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SUPPRESSION OF RAUSCHER VIRUS-INDUCED MURINE LEUKEMIA

BY L-ASPARAGINASE

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION	1
Pathogenesis of RLV-induced leukemia	1
Characteristics of RLV	2
Relationship of RLV to other murine leukemia viruses	3
Inhibition of RLV-induced leukemia	5
Effect of L-asparaginase on leukemias and lymphomas	5
Mechanism of L-asparaginase antileukemic activity	7
MATERIALS AND METHODS	12
Viruses	12
Experimental animals	12
Tris-buffered saline (TBS)	12
L-asparaginase	13
Inoculation of mice	13
Splenomegaly assay for infectivity	13
Treatment regimen	14
Survival time assay	16
Assay for antiviral effect	16
Spleen foci assay	17
Assay of L-asparaginase activity and L-asparagine content	17
Homogenization of spleens	17
Determination of L-asparaginase activity	18
Determination of L-asparagine content	18
Spleen sections	19
RESULTS	20
Titration of RLV stock preparations	20
L-asparaginase effect on development of splenomegaly	20
Comparison of various treatments by relative suppression of splenomegaly	24
Protective value of L-asparaginase treatment	29
Effect of various treatments on survival time	29
Assay for anti-viral effect of L-asparaginase	30
Spleen foci assay for L-asparaginase effect	41
Determination of spleen L-asparaginase activity and L- asparagine content	41
Microscopic examination of spleen sections	42
DISCUSSION	45
Suppression of the leukemic process by L-asparaginase treatment	45
Anti-viral activity of L-asparaginase	47
Effect of L-asparaginase on production of spleen foci	49
Mechanism of L-asparaginase antileukemic activity	49

SUMMARY	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY	53
APPENDIX	
A. List of abbreviations	62
B. Development of myeloid and lymphoid elements	63
C. Peripheral blood picture of RLV-induced leukemia	64

SUMMARY

Murine leukemia induced by Rauscher leukemia virus (RLV) was responsive to treatment with L-asparaginase from E. coli. Five I.U., administered every third day, inhibited the development of splenomegaly and prolonged survival of RLV-infected mice. Examination of spleen sections revealed that L-asparaginase treatment inhibited development of malignancy, but did not completely inhibit hyperplasia of cells in the lymph follicles.

Fifteen I.U. of L-asparaginase, administered one hour before RLV inoculation, did not prevent the development of leukemia. After 7 days, two L-asparaginase treatments did not prevent production of spleen foci. Spleen foci represent areas of primary leukemic transformation by RLV. L-asparaginase treatment exhibited very limited antiviral activity. Since L-asparaginase treatment did not prevent leukemic transformation or RLV replication, the antileukemic effect was apparently directed against the proliferating leukemic cells.

In contradiction to the L-asparagine deprivation hypothesis, first proposed by Broome (1961, 1963b), was our observation that RLV-induced leukemia was suppressed by treatment with L-asparagine. Attempts to grow mouse cells in culture were not successful; thus, the requirement for exogenous L-asparagine could not be determined. Studies to determine the L-asparaginase activity and L-asparagine content of normal and leukemic spleens were unsuccessful.

Since the L-asparaginase antileukemic activity was exerted independently of an inhibition of viremia, the role of RLV replication in leukemogenesis was re-evaluated.