

β 4GalT-II increases cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells depending on its Golgi localization

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Abstract

β 1,4-Galactosyltransferase II (β 4GalT-II) is one of the enzymes transferring galactose to the terminal *N*-acetylglucosamine of complex-type *N*-glycans and its expression is significantly altered during oncogenesis with unknown functions. Here, we reported for the first time the pro-apoptotic role of β 4GalT-II in tumor cells. The level of β 4GalT-II mRNA expression was obviously decreased during HeLa cell apoptosis induced by cisplatin. Interestingly, the ectopic expression of β 4GalT-II in HeLa cells markedly increased apoptosis and cleavage of PARP induced by cisplatin as well as the expression of pro-apoptotic protein Bax. Furthermore, deletion of Golgi localization domain abolished the apoptotic role of β 4GalT-II in HeLa cells. Collectively, these results suggest that β 4GalT-II increases HeLa cell apoptosis induced by cisplatin depending on its Golgi localization, which indicates that β 4GalT-II might contribute to the therapeutic efficiency of cisplatin for cervix cancer.

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Keywords: β 4GalT-II; Apoptosis; Cisplatin; HeLa cells; Golgi localization

Apoptosis, which is a common cellular response to stress caused by environmental challenges [1], plays critical roles in cancer chemotherapy [2]. Cisplatin, a chemotherapeutic agent, is known to cause DNA damage by forming DNA–DNA or DNA–protein adducts that trigger cell apoptosis, and is widely used in the treatment of solid tumors, including ovarian, testicular, cervical, and small cell lung cancers [3,4]. Although cisplatin therapy is effective in treating solid tumors, the acquisition of resistance by tumor cells to cisplatin is one of the major problems in cisplatin with largely unknown mechanisms [5].

β 1,4-Galactosyltransferase (GalT) family are the enzymes responsible for the biosynthesis of *N*-acetylglucosamine on *N*-glycans by transferring UDP-galactose to the terminal *N*-acetylglucosamine (*N*-GlcNAc) residues and this

family consist of seven members, from β 4GalT-I to β 4GalT-VII [6,7]. β 4GalT-II, a member of β 1,4-galactosyltransferase family, is a major regulator of the synthesis of glycans involved in neuronal development [8,9]. The expression change of β 4GalT-II has been investigated using NIH3T3 and the highly malignant transformed cell line MTA_g. Northern blot analysis revealed that the transcript of β 4GalT-II gene decreased to one-fifth in the transformed cells [10]. In addition, our previous study showed that the expression of β 4GalT-II was increased in the process of glioma development [11]. In spite of this knowledge, currently little is known about the role of β 4GalT-II in tumor cells.

In this study, we investigated the contribution of β 4GalT-II in cisplatin-induced apoptosis. The ectopic expression of β 4GalT-II in HeLa cells markedly increased cisplatin-induced apoptosis and the expression of Bax and Bad. Moreover, deletion of Golgi apparatus location domain abolished the apoptotic role of β 4GalT-II in HeLa

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cells. Taken together, our results reveal that $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ increases HeLa cell apoptosis induced by cisplatin depending on its Golgi localization, which elicits survival signals in HeLa cells.

Experimental procedures

Materials. Restriction enzymes, bovine calf serum, DMEM medium, Trizol reagent, and Lipofectamine reagent were purchased from Invitrogen. The anti-GFP antibody, Hechst33258, cisplatin, adriamycin and etoposide were purchased from Sigma Chemical. The anti-Bad, anti-Bid, anti-Bax, anti-Bak, anti-Bcl-2 and anti-PARP antibodies were purchased from Cell Signal. The anti-GAPDH antibody was purchased from Santa Cruz Biotechnology. The EGFPN3 vector has been previously described [12].

Cell culture and transfection. HeLa cells were cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium. Cell transfection was performed with Lipofectamine (Invitrogen) according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Analysis of apoptosis by fluorescence staining and flow cytometry and Western blot analysis. Fluorescence staining and flow cytometry have been described previously [13]. Western blot was performed as previously described [14], using an antibody to GAPDH to ensure equivalent loading.

Plasmids. The entire open reading frame of human $\beta 4\text{GalT-VII}$ gene was obtained from HeLa cells total RNA by RT-PCR. Total RNAs were extracted from HeLa cells with Trizol reagent. Reverse transcription was performed according to the instructions included with the TaKaRa RNA PCR Kit. The primers used were $\beta 4\text{GalT-VIIs}$ (5'-TATCTCGAGA TGTTCCCCTCGCGGAG-3'), $\beta 4\text{GalT-VIIas}$ (5'-TATGGATCCGCTG AATGTGACACAGG-3'). Following digestion with restriction enzymes, the $\beta 4\text{GalT-VII}$ fragment was directionally cloned into *XhoI/BamHI* digested EGFPN3 vector to generate a "full-length" $\beta 4\text{GalT-VII}$. The entire open reading frame of human $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ gene was obtained using the same manner. The primers used were $\beta 4\text{GalT-IIIs}$ (5'-TATCTCGAG ATGAGCAGACTGCTGGGGGGGACG-3'), $\beta 4\text{GalT-IIas}$ (5'-TATGG ATCCGCCCGAGGGGGCCACGACGG-3'). Following digestion with restriction enzymes, the $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ fragment was directionally cloned into *XhoI/BamHI* digested EGFPN3 vector to generate a "full-length" $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ (FL(1–372aa)). Expression vectors containing sequentially truncated fragments (N(1–32aa), C(15–327aa)) of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ were prepared in a similar manner. The transmembrane domain deletion construct D(15–32aa) was created from $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ by PCR using TakaRa MutantBEST mutagenesis kit and the listed primers (forward 5'-GACGT CTACGCCAGCACCTGGCCT-3' and reverse 5'-CTTGCAGACGC GCTCCAGCGTCC-3'). The plasmid of GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-I}$ has been described previously [12]. The expression plasmids for human $\beta 4\text{GalT-III}$ to $\beta 4\text{GalT-VI}$ were kindly provided by Prof. Kiyoshi Furukawa (Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, Japan). The plasmids of GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-III}$ to $\beta 4\text{GalT-VI}$ were constructed in a similar manner.

Reverse transcription (RT)-PCR. Reverse transcription PCR were performed as previously described [12]. Primers used for PCR were as follows: $\beta 4\text{GalT-IIIs}$, 5'-CGGTCATCATCCCCCTTAGA-3' and $\beta 4\text{GalT-IIas}$ 5'-ATTGGTGAAGAGTGGTTGCC-3'. The PCR product for $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ was 635 bp.

Results

The effect of DNA-damaging agents on $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ mRNA expression

To investigate the contribution of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ in cell apoptosis, we first examined the expression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ in HeLa cells treated with cisplatin, etoposide or adriamycin, respectively, which are widely known to be used in the treatment of solid tumors and kill cells through the induction of apoptosis [15]. RT-PCR was performed to analyze

the level of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ mRNA expression in HeLa cells untreated or treated with cisplatin, etoposide or adriamycin in the indicated concentration. As depicted in Fig. 1, the mRNA expression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ was significantly decreased in response to cisplatin in a dose-dependent manner; however, compared to the controls, the mRNA expression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ was not significantly altered in response to etoposide or adriamycin.

Overexpression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ promotes cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells

The effect of cisplatin on $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ mRNA expression motivated us to investigate the contribution of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ in cisplatin-induced apoptosis. To address this point, EGFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ expression construct was constructed and transiently transfected into HeLa cells (Fig. 2A). And, we investigated the effect of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ on apoptosis after cisplatin treatment for 24 h. As shown in Fig. 2B, the percentage of apoptotic cells in $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ -overexpressed HeLa cells was markedly increased, compared to that of the controls by FACS assay. This conclusion was further supported in Figs. 2C and D. $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ sensitized HeLa cells to cisplatin-induced apoptosis as indicated by fragmented and condensed nuclei, indicating the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ in HeLa cells (Fig. 2C). In addition, $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ overexpression markedly increased the cleavage and expression of PARP (Fig. 2D), which is implicated in the apoptosis process in numerous cells induced by DNA-damaging agents [16,17]. To identify the proteins responsible for the enhanced apoptotic response in HeLa cells transiently transfected with $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$, we explored whether $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ influenced on the expression of Bcl-2 family members which play important roles in the apoptosis progress [18]. As shown in Fig. 2E, $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ overexpression increased the expression of Bax and Bad, without changing the expression of the other examined proteins. Taken together, overexpression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ contributed in cisplatin-induced apoptosis.

Ectopic expression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ increases cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells depending on its Golgi localization

The EXPASY search program predicted that $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ protein consisted of a short NH₂-terminal cytoplasmic

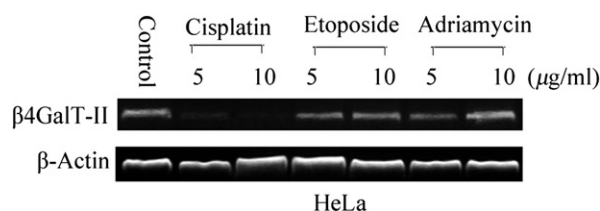


Fig. 1. The effect of DNA-damaging agents on $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ mRNA expression in HeLa cells. RT-PCR analysis of endogenous $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ mRNA expression level in HeLa cells untreated or treated with cisplatin, etoposide or adriamycin in the indicated concentration for 24 h. Level of $\beta\text{-actin}$ mRNA expression was assessed as a loading control.

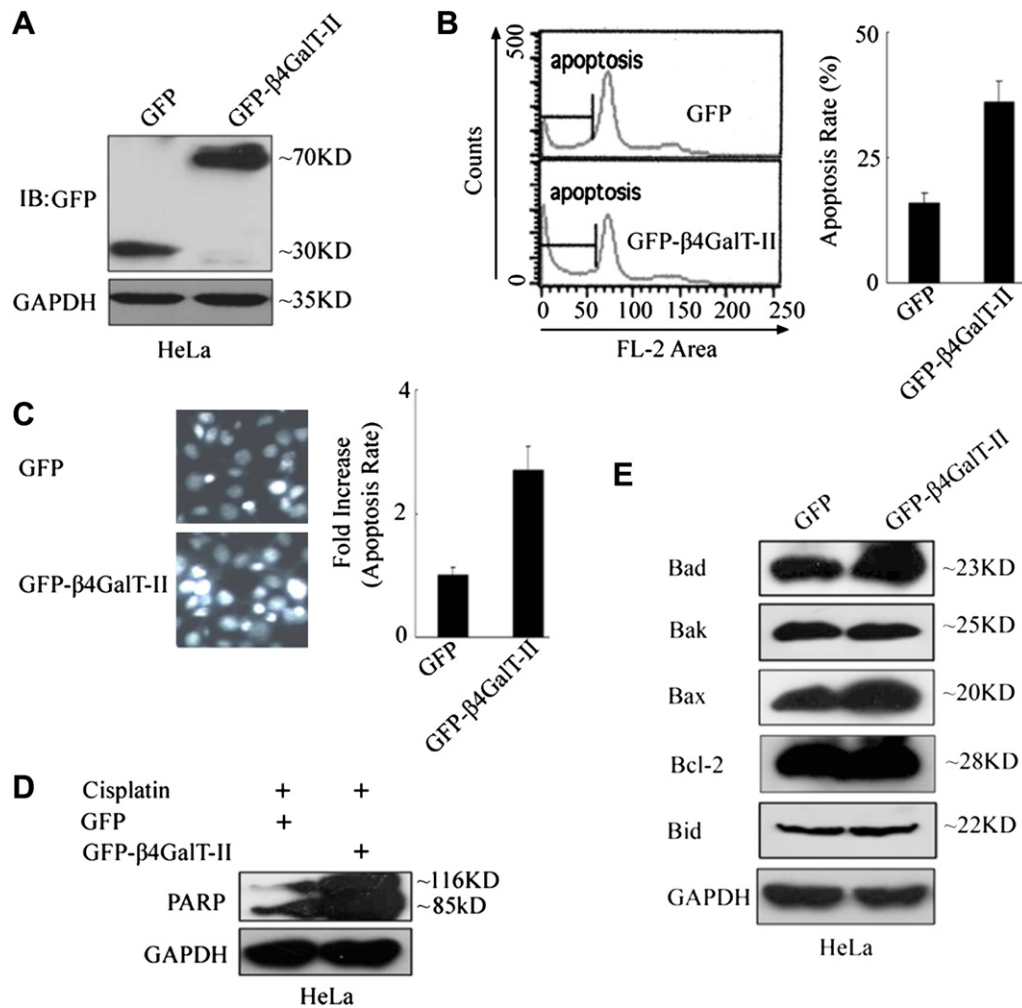


Fig. 2. Overexpression of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ promotes cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells. (A) HeLa cells were transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ expression plasmid and cell extracts were analyzed by immunoblotting with an anti-GFP antibody. GAPDH served as a loading control. (B) Cells transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ expression plasmid were harvested after the treatment of control or cisplatin ($5\text{ }\mu\text{g/ml}$), fixed in ethanol, and stained with propidium iodide. The apoptotic rates were counted by flow cytometry analysis (left). Quantification of apoptotic cells was shown ($n = 3$; $p < 0.05$) (right). Each value was the mean \pm SD of at least three independent experiments. (C) Hoechst 33258 staining of nuclei from HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ treated with cisplatin ($5\text{ }\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h (left). At least 300 cells were counted from three different microscope fields and the percentage of apoptosis was standardized with that of HeLa cells untreated with cisplatin (right). Each value was the mean \pm SD of at least three independent experiments. (D) Western blot analysis of PARP processing in total cell extracts of HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ expression vector treated with control or cisplatin ($5\text{ }\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h. (E) Effect of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ overexpression on the expression of Bcl-2 family members in HeLa cells. Western blot analysis of the expression of Bcl-2 family members in HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ expression plasmid with the indicated antibodies. The GAPDH Western blot served as a loading control.

domain (1–15 amino acids), a trans-membrane domain (15–32 amino acids) and a catalytic domain (32–372 amino acids) (Fig. 3A). To investigate the contribution of these domains in the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$, the GFP-tagged deletion mutations were constructed (Fig. 3A), and transiently transfected into HeLa cells (Fig. 3B). FL(1–327aa), N(1–32aa) and C(15–327aa) were detected in the perinuclear spot that is similar to Golgi staining; however, GFP or D(15–32aa) were detected in the whole cell (Fig. 3C), indicating that the amino acid region between 15 and 32 was essential for the Golgi localization of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$. To investigate the contribution of

these domains in the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$, HeLa cells transiently transfected with the indicated constructs were treated with cisplatin for 24 h, following Hoechst staining assay. As shown in Fig. 3D, compared to the controls, ectopic expression of FL(1–327aa), N(1–32aa) or C(15–327aa) construct increased cisplatin-induced apoptosis; however, the expression of D(15–32) construct had no significant effect on cisplatin-induced apoptosis. The same results were obtained from FACS assay (data not shown). Collectively, these results suggest that $\beta 4\text{GalT-II}$ promotes cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells depending on its Golgi localization.

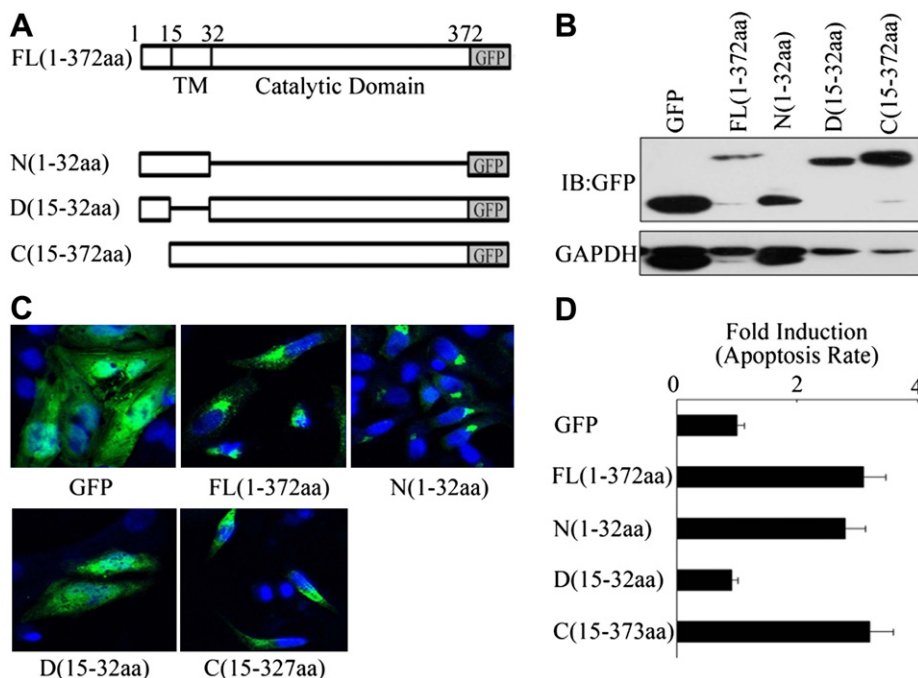


Fig. 3. $\beta 4$ GalT-II promotes cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells depending on its Golgi localization. (A) A schematic diagram of GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalT-II construct (FL(1–372aa)) and its deletion mutation formats (N(1–32aa), C(15–372aa) and D(15–32aa)). (B) Western blot analysis of expression of GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalT-II construct and its deletion mutation in HeLa cells using anti-GFP antibody. The GAPDH Western blot served as a loading control. (C) HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalT-II construct or its deletion mutation construct were stained with Hoechst 33258 and the localization of the indicated proteins was investigated using fluorescence microscope. (D) Hoechst 33258 staining of nuclei from HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP, GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalT-II construct or its deletion mutation constructs treated with cisplatin (5 μ g/ml) for 24 h. At least 300 cells were counted from three different microscope fields and the percentage of apoptosis was standardized with that of HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP. Each value was the mean \pm SD of at least three independent experiments.

The effect of $\beta 4$ GalTs overexpression on cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells

To assess the specificity of the members of $\beta 4$ GalTs family in the regulation of cisplatin-induced apoptosis, EGFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalTs expression plasmids were constructed and transiently transfected into HeLa cells. Forty-eight hour after transfection, EGFP expression was observed with Western blot using anti-GFP antibody. Consistent with previous report [19], the expression of exogenous $\beta 4$ GalT-VI was rarely detected in HeLa cells; however, the other members of $\beta 4$ GalTs were apparently expressed (Fig. 4A). Next, we investigated the effect of $\beta 4$ GalTs on apoptosis after cisplatin treatment for 24 h. Compared to that of the controls, the percentage of apoptotic cells in $\beta 4$ GalT-I to $\beta 4$ GalT-V or $\beta 4$ GalT-VII-overexpressed HeLa cells was markedly increased by FACS assay (Fig. 4B). This conclusion was further supported in Fig. 4C. Overexpression of $\beta 4$ GalT-I to $\beta 4$ GalT-V and $\beta 4$ GalT-VII sensitized HeLa cells to cisplatin-induced apoptosis as indicated by fragmented and condensed nuclei (Fig. 4C).

Discussion

$\beta 4$ GalT-II is a member of $\beta 1,4$ -galactosyltransferase ($\beta 4$ GalT) family which contribute in development and

tumor behavior [12,14]. Since then, additional $\beta 4$ GalTs that mediate cell apoptosis have been reported [13,20–23]. In this report, we have described several observations that implicated the role of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells. (a) The ectopic expression of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in HeLa cells markedly accelerated cisplatin-induced apoptosis. (b) $\beta 4$ GalT-II played an important role in increasing the cleavage and expression of PARP. (c) Forced expression of $\beta 4$ GalT-II up-regulated pro-apoptosis proteins Bax and Bad expression. Taken together, our results suggest a pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in HeLa cells. As described in the introduction, the expression of $\beta 4$ GalT-II was significantly altered in tumorigenesis with unknown functions. To our knowledge, this is the first report of the contribution of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in tumor cells.

Bcl-2 family members are widely known to contribute in cell apoptosis [18]. Bax is a pro-apoptotic member of the Bcl-2 family [24]. The ratio of Bcl-2 to Bax protein might be the final determinant of whether a cell enters the execution phase of apoptosis and contribute in chemotherapy sensitivity [25,26]. $\beta 4$ GalT-II overexpression increased the expression of Bax without changing the expression of Bcl-2, resulting in induction of Bax:Bcl-2 ratio. Consistent with this, $\beta 4$ GalT-II overexpression increased the cleavage of PARP which is a target of Bax and contributes in cisplatin-induced apoptosis [27]. Furthermore, the mRNA expression of $\beta 4$ GalT-II was significantly reduced in

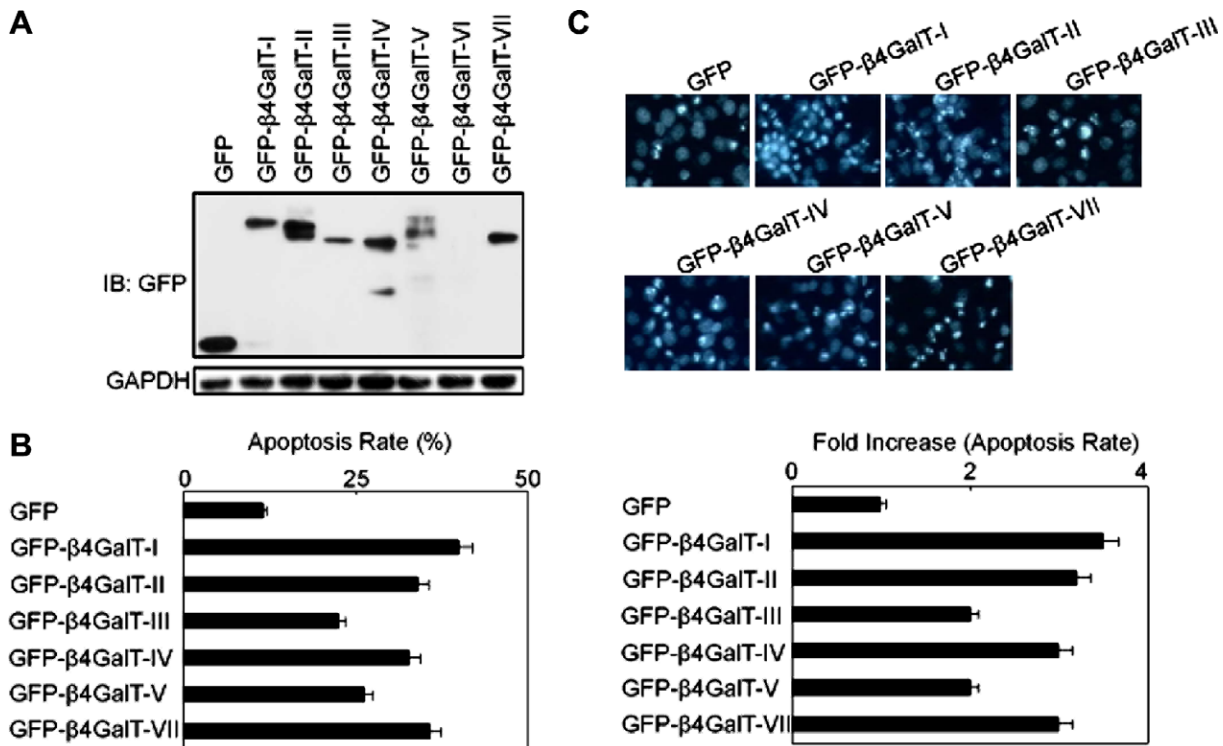


Fig. 4. The role of $\beta 4$ GalTs overexpression in cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells. (A) HeLa cells were transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalTs expression plasmid and cell extracts were analyzed by immunoblotting with an anti-GFP antibody. GAPDH served as a loading control. (B) Cells transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalTs expression plasmid were harvested after the treatment of control or cisplatin (5 μ g/ml), fixed in ethanol, and stained with propidium iodide. The apoptotic rates were counted by flow cytometry analysis. Quantification of apoptotic cells was shown ($n = 3$; $p < 0.05$). Each value was the mean \pm SD of at least three independent experiments. (C) Hoechst 33258 staining of nuclei from HeLa cells transiently transfected with GFP or GFP-tagged $\beta 4$ GalTs treated with cisplatin (5 μ g/ml) for 24 h (upper). At least 300 cells were counted from three different microscope fields and the percentage of apoptosis was standardized with that of HeLa cells untreated with cisplatin (lower). Each value was the mean \pm SD of at least three independent experiments.

response to cisplatin. Taken together, these data indicated that $\beta 4$ GalT-II might play an important role in cisplatin resistant and enhance the therapeutic efficiency of cisplatin for cervix cancer.

Another interesting finding of this study was that $\beta 4$ GalT-II promotes cisplatin-induced apoptosis in HeLa cells depending on its localization on Golgi. The Golgi complex is the central organelle of the secretory pathway and functions to posttranslationally modify newly synthesized proteins and lipids and sort them for transport to their sites of functions [28]. Similar to the endoplasmic reticulum stress response pathway, the Golgi complex may initiate signaling pathways to alleviate stress, and if irreparable, trigger apoptosis [29,30]. The targeting of Golgi complex of PKCdelta is an essential step in ceramide-induced apoptosis [31]. In this present, deletion the Golgi localization domain of $\beta 4$ GalT-II abolished its pro-apoptotic role in cisplatin-induced apoptosis, indicating the essential role of Golgi localization in the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4$ GalT-II. Furthermore, deletion of the catalytic domain of $\beta 4$ GalT-II had no effect on its pro-apoptotic role in cisplatin-induced apoptosis, indicating that the galactosylation activity of $\beta 4$ GalT-II was not contributed in its pro-apoptotic role. And, overexpression of $\beta 4$ GalT-

I to $\beta 4$ GalT-V or $\beta 4$ GalT-VII significantly increased cisplatin-induced HeLa cell apoptosis, which indicated that a stress to Golgi by over-expression of $\beta 4$ GalT-II might contribute in its pro-apoptotic role in cisplatin-induced apoptosis.

In summary, we identified the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in the apoptosis response of HeLa cells to cisplatin. $\beta 4$ GalT-II overexpression increased HeLa cell apoptosis induced by cisplatin depending on its Golgi localization, which indicates that $\beta 4$ GalT-II might contribute in the therapeutic efficiency of cisplatin for cervix cancer. The mechanism of down-regulation of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in response to cisplatin and the pro-apoptotic role of $\beta 4$ GalT-II in HeLa cells should be further investigated.

Acknowledgments

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