

Amurensin G, a Potent Natural SIRT1 Inhibitor, Rescues Doxorubicin Responsiveness via Down-Regulation of Multidrug Resistance 1[§]

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ABSTRACT

The transition from a chemotherapy-responsive cancer to a chemotherapy-resistant one is accompanied by increased expression of multidrug resistance 1 (MDR1, *p*-glycoprotein), which plays an important role in the efflux from the target cell of many anticancer agents. We recently showed that a Forkhead box-containing protein of the O subfamily 1 (FoxO1) is a key regulator of *MDR1* gene transcription. Because nuclear localization of FoxO1 is regulated by silent information regulator two ortholog 1 (SIRT1) deacetylase, we wondered whether SIRT1 dominates *MDR1* gene expression in breast cancer cells. Overexpression of SIRT1 enhanced both FoxO reporter activity and nuclear levels of FoxO1. Protein expression of *MDR1* and gene transcriptional activity were also up-regulated by SIRT1 overexpression. In addition, SIRT1 inhibition reduced both nuclear FoxO1 levels and *MDR1* expression in doxorubicin-resistant

breast cancer cells (MCF-7/ADR) cells. A potent SIRT1 inhibitor, amurensin G (from *Vitis amurensis*), was identified by screening plant extracts and bioassay-guided fractionation. The compound suppressed FoxO1 activity and *MDR1* expression in MCF-7/ADR cells. Moreover, pretreatment of MCF-7/ADR cells with 1 μ g/ml amurensin G for 24 h increased cellular uptake of doxorubicin and restored the responsiveness of MCF-7/ADR cells to doxorubicin. In xenograft studies, injection of 10 mg/kg i.p. amurensin G substantially restored the ability of doxorubicin to inhibit MCF-7/ADR-induced tumor growth. These results suggest that SIRT1 is a potential therapeutic target of *MDR1*-mediated chemoresistance and that it may be possible to develop amurensin G as a useful agent for chemoresistance reversal.

Introduction

Although chemotherapy is widely used for the treatment of various cancers, its use is frequently limited by tumor cell acquisition of multidrug resistance (MDR). MDR describes a

phenomenon of resistance not only to the current drug but also to structurally different chemotherapeutic agents (Ozben, 2007). One of the most important mechanisms underlying resistance to chemotherapy is the active efflux of anticancer drugs through increased expression of the ATP-binding cassette (ABC) transporters (Bodó et al., 2003; Pérez-Tomás, 2006). Three well known MDR genes have been identified in humans: 1) multidrug resistance 1 (*MDR1*, *p*-glycoprotein, ABCB1), 2) multidrug resistance-associated proteins (*MRPs*, ABCC subfamily), and 3) breast cancer resistance protein (*BCRP*, ABCG2) (Kuo, 2007). ABC transporters are transmembrane proteins that pump out a number of molecules across cellular membranes using ATP binding. Although there may be some

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ABBREVIATIONS: MDR, multidrug resistance; ABC, ATP-binding cassette; MRP, multidrug resistance-associated protein; FoxO, Forkhead box-containing protein, O subfamily; SIRT1, silent information regulator two ortholog 1; siRNA, small-interfering RNA; FBS, fetal bovine serum; PMSF, phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride; PBS, phosphate-buffered saline; MS, mass spectrometry; MTT, 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyl-tetrazolium bromide; PCNA, proliferating cell nuclear antigen; PI3, phosphatidylinositol 3; FHRE, forkhead-response element; R-123, Rhodamine-123; MCF-7/ADR, doxorubicin-resistant breast cancer cells; TUNEL, terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase dUTP nick-end labeling.

differences among them, these transporters commonly have been known to cause the efflux of a variety of antitumor agents (Glavinas et al., 2004). However, the expression mechanisms of ABC transporters have not been fully understood despite obvious expression of these proteins in most tumor tissues. Moreover, attempts to modulate the activity of these proteins have met with limited success (Ozben, 2007).

Forkhead box-containing protein, O subfamily (FoxO) transcription factors hold a conserved DNA binding domain termed the Forkhead box. Four proteins—FoxO1, FoxO3, FoxO4, and FoxO6—have been identified as members of the O subfamily FoxO in mammals, and transcriptional activity of FoxO factors is regulated by a shuttling system running between the nucleus and the cytoplasm. This system can be regulated by phosphorylation-dependent ubiquitination and acetylation (Barthel et al., 2005; Vogt et al., 2005; Hoekman et al., 2006). A variety of cellular fates such as differentiation, metabolism, and proliferation are controlled by FoxO factors (Accili and Arden, 2004), and these are frequently dysregulated in some cancers (Barthel et al., 2005; Arden, 2006). We recently found that FoxO1 is consistently up-regulated in MCF-7/ADR doxorubicin (Adriamycin)-resistant breast cancer cells, and FoxO1 plays a critical role in the expression of the *MDR1* gene (Han et al., 2008).

Silent information regulator two ortholog 1 (SIRT1) is the human ortholog of the yeast sir2 protein, which is the name of a family of closely related enzymes, the sirtuins (Motta et al., 2004; Borra et al., 2005). Sirtuins play a key role in cellular responses to stressors such as heat or starvation and are responsible for the lifespan-extending processes of calorie restriction (Borra et al., 2005; de Boer et al., 2006). Sirtuins act by removing acetyl groups from proteins in the presence of NAD^+ . They are thus classified as NAD^+ -dependent deacetylases (de Boer et al., 2006). Several transcription factors (e.g., p53 and nuclear factor- κB) have been reported to be substrates of SIRT1 (Yeung et al., 2004). FoxO transcription factors are also deacetylated by SIRT1 and consequently are accumulated in the nucleus (Stükel et al., 2007).

Based on the hypothesis that SIRT1-dependent FoxO1 activity is important for the expression and regulation of ABC transporters, we investigated a potential role for SIRT1 activation in the up-regulation of *MDR1* in MCF-7/ADR cells. We also screened for in vitro SIRT1 activity using 1820 plant extracts and found that methanol extracts of *Vitis amurensis* have relatively potent SIRT1 inhibitory activity. Bioassay-guided fractionation of this extract resulted in the isolation of eight oligostilbenes, and amurensin G showed the most potent SIRT1 inhibition. We then assessed the inhibitory effect of amurensin G on FoxO1-mediated *MDR1* expression in MCF-7/ADR cells. We also tested whether amurensin G reversed doxorubicin resistance in a xenograft model generated by transplantation into mice of MCF-7/ADR cells.

Materials and Methods

Materials. Anti-*MDR1* antibody was supplied by Calbiochem (Darmstadt, Germany). FoxO1- and FoxO3a-specific antibodies, SIRT1 antibody, and horseradish peroxidase-conjugated anti-rabbit and anti-mouse IgGs were purchased from Cell Signaling Technology (Danvers, MA). Alkaline phosphatase-conjugated donkey anti-mouse IgG and horseradish peroxidase-conjugated rabbit anti-goat IgG were provided by Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories (West Grove, PA). Most of the reagents used for molecular studies were

obtained from Sigma (St. Louis, MO). The siRNA targeting human FoxO1 was acquired from Ambion (Austin, TX). Human recombinant SIRT1, Fluor de Lys SIRT1 deacetylase substrate, Fluor de Lys Developer II NAD^+ and the buffer used for assays were purchased from Enzo Life Sciences (Plymouth Meeting, PA). The 1820 plant extracts were purchased from 21C Frontier R&D Program Plant Diversity Research Center in the Republic of Korea (Supplemental Table 1).

Cell Culture. MCF-7 cells and doxorubicin -resistant MCF-7 (MCF-7/ADR) cells were cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS), 100 units/ml penicillin, and 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ streptomycin at 37°C in a humidified 5% CO_2 atmosphere.

Plasmids. The p195-*MDR1*-Luc reporter plasmid was generated by ligating PCR-amplified *MDR1* promoter regions with pGL3-enhancer vector (Promega, Madison, WI) (Han et al., 2008). The FHRE-Luc, FoxO response element containing a reporter plasmid, was acquired from Addgene Inco. (Cambridge, MA). The SIRT1 constitutive active plasmid was kindly donated by Dr. K. Y. Lee (Chonnam National University, Gwangju, Korea).

Preparation of Nuclear Extracts. Nuclear extracts were prepared essentially as described by Schreiber et al. (1990). In brief, cells in dishes were washed with ice-cold PBS, scraped, transferred to microtubes, and allowed to swell after adding 100 μl of lysis buffer containing 10 mM HEPES, pH 7.9, 0.5% Tergitol-type NP-40, 10 mM KCl, 0.1 mM EDTA, 1 mM dithiothreitol, and 0.5 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride (PMSF). Cell membranes were disrupted by vortexing, and the lysates were incubated for 10 min on ice and centrifuged at 7200g for 5 min. Pellets containing crude nuclei were resuspended in 60 μl of extraction buffer containing 20 mM HEPES, pH 7.9, 400 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 1 mM dithiothreitol, and 1 mM PMSF and then incubated for 30 min on ice. The samples were then centrifuged at 15,800g for 10 min to obtain supernatants containing nuclear extracts, which were stored at -80°C until required.

Immunoblot Analysis. After washing with sterile phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells were lysed in lysis buffer containing 20 mM Tris-Cl, pH 7.5, 1% Triton X-100, 137 mM sodium chloride, 10% glycerol, 2 mM EDTA, 1 mM sodium orthovanadate, 25 mM β -glycerophosphate, 2 mM sodium pyrophosphate, 1 mM PMSF, and 1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ leupeptin. Cell lysates were centrifuged at 10,000g for 10 min to remove debris, and proteins were fractionated using a 10% separating gel. The fractionated proteins were then transferred electrophoretically to nitrocellulose paper and immunoblotted with specific antibodies. Horseradish peroxidase- or alkaline phosphatase-conjugated anti-IgG antibodies were used as the secondary antibodies. The nitrocellulose papers were developed using 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolylphosphate/4-nitro blue tetrazolium or an enhanced chemiluminescence system. For chemiluminescence detection, an image analysis system (LAS3000-mini; Fujifilm, Tokyo, Japan) was used.

Reporter Gene Assay. Promoter activity was determined using a dual-luciferase reporter assay system (Promega, Madison, WI). In brief, cells (3×10^5 cells/well) were replated in 12-well plates overnight and transiently transfected with FHRE-Luc or p195-*MDR1* reporter plasmid/phRL-SV plasmid (*Renilla reniformis* luciferase expression for normalization) (Promega, Madison, WI) using HilyMax reagent (Dojindo Molecular Technologies, Gaithersburg, MD). Cells were then incubated in the culture medium without serum for 18 h, and the firefly and *R. reniformis* luciferase activities in the cell lysates were measured using a luminometer (LB941; Berthold Technologies, Bad Wildbad, Germany). The relative luciferase activities were calculated by normalizing the promoter-driven firefly luciferase activity versus hRenilla luciferase.

Amurensin G Isolation. The stem of *V. amurensis* was collected in July 2008 in Mai Moutain, Jinan-Gun, Jeollabuk-do, Republic of Korea. The sample was authenticated by Professor Y. H. Moon at Chosun University, and a voucher specimen (No. CU-0235) was deposited at the herbarium of Chosun University (Gwangju, Korea).

The dried stem (2 kg) of *V. amurensis* was extracted with methanol ($10\text{ l} \times 72\text{ h}$, twice) at room temperature, and the solution was concentrated to obtain a crude extract (250 g). The extract was suspended in H_2O , partitioned successively with *n*-hexane (1.5 l, three times), EtOAc (1.5 l, three times), and BuOH (1.5 l, three times). The EtOAc fraction (87 g) was subjected to silica gel column chromatography ($10 \times 35\text{ cm}$; 63–200- μm particle size) using *n*-hexane/acetone gradient (from 5:1 to 0:1) to give seven fractions (F1–F7) based on the thin-layer chromatography profile. Fraction 6 (20.5 g) was divided into three fractions (F6.1–F6.3) by a column of Sephadex LH-20 using MeOH as the mobile phase. Fraction F6.2 (5.5 g) was then applied to C-18 silica gel column chromatography and eluted with a step gradient of MeOH/ H_2O (from 1:1 to 10:1) to afford six subfractions (F6.2.1–F6.2.6). Subfraction F6.2.3 (300 mg) was subjected to high-performance liquid chromatography with an ODS-H80 column [$20 \times 150\text{ mm}$, 4- μm particle size]; solvent MeOH in H_2O containing 0.1% formic acid (0–25 min, 35% MeOH; 35 min, 100% MeOH); flow rate, 3 ml/min; UV detection at 280 and 320 nm] to give amurensin G ($t_{\text{R}} = 20\text{ min}$, 28 mg). Amurensin G: brown amorphous powder; m.p., 263 to 264°C; $[\alpha]_{25}^{\text{D}} + 28^\circ$ (c 0.1, MeOH); UV (MeOH) λ_{max} (log ϵ) 213 (3.80), 217 (3.95), 224 (4.00), 282 (4.32) nm; IR (film) ν_{max} 3320, 1610, 1510, 1180, 1040, 840 cm^{-1} ; ^1H - and ^{13}C -NMR were in accordance with reported data; electron ionization-MS, m/z 681 $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ (Calc. for $\text{C}_{42}\text{H}_{32}\text{O}_9$).

SIRT1 Deacetylase Enzyme Assay. The Fluor de Lys fluorescence assay was used to assess SIRT1 activity of phytochemicals. The Fluor de Lys fluorescence assay was performed according to the manufacturer's instructions (Borra et al., 2005). In brief, assays were performed using Fluor de Lys-SIRT1, NAD^+ , SIRT1 enzyme in SIRT1 assay buffer (50 mM Tris-Cl, pH 8.0, 137 mM NaCl, 2.7 mM KCl, 1 mM MgCl_2 , and 1 mg/ml bovine serum albumin). After pre-incubating the assay buffer with the SIRT1 enzyme for 10 min, the reaction was initiated by the addition of the Fluor de Lys peptide and NAD^+ . After 45-min incubation, 2 mM nicotinamide was added to Developer II in the histone deacetylase assay buffer (25 mM Tris-Cl, pH 8.0, 137 mM NaCl, 2.7 mM KCl, and 1 mM MgCl_2). At each time point, 50 μl of the reaction was removed and mixed with 50 μl of the developer solution. Finally, the fluorescence was measured using a microplate reader (Varioskan; Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA) with the excitation and emission at $\lambda = 360\text{ nm}$ and $\lambda = 460\text{ nm}$, respectively.

MTT Cell Viability Assay. To determine cell viability, cells were plated at 10^4 cells/well in 96-well plates. For determination of the cytotoxicity of amurensin G, MCF-7/ADR cells were incubated in FBS-free medium with or without amurensin G (0.1–3 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h. Viable adherent cells were stained with 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyl-tetrazolium bromide (MTT; 2 mg/ml) for 4 h. The media were then removed, and the formazan crystals produced were dissolved by adding 200 μl of dimethylsulfoxide/well. Absorbance was assayed at 540 nm. Cell viability was expressed as relative ratios to untreated control cells.

Crystal Violet Assay. Doxorubicin-induced cell death was determined by crystal violet staining (Vellonen et al., 2004). Cells were stained with 0.4% crystal violet in methanol for 30 min at room temperature and then washed with tap water. Stained cells were extracted with 50% methanol and dye extracts were measured at 550 nm using a microtiter plate reader (Berthold Technologies, Bad Wildbad, Germany).

Cellular Uptake of Doxorubicin. Doxorubicin uptake was quantified in MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells. Cells (3×10^6 cells) were incubated with 30 μM doxorubicin for 60 min, washed with PBS three times, and lysed in lysis buffer containing 20 mM Tris-Cl, pH 7.5, 1% Triton X-100, 137 mM sodium chloride, 10% glycerol, 2 mM EDTA, 1 mM sodium orthovanadate, 25 mM β -glycerophosphate, 2 mM sodium pyrophosphate, 1 mM PMSF, and 1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ leupeptin. After centrifugation of the samples at 10,000g for 10 min, change in fluorescent absorbance of doxorubicin in the supernatant was determined at excitation and emission wavelengths of 470 nm and 590

nm, respectively. Uptake intensity was expressed as a relative ratio to the fluorescence value for the doxorubicin-treated group.

Determination of Cellular Concentration of Doxorubicin. For the determination of cellular concentration of doxorubicin, cell lysates were collected as described under *Cellular Uptake of Doxorubicin*. Acetonitrile (200 μl) with internal standard (ϵ -acetoaminocaproic acid, 1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) was added to the 50 μl of cell lysate, and the mixture was vortexed for 15 s and then centrifuged for 5 min at 12,000 rpm. The organic layer was transferred to another tube and dried under nitrogen flow. The dried sample was then reconstituted with 120 μl of solvent (0.1% formic acid in 30% acetonitrile solution) and vortexed; 50 μl was transferred to autosample vial and 5 μl was injected into the high-performance liquid chromatography system. An aliquot (5 μl) of each sample extract was injected into a Gemini-NX C_{18} analytical column ($150 \times 2.0\text{ mm i.d.}$). The compounds were eluted by pumping the mobile phase [10 mM ammonium formate in water/acetonitrile 70:30 (v/v)] at a flow rate of 300 $\mu\text{l/min}$. Under these conditions, typical standard retention times were 1.2 and 1.5 min for internal standard and doxorubicin, respectively. Total chromatographic run time was 3.5 min. The mass spectrometer (liquid chromatography/tandem MS; 1200L; Varian, Inc. (Palo Alto, CA) equipped with an electrospray source in positive mode was set up in multiple reaction monitoring, monitoring the transitions $544.2 > 361.0$ with collision energy 25 eV for doxorubicin and $174.0 > 114.1$ with collision energy 14 eV for internal standard.

Terminal Deoxynucleotidyl Transferase dUTP Nick-End Labeling Assay. TUNEL assays were performed using an in situ cell death detection kit (Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Germany). After 18 h of incubation with either doxorubicin (30 μM) or amurensin G (0.3–1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$), MCF-7 or MCF-7/ADR cells were washed with PBS. Cells on slides were then fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS, pH 7.4, for 1 h at room temperature and then permeabilized with 0.1% Triton X-100 in 0.1% sodium citrate for 2 min on ice. They were then washed with PBS, incubated for 60 min at 37°C after adding 50 μl of TdT enzyme solution, incubated for 30 min at 37°C after adding 50 μl of anti-fluorescent antibody (Fab fragment from sheep conjugated with alkaline phosphatase), and further incubated for 10 min in the presence of 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolylphosphate/4-nitro blue tetrazolium solution. Slides were then rinsed with phosphate-buffered saline, mounted under coverslips, and analyzed under an optical microscope.

Xenograft Study. A mouse xenograft model was established using 6-week-old female BALB/c nude mice (Central Lab Animal Inc., Seoul, Korea). Tumor cells (5×10^6 MCF-7/ADR cells) were suspended in 0.1 ml of serum-free medium containing 50% Matrigel and injected subcutaneously into the upper flank of each nude mouse. When tumors reached approximately 200 mm^3 (at approximately 12 days), mice were randomly allocated to the vehicle control, doxorubicin-treated, or the amurensin G + doxorubicin-treated groups. Two weeks after inoculation, amurensin G solution (0.1 ml i.p., 10 mg/kg) was injected for 4 weeks [twice a week (Monday and Tuesday)] and doxorubicin was also given at 4 mg/kg i.p. for 4 weeks [once a week (Wednesday)]. Tumor volumes were measured as described previously (Ahn et al., 2010). The animal protocol used in this study was reviewed by the Pusan National University-Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (PNU-IACUC) on their ethical procedures and scientific care and was approved (approval number PNU-2009-0024).

After sacrificing the mice, excised tumors were fixed in 10% buffered formalin and embedded in paraffin. For pathologic examination, 4- μm thick tissue sections were stained with hematoxylin and eosin. Immunohistochemical staining was done with the avidin-biotin complex method using an anti-proliferating cell nuclear antigen (PCNA) antibody. Immune reactions were visualized with 3,3'-diaminobenzidine and counterstained with Mayer's hematoxylin. Tissue TUNEL assays were performed using ApopTag Plus Peroxidase In Situ Apoptosis Detection kits (Intergen, Norcross, GA) according to the

manufacturer's instructions. In brief, slides were deparaffinized and immersed in 3% hydrogen peroxide to block endogenous peroxidase. Then, slides were incubated with reaction buffer containing terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase at 37°C for 1 h. Slides were then incubated with peroxidase-conjugated anti-digoxigenin antibody for 30 min, and the reaction products were visualized with 0.03% 3,3'-diaminobenzidine solution containing 2 mmol of hydrogen peroxide. Counterstaining was achieved with 0.5% methyl green. The PCNA- and TUNEL-positive cells were counted and represented as the average of the five highest areas within a single 200× field. A portion of tumor tissues was homogenized and subjected to immunoblotting for MDR1.

Statistical Analysis. Scanning densitometry was performed using a LAS-3000mini (Fujifilm). One-way analysis of variance procedures were used to assess the significance of differences between treatment groups. When treatment was found to have a significant effect, the Newman-Keuls test was used to compare multiple group means. Statistical significance was accepted at either $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$.

Results

Involvement of SIRT1 in FoxO1-Dependent MDR1 Expression. In our previous study, we showed that FoxO1 binding to the MDR1 promoter plays a key role in MDR1 expression in MCF-7/ADR cells (Han et al., 2008). FoxO

factors can be controlled by two different mechanisms: phosphorylation and acetylation. Multiple kinase pathways including phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI3-kinase)/Akt, extracellular signal-regulated kinase, and p38 kinase have been shown to regulate FoxO via phosphorylation (Vogt et al., 2005; Asada et al., 2007). It has also been reported that SIRT1 causes nuclear translocation of FoxO1 via its deacetylation and subsequently increases the transcriptional activity of FoxO1 (Frescas et al., 2005). Because SIRT1 is considered a promising target for anticancer agent development (Saunders and Verdin, 2007), we were interested in the potential involvement of SIRT1 in MDR1 gene transcription.

We first examined whether SIRT1 activity is essential for FoxO1-dependent MDR1 expression. Both the reporter activity of p195-MDR1-Luc containing a FoxO1 binding site (Han et al., 2008) and the MDR1 protein levels were significantly elevated by overexpression of SIRT1 constitutive active plasmids in MCF-7 cells (Fig. 1A). In addition, SIRT1 overexpression selectively increased nuclear levels of FoxO1 and the transcriptional activity of the forkhead-response element (FHRE) minimal reporter (Fig. 1B). Moreover, 1 mM nicotinamide, a representative SIRT inhibitor, inhibited nuclear accumulation of FoxO1 and reduced levels of MDR1 protein in MCF-7/ADR cells (Fig. 1C, left). These results clearly

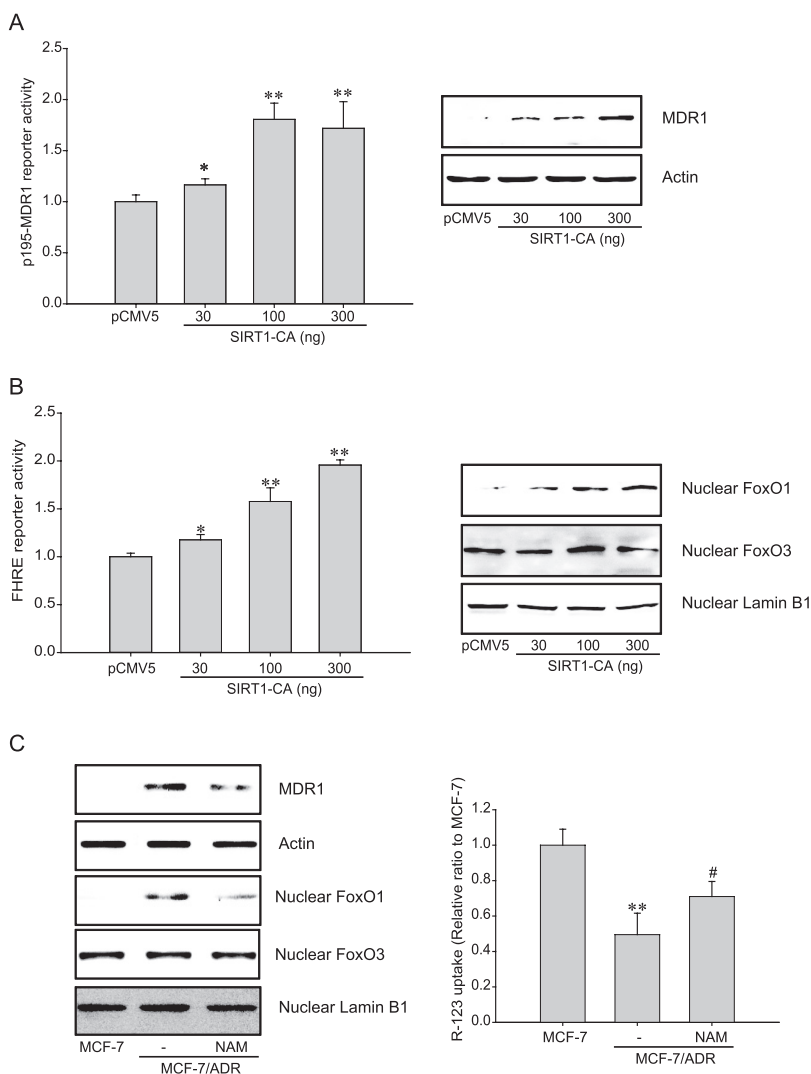


Fig. 1. Role of SIRT1 in MDR1 gene transcription. A, transactivation of *MDR1* gene by SIRT1 overexpression. Reporter activity of p195-MDR1 (left) and MDR1 protein expression (right) in MCF-7 cells transiently transfected with SIRT1-CA (constitutive active form, 30–300 ng/well) or pCMV5 (mock transfection, 300 ng) plasmid. Data represent means \pm S.D. with four different samples (*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$, significant versus control). B, FoxO1 activation by SIRT1 overexpression. Reporter activity of FHRE reporter (left) in MCF-7 cells transiently transfected with FHRE minimal reporter plasmid in combination with SIRT1-CA (30–300 ng/well) or pCMV5 (mock transfection, 300 ng) plasmid. Data represent means \pm S.D. with four different samples (significant versus the control, *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$). Nuclear levels of FoxO1 and FoxO3a (right) in MCF-7 cells transiently transfected with SIRT1-CA (30–300 ng/well) or pCMV5 (mock transfection, 300 ng) plasmid. Western blot analysis was performed using nuclear extracts obtained from both the cells serum-starved for 24 h after transfection, and the levels of FoxO1 and FoxO3a in the nuclear fractions were immunochemically detected using specific antibodies. C, effect of SIRT1 inhibitor on FoxO1-mediated MDR1 expression. Representative immunoblots (left) show protein expression of MDR1 and nuclear FoxO1 and FoxO3 in both MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells incubated with or without 1 mM nicotinamide (NAM) for 24 h. Equal loading of proteins was verified by actin or lamin B1 immunoblot. Rhodamine-123 retention assay (right panel). After incubation of MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells with 20 μ M R-123 for 90 min, the R-123 fluorescence values in cell lysates were measured using the excitation and emission wavelengths of 480 and 540 nm, respectively. Nicotinamide (1 mM) was added 24 h before rhodamine-123 loading. The values were divided by total protein contents of each sample. Data represent means \pm S.D. of four separate samples (**, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the control MCF-7 cells; #, $p < 0.05$, significant versus the vehicle-treated MCF-7/ADR cells).

demonstrate that SIRT1 activity is closely connected with the expression of FoxO1-mediated MDR1. We further examined the transport activity of MDR1 using a Rhodamine-123 (R-123, a substrate of MDR1) retention assay. The reduced accumulation of R-123 in MCF-7/ADR cells was significantly reversed by 1 mM nicotinamide (Fig. 1C, right). This indicates that MDR1 activity, as well as its expression, is controlled by SIRT1 deacetylase.

Synergistic Effects of SIRT1 on FoxO1-Dependent MDR1 Expression. To confirm whether SIRT1 regulates FoxO1-mediated MDR1 gene transcription, MCF-7 cells were cotransfected with constitutively active SIRT1 plasmids with or without a FoxO1 overexpression plasmid. SIRT1 overexpression in the presence of FoxO1 synergistically enhanced both the promoter activity and the protein expression of MDR1, as did FoxO1 overexpression alone (Fig. 2A). Furthermore, SIRT1-induced MDR1 protein expression or MDR1 transcription was reversed by FoxO1 siRNA (Fig. 2B). These data support the idea that SIRT1 is a critical regulator of

MDR1 expression via a FoxO1-dependent mechanism, and FoxO1 and SIRT1 cooperate with each other to induce MDR1 expression.

Screening for Potent SIRT1 Inhibitors from Natural Sources and the MDR1-Inhibiting Effect of Amurensin G. Because SIRT1 controls the cell cycle and apoptosis during tumorigenesis (Saunders and Verdin, 2007), and considering the critical role of SIRT1 in the regulation of MDR1 expression, the deacetylase could be an attractive anticancer targets. Although several SIRT1 inhibiting chemicals have been identified, potential toxicity or low efficacy is a main obstacle to developing new anticancer agents. Hence, we tried to identify potent SIRT1 inhibitors from 1820 plant extracts and found that methanol extracts of *V. amurensis* have significant SIRT1 inhibitory activity (35% inhibition at 30 μ g/ml). Active compound with SIRT1 inhibitory activity was isolated by bioassay-guided fractionation from *V. amurensis* methanol extracts. Active compound was obtained as a brown amorphous powder. Its electron ionization-MS gave the $[M + H]^+$ ion at m/z 681, and the molecular formula of $C_{42}H_{32}O_9$ was inferred from an analysis of the 1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra. The 1H NMR spectrum of active compounds showed three sets of signals for 4-hydroxybenzene moieties, one set of signals for a 3,5-dihydroxybenzene moiety, two meta-coupled doublets due to two aromatic protons, a singlet for an aromatic proton, and six aliphatic protons. Based on an analysis of the spectra and reported data (Ha et al., 2009), active compound was identified as amurensin G, which is a resveratrol trimer (Fig. 3A).

Amurensin G showed *in vitro* inhibitory effects superior to those of 1 mM nicotinamide on SIRT1 enzyme activity (Fig. 3B, left). We then tested the inhibitory effect of amurensin G on SIRT1/FoxO1-dependent transcriptional activity using a FHRE reporter plasmid. After enhancing FHRE reporter activity by introducing a constitutively active SIRT1 plasmid, MCF-7 cells were exposed to amurensin G. Amurensin G reduced SIRT1-induced FHRE transcriptional activity in a concentration-dependent manner, and 1 μ g/ml amurensin G was enough to completely suppress SIRT1-dependent FHRE reporter activity (Fig. 3B, right). To determine whether amurensin G suppresses MDR1 expression, Western blot analysis was performed. The compound potentially inhibited the expression of MDR1 in MCF-7/ADR cells (Fig. 3C). Moreover, nuclear FoxO1 levels were attenuated by amurensin G treatment, whereas FoxO3 was not altered (Fig. 3C). We then determined the basal cytotoxicity of amurensin G in MCF-7/ADR cells. MTT assay revealed that amurensin G up to 3 μ g/ml did not alter the viability of cells (Fig. 3D).

Enhanced Doxorubicin Uptake and Synergistic Cytotoxicity by Amurensin G. Next, we tested whether the cellular uptake of doxorubicin was enhanced by amurensin G using fluorescence detection (Fig. 4A) or LC/tandem MS-based cellular concentration determination (Fig. 4B). Doxorubicin was accumulated in MCF-7/ADR cells to a lesser extent than in MCF-7 cells, whereas doxorubicin uptake in MCF-7/ADR cells was enhanced with increasing concentrations of amurensin G (Fig. 4, A and B). We further determined whether doxorubicin responsiveness is rescued by amurensin G1 in cell culture study. After a 24-h preincubation of MCF-7/ADR cells with vehicle or amurensin G (0.1, 0.3, 1 μ g/ml), doxorubicin (30 μ M)-mediated cell death was monitored. Amurensin G treatment signifi-

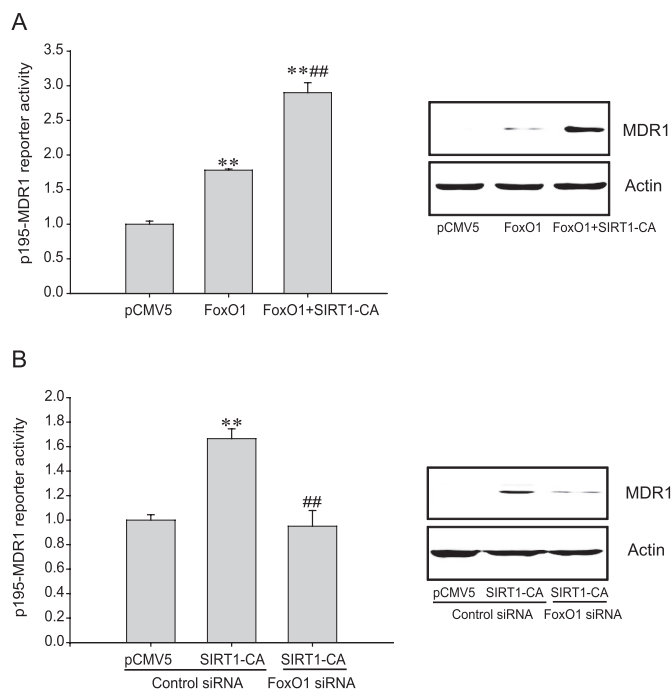


Fig. 2. The complementary effects of FoxO1 and SIRT1. A, up-regulation of MDR1 transactivation by FoxO1 with or without SIRT1 overexpression. MCF-7 cells were cotransfected with p195-MDR1 reporter and pCMV5-FoxO1 (30 ng/well) in the presence or absence of SIRT1 overexpression plasmid (SIRT1-CA, 300 ng/well) and then the luciferase activities were measured 18 h after transfection (left). Data represent the means \pm S.D. of three different samples (****, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the pCMV5-transfected MCF-7 cells; ##, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the FoxO1-transfected MCF-7 cells). Right, immunoblot analysis of MDR1. MCF-7 cells were transfected with pCMV5-FoxO1 (100 ng/well) in the presence or absence of SIRT1 overexpression plasmid (300 ng/well), and then the total cell lysates were obtained 24 h after transfection. B, reversion of SIRT1 induced MDR1 gene transcription by FoxO1 suppression. p195-MDR1 reporter activities were measured in MCF-7 cells cotransfected with 300 ng/well pCMV5 or SIRT1-CA in combination with control siRNA or FoxO1 siRNA (20 pmol/well, left). Data represents means \pm S.D. with three different samples (****, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the control siRNA and pCMV5-transfected MCF-7 cells; ##, $p < 0.01$ significant versus the control siRNA and SIRT1-transfected MCF-7 cells). Right, immunoblot analysis of MDR1. MCF-7 cells were cotransfected with 300 ng/well SIRT1-CA with 60 pg/well control siRNA or FoxO1 siRNA, and then the total cell lysates were obtained 24 h after transfection.

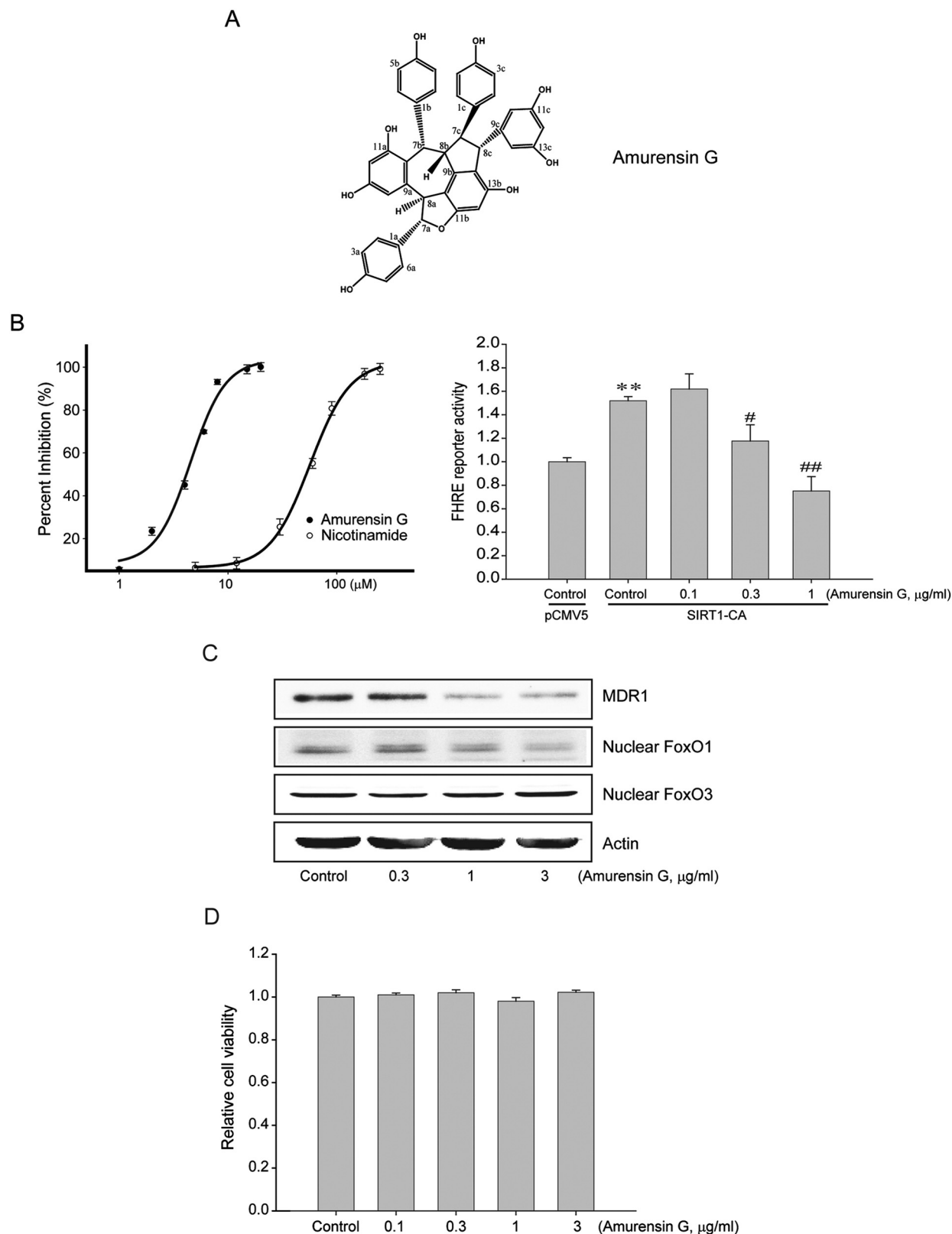


Fig. 3. MDR1 inhibition by amurensin G, a natural SIRT1 inhibitor. A, structures of amurensin G. B, in vitro SIRT1 inhibition by amurensin G and nicotinamide (left). FHRE reporter activity (right). MCF-7 cells were cotransfected with FHRE reporter plasmid with pCMV5 or SIRT1 (300 ng). Six hours after transfection, the cells were incubated with vehicle dimethylsulfoxide or amurensin G (0.1–1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) for a further 18 h. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of three different samples (****, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the pCMV5-transfected MCF-7 cells; #, $P < 0.05$; ##, $P < 0.01$, significant versus the SIRT1-transfected and vehicle-treated MCF-7 cells). C, inhibitory effect of amurensin G on FoxO1-induced MDR1 expression. MCF-7/ADR cells were incubated with or without amurensin G (0.3–3 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h, and total cell lysates and nuclear fractions were subjected to immunoblotting for MDR1, FoxO1, and FoxO3. D, cell viability change after treating MCF-7/ADR cells with amurensin G. After incubation of MCF-7/ADR cells with or without amurensin G (0.1–3 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h, cell viabilities were determined by MTT assay. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of 14 different samples.

cantly enhanced the cytotoxicity of doxorubicin, as evidenced by crystal violet (Fig. 4C) and BrdU uptake (Fig. 4D) assays. Moreover, TUNEL staining showed that expo-

sure of control MCF-7 cells to doxorubicin (30 μ M) for 24 h caused severe apoptosis but not in MCF-7/ADR cells (Fig. 4E). However, TUNEL-positive cells were again found in

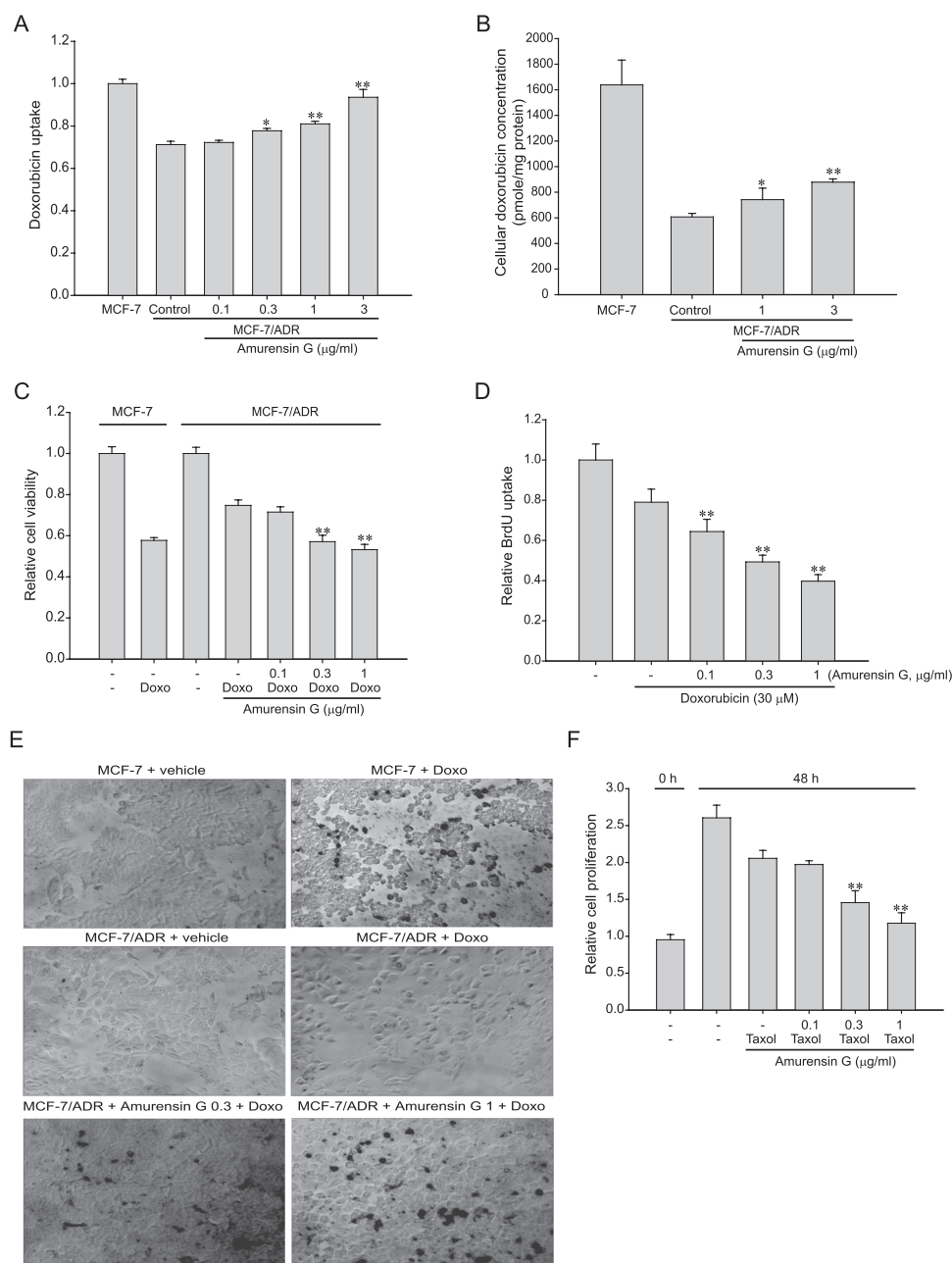


Fig. 4. Overcome of doxorubicin resistance in MCF-7/ADR cells by amurensin G. **A**, cellular doxorubicin uptake. After incubation of MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells with or without amurensin G (0.1–3 μ g/ml) for 24 h, doxorubicin (30 μ M) was treated for 60 min. Doxorubicin fluorescence intensities retained in cell lysates of MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR were measured using the excitation and emission wavelengths of 470 and 590 nm, respectively. The values were divided by total protein content of each sample. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of 3 different samples (significant versus the untreated MCF-7/ADR cells, $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{****}p < 0.01$; control level = 1). **B**, intracellular concentration of doxorubicin. After incubation of MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells with or without amurensin G (0.1–3 μ g/ml) for 24 h, doxorubicin (30 μ M) was treated for 60 min and intracellular concentration of doxorubicin was measured as described in method section. The values were divided by total protein content of each sample. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of 4 different samples (significant versus the untreated MCF-7/ADR cells, $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{****}p < 0.01$). **C**, synergistic cytotoxicity by amurensin G and doxorubicin in MCF-7/ADR cells. Amurensin G (0.1–1 μ g/ml) was preincubated for 24 h and MCF-7 and MCF-7/ADR cells were exposed to doxorubicin (30 μ M) for additional 24 h. Cell viabilities were determined by crystal violet assay. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of 14 different samples ($^{****}p < 0.01$, significant versus the MCF-7/ADR cells treated with doxorubicin alone). **D**, potentiation of doxorubicin-mediated DNA synthesis inhibition by amurensin G. MCF-7/ADR cells were treated as described in **C**, and BrdU assays were performed. Data represent the mean \pm S.D. of eight different samples ($^{****}p < 0.01$, significant versus the MCF-7/ADR cells treated with doxorubicin alone). **E**, representative photographs of TUNEL assays on cells cultured with or without 30 μ M doxorubicin for 24 h. MCF-7/ADR cells were pretreated with CPP343 (0.3–1 μ g/ml) 24 h before doxorubicin exposure. **F**, synergistic cell proliferation inhibition by amurensin G and paclitaxel (Taxol) in MCF-7/ADR cells. Amurensin G (0.1–1 μ g/ml) was preincubated for 24 h, and MCF-7/ADR cells were exposed to doxorubicin (30 μ M) for additional 48 h in 10% FBS-containing medium. Relative cell number was determined by MTT assay. Data represent the means \pm S.D. of eight different samples ($^{****}p < 0.01$, significant versus the MCF-7/ADR cells treated with paclitaxel alone).

MCF-7/ADR cells pretreated with amurensin G (0.3 or 1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) for 24 h (Fig. 4E), suggesting that the MDR1 down-regulatory effect of amurensin G restores cell sensitivity to doxorubicin. We next determined the possible synergistic effect of amurensin G on paclitaxel-mediated cell proliferation inhibition in MCF-7/ADR cells. As expected, amurensin G potentiated paclitaxel-mediated cytotoxicity in a concentration-dependent manner (Fig. 4F).

Restoration of Doxorubicin Responsiveness by Amurensin G in Xenograft Studies. We assessed tumor growth in athymic nude mice bearing MCF-7/ADR cells. Doxorubicin (4 mg/kg) treatment (once per week for 4 weeks) showed only

marginal inhibition of tumor growth, but coinjection of amurensin G (10 mg/kg, twice per week) significantly potentiated doxorubicin-mediated inhibition of tumor growth (Fig. 5A). On histological examination, the tumor showed solid growth of undifferentiated carcinoma devoid of glandular or ductal differentiation. However, amurensin G cotreatment led to more extensive cell death than control or treatment with doxorubicin alone (Fig. 5B). PCNA is a representative marker for cancer cell proliferation. Immunohistochemical analysis showed that all of the tumor cells in the vehicle-treated control cells and in cells treated with doxorubicin alone were PCNA-positive, whereas the number of PCNA-

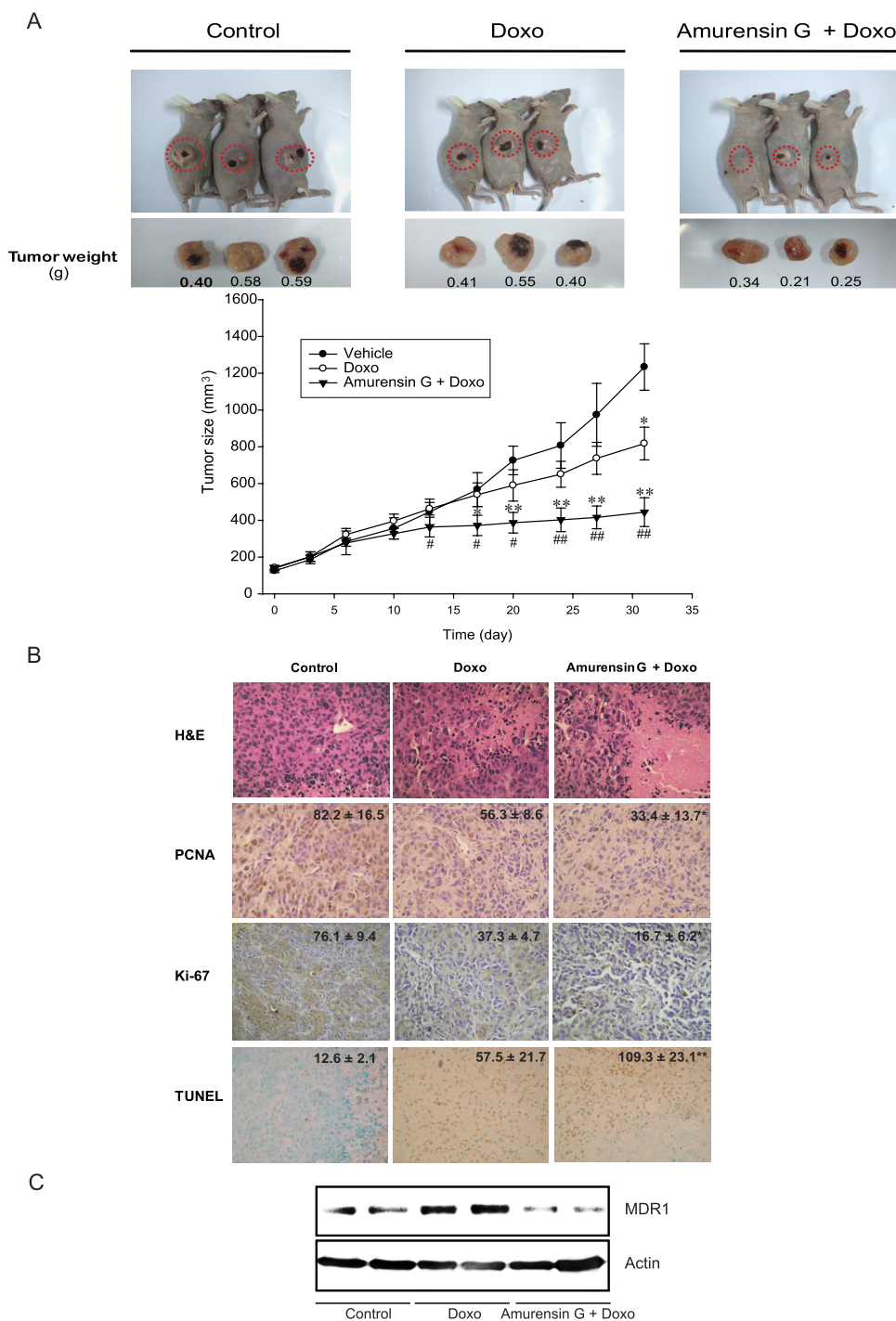


Fig. 5. Restoration of doxorubicin responsiveness by amurensin G in xenograft study. A, MCF-7/ADR tumor growth inhibition by amurensin G. Representative photographs of tumor-bearing athymic mice treated with or without doxorubicin (4 mg/kg, i.p., once a week for 4 weeks) and amurensin G (10 mg/kg i.p., two times a week for 4 weeks) (top). Tumor size was determined by caliper measurements every 3 days, and their volumes were calculated using a standard formula: $\text{width}^2 \times \text{length} \times 0.52$. Data were expressed as the means \pm S.D. of four different mice (*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the untreated control; #, $p < 0.05$; ##, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the group treated with doxorubicin alone). B, histology and immunohistochemistry of tumor tissues. Shown are hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) staining, immunohistochemical staining for PCNA, Ki-67, and TUNEL staining on paraffin sections from solid tumor tissues. The value in each picture represents means \pm S.D. of four different samples (*, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$, significant versus the group treated with doxorubicin alone). C, MDR1 expression in tumor tissue lysates. Tumor tissues were homogenized in PBS and centrifuged at 10,000g. The supernatants were subjected to immunoblottings. Each lane was loaded with 20 μg of the tissue lysates. Equal protein loading was verified using actin as an internal standard. The results were confirmed by two separate experiments.

positive cells was significantly decreased when cells were cotreated with amurensin G (Fig. 5B). PCNA is not expressed throughout the whole cell cycle; Ki-67 tumor-specific antigen is expressed in proliferative cells throughout the G₁, S, G₂, and M phases. Hence, immunohistochemical Ki-67 staining can provide a reliable index of tumor cell proliferation (Brown et al., 1990). Ki-67 staining intensity was also decreased by amurensin G cotreatment with doxorubicin (Fig. 5B). Moreover, cotreatment with amurensin G enhanced the number of TUNEL-positive cells (Fig. 5B). We then measured MDR1 protein expression in tumor tissue lysates. MDR1 protein expression was clearly decreased in amurensin G-treated samples (Fig. 5C). These results confirm our cell culture data that the natural SIRT1 inhibitor, amurensin G, strongly inhibits the growth of MCF-7/ADR-derived tumors by MDR1 down-regulation.

Discussion

Multidrug resistance is a serious obstacle in the treatment of breast cancer (Liu et al., 2007). Several ABC-superfamily multidrug efflux pumps are known to be involved in this phenomenon. MDR1 and MRPs are the overt proteins to drive this severe resistance (Ling, 1997; Sharom, 2008). Although these efflux systems can help in removing harmful chemicals and protecting tissues from toxic materials, a more serious problem is the management of patients who are taking chemotherapeutic drugs, patients whose fate is at the crossroads of life and death. Furthermore, these proteins have intersecting effects on other unrelated anticancer agents, resulting in low success of treatment (Lage, 2003). Hence, extensive studies have been performed to identify chemical MDR1 inhibitors to improve uptake of anticancer drugs. In fact, many MDR1 activity inhibitors have been developed by pharmaceutical companies. However, MDR1 activity inhibitors frequently cause severe side effects or interfere with the kinetics of other drugs (Zhou et al., 2006). Hence, two different approaches have been suggested to overcome MDR1-mediated drug efflux: 1) humanized monoclonal antibody therapy targeting MDR1 or 2) development of novel inhibitors to target MDR1 gene expression (Gottesman et al., 2002). In this study, we demonstrated that SIRT1 inhibitor may function as an efficient adjuvant chemotherapy to suppress MDR1 expression as well as cell proliferation.

FoxO plays an important role in cell growth, proliferation, differentiation, longevity, metabolism, and tumor development (Accili and Arden, 2004; Barthel et al., 2005; Arden, 2006; Reagan-Shaw and Ahmad, 2007). In our previous study (Han et al., 2008), we showed that FoxO1 binding to the -150 ~ -144-base pair MDR1 gene promoter is a key event in the transactivation of the MDR1 gene in MCF-7/ADR cells, which suggested that FoxO1 could be a target for multidrug resistance. The activity of FoxO is controlled by post-translational modifications, including phosphorylation/ubiquitination and acetylation (Vogt et al., 2005). Activation of a representative cell proliferation signal, PI3-kinase/Akt, phosphorylates FoxO1 and subsequently causes ubiquitination-dependent degradation (Vogt et al., 2005). Thus, activation of PI3-kinase may reduce FoxO1 activity but also could result in cancer cell proliferation.

SIRT1, a member of the sirtuin family, is known to be a

regulator of lifespan extension. SIRT1 acts as one of the critical regulators of FoxO transcription in response to cellular stress via its role in NAD-dependent deacetylation (Gan et al., 2005). Frescas et al. (2005) suggested that deacetylation of FoxO by SIRT1 increases its nuclear retention time and thus increases transcriptional activity. On the other hand, Motta et al. (2004) insisted that SIRT1 down-regulates and represses forkhead factor, including FoxO1 and FoxO4, as well as FoxO3a, by destabilizing the protein, decreasing its DNA binding activity, or changing protein/protein interactions.

Although there is a controversy about SIRT1-mediated FoxO regulation mechanism, recent studies showed SIRT1 to be an enhancer of FoxO activation. SIRT1-mediated deacetylation blocks FoxO inhibition introduced from acetylation and thereby prolongs FoxO-dependent transcription of sub-nuclear stress-regulating genes. Through this mechanism, SIRT1 is thought to be able to promote cellular survival and increase lifespan (Daitoku et al., 2004; Kobayashi et al., 2005). In our study, we found that SIRT1 overexpression increases MDR1 gene transcription through nuclear accumulation of FoxO1 in MCF-7 cells. When SIRT1 was cotransfected with FoxO1, MDR1 transcriptional activities were significantly potentiated. Furthermore, MDR1 elevation caused by SIRT1 was reversed by FoxO1 suppression. Vice versa, SIRT1 inhibitors reduced protein levels and promoter activity of FoxO1 and MDR1 in MCF-7/ADR cells. These results clearly demonstrate that SIRT1 is an upstream regulator of FoxO1 and plays a critical role in the up-regulation of the MDR1 gene.

A series of recent studies have suggested that SIRT1 is involved in tumorigenesis, and SIRT1 inhibitors evoked cancer-specific apoptosis (Ota et al., 2006; Alcain and Vilalba, 2009; Lara et al., 2009). However, because only a few SIRT1 inhibitors from natural sources have been reported (Grozinger et al., 2001), identifying a potent SIRT1 inhibitor is meaningful for the development of curative agents against chemotherapy-resistant cancer. In an effort to discover regulators of human SIRT1 enzymes, we screened a phytochemical library using an *in vitro* SIRT1 enzyme assay system. Of 1820 plant extracts, amurensin G isolated from *V. amurensis* methanol extracts showed the most potent inhibition of SIRT1. It is noteworthy that the structure of amurensin G is a trimer of resveratrol known as SIRT1 enzyme activator. The high expression levels of MDR1 and nuclear FoxO1 in MCF-7/ADR cells were drastically reduced by amurensin G treatment. The MDR1-decreasing effects turned out to be due to FoxO1 inhibition as shown by the abilities of amurensin G to reduce FHRE reporter activity and nuclear FoxO1 accumulation. Moreover, our data showing increased doxorubicin cellular uptake and restoration of doxorubicin-induced apoptosis after treating with amurensin G suggest that the compound is an efficient agent for inhibiting MDR1. MCF-7/ADR cell-implanted xenograft studies confirmed that amurensin G treatment suppresses MDR1 expression in tumor tissues and rescues doxorubicin responsiveness.

In our preliminary study, we found that the promoter region of the *MRP2* gene contained four FoxO binding sites and FoxO1 overexpression enhanced gene transcription. Moreover, amurensin G suppressed both *MRP2* protein expression and gene transcription in *MRP2*-overexpressing, ta-

moxifen-resistant breast cancer cells (Supplemental Fig. 1). Although more studies to establish the regulatory mechanism for amurensin G effects may be useful (for example by investigating other potential molecular targets such as the PI3-kinase/Akt pathway), nevertheless our study establishes that SIRT1 inhibitors influence FoxO1 activation and subsequently affect MDR transporters.

Overall, our data show that SIRT1 plays an important role in MDR1 gene transcription via FoxO1 activity and suggest that SIRT1 could be a new therapeutic target to overcome chemoresistance. Amurensin G, a potent SIRT1 inhibitor identified from screening a phytochemical library, seems to have therapeutic potential as a new type of inhibitor of multidrug resistance.

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