Interactions of Novel Morpholine and Hexamethylene Derivatives of Anthracycline Antibiotics with DNA

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Doxorubicin (DOX), daunorubicin (DRB), epidoxorubicin (EDOX) and their analogues with a 3'-NH2 group in daunosamine form a covalent bond with a 2-NH2 group of guanine via a methylene group from formaldehyde (CH2O). It is assumed that a Schiff base type intermediate is formed between CH2O and the 3'-NH2 group in the reaction. This reaction is supposed to occur in the cell. New analogues of anthracyclines with formamidine functionality bound to C-3' of daunosamine and containing the bulky morpholine (DRBM, DOXM and EDOXM) or hexamethyleneimine rings attached are studied in our laboratory. These substituents decrease the association of the drugs to DNA and potentially hinder the formation of Schiff base-intermediates. Our experiments indicate that the formation of the covalent complexes by DRB, DOX and EDOX under these conditions is confirmed by a high enhancement (17–40x) of the inhibition of overall RNA synthesis by E. coli RNA polymerase on T7 DNA. DRBM and DOXM exhibit a lower enhancement of the inhibition by CH2O (7–13x). The other analogues show a 1.6–3x increase of inhibition. Hence, their covalent binding is lower than that of the parent compounds. These conclusions are confirmed by spectrophotometric estimations following removal of non-covalently associated drugs. Electrophoretic analysis of drug-DNA complexes formed in the presence of CH2O indicates that DRBM and DOXM as their parent compounds induce labile cross-links in DNA. Comparison of the results obtained at the subcellular level with cytotoxicity estimations indicates that there is a correlation between cytotoxicity of the anthracyclines on L1210 cells and transcriptional template activity of drug-DNA complexes formed in the presence of CH2O (r = 0.64; n = 9). These data confirm a notion that covalent attachment of anthracyclines to DNA is an essential event leading to cytotoxicity.

Key words: Anthracyclines, DNA-Interactions