

ic biology has the potential to make the construction of novel biological systems a predictable, reliable, systematic process. Recent efforts to implement a highly systematic frame work in biological engineering have provided long-awaited evidence that engineering principles can facilitate the construction of novel biological systems. Synthetic biology has so far demonstrated that its framework can be applied to a wide range of areas such as energy, environment, and health care. In this talk, our recent efforts to develop recombinant microbial cells with programmable biological functionalities will be presented. In particular, an emphasis will be placed on our development of auto-regulatory genetic circuits that transformed microbes into cell factories that autonomously monitor biosynthetic activities. <http://synbiolab.org/>

**Key words:** synthetic biology; recombinant microbial cells

**Corresponding author:** Matthew W. CHANG, E-mail: bchcmw@nus.edu.sg

## Development of photodynamic and sonodynamic drugs from natural and traditional medicinal products

Albert W N LEUNG, C S XU

(*School of Chinese Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China*)

**Abstract:** Malignant tumors and infectious diseases are two main threats to human beings. Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is an effective approach to treat malignancies and infections through the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) of a non-toxic photodynamic drug (photosensitizing agent) upon light irradiation. PDT shows promising in treating areas where light can reach, for example, skin and cavities. To treat the problems on deep tissues, much evidence has accumulated in recent years suggesting that sonodynamic therapy (SDT), which eradicates malignant or infectious cells by ROS produced from the interaction of ultrasound energy and sonodynamic drug (sonosensitizing agent), has potential in treating diseases in deep tissues because ultrasound energy has deeper tissue penetration than light energy. Natural products are a valuable source for developing novel drugs. In recent years, we are focusing on developing novel and naturally occurring photodynamic and sonodynamic agents. We have found some active components from natural products, for example, curcumin and hypocrellin, have not only photodynamic activity and also sonodynamic activity in killing bacterial and tumor cells. This talk will briefly introduce two new technologies including photodynamic and sonodynamic therapy, and highlight the recent development in photodynamic and sonodynamic drugs from natural products or traditional Chinese medicines. Chemical modifications of the active compounds have also been attempted to achieve better results.

**Key words:** photodynamic therapy; curcumin; hypocrellin; photodynamic drugs; sonodynamic drugs

**Foundation item:** The project supported by Health and Medical Research Fund (1100502, 13120442 and 12110442); and the general research fund (GRF) grant from Hong Kong research grant committee (476912)

**Corresponding author:** Albert W N LEUNG, E-mail: awnleung@cuhk.edu.hk

## Using integrative approaches to discover new oncology drugs and study metastasis

Kathy Qian LUO, Afu FU

(*School of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore 637457*)

**Abstract:** Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and neurodegenerative diseases are four major life threatening and health damaging diseases that affect a large portion of the world population at present. Although these diseases differ significantly in terms of symptoms and pathogenesises, they have one thing in common—a defect in the process of programmed cell death, mainly apoptosis. For example, resistance to apoptosis results in cancer formation. On the other hand, over-activation of apoptosis in en-

endothelial cells leads to dysfunction of vascular system which can contribute to cardiovascular diseases and complications of diabetes. Therefore, understanding what causes the defects of apoptosis in those disease-related cells will provide new insights in designing target-specific therapies to treat those diseases. In order to develop a method of real-time detection of apoptosis within the target cells, we genetically engineered a fluorescence resonance energy transfer (FRET)-based biosensor. When this biosensor is synthesized in the transfected cells, the sensor protein can detect caspase activation-mediated apoptosis by changing the color from green to blue. We have generated a bank of 32 sensor cell lines consisting of various types of cancer and non-cancerous cells. We also integrated these sensor cells into six model systems including a sensor cell-based high throughput drug screening assay, 3D *in vitro* tumor model, co-culture system, microfluidic system, zebrafish cancer model and xenograft tumor mouse models. In this talk, I will discuss the applications of these sensor cells and model systems in discovering new anti-cancer agents and elucidating the survival mechanisms of metastatic cancer cells in circulation.

**Key words:** anticancer agents; metastasis; apoptosis

**Corresponding author:** Kathy Qian LUO, E-mail: kluo@nut.edu.sg

## Potential of anthocyanin-rich natural products to retard vascular aging: Role of endothelial senescence

Valérie SSCHINI-KERTH

(UMR CNRS 7213, Strasbourg University, Strasbourg, France)

**Abstract:** Numerous clinical studies have indicated that regular intake of polyphenol-rich products such as red wine and green tea is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases. The protective effect has been attributable, in particular, to their high level of polyphenols such as flavanols and anthocyanins. The beneficial effect of polyphenols on the vascular system involves their ability to improve the lipid profile and to prevent platelet activation and inflammatory responses, and possibly also by a direct action at blood vessels. Indeed, grape-derived polyphenols and tea catechins are potent inducers of endothelium-dependent relaxations of isolated blood vessels by causing a sustained stimulation of the endothelial formation of nitric oxide (NO) and endothelium-derived hyperpolarization, two potent vasoprotective mechanisms. Besides grape-derived and tea products, several red and black fruit-derived products induce also potent vasoprotective effects. Intake of polyphenol-rich products has been shown to retard the induction of aging-related endothelial dysfunction and to improve an established aging-related endothelial dysfunction in rats. The beneficial effect is mostly due to the normalization of the high level of oxidative stress in the arterial wall and of the local angiotensin system. Moreover, polyphenol-rich products prevented the induction of replicative senescence as indicated by levels of senescence-associated beta-galactosidase activity and of key cell cycle regulators p53/p21 and p16 in cultured endothelial cells. The induction of endothelial senescence is associated with the down-regulation of endothelial NO synthase expression and the up-regulation of tissue factor expression most likely triggered by NADPH oxidase- and cyclooxygenase-derived oxidative stress, and leads to a reduced ability of endothelial cells to effectively inhibit platelet aggregation. Thus, regular intake of polyphenol-rich products can delay the induction of aging-related endothelial dysfunction most likely by preventing endothelial senescence, and as a consequence help to maintain an optimal protective effect of endothelial cells on the vascular system.

**Key words:** anthocyanin-rich; natural products; cardiovascular diseases

**Corresponding author:** Valérie SSCHINI-KERTH, E-mail: valerie.schini-kerth@unistra.fr