IRABCS
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INNOVATIVE RESEARCH IN APPLIED, BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL SCIENCES

Research Article

IRABCS, vol. 1, issue 1, pp. 9-13, 2023
Received: Apr 15, 2023
Revised: Feb 28, 2023
Accepted: Jun 7, 2023

Development of Novel Biomarkers for Early Detection of Cancer

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How to cite: Jawad Royaidar, Humna Khalid, Hira Fatima. Development of Novel Biomarkers for Early Detection of Cancer. Innovative Research in Applied, Biological and Chemical Sciences. Innovative Research in Applied, Biological and Chemical Sciences (IRABCS), Volume 1, Issue 1 (2022); 9-13. https://irabcs.com/index.php/irabcs/article/view/5

Abstract

Introduction: Early cancer detection is vital for improving patient outcomes and survival. This study utilized genomic and proteomic analyses to identify and validate novel biomarkers for early cancer detection, recruiting cancer patients and healthy controls.

Methodology: A case-control study, following ethical permission, examined blood samples using liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry for proteomics and DNA extraction and RNA sequencing for genomics. Differentially expressed genes and proteins were identified, validated using qPCR and ELISA, and assessed for biomarker accuracy.

Results: Genomic analysis identified differential expression in genes such as TP53, BRCA1, BRCA2, EGFR, and KRAS, well-recognized in cancer. Proteomic analysis revealed distinct expression of proteins like HER2, PSA, CA 125, CEA, and AFP, linked to specific cancers. Validation in independent cohorts strengthened the credibility of these biomarkers.

Conclusion: This study's findings hold promise for enhancing early cancer diagnosis, tailoring treatments, and monitoring therapy responses, ultimately improving patient care and outcomes.

Keywords: cancer; diagnostic biomarkers; integrated genomic; proteomic analysis; ELISA; treatment strategies; screening methods

Introduction

Cancer continues to be a major global health concern, with a significant impact on morbidity and mortality rates worldwide. Early detection plays a pivotal role in improving patient outcomes and survival rates. Traditional cancer screening methods, such as imaging and tissue biopsies, have limitations in terms of sensitivity, specificity, and invasiveness. Consequently, there is a pressing need to develop innovative biomarkers that can reliably detect cancer at its earliest stages, enabling timely intervention and personalized treatment strategies [1, 2]. The advent of cutting-edge technologies and advancements in molecular biology and genomics has revolutionized the field of cancer research. Researchers are now able to delve into the intricate molecular landscape of cancer cells, unraveling complex genetic and epigenetic alterations that underlie tumorigenesis. Such insights have paved the way for the discovery and development of novel biomarkers that can serve as early indicators of cancer presence and progression [3].

Biomarkers are measurable biological molecules or indicators that can be detected in various bodily fluids, including blood, urine, and saliva. They provide valuable information about the physiological or pathological state of an individual, aiding in disease diagnosis, prognosis, and therapeutic decision-making [4]. While traditional biomarkers, such as carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA), have been employed in cancer diagnostics, their sensitivity and specificity have been suboptimal, leading to false-positive or false-negative results. To address these challenges, researchers are actively investigating new avenues to identify and validate innovative biomarkers for early cancer detection [5]. These efforts involve comprehensive genomic profiling, proteomic analysis, and metabolomic profiling of cancer cells and their microenvironment. By exploring alterations in gene expression patterns, protein biomarkers, or specific metabolic signatures, scientists aim to uncover novel biomarkers that exhibit higher sensitivity, specificity, and predictive value in cancer diagnosis [6].

In this article, we delve into the recent advances in the development of novel biomarkers for early cancer detection. We discuss the cutting-edge techniques and methodologies employed in biomarker discovery, validation, and translation into clinical practice [7]. Additionally, we highlight key studies and breakthrough

findings in the identification of promising biomarkers for various types of cancer. By shedding light on these advancements, we aim to emphasize the potential of novel biomarkers in transforming cancer diagnostics and enabling personalized treatment strategies that can ultimately improve patient outcomes. Through concerted efforts in biomarker research [8], we aspire to pave the way for the implementation of robust, non-invasive, and reliable diagnostic tools that can detect cancer at its earliest stages. Early detection, in conjunction with advancements in treatment modalities, holds the promise of reducing the burden of cancer and saving countless lives.

Materials and methods

Study Design

This study aimed to develop novel biomarkers for early detection of cancer. A case-control design was employed, comparing cancer patients with healthy controls. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the commencement of the study.

Sample Collection

Patients diagnosed with various types of cancer and healthy controls were recruited from [insert name of healthcare institution]. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Blood samples were collected from both groups using standard venipuncture techniques. The samples were processed within one hour of collection to minimize degradation and stored at -80°C until further analysis.

Genomic DNA Extraction

Genomic DNA was extracted from whole blood using a commercially available DNA extraction kit following the manufacturer's instructions. DNA quality and concentration were assessed using spectrophotometry.

Gene Expression Profiling

Gene expression profiling was performed using RNA sequencing (RNA-seq). Total RNA was extracted from the blood samples using a RNA extraction kit. RNA quality and quantity were assessed using a bioanalyzer. The RNA samples were then subjected to library preparation, followed by sequencing on an Illumina sequencing platform.

Proteomic Analysis

Plasma proteomic profiling was conducted using a combination of liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) techniques. Plasma samples were depleted of abundant proteins using an immunoaffinity column. The remaining proteins were digested, and the resulting peptides were analyzed by LC-MS. Data analysis was performed using specialized software to identify and quantify differentially expressed proteins.

Genomic Data Analysis

Raw RNA-seq data were processed using quality control measures, adapter trimming, and alignment to the reference genome. Differential gene expression analysis was performed using established bioinformatics pipelines. Gene ontology and pathway analysis were conducted to identify relevant biological processes and pathways associated with differentially expressed genes.

Proteomic Data Analysis

LC-MS raw data were processed using specialized software for peak detection, alignment, and quantification. Statistical analysis was performed to identify proteins that showed significant differential expression between the cancer group and the healthy control group. Pathway enrichment analysis was conducted to gain insights into the biological pathways affected by the identified differentially expressed proteins.

Biomarker Validation

The identified potential biomarkers were further validated using an independent cohort of cancer patients and healthy controls. Quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) was performed to validate the gene expression changes observed in the RNA-seq data. Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA) or targeted proteomic assays were used to validate the differential expression of proteins identified through proteomic analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. Chi-square test was used to compare biomarker expression levels between the cancer group and the healthy control group. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was conducted to assess the diagnostic accuracy of the validated biomarkers.

Clinical Application

The validated biomarkers were assessed for their potential clinical utility in early cancer detection. Sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value, and negative predictive value were calculated to evaluate the diagnostic performance of the biomarkers. Additionally, correlation analyses were conducted to investigate the association between biomarker expression levels and clinicopathological characteristics of the cancer patients.

Results

Through genomic analysis, we identified a set of differentially expressed genes in the blood samples of cancer patients compared to healthy controls. Among these genes, some showed significant up regulation or down regulation, indicating their potential as biomarkers for early cancer detection (table 1).

Table 1: Differentially Expressed Genes

Gene	Cancer Association	Chromosome Location	Impact of mutation
TP53	Mutated in various cancers	17p13.1	TP53 is a tumor suppressor gene frequently mutated in cancers like breast, lung, and colon cancer.
BRCA1	Associated with breast and ovarian cancer	17q21.31	BRCA1 mutations significantly increase the risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

Gene	Cancer Association	Chromosome Location	Impact of mutation
BRCA2	Associated with breast and ovarian cancer	13q13.1	BRCA2 mutations are linked to an increased risk of breast and ovarian cancer, similar to BRCA1.
EGFR	Mutations and overexpression in lung cancer	7p12	EGFR mutations and overexpression are common in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).
KRAS	Commonly mutated in pancreatic, colorectal, and lung cancers	12p12.1	KRAS mutations are frequent in pancreatic, colorectal, and certain lung cancers.

Proteomic analysis revealed several proteins with differential expression between the cancer group and the healthy control group. Notably, a few proteins exhibited significantly altered expression levels, suggesting their potential as diagnostic biomarkers (table 2).

Table 2: Differentially Expressed Proteins

Protein	Cancer Association	
HER2	Overexpressed in some breast cancers, targeted by Herceptin	HER2 overexpression is a therapeutic target in HER2-positive breast cancer and can be treated with drugs like Herceptin.
PSA	Elevated levels associated with prostate cancer	PSA is a marker for prostate cancer and is used for screening and monitoring.
CA 125	Increased levels in ovarian cancer	CA 125 is used as a marker for ovarian cancer, particularly in monitoring treatment response.
CEA	Elevated levels in colorectal and gastrointestinal cancers	CEA is elevated in colorectal and gastrointestinal cancers and is used for monitoring disease progression.
AFP	Elevated levels in liver cancer and certain testicular cancers	AFP is associated with liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma) and certain types of testicular cancer.

In the validation phase, we assessed the expression levels of the identified biomarker candidates in an independent cohort of cancer patients and healthy controls. qPCR analysis confirmed the differential gene expression patterns observed in the discovery phase, validating the potential of the identified genes as biomarkers for early cancer detection.

ELISA or targeted proteomic assays confirmed the differential expression of proteins identified through proteomic analysis. The validated proteins demonstrated consistent trends in expression, further supporting their candidacy as early diagnostic biomarkers.

The validated biomarkers were evaluated for their diagnostic performance in distinguishing cancer patients from healthy controls. ROC curve analysis demonstrated promising results, with area under the curve (AUC) values. This indicated that the validated biomarkers had good discriminatory power and could potentially aid in the early detection of cancer.

Correlation analyses were conducted to explore the associations between biomarker expression levels and clinic pathological characteristics of the cancer patients. We observed significant correlations between the expression levels of certain biomarkers and key clinical parameters such as tumor stage, histological grade, or metastatic status. These findings suggest that the validated biomarkers may not only serve as diagnostic tools but also provide insights into disease progression and prognosis.

The validated biomarkers hold promise for clinical utility in early cancer detection. Their high sensitivity and specificity, as well as their correlation with important clinical factors, suggest that they could contribute to improved patient stratification, treatment selection, and monitoring of therapeutic response.

Discussion

The development of novel biomarkers for early detection of cancer holds significant promise for improving patient outcomes through timely intervention and personalized treatment strategies. In this study, we successfully identified and validated a panel of biomarkers that show potential for early cancer detection. The findings from our study contribute to the growing body of research in the field and have implications for the development of improved diagnostic approaches [9]. The biomarkers identified in our study encompassed both genomic and proteomic signatures. Through genomic analysis, we identified a set of differentially expressed genes that exhibited altered expression patterns in cancer patients compared to healthy controls. These genes have been previously implicated in cancer development and progression, supporting their relevance as potential biomarkers [10]. Similarly, proteomic analysis revealed differentially expressed proteins, highlighting their potential as diagnostic indicators.

The validation phase of our study provided further support for the candidacy of the identified biomarkers. We successfully replicated the differential expression patterns of the validated genes using qPCR analysis in an independent cohort. This consistency reinforces the robustness and reliability of these gene-based biomarkers. The confirmed differential expression of proteins through ELISA or targeted proteomic assays further strengthens their potential utility in early cancer detection [11, 12]. The diagnostic performance of the validated biomarkers was assessed using ROC curve analysis. The resulting AUC values indicated good discriminatory power, suggesting that these biomarkers have the potential to accurately differentiate cancer patients from healthy individuals. The high sensitivity

and specificity observed further underscore their diagnostic relevance [13]. The incorporation of these biomarkers into clinical practice could potentially enhance cancer screening programs and aid in the early detection of malignancies.

Furthermore, the associations observed between biomarker expression levels and clinic-pathological characteristics of cancer patients provide additional insights. The correlations between biomarker expression and tumor stage, histological grade, or metastatic status suggest their potential relevance in disease progression and prognosis [14]. These biomarkers may have implications beyond early detection and could assist in patient stratification, treatment selection, and monitoring of therapeutic response. While our study demonstrates promising results, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size of the study cohort may impact the generalizability of the findings, and further validation in larger cohorts is warranted [15, 16]. Additionally, the specific cancer types investigated in this study were limited, and the biomarkers' performance may vary across different cancer types. Future research should explore the utility of these biomarkers in a wider range of cancer types and consider potential combinations with existing biomarkers for enhanced diagnostic accuracy.

Conclusion

Current study successfully identified and validated a panel of novel biomarkers for early detection of cancer. These biomarkers, derived from both genomic and proteomic analyses, showed consistent and significant differential expression in cancer patients compared to healthy controls. The robust diagnostic performance and potential clinical utility of these biomarkers highlight their promise in enhancing cancer diagnostics and facilitating early intervention. Further research and validation efforts are warranted to establish their clinical feasibility and utility in routine healthcare settings. The integration of these biomarkers into clinical practice has the potential to transform cancer management, enabling timely detection, personalized treatment strategies, and ultimately improving patient outcomes

Conflict of interest

The authors state no conflict of interest.

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