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**[Identification of cancer stem cells in the "side population"]**

[Article in Japanese]

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Both normal somatic stem cells and cancer cells are thought to be capable of unlimited proliferation. Paradoxically, however, some cancers seem to contain stem-like cells (cancer stem cells). There is increasing evidence that cancers might contain their own stem cells. Many cancers, like normal organs, seem to be maintained by a hierarchical organization that includes slowly dividing stem cells, rapidly dividing transit amplifying cells (precursor cells), and differentiated cells. Malignant gliomas, for example, often contain both undifferentiated and differentiated cells and sometimes contain cells that express neuronal markers as well as cells that express glial markers, suggesting that they may contain multipotent neural stem cell-like cells. We have shown that some cancer cell lines contain a small side population (SP), which, in many normal tissues, is thought to contain the stem cells of the tissue. We provide evidence that SP cells in the C6 glioma cell line can produce both neurons and glial cells and thus have cancer stem cell property. Taken together with studies on normal neural stem cells, studies on cancer stem cells will help us to understand a link between normal stem cells and cancer stem cells.

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