

Chromium induced developments of diseases and their inhibitions

ABSTRACT

The exposure of hexavalent chromium (Cr-VI) mainly through the inhalation, skin contact or oral administration by the environmental chromium industrial processes causes the major toxicity-induced health hazardous mortality throughout the world. Though reduced chromium (Cr-III), as essential micronutrient, is utilized to maintain the normal blood glucose, lipid and protein profiles through the metabolism in the body to activate the action of the hormone such as insulin, the high concentration exposures of Cr-VI and Cr-III cause oxidative stress-induced DNA oxidation and adducts, DNA strand breaks and mutations, DNA-protein cross-links, membrane-lipid peroxidation and reduced / altered antioxidant / immune response activities leading to cellular damage-related various diseases and the development of malignant cancer. Applications of different drugs may inhibit Cr-VI or its intermediates-induced cytotoxicity, immunotoxicity or genotoxicity through chromium-chelating and scavenging free radical reactive species, restoring antioxidant and immune response activities or arresting disease-oriented signal transductions or other pathways at cellular and molecular levels.

Key Words: Hexavalent chromium; Oxidative stress; Diseases; Drugs; Inhibition

1. INTRODUCTION

Chromium (Cr), the most abundant element of the Earth's crust, found in the chromite ore combined with iron and oxygen (FeCr_2O_4), mineral crocoites (PbCrO_4), or others used in the Cr-manufacturing industries in the forms of sodium chromate (Na_2CrO_4), sodium dichromate ($\text{Na}_2\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7$), chromium oxide (CrO_3), potassium chromate (K_2CrO_4), and potassium dichromate ($\text{K}_2\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7$), when is exposed into humans mainly through the inhalation, dermal contact and drinking water, causes developments of various diseases [1-11]. Cr normally exists in two stable

oxidative states of hexavalent Cr-VI and trivalent Cr-III. Kinetically inert octahedral Cr-III compounds forming primarily positively charged complexes such as $[(Cr(OH)_6]^{2+}$ react with biological molecules such as DNAs, RNAs and proteins leading to interferences with their normal activities, whereas tetrahedral Cr-VI complexes forming oxyanions such as CrO_4^{2-} or $Cr_2O_7^{2-}$ show their biological consequences but do not interact with macromolecules [1]. Cr-VI complexes, upon exposure, can penetrate the cells through the sulfate-anion channels and are reduced to Cr-III compounds with the formations of highly reactive Cr-V and Cr-IV transitionals by the cellular reductants such as glutathiones (GSH) and ascorbates [11]. During the reduction procedures, molecular oxygens are activated and reduced to super oxide anions ($O_2^{\cdot-}$) generating hydrogen peroxides (H_2O_2), hydroxyl radicals, singlet oxygens and superoxides via the Fenton and Haber-Weiss type reactions [11,2]. Consequently, excessive generated reactive oxygen species (ROS) give rise to oxidative stress overpowering body antioxidant and immune defense systems leading to DNA damages including the formations of Cr-III-DNA adducts, DNA single and double -strand breaks, DNA-protein cross-links, cellular and sub-cellular damages as well as membrane lipid injuries affecting DNA replication, transcription and translation, and resulting in genetic mutations and altered gene expressions -oriented carcinogenesis [11,2,8,12]. Though Cr-III compounds at lower concentration act as insulin enhancers for the type 2 diabetes, at higher concentration they can lead to DNA damages through their accumulations around the cells altering the cellular surface morphology and entering into the cells via the reactions with the cellular reductants and finally are converted to Cr-V by oxidation [11,1]. In general, Cr-VI is eliminated through the kidney (<5 nm) as low molecular Cr-III compounds and to a lesser amounts by billiary excretions into feces, while bigger compounds (>6 nm) are secluded within the tissues until reduced or decomposed in sizes [13].

The applications of external antioxidants, antibiotics and anti-carcinogens may inhibit oxidative stress and disease progression by donating electrons and neutralizing free radicals and blocking different pathways of disease-promotion. Few drugs such as quercetin, curcumin, melatonin, luteolin, vitamins C and E, selenium, propyl thiouracil, α -lipoic acid, pterostilbene and boron compounds have been used to treat as recognized antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer activities against Cr-VI-induced toxicities-related various diseases [14,15,2,7-11]. This review mainly demonstrates the mechanistic inhibitory activities of various drugs against Cr-VI-induced cytotoxicity, genotoxicity, neurotoxicity, immunotoxicity and carcinogenicity.

2. MODE OF ACTION OF CHROMIUM

The main probable cellular and molecular mechanisms of Cr-VI-induced disease developments demonstrate the intracellular Cr-VI metabolic process, Cr-VI-induced oxidative and nitrative stresses / damages, Cr-VI-induced DNA damage and mutagenesis, Cr-VI-induced inflammations, Cr-VI-induced different signaling pathways and genes / proteins expressions, and cancer formations [1-4,16-18] (Figure 1).

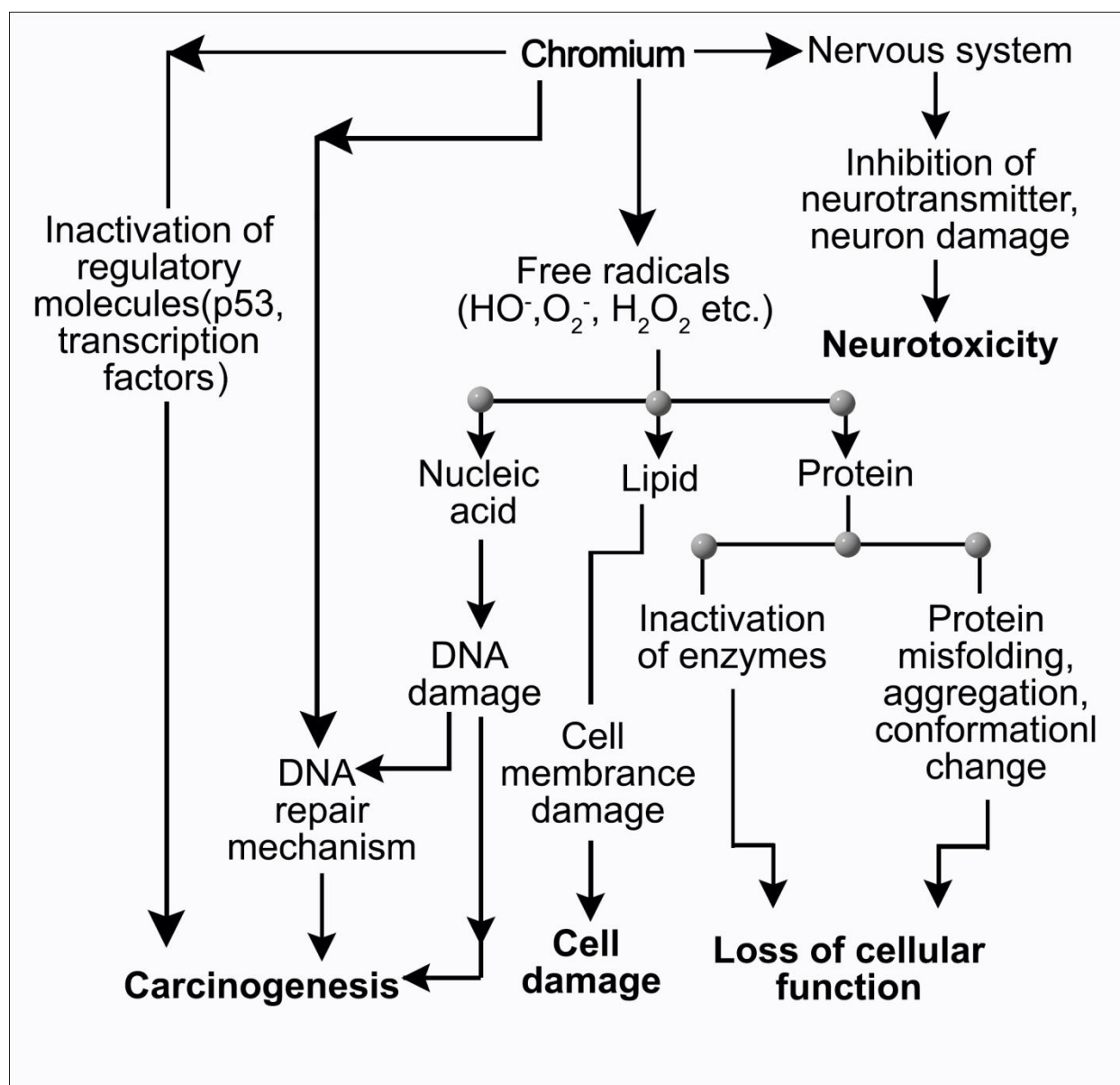


Figure 1. The effects of chromium exposure by several pathways.

2.1 Role of chromium in pathogenesis

It is reported that Cr-III is less toxic than Cr-VI for organisms as Cr-III is less soluble as well as poorly absorbed into the gastrointestinal (GI) cells. However, long-term exposure of Cr-III can cause cellular genotoxicity as Cr-III can enter into the nucleus to react with DNA for producing

cellular mutagenic or clastogenic affectivities. On the other hand, Cr-VI, due to its higher solubility and potent oxidizing characteristics, can enter into the cells through carrier-mediated transports across the plasma membranes following intracellular reductions to finally Cr-III making highly surrounding cytotoxicity to trigger cancer and other diseases by various complex mechanisms.

2.2 Permeability of chromium into the cell membrane

In the presence of oxygen (O_2), Cr-VI can form chromate (CrO_4^{2-}) in the basic state and dichromate ($Cr_2O_7^{2-}$) in the acidic state. The tetrahedral divalent anionic Cr-VI can pass through the plasma membrane passively via chloride phosphate and sulfate anionic carriers against the concentration gradients of the divalent anions⁽²⁻⁾. After absorption via the GI tract, Cr-VI is uptaken by the cells in various tissues and organs and is reduced to the maximal stable Cr-III intracellularly. The extracellular reductions of Cr-VI also are taken primarily in saliva, followed by gastric juices of the stomach and in the intestine by microbes. Generally, Cr-III, impermeable to the membrane, is retained in the area produced on the reduction of Cr-VI. However, a small quantity of extracellular Cr-III can enter the cells by phagocytosis and its toxic effect occurs in the mitochondria and nuclei.

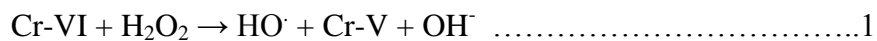
2.3 Chromium-VI metabolism by intracellular / extracellular reductions

Cr-VI can enter the cells as oxyanions following metabolic reductions to Cr-V, Cr-IV and finally trivalent Cr-III by intracellular enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidants, and its entry may be continued by lowering the intracellular Cr-VI concentration and leading constant entry of the extracellular Cr-VI into the cells to maintain the balance of Cr-VI. The main antioxidants, involved in Cr-VI reductions at pH 7.4, include glutathione (GSH), ascorbate (Asc), thioredoxin,

cysteine, lipoic acid, hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), fructose, ribose, mitochondrial electron transport complexes, microsomal cytochrome P450 / NADPH-cytochrome P450 reductase, NADP⁺ oxidoreductase, glutathione reductase (GR) and ferredoxin. As a transition metal, chromium may produce ROS through the indirect oxidization of flavin cofactors to semi-quinon radicals (UQ^{•-}) and interacts either with the oxygen under the actions of cytochrome P450 or with the peroxides under the actions of hemoglobin, myoglobin, cyclooxygenase, catalase and peroxidase, or transfers the oxens from the peroxides or oxygens to the metal ions. The reduced forms of Cr may also induce genomic DNA damage leading to inhibition of DNA replication. Upon GSH depletion, Cr-VI may induce over-expressions of cytotoxic heme-oxygenase 1 genes in dermal fibroblasts. In general, extracellular reductions of Cr-VI to Cr-III detoxify the molecules as Cr-III cannot cross the cell membranes, while intracellular reductions of Cr-VI to Cr-III may trap Cr-III within the cells to enable formations of stable Cr-III complexes with nucleic acids and proteins leading to DNA damages.

2.4 Chromium-VI-induced oxidative and nitrative stresses / damages

Redox-active metallic chromium may produce ROS through redox cycling. The reductions of Cr-VI involve the usages of H₂O₂ for generating HO[•] radicals through Fenton-like reactions. In the presence of Cr-VI, endogenous H₂O₂ and O₂^{•-} anions also lead to the generations of HO[•] radicals through Haber-Weiss reactions.





Superoxide anions, generated in mitochondria mostly, are also toxic as they react with nitric oxide (NO) for generating peroxynitrite (ONOO⁻), the potent reactive nitrogen species (RNS) for cellular damages. Several reports have implicated that Cr-VI-induced stresses may cause oxidative damages in lipids and proteins by several mechanisms. H₂O₂ and HO[·], generated by Cr-VI during Haber-Weiss and Fenton reactions, may attack membranous lipids to cause peroxidation and membrane injuries. The reduced intermediates of Cr-VI may bind to amino acids, peptides and proteins for forming protein carbonyls in the presence of H₂O₂. Cr-VI may cause both functional and structural alterations of the plasma membranes through alterations of the proportions of cholesterol and phospholipids by the depletion of GSH. The accumulations of Cr-III extracellularly and intracellularly may induce morphological alterations in the cell surfaces causing the disruptions of protein-lipid structures of the cell membranes leading to the loss of cellular integrities.

2.5 Cr-VI-induced DNA damage

Cr-VI acts as an inducer of DNA strand breaks and DNA-cross-links at pH 7.4 followed by its reduced Cr-III-form to produce genotoxicity as well as carcinogenicity. Eventually, Cr-III creates oxidative DNA strand breaks lesions, formation of Cr-DNA adducts, DNA-DNA inter-strand cross-links and DNA-protein cross-links succeeding inhibition of replication, mutagenesis and cell death.

2.6 Cr-VI-induced DNA damage with GSH

GSH acts as antioxidant as well as metal chelator for its thiol (-SH) group having high affinity to metals. Generally, GSH can reduce Cr-VI for forming Cr-V, Cr-IV and Cr-III stepwise

through donation of one electron at a time, while Cr-V and Cr-III can break DNA double strands and activate DNA damaging signal. Primarily, Cr-VI reacts with GSH for forming Cr-V-GSH complex and GSH-thiyl radical. Cr-V-GSH complex then reacts with H₂O₂ for producing HO· via Fenton-type reaction to lead to DNA damages.



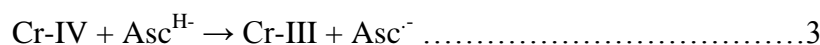
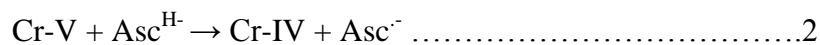
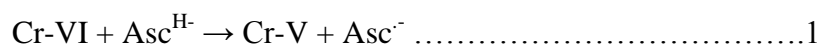
GS·, further, reacts with one molecule of GSH to generate di-sulfide radical. The di-sulfide radical, in turn, reacts with molecular oxygen to form O₂^{·-}.



The interactions between Cr compounds and DNA may cause strand-breaks along with the productions of HO· to cleave DNA, while guanine residues of DNA may react with HO· to produce radical adducts such as 8-hydroxy-deoxyguanosine (8-OH-dG), the marker for oxidative damage in disease-development. The glutathione-Cr-III-DNA cross-links may cause lesions in ternary Cr-DNA phosphotriester adducts owing to the coordination of Cr-III with DNA phosphates leading to mutagenecity during replication or may cause principal polymerase arresting lesions to block DNA replications. The cellular concentration of GSH is decreased owing to the reductions of Cr-VI and the inhibitory effect of Cr-VI on glutathione reductase, and the reduction-process may be accelerated in the presence of higher GSH synthesized via the γ -glutamyl cysteine pathway through the breakdown of the protein to get its precursor amino acid cysteine.

2.7 Cr-VI-induced DNA damage with ascorbate

Asc, the principal non-enzymatic reductant of Cr-VI, causes the damage of nuclear DNA. The reactions of Asc with Cr-VI produce ascorbate radical (Asc^{•-}), carbon dioxide anion radical (CO₂^{•-}) and other carbon-based radicals to facilitate the Cr-III-binding with uncleaved DNA.



The generated Asc^{•-} radicals may react with each other for forming dimmers. The dimmers further may react with H⁺ to form ascorbate and dehydroascorbate (DHA) which are recycled into the Cr-VI reductions.



Asc can enhance Cr-III complex by reduction of Cr-VI to increase DNA-protein crosslinks and cytotoxicity. In general, Asc and Cr-VI can form Cr-DNA adducts via the multi-coordinated bindings of Cr-III to DNA resulting in the resistances to dissociations by chelators and the crosslinking of DNA-Cr-DNA by checking the guanine specific region in DNA polymerases.

2.8 Cr-VI-induced DNA damage with antioxidant NADPH/NADH enzymes

The microsomal and cytosolic reductions of Cr-VI with quinone oxidoreductase are NADPH-dependent occurred through the donation of two electrons directly for forming Cr-III from Cr-VI without formations of Cr-V and Cr-IV -intermediates. In the presence of NADPH, cytosolic Cr-VI is reduced to Cr-V through the transfer of one electron for forming Cr-V-NADPH complex utilizing GR. Cr-V can cause DNA single-strand break and inhibit GR activity, while Cr-III can produce DNA-protein crosslinks. In the presence of NADPH, the cytochrome P-450 electron

transport chain may participate in the microsomal Cr-VI-reduction to form stable Cr-V-NADPH complexes such as glucose-6-phosphate (G6P)-Cr-V complex. Cr-VI with microsomes and NADPH may produce both the single and double -stranded DNA bindings through the interactions of DNA and enzymatically generated chromium intermediates forming polyribocytidylic acid, polyoxyriboadenylic acid, polyribouridylic acid and polyriboguanilyc acid. In the intracellular condition, both Cr-VI and Cr-V complexes may interact with guanine and adenine of DNA, leading to oxidative damage and transfigured to stable Cr-III-deoxyguanosine (dG)-DNA and Cr-III-deoxyadenosine (dA)-DNA adducts for producing bulky DNA implicated as less repairable and utilized to induce mutations.

2.9 Cr-VI-induced DNA damage with mitochondrial electron transport chain (ETC) enzymes

Mitochondrial ETC complexes I and IV may reduce Cr-VI to Cr-V and deplete higher rate of oxygen, while complex-I may donate two electrons to Cr-VI. Mitochondrial complex-II indicating succinate and glutamate serve as electron donors in the ETC complex, while succinate in the presence of ADP facilitates the reductions of Cr-VI and glutamate in the presence of respiratory-chain inhibitors facilitates the reductions of Cr-VI with NAD or FAD -linked substrates. Cr-VI may also inhibit the mitochondrial ETC complexes I and II through the reactions with thioredoxin (Trx) / peroxi-redoxin (Prx) systems for damaging mitochondrial proteins, while the excessive Trx / Prx oxidations and thio-redoxin reductase (TrxR) inhibitions may lead to the loss of mitochondrial membrane potential. The reductions of Trx with Cr-VI occur owing to the inhibition of TrxR to retain the Trx in the reduced state, and the activity of TrxR may not be reversed by the elimination of Cr-VI or the inclusion of electron donor NADPH

for TrxR. Following the above mechanisms, the endogenous antioxidant defense systems are damaged or suppressed after Cr-VI-exposure in both the time and dose -dependent manners.

2.10 Cr-VI-induced epigenetic alterations

The epigenetic, mutagenic and heritable modifications on cellular DNA for the exposure of Cr-VI include DNA methylations, micro-RNAs and histone modifications. The soluble sodium chromate induces aberrant DNA methylations of the gpt reporter genes correlated with the silencing of the gpt genes expressions and altered expressions of DNA repair and tumor suppressor genes. The methylations of the hMLH1 genes are correlated to the repressions of hMLH1 protein expressions and to the diminished protein expressions in the p16 tumor suppressor genes in the chromate-exposed lung cancer cells. Human lung carcinoma A549 cells exposed with Cr-VI exhibit enhancement of histone H3 Lys-9 dimethylations in the promoter zones of the hMLH1 genes related to the reduction in the mRNA expressions.

2.11 Chromium-induced immune-responses and inflammations

The higher dosages of Cr-VI-inhalation decrease the phagocytic activities of alveolar macrophages and the humoral immune responses, whereas its lower dosages increase these activities and responses. The proliferation of both the B and T cells and the generation of immunoglobulins by lipopolysaccharide-triggered B cells are restrained by the higher cobalt-chromium or their prosthesis-implant -exposure indicating the systemic immune-suppression. Supplemental dietary chromium on immune responses may enhance anti-ovalbumin-antibody and mitogen-stimulated blastogenic responses of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC), whereas higher doses of Cr-VI as well as Cr-III, immunized with bovine serum albumin, may suppress the antibody responses.

It is reported that the exposure of higher concentration of cobalt-chromium particles to J774A.1 cells secretes cytokines such as IL-1 α , TNF- α , IL-6 and IL-12, and cytokine mRNA expressions such as TNF- α , TGF- β , IL-1 α , IFN- α , IL-6 and M-CSF. The exposure of higher concentrated Cr-particles leads to acute inflammations and necrosis accompanying the chronic inflammatory responses with the significant enhancement of chemokine IL-8 homolog GRO- α , amphiregulin (EGFR ligand), cytokine IL-6 as well as matrix metalloprotease-9 resulting in cellular injuries, infiltration of macrophages, neutrophils and eosinophils, fibrosis and hyperplasia -associated cellular atypia.

2.12 Cr-VI-induced mutagenicity and tumor formation

Few studies have indicated that the exposure of Cr-VI compounds to hamster cells causes mutations at the hypoxanthine-guanine phosphoribosyltransferase (hgp_{rt}) locus and the eventual chromosomal aberrations. Another study has demonstrated that the exposure of Cr-VI to primary diploid human foreskin fibroblasts causes mutations to 6-thioguanine resistance. The degree of mutagenicity of the ternary complexes, occurred among Cr, DNA and Cr-VI reducers, depends on the basis of reducers, while binary adducts are usually weakly mutagenic. In presence of higher Asc levels, the cells exposed with Cr-VI, produce the most mutagenic Asc-Cr-III-DNA complexes. At lower 2 mM concentration, GSH produces the weakly mutagenic GSH-Cr-III-DNA adducts on pSP189 plasmids, while at higher concentration (upto 5 mM), GSH generates 4-times higher mutagenic GSH-Cr-III-DNA adducts by non oxidative mechanisms. Several investigators have reported that intra-tracheal instillations of potassium dichromate in transgenic mice have induced the time and dose -dependent enhancements of mutations at dosages above 3 mg/kg, while the depletions of tissue GSH with buthionine sulfoximine prior to Cr-III exposure have led to the decline in the mutations.

Several reports have indicated that the chronic exposures of slightly soluble to highly insoluble chromate particles are capable to produce higher toxicity leading to neoplastic transformation and tumor formation characterized by the aberrant p16^{INK4A} methylations, low p53 mutation rates, loss of MLH1 expressions, enhanced microsatellite instability (MSI), and chromosomal aberrations / damages resulting in aneuploidy, triploidy and tetraploidy.

2.13 Cr-VI-induced gene expression

Several studies have exhibited that the Cr-induced regulation of gene expression is dependent on the dosages of Cr-compounds, duration of exposure and the structures of cellular DNA and proteins. The acute, short-term exposures (2-3 h) to high Cr-VI dosages cause the different modes and mechanisms of clonogenic cell deaths compared to chronic exposures (12-48 h) to lower dosages (1-10 μ M). Few investigators have performed on 300 μ M Cr-VI-induced gene regulation in human alveolar epithelial carcinoma A549 cells involving redox stress mechanisms, protein synthesis, cell cycle, energy metabolism and carcinogenesis. In this study, the Src-related genes such as HYL tyrosine kinases and cytoplasmic tyrosine kinase (Cy1) and, as well as MAPKAP kinases, Jun-B and the Raf oncogenes have been up-regulated. The cell cycle and cell growth related genes such as Cdc42 interacting protein 4 (CIP4), proliferation related genes such as retinoblastoma binding protein 2 (RBP2), Cdk5 activator isoform p39 and INK 4p19 genes have been up-regulated by the exposure of Cr-VI. The down-regulated cell growth and cell cycle associated genes include p34Cdc2, Cdc47, Cdc25b and casein kinase II alpha sub-unit by the exposure of Cr-VI. Few researchers have shown that the exposures of 10 μ M Cr-VI to A549 cells for 1 and 4 h have decreased significantly the expressions of the human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (Her 2 / ErbB2) and the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), while the exposures of Cr-VI for 24 h have up-regulated the expressions of ErbB2 receptor and the

expression of EGFR receptor to the basal level indicating the transient and selective regulation of Cr-VI for gene expressions. Other investigators have demonstrated that the exposures of 10 μM Cr-VI for 4 h to transformed human bronchial epithelial cells (BEAS-2B) and primary smooth muscle cells down-regulates the expression of cyclin k, c-myc, Cyp1b1, PP1A MAPKNPK-2, FGFR-1, Akt1 and HSP90. Moreover, the report in *in vivo* study has demonstrated the involvement of cell cycle regulatory gene expressions in human lung cancer exposed with chromate implicating the methylation of the cell cycle inhibitor gene p16 with the decline in p16 protein expression. Furthermore, it is also reported that the exposure of Cr-VI (9 μM) can enhance the gene expression of p21, p15 and GADD45 and diminish the gene expression of cyclin A, pro-survival Bcl-2, Bcl-w and Bcl-XL. Other reports have indicated that the silent information regulator 1 (Sirt-1) used to regulate the gene expression, oxidative stress response and energy metabolism, and participate in the anti-inflammatory and anti-apoptotic mechanisms, and peroxisome proliferation-activated receptor-g co-activator 1 α (Pgc-1 α) used to improve ROS defense system, fatty acid metabolism and regulate mitochondrial biogenesis and oxidative phosphorylation through interactions with particular transcription factors by the induction of SOD and GPx expressions in cells, are deactivated by the exposure of Cr-VI resulting in disorder of mitochondrial dynamics and oxidative stress. On the other hand, nuclear erythroid 2-related factor-2 (Nrf-2) used to induce the expressions of glutathione and thioredoxin antioxidant components, and regulate the expressions of NADPH dehydrogenase quinone-1 (NQO1) for adapting cellular stress, and hemeoxygenase-1 (HO-1) used to stimulate cell proliferation, is deactivated with the exposure to Cr-VI leading to oxidative DNA damage and carcinogenesis.

2.14 Cr-VI-induced survival signaling pathways

Few researchers have demonstrated that the exposure of Cr-VI exceeding 10 μM to human airway epithelial cells may activate MAPKs, p38 MAPK and extracellular signal regulated kinase (ERK) including ROS production. Few other researchers have indicated that the exposure of Cr-VI (50 μM) to mouse embryonic stem cells may activate JNK $\frac{1}{2}$, ERK $\frac{1}{2}$ and p38, whereas at non-toxic concentration, Cr-VI in A549 cells may activate selectively c-Jun N-terminal kinase (JNK) and MAPK. Another study have demonstrated that the exposure of Cr-VI (6 μM) to human lung fibroblasts may activate ERK which is not involved as a mediator of Cr-VI-induced cytotoxicity through non-involvement of MAPK. A study has indicated that the exposure of Cr-VI to DU-145 human prostate carcinoma cells may stimulate VEGF secretion and expression for angiogenesis, while Cr-VI exposure may express signal transducer and activator of transcription-1 (STAT-1) as the rate limiting gene regulatory factor to suppress both the VEGF-A and SP-1 transcriptions. Several studies have demonstrated that signal transducers Src family of kinases such as Src, Fyn and Lck are involved in the progression of malignant cancer, while Cr-VI exposed to BEAS-2B cells may activate selectively Fyn and initiate interferon-like signaling mechanism resulting in STAT-1-dependent interferon stimulated response element (ISRE) gene activation to transactivate interferon regulatory factor 7 (IRF 7). Other study has indicated that *in vivo* chromate exposure in mice may activate serine / threonine kinase Akt (phosphorylated at ser-473) to produce lung airways immunoreactives for pulmonary fibrosis and cancer. Further study has demonstrated that the inhibition of dysregulated protein tyrosine phosphatase (PTP) activity in human lung fibroblasts with the exposure of Cr-VI may lead to the increased clonogenic survival, diminished expression of cell cycle inhibitory genes, enhanced expression of cell cycle promoting genes and the enhancement in forward mutations at the HPRT locus through the Ras / c-Raf -dependent and the MEK / ERK -independent signaling pathways. Few

investigators have also indicated that the exposure of Cr-VI may promote tumorigenesis through the ROS-mediated Wnt/ β -catenin signaling pathway in a colitis-associated colorectal cancer mouse model.

2.15 Cr-VI-induced DNA-lesions repair and side effects

Deficiencies in lesion-specific DNA repair systems exposed by chromium may be associated with the onset and the progression of cancer owing to the enhanced frequency of mutations and subsequent activations of oncogenes and inactivations of tumor suppressor genes [1,19].

It is reported that the Cr-VI-induced oxidative DNA damage may activate base excision repair (BER) and the apurinic / apyrimidinic (AP) endonuclease repair system to excise damaged oxidized / alkylated bases through the usages of specific 8-oxo-guanine DNA glycosylase 1 (OGG1) resulting temporary formation of AP sites, while AP endonucleases (APE1) generate SSBs (5'-deoxyribosephosphate) recognized by DNA polymerase β (Pol β) and the X-ray cross-complementing group 1 (XRCC1)-DNA ligase III- α (XRCC1-LigIII) complex to remove the 5'-deoxyribosephosphate and correct deoxyribonucleotide, and seal the remaining nick in the DNA backbone. Several studies have demonstrated that the exposure of A549 cells to Cr-VI (>25 μ M), involved in ROS production and 8-oxo-2-deoxyguanosine formation, may inhibit the OGG1 expression at the mRNA and protein levels, resulting in enhanced susceptibility to mutations of the cells. The somatic mutations and the loss of heterozygosity in OGG1, the error-prone repair by BER and the dysfunction of BER/APE axis, and the deficiency of XRCC1 protein to induce enhancement of chromatid exchanges (isochromatid lesions), all include Cr-VI-induced cancers.

Other study has elucidated that the nucleotide excision repair (NER), the major repair mechanism for Cr-DNA adducts, excises the fragment of the damaged strand lesion following

repair synthesis to utilize the intact strand as a template. In mutant CHO cells, NER deficiency due to the loss of xeroderma pigmentosum complementation groups D or F may cause impaired removal of Cr-DNA adducts and enhanced sensitivity to Cr-VI lethality. The removal of DNA lesions by NER may be error susceptible and mutagenic owing to the error-prone ligation and / or repair synthesis.

Several other studies have indicated that the loss or defects of the mismatch repair (MMR) system, utilized to correct single base mispairs and deletion / insertion errors during DNA replication homologous recombination (HR), methylation, base oxidation and other biological processes, are associated with high spontaneous mutagenesis, genome-wide instability, predisposition to few types of cancer, resistance to chemotherapeutic components and abnormalities in meiosis and mammalian systems owing to the loss of MLH1 expression and high incidence of MSI for chromate-exposed cancers. Few investigators have demonstrated that the ternary DNA adducts are processed aberrantly by DNA-MMR (MSH2 and MLH1 proteins) to form DNA double-strand breaks (DSBs) evaluated by the tumor suppressor p53 binding protein 1 (53BP1) foci formation implicating genotoxicity. Several researchers have indicated that in the presence of Asc in cells exposed with Cr-VI may inactivate p53 and its Ser15 phosphorylation with the inactivation of ataxia-telangiectasia mutated (ATM) / ataxia-telangiectasia and Rad3-related (ATR) kinase in the S-phase of the cell cycle resulting in toxicity to DNA-protein cross-links (DPCs).

2.16 Cr-VI-induced neurotoxicity

Several studies have demonstrated that the nervous system exposed to chromium have shown the neurotransmitter-inhibition and neuronal cells -damages resulting in neurotoxicity [20-22]. It

is reported that the chromium-exposure may inhibit the acetylcholinesterase (AChE) activity leading to cholinergic and dopaminergic neuronal cells -damages, astrogliosis and oligodendroglioma. Few researchers have exhibited that the exposure of chromium may up-regulate the stress response genes such as Nqo1, Nrf2, Ucp2 and HO-1, and the apoptotic genes such as p53, p51, Bax and caspases 9 and 3. Few other studies have indicated the enhanced levels of metallothionein isoform-1(MT1) and JAK-STAT genes (JAK-1 and STAT-3) induced neuro-inflammation after chromium exposure. Several investigators have also demonstrated that the exposure of chromium may up-regulate early neurogenesis related genes such as elavl3, sox19b, gap43, α -tubulin, neurod-1 and neurogenin-1 with low levels of DNA methylation and down-regulate dnmt-1 and dnmt-3 genes.

3. APPLICATIONS OF THERAPEUTIC MOLECULES / CARGOS ON CHROMIUM-EXPOSED CELLS

The reactive nitrogen and oxygen species are neutralized by the non-enzymatic antioxidants and antioxidant enzymes through removal of free radicals, while antioxidants quench particularly free radicals, chelate redox metals and regenerate other antioxidants. The main effective enzymatic antioxidants include superoxide dismutase (SOD), catalase (CAT) and glutathione peroxidase (GPx), while non-enzymatic antioxidants include vitamins C and E, flavonoids, carotenoids, thiols (thioredoxin, glutathione and lipoic acid), melatonin and other compounds [2,5-11,14,15,18,23-27].

It is reported that the SOD can catalyze the dismutation of O_2^- to O_2 and shorter reactive H_2O_2 as effective anti-tumor antioxidant activity, while CAT can convert H_2O_2 to water (H_2O) and oxygen (O_2). On the other hand, GPx can react with GSH and H_2O_2 to produce GSSG and H_2O

or alcohol with simultaneous GSH production to protect against oxidative stress-induced cellular damage.

Several reports have revealed that vitamin C (ascorbic acid) in the form of AscH^\cdot can react with radicals to produce tricarbonyl ascorbate free radical (AscH^\cdot) leading to the formation of poorly reactive terminal semidehydroascorbate radical (Asc^\cdot) used to protect cell death as antioxidant activity, while vitamin E (α -tocopherol) can protect lipid peroxidation through conversion of α -tocopherol to α -tocopherol radical by the donation of labile hydrogen to lipid or lipid peroxy radical and recycling to reduced α -tocopherol by ascorbic acid used to inhibit free radical formation and activate endonucleases as antioxidant activity. Several reports have also demonstrated that the vitamins C / E can reduce the incidence of cancer through triggering apoptosis of cancer cells.

Few reports have elucidated that the reduced glutathione (GSH) have the antioxidant capability to maintain the redox state of the protein sulphhydryls (protein-SH) for DNA repair and expression, while under oxidative environment, protein sulphhydryls are converted to sulphenic acids (protein-SOH) and thiyl radicals with two electron oxidation and one electron oxidation respectively. These partial oxidized yields react with GSH to form S-glutathiolated protein (protein-SSG), which is reduced again to GSH and restored to protein-SH by the glutathione cycle via glutathione reductase and small glutaredoxin and thioredoxin proteins. The other thiol antioxidants such as lipoic acid and its reduced form -dihydrolipoic acid have the capability to quench ROS, chelate redox metals, regenerate endo and exo -genous antioxidants and repair oxidized proteins against HIV infection, diabetes mellitus, ischemia-reperfusion injury and cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases.

Several reports have exhibited that carotenoids (β -carotene) may act as antioxidant for its conjugated double-bonded structure used to delocalize unpaired electrons through quenching singlet oxygen with free radicals such as $O_2^{\cdot-}$, $\cdot OH$ and peroxy radicals ($ROO\cdot$), and pro-oxidant against apoptotic cancerous cell death, atherosclerosis and age-related muscular degeneration.

Few reports have demonstrated that selenium, associated with its presence in the thioredoxin reductase and GPx, may protect DNA and other cellular components from oxidative damages and regulate oxygen metabolism, cell division, detoxification, induction of apoptosis in cancerous cells and activation of oncogenes.

Several reports have revealed that flavonoidal phenolic antioxidants (PhOH) such as quercetin and luteolin can interfere with the oxidation of lipid and other molecules through the donation of hydrogen atom to radicals ($ROO\cdot + PhOH \rightarrow ROOH + PhO\cdot$), while the 5-hydroxy group of ring-A and the hydroxyl groups of ring-B may chelate redox-active metals preventing catalytic breakdown of H_2O_2 (Fenton reaction). At higher concentration, they also may behave as pro-oxidants utilized for the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer and other pathological disorders. Several investigators have reported that flavonoids like quercetin and luteolin have the capability to inhibit DNA topoisomerase II catalytic activity for the induction of DNA and chromosome damage, cell cycle arrest and caspase-3-induced apoptosis of cancer cells. Few researchers have also demonstrated that quercetin and luteolin are able to inhibit Cr-VI-induced malignant cell transformation by targeting miR-21-PDCD4 signaling or multiple signaling pathways.

It has been reported that the hydrophobic polyphenol curcumin having chelating and antioxidant characteristics owing to its enol-form for chelating positively charged metals and the

presence of phenolic β -di-ketone and the methyl groups for free-radical scavenging have been utilized to chelate chromium, scavenge ROS including $O_2^{\cdot-}$, HO^{\cdot} , ROO^{\cdot} , nitrogen dioxide radicals (NO_2^{\cdot}), N, N-dimethyl-p-phenylenediamine dihydrochloride radical ($DMPD^{\cdot+}$), 1,1-diphenyl-2-picryl-hydrazyl free radical ($DPPH^{\cdot}$) and 2,2'-azinobis (3-ethylbenzthiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) ($ABTS^{\cdot+}$), and protect cells from oxidative stress by inducing Nrf2/keap1/ARE pathway. Few other investigators have reported that curcumin may protect mitochondrial function from Cr-VI-induced oxidative renal damage in rats.

It is reported that melatonin as antioxidant can scavenge ROS (1O_2 , ROO^{\cdot} , hypochlorous acid ($HOCl$), HO^{\cdot} , H_2O_2 , $O_2^{\cdot-}$) and carbon centered free radicals, and up-regulate the expressions of antioxidant enzymes through its membrane receptors (MT1 and MT2) and nuclear receptor activation by protecting cell membrane against lipophilic and hydrophilic oxy-radicals, attenuating the chain reacting lipid peroxidation, and inhibiting the gene expression of lipoxygenase and protein oxidation caused by the exposure of Cr-VI. It is also reported that melatonin and its metabolite (AMK) can up-regulate the gene expressions of GPx, SOD, CAT, and GR, reduce the expressions of nitric oxide synthases (iNOS and mtNOS) through the decrement of NO and $ONOO^-$ and chelate the transition chromium forming di, tri and tetradentate ligands for detoxification. Few investigators have demonstrated that melatonin can up-regulate antioxidant enzymes to maintain cellular antioxidant defense through enhancing Sirt-1/Pgc-1 α signaling and translocating Nrf-2 transcription factor from cytosol to nucleus to increase gene expressions of phase-2 anti-oxidative enzymes such as heme oxygenase-1 (HO-1), c-glutamyl cysteine synthetase (c-GCS) and NADPH: quinone dehydrogenase-1 (NQO1), suppress the expressions of pro-inflammatory NF-kB/COX-2 signaling, and reduce the formation of Cr-III-DNA adduct and DNA single strand break up caused by the Cr-VI exposure. Several

researchers have elucidated that melatonin can increase the activity of complexes -I and IV and ATP production by enhancing the activity of mitochondrial electron transport chain (ETC) and shielding the apoptotic signaling cascade through restriction of the mitochondrial membrane permeability pores to enhance mitochondrial membrane potential caused by Cr-VI-induced mitochondrial damages.

Few reports have exhibited that propyl thiouracil are capable to reduce Cr-VI promoted oxidative stress with the enhancement of toxic malondialdehyde, protein carbonyl and protein oxidation products in adult mice. Few other reports have shown that the boron compounds (boric acid and borax) are capable to bind the catalytic site of the 26S-proteasome to block its activity used to protect against Cr-VI-induced oxidative stress -promoted lipidemia, neurotoxicity and tumor. Few investigators have also reported that pterostilbene as an anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory agent is able to protect cells against free radical and endoplasmic reticulum stresses through scavenging free radical and inhibit pro-inflammatory cytokine production through regulation of the p38MAPK/MK2 signaling and IL-1 β -induced NLRP-3-inflammasome activation and apoptosis against Cr-VI-induced dermatitis.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The exposure of Cr-VI causes free radical stress, Cr-DNA adducts, damage of biological molecules such as proteins, enzymes, nucleic acids, DNA, lipids, and apoptosis, mutagenesis and alteration of various survival signaling pathways leading to immune responses, genotoxicity, neurotoxicity and carcinogenesis, while its chronic exposure may lead to damages of several organs such as liver, kidney, brain and lungs causing development of various diseases in the body. The antioxidant characteristics of drugs (at lower concentration) have been utilized to

protect cells from free radical stress-induced damages, apoptosis or various signaling pathways mainly through toxic radical scavenging and metal-chelating, while the pro-oxidant features of drugs (at higher concentration including duration of exposure) have been used to induce apoptotic death of cancer cells or modulating signaling pathways induced by Cr-VI exposure. However, detailed studies are required for long-term exposure of Cr-VI-induced cytotoxicity, genotoxicity, chelation, metabolism, immunotoxicity and carcinogenicity including its levels in cells, tissues or organs with the evaluation of drug-toxicity *in vivo*. In this regard, vesicular / nanoparticulated drugs / cargos for *in vivo* application may be another approach to reduce drug toxicity, insolubility and drug-resistance, and to target formulated low quantity of drugs to specific site/s of interest maximally to get higher biological efficiency with the evaluation of administrative routes, bio-distribution, pharmacokinetics and elimination of drugs against chromium exposure before going to clinics [28-33].

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