



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE EXPRESSION OF CHICKEN ANEMIA VIRUS VP3 GENE AND
INDUCTION OF APOPTOSIS IN TRANSFORMED AND TUMOR
CELLS**

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By

MOHAMED GHRICI

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

October 2001



To my father GHRICI MOHAMED and my mother KHIDER YAMINA



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science.

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Chairman : Associate Professor Dr Mohd Azmi Mohd Lila, Ph.D.

Faculty : Veterinary Medicine

The pathogenicity of chicken anemia virus (CAV), as shown in previous studies, is the function of apoptotic mechanism as observed in chicken thymocytes and transformed chicken-lymphoblastoid T cells. Thus the present study aimed to investigate the gene and its gene product responsible for apoptosis in as such that leads to the destruction of affected cells. It is known that apoptosis process is an important natural physiological mechanism that induces killing of cancer cells. Therefore, in theory, the gene or its gene product that is responsible for the apoptotic mechanism could be exploited especially in cancer therapy. In this study, a complete open reading frame (ORF) encoding VP3 protein was obtained from the DNA extracted from archival paraffin-embedded tissues and cloned into a plasmid vector. The sequencing of the full length of the ORF encoding VP3 protein showed that it was 363 base pairs long, which is similar in size to that of the reference CAV Cux-1 strain. Comparison of the nucleotide sequences of this VP3 gene with that of the CAV Cux-1 strain exhibited 98% sequence homology indicating that these two viruses are closely related. The functional characteristics of VP3 gene were further investigated by using an eukaryotic expression system, plasmid pcDNA 3.1/Zeo+.



The purified recombinant pcDNA-VP3 plasmid was used to transfect mammalian cells and cancer cells via electroporation. The induction of apoptosis, upon expression of VP3 gene, was studied by identifying and detecting morphological and biochemical changes due to apoptosis. Upon electron microscopic examination, typical apoptotic features were observed, which includes nuclear margination and formation of apoptotic bodies, as early as two days after transfection. Morphological changes developed due to apoptosis were obvious which were later confirmed by means of the apoptotic biochemical staining and DNA fragmentation assay. The differential activities of VP3 were further investigated by the use of the immunofluorescence technique. The VP3 protein was expressed and detected only in the cytoplasm of normal cells. In contrast, the expression of VP3 protein was localized particularly in the nucleus of the transformed cell lines (Vero and rat embryo fibroblast cells) and human derived breast cancer cells (MCF-7 and MDA-MB 231). This differential cellular localization of VP3 protein in normal versus tumorigenic and transformed cells was the reason of VP3 specifically inducing apoptosis in transformed and cancerous cells but not in normal cells. The effects of VP3 protein expression in these three types of cells were also confirmed upon examination by confocal microscopy analysis with cells stained in propidium iodide and acridine orange stains. In conclusion, VP3 protein expression alone was able to induce apoptosis in transformed cells and in human derived cancer cells but had no effect on normal cells. The substantial evidences indicated that the DNA construct containing the VP3 gene under the control of human cytomegalovirus (hCMV) promoter, alias in the form of a DNA vaccine is the new potential candidate for anti-cancer therapy.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan ijazah Master Sains

**EKSPRESI GEN VP3 VIRUS ANEMIA AYAM YANG MENGARUH
APOPTOSIS DALAM SEL-SEL YANG TERUBAH DAN SEL-SEL KANSER**

Oleh

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Sebagaimana yang telah ditunjukkan pada kajian terdahulu, permulaan pengembangan penyakit Virus Anemia Ayam (CAV) yang mempunyai fungsi mekanisma apoptotik yang terdapat dalam timosit-timosit ayam dan limphoblastoid sel-sel T ayam yang terubah. Kajian ini bermatlamat untuk menyiasat gen dan hasil keluaran gen yang bertanggung-jawab terhadap apoptosis seperti meningkatnya kerosakkan kepada sel-sel yang terjangkit. Sebagaimana yang diketahui, proses apoptosis adalah mekanisma fisiologikal semulajadi yang penting dalam mengaruh pembunuhan sel-sel kanser. Oleh itu secara teori, gen atau hasilan gen yang bertindakbalas bagi mekanisma apoptosis boleh dipergunakan terutamanya dalam pengubatan kanser. Dalam kajian ini, rangka bacaan terbuka yang lengkap (ORF) yang mengekod protin VP3 telah diperolehi daripada DNA yang telah diekstrak dari tisu-tisu ditanam parafin dan diklonkan ke dalam vektor plasmid. Pada ketika pengklonan dan penurutan keseluruhan jarak gen ia telah menunjukkan rangka bacaan terbuka yang lengkap itu mengandungi 363 nukleotid dan mempunyai saiz yang sama dengan strain rujukan Cux-1 CAV. Gen yang didapati adalah 98 % homologus (sama siri) kepada strain rujukkan dan juga tinggi pengekaln dengan gen

VP3 dari lain-lain strain CAV. Ciri-ciri fungsi gen VP3 juga disiasat dengan menggunakan sistem expressi eukaryotik, pcDNA 3.1/ Zeo + plasmid. Rekombinan plasmid pcDNA-VP3 yang telah dituliskan telah digunakan terhadap sel mamalia transfeksi dan sel kanser melalui electroporasis. Apoptosis yang diaruhkan pada ketika expressi gen VP3 telah dikaji dengan mengenalpasti dan mengesan secara morfologi dan perubahan biokima yang disebabkan oleh apoptosis. Pada masa pemeriksaan mikroskop elektron transmisi, gambaran apoptosis yang tipikal telah dilihat termasuk pinggiran nuklear dan pembentukan badan-badan apoptotik seawal-awal hari ke 2 selepas transfeksi. Perubahan morfologi terhasil disebabkan apoptosis kemudian ditentukan dengan pewarnaan secara biokimia apoptotik dan asai pemotongan DNA. Aktiviti-aktiviti VP3 yang berbeza kemudiannya diselidik dengan menggunakan teknik immunofluoresen. Menarik sekali, dalam sel-sel normal, protin VP3 yang dikesan hanya bersetempat dalam sitoplasm dan tidak dalam lain-lain bahagian sel-sel transfeksi. Sebaliknya, pada ketika transfeksi, protein VP3 terdapat dalam nukleusnya (Vero dan Fibroblas embrio tikus) dan sel-sel kanser payudara manusia. Kesan-kesan ekspresi protin VP3 dalam 3 jenis sel-sel ini juga telah di kenalpasti menerusi pemeriksaan analisa mikroskop konfokal dengan sel-sel yang diwarnakan menerusi propidium iodida dan acridine oren. Kesimpulannya, expressi protin VP3 sahaja mampu untuk mengaruh apoptosis dalam sel-sel yang transfeksi dan sel payudara manusia tetapi tidak berkesan ke-atas sel-sel normal. Bukti-bukti yang kuat menunjukkan. DNA yang dibentuk mengandungi gen VP3 dibawah kawalan pemaju sitomegalovirus manusia (hCMV) dan dalam bentuk sebagai vaksin DNA adalah mempunyai potensi baru dalam pengubatan anti-kanser.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL	viii
DECLARATION	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Physico-Chemical Characteristics of CAV	5
2.2 Morphological Characteristics of CAV	5
2.3 Genome Organisation of CAV	6
2.3.1 Structure of the Genome	6
2.3.2 Promoter and Enhancer	6
2.3.3 Transcription of the CAV Genome	8
2.4 CAV Proteins	12
2.4.1 VP1 Protein	13
2.4.2 VP2 Protein	15
2.4.3 VP3 Protein	16
2.5 Virus Growth and Replication	17
2.6 Immunosuppression	18
2.7 How CAV Induce Apoptosis	19
2.8 Mechanisms of Cell Death	21
2.9 Molecular Mechanisms of Apoptosis	22
2.10 Virus and Apoptosis	23
2.11 Characterization of Apoptotic Pathway	25
2.12 Understanding Apoptosis by the use of VP3 Gene	25
2.13 Anti-Tumor Therapies	26
3 CLONING AND SEQUENCING OF CAV VP3 GENE	
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 Materials and Methods	30
3.2.1 Total DNA Extraction From Paraffin-Embedded Tissues	30
3.2.2 Agarose Gel Electrophoresis	31
3.2.3 Primers for Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	32
3.2.4 Amplification of the Big CAV DNA Fragment	32
3.2.5 Amplification of Small CAV DNA Fragment	33
3.2.6 Amplification of VP3 Gene	34
3.2.7 Direct Purification of DNA	34
3.2.8 Cloning of PCR Product into a Plasmid Vector	35
3.2.9 Bacterial Cell Transformation	37



3.2.10	Miniprep Plasmid Extraction	37
3.2.11	Restriction Enzyme Analysis	39
3.2.12	Sequencing of the VP3 Gene	39
3.2.13	Computer Analysis	39
3.3	Results	40
3.3.1	DNA Preparations Extracted from Paraffin-Embedded Tissues	40
3.3.2	<i>In vitro</i> Amplification of CAV VP3 Gene by the Polymerase Chain Reaction	40
3.3.3	Cloning of the VP3 Gene	41
3.3.4	The DNA Sequence of VP3 Gene	46
3.4	Discussion	48
4	THE CLONING OF VP3 GENE INTO EUKARYOTIC EXPRESSION VECTOR	
4.1	Introduction	56
4.2	Materials and Methods	57
4.2.1	Plasmid Vector	57
4.2.2	Double Restriction Digestion of pcDNA 3.1/Zeo + with <i>Xba</i> I and <i>Hind</i> III	58
4.2.3	Restriction Digestion of VP3	60
4.2.4	Plasmid-VP3 DNA Ligation	62
4.2.5	Screening of Recombinant Transformants	63
4.2.6	Large Scale Preparation and Purification of pcDNA-VP3	65
4.3	Results	66
4.3.1	Recombinant pcDNA-VP3 Plasmid Construct	66
4.3.2	Selection of Positive Recombinants by Restriction Enzyme Analysis	67
4.4	Discussion	69
5	THE EXPRESSION OF VP3 GENE IN AN ESTABLISHED-TRANSFORMED CELL LINE	
5.1	Introduction	73
5.2	Materials and Methods	75
5.2.1	General Procedures	75
5.2.2	Cell Culture	75
5.2.3	Tolerance of Cell Lines to Zeocin	76
5.2.4	Transformation of Cells by Electroporation	77
5.2.5	Selection of Transformants	78
5.2.6	Electron Microscopic Analysis of Transfected Cells	79
5.2.7	Genomic DNA Isolation	80
5.2.8	Detection of Genomic DNA Fragmentation	81
5.3	Results	84
5.3.1	Optimum Concentration of Zeocin in Cell Culture	84



5.3.2	<i>In Vitro</i> VP3 Gene Expression	88
5.3.3	Morphological Changes Induced by VP3 gene Expression	88
5.3.4	DNA Fragmentation Induced by VP3 Expression	91
5.4	Discussion	94
6	<i>IN-VITRO</i> EXPRESSION OF VP3 PROTEIN IN PRIMARY CELL CULTURE AND HUMAN DERIVED CANCER CELLS	
6.1	Introduction	104
6.2	Materials and Methods	105
6.2.1	Adherent Continuous Cell Lines	105
6.2.2	Human Derived Cancer Cell Lines: MCF-7 and MDA-MB 231	106
6.2.3	Preparation of Primary Cell Culture: Chicken Embryo Fibroblast (CEF)	106
6.2.4	Plasmids and Cloning Vector used for Calcium Phosphate Transfection	107
6.2.5	Plasmid Purification and Quantification	108
6.2.6	DNA Transfection by Calcium Phosphate	109
6.2.7	Immunofluorescence Staining of Transformed Cells	111
6.2.8	Confocal Microscopy of the Transfected Cells	111
6.3	Results	
6.3.1	DNA Transfection	112
6.3.2	Analysis of VP3 Gene Expression by Indirect Immunofluorescence Staining	113
6.3.3	Confocal Microscopy Analysis of Transfected Cells	117
6.4	Discussion	124
7	GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	136
	REFERENCES	142
	APPENDICES	158
	BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR	161



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	A scheme of the CAV life cycle. The closed arrows represent the transcription steps of the CAV genome showing the CAV transcript with a cap site (*) and the poly(A) tail (A) _n followed by the synthesis of CAV proteins. The open arrows represent the steps for the production of encapsidated CAV ssDNA. (Source: Noteborn <i>et al.</i> , 1998)	9
2.2	Genomic organization of the chicken anemia virus (CAV). Diagrammatic representation of the CAV genome illustrating the three major overlapping open reading frames (ORFs) for VP1, VP2 and VP3 and the non-coding regulatory region (promoter/enhancer). (Source: Phenix <i>et al.</i> , 1994)	11
3.1	Physical map of the pCR-Blunt vector. Note the multicloning site for the insertion of VP3 gene. (Source: Invitrogen, USA).	35
3.2	Isolation of total DNA from paraffin-embedded tissue. DNA was extracted from paraffin-embedded tissues of suspected CAV-infected chickens and electrophoresed into agarose/ethidium bromide stained gel and photographed under UV light. Lane 1: 1Kb DNA marker; Lane 2: no DNA extraction from paraffin-embedded liver; Lane 3: total DNA sample extracted from paraffin-embedded thymus.	41
3.3	Agarose gel electrophoresis of CAV specific DNA fragments amplified by PCR. The amplified products were sized by ethidium bromide agarose gel electrophoresis, showing the big fragment (1.5Kb) (Lane 1) and the small fragment (0.8 Kb) (Lane 3). Lanes 2 and 4: negative control containing no template. Lane 6: 100 bp DNA ladder.	42
3.4	PCR amplification of VP3 gene from the big fragment of CAV DNA. Amplification product was electrophoresed on 1% agarose gel. Stained with ethidium bromide and photographed under UV light. Lane 1: 100 bp DNA marker; Lane 2: specific amplification of VP3 gene at 0.4 Kb; Lane 3: big fragment used as template for the amplification of VP3 gene; Lane 4: negative control containing no template.	43
3.5	Restriction endonuclease (<i>EcoRI</i>) analysis of pCR-Blunt-VP3. The recombinant plasmid DNAs were separated on 1% agarose gel after <i>EcoRI</i> digestion of the pCR-Blunt-VP3 which released the VP3 fragment (Lane 3 and 4). Lane 1: 1 Kb DNA marker.	44

3.6	The DNA sequence of VP3 (UPM/ma.1) as compared to the established CAV strain Cux-1.	46
3.7	The complete nucleotide sequence of VP3 gene and its deduced amino acid sequence.	47
4.1	Physical map of pcDNA 3.1-Zeo+ for cloning of VP3 gene. Note that the multicloning site for the insertion of the VP3 DNA fragment. (Source: Invitrogen, USA).	58
4.2	Restriction endonuclease analysis of the recombinant plasmid pcDNA-VP3. The pcDNA-VP3 was digested with <i>XbaI</i> and <i>Hind III</i> and electrophoresed in 1% agarose-ethidiumbromide stained gel. Lane 1: 1Kb DNA marker; Lane 2: undigested pcDNA-VP3; Lane 3,4 and 5: Restriction pattern of the pcDNA-VP3 cleaved with <i>XbaI</i> and <i>Hind III</i> releasing the VP3 from the recombinant plasmid.	67
5.1	Schematic diagram of the ApoAlert LM PCR assay. The diagram shows the different steps of the ApoAlert LM-PCR assay from the ligation of dephosphorylated adaptors to the ends of DNA break generated during apoptosis, followed by PCR amplification of these DNA fragments. The resulting nucleosomal ladder can be visualized on an agarose /ethidium bromide gel. (Source: CLONTECH, USA).	81
5.2	Sensitivity of Vero cell lines to Zeocin. 1: untreated Vero cells; 2: Vero cells treated with 0.5 mg/ml of Zeocin and 3: Vero cells treated with 1.5 mg/ml of Zeocin.	82
5.3	Sensitivity of BHK cell lines to Zeocin. 1: non-treated BHK cells; 2: BHK cells treated with 0.5 mg/ml, and 3: BHK cells treated with 1 mg/ml of Zeocin.	83
5.4	Sensitivity of BT cell lines to Zeocin. 1: non treated BT cells; 2: BT cells treated with 0.250 mg/ml of Zeocin, and 3: BT cells treated with 0.5 mg/ml of Zeocin.	84
5.5	Electron microscopical examination of normal Vero cell lines. Note the normal distribution of euchromatin and heterochromatin and the round shape of the cell with complete integrity of all the organelles and plasma membrane.	87
5.6	Electron microscopic appearance of VP3-induced apoptosis in Vero cells, three days after electroporation. Early nuclear changes with chromatin condensation and margination together with cytoplasm condensation	87

- 5.7 Ultrastructure of transfected Vero cells undergoing apoptosis at day four after electroporation. The nucleus is deeply convoluted and broken up into a number of small fragments. Translucent vacuoles are observed in the cytoplasm of apoptotic cells. 88
- 5.8 Ultrastructural morphological changes observed between day four and five after electroporation. Late stage of apoptosis where apoptotic bodies were already formed following the packaging of nuclear fragments and remnants of the cytoplasm surrounded by plasma membrane. 88
- 5.9 Amplification of DNA strand breaks associated with apoptosis using LM-PCR Ladder assay. Total DNA was extracted from the transfected Vero cells and amplified by LM-PCR ladder assay. The products of amplification were analyzed on 1.2% agarose gel electrophoresis. Lane 1: 100 bp DNA marker; Lane 2: Total DNA extracted from transfected Vero cells; Lane 3: LM-PCR amplification of total DNA extracted from non transfected Vero cells. Internucleosomal DNA fragmentation amplified by LM-PCR ladder assay at day three (Lane 4), day four (Lane 5) and at day five (Lane 6) post-transfection. 89
- 6.1 Localization of VP3 protein expression in chicken embryo fibroblast (CEF) transiently transfected with 15 ug of pcDNA-VP3. Three days after transfection, chicken embryo fibroblast were fixed and analyzed by indirect immunofluorescence. 1: Non-transfected CEF. 2: Transfected CEF exhibiting a complete fluorescence staining of the nucleus. 3: The fluorescence is mainly concentrated around the nucleus in small granules and in larger aggregates in the cytoplasm. 110
- 6.2 Indirect immunofluorescence of transformed-cells Vero and REF transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA-VP3. Both cells were harvested 4 days post-transfection and were reacted with monoclonal antibody, anti-VP3. 1. Transfected Vero cells at early stage of apoptosis in which the nucleus is weakly stained. 2. transfected REF cells at the late stage of apoptosis where the nucleus is fragmented into numerous dispersed fluorescence structure forming apoptotic bodies. 111



- 6.3** Indirect immunofluorescence staining of human breast tumor derived cells, MCF-7 and MDA-MB 231 transfected with 5 ug of pcDNA-VP3. The cells were fixed four days after transfection and were stained with VP3 specific monoclonal antibody. 1: Mock-transfected MCF-7 cells with no sign of apoptosis. 2: Fluorescence concentrated in the nuclear fragments in the transfected MCF-7. 3: Widely scattered fluorescence reflecting an extensive nuclear fragmentation in the transfected MDA-MB-231. 112
- 6.4** Confocal microscopy analysis of the morphological changes induced by VP3 expression in Vero cell lines. 1: Normal Vero cells showing abnormal high uptake of dyes due to loss of plasma membrane integrity. 2: Nuclear fragmentation and apoptotic bodies formation in Vero cells transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA-VP3. 3: Three dimensional structure of Vero cells transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA, the red fluorescence represent a DNA droplets of different sizes, scattered throughout the cells which is correlated with an extensive nuclear fragmentation. 115
- 6.5** Morphological changes of RK-13 cell lines undergoing apoptosis. Three days after transfection with 10 ug of pcDNA-VP3, RK-13 cells were harvested, stained with propidium iodide/ acridine orange staining and analyzed by confocal microscopy. 1: Mock-transfected RK-13 cells with an initial dyes uptake. 2: Bright orange staining of the condensed chromatin in the form of moon shape. 3: RK-13 cells with nuclear fragmentation. 116
- 6.6** Confocal laser scanning microscopic images of transfected REF cell lines. REF cells were transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA-VP3 and stained with propidium iodide/acridine orange before being examined by confocal microscopy. 1: Early stage of apoptosis in transfected REF cells. 2: The whole nucleus is strongly stained and the beginning of nuclear fragmentation. 117
- 6.7** Confocal microscopy analysis of the transfected human breast tumor derived cells, MCF-7. MCF-7 cells were analyzed three days after transfection and were stained with propidium iodide/acridine orange. 1: No sign of apoptosis in the MCF-7 cells transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA 3.1/Zeo +. 2: Transfection of MCF-7 cells with 10 ug of pCMV-HBS did not induce any apoptotic features and the cells were less fluorescent. 118

6.8 Confocal laser scanning microscopic images of transfected MCF-7 cells. MCF-7 cells were transfected with 10 ug of pcDNA-VP3 and were stained with propidium iodide/acridine orange at day three of post-transfection before being analyzed by confocal microscopy. 1: Early stage of apoptosis with weak fluorescence. 2: Condensation of the chromatin at the periphery of the nucleus with strong fluorescence. 3: Fragmentation of the nucleus at advanced apoptotic phase.

119

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Adenosine 5'-diphosphate
AO	Acridine orange
ATP	Adenosine triphosphate
ATV	Antibiotic trypsin versin
A ₂₆₀	Absorbance at 260 nm
BCL-2	B cell leukemia / lymphoma 2
BCR-ABL	B Cell antigen receptor-Abelson murine leukemia
BGHpA	Bovine growth hormone polyadenylation
BHK	Baby hamster kidney
bp	base pair
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
BT	Bovine testis cells
°C	Degree celsius
CaCl ₂	Calcium chloride
Ca/Mg	Calcium / Magnesium
cAMP	Cyclic Adenosine 3':5' monophosphate
CAT	Chloramphenicol acetyltransferase
CAV	Chicken anemia virus
ccdB	Control of cell death gene
CEF	Chicken embryo fibroblast
CNRS	Centre nationale dela recherche scientifique
CPE	Cytopathic effect
CrmA	Cytokine response modifier A
CsCl	Cesium chloride
Da	Dalton
ddH ₂ O	Deionised distilled water
DMEM	Dulbecco's modified essential medium
Dnase	Deoxyribonuclease
d NTP	Deoxyribonucleotide
ds	Double-stranded
E.coli	Escherichia coli
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
e.g	For example
ELISA	Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
EM	Electron microscopy
EMEM	Eagle's minum essential medium
FBS	Fetal bovine serum
FITC	Fluorescein isothiocyanate
g	Gram
xg	Gravity
g/ml	Gram per ml
H ₂ O ₂	Hydrogen peroxide
HBS	HEPES-buffered saline
Hbs	Hepatitis surface antigen (S)
HEPES	N-2-hydroxyethylpiperazine-N'-2 ethanesulfonate
hCMV	Human cytomegalovirus
hr	Hour
HSV/tk	Herpes simplex virus thymidine kinase



ICE	Interleukin-1 β -converting enzyme
IgG	Immunoglobulin G
IIF	Indirect immunofluorescence
IPTG	Isopropylthiogalactopyranoside
kb	Kilobase
kDa	Kilodalton
L15 medium	Leibovitz's L 15 medium
LB	Luria bertani
LM-PCR	Ligation-mediated PCR
LMP	Low melting point
Luc	Luciferase
M	Molar
Mab	Monoclonal antibody
mg	Milligram
mg/ml	Milligram per ml
min	Minute
ml	Milliliter
mM	Milimolar
MCF-7	Human mammary adenocarcinoma
MDA-MB	Human, caucasian, breast adenocarcinoma
MDCC	Marek's disease virus transformed chicken lymphocyte
MDV	Marek's disease virus
mRNA	Messenger ribonucleic acid
MW	Molecular weight
ug	Microgram
ul	Microliter
uM	Micromole
NaHCO ₃	Sodium hydrogen carbonate
NaOH	Sodium hydroxide
ng	Nanogram
ng/ml	Nanogram per ml
nm	Nanometer
OD	Optical density
ORF	Open reading frame
pH	Hydrogen-ion activity
%	Percentage
PBS	Phosphate buffer saline
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PI	Propidium iodide
pmol/ul	Picomol per microliter
Rb	Retinoblastoma
RE	Restriction endonuclease
REF	Rat embryo fibroblast
RF	Replicative form
rpm	Revolution per minute
RPMI-1640	Roswell park memorial institute
SDS-PAGE	Sodium dodecyle sulphate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoreis
sec	Second
SPF	Specific pathogen free
ss	Single-stranded



TAE	Tris-acetate-EDTA buffer
TE	Tris-EDTA
TEM	Transmission electron microscope
TUNEL	TdT-mediated dUTP Nick-End Labeling
U	Unit
UV	Ultraviolet
V	Volt
vs	Versus
v/v	Volume per volume
w/v	Weight per volume
Xgal	5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl- β -D-galactoside

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The living organisms and the maintenance of their wellbeing and health are tribute to the equilibrium between cell division and apoptosis. The failure or dysregulation of one of these two fundamental mechanisms can be fatal or have serious pathological consequences (Singh *et al.*, 1994). Cellular death may occur either via apoptosis or necrosis. Necrosis is non-physiological or pathological type of cell death and it is uncontrolled in nature. It occurs following an extreme cell damage and is characterized by swelling and lysis of the cell causing the release of its content into the surrounding environment leading to inflammation (Trump *et al.*, 1991).

Apoptosis differ from necrosis particularly by two dominant markers: morphological marker characterizing the structural changes of apoptotic cell and the biochemical marker characterizing the cleavage of DNA into domain-sized fragments (Walker *et al.*, 1993). Apoptosis is a programmed cell death and is a genetically controlled cellular mechanism of cell death to eliminate unwanted cells (Earnshaw, 1995). Apoptosis is a widespread cellular mechanism involved in numerous processes such as the embryonic and neural development (Sanders and Wride, 1995), the regulation of the immune system (Williams, 1994), organogenesis and tissue homeostasis (Wyllie *et al.*, 1980). Some of the molecular and biochemical mechanisms of apoptosis have been elucidated and the research in this area continues to expand at an

extremely rapid rate following the development of new techniques and equipment (Hale *et al.*, 1996).

The interest in apoptosis rise from the findings that apoptosis was involved in many important diseases such as neurodegenerative disorders, AIDS and particularly cancer, which affect millions of people around the globe. The growing amount of data generated through a continuous investigations of the mechanisms of apoptosis has proved to be very valuable in understanding the basic cell biology which will path the way to the development of very sensitive diagnostic tools and the design of therapies for various diseases. The suppression or failure and/or excessive rate of apoptosis can trigger the development of tumors as well as render the tumor cells resistant to the current chemotherapy and radiotherapy (Williams, 1994; Kerr *et al.*, 1994; Thompson, 1995).

The elucidation of the molecular mechanisms underlying apoptosis cannot be achieved without developing appropriate methods for detecting and characterizing apoptosis. Classically, the detection and characterization of apoptosis was based on the examination of morphological changes at the cellular level by light-electron-microscopy in combination with vital fluorescent dyes (McGahon *et al.*, 1995). With the advancement of the technology new tools were designed to detect apoptosis at the molecular level, such as the use of Annexin V to monitor the loss of membrane phospholipid asymetry during apoptosis (Koopmans *et al.*, 1993) or assays to detect DNA fragmentation by agarose gel electrophoresis (Wyllie. 1980), or by in-situ nick-

end labeling (Gavrieli *et al.*, 1992). Assays to measure the disruption of the mitochondrial transmembrane potential and the measurement of DNA and RNA content by flow cytometry were developed later (Darzynkiewicz *et al.*, 1992). Flow cytometry and its various alternatives are the most powerful methods to detect and quantitate apoptotic cells (Darzynkiewicz *et al.*, 1997)

The important contribution of apoptosis research was made particularly in the field of oncology, where it was demonstrated that tumor was a consequence of failure or suppression of apoptosis, which also may render tumor cells more aggressive and resistant to chemotherapy and radiotherapy (Williams, 1991). Chemotherapeutic drugs and ionizing radiation, which are the only available cancer treatment, destroy the cancerous cells via apoptosis usually via the action of wild type p53 (Dive and Hikman, 1991; Fisher, 1994; Thompson, 1995). These current therapies become hopeless when a mutation strike the p53 gene and/or by the over-expression of bcl-2 (Lowe *et al.*, 1994). This problem may be solved by the use of a novel cancer therapy that would be independent to the present of prerequisite factors. VP3 protein is encoded by an avian virus (CAV) and has a length of 121 amino acids with an estimated size of 14 kDa (Noteborn *et al.*, 1994). The chicken anemia virus (CAV) was first isolated in Japan in 1979 (Yuasa *et al.*, 1979) and was characterized as a new viral pathogen belonging to *Circoviridae* family (Studdert *et al.*, 1993). In young chickens, CAV transiently cause severe anemia and immunodeficiency due to depletion of cortical thymocytes (Jeurissen *et al.*, 1989; Yuasa *et al.*, 1979). The depletion of thymocytes was demonstrated to