

## Expression of Extracellular Proteins in Somatic Embryogenesis of Plants

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**ABSTRACT:** Somatic embryogenesis' is a process where somatic embryos are derived from somatic cells. The transition of somatic cells from a pro-embryonic mass (PEM) of cells to a somatic embryo requires several factors ranging from phytohormones, proteins, transcription factors and other related substances. Of them all, the extracellular proteins play an indispensable part in the differentiation and morphogenesis of the somatic cells. Despite this phenomenon being well-known, the mechanism of how these extracellular protein influences the cell fate during organogenesis is still unclear. Recent advances in proteomics and developmental biology allow us to explore new pathways in the development of somatic embryos from somatic cells. The various extracellular proteins employed during somatic embryogenesis and that have been reviewed in this article include xyloglucan endotransglycosylases (XET), Endochitinase, Arabinogalactan Proteins (AGPs), Non-Specific Lipid Transfer Proteins (LTPs), Heat shock proteins (HSPs), Lectins, Late embryogenesis abundant proteins (LEA), Citrins, Germins and Germin-like proteins (GLPs).

**KEYWORDS:** Somatic Embryogenesis, Arabinogalactan proteins, Lipid transfer proteins, Germin and germin-like proteins.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The developmental process associated with the restructuring of somatic cells to generate embryonic cells is called somatic embryogenesis. These somatic cells undergo a series of morpho-biochemical changes in them resulting in the formation of non-zygotic embryo capable of regenerating plants. The various stages of development in this process include the differentiation of cells, cell division activation and reprogramming of their physiology, metabolism and gene expression pattern (Xiyang and Zhang, 2010). The first study of somatic embryogenesis was documented in carrot cell suspension culture (Steward et al., 1958, Reinert, 1958). Extracellular proteins play a significant role in angiosperm embryology (Van Engien and de Vries, 1992, Kreuger and Holst, 1993). These proteins and their expressions have been associated with induction and initiation of somatic embryogenesis (Boyer et al., 1993). Carrot cell cultures secrete a wide range of proteins. Several studies have reported that extracellular proteins either play an inductive role (Hilbert et al., 1992) or inhibitory role (Gavish et al., 1992). The extracellular proteins are not secreted by embryogenic cells but from non embryogenic cells e.g. extracellular protein EPI (van Engelen et al., 1991). Chitinase may be involved in the generation of signal molecules which stimulate the somatic embryogenesis in carrot (de Jong et al., 1992). Extracellular protein  $\beta$ -1, 3-glucanase may be involved in the degradation of the callose wall surrounding embryogenic cells and small embryo (Helleboid et al., 1998). Protein  $\beta$ -1, 3-glucanase and chitinase cDNAs are expressed during the spruce somatic embryogenesis (Dong and Dunstan, 1997).

### II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

We searched databases for the articles from relevant journals and books published from 1958 to 2014. This review article aims to focus on newer information and insights gained from all the research works that have been carried out on the role of extracellular proteins in somatic embryogenesis till date.

### III. EXPRESSION OF EXTRACELLULAR PROTEIN IN SOMATIC CELLS

#### Xyloglucan endotransglycosylases

Up-regulation of xyloglucan endotransglycosylases (XET) modify cell wall during somatic embryogenesis [Malinowski and Filipecki 2002, Thibaud-Nissen et al., 2003, Rensing et al., 2005]. In *Pinus radiata* the modification in the structure and properties of the cell wall during somatic embryogenesis is due to the up regulation of  $\alpha$ -d-galactosidase (SEPR1) which cleaves terminal  $\alpha$ -galactosyl moieties of glycolipids and glycoproteins [Aquea and Arch-Johnson 2008].

### **Endochitinase**

In an embryonic culture, endochitinases are expressed only in a morphologically distinct group of cells located outside the proembryonic mass and not in the developing somatic embryo. The transition from the globular to the heart-shaped stage in carrot embryonic culture is achieved by the extracellular glycosylated acidic class IV endochitinase or extracellular protein 3 (EP3) (de Jong et al., 1992). EP3 is a chitinase by function and is known to lift the arrest of somatic embryo growth in the temperature sensitive carrot embryogenic mutant ts11 at the non permissive temperature condition (de Jong et al., 1992). Isozyme EP3-3 was able to lift the arrest at the globular stage and produced later stages of ts11 somatic embryos (Kragh et al., 1996). Endochitinase also play a nurturing role in the processing of signaling molecules during somatic embryogenesis. Apart from these, further investigations reveal endochitinase to be part of a phylogenetically conserved pathway as endochitinase isolated from sugar beet stimulate somatic embryogenesis in cell cultures of *Picea abies* (Egertsdotter and von Arnold, 1998). Sacco de Vries and his research team have shown that certain arabinogalactan proteins contain endochitinases cleavage site. Both arabinogalactans and endochitinases that are present in the carrot seeds or are secreted in the medium of suspension cultured cells can promote the formation of protoplast-derived somatic embryos (van Hengel, 1998). Pre-globular *Pinus caribea* embryos in culture contain a basic 48kDa chitinase-like protein ionically bound to their surface which digests embryo-specific AGPs secreted by these embryos as well as those from seeds but not AGPs from non-embryogenic lines (Domon et al. 2000). These modifications are likely to occur to either GlcN or GlcNAc residues which have been shown to be present within the structure of embryogenesis-inducing AGPs since the AGP molecules were also shown to contain an endochitinase cleavage site within their carbohydrate moiety (van Hengel et al., 2001).

### **Arabinogalactan Proteins**

The Arabinogalactan proteins (AGPs) are a heterogenous group of proteo-glycans commonly found in the cell membrane, cell matrix and cell walls. Besides 90% of the macromolecule being composed of carbohydrates, AGPs are rich in hydroxyproline, alanine, glycine and serine amongst protein components (Majewska-Savka and Nothnagel, 2000). Numerous studies have been carried out demonstrating the signaling role of AGPs in embryogenesis. They are reported to be involved in cell expansion (Welliats and Knox, 1996), cell proliferation (Nothnagel, 1997) and regulation of somatic embryo development (Kreuger and Van Holst, 1995). AGPs promote embryogenesis in a broad range of Angiospermic plants such as carrot (Stacey et al., 1990, van Hengel et al., 2001), Euphorbia (Saare et al., 2000), Wheat (Letarte et al., 2006), Chicory (Legrand et al., 2007) and also in gymnospermic species such as *Picea abies* (Filonova et al., 2000) and *Pinus* (Rocha et al., 2013, Domon et al., 2000). Purified AGPs in nanomolar concentration extracted from carrot embryogenesis suspension culture reinitiated embryogenic potential in non-embryonic cell lines (Kreuger and Van Holst, 1993). AGPs may be used in predicting the developmental fate of cells as they display developmentally regulated patterns of expression (Thompson and Knox, 1998). The ability of the protoplast to form somatic embryos was found to decrease when AGPs bound to the cell wall were removed, whereas, addition of isolated extracellular AGPs reversed the effect of removal of AGPs from the cell wall partially (Van Hengel et al., 2001). Perturbation of AGPs have resulted in the alteration of somatic embryogenesis. For example, the addition of Yariv reagent blocks somatic embryogenesis in *Daucus carota* and *Cichorium hybrid 474* by binding AGPs to the culture media (Thompson and Knox, 1998; Chapman et al., 2000). AGPs show a similar inhibitory effect on somatic embryo formation upon precipitating with an anti-AGP antibody (Butowt et al., 1999). Several immunocytochemistry experiments with AGPs isolated by using different monoclonal antibodies revealed that cells of embryonic suspension cultures of carrot showed a distinct temporal and spatial expression pattern of an AGP epitope detectable with the antibody JIM4 (Stacey et al., 1990), while JIM8-AGPs showed inhibition on the frequency of embryo development from single cells (Toonen et al., 1997). JIM4 reactive epitopes of AGPs have been reported from the embryonic cells of *Daucus carota* and *Zea mays* (Kreuger and van Holst, 1996; Samaj et al., 1999) whereas, JIM8 reactive epitopes of AGPs have been reported from a subpopulation of *Daucus carota* cells with a specific nursing function during somatic embryogenesis where isolated JIM8-negative cells developed into positive cells upon supplementation with media conditioned by JIM8-positive cells. This indicates that an active compound is released from JIM8-positive cells into the medium (McCabe et al., 1997). Isolated AGPs from the seeds of *Daucus carota* using their binding to the antibodies ZUM15 and ZUM18 showed that the ZUM15 reactive AGPs are inhibitory for somatic embryogenesis, while the ZUM18 reactive AGPs increases the percentage of embryonic cells. The frequency of somatic embryos in *Cyclamen* also enhanced upon treatment with ZUM18 reactive AGPs from *Daucus carota* (Kreuger and Van Holst, 1995).

### **Non-specific Lipid Transfer Proteins**

Non-specific Lipid Transfer Proteins (LTPs) are secreted extracellularly are a class of small proteins (7-13kDa) that lack tryptophan and are secreted extracellularly (Stark et al., 1991). These proteins are characterized by their ability to transfer phospholipids from their place of synthesis in the endoplasmic

reticulum to various cellular locations (Kader, 1996). LTPs are ABA inducible and are found to be involved in plant defense, preventing water loss during stress and play an important role in the transport of signalling molecules through the apoplast and symplast (Stark et al., 1991; Smertenko and Bozhkov, 2014). The presence of five acidic LTP-like proteins found in the cell walls and conditioned media of microcluster cells derived from embryonic suspension cultures of *Draba glomerata* helped distinguish between embryonic cells and non-embryonic cells (Tchorbadjieva et al., 2005). The expression of LTPs was observed to be present not only in embryogenic cell cultures but also in developing flowers, maturing seeds and in the shoot apex of seedlings. Expression of LTP gene product was reported to be exclusively associated with the first differentiated tissue of somatic embryo i.e., protoderm and is restricted to peripheral layer of young tissues and developing embryos (Stark et al., 1991; Sossountzov et al., 1991; Thoma et al., 1994). Overexpression of grapevine LTPs under the control of the 35S promoter, however, affects the establishment of bilateral symmetry of the embryos and disturbs epidermal cell layer morphology (Francois et al., 2008). EP2 was the first gene encoding an LTP to be isolated from carrot embryonic culture (Stark et al., 1991). This gene is expressed uniformly in PEMs, but diminishes its expression in non-embryonic cell lines (Chugh and Khurana, 2002). LTP genes were found to be necessary for the induction of normal somatic embryogenesis in *Camellia* leaf culture (Pedroso and Pais, 1995). The expression of LTP levels in Cotton was found to be highest in embryonic cells and pre-globular embryos, through transitional PEMs with higher expression but this expression declines during post-globular stages (Zeng et al., 2006).

### **Heat shock proteins**

Heat shock proteins (HSPs) are a class of proteins that are produced in response to stress and are present in every cell of an individual organism (Li and Srivastava, 2003). During somatic embryo development many HSPs are known to be synthesized and accumulated in response to exposure of hormones such as 2, 4-D (Egertsdotter et al., 1995, Coca et al., 1994.). The HSPs are stage specific and were first reported in carrot embryogenic cultures (Kanabus et al., 1984.). The globular embryo exhibits lesser synthesis and accumulation of low molecular weight hsp mRNA than other developmental stages or undifferentiated callus culture (Zimmerman et al 1989). In yet other studies, two cDNAs (Mshsp 18-1 and 2) that were involved in the synthesis of small HSPs were isolated from Alfalfa suspension cultures. These small HSPs belonged to HSP17 family (Chugh et al., 2002, Gyorgyey et al., 1991). In the development of plant cells HSPs must play a decisive role (Chugh et al., 2002, Gyorgyey et al., 1991).

### **Lectins**

Lectins are a class of carbohydrate-binding proteins that are found in microbes, plants and also animals (Sharon et al., 1998). Lectins were recorded to show differential expressions during various stages of somatic embryo development in Alfalfa. This indicates their involvement in plant embryogenesis although not enough studies have been conducted so far and knowledge about lectins is limited.

### **Late embryogenesis abundant proteins**

Late embryogenesis abundant proteins (LEA) are a class of proteins which are expressed in abundance in the later stages of embryonic development. These proteins are accumulated and are capable of surviving the period of desiccation in the developing embryo. The LEA genes are regulated by exogenous ABA treatment and show high levels of sequence homology among them. LEA genes were first identified in carrot somatic embryo. These genes are viz. Dc 3, Dc ECP31, Dc 8, Dc ECP40, Dc EMB1 (Hatzopoulos et al., 1990). Due to their temporal and spatial expression pattern during various stages of somatic embryogenesis, these genes are used to distinguish between direct and indirect somatic embryogenesis (Corre et al., 1996). During the transition from globular to torpedo stage embryo, EMB1 cDNA from carrot was expressed and accumulated specifically in the meristematic regions (Wurtele et al., 1993). The expression of Dc 8 gene was also found but it was reported that it was dependent on somatic embryogenesis (Cheng et al., 1996).

### **Citrins**

Citrins are citrus seed storage proteins that show differential expression during embryogenesis. Transcripts of citrin coding genes were found to accumulate during the later stages of somatic embryogenesis (Koltunow et al., 1996).

### **Germins and Germin-like proteins (GLPs)**

Germin and Germin-like proteins are one of the most abundant groups of extracellular proteins distributed widely in the plant Kingdom. Although, functionally diverse, structurally, these proteins are related to the members of the cupin superfamily. The naming of these proteins was done on the basis of their conserved  $\beta$ -barrel mature cupin domain (Dunwell et al., 2001; Rajavel et al., 2008; Dunwell et al., 2008). They were

named germin following their initial identification as germination-specific markers in wheat (Thompson and Lane, 1980; Grzeleżak and Lane, 1984). GLPs have been found to play a significant role in somatic and zygotic embryogenesis (Domon et al., 1995, Neutelings et al., 1998, Patnaik and Khurana, 2001). Cell wall bound GLPs were found to be present in the pre-globular somatic embryos but were found absent in non-embryonic callus of *Pinus caribea*. The identification of the first GLP in somatic embryogenesis was achieved comparing profiles of extracellular proteins of non-embryonic and embryonic cell lines in *Pinus caribea* (Domon et al., 1995). In later studies, its cDNA PcGER1 was isolated and its expression was analysed to confirm the embryonic specificity of this GLP (Neutelings et al., 1998) and its relation to the cell cycle (Mathew et al., 2003; Lane, 2002). The isolation of a similar GLP cDNA from *Pinus radiata* showed high mRNA transcription levels in embryogenic tissues and little no expression in non-embryogenic tissue (Bishop - Harley et al., 2003). In several other studies, the upregulation of transcription of GLP encoding genes was also demonstrated in embryonic lines of Caribbean pine and white lupin (Neutelings et al., 1998, Wojtaszek et al., 1998, Caliskan et al., 2004). It was suggested that during somatic embryogenesis GLPs are probably involved in initiation and termination of cell wall expansion (Chugh et al., 2002). It was also proposed that the GLP expressing gene of hybrid larch namely LmGER1 plays an important role in somatic embryo formation by regulating remodeling of cell wall necessary for correct development (Mathew et al., 2006). In order to quantitatively assess the expression levels of proteins in the four stages of embryo development, proteomic methods were employed (Lippert et al., 2005) which showed a significant change in GLP abundance as early as day 7 of embryo development. Several germin and GLP genes such as AtGER2 in *Arabidopsis* (Neutelings et al., 1998), pseudogermin in wheat (Lane et al., 1993) and GP111, GP103 and GP94 in Pine (Domon et al., 2000) were reported in plant embryogenesis but their specific function in embryo development are unknown. Germins and GLPs are characterized as glycoproteins with oxalate oxidase activity (Lane et al., 1993; Lane, 2000; Schweizer et al., 1999) and are often retained in the extracellular matrix by ionic bonds (Faye and Chrispeels, 1988, Jaikaran et al., 1990). Further investigations reveal the wide role that germins and GLPs play as enzymes, structural proteins and receptors during somatic embryogenesis, salt stress and in response to pathogen attack (Dunwell et al., 2000; Bernier and Berna, 2001; Lane, 2000).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Somatic embryogenesis is either directly or indirectly depends on various factors including phytohormones, regulatory proteins, genes, transcription and epigenetic factors. Simultaneously, many genes have been identified and characterized in many plant species which express differentially during somatic embryogenesis and synthesize the specific proteins that are required for somatic embryo development. Previous studies on molecular regulation of somatic embryogenesis indicated that differential gene expression is required for the synthesis of new mRNAs and proteins during somatic embryogenesis. On the basis of previous studies it has been found that molecular understanding of somatic embryogenesis has been greatly based on experiments with different culture systems, such as carrot (Aleith and Richter, 1991; Dodeman and Ducreux, 1996; Komamine et al., 2005), alfalfa (1990; Domoki et al., 2006; ), *Arabidopsis* (Jenik et al., 2007; Park and Harada, 2008), and conifers (Mathieu et al., 2006; Cairney and Pullman, 2007). With the advancement of molecular knowledge, it is necessary to investigate the molecular factors which are involved in the process of somatic embryogenesis.

In this review, we highlighted the main factors involved in all steps of the SE, providing a synthesis of our current understanding of gene expression patterns during this unique developmental pathway. SE is a suitable platform to increase our knowledge of the molecular aspects of the transition events involved in transforming plant somatic cells into mature embryos. A lot of progress has been achieved in the molecular genetics of this process over the past years. Several embryogenic-specific markers have been identified such as SERKs, BBM and LECs. In addition, proteome and transcriptome approaches used in recent years for study of SE allowed large-scale identification of genes associated with the development of somatic embryos, increasing the level of complexity of the developmental regulation of this process through an integration of multiple response pathways. Improving our ability to understand the molecular basis of plant SE will not only help to establish and optimize *in vitro* regeneration protocols for many commercial crop species, but will also ultimately improve our ability to access a major biological conundrum such as the reprogramming of this review, we highlighted the main factors involved in all steps of the SE, providing a synthesis of our current understanding of gene expression patterns during this unique developmental pathway. SE is a suitable platform to increase our knowledge of the molecular aspects of the transition events involved in transforming plant somatic cells into mature embryos. A lot of progress has been achieved in the molecular genetics of this process over the past years. Several embryogenic-specific markers have been identified such as SERKs, BBM and LECs. In addition, proteome and transcriptome approaches used in recent years for study of SE allowed large-scale identification of genes associated with the development of somatic embryos, increasing the level of complexity of the developmental regulation of this process through an integration of multiple response pathways. Improving our ability to

understand the molecular basis of plant SE will not only help to establish and optimize in vitro regeneration protocols for many commercial crop species, but will also ultimately improve our ability to access a major biological conundrum such as the reprogramming o

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