biology and life sciences forum

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Abstract

Microgravity-Induced Metabolic Response in 2D and 3D TCam-2 Cell Cultures †

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† Presented at Cells, Cells and Nothing but Cells: Discoveries, Challenges and Directions, 6–8 March 2023; Available online: https://cells2023.sciforum.net/.

Abstract: The past few decades have seen an increasing number of both space travels and studies aimed at investigating the effects induced by space flights and the environment on humans. One of the main features of these conditions is the presence of altered gravity, mostly represented by microgravity experienced by astronauts. Microgravity is well known to induce deleterious effects at cellular, organ and systemic levels, including alterations in the male and female reproductive systems. In the present study, we investigated the effect of simulated microgravity on the metabolic activity of male germ cells using TCam-2 line as a cell model. These cells were cultured in the Random Positioning Machine that simulated microgravity conditions, and were grown as 2D monolayers or 3D spheroids to assay the effects on single cells or on organ-like structures. After a 24 hour-exposure to simulated microgravity, TCam-2 monolayers showed: (1) a decreased proliferation rate and a delay in cell cycle progression; (2) increased anaerobic metabolism; (3) increased levels of reactive oxygen species and superoxide anion; (4) modifications in mitochondrial morphology. After the same 24 hour-exposure, TCam-2 spheroids showed: (1) an increased anaerobic and aerobic activity in 40% and 26% of samples, respectively; (2) alterations in the redox balance with a decrease in catalase activity in about 65% of cell samples, and therefore, a deficit in the cellular antioxidant capacity; (3) increases in oxidative damage to proteins and lipids in more than 50% of cell samples. In conclusion, these data demonstrated a clear inference of simulated microgravity on the metabolic activity of TCam-2 cells, which is expressed through the activation of an oxidative stress state, that, if not compensated for, could be deleted over time.

Keywords: TCam-2 cells; cellular spheroids; simulated microgravity; ROS; oxidative stress; cellular metabolism

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Citation: Morabito, C.; Guarnieri, S.; Berardini, M.; Gesualdi, L.; Ferranti, F.; Reale, A.; Ricci, G.; Catizone, A.; Mariggiò, M.A. Microgravity-Induced Metabolic Response in 2D and 3D TCam-2 Cell Cultures. *Biol. Life Sci. Forum* **2023**, *21*, 7. https://doi.org/10.3390/blsf2023021007

Academic Editor: Alexander E. Kalyuzhny

Published: 20 March 2023

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Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.M., G.R., A.C. and M.A.M.; methodology, C.M., S.G., M.B., L.G. and A.R.; software, C.M., M.B., L.G. and S.G.; validation, C.M., S.G. and M.A.M.; formal analysis, C.M., S.G. and M.A.M.; investigation, C.M., S.G. and M.A.M.; resources, A.C., G.R. and M.A.M.; data curation, C.M., S.G. and M.A.M.; writing—original draft preparation, C.M.; writing—review and editing, C.M., S.G., M.B., L.G., F.F., G.R., A.C. and M.A.M.; visualization, C.M. and

M.A.M.; supervision, M.A.M.; project administration, M.A.M. and F.F.; funding acquisition, G.R., A.C. and M.A.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by ASI–Italian Space Agency, grant number 2020-24-HH.0.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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