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## **Optimization of sunitinib treatment in metastatic renal cell carcinoma : pharmacogenetic evidence and challenges**

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## CHAPTER 10

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### Summary

Renal cell carcinoma (RCC) is among the top 10 most common malignancies in men with clear cell RCC (cc-RCC) as the majority subtype. 30% of patients have metastatic spread by the time of initial diagnosis and need systematic therapies. Sunitinib, an oral tyrosine kinase inhibitor, has been approved by FDA in 2006 and became the first-line treatment for cc-mRCC patients due to its dramatic improvement in progression-free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS) and affordable toxicity. However, the inter-individual variability of sunitinib outcomes is large. Some clinical factors, such as blood pressure, can partly predict sunitinib efficacy, but they are not enough. More insight into the genetic factors underlying sunitinib outcome could also be helpful to improve optimization of treatment. In this thesis, the relevance of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) to sunitinib treatment in (cc)-mRCC patients was investigated with regard to efficacy and toxicity.

**Chapter 1** contains a general introduction, describing the epidemiology, classification and treatment evolution for RCC, giving a short overview on the challenge of sunitinib treatment in clinical practice, and providing the current knowledge concerning the role of pharmacogenetics in sunitinib treatment for patients with mRCC.

In **Chapter 2**, we systematically collected available published data from a total of 33 publications including 9,977 patients from clinical trials, expanded access program and real-world clinical practice and performed a comprehensive meta-analysis to compare sunitinib efficacy and toxicity in Asian and Caucasian mRCC patients. We observed that Asian patients had similar sunitinib efficacy, but burdened a higher incidence of all grades hand-foot syndrome, > grade 2 fatigue, > grade 2 hand-foot syndrome and > grade 2 thrombocytopenia, in comparison to Caucasian patients. This suggests dose adjustment in Asian patients should be considered.

**Chapter 3** describes an exploratory study with the aim to evaluate the previously identified eight SNPs in genes *CYP3A4*, *NR1H2*, *POR*, *IL8*, *IL13*, *IL4-R* and *MET* (between 2011 and 2013) for possible associations with efficacy and toxicity of sunitinib in a large cohort. We found that T allele of *IL8* rs1126647 was associated with an increased risk of hypertension and T allele in *IL13* rs1800925 with higher risk of leukopenia and any toxicity > grade 2, which suggested a relationship between interleukin genes *IL8* and *IL13* and the development of sunitinib-induced adverse events. Still, further validation in an independent cohort is warranted to confirm our findings.

*VEGFR1* rs9582036 and rs9554320 have been shown to be predictive for PFS and/or OS in sunitinib-treated mRCC patients from three previous studies. In **Chapter 4**, we aimed to assess whether the previous associations could be confirmed in three independent well-characterized cohorts (SUTOX, CCF and SOGUG) and to perform a meta-analysis including all available data. We only validated the associations of both SNPs with sunitinib PFS in the CCF cohort, but not in SUTOX or SOGUG cohort. After meta-analysis, we failed to observe any significant associations, indicating the limited value of both SNPs in clinical use as predictor for sunitinib efficacy in mRCC patients.

**Chapter 5** and **Chapter 6** pay particular attention to *CYP3A5* rs776746 and *CYP3A4* rs4646437. To explain the earlier association of *CYP3A4* rs4646437 with sunitinib-induced hypertension, **Chapter 5** was conducted by testing the effect of *CYP3A4* rs4646437 on sunitinib clearance. Here, the A-allele carriers of *CYP3A4* rs4646437 had an average 29.3% higher clearance of sunitinib, indicating that the A-allele of *CYP3A4* rs4646437 might be associated with an increased CYP3A4 enzyme activity. Later on, the linkage disequilibrium between *CYP3A5* rs776746 and *CYP3A4* rs4646437 in Caucasian population was considered. To have a better understanding of the role of two SNPs in sunitinib treatment, *CYP3A5* rs776746 and *CYP3A4* rs4646437 have been analyzed simultaneously in relationship with sunitinib clearance in a *post hoc* study in **Chapter 5** and with sunitinib-induced hypertension in **Chapter 6**. Our results suggest that *CYP3A5* rs776746, rather than *CYP3A4* rs4646437 is the causal genetic factor in the above associations.

For the past decade, an emphasis has been placed on SNPs of genes involved in angiogenesis pathway in the field of sunitinib pharmacogenetics in mRCC. Recently, an increasing number of studies have shown the interaction between antiangiogenic drugs and immune responses. In **Chapter 7**, we applied a tagging SNP approach to investigate whether genetic variants within genes (*CD274*, *PDCDI* and *CTLA-4*) encoding checkpoints (PD-L1, PD-1 and CTLA-4) could be useful as prognostic or predictive biomarkers for sunitinib outcome in a discovery and an independent validation as well as a combined cohort of cc-mRCC patients. Our results revealed that *CTLA-4* rs231775 was associated with improved OS, implying this polymorphism may serve as a prognostic marker for cc-mRCC patients.

Till now, an increasing number of studies have been done attempting to find a genetic biomarker to predict sunitinib outcomes. Yet, none of the previously investigated genetic variants have been implemented into clinical practice. **Chapter 8** describes what we need to make this dream a reality.

**Chapter 9** provides a discussion of the studies presented in this thesis and describes several obstacles preventing the utility of genetic biomarkers from clinical practice. In addition, future perspectives are presented on further pharmacogenetic research as well as new treatment options and technologies.

## CHAPTER 10

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### Nederlandse samenvatting

Niercelkanker (RCC) behoort tot de top 10 meest voorkomende maligniteiten bij mannen en het heldercellig RCC (cc-RCC) vormt het belangrijkste histologische subtype. Bij diagnose is bij 30% van de patiënten de ziekte gemetastaseerd (mRCC) en is systemische therapie nodig. Sunitinib, een orale tyrosine kinase remmer, is door de FDA geregistreerd in 2006 en werd de eerstelijns therapie voor cc-mRCC patiënten met een sterke verbetering van de progressievrije overleving (PFS) en de algehele overleving (OS) met aanvaardbare toxiciteit. Echter, de interindividuele variabiliteit van sunitinib respons is groot. Een aantal klinische factoren, waaronder de MSKCC-criteria of Heng criteria, kunnen in zekere mate de effectiviteit van sunitinib voorspellen, maar zij voldoen niet helemaal. Meer inzicht in de genetische factoren die van invloed zijn op de uitkomst van de behandeling met sunitinib kan van nut zijn om de uitkomst van de behandeling verder te verbeteren. In dit proefschrift is de relevantie van Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs) voor de uitkomst van de behandeling met sunitinib in (cc)-mRCC patiënten onderzocht, zowel met betrekking tot effectiviteit als toxiciteit.

**Hoofdstuk 1** omvat een algemene inleiding en beschrijft de epidemiologie, de classificatie en de ontwikkeling van de behandeling van mRCC en geeft een kort overzicht van de uitdagingen bij de behandeling met sunitinib in de klinische praktijk. Ook wordt de huidige stand van zaken met betrekking tot de rol van farmacogenetica bij de sunitinib behandeling van patiënten met mRCC besproken.

In **Hoofdstuk 2** verzamelden we systematisch gegevens van studies vanuit 33 publicaties met in totaal 9.997 patiënten uit klinische studies, ‘expanded access’ programma’s, en uit de klinische praktijk. Er werd een uitgebreide meta-analyse verricht om de effectiviteit en toxiciteit van sunitinib te vergelijken in Aziatische en Kaukasische patiënten met mRCC. Wij vonden dat Aziatische patiënten een vergelijkbare effectiviteit hadden, maar een hogere incidentie van bijwerkingen ondervonden, met name alle graden hand-voet-syndroom, > graad 2 vermoeidheid, > graad 2 hand-voet-syndroom en > graad 2 thrombocytopenie. Dit suggereert dat bij Aziatische patiënten een dosisaanpassing moet worden overwogen.

In **Hoofdstuk 3** wordt een exploratieve studie beschreven met het doel om na te gaan of 8 eerder gevonden SNPs in de genen *CYP3A4*, *NR112*, *POR*, *IL8*, *IL13*, *IL4-R* en *MET* (tussen 2011-2013) konden worden gerepliceerd in een omvangrijk cohort voor een associatie met effectiviteit en toxiciteit. We vonden dat het T-allel van *IL8* rs1126647, was geassocieerd



met een verhoogde kans op hypertensie en het T-allel in *IL13* rs1800925, met een hogere kans op leukopenie en toxiciteit > graad 2, wat suggereert dat er een verband is tussen de interleukine genen *IL8* en *IL13* en de ontwikkeling van sunitinib geïnduceerde bijwerkingen. Om onze bevindingen te bevestigen is een validatie in een onafhankelijk cohort nodig.

In drie eerdere studies werd aangetoond dat *VEGFR1* rs958206 en rs9554320 een veelbelovende voorspellende waarde hadden voor PFS en/of OS in mRCC patiënten die met sunitinib behandeld werden. In **Hoofdstuk 4** stelden wij onszelf ten doel om na te gaan of de eerdere associaties bevestigd konden worden in drie onafhankelijke, goed gedefinieerde cohorten (SUTOX, CCF en SOGUG). Ook is er een meta-analyse verricht waarbij alle beschikbare gegevens werden gecombineerd. Alleen de associaties van beide SNPs met sunitinib PFS in het CCF-cohort konden worden gevalideerd, maar niet in het SUTOX of SOGUG-cohort. In de meta-analyse werden geen significante associaties gevonden, hetgeen duidt op de beperkte waarde van beide SNPs in de klinische praktijk als het gaat om het voorspellen van de effectiviteit van sunitinib in de behandeling van mRCC patiënten.

In **Hoofdstuk 5** en **Hoofdstuk 6** werd nader ingegaan op *CYP3A5* rs776746 en *CYP3A4* rs4646437. Om de eerdere associatie van *CYP3A4* rs4646437 met door sunitinib veroorzaakte hypertensie te verklaren werd in Hoofdstuk 5 het effect bepaald van deze SNP op de klaring van sunitinib. De A-allel dragers van *CYP3A4* rs4646437 hadden gemiddeld een 29,3% hogere klaring van sunitinib, hetgeen erop duidt dat het A-allel van *CYP3A4* rs4646437 gepaard gaat met een toegenomen activiteit van het enzym *CYP3A4*. Ook is onderzocht of er een verband (linkage disequilibrium) is tussen *CYP3A5* rs776746 en *CYP3A4* rs4646437 in de Kaukasische populatie. Om de rol van deze twee SNPs beter te begrijpen zijn *CYP3A5* rs776746 en *CYP3A4* rs4646437 gezamenlijk geanalyseerd, waarbij in een posthoc analyse is gekeken naar het effect op sunitinib klaring in Hoofdstuk 5 en op door sunitinib veroorzaakte hypertensie in Hoofdstuk 6. Uit onze resultaten blijkt dat *CYP3A5* rs776746 de belangrijkste genetische factor, en dat *CYP3A4* rs4646437 in dit verband minder relevant is.

In het afgelopen decennium heeft de nadruk in het farmacogenetisch onderzoek naar mRCC vooral gelegen op SNPs van genen die betrokken zijn bij angiogenese. Echter, recent wordt

vaker gekeken naar de interactie van geneesmiddelen die anti-angiogenetisch werken de immuunrespons. In **Hoofdstuk 7** hebben wij door middel van tagging SNPs onderzocht of genetische variatie in genen (*CD274*, *PDCD1* en *CTLA-4*) die coderen voor de ‘checkpoints’ (PD-L1, PD-1 en CTLA-4) van belang zijn als prognostische of predictieve merker voor de behandeling met sunitinib. Onze resultaten lieten zien dat de variant CTLA-4 rs231775 geassocieerd was met OS, wat suggereert dat dit polymorfisme kan dienen als een prognostische biomarker voor cc-mRCC patiënten.

Er zijn tot op heden enkele duizenden studies verricht waarbij getracht is een genetische biomarker te vinden waarmee de uitkomst van behandeling met sunitinib voorspeld kan worden. Geen van deze eerder onderzochte genetische varianten zijn echter toegepast in de klinische praktijk. In **Hoofdstuk 8** beschrijven wij wat er nodig is om klinische toepassing te bereiken.

**Hoofdstuk 9** bevat een samenvatting van de studies die in dit proefschrift worden beschreven en ook wordt nader ingegaan op de hindernissen die het gebruik van genetische biomarkers in de klinische praktijk in de weg staan. Tevens worden in dit hoofdstuk perspectieven geschetst voor toekomstig farmacogenetisch onderzoek, nieuwe behandelingsmogelijkheden en nieuwe technologieën.

## CHAPTER 10

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全文总结

(Summary in Chinese)

肾细胞癌（RCC）占有恶性肿瘤的 2~3%，其中 70~75%为透明细胞癌（cc-RCC）。新发病例中，30%的患者被确诊为转移性肾细胞癌（mRCC）。目前，分子靶向治疗成为转移性肾透明细胞癌（cc-mRCC）患者的最重要的治疗手段，如 2006 年经美国 FDA 批准的口服酪氨酸激酶抑制剂舒尼替尼。由于其对无疾病进展期（PFS）和总生存期（OS）的显著改善以及较好的耐受性，目前舒尼替尼已成为 cc-mRCC 患者的一线治疗药物。然而，个体间舒尼替尼疗效和安全性存在较大差异。尽管多项研究证实舒尼替尼治疗后高血压反应与较好的临床疗效存在相关性，但其不足以作为独立因子用于预测舒尼替尼的临床疗效。近年来，肿瘤药物疗效及毒副作用与基因多态性的相关性研究已成为一大热点。本课题拟开展单核苷酸多态性（SNPs）与舒尼替尼治疗 cc-mRCC 患者的疗效和毒副作用的相关性研究，为进一步提高舒尼替尼的疗效提供参考依据。

第一章对肾细胞癌的流行病学、分期方法、病理学和治疗药物进行了总体概述，并简要阐述了舒尼替尼治疗在临床实践中面临的问题及药物遗传学在舒尼替尼治疗中的作用。

在第二章中，经系统地文献检索，获取了 9977 名 mRCC 患者舒尼替尼疗效（PFS 和 OS）和毒副作用发生率的数据。通过综合荟萃分析，深入比较了亚洲患者和高加索患者中舒尼替尼疗效和毒副作用发生率的差异并探讨了导致差异产生的原因。结果发现与高加索患者相比，亚洲患者具有相似的 PFS 和 OS，但各等级手足综合征，3~4 级疲劳，3~4 级手足综合征和 3~4 级血小板减少症的发生率更高，提示对亚洲患者进行舒尼替尼剂量调整的必要性。

第三章旨在探索 *CYP3A4*, *NR1I2*, *POR*, *IL8*, *IL13*, *IL4-R* 和 *MET* 基因中 8 个 SNP 与舒尼替尼的疗效和毒副作用的相关性。结果发现 *IL8* rs1126647 的 T 等位基因与高血压发生率正相关，*IL13* rs1800925 基因存在 T 等位基因时白细胞减少的发生率和 2 级以上毒副作用的发生率增加，提示白细胞介素基因 *IL8* 和 *IL13* 与舒尼替尼毒副作用的关系。

最近研究表明 *VEGFR1* rs9582036 和 rs9554320 具有预测舒尼替尼治疗的 PFS 和/或 OS 的可能性。第四章旨在 3 个队列的 cc-mRCC 患者中（SUTOX, CCF 和 SOGUG）分别验证 *VEGFR1* rs9582036 和 rs9554320 与舒尼替尼疗效的关系，并对现有数据进

行荟萃分析。单队列分析结果发现仅在 CCF 队列中 *VEGFR1* rs9582036 和 rs9554320 与 PFS 存在显著相关性。而在 SUTOX 和 SOGUG 队列中, *VEGFR1* rs9582036 和 rs9554320 与舒尼替尼疗效的相关性无统计学意义。荟萃分析结果表明 *VEGFR1* rs9582036 和 rs9554320 作为舒尼替尼疗效的预测指标在临床上的应用价值有限。

课题组于 2016 年发现 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 的 A 等位基因携带者发生舒尼替尼诱导的高血压风险较野生型高。但由于 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 功能不明确, 无法解释上述相关性。第五章通过探寻 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 对舒尼替尼清除率的影响, 发现 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 的 A 等位基因携带者舒尼替尼清除率平均提高 29.3%, 提示 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 的 A 等位基因可能与 *CYP3A4* 酶活性增加有关。最新文献报道, 高加索人群中 *CYP3A5* rs776746 和 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 之间存在连锁不平衡。因此, *CYP3A4* rs4646437 与舒尼替尼不良反应和清除率的相关性的根源可能来自于 *CYP3A5* rs776746。为进一步阐明 *CYP3A5* rs776746 和 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 与舒尼替尼治疗的相关性, 第五章的事后研究和第六章分别对 *CYP3A5* rs776746 和 *CYP3A4* rs4646437 与舒尼替尼清除率和舒尼替尼诱导的高血压进行协同分析, 结果表明 *CYP3A5* rs776746 (而不是 *CYP3A4* rs4646437) 是上述相关性的主要遗传因子。

近十年来, 在 mRCC 患者中舒尼替尼药物遗传学研究领域, 研究重点集中在血管生成途径相关基因的 SNPs。最近, 越来越多的研究表明抗血管生成药物与免疫反应之间存在相互作用。第七章采用标记 SNP 方法, 研究编码检查点 (PD-L1, PD-1 和 CTLA-4) 基因 (CD274, PDCD1 和 CTLA-4) 的单核苷酸多态性与舒尼替尼疗效的相关性。结果显示 *CTLA-4* rs231775 的 GG 基因型患者 OS 显著高于其他基因型, 提示 *CTLA-4* rs231775 可作为 cc-mRCC 患者的预后指标。

基于遗传生物标志物检测的靶向疗法为肿瘤治疗带来的希望, 越来越多的研究试图寻找预测舒尼替尼疗效的遗传生物标志物。然而, 截至目前, 尚未有遗传生物标志物被应用于指导舒尼替尼的个体化治疗中。第八章阐述了实现这一梦想所面临的挑战。

第九章对本课题的研究进行了总结性讨论, 综述了目前将遗传生物标志物应用于舒尼替尼个体化治疗中所面临的问题, 并展望了舒尼替尼药物遗传学研究方向、新的研究技术和研究方法以及肾细胞癌新的靶向治疗药物。



## CHAPTER 10

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### List of publications

- ❖ **Liu X**, Diekstra MH, Swen JJ, Boven E, Castellano D, Gelderblom H, Mathijssen RH, Rodríguez-Antona C, García-Donas J, Rini BI, Guchelaar HJ. Association of single nucleotide polymorphisms in *IL8* and *IL13* with sunitinib-induced toxicity in patients with metastatic renal cell carcinoma. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol*. 2015 Dec; 71(12): 1477-1484.
- ❖ **Liu X**, Swen JJ, Boven E, Castellano D, Gelderblom H, Mathijssen RH, Rodríguez-Antona C, García-Donas J, Rini BI, Guchelaar HJ. Meta-analysis on the association of *VEGFR1* genetic variants with sunitinib outcome in metastatic renal cell carcinoma patients. *Oncotarget*. 2017 Jan 3;8(1):1204-1212.
- ❖ **Liu X**, Fiocco M, Swen JJ, Guchelaar HJ. Assessment of ethnic differences in sunitinib outcome between Caucasian and Asian patients with metastatic renal cell carcinoma: a meta-analysis. *Acta Oncol*. 2017 Apr;56(4):582-589.
- ❖ Diekstra MH, **Liu X**, Swen JJ, Guchelaar HJ. What do we need to make genetic biomarker-guided treatment for renal cell carcinoma a reality? *Pharmacogenomics*. 2017 Jan;18(1):1-4.
- ❖ **Liu X**, Swen JJ, Diekstra MH, Boven E, Castellano D, Gelderblom H, Mathijssen RH, Vermeulen SH, Oosterwijk E, Junker K, Roessler M, Alexiusdottir K, Sverrisdottir A, Radu MT, Ambert V, Eisen T, Warren A, Rodríguez-Antona C, García-Donas J, Böhringer S, Koudijs KKM, Kiemeny LALM, Rini BI, Guchelaar HJ. A genetic polymorphism in *CTLA-4* is associated with overall survival of sunitinib-treated patients with clear cell metastatic renal cell carcinoma. (*Accepted by Clin Cancer Res*)
- ❖ **Liu X**, Swen JJ, Diekstra MH, Boven E, Castellano D, Gelderblom H, Mathijssen RH, Rodríguez-Antona C, García-Donas J, Rini BI, Guchelaar HJ. *CYP3A5* rs776746, rather than *CYP3A4* rs4646437, is the causal CYP3A variant in the association with sunitinib-induced hypertension. (*Submitted*)
- ❖ **Liu X**, Moes DJAR, Swen JJ, Diekstra MH, Klümpen HJ, Lolkema MPJK., Kloth JSL, Yu H, Gelderblom H, van Schaik RHN, Gurney H, Huitema ADR, Steeghs, N Crumbaker M, Mathijssen RHJ and Guchelaar HJ. Effect of *CYP3A4* rs4646437 on clearance of sunitinib and its active metabolite SU12662. (Manuscript in preparation)



## **CHAPTER 10**

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### **Curriculum Vitae**

Xiaoyan Liu was born on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1983 in Longkou, Shandong Province, P.R. China. She received her high school diploma at the 3<sup>rd</sup> High School in Longkou in 2002. In the same year, she started her study program in School of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Shandong University and obtained her BSc degree in 2006. Motivated by her internship project in Qilu Hospital, she continued her master program in the field of Phase I clinical trial in the Institute of Pharmaceutics, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences of Shandong University and the Institute of Clinical Pharmacology, Qilu Hospital of Shandong University. Under the supervision of Prof. Ruichen Guo, she finished her master program and obtained her master degree in 2009. Then she started to work as a pharmacist in the Institute of Clinical Pharmacology, Qilu Hospital of Shandong University. Her major daily work was to explore and validate HPLC-MS/MS method for sample concentration determination. In 2012, she gained interest in the science of pharmacogenetics and its implementation on individualized medicine. In 2014, she successfully applied 4-year scholarship from Chinese Scholarship Council to start her PhD program, described in this thesis, under the supervision of Prof. Henk-Jan Guchelaar and Dr. Jesse Swen in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy & Toxicology, Leiden University Medical Center. After completion of her PhD project, she will continue her career as a researcher in the field of pharmacogenetics in the Institute of Clinical Pharmacology, Qilu Hospital of Shandong University.

Xiaoyan Liu is married to Zhong Du and they have a daughter Yixin Du.

## **CHAPTER 10**

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### **Acknowledgements**

With excitement and anxiety, I landed in Amsterdam together with my husband and 2.5-year old daughter on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. Till now, I still remember the beautiful sunny weather when we arrived. It seems that is a good sign of my research in The Netherlands. During the past years, I have more than once to dream the moment when I finish my program and am writing the acknowledgements. Today, I am there.

Undertaking the journey of PhD in The Netherlands has been a truly life-changing experience for me and it would not have been possible to do without the support and guidance that I receive from many people.

First and foremost I want to thank my promotor Prof. Henk-Jan Guchelaar for your valuable guidance and excellent suggestions to make my PhD experience productive and stimulating. I learnt from you how to make impossibility into possibility and disadvantage into advantage, which I will benefit in a long run of my scientific career.

I would like to thank my co-promotor Dr. Jesse Swen for inspiring me with your wise thoughts and encouraging me with your enthusiasm and positive spirit. I would also express my gratitude to Dr. Dirk Jan Moes for your professional assistance.

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