

DYT1 dystonia-associated mutant affects cytoskeletal dynamics

Santos, M. *, Rebelo, S. *, da Cruz e Silva, E. F. *, da Cruz e Silva, O. A. B. *

*Center for Cell Biology, Health Sciences and Biology Department, University of Aveiro, Campus de Santiago, 3810-193 Aveiro, Portugal

Email: marianasmg@gmail.com

TorsinA and its related family members belong to the ATPases associated with a variety of cellular activities (AAA⁺) superfamily. TorsinA has been the most studied torsin family member due to its association with DYT1 dystonia. A mutation of a single glutamic acid within the C-terminal of torsinA ($\Delta E302/303$, also referred to as ΔE) was found in most cases of DYT1 dystonia [1]. TorsinA is primarily located in the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) lumen and nuclear envelope (NE), while ΔE -torsinA is abnormally concentrated in the NE [2]. TorsinA has been implicated in cytoskeleton dynamics through interaction with different binding partners. However, it seems that the ΔE -torsinA mutation interferes with cytoskeleton dynamics [3, 4]. Therefore, we analyzed cytoskeleton alterations associated with the ΔE -torsinA mutation. In order to achieve this goal, we transfected SH-SY5Y cells with GFP-wt-torsinA or GFP- ΔE -torsinA and performed immunofluorescence analysis with β -tubulin and acetylated α -tubulin specific antibodies and with phalloidin that binds to F-actin. We showed that in wt-torsinA transfected cells, β -tubulin, acetylated α -tubulin and F-actin were distributed throughout the cytoplasm, in a manner similar to non-transfected cells (Fig. 1A). In contrast, in some ΔE -torsinA transfected cells, the distribution of those markers is altered, being more restricted to the NE, and cells seem to be less intensely labeled. Moreover, in some cells, β -tubulin co-localized with ΔE -torsinA positive inclusions (Fig. 1A). Further, when we quantified the fluorescence intensity (FI) of β -tubulin, we detected a slight decrease of the FI in ΔE -torsinA transfected cells compared to wt-torsinA transfected cells (Fig.1B). In the same way, ΔE -torsinA transfected cells have lower levels of acetylated α -tubulin, which is a marker for microtubules stability, suggesting that microtubule dynamics may be compromised by the ΔE -torsinA mutation. Furthermore, we observed a loss of F-actin stress fibers in ΔE -torsinA transfected cells (Fig. 1A). Indeed, we showed that F-actin FI decrease from 1.03 to 0.83 (around 20%) in ΔE -torsinA transfected cells compared with wt-torsinA transfected cells (Fig. 1B). Our results are in agreement with previous reports where it was reported that the expression of ΔE -torsinA altered the localization of vimentin to the NE [3], KLC to inclusions and nesprin-3 to the ER [4]. Nesprins in the outer nuclear membrane bind to actin, microtubules and intermediate filaments, thus forming a complex that links the nucleoskeleton and cytoskeleton (the LINC complex). Therefore, torsinA and its binding partners may have a role in modulating the LINC complex. Disruption of the LINC complex may contribute to the development of muscular dystrophies and cardiomyopathies.

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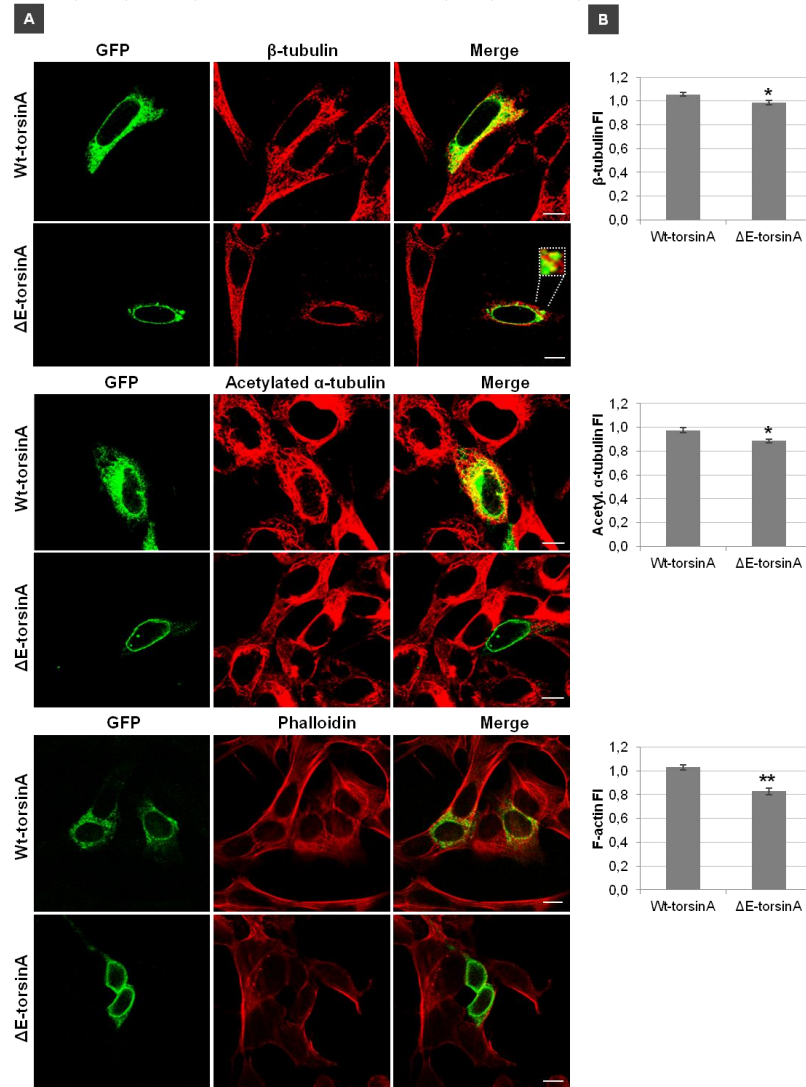


Figure 1. Distribution of β -tubulin, acetylated α -tubulin and F-actin in wt- and Δ E-torsinA transfected cells. **A-** SH-SY5Y cells were transfected with GFP-wt-torsinA or GFP- Δ E-torsinA. Specific primary antibodies for endogenous β -tubulin and acetylated α -tubulin were detected with Alexa Fluor 594-conjugated secondary antibody (red). Alexa Fluor 594-conjugated phalloidin (red) was used to label F-actin. The higher magnification view shows in more detail the co-localization of Δ E-torsinA and β -tubulin in inclusions. **B-** Quantification of β -tubulin, acetylated α -tubulin (acetyl. α -tubulin) and F-actin fluorescence intensity (FI), which represents the ratio transfected cells FI/total cells FI, in wt- and Δ E-torsinA transfected cells. Values are mean \pm SEM, $n=22$ cells (for β -tubulin), 30 cells (for acetyl. α -tubulin) and 20 cells (for F-actin). Statistical significance analysis was conducted by Student's t-test. Statistically different from wt-torsinA transfected cells, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$. Photographs were acquired using a LSM 510-Meta confocal microscope [5]. The argon laser line of 488 nm and the 561nm DPSS laser were used. Microphotographs were acquired in a sole section in the Z-axis (xy mode) and represent a mean of 16 scans. Profiles were acquired using the Zeiss LSM 510 4.0 software. Bars, 10 μ m.