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**The Effect of Uterine Environment during Peri-implantation Period  
on the Ultrastructure of Zona Pellucida in Mouse Oocytes and Embryos**

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**ABSTRACT:** In the studies on the hatching mechanisms in mammals, many investigators focused on the embryonic intrinsic factor(s) in *in vitro* culture, but the uterine environment as an extrinsic factor(s) is thought to play an important role in hatching mechanism. Therefore to evaluate the effect of uterine environment on the hatching event *in vivo*, the immature(GV) and ovulated (M ) oocytes, and the late 2-cell embryos of mouse were transferred to pseudopregnant foster mother's uterus during peri-implantation period. So it was verified whether there would happen hatching by only uterine environment independently on embryonic stage. The ultrastructural changes of the zona surface of transferred group were compared with those of *in vivo* and *vitro* group by SEM. 36hrs after transfer, the immature and ovulated oocytes almost degenerated, and the late 2-cell embryos developed to various embryonic stages. However, the embryos which didn't develop to blastula stage did not hatch. The ultrastructural network of ZP in transferred group seemed to be smoothed uniformly, which was different from *in vitro* group. In conclusion, it is suggested that the uterine environment during peri-implantation period enhances the embryo hatching by provoking the structural change of ZP.

**Key words:** Hatching, Mouse embryos, Zona pellucida (ZP), Uterus, SEM

(compaction), (blastocyst formation),  
(hatching), (implantation)  
가 (zona pellucida, ZP) 가  
가 (glycoprotein)  
2 (secondary follicle) 가  
ZP1 (200 kD), ZP2 (120  
kD) ZP3 (83 kD) 3 (Wassarman, 1988).  
(cortical reaction) (zona reaction) 가  
(polyspermy), ,  
가  
(Pinsker *et al.*, 1974; Perona and Wassarman, 1986). ,  
가  
(Gordon and Dapunt, 1993; cheon *et al.*, 1997).  
가 (Yasumasu, 1961; Edwards  
*et al.*, 1977), (Caroll and Hedrick, 1974; Katagiri, 1976), (Yamagami, 1972)

1974), (trophoectoderm) trypsin (Pinsker *et al.*,  
(trypsin-like proteinase) strypsin (Perona and  
Wassarman, 1986; Sawada *et al.*, 1990).

tissue type plasminogen activator (t-PA) trypsin  
가 (Strickland *et al.*, 1976).  
(*in vitro*) (*in vivo*)  
(ghost ZP, shed

ZP)가 가  
(McLaren, 1970). lysin  
hamster proteolysin  
(Gonzales and Bavister, 1995).

(oxyradical) (Thomas *et al.*, 1997)  
(Perona and Wassarman, 1986; Confino *et*  
*al.*, 1997),  
(McLaren, 1970; Gonzales and Bavister, 1995).

(species) 가  
가  
(lysis) (McLaren, 1970).

lysin  
(scanning electron microscope)  
(surface)

1.  
(light) 14 , (dark) 10 ,  
(Swiss Albino, ICR) 8 10 10

0.4 % bovine serum albumin (BSA) Hepes-buffered  
Medium 2 (M2+BSA; Fulton and Whittingham, 1978)  
(GV stage oocyte) pregnant mare's serum gonadotropin



culture dish, 60 × 15mm, Corning 25010) 37 , 5 % (CO<sub>2</sub>) 95 % 가  
 100 % 가 (Cellstar, QWJ500)  
 36 .

6.

(outer surface) .  
 0.5 % glutaraldehyde (Sigma)가 PBS 4 , PBS 3  
 0.1 % poly-L-lysine (Sigma) slide (8 mm × 8 mm)  
 가 . 가 slide 0.1 % osmium tetroxide  
 (OsO<sub>4</sub>) 1 (post fixation) . (50 100%)  
 ethanol(Merk) (dehydration) isoamylacetate  
 (Critical Point Dryer; HITACHI, HCP-2)  
 (specimen holder, stub)  
 가 , (HITACHI, E-1010)  
 (Au<sup>2+</sup>) 20nm (HITACHI,  
 S-2380) 15 25kV .

1. (*In vivo* group)

, hCG , 96 가  
 (0%), 96 104  
 (10%) (12%)가 104 112  
 가 가 (50%)가 . 112  
 가 (55%)  
 (32%) (Fig. 1).

2.

, (GV oocyte; 46 hrs post PMSG  
 injection) (Fig. 2A) (20 hrs post hCG  
 injection) (corona radiata cells) 가  
 (Fig. 2B). 2- (48 hrs post hCG injection) 가  
 (Fig. 3A), (96 hrs post hCG injection)  
 (Fig. 3B). (shrunken blastocyst; 112 hrs post hCG  
 injection) (Fig. 3C).

3. (Transferred oocyte/embryo group)

Fig. 1 hCG 96 112  
 (post hCG injection) 가 가  
 (pseudopregnant) 가 hCG 76 , 96  
 112  
 (82%) (84%) , 2-  
 가 hCG 96 ( 20 )  
 가 (data were not shown), 112 (36  
 ) 가  
 (Table 1).

2- , 가  
 hCG 96  
 (Fig. 4C) 112 (Fig.  
 4A). 112

(Fig. 5A and 6A).

4. (*In vitro* group)

36 2-  
 (26.7%) (73.3%)  
 (Table 1),  
 36 (morula)  
 (Fig. 4B).  
 가 (Fig. 5B),  
 (Fig. 6B).

가 가 (Gordon and Dapunt,  
 1993) 가

strypsin, tissue type plasminogen activator,  
 hepsin, metalloproteinase oxyradical  
 (Caroline *et al.*, 1996; Perona and Wassarman, 1986;  
 Thomas *et al.*, 1997; Vu *et al.*, 1997).

(McLaren, 1970) (in vivo model)  
가  
(zona pellucida lysis) 가 (proteolytic activity) (Pinsker *et al.*, 1974), estrogen (Orsini and McLaren, 1967; McLaren ; 1970) progesterone (Gonzales and Bavister, 1995).  
(in vivo) 가  
(Gonzales and Bavister, 1995; Lee *et al.*, 1997). , IVF-ET (In Vitro Fertilization-Embryo Transfer) 가  
(zona hardening)  
. (Gordon and Dapunt, 1993a and b).  
가  
가  
hCG 102 (Thomas *et al.*, 1997) (Fig. 1).  
hCG 96 가  
가 112 (post hCG injection) (shrunk blastocyst) PMSG hCG (Miller and Armstrong, 1981a and b; Lim *et al.*, 1997) . 가 (degeneration) (fragmentation) , 2- 가  
가 (Table 1).  
가 (blastula) 가  
, 가  
(Perona and Wassarman, 1986; Sawada *et al.*, 1990; Strickland *et al.*, 1976).  
, ,  
(Familiari

*et al.*, 1992).

36  
 가  
 post hCG 112  
 2-  
 (Fig. 4A)  
 가  
 2-  
 (Fig. 3C)  
 (Fig. 4B).  
 2-  
 (Fig. 5A and 6A).  
 (Fig. 5B),  
 (Fig. 6B). 가 (maturation)  
 (Familiari, 1992).

(Fig. 4A, 5A, 6A).

, pH protease, dithiothreitol  
 (Robert and Steven, 1995). protease가 가  
 , protease 가 가 가 (Pinsker *et al.*, 1974),  
 (Lee *et al.*, 1997).

, 가  
 가  
 가  
 가

( ) . 1998

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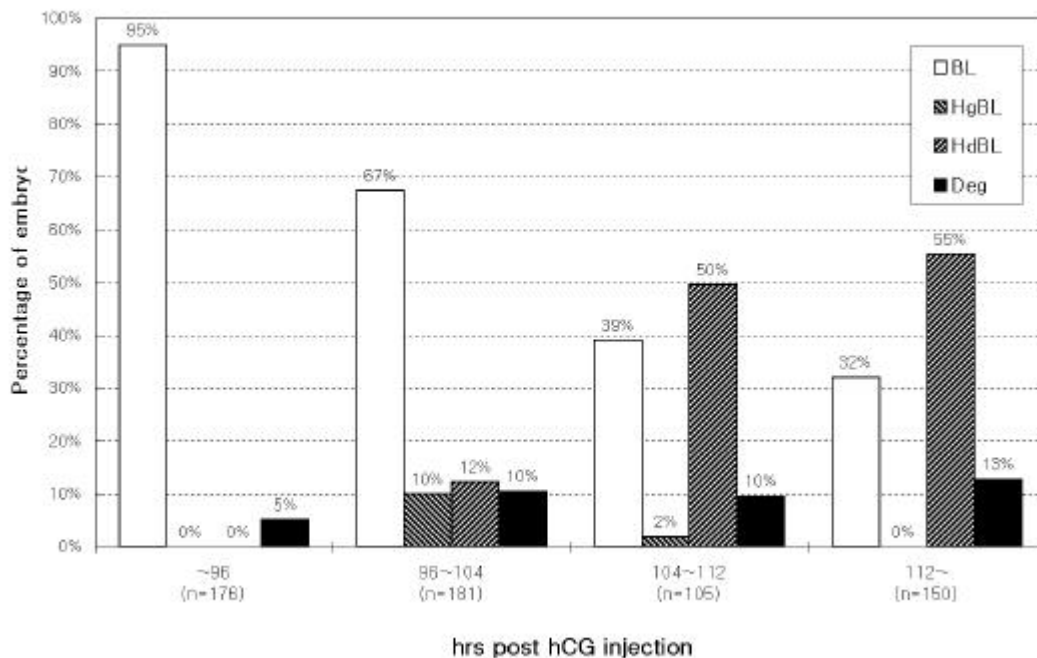
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**Table 1. The Development of the 2-cell embryos transferred to uterus (A) and cultured *in vitro* (B)**

Exp. group	No.(%) of embryos						
	2C	3-4C	5-8C	M	BL	HdBL	Deg
<b>A</b> 29 <sup>a</sup>	7 (24.1)	5 (17.2)	0 (0.0)	4 (13.8)	1 (3.5)	1 (3.5)	11 (37.9)
<b>B</b> 30 <sup>b</sup>	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	22 (73.3)	8 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

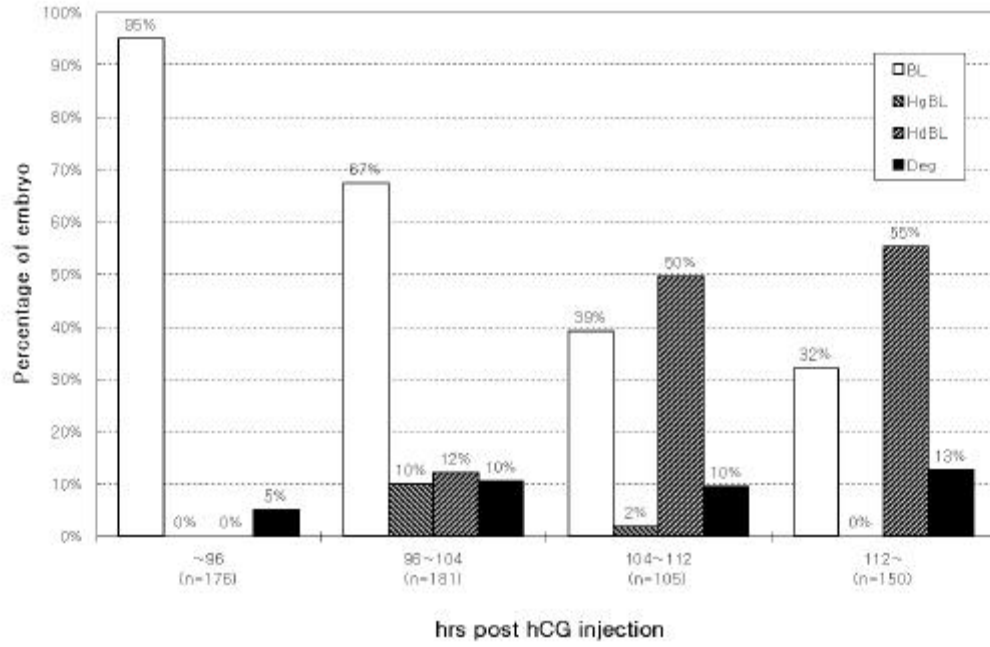
Embryos were exposed to uterus for 36hrs, when foster mothers were at 76–112 hrs post hCG injection (A) or embryos were cultured for 36 hrs (B). a: Number of embryos recovered after transfer. b: Number of embryos cultured.

Abbreviations: C; cell, M; morula, BL; blastocyst, HdBL; hatched blastocyst, Deg; degenerate embryo.



**Fig. 1.** The state of mouse blastocysts retrieved from the uterus (*in vivo* group) according to the times of post-hCG injection. BL; blastocyst, HgBL; hatching blastocyst, HdBL; hatched blastocyst without zona pellucida. Deg; degenerate embryo. n= number of embryos retrieved

- Fig. 2.** Scanning electron microphotographs of the outer surface of zona pellucida of mouse immature (A) and ovulated oocyte (B). Arrows indicate cumulus derivatives. Scale bar is 2  $\mu$ m.
- Fig. 3.** Scanning electron microphotographs of outer surface of zona pellucida of mouse 2-cell (48 hrs post hCG injection) (A), expanded blastocyst (96 hrs post hCG injection)(B) and shrunk blastocyst (112 hrs post hCG injection)(C) *in vivo*. Scale bar is 2  $\mu$ m.
- Fig. 4.** Scanning electron microphotographs of the outer surface of zona pellucida of mouse embryo transferred to uterus (A, C) and cultured *in vitro* (B). A, Blastocyst developed from the 2-cell embryo which was exposed to uterus for 36hrs, when foster mothers was at 76 112 hrs post hCG injection; B, Morula cultured from 2-cell embryo for 36 hrs; C, 4-cell embryo developed from the 2-cell embryo which was exposed to uterus for 20hrs, when foster mother was at 76 96 hrs post hCG injection. Scale bar is 2  $\mu$ m.
- Fig. 5.** Scanning electron microphotographs of the outer surface of zona pellucida of ovulated oocyte transferred to uterus (A) and cultured *in vitro* (B). A, Oocyte degenerated from the ovulated oocytes (M ) which was exposed to uterus for 36hrs, when foster mother was at 76 112 hrs post hCG injection; B, Degenerate oocyte cultured from ovulated oocyte for 36 hrs. Arrows indicate cumulus derivatives. Scale bar is 2  $\mu$ m
- Fig. 6.** Scanning electron microphotographs of outer surface of zona pellucida of immature oocyte transferred to uterus (A) and cultured *in vitro* (B). A, Oocyte degenerated from the immature oocytes (GV) which were exposed to uterus for 36hrs, when foster mother was at 76 112 hrs post hCG injection; B, Degenerate oocyte cultured from GV stage for 36 hrs. Arrows indicate cumulus derivatives. Scale bar is 2  $\mu$ m. Abbreviation: GV, germinal vesicle.



**Fig.2**

**Fig.3**

**Fig.4**



**Fig.5**

**Fig.6**