Epithelial–mesenchymal transition in lung development and disease: does it exist and is it important?

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ABSTRACT

Epithelial–mesenchymal transition (EMT) is a process when epithelial cells gradually transform into mesenchymal-like cells losing their epithelial functionality and characteristics. EMT is thought to be involved in the pathogenesis of numerous lung diseases ranging from developmental disorders, fibrotic tissue remodelling to lung cancer. The most important question—namely what is the importance and contribution of EMT in the pathogenesis of several chronic lung conditions (asthma, COPD, bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome and lung fibrosis)—is currently intensely debated. This review gives a brief insight into the mechanism and assessment methods of EMT in various pulmonary diseases and summarises the recent literature highlighting the controversial experimental data and conclusions.

WHAT IS EPITHELIAL–MESC</p>
Figure 1  The most important features of epithelial–mesenchymal transition (EMT). Multiple pathways have been found to trigger EMT: tyrosine kinase receptors (epidermal growth factor, fibroblast growth factor, connective tissue growth factor, platelet-derived growth factor, insulin-like growth factor, etc), integrins, Wnt, nuclear factor (NF)-κB and transforming growth factor β (TGF-β) pathways. A common feature of these pathways is that they activate ‘master transcription factors’ (Snail, Slug, Zeb-1, Twist, etc) which switch on the EMT programme in epithelial cells, namely, downregulating E-cadherin expression and other genes linked to the epithelial phenotype and activating the transcription of genes associated with the mesenchymal phenotype. Canonical TGF-β/Smad signalling is perhaps the best characterised signalling pathway which contributes to fibrosis (for a recent review, see Fernandez et al (2008)). Activation of canonical Wnt signalling and β-catenin makes epithelial cells susceptible to EMT caused by TGF-β, by inhibiting the growth arrest which is induced by TGF-β. The extracellular matrix (ECM) also modulates TGF-β signalling through integrin signalling contributing to EMT. Inflammatory cytokines activating NF-κB are thought to further accentuate fibrosis and EMT in the lung.

Consequent downregulation of E-cadherin—show striking similarities between fibrosis, developmental programmes involving EMT and carcinogenesis, supporting a common molecular regulatory background is present. However, these experimental methods only provide a ‘snapshot’ of a process stretched over a period of time and thus are criticised for not being suitable to follow a dynamic process like EMT. To solve this ongoing controversy there is a need for methods which are able to track the transdifferentiation process more reliably, like intravital microscopy or cell fate mapping.

Currently there are no publications available describing the use of intravital microscopy to evaluate EMT of lung epithelial cells in real time. Faulkner et al found that kidney interstitial fibroblasts do not derive from tubular epithelial cells in renal fibrosis and it was described that activation of intrinsic transforming growth factor β (TGF-β) signalling is essential in blood-borne metastasis formation in breast cancer cells using in vivo imaging techniques. However, the most important question remaining is whether EMT causally contributes to lung disease and, if yes, to what extent? Lung conditions with chronic inflammation and persistent injury result in scarring, fibrosis and tissue remodelling, leading to a decrease of lung function, respiratory failure and death. Recently, experiments using genetic cell fate tracking of lung epithelial cells were performed to address this issue in mouse models of lung fibrosis and allergic asthma. These studies found that approximately 30–50% of murine lung fibroblasts in lung fibrosis and allergic asthma were derived from epithelial cells which had undergone EMT as identified by genetic tagging. In these models, β galactosidase was used as a genetic label. Criticism of this method highlighted that the enzymatic reaction using X-gal and β galactosidase does not allow high-resolution confocal imaging contrary to fluorescent tags. Because of this, the borders between neighbouring cells are obscure and the possibility of false-positive identification of cells cannot be excluded. Additionally, these lineage-tracking studies used transgenic mice in which the recombination was driven by a 3.7 kb fragment of the human surfactant protein C (Sftpc) promoter, which is somewhat different from the endogenous murine Sftpc promoter which drives the recombination in other animal models. Also in vitro culture of alveolar epithelial cells (AECs) after isolation may result in experimental artefacts, which raises doubt as to whether EMT actually contributes to in vivo fibroblast formation.

Recently published data have challenged the idea that a significant fraction of myofibroblasts in the diseased lung derive from epithelial cells in animal models and humans. These contradictory results from different laboratories have resulted in an intensive debate on lung fibrosis, and kidney and liver fibrosis. Rock et al used a transgenic mouse strain with a
fluorescent protein tag (Tomato) under the control of the endogenous SftpC promoter. These experiments suggest that AECs do not transdifferentiate into myofibroblasts in large numbers in the bleomycin lung injury model. A recently published study in mice using multiple genetic tags for cell fate tracking found that myofibroblasts in unilateral urethral obstruction (UUO) kidney fibrosis derive from proliferation of local precursors (50%), bone-marrow-derived fibrocytes (35%), endothelial-mesenchymal transition (10%) and EMT (5%).

The study of LeBlue et al using the UUO model is a good example, highlighting the multiple origins of myofibroblasts. However, it is difficult to extrapolate from the UUO kidney fibrosis model to the lung as the organ function, the mechanism of parenchymal injury and consequent fibrotic changes are considerably different.

These controversial data illustrate the ongoing intensive scientific debate on the origin of myofibroblasts in fibrotic diseases and tissue remodelling. Elucidating this further is crucial to determine the direction of future research and identification of new therapeutic targets.

**EMT in Lung Development and Paediatric Diseases**

The first EMT event described occurs in gastrulation—the earliest stage of embryonic development. During this process, the primary mesenchyme is formed, giving the first distinction between epithelial and mesenchymal phenotypes. The epithelial and mesenchymal cell phenotypes are not irreversible, and during embryonic development, cells can convert between the epithelial and mesenchymal states through the process of EMT or mesenchymal-to-epithelial transition (MET). Sometimes, several rounds of EMT and MET are required to give a rise to specialised cell types needed for organ formation. During development, EMT provides flexibility in cell fate; however, the development of specialised tissues during embryogenesis requires additional epithelial cell plasticity that slightly differs from classical EMT. Epithelial cell plasticity is essential throughout the process of branching morphogenesis in numerous organs, including the lung. Lung-branching morphogenesis requires reciprocal signalling between the epithelium and surrounding mesenchyme that is mediated by coordinated activity of TGF-β/bone morphogenetic protein, Wnt, Sonic hedgehog, fibroblast growth factor (FGF) or retinoic acid signalling.

Dysregulation of these signalling pathways is implicated in aberrant lung branching, alveologenesis and pulmonary vascular development, events critical for normal lung development. In addition to genetic factors, pre-natal and post-natal environmental exposures, including epigenetics, play a significant role in programming lung morphogenesis and development of paediatric lung disease.

Bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD) is a chronic lung disease that occurs in very premature infants and is characterised by impaired alveologenesis and vascular development. BPD develops as a result of injury or infection on a very immature lung. Interstitial fibrosis is recognised as a prominent feature of BPD as a consequence of repetitive lung injury. Deng and coworkers revealed that expression of Notch1 or Notch4 in endothelial cells can cause transition to a mesenchymal phenotype via endothelial-to-mesenchymal transition, a process very similar to EMT. Constitutive Notch1 activation, together with inhibitor studies in lung organ cultures, identified a role for Notch signalling together with TGF-β in mesothelial EMT. Que et al have also shown that mesothelial cells covering the lung surface can migrate into the organ itself and give rise to various cell types, including mesenchymal cells, within the developing lung.

Taken together, these findings have important implications for our understanding of lung developmental defects; however, the causal impact of EMT to BPD has yet to be determined.

**EMT in Asthma**

Airway remodelling comprises thickening of the basement membrane accompanied by sub-epithelial fibrosis, epithelial shedding and smooth muscle hypertrophy/hyperplasia. Under normal conditions, the damaged epithelium is able to repair itself quickly. However, constant damage inflicted by chronic inflammation in asthma results in a greatly reduced number of ciliated cells, leaving the basal membrane surface only partially covered with basal cells which are more resistant to apoptosis. Loss of E-cadherin as a hallmark of EMT in airway epithelial cells of patients with asthma is also described. Fibroblasts and myofibroblasts are responsible for the increased production of ECM proteins, for example, collagen and proteoglycans, and also serve as storage for cytokines and growth factors like TGF-β, which play important roles in fibrosis and the regulation of fibroblast–myofibroblast differentiation in inflamed airways.

Recent experimental data indicate that T helper 2 dominant chronic inflammation leads to elevated TGF-β levels in airways via increased production of TGF-β by eosinophils and macrophages, in addition to fibroblasts, endothelial and smooth muscle cells. TGF-β is stored in the ECM and in turn induces EMT and sub-epithelial fibrosis.

Concerning the pathogenesis of asthma, does EMT contribute to tissue remodelling and sub-epithelial fibrosis? Johnson and colleagues found evidence for this phenomenon in a house dust mite (HDM) allergen sensitised transgenic murine model. They demonstrated that β1-galactosidase-tagged large airway epithelial cells gradually lose epithelial characteristics, gain expression of mesenchymal markers, for example, vimentin, and migrate into the sub-epithelial compartment. In vivo cell-fate tracking of genetically labelled epithelial cells provides evidence for epithelial cell transdifferentiation in this mouse model of chronic asthma. Other studies use primary human bronchial epithelial cell (hBEC) cultures to study the role of allergen sensitisation in EMT. HDM sensitisation of the airways synergises with TGF-β1 and results in the loss of E-cadherin expression, caveolin-1 internalisation and consequent loss of epithelial barrier function. Hackett et al investigated EMT using air–liquid interface cultures of hBECs isolated from patients with asthma and non-asthmatic controls. The authors found that basal cells of the stratified airway epithelium are the most susceptible to TGF-β1-induced EMT. Interestingly, they found no histological evidence for expression of mesenchymal markers in the bronchial epithelium of matched patients with asthma, rather an increased number of cytokeratin-5+ (KRT5+) positive cells, indicating a differentiation shift towards the basal epithelial cell phenotype.

The results discussed above highlight the controversy and discrepancy between research data concerning EMT.

**EMT in Bronchiolitis Obliterans Syndrome**

Bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome (BOS) is a major cause of allograft dysfunction in lung transplant recipients. Hodge et al found increased expression of mesenchymal proteins by large airway bronchial epithelial cells (BECs) in patients with BOS after lung transplantation to be a clear indicator of the presence of...
of EMT. Ward et al. found that S100A4 and matrix metalloproteinase (MMP)-2, MMP-7 and MMP-9 expression was present in the airway epithelium of patients who were stable following lung transplant without signs of BOS. Invasive capacity of BECs isolated from these patients was also shown. It is known that allograft infections pose a risk for BOS and has been shown to promote EMT in patient-derived small airway epithelial cells. Inadequate graft microvasculature and consequent graft ischaemia has emerged as a promoting factor for EMT in transplanted lungs. Intriguingly, an in vitro study suggests that commonly used immunosuppressive agents may promote EMT in BECs.

**EMT in COPD**

COPD is accompanied by inflammation and tissue remodelling, and has been known to be strongly associated with lung cancer. A recent study found a robust genomic link between COPD, lung cancer and Hedghog signalling, which is also implicated in tobacco-smoke-induced EMT. Tissue remodelling in COPD is characterised by emphysema, and small airway remodelling with peribronchioral fibrosis. Recent investigations reported that nicotine and tobacco smoke induce EMT in BECs in a Wnt3a/β-catennin/TGF-β-dependent manner. Wang et al. described that urokinase plasminogen activator receptor is overexpressed in the airway epithelium of patients with COPD and is involved in mediating the effects of tobacco smoke on EMT in BECs. Studies in mice chronically exposed to tobacco smoke showed increased levels of TGF-β1, connective tissue growth factor (CTGF) and platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF)-B in the treatment group. All these growth factors are known to induce EMT. Recent clinical investigations in patients with COPD showed that cells containing for epithelial and mesenchymal markers are present in the large airways of asymptomatic smokers and in especially large numbers in current smokers. The authors showed that the reticular basement membrane (Rbm) in people who smoke and those with COPD is highly fragmented, with elongated spaces or cracks termed clefts in the Rbm usually contained cells positive for mesenchymal markers S100A4, vimentin and MMP-9. Recent findings indicate that similar changes can also be observed in the small (<1 mm) airways of smokers.

**EMT in Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis**

The histological finding characteristic for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) is usual interstitial pneumonia (UIP) with scattered α-SMA-positive fibroblastic foci (FF) in collagen-rich areas, alternating with normal lung areas. The most often used animal model for IPF is the single-dose bleomycin challenge, although it is known that several features of IPF—most importantly being a progressive and chronic disease—are poorly represented. Also, many drugs including corticosteroids proved to be effective in the bleomycin model but are ineffective in IPF. A recently published study suggests that a repetitive bleomycin injury model recapitulates several features of human IPF better than the conventional single-dose model. In this model the authors found that about 50% of S100A4+ fibroblasts are epithelial derived using genetic fate tracking. On the contrary, Rock et al. found that epithelial cells do not contribute to fibroblast formation in the single-dose model.

Human immunohistochemistry studies on the role of EMT in the formation of myofibroblasts in IPF are controversial. Harada et al. found myofibroblast cells in FF expressing epithelial markers TTF-1, cytokeratin and surfactant protein B. Chilosi et al. identified migratory markers laminin5-γ2, heat shock protein 27 and fascin expression in epithelial cells clustering above FF in UIP samples with special ‘sandwich morphology’. On the contrary, Yamada et al. did not find histological evidence for EMT in tissue samples from patients diagnosed with IPF (n=15) and non-specific interstitial pneumonia (n=12) using dual immunohistochemistry. In conclusion, the evidence that EMT is involved in the formation of activated myofibroblasts in pulmonary fibrosis remains controversial.

**EMT in Lung Cancer**

EMT is thought to contribute to cancer invasion and metastasis by allowing malignantly transformed epithelial cells to migrate, invade the surrounding stroma, and spread through the blood and lymphatic system to distant sites. Through the process of EMT, cancer cells not only lose their cell–cell adhesions and exhibit elevated motility and invasion, but also gain increased resistance to apoptosis, chemotherapeutic drugs and even develop stem-cell like properties. According to current views, EMT has prognostic significance in various cancers as it is highly correlated with invasive phenotype and metastasis-forming capacity. This so-called ‘EMT phenotype’ is a primary determinant of prognosis. It has been shown in non-small-cell lung cancer that EMT phenotype is associated with epidermal growth factor receptor mutations and drug resistance, and also with formation of cancer stem cells. In lung cancer, the circulating tumour cells (CTCs) expressing epithelial marker EpCAM are lower compared with other solid tumours. However, when CTC isolation is not based on epithelial markers, the CTC numbers are similar to those of other solid tumours and have strong prognostic value. These data suggest that lung cancer CTCs have lost their epithelial characteristics having undergone EMT. A recent review suggests that anticancer and antimetastasis drugs frequently have side effects associated with defective wound healing, implicating that similar molecular pathways contribute to these processes. However, despite the growing body of evidence, there is still no direct proof in humans that EMT actually happens as a dynamic process in tumour metastasis formation.

**WHAT IS THE CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF EMT?**

Two disease groups need to be considered concerning the clinical importance of EMT in the lung: conditions with fibrosis and tissue remodelling, and malignant lung diseases.

It has been recently highlighted that various forms of lung fibrosis and tissue remodelling are present in all chronic respiratory diseases. Current research data highlight that we have to be careful on judging how much EMT contributes to the actual fibrosis, scarring and tissue remodelling. Among the identified targets is the TGF-β pathway and other growth factors, like PDGF, CTGF, FGF and vascular endothelial growth factor, which are considered to trigger EMT and have a proven pathogenic role in fibrotic lung diseases. Most of these molecular targets have been tested in animal models but there has been no success so far in translating these findings to the clinic. Pirfenidone is the only licensed therapy for IPF but the mechanism of action is obscure and there are no in vivo data available of its effects on EMT.

As Wnt signalling pathways have been shown to be important in the pathogenesis in several lung diseases, such as fibrosis, asthma, COPD and lung cancer, they could serve as another promising therapeutic target. Currently there are multiple therapeutic approaches targeting Wnt signalling in lung disease.
diseases which might be applied in the clinic in the near future.86–88

For a detailed recent review on the involvement of EMT in malignant transformation and cancer progression, see Craene and Berx.70

For a concise summary of recent articles on EMT in lung diseases, please see the table in the online supplement.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summary, we can say that the extent and significance of EMT in lung diseases is still controversial because of the following issues:

1. A large majority of studies on EMT in lung diseases use methods which take only a ‘snapshot’ of this dynamic process—for example, immunohistochemistry, western blotting or flow cytometry. Although there have been moves to standardise the molecular markers of EMT,3 33 there are doubts as to whether EMT can only be defined by the coexpression of certain epithelial and mesenchymal markers,46 since similar molecular changes occur in epithelial cells during wound repair.11 12

2. In the case of fibrotic changes, genetic lineage tagging of cells in animal models is thought to be a reliable method; however, the results are contradictory in different animal models for lung fibrosis and other organ fibrosis models.33 It seems that the results in transgenic mice differ with regards to the nature of the genetic tag, the method used for its detection and also the quality of the transgenic construct used for recombination.

3. A large proportion of the in vivo data on the connection between fibrosis and EMT have been obtained from the single-dose pulmonary bleomycin challenge model. This has received criticism and clearly there is a need for the development of a more reliable murine lung fibrosis model that accurately reflects human UIP.

4. A growing body of evidence supports that EMT has a pivotal role in malignant transformation, invasion and metastatic capacity, and in the formation of cancer stem cells. In lung carcinomas, CTCs seem to have shifted towards a more mesenchymal phenotype compared with other solid tumours, suggesting EMT. Hitherto, there is no convincing direct in vivo evidence of EMT in human tumours, although suggestions were made about the detection of EMT in tumours in situ.89

In conclusion, much recent research has highlighted the potential of EMT to be involved in lung development and disease responses. The precise clinical importance of EMT outside of tumour biology remains to be determined, but the development of drugs that target growth factors known to promote EMT suggest that modulation of EMT processes in the clinical setting may soon be possible. Whether these are clinically effective remains to be seen.

Contributors DB, NW, RYM, OE and DRT wrote and edited the manuscript.

Funding DB is currently funded by the FP7 Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship (FP7-PEOPLE-IEF 300371) and received funding from the European Respiratory Society Long Term Fellowship (ERS-LTRF 2011–131).

Competing interests None.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

REFERENCES


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<td>BPD</td>
<td>Dong C et al. (1)</td>
<td>Murine model of hyperoxia-induced BPD, GFP-tagged bone marrow (BM) chimera mice</td>
<td>60% oxygen for 14 days, CXCL12 chemotaxis assay</td>
<td>N Y N</td>
<td>Vimentin</td>
<td>GFP-tagged BM-derived fibroblasts were engrafting the lung in active fibrotic areas; there were significantly more BM-derived CXCR4+ fibroblasts in the lungs of O2 treated animals than in controls; BM-derived TFF-1+ epithelial cells were detected in injured lungs</td>
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<td>Asthma</td>
<td>Heijink J et al. (2)</td>
<td>Bronchial epithelial cell line, Primary bronchial epithelium (hBEC), in vitro</td>
<td>TGF-β1, House dust mite (HDM) allergen</td>
<td>Y N Y</td>
<td>EGFR,α-catenin activation, cytokeratin (KRT), Myosin light chain phosphorylation</td>
<td>HDM allergen acted synergically with TGF-β1 in inducing EMT in primary hBECs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hackett T-L et al. (3)</td>
<td>hBEC from patients with asthma (8) and healthy controls (10)</td>
<td>TGF-β1 SMAD3 siRNA, BMP-7</td>
<td>Y N N</td>
<td>Fibronectin (FN), collagen-1, occludin-1</td>
<td>In vitro evidence for EMT in HBE; basal epithelial cells are especially sensitive to EMT as in vitro data suggest; no histological evidence for EMT in sections from matched asthmatic patients</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hackett T-L et al. (4)</td>
<td>hBEC cell lines 16HBE and BEAS-2B; primary hBEC from healthy controls and from patients with asthma</td>
<td>HDM allergen; epidermal growth factor (EGF)</td>
<td>Y N N</td>
<td>Caveolin-1 (Cav-1), β-catenin, Thymic Stromal Lymphopoietin (TSLP),</td>
<td>Cav-1 levels, junctional E-cadherin and β-catenin were significantly lower, TSLP levels</td>
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<td>Johnson JI et al. (5)</td>
<td>HDM-induced asthma in ROSA-26/SPC-Cre-LacZ reporter mice</td>
<td>HDM for 15 weeks</td>
<td>Y Y Y</td>
<td>TGF-β1, occludin, pro-collagen I, SNAIL</td>
<td>LacZ+/α-SMA+ cells were incorporated into airway smooth muscle; LacZ+/Vim+ cells were present in the sub-epithelium; 30% of Vim+ cell were also LacZ+</td>
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<td>Hodge et al. (6)</td>
<td>Bronchial brushings from lung transplant (LTx)patients with (6) or without BOS (16)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N Y N</td>
<td>Flow cytometry, S100A4 FN, HLA-DR; TGF-β1 and HGF levels in BALF-ELISA</td>
<td>EMT markers α-SMA, S100A4 FN and HLA-DR were increased in epithelial cells from BOS patients compared to stable LTx patients; Increased levels of HGF but not TGF-β1 in the BALF of BOS patients.</td>
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<td>BOS</td>
<td>Ward et al (7)</td>
<td>Endobronchial biopsy and brushings from 16 stable LTx patients</td>
<td>TGF-β1</td>
<td>N N N</td>
<td>S100A4 IHC, MMP-2, 7 and 9 zymography, invasion assay</td>
<td>A median 15% of the biopsy epithelium stained for S100A4 and MMP-7 in stable lung transplant recipients; Epithelial cultures from lung allografts were positive for S100A4 and MMP-2 and 9 showed zymographic activity. MMP total protein and activity was increased after TGF-β1 treatment; Both TGF-β1 stimulated and non-stimulated epithelial cells were invasive, invasion capacity was higher in TGF-β1 stimulated cells.</td>
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<td>Borthwick et al. (8)</td>
<td>In vitro culturing of hBEC form obtained via bronchial brushing from stable LTx patients, co-culture with THP-1</td>
<td>TGF-β1 with or without P. aeruginos cell lysate (lab. strain and clinical isolates (9))</td>
<td>Y N Y</td>
<td>IL-8, IL-1β, TNF-α, FN, KRT-19</td>
<td>Supernatants, but not co-cultures of THP-1 cells treated with P. aeruginosina accentuated EMT on cultured hBECs. Clinical isolates of P. aeruginosina induced significantly higher production of inflammatory cytokines in THP-1s than the reference strain.</td>
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<td>BOS</td>
<td>Borthwick et al.</td>
<td>In vitro culturing of hBEC form obtained via bronchial brushing from stable LTx patients</td>
<td>TGF-β, TNF-α</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>FN, KRT-19, S100A4, MMP-9 zymography, Matrigel invasion assay, collagen synthesis</td>
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<td>Bronchial epithelium upregulating EMT and downregulating epithelial markers in BOS but not in stable transplants; epithelial cells; TNF-β accentuates TGF-β1-induced EMT and cell migration, but not ECM deposition.</td>
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<td>BOS</td>
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<td>In vitro culture of hBECs isolated from small airways (&gt;1mm) of non-smokers (5), smokers (12) and COPD patients (15); IHC of tissue samples</td>
<td>Cigarette Smoke Extract (CSE)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>collagen type I, NOX4, ZO-1 (IHC); TGF-β1, cAMP and MMP-9 (ELISA) ERK1/2 and Smad3 phosphorylation (WB)</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>hBECs from smokers and COPD patients but not from controls show EMT; CSE-induced EMT is mediated by the ROS and downregulation of cAMP;</td>
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<td>BOS</td>
<td>Zou et al.</td>
<td>HBEC cell line</td>
<td>Nicotine, Wnt-3a, TGF-β1 siRNA</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>MMP-9, Collagen-I</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Nicotine treatment leads β-catenin to nuclear translocation, E-cad downregulation, αSMA, Vim, Col-1, MMP-9 and TGF-β1 upregulation in HBECs; Knockdown of Wnt3a and TGF-β1 using specific siRNA constructs prevented these effects..</td>
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<td>COPD</td>
<td>Sakai et al.(10, 11)</td>
<td>Endobronchial biopsies from non-smokers(15); ex-smokers with COPD(15), smokers with normal lung function(16) and current smokers (17)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Lung tissue samples obtained during lobectomy from 25 non-smokers, 25 smokers with and 18 smokers without COPD; Human primary small airway epithelial cells (SAEC)</td>
<td>CSE extract, uPAR-1 and 2-specific siRNA constructs;</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>COPD</td>
<td>Chung et al.</td>
<td>C57Bl/6 mice were exposed to cigarette smoke for up to 6 months</td>
<td>Smoke of 2R1 Kentucky research cigarettes in various doses</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>COPD</td>
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<td>Air-liquid interface (ALI) cultures were set up from HBECs from non-smokers (n=5), smokers (n=12) and patients with COPD (n=15)</td>
<td>CSE exposure</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>IPF</td>
<td>Kim et al.(12)</td>
<td>ROSA-26/SPC-Cre-LacZ reporter mice, in vitro culture of transgenic ATIs</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Tanjore et al. (13)</td>
<td>ROSA-26/SPC-Cre-LacZ reporter mice, in vitro culture of transgenic ATIs</td>
<td>IT bleomycin (single 0.08U dose)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S100A4, pro-SP-C</td>
<td>Approximately one-third of S100A4+ fibroblasts are derived from tagged epithelial cells; α-SMA+ myofibroblasts are a distinct population from EMT-derived S100A4+ Fibroblasts; some S100A4+ Fibroblasts derive from bone marrow.</td>
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<td>Deagryse et al. (14)</td>
<td>ROSA-26/SPC-Cre-LacZ reporter mice</td>
<td>IT bleomycin (0.04U given biweekly 8 times)</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>pro-SP-C, Clara cell 10 (CC-10), β-galactosidase, S100A4, TUNEL</td>
<td>Repetitive bleomycin dosing results in greater lung fibrosis, less neutrophilic inflammation, greater cell death, and more prominent EMT compared with the single-dose model; one-half of the S100A4+ fibroblasts were of epithelial lineage. The authors suggest this recapitulates better the features of IPF than the single-dose bleomycin model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harada et al. (15)</td>
<td>13 patients with UIP histology; 11 IPF, 2 autoimmune; 10 control patients w/ normal lung function</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Pro-SP-B, TTF-1, KRT7/8 (CAM5.2)</td>
<td>-SMA were detectable in some epithelial cells covering the fibroblastic foci in UIP but not in healthy control lungs. Spindle-shaped cells positive for TTF-1, ProSP-B, and KRT7/8 were detectable in the fibroblastic foci of UIP lungs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock et al. (16)</td>
<td>ROSA-26 / Sftpctm1-Cre-Tomato transgenic reporter mice</td>
<td>IT bleomycin (1.25 U/kg – 5 U/kg body weight dose) in a single injection</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>SP-C; AQP-5; S100A4; NG2; Desmin; CC-10; PECAM</td>
<td>Proliferating fibroblasts were derived from NG2+ and/or PDGFRB+ stromal populations but not from SP-C+ or CC-10+ epithelial cells using genetically tagged murine models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Methods/Treatment</td>
<td>Markers</td>
<td>Other markers</td>
<td>Main results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lung Cancer</td>
<td>Prudin et al (17)</td>
<td>Tissue from human lung cancers: squamous metaplasia (13), squamous dysplasia (34) &amp; carcinoma in situ (20), Brain metastases: adenocarcinoma (37), squamous cell (11).</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N-Cadherin, Integrin αvβ6, MMP-9, and phosphorylated EGFR. Methods: Tissue microarray construction, IHC, EGFR mutation analysis.</td>
<td>EMT phenotype was commonly expressed in dysplastic lesions, lung squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma. Brain metastases from these tumours expressed higher levels of E-cadherin than primary tumours implicating the occurrence of MET after dissemination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung Cancer</td>
<td>Pirzal et al (18)</td>
<td>AS49s (control) and LC31 (lung cancer primary cell line). LC31 cells grown as pneumospheres were subcutaneously injected in NOD/SCID mice.</td>
<td>TGF-β1 2ng/ml: AS49s for 30 days, LC31s for 80 days</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>KRT, N-cad, CD90, SLUG, TWIST, β-catenin. Stem markers: Oct4, Nanog, Sox2, c-kit, CD133.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>Ren et al (19)</td>
<td>Cell lines: Doxetace (DTX) sensitive and resistant human NSCLC line SPC-A1. Animal model: SPC-A1/DTX cells injected into nude mice.</td>
<td>ZEB1 siRNA knockdown. DTX treatment.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N-cad, KRT-19, TWIST. Methods: apoptosis assay, colony formation assay, wound healing assay, migration/invasion assays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tominga (20)</td>
<td>Human NSCLC lines: A549, PC-9, RERF-LC-KJ, and LC-2/ad</td>
<td>Cell lines were transfected to over-express miR-1.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Vinculin, occludin, SNAI1, SLUG, ZEB1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wik et al (21)</td>
<td>21 NSCLC cell lines were used: squamous (4), large cell (5), adeno-carcinoma (10), &amp; bronchio-alveolar (2).</td>
<td>Gefitinib, HDAC inhibitor (MS-275). E-cad transfection.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>EGFR, ZEB1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


