

**Medium Chain Fatty Acids and Wnt/ β -Catenin Inhibitors
as Adjunctive Colorectal Cancer Chemotherapeutic
Agents**

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Quote

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”

Martin Luther King Jr.

In Memory

This thesis is in memory of my beloved Dad, John Leo Fauser

6th November 1912 - 24th May 1990

Dad, your brave and selfless fight with cancer gave me the inspiration and continued courage to keep searching for the answers during this PhD, so that one day no-one will suffer during chemotherapy treatment.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my life-long friend, confidante and soul sister, Lee-Anne Bennett. Your unconditional love and support of me, physically, emotionally and spiritually has given me the strength and support to believe in myself, and given me the inspiration and courage to follow my heart and achieve my dreams. Words are never enough to show my gratefulness and love for you.

Table of Contents

Quote	ii
In Memory	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
Table of Figures	xiii
Table of Tables	xvii
Abstract	xix
Declaration	xxiv
Acknowledgements	xxv
Publications and Presentations Arising from Ph.D Candidature	xxix
Abbreviations	xxxi
CHAPTER 1 LITERATURE REVIEW	1
1.1 Introduction	2
1.1.1 Colorectal Cancer Chemotherapeutics.....	3
1.2 Apoptosis and Oxidative Stress	6
1.2.1 Oxidative Stress	7
1.2.3 Reactive Oxygen Species and Apoptosis.....	10
1.3 Fatty Acids as Potential Anti-neoplastic Agents	11
1.3.1 Short Chain Fatty Acids (SCFAs)	13
1.3.1.1 SCFA Induction of Apoptosis in Colorectal Cancer Cell Lines.....	14
1.3.1.2 Epigenetic Modification	17

1.3.1.3	Cell Cycle Modification.....	17
1.3.1.4	Signal Transduction Pathways.....	18
1.3.1.5	Reduction of Metastatic Properties.....	19
1.3.1.6	Modulation of the Redox State.....	19
1.3.2	Medium Chain Fatty Acids (MCFAs).....	20
1.3.2.1	Anti-Microbial Properties.....	21
1.3.2.2	Anti-Neoplastic Properties.....	21
1.3.3	Long Chain Fatty Acids (LCFAs).....	22
1.3.3.1	Induction of Apoptosis by LCFAs in Colon Cancer Cell Lines.....	22
1.3.3.2	Gene Regulation and Apoptosis.....	22
1.3.3.3	Cell Cycle Modification.....	23
1.3.3.4	Induction of Oxidative Stress.....	23
1.3.3.5	Signalling Pathways.....	24
1.3.3.6	Wnt Signalling and LCFAs.....	24
1.4	Wnt Signalling and Colorectal Cancer.....	26
1.4.1	Colonic Crypts: Crypt Fission and Intestinal Stem Cells.....	28
1.4.2	Large Intestinal Stem Cells.....	31
1.5	<i>In Vitro</i> Intestinal Models.....	33
1.6	Conclusion.....	34
CHAPTER 2 THE ANTI-NEOPLASTIC POTENTIAL OF MEDIUM CHAIN FATTY ACIDS IN COLORECTAL CANCER AND NORMAL INTESTINAL CELL LINES.....		37

2.1 Introduction.....	38
2.1.1 Hypothesis and Aims	43
2.2 Materials and Methods.....	44
2.2.1 Cell Lines	44
2.2.2 Cell Culture.....	44
2.2.1.1 Seeding of Multi-Well Tissue Culture Plates	45
2.2.2 Trypan Blue Exclusion Dye Assay Evaluation of Cell Viability of Caco-2 and IEC-6 Cell Lines Treated with MCFAs.....	46
2.2.2.1 Cytotoxic Dose Response Assay for MCFAs.....	46
2.2.2.2 Cell Viability Evaluation by Trypan Blue Exclusion Dye Assay.....	47
2.2.2.3 Statistical Analysis.....	48
2.3 Results.....	49
2.3.1 Cytotoxic Dose of Lauric Acid Significantly Reduced Caco-2 Cell Viability Compared to Butyrate	49
2.3.2 High Doses of Lauric Acid Reduced Caco-2 Cell Viability Compared to Butyrate	52
2.3.3 Capric Acid Moderately Reduced Caco-2 Cell Viability Compared to Butyrate.....	52
2.3.4 Myristic Acid did not Reduce Caco-2 Cell Viability Compared to Butyrate.....	54
2.3.5 Lauric Acid Preferentiality Reduced Caco-2 Cell Viability Compared to Capric Acid, Myristic Acid and Butyrate	57
2.3.6 MCFA Effects on Normal Intestinal Epithelial Cells	57
2.3.7 High Doses of Lauric Acid were Cytotoxic to IEC-6 Cells	57
2.4 Conclusion	60

CHAPTER 3	INDUCTION OF APOPTOSIS BY LAURIC ACID IN COLORECTAL	
	CANCER AND NON-TRANSFORMED INTESTINAL CELL LINES	65
3.1	Introduction.....	66
3.1.1	Hypothesis and Aims	69
3.2	Materials and Methods.....	70
3.2.1	Cell Culture.....	70
3.2.2	Experimental Design.....	70
3.2.2.1	Detection of Apoptosis and Necrosis in Lauric Acid and Butyrate-Treated Caco-2 and IEC-6 Cells	70
3.2.2.2	Cell Cycle Analysis in Lauric Acid and Butyrate-Treated Caco-2 and IEC-6 Cells	71
3.2.2.3	Glutathione Availability in Lauric Acid and Butyrate-Treated Caco-2 and IEC- 6 cells	73
3.2.2.4	Detection of Reactive Oxygen Species.....	74
3.2.2.5	Statistical Analysis.....	76
3.3	Results.....	78
3.3.1	Lauric Acid Reduced Cell Viability in the Caco-2 Cell Line.....	78
3.3.2	Lauric Acid Induced a Higher Percentage of Total Apoptosis Compared to Butyrate in Caco-2 Cells.....	78
3.3.2.1	Lauric Acid Induced Apoptosis and not Necrosis in the Caco-2 Cell Line.....	78
3.3.2.2	Lauric Acid Induced a Greater Percentage of Total Apoptosis than Butyrate in Caco-2 Cells.....	80

3.3.3 Lauric Acid Significantly Reduced Cell Viability Compared to Butyrate in IEC-6 Cells	80
3.3.4 Cytotoxic Concentration of Lauric Acid Reduced GSH in Caco-2 Cells.....	83
3.3.5 Cytotoxic Concentration of Lauric Acid Reduced GSH in IEC-6 Cells	83
3.3.6 Lauric Acid Modified the Cell Cycle in Caco-2 and IEC-6 Cells	83
3.3.6.1 Lauric Acid Reduced the Proportion of Caco-2 Cells in G0/G1 Phase.....	83
3.3.6.2 Lauric Acid Arrested the Proportion of Caco-2 Cells in S Phase.....	87
3.3.6.3 Lauric Acid Arrested the Proportion of Caco-2 Cells in M phase.....	87
3.3.6.4 Lauric Acid Reduced the Proportion of IEC-6 Cells in G0/G1 Phase.....	89
3.3.6.5 Lauric Acid Arrested the Proportion of IEC-6 Cells in S phase.....	89
3.3.6.6 Lauric Acid Arrested the Proportion of IEC-6 Cells in M phase	90
3.3.6.7 Caco-2 Cells Treated with Lauric Acid Generated Increased ROS Compared to Butyrate	90
3.3.6.8 Lauric Acid-Treated IEC-6 Cells Generated ROS and Butyrate Exerted a Protective Effect Against ROS	92
3.4 Conclusion	96
CHAPTER 4 THE EFFECT OF WNT/B-CATENIN SIGNALLING PATHWAY BLOCKADE ON CRYPT FISSION, STEM CELL AND GENE EXPRESSION IN THE NEONATAL RAT.....	102
4.1 Introduction.....	103
4.1.1 Hypothesis and Aims	106
4.2 Materials and Methods.....	107
4.2.1 Animals, Experimental Design and Tissue Processing	107

4.2.2	Assessment of Crypt Fission and Intestinal Morphometry.....	108
4.2.3	RNA Isolation and cDNA Synthesis	109
4.2.4	Intestinal Stem Cell Gene Expression	109
4.2.5	Micro Gene Array Analysis of Wnt Inhibition in the Small Intestine.....	111
4.2.6	Immunohistochemical Expression of β -catenin in Intestinal Crypts.....	115
4.2.7	Statistical Analysis.....	116
4.2.8	Ethics	116
4.3	Results.....	117
4.3.1	Morphometrical Analysis of Wnt Inhibition and Effects on Villous and Crypt Area	117
4.3.2	Dkk-1 Treatment Reduced Villous and Crypt Area	120
4.3.2.1	Effect of Dkk-1 Treatment on Crypt Fission and Crypt Cell Proliferation	120
4.3.3	Effect of Wnt Inhibition on β -catenin, ISC and Wnt Pathway Gene Expression...	120
4.3.3.1	β -catenin Expression was Reduced in Dkk-1 Treated Animals	120
4.3.3.2	Lgr5 Stem Cell Expression was Reduced in the Small and Large Intestine of Dkk-1 Treated Animals	126
4.3.3.3	Dkk-1 Treatment did not Alter Wnt Signalling Pathway Gene Expression...	126
4.4	Conclusion	132
CHAPTER 5	DERIVATION OF NEONATAL PORCINE CELL LINE	139
5.1	Introduction.....	140
5.1.1	Aims.....	142
5.2	Materials, Methods and Results	143

5.2.1	Derivation of a Porcine Intestinal Cell Model	143
5.2.1.1	Cell Culture Reagents	143
5.2.2	Derivation Trial 1.....	143
5.2.2.1	Isolation of Porcine Intestine	143
5.2.2.2	Dissociation of Epithelial Cells	144
5.2.2.3	Cell Culture Results	146
5.2.2.4	Conclusions.....	146
5.2.3	Derivation Trial 2.....	147
5.2.3.1	Isolation of Porcine Intestine	147
5.2.3.2	Dissociation of Epithelial Cells	147
5.2.3.3	Cell Culture Results	148
5.2.3.4	Conclusions.....	149
5.2.4	Derivation trial 3.....	149
5.2.4.1	Isolation of Porcine Intestine	149
5.2.4.2	Dissociation of Epithelial Cells	149
5.2.4.3	Cell Culture Results	150
5.2.4.4	Conclusions.....	152
5.2.5	Derivation Trial 4.....	152
5.2.5.1	Isolation of Porcine Intestine	152
5.2.5.2	Dissociation of Epithelial Cells	152
5.2.5.3	Cell Culture Results	153
5.2.5.4	Conclusions.....	153
5.2.6	Derivation Trial 5.....	154
5.2.6.1	Isolation of Porcine Intestine	154

5.2.6.2	Dissociation of Epithelial Cells	154
5.2.6.3	Cell Culture Results	154
5.2.6.4	Conclusions.....	157
5.3	Conclusions.....	159
CHAPTER 6	DISCUSSION.....	161
6.1	Introduction.....	162
6.2	MCFAs as Adjunctive Cehmotherapeutic Agents	163
6.2.1	Fatty Acid Concentration and Carbon Atom Chain Length Influenced Anti-Neoplastic Properties of MCFA's.....	164
6.2.2	MCFAs may Require Targeted Cellular Delivery	167
6.2.3	MCFA Exhibits Chemotherapeutic Properties	169
6.2.4	Induction of Oxidative Stress as a Chemotherapeutic Tool	174
6.2.5	MCFA Therapeutically Target the Cell Cycle.....	177
6.3	Wnt Inhibitors as Potential Chemotherapeutic Agents	179
6.3.1	Co-Application of Fatty Acids and Wnt Inhibitors as CRC Adjunctive Chemotherapeutic Agents.....	185
6.4	Derivation of a Short-Term Porcine Small Intestine Model.....	187
6.5	Summary.....	189
REFERENCES	1901
APPENDIX	246

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1 Resected CRC tumour (circled) on mucosal surface of large bowel.....	4
Figure 1.2 Schematic diagram of intrinsic and extrinsic mediated cell death pathways..	8
Figure 1.3 Schematic diagrams of fatty acids with carbon atom chain lengths between, C2:0 and C22:5.....	12
Figure 1.4 Schematic diagram of Wnt/ β -catenin signalling pathway.....	27
Figure 1.5 Photomicrographs of microdissected human crypts.....	30
Figure 1.6 Schematic diagram of crypts of the small and large intestine with proposed location of intestinal stem cells.....	32
Figure 2.1 Caco-2 cell viability as determined by trypan blue dye exclusion assay.	53
Figure 2.2 Comparison of Caco-2 cell viability post-treatment with increasing carbon atom chain lengths of MCFA. CA (C10:0), LA (C12:0) and MA (C14:0).	58
Figure 2.3 IEC-6 cell viability as determined by trypan blue dye exclusion assay.	59
Figure 3.1 Representative dot plot demonstrating Annexin-V-FITC /PI staining and gating of Caco-2 cells for apoptosis/necrosis determination.	72
Figure 3.2 Representative histogram demonstrating PI staining and gating for cell cycle analysis.....	75
Figure 3.3 Representative histogram demonstrating ROS (DCF) negative and positive gating of Lauric acid (1mM) treated Caco-2 cells.....	77

Figure 3.4 Percentage of Caco-2 cell viability as determined by Annexin-V/PI staining and flow cytometric analysis.	79
Figure 3.5 Percentage of Caco-2 cells in total apoptosis (TA) and necrosis as determined by Annexin-V/PI staining and flow cytometric analysis.	81
Figure 3.6 Mean percentage of Caco-2 cells in total apoptosis.	82
Figure 3.7 Percentage of IEC-6 cells in total apoptosis (TA) and necrosis as determined by Annexin-V/PI staining and flow cytometric analysis.	84
Figure 3.8 GSH availability in Caco-2 cells post-treatment with Lauric Acid.....	85
Figure 3.9 GSH availability in IEC-6 cells post-treatment with Lauric Acid.	86
Figure 3.10 Relative fluorescence of Caco-2 cells stained with DCF post-treatment with Lauric Acid.	94
Figure 3.11 Relative fluorescence of IEC-6 cells stained with DCF post-treatment with Lauric Acid.	95
Figure 4.1 Schematic diagram representing measurements of villous and crypt area.....	110
Figure 4.2 Representative PCR amplification curves for <i>Lgr5</i> SYRB green emission data, demonstrating Ct values of Dkk-1 (100ng) and control treated animals.	113
Figure 4.3 Representative melt curve profiles for ISC markers, peaks indicate melting temperature of amplicon.	114
Figure 4.4 Effects of Dkk-1 treatment 30ng and 100ng on villous and crypt development at day 16 of life in neonatal rats.....	121

Figure 4.5 Percent bifid crypts representing crypt fission in neonatal rats treated with Dkk-1.	122
Figure 4.6 Mitotic counts (%) representing hyperplasia in neonatal rats treated with Dkk-1.	123
Figure 4.7 Percentage of positive stained β -catenin crypts in the SI of Dkk-1 (100ng) and control treated animals.....	124
Figure 4.8 Photomicrograph representing positive pan β -catenin staining in the small intestine of control treated animals... ..	125
Figure 4.9 Effect of Dkk-1 (100ng) on gene expression of ISC markers in the small intestine.	127
Figure 4.10 Effect of Dkk-1 (100ng) on gene expression of ISC markers in the large intestine.	128
Figure 5.1 Post mortem large white (<i>Sus domesticus</i>) piglet on dorsal surface in laminar flow hood, washed and surgical area swabbed with iodine.	145
Figure 5.2 Aseptic removal of small intestine from deceased large white (<i>Sus domesticus</i>) piglet at post mortem.	145
Figure 5.3 Photomicrograph of epithelial like cells at 7 days in culture. 400x.	151
Figure 5.4 Photomicrograph of epithelial like cells at 25 days in culture. 400x.	151
Figure 5.5 Photomicrograph of epithelial like cells radiating from volcano like colonies day 30 in culture.400x.	156

Figure 5.6 70% confluent epithelial cells.400x.158

Table of Tables

Table 1.1 Summary of current CRC adjunctive chemotherapy agents and associated side-effects.....	5
Table 1.2 Summary of fatty acid induction of apoptosis in CRC cell lines.....	15
Table 2.1 Cell Lines	44
Table 2.2 Initial cell viability results of Caco-2 cells following treatment with Lauric Acid compared to Butyrate.....	50
Table 2.3 Cell viability of Caco-2 cells following treatment with Lauric Acid compared to Butyrate.....	51
Table 2.4 Viability of Caco-2 cells following treatment with Capric Acid compared to Butyrate.....	55
Table 2.5 Viability of Caco-2 cells following treatment with Myristic Acid compared to Butyrate.....	56
Table 3.1 Cell cycle results for Caco-2 cells following treatment with Lauric Acid (LA) compared to Butyrate.....	88
Table 3.2 Cell cycle results for IEC-6 cells following treatment with Lauric Acid (LA) compared to Butyrate.....	91
Table 4.1 Primer details for intestinal stem cell markers.....	112
Table 4.2 Effect of Dkk-1 (30ng) treatment of neonatal rats on gross animal and small and large intestine weights	117

Table 4.3 Effect of Dkk-1 (100ng) treatment of neonatal rats on gross animal and small and large intestine weights119

Table 4.4 Rat Wnt PCR Array gene table and mRNA expression ($2^{(-\text{Ave.}\Delta\text{Ct})}$) (n=3)129

Abstract

Chemotherapy remains a primary treatment for advanced stage colorectal cancer (CRC). Although more targeted chemotherapeutic agents are under development, currently prescribed cytotoxic agents target rapidly-dividing cells without discrimination between neoplastic and non-neoplastic cells, inducing debilitating side-effects with high morbidity and mortality rates. The development of less injurious chemotherapeutic agents holds promise in alleviating the negative side-effects of chemotherapy. Fatty acids (FAs) are bioactive aliphatic monocarboxylic acids categorized by the number of carbon atoms in the aliphatic chain, classified as short chain fatty acids (SCFAs) (< C8:0), medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs) (C8-14:0) and long chain fatty acids (LCFAs) (>C16:ω3-9). Exogenous applications of FAs has demonstrated anti-neoplastic properties, and FA have been suggested as adjunctive chemotherapeutic agents for the treatment of CRC. SCFAs and LCFAs have demonstrated potent anti-neoplastic properties in *in vitro* models of CRC. However, there are gaps in the literature regarding the potential anti-neoplastic properties of MCFAs in CRC. Endogenous adjunctive CRC therapies manipulate signalling pathways related to the instigation and progression of CRC, and have only recently been incorporated into standard chemotherapeutic protocols. The Wnt/β-catenin signalling pathway is dysregulated in the majority of CRC cases leading to up-regulation of cell proliferation, crypt expansion and mutated intestinal stem cells (ISC). Inhibition of this pathway has demonstrated a down-regulation of cell proliferation. However, the effect on the process of crypt fission and ISC expression is unknown. *In vitro* (cell culture) technologies are underutilised in investigations of the biological effect and mechanisms of actions of pharmacological agents, bioactive agents and anti-neoplastic agents, when related to intestinal function. There is a paucity of intestinal non-transformed cell lines due to difficulties in the derivation and culture of these

cells. This thesis investigates the effects of a MCFA on a CRC cell line (Caco-2) and a non-neoplastic intestinal cell line (IEC-6), and the *in vivo* endogenous application of Dickkopf-1 (Dkk-1), a Wnt signalling pathway inhibitor. Furthermore, this thesis describes the derivation of a short term porcine small intestinal cell line.

Initially in **Chapter 2**, Caco-2 cells were treated with increasing concentrations of the MCFA, Lauric acid (LA) (C12:0), with cell death compared to the established anti-neoplastic SCFA, butyrate (C4:0) to induce cell death or cytotoxicity, using a CRC *in vitro* model. This study demonstrated the novel finding that LA exerts cytotoxic properties at doses of 0.5mM and 1mM, having induced a significant reduction in cell viability in Caco-2 cells, compared to butyrate and negative controls, as ascertained by trypan blue exclusion assay. This data is supported by published cytotoxic studies in lymphoblastic cells. It has been proposed that anti-neoplastic properties of FAs are carbon atom chain length dependent. On this basis, preferential cytotoxic properties of MCFAs of differing carbon atom chain lengths were investigated. LA exerted preferential cytotoxic properties compared to C10:0 and C14:0 MCFAs. Few studies simultaneously investigate the potential negative side-effects of FAs on non-neoplastic intestinal cell lines. In **Chapter 2**, the murine small intestinal cell line, IEC-6 was treated with cytotoxic doses of LA. LA induced significant cell death compared to butyrate and negative control cells. This data supported further investigation into the mechanisms underpinning cell death induced by LA in Caco-2 and IEC-6 cell lines.

Using flow cytometric analysis compared to butyrate, **Chapter 3** demonstrated that cytotoxic doses of LA induced a significant increase in the percentage of cells undergoing apoptosis as opposed to necrosis in Caco-2 cells. The new discovery that LA induced apoptosis in Caco-2 cells supported further exploration into the anti-neoplastic mechanisms of LA. Few studies

have explored the effects of intracellular redox modulation of intestinal cell homeostasis, thus this study investigated the effect of LA on reduced glutathione (GSH) levels as measured by enzymatic analysis, ROS generation and modification to cell cycle phases were measured using flow cytometric analysis. It was determined that LA reduced the availability of GSH, thereby demonstrating that LA modulated the redox system of the Caco-2 cell line. A significant increase in levels of ROS was detected in LA-treated Caco-2 cells compared to butyrate, indicating that LA induced a higher oxidative state than butyrate. Therefore, the reduction in all phases of the cell cycle in LA treated Caco-2 cells may not have been the key contributor to the induction of apoptosis. Butyrate induced significant apoptosis in Caco-2 cells compared to PBS-treated controls, reduced GSH levels equivalent to LA, decreased cells in G0/G1 phases and generated less ROS than LA. These different effects are proposed to be due to the different carbon atom chain lengths of butyrate and LA. LA at cytotoxic doses significantly reduced cell viability in IEC-6 cells, associated with a reduction in GSH, generation of ROS and modification to all cell cycle phases. Butyrate on the other hand did not decrease IEC-6 viability, reduce GSH, modify phases of the cell cycle or generate ROS, indicating that this SCFA did not influence the redox system of this cell line. This may have been related to the genetic differences in non-transformed (p53 and Wnt positive wild type) and transformed cell lines (p53 and Wnt signalling mutant).

Mutations in Wnt/ β -catenin are present in the majority of CRC cases, resulting in over-expression of the downstream molecule, β -catenin, inducing uncontrolled cell proliferation leading to up-regulation of crypt fission, a precursor and promoter of CRC polyps, thereby generating a greater number of crypts which produce mutated intestinal stem cells to populate CRC tumours. Dickkopf (Dkk-1) is a pan negative regulator of the Wnt/ β -catenin signalling system. In **Chapter 4** neonatal rats (day 11-15) were treated with increasing doses of Dkk-1

(30ng and 100ng). A microdissection technique in the small intestine demonstrated that both doses of Dkk-1 reduced villus and crypt areas significantly. Therefore, it was concluded that Dkk-1 reduced crypt fission but not crypt hyperplasia in neonatal rats. The Wnt controlled intestinal stem cell (ISC) marker *Lgr5* mRNA was significantly reduced in Dkk-1 treated animals in both the small and large intestine. Expression of other ISC markers, *DCAMKL-1*, *Bmi1* and *OLFM4* mRNA remained unchanged in the small intestine. In the large intestine the ISC marker *DCAMKL-1* mRNA expression remained unchanged. *Bmi1* and *OLFM4* mRNA expression was significantly reduced. Protein expression of the Wnt downstream effector molecule, β -catenin, as measured by immunohistochemistry, was significantly reduced in the small intestine of Dkk-1 treated animals.

Rapid and easily reproducible cell culture models are essential for expanding studies of intestinal function and investigations into pharmacological and nutraceutical agents, concomitantly reducing the use of research animals. In **Chapter 5** a hybrid of intestinal primary cell isolation methods was used to derive a short-term porcine small intestinal cell line. Cells were isolated from the jejunum and ileum of a stillborn large white piglet, and, for the first time, maintained in culture for a 5 week period before reaching senescence. This demonstrates that a non-transformed epithelial cell line can be generated using basic cell culture practices, leading to the increased capacity to evaluate bioactive molecules on normal intestinal epithelial cells.

In conclusion, this thesis has provided new evidence into the anti-neoplastic properties of MCFAs in a CRC model. The MCFA, LA modulated the intracellular redox system, inducing apoptosis in Caco-2 cells, with short carbon atom chain FAs inducing a lesser degree of cell death. This finding is important as it demonstrates that carbon atom chain length influences

the rate of apoptosis and possibly the mechanisms underpinning this cytotoxicity. Thus, FAs hold promise to augment adjunctive chemotherapeutic agents. It is essential that FAs of all carbon atom chain lengths are evaluated both *in vitro* and *in vivo* for anti-neoplastic potential. Another key finding of this thesis was that crypt fission is negatively regulated by inhibition of the Wnt signalling system, critical in reducing the number of neoplastic adenomas and mutated ISC populations. This finding has potential for the use of negative regulators of the Wnt/ β -catenin signalling system as possible adjunctive CRC chemotherapeutic agents. Finally, a new method to derive an intestinal cell line was developed. This simple method opens up wider scientific opportunities to evaluate the effects of bioactive compounds on species-specific non-transformed intestinal cells.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. The author acknowledges that copyright of published works contained within this thesis resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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Publications and Presentations Arising from Ph.D Candidature

Publications:

Fauser J.K., Rino P. Donato, Joshua A. Woenig, Simon J. Proctor, Andrew P. Trotta, Phulwinder K. Grover, Gordon S. Howarth, Irmeli A. Penttila, and Adrian G. Cummins. Wnt blockade with dickkopf reduces intestinal crypt fission and intestinal growth in infant rats. *Journal of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*, 2012 Jul 55(1) 26-31.

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Whitford EJ, AG Cummins, RN Butler, **JK Fauser**, R Yazbeck, A Lawrence, KY Cheah, TH Wright, LD Prisciandaro and GS Howarth. The new probiotic, *Streptococcus thermophilus* TH-4, reduces crypt fission in a rat model of 5-Fluorouracil induced mucositis. *Cancer Biology and Therapy*, 2009. 8(6):505-11.

Fauser JK, Matthews, GM, Cummins AG, and Howarth GS. Modulation of intracellular redox state and induction of apoptosis by a Medium chain Length Fatty acid in a Colorectal and non-transformed intestinal cell line. *Manuscript prepared for submission to the Journal of Chemotherapy*.

See Appendix for bound copies of published articles

Abstracts and Presentations:

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG and Howarth GS. Nutritional Supplementation for Improvement of Intestinal function and Porcine Health Subprogram 2b: *Oral presentation at the Pork CRC Annual meeting, Melbourne, November 2006*

Fauser JK, Howarth GS, Butler RN and Cummins AG. Inhibition of Wnt Signalling During Postnatal Growth of the Small Intestine. *Oral presentation at Australian Society for Medical Research, State meeting, Adelaide, June 2007*

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG, Matthews GM and Howarth GS. Medium-Chain Fatty Acid Induction of Cell Death in the Caco-2 and IEC-6 Cell Lines. *Poster presentation at Australian Society for Medical Research, State meeting, Adelaide, June 2007*

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG, Matthews GM and Howarth GS. Medium-chain fatty Acid modulation of cell viability in the Caco-2 and IEC-6 cell lines. *Oral presentation at Australian Gastrological Week, Perth October 2007.*

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG, Matthews GM and Howarth GS. Medium-Chain Fatty Acid Induction of Apoptosis in Colon Cancer. *Poster presentation, Lorne Cancer Conference, Melbourne, February 2007*

Fauser JK, Howarth GS, Butler RN and Cummins AG. Wnt Blockade During Postnatal Growth of the Small Intestine Preferentially Reduces Crypt Fission and not Crypt Hyperplasia. *Poster presentation Digestive Diseases Week, California, USA, May 2008. Abstract published in Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology; 2008*

Jeyaraman KV, Donato RP, **Fauser JK**, and Cummins AG. Investigation of Short-term blockade of Notch Signalling on Postnatal Growth of the Small Intestine. *Poster presentation Australian Society for Medical Research, National meeting, Brisbane November 2008*

Prisciandaro LD, **Fauser JK**, Butler RN, Cummins AG and Howarth GS. Soluble products secreted from the newly identified probiotic *Lactobacillus fermentum* BR11 improves viability of rat intestinal cells. *Oral presentation, Nutritional Society Annual Conference, Adelaide, December 2008*

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG, and Howarth GS. Modulation of the intracellular redox state induces apoptosis in a Colorectal cancer cell line. *Oral presentation at Australian Society for Medical Research, State meeting, Adelaide, June 2009*

Fauser JK, Butler RN, Cummins AG, and Howarth GS. Fatty Acids: Novel Bioactive Anti-Cancer Therapeutics? *Oral presentation World Congress on Oils and Fats & 28th ISF Congress, Sydney, September 2009*

Donato R, **Fauser JK**, Penttila IA, Roberts-Thomson IC, Cummins AG. Wnt ligand expression and regulation of stem cells during postnatal growth of the small intestine in rats. *Poster presentation Digestive Diseases Week, Chicago, USA, May 20011. Abstract published in Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology*

Abbreviations

α	Alpha
β	Beta
Δ	Delta
μg	Microgram
μM	Micromolar
μl	Microliter
nM	Nanomolar
ω	Omega
Ψ	Psi
Ψm	Mitochondrial membrane potential
5-FU	5-fluorouracil
%	Percentage
\pm	Plus or minus
AA	Arachidonic acid
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
APC	Adenomatous Polyposis Coli
ATP	Adenosine Triphosphate
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
C	Carbon
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	Degree Celsius
CA	Capric acid
Ca^{2+}	Calcium
CaCl	Calcium chloride
CDMEM	Complete Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Media

CLA	Conjugated Linoleic Acid
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
COOH	Carboxylic acid
CRC	Colorectal cancer
DAPI	4',6-diamindino-2-phenylindole
DCF-DA	2',7'-Dichlorofluorescin diacetate
Dkk-1	Dickkopf
DISC	Death-inducing signalling complex
DHA	Docosahexanoic acid
DMEM	Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Media
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DSH	Dishevelled protein
E ₀	Standard potential for redox couple at a defined pH
E _h	Standard Redox Potential
EGF	Epidermal growth factor
ELISA	Enzyme Linked Immuosorbent Assay
EPA	Eicosapentanoic acid
EtOH	Ethanol
F	Faraday's constant
FA	Fatty acid
FACS	Fluorescence-activated cell sorting
FAP	Familial cancer
FAF-BSA	Fatty acid free serum albumin
FCM	Flow cytometric analysis
FITC	Fluorescein isothiocyanate
FZ	Frizzled receptors

g	Relative centrifuge force
G6PDH	Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase
GM	Growth Media
GSH	Reduced glutathione
GSH-Px	Glutathione peroxidase
GSSG	Oxidised glutathione
GTP	Guanosine triphosphate
HDACI	Histone deacetylase inhibitors
HI-FCS	Inactivated fetal calf serum
H	Electron
H ₂ O ₂	Hydrogen peroxide
HCL	Hydrochloric acid
Hr(s)	Hour(s)
IU	International units
IP	Intraperitoneal injection
ISC(s)	Intestinal Stem Cell(s)
KCl	Potassium chloride
Kg	Kilo grams
LA	Lauric acid
LCFA	Long Chain Fatty Acid
Lef	Lymphocyte factor
Lgr5	Leucine-rich repeat containing G-protein-coupled receptor 5
LI	Large Intestine
LOA	Linoleic acid
MA	Myristic acid
Mab	Monoclonal antibody

MCFA	Medium Chain Fatty Acid
Min(s)	Minute(s)
ml	Milli Liter
mRNA	messenger RNA
MAPK	Mitogen activated protein kinase
MDA	Malondialdehyde
MgCl ₂	Magnesium chloride
Msi-1	Musashi-1
n	Number of electrons
NaCl ₂	Sodium chloride
NADPH	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (reduced)
NADP ⁺	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (oxidised)
NaH ₂ PO ₄	Sodium hydrogen carbonate
Na ₂ PO ₄	Sodium dihydrogen phosphate
NF-κβ	Necrosis factor kappa-light-chain
ng	Nanogram
n.s	Not sampled
N/S	Not significant
*O ²⁻	Superoxide anion
OA	Oleic acid
OD	Optical density
*OH [·] ,	Hydroxyl radical
OLFM4	Olfactomedin 4
OPP	Oxidative pentose pathway
PI3K	Phosphoinositide-3-kinase
PARP	Poly ADP-ribose polymerase

PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PI	Propidium iodide
PMA	Palmitic acid
PPAR	Peroxisome proliferation-activated
PS	Phosphatidylserine
R	Gas constant
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
R _T	Trans-epithelial resistance
RT	Room temperature
SCFA	Short Chain Fatty Acid
SI	Small Intestine
siRNA	Small interfering RNA
T	Absolute temperature
Tcf	T cell factor
TCF(s)	Tissue culture flasks
TUNEL	Terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase dUTP nick end labelling
TNF	Tumour necrosis factor
TRAIL	TNF-related apoptosis-inducing ligand
TCP(s)	Tissue culture plate(s)
Trx	Thioredoxin
Trx(SH)	Thioredoxin (reduced)
UC	Ulcerative colitis
VEGF	Vascular epithelial growth factor
Wt	Wild type