

FADS2 Function at the Major Cancer Hotspot 11q13 Locus Alters Fatty Acid Metabolism in Cancer

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Running Title: FADS2 function in Cancer

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Key words. fatty acid desaturases, highly unsaturated fatty acids, unusual unsaturated fatty acids, sciadonic acid, sapienic acid, mead acid

Abstract. The human chromosome 11q13 (HSA 11q13) genomic locus is a major cancer hotspot and has been established as the most frequently altered by amplification in a variety of human cancers. The fatty acid desaturase genes (FADS1, FADS2 and FADS3) localize to the 11q12-13.1 region. FADS2 activity is promiscuous, catalyzing biosynthesis of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, including unsaturated branched chain fatty acids (BCFA) by $\Delta 6$, $\Delta 8$, and $\Delta 4$ desaturation toward at least 16 substrates. Our main aim here is to review known and putative consequences of FADS2 dysregulation due to effects on the 11q13 locus in various cancer types. We searched PubMed and Google Scholar databases for articles that showed 11q13 amplification and studies reporting FADS2 function in various cancer types. FADS2 silencing causes synthesis of sciadonic acid (ScA, 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3) in MCF7 cells and breast cancer in vivo. 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3 is structurally identical to the eicosanoid precursor arachidonic acid (5Z,8Z,11Z,14Z-20:4) except it lacks the internal $\Delta 8$ double bond required for prostaglandin and leukotriene synthesis, among other eicosanoids. Melanoma, prostate, liver and lung cancer cells insensitive to SCD inhibition show increased FADS2 activity leading to sapienic acid (16:1n-10) biosynthesis from 16:0. Elevated serum mead acid (20:3n-9) levels were found in more than a third of hepatocellular carcinoma patients, indicative of an unsatisfied demand for arachidonic acid, likely as a substrate for eicosanoids. A highly expressed circular RNA (hsa_circ_022382) within an exonic region of FADS2 is associated with shorter overall survival in colorectal cancer patients. Similarly, in lung cancer tissues circFADS2 RNA is highly expressed. Palmitic acid (16:0) is a common substrate for SCD and FADS2. FADS2 circular RNAs are at high levels in colorectal and lung cancer tissues. The evidence thusfar supports an effort for future research on the role of FADS2 as a tumor suppressor in a range of neoplastic disorders.

Introduction

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States and worldwide estimates show cancer deaths rising to 10 million deaths in 2020 (2, 3). Large-scale cancer genome sequencing efforts have identified both inherited and acquired somatic mutation events as contributors to cancer development (4, 5). The acquired somatic mutations (ASM) include point mutations (e.g. G>T substitution that causes a glycine to valine substitution in codon 12 of the HRAS gene), small insertions and deletions (e.g. EGFR Exon 19 Indel), gene fusions (e.g. C11orf95-RELA at 11q12.1-11q13.3), translocations (e.g. BCR-ABL1 translocation in chronic myeloid leukemia; t(11;14)(q13;q32) in mantle cell lymphoma), structural variations involving deletions or amplifications of genomic material as low as few kilobases of DNA up to loss of partial or entire chromosome (e.g. 11q13 amplification in breast cancer, 11q13 loss in cervical cancer) and epigenetic changes (e.g. COX2 methylation) (4, 6-13). Several oncogenes map to the 11q13 region which has been established as the most frequently amplified genomic locus in a number of human cancers, including breast, ovarian, head and neck, oral, and esophageal cancer (14-19) and has prognostic significance (20). 11q13 amplification is associated with poor response to cancer immunotherapy and to hyper-progressive disease, highlighting the potential importance of this locus for therapy (21-24). The 11q13 region hosts specialized enzyme-encoding genes required for endogenous biosynthesis of fatty acids that are precursors for signaling molecules known to be critical for progression of many cancers. Our purpose here is to review on a cancer-by-cancer basis the association of the 11q12.1-11q13 region as it may relate to fatty acid metabolism.

Highly Unsaturated Fatty Acids (HUFA) and Desaturases

Omega-3 (ω 3 or n-3) and omega-6 (ω 6 or n-6), highly unsaturated fatty acids (HUFA), especially n-3 eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA, 20:5n-3), n-3 docosahexaenoic acid (DHA, 22:6n-3) and n-6 arachidonic acid (AA, 20:4n-6, 5Z,8Z,11Z,14Z-20:4) are ubiquitous in mammalian tissue, are metabolically required for human and animal health, especially vision and cognition during various stages of development and aging (25). They are bioactive components of cell membrane phospholipids, natural ligands for nuclear transcription factors, regulate gene expression, and anchor proteins in cell membranes. DHA and AA together constitute more than 25% of CNS fatty acids, serving primarily as membrane structural components, where they can be liberated as precursors to signaling molecules, for instance, eicosanoids and docosanoids. Inhibition of the biosynthesis or receptor-mediated actions remains a prevailing strategy for developing valuable drug targets used over-the-counter, on the model of drugs such as aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs, ibuprofen and naproxen) and leukotriene receptor inhibitors (zafirlukast, montelukast, and zileuton) (25-30).

The nonheme, iron-containing, oxygen-dependent fatty acid desaturase(s) FADS1 and FADS2 are the only means to introduce double bonds into polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) (Figure 1). FADS2 but not FADS1 operates on several saturated and monounsaturated FA (MUFA) as well. In each case, FADS2 and FADS1 catalyzes the introduction of *cis* double bonds at specific positions in a fatty acid chain (Table 1) (31-34). FADS2 also catalyzes biosynthesis of branched chain fatty acids (BCFA) and normal odd chain fatty acid (Table 1) (35). FADS3 is the third member of the FADS gene cluster, positioned tail to tail at a distance of 6.0 kb telomeric to FADS2 (36). Because of its sequence and genomic similarity (12 exons, 11 introns) it was long assumed to be a fatty acid desaturase, however extensive searching revealed activity only toward 11E-18:1→11E,13Z-18:2, a rare fatty acid in mammals (37). Recently we showed FADS3 to be a sphingolipid back-end desaturase (38). Compelling, accumulated data now indicate that all PUFA desaturation is mediated entirely by FADS1 and FADS2 (39).

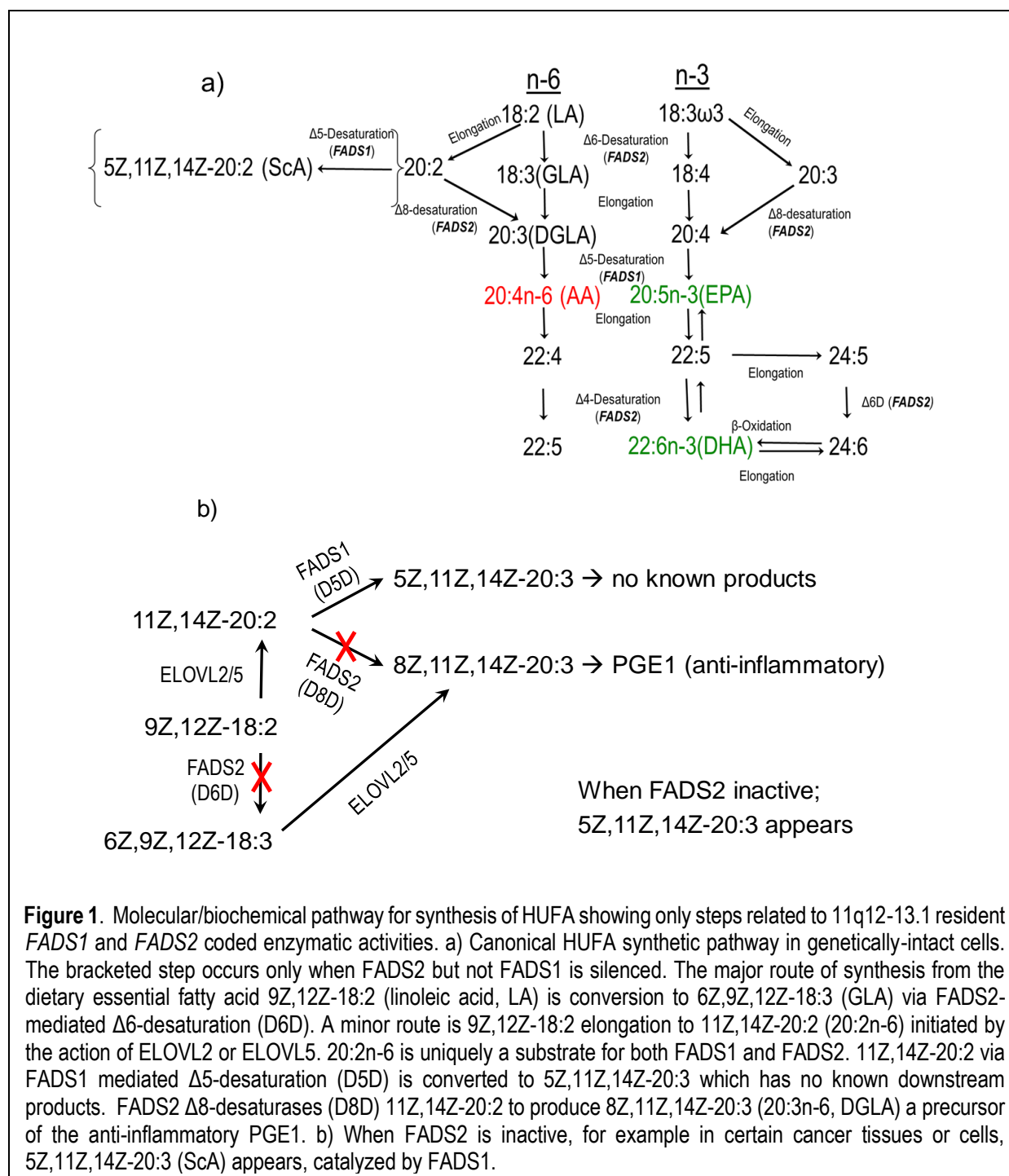


Figure 1. Molecular/biochemical pathway for synthesis of HUFA showing only steps related to 11q12-13.1 resident *FADS1* and *FADS2* coded enzymatic activities. a) Canonical HUFA synthetic pathway in genetically-intact cells. The bracketed step occurs only when *FADS2* but not *FADS1* is silenced. The major route of synthesis from the dietary essential fatty acid 9Z,12Z-18:2 (linoleic acid, LA) is conversion to 6Z,9Z,12Z-18:3 (GLA) via *FADS2*-mediated $\Delta 6$ -desaturation (D6D). A minor route is 9Z,12Z-18:2 elongation to 11Z,14Z-20:2 (20:2n-6) initiated by the action of ELOVL2 or ELOVL5. 20:2n-6 is uniquely a substrate for both *FADS1* and *FADS2*. 11Z,14Z-20:2 via *FADS1* mediated $\Delta 5$ -desaturation (D5D) is converted to 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3 which has no known downstream products. *FADS2* $\Delta 8$ -desaturases (D8D) 11Z,14Z-20:2 to produce 8Z,11Z,14Z-20:3 (20:3n-6, DGLA) a precursor of the anti-inflammatory PGE1. b) When *FADS2* is inactive, for example in certain cancer tissues or cells, 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3 (ScA) appears, catalyzed by *FADS1*.

Dysfunctional endogenous and de novo fatty acid synthesis has long been recognized as a characteristic of human cancer(s). Fatty acid products, the biologically active eicosanoids and their metabolites, are linked to tumor progression via several mechanisms including dysregulation of cell signaling and apoptosis (40-42). Eicosanoids are locally acting (paracrine) bioactive signaling lipids derived from AA and EPA (43) and lesser amounts from a few other HUFA. In human and rodents, the products of 3 genes (*FADS1*, *FADS2*, and *SCD* (10q24.31)) introduce double bonds (desaturate) at specific positions within a fatty acid chain (44). *FADS2* [EC

1.14.19.-] catalyzes the first step in the biosynthesis of HUFA and is a multifunctional even numbered desaturase (31, 34, 35). In several cancer cell lines, the FADS2-mediated first step required for the biosynthesis of eicosanoid precursors is not functional (29, 45, 46).

FADS2 and *FADS1*, the genes mediating synthesis of all HUFA are very different in their substrate specificities and their regulation (39). *FADS1* is highly specific, limited to desaturation of 20 carbon PUFA, with its most active product AA. Several lines of evidence indicate that it is primarily

	Substrate	Activity
<i>FADS2</i>		
$\Delta 4$ -desaturation	22:5n-3 \rightarrow 22:6n-3	Minor
	22:4n-6 \rightarrow 22:5n-6	Minor
$\Delta 6$ -desaturation	18:3n-3 \rightarrow 18:4n-3	Most preferred substrate in normal metabolism
	18:2n-6 \rightarrow 18:3n-6	Preferred substrate in normal metabolism
	18:1n-9 \rightarrow 18:2n-9	Activity unmasked in essential fatty acid deficiency
	24:5n-3 \rightarrow 24:6n-3	Minor, Rodent LCPUFA pathway
	24:4n-6 \rightarrow 24:5n-6	Minor, Rodent LCPUFA pathway
	16:0 \rightarrow 16:1n-10	Tissue specific preference, active in human skin or when SCD is inactive or reach saturation
	17:0 \rightarrow 17:1n-11	Minor
	iso-16:0 \rightarrow iso-6Z-16:1	Minor
	iso-18:0 \rightarrow iso-6Z-18:1	Minor
	iso-17:0 \rightarrow iso-6Z-17:1	Minor
	anteiso-17:0 \rightarrow anteiso-6Z-17:1	Minor
$\Delta 8$ -desaturation	20:1n-9 \rightarrow 20:2n-9	Activity unmasked in essential fatty acid deficiency
	20:3n-3 \rightarrow 20:4n-3	Minor
	20:2n-6 \rightarrow 20:3n-6	Minor
<i>FADS1</i>		
$\Delta 5$ -desaturation	20:3n-6 \rightarrow 20:4n-6	Key activity in normal metabolism
	20:4n-3 \rightarrow 20:5n-3	Preferred substrate in normal metabolism
	20:2n-6 \rightarrow 5,11,14-20:3	Preferred when <i>FADS2</i> is inactive
	20:3n-3 \rightarrow 5,11,14,17-20:4	Preferred when <i>FADS2</i> is inactive
	20:2n-9 \rightarrow 20:3n-9	Tissue specific preference, active in human cartilage or during EFA deficiency
$\Delta 7$ -desaturation	20:1n-9 \rightarrow 7,11-20:2	Novel function, minor activity

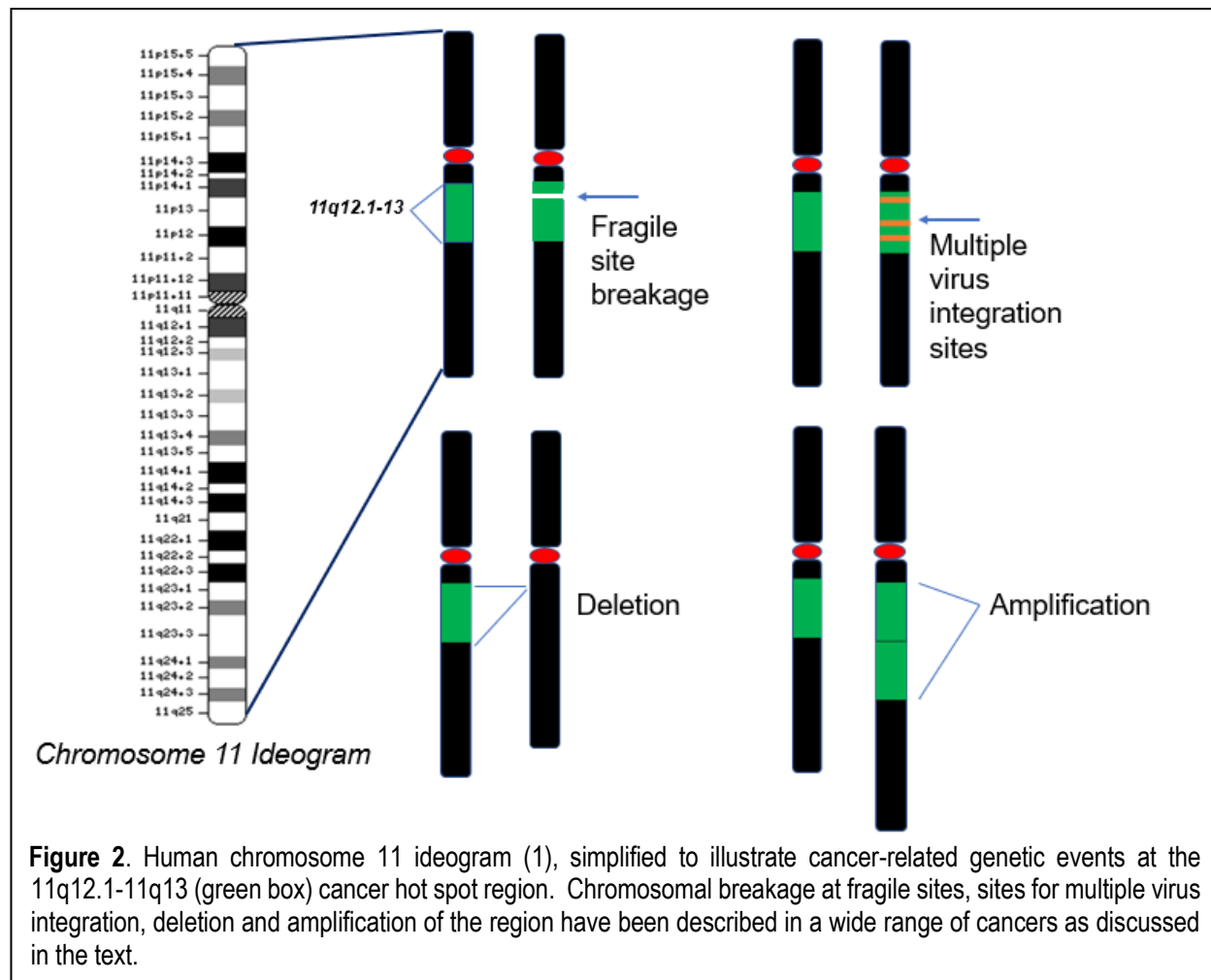
regulated at the transcriptional level: human cells increase FADS1 expression when treated with statins (47); statin treatment increases AA and decreases upstream precursor LA; circulating AA levels in free-living adults are strongly related to a specific genetic polymorphism, rs66698963 (48, 49), 137 bp downstream of a sterol response element in FADS2 intron 1 (47). Polymorphism status controlling the FADS1-mediated step 20:3→20:4 (AA) also causes all upstream precursors to be depleted and downstream products to be enriched, fully consistent with FADS1 as the pivotal control point in HUFA biosynthesis (39). The FADS1 expression is significantly increased in several primary tumors and even at a higher level in the metastatic and recurrent tumors (50).

FADS2 is a promiscuous enzyme with at least 10 PUFA and 6 saturated fatty acid substrates (Table 1). Its regulation is likely to be tissue specific and far more complex than FADS1. FADS2 mediated desaturation is well recognized as required for synthesis of all HUFA and especially the key neural HUFA docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) where it operates twice in the biochemical pathway. It is also the key desaturase in human skin, where it has long been known to mediate synthesis of 16:1n-10, with trivial name sapienic acid because this fatty acid is rare in the skin of animal models, such as rodents. More recently, FADS2 was demonstrated unequivocally to mediate synthesis of monounsaturated, monomethyl branched chain fatty acids, and one odd chain fatty acid (17:0→17:1) (35). The action of FADS2 is related to the mixture of fatty acid substrates available in the cellular pool at any one time, all competing for the active site (32). As a result, FADS2 action may be dysfunctional when the mixture of substrate fatty acids, originating from diet or de novo synthesis, is abnormal.

11q13 Genomic Region

The genetic composition of human chromosome 11q13 is known to contain hotspots for viral integration, harbor fragile sites, copy number variations (CNV) (Figure 2), and various disease phenotypes, including several types of cancers (51-54). The 11q13 locus is well known to contain fragile sites that are prone to breakage (55). This region has a high frequency of repeats, low GC content, two folate-sensitive fragile sites, potential secondary structures, and a high incidence of cytogenetic and molecular alterations in several cancers (51, 54-57). Structural variations (SV) that alter chromosomal structure and the DNA copy number are increasingly recognized as major contributors to genome variability (58). Copy number changes in the 11q13 region are associated with several cancers such as breast cancer (BC) (59), ovarian cancer (16), melanoma (60), head and neck cancers (61-63), bladder, colorectal, lung, liver and esophageal cancers (16, 53, 64), endocrine tumors of pancreas and duodenum (65), and prostate cancer (66). Chromosomal translocations involving 11q12-13 are seen in mantle cell lymphoma (9), multiple myeloma (67) and renal cell carcinoma (68). A 300 kb deletion within 11q13 region is reported in cervical cancer (12, 57). A breakpoint-rich region on 11q13 was found in neuroblastoma (NB) (69). The 11q13 deletion was increasingly found in relapse and 4S stage NB patients, associated with the development of an aggressive NB phenotype and higher sensitivity to PARP (poly ADP ribose polymerase) inhibitors (69-71). Gene fusions involving C11orf95-RELA at 11q12.1-11q13.3 as a result of chromothripsis is seen in supratentorial ependymomas brain tumors (8). In certain disease conditions, the 11q13 CNV span several mega bases (Mb) of DNA (72, 73).

These and many related observations indicate that the 11q13 region is of particular importance in the etiology of cancer. Despite strong underlying evidence of the involvement of AA and other HUFA in cancer incidence and aggressiveness, silencing of their biosynthetic genes by genetic abnormalities in the 11q13 region have seldom focused on the downstream effects on HUFA composition and the implications for cell-cell signaling. Our purpose here is to collect key references that implicate 11q13 in human cancers, organized according to tissue.



Review method

Our main focus is on FADS2, and to a lesser extent FADS1, in major cancer types showing 11q12-13 amplification. We searched PubMed and Google Scholar databases for peer-reviewed research articles using keywords such as 11q13 cancer, 11q12 cancer, 11q13 specific cancer type (for example 11q13 breast cancer) and 11q12 specific cancer type (for example 11q12 breast cancer). Subsequently, articles that matched our search criteria were fully reviewed and the findings in the articles that showed 11q12-13 amplification are recorded. We also searched PubMed and Google Scholar databases for studies reporting FADS2 or $\Delta 6$ -desaturase and FADS1 or $\Delta 5$ -desaturase in various cancer types.

Breast Cancer

Human BC is the most common cancer among women in US and worldwide, with 24% of new cancer cases and 15% of cancer deaths in 2018 (74-76). The 11q13 region is amplified in 15–20% of BC and comprises multiple amplicons highly variable in size, spanning several Mb of DNA from 11q12.2 to 11q14.1 (11, 77-81). Detailed investigation of 11q13 amplification in BC has revealed four core regions within 11q13 that can be amplified independently or together in various combinations (82). A 2010 genome wide association study (GWAS) identified an ER positive BC susceptibility locus on 11q13 (83). A GWAS replication study involving a total of 44,662 cases and 45,502 controls of European descent and 4,076 cases and 2,573 controls of Asian descent identified 11q13 as the strongest susceptibility locus for ER positive BC (84). Comprehensive

genomic profiling (CGP) of tumor samples from 255,117 patients of multiple types of advanced cancers showed that 11q13 amplicon is associated with HPV status, and ESR1 and AR alterations (85). A GWAS of hormone related cancers, namely breast, ovarian, and prostate identified 11q12 as a major susceptibility locus for all three cancers (86). A recent study showed amplification of 11q12.3 locus which includes candidate genes *FADS* gene cluster, *MYRF*, *FEN1* and *FTH1* in mucinous BC (87). A GWAS study identified two functional SNPs rs633800 and rs11227311 within the 11q13 region to be associated with human triple negative breast cancer (TNBC) (88). Zhuang, et al. reported identical allelic loss of 11q13 in 15 of 15 microdissected *in situ* and invasive BC (89). A long-range PCR analysis showed a heterozygous 5.5 kb deletion at 11q13 in 28% of African-Americans, but only 5% among Caucasians (55). African-American women have a higher incidence of BC before the age of 40 years, more severe disease phenotype and approximately 40% higher mortality rate compared with Caucasian women (90, 91). Comparative genomic hybridization, fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH), GWAS and fine mapping studies identified significant 11q13 genetic associations with BC in Chinese, European and African-American women (92-94). 11q13 amplification in BC is associated with estrogen receptor (ER) expression, resistance to endocrine therapy and poor prognosis (15, 81, 95-98). Rosa-Rosa et al. (79) conducted a familial genetic study and identified a candidate region on 11q13 spanning several Mb of DNA to contain a highly penetrant BC gene. Despite all these data, the gene(s) responsible for the emergence of 11q13 amplicon has not been identified. The *FADS* gene cluster in this region is rarely considered with respect to BC or any other cancers. The loss of *FADS2*-encoded activities in cancer cells shuts down the HUFA biosynthetic pathway, limiting cell-cell signaling due to elimination of eicosanoid and docosanoid precursor biosynthesis (29, 46).

Cell culture studies in the 1980s and 90s showed anomalous loss of polyunsaturated FA (PUFA) desaturase activity in several cancer cells, including BC MCF7, HeLa and K562 (29, 45, 46). By using unique molecular and lipidomic methodologies, we extended that work to show that *FADS2* is the specific gene that is silenced (29, 99). This metabolic defect was corrected *in vitro* by the transfection of functional *FADS2* into MCF7 BC cells (29). Reduced *FADS2* expression is seen in BC tissues of patients with poor prognosis (100). Despite the key importance of *FADS2* and the loss of its function in several cancer cells, the consequences of *FADS2* loss has not been investigated in detail.

Absence of the first required step in the endogenous biosynthesis of omega-6 and omega-3 HUFA, $\Delta 6$ -desaturation catalyzed by *FADS2* (31), leads to synthesis of the unusual unsaturated fatty acid (uUFA) sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3). ScA is synthesized via an alternative unmasked $\Delta 5$ -desaturation catalyzed by *FADS1* in MCF7 BC cells (Figure 1) (29). ScA replaces much of the normal signaling precursor AA. Importantly, this pathway eliminates synthesis of the anti-inflammatory prostaglandin E1 (PGE1) precursor dihomo- γ linolenic acid (DGLA; 20:3n-6) *in vitro* (29). A small pilot study showed 3 out of 9 ER positive breast cancer surgical samples, but not the adjacent noncancerous tissue had ScA (99). ScA was detected in BC tissue at about 10% of the precursor 20:2n-6 FA (99). MCF7 cells also make another uUFA dihomotaxoleic acid (7,11-20:2) via *FADS1* when supplemented with 20:1n-9 (33). ScA has been the subject of scattered reports relevant to humans over the years (101-103), whereas we know of no reports of 7,11-20:2 in humans, though it has been reported in nature, in seed lipids of *Taxus chinensis* and *T. baccata* and hardshell clam (104, 105). The 7,11-20:2 molecule is unstudied in normal metabolism but FA with similar structures are known to inhibit topoisomerases required for DNA replication (106).

ScA has structural similarity to AA, but lacks the internal $\Delta 8$ double bond (Figure 3). The double bond at position 8 is required for the biosynthesis of eicosanoids, and thus its absence at position

8 renders ScA inactive as substrate for biosynthesis of most eicosanoids (107-109). Moreover, the possible action of the ScA as competitive inhibitors of eicosanoid biosynthetic enzymes is unknown, as is the activity of other key eicosanoid synthetic enzymes (e.g. cytochrome P450) whose actions on the uUFA would result in products with unknown activit(ies).

ScA replaces the eicosanoid precursor AA in the phosphatidylinositol (PI) fraction when ScA is fed in small quantities (101). One of the key features of BC is its dependence on the phosphatidylinositol-3-kinase (PI3K) pathway (110). As the acyl composition of PI is normally highly resistant to dietary modifications. Replacement of normal AA in PI pools by ScA may lead to the production of novel secondary messengers (101). Feeding ScA for 2-weeks resulted in a 50% reduction in the levels of AA in hepatic PI fractions. In the same study ScA was extensively incorporated into hepatic phosphatidylinositol biphosphate (PIP₂), a precursor of second messengers. The PI signaling pathway is frequently altered in BC

and alterations in this pathway are associated with resistance to hormone therapy (111, 112). PhospholipaseA₂ has poor affinity for ScA which can accumulate in membrane phospholipid (PL) pools even at low doses (113). ScA was shown to reduce ear edema in mice demonstrating epidermal anti-inflammatory properties (102). Apart from this and scattered reports, the effects of ScA substitution for DGLA and AA are unknown. Circulating levels of estrogens and androgens in pre- and postmenopausal women are positively associated with BC risk (114). 17- β -estradiol (E₂) significantly inhibits Δ 5-desaturation activity and AA levels in a dose dependent manner in isolated normal hepatocytes (115). Letrozole causes a decrease in ScA with concomitant increase in DGLA levels in a dose-dependent manner (116). These changes in metabolite levels demonstrate that restoration of FADS2 mediated Δ 8-desaturase function restores normal PUFA levels, pointing to high ScA levels as pathological. Earlier we have shown *in vitro* restoration of normal FADS2 mediated Δ 6-desaturase function also eliminates ScA and restores normal GLA/PUFA synthesis (29).

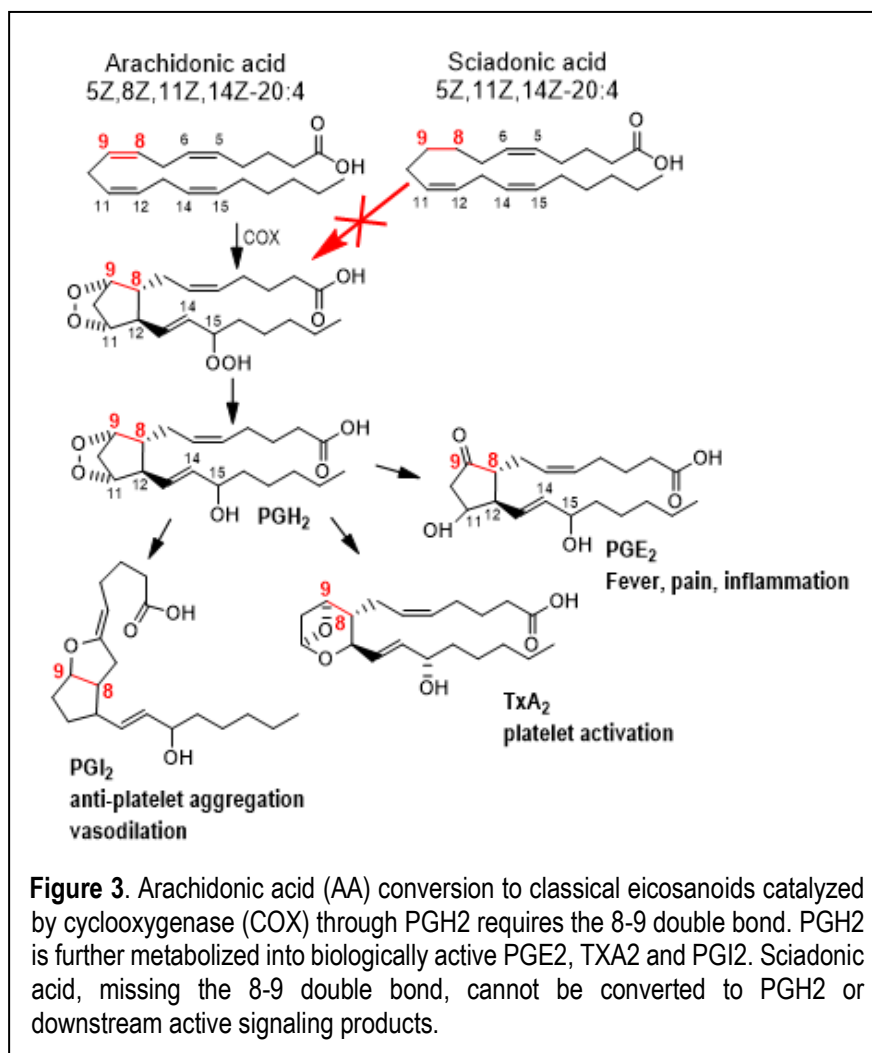


Figure 3. Arachidonic acid (AA) conversion to classical eicosanoids catalyzed by cyclooxygenase (COX) through PGH₂ requires the 8-9 double bond. PGH₂ is further metabolized into biologically active PGE₂, TXA₂ and PGI₂. Sciadonic acid, missing the 8-9 double bond, cannot be converted to PGH₂ or downstream active signaling products.

In normal HUFA biosynthesis (Figure 1a), omega-6 gamma linolenic acid (GLA; 18:3n-6) is the immediate product of linoleic acid (LA; 18:2n-6) desaturation catalyzed by FADS2, exerting cytotoxic actions and modulation of steroid hormone receptors in cancer cells (117, 118). In BC MCF7 cells GLA biosynthesis is hindered due to non-functional FADS2 (Figure 1b). GLA improved the effectiveness of BC chemotherapy by enhancing chemotherapeutic drug cytotoxicity in cell culture experiments (119). Lower GLA and EPA levels in the breast adipose tissue of BC patients are found to be associated with inflammatory BC (120). In human BC studies GLA administration was found to be effective in treating cyclical mastalgia and caused a faster clinical response (117, 118, 121). GLA supplementation along with tamoxifen as primary therapy reduced ER expression in hormone positive BC patients (117). The putative mechanism for this positive response is likely to be preformed GLA bypass the metabolic block created by non-functional FADS2 in certain cancer cells like hormone positive BC MCF7, correcting local deficiency and serving as precursor for downstream HUFA DGLA and AA.

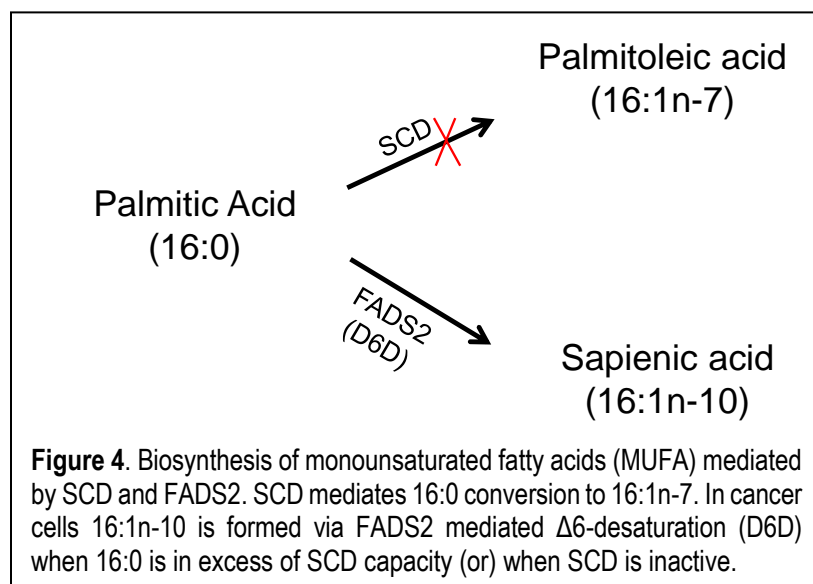
The AA-based eicosanoid signaling pathway has been implicated in the development and progression of BC (122). Elevated AA is associated with increased risk of certain cancers, based on genetic prediction and metabolite studies (123-125). Increased levels of prostaglandins (PG) are seen in BC due to upregulation of cyclooxygenase-2 (COX2), the initial enzyme in eicosanoid biosynthesis (126). COX2 is upregulated in approximately 40% of BC (126). AA release is an important initiating event leading to cellular proliferation, inflammation and eicosanoid biosynthesis (125, 127), whereas omega-3 EPA, the precursor for PGE3, has anti-proliferative effects (128). The cytosolic phospholipase A2 (cPLA2 α) catalyzes the hydrolysis of the sn-2 linkage to release AA, leading to the production of prostaglandin E2 (PGE2) via COX2 (129). Activation of COX2 and PGE2 production are linked with BC progression. IHC analysis showed PGE2 was produced by the cells located in close proximity to the tumor cells and not by the tumor cells (130). We speculate that the replacement of AA by ScA in the tumor tissue will increase demand for AA and this could be the reason for enhanced production of PGE2 in the cells located in close proximity to the tumor cells. AA metabolite 20-hydroxyeicosatetraenoic acid (20-HETE) derived via cytochrome P-450A (CYP4A) was found to regulate the growth of new blood vessels (131). cPLA2 α can be rapidly activated by physiological concentrations of E2 via trans-activation of EGFR/HER2 heterodimers signaling, causing proliferative signals in both ER-positive and ER-negative BC cells (132).

Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer is the second most common cancer in women over the age of 40 and is broadly classified into three main types (epithelial (most common), germ cell, and sex-cord-stromal) (133, 134). A 6-Mb region encompassing several oncogenes within the 11q13 region was amplified in 12 to 25% of ovarian carcinomas (16, 135). A 62-69 Mb region on 11q12–q13 commonly known as malignancy-associated regions of transcriptional activation (MARTA) is amplified in ovarian, breast, colon and prostate cancers (11).

Microsomes prepared from ovarian cancer tissue sample upon incubation with 20:2n-6 showed appearance of ScA (136). The presence of ScA shows that it is synthesized via an alternative, unmasked, $\Delta 5$ -desaturation catalyzed by FADS1 as seen in BC (29, 99). In the tumor microenvironment substrate specificity between stearoyl CoA desaturase (SCD) and FADS2 is gaining acceptance after we showed first molecular evidence of FADS2 mediated biosynthesis of 16:1n-10 (Figure 4) (32, 137, 138). SCD is highly expressed in various ovarian cancer types and regulates ferroptosis (139). Blocking of SCD by MF-438 or CAY10566 inhibitors induced both ferroptosis and apoptosis (140). *FTH1*, a major intracellular iron storage protein localizes to 11q13 locus adjacent to FADS gene cluster and its expression increased during ferroptosis (141, 142). To the best of our knowledge SCD inhibition in ovarian cancer cells leading to the FADS2

mediated biosynthesis of 16:1n-10 has not been reported to date. We speculate ovarian cancer cells can utilize FADS2 mediated 16:1n-10 metabolic pathway to survive, and on that basis ovarian cancer cells would be expected to contain 16:1n-10.



Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States (US) with 1 in 5 Americans developing it by the age of 70 (143). Human skin fatty acid metabolism is unique compared to rodents. In mice, Scd1 and Scd3 are expressed and Scd1 catalyzes the conversion of 18:0→18:1n-9 and 16:0→16:1n-7 which are the major unsaturates in mouse skin (144, 145). No human tissue expresses Scd3/SCD3, and human skin does not express SCD1. Rather, FADS2 is highly expressed in human

skin where it catalyzes $\Delta 6$ -desaturation of several saturated fatty acids, most prominently 16:0→16:1n-10, known as sapienic acid because of its rare occurrence in nature apart from human skin. Sapienic acid is the most abundant unsaturated fatty acid in human skin where it function as a component of the innate immune system as an antimicrobial agent (146). FADS2 action is unmasked because of the absence of SCD1. FADS2 recently has been shown to catalyze unsaturation of sebum-resident branched and odd chain fatty acids iso-16:0 → iso-6Z-16:1, iso-17:0 → iso-6Z-17:1, anteiso-17:0 → anteiso-6Z-17:1 and iso-18:0 → iso-6Z-18:1 (35). Branched chain fatty acids (BCFA) antitumorigenic activity has been described for BC in an isolated report (147), but the significance in skin cancer is unstudied to our knowledge.

Increased copy number changes and amplification of 11q13 are more commonly seen in mucosal, acral and chronic sun-induced damage melanomas (148, 149). Increased copy number gains at 11q13 is associated with poor prognosis in melanoma (60). Anomalous loss of delta-6-desaturation activity was reported in mouse melanoma BL6 cells (150). The two circRNAs derived from the FADS2 gene are the most significantly downregulated in basal cell carcinoma and cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma compared to control non-lesional skin biopsies (151). Mathieu et al. 2012 also reported overexpression of several genes within the 11q12-14 region in melanoma (152). In a 2020 preprint, Lee et al. showed increased FADS2 expression and increased synthesis of 16:1n-10 in metastatic melanoma (153). The liver (HUH7) and lung (A549) cancer cells insensitive to SCD inhibition showed increased FADS2 activity leading to 16:1n-10 biosynthesis (137).

Recently, Lee et al. has proposed blocking FADS2 mediated desaturation as a potential therapy for metastatic melanoma (153). Any strategy to inhibit FADS2 in cancer should be carefully thought as it catalyzes wide range of fatty acid substrates. FADS2 is promiscuous and a multifunctional enzyme which catalyzes even numbered $\Delta 4$ -, $\Delta 6$ - and $\Delta 8$ -desaturation towards normal even chain fatty acids (n-ECFA), normal odd chain fatty acid (n-OCFA) and monomethyl BCFA substrates including eight polyunsaturates, two monounsaturates, one saturate, one n-OCFA, and four BCFA (25, 35). FADS2 loss can affect saturated, monounsaturated,

polyunsaturated and branched chain FA levels *in vitro* and *in vivo* (25, 32, 46, 99). If FADS2 has to be inhibited we suggest that it should be targeted to the specific tumor area not disturbing the normal tissue fatty acid composition. Understanding the tumor microenvironment is very important.

Head and Neck Cancers

11q13 amplification is reported in 30 to 62% of the Head and Neck cancers (HNC) (17, 154). HNC usually originate in the squamous cells and is the seventh most common cancer worldwide in 2018 (155). Major anatomical sites of HNC include oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, paranasal sinuses and nasal cavity (155). In recent years tobacco-related HNC decreased worldwide, however, human papillomavirus (HPV)–associated HNC rose from 16.3% in the 1980s to more than 72.7% in the 2000s in the United States (155).

The Cancer Genome Atlas Network identified somatic genetic changes in several HNC (156). Somatic mutations within AA metabolism genes are reported in oral cancer (157) downstream of AA pathway and thus implying that eicosanoid signaling is a contributory factor. Several studies have shown 11q13 amplification is more common in HPV negative HNC (20, 158, 159). A 1.8 Mb critical region on 11q13 was responsible for tumor suppression in nasopharyngeal carcinoma (160). FADS2 was the most downregulated among 20 differentially expressed genes in oral cavity cancer samples (161). FADS1 was differentially expressed in lymph node positive versus lymph node negative primary larynx squamous cell carcinoma (162) and a GWAS identified susceptibility loci for larynx squamous cell carcinoma (rs174549) within FADS1 in Chinese population (163). A genome-wide array comparative genomic hybridization revealed FADS1 presence along with CCND1 in the 11q13 amplicon in HNC (164). The presence of FADS1 in the 11q13 amplicon shows its activity during cell transformation in HNC. Earlier we demonstrated “during cell transformation FADS1 activity would persist when FADS2 is inactive. However, the preferred substrates for FADS1 are not essential fatty acids (18:2n-6 and 18:3n-3), but their elongation products 20:2n-6 and 20:3n-3” leading to the production of uUFA 5,11,14-20:3 and 5,11,14,17-20:4, respectively with unpredictable consequences for cellular communication and signaling (29). In HNC patient's omega-3 fatty acids supplementation improved immune function, increased body weight and reduced postoperative complications (165, 166). These results imply endogenous synthesis of HUFA is limited in HNC patients.

Bladder Cancer

Bladder cancer (BLC) accounts for over 550,000 cases diagnosed and 20,000 deaths worldwide in 2018 (167, 168). Most cases of BLC are of non-muscle invasive (80%) and the remaining 20% are muscle-invasive (168). 11q13 amplification is reported in up to 10 to 20% of BLC (169, 170). Increased FADS1 expression was found to be associated with high grade, lymphatic, distant metastasis and decreased survival in BLC patients (167). FADS1 expression is also considered as a prognostic biomarker for BLC survival (167, 171). Liu et al. (172) reported higher expression of FADS2 was associated with poor survival in BLC and they have also shown that FADS2 acted as a suppressor factor for ferroptosis. Microsomes extracted from BLC tissue samples upon incubation with 20:2n-6 showed appearance of unusual ScA based on the retention time peak of ScA standard (136). FADS2 encoded $\Delta 6$ -desaturase activity was decreased in BLC tissues when compared to the normal surrounding tissues (136). Presence of ScA and decreased $\Delta 6$ -desaturase activity shows compromised FADS2 function as seen in BC (29, 99). Plasma fatty acid levels of anti-inflammatory omega-3 EPA and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) were found to be significantly reduced in BLC patients from Tunisia (173). DHA significantly inhibited viability of T24 BLC cell line by 22% compared to vehicle control (174). Omega-3 fatty acids inhibited malignant lesions development in a rat model of BLC (175). These results show omega-3 supplementation can correct local omega-3 deficiency in BLC patients.

Gastroesophageal and Pancreatic Cancers

Gastroesophageal cancers account for 26,650 deaths in the US in 2017 (176). The majority of gastric cancers are adenocarcinomas (GAC), whereas two histological types comprise esophageal cancers, namely esophageal squamous cell carcinoma (ESCC) and esophageal adenocarcinomas (EAC) (176). Copy number analysis identified 11q13 amplification in 25% to 48% of ESCC patients (21, 177). 11q13 amplicon in ESCC was found to span 3 to 5 Mb comprising many potential genes (178). Salem et al. reported 11q13 amplification is more common in ESCC when compared to EAC and GAC (176). *FADS1* is silenced by methylation in gastric cancer, whereas, it is not methylated in normal gastric mucosa (179). Increased expression levels of *FADS1* and *ELOVL5*, are found in all mesenchymal-type gastric cancer cells, which lead to ferroptosis sensitization (180). Immunohistochemical staining of 251 ESCC patient tissue samples showed higher *FADS1* expression in 41.8% (105/251) and lower *FADS1* expression in 58.2% (146/251) (181). High levels of inter- and intratumor heterogeneity is commonly seen in ESCC (182). A Mendelian randomization genetically predicted (rs174547 in *FADS1*) model showed higher plasma phospholipid AA concentrations is positively associated with esophageal cancer (odds ratio 1.09; 95% CI 1.02-1.17; $P = 0.016$) (124). Peri-operative enteral nutrition enriched with 2.2 g EPA/d was found to prevent loss of lean body mass (LBM) in the first 3 weeks after esophageal cancer surgery (183). Fish oil enriched supplementation significantly improved skeletal muscle mass and lean body mass in gastrointestinal cancer patients (184). Higher incidence of 11q13 amplification is seen in pancreatic cancer cells and tumor tissues (185). Several studies in pancreatic cancer patients reviewed by Gorjao et al. 2019 showed oral fish oil supplementation, especially EPA improved body weight, LBM, quality of life and decreased plasma IL-6 levels (186). In the Korean population, the risk of gastric cancer decreased significantly in individuals on higher intakes of omega-3 DHA (187).

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the second leading cause of cancer death in the US and third leading cause of cancer death worldwide (188). A 62-69 Mb MARTA region on 11q12–q13 was amplified in CRC (11). A GWAS study involving a total of 14,963 cases and 31,945 controls of East Asian descent identified SNPs within a nearby *FADS* gene locus to be associated with sporadic CRC risk (189). A study integrating functional genomic/epigenomic and eQTL analyses consisting of 6,024 cases and 10,022 controls, identified G allele of rs174575 within *FADS2* intron 1 to be associated with an increased CRC risk (190). The rs174575 acted as an allele specific enhancer to facilitate long-range enhancer–promoter interactions mediated by E2F1 to promote the expression of *FADS2* and long noncoding RNA (lncRNA) AP002754.2, showing a novel mechanism by which a functional noncoding variant can modulate expression of multiple genes including lncRNA by long-range genome interactions (190). A circular RNA (circRNAs; hsa_circ_022382) derived from the exonic region of *FADS2* gene was highly expressed in CRC patients (191). In CRC patients higher circ*FADS2* expression levels are associated with distant metastasis and shorter overall survival (191). Circular RNAs are generated by pre-mRNA back splicing (192). We reported in a series of papers that all three *FADS* are extensively spliced, that splice variants are evolutionarily conserved, and have found functions for two of the four alternative transcripts discovered for *FADS2* and *FADS1* thusfar (23-27). We speculate some of the *FADS* splice variants may be expressed differentially in cancer. Earlier we proposed that *FADS* splice variants can remove omega-3 fatty acids from availability for enzymatic reactions by preferentially binding and sequestering omega-3 fatty acid substrates. This will create a greater demand for omega-3 fatty acids (193). RBC membrane phospholipid fatty acids and rs174537 genotypes data collected from 1,733 individuals who participated in the Tennessee Colorectal Polyp Study showed higher prevalence of the homozygous rs174537 GG genotype and higher AA levels in African Americans compared to European Americans (194).

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer (PCa) affects one in nine men in the USA and is estimated to account for 191,930 new cases and 33,330 deaths in 2020 (195). A 62-69 Mb MARTA region on 11q12–q13 was amplified in PCa (11). Several GWAS found two SNPs rs10896449 and rs7931342 at 11q13 locus to be strongly associated with PCa risk (66, 196, 197), whereas a Japanese GWAS with 7,141 prostate cancer cases and 11,804 controls found rs1938781 at 11q12 to be associated with PCa susceptibility (198). A study in families with both PCa and kidney cancer (KC) showed evidence for a suggestive linkage at 11q12.2 (199). Increased FADS2 gene expression, protein expression and 16:1n-10 biosynthesis was found in the DU145 prostate carcinoma cell line compared to RWPE-1 prostate benign cells (137). In a recent study significantly higher FADS2 expression and increased 16:1n-10 biosynthesis was seen in three prostate cancer cell lines (PC-3, LNCaP, DU145) (200). The cancer cells insensitive to SCD inhibition show increased FADS2 activity and 16:1n-10 biosynthesis (137).

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer and is estimated to account for 235,760 new cases and 131,880 deaths in 2021 in the United States (2). 11q13 amplification is seen in up to 13% of lung cancers and chromosomal micro-dissection analysis showed that 11q13 amplification occurs first and other types of structural rearrangements will be followed later (201). A systematic study generated by evaluating GWAS identified variants for lung cancer risk showed rs174549 within FADS1 to be positively associated with lung cancer after multiple correction (202). Increased FADS2 expression was found in 8 out of 10 lung cancer tissue samples compared to adjacent non-cancer tissue (137). The expression of circFADS2 RNA was elevated in lung cancer tissue samples. circFADS2 by acting like a sponge of miR-498 promoted cell proliferation and invasion of lung cancer cells (203). Cachexia is common in the lung cancer patients. Oral omega-3 supplementation preserved body weight in lung cancer patients undergoing chemoradiotherapy (204). Lung cancer patients with higher plasma phospholipid EPA concentrations showed better preservation of body weight (204). These results imply endogenous synthesis of HUFA is limited in lung cancer.

Liver Cancer

Liver cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer death, with about 841,000 new cases and 782,000 annual deaths worldwide in 2018 (76). Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common type of liver cancer and occurs in patients with chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis caused by hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections (205). As HBV is a DNA virus it can integrate into host DNA and three out of four HBV positive tumors found to have integration sites at 11q12-13 region (206). At the 11q13 region, HBV is integrated with the protein coding genes (206) and this region was preferentially amplified in HBV positive liver cancers (207). Several transformed cell lines via chemical or viral exposures lost FADS2 mediated Δ 6-desaturase activity, however, FADS1 mediated Δ 5-desaturase activity was intact (208, 209). Elevated serum Mead acid (20:3n-9) levels were found in 37.5% (9 out of 24) of HCC patients, whereas, Mead acid is undetected in controls (210). Mead acid is generally considered as a marker for essential fatty acids (EFA), namely linoleic acid (LA; 18:2n-6) and α -linolenic acid (ALA; 18:3n-3) deficiency, however, in the 9 HCC patients EFA levels were elevated (210). Figure 5 shows normal Mead acid biosynthesis and Mead acid biosynthesis when FADS2 mediated Δ 6-desaturase activity is lost (as seen in 9 out of 24 of HCC patients). Horrobin, 1980 pointed out that EFA accumulation in HCC patients is due to the failure of LA conversion to gamma-linolenic acid (GLA; 18:3n-6) because of the loss of FADS2 mediated Δ 6-desaturase activity (209). Due to the loss of Δ 6-desaturase activity the metabolic demand for the supply of GLA and DGLA increases and the ability to make anti-inflammatory PGE1 decreases (209). Elongation enzymes

are active in several cancer cell lines that lost $\Delta 6$ -desaturase function and in these cell lines LA is elongated to eicosadienoic acid (20:2n-6) (29, 208). FADS1 action on 20:2n-6 leads to the synthesis of ScA. In liver cancer HepG2 cells, ScA reduced the AA content of the PI fraction which may have influence on PI-originating bioactive lipids (103, 211). An array-based comparative genomic hybridization showed upregulation of both FADS1 and FADS2 in hepatocellular adenomas (212). FADS2 expression levels were increased in the HUH7 liver cancer cell line and tumor samples from the primary liver cancer patients (137).

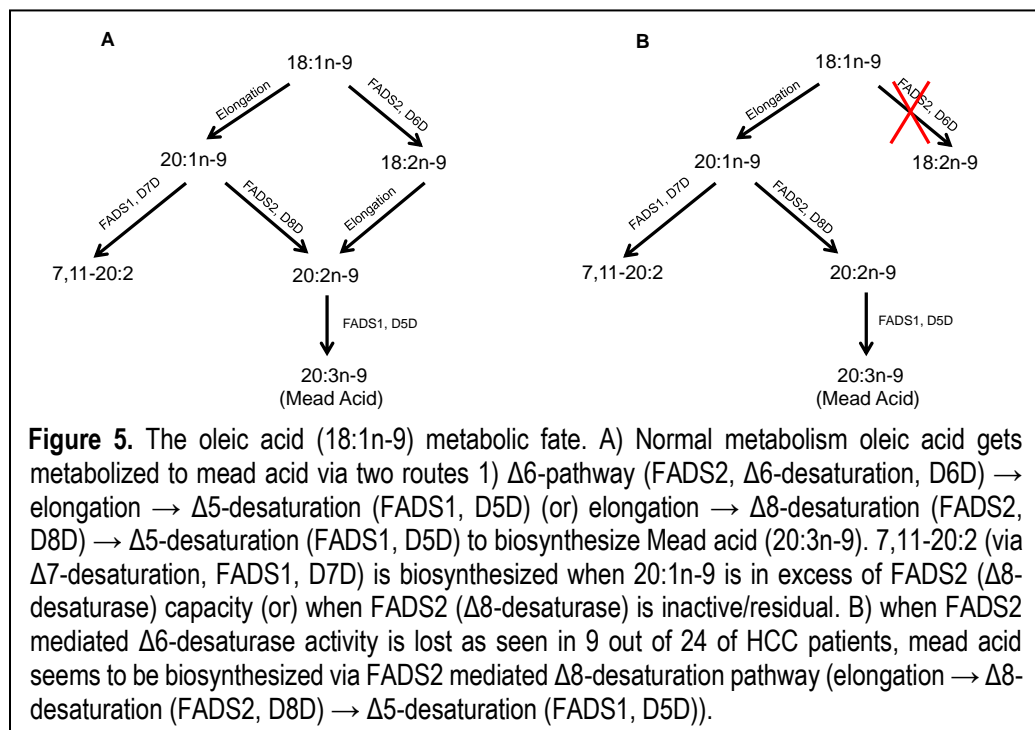
Brain Cancer

Brain cancer accounts for 296,851 new cases and 241,037 number of deaths worldwide in 2018 (76). Glioma is a common type of brain tumor which accounts for 33 percent of all brain cancers (213). The amplification of 11q12-q22 region has been seen in

low-grade and high-grade areas of glioblastoma resection specimen and malignant gliomas (214, 215). Korbecki et al. in peritumoral area of glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) tumor tissues showed decreased FADS2 expression (216). DHA levels were significantly reduced in glioma patients tissue samples (4.8 ± 2.9) compared to normal brain samples (9.2 ± 1.0) (217). The ω -3: ω -6 ratio was found to be significantly altered in malignant glioma tumors due to decreased DHA and increased linoleic acid contents (218). A meta-analysis showed that consumption of fish rich in ω -3 HUFA is associated with a lower risk of brain cancer (219).

11q13 genetic abnormalities and fatty acid changes in different cancer types are presented in Supplementary Table 1.

Conclusions. The human chromosome 11q13 region is one of the most frequently amplified genomic loci in a number of human cancers and in some cancer types, may carry prognostic significance. Several candidate genes have been proposed as drivers of 11q13 amplicon. Despite key importance of FADS2, the consequences of FADS2 dysregulation in several cancers has not been investigated in detail. Several transformed cell lines via chemical or viral exposures lose FADS2 mediated $\Delta 6$ -desaturase activity, however, FADS1 mediated $\Delta 5$ -desaturase activity seems to be intact. Due to the loss of FADS2 mediated $\Delta 6$ -desaturase function EFA cannot be converted to HUFA. The non-functional $\Delta 6$ -desaturase activity unmasks 18:2n-6 elongation to 20:2n-6. The 20:2n-6 is a unique substrate that possess specificity for FADS2 and FADS1,



similarly, 16:0 possess specificity for SCD and FADS2. Under normal metabolism FADS2 acts on 20:2n-6 to make DGLA, when FADS2 is inactive FADS1 desaturates 20:2n-6 to 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3. The 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3 is structurally identical to the eicosanoid precursor arachidonic acid (5Z,8Z,11Z,14Z-20:4) except it lacks the internal $\Delta 8$ double bond required for prostaglandin and leukotriene synthesis, among other eicosanoids. In metastatic melanoma, liver and lung cancer tissues and cells when SCD is not active or SCD reach its saturation capacity, FADS2 desaturates 16:0 to 16:1n-10. In normal physiological conditions, higher bioavailability of 18:2n-6 or 18:3n-3 results in decreased bioconversion of 16:0 to 16:1n-10. This shows that FADS2 mediated $\Delta 6$ -desaturase function is substrate dependent at least in cancer cells. However, in certain cancer types due to the functional loss of FADS2 to catalyze critical first step, 18:2n-6 or 18:3n-3 accumulates. Elevated Mead acid levels are seen in 37% of hepatocellular cancer patients. Interestingly in these patients EFA levels are also elevated, it is possible that 18:2n-6 to 18:3n-6 conversion mediated by FADS2 is defective. FADS2 circular RNAs are highly expressed in colorectal and lung cancer tissues. This review provides an impetus to better understanding the role of FADS2 as a tumor suppressor in neoplastic disorders.

Acknowledgments. This review was supported by NIH grant R01 AT007003 from the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH. We thank Niharika Kothapalli, University of Texas at Dallas for helping with literature search.

Supplementary Table 1. 11q13 genetic abnormalities and fatty acid changes in different cancer types

Cancer Type	11q13 Genetic Abnormalities	Fatty Acid Anomalies
Breast	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)
Ovarian	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)
Skin	Increased copy number changes and amplification, circRNAs	Sapienic acid (16:1n-10)
Head and Neck	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)?
Bladder	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)
Gastroesophageal and Pancreatic	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)?
Colorectal	Amplification, circRNAs	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)?
Prostate	Amplification	Sapienic acid (16:1n-10)
Lung	Amplification, circRNAs	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)?
Liver	Hepatitis B virus (HBV)	Mead acid (20:3n-9)
Brain	Amplification	Sciadonic acid (ScA; 5Z,11Z,14Z-20:3)?

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