Biomarkers for early detection of Parkinson’s disease (PD) are in urgent demand. The occurrence of α-synuclein deposits within neurons and neurites of the skin has recently attracted attention. We therefore started to establish techniques for routine multichannel immunofluorescent detection of different α-synuclein types and for investigation of innervation density in three transgenic mouse lines that are established models for Parkinson’s disease research.

RESULTS

Immunoreactivity of α-synuclein was located in fibers around hair follicles and in the epidermis. This pattern was consistently detected using a variety of antibodies targeting different epitopes of α-synuclein. The anti-human α-synuclein antibodies detected no signal in wild type mice, supporting the specificity of the labeling in transgenic mice. Neuronal fibers were successfully identified using different markers (PGP9.5, neurofilament, tyrosine hydroxylase). Labeling was similar in paraffin sections and cryosections. The highest immunoreactivity was detected in Line 61, then D-Line, whereas signal in A53T mice was very low, similar to the finding in the brain.

SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

We detected only rare overlay of α-synuclein and neuronal markers, suggesting there may be pathologic accumulation of transgenic human α-synuclein outside of neuronal fibers. Ongoing experiments aim at elucidating this pattern. We conclude that skin biopsies in mouse models are a promising technique with translational value for establishing peripheral biomarkers to detect PD before the onset of any motor features.

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