

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
SUMMARY	V
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG.....	VI
ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS.....	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
LIST OF TABLES	XIII
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Cancer	1
1.2 Cancer Metastasis	3
1.2.1 The epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EMT).....	4
1.2.1.1 EMT inducers, regulators and effectors.....	4
1.2.2 Snail.....	7
1.2.2.1 Localization and stability of the Snail protein.....	8
1.2.2.2 Transcriptional regulation of target genes by Snail	8
1.2.3 EMT in cancer.....	9
1.3 The Tumor Microenvironment	13
1.3.1 Tumor-associated stromal cells.....	14
1.3.1.1 Macrophages	14
1.3.1.2 Neutrophils.....	14
1.3.1.3 Lymphocytes.....	15
1.3.1.4 Cancer-associated fibroblasts	15
1.3.2 Hypoxia and Angiogenesis	16
1.3.3 Cancer Immunity.....	17
1.3.3.1 Tumor-promoting inflammation.....	18
1.3.3.2 Cancer immunoediting.....	18
1.3.3.3 Contribution of the microenvironment to cancer metastasis	19
1.4 Cancer Metabolism.....	20
1.4.1 Warburg Effect.....	20
1.4.2 Oncogene-mediated nutrient uptake	21
1.4.3 Utilization of glycolytic intermediates.....	23
1.4.4 Metabolic interplay with the microenvironment.....	24
1.4.5 The Hexosamine Biosynthesis Pathway (HBP).....	25
1.4.5.1 O- and N-linked protein glycosylations	25
1.4.5.2 The HBP in diabetes	27
1.4.5.3 The HBP in cancer.....	27
1.4.6 EMT in cancer metabolism	29
1.5 Lung Cancer	30
1.5.1 Lung cancer therapy	31
1.5.1.1 Immunotherapy.....	32
1.5.2 EMT in lung cancer.....	33
1.5.3 Preclinical lung cancer models	34
1.5.4 Lung tumor microenvironment.....	35
2 AIMS and OBJECTIVES	39

3	RESULTS	41
3.1	The role of the HBP during EMT in NSCLC	41
3.1.1	GFPT2, the rate-limiting enzyme of the HBP, is correlated with GLUT3	41
3.1.2	GFPT2 and O-GlcNAcylation are increased during EMT	42
3.1.3	GFPT2 upregulation is not necessary for an EMT	49
3.1.4	GFPT2 does not drive an EMT in epithelial NSCLC cells	50
3.1.5	GLUT3 does not cooperate with GFPT2 to induce an EMT	52
3.1.6	GFPT2 knockdown downregulates GLUT3	54
3.1.7	STAT3 signaling in the GFPT2-mediated control of GLUT3 expression	56
3.1.8	GFPT1 and 2 expression predict a worse prognosis in NSCLC patients	57
3.2	Characterization of Snail overexpressing KP lung tumors	58
3.2.1	Overexpression of Snail, but not Zeb1, in KP lung tumors	58
3.2.2	Snail accelerates the malignant progression of KP lung tumors	60
3.2.3	Snail-induced EMT is a rare and focal event in KP lung tumors	65
3.2.4	Snail impairs tumor differentiation and enhances vascularization	68
3.2.5	Snail overexpression does not increase metastasis	70
3.2.6	Snail overexpression does not cause chemoresistance	71
3.2.7	Snail increases <i>Gfpt2</i> and O-GlcNAcylation levels in KP tumors	72
3.3	"Snail activated" genes	73
3.3.1	Snail overexpression favors an inflammatory tumor microenvironment	73
3.3.2	Snail alters cytokine expression in cancer and immune cells	77
3.3.3	Snail enhances neutrophil and decreases B lymphocyte infiltration	80
3.3.4	Snail enhances the secretion of neutrophil-recruiting Cxcl2	84
3.3.5	Snail promotes tumor growth independently of neutrophil infiltration and the adaptive immune system	88
3.3.6	Snail and neutrophil infiltration correlate in lung adenocarcinoma patients and both are associated with a worse overall survival	89
3.4	"Snail repressed" genes	92
3.4.1	Snail represses the <i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus in KP lung tumors	92
3.4.2	Snail mediates <i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus repression in immune cells	97
3.4.3	Snail expressing cancer cells secrete a soluble factor that represses the <i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus in immune cells	100
3.4.4	Prediction of <i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus miRNA target genes	103
4	DISCUSSION	107
4.1	The role of the HBP during EMT in NSCLC	107
4.1.1	GFPT2 is specifically upregulated during EMT	107
4.1.2	GFPT2 regulates GLUT3 expression	108
4.1.3	The role of GFPT2 during EMT	109
4.2	The role of Snail in NSCLC	110
4.2.1	Snail accelerates lung tumor progression in KP mice	110
4.2.2	Snail does not increase metastasis incidence or cause chemoresistance of the tumor bulk	111
4.2.3	Snail enhances neutrophil infiltration in KP lung tumors	112
4.2.4	Snail and neutrophils form a vicious cycle in the lung tumor microenvironment	114
4.2.5	EMT in immunomodulation	116
4.2.6	Limitations of the KP mouse model	118
4.2.7	The <i>DLK1-DIO3</i> locus in lung cancer	119
4.2.8	<i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus repression in tumor-infiltrating immune cells	121
4.2.9	<i>Dlk1-Dio3</i> locus functions	123
4.2.10	Identifying the soluble factor secreted by Snail expressing cancer cells	124

5	CONCLUSION and PERSPECTIVE	127
6	MATERIALS and METHODS	129
6.1	Plasmid constructs for <i>in vitro</i> and <i>in vivo</i>	129
6.2	Cell culture	130
6.2.1	Origin of cell lines and culture conditions	130
6.2.2	Virus production	131
6.2.3	Generation of stably transduced cell lines	131
6.2.4	Conditioned medium	131
6.2.5	Transient transfection of siRNA	132
6.2.6	<i>Ex vivo</i> culture	132
6.2.7	Exosome preparation	132
6.3	Mouse experimentation	132
6.3.1	Mouse models	132
6.3.2	Mouse treatment modalities	132
6.3.3	Histological analysis	133
6.3.4	Immunohistochemistry	133
6.4	Tissue microarray	136
6.5	Flow cytometry and cell sorting	136
6.5.1	Chemokine measurements	137
6.6	RNA and protein analysis	139
6.6.1	RNA extraction	139
6.6.2	Reverse transcription	139
6.6.3	Real time PCR	139
6.6.4	miRNA detection	139
6.6.5	Protein extraction	140
6.6.6	Western blot	140
6.7	Statistics and bioinformatics	142
6.7.1	Statistical data analysis	142
6.7.2	Microarray analysis	142
6.7.3	TCGA data processing	142
6.7.4	Survival analysis	143
6.7.5	miRNA target gene analysis	143
6.7.6	Pathway analysis	143

7	REFERENCES	145
	CURRICULUM VITAE	181