Brief Definitive Report

C1 FIXATION AND CLASSICAL COMPLEMENT PATHWAY ACTIVATION BY A FRAGMENT OF THE Cμ4 DOMAIN OF IgM

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An insight into the structural features of human Waldenström IgM proteins which are responsible for their capacity to bind and activate the first component of complement (C) has been obtained. The basic approach has involved enzymatic and chemical fragmentation of the IgM molecule followed by examination of the resulting fragments for C-fixing activity. A 6,800 mol wt fragment obtained from the terminal Cμ4 domain of a Waldenström IgM molecule has been shown to bind active C1 (C1) (1). This subfragment of IgM, which was designated the Cμ4 fragment, was found to be composed of the Cμ4 domain of the Fcμ minus two tryptic peptides in the center of the loop. The first set of experiments described in this communication were designed to evaluate the dependence of C1-binding ability upon the presence of the intrachain disulfide bond in the Cμ4 fragment. In addition, the Cμ4 fragment before and after reduction, as well as each of its component chains, were examined for their ability to trigger the activation of the classical C pathway. Based upon these studies we are able to present evidence suggesting that the C1-activating function remains intact in these three fragments.

Materials and Methods

Preparation of IgM and Its Cμ4 Fragment. The methods used to isolate IgM and to obtain the Cμ4 fragment have been previously reported (1, 2).

Isolation of the Two Peptide Chains Comprising the Cμ4 Fragment. Cμ4 fragments (5 mg/ml in 5 M guanidine-HCl adjusted to pH 7.5 by Tris base) were reduced by the addition of 2-mercaptoethanol to a final concentration of 0.1 M. After 3 h of incubation at room temperature, a 10% excess of iodoacetamide was added and the pH was maintained at 7.5 by the addition of Tris base until alkylation was complete. The reduction mixture was desalted by passage through a Bio-Gel P-2 column (Bio-Rad Laboratories, Richmond, Calif.) eluted with 1% NH4HCO3 and lyophilized. Fractionation of the two peptides comprising the Cμ4 fragment was achieved by chromatography through a column of Whatman DE-52 cellulose (H. Reeve Angel & Co., Inc., Clifton, N. J.) equilibrated with 0.025 M NH4HCO3, pH 8.0. After application of the sample, the column was washed with one to two total column vol of 0.025 M NH4HCO3, pH 8.0, and a linear gradient (0.025 M NH4HCO3−1 M NH4HCO3) was begun. Pooled fractions from each of the two peaks eluted from this column were lyophilized and redissolved in dextrose gelatin veronal buffer containing

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optimum amounts of Ca$^{++}$ and Mg$^{++}$ (3).

C Assays. A description of the modified Cl-fixation assay has been previously reported (1). The ability to activate Cl was examined by incubating the fragments with normal human serum (NHS), followed by C4 titration. Titration of C4 was carried out by the procedure described by Gaither et al. (4) using C4-deficient guinea pig serum (5).

Amino Acid Analyses. Acid hydrolysis was performed in 6 N HCl at 108°C for 20 h before analysis on a Durrum amino acid analyzer (Durrum Instrument Corp., Palo Alto, Calif.) using the single column high pressure system.

Sequence Determination. The amino-terminal residues of each of the two disulfide-linked peptides comprising the C4 fragment were first determined by the Edman-dansyl chloride technique (6, 7). The intact C4 fragment was sequenced automatically on a Beckman Model 890 sequencer (Beckman Instruments, Inc., Fullerton, Calif.). The identification of released phenylthiohydantoin amino acids was performed by gas chromatography.

Results

The C4 fragment isolated from the Waldenström IgM, Dau, after limited tryptic cleavage of the (Fc)$_\mu$m fragment was found to consist of 24 residues on the amino-terminal side of the C4 domain linked by a disulfide bond to 32 residues on the carboxyl side of the loop [i.e. according to the residue numbering of the IgM, Ou, by Putnam et al. (8) the C4 fragment consists of residues 468-491 joined to residues 515-546, with 23 residues having been cleaved out of the center of the disulfide loop (1, 2)]. Separation of the two peptide chains comprising the C4 fragment was achieved by chromatography of the totally reduced sample through a DE-52 cellulose column. Amino acid compositional and sequence analysis of the first major peak eluted by the NH$_4$HCO$_3$ gradient indicated it consisted of the amino-terminal chain of the C4 domain (peptide A), while the second major peak was found to consist of the carboxyl-terminal chain of the disulfide loop (peptide B). The sequence of this region as published by Putnam et al. (8) for the IgM, Ou, and by Watanabe et al. (9) for the IgM, Gal, has been given in Fig. 1. In a comparative study of the Fc sequence of three additional Waldenström IgM proteins, including the Dau IgM used for the studies discussed herein, Florent et al. (10) confirmed the sequence of residues 470-472, 515-517, and 519-526 for Dau IgM and concluded that the Fc sequence is closely similar if not identical for most and possibly all human pathological $\mu$-heavy chains. A spot check via double sequencing in our automated sequenator of the intact Dau C4 fragment confirmed the residues indicated by arrows in the sequence given in Fig. 1.

The Cl-fixing ability of the Dau C4 fragment before and after reduction, as well as of each of its component chains (peptides A and B), was measured by the Cl-fixation assay. As seen in Fig. 2, there was a marked reduction in Cl-binding ability after cleavage of the disulfide bond. However, peptides A and B possessed similar Cl-fixing abilities, each being more efficient than the totally reduced mixture of the two fragments. Table I presents the Cl-fixation molar ratios obtained from the data depicted in Fig. 2. If the number of micromoles of intact C4 fragment required to fix one-half of the available Cl is taken as 1, then peptide B is 76 times less efficient, peptide A is 121 times less efficient, and the reduced C4 fragment (peptides A plus B) is 330 times less efficient than the parent fragment.

We next examined the ability of the C4 fragment and of its respective purified peptide chains to consume hemolytic C4 on incubation with fresh NHS.
The amino acid sequence of the C4 fragment as published by Putnam et al. (8) and by Watanabe et al. (9) is given in this figure. The residues indicated by arrows are those obtained by sequencing the Dau C4 fragment.

As seen in Table I, the results indicated that all three fragments were equivalent in their ability to bring about C4 consumption. The negative controls for the C4-consumption assay were the 17 residue cyanogen bromide fragment which is derived from the center of the Cμ4 domain (11) (i.e., the portion of the Cμ4 domain that is cleaved out to produce the C4 fragment) and the pFc' fragment (i.e., Cy3 domain) of human IgG1 (12).

However, before concluding that C4 consumption is a reflection of C1 activation it is necessary to prove the following: (a) that the immunoglobulin fragments are not activating a serum enzyme other than C1s which can in turn consume C4, and (b) that the fragments are not directly interfering with C4 or some other components of the test system. The first point was not examined directly. However, since the fragments have been shown to bind isolated C1, it seems probable that they, in fact, bind and activate C1 in NHS. In order to determine if the C4 fragment could possibly be acting directly on C4 the
Table I

Complement Fixation by Dau C$_{H4}$ and its Fragments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test material</th>
<th>C1 fixation</th>
<th>C4 consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount*</td>
<td>Molar ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dau C$_{H4}$</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peptide B</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peptide A</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dau C$_{H4}$ reduced</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Amount required to bind 50% of the available C1.

† µmol of fragment required to fix 50% of the available C1 per µmol of intact C$_{H4}$ required to fix 50% of the C1.

$^\dagger$ C4 site-forming units (SFU) consumed per µmol of fragment divided by C4 SFU consumed per µmol of intact C$_{H4}$.

Discussion

The ability of the reduced Dau C$_{H4}$ fragment and of its individual peptide chains to fix C1 and to consume C4 in NHS has been examined. The fact that cleavage of the disulfide bond in the C$_{H4}$ fragment resulted in a decrease in the efficiency of C1 fixation was not surprising. However, it was not expected that peptide A and peptide B would fix C1 and consume C4 in a similar manner. Also of interest was the fact that the individual A and B peptide chains were more efficient at fixing C1 than the reduced mixture of the two chains. In analyzing these results it is necessary to remember that the C1-fixation assay measures the competition of immunoglobulin fragments with the EAC4 cells (sheep erythrocytes [E] sensitized with rabbit antibody [A] to E to which C components have been added) for the available C1, the final result depending on the relative association constants. Perhaps when only one of the peptide chains is present the binding is more avid than when a mixture of the two chains is involved. However, C1 activation as manifested by C4 consumption occurs to a similar degree with all three fragments. Moreover, the reduced C$_{H4}$ fragment appears to consume C4 as effectively as each of its individual chains, and as effectively as the intact C$_{H4}$ fragment. This suggests that tight binding of C1 may not be a prerequisite for activation as measured by C4 consumption. Transient binding of C1 by the individual A and B peptide chains may therefore be sufficient to activate C1, which in turn consumes C4.

In conclusion, the observation that C1-activating and weak C1-fixing ability can be associated with the completely reduced and alkylated peptides A and B indicates that although the intrachain disulfide bond may stabilize the tertiary structure of the area in natural conditions, this bond is not absolutely essential for the expression of these activities.

Summary

A 56 residue fragment derived from a Waldenström IgM protein and consisting of 24 residues of the amino-terminal portion of the Cµ4 domain disulfide
bonded to 32 residues of the carboxy-terminal region of the loop has been shown to fix active C1 (C1) in a C1-fixation assay. Cleavage of the disulfide bond within the C14 fragment resulted in a marked decrease of C1-fixing ability, although the isolated A and B fragments did retain a limited ability to fix C1.

Upon incubation with normal human serum the intact C14 fragment and equal molar amounts of the isolated A and B peptides consumed C4 suggesting that the C1-activating determinant of IgM remains intact in these three fragments. Furthermore, on a molar basis the intact or the reduced C14 fragment consumed C4 as effectively as each of its component chains suggesting that transient binding of C1 by the individual A and B peptide chains is sufficient to activate C1.

On the basis of these observations it is proposed that a classical complement fixation function, i.e. C1 binding and activation, can be localized within a region of the IgM molecule corresponding to the C14 domain.

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References