**Brief Definitive Report**

**Homozygous scid/scid;beige/beige Mice Have Low Levels of Spontaneous or Neonatal T Cell-induced B Cell Generation**

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**Summary**

The autosomal recessive *scid* mutation results in defective immunoglobulin and T cell receptor gene rearrangement. The *scid* mutation occurred in the allotype congenic C.B-17 line, and up to 25% of C.B-17 *scid* mice spontaneously produce both T cells and immunoglobulin, a phenotype known as “leaky.” Moreover, introduction of neonatal T cells into C.B-17 *scid* mice leads to immunoglobulin production by 100% of animals. We have produced mice homozygous for both the *scid* and *beige* mutations. By contrast with C.B-17 *scid* mice, BALB/c *scid*;*beige* mice have a <2% incidence of “leakiness.” This percentage does not increase with age, and introduction of neonatal T cells fails to rescue immunoglobulin production. This suggests that a gene (or genes) closely linked to the *beige* locus regulates B and/or T cell development.

**Materials and Methods**

**Mice.** C.B-17/Nlcr *scid/scid* mice were obtained from Dr. Ken Dorschkind (University of California, Riverside) and bred at Medical Biology Institute, with annual caesarean-rederivation to limit transmission of environmental pathogens. BALB/c *beige* congenic mice were obtained from Dr. Carl Hansen (National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD) with the *beige* gene introduced onto the BALB/cAnN background. C.B-17 SCID mice were crossed with BALB/beige mice and the F2 progeny tested for IgM levels (to detect homozygous *scid/scid* mice) and for large myeloperoxidase-positive granules (9) in peripheral blood granulocytes (to detect homozygous *beige/beige* mice). Mice homozygous for both mutations were inbred for four generations. No attempt has been made to make the mice homozygous at the IgH locus. The mice have been typed using PCR primers and Southern blotting to detect polymorphisms between the IgH b allele from C.B-17 and the IgH a allele from BALB/c. Most of the SCID.BG mice express only the IgH a allele, but some mice also express the IgH b allele. The few leaky SCID.BG mice analyzed had the IgM a allotype, but given the frequency of the IgH a allele in the population, this result is to be expected.

**IgM Detection.** ELISA techniques were used to detect both total IgM and IgM a and IgM b. These techniques have been described in detail elsewhere (10). The assay standard was an IgM mAb purified by affinity chromatography. The assay gave linear results with IgM concentrations between 2 and 400 μg/ml; sera with higher values were diluted and reassayed.

**T Cell Transfer.** Thymocytes were prepared from 2-4-d-old...
BALB.xid mice and 5 × 10⁶ cells injected into the lateral tail vein of 8-wk-old SCID and SCID.BG recipients. IgM levels were determined at weekly intervals after T cell transfer. The use of BALB.xid donors ensures that contaminating donor B cells cannot expand in SCID or SCID.BG recipients (5).

Results and Discussion

Distribution of IgM Levels in Young SCID and SCID.BG Mice

8-wk-old SCID and SCID.BG mice housed under identical pathogen-free conditions were bled and total IgM levels determined by ELISA. Mice with >5 μg/ml of IgM have been designated as leaky, although this value is somewhat arbitrary and differs between laboratories. We found that only 5 of 260 SCID.BG mice were leaky by this criterion, whereas 137 of 574 SCID mice had higher IgM levels. The distribution of IgM levels for the 137 leaky SCID mice and the 5 leaky SCID.BG mice is shown in Fig. 1 A. Most of the leaky mice had IgM levels <20 μg/ml, but two SCID.BG mice and eight SCID mice had >100 μg/ml of IgM. The SCID.BG mouse has a much lower incidence of leakiness than the SCID mouse, but the addition of the beige mutation does not preclude the generation of functional B cells in rare mice.

Distribution of IgM Levels of Old SCID and SCID.BG Mice.

It is known that the incidence of leaky SCID mice and the levels of Ig produced increase dramatically in older animals. We compared cohorts of 8-mo-old SCID and SCID.BG mice born and reared in the same isolation room. The IgM levels of 35 mice from each group are shown in Fig. 1 B. As expected, 33 of 35 old SCID mice had IgM levels >5 μg/ml, and many were substantially higher. By contrast, only 1 of 35 old SCID.BG mice had >5 μg/ml IgM, and that mouse had <20 μg/ml. More important, 90% of both old and young SCID.BG mice had IgM levels below the 2 μg/ml limit of detection, indicating that no increase in the incidence of leakiness was occurring with increasing age. This was confirmed by comparing IgM levels at 8 wk and 8 mo of age on the same SCID.BG mice; the same mice had IgM levels ≥2 μg/ml at both time points (data not shown; n = 16). This result suggests that the rare successful generation of a B cell is limited to early life in SCID.BG mice, while it appears to be an ongoing process in SCID mice.

Induction of IgM Production by Neonatal T Cell Transfer. We have reported previously (5, 6) that injection of neonatal thymocytes or CD4 T cells induces the production of high levels of IgM in every SCID recipient. Both BALB.xid and C.B-17 neonatal thymocytes were capable of rescuing B cells in C.B-17 SCID recipients, so there was no evidence to suggest that recognition of IgH incompatibility was required. To determine if SCID.BG mice harbored latent B cells (or their precursors), we repeated this experiment using both IgH⁺ C.B-17 SCID and IgH⁺ SCID.BG recipients of neonatal BALB.xid thymocytes. By 3 wk after T cell transfer, all 10 SCID recipients had >100 μg/ml of IgM, while only one SCID.BG recipient had IgM levels in this range (Fig. 2). Interestingly, that animal had 9 μg/ml of IgM before T cell transfer, while the other SCID.BG recipients had <5 μg/ml. It appears that most SCID.BG mice have few if any cryptic B cells that can be revealed by neonatal T cell transfer.

To confirm that neonatal T cells, including the critical CD4 T cell subset, survived as well in SCID.BG recipients as in SCID mice, we analyzed the splenic T cells in the same mice depicted in Fig. 2 at 10 wk after thymocyte injection. The results (Fig. 3) indicate that both CD4 and CD8 BALB.xid T cells survive as well as IgH⁺ BALB.SCID.BG as IgH⁺ C.B-17 SCID recipients. The failure of SCID.BG mice to produce IgM thus cannot be attributed to poor survival of neonatal T cells.

The gene product altered by the scid mutation has yet to be identified. The mutation on chromosome 16 affects not only joining of Ig and TCR gene segments but radiation...

Figure 1. (A) IgM levels in 8-wk-old SCID and SCID.BG mice. Only IgM levels ≥5 μg/ml are shown, with the number of mice within each indicated range of IgM levels shown. 137 of 574 SCID and 5 of 260 SCID.BG mice analyzed had IgM levels ≥5 μg/ml. For comparison, IgM levels in normal BALB/c mice are in the 400–800 μg/ml range, so few “leaky” SCID mice achieve this normal range. (B) IgM levels in 8-mo-old SCID and SCID.BG mice. The number of mice with IgM levels ≥5 μg/ml are shown. 33 of 35 SCID mice were in this category, whereas only 1 of 35 SCID.BG mice had elevated IgM.

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damage repair as well (11). The failure to produce coding joins in recombination substrate experiments and the increased sensitivity to radiation damage suggest that the \textit{scid} gene may encode a ligase activity. The observed lower rate of spontaneous or T cell–induced B cell generation in SCID.BG mice could be due to a second locus reducing the already low rate of recombination, or to a reduction in the rescue rate that allows the survival of rare B cells. While the \textit{beige} mutation on chromosome 13 is known to reduce NK cell activity, these experiments do not necessarily imply that NK cells regulate (directly or indirectly) B cell generation. NK cells are present in SCID.BG mice and can be activated to produce cytokines such as IFN-γ (our unpublished observations). Cytolytic activity against YAC cells is reduced in SCID.BG mice. It is thus equally likely that a locus closely linked to \textit{beige} rather than a defect in NK cells is responsible for the phenotype of SCID.BG double mutants. The only locus closely linked to \textit{beige} that is known to influence lymphocyte development is the TCR-γ locus, which is 3 cM telomeric with respect to \textit{beige}. Since rearrangement of the TCR-γ gene should be inhibited by the \textit{scid} mutation, it is not obvious how this locus could contribute to the phenotype we have observed. It is also possible that genes linked to the IgH locus could influence the rate of B cell generation, since most of the SCID.BG mice analyzed had the IgH\textsuperscript{b} allele, and little information is thus available on the rate of leakiness in IgH\textsuperscript{b} SCID.BG mice. The rare leaky SCID.BG mouse (e.g., mouse no. 2 in Fig. 2 B) expressed IgM\textsuperscript{h}. The results presented here thus suggest that other genetic loci can modify the effect of the \textit{scid} mutation, and localize one (or more) such gene(s) to the region of the \textit{beige} locus on chromosome 13.

We appreciate the assistance of Kim von Sederholm and Raquel McDowell in the care of SCID and SCID.BG mice, and in collecting blood. Phillip Morrow, Robert Miller, and Roy Riblet provided valuable information and probes for phenotyping mice.

This work was supported by National Institutes of Health grant AI-22871 to D. E. Mosier. G. L. Gilmore is the recipient of a fellowship from the Cancer Research Institute.

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Received for publication 29 June 1992 and in revised form 24 September 1992.
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