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A Comparative Analysis of the C1-Binding Ability of Fragments Derived from Complement-Fixing and Noncomplement-Fixing IgM Proteins

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this study was to examine the molecular parameters necessary for initiation of complement fixation by IgM proteins. To determine why some IgM molecules are capable of complement fixation while others are not, several different Waldenström IgM proteins were examined for their ability to fix total hemolytic complement in the CH50 assay. Subsequently, the C1 fixing ability of a 56-residue fragment derived from the Cμ4 domain of each of these IgM molecules was studied with the C1 fixation assay.

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On the basis of these observations, it is proposed that a C1 binding site exists within the Cμ4 domain of both complement-fixing and noncomplement-fixing IgM molecules. Presumably, the latter molecules are unable to interact in their native state with C1 in the manner required for initiation of the classical complement pathway, possibly due to the configurational inaccessibility of the entire C1 binding site.

INTRODUCTION

There have been several reports in the literature suggesting the existence of two IgM subclasses, one capable of fixing complement and the second consisting of noncomplement-fixing IgM antibodies (1-4). In one such study Onoue and Ikeda (3) reported the identification of three noncomplement-fixing Waldenström IgM proteins out of a group of six. In a more recent publication, Tanimoto, et al. (4) reported that whereas a group of three monoclonal IgM-rheumatoid factor molecules were found to lack complement-fixing activity in a direct hemolytic assay system, three polyclonal rheumatoid factors were found capable of fixing and activating complement via the classical pathway. These authors suggested that IgM-rheumatoid factor may be composed of a mixture of complement-fixing and noncomplement-fixing antibodies, the noncomplement-fixing IgM either lacking the C1 binding site or possessing configurations that interfere with C1 binding.

We reported previously that a 6,800 mol wt fragment, designated Cμ4 fragment, derived from the terminal Cμ4 domain of the complement-fixing Waldenström IgM, Dau, was capable of binding the activated first component of complement (C1) (5). Due to mounting evidence that a considerable degree of homology in primary structure exists within the Fc region of all human pathological μ heavy chains (6), it seemed logical that the isolated Cμ4 fragment from either a complement-fixing or noncomplement-fixing IgM should be able to fix C1. We therefore compared the C1 fixing ability of the Cμ4 fragment isolated from the noncomplement-fixing IgM molecule, Gr, with that of the same fragment derived from the complement-fixing IgM molecules, Dau and Bus. The Cμ4 fragment from each of these three molecules was found to bind C1, lending support to the hypothesis that noncomplement-fixing IgM proteins do indeed contain C1 binding sites, these sites being either inaccessible to C1 in the native state, or only partially accessible so that even though C1 does attach, it is unable to interact with the other early complement components.
METHODS

Preparation of IgM and its (Fc)μ and C4H4 fragments. Human Waldenström IgM from patients Dau, Bus, and Gr was obtained as described by Hester et al. (7). (Fc)μ and Fabμ fragments were prepared by trypsin digestion (trypsin-TPCK, Worthington Biochemical Corp., Freehold, N. J.) at 60°C for 20 min (7, 8). After separation of (Fc)μ and Fabμ on Sephadex G-200 (Pharmacia Fine Chemicals, Inc., Piscataway, N. J.) in 1% NH4HCO3, pH 8, the (Fc)μ was further purified on Bio-Gel A-15 (Bio-Rad Laboratories, Richmond, Calif.). (Fc)μ fragments were incubated with 0.05 M cysteine (Fisher Scientific Co., Pittsburgh, Pa.) for 8 min at 25°C in 0.05 M Tris (Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, Mo.) buffer (pH 8.6), containing 0.1 M sodium chloride to produce monomeric Fcμ fragments. After alkylation with a 10% excess of iodoacetamide (Sigma Chemical Co.), homogeneous Fcμ fragments were isolated by gel chromatography on Sephadex G-200 (7). Limited tryptic cleavage of Fcμ to produce the C4H4 fragment was performed by the method of Hester et al. (7). Trypsin-TPCK was added at an enzyme-to-substrate ratio of 1:100 to a 5 mg/ml preparation of Fcμ fragments in 0.05 M Tris buffer (pH 8.0) containing 0.1 M sodium chloride and 0.01 M CaCl2. After incubation at 37°C for 16 min, digestion was terminated by the addition of an amount of soybean trypsin inhibitor (Worthington Biochemical Corp.) equivalent in weight to the trypsin used. Solid guanidine-HCl (Schwarz/Mann Div., Becton, Dickinson & Co., Orangeburg, N. Y.) was then added to a final concentration of 5 M and the sample applied to a Sephadex G-75 column. The C4H4 fragment was further purified by passage through a column of Bio-Gel P-10 in 5 M guanidine-HCl.

A detailed account of these methodologies and characterization of the fragments obtained from Gr IgM has been published by Hester et al. (7). The fragments isolated from Dau and Bus IgM molecules behaved identically to the Gr fragments during both fractionation and characterization.

After centrifugation for 1 h at 100,000 g, protein concentrations were determined spectrophotometrically at 280 nm with E280 of 12.0 for IgM and for (Fc)μ. The C4H4 fragments were desalted in 1% NH4HCO3, lyophilized, and weighed directly. A measured aliquot of the parent stock solution of each C4H4 fragment was removed for quantitative amino acid analysis. Amino acid analyses. Samples were hydrolyzed in constantly boiling HCl in vacuum-sealed tubes for 20 h. After evaporation, the samples were analyzed on a Durrum model D-200 automatic amino acid analyzer with high-speed analysis and the single-column technique (Durrum Instrument Corp., Palo Alto, Calif.).

Gel electrophoresis. Disc electrophoresis was performed with 5% polyacrylamide, as described by Maizel (9). The gels were run in 0.1 M sodium phosphate buffer (pH 7.2) containing 0.1% sodium dodecyl sulfate and 0.5 M urea, stained for 15–30 min with 1% amido black (Gallard-Schiesinger Chemical Mfg. Co., Carle Place, N. Y.) in 7% acetic acid, and destained in 40% absolute methanol and 10% acetic acid.

Buffers used in complement assays. Gelatin-veronal buffer is barbital-veronal buffered saline (VBS)1 containing 0.1% gelatin, 0.15 mM CaCl2, and 1 mM MgCl2, with a relative salt concentration of 0.15. The relative salt concentration of each buffer was monitored by relating the electrical resistance of the buffer at 0°C to a standard curve obtained by graphing the resistance of NaCl solutions vs. the NaCl molarities (10).

1 Abbreviation used in this paper: VBS, veronal-buffered saline.

Dextrose-gelatin VBS++ is VBS diluted with 5% dextrose to a relative salt concentration of 0.075, containing standard amounts of gelatin, Ca2+, and Mg2+ (11). Dextrose VBS++ , the buffer used for dilution of immunoglobulin and its fragments, refers to dextrose-gelatin VBS minus the gelatin. VBS containing 0.02 M EDTA and 0.1% gelatin (EDTA-gelatin-VBS) was also used as a buffer in the complement assays (11).

Complement components and intermediates. Partially purified human C1 and guinea pig C2 were prepared as described by Nelson et al. (12), EAC4a (sheep erythrocytes sensitized with rabbit antibody to E, to which complement components have been added) were made by a slight modification of the method described by Borsos and Rapp (13), using guinea pig (gp) C1 (500 effective molecules/cell). EAC1me was prepared by adding 500 effective molecules of C1 per EAC4 cell. As a source of the later-reacting complement components (C3–9), guinea pig serum was used at a dilution of 1:40 in 20 mM EDTA buffer.

CH50 fixation assay. Consumption of human hemolytic complement was demonstrated by quantitative assay of residual hemolytic activity in fresh normal human serum after incubation with immunoglobulin fragments, or with buffer as a control, for 1 h at 37°C. In this procedure 0.25-ml aliquots of fresh normal human serum were mixed with 1.125 ml of immunoglobulin fragment dissolved in gelatin VBS++. After incubation for 1 h at 37°C, the residual hemolytic complement activity was measured as described by Mayer (11).

C1 binding assay. The C1 fixing ability of the IgM molecule and their respective fragments was examined with a modified CI fixation assay (5). The buffer utilized throughout the assay was dextrose-gelatin VBS++ of relative salt concentration 0.065, containing optimum amounts of Ca2+ and Mg2+ (10). An amount of functionally pure human C1 (14) sufficient to yield 63% lysis was incubated with serial dilutions of the test fragments or with buffer as a control for 10 min at 30°C. EAC4 (1.5 × 109/ml) were then added and incubation was allowed to proceed for an additional 10 min. The resulting EAC14 cells were washed twice to remove unbound C1 and resuspended in the same buffer. An excess of functionally pure C2 (12) was then added, followed by an excess of C3–9, and the degree of lysis was determined spectrophotometrically at 412 nm.

The controls used for this assay consisted of the following: (a) a cell blank (cells plus buffer), (b) a complete lysis control (cells plus water to obtain 100% lysis), (c) a cell blank plus complement (buffer substituted for test serum dilutions to insure that no extraneous C1 was in any of the reagents), and (d) a complement color (buffer plus guinea pig serum-EDTA) (10).

RESULTS

After passage of the 60°C tryptic digests of each IgM protein through a Sephadex G-200 column, and subsequent purification of the (Fc)μ fragments on Bio-Gel A-15, an (Fc)μ fraction was obtained that gave a single immunoelectrophoretic band with anti-IgM, and did not react with anti-Bence Jones κ or anti-Bence Jones λ antisera (Meloy Laboratories Inc., Springfield, Va.). Dau (Fc)μ has been characterized by Zikán and Bennett (15), and Hester et al. (7) have published a detailed analysis of Gr (Fc)μ.

Pentameric Fc was reduced with 50 mM cysteine and the 34,000-mol wt monomer isolated on a Sephadex
G-200 column in pH 7.5 phosphate buffer (7). Disc electrophoresis in 5% polyacrylamide with a pH 7.2 sodium phosphate-0.1% sodium dodecyl sulfate-50 mM urea buffer revealed a single band whose molecular weight was not lowered after reduction and alkylation in 5 M guanidine-HCl (7). Furthermore, Hester et al. (7) found that total reduction of Gr monomeric Fcμ released four SH groups per fragment, indicating that the two intrachain disulfide loops had remained intact.

The Fcμ fragment was treated with trypsin for 16 min at 37°C and the digest passed through a Sephadex G-75 column in 5 M guanidine-HCl (7). The peak containing the CμH4 fragments was pooled, desalted on Sephadex G-25 in 1% NH₄HCO₃, lyophilized, and applied to a Bio-Gel P-10 column in 5 M guanidine-HCl. After elution from the P-10 column, the CμH4 fragments from each of the IgM proteins gave a single band on 5% sodium dodecyl sulfate acrylamide gels. The gel filtration patterns and fragment analyses obtained during the fragmentation of Gr IgM have been published by Hester et al. (7). Similar patterns and products resulted from the fragmentation of Dau and Bus IgM molecules. Partial sequence analysis and a comparison of the amino acid composition of the Gr CμH4 fragment and of its respective isolated peptide chains with that published for the IgM,

| Amino Acid Composition of the CμH4 Fragment from Dau and Bus IgM |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 | Dau CμH4 Fragments* | Bus CμH4 Fragments* | Theor.† |
| His             | 1.9             | 1.8             | 2     |
| Arg             | 2.3             | 2.2             | 2     |
| S-CMC           | ND§             | ND              |       |
| Asp             | 3.0             | 3.0             | 3     |
| Thr             | 6.3             | 6.2             | 7     |
| Ser             | 3.7             | 3.5             | 4     |
| Glu             | 7.9             | 7.7             | 8     |
| Pro             | 2.0             | 2.0             | 2     |
| Gly             | 2.0             | 2.0             | 2     |
| Ala             | 4.7             | 4.5             | 5     |
| Val             | 5.7             | 5.6             | 6     |
| Met             | 1.2             | 1.1             | 1     |
| Ile             | 2.0             | 2.0             | 2     |
| Leu             | 3.0             | 3.0             | 3     |
| Tyr             | 1.7             | 1.7             | 2     |
| Phe             | 2.7             | 2.8             | 3     |
| Trp             | ND              | ND              | 2     |
| Lys             | 0               | 0               | 0     |

* Residues per three residues of leucine.
† Residues 468-491 and 515-546 of the IgM, Ou, from Florent et al. (6).
§ ND, not determined.

Table II
Consumption of Human Complement by Dau IgM CμH4 and (Fc)μ Fragments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test sample</th>
<th>CH50</th>
<th>Molar ratio*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CμH4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fc)μ</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IgM</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For each series of titrations the molar ratios refer back to the CμH4 fragment as 1.

Ou (6), enabled Hester et al. (7) to pinpoint its location within the μ chain. The CμH4 fragment was found to be composed of the CμH4 domain of the Fcμ minus two tryptic peptides in the center of the loop (residues 468-491) sulfide bonded to residues 515-546, according to the residue numbering of Ou[6]). Amino acid compositional analysis of the Dau and Bus CμH4 fragments (Table I) and a spot check via double sequencing in our automated sequencer of the intact Dau CμH4 fragment (16) revealed no differences as compared to the Gr CμH4 fragment (7).

Initially, the CH50 assay was used to test the overall complement-consuming ability of the Waldenström IgM, Dau, and its (Fc)μ and CμH4 fragments. As seen in Table II, the Dau CμH4 fragment consumed 2.2 CH50 U/nmol, while the Dau (Fc)μ consumed 17 CH50 U/nmol. (Fc)μ was therefore 7.7 times more efficient than the CμH4 fragment at consuming total complement. Furthermore, on a molar basis, intact Dau IgM appeared to be approximately 10 times more efficient in consuming total complement than the monomeric CμH4 fragment. This latter observation provides an impressive quantitative correlation, since there are 10 CμH4 fragments per IgM molecule.

Subsequently, the ability of two other Waldenström IgM proteins (Bus and Gr) to fix total complement was examined with the CH50 assay. As depicted in Table III, Bus IgM was found to consume total complement, whereas an equivalent amount of Gr IgM did not.

For the final set of experiments, the CμH4 fragment was isolated from Dau, Bus, and Gr IgM proteins and tested in the C fixes assay (Table III). It was found that the CμH4 fragment from each of these IgM molecules was able to fix C, with 8 μg of Dau and Bus CμH4 fragments and 24 μg of Gr CμH4 fragment required to fix one-half of the available C. Fig. 1 is a graph of these results. It should be noted that although the Gr CμH4 fragment appears to be slightly less efficient than the Dau and Bus CμH4 fragments in binding C, the molar ratios for the three fragments are of the same order of magnitude.

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TABLE III
Complement-Binding Properties of Three Different Waldenström IgM Molecules and of Their Respective CH4 Fragments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of IgM</th>
<th>CH4</th>
<th>Molar ratio*</th>
<th>Amount†</th>
<th>Molar ratio‡</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dau</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&gt;100</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For these titrations the molar ratios refer to Dau IgM as 1.
† Amount required to bind 50% of the available C1.
‡ For this titration the molar ratios refer back to the Dau CH4 fragment as 1.

DISCUSSION

It has been suggested by Edelman et al. (17) that certain repeating regions of immunoglobulin polypeptide chains are folded into compact globular structures called domains, each evolved to perform a particular biologic function. According to this concept, it should be possible to associate specific biological effector functions, such as complement fixation, with a specific submolecular domain in certain immunoglobulin molecules. Evidence to support this hypothesis has been obtained from the data of Connell and Porter (18) and of Ellerson et al. (19) demonstrating that the Cγ2 domain of IgG contains a C1 binding site (Fig. 2) and may therefore play a role in complement activation by this molecule.

Few attempts have been made to delineate the structural basis for complement binding to IgM. However, two meaningful observations relative to this question have been published. First, the 7S subunit of IgM was found to bind C1 as effectively as nonaggregated, monomeric IgG in a C1 fixation test (20), and second, the (F1)μ and Fcμ fragments of IgM were found to have similar complement-fixing capacities in a CH4 assay, each being 31 times as effective as intact IgM by weight and 19 times as effective on a molar basis (21).

Complement Fixation by Fragments from the CH4 Domain of IgM Molecules
In a more recent study from this laboratory (5), it was reported that a 56-residue fragment (designated \( \text{Ch4} \) fragment), derived from a Waldenström IgM protein and consisting of 24 residues of the amino-terminal portion of the \( \text{Cu4} \) domain disulfide bonded to 32 residues of the carboxy-terminal region of the loop, possessed \( \text{Cl} \) fixing ability in a \( \text{Cl} \) fixation assay. On the basis of these data, and the observation that upon incubation with normal human serum the \( \text{Ch4} \) fragment consumes \( \text{C4} \) (16), it is proposed that a classical complement fixation function, i.e., \( \text{Cl} \) binding and activation, can be localized within the \( \text{Cu4} \) domain of the IgM molecule (Fig. 2).

The sequence data presented by Florent et al. (6) indicate that only minor differences exist in the primary structure of the \( \text{Fc} \) region of both pathological and normal IgM molecules. This being true, it follows that if primary structure relates directly to function, the \( \text{Ch4} \) fragment from complement-fixing and from noncomplement-fixing molecules should possess \( \text{Cl} \) fixing ability. Whether or not each respective IgM could fix \( \text{Cl} \) so that it could subsequently interact with the other early complement components would therefore depend upon the relative exposure of the \( \text{Cu4} \) domain in the intact molecule. This was indeed borne out by the fact that the isolated \( \text{Ch4} \) fragment from the noncomplement-fixing IgM, \( \text{Gr} \), was able to fix \( \text{Cl} \), and did so nearly as efficiently as the \( \text{Ch4} \) fragments from the complement-fixing IgM molecules, Dau and Bus. The threefold difference in \( \text{Cl} \)-fixing ability observed between the \( \text{Ch4} \) fragments from complement-fixing and noncomplement-fixing molecules was not felt to be significant.

That the \( \text{Ch4} \) fragments from two complement-fixing IgM molecules (Dau and Bus) and from an apparent noncomplement-fixing IgM protein (Gr) were each capable of \( \text{Cl} \) fixation raises interesting possibilities. In this regard it should be pointed out that Isenman et al. (22) found that while noncomplement-fixing IgG4 does not bind \( \text{Cl} \), \( \text{Fc} \) fragments derived from this subclass do fix \( \text{Cl} \), and do so with an affinity comparable to the corresponding fragment from IgG1. In an earlier publication these authors reported that the \( \text{Cl} \) fixing site of \( \beta_2 \)-microglobulin remains active after reduction and alkylation (23). Furthermore, they obtained spectral data indicating that in the absence of an intact intrachain disulfide bond, \( \beta_2 \)-microglobulin does not fold into the conformation characteristic of the native state. On the basis of these data Isenman and co-workers postulated that little secondary or tertiary folding is required for the existence of an active \( \text{Cl} \) binding site, and that the chemical features of the linear amino acid sequence required for binding of \( \text{Cl} \) may be commonplace but may be prevented from reacting because of local folding patterns or interaction with one-dimensionally distant regions of the molecule (22). Such an interpretation is consistent with our observation that fragments derived from the \( \text{Cu4} \) domain of both complement-fixing and noncomplement-fixing IgM molecules retain the ability to fix \( \text{Cl} \).

Considering our data on IgM relative to that of Isenman and colleagues on IgG4 and \( \beta_2 \)-microglobulin, we suggest that a \( \text{Cl} \) fixing site may exist in all IgG and IgM proteins, the noncomplement-fixing molecules possessing configurations that interfere with correct \( \text{Cl} \) binding.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This work was supported in part by grants AI 9153, HL 11310, PPG AM 03555, and NSF BMS 74-11522 from the National Institutes of Health, and credit is given to project 8197-01, Veterans Administration Hospital, Birmingham, Ala.

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Complement Fixation by Fragments from the C4d Domain of IgM Molecules