Award Number: DAMD17-99-1-9244

TITLE: Development of Pro-Peptide Immunotherapy for Breast Cancer

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REPORT DATE: July 2003

TYPE OF REPORT: Final

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release;
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**Development of Pro-Peptide Immunotherapy for Breast Cancer**

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The proposed study will test the hypothesis that solid tumors can be eliminated by immunizing the host with specific foreign peptides and by delivering these peptides to the tumors in the form of pro-peptides which are activated at the tumor sites. This immunotherapy approach takes advantage of the potent tumor destruction capacity of T cells and is independent of self tumor-antigens. The therapeutic peptides will be conjugated to glucuronide through a spacer to form pro-peptides which will have increased aqueous solubility and no longer bind the MHC. Glucuronidase liberated by the tumor cells and tumor infiltrating inflammatory cells is expected to convert the pro-peptides to the active, MHC binding peptides in the vicinity of the tumor mass. The potent peptide specific CTL in vivo are expected to kill the tumor cells or the stromal/endothelial cells surrounding the tumor bed when these cells are marked on their MHC by the liberated peptides, achieving the goal of immunotherapy with foreign peptides. The technical objectives are to (1) Establish an in vitro assay to measure tumor growth inhibition by peptide specific T cells and pro-peptides, (2) synthesize and test the activity of pro-peptides to be activated by β-glucuronidase at the tumor site and (3) Develop human anti-MP58 CTL line and measure pro-peptide activity with anti-MP58 CTL.

**Subject Terms**

Breast Cancer
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INTRODUCTION

This is the revised final report for DAMD17-99-1-9244 "Development of Pro-Peptide Immunotherapy for Breast Cancer". This three year project was extended to the fourth year to verify results in Task 3 and test lipoprotein conjugation of candidate peptides.

The proposed study was to test the novel hypothesis that solid tumors can be eliminated by immunizing the host with foreign peptides and by delivering these peptides to the tumors in the form of pro-peptides which are activated at the tumor sites. Specifically,

Task 1 Establish an in vitro assay to measure tumor growth inhibition by peptide specific T cells and pro-peptides
Task 2 Synthesize and test the activity of pro-peptides to be activated by β-glucuronidase at the tumor site
   (A) Synthesis of glucuronide derivatives of Flu peptide MP-58 GILGFVFTL presented by human HLA-A2.1.
   (B) Measurement of peptide and pro-peptide binding to MHC.
Task 3 Develop human anti-MP58 CTL line and measure pro-peptide activity with anti-MP58 CTL.

BODY

Task 1 Establish an in vitro assay to measure tumor growth inhibition by peptide specific T cells and pro-peptides. Results from this task were described in 2000 annual report and have been published (Appendix A).

A three dimensional tumor growth system which mimics tumor growth in vivo was used to measure the activity of peptide specific CTL against tumor cells loaded exogenously with the same antigenic peptide. D2F2 tumor cells and CTL specific for β-gal peptide p876 TPHPARIGL were suspended together in 1 μl of collagen and embedded in collagen gel in 24 well plate. p876 at 5 or 20 μg/ml was added to the gel when the cells started to grow from the bolus after overnight culture. Complete inhibition of tumor growth was observed in the wells with added p876, indicating that p876 diffused through the gel to load the cells in the growing tumor which became a target of anti-p876 CTL. D2F2 cells embedded with anti-p876 CTL, but without exogenous peptide grew progressively.

To test whether CTL can migrate through the matrix to destroy the target tumor, D2F2 mammary tumor cells were embedded in the collagen, incubated overnight and CTL were added on top of the gel. Approximately 20-40% of CTL migrated through the collagen in 18 hrs and floating T cells were removed. Peptide p876 at 5 or 20 μg/ml was added and complete disintegration of the tumor boluses was observed after 5 days of culture, further supporting the principle of delivering exogenous peptide to mark the tumor for T cell destruction.

Task 2 Synthesize and test the activity of pro-peptides to be activated by β-glucuronidase
Results from this task were described in 2001 and 2002 annual reports and have been published (Appendix B).

We tested two methods for synthesis of prodrugs of MP58 2a (see appendix B) activated by beta-glucuronidase and comprising a self-immolative 3-nitrobenzyloxy carbonyl moiety were investigated. Reaction of beta-glucuronic acid glycoside of 4-hydroxy-3-nitrobenzyl alcohol (3)
with N,N'-disuccinimidyl carbonate (DSC) followed by conjugation with AlaOme, Gly, Thr, Phe-Leu, or Leu-Arg gave carbamates 4a-4f. Deacetylation of 4b and 4e with MeONa/MeOH gave beta-glucuronides 5b and 5e. Compound 5e was converted to beta-glucuronic acid conjugate 6e by the action of pig liver esterase (PLE). Compound 6e is a substrate for beta-glucuronidase. Method of a direct introduction of the prodrug residue into MP58 GILGFVFTL (2b) failed. Alternately, glycine conjugate 5b was activated to pentafluorophenyl ester 10. Model coupling of 10 with Phe-Leu gave tripeptide conjugate ester 11a which was hydrolyzed by PLE to uronic acid 12. Condensation of 10 with octapeptide ILGFVFTL (9) gave prodrug precursor 11b. Octapeptide 9 was prepared by de novo synthesis using a racemization-free fragment coupling method. Ester hydrolysis with Ba(OH)2/MeOH gave the target prodrug 2a which is a substrate for beta-glucuronidase. Prodrug 2a does not bind to HLA-A2.1 of T2 human cells defective in major histocompatibility complex I (MHC I) – associated peptide processing. Addition of beta-glucuronidase restored the binding to the level observed with parent nonapeptide 2b although higher concentrations of prodrug 2a and enzyme were necessary. This is the first reported synthesis of a prodrug of HLA-A2.1 associated flu peptide.

**Task 3** Develop human anti-MP58 CTL line and measure pro-peptide activity with anti-MP58 CTL. Results from this task were described in the 2002 annual report and reported in 2002 Era of Hope meeting (Appendix C).

MP58 specific human CTL line was established from peripheral blood monocytes of an A2.1 positive normal adult man by repeated stimulation with MP58 loaded antigen presenting cells. Dendritic cells were prepared from blood monocytes by culturing in AIM V medium supplemented with fli3 ligand, c-kit ligand, GM-CSF, TNF-alpha and IL-4 for 6 days in 10% autologous serum (1). Such DC were loaded with 40 ug/ml MP58 peptide in the presence of 3 ug/ml beta-microglobulin for 2 hrs at 37 degree. After three washes, DC were incubated with autologous CD8+ T cells in medium containing 10 ng/ml of IL-7. CD8 T cells were prepared by negative depletion of blood MNC which expressed CD20, CD4, CD14 and CD32, using magnetic beads. The antigenic stimulation was repeated with monocytes as the antigen presenting cells. Over 80% of MP58 loaded T2 cells were lysed by CTL at E:T ratio of 10:1 – 2:1. The same CTL did not lyse T2 cells loaded with pro-peptide beta-Glu-MP58. In the presence of beta-glucuronidase, 80% of T2 cells were lysed, demonstrating liberation of active MP58 from the prodrug to mark tumor cells for CTL lysis. These results demonstrate that immunogenic peptide prodrugs are converted to active peptide by beta-glucuronidase and mark tumor cells for CTL mediated lysis.

**Additional study**

Peptide or pro-peptide may be too short-lived in vivo to be therapeutically effective. To increase pro-peptide stability in vivo, lipoprotein conjugates were synthesized using a universal helper epitope PADRE, aK(X)VAAWTLKAAA, as the test peptide. LDL (Sigman) was triple washed with heptane to extract the lipids. Apoprotein B was suspended in PBS by vortexing and aqueous solution of PADRE at 1 mg/ml was added, vortexed and lyophilized at −50 degree for 12 hrs. Lipid extract was added to the powder mixture of apoprotein B and peptide, mixed by vortex. Heptane was slowly removed using rotoevaporator at 40 degree for 30 min under vacuum. When incubated with tumor cells, 55 and 20% of PADRE and PADRE/lipoprotein conjugate, respectively, was degraded in 2 hrs by peptidase on the cell surface. PADRE and lipoprotein conjugated PADRE induced similar lymphoproliferation of T cells. Therefore, it
should be feasible to conjugate pro-peptide drugs to lipoprotein to increase stability while maintaining activity \textit{in vivo}.

**KEY RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

1. An \textit{in vitro} 3-D tumor growth inhibition assay was used to demonstrate the feasibility of delivering antigenic peptide to mark a growing solid tumor for CTL destruction (Appendix A).

2. Beta-Glu-MP58, pro-peptide of flu MP-58 GILGFVFTL, was synthesized. In the presence of β-glucuronidase, MP-58 peptide is released from the pro-peptide and bound to HLA-A2.1. (Appendix B).

3. A human CTL line to flu peptide MP58 was established. Anti-MP58 CTL lysed T2 cells loaded with pro-peptide beta-Glu-MP58 only in the presence of beta-glucuronidase, demonstrating liberation of active MP58 from the prodrug to mark tumor cells for CTL lysis. (Appendix C).

4. A lipoprotein conjugate of the universal helper epitope PADRE was synthesized and demonstrated increased \textit{in vivo} stability.

**REPORTABLE OUTCOMES**


**CONCLUSIONS**

MP58 pro-peptide has been synthesized and is a candidate immunotherapeutic agent in HLA-A2.1 patients. Functional MP58 peptide can be released by beta-glucuronidase to bind HLA-A2.1 on target cells, marking them for specific CTL lysis. A universal peptide PADRE can be stabilized in lipoprotein conjugate while maintaining CD4 T cell stimulating activity. Prodrugs of immunogenic peptides combined with PADRE are potential therapeutic agents for solid tumors.
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APPENDICES


Foreign antigenic peptides delivered to the tumor as targets of cytotoxic T cells

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Received 17 May 2001; received in revised form 3 August 2001; accepted 7 August 2001
Scope of the Journal
The JOURNAL OF IMMUNOLOGICAL METHODS is devoted to covering techniques for: (1) quantitating and detecting antibodies and/or antigens and haptens based on antigen-antibody interactions; (2) fractionating and purifying immunoglobulins, lymphokines and other molecules of the immune system; (3) isolating antigens and other substances important in immunological processes; (4) labelling antigens and antibodies with radioactive and other markers; (5) localizing antigens and/or antibodies in tissues and cells, in vivo or in vitro; (6) detecting, enumerating and fractionating immunocompetent cells; (7) assaying for cellular immunity; (8) detecting cell-surface antigens by cell-cell interactions; (9) initiating immunity and unresponsiveness; (10) transplanting tissues; (11) studying items closely related to immunity such as complement, reticuloendothelial system and others.

In addition the journal will publish articles on novel methods for analysing the organization, structure and expression of genes for immunologically important molecules such as immunoglobulins, T cell receptors and accessory molecules involved in antigen recognition, processing and presentation. Submitted full length manuscripts should describe new methods of broad applicability to immunology and not simply the application of an established method to a particular substance although papers describing such applications may be considered for publication as a short Technical Note.

The Recombinant Technology section will contain articles relating to modification by recombinant techniques of molecules of immunological interest; isolation of novel binding proteins by phage display; gene therapy; transfection; and expression. Immunology Protocols is a section providing detailed, step-by-step descriptions of new and established techniques in immunology. Articles on the molecular biological analysis of immunologically relevant receptor binding sites are also invited.

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Publication information: Journal of Immunological Methods (ISSN 0022-1759). For 2001, volumes 248-259 are scheduled for publication. Subscription prices are available upon request from the Publisher or from the Regional Sales Office nearest you or from this journal's website (http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/jim). Further information is available on this journal and other Elsevier Science products through Elsevier's website (http://www.elsevier.nl).
Foreign antigenic peptides delivered to the tumor as targets of cytotoxic T cells

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Received 17 May 2001; received in revised form 3 August 2001; accepted 7 August 2001

Abstract

Cytotoxic T cells (CTL) are readily activated by immunogenic peptides and they exert potent anti-tumor activity if the same peptides are displayed on class I major histocompatibility complex (MHC) of the tumor cells. A handful of tumor-associated antigens have been identified and many of them are weak antigens. As an alternative strategy, strongly antigenic foreign peptides are delivered to the tumor, marking them for CTL recognition. To establish the principle of this new strategy, in vitro and in vivo tumor destruction was tested with BALB/c CTL to L\textsuperscript{d}-associated beta-galactosidase (\(\beta\)-gal) peptide p876. In vitro, anti-p876 CTL destroyed tumor cells in a single-cell suspension or in 3-D tumor boluses when exogenous p876 was added. Exogenous IL-2 was required to sustain CTL activity for complete destruction of tumor boluses. In vivo, BALB/c mice were immunized with p876 and a CD4 activating Pan DR reactive epitope (PADRE). PADRE, which binds to several different MHC class II antigen and activates CD4 T cells, induced delayed-type hypersensitivity and stimulated T cell proliferation. Immunized mice were injected with tumor cells loaded with p876 and mixed with PADRE. Starting from the day after tumor injection, mice received five rounds of peptide injection at the tumor sites and all tumors were rejected. Injection with saline had no effect. Injection with PADRE had minor anti-tumor activity. Immunization and treatment with p876 alone was not protective. Therefore, by delivering CD4 and CD8 reactive foreign peptides to the tumor, peptide-specific T cells rejected the tumors as demonstrated by the in vitro and in vivo tests. © 2001 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: CTL; Antigenic peptide; Cancer therapy; Prodrug

1. Introduction

Vaccination with tumor-associated, major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class I antigen-restricted immunogenic peptides can induce tumor antigen-specific immunity. BALB/c mammary tumor growth was inhibited in mice immunized with peptide E474 from the envelope protein of mouse mammary tumor virus (MMTV) (Wei et al., 1996a,b). HLA-A1-associated MAGE-3 peptide induced tumor shrinkage in three of sixteen melanoma patients (Marchand et al., 1995). Immunization with HLA-A2-restricted gp100 peptide combined with systemic IL-2 treatment induced partial response in 42% of melanoma patients (Rosenberg et al., 1998). Patients with metastatic melanoma showed complete...
response after they were immunized with dendritic cells loaded with three melanoma peptides (Nestle et al., 1998). These examples indicated the anti-tumor efficacy of peptide-specific cytotoxic T cells (CTL).

Several limitations in tumor-specific immunotherapy prompted us to search for alternative approaches. Antigen expression by tumor cells is heterogeneous and T cells recognizing tumor-specific antigens may eliminate antigen positive tumor cells, but allow the expansion of antigen negative cells. A limited number of tumor-associated antigens have been identified and many of them are weak antigens (Pardoll, 1998). When immunity to tumor-associated self antigens is successfully induced, autoimmunity becomes a risk factor. An alternative approach to exploit effector T cells without being limited by the tumor-associated antigens will be of great advantage.

Chemotherapeutic agents can be delivered to the tumors under the cover of pro-drugs. A nontoxic glucuronyl-spacer-doxorubicin prodrug HMR 1826 was activated selectively by β-glucuronidase which is found at high concentrations at the tumor site (Murdter et al., 1997; Bosslet et al., 1998). Treatment with HMR 1826 resulted in tumor destruction without systemic toxicity. The findings with HMR 1826 encouraged the strategy of delivering antigenic peptides under the cover of pro-peptides. A pro-peptide can be synthesized by conjugating glucuronide to the amino terminus through the self-immolative linker (Rawale et al., 2001). The pro-peptide does not bind to MHC class I antigen, but β-glucuronidase can cleave and release the active peptide, which then binds to MHC class I antigen. The current study is undertaken to establish the in vitro and in vivo assay methods for measuring anti-tumor activity of CTL to foreign peptides.

To sustain CTL activity in vivo, CD4 T cells were activated by Pan DR reactive epitope (PADRE) aK(X)VAWTLKAAa (a is D-alanine and X is cyclohexylalanine), a synthetic peptide containing amino acid sequences derived from the circumsporozoite protein (CSP) from \textit{Plasmodium falciparum}. PADRE binds multiple LHA-DR allospecificity and murine I-A<sup>b/d</sup> or I-E<sup>b/d</sup> antigens (Alexander et al., 1994) and induces helper T cell activity. The efficacy of PADRE to enhance anti-tumor CTL activity was examined.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Mice and cell lines

BALB/c mice originally obtained from the Cancer Research Laboratory, Berkeley, CA were bred by brother–sister mating in our animal care facility. The use and care of experimental mice are in accordance with the guidelines of Wayne State University Animal Investigation Committee. Mouse mammary tumor cell line D2F2 was cloned from a spontaneous mammary tumor, which arose in a BALB/c hyperplastic alveolar nodule line D2 (Mahoney et al., 1985). MMT cell line 168 was cloned from a spontaneous tumor in a BALB/cfC3H mouse which was the offspring of BALB/c mice foster nursed on C3H/HeJ mothers infected with MMTV(C3H) (Wei et al., 1993). Cell line 293 (American Type Culture Collection, Manassas, VA) is a human embryonic kidney cell line transformed with Ad5 E1A and E1B genes, and supports the propagation of E1 deleted recombinant adenovirus. All tissue culture reagents were obtained from GIBCO Laboratories (Grand Island, NY) unless otherwise specified. The cell lines were maintained in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DME) supplemented with 5% heat-inactivated fetal calf serum (HyClone, Logan, UT), 10% NCTC 109 medium (Sigma, St. Louis, MO), 8 μg/ml bovine crystalline insulin (Sigma), 1 mM oxalacetic acid, 0.5 mM sodium pyruvate, 2 mM L-glutamate, 0.1 mM MEM nonessential amino acids, 100 units/ml penicillin and 100 μg/ml streptomycin.
2.2. Peptides

Beta-galactosidase (β-gal) peptide p876 TPH-PARIGL and PADRE aK(X)VAAWTLKAAa (a is D-alanine and X is cyclohexylalanine) were synthesized at Genemed Synthesis (South San Francisco, CA).

2.3. Establishment of peptide-specific CTL

BALB/c mice were injected s.c. at the tail base with 100 μg of p876 emulsified in 0.1 ml of 50% complete Freund’s adjuvant (CFA). At 10 days after the injection, the spleen and lymph nodes were aseptically removed from immunized mice and a single-cell suspension was prepared. The freshly isolated cells were cultured with peptide-loaded, irradiated splenocytes in 12-well plates in RPMI 1640 medium containing 50 μM of 2-mercaptoethanol, 10% fetal calf serum, 5% mixed leukocyte culture supernatant and 18 IU/ml of recombinant hIL-2 (Cetus, Emeryville, CA). The ratio of stimulators to responders was 2:1.

To prepare the stimulators, autologous splenocytes were incubated with 100 μg/ml of p876 for 2 h, exposed to 1000 rad irradiation from a Cesium irradiator and washed to remove excess peptides before they were added to the culture. The cultured cells were re-stimulated with peptide-loaded splenocytes every 7–10 days.

Mixed leukocyte culture was prepared by incubating BALB/c splenocytes with irradiated human peripheral blood leukocytes for 48 h in RPMI 1640 medium with 10% FCS. The ratio of mouse and human cells was 1:1 and the total cell concentration was 5 × 10⁶ cells/ml.

2.4. ⁵¹Cr release assay

D2F2 tumor target cells were labeled by incubating 10 × 10⁶ cells with 100 μCi Na⁵¹CrO₄ (NEN Research Products, Boston, MA) in 1 ml of complete DME at 37 °C for 2 h. In some experiments, the target cells were loaded with p876 peptide by adding 100 μg of p876 during the incubation. The unincorporated ⁵¹Cr and unbound peptide was removed by three washes with Hanks’ balanced salt solution containing 2% calf serum and 2 mM Hepes buffer. Graded numbers of effector cells were mixed with 1 × 10⁵ labeled target cells in 200 μl of DME in the wells of round bottom microtiter plates. After centrifugation at 200 × g for 1 min, the plate was incubated at 37 °C for 4.5 h. After the incubation, the plate was centrifuged at 480 × g for 10 min and a 100-μl aliquot was removed from each well for counting in the gamma counter. The percent lysis was calculated as follows

\[
\text{% specific lysis} = 100 \times \frac{(\text{cpm}_{\text{test}} - \text{cpm}_{\text{medium}})}{(\text{cpm}_{\text{max}} - \text{cpm}_{\text{medium}})}
\]

The cpm_{max} was determined by adding 1/6 N HCL to wells containing ⁵¹Cr-labeled target cells. Each group contained four replicates.

2.5. A 3-D collagen gel assay

The growth and lysis of tumor cell boluses in the collagen were previously reported (Wei et al., 1996a,b) and are briefly described here. Collagen stock solution was prepared from rat tail tendons. The complete collagen mixture contained 12 parts of cold collagen stock, 2 parts of 7.5 X RPMI 1640 medium, 0.6 parts of 7.5% sodium bicarbonate and 0.5 parts of 0.34 N NaOH. This mixture stayed in liquid form if kept on ice. Tumor cell boluses were prepared by suspending 1 × 10⁵ tumor cells with or without CTL in 1 μl of complete collagen mixture and embedded between two layers of collagen gels. The gel was bathed in RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 50 μM of 2-mercaptoethanol, 10% fetal calf serum, 5% mixed leukocyte culture supernatant and 18 IU/ml of recombinant hIL-2 (Cetus). Tumor cells established inter-cellular junction and formed a cell mass during overnight culture (Wei et al., 1985, 1996a,b). In some experiments, the CTL were added to the top of the collagen and allowed to migrate into the gel. Peptide p876 was added the day after CTL were embedded or added. The plates were incubated at 37 °C and tumor growth was measured every other day.

Tumor cell boluses embedded in collagen gel were examined with an inverted microscope equipped with a split image tracing device, using 1 × objective. The projected image of the cell bolus
was traced and the surface area was calculated. The result was expressed as the square root of the measured area, which represented the mean diameter of the bolus, multiplied by a constant. The difference between the test and control group was determined with one-tail Student's t-test. There were four replicates in each group.

2.6. Foot pad swelling test

BALB/c female mice were immunized by s.c. injection with 20 µg of PADRE and 100 µg of p876 in 50% IFA, and challenged 2 weeks later in the foot pads with either or both peptides in 20 µl of saline. The thickness of the feet was measured with a caliper at 24 and 48 h after injection. The significance of the swelling was determined by comparing each test group with the saline control group using Student's t-test. There were seven to eight mice in each group.

2.7. Lymphocyte proliferation assay

Lymph nodes were removed aseptically from mice, and a single-cell suspension was prepared in RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 4% fetal calf serum. Suspended cells were distributed to round bottom wells of a 96-well plate and each well received 1.5 × 10^5 cells. Test peptide at varying concentrations or Concanavalin A (con A) at 1 µg/ml was added to each well. There were four replicates in each group. Cells were incubated in 5% CO₂ at 37 °C for 4 days. Each well received 1 µCi of ^3H-thymidine, and the cells were further incubated for 4 h before they were harvested with Harvester96 (Tomtec, Hamden, CT), and the incorporated ^3H was counted with TRILUX liquid scintillation and luminescence counter (Wallac, Turku, Finland).

2.8. Preparation of AdCMVLacZ

The construction of AdCMVLacZ was previously reported (Acsadi et al., 1994). The recombinant virus was purified through two rounds of plaque purification, propagated in 293 cells, and isolated on a discontinuous cesium chloride gradient. The virus was collected and the salt was removed with a Sephadex column. The quantity of viral particles was estimated by measuring the optical density at 260 nm and the plaque-forming unit (PFU) was determined by direct plaque assay with 293 cells.

2.9. Tumor growth inhibition assay

Female BALB/c mice at 6 weeks of age were immunized by intracutaneous injection with 0.1 ml of saline containing 1 × 10^10 PFU of AdCMVLacZ, and boosted, 2 weeks later, by s.c. injection at the tail base with 0.1 ml of 50% IFA containing 100 µg of p876 and/or 20 µg of PADRE. At 2 weeks after vaccination, mice were injected s.c. on the flank with 1 × 10^5 untreated or peptide-coated D2F2 cells. Starting the day after tumor cell challenge, mice received subcutaneously, every other day, at the tumor site, 0.1 ml of saline containing 100 µg of p876 and/or 40 µg PADRE. A total of five injections were administered and tumor growth was monitored weekly. There were eight mice in each group.

3. Results

3.1. Inhibition of tumor growth by p876-specific CTL in vitro

BALB/c CTL to β-gal peptide p876 was established as described in Materials and methods. After the fifth in vitro stimulation, more than 99% of the cells were CD8⁺ (not shown). CTL were frozen between the seventh and tenth stimulation and they were readily reactivated. The specificity was measured by the ^51Cr release assay. CTL lysed peptide p876-coated BALB/c mouse mammary tumor D2F2 cells, but not untreated D2F2 cells (Fig. 1). Expression of Ld by D2F2 cells was verified by flow cytometry (not shown).

The activity of p876-specific CTL against a solid tumor was tested in a 3-D collagen gel to access peptide loading and CTL lysis of a tumor mass. A total of 1 × 10^5 D2F2 cells and 3 × 10^5 CTL were embedded together in 1 µl of collagen (Fig. 1B). After an overnight incubation when the cell bolus was established, p876 at 5 or 20 µg/ml was added to the culture and tumor growth was monitored for 7
Fig. 1. Anti-tumor activity of anti-p876 CTL. (A) Cytotoxic activity of anti-p876 CTL measured by the $^{51}$Cr release assay. The D2F2 cells were labeled with Na$^{31}$CrO$_4$ in the presence (solid circle) or absence (open triangle) of p876 and chromium release was measured after a 4.5-h incubation at 37 °C with anti-p876 CTL. There were four replicates in each group. (B–D) Inhibition of D2F2 tumor growth by anti-p876 CTL in 3-D collagen gel. (B) A total of $1 \times 10^5$ D2F2 cells were co-embedded with $3 \times 10^5$ anti-p876 CTL in 1 μl of collagen. After an overnight incubation at 37 °C, p876 at 5 (solid square) or 20 (open triangle) μg/ml was added to the culture. Control group (solid circle) did not receive peptide. Alternatively, $1 \times 10^5$ D2F2 (C) or 168 (D) cells were embedded alone in 1 μl of collagen, and $3 \times 10^4$ anti-p876 CTL were added to the collagen gel after a tumor mass is established overnight. CTL migrated through the gel and p876 peptide was added after 24 h. Tumor growth was measured by the square root of the growth area. * indicates significant difference between the control and test groups at $P < 0.005$.

Without exogenous p876, D2F2 cells, co-embedded with anti-p876 CTL, grew progressively. The addition of p876 resulted in profound inhibition of tumor growth. Therefore, tumor cells in the solid mass were loaded with the exogenous peptide and are targets of CTL lysis.

Anti-tumor activity was further tested by embedding D2F2 cells in the collagen to establish a tumor mass before CTL and peptides were added. Therefore, $1 \times 10^5$ D2F2 cells were embedded and incubated overnight to establish a tumor mass with intercellular junctions (Miller et al., 1985) (Fig. 1C). CTL were added to the top of the gel and approximately 20–40% of CTL migrated through the collagen in 18 h (Ratner et al., 1992) when peptide p876 at 5 or 20 μg/ml was added. Complete disintegration of the tumor boluses was observed after 5 days of culture. Vigorous proliferation of CTL was observed in and around the tumor (not shown). The destruction of tumor cell boluses was verified with another mouse.
mammary tumor cell line 168, which also expressed Ld antigen (Fig. 1D). The extended culture period of the tumor boluses will be a particular advantage for testing pro-peptides, which are released by tumor-associated enzymes.

3.2. Effect of p876 on tumor growth in BALB/c mice

To test anti-tumor activity of p876-specific CTL in vivo, BALB/c mice were immunized with AdCMVLacZ to activate β-gal specific CTL and boosted in 2 weeks with 100 μg p876 in IFA. At 2 weeks after peptide immunization, mice were challenged with D2F2 cells pre-coated with p876. Starting the day after tumor cell challenge, mice were injected at the tumor site, every other day, with 200 μg of p876 in 0.1 ml saline. There were five injections in 10 days. Control mice received saline or were not treated. One group received uncoated D2F2 cells. There was no demonstrable protection in any of the treatment group (Fig. 2). We previously showed that immunization with irrelevant peptides had no effect on tumor growth (Wei et al., 1996a,b). The inability to inhibit tumor growth by local administration of p876 may be due to inadequate number of CTL at the tumor site as a result of inadequate cytokine or accessory signals. In the 3-D collagen, exogenous IL-2 was required to achieve complete tumor destruction, indicating that continued stimulation and expansion of the CTL was necessary for controlling tumor growth (Wei et al., 1996a,b).

3.3. T cell activation by PADRE

To enhance local recruitment or maintenance of CTL, CD4 T cell reactive peptide was incorporated
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>P value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>PADRE</td>
<td>38.6 ± 6.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>24.3 ± 8.6</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>β-gal/PADRE</td>
<td>49.3 ± 25.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
<td>39.4 ± 18.4</td>
<td>&lt;0.0005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saline</td>
<td>3.9 ± 7.1</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>3.9 ± 7.1</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mice were immunized and challenged as described in Materials and methods. There were eight mice in each group.

* P value was determined by the Student’s t-test.

into the treatment regimen. PADRE, which binds to a wide range of human and murine MHC class II antigen, was tested as local CD4 T cell activator. The immunogenicity of PADRE was tested by the foot pad swelling assay. BALB/c mice were immunized s.c. with 20 μg of PADRE in 0.1 ml of 50% CFA and challenged 2 weeks later in the foot pad with 40 μg of PADRE in 20 ul of saline. Significant swelling was induced by PADRE both 1 and 2 days after challenge (Table 1). Injection of PADRE in control mice or injection of saline in PADRE-immunized mice did not induce significant swelling. Therefore, PADRE-specific T cells were activated in vivo by peptide immunization. Delayed-type hypersensitivity, induced by a combination of p876 and PADRE, was also tested. Mice were immunized with 100 μg of p876 and 20 μg of PADRE in Incomplete Freund’s adjuvant and challenged 2 weeks later with p876, PADRE or a mixture of both peptides. Significant increase in foot pad thickness was observed after PADRE was injected (Table 2). Injection of both p876 and PADRE further enhanced the immune reactivity. p876 alone did not have significant effect. These results support the immunogenicity of PADRE in BALB/c mice and an enhanced inflammatory reaction when both MHC class I and II antigen reactive peptides were present.

Activation of T cells was also measured by lymphocyte proliferation assay (Table 3). Lymph node cells were prepared from BALB/c mice 2 weeks after mice were immunized s.c. with 20 μg of PADRE in 0.1 ml of 50% CFA. Immune cells were incubated with 0.1-10 μg of PADRE and 3H-thymidine incorporation was measured after 4 days of culture. Incorporation of 3H-thymidine was increased by more than 100 fold in sensitized lymphocytes when incubated with 10 μg of PADRE. Naive lymphocytes did not demonstrate significant activity, supporting specific immune activation by PADRE.

3.4. Anti-tumor activity of p876 and PADRE

To test the therapeutic effect of p876 and PADRE, BALB/c mice were immunized with AdCMVLacZ and boosted in 2 weeks with 100 μg p876 and 20 μg PADRE in IFA. At 2 weeks after the second immunization, mice received s.c. D2F2 cells pre-coated with p876 and mixed with PADRE. Mice were treated five times at the tumor site with a mixture of PADRE and p876, every other day. Complete inhibition of D2F2 tumor growth was observed in mice treated with PADRE and p876, every other day. Complete inhibition of D2F2 tumor growth was observed in mice treated with PADRE and p876 (Fig. 3). Immunization and treatment with PADRE alone had a minor anti-tumor activity (not shown). These re-

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment*</th>
<th>Mean ± S.D. (cpm)</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>P value*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immune</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>145 ± 141</td>
<td></td>
<td>47 ± 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADRE 0.1 μg/ml</td>
<td>269 ± 136</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
<td>40 ± 10</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADRE 5 μg/ml</td>
<td>6360 ± 974</td>
<td>&lt; 0.005</td>
<td>183 ± 117</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>PADRE 10 μg/ml</td>
<td>18167 ± 3784</td>
<td>&lt; 0.005</td>
<td>137 ± 158</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con A 1 μg/ml</td>
<td>92765 ± 11148</td>
<td>&lt; 0.005</td>
<td>78263 ± 16138</td>
<td>&lt; 0.005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lymph node cells were pooled from three mice 2 weeks after PADRE immunization and stimulated with PADRE as described in Materials and methods.

* P value was determined by the Student’s t-test.
sults demonstrated that activation of both CD4 and CD8 T cells at the tumor site with foreign peptide eliminated tumors loaded with the specific peptides.

4. Discussion

This study outlines a scheme for inducing and measuring anti-tumor activity mediated by T cells to foreign peptides. CTL to β-gal peptide p876 eliminated tumor boluses in a 3-D matrix, demonstrating effective loading of p876 in a solid mass, migration of CTL to the tumor and sustained CTL killing at the tumor site. Exogenous IL-2 was necessary to maintain CTL activity. In vivo, tumors were rejected if they were loaded with p876 and PADRE and treated locally with the same peptides. PADRE was required to sustain CTL activity in vivo. Although tumor cells were loaded with peptides in this study, it should be possible to deliver foreign peptides onto tumor cells in vivo by appropriate vehicles. The pro-peptide developed by our group does not bind MHC class I
antigen until the active peptide is released by beta-glucuronidase (Rawale et al., 2001; ID: 2226). Based on the same principle, doxorubicin prodrug HMR 1826 was activated selectively at the tumor site by β-glucuronidase and demonstrated anti-tumor activity without systemic toxicity (Murder et al., 1997; Bosslet et al., 1998). It is anticipated that pro-peptide can be delivered to the tumors by systemic administration. The 3-D tumor growth assay and in vivo tumor inhibition in the presence of PADRE will be useful for testing pro-peptides and other derivatives of MHC class I antigen-associated peptides.

β-gal encoded by *Escherichia coli lacZ* gene is widely used as a genetic tracer. It is immunogenic and restricted epitope p876 TPHPARIGL was previously defined (Rammensee et al., 1989; Gavin et al., 1993). Immunization of BALB/c mice with p876 inhibited the growth of a colon carcinoma genetically engineered to express β-gal, supporting the cytotoxic activity of anti-(β-gal) CTL (Specht et al., 1997). Here, we showed that p876 effectively marked a solid tumor when loaded exogenously onto the tumor cells.

Tumor growth in the 3-D collagen gel is a useful indicator of CTL activity against solid tumors. When CTL were co-embedded with the tumor cells, tumor growth was inhibited, but some tumor cells remained after 2 weeks (not shown). When the same number of CTL were added exogenously, less than half migrated through the gel. These migratory T cells caused complete disintegration of the tumor. When CTL were packed in close proximity in the cell bolus, they may recognize neighboring CTL loaded with p876 and lyse each other. Alternatively, tumor cells may demonstrate immune suppressive activity, e.g. Fas ligand on tumor cells may induce T cell apoptosis. (Whiteside and Rabinowich, 1998; Sarma et al., 1992; Zeytun et al., 1997). These mechanisms can significantly reduce the number of functional effectors in the tumor mass. T cells present in human tumors may be similarly ineffective because of the hostile microenvironment. When the hosts are immunized with foreign peptides, peptide-specific T cells will reside in the peripheral lymphoid organs until they are recruited to the tumor site by the injected peptides. When recruited to the tumor from the periphery, they may be more efficacious than resident T cells against tumor cells.

The in vivo therapeutic effect was striking when both CD4 and CD8 reactive peptides were delivered to the tumor and all tumors were rejected. Delivery of p876 alone was not effective, indicating the need to recruit and sustain CTL activity in vivo. Treatment with PADRE alone had a minor anti-tumor effect (not shown), but was not nearly as effective as p876 and PADRE together. PADRE can bind to I-A<sup>δ</sup> or I-E<sup>δ</sup> antigen expressed by the professional antigen presenting cells (APC) or non-professional APC like the endothelial cells (Rose, 1997) and activate CD4 T cells. Interaction between activated CD4 T cells and APC can further enhance the antigen presenting capacity of the latter (Bennett et al., 1998; Schoenberger et al., 1998). Cytokines generated by activated CD4 T cells recruit and activate additional APC, CD8 T cells and non-specific inflammatory cells.

With the proposed scheme, several major obstacles in tumor immunotherapy, namely, tolerance to self-antigens, induction of autoimmunity or the lack of tumor-specific antigens may be circumvented. Because the peptide is foreign, tolerance to the antigen is not an issue. After the peptide treatment is terminated, there is no lingering immune reactivity to self-antigens. Importantly, this therapy does not rely on the expression of tumor-specific antigens because the therapeutic peptides are administered exogenously. Several peptides can be administered simultaneously or sequentially to enhance the therapeutic effect. Each round of peptide treatment represents a booster shot and can increase the frequency of reactive T cells. The observation that 1-day tumor can be eliminated by local delivery of foreign peptides suggests that this strategy may be useful as an adjuvant therapy to eliminate residual tumors at the surgical sites or small tumors not accessible by surgery.

In summary, excellent therapeutic effect was achieved by local delivery of foreign peptides to the tumors. This demonstration provides the basis for developing new strategies to deliver therapeutic foreign peptides to the tumor.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Ms. Darcy Lichlyter and Serene Lane for their technical assistance. This
study was supported by NIH RO1 CA76340 and USAMRMC (DAMD17-99-1-9244).

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Synthesis and Biological Activity of the Prodrug of Class I Major Histocompatibility Peptide GILGFVFTL Activated by β-Glucuronidase

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Received July 30, 2001

The first synthesis of a prodrug of HLA-A2.1 associated antigenic influenza peptide 2a was accomplished. Two methods for synthesis of prodrugs of antigenic peptides activated by β-glucuronidase and comprising a self-immolative 3-nitrobenzyloxycarbonyl moiety were investigated. Reaction of β-glucuronic acid glycoside of 4-hydroxy-3-nitrobenzyl alcohol (3) with N,N’-disuccinimidyl carbonate (DSC) followed by conjugation with AlaOMe, Gly, Thr, Phe-Leu, and Leu-Arg gave carbamates 4a–4f. Deacetylation of 4b and 4e with MeONa/MeOH gave β-glucuronides 5b and 5e. Compound 5e was converted to β-glucuronic acid conjugate 6e by the action of pig liver esterase (PLE). Compound 6e is a substrate for β-glucuronidase. Method of a direct introduction of the prodrug residue into antigenic nonapeptide GILGFVFTL (2b) failed. Alternately, glycine conjugate 5b was activated to pentafluorophenyl ester 10. Model coupling of 10 with Phe-Leu gave tripeptide conjugate ester 11a which was hydrolyzed by PLE to uronic acid 12. Condensation of 10 with octapeptide ILGFVFTL (9) gave prodrug precursor 11b. Octapeptide 9 was prepared by de novo synthesis using a racemization-free fragment coupling method. Ester hydrolysis with Ba(OH)2/MeOH gave the target prodrug 2a which is a substrate for β-glucuronidase. Prodrug 2a does not bind to HLA-A2.1 of T2 human cells defective in major histocompatibility complex I (MHC I)-associated peptide processing. Addition of β-glucuronidase restored the binding to the level observed with parent nonapeptide 2b although higher concentrations of prodrug 2a and enzyme were necessary.

In an effort to design more effective and less toxic drugs against cancer, attention has turned in recent years to prodrugs of antitumor agents. Most of these approaches rely on specific enzymes capable of converting the prodrugs into active species at a tumor site. Selective drug release should reduce the side effects associated with other forms of chemotherapy. This is also the principle of antibody- and gene-directed prodrug therapy (ADEPT11 and GDEPT12). Prodrugs comprising a carbohydrate moiety amenable to enzyme action attached through a self-immolative benzyloxycarbonyl linker to an anticancer drug (e.g., doxorubicin or daunorubicin, compounds 1a–1c, Chart 1) have attracted a considerable interest.6–9 The prodrug-activating enzymes include β-glucuronidase and α- or β-galactosidase. Prodrug 1b (R2 = NO2, HMR 1826) activated by β-glucuronidase liberated in necrotic tumors10 has an increased efficacy and reduced toxicity relative to that of the parent drug.11 It is a promising candidate for clinical studies.12

We have reasoned that this prodrug concept can be extended to antigenic oligopeptides (8–10 a.a.) which bind to an extracellular domain of class I major histocompatibility complex (MHC I) or human leukocyte antigen (HLA) and are recognized by CD8 positive cytotoxic T lymphocytes (CTL). Interaction between T cell receptor (TCR) and class I HLA/peptide complex on the target cells triggers CTL activity which mediates target cell lysis.14 The HLA I peptides on tumor cells originate from endogenous proteins but they can be replaced exogenously by synthetic peptides. It has been shown that CTL can kill tumor cells very effectively if the latter were loaded with appropriate peptides.15 Thus, mice immunized with tumor-associated peptides rejected tumors expressing the specific peptides. We can then assume that tumors can be rejected if any antigenic peptide which binds to the appropriate MHC is delivered to the tumor in an immunized host. Systemic delivery of such antigenic peptide is not possible because it will bind to all nucleated cells resulting in severe toxicity. Effective antitumor activity may be achieved if the peptide is converted to a suitable prodrug which will release the peptide only at the tumor site. Glucuronic acid linked through a benzyloxycarbonyl spacer to the N-terminus of the antigenic peptide seems to fulfill such requirements. The anchor residues at or near the N- and C-termini of peptides are necessary for effective interaction16 with HLA or MHC I. Blocking one of these sites by a bulky prodrug grouping should eliminate or diminish such a binding. As indicated above for prodrugs 1a–c, β-glucuronidase in the microenvironment of tumors can effectively generate an active drug. Substitution at the N-terminus should also reduce the susceptibility of the prodrug toward enzymatic degradation (peptidases) in cell culture and in vivo.

We have chosen a prodrug of nonapeptide GILGFVFTL (2a) as a target of this study. Parent nonapeptide 2b which binds to HLA-A2.1 of T2 human cells defective in major histocompatibility complex I (MHC I)-associated peptide processing was used as a target for our labelling study. The design and synthesis of two prodrug precursors, 4b and 5e, are shown in Chart 1. Ester hydrolysis with PLE followed by deacetylation with MeONa/MeOH gave the target prodrug 2a.
peptide 2b is an influenza matrix peptide 58–66 which was shown to be optimal for binding to HLA-2 and presentation to cytotoxic T lymphocytes. This article deals with the synthesis and biological investigation of peptide prodrug 2a.

**Synthesis**

Although methods for N-glycopeptide assembly based on solution- or solid-phase peptide synthesis are available, examples of carbohydrates linked to an N-terminus of a peptide through a spacer are rare. In one instance, a β-D-galactopyranosyl-(1→4)-β-D-glucopyranoside moiety was attached through a butyryl spacer to a neutral tricosapeptide in the last step of solid-phase synthesis. Because nonapeptide 2b is commercially available, a possibility of direct introduction of β-D-glucuronyl-3-nitrobenzyloxy carbonyl spacer to the N-terminus of 2b was considered first.

Several model experiments were conducted to determine feasibility of such an approach. Reaction of methyl 2,3,4-tri-O-acetyl-β-D-glucuronyl-3-nitrobenzyl alcohol with N,N'-disuccinimidyl carbonate (DSC), MeCN, NEt₃, DMF; (b) MeONa, MeOH; (c) PLE, pH 7.2; (d) β-glucuronidase, pH 7.2.

**Scheme 1**

- **Reagents and conditions:** (a) 1, N,N'-disuccinimidylcarbonate (DSC), MeCN, NEt₃, R, NET₃, DMF; (b) MeONa, MeOH; (c) PLE, pH 7.2; (d) β-glucuronidase, pH 7.2.

**Scheme 2**

- **Reagents and conditions:** (a) CsF₂OH, DCC, DMF; (b) NEt₃, DMF-THF (1:1); (c) PLE, pH 7.2; (d) Ba(OH)₂, MeOH; (e) β-glucuronidase, pH 7.2.

by 1H NMR spectrum and negative reaction with ninhydrin. This can be explained by a protection of arginine moiety (stronger base than triethylamine) by protonation. Deacetylation of conjugates 4b and 4e with MeONa in MeOH was also problem-free. Compounds 5b and 5e were obtained in 79 and 76% yield, respectively. Methyl glucuronate 5e was hydrolyzed by pig liver esterase (PLE) to give 91% of glucuronic acid derivative 6e. The latter compound was quantitatively digested by β-glucuronidase from Escherichia coli to give β-glucuronic acid (7), alcohol 8, and Phe-Leu.

Although these experiments have indicated that a direct introduction of a glucuronoyl prodrug residue into N-termini of amino acids or dipeptides is possible, application to nonapeptide 2b was beset with problems from the very beginning. Reaction of 2b with DSC and glucuronyl linker 3 led to formation of a complex mixture of products as shown by HPLC. Although mass spectrum showed that the desired prodrug 2a was also present, preparative separation would be extremely difficult. Therefore, an alternate synthetic approach was devised. Because unprotected carbohydrate moieties interfere neither with the active ester formation nor peptide bond synthesis, an alternate synthetic approach was devised. Because unprotected carbohydrate moieties interfere neither with the active ester formation nor peptide bond synthesis, it was anticipated that glycine conjugate 5b can be used for introducing the prodrug function into octapeptide ILGFVFTL (9). As an
Synthesis of a GILGFVFTL Prodrug

Scheme 3

**Biological Studies**

Binding of nonapeptide 2b and prodrug 2a to HLA-A2.1 was investigated with T2 human cells defective in MHC I-associated peptide processing. Because of the defect, HLA-A2.1 on these cells do not contain endogenous peptides, are unstable, and promptly degraded, resulting in a low level of HLA-A2.1 on the surface. Binding of exogenous peptides to A2.1 gives stable MHC/peptide complexes and increased level of surface HLA-A2.1 which can be detected by flow cytometry.

Nonapeptide 2b binds to T2 cells in a dose-dependent manner in the range of 15 to 60 μM. At 60 μM of 2b, the HLA-A2.1 level increased to 230% of control cells which were incubated without peptide or β-glucuronidase at pH 6.5-7.0 to approach the physiological conditions. The enzyme alone did not affect the level of HLA-A2.1 (data not shown). Incubation of nonapeptide 2b up to the 120 μM level without β-glucuronidase had no effect on HLA-A2.1, indicating a complete absence of binding (Figure 1). In the presence of 200 or 300 units/mL of β-glucuronidase, HLA-A2.1 level increased with increasing concentration of the enzyme. At 300 units/mL of the enzyme and 120 μM of prodrug 2a, the HLA-A2.1 level increased to 210% of the control value. Therefore, β-glucuronidase liberated active

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)
not be optimal for the activity of β-glucuronidase in a tumor environment, there is a significant release of active nonapeptide 2b to mark the cells. Further biological investigations are in progress.

Conclusion

We have elaborated two basic strategies for introduction of prodrug grouping, which can be activated by β-glucuronidase, into amino acids and peptides. This effort culminated in the synthesis of the first prodrug of antigenic nonapeptide GILGFVFTL (compound 2a). Although this pH may not be optimal for the activity of β-glucuronidase in a tumor environment, there is a significant release of active nonapeptide 2b to mark the cells. Further biological investigations are in progress.

Experimental Section

General Methods. NMR spectra were determined at 400 MHz in DMSO-d6. Optical rotations were determined with a JASCO DIP-370 digital polarimeter. Mass spectrometry was performed in electron-impact (EI) mode on KRATOS MS80, or electrospray ionization (ESI) mode on MICRO-MASS QUANTRO LC-MS. The TLC was run on MICRO-MASS QUANTRO TLC-PAK. The chromatography of the crude product using solvent S2 provided product 4c (0.175 g, 46%). mp 91-93 °C; [α]D 25° (c 0.1, CHCl3); TLC, Rf 0.50 (S2); HPLC (S18, tR 7.63 min, purity 94%); 1H NMR (CDCl3) 7.87 (s, 1H), 7.73 (d, 1H), 7.25 (d, 1H), 7.17 (d, 1H), 7.03 (d, 1H), 5.35 (t, 1H), 5.12-5.05 (m, 2H), 5.04 (s, 2H), 4.64 (m, 1H), 4.39 (s, 3H), 3.12 (m, 2H), 2.17, 2.11 and 2.06 (3s, 6H); FAB-MS (KCl) 715 (M + K); Anal. Calcd for C30H32N2O16 (C, H, N); Found for C30H32N2O16 (C, H, N).

Methyl N-[2-(3,4,6-Tri-O-acetyl)-2-D-glucopyranuronate-3-nitrobenzoxycarbonyl]glycylglycine (5b). Methyl 3-nitrobenzoxycarbonyl-L-lysine (5c) was prepared 4. The reaction was as described above for alaninate 4a on 0.2 mmol scale of L-lysine. Chromatography of the residue using solvent S2 provided product 5c (0.115 g, 44%). mp 104-106 °C; [α]D 25° (c 0.4, CHCl3); TLC, Rf 0.50 (S2); HPLC (S18, tR 7.03 min, purity 94%); 1H NMR (CDCl3) 7.25 (d, 1H), 7.20 (d, 1H), 7.15 (d, 1H), 5.55-5.45 (m, 2H), 4.71 (d, 1H), 4.50 (m, 1H), 4.39 (s, 3H), 3.46 (s, 3H), 2.01-1.98 (m, 5H), 1.30-1.23 (m, 3H), 0.85-0.78 (m, 4H); FAB-MS (KCl) 667 (M + H); Anal. Calcd for C36H39N3O17-2H2O (C, H, N); Found for C36H39N3O17-2H2O (C, H, N).

Methyl N-[2-(3,4,6-Tri-O-acetyl)-2-D-glucopyranuronate-3-nitrobenzoxycarbonyl]L-lysine hydrochloride (6b). Methyl 3-nitrobenzoxycarbonyl-L-lysine hydrochloride (6c) was prepared 4. The reaction was as described above for alaninate 4a on 0.2 mmol scale of L-lysine. Chromatography of the residue using solvent S2 provided product 6c (0.095 g, 47%). mp 107-109 °C; [α]D 25° (c 0.4, CHCl3); TLC, Rf 0.52 (S2); HPLC (S18, tR 7.31 min, purity 92%); 1H NMR (CDCl3) 7.17 (d, 1H), 6.97 (d, 1H), 5.97 (s, 1H), 4.63 (s, 3H), 4.13 (d, 1H), 3.83 (s, 3H), 2.15-2.02 (m, 6H), 1.20-1.17 (m, 3H), 0.79-0.76 (m, 3H); FAB-MS (KCl) 633 (M + H); Anal. Calcd for C36H39N3O17-2HCl (C, H, N); Found for C36H39N3O17-2HCl (C, H, N).
Synthesis of a GILGFVFTL Prodrug

δ 7.88 (s, 1H), 7.66 (d, 1H) and 7.52 (d, 1H), 7.15 (bs, 1H), 6.05 (d, 1H), 5.86 (d, 1H), 4.03 (t, 1H), 3.78 (t, 1H), 3.48 (d, 1H), 5.02 (s, 2H), 3.68 (s, 3H), 3.42–3.35 (m, 6H); ESI-MS (NaCl) 483 (M + Na).

Methyl N-[β-D-Glucopyranuronate-3-nitrobenzoxycarbonyl]-L-phenylalanyl-L-leucine (5e). Compound 4e (114 mg, 0.21 mmol) in MeOH (7 mL) at room temperature was stirred for 2 days at room temperature and worked-up as described for dipeptide 10. The mixture was stirred for 2 h at 0 °C and then at room temperature for 16 h. The solvents were evaporated, the residue was dissolved in EtOAc (50 mL), the solution was filtered, and the filtrate was evaporated. Chromatography on a silica gel column using hexane:EtOHAc (1:4) as eluent gave 0.385 g (91%) of product 5e: mp 160–161 °C; [α]D -27° (c 0.1, MeOH); TLC, Rf 0.42 (SiO2, hexane:EtOAc, 1:4) as eluent gave 0.385 g (91%) of product 5e: mp 160–161 °C; [α]D -27° (c 0.1, MeOH); TLC, Rf 0.42 (SiO2, hexane:EtOAc, 1:4).

Digestion of Compound 12 by β-Glucoronidase. Compound 12 (1 mg, 1.4 μmol) was incubated with bovine liver β-glucuronidase (100 units) in phosphate buffer (0.02 M, pH 7.2, 1 mL) at 37 °C. The reaction was followed by HPLC (SiO2, flow rate 0.6 mL/min). The starting material was consumed in 4 h with the formation of two major peaks with tR 6.5 and 7.2. The pH was adjusted to 4.0 with HCl, the mixture was partitioned between ethyl acetate and water, and the organic phase was dried (Na2SO4) and evaporated: yield 18 mg (91%) of tripeptide derivative 12; mp 174–175 °C; [α]D -14° (c 0.1, MeOH); TLC, Rf 0.41 (SiO2, hexane:EtOAc, 1:4) as eluent gave 0.385 g (91%) of product 5e: mp 160–161 °C; [α]D -27° (c 0.1, MeOH); TLC, Rf 0.42 (SiO2, hexane:EtOAc, 1:4).
It was prepared as described for dipeptide 14 from Boc-Leu-OH (27, 5 g, 20.05 mmol) and Gly-OBn (25, 4 g, 5.00 mmol) in DMF (10 mL) was then added. The stirring was continued with stirring at room temperature. The stirring was continued for 40 h, the solvents were evaporated, and residue was dissolved in TFA (20 mg, 0.014 mmol) and Ba(OH)2-H2O mixture of compound 31 (0.460 g, 1.02 mmol) in MeOH (10 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 3 h. Dowex 50 (H+ form, 25 mg) was then added, and the mixture was filtered. The filtrate was evaporated. The residue was dissolved in TFA (0.49 mL, c 0.1, MeOH); 1.90 (m, 1H), 1.75 (m, 1H), 1.53 (m, 2H), 1.25 (s, 9H), 1.05 (d, 3H), 0.82 (dd, 6H), 0.73 (m, 6H); ESI-MS (NaCl) 928 (M + Na).

H-Gly-OBn (25). Free base was released from the corresponding hydrochloride as described in the workup procedure for dipeptide 14 as a thick oil: Rf 0.50 (S8); 1H NMR δ 7.24 (d, 1H), 7.30 (m, 5H), 6.84 (s, 1H), 5.71 (s, 2H), 4.68 (m, 2H), 3.09 (t, 6H), 2.27 (t, 6H), 1.73-1.60 (m, 2H); ESI-MS (NaCl) 402 (M + Na).

Boc-Phe-Val-Phe-Thr(Bn)-Leu-OBn (32). This tripeptide was prepared as described for dipeptide 14 from Boc-Ile-Leu-Gly-OBn (30, 4.0 g, 10.80 mmol) and dipeptide 28 (2.5 g, 8.99 mmol). Chromatography of the crude product in solvent Ss provided octapeptide 32 (0.45 g, 66%); mp 177–179 °C; Rf 0.57 (Ss); EI-MS 1,211 (M + Na).

Methyl N-[3-D-Glucopyranuronate-3-nitrobenzylcarbonoyl]glycyl-L-Leu-Gly-Phe-Val-Phe-Thr-Leu-OH (11b). A solution of pentfluorophenylester 10 (136 mg, 0.22 mmol) in THF (10 mL) was added to a mixture of octapeptide 9 (40 mg, 0.011 mmol) and NBEt (15 μL, 0.011 mmol) in DMF (10 mL) with stirring at room temperature. The stirring was continued for 40 h, the solvents were evaporated, and residue was chromatographed (three times) using CHCl3:MeOH (3:2) to obtain compound 11b (68 mg, 46%) which was further purified by semipreparative HPLC (see octapeptide 9, Ss, flow rate 2.4 mL/min, purity 92%) to give compound 11b (19 mg, 0.0060 mmol) in 1H-LPLC (m, 7.4 min, purity 98%); Rf 0.62 (5.4 mL/min, Et3N 0.13, purity 86%); mp 140–142 °C; [α]D25 11° (c 0.1, MeOH); Rf 0.49 /CHCl3:MeOH:NH4OH (4:6:0.1); 1H NMR δ 8.11 (bs, 1H), 8.07 (bs, 1H), 7.86 (bs, 1H), 7.20–7.14 (b, 10H), 4.79 (d, 1H), 4.61 (bs, 1H), 4.38 (m, 2H), 2.42–2.16 (m, 3H), 3.90 (bs, 1H), 3.76 (m, 1H), 3.61 (m, 2H), 2.98 (m, 2H), 2.75 (m, 2H), 1.90 (m, 1H), 1.75 (m, 1H), 1.61–1.43 (m, 6H), 1.01 (bs, 3H), 0.86–0.72 (m, 26H); ESI-MS 909 (M + H).

N-[4-(Glucopyranuronic acid)-3-nitrobenzylcarbonyl]-L-Gly-Leu-Gly-Phe-Val-Thr-Leu-OH (2a). A mixture of compound 11b (20 mg, 0.014 mmol) and Ba(OH)2-H2O (4.6 mg, 0.004 mmol) in MeOH (10 mL) was stirred at room temperature for 3 h. Dowex 50 (H+ form, 25 mg) was then added, and the mixture was filtered. The filtrate was evaporated.
A2.1. T2 cells were maintained in AIM V medium (GIBCO research grant DOD BC 980459 from U.S. Army, Flow cytometric analysis was performed with a FACS Calibur to measure the level of HLA-A2.1, cells were stained with mouse antibodies, incubated at 37 °C for 1 h and then at 28 °C overnight. To maintain the pH at 6.6 ± 0.2 in this medium. The mixtures were held at 6.6 ± 0.2 in this medium. The mixtures were held at 6.6 ± 0.2 in this medium.

BRL/Life Technologies, Gaithersburg, MD) containing 10% FBS. To study the formation of two peaks with retention times of 3.6 and 4.5 min, corresponding to authentic samples of 4-hydroxy-3-nitrobenzyl alcohol (4-HNBA) and its propeptide (12).

The hydrolysis of propeptide was performed as described (12). The hydrolysis of propeptide was performed as described (12). The hydrolysis of propeptide was performed as described (12).

ESI-MS (NH₄OH) 1,335 (M - H).

Hydrolysis of Peptide Prodrug 2a by β-Glucuronidase.

The hydrolysis of propeptide 2a was performed as described for propeptide 12. It was followed by HPLC (Sil60, flow rate 1.0 mL/min). The starting material was consumed in 4 h with the formation of two peaks with tR 3.6 and 4.5 min, corresponding to the authentic samples of 4-hydroxy-3-nitrobenzyl alcohol (8) and propeptide 2b, respectively.

Binding of Nonapeptide 2b and Prodrug 2a to HLA-A2.1. T2 cells were maintained in AIM V medium (GIBCO BRL/Life Technologies, Gaithersburg, MD) containing 10% fetal calf serum. A total of 3 x 10⁵ T2 cells were incubated in the medium with varying concentrations of 2b or 2a. To activate the prodrug 2a, β-glucuronidase from E. coli (200 and 300 units/mL) was added to the cell culture. The pH was maintained at 6.6 ± 0.2 in this medium. The mixtures were incubated at 37 °C for 1 h and then at 28 °C overnight. To measure the level of HLA-A2.1, cells were stained with mouse monoclonal antibody BB7.2 (American Type Culture Collection). Unbound antibody was removed by extensive washing, and bound antibody was visualized by staining with fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC)-conjugated goat anti-mouse IgG (Jackson Immunological Research Laboratory, West Grove, PA). Isotype matched monoclonal antibody was the negative control.

Flow cytometric analysis was performed with a FACS Calibur (Beckton Dickinson, San Jose, CA), and the data were recorded as mean channel fluorescence. The results (average from three separate experiments) are given in Figure 1.

Acknowledgment. This work was supported by a research grant DOD BC 980459 from U.S. Army, Department of Defense.

References


THERAPEUTIC PRODRUG OF HLA-A2.1 ASSOCIATED FLU PEPTIDE MP58 GILGFVFTL ACTIVATED BY β-GLUCURONIDASE

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ABSTRACT: The long term goal is to test the hypothesis that cancer can be eliminated by immunizing the host with foreign peptides followed by systemic delivery of propeptides which are activated at the tumor site by tumor associated enzymes. To test the hypothesis, HLA-A2.1 restricted flu peptide MP58 is linked at the N-terminus to β-glucuronic acid which can be removed by β-glucuronidase. β-glucuronidase is a 310-380 Kd lysosomal enzyme with exoglycosidase activity and is liberated from necrotic tumor cells and tumor infiltrating monocytes to create a high concentration of extracellular β-glucuronidase in the tumor microenvironment. β-glucuronate was attached to the glycine moiety through a benzyloxycarbonyl linker. The product was reacted with octapeptide ILGFVFTL and the target prodrug β-Glu-MP58 was generated following ester hydrolysis. Incubation of the prodrug with β-glucuronidase triggers a self-destructive reaction to liberate free MP58 which was verified by HPLC. MP58 binds to HLA-A2.1 on human T2 cells in a dose dependent manner and A2.1 level increased by 230% in the presence of 60 mM MP58. When T2 cells were incubated with pro-peptide β-Glu-MP58 up to 120 mM, their A2.1 level did not change. In the presence of 300 units/ml of β-glucuronidase, A2.1 level increased by 210%, supporting the enzymatic liberation of active MP58 from the prodrug. An MP58 specific CTL line was established from peripheral blood monocytes of an A2.1 positive adult man by repeated stimulation with MP58 loaded antigen presenting cells. Over 80% of MP58 loaded T2 cells were lysed by CTL at E:T ratio of 10:1 – 2:1. The same CTL did not lyse T2 cells loaded with pro-peptide β-Glu-MP58. In the presence of β-glucuronidase, 80% of T2 cells were lysed, further demonstrating liberation of active MP58 from the prodrug and marking of tumor cells for CTL lysis. These results demonstrate that immunogenic peptide prodrugs are novel agents with therapeutic potential for solid tumors.