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## Abstract

Integrin  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  is widely expressed in mesenchyme and the immune system, as well as a minority of epithelial tissues. Signaling through  $\alpha 1$  contributes to the regulation of extracellular matrix composition, in addition to supplying in some tissues a proliferative and survival signal that appears to be unique among the collagen binding integrins.  $\alpha 1$  provides a tissue retention function for cells of the immune system including monocytes and T cells, where it also contributes to their long-term survival, providing for peripheral T cell memory, and contributing to diseases of autoimmunity. The viability of  $\alpha 1$  null mice, as well as the generation of therapeutic monoclonal antibodies against this molecule, have enabled studies of the role of  $\alpha 1$  in a wide range of pathophysiological circumstances. The immune functions of  $\alpha 1$  make it a rational therapeutic target.

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## Keywords

Integrin · Collagen · Knockout mouse · Phenotype

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## 2.1 Introduction

The integrin  $\alpha 1$  subunit was first discovered by Hemler et al. as the  $\alpha$  component of the Very Late Antigen I (VLA1) expressed on a subset of T cells in the joints of patients with rheumatoid arthritis [57], as well as in a subset of lymphocytes after long term in vitro culture.  $\alpha 1$  is the

largest of the  $\alpha$  subunits, with an apparent mw of 190 kDa nonreduced and 210 kDa reduced [60].  $\alpha 1$ 's larger size compared to  $\alpha 2$  is due to a higher degree of glycosylation [59]. At the C terminus, the intracellular portion of  $\alpha 1$  is the shortest of the  $\alpha$  subunits, at 13 residues. Functionally,  $\alpha 1$  is one of four collagen binding I-domain containing  $\beta 1$  partners, along with  $\alpha 2$ ,  $\alpha 10$  and  $\alpha 11$ . None of the four are known to partner with any  $\beta$  subunit other than  $\beta 1$ . The  $\alpha 1$  I domain shows, like  $\alpha 2$ , 10 and 11, affinity modulation of ligand binding activity in the same way as has been described for  $\alpha L$  [89, 133].

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## 2.2 Tissue Distribution and Gene Regulation

$\alpha 1\beta 1$ , like  $\alpha 11\beta 1$ , is predominantly present in mesenchyme. In the adult  $\alpha 1$  is most abundant in vascular and visceral smooth muscle. This smooth muscle expression has been shown, in the chicken, to be due to a unique combination of transcription factors, GATA6, SRF, and Nkx3.2 [101]. The latter is not found in mammals, but similar factors such as Bapx1 and its family members may play the same role.  $\alpha 1$  expression is switched off during megakaryocytic differentiation and this appears to be due to gene methylation [20]. The regulation of  $\alpha 1$  baseline expression in other tissues has not been extensively explored. Other sites of  $\alpha 1$  expression include fibroblasts [136, 142] and, particularly, specialized fibroblast related cells such as hepatic stellate (Ito) cells [112], pericytes [142] and mesangial cells [60, 96]; bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells [36, 54]; chondrocytes [85], in concert with integrin  $\alpha 10$  [18] and  $\alpha 2$  [152]; neural cells including undifferentiated Schwann cells [139] and neurons [37]; and many white blood cells [44, 59]. Microvascular endothelium shows abundant  $\alpha 1$  expression [33], which is upregulated during angiogenesis. Surprisingly, immunoelectron microscopy shows the presence of abundant  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  on the luminal, as well as abluminal, endothelial surface [16], where no canonical  $\alpha 1$  ligand would be expected to be.  $\alpha 1$  is generally absent from normal epithelia, other than the endoderm derived hepatocytes [55, 86, 137], retinal pigment epithelium [99], and endometrial glands [10], where it is cyclically expressed.

Although SNPs in *ITGA1* have been associated with osteoporosis in Korean populations [80], these are synonymous and do not have associated expression data to corroborate their relevance.

trophoblast shortly after implantation [140], and antibody blockade of  $\alpha 1$  inhibits trophoblast invasion in vitro [32]. During early to mid embryogenesis  $\alpha 1$  is expressed transiently by neurons of the CNS [37], by maturing skeletal and cardiac muscle [144], in the skin [61], throughout the developing kidney [73], and in neural crest cells as they mature to dorsal root ganglia [37].

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## 2.4 Expression in Malignancy

Dysregulation of  $\alpha 1$  has been noted in tumors. Some studies of melanoma have shown a correlation of worse clinical behavior with the presence of  $\alpha 1$  [124, 125], and others with the absence of  $\alpha 1$  [50]. Leiomyosarcomas often show loss of  $\alpha 1$  and gain of  $\alpha 2$  [94]. Bronchoalveolar [75] and gastric [46] carcinomas sometimes show gain of  $\alpha 1$  expression, as do squamous cell carcinomas of the head and neck [114]. Survey of RNAseq signatures of the GATC database shows that  $\alpha 1$  is in general reduced in total expression in tumors compared to normal tissues, probably reflecting the increased epithelial to mesenchyme ratio of the tumors, whereas the reverse is seen for the more epithelially expressed  $\alpha 2$  (Fig. 2.1). The two exceptions to this finding are head and neck SCC, corroborating Ratzinger et al. [114], and clear cell carcinoma of the kidney (Fig. 2.1). Lastly, dermatotrophic T cell lymphomas show expression of  $\alpha 1$  [138] probably consistent with the ontogeny of their derivation in the T cell lineage. There is no consistent relationship between  $\alpha 1$  expression and tumor behavior, in contrast to, the well-characterized and functionally significant  $\alpha 6\beta 4$  to  $\alpha 6\beta 1$  switch seen in some epithelial malignancies.

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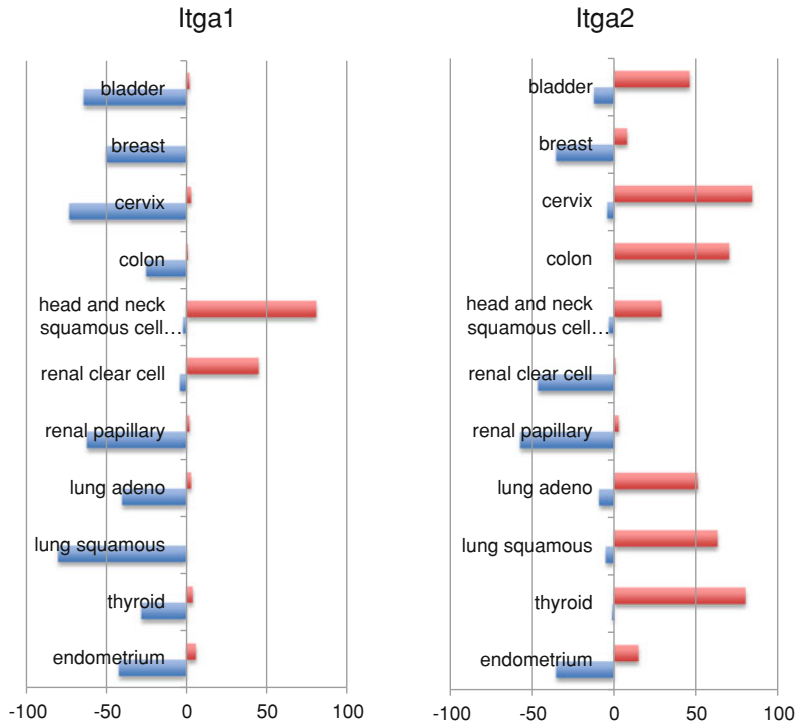
## 2.3 Expression During Development

During development, there is abundant and dynamic expression of  $\alpha 1$  in embryonic tissues. It is first seen at the leading edge of invading

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## 2.5 Integrin $\alpha 1$ Ligands

The best-known ligands for  $\alpha 1$  are the collagens, investigated mostly in fibroblast studies, and laminin 111, investigated primarily in studies of neural cells. Other  $\alpha 1$  ligands include matrilin-1,



**Fig. 2.1** Expression of Integrins alpha1 and 2 in different tumor types. Ratio of RNAseq counts for the gene in tumor versus matched normal was determined. Data taken from TCGA where total evaluable number of samples for the tumor type exceeded 100. Numbers of samples where the ratio of expression exceeded 2 were quantitated. *Red bars* indicate the proportion of cases where tumor expression is twofold or more greater than

matched normal, and *blue bars* where tumor expression is twofold or more lower than matched normal. With the exception of renal tumors, Itga2 tended to be increased in expression in tumors in comparison to normal tissue. With the marked exception of clear cell carcinoma of the kidney and head and neck squamous cell carcinoma, Itga1 tended to be downregulated in tumors versus normal tissue

expressed in cartilage, galectins 1, 3 and 8, and the NC1 domain of collagen IV(1), which will be discussed in the context of endothelial regulation. Lastly, semaphorin 7A expressed on macrophages appears to be a counterreceptor to  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  [141]. Ligands are listed in Table 2.1.

### 2.5.1 Collagens

$\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2 \beta 1$  integrins have collagen binding preferences that are at first glance discordant with their tissue distributions.  $\alpha 1\beta 1$ , predominantly expressed on connective tissue, has a higher affinity for collagen type IV than for type I; whereas  $\alpha 2\beta 1$ , predominantly on epithelial cells, favors collagen I, which epithelial cells do not normally see, over the collagen IV abundant in

epithelial basement membranes.  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  (and probably  $\alpha 10$  and  $\alpha 11$ ) bind the triple helical domains of the collagens with highest affinity, and biochemical, cell biological and crystallographic studies show that this binding is contributed to by more than one chain of the triple helix [39, 42]. As such, the binding is dependent on the chains being in register, and would thus be exquisitely sensitive to melting. As collagen melting occur at or below physiological temperatures in a very dynamic fashion [81], it is likely that  $\alpha 1$  ligand binding, and hence signaling, can be affected by events distal to the receptor along the collagen fibril. This might be especially important in tissue remodeling.

The  $\alpha 1$  I domain can bind the collagen triple helix at multiple different sites [117, 153], with the relative affinities being divisible into several

**Table 2.1** Known ligands of Integrin  $\alpha 1\beta 1$ 

Ligand	Likely cellular context	References
Collagen I	Fibroblasts	[39]
Collagen IV	Fibroblasts, myoepithelium	[39]
Collagen IX	Cartilage	[76]
Collagen XVI	Connective tissue	[40]
Arresten (Col4A1 NC1 domain)	Angiogenesis	[25]
Laminin 111	Neural tissue	[143]
Laminin 112	Neural tissue	[143]
Matrilin I	Cartilage	[91]
Galectin 8	T cells	[31]
Galectins 1, 3	Vascular smooth muscle	[98]
Jararhagin	Snake venom	[104]
Obtustatin	Snake venom	[92]
Ross River Virus	Viral infection	[82]
Semaphorin 7A	T cell macrophage interactions	[141]

classes. Among these there are approximately three of the highest binding affinity, with Kds of  $\sim 0.25$   $\mu\text{M}$ , and about 13 in the next affinity class, with Kds of  $\sim 14$   $\mu\text{M}$ . The highest binding class regions are adjacent to or overlap with the sites occupied by  $\alpha 2$  I domain, and these can be competed off both  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  I domains by triple helical model molecules containing the core sequence GLOGER or GFOGER, the latter of which was also independently identified as an inhibitor of  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  binding to collagen I [72] as well as  $\alpha 11$  [158]. This core peptide is not effective in blocking  $\alpha 1$  binding to collagen IV, but is effective in blocking  $\alpha 2$ . Recently the peptide GFPGEN was identified as a sequence selective for binding  $\alpha 1$  over  $\alpha 2$  [130]. The collagen IV binding site for  $\alpha 1$  is unique and of higher affinity [17], and has been shown by to require Asp 461 in the  $\alpha 1$  chain of collagen IV and Arg 461 in the  $\alpha 2$  chain [39]. The binding of integrin  $\alpha 1$ ,  $\alpha 2$  and  $\alpha 10$  I domains to other collagens has also been explored [103, 147]. More recently  $\alpha 1$  has been clearly identified as a receptor for the FACIT collagens IX (predominantly in cartilage) [76] and XVI (predominantly in connective tissue) [40], in a region close to that bound by  $\alpha 2$ . Mutation of Arg 218 to Asp in  $\alpha 1$  causes loss of collagen IV and IX binding, but only partial reduction in collagen I

binding [76]. Structural analysis based on modeling from the  $\alpha 2$  subunit demonstrates the existence of closed and open states alternately blocking or enabling binding of RKKH type peptides. The two states are energetically very similar, allowing for the possibility of control by inside-out signaling [104]. Another mutation in  $\alpha 1$ , Glu 317 to Ala, causes increased affinity of the I domain for both collagens and laminin [146], and reveals the possibility that the activated integrin, and ligand bound open integrin, may be slightly different states [77]. Dramatically, this I domain mutation Glu 317 to Ala also causes increased activation of ERK, and enhanced downregulation of collagen synthesis [132], further affirming outside-in signaling and attributing it to the integrin itself. The relationship between the probable affinity modulation of  $\alpha 1$ , the multiplicity of sites on the collagen fibril along which  $\alpha 1$  can bind, and the dynamic instability of the triple helix, suggest a highly dynamic interaction between integrin and collagen. For example, one could see how fibroblast motility along collagen I might be contributed to by detachment and reattachment of the integrin along the fibril. Another possibility is that collagen fibril assembly and extrusion from the fibroblast might be aided by  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  protruding from the plasmamembrane

surrounding the fibril. Indeed, the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse has narrower and less well formed collagen fibrils than the wild type animal (Gardner, unpublished). However, the relative importance of  $\alpha 1$  binding to collagen I versus the basement membrane and facit collagens in vivo has not been established.

## 2.5.2 Laminins

Laminin 111 and 211 binding by  $\alpha 1$  is seen in fibroblasts, and is particularly evident on neural cells, for which the pheochromocytoma line PC12 is used as a prototype [143, 159]. These cells show  $\alpha 1$  dependent adhesion to domain VI of the laminin  $\alpha$  chains 1 and 2, at sites adjacent to or congruent with  $\alpha 2$ , at the opposite end of the laminin molecule from the binding regions of the epithelial laminin receptor  $\alpha 3\beta 1$  and the hemidesmosome integrin  $\alpha 6\beta 4$  [24]. This seems reasonable in the context of an epithelial basement membrane, where epithelial cells would bind at one end of the molecule and mesenchymal cells at the other (although binding to laminin 332 by  $\alpha 1$  is not seen). In vitro,  $\alpha 1$  has been [13] found to be important for neurite outgrowth on laminin [145] and neural crest cell attachment to collagen [108]. Neural crest cell attachment to laminin can be inhibited by antisense oligonucleotides to  $\alpha 1$  mRNA [78]. Further studies have shown that neural crest cells migrating on laminin 111 interact, via  $\alpha 1$ , with two distinct sites on the molecule. LN E8— $\alpha 1$  interaction drives FAK activation, focal adhesion formation, and migration, while LN E1— $\alpha 1$  interaction drives ERK activation and survival [35]. While it is tempting to suggest that this specificity is attributable to subtleties of outside in signaling, the work does not rule out the possibility of some essential coreceptor for one or other interaction. The  $\alpha 1$  null mouse, however, has normal pigmentation on all genetic backgrounds and appears neurologically and neuroanatomically normal except for a sensitivity to ketamine/xylazine anesthesia (Davidson J, unpublished observations) which may have a neurological

basis. Whether  $\alpha 2$ , possibly co-expressed on neurons, provides an adequate alternative for neurite outgrowth, will be seen in the  $\alpha 1/\alpha 2$  double null animal.

## 2.5.3 Matrilin and Galectin

Matrilin-1 is found in cartilage, and appears to cause increased chondrocyte adhesion to collagen II, via its association with  $\alpha 1$  [91]. Galectin 8 [31] binds several integrins including  $\alpha 1$  but not  $\alpha 2$ , and induces Erk phosphorylation independently of cell attachment. Galectins 1 and 3, secreted by vascular smooth muscle, also appear to bind integrin  $\alpha 1$ , the latter in a lactose dependent manner [98]. These glycoproteins, in contrast to matrilin-1, appear to inhibit cell attachment to other matrix components.

## 2.5.4 Semaphorin 7A

The semaphorins are best known as guidance molecules in the CNS. Interestingly, Sema7A, a subset of semaphorins primarily found in the immune system, appears also to be a component of the immunological synapse in some activated T cells [141], where it interacts specifically with macrophages expressing integrin  $\alpha 1\beta 1$ , inducing downstream effects of  $\alpha 1$  activation. Similarly to  $\alpha 1$  null mice, sema7A null animals are resistant to encephalitis and DTH models.  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  is widely expressed in the CNS. Whether it interacts with other semaphorins is to be seen.

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## 2.6 Peptide Inhibitors of $\alpha 1$

While Jararhagin, a venom protein first noted to bind the alpha2 I domain, also binds the  $\alpha 1$  I domain [104], Marcinkiewicz and colleagues also identified Obtustatin [92] as a specific inhibitor of  $\alpha 1$  which does not bind to the I domain. Using blockade of FGF2 driven angiogenesis in the chick CAM model as an assay, they pinned down a specific inhibitory peptide

with affinities in the millimolar range, with sequence CWKTSLSHYC. No further work has been published on this interesting molecule.

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## 2.7 Co-receptors of $\alpha 1$

Many non-I domain containing integrins have been shown to associate in the membrane with other receptors, the best examples being the tetraspanins [8] and Integrin Associated Protein [15]. These may modulate integrin behavior and binding to ligands.  $\alpha 1$  has not been shown to associate with such proteins, but this is an area meriting further exploration. On the other hand,  $\alpha 1$  is one of a subset of integrins (including  $\alpha 5\beta 1$ ,  $\alpha v\beta 3$ , and  $\alpha 6\beta 4$ ) which associate in the membrane with caveolin and stimulate the Erk pathway via Fyn and Shc [150, 151].

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## 2.8 Integrin $\alpha 1$ Regulation by Cytokines

Most studies of regulation of  $\alpha 1$  expression in the adult relate to expression during lymphocyte ontogeny, and in fibroblasts in response to a variety of cytokines. Like integrins  $\alpha 2$ ,  $\alpha 3$ ,  $\alpha 4$ , and  $\alpha 5\beta 1$ ,  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  is upregulated in fibroblast lineages by TGF- $\beta$  [56], as well as interleukin-1 $\beta$  [123], TNF- $\alpha$ , and interferon gamma [47]. The only cytokine which appears to cause differential regulation of  $\alpha 1$  is platelet derived growth factor—BB, which causes downregulation of  $\alpha 1$  integrin and upregulation of  $\alpha 5$  integrin in fibroblasts [47] and mesangial cells [68].

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## 2.9 The $\alpha 1$ Null Mouse

Aspects of the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse will be discussed in subsequent sections. A brief overview is provided here to provide perspective on the known and suspected roles of  $\alpha 1$ .  $\alpha 1$  null mice are viable and fertile, and embryogenesis proceeds normally despite the broad and dynamic expression in trophoblast and developing nervous system. Initially, adult animals are remarkably normal with a

mild decrease in weight, normal smooth muscle function, normal rates of wound healing, normal liver function, normal behavior, and no blatant immunodeficiency in a laboratory environment [48]. With ageing, the animals exhibit a series of progressive phenotypes, notably osteoarthritis [156], and retinal degeneration [107], as well as a variety of other vulnerabilities.

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## 2.10 Integrin $\alpha 1$ , Signaling, and the Cell Cycle

The potential role of  $\alpha 1$  as a cell cycle regulator was suggested by studies showing that  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  was a member of a small group of integrins which could activate the adaptor protein Shc, resulting ultimately in MAP kinase activation [150]. Several observations from the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse confirmed this, including a reduction in fibroblast proliferation rate in embryonic skin and dermal fibroblast number in the adult, as well as the observations that embryonic fibroblasts from the  $\alpha 1$  null failed to activate Shc in response to adhesion to collagen, and that they failed to grow on collagen in conditions of limiting serum whereas growth on the  $\alpha 5$  ligand fibronectin or the  $\alpha v$  ligand fibrinogen, was normal [109]. As  $\alpha 2$  and probably  $\alpha 11$  are present on these cells, this suggests that  $\alpha 1$  is unique among collagen binding integrins in mesenchyme in being able to stimulate proliferation. Fracture calluses are smaller in  $\alpha 1$  null mice, concomitant with a deficiency in bone marrow derived mesenchymal stem cell proliferation [41]. Interestingly, the number and proliferation of mesenchymal stem cell derived hypertrophic chondrocytes in this model is normal—suggesting a specific and transient dependence on  $\alpha 1$  for proliferation in the mesenchymal stem cell differentiation pathway. Indeed,  $\alpha 1$  has been identified as a very effective tool for the isolation of mesenchymal stem cells [36], and more recently for the selection of the most proliferative subclones of mesenchymal stem cells with the highest multi-differentiation potential [120]. A role for  $\alpha 1$  has also been described in osteoblast differentiation [66]. Similar phases of  $\alpha 1$  dependence for



proliferation appear to be present at some stages of lymphocyte ontogeny [95]. Furthermore, tumor cells derived from Kras transgenic mice are less proliferative on an  $\alpha 1$  null background [90]. Overall, the subtlety of the proliferative deficit in the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse must be accounted for by the large number of overlapping proliferative pathways, ligands, and integrins present in the organism.

The  $\alpha 1$  cytoplasmic domain is very short. It is required for  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  migration into focal adhesions [12], and has a role in binding cytoskeletal components [87, p. 125] FAK, and phospholipase C gamma [149]. A remarkable study by Abair et al. [1], taking advantage of  $\alpha 1$  null endothelial cells, demonstrated very specific requirements of components of the tail for full activity. The lysine triplet is required for migration and adhesion, and for activation of the Akt and p38 pathways, but not for Erk activation. Furthermore, alanine scanning shows that the most membrane proximal lysine is required for endothelial tubulogenesis, and migration on collagen IV, and that Lys 1151 is required for all functions except for proliferation. It appears that the integrin  $\alpha 1$  cytoplasmic tail is quite unique among the integrins in being able to bind and activate the small nuclear shuttling phosphatase TCPTP. This phosphatase has many targets, but in the context of collagen ligand binding, TCPTP acts to cause a reduction in EGFR signaling [93], either by dephosphorylating EGFR directly or by reducing the amount of phosphorylated caveolin available to activate EGFR [11]. Whatever the mechanisms, the implication that active ligand binding, which in general would cause Erk activation, can serve to dampen an alternative pro-mitotic signaling pathway is intriguing. The specificity to  $\alpha 1$  is also intriguing. While the genomic region containing  $\alpha 1$  is lost in some tumors, and thus  $\alpha 1$  might be regarded as a candidate tumor suppressor [93], the molecule is not expressed in most epithelial tissues. One physiological site where  $\alpha 1$  might usefully downregulate EGFR activity is in myoepithelial cells of the breast, where cells express  $\alpha 1$  [74], as well as EGFR [100], and are juxtaposed to basement membrane.

## 2.11 Integrin $\alpha 1$ , Fibroblasts, and Collagen and Collagenase Regulation

Many studies have shown that  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  is a negative feedback regulator of collagen synthesis by fibroblasts. These were initiated by Langholtz et al., who showed that an activating antibody to  $\alpha 1$  accentuated the normal downregulation of collagen synthesis seen when fibroblasts are suspended in collagen gels [79]. It was also noted that  $\alpha 1$  levels appeared to be reduced on scleroderma fibroblasts, in conjunction with their upregulation of collagen synthesis [64]. Data from the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse lent strong support to this role: in vivo the mice show a 20 % increase in the rate of collagen incorporation into the skin, and fibroblasts from these animals are deficient in downregulating synthesis in response to gel suspension [49]. We subsequently examined keloids to determine whether loss of  $\alpha 1$  could account for the increased collagen expression in these lesions [142]. A high proportion of lesional fibroblasts expressed  $\alpha 1$  (in contrast to scleroderma lesions), although the levels expressed were somewhat lower than seen in chronic wounds with low collagen production. Thus, absence of  $\alpha 1$  could not account for the excess collagen production in keloids, but there may be a relative deficiency compared to normal wounds, which show distinct peaks in  $\alpha 1$  expression at 8 and 30 days [9].

The mechanism for downregulation of collagen synthesis mediated by  $\alpha 1$  has been extensively dissected.  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  stimulation by ligand activates the MAP kinases Erk1 and 2 via Fyn and Shc [109, 150], and Erk1/2 activation reduces collagen synthesis [116]. Reciprocally, the Erk1/2 inhibitor PD98059 causes upregulation of fibroblast collagen synthesis [1]. This is the reverse of the effect of  $\alpha 2\beta 1$  stimulation, which activates p38 and causes induction of collagen synthesis [65]. Thus, in general,  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  and  $\alpha 2\beta 1$  are opponents in their effect on collagen synthesis, the former inhibitory and the latter activatory. More specific mechanisms of collagen regulation involving reactive oxygen

species in mesangial cells will be discussed in the kidney chapter.

The regulation of metalloproteases has similar themes but appears more complex and is probably very cell type specific. Firstly, the structure and function of the mouse and human collagenases is not congruent: MMP1, which is the major fibroblast collagenase in humans, is upregulated by Erk1/2 activation, but the mouse MMP1 structural equivalents, McolA and McolB, are not seen in skin fibroblasts, and have a restricted expression in the placenta and uterus [3]. On the other hand human MMP13, found in chronic ulcers [148], is downregulated by Erk1/2 activation as well as being upregulated by p38 activation [115], and MMP13 is the major fibroblast collagenase in mouse [83]. Although functionally equivalent to human MMP1, mouse MMP13 appears to be regulated like human MMP13, as it is markedly upregulated in  $\alpha 1$  null mice where there is loss of Erk1/2 signaling but normal  $\alpha 2$ -p38 signaling. The  $\alpha 1$  null animal shows an increase in expression of several other MMPs, including 7, 9 and 2 in endothelial cells, and 9 and 2 in fibroblasts [49, 111]. For want of other evidence, this may be attributed to reduced Erk1/2 activation. However, whereas  $\alpha 1$  stimulation is always inhibitory to collagen synthesis, it is sometimes activatory to MMP synthesis. In some systems  $\alpha 1$  activation by laminin [84] or by collagen IV (Pozzi and Gardner, unpublished) or collagen I [121] causes an increase in MMP synthesis.

In many studies of fibroblast collagen interaction, the complex process of collagen gel contraction is addressed. In dermal fibroblasts integrin  $\alpha 2\beta 1$  is seen to be the dominant player in this process [79], which can be uncoupled from MMP synthesis [14], and is dependent on a functional cytoskeleton. However, in studies of specialized cardiac fibroblasts [19], smooth muscle cells [53], stellate cells [113] and mesangial cells [69],  $\alpha 1$  blockade has been shown to prevent gel contraction, as has integrin  $\alpha v\beta 3$  blockade in other cell types [27]. It is possible that whereas  $\alpha 2$  is structurally more suited to gel contraction (having a far higher affinity for collagen I),  $\alpha 1$  expression may be required for

maintenance of the contractile myofibroblastoid phenotype. It is striking that  $\alpha 1$  expression is upregulated *in vivo* in all activated contractile myofibroblastoid cells including myofibroblasts in wound repair, mesangial cells, pericytes, myoepithelial cells [74], and hepatic stellate cells.

In summary, there may be several roles for  $\alpha 1$  and its interplay with  $\alpha 2$  in the fibroblast during dermal wound healing and other episodes of mesenchymal repair.  $\alpha 1$  upregulation in fibroblasts contributes to collagen stimulated cell proliferation, and probably to the myofibroblast transition.  $\alpha 2$  is the major contributor to the synthetic phenotype, where it contributes the major part of collagen matrix contraction and activates collagen synthesis, as well as activating MMP synthesis for matrix remodeling.  $\alpha 1$  fine tunes the MMP response, possibly providing general inhibition of MMP release, but allowing for specific activation near the epidermal boundary where there is a greater abundance of the  $\alpha 1$  high affinity ligand, collagen IV.  $\alpha 1$  also provides feedback inhibition against excessive collagen synthesis. Consistent with these suggestions, the  $\alpha 1$  null shows excessive collagen and collagenase synthesis at overlapping phases of wound healing [49], and collagen fibrils are densely aggregated and irregular in the dermis of the  $\alpha 1$  null, while being individually smaller (Gardner, unpublished observations). Some aspects of this paradigm appear to be different in mesangial cells, which are discussed in the kidney chapter.

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## 2.12 Integrin $\alpha 1$ and Angiogenesis

Immunohistochemical analysis of murine and human tissue shows that  $\alpha 1$  is present on at least some normal microvascular endothelium.  $\alpha 1$  has also been shown to be upregulated on endothelia in MS lesions [135]. New tumor microvessels appear always to express  $\alpha 1$ , while a smaller proportion of them, predominantly the slightly larger ones, also express  $\alpha 2$  [111]. Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF/VPF) can induce  $\alpha 1$  on endothelial cells, and as the only



collagen receptors expressed,  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  are required for endothelial haptotaxis through collagen. Antibodies to  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  reduce angiogenesis in response to subcutaneously implanted gels of fibrin or collagen containing VEGF, or to tumor xenografts [128, 129]. However, tumor matrix contains a great variety of alternative integrin ligands. As we have learned from fibroblasts,  $\alpha 1\beta 1$  can activate an Erk1/2 proliferation pathway mediated by Shc.  $\alpha 2\beta 1$  can also positively regulate the progression through the cell cycle in epithelial cells by non overlapping mechanisms [71]. Thus,  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  blockade in vivo may cause a simple reduction in endothelial proliferation. With this in mind, there is no deficiency in normal vasculo- and angiogenesis in  $\alpha 1$  null mice. Analysis of the null mice, however, reveals other, subtler roles for  $\alpha 1$  in angiogenesis.

Detailed analysis of endothelial cells and tumor vasculature in  $\alpha 1$  null animals [111] led to independent verification of the significance of plasminogen fragments, the angiostatins [105], in endothelial growth regulation. Pulmonary microvascular endothelial cells from  $\alpha 1$  null mice grew poorly compared to wild type, regardless of the substratum on which they were grown. This growth deficiency could be completely rescued by frequent media change even if the cells were grown on collagen. Furthermore, media conditioned by  $\alpha 1$  null endothelial cells was inhibitory to the growth of wild type cells. The growth deficiency in  $\alpha 1$  null endothelial cells was also corrected by antibodies to angiostatin, or growth in media containing serum from plasminogen null mice (from which no angiostatin could be generated) instead of fetal calf serum. Lastly, the growth deficiency could be rescued by MMP9 blockade. Analysis of conditioned medium from  $\alpha 1$  null endothelial cells as well as plasma from wounded (but not unwounded) or tumor bearing  $\alpha 1$  null mice showed an increase in MMP9 and angiostatin compared to wild type animals. These findings in endothelial cells were consistent with the increased MMP expression seen in  $\alpha 1$  null fibroblasts, due to loss of  $\alpha 1$ -Erk1/2 inhibitory signaling with normal  $\alpha 2$ -p38 activatory

signaling. Thus, increased MMP9 released by the  $\alpha 1$  null cells cleaves plasminogen [106] to yield the endothelial inhibitor, angiostatin.

In vivo,  $\alpha 1$  null mice, with higher plasma MMP9 and angiostatin levels are less able to vascularize subcutaneous tumors than wild type, but this deficit can be reversed by oral treatment of the animals with the MMP9 inhibitor doxycycline, and consequent reduction of their angiostatin levels [110]. MMP9 levels in the vasculature correlate inversely with tumor vascularization even in wild type mice. These studies have been repeated in several tumor systems with essentially similar results, namely that tumors in the  $\alpha 1$  null host are smaller and less vascular and the phenotype can be reversed by MMP inhibition [22, 23]. These studies showed that the interplay between  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  integrins has significant consequences in the vascular system. Thus, during vascular remodeling, upregulation of endothelial  $\alpha 1$  and  $\alpha 2$  occurs, and the balance between them regulates MMP release, and ultimately vessel number.

While plasminogen is an MMP9 target, and its cleavage product angiostatin was entirely responsible for endothelial growth inhibition in vitro, other MMP targets might be of importance in this feedback system in vivo. These include the collagens themselves. In this regard the finding that a collagen NC1 domain is a ligand for  $\alpha 1$  may be of significance. The NC1 domain of collagen IV  $\alpha 3$ , also known as tumstatin, causes endothelial cytostasis and blocks angiogenesis by binding to integrin  $\alpha v\beta 3$ , and a similar mechanism appears to exist for  $\alpha 1$  binding to the collagen IV(1) NC1 domain (arresten) [25]. This might be an explanation for the presence of  $\alpha 1$  on the luminal surface of endothelium, where it could act as a detector of collagen fragments released during remodeling, and provide negative feedback to angiogenesis. While in general  $\alpha 1$  binding to collagen in fibroblasts causes activation of Erk1/2 via Shc, arresten may provide a growth inhibitory signal. In fact this has been strongly suggested by the work of Nyberg et al. where the arresten— $\alpha 1$  interaction appears to mediate an apoptotic response [102], and this interaction has been invoked in the blockade of

growth of HSC tongue carcinoma cells [2]. The absence of both signals—collagen IV driving growth and arrestin being pro-apoptotic—in the  $\alpha 1$  null could explain why normal angiogenesis is unaltered in  $\alpha 1$  null mice.

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### 2.13 Smooth Muscle and $\alpha 1$

$\alpha 1$  is extremely abundant on smooth muscle, both visceral and vascular [6], and, in vivo, expresses no other collagen binding integrin (explanted smooth muscle rapidly upregulates  $\alpha 2$ , complicating studies [134]). Furthermore, smooth muscle basal lamina has abundant collagen IV. There is no upregulation of  $\alpha 2$  or  $\alpha 10$  in the  $\alpha 1$  null smooth muscle in vivo, as assessed by immunostaining [48]. Yet in the  $\alpha 1$  null mouse digestion and parturition is entirely normal, and EM studies reveal no alterations in smooth muscle structure. Studies of mesenteric arteries have shown that  $\alpha 1$  deficient vessels rupture at lower stresses than wild type, due to a deficiency in the hypertrophic response [88]. Integrin  $\alpha 8\beta 1$ , a fibronectin receptor, is also abundant in smooth muscle, but the double knockout  $\alpha 1/\alpha 8$  animal also had histologically normal smooth muscle (Gardner and Brandenburger, unpublished). Further collagen binding integrin double knockouts may reveal the answer to this mystery.

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### 2.14 Integrin $\alpha 1$ and the Retina and CNS

Retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) cells have been shown to use  $\alpha 1$  as one among other receptors for collagen gel contraction [99] but  $\alpha 1$  signaling of MAP kinase activation is clearly of unique importance. Peng et al. [107] found that older  $\alpha 1$  null mice become blind, with loss of retinal evoked potentials, degeneration of the peripheral retina, irregularities in basal lamina thickness, rod degeneration and synaptic malformation in rod and cone terminals, and failure of transducin  $\alpha$  translocation to the outer rod segments upon light exposure.

Frasca et al. [45] have made observations on the role of  $\alpha 1$  in contributing to the neurotoxicity of amyloid. This appears to be due to  $\alpha 1$ -ligand interaction, via Erk activation, being permissive to neuronal entry into the cell cycle after their stimulation by A-beta. Neurons, in contrast to other cell types, appear to meet their demise after cell cycle entry.

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### 2.15 Integrin $\alpha 1$ as a Viral Receptor

Many integrins have been recognized as receptors for viruses.  $\alpha 1$  appears to be one of several receptors for Ross River virus, a semliki forest type alphavirus one of whose coat proteins has a region which appears to mimic a collagen fold [82]. There is a possibility that  $\alpha 1$  is also a receptor for rotavirus enterotoxin [131].

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### 2.16 Integrin $\alpha 1$ and the Kidney

Expression of  $\alpha 1$  by glomerular mesangial cells [30, 60] as well as the developing kidney [73] led to a great deal of interest in the role of this integrin in the kidney.  $\alpha 1$  null mice showed no functional or anatomic renal abnormality alterations in  $\alpha 1$  null glomeruli in the unperturbed state, but a variety of challenges have exploited the underlying mesangial alterations to create new models of renal disease. Ex vivo studies demonstrate alterations in mesangial homeostasis in the absence of  $\alpha 1$ , notably an alteration in MMP profile rather different from that seen in cutaneous  $\alpha 1$  null fibroblasts [155].  $\alpha 1$  nulls also have poor osmolarity regulation [97]. Streptozocin treated  $\alpha 1$  nulls get worse glomerular disease than wild type [157], and the diabetic Akita mouse gets dramatically accelerated renal dysfunction when crossed into an  $\alpha 1$  null background [154].

Cross of the  $\alpha 1$  null with the collagen IV  $\alpha 3$  chain null (COL4A3/Alports) mouse [29] led to unexpected effects. Reduced glomerular basement membrane stiffness in the COL4A3 null leads to a progressive glomerulonephritis with mesangial expansion and secondary tubulointerstitial fibrosis. Surprisingly, the double null

animal lived twice as long as the COL4A3 null, due to a delay in the progression of renal failure. This unexpected result appears to be due to several mechanisms. Firstly, in the normal progression of murine Alports, there is a marked influx of monocytes into the interstitium in response to glomerular epithelial damage.  $\alpha 1$  null monocytes are defective in migrating into the renal interstitium, possibly due to the monocyte requirement for  $\alpha 1$  to adhere to the collagen XIII generated by endothelium during injury [34], and are therefore reduced in number in the double null kidney. This reduces delivery of TGF $\beta$  to the kidney, delaying the onset and progression of interstitial fibrosis [122]. Secondly, mesangial cells are dependent on  $\alpha 1$  and Rac to invade the glomerular tuft [155], a key process in the initiation of renal repair and injury. In the  $\alpha 1$ /COL4A3 double null, the mesangial expansion is greatly reduced [29]. In another glomerulonephritis model, anti-Thy-1 GN in the rat [69], direct injection of anti- $\alpha 1$  in the renal artery caused a marked reduction in mesangial proliferation and matrix accumulation, an important *in vivo* validation of a series of studies of the role of  $\alpha 1$  in mesangial cells [67–70]. The role of  $\alpha 1$  in driving proliferation is complex in mesangial cells. In contrast to studies in most systems which ascribe a pro-proliferative role for  $\alpha 1$  signaling, overexpression of  $\alpha 1$  in mesangial cells leads to activation of p27Kip and cell cycle arrest [70]. In fact mesangial cells appear to be an exception in many aspects of  $\alpha 1$  physiology, in that Erk phosphorylation is upregulated in  $\alpha 1$  null mesangial cells and p38 is downregulated. Notwithstanding the increased Erk phosphorylation, collagen synthesis is increased, via a reactive oxygen species driven mechanism [21, 28]. This may be due to some kind of integrin crosstalk, where the excess integrin  $\alpha 1$  activates a pathway normally associated with another integrin [127]. A potential corollary of this is that monomer and polymer collagen have different effects on mesangial cell growth; on the latter substrate growth is inhibited,  $\alpha 1$  is excluded from focal contacts, and ERK1/2 phosphorylation is diminished [126].

## 2.17 Integrin $\alpha 1$ and the Immune System

Integrin  $\alpha 1$  was first discovered as a very late antigen on cultured T cells, and being the largest of the  $\alpha$  subunits, was named Very Late Antigen 1 (VLA1), a name which persists in immunological studies. Hemler et al. subsequently showed that VLA1 was present on a large proportion of T cells in the joints of rheumatoid arthritics, but was almost absent from the circulation, giving a first clue to a role for  $\alpha 1$  in tissue migration and T cell activation [60, 58]. More detailed study of the immune system revealed that  $\alpha 1$  is also expressed on a subset of NK-T cells as well as populations of activated monocytes and NK cells.

$\alpha 1$  deficiency generated by knockout or antibody blockade has dramatic consequences in the immune system.  $\alpha 1$  null mice show no overt immunodeficiency, but they show resistance to many different disease models involving monocyte function or peripheral T cell memory. These include a resistance to anti collagen II antibody induced and mycobacterium induced arthritis [44, 62], colitis [43], DTH, contact hypersensitivity [44], and LCMV induced encephalopathy [7]. Inflamed tissues in these models, as well as the normal gut mucosal epithelium [95], show reduced infiltration by T cells and monocytes. Furthermore, cultured splenocytes from  $\alpha 1$  null animals show reduced proliferation in response to collagen, and fail to express integrin  $\alpha 2$  upon long-term culture.

In murine influenza models,  $\alpha 1$  positive T cells tend to be CD4 and associate with basement membranes, while  $\alpha 2$  T cells bias to CD4 and an interstitial location. Memory to influenza is maintained by the  $\alpha 1$  positive T cells, as they are protected from TNF driven apoptosis [119, 118]. Treg cells are VLA1 negative, and stimulated PBMCs can be diverted from generating VLA1 + T effector cells into Treg cells if TNF signaling is blocked [51]. Taken together, the results suggest that  $\alpha 1$  is needed both for lymphocyte migration into the collagen rich periphery, and for the proliferation of activated

T cells in those locations, or for their long term survival as mediators of peripheral T cell memory [38].

In rheumatoid arthritis,  $\alpha 1$  positive T cells are far more abundant and tend to be found in the joints as oligoclonal populations, probably responding to a restricted number of joint antigens [4, 52]. Here they offer an obvious target for therapy. Interestingly,  $\alpha 1$  has also been noted to be required for monocyte retention at sites of inflammation in skin [5], and a role for the receptor was similarly shown for T cells in a xenotransplantation model of psoriasis, where epidermal, but not dermal, T cells expressed  $\alpha 1$  [26].

## 2.18 Therapeutics

In the early 2000s Biogen Idec developed a humanized function blocking anti-VLA1 antibody for immune diseases. This has now been taken through a phase 1 single dose escalation study by Santarus, as SAN-300, without remarkable side effects, and with anecdotal demonstration of efficacy in a single rheumatoid arthritis RA patient recruited to the study [63]. The potential for this molecule may be very high in diseases characterized by the persistence of localized pathological effector T cell memory, such as RA and psoriasis.

## 2.19 Summary and Prospects

Integrin  $\alpha 1$  has major roles as a modulator of mesenchymal proliferation and differentiation, matrix turnover, and immune function. Its roles in the immune system make it a clear target for therapy. In its biochemical properties,  $\alpha 1$  appears to have a unique role in binding basement membrane collagens, the significance of which in vivo is not yet entirely clear. Like the other collagen binding I domain containing integrins,  $\alpha 2$ ,  $\alpha 10$  and  $\alpha 11$ , its absence is not associated with major structural deficits in the mouse, illustrating the dense interweaving of redundant or partially redundant pathways in tissue morphogenesis.

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I Domain Integrins

Gullberg, D. (Ed.)

2014, XIV, 179 p. 50 illus., 32 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-94-017-9152-6