SELECTIVE INHIBITION OF GROWTH FACTOR-
DEPENDENT HUMAN B CELL PROLIFERATION BY
MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY AB1 TO AN ANTIGEN
EXPRESSED BY ACTIVATED B CELLS

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It is well established that B cell proliferation and differentiation are under the
influence of various growth factors (reviewed in 1). In particular, in a "non-
antigen-specific system, a low dose of anti-IgM antibody is required to stimulate
resting B cells to respond to B cell growth factor (BCGF), which was recently
named B cell stimulatory factor (BSF) (2). Various models describing these events
postulate that activated B cells express receptors for BSF. This is analogous to
the expression of the interleukin 2 (IL-2) receptor by activated T cells (3).

Recently (4-7), a series of new antigens preferentially expressed by activated
human B cells has been described. These have been named B blast-specific
antigens. None of these antigens have been shown to be related to B cell
proliferation. In the present investigation, we identify a new antigen expressed
by activated human B cells by using a monoclonal antibody (AB1) that inhibited
growth factor-dependent B cell proliferation.

Materials and Methods

Cell Preparation. Lymphocytes were isolated from tonsils removed from patients for
chronic tonsillitis or from leukocyte concentrates of normal donors. B lymphocytes were
obtained after two cycles of sheep red blood cell (SRBC) rosette depletion and adherent
cell depletion. The tonsillar B cell preparations contained >90-95% membrane Ig (mIg)+
cells; peripheral blood B cell preparations contained 60-80% mIg+ cells. SRBC-rosetting
lymphocytes were used as T cells.

Monoclonal Antibody (mAb) Production. CF1 female mice were immunized with non-
SRBC-rosetting cells from peripheral blood lymphocytes that had been previously activ-
tated with pokeweed mitogen (PWM) for 3 d. The spleen cells were fused with SP2/0
myeloma cells and hybrids were selected on hypoxanthine, aminopterin, thymidine (HAT)
selection medium. Hybridoma supernatants were screened for their inhibition activity in
the B cell proliferation assay as described below; they were also screened for their binding
activity to activated B cells. The desired hybridomas were cloned on soft agar. Details of
these procedures have been described (8).

Lymphocyte Proliferation Assays. 10⁵ lymphocytes were stimulated in microtiter wells
with phytohemagglutinin (PHA-P; Difco Laboratories, Inc., Detroit, MI), PWM, concan-
avalin A (Con A) (Gibco Laboratories, Grand Island, NY), and formalinized Staphylococcus
aureus (a gift of Dr. S. Pahwa, Northshore Hospital, Manhasset, NY) at optimal concen-
trations for 3 d at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere containing 5% CO₂. 0.5 μCi of
This work was supported in part by grant CA-34546 from the National Institutes of Health.

J. EXP. MED. © The Rockefeller University Press · 0022-1007/84/12/1919/06 $1.00
Volume 160 December 1984 1919-1924
tritiated thymidine was added for the last 6–8 h of incubation. The amount of radioactive thymidine incorporated was measured after the cells were harvested onto glass filter discs with a scintillation counter (Beckman Instruments, Inc., Fullerton, CA). Triplicate samples were counted. Variations of <10% were found.

The B cell proliferation assay was performed using affinity-purified rabbit anti-human IgM as a first stimulant at a final concentration of 5–50 μg/ml. Conditioned medium containing B cell stimulation factor (CM-BSF), produced as previously described (9), was added at the initiation of culture to 10⁵ B cells per microtiter well at a final concentration of 10%. Supernatants of hybridomas to be screened for inhibitory activity were also added at the initiation of culture at a final concentration of 25%. After 3 d of culture, the cells were labeled with tritiated thymidine and radioactivity counted as described above.

Immunofluorescence. Cells were incubated with mAb for 30 min at 4°C, followed by incubation with a fluorescent goat anti-mouse Ig produced in our laboratory. Fluorescent staining was analyzed using an EPICS V flow fluorocytometer (Coulter Electronics, Hialeah, FL). Integrated fluorescence of the gated population was measured and 5,000–10,000 cells were analyzed.

Results

Selective Staining of Activated B Cells by mAb AB1. Several supernatants of hybridomas generated by fusions between SP2/0 tumor cells and spleen cells of mice immunized with activated human B cells isolated from PWM-stimulated peripheral mononuclear cells were found to inhibit anti-IgM-stimulated, BSF-dependent B cell proliferation. One of these was shown to be specific for B cells activated by anti-IgM antibodies and CM-BSF. The hybridoma has been cloned twice and the supernatants of the clones had similar specificity. The mAb is an IgG1 antibody and is termed AB1.

The cellular distribution of AB1 antigen was studied (Table I). In six separate experiments with different tonsillar and peripheral blood preparations, 10–60% of the activated B cells stimulated by anti-IgM antibodies and CM-BSF were stained by AB1. Although there was variation between experiments, the majority of experiments showed >30% of the blasts to be positive. In contrast, AB1 did not stain activated T cells generated by PHA stimulation. AB1 did not stain

| Cell types | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Normal | | |
| Activated B* (four tonsils and two PBL) | 10–60 |
| Activated T (3) | <1 |
| Unstimulated B (6) | <1 |
| Unstimulated T (3) | <1 |
| Monocytes (6) | <1 |
| Granulocytes (6) | <1 |
| Bone marrow (2) | <1 |
| Leukemias | | |
| B-CLL (7) | <1 |
| T-CLL (2) | <1 |
| ALL (3) | <1 |
| AML (2) | <1 |
| AMML (1) | <1 |
| Cell lines | | |
| B lymphoblastoid (20) | <1 |
| T leukemia (4) | <1 |
| Nonlymphoid (6) | <1 |

* B cells were activated by anti-IgM antibodies and CM-BSF.
* Number of individuals studied.
resting B cells, T cells, granulocytes, or monocytes. Isolated tonsillar B cells also showed no reactivity. AB1 did not stain bone marrow cells; cells from patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia, acute lymphocytic leukemia, and nonlymphoid leukemia; or cell lines of T, B, and myeloid cell origins.

The expression of antigen AB1 did not depend on the presence of CM-BSF. In three separate experiments, anti-IgM antibodies (200 µg/ml) alone induced the expression of AB1 by 40–60% of the tonsillar B cells within 24 h.

**Kinetics of Antigen AB1 Expression.** The kinetics of antigen AB1 was studied (Fig. 1). A significant number of B cells expressed AB1 after 3 h of incubation (Fig. 1B). Although the staining was not bright, this was the earliest time point of our experiment. By 12 h, brightly stained cells were easily detectable. 60% of the activated B cells were positive by 38 h.

**Inhibition of CM-BSF-dependent Proliferation of B Cells by AB1.** The supernatant of hybridoma AB1 was consistently shown to inhibit B cell proliferation induced by anti-IgM antibodies and CM-BSF in repeated experiments. In three of these experiments (Table II), the inhibition was 75–98%. Anti-IgM antibodies in high doses and formalized *Staphylococcus aureus* have been shown (10, 11) to induce B cell proliferation without T cells or exogenous factors. AB1 showed no inhibitory effect in these two growth factor-independent B cell proliferation systems. In addition, AB1 did not inhibit T cell proliferation induced by PHA, Con A or PWM. In an IL-2-induced T blast proliferation system, AB1 also had no effect. This selective inhibitory effect on B cell proliferation induced by anti-IgM antibodies and CM-BSF was similarly observed with an IgG preparation isolated from ascitic fluid induced by hybridoma AB1. Table III shows that isolated IgG was inhibitory in this system in a dose-dependent manner. With 25 µg/ml IgG (AB1), there was no inhibitory effect on T cell proliferation induced by PHA, Con A, or PWM. A partially purified BSF (12) that was devoid of IL-2 activity was kindly provided by Drs. A. Maizel and J. Morgan (M. D. Anderson...
Table II

**AB1 Selectively Inhibits Human B Cell Proliferation Induced by a Low Dose of Anti-IgM Antibodies and CM-BSF**

| Cell population     | Stimulating agent       | Thymidine incorporation |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                     |                         | Control medium          | AB1* |
|                     |                         | cpm                      |  |
| Tonsilar B cells    | Anti-IgM (5 µg/ml)      | A 20,332                 | 490 |
|                     | + 10% CM-BSF            | B 12,276                 | 2,661 |
|                     | 5 µg/ml                 | C 27,058                 | 7,743 |
|                     | 25 µg/ml                |                         |     |
|                     | 50 µg/ml                |                         |     |
|                     | Formalinized S. aureus (0.005% vol/vol) | A 31,486                 | 52,330 |
| T cells             | PHA (10 µg/ml)          | A 31,857                 | 37,997 |
|                     |                         | B 125,885                | 117,741 |
|                     |                         | C 38,641                 | 29,147 |
|                     | Con A (5 µg/ml)         |                         |     |
|                     | PWM (1%)                |                         |     |
|                     |                         | 47,695                   | 46,246 |
| PHA-stimulated T blasts | IL-2                 | 19,650                   | 25,997 |

10⁶ cells were cultured with the stimulating agents in microtiters for 3 d with/without AB1. 0.5 µCi [³H]thymidine was added for the last 6-12 h of culture before harvesting, and thymidine incorporation determined on a Beckman scintillation counter. All cultures without stimulating agents had <1,000 cpm. Data represent means of triplicate wells.

* Supernatant of antibody AB1.

Table III

**Effect of AB1 on B Cell Proliferation Induced by Anti-IgM and CM-BSF**

| mAb            | Amount of antibody (µg/ml): |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
|                | 0   | 0.5 | 5   | 10  | 25  | 50  |
| Control Ab*    | 14,747 | 18,137 | 12,879 | 16,968 | 16,882 | 12,171 |
| AB1            | 15,563 | 11,080 | 9,224 | 5,596 | 1,153 |

10⁶/ml tonsilar B cells were stimulated with 10 µg/ml anti-IgM and 10% CM-BSF for 3 d. mAb purified on goat anti-mouse Ig affinity columns were added at the initiation of the culture at the indicated concentrations.

* IgG1 mAb.

Hospital, Houston, TX). AB1 in supernatant and isolated IgG forms inhibited B cell proliferation induced by anti-IgM antibodies and this purified BSF.

**Discussion**

In the present investigation, mAb AB1 has been shown to detect an antigen expressed selectively by activated human B cells. The expression of this antigen was not dependent on the presence of growth factors. Anti-IgM antibodies (200 µg/ml) by themselves were found to activate B cells to express AB1. It remains to be determined if lower doses of anti-IgM antibodies and other stimuli, such as formalinized *Staphylococcus aureus*, Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), and PWM, will induce the expression of this antigen.

In a preliminary experiment, a 58,000 (58 K) mol wt polypeptide was specifically precipitated by antibody AB1. Thus, this antigen is tentatively identified as a 58 K mol wt polypeptide. A number of B blast–specific antigens have been
described. The mAb BB-1 identified a 37 K mol wt protein that was present on B cells activated by EBV and PWM stimulation (4). This antigen was also found on EBV-transformed B cell lines and leukemia B cells, and was similar in tissue distribution to B-LAST 1 (5) and B532 (6), although the latter antigens have molecular weights of 45 K with no apparent cross-reactivity (13). Recently, Posnett et al. (7) described a B cell activation antigen, HC-2. This mAb identified a molecule of four peptides with molecular weights varying from 52 to 63 K. Relatively little data are available on the functional significance of these B blast-specific antigens. The cell distribution pattern and molecular weight suggest that the antigen detected by AB1 is distinct from these other B cell activation antigens.

AB1 was shown to specifically inhibit B cell proliferation that is dependent on CM-BSF. In two B cell proliferation systems, independent of growth factors or T cells, and in four T cell proliferation systems, AB1 had no appreciable inhibitory effect. Both the supernatant and IgG of hybridoma AB1 behaved similarly. These results indicate that the inhibitory effect on CM-BSF-dependent B cell proliferation is probably not due to a nonspecific mechanism.

A number of factors are involved in the process of B cell proliferation. IL-1 and BSF are active in early B cell proliferation (14, 15), while IL-2 may be involved in a late stage of this process (9, 16). The present study, which used a BSF preparation devoid of IL-2 and which demonstrates the early effect of AB1, rules out the possibility that the AB1 inhibitory effect is caused by interference of the interaction between activated B cells and IL-2. IL-1 has been shown to be involved in T cell proliferation induced by mitogens. Since we find that AB1 did not inhibit mitogen-induced T cell proliferation, it is unlikely that IL-1 is involved. Thus, AB1-induced inhibition of growth factor–dependent B cell proliferation is probably caused by AB1 interfering with the binding of BSF to its receptor. This raises the possibility that AB1 identifies the putative BSF receptor. The finding that anti-IgM-activated B cells express antigen AB1 lends support to this possibility. Further studies on the interaction between purified BSF and isolated AB1 antigen are needed.

Summary

A monoclonal antibody, AB1, was established with activated human B cells as immunogen. AB1 stained activated B cells but not activated T cells. Its selective reactivity to activated B cells was further documented by its nonreactivity to activated T cells, resting T and B cells, monocytes, granulocytes, bone marrow cells, leukemic cells, and cells from cell lines of T, B, and myeloid lineages. Upon activation, the antigen appeared on B cells as early as 3–4 h after stimulation and was fully expressed by 38 h. The expression of this antigen was not dependent on the presence of B cell stimulatory factor(s). Anti-IgM antibodies by themselves induced its expression. AB1 inhibited B cell proliferation that was induced by a low dose anti-IgM antibody and conditioned medium containing B cell stimulatory factor. It did not inhibit B cell proliferation induced by either high doses of anti-IgM antibodies or by formalinized Staphylococcus aureus. It also failed to inhibit T cell mitogenesis. The possibility exists that this antigen is related to the receptor for B cell stimulatory factor.
The technical assistance of Mr. Craig Wasson and Ms. Kay Young is much appreciated. We thank Ms. Sue Reese for her help in preparing this manuscript.

Received for publication 17 September 1984.

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