Forced Expression of Chimeric Human Fibroblast Tropomyosin Mutants Affects Cytokinesis

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Abstract. Human fibroblasts generate at least eight tropomyosin (TM) isoforms (hTM1, hTM2, hTM3, hTM4, hTM5, hTM5a, hTM5b, and hTM5mo) from four distinct genes, and we have previously demonstrated that bacterially produced chimera hTM5/3 exhibits an unusually high affinity for actin filaments and a loss of the salt dependence typical for TM-actin binding (Novy, R.E., J. R. Sellers, L.-E Liu, and J. J.-C. Lin, 1993. Cell Motil. & Cytoskeleton. 26: 248–261). To examine the functional consequences of expressing this mutant TM isoform in vivo, we have transfected CHO cells with the full-length cDNA for hTM5/3 and compared them to cells transfected with hTM3 and hTM5. Immunofluorescence microscopy reveals that stably transfected CHO cells incorporate force-expressed hTM3 and hTM5 into stress fibers with no significant effect on general cell morphology, microfilament organization or cytokinesis. In stable lines expressing hTM5/3, however, cell division is slow and sometimes incomplete. The doubling time and the incidence of multinucleate cells in the stable hTM5/3 lines roughly parallel expression levels. A closely related chimeric isoform hTM5/2, which differs only in the internal, alternatively spliced exon also produces defects in cytokinesis, suggesting that normal TM function may involve coordination between the amino and carboxy terminal regions. This coordination may be prevented in the chimeric mutants. As bacterially produced hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 can displace hTM3 and hTM5 from actin filaments in vitro, it is likely that CHO-expressed hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 can displace endogenous TMs to act dominantly in vivo. These results support a role for nonmuscle TM isoforms in the fine tuning of microfilament organization during cytokinesis.

Additionally, we find that overexpression of TM does not stabilize endogenous microfilaments, rather, the hTM-expressing cells are actually more sensitive to cytochalasin B. This suggests that regulation of microfilament integrity in vivo requires stabilizing factors other than, or in addition to, TM.

Nonmuscle cells, unlike smooth or striated muscle cells, express multiple isoforms of tropomyosin (for review see Lees-Miller and Helfman, 1991). The generation of tropomyosin (TM) isoforms involves regulated alternative splicing of an internal exon, as well as exons encoding the terminal “head and tail” regions (Lees Miller and Helfman, 1991; Pittenger et al., 1994 for reviews), domains shown to be essential for muscle TM function in vitro (Mak and Smillie, 1981; Hitchcock and Heald 1987; Cho et al., 1990; Bartegi et al., 1990; Novy et al., 1993b). This specific pattern of exon use in fibroblasts is conserved between human, rat, and chicken (Novy et al., 1993c; Pittenger et al., 1994; Bradac et al., 1989; Libri et al., 1989; Forry-Schaudies et al., 1990) and produces two size classes of TM isoforms, low and high molecular weight TMs with 248 and 284 amino acids (aa), respectively.

Representative isoforms from these two TM classes have been shown to have different localization within cultured human and chick embryo fibroblasts (Lin et al., 1988a), with high molecular weight TMs associated with the stable stress fibers and low molecular weight TMs found on stress fibers and in highly motile ruffle regions. In vitro characterization of nonmuscle TM isoforms from human, rat and chicken (Lin et al., 1985a, 1988a; Fowler and Bennett, 1984; Matsumura and Yamashiro-Matsumura, 1985; Pittenger and Helfman, 1992; Broschat and Burgess, 1986) have also shown isoform-specific actin-binding properties. We have reported differences for bacterially produced human fibroblast TM high and low molecular weight isoforms, as well as for chimeric combinations of high and low molecular weight isoforms (Novy et al., 1993a) in their ability to bind actin and enhance actin-activated HMM-ATPase activity in a manner consistent with the suggestion that low molecular weight isoforms may be more involved with regulation of
motile processes and high molecular weight isoforms with microfilament protection and organization. This stabilization role for high molecular weight TM was further suggested by the in vitro findings (Ishikawa et al., 1989) that high molecular weight TM more effectively protects actin filaments from the severing activities of gelsolin than low molecular weight TM. Additionally, the down regulation of high molecular weight TM in transformed cells is coincident with the diminished, poorly organized actin cytoskeleton and rounded morphology characteristic of the transformed phenotype (Lin et al., 1984, 1985a; Hendricks and Weinstein, 1981; Cooper et al., 1985). A high-affinity nonmuscle TM was also found to slow the depolymerization of the actin filament pointed end in vitro (Broschat et al., 1989). There has been, however, no direct evidence for a stabilization role for TM in vivo, except that a yeast tropomyosin (TPMI) null mutant appears to have less stable actin cables (Liu and Bretscher, 1989).

Correlative data aside, the role of tropomyosin in nonmuscle cells has not been well characterized and even less is known about isoform-specific functions. We have studied bacterially produced human fibroblast TM isoforms hTM3 (high molecular weight), hTM5 (low molecular weight) and their chimeric isoforms hTM5/3 and hTM3/5, in vitro, and have found that hTM5 binds actin more strongly and amplifies actin-activated HMM-ATPase activity to a greater extent than hTM3. The chimeric mutant hTM5/3 has an affinity for F-actin that is even greater than that of hTM5 and does not demonstrate the salt dependence typical for TM-actin binding (Novy et al., 1993a).

To more directly study the physiological role of TM in vivo, we have separately transfected CHO cells with full-length cDNAs encoding tight-binding mutant hTM5/3 and wild-type isoforms hTM3 and hTM5. In this report we describe that, in stably transfected CHO cells, hTM3 and hTM5 colocalize with actin filaments, consistent with the distribution of endogenous tropomyosin. CHO cells stably expressing hTM5/3, however, sometimes possess disruption of F-actin bundles and a significantly increased incidence of multinuclearity that is not seen in cells expressing hTM3 or hTM5. Interestingly, expression of chimeric isoform hTM5/2, which differs from hTM5/3 only in one internal exon, also causes a high incidence of multinucleate cells. These results suggest that nonmuscle TM participates in microfilament organization and cytokinesis, and that the terminal head and tail exon-encoded regions are functionally coordinated within each tropomyosin.

Additionally, we report that overexpression of TM isoforms hTM3, hTM5, hTM5/3, and hTM5/2 in CHO cells, does not stabilize endogenous microfilaments. In fact, TM overexpression renders the cells more sensitive to cytochalasin B, with hTM3 expression having the most pronounced effect. This suggests that, although nonmuscle TM has been shown to protect actin filaments in vitro (Ishikawa et al., 1989a), microfilament stabilization in vivo likely requires other proteins, such as caldesmon.

**Materials and Methods**

**Plasmid DNA Constructs**

Full-length cDNAs for human fibroblast TM isoforms hTM3, hTM5, and chimeric isoform hTM5/3 (Novy et al., 1993a) were subcloned into the XbaI and BamHI sites (for hTM3) or the XbaI site (for hTM5/3) of pcB6hx, a slightly modified version (Warren et al., 1994) of the eucaryotic expression vector pcB6, generously provided by Dr. M. Stinski (University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA). The pcB6hx expression vector contains the neo' gene, which allows for selection of stable clones in G418, a synthetic neomycin. Chimeric mutant hTM5/2 was created in the same manner as hTM5/3 (Novy et al., 1993a) with the splicing of the carboxy terminus (aa 129-284) of hTM5/2 onto the amino terminal fragment (aa 1-92) of hTM5, and was also subcloned into pcB6hx. The resulting recombinant plasmids are referred to as pCBhtTM3, pCBhtTM5, pCBhtTM5/3, and pCBhtTM5/2 and were prepared for the DNA transfections using Qiagen columns (Qiagen, Inc., Chatsworth, CA).

**Cell Culture and Transfection**

CHO cells were maintained in DME plus 10% FCS in a humidified incubator at 37°C with 5% CO2. Transfections were performed using DOPAT transfection reagent as per the manufacturer's procedure (Boehringer-Mannheim Biochemicals, Indianapolis, IN). Briefly, cells grown to 60% confluence on glass coverslips were incubated with the DOPAT-DNA mixture in DME for 6 h, and then rinsed and restored to DME plus 10% FCS. To select stable transfectants, G418 at 500 µg/ml (GIBCO BRL, Gaithersburg, MD) was added to the media 48 h after the transfection. Cells surviving 2 wk of selection were cloned, expanded and screened for expression by immunofluorescence and Western blotting. For each TM isoform studied, a G418-resistant, non-hTM-expressing line was selected as a negative control, and at least three lines expressing low to high hTM amounts were selected to identify hTM expression-related effects. The stable lines used in this paper are, in order of increasing expression, hTM5C1, hTM5C2, hTM3C15, hTM3C26, hTM3C73 for hTM3, hTM5C2, hTM5C11, hTM5C8, and hTM5C14 for hTM5, hTM5C68, hTM5C36, hTM5C325 and hTM5C3270 for hTM5/3, and hTM5C21, hTM5C25, hTM5C20 and hTM5C26 for hTM5/2.

**Antibodies and Phalloidin**

Monoclonal antibody CG6, generated against chicken gizzard TM and characterized previously (Lin et al., 1985b, 1988a), recognizes an epitope in the COOH-terminal exon region of hTM3 and hTM2. It does not cross react with CHO TM and therefore was used to detect hTM3, hTM5, and hTM5/2 in the transfected CHO cells. Anti-caldesmon antibody, LC24, described previously (Lin et al., 1988b, 1991), was used at 250-fold dilution to recognize endogenous CHO caldesmon. Anti-TM4 antibody, LC24, was generated against bacterially produced hTM4 (COOH-terminal half), and anti-TM5 antibody, LC1, was generated from bacterially produced hTM5 (NH2-terminal half), following described procedures (Lin et al., 1985b). LC24 cross-reacts strongly with hTM4, and LC1 with hTM5, as determined by ELISA and Western blotting. LC24 recognizes only CHO TM4 in immunooblots. Another anti-TM antibody, CG3 was characterized previously (Lin et al., 1985b, 1988a). CG6 and CG3 are IgM class antibodies; LC24, LC1, and LC21 are IgG class. Rhodamine-phalloidin was purchased from Molecular Probes (Eugene, OR) and used at a fourfold dilution in DME plus 5% FCS. DAPI (4',6'-diamidino-2-phenylindole; Sigma Chem. Co., St. Louis, MO) was used at 0.5 µg/ml and applied as in Lourier and Lin (1992).

**Immunofluorescence Microscopy**

Cells grown on glass coverslips were fixed, permeabilized, and prepared for immunofluorescence microscopy much as described (Warren and Lin, 1992). Secondary antibodies included FITC-conjugated goat anti-rabbit IgG (y chain-specific; Sigma Chem. Co.), FITC-conjugated goat anti-mouse IgM (µ chain-specific; Sigma Chem. Co.) and Rhodamine-conjugated goat anti-mouse IgM (µ chain-specific; Cappel/Organon-Teknika, Durham, NC). Micrographs were taken with a Zeiss epifluorescence photomicroscope III.

**Western Blot Analysis**

Cells at 90% confluence were harvested and extracts prepared as described previously (Warren et al., 1994). After separation by 12.5% SDS-PAGE, resolved proteins were transferred to nitrocellulose and immunoblotted as in Lin et al. (1985b). Amido black staining was used to demonstrate relative protein loading.

The Journal of Cell Biology, Volume 129, 1995
**Immunoblot Quantitation of Expressed TM**

Determination of the endogenous and force-expressed TM levels reported in Table 1, was performed as described (Warren et al., 1994). Autoradiographs from CGB/36, LC1, CG3, and LC24 immunoblots were collected with a Hamamatsu CCD camera, model XC77, with camera controller C2400 (Hamamatsu, Hamamatsu City, Japan) and analyzed using the Image-1AT image processing and analyzing system, version 4.13 (Universal Imaging Corporation, Westchester, PA). Intensity values of CGB/36, LC1, CG3, or LC24 autoradiograph bands from known amounts of purified, bacterially produced hTMs were used to construct standard curves, against which the CGB/56, LC1, CG3, or LC24 bands from the hTM-expressing lines were measured. Total protein concentration was measured, prior to blotting, as described by Lowry et al. (1951).

**Other Cell Culture Procedures**

"Mitotic shake off" (MSO) was performed as in Mariani et al. (1981). Briefly, a culture dish containing cells at 80% confluence was held in one hand and knocked diagonally into the palm of the other hand. The loosened cells were drawn off the monolayer, centrifuged, and quickly replated in a 35 mm dish.

Cytochalasin B treatment involved incubation of cells grown on glass coverslips in media containing 1.0, 1.25, or 1.5 μg/ml cytochalasin B for 30 mins at 37°C. As cytochalasin B was dissolved in DMSO prior to addition to the media, control cells were exposed to DMSO alone. After treatment, cells were processed for immunofluorescence microscopy with CGB3, LC24, or rhodamine-phalloidin to demonstrate the extent of microfilament disruption.

**Actin Binding Assay**

The actin binding-competition assay was based on the cosedimentation method of Eaton et al. (1975) and was performed as described (Novy et al., 1993a) using a Beckman airfuge rotor A-100/18. F-actin was purified from the acetone powder of rabbit skeletal muscle (Spudich and Watt, 1971) and bacterially produced hTMs were purified as described (Novy et al., 1993a). Reaction mixtures contained 9.4 μM actin and 2.0 mM hTM3 or hTM5 in F buffer (10 mM imidazole buffer, pH 7.0, 100 mM KCl, 10 mM MgCl2, 0.1 mM EGTA, and 1 mM DTT) with competitors hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 in varying amounts up to 2.1 μM. The resulting bound and free fractions were analyzed and quantified as described previously (Novy et al., 1993a).

**Table 1. Level of TM Expression in Selected Stable Lines**

| Cell line     | Force-expressed TM | Endogenous TM4 |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| hTM3[C32]     | 0.000 ± 0.000      | 0.033 ± 0.001   |
| hTM3[C15]     | 0.033 ± 0.013      | 0.026 ± 0.004   |
| hTM3[C36]     | 0.050 ± 0.002      | 0.024 ± 0.001   |
| hTM3[C73]     | 0.050 ± 0.002      | 0.022 ± 0.003   |
| hTM5[C2]      | 0.028 ± 0.028      | 0.029 ± 0.002   |
| hTM5[C11]     | 0.071 ± 0.005      | 0.023 ± 0.002   |
| hTM5[C8]      | 0.075 ± 0.002      | 0.028 ± 0.008   |
| hTM5[C14]     | 0.214 ± 0.014      | 0.026 ± 0.002   |
| hTM5[3C68]    | 0.000 ± 0.000      | 0.029 ± 0.016   |
| hTM5[3C36]    | 0.024 ± 0.002      | 0.022 ± 0.005   |
| hTM5[3C25]    | 0.030 ± 0.008      | 0.030 ± 0.010   |
| hTM5[3C70]    | 0.092 ± 0.004      | 0.033 ± 0.004   |
| hTM5[2C1]     | 0.000 ± 0.000      | 0.025 ± 0.006   |
| hTM5[2C5]     | 0.010 ± 0.001      | 0.029 ± 0.000   |
| hTM5[2C20]    | 0.037 ± 0.000      | 0.024 ± 0.001   |
| hTM5[2C26]    | 0.037 ± 0.001      | 0.026 ± 0.003   |

* Values shown for the hTM3, hTM5/3, and hTM5/2 lines are the average values from two independent experiments.

† Since the LCl antibody crossreacts to both endogenous CHO TM5 and force-expressed hTM5, the amounts of hTM5 expression were calculated by subtracting the amounts of endogenous TM5 in CHO line from the total TM5 amounts detected by LCl antibody in each of hTM5 expressing lines.

Equivalent results were obtained whether the competitors were added at the same time or after a 30-min incubation with hTM3 or hTM5 isoform.

**Results**

Our previous characterization, in vitro, of bacterially produced human fibroblast hTM3, hTM5, and their chimeras hTM3/5 and hTM5/3 (Novy et al., 1993a) revealed that the isoforms had distinct functional properties, including the ability to bind actin, to amplify actomyosin ATPase activity and to interact with caldesmon. To study the function of TM in the nonmuscle cell and to ascertain whether the isoform-specific properties seen in vitro are physiologically relevant, we expressed hTMs in CHO cells with DNA transfection. We focused on isoform hTM5/3, because of its extreme actin binding properties, and hTM3 and hTM5, for comparison, as they are the wild-type “parent” isoforms. Full-length cDNAs for hTM5/3, hTM5, and hTM3 were separately subcloned into eucaryotic expression vector pCB6hx, separately transfected into CHO cells, and assayed for expression 18–24 h after transfection, via immunofluorescence microscopy. Transient expression of hTM5/3, but not hTM3 or hTM5, resulted in severe distortions of the transfected cell shape and a disruption of F-actin bundles (data not shown). We have previously found that shape change is not routinely found with transient expression of other proteins such as actin-binding “CaD39” or non-actin–binding “CaD40” fragments of human fibroblast caldesmon (Warren et al., 1994).

**Mismatched Terminal “Head and Tail” Domains Appear to be Responsible for the Disruptive Effects of hTM5/3**

Fig. 1 shows a cartoon representation of the isoform-specific domains of hTM3 and hTM5 that are “mismatched,” in chimeric mutant hTM5/3. Note that the sequence diversity is restricted to the exon-encoded regions of the termi as well as one internal domain. To determine whether the mismatched terminal or the internal exon region are primarily responsible for the altered properties of hTM5/3, we took advantage of the fact that a chimera between hTM5 and hTM2, hTM5/2-transfected cells demonstrated the same range of aberrant morphologies as seen with transient hTM5/3 expression (data not shown). Additionally, the actin binding properties of bacterially produced hTM5/2, purified and analyzed as in Novy et al. (1993a), were similar to those of hTM5/3 (data not shown). Therefore, the internal exon does not seem to be the primary cause for the dominant effects of hTM5/3 on cell shape and microfilament organization.

**Stable Expression of hTMs Does Not Alter Endogenous Levels of TM or Caldesmon**

To more closely analyze the effects of hTM5/3, hTM5/2, hTM5 and hTM3 overexpression, we obtained clonal lines of permanently transfected cells and determined their relative expression levels by western blot analysis. As our stably transfected cells were the result of random integration of the hTM- and neo'-containing vector, we aimed to select and characterize several independent stable lines each, of hTM3, hTM5, hTM5/3, and hTM5/2, to rule out non-TM, position-
Figure 1. Schematic cartoon of the exon-encoded regions of the cDNAs for hTM3, hTM2, hTM5, and the chimeric isoforms hTM5/3 and hTM5/2. The alternatively spliced exon regions are differently shaded to show the areas of isoform diversity. Chimeric isoforms hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 differ solely in the region encoded by the internal alternatively spliced exon (arrow).

Representative Western blots showing hTM, endogenous TM4, as well as endogenous caldesmon levels are shown for the hTM5/3 lines in Fig. 2, for the hTM3 and hTM5/2 lines in Fig. 3, and for the hTM5 lines in Fig. 4. The CG86 immunoblot of Fig. 2 A, shows hTM5/3C36 (lane 2), hTM5/3C25 (lane 3), and hTM5/3C70 (lane 4), the hTM5/3 lines chosen to represent low to high expression levels, as well as the drug-resistant non-expressor, hTM5/3C68 (lane 1). Fig. 3 A, shows the hTM3 expression levels among the hTM3 stable lines, hTM5C15 (lane 2), hTM5C36 (lane 3), and hTM5C373 (lane 4) and nonexpressor control line, hTM5C32 (lane 1). A CG86 blot of the hTM5/2 lines is shown in Fig. 3 E, with the negative control hTM5/2C1 in lane 1 and hTM5/2-expressing lines, hTM5/2C5, hTM5/2C20 and hTM5/2C26 shown in lanes 2–4, respectively. The amido black–stained panels (Figs. 2 D, and 3 D and H) and the Coomassie blue–stained gel panel (Fig. 4 A) demonstrate relative total protein loading. Since the LCl antibody recognizes both endogenous CHO TM5 and exogenously force-expressed hTM5, the LCl immunoblot shall demonstrate the combined amounts of CHO TM5 and hTM5. In Fig. 4 B, the hTM5 stable lines, hTM5C2 (lane 2), hTM5C11 (lane 3), hTM5C8 (lane 4), and hTM5C14 (lane 5) appear to represent low to high expression levels of hTM5. The level of expression in hTM5C2 (Fig. 4 B, lane 2) was not significantly different from that in the original CHO line (Fig. 4 B, lane 1). Thus, the hTM5C2 may represent a drug-resistant hTM5 non-expressor.

We previously reported that overexpression of the actin-, Ca2+/calmodulin-, and TM-binding fragment of human fibroblast caldesmon, CaD39, increased the steady-state levels of endogenous TM. This was not due to an increase in TM synthesis, but to a reduction in TM turnover, presumably resulting from CaD39-enhanced TM-actin binding (Warren et al.,...
1994). We were, therefore, curious as to whether the overexpression of TM would change caldesmon levels. The Western blots in Figs. 2–4 with anti-caldesmon antibody C21 (Figs. 2B, 3B and F, and 4C) show that steady-state levels of caldesmon remain unchanged in cells expressing various amounts of hTM5/3, hTM3, hTM5, or hTM5/2. Endogenous levels of TM4 also appear undisturbed in the LC24 immunoblots of the lines expressing hTM5/3 (Fig. 2C), hTM3 (Fig. 3C) or hTM5/2 (Fig. 3G) or hTM5 (Fig. 4D). CHO TM5 levels in hTM5/2, hTM5/3, and hTM3 lines also remain constant (data not shown). It appears that force-expressed hTM5/3, hTM5/2, hTM3, and hTM5 do not appreciably alter the accumulation of endogenous CHO TM or caldesmon. The transfected, hTM-expressing, cells then possess unusual total TM to caldesmon ratios.

Stable Chimeric Mutant hTM Lines Have Cell Cycle-dependent Heterogeneous Expression Levels

All viable hTM5/3-expressing lines that we were able to isolate and expand from single clones have the peculiar trait of heterogeneous cell-to-cell expression levels as determined
by immunofluorescence microscopy. CGβ6 immunofluorescence staining in Fig. 5A demonstrates that cells of hTM5/3 representative expressing line, hTM5/3C70, have different levels of expression as judged by relative CGβ6 staining intensities. Four very weakly stained cells have been outlined and marked with asterisks in Fig. 5A. The heterogeneous CGβ6 intensities appear to be linked to the cell cycle because cells from all hTM5/3 lines brightly and evenly stain with CGβ6 after synchronization by mitotic shake off (Fig. 5B). Homogeneous staining remains until cells lose their mitotic synchrony, at about 18 h in culture (data not shown). Heterogeneous CGβ6 staining intensities are also seen with stable hTM5/2 lines but not with hTM3 lines. The homogeneous CGβ6 staining of hTM3C73, a representative high expressing line is shown in Fig. 5C.

**Stable Expression of hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 Perturbs Cytokinesis in CHO Cells**

Most cells of the hTM5/3 stable lines have a relatively “normal” morphology. Of the aberrant cells, some have abnormal shapes similar to the transiently transfected cells but the majority are huge with many nuclei. We found, upon comparative cell counting, that the incidence of multinuclearity increased relative to hTM5/3 expression (Table II). Cells were judged to be multinucleate if at least three nuclei were discernible. Fig. 6 shows DAPI-stained nuclei from non-expressing hTM5/3C68 (Fig. 6A) and expressing line hTM5/3C25 (Fig. 6B), as examples. The nuclei in the affected cells were often bunched together, therefore, the counts included in Table II may even underestimate the percent nuclei in multinucleate cells. The multinucleate population in hTM3- or hTM5-expressing cell lines was not significantly different from that of the non-expressing control lines or for CHO cells alone. Expression of the hTM5/3-related chimera hTM5/2, however, did result in an increased incidence of multinucleate cells related roughly to the level of hTM5/2 expression.

The greatly increased presence of multinucleate cells specifically in the hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 lines is a good indication that these chimeric mutant hTMs can interfere with successful cytokinesis. We therefore sought to understand the mechanism of the cytokinesis defect by studying the hTM-expressing cells which do make it through cell division. As early as the initial cloning of the hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 lines we noticed a decrease in the growth rates that corresponded to the level of the chimeric hTM expressed. Control line hTM5/3C68 cells doubled in 15 h. The doubling times for hTM5/3C36, hTM5/3C25, and hTM5/3C70 were 17, 17, and 24 h, respectively. hTM5/2-expressing stable lines also grow more slowly than nonexpressing stable lines, but stable CHO lines expressing hTM3, hTM5, or caldesmon fragments do not have expression-related effects on their growth rates (data not shown).

To try to define the cell cycle period involved in the hTM5/3-related defect, we synchronized the cells for using MSO. This technique allows for the selection of cells which have rounded up for division without the addition of cytoskeletal-altering drugs. MSO cells from the hTM5/3 lines were collected, replated on coverglasses and observed. After replating, mitotic cells completed cell division by pinching into two distinct, small, juxtaeposed cells we refer to collectively as a doublet. CHO cells and nonexpressing hTM5/
Table II. Percent of Nuclei in Multinucleate Cells*

| Cell line | Relative expression level | Total nuclei counted | Percentage in multinucleate cells |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| CHO       | -                         | 1,206                | 0.91                             |
| hTM3C32   | -                         | 1,229                | 0.49                             |
| hTM3C15   | + +                       | 1,204                | 0.83                             |
| hTM3C36   | ++ +                      | 1,211                | 0.58                             |
| hTM3C73   | ++ +                      | 1,306                | 0.54                             |
| hTM5C2    | -                         | 1,119                | 0.54                             |
| hTM5C11   | + +                       | 1,108                | 0.90                             |
| hTM5C8    | ++ +                      | 1,091                | 2.47                             |
| hTM5C14   | ++ + + +                  | 1,079                | 3.80                             |
| hTM5/3C68 | -                         | 1,257                | 1.03                             |
| hTM5/3C36 | +                         | 1,238                | 6.70                             |
| hTM5/3C25 | + +                       | 1,256                | 7.25                             |
| hTM5/3C70 | ++ + + +                  | 1,340                | 24.78                            |
| hTM5/2C1  | -                         | 1,060                | 0.92                             |
| hTM5/2C5  | +                         | 1,328                | 5.21                             |
| hTM5/2C20 | + +                       | 1,005                | 9.52                             |
| hTM5/2C26 | + +                       | 1,446                | 15.77                            |

* Criteria: cells possessing >3 nuclei = multinucleate.

**Discussion**

The functions of TM in the nonmuscle cell have yet to be definitively assigned. Suggestions that nonmuscle TM is involved in the regulation of microfilament dynamics have been based on in vitro observations that nonmuscle TM can, when bound to F-actin, modulate the actions of other actin-binding proteins which sever (Fattoum et al., 1983; Ishikawa et al., 1989), bundle (Burgess et al., 1987), or stabilize (Ishikawa et al., 1989) actin filaments. In vivo, much less has been done to directly test nonmuscle TM function. The down regulation of TM isoforms in transformed cells correlates well with the decrease of obvious microfilament bundles (Lin et al., 1984, 1985a; Leavitt et al., 1986) and forced reexpression of TM in ras transformed cells has been reported to partially restore stress fibers (Prasad et al., 1993). Microinjection studies with anti-TM antibodies have implicated TM in granule movement (Hegmann et al., 1989) and cytokinesis in Schizosaccharomyces pombe (Balasubramanian et al., 1992). In this study, we have further approached the question of nonmuscle TM function using DNA transfection to express human fibroblast TMs and their chimeric mutants in CHO cells, and we report here
that expression of chimeric mutant hTM isoforms can perturb cytokinesis.

Why do the chimeric hTM isoforms behave so differently from the parent TM isoforms in vitro and in these transfection experiments? It has been suggested that the amino and carboxy terminal regions are required for TM-TM interactions and that both terminal regions are the major determinants of muscle TM function (Cho et al., 1990; Cho and Hitchcock De-Gregori, 1991). Our previously reported data that, in vitro, chimeric hTM5/3 displays actin binding properties distinct from those of hTM5 or hTM3, suggests that interactions between the N and C halves of an individual TM are important for TM function (Novy et al., 1993a). hTM5/2, the closely related chimeric isoform (see Fig. 1), has actin-binding properties similar to hTM5/3 (data not shown), further indicating that the mismatch of the terminal exon-encoded regions is responsible for the altered TM properties. Analysis of muscle TM crystal structure (Phillips et al., 1986; Sanders et al., 1988) predicts that TM is a flexible molecule with at least three conformational states. The amino half is reportedly more stable; the carboxy half more labile, especially in a segment around cys 190 (Phillips et al., 1986). We have previously proposed that a functional con-

Table III. Percent of Doublet Cells After Mitotic Shake Off

| Cell line   | Relative expression level | Total counted | Percent doublets after plating* |
|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------|
|             |                          |               | 20 min | 40 min | 60 min |
| hTM5/3C68   | –                        | 1,045         | 35.4   | 39.4   | 44.8   |
| hTM5/3C36   | ++                       | 970           | 17.7   | 34.8   | 38.8   |
| hTM5/3C25   | ++                       | 1,660         | 13.7   | 26.6   | 28.4   |
| hTM5/3C70   | +++                      | 1,891         | 7.9    | 22.8   | 32.9   |

* Percent doublets never reach 100% due to the significant number of cells which divide during the shake off. These small single cells are one half the size of a doublet.
A

B

Figure 7. Competitive actin-binding assay with bacterially produced hTM5, hTM5, hTM5/2, and hTM5/3. The reaction mixtures contained 9.4 μM actin, and 2.0 μM of hTM5 (A) or hTM3 (B) in F buffer (10 mM imidazole buffer, pH 7.0, 100 mM KCl, 10 mM MgCl2, 0.1 mM EGTA, and 1 mM DTT). After incubation for 30 min at room temperature, various concentrations of competitors (hTM5/2 or hTM5/3) were added to the mixtures. After additional 30-min incubation, the mixtures were centrifuged at 26 psi for 20 min in a Beckman airfuge. Both supernatants and pellets were added to equivalent volumes and analyzed by SDS-PAGE. The binding of hTM5 or hTM3 was determined by scanning stained gels for error bars representing standard deviations. Under this saturation condition, the prebound hTM5 (A) and hTM3 (B) were effectively competed off from actin filaments by chimera hTM5/2 or hTM5/3.

One interesting feature of the stable hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 lines is that, although they were derived from single cells, they exhibit heterogeneous staining for hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 with CGβ6 antibody (see Fig. 5A for hTM5/3). The cell to cell difference is not likely a property of the CGβ6 antibody, since CGβ6 staining of the hTM3 lines is homogeneous (Fig 5C). Also, the CGβ6 staining intensity of hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 lines can be evened out by synchronizing the cells (see Fig. 5B for hTM5/3), suggesting that detectable hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 levels are regulated in a cyclic manner. The fact that all viable hTM5/3 and hTM5/2 we were able to maintain have this heterogeneity, and that lines expressing hTM3 (Fig 5C), mouse β skeletal TM (Warren and Lin, 1993), and that caldesmon fragments CaD39 or CaD40 (Warren et al., 1994) do not, further suggested that the chimeric hTM lines that survived, may have done so because they regulated the timing of the synthesis, degradation, or distribution of the hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 with the cell cycle. Two other indications that the progression through the cell cycle might be sensitive to chimeric hTM expression come from our observations that stable line growth rate decreased with increased expression of hTM5/3 or hTM5/2, but not with increased levels of expressed hTM3 or hTM5 (not shown) and that the incidence of multinucleate cells increased roughly parallel to increased expression levels of hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 (Table II).

Cytokinesis involves a massive remodeling of the actin cytoskeleton, with both de novo filament synthesis and actin filament redistribution to the cleavage furrow (Cao and Wang 1990a, b; Fishkind and Wang, 1993) but little is known about the mechanism of contractile ring assembly and function (for review see Satterwhite and Pollard, 1992). Important information is emerging, however, from analyses of cell cycle defective mutants in yeast. Of special interest is the identification of cdc8 as a novel tropomyosin found to be essential for the formation of the F-actin contractile ring in S. pombe (Balasubramanian et al., 1992). We are interested in determining whether TM is involved in contractile ring function in higher eucaryotes and are therefore closely examining the chimeric hTM cytokinesis defect. The fact that the isolated mitotic cells from chimeric hTM lines are slow to pinch in two (Table III) may be an indication that ring assembly kinetics or contraction may be altered. That cytokinesis appears to be the process most affected by stable expression of chimeric hTMs may suggest that ring formation requires an isoform-specific function that hTM5/3 or hTM5/2 do not possess, or that the crucial timing of ring assembly, function and disassembly is not achieved with hTM5/3 or hTM5/2. For example, it has been shown that tropomyosins of different association constants differentially stabilize the pointed end of actin filaments from disassembly (Broschat et al., 1989). From our in vitro studies, we know that both hTM5/2 and hTM5/3 have unusual high affinity to actin filaments (Novy et al., 1993a). This may suggest that chimeric tropomyosins in the contractile rings may be capable of slowing down the disassembly of actin filaments and then, lead to a defect in cytokinesis. Other cell activities involving TM function may not have such strict temporal requirements. Similar reasoning was used to explain why the S. pombe profilin, recently shown to be required for cytokinesis, does not appear to be essential for other processes involving actin filament formation (Balasubramanian et al., 1994).
In apparent contrast to proposals that nonmuscle TM serves to protect actin filament structures in the cell, we have found that stable overexpression of hTM3, hTM5, hTM5/3, or hTM5/2 does not stabilize microfilaments. In fact, with increasing levels of hTM expression, CHO cell actin structures were increasingly less resistant to cytochalasin B (Fig. 8). The disparity between the in vitro–based predictions and our study can easily be reconciled by considering TM as an essential tool used by caldesmon, and possibly other proteins, in the stabilization of actin filaments. Tropomyosin itself may not stabilize as effectively on its own. In vitro, caldesmon greatly enhances the ability of TM to bind to actin (Yamashiro-Matsumura and Matsumura, 1988; Novy et al., 1993a), and to protect against the severing activity of gelsolin (Ishikawa et al., 1989) and the cross-linking action of filamin (Nomura et al., 1987). In additional support of the working relationship of TM and caldesmon in vivo, we have previously reported that overexpression of an actin-, TM-, and Ca²⁺/calmodulin-binding fragment of caldesmon (CaD39) stabilized endogenous TMs and microfilaments (Warren et al., 1994). In our hTM-transfected cells, endogenous caldesmon and TM levels do not change (Figs. 2–4).
thus the ratio of total TM to caldesmon is higher than normal. This may result in a population of filaments not fully protected, and, therefore, more susceptible to cytochalasin B. Alternatively, works from previous investigators (Lal and Korn, 1986; Hitchcock-DeGregori et al., 1988; Broschat et al., 1989) suggest little effect of tropomyosins on the barbed end of actin filaments, whereas tropomyosins are able to stabilize the pointed end from disassembly. Moreover, it has been elegantly shown that cytochalasins strongly affect the end of actin filaments, whereas tropomyosins are able to stabilize the pointed end from disassembly. Thus, it may not be too surprising that overexpression of tropomyosins in vivo, in the presence of endogenous actin-binding proteins, does not stabilize filaments from cytochalasins. However, this possibility still cannot explain the more sensitive nature of tropomyosin-overexpressing clones. Why hTM3 lines are more sensitive to actin disrupting agents than hTM5, hTM5/3, or hTM5/2 lines is not clear. Since the levels of hTM expression are not vastly different in the three sets of cell lines, with the exception of high-expression hTM5C14, the degree of sensitivity may involve functional isoform differences. Our previous in vitro characterization (Novy et al., 1993a), found that hTM3 had a lower affinity for actin and required significantly more caldesmon to achieve half maximal binding than hTM5 or hTM5/3/2, so it is possible that the difference in cell line sensitivity is related to the actin binding properties of the force-expressed TM.

Another line of support for a stabilizing role for TM has emerged from the study of changes that occur with cell transformation. We and others have correlated the down regulation of high molecular weight TM isoforms in transformed cells with the maintenance of the diminished microfilament organization characteristic of the transformed phenotype (Lin et al., 1984, 1985; Hendricks and Weintraub, 1981; Cooper et al., 1985; Leavitt et al., 1986). It is important to note, however, that many other actin-binding and cytoskeletal proteins are also downregulated upon transformation. These include caldesmon (Novy et al., 1991; Owada et al., 1984), gelsolin (Vanderkerckhove et al., 1990), and vinculin (Raz et al., 1986). The disorganized nature of the actin cytoskeleton in transformed cells may therefore be a result of a combined loss of factors. Even in cases where reintroduction of TM results in the partial restoration of stress fibers (Prasad et al., 1993), the role of other, perhaps TM-dependent, stabilizing factors cannot be ruled out.

In summary, our analysis of CHO cells which express wild type or chimeric isoforms of hTM lends strong support for the role of nonmuscle TM in cytokinesis. We also provide direct evidence that TM alone does not stabilize actin filaments in vivo. A search for the specific mechanism of the cytokinesis defect is underway, and we are also investigating the effects of hTM overexpression on cell motility.

We would like to thank R.E. Novy, C. Jones, and C. S. Patil for helping in the construction of expression plasmids pCBhTM3, pCBhTM5, pCBhTM5/3, and pCBhTM5/2. We are grateful to Dr. M. Stinski for his generous gift of the pCB6 expression vector. This work was supported in part by grants HD18577 and GM40580 from the National Institutes of Health.

Received for publication 16 August 1994 and in revised form 2 February 1995.

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