N-cadherin provides a cis and trans ligand for astrotactin that functions in glial-guided neuronal migration

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Prior studies demonstrate that astrotactin (ASTN1) provides a neuronal receptor for glial-guided CNS migration. Here we report that ASTN1 binds N-cadherin (CDH2) and that the ASTN1:CDH2 interaction supports cell–cell adhesion. To test the function of ASTN1:CDH2 binding in glial-guided neuronal migration, we generated a conditional loss of Cdh2 in cerebellar granule cells and in glia. Granule cell migration was slowed in cerebellar slice cultures after a conditional loss of neuronal Cdh2, and more severe migration defects occurred after a conditional loss of glial Cdh2. Expression in granule cells of a mutant form of ASTN1 that does not bind CDH2 also slowed migration. Moreover, in vitro chimeras of granule cells and glia showed impaired neuron–glia attachment in the absence of glial, but not neuronal, Cdh2. Thus, cis and trans bindings of ASTN1 to neuronal and glial Cdh2 form an asymmetric neuron–glial bridge complex that promotes glial-guided neuronal migration.

Results

CDH2 Is Expressed in the Migration Junction and Interacts with ASTN1. To investigate whether CDH2 interacts with ASTN1, we performed immunoprecipitation on protein lysates from postnatal day 7 (P7) mouse cerebella using an ASTN1 antibody. In this assay, we found that ASTN1 interacts with CDH2 (Fig. 1A). We then used Western blotting to examine the developmental expression of CDH2 in the cerebellum. Western blotting of whole-cerebellar lysates showed maximal levels of CDH2 in

Significance

Gliai-guided neuronal migration is a key step in the histogenesis of cortical regions in the mammalian brain and requires the expression of adhesion proteins by the migrating neuron and the glial fiber. The neuronal receptor astrotactin (ASTN1) regulates glial-guided migration, but the glial ligand has long been unknown. Here we demonstrate that neuron–glia attachment and neuronal migration depend on glial expression of the neural cadherin (CDH2) and that ASTN1 promotes migration by a direct interaction with neuronal and glial CDH2. Thus, ASTN1 and CDH2 form a cis and trans asymmetric bridge complex in the migration junction that is essential for glial-guided neuronal migration.

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See Profile on page 10537.

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the early postnatal stages (P4–P10), when ASTN1 expression is high (Fig. 1B). In HEK 293T cells, we detected coimmunoprecipitation of CDH2 with full-length ASTN1 (ASTN1-FL) but not with a mutant variant of ASTN1 lacking a large portion of the C-terminal ectodomain (ASTN1-ΔCTD) that included the membrane attack complex/perforin (MACPF), fibronectin type III (FNIII), and annexin-like (ANX-like) domains (Fig. 1C). Flow cytometry showed that ASTN1-FL and ASTN1-ΔCTD localized to the cell surface at similar levels (58% and 49%, respectively) (SI Appendix, Fig. S1). Thus, the extracellular C terminus of ASTN1 forms a cis interaction with the ectodomain of CDH2.

In sections of early postnatal (P5–P7) mouse cerebellum, a CDH2 antibody labeled GCPs in the EGL, GCPs migrating across the molecular layer (ML), and mature granule cells (GCs) in the internal granule layer (IGL) as well as in the radial processes of BG stretching across the ML and in Purkinje cells (Fig. 1D). CDH2 also localized to the migration junction, a puncta adherens junction between migrating GCPs (i), identified by their elongated profile and close apposition with the glial fiber (5, 23), and BG fibers in cultures of purified neurons and glia (Fig. 1E–G). Antibodies against CDH2 intensely labeled the neuronal soma at the junction with the glial fiber and also stained the underlying glial fiber. In agreement with prior confocal and immuno-EM localization studies (11), antibodies against ASTN1 labeled the neuronal aspect of the migration junction (Fig. 1F and H). Thus, ASTN1 and CDH2 colocalize to the migration junction of GCPs migrating along BG fibers.

**CDH2 and ASTN1 Form Heterophilic Trans Interactions.** To analyze whether CDH2 interacts with ASTN1 in trans to promote cell adhesion, we used a classical Schneider 2 (S2) cell-adhesion assay (24). For this assay, we transfected S2 cells with bicistronic expression constructs (25) of Cdh2::GFP or Astn1::mCherry cDNA and measured cell aggregation rates over 2 h. Cells transfected with Cdh2::GFP formed aggregates within minutes, demonstrating a rapid homophilic trans binding of CDH2 (Fig. 2A). In contrast, ASTN1-positive cells did not form homophilic aggregates over the 2-h incubation period. ASTN1-positive cells did, however, form coaggregates with CDH2-positive cells, indicating heterophilic trans binding between ASTN1 and CDH2 (Fig. 2B). At 2 h, CDH2-positive aggregates contained 11.7 ± 1.2% ASTN1-positive cells compared with 2.6 ± 0.7% mCherry-expressing control cells (P < 0.0001). Moreover, in contrast to the control cells, ASTN1-positive cells frequently integrated into the core of the aggregates. Taken together, these results confirmed earlier findings that ASTN1 does not promote cell adhesion through homophilic binding (26) and showed that CDH2 provides a trans ligand for ASTN1 that functions in cell–cell adhesion.

To test the specificity of the heterophilic CDH2:ASTN1 trans interaction, we measured the aggregation of ASTN1- and CDH2-positive S2 cells in the presence of Fab fragments of an ASTN1 antibody raised against the C terminus of ASTN1 (12). After addition of Fab fragments, heterophilic CDH2:ASTN1 trans cell adhesion was reduced to control levels (Fig. 2C), suggesting that the C terminus of ASTN1 is required for the interaction with CDH2. We then assessed the specificity of both homophilic CDH2:CDH2 and heterophilic CDH2:ASTN1 binding using a Cdh2-Δ390 construct with a deletion of the extracellular domain of CDH2. In S2 cells expressing CDH2-Δ390, both homophilic adhesion and heterophilic adhesion with ASTN1-positive cells failed (Fig. 2D), demonstrating a requirement for the ectodomain of CDH2 in trans cell adhesion.

**Cell-Specific Deletion of Cdh2 in the Cerebellum.** To provide a genetic model for the function of CDH2 in GCP migration in the developing mouse cerebellum, we generated conditional knockout...
mice, the elongated profile of GCPs lacked the neuronal layers, especially in lines where BG or both BG and Cdh2–/–. Astn1-positive GCPs lacked the neuronal layers, especially in lines where BG or both BG and Cdh2–/–. Immunostaining of cerebellar sections of the three cKO lines in genotype), defects in the foliation pattern of the cerebellum of the cerebellum did not differ significantly in the three lines (Appendix). To examine the development of the cerebellum in each of these cKO lines, we identified in vitro cell-adhesion assays were prepared in four conditions: Cdh2;GFP + mCherry; GFP (A), Cdh2;GFP + Astn1; mCherry (B), Cdh2;GFP + Astn1; mCherry + Astn1 Fab (C), and Cdh2–/–;GFP + Astn1; mCherry (D). Astn1-positive cells were adhering to the Cdh2-expressing aggregates after 30 min (arrows in B1), with more coaggregation seen after 1 h (arrows in B2) and 2 h (arrows in B3), indicating heterophilic trans interactions. Significantly lower proportions of cells were adhering to the aggregates in the conditions with cells expressing control vector (A) or Astn1; mCherry blocked with Astn1 Fab fragments (C). Expression of Cdh2–/–;GFP did not result in cell aggregation within 2 h, demonstrating the importance of the cadherin ectodomain for homophilic and heterophilic interactions and cell adhesion. The proportion of mCherry-expressing cells in the Cdh2;GFP-positive aggregates is quantified in E. ***P < 0.01; ****P < 0.001. (Scale bars: 50 μm in A–D and 10 μm in inset in B3.)

(cKO) of Cdh2 by crossing a floxed Cdh2 (Cdh2fl/fl) mouse line with a NeuroD1-Cre line to delete Cdh2 in GCPs. In addition, we crossed the Cdh2fl/fl mice with an mGFAP-Cre line to delete Cdh2 in BG or with an hGFAP-Cre line to delete Cdh2 in both GCPs and glia (27–29). Western blot analysis of lysates of GCPs and BG purified from each of the lines at P7 (30) confirmed the cell-specific deletion of Cdh2 (SI Appendix, Fig. S2A). To examine the development of the cerebellum in each of these cKO lines, we first analyzed fixed sections of P7 cerebellum by Nissl staining (SI Appendix, Fig. S2 B–E). Although the overall size of the cerebellum did not differ significantly in the three lines (n = 7 per genotype), defects in the foliation pattern of the cerebellum of Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre mice, the elongated profile of GCPs migrating across the molecular layer was indistinguishable from controls, and the overall laminar organization of the cerebellum appeared to be normal (Fig. 3 A–C). In contrast, NeuN-positive GCPs had a significantly higher proportion of rounded soma relative to elongated soma in the ML of both Cdh2fl/fl;mtGFAP-Cre (control: 9.6 ± 0.6%, cKO: 72 ± 13%; P = 0.0026) and Cdh2fl/fl;hGFAP-Cre (control: 9.5 ± 1.7%, cKO: 79 ± 6.5%; P = 0.0014) mice, and many GCPs were located in the ML, suggesting slowed or stalled GCP migration (Fig. 3 D–I) (31). Immunostaining for BLBP in these mice also revealed defects in positioning of BG cell bodies and radial patterning of BG fibers in some areas of the cerebellum (Fig. 3 E and H). Overall, the laminar patterning of the cerebellum was disorganized, as the classic boundaries of the ML and IGL were uneven relative to controls. In contrast, immunostaining with a calbindin antibody showed no changes in the gross morphology or positioning of Purkinje cells (SI Appendix, Fig. S3). Thus, a conditional loss of Cdh2 in BG perturbed the migration of GCPs and the formation of the GC layer.

To quantitate the rate of GCP migration along BG fibers, we performed BrdU birth-dating experiments, injecting BrdU at P5 and killing the animals at P7 (n = 4 per genotype; SI Appendix, Fig. S4 A–J). By BrdU labeling, the migration distance of GCPs was reduced in Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre mice, in which 40 ± 3.7% of labeled GCPs reached the IGL compared with 50 ± 3.5% in control mice (P = 0.035). However, GCP migration was dramatically reduced in the Cdh2fl/fl;mtGFAP-Cre mice, in which 33 ± 4.4% reached the IGL compared with 60 ± 1.9% in control mice (P = 0.040).
Similarly, in the Cdh2fl/fl;hGFAP-Cre mice, 29 ± 2.9% of GCs reached the IGL compared with 55 ± 4.4% in control mice (P = 0.0002). The latter two lines also had a significantly higher proportion of BrdU-labeled cells in the ML (22% and 21% higher than in control littermates, P = 0.02 and 0.0002, respectively). These findings suggest that the expression of CDH2 in BG fibers is required for GCP migration.

Since a decrease in the number of GCs reaching the IGL could also be due to changes in cell proliferation or cell death, we stained sections with antibodies to the mitosis marker phosphohistone H3 and the apoptosis marker caspase-3. We found no differences in proliferation or apoptosis in the three cKO lines (SI Appendix, Fig. S4 J and K), suggesting that the lower proportion of cells in the IGL resulted from migration defects.

Glia Is Essential for GC Migration in Organotypic Slice Cultures. To analyze the features of migrating GCPs in the three cKO lines in more detail, we used electroporation to express the fluorophore Venus in GCPs in P8 organotypic slices of cerebellar cortex and imaged labeled cells by spinning-disk confocal microscopy (Fig. 4). In control slices, after 60 h, Venus-positive GCs were observed in the inner EGL, the ML, and the outer portion of the IGL. Venus-positive cells in the inner EGL extended long parallel fiber axons, with labeled cells in the ML showing the bipolar morphology typical of migrating neurons with a leading process in the radial plane (Fig. 4 A, D, and G).

While Venus-positive GCPs in ex vivo organotypic cultures of both Cdh2fl/fl;mGFAP-Cre and Cdh2fl/fl;hGFAP-Cre mice appeared to extend parallel fiber axons normally, the GCPs had dramatic morphological defects, as nearly all the cells were rounded or irregularly shaped, rather than elongated, and failed to extend a leading process in the direction of migration (Fig. 4 E and H). Consequently, the median migration distance was severely reduced in the Cdh2fl/fl;mgfap-Cre (control: 111 μm, cKO: 38 μm; 66% reduction; P < 0.001) and Cdh2fl/fl;hGFAP-Cre (control: 109 μm, cKO: 26 μm; 76% reduction; P < 0.001).

**Fig. 4.** Glial CDH2 is essential for glial-guided neuronal migration. Organotypic ex vivo slice cultures prepared from the cerebellum of P8 Cdh2fl/fl control and Cdh2loxP:NeuroD1-Cre mice, electroporated with Venus, and fixed after 60 h. In slice cultures from control mice (A, D, and G) Venus-expressing GCPs migrated radially across the ML and extended a leading process in the direction of migration. Although most Venus-positive GCPs lacking Cdh2 extended a leading process (B), their median migration distance was reduced by 37% (C). In ex vivo slices where BG lacked Cdh2 (E), or where both GCPs and BG lacked Cdh2 (H), Venus-positive GCPs had a rounded or multipolar morphology, failed to extend a leading process, and migrated a shorter distance away from the field of labeled parallel fibers into the ML, indicating a stalled migration. Dotted lines indicate the ML/IGL boundary. (A', B', D', E', G', and H') Representative cell morphologies are shown at higher magnification. (F and I) The median migration distance was reduced by 66% (BG cKO) (F) and 76% (GCP + BG cKO) (I). ***P < 0.001. (Scale bars: 50 μm in A, B, D, E, G, and H and 10 μm in A', B', D', E', G', and H').
organotypic cultures (Fig. 4 F and I). Importantly, virtually all the Venus-positive cells were stalled in the EGL or the upper portion of the ML, indicating a failure of glial-guided GCP migration.

Functional Interaction of CDH2 and ASTN1 During GC Migration. Since glial, but not neuronal, loss of Cdh2 stalled GCP migration, we hypothesized that ASTN1 may promote glial-guided migration in the absence of neuronal CDH2. To examine the function of ASTN1 in GCPs positive or negative for CDH2, we electroporated the Venus, Astn1-FL-Venus, or Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus plasmids into cerebella of P8 control and Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre mice before generating organotypic cultures. No significant differences in migration distance or proportion of migrating cells were observed between slice cultures with GCPs expressing Venus and Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre mice, indicating that ASTN1 overexpression did not alter glial-guided migration. However, expression of the Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus plasmid in GCPs in control slices reduced the median migration distance by 35% compared with control slices expressing Venus (78 μm and 120 μm, respectively; $P < 0.001$) (Fig. 5 C and G), which is similar to the reduction in the Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre slices expressions of Venus (78 μm and 120 μm, respectively; $P < 0.001$) and by 60% compared with the controls with Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus (48 μm and 78 μm, respectively; $P < 0.001$) (Fig. 5 F and G). Importantly, combined disruption of CDH2 and ASTN1 in GCPs resulted in a significant failure to migrate out of the EGL. In addition, expression of Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus in GCPs generated a lower proportion of migrating cells, as characterized by their morphology (rounded/multipolar vs. bipolar) (Fig. 5H). These experiments show that CDH2-deficient GCPs that expressed ASTN1 lacking the domains that bind CDH2 failed to extend a leading process and to migrate. Thus, although homophilic CDH2:CDH2 interactions may contribute to neuron–glial binding, these data demonstrate that heterophilic ASTN1:CDH2 binding is required for glial-guided neuronal migration.

Neuron–Glia Attachment Is Dependent on Glial Expression of CDH2.

To directly analyze the formation of the migration junction in

![Image](https://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1811100115 Horn et al.)

**Fig. 5.** ASTN1 and CDH2 interact functionally to regulate migration. Organotypic slice cultures from the cerebellum of P8 Cdh2fl/fl and Cdh2fl/fl;NeuroD1-Cre mice were electroporated with Venus (A and D), Astn1-FL-Venus (B and E), or Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus (C and F). ASTN1-Venus fluorescence labeled the cell soma and processes but not the parallel fibers. After 60 h, the distance migrated by GCPs expressing Astn1-FL-Venus was similar to that of GCPs expressing Venus (A, B, and G) both in the presence and absence of neuronal Cdh2 (D, E, and G). However, in slice cultures of control mice where GCPs expressed Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus, GCPs migrated a 35% shorter distance (78 μm median) than GCPs expressing Venus (120 μm median) (C and G). Loss of Cdh2 combined with overexpression of Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus in GCPs resulted in more severe migration defects, indicated by a 60% reduction in the median migration distance (48 μm) and a higher number of cells stalled in the EGL (F and G). (H) A significantly higher proportion of cells expressing Astn1-ΔCTD-Venus were rounded or multipolar. Dotted lines indicate EGL/ML and ML/IGL boundaries. **$P < 0.01$; ***$P < 0.001$; ns, not significant. (Scale bars: 50 μm in A–F, 10 μm in B, C, E, and F.)
GCPs and BG lacking Cdhl2, we generated in vitro chimeras (23, 31). For these experiments, we purified GCPs or BG using a step gradient of Percoll (30) and mixed and matched GCPs and BG from Cdhl2+/+ control and Cdhl2−/− hGFAP-Cre (GCP + BG–cKO) cerebella. Purified GCPs from each genotype were electroporated with either a Venus plasmid to visualize the GCP soma and processes or an Astn1-FL-Venus plasmid to examine the ASTN1 protein localization and were cocultured with purified glia from each genotype. In control cultures of wild-type GCPs and BG, Venus- or Astn1-FL-Venus–expressing GCPs adhered to GFAP-labeled BG fibers, formed an elongated profile along the fiber, and extended a leading process in the direction of migration (Fig. 6 A and B). ASTN1-FL-Venus localized to the migration junction, and the overexpression did not disrupt neuron–glia attachment or migration. Similar results were observed in cocultures of GCPs lacking CDH2 with control BG (Fig. 6 C and D). A strikingly different result was seen when either control or CDH2-deficient GCPs were cultured with BG lacking CDH2. In both cases, although the ASTN1 protein localized to the basal portion of the soma, the neurons failed to form a migration junction (Fig. 6 E–H). Measurement of the distance between the GCP soma and BG fiber confirmed this observation (Fig. 6f). In addition, GCPs were rounded or multipolar, rather than elongated, as seen on control BG fibers, and failed to extend a leading process. Thus, formation of the migration junction between GCPs and BG fibers required glial CDH2.

Taken together, our results propose a bridge model in which a cis complex of ASTN1 and CDH2 in the neuronal membrane interacts in trans with CDH2 on the glial fiber (Fig. 7) to promote glial-guided migration.

**Discussion**

This study reports evidence for the formation of a cis and trans asymmetric bridge complex between two families of CNS guidance receptors, CDH2 and ASTN1, as well as the discovery that CDH2 is the glial ligand for ASTN1, the neuronal receptor for glial-guided migration. These findings are supported by biochemical evidence that ASTN1 binds CDH2 in cis, by S2 adhesion assays showing that ASTN1 binds CDH2 in trans, by genetic conditional loss-of-function studies showing defects in glial-guided migration in mice lacking Cdhl2 in glia, and by in vitro chimeras showing a failure of GCPs to form a migration junction with glia lacking CDH2. Overexpression of an ASTN1 variant lacking the binding domain for CDH2 confirmed that homophilic CDH2 binding between GCPs and glia is not sufficient to support neuronal migration. Thus, heterophilic bridge complexes of ASTN1 and CDH2 are required for glial-guided neuronal migration in the developing cerebellum.

Support for cis interactions of ASTN1 and CDH2 was provided by immunoprecipitation assays, which further confirmed that three specific extracellular domains of ASTN1—MACPF, FNIII, and ANX-like—are required for ASTN1 binding to CDH2. This finding provided the molecular basis for studies on the overexpression of ASTN1 lacking these domains, which appeared to act as a dominant negative. The biochemical findings were also supported by S2 cell-adhesion assays showing that heterophilic ASTN1:CDH2 binding supports cell–cell adhesion in addition to homophilic CDH2-induced cell adhesion. Thus, CDH2 binds ASTN1 in both cis and trans and in intercellular adhesion. These findings are reminiscent of cis and trans binding between CDH2 and the AMPA receptor subunit GluR2 in dendritic spines (32).

Conditional loss-of-function experiments have been instrumental in defining the site of action of specific neuronal or glial receptors. The significance of glial CDH2, relative to neuronal CDH2, in glial-guided migration was evident from our finding that a glial loss of Cdhl2 resulted in dramatic effects on GCP morphology and a failure to adhere to glial fibers, whereas a neuronal loss of Cdhl2 did not affect neuron–glia binding or stall migration. We therefore propose that the binding of ASTN1 to glial CDH2 is sufficient to promote neuron–glia attachment and glial-guided migration. The finding that a loss of Cdhl2 in GCPs slowed glial-guided migration suggests that the cis interaction of ASTN1 and CDH2 is also important for migration, likely by stabilizing the migration junction between the neuron and the glial fiber. One mechanism for stabilizing the migration junction would be through endosomal recycling of ASTN1 back to the plasma membrane, a role that has previously been ascribed for ASTN2, the second member of the astrotactin family (7). Indeed, CDH2 has been reported to function in AMPA receptor trafficking by increasing surface expression of AMPA receptors in neurons (33).

Other studies have proposed that homophilic CDH2:CDH2 binding regulates neuron–glia attachment and migration (19,
Rap GTPases in the control of CDH2 function (18, 22, 43) and in the migration junction but the CDH2:CDH2 complex is not sufficient for migration. The present study extends the general role for cadherins in homophilic cell–cell interactions by directly demonstrating that both cis and trans ASTN1:CDH2 interactions function in glial-guided migration.

Further support for the asymmetric bridge complex comes from the finding that a combined deletion of Cdhh2 in both GCPs and BG produced migration defects similar to the glia-specific deletion. While the combined deletion also resulted in developmental defects in the cerebral cortex, notably a double cortex (20). Our bridge model does not exclude this scenario; however, the finding that a combined deletion of Cadhh2 and Cdh2 produced migration defects similar to the glia-specific deletion suggests that a compensation of other cadherins do not function in GCP migration. Still, we cannot exclude the possibility that a partial compensation of other cadherins occurred in the neuron-specific Cdhh2 knock-out. Interestingly, cadherin-11 was recently shown to regulate neural crest migration via binding of its cleaved EC1–3 domains to ErbB2 (40). Moreover, Cdhh2 has been demonstrated to interact with trans with the AMPA receptor subunit GluR2 to regulate spine formation (32). This corroborates our findings that cell adhesion and migration can be regulated by cadherins independently of homophilic or compensatory cadherin bindings.

The heterophilic interactions between different cadherins have been reported (34, 35). However, no cadherin defects have been described in mice with a targeted deletion of R-cadherin (36), M-cadherin (37), or cadherin-11 (38), which are expressed in the postnatal mouse cerebellum (39), suggesting that these cadherins do not function in GCP migration. Still, we cannot exclude the possibility that a partial compensation of other cadherins occurs in the neuron-specific Cdhh2 knock-out. Interestingly, cadherin-11 was recently shown to regulate neural crest migration via binding of its cleaved EC1–3 domains to ErbB2 (40). Moreover, Cdhh2 has been demonstrated to interact with trans with the AMPA receptor subunit GluR2 to regulate spine formation (32). This corroborates our findings that cell adhesion and migration can be regulated by cadherins independently of homophilic or compensatory cadherin bindings.

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The heterophilic ASTN1:CDH2 interaction was shown to occur via the C-terminal ectodomain of ASTN1, which included the MACPF, FNIII, and ANX-like domains (Fig. 1C). We were unable to pinpoint whether a single domain binds Cdhh2, since ASTN1 constructs lacking only the MACPF or FNIII domains failed to localize to the cell surface. Expression of ASTN1-ΔCTD in control organotypic slices did not fully stall GCP migration but significantly slowed migration, similar to the neuronal loss of Cdhh2. Slowed GCP migration is consistent with previous migration studies in Astn1 mutant mice (13). However, it is possible that endogenous ASTN1 might not have been fully competed out by ASTN1-ΔCTD and still might have contributed to GCP migration. In addition, we cannot exclude the possibility that other adhesion proteins are also involved in the ASTN1:CDH2 bridge complex. Nevertheless, the combined deletion of Cdhh2 with ASTN1-ΔCTD expression in GCPs resulted in a migration failure similar to that seen with glial Cdhh2 knock-out, demonstrating that a cis interaction of ASTN1 and Cdhh2 in GCPs promotes migration. This is consistent with the observation that Cdhh2 acts in combination with nectin-based adhesion to regulate radial glia-independent somal translocation (41).

Although the intracellular aspect of ASTN1 does not contain any domains known to be involved in intracellular signaling pathways, it is possible that the complex of ASTN1:CDH2 functions in intracellular signaling during migration. The best-characterized signaling cascades involving CDH2 are β-catenin (42) and GTPases (22, 43). While recent studies support a key role for Rho, Rab, and Rap GTPases in the control of CDH2 function (18, 22, 43) and in GCP migration via actin-regulatory pathways (10), their signaling role in CDH2:ASTN1 complexes remains to be determined. In addition, since prior EM studies revealed the presence of microfilaments in the migration junction (6) where ASTN1 localizes (11), it will be important to assay the involvement of β-catenin and cytoskeletal elements, including actin-binding proteins, in the migration junction.

Our study provides a direct demonstration of cis and trans interactions of CDH2 with a CNS migration receptor and raises the possibility for a general function for heterophilic cadherin–receptor complexes in the formation of a wide range of cell–cell junctions.

Materials and Methods

Animals. B6.129S6(SJL) Cdh2tm12oKoa (backcrossed to C57BL/6) carrying loxP sites flanking exon 1 of the Cdhh2 gene (stock no. 007611) from Jackson Laboratory were crossed with Tg(β-Actin-CRE)224 (Tg(Cre)) or Tg(Ki67-CRE)64 (Tg(Ki67-CRE)) lines. Cdh2tm12oKoa, Cdh2tm12oKoa; Cdh2tm12oKoa, mCerf, and Cdh2tm12oKoa; Cdh2tm12oKoa; Cre–/– experimental mice and Cre-negative Cdh2tm12oKoa control littermates. Genotyping details are described in SI Appendix. All procedures were performed according to guidelines approved by the Rockefeller University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

DNA Constructs. See SI Appendix for details.

GC/BG Co-cultures. Cocultures of GCPs and BG from P7 cerebella were prepared as described previously (30). Briefly, a dissociated cerebellar cell suspension was applied to a two-step gradient of 35%/60% Percoll (Sigma-Aldrich) in Tyrode’s solution and was centrifuged at 2,000 × g for 10 min at 4 °C. The large cell fraction at the Tyrode’s solution/35% Percoll interface (BG) and the small cell fraction at the 35%/80% Percoll interface (GCPs) were subsequently washed and preplated in GC medium (SI Appendix) on untreated Petri dishes at 35 °C/5% CO2 for 20 min to remove fibroblasts. The GCP fraction was thereafter cultured on 0.1 mg/mL poly-L-lysine–precoated 12-mm coverslips for 1 h at 35 °C/5% CO2. The unbound cell suspension was then removed, and the adhering glial cells were cultured in GC medium at 35 °C/5% CO2. The GCP fraction was transferred to a 60-mm tissue-culture dish and incubated for 30 min at 35 °C/5% CO2. The dish was then tapped to dislodge the GCPs. The cell suspension was transferred to a new tissue-culture dish, and the process was repeated for maximal purification of GCPs. Purified GCPs were then electroporated with an Amaxa Mouse Neuro Nucleofection kit (Lonza) as described in SI Appendix. GCPs were added to the BG cultures at a GCP:BG ratio of 5:1. The cocultures were incubated at 35 °C/5% CO2 for 48–72 h.

Organotypic Slice Cultures. The method is described in previous work (10) and detailed in SI Appendix. Briefly, P8 cerebellum from Cdhh2tm12oKoa and Cdhh2−/− littermates were dissected out and electroporated with pCIG2-Venus (0.5 μg/μL), pCIG2-Astrin-FL-Venus (1 μg/μL), or pCIG2-Astrin-ΔCTD-Venus (1 μg/μL) plasmids dorsal-to-ventral for 50 μM at 80 V, for a total of five pulses with an interval of 500 ms between pulses, using an ECM 830 Electro Square Porator (BTX Genetronics). The cerebellum was then embedded in 3% agarose in HBSS, and 250-μm horizontal slices were made using a Leica VT1000S vibratome. Slices were placed on Millicell-CM 0.4-μm culture plate inserts (Millipore) and cultured for 60 h at 35 °C/5% CO2.

Immunohistochemistry/Cytochemistry. Brains were dissected out and fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS at 4 °C overnight and thereafter were cryoprotected in 20% sucrose in PBS at 4 °C overnight. Sagittal cryosections (25 μm), organotypic slice cultures, or GCP/BG cocultures were processed for immunohistochemistry as described in SI Appendix.

BrdU Labeling. BrdU in PBS (BD Biosciences) (50 μg/mL of body weight) was injected s.c. in the neck of P5 Cdhh2tm12oKoa and Cdhh2−/− littermates. The brains were dissected out 48 h later and processed for immunohistochemistry as described in SI Appendix.

Immunoprecipitation and Western Blotting. Briefly, transfected HEK 293T cells (clone 17; ATCC CRL-11268) were whole cerebella were extracted in ice-cold lysis buffer (SI Appendix) and precleared with 25 μL Protein G/Agarose beads (Calbiochem). The lysates were incubated with 3 μg of a rabbit GFP antibody (Invitrogen), rabbit Astrin antibody (12), or normal rabbit IgG (Santa Cruz Abcam).
Biotechnology) for 2 h at 4 °C. Immunoprecipitates were collected on 30 μL. Protein G/A agarose beads by overnight rotation at 4 °C, washed with lysis buffer, and resuspended in 50 μL 2x Laemmli buffer. Western blotting was performed as described in SI Appendix.

S2 Cell-Adhesion Assay. Drosophila S2 cells (Life Technologies) were transfected for 24 h as described in SI Appendix, and 1.5 × 10^6 cells from each condition were mixed together at a density of 3 × 10^6 cells/well (1 × 10^6 cells/mL) and shaken gently at 28 °C for up to 2 h to allow aggregation. Cells were imaged immediately after the conditions were set up (t = 0) and after 30 min, 1 h, and 2 h. For full details, see SI Appendix.

Flow Cytometry. Transfected HEK 293T cells were harvested in 1 mM EDTA in PBS. The surface fraction of Venus-linked ASTN1 variants was labeled with rabbit anti-GFP (1:5,000; Invitrogen) for 20 min at 4 °C followed by Alexa Fluor 647 donkey anti-rabbit (1:5,000; Life Technologies) for 25 min at 4 °C. Flow cytometry analysis was carried out on a BD Accuri C6 flow cytometer (BD Biosciences) using 488-nm and 640-nm lasers as described in SI Appendix.

Statistical Analyses. See SI Appendix for details. Differences between conditions were determined using unpaired t tests for equal or unequal variances, except for migration distance in the slice cultures where significance was set at P < 0.05 (two-sided). In the bar diagrams, data are presented as means; error bars represent SDs in Figs. 2, 3, and 5H and SI Appendix. The migration distance data from the slice cultures are presented in box plots (Figs. 4 and 5G).

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