A Molecular and Structural Mechanism for G Protein-mediated Microtubule Destabilization*§

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The heterotrimeric, G protein-coupled receptor-associated G protein, Go, binds tubulin with nanomolar affinity and disrupts microtubules in cells and in vitro. Here we describe that the activated form of Go binds tubulin with a KD of 100 nM, stimulates tubulin GTPase, and promotes microtubule dynamic instability. Moreover, the data reveal that the α3–β5 region of Go is a functionally important motif in the Go-mediated microtubule destabilization. Indeed, peptides corresponding to that region of Go mimic Go protein in activating tubulin GTPase and increase microtubule dynamic instability. We have identified specific mutations in peptides or proteins that interfere with this process. The data allow for a model of the Go/tubulin interface in which Go binds to the microtubule plus-end and activates the intrinsic tubulin GTPase. This model illuminates both the role of tubulin as an “effector” (e.g. adenyl cyclase) for Go, and the role of Go as a GTPase activator for tubulin. Given the ability of Go to translocate intracellularly in response to agonist activation, Go may play a role in hormone- or neurotransmitter-induced regulation of cellular morphology.

Microtubules are dynamic polymers composed of α-β tubulin dimers with kinetically and structurally distinct plus- and minus-ends. Both subunits contain guanine nucleotides. GTP, in the α subunit, is non-exchangeable and non-hydrolyzable. However, GTP in the β subunit, which is exposed at the dynamic plus-ends, is exchangeable and hydrolyzable (it can exchange the GDP with GTP present in the reaction mixture or in the intracellular milieu). Microtubules assemble by the sequential addition of tubulin-GTP to the ends. Newly added tubulin-GTP catalyzes the hydrolysis of GTP to GDP, creating a very short GTP (or GDP-Pi)-tubulin “cap” at the ends and a core of GDP-tubulin (1). This cap at the microtubule tip stabilizes the entire microtubule and prevents rapid disassembly. Loss of the stabilizing cap results in an abrupt switching of an end from growth to shortening, called a catastrophe.

Regulated assembly and disassembly of microtubules play pivotal roles in the genesis, maintenance, and functioning of the nervous system (2). In particular, dynamic microtubules are located in regions of high neuronal plasticity, such as the tips of growing neurites and immature dendritic spines (3–5). How the dynamics of microtubules at their plus-ends is regulated to enable them to perform their diverse cellular functions in the nervous system and elsewhere is a central question in cell biology.

Heterotrimeric guanine nucleotide-binding proteins (G proteins) transduce extracellular neurotransmitter (or hormone) stimuli into intracellular signaling cascades. In response to hormone or neurotransmitter activation of G protein-coupled receptors, the Go and Gβγ subunits functionally dissociate, and the inactive Go exchange its GDP for GTP, resulting in active Go-GTP. Active Go subunits exert intracellular effects by stimulating effectors, such as (in the case of Go) adenyl cyclase, which generates cyclic AMP from ATP. In addition to stimulating adenyl cyclase, G proteins also directly affect microtubule stability (6–8). For example, in cells, activation of Go and the attendant increase in cAMP have been suggested to modulate microtubule dynamics and neurite outgrowth (6, 9). Moreover, active G proteins can promote neurite outgrowth independently of cAMP by directly binding to microtubules (6). Activation of G protein-coupled receptors by hormones or neurotransmitters evokes translocation of Go from G protein-coupled receptors into lipid rafts (10). Go then internalizes, and the intracellular Go interacts with microtubules and destabilizes microtubules, leading to neurite outgrowth (6). Supporting this argument, Go binds tubulin from rat brain extracts and binds with nanomolar affinity in vitro and co-immunoprecipitates tubulin from rat brains (11–13). In addition, in vitro studies have shown that Go subunits increase microtubule dynamics, possibly by acting as a GTPase-activating protein (6, 8). It has been proposed that Go binds to the plus-ends of microtubules and destroys the stabilizing GTP (GDP-Pi) cap, allowing for increased microtubule dynamics (6, 8). Recent modeling studies of tubulin-Go interactions support this possibility (13). Although the cellular effects of Go activation on microtubules and neuronal outgrowth have been described (6), the molecu-
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lar and structural mechanisms by which \(\Gamma\)3 destabilizes microtubules remain unclear.

The purpose of the current study was to elucidate the mechanism by which \(\Gamma\)3 increases dynamic instability and thus destabilizes microtubules. We show that active \(\Gamma\)3 increases microtubule dynamics in association with stimulation of tubulin GTPase activity. Further, using a combination of biochemical and computational approaches, we identify the \(\alpha3\)–\(\beta3\) region as the functionally important structural motif in \(\Gamma\)3 that is involved in the G protein-mediated alteration of microtubule dynamics. In addition, we find that peptides derived from this motif mimic the effects of \(\Gamma\)3 on both tubulin GTPase and microtubule dynamics. These peptides or small molecules based on them may lead to novel therapeutic agents for promoting neuronal outgrowth and differentiation in vivo.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Materials—His-\(\Gamma\)3 WT and His-\(\Gamma\)3 C227L in pRSET plasmids were obtained from Dr. Tarun Patel (Loyola University, Maywood, IL). Peptides were custom synthesized by the University of Illinois Chicago Protein Research Laboratory. Peptide sequences are as follows: KQLKQDKQVYRATHR (peptide N), EDAAKDARVYRATV (peptide GtN), LNLFSK-IWNRRWLR (peptide 3), LHLFNSICNHRYFAT (peptide-Gt3), LHLFNSIWNRRWLR (peptide M1), LNLFSKICNHRR-WLR (peptide M2), LNLFSIWNRRYFAT (peptide M3), LHLFNSIWNRRFAT (peptide M5), and LNLFSKICNHRYFAT (peptide M6). Radiochemicals were obtained from MP Biomedicals (Irvine, CA).

Mutagenesis—Mutagenesis was performed using the QuikChange kit (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA), following the manufacturer’s protocol. \(\Gamma\)3-\(\Gamma\)3 chimeras were created (see supplemental Table 1) by mutating His-\(\Gamma\)3 WT in a pRSET plasmid, and final products were confirmed by DNA sequencing (UIC Research Resources Center) from both the 5’- and 3’-ends.

Protein Purification—Recombinant His-\(\Gamma\)3 and mutated proteins were purified using previously published methods (14, 15). Induction conditions, optimized to maximize soluble protein expression, were as follows: \(\Gamma\)3 WT was exchanged into BIAcore buffer twice (10 mM HEPES, 150 mM NaCl, 0.005% P-20, pH 6.9) using protein desalting columns (7 kDa cut-off; Pierce). The \(\Gamma\)3 proteins or peptides were allowed to bind to immobilized tubulin at 25 °C (10 min for proteins; 100 s for peptides), followed by 15 min of dissociation at a 10 μl/min flow rate in buffer. To achieve complete removal of bound \(\Gamma\)3, flow cells were injected twice with a regeneration solution (0.5% Triton X-100 in 1 mM NaCl in HBS-P buffer) for 15 s at 30 μl/min, followed by an “extraclean” step after each regeneration. Regeneration conditions were optimized to maintain tubulin stability while removing most of the bound G protein or peptide. Each sample was injected into a reference flow cell to control for nonspecific binding. A buffer-only tube was run between every 2–3 tubes.

The final kinetic curves were obtained by first subtracting the blank condition and then subtracting the reference flow cell curves. The resulting curve was fit to a 1:1 Langmuir kinetic association model with drifting base line, per manufacturer’s instructions. The calculated base-line drift was within the specifications of the instrument, and \(\chi^2\) values were <2.0. We used ovalbumin as the control. Ovalbumin did not detectably bind tubulin (1 μM) under this condition. Statistical analyses were performed using BIAEvaluation 4.1 and GraphPad Prism 4.0 software.

Single Turnover Tubulin GTPase Activity Assay—A single turnover GTPase activity assay was performed as described previously (19). Briefly, [γ-32P]GTP (450 mCi/mol) was exchanged onto 2 μM tubulin on ice (PEM buffer), and unbound [32P]GTP was removed using a desalting column (Pierce). 200 nM tubulin-[32P]GTP was incubated with the indicated G protein construct, and the released 32P was isolated using charcoal extraction and quantified by scintillation spectrometry (Beckman LS-6000 (Brea, CA) and Econosafe Scintillation Fluid (Research Products International, Mount Prospect, IL)).

Microtubule Polymerization Assay—Microtubule polymerization was performed using 15 μM tubulin in G-PEM buffer (100 mM PIPES, 1 mM MgCl2, 2 mM EDTA, 200 μM GTP, pH 6.9) (6). Tubulin was polymerized for 1 h at 37 °C, \(\Gamma\)3 C227L (exchanged into G-PEM buffer using a Microcon spin concentrator) was added to microtubules for 1 h at 37 °C, and the microtubules were separated from soluble tubulin at 100,000 × g for 1 h at 37 °C (Beckman TL-100). Final reaction volume, including \(\Gamma\)3, was 20 μl. The pelleted protein was resuspended in 20 μl of water at 4 °C. Two μl of each fraction were run on a 10% SDS-polyacrylamide gel (125 V, 2 h), followed by Coomassie Blue staining, to determine the relative mass of polymerized versus soluble tubulin.

Microtubule Polymer Mass Concentration Response Curves—Purified tubulin (23 μM) was incubated for 1 h with \(\Gamma\)3 WT (0.1–10 μM) in the presence of 1 mM GTP in PEM buffer at 30 °C. Polymerization was initiated with microtubule seeds prepared from purified tubulin, 20% DMSO, and 10% boymethyl dextran-coated CM5 BIAcore sensor chip, and \(\Gamma\)3 was allowed to bind. Tubulin was immobilized in HBS-P buffer, pH 7.4 (10 mM HEPES, 150 mM NaCl, and 0.005% (v/v) surfactant P-20) at a flow rate of 10 μl/min on sensor chip CM5.

His-\(\Gamma\)3 C227L or His-\(\Gamma\)3 WT was exchanged into BIAcore buffer twice (10 mM HEPES, 150 mM NaCl, 0.005% P-20, pH 6.9) using protein desalting columns (7 kDa cut-off; Pierce). The \(\Gamma\)3 proteins or peptides were allowed to bind to immobilized tubulin at 25 °C (10 min for proteins; 100 s for peptides), followed by 15 min of dissociation at a 10 μl/min flow rate in buffer. To achieve complete removal of bound \(\Gamma\)3, flow cells were injected twice with a regeneration solution (0.5% Triton X-100 in 1 mM NaCl in HBS-P buffer) for 15 s at 30 μl/min, followed by an “extraclean” step after each regeneration. Regeneration conditions were optimized to maintain tubulin stability while removing most of the bound G protein or peptide. Each sample was injected into a reference flow cell to control for nonspecific binding. A buffer-only tube was run between every 2–3 tubes.

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glycerol by incubating the mixture at 30 °C for 30 min and shearing the polymers formed through a 25-gauge needle. The ratio of seeds to tubulin was 1:6, and the final DMSO and glycerol concentrations were 3.3 and 1.7%, respectively. The polymers formed were then separated from solvent by centrifugation at 35,000 × g for 1 h at 30 °C. The microtubule pellets were depolymerized at 0 °C overnight, and the protein concentration was determined by the method of Bradford using BSA as the standard (20).

Microtubule Dynamics by Video Microscopy—Purified bovine brain tubulin (15 μl) was assembled onto sea urchin (Strongylocentrotus purpuratus) axonemes in PMEM buffer (87 mM PIPES, 36 mM MES, 1 mM EGTA, and 2 mM MgCl$_2$, pH 6.8) in the presence of 2 mM GTP. The reaction mixture was incubated at 30 °C for 40 min in the presence or absence of different concentrations of $G_{\alpha_5}$-QL, $G_{\alpha_5}$-GGL/QL, peptide P3, or the control peptide $G_{\alpha_s}$. Tracking of microtubule plus-ends was carried out at 30 °C by video-enhanced differential interference contrast microscopy using an Olympus IX71 inverted microscope with a ×100 (numerical aperture = 1.4) oil immersion objective (21). The end of an axoneme that possessed more, faster growing, and longer microtubules than the opposite end was designated as the plus-end as described previously (21). The real-time, 10-min videos were analyzed using Real Time Measurement (RTM II) software, and the data were collected using IgorPro (MediaCybernetics, Bethesda, MD). Microtubules were considered to be growing if they increased in length >0.3 μm at a rate of ≥0.3 μm/min. Shortening events were identified by a >1-μm length change at a rate of ≥2 μm/min. We calculated the catastrophe frequency by dividing the total number of catastrophes (transitions to shortening) by the time the microtubules were growing and in the attenuated state. The rescue (transition from shortening to growing) frequency was calculated as the total number of rescue events divided by the total time shortening. Dynamicity was calculated as the sum of the total growth length and the total shortening length divided by the total time (22).

Molecular Modeling—A previously published model of the $G_{\alpha_5}$-tubulin complex structure, based upon a $G_{\alpha_s}$ crystal structure and the structure of tubulin by electron crystallography, was refined to optimize side chain orientations using SCWRL version 3.0 (13, 23, 24). To determine the structure of the $G_{\alpha_s}$-tubulin complex, the $G_{\alpha_s}$ primary sequence was changed to corresponding $G_{\alpha_5}$ residues in the α3–β5 region using an established method (25). Specifically, Modeler 9.1 (Andrej Sali, University of California, San Francisco, CA) was used to replace the residues in $G_{\alpha_s}$ with the corresponding $G_{\alpha_5}$ residues, using the "automodel" function. Likely structures (120 structures) were generated, and the lowest energy structure was used for further analysis. All structures had very similar peptide backbones on a ribbon diagram. Side chain orientation on the lowest energy complex were optimized using SCWRL version 3.0 (Roland Dunbrak, Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia, PA), followed by Amber 9.0 (Scripps Institute, La Jolla, CA) with the "all atom energy minimization" protocol for 80 steps. To permit comparison between the $G_{\alpha_5}$-WT-tubulin and $G_{\alpha_5}$-GGL/QL models, the $G_{\alpha_5}$-WT model was refined using SCWRL version 3.0.

Statistical Analysis—All data were analyzed using Prism 4.0 (GraphPad Software), with $p < 0.05$ being considered significant. Significance tests were performed as indicated. All error bars reflect S.E. unless otherwise specified, and dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals for best fit curves.

RESULTS

Binding and Kinetics of $G_{\alpha_5}$-Tubulin Complexes—Functional $G_{\alpha_5}$-tubulin interactions promote neurite or process outgrowth in PC-12 pheochromocytoma cells and epithelial cells (6). The $G_{\alpha_5}$-tubulin interaction requires $G_{\alpha_5}$ to be in the active (GTP-bound) form. Therefore, active $G_{\alpha_5}$ was generated using the Q227L mutation ($G_{\alpha_5}^{QL}$), which remains constitutively bound to GTP because it cannot hydrolyze the nucleotide (26). Inactive $G_{\alpha_5}$-GDP, used as a control, was generated by promoting the hydrolysis of GTP on wild-type $G_{\alpha_5}$ by incubation with 5 mM MgCl$_2$ for 1 h at 37 °C. The affinity and kinetics of the $G_{\alpha_5}$-tubulin interaction were determined by surface plasmon resonance spectroscopy (BIACore, SPR). Active $G_{\alpha_5}^{QL}$-GTP bound tubulin with $k_{on} = 5 \times 10^{4}$ M$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$, $k_{off} = 5 \times 10^{-3}$ s$^{-1}$, and an affinity of 100 nM (Fig. 1). The results are concordant with previous studies and indicate that $G_{\alpha_5}$ must be active in order to bind tubulin (6, 11).

Modeling of the $G_{\alpha_5}$-tubulin complex reveals that $G_{\alpha_5}$ is located close to the nucleotide in β-tubulin. In particular, the α3–β5 region of $G_{\alpha_5}$ is intimately involved in the interface. These results are consistent with a proteomic study using $G_{\alpha_5}$-derived peptides (13), suggesting that the α3–β5 region of $G_{\alpha_5}$ might be involved in the interface with tubulin.

$G_{\alpha_5}$ Peptides Derived from the α3–β5 Region Bind to Tubulin—Previous studies have indicated that the α3–β5 region and a region near the N terminus of $G_{\alpha_5}$ may be the regions that bind to tubulin (13). To further understand the role of these regions in binding, 15-amino acid-long peptides cor-
responding to the α3–β5 regions (P3) or residues 28–42 (peptide N) were synthesized (supplemental Table 2). Control peptides (peptides GtN and Gt3) were derived from Gtα, which does not bind tubulin (11, 27), and corresponded to homologous regions on Gtα. The affinities of all peptides for tubulin were determined. Peptide 3 (P3) bound with a $K_D$ of 40 μM, and peptide N displayed 10 μM affinity (Fig. 2A), whereas none of the control (Gtα-derived) peptides bound tubulin. In order to evaluate the contribution of specific residues of P3, four derivative peptides in which some residues were replaced by their Gtα (transducin) homologues were evaluated for their affinity for tubulin (M1, M2, M3, and M5; Fig. 2B and supplemental Table 2). Peptide M2 bound tubulin with an affinity similar to P3 (45 μM) and much more tightly than peptides M1 ($K_D = 373$ μM) and M3 ($K_D = 313$ μM). Peptide M5, which differs from P3 by only 5 residues, did not bind tubulin.

**Gtα Activation of Tubulin GTPase Is Unaltered by Mutating the α3–β5 Loop**—In order to determine the functional importance of the α3–β5 loop within the context of Gtα (GtL/QL) was generated, taking into consideration the fact that Gtα does not bind tubulin. Specifically, the α3–β5 loop of Gtα was replaced with homologous residues from Gtα. A similar approach has been used successfully to dissect the interface of Gt subunits with other proteins, including tubulin (13, 16, 27, 28).

Gtα$_{QL}$-stimulated tubulin GTPase with an EC$_{50}$ of 1.2 μM Gtα and $n_H = 1.0$ (Fig. 3A). This indicates non-cooperative activation of tubulin GTPase by Gtα and is consistent with a 1:1 stoichiometry between the two proteins. The Gtα$_{QL}$$G_{tL/QL}$ mutants exhibited slightly greater activation of tubulin GTPase activity compared with Gtα$_{QL}$ (16 versus 11 nmol of Pi formed/min/μg of tubulin with 2 μM G protein) (Fig. 3B), suggesting that although the α3–β5 loop is involved in modulating tubulin GTPase activity, its importance within the context of the protein is diminished relative to the peptide. Note that Gtα$_{QL}$$G_{tL/QL}$ bound tubulin similarly to parent Gtα$_{QL}$ (supplemental Fig. 2).

**Gtα-derived Peptides Functionally Mimic the G Protein Stimulation of Tubulin GTPase**—Next, the functional effect of Gtα-derived peptides was tested. The α3–β5-derived peptide (P3) mimicked Gtα by stimulating tubulin GTPase with an EC$_{50}$ of 24 μM (Fig. 2C). Peptide M2 also stimulated tubulin GTPase but with a lower potency 47 μM (supplemental Fig. 1). Additionally, peptide N and two peptides with portions of the α3–β5 region from both Gtα and Gtα (M1 and
M6) bound to tubulin but failed to stimulate tubulin GTPase, indicating that P3 stimulates tubulin GTPase uniquely (Fig. 4 and supplemental Fig. 1). Peptide M5 does not bind tubulin and, consequently, was without effect on tubulin GTPase (supplemental Fig. 2). Thus, a peptide corresponding to the Gs region of Gs that mimics the effect of the entire Gs protein on tubulin GTPase further suggests the functional importance of this region.

The Active Conformation of Gs Increases Microtubule Dynamic Instability—Because Gs stimulates tubulin GTPase, it would be expected to increase the switching at microtubule ends from growth to shortening (i.e., to increase the catastrophe frequency). To test this prediction, the effects of Gs on overall microtubule stability and on dynamic instability were determined.

First, the effect of active Gs on total microtubule polymer mass was determined. Purified tubulin (23 μM) was incubated with GsQL for 1 h at 30 °C in the presence of 1 mM GTP. Microtubules were pelleted by centrifugation, and the amount of tubulin in supernatant and pellet fractions was quantified (see “Experimental Procedures”). GsQL inhibited microtubule assembly with an IC50 of 3.5 ± 0.4 μM (n = 3). B–D, life history plot of microtubules in the absence (B) or presence of inactive (C) or active (D) Gs. Gs was added to microtubules polymerized on sea urchin axoneme seeds, and the length of microtubules was determined over time (see “Experimental Procedures”). Three representative microtubules are shown in each panel. E, effect of inactive (GsWT) and active (GsQL) G proteins on the catastrophe frequency (events/min). **, p < 0.001. Dashed lines, 95% confidence interval for best fit curves; error bars, S.E.
Microtubule Destabilization

**TABLE 1**

Effects of G_\alpha_s^{QL} and G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL} on microtubule dynamic instability

Microtubules were polymerized to steady state at the ends of axoneme seeds in the absence and presence of G_\alpha_s^{QL} or G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL}, and the dynamic instability parameters were determined (see "Experimental Procedures"). 15–25 microtubules were measured for each protein concentration. Data are mean ± S.E.

| Dynamic instability parameters | Control | G_\alpha_s^{QL} (1 \mu M) | G_\alpha_s^{QL} (2 \mu M) | G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL} (1 \mu M) | G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL} (2 \mu M) |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Growing rate (\mu m/min)      | 1.6 ± 0.1 | 2.0 ± 0.2^a              | 2.6 ± 0.1^b              | 2.6 ± 0.2^b                 | 3.1 ± 0.3^c                 |
| Shortening rate (\mu m/min)   | 8.9 ± 0.7 | 10.6 ± 1                 | 12.4 ± 1.3^b             | 12.8 ± 1.0^b                | 13.4 ± 0.8^c                |
| Time growing (%)              | 39      | 47                        | 35                        | 50                          | 43                          |
| Time shortening (%)           | 11      | 20                        | 23                        | 20                          | 18                          |
| Time attenuated (%)           | 50      | 33                        | 42                        | 30                          | 39                          |
| Catastrophe frequency (per min) | 0.26 ± 0.02 | 0.45 ± 0.04^b            | 0.45 ± 0.02^b             | 0.59 ± 0.1^c                | 0.62 ± 0.05^c               |
| Rescue frequency (per min)    | 1.42 ± 0.2 | 1.13 ± 0.2               | 0.98 ± 0.1^c              | 1.22 ± 0.05                 | 1.44 ± 0.2                  |
| Dynamicity                    | 1.44    | 2.05                      | 2.35                      | 2.83                        | 2.94                        |

^a p < 0.05 with respect to control.
^b p < 0.01 with respect to control.
^c p < 0.001 with respect to control.

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**DISCUSSION**

The data presented in this report suggest a model for the action of G_\alpha_s on microtubules. We have previously reported that in response to agonist stimulation, G_\alpha_s moves from the plasma membrane to the cytosol and associates with microtubule or to stimulate tubulin GTPase (supplemental Table 3; dynamicity was 1.44 with buffer control and 1.40 in the presence of G_\alpha_s^{WT}). Specifically, G_\alpha_s^{QL} increased the growing rate by 25% (1 \mu M) and 63% (2 \mu M), and increased the catastrophe frequency by 73%. The dynamicity was enhanced by 42% (1 \mu M) and 63% (2 \mu M). Notably, 1 \mu M G_\alpha_s caused minimal depolymerization but increased microtubule dynamics by 42% and nearly doubled the catastrophe frequency, indicating that the primary function of G_\alpha_s may be to increase microtubule dynamics rather than to affect microtubule polymer mass.

Consistent with its effects on tubulin GTPase, G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL} promoted microtubule depolymerization more strongly than G_\alpha_s^{QL} (1.6-fold difference; Fig. 6A). Moreover, this mutant increased microtubule dynamics more strongly than G_\alpha_s^{QL}. For example, whereas 2 \mu M G_\alpha_s increased the growing rate, the catastrophe frequency, and the dynamicity by 63, 73, and 63%, respectively, the same concentration of G_\alpha_s^{GtL/QL} increased these parameters by 94, 138, and 104%, respectively (Fig. 6B and Table 1).

G_\alpha_s-derived Peptides Increase Microtubule Dynamics—We also determined the effects of the \alpha_3–\beta_3-derived peptide (peptide P3) on dynamic instability. The peptide also increased microtubule dynamics but required concentrations higher than those required for the full-length proteins. Specifically, whereas 4 \mu M P3 did not have any significant effect on dynamic instability, 10 and 20 \mu M peptide P3 destabilized the microtubules significantly. For example, at 20 \mu M, peptide P3 increased the growing rate by 63% and the catastrophe frequency by 188%. (Fig. 7 and Table 2). The overall dynamicity was increased by 68% compared with the control. These results suggest that \alpha_3–\beta_3-derived peptide P3 mimics the effect of full-length G_\alpha_s predominantly by increasing the catastrophe frequency.
Mechanism for Goαs-mediated Microtubule Destabilization

We propose that active Goαs both promotes hydrolysis of GTP on tubulin and sequesters the newly released tubulin-GDP, resulting in increased microtubule dynamics. This process is probably terminated by the autohydrolysis of GTP on Goαc. First, we show here that Goαs is must be in an active conformation (Goαs-GTP) in order to bind tubulin, to stimulate tubulin GTPase, and to increase microtubule dynamic instability (Fig. 1). The 1:1 interaction of Goαs with tubulin and 1 μM potency of Goαs for tubulin GTPase (3 μM for microtubule depolymerization) support a model whereby Goαs is delivered to intracellular microtubule plus-ends on the cytosolic surface of lipid raft-derived vesicle membranes (10, 29, 30). The intracellular concentration of tubulin is in the micromolar range, and Goαs targets microtubules upon internalization (6).

Our results also show that 1 μM Goαs causes a 2-fold increase in the catastrophe frequency with minimal depolymerization of the microtubules (Figs. 5 and 6 and Table 1), suggesting that the primary effect of Goαs is on microtubule dynamics rather than on the mass of assembled polymer. This is consistent with neuronal outgrowth being a dynamic process involving both extension and retraction (31). In addition, Goαs has a much higher affinity for tubulin (100 nM) than potency for tubulin GTPase (1 μM) (32, 33). We suggest that Goαs sequesters tubulin-GDP to prevent reassociation with microtubules after nucleotide exchange using cytosolic GTP. Indeed, Goαs binds to both tubulin-GDP and tubulin-GTP (6).

Structurally, the α3–β5 region of Goαs appears to be the principal region through which Goαs mediates its activation of tubulin GTPase. Computational modeling data place this region near the hydrolyzable GTP on tubulin. Mutagenesis of this region alters Goαs stimulation of tubulin GTPase and microtubule dynamics. Furthermore, a peptide corresponding to this region mimics the effects of Goαs on tubulin GTPase, microtubule stability, and dynamics (Figs. 2, 4, and 7 and Table 2). The α3–β5 region of Goαs is a highly interactive surface on that molecule because it meditates Goα interaction with adenyl cyclase and Gβγ (34, 35). This result lends support to the idea that tubulin, like adenyl cyclase, is an effector for Goαs.

Perhaps counterintuitively, the Goαs-Gαtl/QL chimera stimulates tubulin GTPase and increases microtubule dynamic instability to a slightly greater extent than Goαs-QL (Figs. 3 and 6 and Table 1). Molecular modeling studies suggest that this chimera undergoes conformational changes that may be permissive for increased tubulin GTPase (Fig. 8). It does appear that the α3 helix, loop, and β3 sheet together are crucial for getting the peptide or protein into position. Consistent with the peptide data in this paper, mutation of the two tryptophan residues in the α3β3 loop blocked Goαs/adenyl cyclase activation by β3β5 region peptides (36). Grishina and Berlot (37) substituted the αβ5 region from Gα12 into Goαs and found that AC activation was blocked. Thus, it appears that the αβ5 region may be more important than the loop itself but that clear conformational distinctions must be drawn between the proteins and peptides derived from those proteins. Ultimately, rigorous evaluation of this will require crystallization of Goαs-

![FIGURE 7. A peptide derived from the α3–β5 region of Goαs (P3) mimics Goαs protein in increasing the catastrophe frequency and dynamicity of microtubules.](image)

**TABLE 2**

| Dynamic instability parameters | Control | P3 Peptide (4 μM) | P3 Peptide (10 μM) | P3 Peptide (20 μM) | PG3 Peptide (20 μM) |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Growing rate (μm/min)         | 1.6 ± 0.1 | 1.7 ± 0.2       | 1.95 ± 0.2a       | 2.6 ± 0.3a       | 1.5 ± 0.2       |
| Shortening rate (μm/min)      | 8.9 ± 0.7 | 9.6 ± 0.9       | 12.5 ± 1a         | 13.6 ± 1e         | 9.2 ± 0.7       |
| Time growing (%)              | 39       | 26.3            | 39.6              | 21.5              | 42               |
| Time shortening (%)           | 11       | 10.2            | 11.2              | 15.6              | 10.4            |
| Time attenuated (%)           | 50       | 63.6            | 49.2              | 62.9              | 47.6            |
| Catastrophe frequency (per min)| 0.26 ± 0.02 | 0.26 ± 0.02 | 0.37 ± 0.01a | 0.75 ± 0.1a | 0.28 ± 0.03 |
| Rescue frequency (per min)    | 1.42 ± 0.2 | 1.40 ± 0.2 | 1.39 ± 0.2 | 1.36 ± 0.3 | 1.32 ± 0.4 |
| Dynamicity                    | 1.44     | 1.38            | 1.99              | 2.42              | 1.41            |

*a* p < 0.05 as observed in a t test with respect to control.

b p < 0.01 as observed in a t test with respect to control.

p < 0.001 as observed in a t test with respect to control.
tubulin complexes to allow for subnanometer resolution of the structure.

We have also developed short peptides (P3, M2, and M3) that mimic the effects of Gαs on tubulin and microtubules (Figs. 2, 4, and 7 and Table 2). Introduction of these peptides should be useful tools to probe Gαs-tubulin interactions in living cells. Peptides have been successfully used to study G protein signaling in striatal membranes as well as in intact cells, even at high micromolar concentrations (38, 39). The specificity of effects in cells can be assessed both by using inactive Gαs peptides that bind tubulin (M1, M6, and PN) and homologous peptides that do not bind tubulin (PG and P5) (Figs. 2, 4, and 7 and Table 2). Peptides (or peptide mimetics) that target the Gαs/tubulin interface might be of therapeutic usefulness to promote neurite outgrowth and synaptogenesis.

Neurotransmitter (activity)-dependent neuronal remodeling plays a role during development and antidepressant response, and involves alterations in both G protein signaling and microtubule dynamic instability (31, 40–42). Indeed, plastic regions, such as immature dendritic spines, contain highly dynamic microtubules (4, 43). We have recently shown that Gαs, even in the absence of cAMP signaling, modulates microtubule stability and promotes neurite outgrowth in cells (6). These processes may occur via a direct interaction of Gαs with microtubules. The data presented in this report suggest a mechanism for neurotransmitter-induced remodeling of the cytoskeleton and raise the possibility that small molecule probes can be generated to manipulate this process.

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