Regulation of Haemopoiesis in Long-term Bone Marrow Cultures. IV. Glycosaminoglycan Synthesis and the Stimulation of Haemopoiesis by \(\beta\)-D-Xylosides

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ABSTRACT Sulfated glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) are distributed in consistent and distinctive patterns between the cell surface and the growth medium of haemopoietically active long-term bone marrow cultures. Heparan sulfate is the main cell surface component and chondroitin sulfate is the major sulfated species in the medium. When the cultures are supplemented with \(\beta\)-D-xylosides a significant increase in chondroitin sulfate synthesis is observed but no stimulation of heparan sulfate synthesis occurs. The chondroitin sulfate accumulates in the culture medium in \(\beta\)-D-xyloside-treated cultures but the composition of sulfated GAGs in cell-surface derived material is unaffected. \(\beta\)-D-xylosides also stimulate the production of haemopoietic cells without any apparent alteration in the adherent stromal cells of the marrow cultures. Equivalent increases are obtained in cells at all stages of development so that a fivefold increase in pluripotent stem cells (CFU-S) is matched by fivefold increase in the granulocyte-macrophage progenitors (GM-CFC) and in mature granulocytes. The stimulation persists for many weeks in \(\beta\)-D-xyloside-treated cultures. These results indicate that the sulfated GAGs may play an important role in the regulation of haemopoiesis.

The prolonged maintenance of haemopoiesis only occurs in association with the appropriate cellular environment in vivo (1, 2). The long-term production of haemopoietic cells in culture also depends on the formation of an adherent layer of bone marrow-derived stromal cells (3, 4) similar in structure and organization to the corresponding haemopoietic environment of normal bone marrow (5, 6). Duplication of the haemopoietic defects of genetically anaemic mice strains S1/S1\(^{14}\) and W/W\(^{\text{es}}\) in long-term cultures (7) supports the proposition that adherent stromal cells are required for haemopoiesis in vitro. Within the adherent layers of long-term cultures the self-renewal of pluripotent stem cells (CFU-S) occurs for up to 20 wk and haemopoietic cells in all stages of development can be detected (8, 9, 10). These include the whole range of haemopoietic progenitor cells, e.g., the granulocyte/macrophage progenitor cell (GM-CFC) and certain mature cell types (11). Furthermore, in all aspects so far studied, the haemopoietic cells produced are identical to their in vivo counterparts (12).

Although the cellular environment is evidently a prerequisite for haemopoietic activity, the question remains whether it fulfills a directive or permissive role. Our approach to this problem has been to use the stromal cell-dependent long-term bone marrow cultures to investigate various aspects of cell-to-cell interactions and the importance of diffusible regulatory molecules in haemopoietic cell development (12). As part of these studies we have been investigating a class of polysaccharide molecules which are components of the extracellular matrix and the external cell surface membrane. These are the sulfated glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) which normally exist in association with proteins in the form of proteoglycan (13). The GAGs are present in largest quantities in connective tissues, in which they are essential for the physical properties of elasticity and compressibility (14). However, their functions extend beyond those of structural elements, and changes in GAG production and distribution during discrete phases of morphogenesis and organ regeneration are closely correlated with events such as cellular migration and differentiation (15). Sulfated GAGs, particularly heparan sulfate, are widely distributed in cell surface membranes where they may play an important role in cellular recognition (16). Thus, these complex molecules are candidates for influencing haemopoietic cell development.

Sulfated GAGs have been identified in haemopoietic tissue.
but their functions remain obscure (17, 18, 19). There are no data available on GAGs in bone marrow cultures. In the present study we have determined the structure and distribution of GAGs in the adherent layer and in the spent medium of haemopoietically active marrow cultures and, in an attempt to assess the physiological role of GAGs, we have evaluated the effects on haemopoiesis of β-D-xylosides, agents known to stimulate sulfated GAG synthesis in a variety of other cell types (20-22).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Establishing Long-term Bone Marrow Cultures: Long-term bone marrow cultures were established from 8- to 12-wk-old BDF1 (DBA/2 × C57Bl/6F1) donors. Femora were removed from the donors, and the marrow cells were flushed into Fisher's medium (Gibco Ltd) supplemented with horse serum (20% vol/vol), WEHI-3B conditioned medium (15% vol/vol) (the source of colony stimulating factor) and 0.3% agar (final concentration) (Difco). Triplicate 1 ml aliquots of the cell suspension were plated into 35-mm petri dishes and incubated at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere of 5% CO₂ in air. After 7 d, aggregates of more than 50 cells were scored as colonies.

Marrow Cultures

Biosynthesis of GAGs in Long-term Bone Marrow Cultures

Long-term bone marrow cultures were established and fed weekly with growth medium containing 5 × 10⁻⁴ M p-nitrophenyl β-D-xyloside. After 5 wk the cultures were labeled for 48 h with [³H]glucosamine and Na₂₃SO₄. The spent medium and a trypsin-extract of the adherent layer were then harvested and the glycosaminoglycans were separated by DEAE ion exchange chromatography (Fig. 1).

RESULTS

Effect of p-Nitrophenyl-β-D-Xyloside on the Biosynthesis of GAGs in Long-term Bone Marrow Cultures

Long-term bone marrow cultures were established and fed weekly with growth medium containing 5 × 10⁻⁴ M p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside. After 5 wk the cultures were labeled for 48 h with [³H]glucosamine and Na₂₃SO₄. The spent medium and a trypsin-extract of the adherent layer were then harvested and the glycosaminoglycans were separated by DEAE ion exchange chromatography (Fig. 1).

FIGURE 1 Influence of β-D-xyloside on sulfated-GAGs produced by mouse bone marrow cultures. Mouse bone marrow cultures were established and maintained in 5 × 10⁻⁴ M p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside. After 5 wk these cultures and controls were incubated for 48 h with [³H]glucosamine and Na₂₃SO₄. GAGs in the growth medium (---) and in a trypsin extract of the adherent layer (-----) were fractionated by NaCl-gradient elution from DEAE-cellulose. Panel a, GAGs from xyloside-treated cultures, panel b GAGs from control cultures. For simplicity, only the [³S]-sulfate elution profiles are shown. Note the different DPM axes in panels a (x10⁻⁴) and b (x10⁻⁵) for the medium-derived GAGs which indicate the enhanced sulfated GAG synthesis in the xyloside-treated cultures (panel a). Over the portion of the chromatogram shown the NaCl gradient was linear from 0.25 to 0.65 M.

SPOONER ET AL. Regulation of Haemopoiesis in Bone-Marrow Cultures

511
The elution profiles obtained with xyloside-treated (Fig. 1a) and control (Fig. 1b) cultures show that little difference was observed in the trypsin-extracted material. The first peak, eluting between fractions 35 and 55, was almost entirely heparan sulfate whereas the second peak (fractions 56–75) was mainly chondroitin sulfate. The radioactivity profile of the spent medium from control cultures was quite distinctive from that of the corresponding trypsin extract (Fig. 1b). Chondroitin sulfate was the main component present in the medium of control cultures: the second peak (fractions 56-75) was entirely chondroitin sulfate, and the first broad peak (fractions 35-55) contained mainly chondroitin sulfate (70%) and a smaller amount (30%) of heparan sulfate. In the xyloside-treated cultures, only a single broad peak of radioactivity was observed in the spent medium which was almost entirely degraded by chondroitinase ABC. The amount of chondroitin sulfate in the medium fraction from xyloside-treated cultures was 30- to 40-fold greater than that found in the medium from corresponding control cultures (note different scales for right-hand vertical axes in Fig. 1).

**Effect of p-Nitrophenyl-β-D-Xyloside on Haemopoiesis in Long-Term Bone Marrow Cultures**

Long-term bone marrow cultures were established in growth medium supplemented with a range of xyloside concentrations from $5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ M}$ to $10^{-3} \text{ M}$. The cultures were fed weekly with medium containing xyloside, and the harvested cells were counted and assayed for GM-CFC and CFU-S content. The results from 10 weekly assays were averaged and are shown in Fig. 2. There is a xyloside-mediated dose-dependent increase in the production of total cells, GM-CFC and CFU-S in the treated bone marrow cultures which is at a maximum of about fivefold at a dose of $5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ M}$ xyloside. It is also clear from Fig. 2 that there is a remarkably consistent ratio between the number of total cells, GM-CFC, and CFU-S detected in the cultures, regardless of the concentration of xyloside used. The differential morphology of the suspension cells harvested from long-term cultures is not altered by the treatment with xyloside (data not shown). The duration of haemopoietic activity in bone marrow cultures is prolonged in the treated cultures. The control cultures in the experiment described in Table I ceased production of CFU-S after 12 wk and those supplemented with $5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ M}$ xyloside, after 15 wk. In the bone marrow treated with $5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ M}$ xyloside, haemopoiesis declined between 18 and 21 wk (Table I).

Adherent layers were occasionally sacrificed to assay the CFU-S content. Table II shows that, although the total cell and CFU-S content of an adherent layer is variable, in all cases assayed the number of CFU-S in the xyloside-treated cultures slightly exceeded that of the control adherent layers.

**Proliferative Status of CFU-S in Bone Marrow Cultures Treated with p-Nitrophenyl-β-D-Xyloside**

The proliferative status of CFU-S in 3- to 5-wk-old bone marrow cultures was measured by the thymidine suicide technique. It has previously been shown that in untreated bone marrow cultures the proportion of the CFU-S population in the S phase of the cell cycle is maximal in the 2-3 d after feeding, after which there is a decline to insignificant levels of

### Table I

| Duration of Active Haemopoiesis in Bone Marrow Cultures |
|------------------------------------------|
| Time after cultures were initiated | Total suspension cells $\times 10^6$ | Suspension CFU-S/culture |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| wk                                       | Control $5 \times 10^{-5}$ M xy   | Control $5 \times 10^{-5}$ M xy |
|                                        | $5 \times 10^{-4}$ M xy           | $5 \times 10^{-4}$ M xy |
|                                        | 4                                  | 3.62                      | 518                        | 2,189                        | 2,427                      |
|                                        | 8                                  | 2.70                      | 146                        | 380                          | 1,564                      |
|                                        | 11                                 | 2.30                      | 162                        | 275                          | 1,620                      |
|                                        | 12                                 | 0.90                      | 90                         | 155                          | 810                        |
|                                        | 15                                 | 0.72                      | 4.54                       | 90                           | 448                        |
|                                        | 18                                 | 0.30                      | 2.32                       | 0                            | 40                         |
|                                        | 21                                 | 0.10                      | 0.10                       | 0                            | 0                          |

**Ex. 1**: Full results not shown.
**Ex. 2**: Produced results shown in Fig. 2.
**Ex. 3**: Produced results shown in Fig. 3.

### Table II

| CFU-S Content of Adherent Layers of Long-term Bone Marrow Cultures |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Expt. | Age of cultures | Control $5 \times 10^{-4}$ M xy | CFU-S per adherent layer |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| wk       |                | 5 x 10^{-4} M xy                |                          |
| 1        | 4              | 1.6                             | 1.4                      | 276                        | 350                        |
| 2        | 8              | 2.0                             | 2.0                      | 214                        | 322                        |
| 3        | 4              | 4.5                             | 6.3                      | 810                        | 1,197                      |
| 3        | 5              | 4.8                             | 6.7                      | 672                        | 1,273                      |

**Ex. 1**: p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside
**Ex. 2**: p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside
**Ex. 3**: p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside

**FIGURE 2** The effect of p-nitrophenyl-β-D-xyloside on haemopoiesis in long-term bone marrow cultures. Data shown are the average of 10 weekly assays ± SEM. Figures refer to the total suspension cells, GM-CFC and CFU-S per culture. There were six cultures per group.


\[^{3}H\text{-TD}R\text{ kill by }7\text{ d postfeeding (8). These results are repeated in the control group shown in Fig. 3. The CFU}-S\text{ from cultures treated with }5 \times 10^{-4} \text{ M xylose follow a similar feeding-}\text{-dependent cycle of }^{3}H\text{-TD}R\text{ kill, but there is a considerable increase in the maximum percentage of CFU}-S\text{ killed by }^{3}H\text{-TD}R\text{. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the CFU}-S\text{ are maintained in the }S\text{ phase }7\text{ d postfeeling. The results of three assays indicated that the }^{3}H\text{-TD}R\text{ suicide of CFU}-S\text{ in the adherent layer was also higher in xylose-treated cultures than in untreated cultures (data not shown).}

\text{DISCUSSION}

Long-term bone marrow cultures produce both heparan sulfate and chondroitin sulfate, the same sulfated GAG species that are present in normal marrow and spleen cells in vivo (17-19). The pattern of distribution of the GAGs associated with the pericellular domain of bone marrow cultures is reproducible and characterized by heparan sulfate as the major sulfated GAG component. In contrast, chondroitin sulfate is consistently detected as the principal sulfated species in the growth medium, and heparan sulfate is present only in minor quantities. Treatment of long-term cultures with xylosides led to only slight changes in the cell-associated heparan and chondroitin sulfate but gave major differences in the GAG composition of the spent medium. In the latter case, a 30- to 40-fold increase in chondroitin sulfate occurred as a result of xylose treatment and no heparan sulfate was detected. This effect agrees with previously published information in which xylosides were effective at stimulating chondroitin sulfate in embryonic chick cartilage cultures (20, 21). The biosynthesis of chondroitin sulfate and heparan sulfate is initiated on a \(\beta\)-xylose moiety linked to a serine residue in a protein core (22). \(\beta\)-d-xylosides (derivatives of xylose which carry a substituted aglycone group at the carbon-1 position) act as artificial initiators of chondroitin sulfate synthesis (21, 22). Despite the theoretical feasibility of xylosides to act as primers for heparan sulfate synthesis, other studies have also shown thatxylosides are poor, or inactive, substrates for the assembly of heparan sulfate chains (22, 29, 30). Thus, the dramatically elevated levels of chondroitin sulfate seen in long-term culture supernatant medium after treatment with \(\beta\)-d-xyloside were perhaps not too surprising. What is intriguing, however, is the concomitant stimulation of haemopoiesis in such cultures. The enhanced haemopoiesis occurs not only after cultures are treated with \(p\)-nitrophenyl-\(\beta\)-d-xyloside but with other xylosides (e.g., methylumbelliferyl-\(\beta\)-d-xyloside) as well (E. Spooncer, unpublished observation).

Haemopoiesis is stimulated in a dose-dependent manner and is reflected by equivalent increases in the number of pluripotential stem cells (CFU-S), granulocyte progenitor cells (GM-CFC) and their mature progeny, i.e., the balance between self-renewal, differentiation and maturation is unaffected by xylosides. This increase in haemopoiesis is mainly associated with the suspension phase of long-term cultures; little, if any, change occurs in haemopoiesis associated with the adherent cell layer. Since the suspension CFU-S are derived from CFU-S in the adherent layer (9), these observations can be accommodated by the proposition that the CFU-S population increases, yet the proportion of CFU-S which are diverted to differentiate and the degree of amplification to mature cells remain constant. Thus, continuous supplement of xyloside does not lead to a progressive stimulation but sustains a stimulatory effect at a constant plateau, the level of which is established in the first few weeks of culture. These data suggest the attractive hypothesis that xylose treatment modifies cell:cell and cell:matrix interactions in the adherent layer (the stromal cell environment) in some way that renders it able to support higher levels of haemopoiesis than untreated adherent layers. The mechanism involved is unclear. Xylosides only altered sulfated glycosaminoglycans in the medium, not the cell-associated material. However, if these complex polysaccharides in some way regulate haemopoietic activity within the marrow stroma, then a high concentration of chondroitin sulfate in the overlying medium of bone marrow culture could modulate such control processes leading to a stimulation of CFU-S proliferation and to the establishment of a new, and more active, steady-state of haemopoiesis. Presumably, the primary effect is to modify the proliferative activity of the CFU-S. Indeed, this was found to be the case. Our data clearly show that in xyloside-treated cultures a higher proportion of the CFU-S were detected in the S phase of the cell cycle and that the duration for which a significant proportion of the CFU-S were in the DNA S phase was prolonged. Experiments are in progress to test whether this is mediated by the over-production of the factor which is known to stimulate DNA synthesis in CFU-S (32) and which can be produced by the adherent cells in long-term marrow cultures (12, 27). However, previous work has shown that addition of excess CFU-S stimulatory material to long-term cultures did not lead to an increase in the number of CFU-S, although CFU-S proliferation was stimulated (12). Presumably, the "extra" CFU-S generated either died or were recruited into differentiation. Therefore, in addition to prolonging the proliferation of CFU-S, the xylosides also enable the cultures to support both the maintenance of CFU-S and their differentiation and proliferation.

It is also of interest that the duration of haemopoiesis in \(\beta\)-d-xyloside-treated cultures is more prolonged than the corresponding control cultures. To discount the possibility that the increase in numbers of CFU-S merely reflects an increase in the spleen seeding efficiency of pluripotent cells (31), we have also measured the seeding efficiency of CFU-S from control and xyloside-supplemented cultures. No significant differences were found (data not shown).

In conclusion, although this work indicates an association between stimulation of GAG synthesis with \(\beta\)-d-xylosides and increased capacity of long-term cultures to maintain haemopoiesis, the mechanism involved remains to be determined.
poiesis, no "cause and effect" relationship has been formally established. It could be, for example, that the xylosides are having a role other than the stimulation of GAG synthesis. However, the results presented here demonstrate that haemopoiesis is enhanced in xyloside-treated long-term cultures and that this could have important clinical implications (maybe useful for facilitating haemopoietic recovery after chemotherapy or treatment of haemopoietic aplasias?) as well as leading to further experiments at the mechanistic level. In this context we plan to isolate and purify the GAGs from xyloside-treated cultures and determine the effect directly on haemopoietic cell development.

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