In vitro and in vivo application of anti-cotinine antibody and cotinine-conjugated compounds

Hyori Kim1,2, Soomin Yoon1 & Junho Chung1,2,*

1Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul 110-799
2Cancer Research Institute, Seoul National University, Seoul 110-799, Korea

The combination of a high-affinity antibody to a hapten, and hapten-conjugated compounds, can provide an alternative to the direct chemical cross-linking of the antibody and compounds. An optimal hapten for in vitro use is one that is absent in biological systems. For in vivo applications, additional characteristics such as pharmacological safety and physiological inertness would be beneficial. Additionally, methods for cross-linking the hapten to various chemical compounds should be available. Cotinine, a major metabolite of nicotine, is considered advantageous in these aspects. A high-affinity anti-cotinine recombinant antibody has recently become available. Cotinine-conjugated compounds. An optimal hapten for

Keywords: Affinity unit, Antibody, Cotinine, Hapten
nology, it is now possible to generate an antibody with a koff constant in the range of $1 \times 10^{-5}$ to $1 \times 10^{-6}$ s$^{-1}$. With these values for the koff constant, the half-life of the antibody-antigen complex varies from 19 h to more than a week (Table 1) (14). Considering that the half-life of the thioester bond linking the antibody and the drug in T-DM1 is around 3.5 days (15), an anti-hapten antibody with this optimal koff constant and a hapten conjugate can facilitate the linkage of the antibody to the chemical compounds for a sufficiently long period (16).

**COTININE AS AN IDEAL HAPten TO LINK THE ANTIBODY AND CHEMICAL MOIETY**

The combination of a high-affinity antibody to a hapten, and hapten-conjugated compounds, can provide an alternative to the direct chemical cross-linking of the antibody and the compounds. An optimal hapten for in vitro use should be absent from biological systems. Additional characteristics such as pharmacological safety and physiological inertness would be beneficial for in vivo use. Additionally, versatile cross-linking to various chemical compounds is favored. Classically, histamine-succinyl-glycine (HSG), diethylenetriamine pentaacetic acid (DTPA), and 1,4,7,10-tetraazacyclododecane-1,4,7,10-tetraacetic acid (DOTA) have been used as haptens in vivo (17-19).

Recently, we introduced cotinine as an ideal hapten. It is a small chemical with a molecular weight of 176.22, and is a major metabolite of nicotine (Fig. 1A). Commonly used as a biomarker for smoking exposure, cotinine is absent in human or animal tissues (20). Cotinine is highly non-toxic, with an LD$_{50}$ of 4 ± 0.1 g/kg in mice (21). No deleterious side effects were induced in humans treated with daily doses of cotinine up to 1,800 mg for 4 consecutive days. Recently, mild beneficial psychopharmacological effects of cotinine have been reported and the potential therapeutic use of cotinine in Alzheimer’s disease or post-traumatic stress disorder is under discussion (22). Carboxycotinine (trans-4-cotininecarboxylic acid, Fig. 1B) is commercially available at a reasonable cost; this carboxyl group can be conveniently employed for chemical cross-linking. While some immunogenicity is reported for DTPA and DOTA (23-26), no immune response to cotinine has been reported.

A high-affinity anti-cotinine antibody was originally generated by our group to develop a super-sensitive enzyme immunoassay for the detection of second-hand smoking exposure (27). The antibody has k$_{on}$, k$_{off}$, and k$_D$ values of $2.6 \times 10^{6}$ M$^{-1}$ · s$^{-1}$, $1.3 \times 10^{-5}$ s$^{-1}$ and $4.9 \times 10^{-12}$ M, respectively (28). This antibody binds specifically to cotinine and does not cross-react with chemicals with similar structures, such as nicotine, anabasine, caffeine, or cholesterol. Using this antibody, an enzyme immunoassay was developed which can determine cotinine concentrations in the range of 1 ng/ml to 1 μg/ml, comparable to the serum concentrations seen in passive smokers. Furthermore, cotinine levels measured in human volunteers using this antibody exactly corresponded with
In vitro and in vivo application of anti-cotinine antibody and cotinine-conjugated compounds
Hyori Kim, et al.

smoking behavior and showed better correlation than those obtained using liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC/MS) in a split assay. This antibody was confirmed to retain its reactivity even when expressed in various formats other than as a conventional IgG molecule (Fig. 2) (29, 30).

IN VITRO USE OF COTININE/ANTI-COTININE ANTIBODY COMPLEX

The cotinine/anti-cotinine antibody complex provides an effective platform for immunodetection (Fig. 3A) and immunopurification (Fig. 3B) (30). Immunoblot analysis using serum, anti-human complement C5- and cotinine-bispecific tandem scFv-Fc antibody, and cotinine-conjugated horseradish peroxidase (HRP) showed a clear signal without the significant background observed in a parallel experiment using a classical secondary antibody, which reacts with the Fc region of immunoglobulins. Cotinine-conjugated magnetic beads complexed with the bispecific antibody specifically immunoprecipitated complement C5 from serum, whereas conventional immunoprecipitation using protein A beads resulted in the co-precipitation of human immunoglobulin. The bispecific antibody and cotinine-conjugated HRP were successfully employed in an enzyme immunoassay. All these optimal results are possible because cotinine is absent in the biological system and does not react significantly to any biological molecules, which is advantageous over the commonly used biotin-streptavidin system.

COTININE-CONJUGATED APTAMER AND THE ANTI-COTININE ANTIBODY COMPLEX AS A NOVEL AFFINITY UNIT

Over the last decade, aptamers specific to various target mole-
cules have been developed. For use in biological experiments, aptamers have been conjugated to chemical compounds such as enzymes, biotin, or digoxin. For in vivo use, aptamers have to be cross-linked to polyethylene glycol in order to extend their short half-lives (31). It was also reported that a vascular endothelial growth factor-neutralizing aptamer conjugated to a chemically programmable antibody retained both its reactivity and functionality (32). This observation raised the possibility that complexing with an antibody could extend the in vivo half-life of the aptamer. Recently, a cotinine-conjugated aptamer/anti-cotinine antibody complex has been successfully applied to various biological assays such as flow cytometry, immunoblot, immunoprecipitation, and enzyme immunoassay, using AS1411 and pegaptanib as examples (33) (Fig. 3C). Our group is actively testing whether the anti-cotinine antibody could extend the in vivo half-life of aptamers and potentiate their efficacy.

COTININE-CONJUGATED PEPTIDE/ANTI-COTININE ANTIBODY COMPLEX FOR PRE-TARGETED RADIOIMMUNOIMAGING

Pre-targeted radioimmunotherapy (PRIT) technology was developed to reduce the non-specific irradiation of normal tissues and organs originating from the non-specific accumulation of a radiolabeled antibody (34). For PRIT, a bispecific antibody reactive to both the target molecule and a hapten is first injected into the individual. Subsequently, after the antibody has been cleared out of the normal tissue and optimal accumulation in tumor tissue has been achieved, the radiolabeled hapten is injected. The unbound radiolabeled hapten is rapidly cleared from the systemic circulation. HSG, DTPA, and DOTA have been used as haptons for PRIT (35-37). Recently, the cotinine/anti-cotinine antibody complex was ap-

---

**Fig. 3.** Applications of anti-cotinine antibody. Bispecific antibody was used for immunodetection (A) and immunoprecipitation (B). Anti-cotinine antibody detected a cotinine-conjugated aptamer, which bound a cell-surface antigen (C). The complex of bispecific antibody and cotinine-conjugated radioligand was localized to a tumor (D). Parts of this figure have been copied and modified with permission (30).
plied to pre-targeted radioimmunoimaging (Fig. 3D) (29). In this study, a complex of cotinine dipeptide labeled with $^{131}$I and anti-iHER2- and cotinine-bispecific tandem scFv-Fc antibody, was successfully directed to HER2-positive breast cancer in a mouse xenograft model, as seen in single photon emission computed tomography images. The radiosignal was specifically enhanced at the tumor site when $^{131}$I-labeled cotinine dipeptide was re-injected with a time-delay. Our group is testing various forms of bispecific antibodies to determine the most efficient one for the specific delivery of radiolabeled hapten. Furthermore, the optimal peptide sequence for labeling is under active investigation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) grant funded by the Korean government (MSIP) (2011-0030119). This research was supported by the Basic Science Research Program through the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF), funded by the Ministry of Education (2009-0093820).

REFERENCES

1. Ghesani, M., Belgraier, A. and Hasni, S. (2003) Carci

noembryonic antigen (CEA) scan in the diagnosis of re-
current colorectal carcinoma in a patient with increasing
CEA levels and inconclusive computed tomographic
findings. Clin. Nucl. Med. 28, 608-609.

2. Capizzi, R. L. (2004) Targeted radio-immunotherapy with
Bexxar produces durable remissions in patients with late
stage low grade non-Hodgkin's lymphomas. Trans. Am.
Clin. Climatol. Assoc. 115, 255-272.

3. Jain, N., Wierda, W., Ferrajoli, A., Wong, F., Lerner, S.,
Keating, M. and O'Brien, S. (2009) A phase 2 study of yt-
trium-90 ibritumomab tiuxetan (Zevalin) in patients with
chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Cancer 115, 4533-4539.

4. Krop, I. E., Beeram, M., Modi, S., Jones, S. F., Holden, S.
N., Yu, W., Girish, S., Tabbitts, J., Yi, J. H., Slwikowski, M.
X., Jacobson, F., Lutzker, S. G. and Burreis, H. A. (2010)
Phase I study of trastuzumab-DM1, an HER2 antibo-
dy-drug conjugate, given every 3 weeks to patients with
HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer. J. Clin. Oncol.
28, 2698-2704.

5. Lewis Phillips, G. D., Li, G., Dugger, D. L., Crocker, L.
M., Parsons, K. L., Mai, E., Blattler, W. A., Lambert, J. M.,
Chari, R. V., Lutz, R. J., Wong, W. L., Jacobson, F. S.,
Koeppen, H., Schwall, R. H., Kenkare-Mitra, S. R.,
Spencer, S. D. and Slwikowski, M. X. (2008) Targeting
HER2-positive breast cancer with trastuzumab-DM1, an
antibody-cytotoxic drug conjugate. Cancer Res. 68,
9280-9290.

6. Deng, C., Pan, B. and O’Connor, O. A. (2013) Brentuxi-
mab vedotin. Clin. Cancer Res. 19, 22-27.

7. Wakankar, A. A., Feeney, M. B., Rivera, J., Chen, Y., Kim,
M., Sharma, V. K. and Wang, Y. J. (2010) Physicochemical
stability of the antibody-drug conjugate Trastuzumab-
DM1: changes due to modification and conjugation
processes. Bioconjug. Chem. 21, 1588-1595.

8. Junutula, J. R., Raab, H., Clark, S., Bhakta, S., Leipold, D.
De, Weir, S., Chen, Y., Simpson, M., Tsai, S. P., Dennis,
M. S., Lu, Y., Meng, Y. G., Ng, C., Yang, J., Lee, C. C.,
Duenas, E., Coral, J., Katta, V., Kim, A., McDorman, K.,
Flagella, K., Vennok, R., Ross, S., Spencer, S. D., Lee
Wong, W., Lowman, H. B., Vandlen, R., Slwikowski, M.
X., Scheller, R. H., Polakis, P. and Mallett, W. (2008)
Site-specific conjugation of a cytotoxic drug to an anti-
bodies improves the therapeutic index. Nat. Biotechnol.
26, 925-932.

9. Axup, J. Y., Bajuri, K. M., Ritland, M., Hutchins, B. M.,
Kim, C. Y., Kazane, S. A., Halder, R., Forsyth, J. S.,
Sandtian, A. F., Stat, S., Lu, Y. C., Tran, H., Seller, A.
J., Biroce, S. L., Szydlak A., Pinkstaff, J. K., Tian, F., Sinha,
S. C., Felding-Haberman, B., Smider, V. P. and Schultz,
J. P. (2012) Synthesis of site-specific antibody-drug con-
jugates using unnatural amino acids. P. Natl. Acad. Sci.
U. S. A. 109, 16101-16106.

10. Dirksen, A., Hackeng, T. M. and Dawson, P. E. (2006)
Nucleophilic catalysis of oxime ligation. Angew. Chem.
Int. Ed. 45, 7581-7584.

11. Li, X., Yang, J. and Radier, C. (2013) Antibody conjugation
via one and two C-terminal selenocysteines. Methods 65,
133-138.

12. Rabuka, D., Rush, J. S., deHart, G. W., Wu, P. and
BertoZZi, C. R. (2012) Site-specific chemical protein con-
jugation using genetically encoded aldehyde tags. Nat.
Protoc. 7, 1052-1067.

13. Popkov, M., Gonzalez, B., Sinha, S. C. and Barbas, C. F.
(2009) Instant immunity through chemically program-
mable vaccination and covalent self-assembly. P. Natl.
Acad. Sci. U. S. A. 106, 4378-4383.

14. Jakubowski, H. (2002) Understanding biochemical dis-
sociation constants: A temporal perspective. J. Chem.
Educ. 79, 968-971.

15. Krop, I. E., Beeram, M., Modi, S., Jones, S. F., Holden, S.
N., Yu, W., Girish, S., Tabbitts, J., Yi, J. H., Slwikowski, M.
X., Jacobson, F., Lutzker, S. G. and Burreis, H. A. (2010)
Phase I study of Trastuzumab-DM1, an HER2 antibo-
dy-drug conjugate, given every 3 weeks to patients with
HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer. J. Clin. Oncol.
28, 2698-2704.

16. Kontermann, R. E. (2012) Dual targeting strategies with
bispecific antibodies. mAbs. 4, 182-197.

17. Rossi, E. A., Goldenberg, D. M., Cardillo, T. M., McBride,
W. J., Sharkey, R. M. and Chang, C. H. (2006) Stably tether-
ered multifunctional structures of defined composition
made by the dock and lock method for use in cancer
targeting. P. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A. 103, 6841-6846.

18. Goldenberg, D. M., Rossi, E. A., Sharkey, R. M., McBride,
W. J. and Chang, C. H. (2008) Multifunctional antibodies
by the dock-and-lock method for improved cancer
Imaging and therapy by pretargeting. J. Nucl. Med. 49,
158-163.

19. Chang, C. H., Rossi, E. A. and Goldenberg, D. M. (2007)
The dock and lock method: A novel platform technology
for building multivalent, multifunctional structures of de-
fined composition with retained bioactivity. Clin. Cancer
In vitro and in vivo application of anti-cotinine antibody and cotinine-conjugated compounds
Hyori Kim, et al.

BMB Reports
http://bmbreports.org
Res. 13, 5586-5591.

20. Kim, I. and Huestis, M. A. (2006) A validated method for the determination of nicotine, cotinine, trans-3'-hydroxy-ycotinine, and norcotinine in human plasma using solid-phase extraction and liquid chromatography-atmospheric pressure chemical ionization-mass spectrometry. J. Mass Spectrom. 41, 815-821.

21. Riah, O., Dousset, J. C., Courriere, P., Stigliani, J. L., Baziard-Mouysset, G. and Belahsen, Y. (1999) Evidence that nicotine acetylcholine receptors are not the main targets of cotinine toxicity. Toxicol. Lett. 109, 21-29.

22. Moran, V. E. (2012) Cotinine : Beyond the expected, more than a biomarker of tobacco consumption. Front. Pharmacol. 3, 1-9.

23. Watanabe, N., Goodwin, D. A., Meares, C. F., Mctigue, M., Chaoapong, W., Ransone, C. M. and Renn, O. (1994) Immunogenicity in Rabbits and Mice of an Antibody-Chelate Conjugate - Comparison of (S) and (R) Macrocyclic Enantiomers and an Acyclic Chelating Agent. Cancer Res. 54, 1049-1054.

24. Kosmas, C., Maraveyas, A., Gooden, C. S., Snook, D. and Epenetos, A. A. (1995) Anti-Chelate antibodies after intraperitoneal yttrium-90-labeled monoclonal-antibody immunoconjugates for ovarian-cancer therapy. J. Nucl. Med. 36, 746-753.

25. Kosmas, C., Snook, D., Gooden, C. S., Courtenayluck, N. S., Mccall, M. J., Meares, C. F. and Epenetos, A. A. (1992) Development of humoral immune-responses against a macrocyclic chelating agent (Dota) in cancer-patients receiving radioimmunoconjugates for imaging and therapy. Cancer Res. 52, 904-911.

26. Baxter, A. B., Melnikoff, S., Stites, D. P. and Brach, R. C. (1991) Immunogenicity of gadolinium-based contrast agents for magnetic-resonance-imaging - induction and characterization of antibodies in animals. Invest. Radiol. 26, 1035-1040.

27. Park, S., Lee, D. H., Park, J. G., Lee, Y. T. and Chung, J. (2010) A sensitive enzyme immunoassay for measuring cotinine in passive smokers. Clin. Chim. Acta. 411, 1238-1242.

28. Park, S. (2012) Development of anti-cotinine antibody and its application to EIA and carrier for cotinine-conjugated molecule. Ph.D thesis, Seoul National University.

29. Yoon, S., Kim, Y.-H., Kang, S. H., Kim, S.-K., Lee, H. K., Kim, H., Chung, J. and Kim, I.-H. (2013) Bispecific Her2 × cotinine antibody in combination with cotinine-(his-tidime)2-Iodine for the pre-targeting of Her2-positive breast cancer xenografts. J. Cancer Res. Clin. 140, 227-233.

30. Kim, H., Park, S., Lee, H. K. and Chung, J. (2013) Application of bispecific antibody against antigen and hapten for immunodetection and immunopurification. Exp. Mol. Med. 45, 643.

31. Apte, R. S. (2008) Pegaptanib sodium for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration. Expert. Opin. Pharmac. 9, 499-508.

32. Wueellner, U., Gavrilyuk, J. I. and Barbas, C. F. (2010) Expanding the Concept of Chemically Programmable Antibodies to RNA Aptamers: Chemically Programmed Biotherapeutics. Angew. Chem. Int. Edit. 49, 5934-5937.

33. Park, S., Hwang, D. and Chung, J. (2012) Cotinine-conjugated aptamer/anti-cotinine antibody complexes as a novel affinity unit for use in biological assays. Exp. Mol. Med. 44, 554-561.

34. Sharkey, R. M., Chang, C. H., Rossi, E. A., McBride, W. J. and Goldenberg, D. M. (2012) Pretargeting: taking an alternate route for localizing radionuclides. Tumor Biol. 33, 591-600.

35. Sharkey, R. M., Rossi, E. A., McBride, W. J., Chang, C. H. and Goldenberg, D. M. (2010) Recombinant bispecific monoclonal antibodies prepared by the dock-and-lock strategy for pretargeted radioimmunotherapy. Semin. Nucl. Med. 40, 190-203.

36. Sharkey, R. M., Karacay, H., Chang, C. H., McBride, W. J., Horak, I. D. and Goldenberg, D. M. (2005) Improved therapy of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma xenografts using radionuclides pretargeted with a new anti-CD20 bispecific antibody. Leukemia 19, 1064-1069.

37. Karacay, H., Brad, P. Y., Sharkey, R. M., Chang, C. H., Rossi, E. A., McBride, W. J., Horak, I. D. and Goldenberg, D. M. (2005) Therapeutic advantage of pretargeted radioimmunotherapy using a recombinant bispecific antibody in a human colon cancer xenograft. Clin. Cancer Res. 11, 7879-7885.