Different Polypeptides Form the Intermediate Filaments in Bovine Hoof and Esophageal Epithelium and in Aortic Endothelium

LEONARD M. MILSTONE and JOSEPH MCGUIRE
Department of Dermatology, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Connecticut 06510

ABSTRACT Polypeptides that form 10-nm filaments in vitro were isolated from three different bovine tissues: the viable portion of the hoof epithelium, the epithelium of the esophagus, and cultured endothelial cells derived from aorta. The seven polypeptides from hoof, the two from esophagus, and the one from endothelial cells were different with respect to mobility in SDS polyacrylamide gels and/or limited proteolytic digestion. Peptide maps of the different filament-forming polypeptides (FFP's) showed that none of the smaller FFP's was a fragment of any of the larger FFP's. Several isomobile fragments were found in the peptide maps of different FFP's, suggesting that they might contain regions of amino acid sequence homology. We present a hypothesis that suggests how the different 10-nm filament-forming proteins may be related.
Endothelial cells were obtained from aorta, as described by Gospodarowicz et al. (13), by gently stroking the endothelial surface with a cotton swab and then rinsing the swab with culture medium consisting of Dulbecco's Minimal Essential Medium (Grand Island Biological Company, Grand Island, N. Y.) with 10% fetal calf serum (Flow Laboratories, Inc., Rockville, Md.), penicillin (100 U/ml), and streptomycin (100 µg/ml). Cells having the morphology of endothelial cells in culture were grown at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere of 5% CO2-95% air. Intact nuclear cap filaments were harvested from 10⁷ spreading cells by the method of Starger et al. (23) and solubilized in 0.01 M Tris, pH 7.4.

All buffers contained 0.1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride. Stock solutions of 10 M urea were deionized before use by passage over a mixed ion exchange resin (Crystalab, Inc., Hartford, Conn.).

### SDS Polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis

Discontinuous SDS polyacrylamide slab gel electrophoresis was performed on 14 x 14 x 0.13-cm slabs as described by Laemmli (17) with the following modifications: the acrylamide:bisacrylamide ratio in the 12.5% separating gel was 120:1, the acrylamide:bisacrylamide ratio in the 5% stacking gel was 30:0.8. Electrophoresis was performed at room temperature for 6 h at 100 V. Before application to the gels, samples were boiled for 3 min in 0.08 M Tris, pH 6.8, containing 2% SDS, 1% β-mercaptoethanol, and 10% glycerol. Gels were stained with 0.2% Coomassie Blue R-250 in 10% acetic acid-50% methanol and destained with extracts containing 100-300 µg of protein. After electrophoresis, gels were stained for 15 min with Coomassie Blue, and strips of gel containing a single polypeptide band were carefully cut from the slab and inserted into tubes fitted with a dialysis bag at one end. Protein was electrophoretically eluted overnight at 2.5 mA/tube and then precipitated with 20% trichloroacetic acid at 4°C and washed with ether.

### Isolation of Individual Polypeptides

Single-well, SDS polyacrylamide slab gels, prepared as above, were loaded with extracts containing 100-300 µg of protein. After electrophoresis, gels were stained with 0.2% Coomassie Blue. Gels were run for 9 h at 100 V.

### Protein Quantitation and Negative Staining and Electron Microscopy of Filaments

Protein was assayed by the method of Bramhall (3) with bovine serum albumin (Miles Laboratories, Inc., Elkhart, Ind.) as standard. Suspensions of filaments were spread on carbon-coated mica chips, transferred to carbon-coated holey grids, and stained with 1% uranyl acetate. Specimens were examined with a Siemens 101 electron microscope at 80 keV.

### RESULTS

#### Polypeptide Identification

The major polypeptides that form intermediate filaments in three calf tissues are shown in Fig. 1. Seven polypeptides in the urea extract of hoof have molecular weights ranging from 49,000 to 65,000 and together comprise 60% of total extractable hoof protein. We have designated these polypeptides, from higher to lower molecular weight, K₁a, K₁b, K₂, K₃, K₄, K₅, and K₆, in keeping with Steinert and Idler's nomenclature (24). They separated six hoof FFP's by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis and called them keratins K₁-K₆; they found that K₁ had two components (K₁a and K₁b) which were separable by ion exchange chromatography. Our polyacrylamide gel system separates all seven hoof FFP's. The two polypeptides in the urea extract of esophageal epithelium have molecular weights of 56,000 and 46,000, designated E₁ and E₂, respectively, and together comprise 35% of total extractable protein in esophageal epithelium (20). The major polypeptide in intact, nuclear cap filaments obtained from cultivated endothelial cells has a molecular weight of 56,000 and is ~1% of total extractable protein in these cells. The endothelial cell nuclear cap filaments can be dissolved in 10 mM Tris, pH 7.4.

#### Filament Formation

Filaments measuring 6–10 nm in diameter are formed under appropriate conditions in each of the polypeptide solutions described above. Supernate fractions from high-speed centrifugation (200,000 g for 1 h) of solubilized endothelial filaments and of urea extracts from hoof or esophagus contain no filaments. Filaments form in these supernate fractions when urea is removed from the hoof or esophagus extracts by dialysis (Fig. 2) or when the concentration of KCl in the endothelial extract is raised >0.2 M. Filaments formed in vitro are sedimented by high-speed centrifugation, and the pellets contain the same polypeptides in the same relative amounts as in the original extracts. 80–90% of the protein in the original high-speed supernate is recovered in the pellet of hoof or esophageal filaments; 40–50% of the original protein is recovered in the pellet of reassembled endothelial filaments. Evidence presented elsewhere (20, 25) shows that each of the hoof and esophageal polypeptides mentioned above has the capacity to participate in filament formation.

#### Peptide Mapping of FFP’s

Individual FFP's were isolated by preparative SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis and then digested with either...
FIGURE 2 Filaments isolated (a) as intact nuclear cap filaments from cultivated aortic endothelial cells or (b) from a urea-β-ME extract of hoof epithelium. The urea extract (0.5 mg/ml) was dialyzed against 1,000 vol of 0.01 M Tris, pH 7.4, with 0.025 M-β ME for 24 h at 20° C. Suspended filaments were spread on a holey grid and stained with uranyl acetate. x 108,000.

chymotrypsin or S. aureus V8 protease. Fragments produced by proteolytic cleavage of the 56,000-dalton polypeptide from endothelial cells, the 56,000-dalton polypeptide from esophageal epithelium, and the 57,000-dalton polypeptide from hoof were separated on SDS polyacrylamide slab gels to determine whether these FFP's were identical (Fig. 3). These three polypeptides yielded distinct cleavage patterns with S. aureus protease (Fig. 3) or chymotrypsin (not shown) and, thus, are not identical.

To determine whether the lower molecular weight filament-forming polypeptides in esophagus and hoof were related to the higher molecular weight filament-forming polypeptides in these tissues, we compared the cleavage patterns produced by limited proteolytic digestion of both of the esophageal proteins and five of the hoof keratins. Digestion of the lower molecular weight esophageal polypeptide with S. aureus protease (Fig. 4) or chymotrypsin (not shown) produces many fragments which do not have counterparts of identical molecular weight in the digests of the higher molecular weight esophageal polypeptide. Likewise, digestion of each hoof polypeptide with either S. aureus protease (Fig. 5) or chymotrypsin (not shown) produces many fragments which do not have counterparts of identical molecular weight in the digests of any of the other hoof polypeptides. It appears, therefore, that each of these hoof and esophageal polypeptides is distinct, and it is unlikely that any one is derived from any of the others. As indicated by the marks in the margins on Fig. 3 and Fig. 5, there are some similarities in the cleavage patterns of many of these polypeptides. The possible significance of these similarities is discussed below.

DISCUSSION

We have isolated filament-forming polypeptides from three bovine tissues: hoof, esophagus, and aorta. Cells in the stratified squamous epithelium of calf hoof are of ectodermal origin and contain abundant intracellular tonofilaments. Seven FFP's have been identified in calf hoof (24); each can participate in the in vitro assembly of intermediate filaments (25). Cells in the stratified squamous epithelium of calf esophagus are of endodermal origin and contain skeins of intracellular tonofilaments. Two FFP's have been identified in esophageal epithelium; like the hoof FFP's, both of the esophageal FFP's participate in the in vitro assembly of intermediate filaments (20). Aortic endothelial cells are of mesodermal origin, are easily cultivated (13), and have a prominent, perinuclear accumulation of intermediate filaments (2). With the method of Starger et al. (23), we isolated intact intermediate filaments from cultivated endothelial cells and identified a single FFP in these filaments.

We used one-dimensional peptide mapping to compare frag-
A precursor-product relationship existed if all the fragments of which could represent regions of sequence homology. Others, but that there are isomobile fragments in the digests distinct, that no one is a precursor or product of any of the other. There are several shared fragments of identical mobility that distinguish three 56,000-57,000-dalton FFP's from each other. There are shared fragments of identical mobility that, therefore, might miss smaller similarities.

With these criteria and limitations in mind, the one-dimensional peptide maps in Fig. 3 reveal unique digestion products that distinguish three 56,000-57,000-dalton FFP's from each other. There are several shared fragments of identical mobility that could represent large segments of sequence homology. The same is true for comparative maps of the hoof FFP's (Fig. 5) and the esophageal FFP's (Fig. 4) which show that each is same is true for comparative maps of the hoof FFP's (Fig. 5) and the esophageal FFP's (Fig. 4) which show that each is.

In the absence of any comparative sequence data, we propose a hypothesis which is capable of accommodating the available data and which could be helpful in directing future comparisons of different FFP's and the filaments which they form.

We hypothesize that different FFP's are organized in a manner analogous to immunoglobulin molecules, in that they have "constant" regions of amino acid sequence homology and "variable" regions of differing amino acid sequence. The constant region(s) of different FFP's would determine the properties that are shared by the filaments they form. The variable regions would determine differences in the properties of the filaments they form. One property shared by all intermediate filaments so far examined is their x-ray diffraction pattern. The hypothesis predicts that the constant region(s) would be in the α-helical portions of the molecule, because that is the region responsible for the diffraction pattern. The remaining nonhelical portions of these molecules would have variable sequences.

**FIGURE 4** 15% acrylamide SDS gel comparing proteolytic digests of esophageal polypeptides. a, Purified E1 (10 μg); b, SAP (5 μg) incubated alone; c, E1 with SAP (2 μg); d, E1 with SAP (4 μg); e, E2 with SAP (1 μg); f, E2 with SAP (5 μg); g, molecular weight markers as in Fig. 1 plus lysozyme (14,000); h, purified E2 (10 μg).

**FIGURE 5** 15% acrylamide SDS gel comparing proteolytic digests of hoof polypeptides. a, K1a with SAP (1 μg); b, K1a with SAP (5 μg); c, K1b with SAP (1 μg); d, K1b with SAP (5 μg); e, K2 with SAP (1 μg); f, K2 with SAP (5 μg); g, SAP (5 μg) incubated alone; h, K3 with SAP (5 μg); i, K3 with SAP (1 μg); j, K3 with SAP (5 μg).
that would make the filaments they form distinguishable with regard to solubility, immunochemical reactivity, and possibly function.

We thank Barbara Burnham for typing the manuscript.

This research was supported by National Institutes of Health grant KO8-AM 00389 (L.M.M.), U. S. Public Health Service grant AM 13092 (J.M.), National Institute of Aging grant AG 01012 (J.M.), and by the Anna Fuller Fund (L.M.M.).

This work was presented to the American Society for Cell Biology and has appeared in abstract form in the *J. Cell Biol.*, 1978, 79(2, Pt. 2): 30a (Abstr.).

Received for publication 7 March 1980, and in revised form 6 October 1980.

REFERENCES

1. Bennett, G. S., S. A. Fellini, J. M. Croop, J. J. Otto, and H. Hotzer. 1978. Differences among 100-Å filament subunits from different cell types. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 75:4364-4368.
2. Blose, S. H., and S. Chacko. 1976. Rings of intermediate (100 Å) filament bundles in the perinuclear region of vascular endothelial cells. *J. Cell Biol.* 70:459-466.
3. Bramhall, S., N. Noack, M. Wit, and J. R. Loewenberg. 1969. A simple colorimetric method for determination of protein. *Anal. Biochem.* 31:146-148.
4. Cleveland, D. W., S. G. Fischer, M. W. Kirschner, and U. K. Laemmli. 1977. Peptide mapping by limited proteolysis in sodium dodecyl sulfate and analysis by gelelectrophoresis. *J. Biol. Chem.* 252:1102-1106.
5. Cooke, P. 1976. A filamentous cytoskeleton in vertebrate smooth muscle fibers. *J. Cell Biol.* 68:539-566.
6. Crick, F. H. C. 1952. Is α-keratin a coiled coil? *Nature (Lond.)* 170:882-883.
7. Davison, P. F., B.-S. Hong, and P. Cooke. 1977. Classes of distinguishable 10nm cytoplasmic filaments. *Exp. Cell Res.* 109:471-474.
8. Day, W. A., and D. S. Gilbert. 1972. X-ray diffraction of axoplasm. *Biochem. Biophys. Acta* 285:503-506.
9. Franke, W. W., E. Schmid, M. Osborn, and K. Weber. 1977. Different intermediate-sized filaments distinguished by immunofluorescence microscopy. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 75:5034-5038.
10. Franke, W. W., B. Apollans, E. Schmid, C. Freudenstein, M. Osborn, and K. Weber. 1979. Identification and characterization of epithelial cells in mammalian tissues by immunofluorescence microscopy using antibodies to prekeratin. *Differentiation* 15:7-25.
11. Funka, E., and H. Green. 1978. The expression of keratin genes in epidermis and cultured epidermal cells. *Cell* 15:887-898.
12. Girard, D. L., P. B. Bell, and E. Lazarides. 1979. Persistence of desmin and the fibroblastic intermediate filament subunit in muscle and nonmuscle cells. Identification and comparative peptide analysis. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 76:3894-3898.
13. Gospodarowicz, D. J., Moran, D. Braun, and C. Birdwell. 1976. Clinical growth of bovine vascular endothelial cells: fibroblast growth factor as a survival agent. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 73:4120-4124.
14. Huang, L.-Y., I. B. Stern, J. A. Clagett, and E. Y. Chu. 1975. Two polypeptide chain constituents of the major protein of the cornified layer of newborn rat epidermis. *Biochemistry.* 14:3573-3580.
15. Hunez, F. C., and P. F. Davison. 1970. Filibrillar proteins from squid axons. *J. Mol. Biol.* 42:415-428.
16. Kemp, D. J., and G. E. Rogers. 1972. Differentiation of avian keratinocytes. Characterization and relationships of the keratin proteins of adult and embryonic feathers and scales. *Biochemistry.* 11:969-975.
17. Laemmli, U. K. 1970. Cleavage of structural proteins during the assembly of the head of bacteriophage T4. *Nature (Lond.)* 227:680-685.
18. Lee, L. D., J. Kikutlo, and H. P. Baden. 1979. Intraspecies heterogeneity of epidermal keratins isolated from bovine hoof and stout. *Biochem.* 7:187-196.
19. McGuire, J., and L. M. Milstone. 1979. A comparison of the abundance of keratin peptides in different levels of calf hoof epithelium. *J. Invest. Dermatol.* 72:198a.
20. Milstone, L. M. 1981. Isolation and characterization of two polypeptides that form intermediate filaments in bovine esophageal epithelium. *J. Cell Biol.* 88:317-322.
21. Schlesper, W. W. 1977. Immunological and ultrastructural studies of neurofilaments isolated from rat peripheral nerve. *J. Cell Biol.* 74:226-240.
22. Small, J. V., and A. Schiestelz. 1977. Studies on the function and composition of the 100Å filaments of vertebrate smooth muscle. *J. Cell Biol.* 33:243-268.
23. Starker, J. M., W. E. Brown, A. E. Goldman, and R. D. Goldman. 1978. Biochemical and immunological analysis of rapidly purified 10-nm filaments from baby hamster kidney (BHK-21) cells. *J. Cell Biol.* 78:93-109.
24. Steiert, P. M., and W. D. Idler. 1975. The polypeptide composition of bovine epidermal α-keratin. *Biochem.* 151:603-614.
25. Steiert, P. M., W. D. Idler, and S. B. Zimmerman. 1976. Structure of the three-chain unit of the bovine epidermal keratin filament. *J. Mol. Biol.* 108:547-567.
26. Steiert, P. M., S. B. Zimmerman, J. M. Stanger, and R. D. Goldman. 1978. Ten nanometer filaments of hamster BHK-21 cells and epidermal keratin filaments have similar structures. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 75:6098-6101.
27. Sun, T.-T., C. Shih, and H. Green. 1979. Keratin cytoskeletons in epithelial cells of internal organs. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 76:2813-2817.