

MINIREVIEW

Soluble T Lymphocyte Antigen-Specific Molecules (43436)

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The immune response is characterized by the recognition of self versus nonself, specificity, inducibility, and memory. These hallmarks are manifested by the activity of lymphocytes, their differentiated progeny, and some of their soluble products. Specificity of the immune response is ultimately due to cell membrane receptors of T and B lymphocyte clones which bind specifically to antigen. This interaction results in a complex series of events leading to expansion and differentiation of the responding clones, and immunologic memory of the previous exposure to the antigenic stimulus. B lymphocytes extend their specific recognition of antigen by the production of soluble, antigen-specific immunoglobulins with combining sites identical (or very similar) to the heavy and light chain V regions of the B cell membrane immunoglobulin receptor (1) for antigen. In contrast to B lymphocytes, most antigen-specific T lymphocyte activity is mediated by cell membrane-associated receptors which recognize fragments of antigen processed by antigen-presenting cells and associated with class I or II major histocompatibility gene complex (MHC) products (2). The T cell receptor (TCR) for antigen is a heterodimeric molecule consisting of α - and β - or γ - and δ -chains linked by disulfide bonds (2-4), and the organization and sequence of T cell receptor genes demonstrate a significant similarity to immunoglobulin V region genes (3, 4). In addition, murine and human TCR β -chains and immunoglobulin light chains bear cross-reactive epitopes detected by antibodies to synthetic peptides cor-

responding to the TCR V β region (5). However, only low affinity binding of nominal antigen by T cell receptor α -chains has been demonstrated (6). This may be due to conformational changes in the molecule in an aqueous environment and the nature and amount of antigen used. In addition, the affinity of T cell receptors for nominal (non-MHC associated) or MHC-associated antigen may be too low to demonstrate specific binding by conventional methods.

While the "classical" T cell receptor is limited to cell membranes, many T cells secrete immunologically active molecules (lymphokines) after specific interaction with antigen/MHC. These secreted moieties act in a non-specific fashion, even though they are elicited specifically. However, some T cells produce soluble polypeptides that bind nominal antigen with higher affinity than MHC-restricted T cell membrane receptors for antigen (7-17). These molecules have been termed (9,14) antigen-binding molecules (TABM) because they bind nominal antigen with an affinity that permits detection and, in fact, are often purified by specific affinity for antigen (8). TABM occur in T cell membranes (7, 8, 10, 13, 18, 19) and as soluble molecules detected in the culture media of antigen-specific T cells and T cell hybrids (8), T cell hybrid ascites fluid (20, 21), and serum (11, 22-24). Soluble, antigen-specific T cell proteins have been a controversial issue for a number of years (7). However, there is presently substantial information from a number of laboratories demonstrating the structural, serological, and functional properties of these molecules. The structural and functional properties of TABM have been reviewed extensively (7, 8) and, therefore, this review will consider TABM in somewhat more general terms and within the context of the strategy of the immune system to deal with foreign and domestic invaders.

Historical

A description of soluble, antigen-specific T cell products resulted from studies designed to unravel the

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Table I. Functions of Extracellular (T Cell) Antigen-Specific Molecules

Antigen-specific immunoregulation
a) Suppression (10–12, 15, 16, 27)
b) Induction of suppressor cells (12–13, 16, 28, 32)
c) T cell help (46, 47)
Elicitation of hypersensitivity-like reaction (14, 29–31, 33)

Table II. Properties of Soluble Antigen-Specific T Cell Molecules

Reduced
<i>M</i> _r 22,000–31,000 monomer
<i>M</i> _r 50,000–65,000 multimer
<i>M</i> _r 110,000 multimer
Nonreduced
> <i>M</i> _r 250,000 α-globulin
Isoelectric point
a) clonal restricted
b) polyclonal—4.9–7.0
<5% Carbohydrate
Amino acid composition: 40–50% hydrophobic amino acids
Peptides: common, variable

mystery of the T cell receptor for antigen and the demonstration of a soluble, antigen-specific immunobiological activity elicited by T cells. Studies searching for the T cell receptor for antigen were predicated on the notion that such a receptor, soluble or membrane bound, would bind antigen. If an antigen-binding molecule derived from T cells was found, its characteristics would then be defined. This contrasts with the experimental logic used for the B cell receptor for antigen, since soluble, antigen-specific, B cell-derived molecules (immunoglobulins) were a staple of immunology (25). Thus, the B cell receptor had a known candidate. That the T cell receptor for antigen was related to immunoglobulins was a controversial viewpoint which has been resolved more recently with the advent of the description of the sequence and organization of genes for T cell receptors. More than 10 years ago, evidence was presented that some T cells secreted antigen-specific immunoregulatory molecules. Antigen specificity was demonstrated by functional activity and the ability of the molecules to be adsorbed specifically to solid phase antigen. Such molecules have been termed antigen-specific factors. The hallmark of these factors has been their ability to bind nominal antigen, even though their functional activity may be restricted by major histocompatibility glycoproteins (7, 15, 26). This restriction could be due to an enhanced affinity for small amounts of antigen/MHC and/or a restricted association with a non-antigen-specific molecule necessary for biological activity (7, 27, 28).

TABM Functions

A variety of antigens—proteins, erythrocytes, MHC glycoproteins, and haptens (reviewed in Ref. 8)—have been used to elicit TABM, although haptens such as azobenzenearsonate or dinitrophenol are particularly useful because they facilitate affinity purification. Table I shows that a number of immunobiological activities are associated with soluble antigen-specific T cell products. Many TABM affect or effect specific immunoregulation and, in addition to the immunoregulatory activity of T cells, some soluble antigen-specific molecules have been shown to elicit a reaction delayed in time, but similar to immediate hypersensitivity (14, 29–31). Antigen-specific T cell molecules effecting immunoregulatory activity appear to be antigenically distinct from those that elicit a hypersensitivity-like reaction (32), although the molecules are similar structurally. Induction of hypersensitivity may be mediated by the adsorption of antigen-binding molecules to mast cells by a receptor distinct from that for IgE (31). The elicitation of hypersensitivity by some TABM may be very significant clinically since Trentham (14, 33) and colleagues have shown that some TABM specific for collagen induce an arthritic reaction when injected into the joints of naive rats.

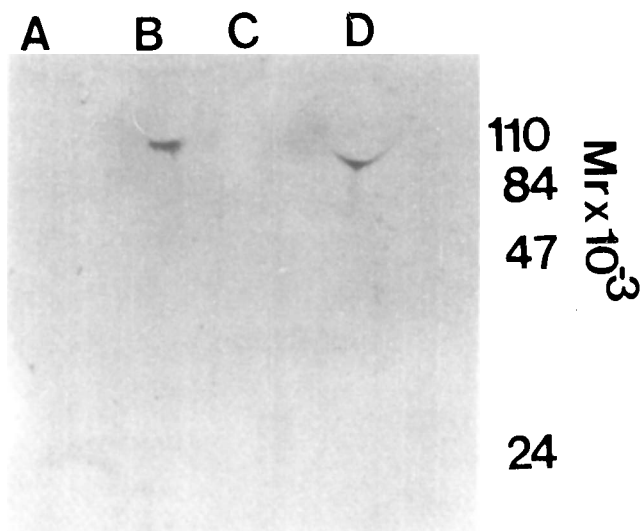


Figure 1. Resolution by sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of TABM specific for azobenzenearsonate (21). Azobenzenearsonate-specific TABM were purified from ascites fluid containing an azobenzenearsonate-specific T cell hybrid by a combination of ion exchange chromatography and affinity for azobenzenearsonate. Azobenzenearsonate-specific TABM were mixed with azobenzenearsonate-ovalbumin Sepharose or ovalbumin Sepharose beads and, after 1 hr at 4°C, the beads were washed and eluted with sodium dodecyl sulfate. The eluates and effluents were reduced, alkylated, and resolved in a 10–15% polyacrylamide gradient. (A) Effluent from azobenzenearsonate-sepharose. (B) Effluent from ovalbumin-Sepharose. (C) Eluate from ovalbumin-Sepharose. (D) Eluate from azobenzenearsonate-Sepharose. The gels were stained with silver stain.

Table III. Epitopes of Soluble Antigen-Specific T Cell Molecules

IgH,L	-
TCR VJ β	+
TCR V β 8	+
TCR C α	+
TCR C β	+
I-J	\pm

Biochemical Properties of TABM

Although TABM may have functional distinctions, they share many properties (like immunoglobulins). Many sizes have been reported (Table II), ranging from an M_r of 22,500 to 110,000 (reduced) and >250,000 (nonreduced). The range in molecular sizes reported for TABM may be due to these relatively hydrophobic (34, 35) molecules forming stable multimers (8–10, 21, 34–36). Denaturation of TABM in dilute solution by guanidine, low pH, and/or heating at 56°C for 1 hr and reduction generates M_r 22,500 peptide chains that can reassociate to form oligomers with an M_r of 45,000–140,000 after reduction (8, 9, 36). Antigen-specific M_r 140,000 TABM have been produced by translation *in vitro* of immunopurified mRNA (36). However, complementary DNA of 600–900 bases transcribed from the immunopurified mRNA is consistent with mRNA that could code for an M_r 23,000 peptide. The (vexing) variability in TABM quaternary structure can be stabilized when TABM are prepared rapidly at relatively high concentrations (>50 μ g/ml) and reduced for <3 min (Fig. 1). Without reduction, TABM generally have an M_r of at least 250,000, which suggests that large multimers are composed of chains linked by interchain disulfide bonds. However, intrachain disulfide bonds may be crucial to a conformation that results in strong, noncovalent interactions between protomers. The ex-

tent of multimerization could affect the affinity and avidity of the molecule for antigen. TABM share common structural and antigenic properties, yet, like immunoglobulins, they also exhibit variable properties in isoelectric points, amino acid composition, and peptides (35). These results suggest that like immunoglobulins and TCR, TABM are composed of constant and variable regions. Moreover, polyclonal and monoclonal anti-TABM antibodies recognize TABM with different specificities (11, 13) for antigen, which adds support to the suggestion that TABM have variable and constant regions.

Structurally, TABM are distinct from TCR, and some T cells express both TCR and TABM on the cell membrane (37). However, ontogenetically, TABM appear a few days earlier than TCR (37). In addition, TABM (or antigen-specific immunoregulatory factors) have been shown to bear TCR V region (34) or C region (15, 17, 38) determinants (Table III), and the production of a functional antigen-specific immunoregulatory factor bearing TCR C α determinants is inhibited by anti-sense TCR V α (39). In addition, the amino acid composition of TABM is significantly similar to TCR α -, β -, or δ -chains (34). Sequence information has been particularly elusive because TABM are difficult to purify in amounts necessary for sequencing. In addition, those TABM purified in quantities sufficient for sequencing have a blocked amino terminus (34). Our attempts to obtain an internal sequence have been frustrated by the hydrophobic properties of the molecule that prevent recovery of peptides for sequencing. Genes for TABM have not been identified with immunoglobulin or TCR probes, which suggests that these molecules are significantly different from immunoglobulins or TCR. It is more likely that the identification of TABM genes will come from TABM probes. Note that the inability of immunoglobulin probes to detect rear-

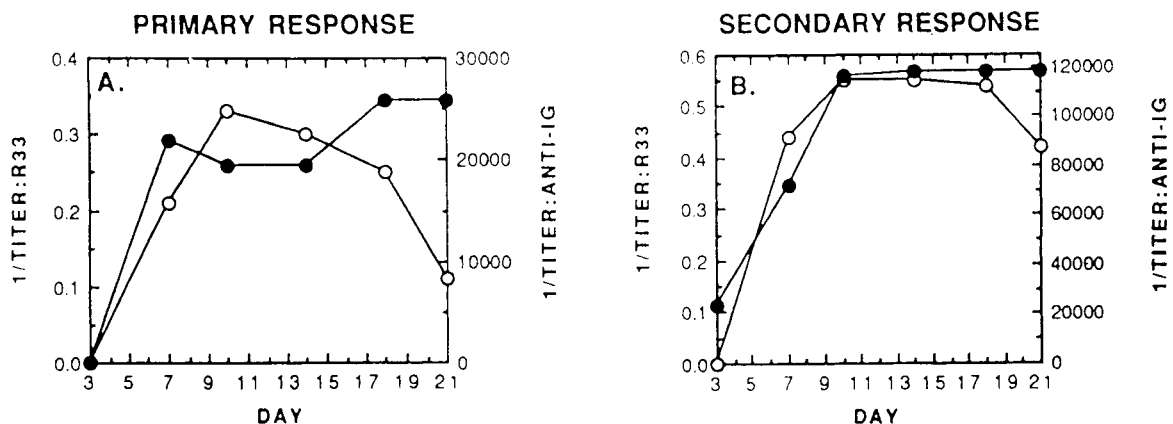


Figure 2. Kinetics of serum TABM and immunoglobulin production during the primary and secondary response (42). BALB/c mice were (A) immunized with bovine serum albumin/poly(A:U) and (B) challenged with bovine serum albumin. Sera were obtained at the indicated times and tested in enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay for binding to bovine serum albumin. TABM titer (O-O) is taken with the amount of serum giving at least 0.2 optical density units with anti-TABM. Immunoglobulin titers (●-●) are taken as the dilution of serum giving 0.2 optical density units with rabbit anti- κ serum in the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. Data represent the results of six individual experiments.

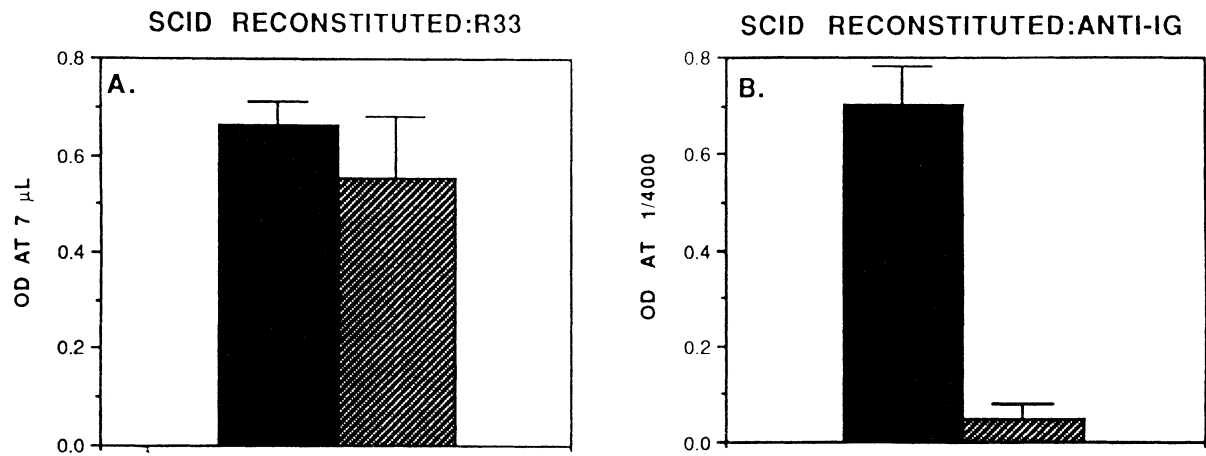


Figure 3. Production of TABM in *scid/scid* mice reconstituted with thymocytes. *Scid/scid* mice were reconstituted with 5×10^7 BALB/c thymocytes and, after 2 weeks, these mice and BALB/c mice were immunized with bovine serum albumin/poly(A:U). After 2 weeks, the mice were challenged with bovine serum albumin and bled 14 days after challenge. The sera were tested for bovine serum albumin-specific TABM (R33) or immunoglobulins (anti-Ig), and the results show the optical density obtained with 100 μ l of 1:14 serum (TABM) or 100 μ l of 1:4000 serum (Ig). The results are the mean \pm SE for six mice per group. (A) TABM response of BALB/c mice (closed), reconstituted *scid/scid* (hatched). (B) Ig response of BALB/c mice (closed) or reconstituted *scid/scid* (hatched).

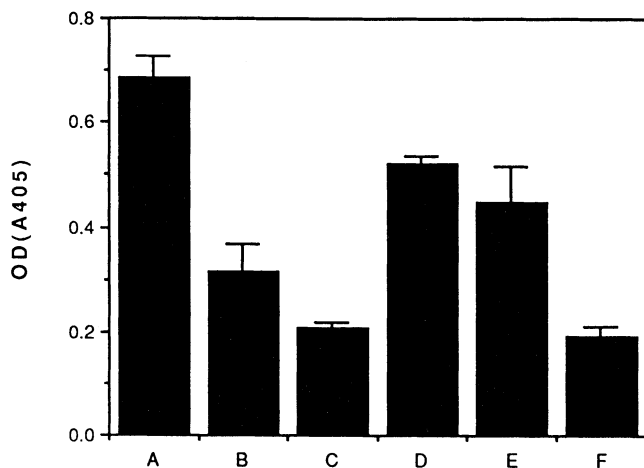


Figure 4. (42) Antigen-specific serum TABM are adsorbed specifically to anti-TCR $C\alpha$ affinity beads. One milliliter of a 1/10 dilution of serum obtained 14 days after bovine serum albumin-primed mice were challenged with bovine serum albumin was mixed with Sepharose beads conjugated with anti-TCR $C\alpha$ or normal hamster Ig and incubated 2 hr at 4°C. The beads were centrifuged, washed, then eluted with 0.1 M glycine NaCl (pH 2.3). The dialyzed eluate and effluent from anti- $C\alpha$ -Sepharose or normal hamster Ig or untreated serum was added to bovine serum albumin-coated microtiter trays. Bound TABM were detected with rabbit anti-TABM and alkaline phosphatase-conjugated goat anti-rabbit Ig. Normal rabbit serum (NRS) was used as a control and the NRS optical density (0.150) was subtracted from the optical density obtained with anti-TABM. A, Untreated immune system; B, effluent from anti-TCR $C\alpha$ -Sepharose; C, normal mouse serum; D, effluent from normal hamster Ig-Sepharose; E, eluate from anti-TCR- $C\alpha$ Sepharose; F, eluate from normal hamster Ig-Sepharose; OD, optical density.

ranged DNA in T cells was taken as evidence that T cell receptors are not related to immunoglobulins (40). Subsequently, it was suggested that "perhaps the wrong probes are used" (41) to detect rearranged DNA in T cells.

TABM are expressed in the cell membrane by most T cells; however, the antigenic type (isotype?) of membrane TABM differs from that commonly secreted *even by the same cell*. Thus, the membrane "isotype" secreted by some T cells is rare in serum. TABM are present constitutively in serum (11, 22, 23) like immunoglobulins and are similar in size and electrophoretic (α -globulin) mobility to TABM secreted by antigen-specific T cell hybrids or clones (23; R. E. Cone, unpublished observations).

Antigen-Specific Humoral T Cell Response

Because TABM are present in serum in low amounts (<50 μ g/ml), it may be that they represent an antigen-specific humoral manifestation of T lymphocyte activity. Doses of antigen that induce an antigen-specific desensitization of mice primed for delayed-type hypersensitivity cause a rise in serum TABM 12 hr after injection. This rise is followed by a rapid fall in serum TABM (22). Some of the TABM are specific for the desensitizing antigen and the induction is antigen specific. Because many of the increased TABM are not specific for the antigen, it may be that desensitization causes the production of some factor that induces secretion of TABM. Preliminary evidence suggests that interleukin 2 may, in fact, induce or increase the secretion of TABM.

The other serum TABM response that we are studying (42) is based solely on the antigen-binding capacity of TABM. Immunization of mice with bovine serum albumin induces a rise in TABM in serum specific for the immunogen (Fig. 2). TABM in serum specific for the immunogen are shown by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay in which immune serum is added to antigen-coated microtiter trays. TABM (in

Table IV. Properties of Immune System Antigen Recognition Structures

	TABM	Immunoglobulin	MHC-Restricted T cell receptor
T cell specific	+	-	+
Binds nominal antigen	+	+	-
MHC-restricted in specific antigen binding	-	-	+
Heterodimer	-	-	+
Hetero-oligomer	-	+	-
Homo-oligomer	+	-	-
Variable and constant peptides	+	+	+
Rearranged genes	?	+	+
Membrane molecules	+	+	+
Soluble molecule	+	+	-
TCR V region epitope	+	+	+
TCR C α epitope	+	-	+

the serum) that bind to the antigen are detected with anti-TABM antiserum. This TABM response displays anamnesis and appears to peak somewhat later than immunoglobulins. M_r 110,000 TABM binding the immunogen have been isolated by affinity chromatography and are, therefore, distinct structurally from immunoglobulins. That serum TABM are not immunoglobulins is also shown by the production of TABM but not immunoglobulins in *scid/scid* mice reconstituted with T lymphocytes (Fig. 3). Moreover, serum TABM are bound by monoclonal antibodies to T cell receptor C α determinants (Fig. 4). Most antigen-specific T cell products reported in serum may be associated with immunoregulatory activity. Reports made in the 1950s of antigen-specific α -globulins in serum which induce a hypersensitivity reaction (43) could be early reports of serum TABM with effector activity (44). Detection and quantitation of serum TABM may provide a new window on T cell activity and an important diagnostic/prognostic tool. We have observed an increase in serum TABM specific for laminin during a mercury-induced autoimmune response (R. E. Cone and P. E. Bigazzi, unpublished observation) and TABM in the cerebral spinal fluid of individuals with multiple sclerosis (M. Dibrino and R. E. Cone, unpublished observations) pointing to a role for TABM in T lymphocyte-associated pathology. The role of these molecules, their genetic origin, and their molecular properties remain to be clarified.

Perspectives

It is becoming evident that the immune system produces *three* antigen-specific moieties (Table IV) to deal with foreign and domestic invaders. Both soluble and membrane-associated (receptor) immunoglobulins utilize the same V genes to produce immunoglobulin-combining sites for antigen which are joined to membrane-associated or soluble C region genes to produce a functional product. Thus, serum immunoglobulins

might be considered the soluble manifestation of the B cell receptor for antigen. T cell receptors for antigen resemble immunoglobulins structurally and utilize the same "rules" as B cells to create combining sites for antigen, although TCR V regions are derived from a distinct family of V region genes. Since TABM share V and C region epitopes with TCR and are significantly similar in amino acid composition, TABM may be the soluble manifestation of the TCR. However, unlike TCR, TABM bind nominal antigen with relatively high affinity and, in fact, appear to precede the appearance of TCR ontogenetically. Does this mean that there is a third "family" of V genes which generate TABM V regions through recombination events? If this was the case, there would be T lymphocytes that express both V gene families. To employ Occam's razor, perhaps TABM V genes are derived from TCR V genes and the antigen-binding capacity of these molecules is due to their multimeric structure, similar to the increased affinity for antigen of immunoglobulin heavy:light chain pairs (45). Perhaps the dimeric association of TCR chains (e.g., α : β) determines the affinity of the intact molecule for MHC/peptide. If this is the case, the association of TABM with TCR β -chains or the polymerization of TCR α -chains might direct the affinity of a TABM for an MHC/antigen fragment or TCR α -chain for nominal antigen. Is the epitope specificity of TABM the same as immunoglobulins? Moreover, can one demonstrate MHC restriction of affinity if TABM are presented with MHC/peptide rather than peptide? Thus, some future studies on TABM require definition of the molecule through sequence of amino acids and/or nucleotides and determination of fine specificity for antigen.

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