

MINIREVIEW

Control of Collagen Deposition in Mammalian Lung (43886)

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Abstract. This review considers the mechanisms controlling collagen deposition in mammalian lung in five different states: normal development, fibrosis, erosion, pneumonectomy, and the steady state. Deposition is the net result of positive and negative processes. The major positive processes are control of cell number and type, regulation of transcription and translation, post-translational modifications, fibril formation, and covalent cross-linking. The negative mechanisms are intracellular degradation, collagenase-mediated degradation, and phagocytosis, and they are integral to the life cycle of collagen.

Cytokines and growth factors have many and complex effects on all the processes that constitute collagen metabolism. Interleukin-1 and tumor necrosis factor- α can either stimulate or inhibit collagen accumulation, presumably depending on the immediate environment. Interleukin-6 inhibits collagen degradation, and γ -interferon inhibits collagen production. Platelet derived growth factor and fibroblast growth factor have powerful mitogenic effects on connective tissue cells in lung, and can also affect collagen production directly. Transforming growth factor- β activates a battery of processes that uniformly contribute to accumulation of collagen. Transforming growth factor- β may be the "master switch" for a fibrotic program in lung. Therapeutic approaches to controlling lung fibrosis by manipulating cytokine levels are promising.

Prostaglandin E has uniformly negative effects on net collagen accumulation and may play a central role in an erosion program. [P.S.E.B.M. 1995, Vol 209]

Collagen deposition in mammalian lung is determined by various processes operating at different levels. Our aims in this essay are to consider these processes within a global view of deposition in normal and pathologic states; to highlight gaps in existing knowledge, as well as areas of frank dis-

agreement, and to present speculations that may stimulate future investigations.

We concern ourselves here with collagen deposition in five different states: normal development, fibrosis, erosion, pneumonectomy, and the adult steady state. Collagen in the lung is often considered synonymously with fibrosis, and although we started out trying to be evenhanded in discussing collagen in the five states, the lion's share of the treatment goes to fibrosis. And this reflects the emphasis in the literature. In a sense, it is artificial to consider collagen deposition independently of the other components of extracellular matrix such as fibronectin, elastin, proteoglycans, and laminins; and mention should be made

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at the outset of the many reviews on various aspects of extracellular matrix in lung (1–5).

A great temptation in writing a review, indeed an important function of a review, is to seek generalizations. But one must be careful. For every generalization there is likely to be a counter-example—some cell type, some set of culture conditions, some experimental system—that does not fit. In seeking our own generalizations here we have employed the standard of civil law, “preponderance of evidence,” rather than the stricter standard of criminal law, “beyond reasonable doubt.” While we emphasize work with lung and lung-derived systems, we also consider the extensive literature describing work in other soft tissues such as skin.

Collagens

There are almost 20 genetically distinct collagens, numbered in approximately the order in which they were discovered. Our knowledge of how the metabolism of a given collagen type is regulated is inversely proportional to its number. Here, we consider mechanisms that affect deposition of collagen I, the major interstitial collagen, and, to a much lesser extent, collagen IV, the principal component of basement membrane. For a succinct discussion of collagens I through XIV, consult reference (6).

Collagen I. A collagen I molecule is made up of three polypeptides called α (I) chains. The secondary and higher order structures of the α -chains are largely determined by two characteristics: a very high content of proline (approximately 20%) that imparts a helical conformation to the chains, and an amino acid sequence in which glycine appears in every third position, (Gly-X-Y)_{*n*}, where *n* is approximately 300. A collagen I molecule usually consists of two α 1(I) chains and one α 2(I) chain; however, α 1(I) homotrimers can form if α 2(I) chains are not made. A collagen molecule is synthesized as a higher molecular weight precursor called procollagen, consisting of three pro α -chains with extension peptides at the N and C termini. The most commonly held view of the folding process is that three pro α -chains come into register at their C termini and wind about each other in the C to N direction to form a long, thin and rigid triple helix. The glycylic residues lie along the axis at the points of closest approach of the chains to each other. Hydroxyprolyl residues, formed by post-translational hydroxylation of approximately half the prolyl residues, stabilize the triple helix. The extension peptides are cleaved after the molecule is secreted. Collagen molecules can associate laterally and head-to-end to form fibrils. Collagen III is very similar to collagen I in structure and composition, a major difference being that collagen III is a homotrimer of α 1(III) chains. Collagen III is also found in the interstitium, usually codistributed with

collagen I. For a more extensive discussion of interstitial collagens in lung, consult reference (7).

The genes coding for the pro α 1(I) and pro α 2(I) chains, COL1A1 and COL1A2, are located on Chromosome 17 and 7, respectively (8). Although the message levels for pro α 1(I) and pro α 2(I) chains are usually maintained fairly tightly in a 2:1 ratio, transcription of the genes can be regulated independently (9, 10). The first intron of COL1A1 contains positive and negative elements (11). The Mov13 mutation in mice, in which a Moloney virus genome is inserted into the first intron (12, 13), provides a particularly instructive example of the importance of these regulatory elements. The insertion blocks transcription in all tissues except teeth, strongly suggesting the existence of tissue-specific *cis* regulatory elements (14, 15). The N and C extension peptides released when procollagen monomers are integrated into fibrils can inhibit (16) or stimulate (17) collagen synthesis. For general discussions of collagen gene regulation, consult reference (18–21).

Collagen IV. The collagen IV molecule is flexible and has numerous interruptions in the triple helical region. There are six genetically distinct pro α (IV) chains which can combine in triplets (22). Genes for the pro α 1(IV) and pro α 2(IV) chains are arranged head-to-head on Chromosome 13 and transcribed in opposite directions under the control of the same promoter. The significance of the large repertoire of pro α (IV) chains is not clear. For reviews, consult Ref. 23 and 24.

Components of Collagen Production

The amount of collagen deposited in a tissue is the algebraic sum of positive (productive) and negative (degradative) processes, and each process can be up- or downregulated. Figure 1 depicts the processes that constitute collagen production. Note that degradation processes, present at many steps along the way, are integral components of lung collagen metabolism.

Positive Processes

Increase in Cell Number and Clonal Activation of Cells with High Collagen Producing Potential. The amount of collagen made in the lung is a direct function of the number of collagen-producing cells. There are two ways to increase the number of cells at a site: replication and recruitment. Fibronectin, a major component of the extracellular matrix, is a potent fibroblast mitogen (25) and chemoattractant (26). Fibronectin fragments, such as might be released during initial stages of injury, are also highly stimulatory for fibroblasts (27, 28). Collagens I and III are synthesized by lung fibroblasts (29), mesothelial cells (30), and endothelial cells (31). Collagen IV is synthesized by type 2 epithelial cells (32, 33), fibroblasts (34), and mesothelial cells (30).

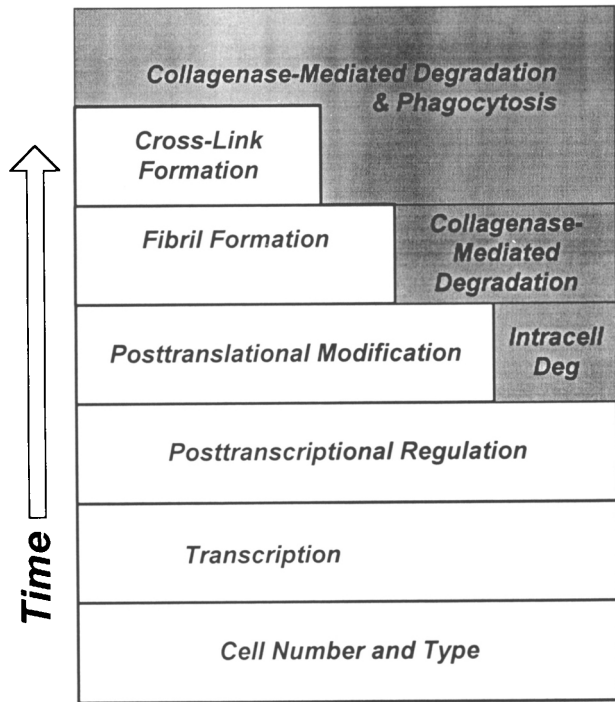


Figure 1. Components of collagen production. Note that degradation processes are integral parts of the general scheme of collagen metabolism.

Far from being undifferentiated “connective tissue cells,” fibroblasts are a diverse group and can carry out a number of different functions. Fibroblast heterogeneity has been observed, and subpopulations have been separated and characterized, based on differences in collagen production, proliferation rates, morphology, response to specific inflammatory mediators, accumulation of intracellular lipid, and a variety of cell surface receptors including integrins. Classification of subpopulations based upon only one characteristic can be misleading because a given cell might be considered a member of more than one subpopulation. For comprehensive discussions of these points, consult references (35, 36).

Lipid-laden interstitial cells. A distinction has been made between lipid-laden interstitial cells (LIC) and non-lipid-laden (NLIC) fibroblasts in rat lungs (37). LIC containing abundant intracellular lipid droplets and bundles of myofilaments are found during alveolarization in the postnatal period and following inflammatory injury (suggesting that repair processes mimic development). LIC produce high levels of extracellular matrix components.

Myofibroblasts. Several investigators have described an interstitial cell, termed the myofibroblast, with morphologic and biochemical features of both contractile cells and fibroblasts. Myofibroblasts are prominent during the branching and alveolar phases of development (38, 39) and following injury (40–42). These cells may participate in contracting or organizing collagen matrices.

FI, FII, and FIII cells. Mollenhauer and Bayreuther described three separate classes of fibroblasts in rat skin and lung which they designated FI, FII, and FIII (43). These cells differ in morphology, proliferative properties, and rates of collagen production. FI are spindle-shaped and highly proliferative, and synthesize low levels of collagens I and III. FII are epitheloid in shape, proliferate more slowly than FI, and synthesize more collagen than FI cells. FIII are large, tetraploid, stellate cells that proliferate more slowly than FI or FII, but synthesize higher levels of collagen. The relative numbers of FI, FII, and FIII cells change with donor age.

Thy1⁺ and Thy1⁻ cells. Phipps and colleagues have characterized two distinct subpopulations of murine lung fibroblasts based on the presence (+) or absence (-) of a 25-kDa cell surface glycoprotein termed Thy1 (44, 45). Although these cell lines, designated Thy1⁺ and Thy1⁻, produce collagens I and III and proliferate at comparable rates, they exhibit morphologic and physiologic differences, particularly in their abilities to synthesize and respond to cytokines (46) and express cell surface markers. Spindle-shaped Thy1⁺ fibroblasts have a distended endoplasmic reticulum and contain intracellular lipid, and may correspond to LIC cells (47). In contrast, Thy1⁻ fibroblasts resemble myofibroblasts.

Transcription of Collagen Genes. Transcription of collagen genes can be modulated by a variety of agents such as prostaglandins of the E series (PGEs) and cytokines, especially interleukins-1 α and -1 β (IL-1 α / β), and transforming growth factor- β (TGF- β).

Post-transcriptional Regulation. Collagen production can be controlled by modulating the stability and efficiency of utilization of mRNA (48). In skin fibroblasts, ascorbic acid induces a greater increase in collagen production than can be attributed to the change in mRNA levels alone (49). The N-terminal propeptide of procollagen inhibits translation of mRNA in a nonspecific manner (50). Cytokines can also affect collagen production by altering the stability of mRNA.

Post-translational Modification. Newly synthesized pro α -chains associate in the rough endoplasmic reticulum to form triple helical procollagen molecules which are then subjected to several posttranslational processes including hydroxylation of prolyl and lysyl residues, and glycosylation of hydroxylysyl side chains. Several therapeutic approaches to inhibiting collagen synthesis in fibrosis target prolyl hydroxylase, which hydroxylates prolyl residues in pro α -chains (51, 52).

Deposition. Collagen fibrils in the interstitium are copolymers of collagens I and III (53–55). There are two different, but complementary, views about how these structures grow. Collagen monomers can, under appropriate conditions, self-assemble *in vitro* to

form fibrils similar to those seen *in vivo* (56). In contrast to this physical chemistry approach, Trelstad and Birk have emphasized that cells synthesizing collagen can also participate in building fibrils. In this view, fibrillogenesis occurs in pockets or extracellular compartments formed by invaginations in the cell surfaces. This model is based on high resolution electron microscopic examination of fibrils in cornea (57), tendon (58) and dermis (59). Furthermore, the cells that participate in fibrillogenesis appear to be rearranged during the process (60). The N- and C-terminal extension peptides of procollagen appear to play important roles in incorporating individual molecules on the surface of a fibril (61), perhaps by orienting or aligning procollagen molecules in relation to the growth regions of the fibril. Fibrils are stabilized by covalent cross-links that form between α -chains in the same and adjacent molecules. The first part of this process is enzymatically mediated by lysyl oxidase. With time, progressively more complicated crosslinks form, uniting several α -chains (62, 63).

In most basement membranes, collagen IV monomers associate at their N- and C-termini to form an open lattice (similar to chicken wire) (6). It is not clear how this lattice is constructed. Chen and Little have described fibrils of collagen IV in organ cultures of embryonic lung (64, 65), but the significance of these structures has not been elucidated.

Negative Processes

Intracellular Collagen Degradation. A significant amount of the collagen synthesized by connective tissue cells is degraded rapidly rather than secreted (66). The basal level of degradation in lung fibroblasts is approximately 15% (67), but degradation increases when cells are induced to synthesize structurally abnormal collagen or exposed to PGE1 (68, 69). The location of this process is not known; some have reported degradation in lysosomes (70), but others have reported conflicting results (71). There are strong indications that intracellular collagen degradation occurs in a distal compartment of the secretory pathway (72). Whether newly synthesized collagen is also degraded in the endoplasmic reticulum, as has been shown for several other secretory proteins (73, 74), is not known.

Degradation Mediated by Collagenases. The triple-helical regions of collagens are refractory to most proteases, however matrix metalloproteinases (MMP) known as collagenases can degrade interstitial and basement membrane collagens. Collagenases are synthesized by fibroblasts and by migratory cells such as neutrophils and macrophages that can invade the lung in response to various chemoattractants. Neutrophil collagenase (MMP-8) is more active against collagen I than collagen III, whereas fibroblast (MMP-1) and macrophage collagenases are equally active

against both collagens (75). The collagenases MMP-2 and MMP-9 are active against collagen IV, and they are synthesized by fibroblasts and macrophages (76). For comprehensive reviews, consult references of MMPs (77–79); and for work specifically dealing with lung, consult references (80, 81). Constitutive expression of collagenase is very low in most cells, but can be increased by phorbol ester or cytokines. Such stimulation induces expression of the proto-oncogenes *c-fos* and *c-jun* whose gene products bind to regulatory sites in the promoter regions of collagenase genes (78). Collagenases are secreted as latent proenzymes and must be activated either by mercurial compounds or—more physiologically—by proteases such as plasmin or kallikrein (78, 79). Alveolar macrophages and lung fibroblasts also synthesize inhibitors of collagenase and other MMPs known as tissue inhibitors of metalloproteinases (TIMPs) (82–84). Collagen accumulation might be controlled by modulating MMP production and activation and controlling TIMP levels.

Phagocytosis. Fibroblasts can engulf or phagocytose large pieces of collagen fibrils (85–89). After internalization, the fibrils are degraded, probably by lysosomal proteases.

Regulators of Collagen Synthesis and Degradation

Prostaglandins. Inflammatory cells and fibroblasts synthesize PGE₂, which has generally negative effects on fibroblast growth and collagen production in soft tissues. Alveolar epithelial cells exposed to silica *in vitro* also synthesize PGE₂ (90). PGE₁ and PGE₂ decrease collagen synthesis (91–94), increase intracellular collagen degradation (69), and may stimulate collagenase production directly (95). PGE₂ inhibits transcription of COL1A1 in lung fibroblasts, but does not affect transcription of COL1A2 (96). One result of this “discordant regulation” would be a surplus of pro α 2(I) chains relative to pro α 1(I) chains, and it is possible that increased intracellular degradation (69) is a response to these redundant chains. PGE may regulate collagen production in cyclic AMP-dependent and -independent ways. Fine *et al.* reported that the inhibition of transcription of COL1A1 by PGE is independent of cyclic AMP (96). However, earlier work by Crystal and colleagues strongly indicated that PGE affects collagen production and intracellular degradation by cyclic AMP-dependent processes. The effects of PGE could be duplicated by agents that increase cyclic AMP and inhibited by agents that lower it (93, 94, 97).

It must be emphasized that the foregoing discussion is limited to soft tissue fibroblasts, and the effects of PGE in mineralized tissues seem to be very different. For example, PGE₂ stimulates collagen synthesis in fetal rat calvariae (98).

Cytokines. Cytokines—interleukins, interferon, and polypeptide growth factors—are powerful modulators of cell metabolism and can affect every process shown in Figure 1. See references (99, 100) for comprehensive reviews. Cytokines are synthesized by connective tissue cells and by inflammatory cells such as macrophages, and many cytokines can stimulate their own production (101–104). Cytokines interact with cell surface receptors of varying specificity (105). These interactions can initiate signal transduction pathways by increasing cyclic AMP (102) and, very often, by activating tyrosine kinases (106–109). A cytokine can elicit opposite effects in different cells by activating different signal transduction pathways (110). Cytokine activity can be controlled in several ways (see Fig. 2).

Modulating the ratios of related cytokines. Many cytokines are members of families and exhibit significant homology and cross-reactivity. Examples are IL-1 α/β , acidic and basic fibroblast growth factor (aFGF and bFGF), and the several homologs of TGF- β . Extensive cross-reactivity of ligands and receptors suggests considerable redundancy in activating signal transduction pathways (111). Alternatively, changes in the relative amounts of homologous ligands or receptors may elicit subtly different cellular responses.

Activating latent forms. Some cytokines such as IL-1 β and TGF- β are synthesized as inactive precursors and must be activated in order to exert an effect (112–114). TNF- α is synthesized as a membrane-bound precursor which is liberated by the action of a metalloproteinase (115, 116).

Modulating receptor levels. Several cytokines (e.g., IL-1 α/β and TNF- α) interact with multiple receptors and different receptor-ligand interactions may initiate different signal transduction pathways. Cell surface-associated heparan sulfate proteoglycans

(HSPGs) can function as cytokine receptors in various ways. Some may have the ability to initiate signal transduction directly, while others may be low affinity receptors that “present” cytokines to high affinity receptors that, in turn, may activate signal transduction pathways. Other HSPGs may function as storage sites for growth factors that could be released to act locally (117).

Competing with antagonists for receptor binding. Soluble receptor antagonists can bind to cytokine receptors but not elicit a response (e.g., the IL-1 receptor antagonist [IL-1ra]) (118).

Modulating levels of soluble receptors and binding moieties. Soluble receptors (e.g., for IL-1) can bind cytokines, limiting their potential to interact with cell surface receptors (106). In addition, some cell surface receptors can be cleaved proteolytically and compete for cytokines (119). (The distinction between receptors, soluble receptors, and binding proteins is often blurred. Some investigators insist that in order to be classified as a receptor a binding moiety must elicit some response from a cell.) Proteins and glycosaminoglycans in serum and matrix proteins can bind cytokines and act either as stores or traps. Examples include the insulin-like growth factor-binding proteins (IGFBPs 1 through 6), which bind insulin like growth factors (IGFs) (120–122), and heparin and HSPG, which bind platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) (123), FGF (117), and TGF- β (124, 125). Betaglycan is an HSPG that can exist as both a membrane receptor for TGF- β as well as a soluble binding moiety that can inhibit binding to membrane-bound receptors (126). α 2-Macroglobulin (α 2-MG) can bind several cytokines including TGF- β , TNF- α , IL-6, PDGF, and FGF. In some cases, binding is much stronger when the α 2-MG has been activated by a protease such as plasmin. Activated α 2-MG-cytokine complexes are cleared rapidly from the circulation (127).

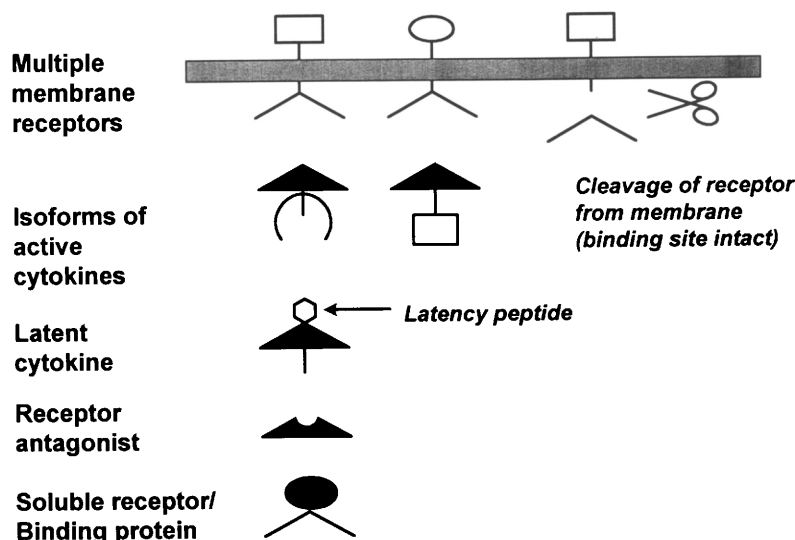


Figure 2. Interactions among cytokines, receptors, and antagonists. Each process represents a potential point at which cytokine activity can be modulated.

Effects of Cytokines on Collagen Accumulation. *Interleukin-1 α* and *-1 β* and *tumor necrosis factor*. IL-1 is synthesized by neutrophils and alveolar macrophages (102, 128). TNF- α is synthesized by alveolar macrophages (102, 129, 130) and is mitogenic for fibroblasts (131–133). There are conflicting data about whether TNF- α is a chemoattractant for fibroblasts (134, 135). IL-1 and TNF- α have been reported to enhance (136) and inhibit (137) collagen production in lung fibroblasts. In dermal fibroblasts, IL-1 α / β enhance transcription of collagens I and III, but TNF- α reduces the stability of procollagen mRNA (138). TNF- α also enhances collagen synthesis in pleural mesothelial cells (139), and IL-1 stimulates production of collagen IV in mammary epithelial cells (140). The ability to stimulate production of collagen IV in lung could be part of a mechanism to repair damage to basement membrane.

IL-1 α increases collagenase production in alveolar macrophages (141); and IL-1 α / β and TNF- α increase collagenase production in lung fibroblasts (142) and cells from other soft tissues (142–144). Synovial fibroblasts do not normally synthesize type IV collagenase (capable of degrading basement membrane collagen), but they can be induced to synthesize it by IL-1 β and TNF- α (145). This result has a clear implication for lung response during inflammation, because it shows that an interstitial cell can be reprogrammed to participate in remodeling basement membrane.

The existence of soluble receptor antagonists for IL-1 (IL-1ra) and soluble receptors indicates still another mechanism for modulating cytokine response (106, 118, 146). For example, IL-1ra inhibits the increase in collagenase production in alveolar macrophages normally elicited by IL-1 (147), and IL-1 stimulates TIMP production in many types of cells, including lung fibroblasts (142).

Interleukin-6. Interleukin-6 (IL-6), which can be synthesized by alveolar macrophages (103), endothelial cells (148), and fibroblasts (149), increase synthesis of TIMP in several different cell types including alveolar macrophages (150), lung fibroblasts (142), skin fibroblasts (151), synovial fibroblasts (142, 152–154), and endothelial cells (154). There is one conflicting report that IL-6 does not stimulate TIMP production in human skin fibroblasts (155).

γ -Interferon. γ -Interferon (IFN- γ) is synthesized by lymphocytes (156). It inhibits collagen production in fibrotic lungs (157) and in fibroblasts from normal and fibrotic lung tissue (158–160), and inhibits fibroblast migration in response to chemoattractants such as fibronectin (161). IFN- γ stimulates the incorporation of newly synthesized collagen into matrix by increasing the number of cell surface receptors for collagen (160). In addition, IFN- γ inhibits production in macrophages and fibroblasts of collagenases that can

degrade collagens I and IV (150, 162–164). However, there are some conflicting results: Duncan *et al.* found that IFN- γ increased collagenase production in fibroblasts (165), whereas Scharffetter *et al.* found it had no effect (166). Elias *et al.* reported that IFN- γ has a bidirectional effect on lung fibroblast proliferation: it stimulates growth of quiescent cells and inhibits growth of proliferating cells (167). For a general discussion of the effects of IFN- γ on collagen production, consult reference (168).

Transforming growth factor- β . TGF- β is synthesized by fibroblasts and macrophages, and can stimulate its own production in an autocrine/paracrine fashion (169–171). There are several different isoforms, with β 1, β 2, and β 3 being the most common (172, 173). TGF- β is distinguished from most other cytokines by its ability to activate a battery of processes that together increase matrix production (174, 175). We shall argue later that it qualifies as a “master switch” for a fibrotic program.

TGF- β increases collagen synthesis by stimulating expression of COL1A1 (10, 176). It stimulates expression of COL1A2 in mouse NIH/3T3 cells (10, 177) but not in lung fibroblasts (10). The effects of TGF- β on collagen gene transcription appear to be mediated by the binding of nuclear factor-1 or a similar protein to regulatory sites close to the promoter regions of COL1A1 and COL1A2 (177, 178).

TGF- β decreases production of interstitial collagenase (179), increases TIMP production (180, 181), and decreases intracellular collagen degradation (182). TGF- β also does the following: (i) stimulates cell replication in fibrotic lung tissue (183), and in lung fibroblasts in an *in vitro* wound model (184); (ii) increases production of integrins, which are cell surface receptors that anchor interstitial cells to the extracellular matrix (185); (iii) increases prolyl hydroxylase (in scleroderma skin fibroblasts [186]), which is crucial for collagen production; (iv) increases production of lysyl oxidase (187), which catalyzes formation of covalent crosslinks in fibrils between α -chains; (v) increases production of fibronectin (188), which binds to collagen in the extracellular matrix and is a growth factor and chemoattractant for lung fibroblasts (25, 26); and (vi) stimulates production of IL-6 which, in turn, stimulates TIMP production in fibroblasts and monocytes (180, 189, 190).

The extent to which TGF- β is a chemoattractant for lung fibroblasts is unclear. Several groups have reported that it is a powerful chemoattractant for fibroblasts in different tissues (161, 191–194). However, a recent paper by Osormo-Vargas *et al.* presents conflicting findings (195): different batches of TGF- β had no chemotactic effect on different preparations of low passage rat lung fibroblasts or Swiss 3T3 fibroblasts.

There are at least 3 different TGF- β receptors. The

type I and type II receptors are transmembrane proteins with serine/threonine kinase activity, suggesting that upon binding of TGF- β , the receptors activate signal transduction. The type III receptor is an HSPG (betaglycan) that can present TGF- β to a type II receptor (126). It is possible that different responses are elicited depending on which isoform interacts with which receptor (196, 197). However, it has recently been shown that interaction of only the type I and II receptors with either TGF- β 1, β 2, or β 3 is adequate to elicit a range of effects on cell proliferation and gene expression (197).

Fibroblast growth factor. Fibroblast growth factor (FGF) stimulates mitogenesis in several types of cells (198, 199), and also stimulates fibroblast migration (200). It is produced by alveolar macrophages, and cells lavaged from lungs of patients with interstitial disease produce elevated amounts (201). FGF is also produced by lung fibroblasts (202) and endothelial cells (203). FGF decreases collagen synthesis in various cell types including normal and keloid skin fibroblasts (204, 205), and smooth muscle cells (206). In corneal endothelial cells, FGF stimulates synthesis of collagen I and inhibits synthesis of collagen IV (207). FGF stimulates production of interstitial collagenase in skin fibroblasts (208), heart fibroblasts (209), endothelial cells (148, 210), and articular chondrocytes (211). However, it must be stressed that the ability of FGF to stimulate collagen production by increasing the number of collagen-producing cells may be much more significant than whatever direct effect FGF may have on transcription of collagen genes.

Platelet-derived growth factor. Platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) is a powerful mitogen (212, 213) and chemoattractant (195, 214) for fibroblasts. Different forms are synthesized by lung macrophages (141, 215) and epithelial cells (216). In general, cells lavaged from patients with significant lung disease are much more active in synthesizing this cytokine than cells from normal volunteers (217–219). PDGF increases collagen synthesis in dermal fibroblasts (220), vascular smooth muscle cells (221), and rat periodontal ligament fibroblasts (222). In an excisional wound model, topical application of PDGF increased the amount of collagen as assessed histologically (223). In a very interesting study, Okada *et al.* observed that PDGF suppressed synthesis of collagen IV and increased synthesis of collagen V (an interstitial collagen) in arterial smooth muscle cells (224). This result indicates that PDGF can modulate not only the amount of collagen but also the kind of collagen synthesized. PDGF has been reported to stimulate production of collagenase in dermal fibroblasts (225), and in normal and rheumatoid synovial fibroblasts (145, 226). However, inhibition of collagenase production by PDGF has also been reported (227). As noted for FGF, the powerful mito-

genic effect of PDGF on fibroblasts may be much more important in increasing collagen production than any direct effect it has on regulating collagen synthesis at the transcriptional or translational levels.

Insulin-like growth factor-I. Insulin-like growth factor-I (IGF-I) is mitogenic for fibroblasts. It is produced by type 2 alveolar epithelial cells (228), alveolar macrophages (229), and fibroblasts (230). IGF-I stimulates collagen synthesis in lung and skin fibroblasts (228, 231, 232), but it inhibits collagen production and stimulates collagenase production in avian skin fibroblasts (233). Activated alveolar macrophages from patients with interstitial lung disease carry IGF-I receptors, suggesting that IGF-I may stimulate the macrophages to proliferate (229). In turn, proliferating macrophages could increase production of other cytokines that either modulate collagen production directly or stimulate fibroblast replication or migration.

Interactions among modulators. Many modulators interact to either enhance or inhibit each other's effects on collagen production. For example, Elias *et al.* reported that the combined effects of IL-1 and TNF- α on collagen synthesis in lung fibroblasts were either more or less inhibitory than either used alone depending on whether serum was present in the culture medium (136). The combined effects of IFN- γ and TNF- α on collagen synthesis in dermal fibroblasts are greater than the effects of either cytokine used alone (166).

We have already noted that there is some disagreement about whether TGF- β is chemotactic for fibroblasts. Interestingly, there is evidence that this cytokine inhibits the positive chemoattractant actions of other factors such as aFGF (234), fibroblast migration-stimulating factor (235), PDGF (236), and epidermal growth factor (237).

At certain concentrations, the effects of IL-1 and TNF- α on collagenase synthesis in synovial fibroblasts are synergistic (238). PDGF synergistically augments the IL-1-induced increase in collagenase synthesized by dermal fibroblasts (225), but inhibits the IL-1 effect in synovial fibroblasts (239). IFN- γ inhibits the IL-1-induced increase in collagenase production in synovial fibroblasts and alveolar macrophages (163, 238).

Figure 3 attempts to illustrate how interactions among IL-1, PGE₂, and TGF- β affect transcription of collagen genes and production of collagenase. The main points are as follows:

- IL-1 and TGF- β can stimulate their own production.
- IL-1 enhances synthesis of PGE₂ (137, 167, 240–242). In a very interesting study, Barr *et al.* showed that the effect of IL-1 on PGE₂ synthesis was greater in monolayer cultures of dermal fibroblasts than in cells grown in a collagen gel (243). The stimulatory effect of IL-1 on PGE₂ synthesis can be

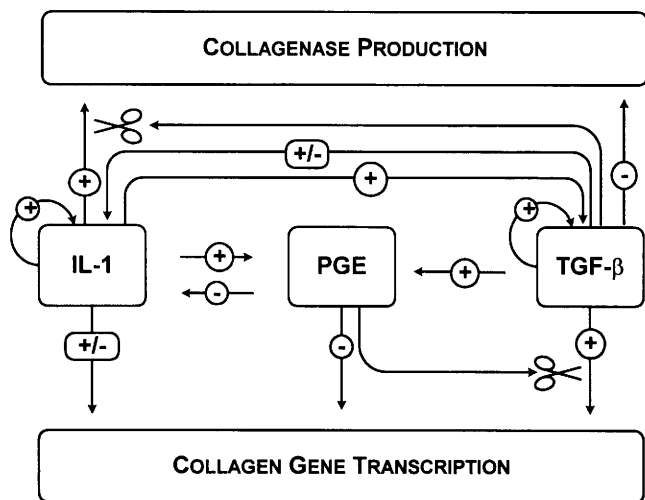


Figure 3. Modulation of collagen gene transcription and collagenase production by PGE, IL-1, and TGF- β . Note the extensive interactions among the modulators.

blocked by IL-1ra (244). There are several reports that PGE₂ can inhibit IL-1 synthesis in monocytes and macrophages (245–248). In a separate study, Viherluoto *et al.* found that PGE₂ inhibits secretion, but not synthesis, of IL-1 in monocytes (249). In contrast, Bailly *et al.* found that PGE₂ had no effect on IL-1 production in monocytes (250). Interestingly, PGE₂ can upregulate production of the IL-1 receptor (251).

- TGF- β enhances synthesis of PGE₂ in lung fibroblasts (176, 242) and other cell types (252–254). It can enhance (255) and inhibit (256) PGE₂ production in monocytes. Taylor *et al.* reported that TGF- β stimulates PGE₂ synthesis in rheumatoid synovial cells (257), but Hamilton *et al.* reported no effect (258).
- IL-1 and TGF- β act synergistically to increase synthesis of PGE₂ (253, 257).
- IL-1 can increase production of TGF- β in pulmonary endothelial cells (259) and T cells (260).
- TGF- β has been reported to stimulate (261) and inhibit (262) IL-1 β production in monocytes.
- TGF- β can also block the effects of IL-1 by stimulating production of IL-1ra (262, 263) and by downregulating IL-1 receptors (264).
- IL-1 can have both inhibitory and stimulatory effects on collagen gene expression. PGE inhibits collagen production; TGF- β stimulates transcription, and PGE counters this effect (176) and also inhibits transcription directly.
- IL-1 stimulates collagenase production in several different cell types. In chondrocytes TGF- β decreases this effect by downregulating the number of IL-1 receptors (265).
- TGF- β inhibits collagenase production (179).

Two notes of caution must be raised regarding this

scheme: (i) it combines results from different types of cells; and (ii) the temporal dimension is missing and one cannot appreciate how interactions among the regulators and their effects on collagen and collagenase production might evolve.

As noted, some cytokines can exert opposite effects on collagen metabolism. Figure 4 illustrates how this might happen. Consider a cell that synthesizes a cytokine that has a direct inhibitory effect on collagen production in a target cell. The cytokine also stimulates production of a second cytokine in another cell, which, in turn, has a stimulatory effect on collagen production in the same target cell. Depending on whether interactions between the cytokines and their receptors are permitted or blocked, the net apparent effect of the first cytokine on collagen production might be enhancement, inhibition, or nothing. This situation might occur when IFN- γ , which inhibits collagen production, stimulates PDGF production in alveolar macrophages, which, in turn, can stimulate collagen production (266, 267).

Summary. Many *in vitro* studies of the effects of cytokines on collagen metabolism appear contradictory. It is likely that all the studies are correct in the sense that they illustrate the range of possible responses to cytokines. Perhaps the systems used, mainly cultured cells, are not appropriate and we do not always appreciate their limitations. For example, fibroblasts respond in different ways to cytokines such as IL-1, PDGF and TGF- β depending on whether they are grown on collagen gels or plastic (268). It can be fundamentally misleading to assume that studying the effects of a single cytokine, or even pairs of cytokines, on collagen metabolism in cultured cells can yield valid insights into control mechanisms. The most striking impression one gets from studying diagrams of the interactions of cytokines with cells is the complexity of the networks. It is probably not far off the mark to say that in charting the interactions, all connections

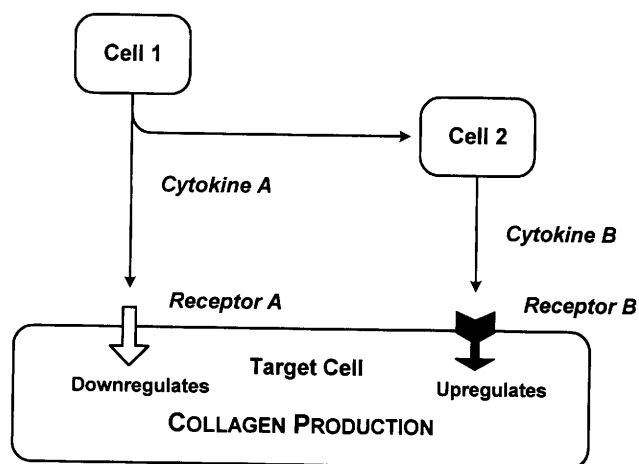


Figure 4. Schematic diagram illustrating how a single cytokine can elicit opposite effects on collagen production.

are possible, although some are more likely than others. Nevertheless, the following generalizations seem reasonable:

- TGF- β enhances collagen production at several levels (more on this later).
- IL-6 increases TIMP production, and so contributes to the net production of collagen.
- IFN- γ inhibits production of collagen and collagenase, and may function to moderate changes in net collagen production.
- IL-1 α/β , TNF- α , FGF, and PDGF have variable effects on collagen production. At any given time their effects probably depend on the immediate cellular environment, and in particular on levels of other cytokines. In this sense, it may be appropriate to call these cytokines *coregulators* of collagen metabolism.

Overview: The Matrix Programs in Lung

The various states of the extracellular matrix in lung can be divided into two groups: stable and unstable. (Fig. 5). There is only one stable state; namely the normal adult lung in which net matrix production is zero—the amount of matrix produced is balanced by the amount degraded. However, we speak of balance in a global sense, and there may be regional imbalances. The unstable states can be further classified as centripetal and centrifugal. Development is centripetal because it is characterized by a steady accumulation of collagen, tending toward the adult steady state lung. When subjected to insult or injury, the extracellular matrix responds in one of two ways.

The first possible response is that of a centripetal repair leading back to the steady state. Usually, this response is associated with mild injury and may involve recapitulating certain developmental stages,

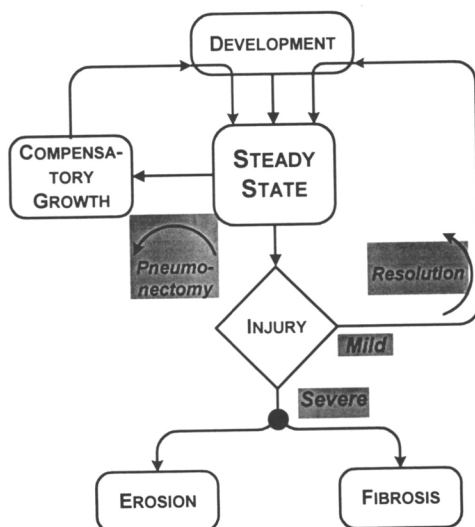


Figure 5. Extracellular matrix "programs" in lung.

such as regenerating alveolar epithelium and repairing or replacing some collagen fibrils. The compensatory growth of the contralateral lung following pneumectomy is also a centripetal state because the net accumulation of collagen approaches a limiting value. The pneumectomy response exhibits many features of normal development.

The second possible response is centrifugal and leads away from the steady state. The better-known form of this response is fibrosis, defined here as uncontrolled and inappropriate production of extracellular matrix components, particularly collagen I. The other form of centrifugal response is erosion, due largely to uncontrolled proteolysis. Erosion of elastin is accepted in the commonly held picture of emphysema caused by cigarette smoke. We suggest that erosion is to be expected as an end state of collagen accumulation in lung, and we shall adduce below experimental evidence supporting this contention.

Associated with each state is a program that specifies how the component processes of collagen production—cell number, transcription, posttranslational modifications, deposition, and degradation—are modulated.

Normal Development. The current state of extracellular matrix in developing lung is reviewed in reference (269).

Collagen production. In a pioneering study, Bradley *et al.* showed that there was a burst of collagen synthesis during the period of alveolarization in rabbits (270). Message levels for collagen I peak during this period (271).

Collagen fibrils and branching morphogenesis. Collagen fibrils stabilize clefts during the branching period (272). Treating lung rudiments with collagenase or with TNF- α (which probably stimulates collagenase production) inhibits branching, whereas TIMP inhibits the effect of collagenase (174, 273). Branching morphogenesis is normal in the Mov13 mouse, which indicates that collagen I is not absolutely necessary for this process (13). It is possible that collagen III, or perhaps collagen IV arranged in fibrils (64, 65), stabilizes the clefts. It is noteworthy that collagen IV and laminin, which are major constituents of basement membranes, are expressed throughout the epithelium and mesenchyme of embryonic mouse lungs (274), and nidogen, another constituent of basement membranes, is expressed only in mesenchyme (274, 275).

Role of degradation during development. Remodeling—the replacement of one structure by another—is an integral part of many developmental processes. In mouse lungs, there is extensive degradation of interstitial and basement collagens (276), and basement membrane-degrading collagenase is expressed at high levels during the immediate postnatal period when alveolar structures form (277). Constitutive ex-

pression of interstitial collagenase during embryogenesis, due to the action of a transgene, leads to a pathology similar to emphysema (278). A problem in interpreting this work is that the original transgene was constructed with a haptoglobin promoter in order to be expressed in liver. It is not clear why it was expressed in lung.

Modulation of cell types during development. Lipid-laden interstitial cells (LIC) and myofibroblasts are observed in lung during the alveolarization period (279); they are rare in normal adult lung, but reappear during fibrotic response. As noted, LIC synthesize high levels of collagen and myofibroblasts may organize the new matrix.

Role of TGF- β during development. TGF- β is present in high levels in the developing lung (280, 281) and it colocalizes with collagens I and III during branching morphogenesis (282). In targeted gene disruption experiments, TGF- β null mice manifest widespread inflammation, especially in lungs, and die soon after birth (283). However, endogenously produced TGF- β is not absolutely necessary for relatively normal development. There are at least two reasons for this: (i) given the extensive homology among members of the TGF- β family, compensation among the isoforms is possible; and (ii) maternal TGF- β 1 can cross the placenta and rescue a TGF- β 1 null fetus (284).

Fibrosis. Fibrosis, the excessive accumulation of extracellular matrix, is a response to injury and exhibits many characteristics of wound healing. The major phases of wound healing, exemplified by simple dermal wounds, are hemostasis, granulation, and laying down new extracellular matrix. However, the details of the response depend on the nature of the insult. Skin wounds are usually limited in extent and time, but insults to the lung are often continual. Crystal and colleagues have emphasized that one of the cardinal features of lung fibrosis is an ongoing alveolitis (285). The most prominent features of the collagen matrix in fibrotic lung are an increase in total amount, an increase in the amount of collagen I relative to collagen III, and deposition in the interstitium and alveolar spaces (286, 287). Immunofluorescence and *in situ* hybridization studies suggest that fibroblasts in fibrotic lungs are much more active in synthesizing collagen than cells in normal lungs (288, 289). It is not clear what induces a region of lung to enter the fibrotic program rather than recover from an insult. Damage to the alveolar basement membrane sufficient to allow passage of mesenchymal cells into the alveolar space may be the trigger (175, 285, 290–294). For recent reviews of lung fibrosis, consult references (295–298).

Models for fibrosis. Pulmonary fibrosis can be induced in laboratory animals in various ways (296). Intratracheal administration of the chemotherapeutic

agent bleomycin provides an excellent model system for studying fibrosis and has been used extensively (292). Bleomycin has several direct effects on lung cells. For example, it increases mRNA levels of TGF- β , collagen I and collagen III in rat lung fibroblasts (299). This study is very important because it demonstrates a “fibrotic response” that is independent of an inflammatory component. Bleomycin also increases production of TGF- β and IL-6 in lung endothelial cells (300, 301) and of FGF and IL-1 β in alveolar macrophages (302, 303). Several strains of mice are resistant to the fibrogenic effects of bleomycin (304, 305) and continued study of these animals will surely provide additional insights into pathogenesis and potential treatment of the human disease.

Modulation of cell types in fibrosis. Cytokines released locally during the initial stages of injury can be powerful chemoattractants for lung fibroblasts. Interestingly, fibroblast migration in lungs does not seem to have been demonstrated *in vivo*. However, there is clear evidence of fibroblast replication in injured lungs (306). It has been postulated that in the development of fibrosis, clones of high collagen-producing fibroblasts are subject to activation, selective expansion, and differentiation under the influence of cytokines secreted by inflammatory cells, or by interaction with fibronectin or other components of the extracellular matrix (307, 308). The recent report that fibroblasts derived from fibrotic lung tissue can grow in soft agar (i.e., they are anchorage-independent) whereas cells derived from normal tissue cannot, supports the idea of selective expansion (309).

As noted previously, LIC appear during fibrotic response. LIC and hepatic lipocytes are very similar, and consideration of the liver cells can give insight into the nature of the LIC. Normal hepatic lipocytes synthesize mostly collagen III and some collagen I; in contrast, lipocytes from fibrotic tissue synthesize mainly collagen I. These cells proliferate in response to PDGF (310) and IGF-I (311); increase synthesis of collagen I without increasing mRNA when exposed to TNF- α (312); and down-regulate collagen I gene expression in response to IL-1 α (313).

Both Thy1⁺ and Thy1⁻ cells can synthesize IL-6. TNF- α and IL-1 can induce the production of IL-6, which can then amplify the induction of TIMP, thus contributing to the fibrotic response. Although Thy1⁺ cells express higher levels of IL-1 receptor, both populations respond to IL-1 by increasing collagen synthesis. In contrast, Thy1⁺ cells respond to interleukin-4 by proliferating and increasing collagen production, whereas Thy1⁻ cells do not (314). IFN- γ reduces collagen synthesis in these cells. C3H mice, which are resistant to radiation-induced fibrosis, have significantly fewer Thy1⁺ cells than cells from radiation-

sensitive strains (315). There is evidence that Thy1⁺ fibroblasts are selectively increased in radiation-induced fibrosis and these cells may correspond to the LIC observed in this condition (45). Thy1⁻ cells synthesize and secrete IL-1 α , and TNF- α can stimulate this process (44).

An increase in myofibroblasts has been observed in hyperoxia (40) and in fibrosis induced by bleomycin (41, 316, 317) and paraquat (287). Myofibroblasts from fibrotic lungs, which may be Thy1⁻ cells, contain higher levels of TGF- β mRNA than cells from normal lungs (318).

Collagen degradation and fibrosis. Several lines of evidence indicate that collagen degradation is an integral part of the fibrotic process:

- Large numbers of activated macrophages, which secrete collagenase, are present in the initial stages of fibrosis (285).
- Bronchoalveolar lavage fluid from fibrosis patients contains high levels of active collagenase (319).
- Collagen fibrils in interstitium of monkeys exposed to paraquat are frayed and disorganized and appear to be partially digested (287).
- Exposure of lung tissue to 95% O₂ in an organ culture system leads to significant degradation of collagen (320).
- Intracellular collagen degradation is increased in lung fibroblasts exposed to bleomycin (321).
- Although much of the degradation is probably due to the action of collagenase secreted by alveolar macrophages and fibroblasts, there is also evidence, from nonlung systems, that phagocytosis of collagen fibrils is active during remodeling processes (89, 322, 323).

Role of cytokines in lung fibrosis: Potential therapeutic approaches. Cytokines are released from damaged cells and platelets immediately after injury. Inflammatory cells that migrate to the site of injury can secrete proteases capable of releasing growth factors bound to ECM components (324, 325). In addition, cytokines are presented to the tissue by inflammatory cells (e.g., macrophages) recruited to the site of injury. In turn, these cells secrete factors that induce resident cells to migrate to the injury, proliferate, and synthesize collagen and cytokines.

An important, but little understood, concept is "activation" of macrophages in inflamed and fibrotic lungs (326, 327). Cells that are activated in response to various challenges synthesize higher levels of PGE₂ (328) and various cytokines than unstimulated cells, and many of the cytokines are secreted in activated, rather than latent, forms (329). Lipopolysaccharide is commonly used to activate cells *in vitro*. Recently, Laskin *et al.* showed that collagen and collagen frag-

ments (such as might be released when inflammatory cells recruited to the site of an injury secrete proteases) activate alveolar macrophages *in vitro* (330). Activated macrophages lavaged from lungs of patients with interstitial disease (102, 331, 332) or cells from normal volunteers activated *in vitro* by radiation (333) secrete large amounts of IL-1 α/β . TNF- α can be detected in macrophages in normal lungs; in fibrotic lungs, however, alveolar epithelial type 2 cells also show high level expression (334, 335). Macrophages lavaged from fibrotic lungs synthesize PDGF at rates comparable to cells lavaged from normal lungs and activated *in vitro* (218).

TNF- α levels rise in lungs of mice that are susceptible to bleomycin-induced fibrosis, but not in lungs of mice that are genetically resistant (304). Net destruction of tissue in the initial stages would be consistent with IL-1 and TNF- α having dominant effects in stimulating collagenase production. However, it is likely that during the later phase of response to injury these agents participate in exerting net positive effects on collagen production. Skin fibroblasts from scleroderma patients have much higher levels of IL-1 receptor than normal cells, suggesting that cells in fibrotic tissue are more sensitive to the cytokine (336).

Consistent with the results of studies showing that levels of certain cytokines rise before or during fibrotic response, additional studies have shown that interventions that increase cytokine levels in normal animals induce fibrosis. Conversely, inhibiting such increases in animals administered fibrogenic agents can ameliorate the fibrosis. Infusion of TNF- α increases collagen deposition in lung (337), whereas infusion of anti-TNF- α antibodies abrogates fibrotic response in mouse lungs exposed to either bleomycin (338) or silica (337), as well as in lungs of lupus-prone mice (339). Infusions of IL-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1ra) or TNF- α antagonist (recombinant soluble TNF- α receptor) also inhibit fibrosis in mice exposed to bleomycin or silica (340, 341). Administration of antibody against the IL-1 receptor diminishes fibrosis in lungs of rats challenged with bacillus Calmette-Guerin (342). Tyrosine kinase activity increases in lungs of rats exposed to paraquat and in fibroblasts isolated from paraquat-exposed lungs, probably as a result of induction by cytokines (343, 344). Tyrosine kinase inhibitors might prevent the fibrosis (345). Inhibiting the processing of TNF- α from a membrane-bound form to a soluble form protects mice from the lethal effects of endotoxin (346); this maneuver might prevent fibrosis in animals exposed to fibrogenic agents. Administration of anti-PDGF antibodies to rats with mesangial proliferative nephritis inhibited the accompanying fibrosis (347). A similar experiment might show inhibition of pulmonary fibrosis in rats administered bleomycin.

In vivo studies suggest that IL-6 has an antifibrotic effect. As noted, the major effect of IL-6 on collagen metabolism is to stimulate TIMP production. In a murine model of hypersensitivity pneumonitis, infusion of IL-6 lessened fibrosis and infusion of anti-IL-6 antibody increased fibrosis (348). A possible interpretation of this work is that inhibiting collagenase activity during an initial inflammatory stage is sufficient to inhibit the fibrotic sequelae. Initial studies with IFN- γ as an antifibrotic agent are promising. Administration of IFN- γ and IFN- γ inducers to rodents exposed to bleomycin reduced the amount of collagen in the lungs (157, 349, 350). Aerosols can be used to deliver recombinant IFN- γ to alveolar spaces (351).

TGF- β —The “master switch” for the fibrotic program? TGF- β has a central role in fibrosis (183, 352). In an experimental model of lung fibrosis, areas containing activated fibroblasts showed high levels of TGF- β (353). Immunohistochemical analysis of human fibrotic lung tissue revealed TGF- β concentrated in regenerating epithelium (354). Mice that are genetically resistant to bleomycin-induced fibrosis have much lower levels of TGF- β than susceptible mice (304, 305, 355). Zugmaier *et al.* injected large amounts of TGF- β into nude mice and found it was taken up by the lungs and other organs and caused a generalized interstitial fibrosis (356). Converse experiments have also been carried out: Antibodies against TGF- β effectively prevented fibrosis in lungs of mice exposed to bleomycin (357) and ameliorated the fibrotic response in mice challenged with bacillus Calmette-Guerin and diminished the amounts of IL-1 β and TNF- α in the lungs (358).

In addition to activating and maintaining a generalized fibrotic response, TGF- β , secreted first by invading macrophages and then by resident epithelial and mesenchymal cells, might also inhibit repair of alveolar epithelium. It is known, for example, that low concentrations of TGF- β stimulate proliferation, and inhibit differentiation of alveolar epithelial cells (359). High concentrations of TGF- β may inhibit both proliferation and differentiation of epithelial cells (360). Furthermore, TGF- β stimulates production of basement-membrane-degrading collagenase (361, 362). A consequence of these processes would be continual access of interstitial cells to, and deposition of collagen within, alveolar spaces.

On the basis of this experimental evidence, we propose that TGF- β functions as a master switch that activates an entire “fibrotic program” (Fig. 6). (It should be noted that Sharma and Ziyadeh present a similar argument for the role of TGF- β in renal disease [363].) Although this scheme accounts for much of the experimental data, there are still large gaps in our knowledge of the role of TGF- β in fibrosis. One piece

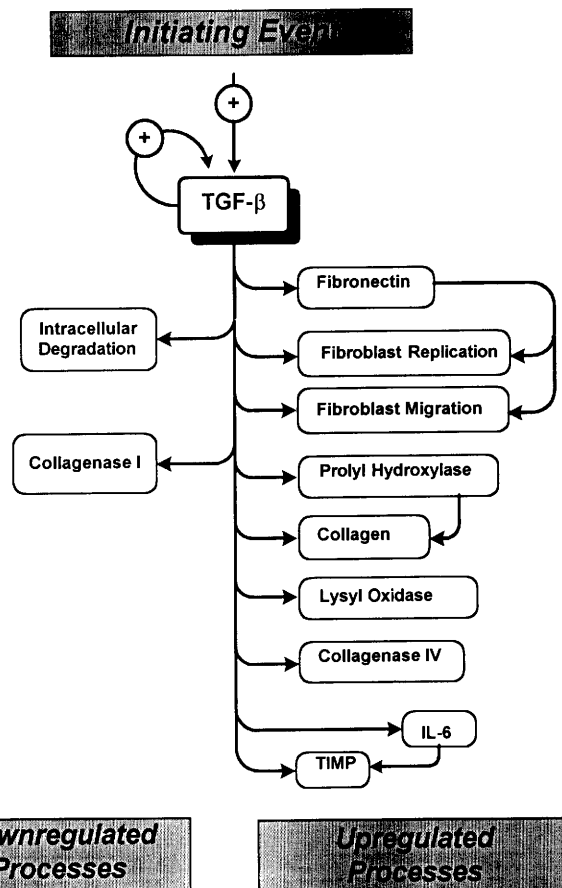


Figure 6. TGF- β , the “master switch” for the fibrotic program.

of important information that is missing from this picture is how TGF- β receptor levels are regulated during fibrosis. (Crouch presents a very interesting discussion of this point [293].) Information on changes in TGF- β receptors is scanty, and none relates directly to lung (364, 365). Also not known is whether the isoforms of TGF- β are modulated in fibrosis. The relative amounts of TGF- β isoforms can vary in a tissue, depending on its state (172). For example, TGF- β 1 is observed in regenerating dermis after burn injury, but not in pressure wounds (366). It is also interesting to speculate whether TGF- β selectively stimulates expansion of fibroblast clones with constitutively high capacity for collagen synthesis and reduced sensitivity to PGE.

As noted previously, TGF- β is secreted in a latent form and must be activated before it can exert an effect. Alveolar macrophages from rats exposed to bleomycin secrete active TGF- β 1, whereas cells from control animals secrete small quantities of the inactive form (367). Rodent macrophages exposed *in vitro* to bleomycin secrete inactive TGF- β (368). The situation appears different in humans. Shaw *et al.* reported that TGF- β mRNA levels were similar in alveolar macrophages from patients with interstitial lung disease and normal volunteers (267).

The scheme presented in Figure 6 does not take account of time. It is not clear that all the processes depicted can be regulated simultaneously in the manner depicted. Finally, it should be noted that TGF- β is synthesized by both inflammatory and interstitial cells, and Figure 6 does not show how the cell types might interact.

Fibril formation. Formation of new fibrils may be extremely difficult in the fibrotic environment because of the constant production of collagenase by inflammatory cells in the lungs (369). However, Last *et al.* found that there is very little turnover of mature (cross-linked) collagen in fibrotic lung (370). A possible explanation is that the collagenase acts on relatively "young" collagen that has not been incorporated into cross-linked structures. Recently, Pinnell and colleagues reported that minoxidil can inhibit formation of covalent crosslinks. This drug may be useful in treating fibrosis (371).

Erosion. Chronic inflammation of the lung leads to a generalized erosion of connective tissue (372). It is widely accepted that an important cause of emphysema is the imbalance between elastase production and inhibition in lung. However, Snider and colleagues have pointed out that an emphysema-like morphology can be induced experimentally without disrupting elastic fibers (373), and Laurent has raised the possibility that an emphysema-like condition can result from degradation of other matrix elements such as collagen (374). Moreover, as noted previously, chronic expression in lung of a transgene coding for collagenase leads to morphologic changes similar to those seen in emphysema (278).

Mice bearing the tight-skin mutation (*tsk*) exhibit a histologic picture resembling both scleroderma, with excessive accumulation of collagen in skin (375) and heart (376), and emphysema, with dilated air spaces and destruction of alveolar walls (377). There is disagreement about whether unmodulated activity of elastase is the cause of the pathology (378–381). Of particular note, Gardi *et al.* observed localized accumulation of collagen, as assessed histologically, but only a moderate increase as measured biochemically (382). They attributed this effect to a continuing process of collagen degradation in the lungs of the *tsk* mice.

An erosion program. It is much more difficult to define an erosion program than it was to define the fibrotic program. Nevertheless, experimental studies in lung and other systems suggest that IL-1, TNF- α , and PGE could mediate a generalized degradative response in which cell replication is inhibited, collagen synthesis and TIMP production are decreased, and collagenase production and intracellular degradation are decreased. Unchecked production of PGE may be

the hallmark of this condition in a way similar to the central role of TGF- β in fibrosis.

Pneumonectomy. The changes in collagen and other extracellular matrix components following unilateral pneumonectomy have been described for rabbits and rodents (383–385). The pneumonectomy response recapitulates some features of normal development, in particular, the burst of collagen synthesis that accompanies the multiplication of alveoli in rabbits (384) and the expansion of alveoli in mice (385). A very interesting aspect of the compensatory growth process is the increase in inflammatory cells and levels of certain cytokines (notably IGF-I) in a manner similar, but not identical, to the response to other kinds of insult (386). Compensatory lung growth may be considered a response to injury, and from this point of view, one might expect increases in TGF- β and TNF- α , at least during the early stages of growth.

Steady State. In the steady state, the processes of collagen metabolism are generally quiescent. In the adult lung, collagen production is very low (270), and fibroblasts do not actively synthesize collagen (42). As noted previously, macrophages recovered from normal rat lungs secrete small amounts of inactive TGF- β (367). This is not to say that nothing is happening. Although Last *et al.* did not detect turnover of mature (cross-linked) collagen in adult lung (387), Laurent and colleagues demonstrated high levels of collagen turnover in lung from adult animals (388–390). A possible explanation for this apparent discrepancy is that the newly synthesized collagen is degraded rapidly, rather than incorporated into cross-linked fibrils.

As indicated earlier, TGF- β and PGE2 have a complex interaction. TGF- β stimulates PGE2 production in lung fibroblasts, whereas PGE2 abrogates the stimulatory effect of TGF- β upon collagen production (176). This interaction may be part of a feedback control system to regulate the level of collagen production at the steady state. In such a scheme, IFN- γ , which inhibits collagen synthesis and collagenase synthesis, may play the role of a "balance-seeking" regulator.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Several questions about control of collagen deposition in lung are unresolved and strike us as particularly interesting and meriting further investigation:

- How are fibrils formed in normal and fibrotic lung, and what is the role of the connective tissue cells in constructing the fibrils?
- How are the powerful effects of PGE, which seems to be ubiquitously produced and which inhibits collagen production, overcome in making the transition to a fibrotic state?

- What is the mechanism of action of PGE in controlling collagen production? Does it operate via cyclic AMP, or by another pathway that is independent of cyclic AMP?
- How are receptors for TGF- β regulated during fibrotic response?
- How do cytokine levels change during response to pneumonectomy?

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