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Structures of Glycoprotein Ibα and Its Complex with von Willebrand Factor A1 Domain

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Transient interactions of platelet-receptor glycoprotein Ib α (GpIb α) and the plasma protein von Willebrand factor (VWF) reduce platelet velocity at sites of vascular damage and play a role in haemostasis and thrombosis. Here we present structures of the GpIb α amino-terminal domain and its complex with the VWF domain A1. In the complex, GpIb α wraps around one side of A1, providing two contact areas bridged by an area of solvated charge interaction. The structures explain the effects of gain-of-function mutations related to bleeding disorders and provide a model for shear-induced activation. These detailed insights into the initial interactions in platelet adhesion are relevant to the development of antithrombotic drugs.

Transient interactions of platelet-receptor glycoprotein Ib α (GpIb α) and immobilized von Willebrand factor (VWF) mediate the rolling of platelets at sites of vascular damage. Rolling reduces platelet velocity and prolongs the contact time with reactive components of the cell matrix. This facilitates platelet activation and subsequent integrinmediated firm attachment (1). Platelet GpIb α and VWF coexist in the circulation but do not interact at a detectable level unless shear stress is applied or exogenous modulators like the snake venom botrocetin are added (2). Four types of congenital bleeding disorders have been defined that are caused by mutations in GpIb α or VWF, either enhancing or reducing complex formation. Shearinduced GpIb α -VWF interaction in occluded atherosclerotic arteries or at the surface of ruptured atherosclerotic plaques contributes critically to the onset of arterial thrombosis (3).

GpIb α is the central component of a receptor complex consisting of glycoproteins Ib α and Ib β , IX, and V. It anchors the complex to the cytoskeleton and harbors the VWF-binding function in its ~290 NH₂-terminal residues. The VWF-binding site is exposed well above the platelet surface, being connected to a ~45-nm-long highly O-glycosylated stalk (4). The ~250-kD VWF protein

ing material on *Science* Online, the namenamicin standard has a retention time of 18.3 min. This compound also displays strong activity in both the BIA (biochemical lambda prophage induction) and the MBL ("molecular break lights") assays (J. B. Biggins, unpublished data).

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Materials and Methods Fig. S1

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forms large disulfide-bonded multimers with molecular sizes of up to 10 MD. It is found in plasma and the subendothelial cell matrix and is released from storage granules when plate-lets and endothelial cells are activated. A VWF multimer acts as the bridging ligand between platelets and the cell matrix through collagen binding by its A3 domain and through GpIb α binding by its A1 domain (5).

Although the crystal structure of VWF-A1 is known (6, 7) and there is a large body of mutagenesis data (8-15), the precise interactions between GpIb α and A1, the mechanism of shear-induced activation, and the molecular basis of related bleeding disorders are poorly understood. We present crystal structures of the NH2-terminal domain of GpIba (residues 1 to 290) and its complex with the VWF-A1 domain (residues 498 to 705; VWF residue numbering used here starts at the first residue of the mature subunit, and the addition of 763 converts the numbering to that of preproVWF) (Table 1). We expressed recombinant GpIb α with the mutations N21Q and N159Q to remove N-glycosylation sites (16). Crystallization of the complex required the use of gain-of-function mutants GpIba-M239V and A1-R543Q, which are associated with platelet-type and type 2B von Willebrand diseases and cause an enhanced affinity for complex formation [dissociation constant $(K_{\rm d}) = 5.8 \text{ nM} (16)$].

The crystal structure of the VWF-binding domain of GpIb α displays an elongated, curved shape (Fig. 1A) that is typical for proteins containing leucine-rich repeats (17). Eight short leucine-rich repeats, seven of which were predicted on the basis of the amino acid sequence, make up the central region of the molecule. Flanking sequences, which are conserved among numerous extracellular proteins including the other members of the GpIb-IX-V com-

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plex, cap the leucine-rich repeats. The NH_2 terminal sequence forms a 14-residue β hairpin delimited by a conserved disulfide bond between Cys⁴ and Cys¹⁷. The tip of the β hairpin, which we refer to as the β finger, protrudes from the protein surface and is disordered in one of the two molecules in the asymmetric unit. The COOH-terminal sequence, up to residue 267, contains a nine-residue α helix and four short 3_{10} helices. The anionic region beyond residue

267 was not visible in the electron density and was not modeled. Conserved disulfide bonds between Cys^{209} and Cys^{248} and between Cys^{211} and Cys^{264} stabilize the irregular fold of the COOH-terminal region. Residues 227 to 241



Fig. 1. Structures of the VWF-binding domain of Gplb α and the complex of Gplb α with the A1 domain of VWF. (A) Ribbon representation of GpIb α . The NH₂-terminal β hairpin, called β finger, is colored blue; the eight leucine-rich repeats are green. The COOH-terminal flanking region is colored red and contains a disordered loop (residues 227 to 241) called β switch. Disulfide bridges are indicated in yellow ball-and-stick representation. (B) Stereo view of a ribbon representation of the Gplba-A1 complex. Gplba is shown in green and A1 in blue, with mutations GpIb α -M239V and A1-R543Q shown in red and the disulfide bridge in A1 shown in yellow ball-andstick representation. The β switch of GpIb α adopts a B-hairpin structure that aligns with the central β sheet of A1. Single-letter abbreviations for the amino acid residues are as follows: A, Ala; C, Cys; D, Asp; E, Glu; F, Phe; G, Gly; H, His; I, Ile; K, Lys; L, Leu; M, Met; N, Asn; P, Pro; Q, Gln; R, Arg; S, Ser; T, Thr; V, Val; W, Trp; and Y, Tyr. (C) Stereo representation of residues at the A1-Gplb α interface, excluding residues located in the β switch of GpIb α and strand β 3 of A1. Residues involved in intermolecular contacts shorter than 4.0 Å are shown in stick representation; they form two sites of tight contact separated by an area of solvated interactions. Lys⁵⁴⁹, Trp⁵⁵⁰, and Arg⁵⁷¹ of A1 that contact the β finger and the first leucine-rich repeat of $Gplb\alpha$ are disordered, showing reduced electron density for their side chains. (D) Stereo view showing a closeup of the β switch and its interaction with strand B3 of A1. Main-chain hydrogen bonds are shown by dotted lines. Amino acids that are known to have gain-of-function mutations related to platelet-type von Willebrand disease and that are likely to induce β-hairpin formation in the β switch of GpIb α are labeled in red.



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project from the concave face of the molecule, forming a highly flexible loop that shows disorder in both molecules in the asymmetric unit. A sequence alignment of COOH-terminal-flanking regions (18) showed that the protruding loop is not a conserved feature in this domain family.

The crystal structure of the complex GpIba-VWF-A1 shows that the globular A1 domain interacts with the concave face of GpIba (Fig. 1B). The interaction surface is extended but discontinuous, comprising two distinct areas of tight interactions (Fig. 1C). The first and most extensive contact site is located near the top of A1 and buries a solvent-accessible surface of ~1700 Å². At this contact site, leucine-rich repeats 5 to 8 and the COOH-terminal flank of GpIb α interact with A1 helix α 3, loop α 3 β 4, and strand β 3 (Fig. 1, C and D). The second and smaller contact site buries a surface of ~900 Å² and involves interactions of the NH₂-terminal β finger and the first leucine-rich repeat of GpIb α with loops $\alpha 1\beta 2$, $\beta 3\alpha 2$, and $\alpha 3\beta 4$ at the bottom face of the A1 domain. As for the native structure of GpIb α , we did not observe the electron density for the COOH-terminal anionic region of GpIb α in the complex. This was unexpected, because this region affects rolling of GpIbaexpressing Chinese hamster ovary cells over VWF (19) but is consistent with our observation that the anionic region has no notable effect on binding to VWF-A1 (16).

The flexible loop from 227 to 241 in the COOH-terminal flank of GpIba undergoes a conformational change on complex formation. In the complex, this loop, which we call the β switch, forms a 16-residue B hairpin that extends from residues 227 to 242 and aligns with the β 3 strand of A1 (residues 562 to 566), forming a continuous β sheet shared between the two molecules (Fig. 1D). The gain-of-function mutations related to platelet-type von Willebrand disease are all found in the β switch. The specific mutation M239V that we used to obtain crystals of the complex enhances binding about threefold and is located in the β -switch strand that directly hydrogen-bonds to β 3 of A1. Val²³⁹ provides two intermolecular main-chain hydrogen bonds, and its side chain contacts Tyr⁶⁰⁰ of helix α 3 in A1. On the basis of the structure, similar interactions with methionine in the wild-type protein may be expected. Other known gain-of-function mutations include G233V, which like M239V is detected in patients with platelet-type von Willebrand disease (20, 21); and V234G, D235V, and K237V, which were identified by site-directed mutagenesis (14, 15). Four of the five gain-of-function mutations involve amino acid substitutions known to stabilize β-hairpin structures by introducing either a CB-branched residue in the strands (G233V, M239V, and K237V) or a glycine residue in the tight turn (V234G) (22). The mutation M239V increases the association rate threefold and hardly affects the dissociation rate, which is consistent with the stabilization of the β hairpin priming the mutant GpIb α for binding to A1. Unclear at this stage is how D235V, at the second position in the tight turn, induces β -hairpin formation and enhances the binding affinity. However, the locations of all five mutations support an indirect mechanism by influencing the conformation, because the side chains have either no or few direct contacts to A1 in the complex. Other value substitutions in this region (K231V, Q232V, A238V, and T240V) that reduce binding affinity (15) may be explained in part by steric hindrance (Q232V and A238V) and by loss of a hydrogen bond with Asp⁵⁶⁰ of A1 (T240V). Overall, we conclude that the conformational equilibrium of the β switch of GpIb α is a critical factor in the precisely balanced affinity of the interacting partners.



Fig. 2. Stereo representation of structural changes at the NH₂- and COOH-terminal side of VWF-A1. The bottom face of the A1 domain, as observed in the complex with Gplb α , is shown in space-filling representation with the NH₂- and COOH-terminal peptides shown as C α -traces in yellow. The position of the β finger of Gplb α is given by a C α -trace in green. The C α -traces of the NH₂- and COOH-terminal peptides of the uncomplexed, wild-type (wt) A1 domain (7) are shown in red. Residues with known gain-of-function mutations yielding a type 2B von Willebrand disease phenotype are shown either in ball-and-stick representation in the wt NH₂- or COOH-terminal peptides of A1 possibly shield the binding site of the β finger of Gplb α .

Table 1. Data collection and refinement statistics. Data were collected on beamline ID14-2 at the ESRF and on beamline X11 at the EMBL outstation [Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron (DESY)]. Data were processed with DENZO and SCALEPACK (*26*). Structures were solved in conjunction by molecular replacement. A model of A1 (7) was placed in the unit cell of the complex with CNS (*27*). Solvent flattening with CNS revealed β strands of GpIb α leucine-rich repeats. A mask was constructed around the putative GpIb α molecule, and the electron density inside the mask was used for molecular replacement with AMoRe (*28*). This identified two molecules in the asymmetric unit of the GpIb α crystal. Improved electron density obtained after density modification and phase extension to 2.5 Å was used for model building with O (*29*). The model was refined at 1.8 Å resolution with CNS and then used, with the model of A1 (7), as the starting point for refinement of the GpIb α -A1 complex. Refinement included bulk solvent correction and calculation of R_{free} with 5% of the reflections. The structures of GpIb α and the GpIb α -A1 complex have been deposited in the Protein Data Bank with ID numbers 1MOZ and 1M10, respectively.

	GpIbα (ESRF)	Gplbα-A1 (DESY)
	Data collection statistics*	
Space group	C2	P61
Unit cell dimensions (Å, °)	a = 121.5, b = 54.5, c = 101.8, β = 103.7	a = b = 89.8, c = 124.6
Resolution (Å)	40.0-1.85 (1.9-1.85)	40.0-3.1 (3.2-3.1)
Completeness (%)	97.8 (80.8)	99.9 (99.9)
Mosaicity (°)	0.4	0.2
Redundancy	3.6 (2.4)	5.8 (5.4)
$R_{marga}(\%)$	7.3 (33.7)	8.7 (48.0)
l/σ ₁	16.3 [°] (2.9 [°])	19.3 (3.6)
	Refinement statistics	
R _{factor} (%)	18.7	23.4
R _{free} (%)	21.7	29.6
No. of protein atoms	4115 (dimer)	3690
No. of waters	687	0
rmsd bonds (Å)	0.005	0.009
rmsd angles (°)	1.3	1.6

*Values in parentheses are for the highest resolution shell.

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The gain-of-function mutations related to type 2B von Willebrand disease are clustered at the bottom face of A1 (Fig. 2), adjacent to the interaction site with the β finger of GpIb α . Type 2B mutation R543Q, which we used in the structure determination of the complex, is located 20 Å away from the interaction site. It causes a \sim 2.5-fold increase in binding affinity of the isolated A1 domain. However, the affinity of the wild-type A1 domain $[K_d \sim 30 \text{ nM} (16)]$ is already much higher than the affinity of multimeric VWF, for which we do not detect any binding up to a concentration of 150 nM. Similarly, other studies have indicated that the affinity depends on the length of the A1-containing VWF fragment used [see for example (9)]. Therefore, the A1 domain used for crystallization lacks key structural elements that suppress GpIb α binding in multimeric VWF. In the crystal structure of the wild-type A1 domain (7), the NH₂- and COOH-termini approach the β-finger interaction site (Fig. 2), suggesting that longer terminal peptides could shield the binding site of the ß finger in multimeric VWF. Type 2B mutations are likely to destabilize a network of interactions observed between the bottom face of A1 and its terminal peptides in the wild-type A1 structure (7), thereby making the binding site accessible. In the complex, we indeed observed a displacement of the termini away from the interaction site and a partial disordering of the NH₂-terminus. In comparison, the homologous integrin I-type domains bind their ligands at a different site, and the large conformational changes observed on ligand binding in I-do-



Fig. 3. Electrostatic surface potentials of the A1 domain of VWF and Gplb α . Potentials were calculated for the individual molecules. The surface is colored blue for potentials > 6 kT/e and red for potentials <-6 kT/e. The C α -traces of the partner molecules in the complex are shown in white for clarity. The areas of large electrostatic potentials at the interface of A1 and Gplb α coincide with the region of loose, solvent-mediated contacts between the two molecules. Calculations were performed with GRASP (30).

mains (23) do not occur in A1. The mechanism of affinity modulation in the A1 domain is therefore different from that of I-type domains and likely involves conformational changes at the NH_2 - and COOH-termini. Shear stress may induce these changes in immobilized VWF, causing activation in the platelet adhesion process.

The electrostatic surface potentials of GpIb α and A1 are characterized by large patches of opposite charge at the GpIb α -A1 interface that induce long-range electrostatic attraction (Fig. 3). In addition to the positively charged patch at the interface. Al also shows a large negatively charged patch on the opposite side of the domain. Possibly, the asymmetric charge distribution on A1 helps to steer the long-range interactions. Crystal structures of P- and E-selectins, proteins that mediate rolling of leukocytes over inflamed endothelium, in complex with their ligands sialyl Lewis^X or a sulfated peptide from PSGL-1 also indicated dominant electrostatic interactions (24). However, in the GpIb α -A1 complex, residues making up the charge potentials at the interface are not involved in direct contacts but are either fully or partially solvated. Thus, it appears that the surfaces of A1 and GpIb α are organized for long-range electrostatic attraction, avoiding the energetically unfavorable desolvation of charged residues (25) in the formation of the final complex.

The Bernard-Soulier syndrome and type 2M von Willebrand disease are characterized by loss-of-function mutations in GpIb α and VWF-A1, respectively. Loss-of-function mutations in the VWF-binding domain of GpIba occur at buried sites (L57F, C65R, L129P, and A156V) or in a disulfide bond (C209S) and are likely to disturb the structural integrity of the domain, causing a reduction in binding affinity. Numerous loss-of-function mutations that were detected in von Willebrand disease type 2M patients (8) or identified by site-directed mutagenesis (9-13) are scattered throughout the A1 domain. Sixteen loss-of-function mutations involve residues in or directly next to the GpIb α -binding site, whereas 10 occur at buried positions inside the A1 domain and are likely to disrupt the A1 structure or to induce conformational changes to A1 that are incompatible with binding to GpIb α . The remaining 14 mutations are scattered over the surface outside the observed GpIba-binding site, and their effects cannot be explained on the basis of the structure of the A1-GpIb α complex.

Our data suggest that GpIb α and VWF are attracted by long-range electrostatic interactions and indicate two contact sites in the final complex, which present primary targets for development of drugs for the treatment or prevention of arterial thrombosis. Interaction at the larger contact site depends on conformational changes in the β switch of GpIb α , whereas the second, smaller site most likely requires the dislodging of the termini of the A1 domain to uncover the site of interaction. Mutations that cause gain-of-function diseases favor the bound conformation at both contact sites. It is conceivable that under physiological conditions shear stress on immobilized VWF displaces the termini of the A1 domain, exposing the second binding site and hence enhancing platelet association to the site of vascular damage.

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Materials and Methods

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