

AID-induced insertions and deletions complement point mutations to massively expand the diversity created by somatic hypermutation of antibodies

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Abstract

During somatic hypermutation (SHM), deamination of cytidine by activation-induced cytidine deaminase (AID) and subsequent DNA repair generates mutations within immunoglobulin V-regions. Nucleotide insertion and deletions (indels) have recently been shown to be critical for the evolution of antibody binding. We analyzed the affinity maturation of 53 antibodies using *in vitro* SHM in a non-B cell context and compared mutation patterns with SHM *in vivo*. The origin, frequency and location of indels observed during *in vitro* affinity maturation is similar to that observed *in vivo*. Indels are localized to CDRs and AID hotspots and secondary mutations within insertions further optimize antigen binding. Structural determination and analysis of an antibody matured *in vitro* and comparison with human derived antibodies containing insertions reveals conserved patterns of antibody maturation. These findings indicate that AID acting on V region sequences is sufficient to initiate authentic formation of indels *in vitro* and *in vivo*, and that point mutations, indel formation and clonal selection form a robust, tripartite system for antibody evolution.

Samples

In vitro SHM coupled with mammalian cell display of full-length IgGs was used to affinity mature 39 human germline antibodies, and 14 CDR-grafted antibodies directed against 21 unique antigens. Sanger sequencing was performed during each round of maturation

Antibodies were sequenced from cell populations without AID as a negative control for potential sequencing and technology related errors

In order to characterize the unbiased spectrum of indels created by AID *in vitro*, samples from cells co-expressing AID with a HC/LC pair in the absence of selection for improved antigen binding were sequenced using Illumina

To characterize the indel repertoire of antibodies *in vivo*, normal human PBMC samples composed of both immature and mature B cells were sequenced using NGS and high quality reads were mapped to the closest human germline V-region sequence

Table 1: Sequence analysis of SHM *in vivo* and *in vitro*

	In vitro SHM, no selection	In vitro, No AID	In vitro SHM, with selection	In vivo NGS
HC Samples	18	3	132	68
Reads	1,672,921	363,535	143,329	285,331
Indels	113	0	54	1,173
LC Samples	16	NA	132	1
Reads	1,419,998	NA	118,762	197,374
Indels	91	NA	51	658

Statistics shown for Indels ≥ 3 bp in length;; signal peptide excluded from *in vivo* and *in vitro* analysis for both indels and mutations; * indicates the number of sites that show a statistically significant number of mutations relative to that predicted by site specific sequence quality metrics and accompanying error model; # indicates the number of individual mutations observed when comparing reads with their germline V gene. Indel analysis not performed for *in vivo* human IgG dataset from NCBI

References

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Bowers PM, et al. Coupling mammalian cell surface display with somatic hypermutation for the discovery and maturation of human antibodies (2011) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci USA* 108(51), 20455-20460.

Sale JE, and Neuberger MS TdT-Accessible breaks are scattered of the immunoglobulin V domain in a constitutively hypermutating B cell line (1998) *Immunity* 9, 859-869.

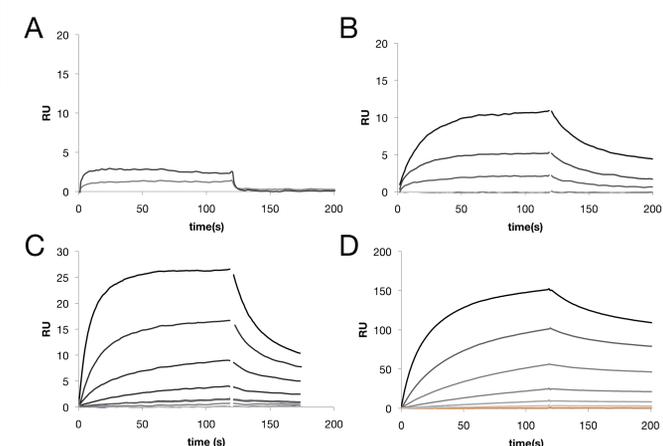
Briney BS, Willis JR and Crowe Jr JE Location and length distribution of somatic hypermutation-associated DNA insertions and deletions reveals regions of antibody structural plasticity (2012) *Genes and Immunity* 1,1-7

Figure 1 A spectrum of related indels are generated during *in vitro* SHM affinity maturation of an antibody to anti-hβNGF



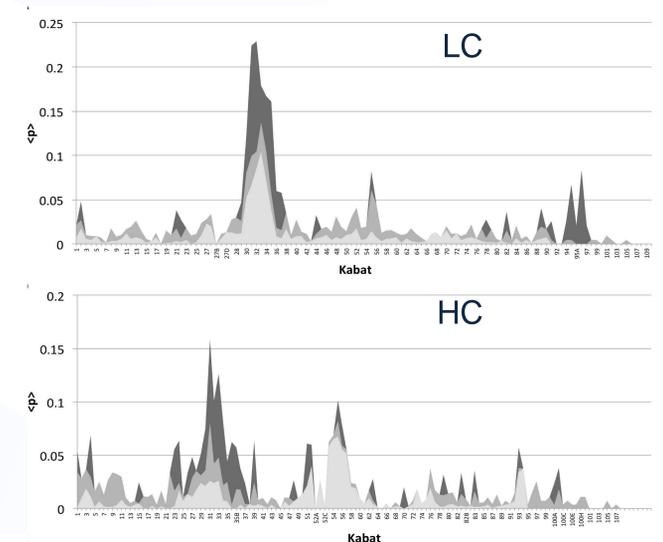
V sequences are shown containing unique insertions recovered during *in vitro* affinity maturation for the HC of an anti-hβNGF antibody. Amino acid sequences shown are on top and the respective DNA sequence below. CDRH1 regions are highlighted with a box, originating sequence is shown in light gray, inserted sequence in black, and point mutations from the parental sequence shown in dark grey.

Figure 2 Multiple, related indels identified by *in vitro* AIM result in significant improvement in antigen binding



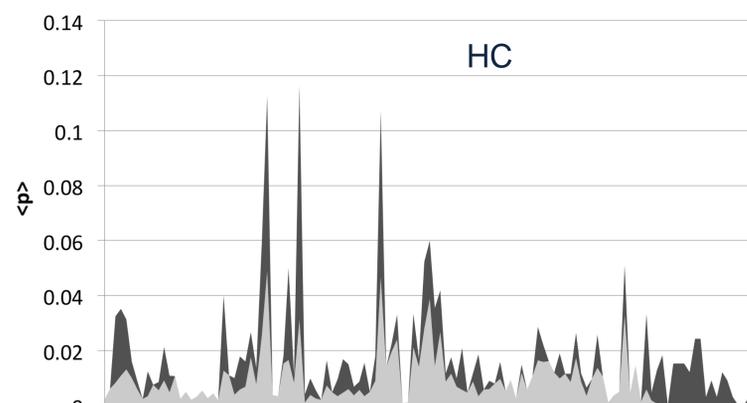
Improvement of antigen binding affinity for anti-hβNGF antibodies containing CDRH1 insertions, respectively. SPR sensorgrams for (A) an anti-hβNGF human antibody containing two point mutations, S31N and L45F; (B, C, D) the same antibody with incorporated insertions derived from *in vitro* SHM (corresponding to Figure 1B HC4-HC6). No non-specific binding was observed for these antibodies.

Figure 3 Distribution of indels in *in vivo* and *in vitro* Abs



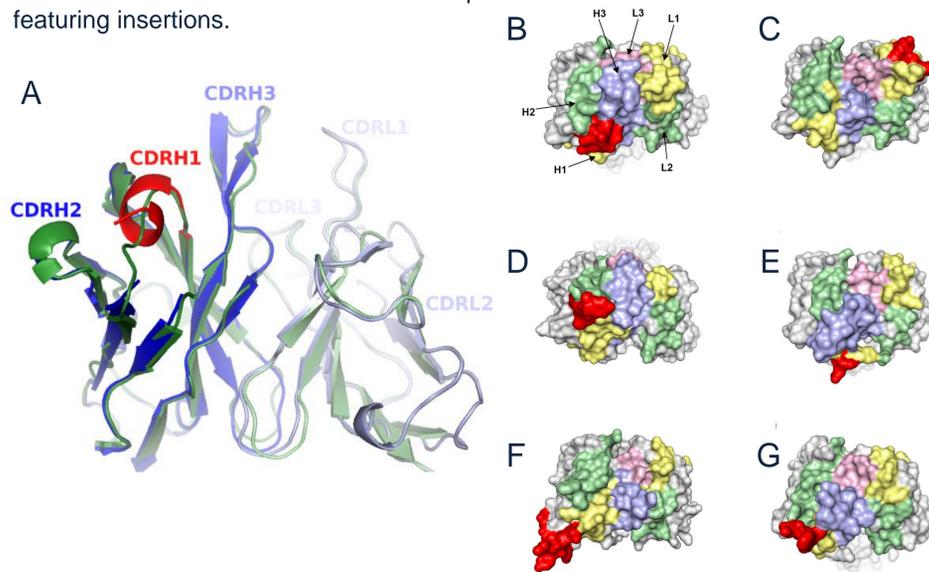
Indel distribution in variable regions of antibodies subjected to *in vitro* AID without maturation (dark gray), *in vitro* AID with maturation in 53 antibodies derived from human and mouse sources (black), compared to *in vivo* data for immature and mature B cells (light gray).

Figure 4 Distribution of point mutations in *in vivo* and *in vitro* Abs



The distribution of point mutations observed in the variable regions of antibodies subjected to *in vitro* AID with antigen binding selection for 53 antibodies derived from human and mouse sources (black; n=330 non-synonymous mutations), compared to *in vivo* data for immature and mature B cells (light gray; n=63549 non-synonymous mutations).

Figure 5 Fab crystal structures of an anti-human βNGF antibody with and without a 9 amino acid insertion in CDRH1. Comparison with PDB structures of antibodies featuring insertions.



(A) Cartoon representation of the superimposed structures of the variable domains with and without CDRH1 insertion. (B-G) Molecular surface representation of the Fab fragment crystal structures of human antibodies with distinct specificities featuring insertions ranging from 4 to 9 amino acids. (B) APE1551, an anti-hβNGF antibody with a 9 residue insert in; (C) bH1, a dual specific antibody to HER2 and VEGF, 4 residue insert in CDRL1 (3BDY, [Bostrom 2009]); (D) PGT127, an anti-gp120 antibody, 6 residue insert in CDRH1, 4 residue deletion in CDRL1 (3TWC, [Pejchal 2011]); (E) C05, an anti-haemagglutinin antibody, 5 residue insert in CDRH1 (4FP8, [Ekiert 2012]); (F) VRC06, an anti-gp120 antibody, 7 residue insert in heavy chain FR3, 1 residue deletion in CDRL1 (4JB9, [Georgiev 2013]); (G) PGT135, an anti-gp120 antibody, 5 residue insert in CDRH1 (4JM2, [Kong 2013]).

Conclusions

Indels are associated with SHM *in vivo* and *in vitro*, but were not observed in the absence of AID

Multiple, sequence related indels are often generated during maturation to an antigen *in vitro*

Indel formation and point mutations are biased toward the complementarity-determining regions and AID hotspots at positions expected to result in changes in binding affinity

Indels occur with a similar frequency and length distribution *in vivo* and *in vitro*

Structure determination of an antibody with and without an *in vitro* SHM-derived *in vitro* showed no large scale structural perturbations, and comparison of with PDB structures containing indels shows conserved patterns of augmentation to extend the the antigen recognition surface