αv-INTEGRINS IN HUMAN MELANOMA: GAIN OF αvβ3 AND LOSS OF αvβ5 ARE RELATED TO TUMOR PROGRESSION IN SITU BUT NOT TO METASTATIC CAPACITY OF CELL LINES IN NUDE MICE


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We investigated the expression of αv-integrins in different stages of human cutaneous melanocytic tumor progression. We observed that αvβ3 was the αv-integrin expressed in all common nevocellular nevi, in 76% of dysplastic nevi, in 53% of early primary melanomas, in 33% of advanced primary melanomas, and in 33% of melanoma metastases. Hence, loss of αvβ3 expression was related to melanocytic tumor progression. In line with earlier reports, αvβ3 was exclusively detected in advanced primary melanomas and metastases (24% and 50% respectively). Staining with anti-αv monoclonal antibodies (MAbs) in lesions, where both αvβ3 and αvβ5 were absent showed that alternative αv-integrins were expressed in advanced primary melanomas and metastases. By FACS analysis, we determined expression of αvβ3 and αvβ5 in human melanoma cell lines with different metastatic capacities after s.c. inoculation into nude mice. One of the non-metastatic and both highly metastatic cell lines expressed αvβ3 at their surface. Surprisingly, αvβ3 was detected exclusively in the non-metastatic cell lines. Absence of αvβ3 in the highly metastatic cell lines was confirmed by lack of immunoprecipitation from S35-methionine-labeled cells and by absence of immunohistochemical staining on primary and metastatic xenograft lesions. Our findings indicate that αvβ3 expression is often lost in advanced stages of melanocytic tumor progression in situ, while αvβ3 is acquired, but that a decrease in αvβ3 and an increase in αvβ5 expression are not necessarily related to the metastatic behavior of human melanoma cells in nude mice.

The extracellular matrix (ECM) regulates a number of cellular processes, while integrins link the ECM to structural elements in the cell and play a role as signalling receptors (Hynes, 1992). Therefore, it is likely that integrins can mediate ECM control of cell growth, migration and invasion. These processes play an important role in tumorigenecity and metastasis formation and integrins have indeed been shown to be involved in both occurrences (Juliano and Varner, 1993).

In human melanoma, integrins have been shown to be involved in tumor growth and metastatic spread (Mortarini and Anichini, 1993). For melanocytic tumor progression in situ, changes in the expression of several integrins have been reported, including acquired expression of αvβ3 in the vertical growth phase of primary melanomas and in metastases (Abeldano et al., 1990). The αv-subunit of this integrin, however, can be associated with several different β-subunits in melanoma cells in vitro (Marshall et al., 1991) and is expressed in all stages of melanocytic tumor progression in situ (Danen et al., 1994). In this study we have investigated expression of αv-integrins in cutaneous melanocytic lesions and in a panel of human melanoma cell lines with different metastatic capacities in nude mice.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Lesions

Specimens were obtained from patients at the University Hospital, Nijmegen, The Netherlands and at the University Hospital, Würzburg, Germany. Based on histopathologic examination of paraffin sections, lesions were divided into 5 classes: common nevocellular nevus (NN) (n = 19), dysplastic (atypical) nevus (DN; De Wit et al., 1993) (n = 9), early primary melanoma (tumor thickness ≤ 1.5 mm; ePM) (n = 8), advanced primary melanoma (tumor thickness > 1.5 mm; aPM) (n = 21) and melanoma metastasis (MM) (n = 24). Representative samples were snap-frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at −80°C until sectioning.

Cell lines and culture conditions

The melanoma cell lines used included: IF6 (Van Muijen et al., 1991a), 530 (Versteeg et al., 1988), BLM (Van Muijen et al., 1991a), MV3 (Van Muijen et al., 1991b) and Mel57 (Van Muijen et al., 1991a). All cell lines were cultured in Dulbecco’s modified Eagle’s medium (DMEM; Flow, Irvine, UK) supplemented with 10% FCS, penicillin and streptomycin.

Monoclonal antibodies

The anti-integrin MAbs used were: 4B4 anti-pl (Morimoto et al., 1985) (Coulter, Hialeah, FL), LM142 anti-αv and LM609 anti-αvβ3 (Cheresh and Spiro, 1987) (kind gifts from Dr. D. Cheresh, La Jolla, CA), 13C2 anti-αv and 23C6 anti-αvβ3 (Davies et al., 1989) (kind gifts from Dr. M. Horton, London, UK), and P1F6 anti-αvβ5 (Wayner et al., 1991) (Telios, San Diego, CA). In FACS analyses WT31 anti-CD3 MAbs (Tax et al., 1983) (kind gift from Dr. W. Tax, Nijmegen, The Netherlands) were used as a negative control. NTI-betab anti-gp100 MAbs (Adema et al., 1993) (kind gift from Dr. C. Figdor, Nijmegen, The Netherlands) were used to identify melanocytic cells in human lesions.

Immunohistochemistry

Identical procedures were used for immunohistochemistry of frozen sections of human melanocytic lesions and melanoma cell line xenograft lesions. Frozen sections of 4 μm were fixed in acetone for 10 min and incubated at room temperature with MAbs for 1 hr. After washing with PBS, bound MAbs were visualized by means of the peroxidase-based Vectastain elite ABC kit (Vector, Burlingame, CA) with 3-amin-9-ethylcarbazole as substrate. After counterstaining with Mayer’s hematoxylin, sections were mounted with Kaiser’s glycerin/gelatin (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany).

Melanocytic cells were identified in H and E-stained sections and by staining with NKI-betab MAbs. The percentage of stained melanocytic cells was estimated as 0, 1–25%, 26–50%, 51–75%, or 76–100%. Slides were read independently by 2 observers. Discrepancies exceeding more than one percentage class were found in less than 10% of the cases. These cases were re-evaluated jointly until consensus was reached.

Logistic regression was used to determine a correlation between antigen expression and tumor progression.

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Expression of avps and in human melanoma cell lines

In order to investigate which av-integrins are expressed in benign melanocytic lesions and to see whether other av-integrins besides avp3 are expressed in malignant melanoma, we stained a series of NN, DN, ePM, aPM and MM with P1F6 anti-avP5 MAbs. Besides staining of fibroblast-like cells in stroma of all lesions, staining of melanocytic cells was found in 100% of NN (19/19), in 78% of DN (7/9), in 63% of ePM (5/8), in 43% of aPM (9/21) and in 33% of MM (8/24) (Figs. 1, 2). Hence, loss of expression of avp5 was related to tumor progression (CHI² trend 1 d.f. = 14.4; p = 0.0001) (Figs. 1, 2). In order to exclude the possibility that absence of avp3 in the surface expression data, synthesis of avp3 was extremely low for the highly metastatic BLM and MV3 cells. For the non-metastatic IF6 and 530 cells, a clear 125-kDa band corresponding to avp3 could be detected on 530 cells. (Fig. 3a). Surprisingly, no avp3 was detected on the highly metastatic cell lines BLM and MV3, whereas the non-metastatic cell lines IF6 and 530 expressed avp3 at their surface (Fig. 3b). Hence, the relation of decreased avp3 and increased avp5 expression with melanocytic tumor progression in situ was not paralleled by a relation with the metastatic capacity of human melanoma cells in nude mice.

Biosynthesis of avp3 in human melanoma cell lines

In order to investigate whether the absence of avp3 from the surface of BLM and MV3 cells was reflected by a lack of biosynthesis of avp3 in these cells, immunoprecipitations were performed on 35S-methionine-labeled cells. Consistent with the surface expression data, synthesis of avp3 was extremely low for the highly metastatic BLM and MV3 cells. For the non-metastatic IF6 and 530 cells, a clear 125-kDa band corresponding to avp3 and a 105-kDa band corresponding to avp5 were detected, whereas these bands were barely visible for BLM and MV3 cells (Fig. 4). The 90-kDa and 150-kDa bands were non-specific since they could be detected even after incubation with normal mouse serum (NMS).

Expression of avp5 in xenograft lesions

In order to exclude the possibility that absence of avp3 in the highly metastatic cell lines in vitro was due to culture conditions, we stained xenograft lesions of these cell lines with anti-avp3 MAbs. No avp3 was detected in primary tumors or metastases of BLM and MV3 cells, whereas control anti-avp3 MAbs stained all tumor cells (Fig. 5). For IF6 and 530 cells that expressed avp3 in vitro, we could not detect avp3 in xenograft lesions (not shown), suggesting that the level of expression was too low for immunohistochemical detection or, alternatively, that culturing the cells might influence the expression of avp3. Therefore, we stained s.c. xenograft lesions of Mel57 melanoma cells that strongly expressed avp3 in vitro (our unpublished data), as a positive control. As shown in Figure 5, to be tumorigenic but IF6 and 530 gave rise to metastases in only a very low percentage of mice or in none at all, whereas BLM and MV3 very frequently metastasized (Van Muijen et al., 1991a, b). FACS analysis showed that comparable levels of avp3 were expressed on IF6, BLM and MV3 whereas no avp3 could be detected on 530 cells. (Fig. 3a). Surprisingly, no avp3 was detected on the highly metastatic cell lines BLM and MV3, whereas the non-metastatic cell lines IF6 and 530 expressed avp3 at their surface (Fig. 3b).

Expression of avp3 in melanoma xenografts

In order to exclude the possibility that absence of avp3 in the highly metastatic cell lines in vitro was due to culture conditions, we stained xenograft lesions of these cell lines with anti-avp3 MAbs. No avp3 was detected in primary tumors or metastases of BLM and MV3 cells, whereas control anti-avp3 MAbs stained all tumor cells (Fig. 5). For IF6 and 530 cells that expressed avp3 in vitro, we could not detect avp3 in xenograft lesions (not shown), suggesting that the level of expression was too low for immunohistochemical detection or, alternatively, that culturing the cells might influence the expression of avp3. Therefore, we stained s.c. xenograft lesions of Mel57 melanoma cells that strongly expressed avp3 in vitro (our unpublished data), as a positive control. As shown in Figure 5,
**Figure 2** – Microphotographs of melanocytic lesions stained with anti-αv-integrin MAbs. Melanocytic lesions were stained with 23C6 and LM609 anti-αvβ3 or P1F6 anti-αvβ5 MAbs. Arrowheads indicate nevus (a–d) or melanoma (e–j) cells. (a, b) NN negative for αvβ3 (a) and positive for αvβ5 (b). (c, d) DN negative for αvβ3 (c; arrow = positive blood-vessel) and positive for αvβ5 (d). (e, f) ePM negative for αvβ3 (e; arrow = positive blood vessel) and positive for αvβ5 (f). (g, h) aPM positive for αvP3 (g) and negative for αvβ5 (h) (s = stromal cells). (i, j) MM positive for αvβ3 (i) and negative for αvβ5 (j) (s = stromal cells). Bars: 20 μm.
Results with 23C6 MAbs were identical to those with LM609.

Mel57 melanoma cells stained strongly with LM609 MAbs in xenograft lesions. Hence, in line with the \textit{in vitro} findings, primary tumors and lung metastases in nude mice of the highly metastatic human melanoma cell lines BLM and MV3 did not show $\alpha_3\beta_3$ expression.

**DISCUSSION**

Cutaneous melanoma is characterized by proliferative and invasive growth in the dermis and is often followed by widespread metastasis. Interactions of tumor cells with the ECM, which are mainly mediated by integrins (Hynes, 1992), are thought to play an important role in the malignant behavior of melanoma (Mortarini and Anichini, 1993) and other human tumors (Juliano and Varner, 1993). In the present study, we investigated the expression of $\alpha_3$-integrins in human melanocytic tumor progression \textit{in situ} and \textit{in vitro}.

Acquired expression of $\alpha_3\beta_3$ in the \textit{in vitro} growth phase of primary melanomas and in melanoma metastases has been reported (Albelda et al., 1990) whereas the $\alpha$-subunit is expressed in all stages of melanocytic tumor progression (Danen et al., 1994). In \textit{vitro}, melanoma cells have been shown to express $\alpha_3\beta_3$, $\alpha_5\beta_1$ (Marshall et al., 1991) and $\alpha_5\beta_3$ (Wayner et al., 1991). In this study we have investigated which of the $\alpha_3$-integrins are expressed \textit{in situ} in nevi and in primary melanomas and metastases. Our data concerning $\alpha_3\beta_3$ expression confirm the findings from previous studies (Albelda et al., 1990) and show that $\alpha_3\beta_3$ emerges in aPM and MM. Regarding $\alpha_3\beta_3$, we find that expression is often lost with melanocytic tumor progression. Since no MAbs have yet been generated recognizing the $\alpha_3\beta_3$ complex, we could not investigate expression of this integrin. For the lesions with $\alpha_3\beta_3$ and/or $\alpha_5\beta_3$ expression we cannot exclude the possibility that other $\alpha_3$-integrins are expressed as well. For those lesions in which neither $\alpha_3\beta_3$ nor $\alpha_5\beta_3$ was detected, we investigated whether alternative $\alpha_3$-integrins were expressed. The fact that alternative $\alpha_3$-integrins were not detected in DN or ePM, whereas a number of PM and MM did express other $\alpha_3$-integrins, suggests that additional $\alpha_3$-integrins may emerge in aPM and MM besides $\alpha_3\beta_3$. Thus, in NN, DN and cPM, $\alpha_3\beta_3$ may be expressed, whereas in aPM and MM $\alpha_3\beta_5$, $\alpha_5\beta_3$ and/or other $\alpha_3$-integrins may be expressed. Since all lesions were $\beta_3$-positive, and since $\alpha_3\beta_3$ can be expressed by melanoma cells \textit{in vitro} (Marshall et al., 1991), $\alpha_3\beta_3$ may be the alternative emerging $\alpha_3$-integrin.

The fact that $\alpha_3\beta_3$ expression is lost in most MM and that expression of $\alpha_3\beta_3$ emerges may have functional consequences for the melanoma cells. The ligand-binding specificity of $\alpha_3\beta_3$ seems to be restricted to vitronectin whereas $\alpha_3\beta_3$ recognizes multiple ligands including vitronectin and fibronectin (Smith et al., 1990). In addition, $\alpha_3\beta_3$ and $\alpha_3\beta_5$ promote distinct cellular responses to vitronectin \textit{in vitro} (Leavesey et al., 1992). We have recently shown that, for melanomas originating from the uvea, $\alpha_3\beta_3$ is absent in all primary lesions including those of the aggressive type, and that $\alpha_3\beta_3$ is the $\alpha_3$-integrin expressed (Ten Berge et al., 1993). This may indicate that the microenvironment of the melanoma cells is important in determining which $\alpha_3$-integrins are expressed. The fact that a role in proliferation (Pehling-Habermann et al., 1992) and invasion (Setford et al., 1992) of melanoma cells has been attributed to $\alpha_3\beta_3$ seems to be in line with the emergence of $\alpha_3\beta_3$ in aPM and MM. In our panel of human melanoma cell lines, IF6 and 530 express $\alpha_3\beta_3$ \textit{in vitro} but no $\alpha_3\beta_3$ can be detected in the primary xenografts.
tumors, which grow slowly. On the other hand, BLM and MV3 tumors lack $\alpha_5\beta_3$ and grow rapidly. All 4 cell lines develop tumors upon s.c. inoculation into nude mice (Van Muijen et al., 1991a, b). This suggests that $\alpha_5\beta_3$ is not necessarily involved in melanoma tumor growth. Furthermore, the fact that, for the highly metastatic cell lines, $\alpha_5\beta_3$ expression is absent in vitro, in s.c. xenograft lesions and in lung metastases, suggests that they use alternative integrins for metastasizing in nude mice.

In conclusion, we show that $\alpha_5\beta_3$ is often lost in advanced stages of melanocytic tumor progression in situ while $\alpha_5\beta_3$ emerges, but that decrease in $\alpha_5\beta_3$ and increase in $\alpha_5\beta_3$ are not necessarily related to the metastatic potential of human melanoma cell lines in nude mice.

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