Spectroscopic Studies on the Interaction of Hemin with Human Telomeric G-Quadruplex DNA

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The interaction behaviours of hemin as a ligand binding with three types of human telomeric G-quadruplex DNA were examined by UV-visible and circular dichroism spectroscopic methods. The circular dichroism spectra of these three types of G-quadruplex DNA all showed major positive absorption peaks at *ca.* 290 nm with shoulder peaks at *ca.* 270 nm, along with a negative absorption peak at *ca.* 250 nm. The presence of hemin did not induce obvious circular dichroism spectral changes of these G-quadruplex DNA, which indicates that hemin is able to stabilize human telomeric antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA structure. For comparison, the addition of hemin induced obvious increment on the characteristic antiparallel circular dichroism absorption of the corresponding single-chain human telomeric sequences, which suggests that hemin may induce and stabilize the formation of antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA even in the absence of K⁺. On the other hand, the addition of the three types of G-quadruplex DNA into the hemin solution with gradually increasing concentrations induced significant hypochromicity (31.86-47.26 %) along with 11-23 nm of bathochromicity on the UV-visible absorption of hemin. From this result, it is suggested that the high binding affinity of hemin to antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA is based on the intensive intercalative binding mode of hemin to antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA by the π - π stacking between the macrocyclic aromatic hemin and the guanine quartet.

Key Words: G-quadruplex DNA, Hemin, Telomeric DNA, Intercalative binding.

INTRODUCTION

Contributing to the potential for inhibiting telomerase and halting tumor cell proliferation, complexes which can bind and stabilize G-quadruplex DNA have attracted researcher's interests in recent years. Telomeres are special classes of functional DNA structures which located at the terminal regions of eukaryotic chromosomes¹. Telomeric DNA play an important biological role in cell growth and genome stability, such as protecting chromosomes from nuclease attacks and loss information in processes cell divisions²⁻⁴. In human, telomeric DNA contains of tandem repeats of guanines rich sequence (TTAGGG), with a single strands in 3'-end overhang of 100-200 nucleotides⁵, this sequence formation of planar molecular G-tetrads by hydrogen-bonding interactions between the Watson-Crick edge and the Hoogsteen edge, the G-tetrad can be further stabilized by alkali metal cations (*e.g.*, potassium or sodium) and consequently form G-quadruplex DNA structures⁶. Previous study has been shown that ligand-induced quadruplex formation or stabilization of G-quadruplexes by the telomeric G-rich strand are able to inhibit the activity of telomerase^{7,8}. Therefore, G-quadruplex DNA has become an important target for

cancer chemotherapy. And finding or designing small molecules binding G-quadruplex may be an attractive strategy for the development on anticancer drugs⁹.

In addition to heteroaromatic compounds as G-quadruplex DNA ligands, metal complexes as effective stabilizers of quadruplex DNA have raised attention in recent years¹⁰. Indeed, some of them have been proven to interact strongly with G-quadruplex DNA and exhibit high selectivity for G-quadruplex DNA¹¹. Cationic metalloporphyrins, a class of G-quadruplex DNA binding molecules are able to bind different types of G-quadruplex DNA. Hemin (**Scheme-I**) formed as a cationic Fe(II) porphyrin with large aromatic planarity wide spreadly exists in biological system. It is apt to externally stack on the terminal G-tetrads of the G-quadruplexes^{12,13}. On the other hand, hydrogen bonds between the carboxyl groups of hemin and the quadruplex phosphate backbone would enhance the interaction between the hemin and the quadruplex DNA¹⁴. The aim of this work was to investigate the hemin selective recognition of different human telomeric G-quadruplex DNA in the absence and presence of K⁺ using UV-visible absorption and circular dichroism spectroscopic methods¹⁵.

Scheme-I: Chemical structure of hemin

EXPERIMENTAL

Hemin was purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. Human telomeric sequences were purchased from Sangon Biotech (Shanghai) Co. Ltd. They were used as received without further purification unless noted specifically. The concentration of G-quadruplex DNA per nucleotide was determined spectrophotometrically by employing a molar absorptivity [$2.285 \times 10^5 \text{ mol}(\text{quadruplex})^{-1} \text{ m}^3 \text{ cm}^{-1}$] at 260 nm. The $1 \times 10^{-4} \text{ M}$ G-quadruplex DNA stock solution was stored at 4°C for no more than 5 days before use. UV-visible absorption spectral titration analyses were performed on a Perkin-Elmer Lambda 45 UV-visible spectrophotometer. CD spectra were recorded by using a JASCO J-810 automatic recording spectropolarimeter.

Spectroscopic studies on DNA interaction: Hemin was prepared as $2 \times 10^{-3} \text{ M}$ DMSO stock solutions for DNA binding studies. The stock solution was diluted to final working solution by TBS (*tris*-NaCl buffer solution, 5 mM *tris*, 100 mM KCl, pH was digitally adjusted to 7.35 by titration with hydrochloric acid with Sartorius professional meter). In UV-visible absorption spectrometry, the 2.5 mL working solution of hemin was constantly kept as $2 \times 10^{-5} \text{ M}$. The G-quadruplex DNA stock solution was added into the working solution with increasing concentrations. After each addition, the solution was allowed to incubate for 8 min before the absorption spectrum was recorded. The intrinsic binding constant K_b was determined by the following equation: $[\text{DNA}]/(\epsilon_a - \epsilon_f) = [\text{DNA}]/(\epsilon_a - \epsilon_f) + 1/[K_b(\epsilon_a - \epsilon_f)]$, where $[\text{DNA}]$ is the concentration of the G-quadruplex DNA, ϵ_a is the apparent absorption coefficient ($\epsilon_a = A_{\text{obsd}}/[\text{hemin}]$), ϵ_f is the extinction coefficient for the free hemin and ϵ_b is the absorption coefficient of hemin fully bound to G-quadruplex DNA. The intrinsic binding constant, K_b , of hemin are calculated as the ratio of the slope to the Y intercept by linear fitting of $[\text{DNA}]/(\epsilon_a - \epsilon_f)$ with $[\text{DNA}]$ from the above equation. CD absorption spectrometry of G-quadruplex DNA in TBS of $4 \times 10^{-6} \text{ M}$ was measured under 100 nm/min scan rate in the wavelength range from 220 to 400 nm, in the absence and presence of each compound of $8 \times 10^{-6} \text{ M}$, respectively. The added compound was pre-incubated with DNA for 1 h. The CD signal of TBS was subtracted in advance as the background. All the spectral analyses were operated under room temperature of 25°C and were based on repeated experiments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Circular dichroism is a powerful technique for monitoring G-quadruplex folding and the influence of a ligand when binding to a quadruplex structure¹⁶. Studies have revealed that different human telomeric sequences adopted diverse of G-quadruplex structure under K^+ rich conditions¹⁷. The human telomeric Htel-1, Htel-2 and Htel-3 sequences adopt an anti-parallel intramolecular G-quadruplexes Form-1, Form-2 and Form-3 in the presence of 100 mM K^+ , respectively¹⁸, as shown in Fig. 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c), in which their CD spectra all showed a positive absorption peak at *ca.* 290 nm with a shoulder peak at *ca.* 270 nm and a weak peak at *ca.* 250 nm. The maximum absorption peak at *ca.* 290 nm is characteristic of anti-parallel G-quadruplex conformation. After addition of hemin into the human telomeric G-quadruplex DNA solution, slight decrease on the intensity of the CD absorption of the Htel-2 and Htel-3 quadruplexes can be observed. Comparatively, addition of hemin induced more significant spectral changes on Htel-1 quadruplex. However, the shapes of the characteristic absorption curves of all the three types of quadruplexes DNA remained unchanged, suggesting that the presence of K^+ can stabilize the human telomeric G-quadruplex structure and the interaction of G-quadruplex with hemin did not disturb its secondary structure.

For comparison, the interactions between the three human telomeric sequences (single-chain) (Htel-1, Htel-2 and Htel-3) and hemin in the absence of K^+ were also investigated. As shown in Fig. 1(d), 1(e) and 1(f), the CD spectra of the Htel-1, Htel-2 and Htel-3 all showed two positive absorption peaks at *ca.* 260 nm and *ca.* 290 nm, which is indicative of a mixture of anti-parallel/parallel G-quadruplex conformations¹⁹. To Htel-1 and Htel-2, the major peak is at *ca.* 260 nm and the minor peak is at *ca.* 290 nm, while Htel-3 showed the major peak at *ca.* 290 nm and the minor peak at *ca.* 250 nm, which suggests that Htel-3 exhibited more characteristic of the anti-parallel G-quadruplex conformation¹⁷. Upon addition of 2 equiv. of hemin to three types of nucleotide solutions, respectively, dramatic changes on their CD spectra can be observed [Fig. 1(d), 1(e) and 1(f)], which is much more significant than those of G-quadruplexes as shown in Fig. 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c). The addition of hemin caused the increase on absorption of the anti-parallel G-quadruplex at 290 nm, along with the decrease on absorption of the parallel G-quadruplex at 260 nm. It may be explained as hemin can effectively induce the single-chain human telomeric nucleotide sequence to form anti-parallel G-quadruplex conformation even in the absence of K^+ .

The binding mode of hemin with Form-1, Form-2 and Form-3 G-quadruplex DNA by UV-visible absorption spectral titration analyses were further carried out to investigate the action mechanism of hemin to induce the formation of anti-parallel G-quadruplex. UV-visible absorption spectra were recorded in the 220-550 nm range by gradual addition of different types of G-quadruplex DNA samples in aliquots sequentially to hemin solution. As shown in Fig. 2, the hemin showed the maximum absorbance at *ca.* 380 nm, corresponding to its characteristic $\pi-\pi^*$ electronic transition of macrocyclic aromatic structure. By addition of three types of G-quadruplex DNA into the hemin solution, respectively, the characteristic

Fig. 1. CD spectra of human telomeric sequences G-quadruplexes in the presence of 100 mM K^+ upon addition of hemin: (a) Htel-1-G4; (b) Htel-2-G4; (c) Htel-3-G4. CD spectra of single-chain human telomeric sequences in the absence of K^+ upon addition of hemin: (d) Htel-1; (e) Htel-2; (f) Htel-3

absorption of hemin at 380 nm all significantly decreased on intensities (hypochromicity) along with various red-shifts (bathochromicity). Interaction of hemin with Form-1 G-quadruplex DNA caused a 43.5 % hypochromicity with a 13 nm bathochromicity. Addition of Form-2 G-quadruplex DNA to hemin solution under same condition led to a 47.3 % hypochromicity with 11 nm bathochromicity. While addi-

tion of Form-3 G-quadruplex DNA to hemin solution led to a 31.9% hypochromicity with 23 nm bathochromicity. The resulted data are summarized in Table-1. The significant hypochromicities and bathochromicities on hemin caused by the addition of G-quadruplex DNA are characteristic of the intercalative binding mode of hemin with the G-quadruplex DNA²⁰.

Fig. 2. UV-visible absorption spectra of hemin in 100 mM K^+ solution in the absence and presence of human telomeric G-quadruplex DNA (10 μ M *tris*-HCl, pH 7.4). (A) Form-1, (B) Form-2, (C) Form-3

The intrinsic binding constants (K_b) of hemin to different types of G-quadruplex DNA were also evaluated from the results of UV-visible titration analyses by using the classic linear fitting equation²¹, as summarized also in Table-1. It indicates that hemin showed moderate binding intensity with Form-3 quadruplex DNA with K_b value of $4.89 \times 10^5 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ L}$

and was comparatively weaker than those of hemin with Form-1 and Form-2 quadruplex DNA, with binding constants (K_b) of 2.81×10^6 and $1.82 \times 10^6 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ L}$, which are 5.7 folds and 3.7 folds higher than that of Form-3, respectively. Nevertheless, these results strongly suggested that the intensive intercalative binding mode of hemin to the three types of G-quadruplex DNA should contribute to the formation and stabilization of antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA by the π - π stacking between the macrocyclic aromatic hemin and the guanine quartet.

TABLE-1
BINDING CONSTANTS AND SPECTRAL CHANGES OF HEMIN UPON ADDITION OF DIFFERENT HUMAN TELOMERIC QUADRUPLEX DNA

G-quadruplex	$K_b [\text{M}^{-1} \text{cm}^{-1}]$	Hypochromicity	Bathochromicity
Form-1	2.81×10^6	43.54 %	13 nm
Form-2	1.82×10^6	47.26 %	11 nm
Form-3	4.89×10^5	31.86 %	23 nm

Conclusion

The interactions of hemin and human telomeric G-quadruplex DNA are studied by CD and UV-visible spectroscopic analyses. The comparison on the changes on the CD spectra of G-quadruplex DNA and the corresponding single-chain telomeric sequences clearly show that hemin is able to induce the formation of antiparallel G-quadruplex structure and stabilize the G-quadruplex DNA. UV-visible absorption spectral analyses were further carried out to discuss the action mechanism of hemin to form and stabilize the antiparallel G-quadruplex DNA. The hemin exhibits characteristic intercalative binding affinities to all the three types of G-quadruplex DNA, with intrinsic binding constants, K_b , of $4.89 \times 10^5 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ L}$, 2.81×10^6 and $1.82 \times 10^6 \text{ mol}^{-1} \text{ L}$, respectively, which should be ascribed to the π - π^* electronic transition based on the π - π stacking between the macrocyclic aromatic hemin and the guanine quartet.

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