Phospholipase A_2 Engineering. 3. Replacement of Lysine-56 by Neutral Residues Improves Catalytic Potency Significantly, Alters Substrate Specificity, and Clarifies the Mechanism of Interfacial Recognition[1]

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We report substantial improvement in the catalytic potency of *bovine* pancreatic phospholipase A_2 (PLA2, overexpressed in *Escherichia coli*)[2,3] toward natural substrate phosphatidylcholine (PC) when Lys-56 was replaced by neutral amino acids, particularly methionine. As shown by the kinetic data summarized in Table I, the methionine mutant (K56M) shows a 4–5-fold increase in k_{cat} and a 4–5-fold decrease in K_m, and as a consequence, a 20–25-fold increase in k_{cat}/K_m for micellar dioctanoyl-PC (DC_8PC) and diheptanoyl-PC (DC_7PC) and monomeric dihexanoyl-PC (DC_6PC) and DC_7PC. Replacement of Lys-56 by other neutral amino acids Asn and Thr (K56N and K56T, respectively) also resulted in increased k_{cat} and decreased K_m, but to a smaller extent. Mutation to the positively charged Arg (K56R) resulted in very small changes.

Most, if not all, of the reported increases in k_{cat}/K_m for site-specific mutants were either for partial reactions or substrate analogues with lower activity (actually a change in substrate specificity).[4] The increase in k_{cat}/K_m for the K56M mutant should represent improved catalytic potency and is the largest reported to date, since DC_8PC micelle is the best natural substrate of bovine pancreatic PLA2. The highest k_{cat} observed for *bovine* K56M is even higher than that of the anionic substrate analogue DC_8-sulfate known to activate *porcine* PLA2.[5] Both k_{cat} and k_{cat}/K_m of K56M are comparable to those of dimeric snake venom PLA2 (Thr at position 56)[6] for DC_8PC micelles and are significantly higher for DC_6PC monomers[7] (see the last three rows of Table I). Crystal structural analysis by Sigler[6] suggested that one of the main causes for the higher catalytic efficiency of snake venom PLA2 is that the loop 57–66 (absent in dimeric snake venom enzymes) prevents the pancreatic enzyme from dimerization.[7] Recently Kuipers et al.[8] reported that deletion of this loop (Δ62–66) from *porcine* pancreatic PLA2 did result in en-

(1) For papers 1 and 2 in this series, see refs 2 and 3, respectively. This work was supported by Research Grant GM41788 from NIH. We thank Dr. R. L. Heinrikson for sharing the results in ref 11 prior to publication.
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(6) Renetseder, R.; Brunie, S.; Dijkstra, B. W.; Drenth, J.; Sigler, P. B. *J. Biol. Chem.* **1985**, *260*, 11627–11634.
(7) Wells, M. A. *Biochemistry* **1974**, *13*, 2248–2257.
(8) Kuipers, O. P.; Thunnissen, M. G. G. M.; de Geus, P.; Dijkstra, B. W.; Drenth, J.; Verheij, H. M.; de Haas, G. H. *Science* **1989**, *244*, 82–85. Unlike DC_8PC, the k_{cat}/K_m for micellar DC_7PC is comparable between their deletion mutant and our K56M. Thus the effect of porcine Δ62–66 is more on altering substrate specificity.

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Table I. Summary of Kinetic Data[a]

enzyme	substrate	state	k_{cat}, s^{-1}	K_m, mM	k_{cat}/K_m, M^{-1} s^{-1}
bovine WT	DC_8PC	micelles	675	1.4	0.48×10^6
K56M	DC_8PC[b]	micelles	2270	0.21	11×10^6
K56N	DC_8PC	micelles	1370	0.62	2.2×10^6
K56T	DC_8PC	micelles	1160	0.56	2.1×10^6
K56R	DC_8PC	micelles	510	0.75	0.68×10^6
bovine WT	DC_7PC	micelles	97	1.6	0.061×10^6
K56M	DC_7PC	micelles	420	0.35	1.2×10^6
bovine WT	DC_7PC	monomers	4.5	0.66	6.8×10^3
K56M	DC_7PC	monomers	13.5	<0.15	$>90 \times 10^3$
bovine WT	DC_6PC	monomers	2.4	4.9	0.49×10^3
K56M	DC_6PC	monomers	7.7	0.51	15×10^3
bovine WT	$DC_{12}PG$	micelles	600		
K56M	$DC_{12}PG$	micelles	330		
K56N	$DC_{12}PG$	micelles	170		
K56T	$DC_{12}PG$	micelles	170		
bovine WT	NOB	monomers	0.28	0.18	1.6
K56M	NOB	monomers	0.16	0.18	0.9
porcine WT	DC_8PC[c]	micelles	410	3.2	0.13×10^6
	DC_8-sulfate[d]	micelles	1340	0.21	6.4×10^6
porcine Δ62–66	DC_8PC[c]	micelles	980	1.9	0.51×10^6
porcine WT	DC_6PC[e]	monomers	0.9	6.0	0.15×10^3
C. atrox PLA2	DC_8PC	micelles	6350	0.18	35×10^6
C. adamanteus PLA2	DC_8PC[f]	micelles	4320	1.1	3.9×10^6
	DC_6PC[f]	monomers	1.6	4.0	0.40×10^3

[a] The data for bovine WT and mutants and *Crotalus atrox* PLA2 were produced in our laboratory while those for porcine and *Crotalus adamanteus* PLA2 were obtained from literature. Bovine PLA2 was isolated from an *E. coli* expression host BL21(DE3)plysS carrying a plasmid pTO-propla2[3] which contained a synthetic gene coding for bovine proPLA2.[2] The procedures for construction and purification of mutants will be described in detail in the future. The assays for PC substrates were performed at pH 8.0 (1 mM sodium borate, 25 mM $CaCl_2$, 100 mM NaCl) and 45 °C by using a pH stat method. The activities for $DC_{12}PG$ (mixed micelles) were determined at 5 mM PG, 15 mM deoxycholate, 5 mM $CaCl_2$, pH 8.0, 45 °C. The K_m of $DC_{12}PG$ cannot be determined since the system did not follow Michaelis–Menten kinetics. The assays for NOB were performed by a spectrophotometric method as described by Tomasselli et al.[11] [b] A k_{cat}/K_m value as high as 3×10^7 has been observed for this mutant, but decreased to 11×10^6 gradually in solution. The detailed cause is under investigation. [c] From ref 8. [d] From ref 5a. [e] From: Pieterson, W. A. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1973. Assays were conducted at pH 6.0 and 25 °C. [f] From ref 7.

hanced activity for micellar DC_8PC, but only a 2-fold increase in k_{cat} and a 2-fold decrease in K_m (also listed in Table I). For K56M, mutation of a single residue outside of the loop improves the catalytic potency of the bovine pancreatic PLA2 to comparable to that of dimeric snake venom PLA2. The mutant remains as a monomer as shown by gel filtration chromatography.

The structural basis of the enhanced catalytic potency remains to be established. Mechanistically, the results allow some clarification on the mechanism of "interfacial recognition" or "interfacial activation", which has been used to describe at least three activation phenomena related to PLA2: (a) the increased activity when substrate concenration exceeds its critical micelle concentration;[9] (b) the activation following the latency period often observed in monolayer assays;[10,11] and (c) the activation by anionic substrate surface as mentioned above for *porcine* pancreatic PLA2.[5] The mechanism remains highly controversial since many have equated the three phenomena and tried to explain all with a single mechanism.[12] Since K56M showed enhanced activity for *both* monomers and micelles, phenomenon a should be unrelated to Lys-56. Phenomena b and c could be related and involve Lys-56, as discussed below.

The choice of Lys-56 for the above studies was based on the recent report[11] that during the latency phase in the catalysis by porcine pancreatic PLA2 this residue is acylated by a substrate analogue, 4-nitro-3-(octanoyloxy)benzoate (NOB) monomers, as well as a natural substrate, dipalmitoyl-PC ($DC_{16}PC$) vesicles.[13] They also demonstrated that acylation resulted in dimerization of the enzyme and that the dimer is >100× more active (in relative activity) than the native PLA2 and suggested this process as the mechanism of "interfacial activation" of PLA2. Although their results are convincing, the level of acylation is far from being quantitative (16% of NOB and 3% for $DC_{16}PC$). Thus, it is likely that the enzyme activation following the latency period (phenomenon b) can be achieved in two mechanisms: acylation, as suggested by Tomasselli et al.,[11] and activation by the negatively charged fatty acid product[5] (phenomenon c). This is strongly supported by our observation that Lys-56 is involved in both.[14] The kinetic data of Lys-56 mutants agree that acylation of Lys-56 can activate the enzyme and suggest that the main function of acylation is charge neutralization. The same charge neutralization should be responsible for phenomenon c, since no improvement (indeed a small decrease) in the catalytic activity was observed for negatively charged substrates dilaurylphosphatidylglycerol ($DC_{12}PG$) and NOB (see data in Table I).

For PC substrates, the activation related to Lys-56 during the catalysis of wild type (WT) is apparently not optimal since both K56M and K56-acylated PLA2 have higher activity than WT. Other effects, such as hydrophobic interaction, could also con-

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(13) For *porcine* pancreatic PLA2, a lag phase was observed for PC but not for PG,[10] possibly because the latter can readily activate the enzyme. Some snake venom PLA2 did not show a lag phase,[10] and we also found that, unlike *porcine* PLA2, *bovine* PLA2 did not show a lag phase with NOB. How the extent of acylation is related to the latency period, the charge of substrates, and the structure of PLA2 from different sources are all interesting questions worthy of further investigation.

(14) Other lysines could also be involved in this or some other mode of activation, since de Haas showed that chemical acylation of the Lys-116 of porcine PLA2 and the Lys-10 of bovine PLA2 increased the penetrating power of the enzyme,[15] and Heinrikson showed that a monomeric snake venom PLA2 is acylated at both Lys-7 and Lys-10 by NOB.[16]

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tribute to the enhanced activity. Then, why would the native pancreatic PLA2 have Lys instead of Met at position 56? The problem could be related to substrate specificity. K56M is a better enzyme than WT for PC and under in vitro conditions, but not for negatively charged substrates PG or NOB. Since the physiological substrates of pancreatic PLA2 are negatively charged mixed micelles, the native pancreatic PLA2 should be as efficient as K56M physiologically. However, even for negatively charged substrates, it is unclear why pancreatic PLA2 would not have evolved to higher catalytic efficiency, as some snake venom PLA2 did under different physiological conditions.