

**Investigations of Interactions of
G Protein-Coupled Receptors
With Their Ligands and G Proteins
Based on Homologous Receptor Subtypes
With Different Biological Functions**

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II. Abbreviations

3D	Three-dimensional
7-TM receptor	Receptor with 7 transmembran (TM) regions, GPCR
AC	Adenylyl cyclase
Acifran	4,5-Dihydro-5-methyl-4-oxo-5-phenyl-2-furan-carboxylic acid
Acipimox	5-Methylpyrazine-carboxylic acid-4-oxide
cAMP	cyclic adenosine monophosphate
C-terminus	Carboxy-terminus
Ctt	C-terminal tail, Carboxy-terminal tail
DAG	Diacyl glycerol
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
ECL	Extracellular loop
ET-1	Endothelin-1
ET-2	Endothelin-2
ET-3	Endothelin-3
ETA	Endothelin receptor, subtype A
ETB	Endothelin receptor, subtype B
G α	α -subunit of trimeric G protein
G β	β -subunit of trimeric G protein
G γ	γ -subunit of trimeric G protein
GDP	Guanosine diphosphate
GPCR	G protein-coupled receptor
G protein	Guanine nucleotide binding protein
GPR109A	High affinity nicotinic acid receptor (also HM74A, PUMA-G)
GPR109B	Low affinity nicotinic acid receptor (also HM74)
GTP	Guanosine triphosphate
hETA	Human endothelin receptor, subtype A
hETB	Human endothelin receptor, subtype B
HM74	<i>see</i> GPR109B
HM74A	<i>see</i> GPR109A
ICL	Intracellular loop
IP3	Inositol-3-phosphate
MD	Molecular Dynamics
MPS	Mastoparan-S
MPX	Mastoparan-X

Niacin	<i>see</i> Nicotinic Acid
Nicotinic Acid	Pyridine-3-carboxylic acid
N-terminus	Amino-terminus
Ntt	N-terminal tail, Amino-terminal tail
PDB	Protein Data Base
P _i	Phosphate, ionic
PKA	Proteinkinase A
PKC	Proteinkinase C
PLC	Phospholipase C
PTX	Pertussis toxin
PUMA-G	Mice variant of GPR109A
RMP	Receptor mimetic peptide
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulfate
Sf6a	Sarafotoxin 6a from <i>Atractaspis engaddensis</i>
Sf6b	Sarafotoxin 6b from <i>Atractaspis engaddensis</i>
Sf6c	Sarafotoxin 6c from <i>Atractaspis engaddensis</i>
Sf6d	Sarafotoxin 6d from <i>Atractaspis engaddensis</i>
TMH	Transmembrane helix

III. Index of Contents

I.	Acknowledgement / Danksagung	3
II.	Abbreviations	4
III.	Index of Contents	6
IV.	Index of Figures	8
V.	Index of Tables	10
VI.	Abstract	11
1	Introduction	13
1.1	G Protein-Coupled Receptors – An Overview	14
1.1.1	Classification of G Protein-Coupled Receptors	15
1.1.2	The Mechanism of Action of G Protein-Coupled Receptors	16
1.1.3	G Protein-Signaling	18
1.2	Structure-Function Studies on G Protein-Coupled Receptors	20
1.2.1	The Endothelin Receptor Subtypes ETA and ETB	21
1.2.2	Nicotinic Acid Receptors GPR109A and GPR109B	26
1.3	Objectives of this Study	29
2	Methods	30
2.1	Introduction into Molecular Modeling	31
2.2	Sequence Alignments	32
2.3	Model Generation and Optimization	34
2.4	Molecular Dynamics	36
2.5	Modeling and Studies of G Protein-Coupled Receptors	38
2.5.1	Endothelin Receptors	38
2.5.2	Nicotinic Acid Receptors	39
2.5.3	G Proteins	41

3	Results	43
3.1	Ligand-Binding Studies at Endothelin-Receptor Subtypes	44
3.1.1	Structurally Different Entries to the Binding Cleft at ETA / ETB	44
3.1.2	Dissecting Ligands Into 4 Regions That Explain Binding and Selectivity	45
3.1.3	Characterization of 4 Ligand-Complementary Regions at ETA and ETB	46
3.1.4	Structure-Function Relationships of Endothelin Receptor-Ligands Interactions	47
3.2	Ligand-Binding at Nicotinic Acid Receptor Subtypes GPR109A/B	55
3.2.1	Characterization of the Ligand Binding Site at GPR109A Receptor	55
3.2.2	Selectivity of Ligand Recognition at GPR109A and GPR109B receptors	59
3.3	Study of Patterns for G Protein-Selectivity	64
3.3.1	Mastoparan-X and -S: Secretagogues Selective for Different G α -Subunits	64
3.3.2	Lipoamines – Small Synthetics Selective for Different G α -Subunits	67
3.3.3	G α -Subtype Specific Differences at Endothelin-Receptor Subtypes A and B	71
4	Discussion	78
4.1	Ligand Binding at Endothelin Receptor Subtypes	79
4.2	Ligand Binding at Nicotinic Acid Receptors GPR109A/B	86
4.3	Selective Interaction Patterns for G Protein-Subtypes	92
4.4	Summary	98
4.5	Conclusions & Outlook	101
5	References	102
6	Appendix	113
	Collection of Proline-Kinked Transmembrane Helices	114
	Multiple Sequence Alignment of Endothelin Receptors by Subtypes	116
	Multiple Sequence Alignment of Nicotinic Acid Receptors GPR109A/B	121
	Multiple Sequence Alignment of G α Proteins	125
	Summary	131
	Zusammenfassung	133
	Curriculum Vitae	135
	Publications	136
	Eigenständigkeitserklärung	137

IV. Index of Figures

1-1	The backbone structure of bovine rhodopsin (PDB entry: 1HZX) and its probable orientation in the cellular membrane	15
1-2	Own preparatory work analyzing structural features of endothelin-receptor peptide ligands	23
1-3	Own preparatory work comparing NMR-structures of mastoparan-X (MPX) und mastoparan-S (MPS)	25
1-4	Binding of nicotinic acid and acifran at nicotinic acid receptors GPR109A and GPR109B and their mutants	27
3-1	Multiple sequence alignment of ETA and ETB focusing on the extracellular loop ECL1	44
3-2	Differences in the entrances to the ligand-binding clefts for ETA and ETB	45
3-3	Assignment of the 4 regions to peptide ligand ET-1	46
3-4	Ligand-complementary regions at the endothelin receptors	47
3-5	Schematic view on the binding of peptide ligands at the endothelin-receptor subtypes A and B using the different entrances to their binding sites	49
3-6	The docked ET-1 ligand at both endothelin-receptor subtypes	52
3-7	Differences in binding mode of endothelin-receptor peptide ligands	54
3-8	Ligand of GPR109A receptor share a common carboxyl group that interacts with a positive charge within the receptor	55
3-9	Ligand binding assays of Arg→Ala mutants at GPR109A receptor	56
3-10	Cartoon of GPR109A receptor and ligand-selective mutations Asn86, Trp91, Ser178, Arg111 and Arg251	57
3-11	The final binding site of nicotinic acid (orange) at GPR109A receptor	58
3-12	Close-up view on the binding site of GPR109A with bound ligand Acifran or nicotinic acid	59
3-13	van der Waals-surface of the binding site at GPR109A	60
3-14	Binding of nicotinic acid and 2-oxo-octanoic acid at GPR109A (HM74A), GPR109B (HM74) and GPR109A-GPR109B-receptor chimeras	61
3-15	van der Waals-surface of the binding site at GPR109B	62
3-16	Comparison of GPR109A- and GPR109B-selective ligands	63
3-17	Visualization of the distributions of positive charges at the investigated peptide structures	65
3-18	The interaction sites in G α -subunits show typical distance patterns of negative charges	66
3-19	Manually docked structures of mastoparan-X (left side) and mastoparan-S (right side) at interaction sites of G α_i and G α_s , respectively	66
3-20	Activation of different recombinant G α -subunits by compound FU132	67
3-21	Lipoamine compound FU132 manually docked at the ligand interaction site of G α -subunit G α_i	68
3-22	Ensembles of molecules from the systematic search within SYBYL6.8	69

3-23	Sequence alignments focusing on intracellular loops ICL1, ICL2 and ICL3 of human ETA and human ETB sequence against rhodopsin	72
3-24	Bottom view of intracellular loops ICL1-3 and C-terminus of ETA and ETB	73
3-25	Preliminary experimental results of G α -selectivity of predicted endothelin receptor mutants	75

V. Index of Tables

1-1	Binding Studies of nicotinic acid and acifran at GPR109A receptor mutants including the corresponding residues from GPR109B receptor	27
2-1	Data from site-directed mutagenesis experiments on ET receptors taken from literature, and used for MD supported ligand docking as constraints	39
3-1	Alignment of investigated endothelin-receptor peptide ligands	46
3-2	Comparison of binding data on endothelin-receptor peptide ligands and their derivatives containing Cy3-photo label attached to Lys9 residue	50
3-3	Interaction partners of the C-terminal modulator region of endothelin-receptor agonistic peptide-ligands at both receptor subtypes	53
3-4	Binding Studies of Nicotinic Acid and Acifran at GPR109A receptor mutants, where aromatic residues suggested as potential interaction partners were exchanged to Leucine and Alanine	58
3-5	Selection of studied lipoamine compounds	70
3-6	Predicted Mutation for Modification of G α -selectivity at ETA and ETB	74
3-7	Comparison of predicted and experimental results of predicted endothelin receptor subtype mutants	76
4-1	Residues within transmembrane helices TMH2 and TMH3 that could alter the shapes of the binding sites at GPR109A and GPR109B	90

VI. Abstract

G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) are important in current pharmacological research, being the target of about 50% of today's drugs. Due to the missing structural data on all GPCRs but rhodopsin, three problems occur in investigations of these receptors. The molecular basis of ligand-binding mechanisms, the intramolecular signal transduction, and the intracellular G protein-interactions are often poorly understood. Due to this, we have studied the interactions of particular GPCRs with their ligands and with their G proteins utilizing homologous receptor subtypes with close sequence similarity but different biological functions.

Delineating ligand-binding mechanisms of GPCRs, we focused in the first example on the endothelin receptor subtypes ETA and ETB, which differ in ligand and G protein-selectivity. Due to the apparent binding affinity of ET-1 (0.01-0.06 nM) that is an order of magnitude higher compared to small molecules such as bosentan (4.7 nM), comprehensive knowledge of peptide binding and initial receptor activation is of importance for understanding receptor mechanism and for designing new ligands. We studied a collection of 15 endothelin receptor peptide ligands regarding agonism, antagonism, and receptor subtype selectivity. The ligands were dissected into 4 regions: addressor, hook, core and modulator. The addressor is a selectivity filter optimized for ETA. Negatively charged residues within the hook region characterize agonistic peptides. While the hydrophobic core seems to be necessary for high affinity binding, the modulator region is the true endothelin receptor ligand.

Ligand binding studies on homology models of ETA and ETB identified 4 ligand-complementary epitopes (gateway, edge, neck, binding cleft) at each receptor. The pairwise interactions of addressor and gateway, hook and edge, core and neck, as well as modulator and binding cleft accurately explain the peptide ligands' selectivity for endothelin receptors and endothelin receptor subtypes. We demonstrated this by the design of a new ETB-selective agonist.

As a second example, the nicotinic acid receptor GPR109A and its homologue GPR109B, which is not binding nicotinic acid, were studied. Residues, being critically involved in binding of nicotinic acid to GPR109A, were identified based on homology models of this receptor as well as known nicotinic acid-protein complexes from the PDB (*e.g.* ferric soybean leghemoglobin). The binding site was predicted to be located between transmembrane helices

TMH2, TMH3 and TMH7. This interaction site is different from most other rhodopsin-like GPCRs, where the binding site is located between TMH4, TMH5 and TMH6. Experimental data on mutations of aromatic residues within TMH5, TMH7 and extracellular loop ECL2, which have been predicted by our models, confirm this result. Comparison of the binding sites of nicotinic acid receptor GPR109A and its homologue GPR109B explains the differences in ligand selectivity. As a result, 2-oxo-octanoic acid was proposed as selective ligand for GPR109B but not GPR109A, which was experimentally confirmed.

Unraveling the unidentified mechanism of GPCR-G protein interactions, we investigated ligands of small, medium and large size directly interacting with the G protein-subtypes. A common pattern, consisting of negative charges on G proteins and positive charges on G protein-ligands, was identified to be important in recognition and/or interaction. Investigations of four different G protein-subtypes ($G\alpha_i$, $G\alpha_o$, $G\alpha_q$, $G\alpha_s$) clearly showed different localizations and, therefore, varying distances of negatively charged residues in close proximity to the G proteins' C-termini (below 12 Å for $G\alpha_i$, around 15 Å for $G\alpha_q$, and greater than 18 Å for $G\alpha_s$). As a result, it was possible to design a new compound (FU244) that exclusively interacts with $G\alpha_i$ but not with $G\alpha_q$ or $G\alpha_s$. Additionally, two residues within the intracellular loop ICL2 of ETA and ETB have been identified and experimentally verified as necessary for interaction with $G\alpha_i$.