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TIF1 β is phosphorylated at Serine 473 in colorectal tumor cells through p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase as an oxidative defense mechanism

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Abbreviations:

TIF1 β ; Transcription Intermediary Factor 1 beta, ROS; reactive oxygen species, CRC;

colorectal cancer, MAPK; mitogen-activated protein kinase, HP1; heterochromatin protein 1

ABSTRACT

TIF1 β is a pleiotropic regulator of a diverse range of cellular processes such as DNA repair or gene repression in stem cells. This functional switch depends on phosphorylation at serine residue 473 and multiple pathways exist to accomplish this. However, the effects of exogenous reactive oxygen species (ROS) generated by bacterial flora and dietary metabolites in the colonic lumen or chemotherapy on TIF1 β have not been determined. We report here that exposure of colorectal cancer (CRC) cell lines DLD-1 and HCT116 to hydrogen peroxide specifically induces TIF1 β Ser473 phosphorylation. Hydrogen peroxide also induces primarily p38 MAPK and some p42/44 MAPK phosphorylation. Chemical inhibition of p38 MAPK and p42/44 MAPK reduced phosphorylation of TIF1 β serine 473 and increased CRC cell death upon peroxide exposure. Taken together, this suggests that it is primarily peroxide-induced p38 MAPK that mediates Ser473 phosphorylation and activation of TIF1 β to enable more efficient DNA repair to assist in tumor cell survival against exogenous ROS.

Keywords: TIF1 β phosphorylation, chromatin, oxidative stress, MAPKs, colorectal cancer

1. Introduction

The protein Transcription Intermediary Factor 1 beta (TIF1 β) is an epigenetic modulator that represses errant gene expression via complexing with heterochromatin protein 1 (HP1), allowing it to interact with the Krüppel-associated box (KRAB) repressor domain found in zinc-finger transcription factors [1]. It is highly expressed in hematopoietic stem cells (as a repressive maintenance factor) [2] as well as several types of cancers [3,4,5] and high expression of TIF1 β is associated with poor prognosis in colorectal cancer patients [6]. A mediator of multiple homeostatic processes, TIF1 β has another key function where it influences DNA repair through HP1 proteins [7] and mediates cellular survival after DNA damage in MCF-7 and HCT116 cells [8]. Whether TIF1 β serves as a repressor or a repair modulator seems to be site-dependent, as the phosphorylation site of TIF1 β at serine 473 (TIF1 β -S473) has been found to regulate TIF1 β -HP1 interaction [9] and activate its role in efficient DNA repair and cell survival [10].

Bacterial flora and dietary metabolites produce ROS in the colon and rectum [11] and inadequate antioxidant defense could result in loss of tissue homeostasis and subsequent tumor formation. To this end, several reports have been published that point to ROS involvement in the pathogenesis of colorectal cancer (CRC) [12,13,14]. The ROS hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) can modify proteins and nucleic acids and it is thought to work at low levels as a signaling molecule regulating cell survival and growth through modulation of transcription factors [15]. However, even if compensatory mechanisms are activated, microsatellite instability from excessive H₂O₂ would induce DNA damage [16] associated with colorectal cancer development. Therefore, peroxides are implicated in both the

regulation of and progression of diseases and the role they play is dependent on their concentration [17,18]. Although the cellular damage caused by ROS in colorectal cancer has been well studied, less well known is the role of these potential second messengers in regulating gene transcription via phosphorylation of repressor proteins.

In the case of TIF1 β , several factors have been reported to induce phosphorylation on the primary activation site Ser473. For example, mitogen-activated protein kinase-activated protein (MAPKAP) kinase 2 (MK2) regulates phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473 in Kaposi's sarcoma-associated herpes virus (KSHV) infection [19]. In early S-phase under normal culture conditions, protein kinase C δ (PKC δ) regulates TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation for cell cycle progression and cellular proliferation [9]. Temporally dynamic TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation has been found upon growth factor stimulation [20]. On the other hand, TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation may also be induced by nutrient depletion in breast cancer [21]. This diverse pool of regulatory elements establishes Serine 473 as the common activation hub for TIF1 β to fulfill its roles of chromatin regulation (DNA damage response) and cell survival and growth. However, little is known about the effect of oxidative stress as an additional modulator of phosphorylation on this crucial site and if activation of the DNA repair mechanism by basal or exogenous ROS could upregulate TIF1 β to protect tumor cells by increasing efficiency of DNA repair.

In this study, we hypothesized that, at physiologically relevant concentrations, TIF1 β phosphorylation will increase, blunting peroxide-induced cell damage. We found that, in fact, H₂O₂-induced CRC cell death was intensified in TIF1 β knockdown conditions. We then discovered that H₂O₂ dose induce phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473. In addition, activation of

p38 MAPK and secondary activation of p42/44 MAPK by ROS may regulate TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation in response to oxidative stress to protect CRC cells from ROS-mediated death.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Cell Lines and Cell Culture

Human colorectal adenocarcinoma HCT116 cells and human embryonic kidney (HEK) 293T cells were maintained in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM, Invitrogen) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 1% of a penicillin-streptomycin solution (Gibco) at 37°C in a 5% CO₂-humidified atmosphere. Human colorectal adenocarcinoma cells (DLD-1) were cultured in RPMI 1640 medium (Invitrogen) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 1% of a penicillin-streptomycin solution at 37°C in a 5% CO₂-humidified atmosphere. Multiple frozen aliquots were established upon the acquisition and all experimental cells were passaged for fewer than 30 passages after reviving from liquid N₂. Cells were washed once after cell growth to a subconfluent state and then made quiescent by incubation in serum- and supplement-free medium for 18 hours (hr) before further experiments.

2.2 H₂O₂ Treatment

A 1M stock solution of H₂O₂ was initially made by diluting a 30% H₂O₂ solution (WAKO) with ultrapure water. For H₂O₂ treatment experiments, cells were serum starved for 18 hr then incubated with 1 mM of H₂O₂ for the indicated periods or with differing concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min, and sampled for Western blot analysis. For kinase inhibitor experiments, after serum starvation for 18 hr, cells were incubated with p42/44 MAPK Inhibitor U0126 (10 μM, SIGMA) and/or p38 MAPK inhibitor SB203580 (10μM, Cayman Chemical) for 1 hr, respectively, before H₂O₂ challenge.

2.3 Antibodies

A FLAG epitope tag (M2, Sigma-Aldrich) and β -actin (Sigma-Aldrich) were used. Mouse monoclonal antibodies against TIF1 β (20A1) and rabbit polyclonal antibodies against TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation (Poly 6446) were used (BioLegend). Rabbit polyclonal antibodies against p44/42 MAPK (Erk1/2, #9102), phospho-p44/42 MAPK (Thr202/Tyr204) (#9101S), phospho-p38 MAPK (Thr180/Tyr182) (#9211S), and p38 MAPK (#9212) were purchased from Cell Signaling Technologies.

2.4 Transfection and Plasmids

For plasmid transfection, HEK293T cells were grown to 85% confluence and transfected with Lipofectamine 2000 reagent (Invitrogen) in serum-free DMEM for 6 hr, after which the medium was replaced with fresh culture medium. After a further 24-48 hr of incubation, the transfected cells were used in experiments. Expression constructs for FLAG-TIF1 β -wild-type, FLAG-TIF1 β S473A mutants, and FLAG-TIF1 β S473E mutants were previously reported [9]. All plasmids were sequenced before use.

2.5 Western Blotting

Cells were solubilized in NP-40 lysis buffer (20 mM Tris-HCl, pH7.5, 150 mM NaCl, 1% Nonidet P-40, 2000 KIU/ml aprotinin, 1 μ g/ml leupeptin). After clearing by centrifugation, total cell lysates or immunoprecipitates obtained using the indicated antibodies were subjected to 10% sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE).

Proteins were electrotransferred to a mixed ester nitrocellulose membrane (Hybond-C Extra, GE Healthcare) and incubated with indicated primary antibodies. Bound antibodies were detected with horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated antibodies specific for mouse IgG and rabbit IgG (GE Healthcare) and with SuperSignal West Dura Extended Duration Substrate (Thermo Fisher Scientific). An LAS-3000 Image Analyzer (Fuji Photo Film) was used to image the membranes.

2.6 Transient Knockdown of TIF1 β Expression

DLD-1 cells were transfected with 40 nM of small interference RNA (siRNA) directed against TIF1 β or control siRNA using Lipofectamine 3000 (Invitrogen) according to the manufacturer's protocol. A mixture of three TIF1 β siRNAs (Stealth RNA, Invitrogen) was used: siTIF1 β #1 (HSS115468), siTIF1 β #2 (HSS115469), and siTIF1 β #3 (HSS115470). Control siRNA was purchased from Invitrogen (Stealth RNAi Negative Universal Control Medium).

2.7 Cell Viability Assay

We used the MTT assay to measure cell viability. Cells were plated in regular growth medium at 5×10^3 cells per well in 96-well plates. The following day, cells were incubated with indicated concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min, then changed to the culture medium and further incubated for 3 days. At each time point, 10 μ l MTT [3-(4,5-Dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (5 μ g/ml; Wako)] was added to each well and incubated for 4 hr. Precipitated formazan crystals were dissolved by the addition of 100 μ l isopropanol and the absorbance was measured at 570 nm with a

microplate reader (MTP-300, Corona Electric). Each experiment was conducted at least in triplicate.

3. Results

3.1 Knockdown of TIF1 β reduces cell survival of DLD-1 cells after H₂O₂ treatment

To evaluate the effect of hydrogen peroxide on cell survival, we measured cell survival rates using the MTT assay at 72 hr after H₂O₂ treatment. Exposure of human DLD-1 colorectal cancer cells to differing concentrations of H₂O₂ resulted in a dose-dependent decrease of cell survival (Fig. 1A). We then transfected DLD-1 cells with siRNA (siControl and siTIF1 β) for 48hr and then exposed them to H₂O₂. These siTIF1 β -transfected DLD-1 cells showed a partial knockdown of TIF1 β as well as increased sensitivity to H₂O₂ and had lower survival rates than siControl-transfected DLD-1 cells in the range of 0.25 - 1 mM H₂O₂ (Fig. 1B). These results indicate that TIF1 β contributes to the resistance to H₂O₂-induced cell death in colorectal cancer cells.

3.2 Hydrogen peroxide induces the specific phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473

To explore the effects of hydrogen peroxide on TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation in human colorectal cancer cell lines DLD-1 and HCT116, cells were treated with differing concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 minutes (Fig. 2A and 2B) or treated with 1mM of H₂O₂ over a time course (Fig. 2C and 2D). H₂O₂ induced TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation in a dose dependent manner at least up to 2 mM (Fig. 2A and 2B). Increased TIF1 β phosphorylation was also observed over the time course, with increased phosphorylation maintained through the 2hr timepoint in both DLD-1 and HCT116 cells (Fig. 2C and 2D).

To verify the specificity of the phospho-TIF1 β antibody, ectopically expressed FLAG-TIF1 β -wild-type or TIF1 β mutants in HEK293T cells were immunoprecipitated with

anti-FLAG M2 antibody-conjugated beads and subjected to Western blotting with anti-phospho-TIF1 β -S473 antibody. Unlike wild type TIF1 β , phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473 mutants was not detected by the anti-phospho-TIF1 β -S473 antibody (Fig. S1A). To further verify the phosphorylation status of the band detected by the phospho-TIF1 β specific antibody, cell lysates from HCT116 cells were incubated with lambda phosphatase to remove phosphorous. As shown in Fig. S1B, the band corresponding to TIF1 β phosphorylation is reduced with lambda phosphatase treatment, confirming that phospho-TIF1 β antibody was specifically detecting the phosphorylated TIF1 β -S473.

3.3 Hydrogen peroxide induces the phosphorylation of p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK

To determine which kinases are responsible for TIF1 β phosphorylation under oxidative stress condition, we examined the phosphorylation of p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK after incubation with various concentrations of H₂O₂. Both p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK showed dose-dependent phosphorylation in response to H₂O₂ in both DLD-1 cells (Fig. 3A) and HCT116 cells (Fig. 3B). However, the p42/44 MAPK phosphorylation was observed even in the absence of H₂O₂ treatment and dosage-dependent increase of the phosphorylation levels was weaker than that of p38 MAPK in both DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. This indicates that ROS insult does affect phosphorylation status of the MAPK family with p38 MAPK being most susceptible to peroxide-induced phosphorylation and p42/44 MAPK being only tangentially affected.

3.4 Hydrogen peroxide induced phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473 is mediated by both p38

MAPK and p42/44 MAPK

Since we found peroxide-induced-p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK phosphorylation in both DLD-1 cells and HCT116 cells, the involvement of the MAPK family in TIF1 β phosphorylation upon peroxide treatment was subsequently explored. We used U0126 (a specific inhibitor of p42/44 MAPK) and SB203580 (a specific inhibitor of p38 MAPK) to block activity. U0126 blocked p42/44 MAPK phosphorylation and marginally inhibited TIF1 β phosphorylation in DLD-1 cells (Fig. 4A) and in HCT116 cells (Fig. 4B). Inhibition of p38 MAPK by SB203580 suppressed TIF1 β phosphorylation more clearly than p42/44 MAPK inhibition and combined use of both inhibitors further suppressed TIF1 β phosphorylation in both DLD-1 and HCT116 cells (Fig. 4A and 4B, respectively). These kinase inhibitors (U0126 and SB203580) were found to act in a dose dependent manner in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells (Fig. S2). These results indicate that p38 MAPK serves as the primary modulator of peroxide-induced TIF1 β phosphorylation and p42/44 MAPK may play a secondary or backup role.

Discussion

ROS are naturally and ubiquitously generated in all aerobic organisms and primarily serve to trigger the inflammatory response [22] and oxidant-induced stress conditions [23]. However, reactive oxygen also acts as a secondary messenger and is involved in many cellular functions such as apoptosis [24], cell survival [25] and proliferation [26]. Within the scope of colorectal cancer, ROS damage leading to carcinogenesis has been well studied but the effect of reactive oxygen in a signaling or secondary messenger setting has not yet been fully explored.

Recently, several reports have suggested that high expression of TIF1 β is related to poor prognosis in colorectal cancer patients [6] as TIF1 β induction in tumor cells could engage DNA repair mechanisms in response to chemotherapy [10]. In this case, suppression of TIF1 β may make chemotherapy much more effective as we discovered that H₂O₂-induced cell death in CRC cells was enhanced by TIF1 β knockdown. In addition, H₂O₂ induced TIF1 β phosphorylation at the crucial serine 473 primarily through p38 MAPK with p42/44 MAPK showing secondary involvements. Two critical subgroups of mitogen-activated protein kinases (MAPK) involved in the potential control of tumor cell growth are the extracellular signal-regulated kinases (ERKs or p42/44 MAPK) and the p38 MAPK [27]. ROS, such as hydrogen peroxide, have been reported to activate p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK [28] which is well in line with our results. This leads to the conclusion that activation of TIF1 β via p38 MAPK may contribute the resistance of cancer cells against ROS at both physiological levels (e.g., ROS generated by oxidized lipids within the feces or from intestinal flora) and chemotherapeutic levels.

The mechanism of this resistance may not be due to TIF1 β 's ability to suppress gene transcription but rather its ability to enhance DNA repair after complexing with HP1 [29]. TIF1 β -mediated recruitment of HP1 to histones, the Ser473 phosphorylation-dependent binding of HP-1 to TIF1 β , and phosphorylation-dependent release of HP-1 from TIF1 β are required for efficient DNA repair [7]. This cascade relaxes the winding of genomic DNA around the histones, facilitating effective repair. Therefore, any exogenous factor that decreases the affinity of TIF1 β for HP1 by increasing phosphorylation at Ser473 would be expected to activate this DNA repair function over the repressor function. In line with this expectation, we found evident TIF1 β -S473 phosphorylation after hydrogen peroxide treatment. Peroxide also strongly induced p38 MAPK phosphorylation with a smaller effect on p42/44 MAPK, and as these affect Ser473 phosphorylation, it stands to reason that ROS can and do force a switching of TIF1 β 's function from repressor to oxidative defense.

However, whether TIF1 β is a direct substrate for p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK under peroxide stress or not is unclear at this moment. Future studies will need to consider how phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473 is regulated by the multiple pathways it connects with and if feedback regulatory mechanics take a central or secondary role to ROS-mediated, MAPK-driven activation.

In summary, our data demonstrated that hydrogen peroxide activates MAPK, particularly p38 MAPK and stimulates phosphorylation of TIF1 β -S473 that will force HP1 dissociation and subsequent protection of CRC cells from oxidative stress by an increase in DNA repair efficiency.

Figure Legends

Fig. 1. H₂O₂-induced cell death is enhanced by TIF1 β knockdown in DLD-1 cells. (A)

DLD-1 cells were treated for 15 min with differing concentrations of H₂O₂ as indicated. Cell viability was determined at 72 hr after H₂O₂ treatment by MTT assay. Data are presented as mean \pm SD, n=3. (B) DLD-1 cells were transfected with siRNA (control and TIF1 β). After 48 hr, cells were challenged with H₂O₂ for 15 min. Cell viability was determined at 72 hr after H₂O₂ treatment by MTT assay. Data are presented as mean \pm SD, n=3. **P<0.01, ***P<0.001. Right panel shows Western blot data indicating total TIF1 β after siRNA transfection.

Fig. 2. H₂O₂ induces TIF1 β serine 473 phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells.

DLD-1 and HCT116 cells were incubated with the indicated concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min (A, B) or with 1mM of H₂O₂ for the indicated periods (C, D). Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using antibodies against phosphorylated TIF1 β (pTIF1 β (S473)) and total TIF1 β (TIF1 β). β -actin antibody was used as a loading control.

Fig. 3. H₂O₂ induces p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. DLD-1 cells (A) and HCT116 cells (B) were incubated with the indicated concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min. Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using first antibodies against phosphorylated p38 (p-p38), total p38 (p38), phosphorylated p42/44 (p-p42/44), and total p42/44 (p42/44). β -actin antibody was used as a loading control.

Fig. 4. Effects of p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK kinase inhibitors on H₂O₂-induced TIF1 β –S473 phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. DLD-1 cells (A) and HCT116 cells (B) were incubated with DMSO (vehicle), U0126, and SB203580 as indicated for 1 hr before 1 mM H₂O₂ treatment for 15 min. UNT; untreated. Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using first antibodies against phosphorylated TIF1 β (pTIF1 β (Ser473)), total TIF1 β (TIF1 β), phosphorylated p42/44 (p-p42/44), phosphorylated p38 (p-p38) and total p38 (p38). β -actin antibody is used as a loading control.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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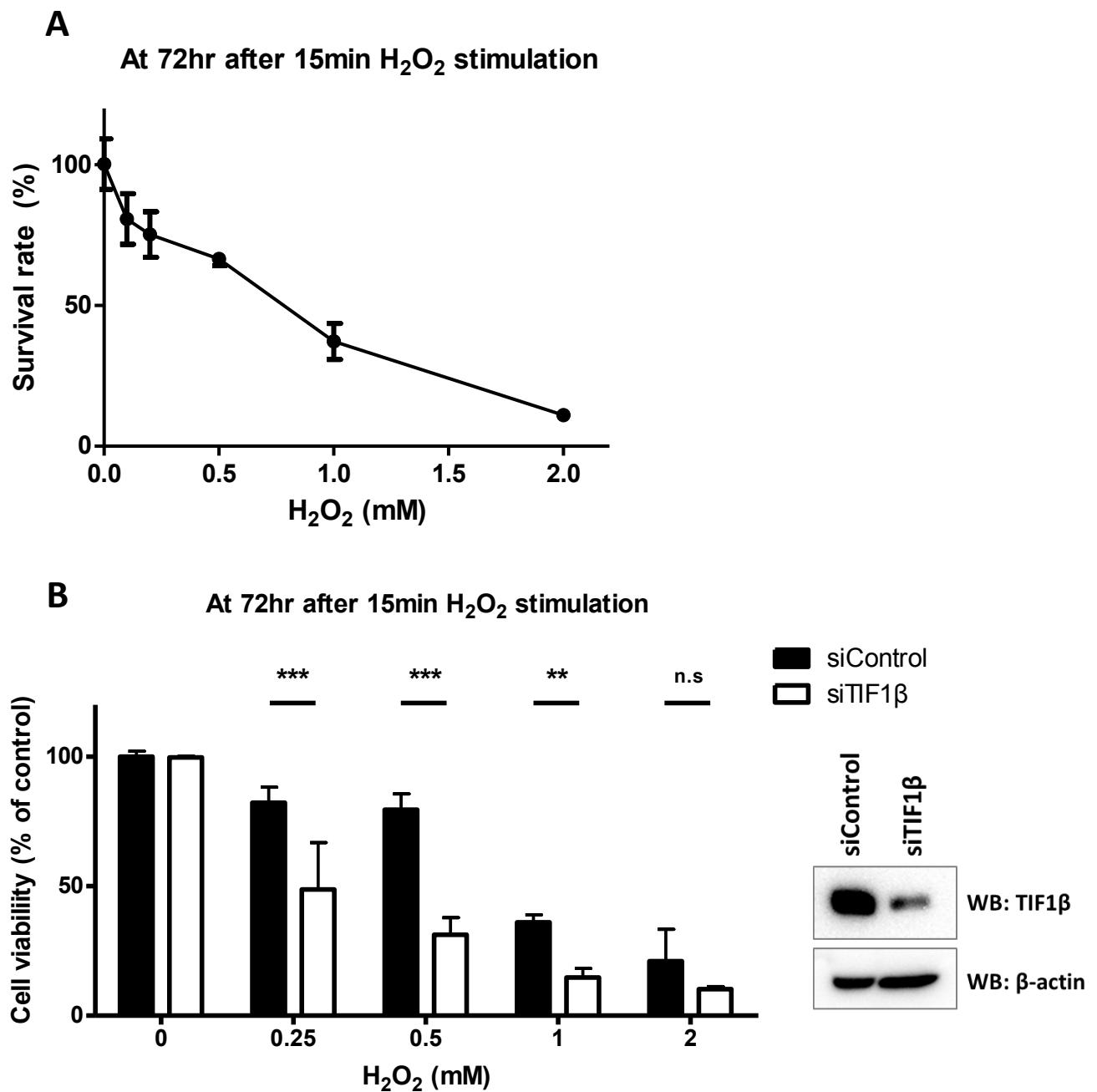


Fig. 1. H₂O₂-induced cell death is enhanced by TIF1β knockdown in DLD-1 cells. (A) DLD-1 cells were treated for 15 min with differing concentrations of H₂O₂ as indicated. Cell viability was determined at 72 hr after H₂O₂ treatment by MTT assay. Data are presented as mean ± SD, n=3. (B) DLD-1 cells were transfected with siRNA (control and TIF1β). After 48 hr, cells were challenged with H₂O₂ for 15 min. Cell viability was determined at 72 hr after H₂O₂ treatment by MTT assay. Data are presented as mean ± SD, n=3. **P<0.01, ***P<0.001. Right panel shows Western blot data indicating total TIF1β after siRNA transfection.

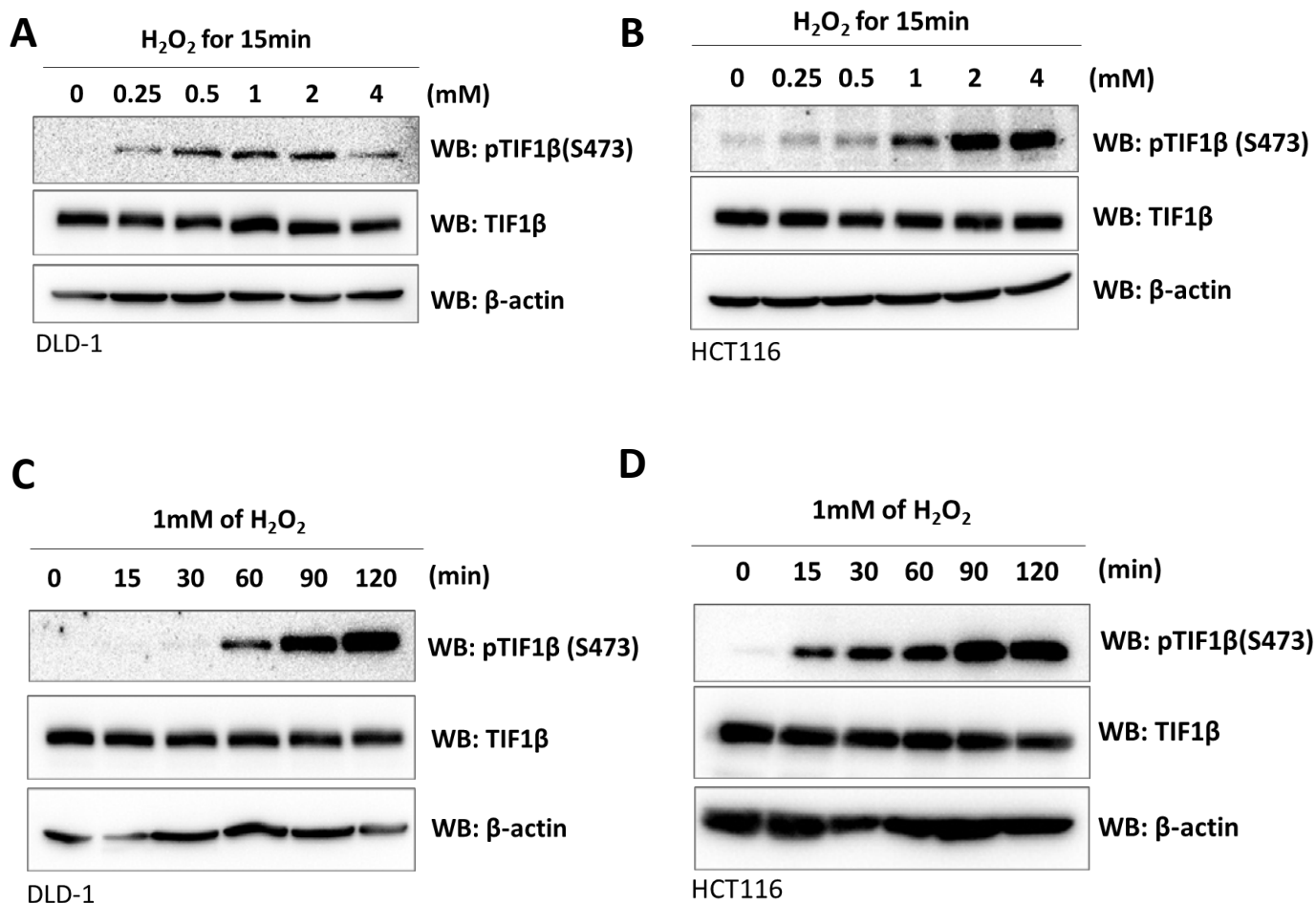
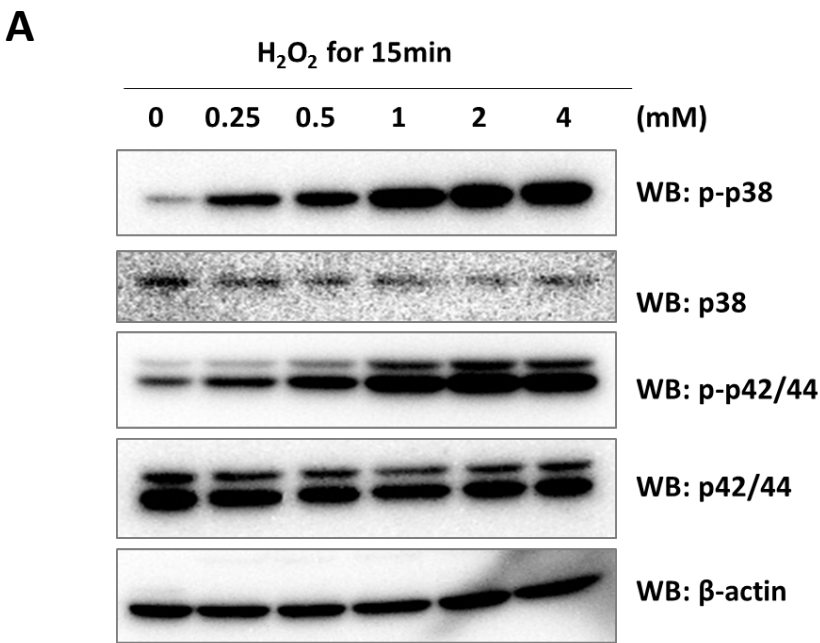
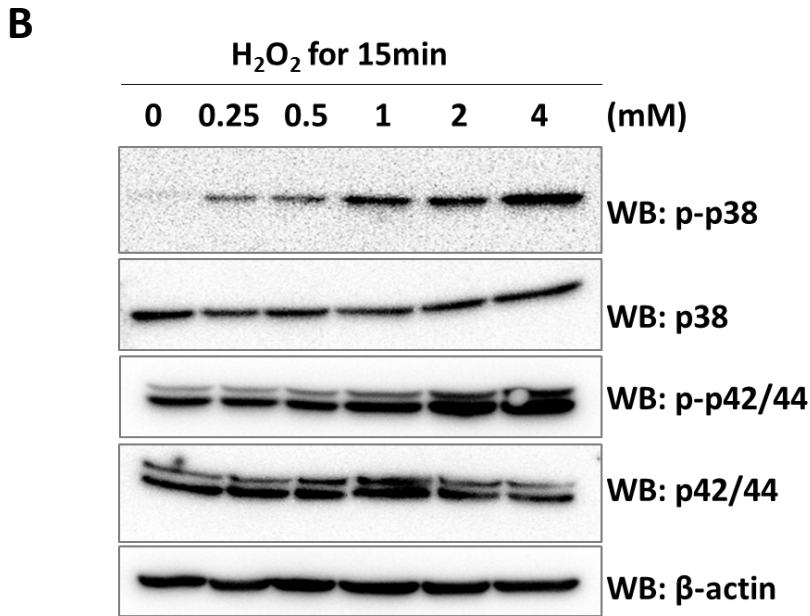


Fig. 2. H₂O₂ induces TIF1β serine 473 phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. DLD-1 and HCT116 cells were incubated with the indicated concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min (A, B) or with 1mM of H₂O₂ for the indicated periods (C, D). Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using antibodies against phosphorylated TIF1β (pTIF1β (S473)) and total TIF1β (TIF1β). β-actin antibody was used as a loading control.



DLD-1



HCT116

Fig. 3. H₂O₂ induces p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. DLD-1 cells (A) and HCT116 cells (B) were incubated with the indicated concentrations of H₂O₂ for 15 min. Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using first antibodies against phosphorylated p38 (p-p38), total p38 (p38), phosphorylated p42/44 (p-p42/44), and total p42/44 (p42/44). β-actin antibody was used as a loading control.

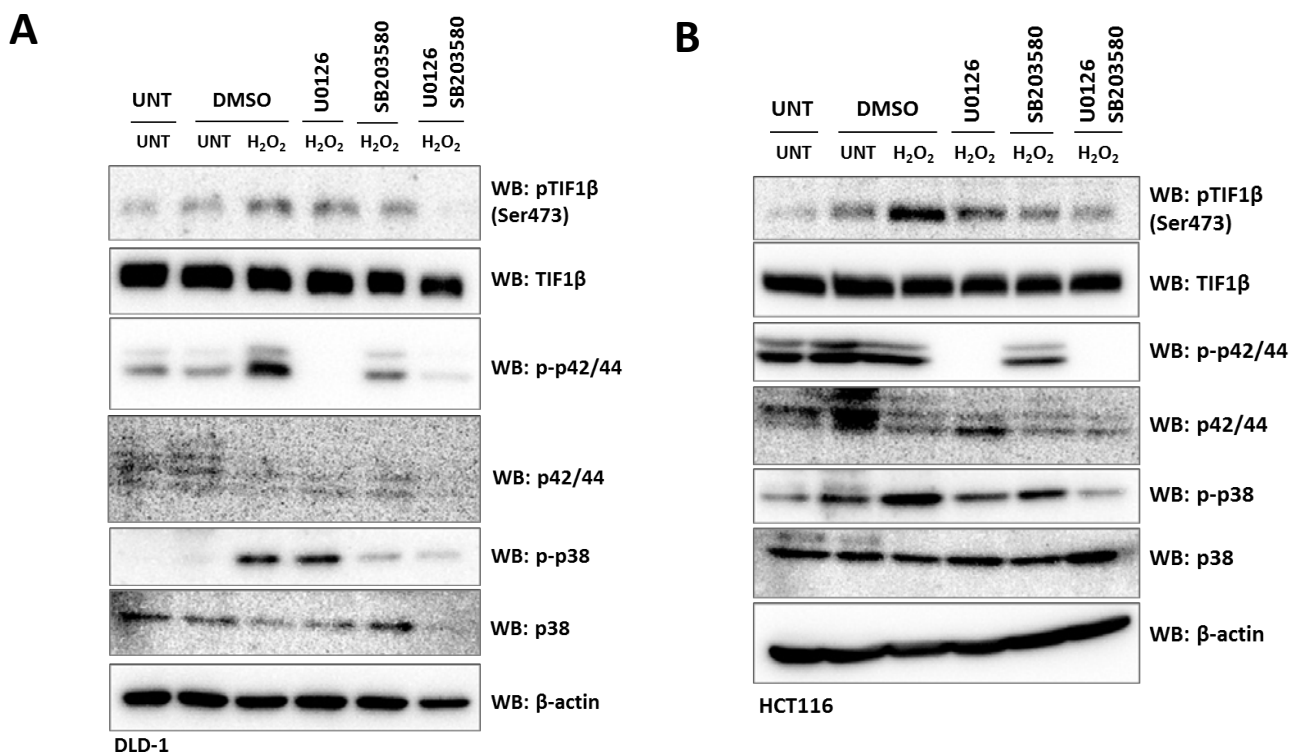


Fig. 4. Effects of p42/44 MAPK and p38 MAPK kinase inhibitors on H₂O₂-induced TIF1β –S473 phosphorylation in DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. DLD-1 cells (A) and HCT116 cells (B) were incubated with DMSO (vehicle), U0126, and SB203580 as indicated for 1 hr before 1 mM H₂O₂ treatment for 15 min. UNT; untreated. Whole cell lysates were subjected to Western blot analyses using first antibodies against phosphorylated TIF1β (pTIF1β (Ser473)), total TIF1β (TIF1β), phosphorylated p42/44 (p-p42/44), phosphorylated p38 (p-p38) and total p38 (p38). β-actin antibody is used as a loading control.

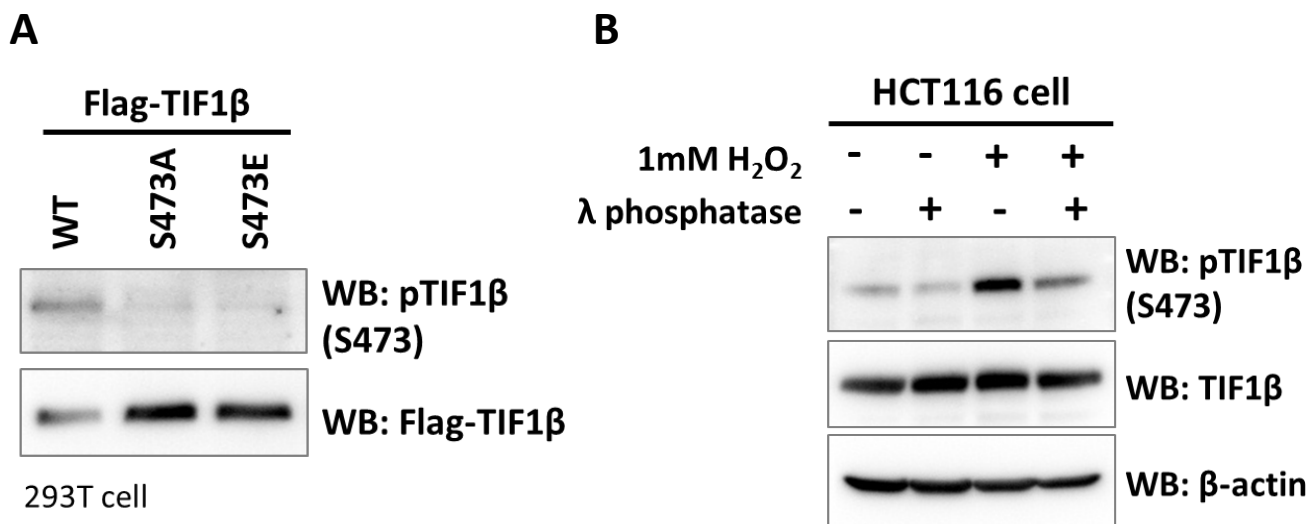


Figure S1. Characterization of anti-TIF1 β -Ser473 phosphorylation antibody under oxidative stress. (A) HEK293T cells were transfected with TIF1 β -wild type, S473A and S473E mutant, respectively. (B) HCT116 cells were incubated with H₂O₂ for 15 min and treated with or without λ phosphatase for 30 min. Whole cell lysates were immunoblotted to detect endogenous expression of phosphorylated TIF1 β , total TIF1 β and β -actin, respectively.

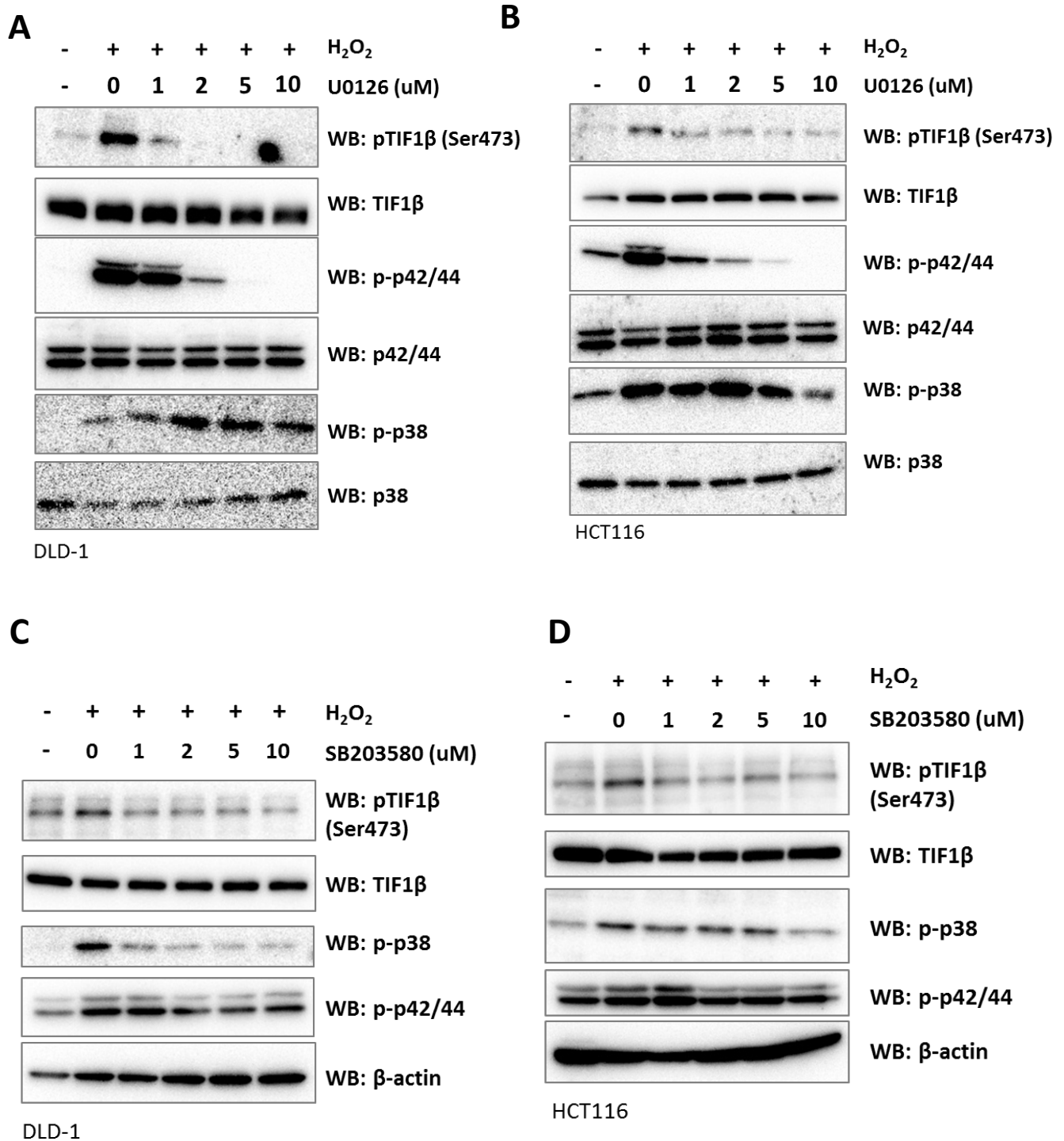


Figure S2. Effect of doses of kinase inhibitors on H₂O₂-induced phosphorylation in colorectal cancer DLD-1 and HCT116 cells. .

DLD-1 cells and HCT116 cells were incubated with U0126 (A-B) or SB203580 (C-D) for the indicated concentration for 1hour before H₂O₂ stimulation. Whole cell lysates were immunoblotted to detect endogenous expression of phosphorylated TIF1β (pTIF1β (Ser473)), total TIF1β (TIF1β), phosphorylated p42/44 (p-p42/44), phosphorylated p38 (p-p38) and total p38 (p38). β-actin antibody is used as a loading control.