Phytohormonal regulation of S-adenosylmethionine synthetase and S-adenosylmethionine levels in dwarf pea epicotyls

Mukul Mathur and R.C. Sachar

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Laboratory, Department of Botany, University of Delhi, Delhi-100 007, India

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A significant stimulation (2- to 2.5-fold) of AdoMet synthetase was witnessed in gibberellic acid (GA₃, 1 μM)-treated epicotyls of the dwarf pea (Pisum sativum). This was accompanied by a 2.4-fold increase in the endogenous pool of S-adenosylmethionine. Both abscisic acid (10 μM) and cycloheximide (20 μg/ml) inhibited the GA₃-mediated enhancement of AdoMet synthetase activity. Three isozymes of AdoMet synthetase were detected in GA₃-treated epicotyls, whereas a single activity peak was observed in controls. Thus, GA₃ seems to control the induction of two new isozymes of AdoMet synthetase in the dwarf pea. By contrast, the tall pea exhibited three isozymes of AdoMet synthetase even in the absence of GA₃ treatment. High concentration of L-methionine (2 mM) mimicked the GA₃-elicited induction of two new isozymes of AdoMet synthetase in dwarf pea epicotyls.

AdoMet synthetase; Enzyme regulation; Isozyme; S-Adenosylmethionine; Gibberellic acid (GA₃); L-Methionine

1. INTRODUCTION

The ubiquitous occurrence of AdoMet synthetase has been reported in eukaryotes. The enzyme has been shown to catalyze the synthesis of S-adenosylmethionine from the substrates ATP and L-methionine with the release of pyrophosphate and inorganic orthophosphate [1]. AdoMet synthetase has been purified from Saccharomyces cerevisiae [2], Escherichia coli [3], several animal tissues [4-7] and wheat embryos [8]. The cDNA clones of AdoMet synthetase have been isolated from rat liver [9] and Arabidopsis thaliana [10], whereas genomic clones have been isolated from Escherichia coli [11] and Saccharomyces cerevisiae [12]. Two genes encoding this enzyme (SAM I and SAM II) have been identified in S. cerevisiae [13] and Arabidopsis [10]. The stimulation of AdoMet synthetase by high concentrations of L-methionine (2 mM) has been reported in S. cerevisiae [13], rat liver [14] and wheat embryos [8]. Cycloheximide blocked the methionine-induced AdoMet synthetase activity in wheat embryos. In yeast cells, a transcriptional control has been envisaged for the induction of AdoMet synthetase by methionine, as it corre

Correspondence address: R.C. Sachar, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Laboratory, Department of Botany, University of Delhi, Delhi-100 007, India

Abbreviations: ABA, abscisic acid; AdoMet synthetase, S-adenosylmethionine synthetase; CHI, cycloheximide; Cs, gibberellic acid; 5'MTA, 5'methylthioadenosine; mRNA, messenger RNA; PCA, perchloric acid; PEG, polyethylene glycol; PVP, polyvinyl polypyrrolidone; SAM (or AMe), S-adenosylmethionine

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RESULTS

Spray application of GA₃ (1 μM) to dwarf pea seedlings (10-day-old) brought about a 2- to 2.5-fold stimulation of AdoMet synthetase activity compared to that of the control epicotyls (Fig. 1). The GA₃-induced AdoMet synthetase activity was completely nullified by the simultaneous presence of ABA (10 μM) (Table I). However, spray application of ABA (10 μM) alone had no inhibitory effect on AdoMet synthetase activity. De novo protein synthesis seemed necessary for GA₃ stimulation of the enzyme activity, since CHI (20 μg/ml) completely inhibited the hormone-mediated response (Table I). A characteristic difference in the isomeric pattern of AdoMet synthetase was witnessed in control and GA₃-treated dwarf pea epicotyls. A single activity peak of AdoMet synthetase was observed in control epicotyls. In contrast, the hormone-treated tissue revealed three distinct isozymes, one of which coincided with the activity peak of the control enzyme (Fig. 2). Thus the appearance of two new isozymes seems to be under the direct control of GA₃.

To determine the physiological significance of GA₃-induced isozymes in dwarf pea epicotyls, we examined the isomeric pattern of AdoMet synthetase in the tall pea, which has inherently high levels of endogenous GAs. Interestingly, the epicotyls of the tall pea

![Graph showing AdoMet synthetase activity](image-url)

Fig. 1. Stimulation of AdoMet synthetase activity by gibberellic acid (GA₃) in dwarf pea epicotyls. The enzyme activity in control and GA₃-treated epicotyls is expressed as a function of protein concentration in ammonium sulphate fraction precipitate (30-60% saturation).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Regulation of AdoMet synthetase by GA₃

Spray application of GA₃ (1 μM) to dwarf pea seedlings (10-day-old) brought about a 2- to 2.5-fold stimulation of AdoMet synthetase activity over that of the control epicotyls (Fig. 1). The GA₃-induced AdoMet synthetase activity was completely nullified by the simultaneous presence of ABA (10 μM) (Table I). However, spray application of ABA (10 μM) alone had no inhibitory effect on AdoMet synthetase activity. De novo protein synthesis seemed necessary for GA₃ stimulation of the enzyme activity, since CHI (20 μg/ml) completely inhibited the hormone-mediated response (Table I). A characteristic difference in the isomeric pattern of AdoMet synthetase was witnessed in control and GA₃-treated dwarf pea epicotyls. A single activity peak of AdoMet synthetase was observed in control epicotyls. In contrast, the hormone-treated tissue revealed three distinct isozymes, one of which coincided with the activity peak of the control enzyme (Fig. 2). Thus the appearance of two new isozymes seems to be under the direct control of GA₃. With a view to determine the physiological significance of GA₃-induced isozymes in dwarf pea epicotyls, we examined the isomeric pattern of AdoMet synthetase in the tall pea, which has inherently high levels of endogenous GAs. Interestingly, the epicotyls of the tall pea

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Table I

Regulation of AdoMet synthetase by gibberellic acid (GA3) and its counteraction by abscisic acid and cycloheximide in dwarf pea epicotyls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>AdoMet synthetase activity (pmol of SAM synthesized/mg protein)</th>
<th>Relative activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA3 (1 μM)</td>
<td>4644</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA3 (1 μM) + ABA (10 μM)</td>
<td>1778</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA3 (1 μM) + CHI (20 μg/ml)</td>
<td>1485</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four-day-old pea seedlings were sprayed with GA3 (1 μM), GA3 (1 μM) + ABA (10 μM) and GA3 (1 μM) + CHI (20 μg/ml). The enzyme activity was assayed in dialyzed ammonium sulphate fraction precipitate (30-60% satn.), prepared from control and treated epicotyls clipped after 48 h of treatment.

We then designed experiments to ascertain whether the hormonal regulation of AdoMet synthetase affects the endogenous levels of S-adenosylmethionine. This was achieved by measuring the incorporation of [14C]methyl methionine into the labelled [14C]SAM in vivo, both in control and GA3-treated dwarf pea epicotyls. We did observe a relative abundance of [14C]SAM in hormone-treated epicotyls (2.4 fold) as compared to the controls (Table II). It appears that the hormonal control of isozymes of AdoMet synthetase does influence the levels of SAM. Thus a positive correlation was observed between the rise in the activity of AdoMet synthetase and the high pool of SAM in hormone-treated dwarf pea epicotyls.

3.2. Regulation of AdoMet synthetase by L-methionine

About 2-fold stimulation of AdoMet synthetase activity was observed in dwarf pea epicotyls in response to L-methionine (2 mM). The simultaneous presence of CHI (20 μg/ml) nullified the regulatory role of methionine, thereby indicating the requirement of de novo protein synthesis for enzyme induction (Table III). However, ABA (10 μM) failed to inhibit methionine-stimulated activity of AdoMet synthetase (data not presented). It is interesting to observe that the concentration of L-methionine (2 mM) for the optimum stimulation of AdoMet synthetase is roughly 2000 fold more than the concentration of GA3 (1 μM).
Fig. 3. Induction of isozymes of AdoMet synthetase by L-methionine in dwarf pea epicotyls. The figure depicts the isozymic pattern of AdoMet synthetase in DE-52 fraction prepared from control, L-methionine (2 mM), and L-methionine (2 mM) + CHI (20 μg/ml)-treated pea epicotyls. Two additional isozymes were witnessed in methionine-treated pea epicotyls that were completely extinguished by CHI treatment. Control (▲ ▲), L-methionine (● ●), L-methionine + CHI (◇ ◇).

methionine-treated epicotyls also showed three distinct isozymes of AdoMet synthetase (Fig. 3). Thus the isozymic pattern of AdoMet synthetase in response to methionine is strikingly similar to that observed in GA3-treated dwarf pea epicotyls. Further, it was observed that cycloheximide treatment strongly repressed the methionine-induced isozymes of AdoMet synthetase (Fig. 3).

Methionine is known to be a precursor of ethylene, a gaseous phytohormone [19]. Thus it could be argued that the administration of relatively high concentration of L-methionine to excised pea epicotyls could result in the build-up of a high pool of ethylene in the epicotyls that could regulate AdoMet synthetase activity. We tested this possibility by treating pea epicotyls with different concentrations of Ethrel (2 μM–2 mM). Ethrel (2-chloro ethyl phosphonic acid) is a synthetic growth regulator which undergoes spontaneous hydrolysis in plant tissues and in aqueous solution to yield ethylene and phosphoric acid. Ethrel, however, failed to stimulate AdoMet synthetase activity, thereby ruling out the regulatory role of endogenous levels of ethylene in methionine-treated pea epicotyls. Nevertheless, Ethrel-treated dwarf pea epicotyls showed significant stimulation of peroxidase activity [20].

Both methionine and GA3-regulated AdoMet synthetase activity was a tissue specific response and was confined only to the apical zone of the pea epicotyls. The basal part of epicotyls and root tissue showed no stimulation of AdoMet synthetase in response to GA3 and L-methionine.

3.3. Chemical characterization of the reaction product

The in vivo labelled [14C]S-adenosylmethionine was chemically characterized. Heat treatment of putative [14C]SAM yielded 97% of [14C]-5′-methylthioadenosine. This proved the authenticity of [14C]-labelled SAM which is synthesized in vivo by the incorporation of [14C]methionine (Table IV). The in vitro synthesized putative [3H]-labelled SAM catalyzed by AdoMet synthetase was also chemically characterized by its conversion into 5′ MTA by heat treatment. About 93% of labelled reaction product was converted into 5′ MTA (Table IV).

4. DISCUSSION

The present investigation has revealed that AdoMet synthetase activity is regulated by GA3 (1 μM) in dwarf pea epicotyls. This stimulatory response of GA3 was nullified by abscisic acid (10 μM). Cycloheximide (20 μg/ml) strongly inhibited the GA3-stimulated AdoMet synthetase activity, thereby suggesting the requirement for further investigations.

Table IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>In vivo synthesis of [14C]-labelled SAM</th>
<th>In vitro synthesis of [3H]-labelled SAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radioactivity in the zone of SAM (DPM)</td>
<td>Radioactivity in the zone of SAM (DPM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control reaction</td>
<td>7235</td>
<td>5432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat-treated</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reaction product</td>
<td>7012</td>
<td>5053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The in vivo and in vitro synthesized putative labelled S-adenosylmethionine was purified on Dowex (Na+). An aliquot of the neutralized fraction (pH 7.0) was heated at 100°C for 10 min for its chemical conversion into 5′ MTA. The control and heat-treated samples were chromatographed on Whatman 3MM for the separation of labelled SAM and labelled 5′ MTA.
of de novo protein synthesis. Whereas a single activity peak of AdoMet synthetase was observed in control epicotyls, the GA$_3$-treated tissue revealed three isozymes. Thus, the quantitative regulation of AdoMet synthetase by GA$_3$ (2- to 2.5-fold stimulation) was also associated with the induction of two distinct isozymes at the qualitative level. The true significance of this observation became apparent when we observed the occurrence of three isozymes of AdoMet synthetase in epicotyls of the tall pea, without GA$_3$-treatment. Conceivably, the induction of AdoMet synthetase isozymes by GA$_3$, in light-grown dwarf peas could be considered a true biochemical response, in view of the prevalence of a similar pattern of isozymes in light-grown tall peas in nature.

In *E. coli*, mutants of the structural gene for AdoMet synthetase have been constructed by in vitro mutagenesis of a plasmid-borne *metK* gene. These conditionally defective mutants, when grown in minimal medium, had a 200-fold less intracellular level of S-adenosylmethionine at non-permissive temperatures. However, the mutants grew normally on a yeast extract-based rich medium even at non-permissive temperatures. The S-adenosylmethionine pool and AdoMet synthetase activity in extracts of mutant and wild-type strains were similar at 30°C and 40°C of growth temperature. These observations revealed that an alternate form of AdoMet synthetase was expressed in nutritionally rich medium. This gene, designated as *metK*, encodes another isozyme of AdoMet synthetase in mutant strains grown in rich medium. At present, the precise nature of chemical stimulus that expresses the *metK* gene in mutant strains remains elusive.

It is interesting to note that high levels of substrate L-methionine (2 mM) mimicked the stimulatory response of GA$_3$ (1 µM) in the modulation of AdoMet synthetase. Methionine-treated epicotyls also showed the induction of two additional isozymes of AdoMet synthetase, a situation comparable to that observed in GA$_3$-treated epicotyls. Earlier, the regulation of AdoMet synthetase by L-methionine (2 mM) has also been reported in yeast [13], rat liver [14] and wheat embryos [8]. In yeast, the methionine-elicited stimulation of AdoMet synthetase activity is ascribed to the increased levels of its mRNA [13]. However, the hormonal regulation of AdoMet synthetase has so far not been reported in animal cells or even in other plant systems.

The phytohormonal regulation of AdoMet synthetase isozymes in dwarf pea epicotyls could have a physiological significance, since it is accompanied by a parallel rise (2.4-fold) in the levels of the endogenous pool of S-adenosylmethionine in vivo. Further studies will be necessary to show the ubiquitous role of GA$_3$ in the regulation of AdoMet synthetase and the rise in the levels of SAM in other GA$_3$-responsive tissues.

REFERENCES