while curvature sensing is generally conserved throughout the membrane binding region of aSyn, curvature generation requires specific binding domains. These results will help to form a model for the interplay between αSyn membrane binding activity and membrane remodeling and may have implications for understanding both αSyn’s native role as well as its contribution to PD.

**1360-Pos Board B90**

**Site-Specific Hydration Dynamics Illuminates the Key Structural Features of Membrane-Bound α-Synuclein**

Samrat Mukhopadhyay, Neha Jain, Karishma Bhanshe, M. Hemawasthi. Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Mohali, Mohali, India.

α-Synuclein is an intrinsically disordered protein that is preferentially expressed in presynaptic nerve terminals. It undergoes a large-scale conformational rearrangement upon binding to synaptic vesicle membranes. In order to obtain the structural insights into the membrane-bound α-synuclein at the residue-specific resolution, we incorporated single tryptophan at various locations along the sequence. These tryptophans were used as site-specific fluorescence markers to characterize the structural and dynamical aspects of α-synuclein. The spatial localization of various parts of the protein near the membrane surface was elucidated utilizing a unique and sensitive fluorescence readout, namely, red-edge excitation shift (REES), which originates when a fluorophore is located in a highly ordered micro-environment. The extent of REES observed at different locations allowed us to directly identify the residues that are localized at the membrane-water interface comprising a thin (~15 Å) layer of motionally-constrained water molecules (Figure 1). Additionally, we have been able to distinguish subtle but important structural differences of α-synuclein bound to different lipid membranes. We believe that the structural modulations of α-synuclein on the membrane could potentially be related to its physiological functions as well as to the onset of Parkinson’s diseases.

**1361-Pos Board B91**

**Determination of Primary Nucleation Mechanisms of α-Synuclein Amyloid Aggregation**


Protein conformational diseases represent a class of pathologies in which specific peptides or proteins form aberrant self-assemblies that constitute the hallmark of several neurodegenerative diseases. Specifically, the formation of intraneuronal inclusions of the protein α-synuclein (αSyn) is associated with the pathogenesis of Parkinson’s disease (PD).

A great interest is in the early stages of αSyn aggregation, for which soluble monomeric proteins are converted into fibrillar nanostructures. It has been shown that at these stages many parallel and competing pathways take contemporaneously place and it is currently very difficult to address on these mechanisms by using standard techniques of molecular investigations. In order to overcome the limitations of standard approaches, we employed ensemble-averaged kinetic studies coupled with microdollop technology in order to characterize the primary nucleation early stages of αSyn amyloid formation and therefore to elucidate the fundamental mechanisms underlying this phenomenon. Testing different aggregation conditions, we have been able to understand that the primary nucleation mechanism underlying αSyn aggregation is not homogenous, whereas it is catalysed by different factors, including air/water surface interactions.

The full characterization of all the processes involved in the aggregation mechanism of αSyn will be fundamental for devising new and innovative therapeutic strategies against PD. Indeed, based on our analysis, we expect that it will be possible to design and screen pharmacological compounds able to selectively inhibit the nucleation steps that trigger either the overall of the process or specifically the formation of the toxic aggregated species.

**1362-Pos Board B92**

**Oligomerisation of Alpha-Synuclein at Physiological Concentrations**

Marija Ilijina. Cambridge University, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Alpha-synuclein is a small intracellular protein naturally abundant in the brain at low-micromolar concentrations. Its fibrillar aggregates are the major constituents of intracellular inclusions, known as Lewy bodies, which are the pathological hallmarks of Parkinson disease and related neurodegenerative disorders. However, increasing evidence suggest that oligomers, rather than fibrils, are the most toxic and damaging to brain neurons. Single molecule FRET can be used to detect and characterise the low levels of heterogeneous oligomers formed during protein aggregation. In this presentation, I will discuss the recent results of in-vitro studies of alpha-synuclein oligomer formation at physiologically-relevant concentrations using single-molecule FRET spectroscopy and show how these experiments reveal the key microscopic reactions taking place during the aggregation of alpha-synuclein.

**1363-Pos Board B93**

**Single-Molecule Spectroscopy Reveals Polymer Effects of Disordered Proteins in Crowded Environments**

Andrea Soranno, Iwo Koegnig, Madeleine B. Borgia, Hagen Hofmann, Franziska Zosel, Daniel Nettels, Ben Schuler. Biochemistry Department, University of Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland.

Currently, it is not clear how the crowded cellular milieu affects the structural distributions of intrinsically disordered proteins (IDPs). Here we employ single-molecule Förster resonance energy transfer (FRET) to quantify the effect of molecular crowding on four disordered proteins with very different degrees of charge-induced expansion. For a variety of crowding agents (PEG, PVP, Dextran, PVA), an increasing collapse of the polypeptide chains is observed with increasing concentrations of crowder, as expected from simple considerations, e.g., as scaled particle theory. However, we also observe an increasing collapse with increasing size of the crowder, the opposite of what scaled particle theory predicts. Interestingly, the observations can be rationalized quantitatively within the framework of Flory-Huggins theories that take into account the polymeric properties of both the disordered proteins and the crowder. The results provide a detailed understanding of the behavior of IDPs and denatured proteins in the presence of polydisperse co-solutes as those characteristic of the cellular environment.

**1364-Pos Board B94**

**Single-Molecule Characterisation of Alpha-Synuclein Oligomers**

Mathew H. Horrocks, Steven F. Lee, Sonia Gandhi, Marija Ilijina, Laura Tosatto, Christopher M. Dobson, David Klenerman.

1Cambridge University, CAMBRIDGE, United Kingdom, 2Institute of Neurology, University College London, London, United Kingdom.

The pathological hallmark of Parkinson’s disease is the presence of insoluble protein deposits in the brain, which are formed when specific protein molecules misfold and aggregate into highly ordered fibrils. In Parkinson’s disease, the deposits are primarily made up of α-synuclein, a protein whose major function is not fully known. Rather than the fibrils themselves being toxic, evidence now points towards the smaller, soluble oligomers formed in the initial stages of the process as being the culprit. We have developed a novel single-molecule fluorescence technique to detect and characterise the oligomers of alpha-synuclein. Using this methodology, we are able to identify the cytotoxic species, and apply these species to primary neuronal cultures to investigate their damaging effects.

**1365-Pos Board B95**

**Repeats in the α-Synuclein Sequence Determine its Conformation on Membranes and Influence Aggregation Properties**

Volodymyr Shvadchak, Vinod Subramaniam.

1Nanobiophysics, University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands, 2Nanoscale Biophysics, FOM Institute AMOLF, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 3University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands.

Alpha-Synuclein (αS) is a 140 aa intrinsically disordered and amyloidogenic protein. Its physiological functions are unclear, but are believed to be connected to the interaction with synaptic vesicles or membranes of other organelles. The sequence of αS shows partial 11 amino acid periodicity that induces atypical 3/11 helix conformation on membranes. Fluorescence studies of tryptophan mutants of αS show a flexible at residues 52-54 between two helical domains. Deletion of this flexible 4 aa fragment between two groups of 11 aa repeats does not significantly affect αS membrane binding but strongly decreases the protein aggregation and fibril formation propensity. Moreover, the deletion mutant inhibits aggregation of wildtype αS, likely by hindering the fibril growth, since the mutant does not appear to co-aggregate into fibrils with wt αS.

Introducing additional 11 amino acid repeats into the αS sequence increases affinity of the modified protein to membranes and slows down the protein aggregation. We believe that the 11 amino acid repeats in the αS sequence play a key role in αS’s ability to switch between a helical conformation on membranes and β-sheets in fibrils.