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89-MiniSymp
Bcl-2 Family Proteins Regulate the Ability of Ceramide Channels to Permeabilize the Mitochondrial Outer Membrane to Proteins
Marco Colombini[1], Meenu N. Perera[1], Vidyaramanan Ganesan[1], Leah J. Siskind[2].
[1]University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA, [2]Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC, USA.
The sphingolipid, ceramide, forms channels capable of translocating proteins through membranes. These channels can form in the mitochondrial outer membrane at ceramide levels found to be present in that membrane early in apoptosis. For these channels to be good candidates for the protein release pathway that is a key, decision-making step in apoptosis, they need to be controlled by Bcl-2 family proteins. Full length Bcl-xL favors ceramide channel disassembly and activated, full length Bax favors the formation of large channels. These act at the low nanomolar level. Thus their mode of action on ceramide channels is consistent with their role in controlling the release of proteins from mitochondria. These proteins interact directly with the ceramide channels and are able to influence the size and stability of the channels whether the channels are formed on mitochondrial membranes or phospholipid membranes. The binding of Bcl-xL to the ceramide channel seems to form a 1:1 complex, the influence of the interaction propagating throughout the structure in an allosteric manner. The influence of Bax seems to involve multiple interactions, favoring a larger channel through an induced-fit mechanism. Alterations in either the protein structure or the ceramide structure can alter the interaction, providing clues to the site of interaction. Supported by a grant from NSF (MCB-0641208).

90-MiniSymp
Structural Insights into Cytomegalovirus Resistance to Apoptosis
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A host defense mechanism against viral invasion is elimination of the infected cells. This process depends on the finely tuned regulation of programmed cell death or apoptosis. Some viruses, however through evolution have been able to counteract this host defense by encoding in its genes proteins that can block apoptosis. The cytomegalovirus (CMV) genome encodes a protein, vMIA that inhibits apoptosis through the mitochondria pathway. The Bcl-2 family of proteins that can be divided into at least two subfamilies controls this apoptosis pathway. The subfamily including Bcl-2 and Bcl-xL inhibits apoptosis whereas the Bax subfamily consisting of Bax and Bak promote apoptosis. Bax is a cytosolic protein that translocates onto the mitochondria upon apoptosis induction. This is a crucial initiation event for the apoptosis process. The vMIA protein of CMV interacts specifically with Bax, recruits it onto the mitochondria membrane and inhibits its apoptotic function. We investigated the interaction between a peptide from vMIA, which retains most of its affinity, and Bax using solution nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR). Due to the nature of the protein interactions non-conventional NMR approach was employed to study the peptide-protein complex. The structure that we determined revealed a unique binding site on Bax that leads to its inhibition. This was confirmed by point mutations. Our findings provide the molecular mechanism for apoptosis inhibition by the vMIA protein of cytomegalovirus.

91-MiniSymp
The Novel Fe-S Protein Miner1- Regulator of Crosstalk Between Apoptosis and Autophagy?
Patricia A. Jennings.
UC San Diego, San Diego, CA, USA.
The mitochondrial protein MitoNEET is an important new target in diabetes therapy. The endoplasmic reticulum protein Miner1, a member of the newly discovered NEET family of iron-sulfur proteins, is essential for health and longevity. Mis-splicing of the Miner1 gene leading to deletion of the iron-sulfur domain causes Wolfram Syndrome 2 (WFS2), an inherited juvenile-onset fatal disease. Interestingly, Miner1 was recently identified as a novel regulator of crosstalk between apoptosis and autophagy response in cells via specific protein-protein interactions. We are exploring the how environmental stress and tuning of the redox-potentials of the NEET proteins regulate their interactions with pro- and anti-apoptotic factors. The structural biochemical and biophysical results are discussed in relation to possible roles of MitoNEET and Miner1 in cellular Fe-S management and redox regulation of apoptotic/autophagic response.

PLATFORM F: Protein Dynamics - Experiment & Simulation

92-Plat
On the Effect of the Ribosome and Trigger Factor on Nascent Chain Protein Folding
Edward P. O'Brien[1], John Christodoulou[2], Christopher Dobson[1], Michele Vendruscolo[1].
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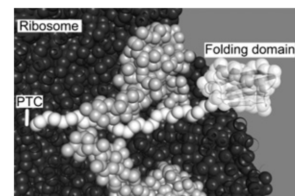
It has been established that nascent proteins can fold concomitant with their synthesis on the ribosome and that chaperones such as Trigger Factor (TF) can interact with the growing nascent chain. The impact of the ribosome and TF on protein folding properties is still largely unknown, although recent studies suggest that in the near future high resolution information on contranslational folding will be available. Motivated by this, and with the goal of outlining plausible folding scenarios in vivo, we use coarse-grained simulations to examine folding in the presence and absence of the ribosome and TF. Using physically plausible interaction strengths between TF and the ribosome, parameterized based on experimental binding free energies, we have used replica exchange simulations to explore the impact of these in vivo actors on nascent chain folding. We find the ribosome significantly perturbs most protein folding properties, altering the distribution of folding pathways and favoring N-terminal folding of the nascent protein domain, suggesting that new scenarios of folding can occur on the ribosome. We then explore how TF alters cotranslational folding properties and discuss these findings in the context of recent NMR results.



93-Plat
Transient Domain Interactions in Non-Ribosomal Peptide Synthetases
Dominique P. Frueh[1], Scott Nichols[1], Subrata Mishra[1], Haribabu Arthanari[2], Alexander Koglin[3], Christopher T. Walsh[2], Gerhard Wagner[2].
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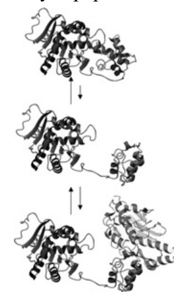
Non-ribosomal peptide synthetases (NRPSs) are multi-module, multi-domain enzymes, synthesizing a wealth of important natural products in bacteria and fungi. These products often find pharmaceutical applications as antibiotics, antitumor agents or immunosuppressant drugs. NRPS use a remarkable assembly line organization to covalently load substrates into each module and catalyze peptide bond formation between substrates loaded on adjacent modules. The substrates may optionally be modified by tailoring domains. These multiple catalytic steps require a series of sequential domain interactions, which are currently poorly understood. We have used NMR to study structures and dynamics of NRPS single- and multi-domains. We show that the domains are neither subject to random interactions nor do they display a fixed quaternary organization. Instead, NRPSs are subject to multiple transient domain interactions which are accompanied by a modulation of their internal dynamics. Understanding the dynamic mechanism of NRPS domain communication may open the venue to efficient NRPS assembly line reprogramming and the production of novel pharmaceuticals.



94-Plat
Energy Landscape of Adenylate Kinase: Phosphoryl Transfer and Conformational Transitions
Roman Agafonov, Jordan Kerns, Lien Phung, Dorothee Kern.
Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, USA.
Catalytic function of many enzymes is comprised of a number of microscopic steps including enzyme structural rearrangements and the chemical steps, in which bonds of the substrate(s) are broken/made to synthesize the product(s). Separation of these processes is a challenging task that hinders our understanding of enzyme catalysis. We have used nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) and

rapid-quenching techniques to independently study these processes in adenylate kinase (ADK) and to characterize their energetic contribution at atomic resolution. Adenylate kinase is an important enzyme that catalyzes a reversible reaction: 2ADP ↔ ATP +AMP, and is involved in maintaining energy homeostasis in a cell. Two binding sites of ADK and three different ligands result in a variety of biochemical states (determined by the bound ligands). Each of these states has different dynamic properties making the overall structural dynamics of ADK complex. We have tackled this problem by engineering a loss-of-function ADK mutant (with greatly reduced rate of turnover), which allowed us to ''trap'' the enzyme in well-defined biochemical states. Our results lead to a detailed energy profile of ADK, providing insights into the molecular mechanism of its functioning. This work reveals fundamental principles of enzyme catalysis and highlights the role of protein's intrinsic dynamics.

95-Plat
Quadrupolar-Order Deuterium NMR Relaxation Provides New Light on Dynamics of Retinal in Rhodopsin

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Deuterium NMR relaxation of quadrupolar order (R_{1Q}) was applied to study dynamics and ligand-protein interactions underlying rhodopsin activation. Rhodopsin was regenerated with retinal ^{2}H-labeled at the C5-, C9-, and C13-methyl groups and recombined with POPC bilayers [1-3]. The ^{2}H NMR relaxation rates were measured in the dark state of rhodopsin in the temperature range from −30 to −150 °C. In our previous studies, we measured relaxation rates of Zeeman order (R_{1Z}) in the dark, Meta I, and Meta II states of rhodopsin. The dynamical parameters involve the spectral densities of motion, which depend on correlation times and can be expressed in terms of a pre-exponential factor (rotational diffusion constant, D_0, or jump rate, k_0, for mobility in absence of a barrier) and the corresponding barrier height (activation energy E_a). The values of D_0, k_0, and $E_a$describe local packing of retinal within the binding pocket of rhodopsin and the changes occurring in the activation process. The R_{1Z} relaxation rates enable determination of dynamical parameters, but they do not establish the anisotropy of methyl rotation. Simultaneous fitting of temperature dependences of the R_{1Z} and R_{1Q} relaxation rates indicates the off-axial rotation of the methyl groups is at least an order of magnitude slower than the axial motion. The new R_{1Q} data confirm previous conclusions on methyl group dynamics and their interactions with the binding pocket [1]. Taken together, the R_{1Z} and R_{1Q} data allow the motional spectral densities to be individually determined, and afford a new way of investigating the dynamics of ligand-protein interactions in membranes. [1] A.V. Struts *et al.* (2010) *Nature Struct. Mol. Biol.* (in press). [2] G.F.J. Salgado *et al.* (2006) *JACS* **128**, 11067. [3] A.V. Struts *et al.* (2007) *J. Mol. Biol.* **372**, 50.

96-Plat
Allostery and Folding Mechanisms of the N-Terminal Receiver Domain of Protein NTRC

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The nitrogen regulatory protein C (NtrC) of enteric bacteria plays a central role in the control of genes involved in nitrogen metabolism. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) studies suggest that the N-terminal receiver domain of NtrC (NtrC^r) exhibits slow conformational dynamics in the microsecond timescale. Allostery in this protein occurs by shifting the preexisting population from the inactive to active state upon phosphorylation (see Fig. 1.). Using a coarse-grained variational model, we give a site specific description of both the folding and conformational transition mechanisms of this βα-repeat protein. Differences in the folding mechanisms to the active and inactive state are consistent with a significant stabilization of the helix-α4 upon activation. Our model suggests that the allosteric conformational change of NtrC^r involves a marked decrease in the flexibility of this protein upon activation without local partial unfolding. In particular, we find that in addition to the functionally important helix-α4, the β3α3 loop also plays significant role in the inactive/active conformational transition mechanism of NtrC^r.

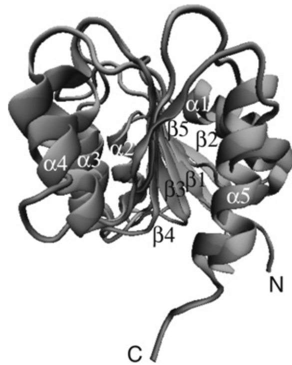

Fig. 1. Phosphorylation induces large conformational change in the NtrCr. The unphosphorylated (inactive) structure is shown in blue and the phosphorylated (active) structure in red.

97-Plat
Novel Protein Semi-Synthesis Methods for Monitoring Conformational Dynamics

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One of the great challenges facing biochemists is to understand the rapid and complex structural dynamics of proteins. Fluorescence measurements can be made on the ns timescale, and distance-dependent interactions such as Förster resonant energy transfer (FRET) can be used to determine the separation of chromophore labels to glean time-resolved structural information on protein motions. However, the relatively large size of common fluorophores precludes assigning these motions at atomic resolution. We have recently demonstrated that a thioamide, a single-atom substitution of the peptide backbone, can be used as a fluorescence quenching probe to monitor structural changes in proteins. We are using these small chromophores to examine the folding of model proteins and working to extend these methods to full-size proteins through semi-synthesis methods.

98-Plat
Ric-8a Catalyzed G Protein Activation Proceeds Through a Disordered State

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Members of the Ras superfamily of regulatory GTP binding proteins, Heterotrimeric G protein alpha subunits (Ga) undergo cycles of activation and deactivation driven by binding and hydrolysis of GTP. Activation occurs by replacement of GDP by GTP at the nucleotide binding site of Ga, which requires catalytic assistance from guanine nucleotide exchange factors (GEFs). Transmembrane G protein-coupled Receptors (GPCRs) are the best known G protein GEFs, but recently, a novel family of cytosolic, non-receptor GEFs, typified by mammalian Ric-8A, were discovered. Unlike GPCRs, which act on G protein heterotrimers, Ric-8A catalyzes the release of GDP directly upon Gi-class Ga subunits (Gai), and has negligible affinity for Gai-GTP. Upon binding to Gai-GDP, Ric-8A catalyzes GDP release and forms a stable Gai:Ric-8A complex that dissociates only in the presence of GTP, resulting in the release of Gai-GTP. The TROSY-HSQC spectrum of [1H,15N]Gai bound to Ric-8A is considerably broadened relative to Gai-GDP. Hydrogen-deuterium exchange mass spectroscopy shows that the rate of HD exchange at Gai:Ric-8A is more than 2X faster than from Gai-GDP. Differential scanning calorimetry shows that both Ric-8A and Gai-GDP undergo cooperative, irreversible unfolding transitions at 47 deg and 52 deg, respectively, while nucleotide-free Gai shows a broad, weak transition near 35 deg. The unfolding transition for Gai:Ric-8A is complex, with a broad transition peaking at 49_i. Ric-8A therefore stabilizes nucleotide-free Gai in a dynamic state, which, we propose, facilitates GTP binding. We show that the C-terminus of Gai is a critical binding element for Ric-8A, as is known to be the case for GPCRs, suggesting that these two GEFs act by similar mechanisms as chaperones for the unstable and dynamic nucleotide-free state of Ga.

99-Plat
Protein Dynamics at the Picosecond-Nanosecond Time Scale: a Complementary Study by Dielectric Spectroscopy, Neutron Spectroscopy and MD Simulation

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We have studied dynamics of hydrated protein (h ~ 0.4 grams of water per gram of protein) in picoseconds-nanosecond time scale using dielectric spectroscopy, neutron spectroscopy and molecular dynamics (MD) simulations. We have observed two relaxation processes in dielectric spectra of hydrated protein: ''main'' (tens of picoseconds) and ''slow'' (nanoseconds). Traditionally these processes have been attributed to the relaxation of bound hydration water and not to the protein. Using Neutron scattering data, the ''main'' process has been assigned to the protein-water coupled motion. MD simulations focused on protein relaxation processes in picoseconds-nanosecond time range also revealed protein motions at the same time-scale as the processes observed in dielectric spectra of hydrated protein. Detailed analysis of the MD simulations and comparison to dielectric data indicate that the observed relaxation process in the nanosecond time range is mainly due to the protein. The relaxation processes involve the entire structure of the protein, including atoms in the protein backbone, side chains and turns. Both surface and buried protein atoms contribute to this motion, however surface atoms demonstrate slightly faster dynamics. Analysis of the water atom residence times reveals that 90% of hydration water exchange with the bulk on time scale shorter than 100 ps, and indicates that there are not enough stationary water molecules at the protein surface to support the bound water-only interpretation of the observed dielectric process in nanosecond time range.