

Antigen Cross-Presentation and Heat Shock Protein-Based Vaccines

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Abstract Vaccines currently in the clinical use contain adjuvants stimulating preferably Th2 type of immune response associated with the production of specific antibodies, mostly of neutralizing isotypes. This kind of immune response is effective only against some types of pathogens and has limited effect against tumors and many viruses where parallel activation of antigen-specific humoral and cell-mediated immunity is required. One of the main objectives of the current vaccine research is the development of approaches leading to the induction of antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cell response including cytotoxic T lymphocyte (CTL). Induction of antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cell response to exogenously delivered antigen requires their cross-presentation by antigen presenting cells, especially dendritic cells. The cross-presentation principles seem to be crucial for effective activation of CTL. In this paper, we discuss some approaches to employing heat shock proteins for induction of antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cells in the context of cross-presentation and cross-priming principles.

Keywords Cross-presentation · Heat shock protein (hsp) · Dendritic cells

Introduction

Antigen presentation on major histocompatibility complex (MHC) molecules is one of the most crucial steps during the recognition of various antigens by the antigen-specific cellular and humoral immunity. It is executed by functionally specialized cells called antigen presenting cells (APC) comprising dendritic cells (DCs), monocyte/macrophages, and B cells. Activation of naïve CD4⁺ T cells is the consequence of the antigen processing by APC which is initiated by engulfment of the antigen by APC, followed by digestion and presentation of peptide fragments on MHC-II molecules; a situation typical for antigens of the exogenous origin such as bacterial ones. In contrast, endogenous antigens such as tumor or viral antigens are processed to peptide fragments and presented via MHC-I molecules; process ongoing inside nearly all nucleated somatic cells. This mechanism ensures a specific elimination of tumors and virus-infected cells by activated antigen-specific cytotoxic CD8⁺ T cells (CTL: cytotoxic T lymphocyte). They are activated during prior interaction of their naïve precursors with the same peptide presented by the MHC-I on DCs (Jung et al. 2002). Nevertheless, such DCs should encounter the respective antigen from their surroundings because they approach cancer cells or virally infected cells as healthy ones and, thus, are not processing these antigens as endogenous. Therefore, the immune system developed several pathways to ensure MHC-I presentation of exogenous antigens by DC or macrophages, collectively called cross-presentation pathways. Here, we will describe basic principles of cross-presentation and will discuss utilization of heat shock proteins (hsp) as one of the known agents leading to effective cross-presentation of associated antigens serving as a promising system for development of novel vaccines for induction of both humoral and cell-mediated immunity.

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Stimulation of Naïve CD4⁺ T Cells Through MHC-II

The classical MHC-II presentation pathway is initiated once exogenous antigen is endocytosed by APC through formation of endocytic vesicles using various mostly receptor-mediated mechanisms including clathrin-dependent endocytosis or clathrin-independent endocytosis including actin-driven pathways such as phagocytosis or pinocytosis (Donaldson et al. 2009; Grant and Donaldson 2009). Endocytic vesicles are delivered to vacuolar domains of pleiomorphic early endosomes (EE) giving rise to multivesicular endosomes/bodies (MVBs) (Woodman and Futter 2008). In the case of phagocytosis, endocytic vesicles called early phagosomes exchange their content with EE (Desjardins 1995; Desjardins et al. 1994). Both MVBs or early phagosomes migrate deeper toward the cell center, decrease their intraluminal pH, and acquire hydrolytically degradative lysosomal hydrolases by either repeated fusion/fission or direct fusion with resting lysosomes (Desjardins et al. 1994) leading to the formation of phagolysosomes, a final degradative organelle where the antigens are cleaved in highly acidic pH into short peptides (15–35 amino acids long) and ultimately to dipeptides and amino acids (Coffey and De Duve 1968).

Inside APC, the EEs fuse with vesicles containing MHC-II molecules targeted to endosomes. There, peptides generated from engulfed antigens are finally associated with MHC-II molecules, which are then transported to the APC cell surface for interaction with CD4⁺ T lymphocytes. Acidification of endosomes or phagosomes must be under control in APCs (especially in immature DCs, which are the most effective in the initiation of the MHC-II presentation) because rapid acidification associated with abundant activation of acidic pH optimum-exhibiting proteases (especially cathepsin L and legumain) leads to an extensive antigen cleavage, diminished MHC-II presentation, and reduced activation of the antigen-specific CD4⁺ T cell response (Trombetta et al. 2003).

Stimulation of Naïve CD8⁺ T cells Through the MHC-I Canonical Pathway

Proteins destined for MHC-I presentation are either synthesized in the cytosol (viral antigens) or delivered to the cytosol from endoplasmic reticulum (ER). Misfolded, damaged, or abnormal proteins (tumor antigens) are delivered by active ER-to-cytosol transport facilitated probably by the retrograde activity of the translocation pore complex formed with contribution of Sec61 and Derlin-1 proteins (Lilley and Ploegh 2004; Wiertz et al. 1996; Ye et al. 2004). Sec61 was initially identified in the ER membrane as the

factor involved in the inverse process—cytosol-to-ER lumen translocation of proteins synthesized either on cytosolic or ER-associated ribosomes allowing their cotranslational or posttranslational transport into ER lumen for further ER processing, followed for example by relocation to Golgi apparatus, and secretion (Rapoport et al. 1996). Within the cytosol, proteins destined for MHC-I presentation are ubiquitinated, fragmented by the proteasome, and partially trimmed by not completely identified cytosolic aminopeptidases or hydrolases (Saveanu et al. 2002). Peptide fragments are thereafter translocated by the transporter associated with antigen processing (TAP1 and TAP2) to ER lumen where they are loaded onto membrane-anchored MHC-I (Cresswell et al. 1999). Before binding to MHC-I, peptides are trimmed by the ER aminopeptidase 1 or 2 (ERAP-1, ERAP-2) to 8–10 amino acid long fragments optimal to fit the MHC-I peptide-binding groove (Serwold et al. 2001, 2002). Afterwards, the MHC-I with a loaded peptide is transported by vesicular traffic through the Golgi complex to the cell surface where the MHC-I/peptide complex is recognized by T cell receptors (TCR) on CD8⁺ T cells (Cresswell et al. 1999). This mechanism fits well to effector functions of antigen-specific CTLs, which kill virally infected or tumor cells.

Stimulation of Naïve CD8⁺ T Cells by Exogenous Antigens Through MHC-I

It was discovered that some exogenously delivered antigens are recognized not only by CD4⁺ T cells but also by CD8⁺ T cells (Bevan 1976). As CD8⁺ T cell activation requires presentation of antigen fragments through MHC-I, which, at the time, was thought to be solely an endogenous pathway, it was quite a surprising observation. DCs and probably also macrophages are the only cells endowed with the capability to activate naïve CD8⁺ T cells to become antigen-specific CTLs, by providing the necessary costimulatory signals. In agreement with classical concept stating that MHC-I presentation takes place only for intracellularly synthesized antigens, it should be assumed that during initiation of CD8⁺ T cell responses, only virally infected or malignantly transformed DCs could activate naïve CD8⁺ T cells, which is not realistic. Therefore, in accordance with the above-described MHC-I-dependent recognition of exogenously delivered antigens by CD8⁺ T cells, it was concluded that DCs should be able to process exogenous antigens for MHC-I presentation. This was designated as cross-priming (Bevan 1976) to specify the MHC-I-dependent stimulation of effector CTL response. In contrast, the more specific term cross-presentation describes only the part of the cross-priming mechanism responsible for the processing of the exogenous antigen for MHC-I presentation.

Uniqueness of DC During Exogenous Antigen Processing for Cross-Presentation

Proteins destined for cross-presentation are either phagocytosed or pinocytosed by DCs. This implies that similarly to MHC-II presentation, DCs digest the engulfed antigens only partially, leaving their proteolytic fragments of appropriate size fitting to the MHC-I peptide-binding groove. Immature DCs could control alkalization/acidification of their phagosomes and they exhibit attenuated lysosomal proteolysis (Delamarre et al. 2005; Savina et al. 2009; Trombetta et al. 2003). The propensity of immature DCs for limited degradation of antigens could be documented by the fact that commensal bacteria can be recovered even several hours after their phagocytosis (Macpherson and Uhr 2004). In contrast to DCs, rapid degradation of internalized antigens occurs in macrophages and especially neutrophils which are characterised by an extensive degradation of phagocytosed antigens.

Cross-Presenting DC Populations

Not all subsets of murine or human DCs could cross-present antigens. This led to many doubts about the existence of cross-presentation because the majority of the former DC experiments were performed using in vitro-derived DCs mostly from bone marrow precursors (BMDC) or from peripheral blood monocytes (MoDC) stimulated by mixture of IL-4 and granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF). In mice, the dominant cross-presenting DC subset is referred to as CD8 $\alpha\alpha^+$ CD11c^{high} DC population (den Haan et al. 2000; Dudziak et al. 2007; Pooley et al. 2001; Schnorrer et al. 2006). In humans, the dominant cross-presenting DC subpopulation is characterized by the surface expression of human blood DC antigen 3 (BDCA-3, also called thrombomodulin or CD141), C-type lectin domain family 9A (CLEC9A, also called DNGR1), and Receptor for XCL1 and XCL2 chemokines (XCR1, also called GPR5) (Schreibelt et al. 2012). The BDCA-3⁺ CLEC9A⁺ DCs were found in lymph nodes, bone marrow, and tonsils (Caminschi et al. 2008; Jongbloed et al. 2010). For clinical applications, exploitation of BDCA-3 DCs from peripheral blood as the easiest cell source is hampered by their very low count—they represent only ~0.03 % of total human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (Jongbloed et al. 2010). Recently performed computational genome wide expression profiling clustered human BDCA-3⁺ DC with the mouse CD8 $\alpha\alpha^+$ (Robbins et al. 2008). Human BDCA-3⁺ DC and mouse CD8 $\alpha\alpha^+$ DC share several phenotypic similarities including the expression of Toll-like receptor (TLR)-3, Nectin-like protein 2, and CLEC9A (Caminschi et al. 2008;

Edwards et al. 2003; Galibert et al. 2005; Huysamen et al. 2008; Sancho et al. 2009).

Basic Principles of Cross-Presentation

Since initial reports about the cross-priming phenomenon (Bevan 1976), several more or less overlapping pathways responsible for cross-presentation of exogenous antigens have been described. In principle, three crucial steps should take place: fragmentation of antigen to peptides of size corresponding to the MHC-I groove, binding to MHC-I, and transport of MHC-I/peptide complex to the cell surface. There are two ways in which antigens can be fragmented and associated with MHC-I: (a) the antigen is relocated from endosome into cytosol and targeted to immunoproteasome followed by processing in a way similar to canonical MHC-I presentation (cytosolic pathway), or (b) the antigen is fragmented inside the phagocytic vesicle (predominantly endosome), associated here with recycling MHC-I, and transported to the cell surface, without being exposed to the cytosolic milieu (vacuolar pathway; Table 1). Furthermore, overlap between both pathways was reported based on the observation that cytosolic antigen could be relocated back to endosome for MHC-I presentation (Gromme et al. 1999). The following sections describe individual cross-presentation pathways identified so far, using the cytosolic and vacuolar pathway classification. The identification of a particular pathway and its principal components such as transporter associated with antigen processing (TAP), proteasome, lysosome, and lysosomal proteases was facilitated by the use of various inhibitors and gene knock-out mice (Table 2).

Endosome-to-Cytosol Pathway

The endosome-to-cytosol pathway (Fig. 1) was described almost 20 years ago in macrophages as the pathway allowing induction of CD8⁺ T cells response to corpuscular antigens as the lysosome-independent, but proteasome-, TAP-, and ER-to-Golgi transport-dependent pathway (Table 1) (Kovacsovics-Bankowski and Rock 1995). Later studies identified involvement of this pathway in cross-presentation of soluble antigens as well (Ichiyanagi et al. 2010; Imai et al. 2011). The mannose receptor (MR) has been studied concerning its involvement in the initiation of the endosome-to-cytosol cross-presentation of soluble antigens such as ovalbumin (OVA) from chicken egg white (Burgdorf et al. 2006). DC could internalize antigens bound to MR into stable EE compartments which do not undergo lysosomal transformation (Burgdorf and Kurts 2008; Segura et al. 2009). Tumor susceptibility gene

Table 1 Principal contributors in individual cross-presentation pathways

	Endosome-to-cytosol pathway	Endosome-to-cytosol-to-endosome pathway	Vacuolar pathway	Gap junction pathway	Note
Soluble antigens	Supports (Ikeuchi et al. 2010)	Supports (Ackerman et al. 2005)	Supports (Chen and Jondal 2004)	Supports (Saccheri et al. 2010)	
Corpuscular antigens	Supports (Kovacs-ovics-Bankowski and Rock 1995)		Supports (Song and Harding 1996)		
Ag targeting to mannose receptor	Supports (Zehner et al. 2011)	Supports (Saveanu et al. 2009)			
Ag targeting to TLR-2	Supports entering of exogenous hsp to the cell (Asea et al. 2002)	Supports entering of exogenous hsp to the cell (Asea et al. 2002)	Supports entering of exogenous hsp to the cell (Asea et al. 2002)		Pathway nonspecific
Ag targeting to CD40	Supports transport of Ag to EE (Chatterjee et al. 2012)	Supports transport of Ag to EE (Chatterjee et al. 2012)	Supports transport of Ag to EE (Chatterjee et al. 2012)		Pathway nonspecific
Ag targeting to DEC205	Supports transport of Ag to late endosome (Chatterjee et al. 2012)	Supports transport of Ag to late endosome (Chatterjee et al. 2012)	Supports transport of Ag to late endosome (Chatterjee et al. 2012)		Pathway nonspecific
Ag targeting to CD11b/CD18 ⁺ cells via/by adenylate cyclase toxin CyaA	Supports transport of Ag to cytosol (Holubova et al. 2012; Mackova et al. 2006)	Supports transport of Ag to cytosol (Holubova et al. 2012; Mackova et al. 2006)			
Proteasome	Supports (Delamarre et al. 2003; Rodriguez et al. 1999)	Supports (Delamarre et al. 2003; Rodriguez et al. 1999)		Supports (Neijssen et al. 2005)	
TAP	Supports (Cresswell et al. 1999)	Supports (Cresswell et al. 1999)		Supports (Cresswell et al. 1999)	
IRAP	Supports (Saveanu et al. 2009)	Supports (Segura et al. 2009)		Supports (Saveanu et al. 2009)	
ERAP	Supports (Serwold et al. 2002)			Supports (Serwold et al. 2002)	
Ubiquitination Sec61	Supports (Hershko et al. 1984)	Supports (Hershko et al. 1984)		(Imai et al. 2005; Mukai et al. 2011)	

Table 2 Approaches used to discriminate individual cross-presentation pathway involvement

Approach	Cross-presentation pathway	Note	References
In vitro			
Chloroquine	Inhibits vacuolar pathway Supports endosome-to-cytosol pathway	Lysosomotropic agent, inhibits acidification of endosomal/lysosomal compartments Increases membrane permeability leading to Ag escape into the cytosol	(Accapezzato et al. 2005; Gromme et al. 1999)
NH ₄ Cl	Supports endosome-to-cytosol pathway Inhibits exchange of peptides on MHC-I	Lysosomotropic agent Inhibits acidification of endolysosomal vesicles	(Accapezzato et al. 2005; Gromme et al. 1999)
Chlorpromazine	Inhibits clathrin-mediated endocytosis	Allows distinguishing between phagocytosis and clathrin-dependent endocytosis	(Moron et al. 2003)
Cytochalasin B	Inhibits phagocytosis	Allows distinguishing between phagocytosis and clathrin-dependent endocytosis Inhibits the non-coated-pit endocytosis by preventing polymerization of actin filaments	(Gurnani et al. 2004)
Cytochalasin D	Studied on endosome-to-cytosol pathway	Inhibitor of phagocytosis or macropinocytosis Causes cytoskeleton disruption and impairs cross-presentation of antigens derived from phagocytosed cellular structures	(Fonteneau et al. 2003; Sanpath and Pollard 1991)
2-APB	Inhibits gap junction pathway	Inhibits gap junction transport	(Bai et al. 2006)
Amiloride	Inhibits macropinocytosis	Allows distinguishing between phagocytosis and clathrin-dependent endocytosis	(Nakamura et al. 2008)
Dimethylamiloride	Inhibits pinocytosis	Inhibits acidification of endolysosomal vesicles	(Fonteneau et al. 2003; Tanaka et al. 2010)
Epoxomicin	Inhibits proteasome-dependent, cytosolic pathways	Inhibits proteasome	(Andrieu et al. 2003; Janda et al. 2004)
MG-132	Inhibits proteasome-dependent, cytosolic pathways	Inhibits proteasome	(Baker et al. 2011; Mant et al. 2012; Pham et al. 2012)
Leupeptin	Inhibits vacuolar pathway	Lysosomal cysteine-protease inhibitor	(Campbell et al. 2000; Kurotaki et al. 2007; Libby and Goldberg 1978)
18 β -glycyrrhetic acid	Inhibits gap junction pathway	Inhibits gap junction formation by dephosphorylation of connexins	(Guan et al. 1996)
Brefeldin A	Inhibits endosome-to-cytosol and Gap junction pathways	Inhibits anterograde ER–Golgi transport Blocks MHC class I-peptide complex turnover on the cell surface	(Benke et al. 2006; Fujiwara et al. 1988; Shakushiro et al. 2004)
Exotoxin A from <i>P. aeruginosa</i>	Sec61 inhibitor	Inhibits protein translocation from the ER to the cytosol	(Ackerman et al. 2006)

Table 2 continued

Approach	Cross-presentation pathway	Note	References
Lactacystin	Inhibits proteasome-dependent, cytosolic pathways	Inhibits proteasome	(Craiu et al. 1997; Giodini et al. 2009)
<i>B. abortus</i> VirB		Directs fusion of phagosome with the ER	(Celli et al. 2003)
Approach In vivo	Note	References	
TAP knock-out	TAP knock-out DCs show lower MHC-I expression and generally reduced cross-presentation	TAP knock-out DCs show lower MHC-I expression and generally reduced cross-presentation	(Merzougui et al. 2011; Sigal and Rock 2000; Van Kaer et al. 1992)
CD11c-DTr	Mice carrying simian diphtheria toxin receptor under control of the murine CD11c promoter synthesizing allow specific killing of CD11c ⁺ DC	Mice carrying simian diphtheria toxin receptor under control of the murine CD11c promoter synthesizing allow specific killing of CD11c ⁺ DC	(Jung et al. 2002)
	Model confirmed indispensable role of CD11 ⁺ DC in cross-presentation and mounting of CTL to intracellular bacterium <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> and malaria parasite <i>Plasmodium yoelii</i>	Model confirmed indispensable role of CD11 ⁺ DC in cross-presentation and mounting of CTL to intracellular bacterium <i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> and malaria parasite <i>Plasmodium yoelii</i>	
OT-I	OT-I T cell receptor-transgenic mouse line produces T cells recognizing an H-2 ^b -restricted OVA epitope—SIINFEKL	OT-I T cell receptor-transgenic mouse line produces T cells recognizing an H-2 ^b -restricted OVA epitope—SIINFEKL	(Garulli et al. 2008; Sathe et al. 2011)
TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, or -9	T cells allow specific tracing of SIINFEKL presented on MHC-I in vitro and in vivo	T cells allow specific tracing of SIINFEKL presented on MHC-I in vitro and in vivo	
	TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, or -9 are dispensable for generation of OVA-specific CTLs in naive mice immunized with mycobacterial hsp70-OVA	TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, or -9 are dispensable for generation of OVA-specific CTLs in naive mice immunized with mycobacterial hsp70-OVA	(Mizukami et al. 2012)
	TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, or -9 are dispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, or -9 are dispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	
MyD88 knock-out	MyD88 is dispensable for generation of OVA-specific CTLs in naive mice immunized with mycobacterial hsp70-OVA	MyD88 is dispensable for generation of OVA-specific CTLs in naive mice immunized with mycobacterial hsp70-OVA	(Kawai and Akira 2010; Mizukami et al. 2012)
	MyD88 is indispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	MyD88 is indispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	
IRAK4 knock-out	IRAK4-deficient animals are completely resistant to a lethal dose of LPS	IRAK4-deficient animals are completely resistant to a lethal dose of LPS	(Mizukami et al. 2012; Suzuki et al. 2002)
	IRAK4 is indispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	IRAK4 is indispensable in mycobacterial hsp70-OVA-dependent rejection of a tumor expressing endogenous OVA	
IL-18R knock-out	Lack of IL-18R signal reduces DCs maturation and production of TNF- α	Lack of IL-18R signal reduces DCs maturation and production of TNF- α	(Ghose et al. 2011)
Cat S knock-out	DC lacking Cat S lack the TAP-independent pathway	DC lacking Cat S lack the TAP-independent pathway	(Shen et al. 2004)
	Mice whose APC lack Cat S have limited cross-priming of particulate and cell-associated antigens	Mice whose APC lack Cat S have limited cross-priming of particulate and cell-associated antigens	

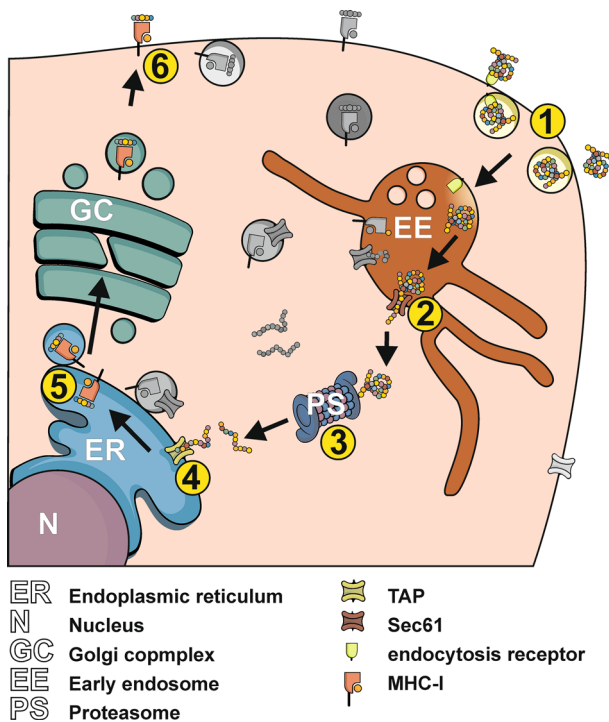


Fig. 1 Endosome-to-cytosol pathway of cross-presentation. Exogenous antigen is engulfed by a DC (I) leading to the formation of endocytic vesicles which fuse with EE. Antigen is transported out of the endosome vesicle with contribution of transporter complexes such as Sec61 (2), followed by cleavage of the antigen by proteasome and trimming to form short peptides (3) which are transported into the lumen or ER by TAP-assisted transport (4) according to canonical MHC-I presentation pathway. Inside the ER, peptides are loaded onto the MHC-I molecules (5) and subsequently transported as MHC-I/peptide complexes via ER and Golgi apparatus to the cell surface (6). Gray color is used for components not involved in this particular pathway

101-regulated poly-ubiquitination of the cytosolic region of MR in the EE membrane recruits p97, a member of the formerly described ER-associated degradation machinery, responsible for antigen translocation across the endosomal membrane (Burgdorf et al. 2007; Zehner and Burgdorf 2013). On the EE membrane, p97 associates with Sec61 and Derlin-1. The mechanism by which Sec61 relocates from ER to EE is probably based on the transport of ER-originating vesicles toward EE or based on the existence of ER protrusions toward phagocytic vesicles leading to the formation of ER-phagosomes (Guernonprez et al. 2003; Mukai et al. 2011). Before translocation into the cytosol, endocytosed antigen must be unfolded and partially proteolytically degraded, depending on its physico-chemical nature (Singh and Cresswell 2010). Targeting the antigen to endosome-to-cytosol pathway could be facilitated also by complexing the antigens to various hsp (Basu et al. 2001).

Once the antigen locates within cytosol, it is targeted to proteasome by ubiquitination (Glickman and Ciechanover

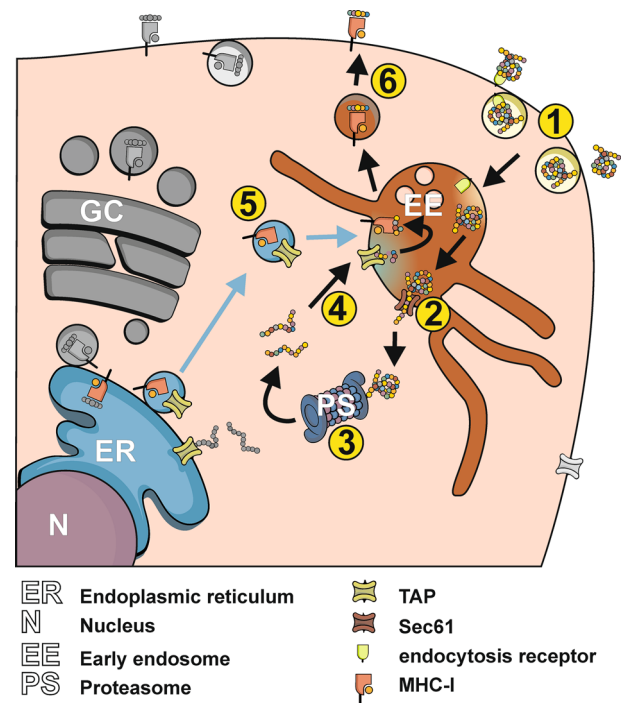


Fig. 2 Endosome-to-cytosol-to-endosome pathway. Exogenous antigen is engulfed by a DC (I) leading to the formation of endocytic vesicles (endosome, phagosome) which fuse with EE. Antigen is transported out of the endosome vesicle with contribution of transporter complexes such as Sec61 (2), followed by cleavage of the antigen by proteasome and transport of peptide fragments back toward the endosome through TAP (4). The endosome/phagosome contains all proteins necessary for peptide transport across endosomal membrane and its subsequent association with MHC-I due to their supply from ER during fusion of ER-originating vesicles with EE (5). Once inside the EE, peptides are further processed and loaded onto the MHC-I molecules. MHC-I molecules with bound peptides are targeted to the cell surface by endosome sorting machinery (6)

2002) and further processed as for canonical MHC-I presentation pathway. Endosome-to-cytosol pathway was confirmed active both in vivo and in vitro (Moron et al. 2003; Norbury et al. 1997; Svensson and Wick 1999).

Endosome-to-Cytosol-to-Endosome Pathway

Here, the endocytosed antigen is also transported to cytosol and subsequently processed in proteasome but, contrary to previous pathway, fragments are transported back into endosome or phagosome (Fig. 2; Table 1) (Ackerman et al. 2003; Guernonprez et al. 2003), where all proteins necessary for efficacious binding of peptide to MHC-I (TAP, tapasin, lectin chaperones calnexin and calreticulin, Erp57, MHC-I) were identified (Ackerman et al. 2003; Houde et al. 2003). The presence of typical ER proteins within endosome/phagosome was explained by the fusion of EE with ER-derived vesicles (Guernonprez et al. 2003; Mukai et al. 2011), in the case of MHC-I molecule with the

contribution of invariant chain (CD74) associating with MHC-I in the ER and mediating trafficking of MHC-I to endolysosomes (Basha et al. 2012). However, the details of this mechanism remain controversial (Touret et al. 2005). Relocation of some MHC-I-loading machinery components from ER to EE could be induced in murine BMDC by lipopolysaccharide (LPS). Both TLR-4 and MyD88-signaling are involved (Burgdorf et al. 2008). Still, it remains to be determined whether and what ER chaperones can mediate efficient peptide exchange in an endosomal environment. Endosome-to-cytosol-to-endosome pathway relies on a peptide-trimming enzyme designated insulin-regulated aminopeptidase (IRAP or oxytocinase) localized within endosomes of murine inflammatory MoDC (Segura et al. 2009) and steady-state CD8 α^+ and CD8 α^- DCs. Steady-state CD8 α^+ DC isolated from the spleen was the most abundant for IRAP and was identified to be the most effective in cross-presentation of both soluble and particulate antigens (Weimershaus et al. 2012). In accordance, mice deficient for IRAP exhibited reduced cross-presentation of phagocytosed antigens or of OVA endocytosed via TLR-2 and MR (Saveanu et al. 2009). Optimal IRAP pH ranging 5–8 assures its activity within EE and phagosomes. IRAP is associated with Rab14, a small GTP-ase that drives IRAP vesicle recruitment to the EE (Reed et al. 2013; Weimershaus et al. 2012).

Vacuolar Pathway

In addition to previous pathways, cross-presentation independent of antigen degradation in the cytosol was identified in vitro as the pathway insensitive to proteasome and TAP inhibitors. The vacuolar pathway was identified in vivo as the pathway responsible for induction of antigen-specific CD8 $^+$ T cells using mice with inactivated genes involved in cross-presentation (Table 2). The name vacuolar cross-presentation pathway (Fig. 3; Table 1) was chosen to stress its independence on typically cytosol-localized proteasome. Endosomal or endolysosomal proteolysis has been attributed to the cysteine proteases (Campbell et al. 2000), particularly cathepsin S (Cat S) (Shen et al. 2004), as this cross-presentation is inhibitable by cysteine-protease inhibitors such as leupeptin, E64, and ZFA-FMK (Campbell et al. 2000) and almost abolished in Cat S-deficient DCs (Shen et al. 2004). In contrast, pepstatin A, an acid protease inhibitor, had little effect on the vacuolar cross-presentation at least for some antigens (Campbell et al. 2000). Cat S could cleave proteins even at neutral pH which is beneficial for cross-presentation as discussed above (Pillay et al. 2002). Generated peptides replace those on MHC-I molecules recycling to EE from the cell surface (Gromme et al. 1999; Schirmbeck et al. 1995) or MHC-I coming to

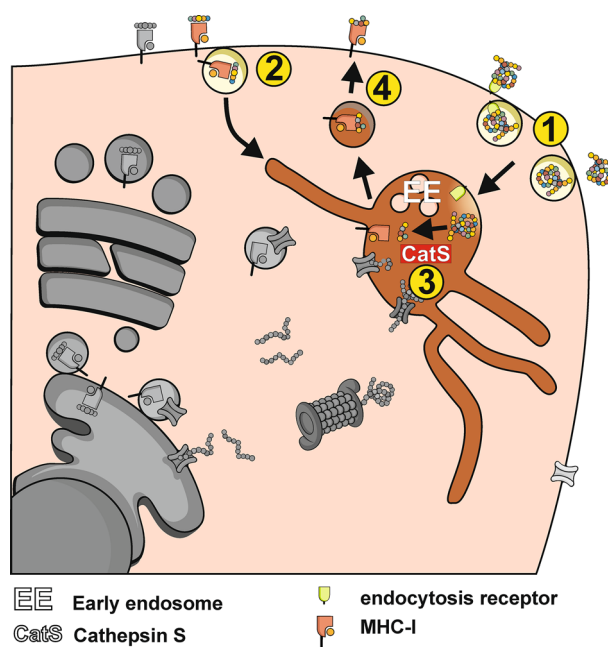


Fig. 3 Vacuolar pathway of cross-presentation. Exogenous protein is engulfed by a DC (1). Recycled molecules of MHC-I coming from the cell surface (2) fuse with the endosome. Protease cathepsin S present in the endosome cleaves the protein into short peptides that are loaded onto the MHC-I molecules (3). Peptides bound on the MHC-I molecules are transferred to the cell surface (4)

endosomes from ER by ER-originating vesicles. MHC-I/peptide complex is finally transported by EE-associated vesicular transport to the cell surface. The vacuolar pathway seems to be important for cross-presentation of particulate and cell-associated antigens such as those complexed with poly(lactic-co-glycolic acid) beads, proteins associated with *E. coli*, viral proteins including influenza nucleoprotein and polymerase, virus-like particles, but it is active also for non-corpuseular antigen as exemplified by the OVA antigen or tumor antigen-originating peptide fragments associated with human hsp (Bachmann et al. 1995; Bendz et al. 2007; Campbell et al. 2000; Chen and Jondal 2004; Ruedl et al. 2002; Shen et al. 2004; Song and Harding 1996; Stober et al. 2002; Wick and Pfeifer 1996).

Gap Junction Pathway

Gap junctions serve for intercellular communication allowing various molecules exchange. The gap junction tunnels are highly ordered structures consisting of connexin (the most broadly expressed is Cx43) forming hexamers called connexons (Handel et al. 2007; Pang et al. 2009). The gap junction communication was observed in vitro both in murine DCs (Matsue et al. 2006) or human monocytes or DCs (Mendoza-Naranjo et al. 2007; Neijssen

et al. 2005). Neijssen et al. (2005) set up a human multi-cellular tissue culture that included a squamous cell carcinoma cell line as an antigen source, activated monocytes as presenting cells, and CD8⁺ T cells as antigen sensors. There, the SCC line was transfected to express connexin 43 (Cx43), which was also expressed by the monocytes (activated by interferon- γ and tumor necrosis factor (TNF)- α). With the CD8⁺ T cells serving as antigen-specific surface MHC-I/peptide sensors, the authors confirmed gap junction Cx43-mediated transport of peptides smaller than 1800 Da (corresponding to less than 10 amino acids) (Neijssen et al. 2005). Furthermore, they confirmed subsequent presentation of such peptides on MHC-I of APCs (Neijssen et al. 2005). Thus, the peptides obtained from adjacent cell could be cross-presented on MHC-I molecules of DCs or activated monocytes (Fig. 4; Table 1) (Handel et al. 2007; Pang et al. 2009). Although many tumor cells inactivate their gap junctions due to down-regulation of the Cx43 by ras, src, and neu oncogenes (Esinduy et al. 1995; Goldberg and Lau 1993), as well as many viruses (HSV-2, HPV-16), the gap junction-mediated peptide or small molecules transport still could take place, as demonstrated for melanoma cells with substantially reduced Cx43 expression (Benlalam et al. 2009). For future utilization of gap junctions in therapeutic anti-cancer vaccines, an important observation was made recently showing that infection with *Salmonella* can induce up-regulation of Cx43, both in human and murine melanoma cells (Saccheri et al. 2010).

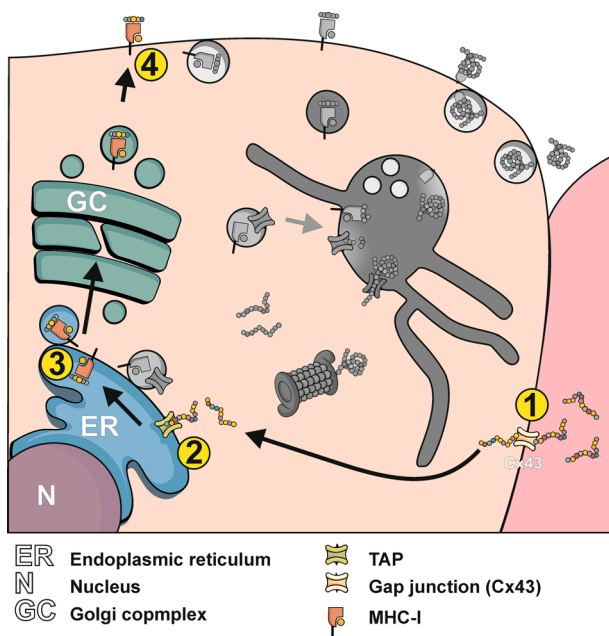


Fig. 4 Gap junction pathway of cross-presentation. Small molecule such as a peptide reaches the cytosol of an APC through the gap junction (1). The peptide is transferred inside the ER (2). Peptide loaded on MHC-I is targeted to the cell surface (3, 4)

Cross-Presentation Applicability in Vaccine Design

Vaccines, currently in clinical use, contain adjuvants stimulating predominantly Th2 type of immunity and production of specific antibodies, mainly of neutralizing isotypes (Kaufmann 2004). This kind of immune response is effective only against some types of pathogens and has very limited effect against tumors and some viruses, where activation of cellular immunity is required. One of the main objectives of the current vaccine research is the development of approaches leading to elicitation of antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cell responses including CTL activation. Knowledge about the cross-presentation principles seems to be crucial for effective CTL induction. Here, we will discuss some approaches employing hsp for induction of antigen-specific CD8⁺ T cell response.

Heat Shock Proteins

The involvement of a class of cellular proteins in tumor-specific immunity was suggested in 1986 after successful protective immunization with a biochemically fractionated proteins isolated from murine methylcholanthrene-induced sarcoma, the predominant one being a 96 kDa protein (Srivastava and Das 1984; Srivastava et al. 1986). Subsequent research identified the 96 kDa protein in that fraction as the glucose-regulated protein Grp94, also called glycoprotein 96 (gp96) (Maki et al. 1990), complexed with tumor-specific peptides. Immunization experiments utilizing gp96 and later hsp70 preparations purified under native (non-denaturing) conditions from tumor cells induced cytotoxic immunity against the same type of tumor, from which the proteins were isolated (Tamura et al. 1997; Udonon and Srivastava 1993). In contrast, hsp preparations obtained by the same method from normal, non-tumor tissue were not effective (Tamura et al. 1997). Similar effects were observed when preparations of another hsp superfamily member, hsp90, were tested. However, the immune response only reached about 10 % of values observed with hsp70 or gp96 preparations (Udonon and Srivastava 1994). The hsp preparations could be separated into hsp and client peptides with molecular mass 1–5 kDa and these peptides, but not hsp per se, represent the tumor antigens recognized by immunization-elicited tumor-specific immunity. It was proposed that hsp-peptide complexes are internalized by APC followed by intracellular processing of client peptides and display of their fragments on MHC-I for activation of specific CTL response. In other words, the hsps were proposed as carriers enabling the cross-presentation of client peptides (Li and Srivastava 1993; Udonon et al. 1994; Udonon and Srivastava 1993, 1994).

Heat shock proteins belong to the super family of stress proteins a highly heterogeneous but evolutionary conserved group of proteins that can be divided into families according to molecular weight: small hsp (m.w. 12–43 kDa), hsp40, hsp60, hsp70, hsp90, and large hsps (m.w. 100–110 kDa) and include also glucose-regulated proteins, ubiquitin, and lectin chaperone—calnexin and calreticulin (David et al. 1993; Nauseef et al. 1995; Raska and Weigl 2005; Wada et al. 1995; Weigl et al. 1999). Heat shock proteins contribute to protection of the cell from external or internal stress factors, such as high temperature, osmotic stress, UV irradiation, inflammation, intense and cellular proliferation, which induce overexpression of several hsp members. Heat shock proteins are involved in the prevention of the nascent protein aggregations and in their proper folding (hsp60, hsp70, hsp40). Some hsps act as chaperones of intracellular signaling proteins, keeping them in an substrate-grabbable state (hsp90, hsp40, hsp70), others are involved in the protein degradation (ubiquitin, hsp104), and some hsps contribute to antigen presentation on MHC-I (calreticulin, calnexin, hsp70, hsp90, and gp96) (Berwin et al. 2002; Biswas et al. 2006; Doody et al. 2004; Ichinayagi et al. 2010; Imai et al. 2011; Kato et al. 2012; Newman et al. 2014) and MHC-II molecules (Kropshofer et al. 1997; Matsutake et al. 2010).

In the vaccine research area, hsps of bacterial or parasite origin have been employed as protective antigens (Radwanska et al. 2000; Raska et al. 2004, 2005, 2008; Svanholm et al. 2000). In parallel, autologous hsp, as introduced above, has attracted attention as adjuvant molecules for the induction of antitumor immunity (Berwin et al. 2002; Biswas et al. 2006; Li and Srivastava 1993; Tamura et al. 1997; Udonon et al. 1994; Udonon and Srivastava 1993, 1994) and later also for induction of antiviral immunity (Hauser et al. 2004; Jazi et al. 2012; Krupka et al. 2015; Li et al. 2007; Meshkat et al. 2011; Rasoli et al. 2010). Furthermore, several studies demonstrated adjuvant activity also for a bacterial hsp such as hsp70 from *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* or DnaK from *E. coli* (Chen et al. 2004; Cheng et al. 2001; Tobian et al. 2004a, b). Adjuvant activity of hsp could be divided into two parts (Fig. 5). First, hsps facilitate receptor-mediated endocytosis of associated (complexed) antigens which are important for MHC-I cross-presentation of antigen-derived peptides, as was confirmed for example on peritoneal macrophages pulsed by native gp96 purified from cells overexpressing Vesicular stomatitis virus nucleocapsid N1 or β -galactosidase (Arnold et al. 1995; Suto and Srivastava 1995). Second, hsps activate APCs leading to the migration of APC to draining lymph nodes, expression of activation markers, and production of cytokines due to the activation of various intracellular pathways. For example, detail studies performed by Nicchitta's team focused on gp96 and murine BMDC

confirmed that gp96 stimulates BMDC to enhanced expression of CD40 and CD86 receptors and proinflammatory cytokines IL-6, IL-12 p40/70 (Warger et al. 2006) in association with the activation of intracellular ERK signaling pathway (Reed et al. 2003). Other pathways identified to be involved in the response to gp96 include NF- κ B, p38, and JNK (Basu et al. 2000; Bethke et al. 2002; Kuppner et al. 2001; Vabulas et al. 2002). Intensity and quality of DC activation by hsps, nevertheless, are dependent at least in some cases on the presence of LPS (endotoxin) which is actively copurified with various hsp proteins and which act upon DC synergistically with hsp (Warger et al. 2006), as will be discussed in detail further.

Hsp Contributes to Cross-Presentation of Hsp-Complexed Peptides and Facilitates Activation of DC

The process of internalization of hsp-complexed peptides, as the first step during representation of peptides on MHC, was explained by incubating monocytic and DC lines with hsp70 and gp96 labeled with gold particles. Electron microscopy revealed internalization of particles through receptor-mediated endocytosis (clathrin-coated vesicles) (Arnold-Schild et al. 1999) similarly to results obtained using fluorescently labeled gp96 (Grp94) (Wassenberg et al. 1999). Several cell surface receptors for hsp, mediating endocytosis and contributing to cross-presentation of hsp-associated peptides on MHC molecules, have been identified since first report in 2000 describing interaction of gp96 with CD91, a member of scavenger receptors family (Basu et al. 2001; Binder et al. 2000, 2002; Srivastava 2002). They include intercellular signaling receptor CD40 (Becker et al. 2002) and another scavenger receptor LOX-1 (Delneste 2004), scavenger receptor-A (SR-A), and SREC-1 (Berwin et al. 2003).

In parallel to facilitating endocytosis, hsp60, hsp70, hsp90, gp96 and, to a lesser extent, calreticulin activate DCs through additional set of cell surface receptors leading to the secretion of inflammatory cytokines (TNF- α , IL-1 β , IL-6, IL-12, and GM-CSF), nitric oxide, up-regulation of cell surface maturation markers (MHC-II, CD83, CD86, and CD40), and migration of DCs to draining lymph nodes; for details, see (Basu et al. 2000; Binder et al. 2004; Millar et al. 2003; Singh-Jasuja et al. 2000b; Todryk et al. 1999; Wallin et al. 2002; Zheng et al. 2001). Several DC-activating hsp receptors were identified including CD36, CD11b, SREC-1, SR-A, stabilin-1, and dectin-1 (Calderwood et al. 2007a, b; Kol et al. 2000; Murshid et al. 2011; Panjwani et al. 2000; Singh-Jasuja et al. 2000a). Scavenger receptor CD36, the second identified hsp receptor, is thought to be involved in endocytosis too, but direct evidence has not been provided yet.

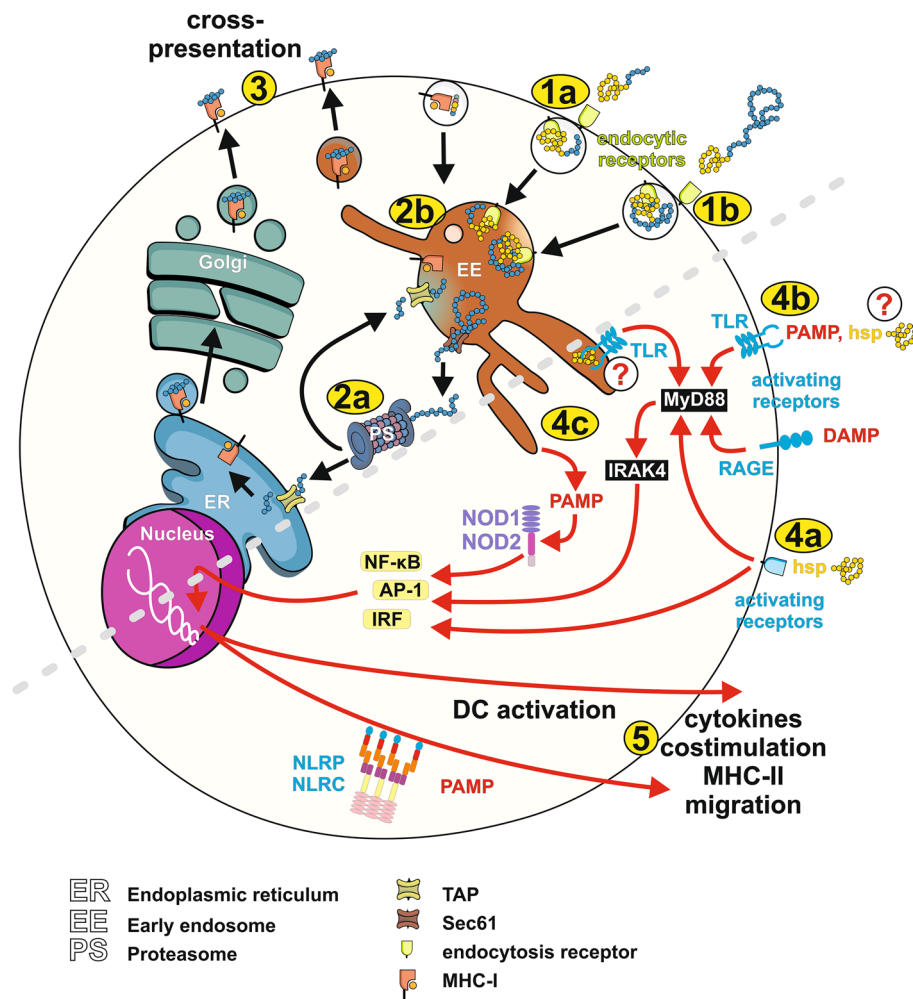


Fig. 5 Involvement of hsp proteins in cross-priming. Peptide (1a) or antigen (1b) (blue chain) complexed to hsp (yellow chain) is engulfed by CD91, LOX-1, CD36, or CD40 receptor-mediated endocytosis and antigen is processed either by cytosol (proteasome- and TAP-dependent) (2a) or vacuolar (2b) pathways leading to the representation of peptide on MHC-I on DC surface (3). Cross-presentation pathway connections are shown using black arrows. In parallel, hsp could activate DC through binding to cell surface-localized activating receptors (CD36, CD11b, SREC-1, SR-A, stabilin-1, dectin-1) (4a) or other surface PAMP or DAMP receptors (TLR, RAGE, etc.) (4b), although TLR involvement is still controversial. Endocytosed hsp could stimulate DC through intracellular TLR or other PAMP or DAMP receptors (4c), although this activation is also disputable.

Additionally, three receptors involved in pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMP) signaling, CD14, TLR-2, and TLR-4, were reported to be involved in the activation of APCs by hsp (Ohashi et al. 2000; Zanin-Zhorov et al. 2003). Nevertheless, there is still an open discussion about hsp interaction with above receptors raised by frequently detected contaminations of hsp preparations with PAMPs, especially with LPS or flagellin both originating from *E. coli* cells, used for recombinant antigens production, or acquired during protein purification

procedures. LPS seems to be the most serious one, due to its binding to the hydrophobic moieties of hsp (Gao and Tsan 2003a, b; Ye and Gan 2007). Using highly purified hsp70 and hsp60 preparations with LPS concentration below 1 EU/mg (measured by limulus amoebocyte lysate assay) of protein when proposing 10–30 µg of hsp preparation per dose, two groups demonstrated that hsps per se are not involved in CD14- or TLR-4-mediated signaling on monocytes and DCs (Bausinger et al. 2002; Gao and Tsan 2003a, b). On the other hand, the LPS at concentration

Although individual TLR involvement seems to be dispensable for cross-priming, subsequent signaling molecules MyD88 and IRAK4 are necessary. In addition to hsp, natural contaminants such as LPS or flagellin act as PAMPs which could activate DC through surface of intracellular receptors (4b, c). Selected DC activation interactions are represented by red arrows. *AP-1* activator protein 1, *DAMP* damage-associated molecular patterns, *IRAK4* interleukin-1 receptor associated kinase 4, *IRF* interferon regulatory factor, *MyD88* myeloid differentiation primary response gene 88, *NLRP* NALP: NACHT-LRR- PYD-containing protein, *NOD* nucleotide-binding oligomerization domain-containing protein, *NF-κB* nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells, *PAMP* pathogen-associated molecular pattern, *TLR* toll-like receptor

below 1 EU/mg has been accepted to be no longer inducing cytokine secretion in human monocytes and monocyte-derived DCs as well. Detailed analyses of gp96-mediated stimulation of murine monocyte-derived DCs (MDDC) in vitro identified substantial synergy between gp96 and LPS. Although LPS-free gp96 preparation at final concentration 20 µg of protein per ml or LPS at 0.25 ng/ml [corresponding approximately to 1.25 EU/ml (Zachova et al. 2009)] does not substantially activate MDDC, mixture of both gp96 and LPS (at the same final concentrations) induced substantial activation of MDDC (Warger et al. 2006). It was confirmed that, although cross-presentation and antigen-specific T cell activation develop in the absence of innate signaling through TLR-2, -3, -4, -7, and -9, mice lacking MyD88 or IRAK4 are unable to reject the tumor cells (Mizukami et al. 2012). Therefore, although innate signaling intracellularly transmitted by MyD88 or IRAK4 is important for activation of DCs and effective cross-priming, the initiation of MyD88, IRAK4 pathway could be achieved even without direct contribution of the above-specified TLRs, suggesting involvement of other extracellular or intracellular receptors from broader family of danger-associated molecular patterns signaling through MyD88 or IRAK4. Nevertheless, to accurately evaluate the immunological effects of hsp-antigens, controlling the parallel activation of DCs by concurrent LPS or other contaminations is necessary. For example, murine cross-presenting DC population (CD8α⁺) or human BDCA-3⁺ cells after licensing by TLR ligands poly I:C could acquire full cross-priming capacity (Jongbloed et al. 2010; Poulin et al. 2010). Therefore, the high purity of the hsp preparations with maximal reduction of the immunologically active moieties in final preparation is needed for further experiments.

The cross-presentation mechanism involved in the processing of hsp-complexed antigens depends on the factors including size of complexed antigen, or N' versus C' orientation of antigen to hsp when recombinant fusogens are prepared, as an example of reverse vaccinology strategy. Tumor antigen Melan-A (MART1)- or tyrosinase-derived peptides complexed to recombinant human hsp70 were reported to be cross-presented in TAP-independent and *P. aeruginosa* exotoxin A- or endosomal acidification-insensitive manner indicating that both peptides are processed by vacuolar cross-presentation pathway without the need for extensive peptide processing before binding to MHC-I (Bendz et al. 2007). In contrast, the cross-presentation of OVA peptides from full length OVA fused to hsp70 is TAP dependent (Ichihyanagi et al. 2010; Imai et al. 2011). The TAP dependence is probably associated with requirement for OVA processing inside DC before presentation on MHC-I (Mizukami et al. 2012). In the case of recombinant fusion hsp-antigens, the cross-presentation of the antigen-

derived peptides depends on the orientation of hsp and antigen subunits. If C'-terminal processing of the peptide for MHC-I presentation is needed, the antigen should be targeted to the proteasome as a part of cytosolic cross-presentation pathways whereas if C'-terminal processing is not required, the transfer of peptide from hsp to MHC-I can occur through vacuolar pathway (Bolhassani and Rafati 2008; Castellino et al. 2000; More et al. 1999).

Although autologous hsps are mostly reported as the MHC-I presentation-facilitating partners, they could assist also to MHC-II presentation of coupled peptides. Likewise, bacterial hsps such as *E. coli* DnaK and *M. tuberculosis* hsp70 have been identified to contribute in both MHC-I and MHC-II presentation of the associated peptides (Tobian et al. 2004b). Peptides presented by MHC-I are processed by cross-presentation pathways, whereas peptides presented by MHC-II are processed by canonical MHC-II pathway. Nevertheless, although gp96, for example, could bind in vivo both MHC-I and MHC-II restricted epitopes, it selectively primes CD8⁺ T cell effector functions (Doody et al. 2004).

Clinical Applications of Hsps in Immunizations

So far a number of phase I to III clinical trials tested immunization of cancer patients with autologous tumor-derived hsp-peptide preparations or tumor-derived peptide preparations complexed with recombinant hsp70 or gp96. Studies focused on safety and effectiveness of particular formulation in therapeutic settings in patients with breast cancer, melanoma, glioma, cervical cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, soft tissue sarcoma, leukemia, and lymphoma (Bolhassani et al. 2008; Kim et al. 2005; Li et al. 2005; Maki et al. 2007; Oki et al. 2007; Pilla et al. 2006; See et al. 2011; Testori et al. 2008; Wood et al. 2008). In the April 2008, patient autologous vaccine oncophage (vitespen; formerly HSPPC-96), based on affinity concanavalin A chromatography-purified gp96-peptide fraction from patient tumor tissue subsequently repurified on diethyl-aminoethyl ion-exchange chromatography (Jonasch et al. 2008), was approved in Russia for adjuvant therapy of renal cell carcinoma at intermediate-risk for disease recurrence. Neither food and drug administration (FDA) USA nor European medicines Agency approved Oncophage although since 2009 FDA granted orphan drug designation to Oncophage for the treatment of glioma, metastatic melanoma, and renal cell carcinoma.

Deeper understanding of the immunomodulatory effects of hsps, improved vaccine formulations, and combinations with other potentiating agents, such as cytokines or PAMPs, will be necessary to improve the efficacy of hsp-

based therapeutics before they can enter human medical practice.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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