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Tubulin as a Molecular Component of Coated Vesicles

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ABSTRACT Two proteins of 53,000 and 56,000 mol wt have been found to be associated with coated vesicles (CV) purified from bovine brain and chicken liver. These proteins share molecular weights, isoelectric points, and antigenic determinants with α- and β-tubulins purified from bovine brain. Based on SDS PAGE and electron microscopic analysis of controlled pore glass bead exclusion column fractions, both the tubulins and the major CV polypeptide clathrin were found to chromatograph as components of a single kinetic particle. In addition, tubulin and CV antigens assayed by a sensitive enzyme-linked-immunosorbent method eluted from the columns with constant stoichiometry. These data provide evidence that tubulin is a molecular component of coated vesicles.

CV are transient intracellular structures derived from coated endocytic pits (33, 41). Found in virtually all cell types, they are recognized morphologically by the presence of an ordered array of material coating the cytoplasmic surface (9, 57) and biochemically by the presence of clathrin, a 180,000-mol-wt protein (30, 31). The central role of CV in receptor-mediated endocytosis has been well documented (11, 43). In addition, CV also appear to play a role in the intracellular shuffling of proteins from the endoplasmic reticulum to the Golgi and plasma membrane (44).

CV have been isolated from many different tissues and cell types (24, 31, 57). Regardless of the initial source, one of the predominant protein bands observed when isolated CV are analyzed by SDS PAGE is invariably the 180,000-mol-wt protein clathrin. When CV are dissociated with Tris or urea, one prominent structure is seen as a triskelion-shaped complex composed of three 180,000-mol-wt clathrin molecules and three light chains of 32,000 and 36,000 mol wt (17, 54). Other proteins that are generally observed by SDS PAGE include several in the 100,000–120,000-mol-wt range and three in the 50,000–55,000-mol-wt area (15, 16, 57). The role of these accessory proteins is not known although it has been suggested that the 110,000-mol-wt protein may be a membrane-bound clathrin-binding protein that plays a role in the assembly of clathrin subunits to form the cagelike structure (53).

CV have been observed in association with various elements of the cytoskeleton. Recent morphological findings have suggested an association among coated structures, MT (49) and actin filaments (46). Presumably such associations may be illustrative of the mechanism by which CV shuttle from the cell surface to specifically targeted intracellular compartments. In addition to the morphological observations, the similarity of molecular weights between α- and β-tubulins and two of the proteins of 50,000–55,000 mol wt invariably associated with isolated CV led us to investigate the possibility that these two proteins might be tubulin and to question the nature of their association with CV.

We used a variety of purification techniques, in particular the CPG bead chromatographic procedure of Pfeffer and Kelly (35), to explore more fully the association between tubulin and coated structures isolated from either bovine brain or chicken liver. The relative amounts of various CV proteins associated with each of the fractions obtained by CPG chromatography were calculated using a number of very sensitive enzyme-linked immunosorbent immunoassays developed in our laboratory.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Purification of CV and MT: CV from bovine brain were purified by the method of Nandi et al. (27). CV from chicken liver were obtained using the methods of either Pearse (32) or Nandi et al. (27). Bovine brain MT were purified using the procedure described by Shelanski et al. (47). The proteins

1 Abbreviations used in this paper: anti-CV, anti-coated vesicle antibody; anti-LC, anti-light chain antibody; CPG, controlled pore glass; CV, coated vesicles; ELISA, enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; MAP-2, microtubule-associated protein-2; MT, microtubules; pI, isoelectric point; S-1000, Sephacryl S-1000.
concentration of each preparation was determined using SDS PAGE according to Laemmli (21) and by electron microcopy of negatively stained samples.

Two-dimensional Gel Electrophoresis: Two-dimensional electrophoresis of CV and MT samples was accomplished by the Ames and Nikaido (2) modification of the method of O'Farrell (28). Typically, 25-80 µg protein samples were first isoelectric-focused in 4% acrylamide tube gels (12 cm x 3.5 mm). Gels contained 2% Nonidet P-40, 8 M urea (Ultra-pure; Schwarz-Mann, Orangeburg, NY) and 2% carrier ampholytes (LKB Instruments, Gaithersburg, MD). The ampholyte profile used was 3 parts pH 4-6, 2 parts pH 7-9, 1 part pH 5-7, and 1.5 parts pH 3.5-10. Gels were focused for a minimum of 9,000 V-h at 400-500 V and then for an additional hour at 1,000 V. To prevent reaggregation of proteins prior to entering the gels in the first dimension, some CV samples were modified through alkylation using either N-ethyl maleimide or iodoacetamide according to the method of Dreesman and Benedict (10).

After isoelectric-focusing, tube gels were gelatinized for 1 h in two changes of 10% Laemmli SDS PAGE gel slab with 1% agarose in 0.125 M Tris, pH 6.8, and 0.2% SDS. After electrophoresis, the gel slabs were stained with silver using the procedure of Merril et al. (25).

Gels containing proteins of known isoelectric points (pI) (pI markers; Calbiochem-Behring Corp., American Hoechst Corp., San Diego, CA) were cofocused with sample gels in the first dimension to determine the pI distribution. The pI markers were then visualized by Coomassie Blue staining of the gels. Alternatively, gels were cut into 1-cm segments and equilibrated in dH2O, and the pH of each solution was determined.

Permeation Chromatography: CV samples were further purified by permeation chromatography on a CPG bead column by the method of Pfeffer and Kelly (35). Typically, 100 ml of CPG-2,000 glass beads (mean pore diameter 1.902 Å, 120-200 mesh, lot #10870; Electro-Nucleonics Int'l, Wantage, NJ) was packed with vibration into a 0.9 x 58 cm column. A 1 ml bovine IgG, and 250 µg/ml tubulin. In these experiments half-maximal inhibition of anti-LC binding was detected with either a rabbit anti-bovine brain tubulin kindly provided by Pfeffer and Kelly (35). Typically, 100 ml of CPG-2,000 glass beads (mean pore diameter 1.902 Å, 120-200 mesh, lot #10870; Electro-Nucleonics Int'l, Wantage, NJ) was packed into a 0.9 x 58 cm column. A 1 ml bovine IgG, and 250 µg/ml tubulin. In these experiments half-maximal inhibition of anti-LC binding was determined using the method of Dreesman and Benedict (10).

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Immunoassays: ELISA samples were carried out essentially as described by Raugi et al. (38). For a typical assay, 100-l aliquots of the solutions to be tested for the presence of antigen were allowed to adsorb to 96-well vinyl microtiter plates for 1 h at 25°C. The antigen solution was removed, and 200 µl of PBS containing 2 mg/ml BSA (PBS-BSA) (Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, MO) was added to the wells and incubated for an additional 60 min to saturate all protein-binding sites. In direct-binding assays 100 µl of appropriately diluted primary antibody was incubated in the treated wells for 2 h at 37°C. Primary antibody solutions were diluted such that the amount of antibody present was in excess of that needed to bind all the vinyl-bound antigen. After a brief wash with PBS, the wells were incubated with 100 µl of an HRP-conjugated secondary antibody for 2 h at 37°C. Where mouse antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-mouse IgG-HRP was used as the secondary antibody at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA. Where rabbit antibodies were used as primary probes, goat anti-rabbit IgG-HRP was used at a final dilution of 1:2,000 in PBS-BSA.
RESULTS

Coelectrophoresis of CV and MT Proteins

Purified CV from a variety of tissues exhibit a number of polypeptides when analyzed by SDS PAGE. Two of these polypeptides have molecular weights between 50,000 and 55,000 (Fig. 1). Because of the apparent similarity of molecular weights, we wished to determine if any of these proteins were α- or β-tubulin.

One criterion for the identification of tubulin among the 50,000–55,000-mol-wt polypeptides is the consistent co-migration of purified bovine brain tubulin with one or more of the polypeptides on SDS PAGE. When these proteins were electrophoresed in adjacent lanes on slab gels, it was apparent that two of the three bands in the 50,000–55,000-mol-wt range found in CV isolated from bovine brain co-migrated with α- (56,000) and β- (53,000) tubulin on 10% acrylamide gels (Fig. 1). Co-migration was also noted at acrylamide concentrations of 7.5 and 12% (data not shown). CV isolated from chicken liver also contained proteins with apparent molecular weights very similar to α- and β-tubulin. However, these proteins were present in a much smaller relative quantity than that found in bovine brain isolated CV and were clearly observable only in overloaded silver-stained gels. Nevertheless, the presence of tubulin associated with chicken liver isolated CV was clearly demonstrated by our ELISA assays described in a following section.

To define the pI of the many CV proteins and, in particular, to determine if the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt doublet had pI similar to α- and β-tubulin, we compared the pI values of CV proteins and tubulin by two-dimensional electrophoresis. Purified CV and MT were electrofocused in the first dimension and then separated in the second dimension by SDS PAGE (Fig. 2). The 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt proteins localized at the same pI and molecular weight as α- and β-tubulin. They had an apparent pI of 5.5 for the "a" band and for α-tubulin and 5.3 for both the "b" band and β-tubulin. Unlike many of the other CV proteins neither of the MT polypeptides had a component which focused at the pI of clathrin.

Examination of CV polypeptides after electrofocusing and electrophoresis in the second dimension revealed at least 18 distinct spots (Fig. 2). Chief among these is a prominent band that migrated in the second dimension and that had the same molecular weight as the clathrin standard. This clathrin band exhibited a distinctly heterologous isoelectric pattern. Although spread from a pI of 6.0 to nearly 7.0, the clathrin was predominantly concentrated in two areas which range from 6.0 to 6.6 and 6.7 to 6.8 and whose peak densities have a pI of 6.4 and 6.7, respectively. Often in the second dimension there was a slightly faster migrating clathrin at both pI; however, this was not always evident at lower protein concentrations.

In addition to the heterogenous pattern produced by clathrin, most of the other polypeptides exhibited two distinct patterns. All had pI distinct from clathrin but, in addition, most also appeared to have a component of the same molecular weight that focuses at the same pI as clathrin (Fig. 2). All of the polypeptides of the 100,000–125,000-mol-wt group electrofocus at pI that are identical to the clathrins; in addition, the 120,000-mol-wt polypeptide also focused at a pI of 6.0 and the 110,000-mol-wt at a pI of 5.8. Polypeptides in the 70,000–90,000-mol-wt range migrated as four well-focused
spots with pI of 6.0 and 5.8 for the 82,000- and 80,000-, 6.1 and 5.9 for the 74,000- and 76,000-mol-wt polypeptides. To a much lesser degree, each of these proteins also had a component that migrated at the same pI as the clathrins. In contrast, the polypeptides in the 40,000–47,000-mol-wt range all focused as discrete spots at a pI of 5.5 for the 48,000-, 5.8 for the 43,000-, 6.1 for the 40,000- and 6.4, 6.1, and 5.9 for the 38,000-mol-wt protein. Only very small amounts of these spots were found migrating at the pI of clathrin. Polypeptides of the 30,000- to 36,000-mol-wt light chain family, two of which are usually purified associated with clathrin, migrated at pI of 4.5, 4.7, and 6.0 for the 36,000-, 34,000-, and 32,000-mol-wt polypeptides respectively.

If the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt bands from CV are in fact α- and β-tubulin, they would be expected to share antigenic determinants with the tubulins. To test this hypothesis, MT and CV polypeptides from SDS PAGE were electrochemically transferred to nitrocellulose, and the polypeptides on the paper were incubated with antibodies specific for tubulin. When autoradiograms were developed, both the α- and β-bands and the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt bands from the CV bound antibodies. Preimmune sera did not bind (Fig. 3).

Kinetic Association of Tubulins with CV

Given the finding that α- and β-tubulin co-purify with CV, we wished to determine if the tubulins were associated with CV in a common kinetic particle or if their apparent co-purification was an artifact of the preparative techniques. Isolated CV were therefore chromatographed over a CPG bead exclusion column with a mean pore size of 1,902 Å. Depending on the purity of the particular CV preparation, two distinct elution profiles, as detected by absorbance at 280 nm, were obtained. One typical profile (Fig. 4) had two distinct protein peaks centered at fractions 19 and 25. Fractions 22–27 when analyzed by SDS PAGE (Fig. 4B) contained the principle CV polypeptide, the 180,000-mol-wt protein clathrin. It should be noted that the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt proteins identified as α- and β-tubulin also eluted in these fractions. Densitometric scans of the silver-stained gels demonstrated that the ratio of tubulin to clathrin remained constant in all of the fractions within this peak (data not shown).

Fractions 22–27 were pooled, pelleted at 200,000 × g for 40 min, and examined as thin sections in the electron microscope (Fig. 4C). In a typical image, 95% of the visible structures were identified as CV that appeared to be of a uniform size. A small number of uncoated membrane structures were also observed in these fractions.

In contrast, fractions 18–21, when examined by a similar procedure in the electron microscope, consisted of large, smooth membranous structures (Fig. 4D). When analyzed by SDS PAGE, the predominant protein component of these fractions was tubulin, with very little clathrin and smaller amounts of other proteins. It should be noted that we did not observe in the electron microscope any MT-like structures in either peak with either thin-sectioned or negative-stained samples. Material eluting in fractions 28–35 proved to be nonpelletable at 100,000 g for 1 h.

The other typical elution profile obtained with certain CV preparations (Fig. 5A, absorbance 280 nm) exhibited no membranous void volume material and consisted of a CV-containing peak (fractions 23–29) that by SDS PAGE analysis was similar to the second peak in Fig. 4 (data not shown).

Immunoassay of Column Purified CV

We were able to verify the presence of CV and MT proteins in the fractions from CPG bead columns by direct-binding immunoblotassays of the column fractions. Two monoclonal antibodies were used to monitor the presence of CV. One monoclonal recognizes the 36,000 polypeptide light chain (anti-LC) of bovine brain CV, and the other recognizes a determinant of chicken liver CV (anti-CV). Polyclonal antitubulin antibodies were used to detect α- and β-tubulin.

Although the elution profile from the glass bead column in Fig. 5 exhibited two distinct protein peaks (peak I, fractions 23–29, and peak II, fractions 30–36), it was clear from the antibody-binding data (Fig. 5A) that CV- and MT-binding activities were localized in the CV-containing peak (peak I). When the fractions from peak I were pooled, concentrated, and rechromatographed, protein eluted from the CPG bead column as two closely spaced peaks (Fig. 5C) with the bulk...
FIGURE 4 Permeation chromatography of bovine brain CV. Brain CV purified by the method of Nandi et al. (27) were chromatographed on a CPG bead column (CPG 1,902 Å), and 1 ml fractions were collected. Fractions containing protein (A), as determined by absorbance at 280 nm, were analyzed by SDS PAGE on a 10% gel and stained with silver (B). Numbers above lanes in (B) correspond to fraction source in (A), (B, lane A) molecular weight standards; (B, lane B) starting material (bovine brain CV). Protein molecular weight markers for the column were run separately and included blue dextran (2 × 10^6 mol wt), apoferritin (4.8 × 10^5 mol wt), and vitamin B12 (1,450 mol wt). The void volume for the CPG bead column corresponds to 1,902 Å diameter for a spherical particle. Fractions 22-27 (C) and fractions 18-21 (D) were centrifuged at 200,000 g for 40 rain; pellets were collected and prepared for electron microscopy as described in Materials and Methods. × 90,000.

Rechromatography of peak II resulted in the elution of a single peak of protein (Fig. 5E) that eluted in approximately the same position as the original peak II. However, most of the antibody-binding activity eluted at the relative position of peak I in fractions containing small amounts of protein, suggesting the presence of contaminating peak I material in the pooled fractions from peak II. Light chain eluted almost exclusively at the peak I position whereas some CV and tubulin activities also eluted at the peak II position.

If the MT and CV polypeptides co-migrate as a single kinetic particle on the CPG bead column, the ratio of the MT and CV should remain constant in fractions containing this particle. All bound antibody ratios remained constant over the fractions comprising peak I but not over the fractions within peak II (Fig. 5B, D, and F). The calculated antibody-binding ratios for rechromatographed peak II remained constant only over a narrow range of fractions (26–29, Fig. 5F), presumably due to contaminating peak I material in the pooled fractions. The tubulin/light chain and the CV/light chain ratios were not constant over the peak II region. However, in some cases (Fig. 5B and F), the tubulin/CV ratios were constant over this region reflecting the presence of coeluting tubulin and CV antigens. From these ratios, light chain appeared to be present only in peak I.

To determine whether the calculated antibody-binding ratios were valid over the range of antigen concentrations obtained from the CPG column, we coated vinyl wells with undiluted and diluted samples of CPG column-eluted material and assayed these samples as described. With our antibody probes we found that for column fractions containing detectable amounts of absorbance 280 nm material, the absorbance at 490 nm obtained by the ELISA procedure (a measure of the amount of antigen in the solution) was linear over a hundredfold range of coating antigen concentrations (data not shown).
Permeation chromatography of bovine brain CV: antibody analysis. (A) Density-gradient isolated bovine brain CV (1.5 mg) were applied to a CPG bead column (58 x 0.9 cm). The CV were eluted as in Fig. 4, and 1 ml fractions were assayed with antitubulin (1:1,000 dilution), anti-CV monoclonal (1:100), and anti-LC (1:1,000). The relative percent of antibody bound was determined by ELISA. Peak I and peak II fractions were pooled separately, concentrated, and reapplied to the CPG bead column. Fractions from rechromatographed peak I (C) and rechromatographed peak II (E) were once again assayed for antibody-binding. Relative antigen levels of tubulin (TUB), CV (CV), and 36-mol-wt light chains (LC) were calculated and expressed as ratios of antibody-binding activity for density-gradient isolated CV (B), pooled and rechromatographed peak I (D), or pooled and rechromatographed peak II (F). Molecular weight markers are as in Fig. 4.

Chicken liver CV were also applied to the same CPG bead column. The protein eluted with a small amount of material in void volume followed by a broad peak centered around fraction 21 (Fig. 6A). Unlike the bovine brain CV elution profile (Fig. 5), the elution profile from this preparation of chicken liver CV did not contain a distinct second peak of material. Tubulin and CV coeluted with the broad protein peak whereas no antibody-binding activity was detected in the void-volume fractions. The ratio of tubulin to CV remained constant, indicating the presence of tubulin in the same kinetic particle as CV (Fig. 6B). Because there was no cross-reactivity with chicken liver CV, the anti-bovine brain 36,000-mol-wt light chain monoclonal (anti-LC) could not be used to monitor the presence of chicken liver CV light chain.

Sephacryl-1000 (S-1000) is also sometimes used as a final step in purifying CV (26). We therefore applied the same bovine brain CV as used in the CPG column to this gel matrix. Protein eluted from the S-1000 column as a single peak with a broad shoulder (Fig. 7). There was no separation of material into two distinct peaks as for the CPG bead.
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wt CV protein clathrin and the 33,000 and 36,000 CV light our findings that the 53,000-, 56,000-, 180,000-, 33,000-, and associated with the same kinetic particle as the 180,000-mol-

brain. In addition, we have shown that these two proteins are genic determinants with a- and/3-tubulin isolated from bovine 36,000-mol-wt components co-purify through velocity and with silver (B).

at 280 nm (A) were analyzed by SDS PAGE on a 10% gel stained (Fig. 7).

Our results demonstrate that the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt proteins chromatographed in a single peak. These results show that, as in bovine brain CV, the MT proteins and the clathrin of chicken liver CV are associated in the same kinetic particle. Unlike those purified from bovine brain, CV isolated from chicken liver consistently have much less associated a- and/3-
tubulin. This conclusion is based on a comparison of the relative densities of the silver-stained SDS PAGE gels that demonstrate that bovine brain CV contain predominant bands of protein at 53,000 and 56,000 mol wt (Fig. 1B), whereas at similar clathrin concentrations chicken liver CV contain barely detectable silver-stained bands in the 50,000-

55,000-mol-wt region (Fig. 1D).

The difference in the amount of MT protein that co-purifies with CV may reflect the differing roles that coated structures presumably serve in these two very different tissues. We expect that the role served by coated structures in bovine brain involves an association between the numerous MT found in this tissue and CV. However, in the liver, many of the functions served by coated structures may not involve an association between CV and MT. We expect that within any particular cell type there are various subpopulations of CV, some of which are not associated with MT. Our data, then, may suggest that the predominant subpopulation of coated structures in bovine brain is associated with MT, whereas only a minor subpopulation of CV in chicken liver has this capability. Thus, many of the CV isolated from liver would not carry along associated MT protein.

FIGURE 7 Gel filtration of bovine brain CV on sephacryl S-1000. Bovine brain CV were isolated on D2O-sucrose gradients according to the method of Nandi et al. (27). 1.5 mg of material in 1 ml of column buffer was chromatographed. 1 ml fractions analyzed for protein (absorbance at 280 nm) and antibody-binding as before (Fig. 5). Fractions containing protein as determined by absorbance at 280 nm (A) were analyzed by SDS PAGE on a 10% gel stained with silver (B).

column even when lesser amounts of protein were applied to the column. Similarly, antibody-binding was detectable in all the fractions of eluted protein, except for light chain activity that was present only in the material nearest the void and not in the peak shoulder fractions. As in the CPG bead column, tubulin and CV appeared to coelute from the S-1000 column (Fig. 7).

DISCUSSION

Our results demonstrate that the 53,000- and 56,000-mol-wt proteins found in highly purified preparations of CV isolated from bovine brain share SDS PAGE mobility, pl, and antigenic determinants with a- and /3-tubulin isolated from bovine brain. In addition, we have shown that these two proteins are associated with the same kinetic particle as the 180,000-mol-wt CV protein clathrin and the 33,000 and 36,000 CV light chain components. These latter results are based, in part, on our findings that the 53,000-, 56,000-, 180,000-, 33,000-, and 36,000-mol-wt components co-purify through velocity and equilibrium sedimentation centrifugation followed by exclusion chromatography through CPG bead columns. Depending on the purity of the initial preparation, two CPG elution profiles were obtained. In addition to a CV-containing peak, some preparations contained large membranous vesicles that eluted in the void volume (Fig. 4). Both peaks, however, appeared to contain similar amounts of tubulin. If it is assumed that the tubulin in the void peak is in association with the large vesicles found in these fractions, the large amount of tubulin in the second peak cannot be explained by the small amount of membrane contaminants and therefore must be in association with the CV themselves. The kinetic association of a- and /3-tubulin and CV was also shown in experiments in which CPG bead column purified CV were assayed by an ELISA method. These experiments demonstrated that the great majority of the MT protein co-purified with the 180,000- and 36,000-mol-wt CV proteins. This association had a constant stoichiometry since the ratio of MT to CV remained constant in all fractions in the CV-containing peak.

These findings are in basic agreement with those of Rubenstein et al. (45). They showed that when sucrose-density purified CV were electrophoresed through agarose, the original material was resolved into two components, one consisting of CV containing the typical CV polypeptides including the 50,000–55,000-mol-wt proteins, and a second fraction containing smooth membrane vesicles with very little protein. Thus, the findings of these authors support our conclusion that the CV proteins clathrin, the two light chain species, and a- and /3-tubulin are components of a single kinetic particle.

We also obtained similar results when we examined the MT components of CV isolated from chicken liver by two different procedures. The D2O-sucrose method of Nandi et al. (27) and the D2O-Ficoll method of Pearse (32). Regardless of the isolation method, the CV components, as assayed by our anti-CV monoclonal antibody probe, and the MT proteins chromatographed in a single peak. These results show that, as in bovine brain CV, the MT proteins and the clathrin of chicken liver CV are associated in the same kinetic particle. Unlike those purified from bovine brain, CV isolated from chicken liver consistently have much less associated a- and /3-
tubulin. This conclusion is based on a comparison of the relative densities of the silver-stained SDS PAGE gels that demonstrate that bovine brain CV contain predominant bands of protein at 53,000 and 56,000 mol wt (Fig. 1B), whereas at similar clathrin concentrations chicken liver CV contain barely detectable silver-stained bands in the 50,000–55,000-mol-wt region (Fig. 1D).

The difference in the amount of MT protein that co-purifies with CV may reflect the differing roles that coated structures presumably serve in these two very different tissues. We expect that the role served by coated structures in bovine brain involves an association between the numerous MT found in this tissue and CV. However, in the liver, many of the functions served by coated structures may not involve an association between CV and MT. We expect that within any particular cell type there are various subpopulations of CV, some of which are not associated with MT. Our data, then, may suggest that the predominant subpopulation of coated structures in bovine brain is associated with MT, whereas only a minor subpopulation of CV in chicken liver has this capability. Thus, many of the CV isolated from liver would not carry along associated MT protein.
In the course of these experiments we used a number of different procedures to isolate CV. Independent of the method used, the relative amount of tubulin in each preparation remained the same. Depending on the method employed, however, and even with different preparations isolated by identical procedures, the relative amounts of non-CV material varied from one preparation to the next (Figs. 4 and 5). Our results are in basic agreement with those of Pfeffer and Kelly (35), and both of our results make obvious the need for rigorous purification beyond the centrifugation techniques now employed, including those that employ D₂O (27, 32).

S-1000 has been used by some investigators as a final purification step in CV preparations (26). In our experiments, when bovine brain CV were chromatographed on CPG bead columns, they were resolved into two distinct peaks whereas when the same starting material was chromatographed on an S-1000 column, a single broad peak was obtained. Thus our data demonstrate that S-1000 is not as effective as CPG in separating CV from contaminating material.

The role of CV in protein and membrane transport has been well documented (3, 4, 11, 12, 31, 41, 42, 44, 46). The mechanism employed to direct a vesicle to any one of several potential intracellular sites is not, however, understood. The presence of MT proteins in CV suggests that these cytoskeletal elements may play a role in directing the transport of CV-derived vesicles through the cytoplasm.

MT have been implicated in the transport of many endocytosed ligands and the secretion of a variety of cellular products (20, 23, 36, 39). There is also considerable evidence that vesicle docking, fusion, and alignment of nuclei in virus-induced syncytia. The phosphorylation of MAP-2 has been suggested as a possible control mechanism for this system (49), since the addition of cAMP enhances MT-organizing activity (55). The exact functions of these MT-associated proteins (tau, MAP-2) in the regulation of transport of cellular organelles remains at this time, speculative. Further studies are necessary to interpret this data in terms of any in vivo mechanisms.

Although much information is available concerning the specific proteins and structure of CV, the manner in which the ligand-containing vesicle is guided to a particular destination remains unclear. In the past, CV have been observed as a ubiquitous contaminant of MT preparations, suggesting that there may be some functional association. The demonstration in this report that α- and β-tubulin are associated in the same kinetic particle as clathrin and CV light chains provides further evidence of a role for MT in the translocation of cytoplasmic CV.

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