

Cytokine-mediated cPLA₂ phosphorylation is regulated by multiple MAPK family members

Niels Geijsen, Pascale F. Dijkers, Jan-Willem J. Lammers, Leo Koenderman, Paul J. Coffer*

Department of Pulmonary Diseases, G03.550, University Medical Centre, Heidelberglaan 100, 3584 CX Utrecht, The Netherlands

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Abstract Cytosolic phospholipase A₂ (cPLA₂) plays a critical role in various neutrophil functions including the generation of leukotrienes and platelet-activating factor release. Enzyme activity is regulated both by translocation to the membrane in a Ca²⁺-dependent manner and serine phosphorylation by members of the mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) family. In this report, we have investigated the role of granulocyte/macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF)-mediated signalling pathways in the regulation of cPLA₂. GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation was not affected by pharmacological inhibition of p38 MAPK, phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase or Src. However, inhibition of extracellular signal-regulated kinase (ERK) MAPK activation resulted in a partial inhibition of cPLA₂ phosphorylation, revealed in a slower onset of phosphorylation. A cell line stably transfected with the GM-CSF receptor was used to further analyze GM-CSF-mediated cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Mutation of tyrosine residues 577 and 612 resulted in a delayed cPLA₂ phosphorylation similar to the pharmacological ERK inhibition. Furthermore, inhibition of p38 MAPK in cells bearing the double mutant βc577/612 completely abrogated GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation. We conclude that GM-CSF can mediate cPLA₂ phosphorylation through the redundant activation of both p38 and ERK MAP kinases.

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Key words: Cytosolic phospholipase A₂; MAPK; Phosphorylation

1. Introduction

Neutrophils perform a critical function in the host defence against microbial infection. Stimulation of these cells induces multiple responses, including cell adhesion, migration, secretion, phagocytosis, and the generation of reactive oxygen species [1]. However, aberrant activation of these cells is also implicated in the pathogenesis of a variety of inflammatory diseases which are associated with tissue damage [1,2]. Therefore, neutrophil function is tightly regulated by a variety of chemoattractants and cytokines acting on these cells through a wide range of receptors. These receptors include tyrosine kinase-associated receptors such as the interleukins (IL) IL-3, IL-5, granulocyte/macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF) family of receptors [3], seven-membrane spanning receptors such as the *N*-formyl-methionyl-leucyl-phenylalanine (fMLP) and platelet-activating factor (PAF) receptors [4] and receptors reacting with immune complexes, the Fc

receptors [5]. Optimal activation of neutrophils only occurs in a 'primed' state which is induced by prior stimulation [6]. For example, pre-treatment of neutrophils with GM-CSF primes the NADPH oxidase for a subsequent challenge with fMLP while not directly stimulating superoxide production itself [7,8]. However, very little is yet known about the molecular mechanisms underlying the priming of human neutrophils.

Stimulation of neutrophils with GM-CSF results in a rapid increase in tyrosine phosphorylation of many intracellular proteins [9–11]. The GM-CSF receptor consists of a ligand specific α-chain (GM-CSFRα) and a common β-chain (βc) that is shared with the receptors for IL-3 and IL-5 [12–16]. The βc does not bind ligand by itself, but is essential for high-affinity ligand-binding and signal transduction. Activation of the receptor results in activation of receptor-associated Janus kinases and tyrosine phosphorylation of the receptor itself [3]. The phosphorylated tyrosine residues in the receptor then function as docking sites for other intracellular signalling proteins, that in turn are activated. Several members of the mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) family are phosphorylated and activated in response to GM-CSF stimulation, including extracellular signal-regulated kinases (ERKs) and the p38 MAP kinase [17–20].

Cytosolic phospholipase A₂ (cPLA₂) plays an important role in various neutrophil functions including PAF release and the production of leukotrienes and prostaglandins [21,22]. cPLA₂ activity results in the release of fatty acids from the sn2 position of membrane phospholipids. The products of this reaction, preferably arachidonic acid and lysophosphatidylcholine, serve as precursors for the generation of inflammatory lipids as prostaglandins, leukotrienes and PAF [21,22]. Furthermore, arachidonic acid by itself can stimulate the NADPH oxidase system, resulting in superoxide production both in vitro and in vivo [23,24]. cPLA₂ activity is controlled through multiple mechanisms. cPLA₂ contains a calcium-binding C2 region which upon association with Ca²⁺ results in translocation of the enzyme from the cytosol to the membrane fraction [25–27]. Importantly, serine phosphorylation of the enzyme leads to an increase in specific activity [26,28,29] and is essential for the agonist-induced activation of the enzyme [30]. Several reports have analyzed this phosphorylation in vivo and although a role for different MAPK family members is suggested, the data appear to be contradictory as to which MAPK family members are critically mediating this phosphorylation [31–33]. GM-CSF has also been shown to induce cPLA₂ phosphorylation and an increase in the enzyme's specific activity in vitro, although the mechanism by which this phosphorylation is established is yet unclear [34,35]. Using the pharmacological inhibitor of MEK kinase,

*Corresponding author. Fax: (31)-30-2542155; <http://www.pulmoscience.org>. E-mail: p.coffer@hli.azu.nl

the upstream activator of ERK MAP kinases, we recently demonstrated a role for these kinases in the serum-treated zymosan (STZ)-induced PAF release [36]. However, the STZ-mediated PAF response was only partially inhibited when neutrophils were first primed with GM-CSF [36]. This suggested that GM-CSF may activate other downstream kinases able to short-circuit the requirement of ERK activation.

In this report, we have further investigated the mechanism by which GM-CSF mediates cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Our results suggest that GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation proceeds through at least two different signalling pathways involving both the ERK and the p38 MAPK members. It appears that these signalling pathways are redundant explaining the widespread ability of cytokines and chemoattractants to activate cPLA₂.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Isolation of human neutrophils

Blood was obtained from healthy volunteers from the Red Cross Blood Bank (Utrecht, The Netherlands). Mixed granulocytes were isolated from the buffy-coat of 500 ml 0.4% (w/v) tri-sodium citrate (pH 7.4)-treated blood as previously described [37]. In short, mononuclear cells were removed by centrifugation over isotonic Ficoll (1.077 g/ml) from Pharmacia (Uppsala, Sweden). After lysis of the erythrocytes in an isotonic NH₄Cl solution, neutrophils were washed and resuspended in incubation buffer (20 mM HEPES, 132 mM NaCl, 6 mM KCl, 1 mM MgSO₄, 1.2 mM KH₂PO₄, 5 mM glucose, 1 mM CaCl₂) containing 0.5% human serum albumin (CLB, Amsterdam, The Netherlands). Neutrophils were incubated for 30 min at 37°C before stimulation. In all experiments, a concentration of 10⁶ cells/ml was used for stimulation.

2.2. Neutrophil and BaF3 cell stimulation

Murine BaF3 cells were cultured in RPMI 1640 media supplemented with 8% Hyclone serum (Life Technologies, Breda, The Netherlands) and recombinant mouse IL-3. Cells were stably transfected with human GM-CSF receptor α -chain (EMBL acc. no. NM_006140) with or without human β c wild type (β c WT), β c mutant Tyr-577 to Gln (β c577), β c mutant Tyr-612 to Phe (β c612) or the double mutant β c577/612 as described previously [38]. Cells stably transfected with RasV12 or p110 K227E have also been described previously [39]. Prior to stimulation, BaF3 cells were serum-starved at 5 × 10⁵ cells per ml at 37°C for 4 h. Neutrophils were used directly after isolation at 5 × 10⁵ cells per ml. In some experiments, cells were pre-incubated as described in the legends of the figures with one of the following inhibitors: LY294002, PD098059, staurosporine, GF109203X or PPI (all from Biomol, Plymouth, PA, USA), SB203580 (Alexis, Laufenlingen, Switzerland), 1 ml of cells was stimulated with either recombinant human GM-CSF (10⁻¹⁰ M, Genzyme, Boston, MA, USA) or mouse IL-3 for the time indicated. Then, cells were quickly pelleted and lysed in 1 × Laemmli sample buffer.

2.3. Protein separation and Western blotting

Protein samples were separated on sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) (0.4 M Tris-HCl pH 8.3, 10% acrylamide, 0.06% bis-acrylamide, 0.1% SDS) and transferred to polyvinylidene difluoride membranes (Immobilon-P, Millipore). The membranes were probed with anti-cPLA₂ antibodies (#sc-454, Santa-Cruz, CA, USA) and swine anti-rabbit peroxidase-conjugated antibodies (DAKO, Denmark), following detection by enhanced chemiluminescence (ECL, Amersham).

Experiments were repeated at least three times. A representative blot for each experiment is shown.

3. Results

3.1. Regulation of GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation

cPLA₂ is regulated by both Ca²⁺-dependent translocation and phosphorylation [25–29]. cPLA₂ has been shown to be a

substrate for members of the family of MAPKs, and ERK1/ERK2 and p38 MAPK have been shown to mediate cPLA₂ phosphorylation both in vitro and in vivo [28,29,40,41]. GM-CSF activates several MAPK family members in human neutrophils, ERK1/ERK2 and p38 MAPK [19,36]. Furthermore, upon stimulation of human neutrophils with GM-CSF, a rapid phosphorylation of cPLA₂ is observed [34,35]. We pre-treated human neutrophils with several kinase inhibitors to further investigate the mechanism of GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation.

Stimulation of human neutrophils with GM-CSF causes phosphorylation of cPLA₂, which results in a lower electrophoretic mobility of the enzyme on SDS-PAGE [28]. This 'shift' in the enzyme's mobility is thus indicative for its phosphorylation. Indeed, cPLA₂ was found to be shifted after 15 min of GM-CSF stimulation (Fig. 1A, control), and this shift was persistent even after 60 min of GM-CSF stimulation. Next, we pre-treated resting human neutrophils with the phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI-3K) inhibitor LY294002. This inhibitor has been shown to effectively block PI-3K activity in human neutrophils at a concentration of 10 μ M [42]. Pre-treatment of cells with 10 μ M (or 25 μ M) LY294002 had no effect on the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 1A). In parallel experiments, this inhibitor was found to inhibit fMLP-induced superoxide production (data not shown). The MEK inhibitor PD098059 has been shown to potently block GM-CSF-induced ERK1/ERK2 activation in human neutrophils at a concentration of 50 μ M [36]. We observed a partial inhibition of GM-CSF (10⁻¹⁰ M)-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation, upon pre-treatment of the neutrophils with 50 μ M PD098059, reflected in a slower onset of cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 1B). However, after 60 min, cPLA₂ was fully phosphorylated even when cells were pre-treated with PD098059. Finally, we analyzed the role of p38 MAPK in the GM-CSF-induced phosphorylation of cPLA₂, utilizing the SB203550 inhibitor. GM-CSF has been shown to activate p38 MAPK in human neutrophils [17]. In these cells, SB203580 completely blocks the GM-CSF-induced p38 MAPK activation at a concentration of 10 μ M. However, at this concentration, SB203580 had no effect on the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 1C). These data suggest that although the ERK MAP kinases might play a role in the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ activation, there are additional signalling pathways, mediating the phosphorylation of cPLA₂.

3.2. cPLA₂ is constitutively phosphorylated in p21Ras(V12)-transfected BaF3 cells

The use of combinations of pharmacological inhibitors can be toxic for cells. To circumvent this problem, we generated BaF3 cells stably transfected with either GM-CSFR α alone, or GM-CSFR α and β c. Stimulation of BaF3 cells stably transfected with human GM-CSFR α alone did not result in an increase in cPLA₂ phosphorylation, demonstrating the requirement for the human β c (data not shown). BaF3 cells stably transfected with both GM-CSFR α in combination with human β c (BaF3-GM-CSFR α β) showed a rapid induction of cPLA₂ phosphorylation upon stimulation with GM-CSF (10⁻¹⁰ M, Fig. 2A), with kinetics similar to GM-CSF-stimulated neutrophils (Fig. 2B). Although cells were serum-starved for 4 h prior to stimulation with GM-CSF, they sometimes demonstrated background levels of cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 2A). This background level of cPLA₂ phosphor-

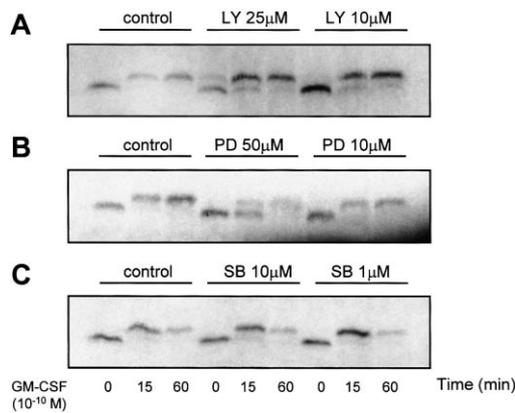


Fig. 1. Effect of kinase inhibitors on cPLA₂ activation in human neutrophils. Human neutrophils were isolated as described and pre-treated for 20 min with either buffer (control) or (A) LY294002 (at 10 μ M and 25 μ M), (B) PD098059 (at 10 μ M and 50 μ M) or (C) SB203580 (at 1 μ M and 10 μ M). Cells (5×10^5 cells/ml) were stimulated with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2.

ylation varied between the experiments, and probably was a result of incomplete inactivation of cPLA₂ after cytokine withdrawal from the cells. However, upon GM-CSF stimulation, a clear increase in cPLA₂ phosphorylation was observed.

To further correlate ERK activation with cPLA₂ phosphorylation, we utilized BaF3 cells stably transfected with constitutively active mutants of either p21Ras (p21RasV12) or PI-3K (p110 K227E) [39]. In analogy with the inhibitor studies on human neutrophils, the constitutively active PI-3K mutant had no effect on GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation

(Fig. 2C). However, we observed constitutive cPLA₂ phosphorylation in cells transfected with RasV12, suggesting a downstream target of Ras activation is sufficient to regulate this process (Fig. 2C). Since p21Ras regulates ERK activation in BaF3 cells, this further supports a role for ERK in mediating cPLA₂ phosphorylation. To investigate further the role of ERK activation in cPLA₂ activation, we pre-treated BaF3-GM-CSFR $\alpha\beta$ cells with the MEK inhibitor PD098059 before stimulation with GM-CSF. Inhibition of ERK activation resulted in a delayed cPLA₂ activation similar to the slow onset of cPLA₂ activation observed in human neutrophils pre-treated with this inhibitor (Fig. 2D). However, in analogy with the cPLA₂ activation observed in human neutrophils, cPLA₂ became fully phosphorylated after 15 min of GM-CSF stimulation (Fig. 2D). These data demonstrate that GM-CSFR-BaF3 cells stably can be used as a model system for cPLA₂ activation. Furthermore, the use of signalling mutants supports a role for ERK and not PI-3K in mediating cPLA₂ phosphorylation.

3.3. β c tyrosines 577 and/or 612 are not critical for cPLA₂ phosphorylation

We utilized BaF3 cells stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and mutants of β c bearing point mutations of tyrosine residues at position 577 (β c577), 612 (β c612) or both (β c577/612) to further investigate the role of various signalling pathways emerging from the receptor in cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Previously, we have shown that these tyrosine residues are critical in mediating both the activation of the Ras-Raf-MAPK and the PI-3K-PKB pathways from the GM-CSF receptor [20]. The independent β c577 or β c612 mutations showed no alteration in the GM-CSF-induced phosphorylation compared to wild type receptor (Fig. 3). However, cPLA₂ phosphorylation

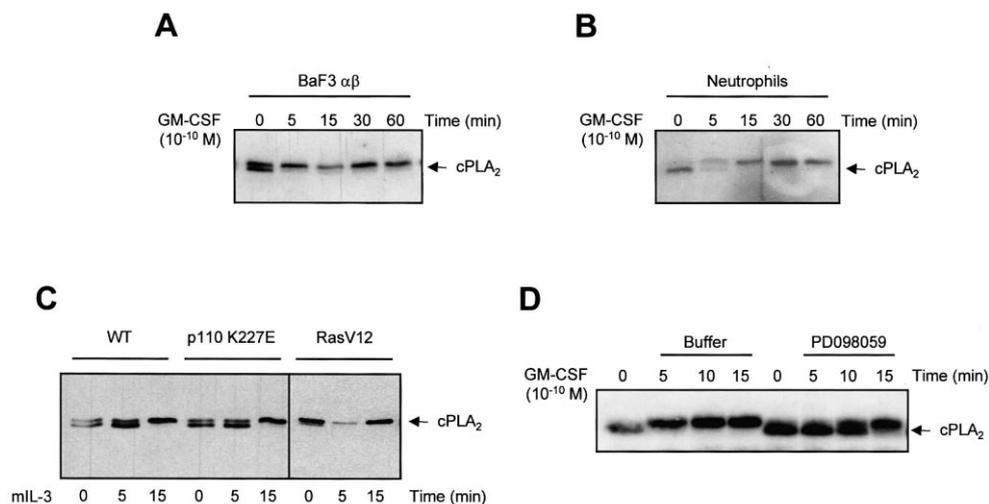


Fig. 2. GM-CSF-mediated activation of cPLA₂ in human neutrophils and BaF3 cells stably transfected with the GM-CSFR $\alpha\beta$. (A) BaF3 cells were stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and β c. Cells were serum-starved (at 5×10^5 cells/ml) for 4 h prior to stimulation with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2. cPLA₂ was detected using anti-cPLA₂ antibody. (B) Human neutrophils were isolated as described and stimulated (5×10^5 cells/ml) with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2. cPLA₂ was detected using anti-cPLA₂ antibody. (C) BaF3 cells stably transfected with either constitutively active p21Ras (RasV12) or constitutively active PI-3K (p110 K227E), as described in Section 2, or control cells were serum-starved (at 5×10^5 cells/ml) for 4 h prior to stimulation with mouse IL-3 (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2. cPLA₂ was detected using anti-cPLA₂ antibody. (D) BaF3 cells were stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and β c. Cells were serum-starved (at 5×10^5 cells/ml) for 4 h. Cells were pre-treated with buffer or PD098059 (50 μ M) for 15 min prior to stimulation with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2. cPLA₂ was detected using anti-cPLA₂ antibody.

was partially inhibited in the double mutant, $\beta c577/612$ cells, which demonstrated a similar slow onset as seen in the PD098059-treated human neutrophils (compare with Fig. 1B). As a control, we stimulated the BaF3- $\beta c577/612$ cells with recombinant mIL-3, which utilizes the endogenous mouse IL-3 receptor for signal transduction [13]. Stimulation of BaF3- $\beta c577/612$ with mIL-3 resulted in cPLA₂ phosphorylation with kinetics comparable to wild type GM-CSF receptor (Fig. 3). These data suggest that the abrogation of ERK activation by mutant $\beta c577/612$ results in alterations in cPLA₂ phosphorylation similar to those observed in GM-CSF-stimulated human neutrophils, pre-treated with the inhibitor of ERK activation PD098059. This results in a delayed onset of activation but does not inhibit GM-CSF-mediated cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Thus the effects of PD098059 do not appear to result from toxicity of the inhibitor, but rather reflect a partial defect in cPLA₂ phosphorylation.

3.4. Multiple signalling pathways mediate βc -stimulated cPLA₂ phosphorylation

Utilizing the $\beta c577/612$ mutant that no longer activates ERK and has reduced cPLA₂ phosphorylation, we are now able to analyze the effect of additional inhibition of other signalling pathways. This strategy avoids the problems associated with the addition of multiple pharmacological compounds, which proved toxic to the cells (data not shown). We examined the additional effect of several kinase inhibitors on the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation utilizing the mutated GM-CSF receptor $\beta c577/612$. Pre-treatment of cells with the p38 MAPK inhibitor SB203580 (10 μ M) completely inhibited the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation, whereas the ERK inhibitor PD098059 had no additional effect (Fig. 4A, upper panel). Utilizing inhibitors of protein kinase C (GF109203X) or Src kinase (PP1), we investigated the role of these kinases in cPLA₂ phosphorylation. None of these compounds had an inhibitory effect on the GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 4A, lower panel). Interestingly, the PKC inhibitor staurosporine induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation, even in the absence of GM-CSF stimulation (Fig. 4A, lower panel). Our results suggest that GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation can occur through at least two redundant signalling pathways. One regulated through tyrosines 577 and 612 of the receptor, and probably involving ERK MAP kinases. The other involving the activation of p38 MAPK. As a control, we used BaF3- $\beta c577$ and BaF3- $\beta c612$ cell lines, pre-

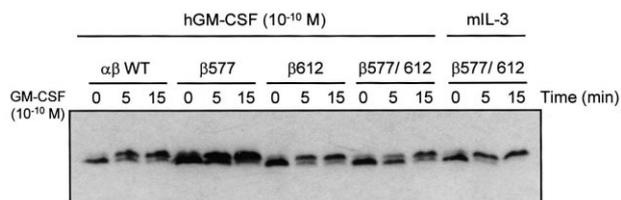


Fig. 3. Role of βc tyrosine residues in the activation of cPLA₂. BaF3 cells were stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and either βc WT or mutants thereof, bearing mutations of tyrosine residues at position 577 ($\beta c577$) or 612 ($\beta c612$), or both ($\beta c577/612$), as indicated. Cells (5×10^5 cells/ml) were serum-starved for 4 h prior to stimulation with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) or recombinant mouse IL-3 for the time indicated. Cells were lysed and Western blotting was performed as described in Section 2. cPLA₂ was detected using anti-cPLA₂ antibody.

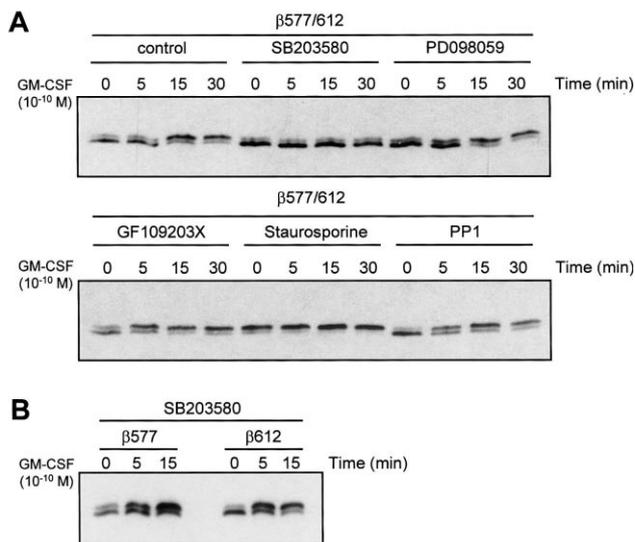


Fig. 4. Effect of kinase inhibitors on cPLA₂ activation by βc tyrosine mutants. (A) BaF3 cells were stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and $\beta c577/612$. Cells were pre-treated with various kinase inhibitors as indicated for 20 min before stimulation with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated. The inhibitors used are SB203580 (10 μ M), PD098059 (50 μ M), GF109203X (5 μ M), staurosporine (100 nM) and PP1 (50 μ M). (B) BaF3 cells were stably transfected with GM-CSFR α and either $\beta c577$ or $\beta c612$. Cells (5×10^5 /ml) were pre-treated with 10 μ M SB203580 for 20 min before stimulation with recombinant human GM-CSF (10^{-10} M) for the time indicated.

treated with the p38 MAPK inhibitor SB203580 as in these single point mutants ERKs can still be activated in response to GM-CSF [20]. In line with our hypothesis, SB203580 did not inhibit GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation in the context of a receptor that can still activate ERKs (Fig. 4B) [20].

4. Discussion

In this report, we show that the phosphorylation of cPLA₂ induced by GM-CSF stimulation can be mediated by redundant signalling pathways. Previous reports have shown that cPLA₂ is phosphorylated in response to a variety of stimuli in human neutrophils including GM-CSF, although there is little consensus as to the relevant signalling pathways regulating this process [32–34]. We also observed a rapid and prolonged phosphorylation of cPLA₂ in response to GM-CSF stimulation of human neutrophils (Fig. 1). Furthermore, we demonstrated that in a model cell line system, stably transfected with the GM-CSF receptor, GM-CSF causes a similar induction of cPLA₂ phosphorylation (Fig. 2). Members of the MAP kinase family have been implicated in the phosphorylation of cPLA₂ in response to a variety of stimuli [32,33]. GM-CSF is known to activate a variety of intracellular kinases including PI-3K, p38 and the ERK1/ERK2 MAP kinases [19,36]. Using pharmacological inhibitors of these kinases, we found that inhibition of ERK activation by the MEK inhibitor PD098059 resulted in a partial inhibition of cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Upon stimulation with GM-CSF, cPLA₂ was rapidly activated in the control cells, with up to 90% of total cPLA₂ being in the phosphorylated state after 15 min, whereas in the PD098059-treated cells, only 50% of total cPLA₂ was phos-

phorylated. However, after 60 min of GM-CSF stimulation, also in the PD098059-treated cells, all cPLA₂ was in the phosphorylated state. Furthermore, in BaF3 cells stably transfected with constitutively active p21Ras, cPLA₂ was constitutively phosphorylated (Fig. 2). As in these cells ERK activation is downstream of p21Ras activation, this further correlates ERK activation with cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Indeed, pre-treatment of the BaF3-GM-CSFR $\alpha\beta$ cells with the MEK inhibitor PD098059 resulted in a delayed onset of cPLA₂ phosphorylation similar to the effect observed using this inhibitor in human neutrophils (Fig. 2). As previously alluded to, the ERKs are able to directly phosphorylate cPLA₂ in vitro [28], and both p38 and ERK MAPKs have been reported to mediate cPLA₂ phosphorylation in vivo [32,33]. As GM-CSF activates both p38 and ERKs, and inhibition of either one kinase did not result in complete inhibition of cPLA₂ phosphorylation, we reasoned that both kinases might act redundantly in phosphorylating cPLA₂. However, treatment of human neutrophils with the combination of both the MEK inhibitor PD098059 and the p38 MAPK inhibitor SB203580 proved to be toxic for these cells (data not shown). To circumvent this problem, we utilized BaF3 cells stably expressing GM-CSFR α and wild type or tyrosine mutants of human β c to further investigate this hypothesis. This approach has avoided adding combinations of potentially toxic or aspecific pharmacological inhibitors. We have previously shown that mutation of both tyrosine 577 and tyrosine 612 of human β c completely blocks ERK1/ERK2 phosphorylation in response to GM-CSF stimulation of BaF3 cells [20]. Although mutation of single tyrosines in β c had only a minor effect on GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation, the double mutant, β c577/612, clearly showed a partial inhibition of cPLA₂ phosphorylation. This inhibition was comparable to the inhibition observed using the MEK inhibitor, suggesting that the inhibiting effect of β c577/612 is indeed caused by the lack of ERK activation by this mutant receptor. Stimulation of these BaF3- β c577/612 with mouse IL-3 resulted in a rapid cPLA₂ phosphorylation comparable to the phosphorylation observed in the GM-CSF-stimulated BaF3- β c WT cells. Thus, the lack of GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation was not the result of an aspecific defect in signalling in these cells. We treated BaF3- β c577/612 cells with various kinase inhibitors to investigate the identity of further signals regulating cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Although inhibition of PI-3K or Src kinases had no effect, pre-treatment of these cells with staurosporine had a stimulatory effect on cPLA₂ phosphorylation. We have previously reported that staurosporine has a priming effect on human eosinophils and causes an enhancement of the opsonized zymosan-induced respiratory burst [43]. Moreover, it has been reported that staurosporine augments the arachidonic acid, thromboxane and LTC₄ production, which are events downstream of cPLA₂ activation [44,45]. Interestingly, pre-treatment of the cells with PKC inhibitor GF109203X, which specifically blocks PKC α , β and γ isoforms, had no effect on cPLA₂ phosphorylation. This suggests that staurosporine exerts its effect through the inhibition of other PKC isoforms or, alternatively, causes cPLA₂ activation in a manner independent of PKC inhibition.

In line with our hypothesis that GM-CSF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation is mediated by both ERK and p38 MAPK pathways, we observed a complete inhibition of cPLA₂ phos-

phorylation when BaF3- β c577/612 cells were pre-treated with SB203580. We conclude that upon GM-CSF stimulation, multiple signalling pathways act in parallel to phosphorylate cPLA₂. One of which is a pathway acting through the activation of ERK kinases, while an additional pathway involves the activation of p38 MAPK. It thus appears that the ERK and p38 MAP kinases have a redundant function in the phosphorylation of cPLA₂ in vivo. The mechanism by which a receptor mediates cPLA₂ phosphorylation appears to depend on its ability to activate either one of these kinases. For example, TNF α -induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation can be completely blocked using the pharmacological inhibitor SB203580 [33]. We have demonstrated that TNF does not induce ERK activation in human neutrophils [36], and therefore ERK activation cannot play a role in the TNF-induced cPLA₂ phosphorylation. Similarly, STZ-mediated cPLA₂ activation is dependent on the activation of the ERK MAP kinases, as is STZ-induced PAF release [36]. However, the STZ-mediated PAF response was only partially inhibited when neutrophils were first primed with GM-CSF [36]. Possibly, the GM-CSF-mediated p38 activation short-circuits the requirement of ERK activation in cPLA₂ phosphorylation.

We conclude that cPLA₂ phosphorylation can be mediated by both p38 and ERK MAP kinases, and the mechanism by which a receptor mediates cPLA₂ phosphorylation ultimately depends on the ability of a specific receptor to stimulate the different MAP kinase family members.

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