Glycoconjugate Nanoribbons from the Self-Assembly of Carbohydrate–Peptide Block Molecules for Controllable Bacterial Cell Cluster Formation

Yong-beom Lim,† Somi Park,† Eunji Lee,† Haemi Jeong,† Ja-Hyoung Ryu,† Myeong Sup Lee,‡ and Myongsoo Lee*,†

Center for Supramolecular Nano-Assembly and Department of Chemistry, and Department of Biochemistry, Yonsei University, Seoul 120-749, Korea

Received January 24, 2007; Revised Manuscript Received March 20, 2007

We demonstrate here the rational design strategy to control the length of 1-dimensional β-sheet peptide nanoassemblies. We synthesized the β-sheet peptides with attached coils and carbohydrates. We reasoned that the bulkiness of the coils affects the final length of the assembled β-sheet peptide nanostructures because of the steric crowding effect. The nanostructure from the peptide with a small and linear coil was several micrometers long, whereas the one from the peptide with a high-volume-fraction dendritic coil was only about 150 nm long. For potential biological applications of the peptide nanoassemblies, we investigated the interactions of the carbohydrate-coated nanoassemblies with E. coli cells containing cognate binding proteins. The results showed that both of the nanoassemblies could immobilize and/or aggregate bacterial cells. The degrees of immobilization were similar for both nanoassemblies; however, only the long nanoribbon was shown to induce the formation of bacterial clusters.

Introduction

Self-assembly, a powerful approach for the construction of novel supramolecular architectures, is mediated by noncovalent interactions, including hydrogen bonds, electrostatic interactions, and hydrophobic interactions. Block molecules that mimic lipid amphiphility have been promising scaffolds for self-assembly into nanometer-sized objects with desired functions. Depending on the molecular structure of the amphiphilic components, it has been possible to construct various supramolecular architectures, such as spherical micelles, vesicles, fibers, and nanotubes.

Peptide-based self-assembling systems are increasingly used for the construction of supramolecular structures. Peptide-based assemblies, compared to organic or polymeric molecules, have advantages due to the biocompatibility and wide structural diversity of amino acids. The driving forces underlying the peptide assemblies are mostly α-helical, β-sheet, and hydrophobic interactions. Among them, the β-sheet mediated assemblies are suitable for generating 1D fiber-like nanostructures in which the peptides stack on top of each other. In addition to the studies on naturally occurring β-sheet peptides such as β-amyloid peptides, artificially designed sequences have been developed. The design principles for the artificial peptide sequences have mostly been the alternating placement of positively charged, hydrophobic, and negatively charged amino acids. Attraction between oppositely charged amino acids and solvophobic interactions between hydrophobic amino acids are the driving force for the proper β-sheet hydrogen bonding arrangement.

* To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: mslee@yonsei.ac.kr.
† Center for Supramolecular Nano-Assembly and Department of Chemistry.
‡ Department of Biochemistry.

In many examples of β-sheet peptides, the interaction between pre-assembled nanostructures resulted in the formation of a hierarchy of supramolecular structures, tapes (single-molecule thick), ribbons (double tapes), fibrils (stacks of ribbons), and fibers (entwined fibrils). Fibril or fiber formation is induced by lateral aggregation of the tapes or the ribbons and is sometimes advantageous when considering the formation of peptide hydrogels. However, discrete nanostructures with uniform diameter are necessary for many biological applications that need soluble and controllable materials. It has been reported that the attachment of the nonionic polymer poly(ethylene glycol) (PEG) to the β-sheet peptide could inhibit the formation of lateral aggregates. It might also be necessary to control the length of the peptide nanostructures for some specific applications, but this has not been reported to our knowledge.

In this communication, we synthesized peptide-based block molecules that consist of a functional carbohydrate block, a coil block, and a β-sheet peptide block. We anticipated that the block molecule with a relatively small and linear coil block would form long nanostructures, whereas the molecule with a bulky dendritic coil block would form short nanostructures because of steric crowding. It has been shown, for example, in our rod–coil self-assembly system, that the bulkiness or the relative volume fraction of the rod and coil segments affects the final size and morphology of the nanostructures. The hydrophilic carbohydrate and coil blocks would prevent the formation of lateral aggregates as well. The resulting nanostructures are discrete and coated with the functional carbohydrates. We investigated the interaction of the β-sheet peptide nanostructures with the bacterial cells.

Experimental Section

Materials. Fmoc-amino acids with standard protection groups and Rink amide MBHA resin were purchased from Novabiochem. For the
construction of pDsRed, the DsRed2 gene was amplified from pDsRed2-1 (clontech) by PCR using a pair of primers (5'-CCGGGATCCCAAGAGGATATACATGATTGCCCTCTCCGGGAAAC-3' and 5'-CCGGAAATCTTCAGGACAGGGTTGGG-3'). The amplified fragment was restriction digested with BamHI and EcoRI. The GFPuv gene was removed from pGFPuv (clontech) using BamHI and EcoRI, and the PCR-amplified DsRed2 fragment was inserted instead. E. coli ORN178-GFP and ORN208-RFP strains were prepared by transforming ORN178 and ORN208 strains with pGFPuv and pDsRed, respectively.

Synthesis of GP1 and GP2. Detailed synthetic schemes and methods are given in Supporting Information. Briefly, the block peptides were synthesized on Rink amide MBHA resin using the Fmoc solid-phase peptide/organic synthesis protocol. After the construction of the block peptides on the resin, they were cleaved from the resin by treatment with cleavage cocktail (trifluoroacetic acid/ethanedithiol/thioanisole; 95:2.5:2.5) for 3 h and were triturated with tert-butyl methyl ether. The block peptides were purified by reverse-phase HPLC (water/acetonitrile with 0.1% TFA). The molecular weight was confirmed by MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry.

TEM and AFM. For TEM measurements, 3 μL of an aqueous solution of sample was placed onto a holey carbon-coated copper grid, and 3 μL of a 2% (w/w) uranyl acetate solution was added for negative stain. The sample was deposited for 1 min, and the excess solution was wicked off by filter paper. The dried specimen was observed with a Nanoscope IIIa instrument (Digital Instruments). AFM scans were taken at 512 x 512 pixel resolution with setpoint at 0.8–1 V and scanning speed at 1–2 Hz.

E. coli Motility Inhibition and Agglutination Assay. An overnight culture of E. coli strain ORN178 was diluted to a concentration of 5 x 10^7 cells/mL with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS). Two microliters of the E. coli solution was placed onto a glass slide, and 2 μL of serially diluted solutions of the nanoribbons in water were added. The sample was covered with a coverslip, and a layer of rubber cement was placed around the edges. E. coli was observed with a Nikon Eclipse TE2000-U inverted fluorescence microscope equipped with a DXM1200C digital camera. For the motility inhibition assay, time-lapse images obtained for each concentration of nanoribbons were analyzed using Adobe Premiere software, and the ratio of nonmobile and mobile cells was calculated. The percent motility inhibition was expressed as (number of nonmobile cells/number of total cells) x 100. The agglutination index (AI) was calculated from 10 random fields of microscopic images (920 μm x 690 μm), where the number of cells in close contact were counted and averaged.

Results and Discussion

Design and Self-Assembly of Block Peptides. We designed block peptides that consist of a carbohydrate mannose block, a coil block, and a β-sheet peptide assembly block (Figure 1a). Glycopeptide 1 (GP1) has a small and linear coil block and glycopeptide 2 (GP2) a bulky dendritic coil block. We anticipated that increasing the volume fraction occupied by the carbohydrate and coil block relative to the peptide block would interfere with the repetitive β-sheet growth of the peptide block because of steric crowding, thereby resulting in the premature termination of nanostructure growth. The molecules were synthesized using solid-phase peptide/organic synthesis methods. The artificially designed peptide sequence (FKFEFKFE) is known to form stable β-sheets in solution. Molecular dynamics simulations have shown that the bilayered ribbon is the most stable structure of the peptide.11

The formation of supramolecular assembly was investigated by circular dichroism (CD), infrared spectroscopy (IR), dynamic light scattering (DLS), transmission electron microscopy (TEM), and atomic force microscopy (AFM). The CD spectrum of GP1 showed a pronounced minimum at 215 nm, indicative of β-sheet formation (Figure 1b). IR and DLS data revealed that GP1 forms an antiparallel β-sheet and self-assembles well in solution (Supporting information). Figure 2a shows a micrograph obtained from a 0.01 wt % aqueous solution of GP1 cast onto a TEM grid. The negatively stained sample with uranyl acetate clearly shows 1D objects with a uniform width of 5 nm. Most of the strands have lengths on the order of micrometers. We were not able to exactly measure the length of the GP1 nanoribbon as it extended beyond the boundary of the TEM image at this high-resolution image. The fully extended molecular length of an 8-residue peptide in β-sheet conformation is estimated to be ~2.8 nm from molecular modeling, and thus, the 5-nm width is consistent with an antiparallel packing of peptide molecules. An examination of the 1D structures by AFM revealed their average height of 1.7 nm, indicating a ribbon-like shape (Figure 2b). The 1.7 nm height is comparable to the calculated height of a β-sheet bilayer stacked in a face-to-face manner, presumably driven by hydrophobic and π–π stacking interactions of the phenylalanine residues. On the basis of these results, the peptide molecules can be considered to self-assemble into 1D ribbon-like aggregates with dimensions of 5 x 1.7 nm and lengths of several micrometers (Figure 2c). The inner core of the nanoribbons is composed of bilayered β-sheet peptide domains, and the outer edges contain mannoses and triethylene glycol segments. Within the core, the peptide segments are stacked perpendicular to the long ribbon axis with an antiparallel β-sheet arrangement.

The CD spectrum of GP2 showed that the β-sheet interaction is much weakened, indicating that the bulky dendritic block interferes with β-sheet packing and growth (Figure 1b). The IR spectrum of GP2 revealed that antiparallel β-sheet structure coexists with some other secondary structures, and the DLS
spectrum showed that GP2 self-assembles well in solution (Supporting information). TEM investigations of GP2 revealed the formation of discrete 1D objects 7 nm in width (Figure 2a). The length distribution of GP2 nanoribbons was from ca. 10 nm to ca. 200 nm. The decrease in length can be interpreted as follows: The steric crowding in the dendritic coil resulted in the premature termination of ribbon growth. The increase in width is in agreement with the fact that the molecular length of GP2 is longer than that of GP1. AFM revealed discrete nanostructures with an average height of 2.3 nm (Supporting Information). The combination of spectroscopic and microscopic data leads to the conclusion that GP2 self-assembles into discrete nanoribbons with finite dimensions of 7 \times 2.3 nm and a length of \sim 150 nm.

Interaction of the Peptide Nanoribbons with E. coli Cells.

To investigate interactions between the mannose-coated nanoribbons and the cells, we chose an E. coli strain with mannose-binding adhesin FimH in its type 1 pili (ORN178).\textsuperscript{22} The type 1 pili are filamentous proteinaceous appendages produced by many members of gram-negative bacteria. The interactions would occur in a multivalent manner because both interacting partners have multiple binding molecules. It is well known that the association in multivalent binding mode is significantly tighter than that in monovalent binding mode.\textsuperscript{23–25} To investigate the effect of the nanoribbons on the cognate E. coli strain ORN178, the nanoribbons were added to E. coli, and the effect on E. coli was observed by optical microscope.

As the concentration increased, the bacteria gradually lost their motility, and complete inhibition of motility took place at 2.5 \mu M for both nanoribbons (Figure 3a). GP1 had a slightly higher degree of motility inhibition than GP2. However, the remarkable difference between GP1 and GP2 was found with

Figure 2. Morphologies of nanoribbons. (a) Negatively stained transmission electron micrographs of GP1 and GP2. Inset in the GP2 image: Length distribution of GP2 nanoribbons. The scale bars represent 100 nm. (b) AFM image of GP1. Inset: Height information of GP1 nanoribbons. (c) Assembly model of the GP1 nanoribbon.

Figure 3. Effect of mannose-coated nanoribbons on bacterial motility and agglutination. (a) Bacterial motility inhibition assay. Each value represents the mean \pm SD (n = 3). (b) Quantitation of the degree of agglutination as represented by the agglutination index (AI). Each value represents the mean \pm SD from two independent experiments. Control; Man, GP1, and GP2 concentrations were 200 \mu M in terms of mannose residues.
E. coli agglutination ability. When the concentration of GP1 reached 100 μM, some bacteria began to form densely populated bacterial clusters (Figure 3b) in motility inhibition and agglutination. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

**References and Notes**


BM0700901