The Structures of Secretory IgA in complex with *Streptococcus pyogenes* M4 and human

CD89 provide insights on mucosal host-pathogen interactions

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ABSTRACT

Immunoglobulin (Ig) A functions as monomeric IgA in the serum and Secretory (S) IgA in mucosal secretions. Host IgA Fc receptors (FcαRs), including human FcαR1/CD89, mediate IgA effector functions; however human pathogen *Streptococcus pyogenes* has evolved surface-protein virulence factors, including M4, that also engage the CD89 binding site on IgA. Despite human mucosa serving as a reservoir for pathogens, SIgA interactions with CD89 and M4 remain poorly understood. Here we report cryo-EM structures of M4-SIgA and CD89-SIgA complexes, which unexpectedly reveal different SIgA-binding stoichiometry for M4 and CD89. Structural data, supporting experiments, and modeling indicate that copies of SIgA bound to *S. pyogenes* M4 will adopt similar orientations on the bacterium surface and leave one host FcαR binding site open. Results suggest unappreciated functional consequences associated with SIgA binding to host and bacterial FcαRs relevant to understanding host-microbe co-evolution, IgA effector functions and to improving the outcomes of group A *Streptococcus* infection.

INTRODUCTION

Immunoglobulin (Ig) A is an antibody class expressed in mammals, where it functions in monomeric (m) and secretory (S) forms; the mIgA is the predominant form in serum whereas SIgA is the most abundant antibody present in mucosal secretions, where it protects the host epithelium against microbes and toxins[1]. Both forms of IgA contain fragment antigen-binding (Fab) and fragment crystallizable (Fc) regions. The Fab is responsible for binding to antigens, whereas the Fc region interacts with other components of the immune system, including IgA Fc Receptors (FcαRs) such as CD89 (a.k.a. FcαR1), that are expressed on the surface of some immune system cells and can promote downstream effector functions such as phagocytosis and respiratory burst[2].

CD89-initiated effector functions are thought to occur when multiple copies of the receptor bind to multiple IgA on IgA-antigen complexes, promoting clustering and cross-linking of the receptors and associated cell signaling through FcR γ-chain complexes[3]. In turn, binding to free IgA does not promote crosslinking has been proposed to transduce anti-inflammatory signals instead[4]. CD89 effector functions have been studied primarily in the context of mIgA, consistent with the observation that cells expressing CD89 are more prevalent in the serum than mucosa. However, phagocyte populations also sample and/or patrol mucosal surfaces and SIgA has been associated with CD89-expressing polymorphonuclear leukocytes (PMN) activity in the presence of accessory molecule Mac-1 (CD11b/CD18)[5]. Whereas the binding of host FcαRs is likely to elicit an effector immune response, IgA can also be bound by bacterial proteins, for example, M4 (a.k.a. Arp4) and M22 (a.k.a Sir22) from *Streptococcus pyogenes,* the β-protein from group B streptococci (GBS), and SSL7 from *Staphylococcus aureus*, interactions that may allow pathogenic bacteria to evade host IgA responses[6–10]. Despite significance, the functional consequences of IgA interactions with host FcαRs and bacterial proteins, sometimes referred to as decoys, remains poorly understood.

The monomeric and secretory forms of IgA that mediate host interactions with antigens,

FcαRs, and bacterial proteins adopt at least two distinct molecular structures. The mIgA contains

two IgA heavy chains and two light chains, resulting in two Fabs and one Fcα. The Fcα contains

two copies of immunoglobulin constant domains, Cα2 and Cα3, and adopts a rigid structure linked

to two Fabs. Fcα contains two FcαR binding sites, one located at each Cα2 and Cα3 interface

(Fig. 1a). The Cα2/Cα3 interdomain has been recognized as a "hot spot" for host FcαRs and

bacterial IgA-binding proteins[6,11,12]. SIgA is polymeric and is typically composed of two mIgA that

assemble with one joining-chain (JC) to form dimeric (d) IgA, which is bound by the polymeric Ig-

receptor (pIgR) ectodomain, called secretory component (SC). The structures of dIgA and SIgA,

reported in 2020, revealed two Fcα connected through four C-terminal motifs called tailpieces

(Tps) and one JC, which contacts each heavy chain uniquely [13–15]. This results in two structurally

unique Fcαs that can be designated as Fc_{AB} (Fcα containing heavy chains A and B) and Fc_{CD}

(Fcα containing heavy chains C and D). Together, Fc_{AB} and Fc_{CD} adopt an asymmetric, bent and

tilted conformation with distinct concave and convex sides. In SIgA, the SC, which comprises five

Ig-like domains (D1-D5), is bound toward one side and protrudes from the center of the molecule

contributing further asymmetry. Overall, the SIgA conformation is predicted to constrain the

possible positions that Fabs can adopt and leave two FcαR binding sites accessible (Fig. 1b).

Notably, these two sites are located on the convex side, one on Fc_{AB} and one on $Fc_{CD,}$ whereas

sites on the concave side are occluded by the JC and the SC. Thus, SIgA is thought to have the

same number of accessible FcαR binding sites as mIgA but instead of two sites on one Fcα that

are horizontally oriented relative to each other, it has one site on two Fcαs that are vertically

oriented relative to each other (Fig. 1) [13]. The functional significance of these differences remains

a topic of investigation; however, it is notable that two receptor binding sites have been

evolutionary preserved in both mIgA and SIgA.

Figure 1. Structures of mIgA, SIgA, and schematic of M4. (a) The structure of mIgA lacking Fabs (Fcα; PDB code 1OW0 with CD89 removed). (b) The structure of human SIgA lacking Fabs (PDB code 6UE7). Structures are colored according to the key; one Cα2 and one Cα3 domain are labeled along with Fc$_{AB}$ and Fc$_{CD}$. The SIgA tailpieces (Tps) are labeled and indicated with a black arrow and the FcαR binding sites are indicated by orange arrows. (c) Schematic of M4 depicted attached to the GAS cell wall through a C-terminal proline-glycine-threonine-serine (PGTS)-rich domain and a cell-wall-associated domain, which are followed by an ectodomain that includes three C-repeats, an IgA-binding region and an N-terminal hypervariable domain (HVR).

Both mIgA and SIgA can be bound by group A streptococcus (GAS; *Streptococcus*

pyogenes)[16]. GAS has long been considered a significant human pathogen that continues to be

one of the top ten causes of mortality worldwide from infectious diseases[17]. The clinical

manifestations of this Gram-positive bacterium are wide-ranging and diverse, encompassing both

mild and common local infections, such as tonsillitis (a.k.a. Strep throat) and impetigo, as well as

life-threating systemic invasions like toxic shock and sepsis[18,19]. While non-invasive disease has

~ 1000-fold higher incidence than the invasive disease, approximately 1.78 million new invasive

infections are reported each year and are associated over 160,000 deaths[17,20]. GAS

asymptomatic carriers are also common, with a prevalence of 12% among healthy children[21].

Typically, invasive infections encounter mIgA in the serum, whereas non-invasive, region

infections encounter SIgA originating from mucosal secretions (e.g., in the upper respiratory tract)

as well as mIgA that perfuses inflamed tissues. Exceptions to this include GAS skin infections

such as impetigo where likely, only mIgA would be encountered, and (asymptomatic) GAS

colonization of mucosal secretions where inflammation is limited and SIgA is expected to

dominate.

The most extensively studied GAS virulence factors are a family of serotype-specific

proteins called M proteins, which include IgA binding proteins M4 and M22. M proteins adopt a

coiled-coil structure that protrudes up to 60 nm from the bacterium cell and can bind a variety of

host extracellular matrix and serum proteins[22,23]. Variability in the M protein ectodomain is

correlated with the ability to bind specific host factors; for example, some M proteins bind IgG,

some IgA, some fibrinogen, and some other host factors[24,25]. These interactions are thought to

contribution to the bacterium's virulence primarily by modulating the host immune response (e.g.,

limiting phagocytosis).

M4 and M22 are found in GAS strains M4 and M22, respectively, both of which can bind

IgA and have widespread global distribution; M4 ranked in the top five most common serotypes

identified in a systemic review of global GAS distribution[8,9,26,27]. Mutational analysis of both M4

and M22 revealed a 29-residue, minimal IgA-binding region located within the ectodomain with

similar, but not identical, sequences[9] (Fig. 1c). M22 also binds IgG at a site overlapping with the

IgA binding site[8]. Despite significance, how M proteins interact with host ligands remains unclear.

Existing structural data includes crystal structures of an M1 fragment containing the HVR and a

repetitive sequence element within the ectodomain and the HVR of M2, M22, M28, and M49,

none of which detail the structure of the IgA-binding region or IgA-M protein interactions [28,29].

Published analysis indicated that M4 and M22 binding to IgA is dependent on residues located at

the $C\alpha2/C\alpha3$ interface, including residues bound by host CD89 and *S. aureus* SSL7[2,6,7]. The

overlapping interface of M4 and CD89 suggested that M4 may interfere with IgA effector functions

and studies suggested that M4 protein can block respiratory burst in neutrophils *in vitro*[11].

However, the role of M4 (and CD89) in disease pathogenesis remains poorly understood and

published studies have focused on mIgA despite mucosal routes of entry.

To investigate how M proteins interact with SIgA and how those interactions compare to

host FcαRs, we determined two Cryo-EM structures, one of SIgA in complex with M4 and one of

SIgA in complex with CD89. Together structures indicate that M4 and CD89 share only a subset

of IgA interface residues and bind through different angles of approach. This leads to differences

in binding stoichiometry, with M4 occupying only one FcαR binding site on SIgA, while leaving

the other site sterically accessible.

RESULTS

Structure determination of the SIgA-M4 complex

In order to better understand how bacterial virulence factors such as M4 engage SIgA, we

designed an M4 expression construct encoding the ectodomain (residues 1-314) and combined

resulting protein with purified, recombinant human SIgA1 to create an SIgA-M4 complex. Using

this complex, we determined the SIgA-M4 cryo-EM structure to an average resolution of 3.1 Å

(FSC=0.143) (Fig. 2a). Map quality and resolution were sufficient to refine the positions of main

chain and side chain atoms for the majority of residues in the complex with the exception of Fab

residues, which were disordered (Fig. S1).   The final structure included a single M4 dimer bound

to one SIgA; M4 residues 45-73, which include the entire known IgA-binding domain, were built

whereas the positions of residues more distal from the binding site were poorly resolved or

disordered, likely due to the inherent flexibility of the M4 dimer's extended, coiled-coil structure.

SIgA is superimposable with a previously published human SIgA1 structure with a RMSD of

0.708[14].

The M4 adopts an α-helical, parallel coiled-coil homodimer as observed for other M

proteins[24]. The M4 fragment termini are stabilized by hydrophobic interactions including two ideal

heptads, characterized by having Tyr, Ile, or Leu, at both *a* and *d* positions[30]. Hydrophobic

residues at the *a* and *d* positions (Y48, L51, I69, L72) are packed against each other and stabilize

the coiled-coil (Fig. 2b and 2c). We also observed polar interactions stabilizing the center of the

M4 fragment, including E54 which forms a hydrogen bond with N55, and Y65 which forms a

hydrogen bond with Q66 (Fig. 2c). A subset of residues between P46-K68 in both helices contact

SIgA, with one (helix-a) forming the majority of contacts with the IgA heavy chain and the other

(helix-b) using equivalent residues to contact solvent and a smaller interface with IgA. Prior

studies, including mutational analysis, identified M4 residues 45-73 as the minimal IgA binding

region[9]; our observations indicate that residues 45, 70, 71, and 73 contribute indirectly by

stabilizing the M4 coiled-coil dimer.

The structure of the SIgA-M4 interface

Despite the reported accessibility of two $Fc\alpha R$ binding sites on SIgA, our structure reveals M4

bound only to Fc_{AB}[13]. The M4 interface includes 11 residues on the $C\alpha3$ domain of both heavy

chain-A (HC-A) and heavy chain-B (HC-B) (Fig. 3), with a total buried surface area of 1000 $Å^2$.

Participating IgA residues are predominantly located along one β-strand in HC-A (F443, T444,

Q445, T447), forming hydrogen bonds with M4 helix-a residues R49 and E54. HC-A E389 and

R346 also reach out to interact with M4 helix-a residues Q47 and D57 respectively, and HC-A

D449 forms a salt bridge with R59 on helix-b of M4. Additionally, HC-A Tp residue K454 may

mediate longer-range electrostatic interactions (e.g. 4.5Å) with M4 helix-b residues D67 and E70.

The M4 interface with IgA HC-B includes only residues S356, E357 and A360, which form

hydrogen bonds with Q66 of helix-b and R61, K68 of helix-a respectively. All IgA interface

residues are conserved in human IgA subtypes (IgA1, IgA2m1, IgA2m2) and most are conserved

in mouse IgA, with the exception of R346 and L441(Fig. S2). Mouse IgA is not known to bind M4

thus R346 and L441 appear to be especially important for M4 binding and structurally equivalent

residues in mouse IgA, P341 and M436 respectively, do not appear to support the interaction [31].

Comparing M4 and M22 sequences, we find seven out of 11 IgA contact residues are identical

and the other four residues are similar (Fig. 2b), consistent with prior analysis that identified similar

IgA binding motifs in M4 and M22[9].

Figure 2. SIgA-M4 Structure. (a) The Cryo-EM structure of the M4 fragment (residues 45-73) in complex with human SIgA is shown as a cartoon with partially transparent map in two orientations. The model is colored according to the key, M4 is labeled, and Fabs are disordered. (b) Sequence alignment of the IgA binding regions of M4 and M22 with their heptad registrations shown above; numbering corresponds to both sequences and M4 residues interacting with IgA are depicted in bold. (c) Cartoon representation showing interchain interactions between M4 helix a and b. Polar interactions are shown as dotted lines.

Mutagenesis confirms the key binding residues on M4

Although side chain density was apparent in the structure, the N and C termini of the M4 coiled-coil were not resolved and therefore to validate residue assignments and investigate the contributions of individual M4 residues on SIgA binding, we conducted structure-based mutational analysis and surface plasmon resonance (SPR) binding assays. Based on the pairwise interactions between M4 and SIgA (Fig. 3b) and pairwise interactions between M4 helix-a and helix-b, we made three individual M4 point mutations Q47A, R49A, K68A. A subset of residues, including helix-b Q66, are positioned such that side chain atoms could interact with both IgA and the other helix (e.g., helix-a); these were not mutated due to the possibility of disrupting the M4 dimer. All mutated M4 variants behaved equivalent to the wildtype M4 as assayed by SDS-PAGE and size exclusion elution chromatography (not shown). M4 and mutant variant binding to SIgA were determined by SPR. Sensorgrams revealed lower responses for all M4 mutants when compared to concentration matched wild-type M4, as well as lower dissociation constants (Fig. 3c and Fig. S3). Compared to wild-type M4 (K_D=20 nM), mutant variants R49A (K_D=159 nM) and K68A (K_D=156 nM) exhibited the most pronounce reduction in IgA-binding, consistent with the observation that R49 interacts with one of the human-IgA specific binding site residues, L441. K68 interacts with HC-B, indicating that contacts with both HC-A and HC-B chains are important.

Figure 3. The M4-SIgA interface. (a) Structure of the M4-SIgA interface. The boxed regions are enlarged (1-3) and depict the (1) M4 helix-a interaction with HC-A, (2) M4 helix-b interactions with HC-A, and (3) M4 interactions with HC-B. Black dotted lines indicate potential hydrogen bonds. (b) Polar and hydrophobic interactions between IgA and M4. Asterisks indicate residues contributing to hydrophobic interactions. (c) M4 binding analysis by surface plasmon resonance (SPR). The sensorgram shows the response of M4 (black) and individual M4 point mutants Q47A (green), R49A (yellow), and K68A (blue) binding to immobilized human SIgA1. All analyte concentrations shown are 0.125 uM. Sensorgrams, including a complete concentration series for each analyte, and binding models can be found in Figure S3.

The structure of SIgA-CD89 complex

The unexpected stoichiometry of the SIgA-M4 complex raised the question of how host $Fc\alpha Rs$

bind SIgA. Modeling based on the structure of mIgA in complex with CD89 and SIgA structures

suggested that two CD89 can bind SIgA[14]; however, to verify this possibility, we determined the

Cryo-EM structure of SIgA with the CD89 ectodomain to a resolution of 3.2 Å (Fig. 4a). The

ectodomain of CD89 consists of two immunoglobulin-like domains (D1 and D2) arranged at an

angle of approximately 90 degrees to each other. Map quality and resolution was sufficient to

refine the positions of main chain and side chain atoms for the residues at the interface, while

density in the distal region of CD89, including the second Ig-like domain D2, was of lower

resolution. The refined structure revealed a 2:1 CD89:SIgA binding stoichiometry verifying that

two copies of CD89 can bind both mIgA and SIgA (Fig. 4a). The two copies of CD89 bound to

SIgA are separated by 108Å (distance between the two copies of D2 C-terminal residue T195)

and relative to each other are oriented differently than the two CD89 bound to mIgA for which C-

terminal residues are reportedly spaced by 124Å (Fig. 4a, and Fig. 4c)[2]. Alignment to the mIgA-

CD89 structure revealed superimposable binding sites (RMSD=1.165 at Fc_{AB}; RMSD=1.121 at

Fc_{CD}) on $C\alpha2$ and $C\alpha3$ [2]. Consistent with the mIgA-CD89 structure, the CD89 D1 BC loop, the D

strand, the DE loop, and the FG loop (Ig-like domain nomenclature) contacted a total of 19 IgA

residues, including three $C\alpha2$ residues and 16 $C\alpha3$ residues, burying a total of 1656 $Å^2$ (Fig. 4b).

CD89 and M4 share overlapping but distinct SIgA binding sites

Comparison of the CD89 and M4 binding footprints on SIgA revealed five shared interface

residues (E389, L441, F443, T444, Q445) located on the $C\alpha3$ domain. These residues are among

those included in the $C\alpha2/C\alpha3$ "hot spot" for receptor and bacterial protein binding. CD89 binds

additional residues located toward and on $C\alpha2$, whereas M4 contacts only $C\alpha3$ and binds

residues closer to the Tps and JC, including R346, T447, D449 from HC-A and S356, E357, A360

Figure 4. SIgA-CD89 structure. (a) The Cryo-EM structure of CD89 in complex with human SIgA is shown as a cartoon with partially transparent map in two orientations. The antigen binding fragments (Fabs) are disordered. The two Ig-like domains of CD89 are labeled D1, D2. CD89 D1 contacted a total of 19 IgA residues, including Cα2 residues L256, L257, L258 and Cα3 residues E348, R382, L384, S387, E389, M433, H436, E437, A438, L439, P440, L441, A442, F443, T444, Q445. (b) Alignment of the mIgA-CD89 crystal structure (PDB: 1OW0) to the Fc$_{AB}$-CD89 interface (left) and Fc$_{CD}$-CD89 interface (right) on SIgA-CD89. The BC, DE, FG loops are labeled on Fc$_{AB}$-CD89. (c) Crystal structure of CD89 in complex with human Fcα (PDB code: 1ow0). All models are colored according to the keys. The C-termini of CD89 D2 domains are indicated by red spheres, which on CD89-SIgA are 108Å apart.

from HC-B (Fig. 5a). CD89 and M4's distinct binding footprints and structures direct CD89 D2 C-

terminal residues away from SIgA and direct the M4 fragment C-terminal residues (and likely the

rest of the M4 coiled-coil), alongside Fc_{AB} in a line near parallel to Cα3 (Fig. 5b). Noted differences

contribute to the distinct stoichiometry of CD89 versus M4 binding to SIgA. In the case of M4, the

inclusion of S356, E357, A360 and R346 in the M4 binding interface, together with its extended

coiled-coiled topology, enforce the surprising 1M4:1SIgA stoichiometry because the steric

accessibility of these four residues and neighboring residues differs between Fc_{AB} and Fc_{CD}. In

Fc_{AB}, M4 can bind S356, E357, A360 and R346 with residues on both helices and extend the

coiled-coiled over neighboring residues and toward the Tps. In Fc_{CD}, S356, E357, A360 and R346

remain solvent accessible, but JC loop residues 24-32 bind the adjacent region, blocking the path

occupied by M4 (helix-b residues 69-72) and therefore occluding binding (Fig. 5b). The JC loop

that occludes M4 binding does not interfere with CD89 binding on Fc_{CD}, implying that sterically,

CD89 and M4 ectodomains could bind to the same copy of SIgA, with M4 binding Fc_{AB} and CD89

binding Fc_{CD} (Fig. 5c); however, whether this would occur in the context of bacterial and host cell

interactions remains to be determined.

Figure 5. M4 and CD89 binding site comparison and modeling. (a) Comparison of M4 and CD89 binding site on Fcα shown in two orientations. Fcα is shown as ribbons and binding residues are shown as stick representation. The 11 residues bound by M4 are shown in pink and yellow and the 19 residues bound by CD89 are shown in orange and yellow. In all panels five shared binding site residues, E389, L441, F443, T444, Q445, are colored yellow. (b) M4 modeled at the second site (Fc$_{CD}$; blue) is partially overlapping with JC (magenta), indicating a steric clash. (c) Model of M4 (pink) and CD89 (orange) bound SIgA. CD89 bound to the Fc$_{CD}$ site does not clash with SIgA residues.

DISCUSSION

IgA is associated with diverse effector functions mediated by monomeric and secretory forms. Both forms have been shown to bind human CD89 and GAS; yet, interactions with SIgA and potential differences between mIgA and SIgA engagement are poorly understood, limiting knowledge of IgA effector functions and host-pathogen interplay[16,32]. Host FcαRs and bacterial IgA-binding proteins have long been appreciated to bind mIgA through the conserved "hot spot", however only recently were hot spot residues shown to be accessible on SIgA[6,11,12]. Our work demonstrates that CD89 and M4 (and likely M22) can engage SIgA through just five common residues and exhibit distinct binding footprints and stoichiometry, implying that while the hot spot is conserved on mIgA and SIgA, its accessibility to different receptors and proteins is variable and has potential to influence functional outcomes and provide unique selective advantages for both the host and the pathogen.

It is notable that both mIgA and SIgA can bind two copies of CD89 *in vitro,* but that the spacing and orientation of bound CD89 are different in CD89-mIgA and CD89-SIgA complexes. Earlier reports suggested that the 124Å distance separating the CD89 D2 domains is too large to initiate signaling (when two CD89 bind the same copy of mIgA). This may also be the case for SIgA, in which we find the two copies of CD89 to be separated by 108Å (previously modeled to 99Å apart), although additional studies are needed to evaluate CD89 function in a host-cell membrane [33]. If this is the case, then CD89 signaling will occur when copies of CD89 bind adjacent IgA on IgA-antigen complexes. We envision that each monomeric/polymeric form of IgA (and its secretory forms) may provide a unique set of CD89 binding sites, each with different accessibility and each oriented differently relative to bound antigen and relative to copies of CD89 on the cell membrane[2]. This, in turn, may influence, CD89 clustering, potential for signaling, and effector functions. Speculatively, this provides an explanation for how different forms of IgA in different location (e.g. serum or mucosa) may elicit different outcomes upon encountering CD89,

251   or perhaps other FcαRs such as human Fcα/μR, and why additional factors (e.g. Mac-1) might

252   be involved in SIgA-CD89 dependent signaling[5,34].

253   Whereas mIgA and SIgA share the same number of CD89 binding sites, this does not

appear to be the case for M4 (and presumably, M22) since the JC, which occludes M4 binding to

SIgA Fc$_{CD}$, is not present in mIgA. Because differences in mIgA and SIgA engagement may

signify different functional outcomes from host-GAS interactions, we modeled the M4 structure

onto Fcα and tested soluble M4 binding to mIgA using SPR. Modeling verified the steric

accessibility of two M4 binding sites and SPR experiments revealed similar dissociation constants,

~15nM and 20nM, for soluble M4 binding to mIgA and SIgA, respectively (Fig. S5). This suggests

that the two M4 binding sites on mIgA are molecularly equivalent to the single site on SIgA. While

we cannot completely rule out the possibility that the unliganded IgA Tp, which is absent from Fcα

structures, contributes to M4-mIgA binding in some way, its inclusion in our SPR experiments did

not markedly alter binding constants. These observations are consistent with publications

reporting similar affinities for M22 binding to mIgA and SIgA, and those reporting similar levels of

mIgA and SIgA binding to GAS cultures[16,35]. While M4 may share molecular interfaces with mIgA

and SIgA, the binding of two copies of M4 to one mIgA could enhance the avidity of IgA-GAS

interactions, effectively strengthening the interaction while also completely blocking CD89-binding

sites. This model is consistent with other reports indicating the M4 binds mIgA with higher affinity

than SIgA and with proposals that M4 functions to block CD89 effector functions (e.g.

phagocytosis)[11]. However, whether each mIgA bound to GAS can in fact be bound by two copies

of M4 *in vivo* remains to be tested; it is also unclear how many CD89- binding sites need to be

blocked to inhibit effector functions.

In the case of SIgA interactions with GAS, the sterically enforced 1:1 M4:SIgA

stoichiometry is intriguing because SIgA adopts an asymmetric structure, which published

modeling predicts will influence the positions of Fabs and accessibility of the SC and FcαR binding

sites[13]; therefore, M4 binding to Fc_{AB} positions SIgA differently than if it could bind to Fc_{CD}. To

visualize this possibility, we used Alphafold2-multimer to model the full-length M4, aligned it to

our M4-SIgA structure and created schematic representations of the complex on a bacterium

surface (Fig. 6)[36]. Assuming that M4 is oriented approximately perpendicular to the outer surface

of the membrane, it would extend ~400 Å, placing the bound SIgA ~ 250 Å from the surface where

one set of Fabs would be directed upward and away from the bacterium surface and the other set

Figure 6. Schematic model of human SIgA binding to M4 on a GAS surface. (a) AlphaFold2-multimer predicted M4 dimer; residues 287-316 are predicted to be disordered and not shown. The IgA-binding region on the predicted model is colored in pink and has an RMSD of 0.640 when aligned to the SIgA-M4 structure. (b) Surface-associated M4, shown in two orientations, binds to one side of SIgA (Fc_{AB}), holding all SIgA at a similar orientation and distance from the bacterium surface while leaving the Fc_{CD} FcαR binding site (red sphere) open. Possible locations of disordered Fabs are shown as grey and green ovals. CD89 binding to M4 bound SIgA is sterically possible and modeled on one copy of the SIgA-M4 complex. SIgA SC domain D2 is indicated by a circle and is exposed near the outermost surface of bacterium.

directed toward the surface. In this model, the SC protrudes upward and away from the bacterium

surface similar to the M4 HVR, and the Fc_{CD} binding site is located closer to the bacterium surface

and approximately 62 Å from M4 (Fig. 6b). Other GAS surface proteins are expected to be shorter

than M4, implying that bound SIgA would occupy a position near the outermost surface of the

bacterium[37]. While information describing M4 flexibility, as well as the density of M4 and other

surface antigens, is needed to fully evaluate the geometric arrangement of SIgA-bound to the

bacterial surface, our data and analysis indicate that the 1:1 M4:SIgA stoichiometry will constrain

the location and orientation of bound SIgA, a possibility that should be considered when exploring

functional outcomes of bacterial-SIgA interactions (Fig. 6).

How might SIgA binding to GAS M4 (or M22) in a constrained orientation influence the

host or microbe? One possibility is that M4 binding to Fc_{AB} impacts the binding of SIgA Fabs to

other antigens on the surface of GAS, such as fibronectin-binding proteins (SFb), Streptococcus

pyogenes cell envelope proteinase (SpyCEP), streptococcal C5a peptidase (Scp)[38]. Bacteria that

can bind SIgA through M4 (or M22), may be able to limit antibody binding to other surface proteins,

although as suggested by others, the relative affinity of antibodies to other surface antigens and

their steric accessibility will likely impact the outcome[39]. Another possibility is that SIgA-bound M4

influences the localization of the bacterium (e.g. in host mucosal secretions). SIgA is covered in

host glycans, which have been implicated in binding to host mucus, lectins, and even microbial

proteins, something we speculate could be promoted by the position of the highly glycosylated

SC[40,41]. Our model predicts the D2 domain of SC, which is the most accessible among the five

domains, would be exposed near the M4 HVR toward the outermost surface of the bacterium

where similar to other SIgA (not bound to GAS), it might mediate interactions with other factors

(Fig. 6)[13].

The 1:1 M4:SIgA stoichiometry also leaves open the possibility that M4-bound SIgA could

bind CD89 (or another FcαR such as Fcα/μR) at the Fc_{CD} site and influence effector functions in

some way (Fig. 6b). The accessibility of these sites on mIgA and SIgA has not been verified on

a bacterial surface and it seems plausible that CD89 activity could be inhibited by occluding just

one of the two CD89-binding sites, especially since our model predicts that the Fc_{CD} site on SIgA-

M4 complexes would be pointed downwards toward the bacterial membrane, potentially occluding

the site. In this case, SIgA may act like mIgA, restricting CD89-dependent effector functions. Still,

we cannot rule out the possibility that a sterically accessible Fc_{CD} binding site and kinetics that

favor CD89 binding might allow one copy of CD89 to bind Fc_{CD} and subsequently, another copy

to compete with M4 for the Fc_{AB} site. Another possibility is that CD89 binding to Fc_{CD} could

promote other copies of CD89 binding to local SIgA (and/or mIgA) that is not bound by M4, but

rather is bound to another antigen with its Fabs.

The idea that IgA and its effectors have provided selective pressure driving GAS evolution

is reasonable given the existence of M4 and M22 virulence factors and prevalence of M4 and

M22 strains, which are abundant and geographically widespread[27,42]. Interestingly, both M4 and

M22 strains lack a Hyaluronic Acid (HA) capsule, found on other GAS strains, which is

antiphagocytic and has long been proposed as an essential virulence factor[43,44]. We speculate

that the Ig-binding proteins provide an alternative and compensatory mechanisms for M4 and

M22 strain virulence. Regardless, our work raises the possibility that SIgA has shaped GAS

evolution, perhaps providing different selective pressures than mIgA, and also highlights the

importance of further investigating GAS-SIgA interactions in the mucosa where M4/M22 might

block host $Fc\alpha R$ effector functions and/or block antibody binding to surface antigens and/or

provide another survival advantage for the bacteria (e.g. adhesion to mucosal factors).

The notion that host SIgA effector functions play a significant role in antimicrobial response

and may provide selective pressure extends beyond GAS, given that at least three distinct

pathogenic bacterial species shown to binding SIgA express specific IgA and/or SIgA binding

proteins, including *S. pyogenes, S. aureus and S. pneumoniae,* all of which utilize the

nasopharynx as their primary human reservoir where encounters with SIgA have potential to

influence virulence and host response[45,46]. To explore potential similarities and differences

between M4 and other IgA-binding proteins, we modeled a *S. aureus* SSL7-SIgA complex by

aligning the crystal structure of SSL7-Fcα (PDB:2QEJ) to each Fc on SIgA (Fig. S6) [7]. Resulting

models suggest that SSL7 can bind both the Fc$_{AB}$ and Fc$_{CD}$ "hot spots," resulting in 2:1 SSL7:SIgA

stoichiometry, as observed for CD89:SIgA. This stoichiometry appears possible because SSL7

adopts a flat "disk-like" topography that when bound to IgA or SIgA positions the C-terminus away

from Fcα, similar to CD89 and in contrast to M4[7]. This structure and trajectory likely allow SSL7

to bind SIgA Fc$_{CD}$ without being occluded by the JC loop as observed for M4, signifying that

among Fcα-binding proteins, the sterically enforced 1:1 M4:SIgA stoichiometry appears to be

unique to M4 and hinting at functional differences relevant to understanding host interactions with

GAS and *S. aureus*. Unlike SSL7 and M4, which bind the IgA Fc, the *S. pneumoniae* SpsA (also

called CbpA) protein binds directly to pIgR or SC, meaning that it interacts only with SIgA and not

mIgA. This further supports the notion that microbial-SIgA interactions are functionally, and

broadly, relevant; together structural data provided here and in other recent reports provide a

framework to further elucidate the consequences of those interactions for both the host and the

microbe[2,6,13–15,47].

METHODS

Protein expression and purification

Genes encoding the human IgA1 heavy chain constant region and the lambda light chain constant

region were fused with STA121 VH and VL domain sequences [48]. The human tissue plasminogen

activator (tPA) signal sequence was inserted upstream of the IgA heavy chain sequence. These

sequences along with human JC and SC were cloned into mammalian expression vector

pD2610v1 (Atum). All constructs were transiently co-transfected into HEK Expi293F cells using

ExpiFectamine to produce SIgA complex (Thermo Fisher). Six days after transfection, SIgA was

purified from the cell supernatant using CaptureSelect™ Human IgA Affinity Resins. Superose 6

(Cytiva) size exclusion chromatography (SEC) was used to further purify SIgA. The gene

encoding the human CD89 ectodomain (uniprot ID: P24071) was fused to a C-terminal

hexahistine-tag and cloned into pD2610v1. The CD89 construct was transiently transfected into

HEK Expi293F cells using ExpiFectamine. CD89 was purified from the cell supernatant using Ni-

NTA affinity resin (Qiagen). Superose 6 SEC was used to further purify CD89. The gene encoding

the *Streptococcus pyogenes* M4 protein (uniprot ID P13050) was cloned into pET28_a (+) vector

(Novagen). The M4 endogenous N-terminal signal peptide and C-terminal cell wall sorting signal

were not included in the construct and a C-terminal hexahistine-tag was added. M4 mutants Q47A,

R49A, K68A were generated using the Q5 site-directed mutagenesis kit (NEB, E0554). The M4

mutant variant constructs were transformed and expressed in *E. coli* strain BL21 (DE3);

expression was induced using 1mM IPTG, added to the culture growing at 37°C when OD reaches

0.4-0.6. Cells were harvested 3-5 hours after IPTG induction by centrifugation, resuspended in

50 mM Tris-Cl, 150 mM NaCl, pH 7.5, 1mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride and lysed by sonication.

The M4 was isolated from soluble fraction of cell lysate using Ni-NTA affinity resin. Superose 6

SEC was used to further purify M4. Purified SIgA and M4 or CD89 were mixed in a 1:2 molar ratio

and incubated in storage buffer (50 mM Tris-Cl, 150 mM NaCl, pH 7.5) at 4°C overnight and

complexes were purified using Superose 6 SEC.

Cryo-EM grid preparation and data collection

SIgA-M4: Quantifoil R2/2 300 mesh holey carbon grids were glow discharged for 60s; 3ul of SIgA-

M4 at 1.0 mg/ml was applied to each grid with Vitrobot Mark IV at SLAC with 1 blot of 1.5 s, 0

offset, 5 s wait, at 100% humidity and 4 C°. Movies were collected using EPU on a Titan Krios

(TEMALPHA at SLAC) operating at 300 kV and with a Gatan K4 direct electron detector. Both

untilted and 25-degree tilted movies were collected at 0.95 Å/Pixel, 40 frames per movie, total

exposure time of 4.95 s and total dose of 50 electrons/Å^2.

SIgA-CD89: Quantifoil R1.2/1.3 400 mesh holey carbon grids were glow discharged for

60s; 3ul of SIgA-CD89 at 1.0 mg/ml was applied to each grid with Vitrobot Mark IV with 1 blot of

2 s, 2 offset, 5 s wait, at 100% humidity and 4 C°. Movies were collected using SerialEM on a

Titan Krios at Purdue University operating at 300 kV and with a K3 direct electron detector. Both

untilted and 30-degree tilted movies were collected at 0.82 Å/Pixel, 60 frames per movie, total

exposure time of 2.41 s and total dose of 71.3 electrons/$Å^2$. Data collection statistics can be found

in Table SI.

Cryo-EM data processing

SIgA-M4: 2600 movies were collected with untilted stage and 3251 movies were collected with

stage tilted at 25 degrees. All data processing were done in CryoSPARC v.3.2.0[49]. Initial

processing of the two data sets were done separately. Movies were motion corrected, CTF

estimated and manually curated based on ice thickness, total motion and CTF fits, resulting in

2081 untilted and 2786 tilted movies. Particles were picked using blob picker in CryoSPARC with

minimum and maximum particle diameter of 100 Å and 200 Å. Particles were extracted with 2x

binning. 2D classification of these particles generated initial references for template-based particle

picking, which gave 970k particles from untilted movies and 1.3 million particles from tilted movies.

Those particles were combined and subjected to several rounds of 2D classification to remove

bad classes. A final set of 200K particles were used to generate the *ab-initio* model. Particles in

the final set were then re-extracted at full-pixel size and used for non-uniform refinements of the

model. The final refinement generated a map with an average resolution of 3.07 Å at FSC=0.143.

SIgA-CD89: 2955 movies were collected with untilted stage and 3696 movies were

collected with stage tilted at 30 degrees. All data processing were done in CryoSPARC v.4.1.2[49].

Initial processing of the two data sets were done separately. Movies were motion corrected, CTF

estimated and manually curated based on ice thickness, total motion and CTF fits, resulting in

2865 untilted and 3105 tilted movies. Particles were picked using blob picker in CryoSPARC with

minimum and maximum particle diameter of 150 Å and 250 Å. Particles were extracted with 2x

binning. 2D classification of these particles generated initial references for template-based particle

picking, which gave 507K particles from untilted movies and 732K particles from tilted movies.

Those particles were combined and went through several rounds of 2D classification to remove

bad classes. A final set of 249K particles were used to generate the *ab-initio* model. Particles in

the final set were then re-extracted at full-pixel size and used for non-uniform refinements of the

model. The final refinement generated a map with an average resolution of 3.18 Å at FSC=0.143.

Structure building and refinement

SIgA-M4: The structure of human SIgA (PDB: 6UE7) was docked into the map using UCSF

Chimera[50]. The M4 fragment was hand-built using the Coot Molecular Graphics Package[51]. All

chains of SIgA and M4 were refined as rigid bodies using Phenix real space refinement[52].

Subsequent iterations involved inspection of the map-model fit and manual adjustment of the

model followed by Phenix real space XYZ refinement. Iterations of Phenix refinements and

manual adjustments were repeated until model quality no longer improves.

SIgA-CD89: Human SIgA structure (PDB: 6UE7) and mIgA:CD89 structure (PDB:1OW0)

were docked into the map using UCSF Chimera[50]. All chains of SIgA and CD89 were refined as

rigid bodies using Phenix real space refienemnt[52]. Inspection of the map-model fit and manual

adjustment of the model were done after each Phenix real space XYZ refinement. Iterations of

Phenix refinements and manual adjustments were repeated until model quality no longer

improves. Model and refinement statistics can be found in Table SI.

Surface plasmon resonance

Surface plasmon resonance (SPR) binding experiments were done using a Bruker Sierra SPR-

32 Pro instrument. 0.2 uM human mIgA or SIgA in sodium acetate buffer (pH = 4.5) was coupled

to lanes B and D, respectively, on a high-capacity amine (HCA) chip using an amine coupling kit

(Bruker 1862634). Lane A and C were mock coupled (with only sodium acetate buffer PH 4.5)

and used as references. Responses were measured for a two-fold dilution series of each analyte

(M4 wild type and mutants Q47A, R49A, K68A) in HBS-EP+ buffer (0.01 M HEPES pH 7.4, 0.15

M NaCl, 3 mM EDTA, 0.005% v/v Surfactant P20) with a high concentration of 0.25 uM. All binding

experiments were done with 120 s contact time, 180 s dissociation time, and flow rate of 25 ul/min.

Surfaces were regenerated with 2.5M $MgCl_2$. All data were collected at room temperature. Data

were fitted to 1:1 binding model using Bruker Analyzer R4 and the K_D values were reported by

the Analyzer.

Structure modelling, analysis, and sequence alignment

Human SIgA (PDB: 6UE7) was aligned to the M4-bound SIgA in The PyMOL Molecular Graphics

System (Version 2.5.1 Schrödinger, LLC) and the RMSD between the bound and unbound state

of SIgA was calculated automatically during the alignment performed by PyMOL (A>align>align

to molecule). A list of all possible interactions between SIgA and M4 was generated using the

protein interaction calculator (PIC) webserver[53]. The interactions were visualized and manually

checked in PyMOL and contacts within 4 Å were selected and reported in Fig. 3b. The buried

surface area was calculated using the 'get_area' function in PyMOL.

AlphaFold2-multimer was used to predict the full length M4 dimer structure and ColabFold

1.5.2 was used to generate the prediction[36]. M4 residues 286-313 are predicted as disordered

and not shown in figures. Full length modeled M4 residues 45-73 were aligned to the

corresponding residues in the SIgA-M4 structure using PyMOL, with an RMSD of 0.640. The

aligned structure of full length M4 with SIgA were used in Fig. 6. The distance of M4 to GAS

surface was estimated by measuring the distance between M4 residues 15 and 285. The distance

from the FcαR site on Fc_{CD} to M4 was measure from HC-D residue L441 to M4 helix-b residue

H97.

The sequence alignment between human and mouse IgA heavy chain (human: Uniprot

P10876, P10877, A0A0G2JMB2; mouse: Uniprot P01878) was carried out using ClustalOmega

and the alignment figure was made using ESPript3[54,55]. The alignment of mIgA:CD89 (PDB:

1OW0) to SIgA:CD89 and RMSD calculation were done in the same way as described above.

Figures

Structural figures were made using UCSF Chimera and PyMOL; SPR data were plotted using

Bruker Sierra-32 Analyzer and Microsoft Excel[50]. All figures were assembled using Adobe

Photoshop.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The Cryo-EM density maps have been deposited in the EM databank (www.ebi.ac.uk/emdb) with

the accession codes 40568, and 40567 for M4-SIgA and CD89-SIgA structures, respectively, and

the refined coordinates have been deposited in the Protein Data Bank (www.rcsb.org) with

accession codes 8SKV (M4-SIgA) and 8SKU (CD89-SIgA).

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The study was conceived by B.M.S and Q.L.; experiments were conducted by Q.L.; B.M.S and

Q.L. analyzed data and wrote the manuscript.

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MATERIALS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

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COMPETING INTERESTS.

494 Authors declare no competing interests.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Figure S1. CryoEM data collection and CryoSPARC processing pipeline. (a) Schematic
summary of data processing pipeline of SIgA-M4 complex in CryoSPARC; (b) representative
micrograph; (c) representative 2D class averages; (d) FSC curve for the final reconstruction with
reported resolution at FSC=0.143 shown by the blue horizontal line. (e) Local resolution map
calculated by cryoSPARC and colored in Chimera. (f) Density from M4 helix-a residues 45-49 and
interactions between M4 K68 and SIgA A360 contoured to 3σ and carved at 2 Å cutoff.

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645 **Figure S3. M4 binding analysis by surface plasmon resonance (SPR).** Sensorgrams showing
646 the response of M4 (a) and individual M4 point mutants, Q47A (b), R49A (c), and K68A (d) binding
647 to immobilized hSIgA1. All data were collected on a surface immobilized with 0.2uM hSIgA1 and
648 all analytes were tested with a two-fold dilution series starting from 0.25uM. The experimental
649 curves were fit with 1:1 binding models, shown in black.
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Figure S4. SIgA-CD89 CryoEM data collection and CryoSPARC processing pipeline. (a)
Schematic summary of data processing pipeline of SIgA-CD89 complex in CryoSPARC; (b)
representative micrograph; (c) representative 2D class averages; (d) FSC curve for the final
reconstruction with reported resolution at FSC=0.143 shown by the blue horizontal line. (e) Local
resolution map calculated by cryoSPARC and colored in Chimera; (f) density from CD89 residues
52-56 and part of the hydrophobic core of the SIgA-CD89 interface contoured to 3σ and carved
at 2 Å cutoff.

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Figure S5. M4 binding to mIgA and SIgA (a) Model of M4 (pink) bound mIgA (blue) shown in
two orientations. The model was made by aligning two copies of HC-A (bound to M4) from the
M4-SIgA structure to the two IgA heavy chains from the Fcα-CD89 crystal structure (PDB code
1OW0 with CD89 removed). M4-HC-A contacts observed in the model are equivalent to those
observed in the SIgA-M4 structure; however, Tp residues, including HC-A K454, which are ~ 4.5Å
from M4 helix b residues D67 and E70 and could contribute to electrostatic interactions, are not
ordered in 1ow0. (b) SPR Sensorgrams showing the response of M4 binding to immobilized
hmIgA1. (c) SPR Sensorgrams showing the response of M4 binding to immobilized hSIgA1. Data
were collected on a surface immobilized with 0.2uM hSIgA1 or 0.2uM hmIgA1 and all analytes
were tested with a two-fold dilution series starting from 0.25uM. The experimental curves were fit
using a 1:1 binding model, shown in black.

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Figure S6. Comparison of M4 and SSL7 binding to SIgA. (a) The structure of M4-SIgA and
model of SSL7 bound to SIgA. The SSL7-SIgA model was built by aligning the cocrystal structure
of an SSL7-Fcα complex (PDB: 2QEJ) to both copies of SIgA Fcα. M4 only binds at Fc$_{AB}$, as
shown in Fig. 5 and the second site (Fc$_{CD}$) is occluded by JC (magenta) whereas SSL7 (purple)
bound to the second site (Fc$_{CD}$) is not overlapping with any part of SIgA, indicating that binding is
feasible. The JC loop that occluded M4 binding is indicated by an arrow. (b) Comparison of M4
and SSL7 binding sites on Fcα. Monomeric Fcαs (PDB code: 1OW0 with CD89 removed) are
shown as ribbons and binding residues are shown as stick representations. The 11 residues
bound by M4 are shown in pink and the 20 residues bound by SSL7 are shown in purple. Nine
Cα3 residues are bound by both M4 and SSL7 including: E357 (HC-B), A360 (HC-B), E389, L441,
F443, T444, Q445, T447, D449. The other 11 residues bound by SSL7 interface are: L257, L258,
E313, N316, H317, M433, H436, E437, P440, A442, R450.
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688   **Table S1. Cryo-EM data collection, refinement, and validation statistics**
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	#1 SIgA:M4 (EMDB-40568) (PDB 8SKV)	#2 SIgA:CD89 (EMDB-40567) (PDB 8SKU)
Data collection and processing		
Magnification	130K	165K
Voltage (kV)	300	300
Electron exposure (e–/Å^2)	50	71
Defocus range (µm)	-0.8 to -2.0	-0.8 to -2.0
Pixel size (Å)	0.95	0.82
Symmetry imposed	C1	C1
Initial particle images (no.)	2270K	1240K
Final particle images (no.)	200K	249K
Map resolution (Å)	3.07	3.18
FSC threshold	0.143	0.143
Map resolution range (Å)	2-5	2-5
Refinement		
Initial model used (PDB code)	6ue7	6ue7, 1ow0
Model resolution (Å)	3.3	3.7
FSC threshold	0.5	0.5
Map sharpening B factor (Å^2)	185	170
Model composition		
Non-hydrogen atoms	12220	14476
Protein residues	1632	1951
Ligands	NAG:15	NAG:12
B factors (Å^2)		
Protein	40.39	52.26
Ligand	67.15	74.18
R.m.s. deviations		
Bond lengths (Å)	0.002	0.005
Bond angles (°)	0.544	0.642
Validation		
MolProbity score	1.67	1.83
Clashscore	5.26	7.13
Poor rotamers (%)	0.32	0.2
Ramachandran plot		
Favored (%)	94.32	93.15
Allowed (%)	5.77	6.85
Disallowed (%)	0	0