A protein kinase A-regulated centrosomal actin pool

sets the threshold for T cell polarization

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Abstract

T lymphocyte migration triggered by chemokine stimulation is preceded by cell polarization. The acquisition of this asymmetry requires a profound cell rearrangement, particularly of the cytoskeleton. The mechanism by which the uniform signal triggered by chemokine receptors rapidly leads to this asymmetry is largely elusive. Using cell imaging, we emphasize that the centrosome dictates the position of the polarization axis in T lymphocytes. Mechanistically, we highlight that the T cell shape is controlled by the amount of actin filaments surrounding the centrosome. In resting conditions as well as after chemokine stimulation, the activity of a specific pool of protein kinase A regulates this cytoskeleton compartment. Once the centrosomal actin is reduced below a certain threshold, the symmetry breaking is catalyzed. This study points to a critical protein kinase A signaling pathway in the establishment of the immune response.

Introduction

T lymphocyte migration constitutes a key step of the immune response considering that allows the cells to explore primary lymphoid organs as well as tissue. It is mainly under the control of CXCL12, CCL19 and CCL21 chemokines. It requires a major rearrangement of the cell compartments (organelles, cytoskeleton, …) (1). Indeed, the lymphocyte has to leave its almost spherical shape to acquire an asymmetrical one with a front structure, the lamellipodium, and a back structure, the uropod. This cell polarization is an absolute prerequisite for the cell to migrate and requires important remodeling of the cytoskeleton. An increase of actin polymerization is rapidly triggered which progressively accumulates at the cell front, conferring a highly dynamic lamellipodium (2). The uropod at the cell back is surrounded by an actomyosin network whose contraction facilitates T cell migration. The establishment of this polarization axis takes place within a few minutes after chemokine stimulation. Chemokine receptor activation has been reported to trigger several signaling pathways, such as calcium signaling, PI3 kinase activation or cAMP modulation (3,4). However, their contribution in the early processes allowing the establishment of the asymmetric distribution of cellular components and of the polarity regulators (5), is still elusive.

T cell polarization appears in two important immune functions: upon immune synapse formation and after chemokine stimulation. In the first case, the stimulation takes place at a specific point imposed by the point of contact with the antigen presenting cell where a signaling pole is formed locally. In this configuration, the position of the polarization axis is driven by the site of stimulation. Conversely, upon chemokine addition, the initial stimulation is homogeneous. However, symmetry breaking is rapidly observed so that the cell polarizes in one clear direction after a couple of minutes. One could therefore wonder whether the orientation of this axis takes place randomly, or whether it is imposed by an intrinsic cellular factor. In other words, is it possible to predict in which direction a cell will polarize after chemokine stimulation?

Among the intrinsic cellular factors which could condition the position of the polarization axis, various hypothesis can be considered. An uneven distribution of chemokine receptors at the cell

surface might lead to the formation of several local signaling poles. The major one might force the

development of the polarization axis at a specific place. A heterogeneous distribution of polymerized

actin or of factors promoting this process, could also favor the formation of the lamellipodium in a

specific position after chemokine stimulation. Finally, the centrosome, a single-copy organelle, is now

clearly considered not only as a microtubule-organizing center (MTOC) but also as a signaling

platform (6) which may consequently transform a uniform external signal into a local response. As a

non-membrane organelle, the centrosome is surrounded by a pericentriolar material linked to the

cytoskeleton. A large number of proteins are indeed associated with this structure, including protein

kinases and phosphatases (7). It is involved in several cellular processes (8), in particular in the

positioning of subcellular structures upon immune synapse formation(9).

Recently, the centrosome has been reported to not only be a microtubule, but also an actin

organizing center (10). In T and B lymphocytes, a decrease in the pool of polymerized actin that

surrounds the centrosome has been reported upon immune synapse formation (11-14).

Furthermore, a recent study demonstrates that this pool of actin could constitute a size-dependent

diffusion barrier around the centrosome (15), suggesting that any event leading to actin

depolymerization at this point could induce a modification of the pericentriolar composition.

Interestingly, this is what is observed in B lymphocytes, where the nature of the proteins associated

with the centrosome is modified upon immune synapse formation (11).

The aim of this study is to understand whether, after chemokine stimulation, the polarity axis is

established in a particular direction with respect to the intracellular compartments or whether this is

completely random. Using a combination of imaging and pharmacological perturbations, we identify

the early signaling pathways which control this event and show that a specific pool of PKA is able to

control T cell polarization by regulating the level of actin around the centrosome.

Results

CXCL12-stimulated T cells polarize along an axis correlated with the centrosome position

T cell stimulation by chemokine triggers a very rapid cell deformation that precedes polarization itself as previously reported (2). This deformation can be quantified by the cell roundness parameter which allows us to calculate how close to a circle the cell is. While the cell roundness is equal to 1 for a perfectly round cell, it decreases as long as the cell deforms. As shown on Figure 1a, unstimulated cells deposited on VCAM-1-coated coverslips present a resting roundness of around 0.85 independently of the duration of adhesion. Conversely, when the coverslips are coated with VCAM-1 plus CXCL12, the cells progressively deform. In this case, the cell stimulation can take place asynchronously depending on the time a given cell enters into contact with the CXCL12-coated coverslip. The kinetics of cell deformation can therefore be more precisely assessed by dynamic cell imaging when cells deposited on VCAM-1 coated coverslips, are stimulated at the same time by the external addition of CXCL12. As depicted in Figure 1b, in this configuration, we observed that cell deformation starts rapidly after stimulation. The mean delay between cell stimulation and the time when cells start to deform is 112 ± 10 s (n=48 cells). As we have previously shown (16), cell polarization corresponds to a major actin cytoskeleton reorganization with an accumulation of newly polymerized actin at the front (lamellipodium), while the stable actin network becomes restricted to the cell back (uropod). This actin reorganization settles the polarization axis. We next considered whether the acquisition of this polarization axis takes place in any direction or along a predetermined position.

We first investigated the distribution of the chemokine receptor CXCR4 on resting lymphocytes to determine whether they are uniformly distributed or whether they display some accumulation at specific points. In the latter case, the stimulation could trigger local signaling poles which may impose the position of the polarization axis. As displayed in Figure Supp1a, a uniform CXCR4 labelling is observed in unstimulated cells in contrast to CXCL12-activated cells in which both actin and CXCR4 accumulated at the cell front (Figure Supp 1b).

We then focused on the centrosome. The centrosome, which we visualized by transfecting the cells

with centrin-GFP construct, can be used as a reference for determining the position of the

polarization axis. We followed the establishment of this axis by determining the point where the

cortical actin cage (labeled with SiR-Actin as previously shown (16)) opens, allowing the formation of

the future lamellipodium. In the example presented in Figure 1c, it clearly appears that this event

takes place in the vicinity of the centrosome. We quantified this observation by measuring the angle

formed between the two lines [Center of the cell - Center of the opening of cortical actin cage] and

[Center of the cell - Centrosome] (Figure 1d, left). An angle of 0° would mean that the lamellipodium

forms exactly in front of the centrosome. As shown in Figure 1d (right), the mean value of the angle is

59.7° ± 6.6 (n=60 cells from 11 independent experiments) with a median of 37.5°, meaning that the

opening of the cortical actin cage preferentially takes place close to the centrosome.

Protein Kinase A activation triggered by CXCL12 stimulation is essential for cell polarization

We next focused on the signaling pathways triggered during early polarity establishment, in

particular the cAMP, PKA and calcium (Ca) pathways. By using the FRET-based cAMP biosensor

TEpacVV (17), we analyzed the variations of cAMP after CXCL12 addition upon dynamic cell imaging.

Surprisingly, despite a supposed coupling of CXCR4 to Gi proteins, we observed a very rapid rise in

cAMP that reaches its maximum within a few seconds (Figure 2a). Because, chemokine stimulation is

known to induce a Ca increase through $G\beta\gamma$-activated phospholipase C (4), we wondered whether Ca

could be responsible for the cAMP increase through a well-described Ca-cAMP crosstalk (18). To

answer this question, we simultaneously measured Ca and cAMP variations in individual cells. As

shown on the averaged traces presented in Figure Supp2a, cAMP increases more slowly than Ca after

CXCL12 addition. These results suggest that the CXCL12-induced Ca rise preceded the cAMP increase.

In order to directly test the causal link between the two events, the sensitivity of the cAMP increase

to the Ca chelator BAPTA was measured. As shown in Figure Supp 2b, the CXCL12-induced cAMP rise

is significantly reduced when Ca is buffered, suggesting that the elevation of cAMP is a consequence

of the previous Ca increase.

We next investigated the consequences of the cAMP rise by analyzing the variations of PKA activity

using the PKA biosensor exRaiAKAR2 (19). As shown in Figure 2b, an increase in PKA activity is rapidly

measured after CXCL12 addition. Analysis of cAMP and PKA responses in a large number of cells,

reveals that cAMP levels start to increase 17.63 ± 0.63 s (n=139 cells) after CXCL12 addition although

it occurs significantly later (23.33 ± 0.75 s, n=201 cells) for PKA activity (Figure 2c), suggesting not

surprisingly, that cAMP increase precedes PKA activation.

Using dynamic cell imaging, we were able establish that cAMP increase as well as PKA activation take

place before the cells start to deform as shown in the examples presented in Figure 3a. This

observation can be quantified by measuring PKA activity simultaneously with roundness evolution

over time. It clearly appears that while PKA are rapidly activated, cells deformed more slowly and

with a certain delay, as shown in the example presented in Figure 3b. This delay is 72.3 ± 9.0 s (n=30

cells). These results demonstrate that CXCL12 triggers first a cAMP rise, followed by an activation of

PKA which itself precedes the cell deformation.

The causal link between these events was directly investigated by testing whether PKA activation was

necessary for the establishment of cell polarization. For this purpose, we used H89, a competitive

inhibitor of ATP on the PKA catalytic subunit. As shown in Figure 3c, the presence of H89 prevents

CXCL12-induced cell deformation. Interestingly, the roundness of unstimulated cells is also increased

in the presence of H89, suggesting that resting PKA activity also controls the shape of unstimulated

cells. To confirm the involvement of PKA in this process, we used another family of PKA inhibitors:

the cAMP analog Rp-8-CPT-cAMPS. As shown in Figure Supp 3a & b, a similar increase in resting

roundness is observed when the cells are incubated with this inhibitor. This inhibitor is also efficient

in suppressing polarization in sub-optimal conditions of stimulation (Figures Supp 3b).

Upon CXCL12 stimulation, centrosomal F-actin decreases through a PKA-dependent mechanism.

We then wondered what the link could be between the centrosome associated with the position of

the polarization axis (Figure 1d) and the protein kinase A which is required for deformation (Figure 3

c). During the last few years, several papers have reported that, upon immune synapse formation

(another example of T cell polarization), important remodeling takes place around T or B cell

centrosomes (11-14). More precisely, a decrease of the F-actin content in this region has been

reported. We therefore studied this particular actin pool over chemokine-induced polarization.

In order to follow the quantity of F-actin around the centrosome upon CXCL12 stimulation, we

measured over time, the intensity of the phalloidin labelling in an area of 3μm diameter centered on

the centrosome whose position is determined by pericentrin labeling (Figure 4a, insert). The kinetics

highlight that centrosomal F-actin rapidly decreases after CXCL12 addition (Figure 4a and example in

Figure 4b) reaching a minimum already around 3 minutes. To investigate whether this event depends

on PKA activity, we performed the same kind of experiment but in the presence of the PKA inhibitor

H89. As shown in Figure 4c, in the presence of H89, F-Actin content in the centrosomal zone

decreases less after CXCL12 addition, compared to control cells. Even after 5 minute stimulation,

centrosomal F-actin is still above the level measured in unstimulated control cells (dashed line).

Furthermore and interestingly, in these conditions, the level of centrosomal F-Actin in unstimulated

cells is dramatically increased by a factor of 2.29 ± 0.39 (n=8 independent experiments) (Figure 4b &

c). An effect similar to H89 was observed when PKA was inhibited with cAMP analogs of Rp-8CPT-

cAMPS. Indeed, as shown in Figure Supp 3c & d, an increase of centrosomal actin is observed in

unstimulated cells incubated with this inhibitor. After sub-optimal conditions of stimulation with

CXCL12, the decrease of centrosomal actin level is also reduced (Figure Supp3d).

In order to have better kinetic resolution, by dynamic imaging, we measured the centrosomal F-Actin

decay in single cell expressing the polymerized actin reporter, LifeAct. In this configuration, CXCL12

drives a rapid F-actin decrease immediately after CXCL12 addition (Figure 4d). Interestingly, H89 on

its own, is able to induce a rapid increase in F-Actin, suggesting once again that, even in resting cells,

basal PKA activity actively controls the level of F actin content at the centrosome.

Inspired by the results obtained upon immune synapse formation in B cells (11), where the decrease

of centrosomal F-actin seems to be driven by a decrease in Arp2/3 content in this area, we measured

in individual cells, the Arp2 content together with F-actin in the centrosomal zone in control

condition, after CXCL12 stimulation or in the presence of H89 (example in Figure Supp4a). Clearly,

Arp2 presents a similar evolution to F-Actin: it is decreased after 5 minute CXCL12 stimulation while

it is increased by H89 treatment (Figure Supp4b).

Altogether, these results show that PKA is able to regulate the pool of centrosomal actin in resting

cells, as well as after CXCL12 stimulation. One could then wonder whether the PKA activity

responsible for this effect is equally distributed in the cell, or restricted to this specific region. By

measuring PKA activity through dynamic cell imaging, we sometimes observed some hot spots of

activity around the centrosome (Figure 3a right). This may be because of the low frequency of

acquisition (one measurement every 10 sec), this event was not systematically observed. In cells, PKA

activity might be compartmentalized at specific intracellular locations through the scaffold proteins

AKAP (A-Kinase anchoring protein). One specific AKAP, AKAP9 (also called AKAP450, AKAP350 or CG-

NAP) has been reported to accumulate at the centrosome and, interestingly, to be required for T cell

migration (20,21). As presented in the examples in Figure 5a, in our T cells, AKAP450 colocalizes with

pericentrin, as attested by the value of the Pearson coefficient (0.78 ± 0.01 n=37 cells). AKAP450 is a

type II AKAP i.e. it is able to bind RII subunits of PKA. In order to determine whether this AKAP allows

a compartmentalization of the PKA activity responsible for centrosomal F-actin regulation, we used

the specific peptide (Ht31) able to counteract the binding of type II PKA to AKAP and subsequently to

prevent type II PKA compartmentalization. As shown in Figure 5b, incubation of the cells with this

peptide induces an increase of resting roundness and prevents CXCL12-induced cell deformation

unlike the control peptide (Ht31-P). Furthermore, in the presence of this inhibitor, centrosomal F-

actin still remains above the level of control cells even after CXCL12 stimulation. Finally, similarly to

what is observed with PKA inhibitors, Ht31 induces a major increase of F-Actin content at the

centrosome in unstimulated cells (Figure 5c). Altogether, these results suggest that in resting cells, as

well as in CXCL12-stimulated ones, a pool of PKA anchored at the centrosome, controls the cell

roundness and the quantity of centrosomal F-actin.

Causal link between centrosomal F-Actin and cell deformation

All the results presented suggest a link between the level of centrosomal actin and the cell shape. We

then attempted to explain this potential causal link between the two events. First, we determined

the temporality of the two events by following the two parameters in individual cells by dynamic cell

imaging. As shown in the example presented in Figure 6a, after chemokine stimulation, the cells start

to deform (blue line) 70 seconds after the centrosomal F-actin starts to decrease (black line). The

average value of the delay between these two events is 56 ± 12 seconds (n=26 individual cells)

showing that they are clearly sequential.

Next, we used the construct VCA-centrin-GFP which artificially triggers an increase of F-Actin at the

centrosome as previously reported (11), and analyzed the consequences on cell roundness.

Expression of the VCA-centrin construct induces, as expected, a clear accumulation of F-Actin at the

centrosome in non-stimulated T lymphocytes as quantified in Figure 6b (left). Interestingly, the cells

in which centrosomal F-Actin was artificially increased by VCA expression, are less deformed as

shown by a higher roundness value (Figure 6b right). Therefore, in resting cells, increasing the level of

F-actin at the centrosome is sufficient to trigger a rounding of the cells.

Altogether, our results show that 1) cell deformation appears after the decrease of centrosomal F-

Actin and 2) that any treatment, such as PKA inhibitors (H89 and Rp-8-CPT-cAMPS), AKAP inhibitor

Ht31 or centrin-VCA, which lead to an increase in centrosomal F-Actin, also induces a rise in cell

roundness. Furthermore, although CXCL12 is still able, in these different conditions, to decrease

centrosomal F-actin, it does so moderately, so that centrosomal F-Actin always stays above the level

measured in control conditions and the cells remain less deformed than the resting cells. This

observation suggests that a decrease of centrosomal F-Actin at least below the resting value, has to

be reached for the cells to deform. In order to analyze this threshold, we measured concomitantly at

single cell level, centrosomal actin and cell roundness and determined after CXCL12 stimulation, the

value of actin at which the cell starts to deform. In the example presented in Figure 6a, the cell starts

to deform (blue line) when the centrosomal actin value is 0.8 (i.e. 20% decrease) (red arrow). By

analyzing a series of cells, we determined that centrosomal F-Actin has to be at 85 ± 2 % (n=26

individual cells) of the initial value for the cell to quit its resting shape.

The link between the level of actin at the centrosome and cell roundness can be visualized by the

phase diagram-like graph presented in Figure 7a, where the roundness has been plotted relative to

the level of centrosomal actin. Each dot represents the mean of many cells for which the two

parameters have been measured. In each case, the values of centrosomal F-actin and roundness

have been normalized relative to the mean values measured in unstimulated control cells of the

same experiment (i.e no treatment for control, H89; Ht31-P for Ht31; centrin-GFP for VCA-centrin-

GFP). Therefore, control cells have (1,1) as coordinates. Four quadrants can then be distinguished

relative to the levels of normalized centrosomal actin or normalized roundness. Clearly, the different

values distribute into only two of the four quadrants corresponding to round cells with a centrosomal

F-Actin value >1 (orange area), or to deformed cells with centrosomal F-Actin<1 (blue area). The two

other configurations are not observed. This observation suggests that centrosomal F-actin content

behaves as a switch (when it reaches 85% of the initial level) that toggles the cells from the round to

the deformed state.

All the experiments presented above allows us to propose a sequential series of events leading to T

cell deformation: chemokine stimulation triggers a rapid rise in Ca, then in cAMP, followed by PKA

activation which triggers a decrease of polymerized actin around the centrosome. This step is a

prerequisite for deformation of the cell which precedes the opening of cortical actin cortex where

the centrosome is located to establish the polarity axis. This sequence is summarized in Figure 7b.

Discussion

T lymphocyte migration is an essential step to mount an efficient immune response. It is essentially under the control of chemokines which trigger T cell polarization and thereafter cell motility. These events require complete cellular reorganization in order for the cell to acquire an asymmetrical distribution of its components. This then allows the establishment of a lamellipodium and a uropod, which settle the polarization axis and therefore the direction of migration. Unlike the polarization induced during immune synapse formation by antigen recognition at the surface of an antigen-presenting cell, no external element dictates, a priori, the position of the polarity axis triggered by uniform chemokine stimulation. In this study, we aimed to determine what controls, in these conditions, this position and what are the signaling pathways involved. Our results highlight a crucial role of the centrosome and more precisely of a PKA-regulated pool of actin in the centrosomal zone.

PKA and response to chemokine

Our results clearly identify the cAMP/PKA pathway as playing a key role in T cell response to chemokine. In particular, we emphasize the involvement of a specific pool of PKA, anchored at the centrosome through AKAP450. Consistent with our data, the deletion of the protein has been previously reported to prevent T cell deformation and migration upon chemokine stimulation (21).

The positive involvement of PKA in T cell polarization may be surprising for two reasons. First of all, our results show, that CXCL12 stimulation is able to trigger a rapid rise in cAMP followed by an activation of PKA, despite the fact that chemokine receptors are normally coupled to Gi proteins supposed to inhibit adenylate cyclases. However, we show that, in our case the cAMP rise is mediated by the chemokine-induced increase of calcium which precedes cAMP signal. This result may suggest the involvement of an unidentified calcium-sensitive adenylate cyclase (such as AC1, AC3, AC8 or AC10 (22,23), although AC7 has been reported to be the most abundant adenylate cyclase in T cells (24). Secondly, cAMP/PKA have been considered as an inhibitory pathway for T cell migration. This consideration is based on the fact that a large and sustained increase in cAMP

triggered by forskolin, PGE2 or phosphodiesterase inhibitors induces a rounding up of the cells (25-

28). However, after chemokine addition, the rise in cAMP remains modest and transient. It is

therefore likely that different features of cAMP signals (intensity and time course) do not lead to the

same effect as is the case for calcium, for which it is clearly established that the shape of the signal

conditions the cellular response (see (29) for a review). Furthermore, with the combination of two

properties of AKAP450, it is possible that this protein is able to restrict the PKA signal at its close

vicinity. First, it is able to bind different partners including the phosphodiesterase PDE4D3(30), able

to degrade cAMP, and then to reduce the scale of the chemokine-induced cAMP increase.

Furthermore, the binding of PKA to AKAP450 reduces the activation threshold of the kinase by cAMP

(31). This could allow a moderate cAMP signal to trigger PKA activation only around the centrosome

where AKAP450 is anchored, and then to prevent the previously described inhibitory effect of this

kinase.

Regulation of centrosomal actin in lymphocyte

Recent studies in T and B lymphocytes demonstrate that, upon immune synapse formation, the pool

of actin around the centrosome is decreased (11-14). Here for the first time, we show that a similar

process takes place in response to chemokine. Using dynamic cell imaging and immunofluorescence,

we were able to show that this phenomenon takes place almost immediately after chemokine

addition. In the case of antigen recognition, the specific kinetics of this process has not been

investigated, and the first time point at which the decrease is reported is 15 minutes, but it is

possible that the decrease starts earlier. The level of actin at the centrosome results from a balance

between the polymerization and depolymerization processes at this site, so that a decrease of F-

Actin after chemokine stimulation might be due to an inhibition of the polymerization and/or

activation of the depolymerization. In the context of immune synapse, several non-exclusive

mechanisms have been suggested to explain this reduction in centrosomal actin (32). Upon T/B

synapse, the recruitment of HS1 at the synapse, triggers the displacement of Arp2/3 from the

centrosome to the synapse and therefore induces a reduction of F-Actin at this place (11). In our

conditions, we observed a similar reduction of Arp2/3 in the centrosomal area (Figure Supp4),

although we do not know which mechanism drives it. The involvement of PKCδ and of the

proteasome have also been shown upon immune synapse formation (14,13,12) but no evidence of

the involvement of these pathways exists in the case of chemokine stimulation. On the contrary, our

results suggest that a local pool of PKA anchored to the centrosome through an AKAP would control

the level of F-actin at this place, not only after chemokine stimulation, but also in resting cells. It is

still unclear the mechanism by which PKA exerts this effect and what is the target(s) it

phosphorylates.

In resting cells, the centrosome presents an eccentric positioning which corresponds to its minimum-

energy position (33). However, during cellular responses, its position seems to be finely regulated,

especially in T lymphocytes during polarization triggered by chemokine or immune synapse

formation, where a relocation of the centrosome is observed. Centrosomal actin seems to contribute

to the stabilization of the centrosome (34) and, in B lymphocytes, to its anchoring to the nucleus

through the LINC complex (11). One could then imagine that the decrease of centrosomal actin after

chemokine stimulation which we observe in our study, allows the reduction of anchoring of

centrosome to the nucleus, a necessary step for the relocation of the centrosome behind the nucleus

during migration. Corroborating this hypothesis, with a siRNA screen, Obino *et al* recently identified,

which proteins among those differentially associated to the centrosome upon B cells stimulation, are

important for centrosome movement. Type II regulatory subunit beta and catalytic subunit beta of

PKA appear in this list (35).

Centrosomal actin, cell deformation and lamellipodium formation

Besides the potential role of centrosomal actin in controlling the centrosome mobility, our results

suggest that it also regulates the shape of the cells in resting conditions, as well as after chemokine

stimulation. What is the link between these two events? Several non-exclusive hypotheses can be

suggested. Firstly, it has been shown recently that actin (rather than microtubules) around the

centrosome can be a cage that limits the exchange between the cytoplasm and the pericentriolar

region (15). A decrease of actin in this area would then weaken this barrier and potentially lead to

modification of the centrosomal composition. Interestingly, that is what is observed by Obino *et al*,

who showed, in parallel to immune synapse formation, a decrease in centrosomal actin as well as a

modification of the protein content associated with the centrosome: some leave this area, while

some are recruited (11). A similar process could probably take place in our case, after stimulation by

chemokine. Because some of these proteins belong to signaling pathways, this local actin

modification will influence local signaling events which may be important for centrosome relocation

and for the cellular response. Among these proteins, as mentioned above, Arp2/3 leaves the

centrosome upon immune synapse formation, as well as after chemokine stimulation (Figure Supp4).

This major actin branching protein can be considered as a fundamental brick for actin network

formation at the lamellipodium, so that triggering its release is crucial. On the other hand, the

disappearance of the actin cage around the centrosome seems to also allow the recruitment of new

proteins at this site. This is particularly the case of Dock2, an exchange factor of the small GTPase

Rac, a crucial element for actin polymerization in T cells. It is then possible that the local activation of

rac through dock2 triggers actin polymerization at this pool, and the subsequent formation of the

lamellipodium in this area. Finally, actin and microtubule networks have been reported to be

dynamically connected so that actin level tunes microtubules and vice-versa (36). Actin network at

the centrosome seems to constitute a physical barrier preventing microtubule elongation (15).

Because microtubules have been reported to play a crucial role in T cell polarization (5), the local

decrease of centrosomal actin may be essential for the extension of the microtubule network and

the subsequent centrosome repositioning (34).

Our results highlight that a 15 ± 2% reduction of centrosomal actin switches the cells from a round

state to a deformed one (summary in Figure 7a). The biological meaning of this threshold is unclear,

but it could correspond to the reduction of the size of the actin mesh. Indeed, Cheng *et al* highlight

that centrosomal actin behave as a protein sieve, and that the reduction of its amount allows the

centrosome accessibility of proteins with a higher Stockes radius (15). One could then imagine that

the 15% reduction is the necessary decrease for recruiting (or loosing) the specific proteins,

mentioned above, which are necessary for the T cell morphological change.

Altogether our results highlight a central role of PKA in the establishment of the polarization axis

upon chemokine stimulation. These results establish a new example where transient activation of

PKA promote an efficient T cell response (37,16), contrary to large and sustained activation which

trigger some immunoinhibitory effects (38).

Materials & Methods

Cell culture

CEM T cells were cultured in RPMI 1640 GlutaMax (Gibco, #61870010), supplemented with 10% FCS, 50 U/ml penicillin and 50 µg/ml streptomycin (Eurobio CABPES01-OU). When specified, cells were transfected by nucleofection (Amaxa Nucleofactor, Lonza VCA-1003) with 5 µg DNA for 5 million of cells using the C-016 program. The cells were used the day after nucleofection.

Reagents

CXCL12 (recombinant human SDF1-α) was purchased from Peprotech (300-28A) and VCAM-1 (CD106 Fc chimera protein) from R&D Systems (862-VC-100). Calcium measurements were performed with Fura-2/AM (Molecular Probes, F1225). For calcium chelation, cells were incubated with 20µM BAPTA-AM (ThermoFisher B6769) for 30 minutes. Nucleus labeling was performed for 4 minutes with 2µg/ml Hoechst 33342 (Molecular Probes, H1399). F-actin detection was performed by expressing the LifeAct-mCherry construct (gift from Dr. A. Benmerah). Stable actin detection was performed with SiRActin (TebuBio, SC001) as previously described (Siamo et al, 2021). Centrin-GFP was a gift from Dr. A. Delouvée (Institut Curie, Paris, France) and Centrin-VCA-GFP was obtained from Dr. Paolo Pierobon (Institut Cochin, Paris). For cAMP measurements, cells were transfected with the most sensitive version of TEpacVV (H187), which was a gift from Dr. K. Jalink (Netherlands Cancer Institute). Monitoring of PKA activity is achieved through the expression of the ExRaiAKAR2 construct (Addgene, #161753). For PKA activity inhibition, cells were pretreated with 10µM of H89 (Calbiochem, 371963), 200 µM Rp-8CPT-cAMPS (Biolog, B001 & C011) for 30 minutes. For PKA delocalization from type II AKAPs, cells were pretreated with 20µM of the inhibitory peptide Ht31 (RRRRRRRRRLIEEAASRIVDAVIEQV) or the control peptide Ht31-P (RRRRRRRRRLIPEAASRPVDAVIEQV) for 1 hour (synthetized by ProteoGenix).

The following primary antibodies were used for immunofluorescence: mouse anti-pericentrin (Abcam, #28144, 1/1000), rabbit anti-pericentrin (Abcam, #4448, 1/2000), rabbit anti-Arp2 (Abcam,

#47654, 1/200), anti-AKAP450 (Becton Dickinson 611518, 1/50), Mouse anti CXCR4 human (R et D

Systems, #MAB172, 1/200). Secondary antibodies were the following: AlexaFluor568 donkey anti-

mouse, AlexaFluor647 donkey anti-rabbit and AlexaFluor plus 647 donkey anti-mouse (Life

Technologies, A10037, A32787 and A31573, 1/1000 or 1/500). Actin filaments were stained with

AlexaFluor488 or AlexaFluor568 conjugated phalloidin (Life Technologies, A12379 or A12380,

1/1000).

Cell stimulation and labelling

For cell roundness measurements, CEMs were deposited on coverslips coated with 1µg/ml VCAM-1

and, when specified, 1µg/ml CXCL12 (except for Figure Supp 3b, 0.3µg/ml) and kept at 37°C for the

indicated time. This type of stimulation allows the cells to polarize in the plane of the coverslip and

thus to quantify the deformation. For immunofluorescence experiments, cells were deposited on

coverslips coated with 1µg/ml VCAM-1 and, after 5 minute adhesion, 100ng/ml CXCL12 (except for

Figure 3d 25ng/ml) was added to the medium, allowing synchronized stimulation and therefore more

precise measurements of the kinetics.

Cells were fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde for 20 minutes at room temperature. Cells were then

permeabilized for 20 minutes with PBS-BSA-Saponin (1x / 0.5% / 0.1%), incubated for 45 minutes

with the primary antibody and 45 minutes more with the secondary antibody and fluorescent

phalloidin. For CXCR4, the labelling was performed on unpermeabilized cells. Coverslips were

mounted with Fluorsave (Millipore, #345789). Microscopy images were acquired with a wide field

microscope, Nikon Eclipse TE2000-U and a CMOS camera CMOS camera (ORCA-flash4.0 LT,

Hamamatsu). Images were acquired with Metamorph software with a 20x/0.75 objective

(morphology measurements) or 60x or 100x/0.5-1.3 oil immersion objective (fluorescence

quantification).

Time-lapse imaging and analysis

Live imaging experiments were performed at 37°C with a wide-field Nikon TE2000, equipped with a

CMOS camera (ORCA-flash4.0 LT, Hamamatsu). Images were acquired every 10 s with Metafluor

software. For monitoring Ca, cAMP, PKA activity and centrosomal actin, a 40x/1.30 oil immersion

objective was used. The dynamic imaging experiments are all performed in saline medium (140 mM

NaCl, 5 mM KCl, 1mM CaCl2, 1mM MgCl2, 11mM glucose, 10 mM Hepes; pH 7.4).

In all figures and for each individual cell, traces have been normalized to the ratio at the time of the

stimulation (R/R0) before averaging.

cAMP

cAMP measurements were performed with the FRET biosensor TEpacVV. Briefly, when cAMP

increases, the probe undergoes a conformational change that allows a decrease of energy transfer

between the turquoise fluorophore and the two Venus molecules. Three images were acquired every

10 s: visible, Turquoise channel and FRET channel. The ratio $R = I_{436/470}/I_{436/535}$, which gives an

estimate of cAMP concentration, was calculated with MetaFluor (Roper Scientific) after background

subtraction. An increase of this ratio corresponds to an increase in cAMP concentration.

PKA activity

cAMP measurements were performed with PKA biosensor ExRaiAKAR2 possessing a circularly

permuted GFP (cpGFP). Upon PKA phosphorylation of the probe, a conformation change shifts the

maximum excitation wavelength from 400 nm to 480 nm. Three images were acquired every 10s:

visible, Exc 480nm / Em 515nm and Exc 405nm /Em 515nm. The ratio $R = I_{480/515}/I_{405/515}$ is

calculated with MetaFluor after subtraction of the background noise. An increase of this ratio

corresponds to an increase in PKA activity.

Simultaneous Ca and cAMP measurements

Cells transfected with TEpacVV were loaded with Fura-2/AM at a low concentration (50nM) in order

to avoid interferences between the different fluorophores. 5 images were acquired every 10s: visible,

Exc 340nm / Em 510 nm, Exc 380 nm / Em 510 nm, Exc 436 nm/ Em 470 nm, Exc 436 nm, Em 535 nm.

The ratios $R = I_{340/510}/I_{380/510}$ and $R = I_{436/470}/I_{436/535}$, which give an estimate of Ca and cAMP

concentrations respectively, were calculated with MetaFluor (Roper Scientific) after background

subtraction.

Image analysis

Cell roundness

Cell roundness parameter was quantified with ImageJ software and corresponds to:

$4 \times \text{area}/\pi \times (\text{major axis})^2$. It is equal to 1 for a round cell and < 1 for a deformed one.

Centrosome position quantification

CEM cells transfected with centrin-GFP and labeled with SiRActin were deposited on a VCAM-1-

coated coverslip for 5 minutes before adding CXCL12. The images were acquired every 10 seconds.

We then selected the image corresponding to the opening of the actin cortex and collected the

coordinates of the centrosome, the cell center and the actin cortex opening. Based on this

information, we calculated the angle between the two lines [Center of the cell - Center of the

opening of cortical actin cage] and [Center of the cell - Centrosome].

Centrosomal actin and Arp2 quantification

Accumulation of Actin or Arp2 around the centrosome is quantified by measuring integrated

intensities of the labelling in a circle of 1.5µm radius, centred on the centrosome (pericentrin or

centrin labelling). A background value is subtracted from this measurement, corresponding to the

integrated intensity measured in a similar circle, designed in the cell but outside of the centrosome

area.

Pearson coefficient

Pearson coefficient was measured on ImageJ by using a macro containing the Coloc2 plugin. This

coefficient measures the degree of overlap between two stainings: perincentrin and AKAP450. A

Pearson Coefficient value of 0 means that there is no colocalization between the two stainings.

Conversely, a Pearson Coefficient value of 1 means that there is a perfect colocalization.

Statistics

Each experiment was repeated N times, as specified in the figure legends, along with the number of

cells analyzed in each experiment for a given condition. Data were formatted with Prism Software. In

the paper, mean ± SE are indicated. Statistical comparisons were performed with Jamovi software

through t-test (Figure 2b, 6c) or non-parametric Anova test for multiple comparisons (Friedman for

paired experiments or Kruskal-Wallis for unpaired ones). 2way Anova was used for curve

comparisons. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$ **** $p<0.0001$.

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Author conributions

M.S., F.R. and C.R. designed and performed experiments and analyzed data. M.S. and C.R. wrote the

manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests

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Figure Legends

Figure 1: Chemokine stimulation triggers actin remodeling along an axis conditioned by the MTOC position

a- A progressive decrease of cell roundness is observed in cells deposited for different periods of time, on coverslips coated with VCAM-1 + CXCL12. A limited effect takes place with VCAM-1 alone. Mean ± SE of 4 independent experiments. 448-1722 cells/condition/experiment.

b- Acute addition of CXCL12 triggers a rapid cell deformation (Mean ± SE of 48 individual cells).

c- Example of actin cortex opening after CXCL12 stimulation in a T cell transfected with Centrin-GFP (red) and whose actin cortex has been labelled with SiRActin. CXCL12 was added at t0 (red arrow) Scale bar = 10μm.

d- The angle formed by the two lines [Center of the cell - Center of the opening of cortical actin cage] and [Center of the cell - Centrosome] (left) has been quantified in 58 cells (right) in similar experimental conditions to c.

Figure 2: Chemokine stimulation triggers a rapid increase in cAMP and activation of PKA

a- CXCL12 addition triggers a rapid rise in cAMP in T cells transfected with the cAMP biosensor TEpacVV. Mean ± SE of 6 independent experiments. 6-59 cells/experiment.

b- CXCL12 addition triggers a rapid rise in PKA activity in T cells transfected with the PKA biosensor ExRaiAKAR2. Mean ± SE of 6 independent experiments. 11-46 cells/experiment.

c- Quantification of the delay between CXCL12 addition and cAMP or PKA activity increases (first point above the baseline). Mean ± SE of 139 cells (cAMP) and 201 cells (PKA).

Figure 3: Chemokine-induced PKA activation is necessary for T cell deformation

a- Examples of cells transfected with TEpacVV (left) or ExRaiAKAR2 (right) and stimulated with CXCL12. cAMP (left) or PKA activity (right) are low in resting cells, but rapidly increase after CXCL12

addition (black arrow). Cell deformation starts thereafter. cAMP and PKA activity are coded in false

color. Time 0: CXCL12 addition. Scale bar = 10μm.

b- Example of a simultaneous measurement of PKA activity (black lin) and cell roundness (blue line)

in a T cell transfected with exRaiAKAR2. The delay between the increase of PKA activity and the

beginning of cell roundness decrease is indicated by the gray arrow.

c- Pretreatment with H89 of cells deposited on VCVAM-1 or VCAM1+CXCL12 for 5 minutes, induces

an increase of basal cell roundness and a reduction of the chemokine-induced cell deformation.

Mean ± SE of 6 independent experiments. 264-1475 cells/condition/experiment.

Figure 4: Chemokine stimulation triggers a decrease of polymerized actin at the centrosome

a- A progressive decrease of polymerized actin around the centrosome is observed in cells deposited

on VCAM-1 (0) or VCAM-1+CXCL12 for the indicated duration. Mean ± SE of 8-10 independent

experiments. 21-159 cells/condition/experiment.

b- Examples of F-Actin (labelled with phalloidin) distribution around the centrosome (detected by

antibodies against centrin) in untreated cells (control), stimulated with CXCL12 or simply pretreated

with H89. Scale bar = 10μm.

c- T cells preincubated with PKA inhibitor H89 display a higher level of centrosomal actin in resting

conditions compared to non-stimulated cells. After 5 minute stimulation with CXCL12, this content is

reduced but still remains above that of resting cells (dotted line). Mean ± SE of 5 independent

experiments. 22-165 cells/condition/experiment.

e- Dynamic evolution of centrosomal actin in T cells transfected with LifeAct-mCherry and centrin-

GFP after addition (arrow) of DMSO (black trace), CXCL12 (red trace) or H89 (blue trace). Mean ± SE

of 19-30 cells/condition.

Figure 5: Involvement of a type II AKAP in cell shape and centrosomal actin level

a- Representative example of distribution of AKAP450, Centrin and F-Actin (visualized by specific

antibodies and phalloidin respectively). Scale bar = 10μm.

b- Pretreatment with the AKAP II inhibitor peptide Ht31, induces an increase of the resting roundness

when compared with cells incubated with the control peptide (Ht31P) (dotted line). After 5 minute

stimulation with CXCL12, the decrease observed in the presence of the control peptide, is abolished

when AKAP II inhibitor is present. Mean ± SE of 5 independent experiments. 280-3589

cells/condition/experiment.

c- Pretreatment with the AKAP II inhibitor peptide Ht31, induces an increase of the resting

centrosomal actin when compared with cells incubated with the control peptide (Ht31P) (dotted

line). After 5 minute stimulation with CXCL12, this content remains above the level observed with the

control peptide when AKAP II inhibitor is present. Mean ± SE of 5 independent experiments. 30-70

cells/condition/experiment.

Figure 6: Centrosomal actin and cell roundness

a- Example of simultaneous recording of cell roundness and centrosomal actin level (thanks to

expression of LifeAct-mCherry) upon CXCL12 stimulation (black arrow). The gray arrow indicates the

time between decreases of centrosomal actin and cell roundness. Red arrow: level of centrosomal

actin at which the cell starts to deform.

b- In T cells expressing the Centrin-VCA construct, the level of centrosomal actin is increased (left)

and the cell roundess is concomitantly higher. Left: Mean ± SE of 6 independent experiments. 19-69

cells/condition/experiment. Right: Mean ± SE of 7 independent experiments. 103-377

cells/condition/experiment.

Figure 7: Link between PKA, centrosomal actin and cell roundness

a- Correlation between centrosomal actin and cell shape. For the different conditions and for a given

cell, the centrosomal actin level and the roundness have been normalized to the mean values of the

control cells of the same experiment. Each dot represents the mean value ± SE of 86-359 individual

cells.

b- Summary of the sequence of events leading to cell polarization after CXCL12 stimulation.

Calcium/cAMP/PKA variations are displayed in parallel to cytoskeleton reorganization.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Supplementary figure legends

Figure Supp1: Distribution of CXCR4 in unstimulated and stimulated cells.

a- Example of two unstimulated cells which display a round shape, a uniform distribution of CXCR4

(blue) at the cell surface as well as a homogeneous actin labeling (green).

b- Example of two cells stimulated with coated CXCL12. An accumulation of polymerized actin (green)

takes place at the lamellipodium where CXCR4 (blue) is also enriched.

The centrosome is labelled with an antibody against pericentrin.

Scale bar = 10µm.

Figure Supp2: Link between Calcium and cAMP after CXCL12 stimulation

a- In T cells transfected with TEpacVV and loaded with Fura-2, the variations of Ca have been measured

simultaneously with cAMP variation. Mean ± SE of 13 cells.

b- In cells transfected with TEpacVV and preincubated with the Ca chelator BAPTA/AM, the cAMP

increase after CXCL12 addition is reduced compare to control cells. Mean ± SE of 5 independent

experiments. 6-19 cells/condition/experiment.

Figure Supp3: Effect of PKA inhibition by Rp-8CPT cAMPS on roundness and centrosomal actin level

a & b- Pretreatment with Rp-8CPT-cAMPS of cells deposited on VCVAM-1 or VCAM1+CXCL12 (1µg/ml

in (a) and 0.3µg/ml (b)) for 5 minutes, induces an increase of basal cell roundness and prevents the

chemokine-induced cell deformation when the stimulation is suboptimal (b). a: Mean ± SE of 4

independent experiments. 500-1226 cells/condition/experiment. b: Mean ± SE of 6 independent

experiments. 479-1283 cells/condition/experiment.

c & d- T cells preincubated with the PKA inhibitor Rp-8CPT-cAMPS display a higher level of centrosomal

actin in resting conditions compared to non-stimulated cells. After addition of CXCL12 (100 ng/ml (c)

or 25 ng/ml (d)), the reduction induced by the chemokine is abolished in sub-optimal conditions of

stimulation (d). c: Mean ± SE of 3 independent experiments. 26-61 cells/condition/experiment. d:

Mean ± SE of 4 independent experiments. 36-94 cells/condition/experiment.

Figure Supp4: Arp2 and F-Actin accumulation at the centrosome display a similar sensitivity to PKA

a- Example of distribution of F-Actin and Arp2 in representative cells in control conditions (upper line),

after CXCL12 stimulation (middle line) or after H89 pretreatment (lower line). Scale bar = 10µm.

b- After CXCL12 stimulation, the accumulations of F-Actin and Arp2/3 at the centrosome are both

decreased while they are enhanced after preincubation with the PKA inhibitor H89. The same cells

have been quantified for the 2 labeling. Mean ± SE of 4 independent experiments. 38-165

cells/condition/experiment.

a

CXCR4   F-Actin Pericentrin

CXCR4   F-Actin Pericentrin

Control

b

CXCL12

Figure Supp3

Figure Supp4