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SNAP-tagged nanobodies enable reversible optical control of a G protein-coupled receptor via a remotely tethered photoswitchable ligand

Short Title: Nanobody-mediated optical manipulation of a transmembrane receptor

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50 **Abstract:**

51
52 G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) mediate the transduction of extracellular signals into
53 complex intracellular responses. Despite their ubiquitous roles in physiological processes and as drug
54 targets for a wide range of disorders, the precise mechanisms of GPCR function at the molecular, cellular,
55 and systems levels remain partially understood. In order to dissect the function of individual receptors
56 subtypes with high spatiotemporal precision, various optogenetic and photopharmacological approaches
57 have been reported that use the power of light for receptor activation and deactivation. Here, we introduce
58 a novel and, to date, most remote way of applying photoswitchable orthogonally remotely-tethered
59 ligands (PORTLs) by using a SNAP-tag fused nanobody. Our nanobody-photoswitch conjugates (NPCs)
60 can be used to target a GFP-fused metabotropic glutamate receptor by either gene-free application of
61 purified complexes or co-expression of genetically encoded nanobodies to yield robust, reversible control
62 of agonist binding and subsequent downstream activation. By harboring and combining the selectivity
63 and flexibility of both nanobodies and self-labelling enzymes, we set the stage for targeting endogenous
64 receptors *in vivo*.

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83 **Introduction:**

84 The optical control of proteins and their associated cellular functions has evolved into a powerful
85 technique for gaining a deeper understanding of biological processes[1, 2]. In particular, the ability to
86 optically control ion channels, transporters and receptors has made it possible to move toward a more
87 mechanistic understanding of the role of specific cells and synapses in the circuit-driven processes of the
88 brain. While classical optogenetic tools, such as those based on opsins, allow for the general control of
89 cellular excitability or broadly-defined signaling pathways, the ability to control specific signaling
90 molecules has the potential to extend such analysis to probe the *molecular* basis of physiological
91 functions and disease pathophysiology. This circumvents the limitations of pharmacology, where
92 subtype-selectivity is difficult to achieve and compounds cannot be applied or removed in a fast and
93 efficient manner to defined locations due to diffusion.

94 Ideally, one would be able to control *native* receptors with subtype-specificity, high
95 spatiotemporal precision, and genetic targeting to defined cell types. A number of previous strategies have
96 achieved a subset of these desired parameters, but it remains a major challenge to attain all of them within
97 the same toolset[3] (**Supplementary Table 1**). We previously developed approaches to optogenetically
98 manipulate specific G protein-coupled metabotropic glutamate receptors (mGluRs) through the covalent
99 attachment of photoswitchable tethered ligands (PTLs)[4-6]. Initially, these compounds were targeted
100 directly to an engineered cysteine *via* maleimide conjugation (**Fig 1A**)[7], but more recently we improved
101 this method through the use of an *N*-terminal self-labeling tag (**Fig 1B**)[8]. This strategy has yielded
102 enhanced labeling efficiency in culture and *in vivo*[9], simplified photoswitch design, enabled
103 multiplexing of tags, and, most importantly, is fully orthogonal to native chemistry[10]. Based on the
104 demonstrated utility of self-labeling proteins in this context and the key finding that tethered
105 photoswitches can optically control ligand binding when attached to a distinct protein domain, we
106 wondered if we could further transport photoswitch attachment to an antibody or antibody fragment to
107 add an extra layer of specificity and flexibility (**Fig 1C**). The ability to photoswitch a membrane receptor
108 in this manner would produce an approach that could be used to target native receptors without the need
109 for the incorporation of a labeling tag directly into the protein of interest. To achieve this, we turned to
110 single chain antibodies (*i.e.* nanobodies). Nanobodies are beneficial because of their small size, target
111 specificity, and ability to be genetically encoded for expression in mammalian cells[11, 12].

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116 **Results:**

117 **SNAP-tagged anti-GFP nanobodies (NBs) retain GFP affinity and efficient labeling of BG-** 118 **conjugated compounds**

119
120 To enable gene-free optical control of target proteins, we sought to utilize previously
121 characterized nanobodies (NBs) that target GFP[13] to produce a "Nanobody-Photoswitch Conjugate"
122 (NPC; see **Supplementary Table 1**). We genetically fused the self-labeling SNAP-tag[14, 15] protein to
123 either the *N*-terminus ("SNAP-NB") or *C*-terminus ("NB-SNAP") of the anti-GFP nanobody GBP1,
124 which enhances the fluorescence of wtGFP. The SNAP-fusion proteins remained reactive in this context
125 and allowed us to covalently attach small molecules, such as fluorophores and photoswitches, to the NBs
126 *via* *O*⁶-benzylguanine (BG)-linked compounds *in vitro* (**Fig S1**). We next tested if SNAP incorporation
127 would alter the ability of the NB to efficiently target its antigen, GFP. Application of both SNAP-NB and
128 NB-SNAP fusions to purified wtGFP led to a dose-dependent increase in fluorescence (**Fig 2A**), with an
129 apparent affinity of ~3 nM. Together this shows that incorporation of SNAP into the NB at either end does
130 not affect its ability to target GFP, consistent with the localization of the *N* and *C*-termini of the NB
131 distant from the GFP binding site[13].

132

133 **SNAP-tagged NBs label GFP-mGluR2 in living cells with 2:2 stoichiometry**

134

135 We next asked if purified SNAP-tagged NBs could enable efficient labeling of a GFP-tagged
136 membrane receptor to ultimately mediate optical control in living cells. We genetically fused GFP to
137 either the extracellular *N*-terminus or the intracellular *C*-terminus of mGluR2 (see online methods).
138 Application of purified SNAP-tagged NBs that had been pre-labeled with Alexa-546 produced clear
139 fluorescence on the surface of HEK 293T cells expressing GFP-mGluR2, but not mGluR2-GFP (**Fig**
140 **2B,C; Fig S2A,B**). Importantly, following cell surface labeling with NBs, washing with buffer for 30
141 minutes did not reduce the fluorescence (**Fig S2C**), indicating that the extracellular GFP-NB interaction is
142 sufficiently stable for probing signaling on the physiological timescales relevant to GPCR signaling.

143 Many membrane receptors are oligomeric, raising the need for labeling of each subunit within a
144 complex if one is going to use NBs for efficient optical control of ligand binding with a tethered agonist.
145 Since mGluRs are dimers in living cells[16, 17] and two agonists are required for full activation[16, 18],
146 we sought to determine if two NBs can bind to an mGluR2 dimer. Compared to typical antibodies (~150
147 kDa), we hypothesized that the small size of NBs (~15 kDa) would decrease the chance of steric
148 hindrance between NBs on adjacent subunits. To measure the stoichiometry of SNAP-tagged NBs bound

149 to GFP-mGluR2 dimers, we performed a single-molecule pulldown ("SiMPull") of lysate from cells
150 expressing GFP-mGluR2 and labeled with NB-SNAP(Alexa-546). After immobilization of GFP-mGluR2
151 on a polyethylene-glycol (PEG) passivated coverslip using an anti-mGluR2 antibody (**Fig 2D**), we used
152 photobleaching step analysis of spots in the red channel that were co-localized with GFP spots to
153 determine the number of NBs per GFP-mGluR2 (**Fig 2D,E**). ~45% of these colocalized red spots
154 bleached in 2-steps, showing that two NBs can indeed bind to an mGluR2 dimer (**Fig 2E**). Importantly,
155 very few spots were observed when lysate from cells expressing mGluR2-GFP was immobilized (**Fig**
156 **S2D**).

157

158 **Purified SNAP-tagged NBs allow photoactivation of mGluR2 via "BGAG" photoswitches**

159

160 Given the efficient binding of SNAP-tagged NBs to GFP-mGluR2, we next tested if they could
161 enable optical control of mGluR2 *via* attachment of BGAG photoswitches[8, 10]. As a pre-requisite to
162 optical control, we first assessed the ability of GFP-mGluR2 to retain normal function following NB
163 conjugation. We performed whole cell patch clamp recordings from HEK 293T cells co-expressing G
164 protein-gated GIRK channels as a readout of activity and saw no effect of NB attachment on apparent
165 glutamate affinity or maximum current amplitude (**Fig 3A**). We next labeled GFP-mGluR2 expressing
166 cells with either SNAP-NB or NB-SNAP along with BGAG variants of different PEG linker length
167 (BGAG₀, BGAG₁₂, or BGAG₂₈) (**Fig. 3B**). Robust photocurrents were observed for most conditions with
168 maximal photo-activation of up to 40% relative to saturating glutamate observed for NB-SNAP with
169 BGAG₁₂ (**Fig 3C; S3A-C**). The directionality of photoswitching, with *cis*-BGAG serving as an agonist,
170 was conserved for NB conjugation to all BGAG variants as was seen in previous studies with direct
171 conjugation to an *N*-terminal SNAP domain[8, 10]. This supports a mechanism where relative efficacy of
172 the *cis* and *trans* configurations are due to alterations in the inherent pharmacology of the azobenzene-
173 glutamate moiety, rather than the relative reach of the two forms. Importantly, in the presence of
174 saturating (1 mM) glutamate, no photoswitching was observed indicating that BGAG₁₂ does not serve as a
175 partial agonist or antagonist in the NB-tethered context (**Fig S3D**). Subtle differences in the BGAG length
176 dependence of SNAP-NB and NB-SNAP indicate differences in the relative orientation to the glutamate
177 binding site. SNAP-NB showed similar efficacy with BGAG₀ and BGAG₁₂ whereas NB-SNAP showed a
178 2-fold increase in efficacy for BGAG₁₂ relative to BGAG₀ (**Fig 3D**). This likely indicates that the SNAP
179 domain of SNAP-NB is, on average, closer to the glutamate binding site than the SNAP domain of NB-
180 SNAP. Both SNAP-NB and NB-SNAP showed negligible photoswitching with BGAG₂₈, consistent with
181 the notion that PEG chains of this length provide too low of an effective concentration due to the large
182 volume of conformational space sampled. Structural models showing a possible arrangement of SNAP-

183 tagged nanobodies relative to GFP-mGluR2 indicate distinct geometries of the two systems which could
184 account for differences in photoswitch efficacy (**Fig S3E**). Protein flexibility likely also plays a major role
185 in facilitating the ability of NB-tethered BGAGs to effectively bind and activate mGluR2. This is
186 especially likely for BGAG₀ which would be too short to reach the binding site without major flexibility
187 introduced either from inter-domain linkers (*i.e.* between GFP and mGluR2 or SNAP and NB) or the
188 receptor itself.

189

190 **Co-expression of genetically encoded SNAP-tagged NBs enables optical control of mGluR2**

191

192 While the ability to target proteins for optical control using purified nanobodies opens many
193 experimental possibilities that don't require genetic manipulation, an alternative approach would take
194 advantage of the relative ease at which NBs can be genetically encoded and expressed in mammalian
195 systems[19, 20]. Genetically encoding NBs that can then target specific proteins and provide a tethering
196 point for photoswitch attachment would allow for cell-type specific targeting, a crucial property for
197 dissecting the role of specific signaling molecules in many physiological systems, especially within the
198 circuitry of the nervous system. To see if NBs can be used to target extracellular protein domains, we
199 added an mGluR signal sequence (ss) to NB-SNAP to promote trafficking through the endoplasmic
200 reticulum (ER) *via* the same pathway as integral membrane proteins. This should allow NB-SNAP to
201 remain in the same compartment (ER lumen, Golgi lumen, extracellular space) as the GFP of GFP-
202 mGluR2 during the entire trafficking process (**Fig 4A**). Consistent with this, co-expression of ss-NB-
203 SNAP and GFP-mGluR2, but not mGluR2-GFP, led to clear surface labeling with BG-Alexa-546 (**Fig**
204 **4B; S4A**). Co-expression of NB-SNAP, without the addition of the ss, was unable to label surface GFP-
205 mGluR2 (**Fig S4B**). We next tested the ability of genetically-encoded, co-expressed NB-SNAP to
206 optically control GFP-mGluR2. Similar to what was observed with purified NB-SNAP, BGAG₁₂
207 produced clear photocurrents that were ~20% in amplitude relative to saturating 1 mM glutamate (**Fig**
208 **4C**). Together these data demonstrate that anti-GFP NBs may be genetically encoded to efficiently target
209 proteins for optical control. In addition to the advantage of permitting cell-type specific optical control in
210 complex systems, this approach also provides the flexibility to either label a nanobody-GFP complex for
211 optical control on the cell surface (using a membrane-impermeable photoswitch or fluorophore) or inside
212 of a cell (using a membrane-permeable photoswitch or fluorophore) to probe the distinct roles and
213 regulation of a signaling protein in different cellular locations, an increasingly appreciated aspect of
214 GPCR function.[21, 22]

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216

217 **Discussion:**

218 In this study, we have established a new, general approach to targeting signaling proteins for
219 optical control using nanobody-photoswitch conjugates (NPCs). In contrast to a recent study using an
220 antibody to deliver an irreversible photosensitizer to inactivate AMPA receptors[23] this work establishes
221 the suitability of immunochemistry for targeting a membrane protein for *reversible* optical control,
222 opening the door to the manipulation of native proteins with high spatiotemporal precision. Similarly,
223 Scholler et al[24] recently reported *allosteric* nanobodies to manipulate mGluR2, but these tools also lack
224 reversibility and were not shown to permit genetic encoding for cell-type targeting, limiting their utility
225 for precise, dynamic manipulation of receptors. In addition, the ability of NPCs to manipulate signaling
226 via the *orthosteric* binding site via PORTLs permits a more physiological receptor perturbation through a
227 defined, native mechanism.

228 Recent work has supported the idea that antibody-based approaches to manipulating GPCRs show
229 great promise for treatment of a wide range of diseases, including various cancers and neurological
230 disorders[25]. Importantly, the principles reported in this manuscript should be widely applicable *via*
231 other types of antibodies and other receptor subtypes, and may ultimately be useful clinically by adding
232 reversible spatiotemporal control to traditional antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs)[26]. Crucially, we
233 demonstrate that NPCs can either be applied as purified complexes, which are most applicable in this
234 clinical context, or as genetically-encoded tools that can be used to target specific cell types for maximal
235 precision in mechanistic biological studies. While the ability to target NBs directly to wild-type,
236 endogenous proteins of interest offers great potential, the targeting of proteins with incorporated GFP tags
237 also offers many advantages. Strong antibodies or nanobodies with sufficient strength and specificity are
238 not available for many antigens but GFP, for which exceptionally high affinity nanobodies have been
239 developed, extensively characterized and applied *in vitro* and in living cells [13, 27] [28] has been
240 successfully incorporated into many proteins, often in multiple different positions, that have been well-
241 characterized functionally[29]. In addition, recent genetic advances based on the CRISPR-Cas9 system
242 have made it increasingly feasible to incorporate GFP or other tags into native proteins either at the
243 transgenic level or even in post-mitotic cells in the nervous system[30] [31]. Ultimately, the existing
244 toolbox of photoswitchable ligands for SNAP and CLIP with different spectral properties, NBs and single
245 chain antibodies for ubiquitous tags, along with the complement of genetic lines for targeting NB
246 expression, should allow for sophisticated multiplexed experiments that can manipulate native signaling
247 proteins to probe their roles in physiology with optimal precision.

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249

250 **Materials and Methods:**

251

252 **Chemical Synthesis**

253 Chemical synthesis was performed as previously described[8, 10].

254

255 **Cloning, Purification and Characterization of Nanobodies**

256 All fusion proteins were cloned using standard cloning techniques. SNAP NB-fusions with an *N*-terminal
257 Strep-tag and 10xHis-tag were cloned into a pBAD expression vector for bacterial expression, wtGFP
258 with an *N*-terminal Strep-tag and a *C*-terminal 10xHis-tag was cloned into pET51b(+) for bacterial
259 expression, and Complete amino acid sequences for constructs used can be found in the supplementary
260 material. ss-NB-SNAP contains the mGluR5 signal sequence ("MVLLLILSVLLLKEDVRGSA") at the
261 *N*-terminus. For purification, SNAP-fused NBs were expressed in the *E. coli* strain DH10B and wtGFP
262 was expressed in BL21(DE3) pLysS cell. All LB media contained ampicillin (100 µg/mL) for protein
263 expression. A culture was grown at 37 °C until an OD₆₀₀ of 0.6 was reached at which point cells were
264 induced with *L*-arabinose (0.02%, (w/v)) or IPTG (1 mM). Protein constructs were expressed overnight at
265 25 °C. Cells were harvested by centrifugation and sonicated to produce cell lysates. The lysate was
266 cleared by centrifugation and purified by Ni-NTA resin (ThermoFisher) and Strep-Tactin II resin (IBA)
267 according to the manufacturer's protocols. Purified protein samples were stored in 50 mM Hepes, 50 mM
268 NaCl (pH 7.3) and either flash frozen and stored at -80 °C or stored at 4 °C. SNAP-tag was labeled with
269 fluorescent dyes or photoswitchable compounds at 2-10 µM protein with a 2-5 fold molar ratio of
270 fluorophores in 50 mM Hepes, 50 mM NaCl (pH 7.3). For *in vitro* experiments, excess label was removed
271 by centrifugal filter devices with 10 KDa cutoff (Microcon YM-10, Millipore), and the labeled protein
272 was stored in 50 mM Hepes, 50 mM NaCl (pH 7.3) at 4 °C.

273

274 Activity testing of purified nanobody-SNAP fusions against wtGFP was performed in 50 mM Hepes, 50
275 mM NaCl (pH 7.3) 0.05 mg/mL BSA, 0.05% Triton X-100 in black 384-well plates (Corning, 3820).
276 Fluorescent intensities were recorded on a Spark 20M (Tecan) with excitation at 480 nm, emission at 535
277 nm, and bandwidths of 5 nm for both excitation and emission. The dose-response was fit with Eq.1.

278

$$I = (R_{max} - R_{min}) \times Fsb + R_{min} + N \times x$$

279

280

$$Fsb = \frac{(L + x + k_D - \sqrt{(L + x + k_D)^2 - 4 \times L \times x})}{2 \times L}$$

281

282

(Eq 1)

283

284 Where I is the Intensity of light at 535 nm, R_{max} is the maximum light emitted at 535 nm, R_{min} is the
285 minimum light emitted at 535 nm, L is the concentration of wtGFP and fixed to 4 nM, x is the
286 concentration of the nanobody-SNAP fusion protein, and K_D is the calculated dissociation constant, and N
287 accounts for non-specific binding. The fit was performed in Prism (GraphPad).

288

289 Competitive labeling and in-gel imaging was used to assay the efficiency of BGAG₁₂ labeling of SNAP-
290 tag NB-fusions. SNAP-NB or NB-SNAP (5 μ M) were treated with BGAG₁₂ (15 μ M, 3-fold equivalence)
291 in 50 mM Hepes, 50 mM NaCl (pH 7.3). Aliquots were taken at indicated time points and labeled with
292 BG-TMR (150 μ M, 30 equivalents) for 1 h. The reaction was then quenched with SDS-loading buffer,
293 heated to 95 °C for 10 minutes, and stored at -20 °C until separated by SDS-PAGE. In-gel fluorescence of
294 BG-TMR was measured on a ChemiDoc MP imager (Bio Rad) equipped with a CCD camera. Imaging
295 was performed using green epifluorescent light and emission filters for Cy3 (605/50 nm.). The gel was
296 then labeled with coomasie. Image analysis was performed with ImageJ (W. Rasband, NIH).
297 Fluorescence Intensities in the Cy3 channel were background subtracted and normalized to the
298 fluorescence with no BGAG₁₂ present at time 0.

299

300 **Mass analysis**

301 A Bruker maXis II ETD quadrupole-time-of-flight (QTOF) instrument with reverse phase liquid
302 chromatography was used to measure accurate protein masses. All measurements were performed by
303 injecting 5 μ L of protein in 50 mM Hepes, 50 mM NaCl (pH 7.3) at a concentration of 5 μ M. Proteins
304 were first passed over a C8 wide pore column (100 mm) heated to 50 °C in a gradient of H₂O + 1%
305 formic acid (A) /MeCN + 1% formic acid (B) from 10 to 98% B over 6 minutes. The charge envelope of
306 the protein within the corresponding spectrum was deconvoluted using Bruker's DataAnalysis software
307 with the Maximum Entropy deconvolution option enabled.

308

309 **Molecular Biology, Cell Culture, and Transfection**

310 GFP-mGluR2 in pcDNA3 was produced using standard PCR-based techniques. In brief, enhanced GFP
311 (eGFP) and a 17 amino acid glycine-rich linker were added after the mGluR2 signal sequence. HEK293T
312 cells were maintained in DMEM media supplemented with 5% fetal bovine serum. Cells were seeded on
313 18 mm coverslips and transfected 12 hours later using Lipofectamine 3000 (Thermo Fisher). 0.3-0.7 μ g
314 each of GFP-mGluR2 DNA, GIRK1-F137S DNA (for electrophysiology experiments), and NB-SNAP

315 (for NB co-expression experiments) was added to each well. Experiments were performed 24-48 hours
316 after transfection.

317

318 **Fluorescence Imaging**

319 Imaging was performed on an IX-73 microscope (Olympus) with a cellTIRF laser illumination system
320 and an sCMOS ORCA-Flash4 v3.0 camera (Hamamatsu). GFP was excited using a 488 nm laser diode
321 and a 561 nm DPSS laser was used for Alexa-546. Cellular imaging was performed in wide field mode
322 using a 60x objective (NA=1.49). Data was acquired using cellSens software (Olympus) and analyzed
323 using ImageJ. Prior to imaging, cells were incubated with purified, Alexa-546 labeled NBs (50 nM) for 45
324 minutes at 37 °C. For genetically-encoded ss-NB-SNAP experiments, BG-Alexa-546 was applied at 1 μM
325 for 45 minutes at 37 °C. Single molecule pulldown of mGluR2 was performed as previously
326 described[16]. Briefly, following immobilization using an anti-mGluR2 antibody images were acquired
327 with a 100x objective (NA=1.49) at 20 Hz in TIRF mode and bleaching steps for individual molecules
328 were manually analyzed using a previously described custom software [32].

329

330 **Patch Clamp Electrophysiology**

331 Whole cell patch clamp electrophysiology was performed as previously described [10]. In brief, HEK
332 293T cells co-expressing GFP-mGluR2 along with GIRK1-F137S (homotetramerization mutant) were
333 voltage clamped at -60 mV using an Axopatch 200B amplifier (Molecular Devices) attached to a 3-6 MΩ
334 pipette filled with intracellular solution containing 140 mM KCl, 10 mM Hepes, 5 mM EGTA, and 3 mM
335 MgCl₂ (pH 7.4). Recordings were performed in high potassium extracellular solution containing 120 mM
336 KCl, 25 mM NaCl, 1 mM MgCl₂, 2 mM CaCl₂, and 10 mM Hepes (pH 7.4). Cells were incubated with
337 purified NBs (100 nM) and/or BGAG variants (10 μM) for 45 minutes at 37 °C. Prior to any recordings,
338 cells were extensively washed with high potassium extracellular solution using a gravity-driven perfusion
339 system, which was also used to control glutamate application. Light stimulation (~1 mW/mm²) was
340 provided by a coolLED pE-4000 illumination system that was controlled *via* pClamp software *via* a
341 Digidata 1550B digitizer. Data were analyzed with Clampfit (Molecular Devices) and Prism (GraphPad).

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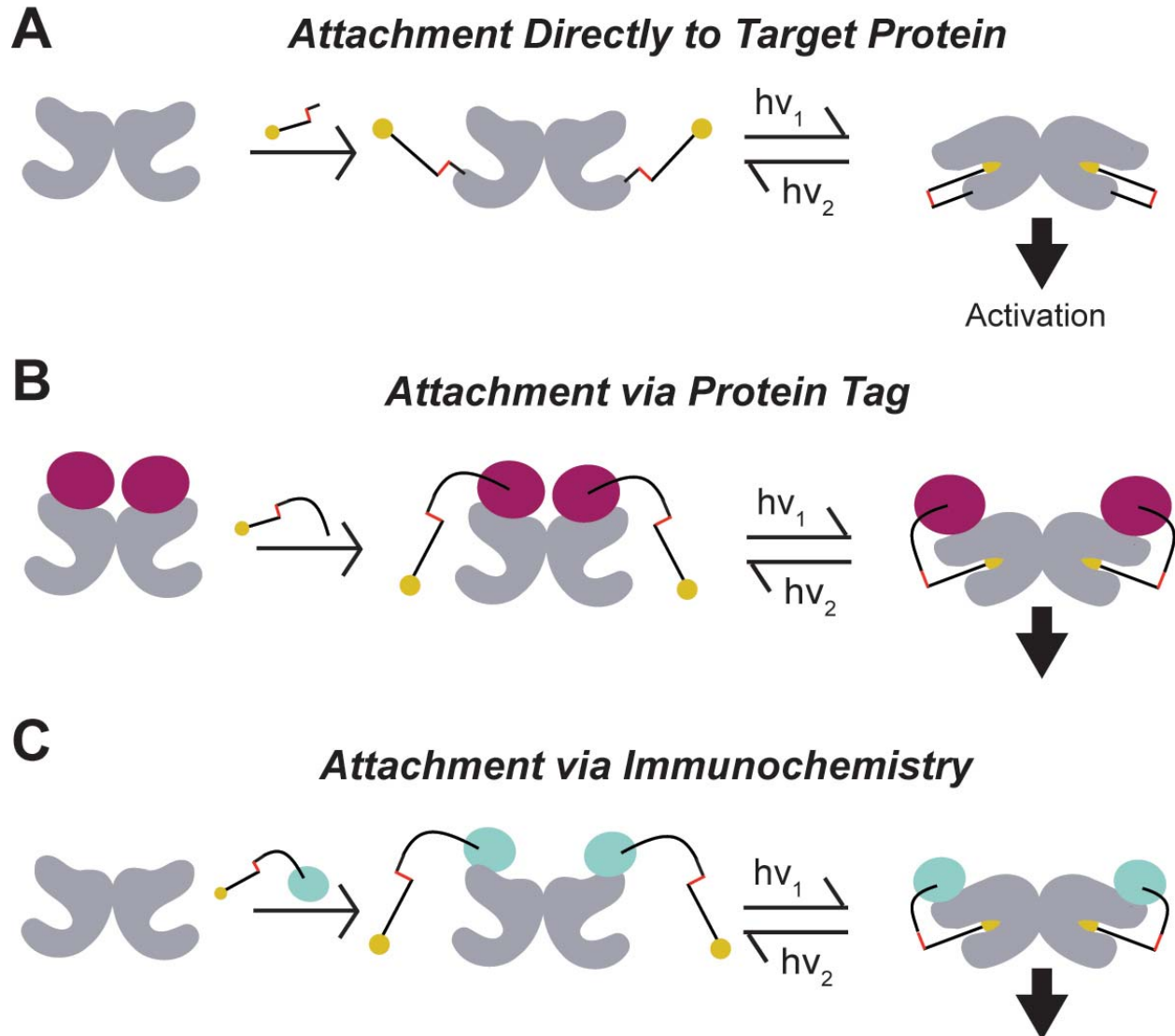
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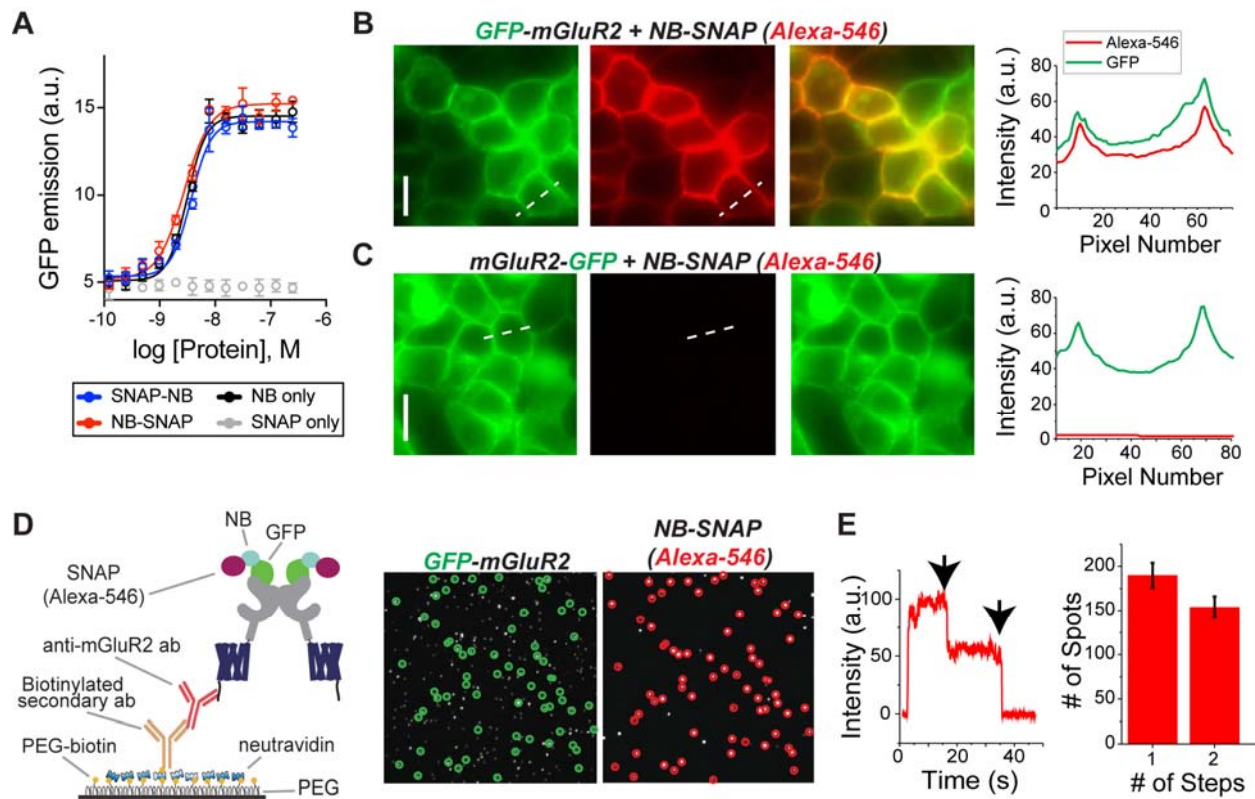


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Fig 1. Optical control of ligand binding via distinct photoswitch attachment strategies.

466 Photoswitchable tethered ligands may be presented to target ligand binding domains through previously
467 established strategies of directly binding to the target protein (A), traditionally *via* cysteine-maleimide
468 linkage, through binding to introduced self-labeling protein tags (B), such as SNAP, CLIP or Halo-tag, or
469 potentially through immunochemistry with labeled antibodies (C).

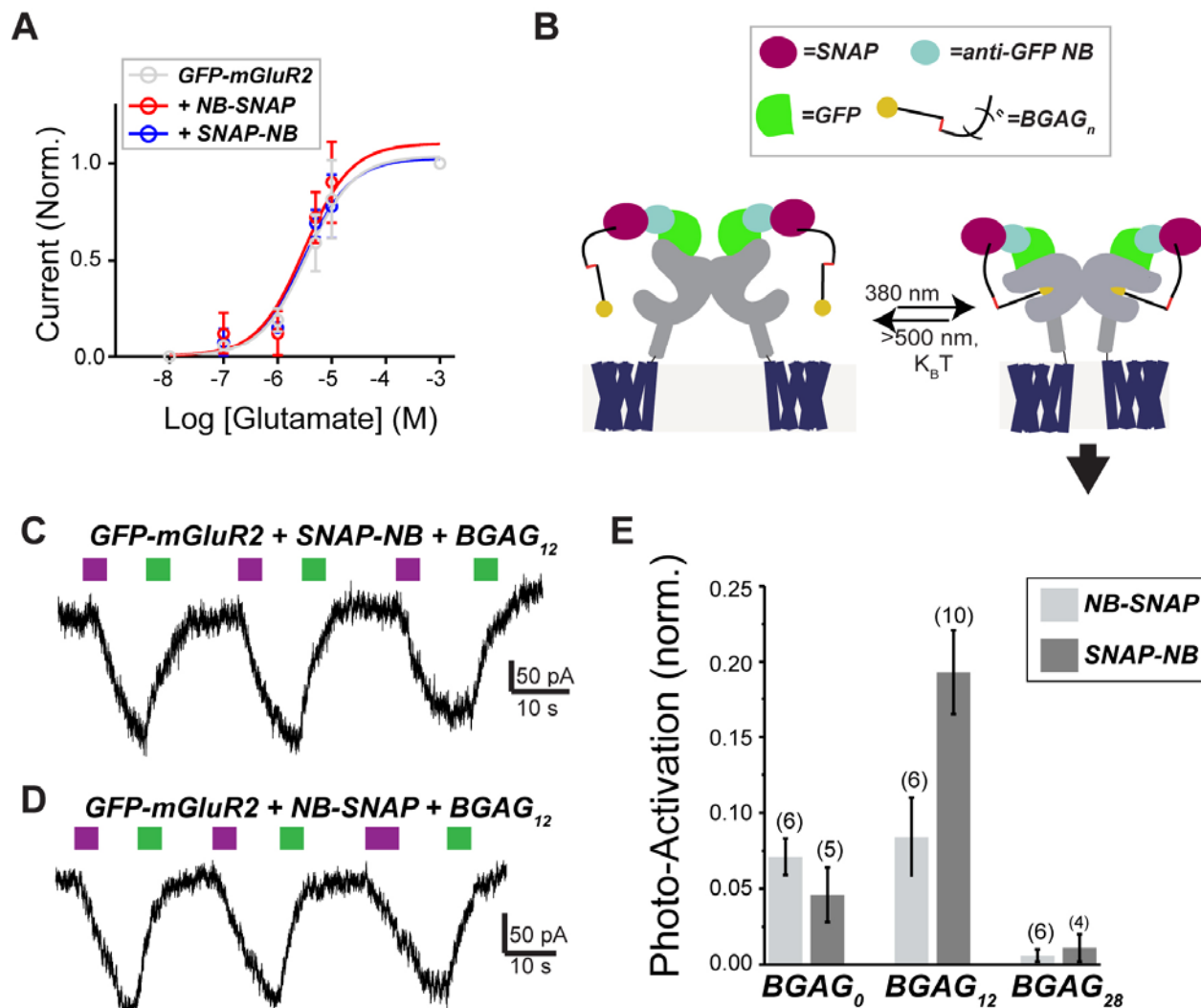
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472 **Fig 2. SNAP-tagged anti-GFP nanobodies enable stoichiometric labeling of GFP-mGluR2 in living**
473 **cells.**

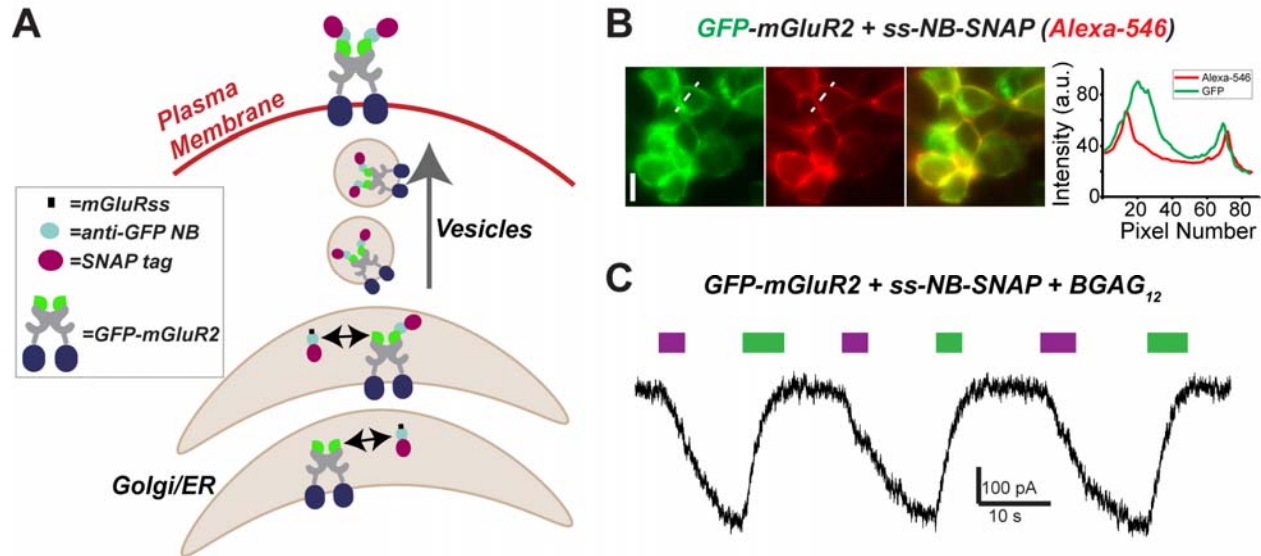
474 (A) *In vitro* dose-response curve for SNAP-NB, NB-SNAP, NB and SNAP against wtGFP assessed by
475 fluorescence enhancement upon binding indicates that attachment of *N* or *C*-terminal SNAP domains does
476 not alter NB affinity (error bars indicate SEM). (B) Representative images showing labeling of surface-
477 expressed GFP-mGluR2 (green) by application of purified NB-SNAP labeled with Alexa-546 (red).
478 Right, line scan analysis shows overlap in GFP and Alexa-546 fluorescence at the plasma membrane. (C)
479 Representative images, left, and line scan, right, showing that no red surface fluorescence is observed
480 following application of Alexa-546-labeled NB-SNAP to cells expressing mGluR2-GFP. (D) Left,
481 Schematic of single molecule pulldown (SiMPull) of GFP-mGluR2 and SNAP-fused NBs *via* an anti-
482 mGluR2 antibody on polyethylene-glycol (PEG) passivated coverslip. Right, representative images show
483 co-localized GFP-mGluR2 (green) and NB-SNAP (Alexa-546; red) molecules. 74.6% of red spots were
484 colocalized with a green spot (773/1034). (E) Counting photobleaching steps in the red channel
485 (representative trace, left) allow for analysis of NB stoichiometry (bar graph, right), confirming that 2
486 NBs can bind to a receptor dimer.

487



488
489 **Fig 3. BGAG conjugation to SNAP-tagged NBs permits robust photo-activation of GFP-mGluR2.**
490 (A) Glutamate dose-response curves, from GIRK activation assay, indicate that conjugation of SNAP-NB
491 or NB-SNAP does not change the glutamate response of mGluR2. Current amplitudes are normalized to
492 the response to saturating 1 mM glutamate. (B) Schematic showing arrangement of BGAG-labeled
493 SNAP-tagged NBs attached to GFP-mGluR2 and light-mediated receptor activation via
494 photoisomerization of the azobenzene moiety of BGAG. (C) Representative traces showing reversible
495 photoactivation of GFP-mGluR2 by BGAG₁₂ conjugated to SNAP-NB (top) or NB-SNAP (bottom). 380
496 nm light (magenta) induces photo-isomerization of the azobenzene from *trans* to *cis* and 500 nm light
497 (green) reverses the process. (D) Summary bar graph showing relative efficacy for BGAG variants of
498 different length conjugated to either SNAP-NB or NB-SNAP. The numbers of cells tested for each
499 condition are shown in parentheses.

500



501
502 **Fig 4. Genetic encoding of SNAP-tagged anti-GFP nanobodies allows targeting of extracellular**
503 **GFP-tags for optical control.**

504 (A) Schematic showing co-trafficking and assembly of ss-NB-SNAP with GFP-mGluR2. (B)
505 Representative images showing labeling of surface-expressed GFP-mGluR2 with co-expressed ss-NB-
506 SNAP following labeling with Alexa-546. (C) Representative traces showing photoactivation of GFP-
507 mGluR2 by BGAG₁₂ conjugated to co-expressed ss-NB-SNAP.

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