

## Naturally occurring cobalamin (B<sub>12</sub>) analogs can function as cofactors for human methylmalonyl-CoA mutase

Olga M. Sokolovskaya,<sup>1</sup> Tanja Plessl,<sup>2</sup> Henry Bailey,<sup>3</sup> Sabrina Mackinnon,<sup>3</sup> Matthias R. Baumgartner,<sup>2</sup> Wyatt W. Yue,<sup>3</sup> D. Sean Froese,<sup>2</sup> and Michiko E. Taga<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Plant & Microbial Biology, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA USA

<sup>2</sup> Division of Metabolism and Children's Research Center, University Children's Hospital, Zurich, Switzerland

<sup>3</sup> Structural Genomics Consortium, Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Oxford, UK

\*Correspondence to: Michiko E. Taga, [taga@berkeley.edu](mailto:taga@berkeley.edu)

### Abstract

Cobalamin, commonly known as vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, is an essential micronutrient for humans because of its role as an enzyme cofactor. Cobalamin is one of over a dozen structurally related compounds – cobamides – that are found in food and are produced by microorganisms in the human gut. Very little is known about how different cobamides affect B<sub>12</sub>-dependent metabolism in human cells. Here, we test *in vitro* how diverse cobamide cofactors affect the function of methylmalonyl-CoA mutase (MMUT), one of two cobalamin-dependent enzymes in humans. We find that, although cobalamin is the most effective cofactor for MMUT, multiple cobamides support MMUT function with differences in binding affinity ( $K_d$ ), binding kinetics ( $k_{on}$ ), and concentration dependence during catalysis ( $K_{M, app}$ ). Additionally, we find that six disease-associated MMUT variants that cause cobalamin-responsive impairments in enzymatic activity also respond to other cobamides, with the extent of catalytic rescue dependent on the identity of the cobamide. Our studies challenge the exclusive focus on cobalamin in the context of human physiology, indicate that diverse cobamides can support the function of a human enzyme, and suggest future directions that will improve our understanding of the roles of different cobamides in human biology.

### Introduction

Vitamins are diet-derived micronutrients that are essential for human health. Cobalamin (vitamin B<sub>12</sub>) is among a subset of vitamins that function as enzyme cofactors. Humans require cobalamin as a cofactor for two enzymes: methionine synthase (MS) and methylmalonyl-CoA mutase (MMUT, MCM in bacteria) (Figure 1A) (1). MS catalyzes the methylation of homocysteine, a reaction that is important not only because it produces methionine, a proteinogenic amino acid and precursor to the cofactor *S*-adenosylmethionine, but also for generating forms of tetrahydrofolate that are required for DNA synthesis (2). MMUT is a mitochondrial enzyme that catalyzes the reversible isomerization of (*R*)-methylmalonyl-CoA to succinyl-CoA, which is part of the propionate catabolism pathway in humans and is required for breaking down branched amino acids, odd-chain fatty acids, and the side-chain of cholesterol into the citric acid (TCA) cycle (3). Impairments in MMUT or MS activity, which can result from cobalamin deficiency in the diet, decreased cobalamin absorption (e.g. pernicious anemia), or inherited mutations in genes encoding MMUT, MS, and cobalamin trafficking proteins, lead to illnesses ranging from mild anemia to severe neurological dysfunction (4-8).

Although it is found in animal tissues, cobalamin is produced exclusively by prokaryotes (9). Rather than synthesizing cobalamin, many bacteria and archaea produce cobalamin analogs that have the same core structure as cobalamin (Figure 1B) but differ in the identity of the nucleotide base, commonly referred to as the lower ligand (Figure 1B, boxed), which can be a benzimidazole, phenolic, or purine (Figure 1C-E) (10-15). Cobalamin and its analogs are collectively called cobamides (and are also known as corrinoid cofactors). In some environments including the human gut, purinyl or phenolyl cobamides can be significantly more abundant than cobalamin itself (11,16). All cobamides share the same catalytic features, which include an upper ligand (*R* in Figure 1B) that varies for different chemical reactions; for MMUT, the upper ligand is 5'-deoxyadenosine (as in adenosylcobalamin, AdoCbl), while for MS it is a methyl group (as in methylcobalamin, MeCbl). Although it is not directly involved in catalysis, lower ligand structure affects the biochemistry of cobamide-dependent enzymes, including both MCM and MS (17-24). However, the differential effects of cobamides have been primarily studied in bacterial cobamide-dependent enzymes, and only to a limited extent in mammalian MS and MCM.

It is widely accepted that humans are unable to use cobamides other than cobalamin, in part because of the intricate cobalamin uptake and trafficking system in humans, which is thought to be highly selective. Human intrinsic factor (IF) is a glycoprotein that captures various forms of cobalamin (including AdoCbl and cyanocobalamin, CNCbl, the vitamin form of cobalamin) in the intestine with up to femtomolar affinity and mediates uptake into ileal cells. IF has been reported to bind adenosyladeninylcobamide (Ado[Ade]Cba, also known as pseudocobalamin) and adenosyl-2-methyladeninylcobamide (Ado[2-MeAde]Cba, also known as Factor A) six orders of magnitude more weakly than AdoCbl (25,26), and to have low affinity for cyano-*para*-cresolylcobamide (CN[Cre]Cba) and the cobamide precursor cobinamide (Figure 1B) (27). Human transcobalamin (TC), which subsequently binds cobalamin forms that have entered the bloodstream and facilitates uptake into various tissues, is also highly selective against cobinamide, but less selective than IF for AdoCbl over other cobamides (25-27). The selectivity of both proteins is considered important for preventing cobinamide, inactive cobamides, and cobamide degradation products from reaching MS and MMUT (18,28-32).

Despite the apparent selectivity of the human cobamide uptake and trafficking proteins, several lines of evidence suggest that cobamides besides cobalamin may reach human tissues. Human IF was found to bind cyano-5-methylbenzimidazolylcobamide (CN[5-MeBza]Cba) with similar affinity as CNCbl, and IF affinity for cyanobenzimidazolylcobamide (CN[Bza]Cba) and cyano-5-hydroxybenzimidazolylcobamide (CN[5-OHBza]Cba) was no more than 2-fold lower than for CNCbl (26,27). Thus, these cobamides are likely to enter ileal cells. Cobalamin analogs have been reported in patient serum samples (33,34) and in human liver (35), and orally and subcutaneously administered cobamide analogs, including hydroxobenzimidazolylcobamide (OH[Bza]Cba), can be found in rat and rabbit tissues (26,30). Considering these findings, it is important to understand how alternative cobamides impact the biochemistry of cobamide-dependent enzymes in humans. While human MS has been shown to be active with multiple cobamides *in vitro* (31), reconstitution of human MMUT with any cobamides besides cobalamin has, to our knowledge, not been reported.

Here, we investigate the ability of human MMUT to use cobamide cofactors other than cobalamin *in vitro*. We find that MMUT binds to and is active with several cobamides from different structural classes, with differences in binding affinity, binding rate, and activity kinetics. We additionally characterize the ability of a set of MMUT missense variants to use different cobamides (36). These MMUT variants represent a subset of hundreds of mutations in MMUT that are found in patients with the inherited metabolic disorder methylmalonic aciduria (MMA) (36,37). Using a collection of 14 natural and unnatural cobamides and cobinamide, we screen the activity of six MMUT variants to look for improved activity *in vitro*. Although we find that the activity of MMUT variants with different cobamides remains well below that of the wildtype enzyme, this investigation demonstrates that both wildtype and MMUT variants are able to use several cobamides as cofactors, contrary to the assumption that cobalamin is the only suitable cobamide for humans.

## Results

### *MMUT binds many cobamides with varying affinity.*

To determine whether MMUT is able to use cobamides other than cobalamin, we heterologously expressed MMUT in *E. coli* and assayed the ability of the purified enzyme to bind cobamides from different structural classes. We measured quenching of intrinsic protein fluorescence to determine equilibrium dissociation constants ( $K_d$  values) for eight cobamides and the cobamide precursor cobinamide, which lacks a lower ligand (Figure 1B). The  $K_d$  calculated for AdoCbl, the native cofactor of MMUT, by this method ( $0.08 \pm 0.03 \mu\text{M}$ , Figure 2A, C) is reasonably close to a  $K_d$  value determined previously based on the spectral change of AdoCbl upon MMUT binding ( $0.27 \pm 0.11 \mu\text{M}$ ) (38). We found that MMUT binds several benzimidazolyl and phenolyl cobamides in addition to AdoCbl (Figure 2A, B), although structural differences within these categories resulted in differences in binding affinity spanning up to two orders of magnitude (Figure 2C, e.g. the  $K_d$  values of AdoCbl and Ado[Bza]Cba, which differ by two methyl groups, differ by ~25-fold). In contrast, MMUT did not bind purinyl cobamides to a significant extent at micromolar concentrations (Figure 2B, C). Consistent with previous reports focused on bacterial MCM orthologs (24,32), MMUT bound Ado-cobinamide, but with lower affinity than AdoCbl (Figure 2A, C).

In addition to determining equilibrium binding affinities of structurally diverse cobamides, we also measured the binding rates ( $k_{\text{on}}$ ) of three cobamides that had high affinity for MMUT, using stopped-flow fluorescence spectroscopy. Interestingly, we discovered that the  $k_{\text{on}}$  of Ado[Cre]Cba was about six times higher than the  $k_{\text{on}}$  of AdoCbl and adenosylphenolycobamide (Ado[Phe]Cba), which had similar binding rates (Figure 3). The fast  $k_{\text{on}}$  of Ado[Cre]Cba is in line with its high binding affinity for MMUT compared to AdoCbl and Ado[Phe]Cba.

### *Multiple cobamides support MMUT activity, with differences in apparent $K_M$ .*

Given that several cobamides bind MMUT, we next considered the possibility that MMUT activity can be supported by cobamides other than AdoCbl *in vitro*. We characterized the activity of recombinant MMUT reconstituted with cobamides for which the enzyme had high affinity, including both benzimidazolyl and phenolyl cobamides. Using a coupled spectrophotometric assay we found that MMUT was active with all of the cobamides we tested: AdoCbl, Ado[5-MeBza]Cba, Ado[Bza]Cba, Ado[Cre]Cba and Ado[Phe]Cba. Interestingly, however, the concentration required to achieve half-maximal activity,  $K_{M, \text{app}}$ , of the cobamides differed drastically, spanning two orders of magnitude (Figure 4). AdoCbl had the lowest  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  ( $0.04 \pm 0.02 \mu\text{M}$ , in agreement with a previously reported value of  $0.050 \mu\text{M}$  (39)), and the other benzimidazolyl cobamides had  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  values within 10-fold of AdoCbl (Figure 4A, C). The 10-fold difference in  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  between AdoCbl and Ado[Bza]Cba is consistent with a previous report for MCM purified from sheep kidney (18). While the  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  of Ado[Cre]Cba was in the range of the benzimidazolyl cobamides, Ado[Phe]Cba had a  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  100-fold higher than AdoCbl (Figure 4B, C). The high  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  values of both phenolyl cobamides relative to AdoCbl were unexpected, given their high binding affinities for MMUT.

### *Disease-associated MMUT variants with defects in AdoCbl $K_M$ also have impaired activity with other cobamides.*

Increased  $K_{M, \text{app}}$  of AdoCbl is a biochemical defect associated with some disease-causing variants of MMUT (36). Since we discovered that four cobamides besides AdoCbl support wildtype MMUT activity but have distinct binding and kinetic properties, we considered the possibility that cobamides other than cobalamin might also support activity of MMUT mutant variants and potentially suffer less of a  $K_M$  defect than AdoCbl. If this were the case, administration of those cobamides could be a potential disease therapy for MMA. We therefore screened a library of cobamides and cobinamide for the ability to

enhance the activity of six MMA-causing MMUT variants associated with  $K_M$  defects (36). Three of these variants have amino acid substitutions located in the B<sub>12</sub>-binding domain of the enzyme (G648D, V633G, G717V), while the other substitutions (P86L, Y100C, Y231N) are located in the substrate-binding domain near the cofactor or near the MMUT dimer interface (36,39). We determined the specific activity of wildtype (WT) MMUT each MMUT variant reconstituted with nine naturally occurring cobamides (Figure 5A, compounds A-H and M), cobinamide, and six “unnatural” cobamide analogs that we previously biosynthesized for structure-function studies (24) (Figure 5A, compounds J-L and N-P).

Consistent with the results of our kinetic assay (Figure 4), WT MMUT (Figure 5B) was active with AdoCbl, Ado[5-MeBza]Cba, and Ado[Bza]Cba (compounds A, B, C), as well as phenolyl cobamides (compounds G, H), and was additionally active with all three of the unnatural benzimidazolyl cobamide analogs (compounds J, K, P). No activity was observed with Ado[5-OHBza]Cba (compound D) or purinyl cobamides (compounds E, F, M, N), likely due to their low binding affinities (Figure 2), or with azabenzimidazolyl cobamides (compounds L, O).

As expected, all of the variants had significantly reduced specific activity with AdoCbl compared to WT MMUT (Figure 5C). None of the cobamides tested rescued MMUT variant activity to levels comparable to the WT enzyme. However, Ado[Cre]Cba (compound G) supported activity to a large extent in all of the variants, and some mutants also had appreciable activity with adenosyl-5-fluorobenzimidazolylcobamide (compound P) (Figure 5C). Notably, most of the variants, with the exception of G717V, partially or entirely lost the ability to use benzimidazolyl cobamides other than AdoCbl (compounds B, C, J, K) relative to the WT enzyme. This implies that if other benzimidazolyl cobamides reach human cells in patients with some of these mutations, the deleterious effects of the mutations could potentially be exacerbated.

## Discussion

Two human enzymes, MS and MMUT, require cobalamin as a cofactor. The metabolic functions of these enzymes are essential, and cobalamin deficiency can be fatal (4,5). Thus, humans have evolved a complex, high-affinity uptake, processing and delivery system for cobalamin, which is generally thought to be selective against other structurally related compounds (25-27). One hypothesis to explain selectivity in the cobamide uptake system is that selectivity has evolved to protect human cells from importing cobamides that are unsuitable as cofactors for MS and MMUT. Indeed, cobalamin precursors or degradation products can inhibit cobamide-dependent enzyme activity (30). However, whether cobamides with diverse lower ligands are suitable cofactors for MMUT has not been investigated *in vitro*.

Here, we report that MMUT functions with multiple benzimidazolyl and phenolyl cobamides, including some analogs with unnatural lower ligands. However, we observe up to 100-fold differences in binding and activity among cobamides, specifically in their  $K_d$  and  $K_{M,app}$  values. Historically, the  $K_{M,app}$  of cobamides has been used as a measure of their apparent affinity for MMUT; since cobamides remain bound to MMUT for multiple reaction cycles during which the cofactor is continuously regenerated (40,41), half-maximal activity is expected when MMUT is half-saturated with cobamide (i.e., at  $K_d$ ). However, direct comparison of  $K_{M,app}$  and  $K_d$  enabled by this study suggests that  $K_{M,app}$  may not reflect the affinity of cobamides for MMUT. Differences between  $K_{M,app}$  and  $K_d$  may be indicative of distinct effects of lower ligands on the catalytic cycle of MMUT.

In the X-ray crystal structure of MMUT bound to AdoCbl, the hydrophobic lower ligand of AdoCbl is located within a highly hydrophobic binding pocket of the enzyme (42). Impaired binding of Ado[5-OHBza]Cba and purinyl cobamides to MMUT may therefore be explained by the absence of stabilizing hydrophobic interactions between MMUT and the more polar lower ligands of these cobamides. We previously observed a similar pattern in MCM from the bacterium *Sinorhizobium meliloti* (*SmMCM*), and identified nitrogen atoms within the six-membered ring of purinyl lower ligands as the structural feature that impaired purinyl cobamide binding (24). These ring nitrogens may similarly interfere with binding of purinyl cobamides to MMUT; the absence of enzyme activity after MMUT



reconstitution with any cobamides containing nitrogens in the six-membered ring (compounds L-O, in addition to E and F, in Figure 5) suggests impaired binding. Comparing both studies reveals that human MMUT and *SmMCM*, which have 61% sequence identity, are remarkably similar in their relative affinities for different cobamides, and are unlike other bacterial MCM orthologs from *Escherichia coli* and *Veillonella parvula* (24). The similarities between MMUT, a mitochondrial enzyme, and *SmMCM* could reflect their evolutionary relationship, as mitochondria are thought to share a more recent common ancestor with *S. meliloti* (an  $\alpha$ -proteobacterium) than with *E. coli* (a  $\gamma$ -proteobacterium) and *V. parvula* (phylum Firmicutes); however, more experimental evidence would be required to support this hypothesis.

In addition to investigating the affinity of MMUT for different cobamides and testing MMUT activity, we measured binding kinetics of different cobamides to MMUT and found that lower ligand structure affects the binding rate of cobamide cofactors. The high  $k_{on}$  of Ado[Cre]Cba compared to AdoCbl is reminiscent of a previous report that the reaction of 2-methyleneglutarate mutase, a bacterial cobamide-dependent enzyme that catalyzes a similar rearrangement to the one catalyzed by MMUT, has a shorter lag time following Ado[Cre]Cba addition than following AdoCbl addition (21). Fast binding of Ado[Cre]Cba to MMUT and 2-methyleneglutarate mutase could be explained by the absence of an intramolecular coordinate bond in this cobamide; coordination between the lower ligand and the cobalt ion, which is present in AdoCbl in solution (Figure 1B), must be disrupted for the cofactor to bind both enzymes (43). This may also explain why Ado-cobinamide, which lacks a lower ligand entirely, binds a bacterial MCM ortholog more rapidly than AdoCbl (32). The fact that Ado[Phe]Cba also has a slower binding rate to MMUT despite lacking a coordinated lower ligand, however, suggests that the structure of the lower ligand itself plays a role in binding kinetics.

Given their functional differences, administration of diverse cobamides to humans could be considered as a possible therapy if MMUT variants associated with disease have improved activity with cobamides other than cobalamin. Among the six MMUT variants that we tested, none of the 14 cobamides in our collection rescued activity to a significant extent compared to cobalamin, although at least two other cobamides supported the activity of each mutant. While addition of high concentrations of cobalamin has been shown to improve activity of these MMUT variants (which are classified as *mut*<sup>0</sup>) (36), some mutations in MMUT cannot be rescued by cobalamin addition (*mut*<sup>0</sup>) and are associated with more severe pathologies and death; however, whether any other cobamides support the activity of these variants has not been tested. Moreover, the effects of most cobamides on MS activity is still unknown. Thus, there is room for further investigating cobamides as therapies for inherited disorders of cobalamin.

A question pertinent to this work is the route by which human tissues may be exposed to diverse cobamides. Cobamides produced by the gut microbiota are thought to be largely inaccessible to humans because cobalamin is absorbed in the small intestine (44), while the majority of bacteria reside in the large intestine (45). However, bacteria that reside in the small intestine have been found to produce cobalamin and potentially other cobamides (46), which would be spatially suited for absorption into human tissues. Thus, small intestinal bacteria could be a source of diverse cobamides. Additionally, certain foods are known to have high content of cobamides other than cobalamin (47), and bacterial species associated with the production of fermented foods such as yogurt synthesize alternate cobamides (48). Diverse cobamides derived from the diet may therefore also be present in the small intestine, where they could be bound by IF and taken up into ileal cells.

In a study similar to ours, Kolhouse *et al.* demonstrated that human MS was active with multiple cobalamin analogs *in vitro*, including [Bza]Cba, [Ade]Cba, and [2-MeAde]Cba (31). Importantly, however, subcutaneous administration of most of these analogs in rats did not support MS activity *in vivo*, as evidenced by high serum homocysteine levels compared to a cobalamin control group (30). Similarly, while our data demonstrate that MMUT is active with Ado[Bza]Cba, subcutaneous administration of OH[Bza]Cba in rats appeared to mildly inhibit MMUT activity (30). The discrepancy between *in vitro* results with purified enzymes and experiments in live animals (with the caveat that MS and MMUT activity assays were performed on the human enzymes, while the animal studies were performed in rats) may be attributable to the many proteins that interact with cobalamin prior to its binding MS or MMUT,

either as escort proteins or as enzymes that modify and activate the cofactor (4,49). It is possible that cobamide trafficking and activation are influenced by lower ligand structure, a hypothesis that has also been suggested for bacteria based on discrepancies between MCM-dependent growth phenotypes and MCM activity *in vitro* (24). Therefore, fully understanding the impact of diverse cobamides on human physiology requires further expanding our knowledge of the biochemical impacts of lower ligand structure on absorption, trafficking, and activation of these cofactors.

## Materials and Methods

### *Protein expression and purification*

Two preparations of MMUT were used in this work. (1) MMUT was expressed with an N-terminal hexahistidine (6xHis) tag in *E. coli* BL21(DE3)pLysS from the pMCM-2 expression plasmid kindly provided by María Elena Flores (40). The expression strain was grown at 37 °C to an optical density at 600 nm of 0.6, cooled on ice for 20 min, and protein was expressed for 19 h at 16 °C after induction with 1 mM isopropyl- $\beta$ -D-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG). Cells were lysed by sonication in 50 mM sodium phosphate pH 8.0, 100 mM NaCl, with 0.5 mM PMSF, 1  $\mu$ g/mL leupeptin, 1  $\mu$ g/mL pepstatin, and 1 mg/mL lysozyme. Protein was purified using nickel affinity chromatography and dialyzed into 25 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 300 mM NaCl, and 10% glycerol. The final concentration of 6xHis-tagged MMUT was determined by absorbance at 280 nm using the extinction coefficient 72,310 M<sup>-1</sup> cm<sup>-1</sup>. (2) Wildtype and mutant MMUT variants were expressed with C-terminal 6xHis tags and purified as originally described in Froese *et al.* (42) with modifications provided in Forny *et al.* (36).

MMUT prepared by both methods (1) and (2) was used for equilibrium binding assays. The binding affinity of MMUT for AdoCbl was indistinguishable between preparations using both methods. All binding kinetics and activity assays were conducted using MMUT prepared by method (2).

### *Cobamide production*

All cobamides besides cobalamin were produced in bacterial cultures and purified as previously described (13,24,50,51). Cobamides and cobinamide were chemically adenosylated to obtain active (5'-deoxyadenosylated) forms (24,52,53), which was the form of the cofactor used for all experiments reported in this manuscript.

### *Cobamide binding assays*

Cobamide equilibrium binding affinities were determined using a fluorescence-based binding assay described in earlier work (24,32); the concentration of MMUT used in the binding assay was 0.2  $\mu$ M. Binding kinetics were measured by stopped-flow fluorescence spectroscopy using the Kintek AutoSF-120 stopped flow fluorimeter. Fluorescence emission was detected with a 320 nm long pass filter (320FG01, Andover Corporation) at an excitation wavelength of 282 nm ( $\pm$  0.12 nm). Temperature and buffer conditions were identical to the equilibrium binding assay. The final concentration of MMUT after mixing was 0.2  $\mu$ M, and cobamide concentrations added were 4.8, 7.2, 10.8, and 16.2  $\mu$ M (and 24.3  $\mu$ M for Ado[Phe]Cba). To determine binding rates ( $k_{\text{obs}}$ ), fluorescence decreases were fitted to a first-order exponential decay equation, following subtraction of MMUT fluorescence decrease upon addition of buffer.  $k_{\text{on}}$  was determined by plotting  $k_{\text{obs}}$  as a function of cobamide concentration (where  $k_{\text{on}}$  is the slope).

### *MUT activity assays*

Enzyme kinetics were measured by coupling MMUT activity to thiokinase (which hydrolyzes succinyl-CoA to succinate and CoA), and spectrophotometric detection of CoA using dithionitrobenzoate (DTNB), as previously described (24,54). The assay was modified as follows: the concentration of substrate was fixed at 4 mM, MMUT at 10 nM, and cobamide concentration was varied across reactions. Substrate (methylmalonyl-CoA) was enzymatically synthesized (24).

A modified version of the coupled activity assay was used to screen activity of mutated MMUT variants. The enzymes were pre-incubated with cobamides, at 1.25X final concentration, in 100 mM Tris, 50 mM phosphate pH 7.5, on ice, for 30 minutes (32) in a 384-well plate. The plate was transferred to 30 °C and a 5X mixture containing thiokinase, MgCl<sub>2</sub>, ADP, and methylmalonyl-CoA was added to initiate the reaction. Final concentrations of reagents are as previously described (24), with the following adjustments: cobamide concentration, 1 μM (a saturating concentration of AdoCbl for WT activity); (*R*)-methylmalonyl-CoA, 2 mM; MMUT WT, 0.01 μM; MMUT G717V 1 μM; all other MMUT variants, 0.1 μM. DTNB was omitted from the reaction mixture, as it was found to inhibit protein activity on timescales longer than those used to measure initial rates. After 30 minutes, a sample of the reaction mixture was removed and immediately combined with DTNB (2.5 mM). Absorbance at 412 nm was measured on a BioTek Synergy 2 plate reader and concentration of CoA was calculated using the extinction coefficient 14,150 M<sup>-1</sup> cm<sup>-1</sup>.

## Acknowledgements

We thank members of the Taga lab and Judith Klinman for helpful discussions, Eric Greene for help with stopped-flow experiments, Kathryn Quanstrom and Kenny Mok for their contributions during the early stages of this project, María Elena Flores for the MMUT expression plasmid, and Andreas Martin and Krishna Niyogi for sharing their equipment. This work was supported by National Institutes of Health grants R01GM114535 and DP2AI117984 to M.E.T and Swiss National Sciences Foundation [31003A\_175779] to M.R.B. Structural Genomics Consortium is a registered charity (Number 1097737) that receives funds from AbbVie, Bayer Pharma AG, Boehringer Ingelheim, Canada Foundation for Innovation, Eshelman Institute for Innovation, Genome Canada, Innovative Medicines Initiative (EU/EFPIA) [ULTRA-DD grant no. 115766], Janssen, Merck & Co., Novartis Pharma AG, Ontario Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation, Pfizer, São Paulo Research Foundation-FAPESP, Takeda, and Wellcome Trust [092809/Z/10/Z].

## References

1. Kolhouse, J. F., and Allen, R. H. (1977) Recognition of two intracellular cobalamin binding proteins and their identification as methylmalonyl-CoA mutase and methionine synthetase. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* **74**, 921-925
2. Froese, D. S., Fowler, B., and Baumgartner, M. R. (2018) Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, folate, and the methionine remethylation cycle - biochemistry, pathways, and regulation. *J Inherit Metab Dis* **42**, 673– 685
3. Fenton, W. A., Gravel, R. A., and Rosenblatt, D. S. (2014) Disorders of propionate and methylmalonate metabolism. in *The Online Metabolic and Molecular Bases of Inherited Disease* (Beaudet, A. L., Vogelstein, B., Kinzler, K. W., Antonarakis, S. E., Ballabio, A., Gibson, K. M., and Mitchell, G. eds.), The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., New York, NY.
4. Huemer, M., and Baumgartner, M. R. (2019) The clinical presentation of cobalamin-related disorders: From acquired deficiencies to inborn errors of absorption and intracellular pathways. *J Inherit Metab Dis* **42**, 686-705

5. Shevell, M. I., and Rosenblatt, D. S. (2015) The neurology of cobalamin. *Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences / Journal Canadien des Sciences Neurologiques* **19**, 472-486
6. Watkins, D., and Rosenblatt, D. S. (1989) Functional methionine synthase deficiency (cblE and cblG): clinical and biochemical heterogeneity. *American journal of medical genetics* **34**, 427-434
7. Chandler, R. J., and Venditti, C. P. (2005) Genetic and genomic systems to study methylmalonic acidemia. *Molecular genetics and metabolism* **86**, 34-43
8. Watkins, D., and Rosenblatt, D. S. (2014) Inherited disorders of folate and cobalamin transport and metabolism. in *The Online Metabolic and Molecular Bases of Inherited Disease* (Beaudet, A. L., Vogelstein, B., Kinzler, K. W., Antonarakis, S. E., Ballabio, A., Gibson, K. M., and Mitchell, G. eds.), The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., New York, NY.
9. Roth, J. R., Lawrence, J. G., and Bobik, T. A. (1996) Cobalamin (coenzyme B<sub>12</sub>): Synthesis and biological significance. *Annual review of microbiology* **50**, 137-181
10. Yan, J., Bi, M., Bourdon, A. K., Farmer, A. T., Wang, P. H., Molenda, O., Quaile, A. T., Jiang, N., Yang, Y., Yin, Y., Simsir, B., Campagna, S. R., Edwards, E. A., and Loffler, F. E. (2018) Purinylcobamide is a native prosthetic group of reductive dehalogenases. *Nature chemical biology* **14**, 8-14
11. Allen, R. H., and Stabler, S. P. (2008) Identification and quantitation of cobalamin and cobalamin analogues in human feces. *Am J Clin Nutr* **87**, 1324-1335
12. Renz, P. (1999) Biosynthesis of the 5,6-dimethylbenzimidazole moiety of cobalamin and of the other bases found in natural corrinoids. in *Chemistry and Biochemistry of B<sub>12</sub>* (Banerjee, R. ed.), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York. pp 557-566
13. Hoffmann, B., Oberhuber, M., Stupperich, E., Bothe, H., Buckel, W., Konrat, R., and Kräutler, B. (2000) Native corrinoids from *Clostridium cochlearium* are adeninylcobamides: Spectroscopic analysis and identification of pseudovitamin B<sub>12</sub> and factor A. *J Bacteriol* **182**, 4773-4782
14. Stupperich, E., Eisinger, H. J., and Krautler, B. (1988) Diversity of corrinoids in acetogenic bacteria. *p*-cresolylcobamide from *Sporomusa ovata*, 5-methoxy-6-methylbenzimidazolylcobamide from *Clostridium formicoaceticum* and vitamin B<sub>12</sub> from *Acetobacterium woodii*. *European journal of biochemistry* **172**, 459-464
15. Hazra, A. B., Han, A. W., Mehta, A. P., Mok, K. C., Osadchiy, V., Begley, T. P., and Taga, M. E. (2015) Anaerobic biosynthesis of the lower ligand of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **112**, 10792-10797
16. Men, Y., Seth, E. C., Yi, S., Crofts, T. S., Allen, R. H., Taga, M. E., and Alvarez-Cohen, L. (2015) Identification of specific corrinoids reveals corrinoid modification in dechlorinating microbial communities. *Environmental microbiology* **17**, 4873-4884
17. Tanioka, Y., Miyamoto, E., Yabuta, Y., Ohnishi, K., Fujita, T., Yamaji, R., Misono, H., Shigeoka, S., Nakano, Y., Inui, H., and Watanabe, F. (2010) Methyladeninylcobamide functions as the cofactor of methionine synthase in a cyanobacterium, *Spirulina platensis* NIES-39. *FEBS Lett* **584**, 3223-3226



18. Lengyel, P., Mazumder, R., and Ochoa, S. (1960) Mammalian methylmalonyl isomerase and vitamin B<sub>12</sub> coenzymes. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **46**, 1312-1318
19. Barker, H. A., Smyth, R. D., Weissbach, H., Toohey, J. I., Ladd, J. N., and Volcani, B. E. (1960) Isolation and properties of crystalline cobamide coenzymes containing benzimidazole or 5,6-dimethylbenzimidazole. *J Biol Chem* **235**, 480-488
20. Keller, S., Kunze, C., Bommer, M., Paetz, C., Menezes, R. C., Svatoš, A., Dobbek, H., and Schubert, T. (2018) Selective utilization of benzimidazolyl-norcobamides as cofactors by the tetrachloroethene reductive dehalogenase of *Sulfurospirillum multivorans*. *Journal of Bacteriology* **200**, e00584-00517
21. Poppe, L., Bothe, H., Bröker, G., Buckel, W., Stupperich, E., and Rétey, J. (2000) Elucidation of the coenzyme binding mode of further B<sub>12</sub>-dependent enzymes using a base-off analogue of coenzyme B<sub>12</sub>. *Journal of Molecular Catalysis B-enzymatic - J MOL CATAL B-ENZYM* **10**, 345-350
22. Poppe, L., Stupperich, E., Hull, W. E., Buckel, T., and Retey, J. (1997) A base-off analogue of coenzyme-B<sub>12</sub> with a modified nucleotide loop; <sup>1</sup>H-NMR structure analysis and kinetic studies with (*R*)-methylmalonyl-CoA mutase, glycerol dehydratase, and diol dehydratase. *European journal of biochemistry* **250**, 303-307
23. De Hertogh, A. A., Mayeux, P. A., and Evans, H. J. (1964) The relationship of cobalt requirement to propionate metabolism in *Rhizobium*. *Journal of Biological Chemistry* **239**, 2446-2453
24. Sokolovskaya, O. M., Mok, K. C., Park, J. D., Tran, J. L. A., Quanstrom, K. A., and Taga, M. E. (2019) Cofactor selectivity in methylmalonyl coenzyme A mutase, a model cobamide-dependent enzyme. *mBio* **10**, e01303-01319
25. Fedosov, S. N., Fedosova, N. U., Krautler, B., Nexø, E., and Petersen, T. E. (2007) Mechanisms of discrimination between cobalamins and their natural analogues during their binding to the specific B<sub>12</sub>-transporting proteins. *Biochemistry* **46**, 6446-6458
26. Kolhouse, J. F., and Allen, R. H. (1977) Absorption, plasma transport, and cellular retention of cobalamin analogues in the rabbit. Evidence for the existence of multiple mechanisms that prevent the absorption and tissue dissemination of naturally occurring cobalamin analogues. *The Journal of clinical investigation* **60**, 1381-1392
27. Stupperich, E., and Nexø, E. (1991) Effect of the cobalt-N coordination on the cobamide recognition by the human vitamin B<sub>12</sub> binding proteins intrinsic factor, transcobalamin and haptocorrin. *European journal of biochemistry* **199**, 299-303
28. Kondo, H., Binder, M. J., Kolhouse, J. F., Smythe, W. R., Podell, E. R., and Allen, R. H. (1982) Presence and formation of cobalamin analogues in multivitamin-mineral pills. *The Journal of clinical investigation* **70**, 889-898
29. Watanabe, F., Abe, K., Fujita, T., Goto, M., Hiemori, M., and Nakano, Y. (1998) Effects of microwave heating on the loss of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> in foods. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* **46**, 206-210
30. Stabler, S. P., Brass, E. P., Marcell, P. D., and Allen, R. H. (1991) Inhibition of cobalamin-dependent enzymes by cobalamin analogues in rats. *The Journal of clinical investigation* **87**, 1422-1430

31. Kolhouse, J. F., Utley, C., Stabler, S. P., and Allen, R. H. (1991) Mechanism of conversion of human apo- to holomethionine synthase by various forms of cobalamin. *J Biol Chem* **266**, 23010-23015
32. Chowdhury, S., and Banerjee, R. (1999) Role of the dimethylbenzimidazole tail in the reaction catalyzed by coenzyme B<sub>12</sub>-dependent methylmalonyl-CoA mutase. *Biochemistry* **38**, 15287-15294
33. Kanazawa, S., Herbert, V., Herzlich, B., Drivas, G., and Manusselis, C. (1983) Removal of cobalamin analogue in bile by enterohepatic circulation of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. *Lancet (London, England)* **1**, 707-708
34. Kolhouse, J. F., Kondo, H., Allen, N. C., Podell, E., and Allen, R. H. (1978) Cobalamin analogues are present in human plasma and can mask cobalamin deficiency because current radioisotope dilution assays are not specific for true cobalamin. *The New England journal of medicine* **299**, 785-792
35. Kanazawa, S., and Herbert, V. (1983) Noncobalamin vitamin B<sub>12</sub> analogues in human red cells, liver, and brain. *Am J Clin Nutr* **37**, 774-777
36. Forny, P., Froese, D. S., Suormala, T., Yue, W. W., and Baumgartner, M. R. (2014) Functional characterization and categorization of missense mutations that cause methylmalonyl-CoA mutase (MUT) deficiency. *Hum Mutat* **35**, 1449-1458
37. Froese, D. S., and Gravel, R. A. (2010) Genetic disorders of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> metabolism: eight complementation groups - eight genes. *Expert Rev Mol Med* **12**, e37
38. Campanello, G. C., Ruetz, M., Dodge, G. J., Gouda, H., Gupta, A., Twahir, U. T., Killian, M. M., Watkins, D., Rosenblatt, D. S., Brunold, T. C., Warncke, K., Smith, J. L., and Banerjee, R. (2018) Sacrificial cobalt-carbon bond homolysis in coenzyme B<sub>12</sub> as a cofactor conservation strategy. *Journal of the American Chemical Society* **140**, 13205-13208
39. Janata, J., Kogekar, N., and Fenton, W. A. (1997) Expression and kinetic characterization of methylmalonyl-CoA mutase from patients with the *mut*<sup>-</sup> phenotype: evidence for naturally occurring interallelic complementation. *Human Molecular Genetics* **6**, 1457-1464
40. Takahashi-Íñiguez, T., García-Arellano, H., Trujillo-Roldán, M. A., and Flores, M. E. (2011) Protection and reactivation of human methylmalonyl-CoA mutase by MMAA protein. *Biochemical and biophysical research communications* **404**, 443-447
41. Padovani, D., and Banerjee, R. (2006) Assembly and protection of the radical enzyme, methylmalonyl-CoA mutase, by its chaperone. *Biochemistry* **45**, 9300-9306
42. Froese, D. S., Kochan, G., Muniz, J. R., Wu, X., Gileadi, C., Ugochukwu, E., Krysztofinska, E., Gravel, R. A., Oppermann, U., and Yue, W. W. (2010) Structures of the human GTPase MMAA and vitamin B<sub>12</sub>-dependent methylmalonyl-CoA mutase and insight into their complex formation. *J Biol Chem* **285**, 38204-38213
43. Mancina, F., Keep, N. H., Nakagawa, A., Leadlay, P. F., McSweeney, S., Rasmussen, B., Bosecke, P., Diat, O., and Evans, P. R. (1996) How coenzyme B<sub>12</sub> radicals are generated: the crystal structure of methylmalonyl-coenzyme A mutase at 2 Å resolution. *Structure (London, England : 1993)* **4**, 339-350
44. Seetharam, B., and Alpers, D. H. (1982) Absorption and transport of cobalamin (vitamin B<sub>12</sub>). *Annual review of nutrition* **2**, 343-369

45. Donaldson, G. P., Lee, S. M., and Mazmanian, S. K. (2016) Gut biogeography of the bacterial microbiota. *Nat Rev Microbiol* **14**, 20-32
46. Albert, M. J., Mathan, V. I., and Baker, S. J. (1980) Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> synthesis by human small intestinal bacteria. *Nature* **283**, 781-782
47. Watanabe, F., Yabuta, Y., Tanioka, Y., and Bito, T. (2013) Biologically active vitamin B<sub>12</sub> compounds in foods for preventing deficiency among vegetarians and elderly subjects. *J Agric Food Chem* **61**, 6769-6775
48. Santos, F., Vera, J. L., Lamosa, P., de Valdez, G. F., de Vos, W. M., Santos, H., Sesma, F., and Hugenholtz, J. (2007) Pseudovitamin B<sub>12</sub> is the corrinoid produced by *Lactobacillus reuteri* CRL1098 under anaerobic conditions. *FEBS Lett* **581**, 4865-4870
49. Gherasim, C., Lofgren, M., and Banerjee, R. (2013) Navigating the B<sub>12</sub> road: assimilation, delivery, and disorders of cobalamin. *J Biol Chem* **288**, 13186-13193
50. Mok, K. C., and Taga, M. E. (2013) Growth inhibition of *Sporomusa ovata* by incorporation of benzimidazole bases into cobamides. *J Bacteriol* **195**, 1902-1911
51. Yi, S., Seth, E. C., Men, Y. J., Stabler, S. P., Allen, R. H., Alvarez-Cohen, L., and Taga, M. E. (2012) Versatility in corrinoid salvaging and remodeling pathways supports corrinoid-dependent metabolism in *Dehalococcoides mccartyi*. *Appl Environ Microbiol* **78**, 7745-7752
52. Crofts, T. S., Hazra, A. B., Tran, J. L., Sokolovskaya, O. M., Osadchiy, V., Ad, O., Pelton, J., Bauer, S., and Taga, M. E. (2014) Regiospecific formation of cobamide isomers is directed by CobT. *Biochemistry* **53**, 7805-7815
53. Brown, K. L., and Zou, X. (1999) Thermolysis of coenzymes B<sub>12</sub> at physiological temperatures: activation parameters for cobalt-carbon bond homolysis and a quantitative analysis of the perturbation of the homolysis equilibrium by the ribonucleoside triphosphate reductase from *Lactobacillus leichmannii*. *J Inorg Biochem* **77**, 185-195
54. Taoka, S., Padmakumar, R., Lai, M. T., Liu, H. W., and Banerjee, R. (1994) Inhibition of the human methylmalonyl-CoA mutase by various CoA-esters. *J Biol Chem* **269**, 31630-31634

## Figures

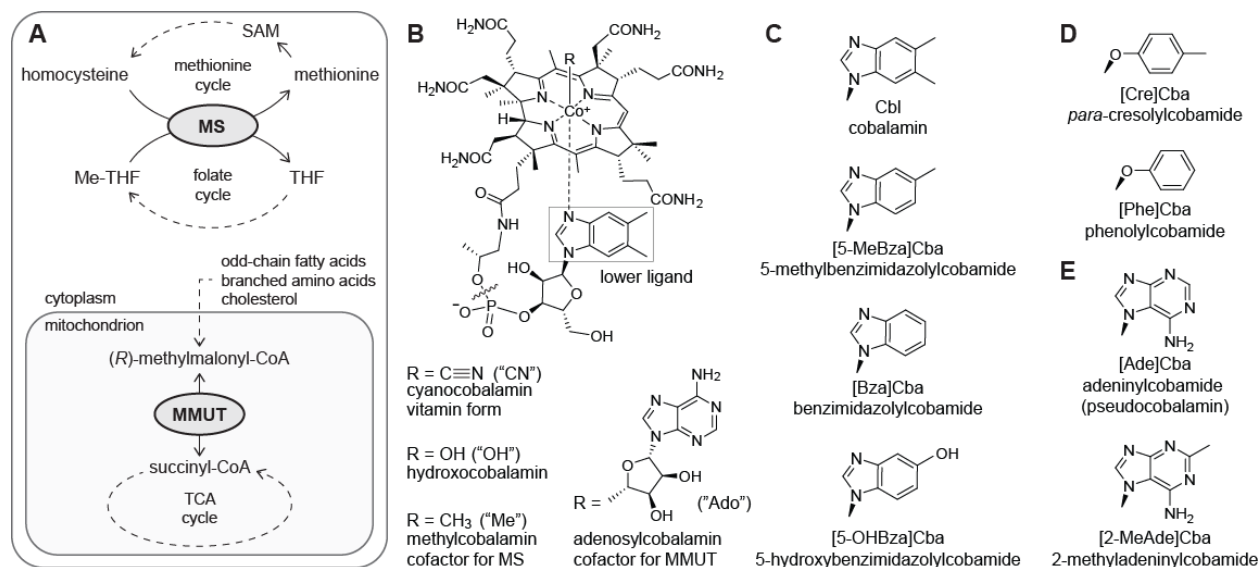


Figure 1: Cobalamin in human metabolism. (A) Diagram of metabolic pathways involving cobalamin in human cells. Dotted arrows indicate multiple reactions. MS (methionine synthase) and MMUT (methylmalonyl-CoA mutase) are the only cobalamin-dependent enzymes in humans. SAM, *S*-adenosylmethionine; (Me-)THF, (methyl-)tetrahydrofolate. (B) The structure of cobalamin. The upper ligand, R, varies for different enzymes; abbreviations listed in parentheses are used in the text when naming cobamides to specify the upper ligand. A wavy line delineates the part of cobalamin (including the lower ligand) that is absent in the precursor cobinamide. The lower ligand, boxed, is different in other cobamides. (C) Benzimidazolyl, (D) phenolyl, and (E) purinyl lower ligands found in cobamides.

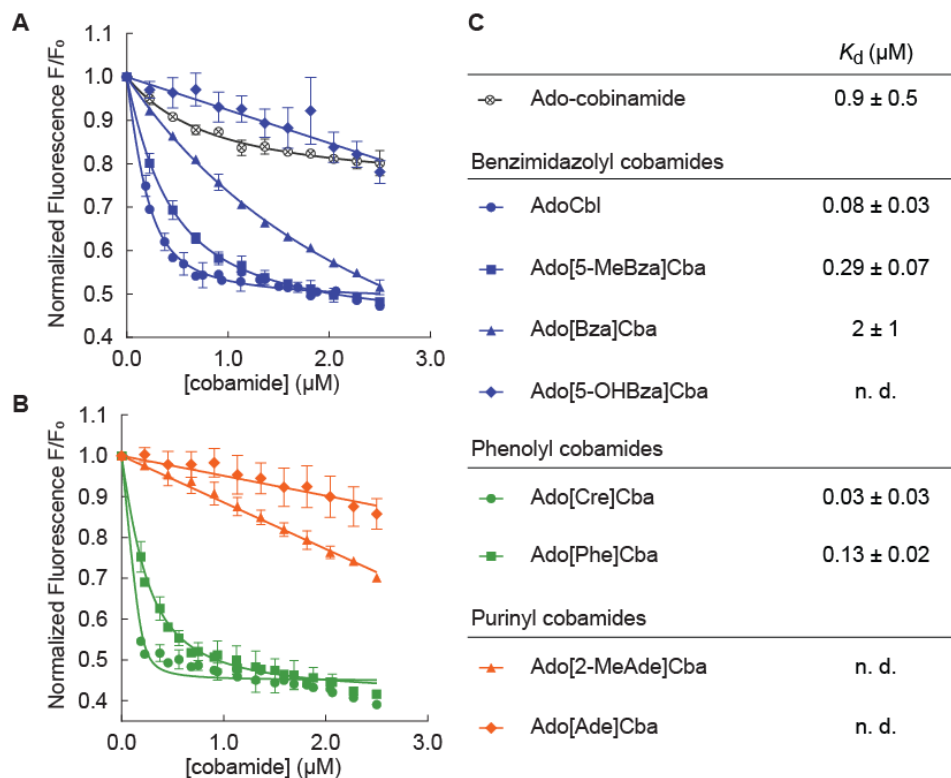


Figure 2: Binding of structurally diverse cobamides to MMUT. Fluorescence decrease of MMUT reconstituted with (A) benzimidazolyl cobamides (blue) and cobinamide (gray), and (B) phenolyl (green) and purinyl (orange) cobamides. Data points represent the mean and standard deviation of three technical replicates from a single experiment. (C)  $K_d$  values are presented as the average and standard deviation of five or more technical replicates across at least two independent experiments. “n. d.,” not determined, indicates that binding was too weak to determine  $K_d$ .



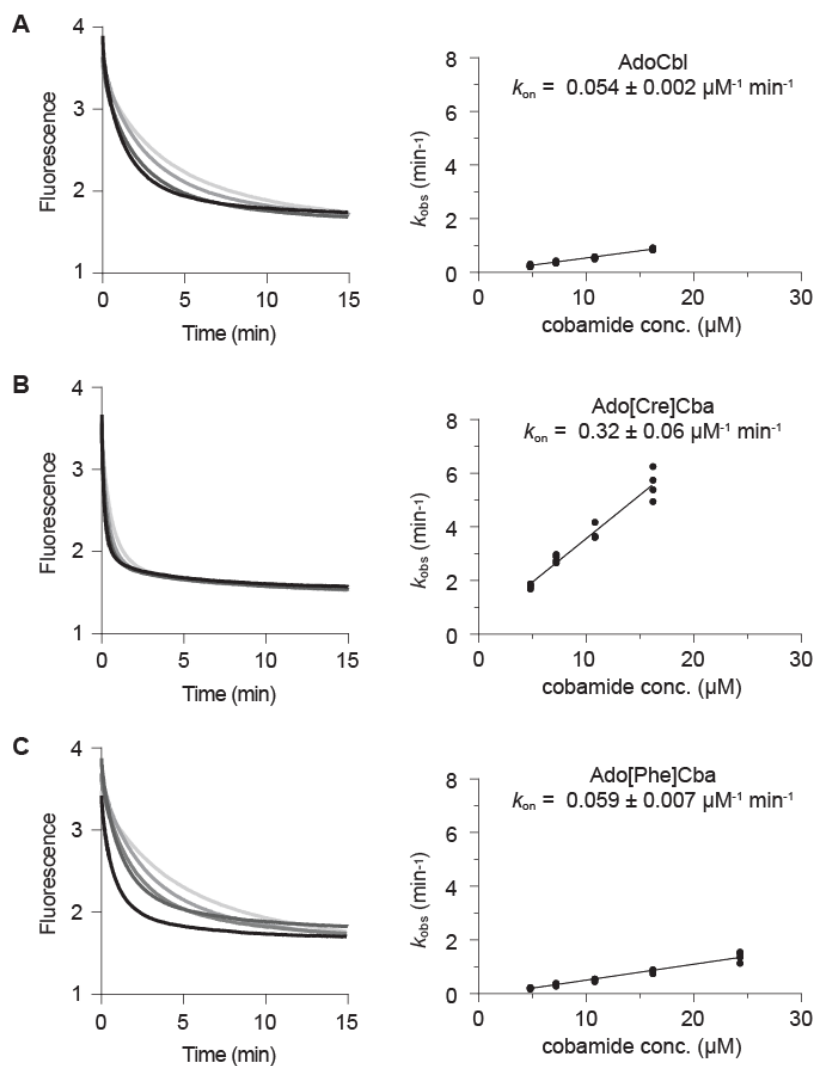


Figure 3: Binding kinetics of AdoCbl and phenolyl cobamides. On the left, time course of the fluorescence decrease of MMUT (0.2 μM) upon addition of (A) AdoCbl, 4.8 – 16.2 μM; (B) Ado[Cre]Cba, 4.8 – 16.2 μM; and (C) Ado[Phe]Cba, 4.8 – 24.3 μM (concentrations increase from light to dark). Data were fitted to an exponential decay function to determine binding rates ( $k_{obs}$ ), which were plotted as a function of cobamide concentration (on the right) to calculate  $k_{on}$ .  $k_{on}$  values are the average and standard deviation of four technical replicates.

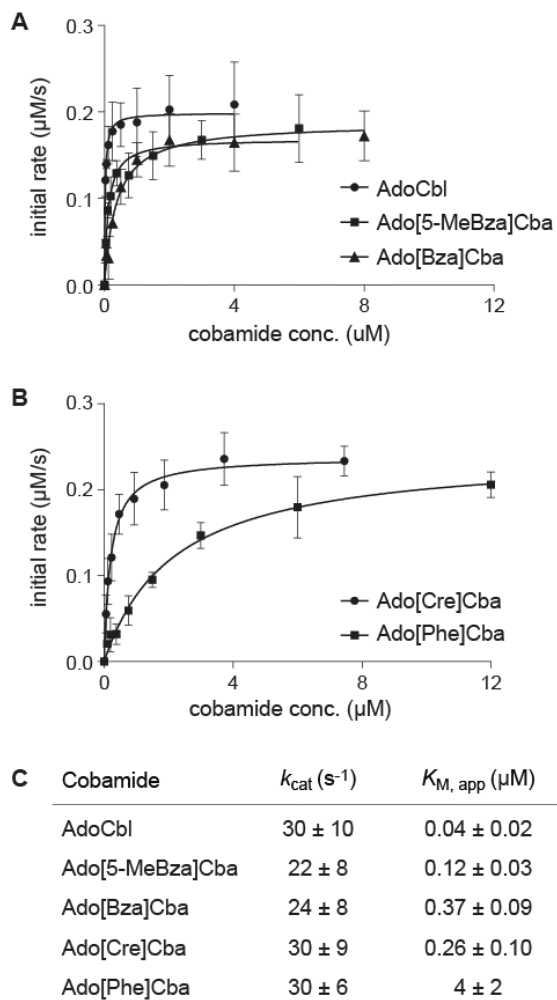


Figure 4: MMUT kinetics. MMUT activity after reconstitution with varying concentrations of (A) benzimidazolyl and (B) phenolyl cobamides. Data points and error bars represent the mean and standard deviation, respectively, of three technical replicates from one experiment.  $K_{M, app}$  and  $k_{cat}$  values are reported in (C) as the average and standard deviation of five or more replicates from at least two independent experiments and two biological samples.

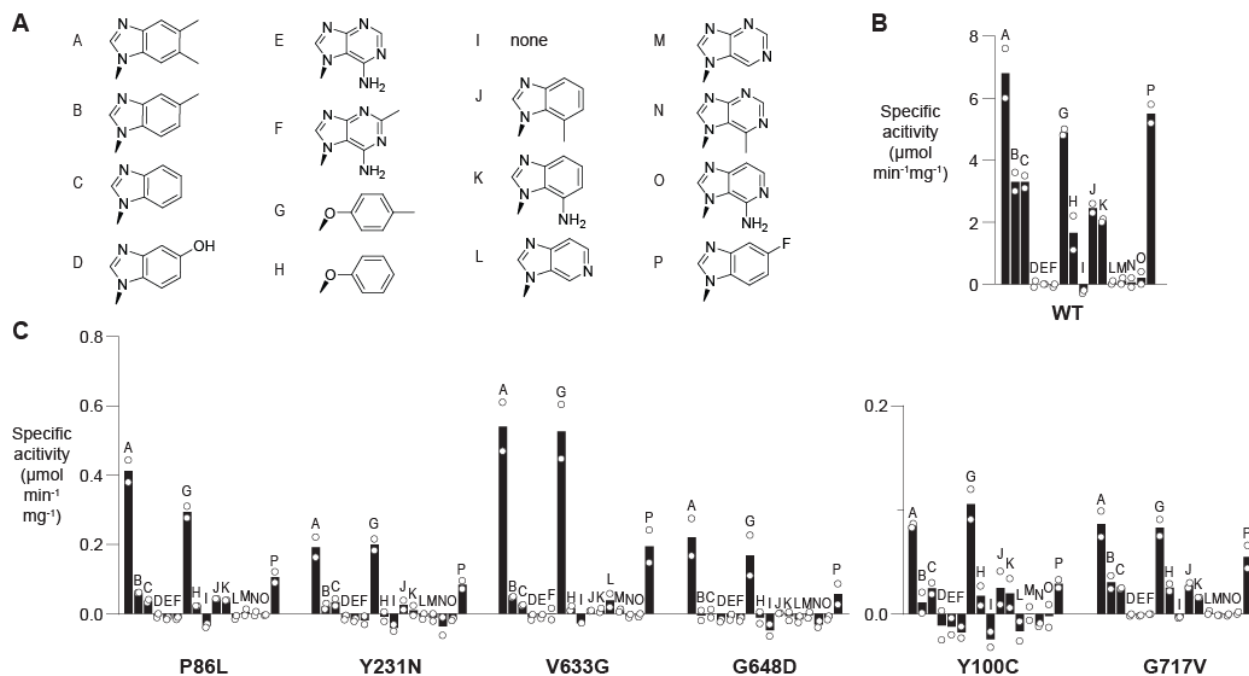


Figure 5: Activity screen of MMUT variants associated with disease. (A) Lower ligands of cobamides screened in this experiment, including cobamides introduced in Figure 1 (A-I in this figure) as well as J: 7-methylbenzimidazolylcobamide, K: 7-aminobenzimidazolylcobamide, L: 6-azabenzimidazolylcobamide, M: purinylcobamide, N: 6-methyladeninylcobamide, O: 3-deazaadeninylcobamide, and P: 5-fluorobenzimidazolylcobamide. Specific activity of MMUT WT (B) and mutant variants (C) reconstituted with different adenosylated cobamides and cobinamide (1  $\mu\text{M}$ ) was determined after 30 minutes of activity. Each letter (A – P) corresponds to a compound assigned in (A). Bars represent the average specific activity across two independent experiments (circles). Note the differences in the y-axis scales between WT and mutated proteins.