

**CHARACTERISATION OF PROTEASE-
RESISTANT, NON-MATRIX-BINDING VARIANT
OF IGFBP-2 AS A POTENTIAL TUMOUR
GROWTH INHIBITOR**

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ABSTRACT

The insulin-like growth factor (IGF) system includes two ligands (IGF-I and IGF-II), which bind and activate the type 1 IGF receptor (IGF-1R). IGF-II also binds with high affinity to the structurally similar insulin receptor isoform A (IR-A). Activation of these receptors elicits mitogenic responses for normal growth and development.

IGF bioavailability is modulated by high-affinity binding proteins (IGFBPs). When in complex with IGFBPs the IGF are unable to interact with their receptors. IGF is released from the IGF:IGFBP complex via IGFBP interaction with extracellular matrix (ECM) or through proteolysis of IGFBPs, increasing bioavailability of IGF. This effectively increases IGF-1R and IR-A activation (in the case of IGF-II).

In cancer, expression of IGF-I, IGF-II, and IGF-1R is upregulated, while compensatory signalling via IGF-II/IR-A (in the event of perturbed IGF/IGF-1R signalling) was documented. Additionally, tumours overexpress IGFBP specific proteases to accelerate IGF release. Collectively, mitogenic signalling via this system is upregulated, thereby promoting tumour growth, survival and metastasis.

The main objective was to investigate the use of IGFBPs as potential anti-cancer agents. Here, IGFBP-2 was used to sequester IGF as it has similar affinities for both ligands. Two novel modified IGFBP-2 analogues were designed to block mitogenic signalling of IGF-1R and IR-A by impairing their IGF releasing abilities. The protease resistant (PR) mutant was produced by deleting residues 114-170 of the linker domain (which contains cleavage sites), while the protease resistant/non-matrix binding (PR/NMB) mutant was generated by further mutation of the PR mutant by Lys→Ala substitutions at positions 180, 181, 227, 234, and 237 (disrupting the ECM binding sites).

The initial work was dedicated to *in vitro* characterisation of modified IGFBP-2. Truncation of the linker domain in PR and PR/NMB IGFBP-2 significantly improved resistance to tumour proteases: plasmin, MMP-1 and MMP-7. However, there is evidence for the presence of MMP cleavage sites outside the truncated linker domain. Furthermore, IGF

binding did not alter rate of IGFBP-2 cleavage by the aforementioned proteases. Additionally, IGFBP-2 was cleaved by plasmin C-terminally to Arg56, Lys150, Arg156, Lys158, Arg188, and Arg287. Together these data provided a detailed understanding of the mechanisms of proteolytical degradation of IGFBP-2, which in a cancer setting may increase IGF bioavailability.

Additionally, both IGFBP-2 mutants exhibited low affinity to ECM components including vitronectin, fibronectin and heparin, which are known to be involved in tumour progression. Lack of ECM binding discourages dissociation of the IGF:IGFBP-2 complex hence preventing IGF-mediated signalling.

An *in vitro* proliferation assay demonstrated that these mutants significantly inhibited proliferation of HT29 cells despite the presence of exogenous IGF-I. Additionally, growth of breast cancer xenograft tumours treated with PR/NMB IGFBP-2 was significantly inhibited. Interestingly, sequestration of IGF by IGFBP-2 did not trigger a compensatory increase of IGF-I in the circulation, an event commonly accompanying treatment using anti-IGF-1R monoclonal antibodies to perturb IGF signalling. Furthermore, analyses of the tumours indicated that PR/NMB IGFBP-2 treatment disrupted vascularisation with a corresponding decrease in the expression of *VEGFA*, a major angiogenic factor.

Through development of these IGFBP-2 mutants, the importance of IGFBP-2 proteolysis and matrix binding in the control of IGF action was confirmed. This research also provided an understanding of the mechanism by which mutant IGFBP-2 inhibits tumour growth. Ultimately, this data can be used to develop mutant IGFBP-2 as a therapeutic agent.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material that has previously been published by any other person except where due reference is made. The research that was carried out as detailed in this thesis was under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Briony Forbes and Associate Professor Dr. Grant Booker. The author consents to this thesis being made available for photocopy or loan, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. The author consents for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue, and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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Poster

- 2014** Proteolysis of IGFBP-2 in a Cancer Context
- APG Student Awards 2014, Adelaide, SA, Australia.
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- 2013** Investigating protease resistant IGFBP-2 as a potential tumour growth inhibitor
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- 2011** Developing a protease resistant IGFBP-2 as a tumour inhibitor
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LIST OF TABLES

Table	Title	Page
1.01	Table of receptor affinities for selected ligands	12
1.02	IGFBP proteolytic cleavage sites reported and confirmed by mass spectrometry or N-terminal amino acid sequencing	24
1.03	Examples of anti-IGF-1R and anti-ligand monoclonal antibodies	48
1.04	Examples of small molecule inhibitors of IGF-1R/IR	50
2.01	Recipe for in house 12% Tris-glycine gel	62
2.02	Binding affinities of WT IGFBP-2 and its mutants	70
2.03	List of most abundant peptides detected in MALDI-TOF	88
2.04	<i>In silico</i> degradation of IGFBP-2 by trypsin and their theoretical masses as calculated using PAWS	94
3.01	Buffers and reagents needed for ELISA detection of IGF-I in mice sera	122
4.01	Primer sequences for qPCR experiments	150
4.02	Volume of components needed for cDNA synthesis, as per the manufacturer's protocol	153
4.03	Reaction mix for RT-PCR according to the manufacturer's instructions	153
4.04	Cycling parameters for RT-PCR reactions	154
4.05	Components for one reaction mix for qPCR according to the manufacturer's instructions	155

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Title	Page
1.01	Interactions between different components of the IGF system in normal growth.	5
1.02	IGF signalling at cellular level	6
1.03	IGF signalling at the whole organism level.	9
1.04	Amino acid sequence and molecular structure of insulin, IGF-I and IGF-II	10
1.05	Interactions of IGF-I and IGF-II with IGF-1R, insulin receptor (IR) and IGFBPs	11
1.06	Schematic diagram illustrating the domain structure of IGF-1R (and IR)	13
1.07	Domain structure of IGFBP-1 to 6	14
1.08	General structure of IGFBP and functional sites	17
1.09	Binding of IGF-I to individual domains of IGFBP-4	20
1.10	Regulation of IGF bioavailability by IGFBPs	30
1.11	Schematic diagram of IGF-dependent and –independent pathways activated by IGFBP-2	34
1.12	Tumour proteases greatly accelerate tumour progression	36
2.01	Designing protease resistant and non-matrix binding IGFBP-2	58
2.02	Characterisation IGFBP-2 and mutants	70
2.03	The PR IGFBP-2 variant is more resistant to proteolysis by conditioned medium collected from various cell lines compared to the WT variant	72
2.04	WT, PR and PR/NMB IGFBP-2 cleavage by (a) plasmin, (b) MMP-7 and (c) MMP-1	74
2.05	Binding to IGFs to WT IGFBP-2 do not affect rate of proteolysis by (A) Plasmin, (B) MMP-1 and (C) MMP-7	76
2.06	Experimental and analysis workflow for identification of residues most susceptible to plasmin cleavage	78, 102
2.07	Summary of workflow of the experiments described in section 2.3.3	79
2.08	Coomassie stained SDS-PAGE containing intact IGFBP-2 at T=0 (lane 1) and the fragments that were generated after exposure to plasmin proteolysis for 5hr (lane 2)	80
2.09	rpHPLC chromatogram of IGFBP-2 and its fragments	82
2.10	<i>In silico</i> cleavage of IGFBP-2 by plasmin under non-reducing conditions	83
2.11	Mass spectrum of Bruker's Protein Standard I	84
2.12	MALDI spectra of cleaved IGFBP-2 after 5hr incubation with plasmin	87
2.13	Schematic diagram of predicted peptides arising from <i>in silico</i> plasmin cleavage of IGFBP-2 under non-reducing conditions	90
2.14	Non-reducing gel electrophoresis of the IGFBP-2 fragments that were collected from rpHPLC shown in Figure 2.09	92
2.15	<i>In silico</i> digestion of reduced IGFBP-2 with trypsin (and also plasmin) cleaving C-terminal of Lys and Arg	93
2.16	Comparison of peptide analyses using a) Protein Pilot (AB Sciex) software with MS/MS data and b) PEAKS (Bioinformatics Solutions) software and de novo sequencing of MS/MS data with 0% false discovery rate (Full-length IGFBP-2)	98

2.17	Comparison of peptide analyses using a) Protein Pilot (AB Sciex) software with MS/MS data and b) PEAKS (Bioinformatics Solutions) software and de novo sequencing of MS/MS data with 0% false discovery rate (Band 2)	99
2.18	Comparison of peptide analyses using a) Protein Pilot (AB Sciex) software with MS/MS data and b) PEAKS (Bioinformatics Solutions) software and de novo sequencing of MS/MS data with 0% false discovery rate (band 3)	100
2.19	Comparison of peptide analyses using a) Protein Pilot (AB Sciex) software with MS/MS data and b) PEAKS (Bioinformatics Solutions) software and de novo sequencing of MS/MS data with 0% false discovery rate (band 4)	101
2.20	Identified peptide fragments generated by plasmin cleavage of IGFBP-2	106
2.21	IGFBP-2 mutants bind with low affinity to fibronectin, vitronectin and heparin	108
2.22	PR and PR/NMB IGFBP-2 inhibition of IGF-I stimulated proliferation after sodium butyrate-induced apoptosis in HT29 cells	109
3.01	Xenograft mouse model flowchart	122
3.02	Outline of standard preparation procedure	123
3.03	Flowchart of serum sample preparation. Serum was collected from 5-10 mice per group	124
3.04	Schematic diagram of the 5 representative sectors for image acquisition	128
3.05	PR/NMB with and without Tamoxifen significantly inhibited MCF-7 tumour xenograft growth	129
3.06	Standard curve for mIGF-I	130
3.07	Administration of IGFBP-2 and mutants does not affect serum levels of IGF-I	131
3.08	Levels of serum mIGFBP-3 as detected in Western blotting experiments	133
3.09	Administration of WT, PR and PR/NMB IGFBP-2 did not affect tumour cell proliferation in MCF-7 xenografts	135
3.10	Quantitation of the Ki67 staining	136
3.11	PR/NMB significantly reduces the number of visible lumina in MCF-7 tumour xenografts	138
3.12	The mean number of (A) blood vessels and (B) lumen per tumour section are shown	139
4.01	Cycling parameters of the qPCR	156
4.02	Extracted RNA from MCF-7 xenograft tumours contains negligible protein and organic solvent contamination	158
4.03	Resulting PCR products from RT-PCR using the <i>RPLP0</i> and <i>VEGFA</i> primer pairs described in Table 4.01	159
4.04	Resulting PCR products from RT-PCR using the <i>MMP2</i> primer pair described in Table 4.01	160
4.05	Amplification plot and standard curve analysis for (A) reference gene <i>RPLP0</i> , (B) gene of interest <i>VEGFA</i> , and (C) gene of interest <i>MMP2</i>	162
4.06	Efficiencies of normalising gene <i>RPLP0</i> , and genes of interest <i>VEGFA</i> and <i>MMP2</i>	163
4.07	Melt curve analysis for qPCR reactions for (A) <i>RPLP0</i> , (B) <i>VEGFA</i> , and (C) <i>MMP2</i>	164

4.08	Expression of VEGFA was lower in tumours treated with mutants of IGFBP-2	166
4.09	Expression of <i>MMP2</i> in MCF-7 tumour xenografts	168
4.10	Resulting PCR products from RT-PCR using the <i>MMP9</i> primer pair described in Table 4.01	169
5.01	Proposed mode of action by which PR/NMB IGFBP-2 inhibited tumour angiogenesis	183

ABBREVIATIONS

ACN	Acetonitrile
Akt	Protein kinase B
ALS	Acid labile subunit
APMA	4-aminophenylmercuric acetate
APS	Ammonium persulphate
ATP	Adenosine triphosphate
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
CD	Circular dichroism
CID	Collision induced dissociation
CM	Conditioned medium
DEPC	Diethylpyrocarbonate
DTT	Dithiothreitol
ECM	Extracellular matrix
EGF	Epidermal growth factor
ELISA	Enzyme-linked immuno sorbent assay
ERK	Extracellular signal-regulated kinase
FGF	Fibroblast growth factor
GH	Growth hormone
GLUT	Glucose transporter
GOI	Gene of interest
HBD	Heparin binding domain
HEPES	4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid
HIF	Hypoxia inducible factor
HRE	HIF response element
HRP	Horseradish peroxidase
IAA	Iodoacetic acid
IGF	Insulin-like growth factor
IGF-1R	Type 1 IGF receptor
IGF-2R	Type 2 IGF receptor
IGFBP	IGF binding protein
IR-A	Insulin receptor isoform A
IR-B	Insulin receptor isoform B
JNK	c-Jun N-terminal kinase
LC-ESI	Liquid chromatography electrospray ionisation
MALDI	Matrix-assisted laser desorption ionisation
MAPK	Mitogen activated protein kinase
MGF	Mascot generic file
MMP	Matrix metalloproteinase
MOPS	N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid
mTOR	Mammalian target of rapamycin
NLS	Nuclear localisation signal
NMR	Nuclear magnetic resonance
NTC	Non-template control
OD	Optical density
PAWS	Protein Analysis WorkSheet
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PDGF	Platelet-derived growth factor

PI3K	Phosphoinositide-3 kinase
PMSF	phenylmethanesulfonylfluoride
PR	Protease resistant
PR/NMB	Protease resistant/non-matrix binding
PTEN	Phosphatase and tensin homolog
qPCR	Real-time polymerase chain reaction
rpHPLC	Reversed phase high performance liquid chromatography
RPLP0	Ribosomal protein P0 large
RT-PCR	Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction
SA	Sinapinic acid
SDS-PAGE	Sodium dodecyl sulphate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
SMI	Small molecule inhibitor
SPR	Surface plasmon resonance
TEMED	Tetramethylethylenediamine
TFA	Trifluoroacetic acid
TK	Tyrosine kinase
TMB	Tetramethylbenzidine
VEGF	Vascular endothelial growth factor
WT	Wild-type

Table of Contents

1.0 CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
1.1 The IGF system: An overview	5
1.1.1 <i>Insulin-like growth factors: IGF-I and IGF-II</i>	7
1.1.1.1 Molecular structure of the IGFs	9
1.1.2 <i>IGF and insulin receptors</i>	11
1.1.2.1 The insulin receptors (IR).....	12
1.1.2.2 Type 1 Insulin like growth factor receptor (IGF-1R).....	12
1.1.2.3 Type 2 insulin-like growth factor receptor (IGF-2R).....	13
1.1.3 <i>IGF binding proteins</i>	14
1.1.3.1 IGF binding determinants in IGFBP-2	17
1.1.3.2 Protease cleavage sites	21
1.1.3.2.1 Functional significance of IGFBP proteolysis.....	25
1.1.3.3 ECM binding: Another mechanism of IGF release	27
1.1.3.4 Integrin binding domain	30
1.1.3.5 Nuclear localisation sequence (NLS).....	32
1.1.3.6 IGF-dependent vs. independent activity of IGFBP-2.....	33
1.2 The IGF system in cancer.....	34
1.2.1 <i>Sustained proliferative signalling</i>	35
1.2.2 <i>Evading growth suppressors</i>	38
1.2.3 <i>Resisting cell death</i>	40
1.2.4 <i>Tumour vascularisation</i>	40
1.2.4.1 Expression of IGF components in blood vessels.....	41
1.2.4.2 Mechanisms of tumour angiogenesis	42
1.2.4.2.1 Interaction between IGF components with HIF-1 α	44
1.2.5 <i>Role of IGFBP-2 in cancers: Growth inhibitory versus oncogenic actions</i>	45
1.3 Current cancer treatments targeting the IGF system: success and challenges	47
1.4 Summary, Hypothesis and Aims	50
2.0 CHAPTER 2: INVESTIGATING PROTEASE RESISTANCE AND MATRIX BINDING ACTIVITY OF MUTANT IGFBP-2.....	54
2.1 Introduction	54
2.1.1 <i>IGFBP-2 as a regulator of IGF bioavailability</i>	54
2.1.2 <i>Designing protease resistant and non matrix-binding mutants of IGFBP-2</i>	57
2.2 Hypotheses and Specific aims	58
2.3 Methodology.....	59
2.3.1 <i>Materials</i>	59
2.3.2 <i>Building a proteolysis profile of IGFBP-2 and its mutants</i>	61
2.3.2.1 Conditioned media cleavage	61
2.3.2.2 Plasmin cleavage	61
2.3.2.3 Matrix metalloproteinase 1 and 7 (MMP-1 and -7) cleavage.....	62
2.3.2.4 SDS-PAGE and Western blotting	62
2.3.2.5 Proteolysis of IGFBP-2 in complex with ligands.....	63
2.3.2.5.1 Complexing IGFBP-2 with either IGF-I or -II	63
2.3.2.5.2 Plasmin proteolysis.....	63
2.3.2.5.3 MMP-1 proteolysis.....	64
2.3.2.5.4 MMP-7 proteolysis.....	64
2.3.2.5.5 SDS-PAGE and Western blotting.....	64
2.3.3 <i>Identifying residues most susceptible to plasmin cleavage</i>	65
2.3.3.1 Reverse phase high performance liquid chromatography (rpHPLC) of plasmin cleavage of IGFBP-2	65
2.3.3.2 Mass spectrometry analysis of IGFBP-2 cleavage.....	65
2.3.3.2.1 LC fraction spotting and matrix application.....	65
2.3.3.2.2 Matrix-assisted Laser Desorption/Ionisation–Time of Flight (MALDI/TOF) mass spectrometry.....	66
2.3.3.2.3 Non-reducing SDS-PAGE.....	66
2.3.3.2.4 In-gel trypsin digestion protocol.....	66
2.3.3.2.5 Liquid chromatography – electrospray ionisation tandem mass spectrometry	67
2.3.4 <i>Matrix binding by WT, PR and PR/NMB IGFBP-2</i>	68

2.3.5	<i>Cell viability assay</i>	68
2.3.6	<i>Statistical analysis</i>	69
2.4	Results	69
2.4.1	<i>Wild type and mutant IGFBP-2 expression and characterisation</i>	69
2.4.2	<i>Mutant IGFBP-2 proteins are resistant to proteolysis</i>	71
2.4.3	<i>Ligand binding with IGFBP-2 does not affect cleavage by tested proteases</i>	75
2.4.4	<i>Limited proteolysis of IGFBP-2 reveals some of the residues most susceptible to plasmin cleavage</i>	77
2.4.4.1	Overview of the mass spectrometry analysis of IGFBP-2 cleavage by plasmin.....	78
2.4.4.2	Larger scale IGFBP-2 cleavage by plasmin.....	79
2.4.4.3	In silico digestion of IGFBP-2 under non-reducing conditions.....	82
2.4.4.4	MALDI-TOF MS of proteolysed IGFBP-2.....	83
2.4.4.4.1	Generating list of candidate peptides.....	88
2.4.4.5	LC-ESI-MS/MS and de novo sequencing.....	91
2.4.4.5.1	Sample preparation and <i>in silico</i> tryptic digestion of reduced IGFBP-2.....	91
2.4.4.5.2	LC-ESI-MS/MS and <i>de novo</i> sequencing data collection.....	95
2.4.4.6	Combining MALDI-MS and LC-ESI-MS/MS to identify residues most susceptible to plasmin cleavage.....	102
2.4.5	<i>Mutations in extracellular matrix (ECM) binding sites disrupt ECM binding</i>	106
2.4.6	<i>Mutant IGFBP-2 inhibits proliferation of HT29 colon cancer cells</i>	108
2.5	Discussion	109
2.6	Conclusions	114
3.0	CHAPTER 3: IGFBP-2 MUTANTS INHIBIT TUMOUR GROWTH IN A MOUSE MODEL	117
3.1	Introduction	117
3.2	Hypothesis and Specific aims	119
3.3	Methodology	120
3.3.1	<i>Materials</i>	120
3.3.2	<i>The animal model: A proof of principle experiment</i>	121
3.3.3	<i>Examining IGF-I concentrations in mouse serum with ELISA</i>	122
3.3.3.1	Buffer and reagent preparation.....	122
3.3.3.2	Sample preparation.....	123
3.3.3.3	ELISA for detection of serum IGF-I.....	124
3.3.4	<i>Determining the levels of serum IGFBP-3</i>	125
3.3.5	<i>Immunohistochemistry of paraffin embedded tumour sections</i>	126
3.3.5.1	Deparaffinising tumour sections and epitope retrieval.....	126
3.3.5.2	Staining and mounting of the tumour sections.....	127
3.3.5.3	Image analyses.....	127
3.3.5.3.1	Counting proliferating tumour cells.....	127
3.3.5.3.2	Visualising tumour vascular networks with endomucin staining.....	128
3.3.6	<i>Statistical analysis</i>	128
3.4	Results	128
3.4.1	<i>Treatment with IGFBP-2 and mutants in the presence of tamoxifen inhibit tumour growth in vivo</i>	128
3.4.2	<i>Systemic levels of IGF-I and IGFBP-3 are undisturbed</i>	129
3.4.3	<i>Immunofluorescence analysis of tumour proliferation and angiogenesis</i>	133
3.4.3.1	Tumour cell proliferation was not affected by treatment with mutant IGFBP-2.....	133
3.4.3.2	Mutant IGFBP-2 inhibits tumour growth by obstructing tumour angiogenesis.....	136
3.5	Discussion	139
3.6	Conclusion	143
4.0	CHAPTER 4: INTERPLAY BETWEEN COMPONENTS OF THE IGF SYSTEM AND TUMOUR ANGIOGENESIS	145
4.1	Introduction	145
4.2	Hypothesis and Specific aims	148
4.3	Methodology	149
4.3.1	<i>Materials</i>	149
4.3.2	<i>Primer design</i>	149
4.3.3	<i>Tumour RNA extraction</i>	150

4.3.4	<i>RNA quality check</i>	152
4.3.5	<i>Reverse transcription from RNA to cDNA</i>	152
4.3.6	<i>Reverse transcription PCR protocol</i>	153
4.3.7	<i>Real-time PCR protocol</i>	154
4.3.8	<i>Relative quantification of VEGFA and MMP2</i>	156
4.4	Results	157
4.4.1	<i>Quality check of extracted RNA</i>	157
4.4.2	<i>Verification of primer pairs</i>	158
4.4.3	<i>Determination of the qPCR assay performance</i>	160
4.4.3.1	Standard curve analysis and efficiencies of the qPCR reactions	160
4.4.3.2	Melt curve analysis	163
4.4.4	<i>VEGFA expression in tumours treated with IGFBP-2 and its mutants</i>	164
4.4.5	<i>MMP2 expression in tumours treated with IGFBP-2 and its mutants</i>	166
4.4.6	<i>Preliminary investigation of MMP9 expression in tumour xenografts</i>	168
4.5	Discussion	169
4.6	Conclusions	173
5.0	FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	175
5.1	Summary of research aims	175
5.2	Major findings and contribution to the field	176
5.3	Limitations and future avenues of the research	184
5.4	Conclusions	188
6.0	REFERENCES	190