



POLYMERIC IgA ANTIBODY IN HUMANS AFTER VACCINATION
AND IN DISEASE

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Title Page	i
Contents	ii-x
Abstract	xi-xii
Declaration	xiii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Preface	xv
 <u>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION</u>	
I. History Of The Discovery Of The Secretory Immune System	1
II. Review Of The Organisation Of The Intestinal Immune System And Production Of Intestinal IgA Antibody	5
III. The Assessment Of Intestinal Immunity In Humans	9
IV. Difficulties In Studying Intestinal Immunity In Humans	11
1. Intestinal Antibody	11
2. Other Measures Of Intestinal Immunity	13
V. Serum Polymeric IgA	16
VI. The Source Of Serum pIgA In Humans	19
VII. The Measurement Of pIgA In Human Sera	22
VIII. Background To The Development Of The Secretory Component Binding Assay For Polymeric IgA Antibody	27
 <u>CHAPTER 2 - MATERIALS AND METHODS</u>	
I. General Methods Used To Prepare And Analyse The Proteins.	32
1. Gel Chromatography	32
2. Ion Exchange Chromatography	33
3. Affinity Chromatography	34
4. Analysis Of Protein Preparations	35
5. Standards And Antisera Used In The Analysis of Protein Preparations	36
6. ELISA Analysis Of Protein Preparations	37
II. Specific Methods Used For Preparation Of Proteins And Anti Sera.	38
1. Secretory Component	38
a) Preparation Of Secretory Component	38
i) Preparation Of Secretory Component Utilizing Anion Exchange and Gel Chromatography	38

	PAGE
ii) Preparation Of Secretory Component Utilizing Affinity Chromatography	41
b) ELISA To Test For Lactoferrin Contamination Of Secretory Component	42
c) Radiolabelling Secretory Component	43
i) The Chloramine T Method	43
ii) The Iodogen Method	44
iii) The Bolton And Hunter Method of Iodinating Secretory Component	46
2. Secretory IgA	47
3. Polymeric IgA	48
a) Preparation Of Polymeric IgA	48
i) Polymeric IgA From Pooled Sera Of Patients With Alcoholic Liver Disease	48
ii) Polymeric IgA From Sera Of Patients With Myeloma	50
b) Radiolabelling Polymeric IgA	51
4. IgG	52
5. IgM	53
a) Preparation Of IgM From Normal Human Serum	53
b) Preparation Of IgM From Sera Of Patients With Waldenströms Macroglobulinaemia	55
6. Preparation Of Anti Light Chain	56
a) Preparation Of Light Chain	56
b) Preparation Of Light Chain Sepharose	57
c) Affinity Purification Of Anti Light Chain Using Light Chain Sepharose	58
d) ELISA To Test Anti Light Chain Antibody	59
III. Preparation Of Anti IgM Sepharose Columns Used To Deplete Serum Of IgM	60
1. Preparation Of Anti IgM For Sepharose Affinity Columns	61
a) The Tryptic Digestion Of Immunoglobulin M To Obtain The Pentameric (Fc) _{5μ} Fragment	61
b) Assessment Of The Purity Of The Presumed IgM (Fc) _{5μ} Fragment By ELISA	62
c) Preparation Of Antiserum To IgM	65
d) Affinity Purification Of The Rabbit Antiserum Against Human (Fc) _{5μ}	65
2. Preparation Of Sepharose Columns Used To Affinity Purify The Rabbit Antiserum Against (Fc) _{5μ}	67
a) The Coupling Of IgM To Cyanogen Bromide Activated Sepharose 4B	67
b) Testing The IgM Sepharose Column	68
c) The Coupling Of IgG To Cyanogen Bromide Activated Sepharose 4B	68
d) Testing The IgG Sepharose Affinity Column	69
3. Coupling Of Rabbit Anti Human IgM To Cyanogen Bromide Activated Sepharose 4B	70

	PAGE
4. Assessing The Effectiveness Of Anti IgM Sepharose Affinity Columns In Depleting Serum Of IgM	70
IV. Alkaline Phosphatase Labelled Conjugates Used To Detect Polymeric IgA Antibody	71
1. Alkaline Phosphatase Labelled Secretory Component	72
2. The Alkaline Phosphatase Labelled Mouse Monoclonal Anti Secretory Component Antibody	73
a) Source Of The Monoclonal Anti Secretory Component	73
b) Testing The Globulin Fraction Of Mouse Ascites Fluid For Anti Secretory Component Activity	74
c) The Preparation And Evaluation Of The Anti SC Alkaline Phosphatase Conjugate	74
V. Material and Methods Used In The Studies Performed In Normal Volunteers And Patients	75
1. Collection And Storage Of Samples Of Intestinal Fluid And Serum	75
2. Typhoid Vaccine	75
a) Oral Typhoid Vaccine	75
i) Gelatin Capsules Containing The Vaccine	76
ii) Liquid Formulation Of The Vaccine	76
iii) Lyophilized Vaccine	77
b) Parenteral Typhoid Vaccine	77
c) Hybrid Cholera-Typhoid Vaccines	77
3. Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assays For Antigen Specific Antibody In Serum And Intestinal Fluid	78
a) Antigens	78
i) Typhoid Lipopolysaccharide	78
ii) <u>Escherichia coli</u> Lipopolysaccharide	79
iii) Gliadin	79
iv) <u>Campylobacter</u> Antigens	79
b) Description Of The ELISA For Antigen Specific Antibody In Serum And Intestinal Fluid	80
4. Immunodiffusion Assays	82
5. Statistical Analysis	82
VI. Miscellaneous Reagents Used In Experimental Work	83
1. Antisera And Alkaline Phosphatase Conjugates Supplied By Dr. P. Ey	83
2. Alkaline Phosphatase Conjugate Supplied By Ms. J. Remes	84

CHAPTER 3 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSAY

I.	Introduction	85
II.	Description Of The Assay For Antigen Specific Polymeric IgA Antibody In Serum	87
	1. Removal of IgM From Serum Samples	87
	2. Assay For Antigen Specific pIgA Antibody	87
III.	Studies Of Secretory Component Binding	89
	1. Binding Of Secretory Component To Polymeric IgA And Other Immunoglobulins	89
	a) The Binding Of Radiolabelled SC To Immunoglobulins Bound To Microtitre Plates	89
	b) The Binding Of Radiolabelled SC To Immunoglobulins Coupled To Plates Coated With Anti Light Chain Antibody	90
	c) The Inhibition Of Binding Of Secretory Component To Polymeric IgA or IgM by Immunoglobulins In The Liquid Phase	92
	d) The Specificity Of Binding Of Secretory Component: Inhibition Of Secretory Component Binding With Specific Antisera	93
	e) Variability Of Binding Of Secretory Component To Different Preparation Of pIgA And IgM.	95
	2. Binding Of Secretory Component To Antigen Specific pIgA	96
	a) Fractionation Of IgM Depleted Samples Of Serum By Gel Chromatography In Order To Confirm That Secretory Component Bound To Polymeric IgA Antibody	96
	b) Ablation Of Secretory Component Binding Capacity By Anti IgA Antibody Sepharose Affinity Columns	97
IV.	Preventing IgM Interfering With The Detection Of pIgA	98
	1. Attempts To Selectively Inhibit Secretory Component Binding To IgM But Not Polymeric IgA	99
	a) The Effect Of Diluting SC In Buffers of pH3, pH5, pH6, pH8, pH9 and pH10.	100
	b) The Effect Of Diluting SC In Buffers Of Varying Molarity	100
	c) The Effect Of Detergent	101
	d) Attempts To Prevent The Binding Of Secretory Component To IgM Using 2-Mercapto Ethanol (BME)	102
	2. The Removal Of IgM From Serum Using Anti IgM Sepharose Affinity Columns	103
	a) Construction Of Anti IgM Sepharose Affinity Columns	103
	b) Use Of The Anti IgM Sepharose Affinity Columns	104
	c) The Efficiency Of The Affinity Columns	104

	PAGE
d) Specificity Of The Anti IgM Sepharose Affinity Columns	104
V. Optimising Other Steps In The Assay	105
1. The Effect Of The Number Of Washes On Secretory Component Binding	106
2. The Effect Of The Temperature Of The Washing Solution and Presence Of Tween	106
3. Optimising The Quantity Of Secretory Component Added To Each Well	106
4. The Optimum Conditions For The Incubation Of SC With pIgA	107
VI. Determining The Sensitivity Of The Assay	108
VII. Stability Of The Radiolabelled Secretory Component	112
VIII. Summary	113
Figures For Chapter 3	117-133

CHAPTER 4 - STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN AN ATTEMPT TO INCREASE THE SENSITIVITY OF THE ASSAY FOR POLYMERIC IgA ANTIBODY

I. Introduction	134
II. Studies Of Alternative Methods of Preparing And Labelling Secretory Component For Use In The Radio-Immuno Assay	135
1. The Use Of Secretory Component Prepared By Affinity Purification Using IgM Sepharose	135
2. The Evaluation Of Secretory Component Radiolabelled By Alternative Methods	137
a) Secretory Component Radiolabelled Using Iodogen Tubes	138
b) Secretory Component Radiolabelled Using The Bolton and Hunter Reagent	138
3. Experiments Examining The Effect Of Radioiodination On Secretory Component	140
a) The Effect Of Chloramine T On Secretory Component	140
b) The Effect Of The Incorporation Of ¹²⁵ I In Secretory Component On Secretory Component Binding To Immunoglobulins	142
4. Summary	144
III. Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay Systems To Measure Polymeric IgA Antibody	144
1. The Secretory Component Alkaline Phosphatase Conjugate	145

	PAGE
2. The Mouse Monoclonal Anti Secretory Component Alkaline Phosphatase Conjugate	148
a) Introduction	148
b) Description Of The Enzyme Linked Immuno-adsorbent Assay For Antigen Specific Polymeric IgA Antibody Using The Anti Secretory Component Conjugate	149
c) Application Of The ELISA Using Alkaline Phosphatase Labelled Anti Secretory Component	150
i) ELISA To Demonstrate The Specificity Of The Binding Of Secretory Component To Polymeric IgA And IgM	150
ii) Application Of The ELISA To Detect Antigen Specific Polymeric IgA Antibody	151
d) Limitations Of The ELISA	155
i) Comparison Of The Binding Of Secretory Component To Polymeric IgA In The Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay and Radio-Immunoassay	157
ii) Reasons For The Reduced Sensitivity Of The ELISA: Dissociation Of Bonds Between Secretory Component And Polymeric IgA	158
e) Attempts To Improve The Sensitivity Of The ELISA	
i) The Use Of Glutaraldehyde	162
ii) Attempts To Reduce The Background	165
f) Discussion On The Anti Secretory Component ELISA	167
Figures For Chapter 4	171-173

CHAPTER 5 - DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSAY FOR TOTAL POLYMERIC IgA IN SERUM

I. Introduction	174
II. Description Of The Assay For Total Polymeric IgA In Serum	175
III. Development Of The Assay	177
1. Determining The Optimum Concentration Of IgM To Be Used To Coat Wells Of Microtitre Plates	177
2. Determining The Optimum Concentration Of Labelled SC To Be Added	179
3. Determining The Length Of The Incubation Period For Leaving SC In The Wells	180
4. Determining The Intra Assay And Inter Assay Variation	181

	PAGE
IV. Validation Of The Assay For Total Serum Polymeric IgA: Assay To Confirm That It Was pIgA In Serum That Inhibited The Binding Of SC To IgM	182
IV. Summary	184
Figures For Chapter 5	187-191
<u>CHAPTER 6 - A STUDY OF THE SECRETORY IMMUNE SYSTEM IN NORMAL SUBJECTS: THE IMMUNE RESPONSE TO TYPHOID VACCINE</u>	
I. Introduction	192
II. Initial Study: The Measurement Of Anti-Typhoid Intestinal And Serum Antibody Following Oral Vaccination With The Ty21a Vaccine	195
1. Introduction	195
2. Materials And Methods	195
a. Subjects	195
b. Vaccine	195
c. Vaccination procedure	196
d. Vaccination schedule	196
e. Samples	197
f. Assays	197
3. Results	198
4. Discussion	199
III. Summary Of The Data Obtained Regarding The Serum Polymeric IgA Response To Oral Immunisation In Volunteers Given Candidate Hybrid Oral Cholera Typhoid Vaccines	201
IV. The Serum Polymeric IgA Antibody Response To Typhoid Vaccination: Its Relationship To The Intestinal IgA Response	204
1. Introduction	204
2. Materials And Methods	
a. Subjects	205
b. Vaccines	205
c. Study design	205
d. Samples	207
e. Assays	207
3. Results	208
4. Discussion	212
Figures For Chapter 6	217-228

	PAGE
<u>CHAPTER 7 - STUDIES IN PATIENTS WITH ALCOHOLIC LIVER DISEASE</u>	
I. Introduction	229
II. First Study - Serum Polymeric IgA Antibody To <u>E.coli</u> LPS In Patients With Alcoholic Liver Disease	232
1. Introduction	232
2. Materials and Methods	232
a. Subjects	232
b. Assays	232
c. Statistical Analysis	233
3. Results	234
4. Discussion	235
III. Second Study - The Immune Response Of Patients With Alcoholic Liver Disease To The Oral Typhoid Vaccine Ty21a And The Relationship Of Serum pIgA To Intestinal IgA	236
1. Introduction	236
2. Materials and Methods	237
a. Ty21A Vaccine	237
b. Vaccination Procedure	237
c. Samples	238
d. Assays	238
3. Results	239
a. Immunoglobulin Levels	239
b. Response To The Oral Typhoid Vaccine	239
c. Relationship Of Anti-Typhoid IgA Antibody In Intestinal Fluid To The Anti-Typhoid Serum pIgA And Total IgA Antibody After Vaccination	242
d. Antibody To <u>E.coli</u> LPS	243
e. Relationship Of The Anti- <u>E.coli</u> LPS IgA Antibody In Intestinal Fluid To The Anti- <u>E.coli</u> Antibody In Serum	244
4. Discussion	245
Figures For Chapter 7	253-262

CHAPTER 8 - POLYMERIC IgA ANTIBODY IN DISEASE

I. Introduction	263
II. Polymeric IgA Antibody To Gliadin In The Serum Of Patients With Coeliac Disease	263
1. Introduction	263
2. Materials And Methods	264
a. Subjects	264
b. Samples	265
c. Assays	266
3. Results	267
4. Discussion	269

	PAGE
III. Serum Polymeric IgA Antibody In Patients With IgA Nephropathy And The Immune Response To Oral Typhoid Vaccination	271
1. Introduction	271
2. Materials And Methods	274
a. Subjects	274
b. Vaccine	274
c. Study Design	274
d. Assays	275
3. Results	275
4. Discussion	281
IV. Serum Polymeric IgA And Antibody To <u>Escherichia Coli</u> Lipopolysaccharide In Patients With Crohns Disease	284
1. Introduction	284
2. Materials And Methods	286
a. Subjects	286
b. Assays	286
3. Results	287
4. Discussion	290
V. Serum Polymeric IgA Antibody To <u>Campylobacter Jejuni</u> In Patients With Campylobacter Enteritis	293
1. Introduction	293
2. Materials And Methods	294
a. Subjects	294
b. Assays	294
3. Results	296
4. Discussion	297
Figures For Chapter 8	300-307
 <u>CHAPTER 9 - DISCUSSION</u>	 308
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	326-351

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between antigen specific polymeric IgA (pIgA) antibody in serum and intestinal IgA antibody in humans.

The difficulties in assessing the human intestinal immune response, the requirement for a simpler method of indirectly assessing intestinal immunity and current knowledge regarding the origins of intestinal and serum IgA in humans are reviewed.

The development and validation of secretory component (SC) binding assays for antigen specific pIgA and total pIgA in human serum are described.

The relationship between pIgA antibody responses in serum and the IgA response in intestinal fluid was examined in normal subjects subject to oral vaccination with the live attenuated typhoid vaccine, Salmonella Ty21a and conventional parenteral typhoid vaccination. The serum pIgA response to oral typhoid vaccination and its relationship to the intestinal response was also examined in patients with alcoholic liver disease. In addition, antigen specific serum pIgA was examined in patients with a variety of disorders by looking for serum pIgA to gliadin in patients with Coeliac disease, to Escherichia coli lipopolysaccharide (E.coli LPS) in patients with alcoholic liver disease and Crohn's disease as well as to Campylobacter antigens in patients with Campylobacter enteritis. The immune response of a small sample of unselected patients with IgA nephropathy to oral typhoid vaccination was also investigated.

In normal subjects a short lived pIgA response to both oral and parenteral vaccination was detected whereas an intestinal immune response was only generated by delivery of an antigenic stimulus to the intestine. Levels of typhoid LPS-specific pIgA antibody related to total serum IgA antibody to typhoid LPS rather than intestinal anti-typhoid antibody.

Antigen specific serum pIgA was also detected in the patients with alcoholic liver disease but again there was no relationship to the levels of intestinal antibody. The SC binding assays were also successfully used to measure pIgA antibody in the other patient groups.

The main conclusion of the studies described in this thesis are that while a serum pIgA antibody response can be generated by delivery of an antigenic stimulus to the intestine there is no direct relationship between the level of the serum pIgA antibody and the antibody in the intestine. The regulation of serum pIgA and intestinal IgA appear to be independent.