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cAMP activates adenylate and guanylate cyclase of *Dictyostelium discoideum* cells by binding to different classes of cell-surface receptors. A study with extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\)

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Key words: cAMP; Adenylate cyclase; Guanylate cyclase; Enzyme activation; Cell-surface receptor; Ca\(^{2+}\); (*D. discoideum*)

**Introduction**

The development of the cellular slime mold, *Dictyostelium discoideum*, to a multicellular organism is mediated by extracellular cAMP signals [1–3]. cAMP is secreted periodically by center cells; neighboring cells react chemotactically and relay the signal [4,5]. Extracellular cAMP is detected by cell-surface receptors [1–3]. This induces several responses, such as the fast activation of guanylate cyclase and the slower activation of adenylate cyclase [6,7]. The increase of intracellular cGMP is assumed to be related to the chemotactic reaction [8], while the cAMP produced intracellularly is secreted into the medium [9].

Binding of cAMP to *D. discoideum* cells is heterogeneous; at least three binding sites can be distinguished in fast binding experiments [10]. A small portion of the total of binding sites (about 4%) slowly releases bound \(^{3}H\)cAMP with a half-life of about 15 s. This binding site, which has been designated as S, has high affinity for cAMP.
with an apparent $K_d$ of 15 nM. The remaining binding sites release bound $[^3H]cAMP$ very quickly with a half-life of 0.7–1.5 s. Two types belong to this class, with respectively high (H) and low (L) affinity (the apparent $K_d$ is respectively 60 nM and 450 nM). During the binding reaction there is a time- and cAMP dose-dependent transition of H to L binding sites.

The transition of high-affinity binding to low-affinity binding strongly resembles the binding of agonists to $\beta$-adrenergic receptors [11]. There, transition appears to be due to the coupling of the occupied high-affinity receptor with a GTP-binding protein, resulting in the activation of adenylate cyclase [12]. Recently, evidence has been presented for a functional G-protein in *D. discoideum* [13–15]. Guanine nucleotides promote the transition of H- to L-sites; they also alter the affinity and number of S-sites. It might be hypothesized that in *D. discoideum* the different binding types represent the coupling of an occupied cAMP receptor to different effector molecules, such as, adenylate cyclase, guanylate cyclase or GTP-binding proteins. To investigate this hypothesis we have analysed the effects of several drugs on the different binding types, the activation of adenylate cyclase and on the activation of guanylate cyclase.

Extracellular calcium ions are reported to increase the number of cAMP-binding sites in *D. discoideum* [16], to accelerate development to a multicellular stage [17], and to inhibit the cAMP-mediated activation of adenylate cyclase [18]. Here it is shown that extracellular $Ca^{2+}$ inhibits both the transition of H to L and the cAMP-induced cAMP accumulation with an EC$_{50}$ = 20 $\mu$M $Ca^{2+}$; other divalent cations are not inhibitory. The apparent $K_d$ of S and the apparent $K_a$ of the cAMP-induced cGMP accumulation are both reduced 3–4-fold with EC$_{50}$ = 400 $\mu$M $Ca^{2+}$. $Mg^{2+}$ and $Mn^{2+}$ are active at respectively 6- and about 50-fold higher concentrations. These data are interpreted as evidence that the cAMP signal for the activation of adenylate and guanylate cyclase are detected by different classes of cell-surface cAMP-binding site.

**Materials and Methods**

**Materials.** $[2,8-^3H]cAMP$ (1.5 TBq/mmol), the cGMP radioimmunoassay kit and the cAMP binding protein assay kit were obtained from Amersham International (Bucks., U.K.), dithiothreitol was from Sigma, and silicon oils were from Wacker Chemie (München, F.R.G.). NaCl, KCl, MgCl$_2$, MnCl$_2$, CaCl$_2$, KH$_2$PO$_4$, Na$_2$HPO$_4$ and Tris were of analytical grade obtained from Merck (Darmstadt, F.R.G.).

**Culture conditions.** All experiments have been performed at 20–22°C. *D. discoideum* NC$_4$(H) was grown in association with *Escherichia coli* 281 on a solid medium containing 3.3 g peptone 3.3 g glucose, 4.5 g KH$_2$PO$_4$, 1.5 g Na$_2$HPO$_4$ · 2H$_2$O and 15 g of agar per liter. Cells were harvested in the late log phase with 10 mM sodium/potassium phosphate buffer (pH 6.5) and freed from bacteria by repeated centrifugation at 100 $\times$ g for 4 min.

**cAMP-binding assay [10].** Cells were starved for 5 h by shaking in phosphate buffer at a density of $10^7$ cells/ml. Then cells were collected, washed twice and resuspended in 10 mM phosphate buffer (pH 6.5) at a density of $1 \cdot 10^8$ cells/ml. cAMP-binding was measured in a total volume of 100 $\mu$l containing phosphate buffer, 5 mM dithiothreitol, different concentrations $[^3H]cAMP$, 80 $\mu$l cells and additives as indicated in the figures. Bound and free $[^3H]cAMP$ was separated by centrifugation of the cells through 200 $\mu$l silicon oil (AR 200/Ar 20-1/2) in a swing-out rotor at 10 000 $\times$ g for 30 s. The technique for rapid mixing and centrifugation has been described previously [10].

**cAMP-relay response [19].** Cells were starved for 4–5 h in suspension, washed twice and resuspended in phosphate buffer at a density of $5 \cdot 10^7$ cells/ml. Cells (90 $\mu$l) were stimulated with 10 $\mu$l of a mixture containing (final concentrations) phosphate buffer, 5 mM dithiothreitol, 10 $\mu$M 2'-deoxyadenosine 3',5'-monophosphate (cdAMP). The reaction was terminated by the addition of 100 $\mu$l of perchloric acid (3.5% v/v). Lysates were neutralized with 50 $\mu$l KHCO$_3$ (50% saturated at 20°C), and centrifuged at 8000 $\times$ g for 2 min. The cAMP concentration was measured in the supernatant by isotope dilution assay using a cAMP-binding protein which has a very low affinity for cdAMP.

**cGMP-response [20].** Cells were starved on non-nutrient agar at a density of 1.5 · 10$^6$ cells/cm$^2$. After 4–5 h cells were harvested, washed twice, and resuspended in phosphate buffer at a density
of 10^8 cells/ml. Cells (100 μl) were stimulated with 20 μl containing different cAMP concentrations, and lysed at the indicated times with 100 μl perchloric acid. Lysates were neutralized as described above, and the cGMP content was measured by radioimmunoassay.

**Solubility of cations.** The solubility of the divalent cations in 10 mM phosphate buffer or 15 mM Tris-HCl was investigated as follows. CaCl\textsubscript{2}, MgCl\textsubscript{2} or MnCl\textsubscript{2} (10 mM final concentration of cations) was added to the buffers in the same way as during experiments with cells. In phosphate buffer, MnCl\textsubscript{2} precipitated immediately; CaCl\textsubscript{2} was soluble for at least 1 h, but a precipitate was observed after 24 h; no precipitate was found with MgCl\textsubscript{2}. All ions were soluble in Tris-HCl. The effects of Ca\textsuperscript{2+} on signal transduction was investigated in phosphate buffer to enable a direct comparison with all previous results on signal transduction in *D. discoideum*. A comparison of the divalent cations was made in Tris-HCl, because manganese could not be used in phosphate buffer.

Experiments were performed at least three times with similar results. The standard deviation in cAMP-binding data is 3–4% of the mean. The standard deviation in cAMP and cGMP determinations is about 10% of the mean. Error bars indicating the standard deviations are shown only when they are beyond 3-times the size of the symbols.

**Results**

**Effect of extracellular Ca\textsuperscript{2+} on cAMP-binding to *D. discoideum* cells**

The association of 30 nM [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP to aggregative *D. discoideum* cells at 20°C is shown in fig. 1. In the absence of added Ca\textsuperscript{2+}, cAMP-binding increases to a maximum obtained at about 6 s, which is followed by a decline to equilibrium value at 45–60 s. Previously [10], it has been shown that this decline of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP-binding is caused neither by degradation of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP, nor by dilution of added [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP by secreted cAMP, nor by a reduction of the number of cAMP-binding sites [10]. The inclusion of 30 μM Ca\textsuperscript{2+} during the binding reaction slightly increases the initial binding of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP at 6 s and strongly increases the equilibrium binding at 45–60 s. Apparently, the transition of high-affinity binding to low-affinity binding is impaired by 30 μM Ca\textsuperscript{2+}. The inclusion of 1 mM Ca\textsuperscript{2+} during the binding reaction also strongly increases the initial binding of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP. As with 30 μM Ca\textsuperscript{2+}, the decrease of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP-binding between 6 s and 60 s is reduced.

The dissociation of bound [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP from *D. discoideum* cells is shown in Fig. 2. At 2 nM [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP most of the bound [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP dissociates with a half-life of less than 2 s, while a small part dissociates more slowly with a half-life of about 15 s. This slowly dissociating binding site has been called S [10]. Extracellular Ca\textsuperscript{2+} increases the binding of 2 nM [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP, both before and after the chase with excess cAMP (Fig. 2); the off-rate of S is not altered by Ca\textsuperscript{2+}, neither is the fraction of cell-associated label bound to S (inset Fig. 2). Binding of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP to S is easily measured by association of [\textsuperscript{3}H]cAMP during 45 s (by which all binding sites are occupied) followed by a
Fig. 2. The effect of Ca$^{2+}$ on the dissociation of the $[^3H]$cAMP-receptor complex. *D. discoideum* cells were incubated for 45 s with 2 nM $[^3H]$cAMP in the absence (○) or presence (●) of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$. At t = 0 s excess cAMP (100 μM) was added, and cells were centrifuged through silicon oil at the times indicated in the figure. Inset: Semilogarithmic plot of the same data. The slope is the rate constant of dissociation, which yields $k_1 = 0.05$ s$^{-1}$ in the absence or presence of Ca$^{2+}$.

chase with excess cAMP during 6 s (during which all radioactivity bound to H and L is released). A Scatchard plot S in the absence and presence of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ is shown in Fig. 3. Both Scatchard plots are approximately linear; Ca$^{2+}$ does not increase the total number of S-binding sites, but reduces the apparent $K_d$ from 16.2 nM to 5.2 nM.

Fig. 3. The effect of Ca$^{2+}$ on the Scatchard plot of S. *D. discoideum* cells were incubated for 45 s with different $[^3H]$cAMP concentrations in the absence (○) or presence (●) of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$. At t = 0 s excess cAMP was added, and cell-associated $[^3H]$cAMP was determined 6 s later. The apparent $K_d$ is 16.2 nM in the absence and 5.2 nM in the presence of Ca$^{2+}$. The $B_{\text{max}}$ is 0.4 nM, which equals about 4000 binding sites/cell.

Fig. 4. The effect of Ca$^{2+}$ on the Scatchard plot of H+L. *D. discoideum* cells were incubated with different $[^3H]$cAMP concentrations in the absence (○) or presence (●) of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$. Cell-associated radioactivity was determined after an incubation period of 45 s, and is bound to the three cAMP-binding sites, H, L and S (part A). At 6 s after a chase with excess cAMP, essentially all cell-associated cAMP is bound to S. During this 6 s chase, about 25% of the occupied S-sites dissociate; therefore the occupation of S at 45 s equals the occupation after a 6 s chase (Fig. 3) divided by 0.75. This value is subtracted from total binding at 45 s (Fig. A), whereby the binding to H+L is obtained. These data are presented in part B. Data were normalized for differences in $B_{\text{max}}$ to obtain a better impression of the differences in linearity of the two curves.
Binding of $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ to the total of the three binding sites at equilibrium is shown in Fig. 4. Addition of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ results in an approx. 2.5-fold increase of the number of binding sites (Fig. 4A). The binding of $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ to S at equilibrium is calculated by dividing the binding at 6 s after a chase with excess cAMP by 0.75 (this figure is obtained from the off-rate of S; $k_{-1} = 0.05$ s$^{-1}$ predicts 25% dissociation during 6 s). The binding of $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ to the sum of H + L is then calculated by subtraction of S-specific binding from total binding (Fig. 4B). In the absence of added extracellular Ca$^{2+}$ the Scatchard plot of H + L thus obtained is strongly curved, which is due to the cAMP concentration-dependent transition of H to L [10]. After using several kinetic approaches, and investigating the effects of drugs, it was suggested that the $K_d$ of H is 60 nM, the $K_d$ of L is 450 nM and that the fraction of H-sites is 40% in the absence of cAMP, and 5% in the presence of 100 nM cAMP [10]. The Scatchard plot of H + L is almost linear in the presence of Ca$^{2+}$, again demonstrating that the transition of H to L is suppressed by Ca$^{2+}$. The Scatchard plot was resolved into two components with fixed affinities and a fixed ratio (i.e., it is assumed that no transition of H to L occurs in the presence of Ca$^{2+}$). Such a computer fit shows that 23% of the sites have a $K_d$ of 57 nM and 77% have a $K_d$ of 462 nM. These $K_d$ values are close to those obtained previously for respectively H and L [10]. This would suggest that Ca$^{2+}$ does not alter the affinities of H and L, but that it interferes with the interconversion of H to L.

The results obtained so far, show that extracellular calcium ions have at least three effects: (i) the total number of binding sites is increased about 2.5-fold; (ii) the affinity of S is increased about 3-fold, while the number of S-binding sites and its off-rate are not altered; (iii) the transition of high-affinity binding to low-affinity binding is suppressed by Ca$^{2+}$.

The Ca$^{2+}$ concentration-dependences of these processes are shown in Fig. 5. The effect on $B_{\text{max}}$ was detected by measuring binding at high $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ concentrations (200 nM). Ca$^{2+}$ induces approx. 2.5-fold stimulation, the concentration which induces a half-maximal effect (EC$_{50}$) is about 500 $\mu$M Ca$^{2+}$. The effect of Ca$^{2+}$ on the affinity of S was detected by measuring the binding of low $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ concentrations (1 nM) 6 s after a chase with excess cAMP. Ca$^{2+}$ induces approx. 3.5-fold increase of the affinity of S with EC$_{50}$ = 400 $\mu$M Ca$^{2+}$. The transition of high-affinity binding to low-affinity binding is given by the reduction of binding of moderate $[^3\text{H}]\text{cAMP}$ concentrations (30 nM) between 6 s and 45 s after the onset of association. The ratio of binding at 6 s and at 45 s decreases from about 1.8 to about 1.2 with EC$_{50}$ = 20 $\mu$M Ca$^{2+}$. The effect of extracellular calcium ions thus appears to be rather specific.
the effect on the transition of H to L occurs at about 25-fold lower concentrations than the effect on S.

The effect of extracellular Ca$^{2+}$ on cAMP relay

The accumulation of intra- and extracellular cAMP levels after chemotactic stimulation of aggregative *D. discoideum* cells can be measured by using a potent cAMP agonist which shows minimal cross-inhibition in the isotope dilution assay for the determination of cAMP concentrations. 2'-Deoxyadenosine 3',5'-monophosphate (cdAMP) is only 7-times less active than cAMP for *D. discoideum* cell-surface receptors, while it is about 1500-times less active than cAMP in the isotope dilution assay [19]. Dithiothreitol, an inhibitor of phosphodiesterase in *D. discoideum* [21], is used to protect cdAMP and extracellular cAMP.

cAMP levels slowly increase after stimulation with cdAMP; a plateau value is reached after 2–3 min, and half maximal values are obtained in about 1.5 min (Fig. 6A). The addition of 1 mM Ca$^{2+}$ without the cdAMP stimulus does not affect basal cAMP levels. However, 1 mM Ca$^{2+}$ strongly inhibits the cdAMP-induced accumulation of cAMP levels. The pace of the cAMP accumulation is almost identical in the absence or presence of 30 µM added Ca$^{2+}$, although the cAMP accumulation might level off slightly earlier in the presence of extracellular Ca$^{2+}$. Small amounts of added extracellular Ca$^{2+}$ are already sufficient to inhibit the cAMP accumulation, but the inhibition is never more than about 80%. A half-maximal effect is induced by about 16 µM added Ca$^{2+}$ (Fig. 6B).

The effect of extracellular Ca$^{2+}$ on the cGMP-response

cAMP induces a fast transient accumulation of cGMP levels in *D. discoideum*. Maximal cGMP concentrations are obtained after about 10 s, and basal levels are recovered in 30–45 s (Fig. 7A and B). The addition of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ without stimulus does not alter basal cGMP levels (Fig. 7A). Pre-incubation of cells with 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ during 30 s and subsequent stimulation with 100 nM cAMP strongly alters the dynamics of the cGMP-response. The initial rate of the cGMP accumulation is slightly reduced by Ca$^{2+}$; maximal cGMP levels are obtained earlier (at about 6 s), and cGMP levels decline faster (Fig. 7A). The addition of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ 5 s after stimulation with 100 nM cAMP results in the almost immediate decline of cGMP levels (Fig. 7A). This suggests that added Ca$^{2+}$ affects the cAMP-mediated cGMP-response almost instantaneously. In Fig. 7B, cells were stimulated with 10 nM cAMP, which induces approx. a half-maximal response in control cells. As with higher cAMP concentrations, maximal cGMP levels are obtained earlier (at about 6 s), and cGMP levels decline faster (Fig. 7A). The addition of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$ 5 s after stimulation with 100 nM cAMP results in the almost immediate decline of cGMP levels (Fig. 7A). This suggests that added Ca$^{2+}$ affects the cAMP-mediated cGMP-response almost instantaneously. In Fig. 7B, cells were stimulated with 10 nM cAMP, which induces approx. a half-maximal response in control cells. As with higher cAMP concentrations, maximal cGMP levels are obtained after about 10 s in the absence and after about 6 s in the presence of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$. In contrast to higher cAMP concentrations, the initial rate of cGMP accumulation is enhanced by Ca. In the presence of 10 mM Ca$^{2+}$, 10 nM and 100 nM cAMP induced almost the same cGMP accumulation. The experiments of Figure 7A and
B suggest that extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) has at least two effects on the cGMP-response: The response is induced at lower cAMP concentrations, and maximal cGMP levels are obtained earlier after stimulation.

Fig. 7C shows the cGMP-response induced by different cAMP concentrations in the absence or presence of 10 mM Ca\(^{2+}\). cGMP levels were measured 5 s after stimulation: thus, before maximal cGMP levels were obtained, by which the effect of Ca\(^{2+}\) on the time parameter of the cGMP peak did not interfere with the dose-response curve (inset Fig. 7C). These data are presented as an Eadie-Hofstee plot (Fig. 7C): the intercept with the ordinate represents the maximal response. Extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) inhibits the maximal rate of cGMP accumulation by about 25%. The slope of the Eadie-Hofstee plot represents the activation constant, \(K_a\) (cAMP concentration which induces a half-maximal cGMP response). Extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) reduces the \(K_a\) from 15 nM in control cells to about 3.5 nM in cells preincubated with 10 mM Ca\(^{2+}\).

The effect of different Ca\(^{2+}\) concentrations on the modulation of the cGMP-response is shown in Fig. 7D, E. The increase of affinity for cAMP was measured by stimulation of cells in the presence of different Ca\(^{2+}\) concentrations with a low cAMP concentration (5 nM). Extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) induces an about 60% increase of cGMP levels 5 s after stimulation with cAMP; a half-maximal effect is obtained at 200-500 \(\mu\)M Ca\(^{2+}\) (Fig. 7D). The effect of different Ca\(^{2+}\)-concentrations on the pace of the cGMP-response was measured by recording the response 10 s after stimulation with a high cAMP concentration (100 nM). Extracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) induces an approx. 60% decrease of cGMP levels; a half-maximal effect is induced by 300-500 \(\mu\)M Ca\(^{2+}\) (Fig. 7E).

**Specificity of cations**

The effects of the monovalent cations K\(^{+}\) and Na\(^{+}\), and the divalent cations Mg\(^{2+}\), Mn\(^{2+}\) and Ca\(^{2+}\) on cAMP binding and on the cAMP and stimulated with 100 nM cAMP and lysed at 10 s after stimulation. The data are the means of duplicate determinations in (A), and the means \pm S.D. of triplicate determinations in the other panels.
cGMP accumulation induced by cAMP are shown in Table I. The monovalent cations at concentrations between 0.1 and 10 mM do not have any effect on cAMP-binding or cAMP-induced responses. The divalent cations increase the number of cAMP-binding sites to the same extent, without differences in concentration-dependency. Mg$^{2+}$, Mn$^{2+}$ and Ca$^{2+}$ increase the binding of cAMP to the S-sites; Mg$^{2+}$ and Mn$^{2+}$ are active, respectively, at approx. 5- and approx. 50-fold higher concentrations than Ca$^{2+}$. The transition of high-affinity binding sites H to low-affinity binding sites L is specifically inhibited by Ca$^{2+}$. Mg$^{2+}$ at a 1000-fold higher concentration is inactive, and even Mn$^{2+}$ only slightly but significantly enhances the transition of H to L.

The cAMP-induced accumulation of cAMP levels is inhibited by Ca$^{2+}$, but not by Mg$^{2+}$; Mn$^{2+}$ induces a small but significant increase of the cAMP response. The cation-specificity on the modulation of the cGMP-response was recorded only for the effect on the reduction of the response 10 s after stimulation with 100 nM cAMP (Fig. 7E). The effect of Ca$^{2+}$ in these experiments is statistically more significant than the effect of Ca$^{2+}$ on the response to low cAMP concentrations (Fig. 7D). The effect of cations on the cGMP-response is not specific for Ca$^{2+}$; Mg$^{2+}$ and Mn$^{2+}$ also inhibit the cGMP-response, but higher concentrations are required. If we assume that Mg$^{2+}$, Mn$^{2+}$ and Ca$^{2+}$ induce the same maximal inhibition of the cGMP-response, then Mg$^{2+}$ and Mn$^{2+}$ are respectively approx. 6- and approx. 60-fold less active than Ca$^{2+}$ (Table II).

*D. discoideum* cells resuspended in Ca$^{2+}$ free buffer, secrete Ca$^{2+}$ ions up to a concentration of about 6 μM [22]. Since the cAMP-induced cAMP accumulation and the transition of H to L are very sensitive to Ca$^{2+}$, they might be slightly inhibited in control cells. The small potentiation of these responses by Mn$^{2+}$ could be due to an antagonistic effect of Mn$^{2+}$ on the inhibition by Ca$^{2+}$. Indeed, it was observed that 100 μM Mn$^{2+}$ completely reverted the inhibition of the cAMP accumulation

### Table I

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<th>Property</th>
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<th>Ca$^{2+}$</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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**Concentration of Cations Which Induce a Half-Maximal Effect (EC$_{50}$) on cAMP-Binding and cAMP-Induced Responses**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Mn$^{2+}$</th>
<th>Ca$^{2+}$</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S (%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cAMP-response</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cGMP-response</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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$^a$ No effect up to 10 mM.

$^b$ Mn$^{2+}$ enhances the transition of H to L and the cAMP-response.
by 30 µM Ca²⁺. Mg²⁺ (tested up to 10 mM) had no such effect. The inhibition of the cGMP response by 1 mM Ca²⁺ was not reverted by either 0.2 mM Mg²⁺ or 2 mM Mn²⁺ (data not shown).

Discussion

The addition of Ca²⁺ to the extracellular medium of D. discoideum cells has a variety of effects on cell-surface cAMP receptors, on cAMP-induced activation of adenylate and guanylate cyclase, and on the rate of development to the multicellular state (Refs. 16–18 and this report). Some of these effects are also induced by Mg²⁺ and Mn²⁺ (Table II). Ca²⁺ induces an approx. 2.5-fold increase of the total number of binding sites, as has been shown previously [16]. Since the number of slowly dissociating cAMP-binding sites (S) is not altered by Ca²⁺, the increase of total binding is due to an increase of the number of quickly dissociating sites (H + L). Mg²⁺ and Mn²⁺ induce the same effect at virtually identical concentrations (Table II).

The affinity of the S-binding sites is increased about 3-fold by Ca²⁺, without an alteration of the off-rate. Therefore, Ca²⁺ increases only the apparent on-rate of the S-binding-sites. Mg²⁺ and Mn²⁺ also affect the S-sites, but higher concentrations are required. A half-maximal effect is induced by 0.4 mM Ca²⁺, 2 mM Mg²⁺ and about 20 mM Mn²⁺. The effect of Ca²⁺ on the S-binding-sites parallels the effect on the cAMP-mediated cGMP response: (i) The dose-response curve for a cAMP-induced cGMP response is shifted by Ca²⁺ to about 4-fold lower cAMP concentrations. (ii) The pace of the cGMP response is faster in the presence of Ca²⁺, suggesting that cAMP is detected more quickly (higher on-rate). (iii) The cGMP response is modified by Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺ and Mn²⁺ with half-maximal effect at 0.4 mM Ca²⁺, 2.5 mM Mg²⁺ and about 25 mM Mn²⁺.

The effect of extracellular Ca²⁺ on the transition of the fast-dissociation cAMP-binding sites and on the cAMP response occurs at much lower Ca²⁺ concentrations and is Ca²⁺-specific. In the absence of extracellular added Ca²⁺, a time and cAMP concentration-dependent transition of high-affinity binding H to low-affinity binding L occurs. This transition is largely inhibited by Ca²⁺ with an EC₅₀ = 20 µM. The cAMP-mediated accumulation of cAMP levels is inhibited by Ca²⁺ at the same low Ca²⁺ concentrations (EC₅₀ = 16 µM).

These results strongly suggest that the cAMP-mediated activation of adenylate and guanylate cyclase proceed by activation of different binding classes of surface cAMP receptors. However, the data do not discriminate between different binding classes of one protein (one receptor protein with different environments, e.g., transducers) and two receptor proteins coded by two genes.

It is proposed that activation of adenylate cyclase is mediated by the fast-dissociating cAMP receptors. Apparently, the transition of high-affinity binding to low-affinity binding represents the coupling of the occupied receptor to adenylate cyclase. It is interesting to notice that the kinetics of the transition of H to L is are approx. equal to the kinetics of activation of adenylate cyclase in vivo [9]. Recently we observed that in membranes from D. discoideum cells guanyl nucleotides promote the conversion of high-affinity cAMP-binding to low-affinity binding [14], which suggests that activation of adenylate cyclase in D. discoideum may proceed via a GTP-binding protein in a way similar to the hormone mediated activation of adenylate cyclase in mammalian cells. Activation of guanylate cyclase is supposed to be mediated by the slow dissociating cAMP receptors (S). Although we have observed an alteration of these sites by guanyl nucleotides, it has not yet been firmly established whether a GTP-binding protein is involved in this activation process.

The mechanism of action of Ca²⁺ is not yet understood, because of its complexity. Ca²⁺ probably acts at the cell surface by different mechanisms, which is suggested by the following experiments (partly unpublished). (i) The Ca²⁺-uptake blockers La³⁺ and Ruthenium Red (both 100 µM) do not affect cAMP-binding and cAMP-induced responses, neither do they reverse the action of Ca²⁺. These data suggest that Ca²⁺ does not have to enter the cell to be effective. It has not been demonstrated that these drugs actually interfere with the localization of Ca²⁺ in D. discoideum; they do alter, however, the behaviour and differentiation of this organism [22,23]. (ii) The effects of Ca²⁺ take
place with different specificity and sensitivity: (a) the effect on $B_{\text{max}}$ is not specific for Ca$^{2+}$ and occurs at high concentrations. Such effects are also induced by polyvalent anions [24]; (b) the effects on the S-sites and on the cGMP-response are moderately specific for Ca$^{2+}$ and also occur at high concentrations. The effect of 1 mM Ca$^{2+}$ is not influenced by the simultaneous presence of 0.2 mM Mg$^{2+}$ or 2 mM Mn$^{2+}$; (c) The effects on the fast sites and on the cAMP accumulation are Ca$^{2+}$-specific, and occur at low concentrations. Mg$^{2+}$ (upto 10 mM) does not influence the inhibition by 10–100 $\mu$M Ca$^{2+}$. In contrast, low Mn$^{2+}$ concentrations (100 $\mu$M) completely annul the inhibition by 30 $\mu$M Ca$^{2+}$, suggesting that Mn$^{2+}$ is an antagonist of Ca$^{2+}$ in this transduction pathway.

All these observations suggest that Ca$^{2+}$ acts at the cell surface, and that the effects on $B_{\text{max}}$, the fast sites and the slow sites have different mechanisms of action which have to be investigated further. Especially the target of Ca$^{2+}$ which induces inhibition of cAMP relay is potentially interesting, cAMP relay is essential during cell aggregation, morphogenesis, and cell differentiation in *D. discoideum* [1–5,25,26]. The low Ca$^{2+}$ concentrations needed to inhibit this response may be present during development in *D. discoideum*.

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