



Docking proteins

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Docking proteins comprise a distinct category of intracellular, noncatalytic signalling protein, that function downstream of a variety of receptor and receptor-associated tyrosine kinases and regulate diverse physiological and pathological processes. The growth factor receptor bound 2-associated binder/Daughter of Sevenless, insulin receptor substrate, fibroblast growth factor receptor substrate 2 and downstream of tyrosine kinases protein families fall into this category. This minireview focuses on the structure, function and regulation of these proteins.

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Overview

In a review on receptor tyrosine kinase (RTK) signalling published a decade ago [1], docking proteins were classified as signal transducers that exhibit a membrane targeting region at the N-terminus, and multiple tyrosine phosphorylation sites that function as binding sites for src homology (SH)2 domains of a variety of downstream effectors. Proteins that fell into this category were members of the growth factor receptor bound (Grb)2-associated binder (Gab)/Daughter of Sevenless (DOS), insulin receptor substrate (IRS), fibroblast growth factor (FGF) receptor substrate

(FRS)2 and downstream of tyrosine kinases (Dok) families. Also, linker for activated T cells (LAT) was classified as a docking protein, although the presence of a transmembrane region raises the issue of whether LAT and other related proteins (e.g. non-T-cell activation linker [2]) should be classified separately. In this context, it is noteworthy that other transmembrane proteins containing tyrosine phosphorylation-dependent recruitment sites (e.g. those with immunoreceptor tyrosine-based activation motifs) are not routinely classified as docking proteins. Another protein that has

Abbreviations

Dok, downstream of tyrosine kinases; DOS, Daughter of Sevenless; EGFR, epidermal growth factor receptor; FGF, fibroblast growth factor; FGFR, fibroblast growth factor receptor; FRS, FGF receptor substrate; Gab, Grb2-associated binder; Grb, growth factor receptor bound; IGF, insulin-like growth factor; IL, interleukin; IRS, insulin receptor substrate; LAT, linker for activated T cells; PH, pleckstrin homology; PKC, protein kinase C; PTB, phosphotyrosine binding; PtdIns, phosphatidylinositol; RTK, receptor tyrosine kinase; SH, src homology.

been described as a docking protein in the literature is p130Cas [3]. This protein contains a large number of tyrosine phosphorylation sites that mediate effector recruitment, but exhibits an N-terminally located SH3 domain rather than a motif/domain for plasma membrane localization. However, the SH3 domain does target Cas to a specific subcellular location, in this case focal adhesions by virtue of its interaction with focal adhesion kinase [4].

How does one distinguish between a docking protein, on the one hand, and an adaptor protein, on the other hand? This is somewhat arbitrary, because in certain contexts docking proteins perform an adaptor function: they establish a direct or indirect linkage between an activated tyrosine kinase or another type of tyrosine-phosphorylated protein and SH2 or phosphotyrosine-binding (PTB) domain-containing effectors. In addition, particular proteins commonly referred to as adaptors (e.g. SLP65) [5] may exhibit characteristics of docking proteins, in possessing multiple tyrosine phosphorylation sites that mediate protein–protein interactions. In order to focus this minireview, we have chosen to define docking proteins as intracellular proteins that contain an N-terminal motif or domain for direct membrane association (e.g. a pleckstrin homol-

ogy [PH] domain or myristoylation sequence) and a large number (> 5) of tyrosine phosphorylation sites for effector recruitment. Based on these criteria, we have classified members of the Gab/DOS, IRS, FRS2 and Dok families as ‘classical’ docking proteins (Fig. 1A). We accept that particular members of a docking protein family may not fulfil both these criteria (e.g. Dok-5 has only three tyrosine phosphorylation sites), however, each of the identified families contains one or more proteins that do. In addition, other proteins also mediate a ‘docking’ function (i.e. multivalent recruitment of SH2-domain containing effectors) (Fig. 1B), but do not fulfil our criteria in terms of structural characteristics or numbers of binding sites.

What are the functional characteristics of docking proteins? In general, these proteins are recruited to sites of tyrosine kinase activation by two broad mechanisms, the first involving interaction with the plasma membrane, and the second, protein–protein interactions. With regard to the first mechanism, plasma membrane localization may reflect myristoylation of the docking protein, as in the case of FRS2 proteins [6], or recruitment by PH domain-mediated binding to specific phospholipid second messengers, as exemplified by Gab proteins [7]. In terms of the second mechanism, a



Fig. 1. Schematic representation of docking protein families. (A) Classical docking proteins. The founding members of the IRS, Gab, Dok and FRS2 families are shown. Binding motifs and fatty acid attachment sites mentioned in the text are indicated. Y, tyrosine phosphorylation site; Pro, proline-rich region; TM, transmembrane domain; LZ, leucine zipper domain; aa, length in amino acids. (B) Examples of other signaling proteins with similarities to docking proteins.

docking protein may bind a tyrosine-phosphorylated receptor either directly (e.g. via an interactive protein module, such as a PTB domain) or via one or more accessory adaptor proteins, such as Grb2. The docking protein is then phosphorylated on multiple tyrosine residues, leading to the recruitment of specific SH2 and/or PTB domain-containing proteins, determined by the sequence context of the phosphorylated tyrosine residue. This leads to the activation of one or more signalling pathways, or their modulation. Thus, docking proteins function as ‘assembly platforms’ for the activation, coordination and regulation of tyrosine kinase signalling events in specific subcellular compartments (Fig. 2). Finally, in addition to tyrosine phosphorylation, these proteins are also subject to serine/threonine phosphorylation, and this may mediate positive or negative effects on signal output, as well as cross-talk with other signalling systems [6,7]. In the following sections, we focus on individual families of docking

proteins and review their structure, signalling and physiological functions, and regulation.

The Gab/DOS family

The Gab/DOS family currently contains five members that have been functionally characterized, which are Gab1–3 in vertebrates, DOS in *Drosophila* and Suppressor of Clear (SOC)-1 in *Caenorhabditis* [7]. These proteins contain a N-terminal PH domain, multiple tyrosine phosphorylation sites and canonical and/or atypical binding sites for the C-terminal SH3 domain of the adaptor protein Grb2. In addition, Gab1 contains a 16-amino acid motif that mediates direct binding to the activated kinase domain of c-Met [8]. The PH domain of Gab1 and Gab2 binds to phosphatidylinositol (PtdIns)3-kinase-generated PtdIns3,4,5P₃ and thereby recruits these docking proteins to the plasma membrane in the vicinity of activated receptors [9].

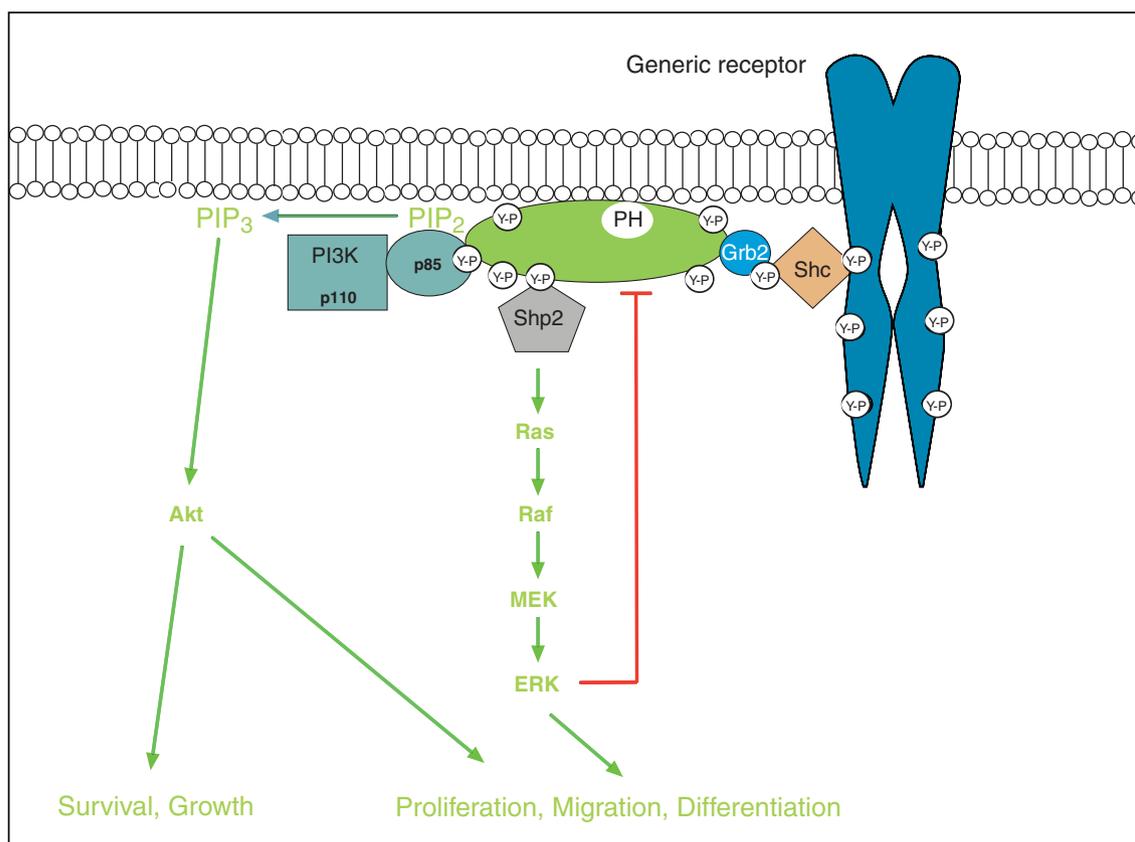


Fig. 2. Docking protein signalling. Summary of the functional characteristics of a docking protein: recruitment to the plasma membrane via an N-terminal domain/modification (in this case a PH domain); association with an activated receptor via protein–protein interactions (in this case, via the Grb2/Shc complex); phosphorylation on multiple tyrosine residues, leading to the recruitment of specific effectors via their SH2 domains and regulation of particular downstream pathways (in this case, recruitment of p85 and Shp2 are shown); negative feedback regulation of signalling mediated by serine/threonine phosphorylation of the docking protein by downstream kinases (in this case, Erk). Green arrows indicate activation, the red bar, inhibition. For details refer to text.

Although Gab1 can bind c-Met directly, it also interacts indirectly via Grb2 [10]. The physiological significance of the indirect recruitment mode was recently highlighted by generation of knockin mice expressing a Gab1 mutant defective in Grb2 binding. These mice exhibit an embryonic lethal phenotype and impaired placental, liver and craniofacial development [11]. Aside from Met, all other receptors that couple to Gab proteins do so via Grb2 [7].

Gab proteins are tyrosine phosphorylated following activation of diverse receptor types, including specific RTKs, B- and T-cell antigen receptors and β 1-integrin, and depending on the cellular context, this may be mediated by the RTK itself, and/or kinases of the Src, Syk/ZAP-70 or JAK families [7]. Interestingly, a recent study reported that c-Src and c-Met exhibit contrasting selectivity towards particular Gab1 phosphorylation sites, and that phosphorylation of four tyrosine residues by c-Src contributes to hepatocyte growth factor-induced DNA synthesis [12]. Gab/DOS tyrosine phosphorylation leads to binding of specific SH2 domain-containing effectors, the best-characterized of which is the SH2 domain-containing protein tyrosine phosphatase Shp2. Signalling via this phosphatase leads to more sustained and/or increased activation of the Ras/Erk pathway [13–16]. In addition, it also promotes Rac or PtdIns3-kinase activation through mechanisms that are incompletely characterized [17–19]. In cell culture models, Gab/Shp2 coupling regulates diverse biological endpoints, ranging from cell migration to epithelial morphogenesis [14,17,19,20]. Knock-in mice expressing a Gab1 mutant that cannot recruit Shp2 exhibit impaired muscle and placental development, highlighting the importance of this pathway *in vivo* [11]. In addition to Shp2, particular Gab proteins bind other SH2 domain-containing proteins, including the p85 subunit of PtdIns3-kinase, phospholipase C γ isoforms, and the Crk and Nck adaptors [7,21]. In mice, Gab1 coupling to PtdIns3-kinase is required for eyelid closure during embryonic development and keratinocyte migration [11]. Furthermore, the impaired allergic responses of *Gab2* gene knockout mice reflect the requirement for Gab2 in activation of PtdIns3-kinase downstream of Fc ϵ RI [22]. Binding of the adaptor Crk enables Gab proteins to regulate the low molecular mass G proteins Rac and Rap, and in turn, processes such as cell motility, invasion and transformation [23–26].

Signalling by Gab/DOS proteins is also subject to negative regulation. Shp2 and its *Drosophila* orthologue Corkscrew are known to dephosphorylate specific tyrosine residues on Gab1 and DOS, respectively [7], and in the case of Gab1 this negatively regulates

binding of the p85 subunit of PtdIns3-kinase [27]. In addition, Gab proteins are subject to negative feedback regulation by serine/threonine phosphorylation [7]. This has been studied in the greatest detail for Gab2. This docking protein is phosphorylated on S623 by Erk, which antagonizes Shp2 recruitment [28]. In addition, it is phosphorylated on S159 by Akt [29] and on S210 and T391 by uncharacterised kinases [30]. The potency of these negative regulatory events is highlighted by the transforming potential of Gab2 S159A and S210A/T391A mutants [29,30]. In the case of S210 and T391, phosphorylation of these sites leads to 14-3-3 protein binding, which uncouples Gab2 from the activated receptor complex [30].

The physiological roles of each of the mammalian Gab proteins have been interrogated by gene knockout studies in mice. Gab1 deficiency results in embryonic lethality because of defects in development of several tissues, including muscle [31,32]. This, in part, reflects the critical role of this docking protein in hepatocyte growth factor/Met signalling. By contrast, Gab2 and Gab3 gene knockout mice are viable. Whereas the latter do not exhibit a detectable phenotype [33], the former display impaired allergic responses [22], osteopetrosis (bone thickening, reflecting the role of receptor activator of NF κ B/Gab2 signalling in osteoclast differentiation) [34] and abnormal haematopoiesis (reflecting important functions for Gab2 in cytokine signalling) [35]. Interestingly, Gab1/2 double knockouts exhibit cardiac insufficiency because of the role of both proteins in neuregulin-1 β signalling [36].

In terms of the potential involvement of Gab proteins in human disease, *GAB2* allelic variation has been associated with Alzheimer's disease susceptibility [37]. Moreover, Gab2 is strongly implicated in several cancer types [7]. The *GAB2* gene is amplified and/or overexpressed in human gastric, ovarian and breast cancers, as well as in acute myeloid leukemia and metastatic melanoma [38–46]. Strong evidence that Gab2 plays a functional role in the development and/or progression of certain malignancies has been obtained from the use of transgenic and knockout mouse models. Such approaches have demonstrated that Gab2 is required for transformation of myeloid progenitors by the chronic myeloid leukemia-associated oncoprotein Bcr-Abl [47], and that Gab2 promotes erbB2-induced mammary tumour formation [39] and metastasis [48].

The FRS2 family

The FRS2 family has two mammalian members, FRS2 α and FRS2 β [6]. Both contain a consensus myristoylation sequence, and myristoylation of FRS2 α is

required for plasma membrane localization of this docking protein [49]. This modification also targets FRS2 to cholesterol-rich plasma membrane microdomains termed lipid rafts, and in the case of RET signalling, this results in enrichment of the RET/FRS2 complex in these subdomains [50,51]. In addition, these proteins contain a PTB domain and six (FRS2 α) or five (FRS2 β) tyrosine phosphorylation sites. FRS2 proteins signal downstream of a more limited spectrum of cell-surface receptors or receptor complexes than the Gab family, being phosphorylated following activation of FGF receptors (FGFRs), the neurotrophin receptors TrkA and TrkB, RET and ALK [6]. However, the *Xenopus* orthologue xFRS2 associates with the Src family kinase Lallo and is required for mesoderm induction by this kinase [52,53], indicating that FRS2 proteins, like Gab proteins, may also act as substrates for particular cytoplasmic tyrosine kinases. The PTB domain of FRS2 proteins mediates direct interaction with certain tyrosine kinases, but exhibits an interesting target selectivity, binding to an unphosphorylated amino acid sequence in the juxtamembrane region of FGFR1, so that recruitment to this receptor is constitutive and FGF independent, whereas association with neurotrophin receptors or RET is mediated via phosphorylated NPXY motifs (X = any amino acid) and is dependent on receptor activation [54–56]. In addition, the PTB domain of FRS2 β binds constitutively to the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR). However, FRS2 proteins are poor substrates for this receptor, and a FRS2 β –Erk2 complex has been proposed to inhibit EGFR signalling [57].

FRS2 α and FRS2 β contain four and three tyrosine phosphorylation sites, respectively, that bind the SH2 domain of Grb2, and the remaining tyrosine phosphorylation sites on both proteins recruit Shp2 [6]. The combined action of Grb2, which binds the guanine nucleotide exchange factor for Ras, Sos, via the Grb2 N-terminal SH3 domain, and Shp2, leads to sustained activation of the Ras/Erk pathway [58]. However, Grb2 is a versatile adaptor given its size, and it also couples FRS2 proteins to Gab1 and hence PtdIns3-kinase signalling [59], as well as to the E3 ubiquitin ligase Cbl that promotes ubiquitylation of the FGFR and FRS2 α and downregulation of the FGFR [60]. Other, less-well characterized binding partners for FRS2 proteins are Cks1 (a cell-cycle regulator) and Rnd1 (which antagonizes RhoA signalling) [61,62]. In addition, signalling via FRS2 is required for FGF-induced tyrosine phosphorylation of Sprouty 2, which is mediated by Src family kinases and represents a negative feedback mechanism for attenuation of Erk activation [63].

Whereas Gab2 is subject to negative regulation by phosphorylation on both serine and threonine residues [29,30], negative feedback regulation of FRS2 α occurs predominantly on threonine residues [64]. FRS2 α contains eight threonine residues within consensus motifs for phosphorylation by Erk, and a FRS2 α mutant containing valine substitutions at these sites exhibits enhanced FGF-induced tyrosine phosphorylation and enhances mitogenic and motogenic responses to this growth factor [64]. Interestingly, threonine phosphorylation of FRS2 α occurs in response to a variety of growth factors, including those that do not promote tyrosine phosphorylation of this docking protein, indicating that it allows for cross-modulation of cellular responses. Of note, FRS2 β is not subject to this regulatory mechanism. Such specificity of negative feedback control processes within a docking protein family is also observed with Gab proteins, where signalling by Gab2, but not Gab1, is attenuated by 14-3-3 binding [30].

Gene knockout and knockin strategies have been utilized to determine the physiological role of FRS2 α and its effector pathways. Ablation of FRS2 α results in lethality by embryonic day 8, reflecting the critical role of particular FGFs in embryonic development [65]. Interestingly, mice expressing a form of FRS2 α lacking the two Shp2 binding sites also exhibit severe phenotypic effects, including defective development of the eye and cerebral cortex, and suffer perinatal lethality [66]. The effects on eye development are associated with reduced Erk activation in the primordial eye. By contrast, ablation of the four Grb2 binding sites in FRS2 α exerts relatively mild effects, with some of the corresponding knockin mice being viable and only exhibiting eyelid developmental defects [66].

Aberrant expression of FRS2 proteins has been detected in certain human malignancies. Amplification and overexpression of the FRS2 α gene occurs in glioblastoma [67] and in a liposarcoma cell line [68]. By contrast, expression of FRS2 β is downregulated in brain and lung cancer cell lines compared with normal controls, which may reflect its ability to negatively regulate signalling by the EGFR [57].

The IRS family

Six proteins have been assigned to the IRS family of docking proteins (IRS-1–6), based on the presence of N-terminal PH and PTB domains (Fig. 1) and on their tyrosine phosphorylation by insulin and insulin-like growth factor 1 receptors (IR and IGF-1R). IRS-1–4 also possess C-terminal regions responsible for the recruitment of specific SH2 domain proteins. By

contrast, the more distantly-related IRS-5 (Dok4) and IRS-6 (Dok5) have truncated C-termini [69] and are relatively weakly phosphorylated in response to insulin [70]. These are discussed with other Dok family proteins below.

IRS-1 is the prototype member of the family [71] and remains the best characterized. Deletion of either the PH domain or PTB domain of IRS-1 reduces its interaction with the IR [72]. The PH domain appears to exert two functions, localizing IRS proteins to the plasma membrane in either an insulin-inducible (IRS-1/2) or constitutive (IRS-3) fashion through binding to specific 3'-phosphorylated phosphoinositides [73], and promoting interaction with the IR [74]. The PTB domain of IRS-1 interacts with specific phosphorylated NPXY motifs, such as Y972 of the IR [75], further stabilizing the complex of docking protein and activated receptor. A kinase regulatory-loop binding domain has been identified only in IRS-2, containing two key tyrosine residues (Y624 and Y628) [76]. Although in their unphosphorylated form these residues were thought to stabilize the IR-IRS-2 complex, the kinase regulatory-loop binding domain has now been structurally defined as a disordered region which is phosphorylated by the receptor with a slow turnover rate, and most likely plays a novel inhibitory role [77]. Tyrosine phosphorylation of IRS proteins can also be catalysed by nonreceptor kinases. For example, interleukin (IL)-4 stimulation leads to phosphorylation of the IL-4R α subunit on a NPXY motif homologous to that found in the IR and IGF-1R, binding of IRS-1 and IRS-2 to this phosphorylated motif via their PTB domains, and phosphorylation of these docking proteins by receptor-associated JAK kinases [78].

Upon association with activated receptors, IRS proteins become tyrosine-phosphorylated on multiple sites. IRS-1 has more than 20 potential tyrosine phosphorylation sites, almost all located C-terminal to the PH and PTB domains, and these include 9 within YXXM sequences that represent preferred binding sites for the SH2 domains of the p85 subunit of PtdIns3-kinase [79]. Consistent with the presence of the latter motifs, the most prominent and best-characterized signalling pathway downstream of IRS-1 is activation of PtdIns3-kinase. Maximal activation of this enzyme is promoted by occupancy of the two p85 SH2 domains by closely located IRS-1 YXXM motifs [80]. In turn, PtdIns3-kinase stimulates a variety of effectors including Akt, atypical protein kinase C (aPKC) enzymes and mTOR/S6K [81]. These effectors are mostly responsible for the effects of insulin and IGF-1 on glucose disposal, protein synthesis and lipid metabolism [81,82]. For example, Akt promotes plasma membrane

translocation of the glucose transporter GLUT4 via phosphorylation of targets that include the Rab GTPase-activating protein AS160, and enhances glycogen synthesis via phosphorylation of glycogen synthase kinase 3 [81]. Other SH2 domain-containing binding partners of IRS-1 are Grb2, which promotes mitogenesis via the Ras/Erk pathway [83] and Nck, involved in reorganization of the actin cytoskeleton [84]. In addition, like Gab and FRS2 proteins, IRS-1 binds Shp2, and this phosphatase may play multiple roles in insulin and IGF-1 signalling. For example, whereas Shp2 mediates negative regulation through dephosphorylation of IRS-1 [85], ablation of Shp2 or inhibition of its signalling function causes defects in insulin action at the level of Akt and aPKC ζ , and in subsequent glucose disposal [86,87].

IRS-1 and IRS-2 are widely expressed, whereas IRS-4 has a more limited tissue distribution, being expressed mainly in the pituitary and thyroid glands [88]. Although IRS-3 is expressed in rodent tissues [89], humans do not possess a functional *IRS-3* gene [90]. Although IRS-1 and IRS-2 have overlapping roles, distinct phenotypes are observed upon genetic ablation. IRS-1 deletion results in retarded growth and reduced glucose disposal by insulin target tissues such as skeletal muscle [91]. By contrast, IRS-2-deficient mice develop both defective insulin secretion and insulin resistance, because of additional defects in IGF-1R-dependent pancreatic β -cell development as well as on peripheral insulin action [92,93]. IRS-3-deficient mice exhibit no defects in growth, insulin signalling or glucose homeostasis [94]. There appear to be cell-type and tissue-specific differences in the coupling of IRS-1 and IRS-2 to glucose and lipid metabolism, which can be mediated by Akt2 but also by aPKC ι/λ [95,96]. The role of IRS-1 and IRS-2 in signalling downstream of cytokine receptors such as IL-4R is to promote PtdIns3-kinase and Ras/Erk activation, leading to mitogenic effects in immune cells [78].

Serine phosphorylation of IRS proteins represents a normal inhibitory feedback mechanism that can be aberrantly induced in a chronic setting, leading to defective signalling and insulin resistance in peripheral tissues [97]. Under normal conditions, IRS-1 serine phosphorylation occurs subsequent to tyrosine phosphorylation, disrupting IRS-1-receptor and IRS-1-membrane interactions to reduce IRS-1 tyrosine phosphorylation and downstream signalling. Chronic insulin stimulation can lead to degradation of IRS-1, and a recent study reported that the CUL7 E3 ubiquitin ligase recognizes serine-phosphorylated forms of IRS-1 generated by mTOR/S6K and mediates polyubiquitylation of this docking protein, thereby targeting

it for proteasomal destruction [98]. The kinases responsible for negative feedback regulation of IRS-1 include the downstream effectors of insulin signalling S6K and α PKC ζ . In addition, chronic conditions or treatments that lead to insulin resistance, such as lipid oversupply, inflammation and exposure to cellular stressors, lead to serine/threonine phosphorylation of IRS-1 and inhibition of downstream signalling. This can be mediated via the aforementioned kinases, as well as JNK [99], IKK β [100], glycogen synthase kinase 3 [101] and several classical and novel PKC isoforms [102]. Numerous sites of serine phosphorylation have been identified, and the effects of their phosphorylation tend to correspond with their proximity to functional domains [97]. Thus S307, a key target for JNK-mediated phosphorylation, is close to the PTB domain and phosphorylation at this site reduces binding of IRS-1 with the IR [103], S24 phosphorylation by PKC reduces PH domain interaction with the plasma membrane [104], and serine phosphorylation close to C-terminal YXXM motifs reduces the recruitment of SH2-containing proteins such as p85 α [105,106]. Fewer serine/threonine phosphorylation sites have been characterized on IRS-2, but there appear to be subtle differences. For example, α PKC ζ fails to phosphorylate IRS-2, which may allow distinct functions to proceed [107]. Other post-translational mechanisms of IRS regulation include O-linked glycosylation [108,109] and acetylation [110,111].

Overexpression of one or more members of the IRS family relative to normal tissue has been detected in certain cancers, such as breast, hepatocellular, pancreatic and prostate cancer [112]. Hormone- and growth factor-dependent upregulation has been described, and this can be mediated by a variety of transcription factors depending on the IRS protein and context, including oestrogen and progesterone receptors, CREB, FOXO1, FOXO3a and AP1. Conversely, the tumour suppressor BRCA1 and also specific microRNAs can suppress IRS-1 expression [112]. Interestingly, use of gene knockout models has demonstrated a requirement for IRS-2 in metastatic progression of mouse mammary tumours [113].

The Dok family

The mammalian Dok protein family comprises seven members. Dok1–3 and Dok4–7 form two separate subfamilies, although Dok7 deviates considerably from the rest of its subfamily [114]. Dok proteins have also been identified in *Drosophila* [115]. The founding member of this family, Dok1, was originally cloned as an interaction partner of the oncogenic kinases v-Abl and

Bcr-Abl [116,117]. All Dok proteins are characterized by an N-terminal PH domain followed by a PTB domain (Fig. 1). The importance of the PH domain for membrane recruitment has been demonstrated for all Dok family members [118–125]. By binding to specific phosphotyrosine residues within activated receptors, e.g. RTKs, the PTB domain also contributes to the membrane recruitment of Dok proteins. For example, the PTB domain of Dok2 promotes recruitment to the activated EGFR and efficient tyrosine phosphorylation of Dok2 [126]. The PH and PTB domains cooperate in the membrane recruitment of Dok4 [121]. The presence of two membrane recruitment mechanisms in Dok proteins highlights a recurring theme for classical docking proteins, as described elsewhere in this minireview. Interestingly, Dok1 and Dok2 form homo- and heterotypic oligomers in a manner dependent on their tyrosine phosphorylation and PTB domains [127]. A critical role is played by a phosphotyrosine residue located between the PH and PTB domain. The oligomerization of these Dok proteins is critical to their inhibitory functions in T cells [127] and NIH3T3 cells transformed by the gain-of-function c-Src^{Y527F} mutant [128]. Similarly, Dok3 also displays homotypic oligomerization, which relies on its PTB domain and the phosphorylation of Y140, which is also localized between the PH and PTB domains [120]. However, the functional relevance of Dok3 oligomerization remains to be elucidated. Dok1, -2, -3 and -7 contain multiple PXXP motifs, which represent putative recognition motifs for proteins with SH3 domains [129]. By contrast, Dok4 contains only one PXXP-motif, whereas Dok5/6 lack this recognition sequence (our own Scan-site analysis) [130]. However, the functional importance of these PXXP-motifs remains an area for further studies. Similar to other docking proteins, the C-terminal regions of the Dok family contain multiple tyrosine phosphorylation sites, and Abl, Src- and Tec-family kinases are implicated in the phosphorylation of these residues [114].

Members of the Dok1–3 subfamily are predominantly expressed in haematopoietic cells where they act as negative regulators of tyrosine kinase signalling networks. Dok1 and Dok2 both exhibit a YxxP-motif that upon phosphorylation, recruits p120 Ras-GAP. In turn, this protein attenuates Ras/Erk-signalling by stimulating the GTPase activity of Ras ([114] and references therein). However, Dok3 lacks this YxxP-motif and instead inhibits activation of the JNK pathway and the function of the SLP-65/Btk/phospholipase C γ 2 signalling complex, which plays a pivotal role in B-cell development and function [120,131]. Dok3-deficient chicken DT40 B cells and murine B lymphocytes

display increased calcium mobilization as well as enhanced activation of NF- κ B, JNK and p38 MAP kinase following B-cell receptor engagement [131]. The inhibitory function of Dok3 requires the recruitment of Grb2 via its SH2 domain [120] but the tyrosine phosphorylation and activation of an additional Dok3 binding partner, the inositol-phosphatase SHIP1, is also impaired upon Dok3 ablation [131]. Binding of Grb2 by Dok3, leading to sequestration of the Grb2/Sos complex away from Shc, also underpins the ability of Dok3 to inhibit Src-induced Ras/Erk activation [132]. By contrast to these negative regulatory functions, Nck is recruited to phosphorylated Y361 in Dok1 and promotes formation of filopodia during spreading of mouse embryonic fibroblasts [133].

Dok4–7 play mostly positive roles in nonhaematopoietic cells, in particular within the nervous system. A recent report identified Dok7 as an essential driver of neuromuscular synaptogenesis because of its PTB-dependent interaction with muscle-specific receptor kinase [124]. The physiological significance of this interaction is supported by the observation that loss-of-function or hypomorphic alleles of the human *DOK7* gene cause a limb girdle-type congenital myasthenic syndrome with malformations of neuromuscular synapses, which has been termed *DOK7* myasthenia [134–139]. The spectrum of gene alterations is diverse and includes exon skipping, missense and frameshift mutations that affect the PH and PTB domains and the C-terminal region [134].

Dok1, -3 and -4 are phosphorylated at serine and threonine residues (www.phosphosite.org), although the functional consequences of these events remain largely ill-defined. One exception is a recent study identifying Dok1 as an IKK β substrate in response to γ -radiation or stimulation with pro-inflammatory cytokines. Phosphorylation of Dok1 takes place at S439, S443, S446 and S450, and mutation of these phospho-acceptor residues to alanine abrogated the inhibitory effect of this docking protein on the Ras/Erk pathway [140].

Although Dok1–3 have established roles as negative regulators of immune cell signalling, downregulated expression or function of these proteins has not been detected in autoimmune disorders or haematological malignancies. However, altered expression of these proteins might contribute to other pathologies. For example, high expression of Dok1–3 occurs in lung tissue, and disruption of the *Dok1-3* genes in mice results in the development of lung adenocarcinomas [141]. Furthermore, copy number loss and reduced expression of *DOK2* was demonstrated in human lung cancer, and Dok2 was shown to suppress the growth of lung cancer cells. These findings highlight *DOK2* as a

novel tumour suppressor in human lung cancer. In addition, a recent publication has implicated Dok1 in development of obesity [142]. In this study, it was shown that *Dok1* mRNA and protein expression increased in white adipose tissue of mice fed a high-fat diet. Importantly, Dok1-deficient mice and murine embryonic fibroblasts derived from these animals showed a reduced diet-induced hypertrophy of adipose tissue and impaired adipogenic differentiation, respectively. The latter defect was correlated with increased Erk activity and inhibition of PPAR γ by Erk-dependent phosphorylation.

Perspectives

The roles played by docking proteins within signalling networks are complex, involving signal transduction, localization, cross-talk and modulation. Consequently, it is likely that great gains will be made by application of ‘systems level’ approaches such as mathematical and computational modelling to the study of docking protein function. In addition, the use of ‘knockin’ mouse models will continue to provide important information regarding the physiological roles of particular protein domains, regulatory events and effector pathways. Finally, as cancer genome and SNP-association studies gather pace, it will be surprising if further links between docking proteins and human disease are not discovered.

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