

CHEMOKINE RECEPTORS AS HIV-1 CORECEPTORS: Roles in Viral Entry, Tropism, and Disease

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ABSTRACT

In addition to CD4, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) requires a coreceptor for entry into target cells. The chemokine receptors CXCR4 and CCR5, members of the G protein-coupled receptor superfamily, have been identified as the principal coreceptors for T cell line-tropic and macrophage-tropic HIV-1 isolates, respectively. The updated coreceptor repertoire includes numerous members, mostly chemokine receptors and related orphans. These discoveries provide a new framework for understanding critical features of the basic biology of HIV-1, including the selective tropism of individual viral variants for different CD4⁺ target cells and the membrane fusion mechanism governing virus entry. The coreceptors also provide molecular perspectives on central puzzles of HIV-1 disease, including the selective transmission of macrophage-tropic variants, the appearance of T cell line-tropic variants in many infected persons during progression to AIDS, and differing susceptibilities of individuals to infection and disease progression. Genetic findings have yielded major insights into the *in vivo* roles of individual coreceptors and their ligands; of particular importance is the discovery of an inactivating mutation in the CCR5 gene which, in homozygous form, confers strong resistance to HIV-1 infection. Beyond providing new perspectives on fundamental aspects of HIV-1 transmission and pathogenesis, the coreceptors suggest new avenues for developing novel therapeutic and preventative strategies to combat the AIDS epidemic.

INTRODUCTION

The discovery that specific chemokine receptors function together with CD4 as coreceptors for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) emerged from two seemingly distinct puzzles in HIV-1 research: the specificity of HIV-1 entry into different target cell types and the control of HIV-1 infection by soluble suppressor factors. The molecular solutions to these problems led to a convergence of research on a viral pathogen that devastates the human immune system and on the chemokine regulatory network that orchestrates the immune system's response to pathogen invasion. Within a remarkably short period the coreceptor discoveries have engendered new perspectives on the major problems of HIV-1 disease, including the mechanisms of HIV-1 transmission and disease progression, and possibly new modes of therapeutic intervention.

This review focuses on coreceptors used by HIV type 1 (HIV-1), the major cause of AIDS worldwide and the subject of the research that led to the original coreceptor discoveries. HIV-2 and simian immunodeficiency virus have also been shown to use chemokine receptors and related orphans as coreceptors; for these subjects the reader is referred to recent review articles (1, 2).

IDENTIFICATION OF CHEMOKINE RECEPTORS AS HIV-1 CORECEPTORS

Historical Perspective: HIV-1 Tropism Suggests Existence of Coreceptors

HIV-1 enters target cells by direct fusion of the viral and target cell membranes. The fusion reaction is mediated by the viral envelope glycoprotein (Env), which binds with high affinity to CD4, the primary receptor on the target cell surface (reviewed in 3). By a similar or identical mechanism, cells expressing Env can fuse with CD4⁺ target cells, sometimes leading to the formation of giant cells (syncytia).

The notion that a coreceptor is required for HIV-1 entry stemmed from the awareness that CD4 expression is not sufficient to explain HIV-1 tropism for different target cells in vitro (see 4 for review and citations). Two related phenomena led to this conclusion. The first series of findings, initially reported in the mid-1980s and extended through the early 1990s, was based on curious results with recombinant human CD4. The receptor was found to render cells permissive for Env-mediated fusion/entry/infection, but only when expressed on a human cell type. Experiments with cell hybrids supported the conclusion that this restriction was due to the requirement for a cofactor (coreceptor) of unknown identity that is specific to human cells, rather than to the presence of a fusion inhibitor on the nonhuman cells.

The second phenomenon concerned the distinct tropisms of different HIV-1 isolates for various CD4⁺ human target cell types in vitro. All HIV-1 strains infect and replicate in activated primary CD4⁺ T lymphocytes; the tropism distinctions emerge when other target cells are examined. Some isolates show efficient infectivity for continuous CD4⁺ T cell lines, but poor infectivity for primary macrophages; this phenotype was originally observed with isolates that had been adapted in the laboratory to replicate in T cell lines and was subsequently observed with some clinical isolates. Such viruses are designated T cell line-tropic (TCL-tropic); they are generally syncytium-inducing in assays using a highly permissive T cell line. Other HIV-1 strains show the opposite preference, infecting primary macrophages much more efficiently than continuous T cell lines; these are designated macrophage-tropic (M-tropic) or nonsyncytium-inducing. Isolates that replicate efficiently in both target cell types are designated dual-tropic.

These in vitro tropism phenotypes were first revealed in the late 1980s and were soon demonstrated to have profound implications for HIV-1 transmission and pathogenesis (see 5 for original citations). The viral isolates obtained from peripheral blood of individuals shortly after infection and during the asymptomatic phase are predominantly M-tropic; as the infection progresses to AIDS, TCL-tropic viruses can be isolated from many (but not all) patients. TCL-tropic strains typically display higher cytopathic effects in vitro, suggesting that they may have a particularly important role in the decline of CD4⁺ T cells in vivo, which is the hallmark of AIDS. In the early to mid 1990s, TCL- versus M-tropism was shown to result primarily from the fusion specificities of the corresponding Envs; again, experiments with cell hybrids revealed that these specificities derived from the requirement for an additional factor (coreceptor) in the permissive cell type rather than from an inhibitor in the nonpermissive type.

In the resulting model, TCL- versus M-tropism of different HIV-1 isolates was postulated to reflect the preferential fusogenic activity of the corresponding Envs for distinct coreceptors that are differentially expressed on these target cell types. Thus, by the mid-1990s, it was clear that the key to the HIV-1 entry/tropism problem rested on identification of these coreceptors. This was finally achieved in 1996.

Identification of CXCR4 and CCR5 as HIV-1 Coreceptors

CORECEPTOR FOR TCL-TROPIC HIV-1 The first HIV-1 coreceptor was identified using an unbiased functional cDNA cloning strategy based on the ability of a cDNA library to render a CD4-expressing murine cell permissive for fusion with cells expressing Env from a TCL-adapted strain (6). A single cDNA was isolated, and sequence analysis indicated that the protein product is a member of

the superfamily of the seven transmembrane domain G protein-coupled receptors, the largest receptor superfamily in the human genome. G protein-coupled receptor superfamily. The cDNA previously had been isolated and sequenced by several laboratories investigating G protein-coupled receptors, but no ligands or functional activities had been found; the protein was thus considered an "orphan" receptor. Because of its new-found activity in HIV-1 Env-mediated fusion, the protein was named "fusin" (6). Its role as a coreceptor was based on both gain-of-function experiments demonstrating that coexpression of fusin along with CD4 rendered nonhuman cells permissive for Env-mediated cell fusion and infection, and loss-of-function experiments showing that anti-fusin antibodies potently inhibited fusion and infection of primary human CD4⁺ T lymphocytes. Most importantly, both types of analyses indicated that fusin functioned for TCL-tropic, but not M-tropic, HIV-1 strains. Fusin thus fit the criteria for the TCL-tropic HIV-1 coreceptor.

Among known members of the G protein-coupled receptor superfamily, fusin has the strongest sequence homology with peptidergic receptors, including chemokine receptors. Chemokines are small proteins (~70–90 amino acid residues) with chemotactic activity for leukocytes; they play prominent roles in leukocyte activation and trafficking to sites of inflammation (7). Receptors for chemokines (8) comprise a subfamily within the G protein-coupled receptors superfamily. All known human chemokines fit within four classes based on the cysteine motifs near the N-terminus. The two major classes are the CXC chemokines, in which the first two cysteines are separated by a single residue, and the CC chemokines, in which the first two cysteines are adjacent. Two minor classes have also been defined, each containing one known example: the C class with only a single cysteine residue in the motif and the CX₃C class with three residues separating the first two cysteines. Nearly all the receptors are selective for one class of chemokines; however, there is redundancy in the system, as individual receptors can bind multiple chemokines within a class, and many chemokines can function with more than one receptor.

CORECEPTOR FOR M-TROPIC HIV-1 The discovery of fusin, a putative chemokine receptor, as the coreceptor for TCL-tropic HIV-1 strains provided an impetus and direction for identifying the coreceptor for M-tropic isolates. The focus was narrowed to CC chemokine receptors by a link with an earlier study directed at a seemingly unrelated problem, namely the identity of soluble HIV-1 suppressor factor(s) released by CD8⁺ T lymphocytes. This phenomenon was first described in the late 1980s (reviewed in 9). Biochemical identification of the molecule(s) in question promised to shed light on the natural mechanisms controlling HIV-1 infection in vivo, and could potentially lead to new modes of prevention and treatment. The first success was achieved in 1995 with the demonstration that the CC chemokines RANTES, MIP-1 α , and MIP-1 β are

major suppressive factors released by CD8⁺ T lymphocytes (10) (although additional factors may contribute to the entire CD8 soluble suppressor phenomenon; see 9). Particularly intriguing was the fact that these CC chemokines potently suppressed infection by M-tropic HIV-1 strains but had little effect on a TCL-tropic strain.

Since fusin, the coreceptor for TCL tropic strains, was a putative chemokine receptor, an obvious mechanism for infection inhibition by CC chemokines was suggested: They bind to and block a chemokine receptor that functions as a coreceptor for M-tropic HIV-1. Fortuitously, at approximately the same time, a chemokine receptor was identified with precisely the corresponding specificity for RANTES, MIP-1 α , and MIP-1 β (11–13); it was designated CCR5, in keeping with the standard nomenclature system for chemokine receptors (fifth receptor for CC chemokines). Within the span of one week, five independent reports demonstrated that CCR5 is a major coreceptor for M-tropic HIV-1 strains (14–18); the evidence was based on both gain-of-function studies with recombinant CCR5, and loss-of-function studies using CCR5 chemokine ligands as blocking agents.

FUSIN AS A CHEMOKINE RECEPTOR (CXCR4) The coreceptor discoveries were soon followed by the demonstration that fusin is indeed a chemokine receptor, specific for the functionally equivalent CXC chemokines SDF-1 α and SDF-1 β (19, 20), which are formed by alternative splicing. Fusin was therefore renamed CXCR4 (fourth receptor for CXC chemokines). SDF-1 was shown to be a selective inhibitor of TCL-tropic HIV-1 strains.

PRIMARY HIV-1 ISOLATES AND GENETIC DIVERSITY The initial descriptions of coreceptor activity for CXCR4 and CCR5 were made with well-characterized prototypic HIV-1 strains. In subsequent studies, virtually all primary HIV-1 isolates were found to use one or both coreceptors (21–25). Isolates from different geographic regions display little relationship between genetic subtype and coreceptor usage (21, 23, 25, 26), although some distinctions have been reported (27). Thus, viruses from all clades can use CCR5 and/or CXCR4, and a marked correlation is observed between biological phenotype (including tropism) and coreceptor usage.

A SIMPLE MECHANISTIC MODEL FOR HIV-1 TROPISM The essential pieces of the tropism puzzle thus appeared to be in place. In a minimal model, the tropism of different HIV-1 strains can be explained by two considerations: the abilities of the corresponding Envs to use CXCR4 and/or CCR5, and the expression patterns of these coreceptors on different CD4⁺ target cells (Figure 1). Thus, TCL-tropic strains preferentially use CXCR4, M-tropic strains prefer CCR5, and dual-tropic strains can use both; continuous T cell lines abundantly express CXCR4, primary macrophages express CCR5, and primary T cells express both.

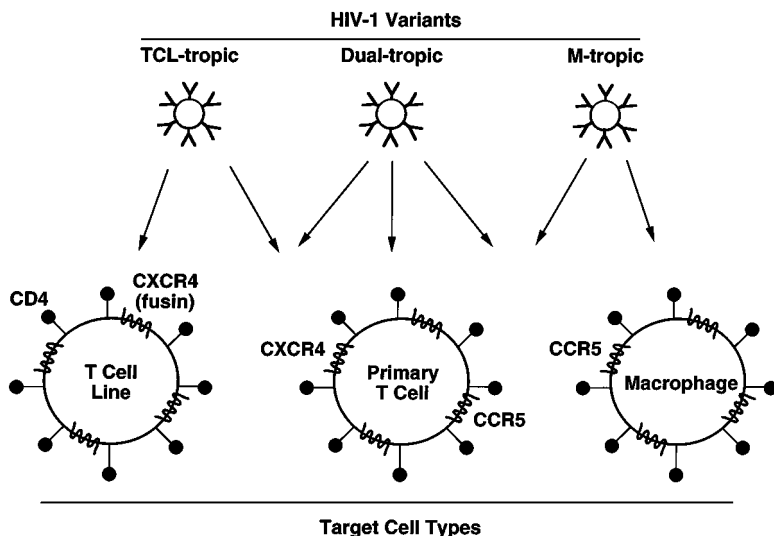


Figure 1 Model for coreceptor usage and HIV-1 tropism. TCL-tropic strains are specific for CXCR4 and can infect continuous $CD4^+$ T cell lines and primary $CD4^+$ T cells. M-tropic strains are specific for CCR5 and can infect primary macrophages and primary $CD4^+$ T cells. Dual-tropic strains can use both CXCR4 and CCR5, and can infect continuous $CD4^+$ T cell lines, macrophages, and primary T cells.

A NEW HIV-1 NOMENCLATURE SYSTEM In keeping with this model, it has been suggested that the designation of HIV-1 phenotype be revised to indicate coreceptor usage, rather than the less biochemically defined characteristics of target cell tropism or syncytium-inducing properties (28). Accordingly, throughout this review, HIV-1 variants are designated as either X4 (CXCR4-specific, generally corresponding to TCL-tropic and syncytium-inducing), R5 (CCR5-specific, generally corresponding to M-tropic and nonsyncytium-inducing), or R5X4 (using both CCR5 and CXCR4, generally corresponding to dual-tropic). While this designation provides a useful framework, not all features of HIV-1 tropism are fully explained by differential usage of CXCR4 and CCR5 (see below).

The Expanding Coreceptor Repertoire

OTHER CHEMOKINE RECEPTORS AND RELATED ORPHANS Additional complexity results from the findings that HIV-1 coreceptor activity is not limited to CXCR4 and CCR5. Studies with recombinant proteins have demonstrated coreceptor activity for several other human chemokine receptors and related orphans. Table 1 summarizes our current knowledge of the HIV-1 coreceptor repertoire and includes the chemokine receptors CCR2b (18), CCR3 (17, 18),

Table 1 HIV-1 coreceptor repertoire^a

Coreceptors	Ligands	Expression patterns			Evidence for coreceptor function		
		PBL ^b	Mo/MDM		In vitro		In vivo
			Other CD4 ⁺ cells	Recombinant protein	Primary cells	Genetic	
Human chemokine receptors							
CCR2B	MCP-1, -2, -3, -4	+	+	+	+	?	?
CCR3	Eotaxin-1, -2, RANTES	+	+	+	+	+	?
CCR5	MCP-2, -3, -4	+	+	+	+	+	+
	RANTES, MIP-1 α , MIP-1 β , MCP-2						
CCR8	I-309	?	+	+	+	?	?
CCR9	CC chemokines	?	?	?	+	?	?
CXCR4	SDF-1 α , -1 β	+	+	+	+	+	?
CX ₃ CR1	Fractalkine	+	+	+	+	?	?
Human orphan receptors							
APJ	?	?	?	?	+	?	?
ChemR23	?	+	+	+	+	?	?
GPR15/BOB	?	+	+	?	+	?	?
STRL33/Bonzo	?	+	?	?	+	?	?
Other human receptors							
BLTR	Leukotriene B ₄	+	?	?	+	?	?
Viral chemokine receptors							
US28	MIP-1 α , MIP-1 β , RANTES, MCP-1	+	+	?	+	?	?

^aSee text for references.

^bPBL, peripheral blood lymphocytes; Mo/MDM, monocytes/monocyte-derived macrophages.

^c+, expressed in cells or direct evidence obtained; ?, unknown, sometimes due to conflicting data.

^dExpressed only in CMV-infected cells.

CCR8 (29–31), CCR9 (32), and CX₃CR1 (formerly designated CMKBRL1 or V28) (29, 33); the chemokine receptor–like orphans STRL33/Bonzo (34, 35), GPR15/BOB (35, 36), and Apj (32, 37). Not all members of the human chemokine receptor family can function as HIV-1 coreceptors; absence of activity has been noted in most studies for CCR1, CCR4, and CCR6, for CXC chemokine receptors other than CXCR4, and for several other chemokine receptor–like orphans.

In addition to these human proteins, HIV-1 coreceptor activity has been detected for US28, a CC chemokine receptor encoded by human cytomegalovirus (29, 38). Also interesting in this regard are the HIV-1 inhibitory effects of vMIP-I and vMIP-II, chemokine-like proteins encoded by Kaposi's sarcoma–associated herpesvirus (39, 40). These findings highlight the potential interplay of concurrent viral infections during HIV-1 pathogenesis.

DEVIATIONS FROM THE SIMPLE CHEMOKINE RECEPTOR/CORECEPTOR PARADIGM
The notion that coreceptor activity is restricted to chemokine receptors and related orphans has been challenged by the recent reports of coreceptor function for BLTR, the leukotriene B₄ receptor (41), and for Chem R23 (42), an orphan receptor more closely related to complement and formyl peptide receptors than to chemokine receptors.

While in most cases the HIV-1 inhibitory activity of chemokines can be attributed to their specific blocking of the corresponding coreceptors (10, 14–17, 19, 20, 30, 33), at least one puzzling exception has been noted. The CC chemokine designated MDC (macrophage-derived chemokine) has been purified based on its ability to block both R5 and X4 HIV-1 replication in PBMCs (43, 44). This activity is controversial, since it has been reproduced by one group using synthetic MDC (45), but not by others using synthetic and recombinant forms of the protein (46, 47). The mechanism of MDC inhibition is undefined, since its only known receptor is CCR4 (48) for which coreceptor activity has not been detected; moreover the HIV-blocking activity of MDC is observed in PBMCs, which R5 and X4 viruses clearly infect via CCR5 and CXCR4, respectively. These results raise the possibility that the infection-blocking activity of MDC occurs by a mechanism other than simple blocking of an HIV-1 coreceptor.

Major Questions About Tropism and the Coreceptor Repertoire

The breadth of the HIV-1 coreceptor repertoire poses important interrelated questions:

1. How well does CXCR4 versus CCR5 usage account for the selectivity of HIV-1 for different CD4⁺ target cell types?

2. What are the relative efficiencies of the various coreceptors?
3. Is the activity of one coreceptor influenced by the presence of others on the same target cell?
4. How is the coreceptor repertoire used by diverse HIV-1 isolates?
5. Which coreceptors are significant on relevant human target cells?
6. Which coreceptors are significant for HIV-1 transmission and disease progression?

The failure of CD4-expressing nonhuman cell lines to allow HIV-1 entry/fusion/infection is clearly explained by the coreceptors. Murine CXCR4 can function for X4 strains, but it is not expressed on most murine cell lines (6, 49–51). Murine CCR5 does not display coreceptor activity (52–55).

However, ambiguities arise regarding the tropism of individual HIV-1 isolates for different CD4⁺ human target cells. The situation is relatively clear with infection of continuous T cell lines. These targets generally express abundant levels of CXCR4 and only rarely CCR5; they are susceptible to infection by X4 and R5X4 strains. The macrophage problem is much more complex. Consistent with the model, CCR5 expression can account for the susceptibility of these cells to most R5 isolates (16, 56–60). However, CCR5 usage does not appear to be sufficient for macrophage infection, based on the isolation of HIV-1 strains that can use CCR5 yet fail to infect macrophages (61). Conflicting results have also been obtained regarding the effects of CCR5 chemokine ligands in macrophages, with some groups reporting the expected inhibition of fusion/entry/infection by R5 viruses (16, 62, 63), and others not observing this effect (15, 64, 65). One proposed explanation is that HIV-1 inhibition by CC chemokines is facilitated by chemokine interaction with cell surface heparan sulfate, and that this interaction occurs minimally with macrophages (66). To further complicate the matter, the effect of CC chemokines on HIV-1 replication in macrophages is reportedly highly dependent on the time of addition relative to virus, with stimulation occurring when they are added before infection, and inhibition occurring when they are added during or after infection (67). Perhaps even more puzzling is the resistance of macrophages to infection by some CXCR4-using strains, since several groups have demonstrated CXCR4 expression on macrophages and its functionality as a coreceptor for some HIV-1 isolates (25, 65, 68–71). As yet there is no simple resolution of these dilemmas, but several confounding issues have been noted, including variations in macrophage isolation and culture methods, donor-dependent macrophage differences, temporal modulation of CXCR4 levels during cell culture, possible

differences in coreceptor display on different cell types, varying sensitivities of different assay systems for coreceptor function, chemokine effects at multiple stages in the HIV-1 replication cycle, possible coreceptor-dependent post-entry effects on viral replication, and the fact that the resistance of macrophages to T cell line-adapted isolates is not absolute.

A major *in vitro* criterion for identifying members of the HIV-1 coreceptor repertoire is the ability of the recombinant proteins to confer HIV-1 permissiveness to a CD4-expressing target cell. However, numerous experimental variables have confounded efforts to assess the relative activities of each coreceptor. For one, the recombinant expression efficiencies can vary widely between different coreceptors. Thus, in several studies CCR3 has been reported as a minor coreceptor, based on the relatively inefficient activity observed with recombinant CCR3 compared to CCR5, and the limited number of HIV-1 isolates that could function with CCR3 (14, 15, 17, 18, 21–23). However, these findings were made under conditions in which recombinant CCR3 expression either was not monitored or was found to be very low compared to recombinant CCR5; in subsequent studies where CCR3 was expressed more efficiently, this coreceptor demonstrated activity comparable to CCR5 and/or CXCR4 and functioned with a broad range of isolates (25, 29). A related problem is the diversity of assay systems used to evaluate coreceptor activity (virus entry, Env-mediated cell fusion, productive infection); it is questionable whether the quantitative readout is proportional to the number of available coreceptor molecules in any of these assays, and whether the limiting molecular determinants are the same in each. Complexities associated with the varying dependencies of different HIV-1 strains on levels of both CD4 and coreceptor have been noted (72). These findings raise the issue of the “relevant” levels of coreceptor, which would seem to be the amounts that are endogenously expressed on natural human CD4⁺ target cells. The reagents necessary to obtain such quantitative information (e.g. monoclonal antibodies, labeled chemokine ligands) have been used for CXCR4, CCR5, and CCR3, but less so for the other coreceptors, particularly the orphans.

Another important *in vitro* criterion in demonstrating the coreceptor activity of CXCR4 and CCR5 is based on the ability of coreceptor-specific blocking reagents to inhibit HIV-1 in natural human CD4⁺ target cells (10, 14–16, 19, 20). In only a few instances has this been achieved for other coreceptors, e.g. for CCR3 in microglia (73) and in monocyte-derived dendritic cells (74). Again these approaches have been hampered by the limited availability of specific coreceptor-blocking agents. Moreover, the possible presence of multiple endogenous coreceptors on a natural target cell type complicates attempts to determine the relative importance of each.

Also critical for assessing the potential significance of an individual coreceptor is its expression pattern on diverse CD4-positive cells. It is possible

that virus replication in a specialized tissue compartment might select for viral variants, with enhanced usage of a coreceptor that is preferentially enriched in that compartment. Focus must therefore be extended to HIV-1 isolates from various specialized tissue compartments (e.g. thymus, genital tract, placenta).

The most powerful evidence for the significance of a given coreceptor is based on correlation of genetic variation in coreceptors with HIV-1 disease. Such analyses have provided convincing evidence of a central role for CCR5 *in vivo*. These findings are detailed in later sections.

CORECEPTORS IN THE HIV-1 FUSION/ENTRY MECHANISM

Model for Coreceptor Function in Fusion/Entry

ENV STRUCTURE The HIV-1 Env consists of two noncovalently associated subunits generated by cleavage of the gp160 precursor: (a) the heavily glycosylated external gp120 subunit, derived from the N-terminal portion of gp160 and containing the CD4 binding site, and (b) the membrane-spanning gp41 subunit, derived from the C-terminal portion of the precursor and containing at its N-terminus a hydrophobic fusion peptide, which is directly involved in membrane fusion (3). Native Env expressed on the surface of the virion or the infected cell is a trimeric structure containing three gp120/gp41 complexes associated via noncovalent interactions within gp41.

SEQUENTIAL CONFORMATIONAL CHANGES Env can be envisioned as a fusogenic machine, catalyzing direct pH-independent fusion between the virion membrane displaying Env and the target membrane displaying CD4 plus coreceptor. It seems logical that Env is activated only at the right time and place, i.e. when the virion encounters the target cell. This suggests that Env might be activated by receptor binding; indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated CD4-induced changes in Env conformation (3). The coreceptors represent new players in the fusion process, leading to more complex models involving multiple, and probably sequential, protein-protein interactions and conformational changes.

In the most favored model (Figure 2), CD4 binding induces conformational change(s) in gp120 that exposes, creates, or stabilizes the coreceptor-binding determinants; the gp120 interaction with the seven transmembrane domain coreceptor then induces a further conformational change(s) in Env that results in activation of gp41, presumably by exposing and extending its fusion peptide so that it can insert into the plasma membrane of the target cell. Several lines of experimental evidence support this model of receptor-induced conformational changes: (a) Env-mediated fusion generally requires the presence of

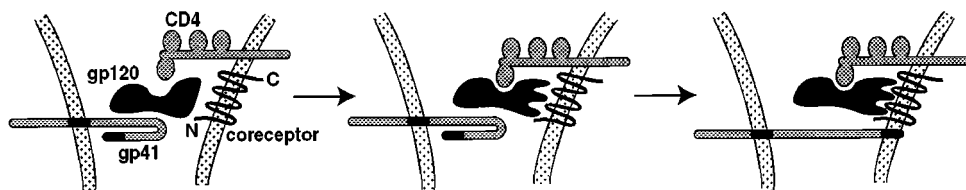


Figure 2 Model for coreceptor usage in HIV-1 entry. Upon binding to CD4, gp120 undergoes a conformational change that exposes, creates, or stabilizes the coreceptor-binding determinants. The interaction of gp120 with coreceptor triggers Env to undergo another conformational change, leading to extension of gp41 and insertion of the fusion peptide into the target cell membrane. Only a monomer of gp120/gp41 is shown for simplicity, though the native Env is a trimer.

CD4 as well as coreceptor on the target cell (6, 14–18); (b) complexes between CD4, gp120, and coreceptor have been isolated (75); associations between coreceptor and CD4 are enhanced in the presence of gp120, though they apparently occur to some extent in its absence (75–78); (c) soluble gp120 binds weakly to coreceptor expressed on cells, but the affinity is greatly increased upon CD4 binding (79–82); (d) treatment of Env-expressing cells with soluble CD4 activates them to fuse with coreceptor-positive CD4-negative target cells (K Salzwedel, ED Smith, EA Berger, unpublished); (e) soluble CD4 treatment renders fusion/entry/infection more susceptible to inhibition by monoclonal antibodies directed against the coreceptor-binding determinants of gp120 (83; also K Salzwedel, ED Smith, EA Berger, unpublished); (f) X-ray crystallographic structure analysis of a ternary complex containing gp120 bound to CD4 and a monoclonal antibody against the coreceptor-binding region (84), combined with mutational (85) and antigenic (86) analyses, suggests that the gp120 captured in the bound state has undergone dramatic conformational changes and that both the CD4 binding site and the coreceptor-interacting regions probably exist in very different conformations prior to CD4 binding.

FUSION INDEPENDENCE FROM CORECEPTOR SIGNALING AND INTERNALIZATION
The effector functions of chemokines are mediated by coupling of their receptors to complex intracellular signaling pathways mediated by G proteins. However, Env-mediated fusion can occur without such signaling or coreceptor internalization (52, 53, 87–91). Moreover, inhibition of fusion/entry/infection by chemokine ligands of the coreceptors does not require receptor activation/signaling and occurs by at least two mechanisms: downmodulation of the coreceptor and direct blocking of the Env/coreceptor interaction (26, 89, 92–96).

CD4-INDEPENDENT CORECEPTOR USAGE The model described above accounts for the major features of the CD4-dependent mechanism, which is undoubtedly

the major route of HIV-1 fusion/entry/infection. However, in certain cases, Env/coreceptor interactions have been reported in the absence of CD4. These phenomena, which have been observed in assays of both Env-mediated fusion/entry/infection and gp120/coreceptor binding, were first described with HIV-2 (97–100) and then with SIV (99, 101, 102) and HIV-1 (82, 103, 104). It has been suggested that the gp120 molecules displaying CD4-independent interaction with coreceptor have already undergone (at least partially) the conformational changes normally induced by CD4.

These CD4-independent entry pathways are relatively inefficient; moreover, Envs capable of mediating CD4-independent interaction with coreceptor retain the ability to bind CD4, and CD4 binding still markedly enhances functional interaction between gp120 and coreceptor. The significance of CD4-independent Env/coreceptor interactions *in vivo* is thus questionable. However, an intriguing hypothesis deduced from these findings is that the evolutionary predecessor of HIV-1 strictly used the chemokine receptors for entry, and that the CD4 requirement evolved later as a means of conferring greater target cell specificity as well as protecting the coreceptor-binding region from the humoral immune system. According to this notion, the designation of CD4 as the primary receptor and the chemokine receptor as the coreceptor is a reflection of both the historical sequence of their discoveries and the kinetic sequence by which they function. These designations do not imply that the chemokine receptor plays only a secondary role; to the contrary, the coreceptor is believed to be essential for triggering the fusogenic activity of Env, and may represent the primordial receptor for primate immunodeficiency retroviruses.

Structural Correlates of the Env-Coreceptor Interaction

DETERMINANTS ON gp120 The gp120/coreceptor interaction is extremely intricate, involving multiple discontinuous regions on each protein. The gp120 molecule contains five variable loops designated V1–V5, interspersed with five relatively conserved regions designated C1–C5 (3). This framework has provided a basis for defining coreceptor interaction sites on gp120 (17, 24, 84–86, 105–114). In keeping with the long-appreciated role of the V3 loop as a critical determinant of Env fusogenicity and tropism, this region has a major role in gp120's activity and specificity for coreceptor binding. In particular, basic residues at fixed positions on either side of the conserved tip determine usage of CXCR4. V3 is critical for gp120 binding to coreceptor; in the fusion process, V3 functions not alone but rather in concert with other gp120 regions including V1, V2, and C4. Recent X-ray crystallographic structural determinations (84) coupled with mutagenic (85) and antigenic (86) analyses have led to a model in which coreceptor interacts with the V3 loop and a conserved "bridging sheet" composed of the V1/V2 stem and an antiparallel,

four-stranded structure including sequences in the C4 region. As noted above, the coreceptor binding site appears to be exposed, created, or stabilized upon CD4 binding.

DETERMINANTS ON CORECEPTORS The coreceptor is topologically arranged with seven transmembrane segments, the N-terminus and three loops extracellular, and the C-terminus and three loops intracellular (Figure 2). Regions of coreceptor involved in Env interaction have been studied by analyzing chemokine receptor chimeras and site-directed mutants, comparing chemokine receptor homologues from different species, and assessing the blocking activities of chemokine ligands and anti-coreceptor antibodies (51–55, 68, 99, 106, 115–131). The results are exceedingly complex and, in some cases, contradictory.

The extracellular regions of the coreceptors have been the focus of most studies, with the assumption that Env probably makes initial direct contacts with these regions. However, the transmembrane and/or cytoplasmic regions of the coreceptor also critically influence activity, perhaps by affecting display of the extracellular regions. Each extracellular region has been implicated in coreceptor function, with several studies suggesting a particularly important role for the N-terminal segment. Interestingly, the effects of a particular coreceptor modification or anti-coreceptor agent can vary markedly for different Envs; in many cases the activities cluster with the class of Env (R5, X4, or R5X4). It has also been suggested that evolution of the viral quasispecies within the infected host (from R5 to R5X4 or X4, see below) is associated with changes in those extracellular regions of coreceptor that are most critical.

Major Questions About Coreceptors in the HIV-1 Fusion/Entry Mechanism

The coreceptors provide a new focus for mechanistic questions about Env-mediated fusion:

1. What are the precise determinants of gp120 and coreceptor involved in intermolecular contacts?
2. How do the interacting determinants vary with different isolates using the same receptor, and a given isolate using different coreceptors?
3. What are the precise conformational changes in Env induced by interaction with CD4 and coreceptor?
4. Does the coreceptor undergo essential conformational changes upon interaction with Env?
5. Do molecular interactions between CD4 and coreceptor have significance for fusion/entry?

6. How does Env interaction with CD4 and coreceptor function in the context of the trimeric Env structure?
7. Are there additional target cell molecular components involved in fusion/entry?

A critical focus for future work will involve detailed characterization of the intricate conformational changes associated with the mechanism described above. The recent success in determining the X-ray crystallographic structure of a core fragment of gp120 complexed to CD4 and a Fab against the coreceptor binding region (84), coupled with the X-ray (132, 133) and NMR (134) structural determinations of gp41, provide a framework for future analyses. Particularly critical are the structures of gp120 prior to CD4 binding, and complexed to coreceptor; the latter problem will undoubtedly be extremely difficult in view of the challenges associated with crystallization of proteins containing multiple membrane-spanning regions.

In considering the regions on gp120 and coreceptor involved in fusion, it is particularly puzzling that many Envs can function with a wide variety of coreceptors that have minimal sequence homology. For example, the dual-tropic 89.6 strain can use CCR5, CCR2, CCR3, CCR8, CXCR4, CX₃CR1, and STRL33/Bonzo (18, 29, 33, 34); several R5 strains (e.g. Ba-L, JR-FL), though they cannot use CXCR4, can function quite efficiently with other coreceptors such as CCR3 (25, 29). Thus, in spite of the findings that individual amino acid substitutions in both Env and coreceptor can dramatically affect activity, the interactions may involve structural features not revealed by simple considerations of amino acid sequence. Also of interest is the possibility that gp120 binding might induce conformational changes in the coreceptor, which in turn trigger Env to initiate the final step in the fusion mechanism.

Finally, little is known about how the CD4 and coreceptor interactions occur in the context of the trimeric (and possibly higher ordered) Env structure. Preliminary information indicates that an individual gp120 subunit must interact with both CD4 and coreceptor; these interactions can then promote activation of gp41 subunits which can be on other members of the oligomeric complex (K Salzwedel, EA Berger, unpublished).

CORECEPTORS IN HIV-1 DISEASE

Each member of the HIV-1 coreceptor repertoire was discovered using *in vitro* model systems; thus far there is limited information on which ones actually play a role *in vivo* in HIV-1 pathogenesis. Coreceptor parameters relevant to this question include the range of viral isolates recognized, the pattern of expression on target cells and tissues, the ability to mediate infection of primary cells,

and allelic polymorphisms associated with altered clinical outcome. By these criteria, the strongest evidence for a role in HIV-1 disease is for CCR5.

Evolution of Viral Tropism in Disease

The coreceptors put a molecular face on one of the most puzzling phenomena of HIV-1 disease, namely the evolution of viral tropism *in vivo* in a specific pattern (reviewed in 5). M-tropic variants are found early after infection and throughout all stages of disease; TCL-tropic variants are detected in many infected persons, but only at late disease stages (Figure 3). The failure to find TCL-tropic variants in the newly infected individual occurs even when such variants are present in the transmitting source; moreover this pattern is observed whether transmission is by mucosal or parenteral routes. Following the coreceptor discoveries, it was determined that R5 viruses predominate at early stages, with X4 and R5X4 variants appearing at late stages. In a longitudinal study of vertical HIV-1 transmission, disease progression in infants was associated with loss of viral sensitivity to CC chemokines and emergence of CXCR4-using variants (24). While there is as yet no precise understanding of the selective factors underlying early R5 restriction and the late R5 → X4 evolution in

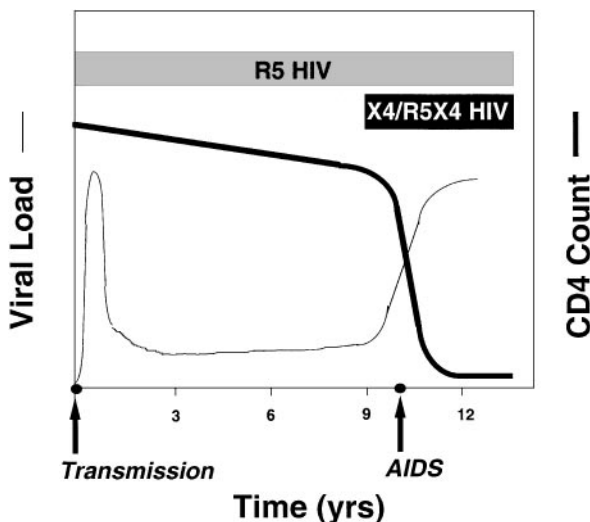


Figure 3 Temporal evolution of HIV-1 tropism during HIV-1 pathogenesis. HIV-1 transmission is restricted to R5 HIV-1 variants, which persist throughout the asymptomatic period as well as after the onset of AIDS. In many but not all individuals, viral tropism broadens to include X4 and R5X4 variants near the time when AIDS-defining symptoms are first observed.

many individuals, and the contributions of these phenomena to pathogenesis, the results suggest an important role for CCR5 during initial viral transmission, and for CXCR4 and/or possibly other coreceptors in late stages of disease progression.

CCR5 and CXCR4 are both expressed on known cell and tissue targets of HIV-1, consistent with roles in disease transmission and progression. In particular, CCR5 expression has been documented on cell and tissue types that may be important targets in the establishment of initial infection, including CD4⁺ T cells (13, 58, 135), monocyte/macrophages (12, 136, 137), dendritic cells (74, 138, 139), Langerhans cells (140, 141), and the mucosa of rectum and colon (137) as well as vagina and cervix (137, 141a). CXCR4 is expressed in many of the same cells and tissues as CCR5 (135, 137–141a).

Role of Coreceptors in HIV-1 Transmission

THE CCR5 $\Delta 32$ MUTATION: PROOF OF A CRITICAL ROLE FOR CCR5 IN HIV-1 TRANSMISSION The realization that CCR5 is the molecular factor mediating entry of the preferentially transmitted M-tropic HIV-1 variants led to a focus on this coreceptor as a possible determinant of transmission. Definitive evidence came from the discovery of a mutant CCR5 allele designated CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and the association of this allele with resistance to HIV-1 infection. CCR5 $\Delta 32$ was discovered independently by several groups using different methods, including direct sequencing (142, 143), single stranded conformational polymorphism analysis (144), and heteroduplex mobility shift analysis (145) of CCR5 alleles. CCR5 $\Delta 32$ has a 32 base pair deletion in the region of the open reading frame encoding the second extracellular loop, causing a frame shift and premature stop codon in transmembrane domain 5. The truncated protein product is not expressed on the cell surface (57, 142, 146).

Homozygous CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and HIV-1 resistance The first report of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ described the mutation in homozygous form in two homosexual men who remained uninfected with HIV-1 despite repeated high-risk exposure (the so-called exposed-uninfected or EU phenotype) (142). Molecular epidemiological studies revealed highly statistically significant and reciprocal distortions in expected genotypic frequencies in HIV-1-infected versus ELL populations (143–145, 147, 148). Thus, the $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ genotype was found to be significantly enriched in several EU cohorts; conversely, $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ homozygotes were not found among several thousand HIV-1-infected individuals tested. Most importantly, these genotypic distortions were noted in cohorts of individuals exposed via mucosal or parenteral routes, including homosexual men, intravenous drug users, and hemophiliacs. In vitro experiments provided a

dramatic correlation to the population data: PBMCs and PBL from EU $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ homozygotes were shown to be susceptible to infection with X4 viruses, but completely resistant to R5 viruses (56, 57, 142, 143, 149).

Heterozygous CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and HIV-1 resistance Despite the unequivocal protective effect of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ in homozygotes, no significant effect of the heterozygous genotype ($+/ \Delta 32$) on transmission has been found in most studies of homosexual, heterosexual, vertical, blood, and blood product transmission of HIV-1 (144, 145, 147, 150–157). Exceptions, all of which suggest a modest protective effect, include (a) a large European study that found a 35% reduction of $+/ \Delta 32$ in HIV-1-infected versus HIV-1-uninfected individuals (143); (b) a small study of HIV-1 discordant couples that found an increased frequency of $+/ \Delta 32$ in seronegative heterosexual, but not homosexual, individuals versus their seropositive partners (158); and (c) a study of 34 vertically infected Austrian infants in which the frequency of $+/ \Delta 32$ was significantly reduced (159).

Identification of an EU who was heterozygous for CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and whose PBMC were resistant in vitro to R5 HIV-1 initially suggested another exception. However, further analysis revealed that the second allele, designated CCR5 m303, harbored a chain-terminating single nucleotide polymorphism (T \rightarrow A) at nucleotide 303 of the open reading frame (160), and did not encode a functional coreceptor. CCR5 m303 is inherited as a single mendelian trait; only three of 209 healthy blood donors tested were heterozygous for this allele, which is not an allelic frequency sufficient for meaningful epidemiologic studies using existing HIV-1 cohorts.

Incomplete protection by CCR5 $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ Rare HIV-1-infected $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ individuals have been reported (148, 161, 162), thus demonstrating that CCR5 is not absolutely required for HIV-1 transmission. In all cases, disease was progressive and the viral isolates appeared to be syncytium-inducing. In one of these individuals, X4 virus was exclusively and persistently detected (163); although isolates were not available at the time of seroconversion, this result raises the speculation that CXCR4 was the coreceptor responsible for initiating infection.

Origin of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ CCR5 $\Delta 32$ is common in Caucasians and found at lower frequencies in the Middle East and India, but only sporadically among native Africans, Amerindians and East Asians (142–145, 147, 164–166). The allele frequency in North American Caucasians is typically $\sim 10\%$; heterozygotes and homozygotes represent $\sim 20\%$ and $\sim 1\%$ of this population, respectively, consistent with Hardy-Weinberg expectations and the absence of any effect of $\Delta 32$ on reproductive fitness. Consistent with this, $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ homozygotes who

have been examined have no obvious health problems, suggesting that normal CCR5 function is dispensable, perhaps because of compensating function by other chemokine receptors with a similar leukocyte distribution. Haplotype analysis indicates that the $\Delta 32$ allele originated quite recently, ~ 700 years ago (range 275–1,875 years) at a single point in northeastern Europe (165, 166). A cline of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ allele frequencies in a north to south gradient has been found in Europe, with the highest frequencies in Finnish and Mordvinian populations (16%), and the lowest in Sardinia (4%). These properties of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ suggest that it was rapidly enriched in Caucasians because it conferred an advantage against some relatively recent and strong selective factor, possibly a catastrophic epidemic. Based on the time and place of fixation and the historical record, bubonic plague has been proposed as a plausible selective factor (165). Together the data provide a particularly compelling example of Darwinian evolution, or natural selection working on variation, and a population-based proof of the importance of CCR5 in HIV-1 transmission.

CHEMOKINE BLOCKADE OF TRANSMISSION Although the $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ genotype is enriched in EU populations, the great majority of EUs do not have this genotype and their PBMCs are infectable with R5 HIV-1, indicating that the EU phenotype is heterogenous and that other resistance mechanisms must exist (145, 149). Indeed, genetic mechanisms unrelated to coreceptors have been proposed to influence susceptibility to HIV-1 infection and disease (reviewed in 167). However, at least one other mechanism mediated by the coreceptor/chemokine system may influence transmission. Several reports have suggested an association between the EU phenotype, both in homosexuals and in hemophiliacs, and high levels of the endogenous CC chemokines MIP-1 α , MIP-1 β and RANTES; this suggests that a “chemokine condom” could contribute to clinical resistance in some cases (149, 168). In fact, elevated secretion of CC chemokines by PBMCs from $\Delta 32/\Delta 32$ homozygotes has been noted, suggesting a negative feedback loop controlling chemokine production (149). It has been proposed that resistance to HIV-1 infection may arise from a combination of high levels of inhibitory chemokines and low level expression of CCR5 (169).

Role of Coreceptors in HIV-1 Disease Progression

Primary HIV-1 infection is associated with a burst of plasma viremia and an acute febrile illness, characterized by nonspecific symptomatology and spontaneous resolution. Plasma viremia then drops to relatively low levels, and the individual enters a prolonged asymptomatic period known as clinical latency. Numerous factors have been proposed to control viral replication during this period, including neutralizing antibody, virus-specific cytotoxic T cells, cytokines, chemokines, and availability of HIV-1 coreceptors (170).

The rate of disease progression is very heterogeneous among individuals, and is affected by many factors including age, associated diseases, immune activation, nutritional status, and viral strain. However, even when these factors are normalized, progression rates differ dramatically; in the extreme some rare individuals, known as long-term nonprogressors, do not appear to progress at all. These observations raise the possibility that progression rate may be influenced by factors that affect HIV-1 coreceptor levels or function. Directly correlating *in vivo* coreceptor levels with clinical progression rate is problematic, mainly due to the variability found in the levels on primary cells from different individuals. Associating *in vivo* levels of blocking chemokines with rates of disease progression is also difficult, due to problems in quantitating levels in plasma and tissues.

A more informative approach has been to correlate genetic polymorphisms that may affect gene expression with clinical progression rate, using survival analysis and disease category analysis. Survival analysis requires large numbers of well-characterized HIV-1 seroconvertors (individuals for whom it is known accurately both the time of infection and the time when AIDS-defining criteria were met) (144, 157, 171, 172). Results from seroprevalent cohorts (individuals found to be HIV-1 seropositive when first tested), which have been used in some studies, can be misleading due to bias introduced by unintended exclusion of rapid progressors. Results are analyzed by Cox proportional hazards or Kaplan-Meier techniques using various endpoints, including the time to AIDS and death. Disease category analysis tests for distortion in expected genotypic frequencies in cohorts of HIV-1-infected subjects with specific outcomes, such as long-term survival (144, 145).

Fortunately, several relatively large, well-characterized and well-managed cohorts of seroconvertors were initiated during the early years of the HIV-1 epidemic. So far four coreceptor/chemokine genetic polymorphisms have been identified and correlated with delayed HIV-1 disease progression rate using these cohorts: CCR5 $\Delta 32$ (144, 145, 147, 152), CCR5 59029 G/A (173), CCR2-64I (157, 174, 175), and SDF-1 3'UTR-801G-A (abbreviated SDF-1 3'A) (157, 176). Several polymorphisms in the gene encoding CXCR4 have been found, but none has proven informative (177). Table 2 summarizes the allelic polymorphisms in coreceptors and their ligands that have been linked to HIV-1 disease.

CCR5 59029 G/A, CCR2-64I, and SDF-1 3'A are single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP) in the CCR5 promoter, CCR2 ORF and SDF-1 3' untranslated region (UTR), respectively. The mechanisms by which the genotypes produce their associated clinical effects are not clearly established. In this regard, it is important to note that CCR5 $\Delta 32$, CCR2-64I, and CCR5 59029 G/A are in linkage disequilibrium, due to the adjacent location of CCR2 and CCR5 genes

Table 2 Inherited polymorphisms in genes for chemokines and HIV-1 coreceptors that alter susceptibility to HIV-1 infection and progression

Molecule	Polymorphism	Site	Type	Freq ^a	Phenotypes		Mechanism
					-/-	+/-	
CCR5	CCR5 Δ 32	ORF	Del	10%	R	DP	Truncation
	m303	ORF	SNP	1%	R	ND	Truncation
	59029G/A	Pro	SNP	50%	DP	—	ND
CCR2	CCR2-64I	ORF	SNP	10%	ND	DP	ND
SDF-1	SDF1-3' A	3' UTR	SNP	21%	DP	—	ND

^aThe allelic frequencies listed are approximations based on genotyping North American Caucasians. Frequencies vary by racial group (see text for details and references).

Abbreviations: Freq, Allelic frequency; -/-, homozygous for the given allele; +/-, heterozygous for the given allele; ORF, open reading frame; SNP, single nucleotide polymorphism; Del, deletion; Pro, promoter; 3' UTR, 3' untranslated region of the mRNA; R, HIV-1 resistance; DP, delayed progression to AIDS relative to other genotypes; ND, not determined. NE, no effects; ?, not determined.

within a chemokine receptor gene cluster on human chromosome 3p21-p24, that also includes CCR1, CCR3, CCR4, CCR8, and CX3CR1 (178). This must be kept in mind when considering statistical associations between particular polymorphisms and clinical outcome, since the identified polymorphism may just be a marker linked to other polymorphisms that have a direct effect on disease outcome.

THE CCR5 Δ 32 ALLELE Too few HIV-1-infected Δ 32/ Δ 32 homozygotes have been found to meaningfully analyze the effect of this genotype on progression, except to say that individuals with this genotype have been identified who have progressed to AIDS. In adult populations of HIV-1-infected seroconvertors who are +/- Δ 32, there is a delay of 0–2 years in mean time to AIDS compared to wild-type controls, depending on the AIDS definition and particular cohorts that are used (144, 145, 147, 152). In the largest study, seroconvertors were pooled from three different cohorts, including hemophiliacs and homosexual men, and a ~2 year delay was observed (144). In addition, several cohorts of long-term nonprogressors have been reported in which a 50% increase in +/- Δ 32 genotypic frequency relative to other HIV-1-infected populations and normals was observed, although immunologic and viral parameters broadly overlapped in individuals with similar rates of progression and discordant CCR5 genotypes (144, 145, 179). Significant protection from progression by this genotype has been difficult to demonstrate in studies of seroconvertors that have relied on only a single cohort.

Perhaps contributing to delayed progression among heterozygotes, the mean values of CCR5 by flow cytometry of peripheral blood T cells from HIV-1 negative CCR5 +/- Δ 32 individuals are significantly lower than would be

predicted by a simple gene dosage effect ($\sim 10\%$ of wild type controls, with considerable overlap) (58). There is biochemical evidence suggesting that this may be partly due to a transdominant effect of $\Delta 32$ through production of dysfunctional heterodimers composed of normal and truncated receptor subunits, which become trapped in the endoplasmic reticulum (143, 146). Functional consequences of the CCR5 $+/ \Delta 32$ genotype have been demonstrated both in vitro and in vivo. Thus, R5 HIV-1 entry and replication have been reported to be reduced in CCR5 $+/ \Delta 32$ versus $+/+$ PBMCs and monocyte-derived macrophages infected in vitro (58, 180); R5 HIV-1 exhibits delayed replication in SCID-hu mice reconstituted with CCR5 $+/ \Delta 32$ versus $+/+$ PBLs (181); and median viral load has been reported to be lower in CCR5 $+/ \Delta 32$ versus $+/+$ HIV-1-infected individuals (172). Taken together, these results suggest that CCR5 levels can be limiting, and that the $+/ \Delta 32$ genotype slows disease progression by causing reduced viral replication through reduced expression of CCR5. There is some evidence that the CCR5 $+/ \Delta 32$ genotype does not operate throughout the course of disease. In fact, paradoxically, it has been associated with accelerated progression to death after AIDS defining criteria were met (182).

THE CCR2-64I ALLELE The CCR2-64I polymorphism (174) causes a conservative amino acid change, valine to isoleucine, at position 64 in the first transmembrane domain of CCR2, a region that has complete amino acid sequence conservation with CCR5. The allele is found in all racial groups tested at the following frequencies: Caucasians, 10%; African Americans, 15%; Hispanics, 17%; and Asians, 25% (174). CCR2-64I and CCR5 $\Delta 32$ occur on separate haplotypes, meaning they are never inherited together on the same chromosome.

CCR2-64I has no effect on initial HIV transmission. However, several studies have shown that seroconvertors bearing the CCR2-64I allele progress to AIDS significantly slower (by ~ 2 – 3 years) than do CCR2 $+/+$ HIV-1 seroconvertors (157, 174, 175, 183). Like CCR5 $\Delta 32$, CCR2-64I is enriched among long-term nonprogressors and reduced in rapid progressors (174, 175, 183). Moreover, the two alleles appear to exert an additive protective effect on progression rate in individuals who carry both (174, 175). The effect of CCR2-64I has not been observed in seroprevalent cohorts (175, 184), probably because it is masked by exclusion of rapid progressors from these cohorts (175). Also, one example of variability among seroconverter cohorts has been reported in which the association between CCR2-64I and delayed progression was found for African-Americans but not for Caucasians in one study (157), and in the converse pattern in another (174). A study of African sex workers found that the CCR2-64I allele correlated with delayed progression to AIDS (185).

Consistent with its association with delayed progression in seroconverter cohorts, CCR2-64I has also been associated with significantly lower viral load at 9–12 months after seroconversion (175); the early viral load is a “set point” highly predictive of progression rate (186). Nevertheless, there is substantial doubt that the mechanism of action of CCR2-64I directly involves CCR2, since this coreceptor can be used by relatively few HIV-1 isolates *in vitro* (18, 29) and has not been consistently demonstrated to mediate HIV-1 infection in primary cells (14, 69, 115). Moreover, the CCR2-64I mutation does not affect coreceptor expression either in primary cells or in transfected cells, nor does it appear to affect chemokine binding or HIV-1 coreceptor activity (187). Instead, it has been suggested that CCR2-64I may be linked to another polymorphism that affects CCR5 expression or function (174). One candidate has been proposed, a C → T SNP at position 59653 in the CCR5 promoter (numbering as in GenBank #U95626) which is in 100% linkage with CCR2-64I, i.e. the two mutations are always inherited together (157, 175); however, so far there is no evidence that this polymorphism affects CCR5 expression (175). Instead, and quite surprisingly, an association has been found between the +/CCR2-64I genotype and reduced levels of CXCR4 on PBMCs from healthy donors (187). The mechanism cannot involve *cis* genetic effects since the gene encoding CXCR4 is on a different chromosome (2q) than CCR2 (3p).

THE CCR5 59029 G/A POLYMORPHISM CCR5 59029 G/A is a G versus A SNP at base pair 59029 in the CCR5 promoter. Neither allele can be considered as “wild type,” since both are very common in all racial groups; the G allele is found at 43%–68% frequency depending on race (173). Haplotype analysis indicates that the 59029 A allele is in complete linkage disequilibrium with both CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and CCR2-64I; that is, all chromosomes bearing either CCR5 $\Delta 32$ or CCR2-64I also have 59029 A, although most chromosomes bearing 59029 A lack both CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and CCR2-64I. In the one cohort study reported so far, the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS) of homosexual and bisexual men, in individuals selected for absence of CCR5 $\Delta 32$ and CCR2-64I the mean time to AIDS for 59029 G/G individuals was 3.8 years longer than for 59029 A/A individuals, $p = 0.004$ (173). This is the largest distortion of HIV-1 progression rate found so far for any polymorphism tested in a single cohort. For comparison, in the same cohort the +/64I and +/ $\Delta 32$ genotypes were each associated with an ~ 1 year delay in mean time to AIDS, neither of which reached statistical significance (DA McDermott and PM Murphy, unpublished data).

Consistent with the epidemiologic difference, promoter fragments differing in sequence only at 59029 G versus A had differential activity in a reporter gene assay, with the 59029 A promoter $\sim 50\%$ more active than 59029 G

(173). This suggests that cells from 59029 G/G individuals may have decreased transcription of the CCR5 gene and decreased expression of CCR5, although this has not yet been demonstrated directly. Many other CCR5 promoter and open reading frame SNPs have been found, but associations with disease outcome have not been reported (157, 175, 177, 188, 189).

THE SDF-1 3'A ALLELE The polymorphism designated SDF1-3'A is a G → A transition at bp 809 of the 3'-UTR of the mRNA encoding one of the two known chemokine ligands for CXCR4, SDF-1 β . The second ligand, designated SDF-1 α , produced by alternative splicing of a common SDF-1 gene, does not contain the SDF-1 3'A polymorphism. SDF-1 3'A is found in all racial groups tested, with high allele frequency in Caucasians (21%), Hispanics (16%), and Asians (26%), and relatively low frequency in African Americans (6%) (176).

A clear picture has not yet emerged for the role of SDF-1 3'A in HIV-1 disease. In the initial report (176), which was based on analysis of 639 seroconvertors pooled from two cohorts of homosexual men (MACS and San Francisco City Cohort), one cohort of hemophiliacs (Multicenter Hemophilia Cohort Study), and one cohort of IV drug abusers (the ALIVE cohort), a strong association was described between the homozygous 3'A/3'A genotype and delayed onset of AIDS. A statistically significant effect was even observed in the MACS cohort tested separately from the others. In the pooled analysis, the effect was reported to be increased in later stages of HIV-1 infection, twice as strong as that found for CCR2-64I or CCR5 Δ 32 separately, and additive, possibly even synergistic, to them. In contrast, in a study of 470 seroconvertors from a single cohort (Tri-Service HIV-1 Natural History Study), the 3'A/3'A was associated with accelerated disease progression (157). Neither study found an altered rate of disease progression in heterozygotes, yet counterintuitively the first study found a significant increase in +/3'A in a group of 79 high-risk ELLs from the MACS, suggesting a protective effect from initial infection. The significance of this is unclear report however, since the same, did not find distortion of expected genotypic frequencies for either +/3'A or 3'A/3'A in a second group of 435 ELLs or in HIV-1 + individuals. The frequency of 3'A/3'A in the group of 79 ELLs was not reported.

The differences between these two studies could result from differences in cohort composition or definition, or the low number of homozygotes available for statistical analysis (3'A/3'A individuals represent only ~5% of Caucasians). It is quite possible that effects of SDF-1 3'A on progression rate could vary in different cohorts through differential environmental factors acting on the same postulated mechanism (176), namely posttranscriptional modulation of SDF-1 levels leading to effects on CXCR4 coreceptor activity.

Major Questions About Coreceptors in HIV-1 Disease

With the coreceptor discoveries, some of the most perplexing questions about HIV-1 disease can now be posed in molecular terms:

1. What are the mechanisms underlying the predominance of R5 HIV-1 variants during establishment of initial infection as well as throughout the asymptomatic period?
2. What are the mechanisms involved in the emergence of X4 and R5X4 variants at later stages?
3. Why are CXCR4-using viruses detected in some AIDS individuals but not in others?
4. Is there a causal relationship between CXCR4 usage and the decline of CD4⁺ T cells and, if so, what are the mechanisms?
5. Does signaling induced by Env interaction with coreceptors play any role in HIV-1 disease?
6. Does Env impairment of normal chemokine-mediated signaling play any role in HIV-1 disease?
7. Are coreceptor levels limiting for transmission and disease progression?
8. To what extent does regulation of the levels of coreceptors and/or their chemokine ligands modulate infection susceptibility and disease progression rates?
9. What additional genetic influences on HIV-1 disease are mediated by the coreceptor/chemokine system, and what are their mechanisms of action?
10. Which members of the coreceptor repertoire are important for HIV-1 disease?

The selective mechanisms observed during virus transmission are particularly bewildering. CCR5, the coreceptor used by HIV-1 variants detected shortly after transmission, is expressed on target cells and tissues that may be important for the establishment of initial infection, (i.e. CD4⁺ T cells, monocyte/macrophages, dendritic cells, Langerhans cells, vagina, cervix, rectum, and colon). Yet CXCR4, the coreceptor used by HIV-1 variants that are rarely detected at early stages of infection, is also expressed at many of these sites. The findings that CXCR4 is expressed at lower levels than CCR5 in colonic (137) and cervical (141a) mucosa may provide a partial explanation for the

predominance of R5 variants after sexual transmission. It is also possible that in order to gain a foothold after entering the body, the infection must become established in some uncharacterized compartment that is enriched in CCR5 but not CXCR4, or that has high levels of blocking chemokine ligands for CXCR4 but not CCR5. However, none of these considerations would explain the enigma of the low transmission frequency of R5X4 viruses, since these can readily use CCR5. It is presently unknown whether this apparent negative selection against CXCR4-using viruses is due to the interaction of the respective Envs with CXCR4 *per se*, or to other properties of the Envs that accompany functionality with CXCR4. An intriguing speculation is that those very features that confer CXCR4 functionality to Env might render the corresponding virus or infected cell susceptible to elimination by immune mechanisms (humoral and/or cellular).

Similarly perplexing is the enrichment for CXCR4-using (R5X4 and X4) viruses during the course of disease progression. There are many possible selective mechanisms, including the elevation of CXCR4 and depression of CCR5 levels upon activation of CD4⁺ T lymphocytes (190, 191), the presence of R5-blocking CC chemokines at sites of virus replication (192, 193), enhanced production of CC chemokine caused by X4 virus infection (194), the ability of CC chemokines to stimulate replication of CXCR4-using viruses by inducing colocalization of CXCR4 with CD4 (77), limiting levels of CCR5, e.g. as occurs in CCR5 +/Δ32 heterozygotes (195), and upregulation of CXCR4 induced by CC chemokines (196) and associated with bacterial infection (197).

Just as the basis for the emergence of CXCR4-using variants is not understood, it is similarly unclear why CXCR4-using viruses are detected in only a subset of AIDS subjects (5). Since this notion is based mainly on analyses of isolates from peripheral blood, it is possible that the fraction would be significantly higher if variants are examined from a broader range of tissues. It is also possible that the frequency of CXCR4-using variants might be underestimated due to difficulties in detection; this concern is raised by the finding that in cells from some individuals, TCL-tropic viruses are only observed upon culture in the presence of CC chemokines (77).

Another fundamental problem is the relationship of coreceptor usage to depletion of CD4⁺ T cells. R5X4 and X4 HIV-1 strains are generally more cytopathic than R5 strains *in vitro*, raising the possibility that CXCR4 usage might contribute to target cell killing, directly or indirectly. An *ex vivo* correlate has come from analysis of lymphoid tissue histocultures, where CD4⁺ T cell depletion occurred much more with X4 than with R5 viruses (198). The *in vivo* kinetics of plasma viremia in SCID-hu mice reconstituted with human peripheral blood leukocytes was found to correlate with the phenotype of the inoculated virus, with R5 strains exhibiting high viral titers and low CD4⁺

T cell depletion, and X4 viruses the converse (199). A critical question for future studies is to determine whether these phenomena reflect an inherently greater cytopathicity of X4 strains, or simply a greater fraction of CD4⁺ T cells expressing CXCR4 compared to CCR5.

A related problem is the possible physiologic significance of Env/coreceptor interactions beyond those involved in virus entry. Soluble Env has been demonstrated to induce signaling events via interaction with CCR5 (200) or CXCR4 (201), and apoptosis has been observed upon gp120 engagement of CXCR4 (202,203). Furthermore, gp120 reportedly antagonizes CXCR4 and CCR5 signaling induced by their respective chemokine ligands, in a CD4-dependent fashion (204). Interaction between gp41 and coreceptors has also been suggested, based on the ability of gp41 to induce downmodulation of chemoattractant receptors (including HIV-1 coreceptors) on monocytes (205). The relevance of these processes for HIV-1 disease is presently unknown.

While the importance for HIV-1 disease has clearly been established for CCR5, and to a lesser extent for CXCR4, the data are much less compelling for other members of the coreceptor repertoire. The genetic evidence has defined a central role for CCR5 in transmission; however, it does not rule out the possibility that other coreceptors may act in concert with CCR5, perhaps in a specialized physiological compartment critical for establishment of clinical infection. Other coreceptors may also be important for tissue-specific virus replication that might have profound consequences for the progression and manifestations of disease. This notion suggests the importance of analyzing coreceptor usage by primary virus isolates obtained from diverse target cells and tissues. An intriguing example is CCR8, which is expressed at minimal levels on peripheral blood T cells and monocytes, but at high levels in thymus (206, 207); perhaps this coreceptor plays an important role in the profound thymic abnormalities associated with HIV-1 infection (208). Similarly, STRL33/BONZO is abundantly expressed in placenta (34, 35), raising the possibility that it might play a role in vertical transmission.

CORECEPTOR-BASED THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES

The coreceptor discoveries have engendered new concepts to combat HIV-1 disease, at the levels of both treatment of infected subjects and prevention of transmission. Most are still at the developmental stage, although a few have progressed to clinical trials.

Coreceptor Blocking Agents

Several classes of coreceptor blocking agents have been described. For each of these, the fact that different HIV-1 strains "see" a given coreceptor differently

(see sections above) raises the possibility that escape variants capable of using that coreceptor in the presence of the blocking agent will be selected for.

CHEMOKINES AND DERIVATIVES The most straightforward coreceptor blocking agents are the natural chemokines that bind to and inhibit fusion/entry/infection mediated by the corresponding coreceptors, as has been shown with the ligands for CXCR4 (19, 20), CCR5 (10, 14–16), CCR3 (17), CCR8 (30), and CX₃CR1 (33). However, concern has been raised that native chemokines may have unwanted activities due to their coupling to signaling pathways; thus, the CC chemokine stimulation of HIV-1 replication in macrophages under certain conditions is dependent on G protein signaling (67), as is the CC chemokine enhancement of TCL-tropic virus replication in T cells (77). Derivatized chemokine variants (93, 95, 209–212) and chemokine-based synthetic peptides (213, 214) have been reported with properties that may be favorable for anti-HIV therapy, including reduced agonist activity, enhanced blocking of fusion/entry/infection, and improved selectivity for the desired coreceptor. A variant of MIP-1 α was found to be well-tolerated in Phase II cancer trials aimed at protecting hematopoietic stem cells during chemotherapy (212); however, no significant effects on viral load or CD4 counts were observed in a Phase I trial in HIV-infected subjects (LG Czaplewski, unpublished).

ANTI-CORECEPTOR ANTIBODIES Anti-coreceptor monoclonal antibodies that inhibit HIV-1 entry represent another class of blocking agent. Murine monoclonal antibodies with HIV-1 inhibitory activity have been described for CXCR4 (68), CCR5 (58, 117), and CCR3 (73). Such antibodies can be humanized and tested for potential clinical utility.

LOW MOLECULAR WEIGHT COMPOUNDS Perhaps the most promising class of blockers is low molecular weight compounds that bind directly to the coreceptors and inhibit their function. In general, members of the G protein-coupled receptor superfamily have proven to be ripe targets for pharmacologic intervention, and the chemokine receptors were already under investigation for development of antiinflammatory drugs prior to their implication in HIV-1 entry. Several low molecular weight blockers specific for CXCR4 have been described (215–217), as has been a more broadly active compound that blocks CCR5, CXCR4, and CCR3 (218). One CXCR4-blocking agent, the bicyclam AMD3100, was shown to inhibit HIV-1 replication in SCID-hu mice (219) prior to the realization that it is a specific inhibitor of entry via CXCR4 (216).

Ex Vivo Modulation of Coreceptor Expression

An interesting therapeutic approach involves treatments that modulate coreceptor expression. An example is ex vivo activation of CD4⁺ T lymphocytes with

antibodies to CD3 and CD28 adsorbed on beads (190). Cells treated in this fashion are refractory to infection with R5 strains but susceptible to X4 virus, consistent with the pattern of coreceptor expression (negligible CCR5, high CXCR4). This strategy is being investigated in the context of immune reconstitution with syngeneic CD4⁺ T lymphocytes, since the cells are refractory to infection by the R5 viruses that predominate in individuals at earlier stages of infection. Phase I clinical trials have been initiated (220).

Gene Therapy Approaches

Several strategies are suggested in the context of gene therapy, with the goal of depleting coreceptors from the surface of the target cells. One approach is to target coreceptor RNA (e.g. using ribozymes, antisense, DNA-enzymes). Some progress has been reported with a hammer-head ribozyme and a DNA-enzyme targeted to CCR5 mRNA; expression of the latter agent in target cells reduced their capacity to fuse with cells expressing an R5 Env in vitro (221).

Alternatively, the coreceptor protein can be targeted. An intriguing strategy involves the expression of a so-called "intrakine," a genetically engineered chemokine with a carboxy-terminal endoplasmic reticulum retention sequence; the intrakine traps the newly synthesized coreceptor and prevents its expression on the surface, thereby rendering the target cell refractory to HIV-1 infection. Intrakines have been described for downregulation of CXCR4 (222) and CCR5 (223).

Genetically Engineered Enveloped Virus Particles

The coreceptors have also been used to design genetically engineered enveloped virus particles displaying CD4 and coreceptor in place of their native envelope glycoproteins. This concept has been applied to rabies virus (224), vesicular stomatitis virus (225), and an HIV-1 vector (226). The engineered viruses fuse selectively with cells productively infected with HIV-1 and expressing surface Env. The idea is that the engineered virus will kill the HIV-infected cells, either by a viral cytopathic effect or by delivering an antiviral gene.

Major Questions about Coreceptor-Based Therapeutic Strategies

As with any novel therapeutic modality, the approaches described above are subject to obvious concerns about efficacy, toxicity, and practicality. Several interrelated questions arise in view of the current understanding of the coreceptor system:

1. Will the loss of normal chemokine receptor function of a specific coreceptor be tolerated?

2. Will impairment of CCR5 usage accelerate disease progression by enhancing selection of X4 and R5X4 variants?
3. How many members of the coreceptor repertoire must be blocked in order to achieve a therapeutic effect?

Coreceptor-based therapeutic strategies have the appeal of targeting relatively invariant host determinants, in contrast with anti-HIV-1 agents directed against components of the rapidly mutating virus population. The limited in vivo data demonstrating slower HIV-1 disease progression in CCR5 Δ 32 heterozygotes and in CCR5 59029 G/G homozygotes provide support for a potential beneficial effect of targeting CCR5. Moreover, these data argue that the positive effects of lower CCR5 levels outweigh negative effects, including possible enhanced selection for CXCR4-using variants. One caveat, however, is that blocking CCR5 in the face of established HIV-1 disease may not be equivalent to expressing limiting CCR5 levels from the time of disease onset.

There are reasonable grounds for optimism that interference with coreceptor function might be well tolerated. Individual components of the chemokine/receptor system have limited rather than pleiotropic physiologic effects, in contrast with elements of other cytokine/receptor systems; moreover, the redundancy of the chemokine/receptor system offers the possibility that blockade of one will be compensated by the activity of others. Again, the genetic data for CCR5 are encouraging, since no adverse medical consequences have been noted in CCR5 Δ 32/ Δ 32 homozygotes. However, the concern remains that individuals with CCR5 genetic defects may have compensating developmental changes in other components of the chemokine/receptor system, and that such compensations may not occur when CCR5 activity is modulated by the treatment modalities noted above.

The situation with CXCR4 may be more problematic. SDF-1 3'A homozygosity has been associated with slower HIV-1 disease progression, but the effect is controversial and the mechanism is unknown. Moreover, there is cause for concern about undesired side effects of blocking CXCR4 function. Knockout mice lacking either SDF-1 (227) or CXCR4 (228, 229) die during embryogenesis, with evidence of hematopoietic, cardiac, vascular, and cerebellar defects. Thus, the SDF-1/CXCR4 interaction appears to be reciprocally monogamous, and may participate in wide-ranging developmental functions. From an optimistic viewpoint, it is possible that CXCR4 function is dispensable after embryogenesis, and that impairment of its activity would be tolerated.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of HIV-1 coreceptors is an example of how basic research can link previously unrelated fields in totally unexpected ways to create a powerful

new research paradigm with immediate clinical relevance. We now know that chemokine receptors, long studied for their roles in leukocyte trafficking in anti-microbial host defense, have been converted to pro-HIV-1 factors. As a result, we now have a more refined model for HIV-1 entry into target cells, a molecular basis for target cell tropism, new insights into the mechanisms underlying diverse aspects of HIV-1 disease, and new targets for therapeutic intervention.

Demonstration of HIV-1 disease-modifying polymorphisms in CCR5 and other coreceptor genes represents a landmark in our understanding of the influence of human genetic factors on outcome in HIV-1 infection, and it supports genetic analysis as a general approach for understanding the heterogeneity of outcome characteristic of all infectious diseases. The observation that protective coreceptor mutations and polymorphisms are well-tolerated provides the proof of principle needed to justify development of coreceptor-based preventive and therapeutic interventions for the AIDS epidemic, and reason for optimism that they may succeed.

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We dedicate this review to the memory of Meta Ann Snyder, who, despite her illness, worked tirelessly to help others with AIDS. The insightful comments of Dr. Paolo Lusso are gratefully acknowledged. We regret that limitations of space prevented citation of all relevant articles in this field.

NOTE ADDED IN PROOF

A newly described CCR5 promoter allele, designated P1, has been reported to show an epidemiological association with rapid progression to AIDS (230). Alleles at position 59029 were not assessed in that report; it is possible they may track the same phenotype due to linkage with P1.

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