
MONOCLONAL ANTIBODY AND PEPTIDE-TARGETED RADIOTHERAPY OF CANCER

Edited by

Raymond M. Reilly

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*To my mother, who always used to ask me, "What is a monoclonal antibody?"
and, in another life would have been a wonderful scientist with
her inborn fascination with medical discovery and knowledge.*

CONTENTS

Preface	xvii
Contributors	xxi
1. Antibody Engineering: Optimizing the Delivery Vehicle	1
<i>Diane E. Milenic</i>	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Intact Murine Monoclonal Antibodies	2
1.3 Recombinant Immunoglobulin Molecules	4
1.3.1 Chimeric Monoclonal Antibodies	5
1.3.2 Humanized Monoclonal Antibodies	6
1.3.3 Human Monoclonal Antibodies	9
1.4 Nanobodies	10
1.5 Domain-Deleted Monoclonal Antibodies	12
1.6 Hypervariable Domain Region Peptides	13
1.7 Fv Fragments	14
1.7.1 Multimeric Fv Forms	16
1.8 Minibodies	19
1.9 Selective High Affinity Ligands	21
1.10 Affibodies	21
1.11 Other Strategies	23
1.11.1 Fc Domain and the Neonatal Fc Receptor	23
1.11.2 PEGylation	25
1.11.3 Albumin Binding	26
1.12 Concluding Remarks	28
References	28
2. The Radiochemistry of Monoclonal Antibodies and Peptides	39
<i>Raymond M. Reilly</i>	
2.1 Introduction	39
2.2 Tumor and Normal Tissue Uptake of Monoclonal Antibodies and Peptides	40
2.3 Selection of a Radionuclide for Tumor Imaging	41
2.4 Selection of a Radionuclide for Targeted Radiotherapy	44

2.5	Labeling Antibodies and Peptides with Radiohalogens	47
2.5.1	Iodine Radionuclides	47
2.5.2	Bromine Radionuclides	51
2.5.3	Fluorine Radionuclides	53
2.5.4	Astatine Radionuclides	56
2.6	Labeling Antibodies and Peptides with Radiometals	57
2.6.1	Technetium Radionuclides	57
2.6.2	Rhenium Radionuclides	62
2.6.3	Indium Radionuclides	63
2.6.4	Yttrium Radionuclides	69
2.6.5	Gallium Radionuclides	71
2.6.6	Copper Radionuclides	72
2.6.7	Lutetium Radionuclides	74
2.6.8	Lead, Bismuth, and Actinium Radionuclides	74
2.7	Characterization of Radiolabeled mAbs and Peptides	75
2.7.1	Evaluation of the Homogeneity of Radiolabeled mAbs and Peptides	75
2.7.2	Measurement of Radiochemical Purity	77
2.7.3	Measurement of Immunoreactivity/Receptor Binding Properties	78
2.7.4	Evaluation of <i>In Vitro</i> and <i>In Vivo</i> Stability	80
2.7.5	Preclinical Biodistribution, Tumor Imaging, and Dosimetry Studies	81
2.7.6	Preclinical Studies to Evaluate Antitumor Effects and Normal Tissue Toxicity	81
2.7.7	Kit Formulation and Pharmaceutical Testing	82
2.8	Summary	82
	Acknowledgments	83
	References	83
3.	The Design of Radiolabeled Peptides for Targeting Malignancies	101
	<i>Leonard G. Luyt</i>	
3.1	Introduction	101
3.2	Peptide Targets	101
3.3	Peptides as Cancer Targeting Agents	102
3.3.1	Discovery of Novel Cancer Binding Peptides	104
3.3.2	The Addition of a Radionuclide to a Peptide	108
3.3.3	Improving the <i>In Vivo</i> Behavior of Peptides	113
3.4	Multimodality Agents	114
3.5	Future Outlook	115
	References	115

4. Peptide Receptor Radionuclide Therapy in Patients with Somatostatin Receptor-Positive Neuroendocrine Tumors	121
<i>Martijn van Essen, Dik J. Kwekkeboom, Wouter W. de Herder, Lisa Bodei, Boen L. R. Kam, Marion de Jong, Roelf Valkema, and Eric P. Krenning</i>	
4.1 Introduction	121
4.2 Radiotherapy with ^{111}In -Octreotide	122
4.3 Radiotherapy with ^{90}Y -DOTATOC	123
4.4 Targeted Radiotherapy Studies with ^{177}Lu -Octreotate	124
4.5 PRRT with Other Somatostatin Analogues	128
4.6 Comparison of Different PRRT Studies	129
4.7 Comparison with Chemotherapy	129
4.8 Options for Improving PRRT and Future Directions	130
4.9 Conclusions	133
References	133
5. Targeted Radiotherapy of Central Nervous System Malignancies	139
<i>Michael R. Zalutsky, David A. Reardon, and Darell D. Bigner</i>	
5.1 Malignant Brain Tumors	139
5.2 Rationale for Locoregional Therapy	140
5.3 Targeted Radiotherapy of Brain Tumors	141
5.4 Rationale for Tenascin-C as a Target for Radionuclide Therapy	142
5.4.1 Tenascin-C Targeting Vehicles	143
5.4.2 BC-2 and BC-4 mAbs: The Italian Experience	144
5.4.3 Antitenascin-C mAb 81C6: The Duke Experience	146
5.4.4 Strategies for Improving the Efficacy of 81C6-Based Targeted Radiotherapy	150
5.4.5 Evaluation of More Stable Constructs: Human/Mouse Chimeric 81C6	152
5.4.6 Evaluation of More Potent Radionuclides: Astatine-211-Labeled CH81C6	154
5.4.7 Pretargeted Radioimmunotherapy	155
5.4.8 Receptor-Targeted Peptides	156
5.4.9 Chlorotoxin	157
5.5 Perspective for the Future	158
Acknowledgments	159
References	159
6. Radioimmunotherapy for B-Cell Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma	169
<i>Thomas E. Witzig</i>	
6.1 Introduction	169
6.2 Radioimmunotherapy	170
6.2.1 Historical Background of RIT	170

6.2.2	Radionuclides Used in RIT	171
6.2.3	Administration of RIT: General Principles and Practice	173
6.2.4	Characteristics of Radiolabeled Monoclonal Antibodies to CD20	175
6.2.5	Clinical Results of Anti-CD20 RIT for Relapsed NHL	179
6.2.6	Safety of Bexxar RIT	185
6.2.7	Radiolabeled Rituximab	187
6.3	Antibodies Against CD22	187
6.3.1	Radiolabeled Epratuzumab	187
6.4	RIT Versus Immunotherapy	188
6.5	RIT in Rituximab Refractory Patients	189
6.6	RIT for Previously Untreated Patients	190
6.7	RIT for Relapsed Large-Cell Lymphoma	191
6.8	RIT for Transformed Lymphoma	192
6.9	RIT for Mantle Cell Lymphoma	192
6.10	Long-Term Results of RIT	193
6.11	Risk of Myelodysplasia with RIT	193
6.12	Feasibility of Treatment After RIT Failure	194
6.13	Combinations of RIT and Chemotherapy	195
6.14	High-Dose RIT with Stem Cell Support	197
6.14.1	Use of RIT After Stem Cell Transplantation	199
6.15	RIT for Central Nervous System Lymphoma	200
6.16	Retreatment with RIT	200
6.17	RIT in Children with Relapsed NHL	201
6.18	RIT in Patients with Lung Involvement	201
6.19	RIT in Patients with Skin Lymphoma	202
6.20	RIT in Patients with >25% Marrow Involvement	202
6.21	RIT in Older Patients	202
6.22	RIT in Hodgkin's Disease	203
6.23	Viral Infections After RIT	203
6.24	Radiation Therapy After RIT	203
6.25	Summary	203
6.26	Future Directions	204
	References	205

7. Radioimmunotherapy of Acute Myeloid Leukemia 219

Todd L. Rosenblat and Joseph G. Jurcic

7.1	Introduction	219
7.2	Antigenic Targets	220
7.3	Radionuclide Selection	220
7.4	Radiolabeling	222
7.5	Pharmacokinetics and Dosimetry	225
7.5.1	Pretargeted Approaches	226

7.6	RIT with β -Particle Emitters	227
7.6.1	^{131}I -M195 and ^{131}I -Lintuzumab	227
7.6.2	^{90}Y -Lintuzumab	230
7.6.3	^{131}I -Labeled p67	230
7.6.4	^{131}I -Labeled BC8	230
7.6.5	^{188}Re -Anti-CD66	231
7.7	RIT with α -Particle Emitters	232
7.7.1	Preclinical Studies	232
7.7.2	^{213}Bi -Lintuzumab	232
7.7.3	^{225}Ac -Lintuzumab	233
7.8	Summary	234
	References	234
8.	Pretargeted Radioimmunotherapy of Cancer	241
	<i>Robert M. Sharkey and David G. Goldenberg</i>	
8.1	Introduction	241
8.2	The Challenge of Improving Tumor/Nontumor Ratios	243
8.3	Pretargeting: Uncoupling the Antibody–Radionuclide Conjugate	246
8.3.1	Bispecific Antibodies and Radiolabeled Haptens	246
8.3.2	Pretargeting: Development of Avidin/Streptavidin and Radiolabeled Biotin	250
8.3.3	Pretargeting with Oligonucleotide/Complementary Oligonucleotide Immunoconjugates	251
8.3.4	Core Principles Associated with Pretargeting Procedures	252
8.4	Clinical Studies of Pretargeting	260
8.4.1	“Two-Step” Pretargeting with Streptavidin Immunoconjugates and ^{90}Y -Biotin	260
8.4.2	“Three-Step” Pretargeting with Streptavidin Immunoconjugates and ^{90}Y -Biotin	263
8.4.3	Bispecific Antibody- ^{131}I -Hapten-Peptide	266
8.5	Prospects for Combination Therapies	268
8.6	Future Innovations	270
8.7	Conclusions	274
	References	274
9.	Targeted Auger Electron Radiotherapy of Malignancies	289
	<i>Raymond M. Reilly and Amin Kassis</i>	
9.1	Introduction	289
9.2	Radiobiological Effects of Auger Electrons	290
9.2.1	Relative Biological Effectiveness	291

9.2.2	DNA Damage	292
9.2.3	Bystander Effects	293
9.3	Selection of an Auger Electron-Emitting Radionuclide	294
9.4	Microdosimetry	296
9.4.1	The “Cross-Dose” Contribution	298
9.5	Molecular Targets for Auger Electron Radiotherapy of Cancer	299
9.5.1	DNA Synthesis Pathways as a Target	299
9.5.2	Somatostatin Receptors	300
9.5.3	Epidermal Growth Factor Receptors	310
9.5.4	Targeting HER2 Receptors	318
9.5.5	Other Antigens/Receptors in Solid Tumors	321
9.5.6	Cell-Surface Epitopes in Lymphomas	324
9.5.7	Targeting CD33 Epitopes in Acute Myeloid Leukemia	327
9.6	Small-Molecule Auger Electron Radiotherapy	329
9.6.1	Radiolabeled Estradiol Analogues	329
9.6.2	Radiolabeled mIBG Analogues	330
9.6.3	DNA Intercalating Agents	331
9.7	Summary and Conclusions	332
	Acknowledgments	333
	References	333
10.	Viral Introduction of Receptors for Targeted Radiotherapy	349
	<i>Kathryn Ottolino-Perry and Judith Andrea McCart</i>	
10.1	Introduction	349
10.2	Viral Vectors	352
10.2.1	Nonreplicating Viruses	352
10.2.2	Replicating Viruses: Mechanism of Tumor Cell Specificity	352
10.3	Virally Delivered Receptors	354
10.3.1	Somatostatin Receptor	354
10.3.2	Sodium Iodide Symporter	363
10.3.3	Other Receptors	375
10.4	Combined Oncolytic and Targeted Radiotherapy	381
10.5	Summary	382
	References	382
11.	Preclinical Cell and Tumor Models for Evaluating Radiopharmaceuticals in Oncology	397
	<i>Ann F. Chambers, Eva A. Turley, John Lewis, and Leonard G. Luyt</i>	
11.1	Introduction	397
11.2	Traditional Approaches to Preclinical Evaluation of Radiotherapeutics	399

11.3	Models of Cancer	402
11.3.1	Cancer as a Complex Collection of Neoplastic Diseases	403
11.3.2	Human Breast Cancer Cell Culture Models	404
11.3.3	Animal Models	405
11.4	Animal Models for Evaluating Radiopharmaceuticals: Unresolved Issues and Challenges for Translation	407
	References	410
12.	Radiation Biology of Targeted Radiotherapy	419
	<i>David Murray and Michael Weinfeld</i>	
12.1	Introduction	419
12.2	Targeted Radionuclide Therapy: Concepts	420
12.3	Radiation-Induced DNA Damage	421
12.4	Cellular DNA Damage Surveillance–Response Networks	422
12.5	Mammalian DNA-Repair Pathways	425
12.5.1	The BER Pathway	426
12.5.2	DSB-Repair Pathways	427
12.6	Modes of Cell Death Following Radiation Exposure	428
12.6.1	Apoptosis	428
12.6.2	Necrosis	429
12.6.3	Accelerated Senescence	430
12.6.4	Autophagy	430
12.6.5	Mitotic Catastrophe	430
12.7	Conventional Models for Cell Survival Curves, Fractionation, and Dose-Rate Effects	431
12.8	Low-Dose Hyperradiosensitivity-Increased Radioresistance	433
12.8.1	Phenomenology of HRS-IRR	433
12.8.2	Mechanistic Basis of HRS-IRR	435
12.8.3	Ultrafractionation	445
12.9	Inverse Dose-Rate Effects	447
12.10	Cross fire	451
12.11	The Radiobiological Bystander Effect	452
12.12	The Adaptive Response	453
12.13	A Possible Contribution from Low-Dose Radiobiological Mechanisms to TRT Tumor Responses?	455
12.14	Use of Radionuclides Other Than β -Particle Emitters	456
12.15	Role of Tumor Hypoxia and Fractionation Effects	457
12.16	Summary and Future Directions	458
	Acknowledgments	458
	References	458

13. Dosimetry for Targeted Radiotherapy	473
<i>Sui Shen and John B. Fiveash</i>	
13.1 Introduction	473
13.2 Basic Concepts of MIRD Dosimetry	475
13.2.1 MIRD Equations	475
13.2.2 Cumulated Radioactivity and Residence Time	476
13.2.3 Radionuclide Data	476
13.2.4 Penetrating and Nonpenetrating Radiation and the Absorbed Fraction	477
13.3 Preclinical Dosimetry	477
13.3.1 Data Collection	477
13.3.2 Preclinical Macrodosimetry	479
13.3.3 Nonuniform Distribution and Multicellular Dosimetry	480
13.4 Clinical Dosimetry Methods	481
13.4.1 Planar Conjugate View Imaging	481
13.4.2 Accounting for Scatter Effects in SPECT and Planar Quantification	483
13.4.3 3D CT/Spect/Planar Hybrid Methods	485
13.4.4 3D PET	487
13.5 Dosimetry for Dose-Limiting Organs and Tumors	487
13.5.1 Marrow Dosimetry	488
13.5.2 Other Normal Organ Toxicity	491
13.5.3 Tumor Dosimetry	492
13.6 Conclusions	495
References	496
14. The Bystander Effect in Targeted Radiotherapy	507
<i>Carmel Mothersill and Colin Seymour</i>	
14.1 Introduction	507
14.2 Historical Review of Bystander Effects in the Context of Radiation Damage to Cells	508
14.3 New Knowledge and the Pillars of the Developing New Paradigm	509
14.3.1 Key Points and Historical Time Line	510
14.4 Concept of Hierarchical Levels of Assessment of Targeted Radiation Effects	513
14.5 The New Meaning of the LNT Model	513
14.5.1 Relating Dose to Effect, Harm, and Risk	514
14.6 Techniques for Studying Bystander Effects	514
14.6.1 Emerging Biomarkers of Nontargeted Radiation Effects	514
14.7 Bystander Phenomena in Targeted and Conventional Radiotherapy	515

14.8. Mechanisms Underlying Bystander Effects and Detection Techniques	518
14.9. The Future	520
References	521
15. The Role of Molecular Imaging in Evaluating Tumor Response to Targeted Radiotherapy	527
<i>Norbert Avril</i>	
15.1 Introduction	527
15.2 Positron Emission Tomography	528
15.2.1 Background and Basic Principles	528
15.2.2 PET Radiotracers	529
15.2.3 PET and PET/CT Imaging of Biologic Features of Cancer	530
15.3 Response to Cancer Treatment Including Targeted Radiotherapy	533
15.3.1 Conventional Methods Used to Evaluate Treatment Response	533
15.3.2 Molecular Imaging for Monitoring Treatment Response	534
References	539
16. The Economic Attractiveness of Targeted Radiotherapy: Value for Money?	543
<i>Jeffrey S. Hoch</i>	
16.1 Introduction	543
16.2 Applying Economics in Theory	544
16.2.1 A Simple Constrained Optimization Problem	545
16.3 Applying Economics in Practice	552
16.3.1 How are Economic Evaluations Used to Make Decisions in Practice?	552
16.3.2 Challenges and Concerns	554
16.3.3 How Does the Model Affect the Results?	557
16.4 The Economic Attractiveness of Targeted Radiotherapy: the Case of ⁹⁰ Y-Ibritumomab Tiuxetan (Zevalin)	559
16.4.1 What has been Published about the Cost-Effectiveness of Zevalin?	559
16.4.2 Why the Scottish Medicines Consortium Said “No” (Again)	563
16.5 Conclusions	564
References	565

17. Selected Regulatory Elements in the Development of Protein and Peptide Targeted Radiotherapeutic Agents	571
<i>Thomas R. Sykes and Connie J. Sykes</i>	
17.1 Introduction	571
17.2 Administrative and Organizational Elements	573
17.3 Pharmaceutical Quality Elements	575
17.3.1 Tumor Targeting Component	577
17.3.2 Radionuclide Binding Component	583
17.3.3 Radionuclide Component	585
17.3.4 Drug Product	587
17.4 Nonclinical Study Elements	593
17.4.1 (Radio)pharmacology Studies	595
17.4.2 Safety Pharmacology Studies	597
17.4.3 Toxicology Studies	598
17.5 Clinical Study Elements	601
17.5.1 Pre-Phase 1 and Exploratory Phase 1 Clinical Investigations	602
17.5.2 Traditional Phase 1 to Phase 3 Clinical Trials	605
17.6 Summary	607
Dedication	608
References	608
Index	613

PREFACE

In June 2009 at the 56th annual meeting of the Society of Nuclear Medicine in Toronto, the “Image of the Year” was selected by Dr. Henry N. Wagner Jr. from Johns Hopkins University [Figure 1(1)]. This image illustrated the high sensitivity of positron emission tomography (PET) with ^{18}F -2-fluorodeoxyglucose (^{18}F -FDG) to reveal complete responses as early as 3 months post-treatment with ^{90}Y -ibritumomab tiuxetan (Zevalin) or ^{131}I -tositumomab (Bexxar) in patients with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL) (2). These two radioimmunotherapeutics are the first to be approved by regulatory authorities for treating cancer. By highlighting this image, Dr. Wagner not only recognized the great advances that have been made over the past three decades in radioimmunotherapy (RIT) of NHL (3) but also pointed the way toward how this approach could be combined with achievements in imaging (4) to help further advance the field of molecularly targeted radiotherapy.

There remain many challenges to be overcome, however, particularly to extend the impressive results seen in NHL to RIT of the more prevalent solid tumors (3). RIT and peptide-directed radiotherapy (PDRT) of solid tumors have been restricted by low tumor uptake, dose-limiting toxicity to normal tissues including the bone marrow, and an intrinsically greater radioresistance (3). Nonetheless, the success of RIT of NHL has proven that this approach is scientifically sound, translatable to clinical practice, and feasible. Moreover, there has recently been progress in the treatment of solid tumors with targeted radiotherapeutics, particularly using innovative pretargeting techniques and in the setting of minimal residual disease (3).

My goal in assembling this book was to provide a single resource that would constitute an expert discussion of the diverse aspects of the field of monoclonal antibody and peptide-targeted radiotherapy of cancer. The chapters cover a wide range of topics including the optimization of design of biomolecules and their radiochemistry, cell and animal models for preclinical evaluation, important discoveries from key clinical trials of their effectiveness for the treatment of malignancies, an understanding of their radiation biology and dosimetry, considerations in their regulatory approval, and health economics issues that need to be appreciated to ultimately see their widespread use in clinical oncology. New emerging areas such as the role of molecular imaging in evaluating the response and resistance to targeted radiotherapy, a discussion of the bystander effect that may enhance its effectiveness, and the potential of combining cytolytic virus therapy with targeted radiotherapy have also been included.

Many of the chapters were authored by internationally renowned experts who have made seminal discoveries in the field and by others who are leaders in areas that will be important to its future. I am grateful to all authors for their excellent contributions and

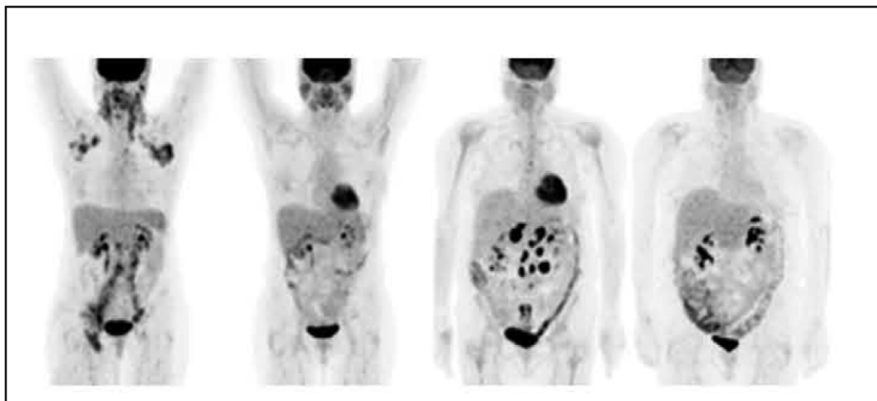


FIGURE 1 Whole-body PET scans using ^{18}F -2-fluoro-deoxyglucose demonstrating complete response in two patients receiving ^{131}I -tositumomab (Bexxar; left two images showing pre- and post-treatment) or ^{90}Y -ibritumomab tiuxetan (Zevalin; right two images showing pre- and post-treatment). (Reprinted with permission from Reference 1.)

thank them all for their patience as this book emerged. I am also indebted to my wife, Anita who tolerated the workload and spared some of the precious time that we have to spend together to accomplish this task. I believe that the book not only celebrates the substantial achievements of mAb and peptide-targeted radiotherapy of cancer but also acknowledges its limitations and failures—as Henry Ford said, “Failure is simply an opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.” A great deal has certainly been learned, approaches are now more informed and elegant, and it is expected that this new knowledge will build on the pioneering discoveries in targeted radiotherapy of NHL that have proven so successful as aptly presented in Dr. Wagner’s selection of the Image of the Year. I hope that this book will provide the impetus for discussion, encourage continued contributions to the advancement of the field, and stimulate the imagination of those who would aspire to set its future.

RAYMOND M. REILLY

*Toronto, Ontario, Canada
January 2010*

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Antibody Engineering: Optimizing the Delivery Vehicle

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The progression of monoclonal antibodies (MAbs) for radioimmunotherapy (RIT) has been driven by the need to solve a series of problems. As variants of antibodies have been developed and evaluated in preclinical studies, opportunities and limitations have become evident. Recent advances in DNA technology have led to the ability to tailor and manipulate the immunoglobulin (Ig) molecule for specific functions and *in vivo* properties. This chapter discusses the use of monoclonal antibodies for radiotherapy with an emphasis on the problems that have been encountered and the subsequent solutions.

The exploration of monoclonal antibodies as vehicles for the delivery of radio-nuclides for therapy has been ongoing for almost 50 years (1). In 1948, Pressman and Keighley reported the first *in vivo* use of a radiolabeled antibody for imaging (2). Ten years later, the first report of radiolabeled tumor-specific antibodies was utilized for radioimmunodiagnosis, and in 1960, radiolabeled antibodies were used to selectively deliver a therapeutic dose of radiation to tumor tissue (1, 3). Even at these early stages, investigators were quick to realize the obstacles associated with utilizing antibodies for radioimmunotherapy. Radiation doses delivered to tumors in patients were too low to have significant effects on tumor growth, and the prolonged retention of the radiolabeled antibodies in the blood led to toxicity complications (4). The inherent heterogeneity in specificity and affinity of polyclonal antibodies resulted in *in vivo* variability. The advent of hybridoma technology and the ability to generate mono-specific, monoclonal antibodies produced a resurgence in the use of antibodies as “magic bullets” (5, 6). In the 1980s, the literature exploded with reports of radiolabeled MAbs being evaluated in the clinical setting, initially in radioimmunodiagnostic applications, confirming that MAbs against tumor-associated antigens could target

tumors in patients. Subsequently, RIT clinical trials were initiated to deliver systemically administered radiation to tumors with a specificity that would spare normal tissues from damage (7). This optimistic viewpoint was quickly tempered by the realization of the obstacles inherent to the use of a biological reagent, especially one of xenogeneic origin.

The preclinical and clinical RIT trials exposed the major constraints to the successful clinical use of radiolabeled MAbs: (i) development of human anti-murine immunoglobulin antibodies (HAMA); (ii) inadequate (low) therapeutic levels of radiation doses delivered to tumor lesions; (iii) slow clearance of the radiolabeled MAbs (radioimmunoconjugates) from the blood compartment; (iv) low MAb affinity and avidity; (v) trafficking to, or targeting of, the radioimmunoconjugates to normal organs; and (vi) insufficient penetration of tumor tissue (8, 9). In addition, there were toxicities associated with conjugated radionuclides when the radioimmunoconjugates were metabolized or when the radionuclide dissociated from the immunoconjugate (9). With these problems in mind, a primary focus has been to optimize RIT by manipulating the MAb molecule. As technology permitted, this was initially accomplished with chemical or biochemical techniques to generate a variety of immunoglobulin forms but is now predominated by genetic engineering.

1.2 INTACT MURINE MONOCLONAL ANTIBODIES

In May 2008, a perspective on MAbs by Reichert and Valge-Archer (10) reported that in the periods 1980–1989, 1990–1999, and 2000–2005, 37, 25, and 8 murine MAbs, respectively, were evaluated in the clinic as cancer therapeutics. During this entire 25-year period, radiolabeled MAbs comprised 33% of the murine MAbs (10). To date, only two radiolabeled murine (*mu*) MAbs, both targeting CD20, have received FDA approval. Zevalin, ^{90}Y -rituxan (ibritumomab-tiuxetan), was approved in 2002 and is indicated for relapsed or refractory low-grade follicular transformed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL). The overall response rate of patients is reported to be 80%; 46% for those with rituximab refractory disease (11). Bexxar (^{131}I -tositumomab) was approved in 2003 for the treatment of non-Hodgkin's B-cell lymphoma in rituximab refractory patients (see Chapter 6). Objective responses following ^{131}I -tositumomab therapy have ranged from 54% to 71% in patients who have undergone previous therapies while for newly diagnosed patients the response rates are 97% with 63% of those experiencing a complete response (12).

In clinical trials using *mu*MAbs for RIT of solid tumors, approximately 73% (ranging from 16% to 100%) of the patients developed HAMA following a single infusion of MAb (13). In contrast, only about 42% of the patients in RIT trials for treatment of hematologic malignancies develop HAMA. When multiple doses of a radioimmunoconjugate have been administered, the amount of MAb that effectively targets tumor tissue is usually compromised after the second administration (13). In general, the human antibody response, especially at earlier time points, is directed against the Fc portion of the MAb molecule (Fig. 1.1). With the passage of time and particularly after repeated infusions, the specificity of the human antibody response

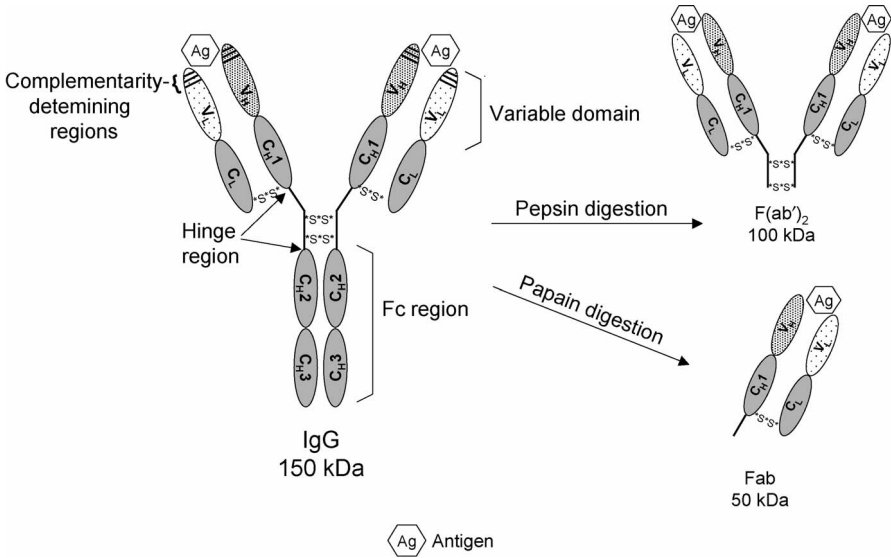


FIGURE 1.1 Schematic of an immunoglobulin structure. Enzymatic digestion of the intact IgG molecule yields $F(ab')_2$ and Fab fragments.

matures and becomes increasingly specific for the variable region of the MAb (13). In some instances, anti-variable region antibodies develop after a single infusion of the MAb (13, 14). This response has the potential of directly inhibiting the ability of the injected MAb from interacting with the targeted tumor (14). As with any therapeutic regimen, for RIT to be effective, multiple treatment cycles will be necessary. Immunomodulatory drugs such as deoxyspergualin, cyclosporin A, or cyclophosphamide have been evaluated as a means of minimizing or suppressing a patient's immune response during RIT (15).

To address these challenges of MAb-directed therapy, several strategies have been employed that center around modifying the MAb molecule. These alterations include reduction in the size of the MAb molecule, deglycosylation, or the addition of side groups. Reduction in size of the MAb molecule has been accomplished through methods such as enzymatic cleavage or genetic engineering (16–18). Digestion of an antibody with pepsin removes the Fc region of the heavy chain on the carboxyl terminus of cysteamine producing $F(ab')_2$ fragments that retain two antigen binding sites and have a molecular weight of ~ 100 kDa (Fig. 1.1). Fab fragments are generated by digestion with papain, an enzyme with a specificity for the amino group of cysteines. In this case, the disulfide bridges between the heavy chains are removed with the Fc region, which results in a molecule ($M_r \sim 50$ kDa) with one antigen binding site. Fab' fragments are produced through reduction and alkylation of $F(ab')_2$, which also yields a MAb molecule with a single antigen binding site and an M_r of ~ 50 kDa (16–18). Comparisons of intact MAbs and $F(ab')_2$ fragments (Fig. 1.1) in RIT clinical trials have demonstrated that the $F(ab')_2$ fragments do have a shorter serum half-life than intact MAbs. Patient antibody responses against $F(ab')_2$ fragments

appear to occur with lower frequency after a single administration of the radioimmunoconjugate. Furthermore, some objective responses to treatment with a radiolabeled $F(ab')_2$ fragment have been observed (19, 20). Autoradiographic studies of radiolabeled MAbs administered to athymic mice bearing human tumor xenografts have illustrated the ability of Fab' and $F(ab')_2$ fragments to penetrate tumor tissue with greater efficiency than intact MAbs (20, 21). The pharmacokinetics of Fab or Fab' fragments is even more rapid than $F(ab')_2$ fragments ($t_{1/2\alpha} \sim 10$ min, $t_{1/2\beta} \sim 1.5$ h for Fab' fragments versus $t_{1/2\alpha} \sim 30$ min, $t_{1/2\beta} \sim 12$ h for $F(ab')_2$ fragments) (22). In general, Fab and Fab' fragments have proven to be less immunogenic than intact MAbs (23). Their greatest disadvantage for RIT applications is their high and persistent renal localization, which appears to be a function of molecular size (22), which greatly increases the risk for renal toxicity. The degree to which the radiolabel is retained in the kidneys depends on the radionuclide and the radiolabeling chemistry (see Chapter 2). Radioiodinated MAbs are rapidly dehalogenated and the radioiodine excreted via the kidneys or into the stomach and intestines. Free radioiodine is trapped in the thyroid gland if there is inadequate blocking with stable iodine. Chelated radiometallonucleides, that is, ^{111}In , ^{90}Y , and ^{177}Lu , are not as readily eliminated from normal tissues when the radioimmunoconjugate is metabolized (24). The retention of radiometals in the kidneys is due to the reabsorption of antibody fragments after their glomerular filtration followed by degradation of the radioimmunoconjugates with trapping of radioactive metabolites within the renal tubular cells (22, 24, 25). Although they are readily eliminated from the body, radioiodines may also pose a concern for toxicity to renal tissue, depending on the dose of radioactivity administered. An effective means of enhancing renal excretion of the radioimmunoconjugates is the blocking of its reabsorption from the luminal fluid in the proximal tubules by administering basic amino acids such as lysine or arginine, prior to or with the radiolabeled MAb fragment (26, 27).

Fragments of MAb that retain immunoreactivity, however, are often difficult to generate (22). As mentioned, they are prepared by proteolytic digestion of intact MAb using enzymes, a procedure that must be optimized for each MAb and usually requires threefold or more MAbs to obtain the final desired quantity of the fragment. The process is inefficient and costly when producing the amounts necessitated by a RIT clinical trial.

1.3 RECOMBINANT IMMUNOGLOBULIN MOLECULES

Antibodies consist of four polypeptide chains, two heavy and two light chains, connected by disulfide bonds; the heavy chains are glycosylated (Fig. 1.1). Several criteria must be met to generate and produce genetically engineered antibodies. First, a host cell is needed that would produce and secrete a properly assembled functional antibody molecule with the appropriate carbohydrate side chains. Second, the DNA must be introduced into the recipient cell in an efficient manner. Finally, expression vectors must be available that permit the expression of the introduced genes as well as the isolation of the cells expressing the introduced antibody genes (28). The vectors