Cell Junctions

Adhesion, Development, and Disease

Edited by Susan E. LaFlamme and Andrew Kowalczyk



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Cover

Cell layers of the epidermis: The epidermis connects to the underlying dermis via a specialized basement membrane (orange layer). Desmosomes (red dots) and hemidesmosomes (blue dots) serve as anchorage points for cytokeratin intermediate filaments (green lines) to the plasma membrane. (Courtesy of Peter J. Koch and Ansgar Schmidt, see Chapter 12) All books published by Wiley-VCH are carefully produced. Nevertheless, authors, editors, and publisher do not warrant the information contained in these books, including this book, to be free of errors. Readers are advised to keep in mind that statements, data, illustrations, procedural details or other items may inadvertently be inaccurate.

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Preface

The evolutionary appearance of multicellular organisms is coincident with the emergence of molecular mechanisms that allow cells to contact their neighbors and to receive positional cues essential for the development of complex tissue architecture and function. Cells interact with one another and with the extracellular matrix (ECM) through a variety of mechanisms. Often, large macromolecular complexes assemble at sites of contact in order to perform specific functions, including adhesion, communication, and to form barriers between tissue compartments. These complex molecular assemblies - or "cell junctions" - are now thought of as cellular organelles that not only mediate physical interactions, but also couple cell contact to signaling pathways that influence cell shape, cell-cycle progression, and gene expression. The manifestation of these various functions becomes apparent in model organisms in which genes encoding cell junction proteins have been ablated, and in the growing list of human disorders that are now known to result from gene mutations in junction components. Indeed, the phenotypes and clinical presentations of these genetic and acquired disorders are impressive in both scope and variety.

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The chapters of this book cover a wide range of cell-cell and cell-matrix interactions. The first section of the book focuses on cell-matrix interactions, including focal adhesions and hemidesmosomes. Embedded within these chapters are discussions of integrin activation and cytoskeletal interactions, as well as signaling mediated by integrins and their cytoplasmic binding partners. The importance of the physical three-dimensional structure of the ECM in regulating cell behavior is underscored. The second section of the book concentrates on cell-cell interactions, including anchoring junctions such as adherens junctions and desmosomes, which utilize cadherins as the major adhesive molecules. Tight junctions and gap junctions are also highlighted, with unique insights provided into the roles of these proteins in complex epithelia and disease pathogenesis. Several chapters in the volume converge on the regulation of cell junction dynamics, including the turnover of membrane proteins, the exchange of components into and out of junctions, and the interface between membrane-trafficking pathways and adhesion receptors. The book concludes with a chapter on how cell-cell and cell-matrix interactions are coordinated during complex morphogenic processes.

VI Preface

We hope that the assembly of these chapters-all in one bound volume and authored by some of the world's leading investigators-provides a resource that is valuable to the new student of cell junctions, to experienced scientists in the field, and to those educators who require a comprehensive assembly of overviews in the discipline of cell contact and adhesion. We are enormously grateful to the authors of each chapter for their outstanding contributions. It is our hope that this book provides not only a resource and compilation of existing knowledge and insight, but also a foundation for future studies designed to understand how cell contact and adhesion influence development and human disease.

Susan E. LaFlamme Albany Medical College Albany, NY USA January 2008 Andrew Kowalczyk Emory University Atlanta, GA USA

Contents

Preface V List of Contributors XIII

Part One Cell-Matrix Junctions

1	The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling 3	
1 1	Asoka Banno ana Mark H. Ginsberg	
1.1	General Overview 3	
1.1.1	Functions 4	
1.1.2	Functions 4	
1.2	Definition 5	
1.2.1	Definition 5	
1.2.1.1	Platelets o	
1.2.1.2	Leukocytes 6	
1.2.2	Structural Basis of Activation 6	
1.2.2.1	Extracentular Rearrangements /	
1.2.2.2	Iransmembrane Propagation /	
1.2.2.3	Intracellular Rearrangements 8	
1.2.2.4	Interactions at the Integrin Cytoplasmic Domains 9	
1.2.3	Regulation of Integrin Activation 13	
1.2.4	Future Research Directions 16	
	References 18	
2	Integrin Signaling Through Focal Adhesion Kinase 25 Youngdong Yoo and Jun-Lin Guan	
2.1	Introduction 25	
2.2	Structure of FAK 26	
2.3	Regulation of FAK Activity 28	
2.3.1	Activation of FAK 28	
2.3.2	Inhibition of FAK Activity 30	
2.4	Regulation of Cellular Functions by FAK Signaling Pathways	30
2.4.1	Cell Adhesion and Spreading 31	
2.4.2	Cell Migration and Invasion 32	

VIII Contents

2.4.3 2.5	Cell Survival and Proliferation 36 Recent Analysis of FAK Functions <i>In Vivo</i> 37
2.6	Conclusions 39
	Acknowledgment 39
	References 39
3	The Paxillin Family and Tissue Remodeling 47
	David A. Tumbarello and Christopher E. Turner
3.1	Focal Adhesions and the Paxillin Superfamily 47
3.1.1	Focal Adhesions 47
3.1.2	The Paxillin Superfamily 49
3.1.3	Structure of Paxillin 50
3.1.4	Structure of Hic-5 51
3.2	The Paxillin Superfamily and Tissue Remodeling 52
3.2.1	Epithelial–Mesenchymal Transformation 52
3.2.2	Integrin-Mediated Signaling and EMT 53
3.2.3	Paxillins α and δ in EMT 56
3.2.4	Hic-5 and EMT 58
	References 60
4	Adhesion Dynamics in Motile Cells 71
	Christa L. Cortesio, Keefe T. Chan, and Anna Huttenlocher
4.1	Introduction 71
4.2	Focal Adhesion Dynamics 72
4.2.1	Focal Adhesion Composition 73
4.2.2	Mechanisms of Focal Adhesion Assembly 74
4.2.2.1	Rho GTPases 75
4.2.2.2	Talin and Phosphoinositides 75
4.2.3	Mechanisms of Focal Adhesion Disassembly 75
4.2.3.1	Calpain 76
4.2.3.2	Tyrosine Phosphorylation and Contractile Machinery 76
4.3	Podosome and Invadopodia Dynamics 76
4.3.1	Podosome and Invadopodia Architecture 77
4.3.2	Molecular Mechanisms of PTA Assembly 78
4.3.2.1	Actin Regulatory Proteins 78
4.3.2.2	Rho GTPases 79
4.3.2.3	Signaling Molecules 79
4.3.3	Molecular Mechanisms of PTA Disassembly 80
4.4	Summary 80
	Acknowledgments 81
	Activities 01
5	Integrin Trafficking 89
	Susan E. LaFlamme, Feng Shi, and Jane Sottile
5.1	Introduction 89

- 5.2 Historical Perspective 89
- 5.3 Clathrin versus Lipid Rafts 90
- 5.4 Internalization of Occupied versus Unoccupied Integrins 91
- 5.5 Regulation of Integrin Trafficking 92
- 5.6 The Role of Integrin Cytoplasmic Domains 94
- 5.7 Integrin-Dependent Endocytosis of Microbial Pathogens 95
- Regulation of Cell Adhesion and Migration by Integrin Trafficking 96
- 5.9 The Regulation of Integrin Trafficking by Cell Adhesion 96
- 5.10 Integrin Trafficking and ECM Remodeling 98
- 5.11 Conclusions 100 Acknowledgments 101 References 101
- 6 Hemidesmosomes and their Components: Adhesion versus Signaling in Health and Disease 109
 - Kristina Kligys, Kevin Hamill, and Jonathan C. R. Jones
- 6.1 Introduction 109
- 6.2 The Structural Components of the Hemidesmosome 110
- 6.2.1 The Plaque Proteins 110
- 6.2.1.1 Plectin 110
- 6.2.1.2 BP230 112
- 6.2.2 Membrane Elements 112
- 6.2.2.1 α6β4 Integrin *112*
- 6.2.2.2 BP180 114
- 6.2.2.3 CD151 115
- 6.3 Laminin-332 115
- 6.4 Hemidesmosome Assembly and Disassembly 116
- 6.5 Hemidesmosomes and Disease 118
- 6.5.1 Inherited Skin Diseases Involving Hemidesmosome Proteins 118
- 6.5.1.1 Disease Involving α6β4 Integrin 118
- 6.5.1.2 Disease Involving Plectin 119
- 6.5.1.3 Disease Involving BP180 119
- 6.5.1.4 Disease Involving CD151 120
- 6.5.1.5 Disease Involving Laminin-332 120
- 6.5.2 Autoimmmune Diseases Associated with Hemidesmosomes 121
- 6.5.2.1 BP and Related Diseases 121
- 6.5.2.2 Cicatricial Pemphigoid 122
- 6.5.2.3 Autoimmune Diseases Involving α6β4 Integrin 122
- 6.6 α6β4 Integrin and Laminin-332 Expression in Cancer 123
- 6.7 Signaling by the α6β4 Integrin in Pathological States and Wound Healing *123*
- 6.8 Laminin-332, α6β4 Integrin and Migration 125
- 6.9 Conclusions 126 References 126

X Contents

7	Cell Matrix Adhesion in Three Dimensions 135
71	Patricia J. Keely
7.1	Model 3D Matrices for Investigations of Cell Rehavior 136
7.2	Matrices Inf Investigations of Cell Denavior 130
72.1	Collagen Cels 136
723	Fibrin Gels 138
724	Cell-Derived Fibronectin-Based Matrices 138
7.2.5	Engineered 3D Matrices and Microfluidic Chambers 138
7.3	Cell Behavior and Adhesive Structures Differ between 3D and 2D
,	Matrices 139
7.4	"Compliancy" or Elastic Modulus Determines Cellular Response to
	ECMs 140
7.4.1	Cellular Contractility and the Response to Matrix Compliance 141
7.4.2	Rho Regulates the Cytoskeleton and Contractility 141
7.4.3	Rho/ROCK, Contractility, and Focal Adhesion Formation 142
7.4.4	Focal Adhesions as Transducers of Biophysical Signals 143
7.5	A Model for Cellular Response to 3D Matrices Varying in
	Compliance 144
	Acknowledgments 146
	References 146
	Part Two Cell-Cell Junctions
0	Armadilla Papast Proteins at Enithelial Adharans Junstians 152
0	Armadillo Repeat Proteins at Epithelial Adherens Junctions 155
81	Introduction 153
8.2	B-Catenin 156
83	Plakoglobin 158
8.4	n120-Catenin 159
8.5	The Role of Armadillo Repeat Proteins and AIs in Cancer 163
8.6	Conclusions 165
010	References 165
9	Signaling To and Through The Endothelial Adherens Junction 169
	Deana M. Ferreri and Peter A. Vincent
9.1	Introduction 169
9.2	Cadherins 170
9.2.1	VE-Cadherin Extracellular Domain 173
9.2.2	Interaction of Cadherin Cytoplasmic Domain and Catenins 174
9.2.2.1	VE-Cadherin Juxtamembrane Region and p120 174
9.2.2.2	VE-Cadherin Catenin Binding Domain 1/6
9.5 0.2.1	Transmission and Junction Assembly/Disassembly 1/9
9.3.1	I yrosine Phosphorylation of Endothelial AJ Proteins 180
9.3.Z	Semile (Theorem and Junction According 182
9.4	Sman G1rases and Junction Assembly 183

- 9.4.1 Rho GTPases 183
- 9.4.2 Rap1 GTPase 186
- 9.5 Conclusions 187 References 187

10 Gap Junctions: Connexin Functions and Roles in Human Disease 197 Michael Koval

- 10.1 Introduction 197
- 10.2 Connexin Structure and Assembly 198
- 10.3 Interactions Between Different Connexins 199
- 10.4 Connexin Binding Proteins and Phosphorylation 201
- 10.5 Channel Permeability and Signaling 202
- 10.6 Connexins in Human Disease 203
- 10.7 Role of Connexins in Vessel Inflammation and Atherosclerosis 206
- 10.8 Conclusions 207 References 208

11 Tight Junctions in Simple and Stratified Epithelium 217

- Cara J. Gottardi and Carien M. Niessen
- 11.1 Introduction 217
- 11.2 Ultrastructure of Tight Junctions 218
- 11.3 Tight Junctions and Epithelial Barrier Function 219
- 11.3.1 Transmembrane Components 219
- 11.3.2 Scaffolding Proteins 221
- 11.3.3 Actin and Related Cytoskeleton Proteins 221
- 11.4 Regulation of Tight Junction Barrier Function 222
- 11.5 Tight Junctions and Epithelial Polarity 222
- 11.5.1 Par3/Par6/aPKC Complex 223
- 11.5.2 Crbs/Patj/Pals 223
- 11.5.3 Fence Function 224
- 11.6 Signaling from Tight Junctions: Coupling Junction Maturation to Transcription-Mediated Differentiation 225
- 11.7 Tight Junctions in Stratifying Epithelia 225
- 11.8 Tight Junctions and Disease 227
- 11.9 Concluding Remarks 228 Acknowledgments 229 References 229

12 Desmosomes in Development and Disease 235

Ansgar Schmidt and Peter J. Koch

- 12.1 Introduction 235
- 12.2 Molecular Composition of Desmosomes, Disease Associations, and Animal Models 236
- 12.2.1 Desmosomal Cadherins 236
- 12.2.2 Desmoplakin 240
- 12.3 Plakoglobin 240

XII Contents

I		
ĺ	12.4	Plakophilins 242
	12.5	Accessory Desmosomal Proteins 243
	12.6	Desmosomal Proteins in Embryonic Development 243
	12.7	Concluding Remarks 244
		Acknowledgments 245
		References 245
	13	Cadherin Trafficking and Junction Dynamics 251
		Christine M. Chiasson and Andrew P. Kowalczyk
	13.1	Introduction 251
	13.2	Exocytosis and Polarized Sorting of Adherens Junction Proteins 252
	13.3	Endocytosis of Adherens Junction Proteins 255
	13.4	Catenin Regulation of Cadherin Endocytosis 258
	13.5	Rho GTPase Regulation of Cadherin Endocytosis 261
	13.6	Co-Regulation of Cadherin and Receptor Tyrosine Kinase Function by
		Endocytosis 262
	13.7	Conclusions 264
		Acknowledgments 266
		References 266
		Part Three Cell–Matrix and Cell–Cell Crosstalk
	14	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273
	14	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio
	14 14.1	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273
	14 14.1 14.1.1	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 <i>C. Michael DiPersio</i> Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275
	14 .1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 <i>C. Michael DiPersio</i> Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278
	14 .1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.3 14.2.4	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282
	14 .1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.2	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3 14.2.5.4	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283 The Epidermis as a Model for Investigating Cadherin–Integrin
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3 14.2.5.4	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283 The Epidermis as a Model for Investigating Cadherin–Integrin Crosstalk 285
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3 14.2.5.4 14.3	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283 The Epidermis as a Model for Investigating Cadherin–Integrin Crosstalk 285 Future Prospects 286
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3 14.2.5.4 14.3	Crosstalk Between Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell–Cell and Cell–Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin–Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin–Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283 The Epidermis as a Model for Investigating Cadherin–Integrin Crosstalk 285 Future Prospects 286 Acknowledgments 287
	14 14.1 14.1.1 14.1.2 14.2 14.2.1 14.2.2 14.2.3 14.2.4 14.2.5 14.2.5.1 14.2.5.2 14.2.5.3 14.2.5.4 14.3	Crosstalk Between Cell-Cell and Cell-Matrix Adhesion 273 C. Michael DiPersio Introduction 273 Coordinate Regulation of Cell-Cell and Cell-Matrix Adhesion 273 Crosstalk Between Integrins and Cadherins 274 Mechanisms of Integrin-Cadherin Crosstalk 275 Extracellular Proteolysis 275 Cross-Regulation of Gene Expression 277 Changes in Intracellular Force Generation 278 Integrin-Cadherin Associations at Sites of Cell Adhesion 279 Intracellular Signal Transduction Pathways 281 FAK: An Integrin Effector that Signals to Cadherins 282 Fer: A Tyrosine Kinase that Translocates between Cadherins and Integrins 282 Rap1: A Central Regulator of Integrin-Cadherin Crosstalk Pathways? 283 The Epidermis as a Model for Investigating Cadherin-Integrin Crosstalk 285 Future Prospects 286 Acknowledgments 287 References 287

Index 295

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Part One Cell-Matrix Junctions

1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

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1.1 General Overview

1.1.1 Integrin Receptors

Integrins are adhesion receptors found in the metazoa, from the simplest sponges and cnidaria to the most complex mammals [1]. They are glycosylated heterodimers composed of non-covalently associated type I transmembrane α and β subunits [2-4]. Each integrin subunit contains a large extracellular domain (N-terminus of >700 residues), a single transmembrane domain (>20 residues), and a generally short cytoplasmic domain (C-terminus of 13-70 residues). Integrin transmembrane domains are thought to begin after an extracellular proline residue, whereas the boundary between the transmembrane and the cytoplasmic domains is less clear [5]. Membrane-proximal regions of the cytoplasmic tails are well conserved in most human integrin α and β subunits, and the boundary between the transmembrane and cytoplasmic domains is predominantly assumed to lie between the conserved W/Y and K/R residues [6, 7]. This conserved K/R residue is usually followed by a stretch of four to six apolar residues, resulting in the K/R residue being flanked by hydrophobic regions [6, 7]. The conserved sequences following K/R residues are GFFKR in α subunits and LLxxxHDRRE in β subunits [6, 7]. These apolar residues are in turn followed by a strongly polar sequence.

In humans, 18 α and eight β subunits have been identified, and these can form at least 24 different heterodimers. In general, each of the 24 integrins has a distinct, non-redundant function, binding to a specific repertoire of cell surface, extracellular matrix (ECM), and soluble protein ligands [1]. The specificity of integrin function is mainly determined by the combination of α and β subunits in each integrin, and by the cellular repertoire of the integrin expression and the functional state of those integrins, in combination with the availability of specific integrin ligands [1, 4]. In addition, the same integrin molecule can have differing ligand specificity, depending on the cell type on which they are found [8]. Further-

4 1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

more, alternative splicing of extracellular and cytoplasmic domains adds to the potential complexity of integrin structure and function [2, 4, 9].

Since the recognition of the integrin family and the introduction of the term "integrin" about 20 years ago, they have been studied extensively and have become relatively well understood adhesion receptors [1, 10]. Playing central roles in cell migration and cell–ECM adhesions and controlling cell differentiation, proliferation, and apoptosis, integrins are an essential contributor in development, immune responses, leukocyte trafficking, hemostasis, and numerous human diseases such as cancer and autoimmune diseases [1, 2].

1.1.2

Functions

Cell attachment and responses to the ECM are an important requirement for the development of a multicellular organism. Integrins serve as transmembrane mechanical links between the ECM outside of a cell and the cytoskeleton inside of the cell [1, 11]. In this way, they connect ECM ligands (e.g., fibronectin, vitronectin, collagen, laminin) to actin microfilaments [1, 8, 10, 12, 13] or other cytoskeletons. Integrin-ECM interaction leads to the occupancy and clustering of integrins, which in turn promotes the recruitment of cytoskeletal and cytoplasmic proteins such as talin, paxillin, and α -actinin to form focal complexes and focal adhesions [4]. Focal complexes and focal adhesions are dynamic in that they are continually assembled, disassembled, and translocated during cell proliferation, spreading, polarization, and migration [14]. Within adhesion complexes, the cytoplasmic domains of the clustered integrins recruit cytoskeletal proteins and signaling molecules into a close proximity at high concentrations, enabling integrins to initiate intracellular signaling cascades. These signaling events enable integrins to regulate a variety of cellular behaviors [15, 16]. This process is referred to as "outside-in" integrin signaling, and results in the activation of protein tyrosine kinases such as focal adhesion kinase (FAK), Src-family kinases, and Abl, and a serine-threonine kinase such as AKT (PKB) [16, 17]. As an integral part of plasma membrane, connecting the cytoskeleton to the ECM, integrins play a role in mechanotransduction and mediate the transmission of mechanical stress across the plasma membrane [18, 19]. They are also capable of transducing physical forces to chemical signals into the cell, with a help of other signaling molecules that colocalize in focal adhesions [18, 20]. Changes in the balance of forces across integrins and resulting alternations in cell shape induce cells to switch between growth, differentiation, and apoptosis [19].

Many integrins are expressed and remain in the low-affinity binding state until cellular stimulation transforms them into a high-affinity form. Cells can use this transformation to modify their adhesive properties by varying the specificity and affinity of a given integrin [9, 15]. This regulation of cell adhesion by signaling from within the cell is referred to as "inside-out" signaling [1, 5, 9]. Rapid changes in integrin-mediated adhesion are often precisely regulated in time and space in biological settings such as platelet aggregation and leukocyte transmigration [9,

21]. Although "inside-out" signaling can be achieved via the modulation of integrin affinity for the ligand, or via affinity-independent mechanisms such as changes in integrin diffusion and integrin clustering, a major focus of integrin research over the past decade has been on the affinity-dependent regulation of integrin-mediated adhesion, a process that will be operationally defined here as integrin activation [1, 5, 9, 15]. Efforts at deciphering the mechanism of this form of "inside-out" signaling have produced compelling evidence that the integrin cytoplasmic domains are the targets of intracellular signals that modulate ligand binding affinity [21, 22].

As noted above, integrins are involved and play essential roles in many biological processes, and many excellent reviews have discussed how signals from these receptors regulate cellular behaviors [4, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 23]. Here, attention will be focused on how cells can change integrin affinity in response to developmental events or to changes in their environment, a process that is widely used in biological functions such as cell adhesion, cell migration, cellular aggregation, and leukocyte transmigration during inflammation.

1.2 Integrin Activation

1.2.1 Definition

Under physiological conditions, many integrins are in equilibrium between lowand high-affinity states [1]. The rapid process of shifting from the low-affinity state to the high-affinity state of integrins will be operationally defined here as "integrin activation". Activation—that is, the process of becoming active—is a term that requires definition depending on context. For example, in the case of many signaling receptors, "activation" refers to the occupancy of that receptor by an extracellular ligand with transmission of signaling events into the cell. Since integrins can also perform this function ("outside-in" signaling), the term "integrin activation" is sometimes encountered when referring to intracellular signals that result from integrin occupancy [6, 24]. Therefore, in order to avoid any confusion, the clear definition of the term "activation" with respect to the meaning of what is the "active" state of the integrin is recommended. Here, the term "activation" is used when referring to transition to the high-affinity state, an event that can be accomplished by the propagation of conformational changes from the integrin cytoplasmic domains to the extracellular domains [1, 5, 25, 26].

Activation and inactivation of integrins are tightly regulated. Although not all integrins have been shown to undergo extremes of activity, it is generally believed that most integrins shift between active and inactive states in a localized fashion when it is important for cells to regulate their adhesion in a temporal and spatial manner [1, 27]. The importance of integrin activation is well demonstrated in the functions of platelets and leukocytes [1, 9].

5 1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

1.2.1.1 Platelets

 α IIb β 3 integrins, also known as GPIIb-IIIa, are present at high density on resting circulating platelets but remain inactive under normal conditions [1, 9]. Upon platelet stimulation by agonists such as thrombin, ADP, or epinephrine acting through G protein-coupled receptors, or by von Willebrand factor signaling through its receptor (GPIb/V/IX), or by collagen binding to its receptor, GPVI, signals from within the cell activate α IIb β 3 integrin to bind to ligands such as fibrinogen, von Willebrand factor, and fibronectin [1, 9]. Binding of these multivalent ligands to activated α IIb β 3 leads to platelet aggregation. It is crucial that α IIb β 3 is inactive on resting circulating platelets, for if it were constitutively active or if its activation were to become deregulated, then unregulated platelet aggregation could lead to thrombosis [1, 9]. In contrast, defects in or a lack of α IIb β 3 integrins result in defects in hemostasis, as seen in a bleeding disorder known as Glanzmann thrombasthenia [1].

1.2.1.2 Leukocytes

 β 2 integrins, also known as CD11/18, on leukocytes are regulated in a very similar fashion to α IIb β 3 integrins on platelets [1, 9]. They are expressed on most white blood cells in their resting state. When the cells encounter agonists such as chemokines, the β 2 integrins are rapidly activated to mediate firm adhesion to the integrins' ligands. Their ligands include counter-receptors such as Ig superfamily molecules (e.g., ICAM-1, 2, and 3), ECM proteins (e.g., fibronectin), blood-clotting proteins such as fibrinogen, and the complement pathway product, C3bi [1, 28, 29]. Intracellular adhesion molecules (ICAMs), which are major ligands of $\beta 2$ integrins, are expressed on cells to allow the attachment of leukocytes to the cells. The β2 integrin–ICAM interaction mediates processes such as phagocytosis, cytotoxic killing, and efficient antigen presentation [1, 28]. Further, like αIIbβ3 integrins on platelets, it is critical that $\beta 2$ integrins remain inactive on resting leukocytes, for deregulated activation or impaired deactivation of B2 integrins could cause failure in normal immune responses [30]. Similarly, a lack of or dysfunction in rapid activation of B2 integrins leads to the defective immune function seen in patients with leukocyte adhesion deficiency (LAD) who suffer from leukocytosis and the failure to recruit leukocytes to sites of infection [1, 9].

1.2.2

Structural Basis of Activation

As noted above, integrin activation is usually due primarily to conformational changes in the extracellular domains of the integrins. Because these conformational changes are believed to initiate at the cytoplasmic face of the integrin, they must somehow traverse the plasma membrane. Several key advances have provided important new insights into each step in the activation process: namely, the nature of the conformational change in the extracellular domain; the mechanism of transmission across the membrane; and how a specific protein–talin–interacting with the β cytoplasmic domain causes these long-range allosteric rearrangements.

1.2.2.1 Extracellular Rearrangements

Based on studies using crystallography, nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), electron microscopy, and Förster resonance energy transfer (FRET), integrins appear to assume at least three conformations: (i) a bent "closed" conformation; (ii) an intermediate extended conformation with a closed headpiece; and (iii) an extended "open" conformation [3, 25, 31, 32]. Several studies have suggested that the bent conformation is a low-affinity state, whereas the extended conformations are associated with the high-affinity state of integrins [31-37]. However, the bent form can also bind ligand with high affinity [38] in some circumstances, and has led research workers to propose an alternative "deadbolt" model for "inside-out" activation, emphasizing that extended conformation is not necessary for integrins to bind to their physiological ligands [38, 39]. Likewise, the results of one study suggest that the extension of integrins may be regulated by different signaling pathways in a temporally specific manner rather than being a fundamental requirement for integrin activation [40]. Thus, it is very likely that integrins are in dynamic equilibrium among different conformational states [24, 32, 35, 41], and the global rearrangements in integrin conformation accompanying "inside-out" signaling remain incompletely understood [35, 42, 43].

In addition to the modulation of integrin affinity via conformational change within a single receptor molecule (affinity modulation), increased integrin-mediated adhesion can also be caused by receptor clustering on the cell surface (avidity modulation) [44–47]. Furthermore, in most circumstances it is likely that some combination of conformational change and receptor clustering is involved in the regulation of integrin-mediated adhesion. In one perceptive report, a monovalent antibody and a conditional dimerizer were used to isolate the relative contributions of affinity modulation and receptor clustering in α IIb β 3-mediated functions [48]. In particular, these studies showed that affinity modulation and avidity modulation play complementary roles in the adhesive functions of this integrin.

1.2.2.2 Transmembrane Propagation

Integrin activation by "inside-out" signaling must involve the transmission of conformational rearrangements from the cytoplasmic domains to the extracellular domains; therefore it would be expected that the transmembrane domain of integrins is involved in the signal transduction process. These regions are highly conserved amongst each of the integrin α - and β -subunit families, and are also conserved between species [49]; indeed, mutations in this region can lead to a loss of integrin expression [50–52]. In fact, recent studies have begun to provide insight into how rearrangements within the transmembrane domain can lead to integrin activation.

Mutational analysis and molecular, computational modeling together suggested that a helical interface between the integrin α and β subunit transmembrane domains stabilizes the inactive state, and also suggest that disruption of this helical transmembrane interface leads to activation [50, 53–55]. To date, four models have been proposed to explain the mechanism underlying the proposed rearrangements in transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption of the α - β transmembrane domain and the sequential disruption d

8 1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

membrane interface: separation, pistoning, twisting, and hinging [1, 6, 7]. These all involve some changes in the orientation of the subunits relative to one another and to the membrane. Although recent findings support the separation and pistoning models, high-resolution structures of the transmembrane domains will be required to distinguish clearly between the different activation models [5, 6, 31].

The helical packing of integrin transmembrane regions is likely to depend on specific crossing angles and specific in-register side-chain arrays [55]. Furthermore, the insertion of the integrin membrane-proximal domain can vary, either shortening or lengthening the transmembrane domain and changing the number of residues buried within the lipid bilayer [3, 5, 49, 55]. Based on these data, the pistoning model suggests that intracellular activating signals could shorten the transmembrane helix, in response to which its membrane tilt angle and register with the neighboring helix change in order to avoid hydrophobic mismatch with the fixed width of the membrane bilayer. This helical mismatch may be the critical event in disruption of transmembrane interactions that stabilize the low-affinity conformation, leading to integrin activation [3, 5, 55]. This model is supported by a report showing that the majority of mutations identified by random mutagenesis throughout the transmembrane domain activated integrins most likely by disrupting or shortening the transmembrane helix [3, 55]. Changes in the length or orientation of the integrin transmembrane domain may also take place during physiological integrin activation [5].

1.2.2.3 Intracellular Rearrangements

Changes in interactions and/or in the structures of the cytoplasmic domains of integrins within the highly conserved regions play crucial roles in integrin activation via "inside-out" signaling [5–7, 56]. Indeed, there is direct experimental evidence for a change in the relationship of the integrin α and β cytoplasmic domains during integrin activation [25].

The interaction between the membrane-proximal regions of the α and β subunits is believed to occur in part through a salt bridge between a conserved Arg in the α tail and an Asp in the β tail and the hydrophobic residues immediately N-terminal to the Arg and Asp [21, 56, 57]. Indeed, this specific association between the α and β subunits is thought to prevent integrin activation by stabilizing the low-affinity state [2, 5, 26]. Mutations that disrupt this "clasp" lead to integrin activation [21, 22, 26, 56]. Integrins can be constitutively activated by deletion in the entire α subunit cytoplasmic tail or of the membrane-proximal GFFKR sequence [21, 22, 26, 56]. Deletion or certain point mutations in the membrane-proximal region of the β tail also result in integrin activation [26, 56, 58]. Furthermore, replacement of the cytoplasmic-transmembrane regions by heterodimeric coiledcoil peptides or an artificial linkage of the tails inactivates the receptor, and breakage of the coiled-coil or clasp activates integrins [58-60]. Taken together, these data strongly indicate that this hydrophobic and electrostatic interaction plays an essential role as a stabilizer in the association of the α and β membrane-proximal regions, maintaining the integrins in a low-affinity state [3, 5, 6]. The important role of α and β tail interaction is further supported by a study using FRET. In the resting states, although fluorophore-tagged α and β tails were sufficiently close together to undergo FRET, stimulation with agonists or the introduction of activating mutations to membrane-proximal α subunits led to a reduction in FRET [31]. Such reduction was ascribed to separation of the cytoplasmic domains, but could also relate to an alternation in the orientation of α and β cytoplasmic tails relative to each other, without actual separation [3, 31]. In consequence, an important goal for future studies will be to provide a more precise description of these structural rearrangements.

Deletions of mutations in the β tail that are more C-terminal (i.e., in the membrane-distal region) can block integrin activation. In particular, an NPxY/F motif of the β subunit has been identified as one of the critical sites [6, 21, 56, 61]. Tyr/ Phe-to-Ala mutations in this conserved motif block integrin activation [6, 62]. It is now known (*vide infra*) that mutations in the NPxY motif perturb the binding of integrin β tails to numerous cytoskeletal and signaling proteins [17], thus accounting for their profound effects on integrin signaling. Hence, membrane-distal portions of the β tail may control integrin activation through interactions with regulatory cytoplasmic proteins and through effects on the conformation of membrane-proximal regions. The physiological integrin activation process also requires the membrane distal region of the β 3 cytoplasmic domain [63].

In summary, a current model is that release of the structural constraint upon the cytoplasmic rearrangement initiates a conformational change that propagates across the membrane through rearrangements in the α and β transmembrane domains. This in turn leads to changes in the conformation of the extracellular domains that activate integrins [32, 59]. As noted above, intriguing questions remain at each step of this process, thereby explaining the continued intense research efforts to further clarify this unusual form of signal transduction.

1.2.2.4 Interactions at the Integrin Cytoplasmic Domains

The integrin cytoplasmic domains play a central role in integrin activation [21, 22], and overexpression of certain proteins that bind to the cytoplasmic tails can result in integrin activation [21, 22, 58, 59]. The binding of the adaptor, talin, to the β cytoplasmic domain has been identified as a crucial, final step in the activation of several classes of integrins [64–66]. This finding has been confirmed for β 1 [67], β 2 [31, 68, 69] and β 3 [70] integrins; hence, talin appears to play a general role in activating multiple classes of integrins. Moreover, a study using mice harboring point mutations in the β 3 cytoplasmic tail provided the first *in-vivo* evidence supporting the importance of talin binding for integrin activation in mammals [71].

A variety of other cellular proteins are reported to interact directly with integrin cytoplasmic tails, and may have roles in integrin activation. β 3-endonexin binds specifically to β 3 tails through membrane-proximal and -distal motifs, and can activate α IIb β 3 in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells [6, 17]. However, since β 3-endonexin-mediated activation depends on the presence of talin, its role may be to cooperate with talin in α IIb β 3 integrin activation in platelets [6, 64]. Cytohesins-1 and -3 bind β 2 integrin tails, and their overexpression has been shown to increase adhesion [6, 17]. However, these proteins contain a SEC7 domain and act as

10 1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

guanine nucleotide exchangers for Arf GTPases. ARF6 can regulate Rac1 activity [72-75], and could therefore increase cell adhesion through affinity-independent processes, such as integrin clustering, rather than integrin activation [6]. Calciumand integrin-binding protein (CIB) has been proposed to activate allbb3 by binding to the α IIb tail [6, 17]. However, some argue that CIB is involved in post-receptor occupancy events rather than initial activation [6, 17] and a recent, elegant study showed that it blocks integrin activation by inhibiting talin binding [76]. Another α subunit-binding protein, paxillin, plays a key role in cell motility and focal adhesion turnover [77]. In T cells, the α 4-paxillin interaction provides resistance to rupture by external shear forces, without changing the integrin affinity of talin [77]. Similarly, while not shown to bind directly to integrin tails, RapL/NORE1B has been reported to associate with $\alpha L\beta 2$ and lead to its activation, clustering, and redistribution [78, 79]. Thus, the list of potential integrin activation regulators is long and will keep expanding. It will be of great interest to examine the activators to see if they are talin-independent, function as modulators of talin binding to the integrins, or act cooperatively with talin.

Talin As mentioned above, recent data strongly indicate that talin plays an important role in integrin activation [64–66]. Talin is a major cytoskeletal protein that colocalizes with and binds to integrins, as well as to actin and actin-binding proteins such as vinculin [2, 64-66]. It is an antiparallel homodimer of two ~270 kDa subunits, each of which consists of an N-terminal globular head domain of ~50 kDa and a C-terminal rod domain of ~220 kDa [80, 81]. The head domain contains a FERM domain with three subdomains, F1, F2, and F3, which often mediates interactions with the cytoplasmic tails of transmembrane proteins. The F2 and F3 subdomains of talin bind specifically to integrin ß3 tails, although F3 shows a higher affinity than F2 [65]. In addition, the expression of F3-but not F2 or other high-affinity β tail-binding proteins-activates α IIb β 3 integrins, implying that the major integrin-binding and activating fragment of talin lies within the 96-residue F3 subdomain [2, 65]. Knockdown of talin expression in CHO cells inhibits the activation of both β 1 and β 3 integrins without altering integrin expression, and this cannot be compensated for by the expression of activating molecules such as activated R-Ras or the CD98 heavy chain [64]. Furthermore, talin knockdown blocks agonist-stimulated fibrinogen binding to the megakaryocyte integrin αIIbβ3, suggesting that normal cellular activation of integrins also requires talin [64].

The talin F3 structure is very similar to that of phosphotyrosine-binding (PTB) domains, which recognize ligands containing β turns formed by NPxY motifs [65]. As discussed above, NPxY motifs are well conserved in most integrin β tails, and mutations that disrupt this motif perturb β turn formation, inhibiting talin binding and therefore interfering with integrin activation [61, 62]. Likewise, mutations within the talin PTB-like domain prevent integrin β tail binding and thereby block integrin activation [64, 82]. These data strongly support the view that the integrin β tail–talin interaction represents a general mechanism for integrin activation.

If talin binding is a final step in integrin activation, then it may be hypothesized that integrin activation is regulated by modulation of the talin binding to integrins. There are two obvious forms of such regulation: (i) alteration of the integrin tails; and (ii) the modification of talin. Tyrosine phosphorylation of the β tail NPxY motif inhibits talin binding, and such modification by Src family kinases inhibits cell adhesion and displaces integrins from talin-rich sites [2, 6]. These data suggest that the phosphorylation of integrins is an important, negative regulator of integrin activation. However, as tyrosine phosphorylation of β 3 occurs after α IIb β 3 integrin activation in platelets, it is not clear whether or not such phosphorylation is important in regulating initial integrin activation [2].

The proteolytic cleavage of intact talin releases the head domain and results in an increase in talin binding affinity for the β tail, indicating that the integrinbinding site is masked in intact talin [2, 6, 68]. In fact, in platelets, the protease calpain can cleave talin to release the head domain, implying its role as a regulator of talin-mediated αIIbβ3 activation [2, 6]. However, as calpain also cleaves integrin β tails, resulting in activation blockade, the effects of calpain on integrin activation are complex [2, 6]. Alternatively, the binding of phosphatidylinositol 4,5-biphosphate (PtdInsP2) to talin has also been reported to induce a conformational change, enhancing talin's association with integrin β 1 tails [2, 6]. Talin can bind to and also activate a splice variant of the PtdInsP2-producing enzyme phosphatidylinositol phosphate kinase type Iy-90 (PIPKIy-90), stimulating PtdInsP2 production, which in turn could promote talin-integrin interactions [2]. Src phosphorylation of PIPKIy-90 has been said to lead to a dramatic increase in its affinity for talin and to an increase in recruitment to focal adhesions. Since c-Src is activated downstream of integrins, the phosphorylation of PIPKIY-90 may represent a positive amplification mechanism that links c-Src signaling to integrin activation [2]. Although talin can be phosphorylated, the effects of these phosphorylations on integrin binding and activation remain unclear [2].

Another major question is how talin binding activates integrins. When the ability of activating talin fragments (i.e., F2–F3 domains together or F3 alone) to bind to different regions of the β 3 cytoplasmic domain was compared to that of non-activating talin fragment (i.e., F2 domain) by monitoring the perturbation of specific NMR resonances of the β tail, the F2–F3 and F3 fragments – but not F2– showed distinct perturbation of the membrane-proximal region of the β 3 tail, suggesting the involvement of the β 3 tail membrane-proximal region in talin-mediated integrin activation [83]. As noted earlier, as the interaction of the α and β membrane-proximal regions maintains the integrins in a low-affinity state [26], it seems likely that perturbations in the region result in integrin activation. NMR studies have suggested that direct disruption of α - β tail interaction by the talin head domain results in integrin activation [59]. In addition, F2–F3 and F3 also perturb the more distal region of the β 3 tail [82]. The membrane-distal region of integrin β tail provides a substantial fraction of the binding energy, and has been suggested to contribute to integrin activation [84].

These data together suggest a two-step activation model: the talin head domain first recognizes the high-affinity binding site in the membrane-distal region, which

12 1 The Ins and Outs of Integrin Signaling

provides a strong linkage between the talin and the integrin β tail, and subsequently binds to a second lower-affinity membrane proximal site that is involved in α - β association, triggering separation of the tails and integrin activation (Figure 1.1) [82, 85].

There are many other PTB domain-containing proteins that bind to integrin β tails in a similar fashion to talin [82, 86]. Such proteins include Numb, Dok-1, ICAP-1 α , and Kindlins [6, 86]. However, talin was unusual in its ability to activate integrins, which led Wegener et al. to reason that there must be additional unique



Figure 1.1 Model of talin-induced integrin activation. Left panel: The talin F3 domain (surface representation; colored by charge), freed from its autoinhibitory interactions in the full-length protein, becomes available for binding to the integrin. Center panel: F3 engages the MD part of the β 3-integrin tail (red), which becomes ordered, but the α - β integrin interactions that hold the integrin in the low-affinity conformation remain intact. Right panel: In a subsequent step, F3 engages the MP portion of the β 3 tail while maintaining its MD interactions. The consequences of this additional interaction are: (1) destabilization of the putative integrin salt bridge; (2) stabilization of the helical

structure of the MP region; and (3) electrostatic interactions between F3 and the acidic lipid head groups. The net result is a change in the position of the transmembrane helix, which is continuous with the MP- β -tail helix. This position change causes a packing mismatch with the α IIb-transmembrane helix, separation or reorientation of the integrin tails, and activation (inset). Mutants of F3 that have compromised interactions with the MP region and other PTB domains that lack an MP-binding site stall at point B, consistent with their dominant-negative behavior. (Reprinted from Ref. [85]; © 2007, with permission from Elsevier.)