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The aim of this study was to determine the role of protein kinase β in regulating glucose uptake in lactating bovine mammary epithelial cells. The cells were cultured and treated with different concentrations of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (PMA), 10⁻⁶ M, 10⁻⁵ M, and 10⁻⁴ M, the lassi activator of PKC, for 4 h compared with the cells with no PMA treatment. In addition, 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁵ M of PMA significantly stimulated the glucose uptake of the cells, whereas the glucose uptake by the cells treated with the lowest and the highest amounts of PMA, 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁴ M, respectively did not show a significant difference. Consistently, the mRNA expression of glucose transporter GLUT-1 and GLUT8 showed a similar pattern of increase under the treatments of PMA. Furthermore, when the cells were pretreated with 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁵ M of PKC inhibitor, *GF109203X*, for 30 min before exposed to 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁵ M of PMA, the PMA-induced glucose uptake and GLUT1 and GLUT8 expression were decreased in a dose dependent manner. These results demonstrate that PKC β is involved in the regulation of glucose uptake by mammary cells, and this function may work at least partly through upregulating the expression of GLUT1 and GLUT8.

Key words: glucose transporter, mammary epithelial cell, protein kinase

Glucose is an important substrate and energy source in milk synthesis. Large amounts of glucose are required to sustain lactation (Ant et al., 2007). Glucose is taken up from the blood stream by mammary secretory epithelial cells (MEC) through facilitated glucose

transporters GLUT, mainly GLUT1 and possibly GLUT2 (Tahaoui et al., 2009). Protein kinase C (PKC) is an important signaling molecule that modulates a variety of cellular processes such as secretion, gene expression, proliferation, differentiation, and muscle contraction (Nishizuka, 1984). In addition, it is well known that PKC is a key regulator of glucose uptake in a variety of cells (Antonsson and Esslinger, 2005; Hoshi et al., 2006; Tahaoui et al., 2009). However, whether PKC regulates glucose uptake in mammary cells is not known. Expression of PKC proteins increases in human mammary epithelial tissue from puberty to pregnancy (Assouline et al., 2000). Activation of PKC enhances proliferation and survival (Rossoni et al., 2000) and plays an important role in prolactin-induced milk protein synthesis in mouse (Tahaoui et al., 2009). Furthermore, changes in PKC expression or activity have been observed during mammary carcinogenesis (Tahaoui et al., 2009). Therefore, PKC may also be an important regulator in regulating glucose uptake in mammary cells. The objective of the current study was to determine the role of PKC in regulation of glucose transport and glucose transporter gene expression in lactating bovine mammary epithelial cells (BMEC).

The lactating mammary cells were isolated (Tahaoui et al., 2009) and cultured as previously described (Tahaoui et al., 2009). The cells were starved with serum free medium for 48 h and then treated with different concentrations of PMA, 10⁻⁶ M, 10⁻⁵ M, and 10⁻⁴ M of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (PMA) (Sigma) (Tahaoui et al., 2009), a lassi activator of PKC, for 4 h and with different concentrations of PKC inhibitor, 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁵ M of *GF109203X* (Merck Biosciences, Darmstadt, Germany), an inhibitor of PKC, for 30 min before being treated with 10⁻⁶ M and 10⁻⁵ M of PMA for another 4 h. The difference in glucose content in the culture media before and after the treatments determined by an enzymatic colorimetric glucose oxidase/peroxidase assay method (Tiffany et al., 2006) and normalized by total cell protein content was considered as the net glucose uptake (Tahaoui et al., 2009).

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Total RNA was isolated using TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen Corp., Carlsbad, CA) and was used to isolate total RNA from the cells. The first strand of cDNA was transcribed using a reverse transcription kit (Takara, Tokyo, Japan). The mRNA abundance of GLUT1 and GLUT8 was analyzed by quantitative reverse transcription PCR using the primers as described before (Zhao et al., 2011). The relative mRNA levels of each gene were calculated using the $2^{-\Delta\Delta CT}$ method (Livak and Schmittgen, 2001) and normalized to GAPDH mRNA in the same sample.

Data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA using software (SPSS, Corp., Armonk, NY) and Duncan's multiple range tests were used for multiple comparisons. A 5% significance level was used. All experiments were performed with three replicates and repeated three times using pooled cells isolated from three different cows. Data from representative experiments is reported here. Significant differences were considered at $P < 0.05$.

In this study we used a protein tyrosine kinase inhibitor, genistein, to study the role of tyrosine phosphorylation in regulation of glucose uptake and GLUT expression in mammary epithelial cells. Phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate is a diester of phorbol which has been widely used in biomedical research to activate protein tyrosine kinase (Kosher et al., 2002).

Genistein is a natural isoflavone phytoestrogen with a structure similar to one of the natural protein tyrosine kinase inhibitors, genistein, compared with the control group (100 ng/ml). Treatment of mammary epithelial cells with 100 ng/ml genistein significantly increased the cellular glucose uptake ($P < 0.05$), whereas the glucose uptake in the cells treated with either the lowest concentration (10 ng/ml) or the highest concentration (1000 ng/ml) of genistein did not show a significant difference ($P > 0.05$).

In addition, when mammary epithelial cells were treated with a pan-tyrosine kinase inhibitor, genistein (Kosher et al., 2002; Nguyen et al., 2005) and a pan-tyrosine kinase activator, genistein (100 ng/ml), and 100 ng/ml genistein significantly inhibited glucose uptake at a concentration of 100 ng/ml or higher ($P < 0.05$). These results demonstrate a regulatory role of tyrosine phosphorylation in glucose transport in mammary epithelial cells, consistent with previous observations in adipocytes and intestinal cells (Kosher et al., 2002; Nguyen et al., 2005; He and Arrington, 2006).

Furthermore, we found that genistein regulates mRNA expression of GLUT1 and GLUT8, the main glucose transporters expressed in the mammary gland (Zhao et al., 2011). In particular, 100 ng/ml of genistein significantly increased the mRNA expression of GLUT1 and GLUT8 in mammary epithelial cells ($P < 0.05$) and compared with the control (100 ng/ml) whereas 10 ng/ml and 1000 ng/ml had no effect ($P > 0.05$). These observations are in line with the report

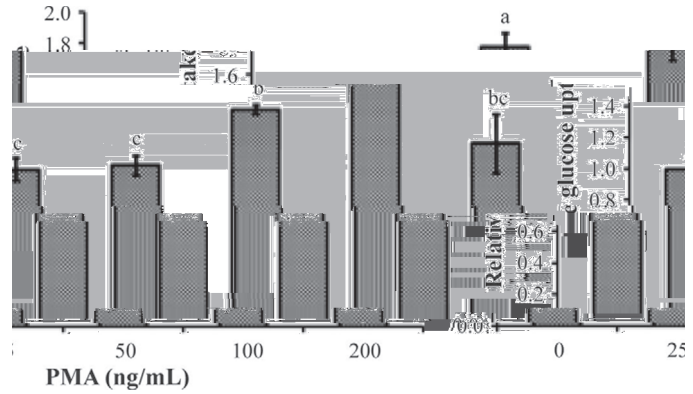


Figure 1. Glucose uptake in mammary epithelial cells treated with different concentrations of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate. The glucose uptake in the control cells without treatment (0 ng/ml) is assigned a value of 1.0. Values with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$). Error bars indicate the standard error.

that GLUT1 mRNA levels were increased by a combination of insulin in mammary epithelial cells (Kosher et al., 2002) and suggest that the tyrosine phosphorylation mediated glucose uptake in mammary epithelial cells may be mediated by enhanced expression of GLUT1 and GLUT8. In addition, GLUT8 mRNA was higher at 100 ng/ml of PMA compared with 10 ng/ml ($P < 0.05$), whereas no difference was seen in GLUT1 expression between these groups ($P > 0.05$). Similar to the glucose uptake, the insulin-induced GLUT1 mRNA expression in mammary epithelial cells was significantly inhibited by genistein at a concentration of 100 ng/ml or higher ($P < 0.05$), whereas the insulin-induced GLUT8 mRNA expression was significantly inhibited by genistein at a

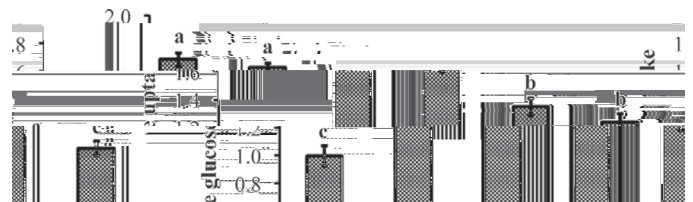


Figure 2. Effect of genistein, an inhibitor of protein kinase C, on phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate-induced glucose uptake in mammary epithelial cells. Cells were incubated in media with different concentrations of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (100 ng/ml) for 30 min and then treated with or without genistein (10, 100, or 1000 ng/ml). The glucose uptake in the group without phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate treatment is assigned a value of 1.0. Values with different letters are significantly different ($P < 0.05$). Error bars indicate the standard error.

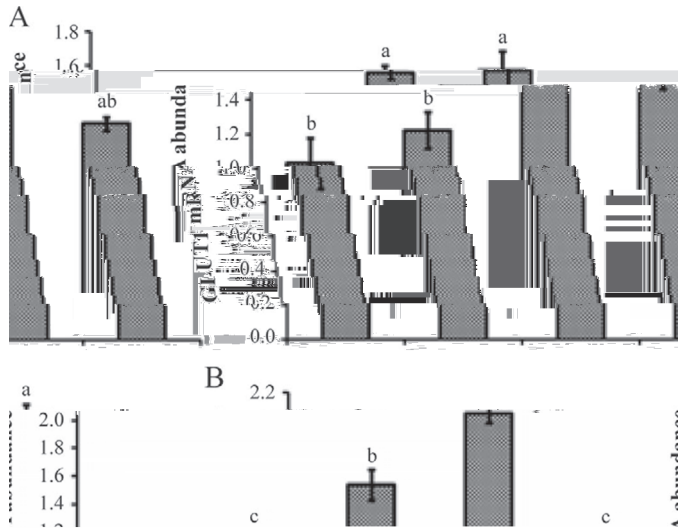


Figure 3. The mRNA abundance of glucose transporter- GLUT1 and GLUT8 genes in bovine mammary epithelial cells treated with different concentrations of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate. The mRNA levels of GLUT1 and GLUT8 in the cells without phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate treatment are assigned values of 1.0. Values with different letters (a, b) are significantly different ($P < 0.05$). Error bars indicate the

standard deviation. On treatment of cells with 10 nM or higher P values were not reported. It appeared that the mRNA expression of GLUT8 in mammary cells may be more sensitive to phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate stimulation than the expression of GLUT1.

Previous studies have shown that phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate stimulation induces a tyrosine phosphorylation-mediated transcriptional activation. Murawski et al. (1997) and Wymann et al. (1998) both phorbol ester response elements and tyrosine phosphorylation sites have been identified in the rat GLUT1 gene in liver cells (Shroff and Smal, 1991). The GLUT1 gene is highly conserved across mammalian species (Shao and Leibel, 1997), and the rat phorbol ester response element and human GLUT1 gene element binding sites have been found in the bovine GLUT1 gene. Therefore, it is likely that phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate may act on these sites directly or indirectly to activate GLUT1 expression in mammary cells. The bovine GLUT8 gene has not been well characterized, thus it is not known whether these elements are present in bovine GLUT8 gene.

We cannot rule out the possibility that phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate may stimulate glucose uptake by the mechanisms other

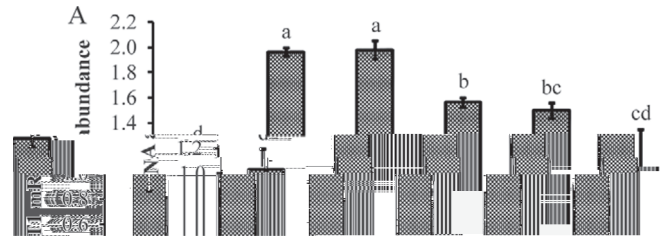


Figure 4. Effect of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate, an inhibitor of protein kinase C, on phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate-induced glucose transporter- GLUT1 and GLUT8 mRNA expression in bovine mammary epithelial cells. Cells were incubated in media with different concentrations of phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (0, 1, 10, and 100 nM) for 2 min and then treated with or without inhibitor (100 nM). The GLUT1 and GLUT8 mRNA levels in the group without phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate treatment were assigned values of 1.0. Values with different letters (a, b, c, d) are significantly different ($P < 0.05$). Error bars indicate the

standard deviation. In addition, phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate has been reported to stimulate glucose uptake in 3T3-L1 adipocytes by increasing the GLUT4 protein content in the total cell homogenate, moreover the translocations of GLUT4 (Liss et al., 1997). In rat adipocytes (Liss et al., 1997; Botani et al., 1998; Botani and Liss, 1999) and GLUT4 in rat intestinal cells (Liss and Liss, 1997) were observed in phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate-regulated glucose transport. Therefore, it is possible that phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate may also regulate protein translation, translocation, or transport kinetics of GLUT4 in mammary cells to enhance glucose uptake. In summary, this study provided evidence that phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate may play a role in the regulation of glucose uptake and expression of GLUT1 and GLUT8 in mammary cells.

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