



Antibody Fc: Chapter 20. Mechanisms of Immunoglobulin-Mediated Mucus Entrapment of Pathogens at Various Mucosal Surfaces

Shannon A. Allen, Thomas J. Hope

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The mucosal epithelia that lines the internal surfaces of gastrointestinal, respiratory, nasal, oral, and genital tissues is constantly under threat from invasion by potentially harmful microorganisms. Therefore, the epithelia must ceaselessly be monitored and reinforced in order to be protected from colonization. One way in which protection from colonization can be achieved is through the secretion of immunoglobulins. Some immunoglobulins are produced from terminally differentiated B cells located just below the mucosal epithelia, transcytosed through mucosal epithelial cells and secreted into the mucus layer that covers the epithelia. Immunoglobulins found within the mucus layer include immunoglobulins A, M, and G, with A being the most dominant subtype in the form of secretory immunoglobulin A. Typically, they elicit protection through mucus entrapment of potentially harmful microflora; that is, they interact with luminal antigens and subsequently anchor them to the mucus lining, thereby preventing invasion of the mucosal epithelia. Immunoglobulin A is thought to perform mucus entrapment through the carbohydrate regions of secretory component, a covalently bound protein attached to immunoglobulin A during secretion by epithelial cells. Immunoglobulin G may sequester pathogens within mucus through its ability to interact with mucus proteins such as mucin-bound Fc γ BP. These observations suggest that immunoglobulins are key factors of mucosal immunity and mucus function that mediate protection from infectious agents. Current and future work in the field of mucosal immunity should seek a better understanding of the mechanisms behind mucus-mediated protection within the mucosa.

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