

# Modulation of poly(ADP-ribosylation) in apoptotic cells

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## Abstract

Poly(ADP-ribosylation) is a post-translational modification of proteins playing a crucial role in DNA repair, replication, transcription and cell death. In this paper, the main features of this process have been reviewed, focusing on the best known poly(ADP-ribose) polymerizing enzyme, PARP-1, a DNA nick-sensor protein that uses  $\beta$ -NAD<sup>+</sup> to form polymers of ADP-ribose. The modulation of poly(ADP-ribosylation) during apoptosis and the possible effects of its inhibition on cell metabolism are discussed.  
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## 1. Poly(ADP-ribosylation): a sensor of DNA damage

The poly(ADP-ribosylation) reaction, discovered 40 years ago [1], is a post-translational modification of proteins involved in DNA repair, replication, transcription and cell death [2–6]. Poly(ADP-ribose) metabolism is regulated by the concerted action of PARP and PARG. In the presence of DNA strand breaks, PARP-1 uses the substrate  $\beta$ -NAD<sup>+</sup> for transferring ADP-ribose polymers to itself and to nuclear acceptor proteins. Polymers are rapidly removed by PARG, which catalyzes the hydrolysis of the ribosyl–ribose glycosidic bonds of linear and branched polymers. This enzyme displays both endo- and exo-glycosidic activities, thus producing short polymers and free ADP-ribose [7]. The basic features of poly(ADP-ribosylation) reactions are shown in Fig. 1.

The best known poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase, PARP-1, is a 113 kDa zinc-finger nuclear protein activated by DNA breaks and using the NAD<sup>+</sup> molecule to catalyze the synthesis of polymers of ADP-ribose on nuclear proteins. PARP-1 has three functional domains: the DNA binding domain (DBD, 46 kDa), located at the N-terminus, which contains the bipartite nuclear localization sequence (NLS)

and two Zn fingers; the automodification domain (22 kDa) which mediates PARP-1 autoribosylation; the C-terminus catalytic domain (54 kDa), which is essential for the conversion of NAD<sup>+</sup> into ADP-ribose. In addition to the classical nuclear PARP-1, which has for decades been the only PARP known, novel nuclear and extra-nuclear ADP-ribose-polymerizing enzymes have been recently described, including PARP-2, PARP-3, Tankyrase-1 and -2, VPARP and TiPARP [2–6].

PARP-1 acts as an endogenous detection system for DNA breaks induced by a variety of environmental stimuli, including free radicals and oxidant molecules [8]. As shown in Fig. 2, PARP-1 binds to DNA breaks and generates polymers of ADP-ribose bound to chromatin-associated proteins, including itself. The negative charge of polymers allows the dissociation of automodified PARP-1 from DNA, thus making it accessible to DNA repair enzymes. PARP-1 inhibitors in combination with DNA damaging agents were found to increase DNA damage, thus suggesting the involvement of PARP-1 in DNA repair [9]. These data were further supported by the observation that mouse strains with a disrupted PARP-1 gene [10–12] exhibit genomic instability after ionizing radiation and alkylating agents [13]. The role of PARP-1 in the base excision repair (BER) mechanism was demonstrated by different approaches [14,15]; the conversion of NAD<sup>+</sup> to ADP-ribose during DNA repair may account for the generation of ATP, which is required for the final ligation step

*Abbreviations:* NAD, nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide; PARG, poly(-ADP-ribose) glycohydrolase; PARP, poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase

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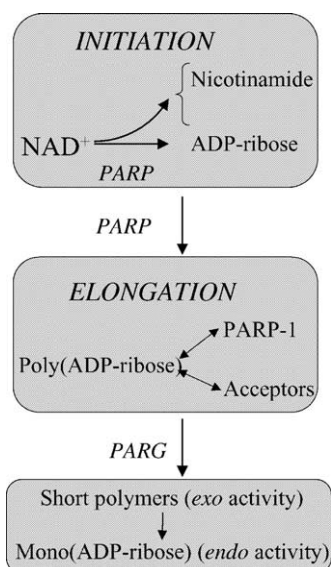


Fig. 1. Poly(ADP-ribosylation) reactions. Initiation step: poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase converts  $\text{NAD}^+$  into ADP-ribose, with the release of nicotinamide and protons. Elongation step: PARP-1 produces polymers of ADP-ribose and binds them covalently to itself and to nuclear acceptor proteins. Poly(ADP-ribose) metabolism is controlled by poly(ADP-ribose) glycohydrolase (PARG), which displays both an exoglycosidic activity, thus detaching ADP-ribose from the distal portion of polymers, and an endoglycosidic activity that shorten polymers.

of BER [16]. In cells with inhibited PARP-1, a defective p53-mediated response to DNA damage was found, dependent on the nature of the damaging agent [17–23]. Moreover, it has been shown that P53 acts as an acceptor of

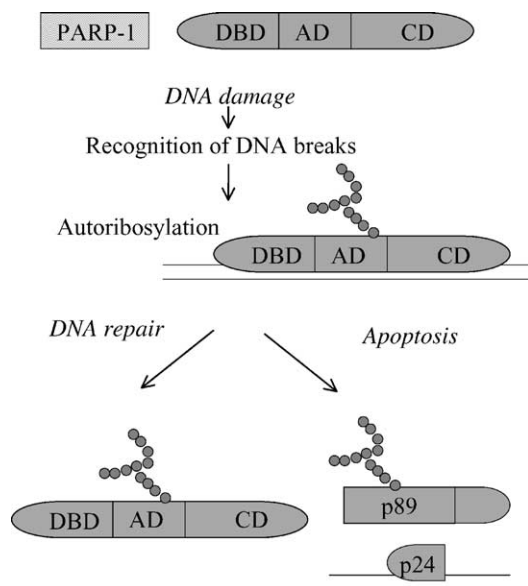


Fig. 2. Involvement of PARP-1 in DNA repair and apoptosis. PARP-1, a 113 kDa protein, has three functional domains: at the N-terminus, the DNA-binding domain (DBD); the central automodification domain (AD); the C-terminal catalytic domain (CD). PARP-1 is a DNA nick sensor recruited to DNA damage sites where it poly(ADP-ribosylates) itself. During DNA repair, autoribosylated PARP-1 is detaching from DNA, thus allowing DNA damage accessible to DNA repair factors. During apoptosis, to avoid excessive NAD consumption, autoribosylated PARP-1 is cleaved by caspases into the p24 and p89 inactive fragments.

poly(ADP-ribose) and that this event modulates its DNA binding and oligomerization functions [24–28]. The recent development of mice deficient for both PARP-1 and p53 contributed to a better elucidation of the cooperation between the two proteins in maintaining chromosome stability and in protecting from tumor development [23,29–31]. As an active member of the surveillance network against DNA damage, PARP-1 also interacts with the Werner syndrome protein [32–34] in a complex, which includes Ku70/80 [35], a component of DNA-PK holoenzyme able to recognize and bind DNA double strand breaks. PARP-1 was described to act synergistically with another factor involved in the response to DNA strand breaks, i.e. ATM [36,37].

## 2. Poly(ADP-ribosylation) and apoptosis

Once activated, PARP-1 produces polymers of ADP-ribose, thus allowing the depletion of intracellular  $\text{NAD}^+$  and a fall in ATP. Cellular  $\text{NAD}^+$  regulates several vital cellular processes, and serves also as precursor for NADP, a cofactor for different synthetic pathways [6]. In this respect, years ago it was proposed that NAD consumption may lead to cell suicide [38]; in fact, intracellular ATP is relevant in driving the apoptotic response and to prevent necrosis [39–41].

During apoptosis, a precocious and transient stimulation of PARP-1 causes poly(ADP-ribose) accumulation in early apoptotic cells [42–46]. Excessive NAD consumption is prevented by the cleavage of PARP-1 by caspases (reviewed in [47]), i.e. cysteine proteases able to cleave after an aspartic acid [48]. As shown in Fig. 2, PARP-1 cleavage generates two inactive fragments of 24 and 89 kDa. The N-terminal fragment (p24) remains in the nucleolus, retains its DNA-binding activity and inhibits the catalytic activity of uncleaved PARP-1, and also impairs DNA repair [49,50]. The p89 fragment migrates from the nucleus to the cytoplasm in late apoptotic cells with advanced nuclear fragmentation [46,51,52], becoming a potential target of autoimmunity [53].

A further evidence for the involvement of poly(ADP-ribosylation) in cell death machinery is provided by the observation that PARP-1 is required for the translocation of the AIF (Apoptosis-Inducing Factor) protein from the mitochondria to the nucleus, with the consequent activation of a caspase-independent apoptotic pathway [54]. The molecular mechanisms triggering the release of AIF are still obscure [55], even if the recent evidence of an intra-mitochondrial PARP could support its direct effect on AIF [56]. Remarkably, during apoptosis poly(ADP-ribosylation) regulates the activity of DNASE1L3, a  $\text{Ca}^{2+}/\text{Mg}^{2+}$ -dependent nuclease that is normally repressed by poly(ADP-ribose). PARP-1 inhibition was shown to promote its release, with a consequent DNA fragmentation and cell death [57,58].

### 3. Protective effect of PARP inhibitors

Although poly(ADP-ribosylation) may be beneficial, a massive PARP-1 activation under damage conditions can be detrimental to the tissue because of energy depletion and consequent occurrence of necrotic death. PARP-1 inhibition by chemicals, by the antisense strategy, by creating dominant negative mutants or PARP-1<sup>-/-</sup> mice, could interfere with apoptosis to a different extent [10–13,59–65], possibly depending on the nature of the apoptogenic stimulus.

During inflammation, ischemia/reperfusion or shock, the generation of free radicals, reactive oxygen species, and peroxynitrite can activate PARP-1, leading to NAD depletion [66–69]. Pharmacological inactivation of PARP-1 represents a novel therapeutical strategy to limit cellular injury and to improve the outcome of a variety of inflammatory conditions. Genetic deletion of PARP-1 supports the critical role of poly(ADP-ribosylation) in the pathogenesis of different diseases (reviewed in [70]). Accordingly, it has been shown that PARP-1 inhibition by chemical compounds exerts a protective effect toward a number of diseases, including cancer [71,72]. PARP-1 inhibitors can be used as chemosensitizing/radiosensitizing agents, being effective against several tumors [73–80]. Remarkably, they reduce nephrotoxicity [81] and acute photodamage caused by chemotherapeutic drugs [82]. Also the inhibition of tankyrase activity, which regulates the function of TRF-1 and TRF-2 telomeric proteins via poly(ADP-ribosylation), could represent a good strategy to repress telomere maintenance in tumor cells, thus promoting chemotherapy-induced apoptosis (reviewed in [83]).

### 4. Protective effect of PARG inhibitors

PARG regulates poly(ADP-ribose) turnover by releasing monomers of ADP-ribose and by shortening long polymers (exo/endo activity, Fig. 1) [84]. During apoptosis, PARG is a target of caspases [85,86]. Since PARG inhibition could influence PARP-1-mediated cell death either by making poly(ADP-ribose) turnover slower or causing PARP-1 inhibition by massive PARP-1 autoribosylation, PARG is now considered as a cell death mediator [87]. Accordingly to this view, some compounds that inhibit PARG activity were found to be effective in rescuing neuronal cell death [87–89]. Remarkably, experiments carried out on *Drosophila* revealed that the genetic deletion of PARG allows neurodegeneration [90].

### 5. Future perspectives

The assumption that poly(ADP-ribosylation) plays a crucial role in carcinogenesis (reviewed in [91]) legiti-

mates the growing interest in developing PARP-1 and PARG inhibitors to improve the efficacy of radio- and chemo-therapy. Since PARP-1 shares the role of guardian of genome integrity with other factors, e.g. DNA-PK, a promising strategy for tumor sensitization could be represented by the combined use of inhibitors of PARP-1 and DNA-PK [92]. On the other hand, it is well known that many agents, including chemotherapeutic drugs, induce DNA damage via the production of oxygen radicals, thus generating oxidatively modified proteins, which can be degraded by the 20S proteasome to facilitate a correct DNA repair. Since proteasome is activated by PARP-1 [93], the efficacy in removing oxidized proteins can be impaired by PARP-1 inhibitors, thus favoring damage accumulation and possibly driving tumoral cells to death [94]. Similarly, it has been reported that PARP-1 interacts with transcription factors of the NF-κB family [95–98]. Since NF-κB activity can confer resistance to apoptosis, the inhibition of NF-κB-dependent gene expression by PARP-1 could be a potentially efficient strategy to promote apoptosis. Accordingly, proteasome inhibitors, such as PS-341, but also natural NF-κB inhibitors including curcumin [99] could modulate the anti-apoptotic effects.

The present renaissance of PARP-1 inhibitors, based on the modeling of new compounds, may be helpful in promoting the pharmacological inactivation of PARP-1 as a novel therapeutical strategy to limit cellular injury, to improve the outcome of a variety of inflammatory conditions and to enhance the efficacy of anticancer therapies. However, long-term studies are necessary to estimate the risks and benefits associated with therapeutic PARP-1 and/or PARG inhibition. This aspect is particularly relevant if one considers the crucial role of poly(ADP-ribosylation) in the maintenance of chromatin structure [100,101] and in regulating transcription [5,100].

Finally, it is important to remind that the molecular mechanisms at the origin of PARP-1 gene expression largely remain to be elucidated. It is known that human PARP-1 promoter lacks a functional consensus TATA box, is GC-rich, and contains a consensus initiator sequence surrounding the transcription start site. Moreover, it has potential binding sites for several transcription factors, including Sp1, AP-2, YY1, and Ets [102]. Additional sequence analyzes give hints about regulatory pathways, which remain yet to be characterized by molecular and cellular technologies (Fig. 3). Novel ways of PARP-1 regulation would then promise additional therapeutic perspectives aiming at the reduction of PARP-1 expression by the way of lowering the constitutive gene expression mechanisms.

The following recent monographs have been devoted to poly(ADP-ribosylation):

- G. de Murcia, S. Shall (Eds.), From DNA Damage and Stress Signalling to Cell Death. Poly ADP Ribosylation Reactions, Oxford University Press, 2000.

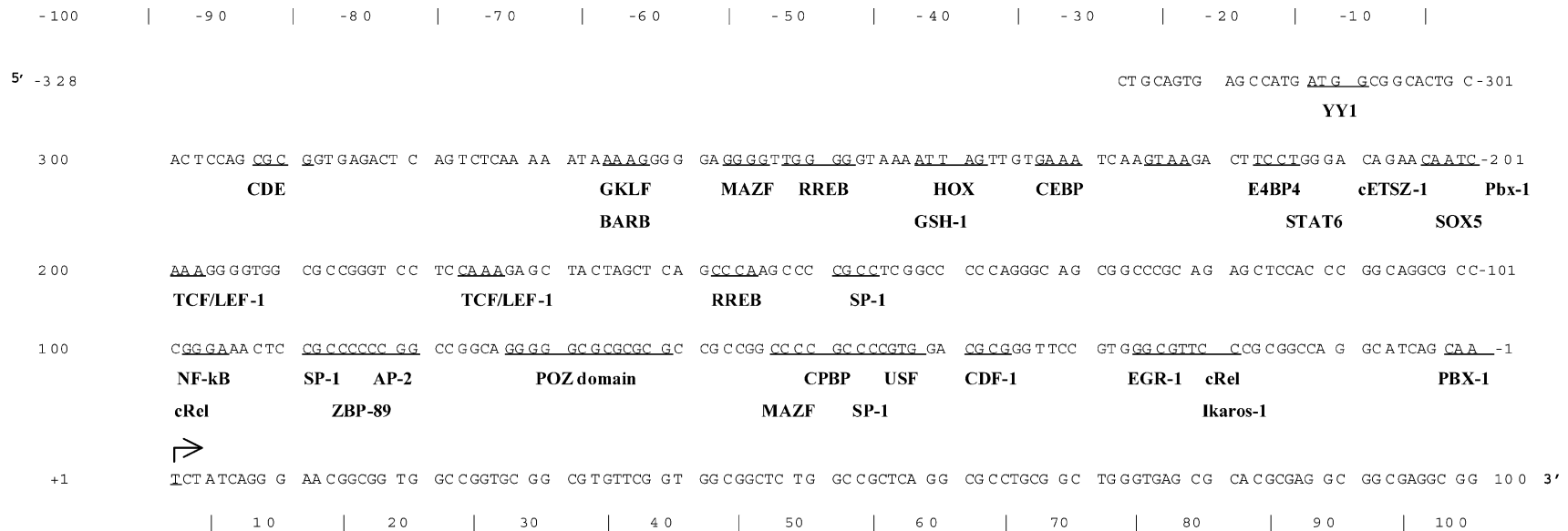


Fig. 3. PARP-1 gene promoter. Putative transcription factor binding sites within the PARP-1 promoter gene are represented. The arrow designates the transcriptional start site. YY1, Yin and Yang 1; CDE, cell cycle-dependent element; GKLF, gut-enriched Krueppel-like factor; BARB, barbiturate-inducible element; MAZF, MYC-associated zinc finger protein related transcription factor; RREB, Ras-responsive element binding protein 1; HOX, muscle segment homeo box 2 homologue of *Drosophila* (HOX 8); GSH-1, homeobox transcription factor Gsh-1; CEBP, CCAAT/enhancer binding protein beta; E4BP4, bZIP domain, transcriptional repressor; STAT6, signal transducer and activator of transcription 6; cETSZ-1, c-Ets-1 binding site; Pbx-1, homeo domain factor Pbx-1; TCF/LEF-1, involved in the Wnt signal transduction pathway; SP-1, GC box elements; NF-kappaB, nuclear factor-kappa B; AP-2, Activator protein 2; c-Rel, NF-kB related; ZBP-89, zinc finger transcription factor ZBP-89; POZ, zinc finger; SP-1, stimulating protein 1; CPBP, core promoter-binding protein with three Krueppel-type zinc fingers; MAZF, MYC-associated zinc finger protein related transcription factor; USF, ubiquitous zinc finger transcription factor, Upstream stimulating factor; CDF-1, cell cycle-dependent element; EGR-1, Egr-1/Krox-24/NGFI-A immediate-early gene product; Ikaros 1, potential regulator of lymphocyte differentiation.

- C. Szabó (Ed.), Cell Death. The Role of PARP, CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2000.
- J. Zhang (Ed.), PARP as a Therapeutic Target, CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2002.
- A. Bürkle (Ed.), Poly(ADP-ribosyl)ation, Landes Bioscience, 2004.

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