

Point Mutations in Apolipoprotein A-I Mimic the Phenotype Observed in Patients with Classical Lecithin:Cholesterol Acyltransferase Deficiency[†]

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ABSTRACT: We have analyzed the effect of charged to neutral amino acid substitutions around the kinks flanking helices 4 and 6 of apoA-I and of the deletion of helix 6 on the *in vivo* activity of LCAT and the biogenesis of HDL. The LCAT activation capacity of apoA-I *in vitro* was nearly abolished by the helix 6 point (helix 6P-apoA-I[R160V/H162A]) and deletion {helix 6Δ-apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]} mutants, but was reduced to 50% in the helix 4 point mutant (helix 4P-apoA-I[D102A/D103A]). Following adenovirus-mediated gene transfer in apoA-I deficient mice, the level of plasma HDL cholesterol was greatly reduced in helix 6P and helix 6Δ mutants. Electron microscopy and two-dimensional gel electrophoresis showed that the helix 6P mutant formed predominantly high levels of apoA-I containing discoidal particles and had an increased preβ1-HDL/α-HDL ratio. The helix 6Δ mutant formed few spherical particles and had an increased preβ1-HDL/α-HDL ratio. Mice infected with adenovirus expressing the helix 4P mutant or wild-type apoA-I had normal HDL cholesterol and formed spherical α-HDL particles. Coinfection of mice with adenoviruses expressing human LCAT and the helix 6P mutant dramatically increased plasma HDL and apoA-I levels and converted the discoidal into spherical HDL, indicating that the LCAT activity was rate-limiting for the biogenesis of HDL. The LCAT treatment caused only a small increase in HDL cholesterol and apoA-I levels and in α-HDL particle numbers in the helix 6Δ mutant. The findings indicate a critical contribution of residue 160 of apoA-I to the *in vivo* activity of LCAT and the subsequent maturation of HDL and explain the low HDL levels in heterozygous subjects carrying this mutation.

Apolipoprotein A-I (apoA-I)¹ is the major protein component of HDL, and plays an essential role in the biogenesis and the functions of HDL (1–4). ApoA-I contains 22- and 11-amino acid repeats (5) which, based on X-ray crystallography (6) and physicochemical studies (5), are organized predominantly in amphipathic α-helices. This unique apoA-I structure may underlie several of its functions. On the basis of the crystal structure and several structural studies, detailed belt as well as hairpin-shaped models have been proposed that describe the binding of apoA-I in discoidal and spherical HDL particles (7, 8).

It is generally believed that the biogenesis of HDL occurs through a complex pathway that requires apoA-I and several other proteins (4).

In the early steps of this pathway, apoA-I is secreted mostly lipid free by the liver and acquires phospholipid and cholesterol via its interactions with the ATP-binding cassette A1 (ABCA1) lipid transporter (1, 9). Through a series of intermediate steps that are poorly understood, apoA-I is gradually lipidated and proceeds to form discoidal particles which are converted to spherical particles by the action of lecithin:cholesterol acyltransferase (LCAT) (2, 10). Both the discoidal and spherical HDL particles interact functionally with the HDL receptor scavenger receptor class B type I (SR-BI) (3, 11, 12). The late steps of the HDL pathway involve the transfer of cholesteryl esters to VLDL or LDL for eventual catabolism by the LDL receptor, the hydrolysis of phospholipids and residual triglycerides by the various lipases (lipoprotein lipase, hepatic lipase, and endothelial lipase), and the transfer of phospholipids from VLDL and LDL to HDL by the action of phospholipid transfer protein (13).

Biogenesis of HDL is prevented by apoA-I deficiency or mutations in ABCA1 that diminish the functional interactions with ABCA1 (1, 9, 14). In addition, formation and/or maturation of HDL is prevented by mutations in LCAT or mutations in apoA-I which prevent the activation of LCAT (15, 16). The domains of apoA-I involved in LCAT activation were initially studied by analysis of natural and

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¹ Abbreviations: ABCA1, ATP-binding cassette transporter A1; apoA-I, apolipoprotein A-I; apoA-I^{−/−} mice, apoA-I-deficient mice; EM, electron microscopy; CE, cholesteryl esters; FC, free cholesterol; GFP, green fluorescence protein; HDL, high-density lipoproteins; helix 4P, helix 4 point mutant apoA-I[D102A/D103A]; helix 6P, helix 6 point mutant apoA-I[R160V/H162A]; helix 6Δ, helix 6 deletion mutant apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]; IDL, intermediate-density lipoproteins; LCAT, lecithin:cholesterol acyltransferase; LDL, low-density lipoproteins; PBS, phosphate-buffered saline; PL, phospholipids; POPC, β-oleoyl-γ-palmitoyl-L-α-phosphatidylcholine; SR-BI, scavenger receptor class B type I; VLDL, very low-density lipoproteins; TC, total cholesterol; TG, triglycerides; WT, wild-type.

bioengineered apoA-I mutants. The *in vitro* studies suggested that although several regions of apoA-I may contribute to the activation of LCAT, specific residues within helix 6 may be essential for LCAT activation (17–24). Few studies have investigated the effect of apoA-I mutations on the biogenesis of HDL. *In vivo* analysis of deletion mutants showed that deletions of either helices 4 and 5 {apoA-I[Δ (100–143)]}, helices 5 and 6 {apoA-I[Δ (122–165)]}, or helices 6 and 7 {apoA-I[Δ (144–186)]} resulted in very low apoA-I and HDL levels following adenovirus-mediated gene transfer in apoA-I deficient (apoA-I^{−/−}) mice and led to the formation of discoidal HDL particles (25).

Similar studies of amino-terminal deletion mutants apoA-I[Δ (7–43)] and apoA-I[Δ (7–65)] also showed that both these mutations were associated with low plasma apoA-I and HDL levels following adenovirus-mediated gene transfer in apoA-I^{−/−} mice. The deletion of residues 7–43 resulted in the generation of spherical HDL particles, whereas the deletion of residues 7–65 resulted in the generation of discoidal HDL particles. The findings indicate that the amino terminus of apoA-I also plays some role in the activation of LCAT *in vivo* (26). Impairment of LCAT activation and accumulation of discoidal HDL particles following adenovirus-mediated gene transfer of an apoA-I mutant lacking residues 89–99 in apoA-I^{−/−} mice were also observed (27).

Transgenic mice expressing apoA-I[Δ (143–164)] in an apoA-I^{−/−} background had greatly reduced apoA-I and HDL plasma levels based on FPLC analysis and generated cholesteryl ester poor HDL particles 8 nm in diameter (23). Overall, the experiments in transgenic mice and following adenovirus-mediated gene transfer of the truncated apoA-I forms in apoA-I^{−/−} mice identified the regions of apoA-I that affect LCAT activation *in vivo*. However, the large deletions introduced in these studies may have altered drastically the apoA-I structure, and thus necessitate that the involvement of specific residues, within these regions, in LCAT activation is further validated by targeted *in vitro* mutagenesis and functional analyses.

For this purpose, we have used adenovirus-mediated gene transfer in apoA-I^{−/−} mice to assess the role of the carboxy-terminal amino acids of apoA-I in the assembly and metabolism of HDL (28). These analyses showed that substitution of hydrophobic residues in the region of residues 211–229 with either charged or less bulky hydrophobic residues resulted in low levels of HDL and formation of discoidal HDL particles following gene transfer of mutant apoA-I forms in apoA-I^{−/−} mice. In contrast, substitution of charged residues 234–239 with Ala led to the formation of normal HDL (28). The data showed for the first time that defective maturation of HDL may occur *in vivo* as a result of specific point mutations in apoA-I.

We have also shown, by analysis of several apoA-I mutants, that charged to neutral amino acid substitutions around the kinks flanking helices 4 and 6 of apoA-I have a profound effect on the functional interactions of lipid-bound apoA-I with WT and mutant SR-BI forms (3, 29). Other studies have shown that natural mutations around residues R160 and H162 of apoA-I as well as deletions in helix 6 or 7 of apoA-I are associated with low HDL levels and/or have reduced capacity to activate LCAT *in vitro* (15, 30–37).

Here we analyzed the impact of point mutations in helices 4 and 6 and the deletion of helix 6 of apoA-I on the

biogenesis of HDL and the activity of LCAT *in vivo* using adenovirus-mediated gene transfer of apoA-I mutants in apoA-I^{−/−} mice. The formation of HDL was assessed by FPLC fractionation, EM analysis, and two-dimensional gel electrophoresis of plasma. The *in vivo* capacity of the endogenous enzyme to activate LCAT was assessed from the CE/TC ratio of the HDL fraction and the restoration of the CE/TC ratio and the plasma HDL levels by coinfection of mice with adenoviruses expressing the mutant apoA-I forms and human LCAT. It was found that although both the helix 6 point mutant (apoA-I[R160A/H162A]) and the deletion mutant {apoA-I[Δ (144–165)]} affected the activity of LCAT *in vitro* and *in vivo* and the biogenesis of HDL *in vivo*, only the defect caused by the helix 6 point mutant could be reversed by excess LCAT.

The studies indicate that the low levels of HDL in patients with a mutation at residue 160 or 162 of apoA-I are the result of defective maturation of HDL due to impairment of the LCAT activity. The phenotype produced by mutations in residues 160 and 162 of apoA-I mimicked the phenotype observed in patients with classical LCAT deficiency (9) and may be overcome by an increase in the plasma concentration of LCAT.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Materials

Materials not mentioned in the experimental procedures have been obtained from sources described previously (3, 38).

Methods

Generation of Adenoviruses Expressing the Wild-Type (WT) and Mutant ApoA-I Forms. The construction of recombinant adenoviruses carrying the genomic sequence for the WT apoA-I has been described previously (28). The adenoviruses expressing apoA-I[D102A/D103A], apoA-I[R160V/H162A], and apoA-I[Δ (144–165)] were generated in a similar way. Briefly, the fourth exon of the human apoA-I gene was amplified and mutagenized by polymerase chain reaction, using a set of specific mutagenic primers {AIMIV1-5 and AIMIV1-3 for apoA-I[D102A/D103A], AIMIV4-5 and AIMIV4-3 for apoA-I[R160V/H162A], and AIMIII3-5 and AIMIII3-3 for apoA-I[Δ (144–165)]} containing the mutation of interest and a set of flanking universal primers (AINOTF and AISALR) containing restriction sites *NotI* and *SalI*. The sequences of the primers are given in Table 1. The pCA13AIGN vector, which contains a *NotI* site in intron 3 and a *XhoI* site at the 3′-end of the apoA-I gene, was used as a template in the amplification reactions (28, 39). The DNA fragment containing the mutation of interest was digested with *NotI* and *SalI* and subcloned into the *NotI* and *XhoI* sites of the pCA13AIGN vector, thus replacing the WT with the mutated exon 4 sequence. The pCA13-A-I plasmids, containing the D102A/D103A or R160V/H162A point mutations or the deletion of residues 144–165, along with a helper PJM17 adenovirus plasmid were used to generate recombinant adenoviruses as described previously (28, 38).

Generation and Isolation of WT and Mutant ApoA-I Forms Using the Baculovirus Expression System. The generation of baculoviruses expressing WT apoA-I, the apoA-I[D102A/

Table 1: Oligonucleotide Sequences of Primers Used in PCR Amplifications

name	sequence	location of sequence
AIMIV1-5	5'-CAG CCC TAC CTG GCC^a GCC TTC CAG AAG AA-3'	nucleotides 364–392 of apoA-I cDNA ^b (sense) (amino acids 98–107)
AIMIV1-3	5'-TT CTT CTG GAA GGC GGC CAG GTA GGG CTG-3'	nucleotides 392–364 (antisense) (amino acids 107–98) ^c
AIMIV4-5	5'-GAC GCG CTG GTC ACG GCT CTG GCC CC-3'	nucleotides 541–566 of apoA-I cDNA (sense) (amino acids 157–165)
AIMIV4-3	5'-GG GGC CAG AGC CGT GAC CAG CGC GTC-3'	nucleotides 566–541 of apoA-I cDNA (antisense) (amino acids 165–157)
AIMIII3-5	5'-GAG AAG CTG AGC CCA <u>... ..</u> ^d TAC AGC GAC GAG CT-3'	nucleotides 487–501 and nucleotides 568–581 of apoA-I cDNA (sense) (amino acids 139–143 and amino acids 166–170)
AIMIII3-3	5'-AG CTC GTC GCT GTA <u>... ..</u> TGG GCT CAG CTT CTC-3'	nucleotides 581–568 and nucleotides 501–487 of apoA-I cDNA (antisense) (amino acids 170–166 and amino acids 143–139)
AINOT F	5'-CCT CCG CGG ACA GGC GGC CGC^e CAG GG-3'	nucleotides 886–911 of apoA-I genomic sequence ^f that contains a <i>NotI</i> site (sense), intron 3 of apoA-I gene
AISAL R	5'-A CAT GTC GAC CCC CTT TCA GGG CAC CTG GCC TTG-3'	ACAT, <i>SalI</i> site, and nucleotides 1917–1894 of apoA-I genomic sequence (antisense), at 3'-end of apoA-I gene

^a Mutagenized residues are marked in boldface type and are underlined. ^b Nucleotide number of the human apoA-I cDNA sequence (71), oligonucleotide position relative to the translation initiation ATG codon. ^c The amino acid positions refer to the mature plasma apoA-I sequence.

^d Deleted nucleotides are underlined. ^e The restriction enzyme recognition sites are marked in boldface type. ^f Nucleotide number of the human apoA-I genomic sequence (39), oligonucleotide position relative to the translation initiation ATG codon.

D103A] and apoA-I[R160V/H162A] point mutants, and the apoA-I[Δ(144–165)] deletion mutant was described previously (3, 40). The expression and purification of recombinant WT and mutant apoA-I forms were performed as described previously (1, 3).

Animal Studies, Plasma Lipids, ApoA-I, and ApoA-I mRNA Level Analyses. ApoA-I^{-/-} (ApoA1^{tm1Unc}) C57BL/6J mice (41) were purchased from Jackson Laboratories (Bar Harbor, ME). The mice were maintained on a 12 h light/dark cycle and standard rodent chow. All procedures performed on the mice were in accordance with National Institutes of Health and institutional guidelines. ApoA-I^{-/-} mice, 6–8 weeks of age, were injected via the tail vein with 1×10^9 pfu of recombinant adenovirus per animal and the animals sacrificed 4 days postinjection following a 4 h fast.

The concentrations of total cholesterol, free cholesterol, phospholipids, and triglycerides of plasma drawn 4 days postinfection were determined using the Total Cholesterol E, Free Cholesterol C, and Phospholipids B reagents (Wako Chemicals USA, Inc.) and INFINITY triglycerides reagent (ThermoDMA), respectively, according to the manufacturer's instructions. The concentration of cholesteryl esters was determined by subtracting the concentration of free cholesterol from the concentration of total cholesterol. Plasma apoA-I levels and hepatic human apoA-I mRNA levels were determined as described previously (1, 3).

For FPLC analysis of plasma, 17 μ L of plasma obtained from mice infected with adenovirus-expressing WT or mutant apoA-I forms was loaded onto a Sepharose 6 PC column (Amersham Biosciences) in a SMART micro FPLC system (Amersham Biosciences) and eluted with PBS. A total of 25 fractions 50 μ L in volume each were collected for further analysis. The concentration of lipids and apoA-I in the FPLC fractions was determined as described above.

Fractionation of Plasma by Density Gradient Ultracentrifugation and Electron Microscopy Analysis of the ApoA-I-Containing Fractions. For this analysis, 300 μ L of plasma

obtained from adenovirus-infected mice was diluted with saline to a total volume of 0.5 mL. The mixture was adjusted to a density of 1.23 g/mL with KBr and overlaid with 1 mL of a KBr solution with a *d* of 1.21 g/mL, 2.5 mL of a KBr solution with a *d* of 1.063 g/mL, 0.5 mL of a KBr solution with a *d* of 1.019 g/mL, and 0.5 mL of normal saline. The mixture was centrifuged for 22 h in a SW55 rotor at 30 000 rpm. Following ultracentrifugation, 0.5 mL fractions were collected from the top and analyzed as described previously (1).

For electron microscopy analysis, the fractions that float in the HDL region were treated and photographed as described previously (1).

Nondenaturing Two-Dimensional Electrophoresis. The distribution of HDL subfractions in plasma was analyzed by two-dimensional electrophoresis as described previously (42) with some modifications. Briefly, in the first dimension, 2 μ L of plasma sample was separated by electrophoresis at 4 °C in a 0.75% agarose gel using a 50 mM barbital buffer (pH 8.6, Sigma, St. Louis, MO) until the bromophenol blue marker had migrated 5.5 cm. Agarose gel strips containing the separated lipoproteins were then transferred to a 4 to 20% polyacrylamide gradient gel. Separation in the second dimension was performed at 90 V for 2–3 h at 4 °C. The separated proteins were transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane, and human apoA-I was detected by probing the membrane with a goat polyclonal anti-human apoA-I antibody (Chemicon International), and mouse apoE was detected by probing the membrane with a goat polyclonal anti-mouse apoE antibody (Santa Cruz Biotechnology Inc., Santa Cruz, CA).

Production, Purification, and Activation of LCAT by WT and Mutant ApoA-I Forms. LCAT was purified as described (38, 43, 44) from the culture medium of human HTB13 cells infected with an adenovirus expressing the human LCAT cDNA (45), which was a generous gift of S. Santamarina-Fojo. For LCAT analysis, the reconstituted HDL (rHDL)

particles, used as the substrate, contained cholesterol and [^{14}C]cholesterol ([4- ^{14}C]cholesterol, 0.04 mCi/mL, specific activity of 45 mCi/mmol; Perkin-Elmer Life Sciences, Inc.), β -oleoyl- γ -palmitoyl-L- α -phosphatidylcholine (POPC), and apoA-I and were prepared by the sodium cholate dialysis method as described previously (2, 46). The reactions were carried out as described previously (2, 38). The cholesterol esterification rate was expressed as nanomoles of cholesteryl ester formed per hour. To calculate the apparent V_{\max} and K_m , the rate of cholesteryl ester formation was plotted versus the concentration of apoA-I. The data were fitted to Michaelis-Menten kinetics, using Prism (GraphPad Software, Inc.). Because of the low catalytic activity of the apoA-I[R160V/H162A] and apoA-I[Δ (144–165)] mutants, their $K_{m\text{-app}}$ and $V_{\max\text{-app}}$ values were obtained as described previously (2, 38) for the WT apoA-I using a 25-fold higher enzyme concentration. To compare the kinetic parameters of the WT apoA-I and the apoA-I[R160V/H162A] and apoA-I[Δ (144–165)] mutants, the $V_{\max\text{-app}}$ values of the two mutants were normalized by dividing the experimentally obtained $V_{\max\text{-app}}$ by 25.

RESULTS

LCAT Activation in Vitro. For LCAT activation, WT and the three mutant apoA-I forms were produced using the baculovirus system and were subsequently used for the generation of discoidal rHDL particles as described previously (27, 38). The LCAT activity was assayed as the rate of production of labeled cholesteryl esters from the ^{14}C -labeled rHDL particles. The cholesterol content of the rHDL particles containing the WT and the three mutant apoA-I forms was comparable (data not shown). The esterification of the cholesterol of the rHDL particles containing the helix 6 point mutant (helix 6P) apoA-I[R160A/H162A] and the helix 6 deletion mutant (helix 6 Δ) apoA-I[Δ (144–165)] in vitro was very low and could be overcome with excess LCAT. It was found that a 25-fold increase in enzyme concentration resulted in initial velocities of esterification comparable to those obtained with WT apoA-I and a 1-fold enzyme concentration. Using the 25-fold excess of enzyme concentration, the $K_{m\text{-app}}$ and $V_{\max\text{-app}}$ values of the mutants were calculated and compared to those of WT apoA-I as described in Experimental Procedures (Figure 1). Both mutants had greatly reduced $V_{\max\text{-app}}$ values and increased $K_{m\text{-app}}$ values compared to those of WT apoA-I (Figure 1). The apparent catalytic efficiencies ($V_{\max\text{-app}}/K_{m\text{-app}}$) of the enzyme using rHDL particles containing the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ mutants were estimated to be ~ 0.7 and 0.4% of the WT control, respectively, whereas that of the helix 4P point mutant (helix 4P) apoA-I[D102A/D103A] was 50% of the WT control (Figure 1). The low catalytic efficiencies of the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ mutants are comparable with previously published values (22, 24, 47–49).

Plasma Lipid, ApoA-I, and Hepatic ApoA-I mRNA Levels following Adenovirus Infection. Analysis of plasma lipids and apoA-I levels and hepatic apoA-I mRNA levels 4 days postinfection showed that apoA-I $^{-/-}$ mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the WT apoA-I and the helix 4P mutant had normal levels of total, free, and esterified cholesterol and similar CE/TC ratios compared with C57BL/6 mice, whereas apoA-I $^{-/-}$ mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ mutants and apoA-

$K_{m\text{-app}}$ (μM)	0.11 \pm 0.02	0.15 \pm 0.04	0.77 \pm 0.19	2.7 \pm 0.8
$V_{\max\text{-app}}$ (nmol CE/h)	0.47 \pm 0.11	0.33 \pm 0.13	0.02 \pm 0.001	0.05 \pm 0.01

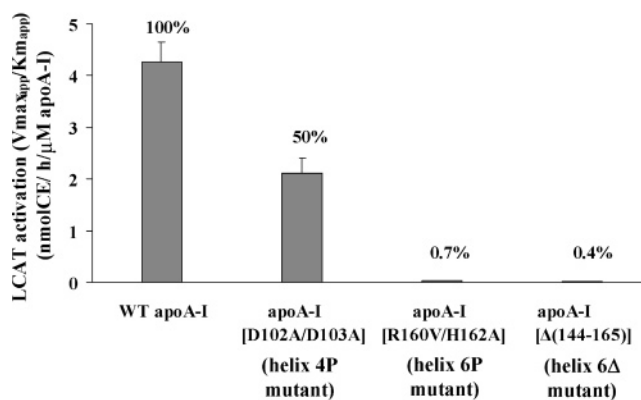


FIGURE 1: Activation of LCAT by rHDL containing WT or mutant apoA-I forms. Experiments were performed as described in Experimental Procedures using the indicated WT and mutant apoA-I forms. Values are the means \pm the standard deviation from three independent experiments performed in duplicate.

I $^{-/-}$ mice infected with the control adenovirus expressing the green fluorescence protein (apoA-I $^{-/-}$ GFP) had reduced levels of total, free, and esterified cholesterol and a decreased CE/TC ratio (Table 2). The plasma apoA-I levels were high in mice expressing WT apoA-I, normal in mice expressing the helix 4P and helix 6P mutants, and diminished in mice expressing the helix 6 Δ mutant (Table 2). The phospholipid levels were normal in mice expressing the WT apoA-I and the helix 4P and helix 6P mutants, but were greatly reduced in mice expressing the helix 6 Δ mutant and the control mice that express GFP (Table 2). The levels of plasma triglycerides in mice expressing the WT or mutant apoA-I forms were moderately increased as compared to those for apoA-I $^{-/-}$ GFP and C57BL/6 mice (Table 2). The differences in plasma lipid and apoA-I levels may not reflect differences in apoA-I expression, since the relative amounts of apoA-I mRNA were comparable (Table 2). However, we cannot exclude the possibility of differences in translation efficiencies or in vivo secretion between the WT and mutant apoA-I forms.

FPLC Profiles of Plasma Isolated from Mice Infected with Adenoviruses Expressing the WT and the Three Mutant ApoA-I Forms. FPLC analysis of plasma from apoA-I $^{-/-}$ mice infected with recombinant adenoviruses expressing either the WT apoA-I or the helix 4P mutant 4 days postinfection showed that apoA-I, cholesterol, and phospholipids were distributed predominantly in the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region (Figure 2A–C). The cholesteryl ester profiles were identical to those of total cholesterol (data not shown). Small amounts of apoA-I and cholesterol and barely detectable levels of phospholipids were also found in the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region in mice infected with the adenovirus expressing the helix 6 Δ mutant (Figure 2A–C). The HDL cholesterol levels in these mice were comparable to the HDL cholesterol levels of mice infected with the control adenovirus expressing the GFP (Figure 2B). In all mice infected with adenoviruses, the triglycerides were distributed in the VLDL region (Figure 2D).

A different apoA-I, cholesterol, and phospholipid FPLC profile was observed in mice infected with the adenovirus expressing the helix 6P mutant. In these mice, high levels

Table 2: Comparison of Plasma Lipids and ApoA-I Levels and Hepatic mRNA Levels of ApoA-I^{-/-} Mice 4 Days Postinfection with Recombinant Adenoviruses Expressing the WT ApoA-I or ApoA-I Mutants or the Control Protein GFP^a

	human apoA-I (mg/dL)	TC (mg/dL)	FC (mg/dL)	CE (mg/dL)	CE/TC (mg/dL)	PL (mg/dL)	TG (mg/dL)	relative hepatic human apoA-I mRNA (%)
WT apoA-I	432 ± 84	101 ± 15	31 ± 16	70 ± 19	0.69 ± 0.08	262 ± 48	101 ± 19	100
apoA-I[D102A/D103A] (helix 4P mutant)	98 ± 24	95 ± 18	24 ± 2	72 ± 19	0.74 ± 0.05	138 ± 30	63 ± 14	73 ± 8
apoA-I[R160V/H162A] (helix 6P mutant)	140 ± 16	57 ± 28	31 ± 15	26 ± 13	0.45 ± 0.06	179 ± 74	73 ± 10	113 ± 29
apoA-I[Δ(144–165)] (helix 6Δ mutant)	33 ± 6	44 ± 14	22 ± 7	22 ± 9	0.50 ± 0.07	63 ± 16	68 ± 16	84 ± 7
apoA-I ^{-/-} GFP	—	35 ± 6	17 ± 7	18 ± 1	0.52 ± 0.11	81 ± 14	42 ± 7	—
C57Bl/6 (mouse plasma apoA-I)	112 ± 10 ^b	95 ± 8	27 ± 5	68 ± 3	0.72 ± 0.02	256 ± 10	43 ± 6	—

^a Parameters for C57Bl/6 mice are also provided. Values are means ± the standard deviation ($n = 4-6$). ^b The value for mouse plasma apoA-I was obtained from ref 72.

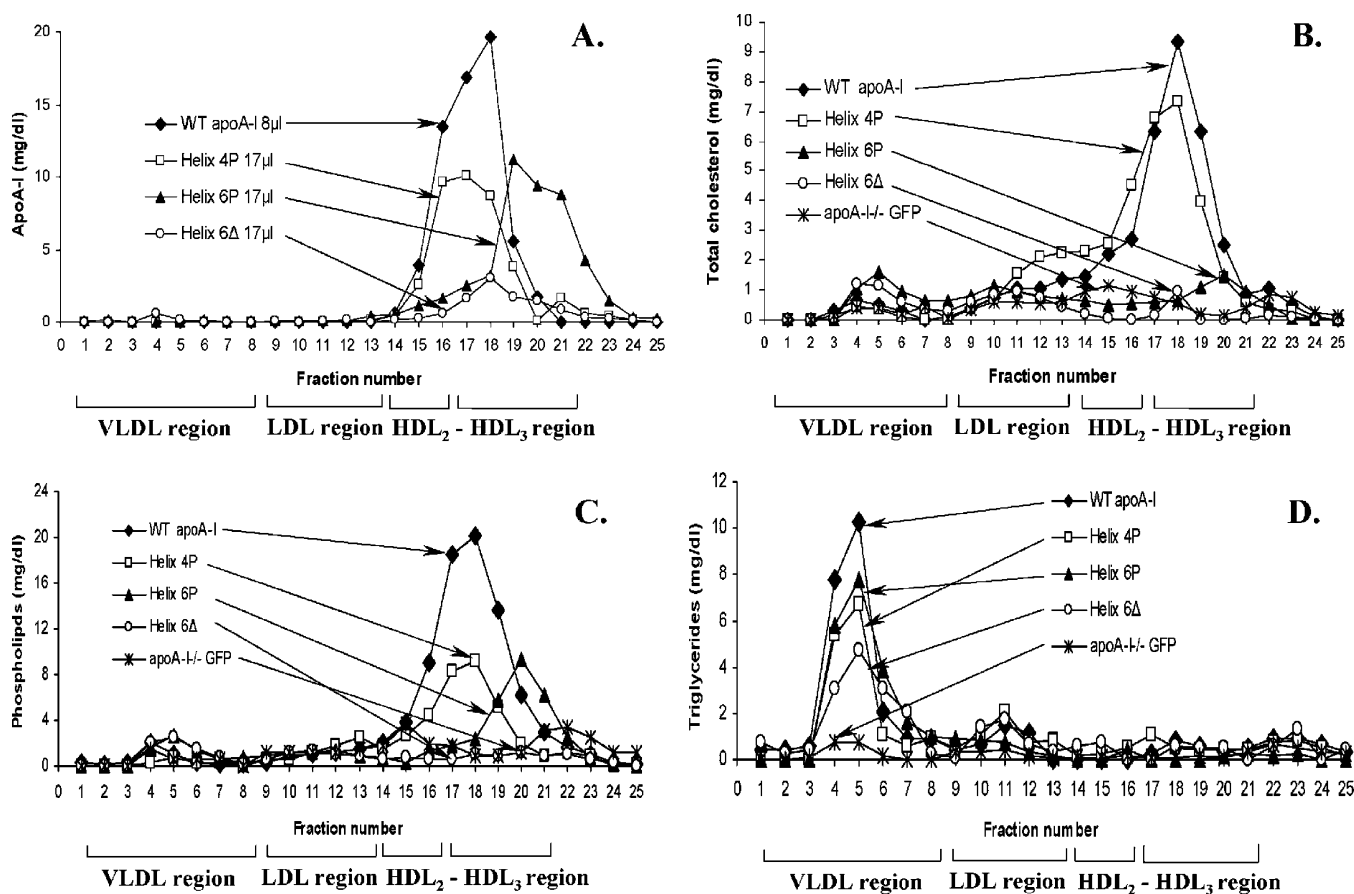


FIGURE 2: FPLC profiles of apoA-I, total cholesterol, phospholipids, and triglycerides in plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT apoA-I, the helix 4P (apoA-I[D102A/D103A]), helix 6P (apoA-I[R160V/H162A]), or helix 6Δ {apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]} mutant, or the control protein GFP. Plasma samples were obtained from mice infected with 1×10^9 pfu of the recombinant adenoviruses expressing the WT or mutant forms of apoA-I or the control protein GFP 4 days postinfection. The samples were fractionated by FPLC, and then the apoA-I (A), total cholesterol (B), phospholipid (C), and triglyceride (D) levels of each FPLC fraction were determined as described in Experimental Procedures.

of apoA-I and phospholipids and lower levels of cholesterol were found in the HDL₃ region (Figure 2A–C). The cholesteryl ester profile was identical to that of the total cholesterol (data not shown).

Effect of the ApoA-I Point Mutations in Helices 4 (apoA-I[D102A/D103A]) and 6 (apoA-I[R160A/H162A]) and Deletion of Helix 6 (apoA-I[Δ144–165]) on the Distribution of ApoA-I in Different Lipoproteins and the Size and Shape of HDL. Analysis of the distribution of apoA-I following density gradient ultracentrifugation of plasma showed that in mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the WT apoA-I and

the helix 4P mutant, apoA-I was distributed in the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region (Figure 3A). In mice expressing the WT apoA-I, the peak concentration of apoA-I was in the HDL₂ region, and in mice expressing the helix 4P mutant, apoA-I was equally distributed in the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region (Figure 3A). Consistent with the FPLC data (Figure 2A) in mice infected with the helix 6P mutant, the peak concentration of apoA-I was in the HDL₃ region (Figure 3A). Finally, in mice infected with the adenovirus expressing the helix 6Δ mutant, apoA-I was equally distributed in HDL₂ and HDL₃ (Figure 3A), whereas a substantial portion of HDL was also found

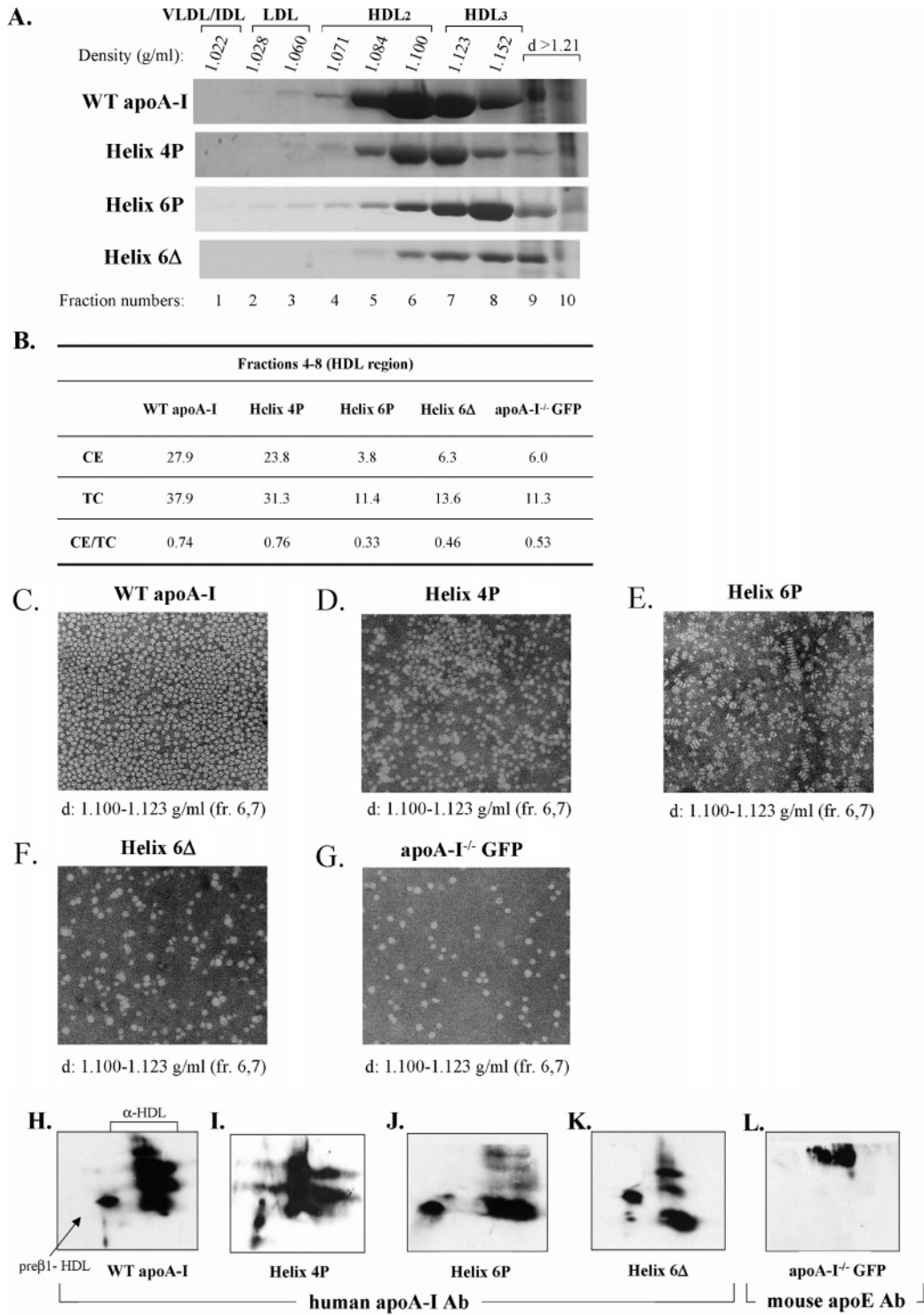


FIGURE 3: Analyses of plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT apoA-I, the helix 4P (apoA-I[D102A/D103A]), helix 6P (apoA-I[R160V/H162A]), or helix 6Δ {apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]} mutant, or the control protein GFP. (A) SDS–PAGE analysis of density gradient ultracentrifugation fractions of plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT or mutant apoA-I forms. Fractionation of plasma was performed as described in Experimental Procedures. The densities of the fractions are indicated at the top. (B) CE/TC ratio from a pool of lipoprotein fractions that correspond to the HDL region (fractions 4–8). (C–G) Electron microscopy pictures of HDL fractions obtained from apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT apoA-I (C), the helix 4P (D), helix 6P (E), or helix 6Δ (F) mutant, or the control protein GFP (G) following density gradient ultracentrifugation of plasma. The densities of the fractions used are given at the bottom. The photomicrographs were taken at 75000× magnification and enlarged three times. (H–L) Analysis of plasma obtained from mice expressing the WT apoA-I (H), the helix 4P (I), helix 6P (J), or helix 6Δ (K) mutant, or the control GFP protein (L) following two-dimensional gel electrophoresis and Western blotting using anti-human apoA-I antibody (H–K) or anti-mouse apoE antibody (L), as described in Experimental Procedures.

in the $d > 1.21$ g/mL fraction that was shown by electron microscopy to lack any lipoprotein particles (data not shown). Analysis of the distribution of total cholesterol, cholesteryl ester, free cholesterol, triglycerides, and phospholipids fol-

lowing density gradient ultracentrifugation of plasma essentially confirmed the distribution of these lipids to different lipoprotein fractions that were obtained by FPLC fractionation (data not shown). The cholesteryl ester (CE) to total

Table 3: Comparison of Plasma Lipids and ApoA-I Levels of ApoA-I^{-/-} Mice 4 Days Postinfection with Recombinant Adenoviruses Coexpressing a Combination of WT or Mutant ApoA-I Forms or GFP and LCAT^a

	apoA-I (mg/dL)	TC (mg/dL)	FC (mg/dL)	CE (mg/dL)	CE/TC (mg/dL)	PL (mg/dL)	TG (mg/dL)	relative hepatic apoA-I mRNA ^b (%)
WT apoA-I	254 ± 88	214 ± 28	44 ± 5	169 ± 23	0.79 ± 0.02	244 ± 39	65 ± 3	68 ± 20
apoA-I[R160V/H162A] (helix 6P mutant)	463 ± 25	461 ± 59	116 ± 26	345 ± 33	0.74 ± 0.03	571 ± 43	166 ± 44	91 ± 28
apoA-I[Δ(144–165)] (helix 6Δ mutant)	45 ± 3	144 ± 4	31 ± 1	113 ± 6	0.79 ± 0.01	170 ± 9	62 ± 7	44 ± 9
apoA-I ^{-/-} GFP	—	116 ± 40	29 ± 9	87 ± 31	0.75 ± 0.01	139 ± 34	46 ± 2	—

^a Values are means ± the standard deviation ($n = 4$). ^b The value of hepatic apoA-I mRNA levels was taken to be 100% in mice infected with adenoviruses expressing WT apoA-I (but not LCAT) (Table 2).

cholesterol (TC) ratio was calculated in fractions 4–8 that correspond to the HDL region (Figure 3A). This analysis showed that the CE/TC ratio in mice infected with the helix 6P and helix 6Δ mutants was comparable to or lower than that of the mice infected with the GFP-expressing adenovirus and was greatly reduced as compared to the CE/TC ratio of mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the WT apoA-I or the helix 4P mutant (Figure 3B). As suggested previously (50), the low CE/TC ratio indicates defective esterification of HDL in vivo in mice infected with the adenoviruses expressing the helix 6P and helix 6Δ mutants of apoA-I. Similar information for the CE/TC ratio of the HDL region was obtained by fractionation of plasma by FPLC (data not shown).

Analysis by electron microscopy of HDL fractions 6 and 7 (density, 1.100–1.123 g/mL), obtained by density gradient ultracentrifugation (Figure 3A), showed that both the WT apoA-I and the helix 4P mutant promoted the formation of spherical HDL particles (Figure 3C,D), whereas the helix 6P mutant promoted predominantly the formation of discoidal HDL particles (Figure 3E). In contrast, the helix 6Δ mutant promoted the formation of few spherical particles (Figure 3F) similar to those seen in control mice infected with the adenovirus-expressing GFP (Figure 3G). Two-dimensional gel electrophoresis of plasma showed that both the WT apoA-I and the helix 4P mutant formed α-HDL particles and small amounts of preβ1-HDL particles (Figure 3H,I), whereas both the helix 6P mutant and the helix 6Δ mutant had an increased ratio of preβ1 to α-HDL particles and reduced the population of the larger α-HDL particles (Figure 3J,K). This reduction in the larger α-HDL particles was more pronounced in the case of the helix 6P mutant.

In the analyses shown in Figure 3H–K, apoA-I-containing HDL particles were detected on the membrane blots with anti-human apoA-I antibodies. When blots were treated with antibodies to mouse apoE, apoE containing particles of fast electrophoretic mobility and larger size were detected in the plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice infected with the control GFP-expressing adenovirus (Figure 3L), but not in the plasma of mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the WT or mutant apoA-I forms (data not shown).

In Vivo Effect of LCAT on Plasma Lipids, FPLC Profiles, the Distribution of HDL in Different Densities, and the Size and Shape of HDL in Mice Infected with Adenoviruses Expressing WT or Helix 6P or Helix 6Δ Mutant ApoA-I Forms and Human LCAT. To assess how apoA-I mutations affect the biogenesis of HDL, apoA-I^{-/-} mice were coinfecting with a mixture of adenoviruses expressing WT or mutant apoA-I forms (1×10^9 pfu) along with human LCAT (1×10^9 pfu). This treatment increased more than 2-fold

the levels of total cholesterol and cholesteryl esters in mice infected with the adenovirus expressing the WT apoA-I, without altering the CE/TC ratio (Tables 2 and 3). This treatment did not affect the FPLC profile of apoA-I, but shifted the FPLC HDL cholesterol profile to the HDL₂ region (Figure 4A,D). The reduction in plasma apoA-I levels can be attributed to the decreased levels of hepatic apoA-I mRNA (Tables 2 and 3). A similar increase in the HDL₂ cholesterol level was observed in apoA-I^{-/-} mice infected with a mixture of adenoviruses expressing GFP and human LCAT (Figure 4G).

The LCAT coinfection had a dramatic effect in mice infected with the helix 6P mutant. This treatment increased 3.3-, 8-, and 13-fold the apoA-I, the total cholesterol, and the esterified cholesterol levels, respectively, and normalized the CE/TC ratio of HDL (Tables 2 and 3). The relative expression levels of hepatic apoA-I mRNA with or without LCAT coinfection were comparable (Tables 2 and 3). All the increase in the cholesterol level could be attributed to the increase in the plasma apoA-I and HDL level (Figure 4B,E). The LCAT coinfection also increased approximately 4-fold the plasma-free cholesterol, 3-fold the plasma phospholipid, and 2-fold the plasma triglyceride levels (Tables 2 and 3). The increase in the plasma triglyceride level most likely is associated with the presence of apoA-I in the VLDL/IDL fraction (Figure 5D) (27, 38). In mice coinfecting with adenoviruses expressing LCAT and the helix 6Δ mutant or the control GFP, lipid parameters (with the exception of those of free cholesterol and triglycerides) increased 3–5-fold and the CE/TC ratio of HDL was normalized (Tables 2 and 3). The LCAT coinfection also caused an increase in plasma apoA-I and HDL levels in mice infected with the adenovirus-expressing helix 6Δ mutant (Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 4C,F). The increase in plasma apoA-I level corrected for hepatic apoA-I mRNA levels was 2.5-fold (Tables 2 and 3). The LCAT coinfection shifted the FPLC HDL cholesterol and apoA-I profile toward the HDL₂ region (Figure 4C,F).

Useful information was obtained by comparison of the relative distribution of apoA-I, apoE, and apoA-IV in the plasma of mice infected with adenoviruses expressing WT and mutant apoA-I forms or the control GFP with or without concomitant infection with adenovirus expressing LCAT. In mice expressing the helix 6Δ mutant, the LCAT treatment increased the concentration of apoE in the HDL₂ and LDL region and also shifted and increased the concentration of apoA-IV in the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region (Figure 5E,F). Similar changes in concentration and shifts toward lower densities of apoE and apoA-IV following treatment with LCAT were observed in mice infected with the adenovirus expressing WT apoA-I or the control adenovirus expressing

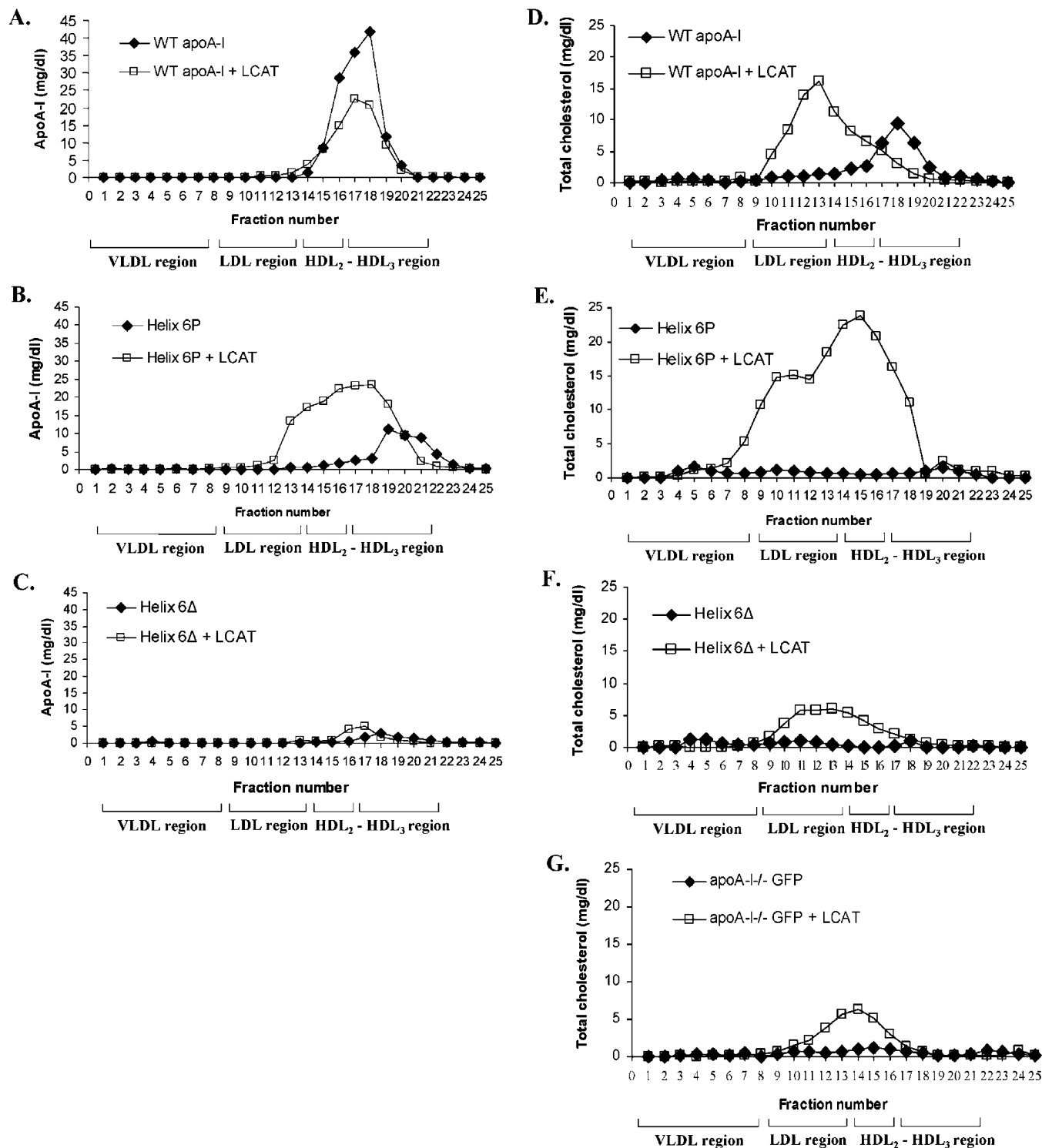


FIGURE 4: FPLC profiles of apoA-I and total cholesterol in plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT apoA-I, the helix 6P mutant (apoA-I[R160V/H162A]), or the helix 6Δ mutant {apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]} as well as FPLC profile of total cholesterol in plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the control protein GFP, alone or in combination with human LCAT. Plasma samples were obtained from mice infected with 1×10^9 pfu of the recombinant adenoviruses expressing the WT or mutant forms of apoA-I alone or in combination with 1×10^9 pfu of an adenovirus expressing the human LCAT 4 days postinfection. The samples were fractionated by FPLC, and then the apoA-I (A–C) and total cholesterol (D–G) levels of each FPLC fraction were determined as described in Experimental Procedures.

GFP (Figure 5A,B,G,H). The shifts in the distribution of apoE and apoA-I that were caused by LCAT treatment seen in Figure 5A,B,E–H parallel the shifts in cholesterol distribution observed in Figure 4D,F,G. The shift in the cholesterol peak toward the LDL region may represent partial esterification of LDL cholesterol, which as reported previously can be promoted by apoE (51, 52). In addition, it may

reflect the formation of apoE-containing HDL particles. The LCAT treatment of mice expressing the helix 6P mutant shifted the bulk of apoA-I from HDL₃ to the HDL₂ and LDL region, while a small amount of apoA-I was also found in the VLDL and IDL region (Figure 5C,D). Only small amounts of apoE and apoA-IV were detected in the VLDL and LDL region and HDL₂ region, respectively, and their

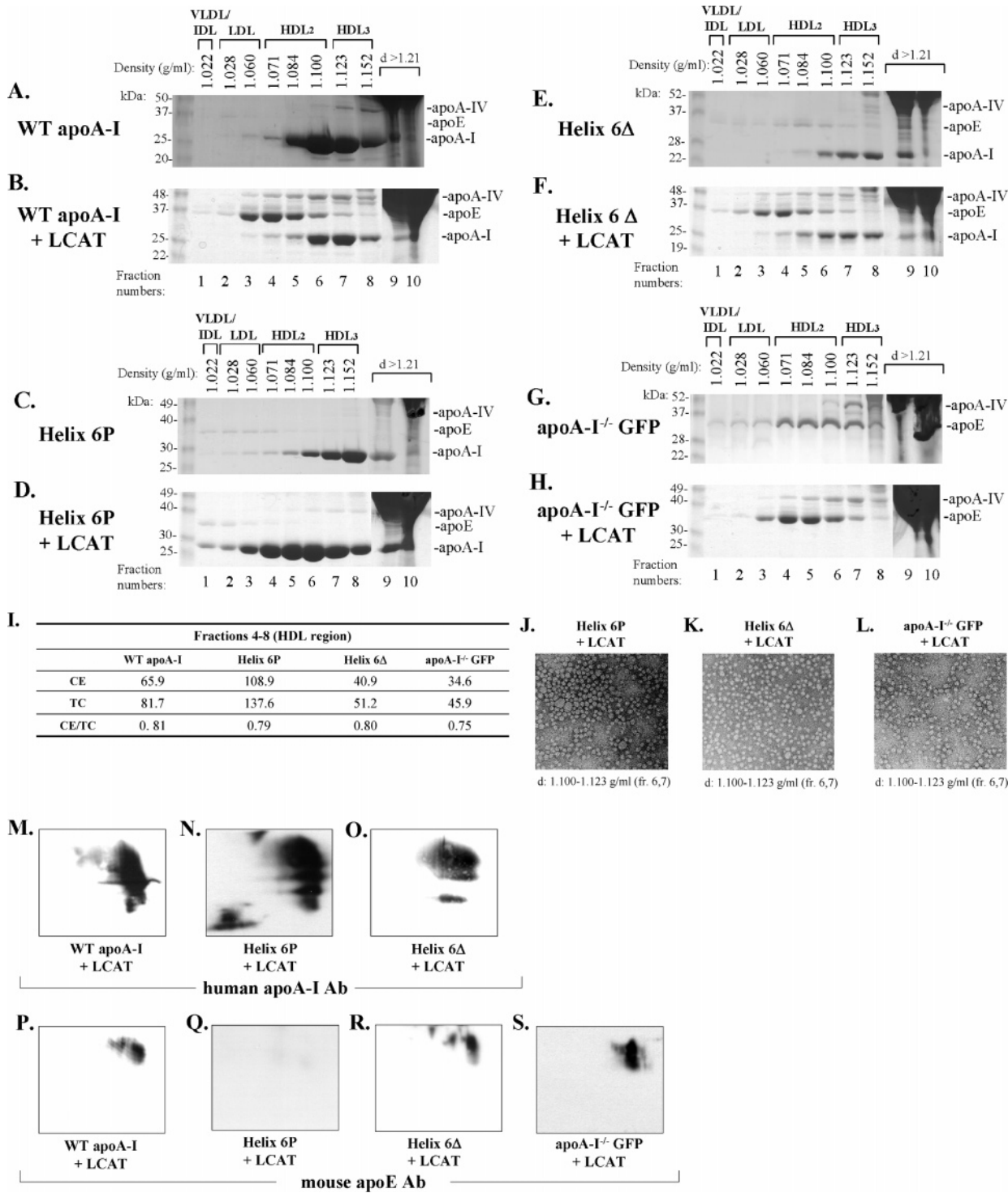


FIGURE 5: Analyses of plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT apoA-I, the helix 6P (apoA-I[R160V/H162A]) or helix 6Δ {apoA-I[Δ(144–165)]} mutant, or the control protein GFP alone or in combination with human LCAT. (A–H) Comparison of the SDS–PAGE profiles of fractions obtained by density gradient ultracentrifugation analysis of plasma of apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the WT or mutant apoA-I forms alone or in combination with the human LCAT. Fractionation of plasma and SDS–PAGE analysis was performed as described in Experimental Procedures. Panels A, C, E, and G correspond to plasma samples obtained from mice expressing the WT apoA-I (A), the helix 6P (C) or helix 6Δ (E) mutant, or the control protein GFP (G) alone. Panels B, D, F, and H correspond to plasma samples obtained from mice expressing the WT apoA-I (B), the helix 6P (D) or helix 6Δ (F) mutant, or the control protein GFP (H) in combination with human LCAT. The densities of the fractions are indicated at the top. (I) CE/TC ratio from a pool of lipoprotein fractions that correspond to the HDL region (fractions 4–8). (J–L) Electron microscopy pictures of HDL fractions obtained from apoA-I^{-/-} mice expressing the helix 6P (J) and helix 6Δ (K) mutants along with human LCAT or the control protein GFP (L) along with human LCAT, following density gradient ultracentrifugation of plasma. The densities of the fractions are indicated at the bottom of each panel. The photomicrographs were taken at 75000× magnification and enlarged three times. (M–S) Analysis of plasma obtained from mice expressing the WT apoA-I (M and P), the helix 6P (N and Q), or helix 6Δ (O and R) mutant, or the control GFP protein (S) together with human LCAT following two-dimensional gel electrophoresis and Western blotting using anti-human apoA-I antibody (M–O) or anti-mouse apoE antibody (P–S), as described in Experimental Procedures.

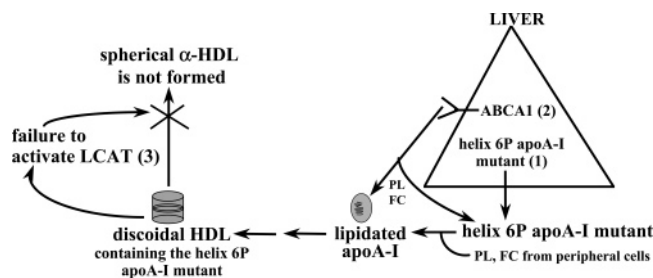


FIGURE 6: Schematic representation of the early steps in the biogenesis of HDL. Numbers 1–3 indicate different steps in the biogenesis of HDL. When step 1 or 2 is inhibited, we observe only formation of pre β 1-HDL (1, 4, 9, 14). This figure indicates that when step 3 is inhibited or the activity of LCAT is rate-limiting we observe accumulation of discoidal HDL particles.

concentration and the distribution to different densities did not change following treatment with LCAT (Figure 5C,D). The LCAT treatment also normalized the CE/TC ratio of HDL in mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the helix 6P mutant and helix 6 Δ mutant as well as in mice infected with the GFP-expressing adenovirus (Figure 5I). It also promoted the formation of only spherical particles in mice expressing the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ apoA-I mutants or the GFP (Figure 5J–L).

Two-dimensional electrophoresis of plasma showed that following LCAT coinfection the WT apoA-I, the helix 6P mutant, and the helix 6 Δ mutant produced large α -HDL particles (compare Figure 5M–O with Figure 3H,J,K). In the case of WT apoA-I and the helix 6 Δ mutant, the LCAT treatment eliminated completely the pre β 1-HDL particles (Figure 5M,O). When duplicate blots corresponding to those shown in Figure 5M–O were treated with antibodies to mouse apoE, apoE-containing lipoproteins with fast electrophoretic mobility and larger size were detected in the plasma of apoA-I-deficient mice infected with adenoviruses expressing the WT apoA-I or the helix 6 Δ mutant (Figure 5P,R), but not in mice expressing the helix 6P mutant (Figure 5Q). ApoE-containing particles were also detected in the plasma of mice coinfecting with adenoviruses expressing LCAT and the control protein GFP (Figure 5S).

Figure 6 is a schematic representation depicting the effect of apoA-I mutations with reduced capacity to activate LCAT, such as the helix 6P mutant, on the biogenesis of spherical HDL.

DISCUSSION

Effect of ApoA-I Mutations on Different Steps in the Pathway of Biogenesis of HDL. ApoA-I bound to lipids is the principal physiological activator of LCAT (53). It has been shown that particles containing one molecule of apoA-I complexed with small amounts of phospholipids and cholesterol are efficient substrates for LCAT (54).

The capacity of apoA-I mutations to activate LCAT has been studied extensively in vitro and, in a few instances, in vivo (2, 18–28, 31–37, 47–49, 55–63).

All these studies invariably suggested that although several domains of apolipoprotein A-I may contribute to the activation of LCAT, helix 6 of apoA-I, which contains residues 143–164, is essential for this process.

The hydrophobic–hydrophilic interface of helix 6 of apoA-I contains a cluster of three conserved arginine residues

(R149, R153, and R160), which were suggested to create a positive electrostatic potential around apoA-I (48). Mutations in these residues reduced drastically the ability of rHDL particles containing these apoA-I mutants to activate LCAT in vitro. On the basis of the “belt” model for discoidal rHDL, it was suggested that residues R149, R153, and R160 are located on the hydrophilic face of the apoA-I helices and do not form intramolecular salt bridges in the antiparallel apoA-I dimer that covers the fatty acyl chain of the discoidal particle (8, 48, 64). This arrangement could allow in principle these apoA-I residues to form salt bridges or hydrogen bonds with appropriate residues of LCAT and thus contribute to LCAT activation.

LCAT activation was also severely impaired in vitro by the naturally occurring mutations R151C and H162Q (24, 62, 63). These residues are found in the hydrophilic face of the helix, and it was proposed, on the basis of the belt model for discoidal HDL, that residue 162 participates in interhelical interactions with D103 in the apoA-I dimer (8, 64).

On the basis of the background information discussed above and our previous work (3), in the current study we have focused on the impact of two sets of point mutations near the kinks on helices 4 and 6 and a deletion of helix 6 on the activation of LCAT.

ApoA-I mutants offer a valuable tool for dissecting the molecular events which lead to the biogenesis of HDL and possibly for understanding the types of molecular interactions between apoA-I and LCAT which lead to the activation of the enzyme.

It has been established that the interactions of lipid-free apoA-I with ABCA1 are essential for the biogenesis of HDL (1, 65, 66). Mutations in the ABCA1 transporter that affect its functional interactions with lipid-free apoA-I prevent the formation of either spherical or discoidal HDL (9). We have also shown that carboxy-terminal deletions which eliminate residues 220–231 of apoA-I interact poorly with ABCA1 and fail to form either discoidal or spherical HDL (1, 4). Following the initial lipidation of apoA-I via ABCA1 (66), the next crucial step in the biogenesis of HDL is the conversion of discoidal to spherical HDL (Figure 6). It is well established that structural mutations in LCAT which affect the catalytic functions of the enzyme are associated with the classical form of LCAT deficiency which is characterized by the accumulation in plasma of discoidal HDL particles (16). This phenotype clearly implies that deficiency in LCAT activity, due to critical mutations in the enzyme or mutations in the activator apoA-I, permits the early steps in HDL biogenesis to proceed, but the discoidal HDL that is produced cannot be converted to spherical particles (Figure 6).

Identification of Point Mutations in ApoA-I that Inhibit LCAT in Vivo and Generate a Phenotype that Mimics the Classical LCAT Deficiency. To dissect the effect of different apoA-I mutations on the biogenesis and/or remodeling of HDL, we have used various HDL parameters, including the HDL cholesterol peak following FPLC fractionation of plasma, the formation of discoidal or spherical HDL as determined by electron microscopy, and the relative abundance of pre β 1 and α -HDL particles. Two other in vivo parameters were important. The first was the in vivo capacity of the mouse LCAT to esterify the HDL cholesterol in mice expressing mutant apoA-I forms as determined by the CE/

TC ratio of the HDL fraction. The second was the restoration of the CE/TC ratio and the formation of α -migrating HDL by overexpression of human LCAT.

The FPLC analysis pointed out important differences in the HDL lipid profiles of the apoA-I mutants. On the basis of the HDL size, the lipid composition, the CE/TC ratio of the HDL region, the spherical shape of HDL, and the ratio of pre β 1 to α -HDL, the helix 4P mutant (apoA-I[D102A/D103A]) appeared to be indistinguishable from WT apoA-I. Physicochemical studies have shown that this mutant undergoes a modest reduction in its α -helical content in both the lipid-free and lipid-bound state, and significant reduction in the cooperativity of unfolding in the lipid-free state. The stability of this mutant protein was altered moderately in the lipid-free state and significantly in the lipid-bound state (I. N. Gorshkova, A. Chroni, V. I. Zannis, and D. Atkinson, unpublished data).

Although both the helix 6P mutant (apoA-I[R160V/H162A]) and the helix 6 Δ mutant {apoA-I[Δ (144–165)]} have very low LCAT activation capacity in vitro, they generated different phenotypes when they were expressed in apoA-I^{-/-} mice. A distinct feature of the helix 6P mutant was the high apoA-I and phospholipid peak in the HDL₃ region, the diminished HDL cholesterol and cholesteryl ester peak, the low CE/TC ratio of HDL, the abundance of discoidal HDL, and the increased pre β 1/ α -HDL ratio. Most of the α -HDL in this mutant was in the form of small α 3 HDL particles (67). On the basis of SDS–PAGE analysis of the fractions obtained from plasma of mice expressing the helix 6P mutant by density gradient ultracentrifugation and two-dimensional electrophoresis of the plasma, the HDL that was formed contained exclusively apoA-I but not apoE. In contrast, the helix 6 Δ mutant had a very small peak of apoA-I, cholesterol, and phospholipids in the HDL region. In addition, this mutant promoted the formation of few spherical particles comparable in numbers to those seen in apoA-I^{-/-} mice. The HDL particles formed had an increased pre β 1/ α -HDL ratio. Approximately two-thirds of the α -HDL generated by the helix 6 Δ mutant was in the form of small α 3 particles. Another difference between the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ mutants was the effect of overexpression of LCAT on HDL levels. Coinfection of mice with adenoviruses expressing the helix 6P mutant and human LCAT caused a dramatic increase in HDL cholesterol and apoA-I levels. This treatment also converted the discoidal HDL into spherical α -HDL and increased the size of the α -HDL particles by converting the α 3 to α 2 and α 1 particles. The pre β 1/ α -HDL ratio of mice expressing the helix 6P mutant and human LCAT is similar to that of mice expressing the WT apoA-I (compare Figure 3H and Figure 5N). On the other hand, coinfection of mice with adenoviruses expressing the helix 6 Δ mutant caused an approximately 2.5-fold increase in the magnitude of the HDL cholesterol and apoA-I peak. This treatment also increased the number of spherical HDL particles, and converted all the pre β 1-HDL into α -HDL particles.

An interesting observation of the LCAT treatment is that it normalized the CE/TC ratio in HDL and promoted the formation of spherical HDL particles not only in mice expressing WT and mutant apoA-I forms but also in the control mice expressing GFP. With one exception, which was the helix 6P mutant, the LCAT treatment increased the

concentration of apoE and apoA-IV, and shifted the distribution of apoE toward the HDL₂ region and of apoA-IV toward the HDL₂ and HDL₃ region. These changes were also associated with the formation of large apoE-containing particles with fast electrophoretic mobility, as determined by two-dimensional gel electrophoresis. A plausible interpretation of these findings is that the excess of LCAT promoted the esterification of cholesterol of apoE- and apoA-IV-containing lipoprotein particles using apoE or apoA-IV as the LCAT activator (68–70), and thus promoted the formation of spherical particles containing these apolipoproteins. An increase in the plasma apoE level has also been observed in LCAT transgenic mice (52). In contrast to the control apoA-I^{-/-} mice and those expressing WT or helix 4P and 6 Δ mutant apoA-I forms, coinfection of mice with adenoviruses expressing the helix 6P mutant and human LCAT did not affect the plasma levels and the distribution of endogenous apoE and apoA-IV, and did not lead to the formation of apoE-containing lipoprotein particles as determined by two-dimensional gel electrophoresis. On the basis of SDS–PAGE analysis of the lipoprotein fractions obtained by density gradient ultracentrifugation of the plasma, it appears that the helix 6P mutant interfered with the formation of apoE- and apoA-IV-containing HDL size particles.

Molecular Mechanisms Causing HDL Deficiencies Due to Mutations in ApoA-I. This study indicates that residues 160 and/or 162 of apoA-I located in the hydrophilic face of helix 6 (8, 64) play a crucial role in the activation of LCAT in vivo. Previous in vivo studies showed that the naturally occurring deletion mutant in helix 6 of apoA-I, apoA-I[Δ (146–160)], in human subjects (15) and a comparable deletion mutant, apoA-I[Δ (143–164)], in mice (23) reduced greatly the apoA-I and HDL levels (15, 23). These studies did not provide a molecular explanation for what caused the reduction in the HDL level.

The phenotype generated by the R160V/H162A mutations mimics the phenotype of the classical LCAT deficiency in the sense that the mutant apoA-I drives the early steps in the biogenesis of HDL but blocks the esterification of free cholesterol that is present on the discoidal HDL particles and thus prevents the conversion of discoidal into spherical particles (Figure 6). Consistent with this interpretation are in vitro data showing that the helix 6P mutant has normal capacity to promote ABCA1-dependent cholesterol efflux (65), but it has a greatly reduced capacity to activate LCAT.

Our data indicate that the phenotypes created by the helix 6 Δ mutant and helix 6P mutant are different. Like the helix 6P mutant, the helix 6 Δ mutant has near-normal capacity to promote ABCA1-dependent lipid efflux in vitro (65). This implies that following binding to ABCA1, the helix 6 Δ mutant may be lipidated and released normally from the apoA-I–ABCA1 complex (65). However, it appears that few of the lipidated apoA-I particles remain in the circulation and are able to mature into spherical HDL, even in the presence of excess LCAT. A potential reason for this finding can be obtained by comparison of the physicochemical properties of the WT apoA-I with the helix 6P and helix 6 Δ mutants of apoA-I.

The α -helical content of WT and the helix 6 Δ and 6P mutant apoA-I forms in the lipid-free state and on the rHDL particles was estimated from the normalized far-UV CD spectra. It was found that the helix 6 Δ mutant had ap-

proximately 22 fewer residues in the α -helical conformation in the lipid-free state and had reduced chemical and thermal stability and cooperativity of unfolding as compared to the WT apoA-I. The deletion also caused a red shift in the wavelength of maximum fluorescence (40). In contrast, compared to WT apoA-I, the helix 6P mutant had normal helical content and stability, in both lipid-free and lipid-bound states, but had a statistically significant reduction in the cooperativity of thermal unfolding in the lipid-free state (I. N. Gorshkova, A. Chroni, V. I. Zannis, and D. Atkinson, unpublished data).

The very low catalytic efficiency of the enzyme in the presence of the helix 6P and 6 Δ mutants observed in vitro and in vivo can be overcome by excess LCAT. This indicates that the endogenous mouse LCAT activity is limiting for the conversion of discoidal to spherical particles. Our data do now allow us to distinguish whether apoA-I participates in the catalytic mechanisms of LCAT, the binding of LCAT to HDL or rHDL containing apoA-I, or both. The role in the catalytic mechanism might involve, for instance, stabilization of the intermediates of the enzymatic reaction that proceeds via acylation and deacylation of the enzyme using lecithin as a substrate. On the other hand, the role in binding of LCAT to HDL may involve protein-protein interactions of the apoA-I bound on discoidal particles with LCAT and/or conformational changes in LCAT that may facilitate the catalysis.

In addition, the reduced stability of the helix 6 Δ mutant may contribute to rapid in vivo catabolism and reduced levels of apoA-I and discoidal HDL substrate. The reduction in the substrate concentration, combined with changes in the catalytic efficiency of the enzyme caused by the helix 6 Δ mutant, may explain the low levels of HDL, even in the presence of excess LCAT.

This study indicates that apoA-I point mutations in the general population may block the biogenesis of HDL at the level of conversion of the discoidal HDL particles to spherical and may cause pathologies similar to those observed in patients with classical LCAT deficiency or other HDL deficiencies.

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