

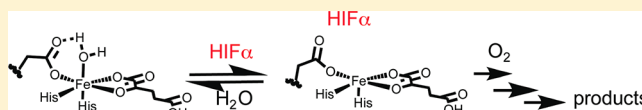
# Inverse Solvent Isotope Effects Arising from Substrate Triggering in the Factor Inhibiting Hypoxia Inducible Factor

John A. Hangasky, Evren Saban, and Michael J. Knapp\*

Department of Chemistry, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003, United States

## Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Oxygen homeostasis plays a critical role in angiogenesis, erythropoiesis, and cell metabolism. Oxygen homeostasis is set by the hypoxia inducible factor-1 $\alpha$  (HIF-1 $\alpha$ ) pathway, which is controlled by factor inhibiting HIF-1 $\alpha$  (FIH). FIH is a non-heme Fe(II),  $\alpha$ -ketoglutarate ( $\alpha$ KG)-dependent dioxygenase that inhibits HIF-1 $\alpha$  by hydroxylating the C-terminal transactivation domain (CTAD) of HIF-1 $\alpha$  at HIF-Asn<sup>803</sup>. A tight coupling between CTAD binding and O<sub>2</sub> activation is essential for hypoxia sensing, making changes in the coordination geometry of Fe(II) upon CTAD encounter a crucial feature of this enzyme. Although the consensus chemical mechanism for FIH proposes that CTAD binding triggers O<sub>2</sub> activation by causing the Fe(II) cofactor to release an aquo ligand, experimental evidence of this has been absent. More broadly, this proposed coordination change at Fe(II) has not been observed during steady-state turnover in any  $\alpha$ KG oxygenase to date. In this work, solvent isotope effects (SIEs) were used as a direct mechanistic probe of substrate-triggered aquo release in FIH, as inverse SIEs (SIE < 1) are signatures for pre-equilibrium aquo release from metal ions. Our mechanistic studies of FIH have revealed inverse solvent isotope effects in the steady-state rate constants at limiting concentrations of CTAD or  $\alpha$ KG [<sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>k<sub>cat</sub>/K<sub>M(CTAD)</sub> = 0.40 ± 0.07, and <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>k<sub>cat</sub>/K<sub>M( $\alpha$ KG)</sub> = 0.32 ± 0.08], providing direct evidence of aquo release during steady-state turnover. Furthermore, the SIE at saturating concentrations of CTAD and  $\alpha$ KG was inverse (<sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>k<sub>cat</sub> = 0.51 ± 0.07), indicating that aquo release occurs after CTAD binds. The inverse kinetic SIEs observed in the steady state for FIH can be explained by a strong Fe–OH<sub>2</sub> bond. The stable Fe–OH<sub>2</sub> bond plays an important part in FIH's regulatory role over O<sub>2</sub> homeostasis in humans and points toward a strategy for tightly coupling O<sub>2</sub> activation with CTAD hydroxylation that relies on substrate triggering.



Oxygen homeostasis is essential for proper cellular function in humans and is tightly controlled by a small group of non-heme Fe(II),  $\alpha$ -ketoglutarate ( $\alpha$ KG)-dependent dioxygenases. Oxygen-dependent regulation of the transcriptional coactivator hypoxia inducible factor-1 $\alpha$  (HIF-1 $\alpha$ ) maintains O<sub>2</sub> homeostasis as HIF-1 $\alpha$  controls more than 100 genes, directing processes such as angiogenesis, glycolysis, and erythropoiesis.<sup>1–3</sup> The Fe(II)/ $\alpha$ KG-dependent dioxygenase “factor inhibiting HIF-1 $\alpha$ ” (FIH-1 or FIH) inhibits HIF-1 $\alpha$  in the presence of sufficient O<sub>2</sub> by hydroxylating the C-terminal activation domain (CTAD) of HIF-1 $\alpha$  at HIF-Asn<sup>803</sup>.<sup>4–7</sup> This hydroxylation prevents recruitment of the CREB binding protein, effectively downregulating HIF-1 $\alpha$ -dependent gene expression in response to a normal or an elevated O<sub>2</sub> concentration.

The consensus mechanism for Fe(II)/ $\alpha$ KG-dependent dioxygenases proposes that binding of the primary substrate triggers the Fe(II) to bind O<sub>2</sub>, because of aquo release opening a coordination site for O<sub>2</sub> (Scheme 1). Substrate triggering is a central tenet of the consensus mechanism, as it can explain the relative O<sub>2</sub> reactivity of  $\alpha$ KG oxygenases.<sup>11,49</sup> Subsequent O<sub>2</sub> activation allows for oxidative decarboxylation of  $\alpha$ KG and the formation of a highly reactive ferryl intermediate. H-Atom abstraction and the ensuing  $\bullet$ OH rebound effectively hydroxylate the primary substrate. As sensing the O<sub>2</sub> concentration requires that O<sub>2</sub> activation occur only when

HIF-1 $\alpha$  is bound, substrate triggering is the key to O<sub>2</sub> sensing by FIH.

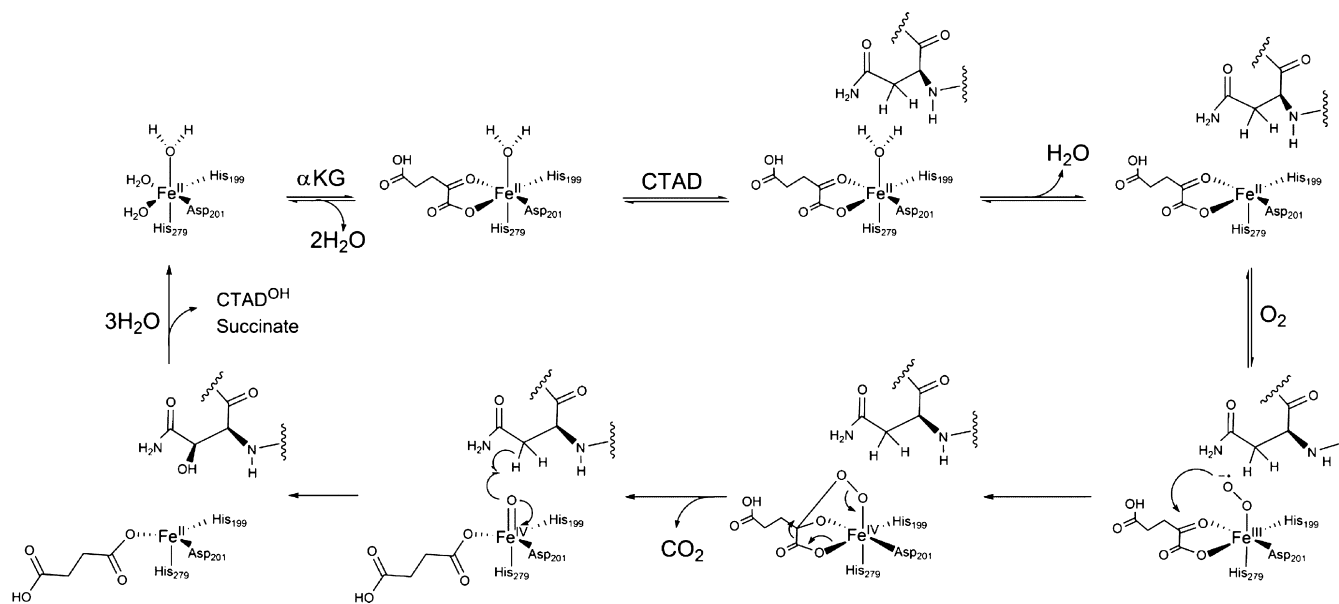
Various experimental techniques have been used to test the consensus mechanism of the Fe(II)/ $\alpha$ KG-dependent dioxygenases. Extensive spectroscopic studies of the Fe(II)/ $\alpha$ KG-dependent dioxygenase clavamate synthase (CAS) have provided insight into the coordination change due to aquo release induced by the primary substrate. MCD and CD studies of (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG)CAS indicate the Fe(II) is predominantly six-coordinate. Upon addition of the primary substrate (S), the active site iron of (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG + S)CAS adopts a five-coordinate square-pyramidal geometry<sup>8–10</sup> because of the release of the aquo ligand. Stopped-flow and freeze-quench techniques have been used to study the Fe(II)/ $\alpha$ KG-dependent dioxygenase, taurine dioxygenase (TauD). Loss of the aquo ligand was observed under single-turnover conditions, and these studies identified an Fe(IV)=O intermediate as the active oxidant in TauD.<sup>11–13</sup> However, these studies did not address aquo release under multiple-turnover conditions, leaving open the possibility that aquo release is not a recurring step in the steady state.

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Scheme 1. Consensus Chemical Mechanism for FIH



To date, neither in-depth spectroscopic studies of the coordination changes proposed upon substrate binding nor mechanistic probes for substrate triggering have been reported for FIH, making substrate triggering in this enzyme largely speculative. The X-ray crystallographic data for FIH bound to various substrates are ambiguous with respect to the coordination geometry of Fe(II), making it difficult to draw conclusions about the link between substrate binding and aquo release. Structures of (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG)FIH are reported to contain either five-coordinate<sup>15</sup> or six-coordinate<sup>16</sup> Fe(II); however, the crystal structure of (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG + CTAD)FIH shows a five-coordinate Fe(II),<sup>15</sup> suggesting that aquo release may partially occur prior to CTAD binding. EPR spectroscopy of Co(II)-substituted (Co +  $\alpha$ KG)FIH revealed a mixture of five-coordinate and six-coordinate Co(II), further suggesting that aquo release may occur prior to CTAD binding.<sup>17,18</sup> Crystal structures of both (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG + Notch)FIH and (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG + TNKS2)FIH were refined with an axial aquo ligand present, suggesting that aquo release occurs after these substrates bind.<sup>19,20</sup> Direct mechanistic probes of aquo release during turnover would provide a crucial view of the mechanism of this enzyme, as well as providing insight into substrate triggering by this broad class of enzymes.

We propose that the extensive H-bonding network surrounding the active site of FIH constitutes a second coordination sphere, which transduces CTAD binding into aquo release. Steady-state kinetics of FIH point mutants indicate that removal of hydrogen bonds from several residues surrounding the Fe(II) impairs catalytic efficiency,<sup>14</sup> suggesting that substrate binding causes alterations of those hydrogen bonds. FIH has been shown to have a tightly coupled oxidative and reductive half-reaction, avoiding the formation of reactive oxygen species during turnover.<sup>21</sup> Point mutations that perturb this H-bonding network significantly decrease FIH activity and lead to uncoupled  $\alpha$ KG consumption.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of FIH crystal structures and mechanistic data for point mutants, we hypothesized that aquo release occurs with every turnover during the steady state.

To test this hypothesis, we applied mechanistic probes that are sensitive to those steps preceding O<sub>2</sub> activation. Specifically,

we focused on the steps involving  $\alpha$ KG and CTAD binding, as these steps lead to substrate triggering: the aquo release and priming of the Fe(II) for O<sub>2</sub> binding and activation. Steady-state kinetic assays were performed to identify the preferred binding order for CTAD and  $\alpha$ KG. Solvent isotope effects (SIEs) on steady-state rate constants were measured to test for the release of aquo ligands from the Fe(II) cofactor. When the rate constants are larger in D<sub>2</sub>O-containing buffers than in H<sub>2</sub>O-containing buffer, the kinetic SIEs are “inverse” and are diagnostic of pre-equilibrium release of aquo ligands from metal cofactors. We observed inverse SIEs on steady-state rate constants, providing direct evidence of the pre-equilibrium release of one, two, and three aquo ligands from the Fe(II) under different conditions. Our results establish two very important points. First, binding of CTAD to (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG)FIH leads to the release of one aquo ligand, suggesting that the overall strategy for controlling hydroxylation in FIH relies on substrate-triggered changes in hydrogen bonding to release the aquo ligand. Second, the rate-limiting step in the steady state precedes or coincides with the first irreversible step; this is likely to be decarboxylation (Scheme 1), meaning that oxidized intermediates do not accumulate in FIH. Both observations point to an overall strategy for O<sub>2</sub> activation that relies on careful control over substrate triggering in FIH.

## EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

**Materials.** All buffers and reagents were purchased from commercial vendors and were not further purified, with the exception of the CTAD peptide. The CTAD peptide corresponding to the C-terminal activation domain of human HIF-1 $\alpha$  (HIF-1 $\alpha$ <sup>788–826</sup>) contained a Cys<sup>800</sup> → Ala point mutation<sup>21</sup> (DEGLPQLTSYDAEVNAPIQGSRNLLQGEELRLALDQVN). The CTAD peptide was purchased as a desalted peptide from EZBiolab (Carmel, IN) with free N- and C-termini. Reverse phase high-performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) utilizing a gradient from 30% acetonitrile and 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) to 95% acetonitrile and 0.1% TFA was used to obtain >95% pure CTAD.

**Protein Expression and Purification.** FIH was overexpressed in *Escherichia coli* with an N-terminal His<sub>6</sub> tag and

purified as previously described.<sup>18</sup> Briefly, His<sub>6</sub>-FIH was separated from cell lysate via Ni-NTA column chromatography and the affinity tag was then cleaved with thrombin. Three additional residues from the fusion protein (NH<sub>2</sub>-GlySerHis-) remained on the N-terminus following thrombin cleavage. Cleaved FIH was collected as flow-through from a Ni-NTA column and then incubated with EDTA to removed metal. Dimeric FIH was obtained via size-exclusion chromatography using Sephadex G-75 resin and 50 mM NaCl and 50 mM Tris (pH 8.00) as the running buffer. Purified FIH was buffer exchanged into 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00). The molecular mass was confirmed by QSTAR TOF-MS (expected, 40.566 kDa; observed, 40.574 kDa), while the purity (>95%) was assessed by sodium dodecyl sulfate–polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis.

**Steady-State Kinetic Assays.** All assays were performed at 37.0 °C with saturating concentrations of FeSO<sub>4</sub> (50 μM) and ascorbate (2 mM) and an ambient O<sub>2</sub> concentration. Assays in which CTAD was the varied substrate (15–250 μM) utilized a saturating level of αKG (500 μM) unless specified otherwise. Assays with αKG as the varied substrate (5–200 μM) utilized a fixed CTAD concentration of either 39 μM [ $\sim 1/2 K_{M(CTAD)}$ ] or 306 μM [ $\sim 4 K_{M(CTAD)}$ ]. Assay reagents were mixed and incubated for 2 min at 37.0 °C in microcentrifuge tubes. Then the reaction was initiated via the addition of enzyme ( $[E]_T = 0.5 \mu\text{M}$ ). Reaction aliquots (5 μL) were quenched with 75% acetonitrile and 0.2% TFA (20 μL) saturated with 3,5-dimethoxy-4-hydroxycinnamic acid and analyzed for peptide hydroxylation using a Bruker Daltonics Omniflex MALDI-TOF-MS instrument. The mole fraction of product,  $\chi_{CTAD-OH}$ , was determined by the relative intensities of hydroxylated CTAD (CTAD<sup>OH</sup>, *m/z* 4271) and unhydroxylated CTAD (*m/z* 4255). Initial rates were determined from five to seven quenched time points. The steady-state rate constants,  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_M$ , were obtained by nonlinear least-squares fitting of initial rate data (0 to ~15% fractional conversion) to the Michaelis–Menten equation.

**Viscosity Assays.** Steady-state assays were performed in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00), using sucrose as the viscosogen to test for the rate limitation of diffusional steps. Initial rates were measured as described above, using buffers containing 10% ( $\eta_{rel} = 1.3$ ), 18% ( $\eta_{rel} = 1.8$ ), and 25% ( $\eta_{rel} = 2.8$ ) sucrose solutions (w/w).<sup>22</sup>

**Solvent Isotope Assays.** Deuterium oxide (D, 99.9%) was purchased from Cambridge Isotope Laboratories (Andover, MA) and used as received. The pD was determined by presoaking the pH meter in D<sub>2</sub>O for 10 min and then adding 0.4 to the meter reading of the D<sub>2</sub>O solution of interest (pD = pH<sub>read</sub> + 0.4).<sup>23</sup> Steady-state assays were performed as described above. All reagent stocks used in the steady-state assays in D<sub>2</sub>O were prepared using D<sub>2</sub>O. Working FIH stock solutions were made by diluting high-concentration stocks from H<sub>2</sub>O into D<sub>2</sub>O containing 50 mM HEPES (pD 7.00). Assays were performed in 50 mM HEPES (pD 7.00) with a final D<sub>2</sub>O percentage of 97%. SIEs were calculated from the ratio of rate constants observed in buffers containing H<sub>2</sub>O or D<sub>2</sub>O; e.g.,  ${}^{D_2O}k_{cat} = k_{cat(H_2O)}/k_{cat(D_2O)}$ .

**Coupling Ratio.** The extent of coupling between FIH's two half-reactions in D<sub>2</sub>O was determined from monitoring the succinate and CTAD<sup>OH</sup> concentrations throughout a reaction. Reactions of αKG (500 μM), FeSO<sub>4</sub> (50 μM), CTAD (200 μM), and FIH (5 μM) were performed in 50 mM Tris (pD 7.00) and analyzed using procedures similar to those previously

reported.<sup>14,24</sup> A Hamilton PRP-X300 anion exclusion column was used to separate the succinate produced from the quenched reactions. UV detection at 210 nm was used to determine the succinate concentration. Using aliquots from the same quenched assay, a Bruker Daltonics Omniflex MALDI-TOF-MS instrument was used to determine the CTAD<sup>OH</sup> concentration. The coupling ratio (*C*) was determined by fitting the succinate concentration as a linear function of CTAD<sup>OH</sup> concentration for multiple quench points, where  $C = [\text{succinate}]/[\text{CTAD}^{OH}]$ .

## RESULTS

**Solvent Isotope Effects.** Solvent isotope effects (SIEs) were measured to test for aquo release from the Fe(II) as part of substrate triggering during turnover in FIH. By varying the degree of saturation with respect to αKG and CTAD, we accessed the SIE on kinetic constants reporting on different microscopic steps. SIEs arising from the pre-equilibrium release of one, two, and three aquo ligands were predicted from the consensus mechanism, depending on the assay conditions (Scheme 1). As the limiting SIEs are multiples of the proton fractionation factor ( $\Phi$ ) for the O–L bond (L = H or D),<sup>25</sup> they are quite distinct for the number of aquo ligands released.

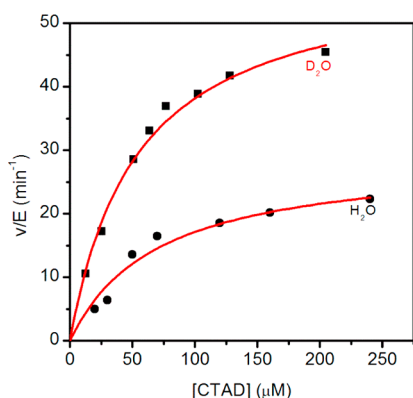
The fractionation factor for L<sub>2</sub>O (where L = H or D) is inverse when water is bonded to another Lewis acid, leading to a tendency for D<sub>2</sub>O to accumulate in bulk solvent. For example,  $\Phi_{O-L} = 0.69$  for L<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup><sup>26–28</sup> because of zero-point energy differences. The fractionation factor,  $\Phi_{O-L}$ , for aquo release from Co(II) in two carbonic anhydrase isozymes has been found to be between 0.72 and 0.90,<sup>25,29</sup> agreeing closely with the fractionation factor for Co(H<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>6</sub><sup>2+</sup> in solution ( $\Phi_{O-L} = 0.73$ ).<sup>30</sup> As the fractionation factor for the Fe<sup>2+</sup>–OH<sub>2</sub> bond in FIH is unknown, we estimate  $\Phi = 0.70$  as is commonly done for fractionation of water from other M–OH<sub>2</sub> ⇌ M + OH<sub>2</sub> equilibria.<sup>30</sup> As  $\Phi$  is reported on a per-bond basis and is multiplicative,  ${}^{D_2O}K_{eq}$  values for the release of aquo ligands are diagnostic of the numbers of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules released from Fe: one ( ${}^{D_2O}K_{eq} = \Phi^2 = 0.49$ ), two ( ${}^{D_2O}K_{eq} = \Phi^4 = 0.24$ ), and three ( ${}^{D_2O}K_{eq} = \Phi^6 = 0.12$ ).

The equilibrium fractionation factors will lead to inverse kinetic SIEs on different kinetic constants provided that the aquo release is in a pre-equilibrium prior to a subsequent rate-limiting step. As shown in the Appendix,  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$  can report on one aquo release, leading to the prediction that the limiting values for  ${}^{D_2O}k_{cat} \sim {}^{D_2O}[k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}] = 0.49$ . In contrast, the limiting values for  ${}^{D_2O}[k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)}]$  will report on the release of two or three aquo ligands depending on the degree to which FIH is saturated with CTAD. It is important to note that our assays used an ambient O<sub>2</sub> concentration (220 μM), which is approximately  $2K_{M(O_2)}$ ,<sup>31</sup> making our kinetic constants apparent.

The rate constants obtained at a saturating αKG concentration, an ambient O<sub>2</sub> concentration, and varied CTAD concentrations are  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$ . Under these conditions,  $k_{cat}$  reports on all steps from CTAD binding to product release and is predicted to involve the release of one aquo ligand (Scheme 1). The initial rate assays in D<sub>2</sub>O exhibited increased rates when compared to similar assays in H<sub>2</sub>O, indicating an inverse SIE on both  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$ . We observed a  ${}^{D_2O}k_{cat}$  of  $0.51 \pm 0.07$ , in good agreement with the limiting SIE (0.49) for the pre-equilibrium release of one aquo ligand (Figure 1). Similarly, we observed a  ${}^{D_2O}[k_{cat}/$

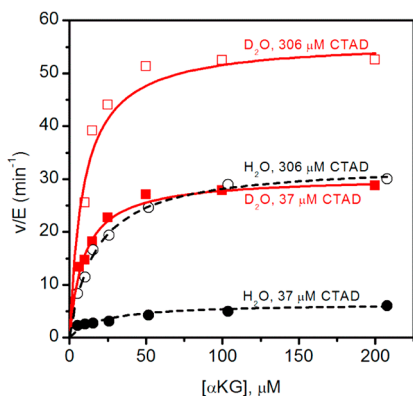


$K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$ ] of  $0.40 \pm 0.07$ , which is also in good agreement with one aquo release prior to a rate-limiting step.



**Figure 1.** Steady-state kinetics of FIH in H<sub>2</sub>O (●) and 97% D<sub>2</sub>O (■) buffers. FIH (0.5 μM), ascorbate (2 mM), αKG (500 μM), FeSO<sub>4</sub> (50 μM), and CTAD (0–250 μM) were in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00).

Because of the sequential ordered mechanism (see below), the apparent  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})}$  encompasses distinct steps depending on the fixed concentration of CTAD. Because  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})}$  reports on steps from the encounter with αKG through the first irreversible step, high or low fixed concentrations of CTAD were used to isolate different microscopic steps. CTAD binding is kinetically irreversible at high CTAD concentrations, meaning that  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{High}[\text{CTAD}]}$  reports on only those steps between αKG encounter and CTAD binding, encompassing the release of two aquo ligands. The observed SIE of  $0.32 \pm 0.08$  on  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{High}[\text{CTAD}]}$  was in reasonable agreement with the limiting value (0.24) expected for the release of two aquo ligands. In contrast, CTAD binding is kinetically reversible at subsaturating CTAD concentrations, making a subsequent step (thought to be O<sub>2</sub> activation) the first irreversible step. Thus,  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{Low}[\text{CTAD}]}$  reports on all steps between αKG binding and O<sub>2</sub> activation, which encompasses the release of three aquo ligands in the consensus mechanism. The observed SIE of  $0.11 \pm 0.03$  for  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{Low}[\text{CTAD}]}$  agreed closely with the limiting value (0.12) expected for the release of three aquo ligands prior to a rate-limiting step (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Steady-state kinetics of FIH for αKG at 37 μM CTAD and 306 μM CTAD, in H<sub>2</sub>O (● and ■) and D<sub>2</sub>O (○ and □) at 37.0 °C. FIH (0.5 μM), ascorbate (2 mM), αKG (0–210 μM), FeSO<sub>4</sub> (50 μM), and CTAD (37 and 306 μM) were in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00).

**Validation of Observed SIEs.** A series of control experiments were completed to ensure that the SIEs arose from aquo release. Control assays showed the steady-state rate constants,  $k_{\text{cat}}$  and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$ , were pH-independent between pH 6.50 and 8.00 at a fixed ionic strength ( $I = 120$  mM). Furthermore, steady-state assays at pH 7.00 showed that  $k_{\text{cat}}$  and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$  were independent of ionic strength (Figure S1 of the Supporting Information). Viscosity experiments were completed as a control for the increased relative viscosity of D<sub>2</sub>O, as solvent viscosity can affect the rate of diffusional steps, or of conformational changes. The binding order of αKG and CTAD was also investigated to define the chemical steps reported on by  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$  and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})}$ , as these rate constants proved different microscopic steps within the chemical mechanism reporting the release of up to three aquo ligands.

FIH's activity increased approximately 2-fold in D<sub>2</sub>O, prompting us to check the coupling between the oxidative and reductive half-reactions in D<sub>2</sub>O. As the oxidative half reaction produces succinate, and the reductive half-reaction produces CTAD<sup>OH</sup>, the  $[\text{succinate}]/[\text{CTAD}^{\text{OH}}]$  ratio is equal to the coupling between these half-reactions ( $C = [\text{succinate}]/[\text{CTAD}^{\text{OH}}]$ ). Previously, we showed tight coupling between succinate production and CTAD hydroxylation in H<sub>2</sub>O.<sup>14</sup> Here we observed that FIH's two half-reactions remained tightly coupled in D<sub>2</sub>O, with  $C$  equal to unity within experimental uncertainty ( $C = 1.1 \pm 0.1$ ) (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Coupling of Succinate and CTAD<sup>OH</sup> Concentrations for FIH in 50 mM Tris (pH 7.00) at 37.0 °C

	$C^a$
D <sub>2</sub> O	$1.1 \pm 0.1^b$
H <sub>2</sub> O	$0.98 \pm 0.03^c$

<sup>a</sup> $C = (\text{moles of succinate})/(\text{moles of CTAD}^{\text{OH}})$ . <sup>b</sup>Reaction mixtures contained αKG (500 μM), FeSO<sub>4</sub> (50 μM), CTAD (200 μM), and FIH (5 μM) in 50 mM Tris (pH 7.00). <sup>c</sup>From ref 14.

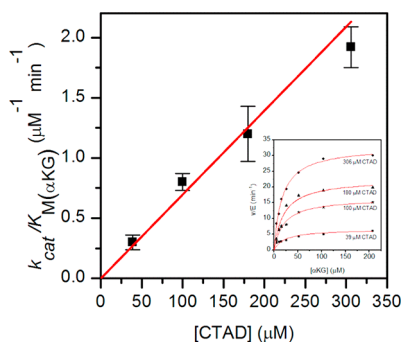
**Diffusional Steps Are Not Rate-Limiting.** Steady-state rate constants were measured as a function of relative viscosity to test for diffusional steps that might contribute to the observed rate constants and SIEs, as the viscosity of D<sub>2</sub>O is greater than that of H<sub>2</sub>O. Initial rate data were collected in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00) with sucrose as the viscosogen and fit to the Michaelis–Menten equation. Analysis of  $k_{\text{cat}}$ ,  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$ , and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})}$  as a function of relative viscosity indicated that each of the steady-state rate constants was independent of solvent viscosity (Figure S2 of the Supporting Information).

The normalized regression plot showed that relative viscosity had no effect on any rate constant. Thus, neither diffusional encounter, relevant for  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$ , nor product release, relevant for  $k_{\text{cat}}$ , is rate-limiting. If diffusional encounter were rate-limiting,  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$  would decrease as the relative solvent viscosity increases.<sup>32,33</sup> Furthermore, the lack of a viscosity effect indicates FIH does not undergo a viscosity-sensitive conformational change, which has been shown to obscure SIEs for some enzymes.<sup>34,35</sup>

**Sequential Order: αKG Binds before CTAD.** The consensus mechanism for αKG oxygenases is a sequential ordered model that, when applied to FIH, predicts αKG binds prior to CTAD. Although steady-state analyses of several other αKG-dependent oxygenases have been shown to follow this

binding order,<sup>36–38</sup> we tested this sequential binding model for FIH because of the interesting SIEs that we observed at varied CTAD concentrations. As the binding order of  $\alpha$ KG and CTAD affects the microscopic steps defined by the steady-state kinetic parameters, this is critical to our interpretations of the SIEs.

Four different fixed CTAD concentrations, ranging from  $1/2K_{M(CTAD)}$  to  $4K_{M(CTAD)}$ , were chosen for steady-state kinetic assays in which the  $\alpha$ KG concentration was the varied substrate. In close agreement with previously reported values,<sup>14,31</sup> the  $K_{M(\alpha KG)}$  remained constant at  $20 \pm 2 \mu\text{M}$  for all CTAD concentrations. The regression plot of  $k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)}$  as a function of CTAD concentration passed through the origin, as expected for ordered sequential binding of  $\alpha$ KG prior to CTAD (Figure 3).<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 3.** Regression plot showing  $k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)}$  as a function of CTAD concentration. The inset shows the steady-state kinetics of FIH with  $\alpha$ KG as the varied substrate, at different fixed CTAD concentrations at 37.0 °C. FIH (0.5  $\mu\text{M}$ ), ascorbate (2 mM),  $\alpha$ KG (0–210  $\mu\text{M}$ ),  $\text{FeSO}_4$  (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ), and CTAD (39–306  $\mu\text{M}$ ) were in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.00).

## DISCUSSION

Sensing of  $\text{O}_2$  by FIH is critical to cellular growth and development, yielding close consonance between  $\text{O}_2$  concentration and the FIH-catalyzed hydroxylation of CTAD central to  $\text{O}_2$  homeostasis. An additional benefit is that controlled  $\text{O}_2$  activation by FIH would prevent ROS production,<sup>21</sup> preventing anomalous oxidations. Although it has been shown that decarboxylation of  $\alpha$ KG and hydroxylation of CTAD by FIH are tightly coupled,<sup>14</sup> the mechanistic strategy used by FIH to ensure that  $\text{O}_2$  activation leads to CTAD hydroxylation with high fidelity remains unclear. Our overall hypothesis is the hydrogen bonding from the second coordination sphere ensures that the Fe(II) in (Fe +  $\alpha$ KG)FIH remains six-coordinate, and that CTAD binding alters these hydrogen bonds leading to  $\text{O}_2$  activation, the substrate triggering model.

CTAD binding could trigger FIH by affecting any of the microscopic steps in the overall chemical mechanism, so long as the rate of  $\text{O}_2$  activation were increased upon CTAD binding. Our observation of inverse SIEs on  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)}$  indicates that the rate-limiting step in the steady state follows aquo release and is either coincident with or precedes decarboxylation (Scheme 1). This points to a strategy for tightly coupling  $\text{O}_2$  activation with CTAD hydroxylation that relies on substrate triggering.

**$\text{O}_2$  Activation Is Rate-Limiting in FIH.** Inverse kinetic SIEs (SIE < 1) are diagnostic of aquo release from metal ions, as the vast majority of SIEs are normal (SIE > 1).<sup>29</sup> Two other causes of inverse kinetic SIEs, the involvement of a CysS nucleophile in catalysis and a conformational change, were ruled out for FIH. In the former case, there are no active site CysSH residues; in the latter case, we verified that viscosity did not affect the rate of turnover.

Inverse kinetic SIEs have been reported for several metalloenzymes, including a number of hydrolases, carbonic anhydrase, and a point mutant of SLO.<sup>29,40–43</sup> In each case, the inverse kinetic SIEs indicated that aquo release was a pre-equilibrium step prior to a subsequent rate-limiting step. Our observation of inverse kinetic SIEs corresponding to multiple aquo release steps is the first such report, to the best of our knowledge. The inverse SIEs arise from an unfavorable equilibrium for aquo release, combined with a slow  $\text{O}_2$  activation step.

The consensus mechanism predicts that both  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$  encompass one aquo release for a limiting predicted SIE of 0.49. The experimentally observed kinetic SIEs correlate nicely with the theoretical value expected for the equilibrium release of one aquo ligand, as  $^{D_2}k_{cat} = 0.51 \pm 0.07$  and  $^{D_2}k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)} = 0.40 \pm 0.07$  (Table 2). A kinetic model with separate microscopic steps for  $\alpha$ KG, CTAD, and  $\text{O}_2$  binding, as well as the final aquo release, was constructed from the consensus chemical mechanism and used to analyze the observed SIEs (Scheme 2). As  $k_{cat}$  encompasses all steps with the exception of the diffusional encounter with substrates, a separate, reversible microscopic step for aquo release was needed, as a  $^{D_2}k_{cat}$  of <1 indicated that aquo release must be separate from CTAD encounter.

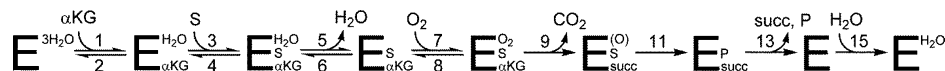
The similarity in the SIEs for  $k_{cat}$  and  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$  strongly suggests that the overall rate-limiting step in FIH turnover is common to both rate constants. As  $k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$  encompasses steps between CTAD encounter and the first irreversible step, the common step has to be the  $\text{O}_2$  activation step (Scheme 1). This step is typically viewed as the initial attack on the 2-oxo group of  $\alpha$ KG that leads to oxidative decarboxylation. This is noteworthy as this predicts that the ferryl intermediate will not accumulate in FIH during turnover, in contrast to TauD.<sup>12</sup> Slow  $\text{O}_2$ - activation can account for the tight coupling between

**Table 2.** Solvent Isotope Effects for FIH in 50 mM HEPES (pL 7.00) at 37.0 °C

	H <sub>2</sub> O	D <sub>2</sub> O	experimental SIE	theoretical SIE	no. of aquo ligands
$k_{cat}$ (min <sup>-1</sup> ) <sup>a</sup>	30 ± 2.5	59 ± 2.0	0.51 ± 0.07	0.49	1
$k_{cat}/K_{M(CTAD)}$ ( $\mu\text{M}^{-1} \text{min}^{-1}$ ) <sup>a</sup>	0.43 ± 0.10	1.09 ± 0.11	0.40 ± 0.07	0.49	1
$k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)_{\text{High}[CTAD]}}$ ( $\mu\text{M}^{-1} \text{min}^{-1}$ ) <sup>b</sup>	1.94 ± 0.13	6.05 ± 1.37	0.32 ± 0.08	0.24	2
$k_{cat}/K_{M(\alpha KG)_{\text{Low}[CTAD]}}$ ( $\mu\text{M}^{-1} \text{min}^{-1}$ ) <sup>c</sup>	0.29 ± 0.07	2.60 ± 0.34	0.11 ± 0.03	0.12	3

<sup>a</sup>CTAD as the varied substrate; FIH (0.5  $\mu\text{M}$ ), ascorbate (2 mM),  $\alpha$ KG (500  $\mu\text{M}$ ),  $\text{FeSO}_4$  (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ), and CTAD (0–250  $\mu\text{M}$ ). <sup>b</sup> $\alpha$ KG as the varied substrate; FIH (0.5  $\mu\text{M}$ ), ascorbate (2 mM),  $\alpha$ KG (5–200  $\mu\text{M}$ ),  $\text{FeSO}_4$  (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ), and CTAD (306  $\mu\text{M}$ ). <sup>c</sup> $\alpha$ KG as the varied substrate; FIH (0.5  $\mu\text{M}$ ), ascorbate (2 mM),  $\alpha$ KG (5–200  $\mu\text{M}$ ),  $\text{FeSO}_4$  (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ), and CTAD (37  $\mu\text{M}$ ).

## Scheme 2. Proposed Kinetic Mechanism for FIH (S = CTAD)



decarboxylation and hydroxylation seen for FIH<sup>14</sup> as hydroxylation must be very fast relative to the decarboxylation step. Thus, we conclude that FIH likely adopts a strategy to ensure tight coupling between O<sub>2</sub> binding and activation in which O<sub>2</sub> activation is rate-limiting.

We analyzed the observed kinetic SIEs using language predominately developed by Northrop and Cleland,<sup>44,45</sup> in which observed kinetic SIEs are a function of “commitments to catalysis” and the equilibrium and kinetic isotope effects (<sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>K<sub>eq</sub> and <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>K<sub>S</sub>, respectively) on the aquo release step (*k*<sub>5</sub>). The commitments to catalysis, *C<sub>f</sub>* and *C<sub>r</sub>*, are ratios of microscopic rate constants that describe the tendency of an enzyme to go forward and backward, respectively, through the isotopically sensitive step. Full expressions are provided in the Appendix. In the case of <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>*k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(CTAD)</sub>, this expression takes the form of eq 1. The primary virtue of such a presentation is that it permits us to focus on specific segments of the kinetic mechanism. As equilibrium isotope effects reflect fractionation factors, the equilibrium SIE on aquo release is predicted to be ~0.5 (<sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>K<sub>S</sub> = 0.49).

$$\left[ \frac{k_{\text{cat}}}{K_{\text{M(CTAD)}}} \right]^{\text{D}_2\text{O}} = \frac{\text{D}_2\text{O}k_5 + C_f + C_r \text{D}_2\text{O}K_S}{1 + C_f + C_r} \quad (1)$$

It is clear that the only way for <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>*k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(CTAD)</sub> to equal <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>K<sub>eq</sub> is for the reverse commitment to be very large (*C<sub>r</sub>* ≫ *C<sub>f</sub>*). Reverse commitment (*C<sub>r</sub>*) is the kinetic competition between H<sub>2</sub>O and O<sub>2</sub> for the triggered form of enzyme; when *C<sub>r</sub>* is large, it means that H<sub>2</sub>O is the preferred ligand (Appendix, eq A10). Furthermore, the *C<sub>f</sub>*/*C<sub>r</sub>* ratio is, to a first approximation, the equilibrium for aquo release; when *C<sub>f</sub>*/*C<sub>r</sub>* ≪ 1, it means that *K<sub>S</sub>* is much less than one and that the position of this equilibrium favors the aquo-on state. Similar analysis of the commitment factors for <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>*k*<sub>cat</sub> further supports the conclusion that aquo release is disfavored thermodynamically, despite a slightly different SIE expression and forward commitment on *k*<sub>cat</sub> (*C<sub>vf</sub>*) (Appendix).

#### Substrate Triggering Is Faster Than O<sub>2</sub> Activation.

Steps involved in substrate triggering were accessed by measuring the kinetic SIE with a subsaturating αKG concentration. As *k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(αKG)</sub> includes steps between diffusional encounter of αKG with FIH and the subsequent irreversible step, CTAD binding and substrate triggering may be observable on this kinetic constant. At high CTAD concentrations, only the two aquo ligands released upon αKG binding may be observed, as a saturating level of FIH with CTAD makes CTAD binding kinetically irreversible for *k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(αKG)High[CTAD]</sub>. In contrast, a subsaturating CTAD concentration makes it possible to access release of all three aquo ligands on *k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(αKG)Low[CTAD]</sub>, provided that a later step is rate-limiting.

The observed SIE for *k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(αKG)High[CTAD]</sub> (SIE = 0.32 ± 0.08) correlates well with the pre-equilibrium release of two aquo ligands (Table 2), as expected for kinetically irreversible CTAD binding. The key observation supporting rapid substrate triggering was the SIE on *k*<sub>cat</sub>/*K*<sub>M(αKG)Low[CTAD]</sub> (SIE = 0.11 ± 0.03), as this indicated the pre-equilibrium release of all three aquo ligands prior to a subsequent rate-limiting step. This

establishes that steps associated with CTAD binding and substrate triggering are not slow under these conditions and further points to O<sub>2</sub> activation as the rate-limiting step.

**Hydrogen Bonding from the Second Coordination Sphere.** Turnover in FIH and other αKG oxygenases depends on substrate triggering, minimally the release of the aquo ligand from the (Fe + αKG + Substr) enzyme form, prior to O<sub>2</sub> binding. What is striking about the kinetics of FIH are the inverse kinetic SIEs, implicating slow O<sub>2</sub> activation in this enzyme. In the case of FIH, substrate triggering leads to rate-limiting O<sub>2</sub> activation, meaning that the intermediate that is expected to accumulate in the steady state is a relatively innocuous Fe<sup>2+</sup> center. In contrast, TauD exhibits SIEs of unity,<sup>46</sup> and the partially rate-limiting steps include product release and H-atom transfer by the [Fe<sup>IV</sup>O]<sup>2+</sup> intermediate.<sup>11</sup> For TauD, substrate triggering leads to rapid O<sub>2</sub> activation, and the partial accumulation of a powerful oxidant, [Fe<sup>IV</sup>O]<sup>2+</sup>.<sup>12</sup> It is as if TauD were built for speed but FIH built for fidelity. As the ligands to the Fe(II) are identical in these two enzymes, the reasons for such disparate strategies for the oxidation reaction must lie beyond the primary coordination sphere.

We attribute the difference in oxidation strategies between these enzymes to their second coordination spheres. The most striking difference between their second coordination spheres is in the hydrogen bonding between the facial triad Asp<sup>201</sup> ligand and the axial aquo ligand. In FIH, the remote O atom of Asp<sup>201</sup> forms a 2.8 Å hydrogen bond to the bound aquo ligand in (Fe + αKG)FIH (Figure 4); once CTAD binds, two new hydrogen

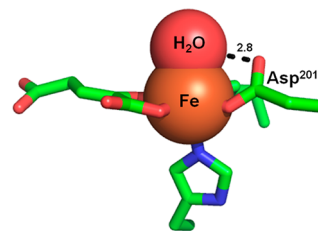


Figure 4. FIH active site with the 2.8 Å Asp<sup>201</sup>–aquo hydrogen bond (Protein Data Bank entry 3P3P).

bonds form to the Asp<sup>201</sup>, which appear to serve to partially stimulate aquo release.<sup>16,17</sup> The extensive hydrogen bonding to this aquo ligand likely serves to stabilize the Fe–OH<sub>2</sub> bond, which would explain the large reverse commitments to catalysis (*C<sub>r</sub>*) and the inverse SIEs. Such high affinity for the aquo ligand could serve to throttle back the oxidation reaction such that O<sub>2</sub> activation occurs only when CTAD is present. We note a certain similarity to the hydrogen bonding network found in PHD2, which leads to an inverse <sup>D<sub>2</sub>O</sup>*k*<sub>cat</sub><sup>47</sup> and the absence of any accumulating intermediates in pre-steady-state experiments.<sup>24</sup>

TauD is a significant contrast to FIH, structurally and kinetically. The facial triad Asp of TauD is rotated away from the aquo ligand and cannot form a hydrogen bond to the bound aquo ligand. This leads to a weak Fe<sup>2+</sup>–OH<sub>2</sub> bond strength,<sup>48</sup> and TauD readily activates O<sub>2</sub> in the absence of the substrate taurine.<sup>49,50</sup> The second coordination sphere of TauD



favors aquo release, which can lead to rapid O<sub>2</sub> activation; unfortunately, this leads to a decrease in fidelity.

### CONCLUSION

Inverse kinetic SIEs on  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_M$  and  $k_{\text{cat}}$  limit the possible rate-limiting step for FIH to a step between aquo release and decarboxylation (Scheme 1). This points to a step very early in the catalytic cycle, such as O<sub>2</sub> activation, as the likely rate-limiting step. Such a strategy would aid in FIH's regulatory role over O<sub>2</sub> homeostasis in humans, as it would lead to direct transduction of intracellular O<sub>2</sub> levels into a readable signal, hydroxylated HIF-Asn<sup>803</sup>. This tight control over O<sub>2</sub> activation strongly suggests that oxidized intermediates will not accumulate in FIH under normal turnover conditions and may reflect the demands of a regulatory function in O<sub>2</sub> sensing by tightly correlating O<sub>2</sub> activation with substrate hydroxylation.

### APPENDIX

As there are multiple isotope-sensitive steps for the kinetic mechanism of FIH (Scheme 2), algebraic expressions for each kinetic parameter were derived using the net rate method of Tian.<sup>51</sup> The expression for  $^{D_2O}k_{\text{cat}}$  takes the form

$$^{D_2O}(k_{\text{cat}}) = \frac{^{D_2O}k_5 + ^{D_2O}k_{15}C_{Vf} + C_r^{D_2O}K_5}{1 + C_{Vf} + C_r} \quad (\text{A1})$$

$$C_{Vf} = k_5 \left[ \frac{k_8}{k_7k_9[\text{O}_2]} + \frac{1}{k_7} + \frac{1}{k_9} + \frac{1}{k_{11}} + \frac{1}{k_{13}} + \frac{1}{k_{15}} \right] \quad (\text{A2})$$

$$C_r = k_6 \left[ \frac{1}{k_7[\text{O}_2]} + \frac{k_8}{k_7k_9[\text{O}_2]} \right] \quad (\text{A3})$$

The parameters  $C_{Vf}$  and  $C_r$  are the forward and reverse commitments to catalysis, respectively.  $^{D_2O}k_5$  is the kinetic SIE for water release;  $^{D_2O}K_5$  is the equilibrium SIE on aquo release, and  $^{D_2O}k_{15}$  is the kinetic SIE on water rebinding. The equations derived for the SIEs for  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\text{CTAD})}$ ,  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{High}[\text{CTAD}]}$ , and  $k_{\text{cat}}/K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{Low}[\text{CTAD}]}$  take a similar form and are shown below.

$$^{D_2O} \left[ \frac{k_{\text{cat}}}{K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{High}[\text{CTAD}]}} \right] = \frac{^{D_2O}k_1 \left( \frac{k_3[\text{CTAD}]}{k_2} \right) + ^{D_2O}K_1}{1 + \frac{k_3[\text{CTAD}]}{k_2}} \quad (\text{A4})$$

$$^{D_2O} \left[ \frac{k_{\text{cat}}}{K_{M(\alpha\text{KG})\text{Low}[\text{CTAD}]}} \right] = \left[ ^{D_2O}k_1 \left( \frac{k_3[\text{CTAD}]k_5}{k_2k_4} \right) + ^{D_2O}K_1 \left( \frac{k_5}{k_4} \right) + ^{D_2O}k_5^{D_2O}K_1 + C_r^{D_2O}K_1^{D_2O}K_5 \right] / \left( 1 + C_f + C_r \right) \quad (\text{A5})$$

$$C_f = k_5 \left( \frac{1}{k_4} + \frac{k_3[\text{CTAD}]}{k_2k_4} \right) \quad (\text{A6})$$

$$C_r = k_6 \left( \frac{1}{k_7[\text{O}_2]} + \frac{k_8}{k_7k_9[\text{O}_2]} \right) \quad (\text{A7})$$

$$^{D_2O} \left[ \frac{k_{\text{cat}}}{K_{M(\text{CTAD})}} \right] = \frac{^{D_2O}k_5 + C_f + C_r^{D_2O}K_5}{1 + C_f + C_r} \quad (\text{A8})$$

$$C_f = \frac{k_5}{k_4} \quad (\text{A9})$$

$$C_r = k_6 \left( \frac{1}{k_7[\text{O}_2]} + \frac{k_8}{k_7k_9[\text{O}_2]} \right) \quad (\text{A10})$$

### ASSOCIATED CONTENT

#### Supporting Information

Control experiments showing the effect of ionic strength and viscosity on the steady-state kinetics of FIH. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

### AUTHOR INFORMATION

#### Corresponding Author

\*Department of Chemistry, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Phone: (413) 545-4001. Fax: (413) 545-4490. E-mail: [mknapp@chem.umass.edu](mailto:mknapp@chem.umass.edu).

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#### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

### ABBREVIATIONS

HIF, hypoxia inducible factor-1 $\alpha$ ; FIH, factor-inhibiting HIF;  $\alpha$ KG,  $\alpha$ -ketoglutarate; CTAD, C-terminal transactivation domain; CREB, cAMP response element-binding protein; CAS, clavamate synthase; MCD, magnetic circular dichroism; CD, circular dichroism; HEPES, 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid; SIE, solvent isotope effect; ROS, reactive oxygen species; PHD2, prolyl hydroxylase dioxygenase 2; TauD, taurine dioxygenase; SLO, soybean lipoxigenase.

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