Antibodies, antibody fusions and antibody conjugates as drugs

Michael Jeltsch Biological Drugs II (PROV-204) Spring term 2021 (29.03.)

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Table of contents

The immune system

Antisera vs. polyclonal antibodies vs. monoclonal antibodies

How to make antisera & polyclonals

Antibody structure

Antibody functions

Antibody types

Generation of antibody diversity

How to make monoclonals: hybridomas, phage display, humanized animals

Antibody stability

The production work horse: CHO cells

Producing antibodies at scale

Why are they so expensive? GMP facilities and costs

Purifying antibodies

Antibody drug examples:

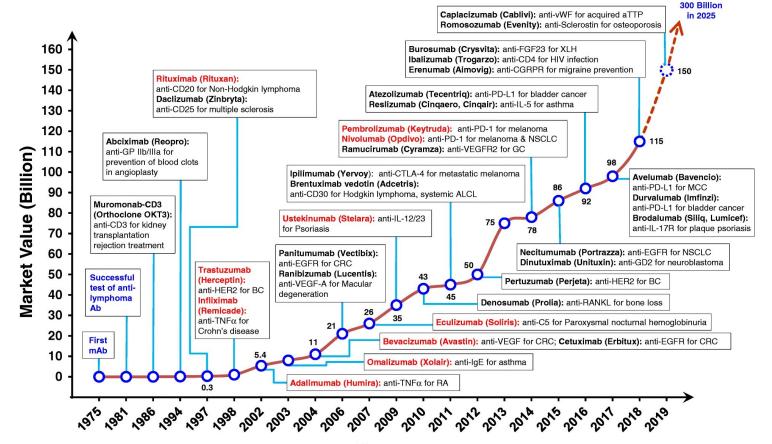
Avastin - 33 years from idea to approval

Herceptin - the 1st personalized drug, patent protection, and biosimilars

Antibody drug conjugates and linking

Kadcyla - weaponized herceptin

Eylea - an antibody fusion protein



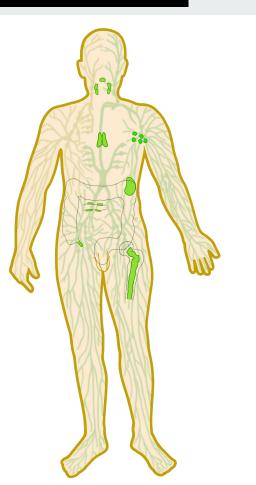
Year

Adaptive immune system:

- Humoral response
- Cellular response

Organs of the immune system

- Lymphatic network & lymph nodes
- Bone marrow
- Thymus
- Spleen
- Tonsills
- Peyer's patches
- Appendix



Physical barriers:

Slide 4 of 71

- Skin
- Mucous membranes

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Innate immune system:

- Macrophages,
- Neutrophils
- Bactericidal proteins

Slide 5 of 71 🛛 😨 🖁 Lab

Antibodies:

Highly specific protein drugs that the body generates on demand to fight everything non-self (mostly other non-self proteins)
Antigen: the molecule that the antibody targets
Immunogen: a molecule that can elicit an immune response (e.g. the generation of antibodies

- Largest pools of antibodies in the human body: 1) mucous membranes 2) blood
- Because each of us encounters many different immunogens, our blood contains a complex, unique, and constantly changing mixture of antibody proteins.

Antiserum*

Blood without cells & clotting factors. Antibodies (= *immunoglobulins*) are the 2^{nd} most abundant blood proteins after albumins, ~15mg/ml.

Polyclonal antibody

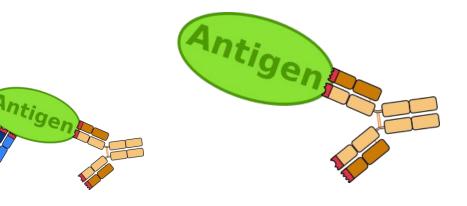
All immunoglobulins that react with a specific antigen

Monoclonal antibody

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One specific Ig protein with a defined amino acid sequence



Slide 6 of 71

Antibody drugs are not new!

- Antibody drugs are the oldest efficient drug class that were purposefully developed.
- Effective antibody therapies have been developed and used in Germany as early as 1890 against deadly diseases like diphteria, tetanus, rabies and snake bites.
- Emil Behring (1854–1917) : Antiserum therapy (serum = blood without blood cells and without clotting factors*). Developed in guinea pigs, large-scale produced in horses.
- Still important for the production of antivenom (snake, insect, scorpion) and anti-toxin (botulinum, anthrax, tetanus)
- Behringwerke (since 1952 part of Hoechst AG
 → Sanofi-Aventis)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8ARFXkjAyo

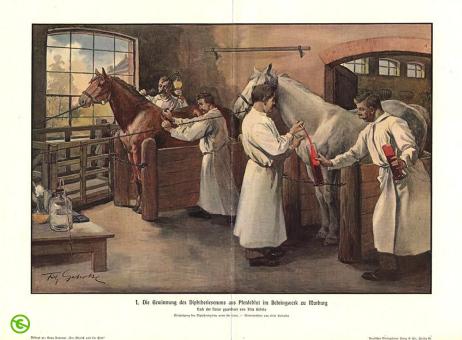


Illustration by Fritz Gehrke (1905)



The idea of antibody conjugates is not new either!

Paul Ehrlich (1854 – 1915)

- Inventor and coiner of the terms *chemotherapy* and magic bullet
- Postulated that poisons can be target specifically to kill a specific cell without harming other cells (chemical targeting)
- Close collaborator of Emil Behring and Robert Koch in the generation of antisera
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V8Hd5IfheY
- 10.1159/000443526



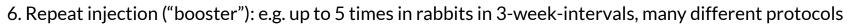




Polyclonal antibody ("antiserum") production

Ingredients for immunization (more or less unchanged for the last 100 years)

- 1. Antigen: (<u>highly</u>) purified protein, synthetic peptides (up to ~100 aa)
- 2. Host: Rabbit, Mouse, Goat, Horse, Human ("convalescent serum")
- 3. Adjuvants (Freund's complete adjuvant (FCA)*, aluminium salts): to be mixed (mostly emulgated) with the antigen to boost the immune response
- 4. Injection syringe for subq (intradermal, intraperitoneal, footpad, intramuscular) injection
- 5. Pre-immune serum sample



- 7. "Test bleeds" (e.g. starting from 2 weeks after 2nd booster) for analysis
- 8. For small hosts mostly "final bleed", for larger animals (incl. humans): repeated blood donation/plasmapheresis



Slide 9 of 71

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me in 1976 (6 months after mAb technology was published)*

https://www.whatisbiotechnology.org/index.php /exhibitions/milstein/monoclonals Nature Vol. 256 August 7 1975 p. 495ff

Continuous cultures of fused cells secreting antibody of predefined specificity G. KÖHLER & C. MILSTEIN

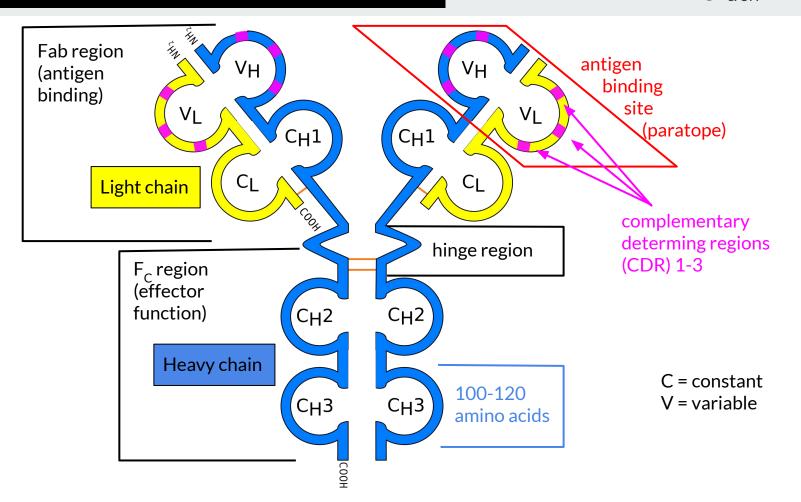
https://www.nature.com/articles/256495a0



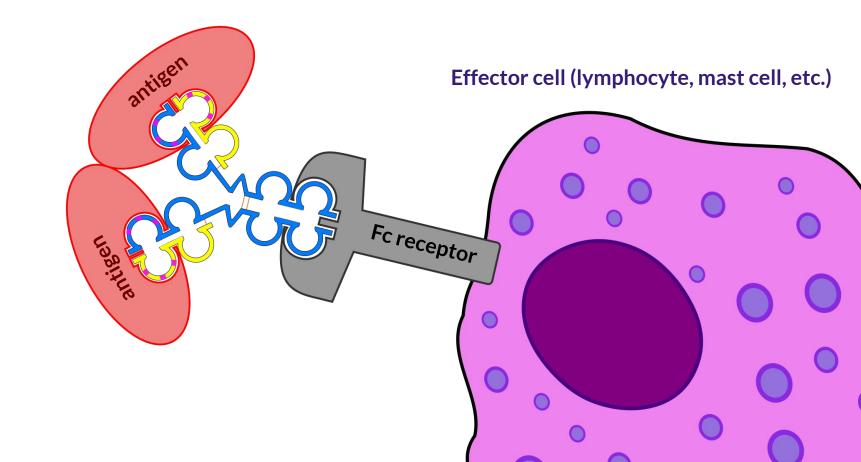


Antibody (Immunoglobulin) structure (IgG)





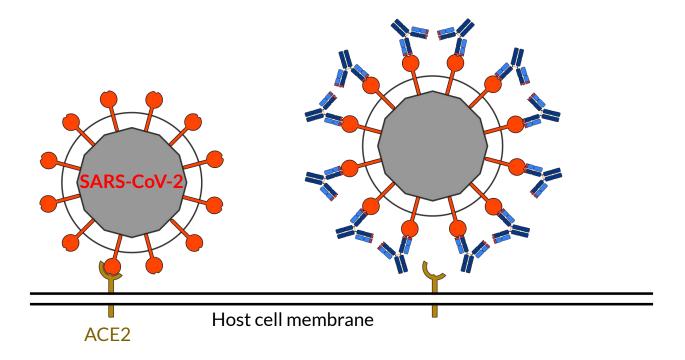






Primary functions of antibodies

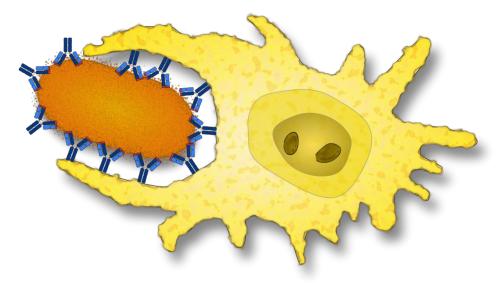
1. Neutralization of toxins and pathogens ("neutralizing/blocking" antibody) Example: Regeneron's <u>REGN-COV2 antibody cocktail</u>





Primary functions of antibodies

2. Opsonization of pathogens \rightarrow phagocytosis or cytotoxicity

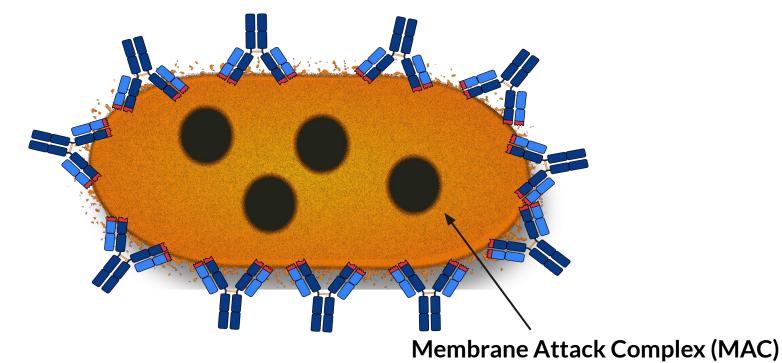


Macrophage

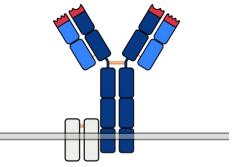


Primary functions of antibodies

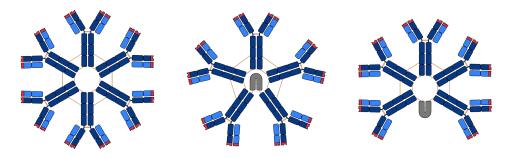
3. Complement activation (classic pathway) \rightarrow membrane perforation by pore-forming proteins



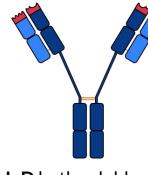


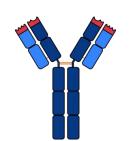


B cell receptor (BCR) Membrane-bound version of IgM or Ear IgD on transitional & mature B cells



IgM Early immune response, both soluble in the blood and on B cell surface

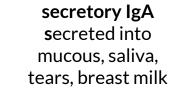




IgE Parasite defence,

allergic reactions





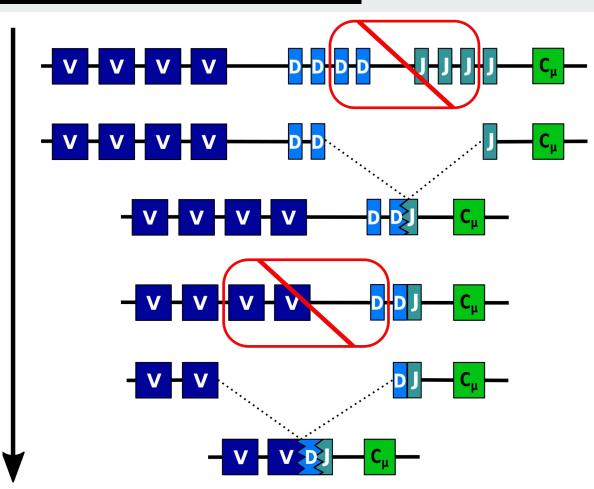
IgG major Ig in the blood, human IgG can cross the placental barrier

IgD both soluble and on B cell surface

Slide 17 of 71 🛛 🔂 & UH

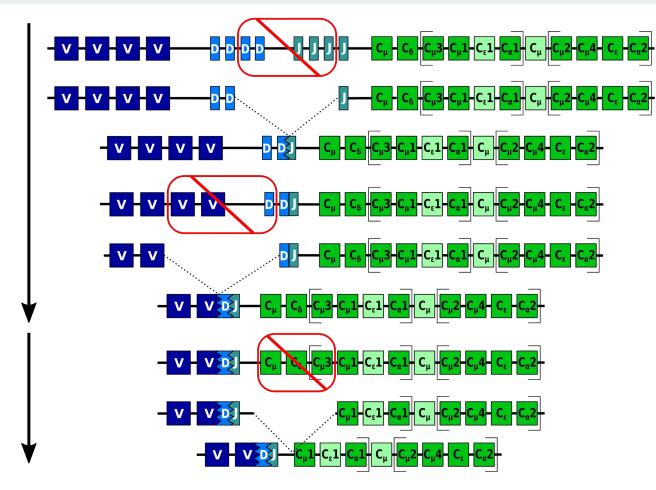
- Millions of different antigens, but only 4 immunoglobulin genes: *IGH* (Ig heavy chain), *IGK*, *IGL* (light chains Ig Kappa and Ig Lambda) and IGJ (joining chain)
- Each of us has <4x10⁸ different antibodies, roughly the same magnitude as B cells in the blood (but most B cells are not in the blood)
 - How does the body generate so many different antibodies?





V-D-J recombination & class switching (heavy chain)

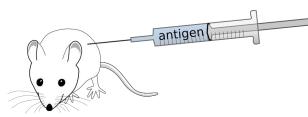


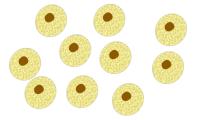


- 1. Assembly of the heavy chain by recombination from V (+D) + J + C genes
- 2. Assembly of the light chain by recombination from V + J (two different sets: kappa & lambda)
- 3. Heavy and light chain combinations
- 4. Addition and deletion of nucleotides during recombination ("junctional diversity")
- 5. Somatic hypermutation upon B cell activation by AID (activationinduced cytidine amidase) enzyme until affinity ceiling reached

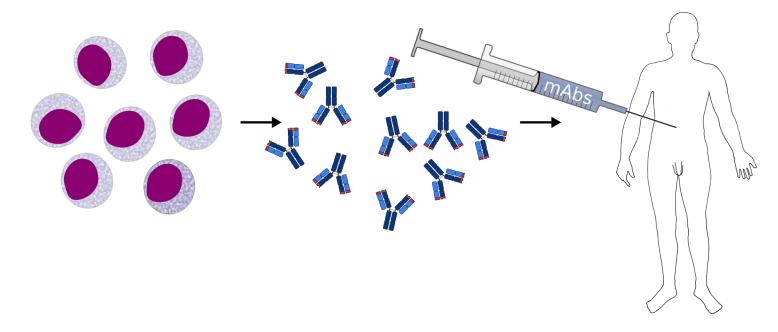


Method 1: Generation of mouse monoclonals in mice



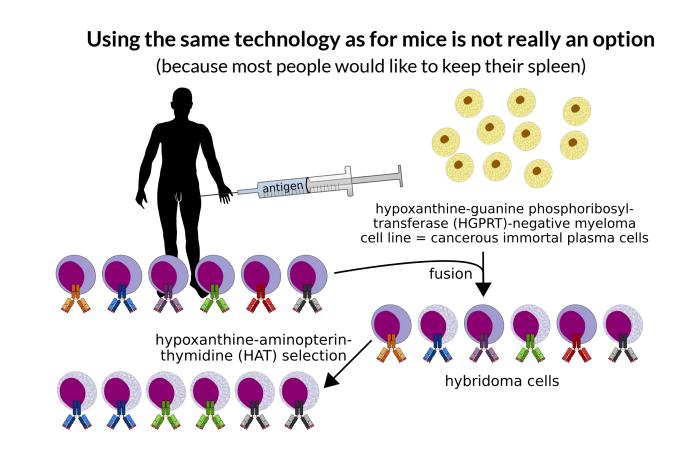




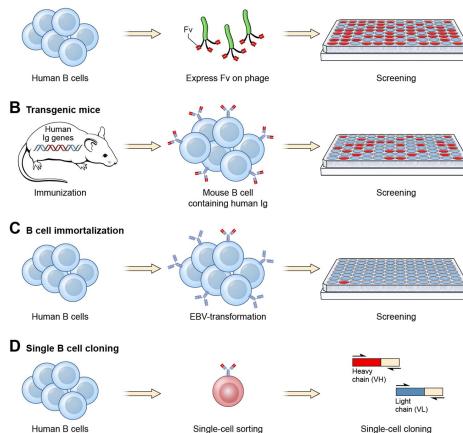


What happens if you inject mouse monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) into humans?

They are eliminated by an immune response!



A Phage display



Almost all antibodies presently used in the clinics are made by phage display (A), humanization of mouse antibodies or transgenic mice (B).

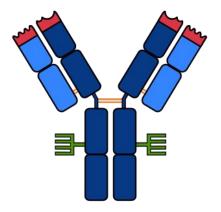
<u>B cell immortalization</u> (C) and <u>single B cell cloning</u> (D) are believed to increase in importance in the future.

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isol

ation of human monoclonal antibodies. .tif

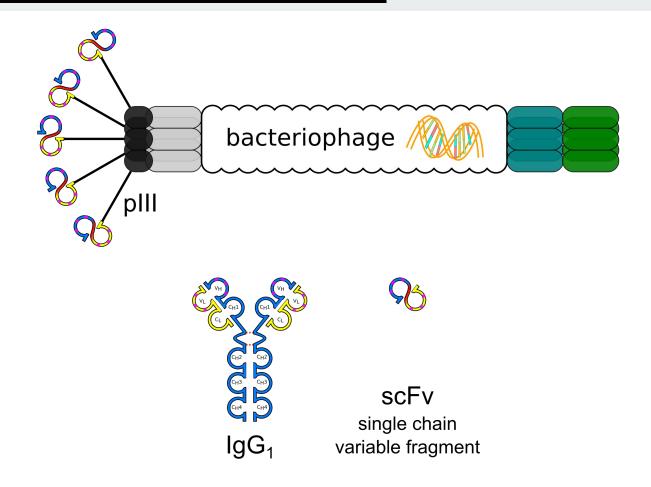






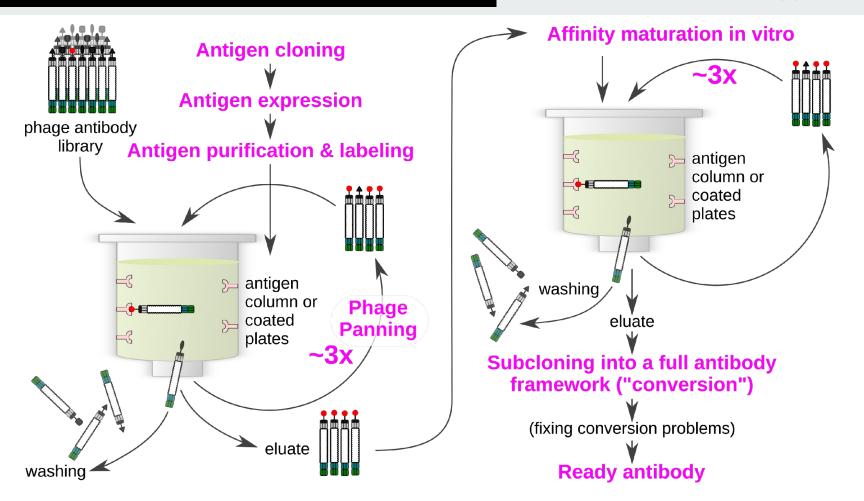


lgG₁ full antibody ~140 kDa Fab fragment antigen binding ~50 kDa scFv single chain variable fragment ~27 kDa



Workflow to find antibodies from a phage display library

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No affinity maturation by somatic hypermutation (counter-measure: mega-libraries) Jeltsch Lab

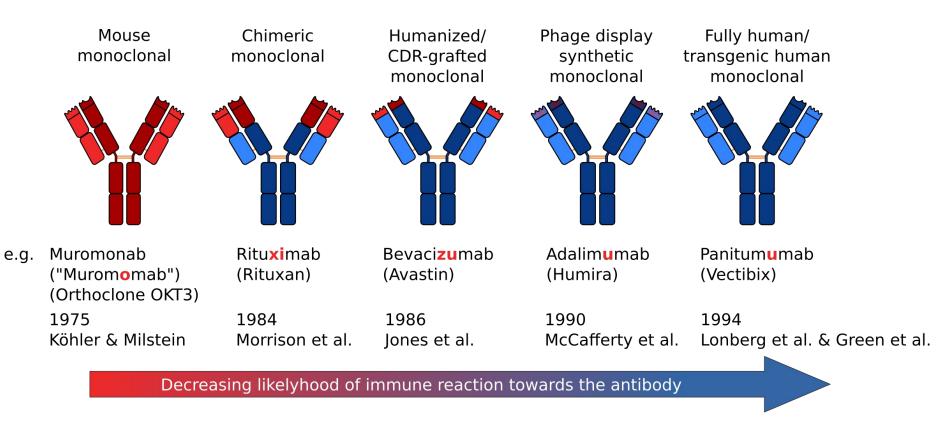
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Slide 28 of 71



Weak elimination of antibodies with disfavorable physical attributes (aggregation, protease-sensitive, low protein expression levels, etc.)

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nomenclature of monoclonal antibodies

• XenoMouse: Cell Genesys/Amgen, <u>https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt1337</u>

- HuMab mouse: GenPharm/Medarex/Bristol Myers Squibb
- Velocilmmune mouse (Regeneron): piece by piece in-place replacement, <u>https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1324022111</u>
- OmniRat[®] (OmniMouse[®]/OmniChicken[®]): OMT/Pfizer/Ligand: human V + rat C regions <u>https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-57764-7</u>

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Slide 30 of 71

- Alloy Gx[™]: Alloy Therapeutics Inc., royalty-free and proprietary, new player
- Kymouse[™]: Kymab Ltd./Wellcome Trust, human V + mouse C regions, <u>https://doi.org/10.1038/nbt.2825</u>
- Harbour Antibodies[™]: Harbour BioMed, normal ("H2L2") and heavy chain only ("HCAb"), <u>https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0601108103</u>
- Trianni Mouse[™]: Trianni Inc., in-place replacement of V regions, <u>https://www.nature.com/articles/d42473-018-00011-5</u>

Why are hybridomas not used to produce antibodies in large scale?

- a) They are all initially inherently unstable (because they have a duplicate set of chromosomes); most of them stabilize after prolonged culture.
- b) Due to a), hybridomas are all a bit different from each other.

Antibody production workhorse: CHO (Chinese Hamster Ovary) cells

- a) Fast growth
- b) High protein production
- c) Can be grown as adherent and suspension cultures
- d) Mutant lines for cell line selection and amplification systems to increase protein production: Dhfr-negative CHO cells (e.g. CHO-DG44, <u>evolution of CHO cells role in cell line development</u>)

Why not to use transgenic animals to produce antibodies (e.g. sheep and goats who produce it in the milk)?

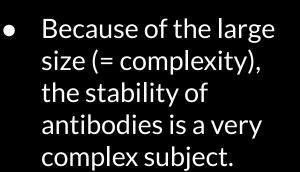
Making a CHO cell line takes about 6 weeks. Making a transgenic goat takes about 2 years (and establishing a trip of transgenic goats takes several years).

Why are animal cells used and not human cells?

Human cells have been/are used (e.g. HT-1080 for making Epo). However, there is concern about human viruses. Most human viruses do not propagate in rodent cells (see e.g. the vesivirus case).

Aspirin

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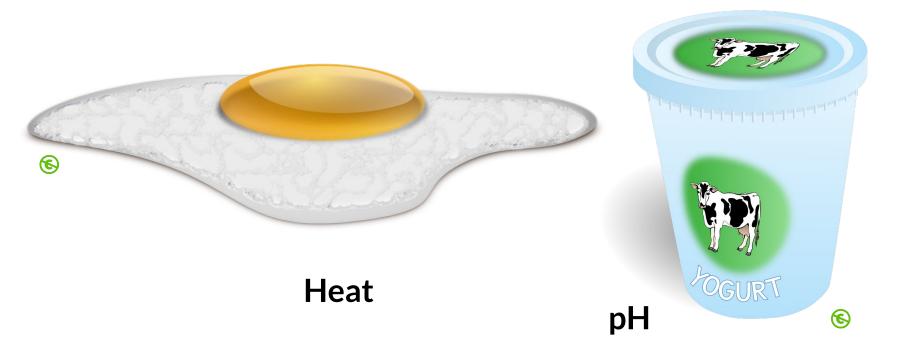
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 Every antibody is different!

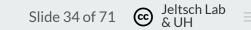
Slide 32 of 71

IgG2a antibody (<u>ligt</u>)

Slide 33 of 71 🛛 Slide 33 of 71



 \rightarrow Denaturation/Aggregation

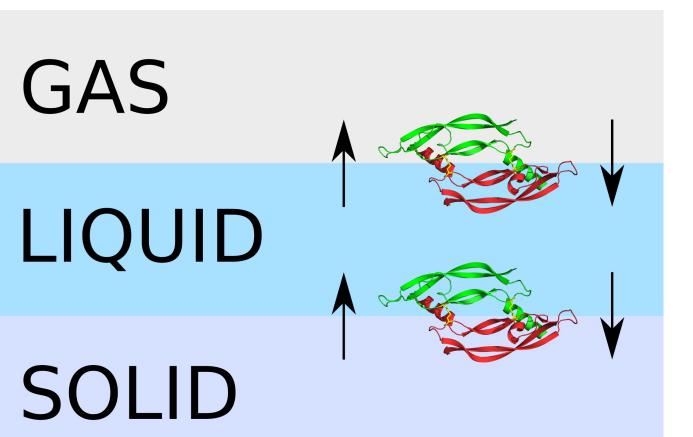




Why does the egg white denaturate despite no pH and temperature change?



https://foto.wuestenigel.com/woman-beats-egg-whites-with-a-mixer-top-view-of-the-process-of-making-a-pie/





Slide 35 of 71



How to treat antibody solutions (and generally proteins) in the lab

- *Temperature*: Keep on ice!
- *pH*: Never change the pH (e.g. by diluting into a buffer with a different pH)!
- *Phase transitions:* Avoid freezing and thawing! Avoid making bubbles when pipetting!

Slide 37 of 71 🛛 😨 🖁 Jeltsch Lab

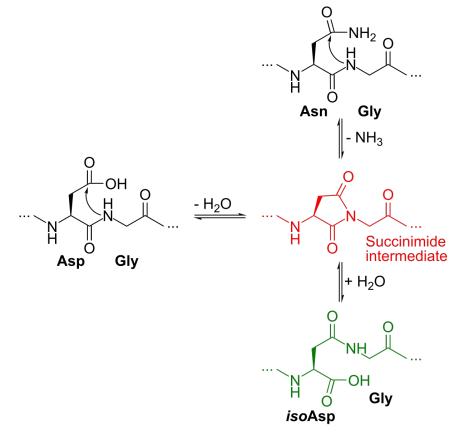
Chemical stability

Chemical and physical degradation are not separate but occur simultaneously and influence each other.

Most chemical degradation reactions require a solvent! (Completely) dry proteins are stable for thousands of years.*

- Oxidation (Cys, His, Met, Phe, Trp, Tyr)
- Deamidation (mostly Asn, Gln)
- Isomerization (Asp, disulfide bonds)
- Cross-linking
- Proteolysis

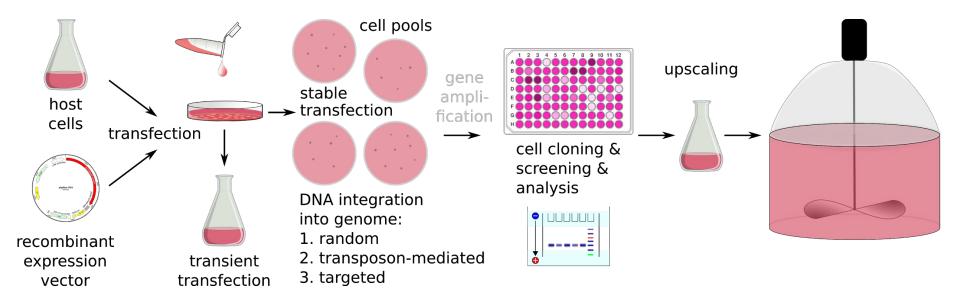
Deamidation



Possible protein concentrations in conditioned cell culture medium have been constantly rising: ~50mg/l (1986), 4.7g/l (2004), ~10g/l (2019)*

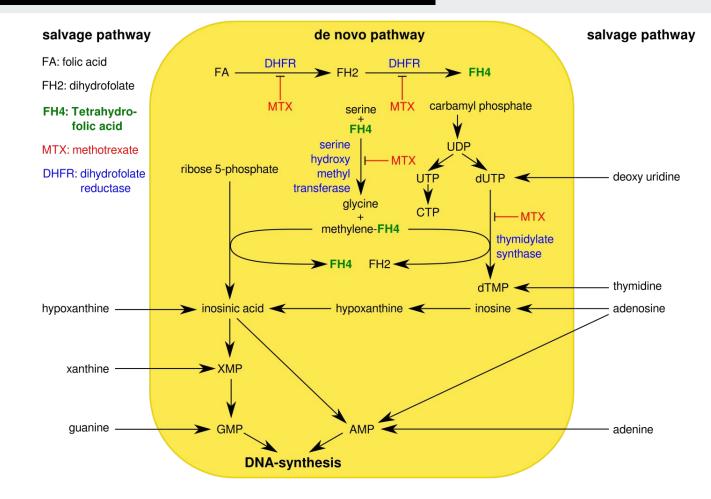
- Higher cell density (medium and fermentation optimization, host cell engineering)
- Longer production phase (host cell engineering, fermentation optimization)
- Specific productivity (HT screening, host cell engineering, site-specific integration)
- 1. Gene amplification systems (MTX, GST)
- 2. Targeted integration
- 3. Improved vectors
- 4. Genetically engineering host cells (e.g. antiapoptotic, capacity for post-translational modification)
- 5. Better screening methods
- 6. Media optimization
- 7. Better culture conditions ("process development innovations")



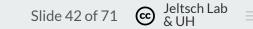


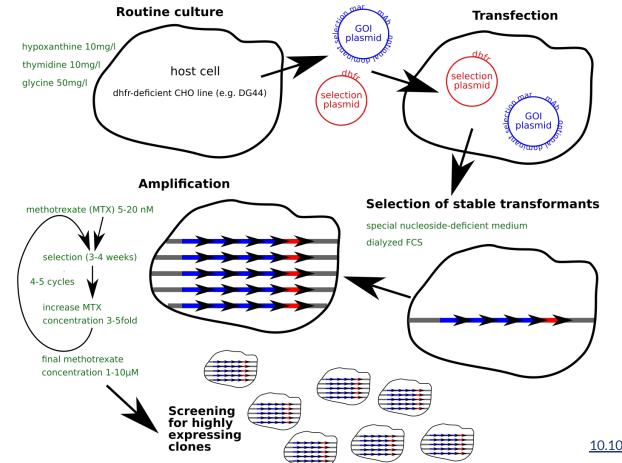
The MTX gene amplification system





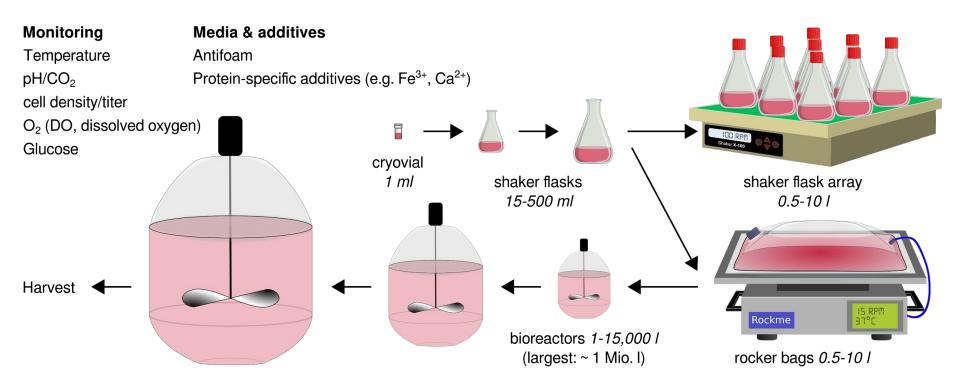
The MTX gene amplification system





10.1016/0022-2836(82)90103-6

Slide 43 of 71 💿 Jeltsch Lab & UH



Cells don't like to grow alone!

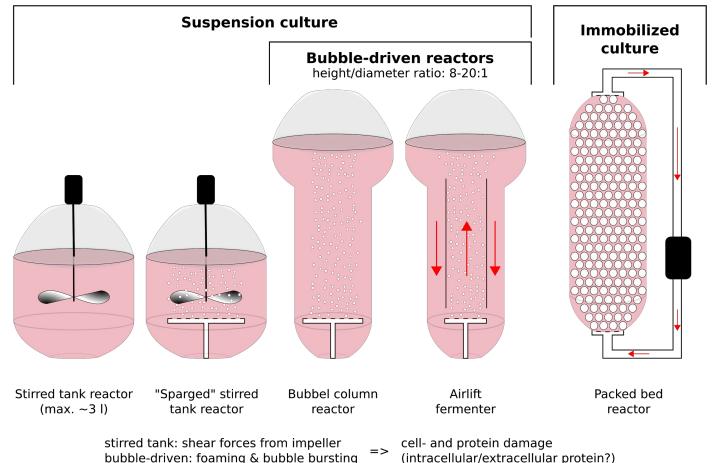
Bioreactor types and operation modes

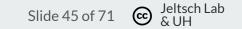
Slide 44 of 71 CC &

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Different operation modes:

- **Batch:** Inoculate final culture with cells. Done.
- Fed-batch: Inoculate final culture with cells, but keep adding nutrients/medium during production (mostly glucose)
- Continuous feed: Inoculate final culture with cells, add continuously medium during production and withdraw continuously medium & cells for purification.









C Large scale bioreactor by Sanofi Pasteur

MINIFOR laboratory fermentor-bioreactor advanced kit 1L vessel-right" by LambdaCZ

High-tech bioreactors do not necessarily result in higher yields compared to shaker flasks!

Pharmaceutical protein

Product	Cell line	Application	Retail price per kg
Rituximab	СНО	Lymphoma	\$9,500,000
Eculizumab	NS0 (murine myeloma)	Paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria	\$23,000,000
Recombinant human growth hormone	E. coli	GH deficiency	\$137,000,000
rFVIIa	СНО	Hemophilia with antibodies against rFVIII	\$2,070,000,000
rHepatitis B Surface Antigen	S. cerevisiae	Vaccine	\$5,400,000,000
rFVIII	СНО	Hemophilia	\$9,600,000,000
Industrial protein			
Product	Cell line	Application	Retail price per kg
Cellulase	T. reesei	Fuel ethanol	\$10
rβ-Glucosidase	E. coli	Fuel ethanol	\$37

Retail pricing of recombinant proteins. rFVIIa-recombinant activated factor VII; rFVIII-recombinant factor VIII (<u>https://doi.org/10.3390/pr7080476</u>).

- Recouping the development costs (17% of revenue versus 2% average for a S&P500 company)
- Clinical phase 3 trial costs: ~\$41k per patient (<u>https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/77166/rpt_erg.pdf</u>)
- Safety issues: keeping the culture contamination-free (disposable bioreactors for up to 4000l, example of severe drug shortage due to contamination: <u>Cerezyme for Gaucher disease</u>)

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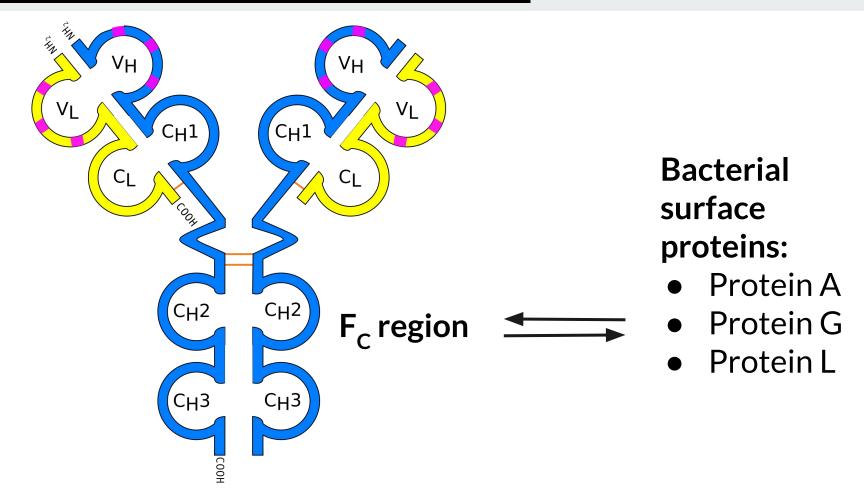
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Slide 47 of 71

- Purity requirements for the end product and the starting material (also for trivial chemicals such as water)
- Quality control & regulatory oversight

Purification of antibodies



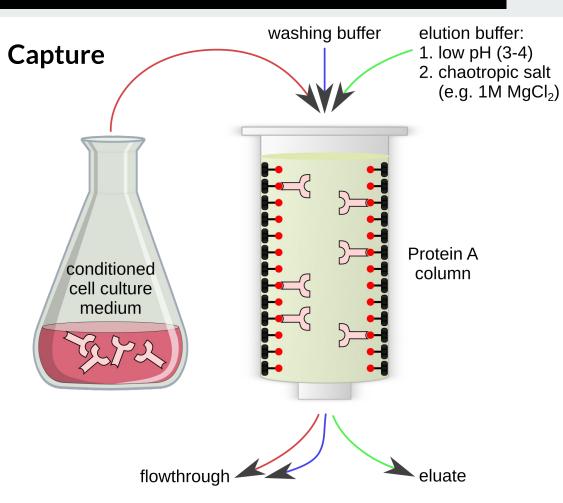


Purification of antibodies

Species	Immunoglobulin	Protein A	Protein G	Protein L*
Human	lgG1	++++	++++	++++
	lgG2	++++	++++	++++
	lgG3	-	++++	++++
	lgG4	++++	++++	++++
	lgM	-	-	++++
	lgA	-	-	++++
	lgE	-	-	++++
Mouse	lgG1	+	++++	++++
	lgG2a	++++	++++	++++
	lgG2b	+++	+++	++++
	lgG3	++	+++	++++
Rat	lgG1	-	+	++++
	lgG2a	-	++++	++++
	lgG2b	-	++	+
	lgG2c	+	++	++++
Goat	lgG	+/-	++	-
Rabbit	lgG	++++	+++	+
Sheep	lgG	+/-	++	-

*Protein L binds only antibodies that contain the a subset of *kappa* light chains: human VkI, VkIII and VkIV (but not to VkII), mouse VkI.

Purification of antibodies



Polishing

- Size-exclusion chromatography (ideal for research but does not scale well since it requires a low
 V
 - V_{sample}/V_{column})
- Ion exchange
- "Mixed-mode resins" (e.g. hydroxyapatite: ion exchange & hydrophobic interaction)

• Many advances are kept proprietary (trade-secrets) and are not patented.

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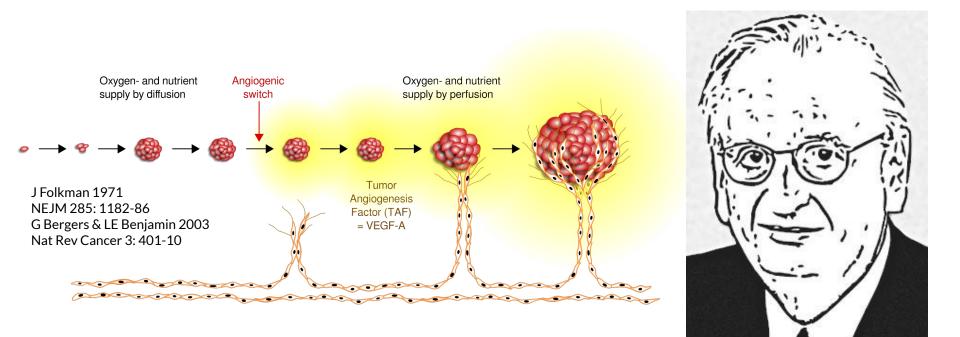
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Slide 51 of 71

- Other systems have been commercialized (i.e. are not available for academic research due to budget limitations).
- Startup companies sometimes prefer old-fashioned systems, which are free from intellectual property rights.

- Avastin (bevacizumab): VEGF monoclonal antibody
- Aflibercept: antibody/VEGF receptor fusion
- Herceptin (trastuzumab): Her2 monoclonal antibody
- Trastuzumab emtansine: Her2-mAb conjugated to DM1 (<u>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trastuzumab_emtansine</u>), T-DM1 (Kadcyla)

Slide 53 of 71 C Jeltsch Lab & UH



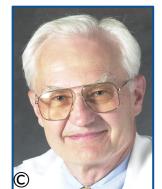
Judah Folkman (1933 – 2008)

Judah Folkman proposes the concept of antiangiogenic tumor therapy



1971

Harold Dvorak isolates Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF)



983

Napoleone Ferrara generates neutralizing mouse antibodies against VEGF



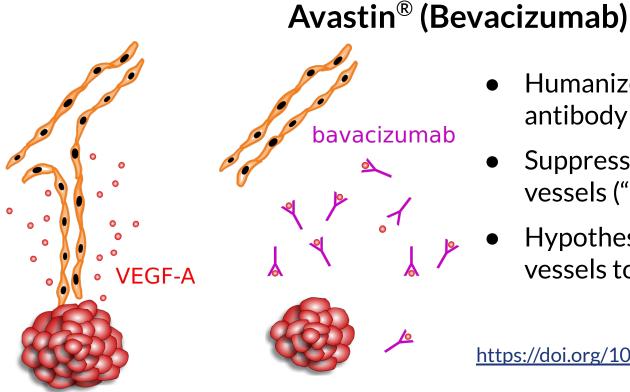
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997

Clinical trials start with the humanized anti-VEGF antibody ("bevacizumab")

2004

Bevacizumab receives FDA approval for treatment of colon cancer



• Humanized mouse monoclonal antibody

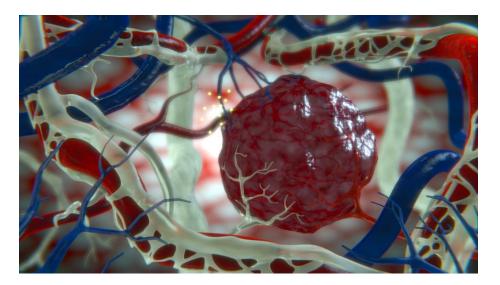
Slide 55 of 71

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- Suppresses the growth of blood vessels ("anti-angiogenic")
- Hypothesis: Tumors need blood vessels to grow big

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbrc.2005.05.132



• Indications: different cancers (colorectal, lung)

Slide 56 of 71

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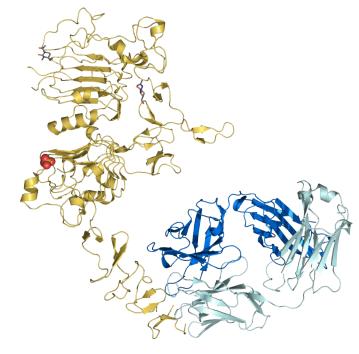
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- Available in Finland: yes
- *Company*: Genentech (US) → Roche
- Interesting: This drug was predicted in 1971 by Judah Folkman
- Market introduction: 2004

Herceptin[®]



Herceptin[®] (Trastuzumab)

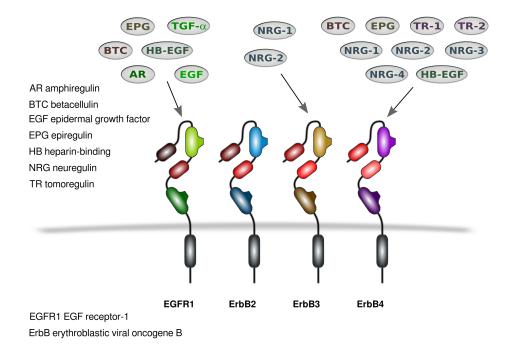


Antibody against ERBB2 (HER2)

- ErBB2 = tyrosine kinase receptor
- Overexpressed in ~15-30% of breast cancers
- One of the oldest mAbs still in use

https://www.gene.com/stories/her2/

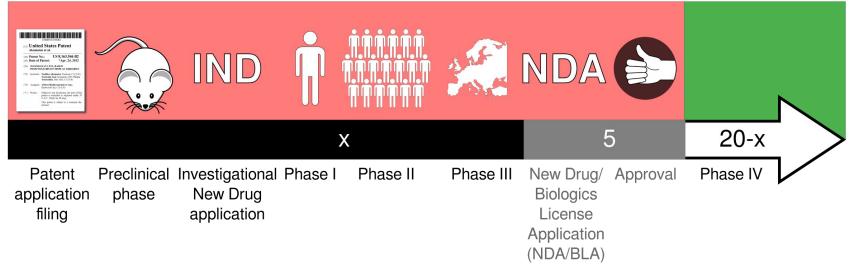




- Indications: ERBB2⁺ breast cancer
- Available in Finland: yes
- Company: Genentech (US) \rightarrow
- Interesting: ERBB2 is a receptor, but it has no known ligands, several biosimilars available since 2017
- Market introduction: 1998



20+5* years of patent protection



*Only for drug patent (compensation for the expected delay due to approval process).

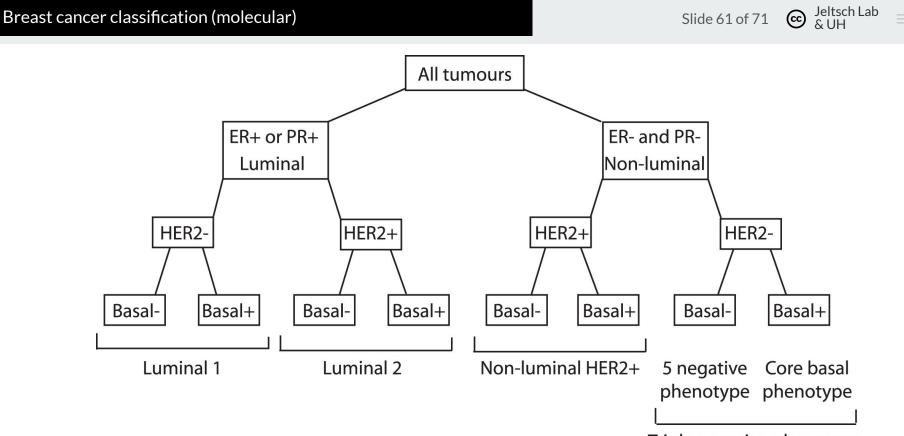
- Biosimilars copy biologics and are typically launched after the original drug's patent-protection has ended.
- Different regulatory framework compared to original biologics and small molecule drug generics
- Lots of antibody drugs' patent protections will end over the next years: lots of biosimilars
- Reducing prices and increasing availability of biologics

Slide 60 of 71 💿 Jeltsch Lab & UH

Stratified medicine/Precision medicine

"One-size-fits-all" medicine

Personalized medicine



© https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000279

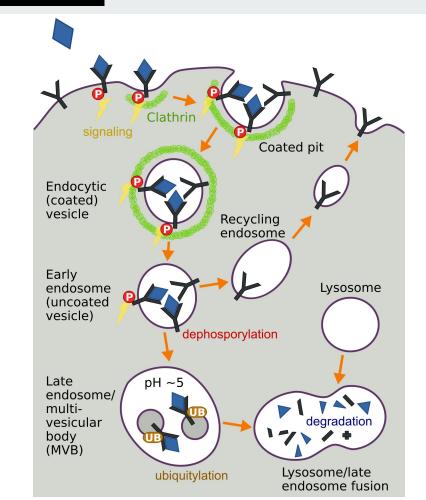
Triple negative phenotype

The luminal/basal designation originates from the histological phenotype (cancer cells resemble cells of the lumen-facing or the underlying basal cell layer).

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What happens after an activating ligand has bound to a receptor?

- 1) Signaling
- 2) Receptor/ligand complex internalization (negative feedback loop) into endosomes
- 3) Signaling vs. dephosphorylation
- 4) Sorting of ligand and receptor in late endosomes
- 5) Dissociation of ligand and receptor in late endosomes, ubiquitylation
- 6) Recycling of receptor to the cell surface (via transport vesicles)
- 7) Targeting of ligand (and receptors) to lysosomes for degradation



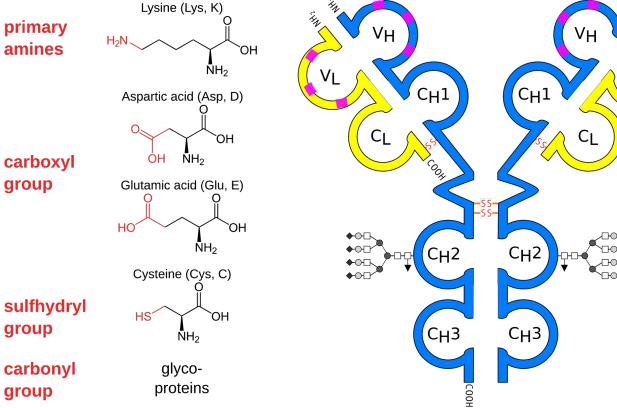
How to link?

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٧L

primary amines

group



Problem: All of these groups occur multiple times in most proteins!

- Conjugate with toxin, tag, enzyme, other protein, radionuclide, etc.
- Immobilize a protein
- Stabilize, capture, other esoteric reasons
- Antibody drug conjugates (ADC) are mostly explored as cancer drugs, the "payload" being often a cytotoxic small molecule (combining antibody specificity and small molecule cytotoxicity)

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Slide 64 of 71

- Chemical specificity, homobifunctional or heterobifunctional?
- Spacer length and cleavage possibilities
- Hydrophobic or hydrophilic?
- Spontaneously reactive or photoreactive?

- Disuccinimidyl suberate (DSS, links to N-terminal amino group and lysine side chains, typical use: receptor-ligand cross-linking, homobifunctional)
- m-maleimidobenzoyl-N-hydroxysuccinimide ester (MBS, links to N-terminal amino group and lysines side chains on one end and cysteines at the other end, typical use: antibody-enzyme linking, heterobifunctional Example of heterobifunctional linker use in antibody production use: ADC trastuzumab emtansine (Kadcyla®, price ~70000 €/14 treatment cycles à 3 weeks)
- Prelinked popular moeities: biotin, HRP, dyes (most used: N-Hydroxysulfosuccinimide (NHS) esters, "labelling kits")

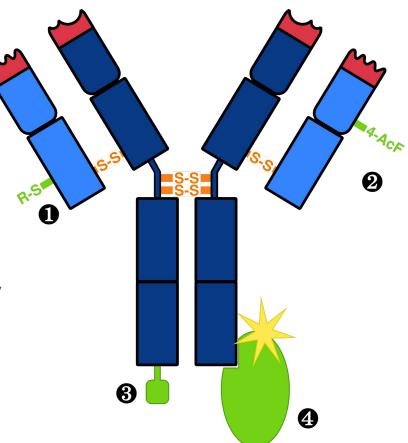
- 1. Engineered cysteines ("THIOMABs", <u>10.1038/nbt.1480</u>) or selenocysteines* (<u>10.1073%2Fpnas.0800800105</u>)
- 2. Non-natural amino acids (e.g. 4-Acetylphenylalanine <u>10.1039/B108185N</u>°
- 3. Tags: a specific amino acid sequence that is then targeted by an enzyme which either attaches directly the payload or modifies a nearby amino acid, which can subsequently specifically targeted.

OH

ОН

NH₂

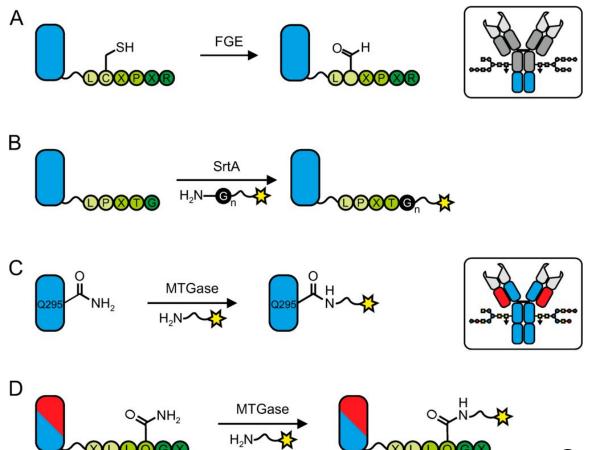
Non-covalent interactions (e.g. protein A, ZZ), can be converted into a covalent bond by photoinducible ligation



Slide 66 of 71

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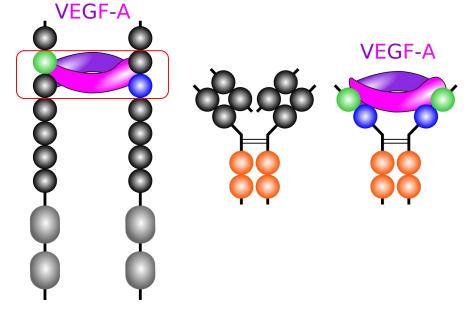
A The formylglycine generating enzyme (FGE) converts the cysteine of a LCXPXR tag into formylglycine, thereby creating a bioorthogonal aldehyde handle for site-specific chemical antibody conjugation.

B Sortase A (Srt A) mediates that conjugation of an LPXTG motif with a polyglycinefunctionalized ligand of interest (yellow star).

C MTGase-mediated antibody modification targeting the endogenous glutamine at position 295 or (**D**) a glutamine-containing tag.



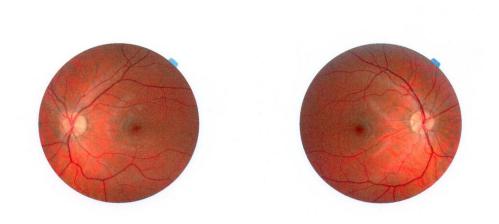
Eylea[®] (Aflibercept)



- Soluble VEGF-A receptor, works like Avastin (antibody)
- Suppresses the growth of blood vessels ("anti-angiogenic")
- 3-part fusion protein from VEGFR-1(D2), VEGFR-2(D3), and IgG₁Fc

https://doi.org/10.1007/s40123-013-0015-2

VEGFR-1 VEGFR-2 IgG₁Fc Aflibercept



https://www.flickr.com/photos/90767393@N00/1612670215

 Indications: wet macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy (~ growth of blood vessels from the choroid into the retina)

Slide 69 of 71

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- Available in Finland: yes
- Company: Regeneron (US)
- Interesting: a successful "me-too-drug"
- Market introduction: 2011

- Roitt's Essential Immunology (generation of antibody diversity): <u>https://www.terkko.helsinki.fi/roitts-essential-immunology</u>
- General review about the industrial production of therapeutic proteins: <u>https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-52287-6_29</u>
- More about the cancer drug Avastin: Scientific review about its development: <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbrc.2005.05.132</u> Interview with Napoleone Ferrara: <u>https://doi.org/10.1387/ijdb.103216dr</u> NYT article: <u>https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/health/06avastin.html</u>

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Slide 70 of 71

- More about Herceptin: <u>https://www.gene.com/stories/her2/</u>
- Drug Conjugate review: <u>https://clincancerres.aacrjournals.org/content/17/20/6389</u>
- Review about the different methods to conjugate: <u>https://doi.org/10.3390/antib4030197</u>
- Lab handbook of bioconjugation: <u>https://www.thermofisher.com/content/dam/LifeTech/Documents/PDFs/COL06007-Bio</u> <u>conjugation-Handbook-Global.pdf</u>

- Laboratory: <u>mjlab.fi</u> (<u>https://www.helsinki.fi/en/researchgroups/lymphangiogenesis-research-and-antibody-development</u>)
- Core facility for protein production and purification: <u>b3p.it.helsinki.fi</u>
- <u>jeltsch.org</u> (private rumblings)
- <u>jeltsch.org/science</u> (private rumblings without the non-scientific stuff)
- Questions to: <u>michael@jeltsch.org</u> or via Skype: jeltsch
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