

TRPC3 and TRPC6 are essential for angiotensin II-induced cardiac hypertrophy

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Angiotensin (Ang) II participates in the pathogenesis of heart failure through induction of cardiac hypertrophy. Ang II-induced hypertrophic growth of cardiomyocytes is mediated by nuclear factor of activated T cells (NFAT), a Ca²⁺-responsive transcriptional factor. It is believed that phospholipase C (PLC)-mediated production of inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate (IP₃) is responsible for Ca²⁺ increase that is necessary for NFAT activation. However, we demonstrate that PLC-mediated production of diacylglycerol (DAG) but not IP₃ is essential for Ang II-induced NFAT activation in rat cardiac myocytes. NFAT activation and hypertrophic responses by Ang II stimulation required the enhanced frequency of Ca²⁺ oscillation triggered by membrane depolarization through activation of DAG-sensitive TRPC channels, which leads to activation of L-type Ca²⁺ channel. Patch clamp recordings from single myocytes revealed that Ang II activated DAG-sensitive TRPC-like currents. Among DAG-activating TRPC channels (TRPC3, TRPC6, and TRPC7), the activities of TRPC3 and TRPC6 channels correlated with Ang II-induced NFAT activation and hypertrophic responses. These data suggest that DAG-induced Ca²⁺ signaling pathway through TRPC3 and TRPC6 is essential for Ang II-induced NFAT activation and cardiac hypertrophy.

The EMBO Journal (2006) 25, 5305–5316. doi:10.1038/sj.emboj.7601417; Published online 2 November 2006

Subject Categories: signal transduction; molecular biology of disease

Keywords: angiotensin; cardiac hypertrophy; diacylglycerol; L-type Ca²⁺ channel; TRPC

Introduction

Regulators of cardiac function such as vasoactive neurotransmitters and hormones activate phospholipase C (PLC) and

thereby generate inositol-1,4,5-trisphosphate (IP₃) and diacylglycerol (DAG). These agonists elevate the concentration of cytoplasmic free Ca²⁺ ([Ca²⁺]_i) in cardiomyocytes, which induces positive inotropic effects on the heart and activates several transcriptional pathways that lead to cardiac hypertrophy (Wilkins and Molkenin, 2004; Woodcock and Matkovich, 2005). NFAT is one of the transcriptional factors regulated by [Ca²⁺]_i (Crabtree and Olson, 2002). The relevance of the NFAT signaling pathway to cardiac hypertrophy is underscored by the observation that cardiac-targeted transgenic animals expressing constitutively activated forms of either calcineurin or NFAT produced ventricular hypertrophy (Molkenin *et al*, 1998; Taigen *et al*, 2000). The Ca²⁺-sensitive serine/threonine phosphatase (calcineurin) primarily regulates NFAT activity by rapid dephosphorylation of NFAT proteins and their translocation to the nucleus. A drop in nuclear Ca²⁺ deactivates calcineurin and allows one of several NFAT kinases to rephosphorylate NFAT, causing it to leave the nucleus and thereby inactivating transcription (Timmerman *et al*, 1996; Dolmetsch *et al*, 1997). Therefore, a sustained elevation of [Ca²⁺]_i is required for NFAT-dependent transcription.

The importance of agonists that activate PLC for cardiac hypertrophy is well established (Molkenin and Dorn, 2001). Many lines of evidence have shown that stimulation of PLC-linked G protein-coupled receptors, such as α_1 -adrenergic receptor (Maruyama *et al*, 2002), Ang II receptor (Nishida *et al*, 2005) and endothelin receptor (Arai *et al*, 2003), induce hypertrophic growth of rat cardiac myocytes. More clinically relevant, hypertrophied hearts induced by volume overload are commonly characterized by high levels of IP₃-generating agonists such as Ang II (Dostal *et al*, 1992; Sadoshima *et al*, 1993). Numerous studies have demonstrated the need for sustained or periodic increases in [Ca²⁺]_i to cause the nuclear localization of NFAT (Dolmetsch *et al*, 1997; Tomida *et al*, 2003). In nonexcitable cells, IP₃ is generally accepted to function as a mediator of sustained Ca²⁺ responses (Timmerman *et al*, 1996; Dolmetsch *et al*, 1997). The sustained Ca²⁺ signaling requires the store-operated Ca²⁺ channel (SOC), which opens in response to depletion of intracellular stores through IP₃ receptor (IP₃R). Therefore, it is currently believed that Ca²⁺ entry through SOC regulates NFAT translocation. In the heart, however, the expression level of IP₃R is much lower than that of ryanodine receptor (Moschella and Marks, 1993). Voltage-dependent L-type Ca²⁺ channel and ryanodine receptor function as the major source of Ca²⁺ for normal Ca²⁺-induced Ca²⁺ release of excitation–contraction (E–C) coupling, but many reports do not support the idea that the increase in [Ca²⁺]_i through E–C coupling between L-type Ca²⁺ channel and ryanodine receptor is coupled to NFAT activation (Wilkins and Molkenin, 2004).

A possible source of Ca²⁺ for activation of calcineurin is Ca²⁺ influx through transient receptor potential (TRP) proteins that are involved in store-operated Ca²⁺ entry (Clapham, 2003). Upregulation of canonical transient receptor potential (TRPC) proteins is recently reported to contribute to

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Received: 10 February 2006; accepted: 11 October 2006; published online: 2 November 2006

the development of cardiac hypertrophy (Seth *et al*, 2004). Other groups reported that TRPM7 regulates Mg^{2+} homeostasis, and TRPM6 and TRPM7 are differentially regulated by Ang II in vascular smooth muscle cells (He *et al*, 2005; Touyz *et al*, 2006). However, it is still unknown whether TRP channels contribute to receptor-stimulated activation of calcineurin-NFAT pathway in the heart. In this study, we investigated the mechanism of how Ang II stimulation induces the sustained Ca^{2+} signaling leading to NFAT activation and hypertrophic growth of rat neonatal cardiomyocytes.

Results

Essential role of DAG in Ang II-induced NFAT activation and cardiac hypertrophy

We first examined whether IP_3 or DAG is involved in Ang II-induced NFAT activation in rat neonatal cardiomyocytes. As it

has been reported that pressure overload- and Ang II-induced cardiac hypertrophy are attenuated in NFAT4 (NFATc3)-null mice (Wilkins *et al*, 2002), the translocation of NFAT4 was determined in this study. Stimulation of cardiac myocytes with Ang II for 30 min increased the maximal nuclear predominant fluorescence of GFP-fused amino-terminal region of NFAT4 protein (GFP-NFAT4) (Figure 1A–C). The Ang II-induced NFAT translocation was completely suppressed by the expression of DAG kinase β (DGK β), an enzyme that decreases the cellular DAG level by converting DAG to phosphatidic acid. Treatment with RHC80267, a DAG lipase inhibitor, significantly increased the Ang II-induced nuclear translocation of GFP-NFAT4. However, treatment with xestospongin C, an IP_3 R blocker, did not affect the Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4 to the nucleus. To directly inhibit IP_3 -mediated signaling, we expressed the ligand-binding region of type 1 IP_3 R (IP_3 -sponge) (Uchiyama *et al*, 2002).

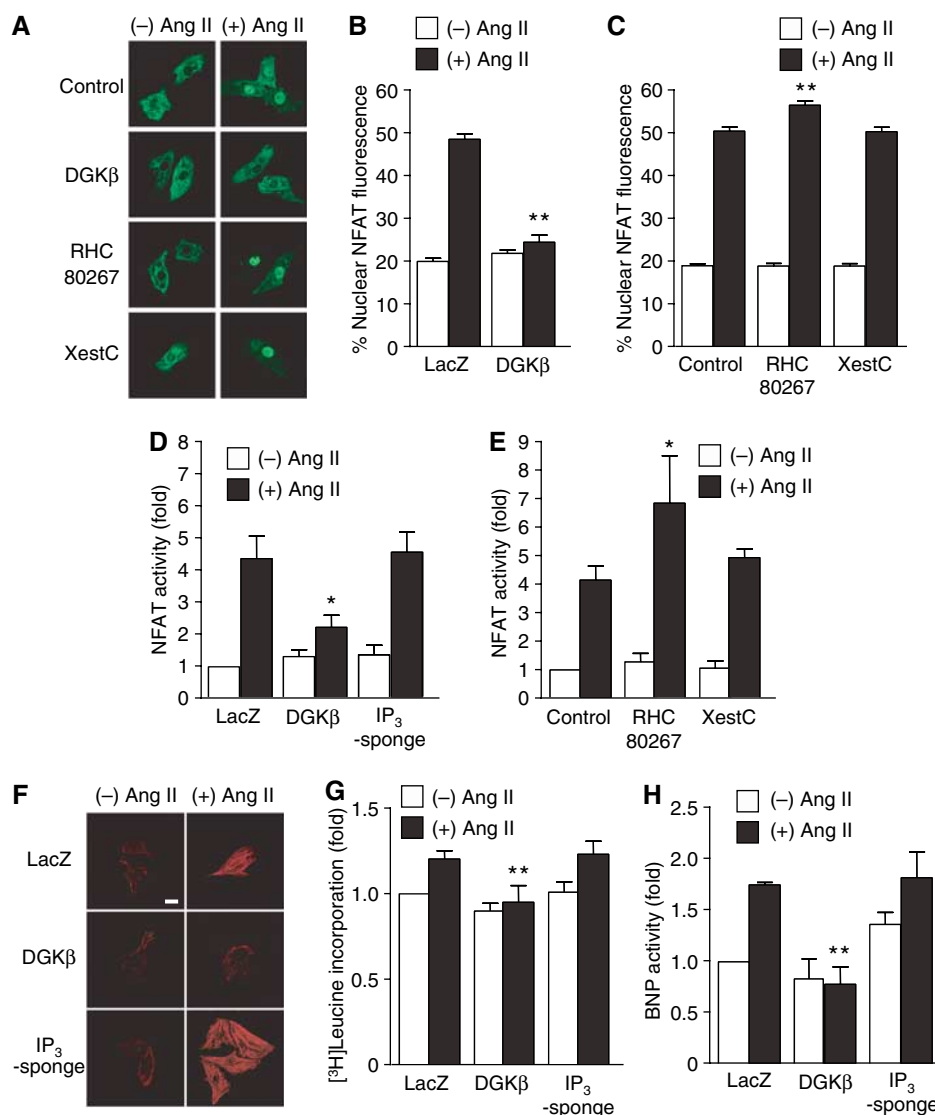


Figure 1 Essential role of DAG in Ang II-induced cardiomyocyte hypertrophy. (A) Nuclear translocation of GFP-NFAT4 by Ang II stimulation. A portion of cells was treated with RHC80267 (30 μ M) or xestospongin C (XestC, 20 μ M) for 30 min before the addition of Ang II (100 nM), and a portion of cells was infected with DGK β for 48 h before Ang II stimulation. (B, C) Quantification of nuclear predominant fluorescence of GFP-NFAT4 after Ang II stimulation. (D, E) Effects of DGK β , RHC80267, and XestC on the increase in NFAT-dependent luciferase activity by Ang II stimulation for 6 h. The fold activation was calculated by the values of untreated cells set as 1. (F–H) Effects of DGK β and GFP- IP_3 -sponge on Ang II-induced actin reorganization (F), protein synthesis (G), and BNP expression (H). Scale bar = 20 μ m. * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01 versus control or LacZ-expressing cells.

The Ang II-induced transient increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ (or Ca^{2+} release) was completely suppressed by the treatment with xestospongins C and by the expression of IP_3 -sponge but not DGK β (Supplementary Figure S1), suggesting the efficient inhibition of IP_3 -mediated Ca^{2+} signaling. The Ang II-induced increase in NFAT-dependent luciferase reporter activity was suppressed by DGK β , but not by xestospongins C and IP_3 -sponge (Figure 1D and E). Treatment with RHC80267 promoted the Ang II-induced NFAT activation (Figure 1E). These results suggest the involvement of DAG in Ang II-induced NFAT activation. We also examined the involvement of DAG in Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses. Expression of DGK β , but not IP_3 -sponge, completely suppressed Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses, such as actin reorganization (Figure 1F), protein synthesis (Figure 1G), and expression of brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) (Figure 1H). These results suggest that DAG, but not IP_3 , is essential for Ang II-induced NFAT activation and hypertrophic responses of neonatal cardiomyocytes.

Involvement of Ang II type 1 receptor, $G\alpha_q$, and PLC in Ang II-induced NFAT activation

In contrast to the absence of extracellular Ca^{2+} (Supplementary Figure S1A), myocytes showed spontaneous increases in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ in the presence of extracellular Ca^{2+} . Treatment with Ang II induced the transient increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ followed by sustained oscillatory increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ (Figure 2A; the former can more clearly be seen in Supplementary Figure S1A). The Ca^{2+} oscillation represents a spontaneous activity of myocytes, and Ang II stimulation increased its frequency (Supplementary Figure S1C). The Ang II-induced Ca^{2+} response and NFAT activation were greatly suppressed by U73122, a PLC inhibitor, but not by U73343, an inactive analog of U73122 (Figure 2A–C). Thus, PLC primarily regulates Ang II-induced Ca^{2+} signal generation. The Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4 was suppressed by CV11974, an Ang II type 1 receptor (AT1R) blocker, but not by PD123319, an AT2R blocker (Figure 2D). These results indicate that AT1R-mediated PLC activation is

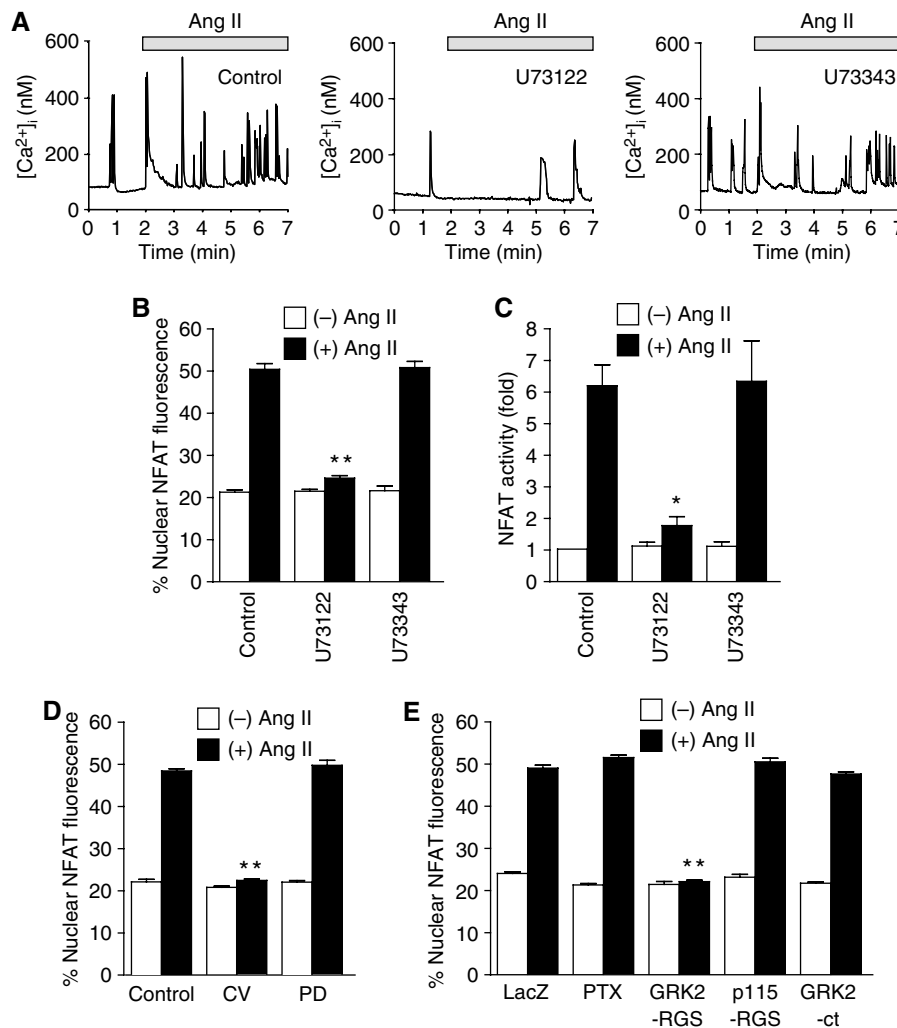


Figure 2 Involvement of AT1R, $G\alpha_q$, and PLC in Ang II-induced NFAT activation. (A–C) Effects of U73122 and U73343 on Ang II-induced Ca^{2+} responses (A), translocation of GFP-NFAT4 (B), and NFAT activation (C). (A) Effects of U73122 and U73343 on the increases in the frequency of Ca^{2+} oscillation during 5 min Ang II stimulation. The digital images were obtained every 1 s. (D) Effects of CV11974 and PD123319 on Ang II-induced NFAT translocation. Cells were treated with U73122 (5 μ M), U73343 (5 μ M), CV11974 (CV, 5 μ M), or PD123319 (PD, 5 μ M) for 30 min before the addition of Ang II (100 nM). (E) Effects of PTX, GRK2-RGS, p115-RGS, and GRK2-ct on Ang II-induced NFAT translocation. Cells were infected with adenovirus encoding LacZ (100 MOI), p115-RGS or GRK2-ct (100 MOI), or GRK2-RGS (300 MOI) for 48 h. A portion of cells was treated with PTX (100 ng/ml) for 24 h before Ang II stimulation. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of control or LacZ-expressing cells.

involved in Ang II-induced NFAT4 activation. We next examined which G proteins are involved in Ang II-induced NFAT activation. It has been generally believed that G_{α_q} plays an important role in agonist-induced cardiac hypertrophy (Molkentin and Dorn, 2001). To examine the involvement of G_{α_q} , we expressed regulator of G protein signaling (RGS) domain that is ~200 amino acids, specifically binds GTP-bound form of G_{α} and accelerates GTPase activity. When RGS domain is expressed in cells, it competes with activated form of G_{α} for endogenous effectors and accelerates turn-off reaction of G_{α} . Therefore, RGS domain can work as a specific inhibitor of G_{α} . As expected, the expression of a G_{α_q} -specific RGS domain of G protein-coupled receptor kinase 2 (GRK2-RGS) completely suppressed the Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4 (Figure 2E). However, the expression of a $G_{\alpha_{12/13}}$ -specific RGS domain of p115RhoGEF (p115-RGS) did not affect the Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4. Pertussis toxin (PTX) and carboxyl terminal region of GRK2 (GRK2-ct), a $\beta\gamma$ subunit of G protein ($G\beta\gamma$)-sequestering polypeptide, did not inhibit the Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4 (Figure 2E). Thus, these results support the evidence that agonist-induced Ca^{2+} -dependent NFAT activation is predominantly regulated by G_{α_q} , but not by $G_{\alpha_{12/13}}$, G_i or $G\beta\gamma$ in cardiomyocytes.

Requirement of Ca^{2+} influx through L-type Ca^{2+} channels and nonselective cation channels in Ang II-induced NFAT activation

It has been reported that DAG induces Ca^{2+} influx through activation of cation channels (Hofmann *et al*, 1999; Clapham, 2003). As the Ang II-induced periodic increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$

likely results from enhanced spontaneous activity of myocytes (which are dependent on extracellular Ca^{2+} ; see above), and these were suppressed by DGK β (Supplementary Figure S1), we next examined whether Ca^{2+} influx is involved in DAG-mediated responses. Treatment of cardiac myocytes with Ang II or with a DAG derivative, 1-oleoyl-2-acyl-*sn*-glycerol (OAG), increased the nuclear translocation of GFP-NFAT4 and NFAT activity, both of which were almost completely suppressed by the voltage-dependent Ca^{2+} channel blocker nitrendipine and a receptor-activated cation channel (RACC) inhibitor SK&F96365 (Figure 3A–C). As OAG-induced NFAT activation was also completely suppressed by cyclosporine A, a calcineurin inhibitor (Figure 3C), DAG increases NFAT activity through calcineurin activation. These results suggest that RACC and Ca^{2+} influx through L-type Ca^{2+} channel mediate Ang II- or DAG-induced NFAT activation.

Ang II activates DAG-sensitive cation channels in cardiac myocytes

To directly demonstrate that Ang II activates DAG-sensitive RACC, whole-cell patch-clamp experiments were performed. In quasi-physiological ionic conditions, administration of Ang II into the bath activated inward currents at -80 mV, which were further enhanced by RHC80267 (Figure 4A and B). These currents were completely abolished by *N*-methyl-*D*-glucamine substitution for all external cations (data not shown), and showed an outward-rectifying property with the reversal potential of ca. 0 mV (1.0 ± 1.0 mV, $n=6$), when Cs^+ was intracellularly dialyzed via patch pipette and TTX ($3 \mu M$) and nitrendipine ($1 \mu M$) were added into

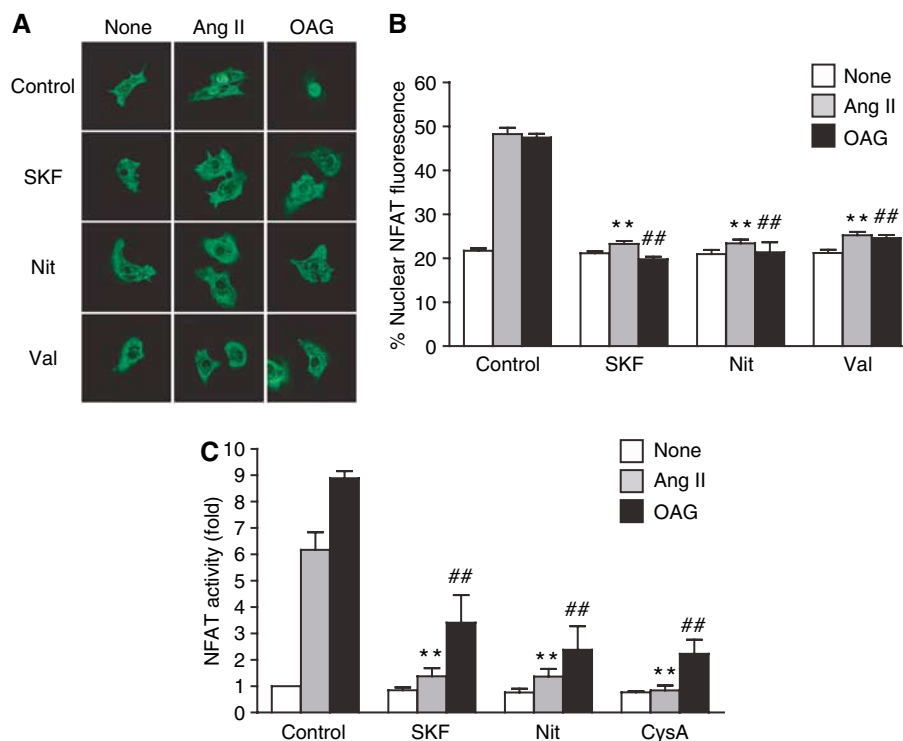


Figure 3 Requirement of RACC and L-type Ca^{2+} channel in DAG-mediated NFAT translocation. (A) Effects of SK&F96365 (SKF), nitrendipine (Nit) and valinomycin (Val) on Ang II- or OAG-induced NFAT translocation. (B) Quantification of the nuclear predominant fluorescence of GFP-NFAT4 without (None) or with Ang II or OAG stimulation. (C) Effects of SKF, Nit, and cyclosporine A (CysA) on Ang II- or OAG-induced increase in NFAT-luciferase activity. Cells were treated with SKF ($10 \mu M$), Nit ($1 \mu M$), Val ($1 \mu M$), or CysA ($1 \mu M$) for 30 min before the addition of Ang II (100 nM) or OAG ($25 \mu M$). ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of control cells. ##; $P < 0.01$ versus OAG stimulation of control cells.

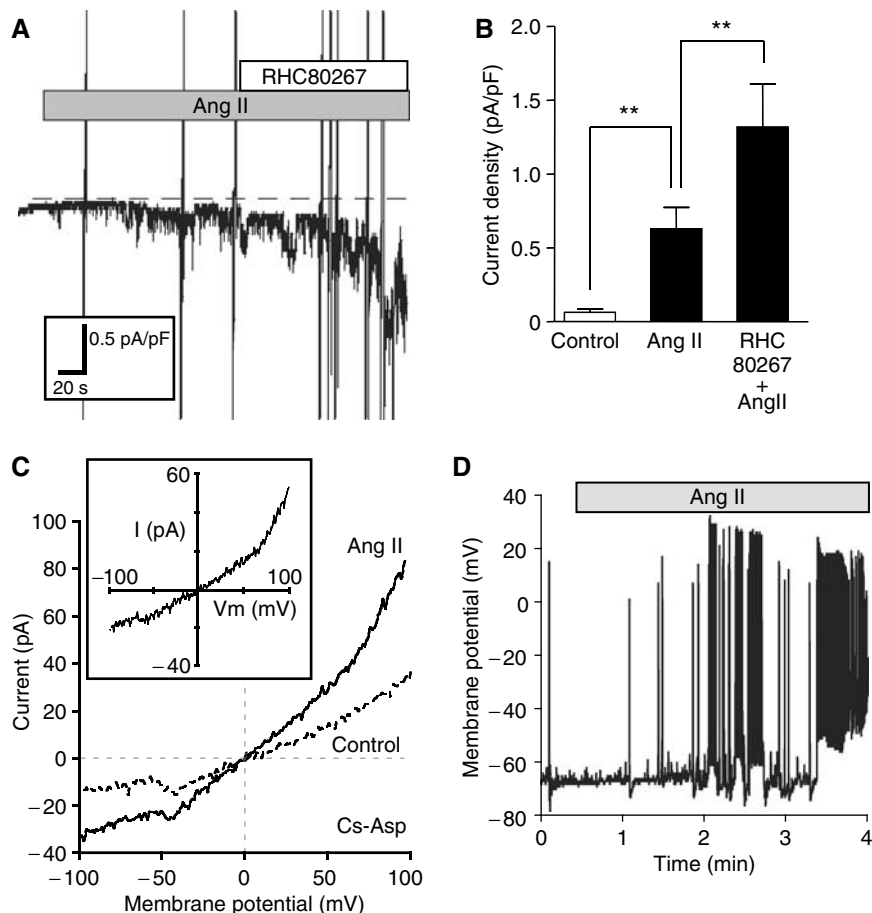


Figure 4 Activation of DAG-sensitive currents from single cardiomyocytes by Ang II stimulation. (A) Representative traces of ionic currents recorded from Ang II-treated cardiomyocytes at a holding potential of -80 mV under conventional whole-cell patch-clamp with K^+ -internal solution. The nonselective cation currents are activated by Ang II ($1 \mu\text{M}$), and potentiated by RHC80267 ($30 \mu\text{M}$). The dotted line represents the zero current level. (B) Current density of inward current (at -80 mV) averaged for the period of 60–65 s after Ang II stimulation or RHC80267 treatment ($n > 8$). $**P < 0.01$. (C) I - V relationship of ionic currents from unstimulated (Control) and Ang II-stimulated myocytes with Cs^+ -internal solution containing myo- IP_3 ($10 \mu\text{M}$). TTX ($3 \mu\text{M}$) and nitrendipine ($1 \mu\text{M}$) are included in the K^+ -free external solution. (Inset) I - V relationship of TRPC-like currents induced by Ang II (differences between Ang II and Control). (D) Representative traces of time-dependent changes in the membrane potential and the frequency of action potential by Ang II stimulation in the current-clamp mode.

K^+ -free external solution to block voltage-dependent K^+ , Na^+ , and L-type Ca^{2+} channels, respectively (see inset in Figure 4C). Administration of OAG ($25 \mu\text{M}$) also activated inward currents showing indistinguishable properties from those activated by Ang II, whereas application of myo- IP_3 ($10 \mu\text{M}$) in the internal solution was unable to activate any discernible currents by itself (data not shown). These results collectively suggest that Ang II activates DAG-sensitive nonselective cation currents in cardiomyocytes via an IP_3 -independent pathway, which bears considerable resemblance to heterologously expressed TRPC channels.

In the next step, we examined Ang II-induced changes in membrane potential by using the current-clamp technique, since the treatment with valinomycin, a K^+ ionophore, which causes inactivation of voltage-dependent channels via stabilization of membrane potential (Linares-Hernandez *et al*, 1998), completely suppressed the Ang II-induced translocation of GFP-NFAT4 (Figure 3A and B), and in general, the activation of RACC causes membrane depolarization (Large, 2002). As expected, membrane potential recording from single myocytes with current-clamp mode clearly demonstrated that Ang II increased the frequency of action poten-

tials, which eventually led to continuous burstic firing superimposed on concomitant sustained depolarization (22.2 ± 5.6 mV, $n = 5$) (Figure 4D). It is noteworthy that the time course of these effects is very similar to that observed for the enhanced frequency of Ca^{2+} oscillations induced by Ang II (see above).

Properties of DAG induced membrane depolarization in rat cardiac myocytes

Current-clamp recordings were technically little feasible to monitor the membrane potential for a long period of time, because of rhythmical contractions of myocytes evoked by Ang II. To circumvent this problem, we adopted a voltage-sensitive fluorescent probe DiBAC₄(3). After DiBAC₄(3) enters the cells, it binds to cellular proteins and membrane lipids. Then, DiBAC₄(3) enhances fluorescence. Because of its slow dissociating nature, DiBAC₄(3) can only detect slow cumulative changes in resting potential rather than rapid changes in membrane potential generated by action potential. Ang II stimulation gradually increased the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) (Figure 5A and B), indicating the shift of membrane potential to positive (BACzkó *et al*, 2004). The

averaged changes in membrane potential induced by Ang II were estimated to be ~15 mV. Treatment with RHC80267 enhanced the Ang II-induced increases in the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) (Figure 5C). These results indicate that DAG generated by Ang II stimulation shifts the membrane potential of cardiac myocytes more positively. DAG also activates other signaling molecules including protein kinase C (PKC). PKC is known to potentiate the extent of L-type

Ca²⁺ channel activation, and both OAG and phorbtor 12-myristate 13-acetate (PMA) have been reported to increase the channel open probability in rat cardiomyocytes (Guinamard *et al*, 2004). However, treatment with PMA did not increase the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) (Figure 5A and B) and OAG-induced translocation and activation of NFAT were not affected by bisindolylmaleimide, a selective PKC inhibitor (Supplementary Figure S2). It is possible that

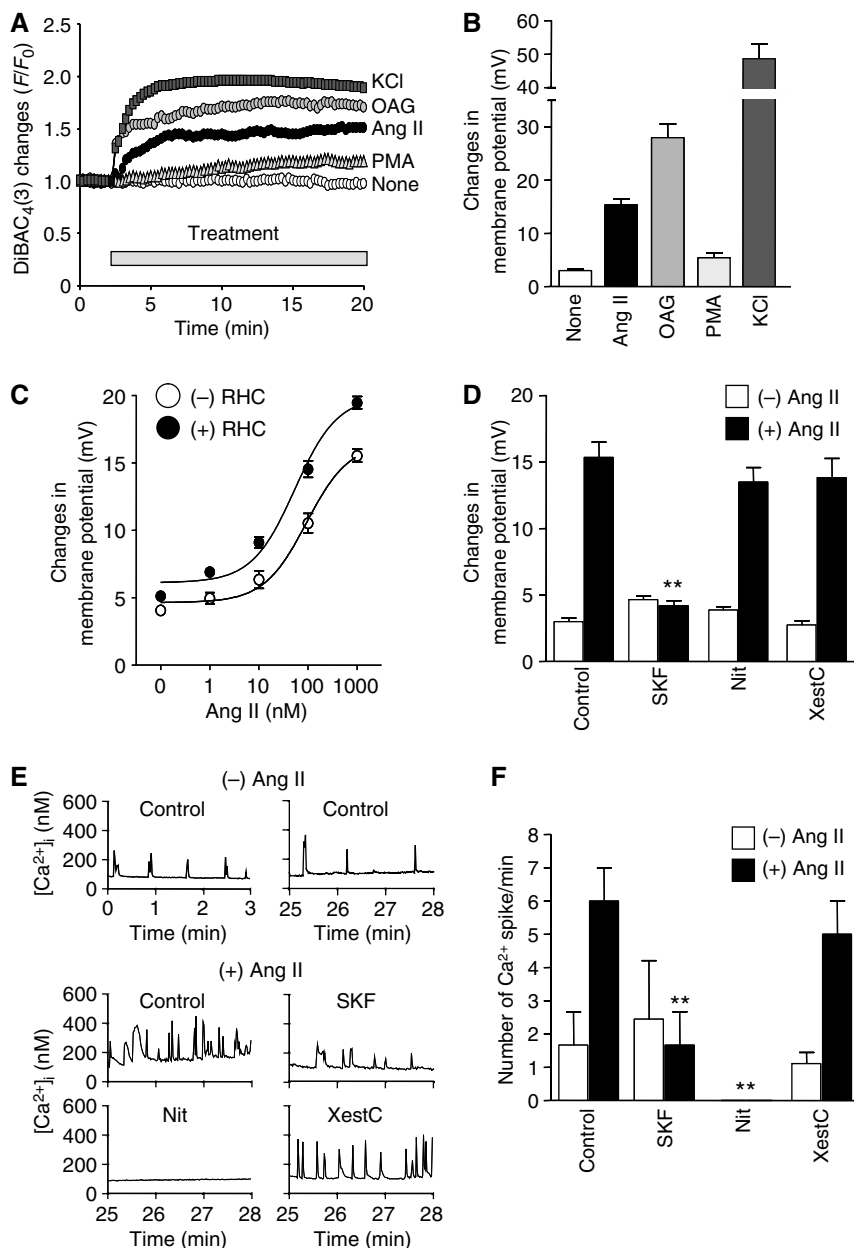


Figure 5 Changes in membrane potential through RACC activation by DAG. (A) Representative time courses of changes in Ang II-, OAG-, or PMA-induced F/F_0 of DiBAC₄(3) fluorescence from time course experiments. Cells were stimulated with Ang II (1 μ M), OAG (25 μ M), PMA (1 μ M), or KCl (10 mM). F_0 means the initial value of fluorescence. (B) Maximal changes in resting membrane potential calculated from the changes in DiBAC₄(3) fluorescence intensity during 15 min drug treatment. For the *in vivo* calibration of the membrane potentials, the KCl-induced maximal changes in fluorescence were fitted to the theoretical potentials obtained from Nernst equation, and then the changes in membrane potential by Ang II stimulation was calculated based on the fitting formula. (C) Effects of RHC80267 on the concentration-dependent changes in resting membrane potentials induced by Ang II stimulation. (D) Involvement of RACC in Ang II-induced increases in the resting membrane potential. Cells were treated with SK&F96365 (SKF, 10 μ M), nitrendipine (Nit, 1 μ M), or xestospongin C (XestC, 20 μ M) for 30 min before the addition of Ang II. ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of control cells. (E) Effects of SK&F96365 (SKF), nitrendipine (Nit), and xestospongin C (XestC) on Ang II-induced Ca²⁺ responses. The digital images were obtained every 1 s during 0–3 min under basal conditions and during 25–28 min after Ang II stimulation. (F) Number of Ca²⁺ spikes was normalized to per minute. ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of control cells.

the metabolites of DAG work as mediators for NFAT translocation. However, treatment with arachidonic acid (AA) or phospholipase A₂ (PLA₂) inhibitors did not affect Ang II-induced NFAT translocation (Supplementary Figure S2). These results suggest that PKCs and DAG metabolites do not participate in Ang II-induced depolarization and NFAT translocation. The Ang II-induced increases in the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) were completely suppressed by SK&F96365, but not by nitrendipine and xestospongine C (Figure 5D).

We next examined whether periodic increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ is regulated by RACC. The myocytes showed spontaneous Ca^{2+} oscillations in the presence of extracellular Ca^{2+} (top panel in Figure 5E). The frequency of Ca^{2+} oscillations was increased by Ang II stimulation and this was suppressed by SK&F96365 and nitrendipine, but not by xestospongine C (middle and bottom panels in Figure 5E and F). These results support the idea that DAG generated by Ang II-induced PLC activation causes membrane depolarization through RACC activation and thereby secondarily activates L-type Ca^{2+} channel, leading to increased frequency of Ca^{2+} oscillations.

Requirement of TRPC3 and TRPC6 in Ang II-induced membrane depolarization

TRPC proteins are thought to be molecular candidates for RACC (Clapham, 2003). We found the expression of at least five TRP canonical (TRPC) mRNAs (TRPC1, TRPC3, TRPC4, TRPC5, TRPC6, and TRPC7) in rat neonatal cardiomyocytes by RT-PCR analysis (data not shown). Recent reports have demonstrated that three TRPC channels (TRPC3, TRPC6, and TRPC7) are activated directly by DAG (Hofmann *et al*, 1999; Clapham, 2003). Thus, we next examined which DAG-sensitive TRPC protein is involved in Ang II-induced NFAT activation. We overexpressed TRPC3, TRPC6, or TRPC7, and examined the Ang II-induced changes in membrane potential with DiBAC₄(3) (Figure 6A and B). Among three TRPC proteins, Ang II-induced increases in the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) were significantly enhanced by the expression of TRPC3 and TRPC6 but not by TRPC7 (Figure 6B), although the latter enhanced OAG-induced $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ increases to the same extent as the former two did (Supplementary Figure S3). These results indicate that TRPC3 and TRPC6, but not TRPC7, likely regulate the Ang II-induced membrane depolarization. This conclusion was further corroborated by siRNA-mediated knockdown of TRPC3 (siRNA 1397, 1992, and 2043) and TRPC6 (siRNA 1609 and 1786) in the cardiomyocytes; this procedure decreased the expression level of endogenous TRPC3 and TRPC6 proteins without affecting other TRPC proteins (Figure 6C–F), and simultaneously caused significant suppression of Ang II-induced increases in the fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) (Figure 6G). Taken together, the above results strongly suggest that DAG-mediated activation of TRPC3 and TRPC6 channels contributes to the enhanced Ca^{2+} oscillation by Ang II via their membrane depolarizing actions.

In addition, siRNA silencing of TRPC3 and TRPC6 also significantly suppressed Ca^{2+} entry-mediated $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ elevation induced by the addition of Ca^{2+} into the bath after Ang II stimulation (Supplementary Figure S3). Thus, some role of direct Ca^{2+} entry via TRPC3/TRPC6-associated pathway cannot completely be excluded in the Ang II-enhanced Ca^{2+} oscillation.

Requirement of TRPC3 and TRPC6 in Ang II-induced NFAT translocation and hypertrophic responses

We next examined whether TRPC3 and TRPC6 are involved in Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses. Treatment with siRNAs of TRPC3 and TRPC6 significantly suppressed Ang II-induced NFAT translocation (Figure 7A and B). Furthermore, both TRPC3 and TRPC6 siRNAs suppressed Ang II-induced actin reorganization and protein synthesis (Figure 7C and D). We further examined the involvement of TRPC6 in Ang II-induced cardiomyocyte hypertrophy by using two dominant negative TRPC6 mutants (Hofmann *et al*, 2002; Hisatsune *et al*, 2004). Expression of TRPC6-Δ(N) and TRPC6-3A significantly suppressed Ang II-induced NFAT activation, actin reorganization, and protein synthesis (Supplementary Figure S4). These results suggest that TRPC3 and TRPC6 play a critical role in Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses in rat neonatal cardiomyocytes.

Discussion

This study reveals the role of DAG in Ang II-induced NFAT activation and hypertrophic responses. DAG produced by Ang II-induced PLC activation directly activates TRPC3 and TRPC6, and the resulting cation (Na^+ , Ca^{2+}) influx changes membrane potential to positive, leading to activation of voltage-dependent L-type Ca^{2+} channel possibly through the generation of action potential. The increase in Ca^{2+} influx through L-type Ca^{2+} channel can activate calcineurin/NFAT pathway and hypertrophic responses in rat neonatal cardiomyocytes (Figure 8).

The physiological role of TRPC was first identified in the vascular smooth muscle cells (Inoue *et al*, 2001). In the vascular system, activation of TRPC6 contributes to membrane depolarization and regulates myogenic tone of resistance arteries (Large, 2002; Welsh *et al*, 2002). In the present study, we demonstrated that TRPC3 and TRPC6 activated by DAG contributes to the shift of membrane potential and subsequent Ca^{2+} signal generation through voltage-dependent Ca^{2+} channel in cardiac myocytes. The role of DAG-induced TRPC3 and TRPC6 activation in membrane depolarization has been reported in vascular smooth muscle cells (Reading *et al*, 2005; Soboloff *et al*, 2005). The novel finding of the present study is to characterize the pathophysiological significance of TRPC3 and TRPC6 in Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses of the heart.

We cannot determine the subtype(s) of TRPC proteins activated by Ang II from the *I*-*V* relationship of native RACC, as inward current activated by Ang II was too small (Figure 4). Previous report has shown that flufenamate inhibits TRPC3 but enhances TRPC6 channel activity (Inoue *et al*, 2001). The Ang II-induced inward current was slightly inhibited by flufenamate (data not shown). However, the similar behavior of currents to the present study was reported in TRPC3/C6-co-expressing HEK293 cells (Maruyama *et al*, 2006). TRPC3-like currents were observed by coexpression of TRPC3 and TRPC6. As Ang II-induced responses were inhibited both by siRNAs of TRPC3 and TRPC6 (Figures 6 and 7), we speculate that TRPC3 and TRPC6 form heterotetramers to regulate DAG-sensitive native cationic currents in cardiac myocytes.

In our hands, the expression of TRPC7 did not enhance Ang II-induced membrane depolarization (Figure 6B). This

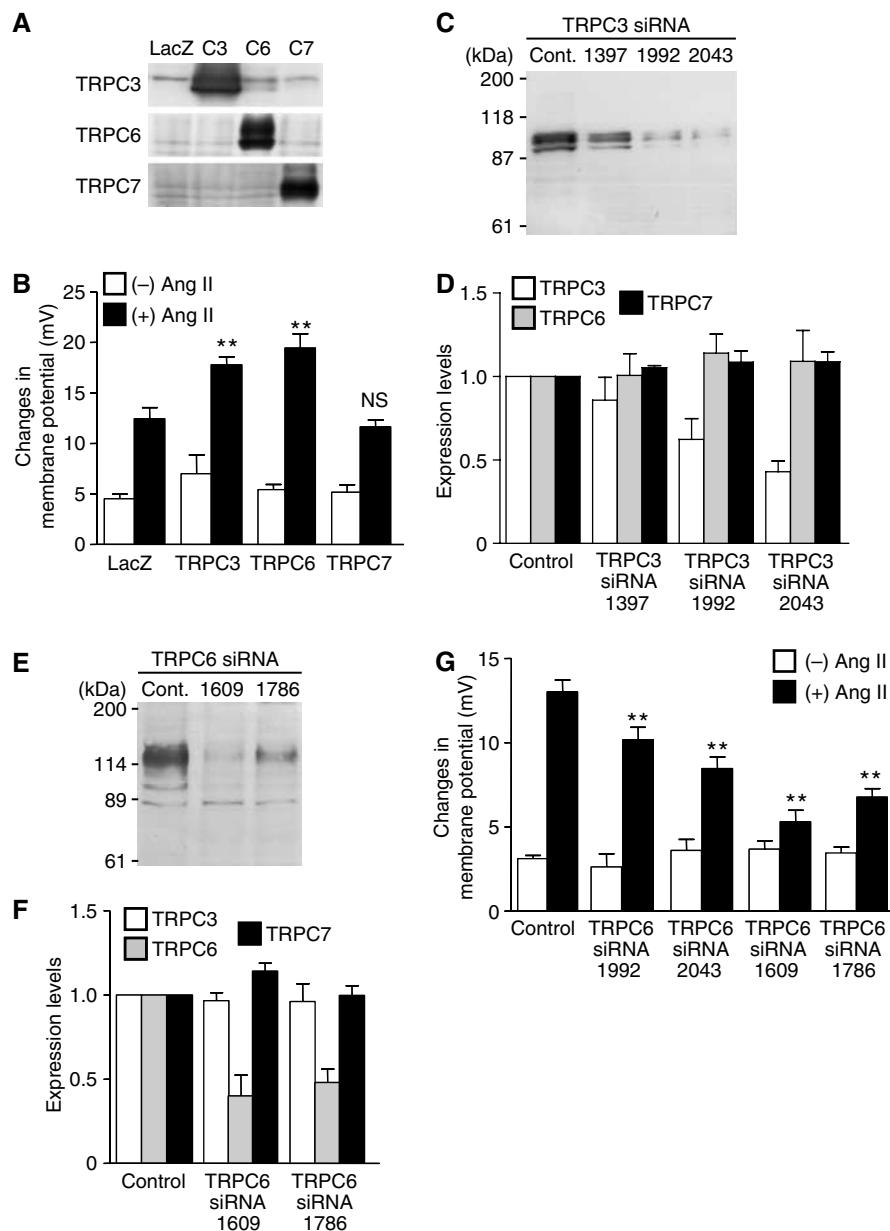


Figure 6 Requirement of TRPC3 and TRPC6 in Ang II-induced increases in membrane potential. (A) Western blots of the respective TRPC proteins. To identify the sizes of TRPC3 (C3), TRPC6 (C6), and TRPC7 (C7), each TRPC was overexpressed with recombinant adenoviruses. (B) Potentiating effects of TRPC3 and TRPC6 on changes in membrane potential by Ang II stimulation in LacZ-, TRPC3-, TRPC6-, and TRPC7-expressing cells. ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of LacZ-expressing cells. NS means no significance from LacZ-expressing cells. (C–F) Effects of TRPC3 siRNAs (C, D) and TRPC6 siRNAs (E, F) on the expression of the respective TRPC proteins. (C, E) Representative Western blots with anti-TRPC3 (C) and anti-TRPC6 (E). (D, F) Effects of siRNAs of TRPC3 and TRPC6 on the average expression of native TRPC3, TRPC6, and TRPC7 proteins. (G) Effects of siRNAs of TRPC3 and TRPC6 on the maximal changes in DiBAC₄(3) fluorescence intensity by Ang II (100 nM). Data are shown as the changes in membrane potentials (mV) calculated by *in vivo* calibration. ** $P < 0.01$ versus Ang II stimulation of control siRNA-treated cells (Control).

may be explained by differential spatial organization and dynamics in the receptor-transduction systems (Delmas *et al*, 2002). As OAG-induced increases in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$, but Ang II-induced shift of membrane potential, was not enhanced in TRPC7-expressing cells (Supplementary Figure S3, Figure 6B), Ang II signaling microdomain may contain TRPC6 and TRPC3, but not TRPC7. This idea is supported by the reports that stimulation of AT1R activates TRPC6 (Large, 2002; Winn *et al*, 2005).

Previous report suggested that capacitative Ca^{2+} entry contributes to the nuclear translocation of NFAT and hyper-

trophy in cardiomyocytes (Hunton *et al*, 2002). In contrast with the present study, they showed that IP₃-mediated store depletion triggers the activation of SOC and activates hypertrophic responses. Although we cannot explain the discrepancy between their report and the present study, we clearly demonstrated that xestospongins C or IP₃-sponge did not affect Ang II-induced changes in fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3), NFAT activation, and hypertrophic responses (Figures 1 and 5D). We also confirmed that the application of high concentration of IP₃ did not activate whole-cell currents (data not shown). In addition, treatment with

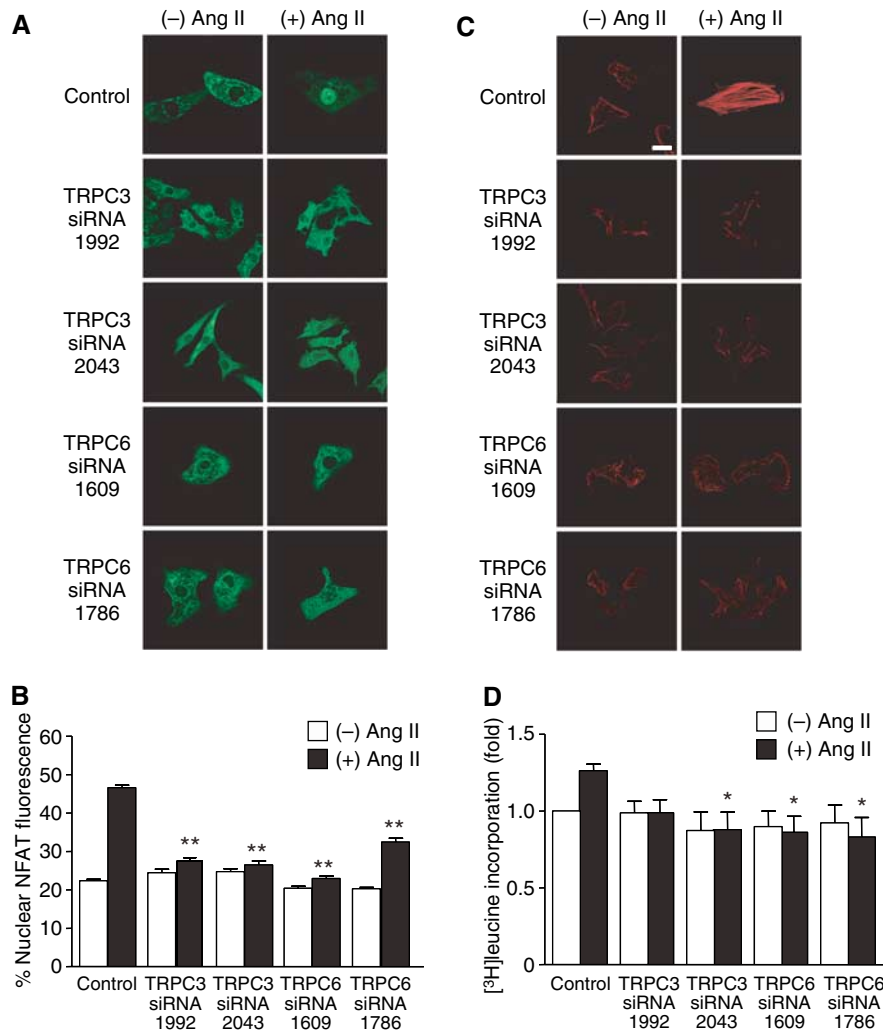


Figure 7 Requirement of TRPC3 and TRPC6 in Ang II-induced hypertrophic responses. Effects of siRNAs of TRPC3 and TRPC6 on Ang II-induced NFAT translocation (**A**, **B**), actin reorganization (**C**), and protein synthesis (**D**). Scale bar = 20 μ m. * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01 versus Ang II stimulation of control siRNA-treated cells (Control).

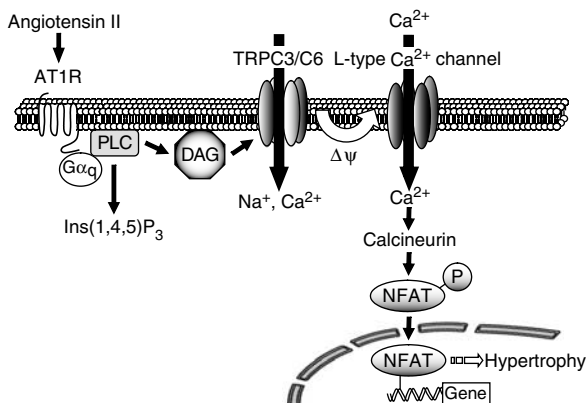


Figure 8 Schema of Ang II-induced NFAT activation in cardiac myocytes. In cardiac myocytes, stimulation of AT1R induces NFAT activation through G_{α_q} -PLC signaling pathway. DAG, generated by PLC activation, directly activates TRPC3 and TRPC6 (TRPC3/C6). Activation of TRPC3/C6 causes slow increases in the membrane potential to a positive direction ($\Delta\Psi$) and concomitantly increases the frequency of spontaneous firing due to activation of L-type Ca^{2+} channel. The Ca^{2+} influx through L-type Ca^{2+} channel activates calcineurin-NFAT pathway, which leads to hypertrophic responses in cardiomyocytes.

caged-IP₃ did not affect the localization of GFP-NFAT4 upon UV irradiation, although caged-IP₃ induced a marked increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ (Supplementary Figure 5). We observed that the treatments with thapsigargin and ionomycin induce NFAT activation through store-operated Ca^{2+} influx. However, Ang II-stimulated increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ through IP₃-mediated Ca^{2+} release is 25–30% of those induced by thapsigargin and ionomycin treatment. This IP₃-mediated increase may not be enough for the activation of SOC. These results suggest that IP₃-mediated Ca^{2+} signaling, including SOC, is not responsible for Ang II-induced NFAT activation.

Whole-cell current experiments revealed that the membrane currents were activated more than 1 min after Ang II stimulation (Figure 4A). However, the maximal shift of membrane potential was achieved about 2 min after Ang II stimulation (Figure 5A). The distinct delay may be explained by DAG metabolism, as RHC80267 enhanced Ang II-induced inward current (Figure 4B). The steady-state DAG lipase activity may regulate the time to elevate DAG concentration required for the activation of whole-cell currents and subsequent changes in membrane potential.

Growing evidence has indicated the involvement of L-type Ca^{2+} channels in the induction of cardiac hypertrophy (Lubic *et al*, 1994, 1995; Whitehurst *et al*, 1999; Liao *et al*, 2005). The role of L-type Ca^{2+} channels in excitation-transcription coupling is well established in the nervous system (Dolmetsch *et al*, 2001, 2003). Calmodulin is reported to be critical for conveying the Ca^{2+} signal to the nucleus (Dolmetsch *et al*, 2001). As calmodulin also regulates calcineurin activity, calmodulin may convey the signal to the nucleus in the cardiovascular system in a similar manner to the nervous system.

While this study is in review process, Bush *et al* (2006) reported that TRPC channels are involved in hypertrophy through pathological calcineurin/NFAT signaling. They showed that TRPC3 expression is upregulated in mice with pathological hypertrophy. We demonstrated that TRPC3 and TRPC6 mediate hypertrophic responses of neonatal myocytes by Ang II stimulation. Thus, the upregulated TRPC channels *in vivo* may enhance receptor-stimulated hypertrophy through the mechanism that we have demonstrated in this study.

In summary, we demonstrated for the first time that PLC-generated DAG has a pathophysiological role in activation of TRPC3 and TRPC6, and TRPC3/6 mediates NFAT-mediated hypertrophic responses through L-type Ca^{2+} channel.

Materials and methods

Materials, plasmid construction, and cell cultures

AT1R blocker CV11974 was provided from Takeda Chemical Industries Ltd (Osaka, Japan). PTX, SK&F96365, caged-IP₃, and cPLA₂ inhibitor were purchased from Calbiochem. Valinomycin, cyclosporine A, U73122, U73343, AA, PACOCF₃, myo-IP₃, TTX, and PD123319 were from Sigma. Fura2/AM was from Dojindo. Collagenase, Liberase (enzyme 3), and Fugene 6 were from Roche. Alexa Fluor 594-phalloidin and DiBAC₄(3) were from Molecular Probe. Nitrendipine was from Wako. The cDNA coding DGK β (KIAA0718) was obtained from Kazusa DNA Research Institute. The cDNAs coding mouse TRPC3, TRPC6, and TRPC7, and anti-TRPC7 antibody were prepared as described (Inoue *et al*, 2001; Nishida *et al*, 2003). Anti-TRPC6 and anti-TRPC3 antibodies were from Alomone. Mouse TRPC6-3A and TRPC6- Δ (N) were constructed according to the previous reports (Hofmann *et al*, 2002; Hisatsune *et al*, 2004). The cDNA coding IP₃-sponge was cloned from mouse brain (Uchiyama *et al*, 2002), and GFP-IP₃-sponge was constructed in pEGFP-C1 vector (Clontech). Isolation of rat neonatal cardiomyocytes was described (Nishida *et al*, 2000).

Production of adenoviruses, infection, and transfection

Recombinant adenoviruses of GFP-NFAT4, HA-tagged DGK β , GFP-DGK β , wild-type TRPC6, TRPC6-3A, TRPC6- Δ (N), and GFP-fused IP₃-sponge (GFP-IP₃-sponge) were produced by the method of He *et al* (1998) with a slight modification. Other adenoviruses were prepared as described previously (Nishida *et al*, 2000, 2005; Arai *et al*, 2003). Cells were infected with adenovirus(es) at 100 MOI for 48 h. Small interference RNAs (250 nM) were transfected with lipofectamine 2000 for 72 h.

Measurement of NFAT activity

Measurement of NFAT activity was performed as described previously (Fujii *et al*, 2005). At 2 h after adenoviral infection in serum-free medium, cardiomyocytes (1×10^6 cells) plated on 24-well dishes were transiently cotransfected with 0.45 μg pNFAT-Luc and 0.05 μg pRL-SV40 control plasmid, using Fugene 6. For measuring the translocation of GFP-NFAT4, cells (1×10^6) plated on glass-bottom 35 mm dishes were infected for 48 h with adenovirus coding GFP-NFAT4 at 100 MOI. After Ang II stimulation (100 nM) for 30 min, the localization of GFP-NFAT4 was determined with a Laser Scanning Confocal Imaging System (Carl Zeiss LSM510) as described (Fujii *et al*, 2005).

Measurement of $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$ and membrane potential

The intracellular Ca^{2+} concentration ($[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$) of cardiomyocytes was determined as described (Arai *et al*, 2003; Nishida *et al*, 2005). Briefly, cells (1×10^6) were plated on gelatin-coated glass-bottom 35 mm dishes and were loaded with 2.5 μM fura-2/AM at 37°C for 30 min. For measurement of cell membrane potential, cells were loaded with 1.5 μM DiBAC₄(3) at 37°C for 30 min. The fluorescence intensity of DiBAC₄(3) was measured at an excitation wavelength of 488 nm with a video image analysis system (Aquacosmos, Hamamatsu Photonics). The peak changes ($\Delta F/F_0$) of DiBAC₄(3) fluorescence intensity were defined as values obtained by subtracting the basal fluorescence intensity (F_0) from the maximal intensity during 19 min Ang II treatment.

Measurement of the expression of TRPC proteins

Cardiomyocytes (3×10^6 cells) plated on six-well dishes were directly harvested with $2 \times$ SDS sample buffer. The protein samples were fractionated by 8% SDS-PAGE gel and then transferred onto PVDF membrane. The expression of endogenous TRPC proteins was assessed by Western blotting using anti-TRPC antibodies. To examine the involvement of TRPC3 and C6, knockdown experiments using siRNAs were performed (sequences of siRNAs used in this study were presented in Supplementary Table 1). We used Stealth (Invitrogen) siRNA sequence to eliminate nonspecific responses by siRNA. Transfection was performed by lipofectamine 2000.

Measurement of hypertrophic responses of cardiomyocytes

Measurement of cardiomyocyte hypertrophy was performed as described (Maruyama *et al*, 2002). Briefly, 24 h after infection, cardiomyocytes were stimulated with Ang II (100 nM) for 48 h. The cells were washed, fixed, and then stained with Alexa Fluor 594-phalloidin to visualize actin filaments. Protein synthesis was measured by [³H]leucine incorporation. After cells were stimulated with Ang II (100 nM) for 18 h, [³H]leucine (1 $\mu\text{Ci}/\text{ml}$) was added to the culture medium and further incubated for 6 h. The incorporated [³H]leucine was measured using liquid-scintillation counter.

Electrophysiology

Single neonatal rat cardiac myocytes plated on thin coverslips for 1–2 days (3×10 mm; Matsunami, Japan) were used for patch-clamp experiments. The details of patch-clamp experiments are described elsewhere (Shi *et al*, 2004). Internal solution used for the whole-cell variant of patch clamp; K⁺-internal solution (mM): 140 K⁺, 4 Na⁺, 2 Mg²⁺, 144 Cl⁻, 2 EGTA, 2 ATP, 10 HEPES or Cs⁺-internal solution (mM): 140 Cs⁺, 2 Mg²⁺, 20 Cl⁻, 2 SO₄²⁻, 120 aspartate, 2 ATP, 5 EGTA (2 Ca²⁺ added), 10 HEPES, and 10 μM myo-IP₃. For current-clamp recordings, normal external solution and K⁺-internal solution of the same composition as used for whole-cell voltage-clamp experiments were used. All experiments were performed at 25–28°C with the aid of a temperature control unit (Warner Instruments) to facilitate the response to Ang II.

Statistical analysis

The results are shown as means \pm s.e.m. All experiments were repeated at least three times. Mean values were compared with control by Student's *t*-test (for two groups) or one-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's *t*-test (for three or more groups).

Supplementary data

Supplementary data are available at *The EMBO Journal* Online (<http://www.embojournal.org>).

Acknowledgements

We thank Y Ito (Department of Pharmacology, Graduate School of Medical Sciences, Kyushu University) for using Aquacosmos imaging system during early stage of this study. We also thank SM Lanier and M Sato (Louisiana State University Health Science Center) for experimental suggestion, and T Murakami for DNA construction. This work was supported by grants from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (to M Nishida and H Kurose), from Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, and the National Institute of Biomedical

Innovation (MF-16, to YS), and by grants from The Naito Foundation, The Kanae Foundation, The Suzuken Memorial Foundation, The Uehara Memorial Foundation, Kao Foundation for Arts and

Sciences, Takeda Science Foundation and Japan Heart Foundation Research Grant (to MN), and Astellas Foundation for Research on Metabolic Disorders (H Kurose).

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