

Loss-of-function presenilin mutations in Alzheimer disease

Talking Point on the role of presenilin mutations in Alzheimer disease

Bart De Strooper

KULeuven and Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology (VIB), Centre for Human Genetics, Leuven, Belgium

Presenilin mutations are the main cause of familial Alzheimer disease. From a genetic point of view, these mutations seem to result in a gain of toxic function; however, biochemically, they result in a partial loss of function in the γ -secretase complex, which affects several downstream signalling pathways. Consequently, the current genetic terminology is misleading. In fact, the available data indicate that several clinical presenilin mutations also lead to a decrease in amyloid precursor protein-derived amyloid β -peptide generation, further implying that presenilin mutations are indeed loss-of-function mutations. The loss of function of presenilin causes incomplete digestion of the amyloid β -peptide and might contribute to an increased vulnerability of the brain, thereby explaining the early onset of the inherited form of Alzheimer disease. In this review, I evaluate the implications of this model for the amyloid-cascade hypothesis and for the efficacy of presenilin/ γ -secretase as a drug target.

Keywords: Alzheimer; gain or loss of function; presenilin

EMBO reports (2007) 8, 141–146. doi:10.1038/sj.embor.7400897

Introduction

Alzheimer disease (AD) is a common and disabling disorder. Its incidence increases exponentially with age and therefore it is a significant public-health concern. Only symptomatic treatment is currently available; however, there is a legitimate hope for a cure thanks to the tremendous progress that is being made in understanding the molecular pathogenesis of the disease. The dominant theory in the field is the 'amyloid-cascade hypothesis', which links abnormal amyloid precipitates in the brain with neuronal dysfunction, the induction of tangles and dementia (Hardy & Higgins, 1992). The logical correlate is that drugs that either block amyloid β -peptide (A β) generation or increase its clearance, for example by vaccination, will cure or halt the progression of AD. Although a great deal of evidence supports this relatively simple and straightforward concept (Annaert &

De Strooper, 2002; Hardy & Selkoe, 2002), there is no proof that this theory has clinical relevance. As a result, the amyloid-cascade hypothesis has received some criticism in recent years. The current discussion revolves around presenilin 1 (encoded by *PSEN1*), and the extent to which gain or loss of function of this gene (Fig 1) contributes to the pathological spectrum of early-onset familial AD. Presenilin 1—along with the closely related presenilin 2—is the catalytic component of the γ -secretase enzyme, which cleaves the amyloid precursor protein (APP) into A β s of varying lengths (De Strooper *et al*, 1998). The discussion is complicated by the fact that researchers use different strategies to evaluate *PSEN* function and, although evidence indicates that *PSEN* mutations result in changes in A β generation in accordance with the amyloid-cascade hypothesis (Scheuner *et al*, 1996), the complete loss of *Psen* function in the brains of mice results in neurodegeneration in the total absence of A β generation (Saura *et al*, 2004). This latter research has led to the theory that A β generation is not necessary for the development of AD.

Clinical mutations in *PSEN1* cause AD

So far, more than 150 familial AD-causing mutations in *PSEN1* have been identified, approximately 10 additional mutations have been found in the homologous gene *PSEN2* and 25 mutations have been identified in the *APP* gene (<http://www.molgen.ua.ac.be/ADMutations>). The study of *PSEN1* is therefore crucial for understanding the pathogenesis of familial AD.

Most mutations in *PSEN1* are simple missense mutations that result in single amino-acid substitutions in presenilin 1. Some are more complex, for example, small deletions, insertions or splice mutations. The most severe mutation in *PSEN1* is a donor–acceptor splice mutation that causes two amino-acid substitutions and an in-frame deletion of exon 9 (Fig 1). Significantly, however, the biochemical consequences of these mutations for γ -secretase assembly are limited (Bentahir *et al*, 2006; Steiner *et al*, 1999). Although as many as one-third of the 467 amino acids in the open-reading frame of presenilin 1 are affected by disease-causing mutations, a truncation or absence of the protein has never been observed, indicating that haploinsufficiency does not cause AD. Rather, at first glance and from a strictly genetic perspective, these different clinical mutations all seem to lead to a specific gain of toxic function for

KULeuven and Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology (VIB),
Centre for Human Genetics, Herestraat 49, 3000 Leuven, Belgium
Tel: +3216346227; Fax: +3216347181;
E-mail: bart.destrooper@med.kuleuven.be

Submitted 12 September 2006; accepted 13 November 2006

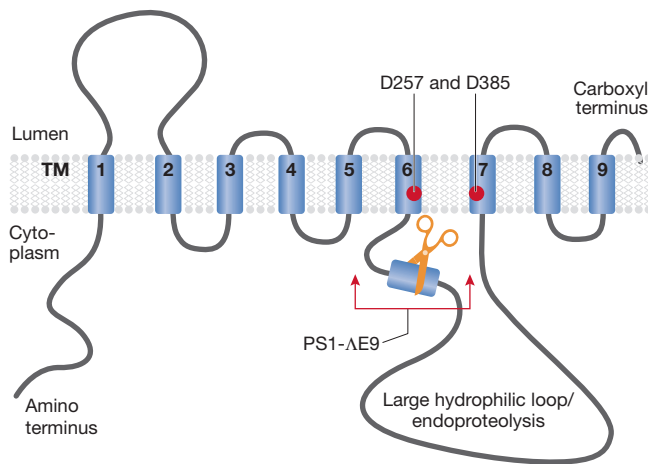


Fig 1 | Nine-transmembrane topology for presenilin. Presenilin is schematically represented. Two aspartate residues in transmembrane domains (TMs) 6 and 7 constituting the catalytic site are indicated. The Δ exon9 mutation (PS1-DE9) deletes the indicated region of the protein.

PSEN1. Investigations over several years, however, have not succeeded in translating this genetic concept into molecular terms—that is, explaining how the mutations scattered over presenilin 1 all cause a similar gain of toxic function in the protein.

Mutations in either presenilin or APP consistently increase the relative ratio between the long (A β 42) and short (A β 40) amyloid peptides (A β 42/A β 40; Borchelt *et al*, 1996; Scheuner *et al*, 1996). Given that inactivation of *Psen1* and *Psen2* completely prevents A β generation (Herreman *et al*, 2000; Zhang *et al*, 2000), this increase can indeed be explained as a gain of toxic function. However, the change in ratio can also be the consequence of a partial loss of A β 40 generation, as is the case with several *PSEN* mutations discussed in detail below. Indeed, several authors have challenged the dominant gain-of-toxic-function hypothesis over the years. First, wild-type human *PSEN1* can effectively rescue the loss of its suppressor of Notch-family member *lin-12* (*sel-12*) homologue in *Caenorhabditis elegans*, whereas a mutated *PSEN1* is less effective or not effective at all (Baumeister *et al*, 1997; Levitan *et al*, 1996). Second, Shen and co-workers have shown that a total loss of *Psen* function in the forebrain of mice causes neurodegenerative disease in the absence of A β (Saura *et al*, 2004). Third, several groups have reported that specific loss of *Psen1* in the mouse forebrain affects particular aspects of memory (Feng *et al*, 2001; Yu *et al*, 2001). Both neurodegeneration and memory deficits are important features of AD; however, it might be dangerous to extrapolate these observations to human pathology. Accordingly, it is difficult to correlate the total loss of four *Psen* alleles in a mouse model (Saura *et al*, 2004) with the relatively mild single mutation of one *PSEN* allele in familial AD patients. Indeed, neurodegenerative phenotypes have not been observed in animal models with only one allele inactivated (*Psen1*^{-/-} or *Psen2*^{-/-}; for a more detailed overview of the different *Psen*-knockout mouse models, see Marjaux *et al*, 2004). Furthermore, it is unclear whether the memory deficits in mice with a forebrain-specific *Psen1*-knockout can really be compared with the memory deficits in patients with AD. In this regard, some of the memory deficits that result from APP overexpression in AD mouse models can be alleviated by *Psen1*

inactivation (Dewachter *et al*, 2002; Saura *et al*, 2005). Fourth, in the past few years, some studies have indicated that genuine loss-of-function *PSEN1* mutations could be involved in forms of fronto-temporal dementia without the involvement of A β (Amtul *et al*, 2002; Dermaut *et al*, 2004; Raux *et al*, 2000). However, formal genetic or molecular proof that these mutations are responsible for the neurodegenerative process in these patients has not been provided. In fact, an additional mutation in the progranulin gene (Baker *et al*, 2006; Cruts *et al*, 2006) in a patient with the presenilin 1 Arg352 insertion (Boeve *et al*, 2006) is probably the cause of the dementia, which implies that, at least in this case, the mutation in presenilin 1 is a polymorphism. Finally, promoter polymorphisms in the *PSEN1* gene that decrease its expression contribute to the risk of early-onset AD (Theuns *et al*, 2000); however, whether these affect amyloid generation is not yet known.

In conclusion, although the current research clearly indicates that presenilin 1 is important for maintaining the integrity of the brain, it is less clear whether the severe deficits in homozygous loss-of-function mouse models are relevant to the pathology in human patients. Furthermore, *PSEN1* deficiency is unlikely to contribute to the disease process in patients with APP mutations, which implies that the effects of loss of *PSEN1* function on APP processing are crucial for our understanding of the pathogenesis of AD. I do not, however, exclude the possibility that partial dysfunction of *PSEN1*—for example, in the Notch signalling pathway that modulates neurite outgrowth and brain repair—makes the brain more prone to A β toxicity. This would fit with the previously proposed ‘two-hit’ model for AD (Marjaux *et al*, 2004), and would also explain why familial AD generally strikes earlier and is more aggressive than sporadic AD.

Presenilin as part of the γ -secretase complex

Presenilin provides the catalytic core of γ -secretase, which removes short transmembrane protein fragments from the cell membrane (De Strooper, 2003). γ -secretase is a highly hydrophobic complex (Fig 2) consisting of at least three additional subunits—nicastrin, Aph1 and Pen2—which, together with presenilin, form a barrel-like structure in the membrane (Lazarov *et al*, 2006). Water, which is necessary for the catalytic activity of the complex, is present in this structure (Tolia *et al*, 2006). Considering the fact that there are two *PSEN* genes and two *APH* genes, at least four different complexes with potentially different biological functions (Serneels *et al*, 2005) could co-exist in cells and tissues (Hébert *et al*, 2004; Shirotani *et al*, 2004). The current models indicate that the aminopeptidase-like domain of nicastrin, which functions as an exosite on the protease, provides a docking site for γ -secretase substrates (Shah *et al*, 2005). Significantly, more than 30 different substrates have been identified, including APP. Following sequential cleavage of APP by the β -secretases and γ -secretases, the major proteolytic products—A β and the APP intracellular domain (AICD)—are released extracellularly and intracellularly, respectively. Although it has been frequently proposed that AICD is a signalling molecule similar to the Notch intracellular domain (NICD; Hébert *et al*, 2006; Kopan & Ilagan, 2004; Marambaud *et al*, 2003), this has not been rigorously proven.

Sequence determination of the carboxyl terminus of A β and the amino terminus of AICD has revealed heterogeneity (Fig 3). There are two γ -cleavage products, which end at either residue Val40 (A β 40) or residue Ala42 (A β 42). The AICD peptide starts at Val51 or Met52 and

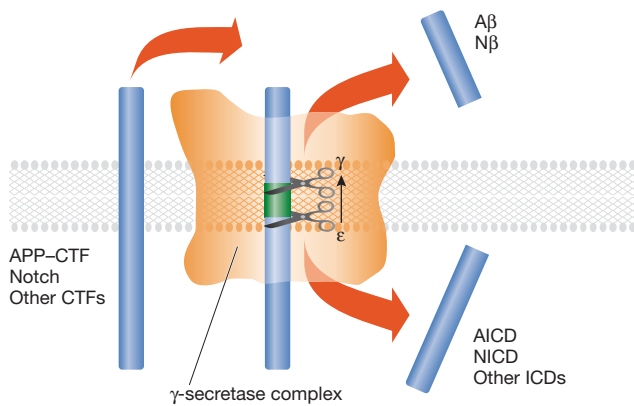


Fig 2 | The γ -secretase. Schematic drawing of the 'barrel' structure of the γ -secretase (orange). The arrow indicates progressive ϵ -to- γ cleavage of the substrate (blue bars). The possibility of unfolding of the substrate is discussed in the main text. A β , amyloid β -peptide; AICD, APP intracellular domain; APP, amyloid precursor protein; CTF, carboxy-terminal fragment; ICD, intracellular domain; N β , Notch β -like fragment; NICD, Notch intracellular domain.

these cleavages are recognized as the ϵ -site cleavage products (Fig 3). Similar dual cleavages have been identified for Notch (Okochi *et al*, 2002) and CD44 (Lammich *et al*, 2002). Evidence indicates that γ -secretase cuts APP initially at the ϵ -site and then progressively removes C-terminal residues until the γ -cleavage site has been reached (Fig 2; Kakuda *et al*, 2006). It is likely that the hydrophobicity of the remaining peptide is then sufficiently reduced to facilitate its release into the extracellular medium. This model would explain the following observations: neither AICD nor NICD peptide fragments that extend N-terminally beyond the ϵ -site have been detected (Chandu *et al*, 2006; Kakuda *et al*, 2006); longer A β s—A β 43 up to A β 49—can be detected in cell extracts (Qi-Takahara *et al*, 2005; Yagishita *et al*, 2006; Zhao *et al*, 2005); tryptophan mutations introduced between the ϵ - and γ -cleavage sites in APP block cleavage at the γ -site (Sato *et al*, 2005); and a product-precursor relationship has been detected between long and short forms of A β (Qi-Takahara *et al*, 2005; Yagishita *et al*, 2006).

Alternative models are more complicated, invoking, for example, additional catalytic sites in γ -secretase or carboxypeptidases that act after the initial ϵ -site cleavage. It remains unclear how substrates are progressively cleaved in the same catalytic site. It is possible that the α -helix of putative substrates unfolds after ϵ -site cleavage, which, in turn, advances the next bound peptide towards the catalytic site for further cleavage. The consecutive cleavage of APP could provide an explanation for how loss-of-function mutations in *PSEN1* might result in decreased A β generation and simultaneous increased production of long A β (Bentahir *et al*, 2006; Kumar-Singh *et al*, 2006; Qi *et al*, 2003).

PSEN mutations are loss-of-function mutations

The first *in vivo* evidence that *PSEN* mutations cause a loss of Notch signalling was provided in *C. elegans* (Baumeister *et al*, 1997; Levitan *et al*, 1996). However, two follow-up reports in mice did not correlate with these observations (Davis *et al*, 1998; Qian *et al*, 1998). The discrepancy in these studies might be explained by the fact that in the mouse studies, the authors used a

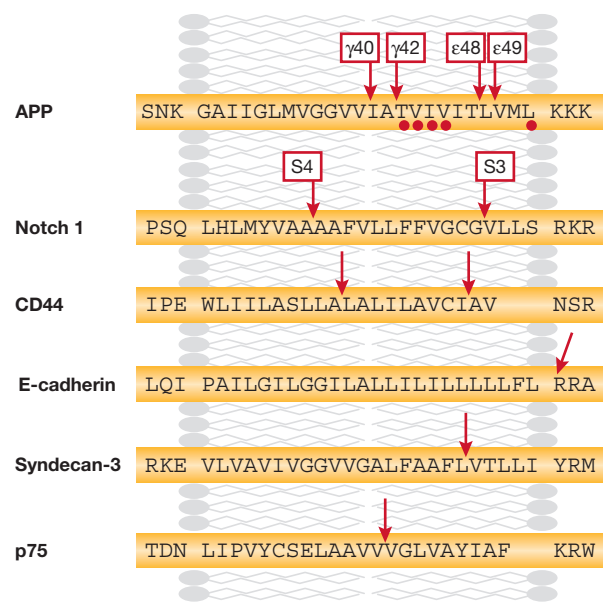


Fig 3 | Cleavage sites of selected γ -secretase substrates. The transmembrane sequences of several substrates of the γ -secretase are indicated. Red arrows indicate cleavage sites deduced from amino-terminal and carboxy-terminal sequencing. APP, amyloid precursor protein.

Psen1 Ala246Glu mutation under a heterologous promoter in their rescue experiments and observed only a partial rescue of the phenotype. Furthermore, in cell-based assays, this mutation resulted in only a 20% reduction in the cleavage of Notch (Bentahir *et al*, 2006). These rescue experiments have not shed light on *PSEN* loss-of-function mutations. Knock-in mutations provide a better way to address this question. Several mutant mice have been described with relatively mild phenotypes (Guo *et al*, 1999; Nakano *et al*, 1999; Siman *et al*, 2000). Memory deficits were observed in one mouse model containing two diseased alleles, which were rescued in heterozygous mice indicating a loss-of-function phenotype (Wang *et al*, 2004). Experiments in cell lines unequivocally confirm that *PSEN* mutants decrease the cleavage of Notch, syndecan and N-cadherin, and this can probably be extended to other substrates (Baki *et al*, 2001; Bentahir *et al*, 2006; Schroeter *et al*, 2003; Song *et al*, 1999). Therefore, *PSEN* mutations result in a loss of function of the γ -secretase. In fact, a wealth of additional experiments examining *PSEN* function in protein trafficking, apoptosis, autophagy, calcium homeostasis, β -catenin turnover, regulation of kinase pathways and tau phosphorylation all support the loss-of-function interpretation. These topics are not discussed further within the scope of this review.

Loss of γ -secretase changes the A β 42/A β 40 ratio

The effects of *PSEN* clinical mutations on APP processing have mostly been investigated by analysing the A β 42/A β 40 ratio; this permits the normalization of differences in APP or presenilin expression in different cell lines and is considered to be a prominent factor for disease progression in familial AD patients (Borchelt *et al*, 1996; Duff *et al*, 1996; Scheuner *et al*, 1996). More than 10 years ago, Jarrett and Lansbury described A β 42 as a 'nucleation' factor, which notably accelerates the aggregation of A β into amyloid *in vitro* (Jarrett

& Lansbury, 1993). Direct evidence for the importance of A β 42 in AD came from a biochemical analysis of the APPVal717Ile clinical mutation (Goate *et al*, 1991). This mutation and several others all cause an increase in the generation of A β 42 relative to A β 40 (Suzuki *et al*, 1994). Finally, A β 42, although generated by neurons at a tenfold lower rate than A β 40, is the main component of amyloid plaques in the brains of AD patients (Iwatsubo *et al*, 1994).

Given the enormous differences in the biophysical properties of the A β 40 and A β 42 peptides, it is surprising that the AD field has spent so much time focusing on the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of this increased ratio. For instance, the combination of a mutant *Psen1* allele with a *Psen1*-null allele causes accelerated amyloidosis, whereas the combination of the same mutant with a wild-type *Psen1* allele is protective, even with an absolute increase in γ -secretase activity (Wang *et al*, 2006). Furthermore, expression of A β 42—but not A β 40—alone is sufficient to cause amyloidosis in transgenic mice (McGowan *et al*, 2005).

The effects of *PSEN* clinical mutations on APP processing were recently re-evaluated in cell-culture systems. Mutants were either expressed in a *Psen*-negative background (Bentahir *et al*, 2006; Walker *et al*, 2005) or stably transfected (Kumar-Singh *et al*, 2006) and the levels of expression were carefully monitored. These studies analysed the absolute levels of A β 40 and A β 42, and, importantly, the accumulation of APP C-terminal fragments, which are direct substrates for γ -secretase. An increase in A β 42/A β 40 was confirmed; however, this was due to a decrease in A β 40 peptide levels in several mutants. Importantly, all cell lines accumulated APP C-terminal fragments and showed decreased generation of the cytoplasmic AICD (Bentahir *et al*, 2006; Kumar-Singh *et al*, 2006; Walker *et al*, 2005; Wiley *et al*, 2005), thereby establishing that *PSEN* mutations result in a loss of γ -secretase cleavage of APP. This apparently translates into an 'incomplete digestion' of the APP substrate, generating fewer but longer A β s (Qi *et al*, 2003; Yagishita *et al*, 2006). It is therefore clear that biochemical loss of function of presenilin can cause AD. The confusion with the genetic gain-of-toxic-function view can, however, be resolved because the loss-of-*Psen* mutations act indirectly in the disease process, causing a gain of toxic function of the *APP* gene by the incomplete digestion of A β .

Implications for the amyloid-cascade hypothesis

Since the original amyloid-cascade hypothesis for AD was put forward (Hardy & Higgins, 1992), many modifications and refinements have been proposed to incorporate new observations and to resolve apparent conflicts. For example, no absolute relationship exists between amyloid load in the brain and the clinical manifestation of AD symptoms in humans (Price & Morris, 1999) or mice (Games *et al*, 1995). This has led to the concept of A β -derived diffusible ligands (Lambert *et al*, 1998) or 'soluble toxic oligomers' (Glabe, 2006; Lambert *et al*, 1998; Walsh *et al*, 2002). These A β oligomers are intermediary forms between free soluble A β s and insoluble amyloid fibres, and seem to be toxic both *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Although the molecular nature of these oligomers remains elusive, they have been isolated from transfected Chinese hamster ovary cells (Walsh *et al*, 2002) and as a 56-kDa oligomer from transgenic mouse brains (Lesne *et al*, 2006). The extent to which *PSEN1* mutations generate mixtures of A β s that are more prone to form toxic oligomers remains to be investigated; however, this concept could explain cases of AD in which smaller amounts of A β are generated. More research is needed to determine the biophysical

and biochemical properties of this species. However, we are clearly moving away from amyloid plaques and fibrils towards a more functional definition of A β toxicity, and it might be appropriate to indicate this paradigm shift by addressing the 'A β -tangle cascade' hypothesis in the future.

There are important implications for therapeutic approaches to AD. It is now essential to investigate how different A β -peptide species contribute to the generation, stability and toxic properties of the oligomers. The relative combination of these peptides could be much more important than the total load of A β in the brain. Inhibiting A β generation by β - or γ -secretase inhibitors might still be a good idea, considering the fact that a reduction of the overall load of free peptide will probably influence the balance between A β in free, oligomeric and amyloid fibril conformations; however, it is becoming increasingly crucial to elucidate the extent to which the last of these is in equilibrium with the toxic oligomer conformation. γ -secretase inhibitors might provide additional possibilities because some have been shown to modulate the activity of the enzyme by shifting the spectrum of A β s to shorter, probably more soluble forms, like the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (Weggen *et al*, 2003), or to longer membrane-bound peptides, such as the γ -secretase inhibitor DAPT (Qi-Takahara *et al*, 2005; Yagishita *et al*, 2006). For non-catalytic site-directed inhibitors of γ -secretase, the observed paradoxical increases in A β 42 might be explained by this vision. However, before testing these drugs in the clinic, it will be important to investigate the fate of the peptides in biological systems, and to determine how the other forms of A β contribute to the generation and stabilization of A β oligomers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author sincerely thanks A. Thathiah, K. Devriendt, E. Legius, T. Golde, M. Hutton and B. Boeve for interesting discussions. The author is supported by a Freedom to Discover grant (Bristol Myers Squibb), a Pioneer award (Alzheimer's Association), the Fund for Scientific Research (Flanders), K.U.Leuven (GOA), the European Union (APODIS: LSHM-CT-2003-503330) and the Federal Office for Scientific Affairs (Belgium).

REFERENCES

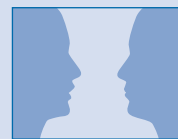
- Amtul Z *et al* (2002) A presenilin 1 mutation associated with familial frontotemporal dementia inhibits γ -secretase cleavage of APP and notch. *Neurobiol Dis* **9**: 269–273
- Annaert W, De Strooper B (2002) A cell biological perspective on Alzheimer's disease. *Annu Rev Cell Dev Biol* **18**: 25–51
- Baker M *et al* (2006) Mutations in progranulin cause tau-negative frontotemporal dementia linked to chromosome 17. *Nature* **442**: 916–919
- Baki L *et al* (2001) Presenilin-1 binds cytoplasmic epithelial cadherin, inhibits cadherin/p120 association, and regulates stability and function of the cadherin/catenin adhesion complex. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **98**: 2381–2386
- Baumeister R, Leimer U, Zweckbrunner I, Jakubek C, Grunberg J, Haass C (1997) Human presenilin-1, but not familial Alzheimer's disease (FAD) mutants, facilitate *Caenorhabditis elegans* Notch signalling independently of proteolytic processing. *Genes Funct* **1**: 149–159
- Bentahir M, Nyabi O, Verhamme J, Tolia A, Horre K, Willfang J, Esselmann H, De Strooper B (2006) Presenilin clinical mutations cause different γ -secretase activity by different mechanisms. *J Neurochem* **96**: 732–742
- Boeve BF *et al* (2006) Frontotemporal dementia and parkinsonism associated with the IVS1+1G->A mutation in progranulin: a clinicopathologic study. *Brain* **129**: 3103–3114
- Borchelt DR *et al* (1996) Familial Alzheimer's disease-linked presenilin 1 variants elevate A β 1-42/1-40 ratio *in vitro* and *in vivo*. *Neuron* **17**: 1005–1013
- Chandu D, Huppert SS, Kopan R (2006) Analysis of transmembrane domain mutants is consistent with sequential cleavage of Notch by γ -secretase. *J Neurochem* **98**: 2043

- Cruts M *et al* (2006) Null mutations in progranulin cause ubiquitin-positive frontotemporal dementia linked to chromosome 17q21. *Nature* **422**: 920–924
- Davis JA, Naruse S, Chen H, Eckman C, Younkin S, Price DL, Borchelt DR, Sisodia SS, Wong PC (1998) An Alzheimer's disease-linked PS1 variant rescues the developmental abnormalities of PS1-deficient embryos. *Neuron* **20**: 603–609
- De Strooper B (2003) Aph-1, Pen-2, and nicastrin with presenilin generate an active γ -secretase complex. *Neuron* **38**: 9–12
- De Strooper B, Saftig P, Craessaerts K, Vanderstichele H, Guhde G, Annaert W, Von Figura K, Van Leuven F (1998) Deficiency of presenilin-1 inhibits the normal cleavage of amyloid precursor protein. *Nature* **391**: 387–390
- Dermaut B *et al* (2004) A novel presenilin 1 mutation associated with Pick's disease but not β -amyloid plaques. *Ann Neurol* **55**: 617–626
- Dewachter I *et al* (2002) Neuronal deficiency of presenilin 1 inhibits amyloid plaque formation and corrects hippocampal long-term potentiation but not a cognitive defect of amyloid precursor protein [V717I] transgenic mice. *J Neurosci* **22**: 3445–3453
- Duff K *et al* (1996) Increased amyloid- β 42(43) in brains of mice expressing mutant presenilin 1. *Nature* **383**: 710–713
- Feng R *et al* (2001) Deficient neurogenesis in forebrain-specific presenilin-1 knockout mice is associated with reduced clearance of hippocampal memory traces. *Neuron* **32**: 911–926
- Games D *et al* (1995) Alzheimer-type neuropathology in transgenic mice overexpressing V717F β -amyloid precursor protein. *Nature* **373**: 523–527
- Glabe CG (2006) Common mechanisms of amyloid oligomer pathogenesis in degenerative disease. *Neurobiol Aging* **27**: 570–575
- Goate A *et al* (1991) Segregation of a missense mutation in the amyloid precursor protein gene with familial Alzheimer's disease. *Nature* **349**: 704–706
- Guo Q, Fu W, Sopher BL, Miller MW, Ware CB, Martin GM, Mattson MP (1999) Increased vulnerability of hippocampal neurons to excitotoxic necrosis in presenilin-1 mutant knock-in mice. *Nat Med* **5**: 101–106
- Hardy J, Selkoe DJ (2002) The amyloid hypothesis of Alzheimer's disease: progress and problems on the road to therapeutics. *Science* **297**: 353–356
- Hardy JA, Higgins GA (1992) Alzheimer's disease: the amyloid cascade hypothesis. *Science* **256**: 184–185
- Hébert SS, Serneels L, Dejaegere T, Horr  K, Dabrowski M, Baert V, Annaert W, Hartmann D, De Strooper B (2004) Coordinated and widespread expression of γ -secretase *in vivo*: evidence for size and molecular heterogeneity. *Neurobiol Dis* **17**: 260–272
- Hébert SS, Serneels L, Tolia A, Craessaerts K, Derks C, Filippov MA, Muller U, De Strooper B (2006) Regulated intramembrane proteolysis of amyloid precursor protein and regulation of expression of putative target genes. *EMBO Rep* **7**: 739–745
- Herreman A, Serneels L, Annaert W, Collen D, Schoonjans L, De Strooper B (2000) Total inactivation of γ -secretase activity in presenilin-deficient embryonic stem cells. *Nat Cell Biol* **2**: 461–462
- Iwatsubo T, Odaka A, Suzuki N, Mizusawa H, Nukina N, Ihara Y (1994) Visualization of A β 42(43) and A β 40 in senile plaques with end-specific A β monoclonals: evidence that an initially deposited species is A β 42(43). *Neuron* **13**: 45–53
- Jarrett JT, Lansbury PT Jr (1993) Seeding "one-dimensional crystallization" of amyloid: a pathogenic mechanism in Alzheimer's disease and scrapie? *Cell* **73**: 1055–1058
- Kakuda N, Funamoto S, Yagishita S, Takami M, Osawa S, Dohmae N, Ihara Y (2006) Equimolar production of amyloid β -protein and amyloid precursor protein intracellular domain from β -carboxyl-terminal fragment by γ -secretase. *J Biol Chem* **281**: 14776–14786
- Kopan R, Ilagan MX (2004) γ -secretase: proteasome of the membrane? *Nat Rev Mol Cell Biol* **5**: 499–504
- Kumar-Singh S, Theuns J, Van Broeck B, Pirici D, Vennekens K, Corsmit E, Cruts M, Dermaut B, Wang R, Van Broeckhoven C (2006) Mean age-of-onset of familial Alzheimer disease caused by presenilin mutations correlates with both increased A β 42 and decreased A β 40. *Hum Mutat* **27**: 686–695
- Lambert MP *et al* (1998) Diffusible, nonfibrillar ligands derived from A β 1–42 are potent central nervous system neurotoxins. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **95**: 6448–6453
- Lammich S, Okochi M, Takeda M, Kaether C, Capell A, Zimmer AK, Edbauer D, Walter J, Steiner H, Haass C (2002) Presenilin-dependent intramembrane proteolysis of CD44 leads to the liberation of its intracellular domain and the secretion of an A β -like peptide. *J Biol Chem* **277**: 44754–44759
- Lazarov VK, Fraering PC, Ye W, Wolfe MS, Selkoe DJ, Li H (2006) Electron microscopic structure of purified, active γ -secretase reveals an aqueous intramembrane chamber and two pores. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **103**: 6889–6894
- Lesne S, Koh MT, Kotilinek L, Kaye R, Glabe CG, Yang A, Gallagher M, Ashe KH (2006) A specific amyloid- β protein assembly in the brain impairs memory. *Nature* **440**: 352–357
- Levitan D, Doyle TG, Brousseau D, Lee MK, Thinakaran G, Slunt HH, Sisodia SS, Greenwald I (1996) Assessment of normal and mutant human presenilin function in *Caenorhabditis elegans*. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **93**: 14940–14944
- Marambaud P, Wen PH, Dutt A, Shioi J, Takashima A, Siman R, Robakis NK (2003) A CBP binding transcriptional repressor produced by the PS1 ϵ -cleavage of N-cadherin is inhibited by PS1 FAD mutations. *Cell* **114**: 635–645
- Marjaux E, Hartmann D, De Strooper B (2004) Presenilins in memory, Alzheimer's disease, and therapy. *Neuron* **42**: 189–192
- McGowan E *et al* (2005) A β 42 is essential for parenchymal and vascular amyloid deposition in mice. *Neuron* **47**: 191–199
- Nakano Y, Kondoh G, Kudo T, Imaizumi K, Kato M, Miyazaki JI, Tohyama M, Takeda J, Takeda M (1999) Accumulation of murine amyloid β 42 in a gene-dosage-dependent manner in PS1 'knock-in' mice. *Eur J Neurosci* **11**: 2577–2581
- Okochi M, Steiner H, Fukumori A, Tani H, Tomita T, Tanaka T, Iwatsubo T, Kudo T, Takeda M, Haass C (2002) Presenilins mediate a dual intramembraneous γ -secretase cleavage of Notch-1. *EMBO J* **21**: 5408–5416
- Price JL, Morris JC (1999) Tangles and plaques in nondemented aging and "preclinical" Alzheimer's disease. *Ann Neurol* **45**: 358–368
- Qi Y, Morishima-Kawashima M, Sato T, Mitsumori R, Ihara Y (2003) Distinct mechanisms by mutant presenilin 1 and 2 leading to increased intracellular levels of amyloid β -protein 42 in Chinese hamster ovary cells. *Biochemistry* **42**: 1042–1052
- Qian S, Jiang P, Guan XM, Singh G, Trumbauer ME, Yu H, Chen HY, Van de Pleog LH, Zheng H (1998) Mutant human presenilin 1 protects presenilin 1 null mouse against embryonic lethality and elevates A β 1–42/43 expression. *Neuron* **20**: 611–617
- Qi-Takahara Y *et al* (2005) Longer forms of amyloid β protein: implications for the mechanism of intramembrane cleavage by γ -secretase. *J Neurosci* **25**: 436–445
- Raux G, Gantier R, Thomas-Anterion C, Boulliat J, Verpillat P, Hannequin D, Brice A, Frebourg T, Campion D (2000) Dementia with prominent frontotemporal features associated with L113P presenilin 1 mutation. *Neurology* **55**: 1577–1578
- Sato T, Tanimura Y, Hirofumi N, Saido TC, Morishima-Kawashima M, Ihara Y (2005) Blocking the cleavage at midportion between γ - and ϵ -sites remarkably suppresses the generation of amyloid β -protein. *FEBS Lett* **579**: 2907–2912
- Saura CA, Chen G, Malkani S, Choi SY, Takahashi RH, Zhang D, Gouras GK, Kirkwood A, Morris RG, Shen J (2005) Conditional inactivation of presenilin 1 prevents amyloid accumulation and temporarily rescues contextual and spatial working memory impairments in amyloid precursor protein transgenic mice. *J Neurosci* **25**: 6755–6764
- Saura CA *et al* (2004) Loss of presenilin function causes impairments of memory and synaptic plasticity followed by age-dependent neurodegeneration. *Neuron* **42**: 23–36
- Scheuner D *et al* (1996) Secreted amyloid β -protein similar to that in the senile plaques of Alzheimer's disease is increased *in vivo* by the presenilin 1 and 2 and APP mutations linked to familial Alzheimer's disease. *Nat Med* **2**: 864–870
- Schroeter EH *et al* (2003) A presenilin dimer at the core of the γ -secretase enzyme: insights from parallel analysis of Notch 1 and APP proteolysis. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **100**: 13075–13080
- Serneels L *et al* (2005) Differential contribution of the three Aph1 genes to γ -secretase activity *in vivo*. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **102**: 1719–1724
- Shah S, Lee SF, Tabuchi K, Hao YH, Yu C, LaPlant Q, Ball H, Dann CE III, Sudhof T, Yu G (2005) Nicastrin functions as a γ -secretase-substrate receptor. *Cell* **122**: 435–447
- Shirofani K, Edbauer D, Prokop S, Haass C, Steiner H (2004) Identification of distinct γ -secretase complexes with different APH-1 variants. *J Biol Chem* **279**: 41340–41345

- Siman R, Reaume AG, Savage MJ, Trusko S, Lin YG, Scott RW, Flood DG (2000) Presenilin-1 P264L knock-in mutation: differential effects on $\text{A}\beta$ production, amyloid deposition, and neuronal vulnerability. *J Neurosci* **20**: 8717–8726
- Song W, Nadeau P, Yuan M, Yang X, Shen J, Yankner BA (1999) Proteolytic release and nuclear translocation of Notch-1 are induced by presenilin-1 and impaired by pathogenic presenilin-1 mutations. *Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* **96**: 6959–6963
- Steiner H, Romig H, Grim MG, Philipp U, Pesold B, Citron M, Baumeister R, Haass C (1999) The biological and pathological function of the presenilin-1 dExon 9 mutation is independent of its defect to undergo proteolytic processing [In Process Citation]. *J Biol Chem* **274**: 7615–7618
- Suzuki N, Cheung TT, Cai XD, Odaka A, Otvos L Jr, Eckman C, Golde TE, Younkin SG (1994) An increased percentage of long amyloid β protein secreted by familial amyloid β protein precursor (βAPP717) mutants. *Science* **264**: 1336–1340
- Theuns J, Del-Favero J, Dermaut B, van Duijn CM, Backhovens H, Van den Broeck MV, Serneels S, Corsmit E, Van Broeckhoven CV, Cruts M (2000) Genetic variability in the regulatory region of presenilin 1 associated with risk for Alzheimer's disease and variable expression. *Hum Mol Genet* **9**: 325–331
- Tolia A, Chavez-Gutierrez L, De Strooper B (2006) Contribution of presenilin transmembrane domains 6 and 7 to a water-containing cavity in the γ -secretase complex. *J Biol Chem* **281**: 27633–27642
- Walker ES, Martinez M, Brunkan AL, Goate A (2005) Presenilin 2 familial Alzheimer's disease mutations result in partial loss of function and dramatic changes in $\text{A}\beta$ 42/40 ratios. *J Neurochem* **92**: 294–301
- Walsh DM, Klyubin I, Fadeeva JV, Cullen WK, Anwyl R, Wolfe MS, Rowan MJ, Selkoe DJ (2002) Naturally secreted oligomers of amyloid β protein potently inhibit hippocampal long-term potentiation *in vivo*. *Nature* **416**: 535–539
- Wang R, Dineley KT, Sweatt JD, Zheng H (2004) Presenilin 1 familial Alzheimer's disease mutation leads to defective associative learning and impaired adult neurogenesis. *Neuroscience* **126**: 305–312
- Wang R, Wang B, He W, Zheng H (2006) Wild-type presenilin 1 protects against Alzheimer's disease mutation-induced amyloid pathology. *J Biol Chem* **281**: 15330–15336
- Weggen S, Eriksen JL, Sagi SA, Pietrzik CU, Ozols V, Fauq A, Golde TE, Koo EH (2003) Evidence that nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs decrease amyloid β 42 production by direct modulation of γ -secretase activity. *J Biol Chem* **278**: 31831–31837
- Wiley JC, Hudson M, Kanning KC, Schecterson LC, Bothwell M (2005) Familial Alzheimer's disease mutations inhibit γ -secretase-mediated liberation of β -amyloid precursor protein carboxy-terminal fragment. *J Neurochem* **94**: 1189–1201
- Yagishita S, Morishima-Kawashima M, Tanimura Y, Ishiura S, Ihara Y (2006) DAPT-induced intracellular accumulations of longer amyloid β -proteins: further implications for the mechanism of intramembrane cleavage by γ -secretase. *Biochemistry* **45**: 3952–3960
- Yu H *et al* (2001) APP processing and synaptic plasticity in presenilin-1 conditional knockout mice. *Neuron* **31**: 713–726
- Zhang Z, Nadeau P, Song W, Donoviel D, Yuan M, Bernstein A, Yankner BA (2000) Presenilins are required for γ -secretase cleavage of β -APP and transmembrane cleavage of Notch-1. *Nat Cell Biol* **2**: 463–465
- Zhao G, Cui MZ, Mao G, Dong Y, Tan J, Sun L, Xu X (2005) γ -cleavage is dependent on ζ -cleavage during the proteolytic processing of amyloid precursor protein within its transmembrane domain. *J Biol Chem* **280**: 37689–37697



Bart De Strooper



For more discussion on this topic, see also
 Hardy J (2007) Putting presenilins centre stage. This issue p134.
 Wolfe MS (2007) When loss is gain: reduced presenilin proteolytic function leads to increased $\text{A}\beta$ 42/ $\text{A}\beta$ 40. This issue p136.