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## Modulation of PPAR activity via phosphorylation

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### Abstract

Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors (PPARs) are members of the nuclear receptor superfamily of transcription factors that respond to specific ligands by altering gene expression in a cell-, developmental- and sex-specific manner. Three subtypes of this receptor have been discovered (PPAR $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ ), each apparently evolving to fulfill different biological niches. PPARs control a variety of target genes involved in lipid homeostasis, diabetes and cancer. Similar to other nuclear receptors, the PPARs are phosphoproteins and their transcriptional activity is affected by cross-talk with kinases and phosphatases. Phosphorylation by the mitogen-activated protein kinases (ERK- and p38-MAPK), Protein Kinase A and C (PKA, PKC), AMP Kinase (AMPK) and glycogen synthase kinase-3 (GSK3) affect their activity in a ligand-dependent or -independent manner. The effects of phosphorylation depend on the cellular context, receptor subtype and residue metabolized which can be manifested at several steps in the PPAR activation sequence including ligand affinity, DNA binding, coactivator recruitment and proteasomal degradation. The review will summarize the known PPAR kinases that directly act on these receptors, the sites affected and the result of this modification on receptor activity.

### Introduction

The regulation of lipid metabolism and glucose utilization is critical for the maintenance of cellular energy homeostasis. Cells have developed several means to respond to internal and external stimuli that signal imbalances in metabolic processes and energy utilization. These include rapid responses such as phosphorylation events as well as relatively latent effects on gene transcription. Ultimately, the result of altered gene expression is the synthesis of new signaling molecules and enzymes that are able to meet the physiological needs of the cell and the organism. The Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptors (PPARs) are members of the nuclear receptor (NR) superfamily that have evolved to be the biological sensors of altered lipid metabolism, in particular that of intracellular fatty acid levels. An interesting and somewhat surprising finding is that these lipid sensors are also profound regulators of cell growth, differentiation and apoptosis in a wide variety of cells. The multifaceted responses of PPARs are actually mediated by three subtypes expressed in different tissues and at different times in development. The PPAR subfamily (NR1C [1]) has been defined as PPAR $\alpha$  (NR1C1), PPAR $\beta$  (also called PPAR $\delta$  and NUC1, NR1C2) and PPAR $\gamma$  (NR1C3), each with a possibility of different ligands, target genes and biological role. PPARs have been cloned in several species, including humans, rodents, amphibians, teleosts and cyclostoma [2]. The expression

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of PPAR $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  varies widely from tissue-to-tissue. In numerous cell types from either ectodermal, mesodermal, or endodermal origin, PPARs are coexpressed, although their concentration relative to each other varies widely [3]. PPAR $\alpha$  is highly expressed in cells that have active fatty acid oxidation capacity including hepatocytes, cardiomyocytes, enterocytes, and the proximal tubule cells of kidney. PPAR $\beta$  is expressed ubiquitously and often at higher levels than PPAR $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$ . PPAR $\gamma$ , expressed predominantly in adipose tissue and the immune system, exists as two distinct protein forms  $\gamma 1$  and  $\gamma 2$ , which arise by differential transcription start sites and alternative splicing [4].

Nuclear receptors can be activated in ligand-dependent and ligand-independent mechanisms. PPARs are activated by xenobiotics as well as endogenous fatty acids and their metabolites [5-8]. The term “activation” denotes an altering in the three dimensional structure of the receptor complex such that it is able to regulate gene expression. The physical alteration that is initiated by ligand binding may include events such as loss of heat shock proteins and chaperones, nuclear translocation, and protein turnover. Conformational changes of PPAR $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$  have been observed using limited proteolysis [9,10] and peptide interaction [11]. Binding of ligand to the PPARs also alters heat shock protein association [12,13] and nuclear localization [14,15] of the PPARs has also been noted.

Ligand-independent mechanisms of regulating NR activity including the PPARs is a relatively new area of study. Activation by ligand-independent mechanisms is most often associated with kinase-dependent processes and has been studied most extensively for the estrogen receptor- $\alpha$  (ER $\alpha$ ) [16-18]. For example, the ER $\alpha$  contains two activation domains, AF-1 and AF-2, that are present in the A/B and E/F domain respectively; In the AF-1, Ser118 is phosphorylated by mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK or MEK), downstream of growth factor receptors and increases basal and ligand-induced activity of ER $\alpha$  [19]. Similarly, PPAR $\alpha$  and PPAR $\gamma$  are phosphoproteins and MAPK (in particular ERK2), can modulate PPAR activity [20]; however, whether this is true ligand-independent modulation remains to be seen and may be particularly difficult to examine in light of the relatively high concentration of endogenous ligands present with the cell. None-the-less, it is clear that the activity of PPAR $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  is affected by phosphorylation status.

## Phosphorylation of PPARs

### PPAR $\alpha$

**Growth factor signaling**—The general approach used to examine cross-talk between kinase cascades and PPARs includes searches for consensus phosphorylation sites, manipulating growth factor signaling pathways with activators and inhibitors, site-directed mutagenesis of the receptor and finally examination of effects on biological activity. Although phosphopeptide mapping would give a more definitive look at the sites phosphorylated and its stoichiometry, this has proven to be a very difficult undertaking, due in part to low expression levels of PPAR $\alpha$ . Several consensus phosphorylation sites for PPAR $\alpha$  can be found (see Figure 1) including MAPK, casein kinase 2 (CK2), glycogen synthase kinase 3 (GSK3) and protein kinase A (PKA) and C (PKC) sites. It should be noted that these computer predictions are not very accurate and they always require detailed investigation. Growth factors such as TNF $\alpha$ , insulin and PDGF/EGF can affect PPAR $\alpha$  activity, presumably via kinase cascades. Pretreatment of ML457 cells with PD98059, a MEK inhibitor, blocks peroxisome proliferator (PP)-induced c-fos, egr-1 and junB expression [21]. This data is supported by work reported previously [22] showing H7, a nonspecific kinase inhibitor, affected PP-induced gene expression. Thapsigargin and A23187 also affect PP-induced DNA synthesis, suggesting a role of calcium mobilization on PP-mediated gene expression. Activators of PKA can enhance mouse PPAR $\alpha$  activity in the absence and the presence of exogenous ligands in transient transfection experiments [23]. PPAR $\alpha$  can be inhibited by growth hormone (GH) via the Janus

kinase-signal transducer and activator of transcription 5b (JAK2/STAT5b) signaling pathway [24]. Additionally, we have shown that inhibition of MAPK (with PD98059) signaling reduces PPAR $\alpha$  activity whereas decreased PI3K activity (Ly2940004 or wortmannin) greatly enhances PPAR activity [25].

PPAR $\alpha$  is phosphorylated exclusively on serine residues *in vivo* with no observable threonine or tyrosine activity<sup>1</sup>. Insulin increases the phosphorylation of PPAR $\alpha$ , an effect that is associated with increased transcriptional activity [26]. Treatment of rat Fao cells with ciprofibrate increased the phosphorylation of PPAR $\alpha$  [27]. In addition, treatment of these cells with phosphatase inhibitors decreased the activity of ciprofibrate-induced gene expression.

#### **Extracellular receptor kinase-mitogen activated protein kinase (ERK-MAPK)—**

As mentioned above, insulin treatment of hepatocytes increased PPAR $\alpha$  phosphorylation and activity. This increase in basal and induced activity is due to the insulin mediated ERK-MAPK activity [26]. The insulin-induced transactivation is due to the phosphorylation of two serines (12 and 21) in the A/B domain of human PPAR $\alpha$  [28]. Co-transfection of MAPK phosphatase-1 (MKP-1) with PPAR $\alpha$  resulted in a decrease in ligand inducible reporter activity [29], once again enforcing the role of the MAPK pathway on this NR. Interestingly, although the phosphorylation is in the A/B domain of PPAR $\alpha$ , there is an effect on the ligand-dependent transactivation and not the ligand-independent AF-1 domain. This was demonstrated by the fact that the activity of heterologous PPAR $\alpha$  A/B-Gal4 construct is not affected by the MEK inhibitor PD98059; also, introducing mutations into these constructs has no effect on ligand-independent activity (unpublished observations). The Wy14,643 induced activity of similar full length PPAR $\alpha$ -Gal4 chimera was sensitive to PD98059 treatment. Thus, ERK-MEK phosphorylation affects intra-molecular communication whereby the phosphorylation status of the A/B domain affects the activity of the E/F region of the protein.

**JNK and p38 MAPK—**The p38 MAPK is activated by cytokines and is a member of the stress activated kinase family, affected by ischemia and hypoxia. In *in vitro* assays, p38 MAPK phosphorylates the A/B domain of PPAR $\alpha$  (at serine 6, 12 or 21)[30]. This results in an enhancement of ligand-dependent transcriptional activity in cardiac myocytes as a consequence of increased interaction with the transcriptional coactivator PPAR $\gamma$ -coactivator-1 $\alpha$  (PGC-1 $\alpha$ ) [30]. The p38 MAPK-enhanced recruitment of PGC-1 to PPAR $\alpha$  is particularly germane in this model system whereby the coactivator has an important role in myocyte energy homeostasis [30]. In the rat cardiomyocyte cell line, the activation of ERK-MAPK decreased PPAR $\alpha$  activity demonstrating the importance of cellular context [31]. Cerivastatin, an inhibitor of HMG CoA reductase, increases transcriptional activity of PPAR $\alpha$  by inhibiting the formation of geranylgeranyl pyrophosphate [32]. The geranylgeranyl pyrophosphate pathway affects the prenylation of Rho family proteins (Rho, Rac and Cdc42) which in turn regulate the JNK- and the p38 -MAPK cascades. The geranylation of small G proteins is necessary for translocation of these proteins to the membrane and for their activation. By inhibiting Rho A small G protein activation, cerivastatin stimulates PPAR $\alpha$  transcriptional activity by reducing its phosphorylation [32]. This provides an important means of cross-talk between two clinically relevant drug families (statins and fibrates) via phosphorylation.

**Protein Kinase A—**Activators of PKA such as cholera toxin (CT) enhance PPAR $\alpha$  activity both in the absence and presence of exogenous ligands [23]. The main site of phosphorylation is located in the C-Domain, although the enhancement of activity requires the AF-2 domain [23], once again suggesting an effect of phosphorylation on intramolecular communication. In addition to the C-domain phosphorylation, an effect on PPAR $\alpha$ -DNA interaction was observed

<sup>1</sup>G.H. Perdew, Penn State University, unpublished results.

with PKA activators. As shown in Figure 2, there are consensus PKA sites found in the C domain of PPAR $\alpha$ , although to our knowledge, site directed mutagenesis has not been performed to confirm importance of this particular serine residue.

**Protein Kinase C (PKC)**—*In vivo* phosphorylation studies show that the level of phosphorylated PPAR $\alpha$  is increased by treatment with the PP Wy-14,643 as well as the PKC activator phorbol myristol acetate (PMA) [33]. In addition, inhibitors of PKC decreased Wy-14,643-induced PPAR $\alpha$  activity. Overexpressing PKC $\alpha$ , - $\beta$ , - $\delta$ , and - $\zeta$  affected both basal and Wy-14,643-induced PPAR $\alpha$  activity [33]. Four consensus PKC phosphorylation sites are contained within the DNA binding (C-domain) and hinge (D-domain) regions of rat PPAR $\alpha$  (S110, T129, S142, and S179), and their contribution to receptor function has been examined [33,34]. PKC $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  phosphorylate PPAR $\alpha$  in human liver cells, at serines 179 and 230, increasing the ligand-induced PPAR $\alpha$  transcriptional activity [34]. Mutation of T129 or S179 to alanine prevented heterodimerization of PPAR $\alpha$  with RXR $\alpha$ , lowered the level of phosphorylation by PKC $\alpha$  and PKC $\delta$  *in vitro*, and lowered the level of phosphorylation of PPAR $\alpha$  in transfected cells. In addition, the T129A mutation prevented PPAR $\alpha$  from binding DNA in an electromobility shift assay [33].

**5'-AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK)**—AMPK activation increases fatty acid oxidation in skeletal muscle by decreasing malonyl CoA concentrations. Activation of AMPK by 5-aminoimidazole-4-carboxamide ribonucleoside (AICAR) increases mRNA expression of PPAR $\alpha$  target genes and PGC-1 in cultured muscle cells and mouse skeletal muscle. Inhibition of PPAR $\alpha$  and PGC-1 by siRNAs prevents AICAR-stimulated increase in fatty acid oxidation [35]. In a similar study, AMPK and p38 MAPK were involved in the activation of PPAR $\alpha$  by adiponectin in muscle cells [36]; these effects were suppressed by the overexpression of a dominant-negative form of AMPK. Moreover, chemical inhibitors of AMPK and p38 MAPK potently repressed fatty acid oxidation and the induction of PPAR $\alpha$  target gene expression by adiponectin. Taken together, these results suggest that adiponectin stimulates fatty acid oxidation in muscle cells by the sequential activation of AMPK, p38 MAPK, and PPAR $\alpha$ .

**Glycogen Synthase Kinase 3 (GSK3)**—GSK3 is a constitutively active proline-directed serine/threonine-specific kinase that phosphorylates at SXXXS sites and is inhibited by phosphorylation [37]. GSK3 was identified as the kinase that phosphorylates and inactivates glycogen synthase, the final enzyme in glycogen synthesis; however, GSK3 has since been shown to play a role in multiple signaling pathways [38,39]. *In vitro* kinase assays reveal that PPAR $\alpha$  is a substrate of GSK3 being phosphorylated predominately at serine 73 in the A/B domain. The over expression of GSK3, as shown through pulse chase experiments, decreased the stability of PPAR $\alpha$ . The decrease in stability of PPAR $\alpha$  was abrogated by mutating serine 73 in PPAR $\alpha$ . The change in stability of PPAR $\alpha$  is mediated via degradation of the ubiquitin proteasome system and suggests that the ubiquitin proteasome pathway is important for the rapid degradation of PPAR $\alpha$  facilitated by GSK3 (unpublished results). With GSK3 and PPAR $\alpha$  both being important metabolic players, this link may be important to the study of diseases such as diabetes or obesity.

## PPAR $\beta/\delta$

As with many areas of research, PPAR $\beta/\delta$  is the least studied subtype in terms of post-translational modification and phosphorylation. Similar to PPAR $\alpha$ , PPAR $\beta/\delta$  has several consensus phosphorylation (Figure 3). Both cAMP and PKA activators (i.e. CT) increase ligand-activated and basal activity of PPAR $\beta/\delta$  [40-42]. It has been proposed that this affect of PKA is due to effects on recruitment of Nuclear receptor CORepressor (NcoR) and silencing mediator for retinoid and thyroid hormone receptor (SMRT) corepressors [40-42]. The specific PPAR $\beta/\delta$  agonist (GW501516) increases the prostaglandin E2 receptor subtype EP4 mRNA

and protein levels [43]. Wortmannin, a selective inhibitor of phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI3-K), but not an inhibitor of Erk, eliminated the effect of GW501516 on EP4 expression. Preincubation of myotubes with the p38 MAPK inhibitor SB203580 reduced insulin- and PPAR $\beta/\delta$ -mediated increase in glucose uptake, whereas PD98059 had no effect [44]. Given the emerging appreciation for the importance of PPAR $\beta/\delta$  in diseases such as obesity, diabetes and inflammation, more studies on phosphorylation and growth factor signaling is well warranted.

## PPAR $\gamma$

**Growth factor signaling**—PPAR $\gamma$  is also a phosphoprotein phosphorylated by activators of MAPK, like insulin; however, this modification decreases transcriptional activity of PPAR $\gamma$  [45,46]. Growth factor platelet derived growth factor (PDGF) treatment of adipocytes in culture decreases the transcriptional activity of PPAR $\gamma$ 1 [47]. This receptor undergoes EGF-stimulated MEK-dependent phosphorylation and co-transfection of adipocytes with a constitutively active MEK decreases PPAR $\gamma$  transcriptional activity. *In vitro* assays demonstrate that ERK2 and JNK are able to phosphorylate PPAR $\gamma$ 2 [46], which may help explain the effects of EGF and TNF $\alpha$ , respectively, on gene expression. Insulin and a PPAR $\gamma$  ligand (troglitazone, TZD) act synergistically to increase the expression of an adipocyte specific gene, aP2 [48].

**Extracellular receptor kinase-mitogen activated protein kinase (ERK-MAPK)**—Transfection with a dominant negative MEK results in a decrease in both insulin and TZD's effects on PPAR $\gamma$  activity, indicating MAPK is involved in the cross talk between PPAR $\gamma$  and insulin [48]. *In vitro* assays demonstrate that ERK2 and JNK are able to phosphorylate PPAR $\gamma$ 2 [46]. The MAPK phosphorylation site, which can be used by both ERK- and JNK-MAPK [49], was mapped at serine 82 of mouse PPAR $\gamma$ 1, which corresponds to serine 112 of mouse PPAR $\gamma$ 2 [50]. Substitution of this serine by alanine (S82A) leads to a loss of PDGF mediated repression of PPAR $\gamma$  activity [47]. Human PPAR $\gamma$ 1 phosphorylation at this site (S84) inhibits both its ligand-dependent and -independent transactivating function. The S84A mutant showed an increase in the AF-1 transcriptional activity of PPAR $\gamma$  [46]. Treatment of macrophages with TGF $\beta$ 1 increases PPAR $\gamma$  phosphorylation and decreases TZD-induced CD36 expression via an activation of the ERK-MAPK pathway [51]. Mutation of the main MAPK site of phosphorylation in PPAR $\gamma$ 2 (S112D) exhibits a decreased ligand-binding affinity [50]. Similar to that noted for PPAR $\alpha$ , this suggests interdomain communications between the AF-1 domain and ligand-binding pocket. Limited protease digestion shows the unliganded PPAR $\gamma$ 2 and the S112D mutant have different sensitivity; thus, the phosphorylation status of serine 112 plays a role in the conformation of the unliganded receptor which regulates the affinity of PPAR $\gamma$  for its ligands and affects coactivator recruitment ability [50]. It has been proposed that phosphorylation-mediated inhibition of transcriptional activity of nuclear receptors is an important “off-switch” of ligand-induced activity (reviewed in [52]). Extracellular signals which activate intracellular phosphorylation pathways can influence the degradation process of PPAR $\gamma$  [53]. For example, treatment of cells with an inhibitor of MEK kinases inhibits the degradation of PPAR $\gamma$ . However, not all phosphorylation events are inhibitory and enhance proteosomal degradation and care must be taken when making a global speculation.

Substitution of proline to glutamine at position 115 of the human receptor renders PPAR $\gamma$  constitutively active through the modulation of the MAPK-dependent phosphorylation status of serine 114 [54]. Subjects carrying this mutation are extremely obese, but surprisingly show a lesser insulin resistance than expected. In mice homozygous for the S112A mutant (homologous to human S114) [55] there is protection against diet induced obesity. This may be due to changes in adipocyte function such as secretion of adiponectin and leptin. Overall,

prevention of PPAR $\gamma$  phosphorylation leads to an improvement of insulin sensitivity mainly due to increased glucose disposal in muscle, which is similar to TZD treatment [55].

**Protein Kinase A**—As was seen with PPAR $\alpha$  and PPAR $\beta$ , activation of PKA with CT increased the basal and ligand-induced activity of PPAR $\gamma$  [40]. The details of this activation were not pursued to the same extent as PPAR $\alpha$ . Treatment with PKA stimulators markedly increased while MEK and PI 3-kinase overexpression resulted in a decrease in PPAR $\gamma$  activity [56]. Clearly, more studies are required to understand the PKA-induced phosphorylation of PPAR $\gamma$ .

**Protein Kinase C (PKC)**—One of the major adverse effects of PPAR $\gamma$  agonists is fluid retention and edema, resulting from an unknown mechanisms. A recent study has shown that TZDs effects on edema and weight are partially due to an adipose tissue-selective activation of PKC and vascular permeability that may be prevented by PKC $\beta$  inhibition [57]. Although not directly studied, it is possible that PKC can directly phosphorylate PPAR $\gamma$  (there are several consensus site, Figure 4), thus leading to altered activity.

**5'-AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK)**—Similar to PPAR $\alpha$ , PPAR $\gamma$  is sensitive to AMPK activity. PPAR $\gamma$  phosphorylation by AMPK represses both the ligand-dependent and -independent transactivating function of the receptor [58]. It has been proposed that one of the mechanisms by which TZDs improve insulin sensitivity is by increasing the expression and release of adiponectin, an adipokine that activates AMPK. However, it has been reported that TZDs also acutely activate AMPK in skeletal muscle and other tissues [59]. Thus, some of TZDs effects may be PPAR $\gamma$ -independent.

## Summary

PPARs are members of the steroid hormone receptor superfamily that respond to changes in lipid and glucose homeostasis. Thus far, three subtypes ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ ) have been identified in many species including humans. The manner in which PPARs regulate gene expression is an area of intense research and appears to be similar for  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ , regardless of the species examined. For example, upon activation with ligand, PPARs associate with the retinoid-X-receptor (RXR) and bind to specific response elements found on target genes. The subsequent alteration in gene expression by the PPARs is influenced by kinases, cofactors and other tissue specific factors. Detailed examination of the structure-function of the PPARs allows for an understanding of certain polymorphisms within the human population and may also aid in the design of new therapeutic agents.

The biological niches of PPAR $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are distinct, yet they have many overlapping functions. PPAR $\alpha$  is the cognate receptor for peroxisome proliferators as well as certain fatty acid and their metabolites. Through the extensive use of the PPAR $\alpha$  null mouse model, it is evident that this receptor plays a key role in lipid homeostasis, particularly in the fasted state. Important fatty acid oxidation enzymes, in peroxisomes and elsewhere, are regulated by PPAR $\alpha$ . PPAR $\gamma$  has received much attention as the target for anti-diabetic drugs, but also plays a role in responding to endogenous compounds such as prostaglandin J<sub>2</sub>. The ability of ectopically-expressed PPAR $\gamma$  to induce differentiation of adipocytes, macrophages and other cells, underscores the importance of this protein in regulating cell fate and implies a role beyond fatty acid metabolism. The embryonic lethality of the PPAR $\gamma$ -null mouse has made identifying definitive biological roles of this particular subtype difficult. PPAR $\beta$  remains a somewhat underappreciated member of this subfamily of receptors. The endogenous ligands for PPAR $\beta$  are, as a group, relatively weak activators, but they include various fatty acids. The phenotype of the PPAR $\beta$ -null suggests an important role in lipid homeostasis and this protein

has received attention as a downstream target of growth regulatory genes, in particular in the colon.

It is interesting to note that many biological functions of the PPARs are redundant such as their ability to affect fatty acid metabolism, although certain phosphorylation events have distinct effects. For example, the MAPK pathway activates PPAR $\alpha$  in hepatocytes, whereas it inhibits PPAR $\gamma$  activity in adipocytes. Similarly, PPAR $\gamma$  phosphorylation by AMPK represses both the ligand-dependent and -independent transactivating function of the receptor; the opposite is seen with AMPK activation of PPAR $\alpha$  in heart. In contrast, PKA phosphorylation positively affects the activity of all three PPAR subtypes. The effects of phosphorylation can be seen in many aspects of PPARs' mechanism of action including ligand, DNA and coactivator binding. An interesting phenomena that has been observed is that kinase activity can affect the intramolecular communication between the A/B and E/F domains; hence, metabolism of the AF-1 affects AF-2 activity. The action of kinase cascades on PPAR activity reflects the complexity of signaling cascades in a biological system. A goal of on-going research in this area is to understand the cross-talk between the PPAR and kinase cascades to better design treatments for diseases such as diabetes, inflammation and cancer.

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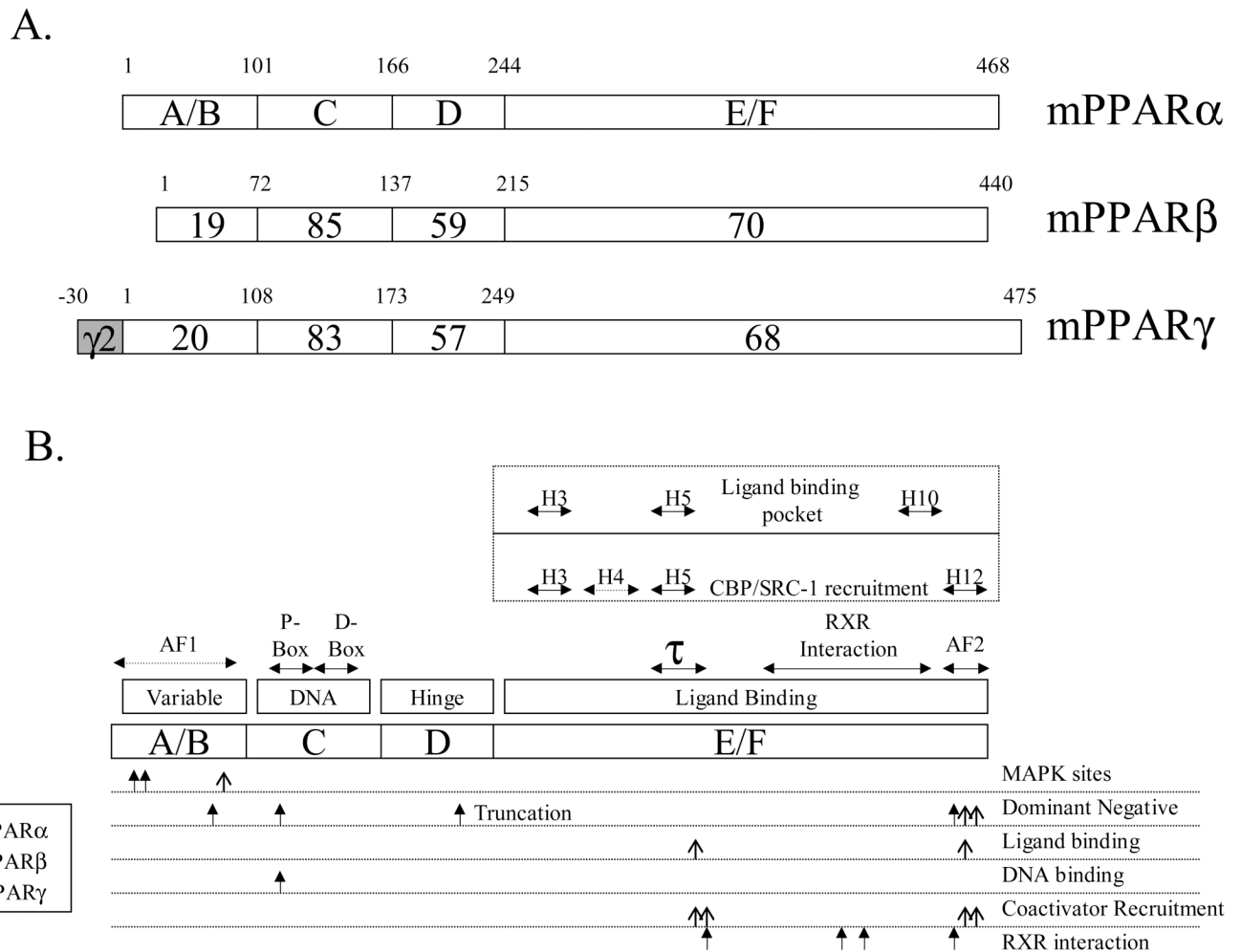
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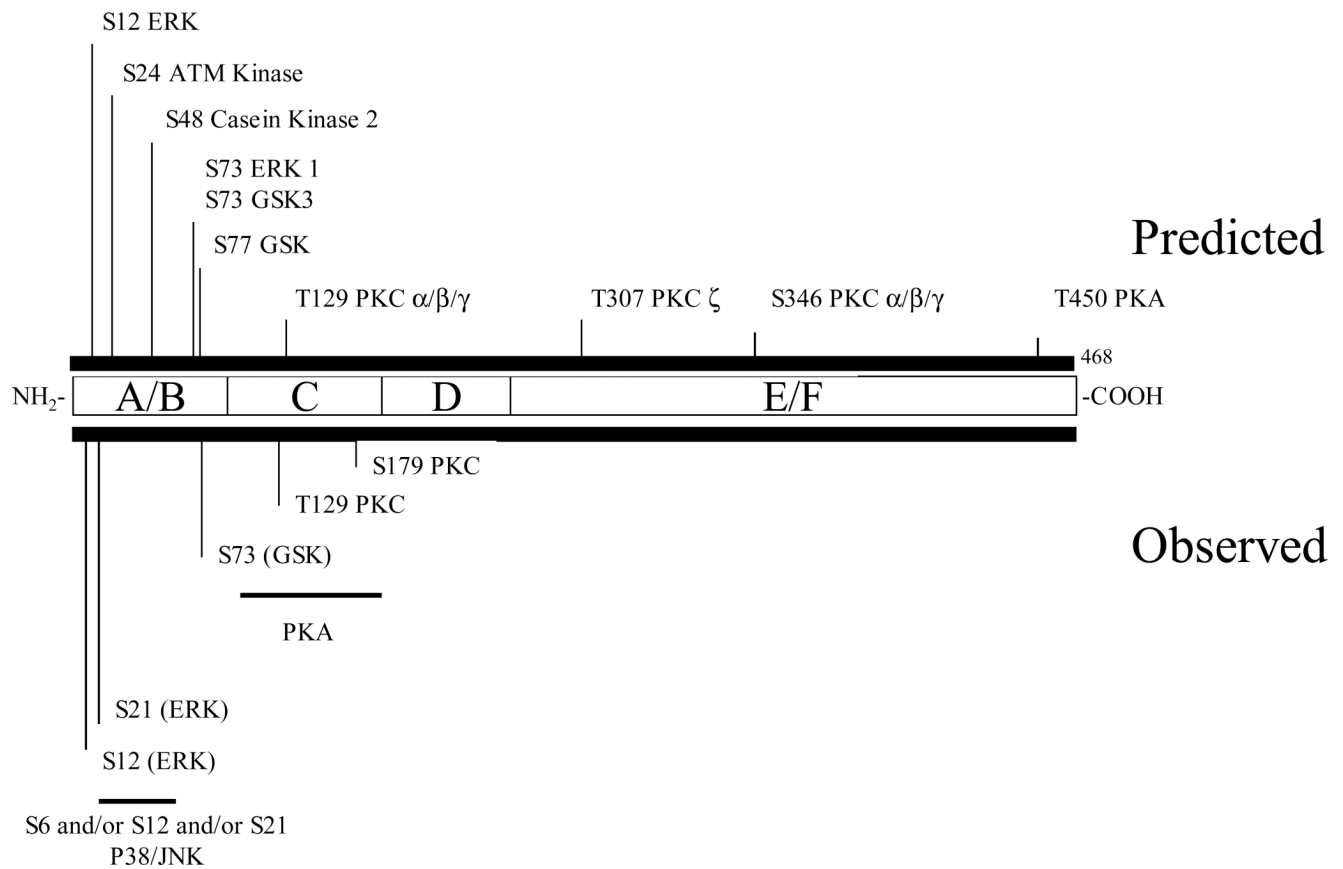
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**Figure 1.**

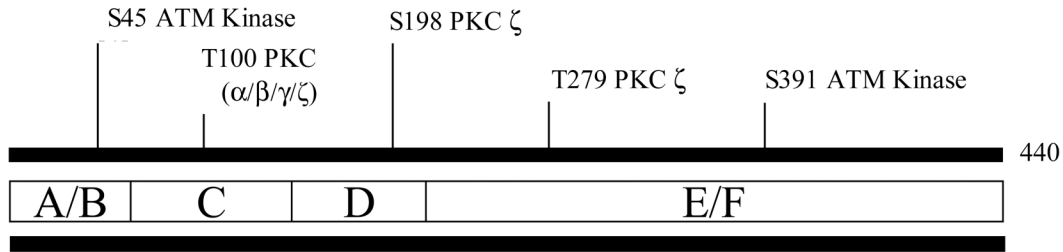
Structure of PPARs. **Panel A.** Structure and functional domains of PPAR $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ . A/B is the hypervariable region containing the putative activation function-1 (AF-1) domain. PPAR $\gamma$ 2 contains a 30 amino acid region that arises from differential promoter use and splicing. The C-domain is the most conserved and contains the DNA binding motif. The D-domain (hinge) is believed to allow for conformational change following ligand binding. The E/F domain contains the ligand-binding region of PPAR. Alignments and percent similarities were performed with MegAlign (DNASar, Madison WI). **Panel B.** Detailed functional domains of PPARs. Above the outline for the hypothetical PPAR are the structural features of PPARs that have been deduced by sequence comparisons and crystallography. The AF-1 domain has not been fully characterized although it is known to reside in the A/B domain. The DNA binding motif contains two  $C_4$  zinc fingers, the proximal (P-box) and distal (D-box) boxes, which confer DNA binding and heterodimerization, respectively. Much has been learned about PPAR structure/function from recent crystallographic studies. PPAR E/F contains 13 alpha helices (H1-H12, H2') and 4 short  $\beta$  strands [60] and helices 3, 5 and 10 forms the ligand-binding pocket. RXR interacts along several helices including H7-H10. The coactivator CBP interacts with H3-5 and H12 while SRC-1 associated with H3, H5 and H12. The  $\tau_1$  domain contains a leucine-zipper-like heptad repeat [61]. The AF-2 domain is highly conserved among all PPARs and is intimately associated with ligand-induced transcriptional events. Much of the characterization of functional domains was performed using site-directed mutagenesis, as

shown below the hypothetical PPAR. MAPK phosphorylation sites have been found at S12 and S21 in mouse PPAR $\alpha$  and S122 in PPAR $\gamma$ 2 [2]. Dominant negative (dn) PPAR $\alpha$  results from mutations at L71, L123, and V444 [62] or in the naturally occurring truncated form of the receptor [63]. A dn PPAR $\gamma$  can be formed by mutating L468 and E471 of the human receptor [64]. Ligand binding mutants may arise from altering residues L319 or L469 of hPPAR $\gamma$  [65]. Similarly, DNA binding-devoid constructs are produced by mutating C122 [66] of PPAR $\alpha$ . Specific interactions, such as those with SRC-1 and CBP, are targeted by mutating residues K301, V315, L468 or E471 of hPPAR $\gamma$  [65] while RXR association is lost by changing sites L433 [66], L370, L391 or D304 [61] of hPPAR $\alpha$ . It is important to note that all domains work as a unified entity, with changes at the A/B terminus affecting ligand binding at the COOH, E/F domain [67] or in DNA binding [68]. Very little mutational analysis has been performed with PPAR $\beta/\gamma$ , although the crystal structure reveals an E/F domain of this subtype to be very similar to PPAR $\gamma$ .



**Figure 2. Structure of mouse PPAR $\alpha$  and location of phosphorylation sites**

Serine or threonine consensus sites are marked with their location (i.e. S12 is serine at residue 12). The key shows the font associated with each kinase's consensus site. Abbreviations used: MAPK, mitogen activated protein kinase; PKC, protein kinase C; CK2, casein kinase 2; GSK3, glycogen synthase kinase 3; PKA, protein kinase A. Consensus sites scanned using Scansite (<http://scansite.mit.edu/>) under moderate stringency. The sequence was scanned for the following kinase sites: Akt\_Kin, ATM\_Kin, Cam\_Kin2, Casn\_Kin1, Casn\_Kin2, Cdc2\_Kin, Cdk5\_Kin, Clk2\_Kin, DNA\_PK, Erk1\_Kin, GSK3\_Kin, p38\_Kin, PKA\_Kin, PKC\_common, PKC\_delta, PKC\_epsilon, PKC\_mu, PKC\_zeta.

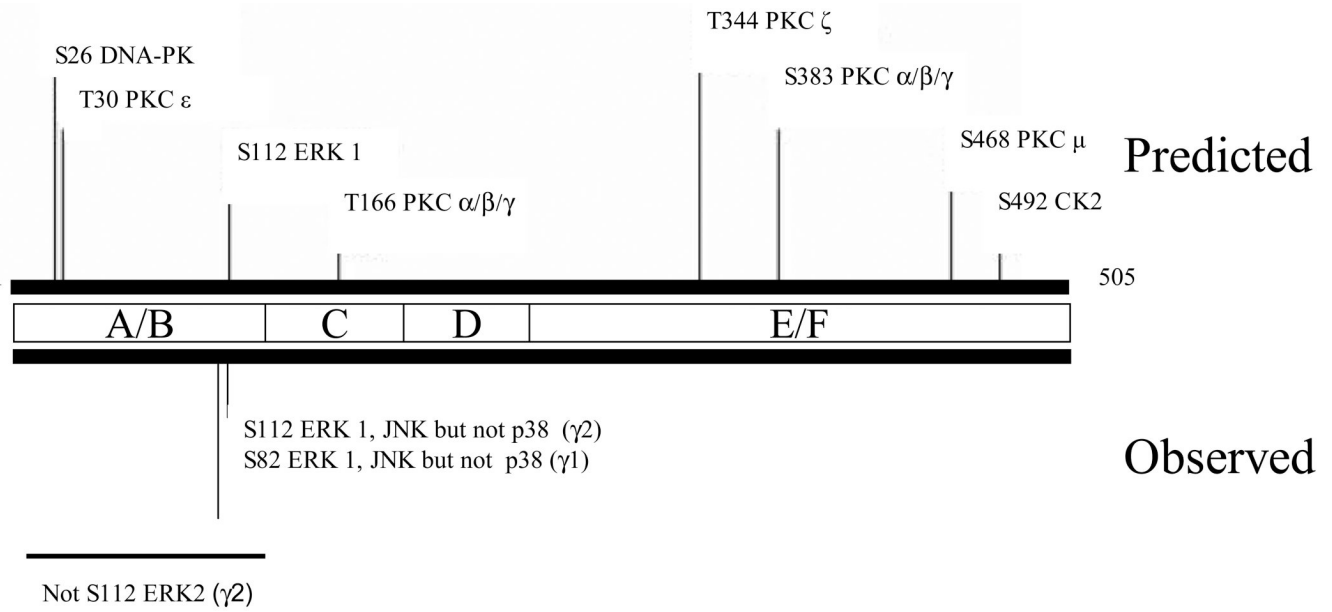


Predicted

Effects of PKA, PI3-K, and p38 MAPK have not been mapped

Observed

**Figure 3. Structure of mouse PPAR $\beta/\delta$  and location of phosphorylation sites**  
See Figure 2 for details.



**Figure 4. Structure of mouse PPAR $\gamma$ 2 and location of phosphorylation sites**  
See Figure 2 for details.