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Adapted MS/MS^{ALL} Shotgun Lipidomics Approach for Analysis of Cardiolipin Molecular Species

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Abstract

Cardiolipin (Ptd₂Gro) is a complex, double-charged phospholipid located in the inner mitochondrial membrane where it plays an essential role in regulating bioenergetics. Abnormalities in Ptd₂Gro content or composition have been associated with mitochondrial dysfunction in a variety of disease states. Herein, we developed an adapted high-resolution data independent acquisition (DIA) MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomic method to enhance the accuracy and reproducibility of Ptd₂Gro molecular species quantitation from biological samples. Utilizing the double charged molecular ions and the isotopic pattern under negative electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS) mode using an adapted MS/MS^{ALL} approach, we profiled more than 150 individual Ptd₂Gro species, including monolysocardiolipin. The method described in this study demonstrated high reproducibility, sensitivity, and throughput with a wide dynamic range. This high-resolution MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics approach could be extended to screening aberrations of Ptd₂Gro metabolism involved in mitochondrial dysfunction in various pathological conditions and diseases.

Keywords

Cardiolipin; mass spectrometry; data independent acquisition; MS/MS^{ALL}; shotgun lipidomics

Introduction

In mammalian cells, cardiolipin (Ptd₂Gro) is found almost exclusively in the inner mitochondrial membrane where it plays an essential role in mitochondrial bioenergetics [1–3]. In eukaryotes, Ptd₂Gro is biosynthesized from phosphatidylglycerol (PtdGro) and

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Conflict of Interest FG, JM, EC, HR, CN, RS, NN and MK are current employees of BERG, LLC and have stock options. NN and RS are co-founders of BERG, LLC.

cytidine diphosphate-diacylglycerol (CDP-DAG) by Ptd₂Gro synthase on the inner face of the inner mitochondrial membrane [1]. Nascent Ptd₂Gro is remodeled by a deacylation-reacylation process, which cleaves acyl chains from Ptd₂Gro, generating monolysocardiolipin (MLPtd₂Gro) and, via reacylation from donor chains (Figure 1), allows for the enrichment of certain acyl chains, especially linoleic acid (18:2), on the backbone of Ptd₂Gro in the majority of mammalian tissues [4]. Additional remodeling pathways of Ptd₂Gro involve the acyl CoA independent transfer of 18:2 acyl chains directly from choline glycerophospholipids (ChoGpl) or ethanolamine glycerophospholipids (EtnGpl) via tafazzin (TAZ) [5].

The molecular structure and composition of Ptd₂Gro enhances the functional activity of mitochondrial respiratory chain complexes by maintaining the balance of biophysical and charge properties of the mitochondrial inner membrane [3, 6]. In addition to its role in mitochondrial bioenergetics, Ptd₂Gro also plays an important regulatory role in cytochrome C release, which triggers downstream signaling events in apoptosis [7]. Abnormalities in Ptd₂Gro composition have been associated with mitochondrial dysfunction in multiple tissues in a variety of pathological conditions, including Barth syndrome [8], ischemia [9], thyroid neoplasia [10], traumatic brain injury [11], and brain tumors [12].

Quantitative analysis of Ptd₂Gro, particularly at the molecular species level, is largely based on electrospray ionization mass spectrometry (ESI-MS), either coupled with normal phase high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) [13, 14], or by direct infusion, i.e. shotgun lipidomics [15]. Under negative mode ESI, cardiolipin species are easily formed as doublecharged ions with a specific isotope distribution ([M-2H]²⁻, [M-2H]²⁻+0.5, and [M-2H]²⁻+1), which could be used for the quantification and identification of Ptd₂Gro species [15]. However, under analysis with triple quadrupole (QQQ) mass spectrometers, the lower resolution mass to charge ratio (m/z) of the double charged ion and its isotopic peaks require deconvolution to provide accurate quantification [15]. Furthermore, traditional QQQ MSbased lipidomics requires pre-selection of specific ions for analysis of diverse lipids [15, 16]. Recently, the strategy of data-independent acquisition (DIA) has been developed to overcome this shortcoming by recording all the fragments in isolation windows with various m/z widths [17]. MS/MS^{ALL} is one variant of DIA, which utilizes a hybrid quadrupole highresolution time-of-flight (qTOF) with a 1 m/z isolation window for profiling lipids in biological samples [18, 19]. Herein, we developed an adapted high-resolution MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics method specifically for Ptd₂Gro molecular species with an analysis time of 6 mins. The isolation window and collision energy were adjusted to accommodate the isotopic peak [M-2H]^{2-+0.5}. The adapted Ptd₂Gro MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics method exhibited a lower coefficient of variation (CV) for Ptd2Gro molecular species compared with the conventional MS/MS^{ALL} method for other negative lipids.

Utilizing the high-resolution MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics approach described in this study, the characteristic Ptd₂Gro molecular species in lipid extracts of mouse heart, kidney, liver, muscle, pancreas, brown adipose tissue (BAT), white adipose tissue (WAT), and brain were quantified. The high sensitivity and wider dynamic range for quantification is valuable for studying alterations in Ptd₂Gro metabolism in a variety of metabolically diverse biological samples.

Materials and Methods

Mice

All animal procedures were approved by the Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee at Joslin Diabetes Center. C57BL/6J male mice (Stock no. 000664) were purchased from The Jackson Laboratory and used at 12 weeks of age. All mice were housed in the Joslin Diabetes Center Animal Care Facility. At 25 weeks of age, mice were sacrificed and dissected. Tissues were snap frozen in liquid nitrogen.

Materials

Ptd₂Gro 14:0–14:0–14:0–14:0 standard, heart Ptd₂Gro, egg PtdOH, and egg PtdGro standards were purchased from Avanti Polar Lipids (Alabaster, AL). All solvents were HPLC or LC/MS grade and were purchased from Fisher Scientific (Waltham, MA) or VWR International (Radnor, PA). Mouse tissues were provided by Joslin Diabetes Center and were frozen before the extraction. All animal procedures were approved by the Institutional Animal Use and Care Committee at Joslin Diabetes Center.

Sample Preparation and Extraction

20 mg mouse tissues samples were transferred to an OMNI bead tube with 0.8 mL 10× diluted PBS and were homogenized for 2 min at 4 °C using the OMNI Cryo Bead Ruptor 24 (OMNI International, Inc., Kennesaw, GA). Protein concentration was measured using BCA assay, and 1 mg of protein was used for extraction with Ptd₂Gro 14:0–14:0–14:0–14:0 added as the internal standard (IS). Lipid extraction was performed using a modified Bligh and Dyer method as previously described [19]. Extraction was automated using a customized sequence on a Hamilton Robotics STARlet system (Hamilton, Reno, NV) to meet the highthroughput needs. Lipid extracts were dried under N₂ and reconstituted in chloroform/ methanol (1:1, by vol). Samples were flushed with N₂ and stored at –20 °C.

To study the dynamic range of Ptd₂Gro under the ESI-MS, the synthetic Ptd₂Gro standard, Ptd₂Gro 14:0–14:0–14:0–14:0, was spiked at different serial concentrations into 1 mg protein extract from mouse heart homogenate to generate the calibration curves. For assay reproducibility, 5 aliquots of 1 mg heart homogenate were extracted with IS and analyzed using two different methods – one for negative lipids, including phosphatidylserine (PtdSer), phosphatidylglycerol (PtdGro), phosphatidylinositol (PtdIns), and phosphatidic acid (PtdOH), and the other method dedicated for the Ptd₂Gro species. The coefficient of variation (CV) was calculated for comparison.

To assess carry over, aliquots of 10 nmol each for heart Ptd_2Gro , egg PtdOH, and egg PtdGro extracts with the appropriate mixture of internal standards cocktail were prepared in 0.4 mL chloroform/methanol (1:1, v/v), separately and analyzed using the described cardiolipin mass spectrometry method.

Direct Infusion Quadruple Time of Flight (QTOF) MS/MS^{ALL} Mass Spectrometry

Concentrated samples were diluted 50× in isopropanol-methanol-acetonitrile-H₂O (3:3:3:1, by vol) with 2 mM ammonium acetate, and 50 μ L diluted lipid extract was automatically

loaded and directly delivered to the ESI source using an Ekspert microLC 200 system (SCIEX, Framingham, MA) with a flow rate of 6 μ L/min on a customized sample loop. The mass spectrometry experiments were carried out on a TripleTOF 5600+ (SCIEX). ESI source parameters included nebulizing gasses GS1 at 10, GS2 at 10, curtain gas at 15, ion spray voltage at -4500 V, declustering potential at 100 V, and temperature at 300 °C. The atmospheric pressure chemical ionization probe was connected to a calibrant pump which delivers mass calibration solution for MS and MS/MS. The MS/MSALL data acquisition was controlled by Analyst® software (SCIEX). For the conventional negative lipid MS/MS^{ALL} analysis [18, 19] all precursors are selected in the Q1 quadrupole at 1 Da isolation window in the MS range was 200-1200, in which the precursor ions are equally spread in one of the isolation windows (Figure 2). The collision energy for negative lipids MS/MS^{ALL} was -30 \pm 15 V. For the Ptd₂Gro species, the MS range was shortened to 400–1000 with the isolation window shifting to fit the double charged isotopologue Ptd₂Gro species (Figure 2). In addition, the optimal collision energy for Ptd₂Gro species was -20 ± 10 V. The identification of Ptd₂Gro species was based on the high-resolution molecular weight, the $[M-2H]^{2-}+0.5$ isotope, and the specific fatty acyl chain fragments. The quantification was performed by comparing the peak area of molecular species isotope, M+0.5, to that of the internal standard within a linear dynamic range with the isotopic corrections [15] and normalized to 1 mg protein across different tissues.

Results

Data independent acquisition (DIA) MS/MS^{ALL} for cardiolipin molecular species

Under negative ESI, Ptd₂Gro molecular species demonstrate different ionization compared to other negatively charged phospholipids through the formation of a double charged molecular ion. This double charged molecular ion demonstrated an isotopic pattern with [M-2H]²⁻, [M-2H]²⁻+0.5, [M-2H]²⁻+1 peaks (Figure 2D). Using a previously assigned strategy for shotgun lipidomics [15], the diagnostic [M-2H]²+0.5 peak was exploited for the identification and quantification of Ptd2Gro using the high-resolution DIA MS/MSALL shotgun lipidomics strategy. Applying an adapted MS/MS^{ALL} approach for Ptd₂Gro compared to the conventional analysis method for negative phospholipids (Figure 2A), the Ptd₂Gro precursors were selected at a shifted 1-m/z wide isolation window in Q1 in order to accommodate the double charged [M-2H]^{2-+0.5} peak with a narrow scan range from 400 to 1000 m/z (Figure 2B). In addition, the collision energy (CE) for Ptd₂Gro was lower than the other negative phospholipids in order to preserve both double charged molecular ions and fragments. This process is illustrated in Figure 2C in which the precursor ions are isolated in a 1-m/z wide window in Q1, fragmented in Q2 using ramping CE and the molecular ions and fragment ions were all analyzed by the high-resolution TOF MS analyzer at a high scan speed.

Optimization of High-resolution MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics for Ptd_2Gro molecular species

 Ptd_2Gro species were isolated in the 1-m/z isolation window by the Q1, and then dissociated in the collision cell (Figure 2). The collision energy (CE) is a key factor that influences the isotopic peaks and the fragments of the Ptd_2Gro species and requires optimization. 1 nM

Ptd₂Gro 14:0–14:0–14:0–14:0 solution was infused into the mass spectrometer and the double charged molecular ions were fragmented under a ramping CE ranging from –100 to 0 V (Figure 3A). The m/z 619.9 of the isotopic peak [M-2H]²+0.5 and the m/z 227.2 of the fatty acid fragment peak were monitored during the infusion. The optimal CE range for the $[M-2H]^2$ +0.5 peak was between –20 and –5 V. We chose a ramping CE as –20 ± 10 V as our final CE for Ptd₂Gro species to produce both stable $[M-2H]^2$ +0.5 and the diagnostic fatty acid fragment (Figure 3B). Quantification using the isotopic peak $[M-2H]^2$ +0.5 under lower resolution mass spectrometers was reported previously [8, 15]. To determine the linear dynamic range and sensitivity of the high-resolution DIA method for Ptd₂Gro species quantification, a serial dilution of Ptd₂Gro 14:0–14:0–14:0–14:0 in one aliquot of 1 mg mouse heart homogenate was analyzed and the calibration curve ranging from 0.04–400 nM was established with an R² regression value of 0.9993 (Figure 3C).

Specificity of High-resolution MS/MS^{ALL} shotgun lipidomics for Ptd₂Gro molecular species

To determine the specificity of the adapted cardiolipin MS/MS^{ALL} method, we examined potential interference of other Ptd₂Gro analysis with other phospholipids standards, heart Ptd₂Gro vs egg PtdOH or egg PtdGro. We chose PtdOH and PtdGro extracts because both of phospholipids ionize in the negative mode and share a similar mass range that partially overlaps with Ptd₂Gro. Analysis of egg PtdOH and egg PtdGro stocks revealed less than 3% interference for the analysis of cardiolipin, which could be associated with background (Supplemental Figure 1).

Assessment of variation for the $Ptd_2Gro MS/MS^{ALL}$ method for quantifying molecular species

To assess the reproducibility of Ptd₂Gro adapted MS/MS^{ALL} method, 5 aliquots of 1 mg mouse heart extract were analyzed using the method for the conventional negative lipid analysis as well as the adapted method for Ptd₂Gro analysis (as described in the methods section). The coefficient of variation (CV) of the top 20 Ptd₂Gro species in the mouse heart tissue using the novel Ptd₂Gro method were less than 10%, whereas the CV of most Ptd₂Gro using the method for other negative lipids was higher than 10% (Figure 4), most likely because the isotopic peaks are near the edge of the isolation window and these ions become less stable than the ions in the middle of the window. The quantitative value of cardiolipin species also demonstrated minimal variation in replicates from the adapted MS/MS^{ALL} Ptd₂Gro workflow compared to negative MS/MS^{ALL} analysis (Figure 4B). The lower variation in the new adapted cardiolipin method compared to the standard negative MS/MS^{ALL} method, may in part be due to lower collision energy creating more stable ions for the 0.5 isotopologue compared to the higher CE in the negative MS/MS^{ALL} method which might be more instable creating more variability.

Analysis of Ptd₂Gro molecular species from different mouse tissues

We applied the adapted MS/MS^{ALL} DIA Ptd₂Gro shotgun lipidomics method to quantify the Ptd₂Gro molecular species from various mouse tissues, including heart, kidney, liver, muscle, pancreas, brown adipose tissue (BAT), white adipose tissue (WAT), and brain (Figure 5). The molecular structure of Ptd₂Gro species was identified by the [M-2H]²⁻ 0.5 isotopic peaks and the MS/MS spectra, as illustrated in Figure 6 where endogenous Ptd₂Gro

Discussion

Ptd₂Gro is a polyglycerol phospholipid composed of two phosphatidyl moieties and four fatty acyl chains, and plays an essential role in mitochondrial function [3, 20]. Disruption of Ptd₂Gro content or composition in mammalian cells has been related to the initiation of mitochondrial dysfunction in various disease states [1, 2]. The complexity and low abundance of Ptd₂Gro in most tissues poses a bioanalytical challenge to accurately quantify Ptd2Gro at the molecular species level. Under ESI conditions, Ptd2Gro forms as a double negative-charged ion with a distinctive isotopic distribution, the characteristics of which could be exploited for Ptd₂Gro identification and quantification [15]. However, most previous studies were performed with lower resolution mass spectrometers, such as QQQ, and the isotopic peaks can overlap and requires deconvolution for accurate quantitation [15]. In this study, we applied an adapted high-resolution qTOF mass spectrometry along with the DIA MS/MS^{ALL} strategy to accurately profile the Ptd₂Gro molecular species from different mouse tissues. The isotopic peaks were clearly identified and used for subsequent quantification. The MS/MS^{ALL} isolation window, the collision energy, and other parameters were optimized to provide a high-throughput, sensitive method for specifically quantifying Ptd₂Gro molecular species from various biological samples.

Data independent acquisition (DIA) is a strategy of molecular analysis in which all ions within a selected m/z window are fragmented and analyzed [17]. The DIA methods has been widely used for proteomics [21], metabolomics [22], and lipidomics [18]. Compared with traditional data dependent acquisition (DDA) methods, DIA overcomes the disadvantages of irreproducibility and under-sampling issues of DDA [17] by covering all fragments of all molecules within the sample. MS/MS^{ALL} is a DIA method developed specifically for lipidomics [18, 19]. The MS/MS^{ALL} approach uses 1 m/z isolation window to select the molecular ions, which not only collects all the fragments from the precursor ions, but also maintains the connections between the precursors and fragments. For Ptd₂Gro analysis, we adjusted the conventional method by shifting the window edges and lowering the collision energy to accommodate the [M-2H]²⁻ +0.5 isotopic ion to achieve more stable signals and lower variance between signals.

More than 150 Ptd₂Gro molecular species, including MLPtd₂Gro and Ptd₂Gro, were quantified from eight mouse tissues. Amongst the tissues investigated, heart provided the highest content of Ptd₂Gro, with the dominant species of Ptd₂Gro being 18:2–18:2–18:2–

18:2. Our findings are in line with previous results analyzed by QQQ [15]. In addition to heart, liver, pancreas, kidney and muscle, we also determined Ptd₂Gro molecular species in brown adipose tissue (BAT) and white adipose tissue (WAT). The Ptd₂Gro content of BAT is more than twice that of WAT, indicating higher amounts of mitochondria and the high metabolic activity of BAT, which helps regulate energy expenditure by thermogenesis [23, 24]. The Ptd₂Gro profile from brain tissue is quite different from other tissues and contains more oleic acid (18:1) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) such as ARA and DHA. The Ptd₂Gro species we detected from brain are consistent with previously reported studies [12, 25, 26].

In summary, we developed an adapted high-resolution DIA MS/MS^{ALL} approach to accurately quantify and profile Ptd₂Gro molecular species from biological samples. The specialized chemical properties of the double charged isotopic molecular ions under the negative ESI mode were used to accurately analyze a multitude of individual Ptd₂Gro molecular species, including MLPtd₂Gro species. The method is reproducible and sensitive with limits of quantification as low as 40 pM. The workflow presented herein offers an efficient and accurate approach for quantitation of Ptd₂Gro molecular species in biological samples and could be extended for screening abnormalities of Ptd₂Gro metabolism in various disease states.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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MLPtd₂Gro

Remodeled Ptd₂Gro

Figure 1. Cardiolipin remodeling in mammalian cells.

ALCAT, acyl-CoA:lysocardiolipin acyltransferase; CDP-DAG, cytidine diphosphatediacylglycerol; Ptd₂Gro, cardiolipin; CLS, cardiolipin synthase; CMP, cytidine monophosphate; MLPtd₂Gro, monolysocardiolipin; MLCLAT, monolysocardiolipin acyltransferase; ChoGpl, choline glycerophospholipids; EtnGpl, ethanolamine glycerophospholipids; PtdGro, phosphatidylglycerol; PLA₂, phospholipase A₂; TAZ, tafazzin.



Figure 2. Data independent acquisition $\rm MS/MS^{\rm ALL}$ schemes for common negative lipids and cardiolipin.

(A) MS/MS^{ALL} for common negative lipids. All precursors are selected in the Q1 at a 1-m/z wide isolation window across 200 to 1200 m/z. Each isolation window is selected to accommodate singly charged negative lipid species with a higher collision energy. (B) MS/MS^{ALL} for Ptd₂Gro. The Ptd₂Gro precursors are selected in Q1 at a 1-m/z wide isolation window across 400 to 1000 m/z with low collision energy and each single adjusted isolated window to fit the doubly charged Ptd₂Gro species and isotopic peaks (see inset). (C)

ESI-QTOF-MS/MS^{ALL} workflow. (**D**) The molecular structure and isotopic distribution of Ptd₂Gro 18:2–18:2–18:2–18:2 under negative ESI conditions. CE, collision energy; ESI, electrospray ionization; PtdOH, phosphatidic acid; PtdGro, phosphatidylglycerol; PtdIns, phosphatidylinositol; PtdSer, phosphatidylserine; Q, quadrupole; TOF, time of flight mass spectrometer.





under the following conditions: GS1=10, GS2=10, CUR=15, Temp=300 °C, DP=100 V. CE, collision energy; Ptd₂Gro, cardiolipin; CUR, curtain gas; DP, declustering potential; FA, fatty acid; GS, nitrogen gas flow; LLOQ, the lower limit of quantification; ULOQ, the upper limit of quantification.; Temp, temperature.

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Top 20 Ptd₂Gro Species in Mouse Heart

Figure 4. Assessment of the two different methods-MS/MS $^{\rm ALL}$ for negative lipids and MS/ $\rm MS^{\rm ALL}$ for cardiolipin.

(A) The coefficient of variation (CV) and (B) the concentration profile of the top 20 Ptd₂Gro species from mouse heart tissue. Mass spectrometry conditions: GS1=10, GS2=10, CUR=15, Temp=300 °C, DP=100 V, CE= -35 ± 15 V and -20 ± 10 V for the negative lipid

MS/MS^{ALL} and the Ptd₂Gro MS/MS^{ALL} methods, respectively. Data are expressed as mean \pm SD (n=5).

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m/z of Ptd2Gro species

Figure 5. Cardiolipin species profiles from different mouse tissues. (A) The total Ptd_{i} Gro and (P) the Ptd_{i} Gro molecular species profile

(A) The total Ptd₂Gro and (B) the Ptd₂Gro molecular species profile from heart, kidney, liver, muscle, pancreas, brown adipose tissue, white adipose tissue demonstrates the predominant Ptd₂Gro species present is 18.2–18.2–18.2–18.2, whereas brain Ptd₂Gro species are vastly different as previously described [12, 25, 26]. The spectra were acquired using the MS/MS^{ALL} for Ptd₂Gro method under the following conditions: GS1=10, GS2=10, CUR=15, Temp=300 °C, DP=100 V, CE=-20 ± 10 V. Data are expressed as mean ± SD (n=3).



Figure 6. MS/MS spectra and fragmentation pattern for $Ptd_2Gro\ species\ identified\ from\ mouse\ heart.$

(A) Species Ptd₂Gro 18:2–18:2–18:2–18:2 and (B) 18:2–18:2–18:2–22:6 were identified from mouse heart. Insets: The enlarged isotopic distribution of $[M-2H]^{2-}$ of Ptd₂Gro species. The spectra were obtained using the MS/MS^{ALL} for Ptd₂Gro under the following conditions: GS1=10, GS2=10, CUR=15, Temp=300 °C, DP=100 V, CE=-20 ± 10 V. DHA, docosahexaenoic acid; LA, linoleic acid