Low Complexity Domains of the Nucleocapsid Protein of SARS-CoV-2 Form Amyloid Fibrils

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SUPPLEMENTRY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

NCAP'S PHASE SEPARATION DROPLETS ARE POSITIVE TO THIOFLAVIN-S AND CONTAIN FIBROUS AGGREGATES

NCAP undergoes phase separation (PS) with hairpin-Site2 (S2hp) vRNA (in 40:1 NCAP: vRNA molar ratio) and partitions with the fluorescent amyloid-dye Thioflavin-S (ThS) in the presence and absence of the PS enhancing $ZnCl₂¹$ (Supplementary Figure 2. a). When incubated in PBS for 1 day, NCAP samples without vRNA form only small, weakly ThS fluorescent specks. More brightly fluorescent, small, irregular structures appear in those samples on day 6 of incubation (Supplementary Figure 2. a, left middle columns). In the presence of vRNA, with or without ZnCl₂, NCAP rapidly forms large spherical droplets with weak ThS-fluorescence (Supplementary Figure 2. a, right columns), and small, strongly ThS- fluorescent structures were observed to decorate these rather weakly fluorescent PS droplets. On day 6 of incubation, the droplets become brighter, larger, and less spherical, and are decorated by multiple ThS- dense structures (Supplementary Figure 2. a).

Using transmission electron microscopy (TEM) to visualize these samples (Supplementary Figure 2. b), we observed fibrillar assemblies in all NCAP containing samples after 6 days of incubation. When incubated alone, NCAP produced some elongated fibrils of several micrometers in length (Supplementary Figure 2. b. ii.), as well as much shorter ones of less than 200 nm. The $NCAP+ZnCl₂$ sample revealed more abundant, gel-like fibrils (Supplementary Figure 2. b. iii.). In the NCAP+ S2hp sample, multiple heavily stained fibrils were coated with aggregated material (Supplementary Figure 2. b. iv.). The origin of fibril coating is unclear, but it is possible that it is the vRNA itself, or amorphous NCAP aggregates. In the NCAP sample containing S2hp and $ZnCl₂$, both coated (as in Supplementary Figure 2. b. iv.) and bare fibrils (Supplementary Figure 2. b. v.) were found. We also detected some sparse fibrils on grids of a more concentrated NCAP sample incubated with and without S2hp vRNA at 4:1 NCAP: vRNA molar ratio in PBS for 2 weeks (Supplementary Figure 2. c). Fibrils formed with the vRNA were morphologically different than those formed in its absence. The most abundant NCAP fibrils were, however, detected in a sample of NCAP incubated for 3 days with $ZnCl₂$ at low ionic strength conditions (2 mM Tris pH 8.0, 30 mM NaCl) (Supplementary Figure 2. d). The aggregation of NCAP, especially in the presence of S2hp vRNA, was also verified by following increase in turbidity and Thioflavin-T (ThT) signal over time (Supplementary Figure 2. e-f). Overall, these results suggest that our recombinant NCAP protein is forming ThS positive PS droplets and is capable of adopting fibrillar morphologies under various conditions in vitro.

Supplementary Figure 1. **schematic representation of SARS-CoV-2 genome and the location of hairpin-Site2 (S2hp) vRNA used in this study.** The misalignment between ORF1a and ORF1b denotes a frameshift site.

Supplementary Figure 2. **NCAP forms ThS positive droplets as well as fibrils and ThT positive species. a** Brightfield (BF) and fluorescence microscopy images of 30 μM Nucleocapsid protein (NCAP) samples incubated with Thioflavin-S (ThS; green) with and without 0.75 μM of hairpin-Site2 (S2hp) vRNA (40:1 NCAP: RNA molar ratio) and 20 μ M ZnCl₂. The fluorescence intensity of PS droplets formed in the presence of both $S2$ hp and $ZnCl₂$ at day 6 was high relative to the other conditions, and this image was adjusted separately to reduce brightness for clarity of features presented. **b** Negative stain transmission electron microscopy (TEM) micrographs of NCAP samples shown in a (in the same order) from day 6 of incubation. **c** TEM micrographs of 100 μM of NCAP incubated in PBS for 2 weeks with and without 25 μM of S2hp vRNA (4:1 NCAP: RNA molar ratio). **d** TEM micrographs of 50 μM NCAP incubated for 3 days in 2 mM Tris pH 8.0, 30 mM NaCl with 0 or 20 μM ZnCl2. **e-f** Thioflavin-T (ThT) (**e**) and turbidity (**f**) measurements of 30 μM

NCAP in the presence (black) and absence (gray) of 7.5 μM S2hp vRNA (4:1 NCAP: RNA molar ratio). Source data for panels e-f are provided as a Source Data file.

Supplementary Figure 3. **Computational prediction of PS and amyloidogenic sequences in NCAP**. **a** ZipperDB² [https://services.mbi.ucla.edu/zipperdb/] prediction of steric-zipper forming segments within the central LCD of NCAP. Three main six residue segments were identified as having high propensity to form amyloid. Those sequences are $_{179}GSQASS_{184}$, $_{217}AALALL_{222}$, and $_{243}$ GQTVTK₂₄₈. The LCD sequence and residue positions are shown on the X-axis. The Y-axis shows gain of energy upon steric zipper formation. An energy threshold of -23 kcal/mol for stericzipper formation is marked as a horizontal gray line. The bars represent six residue segments starting at the indicated position in the sequence. Orange-red segments are predicted to form fibrils. **b** Fuzdrop³ [https://fuzdrop.bio.unipd.it/predictor] prediction of droplet promoting segments and aggregation hot-spots. Droplet promoting segments are labeled with blue boxes and residue numbers are shown on the top. The steric-zipper forming segments $_{179}GSQASS_{184}$ and $_{243}$ GQTVTK₂₄₈ (marked with pink underlines and numbered on the plot) and part of the C-terminal LCD (residues 361-379) are also predicted to participate in droplet promoting interactions.

Aggregation hot-spots are marked with orange boxes and the $_{243}$ GQTVTK₂₄₈ segment and the Cterminal LCD (residues 361-379) are partially included in those regions. **c** Fuzdrop prediction of regions prone to context dependent interactions, namely, regions that are capable of driving amyloid aggregation within PS droplets by switching between disordered and ordered interaction modes³. The majority of the ₂₁₇AALALL₂₂₂ segment (part of the 216-221 segment that is depicted with a pink line) is predicted to participate in such context dependent interactions.

Supplementary Figure 4. (Expanded version of Figure 4) **Amyloid-like association of the NCAP segment AALALL revealed in two crystal forms.** The upper row shows the quality of the fit of each model to its corresponding simulated annealing composite omit maps⁴. The maps are contoured at the 1.0 sigma level. The structural features are well defined by the density. The view is directed down the fibril axis. Each chain shown here corresponds to one strand in a beta-sheet. Thousands of identical strands stack above and below the plane of the page making \sim 100 micronlong beta-sheets. The face of each beta-sheet of AALALL (PDB 7LTU [http://doi.org/10.2210/pdb7LTU/pdb] (form 1); PDB 7LUX [http://doi.org/10.2210/pdb7LUX/pdb] (form 2)) is symmetric with its back. The lower row shows 18 strands from each of the steric zippers at a view nearly perpendicular to the fibril axis. The AALALL zippers are antiparallel, in register sheets, mated with Class 7 zipper symmetry. Trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) appear bound to the AALALL- form 1 steric zipper, and Polyethylene glycol (PEG) to form 2. As the PEG is incorporated into the zipper interface in form 2, we postulate that this form is less likely to occur in vivo.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary Figure 5. **Stereo view illustration of the fit of atomic models into simulated annealing composite omit maps.** The maps are contoured at the 1.0 sigma level. The structural features are well defined by the density. The view is directed down the fibril axis.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary Figure 6. **Localization of FITC-tagged G12 in NCAP assemblies.** PS droplets of NCAP were formed with S2hp vRNA and $ZnCl₂$. FITC-tagged G12 was mixed with untagged peptide at a 1: 9 ratio, and was then added to the samples at 1: 1 final molar ratio with NCAP. NCAP PS without G12 shows no FITC fluorescence. Addition of G12 induces formation of aggregates that contain the G12 peptide (green).

Supplementary Figure 7. **FITC-labeled G12 is diffused in transfected HEK293-ACE2 cells as visualized using fluorescence microscopy.** FITC-tagged G12 (green) was transfected into HEK293-ACE2 cells, which were then incubated for 24 hours at 37 \degree C, 5% CO₂, then fixed and stained with DAPI (blue). The "zoom" inset on the right is an enlarged view of the yellow boxes in the composite DAPI+ FITC images. A 10 μm scale bar is shown on the right bottom side of each image.

Supplementary Figure 8. (Extended version of Figure 5. d). **A full dose-dependence analysis of G12 inhibition of SARS-CoV-2 infection in HEK293-ACE2 cells.** Cells were transfected with indicated concentrations of G12, infected 3-4 hours later with the virus and fixed at 24 hours post infection. The overall percentage of cells positive for infection in each sample were calculated via quantitative immunofluorescence labeling of the

spike protein relative to the number of nuclei in each sample. The relative % infected was then achieved by normalizing the percentage of positive cells to the vehicle control (0 μM G12). Bars and dots indicate the mean and measured values of individual replicates, respectively.

Supplementary Figure 9. **Conservation of NCAP's central LCD with that of SARS-CoV, and LCD identification in other coronaviral NCAPs. a** Sequence alignment of the central LCDs of the NCAPs of SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV showing high level of conservation. Identical residues are colored white and highlighted in purple. The steric-zipper forming segments in NCAP of SARS-CoV-2 that were identified in this study are marked with an upper line. **b** Alignment of LCDs in NCAPs of representative coronaviruses. Sequences were aligned using ClustalW without allowing for gaps to be inserted into sequences. Here, gaps within a sequence represent an interrupting non-LCDs of at least 20% the length of the longest LCD of that protein. Some gaps were manually adjusted in size to achieve a better alignment. Sequence IDs contain the viral genus, name, and Uniprot ID of the NCAPs.

CATAACCCCTTGGG

Supplementary Figure 10. **Fragment of the constructs that was used to express SUMO-tagged, full length NCAP protein.** NCAP coding sequence highlighted in yellow, stop codons are marked by stars, positions of start codon, KpnI and SacI subcloning sites and sequencing primers (T7, T7term, SEQ1F and SEQ2F) are underlined.

NCAP

Supplementary Figure 11. **Aligned translations of Sanger sequencing reads that fully cover fragments of NCAP gene subcloned at KpnI/SacI sites.** Depending on construct, T7, T7term, SEQ1F and SEQ2F sequencing primers were used. Original ABI electropherogram files (.ab1) are available upon request.

Supplementary Figure 12. **Analytical HPLC trace for purified AALALL.** The analytes are detected by their absorbance (y-axis, mAU) at 214 nm as they pass through the flow cell over time (x-axis, minutes). Peak areas were manually integrated. t_R 15.807: 2359.1 mAU² (97.549%); t_R **16.338**: 59.3 mAU2 (2.451%).

Supplementary Figure 13**. Broadband mass spectrum of purified AALALL collected by direct injection into a Waters LCT Premier Mass Spectrometer.** The scan range was 100-2000 (m/z), and the population of each ion is represented by relative abundance. The calculated monoisotopic mass for AALALL is 570.363 g/mol, m/z calculated: $[M+1H]^{1+} = 571.371$; $[2M+1H]^{1+} =$ 1141.734. Observed: 571.191; 1141.383.

Supplementary Table 1. **RNA sequences used in this work.** The RNA segments S1, S1.5, S2, and S2hp are derived from the genomic RNA (gRNA) sequence of SARS-CoV-2. Nucleotide sequence boundaries are given within square brackets.

Supplementary Table 2. **Steric zipper structural stability statistics.**

Supplementary Table 3. **Sequence and Rosetta scores of G12 binding to an AALALL fibril.**

(a) An arbitrary energetic score calculated for the binding of the designed peptide inhibitor to the fibril tip⁶. These scores were calculated without the terminal arginine chain that was added to increase the solubility of G12.

*The Rosetta score for the binding of additional AALALL strand for comparison is -30.78 (fibril top) and -34.57 (fibril bottom).

Supplementary Table 4. **PCR Primers.**

Supplementary Table 5. **Gradient utilized for AALALL peptide purity analysis shown in Supplementary Figures 12 and 13.**

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