Model Peptide for Anti-Sigma Factor Domain HHCC Zinc Fingers: High Reactivity toward 1 O2 Leads to Domain Unfolding

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Supporting Information

Content

Abbreviations

PyBOP: (Benzotriazol-1-yloxy)tripyrrolidino-phosphonium-hexafluorophosphate; Pd(PPh3)4: *tetrakis*(triphenylphosphine)-palladium(0); TIS: triisopropylsilane; TCEP: *tris*(2-carboxyethyl)phosphine; DIEA: N,Ndiisopropylethylamine; TFA: trifluoroacetic acid; MeOH: methanol; DCM: dicholoromethane; Et2O: diethylether; DMF: N,N-dimethylformamide; *t*Bu: *tert*-butyl; Trt: trityl; Fmoc: 9-fluorenylmethoxycarbonyl; Boc: *tert*butyloxycarbobyl; EDTA: ethylenediamine-tetraacetic acid; HPLC: high performance liquid chromatography; ESI: electrospray ionization; MS: mass spectrometry; UV-Vis: ultraviolet-visible; CD: circular dichroism.

Materials and methods

Reagents and solvents: N-α-Fmoc-protected amino acids for peptide synthesis, PyBOP coupling reagent and NovaPEG Rink Amide resin were obtained from Novabiochem. Other reagents for peptide synthesis, solvents, buffers and metal salts were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. All buffers or metal solutions were prepared with MilliQ water (Millipore). Buffer solutions were treated with Chelex 100 resin (Biorad) to remove trace metal ions. The concentration of the Zn^{2+} and Co^{2+} stock solutions was determined by colorimetric EDTA titrations.^[1]

Analyses and purifications: RP-HPLC was used for analyses and purifications of the peptides. Mixtures of solvent A (0.1% TFA in H2O) and B (0.1% TFA in MeOH/H2O 9:1) were used as mobile phase. Analytical HPLC separations were performed on an Agilent Infinity 1200 system using Merck Chromolith RP-18e (150 mm $\times 4.6$) mm) columns. Method A consisted in 5% B during 2 min, a 5 to 55 % B linear gradient in 5 min, then a 55 to 90 % B linear gradient in 15 min at 2 mL/min. Preparative HPLC separations were performed on a VWR LaPrep Σ system using a Waters XBridge Peptide BEH130 C18 (5 μ m, 150 mm \times 19 mm) column at 10 mL/min. The preparative separation method consisted in 5% B during 2 min, a 5 to 50 % B linear gradient in 5 min then a 50 to 90 % B linear gradient in 25 min at 10 mL/min. Eluate was monitored by electronic absorption at 214, 254 and 280. ESI-MS analyses were performed on a Thermo LXQ spectrometer. UV-Vis absorption spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer Lambda 35 spectrophotometer or on a Varian Cary 50 spectrophotometer. Circular dichroism spectra were recorded on an Applied Photophysics Chirascan spectropolarimeter.

Peptide synthesis

Elongation of LASD(**X**HCC) Ac-K**X**VSKQLLKAYAEGTLSEAYSKKVAKHLSKCEECKAKAQKLKAKAA-NH₂ (with $X = H$ or A) was performed on NovaPEG Rink Amide resin (0.40 mol g^{-1} ; 0.13 mmol scale) using standard SPPS protocols using Fmoc/tBu chemistry on an automated peptide synthesizer (CEM Liberty1 Microwave Peptide Synthesizer) after attachment of the first amino acid by single manual coupling (30 min) using 2-fold excess of Fmoc-Gly-OH, 2-fold excess of PyBOP and 6-fold excess of DIEA in DMF followed by acetylation using Ac2O/pyridine/DMF (1:2:7 (by vol.), 10 mL, 5 min). For automated synthesis, single coupling (5 min, 50°C, 25 W microwave power) were performed using 4-fold molar excess of Fmoc-L-amino acid, 4-fold molar excess of PyBOP and 8-fold molar excess of DIEA. A capping step was performed after each coupling with Ac2O/DIEA in DMF (5 min, 65 °C, 40 W microwave power). Fmoc removal was performed using 20% piperidine in DMF (30 s $+$ 3 min, 70 $^{\circ}$ C, 40 W microwave power). Dipeptides underlined in the above sequence were introduced as pseudo-proline dipeptides (Fmoc-Val-Ser($\Psi^{\text{Me},\text{Me}}$ pro)-OH, Fmoc-Gly-Thr($\Psi^{\text{Me},\text{Me}}$ pro)-OH, Fmoc-Tyr(*t*Bu)-Ser($\Psi^{Me,Me}$ pro)-OH and Fmoc-Leu-Ser($\Psi^{Me,Me}$ pro)-OH) by manual coupling as describe above for the

first amino acid. Before the last two amino acids, the resin was divided into two parts in a 6:1 ratio. The KA terminus was assembled on the small batch and the KH terminus on the biggest. The N-terminus was acetylated manually using Ac2O/pyridine/DMF (1:2:7 (by vol.), 10 mL, 5 min). Removal of acid-labile protecting groups and resin cleavage were performed using TFA/H2O/TIS/DTT (19 mL:0.6 mL:0.6 mL:600 mg) for 2 h. TFA was evaporated under reduced pressure and cold Et2O was added to precipitate the peptide. The pure peptide was obtained after HPLC purification and freeze-drying. $L_{ASD}(HHCC)$: Yield = 13 % (98 mg); HPLC (anal.) $t_R = 14.7$ min (method A); ESI-MS: average *m/z* = 1272.7 (4+), 1018.3 (5+), 848.8 (6+), 727.8 (7+), 636.9 (8+), 566.3 (9+), 509.8 (10+) / calculated av. $m/z = 1272.75$ [M+4H]⁴⁺, 1018.40 [M+5H]⁵⁺, 848.84 [M+6H]⁶⁺, 727.72 [M+7H]⁷⁺, 636.88 [M+8H]⁸⁺, 566.23 [M+9H]⁹⁺, 509.71 [M+10H]¹⁰⁺ for M = C₂₂₅H₃₈₃N₆₅O₆₄S₂). L_{ASD}(AHCC): Yield = 13 % (16 mg); HPLC (anal.) $t_R = 16.6$ min (method A); ESI-MS: average $m/z = 1256.1$ (4+), 1005.0 (5+), 837.7 (6+), 718.3 (7+), 628.7 (8+), 558.9 (9+) / calculated av. $m/z = 1256.24$ [M+4H]⁴⁺, 1005.19 [M+5H]⁵⁺, 837.83 [M+6H]⁶⁺, 718.28 $[M+7H]^{7+}$, 628.62 $[M+8H]^{8+}$, 558.89 $[M+9H]^{9+}$ for $M = C_{222}H_{381}N_{63}O_{64}S_2$).

Fig. S1 HPLC chromatograms (*left*) and ESI-MS spectra (*middle*: full MS spectrum; *right*: experimental and simulated isotopic pattern of the $[M+5H]^{5+}$ peak) of (A) L_{ASD}(HHCC) and (B) L_{ASD}(AHCC).

Preparation of zinc finger stock solutions

Solutions of metal-free LASD peptides (*ca.* 1 mM) were prepared by dissolution of the lyophilized peptides in H2O (or D2O for photooxidation experiments) under argon atmosphere. The exact peptide concentration was determined by Ellman's assay.^[2] Solutions of Zn·L_{ASD} (*ca.* 1 mM) complexes were prepared by adding 1.1 eq. of Zn²⁺ dissolved H2O (100 mM). The pH was adjusted to 7.0 using NaOH (or NaOD).

Absorption and circular dichroism

A solution of metal-free L_{ASD} peptide (10-20 μ M and 100-150 μ M for Zn^{2+} and Co^{2+} titrations, respectively) in phosphate buffer (20 mM, pH 7.0) containing TCEP (250 µM) was prepared from stock solutions of peptide, phosphate buffer (100 mM, pH 7.0) and TCEP (33 mM). Titrations were performed at 298 K under argon by adding aliquots of a degassed metal stock solution to a rubber-sealed quartz cell (0.4 cm or 1 cm path length) containing the peptide solution. UV-Vis spectra were recorded every 1 nm at a scan rate of 240 nm/min. CD spectra were recorded from 300 nm to 200 nm every 1 nm with a 2 s signal averaging for each point. Each spectrum was recorded twice, averaged and smoothed using a Savitzky-Golay filter.

Fig. S2 Assessment of Zn^{2+} binding constants by competition experiments. CD spectra of solutions containing LASD(HHCC) (A) or LASD(AHCC) (B) and one equivalent of EDTA in phosphate buffer (10 mM, pH 7.0) before addition of Zn^{2+} (solid lines) and after addition of 1.0 eq. Zn^{2+} (dotted lines) and 2.0 eq. Zn^{2+} (dashed lines).

Oxidation by H2O2

A solution of Zn ·L_{ASD}(HHCC) (20 μ M) and H₂O₂ (5-35 mM) was prepared in an appropriate buffer (pH 7.0) and the reaction was monitored by absorption spectrophotometry. Based on previous work, the decay of the LMCT band at 220 nm was used to monitor the reaction in phosphate buffer (100 mM).[3] The kinetic traces (Fig. S3A) could be fitted by mono-exponential to yield the apparent first-order rate constants, *k*obs. Fig. S3B shows the linear dependence of k^{obs} against [H₂O₂], which yielded $k = 0.031 \pm 0.003 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$. Fig. S3C shows the CD spectra recorded before introduction of H_2O_2 (1 mM) and after reaction (15 h). The PAR assay was thus used to confirm the value of k ^[3] Oxidations were conducted in presence of PAR (100 μ M) in Bis-Tris buffer 1(00 mM) and the appearance of Zn(PAR)₂ absorption at 494 nm was recorded. Mono-exponential fit of the kinetic traces yielded k^{obs} values, which were plotted against $[H_2O_2]$ to yield $k = 0.030 \pm 0.001$ M⁻¹ s⁻¹ (Fig. S3D).

Fig. S3 Oxidation of Zn·LASD(HHCC) by H2O2. (A) Kinetic traces (black, normalized) for the LMCT monitoring (220 nm) with mono-exponential fits in red. (B) Plot of k^{obs} against $[H₂O₂]$ for the LMCT monitoring. The solid line corresponds to the linear regression yielding $k = 0.031 \pm 0.003$ M⁻¹ s⁻¹. (C) CD spectra recorded before (solid line) and after (dashed line) reaction with H2O2. (D) Kinetic traces (black, normalized) for the PAR monitoring (494 nm) with mono-exponential fits in red. (E) Plot of k^{obs} against [H₂O₂] for the PAR monitoring. The solid line corresponds to the linear regression yielding $k = 0.029 \pm 0.001$ M⁻¹ s⁻¹.

Oxidation by ¹O₂

Buffers: Deuterated buffer solutions were prepared by dissolving $Na₂HPO₄$ or ammonium acetate in $D₂O$ (99,9%) from Eurisotop, traces of metals removed by passing D₂O over CHELEX resin), and the pD was adjusted to 7.0 or 8.0 (with a regular pH meter, $pD = pH_{red} + 0.44$)^[4] with NaOD and DCl. Otherwise, buffer solutions were prepared in milliQ H2O.

Photooxidation: Typical photooxidation experiments were performed as follows. In an Eppendorf tube, the solution of Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC) in D₂O is diluted to 200 µM in buffer Pi 20 mM pD containing 1-3 µM photosensitizer (Rose Bengal or Methylene Blue). The sample is maintained at 278 K in a water-cooled bath in front of a 400 W halogen lamp. After *ca.* 5 min of temperature equilibration, irradiation is performed by turning the lamp on for 30 seconds to 10 minutes, depending on the sample and solvent (shorter irradiation times are required for D₂O solution compared to H₂O). Then, the sample (100-300 μ L) is injected into the HPLC for analysis. CD monitoring of the photooxidation was performed using H2O solutions.

Determination of the lower limit for the photo-oxidation rate k_f **of** Zn· **L_{ASD}(HHCC): The competition** experiments were conducted as previously described^[5,6] using peptide EGWGK as a competitor. Photooxidation was performed following the photooxidation protocol described above, but in presence of methylene blue as photosensitizer and in 20 mM Pi pD 8.0. Consumption of the two competitors was monitored by integration of the HPLC chromatograms obtained before and after irradiation. As noted in the text, the peak eluting at 20.3 min contains unreacted LASD(HHCC) as well as some oxidized peptides, but we considered that it contains LASD(HHCC) only. This led to underestimate the consumption of LASD(HHCC). The chemical reaction rate constant was calculated using the equation given in the article. Therefore, only a lower limit of *k*^r was obtained: $k_r(Zn \cdot L_{ASD}(HHCC))$ < $(3.9 \pm 0.5) \times 10^6$ M⁻¹ s⁻¹.

ESI-MS analysis of photooxidation products: For ESI-MS analysis of the reaction mixture, Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC) was photooxidized in ammonium acetate buffer (20 mM in D₂O, pD 7.0) and the solution was lyophilized. The resulting solid was dissolved in H2O containing 0.1 % TFA and lyophilized three times for complete D/H exchange before ESI-MS analysis. Finally, the solid was dissolved in ammonium acetate (20 mM, pH 7.0) and analyzed by ESI-MS. For digestion experiments, products were separated by HPLC, collected and lyophilized. The two collected fractions (0.1-0.2 mg) were dissolved in ammonium acetate (20 mM, pH 7.0, 190 µL). Glutamate carboxypeptidase GluC (200 ng $\times \mu$ L⁻¹, 10 μ L) was added and solutions were incubated overnight at 37°C before freeze-drying. Fractions were dissolved in 0.1% TFA in H2O or ammonium acetate (with or without TCEP) and analyzed by ESI-MS.

Fragment	Mass / Da	Observed m/z / Da for $[M+nH]^{n+}$ or $[M-nH]^{n-}$ species	
		peak eluting at 18.1 min	peak eluting at 20.3 min
Ac-KHVSKQLLKAYAE			
unaltered	1555.87	1556.8 (1+), 779.3 (2+), 519.8 (3+),	1556.8 (1+), 779.6 (2+)
		1554.6 (1-), 776.8 (2-), 1668.8 (1-) $(M+CF3COO-)$	$1554.6(1-)$
AYSKKVAKHLSKC31EE			
unaltered (CysSH)	1719.90		$861.1(2+)$, 1718.8 (1–)
sulfinic acid (CysSO ₂ H)	1751.89	$877.2(2+)$, 585.3(3+)	$\hspace{0.1mm}-\hspace{0.1mm}$
		1750.8 $(1-)$ *, 874.8 $(2-)$, 931.6 $(2-)$ $(M+CF3COO-)$	
C34KAKAQKLKAKAA-NH2			
unaltered (CysSH)	1356.85	1357.6 (1+), 679.3 (2+)	1357.8 (1+), 679.6 (2+)
		1469.2 (1–) $(M+CF3COO-)$	$1355.7(1-)$
sulfinic acid (CysSO ₂ H)	1388.83	$1387.6(1-)$ *	$1387.5(1-)$
sulfonic acid (CysSO ₃ H)	1404.82	$1403.5(1-)$	$1403.6(1-)$

Table S1 ESI-MS analysis of GluC digested HPLC fractions of the photooxidation products of Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC).

 $*$ loss of 66 mass units (H₂SO₂) in MS/MS fragmentation.

Solution structure determination

NMR spectroscopy: All NMR experiments were recorded on a 500 MHz Bruker AVANCE II spectrometer equipped with a BBI probe with a z-axis gradient field. Samples were prepared by adding 1.1 molar equivalent of Zn(ClO₄)₂ to the peptide (*ca.* 1.8 mM) in H₂O/D₂O 9:1. The pH was adjusted to 6.3 with NaOH and HCl. 1D¹H NMR spectra were recorded with 12-ppm window and 32k data points in the time domain. 2D ¹H-¹H spectra were acquired with Watergate^[7,8] solvent suppression in phase-sensitive mode using 4096×1024 matrices over a 5000 Hz spectral width. TOCSY experiments were recorded at 298 K and 283 K using a MLEV-17 spin-lock sequence with a 70 ms mixing time. NOESY experiments were recorded at 298 K with a 200 ms mixing time. DQF-COSY spectra were recorded at 298 K. All spectra were processed with TOPSPIN 3.2.

Structure calculations: Cross peaks in NOESY spectra were integrated using the program SPARKY 3.114[9] and converted to H-H distances. Tyr H δ /H ϵ (2.44 Å), Leu Hy/H δ , Thr H β /H γ , Val H β /H γ (2.80 Å) and His H ϵ 1/H δ 2 (4.21 Å) were used as references for distance calibrations. Multiplicity was taken into account. Upper distance restraints were set to 2.7 Å, 3.5 Å, 5.0 Å and 7.0 Å for distances \leq 2.5 Å, \leq 3.3 Å, \leq 4.8 Å and \geq 4.8 Å, respectively. ${}^{3}J_{HN,Ha}$ coupling constants were measured on 1D¹H NMR spectra experiments. ϕ dihedral restraints were derived from ${}^{3}J_{HN,Ha}$. Non-stereospecifically assigned protons were treated as pseudo-atoms. All peptide bond ω angles were set to *trans*. Solution structures were calculated using the program X-PLOR 3.851^[10] following standard refinement protocols starting from random structures with $r⁻⁶$ averaging. The non-bonded interactions were modeled by the PARALLHDG force field. A first calculation was performed not including the zinc ion in the topology file to determine the overall fold of the peptide. The structure revealed the folding of helix H1, H2 and H3 and their close packing. The side chains of the two His and the two Cys residues were also very close, indicating their binding to the zinc ion. This calculation ensured that introducing a tetrahedral $Zn(Cys)_{2}$ (His)₂ core in the topology file would not bias the structure. It also allowed determining which His N was bound to zinc. In house modifications were thus incorporated in the topology and parameter files (topallhdg.pro and parallhdg.pro) to account for for zinc binding to cysteines and histidines in a tetrahedral geometry with 2.33 Å and 2.00 Zn-S and Zn-N bonds, respectively, 109.4°, 109.4°, 105° and 125° S-Zn-S and S-Zn-N, Zn-S-C and Zn-N-C angles, respectively. Structures selected for analysis had no NOE violations greater than 0.2 Å and no dihedral angle violations greater than 5°.

Fig. S4 Summary of ¹H NMR data for Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC) in H₂O/D₂O 9:1 (pH 6.4) at 298 K.

Table S2¹H NMR (500 MHz) coupling constants (${}^{3}J_{HN,H\alpha}$ / Hz) and chemical shifts (δ / ppm) for Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC) in H2O/D2O 9:1 (pH 6.4) at 298 K.*^a*

Residue	. . $^{3}J_{\rm H N, H\alpha}$	δ (HN)	$\delta(\text{H}\alpha)$	$\delta(H\beta)$	δ (others)
Ac			2.018		
LYS ₁	n.d.	8.040	4.100	1.576, 1.649	CH ₂ (γ): 1.340; CH ₂ (δ): 1.357; CH ₂ (ϵ): 3.008
HIS ₂	n.d.	7.830	4.300	2.797, 2.902	
VAL ₃	7.0	6.930	3.960	1.983	CH ₃ (γ): 1.065, 1.148
SER ₄	≤ 4	8.172	4.353	4.095	
LYS ₅	4.2	8.867	3.936	1.871, 1.972	CH ₂ (γ): 1.521; CH ₂ (δ): 1.752; CH ₂ (ϵ): 3.024
GLN 6	4.0	8.556	4.032	2.004, 2.111	CH ₂ (γ): 2.477; NH(ϵ): 6.908, 7.552
LEU ₇	7.9	7.623	4.200	1.294, 1.908	CH ₂ (γ): 1.562; CH ₃ (δ): 0.736, 0.898
LEU ₈	≤ 5	8.484	4.026	1.412, 1.875	CH ₂ (γ): 1.736; CH ₃ (δ): 0.873, 0.942

^a Chemical shifts are measured relative to external DSS.

Table S3 NOE-derived distances (Å) used for calculations with X-PLOR for Zn·LASD(HHCC).

Table S4 Dihedral angle restraints (\degree) used in calculations with X-PLOR for Zn·L_{ASD}(HHCC).

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