The cell cycle is driven by the kinase activity of cyclin/CDK complexes which is negatively regulated by CDK inhibitor proteins. Recently, we identified INCA1 as interaction partner and substrate of cyclin A1 in complex with CDK2.

On a functional level, we identified a novel cyclin binding site in the INCA1 protein. INCA1 inhibited CDK2 activity and cell proliferation. The inhibitory effects depended on the cyclin-interacting domain. Mitogenic and oncogenic signals suppressed INCA1 expression, while it was induced by cell cycle arrest.

We established a deletional mouse model that showed increased CDK2 activity in spleen with altered spleen architecture in Inca1-/- mice. Inca1-/- embryonic fibroblasts showed an increase in the fraction of S-phase cells. Furthermore, blasts from ALL and AML patients expressed significantly reduced INCA1 levels highlighting its relevance for growth control in vivo. Taken together, this study identifies a novel CDK inhibitor with reduced expression in acute myeloid and lymphoid leukemia.

The molecular events that control the cell cycle occur in a sequential process to ensure a tight regulation, which is important for the survival of a cell and includes the detection and repair of genetic damage and the prevention of uncontrolled cell division.

Activation of complexes of cyclins and cyclin-dependent kinases (CDK) and subsequent phosphorylation of their substrates constitute the major regulatory mechanism of cell cycle control (1,2). CDKs as the catalytic subunit are inactive in the absence of its regulatory subunit, the cyclin. When activated by a bound cyclin, CDKs become phosphorylated and thus activate or inactivate target proteins to coordinate entry into the next phase of the cell cycle. Different cyclin-CDK combinations determine the downstream proteins targeted. CDKs are constitutively expressed in cells whereas cyclins are synthesised at specific stages of the cell cycle, in response to various molecular signals.

Cell cycle progression promoted by activated cyclin/CDK complexes is controlled negatively by another class of proteins, the CDK inhibitors (1). Up to now, two gene families of CDK inhibitors were known, the cip/kip family and the INK4a/ARF. The cip/kip family includes the genes p21, p27 and p57, which modulate the activities of cyclin D-, E-, A-and B-CDK complexes (3). The INK4a/ARF family includes p16INK4a, p15INK4b, p18INK4c and p19INK4d that specifically interact with CDK4 and CDK6 (3). All of these CDK inhibitors were identified in the early 1990s (4-12). A huge range of important information about mechanisms of action and physiological functions of cell cycle regulators has been gathered since then, especially on their function as tumorsuppressors (1,3,13-16). However, analysis of knock-out mouse models deficient for cell cycle regulators revealed surprising redundant functions of almost all of these proteins, since the vast majority of these mouse models were viable and could therefore live without the respective regulator (17,18). For example, mice could unexpectedly compensate...
their deficiency endogenously for RB (19), CDK2 (20,21), CDK4 (22), cyclin E (23,24) or for CDK inhibitors (25-30). To our knowledge, the only cell cycle factor that lead as a single deficiency to embryonic lethality was cyclin A2 (31,32). These findings indicate that the many open questions have not been answered yet concerning cell cycle regulation.

Recently, we identified INCA1 as an interaction partner of the cyclin A1/CDK2 complex in a yeast-triple-hybrid approach (33). We cloned human INCA1 by 5’RACE and identified two splice variants encoded on chromosome 17p13 giving rise to the same protein of 221 amino acids. In mice, we found four splice variants transcribed from chromosome 11B leading to a protein of 231 amino acids. In addition, we cloned the promoter sequence of human INCA1, which is dependent on the transcription factor Sp1 similar to its interaction partner cyclin A1. INCA1 interacts in vitro and in vivo with cyclin A1, which is overexpressed in acute myeloid leukemias (33). It is highly expressed in testis where it is also regulated during development (34). Intermediate expression was found in ovary, pancreas, liver, lung and spleen (33).

Since the function of INCA1 was unknown, we aimed to identify the molecular pathways in which INCA1 was involved and to elucidate its cellular functions under physiological conditions. Here, we characterize INCA1 as a novel growth suppressive CDK inhibitor that is suppressed in proliferating leukemic blasts.

**Experimental procedures**

**Binding assays**

For the GST-binding assays, the human INCA1 or uncoupled GST were expressed using pGEX-5X2 vectors in E.coli BL21-DE3 and purification according to the manufacturer’s recommendations (GST Gene Fusion System, Amersham) using Glutathione-Agarose beads (Sigma). BL21 cells were induced overnight at 30°C to produce the respective GST-protein. To produce and label CDK and cyclin proteins, 1 µg of human CDK1, CDK2, CDK4, cyclin A1, cyclin A2, cyclin B1, cyclin D1, cyclin E1 or cyclin H cDNA (all in pDEST12.2) were transcribed and translated by using [35S]Sulfuric Methionine (Perkin Elmer, USA) to a final volume of 40 µl. GST-protein lysates were incubated overnight with glutathione-beads at 4°C. After washing, 20 µl of the slurry were run on SDS-PAGE gel to control the preparations for equal concentrations and protein degradation, and stained with Coomassie Brilliant Blue.

Subsequently, 1-2 µg of GST-fusion proteins were incubated with 7.5 µl of translated CDKs or cyclins in a total volume of 1 ml GST-binding buffer (20 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.4, 0.01% Nonidet P-40, 150 mM NaCl, glycerol 10%) one hour at room temperature. After washing with binding buffer 5 times the slurry was run on a SDS-PAGE gel. The gel was dried with a vacuum dryer and exposed on a BIOMAX MR-1 film (Kodak). Mutagenesis with INCA1 constructs in pEntry or pGEX vectors were performed with the QuikChange II Site-Directed Mutagenesis Kit according to the manufacturer’s recommendations (Stratagene).

For GST-binding assays using mutant INCA1 proteins, human CDK2 and human cyclin A1 proteins were expressed in BL21-DE3 E.coli cells. Subsequently, 2-5 µg of GST-fusion proteins were incubated with 20 µg of CDK2 and/or 50 µg of cyclin A1 containing Sf9-lysates in a total volume of 1 ml GST-binding buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 1.0% Nonidet P-40, 400 mM NaCl, 1 mM dithiothreitol) overnight at 4°C. After washing with binding buffer and SDS-PAGE, the binding was analyzed by Western blotting using an antibody against cyclin A1 (BD Pharming).

**In vitro kinase reactions**

The fusion proteins GST-RB and GST-B-Myb as substrates for kinase assays were expressed with pGEX-5X-2 vectors in E. coli BL21-DE3 overnight at 30°C and purified according to the manufacturer's recommendations (GST Gene Fusion System, Amersham) using glutathione-agarose beads (Sigma). Briefly, lysates were incubated overnight with glutathione-beads at 4°C. After washing, 20 µl of the slurry were run on SDS-PAGE gel to control the preparations for equal concentrations and protein degradation, and stained with Coomassie Brilliant Blue.
For kinase assays performed with lysates of Sf9 insect cells, cells transfected baculovirally with human INCA1 or cyclin A1/CDK2 were lysed and subjected to kinase reactions using the conditions as described (33,35). Briefly, 5 µCi [α-32P]labeled ATP (ICN Biomedicals) were added to 15 µl of GST fusion beads and 6 µg insect cell lysateexpressing cyclin and CDK2 as well as insect cell lysates expressing control vector or INCA1. This was then incubated for 30 minutes in 1xKinase buffer (10 µM ATP, 50 mM Hepes (pH 7.5), 1 mM DTT, 10 mM MgCl2, 0.1 mM Na3VO4, 1 mM NaF). After washing and SDS-PAGE, phosphorylation was detected by autoradiography.

For kinase assays using recombinant and purified INCA1, human GST-INCA and GST-INCA-del75-99 were cloned into the baculovirus-shuttle vector pDEST20, shuttled to the baculovirus via the Bac-to-Bac Baculovirus Expression System (Invitrogen) and transfected into Sf9 insect cells. Sf9 insect cells were cultured in Schneider’s insect cell medium (Invitrogen) and High Five™ cell line in Express Five SFM medium (Invitrogen) each supplemented with 10% FCS. Sf9 insect cells were infected in Schneider’s insect cell medium (Invitrogen) and High Five™ cell line in Express Five SFM medium (Invitrogen) each supplemented with 10% FCS. Sf9 insect cells were infected by baculovirus constructs (Baculovirus Expression Vector System, PharMingen), whereas High Five™ cells were infected by supernatants from Sf9 insect cells that had been transfected with the constructs before. The cells were lysed on ice in 50 mM Tris-Cl (pH 7.5), 0.5% NP-40, 150 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, and protease inhibitors and concentrations determined by SDS-PAGE.

Purification was carried out according to the manufacturer’s recommendations (GST Gene Fusion System, Amersham) using glutathione-agarose beads (Sigma) as described below for the purification from bacteria. To control the preparations for equal concentrations and protein degradation, 2-5 µl of the slurry were run on SDS-PAGE gel and stained with Coomassie Brilliant Blue.

Kinase assays were performed using 25 ng of recombinant CDK2/cyclin A (Biaffin GmbH & Co KG) or 75 ng of PKCα (Cell Signaling) and the indicated amount of recombinant and purified GST-human INCA1 using the conditions as described above.

To evaluate kinase activity in spleens, 200 µg of whole cell lysate or murine spleen lysate were incubated with 20 µl of agarose-bead-coupled CDK2 antibody or CDK1 antibody (both Santa Cruz) for 1 h at 4°C, washed twice with PBS/ 1% Tween-20 and once with 1x kinase buffer, and kinase reaction was performed as described above. Densitometric analysis was performed using ImageJ software.

**Real-time quantitative RT-PCR, cell culture, and transfection**

Reverse transcription and real-time quantitative RT-PCR were performed as described (33). The probes were labeled at the 5’ end with the fluorescent dye FAM (hINCA1 and mInca1) or VIC (GAPDH) and at the 3’ end with the quencher TAMRA. Murine 32D myeloid progenitor cells were cultured in RPMI-1640 (Invitrogen) supplemented with 100 units/ml penicillin, 100 µg/ml streptomycin, and 2 mM L-glutamine (all: Biochrom) and additional 10% supernatant of IL-3 secreting WEHI cells. The establishment of stably transfected 32D cell lines expressing either FLT3 or FLT3-ITD has been described before (36). 32D cells were starved by depletion of either serum or IL-3. Added IL-3 concentrations refer to recombinant murine IL-3 (PePro Tech) with the standard concentration of 2 ng/ml. 32D cells stably transfected with either FLT3-wt or FLT3-ITD (36) were stimulated with either 2 ng/ml recombinant murine IL-3 or 40 ng/ml FLT3 ligand (FL, PePro Tech). The tyrosine kinase inhibitor D-65476 for FLT3-ITD was used at 1 µM (37).

Murine Embryonic Fibroblasts (MEF) were established by trypsinating E12.5 embryos derived from breeding of Inca1+/− females and males. Immortalization of fibroblasts was achieved with the standard 3T3 protocol. MEF cells were cultured in Dulbecco’s Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM, Invitrogen) supplemented with 10% or 20% fetal calf serum (FCS), 100 units/ml penicillin, 100 µg/ml streptomycin, and 2 mM L-glutamine (all: Biochrom). Sf9 insect cells were cultured in Schneider’s insect cell medium (Invitrogen) and High Five™ cell line in Express Five SFM medium (Invitrogen) each supplemented with 10% FCS. Mammalian cells were
grown at 37°C and 5% CO₂, insect cells at 27°C.

Mammalian cells were transfected using SuperFect (QIAgen) or Nanofectin (PAA) according to the manufacturers’ protocols. SF9 insect cells were infected by baculovirus constructs (Baculovirus Expression Vector System, PharMingen), whereas High Five™ cells were infected by supernatants from SF9 insect cells that had been transfected with the constructs before. The cells were lysed on ice in 50 mM Tris-Cl (pH 7.5), 0.5% NP-40, 150 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, and protease inhibitors and concentrations determined by SDS-PAGE.

**Retroviral transduction, Colony formation assays, and transplantation of bone marrow cells**

Murine Inca1 or mutant Inca1 were cloned into pEntry vector for gateway system (Invitrogen) and then switched from pEntry vector into PINCO-RFB destination vector, that contains green fluorescence (GFP) expressed from an internal ribosomal entry site (IRES), by recombination reaction with LR-Clonase (Invitrogen).

For retroviral transduction, the packaging cell line Plat-E was transfected with the empty vector PINCO or PINCO-mInca1. Supernatants were collected every 12 h, starting 36 h after transfection. For transduction, viruses were bound to retronectin-coated plates by centrifugation as described previously (38). Lineage-depleted bone marrow cells were stimulated overnight, transduced by growth on the virus-coated plates for 24 h and sorted by FACS for EGFP-positivity. 1000 EGFP-positive cells per ml methylcellulose M3434 (Stem Cell Technologies) were plated. The total number of EGFP-positive colonies was determined on day 14 after plating.

A total of 2x10⁵ EGFP-positive cells without any preselection together with 10⁵ wildtype bone marrow cells were injected into the lateral tail vein of lethally irradiated (8 Gy) C57Bl6/N mice. Cotrim was given in the drinking water for 3 weeks after bone marrow transplantation. Fraction of GFP-positive cells was determined by FACS in blood samples 8 weeks after transplantation.

**Cell cycle analysis and growth curves**

Prior to cell cycle analysis, immortalized and primary MEFs were starved for 48 hrs in 0.1% FCS and released in the respective FSC concentrations for 24 hrs or the time indicated. Cell cycle analyses were performed as described using propidium iodide (PI) staining or BrdU incorporation combined with PI staining (39) and subsequent FACS analysis. If indicated, half of the cells were used for RT-PCR to determine Inca1 expression.

**Generation of Inca1 knockout mice**

All animal experiments were performed with permission of the local veterinary administration (G15/2005 and 8.87-51.04.20.09-322).

To generate an Inca1-null mouse, we electroporated 129/SV ES cells with a targeting construct, resulting in the replacement of the Inca1 exons 3 to 7 with an IRES-lacZ cassette and the neomycin resistance gene flanked by loxP sites by homologous recombination. By genotyping of neomycin resistant ES cell clones using flanking nested PCRs, we identified four different ES cell clones with the expected Inca1 mutated allele, which were all verified by Southern blot using a probe which hybridized as described above and additional 10% supernatant of IL-3 secreting WEHI cells. The establishment of stably transfected 32D cell lines expressing FLT3 has been described before (36). Flt3-WT-expressing 32D cells were electroporated with 30 µg of PINCO-empty vector, PINCO-Inca1-wildtype or the mutant construct. The following day, cells were sorted for GFP-positivity per FACS and seeded in triplicate 35x10 mm dishes containing Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM; Life technologies, Grand Island, NY), 1% methylcellulose, 20% FCS, 0 and IL-3 1 ng/ml. Colonies (>50 cells) were counted on day 7 to 10.

Flt3-WT-expressing 32D cells were electroporated with 30 µg of PINCO-empty vector, PINCO-Inca1-wildtype or the mutant construct. The following day, cells were sorted for GFP-positivity per FACS and seeded in triplicate 35x10 mm dishes containing Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM; Life technologies, Grand Island, NY), 1% methylcellulose, 20% FCS, 0 and IL-3 1 ng/ml. Colonies (>50 cells) were counted on day 7 to 10.

**Colony formation assays of 32D cells**

Murine 32D myeloid progenitor cells were cultured in RPMI-1640 (Invitrogen) supplemented as described above and 10% supernatant of IL-3 secreting WEHI cells. The establishment of stably transfected 32D cell lines expressing FLT3 has been described before (36). Flt3-WT-expressing 32D cells were electroporated with 30 µg of PINCO-empty vector, PINCO-Inca1-wildtype or the mutant construct. The following day, cells were sorted for GFP-positivity per FACS and seeded in triplicate 35x10 mm dishes containing Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM; Life technologies, Grand Island, NY), 1% methylcellulose, 20% FCS, 0 and IL-3 1 ng/ml. Colonies (>50 cells) were counted on day 7 to 10.

Flt3-WT-expressing 32D cells were electroporated with 30 µg of PINCO-empty vector, PINCO-Inca1-wildtype or the mutant construct. The following day, cells were sorted for GFP-positivity per FACS and seeded in triplicate 35x10 mm dishes containing Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM; Life technologies, Grand Island, NY), 1% methylcellulose, 20% FCS, 0 and IL-3 1 ng/ml. Colonies (>50 cells) were counted on day 7 to 10.
3’ of the recombination site, resulting in an 8 kb band for the wildtype Inca1 allele and a 6.8 kb band for the Inca1 knockout allele after PstI digest of the genomic ES cell DNA (Fig. S2A).

Primers used for ES cell genotyping were: PCR D-5’-CATCGCCCTTCTATCGCCCTTGAC, PCR D-3’-TCAGGAGGGCTAGGGTGATAA, and PCR D-3’-nested-CTAGGCCATTGTCAGGGTGAGAG. Primers used for routinely genotyping were: Inca1-geno-KO-f- GTCTGTCGATCAGGATGATCTGG, Inca1-geno-WT-f- CTTATTCCCTGCTCTCAATTGCT, and Inca1-geno-WT-r- TTCATTCCCTTCCATCCTACCT. Four clones were used to generate germline chimeras following microinjection into C57Bl/6N blastocysts. Upon mating with C57Bl/6N mice, two chimeras of one clone gave offspring heterozygous for the Inca1-null allele. Intercrosses between heterozygous mice allowed the generation of Inca1 mutant MEFs (Fig. 2B) and living Inca1 homozygous knockout (+/-) mice. The absence of Inca1 mRNA in Inca1-mutant mice was confirmed by real-time RT-PCR using cDNA from wildtype (+/+) and Inca1-/- of different organs and from Inca1+/+, +/- and -/- MEFs (Fig. 2C and Fig. S2C). RNA isolation, reverse transcription and real-time quantitative RT-PCR for Gap-DH expression were performed as described (33). Analysis of the expression of Inca1 expression was performed using primers mINCA1-F301: CAATTGGATGGTAGAACAGTACATTCC and mINCA1-R390: GGAGGAGGCCCTCAAGAG and the probe mINCA1-T331: AATTCTGAGGGCCACTGATTGCTCCC. The probe was labeled at the 5’-end with the fluorescent dye 6-carboxy-fluorescein and at the 3’-end with the quencher 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine.

Inca1+/- mice were healthy, viable and fertile. They were born according to the Mendelian ratio of 1:2:1 (seven different Inca1+/- intercrosses gave birth to 243 pups in total, out of these 60 were wildtype, 120 Inca1+/- and 63 Inca1-/-). Mice used for transplantations were crossed for at least four generations to the C57Bl/6N background.

Histology and antibody concentration measurements
Histological sections and hematoxyline-eosine staining of paraffin-embedded tissues were performed according to standard procedures. NACE (Naphthol and ASD Chloroacetate Esterase) staining was performed as described (40).

Whole mount β-galactosidase staining of organs was performed as described previously (41). The levels of immunoglobulin isotypes were determined from a 1:1000 plasma dilution using a competitive Luminex assay. Micro beads (Bio-Rad Bio-Plex®) were cross-linked to isotype detection antibodies (SIGMA) with a bead coupling system (Bio-Rad Bio-Plex®). Plasma samples or standard dilutions respectively, were incubated to the mixture of microbeads and afterwards biotinylated standard antibodies (Sigma) were added. The solution was incubated with streptavidin-PE, and a number of 100 beads was acquired with a Luminex System (Bio-Rad Bio-Plex®). The level of each isotype was calculated over a standard curve fitted with Four-Parameter-Logistic regression (Bio-Plex manager software, Bio-Rad).

Flow cytometry
For the analysis of Inca1 expression in different hematopoietic cells, bone marrow was flushed with PBS/10% FCS from tibia and femur of C57Bl/6N wildtype mice, red blood cells were lysed with AKC buffer (0.15% NH4Cl, 0.1 M EDTA, 1 mM KHCO3, pH 7.4) for 5 min at RT and incubated with the respective antibody (c-Kit, B220, GR1, CD11b, Ter119, CD41, all BD Biosciences, Franklin Lakes, NJ, USA) for 30 min on ice in the dark. Lineage depletion was obtained using the Lineage Cell Depletion Kit Mouse (Miltenyi Biotec, Bergisch Gladbach, Germany) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. FACS analyses of spleens were performed as described previously (38).

Patient samples
Patient samples were collected from the bone marrow of AML and ALL patients enrolled in different treatment optimization trials. Written informed consent was obtained from all individuals. The use of the human material for scientific purposes was...
approved by the human ethics committees of the participating institution.

RNA isolation and cDNA production was performed as described previously (42). Quantitative real-time RT-PCR was performed using the ABI probe for human INCA1 (Hs01652223_m1) and normalized to GAPDH expression as described previously (34). Overall, 62 samples of patients with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) were analysed (divided into FAB-types: M0: n=4; M1: n=6; M2: n=8; M3: n=8; M4: n=6; M4eo: n=4; M5: n=12; M5a: n=5; M5b: n=1; M6: n=5; unspecified: n=3; FLT3-ITD positiv: n=11, 3 unspecified, 2 of the subtype M1, 1 of M2, 1 of M4, and 4 of M5). 10 samples of patients with normal bone marrow were analysed in comparison to the AML samples.

46 samples of patients with Acute Lymphoid Leukemia (ALL) were isolated, 10 with B-ALL, 25 with c-ALL, 7 with pre-B-ALL and 4 with pro-B-ALL and compared to normal B-cells FACS-sorted using an antibody against CD19 (Miltenyi Biotec) from blood samples. 16 samples from patients with T-ALL were compared to 10 samples from normal T-cells FACS-sorted using an antibody against CD3 (Miltenyi Biotec) from blood samples.

RESULTS

Aminoacids 75-99 of the human INCA1 are required for cyclin binding

The interaction of INCA1 with the cyclin A1/CDK2 complex (33) prompted us to determine the specificity of INCA1 binding to the cyclin A1/CDK2 complex. GST pulldown assays using [35S]-labeled cyclins or CDKs and GST-INCA1 revealed binding of human INCA1 predominantly to the CDK2-specific cyclins A1, A2, B1, and E1 (Fig. 1A). INCA1 did not bind to cyclin D1, cyclin H or luciferase used as negative control. In contrast, INCA1 binding to purified CDKs in the absence of cyclins was very weak (Fig. 1B).

To further analyze the importance of the INCA1 binding to cyclin A1 for its function as CDK inhibitor, we identified the cyclin binding sites of human (Fig. 1C-F) and murine Inca1 (Figure S1B). GST-pulldown assays were performed with various deletion mutants (as depicted in Fig. 1C), which identified a cyclin A1 binding site in the middle part of the human protein (Fig. 1D and E; aminoacids 75-148). In small fragments of this part of INCA1 as well as in mutated full length INCA1, we identified amino acids 75 – 99 (Fig. 1E) and the homologous amino acids 88 – 116 of murine Inca1 (Figure S1A and B) to be required for cyclin binding. These findings underline the specificity of Inca1 binding to cyclin A1 in complex with CDK2.

Binding to cyclins is critical for INCA1 function as CDK inhibitor

The interaction of INCA1 with CDK2-associated cyclins led us to analyze the effects of INCA1 on CDK2 kinase activity. We therefore performed in vitro experiments to analyze the inhibitory effects of INCA1 that was produced within Sf9 insect cells. Indeed, lysates containing human INCA1 inhibited CDK2/cyclin A1 complex kinase activity in vitro towards the different CDK2 substrates histone H1, RB, and B-myb in a dose-dependent manner (Fig. 2A), while Sf9-lysates expressing GST alone did not inhibit CDK2 activity (Fig. 2A; "ctrl"). In addition, we used lysates containing INCA1 produced by another insect cell line (High5) in combination with a purified human CDK2/cyclin A (which corresponds to murine cyclin A2), since INCA1 also bound to cyclin A2 (Fig. 1A). In this setting, INCA1 containing lysates significantly inhibited purified CDK2/cyclin A activity dose-dependently compared to the same amount of lysates of empty cells (Fig. 2B). These results suggest that INCA1 functionally behaves as a CDK inhibitor without sequence homology to any known family of CDK inhibitors.

To further underline the specificity of INCA1 as a CDK-inhibitor, we produced recombinant and purified GST-INCA1 (Fig. 2D, upper panel) from insect cells. Kinase assays using recombinant CDK2/cyclin A-complexes revealed that recombinant GST-INCA1 inhibited CDK2/cyclin A function in a dose-dependent manner, whereas GST alone had no effect (Fig. 2C, upper panel, and data not shown). INCA1 did not inhibit PKCα activity, which belongs to a different class of kinases (Fig. 2C, lower panel). INCA1 was active at low nanomolar
concentrations, which were in a comparable range as determined for other CDK inhibitors (43) and which indicated a strong inhibitory effect. Remarkably, when we compared the kinase inhibitory function of purified full-length INCA1 and the cyclin-binding mutant GST-INCA1-del75-99 identified in previous experiments described in Figure 1, we determined a strong and significant decrease in CDK2 inhibitory activity of the mutant compared to full length INCA1 protein (Fig. 2D, lower panel). The capacity of INCA1 to bind cyclins was therefore required for its full kinase inhibitor activity. These results further substantiated the assumption that INCA1 is a CDK specific kinase inhibitor.

Endogenous Inca1 expression is regulated by mitogenic signals and binding to Cyclin A1 is critical for INCA1 function as a suppressor of growth

In order to uncover mechanisms regulating Inca1 expression, we assessed the effects of mitogenic signals on endogenous Inca1 expression using serum starvation and cytokine depletion experiments in different cell types.

We first examined Inca1 mRNA expression by real-time quantitative RT-PCR in interleukin-3 (IL-3) dependent 32D myeloid progenitor cells. In these cells, presence of IL-3 prevented Inca1 induction by serum depletion whereas IL-3 starvation induced Inca1 expression (Fig. 3A).

We next analyzed the regulation of Inca1 expression in 32D cell lines, which stably express either a constitutively active and leukemogenic mutant FLT3 receptor (FLT3-ITD) or its wildtype form (36,44). Mitogenic signaling from the mutant FLT3 receptor prevented Inca1 induction upon growth factor depletion (Fig. 3B: “starved”). In contrast, in the 32D-FLT3 wildtype cells, Inca1 expression increased after growth factor starvation and decreased time-dependently following stimulation with either IL-3 or FLT3 ligand (FL).

The suppression of Inca1 induction by mutant FLT3 directly depended on FLT3 kinase activity, since its inhibition by the specific FLT3 inhibitor D-65476 (37) led to re-induction of Inca1 mRNA to expression levels comparable to 32D-FLT3 wildtype cells (Fig. 3C) corroborating a negative correlation between active mitogenic signaling and proliferation versus Inca1 expression.

To further determine the putative function of Inca1 as a bona fide CDK inhibitor, we analyzed its involvement in the control of proliferation. We therefore compared the proliferative capacity of the murine Inca1 full length with the CDK2/cyclinA1-binding Inca1-mutant protein (mInca1-del88-116) in colony forming unit assays of the hematopoietic progenitor cell line 32D-FLT3. The cyclin-binding mutant form of the murine Inca1 protein was identified in analogy to the human mutant (Suppl. Fig. 1). Indeed, transient transfection of full length Inca1 decreased colony formation by almost 50% (p=0.0004) whereas no inhibitory effect of the binding deficient mutant was observed (Fig. 3D). Both proteins were expressed efficiently in 32D-FLT3 cells as determined by Western blot detecting murine Inca1 (data not shown). The inhibition of colony formation by Inca1 was associated with decreased proliferation of 32D-FLT3 cells (data not shown). These experiments revealed the antiproliferative functions of Inca1 that clearly depended on cyclin binding.

For further functional analyses, we established primary murine embryonic fibroblast (MEF) cell lines. In primary MEFs, low serum concentrations consistently induced Inca1 mRNA expression (Fig. 3E), which correlated with a high CDK2-specific kinase activity in presence of high FCS concentrations and low activity under FCS-limiting conditions, as we determined in kinase assays using lysates from primary MEFs grown at the respective FCS concentration (Fig. 3E, upper panel). Similar time- and dose-dependent results were obtained for cell lines such as NIH3T3 and HeLa verifying the general induction of Inca1 expression upon serum starvation (data not shown).

Time course experiments were performed to correlate Inca1 mRNA expression and cell cycle distribution. Upon serum-starvation, Inca1 expression in primary MEFs steadily increased (Fig. 3F, upper panel), and Inca1 expression rapidly decreased upon serum addition. This occurred long before the cells re-entered S-phase (Fig. 3F, lower panel).
These experiments implicate regulation of \textit{Inca1} expression during cell cycle and a function of \textit{Inca1} as regulator of proliferation.

\textbf{Inca1-knockout mice are viable and fertile} 

The analyses of relevant molecular and cellular functions are very limited in wildtype cells. A knockout mouse model provides a singular opportunity to reveal physiological mechanisms in which the respective protein is indispensable. We therefore generated a knockout mouse model replacing five of the six coding exons of the murine \textit{Inca1} gene by the \(\beta\)-galactosidase gene (Fig. 4A-C). \textit{Inca1}-null mice were viable and did not express \textit{Inca1} mRNA in all organs tested (Fig. 4D and Fig. 5A) nor in MEFs (Fig. 4E) as determined by quantitative RT-PCR. Although \textit{Inca1} expression is highest in testis and liver (Fig. 4D), loss of \textit{Inca1} did not lead to infertility or to histological liver defects (Fig. 4F and data not shown). \textit{Inca1}-deficient mice were fertile in both sexes. Specific \(\beta\)-galactosidase expression driven by the \textit{Inca1}-knockout construct could be observed in inner layer cells of the seminiferous tubules of \textit{Inca1-/-} testis (Fig. 4F: arrows in the upper panel), which were not stained in the wildtype testis (Fig. 4F, lower panel). A defined region of the dentate gyrus was \(\beta\)-galactosidase positive in \textit{Inca1-/-} brain that is negative in wildtype brains (Fig. 4G). Since no other \textit{Inca1-/-} organs were positively stained for \(\beta\)-galactosidase, protein levels were putatively below the \(\beta\)-galactosidase threshold.

\textbf{Inca1 suppresses cell growth in vivo} 

For further functional analyses, we established primary murine embryonic fibroblasts (MEF) from \textit{Inca1}+/+ and \textit{Inca1}-/- littermates. We first compared the cell cycle distribution of different primary wildtype and \textit{Inca1}-knockout MEFs by propidium iodide staining (Fig. 5B). After 24 h of starvation in 0.1% FCS, the fraction of cells in S-phase was significantly higher (p=0.03) and the fraction of cells in G1 phase significantly lower (p=0.01) in \textit{Inca1-/-} MEFs than in wildtype cells. G2/M-phase was not altered. These effects were also detected at 0.5% FCS, but disappeared at higher serum concentrations (Suppl. Fig. S2).

To further unravel the proliferation restrictive function of \textit{Inca1} in vivo, we retrovirally transduced wildtype bone marrow cells with murine \textit{Inca1} and compared it to cells transduced with the empty control vector in colony formation assays and upon transplantation in mice (Fig. 5C). Remarkably, expression of murine \textit{Inca1} in wildtype bone marrow decreased the number of colonies in retrovirally transduced wildtype bone marrow (Fig. 5D; p=0.02). Moreover, less GFP-positive cells transduced with mInca1 were detected in the blood eight weeks after transplantation compared to empty vector transduced cells (Fig. 5E; p<0.01 for all lineages). Interestingly, this effect was seen in all lineages, indicating an equal impact of \textit{Inca1} on the proliferation of all lineages (Fig. 5C).

\textbf{Inca1-knockout spleen show increased CDK activity and histological changes} 

To further determine the relevance of the kinase inhibitory function of \textit{Inca1} in vivo, we performed kinase assays. For this purpose, we used lysates from different organs from wildtype and \textit{Inca1}-knockout mice. Protein levels were normalized to total CDK2 protein. We consistently observed higher CDK2 activity in spleen lysates lacking \textit{Inca1} than in the wildtype lysates at all ages (Fig. 6A, upper panel), whereas CDK1 activity was not changed (Fig. 6A, lower panel). Densitometric analysis determined this effect as significant (Fig. 6A, righthand side; p=0.035). Investigation of potential histological alterations of 13 wildtype and 17 matched \textit{Inca1-/-} spleens revealed disruption of the splenic architecture, with disturbance of the lymphoid follicles and increased extramedullary hemopoiesis in five \textit{Inca1}-deficient mice, which were all older than 14 months, but not in any wildtype control (Fig. 6B b, f, j and d, h, l compared to 6B a, e, i and c, g, k). Interestingly, the highest CDK2 kinase activity was found in the lysate from a 445 day old \textit{Inca1-/-} mouse with altered spleen morphology (see sections of this spleen in Fig. 6B b, f, and j). However, increased kinase activity was present even in \textit{Inca1}-deficient spleen with normal physiological composition. Cellular proliferation was not generally increased as determined by PCNA staining and spleen...
sizes were not altered (data not shown), indicating intrinsic cellular effects of Inca1. Furthermore, FACS analysis revealed an unchanged composition of Inca1-knockout spleens compared to wildtype controls (Suppl. Fig. S3A). Also, the concentration of antibodies was mostly unaffected in Inca1−/− plasma samples (Suppl. Fig. S3B). Moreover, CDK2 activity was not significantly altered in unfractionated bone marrow, liver or testis suggesting cell type specific regulation of CDK2 activity by Inca1 (data not shown). These results indicate that the loss of the CDK-inhibitory Inca1 protein is associated with increased CDK2 activity in specific cell types in vivo.

INCA1 expression is significantly decreased in blasts of AML and ALL patients

We identified INCA1 as an interacting protein for cyclin A1. Cyclin A1 is a tissue specific cyclin that is highly expressed in human myeloid leukemias. Overexpression of cyclin A1 has been shown to induce leukemia in mice (45). The fact that Inca1-deficiency obviously affected spleen function (Fig. 6) and that Inca1 was expressed in murine hematopoietic progenitors (Fig. 7A: lin−ckit+) as well as lymphocytic progenitor cells (Fig. 7A: B220+) challenged us to further analyze the expression of Inca1 in different human leukemic entities. We therefore analyzed expression of INCA1 in human leukemia cells.

In human leukemia samples obtained at the time of diagnosis, INCA1 was expressed at significantly lower levels compared to control cells. In AML, INCA1 was expressed at reduced levels compared to normal bone marrow (Fig. 7B). In addition, reduced expression levels were observed in AML blasts which harbored a FLT3-ITD mutation (Fig. 7B). INCA1 levels were not related to specific cytogenetic subtypes (data not shown). Suppression of INCA1 levels were also observed in ALL blasts: INCA1 levels were significantly decreased compared to normal B or T cells in progenitor and mature B-ALLs (Fig. 7C) as well as in T-ALLs (Fig. 7D). These findings indicated that INCA1 is consistently downregulated in human acute leukemias.

DISCUSSION

In the current study, we describe Inhibitor of CDK interacting with cyclin A1 (INCA1) as a novel CDK inhibitor. INCA1 binds via a novel cyclin-interaction domain to CDK1 and CDK2 bound cyclins. Mutations of this site inhibit the interaction with the cyclin/CDK complex and significantly reduce the CDK-inhibitory activity. This domain is also important for the proliferation-inhibitory effects. INCA1 is induced by serum starvation and is suppressed by growth-factor signaling. In line, it is suppressed by oncogenic mutants of the FLT3-receptor tyrosine kinase and expression is significantly reduced in acute leukemia samples compared to normal bone marrow.

In general, despite many discoveries in the field of cell cycle regulation, it appears recently that many riddles remain to be solved and that the complex interplay of pro- and anti-proliferative mechanisms is far from being entirely understood as illustrated by the unexpected viability of mice lacking Cdk2 (20,21). Thus, the identification of a novel bona-fide CDK inhibitor of a yet unknown family is another piece of the jigsaw puzzle to understand cell cycle regulation.

Comparing INCA1 to the known CDK inhibitor families on the molecular level reveals an intriguing analogy: Only cip/kip CDK inhibitors are found in complex with cyclin and CDK (1,3), therefore behave similar to INCA1, whereas the INK4 family members exclusively bind to the CDK hindering its heterodimerization with the cyclin (1,3). In line with this observation, INCA1 binds to CDK1/2-specific cyclins but not to CDK4/6 specific cyclin D (Fig. 1A). Remarkably, a single domain in the INCA1 protein confers binding to cyclins and eventually to CDKs. Since this domain is very small, this could hint at a structurally relevant amino acid sequence. It will be interesting to analyse the nature of this domain to further dissect the regulation of INCA1 function.

Since Inca1-knockout mice are viable and fertile, Inca1-deficiency can be endogenously compensated as observed also for many other cell cycle regulators (17,18,25-30). Also, INCA1 overexpression
effects on cell cycle regulation were rather weak most likely due to the direct downregulation of INCA1 upon growth factor signals. However, primary MEF cell lines revealed an increased number of cells in S-phase in absence of Inca1 (Fig. 5B) which corroborates a direct function of Inca1 in cell cycle control. Taken together, our cell cycle analyses suggest a direct effect of INCA1 onto cell cycle progression. INCA1 mRNA expression levels in AML blasts are lower than in normal bone marrow cells. Since low levels of Inca1 predispose cells to unrestricted cycling, it is intriguing to speculate that AML cells harbor decreased levels of INCA1. Indeed, our data show that Inca1 is significantly downregulated in bone marrow from AML and ALL patients as compared to normal bone marrow or control blood cells, which could hint at a function of Inca1 as a tumor suppressor. Notably, many other CDKIs possess tumor suppressive functions (25,46-50). Further analysis will provide an insight into the putative role of Inca1 in tumorigenesis and especially in leukemogenesis.

In summary, we have identified a novel growth-suppressive CDK inhibitor that is induced by cell cycle arrest and lost in human tumors. INCA1 thereby constitutes another player in the complex network of cell cycle regulation that controls proliferation and development.

REFERENCES


FOOTNOTES

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Fig. 1: GST-pulldown assays revealed a Cyclin A1 binding site at amino acids 75-99 in the human INCA1 protein.
(A) GST pulldown assays using [35S]-labeled cyclins and GST-INCA1 were performed to identify INCA1 binding cyclins. INCA1 interacted directly with the CDK2-specific cyclins A1, A2, B1, and E1 but not with cyclin D1 or H.
(B) GST pulldown assays as in Fig. 1A revealed only weak binding of GST-INCA1 to CDKs.
(C) Constructs used to determine cyclin-CDK binding sites in initial experiments. Since the domain structure of INCA1 is unknown, three different deletion mutants were generated and tested. The grey box indicates the binding site.
(D) Cyclin A1 bound to amino acids 75-148 of human INCA1. The weak band in this blot at amino acids 1-74 was not consistently reproducible. No binding to amino acids 149-221 was observed. The lower bands are non-specific.
(E) Upper panel: Further GST-INCA1 deletions were constructed to localize the region responsible for CDK and cyclin binding. The grey box indicates the binding site. Lower panel: Pulldown assays using further deletion mutants indicate that amino acids at positions 75 to 99 of INCA1 are required and sufficient for binding of cyclin A1 and CDK2.
(F) The amino acids 75 to 99 that are required for Cyclin – CDK binding were deleted in the full length construct (upper panel). Coomassie staining of the proteins expressed in E. coli from the constructs to determine the equal amounts of both proteins for the pulldown assays depicted (lower panel, lefthand side). Upon incubation with CDK2 and Cyclin A1, the INCA1 deletion mutant del75-99 showed strongly decreased binding affinity for Cyclin A1 (lower panel, righthand side). M = Marker, FL = full length INCA1, del 75-99 = deletion mutant of full length INCA1 lacking the aa 75-99.

Fig. 2: INCA1 inhibits CDK activity in vitro
(A) INCA1 dose-dependently inhibited CDK phosphorylation of histone H1, GST-Rb, GST-B-Myc). Baculovirally-infected Sf9 cells expressing cyclin A1/CDK2 were incubated with [γ-32P]ATP and different CDK substrates and analyzed by autoradiography. No signals were detected without substrates (no histone H1 or GST alone) or in the absence of cyclin A1/CDK2.
(B) Upper panel: Histone H1 kinase assays using different amounts of lysates from High5 insect cells infected with a baculovirus expressing INCA1 showed a dose-dependent inhibition of CDK2/cyclinA(2) complex activity compared to lysates from uninfected control cells (“ctrl”). Lower panel: Densitometric analysis indicates the statistical significance of CDK2-inhibition by INCA1 (p<0.001).
(C) Purified full-length INCA1 inhibited CDK2-dependent kinase activity dose-dependently in the low nanomolar range (upper panel) but the activity of Protein Kinase Cα was not altered (lower panel). Recombinant and purified CDK2/cyclin A(2)-complexes or PKCα were incubated with two concentrations of purified GST-INCA1 and analyzed in histone H1 kinase assays.
Upper part: In histone H1 kinase assays, full length but not the cyclin-binding mutant human INCA1-del 75-99 (see Fig. 1B-F) inhibited cyclin A2/CDK2 activity. Recombinant and purified CDK2/cyclin A(2)-complexes alone ("contr.") or in combination with either GST-INCA1-full length ("FL") or GST-INCA1-del75-99 were analyzed in histone H1 kinase assays (lower panel). A Coomasie staining confirmed equal expression (upper panel). Lower part: Densitometric analysis underlines the significant decreased CDK2 activity upon inhibition by INCA1 (p=0.006), whereas the mutated INCA1 could not significantly inhibit CDK2 (p=0.23, n.s.).

Fig. 3: Inca1 expression is induced by serum starvation and repressed by pro-proliferative signaling.

(A) Regulation of Inca1 mRNA expression was analyzed in IL-3 dependent 32D cells by quantitative RT-PCR. Serum starvation alone in the presence of IL-3 did not induce Inca1 mRNA expression whereas depletion of IL-3 in the presence of serum resulted in increased Inca1 mRNA expression, indicating the dependence of Inca1 induction on the inhibition of mitogenic signaling rather than serum concentration.

(B) Mitogenic signaling from a constitutively active mutant FLT3 receptor FLT3-ITD (36) blocked Inca1 induction as determined by quantitative RT-PCR. Stable expression of the FLT3 wildtype tyrosine kinase receptor in 32D cells did not alter Inca1 induction after IL-3 depletion. Inca1 mRNA induction after IL-3 depletion was reversible either by addition of IL-3 or by addition of FLT3 ligand (FL). Expression of leukemogenic, constitutively active FLT3-internal tandem duplications (FLT3-mutant) inhibited Inca1 induction. Addition of IL-3 or FL after IL-3 starvation did not change expression of Inca1 in 32D-FLT3-mutant.

(C) The tyrosine kinase inhibitor D65476 increased Inca1 expression in 32D-FLT3-ITD to a level similar to that detected in 32D-FLT3 after starvation. Thus, Inca1 suppression through FLT3-mutant was reversible upon tyrosine kinase inhibition and Inca1 was induced upon inhibition of mitogenic signaling.

(D) Inhibition of colony formation in hematopoietic progenitor cells 32D-FLT3 requires the cyclin binding site. Colony formation assays were performed to analyze the growth inhibitory functions of murine Inca1-full length and the cyclin binding-deficient mutant del88-116. The homologous sites required for cyclin binding were mapped and deleted in murine Inca1 (see Suppl. Fig. S1). Expression of murine Inca1-full length ("mInca1") led to significantly decreased colony formation (p=0.0004). No growth inhibitory effect was observed for the cyclin binding-deficient mutant mInca1-del88-116. Indicated are means plus standard deviations of three independent experiments.

(E) Serum starvation of primary MEFs dose-dependently induced expression of Inca1 mRNA. MEFs were starved for 48 h in 0.1% FCS and released for 24 h in the indicated FCS concentrations. Lower panel: Expression levels were determined by quantitative RT-PCR and normalized to GAPDH expression. Upper panel: Lysates from cells grown at 0.1% or 10% FCS were subjected to CDK2-specific histone H1 kinase assays and revealed high CDK2 kinase activity in cells grown with 10% FCS.

(F) Time course of the regulation of Inca1 expression and cell cycle distribution during starvation and release of primary wildtype MEFs (n=3). The regulation of Inca1 expression preceded the re-entry of cells into S-phase after refeeding of the starved cells. The Inca1 expression was determined as in Fig. 3E and cell cycle distribution was assessed by FACS analysis after BrdU incorporation and propidium iodide staining. Please note that mean plus standard deviation were derived from three independent batches of MEF cells.

Fig. 4: Establishment of the Inca1 knockout mouse which is viable and fertile

(A) Generation of Inca1-knockout (-/-) mice. The Inca1 targeting construct was used to obtain homologous recombination in ES cells between exon 3 and exon 7 of the Inca1 gene. The black bar indicates the Southern blot probe.

(B) The Southern blot revealed that the ES cell clones 13, 186, 229 and 241 were heterozygous for the Inca1 allele, as indicated by the correct bands at 7 kb for the mutant (ko) and 8 kb for the wildtype (wt) allele.
(C) The offspring of Inca1 chimeric mice as well as Murine Embryonic Fibroblasts (MEF) that were generated by breeding heterozygous Inca1 mice were genotyped by PCR with flanking (“PCR D”) and internal (“genotyping”) primers, respectively.

(C-D) Real-time RT-PCR using a primer/probe combination specific for the 5’ UTR of the Inca1 mRNA, which was not replaced by the knockout construct, revealed complete loss of Inca1 mRNA in MEFs (D) and all organs tested (C). The expression of Inca1 was normalized to GAPDH expression.

(F-G) β-Galactosidase expression pattern in Inca1+/+ and Inca1-/- testis (F), and brain (G). Organs were whole-mounted stained using X-gal staining (left-hand side), embedded in paraffin and sections were subjected to eosine counter staining (right-hand side). Specific β-galactosidase expression driven by the Inca1-knockout construct can be observed in inner layer cells of the seminiferous tubules of Inca1-/- testis (black arrows in F) which cannot be detected in the wildtype testis. Unspecific β-galactosidase activity occurs in the epididymis of wildtype and knockout mice. Marked areas in the middle panel (magnification 20x) are shown as higher magnifications in the righthand panels (40x). E, epididymis; T, testis.

(G) A defined region of the dentate gyrus is β-galactosidase positive in Inca1-/- brain (white arrows in G) that is negative in wildtype brains. Marked areas in the middle panel (magnification 2.5x) are shown as higher magnifications in the righthand panels (10x). d, dorsal side; cr, cranial side; v, ventral side of the brain.

Fig. 5: Inca1 represses growth in primary MEFs and bone marrow cells

(A) Real-time RT-PCR using a primer/probe combination specific for the region of the Inca1 mRNA, which was replaced by the knockout construct, revealed complete loss of Inca1 mRNA in bone marrow and spleen of Inca1-/- mice. The expression of Inca1 was normalized to GAPDH expression.

(B) Cell cycle analysis of Inca1+/+ and Inca1-/- murine embryonic fibroblasts (MEFs). Cells were starved for 72 h in 0.1% FCS and analyzed for cell cycle distribution by propidium iodide staining. The number of Inca1-/- cells in G1-phase was significantly decreased (p=0.03, t-test) while the number of Inca1-/- cells in S-phase increased compared to Inca1+/+ cells in low serum condition (p=0.01, t-test). The data show mean and standard deviation of four wildtype and two Inca1-/- MEF preparations, each analyzed independently at least two times.

(C) Schematic overview about the performed transduction and transplantation experiments. Bone marrow isolated from wildtype (WT) mice was retrovirally transduced with either empty vector or with mInca1-IRES-GFP. Equal numbers of positive cells were transplanted into lethally irradiated recipients, which were then subjected to different analyses.

(D) Colony formation assay of wildtype bone marrow cells which were retrovirally transduced with empty vector (control) or murine Inca1-cDNA (mInca1) (n=3). Bone marrow transduced with mInca1 formed a significantly decreased number of colonies compared to the empty vector transduced cells (p= 0.02). Shown here are the results of three independent experiments in triplicate as mean and standard deviation.

(E) Fraction of wildtype bone marrow cells that were transduced with empty vector (contr) or mInca1 was determined by FACS analysis of GFP-positive cells in the blood of transplanted mice 8 weeks after transplantation. The fraction of GFP-positive cells was significantly lower in the blood of recipients transplanted with mInca1-transduced bone marrow cells in all lineages (*p<0.01).

Fig. 6: Inca1 is required for Cdk2 inhibition in vivo in the spleen

(A) CDK associated kinase activity in Inca1+/+ and Inca1-/- spleens. Cdk2- or Cdk1-containing complexes were immunoprecipitated from lysates of control and Inca1-/- spleens and subjected to histone H1 kinase assays. In the absence of Inca1, Cdk2 activity was consistently increased compared to lysates from wildtype animals (upper panel). Cdk1 activity was unchanged (lower panel). Cdk2 Western blot (middle panel) confirmed equal amounts of Cdk2 in the lysates. Densitometric analysis determined that the Cdk2 activity was significantly increased in Inca1-/- compared to the Inca1+/+ spleens (righthand panel; p=0.035).

(B) HE staining (a-h) and NACE (naphthol and ASD chloroacetate esterase) staining of granulopoietic cells (i-l). The Inca1-deficient spleen from a 445 days old mouse showed a
disorganized structure of the white pulp ("w" in b and f), an increased number of megakaryocytes (arrowheads in f and j), and prominent extramedullary hematopoiesis (arrows in j hint at red-stained granulocytes). Other spleens also tested in the kinase assays depicted in Fig. 5C were represented by the spleens of the 420 days old pair of mice, which did not differ significantly concerning their white pulp structure ("w" in c and d, g and h) and the occurrence of megakaryocytes (arrowheads in k and l) or extramedullary hematopoiesis, respectively. Marked areas in a-d are shown in higher magnifications in e-h.

Fig. 7: Inca1 expression is suppressed in human AML and ALL blasts

(A) Inca1 mRNA expression was determined by real-time quantitative RT-PCR using cDNA from murine bone marrow cells, which were sorted by FACS. GAPDH served as housekeeping gene for normalization. Inca1 was expressed in hematopoietic stem/progenitor cells (Lin− c-Kit+) and lymphoid progenitor cells (B220+). Granulocytic (CD11b+/GR1+), erythrocytic (Ter119+) or megakaryocytic progenitors (CD41+) did not express Inca1.

(B) INCA1 expression is significantly downregulated in bone marrow cells from human Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML) patients compared to normal bone marrow cells (NBM). In bone marrow cells from AML patients, which were positively tested for the FLT3-ITD mutation, INCA1 expression was specifically and significantly less expressed compared to normal bone marrow samples (NBM). INCA1 expression was determined by qRT-PCR and normalized to GAPDH expression level.

(C) The expression of INCA1 was also significantly repressed in B-ALLs, especially in the subtype c-ALL, compared to normal B-cells. B-cell control: n=12; ALL (all subtypes): n=46; B-ALL: n=10; c-ALL: n=25; prä-B-ALL: n=7; pro-B-ALL: n=4.

(D) T-ALL bone marrow cells expressed significantly less INCA1 than normal T-cells (p= 0.00036).
Bäumer et al. Fig. 1

A

vector cntr GST-hINCA1

[35S]-cyclin A1

[35S]-cyclin A2

[35S]-cyclin B1

[35S]-cyclin D1

[35S]-cyclin E1

[35S]-cyclin H

[35S]-luciferase

B

vector cntr GST-hINCA1

[35S]-CDK1

[35S]-CDK2

[35S]-CDK4

C

223 aa = 25 kDa
221 aa = 26 kDa

<table>
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<tr>
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GST-INCA1 full length
GST-INCA1 first third
GST-INCA1 second third
GST-INCA1 third third

D

Pulldown for GST, WB for cyclin A1

FL 1-74 75-148 149-221

E

GST INCA1-FL

GST

GST

GST

GST

GST-INCA1 full length
GST-INCA1-aa 75-148
GST-INCA1-aa 100-148
GST-INCA1-aa 75-100 +125-148
GST-INCA1-aa 75-125

F

GST

human INCA1-FL

human INCA1-del75-99

M FL del 75-99 FL del 75-99 FL del 75-99

+ CDK2/ cyclin A1

Pulldown for GST, Western blot for cyclin A1

CDK2

Pulldown for GST, Western blot for cyclin A1

64 kDa

51 kDa

39 kDa
Bäumer et al. Fig. 2

A

No histone H1, no cyclin A(2)/CDK2, ctrl, INCA1

GST-RB

GST-B-Myb

cyclin A1 + CDK2

B

ctrl, INCA1, ctrl, INCA1, ctrl, INCA1, ctrl, INCA1

histone H1 kinase assay

+ cyclin A(2)/CDK2

C

GST-hINCA1

cyclin A(2)/CDK2

histone H1 kinase assay

PKCa

histone H1 kinase assay

D

cyclin A(2)/CDK2

GST-hINCA1

contr. full length del 75-99

Coomassie

histone H1 kinase assay

area [% of contr]

contr Inca1

Inca1- fl

Inca1- del 75-99

area [% of contr]

contr Inca1

Inca1- fl

Inca1- del 75-99
A. wt *Inca1* allele and *Inca1* targeting construct.

B. ES cell clone # and MEF genotyping PCR.

C. Mouse # and MEF genotyping PCR.

D. Relative *Inca1*-expression in testis, liver, kidney, and lung.

E. Relative *Inca1*-expression in MEF.

F. *Inca1*+/+ and *Inca1*-/− tissues.

G. *Inca1*+/+ and *Inca1*-/− tissues.
Bäumer et al. Fig. 6

A spleen lysates

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Cdk2-IP

Cdk2 IB

Cdk1-IP

histone H1 kinase assay

B Inca1+/+ (445 d) Inca1/- (445 d) Inca1+/+ (420 d) Inca1/- (420 d)

HE (10x)

HE (20x)

NACE (20x)
Bäumer et al. Fig. 7

A

rel. m/hINCA1-expression

Lin^-c-Kit^+ B220^+ GR1^+ Ter119^+ CD41^+

0.8 1.1

B

rel. hINCA1 expression

NBM all AML only AML with FLT3mut

p<0.001

p=0.048

C

p<0.001

p=0.006

rel. hINCA1 expression

B-cell contr. B-ALL (all subtypes) B-ALL c-ALL pre-B-ALL pro-B-ALL

D

p = 0.00036

rel. hINCA1 expression

T-cell contr. (n=10) T-ALL (n=16)
Inhibitor of CDK interacting with cyclin A1 (INCA1) regulates proliferation and is repressed by oncogenic signaling
Nicole Baumer, Lara Tickenbrock, Petra Tschanter, Lisa Lohmeyer, Sven Diedrichs, Sebastian Baumer, Boris V. Skryabin, Feng Zhang, Shuchi Agrawal-Singh, Gabriele Koehler, Wolfgang E. Berdel, Hubert Serve, Steffen Koschmieder and Carsten Muller-Tidow

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