

Crystallization and preliminary X-ray crystallographic analysis of *Escherichia coli* CyaY, a structural homologue of human frataxin

Myong Gyong Lee, Seung-Je Cho, Jin Kuk Yang, Hyun Kyu Song and Se Won Suh*

Department of Chemistry, College of Natural Sciences, Division of Chemistry and Molecular Engineering, Seoul National University, Seoul 151-742, South Korea

Correspondence e-mail: sewonsuh@snu.ac.kr

CyaY is a 106-residue protein from *Escherichia coli*. It shows amino-acid sequence similarity to human frataxin and a frataxin homologue in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, Yfh1p. The former is associated with the disease Friedreich ataxia and the latter plays a key role in iron homeostasis in mitochondria. CyaY has been overexpressed in soluble form in *E. coli*. The recombinant protein with a His₆ tag at its C-terminus has been crystallized at 296 K using polyethylene glycol (PEG) 4000 as a precipitant. Native diffraction data have been collected to 1.8 Å using Cu K α X-rays. The crystals belong to the trigonal space group $P3_121$ (or $P3_221$), with unit-cell parameters $a = b = 44.66$, $c = 99.87$ Å, $\alpha = \beta = 90.0$, $\gamma = 120.0^\circ$. The asymmetric unit contains one molecule of recombinant CyaY, with a corresponding V_m of 2.13 Å³ Da⁻¹ and solvent content of 42.3%.

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1. Introduction

Friedreich ataxia (FRDA) is the most common hereditary ataxia, with an estimated prevalence of 1 in 50 000 and a deduced carrier frequency of 1 in 120 in European populations (Skre, 1975; Romeo *et al.*, 1983). FRDA is an autosomal recessive neurodegenerative disease characterized by a progressive gait and limb ataxia with lack of tendon reflexes in the leg, dysarthria and pyramidal weakness of the legs (Geoffroy *et al.*, 1976; Harding, 1981). Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy is found in almost all patients (Harding & Hever, 1983; Pentland & Fox, 1983). A gene, $\chi25$, was identified in the critical region for the FRDA locus on human chromosome 9q13. The majority of FRDA patients were homozygous for an expansion of GAA/TTC triplet repeat inside the first intron of the $\chi25$ gene, but some were found to have point mutations in the frataxin protein-coding region (Campuzano *et al.*, 1996). Human frataxin is localized in the mitochondria (Campuzano *et al.*, 1997), but its biological function has not been clearly established. Frataxin homologues are found in such diverse organisms as *Caenorhabditis elegans*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and Gram-negative bacteria (Campuzano *et al.*, 1996; Gibson *et al.*, 1996). Yfh1p is a frataxin homologue in *S. cerevisiae* and is also localized in mitochondria. It plays a key role in maintaining mitochondrial iron homeostasis at the level of iron efflux (Radisky *et al.*, 1999). The dysfunction of Yfh1p results in mitochondrial iron overload, leading to an increased production of highly toxic free radicals (Foury & Cazzalini, 1997).

CyaY is an *E. coli* protein with 106 amino-acid residues ($M_r = 12\ 231$). It shows overall sequence identities of 29.6 and 34.2% with the

C-terminal regions of human frataxin (residues 122–192) and Yfh1p (residues 89–164), respectively. The disease-associated point mutations found in human frataxin (Gly130Val, Ile154Phe) are located in the C-terminal region; these residues are highly conserved among the homologous proteins (Campuzano *et al.*, 1996; Bidichandani *et al.*, 1997), including *E. coli* CyaY. Biochemical data on *E. coli* CyaY are not available. Since no three-dimensional structure of frataxin or its homologues has been determined, *E. coli* CyaY is an interesting target for structural studies. Its three-dimensional structure will provide a framework for a detailed understanding of the possible functions of frataxin and its homologues at the molecular level. As a first step toward the structural elucidation of *E. coli* CyaY, well diffracting crystals have been produced. Here, we report preliminary X-ray crystallographic data as well as the crystallization conditions.

2. Experimental

2.1. Protein expression and purification

The gene encoding CyaY was amplified by polymerase chain reaction using *E. coli* BL21(DE3) genomic DNA as template. The amplified DNA was inserted into the *Nde*I/*Xho*I-digested expression vector pET-22b. This vector construction, designated as pET-22b-CyaY, adds six histidine residues to the C-terminus of the gene product to facilitate protein purification. The complete nucleotide sequence of the insert was confirmed by dideoxy-DNA sequencing. We overexpressed the protein in soluble form in BL21(DE3) cells by induction with 0.5 mM isopropyl β -D-thio-

Table 1
Data-collection statistics.

Number of crystals	1
Temperature (K)	296
Space group	$P3_121$ (or $P3_221$)
Unit-cell parameters (Å, °)	$a = b = 44.66$ (20), $c = 99.87$ (18), $\alpha = \beta = 90.0$, $\gamma = 120.0$
No. of observed reflections	128723
No. of unique reflections	10309
R_{merge}^\dagger (%)	6.0
Data completeness (%)	92.8 (20.0–1.80 Å), 99.5 (1.86–1.80 Å)

$^\dagger R_{\text{merge}} = \sum_h \sum_i |I(h)_i - \langle I(h) \rangle| / \sum_h \sum_i I(h)_i$, where $I(h)$ is the intensity of reflection h , \sum_h is the sum over all reflections and \sum_i is the sum over i measurements of reflection h .

galactopyranoside (IPTG) at 310 K. Cells were grown in Luria–Bertani medium for 4 h after IPTG induction and were harvested by centrifugation at 4200g (Sorvall GS3 rotor) for 7 min at 277 K. The cell pellet was resuspended in ice-cold lysis buffer (20 mM Tris–HCl pH 7.9, 0.50 M sodium chloride, 50 mM imidazole, 1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride) and was then homogenized by sonication. The crude lysate was centrifuged at 36 000g (18 000 rev min⁻¹; Hanil Supra 21K rotor) for 30 min at 277 K and the recombinant protein in the supernatant fraction was purified by three chromatographic steps. The first step utilized the C-terminal histidine tag by metal-chelate chromatography on Ni–NTA resin (Qiagen). Next, we performed gel filtration on a HiLoad 16/60 Superdex 200 prep-grade column (Pharmacia), which was previously equilibrated with buffer A (50 mM Tris–HCl pH 7.5) containing 150 mM sodium chloride and 1 mM β -mercaptoethanol. We achieved further purification by an ion-exchange chromatographic step on Source 15Q resin packed in a HR 10/10 column (Pharmacia), which was previously equilibrated with buffer B [50 mM *N*-(2-acetamido)-2-imino-diacetic acid–KOH pH 6.5]. Before loading the protein sample onto this ion-exchange column, we lowered the salt concentration to 50 mM by diluting it with buffer B. The

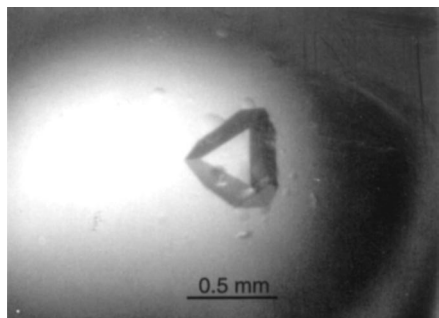


Figure 1
A trigonal crystal of *E. coli* CyaY. Its approximate dimensions are 0.4 × 0.4 × 0.6 mm.

protein was eluted with a linear gradient of 0–1.0 M sodium chloride in buffer B. The purified protein was homogeneous as assessed by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis in the presence of 0.1% (w/v) sodium dodecyl sulfate (Laemmli, 1970). It was dialyzed against buffer A containing 100 mM sodium chloride and the protein solution was concentrated using a YM10 membrane (Amicon). The protein concentration was estimated by measuring the absorbance at 280 nm using the calculated molar extinction coefficient 29 730 M⁻¹ cm⁻¹ (SWISS-PROT; <http://www.expasy.ch/>).

2.2. Crystallization and X-ray diffraction experiment

Crystallization was achieved using the hanging-drop vapour-diffusion method at 296 K using 24-well tissue-culture plates (Hampton Research). Each hanging drop was prepared by mixing 2 μ l of the reservoir solution, 2 μ l of the protein solution (17 mg ml⁻¹) and 0.4 μ l of 2.0 M magnesium chloride. Each hanging drop was placed over 0.9 ml of the reservoir solution. Initial crystallization conditions were established by sparse-matrix sampling (Jancarik & Kim, 1991).

X-ray experiments were carried out using Cu $K\alpha$ X-rays produced with double-mirror focusing optics from a rotating-anode generator (Rigaku RU-200BH, running at 50 kV and 90 mA). A set of X-ray diffraction data was collected at 296 K on the MacScience DIP2030 image-plate area-detector system. A total of 120 1.0° oscillation frames were recorded at a crystal-to-detector distance of 120 mm. The data were processed and scaled using the programs DENZO and SCALEPACK (Otwinowski & Minor, 1997).

3. Results

The recombinant CyaY from *E. coli* with a C-terminal His₆ tag was overproduced in soluble form, with a yield of ~13 mg of homogeneous protein from a 1 l culture. Well diffracting crystals were obtained using a reservoir solution consisting of 100 mM sodium acetate and 34% (w/v) PEG 4000 (final pH 5.12). The crystals grew to maximum dimensions of 0.4 × 0.4 × 0.6 mm within 2 d (Fig. 1). The native crystals diffracted to 1.8 Å resolution with Cu $K\alpha$ X-rays from a rotating-anode source and were very stable in the X-ray beam. Diffraction data were collected from a native crystal of approximate dimensions 0.4 × 0.4 × 0.6 mm using Cu $K\alpha$ radiation

(Table 1). The crystals belong to the trigonal space group $P3_121$ (or $P3_221$), with unit-cell parameters $a = b = 44.66$ (20), $c = 99.87$ (18) Å, $\alpha = \beta = 90.0$, $\gamma = 120.0^\circ$, where the estimated standard deviations of the unit-cell parameters are given in parentheses. The presence of a single copy of the recombinant CyaY with a C-terminal His₆ tag in the crystallographic asymmetric unit corresponds to a crystal volume per protein mass (V_m) of 2.13 Å³ Da⁻¹ and a solvent content of 42.3%. More than one copy is not possible, as it leads to unacceptably low V_m values for protein crystals (Matthews, 1968). A search for heavy-atom derivatives in order to solve the structure by the multiple isomorphous replacement method is in progress.

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