RAPID COMMUNICATION

Isolation and Characterization of Human Bone Marrow Microvascular Endothelial Cells: Hematopoietic Progenitor Cell Adhesion

By Shahin Rafii, Fred Shapiro, Julio Rimarachin, Ralph L. Nachman, Barbara Ferris, Babette Wekslor, Malcolm A.S. Moore, and Adam S. Asch

To examine potential mechanisms by which hematopoiesis may be regulated by endothelial cells within the bone marrow (BM) microenvironment, we have devised a technique for the in vitro study of the interaction of human BM microvascular endothelial cells (BMEC) with hematopoietic cells. Microvessels isolated by collagenase digestion of spicules obtained from filtered BM aspirate were plated on gelatin-coated plastic dishes, and colonies of endothelial cells grown from microvessel explants were further purified by Ulex europaeus lectin affinity separation. BMEC monolayers isolated by this technique grew in typical cobblestone fashion, stained positively with antibody to factor VII/von Willebrand factor, and incorporated acetylated LDL. Immunohistochemical studies showed that BM microvessels and BMEC monolayers express CD34, PECAM, and thrombospondin. In cubation of resting BMEC with BM mononuclear hematopoietic cells resulted in the selective adhesion of relatively large numbers of CD34+ progenitor cells and megakaryocytes. The binding of purified BM-derived CD34+ progenitor cells to BMEC was dependent on divalent cations and was partially blocked by antibodies to CD34. IL-1β treatment of BMEC monolayers resulted in an increase of CD34+ progenitor cell adhesion by mechanisms independent of CD34 or divalent cations. BMEC exhibit specific affinity for CD34+ progenitor cells and megakaryocytes, suggesting that the BM microvascularity may play a role in regulating the trafficking, proliferation, and differentiation of lineage specific hematopoietic elements, and possibly of pluripotent stem cells within the CD34+ population.

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The BM aspirate, consisting of floating fat-laden spicules, was immediately diluted in 1:1 in buffer A (Hanks’ balanced salt solution [HBSS] with 1 mmol/L EDTA), and passed through a 40-μm stainless steel filter to remove the loosely attached hematopoietic cells. The retained stromal elements, which consisted mostly of fat-laden spicules, were washed with 50 mL of buffer A to remove loosely attached cells and plasma. The filter was then placed in a 50-mL conical tube and the retained spicules were resuspended in 5 mL of buffer A, followed by the addition of 5 mL of 0.2% collagenase (final concentration of 0.1%) for 20 to 30 minutes at 37°C. Occasionally a sample of the material undergoing collagenase digestion was removed and examined by phase-contrast microscopy to assess the adequacy of digestion. The digested material was passed gently through a 20- or 21-gauge needle, and then refiltered through another 40-μm filter to obtain microvessel fragments. The retained microvessels were washed with 30 mL of buffer A, and then collected by gentle vortexing or trituration of the filters in a 50-mL conical tube and plated on fibronectin- or gelatin-coated 12- or 6-well cluster dishes. Centrifugation of the microvessels for 2 minutes at 150g accelerated their attachment to the plastic dish.

After 5 to 7 days of growth of microvessel explants in endothelial cell growth medium (ECGM) containing 1% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (HyClone Laboratories, Logan, UT), 20% fetal bovine serum (Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg, MD), and 2% L-glutamine (Gibco-BRL) at a cell density of 70,000 cells/mL, the microvessel explants were treated with EDTA (10 mmol/L) and collagenase (Roche Molecular Biochemicals, Indianapolis, IN) to remove loosely attached cells. The adherent cells were detatched from the UEAl beads by incubation in HBSS supplemented with calcium and magnesium, washed twice in HBSS, and then resuspended in ECGM, and plated on gelatin-coated plastic dishes. Centrifugation of the adherent cells and other adventitial cells were present. The endothelial cells originating from the microvessel explants were washed free of hematopoietic cells, but areas of fibroblast growth were occasionally noted. At this stage, selective metabolic labeling of endothelial cells with Dil-acetylated 1,1'-dioctadecyl-3,3',3'-tetramethylindocarbocyanine perchlorate (Dil) was used to estimate the purity of endothelial cells within each well. Endothelial cells were further purified from wells with smallest amount of fibroblast contamination (endothelial cell to fibroblast ratio > 1:1) by positive selection using Ulex europaeus 1 (UEAl). UEAl lectin (Sigma) was covalently bound to Tosyl activated Dyna beads M-450 (Dynal, Great Neck, NY) by the method of Jackson et al.31 The mixed population of cells was treated with 1 mmol/L EDTA and 0.05% collagenase, washed twice in HBSS, and then resuspended in HBSS + 5% fetal calf serum (FCS) at a cell density of 5 × 10^6 cells/mL. The cells were incubated for 10 minutes at room temperature with Ulex-coated beads (50 beads/endothelial cell). After incubation the BMEC that bound to UEAl-coated beads were washed five times by resuspending them in 10 mL of HBSS + 5% FCS and mixing by end-over-end rotation for 1 minute, followed by separation using a magnetic particle concentrator (MPC) (Dynal). The contaminating cells in the washes were plated for further identification. The endothelial cells were detached from the UEAl beads by incubation in HBSS + 5% FCS containing 0.01 mol/L sucrose (L-isomer) (Sigma) for 3 minutes at 4°C and the beads were removed with MPC. The pure BMEC collected in each wash was pooled, centrifuged, resuspended in ECGM, and plated on gelatin-coated tissue culture dishes. BMEC monolayers isolated in this fashion can be passaged for 8 to 10 times. Early passage cells (1-4) were used for experiments described below. Because some microvascular endothelial cells may escape filtration during collagenase digestion, the flow through from the digested material can be washed and then treated with Ulex-coated Dyna beads to remove endothelial cells or, alternatively, digested material can be plated on gelatin-coated plastic dishes. Subsequently, after 7 to 10 days of growth, Ulex-coated Dyna beads can be used to isolate endothelial cells from contaminating stromal cells. Substitution of D-valine for L-valine in the culture medium, which reportedly slows the growth of fibroblasts,42 did not increase the yield of BMEC.

**BM mononuclear cell preparation.** BM aspirates were obtained from normal subjects undergoing BM harvest at MSKCC. Ten milliliters of BM aspirate was drawn into syringes containing 50 U/mL of preservative-free heparin, and passed through a 80-μm filter to remove stromal elements. The BM was diluted with buffer A, layered over Ficoll-Hypaque (Pharmacia, Uppsala, Sweden) (density 1.077), and centrifuged at 400g for 20 minutes, and the mononuclear cells at the interface were collected, washed in buffer A, and counted. Plastic adherent cells were removed by incubating Ficoll-purified marrow cells (5 × 10^6 cells/mL) on Costar plastic dishes (Cambridge, MA) at 37°C for 2 hours. The nonadherent cells were passed again through an 80-μm mesh to remove any cell clumps, and resuspended in Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM; Sigma), 20% FCS, and monothioglycerol (10 ng/mL) at a density of 5 × 10^5 cells/mL. For adhesion studies with BMEC, the cells were resuspended in HBSS supplemented with calcium (2 mmol/L) and magnesium (2 mmol/L).

**CD34* progenitor cell isolation.** Low-density BM mononuclear cells (less than 1.077 g/mL) were separated over Ficoll-Hypaque. CD34* cells were enriched using a commercially available cell separation system kit from Cell Pro Inc (Bothel, WA),32 washed twice with 1% BSA in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) and resuspended in 1% BSA to a concentration of 2 × 10^6 cells/mL and incubated for 25 minutes with a biotinylated anti-CD34 IgM monoclonal antibody (MoAb) (Dako) (12.8) at room temperature. The cells were washed with 1% BSA to remove unbound antibody, then resuspended at 2 × 10^6 cells/mL in 5% BSA and loaded onto an avidin column. The adsorbed CD34* cells were released by manually squeezing the gel bed, resuspended in IMDM with 20% FCS, and counted on a Coulter counter (Coulter Electronics, Hialeah, FL).

**Antibodies used.** MoAbs to factor VIII/VWF (Dako), PECAM (Becton Dickinson, San Jose, CA), thrombospandin (11.4; Oncogene Science, Manhasset, NY), ICAM1 (10L54, AMAC), VCAM (1G11, AMAC), α-actin (Dako), GPIb (72.2, AMAC), GPIb/IIa (10E5, a gift from Dr B. Coller, Stony Brook Medical Center, Stony Brook, NY), LFA1 (IOT16, AMAC), L-selectin (Dreg-56, a gift from E. Butcher, Stanford University, Stanford, CA), CD38 (AMAC), CD45 (Organon Teknika Corp, West Orange, NJ), LFAl (IOT16, AMAC), L-selectin (Dreg-56, a gift from Dr B. Coller, Stony Brook Medical Center, Stony Brook, NY), CD34 (HPCA-1, Becton Dickinson or 11.1.6, Oncogene Science) were used for immunohistochemical and adhesion assays.

**In vitro adhesion assay.** Plastic nonadherent BM mononuclear cells (5 × 10^6 cells/mL) were incubated with HUVEC or BMEC monolayers in HBSS with calcium and magnesium in six-well cluster plates at 37°C for 1 hour with gentle shaking. The nonadherent cells were removed and adherent cells were characterized by light microscopy (Wright/Giemsa staining) and immunohistochemistry using MoAbs against CD34 (HPCA-1), GPIb (72.2), and GPIb/IIa (10E5). GPIb- or GPIb/IIa-positive cells were counted in the entire six-well cluster plates and scored as megakaryocytes, and small round CD34* but factor VIII/von Willebrand factor (vWF) negative cells were scored as CD34* progenitor cells. Erythroid and myeloid progenitors were identified morphologically by standard Wright/Giemsa staining.

**CD34* progenitor cells purified by avidin-biotin immunoadsorption column (Cell Pro)19 (10 μL of 10^6 cells/mL) were added to washed resting or stimulated BMEC monolayers cultured on Terasaki (Nunc, Naperville, IL) or 96 wells. Adhesion assays were performed for 1 hour at 37°C in HBSS supplemented with magnesium (2 mmol/L) and calcium (2 mmol/L), and unbound cells were removed by three washes with HBSS/Ca/Mg. Adherent cells on endothelial surfaces were counted manually using an inverted phase-contrast microscope. For adhesion inhibition studies, MoAbs (10 μg/mL) to CD34 (HPCA-1 Becton Dickson, or 11.1 Oncogene Science), VCAM (1G11), and LFA1 (IOT16) were incubated with BMEC on ice for 20 minutes before the study. In the case of CD34 inhibition assays, the antibody to CD34 (10 μg/mL) was also added to the fluid phase during the adhesion study.

**Immunohistochemical techniques.** BMEC monolayers and mi-
BONE MARROW MICROVASCULAR ENDOTHELIAL CELLS

I. Isolation and purification of BMEC after Ulex detection. Note the spindle-like and cobblestone morphology of these endothelial cells (original magnification × 50).

(B) Epifluorescence of similar monolayer demonstrating that greater than 98% of cells show fluorescence, characteristic of acetylated-LDL uptake (original magnification × 50).

(C) Immunoperoxidase staining with MoAb to factor VIII/vWF of BMEC monolayers (original magnification × 50).

(D) Immunoperoxidase staining with MoAb to CD34 antigen (HPCA-1). Only early passage cells express this antigen (original magnification × 120).

(E) Immunoperoxidase stain with MoAb to PECAM, showing the expression of this antigen specifically at cellular junctions (original magnification × 50).

(F) Negative control. Immunoperoxidase stain with monoclonal mouse IgG. Red stain is peroxidase substrate amino-ethyl carbazole (original magnification × 50).

**Fig 1.** Microvessels within BM spicules. (A) Immunofluorescence from an intact BM spicule stained with MoAb to factor VIII/vWF showing selective staining of endothelial cells and megakaryocytes (arrows). Note the complex vascular network, crisscrossing the spicule. Large polyploid megakaryocytes can be seen in association with endothelial cells (original magnification × 100). (B) This is a photograph of partially collagenase (0.1%)-digested (10 minutes) BM spicule, retained on a 40-μm mesh, washed three times with buffer A, and transferred to a plastic slide and stained with Wright/Giemsa stain. This photograph shows the complex network of microvasculature within a typical BM spicule. Note that the spicule is denuded of hematopoietic elements and has a predominant central capillary (large arrow) branching into single layered sinusoidal endothelial cells (small arrows) (original magnification × 50).

**Fig 2.** Isolated microvessels. (A) Phase contrast micrograph (original magnification × 100) of a typical microvessel isolated from BM aspirate. BM spicules retained on a 40-μm mesh were digested with 0.1% collagenase for 30 minutes at 37°C, and pushed through a 21-gauge needle. The digested material were passed through another 40-μm mesh, and retained microvessel fragments were resuspended in ECGM and transferred to a 24-well cluster plate. Note that microvessel is tightly attached to the gelatin-coated plastic dish. (B) Immunohistochemistry showing factor VIII/vWF staining of a microvessel using monoclonal anti-factor VIII/vWF antibody and immunoperoxidase detection (original magnification × 100). Note the spindle-shaped endothelial cell lining the microvessel (Red stain is peroxidase substrate, amino-ethyl carbazole). (C) Colonies of BMEC emerging from attached microvessels after 5 days of incubation in ECGM (original magnification × 50). (D) Monoclonal anti-CD34 (HPCA-1, Becton Dickinson) staining with immunoperoxidase detection of a typical microvessel, showing the strong expression of this antigen throughout the microvessel. Red stain is alkaline phosphatase substrate, fast red (original magnification × 100).
crovessel explants were fixed in 3% formalin in PBS for 30 minutes then quenched with 0.1 mol/L glycine in PBS pH 7.4 for 10 to 15 minutes with Histochoice (Amresco Solon, OH), and blocked with 1.5% horse serum. MoAbs to factor VIII/vWF, CD34 (HPCA-1), PECAM, thrombospondin, ICAM1, VCAM, α-actin, GPlb, GPlib/IIIa, or L-selectin, at different dilutions, were incubated with fixed cells for 1 hour. After washing with PBS, biotinylated antismouse or antirabbit Ig diluted 1:200 in PBS containing 1.5% horse serum was incubated with cells for 30 minutes at room temperature. Endogenous peroxidase was quenched with 0.3% hydrogen peroxide in PBS for 30 minutes. Endogenous alkaline phosphatase was quenched with levamisole 1.25 mmol/L for 20 minutes. After 30 minutes of incubation with avidin-labeled peroxidase or alkaline phosphatase, slides were rinsed and incubated with peroxidase substrate, aminoethyl carbazole (red stain), or alkaline phosphatase substrate fast red (red stain) for 10 to 20 minutes. After a final rinse the cells were counter stained with 1% hematoxylin.

Samples of BM aspirate were gently placed on polylysine-coated glass slides, air dried, and fixed with Histochoice or acetone/alcohol. The samples were stained with a primary mouse MoAb to factor VII/vWF, CD34 (HPCA-1), PECAM, thrombospondin, ICAM1, VCAM, α-actin, GPlb, GPlib/IIIa, or L-selectin, at different dilutions, were incubated with fixed cells for 1 hour. After washing with PBS, biotinylated antismouse or antirabbit Ig diluted 1:200 in PBS containing 1.5% horse serum was incubated with cells for 30 minutes at room temperature. Endogenous peroxidase was quenched with 0.3% hydrogen peroxide in PBS for 30 minutes. Endogenous alkaline phosphatase was quenched with levamisole 1.25 mmol/L for 20 minutes. After 30 minutes of incubation with avidin-labeled peroxidase or alkaline phosphatase, slides were rinsed and incubated with peroxidase substrate, aminoethyl carbazole (red stain), or alkaline phosphatase substrate fast red (red stain) for 10 to 20 minutes. After a final rinse the cells were counter stained with 1% hematoxylin.

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Metabolic labeling with Dil-Ac-LDL. Near confluent monolayers of BMEC or mixed populations of endothelial cells and fibroblasts were incubated with 10 μg/mL of Dil-Ac-LDL (acetylated low-density lipoprotein labeled with dioctadecyl 1,3,3,3,-tetramethylindocarbocyanine perchlorate; Biomedical Technologies Inc, Stoughton, MA) for 4 hours at 37°C. The cells were washed with HBSS and incubated with 0.1% lead nitrate and 0.5% gluteraldehyde, followed by l

Immunohistochemical staining of these microvessel fragments with factor VIII/vWF MoAb (Fig 2B) demonstrated the spindle-shaped endothelial cells lining the microvessel, and relative absence of other adventitial elements such as fibroblasts and adipocytes. Figure 2C shows the proliferation of BMEC colonies from microvessel explants grown for 5 days in culture. Figure 2D shows selective staining of a microvessel within an intact BM spicule with MoAb to CD34. BMEC monolayers isolated from microvessel explants and purified by UEA1 selection (Fig 3) proliferated in a cobblestone fashion (A) and were positive for factor VIII/vWF (C), CD34 (D), PECAM (E), thrombospondin (not shown), and acetylated LDL uptake (B). CD34 was significantly expressed only by the monolayers in the first passage. The degree of CD34 expression was diminished and barely detectable by the second passage. Greater than 98% of the cells in these monolayers demonstrated acetylated LDL incorporation characteristic of endothelial cells. BMEC monolayers did not stain with MoAbs to GPlb, GPlib/IIIa, α-actin, ICAM, L-selectin, or VCAM (data not shown).

Electron microscopic analysis of BMEC monolayers shows the presence of Weibel-Palade bodies, which is characteristic of vascular endothelium (Fig 4). To determine if hematopoietic cells selectively interact with resting BMEC monolayers, plastic nonadherent BM mononuclear cells obtained from normal donors were incubated with BMEC and HUVEC monolayers for 1 hour at 37°C. Table 1 shows the results of the characterization and quantification of the BM mononuclear cells that were adherent to endothelial cell monolayers. Although megakaryocytes and CD34+ progenitor cells comprise only 0.05% to 1% of BM mononuclear cells, they represent 22% ± 4%, and 15% ± 2% of the cells adherent to BMEC resting monolayers, respectively. This represents a 20- to 30-fold enrichment and suggests adhesion mechanisms specific to these cell types. Megakaryocytes and CD34+ progenitor cells adhered less well to HUVEC monolayers. The remainder of the adherent cells were comprised of plasma cells, mature myeloid precursors, and lymphoid-appearing cells (Table 1).

To examine the mechanism(s) of adhesion in greater detail, BM CD34+ progenitor cells isolated by an avidin-biotin column were incubated with BMEC monolayers at 37°C for 1 hour. Ten percent of the added CD34+ cells were adherent to resting BMEC monolayers. This adhesion was partially blocked by antibodies to CD34 (HPCA-1, 11.1.61), and was blocked with EDTA (1 mmol/L); antibodies to VCAM, ICAM, or LFA1 did not block binding (Fig 5). The phenotype of the adherent CD34+ progenitor cells that were detached from endothelial cells by brief treatment (1 minute) with 0.5 mmol/L EDTA was examined by flow cytometry. This showed a relative enrichment for CD34+CD38- HLA-
Fig 4. Electron microscopic analysis of BMEC. (A) Electron microscopic analysis of BMEC monolayer showing a typical endothelial cell with numerous mitochondria and Weibel-Palade bodies. (B) Higher magnification of the same BMEC showing the presence of cigar-shaped Weibel-Palade bodies (arrows), which is characteristic of vascular endothelium.

DR<sup>−</sup> cells (Table 2) consistent with a more pluripotent progenitor cell phenotype. In contrast to the results obtained with resting BMEC monolayers, IL-1β treatment resulted in increased adhesion of CD34<sup>+</sup> progenitor cells that was divalent cation independent and not inhibited by antibody to CD34 (Fig 6).

DISCUSSION

During the last few years, microvascular endothelia from brain, retina, adrenal gland, hemangiomas, corpus luteum, lung, adipose tissue, and recently myocardium have been isolated and characterized and the importance of microvascular endothelial cell proliferation in tumor biology is well established. There are fundamental differences in the microvasculature of different organs. Microvascular endothelium within each organ express unique types of adhesion molecules, also referred to as organ-specific ECAMs. Zhu et al have shown that the murine lung vasculature expresses a specific 90-kD endothelial cell adhesion molecule (Lu-ECAM) that may be responsible for selective metastasis of melanoma cells to the lung. Also, Rettig et al have identified a 165-kD vascular endothelial cell antigen called endosialin, which is expressed in tumor microvascula-
BM mononuclear cells obtained from normal donors were isolated on a Ficoll gradient and depleted of monocytes and other plastic adherent cells. The nonadherent hematopoietic cells were incubated with BMEC and HUVEC monolayers for 1 hour at 37°C in PBS supplemented with calcium (2 mmol/L) and magnesium (2 mmol/L). Attached cells were characterized by light microscopy, Wright/Giemsa staining, and immunohistochemistry using MoAbs against CD34 (HPCA-1), GPIb (S22), and GPIb/IIa (10E5). GPIb- or GPIb/IIa-positive cells were counted in two six-well cluster plates and scored as megakaryocytes, and small round CD34+ but factor VIII/vWF-negative cells were scored as CD34+ progenitor cells. Erythroid or myeloid progenitors or plasma cells were identified morphologically by standard Wright/Giemsa staining. Megakaryocytes and CD34+ progenitor cells adhered less well to HUVEC monolayers. The binding of plasma cells, mature myeloid precursors, and lymphoid-appearing cells comprised the remainder of the adherent cells.

Table 1. Adhesion of BM Mononuclear Cells to Resting Endothelial Cells

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell Type</th>
<th>Actual Percentage in BM</th>
<th>Percentage Bound to BMEC</th>
<th>Percentage Bound to HUVEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megakaryocytes</td>
<td>0.05-0.5</td>
<td>22 ± 4</td>
<td>6 ± 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD34+ cells</td>
<td>0.2-0.5</td>
<td>15 ± 2</td>
<td>3 ± 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasma cells</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>15 ± 5</td>
<td>24 ± 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erythroid/myeloid or lymphoid cells</td>
<td>50-80</td>
<td>47 ± 9</td>
<td>67 ± 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Fig 5. CD34+ progenitor cell adhesion to BMEC. BM-derived CD34+ cells isolated by immunoadsorption technique were incubated with BMEC monolayers at 37°C, in the presence or absence of blocking antibodies for 1 hour and adherent cells were quantified by phase-contrast microscopy.

Table 2. Phenotype of Adherent CD34+ Cells to BMEC Monolayer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Adherent</th>
<th>Nonadherent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD34</td>
<td>85 ± 5</td>
<td>87 ± 5</td>
<td>82 ± 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLA-DR</td>
<td>52 ± 9</td>
<td>34 ± 10</td>
<td>72 ± 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD38</td>
<td>81 ± 10</td>
<td>39 ± 12</td>
<td>81 ± 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFA1 (CD11A)</td>
<td>15 ± 6</td>
<td>8 ± 7</td>
<td>11 ± 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CD34+ progenitor cells purified by biotin-avidin immunoadsorption column from BM mononuclear cells were incubated with resting BMEC monolayers at 37°C for 1 hour, and the adherent population of CD34+ cells was detected from BMEC monolayers by brief (1-minute) EDTA (0.5 mmol/L) treatment. The adherent and the nonadherent populations of CD34+ cells were incubated with 10 µg/mL of FITC-labeled MoAbs to CD34 (HPCA-1), HLA-DR, CD38, and LFA1, and the percentage of positive cells was determined by flow cytometry. The figures in the table represent the percent positive cells. As shown in this table the adherent population of CD34+ progenitor cell is enriched for the more pluripotent phenotype CD34+ HLA-DR+CD38+

BM mononuclear cells express higher levels of PECAM at areas of cell-cell contact. PECAM is a 140-kD glycoprotein that is also expressed on monocytes, neutrophils, megakaryocytes, and a subset of CD4 cells, and may function as a transmigratory bridge permitting the exit of mature cells such as neutrophils, lymphocytes, and monocytes out of BM.

The selective homing of transplanted CD34+ progenitor cells to the BM is likely to involve expression of specific adhesion molecules yet to be identified. The movement of mature myeloid and erythroid precursors, and even CD34+ progenitor cells from the BM microenvironment to the peripheral circulation, is a complex phenomenon that is tightly regulated. Regulation of expression of specific adhesion molecules by BMEC or mature hematopoietic elements may allow for selective exit of these mature cells whereas the immature precursors remain bound to adventitial cells within the BM.
the marrow. CD34 antigen is a 110-kD glycosylated protein, which is expressed on pluripotent hematopoietic progenitor cells, as well as on other vascular endothelial cells such as HUVEC, capillaries of different tissues, and neoplastic tissues, such as angiosarcomas, Kaposi’s sarcomas, and hepatic hemangioendotheliomas. However, endothelium from large veins, arteries, placental, and lymphatics are CD34 negative. Our findings, along with recent observations that CD34 is concentrated on interdigitating endothelial membrane processes, suggest that CD34 may function as an adhesion molecule that mediates the transit of peripheral progenitor cells to the BM. Our immunohistochemical studies indicate that only first-passage BMEC monolayers are positive for CD34 but do not express this glycoprotein with subsequent passages. Adhesion studies show that CD34+ progenitor cells display affinity for resting BMEC (passages 2 through 4) monolayers that is divergent cation dependent and is partially inhibited by anti-CD34 antibody. Previous reports have shown that CD34+ progenitor cell binding to fibroblasts is enhanced with cytokine stimulation and expression of VCAM and ICAM adhesion molecules. However, antibodies to VCAM and ICAM do not inhibit binding, suggesting that selective binding of BM-derived CD34+ progenitor cells to BMEC may be mediated by other adhesion molecules. Recently, vascular CD34 has been identified as a counter receptor for leukocyte L-selectin, raising the possibility that a similar interaction might mediate progenitor cell adhesion to L-selectin expressed by endothelium. However, our data show that BMEC (resting or stimulated with IL-1β) do not express L-selectin. These data suggest CD34+ progenitor cell binding to BMEC may be mediated by calcium-dependent mechanisms for cell adhesion are exhibited by resting BMEC. Several studies have shown that homing of murine progenitor cells to BM is regulated by a calcium-dependent C-peptide. Our adhesion studies indicate that CD34+ cell binding to unstimulated BMEC monolayers can be completely abrogated with EDTA, supporting the notion that a specific calcium-dependent adhesion molecule may be responsible for the homing of CD34+ progenitor cells to the BM.

The CD34+ cells that are adherent to BMEC monolayers are enriched for the CD34+ HLA-DR+ CD38+ phenotype, which is reported to be a more pluripotent cell type within the CD34+ progenitor cell population. Furthermore, adherent CD34+ progenitor cells proliferated in coculture with BMEC (unpublished data, 1993), suggesting that regulation of hematopoiesis may be affected by direct contact or by cytokines derived from this endothelium. The role of inflammatory mediators such as IL-1β in regulating hematopoiesis is incompletely understood. IL-1β is known to regulate adhesion mechanisms that govern the transit of inflammatory cells from the circulation by increasing the expression of ICAM and VCAM on the luminal surface of the endothelium, resulting in upregulation of monocyte and polymorphonuclear cell adhesion. Our studies show a similar increase in CD34+ progenitor cell adhesion to IL-1β-treated BMEC monolayers. In contrast to the adhesion observed to resting (untreated) monolayers, adhesion of CD34+ progenitor cells to IL-1β-treated BMEC monolayers was divalent cation independent and not inhibited by anti-CD34, VCAM, or ICAM. The regulation of BMEC adhesion of progenitor cells by IL-1β raises the possibility that increased transit mediated by increased adherence of these circulating hematopoietic cells is one mechanism by which the BM can respond to inflammatory states. That independent mechanisms for cell adhesion are exhibited by resting and IL-1β-stimulated BMEC fits well with experimental data showing that CD34 mRNA expression by HUVEC monolayers is rapidly downregulated by IL-1β, γ-interferon and tumor necrosis factor.

The specific enrichment of megakaryocytes, together with their previously described close association with the submucosal surface of the sinusoidal endothelium, raises the possibility that the final stages of megakaryocyte maturation and platelet formation may be regulated by BM endothelium. The adhesion of a large number of megakaryocytes to BMEC monolayers relative to HUVEC monolayers was particularly striking. Furthermore, immunofluorescence studies of multiple, intact spicules, as shown in Fig 1A, show that mature, large polyploid megakaryocytes reside at the submucosal surface of BMEC. Whether the interaction of BMEC with megakaryocytes are critical for megakaryocyteopoiesis or thrombopoiesis remains to be determined.

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