

Role of CYP1B1 in Glaucoma*

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Key Words

CYP, mutations, eye, transgenic mouse model, metabolism, steroids, arachidonic acid, retinoic acid, melatonin

Abstract

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness, estimated to affect 60 million people by 2010, and represents a heterogeneous group of neurodegenerative disease. The two major types of glaucoma include primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG) and primary congenital glaucoma (PCG). A genetically heterogeneous group of developmental disorders known as anterior segment dysgenesis (ASD) have been reported to be associated with increased intraocular pressure (IOP) and glaucoma. These include Peters' anomaly, Rieger's anomaly, aniridia, iris hypoplasia, and iridogoniodysgenesis. Genetic linkage analysis and mutation studies have identified CYP1B1 as a causative gene in PCG, as a modifier gene in POAG, and, on rare occasions, as causative gene in POAG as well as in several ASD disorders. CYP1B1-deficient mice exhibit abnormalities in their ocular drainage structure and trabecular meshwork that are similar to those reported in human PCG patients. Accordingly, it is speculated that diminished or absent metabolism of key endogenous CYP1B1 substrates adversely affects the development of the trabecular meshwork. CYP1B1 protein is involved in the metabolism of steroids, retinol and retinal, arachidonate, and melatonin. The conserved expression of CYP1B1 in both murine and human eyes, its higher expression in fetal than adult eyes, and its biochemical properties are consistent with this hypothesis. The exact role of CYP1B1 in the pathogenesis of glaucoma and other ASD disorders remains to be elucidated.

INTRODUCTION

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness. By 2010, glaucoma will affect an estimated 60 million people, and by 2020, that number is predicted to rise to 80 million (1). The glaucomas represent a heterogeneous group of complex neurodegenerative diseases, the common feature of which is gradual loss of vision. The neurodegeneration manifests as loss of retinal ganglion cells, characteristic changes in the visual field, and degeneration of the optic nerve (2). Elevated intraocular pressure (IOP) appears to be a major risk factor for glaucoma. A causal role of IOP has been clearly demonstrated in animals in which experimentally induced elevation of IOP causes glaucoma. Glaucomas may be categorized on the basis of etiology (primary and secondary), anatomy of the anterior chamber (open angle and closed angle), and the time of onset (infantile, juvenile, and adult). In general, glaucomas may be classified into three major categories: (a) primary open-angle glaucoma (POAG; OMIM 137760), (b) primary congenital glaucoma (PCG; OMIM 60975), and (c) primary angle closure glaucoma (PACG; no OMIM entry). In addition, a genetically heterogeneous group of developmental disorders known as anterior segment dysgenesis (ASD) have been reported to be associated with increased IOP and glaucoma (3). These include Peters' anomaly (PA; OMIM 604229), Rieger's anomaly (RA; OMIM 180500 and 601499), aniridia (OMIM 106210), iris hypoplasia (OMIM 308500), and iridogoniodysgenesis (OMIM 137600).

The most common form of glaucoma is POAG and it affects more than 35 million people worldwide (1, 4). POAG is characterized by progressive cupping of the optic disc, with corresponding progressive visual field loss and, if untreated, eventual blindness. An increased frequency of the disease among relatives of POAG patients demonstrates that susceptibility is influenced by genetic factors. Cigarette smoking, diabetes, and myopia are also considered risk factors (5–7). Based on the age of onset, POAG is divided into juvenile-onset POAG (JOAG) and adult-onset POAG. JOAG (age of onset 3–35 years) is associated with high IOP, visual field loss, and optic disc damage and requires early surgical therapy (8, 9). It is typically inherited as an autosomal dominant trait, whereas adult-onset POAG is inherited as a complex trait (10). To date, 11 genetic loci for POAG have been identified (GLC1A–GLC1K; **Table 1**). However, only three causative genes have been described: *myocilin* (*MYOC/GLC1A*), *optineurin* (*OPTN/GLC1E*), and *WD repeat domain 36* (*WDR36/GLC1E*). Together, these account for less than 10% of POAG (11). A portion of POAG follows Mendelian inheritance and a considerable fraction results from a large number of variants in several genes, each contributing small effects (11). Mutations in *MYOC* account for approximately 2%–4% of POAG in Caucasians (12), 1.1%–1.8% in Chinese patients (13), and as high as 36% in JOAG families (14). Evidence for the causative effect of *OPTN*, arguably the second POAG gene, is somewhat controversial. Mutations in *OPTN* have been reported to occur in 17% of families with hereditary and adult-onset POAG and in 12% of sporadic patients with POAG, the majority of whom had an IOP of less than 22 mm Hg (15). Another study showed that *OPTN* mutations account for 1.6% of sporadic POAG in Chinese patients (16). In contrast, two recent studies investigating Caucasian POAG patients found no glaucoma-causing

Table 1 Genetic loci associated with glaucoma

| | Locus | Chromosomal location | Gene | Reference |
|------|-------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|
| POAG | GLC1A | 1q21-31 | <i>MYOC</i> | (124) |
| | GLC1B | 2cen-q13 | | (125) |
| | GLC1C | 3q21-24 | | (126) |
| | GLC1D | 8p23 | | (127) |
| | GLC1E | 10p15-14 | <i>OPTN</i> | (15) |
| | GLC1F | 7q35-q36 | | (128) |
| | GLC1G | 5q22.1 | <i>WDR36</i> | (20) |
| | GLC1H | 2p16.3-p15 | | (129) |
| | GLC1I | 15q11-q13 | | (130) |
| | GLC1J | 9q22 | | (131) |
| | GLC1K | 20p12 | | (131) |
| | GLC1L | 3p22-p21 | | (146) |
| | GLC1M | 5q | | (147) |
| | GLC1N | 15q22-q24 | | (148) |
| PCG | GLC3A | 2p21 | <i>CYP1B1</i> | (30) |
| | GLC3B | 1p36 | | (31) |
| | GLC3C | 14q24.3-q31.1 | | (34) |

mutations in *OPTN* (17, 18). Similarly, no specific glaucoma-causing *OPTN* mutations were identified in 148 Japanese patients with normal-tension glaucoma and 165 with high-tension glaucoma (19). The third gene for POAG was characterized as *WDR36* at *GLC1G* (20), and four mutations have been found to be associated with more than 5% of all sporadic cases of POAG (20).

Association studies have suggested that, in addition to causative genes, there are at least 16 POAG-associated genes (11). Most of these genes have been reported in single studies; a few of them have been investigated in multiple association studies, the findings of which are inconsistent. POAG-associated genes include apolipoprotein E (*APOE*; a potent modifier for POAG) (21), optic atrophy P (*OAP1*) (22), tumor protein p53 (*TP53*), tumor necrosis factor (TNF; reported to be associated with POAG in Chinese individuals) (23, 24) and cytochrome P450 1B1 (*CYP1B1*). *CYP1B1* was initially suggested to be a modifier gene for the expression of *MYOC* in JOAG patients (25). However, recent studies have indicated that *CYP1B1* may play an important role in JOAG, with possible monogenic association in French (26), Indian (27), and Spanish (28) patients. Furthermore, mutations in *CYP1B1* have been proposed as potential factors governing severity in POAG patients (29).

CYP1B1 has also been identified as one of the three genetic loci linked to PCG (Table 1) (30). The other two are *GLC3B* at chromosome locus 1p36 (31) and *GLC3C* at chromosome locus 14q24.3-q31.1 (32). Specific genes have not been

linked yet to the GLC3B and GLC3C loci. PCG is a form of glaucoma commonly referred to as infantile or congenital glaucoma. Although normally rare, it is the most common form of glaucoma in infants, with more than 80% of cases observed within the first year of life. This disorder is most likely due to developmental defects in the trabecular meshwork and the anterior chamber angle. The clinical findings in PCG patients typically include epiphora (watery eye), photophobia, corneal edema, and buphthalmos (enlargement of the globe), which result from increased IOP. In PCG, elevated IOPs can rapidly lead to axonal loss and permanent loss of vision in untreated individuals. Sixty to eighty percent of cases involve both eyes, and males are more frequently affected than females (65% versus 35%, respectively). Inheritance is primarily autosomal recessive with variable penetrance (33). Ninety percent of cases are sporadic and pseudodominant transmission has been demonstrated in some families (30). Prevalence of PCG varies geographically from a rate of 1:10000 in Western countries (34) to 1:1250 in the Romany population of Slovakia (35).

CYP1B1 MUTATIONS IN GLAUCOMA

CYP1B1 is a member of the CYP450 superfamily that contains 58 and 102 putatively functional genes in the human and mouse genome, respectively (36). The human *CYP1B1* gene consists of three exons and two introns and spans 8.5 kb of genomic DNA (GenBank accession no. U56438). CYP1B1 was the first gene in the CYP450 gene superfamily in which a mutation was demonstrated to be involved in a primary developmental defect. The CYP1B1 gene is expressed in several tissues, including the eye, as well as in the nucleus of several cell types, including tubule cells of the kidney and secretory cells of the breast (37). The CYP1B1 gene product is a 543-amino acid-long protein that contains (*a*) a membrane-bound N-terminal region consisting of 53 residues; (*b*) a so-called hinge, which is a 10-residue-long proline-rich region; and (*c*) a cytosolic globular domain comprising 480 amino acids.

Table 2 lists the 82 mutations that have been identified in PCG, PA, RA, and POAG patients. These include 46 missense and 10 nonsense mutations, 16 deletions, 8 insertions and/or duplications, and 2 silent mutations. The fact that approximately one-third of the mutations are genetic insertions or deletions indicates that *CYP1B1* is relatively susceptible to recombination events. The observation that mutations are found in patients with POAG, PA, and RA indicates that CYP1B1 mutations are associated with a broader range of clinical phenotypes than originally thought. CYP1B1 was initially identified by genetic linkage analysis and mutation screening as one of the loci GLC3A associated with PCG (38). Recent studies indicate a causative role of CYP1B1 in Peters' anomaly (39, 40). Specifically, four point mutations (W57X, M1T, P118T, and R368H) and a deletion (g.7899_7910del; R355-A358del) have been identified in patients with this condition (39–41). Additional evidence that CYP1B1 may be implicated in a pathophysiological mechanism common to PCG and other anterior dysgenesis disorders comes from a recent study showing that patients with Rieger's anomaly carry mutations in the CYP1B1 gene (W57X, g.4832_4834del, g.4838_4840del, and g.8037_8046dup) (42, 43). Finally, in certain pedigrees, both

Table 2 Mutations in the CYP1B1 gene detected in individuals with glaucoma and/or anterior segment dysgenesis. Nucleotides are numbered according to the CYP1B1 gene sequence listed in GenBank (accession number U56438)

| Type of mutation | Exon | Nucleotide change | Protein change | Pathology | Origin (Reference) |
|------------------|------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|--|
| Missense | 2 | g.3807T→C | M1T | PA* | Canadian (39) |
| | 2 | g.3888C→G | S28W | POAG | Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.3947C→G | R48G | PCG | Saudi Arabia (33), Indian (44), Japan (132) |
| | 2 | g.3976G→C | W57C | PCG, POAG | Hispanic (48), India (27) |
| | 2 | g.3987G→A | G61E | PCG, POAG | Turkey (48), Saudi Arabia (133), Kuwait (134), Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4035T→C | L77P | PCG | Saudi Arabia (33) |
| | 2 | g.4046T→A | Y81N | POAG | French (26), Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4155G→C | R117P | PCG | Asian (135) |
| | 2 | g.4157C→A | P118T | PA/no PCG | Caucasian (40) |
| | 2 | g.4160G→T | A119S | PCG | Saudi Arabia (33), Japan (49) |
| | 2 | g.4237G→T | Q144H | POAG | Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4238C→T | R145W | POAG | Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4370G→C | A189P | OHT | Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4380A→T | D192V | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 2 | g.4383C→T | P193L | PCG | Indian (44) |
| | 2 | g.4397G→A | V198I | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 2 | g.4430T→C | C209R | PCG | Hispanic (135) |
| | 2 | g.4449G→T | S215I | PCG | Indonesia (41) |
| | 2 | g.4490G→A | E229K | PCG, POAG | Lebanon (136), Indian (44), France (26), India (27), Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4499G→C | G232R | PCG | France (137) |
| | 2 | g.4763G→T | V320L | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 2 | g.4793G→T | A330F | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | | g.4794C→T | | | |
| | 2 | g.4793G→T | A330S | OHT | Spain (28) |
| | 2 | g.4838C→T | L345F | PCG | African American (25) |
| | 3 | g.7927G→A | V364M | PCG | Japan (49, 138) |
| | 3 | g.7930G→T | G365W | PCG | USA (48) |
| | 3 | g.7940G→A | R368H | PCG, PA, POAG | Saudi Arabia (33), Indian (44), Brazil (139), Kuwait (134), unknown (40), India (27) |
| | 3 | g.7957G→A | D374N | PCG | |
| | 3 | g.7983C→T | P379L | PCG | Turkey (48) |
| | 3 | g.7996G→A | E387K | PCG | Slovaks (140), Brazil (139), US, Canada, Romany |
| | 3 | g.7999G→A | A388T | PCG | Kuwait (134) |
| | 3 | g.8005C→T | R390C | PCG | Ecuador (141), Indian (142) |
| | 3 | g.8005C→A | R390S | PCG | Saudi Arabia (33) |
| | 3 | g.8006G→A | R390H | PCG, POAG | Pakistani (48), France (26) |
| | 3 | g.8033T→G | I399S | PCG | France (137) |
| | 3 | g.8062G→T | V409F | POAG | Spain (28) |
| | 3 | g.8104A→T | N423Y | PCG | France (137) |
| | 3 | g.8131G→C | L432V | PCG, PA | Turkey (30), Japan (49, 132) |

(Continued)

Table 2 (Continued)

| Type of mutation | Exon | Nucleotide change | Protein change | Pathology | Origin (Reference) |
|-----------------------------|------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|--|
| Nonsense | 3 | g.8147C→T | P437L | PCG | Brazil (139) |
| | 3 | g.8165C→G | A443G | PCG, POAG, OHT | Brazil (139), France (26), Spain (28) |
| | 3 | g.8168G→A | R444Q | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 3 | g.8242C→T | R469W | PCG | Saudi Arabia (133) |
| | 3 | g.8333A→G | E499G | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 3 | g.8381C→T | S515L | POAG | India (27) |
| | 3 | g.8405G→C | R523T | POAG | India (27) |
| | 3 | g.8426A→G | D530G | POAG | India (27) |
| | 2 | g.3860C→T | Q19X | PCG | Brazil (139) |
| | 2 | g.3929C→T | Q42X | PCG | Germany (43) |
| | 2 | g.3976G→A | W57X | PA, PCG, RA | Canada (39), Brazil (139), unknown (42) |
| | 2 | g.4547C→T | Q248X | PCG | France (137) |
| | 2 | g.4645C→A | C280X | PCG | Japan (49), Kuwait (134) |
| | 2 | g.4646G→T | G281X | PCG | Turkey (48) |
| | 3 | g.7900C→T | R355X | PCG | Turkey (136) |
| | 3 | g.8104A→T | N423Y | POAG | France (26) |
| | 3 | g.8139G→A | W434X | PCG | Germany (43) |
| Deletions | 3 | g.8167C→T | R444X | PCG | France (137) |
| | 2 | g.3964delC | fs | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 2 | g.3979delA | fs and 59X | PCG, POAG | France (137), France (26) |
| | 2 | g.4238_4247del | fs | PCG | Saudi Arabia (33) |
| | 2 | g.4081delC | fs | PCG | Turkey (136) |
| | 2 | g.4339delG | fs | PCG | Morocco (143) |
| | 2 | g.4340delG | 51X | PCG | Brazil (139), Ecuador (141) |
| | 2 | g.4356delG | A179R/X 17 aa downstream | PCG | Mexico (144) |
| | 2 | g.4611_4619del | S268_F270del | PCG, POAG | Saudi Arabia (33), France (137), USA (145), France (26) |
| | 2 | g.4635delT | L277X | PCG | Mexico (144) |
| | 2 | g.4832_4834del | fs | RA | Germany (43) |
| | 2 | g.4838_4840del | L345del | RA | Unknown (42) |
| Insertions and duplications | | g.7899_7910del | R355-A358del | PA | Turkey (41) |
| | 3 | g.7901_7913del | fs and 422X | PCG, POAG | Turkey (30), Brazil (139), France (26) |
| | 3 | G7945delC | P370L / X 57 aa downstream | PCG | Mexico (144) |
| | 3 | g.8182delG | | PCG | Hispanic (48), Brazil (139), USA (48) |
| | 3 | g.8214_8215del | fs | PCG | Brazil (139) |
| | 2 | g.3835insA | 223X | | Indian (44) |
| | 2 | g.3956insC | fs | PCG | Russia (43) |
| | 2 | g.4306insT | fs | PCG | Turkey (48) |
| | 2 | g.4673insC | fs | PCG | Turkey (48) |
| | 2 | g.4776insAT | fs | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 3 | g.8037_8046dup | fs | PCG, RA | Brazil (139); USA, Britain, Turkey (48); Germany (136), unknown (42) |

(Continued)

Table 2 (Continued)

| Type of mutation | Exon | Nucleotide change | Protein change | Pathology | Origin (Reference) |
|------------------|------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Silent | 3 | g.8039_8048 | T404S / X26 aa downstream | PCG | Mexico (144) |
| | 3 | g.8240_8266dup | fs | PCG | Turkey (48) |
| | 3 | g.4534G→C | V243V | PCG | Japan (49) |
| | 3 | g.8184T→C | D449D | PCG | Japan (49) |

*Abbreviations: PA, Peters' anomaly; POAG, primary open angle glaucoma; PCG, primary congenital glaucoma; RA, Rieger's anomaly; OHT, ocular hypertension; X, stop codon.

PCG and POAG segregate, indicating that that these two forms of glaucoma may also have a common or overlapping CYP1B1-mediated pathophysiological mechanism. Recent studies have shown mutations and coexistence of PCG and POAG in the same pedigree (44, 45). Moreover, a digenic inheritance of CYP1B1 and MYOC mutations have been shown to result in a phenotype with more pronounced glaucoma, suggesting that *CYP1B1* may function as a gene modifier for the *MYOC* gene (25). Interestingly, 11 of 236 unrelated French Caucasian POAG patients carried mutations in CYP1B1 but not in the MYOC gene. These individuals expressed juvenile or middle-age onset of the disease at a time significantly earlier than that in the noncarrier patients (26). With the exception of one silent mutation, all of these mutations have also been detected in PCG patients. A recent study in an Indian population revealed 6 CYP1B1 mutations in 9 of 200 POAG patients (27). Among these mutations, one novel homozygous mutation (R523T) was found, three were identical to those previously reported in PCG patients (W57C, E229K, and R368H), and two novel mutations (S515L and D530G) were detected in the heterozygous state (27). The R523T was detected in a familial juvenile onset POAG patient (lacking *MYOC* or *OPTN* mutations) and cosegregated with the disease locus in an autosomal recessive mode of transmission. All novel mutations detected in this study (R523T, S515L, and D530G) were found in a *CYP1B1* region that does not harbor any of the missense mutations implicated in PCG or other anterior segment dysgenesis disorders (27). Collectively, these studies suggest that *CYP1B1* may have a larger role than initially thought in glaucoma pathogenesis, ranging from a causal effect in PCG and other anterior segment dysgenesis disorders, to modifying the pathogenesis of POAG or being the primary cause of JOAG under some circumstances.

The crystal structure of CYP1B1 has not yet been determined, although it can be predicted based on conserved sequences found in many P450s (46, 47). Such comparative modeling predicts that missense mutations in CYP1B1 would affect elements that coincide with highly conserved and functionally important regions of the P450 enzyme. For example, mutations associated with W57C, G61E, G365W, P379L, R390H, E387K, P437L, and R469W might disrupt either the hinge region or the conserved core of the protein (48). Another study suggested that one (R444Q) out of the four (D192V, A330F, V364M, and R444Q) missense mutations in CYP1B1 protein could cause significant structural changes (49). In a recent study, wild-type

and the mutant model structures corresponding to the eight PCG mutations (A115P, M132R, Q144P, P193L, E229K, S239R, R368H, and G466D) were developed for the application of comparative modeling approaches (47). These models were subjected to molecular dynamics simulations for studying the time evolution as well as time-averaged values of structural properties with emphasis on the functionally important regions. The results of these simulations indicated that the mutant structures exhibit properties that may not be conducive to enzymatic function (47).

EXPRESSION OF CYP1B1 IN THE EYE

Expression of CYP1B1 has been studied in both human and mouse eyes. In the human eye, CYP1B1 mRNA has been detected in relatively high levels in the iris and ciliary body and in lower levels in the cornea, retinal-pigment epithelium, and retina (48). Interestingly, immunohistochemical analyses revealed an absence of CYP1B1 protein expression in the trabecular meshwork of human fetal and adult eyes (50); however, it was demonstrated in nonpigmented ciliary epithelium, corneal epithelium and keratocytes, both layers of the iris pigmented epithelium, and retina (48). Differences exist between adult and fetal eyes; for example CYP1B1 immunostaining in fetal eyes was more intense than that observed in adult eyes. CYP1B1 mRNA was not among the transcripts expressed in infant human trabecular meshwork (51). By contrast, CYP1B1 transcripts were detected in an adult human trabecular meshwork cDNA library, although CYP1B1 was not among the 50 most abundant cDNA clones (52). CYP1B1 mRNA was also detected in the trabecular meshwork by semiquantitative RT-PCR amplification (48).

A similar pattern of CYP1B1 protein expression was observed in the eyes of adult C57BL/6 mice, with the protein being found in the corneal epithelium, inner ciliary epithelial cells, retinal ganglion cells, and inner nuclear layers and with trace expression in the lens epithelium (53). By contrast, structures derived from the periocular mesenchyme, such as iris, corneal stroma, or outer ciliary epithelium, did not express the CYP1B1 protein (53) despite CYP1B1 mRNA having been detected in the outer ciliary epithelium from P4 through adulthood in the eyes of FVB/N mice (54). A recent study showed that CYP1B1 is expressed in endodermal, mesodermal, and ectodermal derivatives during chick embryo development, including in the anterior segment of the eye and anterior retina (55).

The conserved expression of CYP1B1 in both murine and human eyes, together with the observation that this protein is differentially distributed throughout the eye and found in higher levels in fetal than adult eyes, is consistent with a role for it in ocular function and/or development. Diminished or absent metabolism of important endogenous substrates in the ciliary epithelium as a consequence of altered CYP1B1 could contribute to developmental defects leading to eye pathophysiologies. The ciliary body is the primary source of aqueous humor generation and is involved in the production of mediators that modulate extracellular matrix turnover by secreting metalloproteases (56). Accordingly, mutations in genes expressed by the ciliary body may directly contribute to an abnormal elevation in IOP or indirectly affect the aqueous outflow by disrupting the proper development of trabecular meshwork

in glaucoma patients. By metabolizing ciliary body-derived mediators involved in these processes, CYP1B1 could influence IOP. Consistent with this proposal is the recent study linking CYP1B1 with early-onset POAG in French and Indian patients (27).

***Cyp1b1*-NULL MICE**

To study the role of CYP1B1 in glaucoma, transgenic knockout *Cyp1b1*($-/-$) mice on a mixed $129 \times 1/\text{SvJ}$ X C57BL/6J background were generated (57). Gross examination of eyes from these mice revealed normal-appearing anterior segments and no apparent evidence of glaucoma. The animals were not blind, as determined by standard behavioral comparisons with their wild-type littermates, in their response to light and dark (57). Further studies confirmed the absence of gross abnormalities in *Cyp1b1*($-/-$) mice up to the age of 13 months and that their intraocular pressures were indistinguishable from those of their wild-type littermates (58). However, electron microscopy of the anterior eye segment revealed that *Cyp1b1*($-/-$) mice had abnormalities in their ocular drainage structure that resembled those reported for human PCG patients (58). Such abnormalities included hypoplastic trabecular meshwork, abnormally located basal lamina in the trabecular meshwork, and iridocorneal adhesions. Although these abnormalities were not associated with increased IOP (58), recent reports indicate that *Cyp1b1*-null mice have some elevation in IOP (53). Further studies are needed to examine the IOP in these transgenic knockout mice.

Crossing the *Cyp1b1* mutation onto a tyrosinase-deficient background ($129 \times 1/\text{SvJ}$) resulted in more severe iridocorneal angle abnormalities, suggesting that the tyrosinase (*TYR*) may serve as a modifier gene of iridocorneal angle defects (58). *TYR* is a multifunctional copper-containing glycoenzyme that plays a pivotal role in the rate-limiting steps of the melanin synthesis, making *Tyr*-deficient mice albino. The contribution of *TYR* in iridocorneal angle abnormalities is further supported by the increased incidence of ASD in people with albinism (59). Interestingly, it has been found that *Tyr* also modifies iridocorneal angle phenotypes in another mouse model of ASD, (*Foxc1* $+/-$) mice, suggesting that the effect of *Tyr* may not be specific to CYP1B1 deficiency. However, a recent genome-wide single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) analysis in the *TYR* chromosomal region 11q13-q21 and sequencing of the *TYR* gene suggested that *TYR* is not a modifier of the CYP1B1-associated PCG phenotype in the Saudi Arabian population (60). In addition, Bejjani and colleagues have suggested the existence of a dominant suppressor of the PCG phenotype that is not genetically linked to CYP1B1 (33). The iridocorneal abnormalities observed in *Cyp1b1*($-/-$)/*Tyr*($-/-$) double mutant mice were alleviated (but not rescued) after treatment with the tyrosinase product, dihydroxyphenylalanine (L-dopa) (58). Therefore, it has been concluded that tyrosine hydroxylase, which produces L-dopa from tyrosine, could act as another such modifying factor. In addition, it has been proposed that CYP1B1 may affect tyrosine hydroxylase expression by producing retinoids that promote proliferation of neural crest cells expressing tyrosine hydroxylase (50). Development of the *Cyp1b1*-null mice along with the CYP1B1 humanized mice should help to elucidate the molecular mechanisms underlying glaucoma.

FUNCTIONS OF CYP1B1

CYP1B1 is a dioxin-inducible gene and a member of the AHR gene battery that is involved in the metabolism of both endogenous and exogenous substrates (61). It is involved in the metabolism of carcinogens, as well as in the synthesis of steroid hormones and other lipid molecules that can act in signal transduction pathways that regulate the differentiation and growth of tissues. Through such mechanisms, CYP1B1 may be involved in early ocular differentiation. Among the carcinogens metabolized by CYP1B1 are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, many *N*-heterocyclic amines, arylamines, amino azo dyes, and several other carcinogens (62). Endogenous compounds susceptible to CYP1B1 include steroids, retinoic acid (RA), and melatonin.

STEROID METABOLISM

The recent observation that early menopause in women is associated with an increased risk for open-angle glaucoma suggests that endogenous steroids may be involved in the pathogenesis of glaucoma (63). Testosterone and estradiol are ligands for the cytoplasmic androgen receptors and nuclear estrogen receptors, respectively. Ligand-activated receptors transcriptionally regulate a number of genes (including CYP1B1) through binding to DNA response elements in the promoter region of these genes. As mentioned earlier, CYP1B1 is a proposed modifier for MYOC in patients with POAG. MYOC is inducible by administration of the steroid, dexamethasone (64). It is therefore plausible that a metabolic-impaired CYP1B1 in glaucoma patients may further compromise the function of the mutant MYOC protein, with a subsequent manifestation of the disease at an earlier age (25). This is in agreement with the proposal that open-angle glaucoma may not be a monogenic disease (65). Functional interactions between CYP1B1 and MYOC have not yet been investigated. Human CYP1B1 metabolizes testosterone relatively poorly but is much more effective in metabolizing estradiol (66). Metabolism of estradiol by CYP1B1 generates several metabolites, including the catechol estrogens, 4-OH-estradiol and 2-OH-estradiol (which account for the 75%–80% of the metabolites), the B-ring metabolites 6 α - and 6 β -OH estradiol, and D-ring 15 α - and 16 α -OH estradiol metabolites (**Figure 1**) (66). The 4-OH metabolite appears to be the major product formed by CYP1B1 (67). The effects of two CYP1B1 mutations (G61E and R469W) found in PCG patients have been studied recently by expressing the mutant proteins in *Escherichia coli* (66). The G61E protein showed diminished stability and the R469W holoenzyme had stability similar to CYP1B1. Both mutants showed compromised catalytic activity toward testosterone, progesterone, and estradiol, supporting the notion that CYP1B1 is necessary for normal embryonic or fetal tissue development. In addition to the mutations identified in PCG, POAG, and other ASD disorders, several polymorphisms of CYP1B1 have been described (<http://www.cypalleles.ki.se/cyp1b1.htm>). The CYP1B1*3 allele (L432V) is associated with first trimester miscarriage, possibly through the involvement of CYP1B1 in the metabolism of estradiol and testosterone (68). Studies with recombinant

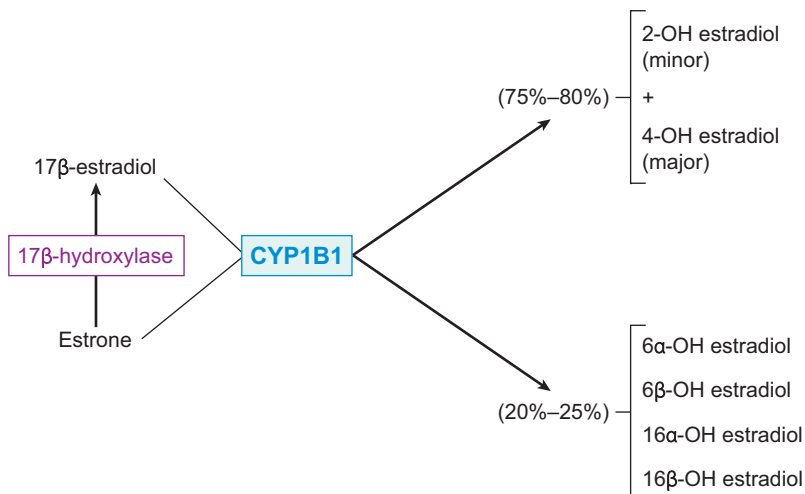


Figure 1

Role of CYP1B1 in estradiol metabolism (adapted from Reference 123). 17 β -estradiol is converted to several hydroxylated metabolites by CYP1B1, the majority of which are the 2-OH and 4-OH derivatives, also referred to as catechol estrogens.

proteins have shown that CYP1B1.3 variants catalyze 17 β -estradiol 4-hydroxylation at a K_m that is 4.5-fold lower than the wild-type CYP1B1*1 (Leu432) variant (69). Furthermore, the CYP1B1.1 (wild-type) protein has been shown to catalyze testosterone 6-hydroxylation at a V_{max}/K_m ratio that is 3.3- to 6.5-fold higher than that of the CYP1B1*3 (70). The CYP1B1*1/1*1 genotype seems to be associated with an increased breast cancer risk (71), whereas the CYP1B1*3/1*3 genotype has been associated with estrogen and P receptor–positive status in breast cancer in Caucasians (72).

Arachidonic Acid Metabolism

Arachidonic acid is a free fatty acid that, when liberated from cell membranes, can be metabolized by cyclooxygenases (COXs), lipoxygenases (LOs), and CYP450s to biologically active products, such as prostaglandins, leukotrienes, epoxyeicosatrienoic acids, and hydroxyeicosatetraenoic acids (73). The hydroxyl derivatives can be further divided into three classes, depending on the site of oxidation, e.g., terminal, midchain, or bisallylic sites (74). Arachidonic acid metabolites are very potent molecules with angiogenic, chemotactic, and migratory activities (53, 75). 12(R)-hydroxyeicosatetraenoic acid [12(R)HETE] is a corneal epithelial arachidonic acid metabolite formed by the CYP450 system that has been shown to be a potent inhibitor of Na⁺-K⁺ (+)-ATPase activity (76). The latter regulates corneal transparency (77). Modulation of this ATPase activity affects corneal susceptibility to pressure-induced hydration, which promotes the corneal clouding associated with glaucoma. On the other hand, 12(R)HETE has been shown to lower IOP in rabbits (78). The role of CYP1A1, CYP1A2, and CYP1B1 in arachidonate metabolism was recently studied using human and mouse proteins (74). The profile of arachidonic acid metabolites formed by CYP1B1 differs significantly from those generated by CYP1A1 and CYP1A2. Specifically, CYP1A1 primarily produced terminal ω -hydroxy metabolites

(terminal HETEs), CYP1A2 generated more epoxy products (EETs), and CYP1B1 formed mostly midchain HETEs (74). Murine CYP1B1 only poorly metabolizes arachidonate (K_m of 0.5 mM and a very low V_{max} activity) to the extent that its catalytic efficiency for arachidonate is only 2% of human CYP1B1 (53). These catalytic differences between human and mouse CYP1B1 proteins suggest that arachidonate might not be a conserved substrate involved in the pathogenesis of PCG, POAG, and other ASD disorders.

Retinol and Retinal Metabolism

RA is a pleiotrophic regulator of morphogenesis and differentiation, providing positional information to cells as they develop during embryogenesis and as they are regenerated in adult tissues. RA is formed from vitamin A (retinol) in a two-step metabolic pathway in which retinol is first oxidized to retinaldehyde, and then retinaldehyde is oxidized to RA (79). RA functions as a ligand for retinoid signaling events that directly regulate gene expression (79). It is well known that retinoid signaling mediates embryonic pattern formation during development of several organs such as eye, limb buds, hindbrain, and spinal cord (80). It is also well known that either an excess or a deficiency of vitamin A and related compounds (retinoids) is associated with teratogenesis and death. Vitamin A deficiency is characterized by a number of teratologies, including severe malformations of the developing CNS and cardiovascular system, face, and eyes that may ultimately lead to embryonic death (81, 82). In addition, excess of retinoids cause teratogenesis associated with craniofacial malformations (83). Impaired retinoid homeostasis observed in aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AHR)-null mice is associated with liver fibrosis, which is prevented with a vitamin A-deficient diet in mice (84–86).

The synthesis and degradation of RA *in vivo* are tightly coupled. During development, RA is initially produced intracellularly by two oxidation reactions of the maternally derived retinol to retinal and then to RA. The first oxidation is catalyzed by retinol and alcohol dehydrogenases and the second step by aldehyde dehydrogenases (ALDH1A1/A2/A3 and ALDH8A1) (**Figure 2**) (79). Following binding to RA-binding protein (CRABP) in the cytosol, RA translocates to the nucleus and binds to the nuclear RA receptors (RARs) and retinoid X receptors (RXRs), which are ligand-dependent transcriptional regulators. The RA-RAR-RXR complex modulates expression of targeted genes via RA response elements (RAREs). In the recent years CYP450s have also been suggested to be involved in the synthesis and degradation of RA (74, 55). RA can be further oxidized by CYP26A1/B1/C1 to 4-*oxo*-RA, 4-OH-RA and 5,8-*epoxy*-RA. Although it was initially proposed that these RA metabolites are biologically inactive (87), recent studies indicate that these metabolites have signaling properties (88). In addition to CYP26 enzymes, CYP1B1 is also capable of metabolizing retinoids. Studies with mouse and human CYP1B1 proteins showed that these proteins oxidize all-*trans*-retinol to all-*trans*-retinal, and all-*trans*-retinal to all-*trans*-RA (74). This study also showed that the human enzyme has a considerably lower K_m for retinol and retinal than the mouse enzyme. However, mouse CYP1B1 exhibits a V_{max} for retinol oxidation to retinal, which is two-fold of that of the human enzyme

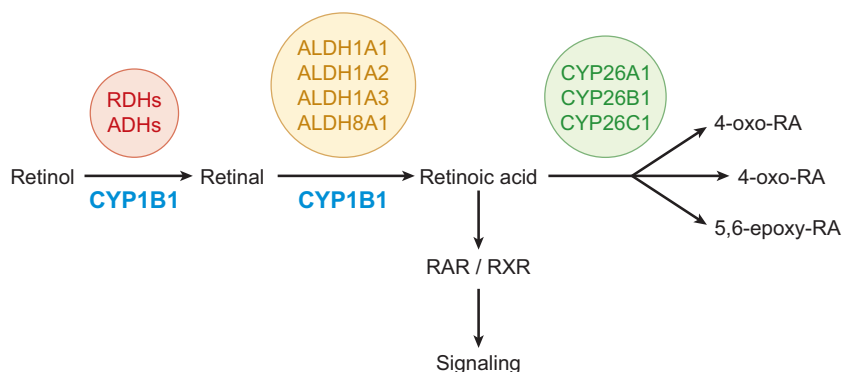


Figure 2

Metabolism of retinol, retinal, and retinoic acid. Retinaldehyde dehydrogenase (RDH) and alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) can convert retinol to retinal, respectively, the latter of which is converted to retinoic acid by several aldehyde dehydrogenases (ALDH). CYP1B1 is also capable of carrying out these reactions. However, in the presence of RDH, ADH, and ALDH in a particular cell type, its contribution would not be significant. Retinoic acid is the main signaling molecule, as it is the primary ligand for the retinoic acid receptors. Retinoic acid is inactivated by CYP26 CYP450s.

and similar to the human enzyme for the oxidation of retinal to RA. These data led the authors to suggest that at physiological levels of vitamin A both enzymes may contribute to RA formation. On the other hand, neither human or mouse CYP1B1 was found capable of oxidizing RA. Similar data regarding human CYP1B1 have been recently published along with the observation that CYP1B1 and ALDHs may complement each other in the production of RA, with the CYP1B1 providing retinal to the ALDHs and contributing to the formation of RA (55). The authors also proposed that CYP1B1 could be the only enzyme generating RA in tissues in which ALDHs are not expressed (55). In conclusion, it is possible that CYP1B1 is involved in the formation of RA; however, in vivo experiments are needed to confirm this possibility.

Melatonin Metabolism

Melatonin (*N*-acetyl-5-methoxytryptamine) is an indoleamine neurohormone that is widely distributed in nature and found in bacteria, protozoa, plants, fungi, invertebrates, and vertebrates (89). In animals, circulating melatonin is mainly synthesized in the pineal gland; however, several tissues are capable of synthesizing melatonin, including bone marrow, gastrointestinal tract, skin, and eye (90). In the eye, melatonin synthesis occurs in the retina (91), lacrimal gland (92), lens (93, 94), and ciliary body (95). Retinal photoreceptors synthesize melatonin, which is rapidly metabolized in *Xenopus* retina, thus restricting its action to retina (96). The animal ciliary body synthesizes melatonin rhythmically and apparently secretes it into the aqueous humor (95, 97, 98). Melatonin found in aqueous humor parallels with the circadian rhythm of the plasma with peak levels occurring during the night cycle (95, 99, 100).

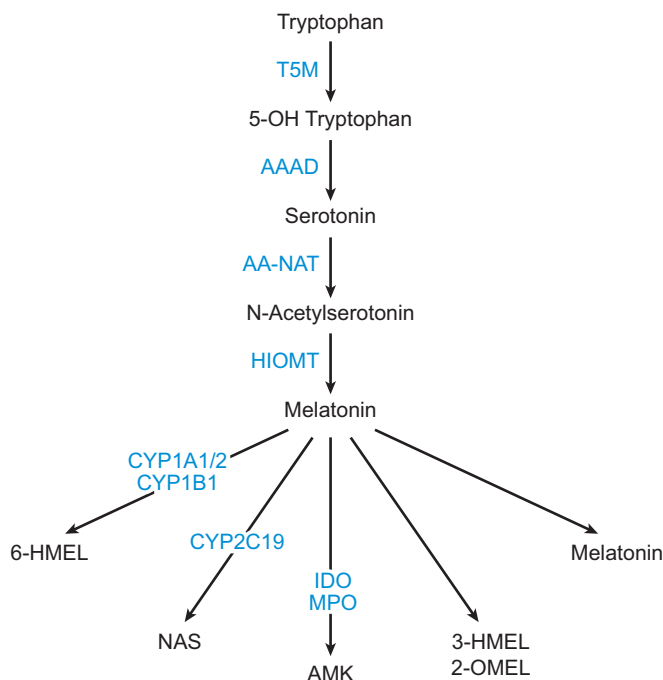


Figure 3

Melatonin synthesis and metabolism (modified from Reference 103). Tryptophan hydroxylation and subsequent decarboxylation forms serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine). Sequential action of serotonin *N*-acetyltransferase (acetyl CoA: arylalkylamine *N*-acetyltransferase, EC 2.3.1.87; AA-NAT) and hydroxyindole-*O*-methyltransferase (*S*-adenosyl-methionine: *N*-acetylserotonin *O*-methyltransferase, EC 2.1.1.4; HIOMT) generate melatonin. Melatonin is catabolized primarily to 6-hydroxymelatonin (6-HMEL) by CYP1A1, CYP1A2, and CYP1B1 and to a minor metabolite *N*-acetyl-5 hydroxytryptamine (NAS) by CYP2C19. Oxidative metabolism catalyzed indoleamine-2,3-dioxygenase (IDO) and/or myeloperoxidase (MPO) leads to the formation of *N*¹-acetyl-*N*²-formyl-5-methoxy-kynurenine (AFMK) and then *N*¹-acetyl-5-methoxy-kynurenine (AFK). *N*-[2-(5-methoxy-2-oxo-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-ethyl]-acetamide (2-OMEL) and cyclic 3-hydroxymelatonin (3-HMEL).

Melatonin is synthesized in a pathway that initially involves tryptophan hydroxylation and subsequent decarboxylation to form serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine). Sequential action of serotonin *N*-acetyltransferase (acetyl CoA: arylalkylamine *N*-acetyltransferase, EC 2.3.1.87; AA-NAT) and hydroxyindole-*O*-methyltransferase (*S*-adenosyl-methionine: *N*-acetylserotonin *O*-methyltransferase, EC 2.1.1.4; HIOMT) (101, 102) lead to the formation of melatonin (**Figure 3**). The AA-NAT is, in most cases, the rate-limiting enzyme controlling melatonin synthesis (103).

Melatonin is metabolized primarily to 6-hydroxymelatonin (6-HMEL) by CYP1A1, CYP1A2, and CYP1B1, and to a minor metabolite *N*-acetyl-5 hydroxytryptamine (NAS) by CYP2C19 (104, 105). Oxidative metabolism catalyzed indoleamine-2,3-dioxygenase (IDO) and/or myeloperoxidase (MPO) leads to the

formation of N¹-acetyl-N²-formyl-5-methoxy-kynurenine (AFMK), which is deformed spontaneously or enzymatically by kynurenine formamidase to more stable N¹-acetyl-5-methoxy-kynurenine (AFK) (106–108). In addition, N-[2-(5-methoxy-2-oxo-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-indol-3-yl)-ethyl]-acetamide (2-OMEL) and cyclic 3-hydroxymelatonin (3-HMEL) have been recently identified as oxidation metabolites (108).

In the eye, melatonin has a variety of biological effects modulating retinomotor movements (109), dopamine synthesis and release (110, 111), photoreceptor outer segment disc shedding (112), IOP (100), and, most importantly, ocular growth and development (113). The functions of melatonin are mediated by the melatonin receptors. Three melatonin receptors have been identified and include MT1 and MT2 receptors and the cytosolic enzyme quinone reductase 2 (QR2/MT3) involved in several metabolic processes (103). Melatonin receptors are found in the cornea, iris, sclera, choroid, photoreceptors, RCGs, and retinal blood vessels (114), as well as the iris-ciliary processes (115) and in the nonpigmented ciliary epithelium (116). The expression of melatonin receptor in the iris and ciliary processes has led to the hypothesis that these molecules are involved in the aqueous humor secretion and the circadian rhythm of IOP (115, 117). However, studies regarding the effect of melatonin on IOP have had conflicting results. Topically applied melatonin and the selective MT3 receptor agonist, 5-methoxycarbonylamino-N-acetyltryptamine (5-MCA-NAT), was found to significantly reduce IOP in rabbits, whereas the nonspecific melatonin receptor antagonist, luzindole, abolished the depressant effect of both compounds, supporting the involvement of melatonin receptors in the regulation of IOP (118). The same group found that topical administration of melatonin and its analogues, 2-Phe-melatonin, 6-Cl-melatonin, 2-I-melatonin, 5-MCA-NAT, and N-acetyltryptamine, caused a reduction in IOP (119). They also found that the melatonin-receptor antagonists, prazosin, DH-97, and 4-P-PDOT, reversed the effect of 5-MCA-NAT in a dose-dependent manner (119). The 5-MCA-NAT also reduced IOP in monkeys with laser-induced glaucoma (120). On the contrary, another study found that melatonin injected into the vortex vein of a rabbit eye produced an increase in IOP that lasted for up to 5 h. In addition, melatonin prevented haloperidol-induced decrease in IOP, most likely through physiological antagonism (121). Similarly, intracameral infusion of melatonin into cat eyes decreased aqueous humor synthesis but caused a greater decrease in aqueous humor outflow, which was associated with a significant increase in IOP (98). Individuals exposed to bright light for 23 h had reduced urinary 6-OH melatonin levels and an attenuated early-morning fall in IOP compared with those exposed in dim light (122). In addition, oral melatonin administration to subjects kept in bright light for 23 h caused a small but significant decrease in IOP (122). Further studies are needed to determine the role of melatonin in glaucoma.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Recent studies have identified *CYP1B1* as a causative gene in PCG, as a modifier gene in POAG, and, rarely, as a causative gene in POAG and several ASD disorders. *CYP1B1*-deficient mice exhibit abnormalities of the ocular drainage structure similar

to those reported for human PCG patients. What is the role of CYP1B1 in glaucoma? The current hypothesis is that CYP1B1 metabolizes an endogenous substrate to generate a metabolite needed for development or eliminates a substrate that is crucial for development. As discussed above, CYP1B1 may be involved in the metabolism of steroids, arachidonic acid, vitamin A, and melatonin. All of these metabolic pathways could potentially generate signaling molecules that may be involved in the development and pathogenesis of glaucoma and other ASD disorders. However, the question that needs to be addressed is which of these pathways is causative and/or critical for these disorders. The existence of another CYP1B1-mediated pathway that may be involved in glaucoma also can not be ruled out. The extensive allelic heterogeneity of *CYP1B1* observed in glaucoma patients supports this hypothesis, and also raises the possibility that different mutations of this gene may result in variable levels of enzymatic activity or even altered substrate specificity. This may have an impact in the CYP1B1-mediated metabolism resulting in individual differences in the concentration of CYP1B1 metabolites and possibly to different phenotypes. Indeed, recent studies in genotype (mutations in *CYP1B1*)-phenotype (degree of angle dysgenesis and disease severity) correlations in POCG patients indicated that specific *CYP1B1* mutations may be associated with severe or moderate angle abnormalities (149). Such studies may provide glaucoma specialists with the molecular tools that will assist in the diagnosis of PCG, including prenatal cases (151), the prediction of clinical course, and development of appropriate treatments (151). However, further studies are needed to determine the precise role of CYP1B1 in glaucoma and ASD disorders. The *Cyp1b1*-null mice provide an excellent experimental model for such studies. The hypothesis that CYP1B1 metabolizes an endogenous substrate to generate a metabolite crucial for development or eliminates a substrate that disrupts development can be elucidated using metabolomic approaches in aqueous humor of wild-type and *Cyp1b1*-null mice. Furthermore, gene expression studies along with 2D gel analysis and proteomics in the anterior eye of these mice during development should reveal important information regarding the involvement of *CYP1B1* in the pathogenesis of glaucoma.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any biases that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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