

## Forum Review

# Redox Regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B Activation: Distinct Redox Regulation Between the Cytoplasm and the Nucleus

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### ABSTRACT

**Reduction/oxidation (redox) regulation mediates numerous cellular responses and contributes to several physiological diseases. The transcription factor nuclear factor  $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B) is known to be a redox-sensitive factor. NF- $\kappa$ B plays a central role in immune responses and inflammation, through regulation of the gene expression of a large number of cytokines and other immune response genes. NF- $\kappa$ B is trapped in the cytoplasm in stimulated cells and translocates into the nucleus in response to several stimuli, including oxidative stress. Reactive oxygen species enhance the signal transduction pathways for NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the cytoplasm and translocation into the nucleus. In contrast, the DNA binding activity of oxidized NF- $\kappa$ B is significantly diminished, and that activity is restored by reducing enzymes, such as thioredoxin or redox factor 1. This review describes the signal transduction pathways for NF- $\kappa$ B activation and redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the cytoplasm and nucleus. *Antioxid. Redox Signal.* 7, 395–403.**

### INTRODUCTION

**M**OLECULAR OXYGEN is important for aerobic organisms using an electron acceptor in respiration. Although respiration is essential for generating energy in living organisms, it is harmful as well, due to formation of reactive oxygen species (ROS). ROS include the superoxide anion ( $O_2^-$ ), hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ), and hydroxyl radical ( $OH^\bullet$ ), which are generated from incomplete reduction of dioxygen primarily through mainly mitochondrial oxidative metabolism. ROS, which cause oxidative stress, can easily react with biological macromolecules, resulting in lipid peroxidation, strand breaks in nucleic acids, and oxidation of proteins. In contrast, it is known that several types of intracellular antioxidant molecules, such as glutathione (GSH), catalase, superoxide dismutase (SOD), and thioredoxin (TRX), protect cells from oxidative damage. For instance, ROS are reduced by GSH, in which the thiol residue is changed from GSH to GSSG. Regulation of intracellular reduction/oxidation processes is referred to as “redox” regulation.

In mammalian cells, the presence of ROS not only results in cell damage, but also triggers activation of protein kinase pathways, which regulate gene expression and control cell proliferation. In particular, it has been shown that ROS production modulates the immune response and is a critical regulator of cellular function. Activation of the transcription factor nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B) is known to be regulated by ROS (for review, see 33). NF- $\kappa$ B is a ubiquitous transcription factor that plays a crucial role in the regulation of numerous genes involved in immune response to pathogens and in cellular defense mechanisms. ROS can modulate NF- $\kappa$ B activation both positively and negatively. Studies of ROS regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation will provide new insight into understanding immune function and developing therapeutic agents for inflammatory diseases. Under basal conditions, NF- $\kappa$ B is localized in the cytoplasm in an inactive form; in response to stimuli, NF- $\kappa$ B is allowed to translocate into the nucleus where it activates target genes. This review will summarize recent advances in our understanding of the redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation, as well as the redox regulation of NF-

$\kappa$ B DNA binding activity in the nucleus by redox factor 1 (Ref-1).

## NF- $\kappa$ B STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPAL FEATURES

NF- $\kappa$ B was originally identified as a transcriptional activator regulating  $\kappa$  immunoglobulin gene expression (78). NF- $\kappa$ B transcriptional activity was induced in response to several stimuli, including tumor necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF $\alpha$ ), interleukin-1 (IL-1), lipopolysaccharide (LPS), H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, and T-cell receptor induction, and so on. Typically, NF- $\kappa$ B induces gene expression of a large number of immune molecules, including cytokines (IL-2, IL-6, IL-8, interferon- $\gamma$ , TNF $\alpha$ ), growth factors (granulocyte, monocyte, and granulocyte-monocyte colony-stimulating factors), immune receptors (T-cell receptor, MHC class I, IL-2 receptors, Fas), adhesion molecules (E-selectin, ICAM-1), and inducible nitric oxide (NO) synthase, among others (for review, see 5). Furthermore, NF- $\kappa$ B plays an important role in both apoptosis and cellular proliferation (for review, see 65). The NF- $\kappa$ B p65 subunit-deficient mouse exhibits embryonic lethality due to massive degeneration of the liver by programmed cell death or apoptosis of cells (8). The p65-deficient cells show an enhanced sensitivity to TNF-induced cell death (89). NF- $\kappa$ B induces several antiapoptotic molecules, including A20, inhibitor of apoptosis proteins c-IAP1 and c-IAP2, TNF receptor (TNFR)-associated factor 1 (TRAF1), TRAF2, Bcl-2, and Bcl-X (for review, see 65). In some cases, aberrant expression of NF- $\kappa$ B is attributed to oncogenesis and resistance of tumor chemotherapy (for review, see 68).

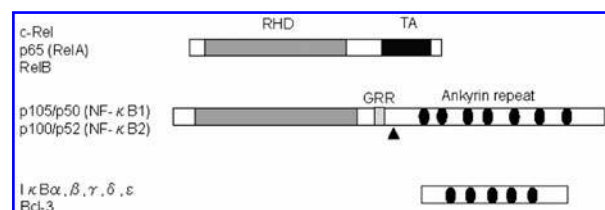
NF- $\kappa$ B is a member of the Rel family proteins, which include p50/p105, p52/p100, p65 (RelA), RelB, and c-Rel. These proteins form homodimers or heterodimers with other Rel family proteins (for review, see 90). As illustrated in Fig. 1, each NF- $\kappa$ B/Rel family protein has a conserved domain as the Rel homology domain in the amino-terminal region of ~300 amino acids. The Rel homology domain consists of a DNA binding domain, a dimerization domain, and a nuclear localization signal. Within the DNA binding domain, the

Cys62 residue of the p50 subunit is critical for ROS-regulated DNA binding (49, 52). The carboxy-terminal domains of the Rel family proteins are divided into two classes. p50/p105 and p52/p100 subunits have the ankyrin repeats motif in the carboxy-terminal region. This region is removed from p105 or p100 by proteolysis, generating the mature NF- $\kappa$ B subunits p50 or p52, respectively (10, 19). The precursor subunit as p105 or p100 plays the inhibitory role for NF- $\kappa$ B activation (70). In contrast, p65, RelB, and c-Rel have transactivation domains in their carboxy-terminal domains, and protein kinase A phosphorylation of Ser276 of the p65 subunit has been shown to enhance its transcriptional activity (100). Although Rel family proteins can form homodimers with each other (except RelB), the most prevalent form is a heterodimer of p50 and p65, which binds with high affinity to the DNA consensus sequence 5'-GGGPPuNNPyPyCC-3' and exhibits transactivation (4, 88).

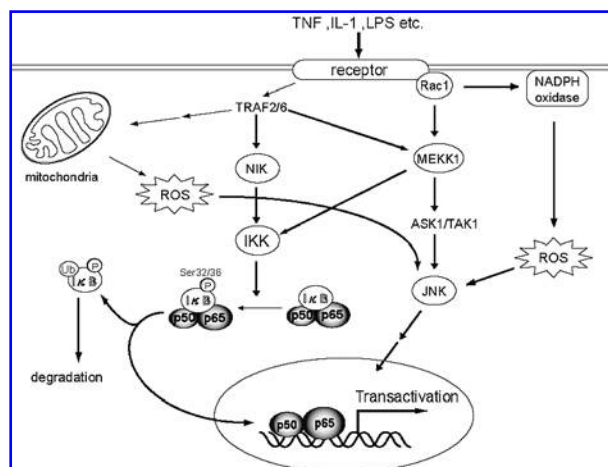
NF- $\kappa$ B is maintained in the cytoplasm through its interaction with the inhibitor of NF- $\kappa$ B (I $\kappa$ B) in unstimulated cells. Several members of the I $\kappa$ B family proteins have been identified, including I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\epsilon$ , and Bcl-3. Each I $\kappa$ B family protein has ankyrin repeats, which share homology with the carboxy-terminal region of the NF- $\kappa$ B precursors p105 and p100 (for review, see 90). Crystal structure analysis of the NF- $\kappa$ B/I $\kappa$ B complex clearly shows that interaction of NF- $\kappa$ B with I $\kappa$ B induces a conformational change in the NF- $\kappa$ B subunit that masks the nuclear localization signal region of NF- $\kappa$ B (29, 32). The NF- $\kappa$ B/I $\kappa$ B interaction is disrupted by modification of I $\kappa$ B phosphorylation sites in response to stimulation. Phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B results in its ubiquitination and degradation and, consequently, NF- $\kappa$ B is activated and translocates from the cytoplasm to the nucleus. Activated NF- $\kappa$ B induces expression of numerous target genes, including the I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  genes (41, 86). It is thought that newly synthesized I $\kappa$ B helps terminate NF- $\kappa$ B activation by sequestering NF- $\kappa$ B.

## REGULATION OF SERINE PHOSPHORYLATION OF I $\kappa$ B

In unstimulated cells, NF- $\kappa$ B subunits are trapped in the cytoplasm by their interaction with I $\kappa$ B. In response to various stimuli, I $\kappa$ B undergoes phosphorylation on serine/threonine residues, ubiquitination, and subsequent proteolytic degradation, thereby releasing NF- $\kappa$ B to translocate into the nucleus and activate gene expression. The signal transduction pathway mediating I $\kappa$ B serine phosphorylation upon TNF $\alpha$  stimulation has been well elucidated (for review, see 6). As shown in Fig. 2, TNF $\alpha$  binds TNFR2 and recruits TRAF2 to TNFR2 (72). Activated TRAF2 leads to activation of NF- $\kappa$ B-inducing kinase (NIK), and also mitogen-activated protein (MAP) kinases (7, 50, 66). NIK interacts with I $\kappa$ B kinase (IKK) (69). IKK was originally identified as a multiprotein kinase complex, which includes the IKK $\alpha$  and IKK $\beta$  kinases that specifically phosphorylate Ser32 and Ser36, respectively, of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  (42, 69). The serine-phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B is ubiquitinated and degraded. Additionally, NF- $\kappa$ B activation by IL-1 or LPS stimulation also activates the IKK pathway and phos-



**FIG. 1. The representative structures of NF- $\kappa$ B/Rel family proteins and I $\kappa$ Bs.** Rel family proteins have a conserved domain, the Rel homology domain (RHD). p65, RelB, and c-Rel have a transactivation domain (TA) in the carboxy-terminal region. The central region of p105/p50 and p100/p52 includes a protease cleavage site (marked by triangle) and a glycine-rich region (GRR), which is a protease recognition sequence. The carboxy-terminal region of p50 and p52 has an ankyrin repeat domain, which shares homology with I $\kappa$ B family proteins.



**FIG. 2. Redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation via serine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B.** TNF or other stimuli induce the phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B Ser32/Ser36 through parallel pathways: TRAF2/6–NIK or TRAF2/6–MEKK1. Phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B undergoes proteosomal degradation allowing NF- $\kappa$ B to translocate into the nucleus. MEKK1-mediated JNK activation results in further activation of NF- $\kappa$ B. ROS generated by stimulation of mitochondria or NADPH oxidase synergistically induce NF- $\kappa$ B activation.

phosphorylates the serine residues of I $\kappa$ B (57, 97). It has been reported that the cellular reductant *N*-acetylcysteine (NAC) represses TNF-induced NF- $\kappa$ B activation (63). NAC also inhibits phosphorylation of NIK, IKK $\alpha$ , and IKK $\beta$  in TNF-stimulated cells. Recently, Hayakawa *et al.* showed that the inhibition NF- $\kappa$ B activation by NAC and pyrrolidinedithiocarbamate (PDTC) is independent of antioxidative function upon TNF stimulation (22). They showed that NAC directly bound to TNFR1 and inhibited TNF-mediated signaling. Furthermore, PDTC inhibits ubiquitin ligase activity toward phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ , independent of ROS. In contrast, H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> increases and prolongs the activity of TNF $\alpha$ -activated IKK $\alpha$  in HeLa cells, but it has been known that H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced NF- $\kappa$ B activation is highly cell type-dependent (36). Thus, NF- $\kappa$ B activation does not seem to be a universal response to oxidative stress.

The tyrosine kinases Src and Abl are activated in response to oxidative stress and target cell death signals to mitochondria (40). Recently, Storz and Toker showed that protein kinase D (PKD) was required for oxidative stress-induced NF- $\kappa$ B activation by inducing tyrosine phosphorylation of IKK in HeLa cells (83). PKD activation in response to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> stimulation is mediated by Src and Abl, via phosphorylation of Tyr463 in the PKD pleckstrin homology domain. Furthermore, oxidative stress-activated Src induced the activation of not only the Abl-PKD pathway, but also the protein kinase C $\delta$  (PKC $\delta$ ) pathway (84). PKC $\delta$ , in turn, phosphorylates Ser738/742 of PKD, independently of Abl-mediated phosphorylation. PKD activation requires the coordinated signaling of both the Src-Abl and Src-PKC $\delta$  pathways. As mentioned later, oxidative stress, such as H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> production, also induces phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B, via activation of protein tyrosine kinases (PTKs). It is still unclear which of these diverse pathways of

I $\kappa$ B phosphorylation at serine or tyrosine residues results from oxidative stress.

## REDOX REGULATION OF NF- $\kappa$ B ACTIVATION VIA THE MAP KINASE PATHWAY

TNF, IL-1, or LPS stimulation induces not only activation of the IKK pathway, but also activation of the MAP kinase pathways mediated by c-Jun amino-terminal kinases (JNK) and p38, which are activated by TRAF2 upon TNF stimulation (82). It has been reported that TNF-activated TRAF2 interacts with several MAP kinase kinase kinases (MAP3Ks or MEKKs), thereby activating JNK or p38 (for review, see 44). MEKK1 interacts with the RING finger domain of activated TRAF2 or TRAF6 (7). The MAP3Ks, transforming growth factor- $\beta$ -activated kinase 1 (TAK1) and apoptosis signal-regulating kinase 1 (ASK1), have been also implicated in TRAF-dependent signaling pathways. IL-1 stimulation activates TAK1 through TRAF6 (60), whereas TNF stimulation activates ASK1 via TRAF2 (62). JNK coordinately activates IKK and induces phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B serine residues in response to TNF (42). Furthermore, MEKK1 directly activates IKK $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  within the IKK complex (42, 43). NIK can also directly activate IKK $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  (see below), but it remains unclear whether NIK and JNK pathways are independent or overlapping mechanisms of NF- $\kappa$ B activation. Activated JNK mediates many cellular functions, including apoptosis, cellular proliferation, tumorigenesis, and embryonic morphogenesis (for review, see 14). Activated JNK mediates serine phosphorylation of c-Jun (67), and phosphorylated c-Jun recruits its transcriptional coactivator CBP/p300 to form an active transcription factor (3). JNK also interacts with the NF- $\kappa$ B subunit c-Rel and induces NF- $\kappa$ B transactivation, but JNK does not directly phosphorylate NF- $\kappa$ B subunits (54). The mechanism of NF- $\kappa$ B activation by JNK is still unclear.

It is known that under TNF or IL-1 induction, intracellular ROS levels rise and ROS production up-regulates the JNK-mediated NF- $\kappa$ B activation (47). The small GTP binding protein Rac1, which belongs to the Ras superfamily of proteins, mediates signaling downstream of the IL-1 or LPS (CD14) receptors (64, 91). Rac proteins regulate NF- $\kappa$ B activity by activating JNK (13, 56). JNK activation by Rac is mediated by MEKK1, which phosphorylates JNK (16, 45, 74). The Rac proteins are also involved in the assembly of the neutrophil plasma membrane-associated NADPH oxidase system and regulate NADPH oxidase-mediated ROS production (1, 37). Sulciner *et al.* showed that the constitutively active mutant of Rac1, V12rac1, induced NF- $\kappa$ B activity through a redox-dependent pathway in HeLa cells (85). Expression of V12rac1 increased intracellular ROS, and treatment with the antioxidants PDTC or NAC decreased NF- $\kappa$ B activation by V12rac1. Rac-induced ROS production is also required for NF- $\kappa$ B activation upon IL-1 or LPS stimulation (11, 75). In contrast, TNF stimulation of mitochondrial ROS production, which also induces NF- $\kappa$ B activity, depends on TRAF2 (12). Furthermore, TNF induces Mn-SOD expression in mitochondria and enhances intracellular ROS levels, independently of Rac-

mediated ROS production by IL-1 or LPS stimulation (71). Thus, ROS production is closely correlated with NF- $\kappa$ B activation via the IKK pathway, but a full understanding of the molecular mechanisms of ROS-mediated NF- $\kappa$ B activation will require further studies.

### REDOX REGULATION VIA TYROSINE PHOSPHORYLATION OF I $\kappa$ B

In addition to activation of NF- $\kappa$ B via serine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B, I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  is also regulated by phosphorylation at Tyr42 (80), as illustrated in Fig. 3. Exposure of cells to hypoxia or H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> stimulates I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  tyrosine phosphorylation and NF- $\kappa$ B activation (38, 77). Interestingly, the tyrosine phosphatase inhibitor pervanadate induces I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  tyrosine phosphorylation and activates NF- $\kappa$ B without proteolytic degradation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  (31). Engagement of receptor-associated PTKs stimulates the ras/raf1/MAP kinases pathway (for review, see 35). Lck, a member of the Src family PTKs, is activated by oxidative stress, such as diamide or H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (59, 99). In T-lymphocytes, induction of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  tyrosine phosphorylation and NF- $\kappa$ B activation in response to treatment with pervanadate or hypoxia/reoxygenation (H/R) is dependent on Lck (31, 46). Analysis of Lck-deficient JCaM1 cells demonstrated that Lck is required for ceramide-induced NF- $\kappa$ B activation, but not TNF $\alpha$ -mediated induction of NF- $\kappa$ B activity (51). Livolsi *et al.* showed that loss of Lck in Jurkat cells suppressed the phosphorylation of Tyr42 of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  (46). Furthermore, H/R exposure activates Lck and results in I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  tyrosine phosphorylation (48).

Similarly, it is known that Src is required for NF- $\kappa$ B activation by UV irradiation or TNF $\alpha$  stimulation (2, 17). Fan *et al.* showed that under H/R or pervanadate stimulation, the phos-

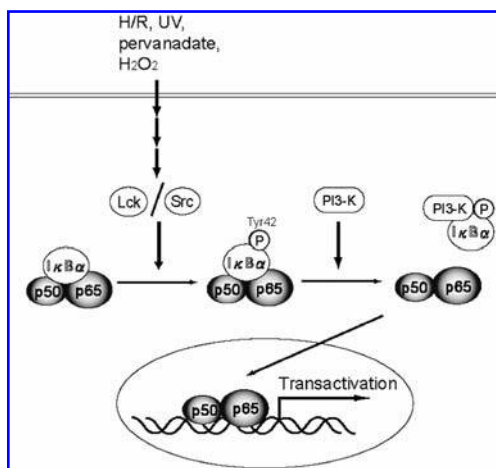
phorylation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  Tyr42 is significantly decreased in the presence of the Src inhibitor protein phosphatase 2 or in Src-deficient T-lymphocytes (20). Furthermore, overexpression of the ROS scavengers catalase or glutathione peroxidase-1, but not Mn-SOD or Cu,Zn-SOD, reduced Src kinase activity, I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  Tyr42 phosphorylation, and NF- $\kappa$ B activation in response to pervanadate stimulation. These results suggested that ROS may regulate the signaling pathways mediating I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  tyrosine phosphorylation. In contrast, Krejsa *et al.* showed that the activation of NF- $\kappa$ B by pervanadate was independent of redox regulation (39). Treatment with antioxidants, such as PDTC or NAC, diminished both intracellular oxidation and pervanadate-induced tyrosine phosphorylation. However, antioxidants did not block the DNA binding activity of NF- $\kappa$ B, induced by the pervanadate compounds, sodium oxodiperoxo(1,10-phenanthroline)vanadate [pV(phen)] or bis(maltolato)-oxovanadium(IV) (BMOV) in Jurkat cells. However, ROS regulation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  phosphorylation may differ, depending on the cell type or stimulation conditions, and the molecular mechanism of pervanadate-induced NF- $\kappa$ B activation is unclear.

As mentioned above, tyrosine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  does not lead to proteolytic degradation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ . Beraud *et al.* showed that the p85 subunit of phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI3-K) was an interactor of tyrosine-phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  using a phosphor-peptide of the Tyr42 region of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  (9). Furthermore, the PI3-K inhibitor wortmannin repressed the activation of NF- $\kappa$ B, but did not affect tyrosine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  in response to pervanadate induction. Sizemore *et al.* showed that treatment with the PI3-K inhibitor LY294,002 did not affect NF- $\kappa$ B nuclear translocation or DNA binding activity upon IL-1 stimulation, but decreased the phosphorylation of p65/RelA and repressed p65/RelA mediated transactivation (81). Furthermore, Akt, which is the PI3-K-activated protein kinase, also induces p65/RelA activation. The exact mechanism mediating the interaction between PI3-K and Tyr42-phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  is unclear, but this interaction may mediate PI3-K/Akt-dependent p65/RelA transcription.

### REDOX REGULATION OF NF- $\kappa$ B DNA BINDING ACTIVITY IN THE NUCLEUS

In the cytoplasm, oxidative stress or ROS can directly or synergistically mediate an up-regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation. In contrast, it is known that oxidation of NF- $\kappa$ B decreases its DNA binding activity in the nucleus (87). Under oxidative conditions, Cys62 of the p50 subunit is critical to DNA binding activity *in vitro* (51). Furthermore, NO also inhibits the NF- $\kappa$ B DNA binding activity, through nitrosylation of the p50 Cys62 (52). Activation of NF- $\kappa$ B induces a large amount of NO production, by up-regulating the expression of inducible NO synthase (96). It is thought that NO production serves as a negative regulator of NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the nucleus.

TRX is a ubiquitously expressed small protein, which can reduce oxidized proteins, including activator protein-1



**FIG. 3. Redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation via tyrosine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B.** Oxidative stress or other stimuli induce the activation of tyrosine kinases, Lck or Src, and result in the phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B Tyr42. NF- $\kappa$ B is released from phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B and translocates into the nucleus. Phosphorylated I $\kappa$ B interacts with PI3-K.



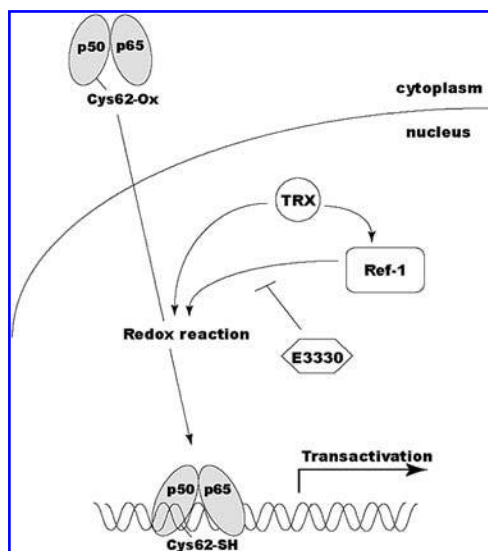
(AP-1) (76). TRX can also reduce the oxidized p50 subunit and restore DNA binding activity of NF- $\kappa$ B. Initially, TRX was thought to be an inhibitor of NF- $\kappa$ B activation, because overexpression of TRX inhibits I $\kappa$ B degradation upon TNF stimulation and suppresses NF- $\kappa$ B transactivation (55). Furthermore, TRX directly inhibits ASK1 activation, which mediates JNK activation (see below) (73). Hirota *et al.* showed that TRX was mainly localized in the cytoplasm, but under phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate (PMA) or TNF $\alpha$  stimulation, TRX translocated into the nucleus and enhanced the DNA binding activity of NF- $\kappa$ B (24, 25). Thus, TRX has opposing actions: up-regulating NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the nucleus, while down-regulating NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the cytoplasm. Glutaredoxin (GRX) and nucleoredoxin (NRX), well-known intracellular oxidoreducing enzymes, can regulate activation of NF- $\kappa$ B, as well as other transcription factors, such as AP-1 and CREB (26). However, whereas TRX translocates from the cytoplasm to the nucleus upon stimulation, GRX and NRX are constitutively located in the cytoplasm or nucleus, respectively, independent of stimulation. The exact mechanism by which these reducing enzymes modulate NF- $\kappa$ B activity is still unclear, but TRX, GRX, and NRX may play either distinct or overlapping roles in redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation.

The quinone derivative E3330, which has a therapeutic effect on endotoxin-induced hepatitis in mice, inhibits LPS-induced TNF $\alpha$  production and selectively suppresses NF- $\kappa$ B-mediated gene expression (23, 58). In PMA-stimulated cells, E3330 does not suppress I $\kappa$ B degradation or translocation of NF- $\kappa$ B, but significantly reduces the NF- $\kappa$ B DNA binding activity. Ref-1 has been identified as an E3330 binding pro-

tein using latex affinity beads (79). Ref-1 is a nuclear protein that was first identified as an apurinic/aprimidinic endonuclease (APE), and participates in base excision repair in response to genotoxic stress (for review, see 21). Ref-1 mediates the redox regulation of several transcription factors, including AP-1, CREB/ATF, p53, and hypoxia-inducible factor-1 $\alpha$  (18, 34, 94). The oxidatively repressed DNA binding activity of NF- $\kappa$ B is repaired by Ref-1, and E3330 blocks this rescue through its interaction with Ref-1 (79). However, the APE domain of Ref-1 is located in the carboxy-terminal region, whereas Ref-1 modulation of the redox activation of AP-1 requires a cysteine residue in the amino-terminal region (92, 95). Maleimide labeling of the oxidized NF- $\kappa$ B p50 subunit clearly showed that Ref-1 selectively reduced the oxidized Cys62 of p50 (61). Furthermore, from *in vivo* analysis, Cys62 is oxidized in the cytoplasm, but following PMA stimulation, p50 is in the reduced form in the nucleus. E3330 selectively inhibits the reduction of p50 Cys62. This study strongly suggests that Ref-1-mediated p50 reduction is a prerequisite for NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the nucleus. Ref-1 can interact directly with targeted transcription factors and with TRX (24). In cells subjected to ionizing radiation, Ref-1 interacts with TRX in the nucleus and both Ref-1 and TRX are required for DNA binding activity of AP-1 (93). Thus, Ref-1 and TRX may synergistically contribute to redox regulation of transcription factors in the nucleus (as illustrated in Fig. 4).

## CONCLUSION

NF- $\kappa$ B translocates from the cytoplasm to the nucleus and activates gene expression in response to a number of stimuli. Interestingly, ROS production exerts opposing effects on NF- $\kappa$ B, inducing activation in the cytoplasm, but causing inactivation in the nucleus. In this review, several of the signal transduction pathways of NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the cytoplasm and redox regulation of DNA binding activity in the nucleus have been described. The pathways leading to NF- $\kappa$ B activation can be classified roughly into two groups, depending on the type of stimulation: those that result in serine phosphorylation, and those that result in tyrosine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B (Figs. 2 and 3). But these two pathways are not strictly divided. For instance, in some cases, oxidative stress induces serine phosphorylation of I $\kappa$ B. However, further study is needed to understand how phosphorylation pathways are selected in response to various stimuli, because the signal transduction pathways are complicated, and the two different pathways may interact with each other. ROS production, as well as oxidative stimulation, can mediate NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the cytoplasm, either independently of, or synergistically with, phosphorylation pathways. In contrast, the DNA binding activity of oxidized NF- $\kappa$ B is significantly suppressed, and enzymes such as TRX or Ref-1 act to reduce NF- $\kappa$ B and restore DNA binding activity of the protein in the nucleus (Fig. 4). The molecular mechanism of ROS-mediated NF- $\kappa$ B regulation is largely unknown. NF- $\kappa$ B activation is responsible for numerous cellular responses, such as inflammation, oncogenesis, and aging. Studies addressing the molecular basis of



**FIG. 4. Redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation in the nucleus.** Upon stimulation, NF- $\kappa$ B, with an oxidized p50 subunit Cys62, translocates into the nucleus. TRX and Ref-1 directly or synergistically reduce the oxidized cysteine and enhance the DNA binding activity of NF- $\kappa$ B. The antiinflammatory agent E3330 selectively inhibits Ref-1-mediated NF- $\kappa$ B reduction.

redox regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B will provide an understanding of pathogenic diseases and will aid in developing selective agents for NF- $\kappa$ B-mediated disorders.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AP-1, activator protein-1; APE, apurinic/aprimidinic endonuclease; ASK1, apoptosis signal-regulating kinase 1; GRX, glutaredoxin; GSH, glutathione;  $H_2O_2$ , hydrogen peroxide; H/R, hypoxia/reoxygenation; I $\kappa$ B, inhibitor of NF- $\kappa$ B; IKK, I $\kappa$ B kinase; IL, interleukin; JNK, c-Jun amino-terminal kinase; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; MAP, mitogen-activated protein; MAP3K and MEKK, MAP kinase kinase kinase; NAC, N-acetylcysteine; NF- $\kappa$ B, nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B; NIK, NF- $\kappa$ B-inducing kinase; NO, nitric oxide; NRX, nucleoredoxin; PDTC, pyrrolidinedithiocarbamate; PI3-K, phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase; PKC, protein kinase C; PKD, protein kinase D; PMA, phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate; PTK, protein tyrosine kinase; Ref-1, redox factor 1; ROS, reactive oxygen species; SOD, superoxide dismutase; TAK1, transforming growth factor- $\beta$ -activated kinase 1; TNF, tumor necrosis factor; TNFR, TNF receptor; TRAF, TNFR-associated factor; TRX, thioredoxin.

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