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Gold nanoparticles regulate the blimp1/pax5 pathway and enhance antibody secretion in B-cells

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Abstract

Nanoparticles are potential threats to human health and the environment; however, their medical applications as drug carriers targeting cancer cells bring hope to contemporary cancer therapy. As a model drug carrier, gold nanoparticles (GNPs) have been investigated extensively for *in vivo* toxicity. The effect of GNPs on the immune system, however, has rarely been examined. Antibody-secreting cells were treated with GNPs with diameters ranging from 2 to 50 nm. The GNPs enhanced IgG secretion in a size-dependent manner, with a peak of efficacy at 10 nm. The immune-stimulatory effect reached a maximum at 12 h after treatment but returned to control levels 24 h after treatment. This enhancing effect was validated *ex vivo* using B-cells isolated from mouse spleen. Evidence from RT-PCR and western blot experiments indicates that GNP-treatment upregulated B-lymphocyte-induced maturation protein 1 (blimp1) and downregulated paired box 5 (pax5). Immunostaining for blimp1 and pax5 in B-cells confirmed that the GNPs stimulated IgG secretion through the blimp1/pax5 pathway. The immunization of mice using peptide-conjugated GNPs indicated that the GNPs were capable of enhancing humoral immunity in a size-dependent manner. This effect was consistent with the bio-distribution of the GNPs in mouse spleen. In conclusion, *in vitro*, *ex vivo*, and *in vivo* evidence supports our hypothesis that GNPs enhance humoral immunity in mouse. The effect on the immune system should be taken into account if nanoparticles are used as carriers for drug delivery. In addition to their toxicity, the immune-stimulatory activity of nanoparticles could play an important role in human health and could have an environmental impact.

Keywords: gold nanoparticle, antibody secretion, immune system, B-cell

(Some figures may appear in colour only in the online journal)

1. Introduction

GNP conjugates have been used in biomedical diagnostics and analytics, photothermal and photodynamic therapies, and drug delivery [1–3] in particular, targeted drug delivery in antitumor treatment [4]. Active targeting provides a powerful approach

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to increasing drug efficacy at specific sites. However, the potential toxicological and immunologic effects of nanoparticles may reduce drug efficacy in therapeutictreatment.

The *in vitro* and *in vivo* toxicity of GNPs has been investigated, mostly *in vitro*. GNPs enter cells in a size- and shape-dependent manner [5, 6]. The uptake of GNPs reaches a maximum when the size nears 50 nm and when the aspect ratio approaches unity. The transport efficiency reaches a plateau 30 min after incubation. The uptake of GNPs is consistent with receptor-mediated endocytosis. Nevertheless, most GNPs can enter cells efficiently, and most studies indicate that they are nearly harmless to cultured cells [7–10]. The bio-distribution of injected GNPs has shown a size-dependent accumulation in liver, spleen, and kidney [11]. Although biocompatibility is associated with GNPs, the injection of GNPs causes impairment of cognition in mice [12]. A heavy dose of GNPs has lethal size-dependent effects most notably on the ability of modified GNPs to stimulate antibody secretion [13, 14]. It should be noted that GNPs enhance a focused antigenic response which corresponds to the accumulation of GNPs in the spleen [14].

GNPs interact substantially with the immune system. Colloidal gold is an extraordinary carrier that can be used to generate antibodies against relatively small haptens, such as glutamate [15–17]. As a carrier, the immunogenic properties of gold nanoparticles have been reported [18]. GNPs are toxic *in vivo* and have immunogenic properties that are associated with their lethal effects [13]. GNPs also show size-dependent immune-stimulating activity when used as vaccine carriers [14]. In a recent report, 10 nm GNPs induced the transcriptional activation of NF-κB in a B-lymphocyte cell line [19]. Treatment with 10 nm GNPs induced the activation of an NF-κB-regulated reporter gene. An interaction with the cysteine residues on IkB kinases (IKK), NF-κB signal transduction proteins was proposed as a mechanism. The activation of the canonical NF-κB signaling pathway is indicated by IkBa phosphorylation, followed by IkBa degradation and increased nuclear RelA localization. The expression of an IkBa suppressor reversed GNP-induced NF-κB activation. This *in vitro* evidence clearly indicates that GNP-cell interactions can be specific, particularly in B-cells. We hypothesize that GNPs may affect the antibody secretion of B-cells through specific signal transduction pathways and in a size-dependent manner.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Preparation and characterization of gold nanoparticles

GNPs of 2, 5, 8, 12, 17, 37, and 50 nm in diameter were synthesized as reported previously [14]. The seed colloids were prepared by adding 1 ml of 0.25 mM $HAuCl_4$ to 90 ml of H_2O and stirring for 1 min at 25 °C. Two milliliters of 38.8 mM sodium citrate was added to the solution and stirred for 1 min, followed by the addition of 0.6 ml freshly prepared 0.1 M $NaBH_4$ in 38.8 mM sodium citrate. The solution was stirred for an additional 5–10 min at 0–4 °C. Different diameters of GNPs, ranging from 2 to 50 nm, were generated by changing the volume of the seed colloid added. The reaction temperature and time were adjusted to control the size of the GNPs. All the synthesized GNPs were characterized by UV absorbance and verified by electron microscopy or atomic force microscopy.

2.2. Cell culture

Murine antibody-generating cells against haptoglobin (5B1B3 B cells, splenocytes fused with myeloma cells) were cultured in DMEM (GIBCO, Gaithersburg, MD) containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Jacques Boy, Reims, France), 2 mM L-glutamine (Boehringer, M12-702, Mannheim, Germany), 100 U ml^{-1} penicillin (GIBCO) and 100 U ml^{-1} streptomycin (GIBCO) at 37 °C, 5% CO_2, and 99% humidity. Cells in the exponential growth phase at a minimum density of 1×10^6 cells ml^{-1} were collected and assayed for IgG secretion.

2.3. Designing of synthetic peptide

The immunogenic peptides against the foot and mouth disease virus (FMDV) were designed and synthesized based on viral protein 1 of type O FMDV. The amino acid sequence for pFMDV is NGSSKYGDTSTNNVRGDLQVLAQKAERTLC. An extra cysteine was added to the C-terminus of each peptide to improve the binding to the gold surface [20]. The conjugation of the antigen with the GNPs was performed by titrating the antigens into a GNP solution. The titration was monitored by UV absorption at the wavelength appropriate for each peptide to detect the aggregation of unsaturated GNP in the presence of 1 M sodium chloride. The conjugated complexes were purified by centrifugation and resuspended in PBS at a final concentration of 0.01 $\mu g\ \mu l^{-1}$.

2.4. Immunization of mice

The animal treatments were performed according to 'The Guidelines for the Care and Use of Experimental Animals' of National Chiao Tung University. Four-week-old male BALB/C mice were housed at 22 ± 2 °C with a 12-h light/dark cycle and fed standard rodent chow and water *ad libitum*. The mice were randomly assigned to the experimental groups. Each group consisted of six mice.

The groups of four-week-old BALB/c mice were given intraperitoneal (IP) and subcutaneous (SC) immunizations of GNPs (8 or 12 nm) conjugated with pFMDVA, pFMDVB, pFMDVC, pFMDVD, and pFMDV. Those antigens were mixed with equal volumes of complete and incomplete adjuvant before administration. For all groups, the mice were immunized on weeks 0, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, and 9, and blood was collected from the tail vein after weeks 4, 6, 8, and 10. The sera were collected after centrifugation and stored at −20 °C. The animals were sacrificed at the end of the experiment by cardiac puncture under CO_2 anesthesia. The spleens were isolated, and the organ weights of all the mice were measured.

2.5. Inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS)

For the total element determinations, standard solutions were prepared by the dilution of a multi-element standard (1000 mg l^{-1} in 1 M HNO_3) obtained from Merck (Darmstadt, Germany). Nitric acid (65%), hydrochloric acid (37%), perchloric acid (70%), and hydrogen peroxide (30%) of

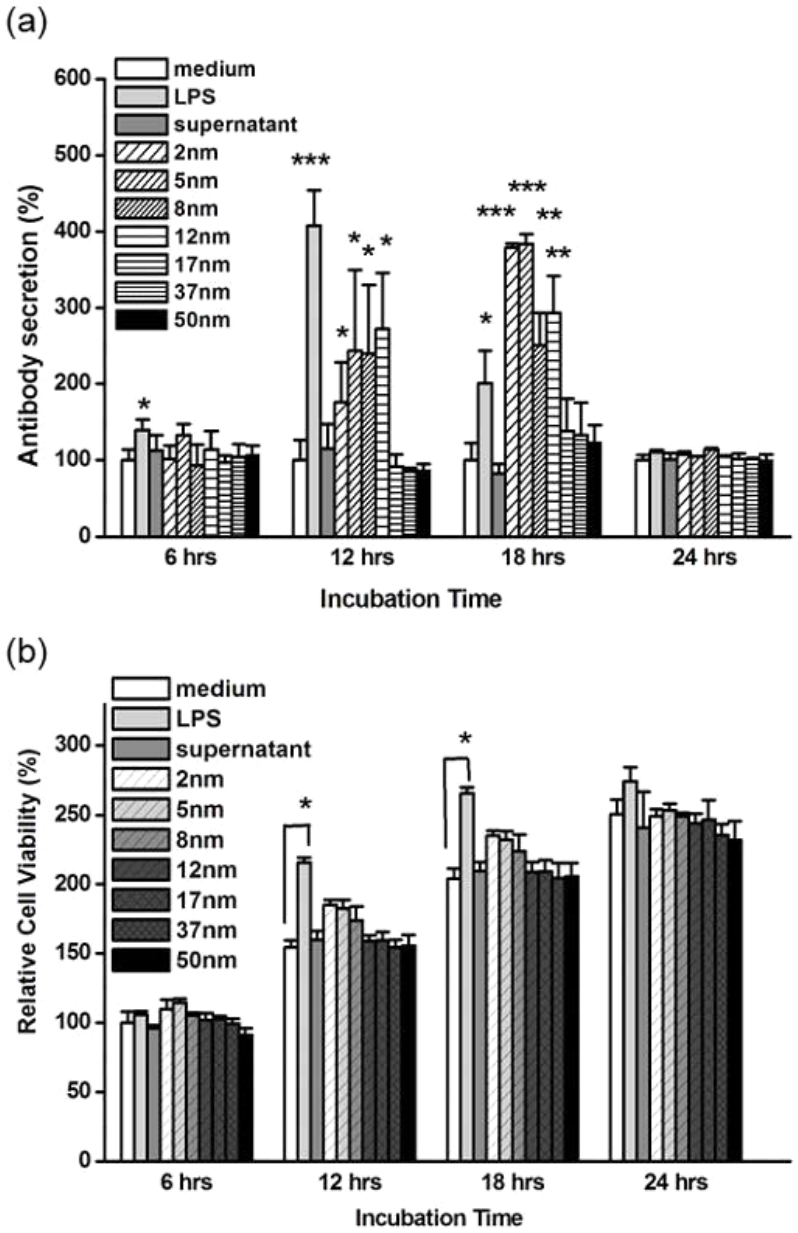

Figure 1. Effects of GNP treatment on the antibody secretion and cell viability of an IgG-secreting cell line. The antibody-generating cell line was treated with 5 μM GNPs, of diameters ranging from 2 to 50 nm, and incubated for 6, 12, 18 and 24 h. LPS served as a positive control. Medium and GNP supernatant served as negative controls. (a) Secreted antibody versus incubation time. (b) Cell viability versus incubation time. The amount of immunoglobulin G secretion was determined by ELISA. The results are expressed as the means ± SD ($n = 6$). * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ when compared with medium control.

Suprapur® grade (Merck) were used to mineralize the samples. A size-exclusion column was connected to the ICP-MS apparatus. The spleen samples were homogenized in 25 mM Tris (hydroxymethyl) aminomethane (Tris)—12.5 mM HCl buffer solution at pH 8 and centrifuged at 13 000 rpm for 1 h. The supernatant was applied to the size-exclusion column of the HPLC system, which had been equilibrated with 25 mM Tris–12.5 mM HCl (containing 20 mM KCl), and was eluted with the same buffer at a flow rate of 1 ml min^{-1}. The metal components of the metal-binding proteins that were eluted from the HPLC system were detected by ICP-MS (Perkin Elmer, SCIEX ELAN 5000). The main operating conditions were as follows: RF power, 1900 W; carrier gas flow, 0.8 l min^{-1} Ar; and makeup gas flow, 0.19 l min^{-1} Ar.

2.6. Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA)

Each well of an ELISA plate (Nunc, Roskilde, Denmark) was coated with haptoglobin (0.02 μg μl^{-1}) in phosphate buffered saline (PBS). The unbound proteins were washed three times with PBS followed by incubation with 1% (wt/vol) skim milk for 2 h at 37 °C. One hundred microliters of culture medium (2–3 weeks following the fusion) was added and incubated at room temperature for 1 h. Each well was washed 3 times

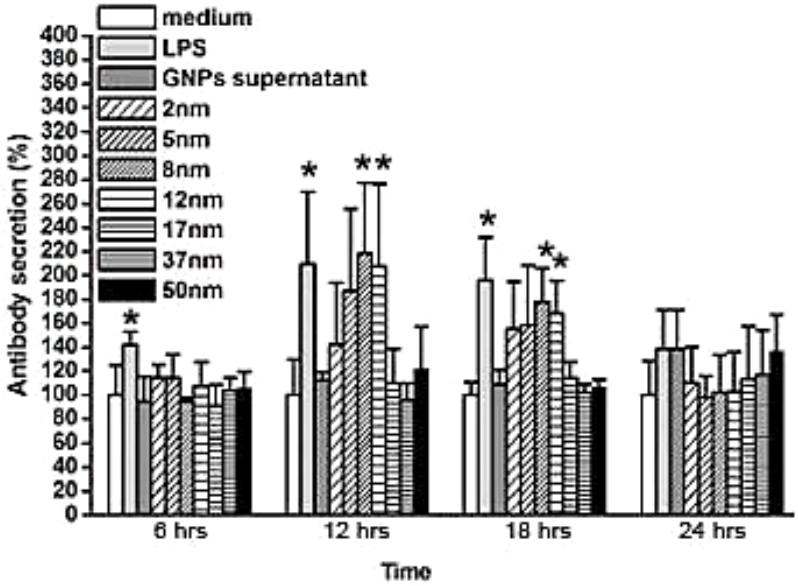

Figure 2. Effects of GNP treatment on the antibody secretion of B-cells isolated from splenocytes. B-cells were treated with 5 μM GNPs of diameters ranging from 2 to 50 nm and incubated for 6, 12, 18 and 24 h. LPS served as positive control. Medium and GNP supernatant served as negative controls. The amount of immunoglobulin G secretion was determined by ELISA. The results are expressed as the means $\pm$ SD ($n = 6$). * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ when compared with medium control.

with PBS containing 0.05% Tween-20. The bound antibodies were detected using a goat anti-mouse IgG conjugated to horseradish peroxidase (HRP) at 37 °C for 1 h in PBS containing 0.05% Tween-20. Finally, each well was washed and developed with 3,3′,5,5′-Tetramethylbenzidine (TMB), and the binding efficiency was monitored by measuring the absorbance at 405 nm.

2.7. Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)

Total RNA was extracted from 10^6 cells using TRI-reagent (Talron Biotech) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The RNA was isolated by chloroform extraction and isopropanol precipitation, followed by ethanol washes to remove the impurities and unwanted organic compounds. The purified RNA was resuspended in DEPC-treated water and quantified by measuring the OD260. The OD260-to-OD280 ratio usually exceeded 2.0. Following the spectrophotometric determination of the RNA yield, cDNA was synthesized with oligo(dT) primers by reverse transcription using SuperScript III Reverse Transcriptase (Invitrogen). An aliquot of the cDNA was subjected to 30 cycles of PCR using a standard procedure denaturing at 94 °C for 30 s, annealing the B-lymphocyte-induced maturation protein 1 (blimp1) and GAPDH primers at 55 °C, or the paired box 5 (pax5) primers at 45 °C for 30 s, and elongating at 72 °C for 1 min. The amplified products were resolved on a 1.8% agarose gel and visualized by ethidium bromide staining. The respective forward and reverse primers used for the amplifications were 5′-TGGACTGGGTGGACATGAGAG-3′ and 5′-AAGTGGTGGAACTCCTCTCTG-3′ for *blimp1*; 5′-TTATGAGACAGGAAGCATCAAGC-3′ and 5′-CGTGTTT GAGAGACAGCACTAC-3′ for *pax5*; and 5′-GCCTACCTC ATGGGACTGAA-3′ and 5′-ACATTCTGCCCTTTGGTG AC-3′ for *GAPDH*.

2.8. Western blot analysis

SDS-PAGE using 15% polyacrylamide gels (unless specified otherwise) was used to analyze the cell lysate using a modified procedure described previously [21]. Electrophoresis was conducted in a vertical slab gel unit (Mini PIII, Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA) equipped with a PAC 300 power supply (Bio-Rad). All of the SDS-PAGE samples (20 μg) were equilibrated in 10 mM Tris-HCl and 5% SDS (pH 7.6) before being loaded onto the gel. Following electrophoresis, the gel was soaked briefly and rapidly in a transfer buffer containing 25 mM Tris, 192 mM glycine, 20% methanol, and 0.0375% SDS (pH 8.3) for 30 s. The gel was then immediately electrotransferred to a PVDF membrane at 90 mA for 60 min in a semi-dry transfer apparatus (Bio-Rad). The membrane was immersed in 5% skim milk for 1 h with gentle shaking. Following three washes with PBS for 5 min each, the membrane was incubated for 1 h at room temperature with a mouse monoclonal antibody raised against blimp1 (Abcam) and pax 5 (Cell Signaling) at 1:1000 dilutions in PBS containing 0.1% skim milk and 0.05% (v/v) Tween-20. The membrane was washed three times with the same dilution buffer and was then incubated with a commercially available goat anti-mouse IgG conjugated with horseradish peroxidase (Chemcon; Temecula, CA) at a 1:10 000 dilution for 1 h. Finally, the membrane was developed using chemiluminescence. The chemiluminescent detection was performed using western blotting luminol and oxidizing reagents (Bio-Rad; CA, USA).

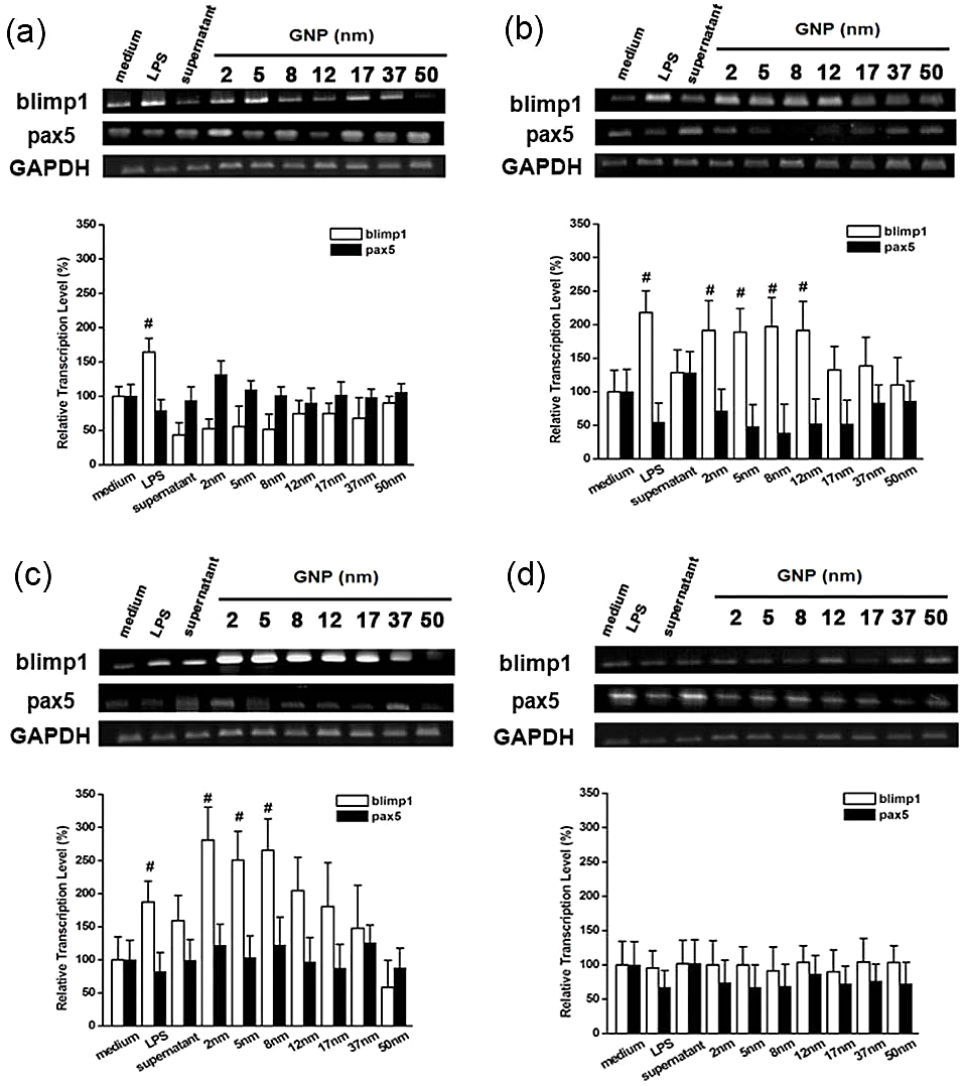

Figure 3. Effect of GNP treatment on the transcription levels of blimp1 and pax5 in antibody-secreting cells. The antibody-generating cells were treated with 5 μM GNPs for 6 h (a), 12 h (b), 18 h (c) and 24 h (d). The level of blimp1 and pax5 mRNA expression was determined by RT-PCR analysis and visualized by ethidium bromide staining of a 1.8% agarose gel. GAPDH was used as an internal control.

2.9. Immunofluorescent staining

Glass cover slips were sterilized by immersing them in 75% ethanol, drying them over a flame, and placing them into the wells of a six-well culture plate. The hybridoma cells (5×10^6) in 2 ml of DMEM medium containing 10% FBS were seeded over the individual cover slips and grown at 37 °C to 50–70% confluence. Following the removal of the culture medium, the cells in each well were rinsed twice with PBS and fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde (sigma) in PBS and then incubated at room temperature for 15 min. After three rinses with PBS, the cells were treated with 0.1% Triton X-100 (pH 8.0) at room temperature for 15 min. Following the washes with PBS, the cover slips were incubated in 1% bovine serum albumin (BSA) to block nonspecific staining and were then incubated with a primary mouse antibody against anti-blimp1 (diluted 1:400) and a rabbit antibody against anti-pax5 (diluted 1:50) at 4 °C overnight. After PBS washes, the cells were incubated with Alexa Fluor 488 goat anti-mouse antibody, Dylight^{TM} 549-conjugated AffiniPure goat anti-rabbit antibody and DAPI for 1.5 h. The samples were mounted and imaged using a Leica TCS SP2 confocal microscope.

2.10. Statistical analyses

All data are presented as the means ± standard deviation (SD), with a minimum of six mice in each group. The concentrations of biogenic amines and ach in the spleen samples were analyzed using an unpaired Student's t-test. The criterion for statistical significance was $p < 0.05$ for all statistical evaluations.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. GNPs enhanced immunoglobulin G (IgG) secretion in B-cells

To investigate the immune-stimulating activity of the GNPs, 5B1B3 mouse hybridoma cells (secreting anti-haptoglobin

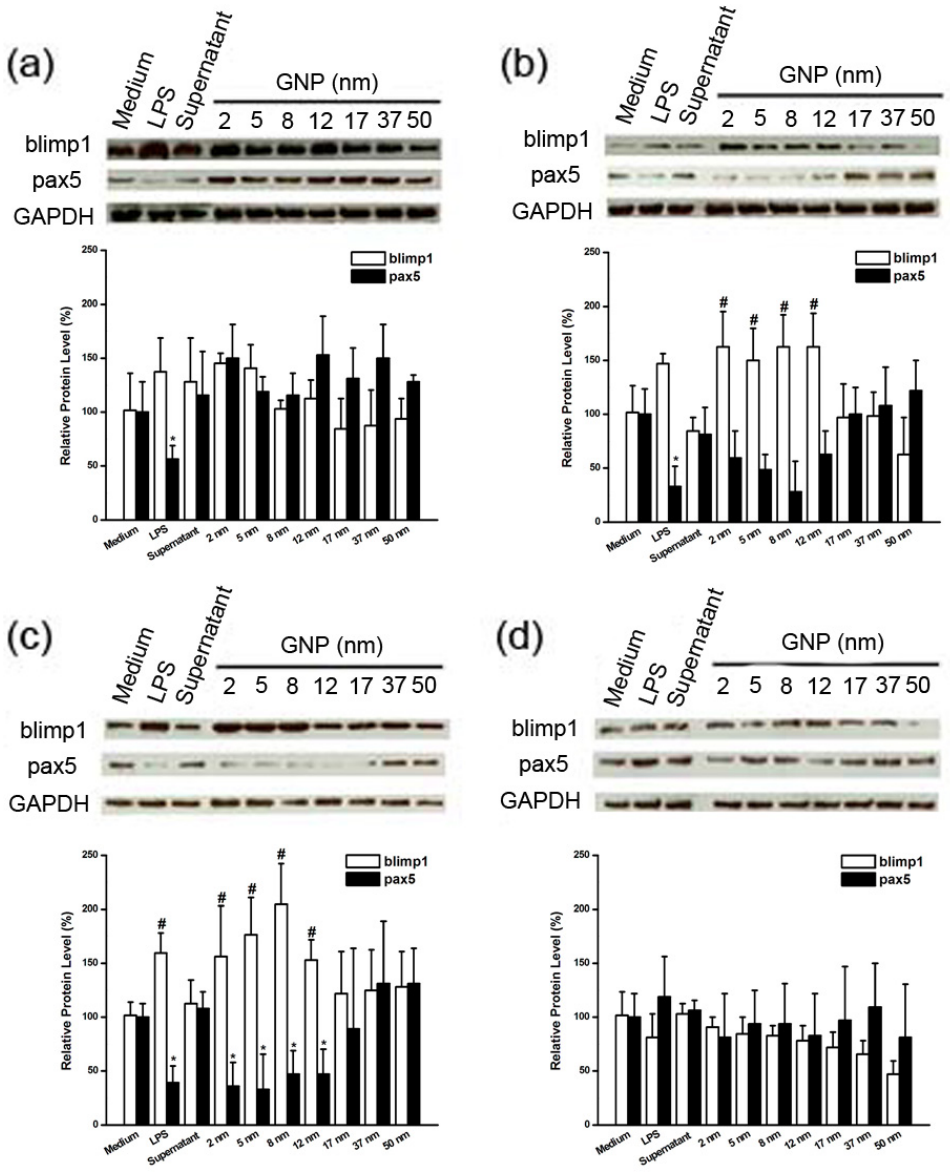

Figure 4. Western blot analysis of blimp1 and pax5 for antibody-generating cells treated with GNPs. The antibody-generating cells were treated with 5 μM GNPs for 6 h (a), 12 h (b), 18 h (c) and 24 h (d). Cell extracts were prepared and separated by 10% SDS-PAGE. Western blotting was performed using antibodies recognizing blimp1, pax5 and GAPDH. The measured specific bands were normalized against GAPDH. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$.

IgG) were treated with GNPs ranging from 2 to 50 nm for 6, 12, 18 and 24 h (figure 1). The secretion of IgG into the culture media was quantified by ELISA. The GNPs enhanced IgG secretion by the 5B1B3 cells. The IgG secretion peaked at 12 to 18 h after the treatment and returned to baseline at 24 h. The enhancing effect was size-dependent. The maximum stimulation occurred between 2 and 12 nm. The cell viability did not vary significantly with GNP treatment, indicating that the stimulation of IgG secretion was not dependent on cell number. To verify the antibody-stimulatory activity of the GNPs, B-cells were isolated from mouse spleens and treated with GNPs (figure 2). The GNP treatment enhanced IgG secretion at 12 and 18 h. The enhancing effect was at a maximum for the 8-nm and 12-nm GNPs. The enhancing effect of the GNPs on the B-cells was analogous to that for the hybridoma cells. The *in vitro* and *ex vivo* evidence indicates that the GNPs stimulated humoral immunity in a size-dependent and time-dependent manner.

3.2. GNPs regulated blimp1/pax5 pathway

B-lymphocyte-induced maturation protein 1 (blimp1) and paired box 5 (pax5) are key factors that regulate the secretion of IgG in B-cells [22, 23]. The expression of blimp1 positively regulates the secretion of IgG, while pax5 down regulates IgG secretion. To test the hypothesis that GNPs may enhance IgG secretion via the blimp1/pax5 pathway, RT-PCR and western blot were performed (figures 3 and 4).In general, the levels of transcription and protein expression for blimp1 and pax5 were complementary. The expression of blimp1 increased in

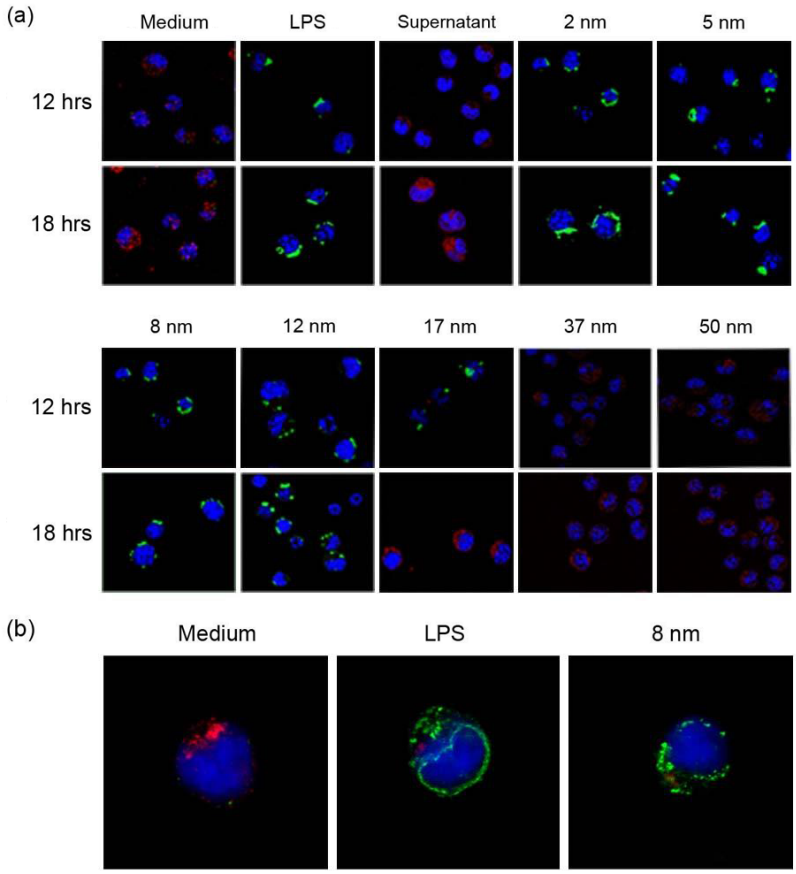

Figure 5. Immunostaining for blimp1 and pax5 in GNP-treated cells. (a) The antibody-generating cells were treated with GNPs for 12 and 18 h, followed by immunostaining for blimp1 (green) and pax5 (red), which were visualized by confocal microscopy. DAPI staining was performed to localize the nuclei (blue). (b) Detailed images of cells treated with medium, LPS and 8 nm GNP for 12 h.

B-cells during both the 12 and 18-h treatments with 2 to 12 nm GNPs. The levels of pax5 expression decreased under the same conditions. The results suggest that the GNPs stimulated IgG secretion by B-cells through the blimp1/pax5 pathway.

To verify the cellular localization of blimp1 and pax5 when stimulated by GNPs, immunofluorescent staining for both blimp1 and pax5 was performed and images were generated using confocal microscopy (figure 5). Blimp1 was expressed and localized near the cell membrane of the GNP-activated B-cells, while pax5 was found in quiescent B-cells. The temporal and size-dependent activation of the blimp1/pax5 pathways was therefore validated using this immunofluorescence staining technique.

3.3. GNP injection enhanced humoral immunity in mice

The GNPs enhanced IgG secretion in both the hybridomas and B-cells. The *in vivo* stimulatory activity of the GNPs remains to be explored. To evaluate humoral immunity, mice were immunized with peptide-conjugated GNPs. The peptides were synthesized based on the amino acid sequence of the VP1 coat protein of the FMDV (table 1). The peptide pFMDVD (19 amino acids in length) and pFMDV (24 a.a. in length) were both conjugated to GNPs ranging from 2 to 50 nm and injected into mice. The serum titer was verified at the end of the fourth week (figure 6). The longer peptide induced a higher titer than the shorter peptide. Under both conditions, the GNPs ranging from 2 to 17 nm induced higher antibody titers. We have previously shown that the size-dependent immune-stimulatory activity of the GNPs is associated with the presence of GNPs in the spleen [13]. To verify that the presence of GNPs in spleen is affected by the length of the conjugated peptide, five peptides of different lengths (pFMDVA, pFMDVB, pFMDVC, pFMDVD, and pFMDVE; table 1) were conjugated to 8 and 12 nm GNPs and injected into mice. The 12 nm GNPs showed higher levels of accumulation in the spleen than the 8 nm GNPs (figure 5). Within the same group, all lengths of the peptide showed similar levels of accumulation, including the unmodified GNPs. In summary, the accumulation of GNPs in the spleen is less associated with the immune-stimulatory

Table 1. Amino acid sequences of the synthetic peptides used to modify GNPs.

Synthesis peptide	Sequence
pFMDVA	ERTL(C)
pFMDVB	LAQKAERTL(C)
pFMDVC	GDLQVLAQKAERTL(C)
pFMDVD	TNNVRGDLQVLAQKAERTL(C)
pFMDV	YGDTSTNNVRGDLQVLAQKAERTL(C)

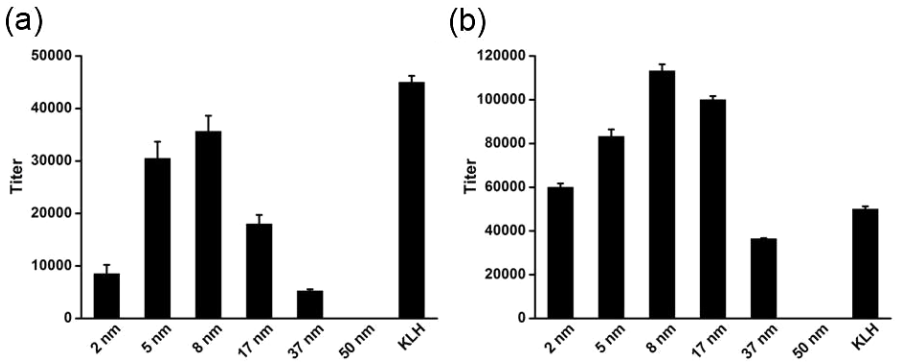

Figure 6. Titers of antisera from mice immunized with peptide-conjugated GNPs. (a) pFMDV-D (b) pFMDV carrying the amino acid sequence derived from FMDV (table 1). The peptides were conjugated to KLH and served as control.

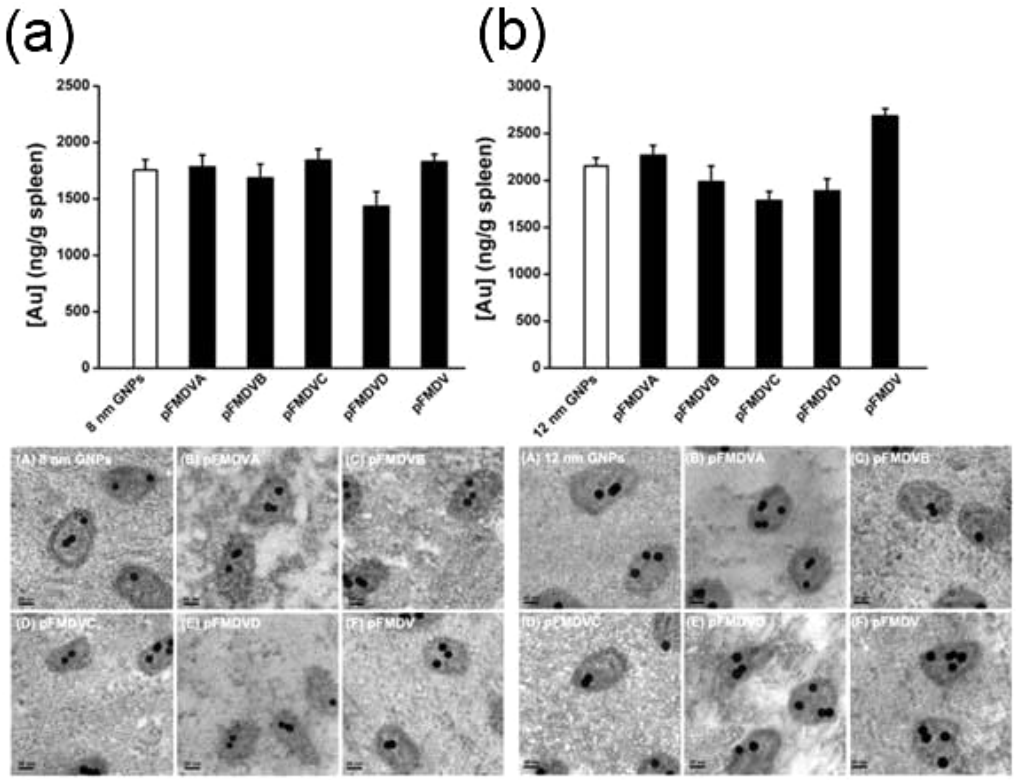

Figure 7. Bio-distribution of the peptide-modified GNPs in mouse spleen. The mice were immunized with peptide-conjugated GNPs. The amounts of GNPs in the spleen were quantified by ICP-MS. Unmodified GNPs served as a negative control. The values shown are the means ± SD, averaged from six mice. (a) 8 nm GNP. (b) 12 nm GNP. Electron micrographs of the spleens from mice injected with (c) peptide-conjugated 8 nm GNP, and (d) peptide-conjugated 12 nm GNP. The scale bars represent 20 nm.

ability of GNPs. The accumulation of GNPs in the spleen is size-dependent but is less dependent on the length of the peptides conjugated to the GNPs.

Nanoparticle-based delivery systems are expected to be advantageous for site-specific delivery, improved *in vitro* and *in vivo* stability, and reduced side effect profile. The primary function of the immune system is to protect the host from foreign substances; however, the recognition of nanoparticles as foreign by the immune cells may result in a multilevel immune response against the nanoparticles and may eventually lead to toxicity in the host and/or lack of therapeutic efficacy due to the scavenging activity of the immune system. Previous studies have indicated that nanoparticles are often scavenged by the phagocytic cells of the immune system, i.e., macrophages [13]. Furthermore, the enhancement of humoral immunity and the generation of antibodies specific to the surface antigens of particles may reduce the efficacy and the safety of nanoparticle-based therapeutics. The current study provides evidence for the size-dependent stimulation of humoral immunity. For the design of nanoparticles as drug carriers, diameters ranging from 2 to 12 nm should be avoided to minimize the immune-stimulatory effect.

We have previously shown that GNPs work as vaccine carriers when they stimulate a focused immune response [14].

The current study provides further evidence that the enhancement of humoral immunity is size-dependent, time-dependent, and associated with the bio-distribution of GNPs.

The accumulation of GNPs in the spleen depends on the diameter of the GNPs [14]. Surface modification of the length of the peptide did not significantly alter the bio-distribution of GMPs in the spleen. The GNPs enter cells in a size- and shape-dependent manner mediated by a membrane receptor [5, 6, 24, 25]. The uptake of GNPs reaches a maximum when the size nears 50 nm and when the aspect ratio approaches unity [24]. GNPs of diameters ranging from 2 to 100 nm alter the signaling processes essential for basic cell functions, including cell death [26]. The current study explored the regulation of signal transduction pathways in B-cells. Blimp1 is a transcriptional repressor that acts as an essential transcriptional activator for high-level immunoglobulin synthesis [22, 23]. Additionally, blimp1 represses pax5, which relieves the repression on the immunoglobulin genes, allowing their upregulation [27]. Blimp1 and pax5 regulate the differentiation of mature B cells into antibody-secreting plasma cells [27, 28].

The enhancement of antibody secretion in B-cells by GNPs likely occurs through the blimp1/pax5 signal transduction pathways. The upregulation of blimp1 and down-regulation of pax5 is closely associated with the size and time of treatment with GNPs. This result is consistent with previous findings that GNPs upregulate NF-κB in mouse B-cells [19]. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that cell death might contribute to this enhancement. Figure 1(b) shows an increase in cell viability upon GNP treatment. The tendency towards viability is consistent with antibody secretion. The lack of significance in the viability statistics might be due to insufficient numbers of repeats performed in the current study. However, the effect of GNP-induced cell-death suppression on the enhancement of antibody secretion could work as an alternative pathway in parallel to the blimp1/pax5 pathways.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the *in vitro*, *ex vivo*, and *in vivo* evidence suggests that GNPs activate B-cells and enhance immunoglobulin G secretion. GNP treatment upregulates blimp1, down-regulates pax5, and enhances downstream IgG secretion. The enhancement is size-dependent and time-dependent. GNPs ranging from 2 to 12 nm had the maximum stimulatory activity for the production of antibody.

Acknowledgments

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