P2Y receptor regulation of sodium transport in human mammary epithelial cells

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The mammary gland is composed of multiple cell types, which include acinar and duct epithelial cells, myoepithelial cells, and stromal cells (31). The functional secretory structure of the human mammary gland is known as the terminal ductal lobular unit, which is composed of a cluster of lobules and acini that emerge from the terminal duct. The duct is composed of epithelial cells that surround a central lumen (luminal epithelial cells) and express a variety of cytokeratins, including cytokeratin 18 (10, 31). Growth and differentiation of the mammary epithelium is subject to regulation by steroid hormones including estrogen and progesterone, the lactogenic hormone prolactin, and growth factors that are released by the adjacent stromal cells (9, 19, 24). Epithelial-stromal cell interactions influence mammary gland growth and development, highlighting the importance of paracrine regulation occurring with age and reproductive stage (24).

In a previous study, normal human mammary epithelial (HME) cells obtained from a 51-yr-old woman were immortalized following transfection with a plasmid containing the human telomerase (hTERT) catalytic subunit (17). A single copy of the exogenous hTERT gene was expressed in the later passages of HME cells where telomere length was shown to be extended and stabilized without the activation of endogenous hTERT or c-Myc genes. In addition, immortalized HME cells exhibited a loss of p16INK4a expression, which is known to be associated with increased phosphorylation of Rb protein and subsequent repression of an important cell cycle checkpoint.

In the present study, we investigated electrolyte transport in these cells and its regulation by purinergic receptor agonists. Our results revealed that HME cells express a variety of purinergic receptors that are known to play important roles in both autocrine and paracrine regulation of transport function in epithelia (4, 6, 7). In particular, a recent study using mouse mammary epithelial cells demonstrated that ATP and UTP increase anion and fluid secretion and suggested that purinergic receptor activation may be involved in fibrocystic disease occurring in premenopausal women (3). The major objectives of this study were to 1) identify purinoceptor subtypes expressed in HME cells, 2) examine the effects of P2Y receptor stimulation on transport properties of the epithelium, and 3) determine the molecular identity of ion channels involved in P2Y receptor regulation of transport function in these cells. Our results indicated that, in contrast to previous studies of mouse or bovine mammary epithelial cells or human mammary tumor cells, HME cells exhibited a basal ENaC-dependent Na+ absorption that was stimulated by basolateral application of UTP. Moreover, this increase in Na+ transport was dependent on bioavailability of extracellular calcium concentration that were significantly reduced following pre-treatment with the calcium-chelating agent BAPTA-AM. Concentration-response relationships indicated that the rank order of potency for these agonists was UTP > UDP > ATPγS. Basolateral stimulation with UTP produced a rapid but transient increase in Isc that was significantly reduced if cells were pretreated with BAPTA-AM or benzamil. Moreover, basolateral treatment with either charybdotoxin or clotrimazole significantly inhibited the initial UTP-dependent increase in Isc and eliminated the sustained current response. These results indicate that human mammary epithelial cells express multiple P2 receptor subtypes and that Ca2+ mobilization evoked by P2Y receptor agonists stimulates Na+ absorption by increasing the activity of Ca2+-activated K+ channels located in the basolateral membrane.

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on mobilization of intracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) and activation of basolateral K\(^+\) channels that were blocked by inhibitors of KCNN4.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Materials.** UTP, 17β-estradiol, and hexokinase were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO). 8-(4-Chlorophenylthio)adenosine 3′,5′-cyclic monophosphate was purchased from RBI (Natick, MA). P2Y1 and P2Y2 receptor antibodies were obtained from Alomone Laboratories (Jerusalem, Israel). Primary HME cells were originally obtained from a normal 51-yr-old woman and purchased from Clonetics (San Diego CA). Mammary epithelium growth medium (MEGM) was purchased from Clonetics along with a factor growth supplement kit from Clonetics (Eugene, OR). 8-(4-Chlorophenylthio)adenosine 3′,5′-cyclic monophosphate was used to identify purinergic receptors, epithelial Na\(^+/\)H\(^{-}\) channels that were blocked by inhibitors of KCNN4.

**Identification of P2Y receptors, A2b receptor, ENaC subunits, and CFTR from primary and immortalized HME cells.** Total RNA was extracted using Trizol reagent (Invitrogen). Primers used in this study are shown in Table 1. The initial condition was 94°C for 4 min, followed by 30 cycles. All PCR products were gel purified using the QIAquick gel extraction kit (Qiagen, Valencia, CA) and sequenced using gene-specific primers to confirm the amplified sequences. DNA sequencing was performed at the Advanced Genetics Analysis Center at the University of Minnesota. Quantitative RT-PCR (QRT-PCR) reactions were carried out using SYBR green detection of newly synthesized PCR products following protocols described in QRT-PCR kits from Stratagene (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA). Fluorescence detection was performed using the Mx3005P real-time PCR system. RT reactions were performed using DNase-treated RNA samples from immortalized cells following the protocol provided by Ambion (Turbo DNase; Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA). RT reactions were diluted 1:60 for each QRT-PCR reaction. SYBR green master mix (1:2) and passive reference dye (1:200) were purchased from Stratagene. Primers used for the QRT-PCR reactions are listed in Table 2. Efficiencies were calculated using the slope of the normalized (maximum fluorescence = 1) amplification plots divided by a twofold change in product/cycle number.

**Measurement of intracellular Ca\(^{2+}\)\textsuperscript{+} concentration (\([\text{Ca}^{2+}]\text{ intracellular}\).** Cells were seeded at low density on coverslip chamber slides for 48 h in HME cell culture medium. At the start of the experiment, the cells were bathed in Hanks’ balanced salt solution (HBSS) containing 10 mM HEPES buffer, pH 7.4. The cells were loaded with 10 μM fura-2 AM (Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR) for 90 min, washed in HBSS, and mounted onto the stage of a Nikon Diaphot inverted microscope with an epifluorescence attachment. Fluorescence in single cells was visualized using a Nikon UV-fluor \(\times40\) oil-immersion objective. The fluorescence excitation, image acquisition and real-time data analyses were controlled using Image-1 Metamorph software (Universal Imaging, Westchester, PA) running on a Pentium 4 microcomputer. Intracellular Ca\(^{2+}\) concentration ([Ca\(^{2+}\)]\text{ i} \) was measured as the ratio of fluorescence emitted at 510 nm when the cells were alternately excited at 340 and 380 nm (F340/F380). P2Y receptor agonists were introduced by single-pass, continuous-flow perfusion. Cells were washed with HBSS solution before addition of either a second agonist or an increase in concentration of the same agonist. [Ca\(^{2+}\)]\text{ i} \) was calculated following calibration with the fura-2 AM calcium-imaging calibration kit (F6774) available from Molecular Probes (Eugene, OR).

**Transepithelial electrical measurements.** Transepithelial resistance of the cell monolayers was measured with the EVOM epithelial voltohmmeter coupled to Ag-AgCl “chopstick” electrodes [World Precision Instruments (WPI), New Haven, CT]. Measurements of

**Table 1. Forward and reverse primers for standard PCR reactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Name (Accession No.)</th>
<th>Fragment Size, bp</th>
<th>Forward/Reverse Primers</th>
<th>Annealing Temperature, °C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2Y1 (U42030)</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>5′-CGTTCGCGGTGGTCTGCG-3′</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-CGAGCCCGCGTACCT-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2Y2 (U07225)</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>5′-CTCTACTTTGGAAGCGAGGGG-3′</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-TTCTGCTCTCATAGGGGATCTGC-3′</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Y4 (X91852)</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>5′-CCAGCCGCTTGTGAGACAC-3′</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-GAGTGCAGAGGAGGAGGCCGAC-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>P2Y6 (U52464)</td>
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<td>5′-CCATCTGCGCGGCGACAGCGGC-3′</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-GTCCTAGATAGTGAGAGATTTG-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAPDH (X02231)</td>
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<td>5′-GTCCTGATAGTGAGAGATTTG-3′</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-CTGCTGATAGTGAGAGATTTG-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2b (AY136748)</td>
<td>299</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-CTCTGAGGCTGCATCAAG-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENaCa (NM_001038)</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>5′-GACACACTGACACCTCGCTGATGTC-3′</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5′-TTCTGCTGAGTTCGGCATGACATG-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENaCB (L.36593)</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>5′-GCTGCTTCTGACATGAGTGGTTG-3′</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-TCGCGACTGAGATCTGATGAGGATTTG-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENaCγ (L.36592)</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>5′-GGAACTGGATGATGAGGAAACTCG-3′</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5′-ACGATTCTGGTAGTGGACAGAC-3′</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5′-TTGCGAGAGGATCATATTAC-3′</td>
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**ENaC, epithelial Na\(^+\) channel.**
short-circuit current \( (I_{sc}) \) were made using monolayers mounted in Ussing chambers (4.5 cm\(^2\)) and bathed on both sides with standard saline solution containing (in mM) 130 NaCl, 6 KCl, 1.5 CaCl\(_2\), 1 MgCl\(_2\), 20 NaHCO\(_3\), 0.3 Na H\(_2\)PO\(_4\), and 1.3 NaHPO\(_4\), pH 7.4, which was maintained at 37°C and bubbled with 95% O\(_2\)-5% CO\(_2\). Voltage-clamp experiments were performed between days 12 and 16 with DVC1000 epithelial voltage-current clamps (WPI), and the data were digitized, stored, and analyzed using Axoscope software (Axon Instruments). For experiments involving basolateral membrane K\(^+\) current, amphotericin B (15 μM) was used to perforate the apical membrane of monolayers mounted in Ussing chambers. In these experiments the basolateral (extracellular) surface was bathed with (in mM) 120 Na-methanesulfonate, 10 KCl, 20 NaHCO\(_3\), 30 mannitol, 1 MgSO\(_4\), 1 CaCl\(_2\), and 10 glucose (pH 7.4), while the apical (intracellular) side was bathed with (in mM) 120 K-methanesulfonate, 10 NaCl, 20 KHCO\(_3\), 30 mannitol, 1 MgSO\(_4\), 1 CaCl\(_2\), and 10 glucose (pH 7.4). The data were acquired using a Digidata 1322 data acquisition system (Axon Instruments/Molecular Devices, Union City, CA).

Statistics. Statistical significance was determined using an unpaired, two-tailed \( t \)-test. Statistical significance was accepted at \( P < 0.05 \).

RESULTS

Identification of \( \text{P2Y} \) receptors and \( \text{A2b} \) receptors in primary and immortalized HME cells. Figure 1, A and B, shows RT-PCR products obtained from primary and immortalized HME cells with specific primers designed to detect human P2Y receptor subtypes. Both primary and immortalized HME cells contained mRNA transcripts for P2Y\(_1\), P2Y\(_2\), P2Y\(_4\), and P2Y\(_6\) receptors. In addition, both primary and immortalized HME cells also expressed the A\(_{2b}\) subtype of adenosine receptors (Fig. 1, A and B). Figure 1C shows the relative levels of P2Y receptor mRNA expression in immortalized HME cells, using QRT-PCR. The P2Y\(_2\) receptor mRNA appeared to be in greatest abundance, whereas the P2Y\(_4\) subtype was lowest relative to the other subtypes. Western blot analysis using commercially available antibodies for human P2Y\(_1\) and P2Y\(_2\) receptors showed several nonspecific bands, thus making it difficult to confirm protein expression using these antibodies (data not shown).

Effects of UTP, UDP + hexokinase, and adenosine 5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate) on \([\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i\) in immortalized HME cells. \([\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i\) was measured using fura-2 AM-loaded HME cells following stimulation with adenosine 5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate) (ATP\(_\gamma\)S), UTP, or UDP + hexokinase (hexokinase was used to degrade any contaminant UTP present in commercially available UDP samples). As shown in Fig. 2A, 50 μM UDP + hexokinase, 10 μM UTP, and 50 μM ATP\(_\gamma\)S all increased \([\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i\) in HME cells. Figure 2B shows the effects of increasing UTP concentration on the time course of \([\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i\) in immortalized HME cells (\(n = 23\) cells), and Fig. 2C shows the normalized concentration-effect relationships for the UTP- and ATP\(_\gamma\)S-stimulated \([\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i\) responses in immortalized HME cells. EC\(_{50}\) values for UTP and ATP\(_\gamma\)S were 4.2 ± 0.1 μM (\(n = 23\) cells) and 13.7 ± 0.4 μM (\(n = 20\) cells), respectively.

HME cells exhibit basal benzamid-sensitive \( \text{Na}^+ \) transport. HME cells grown in monolayer culture exhibited a basal \( I_{sc} \) that ranged between 8 and 20 μA and a transepithelial resistance between 450 and 520 Ω·cm\(^2\). Addition of benzamil (5 μM) to the apical solution produced a rapid and complete inhibition of the basal \( I_{sc} \) (Fig. 3A). Both primary and immortalized HME cell monolayers exhibited benzamil-sensitive currents (primary cells: 9.0 ± 1.2 μA vs. immortal cells: 9.7 ± 2.6 μA) that were not significantly different. Concentration-response relationships reported in Fig. 3B indicate that benzamil was the most potent inhibitor of the basal \( I_{sc} \) with an IC\(_{50}\) value of 137 ± 9 nM, followed by amiloride (IC\(_{50}\) = 483 ± 37 nM) and incomplete inhibition by methyl isopropyl amiloride at 100 μM. Basolateral addition of 10 μM UTP to monolayers maintained under Cl\(^-\) free conditions (where Cl\(^-\) was replaced with methanesulfonate) evoked a rapid increase in \( I_{sc} \) that returned to baseline levels within 5 min following agonist addition (Fig. 3C). The UTP-evoked \( I_{sc} \) response under
Cl− free conditions was not significantly different from that observed in normal saline solution.

Effects of hydrocortisone on ENaC subunit mRNA levels in immortalized cells. Previous studies have shown that mouse mammary epithelial cells express CFTR and that this channel plays a role in anion secretion (2). Therefore, we examined both primary and immortalized HME cells to see whether we could detect CFTR mRNA. RT-PCR experiments showed relatively lower levels of CFTR mRNA expression in HME cells and MCF-7 cells, a human breast tumor cell line (Fig. 5), compared with expression in human colonic epithelial cells (T84 cells). Treatment with β-estradiol (100 nM) for 96 h did not result in detectable expression of CFTR channel mRNA after 30 cycles in primary or immortalized HME cells (Fig. 5B). QRT-PCR

Expression of CFTR in primary and immortalized HME cells. Previous studies have shown that mouse mammary epithelial cells express CFTR and that this channel plays a role in anion secretion (2). Therefore, we examined both primary and immortalized HME cells to see whether we could detect CFTR mRNA. RT-PCR experiments showed relatively lower levels of CFTR mRNA expression in HME cells and MCF-7

Fig. 1. Detection of P2Y receptors and the A3b adenosine receptor in RNA samples extracted from primary and immortalized human mammary epithelial (HME) cells using RT-PCR. A: RT-PCR amplification of human P2Y receptors with RNA isolated from primary HME cells. M, bp markers; Y1, P2Y1, Y2, P2Y5, Y4, P2Y4, Y6, P2Y6; Nc, negative control performed without RT. Arrows indicate 500 bp. B: RT-PCR amplification of human P2Y receptors with RNA isolated from immortalized HME cells. C: quantitative RT-PCR (QRT-PCR) showing the relative abundance of P2Y receptor mRNA in immortalized HME cells (n = 3 for each receptor subtype). Efficiencies for P2Y1 (0.92), P2Y2 (0.91), P2Y4 (0.98), and P2Y6 (0.96) receptors were determined using the slope of the amplification plots. A single peak melting temperature was obtained for each P2Y receptor PCR product. Primers and their predicted sizes are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Fig. 2. Effects of UTP, UDP + hexokinase, and adenosine 5′-O-(3-thiotriphosphate) (ATPγS) on intracellular Ca2+ concentrations ([Ca2+]i) in immortalized HME cells. A: UDP + hexokinase (50 μM) and UTP (10 μM) increased [Ca2+]i in HME cells (top). UDP + hexokinase (50 μM) and ATPγS (50 μM) also increased [Ca2+]i in HME cells (bottom). B: effects of increasing UTP concentration on the time course of [Ca2+]i in immortalized HME cells. The logistic function \( R = \frac{\text{Min} + \left(\frac{\text{Max} - \text{Min}}{1 + 10^{(\log IC_{50} - x)}}\right)}{1 + 10^{(\log IC_{50} - x)}} \) was used to fit the concentration-response data. Hill coefficients were 3.8 ± 0.1 and 5.2 ± 0.4 for UTP and ATPγS respectively. The EC_{50} values were determined from the nonlinear least-squares fit of the data and are reported in RESULTS.

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experiments comparing CFTR mRNA expression in immortalized HME cells and T84 cells indicated relatively low levels of expression in HME cells compared with T84 cells (Fig. 5C).

Apical benzamil inhibits the effect of UTP on $I_{sc}$. Figure 6, A and B, show that apical pretreatment of monolayers with 5 μM benzamil for 5 min before addition of UTP (10 μM) inhibited ~83% of the increase in $I_{sc}$ observed in control monolayers. This result suggests that most of the UTP-stimulated increase in current is dependent on apical ENaC channel activity. In addition, a comparison of the basal benzamil-sensitive $I_{sc}$ was made between monolayers cultured in the presence and absence of hydrocortisone. Results presented in Fig. 6C show that the basal benzamil-sensitive $I_{sc}$ was significantly increased by ~45% when monolayers were grown in the presence of hydrocortisone. This result suggests that hydrocortisone, presumably acting through glucocorticoid receptors, increases the basal ENaC-dependent $I_{sc}$.

Effects of BAPTA-AM on the UTP-stimulated $I_{sc}$ response. Figure 7, A and B, shows the effects of the membrane-permeable calcium-chelating agent BAPTA-AM on UTP-evoked increases in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ in immortalized HME cells. BAPTA-AM (50 μM) was added to both apical and basolateral solutions 15 min before stimulation with 10 μM UTP. BAPTA-AM produced a decrease in the peak $[Ca^{2+}]_i$ response that was >95% compared with cells that were not treated with BAPTA-AM. In Fig. 7C the effects of BAPTA-AM pretreatment on the UTP-evoked increase in $I_{sc}$ are presented. Although BAPTA-AM did not completely abolish the $I_{sc}$ response, it did substantially blunt the initial increase and eliminated the sustained elevation in current observed in monolayers not treated with BAPTA-AM. This result indicates that a major portion of the UTP-stimulated $I_{sc}$ response is dependent on the UTP-evoked increase in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$.

Effects of known KCNN4 inhibitors on the UTP-stimulated $I_{sc}$ response. To investigate the hypothesis that the UTP-activated $K^+$ conductance was KCNN4, we tested the effects of two known inhibitors of the channel. In Fig. 8, A and B, the effects of charybotoxin and clotrimazole pretreatment are presented. Both compounds were added to the basolateral solution 5 min before basolateral stimulation with 10 μM UTP.
Both compounds produced very similar effects that closely resembled the response observed following pretreatment with BAPTA (Fig. 7C). The initial $I_{sc}$ response was blunted, and the sustained current was abolished. In a follow-up experiment, the apical membrane of the monolayer was permeabilized with the pore-forming antibiotic amphotericin B so that a $K^+/H^+$ gradient could be imposed across the basolateral membrane while the voltage was clamped at 0 mV. Basolateral pretreatment with 10 μM clotrimazole for 5 min reduced the initial current increase and abolished the sustained current response consistent with the results reported in Fig. 8, A and B. Measurement of the net change transfer occurring within the first 600 s immediately following UTP addition is shown in Fig. 8D. Significant inhibition was observed in monolayers pretreated with either charybdotoxin or clotrimazole compared with vehicle-treated monolayers.

Identification of KCNN4 mRNA. QRT-PCR was used to detect the expression of KCNN4 and KCNQ1 mRNA in total RNA samples from immortalized HME cells. KCNN4 was detected at a threshold cycle (CT) of 23 cycles, whereas KCNQ1 mRNA appeared to be present in much lower abundance with a CT of 34 cycles (Fig. 9). These results indicate that KCNN4 mRNA was present in immortalized HME cells at levels similar to those of ENaC channels in HME cells and CFTR in T84 cells.

DISCUSSION

Several mammalian subtypes of P2Y receptors (P2Y1, P2Y2, P2Y4, P2Y6, P2Y11, P2Y12, P2Y13, and P2Y14) have been cloned and functionally characterized (4, 6, 7, 18, 28). Among these receptors, P2Y1, P2Y2, P2Y4, P2Y6, and P2Y11 couple to $G_{q/11}$ and activate phospholipase C, resulting in increased inositol 1,4,5-trisphosphate formation and mobilization of intracellular $Ca^{2+}$ (2, 5, 8, 12, 14, 15, 27, 29, 29). In the present study, several P2Y receptor mRNA subtypes (P2Y1, P2Y2, P2Y4, and P2Y6) were identified in HME cells. Calcium imaging experiments showed that stimulation of HME cells with P2Y receptor agonists produced increases in $[Ca^{2+}]_i$. Concentration-response relationships for UTP and ATPγS along with experiments with UDP provided functional evidence for multiple P2Y receptor subtypes present in these cells.
RT-PCR also revealed that HME cells express A2b adenosine receptor mRNA, which has been shown to be coupled to Gs and to activate adenylyl cyclase (20).

Previous studies of human mammary tumor cells (MCF-7) and mouse mammary epithelial cells (31EG4 cells) showed that increases in [Ca\(^{2+}\)]i elicited by purinergic receptor agonists did stimulate Cl\(^{-}\} efflux (3, 10, 22). P2Y receptor agonists including ATP, UTP, and ADP increased [Ca\(^{2+}\)]i and anion efflux that was inhibited by DIDS in MCF-7 cells (10). In mouse mammary epithelial cells, P2Y2 receptors were identified by RT-PCR, and stimulation of Ca\(^{2+}\)-activated Cl\(^{-}\} channels was detected following treatment with ATP or UTP. Cl\(^{-}\} channel activation produced a rapid depolarization of the apical membrane consistent with Cl\(^{-}\} efflux and transepithelial Cl\(^{-}\} secretion (3). CFTR expression and activity also was observed in mouse mammary epithelial cells and was involved in transepithelial Cl\(^{-}\} secretion (3).

Fig. 7. Effects of UTP on [Ca\(^{2+}\)]i and \(I_{sc}\) in immortalized HME cells. A: pretreatment with 50 \(\mu\)M BAPTA-AM significantly blocked the UTP-stimulated increase in [Ca\(^{2+}\)]i (tracing shows averaged responses from 20 cells). B: analysis of [Ca\(^{2+}\)]i, peak responses before and after treatment with BAPTA-AM \((n = 5)\). C: representative data from paired experiments comparing the effects of basolateral UTP (10 \(\mu\)M) on monolayers pretreated with BAPTA-AM and a vehicle (DMSO)-treated control (representative of 6 experiments). Mean differences between the basal \(I_{sc}\) and the plateau \(I_{sc}\) at 400 s after UTP in the absence and presence of BAPTA-AM were 5 ± 0.8 and 0.3 ± 0.5 \(\mu\)A, respectively.

Fig. 8. Effects of KCNN4 channel blockers on the UTP-activated \(I_{sc}\) response. A: representative traces from experiments comparing monolayers pretreated with 100 nM charybdotoxin and a vehicle (saline)-treated control (representative of 6 experiments). B: representative tracings comparing monolayers pretreated with 10 \(\mu\)M clotrimazole and a vehicle (DMSO)-treated control (representative of 6 experiments). C: representative data from paired experiments comparing the effects of basolateral UTP (10 \(\mu\)M) on monolayers pretreated with BAPTA-AM and a vehicle (DMSO)-treated control (representative of 4 experiments). Mean differences between the basal \(I_{sc}\) and the plateau \(I_{sc}\) at 400 s after UTP in the absence and presence of BAPTA-AM were 5 ± 0.8 and 0.3 ± 0.5 \(\mu\)A, respectively.
in Cl− efflux and fluid secretion across the epithelium (2, 29). Similarly, forskolin stimulation of bovine mammary epithelial cells produced an increase in \( I_{sc} \) that was blocked by \( N\)-(4-methylphenylsulfonyl)-N′-(4-trifluoromethylphenyl) urea, a known inhibitor of CFTR Cl− channel activity (27). In the present study, CFTR mRNA was detected in HME cells at relatively low levels compared with T84 cells, which served as a positive control. Attempts to stimulate CFTR expression with estrogen were not successful, although previous studies in rat endometrial epithelial cells showed that CFTR mRNA expression was enhanced following estrogen treatment (25, 26).

Basal ENaC-dependent Na+ transport was previously characterized in 31EG4 cells, indicating that this mouse mammary epithelial cell line is capable of both Na+ absorption and anion secretion (2). In addition, an amiloride-sensitive component to the \( I_{sc} \) was observed in bovine mammary epithelial cells following treatment with dexamethasone, suggesting that ENaC activity was subject to regulation by glucocorticoids (27). In the present study, RT-PCR revealed that HME cells express ENaC α-, β-, and γ-subunit mRNAs. Moreover, transport experiments indicated that the basal \( I_{sc} \) was blocked by amiloride analogs with IC50 values and a rank order of potency consistent with ENaC-dependent electronegative Na+ absorption. Growing immortalized HME cells in the presence of hydrocortisone resulted in an increase in expression of all three ENaC subunits and increased the basal benzamil-sensitive \( I_{sc} \). This response was consistent with the previously described effects of dexamethasone on ENaC activity in bovine mammary epithelial cells (27).

Basolateral stimulation with UTP produced an increase in \( I_{sc} \) that exhibited oscillations that lasted for several minutes. However, unlike the effects of UTP observed in mouse mammary epithelial cells and human MCF-7 cells, the \( I_{sc} \) increase in HME cells was not Cl− dependent, and most of the response was inhibited by apical addition of benzamil (3, 10). This result does not exclude the possibility that UTP may stimulate HCO3− secretion, and this could contribute to the benzamil-insensitive \( I_{sc} \) response. Chelating intracellular Ca2+ with BAPTA-AM as a means to significantly reduce the increase in [Ca2+]i, produced by UTP substantially altered both the magnitude and duration of the initial \( I_{sc} \) response, providing evidence that a major portion of the transport-related actions of UTP were dependent on [Ca2+]i. Concentration-response relationships for UTP and ATPγS revealed Hill coefficients that suggested a high degree of amplification with respect to Ca2+ mobilization, perhaps through Ca2+-induced Ca2+ release, activation of multiple P2Y receptor subtypes, or some combination of these factors. Although increases in [Ca2+]i appear to be important, the \( I_{sc} \) response was not completely abolished after pretreatment with BAPTA-AM, suggesting that Ca2+-independent mechanisms also may be involved.

Partial inhibition of the UTP-evoked \( I_{sc} \) also was produced by basolateral charybdotoxin and clotrimazole at concentrations that are known to block KCNN4 K+ channels (1, 16, 21, 28, 30). Moreover, clotrimazole was shown to inhibit the increase in basolateral membrane K+ current consistent with the observed effects on \( I_{sc} \) and with inhibition of Ca2+-activated K+ channels. QRT-PCR analysis demonstrated that HME cells expressed KCNN4 mRNA and that the relative level of mRNA expression was greater than that for the KCNQ1 K+ channel. Interestingly, the results obtained in the present study are similar to those of a previous report involving CFT1 airway epithelial cells, where activation of a clotrimazole-sensitive K+ conductance in the basolateral membrane produced a significant increase in amiloride-sensitive Na+ transport (13). Activation of basolateral K+ channels such as KCNN4 would be expected to produce membrane hyperpolarization, thus increasing the driving force for Na+ uptake across the apical membrane and, consequently, net transepithelial Na+ transport across the epithelium.

Although the precise origin (duct cells vs. lobular acinar cells) of HME cells described in this study is not known, we speculate that, based on the age of the donor, low levels of CFTR expression, and the existence of ENaC-dependent Na+ transport, the cells exhibit duct-type transport phenotype. We observed that both primary and immortal HME cells expressed several P2Y receptor subtypes (P2Y1, P2Y2, P2Y4, and P2Y6) that bind UTP, UDP and ATP to produce mobilization of intracellular Ca2+. The expression of multiple P2Y receptor subtypes and the presence of A2b adenosine receptors indicate...
that HME cells are capable of responding to wide array of purinergic signaling molecules. In contrast to other mammary epithelia that exhibit anion secretion or a combination of anion secretion and ENaC-dependent Na+ absorption, both primary and immortal HME cells form monolayers that primarily exhibit electrogenic 

\[ \text{Na}^+ \text{Cl}^- \] absorption. A model summarizing the effects of basolateral UTP on Na+ transport in HME cells is presented in Fig. 10. Stimulation of HME cells with UTP enhances Na+ transport by activation of basolateral K+ channels that are Ca2+-dependent and possess pharmacological properties characteristic of KCNN4 K+ channels. In addition, our results suggest that UTP activates a Ca2+-independent K+ channel in the basolateral membrane that contributes to the initial increase in \( I_{sc} \) observed immediately after P2Y receptor stimulation. We speculate that this channel may be regulated by PKC, but its molecular identity remains to be determined.

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GRANTS

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