RECK Negatively Regulates Matrix Metalloproteinase-9 Transcription

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Abstract

RECK, a glycosylphosphatidylinositol-anchored glycoprotein, inhibits the enzymatic activities of some matrix metalloproteinases (MMP), thereby suppressing tumor cell metastasis; however, the detailed mechanism is still obscure. In this study, we compared the gene expression profiles between mock- and RECK-transfected HT1080 cells and showed that RECK decreases MMP-9 mRNA levels but not other MMP mRNA levels. Moreover, treatment with RECK-specific siRNA increased MMP-9 mRNA in RECK-expressing cells. The promoter assay showed that MMP-9 promoter activity was suppressed by RECK and that RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity requires 12-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate–responsive element (TRE) and α sites. Moreover, the binding ability of Fra-1 and c-Jun to TRE within the MMP-9 promoter region was suppressed by RECK. Thus, these results show that RECK is a negative regulator of MMP-9 transcription. [Cancer Res 2009;69(4):1502–8]

Introduction

Matrix metalloproteinases (MMP) play key roles in the degradation of extracellular matrix (ECM) that is associated with homeostasis. On the other hand, in cancer, MMPs contribute to the formation of a microenvironment that promotes tumor growth, metastasis, and angiogenesis (1, 2). Among its members, the 92-kDa type IV collagenase (MMP-9) is thought to be a key regulator of degradation of the type IV collagen component of basement membranes, and its expression and activity have been correlated with tumor progression (3). MMP-9 activity is regulated by several steps—at the level of gene transcription (4), mRNA stability (5), secretory process (6), and enzymatic activity. Gene expression of MMP-9 can be induced by a variety of stimuli, such as tumor necrosis factor α, epidermal growth factor (EGF), and phorbol esters (7, 8). Several transcription factors have been reported to activate the MMP-9 promoter, indicating that MMP-9 expression is regulated by multiple mechanisms in tumor cells and contributes to tumor cell progression (9–11).

The reversion-inducing cysteine-rich protein with Kazal motifs (RECK) gene was isolated as an inducer of flat morphology of v-Ki-ras–transformed NIH3T3 cells (12). RECK expression is observed in human normal organs; however, several oncogenic factors, such as activated Ras (13, 14), EBV latent membrane protein 1 (15), and HER-2/neu (16), suppress the expression of RECK. It has been reported that overexpression of RECK decreases the amount of active MMP-2 and MMP-9 in conditioned medium and inhibits metastatic activity in vitro (12, 17, 18), and in vivo (19). Significant correlation has been found between the abundance of RECK expression in hepatoma samples and colorectal cancer, and the survival of the patients (20, 21). Thus, RECK expression plays a key role in the tumor metastasis can be a good prognostic indicator for cancer patients.

In this report, we show novel insight into RECK-mediated suppression of tumor cell invasion. Overexpression of RECK resulted in the decrease of MMP-9 mRNA, and it was increased after treatment with RECK-specific siRNA in RECK-expressing cells. Promoter analysis and chromatin immunoprecipitation (ChIP) assay revealed that expression of RECK suppressed MMP-9 promoter activity and decreased the direct interaction of Fra-1 and c-Jun to the 12-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate–responsive element (TRE) within the MMP-9 promoter region.

Materials and Methods

Cell culture. Human fibrosarcoma cells, HT1080, human normal lung fibroblast cells, WI-38, and human epidermoid carcinoma cells, A431, were cultured in DMEM (SIGMA) containing 10% FCS (SIGMA). RECK-overexpressing or mock-transfected HT1080 cells, designated as HT1080-RECK and HT1080-Zeo, respectively, were established by gene transfection using Effectene Transfection Reagent (QIAGEN) according to the manufacturer’s instructions (18).

Plasmid construction. The human RECK gene was cloned into the pZeo-SV2 (+) vector (Invitrogen), as described before (18). The human MMP-9 gene was cloned into the pcDNA3.1/Myc-His (+) vector (Invitrogen). The DNA fragment corresponding to 1024 bp of the 5’-flanking region of the human MMP-9 promoter region (−1005 to +19) was amplified by PCR from genomic DNA of HT1080 and cloned into the pg3l-basic vector (Promega). A series of deletions and point mutants of putative cis-elements within the MMP-9 promoter region were generated by PCR site-directed mutagenesis using the technique of overlap extension (22, 23). Mutant construction of putative cis-elements was designed according to previous reports: Smad-binding element (SBE; AGACAG to AtcgAG; ref. 24), α site (GGAAATTCGCC to GtcAacagCC; ref. 24), TRE-1 (TGAGTCA to TatGTCA; ref. 25), trans-inhibitory element (TIE; GGTcgGaGA; ref. 24), TRE-2 (TGAGTCA to TtgGTCA; ref. 25), forming growth factor–β inhibitory element (TIE; GGTTTGGGA to GGTTGAAGA; ref. 24), and TRE-2 (TGAGTCA to TtgGTCA; ref. 4). The phRL-cytomegalovirus vector (Promega) was used to normalize transfection efficiency.

Western blotting. Cells were lysed in TENV buffer [10 mmol/L HEPES (pH 7.2), 142.5 mmol/L KCl, 5 mmol/L MgCl2, 1 mmol/L EGTA, 0.2% Nonidet P-40, 0.1% aprotinin, and 2 mmol/L phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride] and sonicated at 4°C. The lysates were centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 15 min, and their protein concentration was adjusted by staining with Coomassie Brilliant Blue G-250 (Bio-Rad Laboratory). The 4 × sampling buffer [250 mmol/L Tris (pH 6.8), 40% glyceral, 8% SDS, 20% 2-mercaptoethanol, and 0.04% bromophenol blue] was added to each lysate before boiling them for 5 min. The samples were separated by SDS-polyacrylamide electrophoresis. The proteins were transferred to polyvinylidene difluoride membranes (Millipore) and blotted with anti-RECK (611513; BD Bioscience), anti–α-tubulin (T9026; Sigma), or anti–c-Myc (sc-40; Santa Cruz) antibodies. For detection, enhanced chemiluminescence reagent (Pierce) was used with horseradish peroxidase–conjugated anti-mouse IgG (Bio-Rad Laboratory) or anti-rabbit IgG secondary antibody (GE Healthcare).

Evaluation of MMP-9-MH secretion. Cells were seeded at 1.5 × 104 cells per well in 35-mm dishes (Falcon) for 18 h. After cell attachment,
the conditioned medium were exchanged for 1 mL of Opti-MEM (Invitrogen), and cells were transfected with pcDNA3.1-Neo or pcDNA3.1-MMP-9-MH with Effectene Transfection Reagent. This time point was defined as 0 h; cells and conditioned medium were harvested every 6 h. The sampling method of cell lysates has been described before in Western blotting. The cultured medium were centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 15 min, and the supernatant was given 4× sampling buffer before boiling for 5 min.

Gelatin zymography. Cells were seeded at 1.0×10^5 cells per well in 24-well plates (Sumilon) for 12 h. After cell attachment, the conditioned medium were changed for 200 μL of serum-free DMEM and incubated for a further 24 h. The cultured medium were collected and centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 15 min, and 4× sampling buffer without 2-mercaptoethanol was added to supernatants. The samples were electrophoresed on an SDS-polyacrylamide gel containing 0.1% gelatin at 4°C. To remove SDS, the gel was washed with 2.5% Triton X-100 for 1 h and incubated with incubation buffer [50 mM/L Tris (pH 7.5), 200 mM/L NaCl, and 10 mM/L CaCl] for 24 h at 37°C. Then, the gel was stained with Coomassie Brilliant Blue G-250 (26). In the case of the cell lysates, cells were washed with PBS and sonicated for 10 s after lysis without 2-mercaptoethanol sampling buffer at 4°C.

RNA interference. The predesigned siRNAs that targeted RECK were purchased from Ambion (ID, 29149 for siRECK#1; ID, 29055 for siRECK#2; and ID, 29235 for siRECK#3). The siRNA duplex that was designed to target GFP (siGFP, 5′-GAACCGCAUCAUUGGAACTT-3′), Fra-1 (siFra-1, 5′-CACCAGAAGGUCGACAGTAT-3′), and e-Jun (siJun, 5′-GAUCUGAAACAGGAUAUGU-3′) were obtained from Nippon EGT. The sequences of siRNA constructions refer to previous reports (27–29). Cells (1×10^5) were seeded in 60-mm dishes and incubated for 12 h. Then, the cells were transfected with 200 pmol of annealed RNA using Lipofectamine2000 (Invitrogen) and incubated for 48 h.

Semi quantitative reverse transcription-PCR. The total RNA was isolated from cultured cells using ISOGEN (Nippon gene) according to the manufacturer's method, and a solution containing 5 μg of total RNA was taken for the reverse transcription reaction that was performed with SuperScript 2 Reverse Transcriptase (Invitrogen) and oligo-dT primer. The obtained cDNA were amplified with oligo-dT primer pairs as follows: RECK forward (5′-GGGATGTCCGGGAACCTTGCCAG-3′) and reverse (5′-TGGTGCGGCACCACTGAGGACTAC-3′) were obtained from Nippon EGT. The expression of the target gene was determined by RT-PCR using the following primer pairs: GAPDH forward (5′-GCAAGTCTTCCGAGTAGT-3′) and reverse (5′-CATGTGGGCCATGAGGTCCACCAC-3′) were designed by the manufacturer's method, and a solution containing 5 μg of total RNA was taken for the reverse transcription reaction that was performed with SuperScript 2 Reverse Transcriptase (Invitrogen) and oligo-dT primer. The obtained cDNA were amplified with oligo-dT primer pairs as follows: RECK forward (5′-GCAATATCCTC-3′) and reverse (5′-ATCTGTGACCCAGTGGTATG-3′) were obtained from Nippon EGT. The sequences of siRNA constructions refer to previous reports (27–29). Cells (1×10^5) were seeded in 60-mm dishes and incubated for 12 h. Then, the cells were transfected with 200 pmol of annealed RNA using Lipofectamine2000 (Invitrogen) and incubated for 48 h.

Quantitative real-time reverse transcription-PCR. The preparation of cDNA was as described above. SYBR Premix Ex Taq (TAKARA) was taken for quantitative real-time reverse transcription-PCR (RT-PCR), performed by the ABI 7500 Real-time PCR System (Applied Biosystems). The oligonucleotide primer pairs were designed as follows: RECK forward (5′-ATCTGTGACCCAGTGGTATG-3′) and reverse (5′-GCAATATCCTC-3′) were obtained from Nippon EGT.

Results

Overexpression of RECK reduces the level of MMP-9 mRNA. To clarify the molecular mechanism(s) of RECK-mediated suppression of tumor cell invasion, we first analyzed the gene expression profiles that were affected by RECK expression. Previously, we established RECK-overexpressing or mock-transfected HT1080 cells, designated as HT1080-RECK and HT1080-Zeo, respectively (Fig. 1A). We extracted mRNA from HT1080-RECK and HT1080-Zeo cells and compared mRNA expression. Interestingly, expression of MMP-9 mRNA was decreased in HT1080-RECK cells (Fig. 1B). To confirm whether overexpression of RECK affects the amount of MMP-9 mRNA, we compared the levels of mRNA expression by the real-time RT-PCR method. The level of MMP-9 mRNA, but not MMP-2 mRNA, was lower in HT1080-RECK than in HT1080-Zeo (Fig. 1C), indicating that overexpression of RECK results in the decrease of MMP-9 mRNA, but not MMP-2 mRNA, in HT1080 cells.

Correlation between RECK-mediated decrease of MMP-9 levels in cultured medium and expression of MMP-9 mRNA in mutant RECK-expressing cells. We previously established several
glycosylation-deficient mutants of RECK-expressing HT1080 cells and showed that Asn-297 was an important glycosylation residue in reducing MMP-9 in cultured medium (18). To examine whether RECK-mediated decrease of MMP-9 levels in cultured medium correlated with the levels of its mRNA in mutant RECK-expressing cells, we collected the conditioned medium and total RNAs from each cell line. Overexpression of wild-type RECK resulted in the decrease of both MMP-9 in cultured medium and MMP-9 mRNA (Fig. 2), assessed by gelatin zymography and semiquantitative RT-PCR, respectively. Expression of RECK/N297Q, mutating Asn-297 to Gln; and RECK/4NQ, whereby all four Asn glycosylation residues, Asn-86, Asn-200, Asn-297, and Asn-352, were replaced with Gln; failed to reduce the levels of MMP-9 in conditioned medium (18). To examine whether RECK-mediated decrease of MMP-9 in cultured medium can be due to (a) RECK interaction with MMP-9 on the cell surface, and/or (b) RECK indirectly influencing MMP-9 secretion (12). Thus, we examined whether RECK affects MMP-9 secretion. We first detected the amount of both intracellular and extracellular MMP-9. If RECK suppresses MMP-9 secretion, the accumulation of intracellular MMP-9 would be observed in HT1080-RECK cells. We found that, the amount of intracellular MMP-9 was too low to be detected in HT1080-RECK cells (Fig. 4A). Moreover, we transfected the expression vector that encoded Myc-His–tagged MMP-9 (MMP-9-MH) into HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells, and monitored the amount of secreted MMP-9-MH into the cultured medium every 6 h. During the time course experiment, the amount of secreted MMP-9-MH was similar in both HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells (Fig. 4B). This result suggests that RECK-mediated decrease of MMP-9 in the culture medium may be mainly due to the decrease in MMP-9 mRNA levels.

Suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity by RECK. Because the level of MMP-9 mRNA was decreased in HT1080-RECK, we next examined the effect of RECK expression on MMP-9 promoter activity. We cloned the human MMP-9 promoter region (−1005 to

![Figure 1](image_url)

**Figure 1.** Decrease of MMP-9 mRNA by RECK. **A,** establishment of HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. The cells were washed and cultured in serum-free medium for 24 h and lysed, and aliquots of cell lysates were immunoblotted with the indicated antibodies (top). The prepared conditioned medium from each cell line was analyzed by gelatin zymography (bottom). **B,** GeneChip analysis of RECK-overexpressing cells. The cRNA fragments prepared from HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells were hybridized to Affymetrix Human Genome U133 Plus 2.0 arrays, and the gene expression profiles were compared. **C,** expression of MMP-9 and MMP-2 mRNAs in HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. Total RNAs were isolated from HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells, and real-time RT-PCR assay was performed. Expression levels were normalized by GAPDH mRNA. The error bars indicate mean ± SD of triplicate experiments. *, P < 0.05 compared with HT1080-Zeo cells.
transfected cells, the promoter activity was similar in the presence of mTRE-2–transfected cells; however, in pGL3-MMP-9 (mSBE), pGL3-MMP-9 (mTIE)–, pGL3-MMP-9 (mTRE-1), pGL3-MMP-9 (mTRE-2), respectively, and each promoter activity was examined in HT1080-RECK cells. We found that RECK-mediated suppression of HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. We found that RECK-mediated suppression of HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells.

Figure 2. Effect of mutant RECK expression on the expression level of MMP-9 mRNA. HT1080-Zeo, HT1080-RECK, HT1080-RECK/N86Q, HT1080-RECK/N200Q, HT1080-RECK/N297Q, HT1080-RECK/N352Q, and HT1080-RECK/4NQ cells were washed and cultured in serum-free medium for 24 h. Cells were lysed, and aliquots of cell lysates were immunoblotted with the indicated antibodies (Western blotting). The prepared conditioned medium from each cell line was analyzed by gelatin zymography (gelatin zymography), and total RNAs were isolated from each cell line and semiquantitative RT-PCR was performed (RT-PCR).

+19) into the pGL3 basic vector, designated as pGL3-MMP-9 (−1000). There were several putative transcription factor-binding sites in this region, analyzed by the Transcription Element Search Software3 (Fig. 5A). This vector and the phRL-CMV vector were transiently transfected in HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells, and the promoter activity of MMP-9 was measured by luciferase luminescence. Our results indicate that, ~60% of MMP-9 promoter activity was suppressed in HT1080-RECK cells compared with HT1080-Zeo cells (Fig. 5B), suggesting RECK expression suppresses MMP-9 promoter activity. Furthermore, to identify the region(s) in the MMP-9 promoter that is required for the suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity by RECK, we generated several deletion mutants of the MMP-9 promoter region. The vectors that contained the promoter region −700 to +19, −400 to +19, and −100 to +19 were designated as pGL3-MMP-9 (−700), pGL3-MMP-9 (−400), and pGL3-MMP-9 (−100), respectively (Fig. 5B). RECK-mediated suppression of promoter activity that were transfected with pGL3-MMP-9 (−700) was similar to that of pGL3-MMP-9 (−1000); however, it was not observed in cells that were transfected with pGL3-MMP-9 (−400) or pGL3-MMP-9 (−100; Fig. 5B). These results indicate that the MMP-9 promoter region that is located at −700 to −400 bp is the important region for RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity.

To further analyze the contribution of this region (−700 to −400 bp), we constructed more vectors that were mutated at putative transcription factor-binding sites within the MMP-9 promoter, −620/−615, −600/−591, −533/−527, −474/−465, and −79/−73, designated as pGL3−MMP-9 (mSBE), pGL3−MMP-9 (mB), pGL3−MMP-9 (mTRE-1), pGL3−MMP-9 (mTIE), and pGL3−MMP-9 (mTRE-2), respectively, and each promoter activity was examined in HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. We found that RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity was observed in pGL3-MMP-9 (mSBE), pGL3-MMP-9 (mTIE), and pGL3-MMP-9 (mTRE-2)–transfected cells; however, in pGL3-MMP-9 (mB)–transfected cells, the promoter activity was similar in the presence or absence of RECK, and in pGL3-MMP-9 (mTRE-1)–transfected cells, the difference is significant but the suppression was less compared with the other mutants (Fig. 5C). These results suggest that κB site and TRE-1 within the MMP-9 promoter region are important for RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity.

Binding of Fra-1 and c-Jun to TRE-1 within the MMP-9 promoter region is suppressed by RECK. To determine whether RECK influences the binding of activator protein to the TRE-1, ChIP assay was performed. The protein-DNA complexes were immunoprecipitated with anti-Fos family (c-Fos, Fos B, Fra-1, and Fra-2) and anti-Jun family (c-Jun, Jun B, and Jun D) antibodies, followed by PCR reactions that targeted TRE-1 containing region (Fig. 6A). The samples of HT1080-Zeo cells that were immunoprecipitated with anti-Fra-1 and anti-c-Jun antibodies showed the PCR bands, suggesting that these transcription factors might bind to TRE-1 within the MMP-9 promoter region. However, the interactions of Fra-1 and c-Jun with TRE-1 were suppressed in HT1080-RECK cells (Fig. 6B). Although the bindings of the nuclear factor-κB (NF-κB) components p65 and p50 to the κB site were examined, we could not detect the bindings (data not shown). The protein expression levels of Jun family proteins, Fos family proteins (Fig. 6C), and NF-κB components (data not shown) in nuclei were the same for both HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. Therefore, these results indicate that RECK suppresses the binding of Fra-1 and c-Jun to TRE-1 within the MMP-9 promoter region. Finally, we sought to investigate whether Fra-1 and c-Jun regulate MMP-9 mRNA levels. Treatment with siRNAs that targeted Fra-1 (siFra-1) and c-Jun (siJun) of HT1080-Zeo/siRNA

Figure 3. Effect of RECK-specific siRNA on the amount of MMP-9 mRNA. A, effect of RECK-specific siRNA (siRECK#1–3) on MMP-9 mRNA in HT1080-Zeo and HT1080-RECK cells. Cells were treated with GFP siRNA (siGFP) as a control siRNA or siRECK#1. Then, the expression of mRNA levels was analyzed by semiquantitative RT-PCR. B, effect of siRECK#1 on MMP-9 mRNA in WI-38 and A431 cells. WI-38 (left) and A431 (right) cells were treated with siGFP or siRECK#1, and the expression of mRNA levels was measured by semiquantitative RT-PCR.
Zeo cells resulted in the decrease of MMP-9 mRNA (Fig. 6D). To exclude the possibility of off-target effects, we also detected the levels of Jun D and Fra-2 expression, these genes were not affected by the siRNA silencing (data not shown). Thus, taken together, these results indicate that Fra-1 and c-Jun contribute to the regulation of MMP-9 levels of such as other MMPs, glycosidases, cell adhesion molecules, and proteinase inhibitors, comparing HT1080-Zeo with HT1080-RECK cells; however, we could not find any metastasis-associated genes that were down-regulated by the same degree as MMP-9 mRNA (data not shown). On the other hand, we could find some genes whose expressions were changed by RECK expression, such as Cullin-2 or KIF21A. Further studies are needed to examine the role of these genes in RECK-mediated suppression of tumor cell invasion.

It has been proposed that RECK can bind to MMP-9 in vitro; thus, the mechanism of decreasing the MMP-9 levels in culture medium by RECK might be due to the inhibition of MMP-9 secretion on the cell membrane (12, 33). However, in this report, we have shown that overexpression of RECK results in the decrease of MMP-9 mRNA (Figs. 1 and 2), and the knockdown of MMP-9 requires the recovery of MMP-9 mRNA levels in both exogenous and endogenous RECK-expressing cells (Fig. 3). Moreover, the amounts of intracellular and extracellular MMP-9 were hardly detected in HT1080-RECK cells (Fig. 4A). Furthermore, RECK did not inhibit the secretion of exogenously expressed MMP-9 (Fig. 4B). Thus, we concluded that the decrease of MMP-9 level in the cultured medium by RECK expression was mainly due to the inhibition of MMP-9 mRNA level rather than suppression of MMP-9 secretion. Therefore, our data indicate that RECK is a novel type of negative regulator of MMP-9 mRNA.

**Discussion**

Proteases and glycosidases are essential components in both physiologic and pathologic turnover of ECM by degrading macromolecules, and disruption of their regulatory balance has been observed during tumor cell metastasis processes (1–4, 26). The activity of MMP is regulated at multiple steps, including gene transcription, mRNA stability, protein secretion, and enzymatic activity by inhibitory proteins (4–6). Although RECK functions as a negative regulator of MMP by inhibiting enzymatic activities and secretion (12, 18), the molecular mechanism(s) of RECK-mediated suppression of tumor cell invasion has not yet been clarified.

In this study, we performed GeneChip analysis and showed a decrease of MMP-9 mRNA level in RECK-expressing cells (Fig. 1B). We also checked the levels of some metastasis-associated genes, such as other MMPs, glycosidases, cell adhesion molecules, and proteinase inhibitors, comparing HT1080-Zeo with HT1080-RECK cells; however, we could not find any metastasis-associated genes that were down-regulated by the same degree as MMP-9 mRNA (data not shown). On the other hand, we could find some genes whose expressions were changed by RECK expression, such as Cullin-2 or KIF21A. Further studies are needed to examine the role of these genes in RECK-mediated suppression of tumor cell invasion.

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**Figure 5.** Suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity by RECK. A, an illustration of the putative transcription factor-binding sites (diamond, SBE; rectangle, ▲; ellipses, TRE-1 and TRE-2, triangle, TIE) within the MMP-9 promoter region. B, effect of RECK expression on MMP-9 promoter activity. HT1080-Zeo (closed bars) and HT1080-RECK (open bars) cells were transfected with the control vector (pGL3), the plasmid containing the full-length MMP-9 promoter region (–1000), or the deletion constructs (–700, –400, or –100) with pRL-CMV vector (encoded renilla luciferase; used for normalization of transfection efficiencies), and the luciferase activities were measured after 24 h of transfection. The promoter activity of HT1080-Zeo cells transfected with –1000 was defined as 100%. Columns, means of three independent experiments; bars, SD. C, effects of mutations at the cis elements within the MMP-9 promoter region on RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 promoter activity. The putative transcription factor-binding sites within the MMP-9 promoter region were mutated (closed diamond, closed square, closed ellipses, or closed triangle). HT1080-Zeo (closed bars) and HT1080-RECK (open bars) cells were cotransfected with the mutant constructs and pRL-CMV vectors, and the luciferase activities were measured 24 h after transfection. The promoter activity of HT1080-Zeo cells transfected with –1000 was defined as 100%. Columns, mean of 6 independent experiments; bars, SD. * P < 0.05 compared with HT1080-Zeo cells.
MMP-9 is well-characterized as a key promoter of tumor cell invasion (1). We observed that treatment with RECK-specific siRNA of WI-38 cells increases the MMP-9 mRNA level (Fig. 3B); however, it does not make cells invasive (data not shown). Our result may show the possibility that MMP-9 is necessary but not sufficient for the invasive phenotype. Further study is needed to delineate the exact mechanism.

Our luciferase reporter assay showed that RECK suppresses MMP-9 promoter activity through the κB site and TRE-1 sites (Fig. 5C). There are mounting evidences that MMP-9 expression is regulated by AP-1 and NF-κB (4, 7, 8, 25, 34). As for the TRE-1 site, we found Fra-1 and c-Jun as MMP-9 promoter–binding transcriptional factors (Fig. 6B); however, we could not detect any binding of NF-κB components within the MMP-9 promoter region by ChIP analysis. Thus, we speculated that the κB site is important for RECK-mediated suppression of MMP-9 transcription, but unidentified transcriptional factor(s) might bind and regulate MMP-9 mRNA expression through the κB site. Moreover, overall activity is suppressed in mTRE-2 which is located just upstream of the TATA-box, we thought that mutation of TRE-2 may influence the recruitment of basal transcription factors. Further studies are necessary to resolve these phenomena.

We showed that RECK decreased the binding of Fra-1 and c-Jun to TRE-1 within the MMP-9 promoter region (Fig. 6B). In a previous study, Fra–1–overexpressing cells represented the up-regulation of MMP-9 gene expression by microarray experiments, and the activity of the MMP-9 promoter was increased by Fra-1 expression (35). Another group showed that Fra-1 and Stat3 synergistically regulated the expression of human MMP-9 mRNA (36). These reports indicate that Fra-1 contributes to the up-regulation of MMP-9 transcription. On the other hand, Fra-1 is also known to be accumulated in ras-transformed NIH3T3 fibroblasts (37), and the accumulation in both transcription and protein stabilization level is mediated by the MAP/ERK kinase/extracellular signal-regulated kinase pathway (28, 38). Stable transfection with a Fra-1 antisense RNA vector significantly reduces the malignant phenotype in ras-transformed FRTL-5 thyrocytes, indicating that Fra-1 plays crucial roles in ras-induced transformation (39, 40). Interestingly, RECK was originally identified as a suppressor gene of v-Ki-ras–transformed NIH3T3 cells, and our findings show that RECK suppresses Fra-1 activity, suggesting that reversion of ras-transformed NIH3T3 cells by RECK might be mediated by suppression of Fra-1 activity.

Because RECK is a glycosylphosphatidylinositol-anchored protein with no transmembrane domain or intracellular domain, the mechanism to suppress Fra-1 and c-Jun bindings to the MMP-9 promoter region is very interesting. Recently, it has been reported that ErbB-2, a member of the EGF receptor tyrosine kinase family, translocates into the nucleus and binds to the COX-2 promoter to enhance transcriptional activity (31). To examine whether RECK is translocated into the nucleus, we performed cell fractionation experiments and immunohistochemistry with anti-RECK antibody; however, we could not obtain positive evidence that RECK might be localized in the nucleus (data not shown). At present, we speculate that RECK might weaken signal transduction by interacting with some receptors at the plasma membrane and thus leads to the decrease in binding of Fra-1 and c-Jun to the MMP-9 promoter region.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed.

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