

Glycosylation changes leading to the increase in size on the common core of *N*-glycans, required enzymes, and related cancer-associated proteins

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Abstract: Glycan parts of glycoconjugates on the surfaces of cells regulate many kinds of interactions between the cells and their immediate environments. Alterations in glycosylation on the cancer-associated glycoproteins are responsible for changes in their molecular interactions and biological functions. Glycosylation changes occur in the core and/or at the nonreducing end of the oligosaccharide chains of *N*-glycans. In this review, we focus on the branching of the common core structure of *N*-glycans, the responsible enzyme, and the extensions of some of the branches causing size increases on the surface of tumor cells. Abnormal branching, elongation of the branches, and increasing size of the common core of *N*-glycans are the typical features of these changes and are related with malignant transformations. Seven *N*-acetylglucosaminyltransferases (GnTs) (GnT-I, GnT-II, GnT-III, GnT-IV, GnT-V, GnT-VI, and GnT-IX) and α 1,6-fucosyltransferase (FUT8) initiate the new branches on the core. GnT-IV, GnT-V, and GnT-IX initiate the branches available for poly-LacNAc extensions, which are responsible for tumor progression and metastasis. GnT-III prevents the catalytic activity of GnT-II, GnT-IV, GnT-V, and FUT8 to form branching and elongation of the branches. The contributions of GnT-III and the other enzymes to the cancer progression are in conflict with each other. While GnT-III prevents cancer, the others increase metastasis. The function of FUT8 is related to signal transduction and its activity is higher in tumor tissue than in healthy tissue. The impact of glycosylation changes on some of the cancer-associated proteins (growth factor receptors, adhesion and signal molecules, CD147, TIMP-1, and matrilysin) is also summarized.

Key words: *N*-Glycan core branching, glucosyltransferases, FUT8, poly-LacNAc, galectin-3, adhesion and signal molecules, growth factor receptors, CD147, TIMP-1, matrilysin

1. Introduction

In a 2009 special issue of *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta* dedicated to Dr Eric Berger, a colleague explained how his interest in glycosylation defects in human diseases began and how Berger, a medical doctor, had become a glycobiologist with the identification of the first disease caused by a glycosylation disorder in 1978 (Hennot, 2009). In the following years, the description of many human diseases related to glycosylation defects gradually increased. Altered *N*-glycosylation patterns of proteins have been described with increasing age and in several diseases including cancer (Ruhaak et al., 2011).

The cell surface cover, the glycocalyx, is composed of glycan chains (oligosaccharides or polysaccharides), parts of glycoconjugates found within the structure of the plasma membrane and the extracellular matrix (ECM). Glycoconjugates are hybrid molecules including glycoproteins, proteoglycans, glycosphingolipids, and glycosphosphatidyl inositol anchors (Figure 1). Light and

heavily glycosylated plasma membrane glycoproteins have different functions. They are the molecules indicating differentiation (Feizi, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1991), blood groups in ABO and Rh systems (Eyers et al., 1994; Fredriksson et al., 2010), normal and cancer stem cells (Yin et al., 1997; Irollo and Pirozzi, 2013), and tumor-associated antigens (Huang et al., 2013; Saldova et al., 2013b). Membrane receptors for growth factors (Matsumoto et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2014) and for Delta/Serrate (Takeuchi and Haltiwanger, 2014) bear glycans affecting the sensitivity of the cells to their molecular targets. Membrane transporters such as Na⁺-K-ATPase (Tokhtaeva et al., 2010), the ATP-binding cassette (Hollenstein et al., 2007), glucose transporters (Haga et al., 2011), and transmembrane glycoproteins such as cadherin and integrin, playing an important role in cell adhesion and signaling (Zhao et al., 2008; Bassagañas et al., 2014), and a transmembrane serine protease involved in epithelial homeostasis in both health and disease

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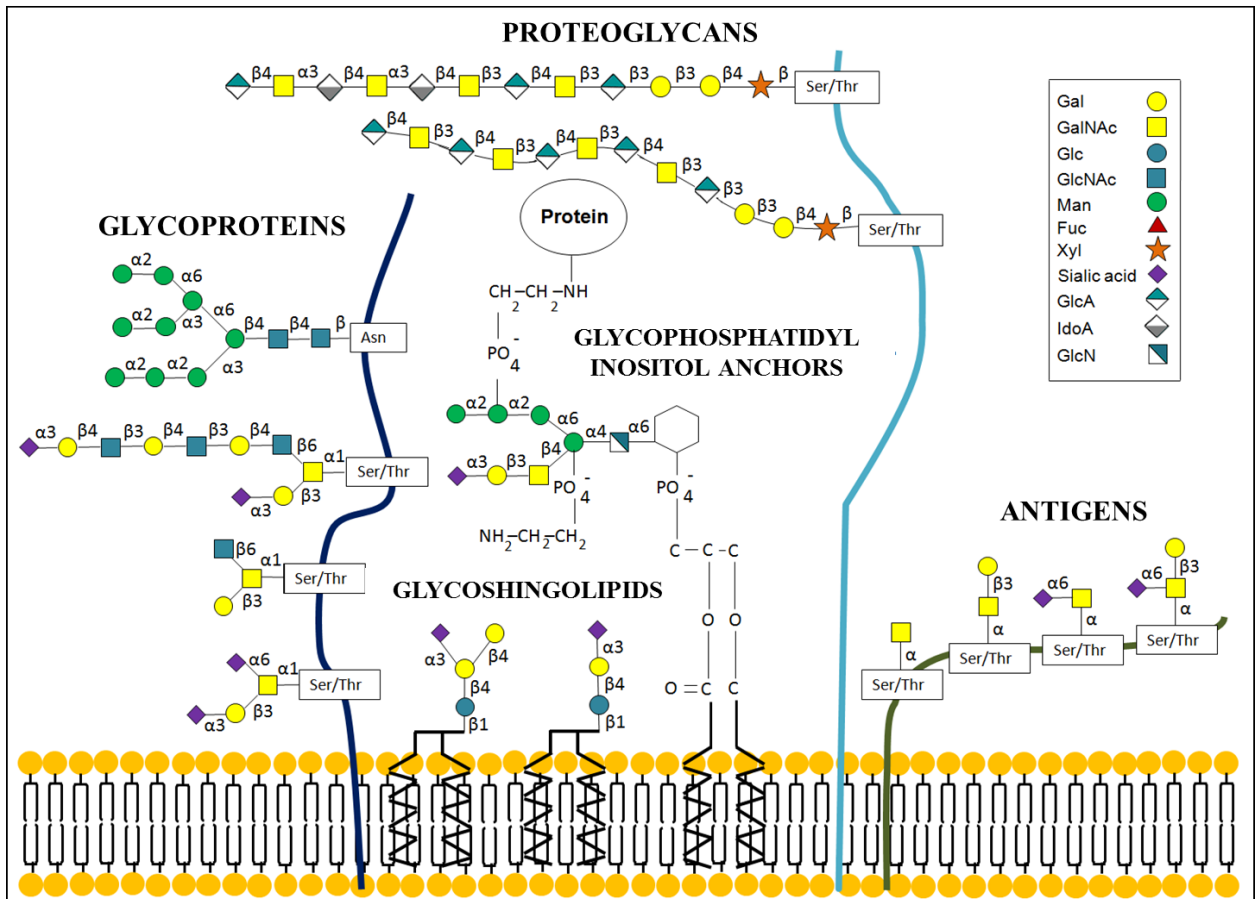


Figure 1. Cell surface glycoconjugates, modified from Varki et al. (2009) with permission.

situations (Gray et al., 2014) are all glycoproteins. Glycan parts of the cell-surface glycoconjugates have a function in self- and nonself-discrimination (Karaçalı et al., 2000; Bayro and Deveci, 2006; Eratak and Karaçalı, 2006; Özkan and Karaçalı, 2006). The glycan structures also decorate signal and carrier molecules in serum. Follicle-stimulating hormone (Lombardi et al., 2013), luteinizing hormone (Mi et al., 2014), sex hormone-binding globulin (Sumer-Bayraktar et al., 2012), and coagulant Factor VIII (Canis et al., 2012) are some such examples.

The cell-surface glycoproteins are responsible for many kinds of interactions between cells and their immediate environments. Free or membrane-associated glycan-binding proteins (lectins, galectins, siglecs, and mannose-binding free and membrane-attached receptors) play critical roles in these interactions. Events mediated by these interactions are recognition, antirecognition, adhesion, signal transduction, endocytosis, vesicle releasing, and migration between the organelles and the cells, on both molecular and cellular levels. Characteristic surface glycosylation patterns, glycotypes, providing a molecular signature, serve to discriminate the differentiated cells from each other.

Glycosylation changes affecting the disruption of normal cellular interactions play an important role in determining cell fate during embryonic and pathological development (Karaçalı, 2003; Varki et al., 2009; Dodla et al., 2012; Nairn et al., 2012). The alterations occurring on the glycans of cell-surface glycoconjugates, such as signaling and attaching and anchoring molecules, receptors, ligands, enzymes, differentiation and cancer-associated antigens, antibodies, and membrane transporters, dramatically change the normal cellular interactions between cells and their microenvironments. A significant relationship between the alteration of cell-surface glycan profiles and cancer progress has been described (Borzym-Kluczyk et al., 2012; Saldova et al., 2013a; Zhang et al., 2014). The modifications of cell-surface glycosylation are responsible for the behavioral changes of tumor cells, including invasion and metastasis (Li et al., 2010; Kang et al., 2011; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011; Tian and Zhang, 2013; Zhang et al., 2013; Christiansen et al., 2014; Häuselmann and Borsig, 2014).

During the last few years, glycosylation abnormalities in genetic diseases have been highlighted as 'congenital disorders of glycosylation' (Cylwik et al., 2013a, 2013b;

Jaeken, 2013; Rosnoblet et al., 2013). Distribution of significant glycan structures on tumor cells makes the carbohydrates attractive targets as cancer biomarkers (Meany and Chan, 2011; Tuccillo et al., 2014) for the new and much publicized objective of personalized therapy (Contessa et al., 2008; Padler-Karavani, 2014) as well as for the development of anticancer vaccines (Hakomori, 2001; Li et al., 2010) and drugs (Kok and Sietsma, 2004; Gerber-Lemaire and Juillerat-Jeanneret, 2010).

Alterations in glycosylation occur in different parts (core and/or antennae) of glycan structures of glycoconjugates of tumor cells, and in various forms (Brooks et al., 2002; Varki et al., 2009; Karaçalı et al., 2011). In general, an increased number of branches on the core structures and their extensions by addition of new monosaccharides cause the formation of heavily glycosylated glycoconjugates. The addition of new epitopes on proximal and distal parts of oligosaccharide chains and the alterations in linkage types at terminal monosaccharides alter the adhesive interactions of the cells. These alterations occur on the glycans of *N*-linked glycoproteins, *O*-linked glycoproteins (mucins and proteoglycans), and glycosphingolipids. In this review we focus particularly on the branching and elongation of oligosaccharide chains occurring in the common core

structure of *N*-glycans on cell-surface glycoconjugates in cancer cells. These changes are responsible for the increase in size and the occurrence of metastatic phenotypes. Responsible enzymes and their key targets associated with cancer are also addressed.

2. Alterations on the common core of *N*-glycans

2.1. Branching on the common core structure

Dolichol-linked precursors, common precursors of *N*-glycans consisting of 14 glycan units (2GlcNAc, 9Man, 3Glc), are formed at the initial synthesis stage of all *N*-linked glycoproteins (Brooks et al., 2002; Varki et al., 2009; Taylor and Drickamer, 2011). First the *N*-acetylglucosamine (GlcNAc) sugar of the precursor is attached to the amide nitrogen of the asparagine residue in the β -glucosidic linkage (GlcNAc β 1-Asn) by the oligosaccharyltransferase. After transferring the precursor to the growing peptide, maturation reactions of the glycans start in the lumen of the rough endoplasmic reticulum and continue in Golgi compartments. Glycosidases and glycosyltransferases successively modify the structure of the precursor. The differential actions of these enzymes cause the formation of high-mannose and hybrid and complex types of *N*-linked oligosaccharides (Figure 2). All of these types

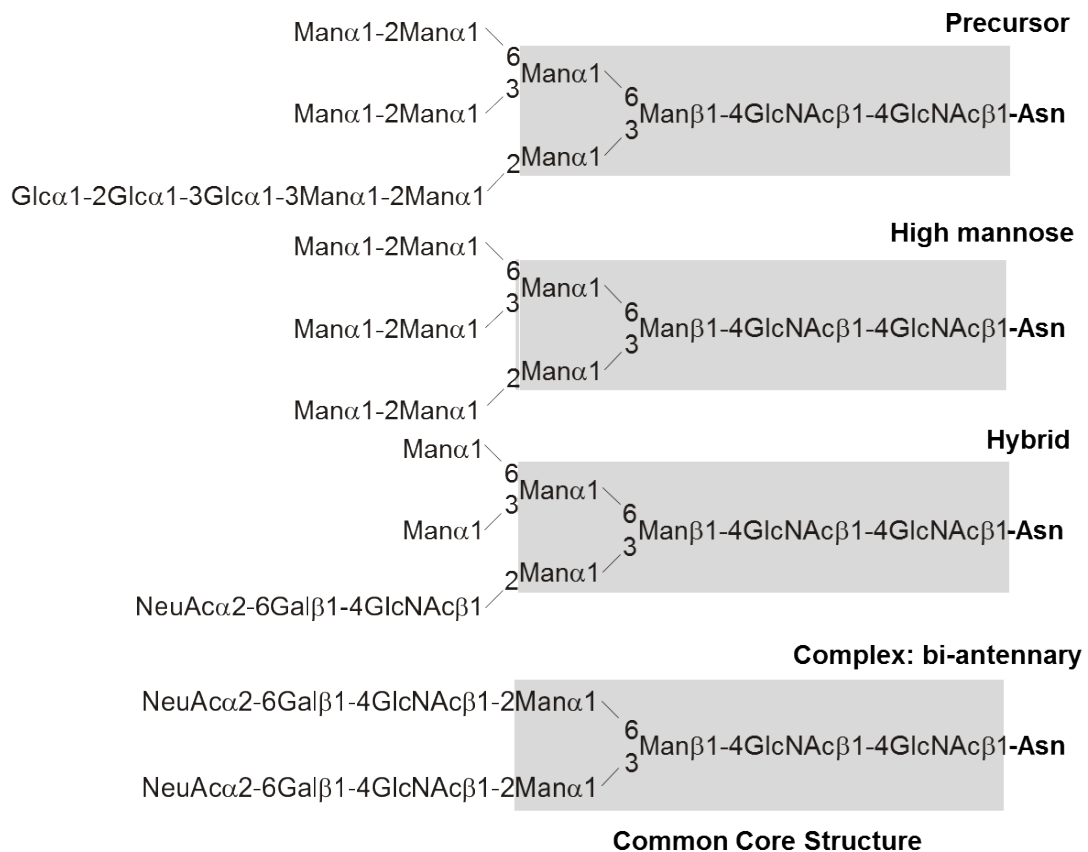


Figure 2. The precursor and the basic types of *N*-glycans. The common core structure is shaded.

have a common core structure consisting of 3 mannose (Man) residues and 2 GlcNAc residues.

Appropriate variations occurring on the glycans direct the protein folding, sorting, correct targeting, half-life, and a number of molecular interactions (adhesion, receptor-ligand binding, and activation) of glycoproteins. Characteristic combinations of these glycan types appear on the surfaces of each differentiated cell. Differentiated healthy cells, together with a few 3- and 4-branched glycans, contain most abundantly 2-branched complex structures on their *N*-glycoproteins.

In tumor cells, increased branching on the core of *N*-glycans is a typical feature, except for truncated expression of oligosaccharides (Brooks et al., 2002; Varki et al., 2009). Two Man residues are attached to the first Man residue by 2 different linkages (α 1-6 and α 1-3), forming the initiation of 2 basic arms on the core structure. Specific *N*-acetylglucosaminyltransferases (GlcNAc-Ts, GnTs) catalyze the transfer of GlcNAc sugar from the active donor, UDP-GlcNAc, to specific positions on the core mannoses of *N*-glycans via a specific glycosidic linkage. Three, 4, and more branches can be started by the activity of a particular GnT on the core structure (Chen et al., 2009). Each of the attached GlcNAc sugars provides a new substrate for the succeeding glycosylation and their number determines the number of branches or antennaries originating from the common core structure on hybrid and complex *N*-glycans. The enzymes catalyzing glycosidic linkages at the starting points of the new branches are seen in Figure 3.

The enzymes responsible for the addition of the new branches and for the increase in core size are well characterized by several GnTs and a fucosyltransferase (FUT8). In vertebrates, 7 different GnTs (productions of *Mgat* genes), indicated as GnT-I, -II, -III, -IV, -V, -VI, and -IX (Figure 3), have been determined to be involved in the initiation of the branching of the complex *N*-glycan core structure (Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011; Takamatsu et al., 2013).

Galactosyltransferases and sialyltransferases are the other important enzymes. One (Taylor and Drickamer, 2011) or more (Antonopoulos et al., 2012) branches are extended by the addition of galactose and GlcNAc residues, which produce the polylactosamine (poly-LacNAc) extensions. Correlations between the originating branches of poly-LacNAcs and regulation of tumor development, invasion, metastasis, aggressiveness, and survival have been investigated (Seto et al., 2013). Sialic acid attached like a cap at the nonreducing end of the oligosaccharide chains prevents further elongation of the chains.

2.1.1. *N*-Acetylglucosaminyltransferases (GlcNAcTs, GnTs)

Sequential activity rules for the GnTs that initiate the branching of the complex *N*-glycan core structure were established by Brockhausen et al. (1988). GnT-I and GnT-

II are involved in initiating the synthesis of the various branches of complex *N*-glycans.

GnT-I, encoded by the *Mgat1* gene (Kumar and Stanley, 1989), acts before all the other GnTs. GnT-I is required for the conversion from the high-mannose type (with 5 Man residues) to the hybrid and complex types (with 3 Man residues) of *N*-glycans (Yip et al., 1997; Chen et al., 2002; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011). It catalyzes the formation of β 1-2 linkage by transferring a GlcNAc sugar to the Man residue on the α 1-3 arm of the core structure with 5 mannoses (Figure 4). Two Man residues on the α 1-6 arm are removed by catalytic activity of α -mannosidase II. This structure is the substrate for the GnT-II and GnT-III enzymes. Mutation on the corresponding gene, *Mgat1*, causes embryonic lethality (Loffe and Stanley, 1994; D'Agostaro et al., 1995).

GnT-II controls the conversion of hybrid type to complex type structures (D'Agostaro et al., 1995; Ye and Marth, 2004). GnT-II recognizes the structure formed by the catalytic activity of α -mannosidase II and catalyzes the β 1-2 glycosidic linkage by adding a GlcNAc to the α 1-6 arm on the core; a 2-branched core structure is formed (Figure 4). Activity of GnT-II is prerequisite (Zhang et al., 2000) for the GnT-IV, GnT-V, and GnT-IX activities that are responsible for cancer progression. Mutation on corresponding gene *Mgat2* causes a number of abnormalities in early stages of development (Wang et al., 2001).

GnT-III (the corresponding gene is *Mgat3*) catalyzes the formation of β 1-4 glycosidic linkage by transferring a bisecting GlcNAc to the first Man residue on the core (Figures 3 and 4). The bisecting GlcNAc is found in various hybrid and complex *N*-glycans. The presence of a bisecting GlcNAc prevents subsequent processing and elongation of *N*-glycans, inhibiting the catalytic activity of the GnT-II, GnT-IV, GnT-V, and FUT8 enzymes that are responsible for branching of the core structure in vitro (Brockhausen et al., 1988; Isaji et al., 2010; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011; Miwa et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2012). However, a contrary suggestion is also present. The glycomic profiles of several *N*-glycans having a bisecting GlcNAc revealed that they carry lactosamine (LacNAc) repeats and also a core fucose (Fuc) sugar (North et al., 2010). The presence of the bisecting GlcNAc on the cell surface glycoproteins, such as E-cadherin and integrins, probably alters *N*-glycan conformation, which affects their interaction with carbohydrate-binding proteins, such as galectins and siglecs. The bisecting GlcNAc of *N*-glycans on adhesion and signal molecules regulates cellular signaling and tumor progression by modulating *N*-glycan/galectin interactions (Miwa et al., 2012).

Overexpression of GnT-III increases the bisected *N*-glycans but reduces the β 1-6 GlcNAc branching structures on target glycoproteins. Knockdown of

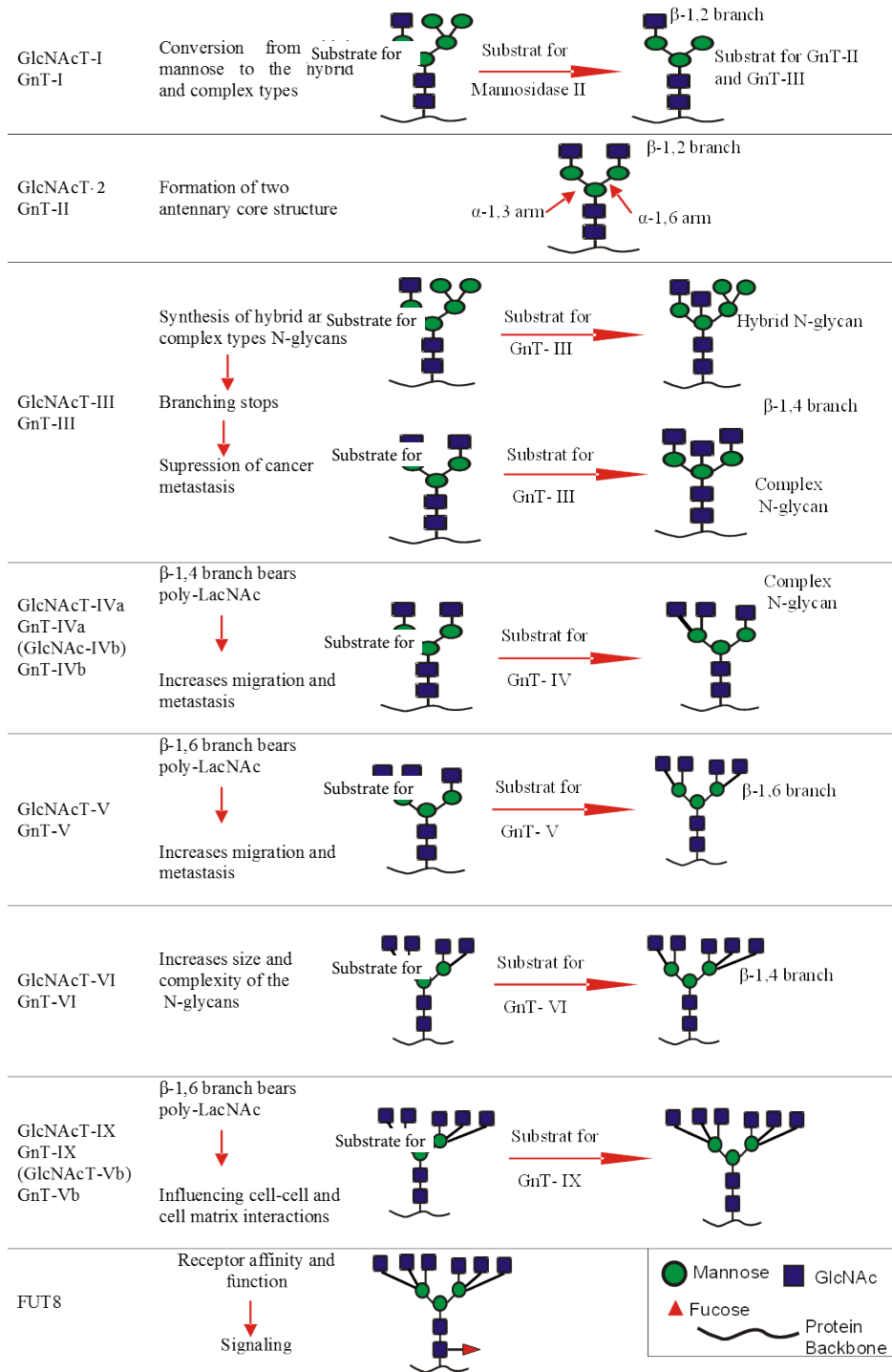


Figure 3. The branches on the common core structure of N-glycans. The glycosyltransferases that initiate formation of the branches and the known branches that bear poly-LacNAcs, and related enzymes, are indicated. Modified from Taniguchi and Korekane (2011) with permission.

endogenous GnT-III expression results in increased cell migration (Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011). As a result, the enzyme suppresses the integrin-mediated cell motility and has an inhibitory effect on cancer metastasis (Kariya et al.,

2010; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011; Xu et al., 2012). The *Mgat3* gene has a tissue-specific expression pattern. High expression levels appear particularly in mouse brain and kidney (Miwa et al., 2012)

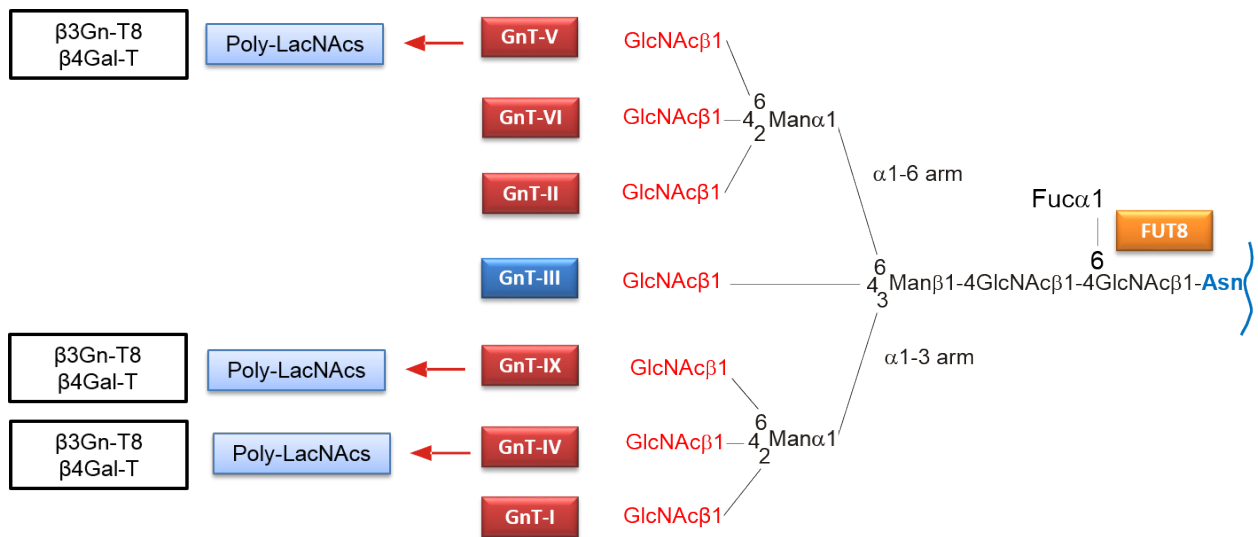


Figure 4. Branching on the common core structure of *N*-glycans. Sequential activities of responsible GnTs. Modified from Taniguchi and Korekane (2011) with permission.

GnT-IV (the corresponding gene is *Mgat4*) catalyzes the formation of β 1-4 glycosidic linkage by transferring a GlcNAc sugar to the α 1-3 Man arm of the *N*-glycan core. The enzyme acts on biantennary complex-type *N*-glycan and forms the 3-antennary core structure (Figures 3 and 4). The third branch extends by addition of LacNAc repeats, poly-LacNAcs that bear galectin-binding epitopes (Takamatsu et al., 2010, 2013; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011). Secreted galectins are bound to β -galactoside sugar on poly-LacNAcs and cross-link glycoconjugates on the cell surface and in the ECM by producing a lattice formation. The galectin-glycoprotein lattice structure controls glycoprotein activity.

GnT-IV has 2 isoenzymes, GnT-IVa and GnT-IVb, and they both contribute to the galectin-mediated glycoprotein clustering on the cell surface (Takamatsu et al., 2013). In humans, GnT-IV isoenzymes have the same specificities but different affinities for sugar donors and acceptors. GnT-IVa has higher affinities and is more active than GnT-IVb (Oguri et al., 2006). The results obtained from GnT-IVb-deficient and both GnT-IVa- and GnT-IVb-deficient mice showed that GnT-IVb is expressed in various organs, whereas GnT-IVa expression is restricted to the gastrointestinal tissues (Takamatsu et al., 2010). GnT-IVa is expressed in malignant and premalignant trophoblastic cells but not in normal or benign cells (Niimi et al., 2012). On the contrary, in pancreatic cancer, the increased expression of GnT-IVb was found in tumor tissue, whereas GnT-IVa expression was found in surrounding normal tissues (Ide et al., 2006).

β 1-Integrin and a cancer-associated antigen, extracellular matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) inducer CD147, are the target proteins of the enzyme GnT-

IVa. Overexpression of GnT-IVa causes an increase in branching of complex *N*-glycans on CD147, leading to enhanced cell migration and metastatic capabilities. However, downregulation of GnT-IVa reduces the branching and decreases cell migration and metastasis (Fan et al., 2012). In GnT-IVb-deficient mice, total enzymatic activity is preserved at a level comparable to the wild type due to upregulated *Mgat4a* expression (Niimi et al., 2012). Transcription factor Ets-1 is responsible for this compensation. Ets-1 evolves from GnT-IVb deficiency and induces the expression of GnT-IVa and GnT-V enzymes (Niimi et al., 2012).

GnT-V (the corresponding gene is *Mgat5*) is an enzyme that has dual functions as a membrane-bound glycosyltransferase and a soluble angiogenic factor (Saito et al., 2002; Nakahara et al., 2006). The membrane-bound form of GnT-V catalyzes the formation of β 1-6 linkage by transferring a GlcNAc sugar to the α 1-6 arm of the *N*-glycan core (Figures 3 and 4). This added GlcNAc residue provides an initial substrate to form the poly-LacNAc extension. Expression of poly-LacNAcs on the *N*-glycan core, which is often modified with Fuc and sulfate residues (Mitsui et al., 2012) on the surfaces of many cancer cells, indicates their association with cellular differentiation and oncogenesis (Hua et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2014).

A close relationship between the metastatic potential of tumor cells and formation of poly-LacNAc extensions has been reported (Chakraborty and Pawelek, 2003; Pinho et al., 2013; Pocheć et al., 2013; Seto et al., 2013; Tanaka et al., 2013). The degree of the invasiveness and metastatic potential appears related to the amounts of poly-LacNAc chains. Comparison of the common glycoproteins from primary and metastatic melanoma cell lines shows that

the metastatic melanoma cells bear larger amounts of poly-LacNAc chains than the primary cells (Kinoshita et al., 2014). Observation of an inhibition in invasion and metastasis events following downregulation of GnT-V in BGC 829 cells (Huang et al., 2014) supports that suggestion. There are several supporting reports indicating that the gene of GnT-V, *Mgat5*, is correlated with metastasis. Tumor growth and metastasis were suppressed by knockout of *Mgat5* in animal studies (Demetriou et al., 1995; Yao et al., 1999; Granovsky et al., 2000; Yamamoto et al., 2000; Ihara et al., 2002; Saito et al., 2002; Tsui et al., 2008).

GnT-IX was recently designated (Inamori et al., 2003) as GnT-Vb (Kaneko et al., 2003) enzyme forming a β 1-6 branched structure (Figures 3 and 4) on the α 1-3 arm of the *N*-glycan core (Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011). In the brain, GnT-IX catalyzes the branched form of *O*-mannosyl glycan structures, as well (Kanekiyo et al., 2013). Brain-specific gene expression of this enzyme is regulated by epigenetic histone modification (Kizuka et al., 2011, 2014; Korekane et al., 2013).

2.1.2. α 1,6-Fucosyltransferase (FUT8)

FUT8 (α 1,6-fucosyltransferase) catalyzes the transfer of a Fuc sugar from the active sugar donor, GDP-fucose, to the first GlcNAc residue linked to the asparagine residue of hybrid and complex *N*-glycan cores. FUT8 activity and increased core fucosylation play an important role in cancer development (Bernardi et al., 2013). In general, FUT8 activity is higher in tumor tissue than in healthy tissue and is related to sex, type of growth, and tumor stage (Muinelo-Romay et al., 2008). Overexpressed FUT8 and increased core fucose were observed in several malignant human cancers, such as in the serum of prostate (Saldova et al., 2011) and ovarian (Saldova et al., 2013a) cancer cells in cell lines of nonsmall cell lung cancer (Chen et al., 2013), and in tissues of colorectal (Muinelo-Romay et al., 2008) and hepatocellular (Li et al., 2013; Yin et al., 2014) carcinomas. However, increased levels of tetraantennary glycan without core fucosylation were also observed in hepatocellular carcinoma (Mehta et al., 2012).

Knockdown FUT8 in aggressive lung cancer cell lines significantly inhibits their malignant behaviors (Chen et al., 2013). In contrast, the level of FUT8 protein was decreased in gastric tumor tissues compared to the adjacent nontumor tissues (Zhao et al., 2014). Decreased core fucosylation in both tissue and serum from gastric cancer patients may result from the decreased expression of FUT8 (Liu et al., 2013). The results of glycoproteomic and microarray analyses show that core fucose regulates the function of proteins associated with malignancy. Cell-surface antigens, antibodies, receptors, sugar transporters on Golgi membranes, and adhesion molecules (E-cadherin and integrins) are modified by FUT8 (Chen et al., 2013). Core fucosylation of several growth factors has been

demonstrated to be required for signal transduction and alters the sensitivity for ligands. Core fucosylation of *N*-glycans of epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) is necessary for the binding of epidermal growth factor (EGF) (Wang et al., 2006). FUT8 promotes EGFR dimerization and phosphorylation (Liu et al., 2011) as well as cellular growth (Matsumoto et al., 2008). Knockdown FUT8 leads to a decrease in the growth response. Decreased core fucosylation of EGFR causes a reduced activation of EGF-induced phosphorylation of the EGFR in gastric cancer (Zhao et al., 2014). Core fucose is required for the ligand binding affinity and function of TGF- β 1 receptor (Wang et al., 2005; Venkatachalam and Weinberg, 2013).

Adhesion molecules, E-cadherin and integrins, play an important role in cancer development and progression. FUT8 regulates E-cadherin-mediated cell adhesion and is expressed in metastatic lung cancer cell (Geng et al., 2004). The increase of core fucosylation of E-cadherin leads to strengthened cell-cell adhesion (Osumi et al., 2009). Core fucosylation is essential for integrin-mediated cell migration and signal transduction (Zhao et al., 2008). FUT8 plays an important role in embryonic development; 70% of FUT8-deficient [FUT8 (-/-)] mice that lack the core fucose structure die within 3 days after birth. The others may survive for several weeks, but they show growth retardation. In embryonic fibroblasts from FUT8 (-/-) mice, the levels of bisecting GlcNAc on β 1-integrin and N-cadherin were increased. The responsible enzyme, GnT-III, that inhibits cell migration in metastasis is regulated by FUT8 deficiency in vivo (Kurimoto et al., 2014).

All these alterations, with the increase in size and structural complexity of the *N*-glycan core, cause functional changes of the glycans on the surface cover of the cells. In general, the degree of branching is very closely related to tumorigenesis. The increase in *N*-glycan core branching and the formation of long linear or branched poly-LacNAcs cause tumor progression. Reduced *N*-glycan branching degree retards tumor progression (Mehta et al., 2012). Briefly, GnT-I and GnT-II are prerequisites in the biosynthesis of highly branched *N*-glycans. GnT-III prevents cancer of the cells. GnT-IV, GnT-V, GnT-IX, and FUT8 are responsible for tumor progression and metastasis.

2.2. Elongation of the oligosaccharide chains, poly-LacNAcs, and galectin-3

Carbohydrate chains on all types of glycoconjugates carry the repeats of *N*-acetylglucosamine (Gal-GlcNAc, LacNAc), poly-LacNAc extensions. Branching and composition of *N*-glycan cores affect the extent of poly-LacNAc chains. They are found more often in tetraantennary and triantennary *N*-glycans. The branch with β 1-6 glycosidic linkage catalyzed by GnT-V on the α 1-6 arm and 2 branches catalyzed by GnT-IX (GnT-Vb, isoenzyme of GnT-V) and

by GnT-IV on the α 1-3 arm are available to carry poly-LacNAc chains (Figure 3). According to the prevalent hypothesis, the poly-LacNAc extension is attached to one of the specific branches on the common trimannosyl core structure. However, the poly-LacNAc chains were equally distributed on all branches and not selectively enriched on a specific *N*-glycan branch in activated cytotoxic T lymphocytes after antigenic stimulation (Antonopoulos et al., 2012). Two kinds of poly-LacNAc chains are known, indicated as type I and type II according to linkage types. Type II is the most common chain form and the linkages are Gal β 1-4GlcNAc and GlcNAc β 1-3Gal in LacNAc repeats. In type I, the linkages are Gal β 1-3GlcNAc and GlcNAc β 1-4Gal in LacNAc repeats.

Linear and branched poly-LacNAcs form i-histo and I-blood group antigens, respectively (Twu et al., 2010) (Figure 5). These are present on the surfaces of red blood cells and other somatic cells. Poly-LacNAc structures are important ligands for galectin-mediated cell adhesion to ECM proteins, such as laminin and fibronectin (Sauerzapfe et al., 2009). Extended and branched poly-LacNAcs cause the formation of multiantennary complex type N-glycans of enormous size. The enzyme required for branching is β 1-6 branching glycosyltransferase (IGnT-V, GCNT2). Correlations between the originating branches of poly-LacNAc and regulation of tumor development, invasion, metastasis, aggressiveness, and survival have been investigated (Seto et al., 2013). The increase in branching and in extension of poly-LacNAc is associated with tumor cell metastasis (Nabi and Dennis, 1998; Ishida et al., 2005; Hua et al., 2012; Peng et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2014). In contrast, reduced degrees of branching and extension of poly-LacNAc chains retard tumor progression and metastasis (Togayachi et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2011, 2014; Shen et al., 2011).

Required enzymes for the formation of poly-LacNAc are β 1,4-galactosyltransferases (β 4GalT) and β 1,3-*N*-acetylglucosaminyltransferase (β 3GnT). The length of poly-LacNAc extensions changes depending on the

repeating action of these 2 transferases (Nabi and Dennis, 1998). $\beta 4\text{GalT}$ is present in a unique form in all cells. However, the number of known $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ genes is 8 in mice and they are expressed in a tissue-specific manner (Henion and Schwarting, 2014). Each of the 8 determined $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -Ts enzymes (Seko and Yamashita, 2005; Peng et al., 2012; Henion and Schwarting, 2014) synthesizes a different glycan type. $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T8 (homolog to $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T2) (Togayachi et al., 2010) has a central role in carcinogenesis and catalyzes the formation of poly-LacNAc on $\beta 1$ -6 branches of *N*-glycans (Hoja-Łukowicz et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2014; Ni et al., 2014). $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T2 regulates the expression of extended poly-LacNAc chains that are essential for axon guidance and neuronal survival in the olfactory epithelium (Henion and Schwarting, 2014). $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T8 and $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T2 have the same specificity to act efficiently on tetraantennary and triantennary *N*-glycan cores (Seko and Yamashita, 2005). The mixing of $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T8 and $\beta 3\text{GnT}$ -T2 in vitro forms a heterocomplex and its enzymatic activity is greatly enhanced compared to the individual enzymes (Seko and Yamashita, 2005).

The branched and extended structure of poly-LacNAc chains is responsible for lattice formation with galectins. The galectin-glycoprotein lattice structure controls the activity of glycoproteins at the cell surface by regulation of their membrane localization, lateral mobility, and clustering. The lattice formation inhibits endocytosis (Grigorian et al., 2009), which is important for receptor turnover. Galectin-glycoprotein lattices can regulate the duration of signaling and receptor turnover. Thus, they can control the decision between cell growth and arrest (Rabinovich et al., 2007). Long poly-LacNAc chains with additional sialyl Lewis^x epitopes are highly metastatic, while short poly-LacNAc chains with many more sialyl Lewis^x epitopes are not metastatic (Srinivasan et al., 2009). This is probably related to the presence of the lattice formation for poly-LacNAc chains of different lengths.

A chemotherapeutic agent, 5-FU, inhibits the expression of $\beta 3$ Gn-T8, and this causes a reduction of poly-

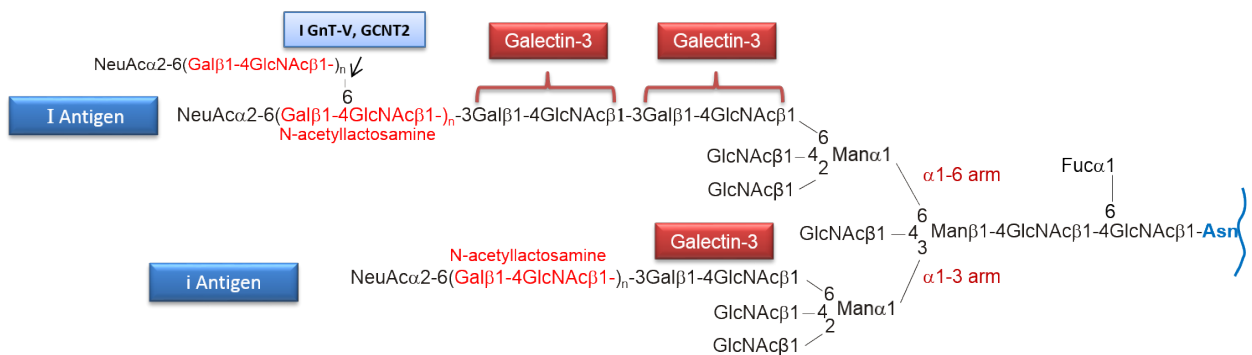


Figure 5. i and I antigens on poly-LacNAc chains. Galectin-3 recognizes proximal LacNAc units.

LacNAc on CD147 in colon cancer cells (Gao et al., 2014). The levels of β 3Gn-T8 and poly-LacNAc chains gradually increase from low to high metastatic potential in colorectal cancer cell lines. A positive correlation between β 3Gn-T8 expression and highly glycosylated CD147 indicates that β 3Gn-T8 plays a critical role in the metastasis of colorectal cancer (Lu et al., 2014; Ni et al., 2014).

Galectins are soluble proteins recognizing and binding β -galactosides on poly-LacNAc extensions of the *N*-glycan core. They are found in the nucleus, cytoplasm, cell surface, and ECM, as well as in biological fluids (Argüeso and Panjwani, 2011). Different galectins have different specificities for oligosaccharides. Galectin-3 (Gal-3) binds proximal LacNAc repeats on the poly-LacNAc chains of *N*-glycan cores (Stowell et al., 2008). Gal-3, existing as a monomer in solution, produces a pentameric structure through self-associated intermolecular interactions and mediates crosslinking of proteins, forming a lattice organization (Chiu et al., 2010; Argüeso and Panjwani, 2011). Galectin-glycan lattices create homotypic or glycoprotein complexes that are involved in cellular signaling related to a variety of cell functions, including cell adhesion, migration, invasion, angiogenesis, immune functions, apoptosis, and endocytosis (Garner and Baum, 2008; Nangia-Makker et al., 2008; Chiu et al., 2010; Çay, 2012). During the ECM remodeling, new Gal-3-glycan lattices occur and mediate new interactions (Lagana et al., 2006; Reticker-Flynn et al., 2012; Priglinger et al., 2013). Galectin-glycoprotein lattices control the organization of plasma membrane domains like lipid rafts and the direction of targeted delivery of glycoproteins to the cell surface. They determine the duration of signaling by inhibiting the endocytosis of glycoprotein receptors (such as growth factors) from the cell surface (Garner and Baum, 2008).

The GnT-V expression-dependent Gal-3-TGF β R lattice preserves growth factor receptor densities at the level necessary for invasive phenotypes in transformed cell surfaces (Rabinovich et al., 2007). GnT-IVa expression-dependent lattice formation increases the cell-surface half-life of glucose transporter 2 on pancreatic β -cells, probably by inhibiting receptor endocytosis (Ohtsubo et al., 2005; Rabinovich et al., 2007). These points indicate that lattice structures are involved in cellular signaling in various ways depending on the origin of the poly-LacNAc chains.

3. Changes in cancer-associated proteins

It appears that the enzymes (GnT-IV, GnT-V, and GnT-IX) initiating branches that possess poly-LacNAc chains on the core of *N*-glycans affect the same proteins involved in cancer development. GnT-V has a number of target proteins involved in tumor progression. Well-defined substrate proteins of GnT-V are growth factor receptors (such as EGF and TGF- β), adhesion and signaling

molecules (cadherin and integrins), tumor-associated antigen (CD147), tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase-1 (TIMP-1), membrane-bound serine protease (Matrilysin), and lysosomal-associated membrane proteins 1 and 2 (Lamp-1 and Lamp-2). Each one contributes in a distinct manner to tumor progression and metastasis (Ochwat et al., 2004; Siddiqui et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2008; Taniguchi and Korekane, 2011; Drake et al., 2012; Christiansen et al., 2014). Expression of β 1-6 GlcNAc branching on these substrate glycoproteins is related to a variety of tumors in malignant transformation (Ihara et al., 2002). Depending on the structural changes of *N*-glycans in these target proteins, different implications of GnT-V have been reported in cancer metastasis.

The occurrence of poly-LacNAc chains is very important for tumor progression and metastasis. The branched structure catalyzed by GnT-V on several glycoproteins has received particular attention in the literature. GnT enzymes have different affinities for the same common core substrate. This produces a restriction mechanism among the GnTs. For example, GnT-I and GnT-II have nearly 250- and 20-fold higher affinity for UDP-GlcNAc than GnT-V, respectively (Chen et al., 2009). Higher expression of GnT-I reduces GlcNAc branching on the core of *N*-glycans by reducing the availability of UDP-GlcNAc to GnT-IV and GnT-V.

3.1. Growth factor receptors

Growth factor receptors (GFRs) are synthesized in the cytoplasm and then transported toward the plasma membrane within the vesicles originating from Golgi membranes (Luo et al., 2013; Katsuda et al., 2014). It has been suggested that *N*-linked glycosylation is required for the successful cell-surface transportation and sensitivity of the TGF- β receptor in gastric carcinoma cell lines (Kim et al., 2012). *N*-glycans on GFRs such as EGF, TGF- β , IGF, and PDGF are modified by overexpression of GnT-V and high affinity ligands, poly-LacNAcs, for galectins are generated on tumor cells (Lajoie et al., 2007). The increase of β 1-6 branches bearing poly-LacNAcs has an influence on ligand binding, dimerization, and promotion of function of EGFRs (Guo et al., 2004; Takahashi et al., 2004).

The formation of the lattice between increased poly-LacNAc chains and Gal-3 causes the inhibition of receptor endocytosis (Partridge et al., 2004; Häuselmann and Borsig, 2014), the prolongation of receptor signaling (Kimura et al., 2012), and the promotion of cell proliferation. EGFR signaling in tumor cells is regulated by the competition between the galectin lattice and oligomerized caveolin-1 microdomains for EGFR (Lajoie et al., 2007). Morphological changes and cell detachment from the matrix occur after receptor stimulation (Guo et al., 2007). The cell detachment from the matrix is closely associated with tumor cell migration (Wang et al., 2009; Pocheć et

al., 2013). Results obtained from studies using knockout GnT-V and antisense cell lines support this suggestion (Seberger et al., 1999; Guo et al., 2001, 2007, 2010). Knockout of GnT-V by siRNA expression causes lowered expression of β 1-6 branches on EGFR *N*-glycans without any effect on EGFR expression level (Guo et al., 2007). The EGFR signaling pathway maintains a balance among cell proliferation, differentiation, and apoptosis and thus plays an important role in the development and progression of several human carcinomas (Al Moustafa et al., 2012). Since occurrence of the epithelial-mesenchymal transition phenotype is initiated via EGFR signaling (Huang et al., 2013), downregulation of GnT-V has particular importance.

3.2. Adhesion and signal molecules

The modification of *N*-linked glycans on adhesion molecules such as E-cadherin and integrins can change their functions (Pinho et al., 2011). Overexpression of GnT-V provides the formation of β 1-6 branches that bear a poly-LacNAc extension. This branch is the cause of E-cadherin-mediated tumor invasion (Pinho et al., 2013). Similarly, increased expression on β 1-6 branching on *N*-glycans of β 1-integrin inhibits the formation of fibronectin receptor α 5 β 1. This deficiency causes a decrease in ECM adhesion and an increase in cell motility (Siddique et al., 2005). In the case of a decrease in GnT-V activity, an enhancement of integrin α 5 β 1-dependent vascular endothelium adhesion and subsequent transmigration occur (Yang et al., 2012). These results indicate that *N*-glycan modification of the adhesion and signal molecules has an important function for migration and invasion activities of tumor cells.

3.3. Tumor-associated antigen (CD147)

CD147, a tumor-associated antigen, is a transmembrane protein and a member of the immunoglobulin receptor family and is highly expressed on the cell surface of various tumor cells (Bai et al., 2014). The role of CD147 in tumorigenesis is related to the inducement of MMP expression. It stimulates the secretion of MMPs from fibroblasts to degrade the basement membrane and the ECM, to facilitate cancer cell penetration, migration, metastasis, and angiogenesis (Weidle et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2013; Zhao et al., 2013). The degradation of the ECM and the cell adhesion contacts, and the formation of blood vessels, are the main events during metastasis that are initiated with CD147. The stimulating effect of CD147 on the production of MMPs reaches the target cells by the vesicles. CD147 is released by an extracellular vesicle shedding mechanism and transported within the vesicle membrane. Although vesicle shedding is common in normal cells, it occurs at much higher rates in tumor cells (Redzic et al., 2013). Thus, the activation of MMPs is triggered by GnT-V via CD147 (Lee et al., 2013). Released CD147 contributes to the cells undergoing an

epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition by activating local MMPs (Siu et al., 2013).

Overexpression of GnT-V results from the increase of both CD147 and MMPs. CD147 contains high mannose and complex type *N*-glycans bearing poly-LacNAc extensions on β 1-6 branches of the core structure. Heterogeneous glycosylation of CD147 causes remarkable variations in its size. According to the results from site-mutated glycosylation studies, *N*-glycans of CD147 contribute to its MMP-inducing activity and the most highly glycosylated form of CD147 is more effective. Because β 1-6 branched glycans are high-affinity ligands for Gal-3, extracellular Gal-3 triggers the clustering of membrane glycoproteins that contain poly-LacNAc extensions. Gal-3 interacting with poly-LacNAc on the CD147 and integrin β 1 of retinal pigment epithelial cells is responsible for modified cell behavior (Priglinger et al., 2013). Aberrant β 1-6 branching glycans on CD147 probably play an important role in the biological activity of CD147 (Zheng et al., 2006), which has been considered as a potential tumor marker (Chen et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2013).

3.4. Tissue inhibitor metalloproteinase-1 (TIMP-1)

Tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase-1 (TIMP-1) is also a target protein for GnT-V.

TIMP-1 regulates the activity of MMPs (Groblewska et al., 2012) and serves as a biomarker in gastric cancer (Grunnet et al., 2013). Polylactosamination on the β 1-6 GlcNA branch and sialylation on TIMP-1 are both characteristic in human colon cancer cells, WiDr, in which GnT-V was overexpressed (Kim et al., 2008). Glycosylation of TIMP-1 participates in the regulation of interaction between MMPs (Kim et al., 2012). The aberrant glycosylation of TIMP-1 is closely correlated with invasive and metastatic potentials of colon cancer cells by producing a weaker inhibition of MMPs, both in vivo and in vitro. Thus, the function of TIMP-1 is associated with the inhibition of MMPs, thereby blocking tumor cell migration and invasion. However, independent of their inhibitory activity on MMPs, TIMPs also have direct cellular functions in normal tissue physiology and disease progression. A novel therapeutic approach to cancer treatment, involving the normalization of the tumor microenvironment including normal ECM components, was postulated (Stetler-Stevenson and Gavil, 2014). Involving the ability of TIMP-1 to act as a signaling molecule with cytokine-like activities (Ries, 2014) support this idea.

3.5. Membrane-bound serine protease (matriptase)

The other target protein for GnT-V is a type II transmembrane serine protease, matriptase, alternatively known as membrane-type serine protease-1 (MTSP-1). Expression of matriptase in a variety of normal tissues and especially in epithelial tissues (Takeuchi et al.,

2000) suggests that this protease could regulate different biological events (Ihara et al., 2004). The function of matriptase is associated with epithelial homeostasis in both health and disease situations (Gray et al., 2014). Matriptase participates in tumor growth and progression through the activation of 2 important cancer invasion effectors, hepatocyte growth factor (HGF) and urokinase plasminogen activator (uPA), on the surface of cancer cells (Qiu et al., 2007; Kotthaus et al., 2010; Owen et al., 2010). These proteins are involved in growth and motility of cancer cells, particularly carcinomas, and in the vascularization of tumors (Benaud et al., 2002). Proteases mediate the degradation of ECM and intercellular adhesive structures to allow penetration and migration of the cells into the extracellular angiogenic factors. Matriptase contributes to these processes (Uhland, 2006). Although proteolytic activity in the close environment of the cells is essential for tissue homeostasis, development, and repair, the incorrect regulation of proteolysis can cause malignant transformation (List et al., 2006; Bugge et al., 2007; List, 2009). Matriptase positively regulates carcinoma metastasis by activating the single-chain latent forms of uPA and HGF and converting them into biologically active forms (Suzuki et al., 2004; Kilpatrick et al., 2006;

Qiu et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2010). A direct relationship between matriptase and GnT-V appears in human cancer tissues (Ihara et al., 2004; Ito et al., 2006). Matriptase with β 1-6 GlcNAc catalyzed by GnT-V becomes resistant to autodegradation and trypsin digestion. *N*-glycosidase F-treated matriptase shows a greatly reduced resistance to degradation. The active matriptase is rapidly inactivated by hepatocyte growth factor activator inhibitor-1 (Chu et al., 2014).

All these alterations occurring in the *N*-glycan common core structure of cancer-associated proteins cause changes in their molecular interactions and functions.

4. Conclusion

Markedly extensive efforts have been made to understand the biological significance of protein glycosylation in cancer in recent years. In cancer progression and metastasis, the enzymes responsible for branching of the core structure and in formation and extension of poly-LacNAcs play very important roles. Elucidation of the interactions between their molecular structures and the functions of the associated enzymes, which are also glycoproteins, will make important contributions to a better understanding of tumor formation, progression, metastasis, and retardation.

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