

Review

Inhibitors of Protein Tyrosine Phosphatase PTP1B With Anticancer Potential

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Abstract. *Background/Aim:* PTP1B tyrosine phosphatase is involved in the development of many types of cancers, such as breast cancer or lung cancer. Therefore, PTP1B is a promising target for anticancer therapy. The purpose of this review was to present the studies on selected PTP1B inhibitors as a possible treatment and describe the latest trends of current research in this field. *Materials and Methods:* This literature review was performed using the PubMed database and the analysis of previous research studies of our Department. *Results:* Recent studies have shown that PTP1B, due to its implication in oncogenic transformation, represents a promising drug target. *Conclusion:* The selected compounds that are effective PTP1B inhibitors can be considered a promising anticancer treatment, both as monotherapy and in combination with other anticancer drugs.

Reversible phosphorylation of proteins is an intracellular signal transduction mechanism, regulating processes such as proliferation, differentiation, growth and apoptosis (1). Phosphorylation and dephosphorylation of proteins affect their functions, including the catalytic activity of enzymes. Protein phosphorylation depends on the activity of protein kinases and phosphatases. Protein kinases attach a phosphate group from ATP to serine, threonine or a tyrosine residue, whereas phosphatases hydrolytically remove this group (2). Disruptions to this mechanism may lead to many diseases, including congenital defects (3), neoplasms, autoimmune or metabolic disorders (4, 5).

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There are 107 different phosphatase genes in the human genome, of which 81 encode for catalytically active enzymes. Depending on the primary structure of the catalytic domain, there are four classes of protein tyrosine phosphatases. Class I is the largest category and contains tyrosine-specific and dual-specific phosphatases. Class II includes one tyrosine-specific LMPTP protein. Class III is represented by three tyrosine-threonine phosphatases involved in the control of the cell cycle. In contrast to class I-III phosphatases, which have a catalytically active cysteine residue in the active center, four tyrosine phosphatases from class IV or serine-tyrosine phosphatases have aspartic acid residues in their center (6). There are two groups of class I PTPs: receptor-like phosphatases (RPTPs) and soluble in cytoplasm, non-receptor enzymes (NRPTPs). RPTPs contain an extracellular sequence, a transmembrane sequence and a cytoplasmic sequence that includes two domains: proximal, catalytic (D1) and distal, regulatory (D2) (7). NRPTPs consist of a conservative domain responsible for dephosphorylation and a domain that modulates the activity and intracellular transport of the enzyme (8). PTP1B is a non-receptor type I phosphatase. Abnormal regulation of PTP1B has been observed in breast cancer, lung cancer, multiple myeloma and Noonan syndrome. PTP1B has also been reported to be overexpressed in type II diabetes and obesity. Therefore, PTP1B is a promising target in the pharmacotherapy of the aforementioned conditions (9, 10). In this article we reviewed scientific reports on tyrosine phosphatase's potential inhibitors.

PTP1B Activates Oncogenic Src Kinases

PTP1B contributes to oncogenic properties through activation of non-receptor tyrosine kinase Src, which is deregulated in multiple tumor types (11). The crucial role of Src kinases in tumor development is due to their effect on proliferation, survival, adhesion, migration, invasion and metastasis. Src kinase activity has been reported to be elevated in many human cancer cell lines, e.g. breast cancer, lung cancer and

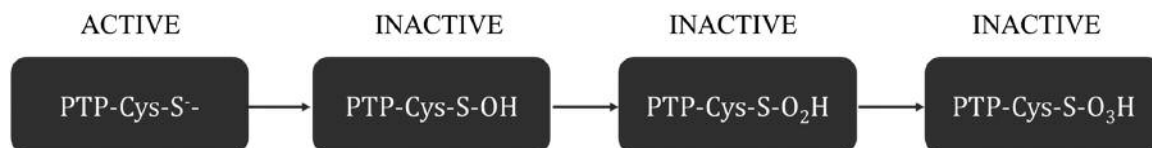


Figure 1. Regulation of PTPs activity by oxidation of catalytic cysteine.

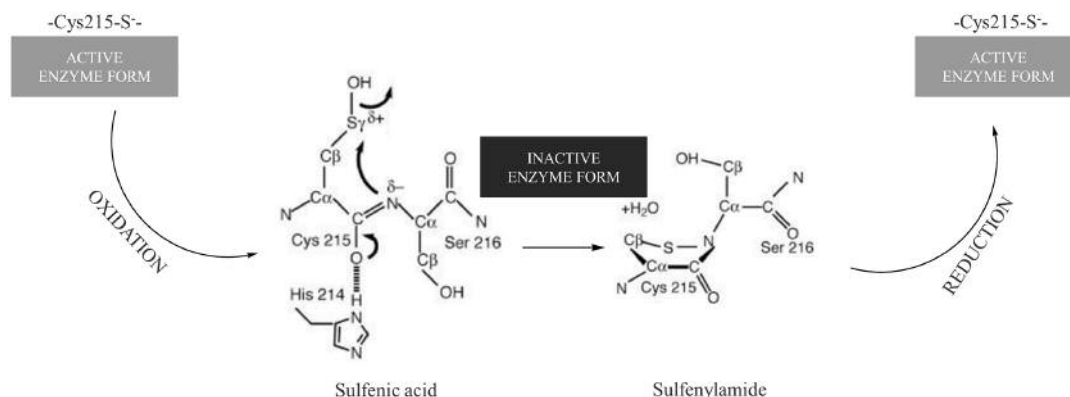


Figure 2. Reversibility of oxidation by formation of sulfenylamide.

colon cancer cells (12-15). However, Src inhibitors have shown only minimal therapeutic activity in various types of solid tumors, when used as a single agent in recent early-phase clinical trials (11). Src kinase activity can be regulated in several ways. Two major phosphorylation sites are present on human Src: the autophosphorylation site Y419 and the negative regulatory COOH-terminal phosphorylation site Y530 (16). Several protein tyrosine phosphatases are capable of activating Src by dephosphorylating Y530. These include PTP- α , PTP- ϵ , SHP-1, SHP-2, and PTP1B (17).

Many studies have shown that PTP1B can act as an activator of Src kinase, increase tumorigenicity and promote tumor progression of colon cancer cells (18) and pancreatic cancer (19).

PTP1B Phosphatase as a Drug Target

Research is focused on the mechanisms of regulation of PTPs' activity due to its involvement in the development of many diseases. For example, PTPs are important for the proper functioning of the immune system, and alterations in the expression of the encoding genes have been associated with the development of various cancers, such as multiple myeloma, lymphoma or glioma (20). Due to the fact that PTPs exert a key role in tumor biology, they may be promising targets for the development of new anticancer diagnostic and therapeutic strategies (1, 21). Contrasting research results have indicated that PTP1B can play both a pro-oncogenic and a tumor-suppressing role (22). PTPs have also been associated with the development of some autoimmune diseases, including severe

combined immunodeficiency (SCID) or multiple sclerosis (MS) (23, 24) and with the development of Noonan syndrome characterized by malformations (25). PTPs are also linked with the pathogenesis of metabolic disorders and viral infections (26). PTP1B tyrosine phosphatase is also a regulator of leptin and insulin signaling pathways. It has been shown that inhibition of PTP1B enhances the activity of insulin and leptin. Consequently, PTP1B has become a new attractive therapeutic target in the treatment of both type 2 diabetes and obesity (27).

Since PTPs play a key role in the numerous signaling pathways involved in the pathogenesis of many diseases. There is an increasing interest for the development and synthesis of new strong, efficient and selective PTPs inhibitors. The main difficulty regarding this project is the high homology between the catalytic domains shared by all PTPs (28). Potential inhibitory compounds should bind to both the catalytic center and the secondary binding site and induce allosteric inhibition (29, 30).

Mechanisms of Inactivation of PTPs

The catalytic residue in the enzymatic center of PTPs is in the form of a thiolate anion, and the sensitivity to oxidation is due to low pKa (~5.4). The oxidation of catalytic cysteine leads to inhibition of the enzyme's dephosphorylation ability, including the transfer of the phosphate group from the substrate to the catalytic cysteine. Depending on the degree of oxidation, the remaining cysteine residues in the active site may be converted to sulphenic acid (SOH), sulfinic acid (SO₂H) or sulphonic acid (SO₃H) (31) (Figure 1).

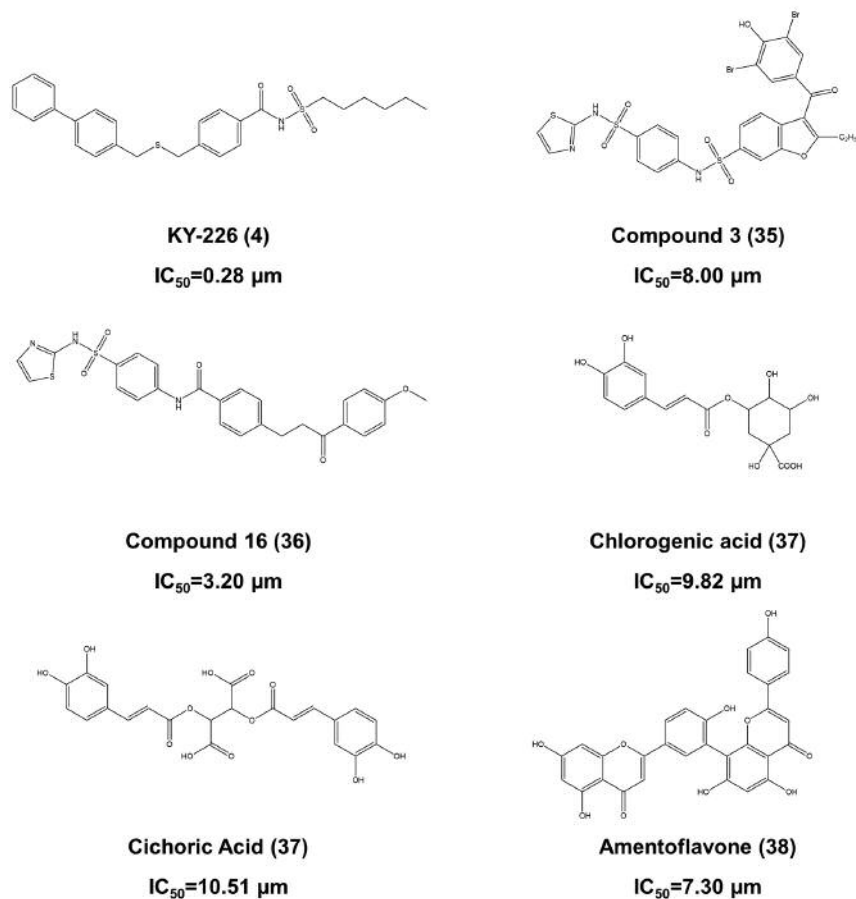


Figure 3. Selected allosteric PTP1B inhibitors.

Inactivation of PTPs by oxidation of the catalytic cysteine residue to sulfenic acid and their activation by reduction of this form to the thiolate anion is a characteristic mechanism of regulation of protein tyrosine phosphatases. The inactive oxidized form may return to the active reduced form by converting the sulfenic acid to the intermediate sulfonylamide. The close proximity of cysteine and histidine residues within the catalytic center of the protein causes polarization of the amide bond, allowing the nucleophilic attack of the nitrogen atom in the serine residue on the sulfur atom of the oxidized form of the cysteine residue. This leads to condensation and the formation of a covalent bond between the sulfur and nitrogen atoms. The sulfonylamide can then be reduced to the active thiolate anion (Figure 2). Oxidation of the cysteine residue to sulfinic and sulfonic acid is an irreversible process. For this reason, the emerging sulfonylamide induces conformational changes in the catalytic center of the enzyme, protecting the cysteine residue against irreversible inactivation, and also facilitating the activation of the enzyme by reducing agents such as thioredoxin or glutathione (32).

Promising Inhibitors of Protein Tyrosine Phosphatase PTP1B

Considering the fact that the regulatory mechanism of tyrosine phosphatases involves mainly the oxidation of catalytic cysteine, the potential inhibitors of PTPs should possess oxidizing properties or induce generation of oxidative compounds. Recent studies have shown that hydrogen peroxide decreases the activity of PTP1B, and more powerful oxidants, such as peracids, have an even much stronger effect (33). However, oxidizing compounds have low specificity, as they are effective against all PTPs.

Discovery of the active site directed inhibitors of PTP1B is very challenging due to the highly conserved sequence of the active center. There are also multiple charge requirements of the ligands, which will lead to loss of selectivity and permeability. Identification of the PTP1B allosteric site (34) has revealed a new field for discovering potent and selective ligands for therapeutic intervention which are presented on Figure 3 (4, 35-38).

PTP1B can be inactivated by mimicking the natural PTPs substrate, phosphotyrosine. Phosphotyrosine in the mimetic

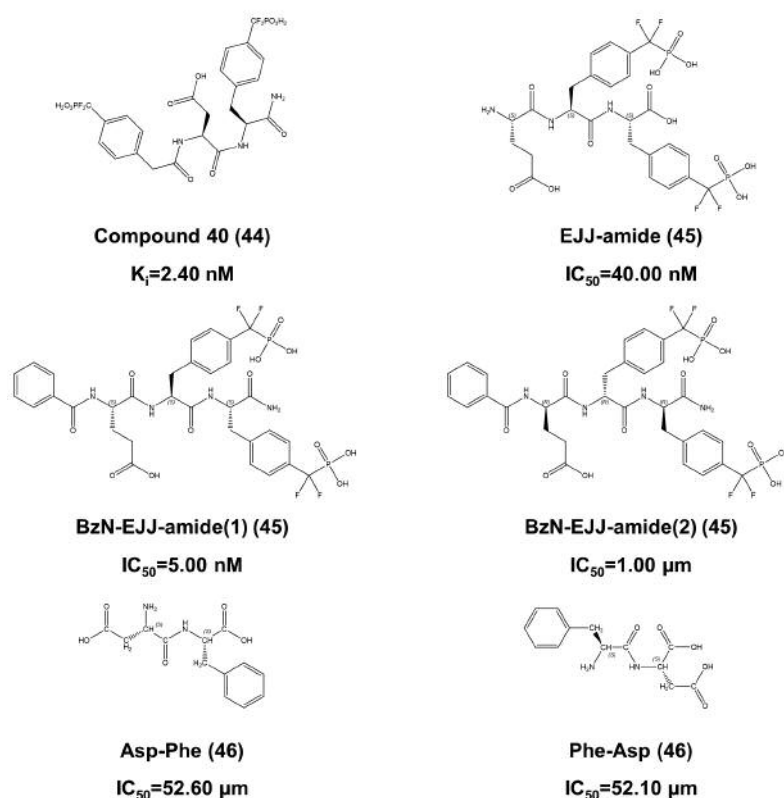


Figure 4. Selected peptide PTP1B inhibitors.

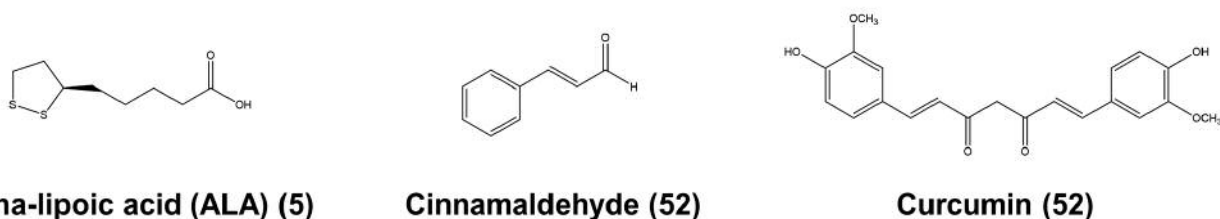


Figure 5. Selected natural compounds that decrease the activity of PTP1B.

structures was replaced by sulfothiophosphotyrosine, thiophosphotyrosine or phosphonomethylphenylalanine (39). Many recent studies have demonstrated that therapeutic peptides represent a promising strategy for the treatment of cancer (40, 41). The peptides are rapidly synthesized, easily modified, and less toxic and immunogenic than *e.g.* recombinant antibodies (42, 43) (Figure 4). As shown in Figure 4, even a slight change in the structure of the inhibitory compound may lead to a lower inhibitory effect (44-46). Such correlation was observed related to aurintricarboxylic acid (ATA) which reveals high inhibitory effect on PTP1B (47). However, the experiments conducted on other tyrosine phosphatase YopH has shown that the analogs of ATA are weaker inhibitors than their precursor (48).

There are also many natural compounds that inhibit various types of enzymes, including PTPs. Some of these PTP inhibitors can be extracted from plants, algae or microorganisms (49).

Recent studies have shown that selected natural dietetic ingredients can be considered as potential anticancer agents (50, 51). Moreover, some of these compounds presented on Figure 5 are able to reduce the activity of PTPs (5, 52).

Conclusion

In conclusion, PTPs regulate the levels of protein tyrosine phosphorylation under normal and pathological conditions and have both positive and negative effects on cellular signal transduction. Abnormal activity of these enzymes is associated with numerous disorders, including carcinogenesis. Reactive oxygen species (ROS), which are involved in the development and progression of cancer, regulate due to reversible oxidation PTPs activity. Protein tyrosine phosphatases may be potential targets for anticancer therapy, because of their key role in the

formation and development of tumors. PTP1B phosphatase is a particularly important target in the treatment of cancer.

Conflicts of Interest

None of the Authors have any conflicts of interest to disclose regarding this study.

Authors' Contributions

All Authors participated in the manuscript writing and reviewing. The Figures were prepared by TK.

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