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Liposomes loaded with *P. falciparum* merozoite-derived proteins are highly immunogenic and produce invasion-inhibiting and anti-toxin antibodies

Wesley L. Fotoran, Rachele M. Santangelo, Márcia M. Medeiros, Marcelle Colhone, Pietro Ciancaglini, Renato Barboza, Claudio Romeiro Farias Marinho, Rodrigo Guerino Stábeli, Gerhard Wunderlich

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*Corresponding author, gwunder@usp.br, phone +551130917265, fax +551130917417

Abstract

The formulation of an effective vaccine against malaria is still a significant challenge and the induction of high anti-parasite antibody titers plus a sustained T cell response is mandatory for the success of such a vaccine. We have a developed a nanoliposome-based structure which contains plasma membrane-associated proteins (PfMNP) of *Plasmodium falciparum* merozoites on its surface. Incorporation of parasite-derived proteins led to a significant increase in the size and dispersity of particles. Immunization of particles in BalbC and C57BL/6 mice led to high anti-MSP1₁₉ IgG titers (10^4) after the first dose and reached a plateau (> 10^6) after the third dose. While very high titers were observed against the C-terminal domain of the vaccine candidate MSP1, only modest titers ($\leq 10^3$) were detected against MSP2. The induced antibodies showed also a strong growth-inhibiting effect in reinvasion assays. In addition, PfMNP immunization generated antibodies which partially blocked the inflammatory response, probably by blocking TLR-induced activation of macrophages by malarial toxins such as GPI anchors. The results underline the potential of nanoliposome-based formulations as anti-malarial vaccines.

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