



Samenvatting proefschrift Meike Bünger

'Probing the role of PPAR α in the small intestine, a functional nutrigenomics approach'

**Promotiedatum: 12 september 2008
Wageningen Universiteit**

Promotor:
Prof. dr. M. Müller

Co-promotor:
Dr. G.J.E.J. Hooiveld

Background: The peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor alpha (PPAR α) is a ligand-activated transcription factor known for its control of metabolism in response to diet. Although functionally best characterized in liver, PPAR α is also abundantly expressed in small intestine, the organ by which nutrients, including lipids, enter the body. Dietary fatty acids, formed during the digestion of triacylglycerols, are able to profoundly influence gene expression by activating PPAR α . Since the average Western diet contains a high amount of PPAR α ligands, knowledge on the regulatory and physiological role of PPAR α in the small intestine is of particular interest.

Aim: In this thesis the function of PPAR α in the small intestine was studied using a combination of functional genomics experiments, advanced bioinformatics tools, and dietary intervention studies.

Results: Detailed analyses on the expression of PPAR α in small intestine showed that PPAR α is most prominently expressed in villus cells of the jejunum, coinciding with the main anatomical location where fatty acids are digested and absorbed. Genome-wide transcriptome analysis in combination with feeding studies using the synthetic agonist WY14643 and several nutritional PPAR α agonists revealed that PPAR α controls processes ranging from fatty acid oxidation and cholesterol-, glucose- and bile acid metabolism to apoptosis and cell cycle. In addition, we connected PPAR α with the intestinal immune system. In a more focussed study we showed that PPAR α controls the barrier function of the intestine. By comparing the intestinal and hepatic PPAR α transcriptome we found that PPAR α controls in these two organs the expression of two distinct, but overlapping sets of genes. Finally, by performing a range of functional studies deduced from the transcriptome analysis, we demonstrated that PPAR α controls intestinal lipid absorption.

Aan de publicatie van dit proefschrift werd een financiële bijdrage geleverd door de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Hepatologie.

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Conclusion: By maximally utilizing the unique possibilities offered in the post-genome era, the studies described in this thesis reported on the function of PPAR α in small intestine. We conclude that intestinal PPAR α plays an important role, is relevant for nutrition, and its effects are distinguishable from the hepatic PPAR α response. Our results provide a better understanding of normal intestinal physiology, and may be of particular importance for the development of fortified foods, and prevention and therapies for treating obesity and inflammatory bowel diseases. ◀

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