



Review

Protein phosphatase 2A regulatory subunits and cancer

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ABSTRACT

The serine/threonine protein phosphatase (PP2A) is a trimeric holoenzyme that plays an integral role in the regulation of a number of major signaling pathways whose deregulation can contribute to cancer. The specificity and activity of PP2A are highly regulated through the interaction of a family of regulatory B subunits with the substrates. Accumulating evidence indicates that PP2A acts as a tumor suppressor. In this review we summarize the known effects of specific PP2A holoenzymes and their roles in cancer relevant pathways. In particular we highlight PP2A function in the regulation of MAPK and Wnt signaling.

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1. Introduction

The ability of a cell to rapidly adapt to external changes is a vital requirement for evolutionary selection in a dynamic environment. Post-translational modifications of proteins can influence the structure, charge and thus the enzymatic activity of proteins thereby

conferring onto a relatively static pool of proteins the ability to rapidly adapt to external cues.

The ever increasing pattern of modifications includes changes in ubiquitination, phosphorylation, glycosylation, methylation, acetylation, farnesylation etc., thus giving rise to a vast amount of differentially modified proteins harboring different activities. Reversible phosphorylation was the first described modification able to alter the enzymatic activity of a protein [1]. Inappropriate regulation of the reversible phosphorylation of proteins can have a profound effect on how the cell responds to its environment. It is therefore not surprising that genetic or chemical disturbance of the action of these kinases and phosphatases can lead to aberrant cellular behavior in an organism, giving rise to a wide array of disease phenotypes including many

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forms of cancer [2]. Specific dependence of tumor cells on their aberrantly regulated kinases or phosphatases for growth and survival, in addition to the drug-able enzymatic activities of these proteins, makes them attractive drug targets [3–6]. Although many kinases are deregulated in cancer, the role of phosphatases in cellular transformation has remained underexplored. The ubiquitously expressed protein phosphatase type 2A (PP2A) is a serine/threonine phosphatase that makes up 1% of all cellular proteins and along with protein phosphatase 1 (PP1) accounts for over 90% of all Ser/Thr phosphatase activity in the cell. A number of studies have highlighted the role of PP2A as a tumor suppressor. This was first suggested in experiments showing that okadaic acid, a selective but not specific inhibitor of PP2A, promotes tumor growth in mice [7–11]. Similarly, it was established that the SV40 small tumor antigen, which is required for cellular transformation in human cells, can alter PP2A activity by displacing the regulatory B subunit from the holoenzyme complex [12,13]. Finally, mutations have been identified in different components of the PP2A holoenzyme complex, which have been linked to a variety of primary human tumors. In this review we will discuss the role of PP2A in cancer with special emphasis on MAPK and Wnt signaling.

2. PP2A structure and function

PP2A is a phosphatase that functions to reverse the action of kinases in most major signaling cascades [11,14,15]. Although once perceived as a single broad specificity phosphatase, this notion now seems oversimplified. PP2A represents a family of holoenzyme complexes (Fig. 1 and Table 1) with different activities and diverse substrate specificities [15]. Three distinct functional components give rise to the holoenzyme complex: Typically the catalytic subunit (PP2Ac) interacts with the structural core subunit (PP2Aa/PR65) making up the core of the enzyme. The association with a wide variety of B regulatory subunits to the core enzyme results in the formation of

heterotrimeric PP2A holoenzyme complexes with diverse specificities (Fig. 1).

2.1. The catalytic subunit (PP2Ac)

The catalytic subunit has a large conserved domain that forms a bimetallic active site for phosphor-ester hydrolysis. It targets phosphate groups on either serine or threonine residues and under some conditions harbors activity towards phosphorylated tyrosine [16]. PP2A catalytic activity is encoded by two distinct ubiquitously expressed genes [17], the C α and the C β subunits, the latter being expressed approximately 10 fold lower due to a weaker promoter [18]. Both are 35 kDa in size and share 97% sequence identity. The levels of PP2Ac are tightly regulated in the cell at the translational or post-translational level making ectopic expression of this protein extremely difficult [19]. Loss of C α in yeast and in mice is lethal [20] underscoring the importance of this phosphatase for proper maintenance of cellular homeostasis.

The recent elucidation of the crystal structure of the PP2A holoenzyme determined that the highly conserved C-terminal tail (³⁰⁴TPDYFL³⁰⁹) of the PP2Ac subunit resides at a critical interface between the PR65 structural subunit and the B subunit PR61 γ [21,22]. As such, the recruitment of the B subunit to the core enzyme is tightly regulated by the methylation and phosphorylation patterns of the C-terminal tail. Methylation on the carboxyl group Leu³⁰⁹ by S-adenosylmethionine-dependent leucine carboxyl transferase 1 (LCMT1) was shown to be required for the binding of the PR55B family members but not for other B subunits [23]. The methylation of the C-terminal tail can be reversed by the specific phosphatase methylesterase (PME-1) thus adding another dimension to holoenzyme regulation [24].

Phosphorylation appears to occur at either Tyr³⁰⁷ or the newly identified Thr³⁰⁴ [23]. Phosphorylation of Tyr³⁰⁷ inhibits the recruitment of the PR55B and PR61B $\alpha\beta\epsilon$ family members to the core

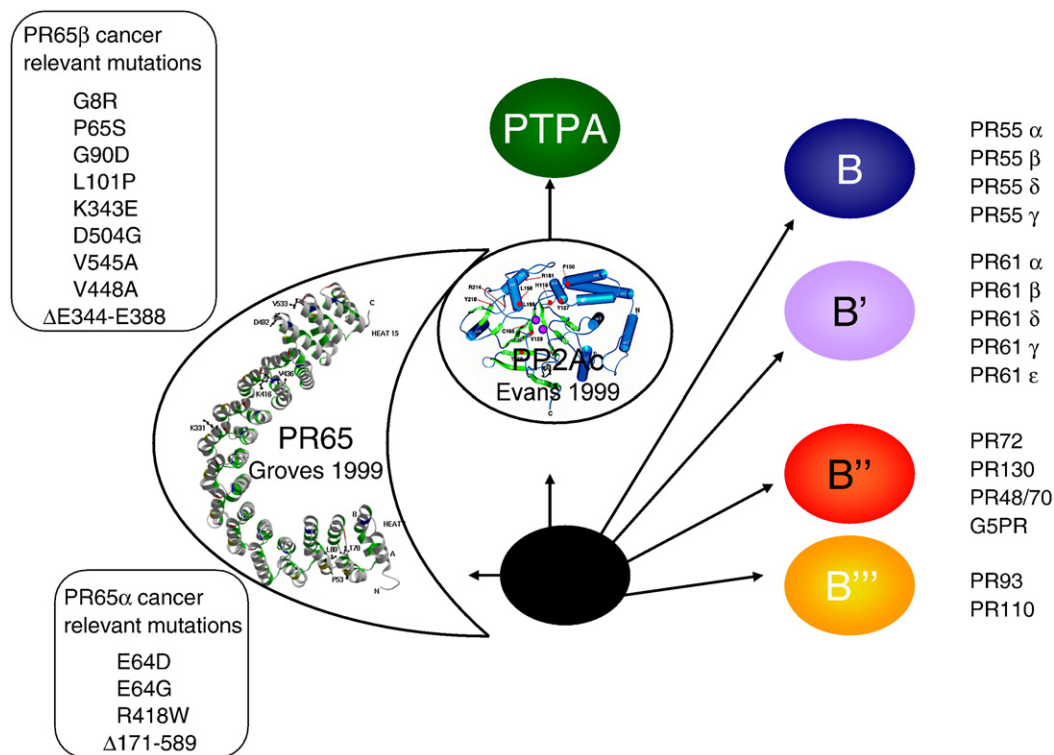


Fig. 1. Schematic overview of PP2A holoenzyme composition showing interaction of the PP2A catalytic subunit [264] to the PR65 scaffold protein at five C-terminal Huntington/elongation/A-subunit/TOR (HEAT) repeats [28]. The variable B subunit interacts with the N-terminal HEAT domains of the PR65 scaffold subunit or directly to the PP2A catalytic subunit. The boxes highlight the cancer relevant mutations described to date in the two isoforms of PR65.

Table 1

Different subunits of the PP2A holoenzyme shown with gene name (first column), the two forms of nomenclature used in the literature (columns 2 and 3), Ensembl transcript number (column 4) and reference (column 5)

Gene name	Alternate name		Ensembl nr.	Reference
<i>Catalytic subunit</i>				
PPP2CA	Ca	PP2A α	ENST00000231504	[17]
PPP2CB	C β	PP2A β	ENST00000221138	[17]
<i>Structural subunit</i>				
PPP2R1A	A α	PR65 α	ENST00000322088 ENST00000361107	[29]
PPP2R1B	A β	PR65 β	ENST00000341980 ENST00000311129	[29]
<i>Regulatory subunit</i>				
PPP2R2A	B α	PR55 α	ENST00000315985	[38,145]
PPP2R2B	B β	PR55 β	ENST00000287031 ENST00000336640 ENST00000355212	[38,145]
PPP2R2C	B γ	PR55 γ	ENST00000264959 ENST00000335585	[39]
PPP2R2D	B δ	PR55 δ	ENST00000314348	[37]
PPP2R3A	B' α	PR130	ENST00000264977	[47]
PPP2R3B	B' β	PR72	ENST00000334546	[47]
		PR70/48	ENST00000300846 ENST00000361450	[51,146]
C14orf10		G5PR	OTTHUMG00000028723	[147]
PPP2R4	PTPA	PR53	ENST00000337738	[53,55]
			ENST00000266101	[55]
			ENST00000347048	[55]
			ENST00000357197	[55]
PPP2R5A	B' α	PR61 α	ENST00000261461	[45,148]
PPP2R5B	B' β	PR61 β	ENST00000164133	[45,148]
PPP2R5C	B' γ 1	PR61 γ 1	ENST00000334743	[148,149]
			ENST00000334756	[148,149]
			ENST00000350249	[148,149]
PPP2R5D	B' γ 3	PR61 γ 3	ENST00000230402	[148,150]
			ENST00000344268	
PPP2R5E	B' ϵ	PR61 ϵ	ENST00000337537	[148]
STRN	Striatin	PR110	ENSG00000115808	[151]
STRN3	SG2NA	PR93	OTTHUMT00000073367	[151]

enzyme [25]. Interestingly this site is regulated by the oncogene c-SRC raising the possibility that inhibition of one or all of these subunits may be one of the requirements for c-SRC induced transformation. However, mutational analysis of Tyr³⁰⁷ limited the methylation status at Leu³⁰⁹ possibly explaining the deficiency in PR55B binding [23]. Similarly the C-terminal tail can be phosphorylated at Thr³⁰⁴, which was also shown to inhibit the binding of PR55B subunits but not the other B subunits [23]. The methylation and phosphorylation status of the C-terminus had no bearing on the binding of PR70, PR72 or PR61 δ B subunits.

The formation of the holoenzyme complex and the activation of PP2Ac are also kept in check by a series of interlocking steps involving the dual action of PME-1 and the peptidyl prolyl isomerase PTPA. PTPA binds to structural subunit of PP2A and is an essential and specific activator of the inactive form of PP2A (PP2Ai). [26]. The precise mechanism of how PTPA induces C subunit activity remains to be determined, but it appears that the PR65/PTPA complex may function partly by inhibiting the methyltransferase activity of PME-1. PME-1 on the other hand appears to have a multifaceted role. In normal cells PME-1 acts as a negative regulator of PR55 B subunit binding by demethylating Leu³⁰⁹ of the PP2Ac C-terminal tail; however, in the absence of PR65, PME-1 can also inhibit the generation of the active C subunit. [27].

2.2. The structural subunit (PR65)

The catalytic subunit interacts with the PR65 scaffold protein at four C-terminal Huntington/elongation/A-subunit/TOR (HEAT)

repeats (Fig. 1) [28]. Upon the formation of the core enzyme the scaffold protein folds in on itself forming a more horseshoe shape-like structure [21,22]. The bending of the structural subunit allows the catalytic subunit unimpeded access to the PP2A substrate, which is recruited to the holoenzyme by the B regulatory subunit. Two alternative genes, PR65 α and PR65 β encode the two flavors of the PR65 scaffold protein [29]. Most PP2A holoenzymes contain the PR65 α isoform, while only a small fraction (10%) contain the PR65 β isoform. Although the 2 isoforms share an 87% sequence identity, PR65 β has unique biochemical properties and is unable to substitute for the loss of PR65 α in mice. Moreover PR65 β is expressed at much lower levels than PR65 α in adult tissues. However, in oocytes and during the early stages of vertebrate development, PR65 β mRNA is more abundant than PR65 α [30,31]. As such these two alternative transcripts differ in their ability to interact with the various regulatory B subunits [32]. Interestingly several tumor-specific mutations have been identified in PR65 β which disrupt the ability of PR65 β to form holoenzymes with specific regulatory subunits in vitro (discussed in detail below).

2.3. The regulatory B subunits

To date, 15 genes have been identified in the human genome that encode at least 26 different alternative transcripts and splice forms representing the B subunits of the PP2A holoenzyme (Table 1). These B subunits can be expressed in a tissue specific manner and are proposed to mediate substrate specificity of the PP2A holoenzyme complex [15,33,34]. While the PR65 α scaffold can interact with all regulatory B subunits, the PR65 β scaffold is unable to interact with the B/PR55 family of B subunits and shows a preference for binding to PR72 [32]. Assuming that there are no significant differences between PP2A α and PP2A β , around 30 PP2A holoenzyme combinations are possible, taking into account the inability of PR65 β to interact with the PR55 family of B subunits [35] and not including predicted splice variants. Functionally the number of holoenzymes might even be lower since different subunits within a family might be functionally redundant or expressed in a tissue specific manner under different promoters. Conversely it could be higher since not all regulatory subunits are necessarily identified. The different holoenzyme complexes likely account for the growing list of phosphoproteins and signaling pathways known to be regulated by PP2A. The B subunits have been subdivided into five distinct families (Table 1), which share no sequence similarity, apart from a few conserved amino acids that allow the interaction with the N-terminal HEAT domains of the PR65 scaffold subunit [36].

2.3.1. The B/PR55 family of B subunits

The B/PR55 family consists of at least six members, transcribed from four different genes (Table 1) with more variants likely to exist [38]. PR55 family members exhibit both temporal and spatial expression patterns [37–39] with both PR55 α and PR55 δ being expressed almost ubiquitously while PR55 β and PR55 γ being highly enriched in the brain. Furthermore, the expression of PR55 β and PR55 γ is also developmentally regulated with PR55 β levels decreasing and PR55 γ levels increasing sharply after birth [37]. The different PR55 family member proteins also show distinct spatial distribution in the cell [40]. However, whether this variable localization is a regulatory function of these subunits or it simply represents the location of their binding partners, is unclear.

Substrate regulation by PR55 family members appears to be dependent on a number of factors. First, substrate binding by the PR55 family members appears to be dependent on a stretch of five degenerate WD40 repeats. WD40 repeats are conserved 40 amino acid sequences that end with a characteristic tryptophan-aspartate (WD) that appears to directly mediate protein–protein interactions. Secondly, the PP2Ac subunit of the core enzyme needs to be methylated

on Leu³⁰⁹ and dephosphorylated at Thr³⁰⁴ for its interaction with the PR55 regulatory B subunits [23,41,42]. However, these PP2Ac modifications are more likely to be a consequence of the spatial distribution of the core enzyme rather than anything else. Surprisingly, it was found that the PR65 subunit is not strictly required for PR55 to interact with PP2Ac subunit [42,43].

2.3.2. The B'/PR61 family of β subunits

The PR61 family of regulatory subunits contains eight members represented by five different genes (Table 1) [44] showing diverse tissue distribution [45,46]. PR61 family members show distinct spatial distribution inside the cell with PR61 α , PR61 β , and PR61 ϵ being expressed in the cytoplasm, while PR61 γ 1, PR61 γ 2 and PR61 γ 3 are expressed in the nucleus. PR61 δ appears to be expressed in both the nucleus and cytoplasm [15]. Interestingly, differentiation induced by retinoic acid treatment in IMR-32 cells results in the specific increase in the expression of PR61 β and PR61 δ suggesting that these two B isoforms are developmentally regulated [44]. These subunits display strong conservation within their central region (80%) but differ in their N- and C-terminal regions. Furthermore, PR61 family proteins show very little to no similarity with any of the other β subunit families. The recent elucidation of the crystal structure of PR61 γ 1 reveals that PR61 family members consist exclusively of α helices [21,22]. Unexpectedly, the structural composition of PR61 γ resembles that of the PR65 structural subunit even though they exhibit little sequence homology. The formation of the holoenzyme structure results in an arrangement whereby the highly acidic, concave side of the PR61 family members remains unoccupied. It is believed that this highly acidic surface is used to recruit substrate proteins [21,22]. Interestingly, Shugoshin, a target of PR61B is a basic protein [22].

2.3.3. The B''/PR72 family of β subunits

PR72 and PR130 were the first members of this family discovered and are transcribed from the same gene albeit from different promoters [47]. PR130 and PR72 differ in their N-terminal regions with PR130 having a specific stretch of 665 amino acids which is functionally replaced by 44 amino acids in PR72. This results in a tissue specific distribution of these subunits [47]. PR72 contains two EFX hand domains that bind calcium, resulting in a conformational change in protein structure [48]. The strongest Ca²⁺ binding EFX domain (EFX1) is required for binding to the PR65 core subunit and nuclear localization of PR72 when overexpressed.

Notably G5PR, the newest proposed member of this subunit family, also contains an EFX hand domain and was also found to be able to associate with both PP5 and PP2Ac/PR65 [49] although the in vivo relevance of these interactions remains unexplored. A recently published functional knockout mouse of G5PR suggests a role for this protein in promoting B-cell survival [49].

A third member of the B''/PR72 family, PR70 has recently been demonstrated to bind to the tumor suppressor RB [50]. While PR48, a splice variant of PR70, was initially found to be able to interact with cdc6 [51]. Notably, similar to PR72, G5PR and PR130, both PR48 and PR70 also harbor an EFX domain which is dependent upon Ca²⁺ levels to regulate its binding to the core enzyme and subsequent phosphatase activity [50].

Finally a mouse specific subunit, PR59 was identified as a p107-interacting protein, which preferentially bound to p107 and not pRB when overexpressed [52]. No obvious human orthologue of mouse PR59 has been identified to date.

2.3.4. The PTP/PR53 family of β subunits

The PTPase activator (PTPA/PR53) was initially described as a B regulatory subunit due to its ability to interact with PR65. However, unlike other B regulatory subunits, which recruit the core enzyme to targeted PP2A substrates, PTPA appears to act like a chaperone directly affecting the activity of PP2Ac. PTPA transiently induces phosphotyrosyl

phosphatase (PTP) activity of the PP2Ac and PP2Ac/PR65 complexes in vitro [53,54]. Similarly ATP and Mg²⁺ could activate PTP activity of PP2A on their own. There are 8 splice variants of this gene although only 4 were found to be efficiently translated [55]. Interestingly recent reports have described that PTPA loss of function mimics some of the effects seen with suppression of regulatory B subunits in yeast and apoptosis in mammalian cells [16]. A list of known PP2A interacting proteins is presented in Table 2.

3. PP2A subunits and cancer

3.1. PP2A and transformation

PP2A was first suggested to act as a tumor suppressor based on the tumor-promoting actions of okadaic acid, a more or less selective inhibitor of PP2A [10]. Treatment of mice with okadaic acid gave rise to tumors on the skin [7–9] which was later demonstrated to be caused by the activation of several cancer-promoting pathways [34]. Similarly, it was found that several tumor-promoting viruses are capable of displacing the B regulatory subunits from the core enzyme [12,56] resulting in altered enzymatic activity towards PP2A substrates [57–59]. Alternatively these could function as B subunits themselves. The alteration of PP2A by viral proteins leads to the deregulation of similar pathways found disturbed by okadaic acid [15,34,60,61]. Both the polyoma small T (pyST) antigen and polyoma middle T (pyMT) antigens but also the simian virus SV40 small T (ST) and E4orf4 antigens are able to form complexes with the PP2A/PR65 dimer [12,62]. Furthermore, the ability of the pyMT antigen to induce transformation in 3T3 cells is directly dependent on its ability to interact with PP2A [13]. Interestingly, while both the viral proteins pyMT/pyST and ST contain the ability to displace the B subunit from the core enzyme, their role in PP2A inhibition leads to activation of discrete cellular pathways [63]. PyMT appears to preferentially activate the MAP kinase pathway while ST stimulates AKT (Ser⁴⁷³) phosphorylation in a PP2A dependent manner [63,64]. Curiously, like PyMT, PyST can activate the MAP kinase pathway; however, its ability to regulate AKT phosphorylation and its downstream effector pathways is highly dependent upon serum concentration levels. In 10% serum PyST dramatically stimulates Thr³⁰⁸ phosphorylation inciting the pro-proliferative aspects of AKT function but sensitizing cells to apoptosis. No clear effect is observed on Ser⁴⁷³ phosphorylation. Conversely, during serum starvation PyST enhances phosphorylation of both Thr³⁰⁸ and Ser⁴⁷³ inducing the antiapoptotic functions of AKT through downstream phosphorylation of FOXO3 and BAD, thus promoting cell survival [64].

Since both PyMT and ST are able to induce transformation this suggests that cellular transformation resulting from PP2A inhibition can occur through distinct mechanisms. Being that global inhibition of PP2A is generally lethal to cells, it is therefore likely that these proteins target specific PP2A complexes required to block cellular transformation. In agreement with this notion, the overexpression of ST appears to correlate with the loss of PR55 activity, resulting in enhanced phosphorylation of proteins involved in controlling cell growth (see below) [35]. It was later found that expression of SV40 ST antigen is required for full transformation of both primary human embryonic kidney (HEK) cells and human foreskin fibroblasts expressing RAS^{V12}/hTERT/SV40 LT (hereby referred to as HEK-TER or BJ-TER cells respectively), suggesting that disruption of PP2A function is one of the requirements to generate engineered transformed human cells [65]. Following on this, a number of groups have used this transformation model to identify other components that could substitute for ST in this system. Surprisingly it was shown that targeted inhibition of only the B subunit PR61 γ could enhance low level spontaneous transformation in RAS^{V12}/hTERT/SV40 LT expressing human fibroblasts [66], thus indicating that ST selectively targets PR61 γ . However, PR61 γ knockdown only weakly phenocopies

Table 2

Proteins that have been shown to directly interact with PP2A either by co-immunoprecipitation, mass-spectrometry, yeast two-hybrid, or functional assays

PP2A interacting protein	B subunit	Substrate	Regulatory effect	Reference
AC8	–	–	–	[152]
AKT	PR55 α	Thr ³⁰⁸	Inhibit	[85]
Alpha 4	–	–	–	[153]
Androgen receptor	–	–	Inhibit	[154]
AP-1/AP-2	PR55 α	Thr ¹⁵⁶	Inhibit	[155]
APC	PR61	–	Inhibit	[131]
ARL2	PR55 α /PR61 ϵ	–	–	[156]
ATM	–	Ser ¹⁹⁸¹	Inhibit	[157]
Aurora A	–	Ser ⁵¹	Inhibit	[158]
AXIN	PR61	–	Inhibit	[133]
B-Arrestin II	–	–	–	[159]
B-CATENIN	–	–	Activate	[139]
BAD	–	Ser ¹¹²	Activate	[75]
BAX	–	Ser ¹⁸⁴	Activate	[160]
BCL-2	PR61 α	–	Inhibit	[161]
B2-ADRENERGIC FACTOR	–	–	–	[162]
Bestrophin	–	–	–	[163]
E-CADHERIN	–	–	Activate	[139]
Cav1.2	PR61	Ser ¹⁹²⁸	Inhibit	[164]
Calpain	–	–	Inhibit	[165]
CaM kinase II	–	–	–	[166]
CaM kinase IV	–	–	Inhibit	[167]
Carboxypeptidase D	–	–	Inhibit	[168]
CAS	–	–	Inhibit	[169]
Cdc2	–	–	–	[89]
Chk1	–	Ser ³¹⁷ / Ser ³⁴⁵	Inhibit	[170]
Chk2	–	Thr ⁶⁸	Inhibit	[171]
CK2	–	–	–	[172]
Caspase-3	–	–	Inhibit	[173]
Cdc6	PR48	–	Activate	[51]
Cdc25c	PR61 δ	–	Inhibit	[174]
Cdk4	–	–	–	[89]
Cdk9	–	–	–	[175]
CFTR	–	–	Inhibit	[176]
CG-NAP	PR130	–	–	[177]
CIP2A	–	–	–	[76]
Cofilin	–	–	–	[178]
Connexin43	–	–	–	[179]
CXCR2	–	–	Inhibit	[180]
Cyclin G1	PR61 α /PR61 β	–	–	[79]
Cyclin G2	PR61 γ /PR61 β	–	–	[181]
DARPP-32	PR72	Thr ⁷⁵	Inhibit	[182]
DNA polymerase A	–	–	–	[183]
E4orf4	–	–	–	[56]
EMI2	–	–	–	[184]
eRF1	–	–	–	[185]
ERK	PR61 γ 1/PR61 β	–	Inhibit	[108]
Estrogen receptor A	–	Ser ¹¹⁸	Inhibit	[186]
FMRP	–	–	–	[187]
Galpha12	–	–	–	[188]
Glutamate receptor	–	–	–	[189]
Gp130	–	Ser ⁷⁸²	Activate	[190]
H2AX	–	–	Inhibit	[191]
HAND-1	PR61 δ	–	Inhibit	[192]
HAND-2	PR61 δ	–	Inhibit	[192]
HCP-6	PR55	–	–	[193]
HDAC4	PR55 α	Ser ²⁹⁸	Inhibit	[194]
HSF2	–	–	–	[195]
HIV Vpr	PR55	–	–	[196]
HOX11	–	–	–	[197]
HRX	–	–	–	[198]
IEX-1	–	–	–	[108]
IKKB	–	Ser ¹⁷⁷ / Ser ¹⁸¹	Activate, inhibit	[199,200]
IKKG	–	–	Inhibit	[201]
IQGAP1	–	–	–	[202]
JAK2	–	–	–	[203]
JNK	–	–	Inhibit	[204]
KCNQ2	PR61 γ	–	–	[205]
Keratin 8	–	–	–	[206]

Table 2 (continued)

PP2A interacting protein	B subunit	Substrate	Regulatory effect	Reference
Keratin 18	–	–	–	[206]
KSR	PR55 α	–	Activate	[97]
LCMT	–	–	–	[207]
Mdm2	–	Thr ²¹⁶	Activate	[77]
MEK3	–	Thr ¹⁹³	Inhibit	[208]
MEKK3	–	Ser ⁵²⁶	Inhibit	[209]
c-MET	–	Ser ⁹⁸⁵	Inhibit	[210]
Mid-1	–	–	–	[211]
MKK4	–	–	Inhibit	[212]
MPM-2	–	–	–	[213]
c-MYC	PR61 α	Ser ⁶²	Inhibit	[72]
Myosin	–	–	–	[214]
Naked	PR72/PR130	–	–	[134,140]
Nemo	–	Ser ⁶⁸	Inhibit	[215]
Neuroephrine transporter	–	–	–	[216]
Neurofilament proteins	PR55	–	–	[217]
NKCC1	–	–	–	[218]
NM23H2	–	–	–	[219]
NMDA receptor	–	–	–	[220]
NR3A	–	–	–	[221]
Nucleoredoxin	PR55 β	–	–	[222]
Occludin	–	–	Inhibit	[223]
OSBP	–	–	–	[224]
P38	–	–	–	[173]
P53	PR55 α PR61 γ 1/ PR61 γ 3	Ser ³⁷ Thr ⁵⁵	Activate	[80,81]
P63	PR61 α	–	–	[132]
P70-S6K	–	–	–	[225]
P107	PR59	–	Inhibit	[52]
PACS-1	–	Ser ²⁷⁸	Inhibit	[226]
PAK1	–	–	–	[225]
PAK3	–	–	–	[225]
Paxillin	PR61 γ 1	–	Inhibit	[69]
Period	–	–	Activate	[227]
P70 S6 kinase	–	–	–	[225]
PIM	PR61 β	–	Inhibit	[228]
PME-1	–	–	–	[24]
Pin1	–	–	–	[229,230]
PKA	–	–	–	[231]
PKC α	–	–	–	[232]
PKC β II	–	–	Inhibit	[233]
PKC δ	–	–	Inhibit	[234]
PKR	PR61 α	–	–	[235]
PLK1	–	–	–	[236]
PyMT	–	–	–	[62,237]
PyST	–	–	–	[100]
Raf1	PR55 α /PR55 δ	Ser ²⁵⁹	Activate	[98]
RalA	–	Ser ¹⁸³ / Ser ¹⁹⁴	Inhibit	[89]
RACK1	–	–	–	[238]
R-RAS	–	–	–	[219]
RB	PR70	Thr ⁸²⁶	Inhibit	[50]
RelA	–	Ser ⁵³⁶	Inhibit	[200– 203,239]
RHEB	–	–	–	[219]
Rho-B	–	–	–	[219]
RSA1-2	–	–	–	[240]
Runx2	–	–	–	[241]
SCR	PR61	–	Inhibit	[242]
Securin	–	–	Activate	[243]
Serotonin	–	–	Activate	[244]
Separase	PR61	–	–	[245]
SET	–	–	–	[112]
Src	PR55 γ	Ser ¹²	Inhibit	[104]
SG2NA	–	–	–	[151]
Shc	–	–	Inhibit	[246]
Shugosin	Pr61	–	–	[247–249]
SMG-2	–	–	–	[250]
Sp1	–	Ser ⁵⁹ / Thr ⁶⁸¹	Activate	[251]
Sprouty	–	Ser ¹¹² / Ser ¹¹⁵	Activate	[252]

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

PP2A interacting protein	B subunit	Substrate	Regulatory effect	Reference
STAT5	–	–	–	[253]
STE20	–	–	–	[218]
SV40 ST	–	–	–	[100]
Tap42/alpha4	–	–	–	[254]
TAU	PR55	Ser ²⁰² / Thr ²⁰⁵	Activate	[255–257]
TAX	–	–	–	[201]
TIP	–	–	–	[258]
TGFBFR1	PR55 α	–	–	[259]
TOM22	PR55 β	–	–	[260]
TRAF2	PR61 γ	Thr ¹¹⁷	Inhibit	[200]
TSC2	–	–	–	[219]
TTP	–	–	–	[261]
UPF1	–	–	–	[262]
Vimentin	PR55	–	Activate	[263]

expression of ST antigen [67] suggesting that other B subunits might also be involved in tumor suppression. Recent clinical evidence has shown that the expression of PR61 γ is suppressed in melanomas compared with non-transformed melanocytic naevi [68] supporting a role for this subunit in tumor suppression. Another interesting finding came from studying the metastatic capability of B16 mouse melanoma subclones that have different metastatic potential. The authors found that a truncated form of PR61 γ was partially responsible for the metastatic potential of one of the subclones [69]. They found the protein co-localizes and interacts with paxillin at focal adhesions similar to wild type PR61 γ . However, in the presence of mutant PR61 γ , paxillin was hyperphosphorylated. Notably the PR61 γ mutant did not lead to a loss of PP2A associated with paxillin, suggesting that the mutant PR61 γ functions in a dominant negative fashion regulating PP2A activity rather than targeting. Furthermore, a number of reports have described that ectopic expression of various B subunits can lead to competition with other regulatory subunits for binding to the core enzyme [70,71]. As such the truncated form of PR61 γ may inhibit the ability of other B subunits to recruit the core enzyme therefore limiting the tumor suppressor capabilities of these other holoenzyme complexes.

Recent evidence has indicated that c-MYC is also a direct target of PP2A regulation [72]. Levels of c-MYC are tightly regulated by opposing phosphorylation events at SER⁶², which stabilizes c-MYC, and the subsequent phosphorylation of MYC^{T58} which is required for its degradation. Holoenzymes containing the B subunit PR61 α dephosphorylate c-MYC at SER⁶² targeting c-MYC for ubiquitination and subsequent degradation. Conversely, inhibition of PR61 α increased the levels of Ser⁶² and led to c-MYC stabilization and an increase in c-MYC activity. Interestingly stable expression of a c-MYC mutant MYC^{T58A}, which is no longer able to be degraded, functionally replaced ST in the transformation assays of primary human cells described above [73].

PR61 α also interacts and co-localizes with the anti-apoptotic protein BCL2 at the mitochondrial membranes. This leads to increased dephosphorylation and inactivation of BCL2 [74]. Interestingly, PR61 α was stabilized by the pro-apoptotic agent ceramide and the authors speculate on this as a possible mechanism for ceramide-induced apoptosis. Similarly, PP2A can also activate the pro-apoptotic function of BAD although the specific holoenzyme complex has of yet to be determined [75].

Junttila et al. have shown that the dephosphorylation of Ser⁶² of c-MYC by PR61 α is regulated by the c-MYC specific PP2A inhibitor CIP2A (Cancerous Inhibitor of PP2A) [76]. Expression of CIP2A stabilizes c-MYC expression by inhibiting the catalytic activity of the PP2A holoenzyme towards Ser⁶² without affecting PP2A binding potential. Conversely inhibition of CIP2A in Hela cells resulted in reduced phosphorylation of Ser⁶² and decreased c-MYC stabilization. Importantly, ectopic expression CIP2A can also replace ST in the HEK-TER transformation model. However, similar to the results observed with

knockdown of PR61 γ , CIP2A only weakly phenocopied the expression of the ST antigen in the HEK-TER system. Considering the functional role of c-MYC in oncogenesis and the inhibition of c-MYC activity by PR61 α it would be surprising if knockdown of PR61 α could not also partly recapitulate the phenotype of ST in the HEK-TER system or if the dual inhibition PR61 α and PR61 γ would not result in a synergist effect on tumor formation closer to that seen with ST.

On top of its role as a regulator of cMyc, PR61 α also appears to play an indirect role in the regulation of the tumor suppressor p53. It was shown that cyclin G, a p53 target, recruits PP2A holoenzyme complexes containing either PR61 α or PR61 β to form a quaternary complex with the E3 ligase MDM2 [77]. This leads to dephosphorylation of MDM2 at Thr²¹⁶ and the subsequent activation of the protein. MDM2 binds to p53 and ubiquitinates p53 leading to its degradation [78]. In agreement with this, cyclin G null cells exhibit increased MDM2 phosphorylation and stabilized p53 protein levels. Interestingly, the interaction between PR61 and cyclin G is dependent on p53 [79]. These results suggest that PP2A can act as a negative regulator of p53 signaling. Although this piece of data would not support a role for PP2A as a tumor suppressor, recent studies indicate that PP2A can also act as a positive regulator of p53 signaling. PP2A has been shown to directly dephosphorylate p53 at either Ser³⁷ or Thr⁵⁵ resulting in increased p53 stabilization and increased apoptosis following DNA damage [80,81]. In agreement with this, targeted inhibition of either PR61 γ 1 or PR61 γ 3 abolished Thr⁵⁵ dephosphorylation and reduced overall p53 levels [81].

Finally, recent data have indicated that activation of the oncogene AKT is inhibited by the actions of PP2A. AKT is a serine/threonine kinase that has been shown to be the central node in a number of tumor-promoting pathways (reviewed in Manning et al. [82]). Furthermore a number of studies have demonstrated that AKT is deregulated in human cancers [83,84]. Activation of AKT is tightly regulated by phosphorylation events at either Thr³⁰⁸ or Ser⁴⁷³. Holoenzymes containing PR55 α directly dephosphorylate AKT at Thr³⁰⁸ resulting in the downstream inhibition of the pro-survival effector pathways and overall growth retardation [85].

In addition to the negative regulatory function of specific B subunits in cancer-associated pathways several cancer-associated mutations have been found in the two PR65 scaffold subunits, indicating a causal role for loss of specific PP2A holoenzyme complexes in cancer. Extensive sequencing of human tumor samples revealed that the PR65 β scaffold subunit was mutated in 15% (5 out of 33) of primary lung tumors, 6% (4 out of 70) of lung tumor-derived cell lines, and 15% (2 out of 13) of primary colon tumors [86]. The PR65 β gene locus (11q23) was found to display LOH in 30%–50% of breast lung ovary cervical carcinomas and melanomas and in 15% of non-Hodgkin's lymphomas and chronic lymphocytic leukemias [86] although ATM kinase, which is frequently mutated in cancer [87], is also present at this locus. Notably the B isoform of PR65 gene was also found to be specifically reduced in approximately 50% of 34 tumor cell lines tested [32]. Most of the PR65 β cancer-associated mutants are composed of missense mutations including G8R, P65S, G90D, L101P, K343E, D504G, V545A, V448A, one contains the double mutant L101P/V448A, and one an in frame deletion Δ E344–E388 [88,89]. Mutational analysis of these cancer-associated mutations determined that individual B subunit binding varies greatly between each PR65 β mutation with only the Δ E344–E388 mutant incapable of binding to any of the B subunits tested [88,89]. A further five of these mutants compromised catalytic subunit binding leading to an overall loss in phosphatase activity. Interestingly, none of the PR65 β mutants tested exhibited a decrease in one specific B subunit. However, only the holoenzymes containing PR61 γ showed complete loss of integrity in all of the mutants tested [90,88,89]. This suggests that while PR61 γ appears to be the critical determinant in the tumor suppressor function of PP2A the loss of other subunits may indeed play a role in cellular transformation.

When addressing the integrity of the PR65 α isoform, no reduction in expression was found in 34 tumor cell lines tested which was in contrast to the β isoform [32]. In a different study, PR65 α levels were found to be reduced in 43% of primary human gliomas [91], while established glioma cell lines showed uniformly high levels of PR65 α [32]. This could suggest that for the establishment of primary tumors in tissue culture, strong selective pressure in favor of high PR65 α levels exists. Mutations have also been described in PR65 α but at a low frequency [92]. Of these four cancer-associated mutations that were identified, two (R418W and Δ 171–589) displayed reduced binding to the catalytic subunit and all regulatory subunits tested. A further two (E64D and E64G) specifically lost efficient binding to the PR61 subunits [93]. Interestingly residue Glu64 of PR65 α resides at the interface between PP2Ac and the B subunit forming a critical hydrogen bond between PR65 α and residue 309 of PP2Ac [22], therefore providing a logical link between PR65 cancer-associated mutants and loss of holoenzyme composition. Since loss of PR65 α is lethal in rats it would be highly surprising to observe a null-mutant in tumors as it appears that at least a minimal level of PR65 α is likely to be required to maintain cell viability [94,95].

To assess the individual roles of each of the structural subunits and cancer-derived mutants in tumorigenesis, Hahn and colleagues substituted ST with either knockdown vectors targeting either PR65 α or PR65 β in HEK-TER cells [89]. As expected, near complete suppression of PR65 α induced cell death by apoptosis, while partial inhibition imparts a tumorigenic phenotype. Interestingly, loss of PR65 β had full tumor-forming potential, which could not be rescued by ectopic expression of PR65 α . Moreover, it was later confirmed that ST exclusively interacts with PR65 α and not PR65 β suggesting that the tumor-forming capabilities of PR65 α and PR65 β occur through unique and independent mechanisms. Further studies indicated that the GTPase RalA bound specifically to PR65 β containing complexes [89]. This interaction is then lost when PR65 β is replaced by the cancer-derived PR65 β mutants, leading to increased RalA activity and increased tumor incidence. Moreover it was shown in a lung carcinoma cell line harboring non-functional PR65 β alleles that there is a concomitant increase in RalA phosphorylation. As these studies suggest that there appears to be a clear importance in the regulation of RalA activity by PP2A:PR65 β complexes. Furthermore, suppression of RalA severely diminished the ability of PR65 β mutants to form tumors in the HEK-TER system. Together, these observations indicate that inhibition of PP2A complexes containing either PR65 α or PR65 β can lead to cellular transformation. However, their mechanistic actions are distinct and unique.

Collectively these data provide compelling evidence for the tumor suppressor function of PP2A. However, the use of artificially engineered transformed fibroblasts, although elegant, probably does not reflect the actual role of PP2A deregulation during *in vivo* tumor progression. Furthermore, the fact that ST itself can also function as a regulatory B subunit [96] adds another level of complexity to the system. If this ability contributes to the transformation phenotype in engineered tumor cells, loss of endogenous subunits might never fully complement the effects of ST expression. It is also possible that different sets of genetic aberrations during tumor formation require the loss of different PP2A holoenzyme complexes for the tumor to survive. Nevertheless, the data on specific holoenzyme complexes clearly indicate that all B subunit families regulate PP2A in pathways that are deregulated in cancer. However, it appears that the functional loss of PR61 γ is the most relevant event for tumorigenesis. As such, the role of PP2A as a tumor suppressor is likely to be more diverse than initially suggested and to be largely context dependent.

3.2. PP2A and MAP kinase signaling

A major function of PP2A, which seems to be conserved between yeast, flies and vertebrates, is the regulation of the RAS-RAF-mitogen-

activated protein (MAP) kinase signaling pathways. PP2A can have both activating and inhibitory effects on these pathways, depending on the cell type. Interestingly PP2A selectively targets a number of kinases in this seemingly linear pathway, suggesting that PP2A regulation of the RAF-MEK-ERK pathway might be context dependent. In response to growth factors, PR55 α is recruited to a complex at the plasma membrane containing Kinase Suppressor of RAS (KSR1), RAF1 and the PR65/PP2Ac core dimer [97]. This correlates with dephosphorylation of critical 14-3-3 binding sites on KSR1 and RAF-1 resulting in downstream activation of the MAPK pathway. Furthermore, both PR55 α and PR55 δ can positively regulate MAPK signaling by directly dephosphorylating the inhibitory phosphorylation site on Raf-1 (Ser²⁵⁹) [98]. Similar results were obtained in *C. elegans* although here it was shown that the action of PR55 (cdc55) does not involve RAF1 dephosphorylation [99]. Furthermore it was found that PR55 translocates to the plasma membrane following treatment with platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF) [97] thus activating the RAF1 pathway. These studies support a positive role for PP2A as activators of the RAF1-MAPK pathway. However, both inhibition of PR55 by ST [100] or treatment of cells with okadaic acid [101] also result in the phosphorylation and activation of Extracellular Regulated Kinase (ERK) which is downstream of RAF1. In support of these data, it was found in *Drosophila* cells that ablation of either the PP2A catalytic subunit, the PR65 core subunit or the B/PR55 subunit caused enhanced MAPK signaling in response to insulin [102]. This would suggest that while PP2A positively regulates MAPK signaling at the level of KSR and RAF1, there is also a negative regulatory role for PR55 and PP2A in this pathway. This notion was supported by studies in *Drosophila* where it was shown with activated RAS and RAF mutants that PP2A stimulates MAPK signaling downstream of RAF1, while negatively influencing MAPK signaling upstream of RAF1 [103]. It was subsequently found in mammalian cells that PR55 γ could interact with and function as a negative modulator of c-SRC activity [104]. Interestingly it was found by others that c-SRC could indeed activate RAF1 independently of RAS [105,106] and thereby activate the MAPK pathway [107]. These data suggest that PR55 mediates the activation of mitogenic signaling through KSR1 downstream of RAF1 and force the inhibition of mitogenic signaling through c-SRC inhibition upstream of RAF1. Interestingly it also appears that PP2A targets ERK. Recent studies have shown that ablation of PR61 β or PR61 γ leads to increased ERK activation with no concomitant increase in pMEK levels, the kinase directly upstream of ERK, suggesting that PP2A acts on ERK directly [108].

In agreement with the antagonistic role of PP2A in the MAPK pathway, overexpression of the endogenous inhibitor of PP2A, I2PP2A, increases both c-JUN and ERK activation [109,110]. I1PP2A (PHAP-I) and I2PP2A (SET/PHAP-II) are both potent inhibitors of PP2A [111,112]. I2PP2A was initially identified as a truncated form of the myeloid leukemia associated protein SET which is fused to nucleoporin Nup214 in acute non-lymphocytic myeloid leukemia [112]. Furthermore, high levels of I2PP2A have been observed in a number of different human malignancies, including Wilms' tumor and leukemias [113,114], thus implying a plausible role of PP2A regulation by I2PP2A in cancer. Recent evidence has demonstrated that BCR/ABL requires the induction of I2PP2A, and the resulting PP2A inhibition, to fulfill its tumorigenic potential in chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) [115]. Suppression of I2PP2A by short hairpin RNAs in BCR/ABL positive cell lines resulted in increased PP2A activity and a reduction in BCR/ABL leukemogenesis *in vivo*. This corresponded with the dephosphorylation of a number of PP2A target genes including ERK, AKT, MYC, BAD, JAK2, and RB, which have previously been shown to be essential downstream signaling components in BCR/ABL induced leukemogenesis [115]. Moreover, inhibition of BCR-ABL activity by the tyrosine kinase inhibitor imatinib methylate (Gleevec, STI571) inhibits the expression of I2PP2A resulting in the reactivation of PP2A and impairing BCR/ABL function [115].

Although targeting of the BCR/ABL oncogene by imatinib has transformed the treatment of CML, patients who initially respond to this treatment invariably develop resistance. However, a number of PP2A activators have been described capable of potently inhibiting BCR/ABL function including forskolin and FTY720 [115,116]. FTY720, a synthetic myriocin analog structurally similar to sphingosine, was originally developed as an immunosuppressive agent and has shown to induce responses in an number of solid tumors [116–121]. Addition of FTY720 to BCR/ABL overexpressing cell lines results in the dephosphorylation of the PP2A target genes AKT, STAT5 and ERK culminating in the induction of apoptosis in both imatinib sensitive and resistant cells while exhibiting minimal effects on wild type cells. Moreover, the addition of ST or okadaic acid to FTY720 treated cells prevents FTY720 induced BCR/ABL degradation restoring BCR/ABL activity and rescuing the oncogenic potential of these leukemias. Interestingly, reduced PR65 β transcript levels have been observed in a subset of leukemia cases [122]. Together these data highlight the importance of PP2A deregulation in BCR/ABL induced leukemogenesis. Furthermore, it supports the use of PP2A activators as a clinically relevant approach to the treatment of a variety of cancers.

Collectively, these data present convincing evidence that PP2A can play both a protagonistic and antagonistic role in regulating the RAF-MEK-ERK pathway, determination of which appears to be largely dependent on stimulus and cell type. A schematic overview of the role of PP2A holoenzymes in MAPK regulation is depicted in Fig. 2.

It was demonstrated both in yeast [123] and in mammalian cells [124] that the adenoviral protein E4orf4 binds to PR55 α and in transformed mammalian cells this interaction is required for E4orf4 to induce apoptosis. Furthermore, in yeast ectopic expression of E4orf4 phenocopies loss of PR55 [123]. The interaction between PR55 and E4orf4 was later confirmed by others [125]. However, it was found that an E4orf4 mutant that can no longer interact with PR55 still induces apoptosis, which is dependent on its interaction with c-SRC [125]. Recent data indicate that following cell stress suppression of

PR55 γ or PR55 δ prolongs and enhances the activation of the JNK stress kinase pathway leading to apoptosis [104]. Interestingly, the enhanced JNK activation following PR55 γ suppression is dependent on c-SRC [104]. This phenotype is similar to that seen with the two c-SRC interacting viral proteins, E4orf4 and pyMT [125]. Expression of pyMT is able to activate JNK by virtue of its interaction with PP2A [126]. Furthermore, pyMT was also found to interact with c-SRC leading to its activation [127,128] and the subsequent activation of the JNK stress kinase pathway. Therefore it is tempting to speculate that both these viral proteins function by displacing PR55 γ from the holoenzyme complex, leading to enhanced c-SRC activity and increased apoptosis.

While a number of early studies have shown that loss of holoenzyme integrity is a prerequisite for tumorigenesis by tumor-promoting viral antigens, a number of recent studies have also shown that a number of B subunits can be bumped off following cell stress. PR55 α is targeted by an ATM dependent pathway following ionizing radiation, which results in the transient dissociation of PR55 α from complexes containing the PR65/PP2Ac core dimer [129]. Similar results have been observed between PR55 γ and c-SRC in which the interaction between c-SRC and PR55 γ is lost following exposure to UV [104]. Interestingly, the loss of PR55 γ binding to c-SRC following cell stress is not dependent on the phosphorylation status of c-SRC.

Holoenzyme formation can also be directly regulated by the substrates themselves. For example, recent studies have indicated that the ERK target gene IEX-1 can form a ternary structure with PP2A and ERK which decreases the phosphatase activity of PP2A towards ERK [108]. Interestingly IEX-1 inhibition of PP2A appears to be ERK dependent. When complexed with IEX-1 ERK transphosphorylates PR61 at a Ser-Pro site, a site conserved in all PR61 family members, triggering the dissociation of PR61 from the core enzyme. This suggests that while the interaction between PP2A subunits and their targets is primarily dependent on the phosphorylation status of the substrate it insinuates that holoenzyme formation is dynamic and can be negatively regulated by various mechanisms.

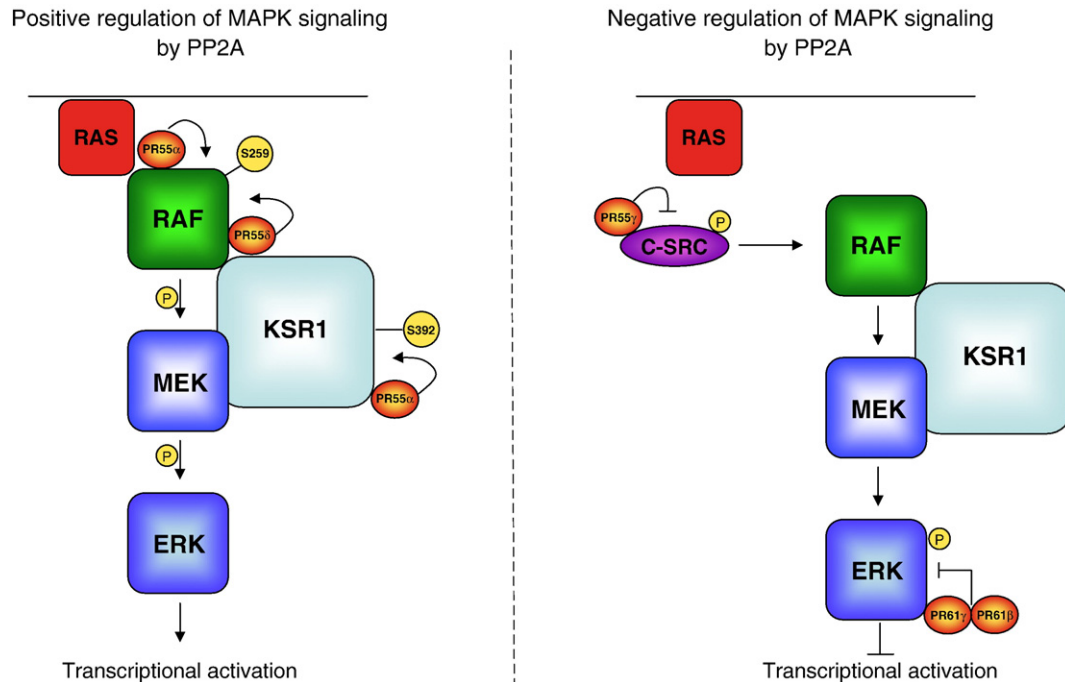


Fig. 2. Schematic overview of MAPK signaling by PP2A. PP2A can play both a positive and negative role in MAPK signaling. Upon stimulation RAS promotes binding of PR55 α to KSR1 and RAF leading to the dephosphorylation of Ser³⁹² and Ser²⁹⁵, respectively. This results in the loss of 14-3-3 inhibition and the subsequent recruitment of RAF to the plasma membrane facilitating the RAS/RAF interaction. Similarly, PR55 α can dephosphorylate key inhibitory 14-3-3 sites on KSR1 allowing KSR1 to act as a scaffold protein permitting the activation the signaling cascade. RAF can also be dephosphorylated at Ser²⁹⁵ by PR55 δ leading to downstream ERK activation. In contrast, PP2A can negatively regulate MAPK signaling by inhibiting the kinase activity of c-SRC. c-SRC activates RAF independently of RAS leading to ERK activation. Furthermore, ERK can be directly dephosphorylated by PR61 β and PR61 γ resulting in decreased ERK activation.

Since it was previously shown that expression of ST results in the activation of a number of these signaling pathways, which appear to be primarily but not exclusively regulated by PR55B subunits, it would be surprising if the loss of these subunits did not play some role in cellular transformation.

3.3. PP2A and WNT signaling

The WNT signaling cascade is required for several crucial steps during early embryogenesis. Deregulation of the WNT signaling cascade in adult tissues can also lead to uncontrolled cellular proliferation and tumorigenesis [130]. One of the targets of the WNT pathway is β -catenin which, when stabilized, accumulates in the nucleus leading to evolution of many cancers. The function of PP2A in WNT regulation is similar to its role in the RAF-MEK-ERK signaling cascade with individual PP2A family members exerting both dominant and negative effects on this pathway. However, the net effect of PP2A inhibition through the use of okadaic acid does lead to stabilization of β -catenin [131], suggesting that the dominate role of PP2A in this pathway is that of a negative regulator. It is however important to note that the stabilization of β -catenin with okadaic acid does not correlate with its phosphorylation status, suggesting that its stabilization may be unrelated to WNT signaling [132].

The first evidence that PP2A controls WNT signaling was obtained using the adenomatous polyposis coli (APC) protein as bait in a yeast two-hybrid assay. This led to the isolation of the PP2A B subunits PR61 α and PR61 δ . Further experiments indicated that overexpression of PR61 α decreased the levels of β -catenin leading to an overall reduction in WNT signaling both in tissue culture and in *Xenopus* cell extracts [131]. However, the effects presented were not specific for PR61 α only but conserved among all the PR61 family members tested [131]. The same group later reported that the PP2A subunits PR61 α , PR61 β , and PR61 γ could interact with axin as well and when overexpressed could inhibit WNT signaling during vertebrate development [133]. It should be noted that as of yet no direct substrate has been identified for the phosphatase activity of PP2A in the WNT signaling pathway. However this should not diminish the clear role that PP2A plays in WNT regulation.

One of the downstream target genes of the WNT signaling cascade is the protein Naked (Naked). Naked is required to restrict WNT signaling during *Drosophila* embryonic segmentation, thus acting as negative feedback regulator of WNT signaling. Interestingly, recent data have shown that Naked requires the presence of the PP2A subunit PR72 for its negative regulatory function [134]. As previously described, ectopic expression of Naked inhibited WNT signaling [135]. However, co-expression of hairpins targeting PR72 completely limited the restrictive capacity of Naked on the WNT pathway [134]. Interestingly, PR72 is required to tether the PP2A/PR65 dimer to Naked and it was shown that PR72 itself is a target of PP2A, suggesting that PR72 might have different functions, which are regulated by direct PP2A-mediated dephosphorylation. Notably, Naked, like PR72, also harbors an EFX hand domain, suggesting that both these proteins are regulated by calcium to alter their conformation [136]. Taken together these reports show that PP2A plays a negative role in WNT signaling and clearly demonstrates that PP2A can associate with a number of WNT signaling components such as APC [131], axin [133,137] and Naked [134].

Initial experiments using PR61 ϵ also described this subunit as a negative regulator of the WNT pathway. PR61 ϵ binds to both disheveled and APC inhibiting WNT/ β -catenin signaling [131]. However in direct contrast to these data, knockdown experiments of PR61 ϵ later convincingly established that PR61 ϵ , rather than being a negative regulator of WNT signaling, acts as a positive modulator of WNT signaling during vertebrate development upstream of disheveled [70]. Earlier studies on PR55 (named "twins" in *Drosophila*) also report differing phenotypes comparing overexpression and knockdown of

the same subunit [71]. It has been proposed in both these reports that regulatory subunits when overexpressed can exert a dominant negative effect due to sequestration of essential components of the PP2A complex or endogenous targets [70,71]. The majority of experiments discussed in the reports above are based on overexpression of B subunits. This approach has the potential artifact that overexpression of one type of B subunit may displace endogenous B subunits. We therefore urge the reader to interpret these data with caution until confirmed by knockdown or knockout experiments.

Be that as it may, during development PR55/twins is required for WNT signaling downstream of disheveled and upstream of the GSK3 β , establishing a positive role for PR55 during *Drosophila* development [71]. Analyses of twins (-/-) mitotic clones suggest that twins is required for stabilization of β -catenin in response to WNT signaling. The authors speculate on a role for Vn/EGFR signaling in the deregulation of WNT signaling by PR55 since Vn/EGFR is a known antagonist of wing development. Since c-SRC is a regulator of EGFR [138] it would be interesting to explore whether this developmental role for PR55 is also mediated through c-SRC deregulation. In addition, a role for PR61 α in the regulation of WNT signaling was found when studying another member of the p53 family: p63 [132]. A yeast two-hybrid screen revealed that PR61 α was able to interact with p63 and overexpression of p63 led to β -catenin stabilization through the negative regulation of GSK3 β . Notably the interaction of PR61 α with p63 did not lead to recruitment of the PP2A holoenzyme to p63 [132]. Strangely however the authors do find a drop in general PP2A activity when both these proteins are overexpressed although the relevance of this remains undetermined.

PP2A can also stabilize β -catenin directly. PP2A has been observed to form a complex with E-cadherin and β -catenin at the plasma membrane resulting in the stabilization of both proteins. In contrast, ablation of PP2A α expression results in β -catenin being redistributed to the cytoplasm where it is rapidly degraded by the proteasome [139]. Although the specific B subunit has not been described loss of PP2A clearly plays a positive role in Wnt signaling.

Finally, PR130, encoded by the larger alternative transcript of PR72, was also found to interact with Naked [140]. However, unlike its sibling, PR130 acts as a positive regulator of WNT signaling inhibiting the effects of Naked both in tissue culture and during embryonic development where it is required for the correct alignment of somite boundaries [140]. Notably, both loss of PR72 and loss of PR130 respectively phenocopy gain and loss of WNT signaling during vertebrate somitogenesis [141]. Similarly, the role of PP2A catalytic activity during this regulation remains elusive, since no dephosphorylation of naked cuticle or other possible targets was observed. A schematic overview of the role of PP2A holoenzymes in Wnt signaling is depicted in Fig. 3.

Collectively these reports provide convincing evidence that PP2A, through a variety of mechanisms, plays both a positive and negative role in the regulation of WNT signaling, thus emphasizing the critical role in PP2A mediated regulation of both embryogenesis and the regulation of cellular proliferation in adult tissues.

4. Conclusions

Our initial understanding of PP2A as a putative tumor suppressor was primarily based on loss of function analysis using the general PP2A inhibitors okadaic acid or expression of tumor antigens from several tumor-promoting viruses. As such, the precise role of the individual PP2A B regulatory subunits remained undisclosed. Not until recent advances in gene knockdown technology have we been able to dissect the individual roles of the PP2A holoenzymes and their specific roles in several signaling pathways. Considering the positive and negative roles PP2A appears to play in a number of different cancer-promoting pathways, the description of PP2A as a *bona fide* tumor suppressor is a bit misleading since not all holoenzyme complexes can

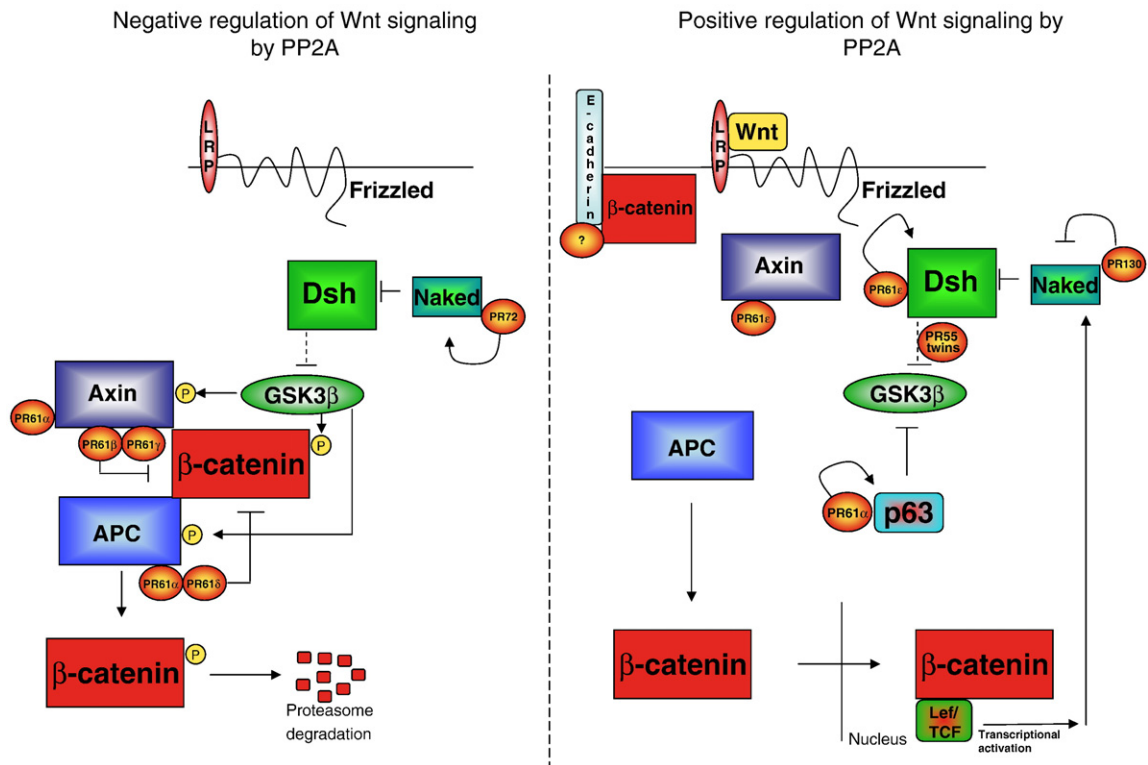


Fig. 3. Schematic overview of Wnt regulation by PP2A. PP2A exerts both dominant and negative effects on the Wnt pathway. In the absence of Wnt signal β -catenin is complexed with APC, AXIN, and GSK-3 β in the cytosol. GSK-3 β negatively regulates β -catenin by phosphorylation rendering it unstable. Phosphorylated β -catenin is subsequently ubiquitinated and targeted by the proteasome for degradation. The PP2A B subunits PR61 α and PR61 β bind to APC leading to decreased levels of β -catenin. Similarly, the PP2A B subunits PR61 α , PR61 β , and PR61 γ bind to Axin also leading to decreased levels of β -catenin. The precise mechanism of how PP2A negatively regulates the Wnt signaling pathway through the destabilization of β -catenin remains unclear. Upon Wnt activation the APC, AXIN, and GSK-3 β complex is degraded by Dsh. Unphosphorylated β -catenin localizes in the nucleus permitting transactivation of specific Wnt target genes. Naked, one of the downstream target genes of the Wnt signaling cascade, inhibits Dsh expression through a negative feedback mechanism. Naked appears to require PR72 for its negative regulatory function. In contrast, the ability of Naked to bind to Dsh is repressed by PR130, resulting in increased Dsh expression. Dsh activity itself is positively regulated by PR61 ϵ . Furthermore, PR55 (twins) acts downstream of Dsh. Both PR61 ϵ and PR55 positively regulate Wnt signaling by destabilizing the inhibitory properties of GSK-3 β . Similarly p63 stabilizes β -catenin through the negative regulation of GSK-3 β . β -catenin may also reside at the plasma membrane complexed with E-cadherin and PP2A. Here, PP2A appears to play a role in the stabilization of E-cadherin and β -catenin, however, its precise role in Wnt signaling remains to be determined.

subscribe to this function. Rather it appears that only a few individual β subunits can be classified as true tumor suppressors and their function as such can be context dependent. Surprisingly however no mutations have been found in any B subunits, suggesting that deregulation of a single holoenzyme complex may not be sufficient to promote tumorigenesis. Recent reports have described that specific inhibition of only the B subunit PR61 γ could enhance the transformation in RAS^{V12}/hTERT/SV40 LT transformed human fibroblasts [66]. However, PR61 γ knockdown only weakly phenocopied expression of ST antigen in these cells, suggesting that other B subunits are involved in tumor suppression [67]. Arguments for this can be taken from the fact that the cancer-associated mutations observed in the structural subunits of PP2A A α and PP2A A β are not specific to the loss of PR61 γ binding, but lead to the deregulation of distinct PP2A holoenzymes [86,88]. Even so the loss of PR61 γ binding was observed in all PR65 β mutations, suggesting that the loss of PR61 γ may be a key factor in cellular transformation, but probably requires the loss of other B subunits for complete tumorigenesis.

One of the most interesting recent observations is that partial inhibition of PR65 α or complete suppression of PR65 β can induce transformation in the HEK-TER system, albeit through the deregulation of distinct downstream signaling pathways. Similarly ectopic expression of either polyoma and SV40 proteins appears to differentially regulate PP2A holoenzymes activating distinct signaling pathways leading to cellular transformation. ST, which binds only to PR65 α , specifically regulates the AKT pathway, while PyMT specifically activates the MAPK pathway. This suggests that the deregulation

of PP2A in a number of distinct but unique pathways is sufficient to promote tumorigenesis.

Another interesting finding has been the demonstration that the expression of PR61 γ is suppressed in melanomas compared with non-transformed melanocytic naevi [68]. B-RAF mutations have frequently been observed in naevi leading to a senescent like phenotype [142]. Furthermore, overexpression of the oncogenic mutant of B-RAF (E600) induces cellular senescence in a number of cultured cell lines (reviewed in Michaloglou et al. [143]). As previously described, PP2A inhibits a number of proteins in the RAF-MEK-ERK pathway including RAF itself. Moreover, recent evidence has shown that PR61 γ directly dephosphorylates ERK, thereby inhibiting ERK activity.

Similarly, a number of reports have suggested that another role of PP2A appears to be in the suppression of the downstream components of the RAS signaling pathway [89,144]. Indeed data clearly indicate that one of the major functions of PP2A is to antagonize the oncogenic ability of RAS by directly dephosphorylating and inhibiting the RAS downstream effectors c-MYC, RALA and AKT. Therefore it appears that deregulation of PP2A in either the RAS or B-RAF pathway is an essential requirement for oncogenic RAS and B-RAF to induce a fully transformed phenotype.

Collectively these observations highlight the role of PP2A deregulation in cancer. Through the upregulation of a number protein kinases involved in mitogenic and survival signaling (e.g. AKT and MAPK), the stabilization of protooncogenes (e.g. MYC), the destabilization of tumor suppressors (e.g. p53 and RB), or the loss of proapoptotic signaling pathways (e.g. BAD), the loss of specific PP2A

holoenzymes is a critical determinant towards cellular transformation. No doubt further studies will lead to a better understanding of the dynamic interaction of PP2A regulatory β subunits within the diverse signaling cascades leading to a more complete understanding of which holoenzyme complexes function as tumor suppressors and in which genetic context(s).

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