

quiescent in adult muscle. Once muscle is damaged, they are activated, proliferate enormously, and fuse with each other or with pre-existing muscle fibers to produce fully mature muscle fibers [3,33]. They have been considered the only cells that give rise to myoblasts and form new myofibers in adult skeletal muscle [3,38].

Recently, cells with myogenic potential have been found in non-muscle tissues. They are involved in bone marrow (BM) [4–6,8,12,13,15,18,22,35], dorsal aorta [10], fetal liver [15], synovial membrane [11], and epidermis [24]. Among them, BM is an attractive source tissue for cell-based therapy for muscular dystrophy because it is thought that BM cells with myogenic potential are disseminated to all muscles in the body through the circulation. More recently, LaBarge and Blau [22] demonstrated that transplanted BM cells were progressively recruited as satellite cells and that subsequent exercise induced them to participate in muscle regeneration, suggesting that donor-derived BM cells contribute to muscle fibers in a step-wise biological progression.

Furthermore, it has been reported that BM side population (BM-SP) cells, which efficiently efflux Hoechst dye 33342 and enrich hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs) [16,17], participated in skeletal muscle regeneration in lethally irradiated mice [7,18]. Recently, Camargo et al. [6] and Corbel et al. [8] have reported that a single BM-SP cell was able to both reconstitute the hematopoietic system and contribute to muscle regeneration. Although Camargo et al. [6] suggested that cells committed to the myeloid lineage were incorporated into newly forming myofibers, it is still unclear what types of myeloid cells preferentially contribute to regenerating myofibers.

Several BM transplantation studies [4,6,8,12,15,18,22] indicate that donor-derived myofibers are frequently detected in regenerated fibers or in exercised muscles, although they are quite rare in normal conditions. This phenomenon is possibly related to increased recruitment of BM-derived myogenic progenitor cells or stem cells into damaged muscle via the blood stream. In addition, it is likely that cytokines released in inflamed muscles direct the myogenic commitment of BM cells.

Here we demonstrated that a large number of SP cells migrated from BM to regenerating muscles, where the BM-derived SP cells did not have hematopoietic potential but did directly participate in muscle regeneration. Further, we showed that cells with myogenic potential were enriched in BM-derived SP cells with low expression of Mac-1 antigen in regenerating muscles. These findings further support the potential of BM-SP cell-based therapy for dystrophic muscular disorders.

## Materials and methods

**Experimental animals.** All procedures used on experimental animals were approved by the Experimental Animal Care and Use Committee

at the National Institute of Neuroscience. C57BL/6 mice were purchased from Nihon CLEA (Tokyo, Japan). C57BL/6-GFP-transgenic mice were kindly provided by Dr. Okabe (Osaka University, Japan). C57BL/6-Rosa26 mice were obtained from the Jackson Laboratory (Bar Harbor, ME).

**Preparation of BM and BM-SP cells.** Bone marrow cells were sterily isolated from the femurs and tibias of GFP transgenic mice [27]. Marrow fragments were filtered through 40  $\mu$ m nitex mesh (BD Bioscience, Franklin Lakes, NJ) and subsequently through 10  $\mu$ m nylon mesh (Kyoshin Rikoh, Tokyo, Japan). After removing red blood cells with Lympholyte-M (Cedarlane, Hornby, Ontario), BM cells were used for BM cell-transplantation or isolation of SP cells.

The BM-SP fraction was prepared as described by Goodell et al. (<http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/genetherapy/goodell/newsite/protocols.html>). BM cells were re-suspended at  $10^6$  cells/ml in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM) (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA) containing 2% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Trace Biosciences, New South Wales, Australia), 10 mM HEPES, and 5  $\mu$ g/ml Hoechst 33342 (Sigma Chemical, St. Louis, MO) and incubated for 90 min at 37°C in the presence or the absence of 50  $\mu$ M Verapamil (Sigma). For antibody staining, cells were incubated on ice for 30 min in the presence of a 1:100 dilution of PE- or APC-conjugated anti-CD45 antibody, PE-conjugated anti-CD11b/CD18 (Mac-1) antibody, PE-conjugated Sca-1 antibody, biotin-conjugated anti-CD34 antibody, or biotin-conjugated anti-c-kit antibody (BD Pharmingen, San Diego, CA). For biotin-conjugated antibodies, 1:100 diluted PE- or APC-conjugated streptavidin (BD Pharmingen) was further labeled for 15 min on ice. After washing, stained cells were re-suspended in PBS containing 2% FBS and 2  $\mu$ g/ml propidium iodide (PI) (BD Pharmingen). Cell sorting was performed on a FACS VantageSE flow cytometer (Falcon, Franklin Lakes, NJ). Hoechst staining and subsequent antibody labeling indicated a viability of  $84.2 \pm 11.5\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 18$ ) as expressed by the percentage of total PI-negative cells per total cells. The BM-SP accounted for  $0.026 \pm 0.017\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 18$ ) of viable unfractionated BM without red blood cells. Debris and dead cells were excluded by forward scatter, side scatter, and PI gating. We used only PI-negative fractions for further experiments.

**Preparation of mononucleated cells from muscle.** Cardiotoxin (CTX) (Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Tokyo, Japan)-injected and uninjected skeletal muscles were dissected from GFP<sup>+</sup>BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice and the GFP transgenic mice. We carefully removed nerves, blood vessels, tendons, and fat tissues from muscles under a dissection microscope. Trimmed muscles were minced and then treated with 0.2% type II collagenase (Worthington Biochemical, Lakewood, NJ) for 40 min at 37°C [20]. Muscle slurries were filtered through 100  $\mu$ m nitex mesh (BD Bioscience) and subsequently through 40  $\mu$ m nitex mesh (BD Bioscience). Erythrocytes were eliminated by treatment with 0.8% NH<sub>4</sub>Cl in Tris-buffer solution. Mononucleated cells were stained with Hoechst 33342 and antibodies as described in BM-SP staining. Then stained cells were analyzed with a FACS VantageSE flow cytometer (Falcon). Hoechst staining and subsequent antibody labeling indicated a viability of  $87.5 \pm 1.3\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 3$ ) and  $68.5 \pm 3.2\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 3$ ) expressed as the percentage of total PI-negative cells per total mononucleated cells from injured muscles and uninjured muscles, respectively. The SP cells accounted for  $0.81 \pm 0.25\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 9$ ) and  $1.72 \pm 0.13\%$  (means  $\pm$  SD,  $n = 3$ ) of viable unfractionated mononucleated cells without red blood cells from injured muscles and uninjured muscles, respectively. We used only PI-negative fractions for further experiments.

**Transplantation experiments.** After X-irradiation with 5 or 9 Gy (Hitachi Medical, Tokyo, Japan),  $5 \times 10^6$ – $1 \times 10^7$  unfractionated GFP<sup>+</sup> BM cells, 2000 GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells, or 3000 GFP<sup>+</sup> SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from regenerating muscles of GFP transgenic mice were transplanted retroorbitally into 8- to 10-week-old C57BL/6 mice. For transplantation of GFP<sup>+</sup> SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from BM and GFP<sup>+</sup> SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from regenerating muscles,  $2 \times 10^5$  unfractionated BM cells from C57BL/6 mice were also transplanted as competitor cells. SP

cells were isolated from PI-negative fractions and immediately used for transplantation assay. GFP chimerism was calculated by the ratio of GFP<sup>+</sup> cells to total mononucleated cells in BM or peripheral blood. Twelve to 15 weeks after transplantation, transplanted mice were subjected to CTX injection studies and FACS analysis.

**Cardiotoxin injection and tissue preparation.** To induce muscle regeneration, 0.1 ml of 10  $\mu$ M CTX was injected into the TA and/or GC muscles of transplanted mice with a 27-gauge needle [9,14,19]. The CTX-injected TA and/or GC muscles and the non-injected contralateral TA and/or GC muscles were dissected for histological analysis at 3–4 weeks or 8–10 weeks after CTX injection. Following fixation with 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS for 30 min, muscles were sequentially soaked in 10% sucrose in PBS and 20% sucrose in PBS. For histological and immunohistochemical analysis, muscles were frozen in isopentane cooled with liquid nitrogen.

**Histological and immunohistochemical analysis.** Muscle cryostat sections (7  $\mu$ m) were stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE). Serial cross-sections were blocked with 5% goat serum in PBS and then reacted with anti-GFP antibody (1:100; Chemicon International, Temecula, CA), anti-laminin  $\alpha$ 2 antibody (1:100; clone 4H8-2; Alexis, San Diego, CA), anti-CD11b/18 (Mac-1) antibody (1:100; Cedarlane), and/or anti-M-cadherin antibody (1:10,000) at 4°C overnight. Anti-M-cadherin antibody was generated by fusing the mouse M-cadherin cDNA sequence corresponding to 339–444 aa to GST in a pGEX vector (Amersham Biosciences, Piscataway, NJ), and the GST-M-cadherin fusion protein was used as an antigen. The rabbit anti-serum obtained was affinity purified. The sections were incubated with appropriate combinations of Alexa 488-, Alexa 568-, and Alexa 594-labeled secondary antibodies (Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR) for 30 min. Nuclei were stained with TOTO3 (Molecular Probes). Stained sections were observed under a confocal laser scanning microscope (Leica TCS SP; Leica, Heidelberg, Germany).

**Preparation of activated satellite cells.** Single myofibers were prepared as described in the literature [2,31] with slight modifications. In brief, dissected extensor digitorum longus (EDL) muscles from C57BL/6 mice or C57BL/6-Rosa26 mice were digested with 0.5% type I collagenase (Worthington Biochemical) at 37°C for 90 min. Five to ten intact, viable single myofibers were plated on chamber slides (Nalge Nunc International, Naperville, IL) coated with Matrigel (Collaborative Biomedical Products, Bedford, MA), and cultured with DMEM (Invitrogen) containing 10% horse serum (HS) (BioWhittaker, Walkersville, MD) and 0.5% chick embryo extract (CEE) (Invitrogen) in a humid 5% CO<sub>2</sub> environment at 37°C for 4 days. To proliferate mononucleated myogenic cells, they were kept in growth medium (10% HS, 20% FBS, and 1% CEE in DMEM).

For immunostaining, cultured cells were fixed with 2% formaldehyde in PBS for 10 min. After washing with 0.5% Triton X-100 in PBS, specimens were blocked with 5% goat serum (Cedarlane) in PBS for 15 min, then incubated with anti-GFP antibody (1:500; Chemicon) and anti-sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin antibody (1:1000; Sigma) for 1 h at 37°C, and then reacted with secondary antibody conjugated with Alexa 488 or Alexa 568 (Molecular Probes). Nuclei were detected with Hoechst 33258 (Molecular Probes). To detect  $\beta$ -galactosidase activity, cells were stained with 5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl  $\beta$ -D-galactopyranoside (X-Gal).

**Co-culture of BM-derived SP cells with activated satellite cells.** After approximately 7 days culture, myofiber-derived activated satellite cells reached 50–70% confluence. At this point, co-culture with BM-SP cells was started. Approximately 500–2500 freshly isolated GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells were added to 3000–5000 activated satellite cells derived from C57BL/6 myofibers. Differentiation medium (10% HS, 2% FBS, and 0.5% CEE in DMEM) was applied soon after starting co-culture. Approximately 4000–5000 SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells, 4000–5000 SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells, 2000 SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells, 10,000 main population (MP)/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells, 10,000 MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells, or 10,000 MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>+</sup> cells from GFP transgenic mouse muscles damaged by CTX injection were co-cultured with 10,000 activated satellite cells from C57BL/6 mice. For BM-derived SP cells from regenerating

muscles, cells were kept in growth medium (20% FBS, 2.5 ng/ml basic fibroblast growth factor (Pepro Tech EC, London, England) in DMEM) for 4 days and then switched to differentiation medium for further culture. Less than 20% of plated BM-SP cells survived 2 days after starting co-culture. Approximately 5–10% plated BM-derived cells from regenerating muscles survived 2 days after starting co-culture. Cultured cells were observed with phase-contrast and fluorescence microscopy IX70 (OLYMPUS, Tokyo, Japan).

## Results

### *Contribution of BM-SP cells to muscle fibers in vivo*

To investigate which type of donor cells contributes to muscle fibers, unfractionated BM cells or BM-SP cells from GFP transgenic mice [27] were transplanted into X-irradiated C57BL/6 mice. To further compare the efficiency of myogenic contributions of donor-derived cells to damaged muscles or intact muscles, we injected cardiotoxin (CTX) into tibialis anterior (TA) and/or gastrocnemius (GC) muscles more than 12 weeks after transplantations to induce muscle regeneration. For BM-SP cell transplantation, we selected the CD45<sup>+</sup> fraction of BM-SP cells (BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup>) to exclude the possible contamination of mesenchymal stem cells [34]. The frequency of donor-derived GFP<sup>+</sup> fibers in damaged muscle was relatively higher than in undamaged muscle (Fig. 1, Table 1). The ratio of GFP<sup>+</sup> myofibers normalized to the number of transplanted cells was significantly higher in BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice than in unfractionated BM cell-transplanted mice (Table 1). Contrary to previous reports [15,22], we have not detected donor-derived GFP<sup>+</sup> satellite cells in muscle sections and in cultures of isolated single myofibers from transplanted mice (data not shown).

### *Migration of SP cells from BM to regenerating muscle*

CTX injection experiments suggested that muscle damage enhanced the contribution of BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells to muscle fiber formation and that muscle injuries could increase the migration of BM cells with myogenic potential to the injury site via the bloodstream. Therefore, we examined whether SP cells migrate or not from BM to regenerating muscle by the use of GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice. Twelve to 15 weeks after transplantation, CTX was injected into TA muscles. Three days after the injury, a considerable number of donor-derived GFP<sup>+</sup> cells were found in damaged muscles (Figs. 2A–D). At this early stage of muscle regeneration, M-cadherin immunostaining revealed many activated satellite cells proliferating inside the pre-existing basement membrane sheath (Fig. 2E).

Next, we isolated mononucleated cells from intact or damaged muscles and analyzed them by fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS). SP cells, which are sensitive to Verapamil, were involved in both intact and damaged

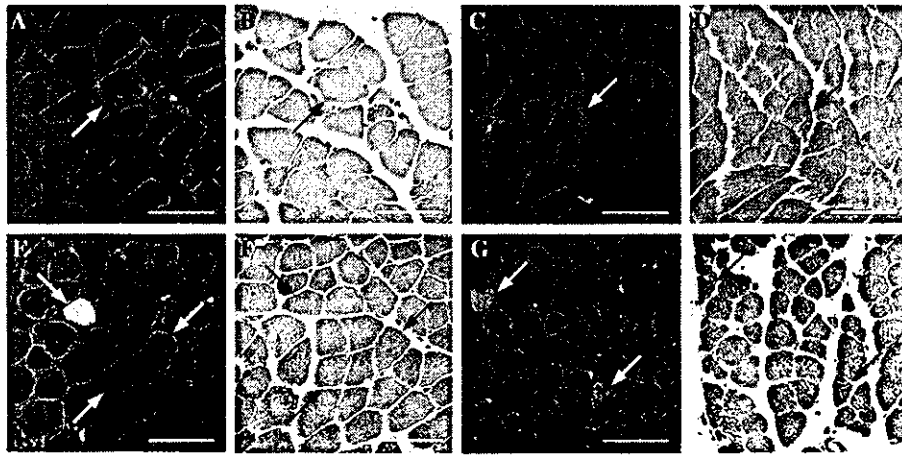


Fig. 1. Contribution of transplanted BM cells to myofibers in mice. (A–H) Unfractionated GFP<sup>+</sup> BM cells (A,B,E, and F) or GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells (C,D,G, and H) were transplanted into lethally X-irradiated C57BL/6 mice. Twelve to 15 weeks after transplantation, CTX was injected into TA and/or GC muscles to induce muscle regeneration (E–H). Undamaged muscles are shown in (A–D). At 10 weeks after CTX injection, cryostat sections of TA (A,B,E,F,G, and H) and GC (C,D) muscles were stained with anti-GFP antibody (green in A,C,E, and G) and anti-laminin  $\alpha$ 2 antibody (red in A,C,E, and G). HE-stained sections (B,D,F, and H) are serial sections of (A,C,E, and G), respectively. Arrows indicate GFP-positive myofibers. Bars, 80  $\mu$ m.

Table 1  
Quantitation of donor-derived myofibers in transplanted mice

Mouse ID No.	X-ray (Gy)	Transplanted cell	GFP-chimerism in BM (%)	Muscle	CTX <sup>a</sup>	GFP <sup>+</sup> myofibers	Total myofibers	% <sup>b</sup>	% <sup>c</sup>
52	9	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM	73.4	TA	4w	2	1368	0.15	0.0002
				GC	4w	18	3234	0.56	0.0018
				TA	—	0	2120	0.00	0.0000
4	5	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM	43.4	GC	—	4	3505	0.11	0.0004
				TA	8w	5	1581	0.32	0.0005
				GC	8w	24	3093	0.78	0.0024
				TA	—	2	1304	0.15	0.0002
				GC	—	0	4658	0.00	0.0000
14	5	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM	46.7	TA	10w	13	1564	0.83	0.0013
				GC	10w	44	1378	3.19	0.0044
				TA	—	0	1150	0.00	0.0000
				GC	—	1	2634	0.04	0.0001
				TA	10w	1	1044	0.10	0.0002
73	9	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM	77.7	GC	10w	0	3171	0.00	0.0000
				TA	—	0	1138	0.00	0.0000
				GC	—	0	556	0.00	0.0000
				TA	10w	2	1205	0.17	0.1000
				TA	—	0	1189	0.00	0.0000
106	9	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	22.9	TA	3w	3	767	0.39	0.1500
				TA	—	0	773	0.00	0.0000
61	9	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	92.9	TA	10w	18	735	2.45	0.7965
				GC	10w	12	1176	1.02	0.5310
				TA	—	0	584	0.00	0.0000
				GC	—	4	2071	0.19	0.1770
				TA	10w	0	405	0.00	0.0000
69	9	GFP <sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	10.4	GC	10w	7	2838	0.25	0.3500
				TA	—	0	1024	0.00	0.0000
				GC	—	1	2889	0.03	0.0500
				TA	10w	0	405	0.00	0.0000

<sup>a</sup> CTX was injected more than 12 weeks after transplantation. Mice were sacrificed 3, 4, 8, or 10 weeks after CTX injection.

<sup>b</sup> % = (the number of GFP<sup>+</sup> myofibers/the total number of myofibers per muscle section)  $\times$  100.

<sup>c</sup> % = (the number of GFP<sup>+</sup> myofibers/the number of transplanted cells)  $\times$  100.

muscles (Figs. 2F–G and I–J). To characterize SP cells in muscles, they were further fractionated by CD45 and GFP expression. GFP<sup>+</sup> SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells significantly

increased in number in injured muscles, when compared with uninjured muscles (Figs. 2H and K). In both uninjured and injured muscles, GFP<sup>+</sup> SP cells were

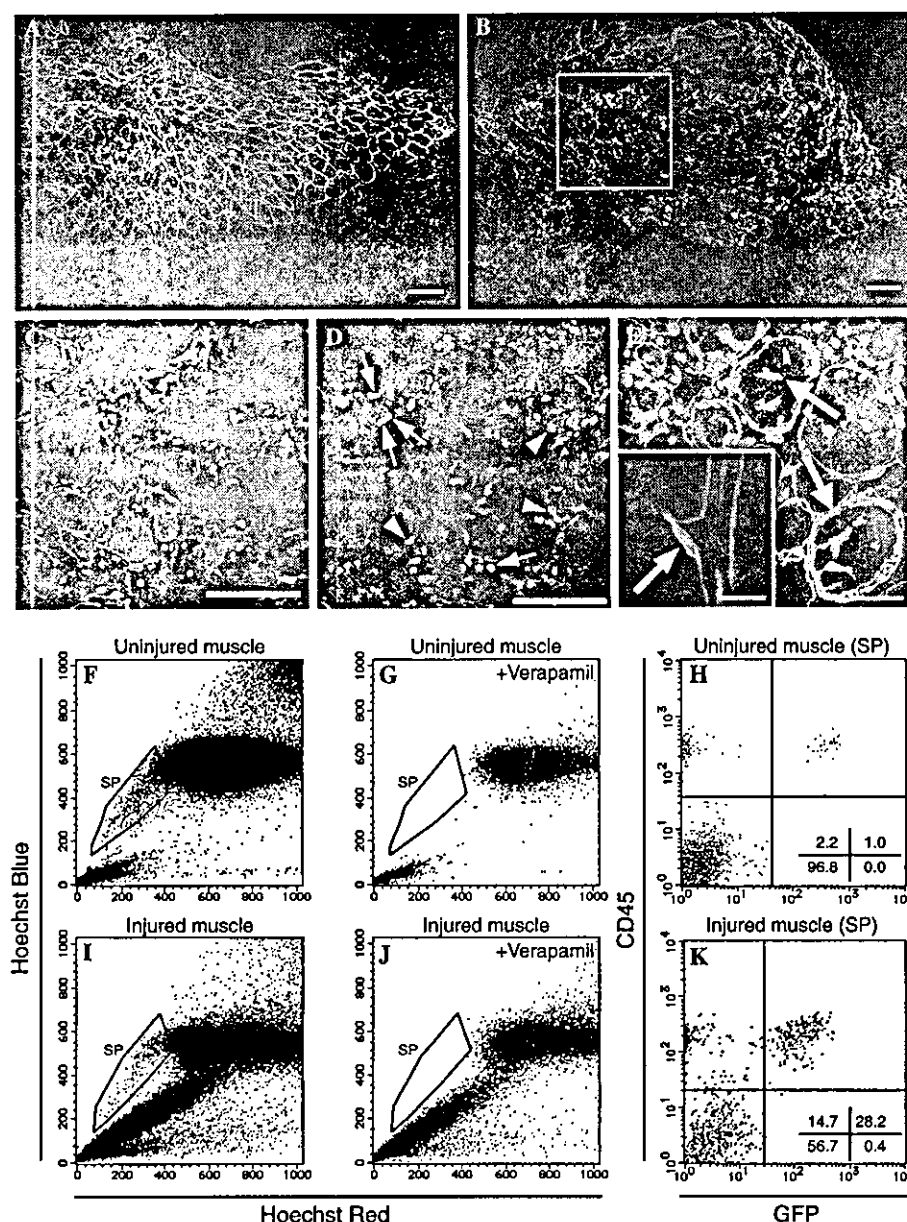


Fig. 2. Migration of BM-derived SP cells to regenerating skeletal muscle. (A,B) Immunofluorescent staining for GFP (green) and laminin  $\alpha 2$  (red) of TA muscle cross-cryosections from GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice. (A) Only a few GFP<sup>+</sup> mononucleated cells were observed in intact muscle. (B) In contrast to (A), a great number of GFP<sup>+</sup> mononucleated cells have infiltrated into damaged muscle at 3 days after CTX injection. (C) A high magnification photograph of the inset area of (B), displaying triple immunofluorescent staining for GFP (green), laminin  $\alpha 2$  (red), and nuclei (blue). GFP<sup>+</sup> cells were located in intra- and extra-basement membranes. (D) At 3 days after CTX injection, a cryostat section of regenerating muscle of a mouse transplanted with GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells was stained with anti-Mac-1 antibody (red) and anti-GFP antibody (green). Nuclei were stained with TOTO3 (blue). Arrows indicate both GFP<sup>+</sup> and Mac-1<sup>+</sup> positive cells. Arrowheads indicate GFP<sup>+</sup> but Mac-1<sup>-</sup> cells. (E) A cryostat section of regenerating muscle at day 3 after CTX injection was stained with anti-M-cadherin antibody (green) and anti-laminin  $\alpha 2$  antibody (red). Nuclei were stained with TOTO3 (blue). Arrows indicate M-cadherin<sup>+</sup> activated satellite cells. Our anti-M-cadherin antibody specifically recognized a satellite cell beneath the basement membrane in control muscle (arrow in inset of E). (F–K) Representative FACS analyses demonstrating that mononucleated cells isolated from uninjured muscles (F–H) or regenerating muscles (I–K) of GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice contained Verapamil-sensitive SP cells. These SP cells were further characterized with GFP and CD45 expression (H,K). Note that the percentage of a subfraction of SP cells expressing both GFP and CD45 was considerably increased at 3 days after CTX injection. In contrast, BM-derived SP cells expressing GFP but not CD45 were hardly detected in both regenerating and undamaged muscles. BM-GFP chimerisms of transplanted mice shown here were 93% (F–H) and 60% (I–K), respectively. Three uninjured mice and nine injured mice were analyzed and showed a similar tendency (data not shown). Bars, 100  $\mu$ m in (A–D), 40  $\mu$ m in (E), and 8  $\mu$ m in inset of (E).

largely CD45<sup>+</sup> (Figs. 2H and K). Moreover, in GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-transplanted mice with more than 95% chimerism, nearly 100% of GFP<sup>+</sup> cells were CD45<sup>+</sup> (Uezumi

et al., unpublished data), in agreement with previous reports [6,21,23]. We, therefore, selected CD45<sup>+</sup> cells to pursue the fate of BM-derived cells after muscle injury.

Table 2  
GFP-chimerism in peripheral blood of transplanted mice

Number of transplanted mice	Transplanted cell <sup>a</sup>	Number of transplanted cells	GFP-chimerism in PB (%) <sup>b</sup>
3	GFP <sup>+</sup> SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	3000	0.09–0.32

<sup>a</sup> Transplanted cells were prepared from CTX-injected muscles (day 3) of *GFP* transgenic mice.

<sup>b</sup> GFP-chimerism in peripheral blood (PB) was determined at 4 weeks after transplantation.

#### *Failure of BM-derived SP cells isolated from regenerating muscles to reconstitute the blood system of recipient mice*

We observed that a large number of SP cells migrated from BM to muscles following injury. To directly examine whether migrated BM-derived SP cells in regenerating muscles had hematopoietic ability or not, we transplanted 3000 freshly isolated BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from regenerating muscles of *GFP* transgenic mice into lethally irradiated recipient mice ( $n = 3$ ). Less than 1% of the peripheral blood cells of recipient mice were donor-derived GFP<sup>+</sup> blood cells 4 weeks after transplantation (Table 2), indicating that BM-derived SP cells in regenerating muscle contained very few or no hematopoietic stem and/or progenitor cells.

#### *Analysis of surface marker expression on BM-derived SP cells*

Previous studies showed that BM-SP cells and BM-derived SP cells in uninjured muscles possess hematopoietic potential [16–18,20]. However, our transplant studies suggested that BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells in regenerating muscles were different from HSCs even if they had the SP phenotype. To compare the surface marker expression, we isolated three different SP cells, BM-SP cells, BM-derived SP cells of uninjured muscles, and BM-derived SP cells of injured muscles. They were labeled with antibodies to CD45 and one of the following markers: Sca-1, c-kit, CD34, or Mac-1 (Fig. 3A). We detected all markers on BM-SP cells, and their expression levels were similar to previous reports [16–18,28]. We observed a small percentage of c-kit<sup>+</sup> cells in the BM-derived uninjured muscle SP cells (Fig. 3A). However, importantly there were no c-kit<sup>+</sup> BM-derived SP cells in injured muscles (Fig. 3A).

Interestingly, BM-derived SP cells contained Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells in both injured and uninjured muscles (Figs. 3A, C, and E). These BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells in day 3 CTX-injected muscles increased in numbers (by muscle weight) approximately 18-fold, compared with uninjured muscles. We found that BM-derived SP/Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells were not labeled with anti-F4/80 antibody, which is a specific and sensitive marker for mature mouse macrophages (data not shown). In contrast, BM-derived Mac-1<sup>high</sup> cells were fallen into the MP fraction (Figs. 3B–E) and expressed

F4/80 antigen (data not shown). These results suggest that SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells actively migrated from BM to injured muscles and that they were not mature myeloid cells.

#### *Myogenic differentiation of BM-SP cells and BM-derived SP cells isolated from regenerating muscle*

To analyze the cellular mechanism of myogenic differentiation of BM-SP cells and BM-derived SP cells from regenerating muscles in vitro, we first co-cultured BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from *GFP* transgenic mice with activated satellite cells of C57BL/6 mice. We found that GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP cells formed multinucleated myotubes (Fig. 4A). These myotubes expressed desmin and sometimes spontaneously contracted (data not shown). To determine whether BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells fuse with host myogenic cells or not, we co-cultured BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells prepared from *GFP* transgenic mice with activated satellite cells derived from Rosa26 mice, which express  $\beta$ -galactosidase ( $\beta$ -Gal) under a ubiquitous regulatory element [37]. X-gal staining showed that GFP<sup>+</sup> myotubes expressed  $\beta$ -Gal, indicating that BM-SP cells fused with co-cultured host myogenic cells and formed heterokaryotic myotubes (Figs. 4B and C). When GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells were cultured alone in the differentiation medium or in the conditioned medium prepared from myogenic cells, they did not form GFP<sup>+</sup> myotubes (data not shown), suggesting that BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells formed myotubes via cell-to-cell contact with myogenic cells.

Next, we examined whether migrated BM-derived SP cells isolated from regenerating muscles differentiated into skeletal muscle cells in vitro or not. We focused on Mac-1 expression of BM-derived SP cells because the results, shown in Fig. 3, indicated that considerably greater number of BM-derived Mac-1<sup>low</sup> SP cells infiltrated into injured muscles than into uninjured muscles. In addition, it has been recently reported that monocytes differentiate into various cell types in certain culture conditions [39]. We fractionated BM-derived cells prepared from *GFP* transgenic mouse muscles damaged by CTX injection based on both Mac-1 expression and SP phenotype: SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells, SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>–</sup> cells, SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells, MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells, MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells, and MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>high</sup> cells. Then each fraction was co-cultured with activated satellite cells from C57BL/6 mice. After 14 days of co-culture, they were fixed and stained with anti-GFP antibody

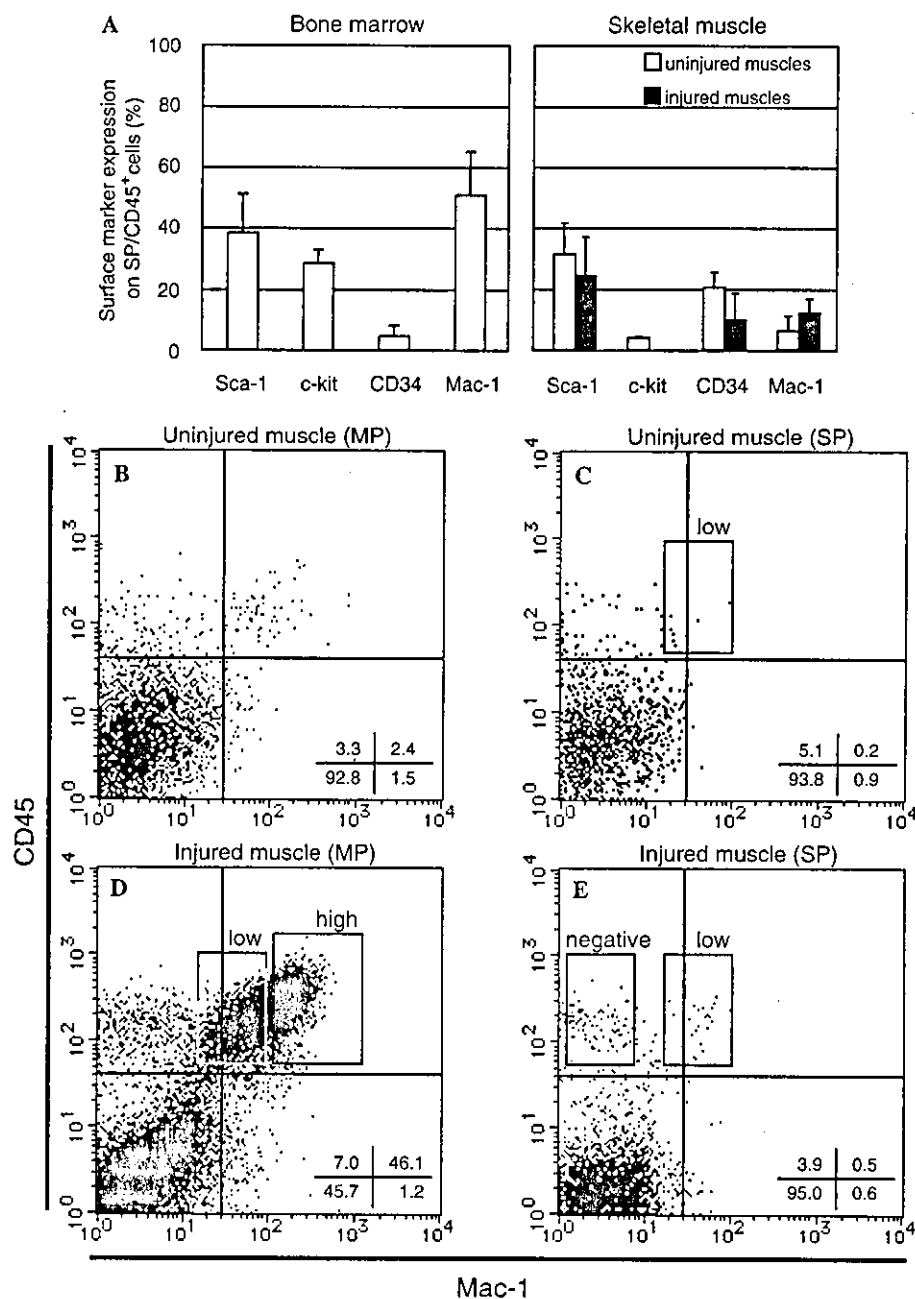


Fig. 3. Analysis of surface marker expression on BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells prepared from muscles. (A) SP cells from BM (left graph), BM-derived SP cells from uninjured (white columns in right graph), and BM-derived SP cells from injured muscles (black columns in right graph) were isolated and then stained with anti-CD45 antibody and one of the following markers: Sca-1, c-kit, CD34, or Mac-1. The percentages of surface marker expression on BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells (left graph) and on BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells (right graph) were calculated by the following formula: (%) = 100 × (the number of surface marker-positive CD45<sup>+</sup> cells in the SP fraction)/(the number of CD45<sup>+</sup> cells in the SP fraction). Note that the expression of c-kit in BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from injured muscles was not at a detectable level. All values (means ± SD) are based on at least three separate experiments. (B–E) Representative FACS analysis demonstrating that mononucleated cells in the MP fraction (B,D) or the SP fraction (C,E) isolated from uninjured muscles (B,C) or injured muscles (D,E) of the GFP transgenic mice. In injured muscles, MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells expressed Mac-1 with a broad range of intensities (D). By contrast, the SP fraction from injured muscles contained not CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>high</sup> cells but CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells (E). Importantly this SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> fraction increased in cell number as well as in ratio after muscle injury (rectangles marked “low” in C,E; also see A). The SP sub-fractions shown by rectangles in (D,E) were isolated and then used in further culture experiments (see Fig. 4 and Table 3).

and anti-sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin antibody (Figs. 4D–F). BM-derived SP cells gave rise to myotubes more effectively than BM-derived MP cells (Table 3). In particular, the BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> fraction was highly

concentrated in cells capable of myotube formation (Table 3). More importantly, sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin-expressing mononucleate myocytes were observed in our co-culture system (Figs. 4G–J), indicating that

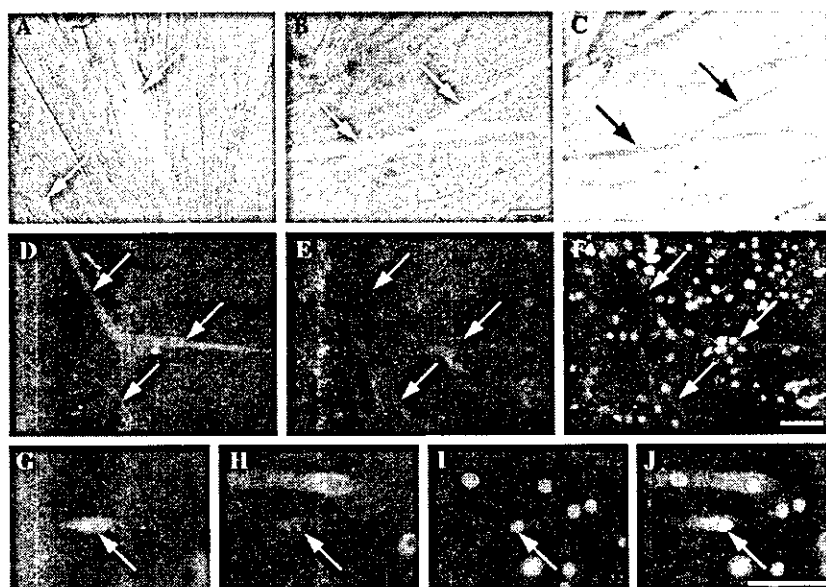


Fig. 4. Myogenic differentiation of BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells and BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells from regenerating muscles. (A) GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells isolated from GFP transgenic mice were co-cultured with activated satellite cells from C57BL/6 mice. GFP<sup>+</sup> multinucleated myotubes (arrows) were observed after 14 days of co-culture. (B,C) GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells were co-cultured with activated satellite cells prepared from ROSA26 mice. (B) A representative image of living GFP<sup>+</sup> myotubes at 21 days co-culture. (C) After fixation, cells were counterstained with X-gal. Arrows show heterokaryotic myotubes expressing both GFP and  $\beta$ -galactosidase. (D–J) Co-culture of GFP<sup>+</sup> BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells from injured muscles of GFP transgenic mice with activated satellite cells from C57BL/6. Immunofluorescent staining for GFP (D,G and green in F,J), sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin (E,H and red in F,J), and Hoechst 33258 (I, blue in F,J) at 14 days co-culture of BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells (a rectangle indicates "low" in Fig. 3E) from regenerating muscles of the GFP transgenic mice with activated satellite cells of C57BL/6 mice. (D–F) Arrows indicate GFP<sup>+</sup> multinucleated myotubes expressing sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin. (G–J) Arrows indicate a GFP<sup>+</sup> mononucleated cell expressing sarcomeric  $\alpha$ -actinin. Note that a mononucleated cell derived from the GFP<sup>+</sup> SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> fraction differentiated into a myogenic cell before fusion with host muscle cells (arrows). Bars, 50  $\mu$ m.

Table 3  
Frequency of GFP<sup>+</sup> myotube formation in co-culture with activated satellite cells

Cultured cells		No. of experiments	No. of cells seeded	No. of GFP <sup>+</sup> myotubes	Frequency of GFP <sup>+</sup> myotubes (%) <sup>a</sup>
Tissue	Cell type				
Regenerating muscle	SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	2	21,500	51	0.24
	SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup> Mac-1 <sup>-</sup>	3	23,000	65	0.28
	SP/CD45 <sup>+</sup> Mac-1 <sup>low</sup>	3	6600	34	0.52
	MP/CD45 <sup>+</sup>	2	20,000	4	0.02
	MP/CD45 <sup>+</sup> Mac-1 <sup>low</sup>	3	62,700	44	0.07
	MP/CD45 <sup>+</sup> Mac-1 <sup>high</sup>	3	70,500	19	0.03

<sup>a</sup> % = (the number of GFP<sup>+</sup> myotubes/the number of seeded cells)  $\times$  100.

BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells from regenerating muscles had the ability to differentiate into skeletal muscle cells and did not simply fuse with host myogenic cells to form heterokaryotic myotubes. Although BM-derived MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>high</sup> cells formed myotubes at low frequency, we have not observed mononucleate myocytes from MP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>high</sup> cells in our co-culture system. We next injected BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells from regenerating muscles into TA muscles of NOD-scid mice, and we detected a few GFP-positive fibers (not shown).

## Discussion

### Contribution of BM cells to muscle fiber regeneration

The number of donor-derived muscle fibers normalized to the number of transplanted cells was significantly higher in BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell-transplanted mice than in unfractionated BM cell-transplanted mice. These results suggest that cells with myogenic potential are enriched in the BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cell fraction. We and other groups [6,8,12,13,15,18,22] have observed that muscle damage

increased the frequency of donor-derived myofibers in mice. Thus, muscle damage and subsequent regeneration could be important for the participation of donor-derived cells in skeletal muscle regeneration and, in particular, for recruitment of BM cells to damaged muscle.

#### *Migration of SP cells from BM to regenerating muscles*

We showed, for the first time, that a considerable number of SP cells migrated from BM to regenerating muscle together with inflammatory cells such as monocytes/macrophages at the early stage of muscle regeneration. The release of a variety of cytokines/chemokines into regenerating muscle [19] suggests that certain kinds of chemotactic factors, which have an analogous mechanism to monocytes/macrophages, recruit BM-SP cells to regenerating muscles. At this stage of muscle regeneration, satellite cells are activated and proliferate enormously to form fully matured multinucleated cells [3]. Hence, regenerating muscles could provide opportunities for BM-derived SP cells to come into contact with myogenic cells.

#### *Absence of hematopoietic stem and/or progenitor cells in the BM-derived SP fraction isolated from regenerating muscles*

One of the most interesting aspects of BM-derived SP cells in regenerating muscles is the lack of hematopoietic potential. It has been reported that BM-SP cells were able to reconstitute the hematopoietic system in lethally irradiated mice [16,17]. In fact, in our transplantation, 2000 BM-SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells reconstituted the hematopoietic system in mice. Likewise, at least 137 uninjured muscle-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells have been reported to reconstitute the mouse blood system [23]. However, 3000 SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> cells isolated from regenerating muscles in this study failed to reconstitute the blood system in recipients. Uninjured muscles contained c-kit<sup>+</sup> BM-derived SP cells (our results [23]), even if the level of c-kit expression detectable was low. BM-derived SP cells from injured muscles did not express c-kit antigen, although c-kit is one of the key surface markers for hematopoietic stem and/or hematopoietic progenitor cells [26]. Therefore, our results suggest that BM-derived SP cells in regenerating muscles contain neither HSCs nor hematopoietic progenitors.

#### *Early myeloid cells in the BM-derived SP fraction of regenerating muscles*

Scharenberg et al. [32] have reported that BM-SP cells sharply down-regulated *ABCG2* at the stage of lineage commitment, resulting in loss of the SP phenotype. In fact, our surface marker analysis revealed that BM-derived SP cells from regenerating muscles did not

contain either Mac-1<sup>high</sup> or F4/80<sup>+</sup> cells, which are mature inflammatory cells, but did contain Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells. In addition, it has been reported that early myeloid cells expressed a low level of Mac-1 antigen [1,29,30]. Therefore, the BM-derived SP fraction should contain early myeloid cells rather than mature inflammatory cells. Our results showed that these early myeloid (BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup>) cells were considerably mobilized to muscles after injury.

#### *Enrichment of cells with myogenic differentiation in BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells*

Camargo et al. [6] demonstrated that myeloid intermediates were incorporated into myofiber formation in response to injury using the lysozyme-M/Cre transgene tracing strategy. More recently, it was shown that the expression of lysozyme-M does not specifically mark cells with myeloid commitment but marks all kinds of hematopoietic cells in their transgene tracing strategy [36]. Hence, it remained unclear what types of cell fractions in BM-derived cells were incorporated into myotubes/myofibers. Here, our co-culture studies clearly revealed that isolated BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> fraction prepared from regenerating muscles showed the highest myogenic differentiation ability among several BM-derived fractions. In addition, BM-derived cells abruptly lost their myogenic differentiation efficiency after they lost the SP phenotype, suggesting that the myotube formation efficiency of BM-derived cells from regenerating muscles was dependent on their maturation stage.

Zhao et al. [39] have shown that monocytes in peripheral blood differentiated into various cell types under their specific differentiation conditions. In addition, BM-derived myogenic progenitors transiently expressed the low level of Mac-1 antigen at the early process of muscle differentiation [25]. Their results together with ours suggest that BM-derived early myeloid cells might convert to other cell lineages including the myogenic cell lineage in certain circumstances, such as regenerating muscles. Our direct transplantation of muscle-derived Mac-1<sup>low</sup> SP cells from GFP transgenic mice into TA muscles of NOD-scid mice, however, resulted in low efficient GFP-positive myotube formation (data not shown). Although a considerable number of injected cells die shortly after the injection due to innate immune response by the host, the results, together with in vitro co-culture experiments (GFP-positive myotube formation rate: ave. 0.52%), indicate that the efficiency of myogenic conversion of Mac-1<sup>low</sup> SP cells is relatively low, compared with muscle satellite cells.

#### *Myogenic differentiation mechanism of SP cells*

Our co-culture studies revealed that BM-derived SP cells as well as BM-SP cells formed myotubes with host



myogenic cells. Importantly, we found skeletal muscle-specific protein expressing mononucleate myocytes that originated from BM-derived SP/CD45<sup>+</sup> Mac-1<sup>low</sup> cells in regenerating muscles. This result strongly suggests that BM-derived SP cells commit to the myogenic cell lineage before fusion with host myogenic cells and that this myogenic contribution is not a random but a step-wise progressive event. A subset of SP cells would adjust to a new environment and start a myogenic differentiation program. Probably its trigger is cell-to-cell contact between SP cells and myogenic cells rather than soluble

factors, because conditioned medium of cultured myogenic cells had no effect on myogenic differentiation of SP cells in vitro (data not shown). In addition, we have not observed myotubes in cultures of SP cells alone (data not shown).

Taken together, our results revealed that early myeloid cells in the BM-derived SP fraction are implicated in skeletal muscle regeneration in the presence of pre-existing myogenic cells. In our proposed model (Fig. 5), a large number of BM-derived SP cells migrate to regenerating muscles in response to injury. These mobilized

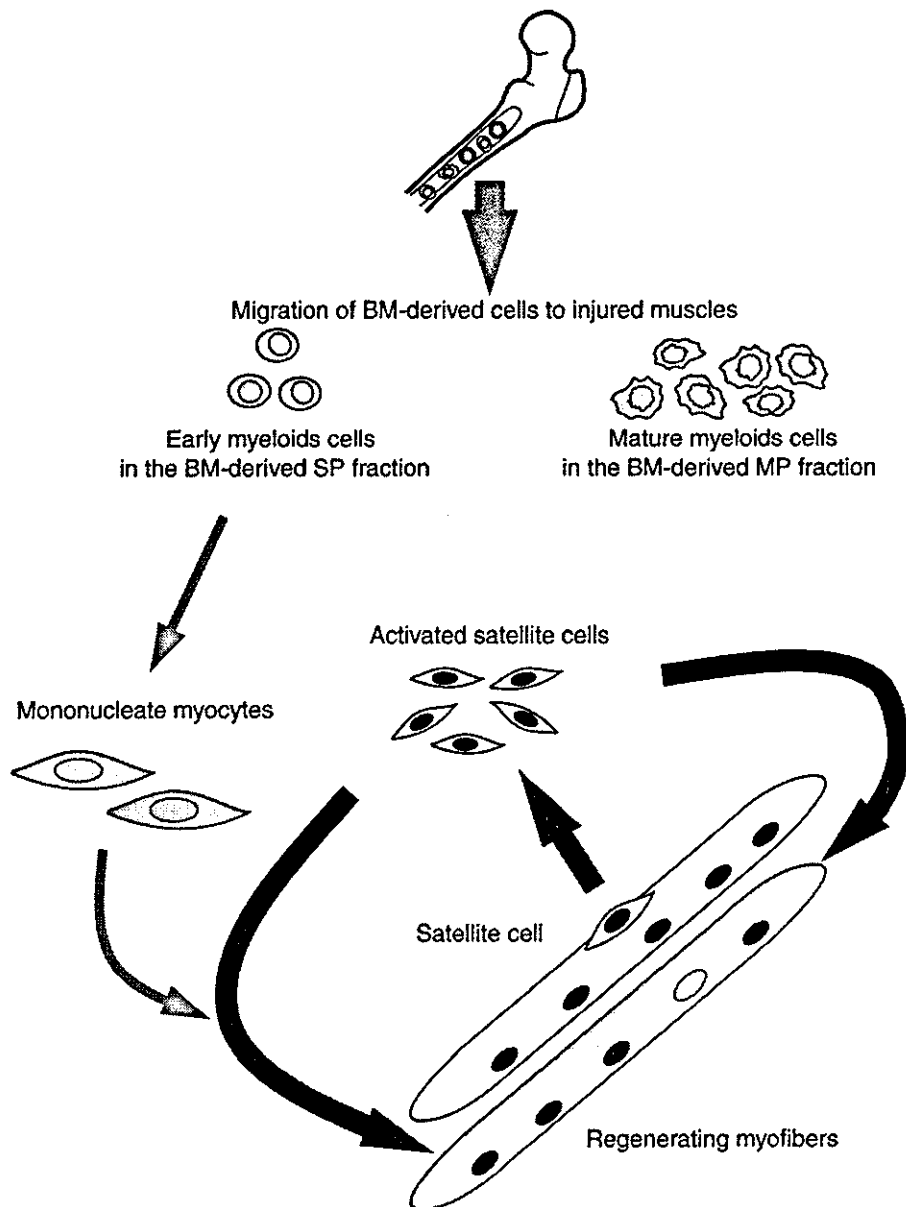


Fig. 5. Model for BM-derived SP cell-mediated muscle regeneration. In response to injury, BM-derived cells are mobilized to injured muscles (gray arrows). Neither HSCs nor hematopoietic progenitors migrate to injured muscles. Migrated BM-derived SP cells in regenerating muscles contain early myeloid cells that enrich cells with myogenic differentiation. These early myeloid cells advance toward mature multinucleated myotubes/myofibers via a myogenic differentiation program before fusion with myogenic cells (blue arrows). On the other hand, some mature macrophages might be stochastically incorporated into myotubes/myofibers at low efficiency.

BM-derived SP cells contain early myeloid cells that enrich cells capable of myogenic differentiation. In regenerating muscles, they advance toward mononucleated myocytes before fusion with pre-existing myogenic cells. They probably require cell-to-cell contact with myogenic cells for skeletal muscle differentiation. The molecular mechanism by which skeletal muscle cells are induced to fuse with BM-derived SP cells and to differentiate BM-derived SP cells into myogenic cells remains to be determined.

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# Laminin $\alpha$ 1 chain reduces muscular dystrophy in laminin $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient mice

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Laminin (LN)  $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency in humans and mice leads to severe forms of congenital muscular dystrophy (CMD). Here, we investigated whether LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in mice can compensate for the absence of LN $\alpha$ 2 chain and prevent the development of muscular dystrophy. We generated mice expressing a LN $\alpha$ 1 chain transgene in skeletal muscle of LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient mice. LN $\alpha$ 1 is not normally expressed in muscle, but the transgenically produced LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was incorporated into muscle basement membranes, and normalized the compensatory changes of expression of certain other laminin chains ( $\alpha$ 4,  $\beta$ 2). In 4-month-old mice, LN $\alpha$ 1 chain could fully prevent the development of muscular dystrophy in several muscles, and partially in others. The LN $\alpha$ 1 chain transgene not only reversed the appearance of histopathological features of the disease to a remarkable degree, but also greatly improved health and longevity of the mice. Correction of LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency by LN $\alpha$ 1 chain may serve as a paradigm for gene therapy of CMD in patients.

## INTRODUCTION

Laminins (LN), major components of basement membranes, are heterotrimers of  $\alpha$ -,  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ -chains. The five  $\alpha$ -, three  $\beta$ - and three  $\gamma$ -chains give rise to at least 15 different protein isoforms that differ in their tissue distribution (1,2). Mutations in the *LAMA2* gene encoding the LN $\alpha$ 2 chain—the main  $\alpha$  chain in skeletal muscle—cause congenital muscular dystrophy (CMD) with LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency. In European populations this accounts for about 50% of the classical CMDs (3). This disorder shows autosomal recessive inheritance and is characterized by neonatal onset of muscle weakness, hypotonia, early muscle fiber degeneration and white matter abnormalities (4–6).

Two knock-out mouse models ( $dy^w/dy^w$ ,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$ ) and three spontaneous mutant mouse strains ( $dy/dy$ ,  $dy^{2J}/dy^{2J}$ ,  $dy^{Pas}/dy^{Pas}$ ) representing animal models for CMD with LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency have been reported (7–12). The  $dy^w/dy^w$  mice still express small amounts of a truncated LN $\alpha$ 2 chain, whereas the  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice are completely deficient in LN $\alpha$ 2 chain. Both strains develop early and severe clinical signs of muscular dystrophy (7–9). In addition, LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency in mice results in defects in multiple

tissues including peripheral and central nervous systems (7,8,13–15).

The development of therapies for muscular dystrophy involves *in vivo* strategies aiming to introduce a normal copy of the defective gene (16). Indeed, it has been demonstrated that a human LN $\alpha$ 2 chain transgene can rescue the dystrophic symptoms in the  $dy^w/dy^w$  mouse (8). However, one major obstacle of gene transfer is the tendency of the immune system to reject novel antigens (16). Instead, delivery of homologous genes already expressed at other sites in the body could eradicate these concerns. Utrophin can compensate for dystrophin deficiency and prevent the development of muscular dystrophy in a mouse model for Duchenne muscular dystrophy (17). Yet, there is no evidence that homologous gene therapy would work in CMD.

In several mouse models for LN deficiency other LN chains are upregulated. The LN $\alpha$ 4 chain is upregulated in the LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient muscle, but this upregulation is inadequate to prevent muscular dystrophy (18). Similarly, the upregulation of LN $\beta$ 1 chain in the glomerular basement membrane of LN $\beta$ 2 chain deficient kidneys does not prevent nephrosis (19). In addition, some basement membranes in LN $\alpha$ 5 chain deficient mice are ultrastructurally defective despite ectopic

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deposition of other  $\alpha$ -chains (20). Thus, whether LN chains functionally can compensate for each other *in vivo* remains to be determined.

Here, we analyzed whether LN $\alpha$ 1 chain, which is mainly expressed in epithelial cells (21,22), could compensate for LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficiency and rescue the dystrophic symptoms in LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was chosen as a therapeutic protein, because this  $\alpha$ -chain is structurally most similar to LN $\alpha$ 2 chain (1,23). Furthermore, LN-1, which contains the  $\alpha$ 1-chain, can significantly promote myogenesis *in vitro* (24), perhaps by binding to integrins (25) or dystroglycan (26). Yet, there are also notable differences between the LN $\alpha$ 1 and LN $\alpha$ 2 chains. The  $\alpha$ 2-chain binds much more efficiently to dystroglycan than the  $\alpha$ 1-chain (26). Myoblast spreading is significantly faster on  $\alpha$ 2LNs than on  $\alpha$ 1LNs (27), and  $\alpha$ 2LNs have been reported to be specifically required for myotube stability and survival *in vitro* (28). Therefore, it was by no means clear from previous studies that LN $\alpha$ 1 chain would compensate for lack of  $\alpha$ 2-chain in muscles *in vivo*.

We demonstrate that expression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain transgene in skeletal muscles of  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice reduces the dystrophy symptoms in these animals as evaluated by histology of muscle, weight gain and longevity of the animals. Our data also illustrate for the first time that LN $\alpha$  chains can functionally compensate for each other *in vivo*.

## RESULTS

### Generation and characterization of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain transgenic mice

LN $\alpha$ 1 chain is mainly limited to some epithelial basement membranes in adult mice (21). To achieve broad expression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain as a transgene, the cDNA for mouse LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was inserted into a vector driven by the cytomegalovirus (CMV) enhancer and the chicken  $\beta$ -actin promoter, followed by the rabbit  $\beta$ -globin polyadenylation signal (29) (Fig. 1A). Fifty-one mice were born from microinjected fertilized eggs. Thirteen of the mice carried the transgene as detected by Southern blot analyses (data not shown). Our primary goal was to study the effects of the LN $\alpha$ 1 transgene in LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient muscle. Thus, we selected mice expressing LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in skeletal muscle. Five of the 13 mice showed immunofluorescence staining of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain to a varying degree in skeletal muscles. Skeletal muscles from line No. 12 contained high expression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain, and were selected for further analysis and for production of  $dy^{3K}$  mice lacking LN $\alpha$ 2 chain but expressing LN $\alpha$ 1 chain. The data presented were obtained with mice derived from line No. 12. Reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) reactions yielded a 532 bp amplicon corresponding to a LN $\alpha$ 1 chain product in transgenic mice (Fig. 1B). No LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was detected in skeletal muscle of wild-type mice (Fig. 1C–E) (30). In contrast, immunofluorescence staining demonstrated the presence of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in basement membranes of skeletal and cardiac muscle in line No. 12 (Fig. 1C). Also, blood vessels within muscle, which normally do not express LN $\alpha$ 1 chain (21), were positively stained for LN $\alpha$ 1 chain (Fig. 1C). In skeletal muscle, LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was also detected

in the neuromuscular and myotendinous junctions (Fig. 1D and E). LN $\alpha$ 1 chain expression was noted in other organs (e.g. salivary gland, pancreas and thymus) where it is normally not expressed (data not shown). However, LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was not present in the sciatic nerve of line No. 12 (Fig. 1C). Importantly, overexpression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in mice revealed no discernible pathological phenotypes.

We next produced mice heterozygous for the transgene and homozygous for the  $dy^{3K}$  mutation, hereafter called  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG. The LN $\alpha$ 1 transgene was expressed in these mice in the same manner as the transgenic line No. 12 (Fig. 3).

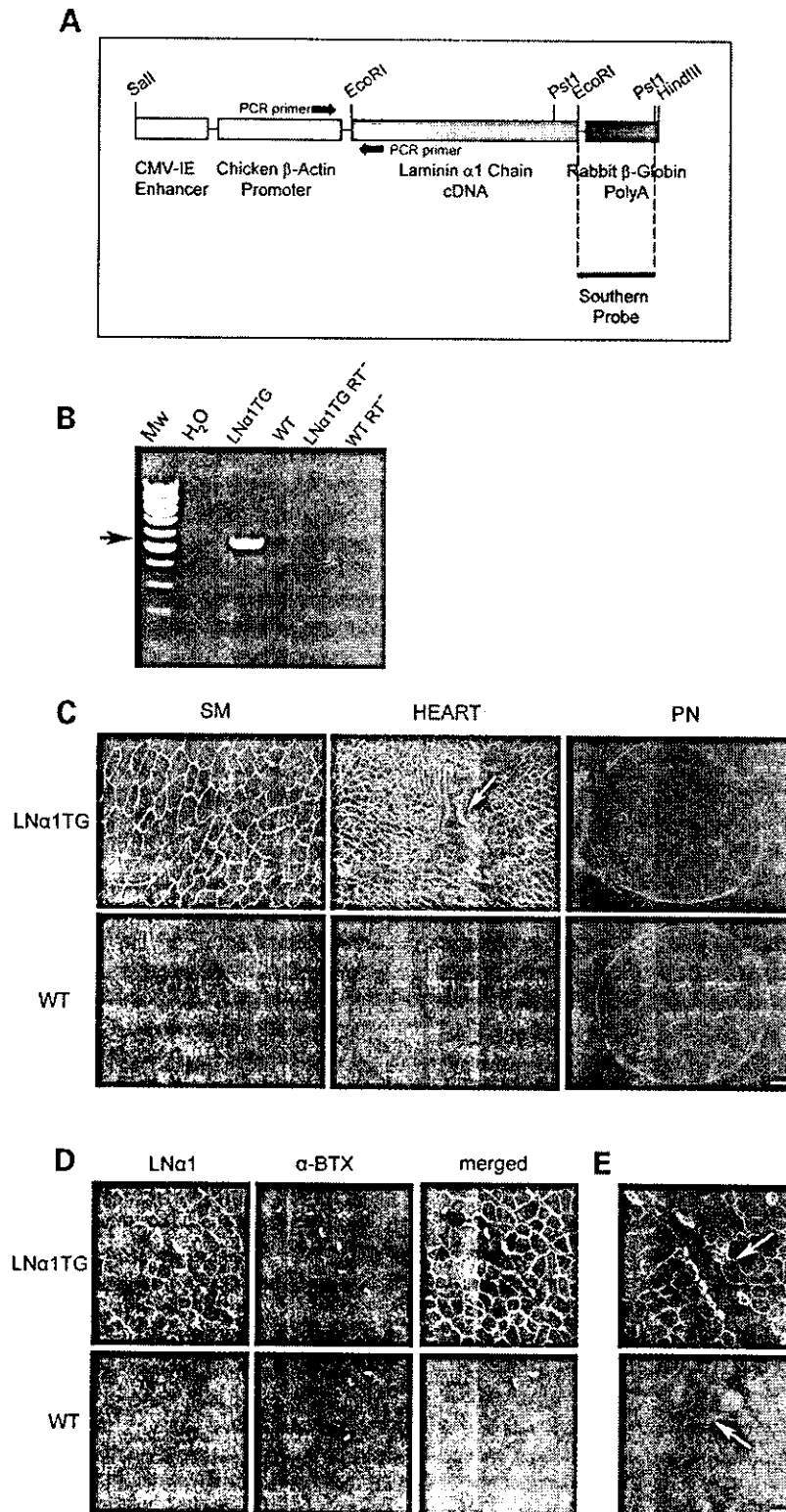
### $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$ mice with LN $\alpha$ 1 transgene are healthy and long-lived

$dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice are characterized by growth retardation and severe muscular dystrophy symptoms (7). As shown in Figure 2A and B, the overall health of  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice was significantly improved compared with  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. First,  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice are bigger than  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. At 2 weeks of age,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice can be identified owing to their growth retardation, whereas  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice appeared outwardly normal (data not shown). Weight gain for  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice was greatly delayed in 5-week-old mice, whereas the weight gain for  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice was significantly increased compared with  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice (Fig. 2C). In addition, the average body weight of 10-week-old  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice was close to that of wild-type mice (Fig. 2D). Second,  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice live longer. On an average,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice died at the age of 4–5 weeks (Fig. 2E). Besides the death of a single  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mouse,  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice survived beyond 10 weeks (Fig. 2E). Currently, our oldest mouse is 11 months old.

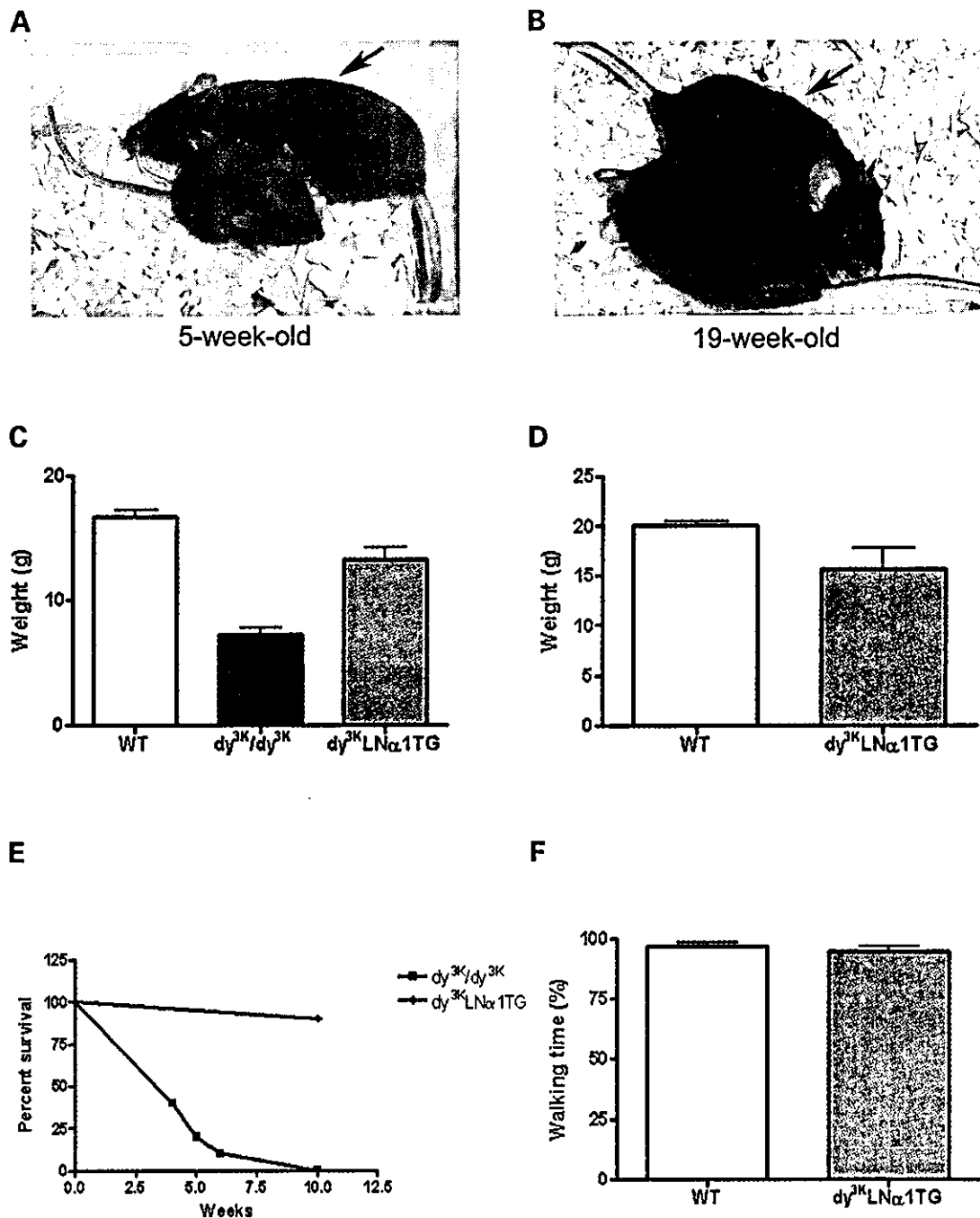
Previous studies have shown that 4-week-old LN $\alpha$ 2 chain deficient mice display a significantly reduced locomotory activity (31). Here, we analyzed the activity of older  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice (10–17-week-old). Exploratory locomotion studies revealed that  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice appeared as active as wild-type mice (Fig. 2F). An additional indication for the improved health is that both male and female  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice are able to produce offspring (data not shown).  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice die before reaching reproductive age, however,  $dy/dy$  mice survive longer but do not reproduce (32) (www.jax.org).

### Localization of basement membrane components in muscles of $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice

As expected, LN $\alpha$ 2 chain was completely absent in  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice (Fig. 3). In wild-type mice, LN $\alpha$ 4 and LN $\alpha$ 5 chains were mainly expressed in blood vessels. In agreement with previous studies, the expression of the LN $\alpha$ 4 chain was strongly increased at the muscle basement membrane area in  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice, whereas the LN $\alpha$ 5 chain was weakly upregulated (18,31) (Fig. 3). In  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG mice, the muscle basement membrane expression of LN $\alpha$ 4 chain was down-regulated to some extent, whereas the expression of LN $\alpha$ 5 chain remained unchanged. Cohn *et al.* (33) have previously reported a reduction of LN $\beta$ 2 staining in skeletal muscle membranes of CMD patients with LN $\alpha$ 2 deficiency.



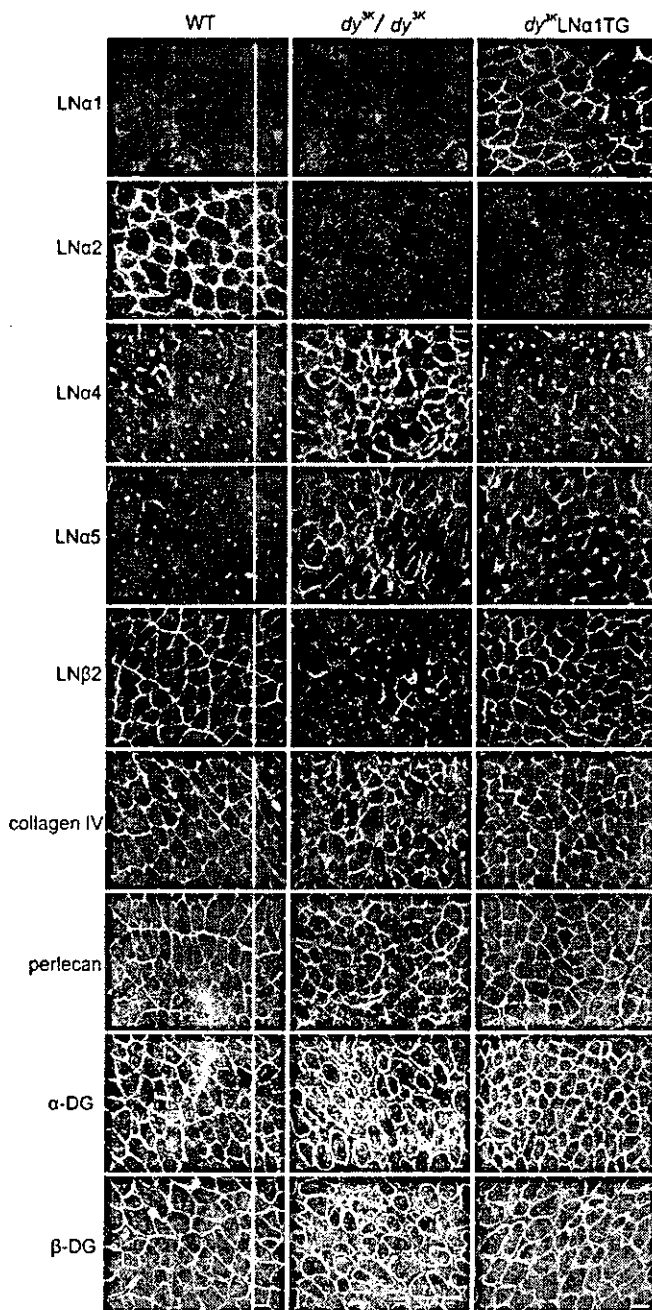
**Figure 1.** Overexpression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in transgenic mice. (A) cDNA encoding LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was subcloned into the pCAGGS expression vector. Restriction sites used to engineer the construct are shown. (B) PCR amplification of reverse transcribed mRNA from transgenic (LN $\alpha$ 1TG) and wild-type (WT) skeletal muscle. (C) Expression of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in transgenic mice from the No. 12 line. LN $\alpha$ 1 chain was expressed in the skeletal muscle (SM) (tibialis anterior) and the heart, but not in the peripheral nerve (PN) of transgenic mice or in the corresponding wild-type tissues. The arrow denotes a LN $\alpha$ 1 chain positively stained blood vessel. (D) Localization of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain in neuromuscular junction. Sections from skeletal muscle containing neuromuscular junctions of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain transgenic and wild-type mice were doubly stained with antibodies against LN $\alpha$ 1 chain (red) and fluorescein  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin ( $\alpha$ -BTX, green). (E) Localization of LN $\alpha$ 1 chain at the myotendinous junction (arrows). Bar, 50  $\mu$ m.



**Figure 2.** Overall phenotype of LNα2 chain deficient animals expressing the LNα1 chain transgene. (A) The 5-week-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice (arrow) are larger than the emaciated  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. (B) The 5-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice (arrow) remain alert and lively with good muscle tone. A  $dy^{3K/+}LN\alpha1TG$  littermate is shown for comparison. (C) Whole body weights of 5-week-old female wild-type,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice. Each bar represents the mean  $\pm$  SEM of six (WT), four ( $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$ ) and five ( $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$ ) mice. Note that  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice weigh significantly more than  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice ( $P < 0.001$ ). (D) Whole body weights of 10-week-old female wild-type and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice. Each bar represents the mean  $\pm$  SEM of six (WT) and five ( $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$ ) mice ( $P > 0.05$ ). (E) Survival curves of  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  (n = 10) and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice (n = 10). One death occurred in the group of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice (at the age of 10 weeks), whereas most of the  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice died between 4 and 5 weeks. (F) Exploratory locomotion of 10–17-week-old female mice in an open field test. Each value represents the mean  $\pm$  SEM of 4 mice.

Similarly, we noted a moderate reduction of LNβ2 chain in  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. Interestingly, the expression of LNβ2 chain in the skeletal muscle membrane of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice was also normalized to expression levels seen in wild-type mice

(Fig. 3). Other basement membrane components including type IV collagen and perlecan were similarly expressed in wild-type,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  and in  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha1TG$  mice (Fig. 3). Dys-troglycan (composed of α- and β-subunits) is a major receptor



**Figure 3.** Immunostaining of LNs, perlecan, collagen IV and dystroglycan. Cross-sections of skeletal muscles (tibialis anterior) from 2-week-old wild-type,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice were stained with antibodies against  $LN\alpha 1$ ,  $LN\alpha 2$ ,  $LN\alpha 4$ ,  $LN\alpha 5$  and  $LN\beta 2$  chains; perlecan; collagen IV;  $\alpha$ -dystroglycan and  $\beta$ -dystroglycan. Bar, 50  $\mu m$ .

for several LNs (26,34). It was recently suggested on the basis of immunofluorescence that the amount of  $\alpha$ -dystroglycan is decreased, whereas the expression of  $\beta$ -dystroglycan is increased in  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice compared with controls (31). Yet, using similar assays but different antibodies, we found no differences in the expression patterns of  $\alpha$ - or  $\beta$ -dystroglycan between normal mice and  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  or  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice (Fig. 3).

### **$LN\alpha 1$ transgene reduces dystrophic pathology of skeletal muscles**

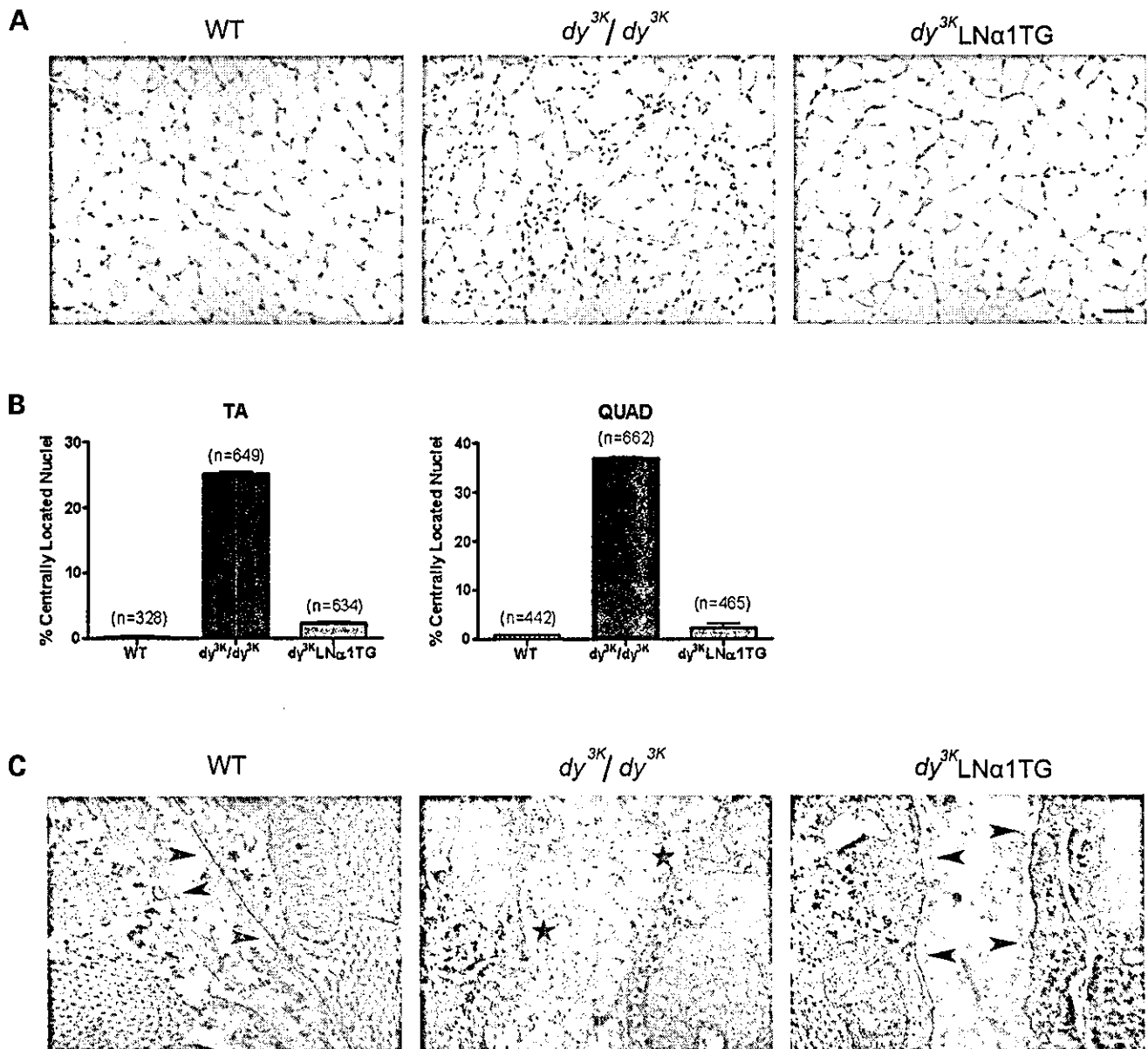
We next examined the morphology of  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  skeletal muscle. Histological features of dystrophic muscle in 2-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice included large groups of centrally nucleated small-caliber muscle fibers revealing the process of active regeneration (7). In contrast, muscles from 2-week-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice had a near normal morphology with significantly fewer central nuclei (Fig. 4A and B). Hence,  $LN\alpha 1$  chain expression protected myofibers from degeneration. In 2-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice there was a nearly complete absence of basement membrane around muscle fibers as revealed by electron microscopy studies (Fig. 4C) (7). The  $LN\alpha 1$  chain transgene restored the basement membrane in  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice (Fig. 4C).

To investigate whether the  $LN\alpha 1$  chain also prevented pathological changes in older mice we analyzed skeletal muscles (quadriceps femoris, gluteus maximus, tibialis anterior, triceps brachii and diaphragm) from 4-month-old mice. No  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice survive till that age. Skeletal muscles of 3–4-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice display signs of a severe dystrophy with pronounced fibrosis characteristic of  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient CMD (Fig. 5) (7). In addition,  $dy/dy$  mice show extensive fibrosis in various muscles (35). Fibrous tissue is believed to replace muscle when the myogenic satellite cell pool becomes exhausted and consequently fail to maintain muscle regeneration (36). Noticeably, no pathological fibrous tissue was detected in skeletal muscles of 4-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice (Fig. 5), whereas pronounced fibrosis was detected in all muscles of 3.5-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice (Fig. 5). In quadriceps femoris of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice most fibers were of polygonal shape and normal size, and very few fibers had internally placed nuclei (Fig. 5). A very mild myopathy was detected in gluteus maximus of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice, with occasional areas of fibers with centrally located nuclei (Fig. 5). In tibialis anterior and triceps brachii of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice we noted larger areas with centrally located nuclei but no fibrosis (Fig. 5). In contrast, diaphragm of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice had a near normal morphology with no fibrosis, regular myofibre size and virtually no centralized nuclei, whereas severe fibrosis was detected in diaphragm of  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice (Fig. 5).

In mature  $dy/dy$  muscle, the expression of tenascin-C is upregulated and extended to the interstitium between muscle fibers, especially within focal lesions, whereas in control muscle, tenascin-C expression is restricted to the myotendinous junction (37). In sharp contrast to this, very little tenascin-C expression was noted in skeletal muscles of  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice (Fig. 6 and data not shown).

$LN\alpha 2$  chain deficiency also results in dysmyelination of peripheral nerve (38–40), a phenotype that was not corrected in  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice, as the  $LN\alpha 1$  chain was not expressed in peripheral nerve (Fig. 1C). Injury to peripheral nerve causes neurogenic atrophy of muscle fibers. Accordingly, we noted occasional shrunken angular muscle fibers indicating neurogenic lesions in several muscles of 4-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice (Fig. 7).





**Figure 4.** Analyses of skeletal muscles from different mice. (A) H&E staining of tibialis anterior muscles of 2-week-old wild-type,  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  and  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice. Dystrophic changes with large groups of centrally nucleated small-caliber muscle fibers were detected in  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice. Muscle degeneration was prevented in  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice. Bar, 50  $\mu$ m. (B) Quantification of central nucleation in tibialis anterior (TA) and quadriceps femoris (QUAD) muscles from 2-week-old mice. The number of fibers examined for each sample is given in parenthesis. (C) Transmission electron microscopy of tibialis anterior muscle. The basement membrane, clearly present along the sarcolemma in wild-type mouse, was almost absent in muscle fibers of 2-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice (indicated by asterisks). The basement membrane (arrows) was restored in  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice. Bar, 300 nm.

## DISCUSSION

We report that  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient mice expressing a  $LN\alpha 1$  chain transgene in skeletal muscle display a prolonged life, better health and improved muscle morphology. The greatly improved health of the  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient mice induced by the transgene was remarkable for several reasons. First, although some classical studies showed that the  $LN\alpha 1$  chain can promote short-term myogenesis *in vitro* (24,41),  $\alpha 2$

chain LNs are much better than  $\alpha 1$  chain LNs as *in vitro* stimulators of myoblast spreading (27) and myotube stability and survival (28). Second, detailed studies of LN receptors have revealed that  $LN\alpha 1$  chain binds to dystroglycan with about 10-fold lower affinity than  $LN\alpha 2$  chain or agrin (26), and dystroglycan is an essential link between the extracellular matrix and the cytoskeleton in muscle (42). Third, compensatory upregulation of other LN chains in mouse knock-out models of other LN chains appears to be of no apparent help (1).

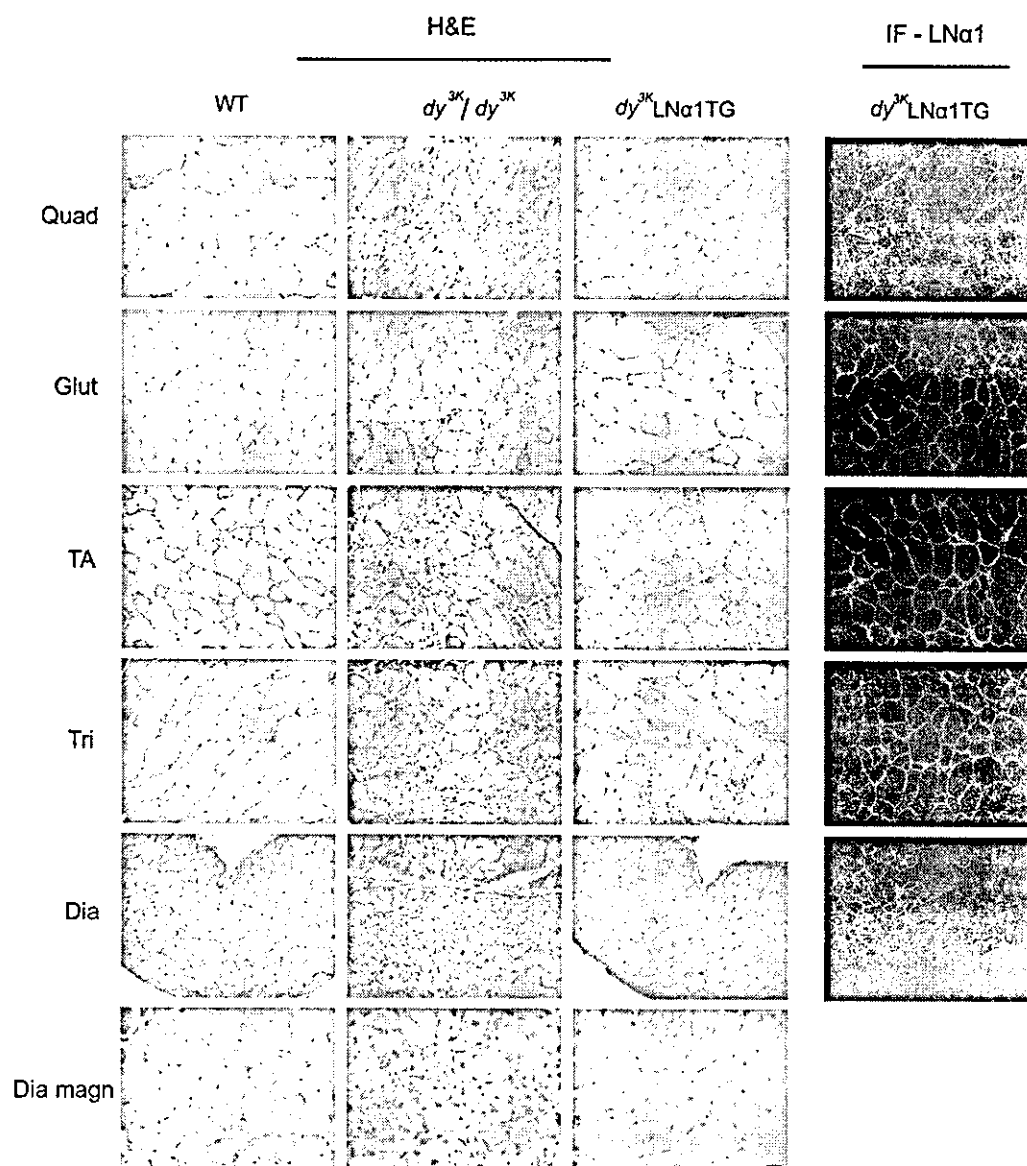


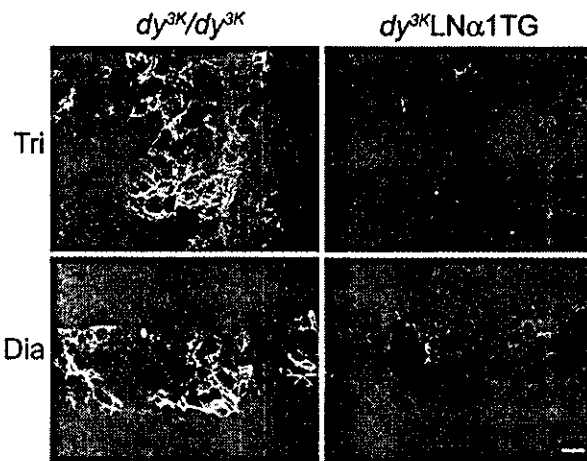
Figure 5. H&E staining of various muscles from 4-month-old wild-type mice, 3.5-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice and 4-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice. Cryosections of quadriceps femoris (Quad), gluteus maximus (Glut), tibialis anterior (TA), triceps brachii (Tri) and diaphragm (Dia) were stained with H&E and with antibodies against LNα1 chain (staining in red in the last column). Dia magn. represents higher magnification of diaphragm. Bar, 50 μm.

Recently, it was reported that an agrin minigene similarly can rescue dystrophic symptoms in the  $dy^w/dy^w$  mouse model of CMD. In these experiments, LNα5 chain expression was significantly enhanced, suggesting an indirect mechanism of rescue (31). No enhanced expression of LNα5 chain was seen in the present study. Hence, we consider it likely that the neo-expression of LNα1 in muscles is the major cause of the rescue, although we cannot exclude that expression in other tissues also was beneficial.

Our results indicate that early gene transfer of LNα1 chain into skeletal muscles constitute promising therapeutic strategies for LNα2 chain deficient CMD. This could be achieved by introducing LNα1 chain into myofibers by the usage of viral vectors. Because the LNα1 chain cDNA is fairly large (~9 kb), gutted adenoviral vectors, which have a cloning capacity > 30 kb,

would be the viral vector of choice (43). Investigations aiming at up-regulating endogenous LNα1 chain in skeletal muscle are also merited. For example, constitutively active Akt-1 induces transcription and synthesis of LNα1 chain in embryonic stem cells (44). However, Akt controls numerous transcription factors and is considered to be a hot drug target for the treatment of cancer, diabetes and stroke (45). Thus, it is unlikely to be specific for the treatment of CMD. Interestingly, the identification of an upstream enhancer in the mouse LNα1 chain was recently reported (46). This enhancer activates LNα1 chain expression in parietal endoderm cells, and activating this enhancer in muscle cells could be a possible strategy in the treatment of LNα2 chain deficient CMD.

Peripheral nerve is also involved in LNα2 chain deficient CMD (6,38–40). In addition,  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice flexed



**Figure 6.** Immunostaining of tenascin-C. Cross-sections of triceps brachii (Tri) and diaphragm (Dia) from 4-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice and 3.5-week-old  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice were stained with antibodies against tenascin-C. Bar, 50  $\mu m$ .

their hind legs to the trunk when lifted by the tail, an indication of a neurological problem. They also displayed hind leg paralysis, but to a varying degree (data not shown). In addition, we detected angular atrophic muscle fibers (indicating neurogenic lesions) in rescued muscles although they appeared rarely. As the  $LN\alpha 1$  chain was not expressed in peripheral nerves of  $LN\alpha 1$  chain transgenic mice, the nerve defect was not expected to be rescued. In this context, it is noteworthy that several attempts to express a  $LN\alpha 2$  transgene in peripheral nerve have failed (9). Interestingly, loss of  $LN\alpha 2$  chain in sciatic nerve of  $dy^{2J}/dy^{2J}$  mice was recently found to be accompanied by variable expression of  $LN\alpha 1$  chain (47). Thus, it remains possible that overexpression of  $LN\alpha 1$  chain can compensate for  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficiency also in peripheral nerves.

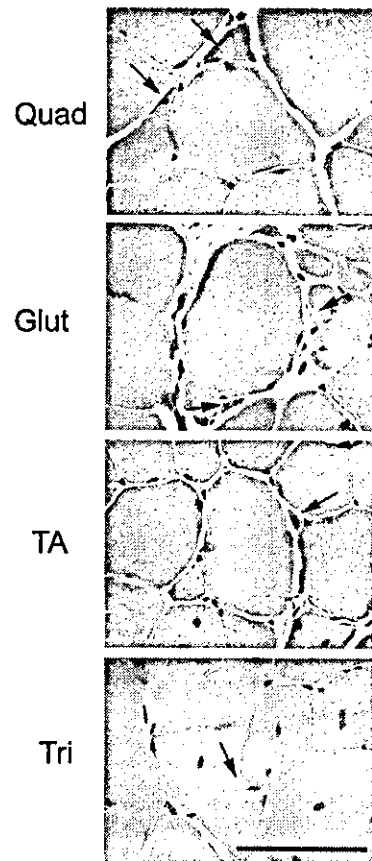
Apart for muscular dystrophy and peripheral neuropathy,  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient mice also display central nervous system myelination defects, hearing loss and abnormal thymocyte and odontoblast development (13–15,48). It will now be interesting to investigate whether  $LN\alpha 1$  chain can compensate for the absence of  $LN\alpha 2$  chain in central nervous system, inner ear, thymus and tooth.

In conclusion, we have established that  $LN\alpha 1$  chain significantly reduces muscular dystrophy in  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient mice. Hence, our data suggest that  $LN\alpha 1$  chain should be considered in the design of therapies to treat  $LN\alpha 2$  chain deficient CMD. We also provide the first evidence that  $LN\alpha$  chains functionally can compensate for each other *in vivo*.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Transgenic construct

Full-length mouse  $LN\alpha 1$  cDNA was generously provided by Dr P. Yurchenco (Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Piscataway, NJ, USA) (49). *Eco*RI adaptors (Amersham-Pharmacia) were ligated to the ends of  $LN\alpha 1$  chain



**Figure 7.** H&E staining of muscles from 4-month-old  $dy^{3K}LN\alpha 1TG$  mice reveals occasional neurogenic lesions. Cryosections of quadriceps femoris (Quad), gluteus maximus (Glut), tibialis anterior (TA) and triceps brachii (Tri) were stained with H&E. Arrows denote angular atrophic muscle fibers. Bar, 50  $\mu m$ .

cDNA, which was subsequently inserted to the *Eco*RI site of the expression vector pCAGGS containing a CMV enhancer and chicken  $\beta$ -actin promoter (generously provided by Dr J. Miyazaki, Osaka University Medical School, Osaka, Japan) (29). A 12 kb transgenic vector was released with *Sal*I and *Hind*III and used for one-cell embryo microinjection.

### Production of $LN\alpha 1$ chain transgenic mice on wild-type background

Transgenic mice were generated by microinjections of transgene DNA into the pronucleus of fertilized single-cell CBAx57BL/6 embryos (Karolinska Center of Transgene Technologies, Stockholm, Sweden).  $LN\alpha 1$  transgenic mice were identified by Southern blot analysis using genomic DNA prepared from mouse tails and the probe indicated in Figure 1A.  $LN\alpha 1$  positive founder transgenic mice were maintained in animal facilities according to animal care guidelines. The use of animals complied with national guidelines, and permission was given by the regional ethical board.

### Production of transgenic mice on $dy^{3K}$ background

Heterozygous LN $\alpha$ 1 transgenic mice were bred to heterozygous  $dy^{3K}/+$  mice (7), followed by sib breeding to generate mice heterozygous for the transgene and homozygous for  $dy^{3K}$ .

### Genotyping

PCR on tail DNA was performed with LN $\alpha$ 1 cDNA primer 5'-GGCATTGGGCGTGTGCAACAG-3' and chicken  $\beta$ -actin primer 5'-GGTTCGGCTTCTGGCGTGTGA-3', amplifying a 400 bp product for LN $\alpha$ 1 chain positive transgenic mice.  $Dy^{3K}$  PCR was performed with primers 5'-CTTTCAGATTGCATTGCAAGC-3' and 5'-CAATGCAGCTTTTGTATCTTAC-3', which anneal to *Lama2* intron sequences flanking an exon (encoding a part of domain VI of LN $\alpha$ 2 chain) that is disrupted by the insertion of a neo cassette in  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice (7). The PCR product is 1 kb for wild-type mice; 1 and 2.5 kb for heterozygous  $dy^{3K}/+$  mice and 2.5 kb for homozygous  $dy^{3K}/dy^{3K}$  mice.

### RT-PCR

Total RNA from skeletal muscle was isolated using TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen) according to manufacturer specifications. First strand cDNA synthesis from total RNA was performed using Superscript<sup>TM</sup> II RT (Invitrogen). PCR was performed using primers directed against LN $\alpha$ 1 chain: 5'-ATATCACA CGCAATCGATGG-3' and 5'-AGTAATAACGTCTTGTG-3'.

### Exploratory locomotion

Exploratory locomotion was examined in an open field test. In each experiment a mouse was placed into a new cage and allowed to explore the cage for 5 min. The time that the mouse spent moving around was measured manually. For all experiments, each  $dy^{3K}$ LN $\alpha$ 1TG animal ( $n = 4$ ) was compared with a wild-type ( $n = 4$ ) sibling of the same sex from the same litter.

### Immunofluorescence

Tissues were immersed in Tissue Tek and frozen in liquid nitrogen. Cryosections (7  $\mu$ m) were either stained with hematoxylin and eosin (H&E) or analyzed by immunofluorescence. Primary antibodies were: anti-LN $\alpha$ 1 chain mAb200 (50), anti tenascin-C MTn15 (50), anti-LN $\alpha$ 2 chain 4H8-2 (Alexis Biochemicals), anti-LN $\alpha$ 4 chain (generously provided by Dr R. Timpl), anti-LN $\alpha$ 5 chain (generously provided by Dr R. Timpl), anti-LN $\beta$ 2 chain (generously provided by Dr T. Sasaki) (51), anti-collagen type IV (Chemicon), anti-perlecan (generously provided by Dr R. Timpl), anti- $\alpha$ -dystroglycan IIH6C4 (Upstate Biotechnology). A rabbit polyclonal antibody was generated against the C-terminal 15 amino acids (KNMTPYRSP-PYVPPC) of  $\beta$ -dystroglycan and affinity purified. For staining of NMJs, samples were simultaneously incubated with FITC-conjugated  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin (Molecular Probes). Images of sections analyzed by fluorescence microscopy (Zeiss Axioplan) were captured using an ORCA 1394 ER digital camera with

Openlab 3 software. Images were prepared for publication using Adobe Photoshop software.

### Transmission electron microscopy

Tibialis anterior muscles were fixed for 2 h with 2.5% glutaraldehyde, rinsed in Sørensen's phosphate buffer, post-fixed in 1% OsO<sub>4</sub> and then embedded in Epon. Ultra-thin sections were stained with uranyl acetate and lead citrate. Specimens were examined by transmission electron microscopy (Philips CM 10).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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