



## Full Length Article

# Prediction of binding characteristics between von Willebrand factor and platelet glycoprotein Iba with various mutations by molecular dynamic simulation<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Binding of platelet glycoprotein (GP)Iba with von-Willebrand factor (VWF) exclusively mediates the initial platelet adhesion to injured vessel wall. To understand the mechanism of biomedical functions, we calculated the dynamic fluctuating three-dimensional (3D) structures and dissociation energy for GPIba with various single amino-acid substitution at G233, which location is known to cause significant changes in platelet adhesive characteristics.

**Material and methods:** Molecular dynamics (MD) simulation was utilized to calculate 3D structures and Potential of Mean Force (PMF) for wild-type VWF bound with wild-type, G233A (equal function), G233V (gain of function), and G233D (loss of function) GPIba. Simulation was done on water-soluble condition with time-step of  $2 \times 10^{-15}$  s using NANOScale Molecular Dynamics (NAMD) with Chemistry at HARvard Molecular Mechanics (CHARMM) force field. Initial structure for each mutant was obtained by inducing single amino-acid substitution to the stable water-soluble binding structure of wild-type.

**Results:** The most stable structures of wild-type VWF bound to GPIba in wild-type or any mutant did not differ. However, bond dissociation energy defined as difference of PMF between most stable structure and the structure at 65 Å mass center distances in G233D was 4.32 kcal/mol (19.5%) lower than that of wild-type. Approximately, 2.07 kcal/mol energy was required to dissociate VWF from GPIba with G233V at mass center distance from 48 to 52 Å, which may explain the apparent “gain of function” in G233V.

**Conclusion:** The mechanism of substantially different biochemical characteristics of GPIba with mutations in G233 location was predicted from physical movement of atoms constructing these proteins.

## 1. Introduction

Platelets play crucial roles for hemostasis, thrombosis, and local regulation of vessel function [1–4]. The initial interaction of platelet with vessel wall is mediated exclusively by platelet glycoprotein (GP) Iba binding with von Willebrand factor (VWF) [5]. This binding is known not only to initiate platelet adhesion but also activates

intercellular signaling eventually leading to platelet activation [6]. Thus, the clarification of the biochemical characteristics of this binding process is important for understanding the mechanism of the initiation of platelet cell interaction with vessel wall and subsequent clot formation. Currently available antiplatelet agents such as aspirin/P2Y<sub>12</sub> inhibitor target platelet activation but do not influence initial platelet adhesion at site of endothelial injury caused by atheroma rupture. Thus,

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interactions of GPIIb $\alpha$  with VWF are still an important potential target for new generation antiplatelet agents.

Previous biological experiments revealed the importance of A1 domain of VWF [7–9] and N-terminus domain of GPIIb $\alpha$  [10–12] for their bindings. The binding of VWF and GPIIb $\alpha$  become stable only under specific conditions such as in the presence of ristocetin [13–17], botrocetin [16,18], under de-natured conditions [19], with specific single amino acid mutation either in VWF [20,21] or GPIIb $\alpha$  [22], and so on. It is of note that the interaction of GPIIb $\alpha$  and VWF become apparent under blood flow conditions [23]. Some investigators suggest the modifying effect of shear force for the three-dimensional (3D) conformations in either VWF [24] or GPIIb $\alpha$  [25], while others show that the stable binding of VWF to platelet could be seen only in the presence of activated GPIIb/IIIa [26]. The precise understanding of the structure mediated binding function of platelet GPIIb $\alpha$  and VWF is crucial to dissect the process of platelet interaction with vessel wall.

Single amino-acid mutations in GPIIb $\alpha$  were shown to lead to clinical phenotype, such as bleeding, by changing the adhesion characteristics of platelets [27–30]. Of them, the amino-acid mutation in 233 location of GPIIb $\alpha$  has been studied thoroughly in *in-vitro* analysis and is known to show different binding characteristics with different amino-acid even in the same location: G233A (equal function), G233V (gain of function), and G233D (loss of function) [13]. Both loss of function and gain of function for GPIIb $\alpha$  binding to VWF, are known to cause bleeding. The loss of function reduces the interaction of platelet with VWF, which is necessary to initiate clot formation while the gain of function causes spontaneous binding of VWF to platelet through GPIIb $\alpha$  which results in reduced plasma concentration of VWF. The binding of GPIIb $\alpha$  with VWF is a protein-protein interaction. Studying the 3D structural bases for the change in binding characteristics for these mutations may give us a clue about the process of structure mediated binding function of these proteins.

X-ray crystallography is a strong tool to understand the 3D structures and functions of various proteins including GPIIb $\alpha$  and VWF. Indeed, the stable binding structures of N-terminus domain of GPIIb $\alpha$  bound with VWF both in wild-type and in various mutants were published previously [31–33]. However, dynamic structural fluctuations of GPIIb $\alpha$  bound with VWF in the presence of water molecules were hard to be predicted by crystallographic analysis. Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy is applicable to predict water soluble structure of VWF [34], but both technologies are too expensive to apply for large numbers of mutations. Therefore, the structural details are still to be elucidated.

Recently progressed high performance computing technology allows us to predict dynamic fluctuations of protein structures calculated from the physical movement of atoms [35]. The most important breakthrough enabling this prediction is the combination of Newton's mechanics and quantum mechanics using force fields. Karplus M, et al. established the force field implementing simplified quantum mechanics which can be integrated in Newton's mechanics calculation, namely Chemistry at HARvard Molecular Mechanics (CHARMM) [36]. Dynamic three-dimensional structural fluctuation and dissociation force of wild-type GPIIb $\alpha$  bound with wild-type VWF was predicted with the use of CHARMM-22 force field previously [37]. The validity of prediction of this molecular dynamics calculation on the binding characteristics of these proteins was confirmed by actual measurement of dissociation force between GPIIb $\alpha$  and VWF detected by atomic force microscopy [38] and by optical tweezers [39]. The same technology can be applied to predict the 3D structure and binding energy of mutants on these proteins. Of note, binding force between the mass center of GPIIb $\alpha$  and VWF is also predictable by molecular dynamic simulation. This provides us with means to predict large numbers of 3D binding structures for various mutants at various mass center distances.

Here we report the dynamic 3D structures and binding energies of VWF and GPIIb $\alpha$  with various single amino acid substitution at 233, showing apparently different phenotypes, calculated using molecular

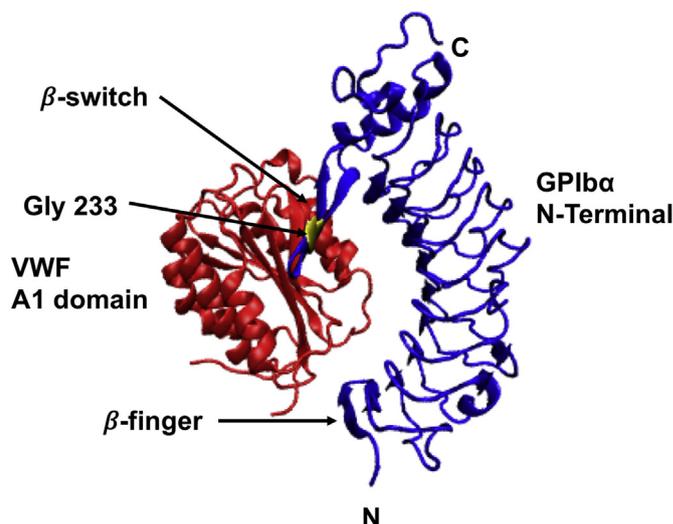


Fig. 1. Crystal structure of N-terminus domain of wild-type GPIIb $\alpha$  binding with A1 domain of VWF and the location of Gly 233 in the structure.

Structure of GPIIb $\alpha$  is shown in blue and VWF is shown in red.  $\alpha$ -Helices are shown as coiled ribbons,  $\beta$ -stands as ribbons with arrows, and loops as tubes. Gly 233 is located in the  $\beta$ -switch region of GPIIb $\alpha$ . (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

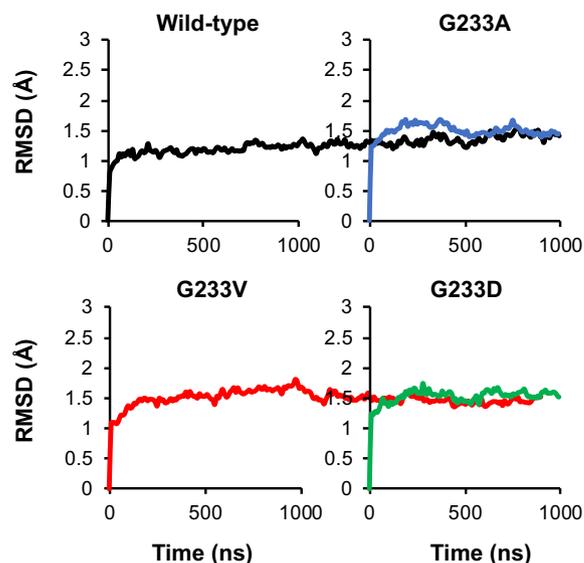
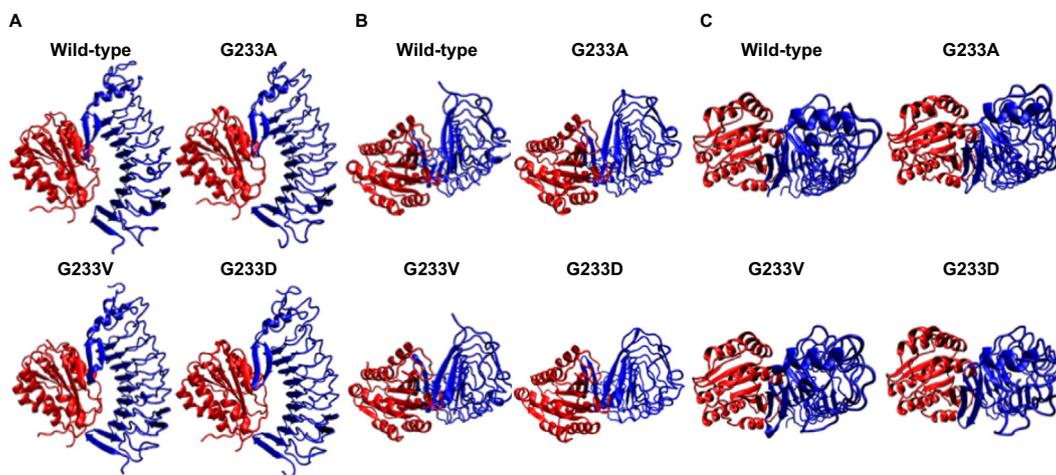


Fig. 2. Root mean square deviation (RMSD) of atoms constructing A1 domain of VWF and N-terminus domain of GPIIb $\alpha$  in wild type and mutants of G233A, G233V, and G233D.

The RMSD of all atoms which constitute the A1 domain of VWF and N-terminus domain of GPIIb $\alpha$  in wild-type (black line), G233A (blue line), G233V (red line) and G233D ( $\beta$ -finger region) starting from the initial structure constructed from the stable soluble structures of wild-type (time 0) to 1000 ps are shown. The RMSD become stabilized after 400 ps ( $400 \times 10^3$  step) of calculation. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

dynamics simulation. Theoretical basis of substantial difference in phenotypic of “equivalent function” in G233A, “gain of function” in G233V and “loss of function” in G233D mutant will be provided.



**Fig. 3.** The predicted most energetically stable structures of VWF bound with GPIIb/IIIa in wild-type, G233A, G233V, and G233D.

Comparison of the calculated most stable structure in the presence of water molecules. View showing the binding site horizontally (A), view from the N-terminus of GPIIb/IIIa (B) and view from the C-terminus of GPIIb/IIIa (C) are shown. The VWF binding N-terminus site of GPIIb/IIIa and A1 domain of VWF are shown as blue and red, respectively.  $\alpha$ -Helices are shown as coiled ribbons,  $\beta$ -stands as ribbons with arrows, and loops as tubes. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. Molecular dynamic simulation

Molecular dynamic simulation on the three-dimensional structure of A1 domain of wild-type von Willebrand factor (VWF: residues ASP<sup>506</sup>-PRO<sup>703</sup>) interacting with N-terminus domain of platelet glycoprotein Iba (GP: residues HSE<sup>1</sup>-PRO<sup>265</sup>) with amino acid substitution of G233A, G233V, and G233D were conducted according to the methods previously published [37].

Briefly, the Newton's second law;  $F$  (force) =  $m$  (mass)  $\times$   $a$  (acceleration) were solved in all atoms constructing VWF and GPIIb/IIIa along with water molecules surrounding them. As the force field, CHARMM-22 was used. The initial structure of each mutant was obtained by inducing the amino-acid substitution against the previously published stable structure in water-soluble condition of wild-type VWF bound to wild-type GPIIb/IIIa using mutate residue plugin of Visual Molecular Dynamics (VMD) version 1.9.3. The water molecules in wild-type structure was removed and re-solvated in the same condition as the other structure with mutations. The water molecules were modeled as transferable intermolecular potential water molecules (TIP3P) [40]. The position and velocity vector of each atom and water molecule were calculated in each 2.0 fs ( $1 \times 10^{-15}$  s.) Similar to the previous publication, Particle mesh Ewald (PME) summation [41] with a cut off length of 12 Å for the direct interactions was used for predicting long range electrostatic interaction.

All the results were visualized with VMD version 1.9.3. The hydrogen bond was predicted on the most stable binding structures for wild-type and each mutant using VMD with distance cutoff of 4.0 Å and angle cutoff of 30°. The root mean square deviation (RMSD) of all atoms, excluding the water molecules, was calculated in each 10 ps. Calculation was assumed to be stabilized when RMSD stopped changing with extension of calculation time.

The multi-dimensional calculations of Newton's second law were conducted with the software of NANOscale Molecular Dynamics (NAMD) compiled on the following high-performance computers; K (Riken, Kobe, Japan), Oak Forest-PACS (Tokyo University, Tokyo), and Hokusai (Riken, Wako, Japan). Other software packages such as the Amber Molecular Dynamics Package were tried, but the NAMD were fastest in these super computers. Supplemental calculations were conducted on rack mount servers in our institute equipped with Xeon Phi™ 7210 (Intel, US) or TITAN Xp (NVIDIA, US).

### 2.2. Selection of target mutants in GPIIb/IIIa

The biological characteristics of GPIIb/IIIa regarding the interaction with VWF differ substantially by the presence of single amino acid mutation in various bleeding disorders including platelet type von Willebrand diseases as previously published [27,28]. Fig. 1 shows the crystal structure of GPIIb/IIIa binding with VWF A1 domain. As shown in this figure, Glycine at 233 of GPIIb/IIIa is located in a structure called “ $\beta$ -switch”. This “ $\beta$ -switch” structure is known to be an important position for the binding [13,42]. Of the mutation in this location, G233A, G233V, and G233D, were selected for calculation target because each three of them has specific biological characteristics, namely “equivalent function” in G233A, “gain of function” in G233V and “loss of function” in G233D as reported by Matsubara et al. [13]. They have shown that “equivalent function” G233A GPIIb/IIIa bound to VWF with ristocetin concentration of 1.0 mg/ml, which was similar to wild-type. The “loss of function” G233D GPIIb/IIIa was bound to approximately 20% lower numbers of VWF in the same ristocetin concentration. The “gain of function” G233V GPIIb/IIIa started binding to VWF in ristocetin concentration as low as 0.11 mg/ml. The apparently different bio-chemical characteristics of GPIIb/IIIa molecules in regard to VWF binding was attempted to be clarified in the current analysis.

### 2.3. Dissociation energy of the bond between A1 domain of VWF and N-terminus domain of GPIIb/IIIa with various mutants

The potential of mean force (PMF) of the binding structure of wild-type VWF and GPIIb/IIIa molecule with 3 different mutation at residue 233 (G233A, G233V, and G233D) along with the wild-type were calculated with the methods previously published [37]. Briefly, PMF was calculated as free energy surface along the mass center distances between GPIIb/IIIa and vwf using the umbrella sampling methods with weighted histogram analysis method (WHAM) [43–45]. PMF expressed as kcal/mol were calculated in VWF interacting with wild-type, G233A, G233V and G233D GPIIb/IIIa with restraints in mass center of VWF and GPIIb/IIIa each 0.5 Å from the distance of 25 Å to 65 Å. The mass centers were calculated separately for GPIIb/IIIa and VWF, as the unique point where the weighted relative position of the distributed mass involving all the atoms excluding water. The dissociation energy of the bond between VWF and GPIIb/IIIa was calculated as the difference of PMF between the most stable structure and the structure at center distances of 65 Å.

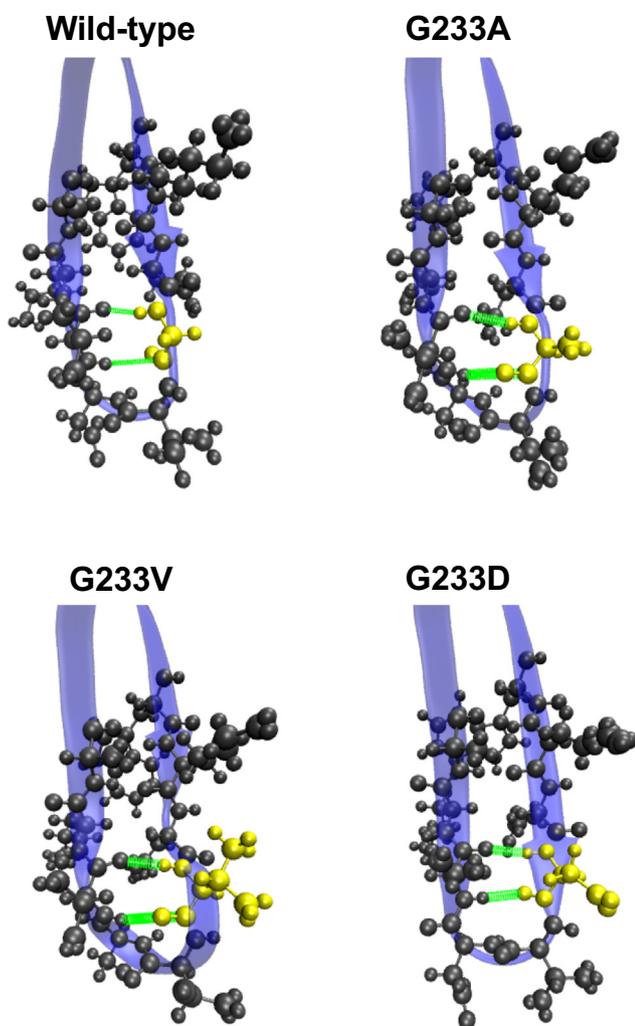


Fig. 4. Hydrogen bond formed between the amino-acid at 233 of GPIIb in wild type, G233A, G233V, and G233D at stable structure.

Representative structure of amino-acid at 230 to 238 of GPIIb for wild type, G233A, G233V and G233D are shown as ball-and-stick. The hydrogen bond between amino-acid at 233 and other amino-acid are shown as green line. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Stable binding structure

To obtain the stable binding structure for wild-type VWF and GPIIb with G233A, G233V, G233D mutation or wild-type, molecular dynamics simulation was performed in water-soluble condition starting from initial structures, produced by inducing single amino-acid substitution in previously published water-soluble stable binding structure. As shown in Fig. 2, the binding structures in water of A1 domain of VWF and GPIIb with 3 mutations and wild-type had large fluctuation as indicated by large change in RMSD in the initial phase (up to 20 ps of calculation) but stabilized to RMSD change within 0.5 Å after calculation of 400 ps or longer. We defined the most stable binding structure as the one after 1000 ps of calculation and compared them as shown in Fig. 3. The most stable binding structure of GPIIb and VWF in water-soluble condition did not differ substantially even in the presence of various mutations. Of note, none of the mutant including the loss-of function (G233D) showed destructive protein unfolding. We further analyzed the stable structure focusing on hydrogen bond around the

amino-acid at 233 of GPIIb. There was no direct hydrogen bond formed between the amino-acid at this location with any amino-acid of VWF. Hydrogen bonds formed between the amino-acid at 233 and other amino-acid in GPIIb are shown in Fig. 4. There was no marked change in hydrogen bond formation observed in the mutants.

#### 3.2. Dynamic 3D structural change of the binding structure of VWF and GPIIb with mutants by changing the distance between mass center of both molecules

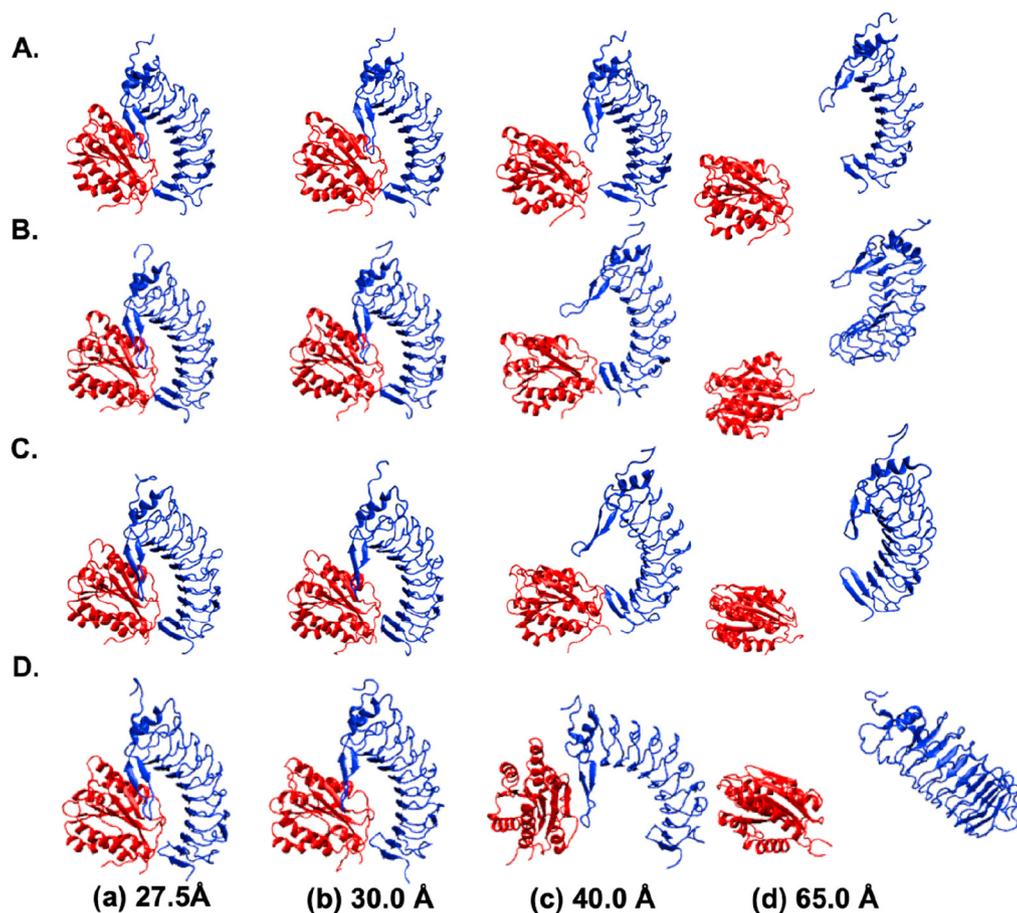
When mass center between A1 domain of VWF and GPIIb increased as 27.5, 30.0, 40.0, and 65.0 Å, wild-type (Fig. 5A), G233A mutant (Fig. 5B) and G233V mutant (Fig. 5C) showed similar changes in three-dimensional structures. Structural change in response to the mass center distance change was markedly different in G233D mutant. Indeed, VWF binding with the  $\beta$ -finger region of GPIIb was already separated at 40.0 Å while other mutants and wild-type retained this bond (Fig. 5D). These results suggest that G233D mutant may have unstable binding characteristics around this center distances and may have weaker binding energy between VWF due to early loss of bond with  $\beta$ -finger region. Dynamic fluctuation of 3-dimensional structure of VWF bound with GPIIb in each  $2 \times 10^{-15}$  s at distance of mass center between GPIIb and VWF at 27.5, 30.0, 40.0, and 65.0 Å, in wild type, G233A, G233V, and G233D were shown as Supplemental movie WTR, G233AR, G233VR, and G233DR. These video supports that the changes in the dynamic structure at 40.0 Å is not only a snap-shot captured by chance but the structure in G233D is actually different.

#### 3.3. Dissociation energy of the bond between VWF and GPIIb with mutants

To calculate the dissociation energy for the bond between GPIIb and VWF in each mutant and wild-type, PMF were calculated along various mass center distances between GPIIb and VWF. We assumed that the PMF of the structure at 65 Å will reflect the energy of unbound state and that the PMF at most stable binding structure will reflect the energy of complete binding. Therefore, we defined the dissociation energy of the bond between GPIIb and VWF as the difference of PMF between the most stable binding structure and the structure at 65 Å mass center distance. Fig. 6 shows the PMF for the binding structure of VWF and GPIIb plotted against mass-center distances of GPIIb and VWF for wild-type and the 3 mutation at residue 233. Predicted dissociation energy between VWF was lowest in G233D mutant, which was 4.32 kcal/mol (19.5%) lower compared with wild-type. The difference in dissociation energy was slightly smaller in G233V mutant (difference with wild-type: 0.48 kcal/mol) or G233A mutant (difference with wild-type: 0.63 kcal/mol). However, the magnitude of the difference in dissociation energy compared with wild-type was approximately 1/10 of that of G233D. In G233A mutant, there was small drop of PMF at distance of mass center between 40 and 50 Å. With G233V mutant, there was small increase of PMF at mass center distances between 48 and 53 Å.

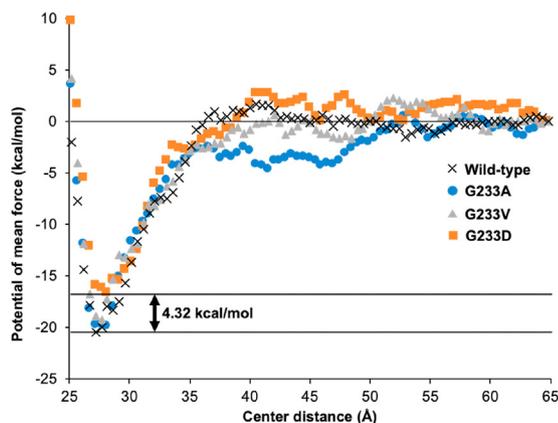
### 4. Discussion

We show here the similarity of predicted stable structure of A1 domain of VWF bound with N-terminus VWF binding site of GPIIb with various amino acid substitution of residue 233 despite apparently different biological functions of “equivalent function”, “gain of function”, or “loss of function”. When mass centers of VWF and GPIIb were spread, markedly different structures appeared in G233D mutant. These drastic structural changes, in addition to smallest dissociation energy provide potential explanation of “loss of function” in G233D mutant. Our result suggests that even without significant changes in stable binding structure, a mutation can cause a dramatic effect and raises an argument that dynamic structures visible only upon very specific conditions, such as right before dissociation, is important.



**Fig. 5.** Structures of A1 domain of VWF bound with N-terminus VWF binding domain of GPIIb/IIIa in wild type (A), G233A (B), G233V (C), and G233D (D) at the distance of mass center of 27.5, 30.0, 40.0, and 65.0 Å.

Representative stable structure of VWF bound with GPIIb/IIIa in wild type, G233A, G233V and G233D are shown at the fixed distance of mass center of 27.5, 30.0, 40.0, and 65.0 Å.  $\alpha$ -Helices are shown as coiled ribbons,  $\beta$ -stands as ribbons with arrows, and loops as tubes.



**Fig. 6.** Potential of Mean Force (PMF) for A1 domain of VWF bound with N-terminus GPIIb/IIIa.

Potential of mean forces for binding between A1 domain of VWF and N-terminus domain of GPIIb/IIIa were calculated as kcal/mol in every 0.5 Å of the distance of the center of mass of both molecules in wild type, G233A, G233V, and G233D are shown.

Platelet adhesion at the site of vessel injury under blood flow condition is mediated solely by GPIIb/IIIa binding with VWF [5] no matter whether platelets are activated or not [46]. The specific biochemical characteristic of VWF binding with GPIIb/IIIa is that the binding occurs transiently, but dissociate rapidly in the absence of specific substances such as ristocetin [11,18,47] or botrocetin [12,16]. Under high shear flow conditions, VWF binding to platelet and VWF-mediated platelet aggregation is known to occur. But, the stable VWF binding on platelet could only be seen when activated GPIIb/IIIa are involved [26]. The

transient nature of VWF binding with GPIIb/IIIa make the biochemical assessment of their interaction more difficult compared to other proteins stably binding to each other. Crystal structure of VWF bound with GPIIb/IIIa provides important information for their interaction. However, the dynamic analysis is necessary to dissect the process of transient nature of the binding between GPIIb/IIIa and VWF. Molecular dynamic simulation enabled to predict the binding force between GPIIb/IIIa and VWF to be 62.3 pN. This predicted value was in agreement with actual measurement by atomic force microscopy [38] and optical tweezers [39]. In the current analysis, we applied this method to study the structure and dissociation energy for GPIIb/IIIa-VWF binding in various GPIIb/IIIa mutation. This approach allowed us to predict the stable binding structure for 3 mutants of GPIIb/IIIa including the one that does not stably bind to VWF. Another strength of our method is the ability to predict the dynamic structure of GPIIb/IIIa binding with VWF just before dissociation. It is impossible to obtain a crystal for this structure. Thus, these structures cannot be solved by X-ray crystallography. Obtaining these dynamic structures may provide us with a new approach of drug development. Since GPIIb/IIIa binding with VWF only transiently capture platelet at site of endothelial injury, small molecule, that is able to bind either GPIIb/IIIa or VWF in this structure just before dissociation, may act as antiplatelet agents. We applied the validated methods to understand the substantial differences in the phenotype of 3 mutant at G233 in GPIIb/IIIa and obtained results applicable to understand the biochemical characteristic of these mutants. Substantial difference in the structure of GPIIb/IIIa bound with VWF only at mass center difference of 40 Å support our hypothesis that small molecules, that binds either GPIIb/IIIa or VWF just before dissociation, could be strong enough antiplatelet agents even if they do not bind to the stable structure.

Our result provides possible explanation for the “loss of function” of G233D by lowest dissociation energy of the bond between VWF and

GPIIb with G233D mutant compared to wild-type and other mutants. Unstable binding structure from mass center distance of 30 to 40 Å may also be a reason not to bind even in the presence of ristocetin. Biologically “equivalent function” in G233A and “gain of function” in G233V are more difficult to explain by our calculation. Relatively lower binding energy in G233A and VWF as compared to wild-type did not contribute to apparent biological difference. The “gain of function” in G233V mutant for VWF binding might be explained by energy increase from the mass center distance from 48 to 53 Å which may create an energy barrier for dissociation around this distance. However, the energy barrier is small and difference in the distance dependent change in structure was not markedly different from wild-type. Further works, especially the calculation in the presence of ristocetin, is necessary to clarify the reason for functional difference in various mutants.

High performance computer and advanced information technology allow us to understand dynamic fluctuation of various biological molecules under various conditions. The molecular dynamic simulation is a strong technology for constructive understanding of the complicated biological functions of various molecules from the atomic movement. Newton's second law should be applicable for determining the position and velocity of various freely moving atoms placed apart. However, quantum mechanics is necessary to understand the forces and position of atoms when they share electrons to make chemical bond. CHARMM force field is a strong tool to simplify quantum mechanics to incorporate into molecular dynamic calculation [36,40,48]. It is of note that there are several potential limitations in our methods in regard to apply it to understand the biological mechanism. Matsubara et al. previously demonstrated the importance of differences in hydrogen bonds between oxygen atoms of main-chain of amino-acid at 233 position GPIIb with computer modeling that potentially changes the stability of  $\beta$ -hairpin structure [13]. In our method, using molecular dynamics with CHARMM force field, we could not confirm this finding. Indeed, CHARMM force field simplifies various forces between atoms. It could not directly account for dynamic changes in covalent bond. Other method such as quantum mechanics may solve this remaining issue.

To overcome potential limitations, validation of predicted results with biological or biochemical experiments are necessary. For the VWF binding with GPIIb, quantitative validation was conducted previously by comparison of the predicted binding force between VWF and GPIIb in wild-type and actually measured ones by atomic force microscopy [38] and optical tweezer [39]. Strong limitation in our study is that the quantitative validation was conducted only in wild-type, but not for variants. Although our results are in good agreement with previously published biological experiments [13], further quantitative validation is needed for mutant molecules.

In conclusion, we have shown the similar stable structure of GPIIb bound with VWF even in the presence of biologically “equivalent function” (G233A), “gain of function” (G233V), or “loss of function” (G233D) mutations. Unstable structure and smaller binding energy in binding with VWF may be the reason of loss of biological function in G233D. Small energetic and structural difference in molecules may be the cause of substantial functional difference in single amino acid mutants.

Each movie provided the calculation results of the position and velocity of all atoms constructing the A1 domain of VWF bound with N-terminus VWF binding domain of GPIIb with wild-type (WTR.mov), G233A (G233AR.mov), G233V (G233VR.mov), and G233D (G233DR.mov) in each  $2 \times 10^{-15}$  s. Despite similar stable structure around mass center distance between VWF and GPIIb at 27.5 Å, marked change in binding structure was observed in G233D mutant. Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.thromres.2019.10.022>.

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