

MULTIVALENT AND MULTISPECIFIC DR5-BINDING FUSION PROTEINS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 62/193,309, filed July 16, 2015, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The disclosure relates generally to molecules that specifically engage death receptor 5 (DR5), a member of the TNF receptor superfamily (TNFRSF). More specifically the disclosure relates to multivalent and multispecific molecules that bind at least DR5.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The tumor necrosis factor receptor superfamily consists of several structurally related cell surface receptors. Activation by multimeric ligands is common feature of many of these receptors. Many members of the TNFRSF have therapeutic utility in numerous pathologies, if activated properly. Importantly to properly agonize this receptor family often requires higher order clustering and conventional bivalent antibodies are not ideal for this. Therefore, there exists a therapeutic need for more potent agonist molecules of the TNFRSF.

SUMMARY

[0004] The disclosure provides multivalent fusion polypeptides that bind at least death receptor 5 (DR5, also known as TRAIL receptor 2 (TRAILR2), or tumor necrosis factor receptor superfamily member 10B (TNFRSF10B)). These DR5 binding fusion polypeptides are also referred to herein as DR5-targeting molecules. DR5 is a member of the TNF receptor superfamily (TNFRSF) and a cell surface receptor of the TNF-receptor superfamily that binds TNF-related apoptosis-inducing ligand (TRAIL). TRAIL evolved to play critical roles in mammalian development and host defense by selectively eradicating unwanted, infected and malignant cells from healthy cell populations. On binding the TNF

models. The lack of activity in humans is hypothesized to be due to insufficient antibody crosslinking. This may be due to differences in serum IgG, FcγR and or TRAIL concentrations between immune compromised mice and human cancer patients.

[0007] The present disclosure provides multivalent fusion proteins targeting DR5 that are capable of potently agonizing DR5 signaling mediating direct cell death. The fusion proteins of the present disclosure can be bivalent, trivalent, tetravalent, pentavalent, or hexavalent. Importantly, the fusion proteins of the present disclosure are capable of eliciting apoptosis of DR5 expressing cells independently of exogenous crosslinking agents.

[0008] In some embodiments, the fusion proteins of the present disclosure incorporate a binding domain (DR5BD) that binds DR5.

[0008a] In a first aspect, there is provided an isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5) and comprises a plurality of DR5 binding domains (DR5BDs).

[0008b] In preferred embodiments, the DR5 binding DR5BD does not bind DR4, decoy R1, decoy R2, Osteopontin, or any other TNFRSF member. In preferred embodiments the DR5 binding DR5BD binds human and cynomolgus monkey DR5. In some embodiments, the DR5 binding DR5BD blocks the interaction of DR5 and its ligand TRAIL. In other embodiments, the DR5 binding DR5BD does not block the interaction of DR5 and its ligand TRAIL. In some embodiments, the fusion protein of the present disclosure incorporates multiple DR5 binding DR5BDs that recognize distinct epitopes on DR5. In some embodiments, the fusion protein of the present disclosure incorporates multiple DR5 binding DR5BDs, wherein some DR5BDs block the DR5-TRAIL interaction and other do not block the DR5-TRAIL interaction. In preferred embodiments, DR5 targeting fusion proteins of the present disclosure induce direct cell death of tumor cells. The DR5 targeting fusion proteins of the present disclosure have utility in treating tumors both hematologic and solid in nature.

[0009] The present disclosure provides multivalent DR5 binding fusion proteins, which comprise 2 or more DR5 binding domains (DR5BDs). In some embodiments, the fusion proteins of the present disclosure have utility in treating neoplasms. In some embodiments, the fusion proteins of the present disclosure bind DR5 expressed on a tumor cell. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains two or more different DR5BDs, where each DR5BD binds DR5. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains multiple copies of a DR5BD that binds DR5. For example, in some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least two copies of a DR5BD that binds DR5. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least three copies of a DR5BD that binds DR5. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least four copies of a DR5BD that binds DR5. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least five copies of a DR5BD that binds DR5.

Chemother Pharmacol. 2015 May;75(5):887-95. doi: 10.1007/s00280-015-2712-0. Epub 2015 Feb 27.). In support of this idea, it has been well-documented that aggregated forms of DR5 agonists induce hepatotoxicity whereas non-aggregated forms do not (J Lemke, S von Karstedt, J Zinngrebe and H Walczak. Getting TRAIL back on track for cancer therapy. Cell Death and Differentiation (2014) 21, 1350–1364).

[0012a] In a second aspect, there is provided an isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5), wherein the isolated polypeptide is not recognized by one or more human anti-VH auto-antibodies (HAVH).

[0012b] In a third aspect, there is provided an isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5) and comprises two or more copies of an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 15-91 or two or more copies of an amino acid sequence comprising a complementarity determining region 1 (CDR1) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 31, 128, 134, 138, 141, 142, 159, 162, 163, 168, 173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a complementarity determining region 2 (CDR2) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a complementarity determining region 3 (CDR3) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 130, 136, 140, 144-158, 161, 165, 170, 175, 180, 183, 186, 187, and 190.

[0013] In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least one DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains two or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains three or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains four or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains five or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains six or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91.

[0014] In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains at least one DR5BD that comprises a complementarity determining region 1 (CDR1) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 31, 128, 134, 138, 141, 142, 159, 162, 163, 168, 173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a complementarity determining region 2 (CDR2) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a complementarity determining region 3 (CDR3) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 130, 136, 140, 144-158, 161, 165, 170, 175, 180, 183, 186, 187, and 190. In some embodiments, the fusion protein contains two or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises a CDR1 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 31, 128, 134, 138, 141, 142, 159, 162, 163, 168, 173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a CDR2 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a CDR3 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group

some embodiments, the fusion protein contains six or more copies of a DR5BD that comprises a CDR1 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 31, 128, 134, 138, 141, 142, 159, 162, 163, 168, 173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a CDR2 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a CDR3 comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 130, 136, 140, 144-158, 161, 165, 170, 175, 180, 183, 186, 187, and 190; and at least one immunoglobulin Fc region polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 1-5 or 127.

[0017] In some embodiments, the fusion protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 92-124.

[0017a] In a fourth aspect, there is provided an isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5) and comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 92-124.

[0017b] In some embodiments, the fusion protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 92-118. In some embodiments, the fusion protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 119-124.

[0018] The fusion proteins of the present disclosure are capable of enhanced clustering of TNFRSF members compared to non-cross-linked bivalent antibodies. The enhanced clustered of TNFRSF members mediated by the fusion proteins of the present disclosure induce enhanced TNFRSF-dependent signaling compared to non-cross-linked bivalent antibodies. In most embodiments, the fusion protein will incorporate more than 2 DR5BDs, for example, three, four, five, or six. In some embodiments the fusion protein will incorporate DR5BDs and a binding domain directed toward non-TNFRSF member antigen. In these embodiments, the interaction of the non-TNFRSF antigen is capable of providing the additional crosslinking function and TNFRSF activation is achieved with only one or two DR5BDs. In these embodiments, the fusion protein is multispecific, binding two distinct antigens. In other embodiments, the fusion protein incorporates three or more DR5BDs and a binding domain directed toward an antigen other than DR5, wherein the interaction with this additional antigen does not enhance DR5 clustering beyond what is achieved by the DR5BD containing portion alone, but rather provides a biodistribution advantage, focusing the DR5 agonistic activity of the fusion protein to a specific site within a subject. For example, a tetravalent DR5 binding fusion protein of the present disclosure may include an additional antigen binding domain that focuses activity to a specific site, yet does not enhance the agonistic activity beyond that achieved by a tetravalent DR5 binding fusion protein lacking this additional antigen binding domain.

following structure: DR5BD-Linker- DR5BD-Linker- DR5BD-Linker-Hinge-Fc, where the DR5BD is a humanized or fully human VHH sequence.

[0058] In some embodiments, the multivalent fusion proteins targeting DR5 of the present disclosure are operably linked via amino acid linkers. In some embodiments, these linkers are composed predominately of the amino acids Glycine and Serine, denoted as GS-linkers herein. The GS-linkers of the fusion proteins of the present disclosure can be of various lengths, for example 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 amino acids in length.

[0059] In some embodiments, the GS-linker comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of GGSGGS, i.e., (GGS)₂ (SEQ ID NO: 11); GGSGGSGGS, i.e., (GGS)₃ (SEQ ID NO: 12); GGSGGSGGSGGS, i.e., (GGS)₄ (SEQ ID NO: 13); and GGSGGSGGSGGSGGS, i.e., (GGS)₅ (SEQ ID NO: 14).

[0060] In some embodiments, the multivalent DR5 binding fusion protein is tetravalent. In some embodiments, the tetravalent DR5 binding fusion protein has the following structure: VHH-Linker-VHH-Linker-Hinge-Fc, where the VHH is a humanized or fully human VHH sequence. In some embodiments, the VHH sequence is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the tetravalent DR5 binding fusion protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 92-118.

[0061] In some embodiments, the multivalent DR5 binding fusion protein is hexavalent. In some embodiments, the hexavalent DR5 binding fusion protein has the following structure: VHH-Linker-VHH-Linker-VHH-Linker-Hinge-Fc, where the VHH is a humanized or fully human VHH sequence. In some embodiments, the VHH sequence is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 15-91. In some embodiments, the hexavalent DR5 binding fusion protein comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 119-124.

[0061a] In a fifth aspect, there is provided use of the polypeptide as described herein in the manufacture of a medicament for treating neoplasms.

[0061b] In a sixth aspect, there is provided use of the polypeptide as described herein in the manufacture of a medicament for modulating immune cells to enhance tumor destruction.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES

[0062] Figure 1 is schematic of exemplary multivalent and multispecific fusion proteins of the present disclosure.

[0063] Figures 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, and 2G are a series of graphs demonstrating the binding of representative DR5 VHHs or humanized variants thereof to either human DR5 (Figures 2A, 2B, 2E, 2F, and 2G) and cyno DR5 (Figures 2C and 2D). Figures 2A, 2B,

173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a complementarity determining region 2 (CDR2) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a complementarity determining region 3 (CDR3) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 130, 136, 140, 144-158, 161, 165, 170, 175, 180, 183, 186, 187, and 190.

42. An isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5) and comprises two or more copies of an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 15-91 or two or more copies of an amino acid sequence comprising a complementarity determining region 1 (CDR1) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 31, 128, 134, 138, 141, 142, 159, 162, 163, 168, 173, 176, 178, 181, and 188; a complementarity determining region 2 (CDR2) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 28, 129, 131-133, 135, 137, 139, 143, 160, 164, 166, 167, 169, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 182, 184, 185, and 189; and a complementarity determining region 3 (CDR3) comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 130, 136, 140, 144-158, 161, 165, 170, 175, 180, 183, 186, 187, and 190.

43. An isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5) and comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs: 92-124.

44. An isolated polypeptide that binds at least death receptor 5 (DR5), wherein the isolated polypeptide is not recognized by one or more human anti-VH auto-antibodies (HAVH).

45. Use of the polypeptide of any one of claims 1 to 44 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating neoplasms.

46. Use of the polypeptide of any one of claims 1 to 44 in the manufacture of a medicament for modulating immune cells to enhance tumor destruction.