SEQUENCE ~~SYMMETRIC~~ ASYMMETRIC MODIFIED IGG4 BISPECIFIC ANTIBODIES

The present disclosure relates to asymmetric antibodies comprising an IgG4 heavy chain or fragment which is mutated and a second heavy chain or fragment which is distinct from said IgG4 chain. The disclosure also extends to compositions comprising said asymmetric antibodies and use of the antibodies and compositions comprising same for treatment. In a further aspect the disclosure extends to methods of preparing the antibodies and formulations, and vectors encoding the antibodies and hosts expressing same.

The biopharmaceutical industry encompassing recombinant proteins, monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and nucleic acid-based drugs is growing rapidly. Antibody engineering has resulted in the design and production of antibody fragments or alternative formats. Preferred molecular format along with other aspects such as production yield, protein quality and storage stability are taken into consideration when selecting an antibody-based protein as a therapeutic agent.

The basic structure of all immunoglobulin (Ig) molecules comprises two identical heavy chains (HCs) and two identical light chains (LCs) which are coupled by disulphide bonds. Each LC consists of a variable (V_L) and constant domain (C_L). Based on the HC, five main Ig classes are recognized: IgG, IgA, IgD, IgE and IgM. For IgG, the HC consists of one variable domain (V_H) and three constant domains (C_H1-3). The C_H2 and C_H3 domains form the Fc part of the molecule that is responsible for stimulating effector function and is linked to the Fab fragment (V_HV_L and C_HC_L) by a hinge region which confers flexibility to the IgG molecule. Two antigen recognition sites are located at the ends of the V_L and V_H domains. IgG is further subdivided into 4 different isotypes: IgG1, IgG2, IgG3 and IgG4.

Fc-mediated effector functions i.e. antibody dependent cytotoxicity (ADCC) or complement dependent cytotoxicity (CDC) are isotype dependent. Each isotype has evolved to perform a specific function within the body. The IgG1 isotype is currently the most widely used as a therapeutic due to its extended half-life, enhanced ADCC activation and complement activation. Other isotypes are employed as therapeutic agents depending on the target and desired effect. For instance, when target antigens are simply to be neutralized and effector functions are less important, alternative isotypes such as IgG2 and IgG4 can be used. Alternatively, IgG with re-engineered Fc/effector function may be considered.

IgG2 also has minimal associated effector function but is prone to dimerisation which is not fully understood.

IgG4 remains a useful isotype because of its relative lack of effector function induction. However, use of IgG4 also has some inherent practical difficulties namely its shorter serum half-life and its ability to undergo "Fab-arm exchange" (also referred to as dynamic heavy chain exchange or heavy chain exchange), wherein the heavy chain and its attached light chain of one antibody is exchanged with the heavy chain and its attached light chain of another antibody to form a whole antibody composed of two heavy chains and two attached light chains (van der Neut Kolfschoten et al., 2007 Science 317, 1554-1557).