Crystal Structure of the Ribonucleoprotein Core of the Signal Recognition Particle

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The signal recognition particle (SRP), a protein-RNA complex conserved in all three kingdoms of life, recognizes and transports specific proteins to cellular membranes for insertion or secretion. We describe here the 1.8 angstrom crystal structure of the universal core of the SRP, revealing protein recognition of a distorted RNA minor groove. Nucleotide analog interference mapping demonstrates the biological importance of observed interactions, and genetic results show that this core is functional in vivo. The structure explains why the conserved residues in the protein and RNA are required for SRP assembly and defines a signal sequence recognition surface composed of both protein and RNA.

In bacteria, the SRP is essential for cell viability and efficient protein export (3) and consists of the 4.5S RNA and the Ffh protein. These components as well as the SRP receptor, FtsY, share sequence and functional homology with their eukaryotic counterparts 7SL RNA, SRP54, and SRα, respectively (4–8). The evolutionary conservation of this fundamental cellular component is demonstrated by the ability of human SRP54 to bind with high affinity to the Escherichia coli 4.5S RNA and to rapidly hydrolyze GTP in the presence of the SRP receptor (5). Similarly, Ffh is able to replace SRP54 in a chimeric mammalian SRP that is capable of elongation arrest and signal sequence recognition (6). Thus, the Ffh/4.5S RNA complex appears to be a minimized structural and functional homolog of the eukaryotic SRP, which makes it attractive for detailed structural and mechanistic studies.

The Ffh/SRP54 proteins contain three domains: N, G, and M. The NH2-terminal N domain, a four-helix bundle, is closely associated with the adjacent G domain, a Ras-like guanosine triphosphatase (GTPase) (9) responsible for mediating the interaction of the SRP with its receptor and regulating SRP function through hydrolysis of GTP (7, 10). Structurally related N and G domains are also present in the SRP receptor (11). The methionine-rich M domain near the COOH-terminus of Ffh/SRP54 contains recognition sites for both the signal peptide and the SRP RNA (12–14).

The Ffh binding site on the 4.5S RNA is localized to domain IV, a ~50-nucleotide (nt) region whose highly conserved secondary structure consists of two internal loops that include noncanonical base pairings and unpaired nucleotides (Fig. 1, B and C) (15–18). In bacterial and human SRP, several lines of evidence suggest that domain IV (Fig. 1, B and C) stabilizes the particle and its interaction with the signal peptide (19, 20). Outside of domain IV, the size, sequence, and secondary structure of SRP RNAs vary widely, even among bacterial species (21), and it is unclear if these regions of the RNA are essential for SRP function.

Here we present the 1.8 Å resolution crystal structure of the universally conserved ribonucleoprotein core of the SRP, a complex between domain IV of 4.5S RNA and the M domain of Ffh. Nucleotide analog interference mapping and genetic results show that the structure represents the functional complex in vivo. In the structure, unique RNA-protein interactions characterize the molecular interface, and a network of highly ordered waters and metal ions also mediate key contacts. The structure explains why phylogenetically conserved residues in the protein and RNA are required for SRP assembly, and it suggests a possible role for the RNA in modular recognition of signal peptides.

Structure determination and overview. To obtain well-ordered crystals of the M domain in complex with SRP RNA, we
screened a series of modified protein and RNA constructs (22). None of these modifications altered the apparent dissociation constant of the RNA-protein complex from that of the intact *E. coli* SRP, which is 40 pM under the assay conditions we used (23). Crystals of the M domain bound to a 49-nt SRP RNA were grown that diffract x-rays to 1.55 Å resolution. The structure was solved by multiwavelength anomalous dispersion (MAD) phasing from crystals containing selenomethionine-labeled protein (Table 1). Using diffraction data extending from 30.0 to 1.8 Å resolution, a model of the complex was built and refined to a crystallographic R factor of 19.9% and a free R factor of 22.1% (Table 1).

The structure reveals minor groove recognition of a noncanonical RNA helix by a helix-turn-helix (HTH) motif contained within the five α helices of the M domain (Fig. 2, A and B). The HTH fold, corresponding to helices 2 to 4 (Figs. 1D and 2A), is virtually identical to that observed in the crystal structure of the Ffh protein alone as well as that of the M domain of the human SRP54 protein (24–26) (Fig. 2A). The HTH motif presents two α helices to the minor groove of the RNA, making a series of direct and solvent-mediated contacts between conserved amino acids and nucleotides. This mode of binding is distinct from that observed for the structurally similar HTH motifs of DNA binding proteins, which bind to DNA primarily through interactions of a single helix in the major groove (27). A 33–amino acid segment of the protein containing the proposed signal peptide recognition site is disordered in the crystals and was not observed in the electron density map (Figs. 1D and 2A). This observation is consistent with biochemical evidence for conformational flexibility of this region in the absence of a bound signal sequence (20).

In contrast to the protein, the structure of the RNA changes significantly upon binding to the M domain (Fig. 2C). Solution nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) structures of domain IV of the RNA showed the nucleotide bases of both internal loops stacked into the helix (16–18). In the complex, however, the four nucleotides of the asymmetric loop of the RNA are extruded from the helix. Three of these bases are stacked and wrap around the outside of the helix to form a unique surface that positions invariant nt A39 for contacts with the M domain.

Minor groove recognition mediated by two RNA internal loops. The internal loop nucleotides in domain IV of the 4.5S RNA create an unusual surface along the minor groove face of the helix that forms the recognition site for the M domain of Ffh. The
The heart of the RNA-protein interface is a protein-mediated interaction between the symmetric and asymmetric internal loops. A dense network of contacts occurs between the G-G pair (Fig. 3B). Notably, there is a dense network of hydrogen bonds between the protein and the RNA in this region (Fig. 3A), most of which involve backbone carbonyl groups in the protein rather than specific side chains. This differs from most protein–nucleic acid complexes in which groove interactions are mediated by protein side chains (28, 29).

In the asymmetric internal loop of the RNA, the single unpaired adenosine on the 3′ side remains stacked in the helix. The phosphodiester backbone of the four nucleotides on the 5′ side of the loop is inverted such that the phosphates are pointed toward the interior of the helix. The nucleotide bases are completely expelled from the helix, and nt A39, C40, and C41 stack perpendicular to the helical axis to form an arch that crosses the major groove (Figs. 2A and 3B). A42, a nonconserved residue, is unstacked and serves as a connector between the stack and the helix above it. This unique geometry positions the universally conserved nt A39 to contact invariant residues in both the symmetric internal loop of the RNA and in the protein (Figs. 2A and 3B).

The heart of the RNA-protein interface is a protein-mediated interaction between the symmetric and asymmetric internal loops. A dense network of contacts occurs between helices 2b and 3 in the M domain (Fig. 1D) and the A47-C62 pair and A39 in the RNA (Fig. 4A). The location of A39 on the outside of the RNA helix enables stacking with the first invariant arginine residue (Arg-398) and hydrogen bonding to the second (Arg-401) within the highly conserved amino acid sequence RXXRXXXGSG (residues 398 to 407) in helix 3 of the M domain. Furthermore, the 2′-OH of A39 is hydrogen-bonded to the phosphate of A63 between the two A-C base pairs of the symmetric loop, directly connecting the two internal loops of the RNA.

Arg-398 and Arg-401 form part of a central salt bridge that includes the invariant Glu-386 and the polypeptide backbone of helix 2b (Fig. 4B). In the structure of the uncomplexed M domain of human SRP54, these side chains were proposed to be inaccessible for direct RNA recognition (25). However, with no rearrangement upon RNA binding, these residues form critical contacts to the RNA. Instead of extending into the RNA major or minor grooves, the arginines in the salt bridge present a surface to which the RNA binds. The bridge links the two internal loops of the RNA by way of hydrogen bonds between Arg-401, the N3 of A39 in the asymmetric loop, and the 2′-OH of C62.
in the symmetric loop (Fig. 4B). Thus, unlike RNA binding proteins including L11, U1A, U2B′ and sex-lethal (29), and L30 (30), the M domain of Ffh is preorganized for SRP RNA recognition.

A network of waters and metal ions facilitate the RNA-protein interaction. One of the most striking features of the M domain–RNA complex is the abundance of well-ordered solvent molecules and metal ions that are coordinated to the RNA and, in one case, bridge invariant residues at the RNA-protein interface (Fig. 3A). The extrusion of the asymmetric internal loop nucleotides from the helical stack creates a large cavity in the center of the RNA helix that is filled with cations and water molecules (Fig. 5, A and B). Two hydrated magnesium ions and 28 water molecules were unambiguously identified within this cavity. The waters have temperature factors similar to those of the surrounding atoms of the RNA, indicating that they are highly ordered and occupy specific binding sites (Fig. 5B). In the symmetric loop of the SRP RNA, two potassium ions are coordinated to the noncanonical base pairs.

One potassium ion, bound to the carbonyl oxygen of G48 and the N3 and 2′-OH groups of G61 in the G-G base pair, also coordinates to the backbone carbonyl of Gly-405 (Fig. 3A). The functional groups that define this ion-binding pocket are universally conserved in the SRP, suggesting that the potassium ion is integral to their interaction. The other potassium ion is situated between the C46-A63 base pair and the U45-G64 pair in the major groove side of the symmetric internal loop. This ion is also coordinated to several water molecules, forming part of the core of the extensive solvent network in the major groove of the asymmetric loop (Fig. 5, A and B).

To test whether these ions are functionally important for the formation of the SRP complex, we probed their coordination to the RNA using nucleotide analog interference mapping (31, 32). Full-length E. coli SRP RNA (110 nt) was transcribed in vitro to contain randomly incorporated 7-deaza adenosine or 2′-deoxyguanosine nucleotide analogs tagged with α-phosphorothioate groups (7dA9S, 7dG9S; respectively). These analogs were chosen for study because N7 of adenosine and the 2′-OH of guanosine are involved in numerous structural contacts between the RNA and protein. From the resulting pools of RNA, molecules competent to bind to the M domain protein were selected, and positions of incorporated nucleotide analogs were identified by site-specific cleavage.

Six of the RNA functional groups tested in this way were found to make significant energetic contributions to the formation of the SRP complex (Fig. 5C). Strikingly, removal of one of the coordinating ligands to either of the potassium ions seen in the crystal structure...
Fig. 4. Asymmetric loop and protein contacts. (A) Within the asymmetric loop, nt A39, C40, and C41 form a continuous stack that is capped by Arg-398. Additional contacts are between A39 N3 and NH1 of Arg-401, and A39 N1 and Ser-397 Oγ. Also shown is the single tertiary contact observed in the RNA structure between A39 2'OH and a phosphate oxygen of A63. (B) The heart of the 4.5S RNA-M domain interaction consists of a hydrogen bonding network between universally conserved residues. The salt bridge between Glu-386 and Arg-401 is cradled between the asymmetric and symmetric loops of the RNA.

Fig. 5. Metals and solvent in the protein-RNA complex. (A) Solvent-flattened experimental electron density map contoured at 1.5 SDs above the mean density level, superimposed on the refined atomic model, shows well-ordered solvent molecules (cyan), hydrated magnesium ions (red), and a potassium ion (orange sphere) located in the interior of the asymmetric internal loop. (B) Ribbon and stick diagram of the complex emphasizing the hydrogen bonding network (magenta dashes) between solvent molecules, magnesium ions, and a potassium ion in the asymmetric loop. The average B factor for the 28 water molecules represented is 28.5, which is only slightly higher than that of RNA atoms surrounding these solvents, indicating that they are well ordered. (C) Histogram of interference values for the M domain binding region of the 4.5S RNA; nucleotide positions correspond to the numbering for the E. coli 4.5S RNA. The dashed line represents an interference value of 2, which is considered to be a site whose functional group substitution significantly impairs protein binding (32). (D) Substitution of the pro-Rp oxygen by sulfur or the N7 by carbon of A63 (shown as red spheres) results in a significant interference of protein binding. These two functional groups form hydrogen bonds with well-ordered water molecules and coordinate a potassium ion, respectively, indicating that these solvent molecules contribute to the stabilization of the protein-RNA complex.
Table 1. Crystal structure determination and refinement. The 49-nt SRP RNA was transcribed by T7 RNA polymerase and purified by standard techniques (44). Selenium-methionine-labeled M domain was expressed in the E. coli methionine auxotrophic strain B834 (Novagen) and purified with a combination of affinity, reverse-phase, and ion-exchange chromatography. The RNA-protein complex was crystallized by the sitting drop vapor diffusion method by the addition of 2 μl of macromolecular solution to 2 μl of a precipitating solution containing 10% isopropanol, 50 mM Na-MES (pH 5.6), 200 mM KCi, 12.5 mM MgCl2, and 35 mM C-HEGA 10 (Anatrace). Over 2 to 3 days, the crystals grew to maximum cell dimensions of 0.2 mm by 0.1 mm by 0.1 mm, belonging to the C2 space group with unit cell dimensions of a = 136.0 Å, b = 77.9 Å, c = 32.9 Å, and β = 96.3°. For cryoprotection, the crystals were exchanged into mother liquor containing 30% 2,4-methyl pentanediol and flash-frozen in liquid propane. Diffraction data were measured at beamline X4A of the National Synchrotron Light Source and processed with the programs DENZO and SCALEPACK (45). Selenium sites were identified and refined with the Crystallography & NMR System (CNS) (46), and this phase information plus density modification yielded an electron density map into which most of the RNA and protein could be unambiguously built with the O graphics interface (47). Rounds of manual building, torsion-angle simulated annealing, and individual B-factor refinement with CNS generated the final model. Magnesium ions were identified by their octahedral coordination geometry as well as the distance (2.1 to 2.2 Å) of inner-sphere coordinated water molecules, whereas potassium ions were identified by their peak height in the electron density (>6.5 SDs above mean density level in each case) as well as inspection of the nature of the functional groups forming inner-sphere coordinations. PROCHECK analysis of the protein revealed that all residues lie within the allowed regions in the Ramachandran plot (92% in the most favorable region) with an overall G factor (2.8 bandwidths from the mean) better than that expected for a protein at this resolution (48). In the RNA, all sugar puckers are C3'-endo except for G58, which is C2'-exo, and A42, which was restrained as C2'-endo during refinement.

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<th>Wavelength (Å)</th>
<th>Resolution (Å)</th>
<th>Number of reflections observed/unique</th>
<th>Data coverage (%) overall/last shell</th>
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<th>R_SOM* (%) overall/last shell</th>
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<td>30.0–1.8</td>
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<td>90.1/72.1</td>
<td>21.8/2.2</td>
<td>3.8/32.0</td>
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**MAD analysis**

Phasing power† (acentric reflections)

Resolution range (Å) | λ₁ | λ₂ | λ₃ | 30.0–1.8 | 0.89 | 2.62 | 0.91 |
|---------------------|----|----|----|----------|------|------|------|

**Mean figure of merit‡ (acentric reflections)**

Resolution range (Å) | Number of reflections observed/unique | Data coverage (%) overall/last shell | (I/σ(I))/overall/last shell | R_SOM* (%) overall/last shell |
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**Refinement**

Resolution (Å) | 30.0–1.8 |
|----------------|----------|

**Reagents**

Working set | 50,840 |
| Test set    | 5,473 (8.7%) |

Total Number of atoms | 1,893 |
Number of waters | 299 |
Number of K+ | 3 |
Number of Mg2+ | 4 |
R factor | 19.9 |
R_free | 22.1 |
rmsd bond (Å) | 0.0065 |
rmsd angle (°) | 1.13 |
Average B factor | 31.2 |

*Average of the phase and average of the density moduli.*
†Phasing power = (I_F/I_F(0) − F_P + F_P)*1/σ(I_F), where I_F is the observed intensity and I_P is the statistically weighted average intensity of multiple measurements of symmetry-related reflections.
‡Mean figure of merit = (Σρ(ρ/|F_F|)/Σρ(ρ/|F_F|)), where ρ is the phase and P(ρ) is the phase-probability distribution.

Fig. 6. In vivo function of truncated forms of the SRP RNA. (A) Sequences of the RNAs tested for in vivo function. The C62G mutation that was used as a control for proper RNA function is highlighted in red and the G54A tetraloop mutation used in the crystallized RNA is shown in cyan. (B) Northern blot analysis of SRP RNAs tested in vivo. E. coli S1610 was transformed with plasmids containing wild-type (wt) or minimized (E4 and min) SRP RNAs, followed by a brief heat shock at 45°C to denature the temperature-labile λ repressor and induce genes responsible for prophage excision (37). These cultures were allowed to further incubate at 30°C, followed by plating on LB agar. At the permissive temperature (30°C), the chromosomal copy of the 4.5S RNA gene is not lost, and thus all cells are viable. At the nonpermissive temperature (42°C), the sole source of SRP RNA is transcribed from a gene encoded on the plasmid. In each case, the RNA with the wild-type domain IV sequence supported cell growth, whereas incorporation of the C62G mutation was lethal (38). Total cellular RNA (5 μg) isolated from these transformants was adduced to each lane (2 to 7) alongside RNAs of known length transcribed in vitro (lane 1) and subjected to electrophoresis on a 12% denaturing polyacrylamide gel. The RNA was transferred to a positively charged nylon filter by electroblotting, followed by probing with a psoralen-biotin-labeled oligonucleotide that is complementary to nt 32 to 74 of the E. coli 4.5S RNA; detection was by chemiluminescence. Lane 1, in vitro–transcribed SRP RNAs that are 110, 51, and 39 nt long serve as molecular weight markers; lane 2, RNA from S1610 cells grown at 30°C; lane 3, RNA from cells transformed with a plasmid encoding the wild-type RNA; lane 4, RNA from cells transformed with a plasmid encoding RNA E; lane 5, RNA from cells transformed with a plasmid encoding RNA E4; lane 6, RNA from cells transformed with a plasmid encoding RNA E4 (G54A); lane 7, RNA from cells transformed with a plasmid encoding RNA min. The E4 RNA (lane 5) reproducibly yielded a smaller degradation product, which was also observed in other highly minimized SRP RNAs (38).
(dGoS at G61 and 7dAaS at A63) was deleterious to protein binding (Fig. 5, C and D). This result is analogous to observations made in group I self-splicing introns, where potassium ions bind and stabilize RNA tertiary structure (33). Furthermore, phosphorothioate substitution alone at A63 interfered with complex formation. Rather than participating in a direct RNA-RNA or RNA-protein contact, this phosphate oxygen is hydrogen-bonded to two well-ordered water molecules that coordinate directly to one of the potassium ions (Fig. 5D). Because these two waters are part of the solvent network seen in the asymmetric loop, this network appears to substantially stabilize the RNA structure required for protein recognition.

Three additional sites where analogs interfere with protein binding are observed in the symmetric internal loop. Two of these involve direct protein-RNA contacts at the 2'-OH groups of G48 and G49 (Fig. 3A). The third, a 7-deaza substitution at A47, disrupts one of the two hydrogen bonds in the A-C base pair at the heart of the RNA-protein interface (Figs. 3A and 4B). Furthermore, results of detailed chemical probing of the 4.5S RNA-Ffh interaction (15) as well as additional analog interference experiments (34) are consistent with the crystal structure. Thus, interactions observed crystallographically are functionally important for formation of the SRP.

In vivo function of the SRP core RNA

Previous studies of the E. coli SRP suggested that domain IV of the RNA is necessary and sufficient for specific recognition by Ffh (15, 35) (Fig. 1, B and C). Its binding affinity for the M domain is virtually identical to that for the full-length Ffh protein and it also supports GTP hydrolysis by Ffh and FtsY in vitro (36). To test whether the 49-nt domain IV RNA used for crystalllography is functional in vivo, we used a strain of E. coli (S1610) lysogenic for the S gene and preventing bacterial growth. This strain is ideal for testing whether the 49-nt domain IV RNA used for in vitro experiments (24) as well as additional analog interference experiments (34) are consistent with the crystal structure. Thus, interactions observed crystallographically are functionally important for formation of the SRP.

The SRP RNA is required to elicit GTP hydrolysis during each cycle of signal sequence binding, protein translocation, and release by the SRP in both bacterial and eukaryotic systems (40, 41). Thus, the RNA–M domain complex (the ribonucleoprotein domain) within the SRP may function analogously to GTPase activating proteins (GAPs) that have been characterized in other GTPase-regulated systems. While most of the universally conserved amino acids and nucleotides are buried in the M domain–RNA interface, A39 and Arg-398 are stacked on the surface of the complex (Fig. 4A). Although invariant within Ffh/SRP54 proteins, Arg-398 is not required for stable association of the SRP RNA with Ffh (42), suggesting another role for this region of the SRP core. An intriguing possibility is that the A39–Arg-398 stack modulates GTPase activity of Ffh and/or FtsY (10), perhaps by enabling the Arg-398 residue to facilitate GTP hydrolysis as has been observed for other GAPs (43).

The structure and analysis of the SRP core presented here provides a detailed understanding of one of the most conserved ribonucleoprotein elements in biology. The unique interactions of protein, RNA, cations, and ordered water molecules create the core of the SRP responsible for signal peptide recognition. Together with earlier crystallographic studies of the NG domain of Ffh (9) and the NG domain of the SRP receptor (11), structures of all of the conserved functional centers required for protein translocation by the SRP are now in hand. These structures provide the foundation for understanding how these elements interact to effect protein targeting in all cells.

References and Notes

22. A fragment of the E. coli Ffh corresponding to residues 298 to 453 was probed with V8 and trypsin proteases in the presence and absence of RNA under conditions that yield lethal inhibition of the protein. Samples of the proteolytic reaction were taken between 5 min and 1 hour and subjected to matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization–time-of-flight mass spectrometry [R. F. Reisert and B. T. Chait, Methods Enzymol. 270, 519 (1996)]. Although the free protein was rapidly proteolyzed (≤5 min), binding of RNA protected a region corresponding to residues 318 to 432. Further mapping yielded a minimal M domain comprising residues 328 to 432 that still binds to the 4.5S RNA with the same affinity as that of full-length Ffh. This construct consists of the signal sequence binding region as well as all of the universally conserved amino acids implicated in RNA recognition (Fig. 1D). Cys-406 was mutated to Ser to avoid oxidation that otherwise destroys RNA binding activity (24). In the RNA, the GGAA tetraloop was changed to GAA to promote RNA–RNA interactions in the crystal lattice.
23. The apparent dissociation constant (Kd) for this RNA-protein interaction was determined with a modification of the nitrocellulose filterbinding assay. Briefly, trace quantities of 5’-end-labeled RNA (<1 pm) were incubated with varying concentrations of M domain in a buffer containing 20 mM K-Hepes (pH 7.5), 100 mM KCl, 10 mM MgCl2, 0.5 mM Na-EDTA, tRNA (0.1 mg/ml), and 0.01% Igepal C-630 for 30 min at room temperature. These reaction mixtures were then filtered through a nitrocellulose filter (BABB, Schleicher & Schuell) and a positively charged nylon filter (Hybond+; Amersham). The filters were washed with two 200-ml samples of binding buffer, and the radioactivity corresponding to free and bound quantified with a PhosphorImager (Molecular Dynamics). The fraction of RNA bound was fit to a Langmuir isotherm to yield Kd.
Three-Layered Atmospheric Structure in Accretion Disks Around Stellar-Mass Black Holes

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Modeling of the x-ray spectra of the Galactic superluminal jet sources GRS 1915+105 and GRO J1655-40 reveals a three-layered atmospheric structure in the inner region of their accretion disks. Above the cold and optically thick disk with a temperature of 0.2 to 0.5 kiloelectron volts, there is a warm layer with a temperature of 1.0 to 1.5 kiloelectron volts and an optical depth around 10. Sometimes there is also a much hotter, optically thin corona above the warm layer, with a temperature of 100 kiloelectron volts or higher and an optical depth around unity. The structural similarity between the accretion disks and the solar atmosphere suggests that similar physical processes may be operating in these different systems.

The sun has a complicated atmosphere, including a photosphere, achromosphere, a transition layer, and an outermost hot corona (1, 2). It is generally thought that the magnetic activities of the sun may play an important role in heating the corona (2, 3), although other models have been proposed (4). The atmosphere of the sun is not in hydrodynamical equilibrium. Consequently, the solar wind is blown outward from the corona. Coronas and outflows are actually common in various types of stellar environments. Here, we present observational evidence and modeling for a solar-type atmosphere for the accretion disks around stellar-mass black holes in x-ray binaries (5).

One of the common characteristics of black hole binaries is the so-called two-component x-ray and gamma-ray spectrum: a soft black-body-like component at low energies (<10 keV) and a hard power-law–like component at high energies (up to several hundred keV) (6). The soft component is generally attributed to the emission from an optically thick, geometrically thin cold accretion disk, which is often described by the standard α-disk model (7). The hard component is attributed to an optically thin, geometrically thick hot corona in either a plane parallel to the disk or with a spherical geometry above the disk (8). The prototype models were motivated by the studies of the solar corona (9).

Recently, more attention has been paid to