

Cloning and sequencing of mouse collagenase cDNA*

Divergence of mouse and rat collagenases from the other mammalian collagenases

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Mouse collagenase cDNA was cloned and sequenced. The deduced amino acid sequence was compared to those of the other mammalian collagenases and related matrix metalloproteinases. These comparisons, as well as those of some enzymatic properties, show that the rodent (mouse and rat) interstitial collagenases are very similar but differ more from the other interstitial collagenases than does human neutrophil collagenase.

This supports the hypothesis that the order Rodentia is an outgroup to the other eutherian (placental) mammalian orders.

Collagen; Evolution; Homology; Matrix metalloproteinase; Neutrophil; Rodent

1. INTRODUCTION

Vertebrate collagenases belong to a family of matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) which share several structural and functional characteristics (reviewed by Matrisian [1], Docherty and Murphy [2] and Woessner [3]). On the basis of their amino acid sequences and their substrate specificities, MMPs have been grouped into three major classes: collagenases, gelatinases and stromelysins. Mammalian collagenases have been divided in two groups: interstitial collagenases (EC 3.4.24.7, MMP 1) and neutrophil collagenases (EC 3.4.24.34, MMP 8).

The cDNA sequences of five interstitial collagenases (human, rabbit, porcine, bovine and rat) and of human neutrophil collagenase are known. The importance of murine experimental models in bone, tumor and developmental biology prompted us to clone and sequence the cDNA of mouse collagenase.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

2.1. Northern blotting analysis

Calvaria of 5-day-old NMRI (Naval Medical Research Institute)

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Abbreviations: ME, metalloelastase; MMP, matrix metalloproteinase; NMRI, Naval Medical Research Institute; PCR, polymerase chain reaction; SSC, sodium saline citrate (1× = NaCl 0.15 M, sodium citrate 0.015 M); UTR, untranslated region.

mice were cultured for 4 days in the presence of heparin [4]. Total RNA was isolated by the standard guanidine thiocyanate-caesium chloride method [5] and about 20 µg were electrophoresed on an agarose-formaldehyde gel and blotted onto a nylon membrane (Amersham). A 2.1-kb cDNA probe was prepared by *Xho*I digestion of a pBluescript clone containing a 2.7-kb cDNA of rat collagenase [6]. The membrane was hybridized overnight at 65°C with the ³²P-labeled rat probe, washed four times (the most stringent condition used was 0.2× SSC–0.1% SDS at 65°C) and exposed for about 48 h with intensifying screens.

2.2. Construction of a cDNA library and isolation of a clone

Poly(A)-rich RNA was purified from total RNA with an oligo(dT)-cellulose column (Pharmacia) and cDNA was synthesized using the Riboclone cDNA Synthesis System *Not*I primer adaptor (Promega Corp.) in the presence of [³²P]dATP (Amersham). The products were fractionated on an Agarose A 50 M column and only fractions that did not contain cDNAs smaller than 600 bp were used in the next steps. A lambda gt 11 (*Sfi*I–*Not*I) cDNA library was constructed with this material using Riboclone *Eco*RI Adaptor Ligation System I and Lambda gt 11 *Sfi*–*Not* DNA (*Eco*RI–*Not*I arms) Plus Packagene System (Promega Corp.).

Clones for collagenase were isolated from this library by triple screening with the rat cDNA probe using standard procedures [5]. About 1.5×10⁵ clones were analyzed in the primary screening. For tertiary screening, membrane duplicates were screened either with the probe described above or with a shorter (390 bp) 5' fragment of this probe in order to detect the longest inserts. Membranes for tertiary screening were finally washed in 0.1× SSC–0.1% SDS at 65°C.

To identify the longest insert, the 5' terminal region of four clones positive after tertiary screening was amplified by PCR using Perkin-Elmer Cetus chemicals and procedure. The oligonucleotides used were the lambda gt 11 forward primer (New England Biolabs) and a 36-mer hybridizing a highly conserved sequence of all MMPs, the cysteine switch (5'-ACGAATTCCTTTAAACACCCACATCAGGCACTCCACA-3'). Amplification products were compared by electrophoresis on an agarose gel. The longest insert was subcloned between the *Hind*III and *Not*I sites of pBluescript (Stratagene) after intermediate passage between the *Sfi*I and *Not*I sites of pGEM 13 Zf+ (Promega Corp.).

2.3. DNA sequencing and sequence comparisons

Progressively deleted clones were generated for each strand with Exonuclease III (Erase A Base System, Promega Corp.). Mouse collagenase cDNA was double-strand sequenced on both strands by the dideoxynucleotide chain termination method [7] with T7 DNA Polymerase or TaqTrack DNA Polymerase Systems (Promega Corp.). The deleted clones were sequenced with T3/T7 primers (Promega Corp.) and fragments of the full-length cDNA with specific primers derived from the rat sequence.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When cultured in the presence of heparin, calvaria from 5-day-old mice release about 10 U of collagenase/ml culture medium in 4 days [8], corresponding approximately to 2.5 μ g of purified enzyme. As illustrated in Fig. 1, extracts of such cultured calvaria contained a 3.0-kb mRNA which hybridized with a rat collagenase cDNA probe (a gift from Dr. J. Jeffrey, see [6]) under the most stringent conditions used. At lower stringency, a human collagenase cDNA probe (a gift from Dr. H. Nagase) revealed the same band plus a band of 1.9 kb (data not shown), the latter probably corresponding to a stromelysin mRNA [9].

A cDNA library was constructed using RNA extracted from such cultured calvaria and screened with the rat collagenase cDNA probe in order to isolate clones for mouse collagenase. About 1% of the clones were positive at the primary screening. Two subsequent screenings allowed the isolation of four clones with a 2.7-kb insert. The clone with the longest insert was identified by PCR amplification of the 5' terminal region and this insert was subcloned and sequenced.

The 2,660-bp cDNA (Fig. 2) shares 94% identity with rat collagenase cDNA [6]. Two sequences of 15 and 10 amino acids determined on purified mouse collagenase (Peeters-Joris, personal communication) are identical with the corresponding sequences deduced from our cDNA. These sequences (residues 105–119 and 266–275) are distinct from the highly conserved regions, thus confirming that our cDNA encodes mouse collagenase. Like its rat homologue [6], mouse collagenase cDNA originates from a mRNA longer (2.9–3.0 kb) than the mRNAs encoding the other mammalian collagenases (2–2.5 kb). Therefore, the 2.0-kb mouse embryonic mRNA detected by Brenner et al. [10] with a PCR-derived probe does not code for mouse collagenase but probably corresponds to a related MMP. Our mouse collagenase cDNA contains a 10-bp 5' untranslated region (UTR), a 1,416-bp open reading frame encoding mouse procollagenase, a 1215-bp 3' UTR containing the polyadenylation signal and a 19-bp poly(A) tail. The initial ATG is preceded by a sequence matching the Kozak consensus [11].

The deduced amino acid sequence of mouse collagenase (Fig. 2) exhibits the domain structure common to MMPs and more particularly to all mammalian collagenases: a signal peptide (residues 1–23), a propeptide

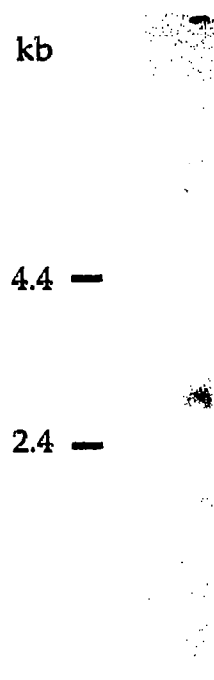


Fig. 1. Northern blot of mouse calvaria total RNA (20 μ g) probed with a 32 P-labeled rat collagenase cDNA.

(residues 24–104) containing the cysteine switch, a catalytic domain (residues 105–234) containing the zinc binding domain and an hemopexin-like domain (residues 235–472). This sequence shares 97% identity with that of rat collagenase [6]. We compared it with the sequences of other mammalian collagenases and related MMPs available from the GenBank/EMBL Database: (i) interstitial collagenases (MMP 1, EC 3.4.24.7, accession numbers M13509, M17820, X54724, X58256 and M60616), (ii) human neutrophil collagenase (MMP 8, EC 3.4.24.34, accession number J05556), (iii) stromelysins 1 (MMP 3, EC 3.4.24.17, accession numbers X05232, X66402 and PIR International Protein Sequence Database accession numbers A29157 and A00997), (iv) stromelysins 2 (MMP 10, EC 3.4.24.22, X07820 and X05083), (v) homologous domains of gelatinases A (MMP 2, EC 3.4.24.24, accession numbers J03210 and M84324), and (vi) a recently cloned mouse metalloelastase (M82831). The results of this computer-aided comparison are presented in Table 1.

These comparisons show that the primary sequences of the same MMPs from different species share 76–98% identity, except the rodent (mouse and rat) collagenases which share no more than 52–55% identity with each of the four other mammalian interstitial collagenases (Table 1, closed box). This is not due to differences restricted to a particular region of the protein sequence. This small percentage of identity is equal or even lower than the percentage of identity (52–62%) shared by

Fig. 2. Nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequence of mouse collagenase. GenBank/EMBL Database accession number X66473.

Rodent interstitial collagenases, but not the other rodent MMPs (gelatinase A, stromelysins 1 and 2), diverge from the non-rodent homologues studied here not only by their primary sequence but also by the 3' UTR of their cDNAs, suggesting the existence of two sub-

groups of interstitial collagenases. Subgroup I includes the rat and mouse interstitial collagenases, subgroup II includes those from human, rabbit, porcine and bovine origin. The 3' UTR sequences of subgroup I could be aligned by considering 99% of the rat sequence and 96% of the mouse sequence; those of the four members of subgroup II could be aligned by considering 61–88% of their sequences. This comparison showed that the aligned 3' UTR sequences of the two members of subgroup I share 85% identity and those of the four members of subgroup II, 64–79% identity. Moreover, the rodent 3' UTRs are longer (1.2 kb) than those of subgroup II (≤ 0.6 kb), accounting for the difference in length of their mRNAs, and no identity was found between any segment of 3' UTRs of members of the two subgroups.

There are four potential glycosylation sites in the rodent interstitial collagenases and two in those of the other subgroup. The apparent M_r of the proenzyme on SDS-PAGE is higher (66 and 62 kDa) for the rodent than for the other interstitial collagenases (55 and 52 kDa), consistent with a more abundant glycosylation. The interactions of rat [12] and mouse (not shown) collagenases with ion-exchange gels and heparin also differ from those of the other interstitial collagenases.

All vertebrate collagenases, but no other known vertebrate proteinase, cleave the triple helical molecule of collagen types I, II and III at a specific site, generating a three quarter- and a one quarter-length fragment. However, the rodent (rat and mouse) interstitial collagenases, the other mammalian ones and the human neutrophil collagenase differ from each other in their substrate specificity [13–16], for example towards soluble type I, II and III collagens. Rodent collagenases have no marked preference, while the catalytic rates (k_{cat}/K_m) for the degradation of soluble collagens are in the order type III (100%), type I (7%), type II (0.2%) for the interstitial collagenases but in the order type I (100%), type II (20%), type III (5%) for neutrophil collagenase.

In conclusion, the cloning of mouse collagenase cDNA and the results of the comparisons made here show that the rodent (mouse and rat) interstitial collagenases are very similar but differ more from the other interstitial collagenases than does neutrophil collagenase. In terms of primary sequence, they are as different from the other mammalian collagenases as are the stromelysins. The divergence of mouse and rat collagenases from the other mammalian ones supports the hypothesis, based on a phylogenetic analysis of DNA sequences [17], that the order Rodentia is an outgroup to the other eutherian (placental) mammalian orders. The other rodent MMPs would have escaped this evolutionary drift through a process of concerted evolution [18] like, for instance, the genes of the growth hormone family [19]. Another possibility would be that present-

day rodent collagenase has evolved, as a new enzyme subgroup (then requiring a distinct MMP number), from a gene that separated from the ancestor of the MMP 1 gene [20] prior to the emergence of Rodentia. This raises the intriguing possibility that members of this new subgroup could coexist with MMP 1 in non-rodent species. In any case, our observations raise the issue of reconsidering the distinction between neutrophil (EC 3.4.24.34) and interstitial (EC 3.4.24.7) collagenases.

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