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Scott Fretzin

Washington University in St. Louis

Barbara D. Allan

Washington University in St. Louis

Angela van Daal

Washington University in St. Louis

Sarah C.R. Elgin

Washington University in St. Louis, selgin@wustl.edu

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Brief Notes

A Drosophila melanogaster H3.3* cDNA encodes a histone variant identical with the vertebrate H3.3

(Conserved proteins; amino acid sequence homologies; chromatin; bacteriophage λ library; invertebrate)

Scott Fretzin, Barbara D. Allan, Angela van Daal and Sarah C. R. Elgin

Department of Biology, Washington University, St. Louis, MO 63130 (U.S.A.)

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SUMMARY

A cDNA encoding an H3.3 histone variant in *Drosophila melanogaster* predicts a protein with an amino acid (aa) sequence identical with that in vertebrates. The *D. melanogaster H3.3* nucleotide (nt) sequence has diverged significantly from that of both the *H3.3* gene of vertebrates and the *H3.1* gene of *D. melanogaster*, largely through third nt changes in its codons. The perfect H3.3 aa sequence conservation between organisms as phylogenetically divergent as vertebrates and flies suggests that the H3.3 histone variant itself is an important structural component of chromatin, apart from the value of its replication-independent expression pattern.

The genes encoding H3 in vertebrates include both those expressed under cell-cycle regulation (i.e., *H3.1* and *H3.2* genes) and those expressed under replication-independent control, notably *H3.3*. The latter genes are characterized as containing introns and producing a polyadenylated message, in contrast to the former, which lack introns and produce a nonpolyadenylated message (for review of data see Wells et al., 1989; Wells and McBride, 1989).

We have recovered a clone encoding histone variant H3.3 from a library of *D. melanogaster* embryo cDNA (Brown and Kafatos, 1988) screened with a 673-bp insert of the chicken *H3.3B* clone (Brush et al., 1985). Both strands of the *D. melanogaster* cDNA clone were fully sequenced. *D. melanogaster H3.3* shows 96% aa sequence similarity to the presumed replication-dependent H3.1 pro-

tein of *D. melanogaster* (five single aa changes). The nt sequence, however, displays only 77% similarity to the *D. melanogaster H3.1* gene from the repetitious cluster at polytene chromosome locus 39D2-E2 (Matsuo and Yamazaki, 1989), containing numerous silent nt substitutions. cDNA and genomic clones encoding the H3.3 replication-independent histone variant have also been isolated from human, chick, rabbit, and mouse (Brush et al., 1985; Wells and Kedes, 1985; Wellman et al., 1987; Wells et al., 1987; Hraba-Renevey and Kress, 1989; Chalmers and Wells, 1990). Although the interspecies nt sequences are only 75% similar, the encoded H3.3 proteins are identical.

The H3.3 proteins from human, chick, rabbit, mouse and *D. melanogaster* all differ from their respective H3.1s in having Ser (rather than Ala³¹), and Ala-Ala-Ile-Gly (rather than Ser⁸⁷-Ala-Val-Met⁹⁰). Each variant contains about 75% similarity to its own S-phase-regulated H3. Although each organism exhibits numerous silent nt changes while conserving the H3.3 aa sequence, these silent nt substitutions are different among various organisms. The characteristic high degree of similarity present between the vertebrate 3'-untranslated regions (Wells et al., 1987; Hraba-

Correspondence to: B.D. Allan, Department of Biology, Box 1137, Washington University, St Louis, MO 63130 (U.S.A.)
Tel. (314)935-6837; Fax (314)935-4432.

* On request the authors will supply experimental evidence for the conclusions reached in this Brief Note.

Abbreviations: aa, amino acid(s); bp, base pair(s); *D.*, *Drosophila*; H3, histone H3; *H3*, gene (DNA) encoding H3; nt, nucleotide(s).

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1      CCCCTTTGTGAAAATTTCTCCTCGCTCCGAATTTGGTCTCGTGTGAAAGTGAC
57  AAATTGTGARGAATRACTTTATTCCTGTTTACGTTTAAAAAAGCTAAGAAAAC
116  ATG GCT CGT ACt AAG CAg ACT GCc CGt AAg TCG ACc GGA GGA AAG
1 MET Ala Arg Thr Lys Gln Thr Ala Arg Lys Ser Thr Gly Gly Lys
161  GcT CcT CGt AAg CAg CTa GCc ACc AAG GCt GCc GcT AaA tcg GCg
16 Ala Pro Arg Lys Gln Leu Ala Thr Lys Ala Ala Arg Lys Ser Ala
206  CCA lAc ACC GCc GGA GTG AAG AAG CCC CA*T C*Gt TAT C*Gt CcC GGA
31 Pro Ser Thr Gly Gly Val Lys Lys Pro His Arg Tyr Arg Pro Gly
251  ACt GTG GcT cTt CGT GA*g ATc CGT CGt TAC CAg AAG tcg ACC GAG
46 Thr Val Ala Leu Arg Glu Ile Arg Arg Tyr Gln Lys Ser Thr Glu
296  tTg C*Tc ATC CGC AAG CTG CcC TTC CAG CGT CTG G*Tt CgT GAA ATC
61 Leu Leu Ile Arg Lys Leu Pro Phe Gln Arg Leu Val Arg Glu Ile
341  GcT CAG GAt T*Tc AAG ACc GAt cTg CGt TTC CAG tcg gct GCc atc
76 Ala Gln Asp Phe Lys Thr Asp Leu Arg Phe Gln Ser Ala Ala Ile
386  ggt GCc tTg CAG GAA GCA tct GA*g GCg TAC cTg GTg GGT CTC TTC
51 Gly Ala Leu Gln Glu Ala Ser Glu Ala Tyr Leu Val Gly Leu Phe
431  GA*g GAc ACC AAc TTG Tgc GcT ATc CAC GCc AAG GCc gAg Aca ATc
106 Glu Asp Thr Asn Leu Cys Ala Ile His Ala Lys Arg Val Thr Ile
476  ATC CcT AAg GAc ATC GAg TTg GCG GCc CCG ATc C*Gt GCG GAG CGT
121 Met Pro Lys Asp Ile Gln Leu Ala Arg Arg Ile Arg Gly Glu Arg
521  GcT TAA GGTGGATCAGCAGGAACGCCAG*TTTCGATCACTGTCGTC*CCATTCCCGARCA
136 Ala
578  GTRGACCATTCCAGTACC*GGTTGTAGAGAGGTGCACGCCAAGGAGCTATACCAGCGACA
637  CATTGATCCAATCTATCATTCA*TATTTACATGTATACATTTTATCATCCITTTGGTGTTC
696  AATCGARTCGTCAGCATGACGTTGTGCATAGAAAACACCACACACAAAC

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Fig. 1. The nt sequence of a *D. melanogaster* cDNA encoding histone H3.3. Lower-case letters within the coding region indicates a nt substitutions in comparison to the *D. melanogaster* H3.1 gene; underlining indicates an aa substitutions. If the cDNA represents a full-length transcript, then the transcription start point is at the 5' end of the sequence. No TATA box and no polyadenylation signal consensus sequences are present. EMBL accession No. X53822.

Renevey and Kress, 1989; Chambers and Wells, 1990) is not seen with the *D. melanogaster* H3.3 cDNA. The function of the H3.3 variants remains unknown; however, the high degree of aa sequence conservation observed argues that the selective pressures on H3.3 reflect the use of the protein itself, and not only a requirement for replication-independent H3 synthesis. Genetic studies in *D. melanogaster* should help elucidate the importance of

both the H3.3 histone variant itself and its expression pattern.

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