



The FAM86 domain of FAM86A confers substrate specificity to promote EEF2-Lys525 methylation

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FAM86A is a class I lysine methyltransferase (KMT) that generates trimethylation on the eukaryotic translation elongation factor 2 (EEF2) at Lys525. Publicly available data from The Cancer Dependency Map project indicate high dependence of hundreds of human cancer cell lines on FAM86A expression. This classifies FAM86A among numerous other KMTs as potential targets for future anticancer therapies. However, selective inhibition of KMTs by small molecules can be challenging due to high conservation within the *S*-adenosyl methionine (SAM) cofactor binding domain among KMT subfamilies. Therefore, understanding the unique interactions within each KMT–substrate pair can facilitate developing highly specific inhibitors. The FAM86A gene encodes an N-terminal FAM86 domain of unknown function in addition to its C-terminal methyltransferase domain. Here, we used a combination of X-ray crystallography, the AlphaFold algorithms, and experimental biochemistry to identify an essential role of the FAM86 domain in mediating EEF2 methylation by FAM86A. To facilitate our studies, we also generated a selective EEF2K525 methyl antibody. Overall, this is the first report of a biological function for the FAM86 structural domain in any species and an example of a noncatalytic domain participating in protein lysine methylation. The interaction between the FAM86 domain and EEF2 provides a new strategy for developing a specific FAM86A small molecule inhibitor, and our results provide an example in which modeling a protein–protein interaction with AlphaFold expedites experimental biology.

Protein lysine methylation is the addition of one, two, or three methyl moieties to the ϵ -nitrogen of a lysine side chain, forming mono-, di-, and trimethylated derivatives (1). Lysine methylation is an abundant posttranslational modification in humans, carried out by dozens of lysine methyltransferases (KMTs) encoded in the human genome (1–3). Human KMTs belong to one of two large families: SET (Su(var)3–9, Enhancer-of-zeste, Trithorax) domain enzymes and 7 β S (seven- β -strand) domain enzymes (4). Members of the SET domain family are known to generate lysine methylation on

histones as well as nonhistone proteins and serve both nuclear and cytoplasmic functions (5). Members of the 7 β S family, with few exceptions (6, 7), generally methylate nonhistone proteins and serve cytoplasmic activities (3). Human KMTs regulate diverse biological processes via their methylation activities, including the fundamental processes of transcription and translation (1, 4, 5). Accordingly, dysregulation of many KMTs, for example by aberrant expression or mutation, has been linked to diverse human diseases including cancer (1, 2, 5). FAM86A is a member of the 7 β S family known to generate trimethylation on lysine 525 (K525me3) on the eukaryotic translation elongation factor 2 (EEF2) (8, 9).

EEF2 performs the essential function of facilitating ribosomal translocation during mRNA translation (10–13). It has been reported that translational control of the proteome, including EEF2 upregulation (14, 15), is common in human cancers (16, 17). Notably, publicly available data from The Cancer Dependency Map project (DepMap) indicate high dependence of hundreds of human cancer cell lines on expression of the EEF2 methyltransferase FAM86A (Fig. S1) (18, 19). This observation suggests there may be value in targeting FAM86A for oncological indications. While there has been success in the last decade in developing selective small molecule KMT inhibitors, advancing inhibitors for many KMTs into successful clinical trials is an ongoing challenge (1, 20, 21). Many small molecule inhibitors under investigation for clinical use are competitors of *S*-adenosylmethionine (SAM), the methyl donor in lysine methylation catalysis (1, 20). While inhibiting KMTs with SAM-competitive molecules can be effective, these molecules carry the challenge of potential poor selectivity since all KMTs utilize SAM for catalysis. Thus, identifying unique characteristics within KMT–substrate pairs can aid in the development of specific KMT inhibitors.

It is common for KMTs to encode structural domains in addition to catalytic domains (*e.g.*, (22)). In both *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and humans, FAM86A encodes an uncharacterized FAM86 domain as well as its catalytic methyltransferase (MTase) domain (Fig. 1A). Primary amino acid sequence alignment shows the FAM86 and MTase domains of FAM86A are conserved from yeast with 20% and 28% conserved identity, respectively (Fig. 1A). Although the FAM86 domain evolved alongside the MTase domain through the evolutionary tree,

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Molecular recognition of *EEF2* by *FAM86A*

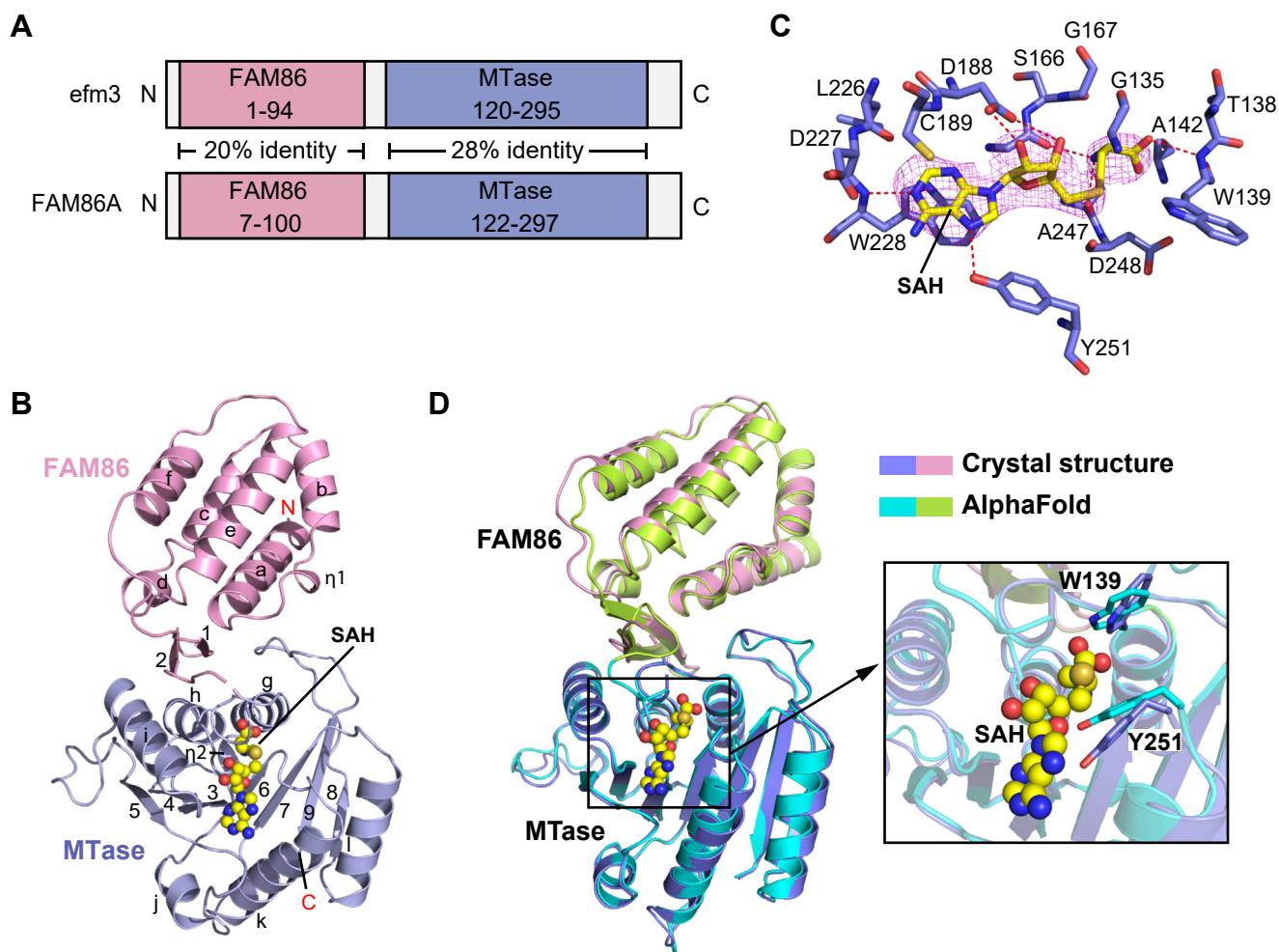


Figure 1. FAM86A structural models determined by X-ray crystallography and AlphaFold. *A*, schematic of yeast *efm3* and human *FAM86A* protein domain structures. *B*, ribbon representation of human *FAM86A* bound to *S*-adenosyl homocysteine (SAH) as determined by X-ray crystallography. *C*, close-up view of the interaction between human *FAM86A* and SAH, with hydrogen-bonding interactions depicted as dashed lines. The $F_o - F_c$ omit map (magenta) of SAH is contoured at 2.5σ level. *D*, superimposition of *FAM86A* X-ray crystallography and AlphaFold predicted structures.

there remains no known biological function for the FAM86 domain in any species.

AlphaFold is the machine learning algorithm developed by DeepMind to predict protein structures based on primary amino acid sequences (23). In the last couple of years, hundreds of thousands of protein models have been predicted by AlphaFold and made available to the public (24). These models are often highly accurate based on comparisons with experimentally determined structures (23, 25). AlphaFold-Multimer is a new iteration of AlphaFold designed to predict possible conformations of multichain protein complexes (26). Therefore, the simulation of protein structures and protein–protein interactions *in silico* has the potential to facilitate the process of experimental biology by enabling molecular insights on an accelerated timescale. In this work, we used a combination of X-ray crystallography, the newest AlphaFold algorithms, and experimental biochemistry to characterize the role of the FAM86 domain in *EEF2* methylation by *FAM86A*.

Using the structural data provided by X-ray crystallography and AlphaFold, we determined the FAM86 domain of

FAM86A forms a five-helix bundle distinct from the $7\beta S$ domain. By testing the catalytic activity of a truncated *FAM86A* construct lacking the FAM86 domain, we found the FAM86 domain is required for *EEF2* methylation *in vitro* and in human cells. Simulated models of the *FAM86A*–*EEF2* interaction generated by AlphaFold-Multimer suggested the FAM86 domain of *FAM86A* forms an extensive intermolecular interaction with *EEF2*. Point mutations within this predicted interface inhibited *EEF2* methylation in human cells. Based on these data, we propose that the FAM86 domain of *FAM86A* confers substrate specificity by orienting *EEF2*-Lys525 toward the *FAM86A* active site. Future work may leverage these insights or take similar approaches to develop selective inhibitors of *FAM86A* and other KMTs.

Results

Characterization of *FAM86A* crystal structure and AlphaFold model

Our initial effort in crystallizing wildtype *FAM86A* failed to generate diffractable crystals. To overcome this challenge, we

designed a *FAM86A* construct harboring a triple mutation for reduction of surface entropy (see [Experimental procedures](#)), which permitted structure determination of full-length *FAM86A* in complex with cofactor-by-product *S*-adenosyl homocysteine (SAH) at 3.3-Å resolution (Figs. 1, B and C, S2 and Table 1). The crystal structure of the *FAM86A*-SAH complex belongs to the $I4_{22}$ space group, containing three complexes in one asymmetric unit (Fig. S2A). We were able to trace the entire *FAM86A* protein, except for the very N terminus (residues 1–5) and a portion of the domain linker between the *FAM86* and MTase domains (residues 127–133).

The structure of *FAM86A* reveals a two-lobe architecture, in which the N-terminal *FAM86* domain stacks right on top of the C-terminal methyltransferase domain, creating a potential catalytic cleft commonly observed for DNA methyltransferases (Fig. 1, B and C) (27, 28). The *FAM86* domain is dominated by a five-helix bundle (α a, α b, α c, α e, and α f), which packs against a following two-stranded (β 1 and β 2) β -sheet via α a- and intervening α d-helix. The methyltransferase domain assumes a Rossmann fold, in which a seven-stranded central β -sheet is flanked by three α -helices on both sides.

We next examined the predicted model of *FAM86A*'s 3D structure available through the AlphaFold database with ligand transposition provided by AlphaFill (29). The predicted model bears striking resemblance to the experimental crystal structure, with root-mean-square deviation (RMSD) of 1.2 Å over

319 aligned C α atoms (Fig. 1D). Of note, the experimental and predicted models reveal the nearly identical SAM-binding pocket with approximately 14 residues participating in the coordination of the ligand SAH (Fig. 1D). Nevertheless, the experimental and predicted models show a slight difference in the helical orientations (α e and α f) in the *FAM86* domain, as well as the positionings of the SAH-engaging residues W139 and Y251 (Fig. 1D). AlphaFill did not predict any ligands to interact with the *FAM86* domain.

The *FAM86* domain of *FAM86A* is required for *EEF2*-Lys525 methylation

We began our investigation into *FAM86A* methylation by raising an antibody that is highly selective and specific for *EEF2*-K525 trimethylation (Fig. S3). First, we generated *FAM86A* knockout (KO) HEK293T cells and found endogenous *EEF2*-K525me3 levels were completely depleted in the KO cells (Fig. 2A). We used the custom antibody to ask whether the *FAM86* domain of *FAM86A* is required for *EEF2* methylation. To test this, we cloned a truncated construct of *FAM86A* (*FAM86A*(101–330)) lacking the *FAM86* domain (Fig. 2B) and tested its activity on *EEF2* by adding back wild-type or truncated *FAM86A* to KO cells by transfection. While wildtype *FAM86A* generated *EEF2*-K525me3, the truncated mutant, which expressed at the same level as wildtype protein, did not (Fig. 2C). Next, we asked a similar question *in vitro* by

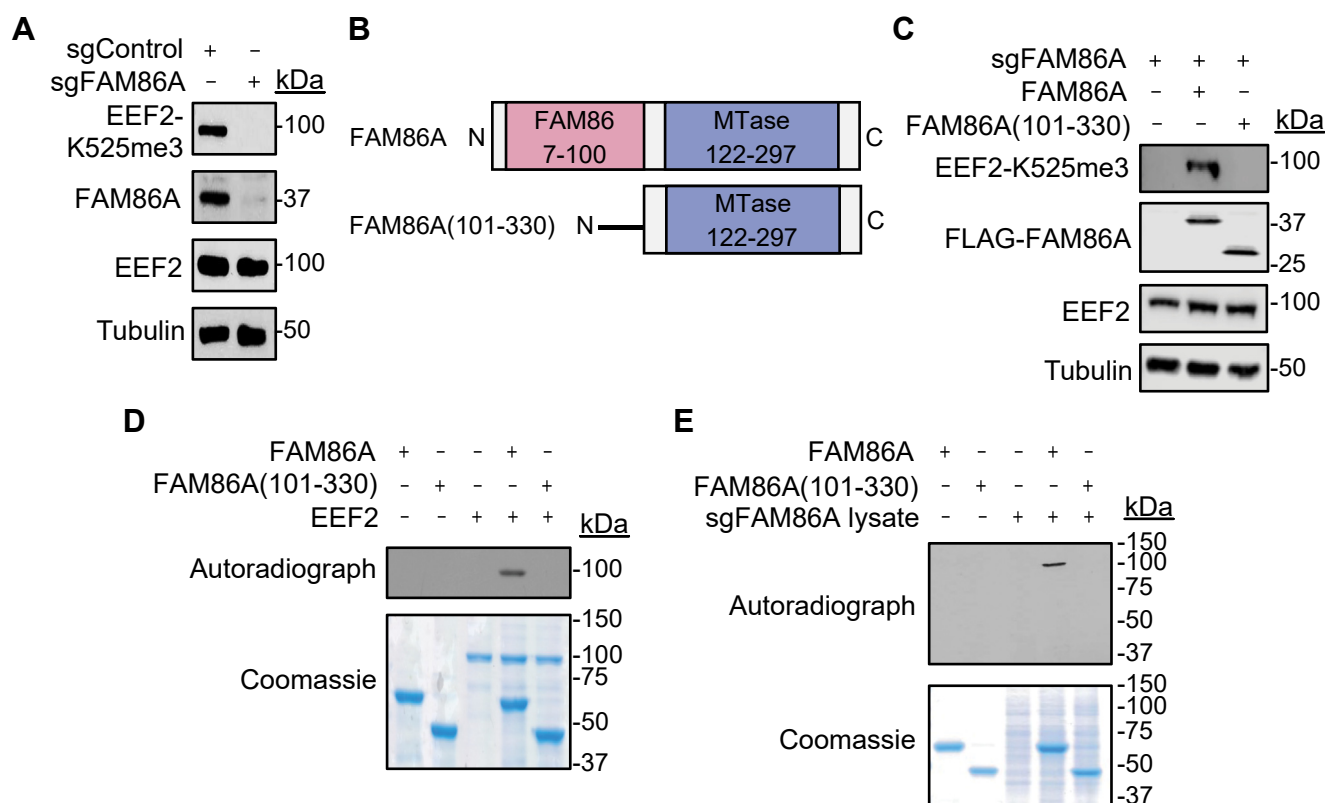


Figure 2. The *FAM86* domain is required for *EEF2* methylation by *FAM86A*. A, Western blot analysis of whole cell extracts from control or *FAM86A*-depleted HEK293T cells. B, schematic of wildtype *FAM86A* and *FAM86A*(101–330) lacking the *FAM86* domain. C, Western blot analysis of whole cell extracts from *FAM86A*-depleted HEK293T cells complemented with the indicated constructs described in (B). D, *in vitro* methylation assay with recombinant wildtype or truncated *FAM86A* as indicated with recombinant *EEF2* as substrate. Top panel, ^3H -SAM is the methyl donor and methylation visualized by autoradiography. Bottom panel, Coomassie blue stain of the proteins in the reaction. E, *in vitro* methylation assay as in (D) using whole cell extracts from *FAM86A*-depleted HEK293T cells shown in (A) as the substrate.

Molecular recognition of *EEF2* by *FAM86A*

incubating recombinant, purified *FAM86A* with recombinant, purified *EEF2* in the presence of radiolabeled SAM ($^3\text{H-SAM}$). Consistent with the result in cells, we found the *FAM86* domain is required for *EEF2* methylation *in vitro* (Fig. 2D). When recombinant, purified *FAM86A*(101–330) was incubated with whole cell extracts from the *FAM86A* KO HEK293T cells *in vitro*, we did not observe activity on any protein, whereas full-length protein methylated a protein the size of *EEF2* (Fig. 2E). From these data we conclude the *FAM86* domain is required for *EEF2*-Lys525 methylation by *FAM86A* and that *EEF2* is the likely main physiologic target of *FAM86A*.

Simulation of the *FAM86A*–*EEF2* interface by AlphaFold-Multimer

We next considered whether the *FAM86* domain participates in the physical interaction between *FAM86A* and *EEF2*. To test this *in silico*, we queried AlphaFold-Multimer via ColabFold (30) to simulate a heterodimeric model containing the *FAM86A* and *EEF2* proteins in a 1:1 stoichiometry. AlphaFold-Multimer outputs multiple models containing the possible conformations of the queried protein sequences in complex with each other, assigning a confidence ranking to each model. The models for our query were all nearly identical to one another, and the model designated with the highest confidence ranking by AlphaFold-Multimer is analyzed here. A physical interaction of less than 3 Å was predicted, involving both the *FAM86* and MTase domains of *FAM86A* (Fig. 3A). Importantly, *EEF2*-Lys525 was predicted to occupy a position proximal to the *FAM86A* active site near the SAM-binding residues that were independently identified by X-ray crystallography and AlphaFill (Fig. 3A). When superimposed with the AlphaFill model, we can visualize the proximity of *EEF2*-Lys525 to the ligand SAM as if *FAM86A*, *EEF2*, and SAM were experimentally cocrystallized (Fig. 3B). In a second interface, an interaction was predicted involving the *FAM86* domain and domain IV of *EEF2* (Fig. 3A). A close-up view reveals an extensive network of interactions involving *FAM86A* residues Ile78, Pro88, Asp90, Try93, Glu94, Leu96, Ala97, Leu100, and Met101 as well as *EEF2* residues Pro596, Val680, Ala681, Trp685, Gly718, Gly719, Gln720, Ile722, Pro723, and Arg726 (Fig. 3C). Since AlphaFold-Multimer folds proteins with a goal of simulating an interaction, we superimposed the models of *FAM86A* and *EEF2* that were individually predicted by AlphaFold onto the *FAM86A*–*EEF2* complex as a measure of quality control. We found the individual *FAM86A* model was nearly identical to its conformation in the *FAM86A*–*EEF2* complex, with RMSD of only 0.366 Å over 252 aligned C α atoms (Fig. 3D). In the case of *EEF2*, the RMSD was calculated to be 0.733 Å over 642 aligned C α atoms (Fig. 3E). Most of the variation for *EEF2* is caused by rotation of domain IV, a physiologic flexibility known to be crucial for GTP hydrolysis and ribosomal translocation (12, 31). Given the high degree of similarity with each protein's individual model, we viewed the predicted *FAM86A*–*EEF2* model as a reasonable basis for further experiments. Therefore, we

hypothesized that the predicted *FAM86A*–*EEF2* complex accurately portrays an interaction between the *FAM86* domain of *FAM86A* and domain IV of *EEF2* that orients *EEF2*-Lys525 toward the *FAM86A* active site.

Allosteric inhibition of *EEF2* methylation by point mutation of *FAM86A* and *EEF2*

To test the AlphaFold-Multimer predicted interaction, we asked if blocking the interaction between the *FAM86* domain of *FAM86A* and domain IV of *EEF2* inhibits *FAM86A*-mediated *EEF2*-Lys525 methylation. We generated model-guided *FAM86A* and *EEF2* derivatives carrying point mutations in the *FAM86* domain and domain IV, respectively. Specifically, *FAM86A*-Ala97 and *EEF2*-Ile722 were substituted to arginine to increase the likelihood of disrupting the binding interface while still maintaining the native individual structures of *FAM86A* and *EEF2* (Fig. S4, A–D). As shown in Figure 4A, complementation of *FAM86A* (A97R) in *FAM86A* KO HEK293T cells failed to rescue *EEF2*-Lys525 methylation in cells, whereas wildtype *FAM86A* restored methylation (Fig. 4A). To test whether *EEF2*(I722R) is a viable substrate for *FAM86A*, we transfected and immunoprecipitated FLAG-*EEF2*(I722R) from HEK293T cells endogenously expressing *FAM86A*. While the input sample shows methylation of endogenous wildtype *EEF2* in the I722R sample, the exogenous *EEF2* carrying I722R substitution was not methylated (Fig. 4B). Importantly, both *FAM86A* (A97R) and *EEF2*(I722R) mutant constructs expressed equally well compared with wildtype in cells and are predicted by AlphaFold to not impact overall protein folding (Figs. 4, A and B and S4, C and D). These data suggest that substitutions of *FAM86A* (A97R) and *EEF2*(I722R) prevent *EEF2*-Lys525 methylation through an allosteric mechanism, likely due to inhibition of the interface predicted by AlphaFold-Multimer.

In vitro, the activity of purified *FAM86A* (A97R) on purified *EEF2* was similar to that of wildtype *FAM86A* (Fig. 4C). In contrast, purified *FAM86A* showed reduced activity on purified *EEF2*(I722R) compared with wildtype *EEF2* (Fig. 4D). We postulate that, in a physiological context, the transient nature of the *FAM86A* and *EEF2* interaction becomes sensitive to the modest interference generated by the point mutations. Meanwhile, the simplicity and high stoichiometry of each protein in *in vitro* reaction mixtures amplify the possibility that any two proteins might interact with one another.

The implication that the *FAM86* domain of *FAM86A* confers substrate specificity for *EEF2* is intriguing on multiple fronts. First, this is an instance in which a noncatalytic domain of a KMT is required for catalysis. Second, the *FAM86* domain represents a novel and clinically actionable target for inhibition of *FAM86A* catalytic activity, which may be relevant given the possible role of the *FAM86A*–*EEF2* methylation axis in cancer biology. Third, there are other *FAM86* domain-containing human KMT genes that likely emerged from *FAM86A* as a common ancestor. While *FAM86A* exists in yeast, neither of the human genes *FAM86B1* or *FAM86B2* exists in many lower animals including mice (32). *FAM86B1* and *FAM86B2* are

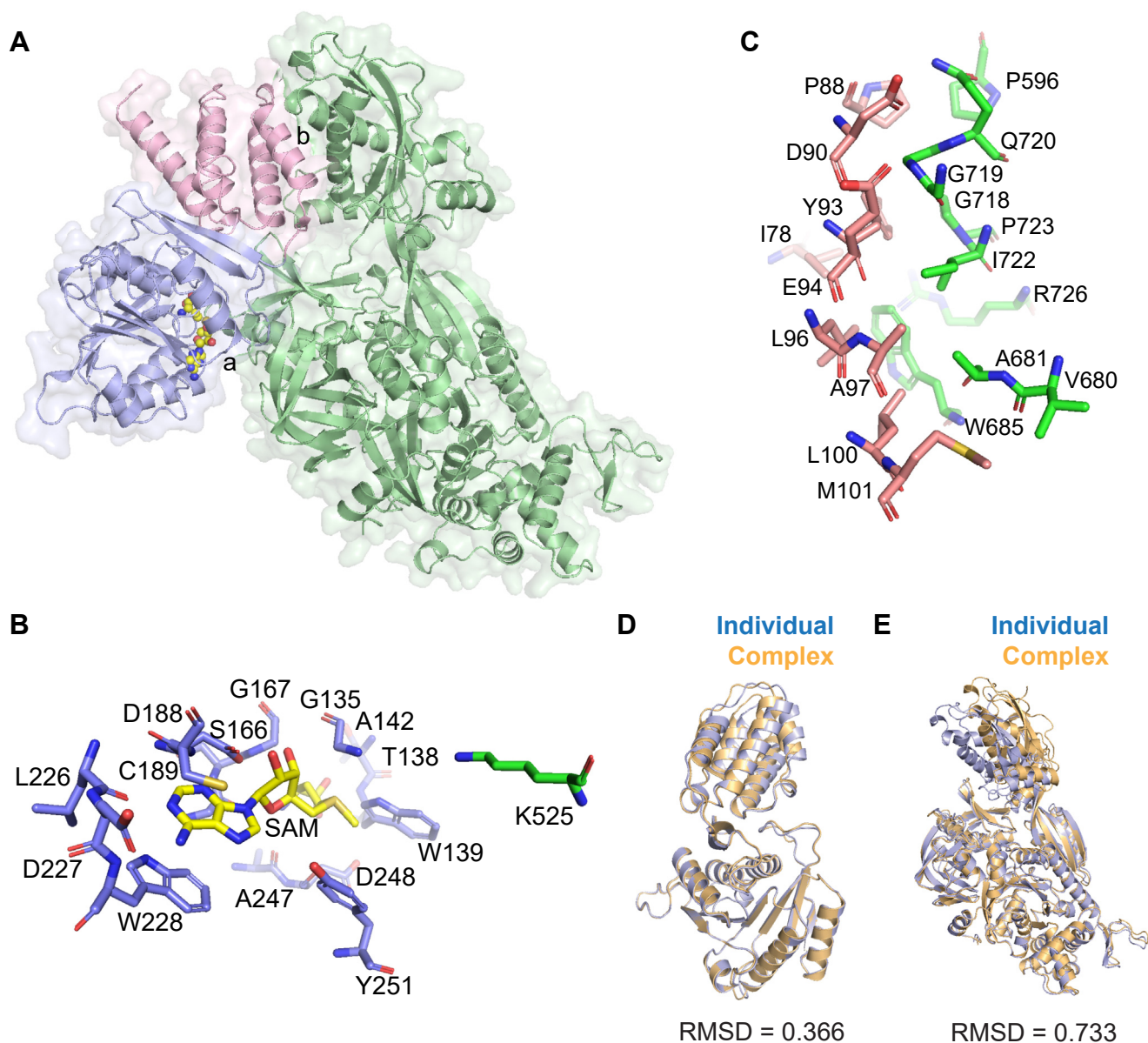


Figure 3. Simulation of the FAM86A-EEF2 interface by AlphaFold-Multimer. *A*, ribbon representation of the overall complex predicted by AlphaFold-Multimer. EEF2 is colored in *green*. FAM86A is colored in *blue* for the MTase domain and *pink* for the FAM86 domain. S-adenosyl methionine (SAM) is shown as spheres. Spaces containing intermolecular interaction within 3 Å are designated as (a) near the FAM86A active site and (b) for the interaction involving the FAM86 domain of FAM86A and domain IV of EEF2. *B*, close-up view of (a) showing the proximity of EEF2-Lys525 to the SAM-binding pocket of FAM86A. *C*, close-up view of (b) showing the intermolecular interaction between the FAM86 domain of FAM86A and domain IV of EEF2. *D* and *E*, overlays of FAM86A (*D*) and EEF2 (*E*) individual AlphaFold models superimposed onto the FAM86A-EEF2 complex from AlphaFold-Multimer. Models of FAM86A and EEF2 determined individually are shown in *blue*, and models determined in complex with one another are shown in *orange*.

both uncharacterized members of the class I methyltransferase family with no known substrates. Alignment of FAM86A, FAM86B1, and FAM86B2 reveals nearly identical homology between the three genes, implying a close evolutionary relationship (Fig. 5, *A* and *B*). FAM86B2 is nearly identical to FAM86A, while FAM86B1 encodes a truncated FAM86 domain resulting from loss of a single exon compared with FAM86A and FAM86B2 (33). While the FAM86 domains of FAM86A and FAM86B2 form five-helix bundles, the FAM86 domain of FAM86B1 only forms a four-helix bundle (Fig. 5*C*). Notably, the exon lost in FAM86B1 encodes the homologous helix that forms the interface of FAM86A with EEF2. We

tested whether FAM86B1 and FAM86B2 are redundant copies of FAM86A by adding back FAM86B1 and FAM86B2 to FAM86A KO HEK293T cells. However, neither FAM86B1 nor FAM86B2 generates EEF2-K525me3 (Fig. 5*D*), suggesting that they may have different substrates or not be active enzymes.

Discussion

FAM86A was previously reported to methylate EEF2-Lys525 in yeast and humans. Here we provide the first report of a function for the FAM86 domain in EEF2 methylation or in any other biological process. Given the

Molecular recognition of EEF2 by FAM86A

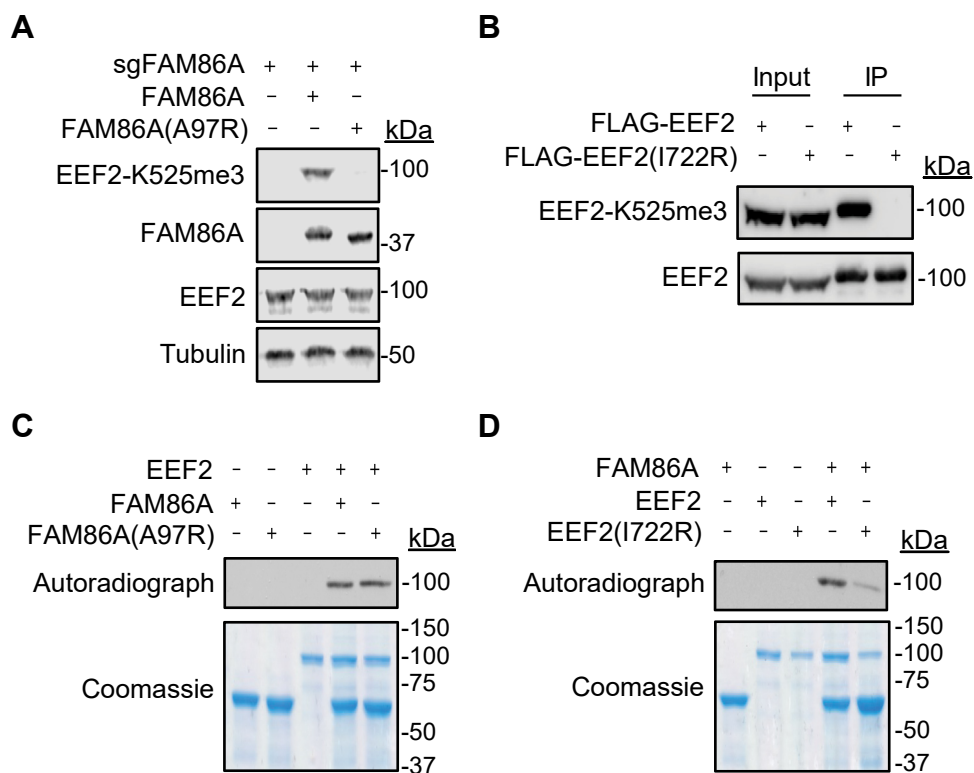


Figure 4. Allosteric inhibition of EEF2 methylation by point mutation of FAM86A and EEF2. A, Western blot analysis of whole cell extracts from FAM86A-depleted HEK293T cells complement with either wildtype or A97R-substituted FAM86A. B, FLAG immunoprecipitation of either wildtype or I722R-substituted EEF2 from HEK293T cells. C and D, *in vitro* methylation assays as in Figure 2 with the indicated combinations.

extremely high homology between FAM86A and FAM86B2, we suspect but cannot conclude that FAM86B2 is an inactive duplicate of FAM86A in humans. The DepMap gene effect data support this hypothesis by revealing no dependence of human cells on FAM86B2 expression, in contrast with high dependence on FAM86A (Figs. S1 and S5A). However, FAM86B1 is categorized as an essential gene by its DepMap gene effect data (Fig. S5B). This suggests that it could be an active enzyme in human cells and hints at an interesting evolutionary story: by deleting the residues of its FAM86 domain that promote EEF2-Lys525 methylation, FAM86B1 evolved specificity for a different substrate that, like the FAM86A-EEF2 methylation axis, promotes a critical function in human cells. A future iteration of AlphaFold (34) could serve as the tool by which to identify the substrate of FAM86B1.

This study describes the use of artificial intelligence to aid experimental biology. While direct truncation experiments could have been used to determine the FAM86 domain role in EEF2 methylation by FAM86A, the use of AlphaFold provided clear and testable molecular hypotheses. For example, it could have been laborious to identify the FAM86-binding residues of EEF2 without the information provided by structural modeling. In our case, it took less than 1 month to progress from hypothesis to simulated models to experimental results. This study supports the potential of AlphaFold algorithms to accelerate the process of experimental biology toward enhancing our understanding of biology and human disease.

Experimental procedures

Cell lines

HEK293T (female, embryonic kidney) cells were grown in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 100 U/ml penicillin/streptomycin. Cells were cultured at 37 °C in a humidified incubator with 5% CO₂. Cell lines were authenticated by short tandem repeat profiling and tested negative for mycoplasma (DDC Medical).

Transfection and viral transduction

Transient expression was performed using polyethylenimine (PEI) 3 µg per 1 µg of plasmid DNA. For CRISPR-Cas9 knockout of FAM86A, virus particles were produced by cotransfection of 293T cells with the lentiCRISPR v2/puro (Addgene) construct containing the sgRNA sequence AGCACGGCCATCATCT CCTA, pCMV-VSV-G (Addgene), and pCMV-dR8.2 dvpr (Addgene) in a ratio of 5:1:4 by mass. As a control, viruses were prepared in the same manner using the safe-targeting sgRNA sequence GGGCTACTAGGATTCAATCT (35). The medium was changed 24 h after transfection. After 48 h, target cells were transduced with 0.45 µm filtered viral supernatant and 4 µg/ml polybrene. The medium was changed 24 h after transduction. Cells were selected with 2 µg/ml puromycin beginning 48 h after transduction and continuing for 7 days.

Plasmids

In addition to plasmids listed for virus production, the following plasmids were cloned and used throughout the

Molecular recognition of EEF2 by FAM86A

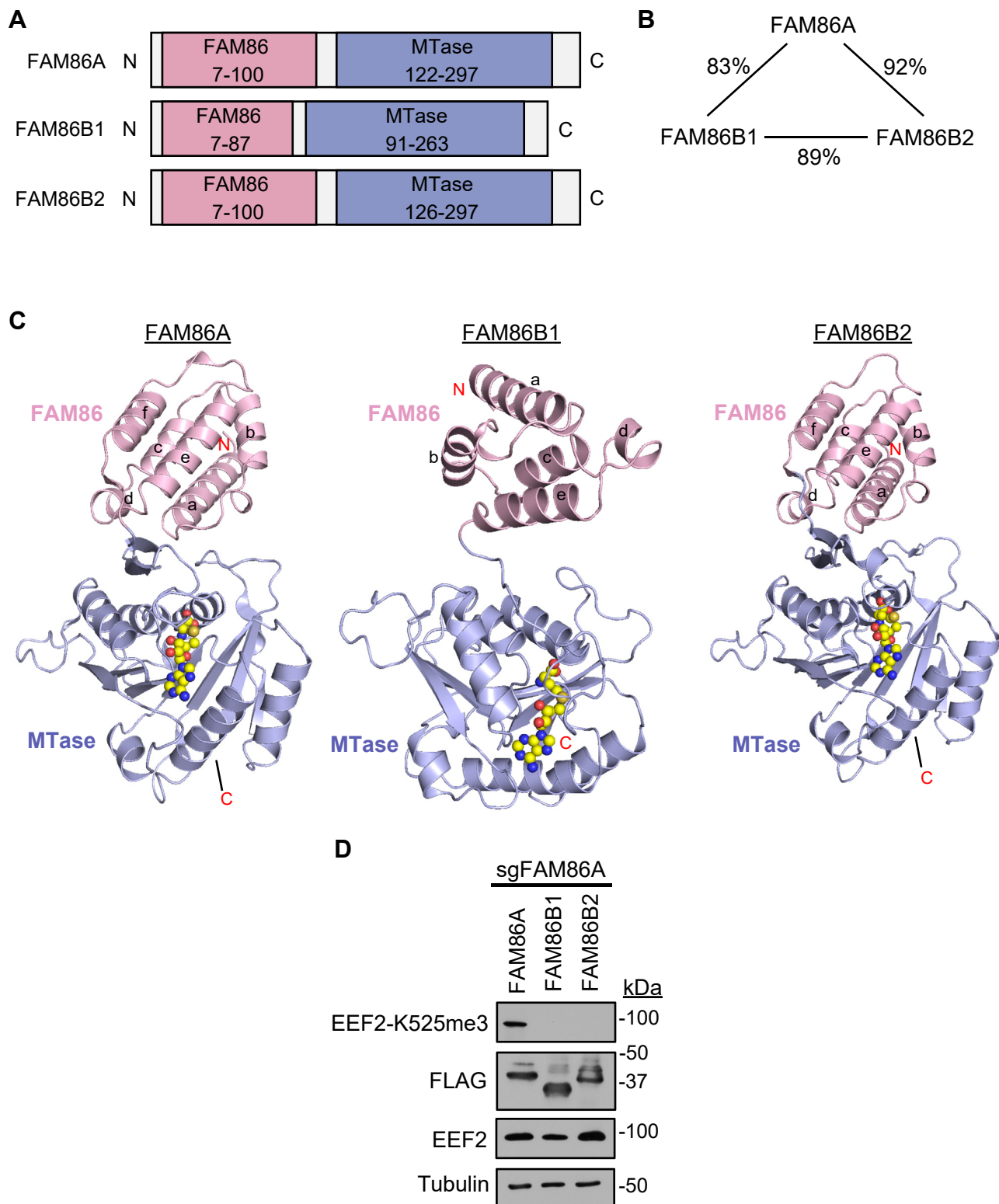


Figure 5. Examination of other FAM86 domain-containing KMTs. *A*, domain structures of FAM86A, FAM86B1, and FAM86B2. *B*, schematic representation of homology between FAM86A, FAM86B1, and FAM86B2. Percentages indicate identical amino acid residues conserved between proteins. *C*, ribbon representations of AlphaFold models for FAM86A (*left*), FAM86B1 (*middle*), and FAM86B2 (*right*) colored in *blue* for MTase domains and *pink* for FAM86 domains. *D*, Western blot analysis of whole cell extracts from FAM86A-depleted HEK293T cells transfected with FAM86A, FAM86B1, or FAM86B2.

study. For transient transfection, the following genes were cloned into pQCXIH-CMV/TO-DEST (Addgene): FAM86A (UniProt ID: Q96G04) including all FAM86A mutants,

FAM86B1 (UniProt ID: Q8N7N1), FAM86B2 (UniProt ID: P0C5J1). For bacterial protein expression and purification, FAM86A and its mutants were cloned into pGEX-6P-1

Molecular recognition of EEF2 by FAM86A

(Addgene). For protein expression and purification from human cells, EEF2 (Uniprot ID: P13639) and its mutants were cloned into pcDNA3.1(+) (Addgene) including the N-terminal FLAG sequence DYKDDDDK.

Immunoblot analysis

For Western blot analysis, cells were lysed in RIPA buffer with 1 mM PMSF and complete protease inhibitor cocktail. Protein concentration was determined using the Bio-Rad DC Protein Assay. Protein samples were resolved by SDS-PAGE and transferred to a PVDF membrane (0.45 μ m). Dot blot analysis was performed by directly loading peptides of the indicated concentrations onto a Nitrocellulose membrane. A volume of 1 μ l was loaded for immunoblots and 5 μ l was loaded for Ponceau S staining (Sigma). The following antibodies were used at the indicated dilutions: EEF2-K525me3 (1:1000) (Abclonal), EEF2 (1:10,000) (Abcam; ab75748), FAM86A (1:500) (Genemed), tubulin (1:4000) (Millipore; catalog 05-661), FLAG M2 (1:4000) (Sigma-Aldrich; F1804). Mouse and rabbit secondary antibodies from Jackson ImmunoResearch were used at 1:10,000 dilution. Protein bands were visualized using Amersham ECL or Amersham ECL Prime Western Blotting Detection Reagent.

Protein expression and purification

Plasmids encoding FLAG-fusion proteins were transfected into 293T cells selected for CRISPR-mediated FAM86A depletion. Whole cell extracts were prepared in lysis buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 250 mM NaCl, 0.5% Nonidet P-40, 10% glycerol, and complete protease inhibitor cocktail 48 h after transfection. Equal amounts of whole cell extracts were incubated with equal volumes of anti-FLAG M2 magnetic beads slurry (Sigma) at 4 °C overnight and either eluted with 0.2 mg/ml 3 \times FLAG peptide (Sigma) for *in vitro* methylation or resuspended in Laemmli buffer for Western blot analysis.

For crystallography, the DNA encoding full-length human FAM86A was inserted into an in-house bacterial expression vector, in which the FAM86 gene is preceded by an N-terminal hexa-histidine (His6)-MBP tag and a TEV cleavage site. To overcome the challenge of crystallization, three mutations (I256Y, M257Y, and E296Y) were introduced to reduce surface entropy. The expression plasmid was transformed into BL21(DE3) RIL cells. The transformed cells were grown at 37 °C until cell density (A_{600}) reached 1.0. Protein expression was then induced by addition of 0.13 mM isopropyl β -D-1-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG), and the cells continued to grow at 16 °C overnight. The cells were harvested and lysed in a buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 1 M NaCl, 25 mM Imidazole, 10% glycerol, and 1 mM PMSF. After centrifugation, the fusion protein in the soluble fraction was purified through a nickel column, followed by removal of His6-MBP tag by TEV cleavage, ion-exchange chromatography on a Q HP column (GE Healthcare), and size-exclusion chromatography on a HiLoad 16/600 Superdex 75 pg column (GE Healthcare). The purified protein samples were concentrated

in 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 100 mM NaCl, 5% glycerol, and 5 mM DTT and stored at -80 °C.

Plasmids encoding GST-fusion proteins were transformed into BL21 *Escherichia coli* and grown up in LB medium (10 g/L tryptone, 5 g/L yeast extract, and 10 g/L NaCl). Protein expression was induced by 0.1 mM IPTG (isopropyl 1-thio- β -D-galactopyranoside, Sigma) in overnight culture at 18 °C. Proteins were purified using Glutathione Sepharose 4B (GE Healthcare) and eluted in 10 mM reduced glutathione (Sigma). Protein concentrations were measured using Pierce Coomassie Plus Assay, and DTT was added to a concentration of 5 mM.

Custom antibody generation

The peptide spanning EEF2-Lys525 (VEGL(Kme3)RLAK) was synthesized and purified by high-performance liquid chromatography (>95% purity). Peptides were conjugated to KLH and used as antigen to immunize rabbits. Rabbit protocols, peptide conjugation, immunization, and antiserum production were performed by Abclonal Technology. Antiserum was negatively selected against an identical, unmodified peptide (VEGLKRLAK). Final purification was performed with the immobilized antigenic peptide to select for methyl-specific antibodies. Peptides carrying Kme1 and Kme2 were also synthesized for antibody validation.

The first 126 amino acids of FAM86A were cloned into pGEX-6P-1 and purified as a GST-fusion protein. GST-FAM86A(1–126) protein was then used as an antigen to immunize rabbits for polyclonal antibody production at Genemed Biotechnology, Inc. Antiserum was enriched for specific FAM86A antibodies using NHS-activated High Performance columns (Sigma) following manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, GST-FAM86A(1–126) was immobilized in coupling buffer containing 200 mM NaHCO₃ (pH 8.3) and 500 mM NaCl. Antiserum was diluted 10-fold in dilution buffer containing 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH7.5) and injected over the column. Specific antibodies were collected in elution buffer containing 100 mM Glycine (pH 2.5).

AlphaFold protein prediction

Individual structures were downloaded either from AlphaFold (<https://alphafold.ebi.ac.uk>) or AlphaFill (<https://alphafill.eu>) as indicated. Combinatorial FAM86A–EEF2 structures were determined by querying the FAM86A and EEF2 primary protein sequences (Uniprot) in ColabFold (<https://colab.research.google.com>) in 1:1 stoichiometry with default parameters. Rank 1 structures were visualized and analyzed with PyMOL after all ranked structures were examined for overall similarity.

Crystallization and structure determination

For crystallization of the FAM86A–SAH complex, \sim 12 mg/ml human FAM86A mixed with 1 mM SAH was incubated with 0.1 M Ammonium citrate tribasic (pH 7.0), 10% w/v Polyethylene glycol 3350, and 5 mM TCEP using the hanging-drop vapor diffusion method at 12 °C. The crystals appeared overnight and continued to grow for 1 week. The crystals were

Table 1
Crystallographic data collection and refinement statistics

	FAM86–SAH (PDB 8FZB)
Data collection	
Space group	<i>I</i> 4 2 2
Cell dimensions	
<i>a</i> , <i>b</i> , <i>c</i> (Å)	160.7, 160.7, 351.8
α , β , γ (°)	90, 90, 90
Wavelength	0.9792
Resolution (Å)	48.72–3.33 (3.45–3.33) ^a
<i>R</i> _{merge}	0.149 (1.64)
<i>I</i> / σ <i>I</i>	19.8 (1.8)
CC _{1/2}	0.999 (0.359)
Completeness (%)	98.6 (96.6)
Redundancy	39 (34)
Total reflections	1,324,854 (112,423)
Unique reflections	33,996 (3229)
Refinement	
No. of reflections	33,573
<i>R</i> _{work} / <i>R</i> _{free} (%)	23.0/25.3
No. of atoms	
Protein	7300
Ligands	78
<i>B</i> factors (Å ²)	
Protein	139.8
Ligands	104.5
RMS deviations	
Bond lengths (Å)	0.003
Bond angles (°)	0.67
Ramachandran	
Favored (%)	96.85
Allowed (%)	3.15
Outliers (%)	0

^a Values in parentheses are for the highest-resolution shell. The dataset was collected from a single crystal.

soaked in the crystallization buffer supplemented with 25% (v/v) glycerol before being flash frozen in liquid nitrogen. X-ray diffraction data were collected on the beamline 24-ID-C at Advanced Photo Source, Argonne National Lab. The datasets were processed with the HKL3000 program (36). The structure of the SAH bonded hFAM86A was solved by molecular replacement with the PHASER program (37) using a structural model (ID: AF-Q96G04-F1) predicted by the AlphaFold program (23) as search model. Iterative cycles of model rebuilding and refinement were performed with COOT (38) and PHENIX (39), respectively. The statistics for data processing and structure refinements are summarized in Table S1.

Protein sequence analysis and alignments

Protein sequences were retrieved under the indicated UniProt IDs and queried using InterPro (<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/interpro/>) for domain structure analysis or protein BLAST (<https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi>) for alignments.

In vitro methylation

In vitro methylation assays were performed as described (40) by combining up to 3 mg of recombinant proteins in assay buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 20 mM KCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, and 10% glycerol supplemented with 100 μ M S-adenosyl-methionine (New England Biolabs) or 2 mCi of tritiated AdoMet (American Radiolabeled Chemicals). The reaction mixtures were incubated overnight at 30 °C. Reactions were resolved by SDS-PAGE and either stained with Coomassie or transferred to a PVDF membrane (0.45 μ m) for autoradiography.

DepMap data

Gene effect data (Project Score, CERES) were downloaded directly (<https://depmap.org/portal/download/all/>) and visualized using R.

Data availability

All data supporting the findings of this study are available within the paper and supporting information or otherwise publicly available for download. The crystal structure of FAM86A–SAH has been submitted to the Protein Data Bank (ID: 8FZB). DepMap, AlphaFold, and AlphaFill data are publicly available online for direct download.

Supporting information—This article contains supporting information.

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Conflict of interest—O. G. is a co-scientific founder, consultant, and stockholder of EpiCypher, Inc, K36 Therapeutics, Inc, and Alternative Bio, Inc.

Abbreviations—The abbreviations used are: 7 β S, seven- β -strand; EEF2, eukaryotic translation elongation factor 2; KMT, lysine methyltransferase; SAH, S-adenosyl homocysteine; SAM, S-adenosyl methionine.

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Molecular recognition of *EEF2* by *FAM86A*

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