

## The PLEES proteins: a family of structurally related enzymes widely distributed from bacteria to humans

Aromatic compounds including biphenyls and polychlorinatedbiphenyls (PCBs) are among the most serious and persistent environmental pollutants, owing to their chemical stability and widespread industrial use [1]. Over the last few years, a variety of bacterial strains with the ability to degrade these aromatic compounds have been isolated and used for the bioremediation of contaminated soil and water. These micro-organisms use different enzymes for the initial attack on the diverse aromatic substrates, but the catabolic pathways converge on just a few central intermediates such as catechol or substituted catechols. The conversion of catechols into tricarboxylic-acid-cycle intermediates is mediated in many cases by common enzymic steps called the meta-cleavage pathway. One of the key reactions in this route is catalysed by a serine hydrolase called BphD, which has the ability to perform the hydrolytic cleavage of carboncarbon bonds, one of the rarest of all enzyme reaction types [2]. At present, eight bacterial hydrolases catalysing this type of reaction have been characterized at the amino-acid-sequence level. These hydrolases are involved in the degradation of biphenyls and their polychlorinated derivatives and show a high degree of sequence similarity. The recent isolation, from a breast carcinoma cDNA library, of a novel human serine hydrolase (Bph-rp) [3], with sequence similarity to the bacterial BphD enzymes involved in PCB degradation, led us to search for common motifs within these enzymes which might establish possible functional relationships between them.

A search against a nonredundant protein sequence database (SWISS-PROT Release 33.0, PIR Release 47.0, CDS translations from GenBank Release 95.0 and daily updates of these databases until 12 June 1996) with human Bph-rp using BLASTP [4] resulted in a series of statistically significant hits with other bacterial serine hydrolases involved in the degradation of a variety of aromatic compounds, including toluene, benzoate, phenol and xylenes [probability of matching by chance (P)  $< 10^{-5}$ ]. In addition, significant similarities were also found with bacterial lipases, esterases, peroxidases, haloalkane dehalogenases and proline iminopeptidases, as well as with epoxide hydrolases, acylaminoacyl peptidases, dipeptidyl peptidases and prolyl oligopeptidases from different organisms, including yeast, plants and mammals [5-7]. A multiple sequence alignment was constructed using the sequence analysis program MACAW [8] (Figure 1). This analysis identified six regions displaying the highest degree of sequence similarities to Bph-rp, from 59-60 % with serine hydrolases, esterases and lipases, to 55-57 % with peroxidases, haloalkane dehalogenases, epoxide hydrolases and peptidases. Three of these blocks (III, IV and V) were conserved around the amino acids which would form the catalytic triad (Ser/Asp)-(Asp/Glu)-His, characteristic of all these proteins, and presumed to be essential for their enzymic activity. This catalytic triad is reminiscent of the archetypal one present in serine proteinases and originally described in chymotrypsin [10], but with opposite handedness.

The sequence similarity of the proteins aligned in Figure 1, together with the presence of a catalytic triad (Ser/Asp)-(Asp/Glu)-His with high conserved patterns around the residues forming the active centre, and the conservation of several residues which would play an important role in the conformation of these enzymes, led us to propose that these proteins may have very similar three-dimensional structures. In this regard, it is worth-while mentioning that the three-dimensional structure of some of the proteins with similarity to human Bph-rp has been elucidated by X-ray crystallography [11,12], and in all cases they are organized into an  $\alpha/\beta$  hydrolase fold, which is characterized by the presence of a central  $\beta$ -pleated sheet surrounded by  $\alpha$ -helices [13]. Therefore it is likely that, in addition to their similarities in amino acid sequences and enzymic mechanism, the different proteins aligned in Figure 1 may also share a similar  $\alpha/\beta$  folding.

Since virtually all these proteins related to human Bph-rp can be classified as peptidases, lipases, esterases, epoxide-hydrolases, or serine hydrolases, we propose to call them 'PLEES' enzymes. These proteins could thus constitute a large family of structurally related enzymes which are able to metabolize a wide variety of substrates by using a common mechanism based on a catalytic triad of topologically conserved (nucleophile)-(acid)-(histidine) residues. The definition of this protein superfamily would extend previous studies describing relationships among serine hydrolases [14–16]. However, although most of the PLEES proteins are hydrolytic enzymes, it is remarkable that the members of the PLEES family of proteins are not exclusively restricted to this activity, and the group includes proteins like bacterial peroxidases, with ability to catalyse the synthesis of carbonhalogen bonds rather than any type of hydrolytic reaction [12]. It should also be stressed that although PLEES proteins may adopt an  $\alpha/\beta$  hydrolase fold, not all proteins possessing an  $\alpha/\beta$ hydrolase structure would be PLEES proteins. Thus there are a number of  $\alpha/\beta$ -hydrolase-fold proteins, including wheat carboxypeptidase [17] or cutinase [18], which do not show significant similarity with human Bph-rp, nor with the remaining proteins included in the alignment shown in Figure 1. Finally, the finding that PLEES enzymes include bacterial, fungal, plant and mammalian enzymes suggests that they could have evolved from a common ancestor that became adapted to perform a wide array of biological functions in the different organisms in which they have been identified. The identification of these similarities between proteins from organisms that diverged about 2 billion years ago [19] will be helpful for future structure-function relationship studies of the different family members and, in particular, in those directed to elucidate the role of human Bphrp in both normal and pathological conditions, including breast cancer.

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	X81372 C35124	JN0816	L34338 P17548	P47229	D44891	P23106	M76991	L05770	D24215	P29715	P49323	P22862	D14529	JC4161	JH0655	P26495	P24640	002104	01398	P22643	P07099	P07687	P04000	P80299	P34913 D16628	U02494	U57350 D63781	P46544	P42786	P48147	P23687	P27028	P13676	P28843	P14740 P27487	P33894 P18962	
IV	. AEDFI	VIDFL.	. AIDFL	VIDFI	. VGDFL	. VENPL	. MKRFN	.FSGFV	ALREF.	LLAFL.	LLAFV.	LLAFL	LSGFI.	LLAFI.	TVAFL.	. IMKFL	YKAFR	VKAFR	LLKFL	. LKHFA	. IRKFL	. IRKFV	LIKWL	.LIKWL	. ILDFI	. IYDFI	. TYDFI	.LSDWL	. VEDIL	. WFAFI	MFAFT.	LLSFA	AULWE.	MSHFL	. MSHFL	LYYWL.	
	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(12).	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	. (11)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(8)	(9)	(10).	. (10).	. (10).	(6)	(9)	(6)	(6)	
Δ	PEGKINLHLR SKCGHWAOWE	SKCGHWAQWE	SQCCHWAQWE PRCCHWAOWF	SKCGHWAQWE	GOCGHWTQIE	GOCGHWTQIE	GROGHT SNVE	IDASHLSNIE	GESAHWPQYE	EGAPHGLLWT	EGLPHGMLST	KDAPHGFAVT	EESGHFPMTE	DGYPHGMPTT	PGAGHVANLD	IDDGHLFLIT	NDVGHVPMVE	RDVGHUPMUR	LPGCHFFVDQ	ADAGHFVQEF	VRGGHFAAFE	ERGCHFAAFE	EDCGHWTQIE	EDCGHWTQIE	EGVAHFINQE	EGSAHFUNQE	PEGSHFVQEQ KGVAHFNNOE	AGCGHMPFVQ	VQAGHCAFDP	TKAGHCAGKP	TKAGHGAGKP	INAGHGAGRS	PKSTHALSEV PKSNHALSEV	TDEDHGIASS	TDEDHGIASS TDEDHGIASS	PDSDHSIRYH	*
	7)IM	7)VF	7)VF	7)VF	7)VF	7)77	6)EV	(9)EV	9)(9 8)vv	8).EV		8) - <mark>VY</mark>	7)CI	TT. (8)	8)VI	6)HI	MM ( /	7), NRM	0) AS	8)EI	MY (9	MX. (9	7) HI	7)HI	MV (1	4)WL	3)FL	6)IF	6) RV	8)VD	8) UD' 4) TR'	4) <b>T</b> E	1)TY	1)WY	1)WY	2)IF	
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	ALI VHGEKDP	FFTTWGRDDRI	TLVTWGRDDRI	FF TWGRDDRI	TLVIHGREDQ	PLVIHGREDR	/LVIAGAQDP/	TLI IAGSADP	TUVHGDDDO	ALILHGTGDR1	/LVAHGTDDQ	T_VIHGDGDO	THVIWASEDK	VLVNHGDDDQ	SLLLCGEHDS7	CLVLAGDDDPI	UL VVWGDKDQI	V VVWGDKDO	KGQMGQLFDII	IKDKLLGPDV	CFSAFPFEL	CFSAFPSEL	LINUTAEKDIV	LMVTAEKDIV	KEVIGELDL	RFIVGEFDLV	XXYITGELDM	LITSGTDDLO	VIVOGRYDLO	TTTTTTT	T.VTTADHDDF	HOCHOSTIAM	ALMI,GQEDRI	TLL. HGTADDN	TLL IHGTADDN	LIMEGTCDDN	*
	P1 K1		K.	EN .	·····图	E	4	<b>4</b>	PT-	<b>A</b>	H	λ <mark>ι</mark> Δι	EX	A	H <mark>d</mark>	<mark></mark>	<mark>д</mark>	<mark>ч</mark> С.	S.	5	4 G	G	H	<b>P</b>	4	A		14	G	SI	12	ES	Id .	E	EE	RI	
	GLTALIAAAKYPSYI.	GATALNFALEYPDRI.	GATALNFALEYPERL.	GATAINFALEYPDRI.	GGIALALAIRHPERV.	GGLALALAIRHPERV.	GLTGQWLAIHFPERF.	GLTALWIGIYQAARF.	GWVSGHFAARYPORV.	TGEVARYVSSYGTAR.	GGEVARYVARAEPGR.	GGDVARYTARHGSAR.	GMT AQELAT LAPDRV.	GGEVVRYMARHPADK.	GNIAQEYLRRRPDEV.	GALAQQFAHDYPERC.	GAISVAYAAKYPKEI.	GALSTLFLUKAFGVC. GATSVAYAAKYPKDV.	GRTGHRMALDHPEAV.	GFLGLTLPMADPSRF.	SLICTNMAQLUPSHV.	SLICTNMAQMUPNHU.	GUMUWNMALFYPERV.	GVLVWNMALFHPERV.	ALTAWYLCLFRPDRV.	ALIAWHLCIFRPDKV.	ARVAYHFALVHPDRV. ALIGWYLCMFRPDRV.	GMLALIYLCDYQFEG.	STLSLAYAQTHPERV.	GLEVAACANQRPDLF.	GLLVATCANQRPDLF.	GLLVGATMTMRPDLA.	GFL SCHLIGQYPETY. GFL SCHLIGQYPETY.	GYVTSMVLGSGSGVF .	GYVTSMVLGSGSGVF.	GFTSLKTVELDNGDT.	
III	MKALKFKKVSLLGWSDC MDALGIDRAHLVCNSMC	MDALDIDRAHLVGNSMC	MDALGIERAHLVGNSMC	MDALDIDRAHLVGNSMC	LDALETEQADLVGNSFC	LDALGIQQGDIVGNSFC	LDHLQTPQATFCGI SMC	LDALNTENAHFCGI SMC	. MDALGIBNAH SGESLO TTDTDTRDVT VAHSMO	LETEDLQDAVEVGF SMC	TEALDIRGAVHICHSTC	IEHLDLKKVTLVGFSMC	MDAEGLONAHIVGHSLC	VAHLGI QGAVHVGHSTC	DAAGMPRPVVLLGOSMC	LDYLDYGQUNVIGVSWC	. QAKGLASNTHVGGNSMC	OAKGLASNIHVGONSM	MRHLGFERFHLVGHDRC	LERLDIRNITLAVODWC	MLRLGFQEFYIQGCDWC	MTRLGFQNFYIQGGDWC	LDKLGIPQAVFIGHDWP	LINKLGIPQAVFIGHDWP	LTASEDERVEVIGHDWC	ALAPNEEKVFVVGHDWC	IDSLGVOOVFLVAHDWC	. REQLGLDQIHLLGQSWC	RENIGICIANINFGCSWC	EGYTSPKRLTINGGSNC	. EGYTSPKRLTINGGSNC EGYTRTDRLATRGGSNC	NGYTSKEYMAL SGRSNG	ERHFDACHVAIMGGSHC ERHFDARHVAIMGGSHC	MGFVDSKRVAIWGWSYC	MGFVDSKRVAIWGWSYC	. SQHIDESKIAIWGWSYC	*
	(22).	(20).	(20).	(20).	(20).	(20).	. (19)	(18).	.(91)	. (61)	(19).	. (19).	. (19).	(19).	(20).	.(19).	(20) .	. (16)	(24) .	(21).	(20) .	(20).	. (21) .	(21).	. (17).	(21) .	. (21).	(23).	(21).	. (29) .	. (29) .	. (29).	. (22).	. (29) .	. (29)	. (31).	
II	FTVVAWDPRGYGHS	YRVILKDSPGFNKS	. YHVILKDSPGFNKS	YRVILKDSPGFNKS	RIVIAPDMLGFGYS	REVIADMUGECYS	YFVICYDTRGHGAS	. YRWTYDTRGHGOS	YRGTANDRRGHGLS	YRVITYDRRGFGOS	. YRVIAHDRAGHGRS	YRTIAFDRAGFGRS	YRTVAFDNRDSGES.	YRVVAHDRAGHGRS	YRTLRWDVRYHGAS	LEVIAFDVPGVGGS	THLIPDLLGFGNS	THE LEPTICATES	HTVVCADLRGYGDS	ARVIAPDFFGFGKS	FEVICPSIPGYGFS	FEVICPSIPGYGYS	FRVLAIDMNGYCDS	FRVLAIDMKGYGDS	YRAVAPDLAGYGDS	.YRAVAPDLRGYGDT.	YRAVAPDLRGYGDT	ROVIMYDQLGCGNS	PRIVIDORGCCRS	GILAVANIRGGGEY	GVLAVANI RGGGEY	GIYAVPNIRGGGEY.	WIGSTGFGQDSILS	II VASFDGRGSGYQ.	IIVASFDGRGSGYQ	VIVIQIEPRCIGR.	
I	. (14)	. (14)	. (14)	. (14)	. (13)	。(13)	. (01) .	. (10)	(11).	(11).	. (11)	(11)	. (10)	. (11)	(11).	(9)	(9)	(116)	(10)	. (11)	. (20)	. (20)	(11).	(11).	(11)	. (11)	. (11)	. (12)	. (12)	. (12)	(12)	(EE)	.(18)	(13).	. (13)	.(17)	
	(8) F.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7)P.		(9)W.	(7) Y.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7) W.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7)F.	(6) <u>F</u> .	(7)F.	(7) F	(7) W.	(7) •• ¥•	(7)F.	(7) F.	(7)W	(7) W.	(7)W.	(7)W.	(7)	(7) ¥.	(7)P.		(6)	(9) E		(10) F.	(10) F.	(6).F.	
	VLLIPG.	VIMING	VIMLHG	VIMING.	LAMMING.	ALLING.	PALIFS.	PAIVES	VVFING	WILING	WVFHHG	VLFSHG.	IFFIAG	THFHHG	TALTHG.	IFNGIG	LLLIHG.	VALUEG.	VLMLHG.	FLCLHG.	LLMVHG	LLMVHG.	LCLCHG	ICLCHG.	VLLLHG.	ILFLHG	VEFLHG.	LLLLHG.	VIFLHG.	FLYGYG.	FLYGYG.	ILYSYG.	VVMPHG	LLDVYA	LEDVYA	PFFAYG.	
	bphrp_Hum bphD_Ppu	bphD_PspL	bphD_Pte bohD_PspK	bphD_Pce	nda damp	XylF_Ppu	catD_Aca	pcaD_Aca	bpA1 Sau	bpA2_Sau	cpol_Sli	est Pfl	est5_Psp	est_Ppu	nonk Sgr	phab_Pol	lip3_Msp	lip1 Pim	dehh1_Msp	dhla Xau	ephx1_Hum	ephx1_Rat	ephx2_Mus	ephx2_Rat	ephx_Ath ephx_Ath	ephx_Stu	ephx_Nta ephx Gma	pip_Lde	pip_Ngo	prep_Hum	prep_Pig prep_Ahv	prep_Fme	acph_Pig acph_Rat	dpp4_Mus	dpp4_Rat dpp4_Hum	dap1_Yea dap2 Yea	18

## Figure 1 Conserved motifs found in the PLEES family of proteins

The six conserved blocks were aligned using the MACAW multiple sequence alignment program. The number of residues located between conserved blocks is indicated. Conserved residues are colour-coded as described by Gibson et al. [9] with minor changes: hydrophobic residues are colour-coded as described by Gibson et al. [9] with minor changes: hydrophobic residues are colour-coded as described by Gibson et al. [9] with minor changes: hydrophobic residues are colour-coded as described by Gibson et al. [9] with minor changes: hydrophobic residues are colour-generation and Pro (*pellow*) are coloured. More than 50% occurrence of a property results in colouring. Residues forming the catalytic triad are indicated with an asterisk. The sequences are from SWISS-PROT and GenBank databases with the accession number for each sequence indicated in the right-most colurn. Functional assignment codes: bphrD\_Ppu, bphD\_PspL, bph2\_Sunot phane to a property and codes: bphrp\_Hum, bphD\_PspL, bphD\_PspL, bphD\_Psc, bphF\_RM5, dmpD\_Ppu, xylF\_Ppu and TodF\_Ppu, catD\_Aca and cmt\_Ppu, serine hydrolases; bph1\_Sun, bpA2\_Sau, cpoL\_Sli and cpoP\_Ppy, bromo- and chloro-peroxidases; est\_Pfl, est5\_Psp, est\_Ppu, tpes\_ppu, bch0\_Rca, nonR\_Sgr and phaD\_pol, esterases; lip3\_Msp, pldB\_Eco and lip1\_Pim, lipases; dehh1\_Msp and dhla\_Xu, haloalkane dehalogenases; ephx, epoxide hydrolases; pip, prep, acph, dpp and dap, peptidases.

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