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**The structure of the mouse immunoglobulin in  $\gamma_3$  membrane gene segment**

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Michael Komaromy<sup>1</sup>, Linda Clayton<sup>1,2</sup>, John Rogers<sup>1,3</sup>, Stella Robertson<sup>4,6</sup>, Jack Kettman<sup>4</sup> and Randolph Wall<sup>1,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Molecular Biology Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024, <sup>4</sup>Dept. Microbiology, University of Texas Health Sciences Center, Southwestern Medical School, Dallas, TX 75235, and <sup>5</sup>Dept. Microbiology and Immunology, UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA 90024, USA

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**ABSTRACT**

The genomic region containing the mouse immunoglobulin  $\gamma_3$  heavy chain membrane (M) exons has been located and sequenced. The exon structure is highly similar to that of the other mouse  $\gamma$  chains, with strong sequence conservation in the coding regions and the intron 5' to the M1 exon. The intron between M1 and M2 shows moderate sequence homology but very strong conservation of size. RNA blots suggest that  $\gamma_3$  membrane exon usage is similar to that seen in other immunoglobulin membrane heavy chain mRNAs. The transmembrane region contains the invariant residues which have been noted in all other heavy chain sequences and which were previously proposed to be interactive in a two-chain model for insertion through the lymphocyte membrane. Conserved residues with similar spacing have been seen in class II histocompatibility antigens, which are also two-chain transmembrane molecules, but not in class I antigens, which span cell membranes with a single chain.

**INTRODUCTION**

Immunoglobulin chains are composed of structurally defined domains which correspond to the biological or functional properties of the molecules. Variable region domains are involved in antigen recognition and binding. Constant region domains define the different classes of immunoglobulins (IgM, IgG, etc.) and carry out various effector functions such as complement fixation, transplacental mobility and release of histamine from mast cells. In active immunoglobulin genes, the complete variable region (generated by DNA rearrangements) as well as the constant region in light chains and the individual constant region domains in heavy chains are encoded in DNA as distinct structural gene segments (exons) which are separated from each other by noncoding intervening sequences (introns). We discovered another class of exons, the M or membrane exons, which include a hydrophobic peptide sequence likely to anchor the membrane-bound form of IgM on the surface of B lymphocytes (1,2). In the  $\mu$  heavy chain gene, the coding sequences for the secreted C-terminal region are contiguous with the C $\mu$ 4 domain, while the

membrane C-terminal coding sequences (the M exons) are located approximately 2 kilobases (kb) to the 3'-side of the C<sub>H</sub>4 domain (2). It has been proposed that the expression of membrane or secreted IgM is regulated by RNA processing events which generate  $\mu$  mRNAs with alternative 3'-sequences coding for either membrane ( $\mu_m$ ) mRNA or secreted ( $\mu_s$ ) mRNA C-termini (1-4). In the nuclear processing pathway for  $\mu_m$  mRNA, the M exons are spliced into the sequence GGT-AAA (coding for Gly-Lys) which closely resembles an upstream consensus splice site (5) at the end of the C<sub>H</sub>4 domain. The  $\mu_s$  C-terminal sequences are replaced by the  $\mu_m$  exons in this process. We have proposed that the developmentally regulated processing of  $\mu_m$  or  $\mu_s$  mRNA occurs through the choice of alternative poly(A) addition sites in the  $\mu$  transcription unit (1,2). This proposal is based on general findings that poly(A) addition precedes splicing in eukaryotic mRNA processing (6-10).

Because all immunoglobulin heavy chains now sequenced at either the DNA or protein level have GGT-AAA and Gly-Lys at the end of their final domain (11-14), we previously predicted that all heavy chains might use the RNA processing mechanism just described to generate membrane or secreted forms (1-5). Recently, we determined that the  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  subclasses of mouse heavy chains have membrane C-terminal gene segments located to the 3'-side of the different C<sub>H</sub>3 domains (16). This has also been shown for the  $\gamma_{2a}$  (17) and  $\delta$  (18-21) heavy chain genes.

Here we describe hybridoma cell lines which produce both secreted and membrane-bound forms of IgG<sub>3</sub>. These cells contain two species of  $\gamma_3$  mRNA encoding membrane and secreted heavy chains. By analogy to the  $\mu$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\gamma_1$ ,  $\gamma_{2a}$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  genes, the  $\gamma_3$  membrane exons are located 2 kb to the 3'-side of C<sub>H</sub>3 domain. The nucleotide sequence of the  $\gamma_3$  M<sub>1</sub>-exon contains a hydrophobic core whose sequence is highly conserved in relation to other transmembrane sequences of heavy chain M-exons. These findings are presented in a model for insertion of immunoglobulin heavy chains in lymphocyte membranes.

### METHODS

The cell lines used have been described (22). The mouse  $\gamma_3$  gene clone (p $\gamma_3$ C6) and cDNA clone (p606 $\gamma_3$ -1) were kindly provided by M. Davis and S. Kim. Nucleotide sequencing was done as described (23), using the M13 system. All enzymes were purchased from New England Bio Labs, Boehringer-Mannheim and P-L Biochemicals.

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**RESULTS****1. Hybridoma lines making membrane and secreted  $\gamma_3$  chains**

The parental hybridoma line B1, which secretes both IgM and IgG anti-arsenate antibodies is a spontaneous double-producing line from the fusion product of the MPC-11 x 45 6TG plasmacytoma line (received from M.D. Scharff, Albert Einstein, Bronx, New York) and immune A/J spleen cells which had been stimulated in vitro by dextran sulfate (DxS) and lipopolysaccharide (LPS) as described by Robertson et al. (22). Briefly, A/J mice were immunized intraperitoneally (IP) with p-azophenylarsenate coupled to keyhole limpet hemocyanin (Ar-KLH) in adjuvant, rested, and injected (IP) with Ar-KLH in saline. Three days later the spleen was removed, teased into a single cell suspension, and cultured at low density ( $2 \times 10^5$  cells/ml) in the presence of 30  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  DxS and 10  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  S. typhosa LPS. The in vitro expanded spleen cells were then fused with the MPC-11 plasmacytoma line at a ratio of 10:1 using 35% polyethylene glycol (PEG1000) according to the method of Galfre et al. (24). After fusion the cells were plated at limiting dilutions at  $4 \times 10^2$  to  $4 \times 10^5$  cells/microtiter well and grown in the presence of Littlefield's HAT selection media (25). The hybrid clone supernatants were then scored for anti-Ar antibodies in a solid phase radioimmunoassay (RIA) and were typed for subclass by gel diffusion. Hybrid lines were carried in vitro and as ascitic tumors in CAF<sub>1</sub> mice.

The A/J mice used for the particular fusion from which the B1 line was derived had been hyperimmunized with Ar-KLH: 500  $\mu\text{g}$  Ar-KLH in complete Freund's adjuvant IP followed by three injections of 250  $\mu\text{g}$  Ar-KLH in incomplete adjuvant and one of Ar-KLH in saline at intervals of two weeks. After resting for eight weeks the animals were given Ar-KLH (250  $\mu\text{g}$ ) in saline. Three days later three animals were sacrificed and their spleen cells were pooled for the in vitro expansion and hybridization procedure as described above. When the cells from the day 4 mitogen stimulated cultures were fused with MPC-11 cells and plated at  $2 \times 10^5$  cells/well, approximately 12% of the wells contained hybrids producing anti-Ar-antibodies. One well, E3, which was producing both IgM and IgG2b, was subcloned twice (F11-H8) and injected into a CAF<sub>1</sub> mouse to produce ascites. The cells were recovered after one passage, cultured and recloned, producing the B1 line which secreted predominantly IgM and little IgG2b. After this line was carried in mice for approximately 3 months (5 passages) the hybrid cells were harvested from ascitic fluid and cultured. The line recovered was now secreting predominantly IgM and IgG3 with a trace of IgG2b and thus represented a spontaneous double-pro-

ducing line. All studies concerning antibody structure, cell surface properties, karyotype, and mRNA have been performed on this B1 double-producer and its subclones.

## 2. Characteristics of Cells Making Membrane and Secreted $\gamma_3$ Chains

The B1 hybridoma cell line and its double-producing subclones, B1C and B1G9 have between 64 and 72 chromosomes. Based on Giemsa banding and secondary constriction karyotypic studies, the B1 line has 2 A/J 12 chromosomes and one Balb/c 12 chromosome. In addition, both the B1C and B1G9 lines appear to have duplicated one A/J chromosome 12 and B1C has lost the Balb/c chromosome 12 (22). The lines secrete varying amounts of IgM and IgG3 antibodies with the B1 line secreting higher amounts of IgM and B1G9 secreting mainly IgG3. All three lines secrete IgG2b, which was the isotype secreted by the parent line. By cell sorter analysis, all three lines bear membrane IgG3 and the B1 line membrane IgM.

## 3. Cells Making Membrane and Secreted IgG3 Contain Two Species of $\gamma_3$ Heavy Chain mRNA

Cytoplasmic poly(A)-containing mRNA was isolated from two subclones of the IgM B1 hybridoma and analyzed by RNA blots. The  $\gamma_3$  mRNAs were initially identified by hybridization to a cloned cDNA probe identified by nucleotide sequencing (J. Rogers and L. Clayton, unpublished results) or to a  $\gamma_3$  genomic DNA probe identified by its hybridization to the cloned  $\gamma_3$  cDNA probe and nucleotide sequencing. These hybridoma cell lines were originally constructed by fusion with a  $\gamma_{2b}$ -producing MPC 11 cell line; however, the presence of  $\gamma_{2b}$  mRNA in these cells does not complicate the results as the hybridization conditions employed effectively discriminate between the mRNAs for these two subclasses of  $\gamma$  heavy chains.

The IgM B1C subclone produces 3.2 kb and 1.7 kb  $\gamma_3$  mRNA species as well as a 2.1 kb  $\mu$  mRNA (Fig. 1). The 2.1 kb  $\mu$  mRNA codes for secreted  $\mu_s$  chains. The 2.35 kb  $\mu$  mRNA which codes for membrane  $\mu_m$  chains is not detectable in IgM B1C. Thus, these cells make both membrane and secreted IgG3 but only secreted IgM. The IgM B1G9 subcloned cells contain the 3.2 kb and 1.7 kb  $\gamma_3$  mRNAs but lack any  $\mu$  mRNA.

## 4. Structure of the $\gamma_3$ M-Region

By analogy to the finding for  $\mu$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\gamma_3$ ,  $\gamma_{2a}$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$ , we presumed that the 3.2 and 1.7 kb  $\gamma_3$  mRNA species contain alternative COOH terminal coding sequences. The origin of such sequences in the 3.2 kb  $\gamma_3$  mRNA species was examined by hybridization to isolated restriction fragments from the  $\gamma_3$  genomic clone (Fig. 2). The pY3C6 clone contains a 6.6 kb BamH I insert.

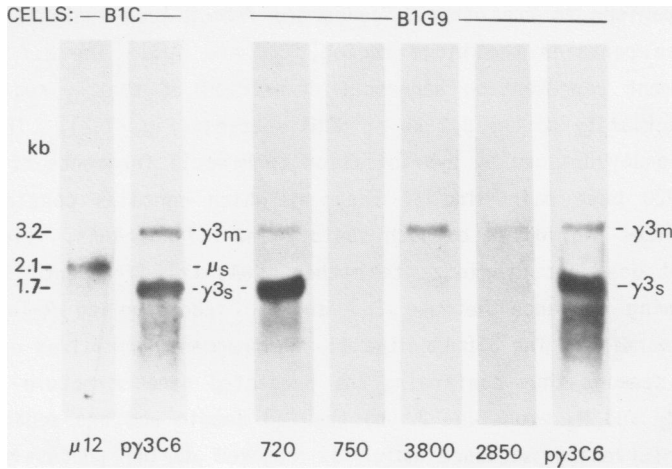


Figure 1. RNA blot analysis of mRNA from the B1C and B1G9 cell lines. See Figure 2 and text for explanation of probes. RNA sizes were based on cellular RNA standard sizes of 1.84 kb (18S), 5.00 kb (28S), 6.35 kb (32S), 11.8 kb (45S), and *E. coli* ribosomal RNA sizes of 1541 nucleotides (16S) and 2904 nucleotides (23S).

Comparison of restriction maps and nucleotide sequences from p606Y3-1 and pY3C6 indicates that this insert contains sequences 3' to the BamH I site located at amino acid 164 in the middle of the  $\gamma_3$  C<sub>H1</sub> domain (J. Rogers and L. Clayton, unpublished results; 26,27). The pY3C6 DNA was cut by BamH I and Xba I and two fragments isolated on an agarose gel. The 3.9 kb BamH I-Xba I fragment contains the distal portion of the  $\gamma_3$  C<sub>H1</sub> domain and regions 3' to

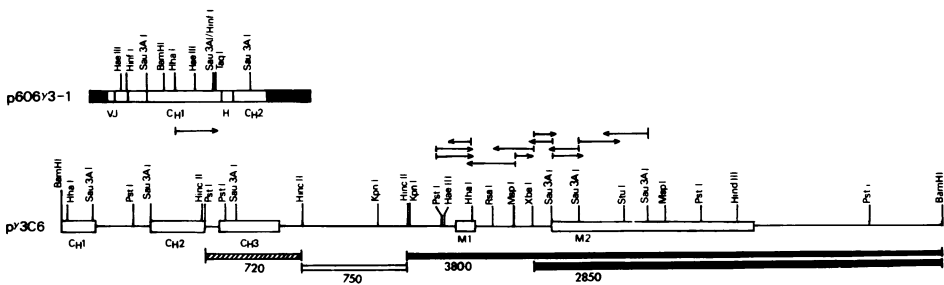


Figure 2. Restriction enzyme maps of p606Y3-1 and pY3C6. Arrows indicate the direction and extent of nucleotide sequence analysis. Bars indicate probes used in Figure 1. The hatched bar hybridized to 1.85 kb  $\gamma_3$ S RNA, the solid bars hybridized to 3.2 kb  $\gamma_3$ M RNA, and the open bar did not hybridize with either cytoplasmic  $\gamma_3$ M RNA species.

it. In comparison to the other  $\gamma$  genes and from R-loop analysis (26) this fragment also contains the hinge region,  $C_H2$  and  $C_H3$ . The 2.7 kb Xba I-Bam HI fragment representing sequences downstream of the  $\gamma_3$  region domain hybridizes primarily to the 3.2 kb  $\gamma_3$  mRNA species (Fig. 1,2). The M exons were more closely defined by hybridization to Hinc II fragments of the pY3C6 DNA. The 720 base pair Hinc II fragment which contains constant region domain sequences hybridizes to both the 3.2 and 1.7 kb mRNAs. The 750 base pair fragment does not hybridize to either mRNA; this fragment lies within the intervening sequence between  $C_H3$  and  $M_1$  according to R-looping and restriction mapping. The 3.8 kb Hinc II DNA fragment hybridizes only to the 3.2 kb mRNA species thus confirming the predicted gene structure for the M exons; the  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  exons lie 3' to the  $C_H3$  domain and are separated from it by an intervening sequence which is removed during processing of the primary transcript. In addition, RNA dot hybridization experiments show that the  $M_1 \rightarrow M_2$  intron is removed during  $\gamma_3$  mRNA biogenesis (data not shown).

The sequence of the  $\gamma_3$   $M_1$  exon was determined according to the strategy shown in Figure 2. The nucleotide sequence and deduced amino acid sequence is shown in Figure 3.

#### DISCUSSION

The nucleotide sequences of the  $\gamma_3$   $M_1$  and  $M_2$  exons are highly conserved in comparison to other  $\gamma$  heavy chains (28). As has been shown for  $\mu$  (1,2),  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  (16,28) and  $\gamma_{2a}$  (28), the  $\gamma_3$   $M_1$  contains a highly acidic polypeptide sequence followed by a hydrophobic core. The  $\gamma_3$  protein sequence differs from  $\gamma_1$  in 4 amino acids out of the first 12 and from  $\gamma_{2b}$  in five positions. The hydrophobic core sequences of  $\gamma_3$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  are identical; this sequence differs from  $\gamma_1$  in one position.

The patchwork pattern of nucleotide sequence homology observed for  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  (16) is also obvious in  $\gamma_3$ . The 33 bases preceding the 5' splice site are highly conserved. There are four differences between  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_3$  (88% homology) and one difference between  $\gamma_{2b}$  and  $\gamma_3$  (97% homology). This is followed by a region of higher divergence within the acidic portion of the protein sequence. Here there are 6 out of 38 differences (84% homology) between  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_3$  and 8 out of 38 (76% homology) differences between  $\gamma_{2b}$  and  $\gamma_3$ . However, as previously mentioned, the overall charge of the protein sequence in this region is maintained. The following 93 nucleotides leading to the splice site at the 3' end of  $M_1$  show only two differences between  $\gamma_3$  and the  $\gamma_1$  and  $\gamma_{2b}$  sequences (98% homology). However, 3' to the splice site the

100

TGCAGCTTTCTCTGGGCTCCATGCAGCTCCTGCCACACAGGGAATGGCCCTAGCTCTACCTTGTGGGACAAACTGACTTTCTCTCTGTTCAGAL

*GluLeuGluLeuAsnGlyThrCysAlaGluAlaGlnAspGlyGlnLeuAspGlyLeuTrpThrThrIleThrIlePheIleSerLeuPheLeuLeuSerVal*  
 GCTGGAACTGAATGGGACCTGTGCTGAGGCCAGGATGGGAGCTGGACGGGCTCTGGACGACCATCACCATCTTCATCAGCCTCTTCTCTCAGCGTG

M1

300

*CysTyrSerAlaSerValThrLeuPheLys*  
 TGCTACAGCGCCTCTGTACCCCTGTTCAAGGTCATCCCTATTTCCTCCATCCATCCTCACAATATCTACACTATACTGTCTATCCCTACCTGTCCATACT

400

GTCTCAATGTCTCCCATGTCTATATGTCATCTTCCACATAGTCATCCACTGTAFTTACACCACCTCTCCCTGTCCCTCTGTCTATACTGTGCCACAA

500

TTGTCCATGTCTCCCTNANTTTGCTTGACACTCCCGCAAGTTGCACCCACCTATCCATGCACCGTCTCCAATATGATCTGCACACTACGTTCTCTAA

600

TTGCCGGTCCCACTCTATTACACCTGGTCTCACAAATCCCTACACTGTCCCTACAATGCCCTTGCTATAGCTACACCCGCTCTCAAAACTCTACT

700

CACACCTTGCCTTACAATGTCACCTGTCTTATCCTCACTCTAGATATATGACATCCCAAGATTGGGAGCTGCCCTGGCTTAGTGTATAATGAGGCAGGGAT

*VallYsTrpIlePheSerSerValValGlnVallYsGlnThrAla*  
 GACCTGTGAAGGACTCAGGTCAGGCACATAACATCTCACTTTTGCATCTCACAGGTGAAGTGGATCTTCTCCTCAGTGGTGAGGTGAAGCAGACGGCC

M2

900

*IlePheAspTyrArgAsnMetIleGlyGlnGlyAlaStop*  
 ATCCCTGACTACAGGAACATGATTGGACAAGGTGCCTAGCCTGTCTCTTCAAGGTTGCCAGAGCTTGCTAGCCCTTAGGACCAAGTCCATGCTGTGTA

1000

GCTGCCAGACACACGGGTTACACTGCCTTCTCATCTCANCATCCTTTGATCTTATGGCTCTGACTCTGCTACCCAGGTCCCTCCACATTTGGAGCAGCAT

1100

GTGGNAAAGCAGGTTTGCCAGACCATAGCCAACAGGACCAAGCACCATTACCACAGCCAAAACAGTGGATAGGCTCAAACTGCTGCTGTGTTTCTTC

1200

TACATGGTGTCTAGCCCTCAGCAGGACCTCTCCAGATGGCTGCATCACCTGCACTCCATTTAGATGCAGATGAGCCTTAGAGCCAGCCCTGTCTATAC

1300

AGTCCCTGAAACTGCTCTCTGAGAGAAGAAATTCATATGTCTCTAAGGCTGAGAAGGCTCAAAGGAACTCTTTGGGAAGGACTGCCAAAAGGTGAC

1400

TCTAATTTGGCCTTGACCCCAACAGTGCCCTGCCGTGTTTTGTCACCTTCTTGAATGTAAGATGGGCATCGTTGTGAAGACCTCTTCTGCCATCCAT

GCAACATGATGATGTTTGATGATC

Figure 3. Nucleotide sequence of the  $\gamma_3$  M exon region. M1 and M2 are indicated, with their respective amino acid sequences written in italics.

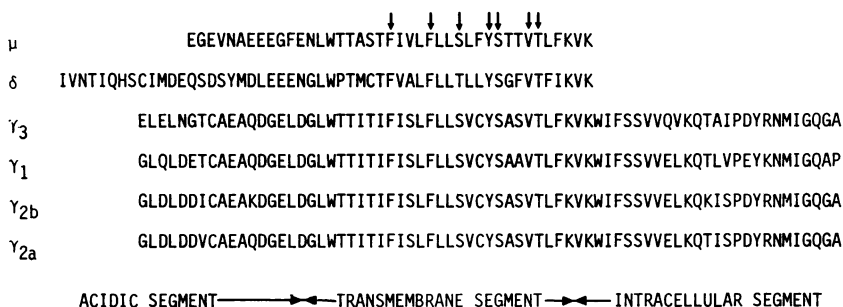


Figure 4. Comparison of amino acid sequences of M exons from mouse immunoglobulin heavy chain genes.

sequences diverge completely. Thus the sequence of the γ<sub>3</sub> M<sub>1</sub> exon and regions immediately flanking it show a pattern of homology identical to that noted for γ<sub>1</sub> and γ<sub>2b</sub> (16).

We previously proposed (16) that the conservation of sequence observed in the M exons of γ immunoglobulins is necessary for the formation of a dimer within the membrane. Possible models of such a dimer include one in which the α-helices cross and interact at 7 "contact" residues. It is noteworthy that these contact residues are identical and conserved in their placement in all mouse immunoglobulin transmembrane segments (with the exception of one S > T in the sequence) (Fig. 4). The homology of the M<sub>1</sub> exons in all known mouse immunoglobulins is much better than that seen between the constant region domains of different immunoglobulins (28).

With regard to the two-chain model, we have noted the presence of conserved residues in other molecules which are structurally related to immunoglobulins and which are anchored in the cell membrane by two chain complexes. These are class II HLA or H-2 molecules which are involved in lymphoid cell interactions. For example, the HLA-DR<sub>β</sub> and HLA-DR<sub>α</sub> (29-32) transmembrane regions contain six conserved residues with spacing like the heavy chain transmembrane contact sites. The A<sub>α</sub>, A<sub>β</sub>, and E<sub>α</sub> chains show similar constraints (33,34; E. Choi and J. Seidman, personal communication). In contrast, none of the sequenced class I H-2 or HLA chains which are anchored in membranes by single chains contain conserved residues at these sites (35-43, reviewed in 44).

The high degree of conservation (85%, 4 differences out of 27 amino acids) seen in the M<sub>2</sub> exons is not as easy to explain. The function of the protein encoded by the M<sub>2</sub> exon, the intracellular segment, is not known, so discussion of selective pressure is purely speculative. Alternatively,



conservations may be due to limited genetic exchange or gene conversion, as proposed for the  $\gamma_{2a}$  gene (45). It has been observed that exons and introns in closely related genes can evolve at different rates, and arguments have been made for crossover events involving separate sequence domains (46). Such events, in this case, would have to be postulated to occur almost entirely within the exons, since the intron between M1 and M2, while exhibiting conservation of size, shows limited sequence homology between  $\gamma_3$  and  $\gamma_{2a}$  or  $\gamma_{2b}$ . Curiously, the much larger CH3  $\rightarrow$  M1 intron exhibits strong homology (about 90%) between  $\gamma_1$ ,  $\gamma_{2a}$ ,  $\gamma_{2b}$  and the sequenced region of  $\gamma_3$ . This is comparable to the values seen for the other introns in the  $\gamma$  genes (47,48).

The factors controlling the production of membrane vs. secreted immunoglobulins are not understood. It is clear that one of the first steps in the B cell lineage is the switch from  $\mu_m$  to  $\mu_s$ . As known for other hybridoma lines fused with myeloma cell parents, the B1C subclone used here produces  $\mu_s$ ,  $\gamma_m$ ,  $\gamma_s$  but no  $\mu_m$ . This indicates that the expression of  $\mu$  and  $\gamma$  M exons is under different control. It is possible that the sequences in the M2 exon have a role in this differentiation. The M2 coding region for  $\mu$  contains only 2 amino acids, as opposed to the 27 amino acids in the M2  $\gamma$  family. In addition, the 3' untranslated regions in the  $\gamma$  M2 exons range from 1.3-1.8 kbp, while the corresponding  $\mu$  region is only 267 bp. Experiments are in progress to determine if control of antigen reactivity of lymphocytes resides in these sequences.

The question of the mechanism of the co-expression of  $\mu$  and  $\gamma_3$  remains. The cells contain three copies of chromosome 12 (22). This raises the possibility that transcription of the  $\mu$  and  $\gamma$  genes occurs on rearranged heavy chain genes on different chromosomes. A second possibility is that there has been a duplication of the V region, so that both the  $\mu$  and  $\gamma_3$  genes have a rearranged V region. This would, as would the first possibility, result in separate transcription units for the two heavy chain genes. Support for separate transcription units comes from analysis of subclones of B1 which have lost either  $\mu$  or  $\gamma_3$  expression during cell passage. A third possible mechanism would involve a large complex transcription unit containing a rearranged V region and spanning the  $\mu$  and  $\gamma_3$  gene segments. The  $\mu_s$ ,  $\gamma_m$  and  $\gamma_s$  would be generated by differential RNA splicing. This latter possibility has been suggested for the co-expression of IgM and IgE (49). Resolution of these possible mechanisms will be necessary to establish the biological relevance of these cells co-expressing IgM and IgG to B cell development.

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<sup>2</sup>Present address: Department of Medicine, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA 94305, USA

<sup>6</sup>Present address: Alcon Laboratories, 6201 S. Freeway, Fort Worth, TX 76134, USA

<sup>3</sup>Present address: MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 2QH, UK

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