

DNA sequences near the site of reciprocal recombination between a *c-myc* oncogene and an immunoglobulin switch region

(switch enzyme recognition sequence/*c-myc* gene regulation)

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ABSTRACT The chromosomal translocations found in many B-cell tumors result in the joining of a *c-myc* oncogene with an immunoglobulin heavy chain switch region. This finding is striking because the natural function of switch regions is to mediate DNA rearrangements important to the maturation of immune responses. These normal switch rearrangements are probably mediated by specific enzymes. In this paper we report the isolation of the two reciprocal products of a recombination between a *c-myc* gene on murine chromosome 15 and an immunoglobulin switch region ($S_{\mu}S_{\gamma}2b$) on chromosome 12. We have determined the sequences of these DNA molecules near the recombination sites and show that the recombination is nearly perfectly reciprocal, with a seven-nucleotide deletion. An examination of the sequences reported in this paper, and of sequences published by other authors, shows a correlation between the points of recombination for *c-myc*-S segment rearrangements and for normal heavy chain switches. We suggest that this correlation implies a role for switch recombination enzymes in creating substrates for the *c-myc* recombination. The *c-myc* gene also seems to share some limited homology to sequences thought to be important in heavy chain switching. Finally, we discuss a working model that accounts for some characteristics of *c-myc*-S segment recombinations. The model also suggests a mechanism for increased transcriptional activity of the rearranged *c-myc* oncogene in B-cell tumors.

A large portion of B-cell tumors (lymphomas and plasmacytomas) have chromosomal translocations (1, 2). Several workers have shown that these translocations in murine plasmacytomas result in the joining of *c-myc* gene on chromosome 15 to immunoglobulin heavy chain (chromosome 12) or light chain (chromosome 6) genes (3-8). Similar translocations are found in human B-cell tumors involving *c-myc* on chromosome 8 and immunoglobulin genes on chromosomes 14, 2, or 22 (4, 7, 9-11). *c-myc* is a ubiquitous eukaryotic gene, homologous to a viral gene (*v-myc*) in the avian retrovirus MC29 (12, 13). Because the presence of *v-myc* in the virus is strictly correlated with the ability of the virus to rapidly induce tumors in chickens, the *myc* gene is termed an oncogene. In plasmacytoma DNA, the recombination between *c-myc* and an immunoglobulin gene involves loss of the 5' end of *c-myc* from the new complex gene and results in increased transcription of *c-myc* (7, 14, 15). The translocated *c-myc* gene in B-cell tumor DNA is often joined to sequences important in immunoglobulin heavy chain switching.

During the differentiation of B cells, a switch from IgM to IgG or IgA synthesis takes place. This protein switch reflects the shuffling of a heavy chain variable region (*V*) gene between a μ constant region (*C*) gene and a C_{γ} or C_{α} gene (Fig. 1). (In the mouse, there are four slightly different C_{γ} genes: $\gamma 1$, $\gamma 2a$,

$\gamma 2b$, and $\gamma 3$.) This gene switch is a deletion event that uses switch sequences that lie to the 5' end of each heavy chain *C* gene (16-19). Switch (*S*) sequences are known to consist of 50-200 copies of short sequences repeated in tandem (20-24). However, the exact signals used in the DNA deletion are just beginning to be understood (22, 25). The *c-myc* translocation nearly always recombines with S_{μ} or S_{α} . Adams, Cory, and their colleagues (7, 26) have shown, by identification and cloning of restriction fragments containing both the 5' end of the *c-myc* gene and the 5' end of switch sequences, that the *c-myc*-S segment recombination is a reciprocal event. Beyond this, the mechanism of the recombination and its relationship to normal heavy chain switching is unknown.

We have molecularly cloned both products of a *c-myc*-S segment reciprocal recombination from the plasmacytoma P3. We report DNA sequences around the *c-myc*-S segment recombination sites and show that the recombination is essentially reciprocal at the nucleotide level. Our interpretation of these sequences favors the use of immunoglobulin switch enzymes in *c-myc* rearrangements. Finally, we suggest a mechanism that accounts for the increased transcription of rearranged *c-myc* genes. This mechanism relates to the possible oncogenic role of *c-myc*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Molecular Cloning. Clone $\gamma M27-3$ was derived from P3.X27 DNA, a cell line subcloned from the P3 line. Clone $\gamma M52$ was derived from P3.26Bu4, a P3 line isolated by Margulies *et al.* (27) and given to us by M. Scharff. In both cases, plasmacytoma DNA was partially digested with *EcoRI* and ligated to Charon 4a arms (28). Phage libraries of about 400,000 plaques were screened (29, 30) with the 6.0-kilobase (kb) *EcoRI* fragment from clone $\gamma M14$ (21). Positive plaques were purified twice and grown in bulk for detailed analysis. The 12-kb *EcoRI* insert of $\gamma M27-3$ was subcloned into the *EcoRI* site of pBR325 and designated pX27-3.

Southern Hybridization Analysis. High molecular weight DNA was prepared from cell lines and from BALB/cJ kidneys and livers as described by Steffen and Weinberg (31). DNA samples were cut with restriction endonucleases, fractionated on 0.8% agarose gels, and blotted onto nitrocellulose paper (32). The immobilized DNA was hybridized to nick-translated DNA (33) in 6 \times standard saline citrate at 65°C as described (21). The final wash was in 1 \times standard saline citrate/0.5% sodium dodecyl sulfate at 65°C. Probes used included p $\gamma 1$ /IF2.E.6.0, a genomic clone in pBR325 that includes S_{μ} , $S_{\gamma 1}$, and $C_{\gamma 1}$ sequences and is the 6.0-kb *EcoRI* fragment from the clone $\gamma M14$

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Abbreviations: NIARD, non-immunoglobulin-associated rearranging DNA; *V*, *C*, and *S*, variable, constant, and switch regions of immunoglobulin genes; kb, kilobase(s).

(21); pS γ 2a-1, a S γ 2a probe (R. Lang and K. B. Marcu, personal communication); pj14, a S μ probe (34); pa25BH3.4, a probe that includes most of the murine *c-myc* introns, exons, and 3' flanking sequences (35); PX9-5, a probe for the 5' exon of the murine *c-myc* gene (14); and M13/73, a probe that includes S γ 1 and C γ 1 sequences (21).

Restriction enzyme cleavage maps for *Eco*RI, *Bam*HI, *Xba*I, *Kpn*I, and *Hind*III were constructed by single and double digests and a best-fit analysis.

DNA Sequences. DNA sequences were obtained by the di-deoxy method (36) in phages M13mp8 and M13mp9 (37).

RESULTS

Immunoglobulin gene expression is nearly always associated with DNA rearrangement. Using a probe that included μ and γ 1 switch sequences and γ 1 constant region sequences, we detected at least three rearranged *Eco*RI fragments in P3 plasmacytoma DNA (Fig. 1, lane 3). One fragment (8.5 kb) is probably associated with the γ 1 heavy chain gene expressed by P3 cells. We obtained molecular clones of two other fragments (12 and 14 kb). The *Eco*RI insert of the plasmid clone pX27-3 comigrates with the upper band in the 12-kb *Eco*RI doublet from P3 DNA (lanes 1–3), and the *Eco*RI insert of the Charon 4a clone γ M52 comigrates with the 14-kb *Eco*RI fragment from P3 DNA (lanes 3 and 4). Both the 8.5- and 14-kb *Eco*RI fragments hybridized to a S γ 2a probe, as did S γ 2b (6.6-kb) and S γ 2a (4.6-kb) germ-line fragments (lanes 5 and 6).

To understand better the composition of the rearranged switch segments, we analyzed the two clones containing the 12- and 14-kb *Eco*RI fragments by Southern hybridization using S μ , S γ 1, and S γ 2a probes. We also used probes for the murine *c-myc* gene [non-immunoglobulin-associated rearranging DNA (NIARD); ref. 35] and the 5' exon of *c-myc* (14). These analyses (Fig. 2) showed that the 14-kb *Eco*RI fragment (γ M52) contained a 5.6-kb *Bam*HI fragment that included most of the *c-myc* exons and introns and a 2.8-kb *Bam*HI fragment that included some of the 5' exon from the *c-myc* gene, S γ 2a or S γ 2b sequences, and S μ sequences. The 12-kb *Eco*RI fragment included, in a 3.6-kb *Xba*I fragment, both S μ sequences and *c-*

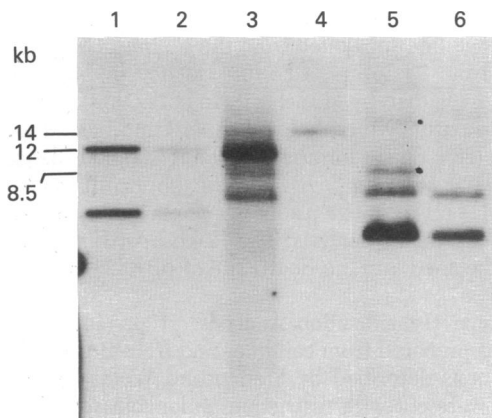


FIG. 1. Identification of cloned DNA inserts from P3 plasmacytoma DNA. DNA samples were cut with *Eco*RI, fractionated on 0.8% agarose gels, blotted onto nitrocellulose paper, and hybridized with nick-translated p γ 1/IF2.E.6.0 (lanes 1–4) or pS γ 2a-1 (lanes 5 and 6). DNA samples were pX27-3 (lanes 1 and 2), P3 (lanes 3 and 5), γ M52 (lane 4), and BALB/cJ kidney and liver (lane 6). Because the probes used included radiolabeled plasmid DNA, plasmid vector hybridization at about 5 kb can be seen in lanes 1 and 2. Lanes 1–4 and 5 and 6 are from different experiments and thus have slightly different electrophoretic migration distances. The 14- and 8.5-kb fragments in lane 5 are shown by dots.

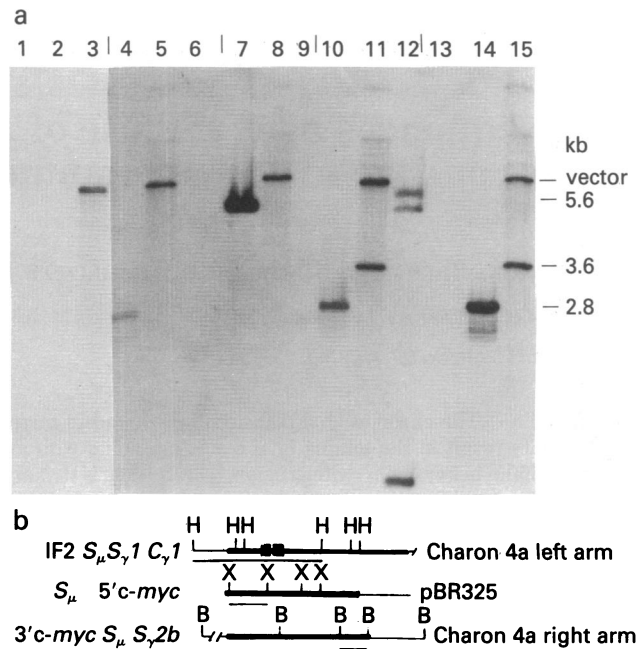


FIG. 2. (a) Southern hybridization analysis of *c-myc* and switch region content of recombinant DNA clones. Probes were M13/73 for S γ 1 (lanes 1–3), pS γ 2a-1 for S γ 2a (lanes 4–6), pa25BH3.4 for NIARD (lanes 7–9), pj14 for S μ (lanes 10–12), and PX9-5 for the 5' exon of *c-myc* (lanes 13–15). DNA samples were *Hind*III-digested γ M14 (lanes 3, 6, 9, 12, and 13), *Xba*I-digested pX27-3 (lanes 2, 5, 8, 11, and 15), and *Bam*HI-digested γ M52 DNA (lanes 1, 4, 7, 10, and 14). pBR325 vector DNA from the clone pX27-3 hybridizes to radiolabeled vector sequences in several of the lanes. (b) Restriction enzyme cleavage sites and hybridizing fragments (noted by thin lines) for γ M14 (Upper), pX27-3 (Middle), and γ M52 (Lower). H, *Hind*III; X, *Xba*I; B, *Bam*HI.

myc 5' exon sequences. However, it lacked the bulk of the *c-myc* gene. As a control for these hybridization analyses we used a Charon 4a clone called γ M14 (21). This fragment hybridizes to the S γ 1 probe but not to the S γ 2a probe. Furthermore, sequences in γ M52 hybridize to the S γ 2a probe but not to the S γ 1 probe.

We constructed enzyme cleavage maps for both the 14-kb and the 12-kb *Eco*RI fragments (Fig. 3). These maps, along with the hybridization experiments presented in Fig. 2 and the restriction maps published by others (6, 7, 26, 35, 38, 39), suggest the following composition for these two rearranged fragments. The 14-kb *Eco*RI fragment includes most of the murine *c-myc* gene and 3' flanking sequences. It includes the recombination, probably within the 5' exon of *c-myc*, to S μ and S γ 2b sequences. The clone ends with the *Eco*RI site between S γ 2b and C γ 2b. The *c-myc* and switch sequences are transcriptionally in the opposite sense, in a head-to-head fashion. These results with P3 DNA segments confirm those of other workers studying similar segments derived from other plasmacytomas (4, 7, 14, 26, 35, 38, 39).

The 12-kb fragment seems to include DNA reciprocal to that in the 14-kb fragment. It includes some of the *c-myc* 5' exon and all of the 5' flanking sequences to the *Eco*RI site. These 5' *c-myc* sequences are joined to S μ sequences. Again, the DNA segments are transcriptionally in the opposite sense, being joined tail-to-tail.

These results were also confirmed by direct sequence analysis. Most of these sequences, which are in 99% agreement with published sequences (14, 20, 23, 34), are not presented, but the areas analyzed are shown in Fig. 3. Some sequences near recombination sites are presented in Fig. 4. These sequences

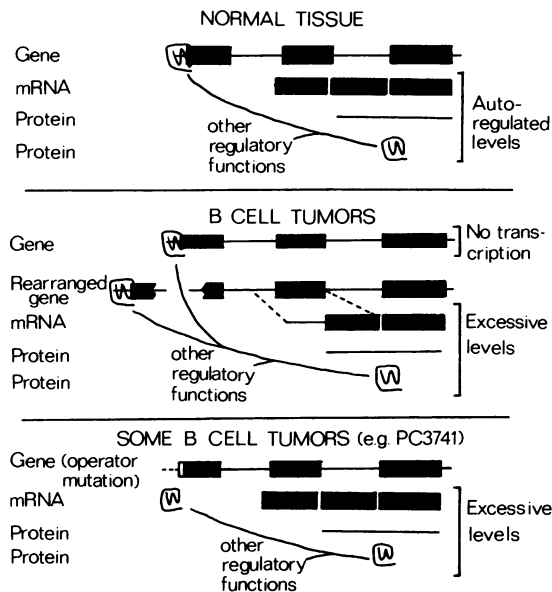


FIG. 6. Working model for *c-myc* gene regulation. We show the protein in the unfolded form to emphasize that it is encoded by the second and third exons. We also show the folded form of the protein to emphasize its function.

ther assume that the myc protein also binds to the 5' end of the *c-myc* gene and inhibits its own transcription. The translocation in B-cell tumors separates the myc protein coding segments (in the second and third exons only; see ref. 14) from its operator in or near the 5'-most exon (7, 14, 26). Thus, transcription of the *c-myc* gene proceeds unregulated, albeit from an adventitious promoter that may or may not rely on proximity to immunoglobulin genes (7, 14). The excess of myc protein has two consequences. First, it shuts off the unrearranged gene completely, a phenomenon already noted by Stanton *et al.* (14). Second, it provides an overabundance of regulatory proteins that may result in oncogenesis. Recombinations that take place 5' of the first exon may not separate the operator from the bulk of the *c-myc* gene; recombinations that take place 3' of the first intron may remove transcription signals, translation signals, or protein domains important in oncogenesis. Thus, *c-myc* recombinations that lead to tumors are restricted to a small region. This model predicts the existence of operator constitutive mutations (43) that do not bind the myc protein. This may be the genotype of plasmacytomas with high levels of transcription but no *c-myc* rearrangement (e.g., PC3741) (4, 35). myc protein variants that do not bind operator are not likely to be detected because they would probably have to be homozygous to be effective. In addition to autoregulation, *c-myc* expression may be regulated by enhancing factors present only in B cells.

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