

Cloning of cytochrome P-450 2C9 cDNA from human liver and its expression in CHL cells

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Abstract

AIM: Using bacterial, yeast, or mammalian cell expressing a human drug metabolism enzyme would seem good way to study drug metabolism-related problems. Human cytochrome P-450 2C9 (*CYP2C9*) is a polymorphic enzyme responsible for the metabolism of a large number of clinically important drugs. It ranks among the most important drug metabolizing enzymes in humans. In order to provide a sufficient amount of the enzyme for drug metabolic research, the *CYP2C9* cDNA was cloned and expressed stably in CHL cells.

METHODS: After extraction of total RNA from human liver tissue, the human *CYP2C9* cDNA was amplified with reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), and cloned into cloning vector pGEM-T. The cDNA fragment was identified by DNA sequencing and subcloned into a mammalian expression vector pREP9. A transgenic cell line was established by transfecting the recombinant vector of pREP9-*CYP2C9* into CHL cells. The enzyme activity of *CYP2C9* catalyzing oxidation of tolbutamide to hydroxy tolbutamide in S9 fraction of the cell was determined by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC).

RESULTS: The amino acid sequence predicted from the cDNA segment was identical to that of *CYP2C9*1*, the wild type *CYP2C9*. However, there were two base differences, i.e. 21T>C, 1146C>T, but the encoding amino acid sequence was the same, L7, P382. The S9 fraction of the established cell line metabolizes tolbutamide to hydroxy tolbutamide; tolbutamide hydroxylase activity was found to be $0.465 \pm 0.109 \mu\text{mol} \cdot \text{min}^{-1} \cdot \text{g}^{-1}$ S9 protein or $8.62 \pm 2.02 \text{mol} \cdot \text{min}^{-1} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$ CYP, but was undetectable in parental CHL cell.

CONCLUSION: The cDNA of human *CYP2C9* was successfully cloned and a cell line of CHL-*CYP2C9*, efficiently expressing the protein of *CYP2C9*, was established.

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INTRODUCTION

Cytochrome P-450 (CYP) is a heme-containing enzyme widely distributed from bacteria to mammals, which catalyzes oxidative or reductive metabolism of a wide variety of substances including endogenous as well as exogenous compounds. Mammalian CYP present in liver microsomes is one of the key enzymatic mechanisms for the metabolism of drugs, pesticides, environmental pollutants, and carcinogens^[1]. Mammals possess at least 17 distinct CYP gene families that together code for an estimated 50-60 individual CYP genes in any given species^[2]. The human CYP2C subfamily comprises four members, *CYP2C8*, *CYP2C9*, *CYP2C18* and *CYP2C19*^[3], accounting for 20% of the total CYP in human liver. *CYP2C9* is a polymorphic enzyme responsible for the metabolism of a large number of clinically important drugs such as S-warfarin, phenytoin, tolbutamide, torsemide, losartan, fluoxetine, dapsone^[4], cyclooxygenase-2 inhibitor: celecoxib^[5,6], nonpeptide angiotensin II receptor antagonist: irbesartan^[7] and numerous nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. It ranks among the most important drug metabolizing enzymes in humans^[8].

The combination of gene technology and cell culture technology has provided new opportunities for studying proteins because any gene from any species encoding an protein may be cloned and expressed in bacterial, yeast, or mammalian cells in a defined way^[9-18]. This approach to drug metabolism is of particular importance because some of the enzymes are difficult to purify and prepare in sufficient quantities, or expression levels are low, expression is organ-specificity, or the enzyme-product organs are very scarce. These restrictions apply especially for human enzymes. The heterologous expression of the cDNA allows to bypass these restrictions^[19]. Human *CYP2C9* previously has been expressed in *E. coli*^[20], *Salmonella typhimurium*^[21], yeast^[22] COS-1^[3], human liver epithelial cell THLE^[23], and human hepatic cell line HepG2^[24]. Several cell lines stably expressing human CYP1A1^[25], CYP2B6^[25], CYP2A6^[26], CYP3A4^[27], *CYP2C18* (in press) and a phase II metabolism enzyme UDP-glucuronosyltransferase, UGT1A9^[28] have been established in our laboratory. In this study human *CYP2C9* cDNA was amplified with reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), and a transgenic cell line stably expressing *CYP2C9* was established.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

Restriction endonucleases, Moloney murine leukemia virus (M-MuLV) reverse transcriptase were purchased from MBI Fermentas AB, Lithuania. Taq plus I DNA polymerase, dNTPs, PCR primers, DNA sequence primers and random hexamer primer were supplied or synthesized by Shanghai Sangon Biotechnology Corp. DNA sequencing kit was supplied by Perkin-Elmer Corp. The TRIzol reagent, G418, minimum essential media (MEM) and newborn bovine calf sera from Gibco. NADPH from Roche Molecular Biochemicals. Diethyl pyrocarbonate (DEPC), tolbutamide and hydroxytolbutamide were obtained from Sigma Chemical Company. T4 DNA ligase and pGEM-T vector system were supplied by

Promega. Other chemical reagents used were all of analytical purity from commercial sources.

Methods

Cloning of human *CYP2C9* cDNA from a Chinese human liver

The total RNA was extracted from a surgical specimen of human liver with TRIzol reagent according to the manufacture's instructions, and then the first strand of cDNA was reverse transcribed from mRNA. Procedure: 5 µg of the total RNA and 2 µg of random hexamer primer in deionized DEPC-treated water were denatured at 65°C for 15min, then 4 µL 5×reverse transcription buffer, 3 µL 10mmol·L⁻¹ dNTP, 1 µL M-MuLV reverse transcriptase (200u) and essential deionized DEPC treated water was added to a total volume of 20 µL. The reaction was performed at 25°C for 10min, then at 42°C for 1h, and finally at 70°C for 10min to inactivate reverse transcriptase. The reactant then was stored at 4°C. To amplify the human *CYP2C9* cDNA by PCR, 2 µL of the reactant were mixed with 2 µL of 10mmol·L⁻¹ each of dNTPs, 20pmol of PCR primers and 4u of Taq plus I DNA polymerase in 1×PCR buffer containing 1.5mmol·L⁻¹ MgCl₂. A total volume of 100 µL was reached by adding deionized water. Two specific 32 mer and 28 mer oligonucleotide PCR primers were designed according to the cDNA sequence of *CYP2C9* clone 25 reported by Romkes *et al.*^[31] (GenBank accession no. M61855, J05326). The sense primer corresponding to base position 1 to 32 was 5'-GAGAAGGTACCAATGGATTCTCTTGTGGTCCT-3', with a restriction site of *Kpn* I, and the anti-sense one, corresponding to the base position from 1513 to 1540, was 5'-AGAGGAAAGAGAGCTCGAGGGACTGCAC-3' with a restriction site of *Xho* I. The PCR was performed at 94°C 2min, then 35 cycles of 94°C 60s, 60°C 60s, 72°C 2min, and lastly 72°C 10min. The product was stored at 4°C. An aliquot of 10 µL from the PCR was subjected to electrophoresis in a 10g·L⁻¹ agarose gel stained with ethidium bromide.

Construction of recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9* and sequencing of *CYP2C9* cDNA^[29]

The PCR product of about 1.5 kb in length, recovered and purified by electroelution into dialysis bag was ligated with a clone vector, pGEM-T (Promega), by T4 DNA ligase. *E.coli* DH5α was transformed with the resulted recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9* and the replicated plasmid was harvested from the bacteria screened by ampicillin resistant and blue-white selection with X-gal and IPTG. The cDNA of *YP2C9* cloned in pGEM-T was sequenced on both strands by dideoxy chain-termination method marked with BigDye with primers of T7 and SP6 promoters and two specific primers of 5'-TGCCTTGTGGAGTTG-AGA-3' (463-483), and 5'-ACAGAGACGACAAGCACAAC-3' (907-926). The termination products were resolved and detected using an automated DNA sequencer (Perkin-Elmer-ABI Prism 310).

Construction of the pREP9 based expression plasmid for *CYP2C9*

The *Kpn* I/*Xho* I fragment of the human *CYP2C9* cDNA cleaved from the recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9* recovered and purified by electroelution into dialysis bag was cloned directly into a unique site *Kpn* I/*Xho* I within the multiple cloning sites of the mammalian expression vector pREP9 (Invitrogen) with T4 DNA ligase. The recombinant was transformed to *E. coli* Top 10, and screened by ampicillin resistant. The recombinant was identified by restriction mapping.

Transfection and selection^[29]

Chinese hamster lung(CHL) cells were transfected with the resultant

recombinant, pREP9-*CYP2C9*, using a modified calcium phosphate method. After 24h incubation in MEM containing 10% newborn bovine calf sera at 37°C, the culture was rinsed and re-fed with fresh growth medium. After 72h post-transfection, the culture were split and then selected in the culture medium containing the neomycin analogue G418 (400mg·L⁻¹). The selective medium was changed every 3-4d to remove dead cells and to allow the growth of resistant colonies. After 1mo, surviving colonies (termed CHL-*CYP2C9*) were harvested as a pool and propagated in medium containing G418.

Preparation of S9 of CHL-*CYP2C9*

CHL-*CYP2C9* cells grown in the culture medium containing G418 (400mg·L⁻¹) were rinsed with phosphate balanced solution (PBS), scraped and collected from the bottle with 11.5g·L⁻¹ KCl aqua solution and then sonicated in 200W, 5 s for 10 times with 10s of interval break. The resulted homogenate was centrifuged at 9000g at 4°C for 20min and the postmitochondrial supernatant (S9) was transferred carefully to a clean tube for assay or storage under -70°C. The protein in S9 was determined by the method described by Lowry *et al.*, with bovine serum albumin as standard. CYP was measured spectrally using the method of Johannesen *et al.*^[30].

Tolbutamide hydroxylase assay^[22,31]

The *CYP2C9* tolbutamide hydroxylase activity of S9 fraction was determined by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). The assay was performed in a total volume of 500 µL containing final concentrations of 5mmol·L⁻¹ HEPES (pH 7.4), 1.5mmol·L⁻¹ MgCl₂, 0.1mmol·L⁻¹ EDTA, 0.25mg S9 and 1mmol·L⁻¹ sodium tolbutamide. The reaction was initiated with 0.5mmol·L⁻¹ NADPH and terminated after 60min at 37°C by the addition of 50 µL of 4mmol·L⁻¹ HCl. Reaction product was extracted by vortex-mixing of 3mL of water-saturated ethyl acetate with the mixture for 2min. The organic layer was collected after centrifugation in a table top centrifuge at 1000g for 5min. After most of the ethyl acetate extract had air-dried, the rest was removed in a heating block at 75°C. The residue was resolubilized in 200 µL of methanol, and reaction product, hydroxytolbutamide was then assayed using HPLC by injecting 20 µL of the solubilized extract on to a reversed phase column (Shim-pack CLC-ODS 15cm×0.6cm id, 10 µm particle size), using 0.5g·L⁻¹ phosphoric acid, pH 2.6, acetonitrile (6:4/V:V) as the mobile phase with a flow rate of 1mL·min⁻¹. The column elution was monitored at 230nm, and rates of product formation were determined from standard curves prepared by adding varying amounts of hydroxytolbutamide to incubations conducted without NADPH.

RESULTS

Construction of recombinants

The recombinant of pGEM-*CYP2C9* (Figure 1) was constructed with the human *CYP2C9* cDNA inserted into the cloning site of vector pGEM-T between the promoters of T7 and SP6. Selection and identification of the recombinant was carried out by *Kpn* I/*Xho* I endonuclease digestion and agarose gel electrophoresis (Figure 1). The cloned cDNA segment was sequenced. In comparison with the *CYP2C9* clone 65 cDNA sequence reported by Romkes *et al.*^[31] (GenBank accession no. M61855, J05326), our preparation showed two base differences, i.e. 21T>C, 1146C>T, but the encoding amino acid sequence was the same, i.e. L7, P382 respectively.

The *Kpn* I/*Xho* I fragment (1.5 kb) containing the complete *CYP2C9* cDNA was subcloned into the *Kpn* I/*Xho* I site of mammalian expression vector pREP9 (Figure 2). Selection and identification of the recombinants were carried out by *Kpn* I/*Xho* I endonuclease digestion and agarose gel electrophoresis (Figure 2). The resulting plasmid was designated as pREP9-*CYP2C9* and

contained the entire coding region, along with 2 bp of the 5' end and 41 bp of the 3' end untranslated region of the *CYP2C9* cDNA, respectively.

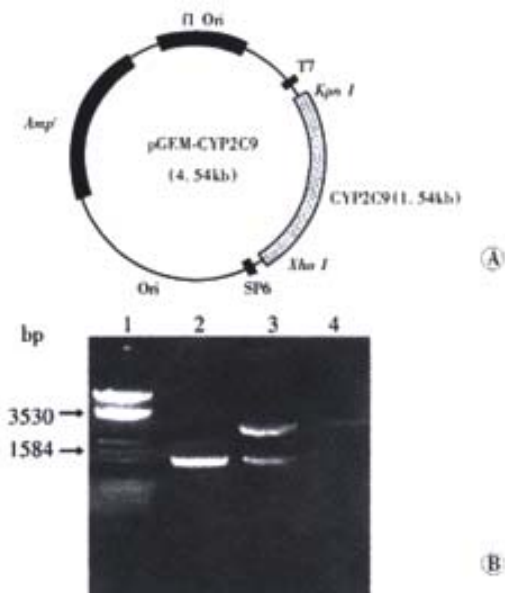


Figure 1 Scheme and electrophoresis identification of recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9*. A: Scheme of recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9*; B: Electrophoresis identification of recombinant pGEM-*CYP2C9*; 1: Marker (λ /EcoRI and Hind III); 2: PCR product of *CYP2C9*(1.54 kb); 3: Recombinant of pGEM-*CYP2C9* digested by *Kpn* I and *Xho* I; 4: pGEM-T vector

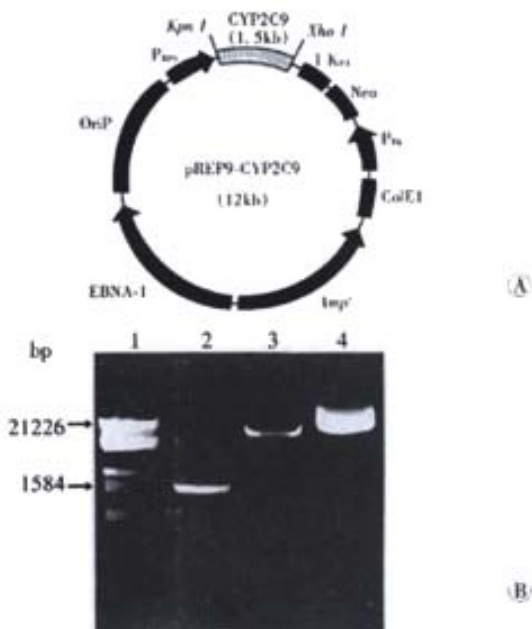


Figure 2 Scheme and electrophoresis identification of recombinant pREP9-*CYP2C9*. A: Scheme of pREP9-*CYP2C9*; B: Electrophoresis identification of recombinant pREP9-*CYP2C9*; 1: Marker (λ /EcoRI and Hind III); 2: PCR product of *CYP2C9*(1.54 kb); 3: Recombinant of pREP9-*CYP2C9* digested by *Kpn* I and *Xho* I; 4: pREP9 vector

Establishment of transgenic cell lines with *CYP2C9* enzyme activity

CHL cells were transfected with pREP9-*CYP2C9*, and selected with G418 (400mg·L⁻¹). The surviving colonies were propagated and a cell line termed CHL-*CYP2C9* was established. The tolbutamide

hydroxylase activity of *CYP2C9* in S9 fraction of CHL-*CYP2C9* cells was assayed by HPLC. A typical elution profile of hydroxytolbutamide in extracts is shown (Figure 3). *CYP2C9* enzyme activity with tolbutamide was found to be 0.465±0.109 μmol·min⁻¹·g⁻¹ S9 protein or 8.62±2.02 mol·min⁻¹·mol⁻¹ CYP (n=3), but none was detectable in parental CHL cells. The CYP content was 57.7 nmol·g⁻¹ S9 protein from CHL-*CYP2C9* but no detectable CYP was present in CHL cell.

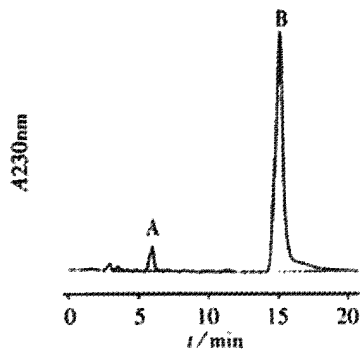


Figure 3 Representative chromatogram of extracts A Shim-pack CLC-ODS column (15cm×0.6cm i.d.) was used. The mobile phase was constituted with phosphoric acid (pH 2.6), acetonitrile (6:4/V:V) with the flow rate at 1 mL·min⁻¹. Hydroxytolbutamide was monitored at 230nm. A: hydroxytolbutamide; B: tolbutamide

DISCUSSION

Direct cloning of human *CYP* cDNAs from cDNA libraries generally has been successful using anti-rodent or anti-human *CYP* antibodies and rodent *CYP*cDNA probes. But these cloning procedures are applicable only for the most abundantly expressed *CYP* mRNAs. Using the RT-PCR to clone low abundance *CYP*cDNA is a simple and direct method. *CYP2C9* mRNA was present in human liver^[32], HepG2 cells^[33], kidney, testes, adrenal gland, prostate, ovary, duodenum^[34], and brain tumors^[35]. The pGEM-T vector system possessing single 3'-T overhangs at the insertion site greatly improves the efficiency of ligation of a PCR product into the plasmid by preventing recircularization of the vector and providing a compatible overhang for PCR products generated by Taq Plus I DNA polymerases.

The human *CYP2C9* gene is located on chromosome 10q24. Up to date, 12 *CYP2C9* alleles have been identified (see: Table 1 and *CYP2C9* alleles nomenclature <http://www.imm.ki.se/CYPalleles/cyp2c9.htm>). *CYP2C9**1 is the wild type of human *CYP2C9*. *CYP2C9**2 exhibit a base substitute 430C>T, resulting in a R144C substitution which has been suggested to affect the interaction between the CYP enzyme molecule and the cytochrome P450 reductase^[36]; this may explain the slower metabolism of some *CYP2C9* substrates such as S-warfarin and tolbutamide^[8, 37]. *CYP2C9**3 has a base substitute 1075A>C, which leads to an I359L substitute. Takanashi *et al*^[38] expressed the *CYP2C9**1 and *CYP2C9**3 cDNA in yeast and examined the kinetics of seven individual metabolic reactions by wild-type *CYP2C9**1 and its *CYP2C9**3 variant. Their results indicated that the I359L exchange significantly reduces the catalytic activity with all *CYP2C9*-mediated substrates studied, although the extent of the reduction in activity and kinetic parameters varied between different substrates. Interestingly Kidd *et al*^[39] reported a male Caucasian, homozygous for *CYP2C9**3, who poorly metabolized phenytoin and glipizide/tolbutamide. This study establishes that the I359L mutation is responsible for the poor metabolizer phenotype. The *CYP2C9**2 and *CYP2C9**3 are responsible for the poor metabolizing celecoxib^[5], losartan^[40], torsemide^[41]. *CYP2C9**4^[42] has a base substitute of 1076T>C,

leading to a I359T substitution. Ieiri *et al*^[43] evaluated the catalytic activity of three variants (I, L, and T) at codon 359 of CYP2C9 enzymes expressed in a yeast cDNA expression system. The specific catalytic activities were assessed by diclofenac-4'-hydroxylation. The *in vitro* study revealed that recombinant I359, L359, and T359 (2 batches) exhibited a mean Km of 2.0, 16.5 and (3.8 and 2.9) μmol and Vmax of 12.4, 17.9 and (4.4 and 5.1) $\text{nmol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{nmol}^{-1}\text{CYP}$, respectively. The CYP2C9*5 variant is derived from a 1080C>G transversion in exon 7 of CYP2C9 that leads to a D360E substitution in the encoded protein^[44]. The CYP2C9*5 variant was found to be expressed in African-Americans with a frequency of approximately 3% in this population group. This variant was expressed in, and purified from, insect cells infected with a recombinant baculovirus. The *in vitro* data suggest that carriers of the CYP2C9*5 allele would eliminate CYP2C9 substrates at slower rates compared to individuals expressing the wild-type protein^[44]. Kidd *et al*^[45] reported a new CYP2C9 allele (CYP2C9*6) with the deletion of an adenine at base pair 818 of the cDNA. The clearance of phenytoin in this individual is estimated to be approximately 17% of that observed in normal patients. The frequency of this allele was 0.6% in 79 African-Americans and 0% in 172 Caucasians. Shintani *et al*^[46] reported that mutations in the 5'-flanking region of the human CYP2C9 gene appear to contribute to the large interindividual variability in drug metabolism activity. Compared with CYP2C9*1 cDNA, there are two base differences in the CYP2C9 cDNA cloned by us, but the encoded amino acid sequence remains unchanged. This obviously is the molecular basis for full enzymatic activity.

Table 1 Nomenclature and characteristics of CYP2C9 alleles

Allele	Protein	Nucleotide changes	Effect	Enzyme activity		References
				In Vivo	In vitro	
CYP2C9*1	CYP2C9.1	None		Normal	Normal	3
CYP2C9*2	CYP2C9.2	430C>T	R144C		Decr	36
CYP2C9*3	CYP2C9.3	1075A>C	I359L	Decr	Decr	37,38,39,43
CYP2C9*4	CYP2C9.4	1076T>C	I359T			42,43
CYP2C9*5	CYP2C9.5	1080C>G	D360E	Decr		44
CYP2C9*6		818delA	frame shift	Decr		45
CYP2C9*7-12						In press

To express the functional activity of a CYP, a cell evidently must have adequate heme supply, either by intracellular biosynthesis or extracellular provision^[47]. CYPs also require other enzymatic components for full activity, including the flavoprotein NADPH-P450 oxidoreductase (OR) and, in some cases, cytochrome b₅. The OR must interact directly with the CYP to transfer the required two electrons from NADPH. Cytochrome b₅ is necessary for increasing electron transfer for certain CYP forms and specific substrates. The CHL is the cell line originally derived from the lung of a newborn female Chinese hamster and has no or very limited activities of CYP enzymes, but has adequate OR and cytochrome b₅ levels to support CYP activities.

To achieve high expression levels of CYP2C9, the CYP2C9 cDNA was cloned into the eukaryotic expression vector pREP9, which had previously been used in this laboratory for the expression of human CYP1A1, CYP2B6, CYP2A6, CYP3A4 and UGT1A9 in CHL cells^[25-28]. The salient feature of this vector has an Epstein Barr Virus origin of replication and nuclear antigen (EBNA-1) to allow high-copy episomal replication in mammal cell lines. The Rous sarcoma virus long terminal repeat (RSV LTR) early promoter controls the expression of the CYP2C9 cDNA.

Tolbutamide (1-butyl-3-p-tolylsulfonylurea) is an oral hypoglycemic agent which is being used in the treatment of diabetes. In humans it undergoes CYP-catalyzed hydroxylation of the tolyl methyl group which is the initial and rate-limiting reaction followed by

further oxidation by cytosolic dehydrogenases yielding carboxytolbutamide. Overall this pathway accounts for up to 85% of tolbutamide clearance in humans. Evidence that CYP2C9 is solely responsible for tolbutamide hydroxylation is convincing and tolbutamide is widely accepted as a prototypic substrate for the assessment of hepatic CYP2C9 activity, both *in vitro* and *in vivo*^[8].

We used tolbutamide as a substrate for evaluating the expressing of human CYP2C9 activity in CHL-CYP2C9 cell. The tolbutamide hydroxylase activity was $0.465\pm 0.109\mu\text{mol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{g}^{-1}$ S9 protein or $8.62\pm 2.02\text{mol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$ CYP. These value, were somewhat higher than those obtained with recombinant CYP2C9 purified from *E. coli*: $4.67\text{-}4.96\text{nmol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{nmol}^{-1}$ CYP^[48] or human liver microsomes: $0.189\pm 0.0083\text{nmol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{mg}^{-1}$ microsome^[49] and $2.29\text{-}4.33\text{nmol}\cdot\text{min}^{-1}\cdot\text{nmol}^{-1}$ CYP^[48]. This clearly stated that CHL-CYP2C9 expressed the CYP2C9 efficiently and this may be a useful tool for further studies of its enzymatic function and mechanism.

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