Cloning and expression of cDNA for human poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase

(DNA repair/COS cell transfection/cell cycle/DNA strand breaks)

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Communicated by Arthur B. Pardee, November 10, 1986

ABSTRACT cDNAs encoding poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase from a human hepatoma λgt11 cDNA library were isolated by immunological screening. One insert of 1.3 kilobases (kb) consistently hybridized on RNA gel blots to an mRNA species of 3.6–3.7 kb, which is consistent with the size of RNA necessary to code for the polymerase protein (116 kDa). This insert was subsequently used in both in vitro hybrid selection and hybrid-arrested translation studies. An mRNA species from HeLa cells of 3.6–3.7 kb was selected that was translated into a 116-kDa protein, which was selectively immunoprecipitated with anti-poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase. To confirm that the 1.3-kb insert from λgt11 encodes for poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase, the insert was used to screen a 3- to 4-kb subset of a transformed human fibroblast cDNA library in the Okayama-Berg vector. One of these vectors (pcD-p[ADPR]P; 3.6 kb) was tested in transient transfection experiments in COS cells. This cDNA insert contained the complete coding sequence for polymerase as indicated by the following criteria: (i) A 3-fold increase in in vitro activity was noted in extracts from transfected cells compared to mock or pSV2-CAT transfected cells. (ii) A 6-fold increase in polymerase activity in pcD-p[ADPR]P transfected cell extracts compared to controls was observed by “activity gel” analysis on gels of electrophoretically separated proteins at 116 kDa. (iii) A 10- to 15-fold increase in newly synthesized polymerase was detected by immunoprecipitation of labeled transfected cell extracts. Using pcD-p[ADPR]P as probe, it was observed that the level of poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase mRNA was elevated at 5 and 7 hr of S phase of the HeLa cell cycle, but was unaltered when artificial DNA strand breaks are introduced in HeLa cells by alkylating agents.

The chromatin-associated enzyme poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase is a 116-kDa protein that uses NAD as substrate to catalyze both the covalent transfer of ADP-ribose to a variety of nuclear protein acceptors and subsequently catalyzes the transfer of an additional 60–80 ADP-ribose units to the initial moiety. Nuclear proteins that become predominantly poly-(ADP-ribo)lated include nucleosomal core histones, histone H1, HMG proteins, topoisomerase I and II, and simian virus 40 large tumor antigen (1). Extensive autopoly(ADP-ribosylation) of the polymerase also occurs (2). A clue to the biological function of poly(ADP-ribo)lylation is provided by the observations that the in vitro catalytic activity of the enzyme is exclusively dependent upon the presence of strand breaks in DNA (3–6). It is thus possible that the enzyme system functions in response to transient and localized DNA strand breaks in cells that may arise through a variety of processes including DNA repair, replication, recombination, and gene rearrangement. Accordingly, the long-term rationale for the molecular cloning of the gene encoding this enzyme has been to precisely define the function(s) of this nuclear protein modification system.**

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Antibody Screening of λgt11 Library. The λgt11 library used in the study was constructed with mRNA isolated from human hepatomas and was screened by a modification of the method of Young and Davis (8). The antibody used in the screening was a rabbit antiserum against a pure preparation of HeLa cell poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase (9). A similar antibody has been described (10).

Hybrid Selection and Hybrid-Arrested Translation. The cDNA inserts of recombinant λgt11 clones were excised by EcoRI digestion as described by the supplier (Bethesda Research Laboratories) and subcloned into the plasmid pBR322. Plasmid preparations containing 0.1–0.5 μg of cDNA insert were linearized by digestion with EcoRI endonuclease and spotted on 5-mm nitrocellulose filters (Chleicher & Schueller). Filter-bound DNA was alkali-denatured, neutralized, washed, and hybridized to mRNA as described (11). Hybridized RNA was eluted from the filters and translated in a mRNA-dependent rabbit reticulocyte lysate. Hybrid-arrested translation studies were performed essentially as described by Miller et al. (11).

RESULTS

Isolation and Characterization of a Partial Human Poly(ADP-ribos e) Polymerase cDNA. A λgt11 cDNA expression library constructed from human hepatoma mRNA was screened with an antibody against human poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase (9). The polyclonal antibody reacted selectively with polymerase on immunoblots of total HeLa nuclear proteins (see below). This antibody specifically promotes only poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase immunoprecipitation from [35S]methionine-labeled cell extracts and neutralizes catalytic polymerase activity in an in vitro assay (data not shown). We screened 2 × 10⁶ plaques from the hepatoma λgt11 library. Several clones were identified as producing a hybrid protein with polymerase antigenic determinants through five successive rounds of antibody screening and plaque purification (7). DNA was isolated from these clones

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*Preliminary reports of early aspects of this work were presented in poster and abstract at the International Conference on Mechanisms of DNA Damage and Repair, Gaithersburg, MD, June 1985, and published (7).
and digested with EcoRI. The cDNA inserts ranged in size from 2.1 to 0.14 kilobases (kb). It should be noted that clone 2-1 had an internal EcoRI site yielding two fragments A and B of 1.3 kb and 0.7 kb, respectively.

Three selected phage clones were used to lysogenize bacterial strain BNN103. A bacterial lysate was prepared from the cells by incubation of the temperature-sensitive repressor at 42°C and induction of fusion protein production by isopropyl β-D-thiogalactoside. The lysate was analyzed by NaDodSO4/PAGE and immunoblotting, as shown in Fig. 1. In three of the selected clones (O-1, W-1, and 2-1; lanes 3–5, respectively), the fusion protein reacted selectively with the anti-human poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase. There was no reactivity with β-galactosidase per se as indicated in lane 2 by immunoblotting of αgt11 phage-infected cells lacking a DNA insert.

Inserts in αgt11 phage were removed by cleavage with EcoRI and recloned in EcoRI-cleaved phosphatase-treated pBR322. The cDNA fragment A (derived from αgt11 clone 2-1) was used as a probe to hybridize against the other four selected cDNA fragments. Southern blot analysis indicated that insert A did not hybridize to insert B (which is from the same large insert in αgt11) nor was there hybridization to any other inserts.

RNA Gel Blot Analysis. The molecular weight of poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase (116 kDa) predicts that the mRNA for this protein must be at least 3 kb. Accordingly, the cDNA inserts were evaluated for use as probes to screen RNAs prepared from various human cells by RNA gel blot analysis. The smaller cDNA clones mainly hybridized to mRNA species that migrated considerably faster than the 18S ribosome marker (i.e., <2.5 kb). On the other hand, as shown in Fig. 2A, lanes 1 and 2, and B, lanes 1 and 2, the 1.3-kb insert-A cDNA hybridized only to an mRNA species derived from either HeLa cell total or poly(A)*-selected RNA, which was slightly faster in mobility than the 28S marker and, hence, 3–4 kb in size. Identical results were achieved with human fibroblast mRNA and human bladder carcinoma strain 1080 total RNA.

![Fig. 2. RNA gel blot analysis of polymerase mRNA derived from various human RNA preparations and hybrid-selected RNA preparations. Labeled 1.3-kb cDNA fragment (insert A) from λ clone 2-1 was used as the hybridization probe. Total RNA (10–15 μg) or poly(A)*-selected RNA (<1 μg) was electrophoresed on 1% agarose gels containing 2.2 M formaldehyde and processed for RNA gel blot analysis. (A) Lanes: 1 and 2, total RNA or poly(A)*-selected RNA from HeLa cells, respectively; 3, poly(A)* RNA from human fibroblasts; 4 and 5, total RNA or poly(A)* RNA from human cell line HT-1080, respectively. (B) Lanes: 1, total HeLa cell RNA; 2, poly(A)*-purified RNA; 3, hybrid-selected RNA; 4, poly(A)* RNA not selected by the A fragment cDNA (as described in the legend to Fig. 3).

Fig. 1. Induction of the synthesis of antigenic fusion proteins in αgt11. The synthesis of the fusion proteins was induced essentially as described (8). Total proteins from Escherichia coli strain BNN103 and its αgt11 lysogens were isolated and analyzed by NaDodSO4/PAGE. Duplicate lanes of the gel were either stained with Coomassie blue (lanes 1 and 2a–5a) or were transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane and subsequently treated with poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase antibody (lanes 2b–5b) and visualized using anti-rabbit peroxidase IgG. Lanes 3–5 represent polymerase λ strains 2-1, W-1, and O-1, respectively. Lane 1 contains molecular weight markers; lane 2 contains proteins from an induced αgt11 strain that contains no insert and only synthesizes β-galactosidase. Lane 6 is an immunoblot of a semi-purified preparation of HeLa cell poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase that comigrates on these gels at 116 kDa, with β-galactosidase (2, 9, 12).
mRNA was pcD-12 cDNA Hybrid control, lane is shown. products NaDodSO4/polyacrylamide gel containing S
the RNA with absence of cDNA (lane 3). The selected mRNA was eluted and translated in a reticulocyte lysate with [35S]methionine as described (13). The autoradiogram of an 8% NaDodSO4/polyacrylamide gel containing 35S-labeled translation products is shown. The reticulocyte lysate was programmed as follows: lane 1, nonhybrid-selected, total HeLa poly(A)+ RNA; lane 2, hybrid-selected RNA followed by immunoprecipitation with preimmune sera; lane 3, hybrid-selected RNA and immunoprecipitation with anti-poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase. (B) Hybrid arrest pcD-12 cDNA (0.1 µg) (see Fig. 4) was incubated with 10 µg of HeLa cell poly(A)+ RNA in buffer containing 55% formamide, 0.4 M NaCl, and 0.01 M Pipes (pH 6.4) at 48°C for 12 hr (11) (lanes 1 and 2). As a control, HeLa poly(A)+ RNA was treated under the same conditions with the exception that cdNA was not added (lanes 3 and 4). After hybridization at 48°C (and melting at 100°C, when indicated) the samples were translated with [35S]methionine, immunoprecipitated with anti-polymerase, and electrophoresed as described in A. Arrest: RNA was hybridized with pcD-12 cdNA (lane 1). Release: heat melt of lane 1 (lane 2). Arrest: RNA was hybridized in the absence of cdNA (lane 3). Release: heat melt of lane 3 (lane 4).

These data (Fig. 3B, lane 1) indicate that this DNA selectively inhibits the translation of polymerase mRNA. Examination of a nonimmunoprecipitated sample of lane 1 indicated a full complement of translated proteins (data not shown). Full recovery of polymerase translation was achieved upon heat melting of the hybrid sample (lane 2). Poly(A)+ RNA that had been mock-hybridized in the absence of added cdNA (lanes 3 and 4) directed the translation of polymerase in amounts equivalent to that of untreated mRNA.

Isolation of Full-Length Polymerase cdNA. Based upon the consistent detection of an mRNA species of ~3.6 kb detected in a variety of RNA gel blot analyses (Fig. 2) an Okayama-Berg simian virus 40-transformed human fibroblast pcD-cdNA library that had been enriched for cdNAs 3-4 kb in size (15) was screened (5 X 106 colonies) with the labeled 1.3-kb insert-A cdNA. Approximately 100 positive clones were identified, and six were characterized. All of these clones hybridized with the 1.3-kb probe and contained inserts that were nearly consistent with the size of mRNA noted in Fig. 3. Clone pcD-19 was noted to possess 5 BamHI sites, of which those at 1.1, 0.85, and 0.25 kb hybridized with the 1.3-kb probe (Fig. 4, lane 3). The remaining positive cdNAs were accordingly analyzed with BamHI restriction endonuclease (lanes 11-14). Four of the cdNA inserts gave essentially similar digestion and hybridization patterns; however, clone pcD-12 yielded a slightly larger BamHI fragment at 2.0 kb that subsequently mapped toward the 5' region of the cdNA. Excluding vector sequences, the additive size of the BamHI fragments in pcD-12 was 3.6 kb, which corresponded nearly exactly with the size of mRNAs noted earlier in Fig. 2.

pcD-12 Produces Enzymatically Active Polymerase in COS Cells. Based upon the above results a transient transfection of COS cells using DEAE-dextran was performed utilizing pcD-12 and pcD-19, which appeared to be shorter by ~400 base pairs at the 5' region of the cdNA. Additional controls included duplicate plates of mock-transfected cells, and cells transfected with pSV2-CAT. After 48 hr, the cells were rinsed, scrapped, sonicated, and assayed for poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase activity utilizing [32P]NAD in an in vitro assay that measures the initial velocities (16). The data were quite striking and indicated that indeed pcD-12 coded for nearly intact polymerase. Specific activity for pSV2-CAT transfected or mock-transfected cells was in the range of 1500 pmol of ADP-ribose per min per mg of protein, whereas cells transfected with pcD-12 yielded a value of over 4100, indicating a nearly 3-fold increase in specific activity. pcD-19, with a deletion at the 5' region, did not increase endogenous enzymatic activity. The labeled nuclear proteins from a similar assay were ethanol precipitated and separated by electrophoresis (Fig. 5A). The data indicated significantly increased automodification of the 116-kDa polymerase in the extract derived from pcD-12 transfected cells compared to controls.

To confirm conclusively that poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase was induced by pcD-12, two other experiments were performed. In Fig. 5B, unlabeled sonicates from the transfected cells were electrophoresed in NaDodSO4/polyacrylamide gels that contained sonicated DNA as part of the gel matrix since polymerase requires active polymerase DNA for activity. Subsequently, the separated velocity proteins in the gels were renatured and subjected to in vitro activity gel analysis by incubation of the gel with [32P]NAD as described by Scovassi et al. (12). The data (lane 4) clearly demonstrate considerably higher (6-fold) enzymatic activity versus control for polymerase residing in a band at 116 kDa from sonicates of cells transfected with pcD-12. Finally, extracts from [35S]-methionine labeled, transiently transfected COS cells (Fig. 5C) were immunoprecipitated with anti-poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase, and the precipitates were subjected to electrophoresis. The data (lane 9) clearly show that significantly higher levels (>15-fold) of polymerase were newly synthesized in COS cells transfected with pcD-12 in contrast to other control plasmids. A minimal amount of specific degradation (14) occurred in this experiment. It is of interest to note the regular ladder of bands migrating slower than polymerase in lane 9. These probably represent automodified species of the expressed enzyme and suggest that enhanced poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase activity in vivo is accompanied by expression of elevated levels of polymerase. At this stage, amino acid sequence information for peptides from the polymerase is not available for a direct DNA sequence comparison. From these data and the data presented earlier (7), we conclude that we have isolated a cdNA of sufficient size to code for human poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase [i.e., pcD-p(ADPRP)].

RNA Gel Analysis During the HeLa Cell Cycle. We screened for mRNA accumulation in HeLa cells during various stages of the synchronized cell cycle, since earlier data had suggested either higher catalytic activity and/or accumulation of poly(ADP-ribosyl)ated proteins both in mid-S and at the end of S phase (18, 19). HeLa cells were synchronized by a double-thymidine block and were released into S phase. RNA samples were taken through the first 10.5 hr of the cell cycle
and analyzed by RNA gel blot analysis with pcD-p(ADPR)P as probe. The data indicate (Fig. 6) that polymerase mRNA was consistently noted to be elevated (6-fold by scan) in periods between S phase and early G2 phase (at 5 hr and at 7 hr). In contrast, mRNA levels for histones H3 and H4 were elevated (10-fold) during 4–6 hr and negligible by 8 hr of these experiments (data not shown).

**DISCUSSION**

To our knowledge, this paper describes the first reported cloning and expression of a cDNA encoding poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase. The isolation of the large 3.6-kb insert in the Okayama–Berg expression vector and its expression into enzymatically active protein in COS cells provided the most

![Fig. 4](image-url)  
Restriction enzyme analysis and Southern blot hybridization of cDNAs obtained from an Okayama–Berg 3- to 4-kb library. pcD-plasmid DNA (10–20 μg) was isolated, digested with various restriction enzymes, electrophoresed on a 0.8% agarose gel (A shows the ethidium bromide stain), and, after Southern transfer, probed with [32P]-labeled A cDNA insert (B). Lanes: 1, cDNA insert A; 2, insert A digested with BamHI; 3–7, pcD plasmid 19 digested with BamHI, Xho I, Sal I, Sac I, and an undigested sample, respectively; 8, HindIII λ marker; 9, *Hae* III 6X174 marker; 10–14, pcD plasmids 10, 12, 13, 15, and 34 were digested with BamHI, respectively.

![Fig. 5](image-url)  
Transfection of COS cells with pcD-12 produces enhanced expression of polymerase activity and immunoprecipitable polymerase protein. COS cells (10⁶ cells) in duplicate flasks were treated in the presence or absence of plasmid DNA (25 μg per 175-mm flask) for 4 hr at 37°C in the presence of DEAE-dextran as described (15). After 48 hr, the cells were rinsed, scraped from plates, sonicated, and assayed for poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase activity or immunoprecipitation (17). (A) Sonicated samples were assayed for activity for 10 sec with 2.8 μCi (1 Ci = 37 GBq) [32P]NAD (2.1 mM), ethanol precipitated, electrophoresed on 7.5% NaDodSO4/polyacrylamide gels, and exposed to x-ray film at −70°C. Lanes 1–3 show cells transfected with pcD-12, pSV2-CAT, or mock-transfected, respectively. (B) The sonicated samples were separated by electrophoresis in 7.5% NaDodSO4/polyacrylamide (containing sonicated salmon sperm DNA at 100 μg/ml). The gels were subsequently "renatured," and the gel was assayed directly with [32P]NAD for *in situ* poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase activity as described by Scovassi *et al.* (12). The washed gels were exposed to x-ray film at −70°C. Lanes 4–7 show cells transfected with pcD-12, pSV2-CAT, cells mock-transfected, or untreated, respectively. (C) The COS cells (2 × 10⁵ cells per flask) were treated for above for 45 hr after which they were starved for methionine at 37°C in methionine-free media. [35S]Methionine (250 μCi per flask) was added, and the cells were incubated at 37°C for 3 hr after which they were lysed; the proteins were immunoprecipitated with anti-polymerase, analyzed by NaDodSO4/PAGE, and autoradiography. Lanes 8–12 show cells transfected with pBR322, pcD-12, pcD-sis, cells mock-transfected, or untreated cells, respectively.
indicated that these cellular conditions cause either immediate or long-term induction for poly(ADP-ribose) polymerase. However, in the future, once stable, transfected cell lines containing the polymerase cDNA and controlled by inducible promoters are available in our laboratory, it is hoped that the relationship between this enzyme system and pleiotropic reactions of cells involving DNA breakage can be better elucidated.

We gratefully acknowledge Drs. John O’Brien and Edward Ginns for help with αgt11 studies. We thank Dr. Hiroto Okayama for useful discussions and for sharing his library with us. We also thank Dr. Caroline Tabourdin, Yawen Chen, Julianne Lin, and Joe Muccini for their help in the current work. This research was supported by Grants CA 13195 and CA 25344 from the National Cancer Institute and Grant OSR-86-0024 from the U.S. Air Force, Office of Scientific Research. This work comprises part of the doctoral thesis of H.M.A. to be submitted to Georgetown University.


FIG. 6. Levels of polymerase mRNA during the cell cycle. HeLa cells were synchronized by a double thymidine block and released into S phase at 0 time (lane 1) as described in detail (20). Total cellular RNA samples were isolated hourly until 10.5 hr into the cell cycle, lanes 2–11, respectively. RNA (15 μg) was loaded on each lane and hybridized to the pcD-p(ADPR)P insert.