The liver/erythrocyte pyruvate kinase gene complex \([Pk-1]\) in the mouse: regulatory gene mutations

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Summary

Nine enzyme activity variants and one charge variant of liver/erythrocyte pyruvate kinase have been found amongst laboratory and wild mice. Four of the enzyme activity variants were previously reported to be caused by allelic differences in the structural gene, \(Pk-1\). Analysis of two putative regulatory gene mutations is now reported, both of which map at, or close to, the structural gene on chromosome 3. One of these mutations, in the inbred strain SWR, is tissue specific, affecting enzyme concentration in the liver but not the erythrocyte the other, which arose in a mutation experiment, doubles the enzyme concentration in both tissues. The organization and the nomenclature in the \([Pk-1]\) gene complex are discussed and are compared with the organization of other comprehensively analysed gene complexes in the mouse.

Introduction

The structural gene \(Pk-1\), for liver/erythrocyte pyruvate kinase (Moore & Bulfield, 1981), codes for a different isoenzyme in each tissue (Imamura et al. 1972 Harada et al. 1978 Saheki et al. 1978, Marie et al. 1981, Moore & Bulfield, 1981, Simon et al. 1982); cDNA sequences for the gene have been cloned (Noguchi et al. 1983; Simon et al. 1983; Inoue et al. 1986; Lone et al. 1986). \(Pk-1\) has recently been mapped to mouse chromosome 3 (Sola et al. 1988).

Nine inherited enzyme activity variants and one electrophoretic allele of \(Pk-1\) have been found in the mouse (Bulfield et al. 1978; Moore & Bulfield, 1981 Bonhomme et al. 1984; Bulfield et al. 1984 Charles & Pretsch, 1984, 1987). Four of these activity variants are caused by allelic differences in the structural gene, \(Pk-1s\); one of them (in the inbred strain C57BL) is an unusual tissue specific structural gene mutation (Fitton & Bulfield, 1989). In this paper we analyse two putative regulatory gene mutations. One of these mutations, in the inbred strain SWR, maps close to the structural gene and is tissue specific, affecting enzyme concentration in the liver but not the erythrocyte. The other mutation which arose in an ENU mutation experiment (Charles & Pretsch, 1984, 1987), also maps close to the structural gene and doubles the measurable activity of the enzyme in both tissues.

2. Materials and methods
(i) Animals

The inbred strains C57BL/6, SWR and C3H/He were obtained from B&K Universal Ltd, Grimston, Hull, U.K. The \(Pk-1s^w\) allele producing the W phenotype was recovered from feral mouse (Moore & Bulfield, 1981). Animals from the C57L inbred strain and SWXL RI strains were imported from the Jackson Laboratory, Bar Harbor MA, USA. The MUN phenotype originated from an ENU mutation experiment on (101/E1 × C3H/E1)F\(_1\) mice and is caused by a codominant mutation (Charles & Pretsch, 1984, 1987).
3. Results

(i) The activity of liver and blood pyruvate kinase in four phenotypes

The activity of PK in blood and liver homogenates was determined for four phenotypes (Table 1). In relation to the C57BL/6 inbred strain, SWR animals have low PK activity in the liver but similar activity in the blood. The MUN phenotype has over twofold greater PK activity than C3H/He animals in both liver and blood; the mutation causing the MUN phenotype arose in a mixed C3H/101 background (see also Charles & Pretsch, 1984, 1987). Therefore, on the basis of enzyme activity SWR and C3H/He animals seem to have a similar phenotype in relation to C57BL/6 mice; that is a tissue-specific reduction in liver PK activity. The C57BL/6:C3H/He phenotype difference is caused by a tissue-specific mutation in the
Table 1. Activity of pyruvate kinase* in the blood and liver of four phenotypes of mice

| Phenotype    | Liver Activity | Percentage of B6 | Percentage of C3H | Blood Activity | Percentage of B6 | Percentage of C3H |
|--------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| C57BL/6      | 820 ± 280      | 28               | 100               | 758 ± 17       | 18               | 100              |
| SWR          | 35 ± 145       | 14               | 43                | 857 ± 33       | 17               | 113              |
| C3H/He       | 428 ± 240      | 19               | 52                | 752 ± 20       | 14               | 99               |
| MUN          | 101 ± 440      | 22               | 123               | 169 ± 32       | 41               | 223              |

* Mean ± s.e. expressed as units (g liver)^−1 or units (ml blood)^−1 at 30 °C.

Table 2. Equivalence points and slopes of liver and blood PK of four phenotypes of mice determined by immunotitration

| Phenotype    | Liver Equivalence point | Slope           | Blood Equivalence point | Slope           |
|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| C57BL/6      | 13.5 ± 1.3              | 19.8 ± 1.0      | 18.5 ± 1.0              | 20.1 ± 1.3      |
| W            | 10.1 ± 1.1              | 6.6 ± 1.2       | 17.2 ± 1.5              | 86.0 ± 0.8      |
| SWR          | 25.3 ± 0.5              | 6.7 ± 0.1       | 17.6 ± 0.8              | 18.9 ± 0.5      |
| C3H/He       | 10.7 ± 1.7              | 8.37 ± 0.8      | 21.0 ± 1.5              | 174.9 ± 1.8     |
| MUN          | 5.10 ± 0.7              | 22.1 ± 0.5      | 8.50 ± 0.5              | 38.5 ± 2.1      |

* Mean ± s.e. of ten animals, each animal assayed three times, for each phenotype.

(ii) The concentration of liver and blood pyruvate kinase in four phenotypes

The concentration of PK enzyme molecules in the four phenotypes was determined by immunotitration. From these data it was possible to calculate the equivalence points and slopes of the plots by linear regression analysis (Table 2, Fig. 1). The equivalence points are inversely proportional to the concentration of enzyme and the slopes proportional to the measurable activity, i.e. the product of the enzyme concentration x enzyme specific activity (Fitton & Bulfield, 1989).

From these analyses, it can be seen (Table 2, Fig. 1) that the PKs from SWR and C57BL/6 differ in equivalence points in the liver although they are similar in the blood (as would be expected from the enzyme activity measurements, Table 1). This indicates that the activity difference in liver PK between C57BL/6 and SWR animals is caused by a difference in enzyme concentration rather than a difference in enzyme specific activity. This implies that the C57BL/6:SWR phenotypic difference is probably caused by a regulatory gene mutation. The difference in liver PK activity between C57BL/6 and C3H/He animals, on the other hand, is caused by an alteration in specific activity of the enzyme as the equivalence points and hence enzyme concentration, are the same (Table 2; see also Fitton & Bulfield, 1989).

C3H/He and MUN animals differ over twofold in equivalence points for both liver and blood PK (Table 2, Fig. 1). This indicates that the twofold PK activity differences (Charles & Pretch, 1984 Table 1) between these two phenotypes in both tissues is due to a difference in enzyme concentration, implying that it is probably caused by a regulatory gene mutation.

(iii) The SWR phenotype

The immunotitration results suggest that the C57BL/6:SWR phenotypic difference is caused by a mutation in a regulatory gene(s). This is confirmed by kinetic determinations (Table 3) which show no difference in the affinity of liver PK for PEP or ADP between the C57BL and SWR phenotypes.
Fig. 2. Segregation analysis of liver PK activity among backcrosses and F₂s between animals of the SWR and C57BL/6 inbred strains.

Table 3. Kinetic analysis of liver PK in the C57BL and SWR phenotypes

| Phenotype         | $V_{\text{max}}$ | $K_m$ PEP | $K_m$ ADP |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| C57BL             | 60.5 ± 4.1       | 48.3 ± 0.55 | 327 ± 22  |
| SWR               | 36.8 ± 13.5      | 48.7 ± 10.3 | 308 ± 9.5 |
| Ratio             | 0.61             | 1.01       | 0.94      |

$V_{\text{max}}$ and $K_m$ were measured by linear regression analysis.

A formal segregation analysis of liver PK activities between C57BL and SWR was performed (Fig. 2, Table 4). It can be seen that the F₁ values are displaced towards the SWR parental distribution. The backcross to C57BL suggest a bimodality as would be caused by monogenic segregation but the backcross to SWR does not. The F₂ values (Fig. 2) suggest a 1:2:1 monogenic segregation but it is not clear-cut with significant overlap. A simple inspection of this data does not, therefore, allow conclusions over the existence of monogenic segregation in these crosses.

To try and resolve this problem, the distribution of PK activity levels was determined amongst the SWXL recombinant inbred strains and these data and the segregation data subjected to maximum likelihood analysis.

The progenitor strains of the SWXL RI strains are
the C57L and SWR inbred strains. C57L animals have a high liver-specific PK activity phenotype they do not, however, have activity levels as high as C57BL/6 mice (Table 5) and other genes with minor effect may cause this difference although they have the same general phenotype. Despite this difference between C57BL/6 and C57L mice, the C57L/SWR phenotypic differences segregates clearly amongst the six SWXL RI strains in a 1:1 ratio (Table 5). This indicates that the phenotypic difference between C57L and SWR is caused by a single major gene.

The segregation data was subject to maximum likelihood analysis (Elston, 1984). The initial analysis of the liver PK activities in C57BL/6, SWR mice and their F1 hybrids indicate that these three classes are not significantly heteroscedastic ($\chi^2 = 2.81$, 2 d.f., $P > 0.2$) and that the best power transformation to obtain normality and homoscedasticity is $y = x^{0.39}$. An analagous analysis of the RI strains also indicated lack of significant heteroscedasticity ($\chi^2 = 6.70$, 6 d.f., $P > 0.5$) and the power transformation was estimated to be $x = y^{0.39}$.

Based on the results of this initial analysis, the data on C57BL/6, SWR, F1, and their backcross offspring were analyzed after undergoing a logarithmic transformation, which corresponds to a power of zero. The analyses were repeated after using the transformation $x = y^{0.39}$ and essentially the same results were obtained. The same mixed model is the only one to fit the data, though the fit is slightly better ($\chi^2 = 7.38$, 3 d.f.). The estimates show the same peculiarity – the two SWR $\times$ F1 backcross means are identical, and almost equal to the F1 mean.

In conclusion, the analysis of the phenotypic difference between the C57L and the SWR strains using the SWXL RI strains indicates monogenic segregation. The analysis of the C57BL/SWR segregation data also indicate segregation of a major gene with polygenic effects. The immunotitration and kinetic data suggest this is a tissue-specific regulatory gene. The relationship of this gene to the gene complex [Pκ-1] is discussed later.

(iv) The MUN phenotype

The MUN phenotype arose in an ENU mutation experiment and had previously been shown to be caused by the segregation of a single gene in a

| Strain         | Liver PK activity | PK phenotype | Coat colour phenotype |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| C57BL/6       | 82.0 ± 2.8       | B            | Black                 |
| C57L          | 56.5 ± 2.5       | L            | Leaden                |
| SWR/J         | 35.3 ± 1.5       | S            | Albino                |
| SWXL 4        | 38.0 ± 0.9       | S            | Albino                |
| SWXL 12       | 32.8 ± 1.9       | L            | Albino                |
| SWXL 14       | 61.3 ± 2.3       | L            | Albino                |
| SWXL 15       | 35.6 ± 1.9       | S            | Albino                |
| SWXL 16       | 35.0 ± 1.0       | S            | Albino                |
| SWXL 17       | 61.0 ± 3.0       | L            | Leaden                |

* Mean ± s.e. expressed as units (g liver)$^{-1}$ at 30 °C.

| Parameters | Estimates (natural log scale) |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| C57BL      | 4.38                          |
| F1 mean    | 3.89                          |
| SWR mean   | 3.55                          |
| C57BL $\times$ F1 backcross means | 4.46, 4.11 |
| SWR $\times$ F1 backcross means | 3.84, 3.84 |
| Parental and F1 standard deviation | 0.19 |
| Backcross standard deviation | 0.21 |

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Table 5. Liver PK activity* in C57BL/6, C57L, SWR and SWXL strain mice

Table 6. Maximum likelihood parameter estimates for segregation of a major gene between C57BL and SWR with polygenic effects
C3H/101 hybrid background (Charles & Pretsch, 1984, 1987). Homozygotes had 2-4-fold the activity of the progenitor strain and the gene is inherited additively with heterozygotes having 1-6-fold wild-type levels. The effect on PK activity is specific to adult liver and erythrocytes and PK activity in other tissues was not affected and therefore the phenotype is controlled by the [Pk-1] gene complex. The mutation does not affect heat stability, electrophoretic mobility or \( K_m \) PEP and it was therefore suggested that it was within a regulatory gene (Charles & Pretsch, 1984).

The immunotitration results (Table 2) confirm this conclusion demonstrating that the MUN phenotype has over twofold the number of PK molecules of C3H/He animals in both liver and blood. The mutation causing the MUN phenotype arose in a C3H/101 hybrid stock which has the same phenotype as purebred C3H/He mice (Charles & Pretsch, 1984). What now remains is to determine the relationship of the gene causing the MUN phenotype to the structural gene, \( Pk-1s \).

Therefore animals of the MUN phenotype were mated to animals of the W phenotype which are homozygous for the reduced PK activity allele of the structural gene, \( Pk-1s^b \) (Moore & Bulfield, 1981; Fitton & Bulfield, 1989). The segregation data for PK activity in blood of W, MUN, F, and backcross animals are displayed in Fig. 3. The data show clear additive monogenic segregation; no recombinant activity classes are present. This segregation of the low activity \( Pk-1s \) structural gene mutation and the hyperactivity regulatory gene mutation causing the MUN phenotype, indicates that both the structural gene and regulatory gene are part of the same gene complex, [Pk-1]; there is also segregation in thermal stability as an indicator of the structural gene mutation (data not shown).

(v) Further segregation analysis and relationships between the phenotypes

It has now been possible to determine the relationship of the regulatory gene causing the MUN phenotype to the structural gene \( Pk-1s \); they are closely linked. A similar segregation analysis is not possible between the \( Pk-1s^b \) structural gene mutation and the regulatory gene mutation causing the SWR phenotype as they both reduce PK activity to similar level (Table 1; Fitton & Bulfield, 1989). Liver PK levels do however differ enough between the SWR and MUN phenotypes (Table 1) to permit a segregation analysis. This was performed but the backcross data did not show monogenic segregation (data not shown) although there was some indication of a 1:2:1 segregation in the F\(_2\) (Fig. 4). This analysis therefore remains inconclusive.

Taking all the segregation data together we get the relationships in Fig. 5 for monogenic segregation between phenotypes. In all these cases, except for the polygenic interference with the C57BL/6 – SWR segregation, there are no examples of recombinant phenotypes. This implies that all the genes involved are either alleles of the \( Pk-1s \) structural gene or alleles of genes closely linked to it within the [Pk-I] gene complex. For nomenclature purposes we have considered mutations affecting enzyme concentration as regulatory gene mutations closely linked to \( Pk-1s \). This definition is based on phenotype and does not presume to imply anything about their action at the DNA level, this will have to await molecular analysis.

(vi) Nomenclature of alleles and genes with the [Pk-1] gene complex

It is now possible to assign alleles and genes within the [Pk-1] gene complex on chromosome 3 (Table 7).
The most common phenotype amongst inbred mice (Bulfield et al., 1978) and wild-caught European M. m. domesticus is that of C3H; this is therefore given the a allelic symbols for both the structural gene, Pk-1s and the regulatory gene, Pk-1r. The W, PKD and PKL phenotypes are all caused by mutations of the structural gene, Pk-1s amongst geographically different trapping of wild mice the alleles, b, c and d may be identical but this is unlikely. C57BL and C57L mice contain the tissue specific structural gene mutation Pk-1s' (Fitton & Bulfield, 1989) but are identical at the Pk-1r regulatory gene. The MUN phenotype is caused by a mutation in a gene regulating enzyme concentration; it is not known whether this is in the Pk-1r gene and therefore, as convention dictates, this gene is named Pk-1c, the allele in C3H/101 being a and the mutant allele causing the MUN phenotype a-m (a-mutation). Without molecular evidence it is not possible to tell if Pk-1r and Pk-1c are the same regulatory element or not.

4. Discussion

The basic unit of gene function in mammals appears to be a gene complex of a structural gene with closely associated regulatory gene(s) or elements (Paigen, 1979). The genetical analysis of these complexes has been difficult in mammals compared with Drosophila or micro-organisms. What is apparent, however, from the genetical analysis of the phenotypic variation currently available to mammalian geneticists, is that there is a wide variety of different phenotypes caused by putative regulatory gene mutations. These include mutations in the response to hormone induction (Paigen, 1979; Pfister et al. 1982; Martin et al. 1984; Middleton et al. 1987) intracellular location (Luis et al. 1977) and developmental profile (Paigen, 1979 Pfister et al 1982) as well as systemic and tissue-specific regulatory gene mutations (Paigen, 1979).

The liver pyruvate kinase gene complex, [Pk-1] appears to be no less complicated. In a previous paper we analysed four structural gene mutations found amongst inbred and wild-caught mice. Three of these mutations behaved in a predictable fashion affecting the specific activity of the enzyme in both the liver and erythrocyte. The fourth mutation (in the inbred strain C57BL) affected the specific activity of PK in the liver only (Fitton & Bulfield, 1989). As the liver and the erythrocyte isoenzymes are encoded by different mRNAs presumably by a splicing mechanism (Imamura et al. 1978; Harada et al. 1978; Saheki et al. 1978; Marie et al. 1981 Simon et al. 1982) it was hypothesized that the mutation in C57BL mice could be in a shuffled exon. This type of tissue specific structural gene mutation has never been reported before in mammals. In this paper, we show that the [Pk-1] gene complex is no less complicated as far as putative regulatory gene mutations affecting enzyme concentrations are concerned.

The difference between the SWR and C57BL phenotypes is caused by segregation of a major gene affecting tissue-specific liver enzyme concentration (although complicated by polygenic variation); this is confirmed by the segregation of these phenotypes amongst the SWXL RI strains. This tissue specific regulatory gene mutation can be contrasted to the ENU-induced mutation occurring in C3H/101 hybrid mice (Charles & Pretsch, 1984) which affects enzyme concentration in both liver and erythrocyte. The [Pk-1] gene complex therefore has given us two novel types of mutations to add to our portfolio of mammalian genetic variation: the Pk-1s', tissue specific structural gene mutation found in C57BL strain mice and, the Pk-1r', tissue specific regulatory gene mutation found in SWR strain mice.

In the four genetic systems in mice now analysed in some detail, a wide variety of types of mutations have been found (Table 8). Such a variety from only four systems suggests that the regulation of mammalian genes will be complicated and complex. As molecular evidence becomes available on the regulation of individual genes this complexity has begun to...
be defined in terms of DNA sequence; the metallothionein II gene for example has at least nine 5' regulatory sequence motifs controlling at least five regulatory functions (Lee et al. 1987). The mutations available in these four gene complexes (Table 8), especially those in the regulatory genes, will prove of great value in relating DNA sequence to gene function.

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Table 8. Regulatory genes within gene complexes in mice

| Gene complex | [Gst] | [Hla] | Bpg | Bul | Hph | mgs | Pk-J | Pk-L | Pk-M | Pk-X |
|--------------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-------|------|
| Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene | Structural gene |

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