Summer 2018

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Recommended Citation
Brothers, John; Gerry, Alexis; Scofield, Lauren; and Otto-Hitt, Stefanie, "Exploring the Effects of Environmental Temperature on CDC-7 Expression in T. thermophila" (2018). Life and Environmental Sciences Course-based Research Projects. 10.
https://scholars.carroll.edu/lifesci_undergrad/10

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Exploring the Effects of Environmental Temperature on CDC-7 Expression in T. thermophila

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July 31, 2018

Experiment Type: Reverse transcriptase (RT) PCR
Feature: TThERM_00729170
Gene: CDC7: Protein kinase domain containing protein. Sequence similarity to the CDC7 protein kinase family (Eisen et al., 2006)."

1 Introduction

Tetrahymena thermophila are unicellular eukaryotes with a remarkably large genome: over 27,000 genes. One important aspect of studying the Tetrahymena genome is identifying and understanding what factors influence gene expression. This study examined the effects of temperature on the expression of CDC-7, a cell division control gene. We subjected Tetrahymena cultures to increased temperature and hypothesized such treatments would induce cell division and increase CDC-7 expression. Gene expression levels were measured via semi-quantitative PCR analysis after an acute heat treatment.

2 Methods

Primer synthesis: Primers for CDC7 were designed using the Tetrahymena Genome Database and Integrated DNA Technologies Oligoanalyzer. The sequences of the forward and reverse primers used to amplify CDC7 are as follows: TTGTTAAGCCAGCAAATATCTAACTTTTCTATTTCAA (Forward) and GATCAAAATTCCCTTTTTCTCAGCAGTGTT (Reverse). The sequences of the control Btu1 primers are as follows: CCCAGAGCTATCTTGATGGACTTA (Forward) and TAACACCAGACATGGCAGCA (Reverse).

Culturing Tetrahymena: T. thermophila were cultured in NEFF media and then transferred into nutrient-rich SPP media at the time of the experiment (Cassidy-Handley, 2012). For the experiment, Tetrahymena cultures were randomly placed in either a room temperature
incubator (control group) or a 37°C incubator (experimental group) for 24 hours.

RNA extraction: RNA was extracted from control and experimental T. thermophila cultures following the experiment using Qiagens RNeasy Mini Kit as per the manufacturer’s instructions. All cultures were centrifuged for three minutes at 3,000rpm and washed with 5mL of 10mM Tris (pH 7.4) before processing.

RT-PCR: cDNA was synthesized using the RevertAid RT kit (ThermoScientific) and following the manufacturer’s protocol. PCR was performed using GoTaq Green PCR Master Mix (Promega) using the manufacturer’s protocol. PCR amplification of BTU1 cDNA was used as a positive control for the Tetrahymena RT-PCRs while Gapdh was used as a positive control for the entire RT-PCR experiment as the reagents for this sample were provided in the RevertAid kit. The No Template Control (NTC) reactions contained all reagents for the RT-PCR reaction, except nuclease-free water was added in place of RNA template.

Gel electrophoresis: The RT-PCR reactions were electrophoresed on a 1% agarose gel (BioRad) in 1xTBE (VWR). The ImageJ gel analysis program was used to determine the relative intensities of the PCR products for semi-quantitative analysis.

3 Results

Contrary to our hypothesis, acute exposure of Tetrahymena to a 37°C environment resulted in the significant down-regulation of CDC7 (p < 0.05). This change in expression appears to be gene specific as there was no significant change in BTU-1 expression (p > 0.05).

Future studies should focus on varying the temperatures Tetrahymena cultures are exposed to, as well as increasing the number of replicates. Furthermore, a more quantitative measure of gene expression should be used to better determine whether exposure to heat affects CDC7 expression.
4 Figures

4.1 Relative Expression of CDC7 in Heat-exposed Tetrahymena thermophila Cultures

The relative expression of CDC7 compared to the control gene BTU1 was measured using semi-quantitative RT-PCR across four control and four experimental (37°C-exposed) Tetrahymena cultures after one week of culturing. The error bars represent the standard error of the means for each condition. A two-tailed t-test assuming unequal variance was performed to determine the significance of changes in gene expression between the control and experimental cultures, with $p \leq 0.05$ for CDC7 and $p \leq 0.05$ for BTU1.

5 References


6 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Stefanie Otto-Hitt for her support and guidance, the Ciliate Genomics Consortium for generous funding, and the millions of ciliates who died valiantly for this discovery.