

Molecular cloning and sequencing of cDNA for rat cathepsin H

Homology in pro-peptide regions of cysteine proteinases

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Received 27 October 1987

A cDNA for rat cathepsin H was isolated and sequenced. The deduced protein comprising 333 amino acid residues is composed of a typical signal sequence (21 residues), a pro-peptide region (92 residues) and a mature enzyme region (220 residues). The amino acid sequence in the pro-peptide region, in particular, residues Phe(-41) to Ser(-29) of cathepsin H, is highly homologous to the pro-peptide regions of other cysteine proteinases. This homologous region may play a role in the processing of cysteine proteinases.

Cathepsin H; Cysteine proteinase; cDNA cloning; Propeptide region; Amino acid sequence

1. INTRODUCTION

Cysteine proteinases are widely distributed in plants and animals and participate in various cellular functions, e.g. intracellular protein breakdown, cell growth, biosyntheses of peptide hormones and tumor metastasis [1–3]. Cathepsins B, H and L are the most typical and well-characterized cysteine proteinases. The primary structures of cathepsins B and H have been determined at the protein level [4] and are highly homologous to that of papain. Studies on in vitro

translation and immunological investigations have shown that cathepsins B and H are synthesized as preproenzymes and exist in lysosomes as mature enzymes after post-translational modifications [5–7]. Cloning of the cDNA for cathepsin B has revealed the structure of its primary translation product: 339 amino acid residues containing a signal peptide (17 residues), pro-peptide region (62 residues), mature enzyme region (254 residues) and C-terminal extension peptide (6 residues) [8]. Similar studies involving cloning of the cDNA for papain and rat cathepsin L [9,10] have also established the structure of the N-terminal extension peptides, i.e. a signal peptide and pro-peptide.

Here, we isolated cDNA for rat cathepsin H and determined its nucleotide sequence. The deduced amino acid sequence of cathepsin H is highly homologous to those of other cysteine proteinases in the pro-peptide region as well as in the mature enzyme region. The observation of this sequence homology in the pro-peptide region of cysteine

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The nucleotide sequence presented here has been submitted to the EMBL/GenBank database under the accession number Y00708

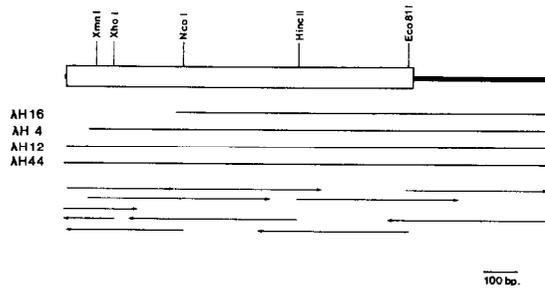


Fig.1. Restriction map and sequencing strategy of cDNA clones of cathepsin H. DNA sequencing was carried out using the dideoxy method in both directions. Arrows indicate the direction and length of sequencing. The open box indicates the amino acid coding region and thick lines indicate 5'- and 3'-non-coding regions.

proteinases may provide us with a clue to the understanding of the function of the pro-peptide region.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Extraction of total RNA from rat kidney, selection of poly(A)⁺ RNA and construction of a cDNA library were as described previously [10]. Synthetic oligonucleotide probes, CATH-ACT (5'-CCTGTGAAGAACCAGGGCGCCTGTGGCTCCTGCTGGACCTTCTCC-3', 45-mer) corresponding to the amino acid sequence around the active-site cysteine residue (from Pro-16 to Ser-30) and CATH-H (5'-CAGTGC AAGTTCAACCCTGAGAAGGCTGTGGCCTTTGTGAAGAATG-



Fig.2. Nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequences of cDNA clones for rat cathepsin H. The nucleotide sequence is numbered starting at the initiation codon ATG and negative numbers show the 5'-non-coding region. The deduced amino acid sequence for the precursor of cathepsin H, shown under the nucleotide sequence, is numbered beginning at the N-terminal residue of the mature enzyme region. Negative numbers indicate pre- and pro-sequences. Arrows indicate cleavage sites in post-translational processing. Underlining indicates the polyadenylation signal. Single and triple asterisks indicate potential glycosylation sites and the termination codon, respectively.

Table 1

Amino acid sequence homology of cathepsin H with other cysteine proteinases

	Pro-peptide region	Mature enzyme region	Total
Cathepsin L	24.5 (39.2)	44.2 (60.7)	38.7 (53.7)
Papain	34.0 (48.5)	30.9 (44.7)	30.6 (45.6)
Aleurain	29.0 (53.0)	61.8 (76.8)	48.3 (64.8)
CP1	20.8 (32.3)	36.7 (55.5)	31.1 (48.4)
CP2	22.4 (42.9)	34.1 (47.3)	30.0 (44.7)

Sequence identity (%) was calculated using a computer program package IDEAS (see fig.4) [18]. Values in parentheses were calculated assuming that conservative amino acids are identical. Gaps are regarded as mismatches. Cathepsin B was not included because of its shorter length. Values given as percentages

hybridization analysis shows that the size of the mRNA for cathepsin H is about 1.8 kb (fig.3), which is approximately the same as that of the insert of λ H44.

The signal peptide and the pro-peptide are predicted to be residues -113 to -93 and -92 to -1, respectively, by comparing the deduced amino acid sequence with that of the mature enzyme [4] and by following the method in [12]. In the pro-peptide region, two potential glycosylation sites, Asn(-44) and Asn(-15) are found together with one additional site in the mature enzyme region which has been noted before [4]. These sites in the pro-peptide region are also found in the corresponding region of papain [9], although such sites do not exist in cathepsin L [10]. Whether or not these sites in the pro-peptide region are glycosylated remains unclear at present.

The deduced amino acid sequence of the mature enzyme region coincides completely with that determined at the protein level. A C-terminal extension peptide which is found in cathepsin B [8] cannot be found in cathepsin H.

A consensus polyadenylation signal is seen at 1317-1322 [13] followed by a poly(A) tail.

4. DISCUSSION

This is the first sequence determination of the primary translation product of cathepsin H. The

5'-termini of most clones obtained for cathepsin H (~40 clones) terminated around nucleotide no.12. Various attempts to obtain longer 5'-sequences have not been successful. mRNA having a high GC content often forms a stable secondary structure which inhibits efficient synthesis of cDNA. Presumably, this is one of the reasons why longer cDNA clones are not obtained.

Recently, cDNA cloning for various cysteine proteinases, including cathepsin B from human, mouse and rat [8], cathepsin L from rat [10], papain from *Carina papaya* fruit [9], cysteine proteinases 1 and 2 (CP1 and CP2) from *Dictyostelium discoideum* [14,15] and aleurain from barley aleurone cells [16], has revealed the amino acid sequences of their preproenzymes. As has already been discussed, the mature enzyme regions of these proteinases show very high sequence homology [4,16]. Their pro-peptide regions also show significant sequence homology when they are aligned as shown in fig.4. Although the sequence homology in the pro-peptide region is independent of that in the mature enzyme region and is clearly lower, it amounts to 21-34% when the pro-sequence of cathepsin H is compared with others (table 1). The homology increases to 32-53% when conservative amino acids are regarded as identical [17]. In particular, the region from Phe(-41) to Ser(-29) of cathepsin H is highly homologous to other cysteine proteinases except for cathepsin B.

The homology found in the pro-peptide region may be important when we consider the function of the pro-peptide in cysteine proteinases.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported in part by research grants from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Japan.

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