



APPLICATIONS OF CHIMERIC GENES AND HYBRID PROTEINS

Volume 327

Jeremy Thorner

Methods in Enzymology

Volume 327

APPLICATIONS OF CHIMERIC GENES
AND HYBRID PROTEINS

Part B

Cell Biology and Physiology

METHODS IN ENZYMOLOGY

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Methods in Enzymology

Volume 327

*Applications of Chimeric
Genes and Hybrid Proteins*

*Part B
Cell Biology and Physiology*

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Table of Contents

CONTRIBUTORS TO VOLUME 327.	xi
PREFACE.	xvii
VOLUMES IN SERIES	xix

Section I. Epitope Tags for Immunodetection

1. Epitope Tagging: General Method for Tracking Re-combinant Proteins	CHRISTIAN E. FRITZE AND THOMAS R. ANDERSON	3
---	---	---

Section II. Markers for Cytology, Analysis of Protein Trafficking, and Lineage Tracing

2. Alkaline Phosphatase Fusions of Ligands or Receptors as <i>in Situ</i> Probes for Staining of Cells, Tissues, and Embryos	JOHN G. FLANAGAN, HWAI-JONG CHENG, DAVID A. FELDHEIM, MITSU HARU HATTORI, QIANG LU, AND PIERRE VANDERHAEGHEN	19
3. Chimeric Molecules Employing Horseradish Peroxidase as Reporter Enzyme for Protein Localization in the Electron Microscope	COLIN HOPKINS, ADÈLE GIBSON, JANE STINCHCOMBE, AND CLARE FUTTER	35
4. Biochemical Analyses of Trafficking with Horseradish Peroxidase-Tagged Chimeras	ANASTASIYA D. BLAGOVESHCHENSKAYA AND DANIEL F. CUTLER	45
5. Visualizing Protein Dynamics in Yeast with Green Fluorescent Protein	CHRISTOPHER G. BURD	61
6. Kinetic Analysis of Intracellular Trafficking in Single Living Cells with Vesicular Stomatitis Virus Protein G–Green Fluorescent Protein Hybrids	KORET HIRSCHBERG, ROBERT D. PHAIR, AND JENNIFER LIPPINCOTT-SCHWARTZ	69
7. Dual Color Detection of Cyan and Yellow Derivatives of Green Fluorescent Protein Using Conventional Fluorescence Microscopy and 35-mm Photography	GISELE GREEN, STEVEN R. KAIN, AND BRIGITTE ANGRES	89

8. Invertase Fusion Proteins for Analysis of Protein Trafficking in Yeast	TAMARA DARSOW, GREG ODORIZZI, AND SCOTT D. EMR	95
9. Introduction of Kex2 Cleavage Sites in Fusion Proteins for Monitoring Localization and Transport in Yeast Secretory Pathway	B. DIANE HOPKINS, KEN SATO, AKIHIKO NAKUNO, AND TODD R. GRAHAM	107
10. Lineage Analysis with Retroviral Vectors	CONSTANCE L. CEPKO, ELIZABETH RYDER, CHRISTOPHER AUSTIN, JEFFREY GOLDEN, SHAWN FIELDS-BERRY, AND JOHN LIN	118
11. Use of Pseudotyped Retroviruses in Zebrafish as Genetic Tags	SHAWN BURGESS AND NANCY HOPKINS	145

Section III. Tools for Analysis of Membrane Proteins

12. A Gene Fusion Method for Assaying Interactions of Protein Transmembrane Segments <i>in Vivo</i>	JENNIFER A. LEEDS AND JON BECKWITH	165
13. Using <i>SUC2-HIS4C</i> Reporter Domain to Study Topology of Membrane Proteins in <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i>	CHRISTIAN SENGSTAG	175
14. Detecting Interactions between Membrane Proteins <i>in Vivo</i> Using Chimeras	IGOR STAGLIAR AND STEPHAN TE HEESSEN	190
15. Alkaline Phosphatase Fusion Proteins for Molecular Characterization and Cloning of Receptors and Their Ligands	JOHN G. FLANAGAN AND HWAI-JONG CHENG	198
16. Surface Chimeric Receptors as Tools in Study of Lymphocyte Activation	BRYAN A. IRVING AND ARTHUR WEISS	210
17. Use of Chimeric Receptor Molecules to Dissect Signal Transduction Mechanisms	WARREN J. LEONARD	228
18. Fusion Protein Toxins Based on Diphtheria Toxin: Selective Targeting of Growth Factor Receptors of Eukaryotic Cells	JOHANNA C. VANDERSPEK AND JOHN R. MURPHY	239
19. Green Fluorescent Protein-Based Sensors for Detecting Signal Transduction and Monitoring Ion Channel Function	MICAH S. SIEGEL AND EHUD Y. ISACOFF	249

20. Metabolic Labeling of Glycoproteins with Chemical Tags through Unnatural Sialic Acid Biosynthesis	CHRISTINA L. JACOBS, KEVIN J. YAREMA, LARA K. MAHAL, DAVID A. NAUMAN, NEIL W. CHARTERS, AND CAROLYN R. BERTOZZI	260
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Section IV. Signals for Addressing Proteins to Specific Subcellular Compartments

21. Using Sorting Signals to Retain Proteins in Endoplasmic Reticulum	HUGH R. B. PELHAM	279
22. Directing Proteins to Nucleus by Fusion to Nuclear Localization Signal Tags	HEIKE KREBBER AND PAMELA A. SILVER	283
23. Identification, Analysis, and Use of Nuclear Export Signals in <i>Saccharomyces cerevisiae</i>	KARSTEN WEIS	297
24. Directing Proteins to Mitochondria by Fusion to Mitochondrial Targeting Signals	KOSTAS TOKATLIDIS	305
25. Targeting Proteins to Plasma Membrane and Membrane Microdomains by N-Terminal Myristoylation and Palmitoylation	WOUTER VAN'T HOF AND MARILYN D. RESH	317
26. Analysis of Function and Regulation of Proteins That Mediate Signal Transduction by Use of Lipid-Modified Plasma Membrane-Targeting Sequences	GARY W. REUTHER, JANICE E. BUSS, LAWRENCE A. QUILLIAM, GEOFFREY J. CLARK, AND CHANNING J. DER	331
27. Glycerolphosphoinositide Anchors for Membrane-Tethering Proteins	JOHN D. FAYEN, MARK L. TYKOCINSKI, AND M. EDWARD MEDOF	351
28. Fusions to Members of Fibroblast Growth Factor Gene Family to Study Nuclear Translocation and Nonclassic Exocytosis	I. PRUDOVSKY, M. LANDRISCINA, R. SOLDI, S. BELLUM, D. SMALL, V. ANDREEVA, AND THOMAS MACIAG	369

Section V. Application of Chimeras in Monitoring and Manipulating Cell Physiology

29. Posttranslational Regulation of Proteins by Fusions to Steroid-Binding Domains	DIDIER PICARD	385
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30. Tet Repressor-Based System for Regulated Gene Expression in Eukaryotic Cells: Principles and Advances	UDO BARON AND HERMANN BUJARD	401
31. Coumermycin-Induced Dimerization of GyrB-Containing Fusion Proteins	MICHAEL A. FARRAR, STEVEN H. OLSON, AND ROGER M. PERLMUTTER	421
32. Use of Glutathione <i>S</i> -Transferase and Break Point Cluster Region Protein as Artificial Dimerization Domains to Activate Tyrosine Kinases	YOSHIRO MARU	429
33. Recombinant Aequorin as Tool for Monitoring Calcium Concentration in Subcellular Compartments	VALERIE ROBERT, PAOLO PINTON, VALERIA TOSELLO, ROSARIO RIZZUTO, AND TULLIO POZZAN	440
34. Recombinant Aequorin as Reporter of Changes in Intracellular Calcium in Mammalian Cells	JENNY STABLES, LARRY C. MATTHEAKIS, RAY CHANG, AND STEPHEN REES	456
35. Monitoring Protein Conformations and Interactions by Fluorescence Resonance Energy Transfer between Mutants of Green Fluorescent Protein	ATSUSHI MIYAWAKI AND ROGER Y. TSIEN	472
36. Studies of Signal Transduction Events Using Chimeras to Green Fluorescent Protein	TOBIAS MEYER AND ELENA OANCEA	500
37. Use of Fusions to Green Fluorescent Protein in the Detection of Apoptosis	EVE SHINBROT, COLLIN SPENCER, VALERIE NATALE, AND STEVEN R. KAIN	513
38. Synapto-pHluorins: Chimeras between pH-Sensitive Mutants of Green Fluorescent Protein and Synaptic Vesicle Membrane Proteins as Reporters of Neurotransmitter Release	RAFAEL YUSTE, REBECCA B. MILLER, KNUT HOLTHOFF, SHIFANG ZHANG, AND GERO MIESENBOCK	522
39. Studying Organelle Physiology with Fusion Protein-Targeted Avidin and Fluorescent Biotin Conjugates	MINNIE M. WU, JUAN LLOPIS, STEPHEN R. ADAMS, J. MICHAEL MCCAFFERY, KEN TETER, MARKKU S. KULOMAA, TERRY E. MACHEN, HSIAO-PING H. MOORE, AND ROGER Y. TSIEN	546

40. Fluorescent Labeling of Recombinant Proteins in Living Cells with FIAsh	B. ALBERT GRIFFIN, STEPHEN R. ADAMS, JAY JONES, AND ROGER Y. TSIEN	565
41. Ubiquitin Fusion Technique and Its Descendants	ALEXANDER VARSHAVSKY	578
42. Use of Phosphorylation Site Tags in Proteins	SIDNEY PESTKA, LEI LIN, WEI WU, AND LARA IZOTOVA	594
AUTHOR INDEX		615
SUBJECT INDEX		657

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Preface

The modern biologist takes almost for granted the rich repertoire of tools currently available for manipulating virtually any gene or protein of interest. Paramount among these operations is the construction of fusions. The tactic of generating gene fusions to facilitate analysis of gene expression has its origins in the work of Jacob and Monod more than 35 years ago. The fact that gene fusions can create functional chimeric proteins was demonstrated shortly thereafter. Since that time, the number of tricks for splicing or inserting into a gene product various markers, tags, antigenic epitopes, structural probes, and other elements has increased explosively. Hence, when we undertook assembling a volume on the applications of chimeric genes and hybrid proteins in modern biological research, we considered the job a daunting task.

To assist us with producing a coherent work, we first enlisted the aid of an Advisory Committee, consisting of Joe Falke, Stan Fields, Brian Seed, Tom Silhavy, and Roger Tsien. We benefited enormously from their ideas, suggestions, and breadth of knowledge. We are grateful to them all for their willingness to participate at the planning stage and for contributing excellent and highly pertinent articles.

A large measure of the success of this project is due to the enthusiastic responses we received from nearly all of the prospective authors we approached. Many contributors made additional suggestions, and quite a number contributed more than one article. Hence, it became clear early on that given the huge number of applications of gene fusion and hybrid protein technology—for studies of the regulation of gene expression, for lineage tracing, for protein purification and detection, for analysis of protein localization and dynamic movement, and a plethora of other uses—it would not be possible for us to cover this subject comprehensively in a single volume, but in the resulting three volumes, 326, 327, and 328.

Volume 326 is devoted to methods useful for monitoring gene expression, for facilitating protein purification, and for generating novel antigens and antibodies. Also in this volume is an introductory article describing the genesis of the concept of gene fusions and the early foundations of this whole approach. We would like to express our special appreciation to Jon Beckwith for preparing this historical overview. Jon's description is particularly illuminating because he was among the first to exploit gene and protein fusions. Moreover, over the years, he and his colleagues have

continued to develop the methodology that has propelled the use of fusion-based techniques from bacteria to eukaryotic organisms. Volume 327 is focused on procedures for tagging proteins for immunodetection, for using chimeric proteins for cytological purposes, especially the analysis of membrane proteins and intracellular protein trafficking, and for monitoring and manipulating various aspects of cell signaling and cell physiology. Included in this volume is a rather extensive section on the green fluorescent protein (GFP) that deals with applications not covered in Volume 302. Volume 328 describes protocols for using hybrid genes and proteins to identify and analyze protein–protein and protein–nucleic interactions, for mapping molecular recognition domains, for directed molecular evolution, and for functional genomics.

We want to take this opportunity to thank again all the authors who generously contributed and whose conscientious efforts to maintain the high standards of the *Methods in Enzymology* series will make these volumes of practical use to a broad spectrum of investigators for many years to come. We have to admit, however, that, despite our best efforts, we could not include each and every method that involves the use of a gene fusion or a hybrid protein. In part, our task was a bit like trying to bottle smoke because brilliant new methods that exploit the fundamental strategy of using a chimeric gene or protein are being devised and published daily. We hope, however, that we have been able to capture many of the most salient and generally applicable procedures. Nonetheless, we take full responsibility for any oversights or omissions, and apologize to any researcher whose method was overlooked.

Finally, we would especially like to acknowledge the expert assistance of Joyce Kato at Caltech, whose administrative skills were essential in organizing these books.

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