Investigating the Effects of eIF3 Mutations on Start-Codon Recognition Reveals its Roles Across the Transcriptome

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Translation Initiation is a Complex Multi-step Pathway in Eukaryotes that Regulates Gene Expression

- Translation initiation requires the formation of the pre-initiation complex (PIC), which then attaches to the 5' end of messenger RNA (mRNA) and then scans the mRNA in order to locate the start (AUG) codon.

Comparing the Translational Efficiency of Two Mutants

- Ribosome Profiling: locates the position of every translating ribosome on every mRNA molecule in living cells
- mRNA Sequencing is used to thoroughly determine the abundance of each individual mRNA.

By comparing the information from these two approaches, we can calculate the translational efficiency of individual mRNAs and how this is impacted by mutations to eIF3.

We then investigate the features of mRNAs most sensitive to specific mutations of eIF3 to infer the mechanistic contributions of eIF3 during translation initiation.

DDKK Mutant Strain: disrupts the interaction of eIF3 and eIF3g with the remainder of the eIF3 complex.

Degron Mutant Strain: disrupts the entire eIF3 complex.

mRNAs containing near-cognate uORFs show greater decreases in translation in the presence of both mutants (Plots 1 & 2).

We examined the impact of having both types of uORFs, only cognate uORFs, only near-cognate uORFs, and no uORFs on the translational efficiency of the two mutant strains.

Increasing numbers of near-cognate uORFs result in decreasing mutant translational efficiency (Plots 3 & 4).

We examined the impact of the number of near-cognate uORFs on translational efficiency of the two mutant strains. As the number of near-cognate uORFs increases, the translational efficiency gradually decreases in both mutants.

Increasing 5’ untranslated region (UTR) length results in an increase of near-cognate uORFs (Plot 5).

We examined the impact of having both types of uORFs, only cognate uORFs, only near-cognate uORFs, and no uORFs on the translational efficiency of the two mutant strains.

Increasing numbers of near-cognate uORFs result in increasing 5’ UTR length (Plot 6).

We examined the impact of the number of near-cognate uORFs on 5’ UTR length. As the number of near-cognate uORFs increased, the 5’ UTR length increased as well.

Both mutants evidently result in an increased translational efficiency for the near-cognate uORFs as compared to the cognate uORFs.

Conclusion and Future Studies

- From Plots 1, 2, 7, and 8, we observe that a mutation that disrupts the interaction of eIF3 and eIF3g with the remainder of the complex (DDKK) and a mutation that disrupts the entire eIF3 complex (eIF3 degron) both result in increased translation of near-cognate uORFs as compared to cognate uORFs.

- This effect is most severe on mRNAs that are sensitive to both mutations.

- We also observed that increasing numbers of near-cognate uORFs result in gradually decreasing translational efficiency in both the DDKK and eIF3 degron mutants.

- In addition, we observed from the 5th plot, as the length of the 5’ UTR increases, there is an increase in near-cognate uORFs. Also, in the 6th plot, we observed that as the number of near-cognate uORFs increases, the length of the 5’ UTR increases as well. This demonstrates a potential correlation between 5’ UTR length and the number of near-cognate uORFs.

We are currently testing these effects with statistical models. Taken together, these observations are consistent with a model in which eIF3 contributes to discrimination against near-cognate start codons, with the eIF3d and eIF3g subunits playing an important role in this discrimination.

Further experiments must be conducted on the individual subunits of eIF3 to see how consistent these results are within the entire complex. Ultimately, we hope to provide a mechanistic framework for understanding how disruption of translation initiation is involved in cancer.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my mentor, Professor Colin Echeverría Aitken for guiding me throughout my research project this summer. I would also like to thank URSI director, Professor Daly, and URSI Administrative Coordinator, Susan Painter, for providing me with this opportunity. Finally, I would like to thank those who funded the Vassar URSI 2020 program for allowing me to pursue cutting-edge research this summer.

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