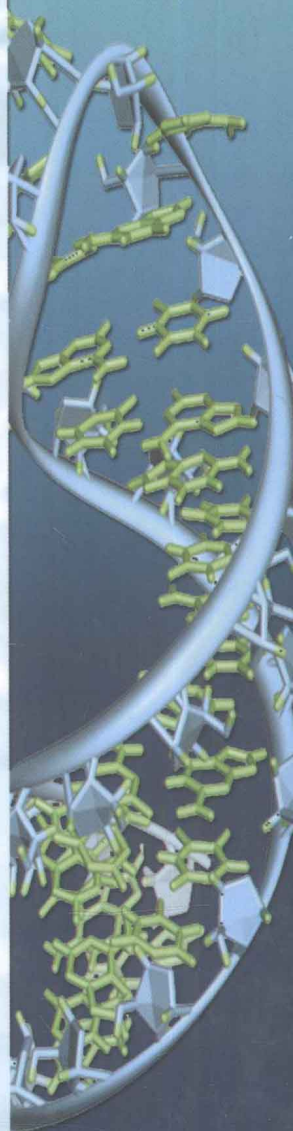


Regulation of Gene Expression by Small RNAs

小分子RNA介导的 基因表达调控



Rajesh K. Gaur and John J. Rossi

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Edited by
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中文导言

长久以来，按照经典的“中心法则”定律，人们一直认为 RNA 只是起到遗传信息传递者的作用，负责把遗传密码由 DNA 传递到蛋白质。但在 1998 年，当安德鲁·菲尔和克雷格·梅洛公布了他们的惊世发现——双链 RNA 能够介导序列同源 RNA 的沉默后，这一定律不得被彻底地改写。RNA 并不仅仅是遗传信息的传递者，小分子 RNA 参与的 RNA 沉默途径还广泛参与基因表达的精细调控。考虑到这一发现对于生物学研究的深远影响，小分子 RNA 的发现能够荣膺 2002 年《科学》杂志十大科技突破之首，以及最早揭示这一现象的两位先驱科学家能够在短短 8 年后（2006 年）就获得诺贝尔生理医学奖也就毫不令人意外了。

虽然 RNA 沉默机制只是在最近十几年才成为一个新的研究领域，但 RNA 沉默现象却在很早以前就有了报道，例如，早在 1928 年植物学家用烟草环斑病毒进行攻毒实验时发现，只有最初侵染的下部叶片有感病症状，而上部叶片似乎对病毒侵染具有免疫性，即“恢复”现象。1990 年，当 Napoli 等向矮牵牛中导入与粉红色色素合成有关的基因以产生颜色更深的紫色矮牵牛花时，他们惊讶地发现花色不但没有加深，部分转基因矮牵牛的花色竟然完全消失，他们当时将这种现象称为“共抑制”。随后又陆续有研究报道了在动物及真菌细胞中发现了类似的现象，分别称为“RNA 干扰”（RNA interference）和“基因消除”（Gene quelling）。近期在单细胞绿藻类等低等生物中也发现了小分子 RNA 及类似多细胞真核生物的 RNA 沉默途径的存在。表明了 RNA 沉默是一种古老保守却又不断进化的基因表达调控机制。

如今经过十几年的飞速发展，有关小分子 RNA 介导的 RNA 沉默机制已经得到了比较系统的阐明。现在人们已经清楚，小分子 RNA 是一类长度在 21～30nt 的非编码 RNA，主要包含三大类：siRNA、microRNA，以及 piRNA（仅在动物中发现）。虽然生物体内的小 RNA 途径多种多样，双链 RNA 都是其最初的触发因子。双链 RNA 可以有多种来源，如异常的单链 RNA、能够自我折叠成茎环结构的发夹状单链 RNA、转录方向相反的重叠 RNA、外源核酸导入（如转基因及病原核酸入侵）、转座子、重复序列，以及由 RNA 依赖的 RNA 聚合酶产生的双链 RNA 等等。不仅小 RNA 的来源各异，其参与调控的细胞过程也多种多样，如细胞的分化、增殖、凋亡、免疫及防御反应、疾病的发生等等。如今，由病毒诱导的基因沉默（VIGS）作为寄主抵抗病原侵染的一种天然防御机制已经成为小 RNA 研究的一个重要分支。

小 RNA 不但在转录后水平上（PTGS）通过降解信使 RNA 或者阻止其翻译成蛋白质来实现对基因表达的调控，同时也在转录水平上（TGS）通过 RNA 指

导的 DNA 甲基化 (RdDM) 等途径直接控制基因转录的开关。另外, 小 RNA 分子在组蛋白修饰及染色质改型等表观遗传学修饰通路中也发挥着重要的作用。

随着小 RNA 机制的不断阐明, 人们也将关注的目光逐渐转移到该机制在作物改良和生物医药中潜在的巨大应用价值上。例如, 已经有许多研究报道了利用靶向病原基因组的小 RNA 培育转基因抗病/虫作物的成功案例。同时, 小 RNA 在重大疾病 (如癌症、艾滋病) 等中的作用也为人们利用该途径设计小 RNA 分子药物及寻找药物关键靶点开辟了一条新的途径。

短短十几年的发展已经展现了小分子 RNA 这一冉冉兴起的明星调控分子在生命起源进化、基因表达调控网络, 以及生物医药等领域的巨大潜力, 译者也有幸参与其中——在植物 RNA 沉默及其抗病应用研究中做了一些工作。相信随着研究的不断深入, 小分子 RNA 必将给我们带来更多的惊喜, 当然伴随的必然还有更多的疑问, 这也将吸引我们更努力地去探索这一神秘的 RNA 世界。

郭惠珊 段成国

2011 年于北京

前 言

小 RNA 能够与互补靶 RNA 通过 Watson-Crick 碱基配对控制基因的表达 (RNA 干扰), 这一发现极大地拓宽了我们对真核基因表达调控与功能的理解。小 RNA 序列调控基因表达为研究基因功能提供了强有力的新工具, 而且将为疾病治疗带来新的革命。内源小 RNA 已在多种生命体中发现, 包括人类、老鼠、果蝇、蠕虫、真菌和细菌等。在高等真核生物中, microRNA 可能参与了多达 50% 的基因的表达调控。由于调控型小 RNA 就像细胞的变阻器一样能够精细调控基因的表达, 因此其生物起源及加工机制已经成为受到广泛关注的研究领域。

人们通过外源引入小干扰 RNA (siRNA) 靶向胞内基因的方法正是利用了内源转录后基因沉默机制 (PTGS)。SiRNA 能够直接经转染进入细胞, 并进入 RNA 诱导的沉默复合体 (RISC)。同样, siRNA 也可经 Pol II 或 Pol III 启动子控制的载体表达的方式在细胞内表达产生。这些 RNA 干扰诱发子能够以 microRNA 或者短的发夹 RNA (shRNA) 的形式在体内表达, 进而被加工成 21~22 nt 的 siRNA。转录水平的基因沉默 (TGS) 包含一类与启动子区域序列互补的小 RNA 分子, 能够招募 RNA 干扰途径中的蛋白组分, 以及与染色体改型 (重排) 相关的蛋白因子到启动子区域, 导致沉默。TGS 现象已经在低等真核生物、植物及哺乳动物细胞 (最近的研究成果) 中发现。除了在高等生物中发现的小 RNA 机制, 在原核生物中也存在大量的小 RNA, 它们通过多种不同的机制在转录后水平上调控基因的表达, 其中包括 Watson-Crick 碱基配对机制。

本书内容覆盖了从细菌到人类等不同生物中发现的多种不同的小 RNA 调控通路。这些调控通路的普遍性及其功能上的重要性在本书中也有阐述。另外, 除了介绍小 RNA 介导的基因表达调控的生物学机制, 本书还讨论了利用小 RNA 研究基因功能或疾病治疗的技术体系。我们相信本书对于新发现的调控型小 RNA 研究无论是在广度还是深度方面都有着深入的探讨。

编者简介

Rajesh K. Gaur, Ph. D

Gaur 博士在德里大学基因组学与整合生物学研究所和化学系获得核酸化学博士学位，其导师为 M. Atreyi 和 K. C. Gupta 教授。作为洪堡学者，他在德国海德堡的欧洲分子生物学实验室（EMBL）及德国基尔大学与 Guido Krupp 和 Brian Sproat 合作进行过两年的研究。随后于 1993 年赴美做博士后，分别在哈佛大学的 Tom Maniatis 实验室及马萨诸塞大学医学院的 Michael Green 实验室从事有关 RNA 拼接方面的研究。目前，他是希望之城研究中心贝克曼医疗研究所的助理教授。其研究兴趣主要包括乳腺癌选择性拼接调控和基于 RNA 的靶向病原新方法的设计。

John J. Rossi, Ph. D

Rossi 博士在美国斯托尔斯的康涅狄克大学获得微生物遗传学博士学位。博士后期间，Rossi 博士在美国罗德岛州普罗维登斯市的布朗大学医学院 Arthur Landy 教授的指导下从事有关大肠杆菌基因组结构、组织及编码 tRNA 色氨酸的两个基因簇的表达研究。该研究是有关一种 tRNA 基因簇能够与信使 RNA 共转录并由信使 RNA 加工而来的首次报道。1980 年，Rossi 博士加入美国加利福尼亚州杜阿尔特市希望之城的分子遗传学系。Rossi 博士的实验室开始发展并验证了一种利用催化 RNA 或者说核酶来实现对 HIV 侵染进行抑制的新方法。该研究项目促成两次临床试验的进行，即在艾滋病感染者身上进行导入了核酶基因的造血干细胞的自体移植。该实验室的研究聚焦于通过 RNA 转运及靶标共定位的方式提高核酶及 RNA 诱饵在胞内的效应。目前该实验室研究主要集中于有关小分子干扰 RNA（siRNA）的生物学特性及其临床应用，并促成了临床上利用三基因手段介导的造血干细胞方法治疗艾滋病及淋巴瘤的首次尝试。

致 谢

本书的各位撰稿人对本书的出版和 RNA 研究领域做出了杰出的贡献，我们借此机会向他们表示感谢。我们也感谢希望之城的 Marieta Gencheva 和 Shikha Gaur 在此书的编写过程中提出的宝贵建议。最后感谢 Faith Osep 提供的行政支持。

Preface

The discovery that gene expression can be controlled via Watson-Crick base pairing of short RNAs to complementary target RNAs (RNA interference) has significantly advanced our understanding of eukaryotic gene regulation and function. The ability of short RNA sequences to modulate gene expression has provided a powerful new tool to study gene function and is about to revolutionize the treatment of disease. Endogenous small RNAs have been found in various organisms, including humans, mouse, flies, worms, fungi, and bacteria. In higher eukaryotes microRNAs may regulate as much as 50% of gene expression. The biogenesis and processing of these regulatory RNAs is an area of intense research interest since they act as cellular rheostats, subtly modulating gene expression.

Targeting cellular genes by exogenous introduction of small interfering RNAs (siRNAs) takes advantage of the endogenous posttranscriptional gene silencing (PTGS) mechanism. The siRNAs can be transfected directly into cells wherein they enter the RNA induced silencing complex (RISC) directly. Alternatively, they can be generated within the cell via gene expression by the use of vectors containing Pol II or Pol III promoters for expression. These RNAi triggers can be expressed in the form of microRNAs or as short hairpins (shRNAs), which are processed into 21-22 nt RNAi triggers. Transcriptional gene silencing (TGS) involves small RNAs complementary to promoter regions that recruit components of the RNAi machinery as well as chromatin remodeling proteins to promoter regions, resulting in transcriptional silencing. TGS has been demonstrated in lower eukaryotes, plants, and most recently in mammalian cells. In addition to the small RNA mechanisms in higher organisms, there are numerous small RNAs in prokaryotic organisms that posttranscriptionally regulate gene expression by a variety of different mechanisms, including Watson-Crick base pairing.

The chapters in this volume cover a wide variety of small RNA regulatory pathways in organisms ranging from bacteria to humans. The breadth of these regulatory pathways and their functional importance in the host organisms are also covered within the volume. Aside from the biological aspects of small RNA mediated regulation of gene expression, techniques for utilizing small RNAs to study gene function or as therapeutic modalities are also discussed. We believe that this volume captures the essence of the breadth and excitement surrounding the newly discovered regulatory roles of small RNAs.

Acknowledgments

We take this opportunity to acknowledge all the authors for their valuable contributions to the book and to the field of RNA in general. We are also grateful to our colleagues at City of Hope, Marieta Gencheva and Shikha Gaur, for their suggestions and advice throughout the course of this challenging project. Finally, we acknowledge the administrative support of Faith Osep.

About the Editors

Rajesh K. Gaur, Ph.D., received his doctorate in nucleic acids chemistry at the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology and Department of Chemistry, University of Delhi, working under the guidance of M. Atreyi and K.C. Gupta. He spent two years at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), Heidelberg, Germany, and Christian-Albrechts-Universität, Kiel, Germany, as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, working with Guido Krupp and Brian Sproat. He then moved to the United States in 1993, where he obtained postdoctoral training in RNA splicing in the laboratories of Tom Maniatis at Harvard University and Michael Green at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Molecular Biology, Beckman Research Institute of the City of Hope. His research interests include the regulation of alternative splicing in breast cancer and designing of novel RNA-based approaches to target disease state.

John J. Rossi, Ph.D., received his doctorate in microbial genetics from the University of Connecticut at Storrs. For postdoctoral training, Dr. Rossi went to Brown University School of Medicine in Providence, Rhode Island, where he trained under Dr. Arthur Landy, studying the genomic structure, organization, and expression of two gene clusters encoding tRNA-tyrosine in *E. coli*. This research led to the first observation that a tRNA gene cluster was cotranscribed with and subsequently processed from an mRNA. In 1980 Dr. Rossi moved to the Department of Molecular Genetics at the City of Hope in Duarte, California. Dr. Rossi's laboratory began to develop and test the idea of utilizing catalytic RNAs or ribozymes for inhibition of HIV infection. This research program has led to two clinical trials in which ribozyme genes have been transduced into hematopoietic stem cells for autologous transplant in HIV-infected individuals. Work in the laboratory continues to focus upon enhancing the intracellular efficacy of ribozymes and RNA decoys via RNA trafficking and target colocalization approaches. At present a large percentage of the research effort of the lab is focused upon the biology and utilization of small interfering RNAs, or siRNA. This program has led to a first of its kind, a hematopoietic stem cell clinical trial using a triple gene therapy approach in AIDS/lymphoma patients.

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