

# Next-Generation Genome Sequencing

Towards Personalized Medicine



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# **Next-Generation Genome Sequencing**

Towards Personalized Medicine

Edited by Michal Janitz







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# Next-Generation Genome Sequencing

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#### Preface

The development of the rapid DNA sequencing method by Fred Sanger and coworkers 30 years ago initiated the process of deciphering genes and eventually entire genomes. The rapidly growing demand for throughput, with the ultimate goal of deciphering the human genome, led to substantial improvements in the technique and was exemplified in automated capillary electrophoresis. Until recently, genome sequencing was performed in large sequencing centers with high automation and many personnel. Even when DNA sequencing reached the industrial scale, it still cost \$10 million and 10 years to generate a draft of the human genome. With the price so high, population-based phenotype-genotype linkage studies were small in scale, and it was hard to translate research into statistically robust conclusions. As a consequence, most presumed associations between diseases and particular genes have not stood up to scientific scrutiny. The commercialization of the first massive parallel pyrosequencing technique in 2004 created the first opportunity for the costeffective and rapid deciphering of virtually any genome. Shortly thereafter, other vendors entered the market, bringing with them a vision of sequencing the human genome for only \$1000.

This is the topic of this book. We hope to provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of next-generation sequencing (NGS) techniques and highlight their impact on genome research, human health, and the social perception of genetics.

There is no clear definition of next-generation sequencing. There are, however, several features that distinguish NGS platforms from conventional capillary-based sequencing. First, it has the ability to generate millions of sequence reads rather than only 96 at a time. This process allows the sequencing of an entire bacterial genome within hours or of the *Drosophila melanogaster* genome within days instead of months. Furthermore, conventional vector-based cloning, typical in capillary sequencing, became obsolete and was replaced by direct subjecting of fragmented, and usually, amplified DNA for sequencing. Another distinctive feature of NGS are the sequenced products themselves, which are short-length reads between 30 and 400 bp. The limited read length has substantial impact on certain NGS applications, for instance, *de novo* sequencing. The following chapters will present several innovative approaches, which will combine the obvious advantages of NGS, such as

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throughput and simplified template preparation, with novel challenging features in terms of short read assembly and large sequencing data storage and processing.

This book arose from the recognition of the need to understand next-generation sequencing techniques and their role in future genome research by the broad scientific community. The chapters have been written by the researchers and inventors who participated in the development and applications of NGS technologies. The first chapter of the book contains an excellent overview on Sanger DNA sequencing, which still remains the gold standard in life sciences. The second and fourth parts of the book describe the commercially available and emerging sequencing platforms, respectively. The third part consists of two chapters highlighting the bottlenecks in the current sequencing: data storage and processing. Once the NGS techniques became available, an unprecedented explosion of applications could be observed. The fifth part of this book provides the reader with the insight into the ever-increasing NGS applications in genome research. Some of these applications are enhancements of existing techniques. Many others are unique to next-generation sequencing marked by its robustness and cost effectiveness, with the prominent example of paleogenomics.

The versatility and robustness of the NGS techniques in studying genes in the context of the entire genome surprised many scientists, including myself. We know that the processes that cause most diseases are not the result of a single genetic failure. Instead, they involve the interaction of hundreds if not thousands of genes. In the past, geneticists have concentrated on genes that have large individual effects when they go wrong, because those effects are so easy to spot. However, combinations of genes that are not individually significant may also be important. It has become evident that next-generation sequencing techniques, together with systems biology approaches, could elucidate the complex dependences of regulatory networks not only on the level of a single cell or tissue but also on the level of the whole organism.

We hope that this book will enrich the understanding of the dramatic changes in genome exploration and its impact not only on research itself but also on many aspects of our life, including healthcare policy, medical diagnostics, and treatment. The best example comes from the field of consumer genomics. Consumer genomics promises to inform people of their risks of developing ailments such as heart disease or cancer; it can even advise its customers how much coffee they can safely drink. This information is retrieved from the correlation of the single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) pattern of the individual with the SNP haplotype linked to a particular disease. Recent public discussions on the challenges posed by the availability of personal genome information have revealed a new perception of genomic information and its uses. For the first time, a desire to understand the genome has become important and relevant to people outside of the scientific community. In addition to the benefits of having access to genetic information, the ethical and legal risks of making this information available are emerging. The last part of the book introduces the reader to the debate, which will only intensify in the years to come.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the contributors for their extraordinary effort to present these fascinating technologies and their applications in genome exploration in such a clear and comprehensive way. I also extend my thanks to Professor Hans Lehrach for his constant support.

Berlin, July 2008

Michal Janitz

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### **Contents**

Preface	XIII	
List of C	ontributors	XVII

Part	One	Sanger	DNA	Sequencing	1
	0	Junger	DIAM	Sequencing	1

1	Sanger DNA Sequencing 3
	Artem E. Men, Peter Wilson, Kirby Siemering, and Susan Forrest
1.1	The Basics of Sanger Sequencing 3
1.2	Into the Human Genome Project (HGP) and Beyond 6
1.3	Limitations and Future Opportunities 7
1.4	Bioinformatics Holds the Key 8
1.5	Where to Next? 9
	References 10

# Part Two Next-Generation Sequencing: Toward Personalized Medicine 13

2	Illumina Genome Analyzer II System 15
	Abizar Lakdawalla and Harper VanSteenhouse
2.1	Library Preparation 15
2.2	Cluster Creation 17
2.3	Sequencing 19
2.4	Paired End Reads 19
2.5	Data Analysis 20
2.6	Applications 21
2.6.1	Genome Sequencing Applications 23
2.6.2	Epigenomics 23
2.6.3	Transcriptome Analysis 23
2.6.4	Protein–Nucleic Acid Interactions 26
2.6.5	Multiplexing 26

Next-Generation Genome Sequencing: Towards Personalized Medicine. Edited by Michal Janitz Copyright © 2008 WILEY-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co. KGaA, Weinheim ISBN: 978-3-527-32090-5

VI	Contents	
	2.7	Conclusions 26
		References 27
	3	Applied Biosystems SOLiD <sup>™</sup> System: Ligation-Based Sequencing 29
		Vicki Pandey, Robert C. Nutter, and Ellen Prediger
	3.1	Introduction 29
	3.2	Overview of the SOLiD <sup>TM</sup> System 29
	3.2.1	The SOLiD Platform 30
	3.2.1.1	Library Generation 30
	3.2.1.2	Emulsion PCR 31
	3.2.1.3	Bead Purification 31
	3.2.1.4	Bead Deposition 33
	3.2.1.5	Sequencing by Ligation 33
	3.2.1.6	Color Space and Base Calling 35
	3.3	SOLiD <sup>TM</sup> System Applications 35
	3.3.1	Large-Scale Resequencing 35
	3.3.2	De novo Sequencing 35
	3.3.3	Tag-Based Gene Expression 36
	3.3.4	Whole Transcriptome Analysis 37
	3.3.5	Whole Genome Resequencing 38
	3.3.6	Whole Genome Methylation Analysis 38
	3.3.7	Chromatin Immunoprecipitation 39
	3.3.8	MicroRNA Discovery 39
	3.3.9	Other Tag-Based Applications 40
	3.4	Conclusions 40
		References 41
	4	The Next-Generation Genome Sequencing: 454/Roche GS FLX 43
		Lei Du and Michael Egholm
	4.1	Introduction 43
	4.2	Technology Overview 44
	4.3	Software and Bioinformatics 47
	4.3.1	Whole Genome Assembly 47
	4.3.2	Resequencing and Mutation Detection 47
	4.3.3	Ultradeep Sequencing 47
	4.4	Research Applications 49
		References 51
	5	Polony Sequencing: History, Technology, and Applications 57
		Jeremy S. Edwards
	5.1	Introduction 57
	5.2	History of Polony Sequencing 57
	5.2.1	Introduction to Polonies 58
	5.2.2	Evolution of Polonies 59
	5.2.3	Current Applications of the Original Polonies Method 61

Current Applications of the Original Polonies Method 61

5.5	Polony Sequencing 62
5.3.1	Constructing a Sequencing Library 63
5.3.2	Loading the Library onto Beads Using BEAMing 64
5.3.3	Immobilizing the Beads in the Sequencing Flow Cell 65
5.3.4	Sequencing 66
5.3.5	Data Analysis 68
5.4	Applications 69
5.4.1	Human Genome Sequencing 69
5.4.1.1	Requirements of an Ultrahigh-Throughput Sequencing
	Technology 69
5.4.2	Challenges of Sequencing the Human Genome with Short Reads 70
5.4.2.1	Chromosome Sequencing 72
5.4.2.2	Exon Sequencing 72
5.4.2.3	Impact on Medicine 72
5.4.3	Transcript Profiling 73
5.4.3.1	Polony SAGE 73
5.4.3.2	Transcript Characterization with Polony SAGE 73
5.4.3.3	Digital Karyotyping 75
5.5	Conclusions 75
	References 76
6	Next-Congration Sequence Data Analysis 70
6	Next-Generation Sequence Data Analysis 79
6.1	Leonard N. Bloksberg
6.1	Why Next-Generation Sequence Analysis is Different? 79
6.2	Strategies for Sequence Searching 80
6.3	What is a "Hit," and Why it Matters for NGS? 82
6.3.1 6.3.2	Word Hit 82
6.3.3	Segment Hit 82
6.3.4	SeqID Hit or Gene Hit 82 Region Hit 82
6.3.5	
6.3.6	
6.4	Synteny Hit 83  Scoring: Why it is Different for NGS2 63
6.5	Scoring: Why it is Different for NGS? 83
6.6	Strategies for NGS Sequence Analysis 84
0.0	Subsequent Data Analysis 86 References 87
	References 8/
7	DNASTAR's Next-Generation Software 89
	Tim Durfee and Thomas E. Schwei
7.1	Personalized Genomics and Personalized Medicine 89
7.2	Next-Generation DNA Sequencing as the Means to Personalized Genomics 89

VIII	Contents	
	7.3 7.4	Strengths of Various Platforms 90 The Computational Challenge 90
	7.5	DNASTAR's Next-Generation Software Solution 91
	7.6	Conclusions 94
		References 94
	Part Four	Emerging Sequencing Technologies 95
	8	Real-Time DNA Sequencing 97 Susan H. Hardin
	8.1	Whole Genome Analysis 97
	8.2	Personalized Medicine and Pharmacogenomics 97
	8.3	Biodefense, Forensics, DNA Testing, and Basic Research 98
	8.4	Simple and Elegant: Real-Time DNA Sequencing 98 References 101
		References 101
	9	Direct Sequencing by TEM of Z-Substituted DNA Molecules 103
		William K. Thomas and William Glover
	9.1	Introduction 103
	9.2	Logic of Approach 104
	9.3	Identification of Optimal Modified Nucleotides for TEM Visual
		Resolution of DNA Sequences Independent of
		Polymerization 106
	9.4	TEM Substrates and Visualization 107
	9.5	Incorporation of Z-Tagged Nucleotides by Polymerases 108
	9.6	Current and New Sequencing Technology 109
	9.7	Accuracy 111
	9.8	Advantages of ZSG's Proposed DNA Sequencing Technology 111
	9.9	Advantages of Significantly Longer Read Lengths 112
	9.9.1 9.9.2	De novo Genome Sequencing 112
	9.9.2	Transcriptome Analysis 113 Haplotype Analysis 114
	9.9.9	Haplotype Analysis 114 References 115
		References 115
	10	A Single DNA Molecule Barcoding Method with Applications in DNA Mapping and Molecular Haplotyping 117  Ming Xiao and Pui-Yan Kwok
	10.1	Introduction 117
	10.2	Critical Techniques in the Single DNA Molecule Barcoding
		Method 118
	10.3	Single DNA Molecule Mapping 120
	10.3.1	Sequence Motif Maps of Lambda DNA 121
	10.3.2	Identification of Several Viral Genomes 123

10.4	Molecular Haplotyping 124
10.4.1	Localization of Polymorphic Alleles Tagged by Single Fluorescent Dye
	Molecules Along DNA Backbones 125
10.4.2	Direct Haplotype Determination of a Human DNA Sample 127
10.5	Discussion 129
	References 131
11	Optical Sequencing: Acquisition from Mapped Single-Molecule
	Templates 133
	Shiguo Zhou, Louise Pape, and David C. Schwartz
11.1	Introduction 133
11.2	The Optical Sequencing Cycle 135
11.2.1	Optical Sequencing Microscope and Reaction Chamber Setup 137
11.2.1.1	Microscope Setup 137
11.2.1.2	Optical Sequencing Reaction Chamber Setup 137
11.2.2	Surface Preparation 137
11.2.3	Genomic DNA Mounting/Overlay 139
11.2.4	Nicking Large Double-Stranded Template DNA Molecules 139
11.2.4.1	Nicking Mounted DNA Template Molecules 139
11.2.4.2	Gapping Nick Sites 139
11.2.5	Optical Sequencing Reactions 140
11.2.5.1	Basic Process 140
11.2.5.2	Choices of DNA Polymerases 140
11.2.5.3	Polymerase-Mediated Incorporations of Multiple Fluorochrome-Labeled
	Nucleotides 140
11.2.5.4	Washes to Remove Unincorporated Labeled Free Nucleotides and
	Reduce Background 141
11.2.6	Imaging Fluorescent Nucleotide Additions and Counting Incorporated
	Fluorochromes 141
11.2.7	Photobleaching 147
11.2.8	Demonstration of Optical Sequencing Cycles 147
11.3	Future of Optical Sequencing 148
	References 149
12	Microchip-Based Sanger Sequencing of DNA 153
	Ryan E. Forster, Christopher P. Fredlake, and Annelise E. Barron
12.1	Integrated Microfluidic Devices for Genomic Analysis 154
12.2	Improved Polymer Networks for Sanger Sequencing on
	Microfluidic Devices 156
12.2.1	Poly(N,N-dimethylacrylamide) Networks for DNA
	Sequencing 156
12.2.2	Hydrophobically Modified Polyacrylamides for DNA Sequencing 159
12.3	Conclusions 160
	References 160