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Contents

Abbreviations in parenthesis refer to the following sections: (E) Editorial; (R) Review article; (O) Original investigation; (SC) Short communication; (CC) Clinical case report; (CO) Case observed; (RG) Rare genetic variant register; (DV) DNA variants; (L) Letter to the editors

- Abel L → Sefiani A
Abu Srair H → Bergada I
Adinolfi M → Kozma R
Agematsu K, Koike K, Morosawa H, Nakahori Y, Nakagome Y, Akabane T: Chondrodysplasia punctata with X;Y translocation (CC) 105
Ahti H, Palotie A, Peltonen L: *Bgl*III RFLPs in the COL1A2 gene in the Finnish population (L) 110
Akabane T → Agematsu K
Akaboshi I → Indo Y
Alembik Y → Hanauer A
Almeida VM → Rocha J
Al Roomi L → Tolmie JL
Altland K → Saraiva MJM
Altman R → Levcovitz H
Amorim A → Rocha J
Antonarakis SE, Oettgen P, Chakravarti A, Halloran SL, Hudson RR, Feisee L, Karathanasis SK: DNA polymorphism haplotypes of the human apolipoprotein APOA1-APOC3-APOA4 gene cluster (O) 265
Antonarakis SE → Youssoufian H
Anvret M → Johnson K
Armson BA → Münke M
Arveiler B → Hanauer A
Assum G → Neidlinger C
Aten JA → Hout AH van der
d'Azzo A → Strisciuglio P
Bacchus C, Buselmaier W: Blastomere karyotyping and transfer of chromosomally selected embryos. Implications for the production of specific animal models and human prenatal diagnosis (O) 333
Back E → Hausmann C
Bakker M → Pronk JC
Banzhoff A → Saraiva MJM
Bartels I, Lindemann A: Maternal levels of pregnancy-specific β_1 -glycoprotein (SP-1) are elevated in pregnancies affected by Down's syndrome (O) 46
Bartlett R → Johnson K
Batstone P → Tolmie JL
Bauer R → Gebhart E
Baumann P → Eap CB
Benke PJ → Levcovitz H
Bennekom CA van → Brunner HG
Bergada I, Schiffrin A, Abu Srair H, Kaplan P, Dornan J, Goltzman D, Hendy GN: Kenny syndrome: description of additional abnormalities and molecular studies (O) 39
Berger GMB → Henderson HE
Berger M → Gedschold J
Bernardi F → Citarella F
Bernardi F, Marchetti G, Volinia S, Patracchini P, Casonato A, Girolami A, Conconi F: A frequent factor XII gene mutation in Hageman trait (O) 149
Bernini LF → Foode R
Birg F → Voelckel MA
Blanquet V, Garreau F, Chenivresse X, Brechot C, Turleau C: Regional mapping to 4q32.1 by in situ hybridization of a DNA domain rearranged in human liver cancer (O) 274
Bobrow M → Zahed L
Bohler MC → Saint-Basile G de
Boltshauser E, Schinzel A, Wichmann W, Haller D, Valavanis A: Pelizaeus-Merzbacher disease: identification of heterozygotes with magnetic resonance imaging? (SC) 393
Bomben G → Stassen HH
Borden J → Cremer T
Borden J → Lichter P
Boucheix C → Nguyen VC
Boucher CAB → Pronk JC
Boyd E → Tolmie JL
Brand N → Mattei M-G
Brechot C → Blanquet V
Brock DJH → Strain L
Broek MH van den → Fodde R
Brown CJ, Mahtani MM, Willard HF: Genetic mapping of four DNA markers (DXS16, DXS43, DXS85, and DXS143) from the p22 region of the human X chromosome (SC) 296
Brown LG → Münke M
Brunner H → Smeets B
Brunner HG, Bennekom CA van, Lambermon EMM, Oei TL, Cremers CWRJ, Wieringa B, Ropers H-H: The gene for X-linked progressive mixed deafness with perilymphatic gusher during stapes surgery (DFN3) is linked to PGK (O) 337
Brusa P → Kovacs G
Bucchini D → Michalova K
Bury J → Smit M
Buselmaier W → Bacchus C
Buys CHCM → Hout AH van der
Cappa F → D'Alessandro E
Cartron J → Saint-Basile G de
Casonato A → Bernardi F
Cassiman JJ → Lukusa T
Chakravarti A → Antonarakis SE
Chambon P → Mattei M-G
Chenivresse X → Blanquet V
Chertok HA → Levcovitz H
Citarella F, Tripodi M, Fantoni A, Bernardi F, Romeo G, Rocchi M: Assignment of human coagulation factor XII (fXII) to chromosome 5 by cDNA hybridization to DNA from somatic cell hybrids (SC) 397
Clark D → Howard PJ
Cohn CMG → Cohn SJ
Cohn SJ, Cohn CMG, Jensen AR: Myopia and intelligence: a pleiotropic relationship? (O) 53
Conconi F → Bernardi F
Connor JM → Tolmie JL
Costa PP → Saraiva MJM
Couronne F → Formiga L de F
Cowell JK, Rutland P, Hungerford J, Jay M: Deletion of chromosome region 13q14 is transmissible and does not always predispose to retinoblastoma (O) 43
Cragg SJ, Darke C, Worwood M: HLA class I and H ferritin gene polymorphisms in normal subjects and patients with haemochromatosis (O) 63
Craig I → Sefiani A
Cremer C → Dudin G
Cremer T → Dudin G
Cremer T → Lichter P
Cremer T, Lichter P, Borden J, Ward DC, Manuelidis L: Detection of chromosome aberrations in metaphase and interphase tumor cells by in situ hybridization using chromosome-specific library probes (O) 235
Cremers CWRJ → Brunner HG
Crusius B → Pronk JC
Cuendet C → Eap CB
Curtis A → Strain L
D'Alessandro E, De Mattei Vaccarella C, Lo Re ML, Cappa F, D'Alfonso A, Discepoli S, Della Penna MR, Del Porto G: Pericentric inversion of chromosome 19 in three families (CC) 203
D'Alfonso A → D'Alessandro E
Darke C → Cragg SJ
Dautigny A → Mattei M-G
Davies KE → Read AP
Dearlove J → Howard PJ
Dejean A → Mattei M-G
Della Penna MR → D'Alessandro E
Del Porto G → D'Alessandro E
De Mattei Vaccarella C → D'Alessandro E
Deminatti MM → Formiga L de F
Diaz E → Dudin G
Diaz de Bustamante A → Pinel I
Dietrich C → Neidlinger C
Discepoli S → D'Alessandro E
Djaldetti M → Shabtai F
Donald JA, Lammi A, Trent RJ: Hemoglobin F production in heterocellular hereditary persistence of fetal hemoglobin and its linkage to the β globin gene complex (O) 69
Donlon TA: Similar molecular deletions on chromosome 15q11.2 are encountered in both the Prader-Willi and Angelman syndromes (O) 322
Dornan J → Bergada I
Du CS, Xu YK, Hua XY, Wu QL, Liu LB: Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase variants and their frequency in Guangdong, China (O) 385
Dudin G, Steegmayer EW, Vogt P, Schnitzer H, Diaz E, Howell KE, Cremer T, Cremer C: Sorting of chromosomes by magnetic separation (O) 111
Dücker M → Krawczak M
Dufier JL → Saint-Basile G de
Eap CB, Cuendet C, Baumann P: Orosomucoid (alpha-1 acid glycoprotein) phenotyping by use of immobilized pH gradients with 8 M urea and immunoblotting. A new variant encountered in a population study (O) 183
Eibel JL → Formiga L de F

- Eichenlaub-Ritter U, Stahl A, Luciani JM: The microtubular cytoskeleton and chromosomes of unfertilized human oocytes aged in vitro (O) 259
- Emanuel BS → Münke M
Endo F → Indo Y
Engel W → Krawczak M
Eriksson AW → Pronk JC
Estivill X → Stanier P
- Fantoni A → Citarella F
Fear C → Kozma R
Feisee L → Antonarakis SE
Felix V → Pinel I
Ferguson-Smith MA → Wirth B
Ferguson-Smith ME → Tolmie JL
Ferlini A → Saraiva MJM
Figura K v → Wirth B
Fischer A → Saint-Basile G de
Flatz G → Hundrieser J
Flechter MA → Levkovitz H
Flori E → Formiga L de F
Fodde R, Losekoot M, Broek MH van den, Oldenburg M, Rashida N, Schreuder A, Wijnen JT, Giordano PC, Nayudu NVS, Meera Khan P, Bernini LF: Prevalence and molecular heterogeneity of alfa+ thalassemia in two tribal populations from Andhra Pradesh, India (O) 157
- Formiga L → Hanauer A
Formiga L de F, Poenaru L, Couronne F, Flori E, Eibel JL, Deminatti MM, Savary JB, Lai JL, Gilgenkrantz S, Pierson M: Interstitial deletion of chromosome 15: two cases (CC) 401
- Forrest SM → Read AP
Frachet P → Nguyen VC
Frants R → Smit M
Frants RR → Pronk JC
Fraser N → Sefiani A
Frézal J → Nguyen VC
Frézal J → Sefiani A
Frossard PM → Masharani U
Frydman M → Sefiani A
Fryns J-P → Kleczkowska A
Fryns J-P → Moerman P
- Gal A → Wirth B
Garreau F → Blanquet V
Gebhart E, Bauer R, Raub U, Schinzel M, Ruprecht KW, Jonas JB: Spontaneous and induced chromosomal instability in Werner syndrome (O) 135
- Gedschold J, Szibor R, Kropf S, Berger M: Different numbers of maternal and paternal siblings of cystic fibrosis patients (SC) 399
- Giacanelli M → Romeo G
Gilgenkrantz S → Formiga L de F
Gilgenkrantz S → Hanauer A
Gilgenkrantz S → Sefiani A
Gillard EF → Wirth B
Giordano PC → Fodde R
Girolami A → Bernardi F
Giudice C → Strisciuglio P
Goltzman D → Bergada I
Goudsmit J → Pronk JC
Griscelli C → Saint-Basile G de
Gross MS → Nguyen VC
- Hamaguchi H → Yamakawa K
Hanauer A, Alembik Y, Arveiler B, Formiga L, Gilgenkrantz S, Mandel JL: Genetic mapping of anhidrotic ectodermal dysplasia: DXS159, a closely linked proximal marker (O) 177
- Harper PS → Johnson K
Harris R → Read AP
Hattori N → Yamakawa K
Hausmann C, Back E, Wolff G, Voiculescu I: Deletion 11q23.3 without familial predisposition (L) 205
- Havekes L → Smit M
Henderson HE, Berger GMB, Marais AD: A new LDL receptor gene deletion mutation in the South African population (O) 371
- Hendy GN → Bergada I
Herrmann FH → Wirth B
Heuertz S → Sefiani A
Heyden H van der → Knoers N
Hirayama K → Naritomi K
Hochsattel R → Neidlinger C
Holloway S → Strain L
Hoogeveen AT → Strisciuglio P
Hori T → Takahashi E
Hors-Cayla MC → Sefiani A
Hout AH van der, Veen AY van der, Aten JA, Buys CHCM: Localization of DNA probes with tight linkage to the cystic fibrosis locus by in situ hybridization using fibroblasts with a 7q22 deletion (O) 161
- Howard PJ, Clark D, Dearlove J: Retinal/macular pigmentation in conjunction with ring 14 chromosome (O) 140
- Howard-Peebles PN → Phelan MC
Howell KE → Dudin G
Hua XY → Du CS
Hudson RR → Antonarakis SE
Hundrieser J, Sanguansermsri T, Papp T, Laig M, Flatz G: β -Globin gene linked DNA haplotypes and frameworks in three South-East Asian populations (O) 90
- Hungerford J → Cowell JK
Hyakuna N → Naritomi K
- Imamura T → Naritomi Y
Indo Y, Akaboshi I, Nobukuni Y, Endo F, Matsuda I: Maple syrup urine disease: a possible biochemical basis for the clinical heterogeneity (O) 6
- Ishihara T → Takahashi E
Iwamura Y → Yamakawa K
- Jami J → Michalova K
Jay M → Cowell JK
Jegou-Foubert C → Nguyen VC
Jensen AR → Cohn SJ
Johnson K, Nimmo E, Jones P, Weiss M, Savontaus M-L, Anvret M, Bartlett R, Roses A, Shaw D, Harpel PS, Koivunen-Tapio E, Williamson R: Segregation of linked probes to myotonic dystrophy in a family demonstrating that 152 and APOC2 are on the same side of DM on 19q (O) 379
- Jollès P → Mattei M-G
Jonas JB → Gebhart E
Jones P → Johnson K
- Kähkönen M: Population cytogenetics of folate-sensitive fragile sites. I. Common fragile sites (O) 344
- Kähkönen M → Rekilä A-M
- Kalsheker NA, Watkins GL: Heterozygosity and localisation of normal allelic fragments for an alpha₁-antitrypsin homologous sequence (DV) 108
- Kaneko Y → Takahashi E
Kaplan P → Bergada I
Karathanasis SK → Antonarakis SE
Kasper CK → Youssoufian H
Kawai K → Yamakawa K
Kazazian HH Jr → Youssoufian H
Kenwick SJ → Read AP
Klar D → Shabtai F
Klasen E → Smit M
Kleczkowska A, Fryns J-P, Van den Berghe H: X-chromosome polysomy in the male. The Leuven experience 1966-1987 (O) 16
- Kleczkowska A → Moerman P
Klotz G → Neidlinger C
Knijff P de → Smit M
Knoers N, Heyden H van der, Oost BA van, Ropers HH, Monnens L, Willems J: Nephrogenic diabetes insipidus: close linkage with markers from the distal long arm of the human X chromosome (O) 31
- Koike K → Agematsu K
Koivunen-Tapio E → Johnson K
Konecki DS → Krawczak M
Kovacs G, Brusa P: Recurrent genomic rearrangements are not at the fragile sites on chromosomes 3 and 5 in human renal cell carcinomas (SC) 99
- Kozma R, Fear C, Adinolfi M: Fluorescence in situ hybridization and Y ring chromosome (SC) 95
- Krawczak M, Konecki DS, Schmidtke J, Dück M, Engel W, Nützenadel W, Trefz FK: Allelic association of the cystic fibrosis locus and two DNA markers, XV2c and KM19, in 55 German families (O) 78
- Krone W → Neidlinger C
Kropf S → Gedschold J
Kruse TA → Sefiani A
- Labuda D → Sefiani A
Laffage M → Pellissier MC
Lai JL → Formiga L de F
Laig M → Hundrieser J
Lambermon EMM → Brunner HG
Lammi A → Donald JA
László A → Selyes A
Lauweryns J → Moerman P
Laverigne L → Sefiani A
Leão M → Rocha J
Leeuwen-Cornelisse I van → Schroeff JG van der
Leisti J → Rekilä A-M
Lench N → Stanier P
Levkovitz H, Fletcher MA, Phillips P, Chertok HA, Altman R, Benke PJ: Segregation of lymphocyte low-molecular-weight DNA and antinuclear-antibodies in a family with systemic lupus erythematosus in first cousins (O) 253
- Lewinski UH → Shabtai F
Li X → Yan Z-A
Lichter P → Cremer T
Lichter P, Cremer T, Borden J, Manuelidis L, Ward DC: Delineation of individual human chromosomes in metaphase and interphase cells by in situ suppression hybridization using recombinant DNA libraries (O) 224
- Haeringen A van → Schroeff JG van der
Halbrecht I → Shabtai F
Haller D → Boltshauser E
Halloran SL → Antonarakis SE

- Liguori M → Romeo G
Lijoi S → Strisciuglio P
Lim DW → Masharani U
Lindemann A → Bartels I
Liu LB → Du CS
Lo Re ML → D'Alessandro E
Losekoot M → Fodde R
Luciani JM → Eichenlaub-Ritter U
Lukusa T, Vercauteren P, Van den Berghe H, Cassiman JJ: SCE variability in lymphocytes and fibroblasts. A controlled study (O) 117
Lykken DT → Stassen HH
- Mahtani MM → Brown CJ
Mandel JL → Hanauer A
Manuelidis L → Cremer T
Manuelidis L → Lichter P
Marais AD → Henderson HE
Marchetti G → Bernardi F
Marchio A → Mattei M-G
Marguerie G → Nguyen VC
Martin RH: Cytogenetic analysis of sperm from a male heterozygous for a 13:14 Robertsonian translocation (O) 357
Martinez-Frías ML → Pinel I
Masharani U, Frossard PM: *MspI* and *HindIII* restriction fragment length polymorphisms at the human Na,K-ATPase β -subunit (ATP1B) gene locus (SC) 308
Masharani U, Nakashima PF, Lim DW, Frossard PM: *NsiI* and *ScaI* restriction fragment length polymorphisms at the atrial natriuretic peptides (ANP) gene locus (SC) 307
Matsuda I → Indo Y
Matsumoto H: Characteristics of Mongoloid and neighboring populations based on the genetic markers of human immunoglobulins (R) 207
Mattei J-F → Mattei M-G
Mattei J-F → Pellissier MC
Mattei J-F → Voelckel MA
Mattei M-G, Dautigny A, Pham-Dinh D, Passage E, Mattei J-F, Jollès P: The gene encoding the large human neurofilament subunit (NF-H) maps to the q121-q131 region on human chromosome 22 (SC) 293
Mattei M-G → Pellissier MC
Mattei M-G, Petkovich M, Mattei J-F, Brand N, Chambon P: Mapping of the human retinoic acid receptor to the q21 band of chromosome 17 (SC) 186
Mattei M-G, Thé H de, Mattei J-F, Marchio A, Tiollais P, Dejean A: Assignment of the human *hap* retinoic acid receptor RAR β gene to the p24 band of chromosome 3 (SC) 189
Mattei M-G → Voelckel MA
Meera Khan P → Fodde R
Melançon S → Sefiani A
Mennie M → Strain L
Mennuti MT → Münke M
Meroz A → Shabtai F
Meyers-Wallen VN, Patterson DF: XX sex reversal in the American cocker spaniel dog: phenotypic expression and inheritance (O) 23
Michalova K, Bucchini D, Ripoche M-A, Pictet R, Jami J: Chromosome localization of the human insulin gene in transgenic mouse lines (O) 247
- Millington-Ward AM, Pearson PL: Use of restriction fragment length polymorphic probes in the analysis of Down's syndrome trisomy (O) 362
Minamihisamatsu M → Takahashi E
Mitchell G → Sefiani A
Moerman P, Frys J-P, Steen K van der, Kleczkowska A, Lauweryns J: The pathology of trisomy 13 syndrome. A study of 12 cases (O) 349
Monnens L → Knoers N
Morosawa H → Agematsu K
Mountford RC → Read AP
Münke M, Page DC, Brown LG, Armsom BA, Zackai EH, Mennuti MT, Emanuel BS: Molecular detection of a Yp/18 translocation in a 45,X holoprosencephalic male (O) 219
Murata M → Takahashi E
Murer-Orlando M → Zahed L
- Naito Y → Naritomi Y
Nakagome Y → Agematsu K
Nakahori Y → Agematsu K
Nakashima HF → Naritomi Y
Nakashima PF → Masharani U
Nanba E, Tsuji A, Omura K, Suzuki Y: Galactosialidosis: molecular heterogeneity in biosynthesis and processing of protective protein for β -galactosidase (O) 329
Naritomi K, Hyakuna N, Suzuki Y, Orii T, Hirayama K: Zellweger syndrome and a microdeletion of the proximal long arm of chromosome 7 (CC) 201
Naritomi Y, Naito Y, Nakashima H, Yokota E, Imamura T: A substitution of cytosine for thymine in codon 110 of the human β -globin gene is a novel cause of β -thalassemia phenotypes (O) 11
Nayudu NVS → Fodde R
Neidlinger C, Assum G, Krone W, Dietrich C, Hochsattel R, Klotz G: Increased amounts of small polydisperse circular DNA (spcDNA) in angiofibroma-derived cell cultures from patients with tuberous sclerosis (TS) (Erratum) 315
Neugebauer M → Wirth B
N'Guyen C → Voelckel MA
Nguyen VC, Uzan G, Gross MS, Jegou-Foubert C, Frachet P, Boucheix C, Marguerie G, Frézal J: Assignment of human platelet GP2B (GPIIb) gene to chromosome 17, region q21.1-q21.3 (O) 389
Nikoskelainen EK → Vilkki J
Nimmo E → Johnson K
Nobukuni Y → Indo Y
Nützenadel W → Krawczak M
- Oei TL → Brunner HG
Oettgen P → Antonarakis SE
Okafuji T → Yamakawa K
Oldenburg M → Fodde R
Oliveira JP → Rocha J
Omura K → Nanba E
Oost BA van → Knoers N
Orii T → Naritomi Y
Orkin SH → Saint-Basile G de
- Page DC → Münke M
Page DC → Phelan MC
Palotie A → Ahti H
Papp T → Hundrieser J
Parenti G → Strisciuglio P
- Passage E → Mattei M-G
Passage E → Pellissier MC
Patraccini P → Bernardi F
Patterson DF → Meyers-Wallen VN
Pearson PL → Millington-Ward AM
Pellissier MC, Laffage M, Philip N, Passage E, Mattei M-G, Mattei J-F: Trisomy 21q223 and Down's phenotype correlation evidenced by in situ hybridization (O) 277
Peltonen L → Ahti H
Pereira MS → Rocha J
Peter MO → Sefiani A
Petkovich M → Mattei M-G
Pham-Dinh D → Mattei M-G
Phelan MC, Prouty LA, Stevenson RE, Howard-Peebles PN, Page DC, Schwartz CE: The parental origin and mechanism of formation of three dicentric X chromosomes (O) 81
Philip N → Pellissier MC
Philip N → Voelckel MA
Phillips DG → Youssoufian H
Phillips P → Levkovitch H
Pictet R → Michalova K
Pierson M → Formiga L de F
Pinel I, Diaz de Bustamante A, Urioste M, Felix V, Ureta A, Martinez-Frías ML: An unusual variant of chromosome 16. Two new cases. (CC) 194
Plasmati R → Saraiva MJM
Poddighe J → Smeets B
Poenaru L → Formiga L de F
Pronk JC, Frants RR, Crusius B, Eriksson AW, Wolf F de, Boucher CAB, Bakker M, Goudsmit J: No predictive value of GC phenotypes for HIV infection and progression to AIDS (O) 181
Propping P → Stassen HH
Prouty LA → Phelan MC
- Rashida N → Fodde R
Raub U → Gebhart E
Read AP, Mountford RC, Forrest SM, Kenwick SJ, Davies KE, Harris R: Patterns of exon deletions in Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophy (O) 152
Rekilä A-M, Väisänen M-L, Kähkönen M, Leisti J, Winqvist R: A new RFLP with *StuI* and probe cX55.7 (DXS105) and its usefulness in carrier analysis of fragile X syndrome (SC) 193
Ripoche M-A → Michalova K
Rocchi M → Citarella F
Rocchi M → Romeo G
Rocha J, Amorim A, Almeida VM, Oliveira JP, Leão M, Tavares MC, Pereira MS, Vidal-Pinheiro L: Gene dosage evidence for the regional assignment of GPT (glutamate-pyruvate transaminase; E.C.2.6.1.2) locus to 8q24.2→8qter (SC) 299
Romeo G → Citarella F
Romeo G, Roncuzzi L, Sangiorgi S, Giacaneli M, Liguori M, Tassarolo D, Rocchi M: Mapping of the Emery-Dreifuss gene through reconstruction of crossover points in two Italian pedigrees (O) 59
Romeo G → Saraiva MJM
Roncuzzi L → Romeo G
Ropers H-H → Brunner HG
Ropers H-H → Knoers N
Ropers H-H → Smeets B
Rosario Almeida M do → Saraiva MJM
Roses A → Johnson K

- Rosseneu M → Smit M
 Rubboli G → Saraiva MJM
 Ruprecht KW → Gebhart E
 Russell DW → Yamakawa K
 Rutland P → Cowell JK
- Saint-Basile G de, Bohler MC, Fischer A, Cartron J, Dufier JL, Griscelli C, Orkin SH: Xp21 DNA microdeletion in a patient with chronic granulomatous disease, retinitis pigmentosa, and McLeod phenotype (O) 85
- Salvi F → Saraiva MJM
 Sangiorgi S → Romeo G
 Sanguansermisri T → Hundrieser J
 Saraiva MJM, Costa PP, Rosario Almeida M do, Banzhoff A, Altland K, Ferlini A, Rubboli G, Plasmati R, Tassinari CA, Romeo G, Salvi F: Familial amyloidotic polyneuropathy: transthyretin (pre-albumin) variants in kindreds of Italian origin (O) 341
- Satoh J → Yamakawa K
 Savary JB → Formiga L de F
 Savontaus M-L → Johnson K
 Savontaus M-L → Vilkki J
 Schempp W → Weber B
 Schiffrin A → Bergada I
 Schinzel A → Boltshauser E
 Schinzel M → Gebhart E
 Schmidtke J → Krawczak M
 Schmutz JL → Sefiani A
 Schnitzer H → Dudin G
 Schreuder A → Fodde R
 Schroeff JG van der, Leeuwen-Cornelisse I van, Haeringen A van, Went LN: Further evidence for localization of the gene of erythrokeratoderma variabilis (SC) 97
- Schwartz CE → Phelan MC
 Scriver CR → Smith DW
 Sefiani A, Sinnott D, Abel L, Szpiro-Tapia S, Heuert S, Craig I, Fraser N, Kruse TA, Frydman M, Peter MO, Schmutz JL, Gilgenkrantz S, Mitchell G, Frézal J, Melançon S, Lavergne L, Labuda D, Hors-Cayla MC: Linkage studies do not confirm the cytogenetic location of incontinentia pigmenti on Xp11 (O) 282
- Selyes A, László A: Miller-Dieker syndrome and monosomy 17p13: a new case (CC) 103
- Shabtai F, Lewinski UH, Meroz A, Klar D, Djaldetti M, Halbrecht I: Non-random chromosomal aberrations in a complex leukaemic clone of a Bloom's syndrome patient (CC) 311
- Shaw D → Johnson K
 Simell O → Smith DW
 Sinnott D → Sefiani A
 Smeets B, Poddighe J, Brunner H, Ropers H-H, Wieringa B: Tight linkage between myotonic dystrophy and apolipoprotein E genes revealed with allele-specific oligonucleotides (O) 49
- Smit M, Knijff P de, Rosseneu M, Bury J, Klasen E, Frants R, Havekes L: Apolipoprotein E polymorphism in the Netherlands and its effect on plasma lipid and apolipoprotein levels (O) 287
- Smith DW, Scriver CR, Simell O: Lysinuric protein intolerance mutation is not expressed in the plasma membrane of erythrocytes (SC) 395
- Stahl A → Eichenlaub-Ritter U
 Stanier P, Estivill X, Lench N, Williamson R: Detection of a rare-cutter RFLP in a CpG-rich island near the cystic fibrosis locus (SC) 309
- Stassen HH, Lykken DT, Propping P, Bomben G: Genetic determination of the human EEG. Survey of recent results on twins reared together and apart (O) 165
- Stegmayer EW → Dudin G
 Steen K van der → Moerman P
 Stein C → Wirth B
 Stevenson RE → Phelan MC
 Štirská K → Šubrt I
 Strain L, Curtis A, Mennie M, Holloway S, Brock DJH: Use of linkage disequilibrium data in prenatal diagnosis of cystic fibrosis (O) 75
- Strisciuglio P, Parenti G, Giudice C, Lijoi S, Hoogeveen AT, d'Azzo A: The presence of a reduced amount of 32-kd "protective" protein is a distinct biochemical finding in late infantile galactosialidosis (SC) 304
- Šubrt I, Štirská K: Familial translocation t(17;22), including the segregation in five consecutive abortuses (CC) 195
- Suzuki Y → Nanba E
 Suzuki Y → Naritomi K
 Szibor R → Gedschold J
 Szpiro-Tapia S → Sefiani A
- Takahashi E, Kaneko Y, Ishihara T, Minamihisamatsu M, Murata M, Hori T: A new rare distamycin A-inducible fragile site, fra(11)(p15.1), found in two acute nonlymphocytic leukemia (ANLL) patients with t(7;11)(p15-p13;p15) (O) 124
- Tassinari CA → Saraiva MJM
 Tavares MC → Rocha J
 Tessarolo D → Romeo G
 Thé H de → Mattei M-G
 Tiollais P → Mattei M-G
 Tolmie JL, Boyd E, Batstone P, Ferguson-Smith ME, Al Roomi L, Connor JM: Siblings with chromosome mosaicism, microcephaly, and growth retardation: the phenotypic expression of a human mitotic mutant? (CC) 197
- Trefz FK → Krawczak M
 Trent RJ → Donald JA
 Tripodi M → Citarella F
 Tsuchiya S → Yamakawa K
 Tsuji A → Nanba E
 Turleau C → Blanquet V
- Ureta A → Pinel I
 Urioste M → Pinel I
 Uzan G → Nguyen VC
- Väisänen M-L → Rekilä A-M
 Valavanis A → Boltshauser E
 Van den Berghe H → Kleczkowska A
 Van den Berghe H → Lukusa T
 Veen AY van der → Hout AH van der
 Vercauteren P → Lukusa T
 Vidal-Pinheiro L → Rocha J
 Vilkki J, Savontaus M, Nikoskelainen EK: Human mitochondrial DNA types in Finland (O) 317
- Voelckel MA, Mattei MG, N'Guyen C, Philip N, Birg F, Mattei JF: Dissociation between mental retardation and fragile site expression in a family with fragile X-linked mental retardation (O) 375
- Vogt P → Dudin G
 Voiculescu I → Hausmann C
 Volinia S → Bernardi F
- Ward DC → Cremer T
 Ward DC → Lichter P
 Watkins GL → Kalsheker NA
 Weber B, Weissenbach J, Schempp W: X-Y crossing over in the chimpanzee (SC) 301
- Weber W, Weidinger S: PI Scologne: a new variant in the alpha-1-antitrypsin system (SC) 102
- Weidinger S → Weber W
 Weiss M → Johnson K
 Weissenbach J → Weber B
 Went LN → Schroeff JG van der
 Wichmann W → Boltshauser E
 Wieringa B → Brunner HG
 Wieringa B → Smeets B
 Wijnen JT → Fodde R
 Willard HF → Brown CJ
 Willems J → Knoers N
 Williamson R → Johnson K
 Williamson R → Stanier P
 Winqvist R → Rekilä A-M
 Wirth B, Herrmann FH, Neugebauer M, Gillard EF, Wulff K, Stein C, Figura K v, Ferguson-Smith MA, Gal A: Linkage analysis in X-linked ichthyosis (steroid sulfatase deficiency) (SC) 191
- Wolf F de → Pronk JC
 Wolff G → Hausmann C
 Worwood M → Cragg SJ
 Wu QL → Du CS
 Wulff K → Wirth B
- Xu YK → Du CS
- Yamakawa K, Okafuji T, Iwamura Y, Yuzawa K, Satoh J, Hattori N, Yamanouchi Y, Yanagi H, Kawai K, Tsuchiya S, Russell DW, Hamaguchi H: *TaqI* polymorphism in the LDL receptor gene and a *TaqI* 1.5-kb band associated with familial hypercholesterolemia (O) 1
- Yamanouchi Y → Yamakawa K
 Yan Z-A, Li X, Zhou X: Synergistic effect of hydroxyurea and excessive thymidine on the expression of the common fragile sites at 3p14 and 16q23 (O) 382
- Yanagi H → Yamakawa K
 Yokota E → Naritomi Y
 Youssoufian H, Kasper CK, Phillips DG, Kazazian HH Jr, Antonarakis SE: Restriction endonuclease mapping of six novel deletions of the factor VIII gene in hemophilia A (O) 143
- Yuzawa K → Yamakawa K
- Zackai EH → Münke M
 Zahed L, Murer-Orlando M, Bobrow M: Cell cycle studies in chorionic villi (O) 127
- Zhou X → Yan Z-A
- Announcements* 206, 316
- Indexed in *Current Contents*

*Original investigations***Sorting of chromosomes by magnetic separation**Gertrud Dudin¹, Ernst W. Steegmayer², Peter Vogt², Haide Schnitzer¹, Eduardo Diaz¹, Kathryn E. Howell³, Thomas Cremer², and Christoph Cremer¹¹Institut für Angewandte Physik I der Universität, Albert-Überle-Strasse 3–5, D-6900 Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany²Institut für Humangenetik und Anthropologie der Universität, Im Neuenheimer Feld 328, D-6900 Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany³European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), Meyerhofstrasse 1, D-6900 Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany

Summary. Chromosomes were isolated from Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell lines containing four and nine human chromosomes. Human genomic DNA was biotinylated by nick translation and used to label the human chromosomes by *in situ* hybridization in suspension. Streptavidin was covalently coupled to the surface of magnetic beads and these were incubated with the hybridized chromosomes. The human chromosomes were bound to the magnetic beads through the strong biotin-streptavidin complex and then rapidly separated from nonlabeled Chinese hamster chromosomes by a simple permanent magnet. The hybridization was visualized by additional binding of avidin-FITC (fluorescein) to the unoccupied biotinylated human DNA bound to the human chromosomes. After magnetic separation, up to 98% of the individual chromosomes attached to magnetic beads were classified as human chromosomes by fluorescence microscopy.

In this paper we describe a new approach to separating the human from the hamster chromosomes in a hamster × human hybrid cell line by use of the streptavidin-biotin affinity couple, magnetic beads, and a simple permanent magnet.

Material and methods

Metaphase chromosomes of the Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell lines Alwbf2 and ADA13SC3 (kindly provided by P. Pearson, Leiden) were isolated in a hexylene glycol buffer (Dudin et al. 1987). Most interphase nuclei were separated from the isolated chromosomes by centrifugation at 30g for 4 min. Human genomic DNA was biotinylated by nick translation (Rigby et al. 1977) using the nick translation reagent kit of BRL (Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, FRG). The isolated metaphase chromosomes were hybridized in suspension (Dudin et al. 1987) using a hybridization mixture of 40% (v/v) formamide, 2 × SSC, 1 μg biotinylated human genomic DNA, and 7.5% (v/v) dextran sulfate (1 × SSC is 0.15 M NaCl, 0.015 M sodium citrate). After the last step in 0.1 × SSC, the chromosome suspension was centrifuged at 350g for 15 min and the pellet resuspended in 1 ml IB + M buffer (50 mM KCl, 5 mM Hepes, 10 mM MgSO₄, pH 8.0; Trask et al. 1985) containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20.

Magnetic beads, 4 μm in diameter (Dynabeads M-450), were purchased from Dynal, Oslo. The free hydroxyl groups on the polymer surface were activated with *p*-toluene sulfonyl chloride (Nustad et al. 1984). Briefly, 100 mg of uncoated magnetic beads were transferred into acetone with sequential washings in 10 ml aliquots (water to acetone (v/v) 7:3, then (v/v) 6:4, then (v/v) 2:8, then 3 × (v/v) 0:10, and resuspended in 1 ml acetone). At each step the magnetic beads were collected with a permanent magnet (MPC 1, Dynal), which was held at the outside of the tube. The supernatant was simply poured off. The magnetic beads were incubated with 4.5 mM pyridine and 2.2 mM *p*-toluene sulfonyl chloride in acetone for 20 h at room temperature with end-over-end rotation. The beads were again collected with the magnet, the supernatant was discarded, and the beads were washed three times in acetone. They were transferred back to water by reversing the washing steps 1–3. The activated magnetic beads were stored in 1 mM HCl + 0.02% (v/w) NaN₃ at 4°C. To couple streptavidin to the activated beads, the storage solution was removed and the beads were washed twice in IB + M containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20. Then the magnetic beads were resuspended in

Introduction

Magnetic solid supports with specific affinity couples (Oberbauer 1974) have become a commonly used method ("magnetic sorting") for separating cells, cell organelles, and microorganisms (Molday et al. 1977; Owen 1983). One partner of the affinity couple, normally an antibody, is covalently bound or physically absorbed to magnetic microspheres. Magnetic, polymeric microspheres, designed for this purpose by John Ugelstad, are polystyrene beads containing iron oxide (Fe₃O₄) particles (see review by Lea et al. 1985; Howell et al. 1988). By binding specific cells to these "magnetic beads" through an antigen-antibody bridge, large quantities of the specific cells can be sorted in a very short time. We have covalently coupled streptavidin to the magnetic beads to isolate biotinylated chromosomes.

Human chromosomes in hamster × human hybrid cells can be selectively hybridized with human genomic DNA due to sufficient sequence differences of most repetitive DNA sequences in the genome of hamster and human (Durnam et al. 1985; Manuelidis 1985; Schardin et al. 1985; Pinkel et al. 1986a, b). Nucleic acid hybridization of biotinylated human genomic DNA to isolated metaphase chromosomes in suspension offers the possibility of labeling specifically the human chromosomes of a hamster × human hybrid cell line with biotin (Dudin et al. 1987).

0.1 M borate buffer (pH 9.5) containing 1 µg streptavidin/mg beads. The suspension was mixed overnight by end-over-end rotation at room temperature. After addition of 0.02% Na₂S₂O₃ to this solution, the magnetic beads were stored at 4°C. Before use, the beads were washed three times in 1 ml IB + M buffer containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20.

The binding of streptavidin to the magnetic beads was determined prior to further experiments. A sample of 50 µl coated beads was washed twice with API buffer (0.1 M Tris/HCl pH 7.5, 0.1 M NaCl, 2 mM MgCl₂, 0.05% (v/v) Triton X-100) and sequentially incubated in 1 ml of API buffer containing 1 µl of biotin-AP solution of the alkaline phosphatase detection reaction system (BRL, Eggenstein-Leopoldshafen, FRG). After 20-min incubation at room temperature, the beads were collected by the magnet. The beads were washed in API and three times in APIII buffer (0.1 M Tris/HCl, 0.1 M NaCl, 5 mM MgCl₂, pH 9.5); resuspended in 1 ml of staining solution containing 9 µl NBT (nitroblue tetrazolium), 6.5 µl BCIP (5-bromo-4-chloro-3-indolylphosphate), and 1 ml of APIII buffer; and incubated in the dark for 4 h at room temperature. The reaction was terminated by 1 ml 20 mM Tris of pH 7.5 and 5 mM K-EDTA. A dark blue precipitate indicated the presence of streptavidin on the surface of the magnetic beads.

Magnetic beads coated with streptavidin were used for isolating the hybridized chromosomes (A1wbf2 and ADA13SC3) or control, Chinese hamster lung (CHL), chromosomes. Coated beads (0.1 mg, 1.4 × 10⁶ beads) were suspended with about 10⁶ chromosomes in 100 µl IB + M buffer containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20 and 5% (v/v) nonfat dry milk and incubated at 37°C for 2 h by slightly shaking the sample.

The beads were collected with the magnet and resuspended in IB + M containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20. The supernatant was transferred to a separate tube for further analysis. The binding of the chromosomes to the beads was checked microscopically. For this purpose 5 µl of the bead suspension was dropped on a slide, stained by adding 5 µl of a DAPI staining solution (5 µM 4,6-diamidino-2-phenylindole 2HCl) for 5 min, and covered by a coverglass.

To distinguish human chromosomes labeled with biotin from nonlabeled Chinese hamster chromosomes, the bead suspension and the supernatant were incubated with avidin-FITC (Enzo, Neckargemünd, FRG) in a 1:100 dilution in IB + M buffer containing 5% (v/v) nonfat dry milk and 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20. After an incubation period of 90 min at 37°C, the buffer was removed by centrifugation (300 g/15 min) or with the aid of the magnet. The pellets were washed twice in IB + M buffer containing 0.05% (v/v) Tween 20.

For microscopy, 5 µl samples from all fractions (including the original fraction after fluorescence hybridization) were dropped on slides, counterstained with propidium iodide by adding 10 µl of a 150 µM staining solution or 5 µl of a 5 µM DAPI solution to each sample, and incubated for 20 min at room temperature. Five microliters of a fluorescence antifading buffer (1 mg *p*-phenylenediamine in 1 ml glycerine buffer, pH 8) was added. The sample was enclosed in a sealed cover slide. Photographs were taken with a Leitz Vario Orthomat 2 and a Kodak Ektachrome 200 or 400 color slide film type R. Fluorescein (FITC) and propidium iodide (PI) were excited at 450–490 nm and photographed with a 515-nm long pass filter. Propidium iodide alone was excited at 530–560 nm and photographed with a 580-nm long pass filter. DAPI was excited at 270–380 nm and photographed with a 430-nm long pass filter.

To establish the percentage of human chromosomes in the different fractions, the following procedure was applied: Chromosomes were identified under the microscope by their PI-fluorescence with the 580-nm long pass filter. Then they were analyzed for their yellow-green and for their red fluorescence with the 515-nm filter. To quantify the difference in yellow-green and red fluorescences of the labeled and nonlabeled chromosomes, digital image analysis was applied using diapositives of randomly selected chromosomes of the supernatant fraction. The images were digitized using a drum scanning densitometer (Scandig 2605; Joyce Loebel). The measurements were done with a green filter in transmission mode, and 256 gray levels were distinguished. The higher the green fluorescence, the higher was the transmission and the lower was consequently the gray level registered. Evaluation was carried out on a VAX 11/780 computer. For each chromosome, the size (pixel number A), the maximum gray level MAX of the individual pixels, the maximum gray level R-MAX of the sum of gray level values on any line perpendicular to the chromosome axis, and the mean gray level density (sum I of all gray values of a chromosome divided by the size A) was determined.

Slot blotting of DNA samples was done in a Minifold II apparatus from Schleicher & Schüll (Dassel, FRG) according to the manufacturer's protocols. Equal amounts (110 ng–0.55 ng) of hamster and human DNA were slotted in parallel on two slot filters. A parallel hybridization of both slot filters with the first to hamster DNA, the second to human DNA, was performed. Any quantitative estimates of DNA concentration were done only on the same experiment. The specific activity of both radiolabeled (³²P)-DNA probes was the same. Only autoradiographic signals in between the linear response range were evaluated.

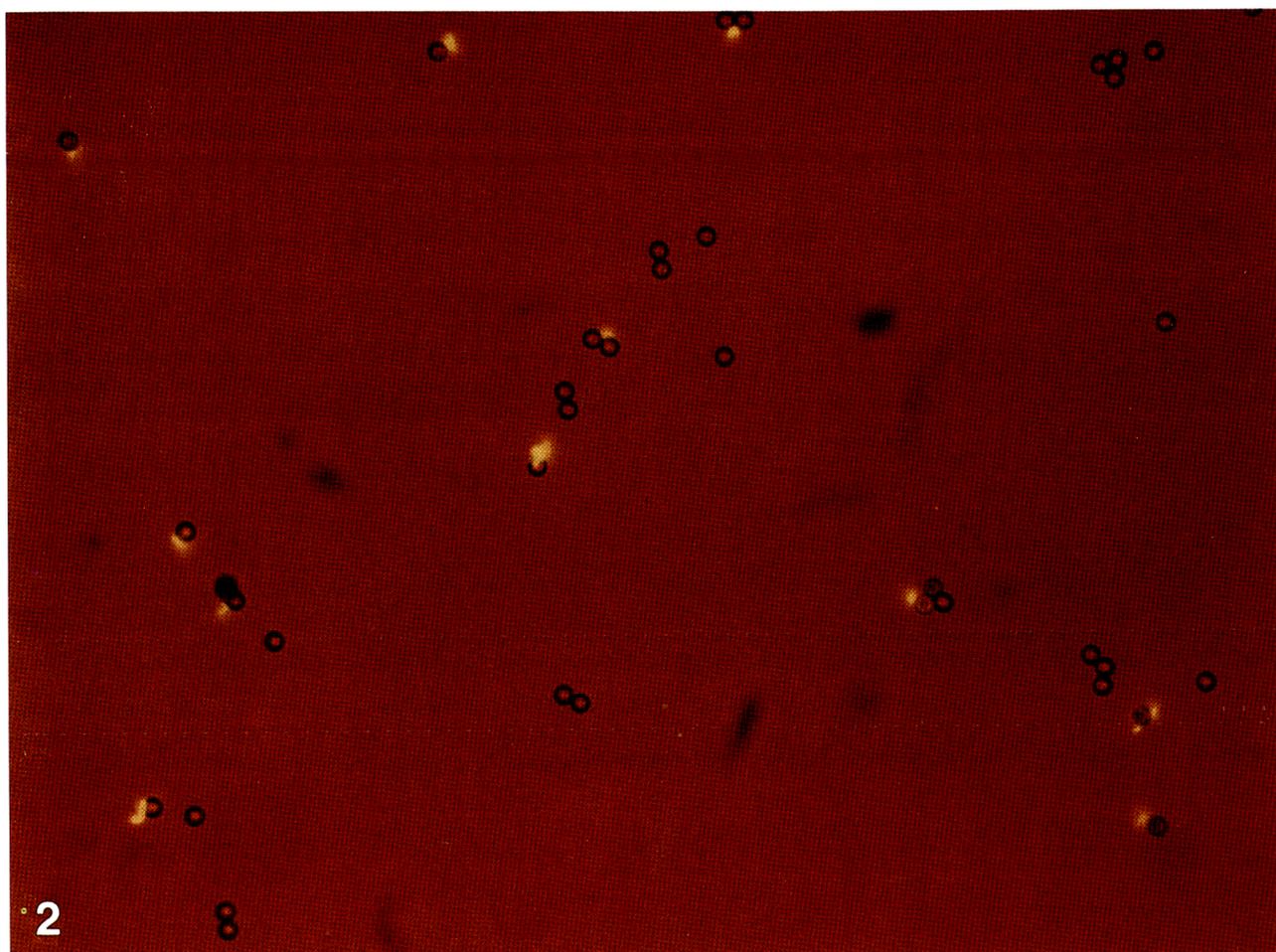
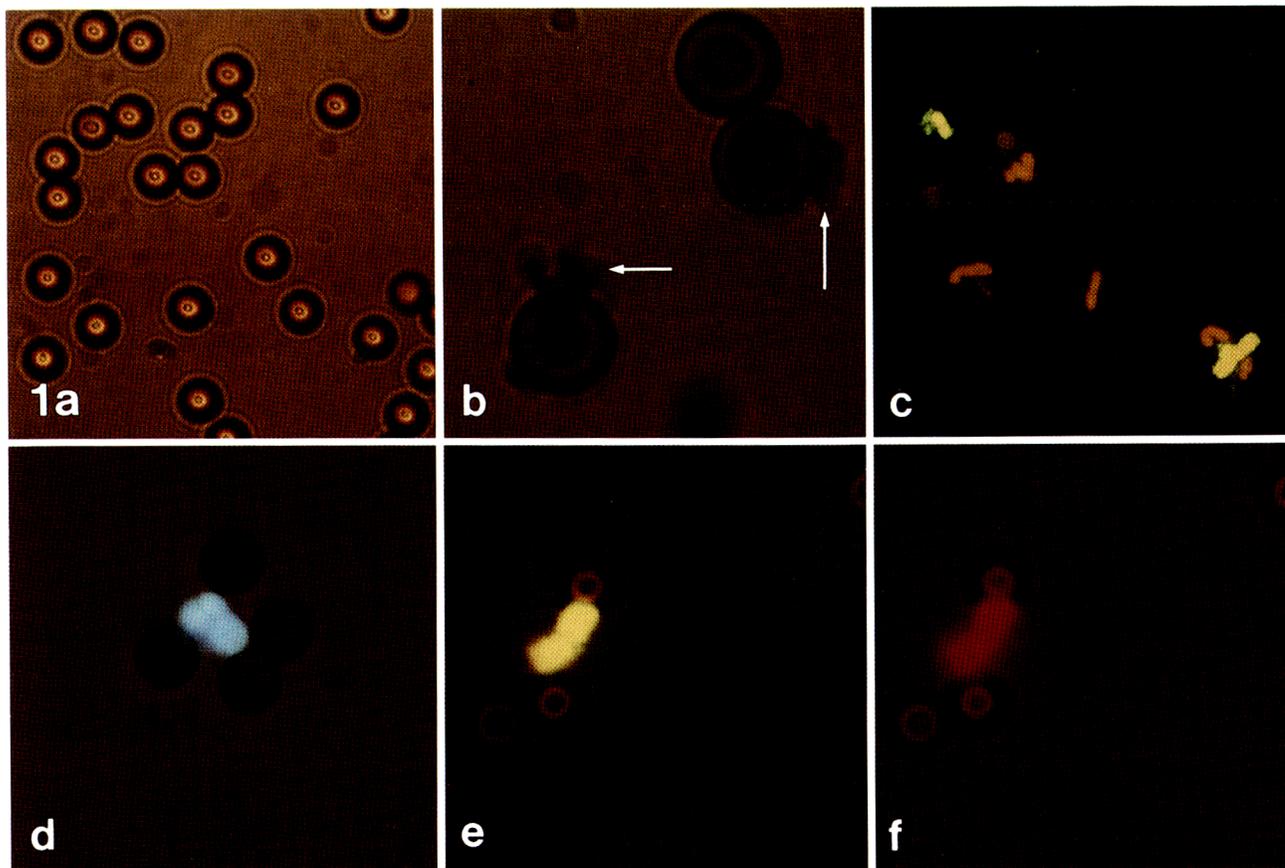
Results and discussion

Isolated metaphase chromosomes of the Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell lines A1wbf2 and ADA13SC3 were hybridized with biotinylated human genomic DNA. The human biotin-labeled chromosomes were then isolated with streptavidin-coated magnetic beads. Binding of streptavidin to the magnetic beads was demonstrated prior to the experiment by the alkaline phosphatase reaction, which resulted in a dark blue precipitate on the surface of the beads (Fig. 1a,b).



Fig. 1. **a** Magnetic beads before streptavidin binding. **b** Magnetic beads with streptavidin covalently bound. Streptavidin is visualized on the surface of the magnetic beads as dark blue precipitate (arrows) after the alkaline phosphatase reaction (see text). **c** Metaphase chromosomes of the Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell line ADA13SC3 after fluorescence hybridization with biotinylated human genomic DNA and counterstaining with propidium iodide. The nonhybridized chromosomes show red and the hybridized chromosomes, yellow-green fluorescence in a 515-nm long pass filter. **d** Magnetic beads bound with streptavidin have isolated a biotinylated human chromosome by streptavidin-biotin bridges. DAPI stain. **e** Magnetic beads bound with a yellow-green fluorescing human chromosome (biotin labeled), photographed with a 515-nm long pass filter. **f** The same chromosome photographed with a 580-nm long pass filter. The diameter of the beads is 4 µm

Fig. 2. Metaphase chromosomes of the Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell line A1wbf2 after magnetic isolation. All chromosomes bound to the magnetic beads show yellow-green fluorescence (details in the text). The diameter of the beads is 4 µm



Labeled human chromosomes became attached to one or more magnetic beads (Fig. 1d–f) through the strong biotin-streptavidin complex. They were distinguished from nonlabeled Chinese hamster chromosomes by their specific fluorescence following binding of avidin-FITC to free biotin molecules (Figs. 1c, e, 2). Counterstaining of the chromosomes with propidium iodide resulted in yellow-green fluorescence (FITC + propidium iodide) of labeled human chromosomes and red fluorescence of Chinese hamster chromosomes (propidium iodide) (Fig. 1c), observed microscopically using a 515-nm long pass filter. Both types of chromosomes exhibited red fluorescence when the 580-nm band pass filter was used (Fig. 1f).

The difference in the fluorescence intensity of human (yellow-green) and hamster (red) chromosomes was quantified by digital image analysis from diapositives photographed with a 515-nm long pass filter. Table 1 shows the results of the evaluation of ten randomly selected chromosomes with yellow-green fluorescence (human chromosomes) and ten randomly selected chromosomes with red fluorescence. All three modes of evaluation show a significant difference between yellow-green (human) and red (hamster) fluorescing chromosomes. The range of variation of the maximum gray level values was 83–105 for yellow-green fluorescing chromosomes and 119–156 for red fluorescing chromosomes, i.e., no overlap was ob-

served here. These data confirm that under the conditions used there is indeed a large difference in the fluorescence intensities between the two groups of chromosomes.

Cells of the Chinese hamster × human hybrid cell line A1wbf2 contain about 42 chromosomes per cell, 4 of which are human chromosomes. In the original sample, 81 (8.1%) of 1000 chromosomes counted were yellow-green (human), corresponding to 3.4 human chromosomes in each set of 42 chromosomes. This number fits with the expected number (4) of human chromosomes and confirms that the yellow-green fluorescing chromosomes are indeed the human ones.

Table 2 gives the results of a microscopic evaluation of chromosomes following magnetic separation. The total number of individual chromosomes counted was 779 in the A1wbf2 line and 2626 in the ADA13SC3 line. Of these individual chromosomes, 761 (97.7%) and 2596 (98.9%), respectively, were classified as human chromosomes due to their fluorescence (for discussion of chromosome aggregates, etc., see below).

In the supernatant after magnetic separation, 23 of 506 chromosomes counted (4.5%; 5% confidence ranges 2.8%–6.7%) were classified as human. This figure is significantly lower than the expected number of 48 (9.5%; 5% confidence ranges 7.1%–12.5%) in an unfractionated chromosome suspension. This again confirms the selective binding of human chromosomes to the magnetic beads.

Cross hybridization of biotinylated human DNA to Chinese hamster chromosomes might result in indiscriminate binding of these chromosomes to the magnetic beads and thus impair the specificity of magnetic beads separation. However, our data as follows indicate that such an effect was small:

(1) Chinese hamster lung (CHL) chromosomes were hybridized to biotinylated human genomic DNA and incubated with magnetic beads coated with streptavidin. The binding of CHL chromosomes was found to be very rare: 5 µl suspension in each sample contained about 35000 beads. In this control experiment, 229 CHL chromosomes were bound to 70000 beads (0.3%).

(2) In the ADA13SC3 experiment (Table 2), 30 individual hamster chromosomes were bound to 35000 beads (0.1%). For comparison, the ratio of individual human chromosomes bound to magnetic beads divided by the number of beads was about two orders of magnitude higher (see also Fig. 2).

Table 1. Digital image analysis of chromosomes following fluorescence hybridization (ADA 13SC3 line). For digital image analysis, the chromosomes were selected visually (yellow-green or red fluorescence). Ten randomly chosen chromosomes of each fluorescence mode were photographed under identical conditions; the images were digitized and evaluated as described in Material and methods. The means ($N = 10$) ± SD are in arbitrary units. MAX, Maximum gray level of any individual pixel (image element) of a given chromosome; R-MAX, maximum of the sum of gray levels on any line perpendicular to the chromosome axis; I/A, sum (I) of all gray values of a given chromosome divided by the chromosome area A (given in number of pixels) or mean gray level

Fluorescence mode	Maximum gray level (MAX)	R-MAX	Mean gray level (I/A)
Yellow-green (human)	93.2 ± 8.15	693.1 ± 156.5	41.5 ± 5.0
Red (hamster)	136.3 ± 12.4	1133.9 ± 207.8	67.3 ± 10.4

Table 2. Microscopic evaluation of chromosomes following magnetic separation. Chromosome aggregates (several chromosomes bound together) were counted as human chromosome aggregates when all the chromosome showed yellow-green fluorescence. In case where at least one of the chromosomes exhibited red fluorescence only, the chromosome aggregate was listed as hamster. Total number of individual chromosome counted: A1wbf2-line, 779; ADA1, 2626

Cell line	Human chromosomes ^a (N)				Hamster chromosomes ^b (N)			
	Bound to magnetic beads		Free		Bound to magnetic beads		Free	
	Individual chromosomes	Chromosome aggregates	Individual chromosomes	Aggregates	Individual chromosomes	Chromosome aggregates and inter-phase nuclei	Individual chromosomes	Chromosome aggregates and inter-phase nuclei
A1wbf2	751	–	10	–	14	7	4	–
ADA13SC3 ^c	2596	181	–	–	30	7	–	32

^a Yellow-green fluorescence

^b Red fluorescence

^c Evaluation of the entire suspension (containing approx. 35000 beads)

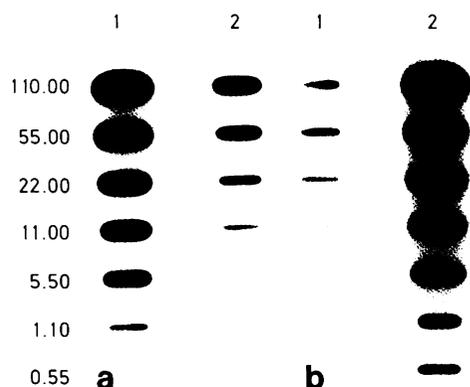


Fig. 3a, b. A concentration gradient of hamster (lane 1) and human (lane 2) genomic DNA was hybridized via DNA slot blot to nick-translated total ^{32}P -labeled DNA of hamster (a) and human (b). The numbers at the left indicate the amount of slotted DNA in nanograms. The percentage of cross hybridization between the DNA of both species in (a) and (b) averages between 1% (see b) to 10% (see a) under nonstringent posthybridization washing conditions ($2 \times \text{SSC}$, 65°C)

(3) After incubation of the hybridized CHL chromosomes see (1) with avidin-FITC under the same conditions as in the separation experiments, no yellow-green chromosomes were found, but all chromosomes analyzed (1500) were stained red with propidium iodide.

(4) An independent estimate of the possible cross hybridization between the biotinylated human genomic DNA and the hamster chromosomes was done on the DNA level with the aid of a slot blot experiment. Under nonstringent washing conditions ($2 \times \text{SSC}$, 65°C), human DNA hybridizes to Chinese hamster DNA at a level between 1%–10% (Fig. 3). This agrees well with the low percentages of individual hamster chromosomes observed after magnetic separation ($18/779 = 2.3\%$ and $30/2626 = 1.1\%$, respectively; see Table 2).

If individual chromosomes only are considered, the results (Table 2) of sorting human chromosomes by magnetic separation may be as good as the best results so far obtained by laser fluorescence activated flow sorting of chromosomes (Lebo et al. 1984). In these calculations, however, chromosome aggregates and interphase nuclei were not taken into consideration. Since every chromosome aggregate/interphase nucleus may contain many hamster chromosomes (up to 38), the efficacy of the sort (e.g., measured as the percentage of human DNA in the sorted fraction divided by the percentage of human DNA prior to sorting) may be considerably reduced. The figures given in Table 2 suggest that even in a "worst case" (every aggregate of chromosomes classified as human is assumed to contain two chromosomes only; every chromosome aggregate of "hamster" chromosomes is assumed to be a mitotic cell; every interphase nucleus is assumed to be in G₂), the percentage of human chromosome equivalents after magnetic sorting is about 70%. This is still a reasonably high enrichment, justifying the term "sorting" (Yu et al. 1981; Cremer et al. 1984).

For high purity sorting, however, it will be important to reduce significantly or to eliminate essentially the aggregates and interphase nuclei, respectively. This may be done, e.g., by 1g sedimentation (Collard et al. 1980; Blochmann et al. 1987; Schwäger et al. 1987), preferably prior to magnetic sep-

aration. The combined use of sedimentation (or other methods) and magnetic separation remains to be established. However, it has been shown that the conditions used for 1g sedimentation of chromosomes are compatible with in situ hybridization (Blochmann et al. 1987).

The number of chromosomes which can be sorted in a given time by magnetic separation is, in principle, not limited. In contrast, even high-speed flow sorters (Peters et al. 1985) sort specific chromosomes at a rate not higher than about 1000 chromosomes/s, which corresponds to a few micrograms of chromosomes per hour. To realize the large sorting potential of the magnetic beads separation technique, it will be necessary, however, to overcome the severe clumping observed when larger numbers of chromosomes/ magnetic beads are used (data not shown). This problem may be resolved by different ways, e.g., the beads may be enclosed in a "magnetic bottle" and kept there in a dispersed state (Schwager 1986; Howell et al. 1988) or beads with a lower magnetic affinity may be constructed (Lea et al. 1988).

The results presented here indicate that sorting of chromosomes by magnetic beads is indeed feasible. As an application, this new approach might be used to sort a specific chromosome for library construction (Cremer et al. 1984; Fuscoe et al. 1986) and biochemical analyses. This may be achieved by using a hybrid cell line containing one human chromosome only and human genomic DNA as a probe, or by using human cell types and chromosome-specific DNA probes.

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