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Characterization of the Human *Rad51* Genomic Locus and Examination of Tumors with 15q14–15 Loss of Heterozygosity (LOH)[1]

Christoph Schmutte,[2] Gregory Tombline,[2] Kerstin Rhiem, Margaret M. Sadoff, Rita Schmutzler, Andreas von Deimling, and Richard Fishel[3]

Kimmel Cancer Center, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107 [C. S., G. T., M. M. S., R. F.]; Universitäts-Frauenklinik, Universität Bonn, 53105 Bonn, Germany [K. R., R. S.]; and Universitätsklinikum Charité, Humboldt-Universität, Institut für Neuropathologie, D-13353 Berlin, Germany [A. v. D.]

Abstract

Human *Rad51* (*hRad51*) has been found to be associated with BRCA1, BRCA2, and p53 either directly or indirectly and is one of at least eight human genes that are members of the *Escherichia coli* RecA/*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* Rad51 family thought to affect genomic stability through DNA recombination/repair processes. While inactivation of DNA mismatch repair clearly leads to instability of repeated sequences and to an increased risk for tumorigenesis, such a parallel for the RecA family members has not been reported. Recently, a high frequency of loss of heterozygosity at chromosome 15q14–15, near the genomic region containing *hRad51*, has been reported in human tumors (W. Wick *et al.*, Oncogene, *12:* 973–978, 1996). To determine whether *hRad51* inactivation may be involved in the etiology of these tumors, we have characterized the *hRad51* genetic locus and mapped it to chromosome 15q14–15 within the central region of loss of heterozygosity. However, single-strand conformational polymorphism analysis and direct sequencing of tumors did not reveal any mutations in the *hRad51* coding sequence or intron/exon boundaries. We also examined the DNA methylation status of a CpG-rich region in the putative *hRad51* promoter region. No indication of hypermethylation was found. These results suggest that *hRad51* is not a tumor suppressor because it is either an essential gene, redundant gene and/or independent of the BRCA1/BRCA2 tumor suppressor pathway(s).

Introduction

Genomic instability is a common denominator in the vast majority of human cancers (1). The high number of genetic alterations found in tumor cells has led to the suggestion that an increased mutation rate (mutator phenotype), likely in combination with selection and clonal expansion, provides the requisite for tumorigenesis (2, 3). While up to 30% of colorectal tumors display instability in the length of repeated sequences (MSI;[4] Ref. 4), more than 70% of colorectal tumors exhibit gene amplifications and gross chromosomal changes that include chromosome translocations and alteration in chromosome numbers (aneuploidy; Ref. 5). Most MSI tumors harbor alteration(s) in the DNA mismatch repair genes (*hMSH2*, *hMLH1*, *hPMS2*, and *hMSH6*) that inactivate a pathway for repair of single-nucleotide and small insertion/deletion loop-type mismatches. In addition to MSI, inactivation of the mismatch repair machinery leads to an increase in spontaneous mutation rates, as would be predicted for a mutator phenotype (for recent reviews, see Refs. 6 and 7). A genetic basis for the 70% of colorectal tumors that exhibit gene amplifications and

gross chromosomal changes has been suggested in experiments that demonstrate the persistence of the chromosomal aneuploidy phenotype (chromosomal instability) in colorectal cell lines (8). These studies support an aneuploidy mutator phenotype that is induced by as yet unidentified mechanisms.

Defects in recombination/repair pathways that process DNA damage, such as double-strand breaks, have been proposed to contribute to the observed genomic instability phenotype in some human cancers (1). Xeroderma pigmentosum, ataxia telangiectasia, Bloom's syndrome, Fanconi's anemia, and Nijmegen breakage syndrome are hereditary disorders in which chromosome breaks are known to contribute to an overall susceptibility to cancer (9, 10). Moreover, both the Bloom's syndrome and Nijmegen breakage syndrome gene products are related to bacterial or yeast homologues known to participate in the repair of broken chromosomes (11, 12).

The hRAD51 protein has been suggested to play a role as a tumor suppressor gene for several reasons: (*a*) hRAD51 is a member of the RecA/RAD51 family of proteins, which have been implicated in DNA recombination/repair processes (13); (*b*) the hRAD51 protein appears to associate either directly or indirectly with p53 (14), BRCA1 (15), and BRCA2 (16), three other known tumor suppressors; (*c*) RAD51 has been shown to function in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* mutation avoidance (17), and the frequency and spectrum of a *rfa-1* mutant (the large subunit of the consensus cellular single-stranded binding protein) are enhanced by a *rad51* null mutation (18); and (*d*) the distribution of hRAD51 appears to be altered in response to DNA damage as well as along paired meiotic chromosomes in spermatocytes derived from *ATM*$^{-/-}$ mice (15, 19). Moreover, c-abl, an oncogene and downstream effector in the ATM DNA damage response pathway (20, 21), has been shown to phosphorylate hRAD51 and alter its ability to bind DNA *in vitro* (22). These results have led to the proposal that hRAD51 dysfunction in somatic cells might also contribute to genomic instability and cancer.

While both *Escherichia coli* RecA and the *S. cerevisiae* RAD51 proteins are not required for viability, mice containing a homozygous disruption of the *Rad51* gene display early embryonic lethality (23), and attempts to generate null *rad51* cell lines have failed (24). These findings would appear to limit a possible role for *hRad51* as a tumor suppressor gene. Interestingly, mammalian cells contain at least eight additional RAD51 homologues that may provide some redundancy in function or functional interaction. For example, it has been shown that XRCC3, one of these RAD51 homologues, interacts with hRAD51, and XRCC3 mutant cells display radiation sensitivity and increased chromosome aberrations (25, 26).

Here, we have characterized the *hRad51* genomic locus by defining the intron/exon boundaries and genetically mapping it relative to markers used previously in LOH studies of human tumors. We found that *hRad51* was located in the center of a region at chromosome 15q14–15, which is frequently deleted in breast tumors and metastatic brain tumors (27). We examined a cohort of these tumors that displays

Table 1 *Primers used for mutational analysis*

Exon 2	
CAAGCCCCTTATTTCTCTAGT	R37; 5′
CCTTCCACTAGGTAGAAGAA	R38; 3′
Exon 3	
GGACACATAACATCTGTGTTAG	R39; 5′
TGTACTATTCCCACTAATGCCT	R40; 3′
Exon 4	
TCAAGATCACTGTGGTAAGGA	R41; 5′
GCTTTCCTAACTAGAGTTCAC	R42; 3′
Exon 5	
CCAAGAACATTTCTATGACTACAG	R43; 5′
CAGGAATGAAGTAATGCTTGC	R44; 3′
Exon 6	
CTTGGTCAGCTGTATCAGAAAT	R45; 5′
GATAAGTGTAGCCATAGTCTCT	R45; 3′
Exon 7	
AGTTCTGTGTGCAGCCTAAA	R47; 5′
GGGAAGGACTCTTAAGAACAT	R48; 3′
Exon 8	
ACAGGCTAGAAATAGGCTTCA	R49; 5′
CTGAAAGTAGGCATTCTCTGT	R50; 3′
Exon 9	
GTCTATGGCCACAAAATTGACA	R51; 5′
TCCGAAAAGAAGAACTGATCC	R52; 3′
Exon 10	
CAAAGTCAGGAACGGAATTGT	R53; 5′
GCACTTAAGGTTTTTAACAGAGG	R54; 3′

LOH at 15q14–15 for *hRad51* mutations and promoter methylation. While we found no alterations of the *hRAD51* locus in the DNA derived from any of these human tumors, this study provides the tools necessary to further understand the regulation of *hRAD51* expression and to study its potential role in tumorigenesis.

Materials and Methods

Determination of *hRad51* Genomic Structure. Oligonucleotide primers specific for *hRad51* (R11, 5′-AGTGCTGCAGCCTAATGAGAGT-3′; and R12, 5′-TGTGACTACTGACCTGTCTCCT-3′) were used to screen a human BAC library (Version IV; Research Genetics, Huntsville, AL) by PCR. DNA from positive clones was isolated using the Qiagen (Chatsworth, CA) DNA purification kit. The DNA was sequenced on an Applied Biosystems automated sequencer, and intron-exon boundaries were determined by comparison with the cloned cDNA sequence as well as consensus splice site junctions. Intron sizes were confirmed by PCR followed by agarose gel electrophoresis. An additional 1.5 kb of 5′-untranslated sequence were sequenced and analyzed for potential transcription factor binding sites as well as the percentage of G+C bp and CpG sites.

Radiation Hybrid Analysis. The location of *hRad51* was determined using primers R11 and R12 to screen the Genebridge-4 radiation hybrid panel (Version RH02.02; Research Genetics; Huntsville, AL). PCR products were visualized by agarose gel electrophoresis, and data were submitted to the Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research for interpretation. Using the same method, we determined the genomic position of marker GAAA1C11 (also known as D15S1232) using forward primer R33 (5′-CCA-GAGAGAGATCTTTCCCCAT-3′) and reverse primer R34 (5′-TTGCTCCACT-GTTTTCTCAG-3′), and we determined the genomic position of marker D15S641 using forward primer R31 (5′-AACAAAGGGAGACCCTCATC-3′) and reverse primer R32 (5′-GACACCCCAGTAGCAATGAG-3′). Information on the original characterization of these markers was obtained from the Cooperative Human Linkage Center.[5]

Tumor Samples. Native tumor specimens and corresponding normal blood were obtained from patients treated at the University Hospital-Bonn between 1990 and 1998 during surgery or at autopsy. Tissues were collected without bias for age, sex, or ethnic background. All tumors were classified according to the WHO guidelines. The tumor specimens were examined microscopically before phenol DNA extraction to exclude contamination by nontumorous tissue. DNA was isolated as described previously (27). Twenty brain metastases of tumors from various tissue origins and their normal counterparts were

analyzed for mutations in the coding region of the *hRad51* gene. All tumors examined displayed LOH at 15q14–15 (Ref. 27; Table 2). A second set of 41 breast carcinomas (21 of which displayed LOH at 15q14–15) was examined for *hRad51* mutations (Table 2).

Single-Strand Conformational Polymorphism/Mutation Analysis. Details of the primer sets used to amplify the *hRad51* exons are shown in Table 1. Approximately 20 ng of genomic DNA were used as template in 20-μl reactions that contained 1.0 unit of AmpliTaq Gold (Perkin-Elmer); 200 μM each of dATP, dGTP, and dTTP; 40 μM dCTP; and 1.0 μCi of [α-^{32}P]dCTP. Cycles were as follows: 95°C for 12 min, followed by 30 cycles of 94°C for 30 s; 55.5°C for 30 s; 72°C for 45 s; followed by 5 min at 72°C. The reactions were heated at 94°C for 5 min and placed immediately on ice until loading. Samples were run at room temperature on 0.5× MDE gels (FMC BioProducts). Exons to be sequenced were amplified in a similar fashion, except that 200 μM dCTP was used. The PCR products were then isolated using agarose gel electrophoresis and the Qiagen Gel Extraction kit, and approximately 5 ng of PCR products were sequenced with an Applied Biosystems Automated Sequencer.

Methylation Analysis. Methylation of the predicted CpG island of the *hRad51* promoter was performed using the bisulfite method as originally described by Clark *et al.* (28). In brief, approximately 50 ng of DNA were digested with *Apa*I and then incubated with 2.5 M sodium metabisulfite (Amresco) and 100 mM hydroquinone (Sigma) at pH 5.0 in a total volume of 240 ml at 55°C for 16 h. Subsequently, the DNA was desalted, treated with 0.3 M NaOH at 37°C for 15 min, and precipitated. Primers were designed such that they flanked the region of highest CpG density as well as several Sp1 sites within the putative *hRad51* promoter upstream of exon 1 (see Fig. 3, ▨; 5′-TGAGGGATTGGGGTAGGAGTA-3′, 5′-CCAACCTTCTACACACAAC-CCAA-3′, 5′-GTAAAAAGGGAAGAGGGTAGTTTG-3′, 5′-ACAACCC-AAATAAATTACAATTCCCAACT-3′). PCR products (274 bp) were synthesized by a nested PCR approach and sequenced directly. DNA treated with M.*Sss*I, which methylates CpG sites, were used as a positive control. There did not appear to be any differences in the amplification of methylated *versus* unmethylated substrate DNA. We estimate that 20% of methylated CpGs in the substrate DNA at most sites could be detected.

Results

Radiation Hybrid Mapping of the *hRAD51* Gene. The *hRAD51* gene was mapped previously by fluorescence *in situ* hybridization to chromosome 15q15.1 (29). This genomic locus is adjacent to a region (15q14) that has been reported to be frequently lost in brain metastases of various tumors (27). To test whether *hRad51* is involved in the development of these tumors, we first established the genomic location of the *hRad51* gene and many of the markers used in the tumor study relative to markers contained in a radiation hybrid panel (27). Radiation hybrid mapping revealed that *hRad51* is located between the most commonly deleted markers in these tumors, 26.7 cR telomeric from marker GAAA1C11 and 20 cR centromeric from marker D15S641 at 15q14–15 (Fig. 1). We also determined the location of nine polymorphic markers used to define the region of LOH on chromosome 15q14–15 in 21 metastatic brain tumors and 21 primary breast carcinomas. These data also indicate that the *hRad51* genomic locus is slightly more centromeric than reported previously but is clearly within the common region of LOH in both the brain and breast tumors.

Structure of the *hRad51* Genomic Locus. We determined the genomic structure of the *hRad51* gene to screen tumors for possible *hRad51* mutations. A BAC clone (21B18) containing the *hRad51* gene was identified by PCR screening of a human BAC DNA library (Research Genetics) using primers specific for *hRad51*. DNA from clone 21B18 was isolated and sequenced. Intron sizes were determined by long-range PCR (Boehringer Mannheim). PCR products could not be obtained for introns 5 and 6, suggesting intron sizes of >10 kb. The *hRad51* gene consists of 10 exons and spans at least 30 kb (Fig. 2A). All exon-intron boundaries follow the GT-AC rule. The translation start codon is located in exon 2 (Fig. 2B, *underlined*), and

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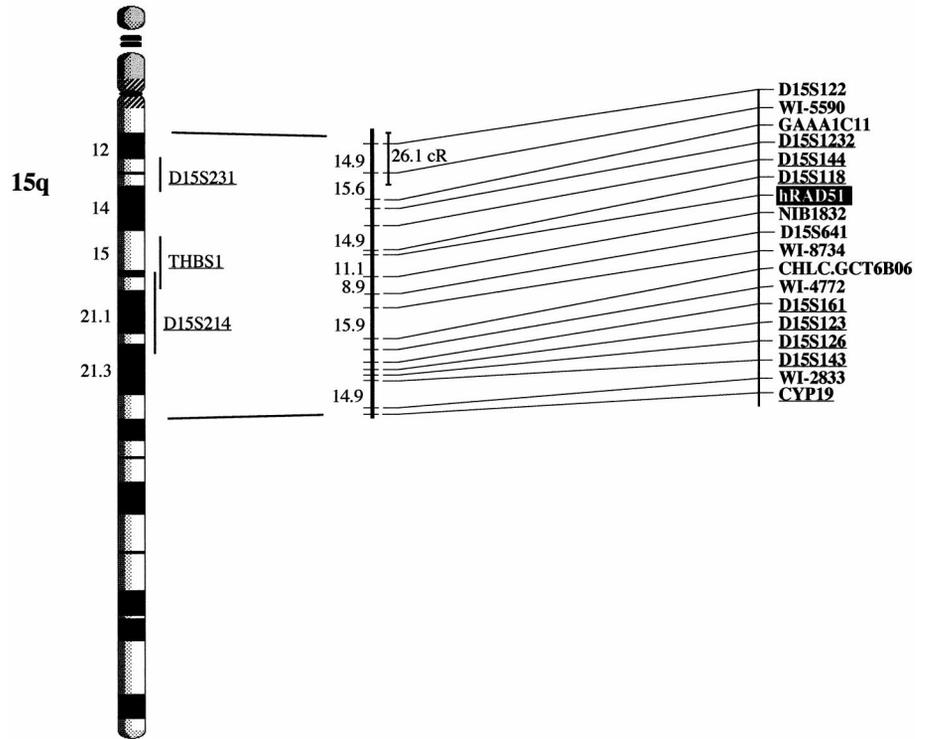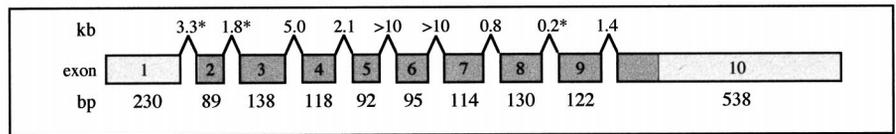[5] Address: http://www.chlc.org.

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Fig. 1. Radiation hybrid analysis. The hRAD51 genomic locus, CYP19, and several additional microsatellite markers were mapped to chromosome 15q14–15 using the radiation hybrid method (see "Materials and Methods" for details). Markers used in LOH studies are *underlined*.

the average size of the coding exons is 112 bp. Further sequencing of the region 5′ of the first exon revealed that noncoding exon 1 contained a CpG island that was approximately 990 bp in size (Fig. 3). This putative promoter region contains several Sp1 recognition sites but lacks a TATA box. Further characterization of that region is in progress and will be published elsewhere. Sequences were submitted to GenBank (GenBank accession numbers AF165088, AF165089, AF165090, AF165091, AF165092, AF165093, and AF165094).

Fig. 2. *hRad51* genomic structure. A human BAC clone containing the *hRad51* gene was identified by screening a BAC library (Research Genetics). Exon-intron borders were determined by direct sequencing of the BAC DNA. *A, hRad51* consists of 10 exons (*dark gray box*, coding exons; *light gray box*, noncoding exons) and covers ~30 kb (∗, introns sequenced completely). *B*, exon-intron borders follow the GT-AG rule. *Capital letters*, intronic sequences. *Numbers in parentheses*, size (in bp) of the published cDNA sequence (GenBank accession number D14134).

A.

kb	3.3*	1.8*	5.0	2.1	>10	>10	0.8	0.2*	1.4	
exon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
bp	230	89	138	118	92	95	114	130	122	538

B.

EXON 1

TTGGCGGGAATTCTGAAAGCCGCTGGCGGA-cc(1-230)ag-GTGAGTGTGTGAGGCGCAGGCTGGGCCCTCC

EXON 2

CTTATACTGATAAGCATTTGTATTTTTCAG-ta(231-319)ag-GTATGTGGTTAGTTGCTAATTTTGGAATTA

EXON 3

AAATTTATCCATGGTTTTCTTCATTTGCAG-ca(320-457)tg-GTAAGTACTGCTTACTTAACCTAGGGAGGCA

EXON 4

TGTTGATTTAATATTTCTTATTTTTCCCAG-gc(458-575)ag-GTGTAGTAATCCTTTATCCTGTGTTGTGAAC

EXON 5

GCTAAGAGTTATTTCTTATCGCTTTTTTAG-gt(576-667)ag-GTGAGCTGTTGGGGCTATAGCTAATCAAATA

EXON 6

CATTTCTACTGTTGTTTTTGTTCTCTATAG-ct(668-762)ag-GTAGGTTACTGGTTTAGATAAGAGAGACTAT

EXON 7

AGCCTAAAAATGTTCTCTCCTCTCTCATAG-gt(763-876)ag-GTATGTGTTCAGTATAAGACACCAAATATGTT

EXON 8

TAGGCTTCAGAGAATCCTTGTTTCCTGTAG-gt(877-1006)ag-GTAAGTTGTGGGATAGGGACAGAGAATGCCT

EXON 9

CAAAATTGACATTTATCCTTTCCCCATCAG-tt(1007-1128)ag-GTAAGGTGTTGATGGGATCAGTTCTTCTTTT

EXON 10

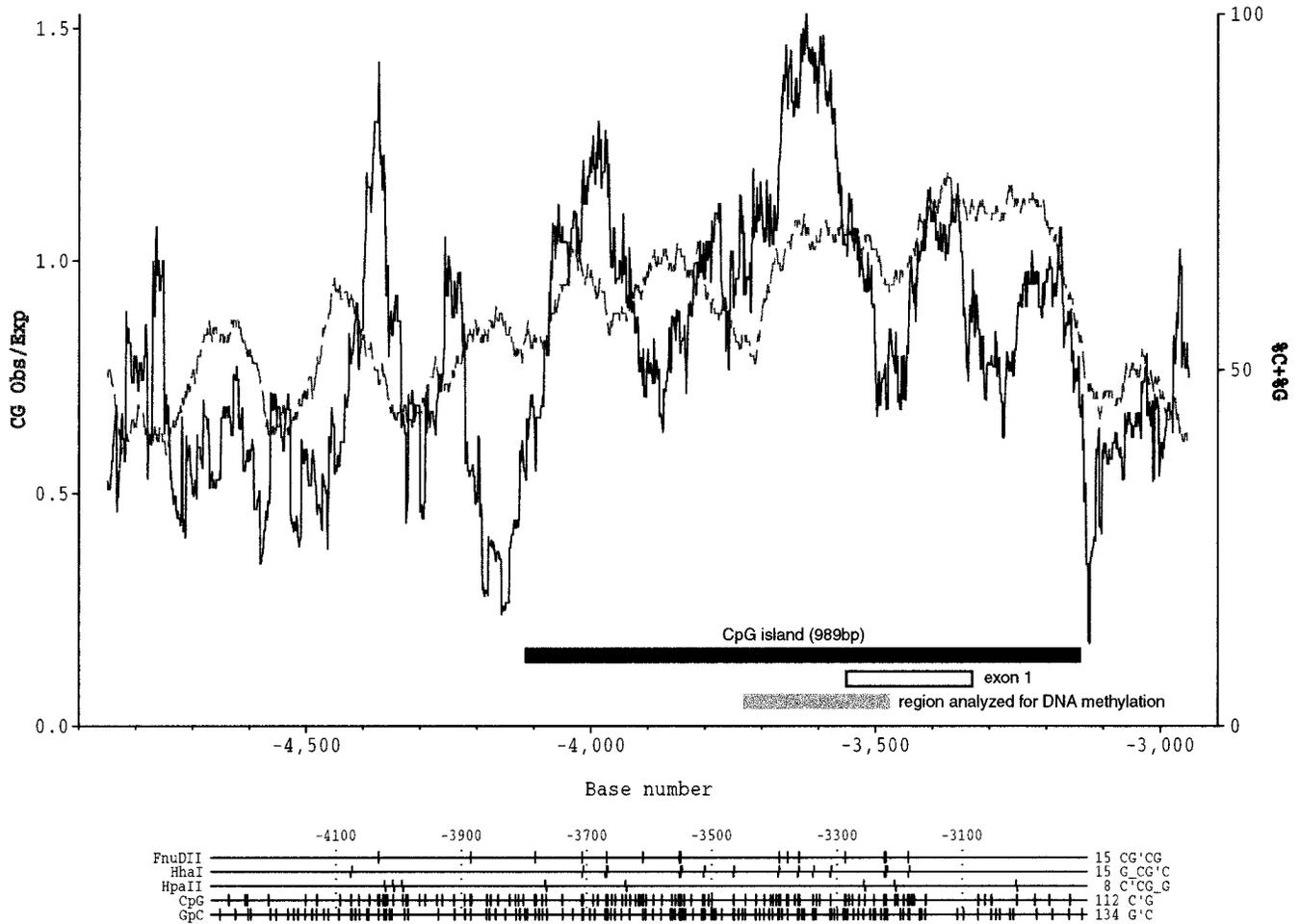TTGGTGCTTTGGTCTGTGTCTTTGGGTCAG-at(1029-2229)tg-AATGT

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Fig. 3. Analysis of the CpG island in the 5′ region of the *hRad51* gene. The 5′ region of the *hRad51* gene was sequenced and analyzed using the GCG Software Package (GCG, Madison, WI). The translation start site (ATG) was used as 0. According to the rules established by Gardiner-Garden and Frommer (43), a region of 989 bp can be considered a CpG island (■), which covers exon 1 (□) and extends into intron 1. The region marked by the ▨ was examined for changes in DNA methylation.

Mutation Analysis of *hRAD51* in Human Tumors. All coding exons from 21 metastatic brain tumors and 42 breast carcinomas (including 21 that clearly displayed LOH at chromosome 15q14–15) were analyzed by the single-strand conformational polymorphism method using the primer pairs listed in Table 1. In addition, complete coding exons of 10 brain metastases were sequenced. No alterations in the coding sequence of *hRAD51* were detected (data not shown). These results suggest that nucleotide mutations of *hRAD51* that might lead to altered function of the hRAD51 protein were unlikely to be present in the cohorts of tumors that displayed LOH surrounding the *hRAD51* genetic locus.

Promoter Methylation Analysis in Human Tumors. We detected a large CpG island imbedded within the putative *hRad51* promoter region. CpG methylation may reduce or abolish expression of the *hRad51* gene, as has been shown for several tumor suppressor genes and repair genes including *hMLH1* (30) and the O^6-methylguanine methyltransferase gene (31). To rule out the possibility of both normal allele contamination and biallelic tumors, we examined promoter methylation in a region including the highest CpG density and several Sp1 binding sites in samples that clearly displayed LOH covering the *hRad51* genomic locus (Table 2; see dot samples). We found no evidence of promoter methylation in any of these samples in the region examined (data not shown), suggesting that *hRad51* expression is not impaired in tumors that display LOH at chromosome 15q14–15. These experiments must be tempered by the results of the

bisulfite methylation detection method (28), in which there appeared to be a somewhat higher background between nucleotide -3693 and -3717).

Discussion

In this study we have: (*a*) characterized the structure of the *hRad51* genomic locus, which provided the tools necessary to specifically amplify *hRad51* coding regions from genomic DNA; and (*b*) tested the possibility that *hRad51* could function as a tumor suppressor gene in metastatic brain tumors and breast carcinomas that show high frequencies of LOH at chromosome 15q14–15.

Sequencing of the *hRad51* genomic locus revealed 10 exons, and a large (approximately 1 kb) CpG island covers the putative promoter region, which also includes the first (noncoding) exon. This CpG island appears TATA-less and is similar to typical housekeeping promoters (32). The presence of several putative Sp1 promoter binding sites is consistent with the observed cell cycle-dependent expression of *hRad51* (33). Previous reports have shown that both protein and mRNA levels rise at the G_1-S-phase boundary and remain elevated through the G_2-M phase (34). This G_1-S-phase pattern of expression is similar to that of yeast *Rad51* (35), possibly reflecting an S-phase-specific role other than recombination for RAD51 (36). Perhaps the most interesting difference between mammalian RAD51 and its yeast and bacterial family members is that its expression is not

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Table 2 *Human tumor analysis*

SET1[a] ID	tumor	b	D15S165	D15S231	D15S1232	*hRad51*	CYP19	D15S643
18	glioblastoma				LOH			
524	malignant peripheral nerve shealth tumor	•		LOH	h			
534	astrocytoma			LOH				
644	bronchial carcinoma metastasis	•		LOH	LOH			
662	bronchial carcinoma metastasis	•		LOH	ni			h
682	mamma carcinoma metastasis	•	LOH	LOH	LOH		LOH	LOH
722	lung carcinoma metastasis	•		LOH	ni		LOH	
730	oligodendroma			LOH	h			
732	lung carcinoma metastasis	•	LOH	LOH	LOH		LOH	LOH
764	glioblastoma				ni			
954	bronchial carcinoma metastasis	•		LOH	LOH		ni	
2006	bronchial carcinoma metastasis			LOH	LOH		LOH	
2124	lung adenocarcinoma metastasis	•	ni	LOH	LOH		h	
2194	rectal carcinoma metastasis	•		ni	LOH			
2240	gliosarcoma	•		ni	LOH			
2268	gliosarcoma	•		LOH	LOH			
2378	neurinoma	•		LOH	h			
2410	plexus papilloma			h	ni			
2468	medullablastoma			LOH			ni	
3786	oligoastrocytoma			ni				
3878	oligoastrocytoma			h				

SET2[a] ID	b	D15S217	D15S144	D15S118	*hRad51*	THBS1[d]	D15S214	D15S161	D15S123	D15S126	D15S143	CYP19
12		LOH	h	ni		h	ni	ni	LOH	h	h	h
42		h	ni	ni		ni	ni	ni	h	ni	h	LOH
62						ni						LOH
112		ni	h			ni	h	ni	h	ni	LOH	LOH
352	•	ni	LOH	ni		LOH	LOH	h	ni	LOH	LOH	ni
422	•	h	ni	ni		ni	ni	LOH	h	ni	ni	h
542		h	h	LOH		ni	h	ni	h	ni	h	h
762	•	h	ni	LOH		ni	LOH	ni	ni	ni	ni	ni
782		h	LOH?	ni		h	ni	ni	ni	ni	ni	LOH
882	•	ni	LOH	ni		ni	ni	h	ni	ni	ni	h
902		ni	ni	ni		h	h	ni	h	ni	h	LOH
952		ni	h	LOH		ni	h	h	h	LOH	h	ni
962	•	ni	ni	LOH		ni	LOH	ni	h	LOH	ni	ni
1072		ni	ni	h		ni	h	ni	h	ni	ni	ni
1102		ni	LOH	LOH		ni	ni	h	ni	ni	ni	LOH
1112	•	LOH	ni	LOH		ni	LOH	ni	ni	h	LOH	LOH
1122	•	ni	ni	LOH		ni	ni	h	h	LOH	ni	LOH
1162						ni						LOH
1312		LOH	LOH	ni		ni	LOH	ni	LOH	LOH	LOH	LOH
1314			LOH	ni		ni	LOH	ni	LOH	LOH	LOH	LOH
1382		h	ni	ni		ni	h	ni	LOH	h	ni	h

[a] Set 1, metastatic brain tumors; Set 2, primary breast tumors.
[b] Bisulfite methylation analysis of the region of the *hRad51* promoter described in Fig. 3.
[c] h, heterozygous; ni, not informative.
[d] The exact position of THBS1 relative to hRad51 has not been determined.

induced by DNA-damaging agents (37). Both the *E. coli* RecA and yeast RAD51 proteins are induced over 1000-fold during the SOS and RAD9 damage responses, respectively (38). While the mammalian p53 damage checkpoint/response has been compared to these pathways, we did not find p53 consensus transcription-activation sites in the *hRad51* promoter. Furthermore, recent reports suggest a p53/p21-dependent decrease in *hRad51* mRNA in response to ionizing irradiation (39). This distinction may classify *hRad51* more closely to genes such as PCNA, whose mRNA levels increase at the G_1-S-phase boundary but are down-regulated by p53 (40).

While hRAD51 mRNA levels are reduced in response to irradiation, proteins levels appear to persist (37), and hRAD51 becomes part of distinct nuclear foci (41). Other distinct nuclear foci of hRAD51 have been identified during S phase (36) and in B cells induced to undergo class switching (42). Thus, hRad51 appears to be regulated in at least two ways: (*a*) transcriptionally, by genes that confer a proliferative potential, as well as by checkpoint signaling pathways that regulate DNA damage responses; and (*b*) at the protein level, where

interactions with other molecules leads to distinct cellular localization in hRAD51 nuclear foci. It is possible that hRAD51 regulation may occur at the transcriptional level in a cell type-, cell cycle-, or damage response-coordinated manner. Additional studies will be required to determine the context of the *hRad51* promoter and understand its regulation at the molecular level.

We have determined the chromosomal location of *hRad51* relative to markers used in LOH analysis of human tumors (27). *hRad51* was found to be slightly more centromeric than reported previously (15q14 bordering 15q15) and central to a commonly deleted region in brain metastases from several tumor types and breast carcinomas. However, we did not uncover any mutations in the *hRad51* coding region in a cohort of 42 tumors that displayed LOH in the chromosome 15q14–15 region. In addition, we found no indication that expression of *hRad51* might be down-regulated by hypermethylation of the CpG island in the putative promoter region. It is therefore likely that *hRad51* is not the candidate tumor suppressor gene in these tumors. These results support the notion that hRAD51 may be an essential

gene, a redundant gene, or is dispensable and/or independent of the BRCA1/BRCA2 tumor suppressor pathway(s).

Acknowledgments

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Characterization of the Human *Rad51* Genomic Locus and Examination of Tumors with 15q14−15 Loss of Heterozygosity (LOH)

Christoph Schmutte, Gregory Tombline, Kerstin Rhiem, et al.

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