

signed this as the initiation codon. Beginning at this putative initiation codon, the open reading frame apparently encodes a protein of 349 amino acids in length, with a predicted molecular mass of 36,700 daltons.

A computer search for related protein sequences revealed definite similarity between HBP-1 and GCN4 (4), a yeast transcription factor. The two proteins shared 19 identical residues within a sequence of 42 amino acids localized near their respective carboxyl termini (Fig. 4). This region contains two characteristic motifs, namely the basic motif and the leucine zipper motif, which are both found in other eukaryotic transcription factors such as C/EBP (2), GCN4 (2), CREB (3), and the proto-oncogene products Jun and Fos (2). The basic motif constitutes the DNA binding domain in GCN4 (4) and the Fos-Jun complex (13), suggesting that this motif functions as the DNA binding domain of HBP-1. In the typical leucine zipper motif, when the amino acid sequence is arranged to form an idealized α helix, a periodic repetition of leucine residues present at every seventh position over a distance of eight helical turns aligns along one side. A similar array of five leucines and one isoleucine was noted in the sequence of HBP-1. This motif is thought to represent a part of the scaffold that molds a protein to interact with its target site on DNA and allows dimerization of polypeptides that have this motif. Thus our finding that HBP-1, a putative trans-acting factor, appears to have the basic motif and the leucine zipper motif extends the range of evolutionary conservation of the structure of transcription factors.

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(pH 7.9), 100 mM KCl, 0.5 mM dithiothreitol, 0.25% powdered milk, poly(dI-dC) (10 μ g/ml), and nick-translated-catenated probe (0.01 μ g/ml) (made by ligating 30-bp oligonucleotides).

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His; I, Ile; K, Lys; L, Leu; M, Met; N, Asn; P, Pro; Q, Gln; R, Arg; S, Ser; T, Thr; V, Val; W, Trp; and Y, Tyr.

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Recognition of Thymine·Adenine Base Pairs by Guanine in a Pyrimidine Triple Helix Motif

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Oligonucleotide recognition offers a powerful chemical approach for the sequence-specific binding of double-helical DNA. In the pyrimidine-Hoogsteen model, a binding size of >15 homopurine base pairs affords >30 discrete sequence-specific hydrogen bonds to duplex DNA. Because pyrimidine oligonucleotides limit triple helix formation to homopurine tracts, it is desirable to determine whether oligonucleotides can be used to bind all four base pairs of DNA. A general solution would allow targeting of oligonucleotides (or their analogs) to any given sequence in the human genome. A study of 20 base triplets reveals that the triple helix can be extended from homopurine to mixed sequences. Guanine contained within a pyrimidine oligonucleotide specifically recognizes thymine·adenine base pairs in duplex DNA. Such specificity allows binding at mixed sites in DNA from simian virus 40 and human immunodeficiency virus.

THE SEQUENCE-SPECIFIC RECOGNITION of double-helical DNA is essential for the regulation of cellular functions including transcription, replication, and cell division. The ability to design synthetic molecules that bind sequence-specifically to unique sites on human DNA could have major implications for the treatment of genetic, neoplastic, and viral diseases (1, 2). Pyrimidine oligodeoxyribonucleotides [15- to 18-nucleotide (nt) oligomers] bind homopurine sites within large double-stranded DNA by triple helix formation (3-5). Pyrimidine oligonucleotides bind in the major groove, parallel to the purine strand of Watson-Crick double-helical DNA (3). Specificity is due to Hoogsteen hydrogen bonding, wherein thymine (T) recognizes adenine·thymine (AT) base pairs (T·AT triplet) and protonated cytosine (C) recognizes guanine·cytosine (GC) base

pairs (C+GC triplet) (6-8) (Fig. 1). In addition to length and sequence composition, the binding affinity and specificity of the pyrimidine oligonucleotide for duplex DNA is sensitive to pH, organic cosolvent, added cations, and temperature (3, 4). Less well understood is purine recognition of double-helical DNA (purine-purine·pyrimidine triplets) (7, 9-11). Recently, purine oligonucleotides have been postulated to bind parallel to purines in duplex DNA by triple helix formation (A·AT and G·GC base triplets) (11).

We examined the relative affinities of common bases for all four base pairs within a pyrimidine triple helix motif. We report that G in a pyrimidine oligonucleotide specifically recognizes TA base pairs within mixed purine-pyrimidine sites. We believe that this G·TA triplet represents a new specific interaction stabilizing triplex formation in mixed purine-pyrimidine sequences. Although there will undoubtedly be sequence-composition effects, this finding extends specific recognition within the pyrimidine triple-helix motif to three of the four possible base pairs in double-helical DNA.

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Recognition of TA by G was revealed by the study of the effects on triple-strand formation of 20 possible base triplets at a single common position (Table 1). The use of oligonucleotides equipped with the DNA cleaving moiety, thymidine-EDTA·Fe(II) (T*) (12, 13), allowed the relative stabilities of triple helix formation between 30-bp DNA duplexes containing the site d(A₇XA₇)·d(T₇YT₇) (XY = AT, GC, CG, or TA) and a series of 15-nt oligomers differing at one base position d(T₇ZT₇) [Z = T, C, A, G, or I (I = inosine)] to be determined by the affinity cleaving method (1) (Fig. 2B). The 30-bp duplexes were labeled with ³²P at the 5' end of the target-site strand d(T₇YT₇). The DNA binding-cleaving reactions were performed under conditions that were sensitive to the stability of the variable base triplet in the middle of a thymine 15-nt fragment upon triple helix formation (pH 7.0, 23°C, 40% ethanol). The most intense

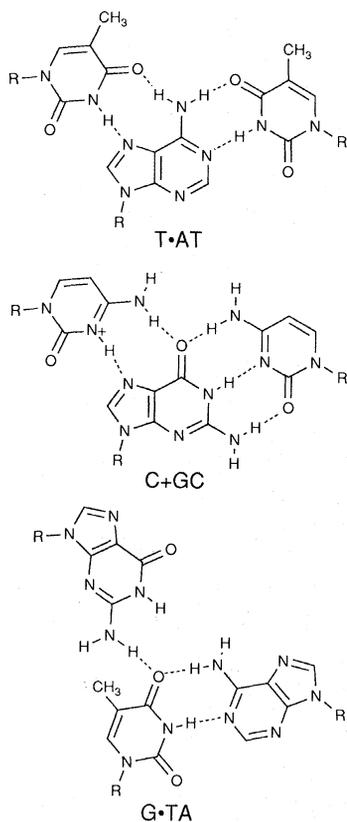


Fig. 1. (Top) Pyrimidine motif with isomorphous base triplets, T•AT and C+GC. Each pyrimidine base is bound in the major groove by two Hoogsteen hydrogen bonds to the purine base in the Watson-Crick duplex. **(Bottom)** Hypothetical model for G•TA base triplet within a pyrimidine triple helix motif where G (N-2) is bound in the major groove by a hydrogen bond to T (O-4) of the Watson-Crick TA base pair. With more severe perturbation of the third strand DNA backbone or disruption of the Watson-Crick hydrogen bonds between T and A, additional hydrogen bonds may conceivably be formed between G and A.

cleavage patterns were observed for the combinations Z = T, XY = AT; Z = C, XY = GC; and Z = G, XY = TA (Fig. 2A and Table 1). The cleavage observed for two of these combinations (lanes 3 and 8) represents the known ability of T and C to form T•AT and C+GC base triplets, respectively. Remarkably, intense cleavage is also observed for a G•TA base triplet (lane 18)

implying that G may form specific hydrogen bonds to TA. The lack of binding-cleavage observed for base triplets G•AT, G•GC, and G•CG (lanes 15, 16, and 17, respectively, Fig. 2) demonstrates that G is specific for a TA base pair. The lack of binding-cleavage observed for base triplets T•TA, C•TA, A•TA, and I•TA shows that the base pair TA is also specific for G in the third strand

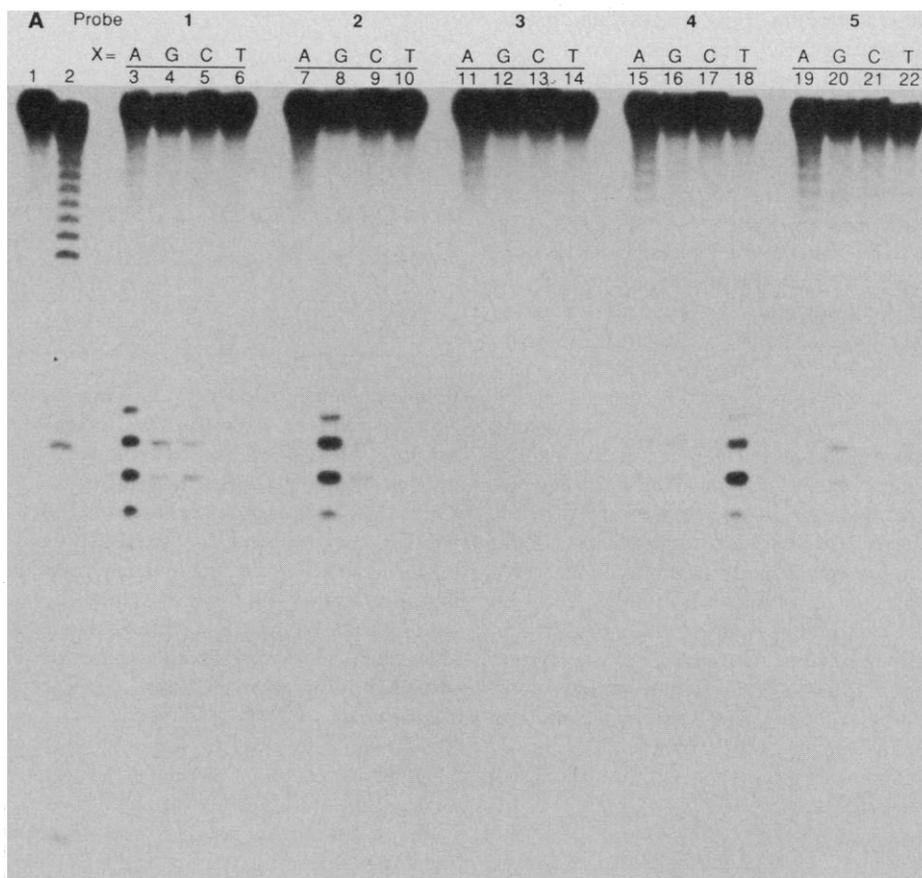
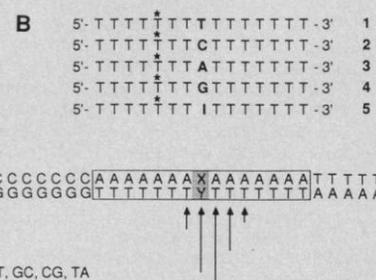


Fig. 2. (A) Autoradiogram of the 20% denaturing polyacrylamide gel. The cleavage reactions were carried out by combining a mixture of oligonucleotide-EDTA (1 μM), spermine (1 mM), and Fe(II) (25 μM) with the ³²P-labeled 30-oligomer duplex [~12,500 ± 600 cpm] in a solution of tris-acetate, pH 7.0 (25 μM), NaCl (100 mM), calf thymus DNA (100 μM in base pairs), and 40% ethanol and then incubating at 0°C for 30 min and at 23°C for 30 min (16). Cleavage reactions were initiated by addition of dithiothreitol (DTT) (3 mM) and allowed to proceed for 6 hours at 23°C. The reactions were stopped by freezing and lyophilization, and the cleavage products were analyzed by gel electrophoresis. (Lanes 1 to 22) Duplexes containing 5' end-labeled d(A₅-T₇-YT₇-G₁₀). (Lane 1) Control showing intact 5' labeled 30-bp DNA standard obtained after treatment according to the cleavage reactions in the absence of oligonucleotide-EDTA; (lane 2) products of Maxam-Gilbert G+A sequencing reaction (17); (lanes 3 to 22) DNA cleavage products produced by oligonucleotide-EDTA·Fe (1 to 5); 1 (lanes 3 to 6), 2 (lanes 7 to 10), 3 (lanes 11 to 14), 4 (lanes 15 to 18), 5 (lanes 19 to 22). XY = AT (lanes 3, 7, 11, 15, and 19); XY = GC (lanes 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20); XY = CG (lanes 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21); XY = TA (lanes 6, 10, 14, 18, and 22). **(B)** (Above) Sequences of oligonucleotide-EDTA 1 to 5 where T* is the position of the thymidine-EDTA (13). The oligonucleotides differ at one base position indicated in bold type. (Below) DNA cleavage pattern derived by densitometry of the autoradiogram shown in (A) (lane 18). The heights of the arrows represent the relative cleavage intensities at the indicated bases. The box indicates the double-stranded sequence bound by oligonucleotide-EDTA·Fe(II) 1 to 5. The Watson-Crick base pair (AT, GC, CG, or TA) opposite the variant base in the oligonucleotide is shaded (see Table 1).



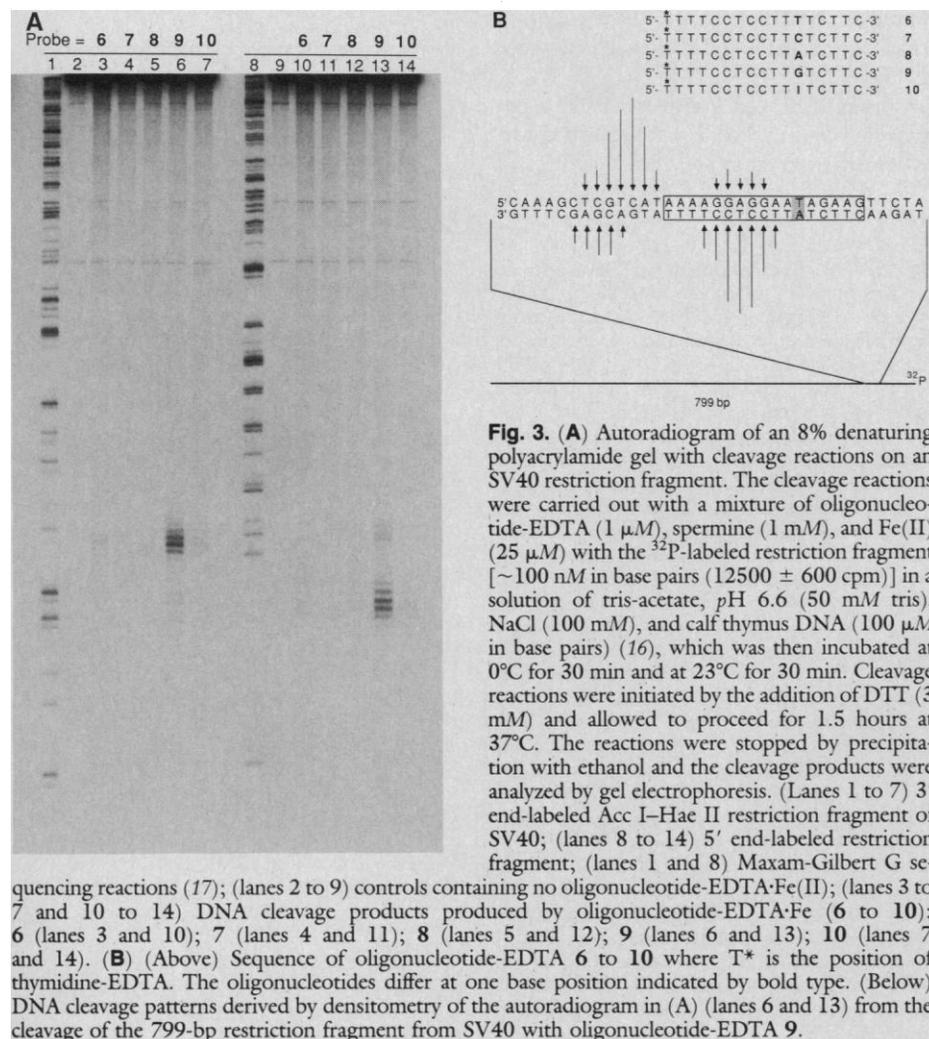
(lanes 6, 10, 14, and 22, Fig. 2A and Table 1). In order to test for the importance of the amino group of G in the G-TA base triplet, G was replaced with I, a purine base that lacks NH₂ at position 2. The lack of cleavage observed with oligonucleotide 5 [Z = I] indicates that the amino group of guanine is important for recognition of TA base pairs. No binding is observed for Z = 8-bromoguanosine, XY = TA. Since 8-bromoguanosine prefers the *syn* conformation (14), the simplest model is a G-TA base triplet structure where G is in the *anti* conformation with respect to the sugar ring and forms at least one hydrogen bond between G and T (G, N-2 to T, O-4) (Fig. 1, bottom). Finally, minor cleavage was observed for triplets T-GC, T-CG, C-CG, and G-CG (lanes 4, 5, 9, and 17). These bases may hydrogen-bond to the Watson-Crick base pair to a lesser extent or may be sterically compatible with triple strand formation.

To determine whether this specificity can be observed at mixed sequences within larger DNA fragments, cleavage of a 799-bp simian virus 40 (SV40) restriction fragment

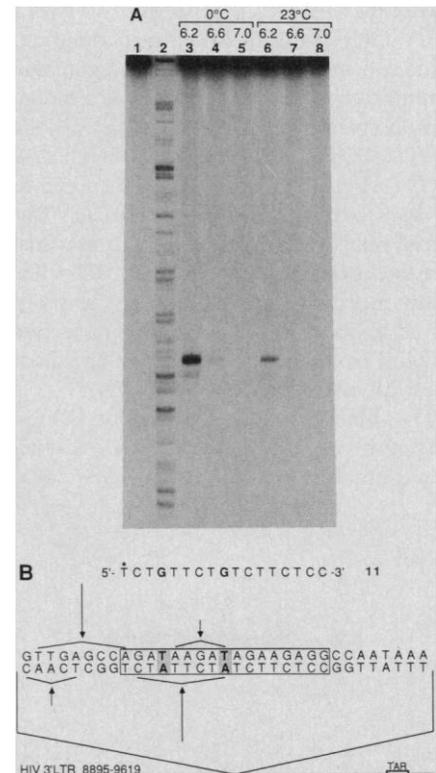
by an oligonucleotide-EDTA-Fe(II) series (6 to 10) (5'-T*T₃C₂TC₂TZTCTC-3') was examined. This restriction fragment contains the 17-bp sequence d(AAAAGGA-GGAATAGAAG), which represents a purine-rich site containing one pyrimidine (T). The cleavage efficiencies of oligonucleotides 6 to 10, differing at one base position

Table 1. Twenty base triplets were examined for binding specificity compatible with the pyrimidine-Hoogsteen triple helix motif by the experiment described in Fig. 2. Relative cleavage efficiencies are (+++) 25 to 30 (±3)% cleavage, (+) 10 to 15 (±1.5)% cleavage, (-) <5 (±0.5)% cleavage. The data are obtained from scintillation counting and densitometric analysis of the autoradiogram shown in Fig. 2A.

W-C duplex (XY)	Pyrimidine third strand (Z)				
	T	C	A	G	I
AT	+++	-	-	-	-
GC	+	+++	-	-	-
CG	+	+	-	+	-
TA	-	-	-	+++	-



opposite the TA Watson-Crick base pair, were examined under conditions sensitive to the stability of the base triplet at the TA site (pH 6.6, 37°C). Oligonucleotide-EDTA 9, but not 6, 7, 8, or 10, produced significant site-specific cleavage on the 799-bp fragment (Fig. 3A). Oligonucleotide 9 contains G opposite the TA base pair. Site-specific



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Synthesis of Functional Human Hemoglobin in Transgenic Mice

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Human α - and β -globin genes were separately fused downstream of two erythroid-specific deoxyribonuclease (DNase) I super-hypersensitive sites that are normally located 50 kilobases upstream of the human β -globin gene. These two constructs were coinjected into fertilized mouse eggs, and expression was analyzed in transgenic animals that developed. Mice that had intact copies of the transgenes expressed high levels of correctly initiated human α - and β -globin messenger RNA specifically in erythroid tissue. An authentic human hemoglobin was formed in adult erythrocytes that when purified had an oxygen equilibrium curve identical to the curve of native human hemoglobin A (Hb A). Thus, functional human hemoglobin can be synthesized in transgenic mice. This provides a foundation for production of mouse models of human hemoglobinopathies such as sickle cell disease.

CORRECTLY REGULATED EXPRESSION of human β -globin genes in transgenic mice is well documented (1, 2). The human gene is expressed only in adult erythroid tissue and, in some animals with relatively high transgene copy numbers, the level of human β -globin mRNA is equivalent to endogenous mouse β -globin mRNA. Analysis of constructs with β -globin gene fragments inserted upstream of a reporter gene demonstrate that sequences located immediately upstream, within and downstream of the gene contribute to the correct temporal and tissue specific expression (3). Sequences located 50 kb upstream of the β -globin gene also have an effect on globin gene expression (4–8). When these sequences that contain erythroid-specific, DNase I super-hypersensitive (HS) sites are fused upstream of the human β -globin gene

and injected into fertilized mouse eggs, large amounts of human β -globin mRNA are synthesized in virtually all transgenic mice that develop (5, 7). These experiments suggest that the super-hypersensitive sites define locus activation regions that “open” a large chromosomal domain for expression specifically in erythroid cells and dramatically enhance globin gene expression.

The human α 1-globin gene is also expressed at high levels in erythroid tissue of transgenic mice when the injected gene is flanked by super-hypersensitive sites from the human β -globin locus (8). Thus a com-

plete human hemoglobin could be synthesized in mice if human α - and β -globin gene constructs were coinjected into fertilized eggs. Previous studies demonstrated that two of the five HS sites in the β -globin locus were sufficient for high-level expression (7, 8). Therefore, we inserted HS I and II (a 12.9-kb Mlu I–Cla I fragment) upstream of the human α 1- and β -globin genes (Fig. 1) and coinjected equimolar amounts of these constructs into fertilized mouse eggs (9). The eggs were transferred into the oviducts of pseudopregnant foster mothers, and seven transgenic mouse lines were established from founder animals that contained intact copies of the injected fragments. Total RNA from ten tissues of adult progeny were then analyzed for correctly initiated human α -, human β -, mouse α -, and mouse β -globin mRNA by primer extension (10) (Fig. 2A). Human α - and β -globin transgenes were expressed only in blood and spleen, which are both erythroid tissues in mice; detection in the lung is the result of blood contamination (11) because both human and mouse α - and β -globin mRNA are observed in this nonerythroid tissue. Human α - and β -globin mRNA levels in blood, as measured by solution hybridization, were 100% and 120% of endogenous mouse β -globin mRNA, respectively. Therefore, erythroid-specific, human α - and β -globin gene expression can be achieved in adult transgenic mice after coinjection of α - and β -globin constructs that contain HS I and II.

To determine whether complete human hemoglobins were formed, we separated hemolysates (12) of the blood of animals from two different transgenic lines by non-denaturing isoelectric focusing (IEF) (Fig. 2B). The first lane is a mouse control and the last lane is a normal human sample. The predominant band in each of the controls is the major adult hemoglobin; mouse α 2 β 2 or human α 2 β 2, respectively. In both transgenic mouse samples 5394 and 5393, bands that run at the same pI as human Hb A

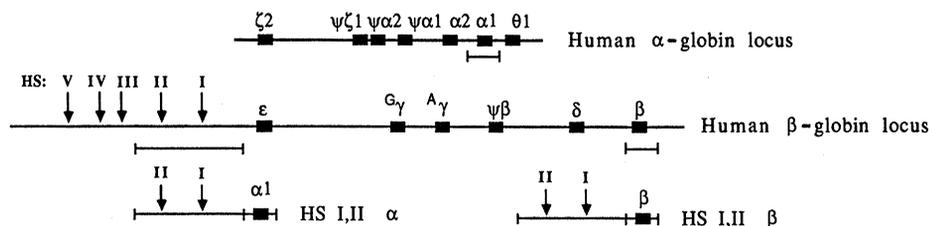


Fig. 1. HS I,II α -globin and HS I,II β -globin gene constructs. Eighty-five kilobases of the human β -globin locus and 35 kb of the human α -globin locus are drawn to scale. The brackets beneath the HS sites, α 1-globin gene, and β -globin gene indicate fragments used for construction. A 12.9-kb Mlu I–Cla I fragment that contained erythroid-specific, DNase I super-hypersensitive (HS, arrow) sites I and II from the human β -globin locus was inserted into a modified pUC19 plasmid upstream of a 3.8-kb Bgl II–Eco RI fragment carrying the human α 1-globin gene or a 4.1-kb Hpa I–Xba I fragment with the human β -globin gene. The 16.7- and 17.0-kb fragments with HS I,II α -globin and HS I,II β -globin were separated from plasmid sequences and coinjected into fertilized mouse eggs (9).

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