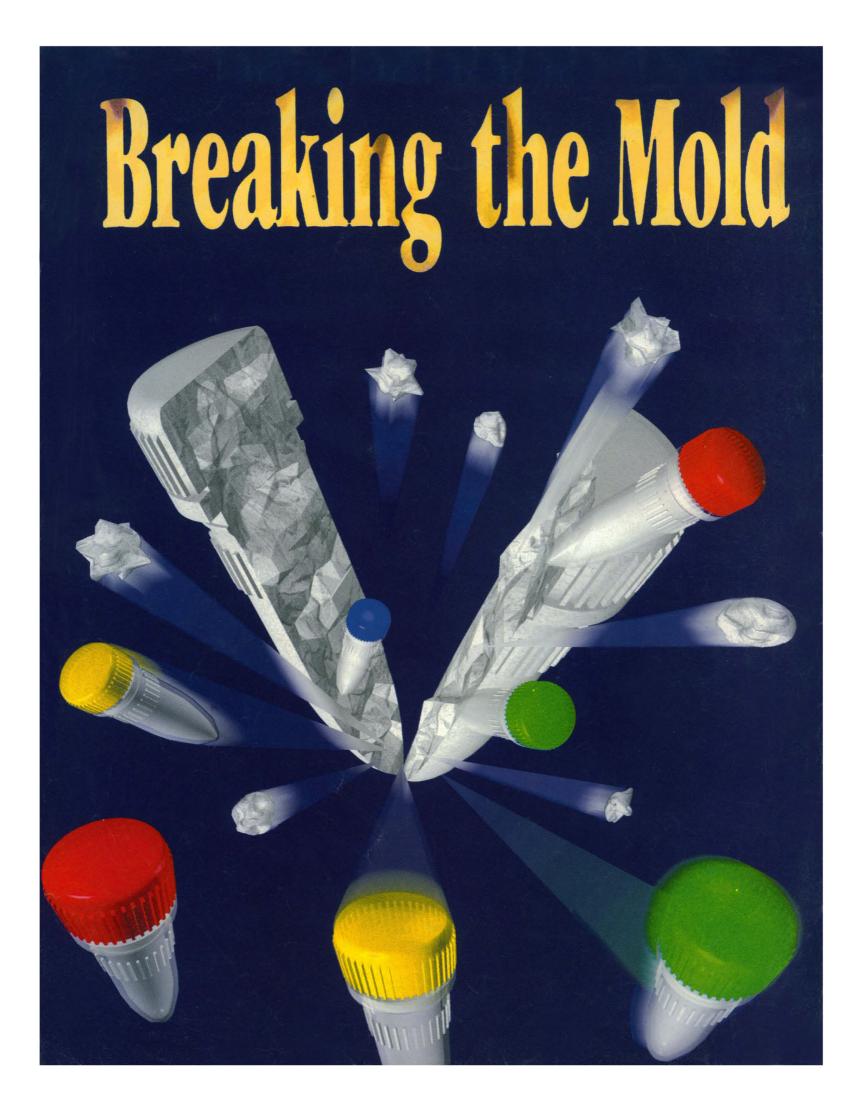
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3. Mathur, E., et al. (1992) The San Diego Conference on Nucleic Acids Abstract #10.



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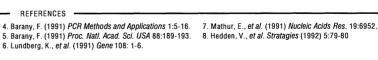
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COVER

Model of the protein lysin superimposed on the shells of a red abalone. To fertilize the egg, the abalone spermatozoon must disrupt the protective vitelline envelope. Lysin binds to the filamentous glycoproteins that form the envelope and creates a hole by means of a nonenzymatic process. The lysin-glycoprotein association also contributes to the species recognition between sperm and egg. See page 1864. [Cover design: Peggy Myer. Digital photography: Bob Turner. Molecular model: Mike Pique]

1877

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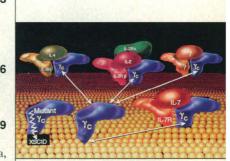
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1818, 1874, 1877 & 1880

Common subunit for interleukin receptors

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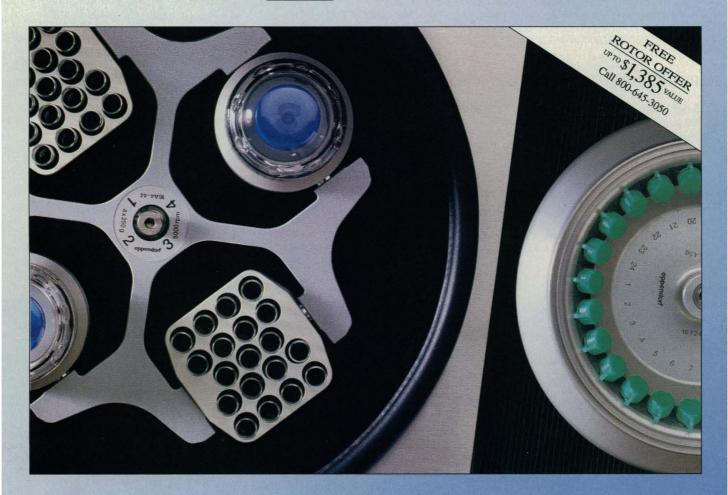
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THIS WEEK IN SCIENCE

edited by PHIL SZUROMI

Origins and silence

In yeast, extra copies of the mating-type genes are silenced, or maintained in an inactive state. Silencing requires flanking sequence elements (silencers). One silencer, HMR-E, contains an ARS consensus sequence, a sequence found at yeast replication origins. A link has now been made between transcription silencing and DNA replication (see the Perspective by Newlon, p. 1830). Foss et al. (p. 1838) found a mutation in a gene ORC2 that disrupts both transcriptional silencing and the cell cycle. The sequence of this protein matches that of a protein subunit (ORC2) of the origin recognition complex (ORC) characterized by Bell et al. (p. 1844). Li and Herskowitz (p. 1870) screened for proteins that bind to the yeast ARS sequence and found another ORC subunit, ORC6, which was also characterized by Bell et al.

Pinning down the transition state

Although numerous studies have been made of the elementary reaction between F and H_2 , quantitative agreement between theory and experiment has been elusive. Manolopoulos et al. (p. 1852; see the Perspective by Schatz, p. 1828) used photoelectron spectroscopy to characterize the FH₂⁻ intermediate, which undergoes electron photodetachment near the transition state, for the para and normal populations of the hydrogen rotational state. Exact quantum reactive scattering simulations of these spectra on a highly accurate ab initio potential energy surface yielded excellent agreement. Such agreement could not be obtained with semiempirical potential energy surfaces that have normally been used.

Pushing superconductivity to 250 kelvin?

One characteristic of the various families of high-temperature cuprate superconductors is that the transition temperature is roughly a function of the number of CuO_2 layers. However, it has proven difficult to synthesize pure phases for materials with more than three layers. Laguës *et al.* (p. 1850; see news story by Pool, p. 1816) report the epitaxial growth of a thin film of an artificial cuprate compound of the BiSrCaCuO family with building blocks of eight adjacent cuprate layers. This material was grown by sequentially imposed layer epitaxy on a single crystal of SrTiO₃ at a substrate temperature of 500°C. The resistivity of this material drops five orders of magnitude between 280 and 250 K, and it exhibits a diamagnetic variation of susceptibility and magnetization below 290 K. These and other results suggest the possibility of a superconducting transition at 250 K.

Riding high

Nitrous oxide (N_2O) , a greenhouse gas, is currently increasing in abundance in the atmosphere. Like CO₂, its global budget seems to be out of balance between known sources and sinks. To estimate fluxes from sources better, Kim and Craig (p. 1855) measured nitrogen and oxygen isotopic ratios of N₂O in several soils and in stratospheric gas samples. The data imply that there is a large back flux of N₂O from the stratosphere, but this flux appears to be so large that it must in turn be balanced by a large input of N₂O from the oceans.

Separation anxiety

The abundances of siderophile (metal-loving) elements such as nickel and iridium in the Earth's mantle seem too high to account for equilibrium fractionation of the iron-rich core at temperatures up to 1600°C, the limit of earlier measurements. A recent controversial proposal is that this imbalance can be explained by the separation of the core at higher pressures and temperatures where the distribution coefficients for siderophile elements between iron melt and silicate mantle are closer to unity. Walker *et al.* (p. 1858) report measurements of distribution coefficients for some of the problematic elements at temperatures up to 3000 K. Coefficients for germanium, gold, sulfur, and nickel do decrease significantly with temperature, but discrepancies among elements are still evident. The data for sulfur also suggest that it or carbon, rather than oxygen, may be the light element in the core.

Share and share alike

Mutations in the g chain of the interleukin-2 receptor (IL-2Rg) can lead to X-linked severe combined immunodeficiency (XSCID) in humans, yet mice that do not produce IL-2 still develop a population of mature mature T cells. The IL-2Rg was found to be a component required for high-affinity binding by the IL-4 receptor (Kondo et al., p. 1874, and Russell et al., p. 1880) as well as the IL-7 receptor (Noguchi et al., p. 1877). The cytokines IL-4 and IL-7 both exhibit T cell growth factor activity; disabling activation in several receptor systems may account for the virtual absence of T cells in XSCID patients (see news story by Nowak, p. 1818).

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Oxygen signal

When infected by a pathogen, plants may produce both local and systemic defensive responses. This phenomenon, termed systemic acquired resistance, is mediated in part by salicylic acid (SA). Chen et al. (p. 1883) have cloned an SAbinding protein that has catalase activity and is inhibited by SA. Inhibition increases the amount of active oxygen species and induces the expression of defense-related genes. Active oxygen species as well as SA seem to be critical elements in the signaling pathway from infection to systemic resistance.

In one package

Many cellular functions are controlled by guanosine triphosphate (GTP)-binding proteins. Hydrolysis of GTP by these proteins causes their inactivation. The small GTP-binding proteins like Ras are regulated by GTPase activating proteins or GAPs. However, the heterotrimeric GTP-binding proteins (G proteins) that couple receptors on the cell surface to intracellular signaling pathways have intrinsically high GTPase activity. Markby et al. (p. 1895) present evidence that G proteins contain a separate domain that functions as a GAP. The GTP-binding and GAP-like portions of a G protein α subunit were expressed separately and shown to retain their essential functions. The results suggest a mechanism by which GTPase activity may be enhanced.

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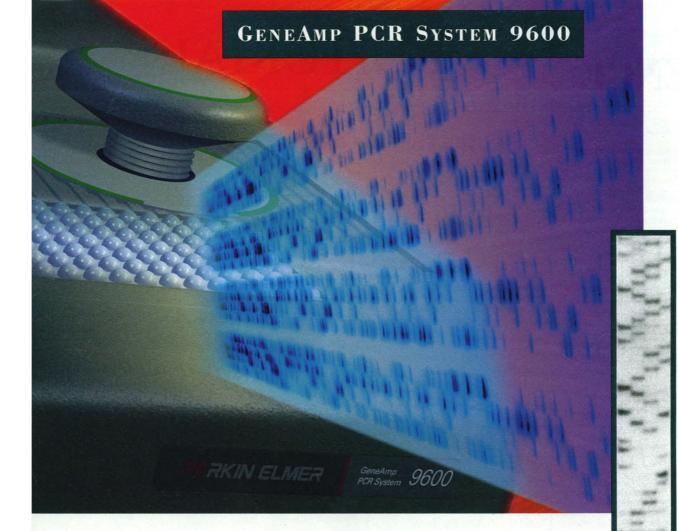


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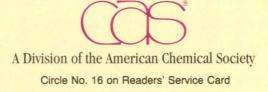
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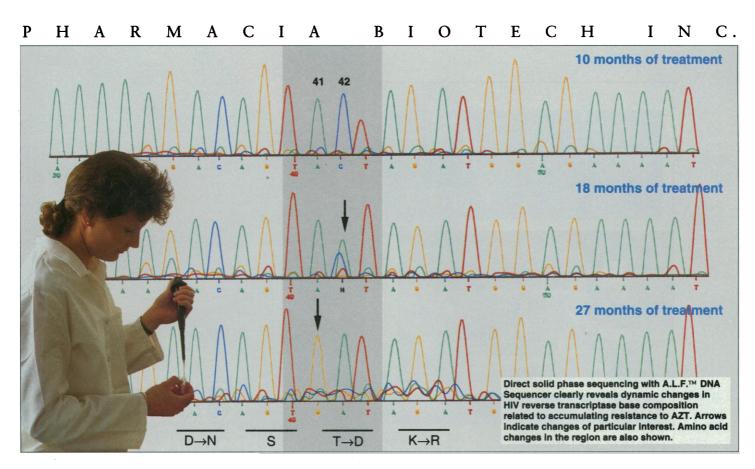
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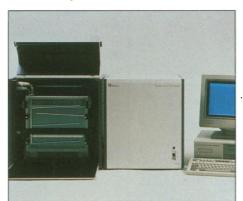
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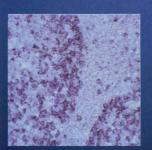
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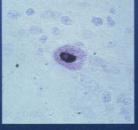
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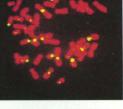


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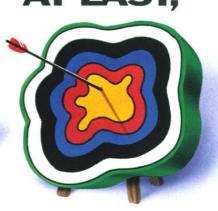
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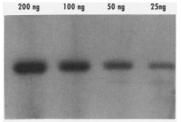
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Reference 1) Sano, M. et al. (1992) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 89, 8512-8516.

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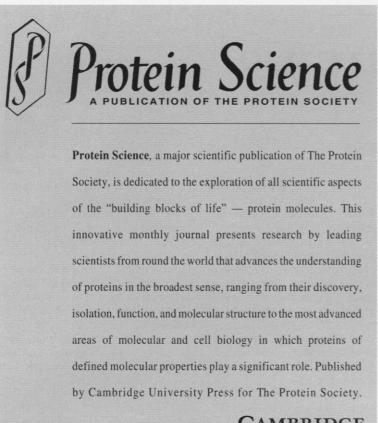
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