A modified mini-primer set for the mtDNA control region sequence analysis from highly degraded forensic remains

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Mitochondrial DNA

✦ General properties
  • Maternal inheritance
  • High copy number per cell
    → Powerful tool for forensic identity testing of highly degraded skeletal remains

✦ Control region : major target for forensic field
  • Hypervariable regions (HV1, HV2 and HV3)
  • Length heteroplasmy and point heteroplasmy
The different annealing temperature and times for primer pairs make mtDNA analysis labor-intensive.

A sequence gap on samples with the HV1 length heteroplasmy.

AFDIL mini-primer produces reduced or inhibited amplification yield by some frequent mutation.

Primer design of modified mini-primer set

Primer3 (http://www-genome.wi.mit.edu/cgi-bin/primer3/primer3_www.cgi)

- Size: 18 - 27 nucleotide (optimum: 20 nucleotide)
- Temperature: 55℃ - 63℃ (optimum: 60℃)
- GC content: 20% - 80%

→ Screening PCR

The final set of primers with high amplification efficiency, relatively short primer length, and high Tm.
The modified mini-primer sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control region</th>
<th>Amplicon</th>
<th>Primer sequence (5′ → 3′)</th>
<th>Amplicon size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M11</td>
<td>F15989 CCC AAA GCT AAG ATT CTA AT</td>
<td>165bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R16153 CAG GTG TGC AAG TAT TTA TGG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M12</td>
<td>F16097 TAC ATT ACT GCC AGC CAC CA</td>
<td>137bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R16233 TGA TAG TTG AAG GTT GAT TGC TGT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HV1</td>
<td>F16159 CAT AAA AAC CCA ATC CAC AT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R16304 ACT GTT AAG GTG GGG TAG GT</td>
<td>146bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M13</td>
<td>F16247 ACT CCA AAG CCA CCC CTC A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R16410 GAG GAT GGT GGT CAA GGG AC</td>
<td>164bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M14</td>
<td>F015 CAC CCT ATT AAC CAC TCA CG</td>
<td>173bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R187 CGC CTG TAA TAT TGA ACG TA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HV2</td>
<td>F120 CGC AGT ATC TGT CTT TGA TTC C</td>
<td>166bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M21</td>
<td>R285 GTT ATG ATG TCT GTG TGG AA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F220 TGC TGG TAG GAC ATA ATA AT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M22</td>
<td>R389 CTG GGG CTG GTG TTA GG</td>
<td>170bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PCR amplification efficiency test

- **DNA samples**
  - mtDNA haplogroup D4 (16223-16362-73-263-315.1C)
  - HV1 length heteroplasmy
  - Mutations are located at AFDIL’s mini-primer annealing site
    - → Long bone and molar teeth samples from 55 year-old skeletal remains
      - DNA from blood samples

- **PCR amplification**
  - Total 25.0 μl PCR reaction : 2 μl of DNA, 2.5 μl of STR buffer, 2.5 U AmpliTaq Gold polymerase and primer

- **Thermal Cycling**
  - 95°C for 11 min
  - 95°C for 20 sec
  - 50°C for 20 sec
  - 72°C for 30 sec
  - 72°C for 7 min
  - Blood sample : annealing Tm - 56°C, 35 cycles
**Comparison of the PCR amplification efficiency**

A. AFDIL mini-primer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HV1</th>
<th>HV2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mps1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. modified mini-primer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HV1</th>
<th>HV2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mps1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HV2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PCR amplification efficiency on mutation samples**

**Mutation frequencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasians</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asians</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16140 mutation</th>
<th>16209 mutation</th>
<th>16304 mutation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mps1a</td>
<td>M11</td>
<td>Mps2a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16140 mutation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16209 mutation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16304 mutation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of the sequence alignment with the 16189 mutation sample

A. AFDIL mini-primer

B. Modified mini-primer

The modified mini-primer set

- The modified mini-primer set is composed of four and three PCR amplicons.
- The forward primer of M13 was designed to be avoid the possible gap on samples with the HV1 length heteroplasmy.
- Using the FBI mtDNA population database, the first to the third nucleotide from the 3’ end of each primer were located at the nucleotide position with a low mutation frequency in the Caucasians, Asians, and Africans.
Alternative primers

📍 In Africans
n.p. 16265 mutation frequency : 6.5%
M14 - F16247 → F16255 (5’-GCC ACC CCT CAC CCA CTA G)
M13 - R16304 → R16322 (5’-TGG CTT TAT GTA CTA TGT AC)

📍 In Caucasians
n.p. 239 mutation frequency : 1.9%
M23 – F220 → F220* (5’-TGC TTG TAG GAC ATA ATA ATA ACA A)

Conclusion

📍 We developed the modified mini-primer set which makes up for the weak points of AFDIL mini-primer set.
  • HV1 length heteroplasmy
  • Nucleotide variability
  • PCR amplification condition

📍 The modified mini-primer set will be a useful tool for mtDNA control region sequence analysis from highly degraded forensic samples.
Acknowledgements

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