

RFX-1, a putative alpha Adducin interacting protein in a human kidney library

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Abstract Adducin regulates tubular absorption of sodium by modulating the expression levels of the sodium–potassium-ATPase in renal tubular cells. Adducin is a candidate gene in the pathogenesis of hypertension. Yeast two hybrid screen showed a specific interaction between human alpha Adducin and the regulatory factor for X box (RFX-1), a nuclear protein that down regulates the expression of several proteins in non neuronal cells. The interaction was confirmed in cells through coimmunoprecipitation and colocalization experiments. The binding of alpha Adducin to RFX-I and their nuclear co-localization suggests that Adducin can have a role in modulating the transcriptional regulating activity of RFX-I.
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Keywords: Adducin; Hypertension; RFX-1; Sodium absorption; Yeast two hybrid; Kidney library

1. Introduction

Essential hypertension is a multifactorial disease due to genetic and environmental factors. It is a common disease with a prevalence ranging from 25% to 30%, with wide variations depending on the ethnical and racial composition of the population [1].

Recent studies suggest that Adducin plays a leading role in the pathogenesis of human hypertension. Mutations in the alpha-Adducin gene have been associated with increased renal sodium retention and with the development of high blood pressure in humans and rodents [2,3], although this association has not been found in all the populations studied [4,5]. Alpha Adducin is an ubiquitously expressed cytoskeleton protein that is involved in cell-to-cell contact [6] and regulates both actin dynamics [7] and the expression of the sodium–potassium-ATPase on the basolateral side of renal tubular

cells, thus modulating the complex tubular re-absorption of sodium. The activity of the sodium–potassium-ATPase pump is regulated by hormonal factors, like dopamine, aldosterone and vasopressin as well as by non hormonal factors. The sodium retentive effect has been attributed to an increase in the rate of actin polymerization and in the number of Na, K-ATPase units in the plasma membrane of renal tubular cells [8].

We performed yeast two hybrid screening using a kidney library as a source of prey cDNA. A clone coding for a putative Adducin interactive molecule was identified, as the COOH terminal sequence of regulatory factor for X box (RFX-I), a non neuronal cell-specific transcription factor that inactivates the transcription of the microtubule-associated protein MAP1A [9].

We present evidence, based upon colocalization and coimmunoprecipitation experiments, that the interaction is specific and occurs in yeast as well as in eukaryotic cells. These findings suggest that Adducin can have a role in modulating the transcriptional regulating activity of RFX-I, with possible consequences on the establishment of an actin-microtubule cytoskeleton network, regulating the internalization of Na, K-ATPase subunits.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Constructs

pCMVneoHA-Adducin. The full length human Adducin cDNA, cloned into pCMVneoHA, was a generous gift of Prof. Bianchi.

pBridge-Adducin. Polymerase chain reaction (Klen.Taq; BD Biosciences/Clontech, Palo Alto, CA) was used to amplify alpha Adducin from pCMVneoHA-Adducin. Primers introducing EcoRI restriction site (CAGAATTCATGAATG GTGATTCTCGTGCTG) and BamHI restriction site (CTGGATCCTCAGGAGTCACTCTTCT) were used.

The amplified fragment, flanked by an EcoRI site upstream and a BamHI site downstream, was ligated into pGEM-T Easy vector (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) and subcloned into the multiple cloning sites of pBridge (Clontech laboratories, Inc. Palo Alto, CA).

pCDNA3 Myc-RFX-I. A pCMV SPORT 6 vector containing the full length cDNA sequence of RFX1 was obtained from Research Genetics through Invitrogen (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA).

The coding sequence of RFX-I was amplified from pCMV SPORT 6 RFX-1 by a PCR based method (Klen.Taq).

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90 The following primers were used:
91 (1) (ATGCGGAATTCCATGGAACAAAACTCATCTCAGAC-
92 GAGGATCTGGCAACACAGGCG TAT) introduced an
93 *EcoRI* restriction site and a Myc tag 5' to the sequence coding
94 for RFX-1.
95 (2) (GGCACTCGAG TTAGCTGGAGGGCAGCGCCT) intro-
96 duced a *XhoI* site 3' to the sequence coding for RFX-1.
97 The amplified fragment, was subcloned into pcDNA3 (Invitrogen).
98 This vector was used in all the experiments requiring the expression
99 of RFX-1 in eukaryotic cells.
100

101 2.2. Yeast two hybrid screening

102 To identify Adducin binding proteins, a yeast two hybrid system was
103 used (MATCHMAKER Gal4 Two-Hybrid Clontech Laboratories
104 Inc.) [10]. The bait plasmid pBridge-Adducin, with full length human
105 alpha Adducin expressed as a fusion protein with the DNA binding
106 domain (BD) of the yeast transcription factor Gal 4, was used to trans-
107 form a suitable yeast strain (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* AH109). The
108 yeasts transformed by pBridge-Adducin were used for mating with a
109 *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* host strain Y187 (Clontech laboratories,
110 Inc.) pretransformed by a MATCHMAKER human Kidney cDNA
111 pACT2 derived library, cloned into a yeast GAL4 activation domain
112 (AD) expressing proteins containing a HA-tag at the N terminus. After
113 20 h of mating we spread the mating mixture on SD/-Ade/-His/-Leu/-
114 Trp plates. Yeast colonies that demonstrated activation of both report-
115 ers conferring galactose-dependent blue staining in the presence of X-
116 Gal (5-bromo-4chloro-3-indolylbeta-D-galactopyranoside) and ade-
117 nine and histidine-independent growth were selected and considered
118 for further evaluation to screen for putative alpha Adducin interacting
119 proteins.

120 Library plasmid DNA was isolated from this selection of clones in
121 presence of lyticase solution and then rescued into HB101 *Escherichia*
122 *coli* strain by the CaCl₂ method (Invitrogen.). The transformants were
123 recovered on minimal M9 selective medium lacking leucine for nutri-
124 tional selection. The specificity of the interaction was tested for several
125 clones by retransforming the interactor plasmid into yeast expressing
126 pBridge-Adducin bait, as well as in yeast strain transformed with
127 empty vector, pBridge and two unrelated bait plasmids: pBridge-
128 HMG and pBridge-SGK. The growth was then assayed on plates
129 SD/-Ade/-His/-Leu/-Trp. The cDNA encoding specific alpha Adducin
130 interacting proteins were sequenced and studied with BLAST analysis.

131 2.3. Expression in COS 7

132 COS 7 cells were plated at a density of 3.5×10^5 cells/ml in six well
133 plates. For the immunofluorescence studies cells were plated at a den-
134 sity of 2.0×10^5 cells/ml on glass cover slips in individual 35 mm plates.
135 Cells were cultured overnight in DMEM containing 10% fetal bovine
136 serum (Invitrogen). The following day the cells were transfected with

eukaryotic expression vectors using lipofectamine plus (Invitrogen.)
following the manufacturer's instructions. We used pCMVneoHA-
Adducin (600 ng/ml) and pCDNA3 Myc-RFX-1 (600 ng/well) for the
coimmunoprecipitation experiments and for the confocal microscopy
experiments. Empty vectors were transfected in the sham transfected
cells.

Five hours after transfecting the cells, the transfection medium was
changed with DMEM medium containing fetal bovine serum (10%)
and antibiotics (penicillin, 100 U/ml, and streptomycin, 100 µg/ml).
Thirty-six hours after transfection, the cells were used for studying
the coimmunoprecipitation and the colocalization experiments. Confo-
cal microscopy experiments showed that the efficiency of transfection
reached approximately 30%.

2.4. Coimmunoprecipitation experiments

The transfected cells were solubilized for 20 min, at 4 °C, in a solu-
bilization buffer (250 µl/well) containing: 25 mM Hepes, 100 mM KCl,
12.5 mM MgCl₂, 0.1 mM EDTA, 10% glycerol, 0.1% Nonidet P-40,
pH 7.9, with protease inhibitors complete TM (Roche Molecular Bio-
chemicals, Mannheim, Germany) and phosphatase inhibitors (100 mM
NaF; 5 mM sodium pyrophosphate; 2 mM sodium orthovanadate,
5 mM EDTA). Protein extracts were quantified by means of a Brad-
ford based assay (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA), and an aliquot (20µg) of
protein extracts was analyzed by immunoblotting with rabbit anti-
HA (Roche Diagnostic) and rabbit anti-Myc (Santa Cruz Biotechnol-
ogy, CA) to assess the expression of HA-Adducin and Myc-RFX-1.
Four hundred micrograms of proteins were immunoprecipitated with
rabbit anti-HA antibodies, (8 µl, Roche Diagnostic S.p.A., Italy) at
4 °C, overnight. The antibody was bound to protein G-Ultralink
(15 ml, Pierce) at 4 °C for 60 min. The immune complexes were sedi-
mented, washed three times with a washing buffer containing 25 mM
Hepes, 100 mM KCl, 12.5 mM MgCl₂, 0.1 mM EDTA, 10% glycerol,
0.1% Nonidet P-40, pH 7.9 [4]. The pellets were then resuspended in
Laemmli sample buffer containing dithiothreitol (1 mM), boiled for
5 min, and separated by SDS polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis using
a 10% gel. The proteins were transferred to nitrocellulose, blocked in
5% non fat dry milk in TTBS and incubated with rabbit anti-HA anti-
body at a dilution of 1:1000 in 5% non fat dry milk in TTBS, to detect
immunoprecipitated Adducin, rabbit anti Myc antibody at a dilution
of 1:1000 in 5% non fat dry milk in TTBS for the detection of RFX-1.

2.5. Immunofluorescence for Adducin, RFX-1 and speckles SC-35

For the immunofluorescence experiments, cells were plated and
transfected with the appropriate vectors. After 24 h of incubation with
the transfection mixture, the cells were fixed with 4% formaldehyde in
PBS at 4 °C for 15 min and then permeabilized with 0.5% Triton X-100
in PBS. In the Adducin/RFX-1 colocalization experiments Adducin
was visualized with a mouse anti-HA antibody (Santa Cruz Biotech-
nology Inc.). In the Adducin/speckles sc-35 colocalization experiments

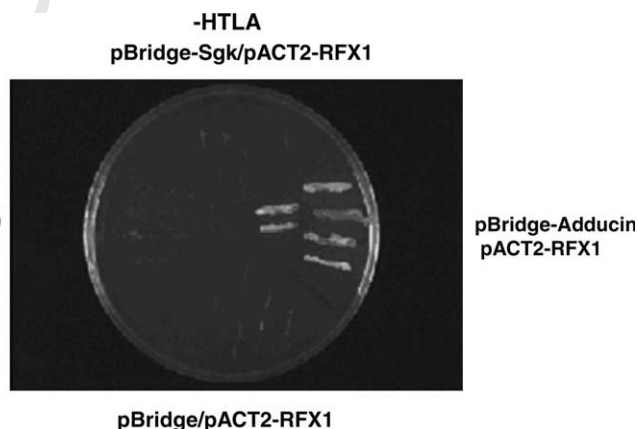


Fig. 1. Identification of regulatory factor for box X-I (RFX-I) as Adducin interacting protein using yeast two-hybrid assay. AH 109 yeast strain cells cotransformed with p-Bridge-Add and pACT2-RFX-1 were able to grow in selective medium lacking histidine, tryptophan, leucine, and adenine. The interaction was specific because yeasts cotransformed by vectors expressing different molecules, pACT2-RFX-I with p-Bridge SgK, pBridge HMG(Y) and p-Bridge empty vector, were unable to grow in selective medium.

184 Adducin was visualized with rabbit anti HA antibodies (Santa Cruz).
185 RFX-1 was visualized with a rabbit anti-Myc antibody (Santa Cruz).
186 sc-35 speckles were visualized with a mouse monoclonal anti sc-35
187 antibody (Sigma-Aldrich, Milan, Italy). All the primary antibodies
188 were diluted 1:200 in Blocking solution (BSA 1%, Triton 0.1% in
189 PBS). Adducin was detected, with 1:800 Alexa Fluor 568 goat anti
190 mouse IgG (Molecular Probes) in the Adducin/RFX-1 colocalization
191 experiments, and with 1:800 Alexa Fluor 488 goat anti rabbit IgG
192 (Molecular Probes) in the Adducin/speckles sc-35 colocalization exper-
193 iments. RFX-1 was detected with 1:800 Alexa Fluor 488 goat anti rab-
194 bit IgG (Molecular Probes). sc-35 speckles were detected with 1:800
195 Alexa Fluor 568 goat anti mouse IgG (Molecular Probes). All the incu-
196 bations were performed in a humidified chamber. After being washed
197 with PBS, cells were mounted in Prolong anti fade reagent (Molecular
198 Probes) and visualized using a confocal microscope (Leica Microsys-
199 tems, Wetzlar, Germany).

200 3. Results

201 3.1. Yeast two-hybrid screening reveals specific Adducin/RFX-1 202 interaction

203 Two hybrid screening allowed us the identification of differ-
204 ent independent clones, interacting specifically with Adducin.
205 Approximately, 10 million yeast transformants were screened.
206 We found only one putative interacting clone. Blast analysis of
207 the corresponding cDNA revealed that the library clone con-
208 tained a partial sequence coding for the COOH terminal re-
209 gion, from Leucine 866 to the end of the molecule, of the
210 regulatory factor for X box (RFX-I) (Fig. 1). The interaction
211 was specific since the growth on plates SD/-Ade/-His/-Leu/
212 Trp was observed only when the interactor plasmid pACT2-
213 RFX-1 was retransformed into yeast expressing pBridge-
214 Adducin bait. No growth was observed when the interactor
215 plasmid pACT2-RFX-1 was retransformed into yeast contain-
216 ing the empty vector pBridge or two unrelated bait plasmid:
217 pBridge-HMG(Y) and pBridge-PTP η (Fig. 1).

218 3.2. Coimmunoprecipitation of Adducin and RFX-1 in COS-7 219 cells

220 Rabbit anti Myc and anti HA immunoglobulins allowed the
221 detection of HA-alpha Adducin (Fig. 2 panel A, lanes 3) and
222 Myc-RFX-1 (Fig. 2 panel A, lanes 2 and 3) in cell extracts.
223 Rabbit anti HA immunoglobulins were used to immunopre-
224 cipitate HA-Adducin, detected by blotting with rabbit anti
225 HA antibodies as expected (Fig. 2 panel B, lanes 3). RFX-1
226 was detected, by blotting with a rabbit anti Myc antibody
227 (Fig. 2 panel C, lane 3), only in HA immunoprecipitates from
228 cells transfected with vectors coding for HA Adducin and Myc
229 RFX-1, thus proving that the interaction between alpha Addu-
230 cin and RFX-1 occurs in eukaryotic cells. As positive control
231 Myc-RFX-1 was detected by rabbit Myc antibodies in extracts
232 from cells transfected with pCDN3- Myc RFX-1 (Fig. 2 panel
233 C, lane 4).

234 3.3. Adducin colocalizes with RFX-1 in specific subnuclear 235 domains

236 The localization of alpha Adducin, RFX-1 was studied in
237 COS7 cells by confocal microscopy (Fig. 3 panels A and B).

238 Both the proteins localized in subnuclear structures, similar
239 to the subnuclear domains, previously described as typical of
240 RFX-1. Colocalization of alpha Adducin and RFX-1 was
241 demonstrated by the appearance of the yellow color in the al-

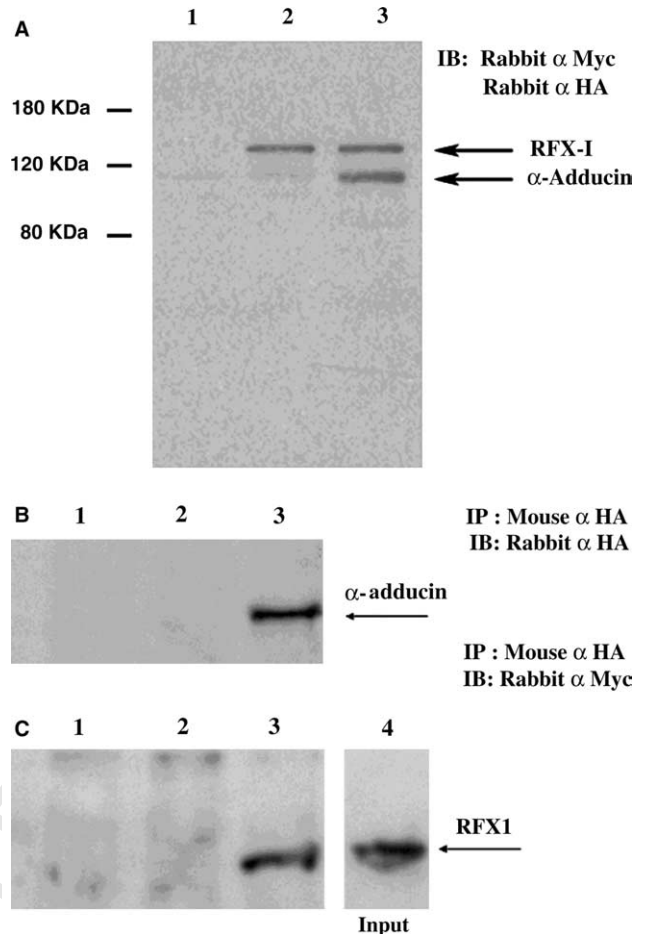


Fig. 2. Panel A, B and C. Coimmunoprecipitation of Add and RFX-I. COS-7 cells were transfected with empty vector (A, B, lane 1), pCMVneo Ha Add (A, B, lane 2), pcDNA3Myc RFX-I more pCMVneo Ha Add (panel A, B, lane 3) and only pcDNA3Myc RFX-I as control (panel B, lane 4). Rabbit anti Myc and anti HA immunoglobulins allowed the detection of HA-alpha Adducin (panel A, lanes 2 and 4) and Myc RFX 1 (panel A, lanes 3 and 4) in cell extracts. Rabbit anti HA were used to immunoprecipitate HA-Adducin, detected by blotting with rabbit anti HA antibodies as expected (panel B, lanes 3 and 4). RFX1 was detected by blotting with a rabbit anti Myc antibody (panel B, lane 3), only in HA immunoprecipitates from cells transfected with vectors coding for HA Adducin and Myc RFX-1, thus proving that the interaction between alpha Adducing and RFX1 occurs in euk aryotic cells. Lane 4 shows the Myc RFX1 was detected with rabbit anti myc antibodies in extracts from cells transfected with pCMVneoMyc RFX-I.

242 pha Adducin, RFX-1 overlay (Fig. 3, panel A). Interestingly,
243 alpha Adducin showed no colocalization with other subnu-
244 cleular structures (speckles) identified by the mouse sc-35 anti-
245 body in separate experiments, thus confirming the specificity
246 of the subnuclear colocalization between alpha Adducin and
247 RFX-1 (Fig. 3, panel B).

248 4. Discussion

249 The understanding of the mechanisms underlying renal
250 tubular sodium reabsorption is very important in enlightening
251 the genetic mechanisms of human hypertension. Alpha-Addu-
252 cin is a cytoskeleton protein [11] involved in the complex renal

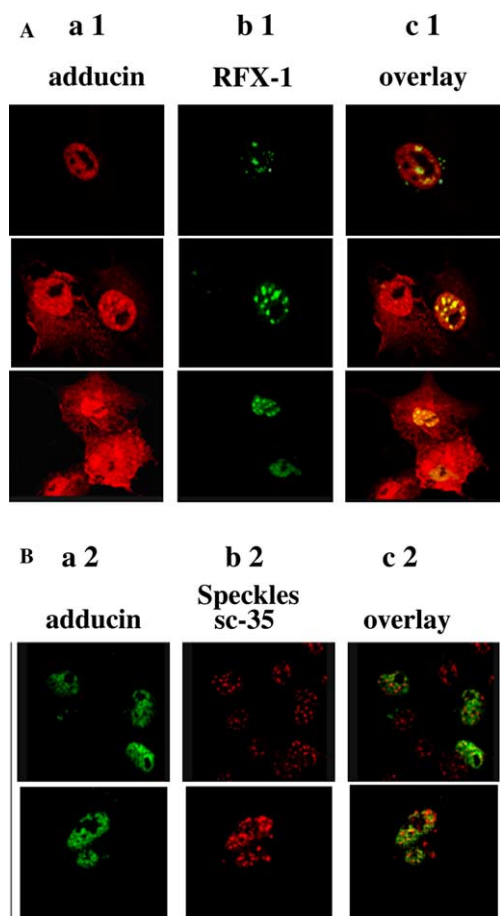


Fig. 3. Panels A and B. Colocalization of alpha Adducin and RFX1 in COS7 cells (panel A) and immunofluorescence of Adducin-S-35 by confocal microscopy (panel B). COS 7 cells grown on glass coverslips at ~50% confluence were transfected with expression vectors encoding the full-length Ha-tagged Adducin (pCMVneo-Ha-Adducin) and the full-length Myc-tagged RFX-I (pcDNA3-Myc-RFX-I). Serum-starved cells were fixed as indicated in Section 2. Panel A: HA-Adducin was detected by mouse anti-HA antibodies and visualized by anti mouse antibody (ALEXA FLUOR 568 goat anti-mouse IgG-) (panel A, a1), Myc RFX-1 was detected by rabbit anti-Myc antibodies and visualized by ALEXA FLUOR 488 goat anti-rabbit Ig G (panel A, b1). Panel B: HA-Adducin was detected by rabbit anti HA antibodies and visualized by ALEXA FLUOR 488 goat anti-rabbit Ig G (panel B, a2). The Sc-35, detected by mouse anti-Sc-35 antibodies and visualized by Alexia Fluor 568 goat anti-mouseIgG] (panel B, b2). Images shown in c1 and c2 represent the overlay of a1 and b1, a2 and b2, respectively.

253 tubular re-absorption of sodium by regulating the expression
254 levels of the sodium-potassium-ATPase on the basolateral side
255 of renal tubular cells [8].

256 In the present paper, we present evidences of structural
257 interaction between alpha Adducin and a regulatory factor
258 X-I box (RFX-I), a non neuronal cell-specific transcription
259 factor that inactivates the transcription of the microtubule-
260 associated protein MAP 1A [9]. The interaction was first dis-
261 covered in yeast, and then confirmed in eukaryotic cells. Inter-
262 estingly alpha-Adducin colocalized with RFX-1 in specific
263 subnuclear structures, as previously described for RFX-1
264 [12]. On the contrary a very weak, if any colocalization at
265 all, was found between alpha Adducin and other transcrip-
266 tionally active subnuclear structures, named speckles [13].
267 The activity of RFX-I as a transcription factor is regulated

in a complex manner. RFX-I belongs to a protein family shar-
ing a DNA-binding domain and a conserved C-terminal re-
gion. In RFX-I, the C terminal region mediates the
dimerization, and is followed by a terminal tail, containing a
highly acidic stretch. The adjacent "acidic region" potentiates
the functions of the NLS such as the nuclear import and
DNA-binding activity of RFX-1. In HL-60 cells nuclear trans-
location of RFX-1 is regulated by protein Kinase C through a
poorly characterized mechanism [12]. RFX-1 has been shown
to be able to bind to regulatory elements of several genes. It
associates with a Myc intron binding factor (MIBP1) to acti-
vate myc expression [14] as well as with a B cell specific acti-
vity protein (BSAP/Pax5) that regulates B cell specificity of
Epstein Barr virus growth transforming function [15]. RFX-
1 also interacts with and activates cAbl kinase, a non receptor
tyrosine kinase activated in the nucleus during S phase [16].
RFX-1 homodimers, RFX-1/RFX-2 heterodimers and RFX5
can form complexes on methylated as well as unmethylated
collagen transcription factor start site, thereby controlling col-
lagen expression [17]. This activity can explain some of RFX1
function in the light of the mechanisms of inflammation where
INF γ decreases and TGF β increases collagen transcription.
Moreover a RFX1 transcription factor binding site has been
located in the promoter region of the gene coding for 11 β -
hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase, type 2 (11 β HSD2) [18], thus
suggesting that RFX1 can indeed modulate the expression of
an enzyme involved in regulating the sodium retentive activity
of steroids. On the other hand, a gene transcription regulating
activity has recently been described for nuclear actin-binding
proteins [19].

Although a functional meaning of the interaction described
in the present paper is still lacking, the binding of alpha Addu-
cin to RFX-1 and their specific nuclear co-localization strongly
suggests that Adducin can have a role in modulating the tran-
scription regulating activity of RFX-1. Interestingly adducin
colocalizes with RFX-1, a negative regulator of the transcrip-
tion of specific genes, not with the proteins identified by the sc-
35 anti speckles antibody, which detects transcriptionally ac-
tive subnuclear domains [20]. Taken together these data sug-
gest that alpha adducin can be involved in modulating the
negative regulation of transcription through RFX-1.

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