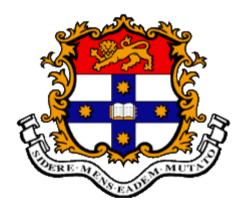
## Characterisation of mutants

# influencing epigenetic gene silencing

## in the mouse

Timothy J. Bruxner



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School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences

Faculty of Science

University of Sydney

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#### **Declaration**

I carried out the work described in this thesis between March 2004 and February 2006 in the School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences, The University of Sydney, and between February 2006 and October 2007 in the Department of Population Studies and Human Genetics, Queensland Institute of Medical Research. I performed these experiments myself, except where otherwise stated. I have not presented this material for the purpose of obtaining any other degree.

Tim Bruxner

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#### Publications arising from this thesis

#### Journal publications

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#### Book chapters

Bruxner, T. J., and Whitelaw, E. (In press) Transgenerational Epigentic Inheritance, In Epigenetics, J. Töst, ed. (Perth, UK: Prepress Projects Ltd).

V

#### **Abstract**

The field of epigenetics emerged primarily from studies in *Drosophila*, and is now being studied intensively by mammalian biologists. In order to increase our knowledge of epigenetic gene control in the mouse, I have studied modifiers of epigenetic gene silencing.

My main method of investigation involved the characterisation of mutants from a sensitised ENU mutagenesis screen performed previously in our laboratory. The screen was carried out in an FVB/NJ strain carrying a variegating GFP transgene expressed in erythrocytes. To date we have recovered 12 dominant (D) and seven recessive (R) mutant mouse lines from this screen that display altered transgene expression. We have named these *Mommes* (Modifiers of murine metastable epialleles). I investigated the phenotype and attempted to identify the underlying causative mutation of two of these *Momme* mutants.

*MommeD6* is a semi-dominant, homozygous lethal mutation that acts as a suppressor of variegation with respect to the GFP transgene. This mutation has a large effect on the level of expression of the transgene in expressing cells, but little effect on the percentage of cells expressing the transgene. *MommeD6* is linked to a 2.5 Mbp interval on chromosome 14. *MommeD9* is a semi-dominant, homozygous lethal mutation that acts as an enhancer of variegation with respect to the GFP transgene. Mutants have a tendency to become obese as they age, show abnormal haematology profiles, and females develop infertility. *MommeD9* is linked to a 17.4 Mbp region on chromosome 7.

I produced and studied a strain carrying the same GFP transgene but in a new strain background, C57BL/6J. This strain provided an opportunity to look for strain-specific modifiers of expression of the GFP transgene. Several regions were mapped to chromosomal locations. Further work will be needed to identify the genes involved. This mouse will be useful in future mutagenesis screens of this type.

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#### List of abbreviations

129 129P4/RrRk

a agouti (null allele)

A Agouti (wildtype allele)

A<sup>vy</sup> agouti viable yellow

 $Axin^{Fu}$  axin fused bp base pair

BSA bovine serum albumin

C57 C57BL/6J

CpG cytosine-phosphate-guanine sequence

dATP deoxyadenosine triphosphate dCTP deoxycytidine triphosphate

DEPC diethyl pyrocarbonate

dGTP deoxyguanosine triphosphate

DNA deoxyribonucleic acid
Dnmt DNA methyltransferase

dpc days post coitum

dsRNA double stranded RNA

dTTP deoxythymidine triphosphate
EDTA ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid

 $egin{array}{ll} ENU & N-ethyl-N-nitrosourea \\ F_1 & first filial generation \\ \end{array}$ 

FVB FVB/NJ

g constant of gravitational acceleration

GAPDH glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase

GFP green fluorescent protein
HAT histone acetyltransferase

HDAC histone deacetylase

HMTase histone methyltransferase
HP1 heterochromatin protein 1
IAP intracisternal A particle
ICR imprinting control region

LTR long terminal repeat

Mel18 synonym for Pcgf2 (polycomb group ring finger 2)

miRNA microRNA

MommeModifier of murine metastable epialleleMOPS3-[N-morphino]propanesulfonic acid

MQW Milli-Q water

mRNA messenger RNA

PBS phosphate buffered saline
PCR polymerase chain reaction
PEV position effect variegation

PGC primordial germ cell
RNA ribonucleic acid
RNAi RNA interference

RNase ribonuclease rRNA ribosomal RNA

SDS sodium dodecyl sulfate (lauryl sulfate sodium salt)

SINE short interspersed nuclear element

siRNA short interfering RNA snoRNA small nucleolar RNA

SNP single nucleotide polymorphism

SSC sodium chloride, tri-sodium citrate buffer

TAE tris, acetic acid, EDTA buffer
TBE tris, boric acid, EDTA buffer

TE tris, EDTA buffer

TRD transmission ratio distortion

Tris tris-hydroxymethyl-methylamine

tRNA transfer RNA
UV ultraviolet
v volume
w weight

Xist inactive X specific transcripts

Xp paternal X chromosome