

Revised nomenclature for the mammalian long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase gene family

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Abstract By consensus, the acyl-CoA synthetase (ACS) community, with the advice of the human and mouse genome nomenclature committees, has revised the nomenclature for the mammalian long-chain acyl-CoA synthetases. ACS is the family root name, and the human and mouse genes for the long-chain ACSs are termed *ACSL1,3–6* and *Acs1,3–6*, respectively. Splice variants of *ACSL3, -4, -5, and -6* are cataloged. ■ Suggestions for naming other family members and for the nonmammalian acyl-CoA synthetases are made.—Mashek, D. G., K. E. Bornfeldt, R. A. Coleman, J. Berger, D. A. Bernlohr, P. Black, C. C. DiRusso, S. A. Farber, W. Guo, N. Hashimoto, V. Khodiyar, F. A. Kuypers, L. J. Maltais, D. W. Nebert, A. Renieri, J. E. Schaffer, A. Stahl, P. A. Watkins, V. Vasiliou, and T. T. Yamamoto. **Revised nomenclature for the mammalian long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase gene family.** *J. Lipid Res.* 2004. 45: 1958–1961.

Supplementary key words acyl-coenzyme A synthetase • fatty acid-coenzyme A ligase • coenzyme A synthetase • bubblegum • fatty acid transport protein • very long chain-acyl-CoA synthetase • long-chain acyl-coenzyme A synthetase • lipidosis • scFat2p

In mammals, long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase (ACSL) catalyzes the initial step in cellular long-chain fatty acid metabolism. In this reaction, ACSL ligates fatty acids to CoA in a two-step reaction (1, 2): 1) fatty acid + ATP → fatty acyl-AMP + pyrophosphate; 2) fatty acyl-AMP + CoA → fatty acyl-CoA + AMP. Since the cDNA encoding ACSL was cloned in 1990 (3), five isoforms of ACSL differing in their substrate preferences, enzyme kinetics, cellular and organelle locations, and regulation have been identified and characterized in rodents and humans. Although our knowledge of the ACSL family has advanced greatly in recent years, inconsistencies regarding ACSL nomenclature have led to confusion in the scientific literature. To alleviate the confusion regarding ACSL naming and numbering, a group of researchers studying the *ACSL* genes, in coordination with the human and mouse genome nomenclature committees (HGNC and MGNC), have revised the previous nomenclature system. The purpose of this report is to present the revised and approved nomenclature for the *ACSL* gene family in humans and rodents and to en-

Manuscript received 25 June 2004 and in revised form 15 July 2004.

Published, JLR Papers in Press, August 1, 2004.
DOI 10.1194/jlr.E400002-JLR200

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courage scientists referencing ACSL to adhere to the new nomenclature.

NOMENCLATURE

The HGNC and MGNC have chosen ACS as the family root name: synthetase, rather than ligase or synthase, was selected for the activity and acyl-CoA for the product. Synthetase refers to a reaction that uses ATP and forms an acyl-AMP intermediate. Despite the fact that the best known substrates are fatty acids, the entire spectrum of natural and xenobiotic substrates used by ACSL and other ACS subfamilies is not fully known, but it certainly encompasses substrates that are not fatty acids. For example, xenobiotic carboxylic acids (4) and bile acids (5) are substrates. Thus, the use of acyl-CoA is preferred because it does not limit ACS substrates to fatty acids.

The ACS family includes enzymes that prefer short-, medium-, long-, or very long-chain fatty acids as substrates. Although related family members exhibit considerable overlap in their use of fatty acids of similar chain lengths, differences in the amino acid sequences of the AMP/ATP and fatty acid binding motifs distinguish subfamilies previously designated as acetyl-CoA synthetase, medium-chain acyl-CoA synthetase, long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase, very long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase, bubblegum (lipidosin), and scFat2p (6). Earlier studies used the term LACS (long-chain ACS) to distinguish ACS isoforms that act on long-chain fatty acids; however, the revised nomenclature recommends a hierarchical approach with ACS as the root symbol followed by a letter to specify the length of fatty acid acted upon. The HGNC and MGNC have approved the ACSL mammalian gene nomenclature.

As standard guidelines for human and rodent gene nomenclature, the human symbols are entirely capitalized

(e.g., *ACSS*, *ACSM*, *ACSL*) and the rodent symbols are lowercase with the exception of the first letter (e.g., *Acss*, *AcsM*, *AcsL*) (7). The HGNC recommends that gene and allele symbols be italicized and protein symbols be represented in nonitalicized fonts. Italics need not be used in gene catalogs. Proteins are shown in uppercase letters. To distinguish between mRNA, genomic DNA, and cDNA, the relevant prefix should be written in parentheses: (mRNA) *ACSL1*, (gDNA) *ACSL1*, (cDNA) *ACSL1*.

ORTHOLOGY

Improper designation of *ACSL1*, the first cloned human ACSL family member, has caused considerable confusion. Although two separate genes were originally reported to encode *FACL1* (fatty acid-CoA ligase) and *FACL2* (8, 9), it was subsequently discovered that *FACL1* and *FACL2* are the same gene. Therefore, the revised nomenclature system now identifies *FACL1/FACL2* as human *ACSL1*. As a consequence of the original human nomenclature, the previously reported *FACL2* was not orthologous to rodent *ACS2*. To correct this problem, the former rodent *ACS2* has been redesignated as *Acs16* because it shares highest sequence identity with human *ACSL6* [originally characterized as *LACS5* (10)], as shown in **Table 1**. Hence, according to the revised nomenclature system, there is no *ACSL2* in humans or in rodents.

SPLICE VARIANTS

The *ACSL3*, *ACSL4*, *ACSL5*, and *ACSL6* genes encode mRNAs and proteins that have splice variants. The human *ACSL3* gene encodes two transcripts with varying 5' untranslated regions, *ACSL3* variant 1 (*ACSL3_v1*) and

TABLE 1. Revised nomenclature for the long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase gene family

| Approved Nomenclature (Chromosome Location) | | | Previous Nomenclature and Aliases | Gene and Protein Sequences | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Gene and Protein Sequences | | | | Human | Rat | Mouse |
| Human | Rat | Mouse | | | | |
| <i>ACSL1</i> (4q34-q35) | <i>Acs11</i> (16q11) | <i>Acs11</i> (8 B1.1) | <i>FACL1</i> , <i>FACL2</i> , <i>LACS</i> , <i>LACS1</i> , <i>ACS1</i> , <i>LACS2</i> | NM_001995, NP_001986 | NM_012820, NP_036952 | NM_007981, NP_032007 |
| <i>ACSL3</i> (2q34-q35) | <i>Acs13</i> (9q33) | <i>Acs13</i> (1 C4) | <i>FACL3</i> , <i>ACS3</i> , <i>PRO2194</i> | variant 1 / variant 2: NM_004457 / NM_203372 NP_004448 / NP_976251.1 | NM_057107, NP_476448 | XM_129894, XP_129894 |
| <i>ACSL4</i> (Xq22.3-q23) | <i>Acs14</i> (Xq14) | <i>Acs14</i> (X F1) | <i>FACL4</i> , <i>ACS4</i> , <i>LACS4</i> , <i>MRX63</i> | variant 1 / variant 2: NM_004458 / NM_022977 NP_004449 / NP_075266 | NM_053623, NP_446075 | NM_019477, NP_062350 |
| <i>ACSL5</i> (10q25.1-q25.2) | <i>Acs15</i> (1q55) | <i>Acs15</i> (19 D2) | <i>FACL5</i> , <i>ACS2</i> , <i>ACS5</i> | variant 1 / variant 2 / variant 3: NM_016234 / NM_203379 / NM_203380 NP_057318 / NP_976313 / NP_976314 | NM_053607, NP_446059 | BC031544, AAH31544 |
| <i>ACSL6</i> (5q31) | <i>Acs16</i> (10q22) | <i>Acs16</i> (11 B1.3) | <i>FACL6</i> , <i>ACS2</i> , <i>LACS2</i> , <i>LACS5</i> , <i>KIAA0837</i> | variant 1 / variant 2: NM_015256 / AB020644 NP_056071 / BAA74860 | variant 1 / variant 2: NM_130739 / — NP_570095 / AY625254 | variant 1 / variant 2: NM_144823 / AY167035 NP_659072 / AAO38689 |

This table is a modified version of that posted on the Human Genome Nomenclature Committee website (<http://www.gene.ucl.ac.uk/nomenclature/genefamily/acs.html>). The final nomenclature for the other ACS subfamilies is still under consideration.

ACSL3_v2 (Table 1). Both transcripts encode the same ACSL3 protein. Human ACSL3 is homologous to rat and mouse ACSL3. Likewise, human ACSL4 is homologous to rat and mouse ACSL4. In humans, two splice variants of ACSL4 have been demonstrated (11). Compared with *ACSL4_v1*, *ACSL4_v2* contains an earlier in-frame start codon that encodes a hydrophobic N terminus that is 41 amino acids longer. Human ACSL5, which is homologous to rat and mouse ACSL5, has three splice variants. *ACSL5_v1* encodes a protein with a 56 amino acid longer N terminus (ACSL5a) compared with the protein encoded by both *ACSL5_v2* and *ACSL5_v3*, which encode the same shorter protein (ACSL5b). Splice variants of *ACSL6* have been identified in humans and rodents (unpublished observations). The *ACSL6_v1* and *ACSL6_v2* transcripts of human *ACSL6* differ in amino acid residues 306–331 because they are encoded by exon 14 and exon 13, respectively, as a result of alternative exon use.

The numerous examples of *ACSL* genes encoding multiple proteins having different N-terminal and/or internal regions suggest that additional splice variants will be identified. The HGNC recommends that new variants of *ACSL1–6* or *Acsli–6* should be named splice variants of a gene (e.g., *ACSL5_v4*) if they use some of the same exons as an existing ACSL isoform (<http://www.gene.ucl.ac.uk/nomenclature/guidelines.html>). For genes with multiple promoters, the alternative promoters are designated by the addition of the lowercase letters “pr” (e.g., symbol: *ACSL6_pr1*; name: long-chain acyl-CoA synthetase 6, promoter 1). Proteins translated from mRNA splice variants may be distinguished by lowercase suffixes (e.g., ACSL5a and ACSL5b).

OTHER ACS FAMILY MEMBERS

It should be noted that proteins of the family previously named very long-chain ACS (VLCS) (6) are also known as fatty acid transport proteins (FATPs). These are included in the superfamily of proteins encoded by members of the solute carrier gene family, whose currently approved gene symbols are *SLC27A1–6* (12). The VLCS/FATPs also have acyl-CoA synthetase enzymatic activity (13–16). Thus, these proteins may play a dual role in the transport and esterification of their substrates.

Some amino acid sequences are shared between ACSL subfamily members and other enzymes, such as acetyl-CoA synthetase, bubblegum, and scFat2p, and related proteins (6). As yet, a standardized nomenclature has not been formulated for these other enzymes or for the yeast and bacterial ACS families. Each member of the extended ACS family has the ATP/AMP binding motif that is a hallmark of adenylate-forming enzymes as well as a fatty acid binding motif defined in the bacterial homolog FadD (17).

CONCLUSIONS

Previous publications have used a multitude of names for members of the ACSL family, which has led to confu-

sion among investigators. Implementation of the revised nomenclature proposed here for the mammalian ACSL gene family will reduce disparities and render our literature more accessible to us as well as to those outside the field.

The use of *ACSS* and *ACSM* root symbols for the acetyl-CoA and medium-chain acyl-CoA synthetases, respectively, should also be considered. The VLCS/FATP/*SLC27A1–6* and the bubblegum/lipidosin subfamily members use as substrates long-chain and very long-chain fatty acids and/or bile acids; thus, it is not yet clear what prefix should be used to designate these enzymes. Further consultation is needed among scientists who study these proteins. We propose that those working on ACS genes in other organisms also consider adopting a similar nomenclature. ■

This project was supported in part by the Austrian Science Foundation FWF P14163-MOB (J.B.); the National Institutes of Health: DK-53189 (D.A.B.), HL-076719 (K.E.B.), GM-56850 (P.N.B.), DK-59935 (R.A.C.), DK-60369 (S.A.F.), P30 HG-00330 (L.J.M.), P30 ES-06096 (D.W.N.), DK-066336 and DK-56339 (A.S.), EY-11490 (V.V.), and NS-37351 (P.A.W.); and the American Heart Association: North East Affiliate 0151215T (C.C.DR) and 0265311Y (A.S). The work of the Human Genome Nomenclature Committee is supported by National Institutes of Health contract N01-LM-9-3533, the UK Medical Research Council, and the Wellcome Trust.

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