

Identification of tandem organization of soluble guanylyl cyclase α_1 and β_1 subunit genes in the Japanese pufferfish (*Fugu rubripes*) genome: comparison with their human homologues.

Chikako Morinaga, Takehiro Yamamoto, Yuki Moriya and Norio Suzuki*

Division of Biological Sciences, Graduate School of Science, Hokkaido University, Sapporo 060-0810, Japan.

Key words: *Fugu rubripes*; pufferfish; soluble guanylyl cyclase; Human Genome Database

The nucleotide sequence reported in this paper has been submitted to DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank under the accession numbers AB062169, AB062170, AB062171 and AB062172.

Abstract We determined the complete nucleotide sequences of the genomic structure of the α_1 subunit gene (*FrGCS- α_1*) and the β_1 subunit gene (*FrGCS- β_1*) of Japanese pufferfish (*Fugu rubripes*) soluble guanylyl cyclase (GC). In the *Fugu* genome, the two genes are only 161 bp apart and span approximately 16 kbp in the order of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* . The *Fugu* genomic structures were compared with those of human soluble GC α_1 and β_1 subunit genes constructed by the Human Genome Database.

Teleosts have all the complex physiological functions found in higher vertebrates and a gene repertoire similar to that in mammals. Comparative vertebrate genome sequencing has been demonstrated to be a useful method for detecting conserved regulatory sequences. The Japanese pufferfish, *Fugu rubripes*, has the smallest known vertebrate genome (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2000). The homology between *Fugu* and mammalian genes is high enough to facilitate easy identification through database comparison. This forms the basis of the suitability of *Fugu* for use in comparative genomics. Soluble guanylyl cyclase (GC) is a heme-containing heterodimer consisting of α_1 and β_1 subunits and activated by nitric oxide (NO), suggesting that it is a key enzyme in the NO/cGMP signalling pathway participating in various physiological phenomena (Koesling and Fribe, 1999; Lucas *et al.*, 2000). Increasing evidence has demonstrated that both α and β subunits are required for basal and NO-stimulated

activity of soluble GC. The α_1 and β_1 subunit genes are colocalized in human, rat and mouse chromosomes (Azam *et al.*, 1998; Giuli *et al.*, 1993; Sharina *et al.*, 2000). These facts imply that the expression of both genes is coordinated. However, little is known about the genomic structure of soluble GC. As a first step in investigating whether the expression of both genes is coordinated, we determined the genomic structure of the α_1 subunit gene (*FrGCS- α_1*) and the β_1 subunit gene (*FrGCS- β_1*) of Japanese pufferfish. The *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* genes are organized in tandem in the pufferfish genome separated by a 161 bp spacer sequence.

A Japanese pufferfish (*Fugu rubripes*) genomic library in EMBL3 SP6/T7 vector (Clontech Laboratories, Inc., Palo Alto, CA) was screened by hybridization using cDNA fragments of medaka fish soluble GC subunit genes, *OIGCS- α_1* (nucleotides 1911-2534) and *OIGCS- β_1* (nucleotides 12-402), as probes. The probes were labeled with digoxigenin (DIG)-dUTP using a DIG-High Prime (Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Germany) or [32 P]dCTP using a Random Primer DNA labeling Kit ver.2 (Takara Shuzo Co., Ltd., Otsu, Japan). Phage DNA obtained from positive clones was purified by using a QIAGEN lambda kit (QIAGEN, Valencia, CA), and was subcloned into pBluescript II (Stratagene Inc., La Jolla, CA). The nucleotide sequence of the insert DNA was analyzed by an ABI Prism 377 or genetic analyzer 3100 with a BigDye Terminator cycle sequencing kit (Applied Biosystems, Japan). Total RNA was prepared from the *Fugu* brain and ovary according to the method of Chomczynski and Sacchi (1987). For reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), the first strand cDNA was synthesized using an oligo(dT) primer by SuperScript

* Corresponding to: Dr. Norio Suzuki, Division of Biological Sciences, Graduate School of Science, Hokkaido University, Sapporo 060-0810, Japan. Tel.: 81-11-706-4908; Fax: +81-11-706-4461. E-mail: norio-s@sci.hokudai.ac.jp

5'-franking region

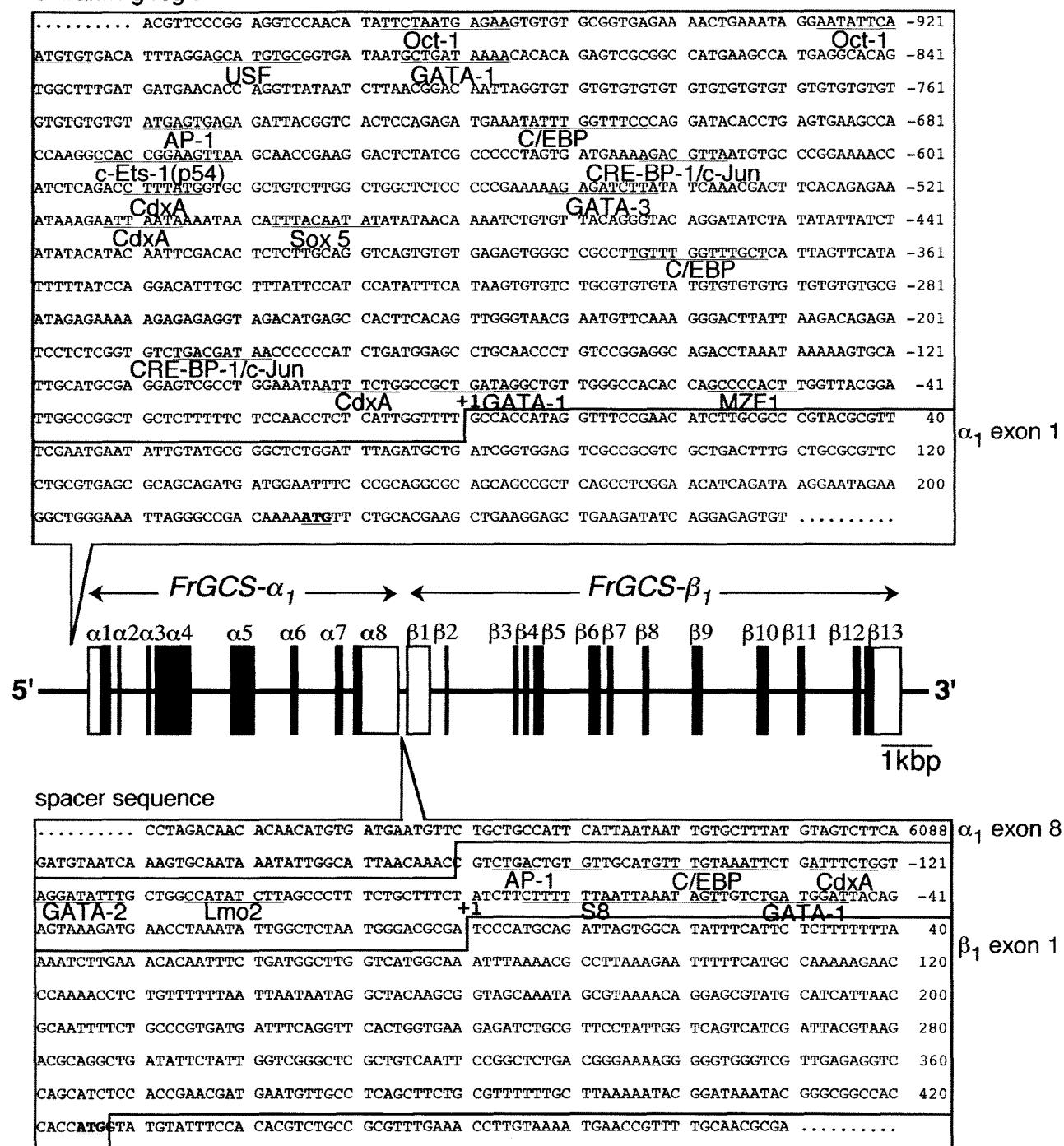


Fig. 1. Genomic structures of the *Fugu* soluble GC subunit genes, *FrGCS- α_1* , and *FrGCS- β_1* . Exons are indicated by open-boxes (non-coding region) and closed boxes (coding region) with numbers. The transcription initiation site is indicated by +1. The 5'-franking region of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* is shown in the upper and lower panels with several known *cis*-regulatory elements. The nucleotide sequences of the 5'-franking region of the human soluble GC α_1 and β_1 subunit genes are from NCBI and the Celera Human Genome Database, respectively.

II reverse transcriptase (Life Technologies, Inc., Rockville, MD). Poly(A)⁺RNA was isolated using an Oligotex-dT30 <Super> mRNA Purification kit (Takara Shuzo Co., Ltd.), according to the manufacturer's protocol. The transcription start site was determined by the primer extension method using the oligonucleotide primers, 5'-GATATCTT-

CAGCTCCTTC-3' for *FrGCS- α_1* and 5'-CCCG-ACCAATAGAATATCAGC-3' for *FrGCS- β_1* , according to the previously described method (Mikami *et al.*, 1999).

The genomic structures of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* are shown in Fig. 1. In the *Fugu* genome, *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* are 161 bp

(A) α_1 subunit

Fugu	MFC7KLKELKISGECPPPTSSAK-----TNQLEHSEQLSKDVAHLPTSKDVR-RNTGENAPHQKSSRAVKNLHTLGESIRKACPEFERLHTALRRMMRLS	94
Human	MFC7KLKELKTTGECPPSILAPGVNPNESEEAGGSSRCKATVPCQDPKRNQESLSPORTRSRVLHTLAESICKLIFPEFERLNVALQRTLAKH	100
Fugu	DPSREPASPFWCCCTEYQRCSDDPBFVKMMMSMFSRKAIQMDTLLRVALGEELPNMCYEEEDRHILRVVGGALHDPLNSPNVLLKQSSSTLHYODREBCVNEP	194
Human	KIKES-----RKSLE----REDPEFTIAEQAVAGPVPEVIKESSLGEERVKICYEBENILGVVGTLKDPLNSFSTLLKQSSRCQAEGRGRLEDA	188
Fugu	SVLCLDKDLGLLTYYFFNPBPTTELPFFPGVIKAARLLYHTTVDFVLMPPATKDSILOSSPQPSLLYVVVKDAKSLSPSPRLRATSAGTLPSTLPSLTFPP	294
Human	SILCLDKEDDFLSVYYPFPKRTTSLLPGIKAABAHVLYETEVESLMPCFHNDCSFVNOPYLVSVMKSTKPS-LSPSKPQSSLVITSLFCKTFF	287
Fugu	FELLLDQDILVIVQVGHGLRKRLTRKDGLRRPAFTQEHFSILSPPLIRCTFQGILITMLNQFTIRKRGVSTADN--TLMIDLKGOMIYVPESDAILEFLGSPC	392
Human	FBBMFQDKDTILQFGNGIRLMNRDPQGKPN-FEYYFEILTPKINQFTSGIMTMNNQFVVVRWRWDNSVKSSRVMVLKGOMIYIVESSAIIFLGSPC	386
Fugu	VDKLEELTGRLGLYLSDIPINNALRDVVLVGEQAKAQDGLKRLGKAKAALEHQAEEKKKTVDLNFTIIPGCTVAAQQLWQSGQTVQAKPERVTMFLSD	492
Human	VDRLEDPFLGGLYLSDIPINNALRDVVLIGEQARAGDGLKRLGKAKATLQEAAEEKKKTVDLCSIPFCEVAQQLWQSGQTVQAKFSNVTMFLSD	486
Fugu	IVGFTAVCSHCTPMQVITMLNELYTKFDDBHCGELDVYKVETIDAYCVAGGLKHESPTTHAVQVALMALKMELNSNGVMTPAGEPIQMIRLHTGSVLAGV	592
Human	IVGFTACSCSPLQVITMLNALYNTFREDQCCGELDVYKVETIDAYCVAGGLKHESPTTHAVQVALMALKMELNSDEVNPSPHGPPIKMRICLRSGSVFAVG	586
Fugu	VGVKMPRYCLFGNNVTLANKFESCSQPGRKINISPTTHRLLEDHPFVFIPRRLPANFPDELIPGCVFLEASPRPSEVTLK-----	675
Human	VGVKMPRYCLFGNNVTLANKFESCSVPRKINVSPPTYRLLKDCPCGFVFTPSREELPPNFSEIPICFHLDAYQQGTNSKPCFQKDVEDGNANFLGKA	686
Fugu	-----	690
Human	SGID	

(B) β_1 subunit

Fugu	MYGFVNHAELLVLRNNGPEVWEDIKREAQLDIEGQFLVRIIYEDAKTYDLVAAASKVLKIDAGDILQLFGRMFFBFCQESGYDTILRVLGSNVREFLQN	100
Human	MYGFVNHAELLVIRNYGPEVWEDIKREAQLDIEGQFLVRIIYEDAKTYDLVAAASKVLNNAEGILQMFGRMFFVFCQESGYDTILRVLGSNVREFLQN	100
His105		
Fugu	LDALHDHLLATIYPGMRAPSFRCTDAEKGSNLLHLYYSEREGLQDIVIGI1KTVAAQQI1HGTII1RMK1IOPKSKECDB1KFL1EKKD3RREAFYEDIDLGPR	200
Human	LDALHDHLLATIYPGMRAPSFRCTDAEKGSNLLHLYYSEREGLQDIVIGI1KTVAAQQI1HGTII1RMK1IOPKSKECDB1KFL1EKKD3RREAFYEDIDLGPR	200
Fugu	NGTQETRISPYTFCKAFTPFLMFRDLMITQCGNAIYRVLPLQLOPGSCLISVSVLSVRLPHIDSFPGILSHTVFLRSKEGLLNVTENEDELTGVE	300
Human	NGTQESRISPYTFCKAFTPFLMFRDLMITQCGNAIYRVLPLQLOPGSCLISVSVLSVRLPHIDSFPGILSHTVFLRSKEGLLNVTENEDELTGVE	300
Fugu	ISCLRLKGQMIYLPEDAISLFCSPSPVMNLLDLTRRGLYLSDIPLHDATRDLVLLGEQFRBEYKLTQEEL1LTDRDQHTLRAEDEKKKTDVLLYSVLP	400
Human	ISCLRLKGQMIYLPEDAISLFCSPSPVMNLLDLTRRGLYLSDIPLHDATRDLVLLGEQFRBEYKLTQEEL1LTDRDQHTLRAEDEKKKTDVLLYSVLP	400
Fugu	SVANELRHKRPVPAKRYDNVTLPSGIVGFTFCSSKHASAEGA1KIVNLLNDVYTRFDI1TDSRNNPYYVYKVTGDKYMTVSGLEPCITHHAKSICHLA	500
Human	SVANELRHKRPVPAKRYDNVTLPSGIVGFTFCSSKHASAEGA1KIVNLLNDVYTRFDI1TDSRNNPYYVYKVTGDKYMTVSGLEPCITHHAKSICHLA	500
catalytic domain		
Fugu	LEMLEIAGQVQVDDPKVQ1ITIGIHTGEVTGIGQRMPPRYCLFGNTVNLTSRTEITGEKGRINRVESEFTFRCLQSAENADPQFHLEYRGPVIMKGKKEPMK	600
Human	LEMLEIAGQVQVDDPKVQ1ITIGIHTGEVTGIGQRMPPRYCLFGNTVNLTSRTEITGEKGRINRVESEFTFRCLQSAENADPQFHLEYRGPVIMKGKKEPMK	600
Fugu	VWFLEKRP1TVEPATVKA--	617
Human	VWFLEKRP1TVEPATVKA--	619

(C)

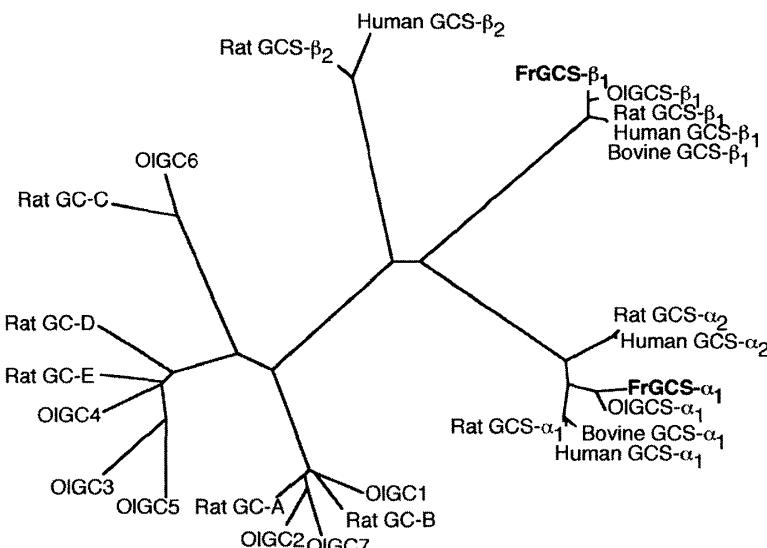


Fig. 2. Alignment of the amino acid sequences of the α_1 (A) and β_1 (B) subunits of *Fugu* and human soluble GC, and molecular phylogenetic analysis of various GCs (C). The deduced amino acid sequence of *FrGCS- α_1* or *FrGCS- β_1* was compared with that of the corresponding human soluble GC subunit (accession numbers; CAA75738 for α_1 and CAA47144 for β_1). Amino acids identical between the two soluble GCs are indicated with asterisks (*) below the residues. Gaps in the sequences are indicated by a dash (-). The conserved histidine residue in the β_1 subunit, which is necessary for heme binding, is indicated by an arrowhead. The putative catalytic domains are boxed. Aligned amino acid sequences of the catalytic domain of soluble GC α_1 , β_1 , α_2 and β_2 subunits (human, bovine, rat and medaka fish) and membrane GCs (rat and medaka fish) were subjected to phylogenetic analysis. An unrooted phylogenetic tree was constructed by the neighbor-joining method. Branch lengths were proportional to evolutionary distance.

Table 1. Exon and intron sizes in *Fugu* and human soluble GC α_1 and β_1 subunit genes. Exon and intron lengths are in bp. Human exon/intron sizes were derived from the Celera Human Genome Database.

α_1 subunit gene (6127 bp)					
Number	Exon size (bp)		Intron size (bp)		
	<i>Fugu</i>	Human	<i>Fugu</i>	Human	
1	462	240	130	380	
2	68	74	497	670	
3	89	94	77	28577	
4	710	367	773	6814	
5	486	62	702	4247	
6	144	59	726	2261	
7	155	710	200	1846	
8	908	486		3581	
9		144		4735	
10		155		7824	
11		597			
Total	3022	2988	3105	60935	

β_1 subunit gene (9601 bp)					
Number	Exon size (bp)		Intron size (bp)		
	<i>Fugu</i>	Human	<i>Fugu</i>	Human	
1	447	82	290	643	
2	74	74	1264	15106	
3	101	101	89	2455	
4	119	119	98	12072	
5	198	198	879	>3596	
6	231	231	141	1253	
7	117	117	566	919	
8	134	134	850	3367	
9	198	198	1063	2267	
10	238	238	569	1044	
11	141	141	949	827	
12	155	155	74	355	
13	616	127		1159	
14		519			
Total	2769	2434	6832	>45063	

FrGCS- α_1 and *FrGCS- β_1* are organized in tandem and span over 15889 bp.

The spacer sequence between the two genes is 161 bp.

apart and span approximately 16 kbp in the order of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* . *FrGCS- α_1* consists of 8 exons and *FrGCS- β_1* consists of 13 exons. The GT-AG rule was maintained for all splice sites. Although a number of known *cis*-regulatory elements are present in the 5'-upstream regions of each gene, there is no TATA box consensus

sequence. Comparison of the deduced amino acid sequences of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* with those of the corresponding human soluble GC indicated that the amino acid sequences of the putative catalytic domain of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* are 81% and 88% identical to those of human soluble GC, respectively (Fig. 2 (A) and (B)). Furthermore,

phylogenetic analysis of known soluble GC α_1 , β_1 , α_2 , and β_2 subunits and membrane GCs demonstrated that the catalytic domains of α_1 and β_1 subunits are highly conserved between *Fugu* and mammals (Fig. 2 (C)).

Comparison of exon and intron sizes of *FrGCS- α_1* and *FrGCS- β_1* subunit genes with those of the human soluble GC α_1 and β_1 subunit genes based on data from the Celera Human Genome Database indicated that, in the coding region of the β_1 subunit gene, all the exon/intron boundaries are the same in both species except for the last exon, and exons 4-7 in *FrGCS- α_1* correspond to exons 7-10 in the α_1 subunit gene of human soluble GC (Table 1). The database also revealed that the human soluble GC α_1 and β_1 subunit genes are organized in tandem in the order of α_1 and β_1 with a 28 kbp spacer sequence on chromosome 4. Thus, the genomic structures of the soluble GC subunit genes are very similar in both species. These results suggest that the expression of these genes is regulated in the same manner. We referred to the Human Genome Database of Celera and NCBI for detection of the regulatory elements and found that various known *cis*-elements in the 5'non-coding region of both genes were conserved in *Fugu* and humans (Fig.1).

Sequence comparisons between *Fugu* and mammals have identified several conserved non-coding sequences (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2000). A comparison of non-coding sequences between the evolutionary distant *Fugu* and human genomes is useful for detecting conserved regulatory elements. The function of such conserved elements can be tested in cell lines or transgenic systems.

Our study should help to clarify the transcriptional regulation of soluble GC. Further studies are in progress in our laboratory.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Dr. Michiya Matsuyama, Kyusyu University for providing the *Fugu* organs. This work was supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (No. 11236202) from the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture of Japan.

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Received June 2001.