

α 1-Antitrypsin Deficiency Caused by the α 1-Antitrypsin Null_{Mattawa} Gene

An Insertion Mutation Rendering the α 1-Antitrypsin Gene Incapable of Producing α 1-Antitrypsin

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Abstract

α 1-Antitrypsin (α 1AT) deficiency is a hereditary disorder associated with reduced serum α 1AT levels and the development of pulmonary emphysema. An α 1AT gene is defined as "Null" when no α 1AT in serum is attributed to that α 1AT gene. Although all α 1AT Null genes have identical phenotypic consequences (i.e. no detectable α 1AT in the serum), different genotypic mechanisms can cause the Null state. This study defines the molecular basis for the α 1AT gene Null_{Mattawa}, identified and cloned from genomic DNA of an individual with the Null-Null phenotype and emphysema resulting from the heterozygous inheritance of the Null_{Mattawa} and Null_{Bellingham} genes. Sequencing of exons Ie-V and all exon-intron junctions of the Null_{Mattawa} gene demonstrated it was identical to the common normal M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT gene except for the insertion of a single nucleotide within the coding region of exon V, causing a 3' frameshift with generation of a premature stop signal. Family analysis using oligonucleotide probes specific for the Null_{Mattawa} sequence demonstrated the gene was inherited in an autosomal fashion. Examination of blood monocytes demonstrated that a normal-sized, 1.8-kb α 1AT mRNA transcript is associated with the Null_{Mattawa} gene and in vitro translation of mRNA with the Null_{Mattawa} mutation showed it translated at a normal rate but produced a truncated α 1AT protein. Additionally, retroviral transfer of the α 1AT Null_{Mattawa} cDNA to murine fibroblasts demonstrated no detectable intracellular or secreted α 1AT, despite the presence of α 1AT Null_{Mattawa} mRNA transcripts. These findings are consistent with the concept that the molecular pathophysiology of Null_{Mattawa} is likely manifested at a posttranslational level. The identification of the Null_{Mattawa} gene supports the concept that Null α 1AT alleles represent a heterogeneous group in which very different mechanisms cause the identical phenotypic state.

Introduction

α 1-antitrypsin (α 1AT)¹ deficiency is an autosomal hereditary disorder, characterized in adults by reduced serum α 1AT levels and the development of pulmonary emphysema by ages 30–45 (1, 2). With the knowledge that the major physiologic

role of α 1AT is to inhibit neutrophil elastase, we understand that the pathogenesis of the emphysema associated with α 1AT deficiency results from insufficient α 1AT, which provides the lower respiratory tract protection against the chronic burden of elastase in the local milieu (3, 4). As a result, over several decades, there is progressive destruction of the alveolar walls, culminating in the clinical disorder, emphysema.

α 1AT is coded for by a single copy gene of 12.2 kb on chromosome 14 at q31–32.3 (5–7). The coding exons of the gene are highly pleomorphic, with > 75 alleles described (1, 8, 9). The α 1AT phenotype is determined by codominant expression of the parental alleles (1, 8, 10). The α 1AT deficiency state associated with emphysema occurs only when there are abnormalities in both of the parental genes (8, 10, 11). In most cases there is some α 1AT detectable in serum, albeit in reduced amounts (1, 2, 8, 11). For example, the commonest form of α 1AT deficiency associated with emphysema results from the homozygous inheritance of the Z allele, a circumstance that results in α 1AT serum levels 10–15% of normal (1, 8, 11). There are also α 1AT genes causing an absolute deficiency state (10, 12–23). This category of α 1AT genes, referred to as the Null alleles, represents α 1AT genes in which the gene is present but does not code for an α 1AT molecule that is detectable in the serum (10, 19). Compared with the deficiency alleles, the Null genes are rare, with an estimated allelic frequency of < 0.001 in Caucasians of Northern European descent (13). Although all Null alleles were originally thought to be similar, it is now recognized that the α 1AT gene can be rendered Null by different mutations (21–23). The purpose of this study is to demonstrate a newly recognized type of mutational event that can cause the α 1AT Null state, Null_{Mattawa}, a nucleotide insertion in a coding exon, causing a 3' frameshift with generation of a stop signal many codons distal to the mutation. Interestingly, unlike Null_{Bellingham}, in which a stop codon is associated with a lack of detectable α 1AT mRNA in α 1AT-synthesizing cells, the Null_{Mattawa} gene codes for detectable α 1AT mRNA, but no detectable α 1AT protein produced by these cells.

Methods

Identification of the Null-Null phenotype in two index cases. The Null-Null α 1AT phenotype was identified in two sisters (index case 1 and index case 2) using a combination of isoelectric focusing of serum at pH 4–5 to identify α 1AT alleles, serum α 1AT levels (radial immunodiffusion), and family analysis (Fig. 1) (10). To confirm that the index cases were truly Null-Null, the serum was also evaluated for the presence of α 1AT using an enzyme-linked immunoassay sensitive to 2 nM² (24). The two index cases both had clinical evidence of emphysema.

2. α 1AT levels expressed in milligrams per deciliter are based on the commonly used commercial standard, whereas those in micromolar are based on a true laboratory standard; the commercial standard overestimates α 1AT levels by 35% (see reference 24 for details).

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1. Abbreviations used in this paper: α 1AT, α 1-antitrypsin; DLCO, diffusing capacity; FEV₁, forced expiratory volume in one second; FVC, forced vital capacity; TLC, total lung capacity.

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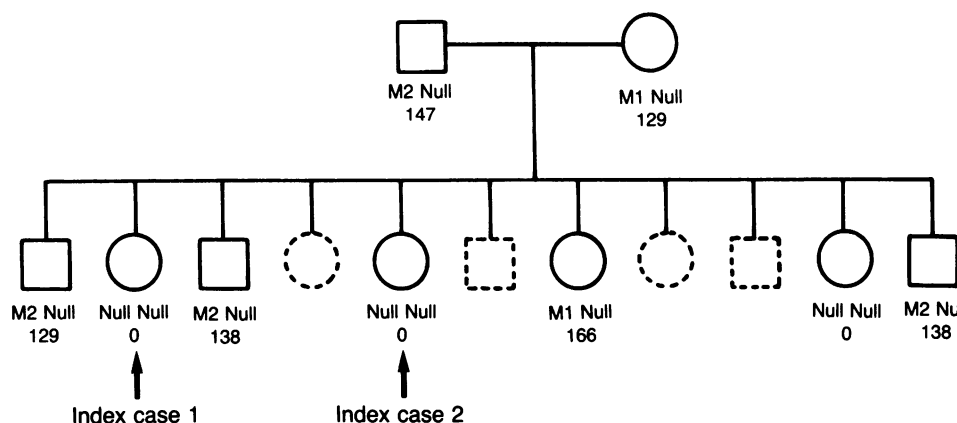


Figure 1. Family tree demonstrating the inheritance of Null alleles. α 1AT phenotypes were determined by evaluating the α 1AT patterns in isoelectric focusing of serum, α 1AT levels in serum, and family analysis. Family members not available for evaluation are indicated by broken-lined circles or squares. The two index cases are indicated by arrows. The phenotype is listed below each family member together with the serum α 1AT level (milligrams per deciliter).

Index case 1, a 39-yr-old female who had had dyspnea for 10 yr, had no smoking history. Severe pulmonary emphysema was documented by physical examination showing a hyperresonant chest and distant breath sounds; chest x ray demonstrating hyperinflation, flattened hemidiaphragms, and a marked loss of vascularity at both bases; xenon-127 ventilation scan showing abnormal retention of gas in the lower lobes and a technetium-99m perfusion scan depicting loss of vascularity in the same regions; pulmonary function testing (25) revealing that vital capacity (VC) was 42% predicted, total lung capacity (body plethysmography) was 122% predicted, forced expiratory volume in 1 s (FEV_1) was 25% predicted, FEV_1 /forced (F) VC was 50% observed (69% predicted value), and diffusing capacity (DLCO; corrected for volume and hemoglobin) was 41% predicted.

Index case 2, a 31-yr-old female without pulmonary symptoms, had no smoking history. The physical examination and chest x ray were normal. The presence of mild emphysema was documented by a xenon-127 ventilation scan demonstrating abnormal retention of gas in the lower lobes, a technetium-99m perfusion scan showing complementary loss of vascularity, and lung function testing revealing VC was 93% predicted, TLC was 114% predicted, FEV_1 was 78% predicted, FEV_1 /FVC was 65% observed (82% predicted), and DLCO was 87% predicted.

Evaluation of genomic DNA using oligonucleotide gene probes. To determine if the Null-Null phenotypes of the index cases were due to the inheritance of the α 1AT Null alleles Null_{bellingham} (21) or Null_{granite falls}, genomic DNA of the index cases and relevant controls were evaluated using gel hybridization with oligonucleotide gene probes by the method of Kidd et al. (26) as modified by Satoh et al. (21). Genomic DNA of index case 1, a normal M1(Val²¹³) homozygote (27), a Null_{bellingham} homozygote, and an M1(Val²¹³) Null_{granite falls} heterozygote were digested with the restriction endonuclease Pst I and the DNA was electrophoresed on 0.7% agarose (8 μ g/lane). The gels were hybridized at 55°C with oligonucleotide gene probes centered on the sequence of interest (see Fig. 2, top for the sequences used). The oligonucleotide probes were 5'-labeled with [³²P]ATP and separated from unincorporated label on an 8% polyacrylamide-8 M urea denaturing gel. After hybridization, the gels were washed at 60°C in 25 mM sodium phosphate buffer, pH 7.0, 0.45 M NaCl, 2.5 mM EDTA, 0.1% SDS for 15 min and autoradiographed at -70°C for 2 wk.

Cloning and sequencing of the Null_{mattawa} gene. After oligonucleotide analysis of genomic DNA of index case 1 demonstrated that the Null-Null state in this family was caused by inheritance of the Null_{bellingham} allele together with a previously unidentified Null allele (referred to subsequently as Null_{mattawa} based on the birthplace of index case 1). The Null_{mattawa} gene was cloned from genomic DNA of index case 1 by conventional methods. Using DNA from skin fibroblasts, a cosmid library was prepared by inserting size-fractionated partial Mbo I-digested DNA into the vector C2RB (28) with subsequent packaging and transfection into *Escherichia coli* 1046 as previously described by van Ommen et al. (29). The primary library was plated out on 20 90-mm dishes at a density of 40,000 colonies per dish.

Duplicate filters were prepared and the filters hybridized under standard conditions using a ³²P-labeled human α 1AT cDNA probe. Clones containing the region of the α 1AT gene were confirmed by restriction enzyme analysis using Eco RI. To select for the Null_{mattawa} allele, cosmid clones containing the α 1AT gene were evaluated using oligonucleotide gene probes as described above. Because the genotype of index case 1 had been defined as heterozygous Null_{bellingham} Null_{mattawa}, those clones which did not contain the Null_{bellingham} sequence at residue 217 by definition contained the Null_{mattawa} allele. A single 40-kb cosmid clone that contained the entire α 1AT Null_{mattawa} gene plus flanking regions was selected and subcloned into pUC19 by standard techniques (30). The recombinant subclones obtained contained 0.5 kb encompassing exon Ic, 1.6 kb encompassing exon II, 2.4 kb encompassing exons III and IV, and 1.1 kb encompassing exon V (see Fig. 2, top, for the overall normal α 1AT gene structure). These subclones were used as templates for sequencing using the dideoxynucleotide chain termination method (31) with bidirectional primers of 15-mer oligonucleotides (30). Sequencing included 150 bp 5' to exon Ic, exons Ic-V together with the intron-exon junctions, and 40 bp 3' to exon V.

Demonstration of inheritance of the Null_{mattawa} allele. To demonstrate the inheritance of the Null_{mattawa} mutation, oligonucleotide probes were prepared that were complementary to both the region centered at residue 353 in exon V with the insertional mutation in Null_{mattawa} and to the normal sequence in this region. Genomic DNA from index case 1, index case 2, the father of the index cases, and an M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control were cut with Pst I and evaluated with labeled oligonucleotide probes using the methods described above.

Evaluation of α 1AT mRNA transcripts from cells expressing the α 1AT gene. To gain insight into the consequences of the Null_{mattawa} mutation, blood monocytes, cells known to normally express the α 1AT gene (32, 33) were evaluated for the presence of α 1AT mRNA transcripts. Monocytes were evaluated from index case 2 and compared with those from a normal M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control. Although index case 2 (like index case 1) is a Null_{bellingham}-Null_{mattawa} heterozygote, the consequences of the Null_{mattawa} allele could be directly evaluated independent of the Null_{bellingham} allele because (a) the parental α 1AT genes are codominantly expressed, i.e., α 1AT gene expression of one allele is independent of the other parental allele (1, 8, 10); and (b) the Null_{bellingham} gene is known to be associated with no α 1AT mRNA transcripts and no production of α 1AT by blood monocytes (20).

Blood monocytes were isolated from index case 2 and a normal M1(Val²¹³) homozygote using adherence purification of mononuclear cells obtained by monocytopheresis. Blood mononuclear leukocytes were harvested by cytopheresis on a cell separator (model 2297; IBM Instruments, Inc., Danbury, CT) during continuous centrifugation by standard techniques (34). The mononuclear cells were separated from contaminating granulocytes using Hypaque-Ficoll density centrifugation. The resulting mononuclear cells were resuspended in DMEM supplemented with 10% FCS (Biofluids) and allowed to adhere to

150-mm tissue culture plates for 1 h at 37°C. The nonadherent cells were removed and the plates were washed three times with PBS, pH 7.4. The resulting adherent cells were harvested by scraping, washed three times, with PBS, and replated as above. The resulting cell populations were > 90% monocytes (morphology and nonspecific esterase staining) and had > 95% viability (trypan blue exclusion). α 1AT mRNA transcripts in the monocytes were evaluated by Northern analysis (33). Total cellular RNA (10 μ g/lane) prepared by guanidine HCl extraction followed by CsCl centrifugation was electrophoresed in agarose gels under denaturing conditions, transferred to nitrocellulose filters, hybridized with a 32 P-labeled α 1AT cDNA probe, and autoradiographed.

Analysis of translation of Null_{mattawa} α 1AT mRNA transcripts. In vitro translation analysis was used to examine the effect of the Null_{mattawa} mutation on the translation of the α 1AT mRNA transcript into protein. To accomplish this, an α 1AT Null_{mattawa} cDNA was constructed from a normal α 1AT M1(Val²¹³) cDNA (pPB01) by standard techniques. Both this mutant α 1AT cDNA and a normal M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT cDNA were used to construct plasmids for use in the Riboprobe (Promega-Biotec) SP6 polymerase in vitro transcription system. The M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT cDNA containing plasmid and the Null_{mattawa} α 1AT cDNA containing plasmid served as templates for generation of capped, poly-adenylated synthetic α 1AT mRNA transcripts of normal M1(Val²¹³) type or mutant Null_{mattawa} type, respectively (35). After purification, 1 μ g of each α 1AT mRNA species was used to direct translation (1 h at 37°C) in a rabbit reticulocyte lysate system (Promega-Biotec) with [³⁵S]methionine used as a label. Aliquots of the reaction mixtures were analyzed by SDS-acrylamide gel electrophoresis and fluorography and quantified by laser densitometry.

Retroviral gene transfer of human M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type α 1AT cDNAs. To examine posttranslational events in α 1AT biosynthesis, M1(Val²¹³) and Null_{mattawa} type α 1AT cDNAs were transferred to murine fibroblasts using retroviral gene transfer. The retroviral vectors used to insert the full length M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type α 1AT cDNAs into the genome of mouse fibroblasts were constructed from the N2 vector as previously described (36). The final retroviral vectors (pN2- α 1AT/M1 and pN2- α 1AT/Mattawa) contained (5' to 3') the SV40 early promoter and full length human α 1AT cDNAs of M1(Val²¹³) type or Null_{mattawa} type, respectively, inserted into the Xho I site of N2. Sequence analysis confirmed that pN2- α 1AT/Mattawa differed from pN2- α 1AT/M1 by only the single nucleotide insertion corresponding to the Null_{mattawa} mutation. The helper virus-free packaging cell line ψ_2 (37) was used to package transcripts from pN2- α 1AT/M1 and pN2- α 1AT/Mattawa into ecotropic infectious viral particles that were then used to infect NIH-3T3 cells. Polyclonal populations of infected NIH-3T3 cells were scored at > 100 colonies/10-cm plate and were equivalent for the human α 1AT M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type cDNA containing cell populations, referred to as NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa, respectively.

α 1AT mRNA levels in mouse fibroblasts. Human α 1AT mRNA transcripts were identified in NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells by cytoplasmic dot hybridization (38). Uninfected NIH-3T3 cells were used as control. Extracted cytoplasmic RNA was denatured and applied to nitrocellulose filters with a mini-fold apparatus (Schleicher & Schuell, Keene, NH) in serial dilutions. The filters were hybridized using a 32 P-labeled human α 1AT cDNA probe. Exposure of the autoradiograms was for 48 h at -70°C.

Synthesis and secretion of human α 1AT by mouse fibroblasts. The synthesis and secretion of human α 1AT by NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells was evaluated by immunoprecipitation of [³⁵S]methionine-labeled α 1AT as previously described (36). NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells were plated (5 \times 10⁵ cells per 60-mm plate); the next day, each plate was incubated for 10 min in methionine-free Iscove's minimal essential medium containing 10% dialyzed calf serum, pulsed with 250 μ Ci of [³⁵S]-methionine (600 Ci/mmol) for 30 min, then chased with nonselective media supplemented with 1 mM unlabeled methionine for 120 min.

To normalize the two study cell populations, aliquots of supernatants containing 10⁵ dpm and lysates containing 10⁶ dpm of TCA-precipitable protein were compared. Immunoprecipitation, gel electrophoresis, and fluorography were as previously described (33).

Results

Evaluation of index case 1 for the presence of the Null_{granite falls} and the Null_{bellingham} alleles. Using oligonucleotide probes specific for the sequence defining the Null_{granite falls} mutation, the Null_{bellingham} mutation, and the corresponding normal sequences of these regions, it was apparent that the α 1AT genotype of index case 1 was heterozygous Null-Null containing the Null_{bellingham} mutation at one allele and a different α 1AT Null mutation in the other allele (Fig. 2). In this regard, genomic DNA of index case 1 had a sequence that was normal in the regions defining the Null_{granite falls} mutation (compare lane 6 with lane 5, along with the controls in lanes 1-4). In contrast, the genomic DNA of index case 1 clearly contained the Null_{bellingham} mutation in one gene (lane 12), and a normal sequence in the Null_{bellingham} mutation region in the other (lane 11, along with controls lanes 7-10). Together, these findings indicate that index case 1 must be a heterozygous Null-Null, with one Null_{bellingham} allele and another, different α 1AT Null allele, which possesses the normal sequence at positions 214-220 (the region of the Null_{bellingham} mutation).

Identification of the Null_{mattawa} mutation by sequence analysis. Sequencing of exons Ic-V, all exon-intron junctions, and the 3' flanking region of the cloned α 1AT Null_{mattawa} gene of index case 1 demonstrated that it was identical to that of the normal M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT gene except for a single nucleotide insertional mutation in the exon V coding region at residue 353 of the primary amino acid sequence (Fig. 3). The 217 region of the Null_{mattawa} allele, the region of the Null_{bellingham} mutation site, was similar to the normal α 1AT M1(Val²¹³) gene. This novel mutation causes a 3' frameshift, resulting in an altered reading frame commencing at the codon for amino acid 353. The new nucleotide sequence codes for a significantly altered amino acid sequence distal to the insertion site and terminates in a premature stop signal at new codon 376.

Demonstration of inheritance of the Null_{mattawa} gene. Evaluation of genomic DNA of the index cases and the father of the index cases using synthetic oligonucleotide probes centered at the 353 region and specific for the Null_{mattawa} mutation sequence or the corresponding normal sequence, demonstrated that the Null_{mattawa} nucleotide insertion mutation had been inherited in an autosomal fashion (Fig. 4). In this context, specific hybridization of the Null_{mattawa} probe to the genomic DNA of index case 1 (lane 2), index case 2 (lane 4), and the father (lane 6), yielded a 1.1-kb band corresponding to the Pst I fragment containing the mutated sequence in exon V. Genomic DNA of both index cases and the father also specifically hybridized with the normal 350-356 probe. In the case of the father, the alternate allele is M2 (Fig. 1) and thus is identical to the normal probe in the 350-356 region. Likewise, even though both index cases have the Null_{bellingham} allele as the alternate allele, they are normal in the 350-356 region (the Null_{bellingham} substitution mutation is centered at residue 217). Based on this analysis, it may be deduced that the genotype of the mother is M1Null_{bellingham} despite the lack of direct analysis of her DNA. Together, these observations confirm both the

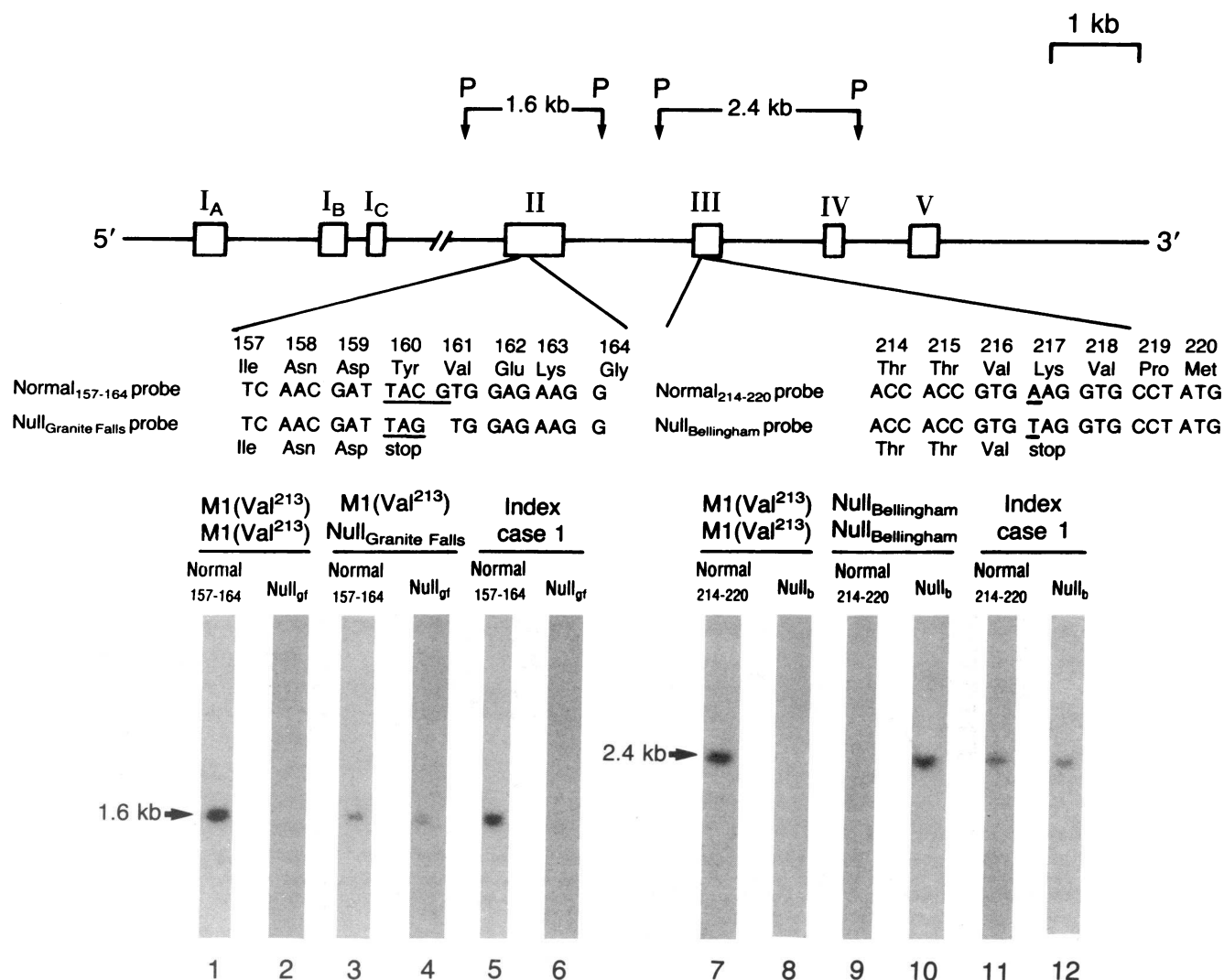


Figure 2. Evaluation of index case 1 for the presence of two previously described Null alleles, Null_{granite falls} (22) and Null_{bellingham} (21). The oligonucleotide gene probes used included: probes centered on the Null_{granite falls} defect (Null_{gr}) or the corresponding normal sequence for residues 157–164 (Normal₁₅₇₋₁₆₄) and probes that centered on the Null_{bellingham} defect (Null_b) or the corresponding normal sequence for residues 214–220 (Normal₂₁₄₋₂₂₀). Shown at the top is the structure of the $\alpha 1$ AT gene. Exons I_A–I_C contain untranslated regions (for hepatocyte $\alpha 1$ AT expression, the 3' part of exon I_C and a short 5' segment of exon II; for mononuclear phagocyte expression, I_A, I_B, I_C and a short 5' segment of exon II; see references 6, 7, and 9), whereas the coding regions for the protein are in exons II–V (6). Both the sequences of the oligonucleotide probes and the corresponding coded amino acids in the primary protein structure are depicted; the mutational changes are underlined. The probes were labeled and used to evaluate Pst I- (P) digested genomic DNA from various sources; Pst I was used because it separates the exons with the Null_{granite falls} and Null_{bellingham} mutations (see diagram and text). Lane 1, genomic DNA of an M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control evaluated with Normal₁₅₇₋₁₆₄ probe. Lane 2, identical to lane 1 except evaluated with Null_{granite falls} probe. Lane 3, genomic DNA of M1(Val²¹³) Null_{granite falls} heterozygote evaluated with Normal₁₅₇₋₁₆₄ probe. Lane 4, identical to lane 3 except evaluated with Null_{granite falls} probe. Lane 5, genomic DNA of index case 1 (see Fig. 1) evaluated with Normal₁₅₇₋₁₆₄ probe. Lane 6, identical to lane 5 except evaluated with Null_{granite falls} probe. Lane 7, genomic DNA of an M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control evaluated with Normal₂₁₄₋₂₂₀ probe. Lane 8, identical to lane 7 except evaluated with Null_{bellingham} probe. Lane 9, genomic DNA of Null_{bellingham} homozygote evaluated with Normal₂₁₄₋₂₂₀ probe. Lane 10, identical to lane 9 except evaluated with Null_{bellingham} probe. Lane 11, genomic DNA of index case 1 evaluated with Normal₂₁₄₋₂₂₀ probe. Lane 12, identical to lane 11 except evaluated with Null_{bellingham} probe.

autosomal inheritance of the Null_{mattawa} allele in this family and the heterozygous Null_{bellingham}-Null_{mattawa} phenotype of the index cases.

Evaluation of $\alpha 1$ AT-producing cells for mRNA transcripts associated with the Null_{mattawa} gene. Because the Null_{bellingham} allele is associated with the complete absence of $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA in $\alpha 1$ AT producing cells (20), any $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcript exhibited by blood monocytes of the index case must represent the exclusive expression of the Null_{mattawa} allele. In this regard,

Northern analysis of RNA of index case 2 showed that $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcript was expressed (Fig. 5). Furthermore, it was 1.8 kb long (lane 2), similar to the $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcripts of a normal M1(Val²¹³) homozygote (lane 1). It appears, therefore, that the presence of a stop codon near the 3' end of the $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA molecule generated by the Null_{mattawa} mutation is not associated with the absence of $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA as is the case for the Null_{bellingham} mutation, in which the stop signal is generated near the center of the coded $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA.

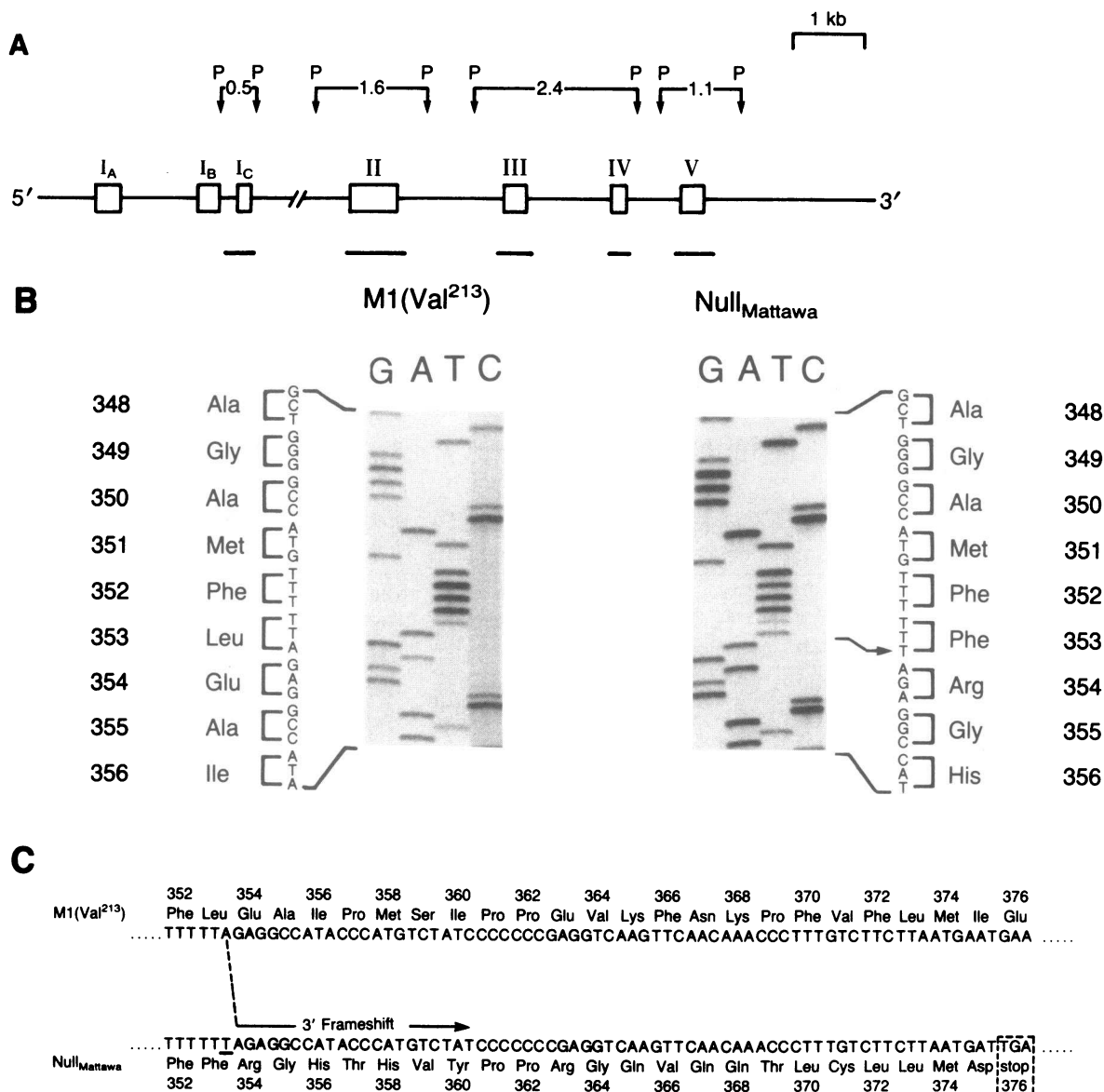


Figure 3. Identification of Null_{Mattawa} mutation in exon V by sequence analysis. (A) Schematic representation of the $\alpha 1$ AT gene, see legend to Fig. 2 for details. The Pst I (P) subclones used for sequencing are indicated above the gene; the actual areas sequenced are shown as solid lines below the gene. The sequence was identical to that of the $\alpha 1$ AT M1(Val²¹³) gene except for a region in exon V. (B) Evaluation of the 348–356 region of exon V for the M1(Val²¹³) and Null_{Mattawa} alleles. A thymidine insertion (arrow) in the codon for amino acid 353 is the single change in the Null_{Mattawa} allele. (C) The nucleotide insertion in codon 353 causes a frameshift in the 3' direction, which alters the reading frame and generates a stop signal at the new codon 376.

Translation of the Null_{Mattawa} $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcript. Evaluation of the translation of the Null_{Mattawa} $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcript demonstrated that it was capable of directing the synthesis of an $\alpha 1$ AT protein product in a fashion comparable to the normal M1(Val²¹³) $\alpha 1$ AT mRNA transcript, except that, as expected for a mutation causing a stop codon, the translation product was truncated (Fig. 6). In this context, in vitro translation of a synthetic $\alpha 1$ AT M1(Val²¹³) mRNA transcript directed synthesis of a 47-kD $\alpha 1$ AT protein species (lane 1), corresponding to the nonglycosylated $\alpha 1$ AT protein including the 24-amino acid signal peptide. In contrast, the $\alpha 1$ AT Null_{Mattawa} mRNA transcript directed the synthesis of a 45-kD $\alpha 1$ AT protein species (lane 2), corresponding to the primary translation product of $\alpha 1$ AT minus the 19 amino acids 3' to

the premature termination codon of the Null_{Mattawa} gene that are not translated into protein. Quantification of the amounts of $\alpha 1$ AT directed by the Null_{Mattawa} mRNA demonstrated it was similar to that directed by the normal mRNA ($P > 0.2$; two-tailed t test). It thus appears that the insertional mutation of the Null_{Mattawa} gene does not alter the capacity of the Null_{Mattawa} mRNA transcript to be translated into protein and that, therefore, the molecular pathophysiology accounting for the $\alpha 1$ AT Null state associated with this gene is likely not manifest at the translational level.

Human $\alpha 1$ AT gene expression in murine fibroblasts modified to contain the human $\alpha 1$ AT of M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{Mattawa}-type cDNAs. Retroviral gene transfer of the human $\alpha 1$ AT cDNAs of the normal M1(Val²¹³)-type and the mutant

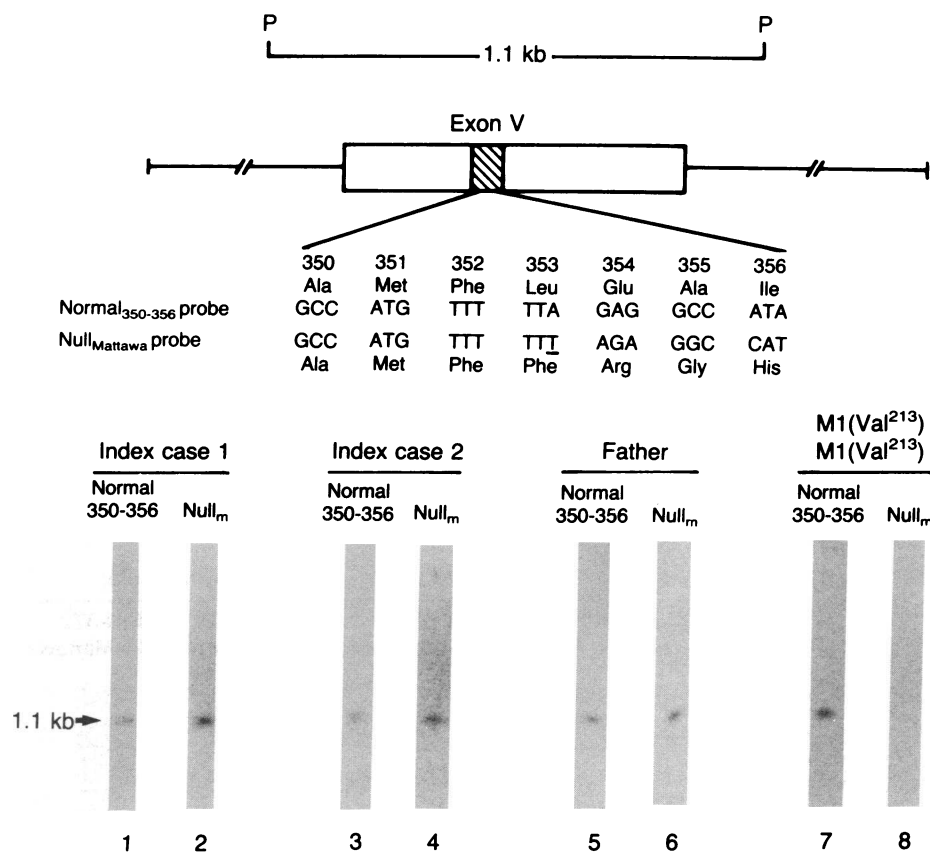


Figure 4. Determination of the inheritance of the Null_{mattawa} allele using an oligonucleotide probe specific for the Null_{mattawa} mutation. Synthetic 21-mer oligonucleotide probes centered in exon V about the Null_{mattawa} mutation (Null_m) or the corresponding normal sequence in the region coding for residues 350–356 (Normal₃₅₀₋₃₅₆) were used to evaluate genomic DNA. Shown are the sequences of the probes and the corresponding coded amino acid sequence of the primary protein structure. The nucleotide insertion in Null_{mattawa} is underlined. Genomic DNA was digested with Pst I (P), an enzyme that cuts on either side of exon V, rendering a 1.1-kb fragment. Lane 1, genomic DNA of index case 1 evaluated with the Normal₃₅₀₋₃₅₆ probe. Lane 2, identical to lane 1 except evaluated with the Null_{mattawa} probe. Lane 3, genomic DNA of index case 2 evaluated with the Normal₃₅₀₋₃₅₆ probe. Lane 4, identical to lane 3 except evaluated with the Null_{mattawa} probe. Lane 5, genomic DNA of the father of the index cases evaluated with the Normal 350–356 probe. Lane 6, identical to lane 5 except evaluated with the Null_{mattawa} probe. Lane 7, genomic DNA of M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control evaluated with the Normal 350–356 probe. Lane 8, identical to lane 7 except evaluated with the Null_{mattawa} probe.

Null_{mattawa} type to murine fibroblasts demonstrated that the α 1AT Null state associated with the Null_{mattawa} gene could be reproduced in cells that do not normally produce human proteins, and do not normally produce any form of α 1AT (Fig. 7). Cells modified to contain the normal α 1AT M1(Val²¹³)-type cDNA exhibited human α 1AT gene expression at the mRNA and protein level. In contrast, whereas the cells modified to contain the α 1AT Null_{mattawa}-type cDNA expressed equivalent

amounts of α 1AT mRNA transcripts, no α 1AT protein product could be detected. In this regard, cytoplasmic dot analysis of RNA isolated from the cell populations using a ³²P-labeled α 1AT cDNA probe demonstrated comparable levels of α 1AT mRNA transcripts in the NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells (Fig. 8 A). This finding is consistent with the concept that the Null_{mattawa} α 1AT mRNA transcript has comparable stability to the normal M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT mRNA

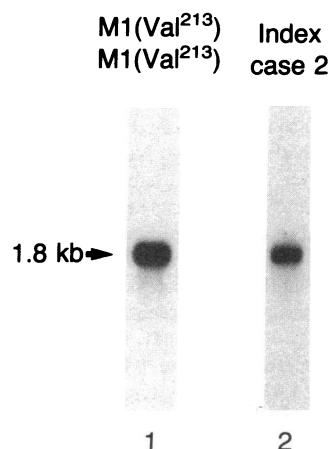


Figure 5. Northern analysis of α 1AT transcripts in blood monocytes of index case 2 and M1(Val²¹³) homozygote control. Total cellular RNA (10 μ g/lane) was evaluated using a ³²P-labeled human α 1AT cDNA probe. Lane 1, M1(Val²¹³) homozygote. Lane 2, index case 2. The position and average length of normal M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT mRNA transcript is indicated.

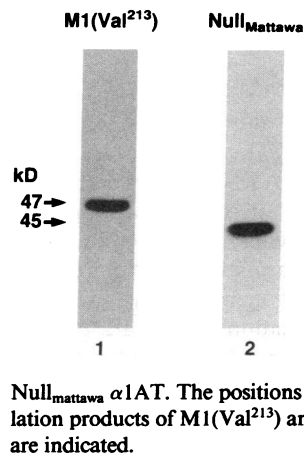


Figure 6. In vitro translation of Null_{mattawa} and M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT mRNA transcripts. Synthetic α 1AT mRNA transcripts derived by in vitro transcription of Null_{mattawa} and M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT-type cDNAs, respectively, were used to direct α 1AT protein synthesis in a rabbit reticulocyte lysate system with [³⁵S]methionine as a label. Shown are fluorograms of SDS-acrylamide gel analysis of [³⁵S]methionine-labeled α 1AT. Lane 1, M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT. Lane 2, Null_{mattawa} α 1AT. The positions of the 47- and 45-kD primary translation products of M1(Val²¹³) and Null_{mattawa} mRNAs, respectively, are indicated.

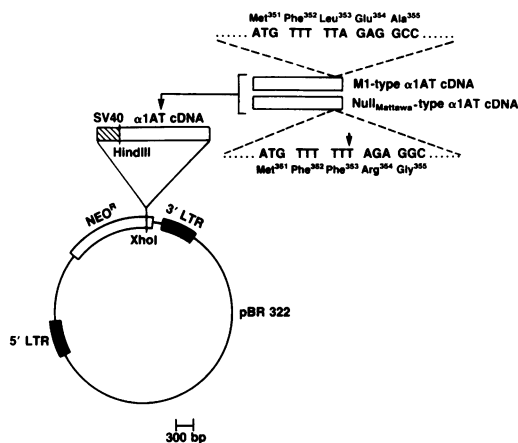


Figure 7. DNA plasmid map of the pN2- α 1AT/M1 and pN2- α 1AT/Mattawa retroviral vectors containing full-length human α 1-antitrypsin cDNAs of M1-type and Null_{mattawa}-type, respectively. The pN2- α 1AT/M1 and pN2- α 1AT/Mattawa vectors were formed from pN2 by combining (5'-3') the SV40 early promoter and the forward orientation of the α 1AT cDNAs of M1(Val²¹³) type and Null_{mattawa} type, respectively, into the Xho I site. The M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type α 1AT cDNAs differ by a single-nucleotide insertion causing the replacement of leucine by phenylalanine at amino acid position 353 of the coded protein and a 3' frameshift with the generation of a premature stop codon at position 376.

transcript. However, despite the presence of α 1AT mRNA transcripts which differ from M1(Val²¹³) α 1AT mRNA transcripts by only a single nucleotide insertion, murine fibroblasts containing the Null_{mattawa}-type cDNA exhibited no detectable human α 1AT protein (Fig. 8 B). In this context, labeling with [³⁵S]methionine for 30 min followed by a 120-min chase showed that the murine fibroblasts containing the M1(Val²¹³)-type α 1AT cDNA secreted a 52-kD mature form of human α 1AT specifically immunoprecipitated by anti- α 1AT antibody (lane 1). In marked contrast, no secreted human α 1AT could be detected from the Null_{mattawa} cDNA-containing cells (lane 2). Analysis of the cellular lysates after a 30-min pulse labeling with [³⁵S]methionine for the NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 cells showed a 50-kD precursor form of human α 1AT specifically immunoprecipitated by anti- α 1AT antibody (lane 3). In contrast, examination of lysates of NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells demonstrated no detectable intracellular α 1AT (lane 4). Thus, although it is conceivable that the truncated α 1AT protein associated with the Null_{mattawa} gene is stable but not detected by the polyclonal anti- α 1AT antibody used, it is more likely that if a truncated protein is produced, it is degraded rapidly and thus not detected.

Discussion

Although the consequences of all α 1AT Null alleles are identical, i.e., no detectable serum α 1AT, it is becoming apparent that several different mutational events may render an α 1AT gene Null. To date, all result from mutations in exons coding for the mature form of the α 1AT protein. Null_{bellingham} results from a nucleotide substitution mutation in exon III, causing the substitution of a stop signal for a lysine residue (Lys²¹⁷ AAG \rightarrow stop²¹⁷ TAG) (21). In contrast, Null_{granite falls} results from a single nucleotide deletion mutation in exon II at amino acid position 160 causing a 5' frameshift of the reading frame

with the consequent generation of a premature stop signal at the codon position of the mutation (Tyr¹⁶⁰TAC Val¹⁶¹GTG, deletion of C in codon TAC for residue 160, and 5' frameshift forming stop¹⁶⁰TAG) (22). The Null_{hong kong} allele is a TC dinucleotide deletion at Leu³¹⁸ causing a 5' frameshift with generation of a premature termination codon at position 334 (23). The α 1AT Null_{mattawa} allele presents yet another mechanism; a Null allele resulting from a single-nucleotide insertional mutation within the coding region of exon V, causing a distal 3' frameshift, different amino acids substituting for residues 353 \rightarrow 375, and a premature stop codon at residue 376. Thus, the heterogeneity in the Null mutations is diverse. Consistent with this concept, we have recently observed an entirely different cause of the Null state, an inherited deletion of the entire α 1AT gene (Null_{deletion procida}; Takahashi, H., and R. Crystal, unpublished observation).

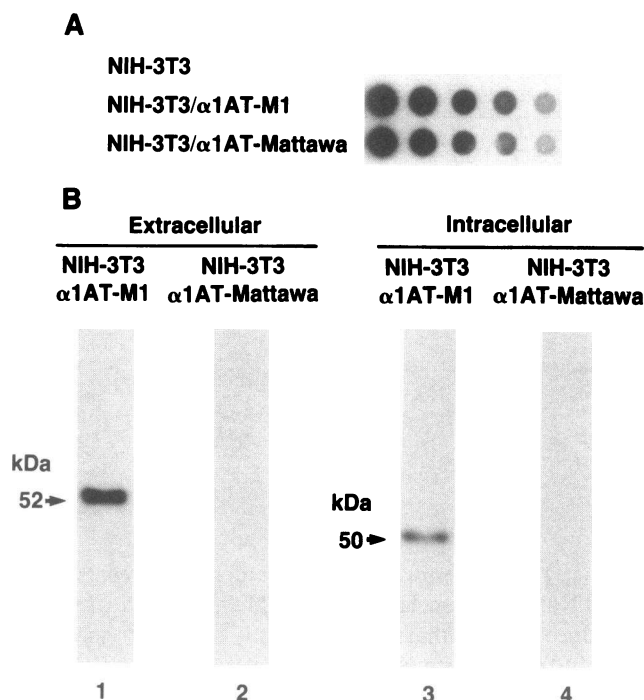


Figure 8. Evaluation of human α 1AT gene expression in murine fibroblasts modified to contain the α 1AT cDNAs of M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type. (A) Identification of α 1AT mRNA transcripts in mouse fibroblasts containing the integrated M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type human α 1AT cDNAs. Shown are data from NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells and as control, unmodified NIH-3T3 cells. Cytoplasmic RNA was evaluated for human α 1AT mRNA transcripts using cytoplasmic dot hybridization analysis with a ³²P-labeled α 1AT cDNA probe. (B) Synthesis and secretion of human α 1AT by mouse fibroblasts modified to contain the human α 1AT cDNAs of M1(Val²¹³)-type and Null_{mattawa}-type. Shown are fluorograms of SDS-acrylamide gel analysis of ³⁵S-labeled proteins isolated from lysates and supernatants of NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1 and NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa cells (30 min pulse with [³⁵S]methionine and 120 min chase with label-free media) and immunoprecipitated with an anti- α 1AT antibody. Lysates were analyzed directly after the 30-min pulse period and supernatants after the 120-min chase period. Lane 1, NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1, supernatant. Lane 2, NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa, supernatant. Lane 3, NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-M1, lysate. Lane 4, NIH-3T3/ α 1AT-Mattawa, lysate. The position of the 52-kD secreted form and 50-kD intracellular form of α 1AT are indicated.

Insertional mutations generating a Null state have been described in other protein deficiency disorders. Subsets of the β^0 thalassemia genes have been identified in ethnic Asian Indians and Chinese that result from different single nucleotide insertional mutations within the coding region of the β -globin gene (39, 40). Recently, Hidaka and colleagues (41) have identified an insertional mutation in a splice junction in the human adenine phosphoribosyltransferase gene, causing aberrant splicing. Interestingly, the inserted nucleotide resulting in the Null_{mattawa} allele is a thymidine that occurs at the terminus of a short polymeric sequence of repeating thymidines. This is consistent with the observation in studies of bacteriophage T4 mutants that nucleotide insertion mutations generating frameshifts generally occur in the setting of short repeating polymeric sequences (42–45), a phenomenon which has been explained on the basis of slippage mispairing during transcriptional replication (42, 46). Consistent with this concept, a tetrameric or pentameric polythymidine sequence has been shown to be a frameshift mutational hot spot both in vivo (44, 45) and in in vitro systems evaluating mutagenesis (47, 48).

The insertional mutation of the Null_{mattawa} gene generates a 3' frameshift with an altered reading frame distal to and including codon 353. This altered reading frame terminates at a premature stop signal at new codon 376, 19 codons upstream from the normal stop signal. Interestingly, the presence of a premature stop signal in the Null_{mattawa} allele is associated with a normal-sized α 1AT mRNA transcript. In contrast, the premature stop signal of Null_{bellingham} is associated with the complete absence of detectable α 1AT mRNA from α 1AT-expressing cells (20). Perhaps an explanation for this difference is that the premature stop signal of the Null_{bellingham} allele occurs near the center of the α 1AT mRNA transcript; the lack of α 1AT mRNA in this setting may be the consequence of mRNA molecules not protected at the 3' end by polysomes, as has been proposed for some of the β^0 thalassemia mutations in which no β -globin mRNA is detected (49, 50). In this regard, the Null_{mattawa} allele is associated with a premature stop signal near the terminal part of the α 1AT mRNA molecule. In this setting, the occurrence of the stop signal at a distal position may allow sufficient protection by polyribosomes such that a stable α 1AT mRNA transcript results.

As the α 1AT Null_{mattawa} allele is associated with α 1AT mRNA transcripts, it is of interest that no α 1AT translation product in association with this allele could be detected from cells with the Null_{mattawa} mutation. In vitro translation analysis of the Null_{mattawa} mRNA transcript demonstrated that it directs synthesis of a truncated α 1AT molecule. The coded translation product contains alterations of the primary protein structure predictive of structural instability (51). Presumably, the conformational changes affected by these alterations generate a protein species incapable of secretion. This could occur on the basis of intracellular aggregation within a subcellular compartment or alternatively, secondary to intracellular degradation of the nascent protein. The α 1AT Null_{hong kong} gene has recently been shown to result in a truncated α 1AT protein which aggregates within the cell at the level of the rough endoplasmic reticulum (23). In contrast, not only can no α 1AT be detected as a secretion product from α 1AT-expressing cells with the Null_{mattawa} gene, but additionally, no detectable intracellular form of α 1AT can be identified aggregating within the cell. Thus, it is likely that translation of the Null_{mattawa} mRNA results in synthesis of a structurally unstable, truncated α 1AT

molecule, with the consequence that the altered α 1AT protein is degraded within the cell and thus not present in the serum in detectable amounts.

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