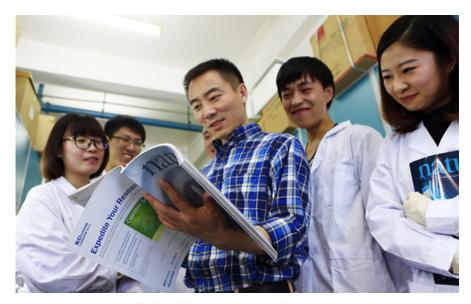
哈尔滨工业大学 Nature 破译分子机制让 CRISPR 更高效可控

Harbin Institute of Technology discovered the Structural basis of CRISPR-SpyCas9 inhibition by an anti-CRISPR protein

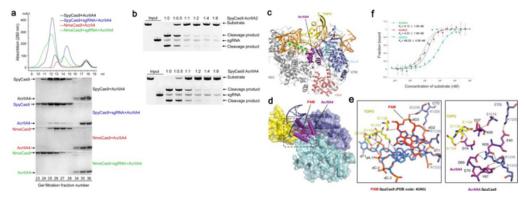


黄志伟教授(中间)及其团队成员

6 月 15 日,哈尔滨工业大学生命科学与技术学院黄志伟教授课题组在《Nature》期刊发表最新研究成果,揭示 CRISPR 系统"关闭开关"anti-CRISPR 抑制 SpyCas9 活性的分子机制。这一成果为设计时间或空间上特异性或条件性精确控制 SpyCas9 活性的基因编辑工具提供了结构基础。

CRISPR/Cas 系统原本是细菌用来保护自身免受噬菌体感染的适应性免疫系统。近几年,CRISPR/Cas9(SpyCas9)已经在全世界范围内被广泛应用于生物医学研究,成为目前最重要的、也是最广泛使用的基因编辑工具。2016年,Cell 杂志发表了一项重要成果,发现了在细菌和人类细胞中都能阻止 CRISPR 系统基因编辑活性的"关闭开发"anti-CRISPRs: AcrilA2和AcrilA4,证实它们能够阻断 CRISPR 系统中 Cas9/SpyCas9酶的活性。

黄志伟团队首次建立体外生物化学研究系统,证实 AcrilA2 或 AcrilA4 蛋白可以直接结合 SpyCas9-sgRNA 复合物,有趣的是 AcrilA2 或 AcrilA4 只和结合有 sgRNA 的 SpyCas9 有相互作用。他们进一步实验发现,AcrilA2 或 AcrilA4 能够直接抑制 SpyCas9 介导的目的 DNA 剪切。



为了研究 AcrilA4 直接抑制 SpyCas9 活性的分子机制,课题组纯化出 SpyCas9-sgRNA-AcrilA4 复合物,并通过结构生物学研究方法解析了 SpyCas9-sgRNA-AcrilA4 复合物的晶体结构。他们证实,单独 SpyCas9 上并不存在 AcrilA4 的结合位点,SpyCas9-sgRNA 复合物的形成,使得SpyCas9 构象发生显著变化,组装形成 AcrilA4 结合位点,从而很好地解释了本项目初始生化研究结果显示的 AcrilA4 只结合 SpyCas9-sgRNA 复合物,而不结合单独 SpyCas9。

该研究揭示的 Anti-CRISPR 蛋白 AcrIIA4 抑制 SpyCas9 活性的分子机制,不仅对揭示细菌免疫系统(CRISPR-Cas9)与噬菌体防御系统(Anti-CRISPR)"军备竞赛"的共进化分子机制具有重要的科学意义,而且为设计时间、空间特异性地,或条件性地精确控制 SpyCas9 基因编辑活性的工具提供了结构基础。



Structural basis of CRISPR-SpyCas9 inhibition by an anti-CRISPR protein

Anti-CRISPR 蛋白抑制 CRISPR-SpyCas9 活性的分子机制

哈尔滨工业大学 黄志伟 2017年6月15日 doi:10.1038/nature22377

CRISPR-Cas9 systems are bacterial adaptive immune systems that defend against infection by phages. Through the RNA-guided endonuclease activity of Cas9 they degrade double-stranded DNA with a protospacer adjacent motif (PAM) and sequences complementary to the guide RNA1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Recently, two anti-CRISPR proteins (AcrIIA2 and AcrIIA4 from Listeria monocytogenes prophages) were identified, both of which inhibit Streptococcus pyogenes Cas9 (SpyCas9) and L. monocytogenes Cas9 activity in bacteria and human cells6. However, the mechanism of AcrIIA2or AcrIIA4-mediated Cas9 inhibition remains unknown. Here we report a crystal structure of SpyCas9 in complex with a single-guide RNA (sgRNA) and AcrIIA4. Our data show that AcrIIA2 and AcrIIA4 interact with SpyCas9 in a sgRNA-dependent manner. The structure reveals that AcrIIA4 inhibits SpyCas9 activity by structurally mimicking the PAM to occupy the PAM-interacting site in the PAM-interacting domain, thereby blocking recognition of double-stranded DNA substrates by SpyCas9. AcrIIA4 further inhibits the endonuclease activity of SpyCas9 by shielding its RuvC active site. Structural comparison reveals that formation of the AcrIIA4-binding site of SpyCas9 is induced by sgRNA binding. Our study reveals the mechanism of SpyCas9 inhibition by AcrIIA4, providing a structural basis for developing 'off-switch' tools for SpyCas9 to avoid unwanted genome edits within cells and tissues.