

Signals of selection in primates due to viruses

Master's thesis in bioinformatics

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Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Data and processing	5
Supplied data	5
Polymorphism data	5
Divergence values	5
Orthology summary	5
Gene annotations	6
Recombination rates	6
Data summaries	7
Methods	9
MK test	9
Model overview	10
The DFE	12
Expectations for polymorphism counts	13
Divergence expectations	15
Estimations of w_{na} , w_a , α and proportions of <i>de novo</i> adaptive and slightly deleterious mutations.	16
Parametric bootstrapping	17
Workflow	18
Results and discussion	19
Recombination distribution	19
SFS	20
Estimates of w_{na} , w_a and α	21
Bootstrapping results	23
Conclusion	24
Proposals for future studies	24
Acknowledgements	25
References	26
Supporting information	29

Abstract

Viruses interact with thousands of their host proteins in mammals, which are known as virus interacting proteins (VIP). It has been shown that even though VIPs are under a strong selective pressure to conserve their function, they account for a big part of the protein adaptation in mammals. The aim of this project was to analyse the intragenomic determinants for signals of protein adaptive evolution in VIP genes in primates. Genes were divided based on their recombination rate to explore correlation with statistics related to the efficiency of positive and purifying selection, and ensure that the signal of strong adaptation in VIP is robust to differences of this possible confounding factor. Using a hierarchical probabilistic method based on the McDonald-Kreitman test (MK), the distribution of fitness effects (DFE) was estimated allowing to estimate the proportion of adaptive substitutions (α) together with the rate of adaptive and non-adaptive substitutions (w_a and w_{na}) and the proportion of *de novo* advantageous and slightly deleterious mutations, in order to quantify the selective forces acting upon the analysed genes. This was accomplished by generating non-synonymous and synonymous site frequency spectra (SFS) from polymorphisms data in human, chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan and macaques and combining it with non-synonymous and synonymous divergence between those species.

The results of this study revealed that adaptation observed in VIP genes increases with recombination which indicates that recombination enables a more efficient positive selection and aids in the evolutionary arms race against viruses. It was also shown that VIP genes have a smaller proportion of *de novo* non-adaptive mutations compared to nonVIP genes and that it is not dependent on recombination which confirms the strong selective pressure that they are under to conserve their function. Signals for the proportion of adaptive *de novo* mutations weren't conclusive and reflect the sensitivity of the method to the number of sampled polymorphisms.