

EXPRESSION OF HIV-2 GAG AND ENV ANTIGENS IN *E. COLI*

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For the serological diagnosis of infections with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) Env and Gag antigens are of most importance. Recombinant ELISA and Western blot assays have been developed for this purpose (7, 8).

On the basis of pEX plasmids (6) we constructed expression vectors which encode N-terminal and C-terminal parts of Gag protein p26 from HIV-2<sub>GH-1</sub> (3: amino acids 115-269 or 269-522 of Gag precursor) and HIV-2<sub>ROD</sub> (2: amino acids 268-463), respectively. Furthermore, a DNA fragment encoding amino acids 554-719 (numbered according to ref. 5) of the Env precursor of HIV-2<sub>ROD</sub> was inserted into pEX vector. The latter spans the immunodominant epitope of the transmembrane protein gp36 which can be used for differentiation of HIV-1 and HIV-2 infections (1). The expressed  $\beta$ -galactosidase fusion proteins were detected in stained polyacrylamide gels. Using a monkey serum obtained by infection with HIV-2<sub>ben</sub> (4) we recognized the HIV-specific fusion proteins by immunoblot. A monoclonal antibody raised against p26 of HIV-2<sub>ben</sub> (obtained from S. Nick, Göttingen) reacted with p26 from HIV-2<sub>GH-1</sub> as well as from HIV-2<sub>ROD</sub>. We localized its epitope in the C-terminal segment of p26.

Further investigations on the crossreactivity of the antigens described here with the corresponding antigens of HIV-1 (7) by means of sera from HIV-1 and HIV-2 infected individuals are in progress.

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