The membrane-targeting-sequence motif is required for exhibition of recessive resurrection in *Escherichia coli* RNase E

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Abstract

The essential homo-tetrameric endoribonuclease RNase E of *Escherichia coli* participates in global RNA turnover as well as stable RNA maturation. The protomer's N-terminal half (residues 1-529) bears the catalytic, allosteric and tetramerization domains, including the critical active site residues D303 and D346. The C-terminal half (CTH, residues 530-1061) is dispensable for viability. We have previously described a phenomenon of recessive resurrection in RNase E that requires the CTH, wherein the wild-type homo-tetramer displays identical activity in vivo as a hetero-tetramer comprised of three catalytically dead subunits (with D303A/D346A substitutions) and one wild-type subunit. Here we show that recessive resurrection is exhibited even in dimeric RNase E with the CTH, and that it is dependent on presence of the membrane-targeting-sequence motif (residues 565-582). A single F575E substitution also abolished recessive resurrection, whereas other CTH motifs (such as those for binding of RNA or of partner proteins) were dispensable. The phenomenon was independent of RNA 5'-monophosphate sensing by the enzyme. We propose that membrane-anchoring of RNase E renders it uniquely processive for endoribonucleolytic action, and that recessive resurrection and dominant negativity are alternative and mutually exclusive manifestations of, respectively, processive and distributive catalytic mechanisms in a homo-oligomeric enzyme.

Introduction

The essential endoribonuclease RNase E in *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella enterica* not only catalyzes the rate-limiting initial steps in global RNA degradation and turnover (1) but also participates in gene regulation mediated by small RNAs as well as in rRNA and tRNA processing and maturation reactions (reviewed in 2–11). It is a large homo-tetrameric enzyme whose subunit polypeptides (encoded by the *rne* gene) are each comprised of 1061 amino acid residues. Several features of RNase E are depicted in Figure 1A (top line) on a linear polypeptide representation.

The N-terminal half of RNase E (NTH, residues 1 to 529) is by itself sufficient for homo-tetramer assembly as well as to confer bacterial viability. Crystal structures have been determined of the RNase E-NTH without and with bound RNA (12–15), Each subunit is folded into a large domain (residues 1 to 400) and a small domain (residues 438 to 529), with a pair of Cys residues (C404, C407) in the intervening linker region. The large domain comprises the catalytic active site that includes residues D303 and D346 as well as an allosteric regulatory site described further below. The enzyme exists as a dimer of dimers, with a Zn^{2+} atom co-ordinated between the Cys residues of a pair of linker regions contributing to dimer formation (referred to as a principal dimer); inter-subunit contacts between the pair of small domains of one principal dimer with those of a second then results in tetramer assembly.

An allosteric regulatory site in RNase E-NTH is known as the 5'-sensor pocket (13, 14), with residue R169 located within it. This site confers to the enzyme the property of preferential action on RNA substrates with 5'-monophosphate termini (16, 17), which is lost with an R169Q substitution in the enzyme (18, 19). There is evidence for cross-subunit catalysis within a "dimer", that is, with 5'-end sensing in one protomer and endonucleolytic cleavage in the adjacent one (13, 20). Newly synthesized bacterial RNAs bear 5'-

triphosphate ends that need to be converted to 5'-monophosphate prior to RNase E action, and an enzyme RppH is required for this conversion (21, 22).

Notwithstanding that the C-terminal half of RNase E (CTH, residues 530 to 1061) is dispensable for viability, this region exhibits several important functional features and properties. The CTH is a scaffold for assembly of a multi-protein complex called the degradosome (23–28) whose constituents have been proposed to act cooperatively for efficient RNA degradation (29, 30). The CTH also bears two Arg-rich RNA-binding domains AR1 and AR2 (residues 604 to 644, and 796 to 814, respectively) (31, 32) as well as a membrane-targeting-sequence (MTS) motif from residues 565 to 582 (11, 33–37). The MTS motif is evolutionarily conserved in the gamma- and beta-proteobacteria (29, 33), and is responsible for the enzyme's localization or compartmentalization to the cytoplasmic surface of the bacterial inner membrane. An F575E substitution within the MTS motif dissociates RNase E from the membrane and renders it soluble (12, 33, 34, 38). A recent study has also shown that the protein MinD binds to the MTS motif region of RNase E and by doing so mediates both the latter's interaction with the membrane as well as the polar localization of a subset of mRNAs in *E. coli* (39).

That the CTH contributes significantly to RNase E function and hence to bacterial fitness and growth is supported by data from multiple studies (reviewed in 40). The specific activity of RNase E-ΔCTH is less than that of the full-length polypeptide both in vivo and in vitro (20, 41, 42), and mutants expressing the former are defective for degradation of ribosome-free mRNAs (43, 44). Loss of the MTS motif is by itself correlated with failure of degradosome localization to the inner membrane, reduced growth rate, and increased degradation of rRNAs (11, 33, 35). A transcriptomic study has shown that RNase E truncated beyond residue 602 (that is, with the MTS motif still present) is also defective for global mRNA degradation, which has been attributed to the loss of AR-1 and -2 domains in the mutant (45).

Importantly, perturbations of allosteric RNase E activation through its 5'-sensor pocket (caused either by absence of RppH or by an R169Q substitution in RNase E) are lethal in combination with RNase-ΔCTH but are viable with full length RNase E (19, 41). On the other hand, substitutions such as D303A or D346A that destroy the enzyme's active site are lethal in both full-length and CTH-deleted RNase E (18, 20). These results have been interpreted to suggest that the enzyme catalyzes RNA cleavage through two pathways, namely a 5'-end-dependent pathway that requires R169 in RNase E and RppH, and a 5'-end-independent pathway that requires the CTH (41, 44, 46). The details of the postulated latter pathway are unclear.

In vitro studies on RNase E have been difficult because of the protein's membrane association, insolubility, and tendency to aggregate (38); accordingly, the majority of studies have been performed with water-soluble RNase E-ΔCTH. The measured K_{cat} values for RNA cleavage are rather low at around 10 min^{-1} or less (17, 18, 47–49), which may not adequately account for the enzyme's essentiality and actions on its multifarious targets in vivo. The K_{cat} value for (detergent-solubilized) full-length RNase E in a reconstituted degradosome is around 8-fold higher than that for RNaseE-ΔCTH (48). However, there are no published studies on the enzyme's catalytic activity in vitro in its membrane-associated state.

We have recently demonstrated a new genetic phenomenon of "recessive resurrection" in RNase E, for which too the CTH is required (20). Recessive resurrection refers to the situation wherein an RNase E hetero-tetramer with just one wild-type subunit and three catalytically dead subunits (bearing D303A or D346A active site-substitutions) unexpectedly exhibits identical enzyme activity in vivo to that of a wild-type homo-tetramer. In other words, if four wild-type RNase E protomers are assembled in two alternative ways, either as a single homo-tetramer or as four hetero-tetramers each with three other catalytically inactive protomers, the latter (that is, the group of four hetero-tetramers) exhibits approximately four-fold higher enzyme activity in vivo than does the former. This

phenomenon is exhibited with the full-length polypeptides; on the other hand, in a tetramer comprised of CTH-truncated polypeptides, the presence of subunits with D303A or D346A active-site disruptions confers the expected, and opposite, effect of dominant negativity (that is, "subunit-poisoning") (20).

In the present study, we have investigated which if any of the various features and properties of the CTH is required for recessive resurrection. Our findings suggest that it is the MTS motif that is necessary and sufficient for exhibition of recessive resurrection in RNase E. Thus, the phenomenon does not occur with polypeptides that lack the MTS motif or that bear the F575E substitution within the motif. Our model is that when RNase E is membrane-associated, it is rendered uniquely processive for its endonucleolytic action on RNA; and that recessive resurrection is simply a manifestation of processivity of catalysis by a homo-oligomeric enzyme.

Materials and Methods

Bacterial strains and growth conditions

Genotypes of *E. coli* K-12 strains are listed in Supplementary Table S1. Cultures were routinely grown at 37° in LB medium (50). The medium was supplemented, where appropriate, with ampicillin (Amp), chloramphenicol (Cm), kanamycin (Kan), trimethoprim (Tp), and Xgal at concentrations as previously described (41). Supplementation with isopropyl β-D-thiogalactoside (IPTG) was at concentrations as indicated for the individual experiments, and it was ensured that all strains grown with IPTG were devoid of *lacY*-encoded lactose permease.

Plasmids

Previously described plasmids included the following (salient features given in parentheses): pKD13 (Kan^R Amp^R), pKD46 (Amp^R), and pCP20 (Cm^R Amp^R) for use in recombineering and site-specific excision between FRT sites, as described (51); pSG1 and pSG4 (Kan^R, pSC101-derived plasmids carrying, respectively, *rne*$^+$ and *rne*-R169Q alleles) (19); pHYD5159 and pHYD5193 (Tp^R,

single-copy-number *rne*$^+$ shelter plasmids with, respectively, *lacZ4526 lacY*$^+$ and *lacZ*$^+$ Δ*lacY* alleles) (20); pASKA-*rne* and its parent vector pCA24N from the ASKA plasmid collection (Cm^R, wherein RNase E with N-terminal 6 X His-tag is expressed from an IPTG-inducible promoter in the former) (52); and pHYD5151, pHYD5152, pHYD5164 and pHYD5165 (Cm^R, derivatives of pASKA-*rne* encoding RNase E mutants with, respectively, D346A, D303A, D346A + R169Q, and D303A + R169Q substitutions) (20).

Additional variants of pASKA-*rne* were obtained in this study by recombineering or by site-directed mutagenesis; they are listed in Supplementary Table S2 and their construction and validation are described in the Supplementary Text. The primers used for construction and validation of the plasmids are listed in Supplementary Table S3.

Blue-white screening assay to determine functionality of *rne* alleles

The blue-white assay to establish whether an individual ASKA plasmid-borne *rne* allele can confer viability to a Δ*rne* strain has been described earlier (20). Briefly, a Δ*lac* Δ*rne* strain GJ20314 carrying the single-copy-number *rne*$^+$ *lacZ*$^+$ Tp^R shelter plasmid pHYD5193 was transformed with the ASKA plasmid of interest and plated at suitable dilution on Xgal-supplemented medium without Tp. The presence of white colonies (typically at around 5% of total) indicated that cells that had spontaneously lost pHYD5193 continued to be viable and therefore that the ASKA *rne* allele was functional, whereas the absence of white colonies indicated that the *rne* allele was unable to support viability.

Measurements of *rne-lac* expression

Specific activity of β-galactosidase was measured in cultures (supplemented with IPTG at indicated concentrations) of ASKA plasmid-bearing Δ*recA rne-lac* derivatives by the Miller method (50), and values (mean ± SE) calculated from at least three independent experiments) are reported in the units defined therein. The Δ*recA* allele was sourced from the Keio knockout collection

(53).

Western blotting

The procedure for Western blotting was essentially as described (54). Cell lysates prepared from cultures grown to mid-exponential phase were subjected to electrophoresis on 8% polyacrylamide gels with sodium dodecyl sulphate. The separated proteins were electroblotted on PVDF membranes and reacted with mouse anti-His primary antibody followed by goat anti-mouse secondary antibody conjugated with horseradish peroxidase. The membranes were also stained with amido black to serve as loading controls.

Other methods

The protocols of Sambrook and Russell (54) were followed for recombinant DNA manipulations, PCR, transformations, and plasmid DNA analyses. Strain XL1-Blue (55) as routinely used for transformation of ligated DNA preparations. Procedures for phage P1 transduction (56), ARMS-PCR (57), recombineering (51), and pCP20-mediated site-specific excision between FRT sites (51), were as described.

Results

Exploiting *rne-lac* autoregulation to estimate intracellular RNase E specific activity

The 5'-untranslated region of *rne* mRNA is itself a target for cleavage by RNase E, as a consequence of which the overall intracellular enzyme activity is subject to feedback autoregulation in *E. coli.* The expression of an *rne-lac* fusion therefore serves as a robust and sensitive inverse measure of intracellular RNase E activity, as established by work from several groups (58–64).

In the present study to investigate the roles of different CTH features on recessive resurrection, we adopted the following approach. The polypeptide encoded from the gene construct resident at the chromosomal *rne* locus

(expressed from its native promoter) carried the functional active site residues D303 and D346, and hence was by itself sufficient to confer viability. Another gene construct placed downstream of an IPTG-inducible promoter on a plasmid encoded a second RNase E polypeptide that was either catalytically active (as control) or catalytically inactive (with D303A or D346A substitutions). Recessive resurrection was inferred to occur if there was an IPTG-dependent decrease of *rne-lac* expression in derivatives that carried the gene construct for a catalytically inactive polypeptide on the plasmid, since it implied that the catalytic activity of the functionally proficient polypeptide expressed from the chromosome is being augmented by its heteromeric association with functionally deficient polypeptides from the plasmid. On the other hand, if there was an IPTG-dependent increase of *rne-lac* expression under these conditions, the phenomenon was identified as one of dominant negativity.

Description of the different RNase E constructs obtained and tested for recessive resurrection

ASKA plasmid-borne gene constructs for the following altered versions of RNase E (depicted in Fig. 1A) were obtained and validated as described in the Supplementary Text: truncations of the polypeptide beyond residues 815, 796, 645, 603, 529, or 437 [each designated by the corresponding residue number suffixed with Δ; 437Δ has been described as 438Δ in an earlier study (20)]; ΔAR1-ΔAR2 (that is, combination of individual deletions of AR1 and AR2); ΔMTS; ΔMTS -ΔAR1-ΔAR2; or the substitution F575E. (As schematically depicted in Figure 1B (panels i to iii), full-length RNase E and its truncated versions 529Δ and 437Δ are expected to exist as membrane-tethered homo-tetramer, cytoplasmic homo-tetramer, and cytoplasmic homo-dimer, respectively.) The different perturbations above were generated on constructs carrying the functional catalytic active site of RNase E or with D303A / D346A substitutions.

To investigate whether recessive resurrection would occur also in dimeric RNase E, we generated constructs to encode deletions of the small domain (since

this domain mediates tetramer assembly as a dimer of dimers). In these ΔSD variants, the stretch of residues from 438 to 529 was deleted and replaced with an 8-amino acid sequence linking the large domain (and residues involved in Zn^{2+}-coordination) to the CTH. The ΔSD constructs (alone, or in combination with the other perturbations) were generated on polypeptides carrying wild-type active site or the D303A substitution.

All constructs were tested by the "blue-white" screening assay described above to confirm that (i) those encoding the wild-type active site are able to confer viability in a chromosomal Δ*rne* strain background and (ii) those encoding D303A / D346A substitutions are unable to do so. Plasmid-bearing constructs encoding the functional active site were also introduced into a Δ*rne* strain (also RecA-deficient) carrying *rne-lac*, to obtain a measure of their intrinsic intracellular RNase E activity (Supp. Fig. S1). The data indicated that CTH truncations starting from residue 530 or further downstream (in each of which the enzyme is expected to remain tetrameric) are associated with moderate elevation of *rne-lac* expression (up to 4-fold), whereas the 437Δ truncation and the ΔSD construct (the latter was tested in a *recA*$^+$ derivative) conferred around 10-fold increase in *rne-lac* expression indicative of poor intrinsic enzyme activity. Perturbations to the MTS motif, as well as the ΔAR1-ΔAR2 deletion, were also associated with moderately elevated *rne-lac* expression.

An intact MTS motif is required for the exhibition of recessive resurrection

In the studies described below, we have compared *rne-lac* expression within sets of isogenic *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain derivatives carrying equivalent plasmid-based RNase E constructs, without or with a functional catalytic active site, expressed from an IPTG-regulated promoter; in the first set of experiments, all strains were *rne*$^+$ on the chromosome. For each construct, the *rne-lac* expression values at different IPTG concentrations have been normalized to that at nil IPTG (when the plasmid-encoded polypeptide is expected to be present at very low basal levels). It was also confirmed that *rne-lac* values at nil IPTG are

similar for the various plasmid constructs (including vector pCA24N) in the given *rne*$^+$ chromosomal background (Supp. Fig. S2).

With the use of a trio of plasmid-borne full-length RNase E constructs (bearing either the functional active site or the D303A or D346A substitution therein), we first confirmed the phenomenon of recessive resurrection as previously described (20). Thus, in the chromosomal *rne*$^+$ background, the plasmid encoding functional full-length RNase E downstream of an IPTG-inducible promoter conferred, as expected, a progressive decrease in chromosomal *rne-lac* expression with increasing IPTG concentration, indicative of *rne* autoregulation; given that the extent of reduction in *rne-lac* expression was approximately 60 to 70 percent at IPTG concentrations ≥ 50 μM (Fig. 2, panel i), one may infer that the ratio of RNase E polypeptide synthesis from the plasmid to that from the chromosome is around 3:1 under these conditions. The relative excess of plasmid-encoded protomers in comparison the chromosomally encoded species is fortified also by the fact that the latter is expressed from the native autoregulated locus (and is therefore down-regulated to the same extent as *rne-lac*) whereas the former is induced by IPTG but not autoregulated. A nearly identical pattern of decrease in *rne-lac* expression was observed also with IPTG-induced expression of full-length RNase E variants with the catalytically dead D303A or D346A substitutions, indicative of recessive resurrection (Fig. 2, panel i). As expected, in the control strains carrying just the plasmid vector, *rne-lac* expression was unaffected by IPTG (Fig. 2, panel i).

In experiments with plasmid-encoded RNase E polypeptides (with functional active site or with D303A or D346A substitutions) of RNase E constructs bearing 529Δ or 437Δ truncations (Fig. 2, panels ii and iii respectively), we confirmed the earlier findings that recessive resurrection is not observed with RNase E variants lacking the CTH (20). In either case, IPTG-induced expression from the plasmid of the control polypeptide with functional active site was associated with elevated *rne-lac* expression (more pronounced for 437Δ than for 529Δ), which is consistent with previous reports that C-terminal

truncations of RNase E confer a dominant-negative phenotype (20, 42). Upon IPTG-induced expression of the polypeptides with D303A or D346A substitutions, the increase in *rne-lac* expression was even more marked, indicative of subunit poisoning leading to stronger dominant negativity (which is to be viewed as the opposite of recessive resurrection). Indeed (and as further elaborated below), an important conclusion from multiple experiments in this study has been that recessive resurrection and dominant negativity are mutually exclusive manifestations associated with expression of different RNase E constructs bearing the D303A or D346A active site substitutions.

The subsequent experiments were intended to test which features, if any, of the CTH are required for recessive resurrection. Our earlier studies had suggested that degradosome assembly on the CTH is dispensable for recessive resurrection (20); in continuation, the current experiments were performed with constructs bearing deletions of AR1 and AR2, or perturbations of MTS such as ΔMTS or F575E substitution. The results indicate that recessive resurrection is retained upon loss of the AR1 and AR2 motifs, in that IPTG-induced expression of the construct with D346A substitution and ΔAR1-ΔAR2 was associated with reduction in *rne-lac* expression in the *rne*$^+$ background (Fig. 2, panel iv). On the other hand, when the MTS motif was perturbed by either deletion or F575E alteration, constructs with the intact functional active sites were associated with IPTG-dependent reduction in *rne-lac* expression whereas those with D303A or D346A active site substitutions were dominant negative (Fig. 2, panels v and vi, respectively, for ΔMTS and F575E). These results indicate that, of the different features in the CTH, it is the MTS motif that is required for recessive resurrection.

Interestingly, with constructs bearing ΔAR1-ΔAR2 and ΔMTS together (that is, the triple deletion), IPTG-induced overexpression of even the polypeptide bearing the functional active site failed to lower *rne-lac* expression, and that with D303A conferred dominant negativity (Fig. 2, panel vii). These results suggest that the AR1-AR2 motifs and the MTS motif perhaps act redundantly to facilitate RNase E's catalytic activity.

Comparable expression of RNase E polypeptides in strains without or with recessive resurrection

To exclude the possibility that the absence of recessive resurrection with some plasmid-encoded RNase E constructs is because of instability of the cognate RNase E polypeptides, we performed Western blot experiments following IPTG-induced expression from ASKA plasmid derivatives (with functional active site or with D303A / D346A substitutions) of full-length, 529Δ, ΔMTS and F575E versions of RNase E, in a chromosomal *rne*$^+$ background. The ASKA plasmid-encoded polypeptides are N-terminally His-tagged, and an anti-His antibody preparation was used in the experiments.

From the results shown in Figure 3, we confirmed that full-length RNase E (but not 529Δ) displays anomalously slow electrophoretic mobility, as reported earlier (65); the ΔMTS- and F575E-bearing polypeptides retained this property. It was also noted that the polypeptides that fail to show recessive resurrection, namely the D303A- and D346A-substituted versions of F575E (Fig. 3, lanes 7-8) and of ΔMTS (Fig. 3, lanes 10-11) are not less abundant than either (i) their counterparts with functional active sites (Fig. 3, lanes 6 and 9, respectively) or (ii) the active site mutants of full-length RNase E which exhibit recessive resurrection (Fig. 3, lanes 4-5). With the 529Δ constructs as well, expression of the polypeptide with D303A substitution (which is deficient for recessive resurrection) was similar to that with functional active site (Fig. 3, compare lanes 12 and 13); interestingly, the abundance of both these polypeptides was markedly higher than those of the full-length, ΔMTS or F575E versions.

We conclude that exhibition of recessive resurrection or otherwise is not correlated with differences in expression levels of polypeptides with D303A / D346A active site substitutions.

Effects on recessive resurrection of other truncations within the CTH

As shown above and earlier (20), constructs of the RNase E truncations

529Δ and 437Δ (both lacking the MTS motif) do not exhibit recessive resurrection, and we proceeded to test whether shorter truncations within the CTH such as 815Δ, 796Δ, 645Δ or 603Δ (all of which retain the MTS motif) will do so. Our findings indicate that as with full-length RNase E, the 815Δ, 796Δ and 645Δ constructs are able to confer recessive resurrection in the *rne*$^{+}$ background (Fig. 2, panels viii-x, respectively).

On the other hand, with 603Δ, *rne-lac* expression was reduced upon IPTG addition only for the construct with functional active site but not for that with D346A substitution, indicating absence (or inefficiency) of recessive resurrection in this situation (Fig. 2, panel xi). The length of C-terminal extension beyond the MTS motif is only 19 amino acid residues for the 603Δ constructs and, as described below, the active-site mutant construct was still able to confer recessive resurrection in the chromosomal 437Δ background; a hypothesis to explain this behaviour is discussed in a subsequent section.

Taken together, therefore, the results with the different CTH truncations are consistent with the proposal that it is the MTS motif in RNase E that is required for the phenomenon of recessive resurrection.

Recessive resurrection in derivatives expressing RNase E-437Δ from the chromosome

As mentioned above, the quaternary structure of RNase E is that of a dimer of principal dimers, and it is the pair of small domains (residues 438-529) in a principal dimer that contacts its counterparts of the second principal dimer for homo-tetramer assembly. Strains expressing an RNase E variant truncated beyond residue 437 are therefore expected to harbour only the dimeric species of enzyme; such strains are viable but possess low intracellular specific activity, as inferred from the ~6-fold increase of autoregulated *rne-lac* expression in them (ref. 1, see also Supp Fig. S1).

In a Δ*recA rne-lac* strain expressing RNase E-437Δ from the chromosome,

we tested for recessive resurrection after introducing plasmids with the IPTG-regulated constructs encoding different RNase E variants; these data are presented in Figure 4A. It was reasoned that if RNase E-437Δ is the only species with a functional active site in cells that are abundantly co-expressing catalytically inactive variants of full-length RNase E, membrane-tethered hetero-oligomeric assemblies will each bear a lone functional 437Δ protomer in either 1:1 or 1:3 stoichiometry (Fig. 4B).

The overall broad conclusion from these experiments has been that the features of recessive resurrection as observed in the *rne*$^+$ strain are reproduced also in the chromosomal *rne*-437Δ strain. Thus, in the latter background, recessive resurrection was observed with the full-length and 645Δ constructs (Fig. 4A, panels i and ii, respectively, whereas the catalytically dead constructs of the 529Δ, 437Δ, ΔMTS or F575E variants failed to show recessive resurrection (Fig. 4A, panels iii-vi, respectively).

Interestingly, the 603Δ-D346A construct also exhibited recessive resurrection in the chromosomal 437Δ background (Fig. 4A, panel vii), unlike the situation with chromosomal *rne*$^+$. The interpretations from these data are further discussed below.

The following additional differences were noted in the data from the chromosomal 437Δ derivatives (compared to those from chromosomal *rne*$^+$). (i) The magnitude of decrease in *rne-lac* expression upon overproduction of the functionally active polypeptides is greater, which can be explained as being the consequence of the 6-fold higher basal *rne-lac* expression in these strains in absence of IPTG (Supp. Fig. S3). (ii) Whereas in the chromosomal *rne*$^+$ background each of the full-length constructs without or with the active site substitutions behaved identically at the various IPTG concentrations, in the chromosomal 437Δ background the catalytically inactive constructs were less effective than the functionally active construct in reducing *rne-lac* expression at the intermediate IPTG concentrations; however, at 100 μM IPTG, the three

constructs were all more or less equivalent to one another. The possible relevance of these findings to the model being proposed for recessive resurrection is further explored below.

Recessive resurrection is exhibited also in dimeric RNase E

In an additional test to determine whether recessive resurrection can occur in dimeric RNase E, we constructed and employed the plasmid-borne, and IPTG-regulated, ΔSD variants (Δ438-529), in each of which the SD region is deleted and the CTH region is attached directly to the large domain (along with the segment involved in Zn^{2+} co-ordination) through an 8-amino acid Gly-rich linker (66). When a ΔSD variant is overexpressed in a chromosomal *rne*$^{+}$ strain, the full-length polypeptide is expected to be titrated by the ΔSD species so that the former is present only in hetero-dimeric assemblies.

As mentioned above, in a Δ*rne* background, the ΔSD variant (with functional active site) was associated with high *rne-lac* expression (Supp. Fig. S1), indicating that it possesses low specific activity (although sufficient to support viability). It is not clear, however, whether this low activity is because of the protein's existence as a dimer (rather than as tetramer) or because of alteration of its primary structure through presence of the artificial linker region between the large domain and CTH.

In experiments with a pair of plasmid-borne ΔSD variants (carrying the functional active site or the D303A substitution) in the chromosomal *rne*$^{+}$ background, we could show that *rne-lac* expression is decreased with increasing IPTG to equivalent extents with both the variant bearing the functional active site as also that in which the active site had been destroyed (Fig. 2, panel xii). These findings permit the conclusion that recessive resurrection (namely, the ability of a catalytically inactive protomer to contribute to enzyme activity in heteromeric assembly with a functional protomer) is exhibited even in dimeric RNase E.

5'-Monophosphate sensing is not required for recessive resurrection in RNase E

As mentioned above, the R169Q substitution in RNase E which abolishes sensing of and stimulation of catalytic activity by 5'-monophosphate in the RNA substrate, is viable when present on the full-length polypeptide but is lethal in combination with a CTH truncation. Since recessive resurrection is also exhibited with full-length but not CTH-truncated RNase E, we investigated whether this phenomenon would still occur in heteromeric complexes in which all protomers carried R169Q.

Accordingly, *rne-lac* expression was measured in different derivatives of a strain in which full-length RNase E with R169Q substitution was expressed from its native promoter. The derivatives each carried a plasmid expressing one of the following from an IPTG-inducible promoter: (i) nil (that is, plasmid vector); (ii) full-length RNase E with functional active site or with D303A or D346A substitutions; or (iii) full-length RNase E with R169Q substitution along with functional active site or with D303A or D346A substitutions.

From the results, we noted first that the basal *rne-lac* expression (that is, in presence of just the plasmid vector) is elevated around three-fold in the derivative with RNase E-R169Q compared to that with wild-type RNase E (Supp. Fig. S4, compare the first two bars at left). This finding lends support to the notion that the 5'-sensing and 5'-independent pathways contribute redundantly to catalytic efficiency of the enzyme in vivo (18, 41).

With regard to recessive resurrection, we observed that in the derivatives with RNase E-R169Q, the pattern of reduction in *rne-lac* expression upon IPTG-induced expression of different constructs is identical across all combinations of the alterations tested, that is, with or without functional active site and with or without 5'-sensor mutation (Fig. 5). These data establish that recessive resurrection is exhibited even when all four protomers are defective for 5'-monophosphate sensing. Similar results have been described earlier for full-

length hetero-tetramers in which the catalytically inactive protomers carried R169Q and the active protomer was proficient for 5' sensing (20).

Discussion

Genetic, biochemical, and structural studies have provided reasonably detailed insights into the mechanism of catalysis by the NTH of the essential endoribonuclease RNase E of *E. coli*. The role of its CTH in the cellular functions of the enzyme is less well understood. We had previously identified a novel genetic feature of recessive resurrection in RNase E which requires the CTH of the polypeptide (20). Recessive resurrection refers to the phenomenon by which four wild-type RNase E protomers, each distributed in a hetero-tetramer with three other catalytically dead protomers, together confer roughly four-fold higher enzyme activity in vivo than when assembled as a single homo-tetramer. The present work establishes that it is the MTS motif in the CTH that is needed for recessive resurrection.

Identification of the MTS motif as a requirement for recessive resurrection in RNase E

In our studies, recessive resurrection in RNase E has been identified and investigated by comparison of intracellular enzyme specific activity of a catalytically active homo-tetramer with that of a hetero-tetramer in which one, two, or three protomers carried the D303A or D346A substitution inactivating the catalytic active site. Such hetero-tetrameric assemblies were achieved by progressive increase in expression of the inactive polypeptide from an IPTG-inducible promoter on a plasmid whereas the protomer bearing the functional active site was expressed from the *rne* promoter at its native chromosomal locus. Intracellular RNase E activity was assessed through measurement of steady-state *rne-lac* expression (which is inversely related to RNase E activity, since the latter is autoregulated).

Our results have confirmed that recessive resurrection is exhibited in full-

length but not CTH-truncated RNase E, and have furthermore shown that, of the various features associated with the CTH, it is the 18-amino acid MTS motif that is required for recessive resurrection. Thus, deletion of this motif, or even a single substitution (F575E) that is known to disrupt it, was sufficient to abolish recessive resurrection. Furthermore, there was a correlation between presence of the MTS motif in different constructs and their ability to support recessive resurrection. Recessive resurrection was also evident for hetero-tetramers in which the lone protomer bearing the functional active site lacked the MTS motif whereas the other three catalytically dead protomers retained the MTS motif. Finally, the phenomenon was also exhibited in dimeric RNase E bearing the CTH, although less prominently than in the tetrameric constructs.

An interesting observation was that the 603Δ construct with D346A active site substitution is proficient for recessive resurrection in cells in which the polypeptide with functional active site (expressed from the native chromosomal locus) is 437Δ, but is not so in the *rne*$^+$ cells. To explain these findings, we first note that the MTS motif in 603Δ is located very close to the C-terminal end of the polypeptide, which may therefore render it inefficient or unstable for membrane association. Accordingly, we suggest that a 3:1 hetero-tetramer of inactive 603Δ with an active full-length RNase E polypeptide will be very poorly membrane-localized (relative to a homo-tetramer of full-length RNase E), so that recessive resurrection is not observed in this case. On the other hand, since 437Δ lacks the MTS motif altogether, its homo-oligomeric assembly as dimer will be completely cytoplasmic (Fig. 1B, panel iii) whereas the corresponding hetero-oligomers with 603Δ may be expected to display at least some association, albeit inefficient, with the membrane.

Our model is supported by the findings that, unlike 603Δ, the constructs 645Δ, 796Δ, and 815Δ were all proficient for recessive resurrection in the *rne*$^+$ background. Furthermore, the model will also explain the observations that the 3:1 hetero-tetramer of catalytically inactive polypeptide with a functionally active

protomer is more proficient for recessive resurrection in the case where the latter is a full-length polypeptide than the truncated 437Δ version.

How is membrane anchoring of RNase E mediated by the MTS motif?

Disruption of the evolutionarily conserved MTS motif in RNase E (by either deletion or F575E substitution) has previously been shown to be associated with moderate reductions in both mRNA degradation rate and culture growth rate (11, 33). It has also been proposed that membrane localization of RNase E and of the degradosome serves both to protect against wasteful degradation of precursor rRNAs within ribosome assembly intermediates in the cytoplasm (35), and to mediate the capture of polyribosomes for promoting mRNA degradation (23). How would these findings and proposals align with the new results, that recessive resurrection in RNase E hetero-tetramers with only one functional catalytic active site requires presence of the MTS motif on the majority of the protomers?

From the X-ray crystal structures of the NTH of RNase E, it is apparent that the junction between NTH and CTH is located on the inner lateral surface of the small domain, that is, adjoining its partner small domain in each of the principal dimers of the tetramer. This would imply that the MTS motifs from the four protomers of each RNase E molecule are sterically clustered during their interaction with the bacterial inner membrane (as depicted in Fig. 1B, panel i), given that the MTS motif is only around 35 amino acid residues away from the NTH-CTH junction in the primary sequence of the polypeptide. This model is different from the extended-degradosome-conformation models depicted previously (15, 40), but it may also explain the results from live-cell microscopy experiments in which RNase E molecules were visualized to form short-lived foci or puncta at the membrane (2, 23, 34).

It may be expected that in the ΔMTS mutant, both this clustering and the membrane association are disrupted so that the individual CTH regions of a

tetramer are more widely separated from one another in a three-dimensional random-walk distribution. Accordingly, we propose that it is the clustered arrangement of the CTH regions of all four protomers mediated by the MTS motifs that is required for the phenomenon of recessive resurrection in RNase E (Fig. 1B, panel i), as further discussed below.

Postulated mechanism for recessive resurrection, and its contrast with dominant negativity

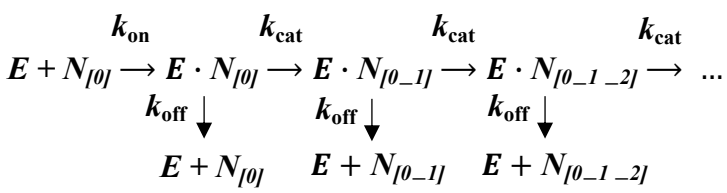
It is apparent from the results depicted in Figures 2 and 4A that, when different versions of catalytically dead RNase E protomers are overexpressed in cells with a basal level of functional protomers, the phenomenon of either recessive resurrection or dominant negativity is elicited in a mutually exclusive fashion. These two phenomena are characterized by reduction and elevation, respectively, of *rne-lac* expression with progressive overexpression of the catalytically inactive protomers in the cells. Thus, dominant negativity was observed with inactive versions of CTH-truncated polypeptides such as 529Δ or of polypeptides with ΔMTS or F575E alterations, whereas recessive resurrection was exhibited with inactive versions of full-length, 645Δ, or ΔAR1-ΔAR2 polypeptides.

We propose that the contrasting phenomena of dominant negativity and of recessive resurrection can be explained by, respectively, (i) processive degradation of RNA at the single-molecule level by membrane-associated RNase E, and (ii) distributive or stochastic cleavage of RNA at single sites by the cytoplasmic enzyme. Below, we discuss first the distinction between processive versus distributive activities (67) with respect to RNA cleavage by RNase E, and then the postulated effects of the enzyme's subcellular localization on these alternative events.

It has long been speculated (68) that endonucleolytic cleavages in *E. coli* occur progressively in a 5' to 3' direction on mRNA, and that such decay is often

cotranscriptional (59, 69). Evidence in strong support of these notions was obtained from an RNA-seq study by Xie and coworkers (70) on lifetimes of different segments of transcripts across the genome. However, it is not known whether the polarity of RNA degradation is being achieved by a processive cleavage mechanism, or by a series of distributive cleavages on the RNA molecules (16).

According to our model, endonucleolytic activity of a wild-type RNase E tetramer within the cell is processive in 5' to 3' direction on a single molecule of RNA substrate, as may be represented by the following scheme:



In the scheme shown above, (i) E and $N_{[0]}$ stand for the *e*nzyme and initial length of the *n*ucleotide substrate, respectively; (ii) $N_{[0_1]}$, $N_{[0_1_2]}$, and so on represent the successively smaller lengths of substrate after, respectively, the first, second steps and so on of the processive RNase E-catalyzed cleavage reactions (the released oligoribonucleotides in these reactions are not shown); and (iii) k_{on}, k_{off}, and k_{cat} have the usual meanings that specify the rates of enzyme-substrate association, dissociation, and catalysis, respectively.

Our proposed scheme for processive action of RNase E is analogous to that described earlier for other enzymes such as cellulose and chitin hydrolases (71–73) or nucleic acid enzymes including helicases (74), nucleases (75) and polymerases (76, 77); the kinetics of catalysis by these enzymes are distinct from the classical Michaelis-Menten kinetics. Thus, for such enzymes and as is also proposed here for RNase E, there is a component of substrate retention and

channeling so that (i) the rate-limiting step of the reaction is determined not by the enzyme's k_{cat} but often by its rate of dissociation k_{off} from the substrate (71–73, 76, 77), and (ii) the enzyme's k_{cat} merely determines its processivity, which can be expressed as the ratio of k_{cat} to k_{off} (71, 73).

By our model, therefore, although the presence of three inactive protomers in a tetramer of full-length RNase E will be expected to decrease the enzyme's k_{cat}, such reduction would serve to reduce enzyme processivity but not the rate of RNA decay. That the CTH of RNase E may participate in substrate trapping and presentation for catalysis has been suggested earlier (20, 42, 48), but our proposal that the CTH-bearing enzyme acts processively on the substrate is novel. Recessive resurrection is, therefore, a phenomenon that is an apparent outcome of the enzyme's postulated processivity on RNA in vivo.

We further propose that the enzyme variants which display dominant negativity are those that exhibit high k_{off} rates; in this situation, processivity is lost and the classical Michaelis-Menten kinetics become applicable, with k_{cat} becoming rate-limiting. Accordingly, a reduction in k_{cat} caused by presence of inactive protomers within a tetramer will lead to drastic decrease in rate of RNA degradation, accounting for dominant negativity. In summary, k_{off} and k_{cat}, respectively, are proposed to be rate-limiting for membrane-associated RNase E that exhibits recessive resurrection and cytoplasmic RNase E that exhibits dominant negativity.

In our model, how could membrane association of RNase E be expected to contribute to its processivity? As indicated above, we believe that the MTS motif mediates the clustered arrangement of the CTH regions of a tetramer in the vicinity of the membrane. The *E. coli* inner membrane is comprised of acidic and zwitterionic phospholipids (78, 79), and it has previously been shown that such a membrane is strongly repulsive for nucleic acid molecules such as DNA (6). It is therefore possible that it is electrostatic repulsion between RNA and the inner membrane (both negatively charged) that leads to a reduced rate of dissociation

of RNA from the enzyme-substrate complex, thereby contributing to the enzyme's processivity.

Subcellular compartmentalization of endoribonucleases involved in mRNA degradation has been reported also in other bacteria (2), with the examples including membrane-anchored RNase Y in *Bacillus subtilis* and *Staphylococcus aureus* (80), and presence of RNase E in liquid-liquid phase-separated condensates in *Caulobacter crescentus* (81). Whether such compartmentalization may be correlated with enzyme processivity on mRNA remains to be investigated. Also worthy of investigation is the question whether other homo-oligomeric enzymes that display processivity, such as several of the exonucleases (75, 82) or helicases (83, 84), could exhibit recessive resurrection.

Recessive resurrection in RNase E does not require RNA 5'-monophosphate sensing

It has previously been shown that RNA 5'-monophosphate sensing by RNase E is dispensable for viability when the polypeptide carries the CTH. This finding has led to the hypothesis of a second and redundant CTH-mediated pathway of presentation of RNA to the enzyme's catalytic active site for cleavage. Our present results indicate that recessive resurrection (which is CTH-dependent) also does not require RNA 5'-monophosphate sensing, since it is exhibited even when all four polypeptides in a tetramer carry the R169Q substitution. The simplest explanation for these observations taken together is that it is the 5'-end-independent (and CTH-dependent) pathway which mediates the endonucleolytic processivity of RNase E on its substrate.

Supplementary data

Supplementary data are provided in a PDF file "Supplementary data".

Funding

This work was supported by Government of India funds from Department

of Biotechnology project BT/ PR34340/ BRB/ 10/ 1815/ 2019. PB is recipient of a postdoctoral fellowship from IISER Mohali.

We declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

We thank Nida Ali and members of the Laboratory of Bacterial Genetics, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad for strains; Ayushi for assistance with isolation of and studies on the ΔSD mutant; and Rachna Chaba, Purnananda Guptasarma, Himanshi Maheshwari and Apuratha Pandiyan for advice and discussions. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Marc Dreyfus.

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Legends to figures

Figure 1: Features of RNase E and its variants. (**A**) Presented on top is a linear representation (not to scale) of the 1061-amino acid long wild-type RNase E polypeptide, with the positions of different motifs and active site residues marked; the NTH and CTH regions are shown in orange and black, respectively. Sites for binding of other proteins are not shown. Each of the lines beneath represents an ASKA plasmid-encoded RNase E variant used in this study; deletions (in-frame or at the C-terminus) are denoted by interrupted lines. (**B**) Schematic depiction (not to scale) of wild-type RNase E (panel i) and of its truncation variants 529Δ (panel ii) and 437Δ (panel iii) as inner membrane-tethered homo-tetramer, cytoplasmic homo-tetramer and cytoplasmic dimer, respectively. Large and small domains of each NTH are represented as buttons of different size connected by a linker in crossed conformation within a principal dimer, while the CTH of each protomer in the wild-type enzyme is shown as a wavy line emanating from the small domain and attached at its MTS motif to the inner membrane.

Figure 2: Effects on *rne-lac* expression in chromosomal Δ*recA rne*$^+$ background (strain GJ15074) of IPTG-induced overexpression of RNase E variants from ASKA plasmid constructs. In each panel, data are presented for a set of constructs (with functional active site or with D303A / D346A substitutions, as indicated in the key), and the identifying feature for each of the different sets is indicated at bottom left of the individual panels; Full, full-length. Values (± SE) of β-galactosidase specific activity for a particular strain are normalized to the value at nil IPTG for that strain (taken as 1.0); the Miller unit values at nil IPTG for the different strains are given in Supplementary Figure S2. Also shown in panel i (grey line) are normalized values for the isogenic derivative bearing ASKA plasmid vector pCA24N.

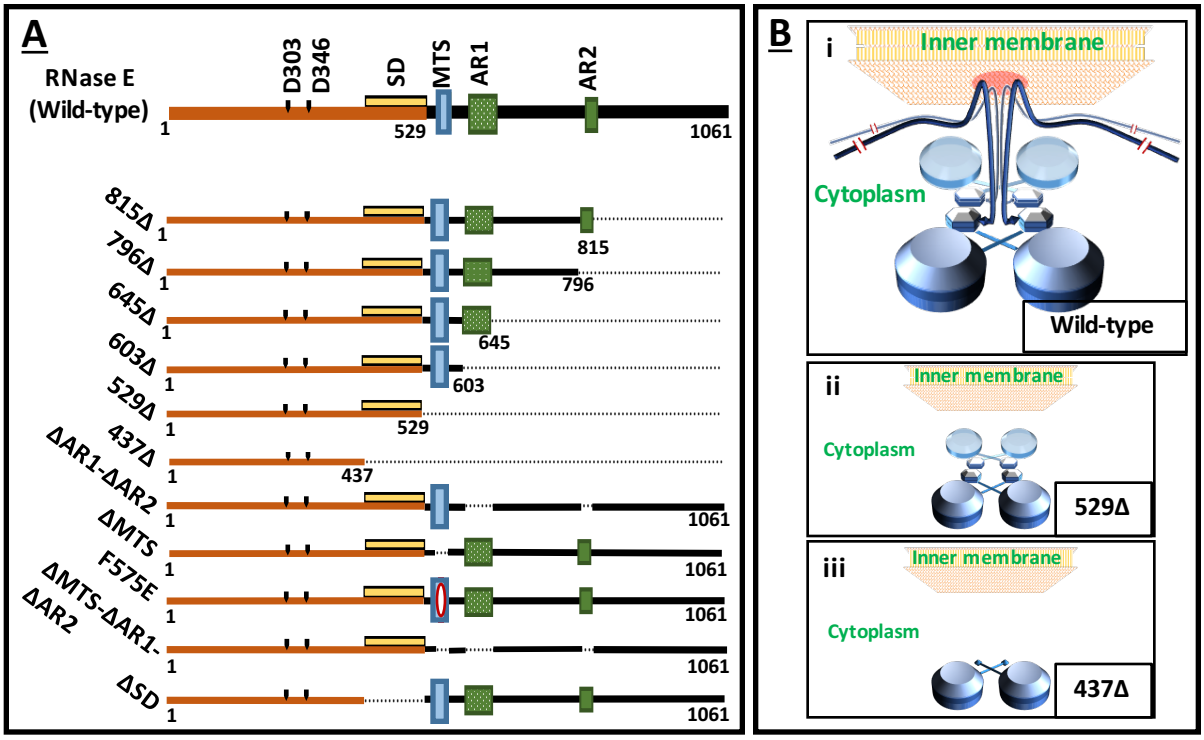
Figure 3: Determination by Western blotting of expression levels of wild-type RNase E and its variants in cultures of GJ15074 derivatives bearing

different ASKA plasmids. IPTG supplementation of cultures was at the indicated concentrations. Top pair of panels represent immunoblots with anti-His antibody, and the bottom pair represent cognate amido black-stained loading controls. Positions of migration of molecular-mass standards (in kDa) are marked at right. Arrowheads denote the bands of wild-type RNase E and its variants.

Figure 4: (**A**) Effects on *rne-lac* expression in chromosomal Δ*recA rne*-437Δ background (strain GJ20318) of IPTG-induced overexpression of RNase E variants from ASKA plasmid constructs. Notations are as described in legend to Figure 2. Miller unit values at nil IPTG for the different strains are given in Supplementary Figure S3. (**B**) Schematic depiction of heteromeric assemblies of RNase E 437Δ protomer (with functional active site) with full-length catalytically inactive polypeptides in 1:1 and 1:3 stoichiometries. The different elements of this depiction are as described in the legend to Figure 1B. Protomers bearing D303A or D346A substitutions are shown with 'X' symbol in their large domains.

Figure 5: Effects on *rne-lac* expression in Δ*recA rne*-R169Q background (strain GJ20323/pSG4) of IPTG-induced overexpression of RNase E variants from ASKA plasmid constructs. Notations are as described in legend to Figure 2. Miller unit values at nil IPTG for the different strains are given in Supplementary Figure S4.

Figure 1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D346
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MTS
AR1
AR2
1
529
1061
815Δ
796Δ
645Δ
603Δ
529Δ
437Δ
ΔAR1-ΔAR2
ΔMTS
F575E
ΔMTS-ΔAR1-
ΔAR2
ΔSD
815
796
645
603
529
437
B
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Cytoplasm
Wild-type
ii
Inner membrane
Cytoplasm
529Δ
iii
Inner membrane
Cytoplasm
437Δ

Figure 2

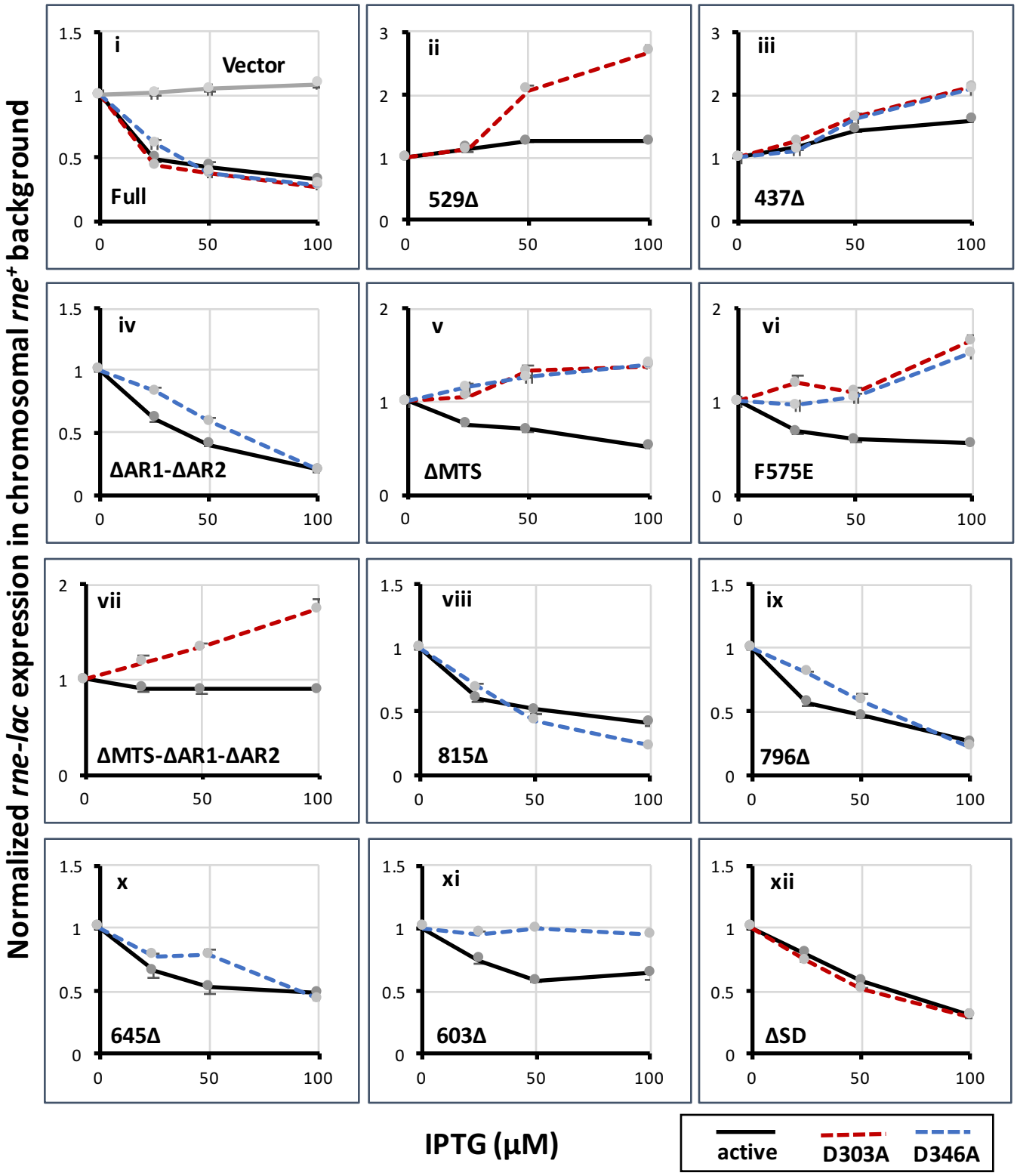
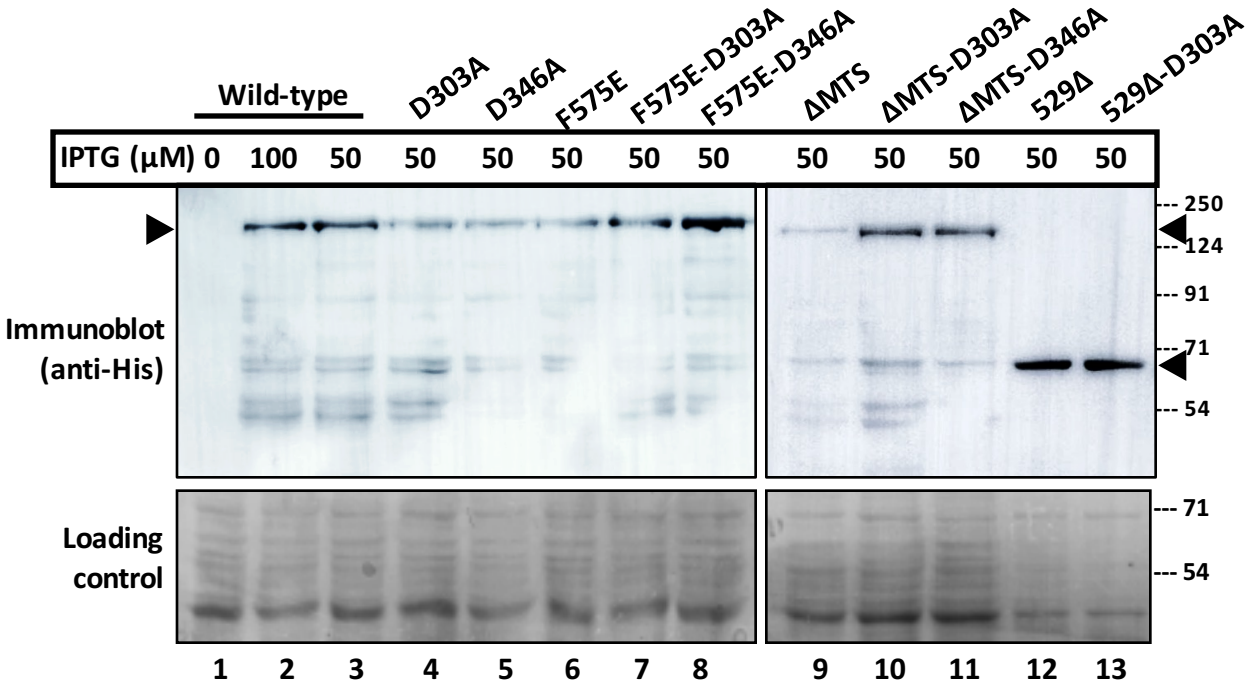

Normalized rne-lac expression in chromosomal rne+ background
i
Vector
Full
ii
529Δ
iii
437Δ
iv
ΔAR1-ΔAR2
v
ΔMTS
vi
F575E
vii
ΔMTS-ΔAR1-ΔAR2
viii
815Δ
ix
796Δ
x
645Δ
xi
603Δ
xii
ΔSD
IPTG (μM)
active
D303A
D346A

Figure 3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D346A
F575E
F575E-D303A
F575E-D346A
ΔMTS
ΔMTS-D303A
ΔMTS-D346A
529Δ
529Δ-D303A
IPTG (μM) 0 100 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50 50
Immunoblot (anti-His)
Loading control
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91
71
54
71
54
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Figure 4

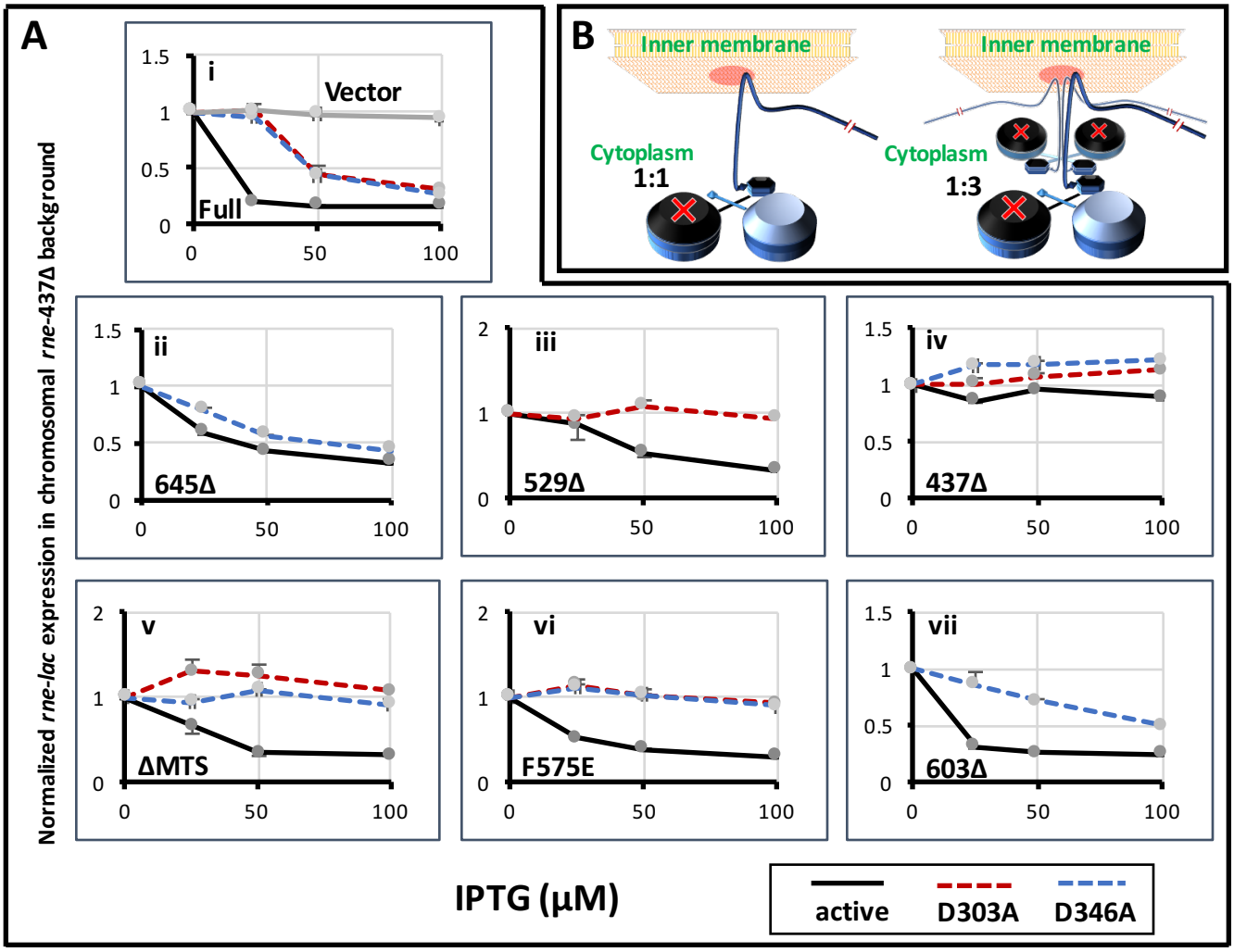
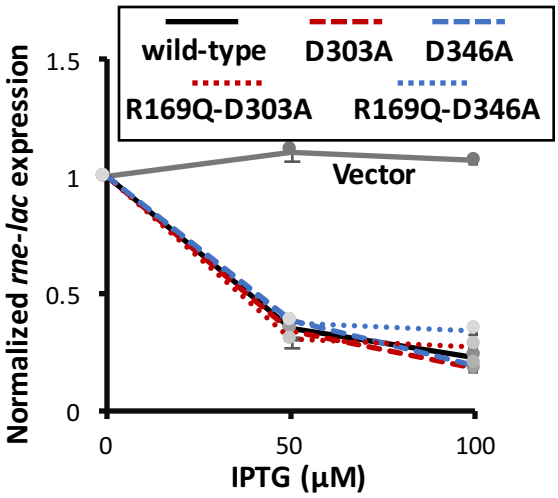

A
B
Inner membrane
Inner membrane
Cytoplasm
1:1
Cytoplasm
1:3
i
Vector
Full
ii
645Δ
iii
529Δ
iv
437Δ
v
ΔMTS
vi
F575E
vii
603Δ
Normalized rne-lac expression in chromosomal rne-437Δ background
IPTG (μM)
active
D303A
D346A

Figure 5


wild-type
D303A
D346A
R169Q-D303A
R169Q-D346A
Vector
Normalized *rne-lac* expression
1.5
1
0.5
0
0
50
100
IPTG (μM)

Supplementary Data for

The membrane-targeting-sequence motif is required for exhibition of recessive resurrection in *Escherichia coli* RNase E

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Fig S3. β-Galactosidase specific activity in derivatives of *rne*-437Δ *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain.

Fig S4. β-Galactosidase specific activity in derivatives of *rne*-R169Q *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain.

Supplementary Text

Construction of ASKA-*rne* plasmid variants

ASKA plasmids encoding different RNase E variants were constructed by recombineering or by site-directed mutagenesis, as described below. These variants were generated on ASKA-*rne* as well as its D303A / D346A-encoding derivatives pHYD5152 and pHYD5151, respectively. The oligonucleotide primers used are listed in Supplementary Table S3.

I. Construction by recombineering of ASKA-*rne* plasmid variants encoding C-terminal truncations of RNase E. Forward primers for preparing the variants encoding truncations 603Δ, 645Δ, 796Δ, and 815Δ were, respectively, PB18, PB19, PB20 and PB21; each of these primers carried a TAA stop-codon sequence immediately following the sequence for the cognate truncation site and preceding that for annealing to the recombineering plasmid pKD13. Primer G, described in a previous study (1), was used as the common reverse primer for preparing all the truncation variants. Primers J and S, that were used as forward primers for truncations 437Δ and 529Δ, respectively, have also been described earlier (1).

For generating each of the truncations, the pair of forward and reverse primers was first used in PCR on plasmid pKD13 (2), and the amplicon was then transfected into strain MC4100 carrying both plasmid pKD46 as well as plasmid ASKA-*rne* or its D303A / D346A-encoding variants. Kan^R colonies were selected, and derivatives carrying the truncation-encoding variant on the ASKA replicon were validated as described below.

II. Construction of ASKA-*rne* plasmid variants by site-directed mutagenesis. The procedure for site-directed mutagenesis to introduce mutations encoding in-frame internal deletions as well as the F575E substitution in the ASKA plasmid derivatives (ASKA-*rne*/pHYD5151/pHYD5152) was essentially as described (1). Twenty cycles of "linear PCR" were performed with Q5 DNA polymerase and the indicated primer pairs on the plasmid templates, and the amplicons were transformed following *DpnI* treatment into strain XL1-Blue with selection for Cm^R colonies.

The primer pairs employed for the different mutations were as follows: (i) ΔMTS, ME01-ME02; (ii) ΔAR1, ME07-ME08; (iii) ΔAR2, ME09-ME10; (iv) F575E substitution, ME11-ME12; and (v) ΔSD, ST1-ST2. The primers for generating the ΔSD construct are so designed that *KpnI* digestion of the amplicon and its re-circularization by ligation will yield a plasmid encoding an RNase E variant with deletion of the small domain and its replacement by a short Gly-rich linker peptide.

Combinations of deletions, such as ΔAR1-ΔAR2 and ΔMTS-ΔAR1-ΔAR2 were achieved in sequential steps with the primer pairs listed above.

Tests for validation of new plasmid constructs

The tests performed to validate the new plasmid constructs are described separately below for those obtained by recombineering and those by site-directed mutagenesis. Two additional tests were commonly applied to the plasmids obtained through either approach: (i) inviability of MC4100 derivatives carrying the plasmids on medium supplemented with 100 μM IPTG, which served to exclude the occurrence of inadvertent frameshift mutations; and (ii) blue-white screening assay to confirm that plasmids with functional active site and those with D303A/D346A substitutions confer, respectively, viability and inviability in a Δ*rne* background.

(I). Plasmids encoding RNase E truncations obtained by recombineering. Since it was possible that the Kan^R recombineering event to generate truncations of RNase E could occur on either the ASKA plasmid or the chromosome, we first prepared plasmids from the strains and transformed them into XL1-Blue to check for co-inheritance of Cm^R and Kan^R markers. Agarose gel electrophoresis of undigested plasmid preparations from the XL1-Blue transformants was undertaken to exclude plasmid multimers, and presence of the truncation of interest was established both by restriction digestion with *BamHI* and by PCR [using a pair of primers of which one (K1) was common for validating all truncations and has been described in Datsenko and Wanner (2) while the other was either GJRNE04 (for 815Δ, 796Δ, 645Δ and 603Δ) or PB13 (for 529Δ and 437Δ)].

ARMS-PCR tests (3) were use to determine whether the residue at position 575 of RNase E was Phe (parent) or Glu (mutant) with primer pairs PB23-PB25 for the former and PB24-PB25 for the latter.

II. Plasmids obtained following site-directed mutagenesis. Presence of deletions ΔSD, ΔAR1, ΔAR2, and ΔMTS (either alone or in different combinations) was checked by (i) restriction digestion with *BamHI*; (ii) PCR with primer pairs ST3-ST4 for the ΔSD constructs, PB13-GJRNE08 for constructs with ΔMTS and/or ΔAR2 but with intact AR1, and ME05-GJRNE09 for constructs bearing ΔAR1 either alone or in combination with ΔMTS and/or ΔAR2; and (iii) DNA sequencing of the PCR amplicons above.

DNA sequence analysis of the two ΔSD constructs obtained in this study (with functional active site and with D303A substitution) revealed that, in both of them, the peptide linker replacing the small domain was eight residues in length (Gly-Thr-Ser-Gly-Gly-Gly-Gly-Ser), although the linker length that had been expected from the designed primer sequence was thirteen amino acid residues (Gly-Thr-Ser-Gly-Gly-Gly-Gly-Ser-Gly-Gly-Gly-Gly-Ser).

ARMS-PCR testing for variants encoding R169Q, D303A or D346A substitutions

The primer pairs used for ARMS-PCR (3) to determine whether the residues at positions 169, 303 and 346 were parental or mutant were the following: position 169, PB34-PB37 and PB27-PB35 for parent and PB34-PB38 and PB27-PB36 for mutant; position 303, PB30-ST2 for parent and PB31-ST2 for mutant; and position 346, PB32-ST2 for parent and PB33-ST2 for mutant.

Supplementary References

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Table S1. List of *E. coli* strains

Strain [a]	**Genotype** [b]
XL-1 Blue	*recA1 endA1 gyrA96 thi-1 hsdR17 supE44 relA1 lac* [F´ *proAB lacI*^{q} *Z*Δ*M15* Tn*10*]
MC4100	Δ*(argF-lac)U169 rpsL150 relA1 spoT1 araD139 flbB5301 deoC1 ptsF25*
GJ15074	MC4100 Δ*recA*::Kan [λ P_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$ Δ*lacY::*FRT]
GJ15084 [c]	MC4100 Δ*(flgK-rne)*::Kan [λ P_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$ Δ*lacY::*FRT]
GJ20314 [c]	MC4100 Δ*(flgK-rne)*::FRT
GJ20318	MC4100 *rne*-437Δ::FRT [λP_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$ Δ*lacY::*FRT] Δ*recA*::Kan
GJ20322 [c]	MC4100 Δ*(flgK-rne)*::FRT [λ P_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$Δ*lacY::*FRT] Δ*recA*::Kan
GJ20323 [c]	MC4100 Δ*(flgK-rne)*::FRT [λ P_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$Δ*lacY::*FRT] Δ*recA*::FRT

[a] Previously described strains include XL-1 Blue (4), MC4100 (5), GJ15074 (1), and GJ15084 (1).

[b] For the strains constructed in this study, the following alleles were sourced from strains previously described: [λ P_{rne} -*lacZ*$^{+}$ Δ*lacY::*FRT], Δ*(flgK-rne)*::FRT and *rne*-437Δ::FRT (1). Alleles from which the antibiotic resistance markers have been excised by pCP20-mediated recombination are shown with the suffix '::FRT'.

[c] Each of the indicated strains was maintained in the stock collection as a derivative with an *rne*$^{+}$-carrying shelter plasmid pHYD5159 or pHYD5193.

Table S2. Features of RNase E-encoding variants on ASKA plasmids that were constructed in this study

Plasmid	Feature at enzyme active site	Additional feature(s)
pHYD7693	Functional	ΔSD
pHYD7695	D303A	ΔSD
pHYD7716	Functional	ΔAR1, ΔAR2
pHYD7717	D303A	ΔMTS
pHYD7718	D346A	ΔMTS
pHYD7719	Functional	603Δ::Kan
pHYD7720	Functional	645Δ::Kan
pHYD7721	Functional	796Δ::Kan
pHYD7722	Functional	815Δ::Kan
pHYD7723	D346A	603Δ::Kan
pHYD7724	D346A	645Δ::Kan
pHYD7725	D346A	796Δ::Kan
pHYD7726	D346A	815Δ::Kan
pHYD7732	D346A	ΔAR1, ΔAR2
pHYD7733	D303A	529Δ::Kan
pHYD7737	Functional	437Δ::Kan
pHYD7738	D303A	437Δ::Kan
pHYD7739	D346A	437Δ::Kan
pHYD7744	Functional	F575E
pHYD7745	D303A	F575E
pHYD7746	D346A	F575E
pHYD7747	Functional	529Δ::Kan
pHYD7801	Functional	ΔMTS
pHYD7804	Functional	ΔAR1, ΔAR2, ΔMTS
pHYD7805	D303A	ΔAR1, ΔAR2, ΔMTS

Table S3. List of oligonucleotide primers

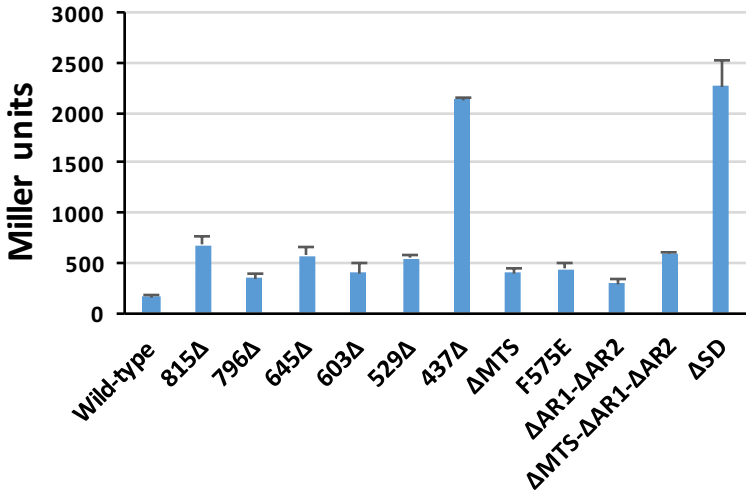
Primer ID	**Sequence (5' to 3')**
GJRNE04	CTGTTGAGCCGCTTCT
GJRNE08	ACGACGGTTTTCTTC
GJRNE09	TCGGCTGCACATGTA
ME01	CCGGCAACACCAGCAGCTAGCGGTGGTGAAGAAACC
ME02	GGTTTCTTCACCACCGCTAGCTGCTGGTGTTGCCGG
ME05	GGAAGATCTAGCGGTGGTGAAGAAACC
ME07	GCAGAAGCGAAACCGGAACAGGCACAGCAGCAGACT
ME08	AGTCTGCTGCTGTGCCTGTTCCGGTTTCGCTTCTGC
ME09	CGTGACAACGGTGGCATGCCGTATCGTGACGAGCGTTATCCA
ME10	TGGATAACGCTCGTCACGATACGGCATGCCACCGTTGTCACG
ME11 [a]	GGGCTGTTGAGCCGCTTC**GAA**GGCGCACTGAAAGCGCTG
ME12 [a]	CAGCGCTTTCAGTGCGCC**TTC**GAAGCGGCTCAACAGCCC
PB13	GCGGTAGAAAACCGTCTGCGTG
PB18 [b]	CCGACCGAGCAACCAGCACCGAAAGCAGAAGCGAAACCGGA A**TAA**ATTCCGGGGATCCGTCGACC
PB19 [b]	GGCAGCGATAATCGCGAAGAAAACCGTCGTAATCGTCGCCAG **TAA**ATTCCGGGGATCCGTCGACC
PB20 [b]	GAGAACAATGCTGATAACCGTGACAACGGTGGCATGCCGCGT **TAA**ATTCCGGGGATCCGTCGACC
PB21 [b]	CCTCGTCACCTGCGCGTAAGTGGTCAGCGTCGTCGTCGCTAT **TAA**ATTCCGGGGATCCGTCGACC
PB23	CAACCTGGGCTGTTGAGCCGCTTCTTC
PB24	CAACCTGGGCTGTTGAGCCGCTTCGAA
PB25	CTACGTTCACGACGCGGCGCTTG
PB27	CGCGCGTGCGGAGTTGATGGCGATGGCCGTTAACGCTTCG
PB30	AGCACCGAAGCGTTAACGGCCATCAA
PB31	AGCACCGAAGCGTTAACGGCCATCAC
PB32	GACCTCGGCGGCCTGATTGTTATCAA
PB33	GACCTCGGCGGCCTGATTGTTATCAC
PB34	CACCCGCATTGAACCGAGTCTG
PB35	GAAGGCATGGGGCTTATCGTGCTC
PB36	GAAGGCATGGGGCTTATCGTGCAA
PB37	GATTTGCCGACGCCAGCGGTCC
PB38	GATTTGCCGACGCCAGCGGTTT
ST1 [c]	CCGCGG*GGTACC*AGCGGTGGAGGAGGATCAGGCGGAGGTGG CAGCGCAACCTTTGCCATGCCGGA
ST2 [c]	CCGCGG*GGTACC*CTGGGTGTTCTCTTTCAGCG
ST3	TAACTATGAGAGGATCTCAC
ST4	CTGGTGTTGCCGGTGCAGCT
ST5	CAGCGCAGGTTGTTCCGGAC

[a] Nucleotides encoding the F575E substitution in the pair of primers are shown in bold.

[b] Nucleotides encoding the termination codon in each of the primers are shown in bold, and the adjacent underlined sequence is that which is designed to anneal to pKD13 for recombineering.

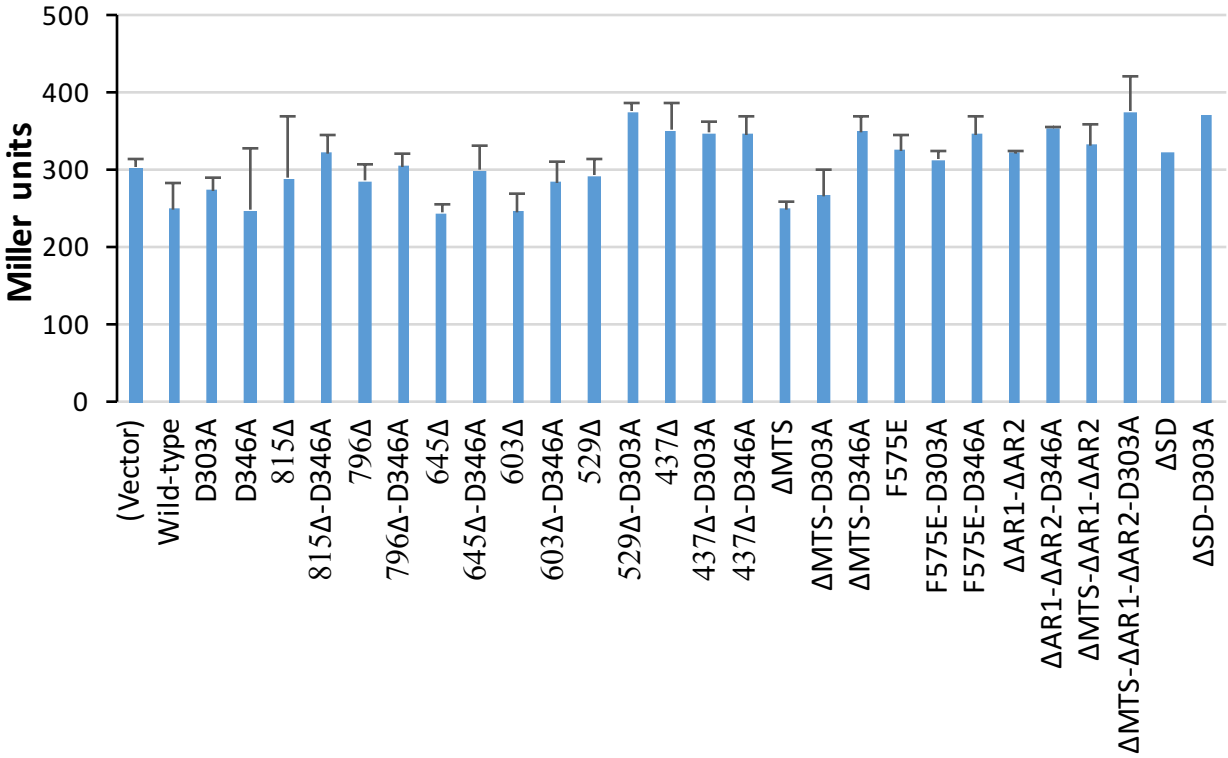
[c] *KpnI* sequences are italicized, and the underlined sequence is designed to encode a Gly-rich linker peptide.

Supp. Fig. S1



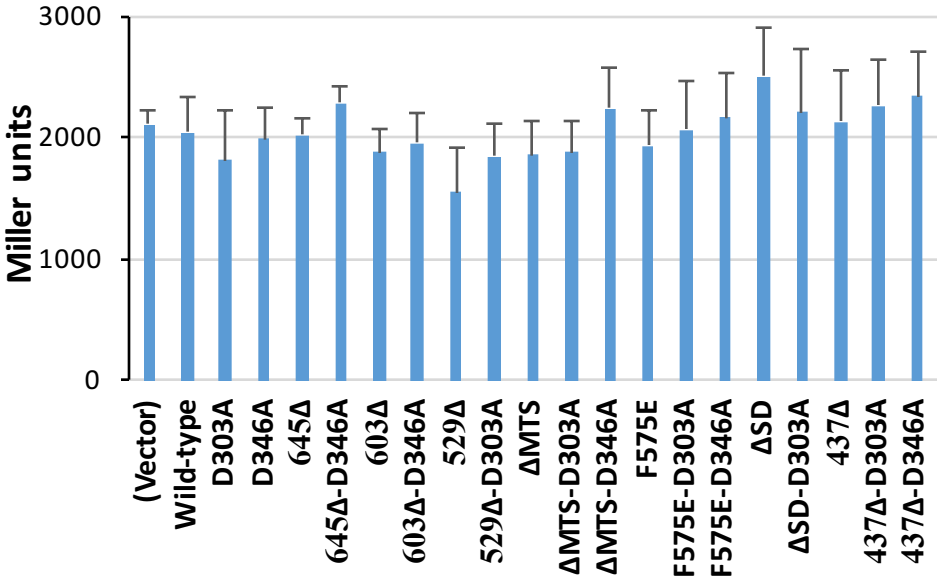
Legend to Supp. Fig. S1: Specific activity (Miller units) of β-galactosidase in cultures supplemented with 20 μM IPTG of derivatives of Δ*rne rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain GJ20322 carrying different plasmids as indicated. The ΔSD-encoding plasmid variant was assayed in the Δ*rne rne-lac recA*$^+$ strain GJ15084. Plasmids were (from left, numbers are to be prefixed with pHYD unless otherwise marked): ASKA-*rne*, 7722, 7721, 7720, 7719, 7147, 7737, 7801, 7744, 7716, 7804 and 7693.

Supp. Fig. S2



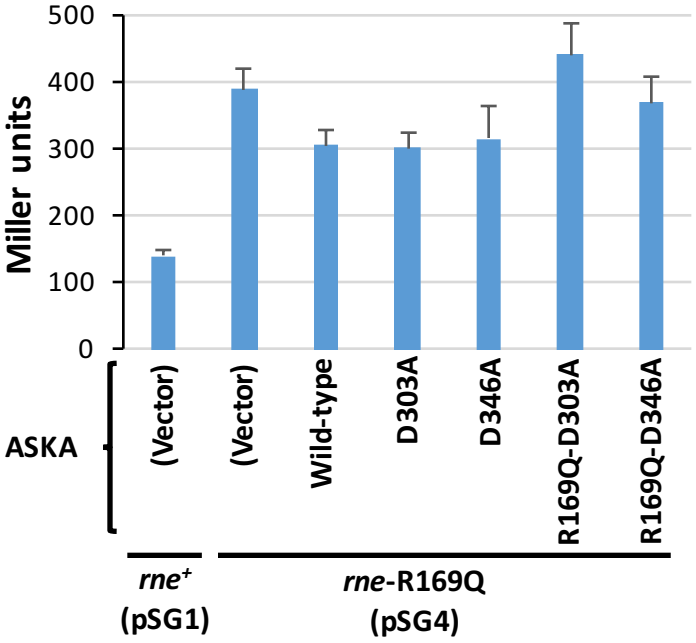
Legend to Supp. Fig. S2: Specific activity (Miller units) of β-galactosidase in cultures supplemented with nil IPTG of derivatives of *rne*$^{+}$ *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain GJ15074 carrying different plasmids as indicated. These values have been normalized to 1.0 in the different panels of Figure 2. Plasmids were (from left, numbers are to be prefixed with pHYD unless otherwise marked): pCA24N, ASKA-*rne*, 5152, 5151, 7722, 7726, 7721, 7725, 7720, 7724, 7719, 7723, 7747, 7733, 7737, 7738, 7739, 7801, 7717, 7718, 7744, 7745, 7746, 7716, 7732, 7804, 7805, 7693 and 7695.

Supp. Fig. S3



Legend to Supp. Fig. S3: Specific activity (Miller units) of β-galactosidase in cultures supplemented with nil IPTG of derivatives of *rne*-437Δ *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strain GJ20318 carrying different plasmids as indicated. These values have been normalized to 1.0 in the different panels of Figure 4. Plasmids were (from left, numbers are to be prefixed with pHYD unless otherwise marked): pCA24N, ASKA-*rne*, 5152, 5151, 7720, 7724, 7719, 7723, 7747, 7733, 7801, 7717, 7718, 7744, 7745, 7746, 7693, 7695, 7737, 7738 and 7739.

Supp. Fig. S4



Legend to Supp. Fig. S4: Specific activity (Miller units) of β-galactosidase in cultures supplemented with nil IPTG of derivatives of *rne-lac* Δ*recA* strains GJ20323/pSG1 (*rne*$^+$) or GJ20323/pSG4 (*rne*-R169Q) carrying different plasmids as indicated. These values have been normalized to 1.0 for the different plots in Figure 5. Plasmids were (from left, numbers are to be prefixed with pHYD unless otherwise marked): pCA24N, pCA24N, ASKA-*rne*, 5152, 5151, 5165 and 5164.