

METHODS IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY™

Series Editor
John M. Walker
School of Life Sciences
University of Hertfordshire
Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AB, UK

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Difference Gel Electrophoresis (DIGE)

Methods and Protocols

Edited by

Rainer Cramer

Department of Chemistry, University of Reading, Reading, UK

Reiner Westermeier

SERVA Electrophoresis GmbH, Heidelberg, Germany

Editors

Rainer Cramer
Department of Chemistry
University of Reading
Reading, UK

Reiner Westermeier
SERVA Electrophoresis GmbH
Heidelberg, Germany

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Preface

Protein analysis is increasingly becoming a cornerstone in deciphering the molecular mechanisms of life. Proteomics, the large-scale and high-sensitivity analysis of proteins, is already pivotal to the new life sciences such as Systems Biology and Systems Medicine. Proteomics, however, relies heavily on the past and future advances of protein purification and analysis methods. In-depth protein and protein interaction analysis would be impossible without these advances. It is this progress being made available through techniques such as DIGE that is enormously important for pushing the boundaries in the analysis of the cellular machinery and larger biological systems even further.

Apart from mere “stamp collections”, most analytical measurements have to be somewhat quantitative. This is particularly true for the analysis of proteins and protein contents in order to find out at what level these small molecular engines are involved in the fundamental processes of life. Thus, the proteomic research community has become increasingly aware of the fact that most proteomic analyses have to fulfill strict requirements with regard to their quantitative aspects. Protein or peptide identification and characterization without quantification might just be sufficient in areas such as Proteogenomics where this information can be used to curate genomic data or delineate function. However, once a protein is characterized and known to be present, it is essential to obtain quantitative information. Only this quantitative data obtained from different time points and conditions will enable a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of protein contents in biological systems and, thus, the elucidation of how these systems function and react.

Consequently, many quantitative proteomic analysis methods were devised shortly after Proteomics was born. Most of these are based on quantification using the mass spectral read-out from methods of metabolic isotope labeling (e.g., SILAC), chemical isotope labeling (e.g., iTRAQ or TMT), and increasingly from simple non-labeling methods such as MS ion signal comparison in so-called label-free approaches. However, virtually all MS-based quantitative proteomic analyses favor the analysis at the peptide level which inherently excludes quantification at the protein level, i.e., of protein isoforms. Thus, one often-cited strength of proteomics, the analysis of posttranscriptional and -translational changes, is fundamentally hampered through the inadequacy of these methods in protein isoform quantification. DIGE, being able to quantify proteins in their intact form, is one of a few methods that can facilitate this type of analysis and still provides the protein isoforms in an MS-compatible state for further identification and characterization with high analytical sensitivity.

This volume introduces the concept of DIGE and its advantages in quantitative measurements with the specific focus on proteomic analyses. It provides detailed protocols and important notes on the practical aspects of DIGE with both generic and specific applications in the various areas of quantitative protein analysis. As such this volume can be used by novices with some background in biochemistry or molecular biology, who want to widen their portfolio of quantitative techniques in protein analysis, as well as by experts in proteomics, who would like to deepen their understanding of DIGE and its employment in many hyphenations and application areas. With its many protocols, applications, and methodological variants,

it is also a unique reference for all who seek fundamental details on the working principle of DIGE and ideas for a possible future use of DIGE in novel analytical approaches.

The chapters in this volume have been divided into four categories. Starting with the basics of DIGE the reader acquires a sound background in the technique and its practical details with a focus on the planning of a DIGE experiment and its data analysis. The next chapters introduce various DIGE methods. While most of these have been employed by scientists world-wide, some are more novel and provide a glance at what is at the horizon in the DIGE world. The final sets of chapters provide a good overview of the wide range of DIGE applications from Clinical Proteomics to Animal, Plant and Microbial Proteomics applications.

Reading, UK
Heidelberg, Germany

Rainer Cramer
Reiner Westermeier

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Contributors

- JUAN PABLO ALBAR • *Laboratorio de Proteómica, Centro Nacional de Biotecnología, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Madrid, Spain*
- OSCAR ALZATE • *Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- GEORG J. ARNOLD • *Laboratory for Functional Genome Analysis LAFUGA, Gene Center, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany*
- NURALY K. AVLIYAKULOV • *Department of Biological Chemistry, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
- PHIL BECKETT • *GE Healthcare Bio-Sciences, Piscataway, NJ, USA*
- HANS-PETER BRAUN • *Institute for Plant Genetics, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*
- HONG-LIN CHAN • *Institute of Bioinformatics and Structural Biology, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan*
- MAXEY C.M. CHUNG • *Department of Biochemistry and Biological Sciences, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and Faculty of Science, National University of Singapore, Singapore*
- FRANK COLDITZ • *Institute for Plant Genetics, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*
- RAINER CRAMER • *Department of Chemistry, University of Reading, Reading, UK*
- ROBERT M. DEKROON • *Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- SARA DE PALMA • *Dipartimento di Scienze e Tecnologie Biomediche, Università degli Studi di Milano, Segrate, Italy*
- NEDYALKA N. DICHEVA • *Program of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- ATHANASIOS DIDANGELOS • *Cardiovascular Division, King's College London, London, UK*
- LUTZ ANDREAS EICHACKER • *Center of Organelle Research (CORE), University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway*
- MATTHIAS ERNST • *Ludwig Centre for Cancer Research, Parkville, VIC, Australia*
- MARISOL FERNÁNDEZ • *Laboratorio de Proteómica, Centro Nacional de Biotecnología, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Madrid, Spain*
- DAVID B. FRIEDMAN • *Proteomics Laboratory, Mass Spectrometry Research Center, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, TN, USA*
- THOMAS FRÖHLICH • *Laboratory for Functional Genome Analysis LAFUGA, Gene Center, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany*
- CECILIA GELFI • *Dipartimento di Scienze e Tecnologie Biomediche, Università degli Studi di Milano, Segrate, Italy*
- ALEXANDRA GRAF • *Section of Medical Statistics, Center for Medical Statistics, Informatics and Intelligent Systems, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria*
- ERIC HAMLETT • *Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*

- SONJA HARTWIG • *Institute of Clinical Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry, German Diabetes Center, Düsseldorf, Germany*
- MICHAEL J. HAYKINSON • *Department of Biological Chemistry, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
- YIN YING HO • *Adelaide Proteomics Centre, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia*
- PETER HOFFMANN • *Adelaide Proteomics Centre, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia*
- HYE-JIN JEONG • *Yonsei Proteome Research Center, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea*
- JOSEPH S.Y. JEONG • *Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- HONG JI • *Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Parkville, VIC, Australia*
- MICHAEL E. JUNG • *Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
- HOGUEN KIM • *Department of Pathology, Yonsei University College of Medicine, Seoul, South Korea*
- WAN-JOONG KIM • *Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
- MIN-JUNG LEE • *Integrated OMICS for Biomedical Science, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea*
- STEFAN LEHR • *Institute of Clinical Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry, German Diabetes Center, Düsseldorf, Germany*
- IAN LEWIS • *Division of Haematology, SA Pathology, Adelaide, Australia*
- CYNTHIA LIANG • *Department of Biological Science, Faculty of Science, National University of Singapore, Singapore*
- ROMMEL A. MATHIAS • *Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Parkville, VIC, Australia*
- MANUEL MAYR • *Cardiovascular Division, King's College London, London, UK*
- INGRID MILLER • *Department for Biomedical Sciences, University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Vienna, Austria*
- DAVINIA MILLS • *The BioCentre, University of Reading, Reading, UK*
- JONATHAN S. MINDEN • *Department of Biological Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA*
- MIHAELA MOCANU • *UNC Systems-Proteomics Center, Program of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- KEUN NA • *Graduate Program in Functional Genomics, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea*
- RUDOLF OEHLER • *Department of Surgery, Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria*
- CRISTINA OSORIO • *UNC Systems-Proteomics Center, Program of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- MERVE OZTUG • *Department of Biological Chemistry, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, USA*
- YOUNG-KI PAIK • *Department of Biochemistry, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea*

- MEGAN PENNO • *Adelaide Proteomics Centre, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia*
- MICHELLE PERUGINI • *Division of Haematology, SA Pathology, Adelaide, Australia*
- KATRIN PETERS • *Institute for Plant Genetics, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*
- GEREON POSCHMANN • *Molecular Proteomics Laboratory, Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf, Germany*
- RALF RABUS • *Institute of Biology and Chemistry of the Marine Environment (ICBM), University Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany; Max Planck Institute for Marine Microbiology, Bremen, Germany*
- VERONIKA REISINGER • *Center of Organelle Research (CORE), University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway*
- JENNIFER B. ROBINETTE • *UNC Systems-Proteomics Center, Program of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- CHRISTINA RODE • *Institute for Plant Genetics, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*
- RICHARD J. SIMPSON • *Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Parkville, VIC, Australia*
- JOHN SINCLAIR • *Cancer Proteomics Laboratory, EGA Institute for Women's Health, University College London, London, UK*
- BENCE SIPOS • *Institute of Pathology, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany*
- BARBARA SITEK • *Medizinisches Proteom-Center, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany*
- CELIA SMITH • *Department of Chemistry, University of Reading, Reading, UK*
- KAI STÜHLER • *Molecular Proteomics Laboratory, Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf, Germany*
- GEK SAN TAN • *Department of Biological Science, Faculty of Science, National University of Singapore, Singapore*
- JOHN F. TIMMS • *Cancer Proteomics Laboratory, EGA Institute for Women's Health, University College London, London, UK*
- INGO VORMBROCK • *Institute of Clinical Biochemistry and Pathobiochemistry, German Diabetes Center, Düsseldorf, Germany*
- REINER WESTERMEIER • *SERVA Electrophoresis GmbH, Heidelberg, Germany*
- TRAUD WINKELMANN • *Institute for Floriculture and Woody Plant Science, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany*
- WITOLD M. WINNIK • *NHEERL Proteomics Research Core, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Research Triangle Park, NC, USA*
- XIAOKE YIN • *Cardiovascular Division, King's College London, London, UK*

