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Abstract Chromatin immunoprecipitation followed by massively parallel sequencing (ChIP-Seq) is a powerful technique to map the genomic location of a given chromatin bound factor (i.e., transcription factors, cofactors) or epigenetic marks, such as histone modification. The procedure is based on cross-linking of proteins to DNA followed by the capture of the protein-DNA complexes by “ChIP-grade” antibodies. In this chapter we describe in detail the experimental method developed in our laboratory to investigate in vivo the DNA-binding characteristics of a key heterodimeric nuclear receptor, the retinoid X receptor (RXR) in murine bone marrow-derived macrophages.

Key words (separated by “-”) Macrophage - Chromatin - Binding site - ChIP - RXR - Cistrome

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Abstract 7

Chromatin immunoprecipitation followed by massively parallel sequencing (ChIP-Seq) is a powerful technique to map the genomic location of a given chromatin bound factor (i.e., transcription factors, cofactors) or epigenetic marks, such as histone modification. The procedure is based on cross-linking of proteins to DNA followed by the capture of the protein-DNA complexes by “ChIP-grade” antibodies. In this chapter we describe in detail the experimental method developed in our laboratory to investigate in vivo the DNA-binding characteristics of a key heterodimeric nuclear receptor, the retinoid X receptor (RXR) in murine bone marrow-derived macrophages. 8
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Key words Macrophage, Chromatin, Binding site, ChIP, RXR, Cistrome 15

1 Introduction 16

Nuclear hormone receptors are lipid-activated transcription factors that regulate gene expression in a ligand-dependent manner. They possess an evolutionarily conserved domain structure, which consists of a DNA-binding domain responsible for the recognition of a specific motif encoded in the genome, a ligand-binding domain for binding the activator ligand, and the transactivation domain for transcription initiation. Ligand binding leads to conformation changes on the surface of the receptor, followed by a co-repressor-co-activator switch/exchange, which then results in a distinct change in gene transcription (reviewed in [1]). 17
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RXR is an essential member of the nuclear receptor family, because it forms heterodimers with other nuclear hormone receptors (liver X receptor, LXR; peroxisome proliferator activated receptor, PPAR; retinoic acid receptor, RAR; etc.) that regulate indispensable biological processes such as inflammation and lipid 27
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32 and glucose metabolism [2, 3]. RXR was discovered as a novel
33 retinoid responsive transcription factor [4]. Several ligands, such as
34 9-cis retinoic acid, docosahexanoic acid, and phytanic acid, have
35 been shown to activate the receptor, although their action as
36 endogenous ligands under physiological conditions has not been
37 proven yet [5]. There are also specific and selective synthetic ago-
38 nists of RXR, such as LG100268 or LG10069 (Bexarotene) [6, 7].

39 RXR has three different isoforms in metazoans (RXR α , RXR β ,
40 RXR γ), which display differential expression patterns in different
41 tissues. For example, RXR α is expressed in heart, liver, kidney,
42 spleen, and placenta epidermis, RXR γ is specific to brain and mus-
43 cle, while RXR β is ubiquitous [5]. The phenotypes attributable to
44 these isoforms have been well characterized. For instance, abolished
45 expression of RXR α was shown to be lethal at embryonic stage
46 E13.5–16.5 mostly due to cardiac abnormalities, while the lack of
47 RXR β or RXR γ was not fatal, but resulted in male infertility and
48 increased metabolic rate. These studies also revealed a locomotor
49 deficiency in RXR β/γ double-*knockout* mice [8, 9]. In cells of
50 myeloid origin RXR α appears to be the dominant isoform [10, 11].

51 On the other hand, activation of RXR and the molecular details
52 of RXR-mediated gene expression remain enigmatic, because (1)
53 definitive proof for a biological role for an endogenous ligand is
54 still lacking and (2) it is not clear if it also has heterodimer-
55 independent activities.

56 ChIP-Seq has become the most widely used and effective
57 method to study chromatin state and transcription factor distribu-
58 tion at the genomic level. ChIP was almost the first application
59 linked to next-generation sequencing and the one leading to the
60 determination of the typical histone acetylation and methylation
61 patterns of gene promoters, enhancers, insulators, and repressed
62 chromatin territories [12]. ChIP-Seq also allows the determination
63 of the “cistrome” of any transcription factor meaning—all the
64 binding sites in a given cell type under given circumstances, which
65 was first carried out for signal transducer and activator of transcrip-
66 tion (STAT) 1 [13]. Macrophages are a major target of research
67 including studies on immune function, but also in metabolism and
68 transcriptional regulation as well [14, 15]. This is not only because
69 of their relatively easy accessibility, but also due to their importance
70 in physiological as well as pathological processes.

71 In order to better understand the molecular mechanisms by
72 which RXR regulates gene expression in a genome-wide manner in
73 murine bone marrow-derived macrophages, a protocol was devel-
74 oped in our laboratory to accurately map the receptor-binding sites
75 using ChIP-Seq. This protocol is described in this chapter (Fig. 1).

76 The protocol here described is optimized to murine bone
77 marrow-derived macrophages. A similar approach was used by us
78 to determine the RXR cistrome in HeLa cells [16]. Optimization
79 to other cell types would be required especially regarding cross-
80 linking and sonication.

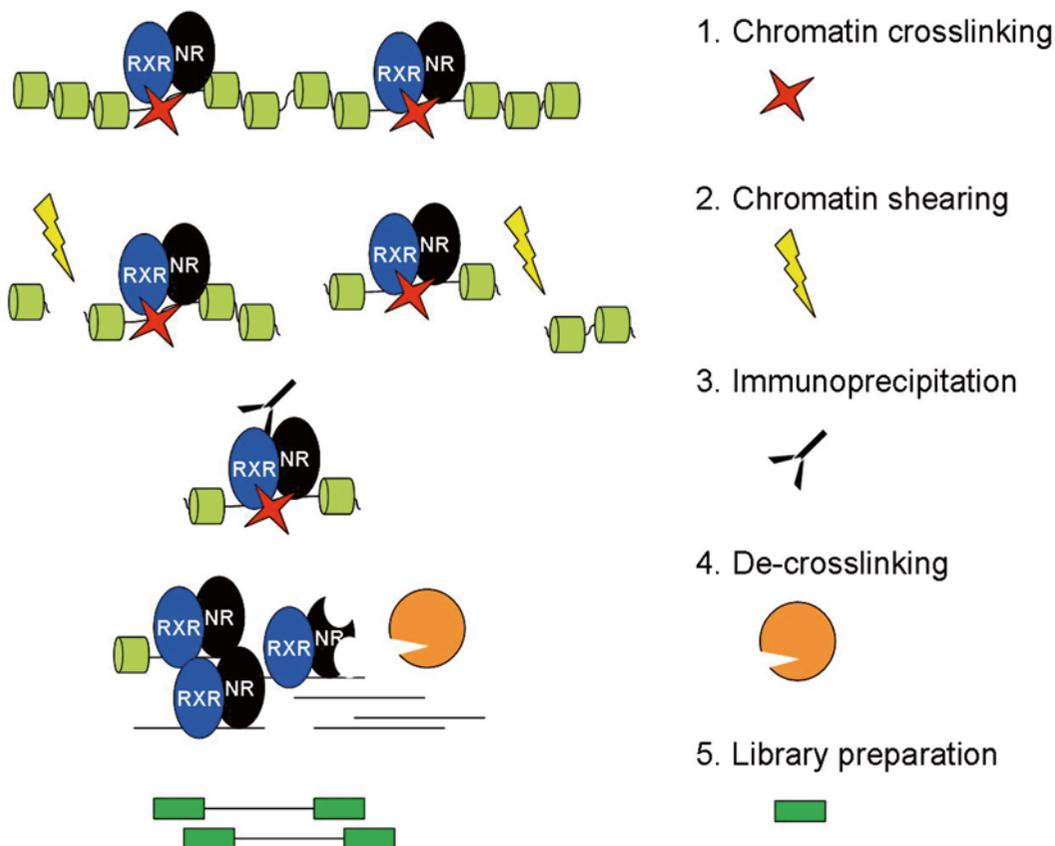


Fig. 1 Schematic representation of the main steps of the CHIP-Seq protocol

2 Materials

1. Bone marrow-derived macrophages obtained from the femur of C57Bl6/J male animals as described [17]. Briefly, bone marrow was flushed, and cells were purified through a Ficoll-Paque gradient and cultured in DMEM containing 20 % endotoxin-reduced fetal bovine serum and 30 % L929 conditioned medium for 5 days. On the sixth day DMEM is replaced to macrophage serum-free media for 24 h, and then treatments are performed.
2. DSG Di (*N*-succinimidyl) glutarate (*see Note 1*).
3. DMSO (dimethyl sulfoxide).
4. DMSO/EtOH (1:1) as vehicle treatment.
5. LG268 (Ligand Pharmaceuticals) dissolved in DMSO/EtOH.
6. Ultrapure formaldehyde 16 % (Thermo Scientific, PI-28906) (*see Note 1*).

- 96 7. 1 M Glycine.
- 97 8. PBS (phosphate-buffered saline).
- 98 9. Roche Complete Mini Protease Inhibitor Tablets (EDTA free).
- 99 10. Cell lysis/wash buffer: 0.15 M NaCl, 0.005 M EDTA pH 7.5,
- 100 0.05 M Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 0.5 % NP40, dH₂O supplemented
- 101 with protease inhibitor (Roche) prior to use. Store at 4 °C.
- 102 11. 1 ml Insulin syringe.
- 103 12. Shearing buffer 0.05 M Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1 % SDS, 0.01 M
- 104 EDTA, dH₂O supplemented with protease inhibitor tablets
- 105 (Roche) prior to use. Store at room temperature (*see Note 4*).
- 106 13. Dilution buffer: 0.001 M EDTA, pH 8.0, 0.01 % SDS, 1.1 %
- 107 Triton-X 100, 0.17 M NaCl, dH₂O supplemented with protease
- 108 inhibitor tablets (Roche) prior to use. Store at 4 °C.
- 109 14. 0.5 % Bovine serum albumin (BSA)/PBS: Filter through
- 110 0.22 µm filter using a syringe. Prepare freshly before use.
- 111 15. IgG (Millipore).
- 112 16. ChIP-grade antibody to RXR (Santa Cruz Biotechnology).
- 113 17. 15 ml conical tubes (polystyrene) (*see Note 6*).
- 114 18. 100 % Ethanol (ETOH).
- 115 19. Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer with 7,500 chips for inputs, 1,000
- 116 chips for DNA libraries.
- 117 20. Axygen LoBind tubes (1.5 ml).
- 118 21. Dynabeads® Protein A (10002D).
- 119 22. PBS containing 0.5 % BSA (filter through a 0.22 µm filter
- 120 using syringe).
- 121 23. Magnetic rack for 1.5 ml Eppendorf tubes and for 15 ml conical
- 122 tubes.
- 123 24. TE buffer: 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0, 1 mM EDTA, dH₂O
- 124 (without protease inhibitor). Store at 4 °C.
- 125 25. Bead elution buffer: 0.1 M NaHCO₃, 1 % SDS, dH₂O (make
- 126 fresh immediately before elution).
- 127 26. RNase A 10 µg/µl.
- 128 27. Proteinase K 20 µg/µl.
- 129 28. 3 M Sodium acetate, pH 5.2.
- 130 29. Qiagen MinElute PCR Purification Kit.
- 131 30. Sonicator, Diagenode Bioruptor® standard (Cat. No. UCD-
- 132 200).
- 133 31. Thermomixer.
- 134 32. Rotating tube rack or platform in cold room.
- 135 33. Ovation Ultralow Library Systems (Nugen).

3 Methods

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Prepare the lysis, dilution, and shearing buffers by dissolving the protease inhibitor tablets according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure that you have sufficient amount of PBS at room temperature and at 4 °C (20 ml ice-cold PBS for washing/plate, 20 ml PBS at room temperature for cross-linking/plate).

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3.1 Cross-Link and Harvest the Cells

1. Approximately 3×10^7 bone marrow-derived macrophages are used as starting material for transcription factor ChIP-Seq. About 10^7 cells are seeded per plate (15 cm diameter) and the chromatin obtained from three plates is combined during the experiment for each reaction.
2. Treat the cells with vehicle (DMSO/EtOH) or 100 nM LG268 for 1 h or more, depending on the given experiment.
3. Dissolve DSG in DMSO (50 mg DSG is dissolved in 300 μ l DMSO yielding a 0.5 M DSG solution) (*see Note 1*).
4. Dilute DSG to 0.002 M in PBS, at room temperature.
5. Remove the medium from the cells and pipette 10 ml of DSG containing PBS onto the plates.
6. Incubate for 30 min at room temperature. Gently swirl the plates every 5 min.
7. During the last 5 min, prepare 1 % formaldehyde solution in PBS at room temperature (*see Note 1*).
8. After incubation, aspirate the DSG solution and replace it with 10 ml 1 % formaldehyde solution. Incubate for 10 min at room temperature. Gently swirl the plates every 2 min. Make sure that the DSG solution is completely discarded before adding the formaldehyde solution (*see Note 2*).
9. Add 1.5 ml of 1 M glycine directly to the formaldehyde-containing solution and incubate the cells at room temperature for an additional 5 min while gently swirling the plate in every minute.
10. Place the samples on ice.
11. Aspirate the liquid from the plates and wash the cells twice with ice-cold PBS. Make sure that after the second wash all the supernatant is discarded, and then immediately proceed to lysis.

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3.2 Cell Lysis and Chromatin Shearing

1. Scrape up the cells from each plate in 1 ml cell lysis/wash buffer containing appropriate amount of protease inhibitors (*see Note 3*).
2. Transfer the lysates to 1.5 ml centrifuge tubes.
3. Centrifuge with $12,000 \times g$ for 1 min at 4 °C.
4. Remove the supernatant and add 1 ml of cell lysis/wash buffer.

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5. Pipette up and down the cells at least 20 times to get homogenous cell suspension, and then push through the whole volume in a 1 ml insulin syringe.
 6. Repeat **step 3**.
 7. Remove the supernatants and combine the pellets into one centrifuge tube, using the same 1 ml lysis buffer. Push the whole volume again through a 1 ml insulin syringe.
 8. Repeat **step 3**.
 9. Remove the supernatant and resuspend the nuclear pellet in 1 ml of room-temperature shearing buffer (*see Note 4*).
 10. Gently pipette up and down at least 30 times to generate a homogenous suspension and take care not to generate bubbles (*see Note 5*).
 11. Transfer the solutions into 15 ml conical tubes (polystyrene) (*see Note 6*) and place the sonicator probes into the tubes (*see Note 7*).
 12. Sonicate the chromatin to get fragments between 200 and 500 bp. Using the Diagenode Bioruptor® Standard model, 3 × 5 min long cycles are used, with 30-s on and 30-s off setup. The first sonication cycle is carried out at high and the other two at low power setting (3 cycles, 15 min) (*see Notes 8 and 9*).
 13. Transfer the sheared chromatin to 1.5 ml tubes and centrifuge at 12,000 × *g* for 10 min at 4 °C. Set aside 20 µl of sheared chromatin as input to check the fragment size distribution and normalize quantitative PCR measurements (*see Note 10*).
 14. Transfer 900 µl supernatant to a new 15 ml conical tube and dilute tenfold by adding 8.1 ml dilution buffer containing protease inhibitors. The diluted chromatin can be stored for 24 h at 4 °C.

206 **3.3 Immuno-** 207 **precipitation**

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1. Add 5 µg of anti-RXR antibody to each diluted chromatin.
 2. Set aside at least 1 ml of diluted chromatin and add 5 µg of pre-immune rabbit IgG, as a control of nonspecific binding.
 3. Incubate the samples overnight at 4 °C, using an “end-over-end” rotator.
 4. On the day of immunoprecipitation, pre-block the paramagnetic beads. For each immunoprecipitation, prepare 190 µl of beads. Wash the beads three times with 1 ml of PBS containing 0.5 % BSA, using the magnetic rack appropriate for 1.5 ml centrifuge tubes. Incubate the beads overnight at 4 °C using rotator (*see Note 11*).
 5. After overnight incubation, centrifuge the chromatin antibody complexes at ~~3,500 rpm~~ for 20 min at 4 °C.
 6. Use the top 90 % of the centrifuged chromatin for bead binding (*see Note 12*).

7. Use the magnetic rack to collect the beads and replace the supernatant with 190 μ l of PBS containing 0.5 % BSA.	221 222
8. Combine the beads with the antibody chromatin complexes and incubate for at least 4 h at 4 °C using the rotator (<i>see Note 13</i>).	223 224
9. Prepare appropriate amount of cell lysis/wash buffer by adding 1 protease inhibitor tablet to 50 ml of cell lysis/wash buffer.	225 226
10. Place the tubes containing the antibody-chromatin-bead complexes on a magnetic rack at 4 °C.	227 228
11. Incubate for 2 min or until the liquid appears clear, and then aspirate the supernatant.	229 230
12. Add the same volume of cell lysis/wash buffer as the immunoprecipitation volume (RXR-8 ml, IgG-1 ml) and rotate the tubes for 3 min at 4 °C.	231 232 233
13. Wash (six times) the complexes with cell lysis/wash buffer. Carefully remove all traces of buffer at the end of the last washing step, without disturbing the beads, and place the tubes on ice.	234 235 236
14. Add 1 ml ice-cold TE buffer. Gently pipette up and down to generate homogenous bead slurry and then transfer the whole volume to a 1.5 ml LoBind tube.	237 238 239
15. Place the LoBind tubes on a magnetic rack, which stands on ice. Wait until the liquid appears clear and then remove the supernatant (<i>see Note 14</i>).	240 241 242
3.4 Bead Elution, De-cross-linking, and DNA Purification	
The remaining part of the protocol should be carried out at room temperature.	243 244
1. Add 100 μ l bead elution buffer to each tube and vortex at moderate speed for a few seconds. Place the samples on a thermomixer for 15 min and shake at 1,000 rpm.	245 246 247
2. Place the tubes back on the magnetic rack and collect the supernatant into clean LoBind tubes.	248 249
3. Repeat step 1 .	250
4. After the second elution step, add 8 μ l of 5 M NaCl to each sample and incubate overnight at 65 °C to de-cross-link the immunoprecipitated chromatin. Process the input DNA in the same way for QPCR measurements.	251 252 253 254
5. On the following day, add 1 μ l of 10 μ g/ μ l RNase A to each sample and incubate for 30 min at 37 °C.	255 256
6. Add 8 μ l of 1 M Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 4 μ l of 0.5 M EDTA, and 1 μ l of 20 μ g/ μ l Proteinase K and incubate for at least 2 h at 45 °C on a thermomixer at 1,000 rpm.	257 258 259
7. Purify the immunoprecipitated DNA (total volume 222 μ l) using Qiagen MinElute columns, according to the manufacturer's instruction.	260 261 262

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8. Add 1,110 μ l PB buffer to each sample and acidify the solution by adding 50 μ l of 3 M sodium acetate (*see* **Note 15**).
 9. Elute the immunoprecipitated DNA in 15 μ l elution buffer.
 10. Proceed to library preparation and/or QPCR measurements.
 11. For library preparation the Ovation Ultralow Library Systems are used. Libraries are generated from 5 ng of immunoprecipitated DNA, according to the manufacturer's protocol (*see* **Note 16**).

271 4 Notes

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1. Dissolve DSG immediately before use as it is highly unstable in solution and always use freshly opened formaldehyde ampulla for cross-linking. Otherwise, the cross-linking efficiency might be seriously affected.
 2. Make sure that all the DSG is discarded before formaldehyde cross-linking, since DSG and formaldehyde cross-reaction might lead to quenched formaldehyde efficiency.
 3. Scraping up the cells in PBS will cause the cells to stick to the wall of the centrifuge tubes during centrifugation that causes a subsequent loss in cell number.
 4. Store and use shearing buffer at room temperature, because SDS precipitation occurs at 4 °C. This negatively affects sonication efficiency. If SDS precipitation occurs in the nuclear lysate, allow the solution to come to room temperature before sonication.
 5. Be careful not to generate bubbles during lysis, which can negatively affect sonication efficiency.
 6. It is highly recommended to use polystyrene tubes, instead of polypropylene, since polystyrene transfers sonic waves more efficiently.
 7. The probes should be set exactly in the middle of the tube submerged in the solution. If the probes come in contact with the inner surface of the tubes it might negatively affect sonication efficiency.
 8. Check the position of the probes after each sonication cycle to make sure that they do not touch the tube.
 9. In order to determine the optimal sonication conditions for your cells perform a series of experiment with different power, cycle number, etc. Use the condition resulting in the highest enrichment of a positive control region after QPCR measurement, which typically gives the best sequencing results. For QPCR measurements of RXR ChIP, we used the following primers: Abca1 -78 bp Fw: TGCCGCGACTAGTTCCTT,

- Abca1 -78 bp Rev: TCTCCACGTGCTTTCTGCT, Abcg1 305
 +1 kb Fw: CCGAATCGTGCCTTTCTTT, and Abcg1 +1 kb 306
 Rev: GTGGGCTTCTAGCGTATTG. As a negative control 307
 region use 36b4 Fw: GGGGAGATCCCAAGACTACAG and 308
 36b4 Rev: CCACGCGCTTTAACAGAGTT. 309
10. For input isolation, add 3 volumes of 100 % EtOH to the 20 μ l 310
 sheared chromatin, vortex, and incubate overnight at 311
 -80 °C. The next day, centrifuge it for 10 min at maximum 312
 speed (4 °C). Remove the supernatant, dry the DNA pellets, 313
 and dissolve in 200 μ l elution buffer. Process input DNA from 314
step 4 in Subheading 3.4. 315
 11. Avoid that magnetic beads remain in the bottom of the tubes, 316
 since it causes incomplete blocking and high background sig- 317
 nal after sequencing. Therefore, transfer the tubes immediately 318
 from the magnetic rack to the rotator before the overnight 319
 blocking step. 320
 12. Be careful not to disturb the chromatin-antibody complexes 321
 after centrifugation. Use only the top 90 % of the sample to 322
 avoid high background signal. 323
 13. To avoid incomplete mixing of the magnetic beads and the 324
 antibody-chromatin complexes *see Note 11* for instructions. 325
 14. Use 1 ml pipette tips to remove all the supernatants at this 326
 step, because the beads are loosely attached to the tube 327
 surface. 328
 15. Adsorption of DNA to the silica during column purification is 329
 drastically reduced at higher pH. It is important to follow the 330
 manufacturer's instructions to acidify the DNA solution prior 331
 to binding to the column. 332
 16. To determine the background of the experiment prepare con- 333
 trol libraries with the input DNA and DNA obtained from 334
 samples immunoprecipitated with control IgG. 335

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