POLYNUCLEOTIDES ENCODING MOUSE PITUITARY TUMOR TRANSFORMING GENE (PTTG) CARBOXY-TERMINAL PEPTIDES AND METHODS OF USE THEREOF TO INHIBIT NEOPLASTIC CELLULAR PROLIFERATION AND/OR TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Disclosed is a method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of mammalian cells, including cells of human origin, in vitro or in vivo. The inventive method involves the use of a composition containing a polynucleotide encoding a pituitary tumor transforming gene carboxy-terminal peptide (PTTG-C), which has the ability to regulate endogenous pituitary tumor transforming gene (PTTG) expression and/or function in a dominant negative manner. Kits comprising the inventive compositions are also disclosed for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation in vitro or in vivo. Isolated polynucleotides encoding PTTG-C peptides.
FIG. 1

FIG. 2A
FIG. 2B
FIG. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HeLa</th>
<th>T47-D</th>
<th>MCF-7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTTG-C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG-Cpm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vector</td>
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FIG. 4
POLYNUCLEOTIDES ENCODING MOUSE PITUITARY TUMOR TRANSFORMING GENE (PTTG) CARBOXY-TERMINAL PEPTIDES AND METHODS OF USE THEREOF TO INHIBIT NEOPLASTIC CELLULAR PROLIFERATION AND/OR TRANSFORMATION


[0002] The U.S. Government has a paid-up license in this invention and the right in limited circumstances to require the patent owner to license others on reasonable terms as provided for by the terms of Contract CA75979, awarded by the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Throughout the application various publications are referenced in parentheses. The disclosures of these publications in their entirety are hereby incorporated by reference in the application in order to more fully describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains.

[0004] 1. Field of the Invention

[0005] The present invention relates to a method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of mammalian cells, in vitro and in vivo.

[0006] 2. Related Art

[0007] Neoplasms, including cancers and other tumors, are the second most prevalent cause of death in the United States, causing 450,000 deaths per year. One in three Americans will develop cancer, and one in five will die of cancer (Scientific American Medicine, part 12, 1, 1, section dated 1987). While substantial progress has been made in identifying some of the likely environmental and hereditary causes of cancer, the statistics for the cancer death rate indicates a need for substantial improvement in the therapy for cancer and related diseases and disorders.

[0008] A number of cancer genes, i.e., genes that have been implicated in the etiology of cancer, have been identified in connection with hereditary forms of cancer and in a large number of well-studied tumor cells. Studies of cancer genes have helped provide some understanding of the processes of tumorigenesis. While a great deal more remains to be learned about cancer genes, the presently known cancer genes serve as useful models for understanding tumorigenesis.

[0009] Cancer genes are broadly classified into “oncogenes” which, when activated, promote tumorigenesis, and “tumor suppressor genes” which, when damaged, fail to suppress tumorigenesis. While these classifications provide a useful method for conceptualizing tumorigenesis, it is also possible that a particular gene may play differing roles depending upon the particular allelic form of that gene, its regulatory elements, the genetic background and the tissue environment in which it is operating.


[0011] Tumor suppressor genes play a role in regulating oncogenesis. Tumor suppressor genes are genes that in their wild-type alleles, express proteins that suppress abnormal cellular proliferation. When the gene coding for a tumor suppressor protein is mutated or deleted, the resultant mutant protein or the complete lack of tumor suppressor protein expression may fail to correctly regulate cellular proliferation, and abnormal cellular proliferation may take place, particularly if there is already existing damage to the cellular regulatory mechanism. A number of well-studied human tumors and tumor cell lines have been shown to have missing or nonfunctional tumor suppressor genes. Examples of tumor suppressor genes include, but are not limited to the retinoblastoma susceptibility gene or Rb gene, the p53 gene, the deleted in colon carcinoma (DCC) gene and the neurofibrinomasis type 1 (NF-1) tumor suppressor gene (Weinberg, R. A., Science, 254:1138-46 [1991]). Loss of function or inactivation of tumor suppressor genes may play a central role in the initiation and/or progression of a significant number of human cancers.

[0012] Anterior pituitary tumors are mostly benign hormone-secreting or non-functioning adenomas arising from a monochononal expansion of a genetically mutated pituitary epithelial cell. Pathogenesis of tumor formation in the ante-

[0013] G(s)x mutations occur in about 40% of growth hormone (GH)-secreting tumors, and constitutively activated CREB transcription factor is also found in a subset of these tumors. Although the importance of Gs(α) mutant proteins in the development of growth-hormone secreting pituitary tumors is well established, only about one third of these tumors contains these mutations, indicating the presence of additional transforming events in pituitary tumorigenesis. Although point mutations of Ras oncogene, loss of heterozygosity (LOH) near the Rb locus on chromosome 13, and LOH on chromosome 11 have been implicated in some pituitary tumors, the mechanism that causes pituitary cell transformation remains largely unknown.


[0015] By dysregulating chromatin separation, PTTG overexpression may also lead to aneuploidy, i.e., cells having one or a few chromosomes above or below the normal chromosome number (Zou et al. [1999]). Like most cancer-related genes, the expression of PTTG is restricted in normal tissues, but PTTG expression is dramatically increased in malignant human cell lines, pituitary tumors, colon carcinomas and colorectal tumors. (Zhang, X., et al. [1999a]; Zhang, X., et al., Pituitary tumor transforming gene (PTTG) expression in pituitary adenomas, J. Clin. Endocrinol. Metab. 84:761-767 [1999b]; Heaney, A. R., et al., Pituitary tumor transforming gene: a Novel marker in colorectal tumors, Lancet [In Press; 2000].

[0016] The recent discovery of a human PTTG gene 2, which shares high sequence homology with human PTTG1, implying the existence of a PTTG gene family. (Prezant, T. R., et al., An intronless homolog of human proto-oncogene hPTTG is expressed in pituitary tumors: evidence for hPTTG family, J. Clin. Endocrinol. Metab. 84:1149-1152 [1999]). Marine PTTG shares 66% nucleotide base sequence homology with human PTTG1 and also exhibits transforming ability. (Wang, Z. and Melmed, S., Characterization of the marine pituitary tumor transforming gene (PTTG) and its promoter, Endocrinology [In Press; 2000]). A proline-rich region was identified near the protein C-terminus that is critical for PTTG1's transforming activity. (Zhang, X., et al. [1999c], as demonstrated by the inhibitory effect on in vitro transformation, in vivo tumorigenesis, and transactivation, when point mutations were introduced into the proline-rich region. Proline-rich domains may function as SH3 binding sites to mediate signal transduction of protein-tyrosine kinase. (Pawson, T., Protein modules and signaling networks, Nature 373:573-580 [1995]; Kuriyan, J., and Cowburn, D., Modular peptide recognition domains in eukaryotic signaling, Annu. Rev. Biophys. Biomol. Struct. 26:259-288 [1997]).

[0017] There remains a need for a therapeutic treatment for neoplasms, such as cancer, that inhibits neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation associated with PTTG overexpression. This and other benefits are provided by the present invention as described herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The present invention relates to a method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of mammalian cells, including cells of human origin, whether in vitro or in vivo. The inventive method relies on the discovery that the native carboxy-terminal portion of the pituitary tumor transforming gene protein (PTTG) is critical to PTTG protein function and that, surprisingly, pituitary tumor transforming gene carboxy-terminal peptide (PTTG-C) molecules have the ability to downregulate pituitary tumor transforming gene (PTTG) expression and/or PTTG function in a dominant negative manner. In some embodiments, the invention is directed to gene-based treatments that deliver PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotides to mammalian cells to inhibit the endogenous expression and function of PTTG. Other embodiments are directed to peptide-based treatments that deliver PTTG-C peptides to the cells, which inhibit endogenous PTTG expression and/or PTTG function.

[0019] In particular, useful gene-based embodiments of the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of mammalian cells involve delivering to the cell a composition comprising a PTTG-C-related polynucleotide that includes a base sequence that defines a PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide-encoding sequence, or defines a degenerate sequence, or defines a sequence complementary to either of these. In accordance with the method, the PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide, preferably complexed with a cellular uptake-enhancing agent, is delivered in an amount and under conditions sufficient to enter the cell, thereby inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of the cell.

[0020] Alternatively, useful peptide-based embodiments of the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of a mammalian cell involve deliver-
ing to a mammalian cell a composition comprising a PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide (PTTG-C), or a biologically functional fragment thereof, preferably complexed with a cellular uptake-enhancing agent, in an amount and under conditions sufficient to enter the cell, thereby inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation.

[0021] Because, PTTG protein further mediates the expression of bFGF, an important angiogenesis activator, the inventive method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, practiced in vivo, also encompasses a method of inhibiting tumor angiogenesis. Angiogenesis activators, including bFGF and VEGF, are expressed and secreted by most human carcinoma cells. (Plate, K. H. et al., Nature 359:845-48 [1992]; Schultz-Hector, S. and Haghayegh, S., Cancer Res. 53:1444-49 [1993]; Yamamaki, Y. et al., Cancer Res. 53:5289-96 [1993]; Buesing, S. et al., Anticancer Res. 15:2331-34 [1995]). The discovery, described herein, that the inventive PTTG-C peptides dramatically reduce bFGF production by cancer cells (e.g., HeLa), shows that in accordance with the inventive method, the inventive PTTG-C peptides can impair new blood vessel growth, which is essential for tumor growth. Thus, the method of inhibiting tumor angiogenesis further inhibits neoplastic cellular proliferation, in vivo.

[0022] The present invention also relates to compositions useful for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation. These include compositions comprising a PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide or comprising a chimeric or fusion protein that contains a first PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide segment and a second cellular uptake-enhancing peptide segment. The invention also relates to compositions comprising a PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide, for example, a polynucleotide encoding a PTTG-C peptide or antisense PTTG-C-related oligonucleotides. Also included in the invention are compositions comprising expression vectors containing the PTTG-C-related polynucleotides, including nucleic acids encoding PTTG-C peptides. The inventive PTTG-C peptides and inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotides are useful in the manufacture of pharmaceutical compositions, medicaments or medicaments for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, which contain the inventive PTTG-C peptides and PTTG-C-related polynucleotides.

[0023] In accordance with the present invention, there are also provided PTTG carboxy-terminal (PTTG-C) peptides and PTTG-C-related polynucleotides, which can also be isolated from other cellular components. The inventive PTTG-C peptides are useful in bioassays, as immunogens for producing anti-PTTG antibodies, or in therapeutic compositions containing such peptides and/or antibodies. Also provided are transgenic non-human mammals that comprise mammalian cells that comprise embodiments of the inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotides and express the inventive PTTG-C peptides.

[0024] Also provided are antibodies that are specifically immunoreactive with PTTG proteins, or more particularly, with PTTG-C peptides. The inventive antibodies specifically bind to PTTG-C peptides. These anti-PTTG-C-specific antibodies are useful in assays to determine levels of PTTG proteins or PTTG-C peptides present in a given sample, e.g., tissue samples, biological fluids, Western blots, and the like. The antibodies can also be used to purify PTTG proteins or PTTG-C peptides from crude cell extracts and the like.

Moreover, these antibodies are considered therapeutically useful to counteract or supplement the biological effect of PTTG proteins in vivo.

[0025] The present invention is further described by related applications U.S. Ser. No. 09/569,956, filed May 12, 2000, U.S. Ser. No. 08/894,251, filed Jul. 23, 1999, international application PCT/US97/21463, filed Nov. 21, 1997, and U.S. provisional application No. 60/031,338, filed Nov. 21, 1996, the disclosures and drawings of which are incorporated by reference in their entirities.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0026] FIG. 1 illustrates transcriptional activation in transfected NIH 3T3 cells, as mediated by pGAL4, pGAL4-VP16, pGAL4-wPTTG, or pGAL4-mutPTTG 48 hours after transfection. Cell lysate proteins were assayed for luciferase and β-gal expression. pGAL4 was used as a negative control and pGAL4-VP 16 as a positive control.

[0027] FIG. 2 shows PTTG-C and PTTG-Cpm expression in transfected tumor cells. FIG. 2A illustrates expression construct which express a C-terminal peptide of human PTTG protein (PTTG-C), corresponding to amino acid residues 147-202 of SEQ. ID. NO. 4 (i.e., SEQ. ID. NO. 5), under the control of the CMV promoter (black bar). PXXP represents the proline-rich region(s) of the PTTG-C. A mutant expression vector (PTTG-Cpm), contained point mutations P163A, S1650, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L. FIG. 2B includes representative 1% agarose gels of RT-PCR products of HeLa (top panel), T-47D (middle panel), and MCF-7 cells (bottom panel), showing PTTG-C and PTTG-Cpm expression. Products from reverse transcription carried out in the presence (+) or absence (−) of RT were used as template in PCR reactions. FIG. 2C shows a representative sequencing gel from RT-PCR followed by direct sequencing analysis showing PTTG-C and PTTG-Cpm expression in respective transfecants. Arrows point to nucleotide changes.

[0028] FIG. 3 shows colony formation of HeLa (top row), T-47D (middle row), and MCF-7 (bottom row) cells transfected with PTTG-C or PTTG-Cpm expression vectors on soft agar. “Vector” (left column) shows cells transfected with vector pcI-neo alone; “PTTG-C” (middle column) shows cells transfected with vector pcI-neo containing PTTG C-terminal encoding cDNA; “PTTG-Cpm” (right column) shows cells transfected with vector pcI-neo containing mutant PTTG C-terminal cDNA (P163A, S1650, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L).

[0029] FIG. 4 shows suppression of bFGF secretion by HeLa cells expressing PTTG-C peptide. The concentration of bFGF in conditioned medium derived from transfecants cultured for 72 h as measured by ELISA. “Vector” (two left-most bars) indicates medium conditioned by cells transfected with vector pcI-neo alone; “PTTG-C” (three middle bars) indicates medium conditioned by cells transfected with vector pcI-neo containing PTTG-C-terminal encoding cDNA; “PTTG-Cpm” (three right-most bars) indicates medium conditioned by transfected with vector pcI-neo containing mutant PTTG C-terminal encoding cDNA (P163A, S1650, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L).
DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0030] The present invention relates to a method of inhibiting PTTG-mediated neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of a mammalian cell, including but not limited to, a cell of human or non-human origin. Non-human mammalian cells also originate from, or in any mammalian animal, e.g., a non-human primate, rat, mouse, rabbit, guinea pig, hamster, bovine, porcine, ovine, equine, canine, feline, pachyderm, and the like. The mammalian cell can be situated in vivo, i.e., within a mammalian animal subject or human subject, or in vitro, i.e., the cell can be a cultured cell.

[0031] For the purposes of the invention, “neoplastic cellular proliferation” includes neoplastic (malignant or benign), hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic and/or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation in a mammalian subject or cell culture. Hyperplastic cellular growth or proliferation includes abnormal multiplication or increase in the numbers of normal cells in a normal arrangement in a tissue, for example, as is common in benign prostatic hyperplasia. Cytologically dysplastic and/or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation include increases in cellular numbers of karyotypically abnormal but non-malignant cells within a tissue. Examples include some benign prostatic hyperplasias/dysplasias and cervical hyperplasias/dysplasias.

[0032] Neoplastic cellular growth and/or proliferation, i.e., growth of abnormally organized tissue, includes malignant and non-malignant neoplasms. Malignant neoplasms include primary, recurrent, and/or or metastatic cancerous tumors originating in any tissues, for example, carcinomas, sarcomas, lymphomas, mesotheliomas, melanomas, gliomas, nephroblastomas, glioastomas, oligodendrogliomas, astrocytomas, ependymomas, primitive neuroectodermal tumors, a typical meningiomas, malignant meningiomas, or neuroblastomas, originating in the pituitary, hypothalamus, lung, kidney, adrenal, ureter, bladder, urethra, breast, prostate, testis, skull, brain, spine, thorax, peritoneum, ovary, uterus, stomach, liver, bowel, colon, rectum, bone, lymphatic system, skin, or in any other organ or tissue of the subject.

[0033] In accordance with gene-based embodiments of the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, an inventive composition is delivered to the cell, which composition comprises a PTTG carboxy-terminal-related nucleotide. A “PTTG carboxy-terminal-related” nucleotide is a nucleotide having a contiguous sequence of bases (e.g., adenine [A], thymine [T], uracil [U], guanine [G], and/or cytosine [C]) defining a sequence specific to the 3′ coding region of PTTG. The 3′-end or terminal extends from approximately the mid-point of a cDNA coding sequence encoding a native PTTG to its end at a stop codon. The PTTG carboxy-terminal-related nucleotide can be a sequence encoding a carboxy-terminal portion of a mammalian PTTG protein (i.e., a PTTG-C peptide), as described more fully below, or encoding a PTTG-specific fragment thereof, or a degenerate coding sequence, or a sequence complementary to any of these.

[0034] In some preferred embodiments, the inventive composition includes a nucleic acid construct, such as a plasmid or viral expression vector, which comprises the nucleotide in a sense or antisense orientation, and from which PTTG-specific mRNA transcript can be expressed in the cell. In a preferred embodiment, the nucleic acid construct contains a polynucleotide encoding a mammalian PTTG carboxy-terminal (PTTG-C) peptide, which can be any PTTG-C peptide or functional fragment thereof as described herein. The composition can also contain one or more helper plasmids or viruses, if appropriate. The plasmid or viral expression vector is a nucleic acid construct that includes a promoter region operatively linked to the polynucleotide in a transcriptional unit.

[0035] As used herein, a promoter region refers to a segment of DNA that controls transcription of a DNA to which it is operatively linked. The promoter region includes specific sequences that are sufficient for RNA polymerase recognition, binding and transcription initiation. In addition, the promoter region includes sequences that modulate this recognition, binding and transcription initiation activity of RNA polymerase. These sequences may be cis acting or may be responsive to trans acting factors. Promoters, depending upon the nature of the regulation, may be constitutive or regulated. Exemplary promoters contemplated for use in the practice of the present invention include the SV40 early promoter, the cytomegalovirus (CMV) promoter, the mouse mammary tumor virus (MMTV) steroid-inducible promoter, Moloney murine leukemia virus (MMLV) promoter, and the like.

[0036] As used herein, “expression” refers to the process by which polynucleic acids are transcribed into mRNA and translated into peptides, polypeptides, or proteins. If the polynucleic acid is derived from genomic DNA, expression may, if an appropriate eukaryotic host cell or organism is selected, include splicing of the mRNA.

[0037] As used herein, the term “operatively linked” refers to the functional relationship of DNA with regulatory and effector nucleotide sequences, such as promoters, enhancers, transcriptional and translational stop sites, and other signal sequences. For example, operative linkage of DNA to a promoter refers to the physical and functional relationship between the DNA and the promoter such that the transcription of such DNA is initiated by the promoter by a RNA polymerase that specifically recognizes, binds to and transcribes the DNA. Thus, “operatively linked” means that, within a transcriptional unit, the promoter sequence, is located upstream (i.e., 5′ in relation thereto) from the coding sequence and the coding sequence, is 3′ to the promoter, or alternatively is in a sequence of genes or open reading frames 3′ to the promoter and expression is coordinately regulated thereby. Both the promoter and coding sequences are oriented in a 5′ to 3′ manner, such that transcription can take place in vitro in the presence of all essential enzymes, transcription factors, co-factors, activators, and reactants, under favorable physical conditions, e.g., suitable pH and temperature. This does not mean that, in any particular cell, conditions will favor transcription. For example, transcription from a tissue-specific promoter is generally not favored in heterologous cell types from different tissues.

[0038] The term “nucleic acid” encompasses ribonucleic acid (RNA) or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), which DNA can be complementary DNA (cDNA) or genomic DNA, e.g. a gene encoding a PTTG protein. “Polynucleotides” encompass nucleic acids containing a “backbone” formed by phosphodiester linkages between ribosyl or deoxyribosyl moieties. Polynucleotides also include nucleic acid analogs,
for example polynucleotides having alternative linkages as known in the art. Examples include phosphorothioate linkages (e.g., phosphorothioate oligodeoxynucleotides; 8-oligomucleotides), mixed phosphorothioate and phosphodiester linkages (e.g., S—O-oligodeoxynucleotides and phosphodiester/phosphorothioate 2′-O-methyl-oligoribonucleotides; Zhou, W. et al., *Mixed backbone oligonucleotides as second-generation antisense agents with reduced phosphothioate-related side effects*, Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett. 8(22):3269-74 [1998]), methylphosphonate-phosphodiester modifications (MP—O-oligomucleotides; Zhao, Q. et al., *Comparison of cellular binding and uptake of antisense phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, and mixed phosphorothioate and methylphosphonate oligonucleotides; Antisense Res. Dev.* 3(1):53-66 [1993]), or morpholino oligomucleotides (e.g., Schmauki, G. et al., *Antisense oligonucleotides with different backbones. Modification of splicing pathways and efficacy of uptake*, J. Biol. Chem. 274(31):21783-89 [1999]).


Polynucleotides include sense or antisense polynucleotides. “Polynucleotides” also encompasses “oligonucleotides”.

A polynucleotide sequence complementary to a PTGG-specific polynucleotide sequence, as used herein, is one binding specifically with a PTGG-specific nucleic acid sequence. The phrase “binding specifically” encompasses the ability of a polynucleotide sequence to recognize a complementary base sequence and to form double-helical segments therewith via the formation of hydrogen bonds between the complementary base pairs. Thus, a complementary sequence includes, for example, an antisense sequence with respect to a sense sequence or coding sequence.

In some embodiments of the PTGG-C-related polynucleotide, the polynucleotide is in a sense orientation within the transcriptional unit, such that mRNA transcript can be produced, which when translated results in a translation product, such as a PTGG protein or a PTGG carboxy-terminal peptide (PTGT-C). In other embodiments, the PTGG-C-related polynucleotide is in an antisense orientation such that transcription results in a transcript complementary to and hybridizable with a naturally-occurring sense PTGG mRNA molecule under physiological conditions, inhibiting or blocking translation therefrom. Thus, antisense oligonucleotides inactivate target mRNA sequences by either blocking translation and inhibiting degradation of the mRNA, by, for example, RNase I digestion, or inhibiting translation of mRNA target sequence by interfering with the binding of translation-regulating factors or ribosomes, or by inclusion of other chemical structures, such as ribozyme sequences or reactive chemical groups which either degrade or chemically modify the target mRNA. For example, an antisense oligonucleotide targeted to a PTGG carboxy-terminal related polynucleotide segment of mRNA or genomic DNA is effective in inhibiting expression of PTGG.


[0044] In other embodiments of the inventive method, the inventive composition comprises a PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide that is not contained in an expression vector, for example, a synthetic antisense oligonucleotide, such as a phosphorothioate oligodeoxynucleotide. Synthetic antisense oligonucleotides, or other antisense chemical structures designed to recognize and selectively bind to mRNA, are constructed to be complementary to portions of the PTTG coding strand, for example, to coding sequences shown in SEQ ID Nos.1, 3, 10, 15, 18, or 19 (Tables 1-6 below). By preventing translational expression of at least part of the PTTG 3' coding region, an antisense PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide is useful, in accordance with the inventive method, to prevent expression of PTTG protein that is functional in mediating neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation.

[0045] In preferred embodiments of the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, the composition also comprises an uptake-enhancing agent as further described herein. Inventive compositions, containing the uptake-enhancing agent complexed with a PTTG-specific polynucleotide, are designed to be capable of passing through the cell membrane in order to enter the cytoplasm of the cell by virtue of physical and chemical properties. In addition, the composition can be designed for delivery only to certain selected cell populations by targeting the composition to be recognized by specific cellular uptake mechanisms which take up the PTTG-specific polynucleotides only within select cell populations. For example, the composition can include a receptor agonist to bind to a receptor found only in a certain cell type.

[0046] The inventive composition can also optionally contain one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carrier(s). As used herein, the term “acceptable carrier” encompasses any of the standard pharmaceutical carriers. The carrier can be an organic or inorganic carrier or excipient, such as water and emulsions such as an oil/water or water/oil emulsion, and various types of wetting agents. The active ingredient(s) can optionally be compounded in a composition formulated, for example, with non-toxic, pharmaceutically acceptable carriers for infusions, tablets, pellets, capsules, solutions, emulsions, suspensions, and any other form suitable for use. Such carriers also include glucose, lactose, gum acacia, gelatin, mannitol, starch paste, magnesium trisilicate, talc, corn starch, keratin, colloidal silica, potato starch, urea, medium chain length triglycerides, dextran, normal saline, phosphate buffered saline and other carriers suitable for use in manufacturing preparations, in solid, semisolid, or liquid form. In addition auxiliary, stabilizing, thickening and coloring agents and perfumes can be used as appropriate.

[0047] PT TG-specific polynucleotides, including PT TG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotides, are determined by base sequence similarity or homology to known mammalian PT TG-specific nucleotide sequences. Base sequence homology is determined by conducting a base sequence similarity search of a genomics data base, such as the GenBank database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/), using a computerized algorithm, such as PowerBLAST, QBLAST, PSI-BLAST, PHI-BLAST, gapped or ungapped BLAST, or the “Align” program through the Baylor College of Medicine server (www.hgsc.bcm.tmc.edu/seq data). (E.g., Altschul, S. F., et al., Gapped BLAST and PSI-BLAST: a new generation of protein database search programs, Nucleic Acids Res. 25(17):3389-402 [1997]; Zhang, J., & Madden, T. L., PowerBLAST: a new network BLAST application for interactive or automated sequence analysis and annotation, Genome Res. 7(6):649-56 [1997]; Madden, T. L., et al., Applications of network BLAST server, Methods Enzymol. 266:131-41 [1996]; Altschul, S. F., et al., Basic local alignment search tool, J. Mol. Biol. 215(3):403-10 [1990]). Preferably, a PT TG-specific polynucleotide sequence is at least 5 to 30 contiguous nucleotides long, more preferably at least 6 to 15 contiguous nucleotides long, and most preferably at least 7 to 10 contiguous nucleotides long. Preferably, the inventive PT TG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide is at least about 45 contiguous nucleotides long.

[0048] Preferred examples of PT TG-specific coding sequences include the sequence for human PT TG (hPT TG or PT TG1). The PT TG1 peptide is encoded by the open reading frame at nucleotide positions 95 through 700 of human PT TG1 gene sequence SEQ. ID.NO.:3 (Table 1 below).

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PT TG1 gene sequence.</th>
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<tr>
<td>ATGCCGCCGCA GTTGGCGTTT AAACCAGGAG TGCCCGCCTT CCGTCCGCGG (SEQ. ID. NO.:1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 CGCGCCTGCA TGAAAGCCGC TGCTAGGCC TCCAGAAC ACAGAAAGCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>101 ACCTGAGACT ATGGTGAAAG GCAGAAAGGC AAACACCAAC CCAGGCTAGG</td>
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<tr>
<td>151 TGCTAAGACT CGGGTGGAAG TGCGCCGTGC ACGACTAAC ACAGCCCTAG</td>
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<td>201 ATGCCGCGCT TCAATGTTCA ACGACGCTTT TGGCGCAAGT GCTGTAAGCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>251 CAACCCGGCT TACCTGAGAC TACAGAAAG GCCTGAGGAA CTGCTCAGAG</td>
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</table>
TABLE 1-continued

PTTG1 gene sequence.

| 301 | AGCTACAGAA AGAGCTGTTAA AGACCAAGGG ACACCCCTAAA CAAAAACAGC |
| 351 | CAGCTTTTTC TGCCAAAAG ATGACTGAGA AGACTTTGAA AGCAAAAAGC |
| 401 | TCTGGCTCCTG CCTCGAGATG TGCTTATCCA GAAXAGAAA AATCTTTTCC |
| 451 | CTCCAATCTCT CAGACTTTGG AGAGTTCGTA CCTGCTTGAA GAGCACCCAGA |
| 501 | TTGGCAACCCT CCCCTTGAGT GGAGATCCCT TGATGATCCC TGACCAGAGG |
| 551 | AGAGAGTCTT AAAAGCTTTT TGATGCTGGG CCCCTTCGAC CTGTGAAGAT |
| 601 | GGCCTCTCCA CCATGGAATT CCAATCTGCT GACCTCTCCT TGACACTTC |
| 651 | TCTGAGACCT CAGTCTTAAA TTGCAACCTG TTTCTTGTTA CATAATATX |
| 701 | TAAATTTCTT AGTCTTGACAG AGTTTTTGTG TATTAGATT AATAAGACAT |
| 751 | TTCTTACAG ATAAAAAAA AAATAAAA. |

[0049] The 3' coding region of PTTG1 includes the following 168-nucleotide sequence, which corresponds to nucleotide positions 533 through 700 of SEQ. ID. NO.3, shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2

Portion of 3' coding region of PTTG1

| 1 | ATGATCTCTTG AGAGGAGAG AGAGCTCTGAA AAAGCTTTTC AGCTGGGCC (SEQ.ID. NO.110) |
| 51 | CCGCTCGACCT GTGAAGAGTG CCGCTCCACC AGGAAATCC AGTCTGTTGC |
| 101 | AGCTTGCTCTT AGAGCTCTTG TGAGAAGCTT GGTGAATT TTGAAGACCA |
| 151 | TCTCTCTGACA TAGATATX. |

[0050] Another useful example of a PTTG-specific coding Sequence is a Sequence that encodes a rat PTTG peptide, including nucleotide positions 293 through 889 of SEQ. ID. NO.1 (Table 3 below).

TABLE 3

Rat PTTG sequence.

| AATTCGGCAG GAGCCCAACCT TGAGCACTCTG ATGCTCTCTG GTCTGCCTCT CTATGCTGTA |
| 60 (SEQ. ID. NO.11) |
| GCTGGTACGC TGAGAAGCTT GTGTGGGCTT CCAAGATCAA CAAAGTTTT CTGTAATT |
| 120 |
| GCTTGAACGA CCGTGGCTGG AGAGTTAAAG GTGTTGTAAG AGCCGGTTGA CTCTGCACAG |
| 180 |
| TACTTCTAAA TTTTTTTTGCA TAGATCCTCT GCTGCTGTTT GCTGCTGACT TTTACTGAGC |
| 240 |
| TTCTCAAGTG CGGTGTTTTAT AATATGACGG TCTCTCCCT CAGTAATCCA GA ATG |
| 295 |
| GCT ACT CTG ATC TTT GTT GAT AAG GAT AAG GAA GAG CCA GGC AGC GGT |
| 343 |
| TGG CCA TCT AAG GAT GCA TTG AAG CTG GCC TCT GGT GTC AAA GCC TTA |
| 391 |
| GAT GGG AAA TGG CAG GTT TCA AGC CCA GCA GTC GGC AAA GTG TGC GTT |
| 439 |
| GCC CCA GCC TTG CCT AAA GCC AGC AGG AAG GCT CTG GGA ACT GTC AAC |
| 487 |
| AGA GTT ACT GAA AAG CCA GTC AAG AGT AGT AAA CCC CTG CAA TCG AAA |
| 535 |
The 3' coding region of rat PTTG includes the following 168-nucleotide sequence, which corresponds to nucleotide positions 722 through 889 of SEQ. ID. NO.:1, shown in Table 4 below.

### Table 4

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portion of 3' coding region of rat PTTG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATG ATC CTG AAT GAA GAG AGG GCT GAG CTC GAG CTG GAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCG CCT TGC CCT CTG CAG AAG CCC TCA CCG TGC GAA TCT GAT CCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTG CCG TCT CCT CCC ACG GCC TCC TCC GCT CTG GAT GTP GTA GAA TGG CCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT GCT TGT TAC GAT GCA GAT ATT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another useful example of a PTTG-specific coding sequence is a sequence that encodes a murine PTTG peptide, including nucleotide positions 304 through 891 of SEQ. ID. NO.:15 (Table 5 below).

### Table 5

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murine PTTG sequence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 TCTTCACAATT GTTATGTAAC AGGAGGCCAA ATTTGAGCAT CCTCTTGGCT TCTCTTTATA (SEQ. ID. NO.:15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 GCAAGAGTAG TAGGCCTGAC ACAGGTGGGA TGGTGCCCAA ATAAACTGA TTTTGATAG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121 ATTTGAGGTT TTATAGCCAC TAGGCTGAC ATTTGAGGAC GTGCTGAGCG GGTGCACTTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191 CTCCACCTAC TTATAATTT TTGGACTAG TGGCCTCCGG TAAAGCTGGG TCTCTCTTAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>261 TGCTAGTAT TTTACCCCT CTCAAGGGCA ATATCCAOGC TCTCTCTTTT AAGAAAAGCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>331 AGCAGGCTCA CTCTACCTTT TGGCTGTAAG GAAAGCAGAA AGCGGCGGCA CCCCTGCGCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 CGTTTGAGCT CAGCTCAACAG GCTTTGCGAAG AGCTGAGGCA ATTTGAGGAC GTGCTGAGCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>471 TTCTTGGAGA AGTTCTGGAC ATTTGAGGAC GTGCTGAGCG GGTGCACTTT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>541 CCAAAAGGC CGAATTGGAC CGGCTGAGGT TGGGAAGGAA ATATCCAOGC TCTCTCTTTT AAGAAAAGCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 TCTCTCTTTG CTCTGACTGA TGGCTACCCA GAAAGCAGAA AGCTGAGGCA ATTTGAGGAC GTGCTGAGCG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jul. 10, 2003
The 3' coding region of murine PTTG includes the following 168-nucleotide sequence, which corresponds to nucleotide positions 724 through 891 of SEQ. ID. NO.:15, shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Portion of 3' coding region of murine PTTG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATCACCCCTGA ATGAAGAGAG AGGGCTGGAG AAGCTGCTGC ATCTGGGCC CCCTAGCCCT</td>
<td>(SEQ. ID. NO.:19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTGAGAACAC CTTCTCTAC ATGGGATCT GATCCGCTGT ACTCTCCTCC CAGTGCCCTC</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCCACTCTGG ATGTTGAATT GCCGCCTGTT TGTTACGATG CAGATATT</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotides having nucleotide sequences of SEQ. ID.NOS.:10, 18, or 19, degenerate coding sequences, or sequences complementary to any of these, are merely illustrative of useful PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotides. Other useful PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotides are functional fragments of any of SEQ. ID. NO.:10, 18, or 19 at least about 45 contiguous nucleotide long, degenerate coding sequences, or sequences complementary to any of these, the presence of which in the cell can function to downregulate endogenous PTTG expression and/or PTTG function, which functionality can be determined by routine screening.

As used herein, the term “degenerate” refers to codons that differ at least one nucleotide from a reference nucleic acid, e.g., SEQ ID NOS:1, 3, 10, 15, 18, or 19, but encode the same amino acids as the reference nucleic acid. For example, codons specified by the triplets “UCU”, “UCC”, “UCA”, and “UCG” are degenerate with respect to each other since all four of these codons encode the amino acid serine.

Other useful polynucleotides include nucleic acids or other polynucleotides, that differ in sequence from the sequences shown in SEQ ID NO:1, SEQ. ID. NO.:3, SEQ. ID. NO.:10, SEQ. ID. NO.:15, SEQ. ID. NO.:18, and SEQ. ID. NO.:19, but which when expressed in a cell, result in the same phenotype. Phentotypically similar nucleic acids are also referred to as “functionally equivalent nucleic acids”. As used herein, the phrase “functionally equivalent nucleic acids” encompasses nucleic acids characterized by slight and non-consequential sequence variations that will function in substantially the same manner, compared to any of the detailed nucleotide sequences disclosed herein, to produce PTTG protein functional with respect to inducing neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, or PTTG-C peptide(s) functional with respect to inhibition of neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, and/or polypeptide products functional with respect to immunogenicity.

In preferred embodiments, functionally equivalent nucleic acids encode polypeptides or peptide fragments that are the same as those disclosed herein or that have conservative amino acid variations, or that encode larger polypeptides that include SEQ. ID. NO.:2, SEQ. ID. NO.:4, SEQ. ID. NO.:9, or SEQ. ID. NO.:14, SEQ. ID. NO.:16, or SEQ. ID. NO.:17, or fragments of any of these that are biologically functional fragments with respect to inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation. For example, conservative variations include substitution of a non-polar residue with another non-polar residue, or substitution of a charged residue with a similarly charged residue. These variations include those recognized by skilled artisans as those that do not substantially alter the tertiary structure of the protein.
Useful polynucleotides can be produced by a variety of methods well-known in the art, e.g., by employing PCR and other similar amplification techniques, using oligonucleotide primers specific to various regions of SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 10, 15, 18, 19, or functionally equivalent polynucleotide sequences. Other synthetic methods for producing polynucleotides or oligonucleotides of various lengths are also well known.

In accordance with the method, preferred polynucleotides hybridize under moderately stringent, preferably high stringency, conditions to substantially the entire sequence, or substantial portions (i.e., typically at least 15-30 nucleotide) of the nucleic acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:1, 3, 10, 15, 18, or 19, or to complementary sequences.

The phrase “stringent hybridization” is used herein to refer to conditions under which annealed hybrids, or at least partially annealed hybrids, of polynucleic acids or other polynucleotides are stable. As known to those of skill in the art, the stability of hybrids is reflected in the melting temperature (Tm) of the hybrids. In general, the stability of a hybrid is a function of sodium ion concentration and temperature. Typically, the hybridization reaction is performed under conditions of relatively low stringency, followed by washes of varying, but higher, stringency. Reference to hybridization stringency relates to such washing conditions.

As used herein, the phrase “moderately stringent hybridization” refers to conditions that permit target-DNA to bind a complementary nucleic acid that has about 60% sequence identity or homology, preferably about 75% identity, more preferably about 85% identity to the target DNA; with greater than about 90% identity to target-DNA being especially preferred. Preferably, moderately stringent conditions are conditions equivalent to hybridization in 50% formamide, 5x Denhart’s solution, 5xSSPE, 0.2% SDS at 42°C, followed by washing in 0.2xSSPE, 0.2% SDS, at 65°C.

The phrase “high stringency hybridization” refers to conditions that permit hybridization of only those nucleic acid sequences that form stable hybrids in 0.018 M NaCl at 65°C. (i.e., if a hybrid is not stable in 0.018 M NaCl at 65°C, it will not be stable under high stringency conditions, as contemplated herein). High stringency conditions can be provided, for example, by hybridization in 50% formamide, 5x Denhart’s solution, 5xSSPE, 0.2% SDS at 42°C, followed by washing in 0.1xSSPE, and 0.1% SDS at 65°C.

The phrase “low stringency hybridization” refers to conditions equivalent to hybridization in 10% formamide, 5x Denhart’s solution, 6xSSPE, 0.2% SDS at 42°C, followed by washing in 1xSSPE, 0.2% SDS, at 50°C. Denhart’s solution and SSPE (see, e.g., Sambrook et al., Molecular Cloning, A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press [1989]) are well known to those of skill in the art as are other suitable hybridization buffers.

The PTGG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotides can be, but are not necessarily, directly bound to the cellular uptake-enhancing agent. For example, the polynucleotide can be contained in an expression vector or other nucleic acid construct, which vector or other construct is bound to the uptake-enhancing agent at some moiety or part of the vector or construct not directly linked to the PTGG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide; for purposes of the present invention, the PTGG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide is still “complexed” with the uptake-enhancing agent, although not being directly bound to the uptake-enhancing agent by a chemical bond. As long as the polynucleotide and the uptake enhancing agent are both constituents or members of the same complex, an indirect chemical linkage suffices. An example with respect to PTGG-C peptides, is an intervening third peptide commonly used in presentation.
sequence linking a first PTTG-C peptide segment with a second cell uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment. The first and second peptide segments, indirectly linked, are “complexed” for purposes of the invention.


[0069] Inventive compositions can include negatively charged ternary complexes of cationic liposomes, transferrin or fusicigen peptide(s) or poly(ethyleneimine). (E.g., Simeo, S. et al., Gene delivery by negatively charged ternary complexes of DNA, cationic liposomes and transferrin or fusicigen peptides, Gene Ther. 5(7):955-64 [1998]). Liposomal uptake-enhancing agents complexed with inventive polynucleotide(s) can also be encapsulated in polyethylene glycol (PEG), FuGENE6, or the like. (E.g., Sarovalee, E. G., et al., Encapsulation of plasmid DNA in stabilized plasmid lipid particles composed of different cationic lipid concentration for optimal transfection activity, J. Drug Target 6(6):423-37 [2000]; Yu, R. Z. et al., Pharmacokinetics and tissue disposition in monkeys of an antisense oligonucleotide inhibitor of Ha-ras encapsulated in stealth liposomes, Pharm. Res. 16(8):1309-15 [1999]; Tao, M. et al., Specific inhibition of human telomerase activity by transfection reagent, FuGENE6-antisense phosphorothiolate oligonucleotide complex in HeLa cells, FEBS Lett. 454(3):312-6 [1999].

[0070] In some embodiments, the uptake of antisense oligonucleotides is also enhanced by complexation with biocompatible polymeric or co-polymeric nanoparticles, for example, comprising algin, aminooalkylmethacrylate, methylmethacrylate, polyacrylimethacrylate, methylaminoethyl-methacrylate, polyalkylycyaanoacrylate, or the like. (E.g., Aynic, I. et al., Spongolike algininate nanoparticles as a new potential system for the delivery of antisense oligonucleotides, Antisense Nucleic Acid Drug Dev. 9(3):301-12 [1999]; Zimmer, A., Antisense oligonucleotide delivery with polyhexylcyanocrylate nanoparticles as carriers, Methods 18(3):286-95, 322 [1999]; Berton, M. et al., Highly loaded nanoparticle carrier using an hydrophobic antisense oligonucleotide complex, Eur. J. Pharm. Sci. 9(2):163-70 [1999]; Zobel, H. P. et al., Evaluation of aminooalkylmethacrylate nanoparticles as colloidal drug carrier systems. Part II: Characterization of antisense oligonucleotides


[0073] Another example, a viral cellular uptake-enhancing agent, is the adenosivirus enhanced transferrin-polysylsin-mediated gene delivery system has been described and patented by Curiel et al. (Curiel D. T., et al., Adenosivirus
enhancement of transferrin-polylysine-mediated gene delivery, PNAS USA 88: 8850-8854 (1991). The delivery of DNA depends upon endocytosis mediated by the transferrin receptor (Wagner et al., Transferrin-polylysine conjugates as carriers for DNA uptake into cells, PNAS (USA) 87: 3410-3414 (1990). In addition this method relies on the capacity of adenoviruses to disrupt cell vesicles, such as endosomes and release the contents entrapped therein. This system can enhance the gene delivery to mammalian cells by as much as 2,000 fold over other methods.

[0074] The amount of each component of the composition is chosen so that the gene modification, e.g., by transfection or transduction, of a mammalian cell is optimized. Such optimization requires no more than routine experimentation. The ratio of polynucleotide to lipid is broad, preferably about 1:1, although other effective proportions can also be utilized depending on the type of lipid uptake-enhancing agent and polynucleotide utilized. (E.g., Bence, R. et al. [1999]; Jansen, I. et al., A lipid carrier with a membrane active component and a small complex size are required for efficient cellular delivery of anti-sense phosphorothioate oligonucleotides, Eur. J. Pharm. Sci. 10(3):187-193 [2000]; Sakurai, F. et al., Effect of DNA/liposome mixing ratio on the physicochemical characteristics, cellular uptake and intracellular trafficking of plasmid DNA/cationic liposome complexes and subsequent gene expression, J. Controlled Release 66(2-3):255-69 [2000]).

[0075] A suitable amount of the inventive polynucleotide to be delivered to the cells, in accordance with the method, preferably ranges from about 0.1 nanograms to about 1 milligram per gram of tissue, in vivo, or about 0.1 nanograms to about 1 microgram per 5000 cells, in vitro. Suitable amounts for particular varieties of PTTG-C-related polynucleotides and/or cell types and/or for various mammalian subjects undergoing treatment, can be determined by routine experimentation. For example, malignant cell lines, such as MCF-7 or HeLa, typically are more efficiently transfected by the inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotides than non-malignant cell lines. Also, those skilled in the art are aware that there is typically considerable variability among individual cancer patients to any single treatment regimen, therefore, the practitioner will tailor any embodiment of the inventive method to each individual patient as appropriate.

[0076] In some preferred embodiments, the polynucleotide can be delivered into the mammalian cell, either in vivo or in vitro using suitable expression vectors well-known in the art (e.g., retroviral vectors, adenovirus vectors, and the like). In addition, to inhibit the in vivo expression of PTTG, the introduction by expression vector of the antisense strand of a DNA encoding a PTTG-C peptide is contemplated.

[0077] Suitable expression vectors are well-known in the art, and include vectors capable of expressing DNA operatively linked to a regulatory sequence, such as a promoter region that is capable of regulating expression of such DNA. Thus, an expression vector refers to a recombinant DNA or RNA construct, such as a plasmid, a phage, recombinant virus or other vector that, upon introduction into an appropriate host cell, results in expression of the inserted DNA. Appropriate expression vectors are well known to those of skill in the art and include those that are replicable in eukaryotic cells and/or prokaryotic cells and those that remain episomal or those which integrate into the host cell genome.

[0078] Exemplary, eukaryotic expression vectors, include the cloned bovine papilloma virus genome, the cloned genomes of the murine retroviruses, and eukaryotic casettes, such as the pSV-2 gpt system (described by Mulligan and Berg, 1979, Nature Vol. 277:108-114) the Okayama-Berg cloning system (Mol. Cell Biol. Vol. 2:161-170, 1982), pCB1, pCT (e.g., pCB-ntz), and the expression cloning vector described by Genetics Institute (Science Vol. 228:810-815, 1985), are available which provide substantial assurance of at least some expression of the protein of interest in the transformed mammalian cell.

[0079] Particularly preferred are vectors which contain regulatory elements that can be linked to the inventive PTTG-encoding DNAs, such as a PTTG-C-encoding DNA segment, for transfection of mammalian cells. Examples are cytomegalovirus (CMV) promoter-based vectors such as pCMV (Invitrogen, San Diego, Calif.), MMTV promoter-based vectors such as pMAMNeo (Clontech, Palo Alto, Calif.) and pMSG (Pharmacia, Piscataway, N.J.), and SV40 promoter-based vectors such as pSV2 (Clontech, Palo Alto, Calif.).


[0081] In addition, vectors may contain appropriate packaging signals that enable the vector to be packaged by a number of viral virions, e.g., retroviruses, herpes viruses, adenoviruses, resulting in the formation of a "viral vector."

[0082] "Virus", as used herein, means any virus, or transfecting fragment thereof, which can facilitate the delivery of the polynucleotide into mammalian cells. Examples of virions which are suitable for use herein are adenoviruses, adeno-associated viruses, retroviruses such as human immune-deficiency virus, lentiviruses, mumps virus, and transfecting fragments of any of these viruses, and other viral DNA segments that facilitate the uptake of the desired DNA segment by, and release into, the cytoplasm of germ cells and mixtures thereof. A preferred viral vector is Moloney murine leukemia virus and the retrovirus vector derived from Moloney murine leukemia virus which is a preferred viral vector. A most preferred viral vector is a pseudotypy (SV9-G) lentiviral vector derived from the HIV virus. Naldini et al. [1996]). Also, the mumps virus is particularly suited because of its affinity for immature sperm cells including spermatogenesis. All of the above viruses may require modification to render them non-pathogenic or less antigenic. Other known viral vector systems, however, are also useful within the confines of the invention.

[0083] Viral based systems provide the advantage of being able to introduce relatively high levels of the heterologous nucleic acid into a variety of cells. Suitable viral vectors for
introducing inventive PTTG-specific polynucleotides into mammalian cells (e.g., vascular tissue segments) are well known in the art. These viral vectors include, for example, Herpes simplex virus vectors (e.g., Geller et al., 1988, Science, 241:1667-1669), Vaccinia virus vectors (e.g., Piccinini et al., 1987, Meth. in Enzymology, 153:545-563; Cytomegalovirus vectors (Mocarski et al., in Viral Vectors, Y. Gluzman and S. H. Hughes, Eds., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., 1988, pp. 78-84), Moloney murine leukemia virus vectors (Danos et al., 1980, PNAS, USA, 85:6469), adenovirus vectors (e.g., Logan et al., 1984, PNAS, USA, 81:3655-3659; Jones et al., 1979, Cell, 17:683-689; Berkshire, 1988, Biotechniques, 6:616-626; Cotten et al., 1992, PNAS, USA, 89:6094-6098; Graham et al., 1991, Meth. Mol. Biol., 7:109-127), adenov-associated virus vectors, retrovirus vectors (see, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 4,405,712 and 4,650,764), and the like. Especially preferred viral vectors are the adenovirus and retroviral vectors.

[0084] As used herein, “retroviral vector” refers to the well-known gene transfer plasmids that have an expression cassette encoding an heterologous gene residing between two retroviral LTRs. Retroviral vectors typically contain appropriate packaging signals that enable the retroviral vector, or RNA transcribed using the retroviral vector as a template, to be packaged into a viral virion in an appropriate packaging cell line (see, e.g., U.S. Pat. No. 4,650,764). Retroviral vectors include lentiviral vectors, such as HIV-derived vectors.

[0085] Suitable retroviral vectors for use herein are described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,252,479, and in WIPO publications WO 92/05753, WO 90/06997, WO 89/05345, WO 92/05266 and WO 92/14829, incorporated herein by reference, which provide a description of methods for efficiently introducing nucleic acid into mammalian cells using such retroviral vectors. Other retroviral vectors include, for example, the mouse mammary tumor virus vectors (e.g., Shackleford et al., 1988, PNAS, USA, 85:9655-9659), and the like.

[0086] A most preferred embodiment employs a pseudotyped retroviral vector system, which was developed for gene therapy. (Naldini, L., et al., In vivo gene delivery and stable transduction of nondividing cells by a lentiviral vector, Science 272: 263-267 [1996]), and which is used to transduce mammalian cells. This gene delivery system employs retroviral particles generated by a three-plasmid expression system. In this system a packaging construct contains the human cytomegalovirus (hCMV) immediate early promoter, driving the expression of all viral proteins. The construct’s design eliminates the cis-acting sequences crucial for viral packaging, reverse transcription and integration of these transcripts. The second plasmid encodes a heterologous envelope protein (env), namely the G glycoprotein of the vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV-G). The third plasmid, the transducing vector (pHR), contains cis-acting sequences of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) required for packaging, reverse transcription and integration, as well as unique restriction sites for cloning heterologous complementary DNAs (cDNAs). For example, a genetic selection marker, such as green fluorescent protein (GFP), enhanced green fluorescent protein (EGFP), blue fluorescent protein, yellow fluorescent protein, β-galactosidase, and/or a gene encoding another preselected product is cloned downstream of the hCMV promoter in the HR’ vector, and is operatively linked so as to form a transcriptional unit. A VSV-G pseudotyped retroviral vector system is capable of infecting a wide variety of cells including cells from different species and of integrating into the genome. Some retrovirus vectors, i.e., lentiviruses, such as HIV, have the ability to infect non-dividing cells. Lentiviruses have a limited capacity for heterologous DNA sequences, the size limit for this vector being 7-7.5 kilobases (Verma, I. M. and Sonnia. N., Gene Therapy—promises, problems and prospects, Nature 389:239-242 [1997]). In vivo experiments with lentiviruses show that expression does not shut off like other retroviral vectors and that in vivo expression in brain, muscle, liver or pancreatic-islet cells, is sustained at least for over six months—the longest time tested so far (Verma and Sonnia [1997]; Anderson, W.F., Human Gene Therapy, Nature [Suppl. 392:25-30 [1998]).

[0087] “Gene delivery (or transfection) mixture”, in the context of this patent, means a selected PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide, whether in sense or anti-sense orientation, together with an appropriate vector mixed, for example, with an effective amount of uptake-enhancing agent as described above. (e.g., Clark et al., Polycations and cationic lipids enhance adenovirus transduction and transgene expression in tumor cells, Cancer Gene Ther. 6(5):437-46 [1999]). For example, the efficiency of adenoviral-, retroviral-, or lentiviral-mediated transduction is enhanced significantly by including a cationic lipid, such as polybrene during the infection.

[0088] In peptide-based embodiments of the inventive method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, involves delivering an inventive composition comprising a PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide, which is interchangeably designated herein “PTTG-C” or “PTTG C-terminal peptide”.

[0089] The terms “protein”, “peptide”, and “polypeptide” are used interchangeably herein. As used herein, the phrase “PTTG” refers to protein member of a mammalian family of PTG proteins, formerly also known as “pituitary-tumor-specific-gene” (PTSG) proteins, that are able to transform mammalian cells in tissue culture (e.g., NIH 3T3 and the like).

[0090] In vivo, PTG proteins are further characterized by having the ability to induce tumor formation, for example, in nude mice (e.g., when transfected into NIH 3T3 and the like). PTG proteins include naturally occurring allelic variants thereof encoded by mRNA generated by alternative splicing of a primary transcript, and further include fragments thereof which retain at least one native biological activity.

[0091] The term “biologically active” or “functional”, when used herein as a modifier of inventive PTTG protein(s), peptide(s), or fragments thereof, refers to a polypeptide that exhibits at least one of the functional characteristics attributed to PTTG. For example, one biological activity of PTG is the ability to transform cells in vitro (e.g., NIH 3T3 and the like). Yet another biological activity of PTG is the ability to induce neoplastic cellular proliferation (e.g., tumorigenesis) in nude mice (e.g., when transfected into NIH 3T3 cells and the like).
On the other hand, the inventive PTTG-C peptide, as distinct from the full length native PTTG protein, has the biological activity of inhibiting PTTG-mediated tumorigenesis in a dominant negative manner. "Dominant negative" is commonly used to describe a gene or protein which has a dominant effect similar to that described genetically, i.e. one copy of the gene gives a mutant phenotypic effect, and a negative effect in that it prevents or has a negative impact on a biological process such as a signal transduction pathway. Thus, PTTG carboxy-terminal peptides have the ability to downregulate intracellular PTTG expression and/or endogenous PTTG function. The inventive method is not limited to any particular biochemical, genetic, and/or physiological mechanism(s) by which a PTTG-C peptide exerts its biological activity on PTTG expression and/or PTTG function, and any or all such mechanism(s) can contribute to the biological activity of PTTG-C, in accordance with the invention.

Another biological activity of PTTG or PTTG-C peptides is the ability to act as an immunogen for the production of polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies that bind specifically to PTTG and/or PTTG-C. Thus, an inventive nucleic acid encoding PTTG or PTTG-C will encode a polypeptide specifically recognized by an antibody that also specifically recognizes a PTTG protein as described herein. Such activity may be assayed by any method known to those of skill in the art. For example, a test-polypeptide encoded by a PTTG cDNA can be used to produce antibodies, which are then assayed for their ability to bind to the protein. If the antibody binds to the test-polypeptide and the protein with substantially the same affinity, then the polypeptide possesses the requisite biological activity with respect to immunogenicity.

In the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of a mammalian cell, whether in vitro or in vivo, useful PTTG-C peptides encompass also any fragment of a larger PTTG-C molecule, which fragment retains PTTG-C biological activity with respect to downregulating endogenous PTTG expression and/or endogenous PTTG function. Useful PTTG-C peptides are preferably, but not exclusively, about 15 to about 60 contiguous amino acid residues long and comprise one or more proline-rich regions, which are peptide segments having a PXXP motif, where the Xs between the proline (P) residues represent any amino acid residue, including proline. The proline-rich region(s) of the PTTG-C peptide is a potential SH3-binding site.

Most preferably, the PTTG-C peptide is derived from a human PTTG, also designated hPTTG or PTTG1 protein. The native human PTTG1 protein is 202 amino acids long, having the following amino acid sequence (Table 7 below; encoded by nucleotide positions 95 through 700 of human PTTG1 sequence SEQ.ID.NO.:3 and degenerate sequences).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTTG1 amino acid sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are at least two proline-rich regions between amino acid residues 163-173 of SEQ.ID.NO.:4, which correspond to amino acid residues 17 through 27 of SEQ.ID.NO.:9, encoded by nucleotides 49 through 81 of SEQ.ID.NO.:10 and degenerate sequences. Proline-rich regions are found at amino acid residues 163-167 and 170-173 of SEQ.ID.NO.:4, corresponding to amino acid residues 17-20 and 24-27 of SEQ.ID.NO.:9. Other useful smaller peptide fragments of SEQ.ID.NO.:9 are tested by routine means for their effectiveness in inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation of a cell.

Another example of a PTTG protein is a rat PTTG having the following amino acid sequence (Table 8 below; encoded by nucleotide positions 293-889 of SEQ.ID.NO.:1 and degenerate sequences).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human PTTG-C amino acid sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLLDREEREK KLPLGGPPGP VMPSPSWES NLQGSSSIL STLWLPFVCDI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rat PTTG amino acid sequence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Met Ala Thr Leu Ile Phe Val Asp Lys Asp Asn Glu Glu Pro Gly Ser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arg Leu Ala Ser Lys Asp Gly Leu Lys Leu Gly Ser Gly Val Lys Ala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leu Asp Gly Lys Leu Gin Val Ser Thr Pro Arg Val Gly Lys Val Phe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gly Ala Pro Gly Leu Pro Lys Ala Ser Arg Lys Ala Leu Gly Thr Val</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asn Arg Val Thr Glu Lys Pro Val Lys Ser Ser Lys Pro Leu Gin Ser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lys Gin Pro Thr Leu Ser Val Lys Lys Ile Thr Glu Lys Ser Thr Lys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thr Gin Gly Ser Ala Pro Ala Pro Asp Ala Pro Leu Gin Ile Glu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lys Phe Phe Pro Phe Asp Pro Leu Asp Phe Glu Ser Phe Asp Leu Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glu Gin His Gin Ile Ser Leu Pro Leu Asn Gin Val Pro Leu Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile Leu Asn Gin Glu Arg Gly Leu Glu Leu Leu His Leu Asp Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Ser Pro Leu Gin Lys Pro Phe Leu Pro Trp Glu Ser Asp Pro Leu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Ser Pro Pro Ser Ala Ser Ser Ala Leu Asp Val Glu Leu Pro Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val Cys Tyr Asp Ala Asp Ile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0100] A rat PTTG-C peptide includes amino acid residues 144 through 199 of SEQ. ID. NO.:2, i.e., SEQ. ID. NO.:16 (Table 10 below; encoded by nucleotide positions 722 through 889 of SEQ. ID. NO.:1 or 1-168 of SEQ. ID. NO.:18 and degenerate sequences).

### Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rat PTTG-C amino sequence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Met Ile Leu Asn Gin Glu Arg Gly Leu Glu Lys Leu Leu His Leu Asp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Pro Ser Pro Leu Gin Lys Pro Phe Leu Pro Trp Glu Ser Asp Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leu Pro Ser Pro Pro Ser Ala Leu Ser Ala Leu Asp Val Glu Leu Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Val Cys Tyr Asp Ala Asp Ile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0101] The amino acid sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.:16 includes proline-rich regions at amino acid residues 17-20, 24-27, and 34-37 (corresponding to amino acid residues 160-163, 167-170, and 177-180 of SEQ. ID. NO.:2).

[0102] Another example of a PTTG protein is a murine PTTG having the following amino acid sequence (Table 11 below; encoded by nucleotide positions 304 through 891 of SEQ. ID. NO.:15 and degenerate sequences).

### Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murine PTTG amino acid sequence.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51PAPVPA6RKLGTGVRVEKMKDQGPQPQLPGTCTQKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101VPAPCDAFIEKFPFPNSLLJQISLVLHNVPLTLHNLH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151KLLHIGPSPXPLKPLSSDQLYSPPSALSTILOLYPCYC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[0103] A murine PTTG-C peptide includes amino acid residues 141 through 196 of SEQ. ID. NO.:14, i.e., SEQ. ID. NO.:17 (Table 12 below; encoded by nucleotide positions 724 through 891 of SEQ. ID. NO.:15 or 1-168 of SEQ. ID. NO.:19 and degenerate sequences).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murine PTTG-C amino acid sequence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITLNEERGLE KLLMLGPPSP LKTPFLSWES DPLYSPPSAL STLDVELPPV CYDADI. 56 (SEQ. ID. NO.:17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[0104] The amino acid sequence of SEQ. ID. NO.:17 includes a proline-rich region at amino acid residues 17-20 (corresponding to amino acid residues 157-160 of SEQ. ID. NO.:14).

[0105] Preferred PTTG-C peptides include:

- **[0106]** (A) peptides having an amino acid sequence of (SEQ. ID. NO.:9), (SEQ. ID. NO.:16), or (SEQ. ID. NO.:17); or
- **[0107]** (B) mammalian PTTG-C peptides having at least 60% sequence homology with any of the sequences in (A); or
- **[0108]** (C) peptide fragments of any of the sequences in (A) or (B) that comprise at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues and that function to downregulate endogenous PTTG expression and/or PTTG function. Most preferably, the fragment of (C) includes one or more proline-rich regions.

[0109] Those of skill in the art will recognize that in other useful PTTG-C peptides numerous residues of any of the above-described PTTG or PTTG-C amino acid sequences can be substituted with other, chemically, sterically and/or electronically similar residues without substantially altering PTTG or PTTG-C biological activity. In addition, larger polypeptide sequences containing substantially the same amino acid sequences in SEQ ID NO.:2, SEQ. ID. NO.:4, SEQ. ID. NO.:9, SEQ. ID. NO.:14, SEQ. ID. NO.:16, or SEQ. ID. NO.:17 (e.g., splice variants) are contemplated.

[0110] As employed herein, the term "substantially the same amino acid sequence" refers to amino acid sequences having at least 60% sequence homology or identity with respect to any of the amino acid sequences described herein ("reference sequences"), and retaining comparable functional and biological activity characteristic of the protein defined by the reference sequences described, particularly with respect to neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation or its inhibition. More preferably, proteins having "substantially the same amino acid sequence" will have at least about 80%, still more preferably about 90% amino acid identity with respect to a reference amino acid sequence; with greater than about 95% amino acid sequence identity being especially preferred. It is recognized, however, that polypeptide containing less than the described levels of sequence identity arising as splice variants or that are modified by conservative amino acid substitutions are also encompassed within the scope of the present invention. The degree of sequence homology is determined by conducting an amino acid sequence similarity search of a protein data base, such as the database of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/BLAST/), using a computerized algorithm, such as PowerBLAST, QBLAST, PSI-BLAST, PHI-BLAST, or the "Align" program through the Baylor College of Medicine server (www.hg-

[0111] Also encompassed by the terms PTTG protein or PTTG-C peptide, respectively, are biologically functional or active peptide analogs thereof. The term peptide "analog" includes any polypeptide having an amino acid residue sequence substantially identical to a sequence specifically shown herein in which one or more residues have been conservatively substituted with a functionally similar residue and which displays the ability to mimic the biological activity of PTTG or PTTG-C, respectively, particularly with respect to neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation or its inhibition as described herein above. Examples of conservative substitutions include the substitution of one non-polar (hydrophobic) residue such as isoleucine, valine, leucine or methionine for another, the substitution of one polar (hydrophilic) residue for another such as between arginine and lysine, between glutamine and asparagine, between glycine and serine, the substitution of one basic residue such as lysine, arginine or histidine for another, or the substitution of one acidic residue, such as aspartic acid or glutamic acid for another.

[0112] The phrase “conservative substitution” also includes the use of a chemically derivatized residue in place of a non-derivatized residue, provided that such polypeptide displays the requisite biological activity.

[0113] “Chemical derivative” refers to a subject polypeptide having one or more residues chemically derivatized by reaction of a functional side group. Such derivatized molecules include, for example, those molecules in which free amino groups have been derivatized to form amine hydrochlorides, p-toluene sulfonyl groups, carbobenxox groups, t-butyloxycarbonyl groups, chloroacetyl groups or formyl groups. Free carboxyl groups may be derivatized to form salts, methyl and ethyl esters or other types of esters or hydrizides. Free hydroxyl groups may be derivatized to form O-acyl or O-alkyl derivatives. The imidazole nitrogen of histidine may be derivatized to form N-im-benzylhistidine. Also included as chemical derivatives are those peptides which contain one or more naturally occurring amino acid derivatives of the twenty standard amino acids. For example, 4-hydroxyproline may be substituted for proline;
5-hydroxylysine may be substituted for lysine; 3-methylhistidine may be substituted for histidine; homoserine may be substituted for serine; and ornithine may be substituted for lysine. The inventive polypeptide of the present invention also include any polypeptide having one or more additions and/or deletions of residues, relative to the sequence of a polypeptide whose sequence is shown herein, so long as the requisite PTTG or PTTG-C biological activity is maintained.

0114] In accordance with peptide-based embodiments of the inventive method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation, the composition comprising the PTTG-C peptide is delivered to the cell. A suitable amount of the inventive PTTG-C peptide to be delivered to the cells, in accordance with the method, preferably ranges from about 0.1 nanograms to about 1 milligram per gram of tumor tissue, in vivo, or about 0.1 nanograms to about 1 microgram per 5000 cells, in vitro. Suitable amounts for particular varieties of PTTG-C peptide and/or cell types and/or for various individual mammalian subjects undergoing treatment, can be determined by routine experimentation.

0115] Methods of delivering and importing peptides into target cells are known. For example, the composition preferably, but not necessarily, comprises in addition to the PTTG-C peptide, a complex in which the PTTG-C peptide is complexed with a cellular uptake-enhancing agent. For example, the PTTG-C peptide can be covalently linked in a complex to a cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment for delivery of PTTG-C into the mammalian cell; in addition, a nuclear localization peptide can be included in the complex to direct the PTTG-C to the nucleus. (E.g., Lin et al., Method for importing biologically active molecules into cell, U.S. Pat. No. 6,045,339). An “importation-competent peptide,” as used herein, is a sequence of amino acids generally of a length of about 10 to about 50 or more amino acid residues, many (typically about 55-60%) residues of which are hydrophobic such that they have a hydrophobic, lipid-soluble portion. The hydrophobic portion is a common, major motif of a signal peptide, and it is often recognizable as a central part of the signal peptide of a protein secreted from cells. A signal peptide is a peptide capable of penetrating through the cell membrane to allow the export of cellular proteins. Signal peptides useful in the present method are also “importation-competent,” i.e., capable of penetrating through the cell membrane from outside the cell to the interior of the cell.

0116] In a preferred embodiment, a PTTG-C peptide forms a first PTTG-C peptide segment of a chimeric or fusion protein. The chimeric or fusion protein comprises at least the first PTTG-C peptide segment and a second cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment. The second segment of the chimeric or fusion protein is a cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment, such as a signal peptide, that allows the hybrid molecule to enter neoplastic cells that overexpress PTTG, whether in vitro or in vivo. The second peptide segment, such as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) TAR protein (Schwarz, S. R., et al., In vivo protein transduction: delivery of a biologically active protein into the mouse, Science 285:1569-72[1999]), infiltrates the cells, and once within the cells, the PTTG-C peptide segment of the fusion protein becomes active within the cells to inhibit endogenous PTTG expression and/or PTTG function. Another example of a useful uptake-enhancing peptide segment is the signal peptide from Kaposi fibrolast growth factor (K-FGF). But any cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment, capable of translocating across the cell membrane into the interior of the selected target mammalian cell, can be used according to this invention. The chimeric or fusion protein can also include additional segments, such as a linker segment, that can be an intervening segment between the first and second segments. The additional segment can alternatively be a terminal segment, as appropriate.

0117] In embodiments of the method involving the use of PTTG-C chimeric or fusion proteins, the cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptide segment can be the uptake-enhancing agent. Alternatively, or in addition, the cellular uptake-enhancing agent can be a lipid or liposome uptake-enhancing agent as described herein above, such as lipofectin, lipofectamine, DOTAP, and others.

0118] With respect to delivery of the composition to mammalian cells in vivo, the composition is administered to a mammalian subject in need of treatment, including a human subject, by any conventional delivery route. Preferably, the PTTG-C peptide, whether or not complexed with cellular uptake-enhancing and/or importation-competent peptides (e.g., signal or localization peptides), is injected intravenously, intravenously, intraperitoneally, or by means of injection directly into a tumor or into a cell by microinjection. Conventional stereotactic methods can be useful for direct injection into tumors or cells. In other preferred embodiments, controlled release formulations of biodegradable polymeric microspheres or nanospheres (e.g., polylactic-co-glycolide; PLGA) encapsulating the PTTG-C peptide, or PTTG-C chimeric or fusion protein are administered to the mammalian subject orally. (E.g., Zhu, G. et al., Stabilization of proteins encapsulated in injectable poly(lactic-co-glycolide), Nature Biotechnology 18:52-57 [2000]). Administration by nasal, rectal, or vaginal delivery routes can also be useful. Administration by catheter or stent can also be useful for delivering the PTTG-C peptide.

0119] In some embodiments, isolated and crystallized PTTG-C peptide can be cross-linked with a multifunctional crosslinking agent that inhibits proteolysis of the PTTG-C peptide in vivo. (Navia, M. A., Method of protein therapy by orally administering crosslinked protein crystals, U.S. Pat. No. 6,011,001).

0120] In accordance with the inventive method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation that is mediated by PTTG, the mammalian cell is a cell that overexpresses PTTG, the gene that encodes a PTTG protein.
Although detecting PTTG overexpression by the cell is not essential or necessary to the practice of the inventive method, the level of PTTG expression, including overexpression, is detectable by one skilled in the art. Detection of PTTG expression is accomplished by immunochemical assay for PTTG protein, for example, using the inventive anti-PTTG-C antibodies, described herein, or other anti-PTTG-specific antibodies. Alternatively, amplification of PTTG-specific mRNAs present in biological samples (e.g., tissue biopsy) can be used to detect PTTG expression. This is done by known molecular biological techniques of amplification and analysis of the amplification products for the presence or absence of PTTG-specific amplification products. If PTTG gene-specific amplification products are present, the findings are indicative of expression of the PTTG gene and diagnostic of the presence of neoplastic cellular proliferation in the subject as defined herein.

0121] However, for interpretation of negatives (no PTTG-specific amplification products) analysis is preferably carried out following a control amplification of nucleic acids specific for a housekeeping gene, for example, a gene encoding β-actin, phosphofructokinase (PFK), glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase, or phosphoglycerate kinase. Only if expression of the housekeeping gene is detected in the sample, is the absence of PTTG gene expression reliably accepted. With increasing sensitivity of amplification and analysis methods employed, it becomes increasingly preferable to determine the level of PTTG gene expression relative to expression of a housekeeping gene, in order to better distinguish neoplastic, hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic and/or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation from the detectable background of normal cellular division. The ratio of PTTG expression to housekeeping gene expression is determined, for example, by real-time PCR methods or densitometric measurement and analysis of electrophoretic bands after amplification. When the ratio of PTTG expression to housekeeping gene expression exceeds a normal cell standard range and/or approximates an abnormal (e.g., neoplastic) cell standard range, this indicates overexpression of PTTG gene product, characteristic of neoplastic, hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic and/or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation.

0122] PTTG-specific mRNAs in a biological sample are amplified by a suitable amplification method. For example, a reverse transcriptase-mediated polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is employed to amplify PTTG-specific nucleic acids. Briefly, two enzymes are used in the amplification process, a reverse transcriptase to transcribe PTTG-specific cDNA from a PTTG-specific mRNA template in the sample, a thermal resistant DNA polymerase (e.g., Taq polymerase), and PTTG-specific primers to amplify the cDNA to produce PTTG gene specific amplification products. The use of limited cycle PCR yields semi-quantitative results. (E.g., Gelfand et al., Reverse transcription with thermostable DNA polymerase-high temperature reverse transcription, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,310,652; 5,322,770; Gelfand et al., Unconventional nucleotide substitution in temperature selective RT-PCR, U.S. Pat. No. 5,618,703).

0123] Alternatively, single enzyme RT-PCR is employed to amplify PTTG gene-specific nucleic acids. Single enzymes now exist to perform both reverse transcription and polymerase functions, in a single reaction. For example, the Perkin Elmer recombinant Thermus thermophilus (rTth) enzyme (Roche Molecular), or other similar enzymes, are commercially available.

0124] Real-time RT-PCR can be employed to amplify PTTG-specific nucleic acids. Briefly, this is a quantitative gene analysis based on the ratio of PTTG gene expression and the expression of a housekeeping gene, i.e., a gene that is expressed at about the same level in normal and abnormal (e.g., malignant) cells, for example, a gene encoding β-actin, phosphofructokinase, glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase, or phosphoglycerate kinase. The the ratio of the PTTG and housekeeping genes’ expressions is routinely established as a standard for normal and abnormal cells, which standard expression ratio(s) is (are) used for comparison in determining that expression of the PTTG gene relative to expression of the “housekeeping” gene in a given sample is either “normal” or “increased”, the latter indicative of “overexpression” and diagnostic for the presence of neoplastic, hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic and/or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation. In this embodiment, the ratio is the key to diagnosis and constitutes quantitative gene expression analysis. This embodiment utilizes so-called real-time quantitative PCR, carried out with commercially available instruments, such as the Perkin Elmer ABI Prism 7700, the so-called Light Cycler (Roche Molecular), and/or other similar instruments. Optionally, single enzyme RT-PCR technology, for example, employing rTth enzyme, can be used in a real-time PCR system. Preferably, amplification and analysis are carried out in an automated fashion, with automated extraction of mRNA from a urine sediment sample, followed by real-time PCR, and fluorescence detection of amplification products using probes, such as TaqMan or Molecular Beacon probes. Typically, the instrumentation includes software that provides quantitative analytical results during or directly following PCR without further amplification or analytical steps.

0125] Alternatively, transcription-mediated amplification (TMA) is employed to amplify PTTG gene-specific nucleic acids. (E.g., K. Kamisango et al., Quantitative detection of hepatitis B virus by transcription-mediated amplification and hybridization protection assay, J. Clin. Microbiol. 37(2):310-14 [1999]; M. Hirose et al., New method to measure telomerase activity by transcription-mediated amplification and hybridization protection assay, Clin. Chem. 44(12):2446-52 [1998].) Rather than employing RT-PCR for the amplification of a cDNA, TMA uses a probe that recognizes a PTTG-specific (target sequence) RNA, in subsequent steps, from a promoter sequence built into the probe, an RNA polymerase repeatedly transcribes a cDNA intermediate, in effect amplifying the original RNA transcripts and any new copies created, for a level of sensitivity approaching that of RT-PCR. The reaction takes place isothermally (one temperature), rather than cycling through different temperatures as in PCR.

0126] Other useful amplification methods include a reverse transcriptase-mediated ligase chain reaction (RT-ICR), which has utility similar to RT-PCR. RT-ICR relies on reverse transcriptase to generate cDNA from mRNA, then DNA ligase to join adjacent oligonucleotides after they have bound the target cDNA.
Amplification of a PTTG gene-specific nucleic acid segment of the subject can be achieved using PTTG gene-specific oligonucleotide primers and primer sets as provided herein.

Optionally, high throughput analysis may be achieved by PCR multiplexing techniques well known in the art, employing multiple primer sets, for example primers directed not only to PTTG gene-specific nucleic acids, but to amplifying expression products of housekeeping genes (controls) or of other potential diagnostic markers (e.g., oncogenes), as well, such as MAG or telomerase, to yield additional diagnostic information. (E.g., Z. Lin et al., Multiplex genotyp...USA 93(6):2582-87 [1996]; Demetriou et al., Method and probe for detection of gene associated with liver neoplastic disease, U.S. Pat. No. 5,866,329).

Hybridization analysis is a preferred method of analyzing the amplification products, employing one or more PTTG-specific probe(s) that, under suitable conditions of stringency, hybridize(s) with single stranded PTTG-specific nucleic acid amplification products comprising complementary nucleotide sequences. Hybridization refers to the binding of complementary strands of nucleic acid (i.e., sense/antisense strands or probe-target-DNA) to each other through hydrogen bonds, similar to the bonds that naturally occur in chromosomal DNA. The amplification products are typically deposited on a substrate, such as a cellulose or nitrocellulose membrane, and then hybridized with labeled PTTG-specific probe(s), optionally after an electrophoresis. Conventional dot blot, Southern, Northern, or fluorescence in situ (FISH) hybridization protocols, in liquid hybridization, hybridization protection assays, or other semi-quantitative or quantitative hybridization analysis methods are usefully employed along with the PTTG gene-specific probes of the present invention. Preferred probe-based hybridization conditions comprise a temperature of about 37°C, a formamide concentration of about 20%, and a salt concentration of about 5 standard saline citrate (SSC; 20×SSC contains 3 M sodium chloride, 0.3 M sodium citrate, pH 7.0). Such conditions will allow the identification of sequences which have a substantial degree of similarity with the probe sequence, without requiring perfect homology. The phrase “substantial similarity” refers to sequences which share at least 50% homology. Stringency levels used to hybridize a given probe with target-DNA can be readily varied by those of skill in the art. Preferably, hybridization conditions will be selected which allow the identification of sequences having at least about 60% homology with the probe, while discriminating against sequences which have a lower degree of homology with the probe.

As used herein, a “probe” is single-stranded DNA or RNA, or a nucleic acid analog. The inventive probe is preferably 7 to 500 nucleotides long, more preferably 14 to 150 nucleotides long, and most preferably at least 50 nucleotides long. The probe comprises, for at least part of its length, a PTTG-specific nucleotide sequence at least 7 to 15 contiguous nucleotides long, such that the probe hybridizes to a PTTG-specific single stranded nucleic acid under suitably stringent hybridization conditions. Examples of PTTG-specific nucleotide sequences are set forth in any of SEQ. ID. NOS.: 1, 3, 10, 15, 18, or 19, preferably, but not necessarily, including 5′ and/or 3′ coding regions thereof in addition, the entire cDNA encoding region of an inventive PTTG-specific nucleotide sequence, or the entire sequence corresponding to SEQ. ID. NOS.: 1, 3, 10, 15, 18, or 19 nucleotide sequences complementary to any of these, can be used as a probe. For example, probes comprising inventive oligonucleotide primer sequences, such as, but not limited to, SEQ. ID. NO.8, can be labeled for use as probes for detecting or analyzing PTTG-specific nucleic acid amplification products. Any of the inventive isolated PTTG-C-related polynucleotides can be used as probes or primers.


As used herein, the terms “label”, “tracer”, and “indicating means” in their various grammatical forms refer to single atoms and molecules that are either directly or indirectly involved in the production of a detectable signal. Any label or indicating means can be linked to PTTG-specific probes, primers, or amplification products, or PTTG proteins, peptides, peptide fragments, or anti-PTTG antibody molecules. The label can be used alone or in conjunction with additional reagents. Such labels are themselves well-known in the art. The label can be a fluorescent labeling agent that chemically binds to antibodies or antigens without denaturation to form a fluorochrome (dye) that is a useful immunofluorescent tracer. A description of immunofluorescent analytic techniques is found in DeLuca, “Immunofluorescence Analysis”, in Antibody As a Tool, Marchalonis et al., eds., John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., pp. 189-231 (1982), which is incorporated herein by reference. Any of diverse fluorescent dyes can optionally be used as a label, including but not limited to, SYBR Green I, Y10-PRO-1, thiazole orange, Hex (i.e., 6-carboxy-2′,4′,7′-hexachlorofluorescein), pico green, edans, fluorescein, FAM (i.e., 6-carboxyfluorescein), or TET (i.e., 4′,7,2′,7′-tetrachloro-6-carboxyfluorescein) (E.g., J. Stedalsvold and P. M. Ueland, Analysis of double-stranded DNA by capillary electrophoresis with laser-induced fluorescence detection using the monomeric dye SYBR green I, Anal. Biochem. 231(20):359-65 [1995]."

**[0134]** The label can also be an enzyme, such as horseradish peroxidase (HRP), glucose oxidase, β-galactosidase, and the like. Alternatively, radionuclides are employed as labels. The linking of a label to a substrate, i.e., labeling of nucleic acid probes, antibodies, polypeptide, and proteins, is well known in the art. For instance, an invention antibody can be labeled by metabolic incorporation of radiolabeled amino acids provided in the culture medium. See, for example, Galfré et al., Meth. Enzymol., 73:3-46 (1981). Conventional means of protein conjugation or coupling by activated functional groups are particularly applicable. See, for example, Aurameas et al., Scand. J. Immunol., Vol. 8, Suppl. 7:7-23 (1978), Rodwell et al., Biotech., 3:889-894 (1984), and U.S. Pat. No. 4,493,795.

**[0135]** In accordance with yet another embodiment of the present invention, there are provided anti-PTTG antibodies having specific reactivity with PTTG polypeptides of the present invention. Antibody fragments, for example Fab, Fab', F(ab')2, or Fv fragments, that selectively or specifically bind a PTTG protein, PTTG-C peptide, or immunogenic fragment of PTTG-C, are also encompassed within the definition of “antibody”.

**[0136]** Inventive antibodies can be produced by methods known in the art using PTTG polypeptide, proteins or portions thereof, such as PTTG-C peptide or immunogenic fragments of PTTG-C, as antigens. For example, polyclonal and mononclonal antibodies can be produced by methods well known in the art, as described, for example, in Harlow and Lane, *Antibodies: A Laboratory Manual* (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory [1988]), which is incorporated herein by reference. Isolated or purified PTTG proteins, PTTG-C peptides, and immunogenic PTTG-C fragments can be used as immunogens in generating such specific antibodies.

**[0137]** PTTG proteins, PTTG-C peptides, or polypeptide analogs thereof, are purified or isolated by a variety of known biochemical means, including, for example, by the recombinant expression systems described herein, precipitation, gel filtration, ion-exchange, reverse-phase and affinity chromatography, and the like. Other well-known methods are described in Deutscher et al., *Guide to Protein Purification: Methods in Enzymology* Vol. 182, (Academic Press, [1990]), which is incorporated herein by reference. Isolated PTTG proteins or PTTG-C peptides are free of cellular components and/or contaminants normally associated with a native in vivo environment.

**[0138]** Isolated PTTG proteins or PTTG-C peptides can also be chemically synthesized. For example, synthetic polypeptide can be produced using Applied Biosystems, Inc. Model 430A or 431A automatic peptide synthesizer (Foster City, Calif.) employing the chemistry provided by the manufacturer. Alternatively, PTTG can be isolated or purified from native sources, and PTTG-C peptides can be isolated from PTTG (or from chimeric proteins) by the use of suitable proteases.

**[0139]** Alternatively, PTTG or PTTG-C polypeptides can be recombinantly derived, for example, produced by mammalian cells genetically modified to express PTTG-C-encoding polynucleotides in accordance with the inventive technology as described herein. Recombinant methods are well known, as described, for example, in Sambrook et al., supra., 1989). An example of the means for preparing the inventive PTTG or PTTG-C polypeptide(s) is to express nucleic acids encoding the PTTG protein or PTTG-C peptide in a suitable host cell, such as a bacterial cell, a yeast cell, an amphibian cell (i.e., oocyte), or a mammalian cell, such as the inventive mammalian host cell described herein below, using methods well known in the art, and recovering the expressed polypeptide, again using well-known methods.

**[0140]** The immunogenicity of various PTTG-C fragments of interest is determined by routine screening. Alternatively, synthetic PTTG or PTTG-C polypeptides or fragments thereof can be prepared (using commercially available synthesizers) and used as immunogens. Amino acid sequences can be analyzed by methods well known in the art to determine whether they encode hydrophobic or hydrophilic domains of the corresponding polypeptide. Altered antibodies such as chimeric, humancized, CDR-grafted or bifunctional antibodies can also be produced by methods well known in the art. Such antibodies can also be produced by hybridoma, chemical synthesis or recombinant methods described, for example, in Sambrook et al., supra., and Harlow and Lane, supra. Both anti-peptide and anti-fusion protein antibodies can be used. (see, for example, Bahouth et al., *Trends Pharmacol. Sci.* 12:338 [1991]; Ausbel et al., *Current Protocols in Molecular Biology* (John Wiley and Sons, NY [1989] which are incorporated herein by reference).

**[0141]** Antibody so produced can be used, inter alia, in diagnostic or assay methods and systems to detect the level of PTTG protein, PTTG-C peptide, or immunogenic fragments thereof, present in a mammalian, preferably human, biological sample, such as tissue or vascular fluid. This is useful, for example, in determining the level of PTTG expression. Such antibodies can also be used for the immunoaffinity or affinity chromatography purification of the inventive PTTG proteins or PTTG-C peptides. In addition, methods are contemplated herein for detecting the presence of PTTG protein or PTTG-C peptide, either on the surface of a cell or within a cell (such as within the nucleus), which methods comprise contacting the cell with an antibody that specifically binds to PTTG protein or PTTG-C peptide, under conditions permitting specific binding of the antibody to PTTG protein or PTTG-C peptide, detecting the presence of the antibody bound to PTTG or PTTG-C, and thereby detecting the presence of PTTG or PTTG-C polypeptide on the surface of, or within, the cell. With respect to the detection of such polypeptide, the antibodies can be used for in vitro diagnostic or assay methods, or in vivo imaging methods.

**[0142]** Immunological procedures useful for in vitro detection of target PTTG or PTTG-C polypeptides in a sample include immunoassays that employ a detectable antibody. Such immunoassays include, for example, ELISA, immunofluorescence assay (IFA), Pandex microfluorimetric assay, agglutination assays, flow cytometry, serum diagnostic assays and immunohistochemical staining procedures which are well known in the art. An antibody can be made detectable by various means well known in the art. For example, a detectable marker can be directly or indirectly
attached to the antibody. Useful markers include, for example, radionuclides, enzymes, fluorogens, chromogens and chemiluminescent labels.

Inventive anti-PPTG or anti-PPTG-C antibodies are also contemplated for use herein to modulate activity of the PTTG polypeptide in living animals, in humans, or in biological tissues or fluids isolated therefrom. Accordingly, compositions comprising a carrier and an amount of an antibody having specificity for PTTG polypeptide effective to block naturally occurring ligands or other PTTG-binding proteins from binding to invention PTTG polypeptide are contemplated herein. For example, a monoclonal antibody directed to an epitope of PTTG polypeptide molecules present on the surface of a cell and having an amino acid sequence substantially the same as an amino acid sequence for a cell surface epitope of a PTTG polypeptide including the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2, 4, 9, 14, 16, or 17 can be useful for this purpose.

The present invention also relates to transfected, transduced, or otherwise transformed mammalian host cells comprising any of the inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotide-containing compositions as described hereinabove. The inventive cells are either contained in a mammalian subject or are cultured in vitro. Included among preferred embodiments are mammalian host cells containing an expression vector comprising the inventive PTTG-C-related polynucleotide in a transcriptional unit. Preferably, a product is expressed by the cell, which product, most preferably, but not necessarily, is a biologically active PTTG-C peptide that functions to downregulate PTTG-mediated neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation. In vivo and in vivo methods of transfaction, transduction, or transforming suitable host cells are generally known in the art. Methods for culturing cells, in vitro, are also well known. Exemplary methods of transfection, transduction, or transformation include, e.g., infection employing viral vectors (see, e.g., U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,405,712 and 4,650,764), calcium phosphate transfection (U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,399,216 and 4,634,665), dextran sulfate transfection, electroproporation, lipofection (see, e.g., U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,394,448 and 4,619,794), cytofection, microparticle bombardment, and the like. The heterologous nucleic acid can optionally include sequences which allow for its extrachromosomal (i.e., plasmid) maintenance, or heterologous DNA can be caused to integrate into the genome of the host (as an alternative means to ensure stable maintenance in the host cell).

The present invention further provides transgenic non-human mammals containing the inventive mammalian cells that are capable of expressing exogenous nucleic acids encoding PTTG polypeptides, particularly the inventive PTTG-C peptides and functional fragments thereof as described hereinabove. As employed herein, the phrase “exogenous nucleic acid” refers to nucleic acid sequence which is not native to the host, or which is present in the host in other than its native environment (e.g., as part of a genetically engineered DNA construct). Methods of producing transgenic non-human mammals are known in the art. Typically, the pronuclei of fertilized eggs are microinjected in vitro with foreign, i.e., xenogenic or allelogeneic DNA or hybrid DNA molecules, and the microinjected fertilized eggs are then transferred to the genital tract of a pseudopregnant female to gestate to term. (E.g., P. J. A. Krimpenfort et al., Transgenic mice depleted in mature T-cells and methods for making transgenic mice, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,175,384 and 5,434,340; P. J. A. Krimpenfort et al., Transgenic mice depleted in mature lymphocytic cell-type, U.S. Pat. No. 5,391,669). Alternatively, methods for producing transgenic non-human mammals can involve genetic modification of female or male germ cells using an expression vector, which germ cells are then used to produce zygotes, which are gestated to term. The resulting offspring are selected for the desired phenotype. These offspring can further be bred or cloned to produce additional generations of transgenic animals with the desired phenotype. The inventive transgenic non-human mammals, preferably, but not necessarily, are large animals such as bovines, ovines, porcines, equines, and the like, that produce relatively large quantities of PTTG-C peptides that can be harvested for use in practicing the method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation.


Techniques for obtaining the preferred transgenic female mammals typically employ transfection with an expression vector in which, within a transcriptional unit regulated, for example, by a suitable β-lactoglobulin promoter, the PTTG-C peptide-encoding polynucleotide is chemically linked with a polynucleotide encoding a mammary secretory signal peptide, such that mammary-specific expression yields a chimeric polypeptide from which the desired PTTG-C peptide segment is removed proteolytically and purified.

The present invention is also directed to a kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation. The kit is useful for practicing the inventive method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation and/or transformation. The kit is an assemblage of materials or components, including at least one of the inventive compositions containing a PTTG-C-related polynucleotide and/or PTTG-C peptides, as described above. The exact nature of the components configured in the inventive kit depends on its intended purpose. For example, some embodiments of the kit are configured for the purpose of treating cultured mammalian cells. Other embodiments are configured for the purpose of treating mammalian cells in vivo, i.e., for treating mammalian subjects in need of treatment, for example, subjects with malignant tumors. In a most preferred embodiment, the kit is configured particularly for the purpose of treating human subjects.
Instructions for use are also included in the kit. “Instructions for use” typically include a tangible expression describing the reagent concentration or at least one assay method parameter, such as the relative amounts of reagent and sample to be admixed, maintenance time periods for reagent/sample admixtures, temperature, buffer conditions, and the like, typically for an intended purpose.

Optionally, the kit also contains other useful components, such as, diluents, buffers, pharmaceutically acceptable carriers, specimen containers, syringes, stents, catheters, pipetting or measuring tools, paraphernalia for concentrating, sedimenting, or fractionating samples, or the inventive antibodies, and/or primers and/or probes for controls.

The materials or components assembled in the kit can be provided to the practitioner stored in any convenient and suitable ways that preserve their operability and utility. For example the components can be in dissolved, dehydrated, or lyophilized form; they can be provided at room, refrigerated or frozen temperatures.

The packaging material(s) used herein, the phrase “packaging material” refers to one or more physical structures used to house the contents of the kit, such as invention nucleic acid probes or primers, and the like. The packaging material is constructed by well known methods, preferably to provide a sterile, contaminant-free environment.

The packaging materials employed in the kit are those customarily utilized in polynucleotide-based or polypeptide-based systems. As used herein, the term “package” refers to a solid matrix or material such as glass, plastic, paper, coil, and the like, capable of holding the individual kit components. Thus, for example, a package can be a glass vial used to contain suitable quantities of an inventive composition containing nucleic acid or peptide components. The packaging material generally has an external label which indicates the contents and/or purpose of the kit and/or its components.


EXAMPLES

Example 1
Isolation of PTTG cDNA

To clarify the molecular mechanisms involved in pituitary tumorigenesis, differential display PCR was used to identify mRNAs differentially expressed in pituitary tumor cells (see, e.g., Risinger et al., 1994, Molec. Carcinogenesis, 11:13-18; and Qu et al., 1996, Nature, 380:243-247). GC and Gh1 pituitary tumor cell lines (ATCC #CCL-82 and #CCL-82.1, respectively) and an osteogenic sarcoma cell line, UM108 (ATCC #CRL-1663) were grown in DMEM supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum. Normal Sprague-Dawley rat pituitaries were freshly excised. Total RNA was extracted from tissue cultured cells and pituitary tissue using RNeasy™ kit (Qiagen) according to manufacturer’s instructions. Trace DNA contamination in RNA preparations was removed by DNase1 (GenHunter Corporation) digestion. cDNA was synthesized from 200 ng total RNA using MMLV reverse transcriptase (GenHunter Corporation), and one of the three anchored primers (GenHunter Corporation). The cDNA generated was used in the PCR display.

Three downstream anchored primers AAGCT13N (SEQ. ID. NO.:13; where N may be A, G, or C), were used in conjunction with 40 upstream arbitrary primers for PCR display. 120 primer pairs were used to screen mRNA expression in pituitary tumors versus normal pituitary. One tenth of the cDNA generated from the reverse transcriptase reaction was amplified using AmpliTaq DNA polymerase (Perkin Elmer) in a total volume of 20 µl containing 10 mM Tris, pH 8, 4, 50 nM KCl, 1.5 mM MgCl2, 0.001% gelatin, 2 µM dNTPs, 0.2 µM each primer and 1 µl [32P]ATP. PCR cycles consisted of 30 seconds at 94°C, 2 minutes at 40°C, and 30 seconds at 72°C for 40 cycles. The products were separated on 6% sequencing gels, and dried gels were exposed to Kodak film for 24 to 48 hours.

After development, DNA fragments amplified from pituitary tumor and normal pituitary were compared. Bands unique to pituitary tumor were excised from the gel, and DNA extracted by boiling in 100 µl water and precipitated with ethanol in the presence of glycerol (GenHunter Corporation). DNA was reamplified using the original set of primers and the same thermal cycling conditions except that the dNTP concentration was increased to 20 µM. Reaction products were run on 1% agarose gel and stained with ethidium bromide. Bands were excised from the gel, eluted (Qiagen), cloned in to TA vectors (Invitrogen) and sequenced using primer (USB). Using 120 primer pairs in the above-described PCR assay, 11 DNA bands that appeared to be differentially expressed in pituitary tumor cells were identified. These bands were evaluated further by Northern blot analysis, using the PCR products as probes.

For Northern blot analysis, 20 µg of total RNA were fractionated on 1% agarose gel, blotted on to nylon membrane and hybridized with random primed probe using Quickhyb solutions (Stratagene). After washing, membranes were exposed to Kodak films for 6 to 72 hours. As a result of the Northern blot assay, pituitary tumor specific signals were detected for 2 bands. DNA sequence analysis revealed that one sequence was homologous with Insulin-induced growth response protein, while the other 396 base pair fragment (amplified using 5'-AAGCITTCTTTTTTGGT-3' [SEQ. ID. NO.:11] as the anchored primer and 5'-AAGCCTGCTCTC-3' [SEQ. ID. NO.:12] as an arbitrary primer) showed no homology to known sequences in the GenBank. This 396 bp fragment detected a highly expressed mRNA of about 1.3 kb in pituitary tumor cells, but not in normal pituitary nor in osteogenic sarcoma cells.
Example 2

Characterization of cDNA Sequence Encoding PTTG

[0159] To characterize this pituitary tumor-specific mRNA further, a cDNA library was constructed using mRNA isolated from rat pituitary tumor cells. Poly A+RNA was isolated from pituitary tumor GHI cells using messenger RNA isolation kit (Stratagene) according to manufacturer’s instructions, and was used to construct a cDNA library in ZAP Express vectors (Stratagene). The cDNA library was constructed using ZAP Express™ cDNA synthesis and Gigapack III gold cloning kit (Stratagene) following manufacturer’s instructions. The library was screened using the 396 bp differentially displayed PCR product (cloned into TA vector) as the probe. After tertiary screening, positive clones were excised by in vivo excision using helper phage. The resulting plasmid plasmid phagemid containing the insert was identified by Southern Blotting analysis. Unidirectional nested deletions were made into the DNA insert using EXOIII/Mung bean nuclease deletions kit (Stratagene) following manufacturer’s instructions. Both strands of the insert DNA were sequenced using Sequenase (USB).

[0160] Using the 396 bp PCR fragment described in Example 1 as a probe, a cDNA clone of 974 bp (SEQ ID NO.:1) was isolated and characterized. This cDNA was designated as pituitary tumor-specific gene (PTTG). The sequence of PTTG contains an open reading frame for 199 amino acids (SEQ ID NO.:2). The presence of an in-frame stop codon upstream of the predicted initiation codon indicates that PTTG contains the complete ORF. This was verified by demonstrating both in vitro transcription and in vitro translation of the gene product as described in Example 3.

Example 3

In vitro Transcription and Translation of the PTTG

[0161] Sense and antisense PTTG mRNAs were in vitro transcribed using T3 and T7 RNA polymerase (Stratagene), respectively. The excess template was removed by DNase I digestion. The in vitro transcribed mRNA was translated in rabbit reticulocyte lysate (Stratagene). Reactions were carried out at 30° C. for 60 minutes, in a total volume of 25 μl containing 3 μl in vitro transcribed RNA, 2 μl 35S-Methionine (Dupont) and 20 μl lysate. Translation products were analyzed by SDS-PAGE (15% resolving gel and 5% stacking gel), and exposed to Kodak film for 16 hours.

[0162] The results indicate that translation of in vitro transcribed PTTG sense mRNA results in a protein of approximately 25 KD on SDS-PAGE, whereas no protein was generated in either the reaction without added mRNA or when PTTG antisense mRNA was utilized.

Example 4

Northern Blot Analysis of PTTG mRNA Expression

[0163] A search of GenBank and a protein profile analysis (using a BLAST Program search of databases of the national center for Biotechnology Information) indicated that PTTG shares no homology with known sequences, and its encoded protein is highly hydrophilic, and contains no well recognized functional motifs. The tissue expression pattern of PTTG mRNA was studied by Northern Blot analysis. A rat multiple tissue Northern blot was purchased from Clontech. Approximately 2 μg of poly A+ RNA per lane from eight different rat tissues (hearts, brain, spleen, lung, liver, skeletal muscle, kidney, and testis) was ran on a denaturing formamide 1.2% agarose gel, transferred to nylon membrane and UV-cross linked. The membrane was first hybridized to the full length PTTG cDNA probe, and was stripped and rehybridized to a human B-actin cDNA control probe. Hybridization was performed at 60° C. for one hour in ExpressHyb hybridization solution (Clontech). Washing was twice 15 minutes at room temperature in 2xSCS, 0.05% SDS, and twice 15 minutes at 50° C. in 0.1% SSC, 0.1% SDS. Exposure time for PTTG probe was 24 hrs, and actin probe 2 hours.

[0164] The results of the Northern assay indicate that testis is the only tissue, other than pituitary tumor cells, that expresses PTTG mRNA, and the testis expression level is much lower (2 μg polyA+ mRNA, 24 hour exposure) than in pituitary tumor cells (20 μg total RNA, 6 hour exposure). Interestingly, the testicular transcript (about 1 Kb) is shorter than the transcript in pituitary tumors (1.3 Kb), indicating that the mRNA is differentially spliced in testis, and that the 1.3 Kb transcript is specific for pituitary tumor cells.

Example 5

Over-Expression of PTTG in NIH 3T3 Fibroblast Cells

[0165] Since PTTG mRNA is over-expressed in pituitary tumor cells, whether this protein exerts an effect on cell proliferation and transformation was determined. An eukaryotic expression vector containing the entire coding region of PTTG was stably transfected into NIH 3T3 fibroblasts.

[0166] The entire coding region of the PTTG was cloned in frame into pBK-CMV eukaryotic expression vector (Stratagene) and transfected into NIH 3T3 cells by calcium precipitation. 48 hrs after transfection, cells were diluted 1:10 and grown in selection medium containing 1 mg/ml G418 for two weeks in which individual clones were isolated. Cell extracts were prepared from each colony and separated on 15% SDS-polyacrylamide gels, and blotted onto nylon membrane. A polyclonal antibody was generated using the first 17 amino acids of PTTG as epitope (Research Genetics). The antibody was diluted 1:5000 and incubated with the above membrane at room temperature for 1 hour. After washing, the membrane was incubated with horseradish peroxidase-labeled secondary antibody for one hour at room temperature. The hybridization signal was detected by enhanced chemiluminescence (ECL detection system, Amersham).

[0167] Expression levels of the PTTG were monitored by immunoblot analysis using the above-described specific polyclonal antibody directed against the first 17 amino acids of the protein. Expression levels of individual clones varied, and clones that expressed higher protein levels were used for further analysis.
Effect of PTTG Expression on Cell Proliferation

A non-radioactive cell proliferation assay was used to determine the effect of PTTG protein over-expression on cell proliferation (see, e.g., Mosmann, T., 1983, J. Immunol. Meth., 65:55-63; and Carmichael et al., 1987, Cancer Res., 47:943-946). Cell proliferation was assayed using CellTiter 96TM Non-radioactive cell proliferation assay kit (Promega) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Five thousand cells were seeded in 96 well plates (6 wells for each clone in each assay), and incubated at 37°C for 24 to 72 hours. At each time point, 15 μl of the Dye solution were added to each well, and incubated at 37°C for 4 hours. One hundred μl of the solubilization/stop solution were then added to each well. After one hour incubation, the contents of the wells were mixed, and absorbance at 595 nm was recorded using an ELISA reader. Absorbance at 595 nm correlates directly with the number of cells in each well.

Three independent experiments were performed. The cell growth rate of 3T3 cells expressing PTTG protein (assayed by cellular conversion of tetrazolium into formazan) was suppressed 25 to 50% as compared with 3T3 cells expressing the pCMV vector alone, indicating that PTTG protein inhibits cell proliferation (data not shown).

PTTG Induction of Morphological Transformation and Soft-Agar Growth of NIH 3T3 Cells

The transforming property of PTTG protein was demonstrated by its ability to form foci in monolayer cultures and show anchorage-independent growth in soft agar (Table 1). As primary pituitary cells are an admixture of multiple cell types and they do not replicate in vitro, NIH 3T3 cells were employed. For the soft agar assay (Schwab et al., 1985, Nature, 316:160-162), 60 mM tissue culture plates were coated with 5 ml soft-agar (20% 2×DEEM, 50% DEEM, 10% fetal bovine serum, 20% 2.5% agar, melted and combined at 45°C). 2 ml cells suspended in medium were then combined with 4 ml agar mixture, and 1.5 ml of this mixture added to each plate. Cells were plated at a density of 10^5 cells/dish and incubated for 14 days before counting the number of colonies and photography. Only colonies consisting of at least 40 cells were counted. Values shown in Table 13 are mean±SEM of triplicates.

### TABLE 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell line</th>
<th>Growth in Soft Agar</th>
<th>Efficiency of Colony Formation in Soft Agar (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No DNA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vector only</td>
<td>3.5 ± 0.7</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 2</td>
<td>26 ± 4.6</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 4</td>
<td>132 ± 26</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 8</td>
<td>33 ± 6.0</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 9</td>
<td>72 ± 13</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 10</td>
<td>92 ± 18</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Efficiency of colony formation was calculated as percentage of number of colonies divided by total number of cells.

The results indicate that NIH 3T3 parental cells and 3T3 cells transfected with pCMV vector do not form colonies on soft agar, whereas 3T3 cells transfected with PTTG form large colonies. In addition, focal transformation is observed in cells over-expressing PTTG protein, but cells expressing pCMV vector without the PTTG insert showed similar morphology to the parental 3T3 cells.

### Example 8

Assay to Determine whether PTTG is Tumorigenic in vivo

To determine whether PTTG is tumorigenic in vivo, PTTG-transfected 3T3 cells were injected subcutaneously into athymic nude mice. 3x10^6 cells of either PTTG or pCMV vector-only transfected cells were resuspended in PBS and injected subcutaneously into nude mice (5 for each group). Tumors were excised from sacrificed animals at the end of the 3rd week and weighed. All injected animals developed large tumors (1-3 grams) within 3 weeks. The results are shown in Table 14 below. No mouse injected with vector-only transfected cells developed tumors. These results clearly indicate that PTTG is a potent transforming gene in vivo.

### TABLE 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cell line</th>
<th>No. Animals injected</th>
<th>Tumor formation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vector only</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTTG 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Example 9

Human Carcinoma Cell Lines Express PTTG

The pattern of expression of PTTG in various human cell lines was studied employing a multiple human cancer cell line Northern blot (Clontech). The specific cell lines tested are shown in Table 15 below.

### TABLE 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Carcinoma Cell Lines Tested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Promyelocytic Leukemia HL-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 HeLa Cell S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia K-562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lymphoblastic Leukemia MOL-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Burkitt’s lymphoma Raji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Colorectal Adenocarcinoma SW 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Lung Carcinoma A549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Melanoma G361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 2 μg polyA RNA from each of the 8 cell lines indicated in Table 3 above were placed on each lane of a denaturing formaldehyde 1.2% agarose gel, separated by denaturing gel electrophoresis to ensure intactness, transferred to a charge-modified nylon membrane by Northern blotting, and fixed by UV irradiation. Lanes 1 to 8 contained RNA from promyelocytic leukemia HL-60, HeLa cell line
S3, human chronic myelogenous leukemia K-562, lymphoblastic leukemia MOLT-4, Burkitt’s lymphoma Raji, colorectal adenocarcinoma SW 480, lung carcinoma A549) and melanoma G361, respectively. RNA size marker lines at 9.5, 7.5, 4.4, 2.4, and 1.35 kb were indicated in ink on the left margin of the blot, and utilized as sizing standards, and a notch was cut out from the lower left hand corner of the membrane to provide orientation. Radiolabeled human β-actin cDNA was utilized as a control probe for matching of different batches of polyA RNAs. A single control band at 2.0 kb in all lanes spotted is confirmatory.

[0175] The blots were probed with the full length rat PTTG cDNA probe (SEQ. ID No: 1; 974 bp) at 60°C for 1 hr. in ExpressHyb hybridization solution (Clontech) as described by Sambrook et al., the relevant section of which reference is incorporated herein by reference. See, Sambrook et al., Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2nd Ed, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y. (1989). The blots were then washed twice for 15 min at room temperature in 2xSSC, 0.05% SDS, and twice for 15 min at 50°C in 0.1% SSC, 0.1% SDS. A more detailed description of the remaining experimental procedures may be found in Pei & Melmed, the relevant section of which is incorporated herein by reference. (See, Pei & Melmed, Endocrinology 4: 433-441 [1997]).

[0176] All cells tested by the Northern blot analysis as described above evidenced expression of human PTG (i.e., PTTG), including lymphoma, leukemia, melanoma and lung carcinomas, among others.

Example 10

Molecular Cloning of Human PTTG cDNA

[0177] A human fetal liver cDNA library (Clontech, Palo Alto, Calif.) was screened as described by Maniatis et al. (Maniatis et al., Molecular cloning, Cold Spring Harbor Press, 1989), using a radiolabeled cDNA fragment of the entire rat PTTG coding region as a probe. The cDNA inserts from positive clones were subcloned into plasmid pHBluescript-SK (Stratagene, La Jolla, Calif.), and subjected to sequence analysis using Sequenase kit (U.S. Biochemical Corp., Cleveland, Ohio).

[0178] A complete open reading frame containing 606 bp was found in the positive clones. The homology between the nucleotide sequences of the open reading frame and the coding region of rat PTTG is 85%. Amino acid sequence comparison between the translated product of this open reading frame and rat PTTG protein reveals 77% identity and 89% homology. The cDNAs obtained from these clones represents human homologies of rat PTTG. No other cDNA fragments with higher homology were detected from the library.

Example 11

Tissue Distribution of Human PTTG mRNA

[0179] Total RNA was prepared using Trizol Reagent (Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg, Md.) from normal human pituitary glands (Zoion Research Inc. Worcester, Mass.) and fresh human pituitary tumors collected at surgery and frozen in liquid nitrogen. 20 mg total RNA were used for 1% agarose gel electrophoresis. RNA blots (Clontech, Palo Alto, Calif.) derived from normal adult and fetal tissues as well as from malignant tumor cell lines, were hybridized with radioactively labeled human cDNA fragment containing the complete coding region. The RNA isolated from each cell line was transferred onto a nylon membrane (Amersham, Arlington Heights, Ill.), and hybridized with radioactively labeled probe at 55°C overnight in 6xSSC, 2x Denhardt’s solution, 0.25% SDS. The membranes were washed twice at room temperature for 15 minutes each, and then for 20 minutes at 60°C in 0.5xSSC, 0.1% SDS, and autoradiographed. The autoradiography was carried out using Kodak BIOMEX-MR film (Eastman Kodak, Rochester, N.Y.) with an intensifying screen. The blots were stripped by washing for 20 minutes in distilled water at 95°C for subsequent probing.

[0180] The results from the Northern blot analysis indicated that PTTG is expressed in liver, but not in brain, lung, and kidney of human fetal tissue. In addition, PTTG is strongly expressed in testis, modestly expressed in thymus, and weakly expressed in colon and small intestine of normal adult human tissue. No expression was detected by Northern analysis in brain, heart, liver, lung, muscle, ovary, placenta, kidney, and pancreas.

[0181] The expression of PTTG in several human carcinomas cell lines was also analyzed by Northern blots. In every carcinoma cells examined, PTTG was found highly expressed. The human tumor cell lines tested are listed in Table 16 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tissue/Cell Type</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blood - Promyelocytic leukemia HL-60</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood - Epitheloid carcinoma HeLa cell S3</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood - Chronic myelogenous leukemia K-562</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood - Lymphoblastic leukemia MOLT-4</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood - Burkitt’s lymphoma Raji</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon - Colorectal adenocarcinoma SW 480</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung - Lung carcinoma A549</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung - Melanoma G361</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver - Hepatocellular carcinoma Hep 3B</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver - Thyroid carcinoma TC-1</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast - Breast adenocarcinoma MCF-7</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovary - Osteogenic sarcoma U2 OS</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placenta - Placenta choriocarcinoma JAR</td>
<td>Very Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placenta - Choriocarcinoma JEG-3</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 12

Human PTTG Expression in Normal Pituitary and Pituitary Tumors

[0182] RT-PCR was performed as follows. 5 mg total RNA were treated with 100 U RNase-free DNase I at room temperature for 15 minutes. DNase I was inactivated by incubation at 65°C for 15 minutes. The sample was then used for reverse transcription using oligo-dT primer and SuperScript II reverse transcriptase (Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg, Md.). After reverse transcription, the sample was subjected to PCR amplification with PCR SuperMix (Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg, Md.) using hPTTG-specific primers and human cyclophilin A-specific primers as an internal control.

[0183] Northern blot analysis indicated that the level of expression of PTTG is quite low in normal pituitary as well
as in pituitary tumors. Therefore, comparative RT-PCR was used to study the expression of PTTG quantitatively in normal pituitary and pituitary tumors. The results of this study showed that in most of pituitary tumors tested, including non-functioning tumors, GH-secreting tumors, and prolactinomas, the expression level of PTTG was higher than that of normal pituitary.

Example 13

Stable Transfection of Human PTTG into NIH 3T3 Cells

[0184] The complete coding region of hPTTG cDNA was subcloned in reading frame into the mammalian expression vector pBK-CMV (Stratagene, La Jolla, Calif.), and transfected into NIH 3T3 fibroblast cells by Lipofectamine (Gibco-BRL, Gaithersburg, Md.) according to manufacturer’s protocol. 24 hours after transfection, the cells were serially diluted and grown in selection medium containing 1 mg/ml G418 for 2 weeks. Individual clones were isolated and maintained in selection medium. Total RNA was isolated from hPTTG-transfected cell lines as well as from control cells in which blank vector pBK-CMV had been transfected. Northern blot was performed to confirm over-expression of hPTTG in transfected cell lines. These cell lines were used in subsequent cell proliferation assay as well as in vitro and in vivo transformation assay.

Example 14

Cell Proliferation Assay

[0185] A cell proliferation assay was performed using the CellTiter 96 non-radioactive cell proliferation assay kit (Promega Medicine, WI) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. 5,000 cells were seeded in 96-well plates and incubated at 37° C. for 24-72 hours. Eight wells were used for each clone in each assay. At each time point, 15 ml of dye solution was added to each well and the cells were incubated at 37° C. for 4 hours. After incubation, 100 ml solubilization/stop solution was added to each well, and the plates incubated overnight at room temperature. The absorbance was determined at 595 nm using an ELISA plate reader.

[0186] Control and hPTTG-overexpressing NIH 3T3 cells were used to perform this assay. The results indicated that the growth of cells transfected with the PTTG-expressing vector was suppressed by 30-45% as compared with cells transfected with blank vector. These results clearly show that PTTG protein inhibits cell proliferation.

Example 15

In Vivo and in vivo Transformation Assay

[0187] (a) In vitro Transformation Assay

[0188] Control and hPTTG-transfected cells were tested for anchorage-independent growth in soft agar; 3 ml of soft agar (20% of 2xDMEM, 50% DMEM, 10% fetal bovine serum, and 20% of 2.5% agar, melted and mixed at 45° C.) were added to 35-mm tissue dishes. 10,000 cells were mixed with 1 ml soft agar and added to each dish, and incubated for 2 weeks until colonies could be counted and photographed.

[0189] (b) In vivo Transformation Assay

[0190] 5x10^5 cells containing either a blank vector or hPTTG-expressing cells were injected into nude mice. The mice were sacrificed two weeks after injection, and the tumors formed near the injection sites examined.

[0191] When the NIH 3T3 cells stably transfected with the PTTG-expressing vector were tested in an anchorage-independent growth assay, these cells caused large colony formation on soft agar, suggesting the transforming ability of PTTG protein.

[0192] When the NIH 3T3 cells were injected into nude mice, they caused in vivo tumor formation within 2 weeks after injection. These data indicate that human PTTG, as its rat homologue, is a potent transforming gene.

Example 16

Inhibition of Cell Transformation/Tumor Formation by PTTG C-Terminal Polypeptide

[0193] Cell lines. NIH 3T3 cells were maintained in high glucose (4.5 g/L) DMEM (Gibco-BRL) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum. HeLa cells were maintained in low glucose (1 g/L) DMEM (Gibco-BRL) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS). T47D and MCF-7 cells were maintained in high glucose DMEM (Gibco-BRL) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 0.01 mg/mL bovine insulin (Sigma). All cell lines were obtained from American Type Collection Culture (ATCC).

[0194] Site-directed mutagenesis and stable transfection of human and mutant PTTG into NIH 3T3 cells. Point mutations on the proline-rich domain(s) of wild type human PTTG polypeptide (wpPTTG) were generated by PCR-based site-directed mutagenesis. Two synthetic oligonucleotides, 5’-GATGCTCTCAGCCAATGGATAATGTTGAGAAAATCTG-3’ (SEQ: ID: NO:5) and 5’-TTCAAGGTTGAGGGCCACAGCTGAAACAGG-3’ (SEQ: ID: NO:6), which cause point mutations that result in amino acid sequence changes P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L in the wpPTTG protein, were used to amplify human PTTG cDNA cloned into pBlueScript SK vector (Stratagene). Amplified mutated cDNA (mutPTTG) was then cloned into mammalian expression vector pCI-neo (Promega). Overexpression of mutPTTG in transfected cells was confirmed by Northern analysis and RT-PCR followed by direct sequence analysis. wpPTTG and mutPTTG were then incubated into pCI-neo, and the vector was used to transfect NIH 3T3 cells as described in Zhang, X., et al. [1999a].

[0195] Transactivation assay. wpPTTG cDNA was fused in frame with pGAL4 (Stratagene), designated pGAL4-wpPTTG and was used as template for deletion and mutation analysis; mutPTTG cDNA was also fused in frame with pGAL4 and designated pGAL4-mutPTTG. pGAL4-VP16 was used as a positive control. Experimental plasmids were co-transfected with pLUC and pCMV-β-Gal (as internal control). Cell lysates were prepared 48 hours after transfection and assayed for luciferase activity as described (Wang, Z. and Meltzer. S. [2000]; Sambrk, J., et al., Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2d Ed. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., 10.2.1-10.2.6 [1989]).

[0196] Constructions of expression vectors for wild type and mutant human PTTG C-terminal polypeptides. To generate wpPTTG and mutPTTG C-terminal polypeptide
expression vector, the internal Xba I site of wtPTTG and mutPTTG cDNA and the 3'-portions of these cDNAs were cloned into pCI-neo (Promega, Madison, Wis.) via Xba I and Not I sites. In these clones, the ATG for M147 of full-length PTTG is used as an initiation codon, generating a polypeptide of 56 amino acid residues corresponding to nucleotide positions 147 through 202 of full-length wtPTTG.

[0197] Stable transfection of human PTTG C-terminal peptide into tumor cells. Wild type and mutant PTTG C-terminal expression constructs were transfected into HeLa, MCF-7, and T47-D cells with Lipofectin (GIBCO-BRL) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Twenty-four hours after transfection, cells were serially diluted and selected with G418 (1 mg/mL) for 2 weeks. Individual clones were isolated and maintained in selection medium (respective high or low glucose DMEM with 10% FBS, as described above, and G418 [1 mg/mL]), and total RNA was extracted from transfected cells. Expression of wild-type and mutated PTTG-C terminal was confirmed by RT-PCR using two synthetic oligonucleotides, with one specific to the 5'-nontranslational region from vector pCI-neo, 5'-GGCTAGAGCTTTTAAATGACCTACATAAGGC-3' (SEQ. ID. NO.-7), and the other to the 3'-translational region of PTTG cDNA, 5'-CTATGTACACGCAAACAGTG-GCAATGTCAC-3' (SEQ. ID. NO.-8), followed by direct sequence analysis.

[0198] In vitro colony formation and in vivo tumorigenesis. NIH 3T3 stable transfectants were tested in vivo as described in Zhang, X., et al. [1999a]. Transfected cells were tested for anchorage-independent growth in soft agar as described Zhang, X., et al. [1999a]. HeLa cells were incubated for 3 weeks and MCF-7 and T47D cells for 2 weeks. For in vivo assays of tumorigenesis, 1x10^5 MCF-7 stable transfectants were resuspended in 500 µl MatriGel, basement membrane matrix (Becton Dickinson, Bedford, Mass.) and were injected subcutaneously into nude mice (three mice for each group). After four weeks, animals were photographed and tumors were excised and weighed.

[0199] ELISA of basic fibroblast growth factor (bFGF) in conditioned medium. The concentration of basic fibroblast growth factor (bFGF) concentration in HeLa cell culture medium was assayed using Quantikine HS Human FGF Basic Immunoassay Kit (R&D Systems, Minneapolis, Minn.) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Cells (1x10^6) were plated in 100-mm cell culture dishes. After 72 hours, the culture medium was collected and 200 mL was used for ELISA assay.

[0200] Effects of wild type human PTTG and mutant PTTG overexpression on tumor induction. It was previously demonstrated that NIH 3T3 cells overexpressing wild type PTTG formed large colonies in an anchorage-independent growth assay and formed tumors when injected into athymic nude mice, while point mutations in the proline-rich region (P163A, P170L, P172A, and P173L) abrogated formation of colonies and tumors (Zhang, X., et al. [1999a]). Overexpression of wtPTTG and mutPTTG (P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L) in each transfectant cell line was confirmed by Northern analysis and RT-PCR followed by direct sequence analysis (not shown).

[0201] It was further shown that overexpressing PTTG transfectants injected into athymic nude mice caused tumor formation within 2 weeks in all injected animals. Five mice in each of three groups were injected subcutaneously with 3x10^6 NIH 3T3 cells transfected with: (1) control cell line (transfected with pGal4 vector alone); (2) wild type PTTG-overexpressing (wtPTTG); or (3) mutant PTTG-overexpressing (mutPTTG [P163A, S 165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L]). After 2 weeks, mice were sacrificed and tumors were excised and weighed. In the mice injected with control transfectants or mutPTTG transfectants, no tumors developed. But mice injected with transfectant cells bearing wtPTTG developed tumors without exception. Tumor weights ranged from 470 to 1500 mg (Table 17).

**TABLE 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tumor formation by PTTG-expressing NIH 3T3 Cells in Athymic Nude Mice.</th>
<th>Tumor weight (mg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vector</td>
<td>wtPTTG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none*</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*none* = no detectable tumor.

[0202] PTTG exhibits transcriptional activation. Vector pGal4 alone (negative control) did not activate the luciferase (luc) reporter, and a known activation domain, VP16, significantly increased reporter activity about 28-fold. pGal4-wtPTTG exhibited transactivation properties and induced reporter activity about 22-fold (FIG. 1).

[0203] Transcriptional activity of pGal4-mutPTTG (mutated proline region [P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L]), other point mutations, as well as a separate deletion (d) of wtPTTG were also tested as indicated in Table 18. In Table 18, the indicated plasmids were co-transfected with pLuc and pCMV-ß-Gal into NIH 3T3 cells, and luciferase assays were performed, with ß-Gal serving as the internal control. Each value represents triplicate wells from two independent experiments (±SEM); transactivation by wtPTTG was designated 100%. pGal4-mutPTTG exhibited about 95% transactivating activity compared to pGal4-wtPTTG, thus confirming the importance of the wtPTTG proline-rich motif for transactivation.

**TABLE 18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transactivation assay of bPTTG mutants.</th>
<th>Mutant</th>
<th>activation activity (%) (±SEM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pGal4-wtPTTG</td>
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<td>100 ± 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-163 Pro⇒Ala</td>
<td>100 ± 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-184 Ser⇒Ala</td>
<td>100 ± 10</td>
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</table>
Human PTTG C-terminal peptide expression blocks cell transformation. The critical role of the proline-rich region in transactivation, transformation and tumor formation, as described above, implies that PTTG functions through SH3-mediated signal transduction. If human PTTG1 protein mediates the SH3-related signal cascade, it probably contains at least two functional domains interacting with upstream and downstream signal molecule(s), respectively. A mutant protein containing only one such functional domain could then act in a dominant-negative manner to abrogate wild-type protein function and disrupt signal transduction.

Based on this hypothesis, a truncated PTTG1 mutant peptide, lacking N-terminal amino acid residues 1-146, was introduced into human carcinoma cells. An expression construct was used expressing a PTTG-C peptide corresponding to residues 147-202 of the full-length protein, under the control of a CMV promoter. This polypeptide contains the proline-rich domain(s) (residues 163-173; Zhang, X., et al. [1999a]), and when the coding sequence was fused to glutathione S-transferase (GST), it was expressed in *Escherichia coli* as an intact protein with the appropriate molecular weight (data not shown). Mutant expression vector pCIneo-mutPTTG (mutated proline region [P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L]), as well as the empty vector pCI-neo alone as control, were stably transfected into HeLa, MCF-7, and T-47D human carcinoma cell lines.

Transfectants expressing wild-type PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide (PTTG-C), PTTG C-terminal mutated in several proline residues (PTTG-Cpm; mutated proline region [P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170L, P172A, and P173L]), and vector (V), were isolated. Expression of each transfectant line was confirmed by RT-PCR, using a primer directed to the 5'-ntrnaslational region of the expression vector and a primer directed to the 3'-translational region of PTTG mRNA, followed by direct sequence analysis (FIGS. 2A, 2B, and 2C). Transforming abilities of all three of these stably transfected cell lines were tested in an anchorage-independent growth assay, PTTG-Cpm cells were observed to form large colonies, as did control V cells containing the same expression vector but lacking either wild type or mutant C-terminal polypeptide. Each transfectant cell line was plated in three different plates. HeLa was scored on the 21st day and T-47D and MCF-7 on the 14th day. Colonies consisting of 60 or more cells were scored. However, the number and size of colonies formed by cells expressing PTTG-C were markedly reduced (p<0.01) (FIG. 3). Table 19 (below) summarizes the soft agar colony formation for each cancer cell type.

Human PTTG C-terminal polypeptide-expressing MCF-7 cells fail to develop tumors in vivo. Stably transfected MCF-7 cell lines were injected (1x10⁶ cells/per mouse in 500 μL MATRIGEL basement membrane matrix) subcutaneously into athymic nude mice. After four weeks, mice were photographed, killed, and their tumors were excised and weighed. Three mice injected with cells transfected with control vector only developed visible tumors in 4 weeks, while three mice injected with PTTG-C-transfected cells failed to generate tumors. At autopsy, absence of subcutaneous or other peripheral tumor formation was confirmed in the mice receiving PTTG-C transfected cells. Three mice injected with PTTG-Cpm-transfected cells also developed tumors after 4 weeks, which were similar in size to those developed in mice injected with control vector-transfected cells, indicating that the mutated PTTG-C-terminal polypeptide lost its ability to abrogate endogenous PTTG function (Table 20).

These results show that overexpression of the PTTG C-terminal peptide caused cancer cells to lose their abilities for in vitro cell transformation and ex vivo tumor growth. Also, the importance of proline-rich regions is further confirmed here, since PTTG C-terminal peptide containing point mutations of these proline residues failed to interfere with transforming activity or tumor-forming activity in vivo.
[0209] Suppression of bFGF secretion and PRL expression by PTTG-C peptide. As cells expressing wild-type human PTTG-C terminal peptide had markedly reduced colony forming ability on soft agar and were also unable to induce solid tumor growth in vivo, expression of bFGF was tested in HeLa transfectants. An enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay (ELISA) was performed to examine bFGF levels in conditioned medium derived from 72-hour cultures of HeLa transfectants. As shown in FIG. 4, bFGF levels were markedly decreased in conditioned medium derived from PTTG-C DNA-transfected cells than those derived from vector-only and PTTG-Cpmp-transfected cells, indicating a suppression of bFGF secretion resulting from the presence of PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide.

[0210] Since, the growth rate of solid tumors is directly related to activation of angiogenesis and recruitment of new blood vessels, this shows that, in accordance with the inventive method, the ability for new blood vessel growth can be impaired by the inventive PTTG-C peptides, providing an additional mechanism leading to the failure of in vivo neoplastic cellular proliferation and tumor growth. Experimental tumors do not grow more than 1 or 2 mm in diameter in the absence of angiogenesis. (Folkman, J., and Klagsburn, M. (1987) Science 235:442-447 [1987]). The human cancer cell lines used in this study form prominent solid tumors (>2 mm in diameter) indicating active angiogenesis.

[0211] Moreover, these results imply that additional hormonal regulatory cascades can be affected by the inventive PTTG-C peptides, because reduced bFGF secretion can result in altered expression of bFGF-mediated pathways, for example prolactin (PRL) expression. For example, expression of the same human wild-type PTTG-C-terminal peptide (amino acid residues 147-202 of SEQ. ID. NO.:4) in rat prolactin (PRL) and growth hormone (GH)-secreting GH3 cells caused markedly reduced PRL promoter activity (about 16-fold decrease), PRL mRNA expression (about 10-fold decrease), and prolactin protein expression (about 72-fold decrease) in comparison to rat GH3 cells transfected with control vector alone or GH3 cells expressing a mutated PTTG1 C-terminal fragment (P163A, S165Q, P166L, P170A, P172A, and P173L; data not shown). Furthermore, a compensatory increase in GH mRNA (about 13-fold increase) and protein (about 37-fold increase) were observed in the PTTG-C-terminal expressing GH3 cells. These observations demonstrate that PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide expressed in GH3 cells alters the hormonal secretory pattern by silencing PRL-gene expression and augmenting GH expression.

---

SEQUENCE LISTING

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نعاء، أورام: Rattus rattus

نعاء، سeq. إيد: 1

نعاء، LONGHIT: 974

نعاء، RIC: DNA

نعاء، آي سي أس: 19

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TYPE: DNA
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FEATURE:
OTHER INFORMATION: Synthetic oligonucleotide specific to pCl-neo plasmid. vector.

SEQUENCE: 7

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LENGTH: 31
TYPE: DNA
ORGANISM: Homo sapiens

SEQUENCE: 8
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ORGANISM: Homo sapiens

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20  25  30

Leu Asp Gly Lys Leu Gin Val Ser Thr Pro Arg Val Gly Lys Val Phe
35  40  45

Asp Ala Pro Ala Val Pro Lys Ala Ser Arg Lys Ala Leu Gly Thr Val
50  55  60

Asn Arg Val Ala Glu Lys Pro Met Lys Thr Gly Lys Pro Leu Gin Pro
65  70  75  80

Lys Gin Pro Thr Leu Thr Gly Lys Ile Thr Glu Lys Ser Thr Lys
85  90  95

Thr Gin Ser Ser Val Pro Ala Pro Asp Asp Ala Tyr Pro Glu Ile Glu
100 105 110

Lys Phe Phe Pro Phe Asn Pro Leu Phe Asp Leu Pro Glu Glu His
115 120 125

Gln Ile Ser Leu Leu Pro Leu Asn Gly Val Pro Leu Ile Thr Leu Asn
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We claim:
1. A method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both, of a mammalian cell comprising:
   delivering to a mammalian cell that overexpresses PTTG, a composition comprising a PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide, said polynucleotide encoding a PTTG-C peptide selected from the group consisting of
   (A) peptides having an amino acid sequence consisting of SEQ ID NO:17; and
   (B) peptide fragments of (A) that comprise at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:17, including a proline-rich region, and that function to downregulate endogenous PTTG expression or PTTG function, or both;
   said PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide being complexed with a cellular uptake-enhancing agent, in an amount and under conditions sufficient to allow the polynucleotide to enter the cell, whereby neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both, of the cell is inhibited.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is of human origin.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the cell exhibits neoplastic, hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic, or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is a malignant cell.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the composition is delivered to the cell in vitro.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising administering the composition to a mammalian subject, such that the composition is delivered to the cell in vivo.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide is a DNA or DNA analog.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide is a peptide nucleic acid.
9. The method of claim 7, wherein the composition further comprises an expression vector comprising a promoter, and the PTTG carboxy-terminal-related polynucleotide is operatively linked to the promoter in a transcriptional unit.
10. The method of claim 9, wherein the polynucleotide encodes a PTTG carboxy-terminal peptide having an amino acid sequence consisting of SEQ ID NO:17.
11. The method of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide encodes a peptide fragment of SEQ ID NO:17 that comprises at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:17, including amino acid residues 17-20 of SEQ ID NO:17.
12. The method of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide has a nucleotide sequence consisting of
   (A) SEQ ID NO:19;
   (B) a degenerate coding sequence of (A);
   (C) a sequence complementary to any of (A) or (B); or
   (D) a polynucleotide fragment comprising at least 45 contiguous nucleotides of any of (A), (B) or (C) that comprises contiguous nucleotide positions 49-60 of SEQ ID NO:19, a degenerate sequence, or a complementary sequence.
13. A method of inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both, of a mammalian cell comprising:
   delivering to a mammalian cell that overexpresses PTTG, a composition comprising an expression vector comprising a promoter and a polynucleotide, said polynucleotide comprising a first DNA segment encoding a mammalian PTTG-C peptide, said polynucleotide being operatively linked to the promoter in a transcriptional unit, said PTTG-C peptide being selected from the group consisting of
   (A) peptides having an amino acid sequence consisting of (SEQ ID NO:17); and
   (B) peptide fragments of (A) that comprise at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues, including a proline-rich region of SEQ ID NO:17, and that function to downregulate endogenous PTTG expression or PTTG function, or both, said expression vector being complexed with a cellular uptake-enhancing agent, in an amount and under conditions sufficient to enter the cell, such that the PTTG-C peptide is expressed.
in the cell, whereby neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both, of the cell is inhibited.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the polynucleotide further comprises a second DNA segment encoding an uptake-enhancing or importation-competent, or both, peptide segment.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the cellular uptake-enhancing or importation-competent, or both, peptide segment is a human immunodeficiency virus TAT-derived peptide segment or a signal peptide from Kaposi fibroblast growth factor.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein the cell is of human origin.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein the cell exhibits neoplastic, hyperplastic, cytologically dysplastic, or premalignant cellular growth or proliferation.

18. The method of claim 13, wherein the cell is a malignant cell.

19. The method of claim 13, wherein the composition is delivered to the cell in vitro.

20. The method of claim 13, further comprising administering the composition to a mammalian subject in need of treatment, such that the expression vector is delivered to the cell in vivo.

21. An isolated polynucleotide, wherein said polynucleotide encodes a PTIT-C peptide selected from the group consisting of

(A) peptides having an amino acid sequence consisting of SEQ ID NO:17; and

(B) fragments of (A) that comprise at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:17, including a proline-rich region.

22. The polynucleotide of claim 21, wherein the polynucleotide has a nucleotide sequence consisting of

(A) SEQ ID NO:19;

(B) a degenerate coding sequence of (A);

(C) a sequence complementary to any of (A) or (B); or

(D) a fragment comprising at least 45 contiguous nucleotides of any of (A), (B) or (C) that comprises contiguous nucleotide positions 49-60 of SEQ ID NO:19, a degenerate sequence, or a complementary sequence.

23. The polynucleotide of claim 22, wherein the polynucleotide is DNA or a DNA analog.

24. The polynucleotide of claim 22, wherein the polynucleotide is RNA.

25. The polynucleotide of claim 22, wherein the polynucleotide is a peptide nucleic acid.


27. The composition of claim 26, wherein the composition is a nucleic acid construct.

28. The composition of claim 26, further comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

29. The composition of claim 26, further comprising a cellular uptake-enhancing agent complexed with the polynucleotide.

30. The composition of claim 29, wherein said uptake enhancing agent comprises a lipid agent.

31. The composition of claim 29, wherein said uptake enhancing agent comprises a polycationic lipid agent.

32. The composition of claim 29, wherein said uptake enhancing agent comprises a peptide segment that is cellular uptake-enhancing or importation-competent, or both.

33. The composition of claim 26, wherein the polynucleotide is a DNA or DNA analog.

34. The composition of claim 26, wherein the polynucleotide is a peptide nucleic acid.

35. The composition of claim 27, further comprising an expression vector comprising a promoter operatively linked to the polynucleotide in a transcriptional unit.

36. A mammalian cell, comprising the composition of claim 27.

37. A mammalian cell, comprising the composition of claim 31.

38. A mammalian cell, comprising the composition of claim 32.

39. A mammalian cell, comprising the composition of claim 35.

40. A kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation, said kit comprising:

the composition of claim 26; and

instructions for the use of said composition for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both.

41. A kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation, said kit comprising:

the composition of claim 27; and

instructions for the use of said composition for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both.

42. A kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation, said kit comprising:

the composition of claim 29; and

instructions for the use of said composition for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both.

43. A kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation, said kit comprising:

the composition of claim 32; and

instructions for the use of said composition for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both.

44. A kit for the treatment of neoplastic cellular proliferation, said kit comprising:

the composition of claim 35; and

instructions for the use of said composition for inhibiting neoplastic cellular proliferation or transformation, or both.