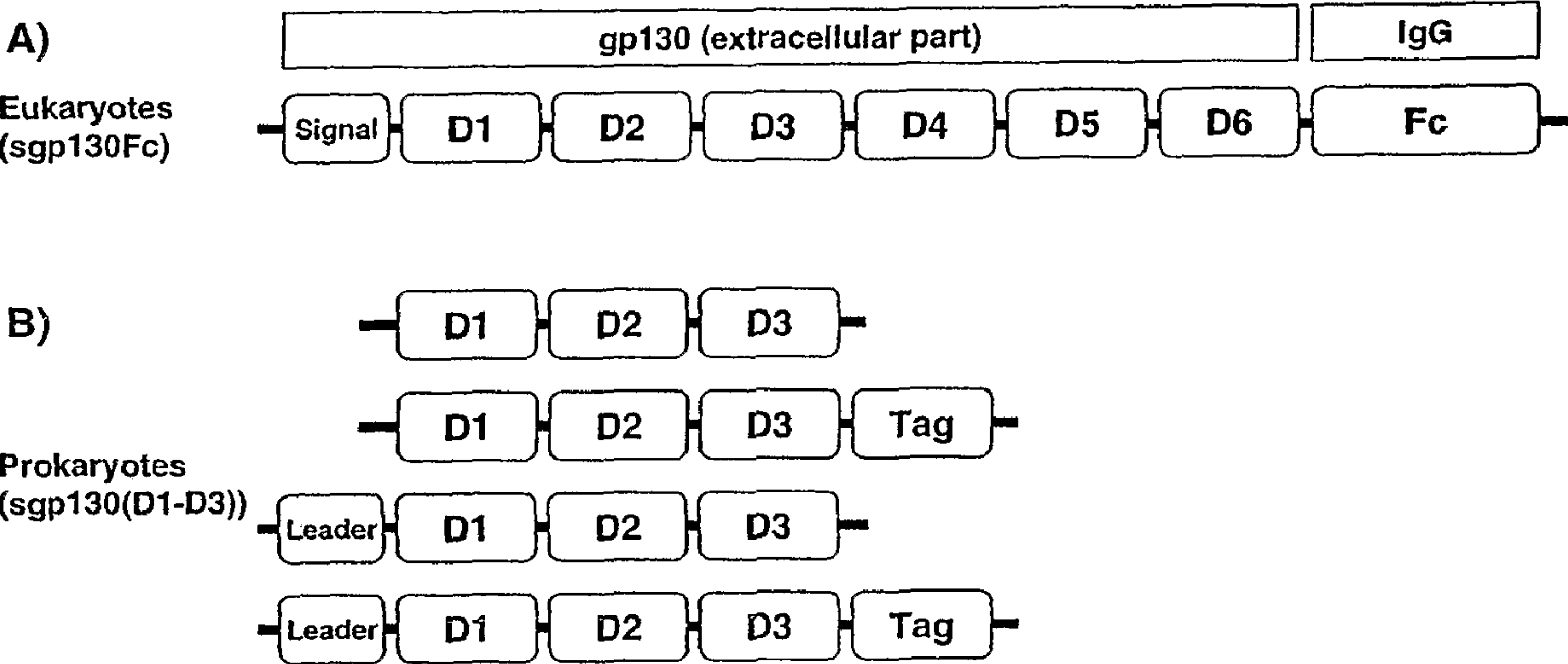




(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2005/08/26 (87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2006/03/02 (45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2018/06/05 (85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2007/02/01 (86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: EP 2005/009247 (87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2006/021453 (30) Priorité/Priority: 2004/08/27 (EP04020455.4)	(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. <i>C12N 15/67</i> (2006.01), <i>C07K 14/715</i> (2006.01) (72) Inventeurs/Inventors: SEEGERT, DIRK, DE; WAETZIG, GEORG, DE; RAHAUS, NIKOLAUS, DE; DAECKE, JESSICA, DE; ROSE-JOHN, STEFAN, DE (73) Propriétaire/Owner: CONARIS RESEARCH INSTITUTE AG, DE (74) Agent: SMART & BIGGAR
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(54) **Titre :** SEQUENCES NUCLEOTIDIQUES OPTIMISEES CODANT SGP 130
(54) **Title:** OPTIMIZED NUCLEOTIDE SEQUENCES ENCODING SGP130



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**
Described are codon optimized sgp130 encoding nucleic acid molecules as well as a method for the highly efficient recombinant production of sgp130 in mammalian cells or bacteria using a nucleic acid molecule of the invention.

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
2 March 2006 (02.03.2006)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2006/021453 A3

(51) International Patent Classification:

C12N 15/67 (2006.01) C07K 14/715 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/EP2005/009247

(22) International Filing Date: 26 August 2005 (26.08.2005)

(25) Filing Language:

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

04020455.4 27 August 2004 (27.08.2004) EP

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(81) **Designated States** (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) **Designated States** (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

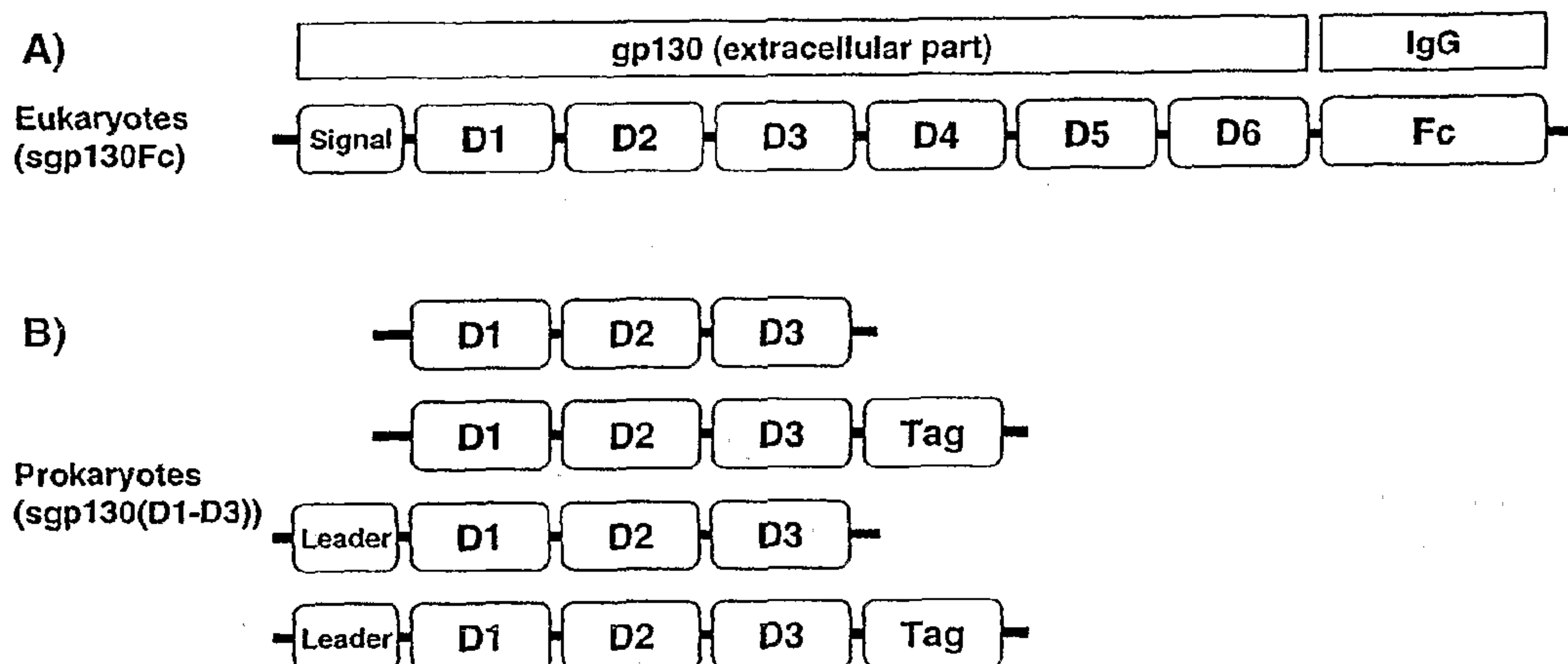
- with international search report
- before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments

(88) Date of publication of the international search report:

22 June 2006

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: OPTIMIZED NUCLEOTIDE SEQUENCES ENCODING SGP 130



(57) **Abstract:** Described are codon optimized sgpl30 encoding nucleic acid molecules as well as a method for the highly efficient recombinant production of sgpl30 in mammalian cells or bacteria using a nucleic acid molecule of the invention.

WO 2006/021453 A3

Optimized nucleotide sequences encoding sgp130

The present invention relates to codon optimized sgp130 encoding nucleic acid molecules as well as a method for the highly efficient recombinant production of sgp130 in mammalian cells or bacteria using a nucleic acid molecule of the invention.

For the treatment of various diseases such as Crohn's disease etc. the specific blocking of IL-6 responses dependent on soluble IL-6R might be desirable for treatment. It was found that a soluble gp130-dimer, in particular an IgG-Fc fusion protein or a PEGylated version of spg130, efficiently inhibits the anti-apoptotic effect of sIL-6R from LPMC from Crohn's disease (CD) patients and that, thus, said compound is useful for the treatment of said disease and related diseases like, e.g., colitis or rheumatoid arthritis. Unfortunately, so far the recombinant production of sgp130 is difficult in particular due to the fact that only low amounts of protein can be obtained

Thus, the technical problem underlying the present invention was to provide means allowing to improve the efficiency of recombinant production of sgp130Fc or sgp130(D1-D3).

During the experiments leading to the present invention it was found that by use of particular codon optimized versions of the DNA encoding sgp130Fc the yields of recombinant protein can be increased at least 10- to 20-fold compared to the unmodified version of the DNA. In case of the prokaryotic sgp130(D1-D39 version, the optimization of the DNA led to the reduction of undesired shorter side products.

Summary of the invention

In one aspect of the invention, there is provided a nucleic acid molecule encoding sgpl30 comprising (a) the nucleic acid sequence as depicted in SEQ ID No. 7 (sgpl30(D1-3)_opt) or (b) a fragment thereof which maintains the ability to inhibit the activity of the agonistic complex IL-6/sIL-6R.

In another aspect, there is provided a nucleic acid molecule encoding sgpl30 comprising (a) the nucleic acid sequence as depicted in SEQ ID No. 12 (sgpl30Fc_opt), wherein at least 80% of the codons altered in the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID No. 12 vs. the wild type sequence are present, or (b) a fragment thereof which encodes a polypeptide that comprises extracellular domains D1 to D3 of sgpl30, wherein the encoded polypeptide inhibits the activity of the agonistic complex IL-6/sIL-6R.

In another aspect of the invention, there is provided an expression vector containing a nucleic acid molecule of the present invention.

In another aspect of the invention, there is provided a host cell containing an expression vector of the present invention.

In another aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of producing a sgpl30 polypeptide comprising culturing a host cell of the present invention and recovering the polypeptide from said host cell or the culture.

Brief description of the drawings

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of the constructs

Grey shading marks the parts of the protein which have been optimized. (A) Eukaryotic construct comprising a signal peptide, six extracellular gp130 domains and the IgG-Fc part. (B) Variations of the sgp130 protein expressed in prokaryotic cells. sgp130 can be expressed with or without N-terminal leader sequence and/or C-terminal Tag for purification purposes.

Figure 2: sgp130(D1-D3) (nucleotide sequence and amino acid sequence) for expression in bacterial cells

An alignment of the nucleotide sequence with optimized codons (sgp130(D1-D3)_opt) vs. the original sequence (sgp130(D1-D3)_wt) is shown.

Figure 3: sgp130(Fc) (nucleotide sequence and amino acid sequence) for expression in mammalian cells

An alignment of the nucleotide sequence with optimized codons (sgp130Fc_opt) vs. the original sequence (sgp130Fc_wt) is shown.

Figure 4: Detection of sgp130Fc after transient transfection of HEK293 cells (A) or CHO cells (B) with wildtype or optimized (opt) sgp130Fc expression plasmids

The position of sgp130Fc is indicated by arrows (◄). Wildtype and optimized sgp130Fc expression was detected in two independent transfection experiments each. The different sizes of the protein (left panel) result from the leader sequence which has been partially cleaved off after secretion into the medium. The right panel represents the results derived from

whole cell extracts from CHO cells (sgp130Fc with leader sequence).

Figure 5: Detection of RNA transcribed from transfected plasmid DNA (sgp130Fc; neomycin resistance gene (NeoR)) by gene-specific RT-PCR

HEK293 cells were transfected with an expression plasmid encoding either wildtype or optimized sgp130Fc. Transfection of the empty vector (mock) or non-transfected cells (control) served as negative controls. β -actin was amplified from total RNA to demonstrate the use of equal amounts of RNA in each single experiment.

Figure 6: Expression of sgp130(D1-D3) in BL21(DE3)pLys bacteria

The cDNA encoding sgp130(D1-D3) was cloned into the expression plasmid pET22b (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) which in addition encodes a leading pelB sequence and a C-terminal His-tag. sgp130(D1-D3) was detected by western blot with a His-specific antibody and marked with an arrow (◄).

Figure 7: Comparison and selection of different optimized sgp130Fc sequences

The wt cDNA encoding sgp130Fc was optimized using different optimization algorithms ("Java Codon Adaption Tool" (JCat, available at <http://www.prodoric.de/JCat/> and "UpGene" Gao et al. (2004), Biotechnol. Proc. 20(2): 443-8) and the resulting expression constructs were transfected into HEK293 cells. The expression of sgp130Fc was determined on RNA level by RT-PCR and on protein level by western blot as described earlier. The figure represents an example of the comparison of two different optimized sgp130Fc sequences (Opt1 and Opt2) with a sgp130Fc sequence optimized according to the present invention (Opt CONARIS).

Figure 8: Alignment of different optimized sgp130Fc cDNA sequences and comparison with the unmodified wild type (wt) sequence

The shaded regions are showing a few examples of codons which either have been left unmodified (grey) as compared to the wild type (wt) or have been changed (partly in different ways) by the algorithms.

Figure 9: The table indicates the numbers of base pairs which are different between two compared sequences

sgp130Fc sequence optimized according to the present invention (opt_CON), JCat (opt_JCat) or UpGene (opt_Upgene).

Thus, the present invention relates to a nucleic acid molecule encoding sgp130 comprising the nucleic acid sequence (a) as depicted in Figure 2 (sgp130(D1-3)_opt) or Figure 3 (sgp130Fc_opt) or (b) a fragment or analogue thereof which maintains the codon usage pattern thereof.

The letter "s" of sgp130 means "soluble". The term "soluble" as used herein refers to a gp130 molecule lacking the intracellular domain and the transmembrane domain. The domains utilized in sgp130(D1-D3)_opt consist of the first three extracellular domains D1-D3 of gp130.

The term "fragment" as used herein refers to sgp130 fragments which comprise the entire or smaller parts of the optimized cDNA encoding the extracellular domain of gp130. Preferably, such fragments show a biological activity of the full length molecule, e. g. maintain the ability to inhibit the activity of the agonistic complex IL-6/sIL-6R. For the expression in bacteria such fragment also comprises sgp130 without the eukaryotic secretory leader sequence (MLTLQTWVVQALFIFLTTESTG,

Pos. 1 to 22). Moreover, a prokaryotic secretory leader sequence, e. g. *pelB* or *OmpA* could be cloned in front of the *sgp130* sequence or parts of it and could be derived from the respective suitable expression plasmid, e. g. pET22b (Merck Biosciences GmbH, Bad Soden, Germany), pASK-IBA2, pASK-IBA12 (IBA, Goettingen, Germany). In addition the *sgp130* protein can be expressed with or without Tag for purification purposes, e. g. His₆, Strep, Myc or others.

The term "analogue" as used herein refers to a nucleic acid molecule which encodes the same amino acid sequence but which, through the redundancy of the genetic code, has a different nucleotide sequence. The term "codon usage pattern" as used herein refers to the average frequencies in the nucleotide sequence, e.g., highly expressed mammalian genes. Codon usage patterns for mammals, including humans can be found in the literature; see, e.g., Nakamura et al., Nucleic Acids Research 1996, 24:214-5. In the nucleic acid molecules of the present invention, the codon usage pattern is altered to more closely represent the codon bias of the host organism, e.g. a mammalian cell.

Alternatively, the present invention relates to a nucleic acid molecule, wherein at least 80%, preferably at least 90%, more preferably at least 95% and, most preferably at least 98% of the codons altered in the nucleic acid sequence of Figure 2 or 3 vs. the wild type sequence are present.

In a preferred embodiment, the nucleic acid molecule of the present invention is a DNA molecule.

The present invention includes expression vectors that comprise the nucleic acid molecules of the invention. The expression vectors can be constructed according to methods well known to the person skilled in the art; see, e.g.,

Sambrook, Molecular Cloning A Laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (1989) N.Y. The "control elements" or "regulatory sequences" used for recombinant expression are those non-translated regions of the vector-enhancers, promoters, 5' and 3' untranslated regions which interact with host cellular proteins to carry out transcription and translation. Such elements may vary in their strength and specificity. Depending on the vector system and host utilised, any number of suitable transcription and translation elements, including constitutive and inducible promoters, may be used. In mammalian cell systems, promoters from mammalian genes or from mammalian viruses are preferable. Promoters and other expression regulation signals may be selected to be compatible with the host cell for which expression is designed. For example, mammalian promoters include the metallothionein promoter, which can be induced in response to heavy metals such as cadmium, and the β -actin 30 promoter. Viral promoters such as the SV40 large T antigen promoter, human cytomegalovirus (CMV) immediate early (IE) promoter, rous sarcoma virus LTR promoter, adenovirus promoter, or a HPV promoter, particularly the HPV upstream regulatory region (URR) may also be used. All these promoters are well described and readily available in the art.

In mammalian host cells, a number of viral-based expression systems may be utilised. In cases where an adenovirus is used as an expression vector, sequences encoding the polypeptide(s) of the present invention may be ligated into an adenovirus transcription/translation complex consisting of the late promoter and tripartite leader sequence. Insertion in a non-essential E1 or E3 region of the viral genome may be used to obtain a viable virus which is capable of expressing the antibody in infected host cells (Logan, J. and Shenk, T. (1984) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. 81:3655-3659). In addition, transcription enhancers, such as the Rous sarcoma virus (RSV)

to the present invention, significantly increased the expression of sgp130Fc protein by HEK293 cells. Figure 8 represents an alignment of the same sequences. Although in all cases the optimization approach was based on an optimal codon usage in eukaryotes, the figure clearly demonstrates that the prediction for the optimal codon at a certain position is often completely different. Figure 9 summarizes the findings of these alignments by showing the number of different base pairs between each of the sequences.

These results clearly demonstrate that the computer aided prediction of cDNA sequences for optimal protein expression in a certain organism has only an extremely limited value. The development of best optimized sequences makes it necessary to choose individual research approaches and must be accompanied by high innovative technologies and inventive power.

SEQUENCE LISTING IN ELECTRONIC FORM

In accordance with section 111(1) of the Patent Rules, this description contains a sequence listing in electronic form in ASCII text format (file: 94022-5seq04-12-12v1.txt).

A copy of the sequence listing in electronic form is available from the Canadian Intellectual Property Office.

The sequences in the sequence listing in electronic form are reproduced in the following table.

SEQUENCE TABLE

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<140> 2,575,800

<141> 2005-08-26

<150> EP 04020455.4

<151> 2004-08-27

<160> 13

<170> PatentIn version 3.2

<210> 1

<211> 22

<212> PRT

<213> Artificial sequence

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<223> secretory leader sequence of sgp130

<400> 1

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20

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 gcgaactaca ttgtgtggaa aaccaaccat ttcaccatcc cgaaagaaca gtataccatc 180


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cccaatccgc cacataattt atcagtgatc aactcagagg aactgtctag tatcttaaaa 660
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aggaccaaag atgectcaac ttggagccag attcctcctg aagacacagc atccacccga 780
tcttcattca ctgtccaaga ccttaaacct tttacagaat atgtgttttag gattcgctgt 840
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<400> 8

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Val Gln Leu His Ser Asn Phe Thr Ala Val Cys Val Leu Lys Glu Lys
          20           25           30

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Cys Met Asp Tyr Phe His Val Asn Ala Asn Tyr Ile Val Trp Lys Thr
          35           40           45

```

```

Asn His Phe Thr Ile Pro Lys Glu Gln Tyr Thr Ile Ile Asn Arg Thr
          50           55           60

```

```

Ala Ser Ser Val Thr Phe Thr Asp Ile Ala Ser Leu Asn Ile Gln Leu
65           70           75           80

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Thr Cys Asn Ile Leu Thr Phe Gly Gln Leu Glu Gln Asn Val Tyr Gly
          85           90           95

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Ile Thr Ile Ile Ser Gly Leu Pro Pro Glu Lys Pro Lys Asn Leu Ser
          100          105          110

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```

Cys Ile Val Asn Glu Gly Lys Lys Met Arg Cys Glu Trp Asp Gly Gly
          115          120          125

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 130 135 140

Thr His Lys Phe Ala Asp Cys Lys Ala Lys Arg Asp Thr Pro Thr Ser
 145 150 155 160

Cys Thr Val Asp Tyr Ser Thr Val Tyr Phe Val Asn Ile Glu Val Trp
 165 170 175

Val Glu Ala Glu Asn Ala Leu Gly Lys Val Thr Ser Asp His Ile Asn
 180 185 190

Phe Asp Pro Val Tyr Lys Val Lys Pro Asn Pro Pro His Asn Leu Ser
 195 200 205

Val Ile Asn Ser Glu Glu Leu Ser Ser Ile Leu Lys Leu Thr Trp Thr
 210 215 220

Asn Pro Ser Ile Lys Ser Val Ile Ile Leu Lys Tyr Asn Ile Gln Tyr
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Arg Thr Lys Asp Ala Ser Thr Trp Ser Gln Ile Pro Pro Glu Asp Thr
 245 250 255

Ala Ser Thr Arg Ser Ser Phe Thr Val Gln Asp Leu Lys Pro Phe Thr
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Pro
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		35					40					45			

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			100						105				110		

Cys	Ile	Val	Asn	Glu	Gly	Lys	Lys	Met	Arg	Cys	Glu	Trp	Asp	Gly	Gly
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			165						170					175	

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Phe	Asp	Pro	Val	Tyr	Lys	Val	Lys	Pro	Asn	Pro	Pro	His	Asn	Ile	Ser
		195					200					205			

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 210 215 220

Asn Pro Ser Ile Lys Ser Val Ile Ile Leu Lys Tyr Asn Ile Gln Tyr
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Arg Thr Lys Asp Ala Ser Thr Trp Ser Gln Ile Pro Pro Glu Asp Thr
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Ala Ser Thr Arg Ser Ser Phe Thr Val Gln Asp Leu Lys Pro Phe Thr
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Pro
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Pro Glu Ser Pro Val Val Gln Leu His Ser Asn Phe Thr Ala Val Cys
35 40 45

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50 55 60

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65 70 75 80

Ile Ile Asn Arg Thr Ala Ser Ser Val Thr Phe Thr Asp Ile Ala Ser
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Leu Asn Ile Gln Leu Thr Cys Asn Ile Leu Thr Phe Gly Gln Leu Glu
100 105 110

Gln Asn Tyr Tyr Gly Ile Thr Ile Ile Ser Gly Leu Pro Pro Glu Lys
115 120 125

Pro Lys Asn Leu Ser Cys Ile Val Asn Glu Gly Lys Lys Met Arg Cys
 130 135 140

Glu Trp Asp Gly Gly Arg Glu Thr His Leu Glu Thr Asn Phe Thr Leu
 145 150 155 160

Lys Ser Glu Trp Ala Thr His Lys Phe Ala Asp Cys Lys Ala Lys Arg
 165 170 175

Asp Thr Pro Thr Ser Cys Thr Val Asp Tyr Ser Thr Val Tyr Phe Val
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Asn Ile Glu Val Trp Val Glu Ala Glu Asn Ala Leu Gly Lys Val Thr
 195 200 205

Ser Asp His Ile Asn Phe Asp Pro Val Tyr Lys Val Lys Pro Asn Pro
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Lys Leu Thr Trp Thr Asn Pro Ser Ile Lys Ser Val Ile Ile Leu Lys
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 260 265 270

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 275 280 285

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Thr Leu Pro Pro Phe Glu Ala Asn Gly Lys Ile Leu Asp Tyr Glu Val
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 370 375 380

Thr Lys Leu Thr Val Asn Leu Thr Asn Asp Arg Tyr Leu Ala Thr Leu
 385 390 395 400

Thr Val Arg Asn Leu Val Gly Lys Ser Asp Ala Ala Val Leu Thr Ile
 405 410 415

Pro Ala Cys Asp Phe Gln Ala Thr His Pro Val Met Asp Leu Lys Ala
 420 425 430

Phe Pro Lys Asp Asn Met Leu Trp Val Glu Trp Thr Thr Pro Arg Glu
 435 440 445

Ser Val Lys Lys Tyr Ile Leu Glu Trp Cys Val Leu Ser Asp Lys Ala
 450 455 460

Pro Cys Ile Thr Asp Trp Gln Gln Glu Asp Gly Thr Val His Arg Thr
 465 470 475 480

Tyr Leu Arg Gly Asn Leu Ala Glu Ser Lys Cys Tyr Leu Ile Thr Val
 485 490 495

Thr Pro Val Tyr Ala Asp Gly Pro Gly Ser Pro Glu Ser Ile Lys Ala
 500 505 510

Tyr Leu Lys Gln Ala Pro Pro Ser Lys Gly Pro Thr Val Arg Thr Lys
 515 520 525

Lys Val Gly Lys Asn Glu Ala Val Leu Glu Trp Asp Gln Leu Pro Val
 530 535 540

Asp Val Gln Asn Gly Phe Ile Arg Asn Tyr Thr Ile Phe Tyr Arg Thr
 545 550 555 560

Ile Ile Gly Asn Glu Thr Ala Val Asn Val Asp Ser Ser His Thr Glu
 565 570 575

Tyr Thr Leu Ser Ser Leu Thr Ser Asp Thr Leu Tyr Met Val Arg Met
 580 585 590

Ala Ala Tyr Thr Asp Glu Gly Gly Lys Asp Gly Pro Glu Phe Arg Ser
 595 600 605

Cys Asp Lys Thr His Thr Cys Pro Pro Cys Pro Ala Pro Glu Ala Glu
 610 615 620

Gly Ala Pro Ser Val Phe Leu Phe Pro Pro Lys Pro Lys Asp Thr Leu
 625 630 635 640

Met Ile Ser Arg Thr Pro Glu Val Thr Cys Val Val Val Asp Val Ser
 645 650 655

His Glu Asp Pro Glu Val Lys

