

## ABSTRACT

Erythropoietin (*EPO*) is a glycoprotein hormone which plays a vital role in the regulation of the formation of red blood cells in mammals. Inadequate production of *EPO* was found to be one of the major causes of anaemia. Anaemia is also a frequent complication to many other diseases such as AIDS, chronic renal failure, rheumatoid arthritis, etc. In the mid-1980s, anaemia was treated with blood transfusion which however brought about many other problems. The advent of recombinant DNA technology proved to be a useful method for the mass production of recombinant *EPO*. However, finding a stable biofactory for the production of this protein was essential as the expression system needed to have certain attributes for the large and safe production of *EPO*. In this proof of concept experiment, the use of banana (*Musa acuminata*) has shown to be of great potential as an expression system for the production of recombinant *EPO*. Particle bombardment was also a suitable transformation method for the transient expression of the *EPO* gene. The transformation success of about 17-80% success (based on GFP expression and RT-PCR results) proved that meristems of banana were able to express the human *EPO* gene in its system in the period studied. Nevertheless, the production of the recombinant protein appeared to have stunted the growth of the banana plant and decreased the number of multiple shoots formed from the meristem compared to the controls. The use of the KDEL sequence in the gene construct potentially enables the retention of the *EPO* protein in the endoplasmic reticulum for higher expression levels. This study however did not analyse the expression levels of *EPO* with and without the KDEL in its construct. However, the transcription of *EPO* in both the constructs was observed based on the RT-PCR results further suggesting the successful transformation of the cells. This study shows that the

human *EPO* gene can be transformed in banana meristems and the *EPO* mRNA in the transformants were also shown to be successfully transcribed.

## ABSTRAK

Erythropoietin (*EPO*) adalah suatu hormone glikoprotein yang memainkan peranan penting dalam mengawalatur proses pembentukan sel darah merah. Kekurangan penghasilan *EPO* merupakan salah satu sebab anemia. Anemia juga sering dikaitkan dengan pelbagai penyakit lain seperti AIDS, sakit buah pinggang yang kronik, rheumatoid arthritis dan sebagainya. Pada pertengahan tahun 1980, pesakit anemia dirawat dengan transfusi darah yang kemudian didapati membawa kepada banyak masalah lain. Penemuan rekombinan DNA merupakan suatu kaedah yang amat berguna dalam penghasilan secara besaran protein *EPO*. Namun mencari suatu sistem pengekspresan yang stabil bagi penghasilan protein ini adalah penting kerana sistem ini haruslah mempunyai beberapa ciri-ciri yang penting bagi menghasilkan *EPO* yang banyak dan stabil. Dalam eksperimen pembuktiaan konsep ini, penggunaan meristem pisang (*Musa acuminata*) sebagai sistem pengekspresan telah dibuktikan sebagai suatu pilihan sistem yang efisien bagi produksi *EPO* rekombinan. 'Particle bombardment' merupakan suatu kaedah transformasi yang efisien bagi pengekspresan transient gen *EPO*. 17-80% kejayaan yang didapati dalam kajian ini membuktikan bahawa pisang adalah suatu sistem pengekspresan yang dapat mengekalkan gen *epo* manusia dalam jangka masa kajian ini dijalankan. Namun, produksi protein rekombinan ini telah membantutkan pertumbuhan pisang dan juga mengurangkan pertumbuhan mercu pucuk daripada meristem jika dibandingkan dengan kawalan. Penggunaan KDEL dalam vektor mempunyai potensi untuk mengekalkan produksi *EPO* di retikulum endoplasma (ER). Namun dalam kajian ini tahap ekspresi *EPO* dengan dan tanpa KDEL tidak dibuktikan. Tetapi, pengekspresan *epo* dalam kedua-dua jenis vektor ini dapat diperhatikan daripada keputusan RT-PCR. Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa kehadiran gen *EPO* manusia

adalah stabil dalam sistem kultur tisu pisang dan kehadiran mRNA *EPO* juga dapat dikenalpasti.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Prof Rofina Yasmin Othman for her guidance and support throughout the course of my research. She has given me invaluable advice and information which has been of great help in the completion of my project.

A very big thank you to all those who are working in the lab, Ng Cheah Wei, Adriya, Marina, Ser Huey, Sharifah, Geeng Loo and Chuen Yi. Thank you for aiding and assisting me throughout the course of my project. Thank you for also sharing with me the materials needed for this research.

This research would not have been completed without the encouragement, patience and support of my parents and siblings. To my wonderful friends, Hee Teng Wei and Junnie June, thank you very much.

Lastly, I would like to extend my grateful thanks to everyone who has helped me directly and indirectly in the completion of this study.

Thank you very much.

## Table of contents

Abstract.....	i
Abstrak.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of contents.....	vi
List of figures.....	x
List of tables.....	xi
List of appendices.....	xii
Abbreviations.....	xiii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Objective.....	2
2. Literature Review.....	3
2.1 Micropropagation and genetic transformation.....	3
2.1.1 Plant tissue culture.....	3
2.1.2 Banana and its tissue culture system.....	4
2.1.3 Monocot gene delivery system.....	6
2.1.4 Direct genetic transformation.....	7
2.1.5 Particle gun bombardment.....	7
2.2 Molecular pharming.....	9
2.2.1 Protein expression in plants.....	9
2.2.2 Banana as a host system.....	10
2.2.3 Protein targeting in plant organelles.....	11
2.2.4 Endoplasmic reticulum (ER) targeting of proteins in plants.....	12
2.3 Erythropoietin ( <i>EPO</i> ).....	13
2.3.1 Introduction to erythropoietin.....	13
2.3.2 Expression of the <i>EPO</i> gene.....	15

2.4	pCAMBIA1304.....	16
3.	Materials and methods.....	18
3.1	Plant tissue culture.....	18
3.1.1	Plant material and its tissue culture system.....	18
3.1.2	Explant preparation for particle bombardment.....	19
3.2	Plasmid material.....	19
3.2.1	Preparation of pCEPOKDEL and pCEPO.....	20
3.2.1.1	Transformation into <i>Escherichia coli</i> cells.....	20
3.2.1.2	Colony selection.....	20
3.2.1.3	Plasmid minipreparation.....	21
3.3	Polymerase chain reaction.....	23
3.3.1	PCR with <i>EPO</i> primers.....	23
3.4	Preparation of pCEPO plasmid.....	24
3.4.1	Gel extraction.....	24
3.4.2	Sequencing.....	26
3.4.3	Computer analysis.....	26
3.5	Preparation of pCEPOKDEL plasmid.....	27
3.5.1	Sequencing.....	27
3.5.2	Computer analysis.....	28
3.6	Biolistic mediated transformation.....	28
3.7	Verification of transformants.....	28
3.7.1	Visualisation of green fluorescent protein.....	29
3.7.2	RNA extraction.....	29
3.7.3	Reverse-transcriptase PCR.....	30
3.7.4	PCR on cDNA obtained.....	31
3.7.5	Purification of the PCR product.....	31
3.7.6	Sequencing.....	31
3.7.7	Computer analysis.....	31

4. Results.....	32
4.1 Plant material.....	32
4.1.1 Plant propagation.....	32
4.1.2 Plant material for transformation.....	32
4.2 Plasmid preparation.....	35
4.2.1 PCR analysis of plasmids for both pCEPOKDEL and pCEPO with <i>EPO</i> primers.....	35
4.2.2 Preparation of pCEPO.....	35
4.2.3 Preparation of pCEPOKDEL.....	36
4.3 Transformation.....	41
4.3.1 Survival of explants.....	41
4.3.2 Visualisation of GFP.....	41
4.3.3 Molecular analysis of transformants.....	42
5. Discussion.....	53
5.1 Plasmids.....	53
5.2 Plant propagation before and after transformation.....	54
5.3 Visualisation of GFP and molecular analysis of transformants.....	57
6. Conclusion.....	59
7. Reference.....	60
8. Appendix.....	75
8.1 Sequencing results of pCEPO.....	75
8.2 BLAST results for pCEPO plasmid.....	76
8.3 Multiple alignment results of pCEPO.....	78
8.4 Sequencing results of pCEPOKDEL.....	79
8.5 Multiple alignment results of pCEPOKDEL.....	80
8.6 Sequencing results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	81



8.7	Sequencing results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	82
8.8	BLAST results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	83
8.9	BLAST results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	84
8.10	Multiple alignment results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	85
8.11	Multiple alignment results of a transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	86

## List of figures

Figure 2.1	pCAMBIA1304 plasmid construct.....	16
Figure 3.1	Schematic diagram of DNA library plate.....	21
Figure 4.1	Propagation of banana meristems.....	34
Figure 4.2	Excised meristems for bombardment.....	34
Figure 4.3	Electrophoresed pCEPO plasmids on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	37
Figure 4.4	Electrophoresed pCEPOKDEL plasmids on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	38
Figure 4.5	Amplified fragment of <i>EPO</i> from pCEPO plasmid sample on agarose (1%) gel.....	39
Figure 4.6	Amplified fragment of <i>EPO</i> gene from pCEPOKDEL plasmid sample on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	40
Figure 4.7	Explants after bombardment.....	45
Figure 4.8	Explants used for molecular analysis.....	45
Figure 4.9	Normal meristems at 25 days post-bombardment.....	46
Figure 4.10	Normal meristems at 50 days post-bombardment.....	46
Figure 4.11	Retarded growth of meristems.....	47
Figure 4.12	Control meristem viewed for GFP at 400X magnification.....	47
Figure 4.13	Transformed meristem viewed for GFP at 400X magnification.....	48
Figure 4.14	Transformed meristem viewed for GFP at 400X magnification.....	49
Figure 4.15	Electrophoresed cDNA of pCEPO bombarded explants 25 days post-bombardment on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	50
Figure 4.16	Electrophoresed cDNA of pCEPO bombarded explants 50 days post-bombardment on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	51
Figure 4.17	Electrophoresed cDNA of pCEPOKDEL bombarded explants 50 days post-bombardment on agarose (0.7%) gel.....	52

## List of tables

Table 4.1	Number and percentage of survival and dead cultures after 50 days of culturing.....	33
Table 4.2	Rate of survival and death of bombarded explants.....	43
Table 4.3	Results of RT-PCR on bombarded cultures.....	44
Table 4.4	Transformation efficiency after 50 days post-bombardment.....	44

## Appendix

1	Sequencing results of pCEPO.....	75
2	BLAST results of pCEPO.....	76
3	Multiple alignment results of pCEPO.....	78
4	Sequencing results of pCEPOKDEL.....	79
5	Multiple alignment results of pCEPOKDEL.....	80
6	Sequencing results of transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	81
7	Sequencing results of transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	82
8	BLAST results of transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	83
9	BLAST results of transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	84
10	Multiple alignment results of transformant bombarded with pCEPO.....	85
11	Multiple alignment results of transformant bombarded with pCEPOKDEL.....	86

## Abbreviations

BAP	6-benzylaminopurine
BLAST	Basic local alignment search tool
cDNA	complementary deoxyribonucleic acid
cm	centimetre
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	deoxynucleotriphosphate
dH <sub>2</sub> O	distilled water
<i>EPO</i>	erythropoietin
ER	endoplasmic reticulum
<i>et al</i>	<i>et alia</i> (and other people)
GFP	green fluorescent protein
hr	hour
HDEL	His-Asp-Glu-Leu
hEPO	human erythropoietin
kb	kilo base
KDEL	Lys-Asp-Glu-Leu
LB	Luria-Bertani
MS	Murashige and Skoog media
mRNA	messenger ribonucleic acid
mg	milligram
mm	milimeter
mL	mililiter
mM	mili molar
M	molar
min	minute
NaOH	sodium hydroxide
NaCl	sodium chloride

ng	nanogram
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
pCEPO	pCAMBIA1304-epo
pCEPOKDEL	pCAMBIA1304-epo-KDEL
RT-PCR	reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction
rpm	revolutions per minute
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulphate
sec	second
TAE	trisacetate
TBE	trisborate
UV	ultra violet
$\mu\text{L}$	micro liter
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	degree Celsius
%	percentage