Within nine months of the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent in the European Patent Bulletin, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to that patent, in accordance with the Implementing Regulations. Notice of opposition shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid. (Art. 99(1) European Patent Convention).
BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Angiogenesis is a fundamental process required for normal growth and development of tissues, and involves the proliferation of new capillaries from pre-existing blood vessels. Angiogenesis is not only involved in embryonic development and normal tissue growth, repair, and regeneration, but is also involved in the female reproductive cycle, establishment and maintenance of pregnancy, and in repair of wounds and fractures. In addition to angiogenesis which takes place in the normal individual, angiogenic events are involved in a number of pathological processes, notably tumour growth and metastasis, and other conditions in which blood vessel proliferation, especially of the microvascular system, is increased, such as diabetic retinopathy, psoriasis and arthropathies. Inhibition of angiogenesis is useful in preventing or alleviating these pathological processes.

It has been suggested that a particular family of endothelial cell-specific growth factors and their corresponding receptors is primarily responsible for stimulation of endothelial cell growth and differentiation, and for certain functions of the differentiated cells. These factors are members of the PDGF family, and appear to act via endothelial receptor tyrosine kinases (RTKs). Hitherto four vascular endothelial growth factor subtypes have been identified. Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), now known as VEGF-A, has been isolated from several sources. VEGF-A shows highly specific mitogenic activity against endothelial cells, and can stimulate the whole sequence of events leading to angiogenesis. In addition, it has strong chemotactic activity towards monocytes, can induce plasminogen activator and plasminogen activator inhibitor in endothelial cells, and can also influence microvascular permeability. Because of the latter activity, it is also sometimes referred to as vascular permeability factor (VPF). The isolation and properties of VEGF have been reviewed; see Ferrara et al, "The Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor Family of Polypeptides", J. Cellular Biochem., 1991 47 211-218 and Connolly, "Vascular Permeability Factor: A Unique Regulator of Blood Vessel Function", J. Cellular Biochem., 1991 47 219-223.

More recently, three further members of the VEGF family have been identified. These are designated VEGF-B, described in International Patent Application No. PCT/US96/02957 (WO 96/26736) by Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and The University of Helsinki, VEGF-C, described in Joukov et al, The EMBO Journal, 1996 15 290-298, and VEGF2, described in International Patent Application No. PCT/US94/05291 (WO 95/24473) by Human Genome Sciences, Inc. VEGF-B has closely similar angiogenic and other properties to those of VEGF, but is distributed and expressed in tissues differently from VEGF. In particular, VEGF-B is very strongly expressed in heart, and only weakly in lung, whereas the reverse is the case for VEGF. This suggests that VEGF and VEGF-B, despite the fact that they are co-expressed in many tissues, may have functional differences.


VEGF-C was isolated from conditioned media of PC-3 prostate adenocarcinoma cell line (CRL1435) by screening for ability of the medium to produce tyrosine phosphorylation of the endothelial cell-specific receptor tyrosine kinase Flt4, using cells transfected to express Flt4. VEGF-C was purified using affinity chromatography with recombinant Flt4, and was cloned from a PC-3 cDNA library. Its isolation and characteristics are described in detail in Joukov et al, The EMBO Journal, 1996 15 290-298.

VEGF2 was isolated from a highly tumorigenic, oestrogen-independent human breast cancer cell line. While this molecule is stated to have about 22% homology to PDGF and 30% homology to VEGF, the method of isolation of the gene encoding VEGF2 is unclear, and no characterization of the biological activity is disclosed.

Vascular endothelial growth factors appear to act by binding to receptor tyrosine kinases of the PDGF-receptor family. Five endothelial cell-specific receptor tyrosine kinases have been identified, namely Flt-1 (VEGFR-1), KDR/Flik-1 (VEGFR-2), Flt4 (VEGFR-3), Tie and Tek/Tie-2. All of these have the intrinsic tyrosine kinase activity which is necessary for signal transduction. The essential, specific role in vasculogenesis and angiogenesis of Flt-1, Flk-1, Tie and Tek/Tie-
We have now isolated human cDNA encoding a novel protein of the vascular endothelial growth factor family. The novel protein, designated VEGF-D, has structural similarities to other members of this family.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

The invention generally provides an isolated polypeptide having the ability to stimulate endothelial cells proliferation in a mammal, wherein said polypeptide consists of the sequence of a mature VEGF-D which is contained in the fragment spanning amino acid residues 92 and 205 of VEGF-D SEQ ID NO: 5, isolated DNA sequences encoding the polypeptide with the proviso that the polypeptide encoded is not the full-length VEGF-D (SEQ ID No. 5) antibody specifically reactive with the polypeptide and compositions useful for diagnostic and/or therapeutic applications. Also described is an isolated and purified nucleic acid molecule which encodes a novel polypeptide, designated VEGF-D, which is structurally homologous to VEGF, VEGF-B and VEGF-C. The nucleic acid molecule may be a cDNA which comprises the sequence set out in SEQ ID NO. 1, SEQ ID NO. 4, SEQ ID NO. 6 or SEQ ID NO. 7. DNA molecules of sequence such that they hybridise under stringent conditions with DNA of SEQ ID NO. 1, SEQ ID NO. 4, SEQ ID NO. 6 or SEQ ID NO. 7 are also described. Preferably the DNA molecule able to hybridise under stringent conditions encodes the portion of VEGF-D from amino acid residue 93 to amino acid residue 201, optionally operatively linked to a DNA sequence encoding FLAG™ peptide.

**[0014]** The cDNA may comprise the sequence set out in SEQ ID NO. 4, SEQ ID NO. 6 or SEQ ID NO. 7.

**[0015]** Described herein is a polypeptide possessing the characteristic amino acid sequence:

Pro-Xaa-Cys-Val-Xaa-Xaa-Arg-Cys-Xaa-Gly-Cys-Cys (SEQ ID NO. 2),

said polypeptide having the ability to stimulate proliferation of endothelial cells, and said polypeptide comprising a sequence of amino acids substantially corresponding to the amino acid sequence set out in SEQ ID NO. 3, or a fragment or analogue thereof which has the ability to stimulate one or more of endothelial cell proliferation, differentiation, migration or survival. These abilities are referred to herein as "biological activities of VEGF-D" and can readily be tested by methods known in the art. Preferably the polypeptide of the invention has the ability to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation, including, but not limited to, proliferation of vascular endothelial cells and/or lymphatic endothelial cells.

**[0016]** Polypeptides having the sequence set out in SEQ ID NO. 5, SEQ ID NO. 8 or SEQ ID NO. 9 are also described.

**[0017]** A preferred fragment of the polypeptide invention is the portion of VEGF-D from amino acid residue 93 to amino acid residue 201, optionally operatively linked to FLAG™ peptide. Where the fragment is linked to FLAG™, the fragment is VEGFD△NAC, as hereindefined.

**[0018]** Polypeptides comprising conservative substitutions, insertions, or deletions, but which still retain the biological activity of VEGF-D, are also described herein. The person skilled in the art will be well aware of methods which can readily be used to generate such polypeptides, for example the use of site-directed mutagenesis, or specific enzymic cleavage and ligation. The skilled person will also be aware that peptidomimetic compounds or compounds in which one or more amino acid residues are replaced by a non-naturally occurring amino acid or an amino acid analogue may retain the required aspects of the biological activity of VEGF-D. Such compounds can readily be made and tested by methods known in the art.

**[0019]** In addition, variant forms of the VEGF-D polypeptide which result from alternative splicing, as are known to occur with VEGF, and naturally-occurring allelic variants of the nucleic acid sequence encoding VEGF-D are also described. Allelic variants are well known in the art, and represent alternative forms or a nucleic acid sequence which comprise substitution, deletion or addition of one or more nucleotides, but which do not result in any substantial functional alteration of the encoded polypeptide.

**[0020]** As used herein, the term "VEGF-D" collectively refers to the polypeptides of SEQ ID NO. 3, SEQ ID NO. 5, SEQ ID NO. 8 and SEQ ID NO. 9 and fragments or analogues thereof which have the biological activity of VEGF-D as herein defined.

**[0021]** Such variant forms of VEGF-D can be prepared by targeting non-essential regions of the VEGF-D polypeptide for modification. These non-essential regions are expected to fall outside the strongly-conserved regions indicated in
the figures herein, especially Figure 2 and Figure 10. In particular, the growth factors of the PDGF family, including VEGF, are dimeric, and VEGF-B, VEGF-C, PIGF, PDGF-A and PDGF-B show complete conservation of 8 cysteine residues in the N-terminal domains, i.e. the PDGF-like domains (Olofsson et al, 1996; Joukov et al, 1996). These cysteines are thought to be involved in intra- and inter-molecular disulphide bonding. In addition there are further strongly, but not completely, conserved cysteine residues in the C-terminal domains. Loops 1, 2 and 3 of each subunit, which are formed by intra-molecular disulphide bonding, are involved in binding to the receptors for the PDGF/VEGF family of growth factors (Andersson et al: Growth Factors, 1995 12 159-164) As shown herein, the cysteines conserved in previously known members of the VEGF family are also conserved in VEGF-D.

[0022] The person skilled in the art thus is well aware that these cysteine residues should be preserved in any proposed variant form, and that the active sites present in loops 1, 2 and 3 also should be preserved. However, other regions of the molecule can be expected to be of lesser importance for biological function, and therefore offer suitable targets for modification. Modified polypeptides can readily be tested for their ability to show the biological activity of VEGF-D by routine activity assay procedures such as cell proliferation tests.

[0023] It is contemplated that some modified VEGF-D polypeptides will have the ability to bind to endothelial cells, i.e. to VEGF-D receptors, but will be unable to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation, differentiation, migration or survival. These modified polypeptides are expected to be able to act as competitive or non-competitive inhibitors of VEGF-D, and to be useful in situations where prevention or reduction of VEGF-D action is desirable. Such receptor-binding but non-mitogenic, non-differentiation inducing, non-migration inducing or non-survival promoting variants of VEGF-D are referred to herein as "receptor-binding but otherwise inactive variants".

[0024] According to a third aspect, the invention provides a purified and isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide or polypeptide fragment of the invention with the proviso that the polypeptide encoded is not the full-length VEGF-D (SEQ ID No.5). The nucleic acid may be DNA, genomic DNA, cDNA or RNA, and may be single-stranded or double stranded. The nucleic acid may be isolated from a cell or tissue source, or of recombinant or synthetic origin. Because of the degeneracy of the genetic code, the person skilled in the art will appreciate that many such coding sequences are possible, where each sequence encodes the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO. 3, SEQ ID NO. 5, SEQ ID NO. 8 or SEQ ID NO. 9, an active fragment or analogue thereof, or a receptor-binding but otherwise inactive or partially inactive variant thereof.

[0025] A fourth aspect of the invention provides vectors comprising the cDNA of the invention or a nucleic acid according to the third aspect of the invention, and host cells transformed or transfected with nucleic acids or vectors of the invention. These cells are particularly suitable for expression of the polypeptide of the invention, and include insect cells such as Sf9 cells, obtainable from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC SRL-171), transformed with a baculovirus vector, and the human embryo kidney cell line 293EBNA transfected by a suitable expression plasmid. Preferred vectors of the invention are expression vectors in which a nucleic acid according to the invention is operatively connected to one or more appropriate promoters and/or other control sequences, such that appropriate host cells transformed or transfected with the vectors are capable of expressing the polypeptide of the invention. Other preferred vectors are those suitable for transfection of mammalian cells, or for gene therapy, such as adenovirus or retrovirus vectors or liposomes. A variety of such vectors is known in the art.

[0026] The invention also provides a method of making a vector capable of expressing a polypeptide encoded by a nucleic acid according to the invention, comprising the steps of operatively connecting the nucleic acid to one or more appropriate promoters and/or other control sequences, as described above.

[0027] The invention further provides a method of making a polypeptide according to the invention, comprising the steps of expressing a nucleic acid or vector of the invention in a host cell, and isolating the polypeptide from the host cell or from the host cell’s growth medium. In one preferred embodiment of this aspect of the invention, the expression vector further comprises a sequence encoding an affinity tag, such as FLAG™ or hexahistidine, in order to facilitate purification of the polypeptide by affinity chromatography.

[0028] In yet a further aspect, the invention provides an antibody specifically reactive with a polypeptide of the invention. Such antibodies are useful as inhibitors or agonists of VEGF-D and as diagnostic agents for detection and quantification of VEGF-D. Monoclonal or polyclonal antibodies may be used. Monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies can be raised against polypeptides of the invention using standard methods in the art. For some purposes, for example where a monoclonal antibody is to be used to inhibit effects of VEGF-D in a clinical situation, it may be desirable to use humanized or chimeric monoclonal antibodies. Methods for producing these, including recombinant DNA methods, are also well known in the art. An antibody according to the invention may be suitably labelled. Polypeptides or antibodies according to the invention may be labelled with a detectable label, and utilised for diagnostic purposes. Similarly, the thus-labelled polypeptide of the invention may be used to identify its corresponding receptor in situ. The polypeptide or antibody may be covalently or non-covalently coupled to a suitable supermagnetic, paramagnetic, electron dense, ecogenic or radio-active agent for imaging. For use in diagnostic assays, radioactive or non-radioactive labels, the latter including enzyme labels or labels of the biotin/avidin system, may be used.

[0029] Clinical applications of the invention include diagnostic applications, acceleration of angiogenesis in wound
healing, tissue or organ transplantation, or to establish collateral circulation in tissue infarction or arterial stenosis, such as coronary artery disease, and inhibition of angiogenesis in the treatment of cancer or of diabetic retinopathy. Quantitation of VEGF-D in cancer biopsy specimens may be useful as an indicator of future metastatic risk.

Inasmuch as VEGF-D is highly expressed in the lung, and it also increases vascular permeability, it is relevant to a variety of lung conditions. VEGF-D assays could be used in the diagnosis of various lung disorders. VEGF-D could also be used in the treatment of lung disorders to improve blood circulation in the lung and or gaseous exchange between the lungs and the blood stream. Similarly, VEGF-D could be used to improve blood circulation to the heart and O2 gas permeability in cases of cardiac insufficiency. In like manner, VEGF-D could be used to improve blood flow and gaseous exchange in chronic obstructive airway disease.

Conversely, VEGF-D antagonists (e.g. antibodies and/or inhibitors) could be used to treat in conditions, such as congestive heart failure, involving accumulations of fluid in, for example, the lung resulting from increases in vascular permeability, by exerting an offsetting effect on vascular permeability in order to counteract the fluid accumulation.

VEGF-D is also expressed in the small intestine and colon, and administrations of VEGF-D could be used to treat malabsorptive syndromes in the intestinal tract as a result of its blood circulation increasing and vascular permeability increasing activities.

Described herein is a method of stimulation of angiogenesis and/or neovascularization in a mammal in need of such treatment, comprising the step of administering an effective amount of a VEGF-D polypeptide or an antibody thereto. Compositions which comprise VEGF-D polypeptide according to the provision of a pharmaceutical composition comprising, either the VEGF-D polypeptide of the invention which promotes proliferation of endothelial cells, or an antibody thereto.

A method of detecting aberrations in VEGF-D gene structure in a test subject which may be associated with a disease condition in said test subject comprises providing a DNA sample from said test subject; contacting the DNA sample with a reagent capable of binding VEGF-D, and detecting the binding. Preferably the reagent capable of binding VEGF-D is an antibody directed against VEGF-D, more preferably a monoclonal antibody. The binding and/or extent of binding may be detected by means of a detectable label; suitable labels are discussed above.

Where VEGF-D or an antagonist is to be used for therapeutic purposes, the dose and route of application will depend upon the condition to be treated, and will be at the discretion of the attending physician or veterinarian. Suitable routes include subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous injection, topical application, implants etc. Topical application of VEGF-D may be used in a manner analogous to VEGF.

Diagnostic/prognostic means typically in the form of test kits are also described. For example, a diagnostic/prognostic test kit comprises an antibody to VEGF-D and means for detecting, and may also comprise means for evaluating, binding between the antibody and VEGF-D. Either the antibody or the VEGF-D is labelled with a detectable label, and either the antibody or the VEGF-D is substrate-bound, such that the VEGF-D-antibody interaction can be established by determining the amount of label attached to the substrate following binding between the antibody and the VEGF-D.

The diagnostic/prognostic means may be provided as a conventional ELISA kit.

Alternatively, the diagnostic/prognostic means may comprise polymerase chain reaction means for establishing the genomic sequence structure of a VEGF-D gene of a test individual and comparing this sequence structure with that disclosed in this application in order to detect any abnormalities, with a view to establishing whether any aberrations in VEGF-D expression are related to a given disease condition.

A method of detecting aberrations in VEGF-D gene structure in a test subject which may be associated with a disease condition in said test subject comprises providing a DNA sample from said test subject; contacting the DNA sample with a set of primers specific to VEGF-D DNA operatively coupled to a polymerase and selectively amplifying VEGF-D DNA from the sample by polymerase chain reaction, and comparing the nucleotide sequence of the amplified VEGF-D DNA from the sample with the nucleotide sequences set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:4. A test kit comprises a pair of primers specific to VEGF-D DNA operatively coupled to a polymerase, whereby said polymerase is enabled to selectively amplify VEGF-D DNA from a DNA sample.

Another aspect of the invention concerns the use of a polypeptide or an antibody according to the invention in the provision of a pharmaceutical composition comprising, either the VEGF-D polypeptide of the invention which promotes proliferation of endothelial cells, or an antibody thereto. Compositions which comprise VEGF-D polypeptide according to the invention may optionally further comprise one or more of VEGF, VEGF-B and VEGF-C, and/or heparin.
A protein dimer comprises VEGF-D polypeptide, particularly a disulphide-linked dimer. The protein dimers include both homodimers of VEGF-D polypeptide and heterodimers of VEGF-D and VEGF, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, PIGF or PDGF.

A method for isolation of VEGF-D comprises the step of exposing a cell which expresses VEGF-D to heparin to facilitate release of VEGF-D from the cell, and purifying the thus-released VEGF-D.

Described herein is a vector comprising an anti-sense nucleotide sequence which is complementary to at least a part of a DNA sequence which encodes VEGF-D or a fragment or analogue thereof which promotes proliferation of endothelial cells. Such a vector comprising an anti-sense sequence may be used to inhibit, or at least mitigate, VEGF-D expression. The use of a vector of this type to inhibit VEGF-D expression is favoured in instances where VEGF-D expression is associated with a disease, for example where tumours produce VEGF-D in order to provide for angiogenesis. Transformation of such tumour cells with a vector containing an anti-sense nucleotide sequence would suppress or retard angiogenesis, and so would inhibit or retard growth of the tumour.

Polynucleotides such as those described above, fragments of those polynucleotides, and variants of those polynucleotides with sufficient similarity to the non-coding strand of those polynucleotides to hybridise thereto under stringent conditions all are useful for identifying, purifying, and isolating polynucleotides encoding other, non-human, mammalian forms of VEGF-D. Exemplary stringent hybridisation conditions are as follows: hybridisation at 42°C in 5X SSC, 20 mM NaPO₄, pH 6.8, 50% formamide; and washing at 42°C in 0.2X SSC. Those skilled in the art understand that it is desirable to vary these conditions empirically based on the length and the GC nucleotide base content of the sequences to be hybridised, and that formulae for determining such variation exist. See for example Sambrook et al, "Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual", Second Edition, Cold Spring Harbor, New York: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (1989).

It will be clearly understood that nucleic acids and polypeptides of the invention may be prepared by synthetic means or by recombinant means, or may be purified from natural sources.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Figure 1 shows a comparison between the sequences of human VEGF-D and human VEGF₁₆₅ (Figure 1a), human VEGF-B (Figure 1b), human VEGF-C (Figure 1c) and human PIGF (Figure 1d). The box indicates residues which match those in human VEGF-D exactly;

Figure 2 shows sequence alignments between the sequences of human VEGF-D, human VEGF₁₆₅, human VEGF-B, human VEGF-C and human PIGF. The boxes indicate residues that match the VEGF-D sequence exactly; and

Figure 3 shows the amino acid sequence of human VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO 3), as predicted from the cDNA sequence (SEQ ID NO 1). The boxes indicate potential sites for N-linked glycosylation.

Figure 4 shows the nucleotide sequence of a second cDNA sequence encoding human VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO 4), isolated by hybridisation from a commercial human lung cDNA library; this cDNA contains the entire coding region for human VEGF-D;

Figure 5 shows the amino acid sequence for human VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO 5) deduced from the sequence of the cDNA of Figure 4;

Figure 6 shows the nucleotide sequence of cDNA encoding mouse VEGF-D1 (SEQ ID NO 6), isolated by hybridisation screening for a commercially-available mouse lung cDNA library;

Figure 7 shows the nucleotide sequence of cDNA encoding mouse VEGF-D2 (SEQ ID NO 7), isolated from the same library as in Figure 6;

Figure 8 shows the deduced amino acid sequences for mouse VEGF-D1 (SEQ ID NO 8) and VEGF-D2 (SEQ ID NO 9);

Figure 9 shows a comparison between the deduced amino acid sequences of mouse VEGF-D1, mouse VEGF-D2 and human VEGF-D;

Figure 10 shows sequence alignments between the amino acid sequences of human VEGF-D, human VEGF₁₆₅, human VEGF-B, human VEGF-C and human PIGF; and

Figure 11 shows the results of a bioassay in which conditioned medium from COS cells expressing either VEGF-A or VEGF-D was tested for ability to bind to the extracellular domain of a chimeric receptor expressed in Ba/F3 cells. Figure 12 shows the results of immunoprecipitation and Western blotting analysis of VEGF-D peptides (A) pEFBOSVGFDfuFLAG and pCDNA-1VEGF-A were transfected into COS cells and biosynthetically labelled with 35S-cysteine/methionine for 4 hours. The supernatants from these cultures were immunoprecipitated with either M2 gel or an antiserum directed to VEGF-A coupled to protein A. Washed beads were eluted with an equal volume of 2 x SDS-PAGE sample buffer and boiled. The samples were then resolved by 12% SDS-PAGE. Lanes marked with an asterix (*) indicate where samples were reduced with dithiothreitol and alkylated.
with iodoacetamide. Molecular weight markers are indicated. fA and fB indicate the 43 kD and 25 kD species immunoprecipitated by the M2 gel from the COS cells expressing pEFBOSVEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\)FLAG.

(B) Western blotting analysis of purified VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) An aliquot of material eluted from the M2 affinity column (fraction #3, VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\)) was combined with 2 x SDS-PAGE sample buffer and resolved on a 15% SDS-PAGE gel. The proteins were then transferred to nitrocellulose membrane and probed with either monoclonal antibody M2 or a control isotype-matched antibody (Neg). Blots were developed using a goat anti-mouse-HRP secondary antibody and chemiluminescence (ECL , Amersham). Monomeric VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) is arrowed, as is the putative dimeric form of this peptide (VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C^*\)). Molecular weight markers are indicated.

Figure 13 shows the results of analysis of VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) protein using the VEGFR2 bioassay. Recombinant VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\), and material purified by M2 affinity chromatography, was assessed using the VEGFR2 bioassay. Bioassay cells (10^4), washed to remove IL-3, were incubated with aliquots of conditioned medium from VEGF-D transfected COS cells, fraction #1 from the affinity column (void volume) or fraction #3 from the affinity column (containing VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\)). All samples were tested at an initial concentration of 20% (ie 1/5) followed by doubling dilutions. Cells were allowed to incubate for 48 hours at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere of 10% CO\(_2\). Cell proliferation was quantitated by the addition of 1 \(\mu\)Ci of \(^3\)H-thymidine and counting the amount incorporated over a period of 4 hours.

Figure 14 shows stimulation of tyrosine phosphorylation of the VEGFR3 receptor (Flt4) on NIH3T3 cells by culture supernatant from HF cells infected with a recombinant baculovirus vector transformed with VEGF-D. Figure 15 shows stimulation of tyrosine phosphorylation of the VEGFR2 receptor (KDR) in PAE cells by culture supernatant prepared as in Figure 14. Figure 16 shows the mitogenic effect of VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) on bovine aortic endothelial cells (BAEs). BAEs were treated with fraction #3 containing VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) and, as positive control, purified VEGF-A as described in the text. The result obtained using medium without added growth factor is denoted Medium Control.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Example 1 (Comparative)

It has been speculated that no further members of the VEGF family will be found, because there are no known orphan receptors in the VEGFR family. Furthermore, we are not aware of any suggestion in the prior art that other such family members would exist.

A computer search of nucleic acid databases was carried out incidentally to another project, using as search topics the amino acid sequences of VEGF, VEGF-B, VEGF-C and PIGF. Several cDNA sequences were identified by this search. One of these sequences, GenBank Accession No. H24828, encoded a polypeptide which was similar in structure to the cysteine-rich C-terminal region of VEGF-C. This sequence was obtained from the database of expressed sequence tags (dbEST), and for the purposes of this specification is designated XPT. The XPT cDNA had been isolated from a human cDNA library designated “Soares Breast 3NbHBst”, which was constructed using mRNA from an adult human female breast tissue. As far as can be ascertained this was normal breast tissue. Sequencing of the XPT cDNA had been performed pursuant to the Integrated Molecular Analysis of Genome Expression Consortium (IMAGE Consortium), which solicits cDNA libraries from laboratories around the world, arrays the cDNA clones, and provides them to other organisations for sequencing.

The XPT sequence shown in the database was 419 nucleotides long, and encoded an amino acid sequence similar to the C-terminal 100 amino acids of VEGF-C, ie. approximately residues 250 to 350, using the numbering system of Joukov et al (1996). Similarly cysteine-rich regions are found in other proteins, which are entirely unrelated in function to the VEGF family, for example the secreted silk-like protein sp185 synthesized in the salivary glands of the midge Chironomus tentans. This protein is encoded by the gene BR3, located in a Balbiani ring, a tissue specific chromosome (Dignam and Case: Gene, 1990 88 133-140; Paulsson et al, J. Mol. Biol., 1990 211 331-349). It is stated in Joukov et al (1996) that the sp185-like structural motif in VEGF-C may fold into an independent domain, which is thought to be at least partially cleaved off after biosynthesis, and that there is at least one cysteine motif of the sp185 type in the C-terminal region of VEGF.

Figure 3 of Joukov et al shows that the last two-thirds of the C-terminal cysteine-rich region of VEGF-C do not align with VEGF or P1GF, and in fact could be considered a C-terminal extension of VEGF-C which is not present in VEGF or P1GF. The sequence encoded by XPT is similar to this extension. As the XPT cDNA was truncated at its 5’ end, it was not possible to deduce or predict any amino acid sequence for regions N-terminal to the cysteine-rich domain.
Thus the portion of VEGF-C which is similar to the XPT-derived sequence does not extend to regions of VEGF-C which are conserved among other members of the VEGF family.

As described above, it was not possible to predict whether the N-terminal region of the polypeptide encoded by a full-length XPT nucleic acid (as distinct from the truncated XPT cDNA reported in dbEST) would show any further homology to any member of the VEGF family, in particular VEGF-C, which has a further N-terminal 250 amino acids. For example, the naturally-occurring protein encoded by a full-length XPT nucleic acid could have been the human homologue of the midge salivary gland protein. Alternatively, the type of cysteine-rich motif encoded by truncated XPT cDNA could be widely distributed among proteins, as are many structural domains. For example, clusters of cysteine residues may be involved in metal binding, formation of intramolecular disulphide bonds to promote accurate protein folding, or formation of intermolecular disulphide bonds for assembly of protein subunits into complexes (Dignam and Chase, 1990). In order to determine whether the truncated XPT cDNA was derived from sequences encoding a VEGF-related molecule, it was necessary to isolate a much longer cDNA.

Example 2 Cloning of cDNA Encoding VEGF-D

A sample of the XPT cDNA reported in dbEST was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection, which is a registered supplier of cDNA clones obtained by the IMAGE Consortium. The identity of the XPT cDNA was confirmed by nucleotide sequencing, using the dideoxy chain termination method (Sanger et al, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 1977 74 5463-5467).

The XPT cDNA was used as a hybridisation probe to screen a human breast cDNA library, which was obtained commercially from Clontech. One positive clone was isolated, and this clone was then sequenced on both strands. The nucleotide sequence was compiled and an open reading frame was identified. The nucleic acid sequence is set out in SEQ ID NO. 1. The polypeptide encoded by this sequence was designated VEGF-D, and its deduced amino acid sequence, designated SEQ ID NO. 3, is set out in Figure 3. In Figure 3 putative sites of N-linked glycosylation, with the consensus sequence N-X-S/T in which X is any amino acid, are indicated by the boxes.

Example 3 Characteristics of VEGF-D (Comparative)

The amino acid sequence of VEGF-D was compared with those of human VEGF-A165, VEGF-B, VEGF-C and P1GF. These comparisons are set out in Figures 1a to d respectively. The degree of sequence homology was calculated, and if gaps in sequence introduced for the purposes of alignment are not considered in the calculation, VEGF-D is 31% identical to VEGF, 48% identical to VEGF-C, 28% identical to VEGF-B and 32% identical to P1GF. Thus the most closely-related protein identified was VEGF-C.

Computer searches of the GenBank, EMBL and SwissProt nucleic acid databases did not reveal any protein sequences identical to VEGF-D. As expected from the sequence alignment referred to above, the most closely related protein found in these databases was VEGF-C. Searches of dbEST were also performed, but did not reveal any sequences encompassing the entire coding region of VEGF-D. The sequence of VEGF-D is unrelated to that of Tie-2 ligand 1 as disclosed in WO 96/11269.

It is important to bear in mind that the only homologies detected were at the level of amino acid sequence. Thus it would not have been possible to isolate the cDNA or gDNA encoding VEGF-D by methods such as low-stringency hybridization with a nucleic acid sequence encoding another member of the VEGF family.

VEGF-D appears to be most closely related to VEGF-C of all the members of the VEGF family. Because the VEGF-D amino acid sequence includes the cysteine-rich sp185-like motif which is found in VEGF-C, the polypeptide of the invention may play an important functional role in lymphatic endothelia. While we do not wish to be bound by any proposed mechanism, it is thought that VEGF-C and VEGF-D may constitute a silk-like matrix over which endothelial cells can grow. Lymphatic vessels have no basement membrane, so the silk-like matrix can form a basement membrane-like material. This may be important in promoting cell growth and/or in cell differentiation, and may be relevant to cancer, especially metastasis, drug therapy, cancer prognosis, etc.

Example 4 Biological Characteristics of VEGF-D

The cDNA sequence of VEGF-D was used to predict the deduced amino acid sequence of VEGF-D, the biochemical characteristics of the encoded polypeptide, including the numbers of strongly basic, strongly acidic, hydrophobic and polar amino acids, the molecular weight, the isoelectric point, the charge at pH 7, and the compositional analysis of the whole protein. This analysis was performed using the Protan protein analysis program, Version 1.20 (DATASTAR). These results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 below. Table 1 also shows the codon usage.
### Table 1
Translated DNA Sequence of VEGF-D contig x(1,978)
With Standard Genetic Code

Molecular Weight 37056.60 Daltons
425 Amino Acids
46 Strong Basic(+) Amino Acids (K,R)
41 Strong Acidic(-) Amino Acids (D,E)
79 hydrophobic Amino Acids (A,I,L,F,W,V)
108 Polar Amino Acids (N,C,Q,S,T,Y)

7.792 Isoelectric Point
6.371 Charge at pH 7.0

Total number of bases translated is 978
% A = 28.73  [281]
% G = 23.11  [226]
% T = 23.21  [227]
% C = 24.95  [244]
% Ambiguous = 0.00  [0]
% A+T = 51.94  [508]
% C+G = 48.06  [470]

Davis, Botstein, Roth Melting Temp °C.  84.09
Wallace Temp °C.  3384.00
Table 1 (cont.)

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<th>Codon usage:</th>
<th>0 # ugc Cys(C)</th>
<th>14 # cuc Leu(L)</th>
<th>6 # ucg Ser(S)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1 # uga Ter(?)</td>
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<td>5 # nnn ???(X)</td>
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<td>13 # cua Leu(L)</td>
<td>5 # ucc Ser(S)</td>
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Contig 2:

- Contig Length: 2379 bases
- Average Length/Sequence: 354 bases
- Total Sequence Length: 4969 bases
Table 2
Predicted Structural Class of the Whole Protein:
Deléage & Roux Modification of Nishikawa & Ooi 1987

<table>
<thead>
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<td>1 microgram =</td>
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<td>Molar Extinction coefficient</td>
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<td>1 A(280) =</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Charge at pH 7</td>
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This analysis predicts a molecular weight for the unprocessed VEGF-D monomer of 37 kilodaltons (kD), compared to the experimentally determined values (for the fully processes peptides) of 20 to 27 kD for VEGF-A monomers, 21 kD for the VEGF-B monomer and 23 kD for the VEGF-C monomer.

Example 5

The original isolation of a cDNA for VEGF-D, described in Example 2 involved hybridisation screening of a human breast cDNA library. As only one cDNA clone for VEGF-D was thus isolated, it was not possible to confirm the structure of the cDNA by comparison with other independently isolated VEGF-D cDNAs. The work described in this
example, which involved isolation of additional human VEGF-D cDNA clones, was carried out in order to confirm the structure of human VEGF-D cDNA. In addition, mouse VEGF-D cDNA clones were isolated.

[0064] Two cDNA libraries which had been obtained commercially from Stratagene, one for human lung and one for mouse lung (catalogue numbers 937210 and 936307, respectively) were used for hybridisation screening with a VEGF-D cDNA probe. The probe, which spanned from nucleotides 1817 to 2495 of the cDNA for human VEGF-D described in Example 2, was generated by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) using a plasmid containing the VEGF-D cDNA as template and the following two oligonucleotides:

5'-GGGCTGCTTCTAGTTTGGAG (SEQ ID NO. 10), and
5'-CACCTCGCAACGATCTTCGTC (SEQ ID NO. 11).

[0065] Approximately two million recombinant bacteriophage were screened with this probe from each of the two cDNA libraries. Nine human and six mouse cDNA clones for VEGF-D were subsequently isolated.

[0066] Two of the nine human cDNA clones for VEGF-D were sequenced completely using the dideoxy chain termination method (Sanger et al, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 1977 74 5463-5467). The two cDNAs contained the entire coding region for human VEGF-D, and were identical except that one of the clones was five nucleotides longer than the other at the 5'-terminus. The nucleotide sequence of the shorter cDNA is shown in Figure 4, and is designated SEQ ID NO. 4. The amino acid sequence for human VEGF-D (hVEGF-D) deduced from this cDNA was 354 residues long, and is shown in Figure 5; this is designated SEQ ID NO. 5. The sequences of the 5' regions of five of the other human VEGF-D cDNA clones were also determined. For each clone, the sequence that was characterized contained more than 100 nucleotides of DNA immediately downstream from the translation start site of the coding region. In all cases, the sequences of these regions were identical to corresponding regions of the human VEGF-D cDNA shown in Figure 4.

[0067] All six mouse cDNA clones for VEGF-D were sequenced completely. Only two of the clones contained an entire coding region for VEGF-D; the other clones were truncated. The nucleotide sequences of the two clones with an entire coding region are different, and encode amino acid sequences of different sizes. The longer amino acid sequence is designated mVEGF-D1, and the shorter sequence is designated mVEGF-D2. The nucleotide sequences of the cDNAs encoding mVEGF-D1 and mVEGF-D2 are shown in Figures 6 and 7 respectively. The deduced amino acid sequences for mVEGF-D1 and mVEGF-D2 are shown in Figure 8. These sequences are respectively designated SEQ ID NOS. 6, 7, 8 and 9. The differences between the amino acid sequences are:

i) an insertion of five amino acids (DFSFE) after residue 30 in mVEGF-D1 in comparison to mVEGF-D2;
ii) complete divergence of the C-terminal ends after residue 317 in mVEGF-D1 and residue 312 in mVEGF-D2, which results in mVEGF-D1 being considerably longer.

[0068] Three of the four truncated cDNAs for mouse VEGF-D encoded the C-terminal region, but not the N-terminal 50 amino acids. All three of these cDNAs encoded a C-terminal end for VEGF-D which is identical to that for mVEGF-D2. The other truncated cDNA encoded only the N-terminal half of VEGF-D. The amino acid sequence deduced from this cDNA contained the five amino acids DFSFE immediately after residue 30 found in mVEGF-D1, but not in mVEGF-D2.

[0069] As described above, the entire sequence of the human VEGF-D cDNA clone reported in this example has been validated by comparison with that for a second human clone. In addition; the sequence of the 5' end of the coding region was found to be identical in five other human VEGF-D cDNA clones. In contrast, the sequence reported in Example 2 contained most of the coding region for VEGF-D, but was incorrect near the 5'-end of this region. This was probably because the VEGF-D cDNA was truncated near the 5'-end of the coding region and at that point had been ligated with another unidentified cDNA, and consequently the first 30 codons of the true coding sequence for VEGF-D had been deleted and replaced with a methionine residue. This methionine residue was defined as the N-terminal amino acid of the VEGF-D sequence presented in Example 2.

[0070] The N-terminal regions of the deduced amino acid sequences of mouse VEGF-D1 and VEGF-D2 are very similar to that deduced for human VEGF-D (see Figure 9). This also indicates that the correct deduced amino acid sequence for human VEGF-D is reported in this example. The N-terminal 25 amino acids of human VEGF-D form an extremely hydrophobic region, which is consistent with the notion that part of this region may be a signal sequence for protein secretion. Figure 10 shows the alignment of the human VEGF-D sequence with the sequences of other members of the VEGF family of growth factors, namely human VEGF165 (hVEGF165), human VEGF-B (hVEGF-B), human VEGF-C (hVEGF-C) and human Placental Growth Factor (hPlGF). When gaps in the alignments are ignored for the purposes of calculation, human VEGF-D is found to be 31% identical in amino acid sequence to human VEGF165, 28% identical to human VEGF-B, 48% identical to VEGF-C and 32% identical to human P1GF. Clearly VEGF-C is the member of this family which is most closely related to VEGF-D.

[0071] The differences in sequence for mouse VEGF-D1 and VEGF-D2 most probably arise from differential mRNA splicing. The C-terminal 41 amino acid residues of VEGF-D1 are deleted in VEGF-D2, and are replaced with 9 residues
which are not closely related to the VEGF-D1 sequence. Therefore 4 cysteine residues present near the C-terminus of VEGF-D1 are deleted in VEGF-D2. This change may alter the tertiary or quaternary structures of the protein, or may affect the localisation of the protein in the cell or the extracellular environment. The C-terminal end of human VEGF-D resembles that of mouse VEGF-D1, not mouse VEGF-D2. The small 5 amino acid insertion after residue 30 in mouse VEGF-D1, which is not present in either mouse VEGF-D2 or human VEGF-D, may influence proteolytic processing of the protein.

[0072] VEGF-D is highly conserved between mouse and man. Eighty-five percent of the amino acid residues of human VEGF-D are identical in mouse VEGF-D1. This is likely to reflect conservation of protein function. Putative functions for VEGF-D have been proposed herein. Although we have not found alternative forms of human VEGF-D cDNA, it is possible that the RNA splice variation which gives rise to numerous forms of mRNA for mouse VEGF-D may also occur in human tissues.

Example 6 Expression of VEGF-D in COS Cells

[0073] A fragment of the human cDNA for VEGF-D, spanning from nucleotide 1 to 1520 of the sequence shown in Figure 4 and containing the entire coding region, was inserted into the mammalian expression vector pCDNA1-amp. The vector was used to transiently transfect COS cells by the DEAE-Dextran method as described previously (Aruffo and Seed, 1987) and the resulting conditioned cell culture media, collected after 7 days of incubation, were concentrated using Amicon concentrators (Centricon 10 with a 10,000 molecular weight cut off) according to the manufacturer. The plasmids used for transfections were the expression construct for human VEGF-D and, as positive control, a construct made by insertion of mouse VEGF-A cDNA into pCDNA1-amp. The conditioned media were tested in two different bioassays, as described below, and the results demonstrate that the COS cells did in fact express and secrete biologically-active VEGF-D.

Example 7 Bioassay for Capacity of VEGF-D to Bind to VEGF Receptor-2

[0074] As shown in Example 5, VEGF-D is closely related in primary structure to other members of the VEGF family. Most members of this protein family are mitogenic and/or chemotactic for endothelial cells (Keck et al, 1989; Leung et al, 1989; Joukov, et al, 1996; Olofsson et al, 1996). In addition VEGF-A (previously known as VEGF), the first member of the VEGF family to be described in the literature, is a potent inducer of vascular permeability (Keck et al, 1989). As protein structure is an important determinant of protein function, it seemed likely that VEGF-D might also be mitogenic for endothelial cells or induce vascular permeability. Therefore human VEGF-D was tested in a bioassay for its capacity to bind to VEGF receptor-2 (VEGFR2; also known as Flk-1), an endothelial cell-specific receptor which, when activated by VEGF-A, is thought to give rise to a mitogenic signal (Strawn et al, 1996).

[0075] A bioassay for detection of growth factors which bind to VEGFR2 has been developed in the factor-dependent cell line Ba/F3, and is described in our earlier patent application, No. PCT/US95/16755. These cells grow in the presence of interleukin-3 (IL-3); however removal of this factor results in cell death within 48 hours. If another receptor capable of delivering a growth stimulus is transfected into the Ba/F3 cells, the cells can be rescued by the specific growth factor which activates that receptor when the cells are grown in medium lacking IL-3. In the specific case of receptor-type tyrosine kinases (eg. VEGFR2), chimeric receptors containing the extracellular domain of the receptor tyrosine kinase and the transmembrane and cytoplasmic domains of the erythropoietin receptor (EpoR) can be utilised. In this case stimulation with the ligand (eg. VEGF), which binds to the extracellular domain of the chimeric receptor, results in signalling via the EpoR cytoplasmic domain and subsequent rescue of the cell line in growth medium lacking IL-3. The construction of the chimeric receptor used in this study, consisting of the mouse VEGFR2 extracellular domain and the mouse EpoR transmembrane and cytoplasmic domains, and the bioassay itself are described below.

Plasmid Construction

i) Construction of a plasmid for generating chimeric VEGFR2 receptors

[0076] To obtain a plasmid construct with which DNA encoding the extracellular domain of mouse VEGFR2 could easily be ligated with DNA encoding other protein domains, site-directed mutagenesis was used to generate a BglII restriction enzyme site at the position of mouse VEGFR2 cDNA which encoded the junction of the extracellular domain and the transmembrane domain. The full-length clone of the mouse VEGFR2 cDNA described by Oelrichs et al (1993) was subcloned into the mammalian expression vector pCDNA1-amp, using the BstXI restriction enzyme site. Single stranded UTP+ DNA was generated using the M13 origin of replication, and this was used as a template to generate mouse VEGFR2 cDNA containing the BglII site at the desired position. The plasmid containing the altered VEGFR2 cDNA was designated pVEGFR2Bgl. DNA fragments encoding the transmembrane and cytoplasmic domains of any...
The data described here indicate that VEGF-D is a secreted protein which, like VEGF-A, binds to and activates
the presence of VEGF-A or VEGF-D demonstrated that both of these proteins strongly induced vascular permeability.

The enhanced extravasation of dye observed for both animals in the conditioned sample was 0.141, that for the VEGF-D conditioned sample was 0.116 and that for a sample matched for the bioassay.

The Bioassay

The Ba/F3-NYK-EpoR cells described above were washed three times in PBS to remove all IL-3 and resuspended at a concentration of 1000 cells per 13.5 μl of culture medium and 13.5 μl was aliquoted per well of a 60-well Terasaki plate. Conditioned media from transfected COS cells were then diluted into the cell culture medium. Cells expressing a chimeric receptor consisting of the extracellular domain of the endothelial cell receptor Tie2 and the transmembrane and cytoplasmic domains of EpoR were used as a non-responding control cell line. Cells were incubated for 48-96 hours, during which the cells incubated in cell culture medium alone had died and the relative survival/proliferation seen in the other wells (ie. in the presence of COS cell-conditioned media) was scored by counting the viable cells present per well.

The conditioned medium from COS cells which had been transiently transfected with expression plasmids was concentrated 30-fold and used in the VEGFR2 bioassay. Concentrated conditioned medium from COS cells transfected with pCDNA1-amp was used as negative control.

Example 8 Vascular Permeability Assay (Comparative)

Human VEGF-D, prepared as in Example 6 and concentrated 30-fold, was tested in the Miles vascular permeability assay (Miles and Miles, 1952) performed in anaesthetized guinea pigs (albino/white, 300-400 g). Concentrated conditioned medium for COS cells transfected with pCDNA1-amp was used as negative control. Guinea pigs were anaesthetised with chloral-hydrate (3.6 g/100 ml; 0.1 ml per 10 g of body weight). The backs of the animals were then carefully shaved with clippers. Animals were given an intracardiac injection of Evans Blue dye (0.5% in MT PBS, 0.5 ml) using a 23G needle, and were then injected intra-dermally with 100-150 μl of concentrated COS cell-conditioned medium. After 15-20 min the animals were sacrificed and the layer of skin on the back excised to expose the underlying blood vessels. For quantitation, the area of each injection was excised and heated to 45°C in 2-5 ml of formamide. The resulting supernatants, containing extravasated dye, were then examined spectrophotometrically at 620 nm.

For animal 1, the absorbance at 620 nm arising from injection of 30-fold concentrated VEGF-A conditioned medium was 0.178, that for the 30-fold concentrated VEGF-D conditioned medium was 0.114, and that for 30-fold concentrated medium from cells transfected with pCDNA1-amp was 0.004. For animal 2, the 30-fold concentrated media were diluted 4-fold in cell culture medium before intra-dermal injection. The absorbance at 620 nm for the VEGF-A conditioned sample was 0.141, that for the VEGF-D conditioned sample was 0.116 and that for a sample matched for serum content as negative control was 0.017. The enhanced extravasation of dye observed for both animals in the presence of VEGF-A or VEGF-D demonstrated that both of these proteins strongly induced vascular permeability.

The data described here indicate that VEGF-D is a secreted protein which, like VEGF-A, binds to and activates
Example 9 Bioactivities of Internal VEGF-D Polypeptides

[0085] The deduced amino acid sequence for VEGF-D includes a central region which is similar in sequence to all other members of the VEGF family (approximately residues 101 to 196 of the human VEGF-D amino acid sequence as shown in the alignment in Figure 10). Therefore, it was thought that the bioactive portion of VEGF-D might reside in the conserved region. In order to test this hypothesis, the biosynthesis of VEGF-D was studied, and the conserved region of human VEGF-D was expressed in mammalian cells, purified, and tested in bioassays as described below.

Plasmid construction

[0086] A DNA fragment encoding the portion of human VEGF-D from residue 93 to 201, i.e. with N- and C-terminal regions removed, was amplified by polymerase chain reaction with Pfu DNA polymerase, using as template a plasmid comprising full-length human VEGF-D cDNA. The amplified DNA fragment, the sequence of which was confirmed by nucleotide sequencing, was then inserted into the expression vector pEFBOSSFLAG to give rise to a plasmid designated pEFBOSVEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\). The pEFBOSSFLAG vector contains DNA encoding the signal sequence for protein secretion from the interleukin-3 (IL-3) gene and the FLAG™ octapeptide. The FLAG™ octapeptide can be recognized by commercially available antibodies such as the M2 monoclonal antibody (IBI/Kodak). The VEGF-D PCR fragment was inserted into the vector such that the IL-3 signal sequence was immediately upstream from the FLAG™ sequence, which was in turn immediately upstream from the VEGF-D sequence. All three sequences were in the same reading frame, so that translation of mRNA resulting from transfection of pEFBOSVEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) into mammalian cells would give rise to a protein which would have the IL-3 signal sequence at its N-terminus, followed by the FLAG™ octapeptide and the VEGF-D sequence. Cleavage of the signal sequence and subsequent secretion of the protein from the cell would give rise to a VEGF-D polypeptide which is tagged with the FLAG™ octapeptide adjacent to the N-terminus. This protein was designated VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\).

[0087] In addition, a second plasmid was constructed, designated pEFBOSVEGFD\(\text{fullFLAG}\), in which the full-length coding sequence of human VEGF-D was inserted into pEFBOSIFLAG such that the sequence for the FLAG™ octapeptide was immediately downstream from, and in the same reading frame as, the coding sequence of VEGF-D. The plasmid pEFBOSIFLAG lacks the IL-3 signal sequence, so secretion of the VEGF-D/FLAG fusion protein was driven by the signal sequence of VEGF-D. pEFBOSVEGFD\(\text{fullFLAG}\) was designed to drive expression in mammalian cells of full-length VEGF-D which was C-terminally tagged with the FLAG™ octapeptide. This protein is designated VEGFD\(\text{fullFLAG}\), and is useful for the study of VEGF-D biosynthesis.

Analysis of the Post-Translational Processing of VEGF-D

[0088] To examine whether the VEGF-D polypeptide is processed to give a mature and fully active protein, pEFBOSVEGFD\(\text{fullFLAG}\) was transiently transfected into COS cells (Aruffo and Seed, 1987). Expression in COS cells followed by biosynthetic labeling with \(35\text{S}\)-methionine/cysteine and immunoprecipitation with M2 gel has demonstrated species of approximately 43 kD (fA) and 25 kD (fB) (Figure 12A). These bands are consistent with the notion that VEGF-D is cleaved to give a C-terminal fragment (FLAG™ tagged) and an internal peptide (corresponding approximately to the VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) protein). Reduction of the immunoprecipitates (M2*) gives some reduction of the fA band, indicating the potential for disulphide linkage between the two fragments.

Expression and purification of internal VEGF-D-polypeptide

[0089] Plasmid pEFBOSVEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\) was used to transiently transfecj COS cells by the DEAE-Dextran method as described previously (Aruffo and Seed, 1987). The resulting conditioned cell culture medium (approximately 150 ml), collected after 7 days of incubation, was subjected to affinity chromatography using a resin to which the M2 monoclonal antibody had been coupled. In brief, the medium was run batch-wise over a 1 ml M2 antibody column for approximately 4 hours at 4°C. The column was then washed extensively with 10 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 150 mM NaCl before elution with free FLAG™ peptide at 25 \(\mu\text{g/ml}\) in the same buffer. The resulting material was used for the bioassays described below.

[0090] In order to detect the purified VEGFD\(\Delta N\Delta C\), fractions eluted from the M2 affinity column were subjected to Western blot analysis. Aliquots of the column fractions were combined with 2 x SDS-PAGE sample buffer, boiled and loaded onto a 15% SDS polyacrylamide gel. The resolved fractions were transferred to nitrocellulose membrane and non-specific binding sites blocked by incubation in Tris/NaCl/Tween 20 (TST) and 10% skim milk powder (BLOTTO). Membranes were then incubated with monoclonal antibody M2 or control antibody at 3 \(\mu\text{g/ml}\) for 2 h at room temperature,
followed by extensive washing in TST. Membranes were then incubated with a secondary goat anti-mouse HRP-conjugated antiserum for 1 h at room temperature, followed by washing in TST buffer. Detection of the protein species was achieved using a chemiluminescent reagent (ECL, Amersham) (Figure 12B).

Under non-reducing conditions a species of molecular weight approximately 23 kD (VEGFDNΔNΔC) was detected by the M2 antibody. This is consistent with the predicted molecular weight for this internal fragment (12,800) plus N-linked glycosylation; VEGFDNΔNΔC contains two potential N-linked glycosylation sites. A species of approximately 40 kD was also detected, and may represent a non-covalent dimer of the 23 kD protein (VEGFDNΔNΔC).

Bioassays

The bioassay for the capacity of polypeptides to bind to VEGF receptor-2 is described in detail in Example 7. Aliquots of fractions eluted from the M2 affinity column, containing the VEGFDNΔNΔC protein, were diluted in medium and tested in the VEGFR2 bioassay as previously described. Fraction #3 from the affinity column, which was shown to contain the purified VEGFDNΔNΔC protein (Figure 12B), demonstrated a clear ability to induce proliferation of the bioassay cell line to a dilution of 1/100 of the purified fraction (Figure 13). In comparison, the void volume of the affinity column (fraction #1) showed no activity, whereas the original VEGFDNΔNΔC conditioned medium gave only weak activity.

The vascular permeability assay (Miles and Miles, 1952) is described in brief in example 8. Aliquots of purified VEGFDNΔNΔC, and samples of the void volume from the M2 affinity column (negative control) were combined with medium and injected intradermally into the skin of guinea pigs. The regions of skin at the sites of injections were excised, and extravasated dye was eluted. The absorbance of the extravasated dye at 620 nm arising from injection of purified VEGFDNΔNΔC was 0.131 ± 0.009. In comparison, the value for absorbance arising from injection of a sample of the void volume was 0.092 ± 0.020. Therefore VEGFDNΔNΔC induced vascular permeability, but the effect was only marginal.

Due to its ability to bind to VEGFR2 and its lower induction of vascular permeability compared to full length VEGF-D, VEGF-DNΔNΔC may be said to relatively decrease the induction of vascular permeability by VEGF-D through competitive inhibition. In this sense, the VEGF-DNΔNΔC fragment may be thought of as an antagonist for VEGF-D as regards regulation of vascular permeability.

Summary

Two factors have led us to explore internal fragments of VEGF-D for enhanced activity. Firstly, it is the central region of VEGF-D which exhibits amino acid homology with all other members of the VEGF family. Secondly, proteolytic processing which gives rise to internal bioactive polypeptides occurs for other growth factors such as PDGF-BB. In addition, the activity seen with the full length VEGF-D protein in COS cells was lower than for the corresponding conditioned medium from VEGF-A transfected COS cells.

It was predicted that the mature VEGF-D sequence would be derived from a fragment contained within residues 92-205, with cleavage at FAA^TFY and IIRR^SIQI. Immunoprecipitation analysis of VEGF-DfullFLAG expressed in COS cells produced species consistent with the internal proteolytic cleavage of the VEGF-D polypeptide at these sites. Therefore a truncated form of VEGF-D, with the N- and C-terminal regions removed (referred to as "full length VEGF-D") two baculoviral shuttle vectors were assembled, in which the VEGF-D cDNA was modified in the following ways.

In one construct (referred to as "full length VEGF-D-H6") a C-terminal histidine tag was added. In the other construct the putative N- and C-terminal propeptides were removed, the melittin signal peptide was fused inframe to the N-terminus, and a histidine tag was added to the C-terminus of the remaining VEGF homology domain (referred to as "ΔNΔC-MELsp-VEGF-D-H4").

For each of the three constructs baculoviral clones of two or three independent transfections were amplified. The supernatant of High Five (HF) cells was harvested 48 h post infection with high titre virus stocks. The supernatant was adjusted to pH 7 with NaOH and diluted with one volume of D-MEM (0.2% FCS).
The samples were tested for their ability to stimulate tyrosine phosphorylation of VEGFR-3 (Flt4 receptor) on NIH3T3 cells, as described by Joukov et al, 1996. The supernatant of uninfected cells and the supernatant of cells infected with the short splice variant of VEGF-C, which does not stimulate tyrosine phosphorylation of VEGFR-3, were used as negative controls. VEGF-C modified in the same way as ∆N∆C-melSP-VEGF-D-H6 was used as positive control. The results are shown in Figure 14.

The appearance of new bands at 125 and 195 kD indicates phosphorylation, and hence activation, of the receptor.

Example 11 VEGF-D Binds to and Activates VEGFR-2

Modified and unmodified human VEGF-D cDNA was cloned into baculovirus shuttle vectors for the production of recombinant VEGF-D as described in Example 10.

For each of the three constructs full length VEGF-D, full length VEGF-D-H6, and ∆N∆C-melSP-VEGF-D-H6, baculoviral clones of two or three independent transfections were amplified. The supernatant of High Five (HF) cells was harvested 48 hours post infection with high titre virus stocks. The supernatant was adjusted to pH 7 with NaOH and diluted with one volume of D-MEM (0.2% FCS).

The supernatants conditioned with the histidine-tagged proteins were tested for their ability to stimulate tyrosine phosphorylation of the KDR receptor according to Joukov et al, 1996. KDR is the human homologue of flk1 (VEGFR-2). The supernatant of uninfected cells and the supernatant of cells infected with the VEGF-C 156S mutant, which does not stimulate KDR, were used as negative controls. VEGF165 and VEGF-C modified in the same way as ∆N∆C-melSP-VEGF-D-H6 were used as positive controls. The results are shown in Figure 15.

The appearance of a new band at approximately 210 kD indicates phosphorylation, and hence activation, of the receptor.

Example 12 Analysis of VEGF-D Gene Expression

In order to characterise the pattern of VEGF-D gene expression in the human and in mouse embryos, VEGF-D cDNAs were used as hybridization probes for Northern blot analysis of polyadenylated human RNA and for in situ hybridization analysis with mouse embryos.

Gene expression in the adult human

A 1.1 kb fragment of the human VEGF-D cDNA shown in Figure 4 (SEQ ID NO. 4) spanning from the EcoRV site to the 3'-terminus (nucleotides 911 to 2029) was labelled with [α-32P]dATP using the Megaprime DNA labelling system (Amersham) according to manufacturer's instructions. This probe was used to screen human multiple tissue northern blots (Clontech) by hybridization, also according to manufacturer's instructions. These blots contained polyadenylated RNA obtained from tissues of adult humans who were apparently free of disease. Autoradiography with the labelled blots revealed that VEGF-D mRNA was most abundant in heart, lung and skeletal muscle. VEGF-D mRNA was of intermediate abundance in spleen, ovary, small intestine and colon, and was of low abundance in kidney, pancreas, thymus, prostate and testis. No VEGF-D mRNA was detected in RNA from brain, placenta, liver or peripheral blood leukocytes. In most of the tissues where VEGF-D mRNA was detected the size of the transcript was 2.3 kb. The only exception was skeletal muscle, where two VEGF-D transcripts of 2.3 kb and 2.8 kb were detected. In skeletal muscle the 2.3 kb transcript was more abundant than the 2.8 kb transcript.

Gene expression in mouse embryos

In order to generate an antisense RNA probe for mouse VEGF-D mRNA, the mouse VEGF-D2 cDNA shown in Figure 7 (SEQ ID NO. 7) was inserted into the transcription vector pBluescriptIIKS+ (Stratagene). The resulting plasmid was digested to completion with the restriction endonuclease FokI and then used as template for an in vitro transcription reaction with T3 RNA polymerase. This transcription reaction gave rise to an antisense RNA probe for VEGF-D mRNA which was complementary in sequence to the region of the VEGF-D2 cDNA (Figure 7) from the 3'-terminus to the FokI cleavage site closest to the 3'-terminus (nucleotides 1135 to 700). This antisense RNA probe was hybridized at high stringency with paraffin-embedded tissue sections generated from mouse embryos at post-coital day 15.5. Hybridization and washing were essentially as described previously (Achen et al., 1995).

After washing and drying, slides were exposed to autoradiography film for six days.

Development of the autoradiography film revealed that VEGF-D mRNA is localised in the developing lung of post-coital day 15.5 embryos. The signal for VEGF-D mRNA in the lung was strong and highly specific. Control hybridizations with sense probe gave no detectable background in lung or any other tissue.
Summary

The VEGF-D gene is broadly expressed in the adult human, but is certainly not ubiquitously expressed. Strongest expression was detected in the heart, lung and skeletal muscle. In mouse embryos at post-coital day 15.5, strong and specific expression of the VEGF-D gene was detected in the lung. These data suggest that VEGF-D may play a role in lung development, and that expression of the VEGF-D gene in lung persists in the adult, at least in humans. Expression of the gene in other tissues in the adult human suggests that VEGF-D may fulfill other functions in other adult tissues.

Example 13 VEGF-D is Mitogenic for Endothelial Cells

Some members of the VEGF family of proteins, namely VEGF-A (Leung et al, 1989) and VEGF-B (Olofsson et al, 1996), are mitogenic for endothelial cells. In order to test the mitogenic capacity of VEGF-D for endothelial cells, this protein was expressed and purified by affinity chromatography as described in Example 9. Fraction #3, eluted from the M2 affinity column, which contained VEGF-D, was diluted 1 in 10 in cell culture medium containing 5% serum and applied to bovine aortic endothelial cells (BAEs) which had been propagated in medium containing 10% serum. The BAEs had been seeded in 24-well dishes at a density of 10,000 cells per well the day before addition of VEGF-D. Three days after addition of this polypeptide the cells were dissociated with trypsin and counted. Purified VEGF-A was included in the experiment as positive control. Results are shown in Figure 16. The addition of fraction #3 to the cell culture medium led to a 2.4-fold increase in the number of BAEs after 3 days of incubation, a result which was comparable to that obtained with VEGF-A. Clearly VEGF-D is mitogenic for endothelial cells.

Example 14 Localization of the VEGF-D Gene on Human Chromosomes

In order to generate hybridization probes for localization of the VEGF-D gene on human chromosomes, a human genomic DNA clone for VEGF-D was isolated from a human genomic DNA library (Clontech). The genomic library was screened by hybridization with the human VEGF-D cDNA shown in Figure 4, using standard methods (Sambrook et al., 1989). One of the clones thus isolated was shown to contain part of the VEGF-D gene by hybridization to numerous oligonucleotides which were derived in sequence from the human VEGF-D cDNA. A region of the genomic clone, approximately 13 kb in size, was purified from agarose gel, labelled by nick-translation with biotin-14-dATP and hybridized in situ at a final concentration of 20 ng/ml to metaphases from two normal human males. The fluorescense in situ hybridization (FISH) method was modified from that previously described (Callen et al., 1990) in that chromosomes were stained before analysis with propidium iodide (as counterstain) and DAPI (for chromosome identification). Images of metaphase preparations were captured by a cooled CCD camera, using the CytoVision Ultra image collection and enhancement system (Applied Imaging Int. Ltd.). FISH signals and the DAPI banding pattern were merged for analysis.

Fifteen metaphases from the first normal male were examined for fluorescent signal. Ten of the metaphases showed signal on one chromatid (3 cells) or both chromatids (7 cells) of the X chromosome in band p22.1. There was a total of 9 non-specific background dots observed in these 15 metaphases. A similar result was obtained from hybridization of the probe to 15 metaphases from the second normal male, where signal was observed at Xp22.1 on one chromatid in 7 cells and on both chromatids in 4 cells. In conclusion, the human VEGF-D gene is located on the X chromosome in band p22.1.

Example 15 Localization of the murine VEGF-D Gene on Mouse Chromosomes (Comparative)

The mouse chromosomal location of the VEGF-D gene was determined by interspecific backcross analysis using progeny generated by mating (C57BL/6J x M. spretus) F1 females and CB7BU67 males as described previously (Copeland and Jenkins, 1991). This interspecific backcross mapping panel has been typed for over 2400 loci that are well distributed among all the autosomes as well as the X chromosome (Copeland and Jenkins, 1991). C57BL/6J and M. spretus DNAs were digested with several enzymes and analyzed by Southern blot hybridization for informative restriction fragment length polymorphisms (RFLPs) using a 1.3 kb mouse VEGF-D cDNA probe essentially as described (Jenkins et al., 1982). Fragments of 7.1, 6.3, 4.7, 2.5 and 2.2 kb were detected in Tacl-digested C57BL/6J DNA and major fragments of 7.1, 3.7, 2.7 and 2.2 kb were detected in Tacl-digested M. spretus DNA. The presence or absence of the 3.7 and 2.7 Tacl M. spretus-specific fragments, which cosegregated, was followed in backcross mice. The mapping results indicated that the VEGF-D gene is located in the distal region of the mouse X chromosome linked to Bik, Dxpasl and Ptmnb4. Although 89 mice were analyzed for every marker, up to 133 mice were typed for some pairs of markers. Each locus was analyzed in pairwise combinations for recombination frequencies using the additional data. The ratios of the total number of mice exhibiting recombinant chromosomes to the total number of mice analyzed for each pair of loci and the most likely gene order are: centromere - Bik - 14/121 - Dxpasl - 3/99 - VEGF-D - 5/133 - Ptmnb4. The recombination frequencies [expressed as genetic distances in centiMorgans (cM) ± the standard error], calculated using
Map Manager (version 2.6.5), are - Btk - 11.6+/±2.9 - DxPasI - 3.0+/±1.7 - VEGF-D - 3.8+/±1.7 - Ptmb4. A description of the probes and RFLPs for the loci linked to the VEGF-D gene, including Btk, DxPasI and Ptmb4, has been reported previously (Hacfliger et al., 1992; Holloway et al., 1997).

We have compared our interspecific map of the X chromosome with a composite mouse linkage map that reports the map location of many uncloned mutations (provided from Mouse Genome Database, a computerized database maintained at The Jackson Library, Bar Harbor, ME). The VEGF-D gene mapped in a region of the composite map that lacks mouse mutations with a phenotype that might be expected for an alteration in the locus for an endothelial cell mitogen. The distal region of the mouse X-chromosome shares a region of homology with the short arm of the human X chromosomes (Mouse Genome Database). The placement of the VEGF-D gene in this interval in mouse suggests that the human homolog will map to Xp22. This is consistent with our FISH analysis which has localized the human gene to Xp22.1.

Numerous disease states are caused by mutations in unknown genes which have been mapped to Xp22.1 and the positions immediately surrounding this region in the human. These disease states include Kallmann syndrome, ocular albinism (Nettleship-Falls type), ocular albinism and sensorineural deafness, Partington syndrome, spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia (late), retinitis pigmentosa 15, gonadal dysgenesis (XY female type), Nance-Horan cataract-dental syndrome, retinoschisis, Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, F-cell production, hypomagnesemia, keratitis follicularis spinulosa decalvans, Coffin-Lowry syndrome, corneal dermoids, hypophosphatemia, agammaglobulinemia, Aicardi syndrome, hereditary hypophosphatemia II, mental retardation (non-dysmorphic), Opitz G syndrome, pigment disorder (reticulate), dosage-sensitive sex reversal, adrenal hypoplasia, retinitis pigmentosa-6, deafness 4 (congenital sensorineural) and Wilson-Turner syndrome. The positions of the genes involved in these disease states are documented in the OMIM gene map which is edited by Dr. Victor McKusick and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University (USA).

BIOASSAYS TO DETERMINE THE FUNCTION OF VEGF-D

Other assays are conducted to evaluate whether VEGF-D has similar activities to VEGF in relation to endothelial cell function, angiogenesis and wound healing. Further assays may also be performed, depending on the results of receptor binding distribution studies.

I. Assays of Endothelial Cell Function

a) Endothelial cell proliferation


b) Cell adhesion assay

The effect of VEGF-D on adhesion of polymorphonuclear granulocytes to endothelial cells is tested.

c) Chemotaxis

The standard Boyden chamber chemotaxis assay is used to test the effect of VEGF-D on chemotaxis.

d) Plasminogen activator assay

Endothelial cells are tested for the effect of VEGF-D on plasminogen activator and plasminogen activator inhibitor production, using the method of Pepper et al (1991).

e) Endothelial cell Migration assay

The ability of VEGF-D to stimulate endothelial cells to migrate and form tubes is assayed as described in Montesano et al (1986). Alternatively, the three-dimensional collagen gel assay described by Joukov et al (1996) or a gelatinized membrane in a modified Boyden chamber (Glaser et al, 1980) may be used.

II Angiogenesis Assay

The ability of VEGF-D to induce an angiogenic response in chick chorioallantoic membrane is tested as described in Leung et al (1989). Alternatively the rat cornea assay of Rastinejad et al (1989) may be used; this is an
accepted method for assay of in vivo angiogenesis, and the results are readily transferrable to other in vivo systems.

III Wound Healing

[0126] The ability of VEGF-D to stimulate wound healing is tested in the most clinically relevant model available, as described in Schilling et al (1959) and utilised by Hunt et al (1967).

IV The Haemopoietic System

[0127] A variety of in vitro and in vivo assays using specific cell populations of the haemopoietic system are known in the art, and are outlined below. In particular a variety of in vitro murine stem cell assays using fluorescence-activated cell sorter purified cells are particularly convenient:

a) Repopulating Stem Cells

[0128] These are cells capable of repopulating the bone marrow of lethally irradiated mice, and have the Lin−, Rhd1, Ly-6A/E+, c-kit+ phenotype. VEGF-D is tested on these cells either alone, or by co-incubation with other factors, followed by measurement of cellular proliferation by 3H-thymidine incorporation.

b) Late Stage Stem Cells

[0129] These are cells that have comparatively little bone marrow repopulating ability, but can generate D13 CFU-S. These cells have the Lin−, Rhd1, Ly-6A/E+, c-kit+ phenotype. VEGF-D is incubated with these cells for a period of time, injected into lethally irradiated recipients, and the number of D13 spleen colonies enumerated.

c) Progenitor-Enriched Cells

[0130] These are cells that respond in vitro to single growth factors and have the Lin−, Rhd1, Ly-6A/E+, c-kit+ phenotype. This assay will show if VEGF-D can act directly on haemopoietic progenitor cells. VEGF-D is incubated with these cells in agar cultures, and the number of colonies present after 7-14 days is counted.

V Atherosclerosis

[0131] Smooth muscle cells play a crucial role in the development or initiation of atherosclerosis, requiring a change of their phenotype from a contractile to a synthetic state. Macrophages, endothelial cells, T lymphocytes and platelets all play a role in the development of atherosclerotic plaques by influencing the growth and phenotypic modulations of smooth muscle cell. An in vitro assay using a modified Rose chamber in which different cell types are seeded on to opposite coverslips measures the proliferative rate and phenotypic modulations of smooth muscle cells in a multicellular environment, and is used to assess the effect of VEGF-D on smooth muscle cells.

VI Metastasis

[0132] The ability of VEGF-D to inhibit metastasis is assayed using the Lewis lung carcinoma model, for example using the method of Cao et al (1995).

VII VEGF-D in Other Cell Types

[0133] The effects of VEGF-D on proliferation, differentiation and function of other cell types, such as liver cells, cardiac muscle and other cells, endocrine cells and osteoblasts can readily be assayed by methods known in the art, such as 3H-thymidine uptake by in vitro cultures. Expression of VEGF-D in these and other tissues can be measured by techniques such as Northern blotting and hybridization or by in situ hybridization.

VIII Construction of VEGF-D Variants and Analogues

[0134] VEGF-D is a member of the PDGF family of growth factors which exhibits a high degree of homology to the other members of the PDGF family. VEGF-D contains eight conserved cysteine residues which are characteristic of this family of growth factors. These conserved cysteine residues form intra-chain disulfide bonds which produce the cysteine knot structure, and inter-chain disulfide bonds that form the protein dimers which are characteristic of members of the
PDGF family of growth factors. VEGF-D will interact with protein tyrosine kinase growth factor receptors.

[0135] In contrast to proteins where little or nothing is known about the protein structure and active sites needed for receptor binding and consequent activity, the design of active mutants of VEGF-D is greatly facilitated by the fact that a great deal is known about the active sites and important amino acids of the members of the PDGF family of growth factors.

[0136] Published articles elucidating the structure/activity relationships of members of the PDGF family of growth factors include for PDGF: Oestman et al, J. Biol. Chem., 1991 266 10073-10077; Andersson et al, J. Biol. Chem., 1992 267 11260-1266; Oefner et al, EMBO J., 1992 11 3921-3926; Flemming et al, Molecular and Cell Biol., 1993 13 4066-4076 and Andersson et al, Growth Factors, 1995 12 159-164; and for VEGF: Kim et al, Growth Factors, 1992 7 53-64; Pötgens et al, J. Biol. Chem., 1994 269 32879-32885 and Claffey et al, Biochem. Biophys. Acta, 1995 1246 1-9. From these publications it is apparent that because of the eight conserved cysteine residues, the members of the PDGF family of growth factors exhibit a characteristic knotted folding structure and dimerization, which result in formation of three exposed loop regions at each end of the dimerized molecule, at which the active receptor binding sites can be expected to be located.

[0137] Based on this information, a person skilled in the biotechnology arts can design VEGF-D mutants with a very high probability of retaining VEGF-D activity by conserving the eight cysteine residues responsible for the knotted folding arrangement and for dimerization, and also by conserving, or making only conservative amino acid substitutions in the likely receptor sequences in the loop 1, loop 2 and loop 3 region of the protein structure.

[0138] The formation of desired mutations at specifically targeted sites in a protein structure is considered to be a standard technique in the arsenal of the protein chemist (Kunkel et al, Methods in Enzymol., 1987 154 367-382). Examples of such site-directed mutagenesis with VEGF can be found in Pötgens et al, J. Biol. Chem., 1994 269 32879-32885 and Claffey et al, Biochim. Biophys. Acta, 1995 1246 1-9. Indeed, site-directed mutagenesis is so common that kits are commercially available to facilitate such procedures (eg. Promega 1994-1995 Catalog., Pages 142-145).

[0139] The endothelial cell proliferating activity of VEGF-D mutants can be readily confirmed by well established screening procedures. For example, a procedure analogous to the endothelial cell mitotic assay described by Claffey et al, (Biochim. Biophys. Acta., 1995 1246 1-9) can be used. Similarly the effects of VEGF-D on proliferation of other cell types, on cellular differentiation and on human metastasis can be tested using methods which are well known in the art.

REFERENCES

Copeland, N.G. and Jenkins N.A. Trends Genet., 1991 7 113-118
Further embodiments

1. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleic acid sequence which encodes a polypeptide comprising a sequence of amino acids substantially corresponding to the amino acid sequence set out in SEQ ID NO.3, SEQ ID NO.5, SEQ ID NO.8 or SEQ ID NO.9, said polypeptide having the ability to stimulate vascular permeability or proliferation of endothelial cells, or a fragment or analogue thereof which has the ability to stimulate at least one biological activity selected from the group consisting of angiogenesis, vascular permeability, endothelial cell proliferation, differentiation, migration or survival, or which has the ability to bind to endothelial cells, but is unable to...
stimulate at least one of said biological activities.

2. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, wherein said nucleic acid molecule comprises a nucleic acid sequence which encodes the amino acid sequence: Pro-Xaa-Cys-Val-Xaa-Xaa-Xaa-Arg-Cys-Xaa-Gly-Cys-Cys (SEQ ID NO.2).

3. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

4. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, which is a genomic DNA.

5. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, which is a cDNA.

6. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 5, which comprises the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO. 1, SEQ ID NO.4, SEQ ID NO.6, SEQ ID NO.7, or a DNA sequence which hybridizes to one of the foregoing sequences under stringent conditions.

7. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 6, which comprises the nucleic acid sequence of SEQ ID NO.4.

8. A nucleic acid molecule according to any one of embodiments 1 to 7, which encodes a polypeptide which has the ability to stimulate vascular permeability or proliferation of endothelial cells.

9. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, which encodes a polypeptide comprising amino acid residues 64 through 172 of SEQ ID NO:3 or amino acid residues 93 through 201 of SEQ ID NO: 5.

10. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 9, wherein said polypeptide further comprises an affinity tag peptide sequence.

11. A nucleic acid molecule according to any one of embodiments 1 to 7, which encodes a polypeptide which has the ability to bind to endothelial cells but is unable to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation.

12. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 11, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

13. A nucleic acid molecule according to embodiment 1, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is a human DNA molecule.

14. A vector comprising a nucleic acid according to any one of embodiments 1 to 13.

15. A host cell transformed or transformed with a vector according to embodiment 14.

16. An isolated polypeptide which comprises a sequence of amino acids substantially corresponding to the amino acid sequence set out in SEQ ID NO.3, SEQ ID NO.5, SEQ ID NO.8 or SEQ ID NO. 9, said polypeptide having the ability to stimulate vascular permeability or proliferation of endothelial cells, or a fragment or analogue thereof which has the ability to stimulate at least one endothelial cell biological activity selected from the group consisting of cell proliferation, cell differentiation, cell migration, cell survival and vascular permeability, or which has the ability to bind to endothelial cells but is unable to stimulate at least one of said biological activities.

17. A polypeptide according to embodiment 16, wherein said polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence Pro-Xaa-Cys-Val-Xaa-Xaa-Arg-Cys-Xaa-Gly-Cys-Cys (SEQ ID NO.2).

18. A polypeptide according to embodiment 16, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

19. A polypeptide according to embodiment 16, which comprises a sequence of amino acids substantially corresponding to SEQ ID NO:3 or SEQ ID NO: 5.

20. A polypeptide according to embodiment 19, which comprises a sequence of amino acids substantially corresponding to SEQ ID NO 5.
21. A polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 20, which has the ability to stimulate proliferation of endothelial cells.

22. A polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 20, which has the ability to induce endothelial cell differentiation.

23. A polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 20, which has the ability to induce vascular permeability.

24. A polypeptide according to 16, comprising amino acid residues 64 through 172 of SEQ ID NO:3 or 93 through 201 of SEQ ID NO:5.

25. A polypeptide according to embodiment 24, further comprising an affinity tag peptide sequence.

26. A polypeptide according to embodiment 16 or 17, which has the ability to bind to endothelial cells but is unable to stimulate proliferation of endothelial cells.

27. A polypeptide according to embodiment 26, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

28. A polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 20, wherein said polypeptide is a human protein.

29. An antibody specifically reactive with a polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 28.

30. An antibody according to embodiment 29, wherein said antibody is a polyclonal antibody.

31. An antibody according to embodiment 29, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

32. An antibody according to embodiment 29, wherein said antibody is labelled with a detectable label.

33. A method of making a polypeptide according to embodiment 16, said method comprising the steps of: culturing a host cell transformed or transfected with a vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence encoding said polypeptide operably associated with a promoter sequence such that the nucleic acid sequence encoding said polypeptide is expressed; and isolating said polypeptide from said host cell or from a growth medium in which said host cell is cultured.

34. A method of isolation of VEGF-D comprising the step of exposing a cell which expresses VEGF-D to heparin to facilitate release of VEGF-D from the cell, and purifying the thus-released VEGF-D.

35. A method of making a vector embodiments capable of expressing a polypeptide encoded by a nucleic acid molecule according to any one of embodiments 1 to 9, said method comprising inserting said nucleic acid molecule into a vector in a position in which said nucleic acid molecule is operatively connected with at least one promoter.

36. A vector comprising an anti-sense nucleotide sequence, said anti-sense nucleotide sequence being complementary to at least a part of a VEGF-D genomic DNA sequence or a VEGF-D RNA sequence or a cDNA sequence which encodes VEGF-D or a fragment or analogue thereof which promotes at least one bioactivity selected from vascular permeability, proliferation of endothelial cells and endothelial cell differentiation, whereby said vector can be used to inhibit said at least one bioactivity.

37. A method of stimulating endothelial cell proliferation comprising contacting endothelial cells with an effective endothelial cell proliferation stimulating amount of a polypeptide according to embodiment 16.

38. A method according to embodiment 37, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

39. A method of stimulating at least one bioactivity selected from endothelial cell proliferation, endothelial cell differentiation and vascular permeability, in vivo in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective bioactivity stimulating amount of a polypeptide according to embodiment 16, which has the ability to stimulate said at least one bioactivity.
40. A method according to embodiment 39, wherein said polypeptide comprises amino acid residues 64 through 172 of SEQ ID NO: 3 or amino acid residues 93 through 201 of SEQ ID NO: 5.

41. A method according to embodiment 39, wherein lymphatic vessel endothelial cell proliferation is stimulated.

42. A method of stimulating at least one bioactivity selected from angiogenesis and neovascularization in a mammal, said method comprising the step of administering to said mammal an effective angiogenesis or neovascularization stimulating amount of a polypeptide according to claim 16, said polypeptide having the ability to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation.

43. A method according to embodiment 42, wherein said polypeptide comprises amino acid residues 64 through 172 of SEQ ID NO:3 or amino acid residues 93 through 201 of SEQ ID NO: 5.

44. A method according embodiment 43, wherein said polypeptide further comprises an affinity tag peptide sequence.

45. A method according embodiment 32, further comprising co-administering at least one substance selected from the group consisting of VEGF, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, P1GF, PDGF, FGF and heparin.

46. A method of inhibiting a bioactivity selected from angiogenesis and neovascularization in a mammal, said method comprising the step of administering to said mammal an effective angiogenesis or neovascularization inhibiting amount of a VEGF-D antagonist.

47. A method according to embodiment 46, wherein said VEGF-D antagonist comprises an antibody specific to VEGF-D.

48. A method according to embodiment 46, wherein said VEGF-D antagonist comprises a polypeptide which binds to endothelial cells but which is unable to stimulate at least one biological activity selected from proliferation of endothelial cells, endothelial cell differentiation and vascular permeability.

49. A method according to embodiment 48, wherein said endothelial cells are selected from the group consisting of vascular endothelial cells and lymphatic endothelial cells.

50. A method of inhibiting VEGF-D expression in a mammal comprising the step of transforming target cells expressing VEGF-D with a vector according to embodiment 36.

51. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 24, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or adjuvant.

52. A pharmaceutical composition according to embodiment 51, further comprising at least one substance selected from the group consisting of VEGF, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, P1GF, PDGF and heparin.

53. A pharmaceutical composition comprising an antibody according to any one of embodiments 29 through 32, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or adjuvant.

54. A pharmaceutical composition according to embodiment 53, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

55. A protein dimer comprising a first polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 24, and a second polypeptide.

56. A protein dimer according to embodiment 55, wherein said protein dimer is a homodimer in which the second polypeptide is identical to the first polypeptide.

57. A protein dimer according to embodiment 55, wherein said protein dimer is a heterodimer in which the second polypeptide is selected from VEGF, VEGF-B, VEGF-C, P1GF and PDGF.

58. A method of detecting VEGF-D in a biological sample, comprising the step of contacting the sample with a reagent capable of binding VEGF-D, and detecting the occurrence of binding of said reagent.
59. A method according to embodiment 58, wherein said reagent comprises an antibody according to any one of embodiments 29 to 32.

60. A method of modulating vascular permeability in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective vascular permeability modulating amount of a polypeptide according to any one of embodiments 16 to 24, or an antibody according to any one of embodiments 29 to 32.

61. A method according to embodiment 60, comprising administering to said mammal a polypeptide according to claim 16, having the ability to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation.

62. A method according to embodiment 60, comprising administering to said mammal a polypeptide according to embodiment 16, which has the ability to bind to endothelial cells, but which is unable to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation.

63. A method of activation of VEGF receptor 2, comprising the step of exposing cells bearing said receptor to an effective receptor activating dose of VEGF-D.

64. A method of activation of VEGF receptor 3, comprising the step of exposing cells bearing said receptor to an effective receptor activating dose of VEGF-D.

65. A method according to embodiments 63 or 64, wherein said method is carried out in vivo.

66. A method according to embodiments 63 or 64, wherein said method is carried out in vitro.

67. A diagnostic or prognostic test kit comprising a specific binding reagent for VEGF-D and means for detecting binding of said reagent.

68. A test kit according to embodiment 67, wherein said specific binding reagent comprises an antibody according to any one of embodiments 29 to 32.

69. A diagnostic or prognostic test kit comprising a pair of primers specific to VEGF-D DNA operatively coupled to a polymerase, whereby said polymerase is enabled to selectively amplify VEGF-D DNA from a DNA sample.

70. A method of detecting aberrations in VEGF-D gene structure in a test subject comprising the steps of: providing a DNA sample from said test subject; contacting said sample with a set of primers specific to VEGF-D DNA operatively coupled to a polymerase and selectively amplifying VEGF-D DNA from said sample by polymerase chain reaction; and comparing the nucleotide sequence of the amplified VEGF-D DNA from said sample with a nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO:4.

71. A VEGF-D antagonist having the capability to inhibit at least one biological activity induced by VEGF-D selected from vascular permeability, endothelial cell proliferation and endothelial cell differentiation, said antagonist binding to VEGF-D or to a VEGF-D receptor, but being less able than VEGF-D to stimulate said at least one biological activity.

72. A VEGF-D antagonist according to embodiment 71, wherein said antagonist comprises an antibody which selectively binds VEGF-D.

73. A VEGF-D antagonist according to embodiment 72, wherein said antibody is a monoclonal antibody.

74. A VEGF-D antagonist according to embodiment 71, wherein said antagonist comprises a VEGF-D polypeptide fragment or analogue which binds to a VEGF-D receptor, but is less able to stimulate said at least one biological activity.

75. A method of improving pulmonary blood circulation and/or gas exchange in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective blood circulation and/or gas exchange improving amount of VEGF-D.

76. A method of treating fluid accumulation in the heart and/or lung due to increases in vascular permeability in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective vascular permeability decreasing amount of a VEGF-D antagonist.
77. A method of treating an intestinal malabsorption syndrome in a patient suffering therefrom, said method comprising administering to said patient an effective intestinal blood circulation and/or vascular permeability increasing amount of VEGF-D.

78. An antibody according to embodiment 29 wherein said antibody is a humanised antibody.

79. An antibody according to embodiment 29 wherein said antibody is a chimeric antibody.

SEQUENCE LISTING

[0142]

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

(i) APPLICANT: LUDWIG INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH
(ii) TITLE OF INVENTION: GROWTH FACTOR
(iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 11
(iv) CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:

(A) ADDRESSEE: Evenson, McKeown, Edwards & Lenahan P.L.L.C.
(B) STREET: 1200 G Street, NW, Suite 700
(C) CITY: Washington
(D) STATE: DC
(E) COUNTRY: United States of America
(F) ZIP: 20005

(v) COMPUTER READABLE FORM:

(A) MEDIUM TYPE: Floppy disk
(B) COMPUTER: IBM PC compatible
(C) OPERATING SYSTEM: PC-DOS/MS-DOS
(D) SOFTWARE: PatentIn Release #1.0, Version #1.25

(vi) CURRENT APPLICATION DATA:

(A) APPLICATION NUMBER:
(B) FILING DATE:
(C) CLASSIFICATION:

(viii) ATTORNEY/AGENT INFORMATION:

(A) NAME: EVANS, Joseph D.
(C) REFERENCE/DOCKET NUMBER: 1064/42983PCT

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(A) TELEPHONE: (202) 628-8800
(B) TELEFAX: (202) 628-8844
(C) TELEX: N/A

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:1:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 2846 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear
(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA
(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Human Breast

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:1:

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| 1 | GGAATTCAGT | GAAGTAAGA | AGACAAAGTG | TTCATTGGAG | ATTTTTAGTA | AGGCGGCAAC |
| 2 | AGAGCTGCTA | AGTCATGCT | TCACCTAACG | ATGGGGAAT | GTCCGGAGAA | ATGCATTGTT |
| 3 | AGGTGATTTT | GTGTTGGGC | AAGCATCTTA | GAGTACACTT | AGACAAACCT | AGCTGGTATA |
| 4 | ACCTAGGGTG | GTAGTACGAT | ATATGGGTATA | GCCTATTTGT | CCTAGGCCTAC | AAAAAACATC |
| 5 | AGCATGTCC | TGACTGGAAT | ACTGAGGCACAA | CTGCAACACC | GCTGGTGAAT | TTTGTATATC |
| 6 | TAAACATAAC | TAAATACAGA | AAGATACAG | TAAAAATAGT | GCATTATAGT | CTTATGGGAC |
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360
(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:2:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 13 amino acids  
(B) TYPE: amino acid  
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single  
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: peptide

(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:2:

Pro Xaa Cys Val Xaa Xaa Xaa Arg Cys Xaa Gly Cys Cys

1 5 10

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:3:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 325 amino acids  
(B) TYPE: amino acid  
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single  
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein

(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO

(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Human Breast

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:3:
(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:4:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

Met Arg Ser Ser Gln Ser Thr Leu Glu Arg Ser Glu Gln Gln Ile Arg
1 5 10 15
Ala Ala Ser Ser Leu Glu Glu Leu Leu Arg Ile Thr His Ser Glu Asp
20 25 30
Trp Lys Leu Trp Arg Cys Arg Leu Arg Lys Ser Phe Thr Ser Met
35 40 45
Asp Ser Arg Ser Ala Ser His Arg Ser Thr Arg Phe Ala Ala Ala Thr Phe
50 55 60
Tyr Asp Ile Glu Thr Leu Lys Val Ile Asp Glu Glu Trp Gln Arg Thr
65 70 75 80
Gln Cys Ser Pro Arg Glu Thr Cys Val Glu Val Ala Ser Glu Leu Gly
85 90 95
Lys Ser Thr Asn Thr Phe Phe Lys Pro Pro Cys Val Asn Val Phe Arg
100 105 110
Cys Gly Gly Cys Cys Asn Glu Glu Ser Leu Ile Cys Met Asn Thr Ser
115 120 125
Thr Ser Tyr Ile Ser Lys Glu Leu Phe Glu Ile Ser Val Pro Leu Thr
130 135 140
Ser Val Pro Glu Leu Val Pro Val Lys Val Ala Asn His Thr Gly Cys
145 150 155 160
Lys Cys Leu Pro Thr Ala Pro Arg His Tyr Ser Ile Ile Arg Arg
165 170 175
Ser Ile Gln Ile Pro Glu Glu Asp Arg Cys Ser His Ser Lys Lys Leu
180 185 190
Cys Pro Ile Asp Met Leu Trp Asp Ser Asn Lys Cys Lys Cys Val Leu
195 200 205
Gln Glu Glu Asn Pro Leu Ala Gly Thr Glu Asp His Ser His Leu Gln
210 215 220
Glu Pro Ala Leu Cys Gly Pro His Met Met Phe Asp Glu Asp Arg Cys
225 230 235 240
Glu Cys Val Cys Lys Thr Pro Cys Pro Lys Asp Leu Ile Gln His Pro
245 250 255
Lys Asn Cys Ser Cys Phe Glu Cys Lys Glu Ser Leu Glu Thr Cys Cys
260 265 270
Gln Lys His Lys Leu Phe His Pro Asp Thr Cys Ser Cys Glu Asp Arg
275 280 285
Cys Pro Phe His Thr Arg Pro Cys Ala Ser Gly Lys Thr Ala Cys Ala
290 295 300
Lys His Cys Arg Phe Pro Lys Glu Lys Arg Ala Ala Gln Gly Pro His
305 310 315 320
Ser Arg Lys Asn Pro
325
(A) LENGTH: 2029 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA
(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Human Lung

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:4:

```
GGTTGgttcc AGCTTTCTGT AGCTGTAAGC ATGGGTGgcC ACACCACTC GTPACAAAGC
```
AACCTAGAAC CTGGGCATAC ATGTCAGAGA TTTTTTATAAT TTCTCGGACA TGAAGTAAAT
TTAGAGTGCCT TTCAAATTTTC AGGTAAGAAGA CATGTCCACC TTCTGATTAT TTTTGGAGAA
CATTCTGATT TTTCCTCACC CTCTCTCCCC ACCCTTAAGA TGGTGCAAAA AAAGCCTACC
TTGCCAATTT CAAATAATTG CATGGGATTT GATACAGAAG TATATTATTG GTTTCTGCTG
TGAAATTTTG AGGGTCTAAA TTCTCTCTCTT GAAATGCGGC TTTGAAACAA ATTTTCTCTA
GCTGCCCTAT GCTCACCTCT TAGCTAATCGG TGGATATTGG AAATATACAA ATGATCAAGAG
AGTGGGGTATG GGCTAGATTT TTCAATGATGT TGTTACCTCCA GCTGTTGCGG GCTCTCCAGTA
ATGAAACTAG AGGACCTGAG CCATCTACTC ATGCCCCACCT GAAAACACCT GAAACACCGA
TCAGGGCTTG TGTCAGTTTTG GAGGAACTAC TTCTAATTAC TCACCTGAGA GACTGGGAAGC
TGCTGAGATG CAGCTCTGAGG CTCAAAGGTG TTACAGATGT GAACTCTGCG TCAGCATCCC
ATGGTCTCAG GCTGTTTGGCC CCAATCTCCTG ATGACATTGA AACAATGAAA ATTTTTTTAT
AAAGAACTGGCA AAGAACTCGAG TGGAGCCCTTA GAGAAACCTG CTGAGGGTG TGGCCAGGGC
TGGGGGAGAG TACAACTGAC TTCTCTGACC CCCCTCTGAT GAGTGTTTGC AGATGGCTGTG
GCTGGTGGCA TGGAGAGAAC CTTATCTGTA TGGACCCACG ACCTGTCAC ATTTCCCAAAC
AGCTCTTTTG CATATCTGTT CTTTCTGACT CAGCTCTGCA ATTAGTCCCT GAAAAAGTTG
CCAACTACATG AGGGTCCATG TCCGAGCCCA CACCCCCCG CCATCATGACT TCACATATCA
GAAAGATCCAT CCCAGTTCCT GAGAAGAAGTC GCTGTCCCTAC TCCAAAAAAT CTTGCCTCAT
TTGCAATAGCT ATGGGATAGC AAACAAATGTA AATGTTTTTT GACAGGGAAGA AATCCACCTTG
CTGGGAAAAGA AGCACCACCT CATCTCAGGG AACAGCTCTG CTGTGCGCCCA CACCAGTATG
TTGACCGAAGA TCGTGGCGAG TGTTCTGCTA AAACACCATG TCCAAAAGAT CTAATCCAGC
ACCCAAAAAT CGCAGTTGCC TTTGAGTGCA AAGAAAGTCT GGAACGTGGC TGCCGAAGGC
ACAAAGCTATT TCACCAGAC ACCCTCAGCT GTGAGGACAG ATGCCCTGTT ATGACCTACAG
CATCTGCCAG TGCGAAAACA GCATGTGCAA AGCATTGCGG CTTTCCAAAG GAGAAAAAGG
CTGCGCGGGG GCCCCAGAGC CGAAGAATAC CTTGATTAGC GCTTTCAAGT TCCCATCACC
TGTCATTTTC AACAGCCATGC TGGGTTGCCCA AGTTGCTGTC ACTGTGTCTT TCCAGGTGTT
TAAAAAAAT ATCCATTTTA CACAGCACCAC CAGTGAATCC AGAACCACTT TCCATTCCACA
CAGCCTGAGG AGTTCCCTTGTT TCAATGTTACT ATGTTCTTCA GCTGCGAATG CTCCTCCAGA
CCAAAGATAG GAGAGGAGGG GACCCCAATGA ATCTTCTTTT TTAGTTTTTT TTTTGGTTTT
TGATGAAATGA GAAAGGCTTG CTGGTCTAGGG AAGGGGAGGT GTCAATGAGC TGATATTAC
GAGCGTATGA GGAAGAATGTG AGTCTCTGAG CTTCTTTGGA ATGGCAAATC TGGGAATTAA
TTCTGATTTT TTTTTATGCA GAAATTGATT CGTATGATCA GTACTGACTT TCTGTATTTC
GTCGGCTTAA TAGCTCCACA GTTTAATGGAA CTACCCATCTG ATGTTCACAT TTTAAGTGGTA
TTTAAAGAAA ATAAACACCA TTATTTCCGC CAAAATCAA AAAAATCAAA

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:5:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
(A) LENGTH: 354 amino acids
(B) TYPE: amino acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein
(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Human Lung

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:5:

```
Met Tyr Arg Glu Trp Val Val Val Asn Val Phe Met Met Leu Tyr Val
 1           5           10          15
Gln Leu Val Gln Gly Ser Ser Asn Glu His Gly Pro Val Lys Arg Ser
  20          25          30
Ser Gln Ser Thr Leu Glu Arg Ser Glu Gln Gln Ile Arg Ala Ala Ser
  35          40          45
Ser Leu Glu Glu Leu Arg Ile Thr His Ser Glu Asp Trp Lys Leu
  50          55          60
Trp Arg Cys Arg Leu Arg Leu Lys Ser Phe Thr Ser Met Asp Ser Arg
  65          70          75          80
Ser Ala Ser His Arg Ser Thr Arg Phe Ala Ala Thr Phe Tyr Asp Ile
  85          90          95
Glu Thr Leu Lys Val Ile Asp Glu Glu Trp Gln Arg Thr Gln Cys Ser
 100         105         110
Pro Arg Glu Thr Cys Val Glu Val Ala Ser Glu Leu Gly Lys Ser Thr
 115         120         125
Asn Thr Phe Phe Lys Pro Pro Cys Val Asn Val Phe Arg Cys Gly Gly
 130         135        140
Cys Cys Asn Glu Glu Ser Leu Ile Cys Met Asn Thr Ser Thr Ser Tyr
145        150        155        160
Ile Ser Lys Glu Leu Phe Glu Ile Ser Val Pro Leu Thr Ser Val Pro
165        170        175
Glu Leu Val Pro Val Lys Val Ala Asn His Thr Gly Cys Lys Cys Leu
180        185        190
Pro Thr Ala Pro Arg His Pro Tyr Ser Ile Ala Arg Ser Ile Gln
195        200        205
Ile Pro Glu Asp Arg Cys Ser His Ser Lys Leu Cys Pro Ile
210        215        220
Asp Met Leu Trp Asp Ser Asn Lys Cys Lys Cys Val Leu Gln Glu Glu
225        230        235        240
Asn Pro Leu Ala Gly Thr Glu Asp His Ser His Leu Gln Glu Pro Ala
245        250        255
Leu Cys Gly Pro His Met Met Phe Asp Glu Asp Arg Cys Glu Cys Val
260        265        270
```
(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:6:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 1325 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA
(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Mouse Lung

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:6:

```
GGAGAACGGT TTTTCGGCA CTTTTCCAGA GCTGCGCTGCA AACAAGTGCCT AGTCTCGAG  
60
TAGACATTTG AAAATTTAGA AATGATGGG AAGTGGGAGA TGGGAGATAT CCTCATGATG  
120
TTTCATGGTG ACTTGCGAGA GGCCTCCAGG AGCCGACATG GACCAGTGCA GATTATTTCT  
180
TTTGGAGCGAT CATCCGCGTG CAGTCCGAGA CGATCTGAGA AACAGATCGG AGCAGCTTCT  
240
AGTTGGAGG AGTGGCGCA AATCGCGCAG TCTGAGGACT GGAAGCTGGG GGAAGTCCGG  
300
TTGAAGCTCA AAAGTCTTGC CAGTATGGAC TCACGCCTAG CATCCGATCG TCACCAGAGA  
360
TTGCCGCGGA CTTTCTATGA CACTGGGACA CTAAAAGTTGA TAGATGAGGA ATGCCGAGG  
420
ACCCAGAGCA GCGCTAGAGA GACATGCCAGA GAAAGTCGAGA GTGAGCTGGG GAAAGACACC  
480
AACACATTCT TCAAGCCTCC CTTCTGAAAT CGTCTCCGAG GTGGAGGTCT GTGCCAACGAA  
540
GAGGGTGTGA TGTTGATGAA CACAAGCCAC TCTCAATATCT CCAAAACGATG CTGGAGATAG  
600
TCAGGCGCCT TGACATCGTG GCCCGAGGTTA GTCCTGTTAA AATTTGCGCA CCATACGCGT  
660
TGTAAGCGTG TGGCCACCGGG CCCCCGCCC CCTCACCACA TTATCAGAGA ATCCATCCAG  
720
ACCCAGAAAG AAGATGAAATG TCTTCATTCC AAAGAAACTCT GTCTTATTGA CATGCTGAG  
780
GATACACAGA AATGGAAAGT GCTTAGGTTGCA GACGAGACTC CACTGGCGCG GACAGAAGAC  
840
CAGCTCTACC TCCAGAAGCG CACTCTCTTG GAGCGCACA TGACGGTTGA TGAGATTGCC  
900
TGTTAGTGCG TCTGTAAAAG ACATGTCCCG CGGAGATCTCA TCACGCACCC GGAAGACTGC  
960
```
(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:7:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

   (A) LENGTH: 1135 base pairs
   (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
   (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
   (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA
(iii) HYPOTHETICAL: NO
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

   (F) TISSUE TYPE: Mouse Lung

(x) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:7:
(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:8:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 358 amino acids
(B) TYPE: amino acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Mouse Lung

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:8:
<table>
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<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser Phe Glu Arg Ser Ser Arg Ser Met Leu Glu Arg Ser Glu Gln Gln</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ile Arg Ala Ala Ser Ser Leu Glu Glu Leu Leu Gln Ile Ala His Ser</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glu Asp Trp Lys Leu Trp Arg Cys Arg Leu Lys Leu Lys Ser Leu Ala</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser Met Asp Ser Arg Ser Ala Ser His Arg Ser Thr Arg Phe Ala Ala</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thr Phe Tyr Asp Thr Glu Thr Leu Lys Val Ile Asp Glu Glu Trp Gln</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>115</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>130</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>140</td>
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<td>145</td>
<td>150</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>165</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
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<td>185</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>195</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>215</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
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<td>230</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val Leu Gln Asp Thr Pro Leu Pro Gly Thr Glu Asp His Ser Tyr</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leu Gln Glu Pro Thr Leu Cys Gly Pro His Met Thr Phe Asp Glu Asp</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Arg Cys Glu Cys Val Cys Lys Ala Pro Cys Pro Gly Asp Leu Ile Gln
  275                                   280
His Pro Glu Asn Cys Ser Cys Phe Glu Cys Lys Glu Ser Leu Glu Ser
  290                                                   295
Cys Cys Gln Lys His Lys Ile Phe His Pro Asp Thr Cys Ser Cys Glu
  305                                                   310
                                   315
Asp Arg Cys Pro Phe His Thr Arg Thr Cys Ala Ser Arg Lys Pro Ala
  325                                                   330
                                   335
Cys Gly Lys His Trp Arg Phe Pro Lys Glu Thr Arg Ala Gln Gly Leu
  340                                                   345
                                   350
Tyr Ser Gln Glu Asn Pro
  355

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:9:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 321 amino acids
(B) TYPE: amino acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: protein
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE: Mouse Lung

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:9:
Met Tyr Gly Glu Trp Gly Met Gly Asn Ile Leu Met Met Phe His Val 1 5 10 15
Tyr Leu Val Gln Gly Phe Arg Ser Glu His Gly Pro Val Lys Arg Ser 20 25 30
Ser Arg Ser Met Leu Glu Arg Ser Glu Gln Gln Ile Arg Ala Ala Ser 35 40 45
Ser Leu Glu Glu Leu Leu Gln Ile Ala His Ser Glu Asp Trp Lys Leu 50 55 60
Trp Arg Cys Arg Leu Lys Leu Lys Ser Leu Ala Ser Met Asp Ser Arg 65 70 75 80
Ser Ala Ser His Arg Ser Thr Arg Phe Ala Ala Thr Phe Tyr Asp Thr 85 90 95
Glu Thr Leu Val Ile Asp Glu Glu Trp Gln Arg Thr Gln Cys Ser 100 105 110
Pro Arg Glu Thr Cys Val Glu Val Ala Ser Glu Leu Gly Lys Thr Thr 115 120 125
Asn Thr Phe Phe Lys Pro Pro Cys Val Asn Val Phe Arg Cys Gly Gly 130 135 140
Cys Cys Asn Glu Glu Gly Val Met Cys Met Asn Thr Ser Thr Ser Tyr 145 150 155 160
Ile Ser Lys Gln Leu Phe Glu Ile Ser Val Pro Leu Thr Ser Val Pro 165 170 175
Glu Leu Val Pro Val Lys Ile Ala Asn His Thr Gly Cys Lys Cys Leu 180 185 190
Pro Thr Gly Pro Arg His Pro Tyr Ser Ile Ile Arg Arg Ser Ile Gln 195 200 205
Thr Pro Glu Glu Asp Glu Cys Pro His Ser Lys Leu Cys Pro Ile 210 215 220
Asp Met Leu Trp Asp Thr Lys Cys Lys Cys Val Leu Gln Asp Glu 225 230 235 240
Thr Pro Leu Pro Gly Thr Glu Asp His Ser Tyr Leu Gln Glu Pro Thr 245 250 255
Leu Cys Gly Pro His Met Thr Phe Asp Glu Asp Arg Cys Gly Cys Val 260 265 270
Cys Lys Ala Pro Cys Pro Gly Asp Leu Ile Gln His Pro Glu Asn Cys 275 280 285
Ser Cys Phe Glu Cys Lys Glu Ser Leu Glu Ser Cys Cys Gln Lys His 290 295 300
Lys Ile Phe His Pro Asp Thr Cys Arg Ser Met Val Phe Ser Leu Ser 305 310 315 320
Pro

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:10:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
(A) LENGTH: 20 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: oligonucleotide
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE:

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:10:
GGGCTGCTTC TAGTTTGGAG 20

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:11:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 20 base pairs
(B) TYPE: nucleic acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: oligonucleotide
(vi) ORIGINAL SOURCE:

(F) TISSUE TYPE:

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:11:
CACTCGCAAC GATCTTCGTC 20

Claims

1. An isolated polypeptide having the ability to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation in a mammal, wherein said polypeptide consists of the sequence of a mature VEGF-D which is contained in the fragment spanning amino acid residues 92 and 205 of VEGF-D SEQ ID NO: 5.

2. An isolated polypeptide according to claim 1, consisting of amino acid residues 92 to 205 of SEQ ID NO: 5.

3. An isolated polypeptide according to claim 1, consisting of amino acid residues 93 through 201 of SEQ ID NO: 5.

4. An isolated nucleic acid molecule that encodes the polypeptide of any one of claims 1 to 3, with the proviso that the polypeptide encoded is not the full length VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO: 5).

5. An isolated nucleic acid molecule according to claim 4, which is a genomic DNA.

6. An isolated nucleic acid molecule according to claim 4, which is a cDNA.

7. A vector comprising a nucleic acid molecule according to any one of claims 4 to 6.

8. A vector according to claim 7, wherein the nucleic acid is a cDNA encoding the polypeptide of claim 3 and is operably linked to a DNA encoding the signal sequence for protein secretion from the interleukin-3 (IL-3) gene.

9. A host cell transformed or transfected with a vector according to claim 7 or claim 8.

10. An antibody specifically reactive with a polypeptide according to any one of claims 1 to 3.

11. A method of making a vector capable of expressing a polypeptide according to any one of claims 1 to 3, said method
comprising inserting the nucleic acid of any one of claims 5 or 6 into a vector in a position in which said nucleic acid molecule is operatively connected with at least one promoter and/or other control sequences.

12. An isolated polypeptide having the ability to stimulate endothelial cell proliferation in a mammal according to any one of claims 1 to 3, for use in the stimulation of angiogenesis and/or neovascularisation in a mammal.

13. A polypeptide for the use according to claim 12, for use in accelerating angiogenesis in wound healing, tissue or organ transplantation; or for establishing collateral circulation in tissue infarction or arterial stenosis.

14. A polypeptide for the use according to claim 12, wherein the endothelial cell is a lymphatic vessel endothelial cell.

15. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a polypeptide according to any one of claims 1 to 3 or an antibody according to claim 10.

**Patentansprüche**

1. Isoliertes Polypeptid mit der Fähigkeit, die Endothelzellenproliferation in einem Säugetier zu stimulieren, wobei das Polypeptid aus der Sequenz eines reifen VEGF-D besteht, die in dem Fragment enthalten ist, das die Aminosäurereste 92 und 205 von VEGF-D SEQ ID NO: 5 überspannt.

2. Isoliertes Polypeptid nach Anspruch 1, das aus den Aminosäureresten 92 bis 205 von SEQ ID NO: 5 besteht.

3. Isoliertes Polypeptid nach Anspruch 1, das aus den Aminosäureresten 93 bis 201 von SEQ ID NO: 5 besteht.

4. Isoliertes Nukleinsäuremolekül, das für das Polypeptid nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3 codiert, mit der Maßgabe, dass es sich bei dem codierten Polypeptid nicht um den Volllängen-VEGF-D (SEQ ID NO: 5) handelt.

5. Isoliertes Nukleinsäuremolekül nach Anspruch 4, bei dem es sich um eine genomische DNA handelt.

6. Isoliertes Nukleinsäuremolekül nach Anspruch 4, bei dem es sich um eine cDNA handelt.


8. Vektor nach Anspruch 7, wobei es sich bei der Nukleinsäure um eine cDNA, die für das Polypeptid nach Anspruch 3 codiert und die operativ mit einer DNA, die für die Signalsequenz für die Proteinsekretion aus dem Interleukin-3 (IL-3)-Gen codiert, verknüpft ist, handelt.

9. Wirtszelle, die mit einem Vektor nach Anspruch 7 oder Anspruch 8 transformiert oder transfi zi t ist.

10. Antikörper, der spezifisch mit einem Polypeptid nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3 reagiert.

11. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Vektors, der fähig ist, ein Polypeptid nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3 zu exprimieren, wobei das Verfahren umfasst, dass man die Nukleinsäure nach einem der Ansprüche 5 oder 6 in einen Vektor insertiert, und zwar in einer Position, in der das Nukleinsäuremolekül operativ mit mindestens einem Promoter und/oder anderen Kontrollsequenzen verknüpft ist.

12. Isoliertes Polypeptid mit der Fähigkeit, die Endothelzellenproliferation in einem Säugetier zu stimulieren, nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, für die Verwendung bei der Stimulation der Angiogenese und/oder Gefäßneubildung in einem Säugetier.

13. Polypeptid für die Verwendung nach Anspruch 12 für die Verwendung zur Beschleunigung der Angiogenese in der Wundheilung, der Gewebe- oder Organtransplantation oder für die Schaffung eines Kollateralkreislaufs bei Gewebeinfarkt oder bei arterieller Stenose.

14. Polypeptid für die Verwendung nach Anspruch 12, wobei es sich bei der Endothelzelle um eine Lymphgefässendothelzelle handelt.
Revendications

1. Polypeptide isolé ayant la capacité de stimuler la prolifération de cellules endothéliales chez un mammifère, où ledit polypeptide est constitué de la séquence d’un VEGF-D mature qui est contenue dans le fragment comprenant les résidus d’acide aminé 92 et 205 de VEGF-D SEQ ID NO: 5.

2. Polypeptide isolé selon la revendication 1, constitué des résidus d’acide aminé 92 à 205 de SEQ ID NO: 5.

3. Polypeptide isolé selon la revendication 1, constitué des résidus d’acide aminé 93 à 201 de SEQ ID NO: 5.

4. Molécule d’acide nucléique isolée qui code pour le polypeptide de l’une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, à condition que le polypeptide codé ne soit pas VEGF-D de pleine longueur (SEQ ID NO: 5).

5. Molécule d’acide nucléique isolée selon la revendication 4, qui est un ADN génomique.

6. Molécule d’acide nucléique isolée selon la revendication 4, qui est un ADNc.


8. Vecteur selon la revendication 7, dans lequel l’acide nucléique est un ADNc codant pour le polypeptide de la revendication 3 et est fonctionnellement lié à un ADN codant pour la séquence signal pour la sécrétion de protéine du gène de l’interleukine 3 (IL-3).

9. Cellule hôte transformée ou transfectée avec un vecteur selon la revendication 7 ou la revendication 8.

10. Anticorps spécifiquement réactif avec un polypeptide selon l’une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3.

11. Procédé de préparation d’un vecteur capable d’exprimer un polypeptide selon l’une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, ledit procédé comprenant l’insertion de l’acide nucléique de l’une quelconque des revendications 5 ou 6 dans un vecteur dans une position dans laquelle ladite molécule d’acide nucléique est fonctionnellement reliée à au moins un promoteur et/ou d’autres séquences de contrôle.

12. Polypeptide isolé ayant la capacité de stimuler la prolifération de cellules endothéliales chez un mammifère selon l’une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, pour utilisation dans la stimulation de l’angiogenèse et/ou la néovascularisation chez un mammifère.

13. Polypeptide pour l’utilisation selon la revendication 12, pour utilisation dans l’accélération de l’angiogenèse dans la cicatrisation des plaies, la transplantation de tissu ou d’organe ; ou pour établir une circulation collatérale dans un infarctus tissulaire ou une sténose artérielle.

14. Polypeptide pour l’utilisation selon la revendication 12, la cellule endothéliale étant une cellule endothéliale de vaisseau lymphatique.

15. Composition pharmaceutique comprenant un polypeptide selon l’une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3 ou un anticorps selon la revendication 10.
FIG. 1a
FIG. 1b
FIG. 1d
FIG. 3

MRSSQSTLERSEQQRASAASSLEELLRIHSEDWKLWRCRL

RLKSFTSMDSRSSASHRSTRFAATFYDIETLKVIDEESWQRT

QCSPRETCEVASELGKSTNTFFKPPCVCNVRFRCGCCNEE

SLICMNTSTSYSKQLEISVPLSVPELVPKVANHTGC

KCLPTAPRHPYSIIRRIQIPEEDRCSHSKLCPLIDMLWD

SNKCKCVLQEEENPLAGTEDHSHLQEPALCGPHMFDEEDRC

ECVCKTPCPLQIHPKNCSCFEKESLETCCQKHKLFP

DTCSCEDRCPPFHTRPCASGKTACAKHCRFPKKEKRAAQGPH

SRKNP
FIG. 5
FIG. 6

GGAGAATGCGCTTTTGCAACACTTTTCAGTGCCTGCGCTGGGAAAACAACGTCTTAGTCAT
CGTGAACATTAAAATATTCAAAATATGTTGAGAAATGCGGAAATGGAATATCCCT
ATGATTTCCCATGCTGACTTGGTGGCAGGCTCCAGGAGCGAATGACGACTGGAG
GATTTGCTTTTTGAGCGATCTACCCGGCTTCCGTATGTTGAGACGTCTCAAAACAGATC
CGAGCAGCTCTGATTTGGAGAGTATTGCTGCAAAATCGGCACTCTGAGGAAGT
CTGTTGGCGTGGCGTTGACGCTCAGTCGAGATCTACGCTCAGCA
TCCCATCGCTCCACCAGATTTGCGCCAACTTTCTATGACACTGAAATCAACTAAAGTT
ATAGATGAAAGAATGGCAGAGCCCAATGGCAGCCTAGAGAATGACGCTGAGAAGTC
GCCAGTGAAGCTGCGGAAAAGAACAACACACATTTCTCAGCCCTCGGTGTTAATGTC
TTCCGCTGTGGAGCGCTGCTGCAACGAAAGGGTGATGTGTATGATGACACCAAGCAC
TCCTACATCTCCAAAACAGCCTTGGAGATATGCACTGCTGCTGACATCACTGCGGCCAG
TTAGTGCCTGTGGTTAAATGGCCAAACCATACGGGTGGTAAGTCTGTGCCCCAGGCGCC
CCAGCATCCTTACTCAATTATCAGAAGATCCATCCAGACCCCAGAGAAGAGATGAAGT
CCCTCACTCCAAAGAAGCTCTGCTCTATTGACATGCTGTGGATAACACAAATGTAAG
TGTTTTGCGAAGACGACAGACTCCAGTGCTGGGACGAAAGACACCACCTTACTCCTCAG
GAACCCACTCTCTTGAGCCACATGACGTGGATGATGACGTGAGTCGTC
TGTAAGACACCAGATCTTCCGGGAGATCTACTACGACCCGGAAAGACTGAGTTGGTT
GAGTGAAGAAAGAAGTGGAGCTGCTGCAAAAGCGACAAATTTTCCACACAGAC
ACCAGCTGCTGAGACAGACATGCTTCTTTPCAACGGAGAAGTGTGCAAGTGAAGAG
CCAGCTGCTGGGAAGACATCGGCCCTCCAAGAGGACGAGCAGGGCGACGACTCTAC
AGCCAGGAGAACCTTGAATTCTCCTTCCAAGTCAGTCCCTAACCTGCTGTTCC
AACAGCTCAGTGTCTTTGCTCAGGTGCTGCTGCTGCTGCTCAGTGGGGCTAC
TGCAAAACAGACAGACACACACACACACACACACACACACAGAGCAACTGAATTATGTG
TTTCTAGGTTGCTGCTTAAG
FIG. 10
FIG. 11

VEGFR2 bioassay. Testing of COS cell conditioned medium containing VEGF-A, VEGF-D(Human)

- ■ VEGF-A
- ● VEGF-D (Human)
- ○ Medium Alone

Viable Cells vs. % Per Well of Conditioned Medium
HMM
\(\Delta\text{NAC-melSP-VEGF-C-H}_6\)
Short splice variant of VEGF-C
Not Infected
Full length VEGF-D #1
Full length VEGF-D #2
Full length VEGF-D #3
\(\Delta\text{NAC-melSP-VEGF-D-H}_6\) #1
Full length VEGF-D-H6 #1
\(\Delta\text{NAC-melSP-VEGF-D-H}_6\) #3
\(\Delta\text{NAC-melSP-VEGF-D-H}_6\) #2
Full length VEGF-D-H6 #2

FIG. 14
FIG. 15
REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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