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Oon et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2007/0026422 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Feb. 1, 2007**(54) **VACCINE-INDUCED HEPATITIS B VIRAL
STRAIN AND USES THEREOF****Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.****C12Q 1/68** (2006.01)**G01N 33/53** (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **435/6; 435/7.1**

(57)

ABSTRACT

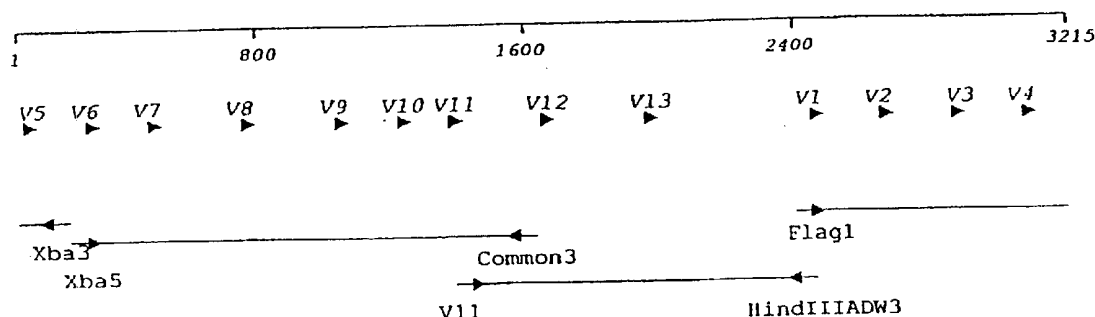
This invention provides an isolated strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) which constituent viral genome is deposited under Accession Nos. P97121504, P97121505 and P97121506 with the European Collection of Cell Culture on 15th Dec. 1997. This invention also provides an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine, and the purified peptide. This invention further provides an isolated nucleic acid which encodes a peptide, wherein the peptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule comprising nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1, and the purified peptide. This invention also provides various methods using the disclosed isolated nucleic acids and polypeptides.

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OF SINGAPORE**(21) Appl. No.: **11/385,013**(22) Filed: **Mar. 20, 2006****Related U.S. Application Data**

(62) Division of application No. 09/719,533, filed on Jul. 10, 2001, now Pat. No. 7,038,035, filed as 371 of international application No. PCT/SG98/00045, filed on Jun. 19, 1998.



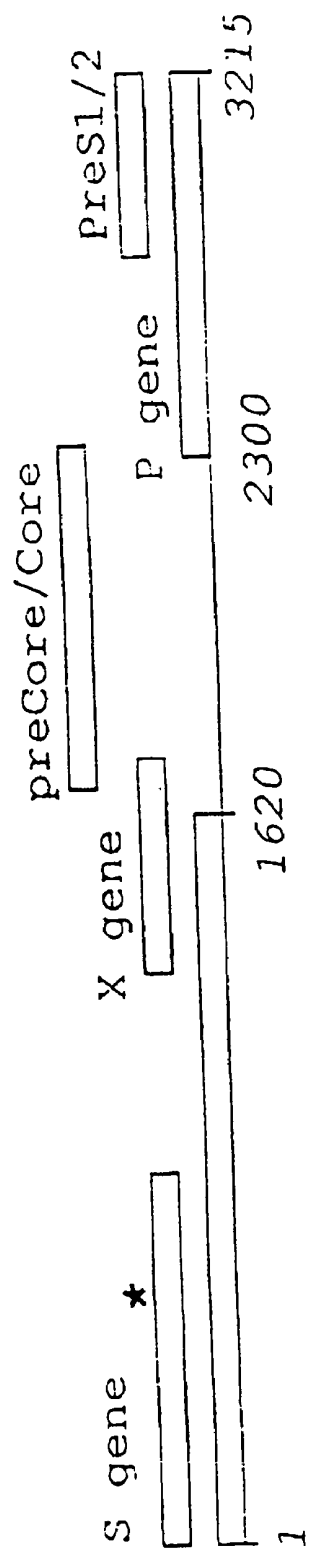


Figure 1

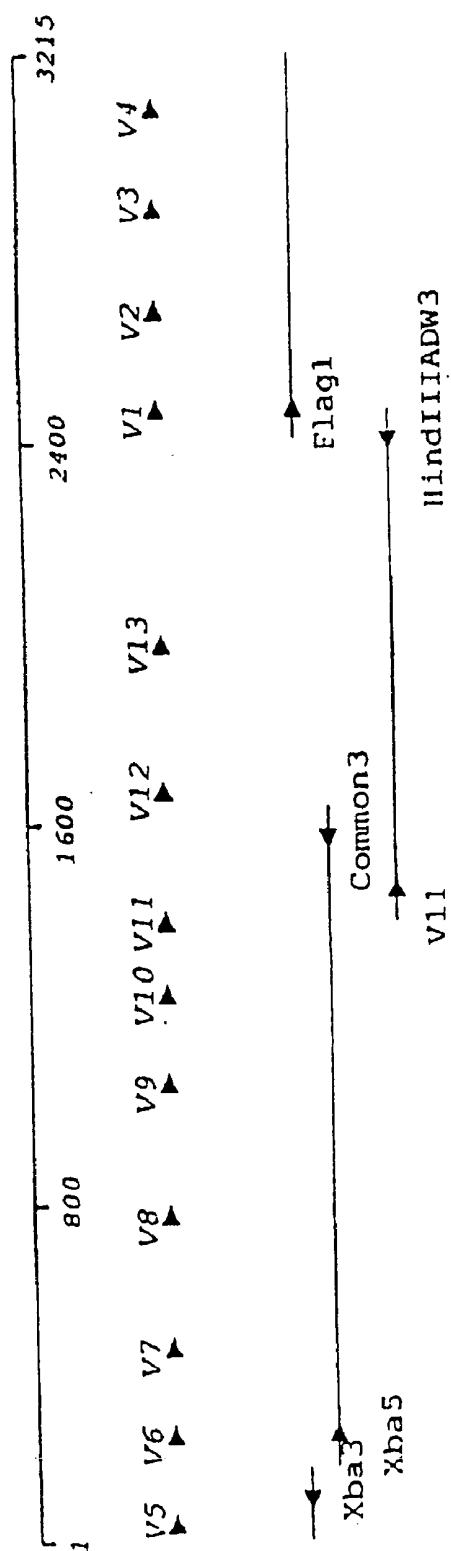


Figure 2

VACCINE-INDUCED HEPATITIS B VIRAL STRAIN AND USES THEREOF

[0001] Throughout this application, various references are referred to within parentheses. Disclosures of these publications in their entireties are hereby incorporated by reference into this application to more fully describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention concerns the hepatitis B virus genome with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) within the major surface antigen, its nucleotide sequence, the deduced four major protein sequences, antigen, antibody, detection systems, development of effective vaccines, and antiviral agents.

[0003] The hepatitis B virus was first discovered in 1963 as a human virus that is transmitted parenterally. Although these viruses are not particularly cytotoxic and do not lead to massive cell death, they have been the cause of a major infectious disease affecting both adults and young children worldwide. The presence of hepatitis B surface antigen has served as the main detection marker for carriers of hepatitis B virus, and thus, possibly those at risk of transmitting the virus. Conversely, the occurrence of an anti-surface antigen antibody indicates an immune response which would lead to eventual recovery. Stimulation of such immune response has been greatly helped by the currently licensed hepatitis B vaccines developed by Merck Sharpe & Dohme. These vaccines contain the major surface antigen in either the natural (plasma-derived) or the recombinant (purified from yeast cells) form, and have proven safe and effective in neutralizing the hepatitis B virus. In Singapore, the active vaccination program at a national scale has resulted in a significant decrease of acute hepatitis B infection and the incidence of primary hepatocellular carcinoma. This decrease has in turn been associated with an increased immunity in the population.

[0004] The major antigenic epitope of hepatitis B virus is a highly conserved region spanning 23 amino acid residues and located from amino acid position 124 to 147 of the major surface antigen. This small region designated as the group specific determinant "a" is found in all subtypes and isolates of hepatitis B viral genomes. Its antigenic properties seem due to its proposed double loop structure, to which the vaccine-induced neutralizing antibody binds.

[0005] In contrast to random mutations introduced into hepatitis B viral genomes during viral replication by the proof-reading defective reverse transcriptase, mutations induced following vaccination occur mainly in the "a" epitope of the major surface antigen. These mutant viruses are of particular interest since they show reduced affinity to the neutralizing antibody and therefore are able to replicate independently. Among these vaccine-escape mutants, the mutation at amino acid residue 145 (from Glycine to Arginine) in the second loop of the major surface antigen is the most significant because it is stable, results in conformational changes of the "a" epitope and has been reported worldwide in North America, Europe, Japan and Southeast Asia. In Singapore, for example, such mutants are the most frequent variant following vaccination. Twelve infectious variants among 41 breakthroughs have been identified as having an arginine mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the

major surface antigen. There is evidence of vertical transmission from one of the 12 variants and this variant has also been associated with active liver disease. Significantly, some of these variants are now found in random asymptomatic adult population.

[0006] The occurrence of this replicative vaccine-induced mutant and its ability to escape detection using standard reagents is of grave concern because it has resulted in the development of acute hepatitis B in Italy and Singapore. This situation therefore requires the urgent development of specific detection systems, as well as, effective prophylactic vaccines and antiviral agents. Determination of the nucleotide sequence of this vaccine-induced mutant virus constitutes the first step towards these aims and will certainly be helpful for the various above-mentioned developments.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] This invention provides an isolated strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-'S'-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) which constituent viral genome is deposited under Accession Nos. P97121504, P97121505 and P97121506 with the European Collection of Cell Culture on 15th Dec. 1997.

[0008] This invention also provides an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine.

[0009] This invention provides a method of producing the polypeptide in purified form and the resulting purified polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine.

[0010] This invention provides an oligonucleotide of at least 15 nucleotides capable of specifically hybridizing with sequences of only the mutant viral strain of hepatitis B virus.

[0011] This invention provides a method of obtaining antibodies to a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus and the antibodies produced.

[0012] This invention provides uses of the above-described polypeptide, antibodies or nucleic acid for determining whether a subject is infected with the above-described viral strain.

[0013] This invention also provides a composition capable of stimulating or enhancing antibody production for the polypeptide.

[0014] This invention further provides a method for identifying a chemical compound which is capable of treating and/or preventing an infection by the above-described mutant viral strain and compositions containing such compounds.

[0015] This invention also provides a composition comprising the chemical compound identified by the above-

described methods in an amount effective to treat or prevent infection by the strain and a pharmaceutically effective carrier.

[0016] This invention further provides use of compositions for treating a subject infected with this viral strain.

[0017] This invention also provides use of compositions for preventing infection of a subject by this viral strain.

[0018] And lastly, this invention provides a method of screening bodily fluids for this viral strain.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0019] FIG. 1. Structure of the four open reading frames of human hepatitis B viral genome isolated from a male, eleven year old Singaporean child with a glycine to arginine mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen, as labeled by an asterisk. The major viral proteins: DNA polymerase, large/middle/major surface antigen, precore, core and transactivating X are denoted as P, PreS 1/PreS2/S, PreC, C and X respectively.

[0020] FIG. 2. Strategy of cloning and sequence determination of the same hepatitis B viral genome.

[0021] FIG. 3. Whole nucleotide sequence of human hepatitis B virus, isolated from an eleven year old child born to a mother in Singapore with the wild type virus. The child had received standard Hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) and HB vaccine and was infected with the mutated strain one year later. This strain carries a mutation at amino acid residue 145 (glycine to arginine) of the major surface antigen (SEQ. I.D. No. 1). The mutation is shown at nucleic acids numbered 587-589.

[0022] FIG. 4. Deduced amino acid sequence of the DNA polymerase from the nucleotide sequence of FIG. 3 (SEQ. I.D. No. 2).

[0023] FIG. 5. Deduced amino acid sequence of the large surface antigen from the nucleotide sequence of FIG. 3. The mutated amino acid residue (G to R) is numbered 319 (SEQ. I.D. No. 3).

[0024] FIG. 6. Deduced amino acid sequence of the core protein from the nucleotide sequence of FIG. 3 (SEQ. I.D. No. 4).

[0025] FIG. 7. Deduced amino acid sequence of the transactivating x protein from the nucleotide sequence of FIG. 3 (SEQ. I.D. No. 5).

[0026] FIG. 8. Oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to the initiation site of the coding region of DNA polymerase, at position 2307 of the viral genome and matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.6).

[0027] FIG. 9. Oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to position 250 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.7).

[0028] FIG. 10. oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to position 250 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.8).

[0029] FIG. 11. Oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to the stop codon of the coding region of DNA polymerase,

at position 1623 of the viral genome and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.9).

[0030] FIG. 12. Oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to position 1420 of the viral genome and matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.10).

[0031] FIG. 13. Oligonucleotide sequence corresponding to position 2340 of the viral genome and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide) (SEQ.I.D.No.11).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0032] Throughout this application, references to specific nucleotides are to nucleotides present on the coding strand of the nucleic acid. The following standard abbreviations are used throughout the specification to indicate specific nucleotides:

C = cytosine	A = adenosine
T = thymidine	G = guanosine

[0033] The present invention provides the nucleotide sequence of a hepatitis B virus genome, which carries a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, consisting of 3215 nucleotides (FIG. 3) coding for 4 overlapping viral proteins shown in FIGS. 4-7.

[0034] The invention provides amino acid sequences of the four major viral proteins, these include the DNA polymerase, large/middle/major surface antigen, core and transactivating X. These proteins can be produced using recombinant technology, and used in developing polyclonal or monoclonal antibodies.

[0035] The present invention also provides a hepatitis B virus diagnostic system, specific for the vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, using nucleotide or protein sequences or antibodies described herein.

[0036] The present invention provides an isolated strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-'S'-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) which constituent viral genome is deposited under Accession Nos. P97121504, P97121505 and P97121506.

[0037] The invention also provides an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of the major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine. In a specific embodiment, the polypeptide is being encoded by nucleotides 155 through 835 of the nucleic acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 1, specifically, comprising nucleotides "AGA" in position 587-589, instead of "GGA." This nucleic acid can be DNA or RNA, specifically, cDNA or genomic DNA.

[0038] In another embodiment of the invention, the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence substantially the

same as amino acid residues 174 through 400 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.

[0039] This invention further provides an isolated nucleic acid which encodes a peptide, wherein the peptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule comprising nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1.

[0040] This invention also provides an isolated nucleic acid which encodes a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.

[0041] This invention also provides a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine and operatively linked to a promoter of RNA transcription.

[0042] Further, this invention provides a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a peptide, wherein the peptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule comprising nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1.

[0043] In both of the above-identified vectors, the vector may comprise viral DNA.

[0044] This invention also provides a host vector system for the production of a polypeptide which comprises the above-described vectors in a suitable host.

[0045] This invention also provides a method of producing a polypeptide or a peptide which comprises growing the host vector systems described above, under suitable conditions permitting production of the polypeptide and recovering the polypeptide so produced.

[0046] This invention further provides a method of obtaining a polypeptide or a peptide in purified form which comprises: (a) introducing the above-described vectors into a suitable host cell; (b) culturing the resulting host cell so as to produce the polypeptide; (c) recovering the polypeptide produced in step (b); and (d) purifying the polypeptide so recovered.

[0047] This invention further provides a purified polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine. One means of obtaining the polypeptide is by the above-described method.

[0048] This invention also provides a purified peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated Seq. I.D. No. 3. One means of obtaining this peptide is by the above-described method.

[0049] This invention also provides an oligonucleotide of at least 15 nucleotides capable of specifically hybridizing with a unique sequence of nucleotides within a nucleic acid which encodes a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypep-

tide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine, without hybridizing to any sequence of nucleotides within a nucleic acid which encodes the major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus. Specifically the oligonucleotide comprises nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1.

[0050] This invention also provides a method of obtaining antibodies to a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and not to the major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus, comprising: (a) obtaining the polypeptide in a purified form; (b) immunizing an organism capable of producing antibodies against the purified polypeptide; (c) collecting the produced antibodies; (d) combining the produced antibodies and the purified polypeptide under conditions to form a complex; and (e) determining which produced antibodies form a complex with the purified polypeptide so as to obtain antibodies to the polypeptide. Specifically, the polypeptide is being encoded by nucleotides 155 through 835 of the nucleic acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 1. In another embodiment, the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence substantially identical to amino acid residues 174 through 400 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.

[0051] One could perform the above-described well-known method in rabbits or mice.

[0052] This invention also provides a method of obtaining antibodies to a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3, comprising: (a) obtaining the peptide in a purified form; (b) immunizing an organism capable of producing antibodies against the purified peptide; (c) collecting the produced antibodies; (d) combining the produced antibodies and the purified peptide under conditions to form a complex; and (e) determining which produced antibodies form a complex with the purified peptide so as to obtain antibodies to the peptide.

[0053] One could perform the above-described well-known method in rabbits or mice.

[0054] This invention also provides the antibodies obtained from the above-described methods, specifically the monoclonal antibodies. Further, the invention provides antibodies capable of detecting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and incapable of detecting the major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus, as well as, antibodies capable of detecting a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.

[0055] This invention also provides use of an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine for determining whether a subject is infected with a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-“S”-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine), wherein such determination comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate nucleic acid sample from the subject; and (b) determining whether the nucleic acid sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine.

[0056] A means of determination is where the nucleic acid sample in step (a) comprises mRNA corresponding to the transcript of DNA encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and wherein the determining of step (b) comprises: (i) contacting the mRNA with the above-described oligonucleotide under conditions permitting binding of the mRNA to the oligonucleotide so as to form a complex; (ii) isolating the complex so formed; and (iii) identifying the mRNA in the isolated complex so as to thereby determine whether the mRNA is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid which encodes the polypeptide.

[0057] Another example is where the nucleic acid sample in step (a) comprises mRNA corresponding to the transcript of DNA encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and wherein the determining of step (b) comprises: (i) translating the mRNA under suitable conditions to obtain an amino acid sequence; and (ii) comparing the amino acid sequence of step (i) with the amino acid sequence of an isolated nucleic acid which encodes a polypeptide, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence substantially identical to amino acid residues 174 through 400 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3 so as to thereby determine whether the nucleic acid sample is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid which encodes the polypeptide. A further example is where the determining of step (b) comprises: (i) amplifying the nucleic acid present in the sample of step (a); and (ii) detecting the presence of polypeptide in the resulting amplified nucleic acid.

[0058] This invention provides the use of an antibody that recognizes a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus for determining whether the subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular

carcinoma, wherein such determination comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate nucleic acid sample from the subject; and (b) determining whether the nucleic acid sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, by contacting the sample under appropriate conditions to bind to the antibodies of claim 35 so as to determine whether the subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0059] This invention also provides use of antibodies capable of detecting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-“S”-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) for determining whether a subject is infected with a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-“S”-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine), wherein such determination comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate sample from the subject; and (b) determining whether the sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine by contacting the sample under appropriate conditions to bind to the antibodies so as to determine whether a subject is infected. Furthermore, the antibody may also be capable of detecting a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298-320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.

[0060] In the above-described uses, the isolated nucleic acid, oligonucleotide or antibody may be labeled with a detectable marker. Examples of detectable markers include radioactive isotopes, fluorophors and enzymes.

[0061] In a specific embodiment, the sample includes, but is not limited to, blood, tissue or sera.

[0062] This invention also provides a method for identifying a chemical compound for the manufacture of a medicament which is capable of treating infection by a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-“S”-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) which comprises: (a) contacting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, with the chemical compound under conditions permitting binding between the polypeptide and the chemical compound; (b) detecting specific binding of the chemical compound to the polypeptide; and (c) determining whether the chemical compound inhibits the polypeptide so as to identify a chemical compound which is capable of treating infection by the viral strain.

[0063] This invention also provides a method for identifying a chemical compound for the manufacture of a medi-

cament which is capable of preventing infection by a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine), which comprises: (a) contacting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, with the chemical compound under conditions permitting binding between the polypeptide and the chemical compound; (b) detecting specific binding of the chemical compound to the polypeptide; and (c) determining whether the chemical compound inhibits the polypeptide so as to identify a chemical compound which is capable of preventing infection by the viral strain.

[0064] This invention further provides a composition comprising a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, or derivative thereof, the amounts of such polypeptide being effective to stimulate or enhance antibody production in a subject, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

[0065] The actual effective amount will be based upon the size of the polypeptide, the biodegradability of the polypeptide, the bioactivity of the polypeptide and the bioavailability of the polypeptide. If the polypeptide does not degrade quickly, is bioavailable and highly active, a smaller amount will be required to be effective. The effective amount will be known to one of skill in the art; it will also be dependent upon the form of the polypeptide, the size of the polypeptide and the bioactivity of the polypeptide. Use of an adjuvant for example, would lower the required amount of the polypeptide. One of skill in the art could routinely perform empirical activity tests to determine the bioactivity in bioassays and thus determine the effective amount.

[0066] Pharmaceutically acceptable carriers are well known to those skilled in the art and include, but are not limited to, 0.01-0.1M and preferably 0.05M phosphate buffer or 0.8% saline. Additionally, such pharmaceutically acceptable carriers may be aqueous or non-aqueous solutions, suspensions, and emulsions. Examples of non-aqueous solvents are propylene glycol, polyethylene glycol, vegetable oils such as olive oil, and injectable organic esters such as ethyl oleate. Aqueous carriers include water, alcoholic/aqueous solutions, emulsions or suspensions, including saline and buffered media. Parenteral vehicles include sodium chloride solution, Ringer’s dextrose, dextrose and sodium chloride, lactated Ringer’s or fixed oils. Intravenous vehicles include fluid and nutrient replenishers, electrolyte replenishers such as those based on Ringer’s dextrose, and the like. Preservatives and other additives may also be present, such as, for example, antimicrobials, antioxidants, chelating agents, inert gases and the like.

[0067] This invention further provides a composition comprising a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3 or derivative thereof, the amounts of such peptide being effective

to stimulate or enhance antibody production in a subject, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

[0068] This invention further provides compositions comprising the chemical compound identified by the above-described methods in an amount effective to treat or prevent infection by a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) and a pharmaceutically effective carrier.

[0069] This invention provides the use of the above-described compositions as medicaments for treating and/or preventing hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0070] This invention also provides use of the above-identified compositions for treating a subject infected with a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine).

[0071] This invention also provides use of the above-identified compositions for preventing infection by a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) in a subject which comprises administering an effective amount.

[0072] This invention further provides a method of screening tissues and bodily fluids from a subject for a strain of hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine) which comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate sample of bodily fluid from the subject; (b) determining the presence of a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine in the sample of step (a) so as to screen the sample for the strain. In embodiments of this method, the bodily fluid comprises blood, sera, or a nucleic acid sample of blood or sera.

[0073] This invention provides a method for determining whether a subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular carcinoma, which comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate nucleic acid sample from the subject; and (b) determining whether the nucleic acid sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, thereby determining whether the subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0074] This invention also provides the above-described method, wherein the nucleic acid sample in step (a) comprises mRNA encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and wherein the determining of step (b) com-

prises: (i) contacting the mRNA with the above-described oligonucleotides under conditions permitting binding of the mRNA to the oligonucleotide so as to form a complex; (ii) isolating the complex so formed; and (iii) identifying the mRNA in the isolated complex so as to thereby determine whether the mRNA is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid which encodes the polypeptide.

[0075] This invention further provides the above-described method, wherein the nucleic acid sample in step (a) comprises mRNA encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and wherein the determining of step (b) comprises: (i) translating the mRNA under suitable conditions to obtain an amino acid sequence; and (ii) comparing the amino acid sequence of step (i) with the amino acid sequence encoded by the isolated nucleic acid described above so as to determine whether the nucleic acid sample is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid which encodes the polypeptide.

[0076] This invention also provides the above-described method, wherein the determining of step (b) comprises: (i) amplifying the nucleic acid present in the sample of step (a); and (ii) detecting the presence of polypeptide in the resulting amplified nucleic acid.

[0077] This invention further provides the above-described method for determining whether a subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular carcinoma, which comprises: (a) obtaining an appropriate sample from the subject; and (b) determining whether the sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, by contacting the sample under appropriate conditions to bind to the above-described antibodies so as to determine whether the subject has a predisposition for hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0078] This invention provides the above-described methods, wherein the oligonucleotide or antibody is labeled with a detectable marker.

[0079] This invention also provides the above-described methods, wherein the detectable marker is a radioactive isotope, a fluorophor or an enzyme.

[0080] This invention also provides the above-described methods, wherein the sample comprises blood, tissue or sera.

[0081] This invention further provides a method for identifying a chemical compound for the manufacture of a medicament which is capable of treating hepatocellular carcinoma which comprises: (a) contacting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide

is an arginine, rather than a glycine, with the chemical compound under conditions permitting binding between the polypeptide and the chemical compound; (b) detecting specific binding of the chemical compound to the polypeptide; and (c) determining whether the chemical compound binds to the polypeptide so as to identify a chemical compound which is capable of treating hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0082] This invention provides a method for identifying a chemical compound for the manufacture of a medicament which is capable of preventing hepatocellular carcinoma, which comprises: (a) contacting a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, with the chemical compound under conditions permitting binding between the polypeptide and the chemical compound; (b) detecting specific binding of the chemical compound to the polypeptide; and (c) determining whether the chemical compound binds to the polypeptide so as to identify a chemical compound which is capable of preventing hepatocellular carcinoma.

[0083] Additionally, this invention provides a composition comprising the chemical compound identified by the above-described methods in an amount effective to treat hepatocellular carcinoma and a pharmaceutically effective carrier.

[0084] This invention also provides a composition comprising the chemical compound identified by the above-described methods in an amount effective to prevent hepatocellular carcinoma and a pharmaceutically effective carrier.

[0085] This invention further provides a method treating a subject with hepatocellular carcinoma which comprises administering an effective amount of the above-described compositions.

[0086] This invention further provides a method preventing hepatocellular carcinoma in a subject which comprises administering an effective amount of the above-described compositions.

[0087] This invention also provides a hepatitis vaccine, comprising a mutant form of the surface antigen of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of the major surface antigen of hepatitis B in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine.

[0088] This invention also provides the above-described vaccine and an adjuvant.

[0089] This invention is illustrated in the Experimental Details section which follows. These sections are set forth to aid in an understanding of the invention but are not intended to, and should not be construed to, limit in any way the invention as set forth in the claims which follow thereafter.

Experimental Details

[0090] In the method described below, the hepatitis B virus carrying the mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen was isolated, and its nucleotide sequence was determined.

[0091] Serum sample (20/815c) was obtained from an 11-year old child born to a mother carrying the wild type surface antigen. The child tested surface antigen negative at birth and was subjected to a combined treatment of hepatitis B immunoglobulin (HBIG) and plasma-derived vaccine. He was tested surface antigen positive one year later and carried an Arginine mutation at amino acid residue 145 in the major surface antigen. The viral DNA was extracted prior to the determination of its sequence in the present invention.

[0092] As described in the Examples below, the genome of this hepatitis B mutant virus carrying a mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen consists of 3215 nucleotides which are identical to those of the wild type virus of the same subtype (adw). Open reading frames (ORFs) coding for the major viral proteins are found at corresponding positions when compared to the wild type virus. Position 1 in the mutant hepatitis B virus genome is defined according to that in the wild type virus, corresponding to the restriction site EcoRI which is absent in the hepatitis B virus in the present invention due to changes in the nucleotide sequence.

[0093] The structure of the different ORFs in the mutant virus genome reported are summarized in FIG. 1 and their locations are indicated as follows:

[0094] DNA polymerase gene starts at position 2307 and ends at position 1623, therefore consisting of 2532 nucleotides and coding for 843 amino acid residues;

[0095] Large surface antigen gene starts at position 2848 and ends at position 835, therefore consisting of 1203 nucleotides and coding for 400 amino acid residues. This large surface antigen overlaps the middle surface antigen starting at position 3205 and the major surface antigen which starts at position 155. Both the middle (consisting of 281 amino acids residues) and the major (consisting of 226 amino acid residues) surface antigens end at the same position as the large surface antigen;

[0096] Core gene starts at position 1814 and ends at position 2452, therefore consisting of 639 nucleotides and coding for 212 amino acid residues; and

[0097] Trans-activating X gene starts at position 1374 and ends at position 1838, therefore consisting of 465 nucleotides and coding for 154 amino acid residues.

[0098] Furthermore, sequence analysis has established this mutant hepatitis B virus as belonging to adw subtype, as indicated by a lysine residue at both positions 122 and 160 in the major surface antigen. Consistent with previous analysis of the "a" epitope by direct sequencing, the vaccine-induced mutation (from Glycine to Arginine) is found at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen.

[0099] Compared with the wild type hepatitis B virus deposited in the Genbank database (accession number D00329), the identity of this hepatitis B viral strain is at 89.4% for the nucleotide sequence. The identity of different viral proteins of the present mutant hepatitis B virus as compared with its wild type counterparts is at 88.3%, 87.7%, 93.4% and 87% for DNA polymerase (PIR—Protein Identification Resources accession number P93460), large surface antigen (PIR accession number A93460), core (PIR

accession number C93460) and trans-activating X (PIR accession number A31289) proteins, respectively.

[0100] The hepatitis B virus genome in the present invention carrying a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, can be used as material to design oligonucleotides specific to the mutant virus genome. These oligonucleotides can be used as material for highly specific diagnostic agents that detect virus carrying a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen.

[0101] The hepatitis B virus genome in the present invention, with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, can be used as material to produce proteins of the invention by expressing a vector that carries the relevant coding region, and which can replicate in a host cell such as *Escherichia coli*, by standard DNA recombinant technology.

[0102] Proteins of the present invention are useful as material for highly specific diagnostic agents capable of detecting hepatitis B virus carrying a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen. Using known methods, these same proteins can be used to produce polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies.

[0103] Polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies can be used as material for diagnostic agents to detect with high specificity antigens of hepatitis B virus, with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen.

[0104] A detection system using each protein of the present invention or proteins with partial replacement of amino acids, and a detection system using monoclonal or polyclonal antibodies to such proteins, are useful as highly specific diagnostic agents for hepatitis B virus with vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen, and are effective to detect and screen out such virus from transfusion bloods or blood derivatives. The proteins or antibodies to such proteins, can be used as a material for development of prophylactic and therapeutic vaccine against such virus.

[0105] It is well known that one or more nucleotides in a DNA sequence can be substituted by other nucleotides to produce the same protein. The present invention also concerns such nucleotide changes which code for proteins reported in this invention. It is equally well known that one or more amino acids in a protein sequence can be replaced by other analogous amino acids, as defined by their hydrophilic properties or charges, to produce an analog of the amino acid sequence. Any analogs of the proteins of the present invention involving amino acid replacement, deletions, or by isosteres (modified amino acids that bear close structural and spatial similarity to protein amino acids), amino acid addition, or isostere addition can be utilized, provided that the resulting sequences elicit antibodies recognizing hepatitis B virus with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid mutation 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen.

EXAMPLES

[0106] The nucleotide sequence and the deduced amino acid sequence of hepatitis B virus, carrying a vaccine-

induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, were determined in the following manner:

1. Isolation of Viral DNA

[0107] The viral DNA was isolated from a serum sample (20/815c) obtained from the serum of an 11-year old Chinese child who was born to a mother of wild type hepatitis B virus surface antigen. Despite negative test results at birth, he was given combined treatment of HBIG and the plasma-derived vaccine and tested positive for hepatitis B virus surface antigen one year later. Sequence analysis of the "a" epitope indicated the presence of a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen.

[0108] The isolation method used was:

[0109] 200 μ l of the serum sample was added with 400 μ l of the lysis buffer (Tris chloride 10 mM, pH7.4, EDTA 1 mM, and sodium dodecyl sulfate 2%) and 25 μ l of proteinase K (20 mg/ml), incubated at 65 C for 3 hours. Viral DNA was then extracted by phenol/chloroform and precipitated by ethanol.

2. Amplification of Viral DNA by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)

[0110] The virus genome was amplified by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) using 3 sets of overlapping oligonucleotides, which were designed according to the wild type hepatitis B virus of adw subtype. Various restriction enzyme sites were included to facilitate the cloning of the PCR products. The position of these oligonucleotides is shown in FIG. 2 and indicated as follows:

[0111] Flag 1 (ATAAGCTTATGCCCTATCTTATCAACACTTCCGGA) (SEQ. I.D. No. 6) starts at the initiation site of the coding region of DNA polymerase, at position 2307 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide). An additional HindIII restriction enzyme site is underlined;

[0112] Xba3 (GAGTCTAGACTCTGCGGTATGTGA) (SEQ. I.D. No. 7) starts at the internal restriction enzyme site XbaI, at position 250 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide). An additional XbaI restriction enzyme site is underlined;

[0113] Xba5 (GAGTCTAGACTCGTGGTGGACTTCT) (SEQ. I.D. No. 8) starts at the internal XbaI site, at the same location as that of Xba3 oligonucleotide but matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide). An additional XbaI restriction enzyme site is underlined;

[0114] Common 3 (TGAGAATTCTCACGGTGTCTCCATGCGACGT) (SEQ. I.D. No. 9) starts at the stop codon of the DNA polymerase, at position 1623 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide). An additional EcoRI restriction enzyme site is underlined;

[0115] V11 (TTTGTTCACGTCCCGT) (SEQ. I.D. No. 10) starts near the initiation site of the X gene, at position 1420 of the viral nucleotide sequence and matches the coding strand (sense oligonucleotide);

[0116] HindIIIADW3 (CTAAGCTTAGTTCCGGAAGTGTGAT) (SEQ. I.D. No. 11) starts close to

the initiation site of the DNA polymerase, at position 2340 and matches the complementary strand (anti-sense oligonucleotide). An additional Hind III restriction enzyme site is underlined.

[0117] Using viral DNA as a template, PCR was then carried out on a DNA Thermal Cycler (Perkin-Elmer, Cetus) for 35 cycles using Pfu polymerase (Stratagene, U.S.A.), each cycle consisting of 1.5 minutes at a denaturing temperature of 94° C., 2 minutes at an annealing temperature of 53° C. and 4 minutes at an extension temperature of 72° C. The following combinations of oligonucleotides were used: FlagI/Xba3, Xba5/Common3 and V11/HindIIIADW3, and generating amplification products of 1.2 kb, 1.4 kb and 1.1 kb, respectively.

3. Cloning of the Amplified Viral DNA Fragments.

[0118] Amplified viral DNA fragment from FlagI/Xba3 (1.2 kb) was subjected to restriction enzyme digestion by HindIII and XbaI prior to cloning in a BlueScript plasmid pre-treated by the same restriction enzymes. Similar digestion with XbaI and EcoRI was applied to PCR product from Xba5/Common3 (1.4 kb) prior to cloning in a BlueScript plasmid pre-treated by XbaI and EcoRI. On the other hand, the DNA fragment amplified with V11 and HindIIIADW3 (1.1 kb) was directly cloned into ZeroBlunt plasmid, developed by InvitroGen (U.S.A.) for cloning blunt-end DNA fragments.

4. Determination of Nucleotide Sequence

[0119] Nucleotide sequence of the vaccine-induced hepatitis B virus in the present invention was determined on plasmid DNA template by chain-terminating inhibitors, using the Sequenase DNA Sequencing Kit (United States Biochemical Corp.). To facilitate the sequencing procedure, various internal oligonucleotides were designed (from V1 to V13) according to the wild type hepatitis B virus, and their positions are indicated in FIG. 2.

[0120] From the analysis described above, the full-length nucleotide sequence of the hepatitis B virus carrying a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen was determined as shown in FIG. 3.

[0121] The deduced amino acid sequences coding for the major viral proteins are shown in FIGS. 4-7: hepatitis B viral DNA polymerase (FIG. 4), the large surface antigen (FIG. 5), the core protein (FIG. 6) and the trans-activating X protein (FIG. 7).

[0122] Alignment of the virus sequence in the present invention with other hepatitis B viral sequences, available in the Genbank database, will point to specific sequence differences which in turn can be used to design DNA probes. A detection system using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) can then be developed. Such PCR reactions will involve combinations of oligonucleotides specific to hepatitis B virus with a vaccine-induced mutation at the amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen, thereby allowing highly specific detection of these mutant viral DNAs. Briefly, viral DNA can be extracted as described in this invention. PCR reactions can be performed using specific oligonucleotides using similar cycling conditions described above. Results can then be analyzed after resolving PCR products on a 1% agarose gel.

[0123] According to known immunological procedures, it is possible to determine epitopes from protein sequences such as those in FIGS. 4-7. Determination of these epitopes specific to hepatitis B virus with vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen will allow the synthesis of peptides using genetic engineering methods, synthesis of the proteins, production of the antibodies, development of specific diagnostic reagents, development of prophylactic and therapeutic vaccines, and antiviral agents.

[0124] A detection system for antibodies against hepatitis B virus, with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen, can be developed using polyvinyl microtiter plates and the sandwich method. Briefly, 50 μ l of 5 μ g/ml concentration of a hepatitis B virus (vaccine-induced mutant) peptide can be dispensed in each well of the microtiter plates and incubated overnight at room temperature for consolidation. Similar procedures can be applied to 's'protein purified from host cells such as *Escherichia coli*. The microplate wells can be washed five times with physiological saline solution containing 0.05% Tween 20. For overcoating, 100 μ l of NaCl buffer containing 30% (v/v) of calf serum and 0.05% Tween 20 (CS buffer) can be dispensed in each well and discarded after incubation for 30 minutes at room temperature.

[0125] To determine antibodies specific for the vaccine-induced mutant hepatitis B virus antibodies in serum, the primary reaction can be carried out such that 50 μ l of the CS buffer and 10 μ l of a serum sample can be dispensed in each microplate well and incubated on a microplate vibrator for one hour at room temperature. After completion of the primary reaction, microplate wells are washed five times as described above.

[0126] In the secondary reaction, 1 ng of horseradish peroxidase labeled anti-human IgG mouse monoclonal antibodies dissolved in 50 μ l of calf serum can be dispensed in each microplate well, and incubated on a microplate vibrator for one hour at room temperature. Upon completion, wells can be washed five times in the same way. After addition of hydrogen peroxide (as substrate) and 50 μ l of O-phenylenediamine solution (as color developer) in each well, and after incubation for 30 minutes at room temperature, 50 μ l of 4M sulphuric acid solution can be dispensed in each well to stop further color development and for reading absorbance at 490 nm.

[0127] The present invention makes possible detection of vaccine-induced mutant hepatitis B virus, in particular those carrying a mutation at amino acid residue 145 of the major surface antigen. Such mutant hepatitis B virus have hitherto escaped the detection using conventional antibody-based methods, and the present invention also provides detection systems capable of highly specific and sensitive detection at an early stage of infection.

[0128] In addition, these features allow accurate diagnosis of patients at an early stage of the disease and also help to remove with higher efficiency blood contaminated with vaccine-induced mutant hepatitis B virus through using a screening test of donor bloods.

[0129] Proteins and their antibodies under the present invention can be utilized for development of prophylactic and therapeutic vaccines, as well as, immunological phar-

maceuticals. Sequence information on structural genes of these mutant viruses will be helpful in developing detection systems of the relevant protein antigens and antibodies.

[0130] Antigen-antibody complexes can be detected by known methods. Specific monoclonal and polyclonal antibodies can be raised by immunizing animals such as mice and rabbits with peptides or proteins specific to mutant vaccine-induced hepatitis B viruses. Inhibitory antiviral agents can be designed and targeted against these proteins and molecules in cell culture or in vivo.

[0131] The present invention is based on studies on an isolated virus genome with a vaccine-induced mutation at amino acid residue 145 (Glycine to Arginine) of the major surface antigen. The invention makes possible highly specific detection of these vaccine-induced mutant hepatitis B virus and provides material such as protein, polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies for development of such detection system.

[0132] We have evidence showing that when expressed in a mammalian expression system, the major surface antigen (HBsAg) of the mutant HBV reported in our invention is detected as a 22 kDa protein on a Coomassie-blue stained SDS-PAGE gel, whereas the wild type HBsAg is detected as a 25 kDa protein. Since the only glycosylation site on the HBsAg is located in close proximity (Asparagine at position 146) to the mutation at position 145, it is very likely that the drastic change from Glycine to Arginine at position 145 affects the glycosylation process in the mutant HBsAg. This defective glycosylation process would in turn result in the smaller protein as observed in our studies. As the antigenicity of a protein is adversely affected by the extent of its glycosylation, we predict that the mutant HBsAg reported in our invention is more antigenic than the wild type HBsAg. This prediction is further supported by the structural analysis using the method developed by Hopp and Woods.

[0133] Our serological studies also indicate major differences between wild type HBV carriers and those carrying the mutant HBV reported in our invention, one such difference is that the serum viral DNA load is significantly lower at around 5 pg per ml as measured by an 125 I hybridization assay (Abbott Laboratories, U.S.A.). In marked contrast, the wild type HBV DNA load is much higher at over 100 pg per ml. In addition, the anti-Hepatitis B surface antigen (anti-HBs) level is detectable at 10 IU per ml in the mutant HBV reported in our invention, whereas such antibodies remained undetectable in carriers of wild type HBV.

[0134] In the process of sequence determination, we have observed that a few oligonucleotides (each of them longer than 17 bases) designed according to the wild type HBV sequence, failed to hybridize to the mutant viral DNA reported in our invention. Two such oligonucleotides are located in the genome at positions 2711 to 2729 and 2902 to 2920. Our results, therefore, point to the structural differences between the wild type and mutant HBV genomes.

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 SEQUENCE LISTING

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

(iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 11

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 1:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 3215 base pairs

(B) TYPE: nucleic acid

(C) STRANDEDNESS: double

(D) TOPOLOGY: circular

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

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CTCCACCACT TTCCACCAAA CTCTTCAAGA TCCCAGAGTC AGGGCCCTGT ACTTTCCTGC      60
TGGTGGCTCC AGTTCAGGAA CAGTGAGCCC TGCTCAGAAT ACTGTCTCTG CCATATCGTC      120
AATCTTATCG AAGACTGGGG ACCCTGTACC GAACATGGAG AACATCGCAT CAGGACTCCT      180
AGGACCCCTG CTCGTGTTAC AGGCGGGGTT TTTCTTGTTG AAAAAATCC TCACAATACC      240
GCAGAGTCTA GACTCGTGGT GGAATTCTCT CAATTTTCTA GGGGGAACAC CCGTGTGTCT      300
TGGCCAAAAT TCGCAGTCCC AAATCTCCAG TCACTCACCA ACCTGTTGTC CTCCAATTG      360
TCCTGGTTAT CGCTGGATGT GTCTGCGGCG TTTTATCATC TTCCTCTGCA TCCTGCTGCT      420
ATGCCCTCAT TTCTTGTTGG TTCTTCTGGA CTATCAAGGT ATGTTGCCCG TTTGTCCTCT      480
AATTCCAGGA TCAACAACAA CCAGCACCGG ACCATGCAAA ACCTGCACAA CTCCTGCTCA      540
AGGAACCTCT ATGTTTCCCT CATGTTGCTG TACAAAACCT ACGGACAGAA ACTGCACCTG      600
TATTCCCATC CCATCATCTT GGGCTTTCGC AAAATACCTA TGGGAGTGGG CCTCAGTCCG      660
TTTCTCTTGG CTCAGTTTAC TAGTGCCATT TGTTTCAGTG TTCGTAGGGC TTTCCCCCAC      720
TGTCTGGCTT TCAGTTATAT GGATGATGTG GTTTTGGGGG CCAAGTCTGT ACAACATCTT      780
GAGTCCCTTT ATGCCGCTGT TACCAATTTT CTTTGTCTT TGGGTATACA TTAAACCCCT      840
CACAAAACAA AAAGATGGGG ATATTCCCTT AACTTCATGG GATATGTCAT TGGGAGTTGG      900
GGCACATTGC CACAGGAACA TATTGTACAA AAAATCAAAA TGTGTTTTAG GAAACTTCCT      960
GTAAACAGGC CTATTGATTG GAAAGTATGT CAACGAATTG TGGGTCTTTT GGGGTTTGCC      1020
GCCCCTTTCA CGCAATGTGG ATATCCTGCT TTAATGCCTT TATATGCATG TATACAAGCA      1080
AAACAGGCTT TTACTTTTCTC GCAAACCTTAC AAGACCTTTC TAAGTAAACA GTATCTGAAC      1140

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CTTTACCCCG	TTGCTCGGCA	ACGCCCTGGT	CTGTGCCAAG	TGTTTGCTGA	CGCAACCCCC	1200
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CCGATCCATA	CTGCGGAACT	CCTAGCCGCT	TGTTTGTCTC	GCAGCAGGTC	TGGGGCAAAA	1320
CTCATCGGGA	CTGACAATTC	TGTCGTGCTC	TCCCGCAAGT	ATACATCATT	TCCATGGCTG	1380
CTAGGCTGTG	CTGCCAACTG	GATCCTGCGC	GGGACGTCCT	TGTTTACGT	CCCGTCGGCG	1440
CTGAATCCCG	CGGACGACCC	CTCCCCGGGC	CGCTTGGGGC	TCTACCGCCC	GCTTCTCCGC	1500
CTGTTATACC	GACCGACCAC	GGGGCGCACC	TCTCTTTACG	CGGACTCCCC	GTCTGTGCCT	1560
TCTCATCTGC	CGGACCGTGT	GCACCTCGCT	TCACCTCTGC	ACGTCGCATG	GAGACCACCG	1620
TGAACGCCCA	CGGGAACCTG	CCCAAGGTCT	TGCATAAGAG	GACTCTTGGA	CTTTCAGCAA	1680
TGTCAACGAC	CGACCTTGAG	GCATACTTCA	AAGACTGTGT	GTTTAATGAG	TGGGAGGAGT	1740
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GTTCAACATC	ACCATGCAAC	TTTTTCACCT	CTGCCTAATC	ATCTCATGTT	CATGTCCTAC	1860
TGTTCAAGCC	TCCAAGCTGT	GCCTTGGGTG	GCTTTGGGGC	ATGGACATTG	ACCCGTATAA	1920
AGAATTTGGA	GCTTCTGTGG	AGTTACTCTC	TTTTTTGCCT	TCTGACTTTT	TTCTTCTAT	1980
TCGAGATCTC	CTCGACACCG	CCTCTGCTCT	GTATCGGGAG	GCCTTAGAGT	CTCCGGAACA	2040
TTGTTACCTT	CACCATACGG	CACTCAGGCA	AGCTATTCTG	AGTTGGGGTG	AGTTAATGAA	2100
TCTAGCCACC	TGGGTGGGAA	GTAATTTGGA	AGATCCAGCA	TCCAGGGAAT	TAGTAGTCAG	2160
CTATGTCAAC	GTTAATATGG	GCCTAAAAAT	CAGACAATA	TTGTGGTTTC	ACATTTCTTG	2220
TCTTACTTTT	GGGAGAGAAA	CTGTCTCTGA	ATATTTGGTG	TCTTTTGAG	TGTGGATTCTG	2280
CACTCCTCCT	GCATATAGAC	CACCAAATGC	CCCTATCTTA	TCAACACTTC	CGGAAACTAC	2340
TGTTGTTAGA	CGAAGAGGCA	GGTCCCCTAG	AAGAAGAACT	CCCTCGCCTC	GCAGACGAAG	2400
GTCTCAATCG	CCGCGTCGCA	GAAGATCTCA	ATCTCGGGAA	TCTCAATGTT	AGTATTCCTT	2460
GGACACATAA	GGTGGGAAAC	TTTACGGGGC	TTTATTCTTC	TACGCTACCT	TGCTTTAATC	2520
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ATTATCCAGA	GTATGTAGTT	AATCATTACT	TCCAGACGCG	ACATTATTTA	CACACTCTTT	2760
GGAAGGCGGG	GATCTTATAT	AAAAGAGAGT	CCACACGTAG	CGCCTCATTT	TGCGGGTCAC	2820
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CCTGCATTCA	AAGCCAACTC	AGAAAAATCCA	GATTGGGACC	TCAACCCGCA	CAAGGACAAC	3000
TGGCCGGACG	CCAACAAGGT	GGGAGTGGGA	GCATTGCGGC	CAGGGTTCAC	CCCTCCTCAT	3060
GGGGGACTGT	TGGGTGGGAG	CCCTCAGGCT	CAGGGCCTAC	TCACAACGTG	GCCAGCAGCT	3120
CCTCTCCTG	CCTCCACCAA	TCGGCAGTCA	GGAAGGCAGC	CTACTCCCTT	ATCTCCACCT	3180
CTAAGGGACA	CTCATCTCTA	GGCCATGCAG	TGGAA			3215

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 2:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

(A) LENGTH: 843 amino acids

(B) TYPE: amino acid

-continued

(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

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

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Met Pro Leu Ser Tyr Gln His Phe Arg Lys Leu Leu Leu Leu Asp Glu
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20      25      30
Leu Asn Arg Arg Val Ala Glu Asp Leu Asn Leu Gly Asn Leu Asn Val
35      40      45
Ser Ile Pro Trp Thr His Lys Val Gly Asn Phe Thr Gly Leu Tyr Ser
50      55      60
Ser Thr Val Pro Cys Phe Asn Pro Lys Trp Gln Thr Pro Ser Phe Pro
65      70      75      80
Asp Ile His Leu Gln Glu Asp Ile Leu Asp Arg Cys Lys Gln Phe Val
85      90      95
Glu Pro Leu Thr Val Asn Glu Asn Arg Arg Leu Lys Leu Ile Met Pro
100     105     110
Ala Arg Phe Tyr Pro Asn Val Thr Lys Tyr Leu Pro Leu Asp Lys Gly
115     120     125
Ile Lys Pro Tyr Tyr Pro Glu Tyr Val Val Asn His Tyr Phe Gln Thr
130     135     140
Arg His Tyr Leu His Thr Leu Trp Lys Ala Gly Ile Leu Tyr Lys Arg
145     150     155     160
Glu Ser Thr Arg Ser Ala Ser Phe Cys Gly Ser Pro Tyr Ser Trp Glu
165     170     175
Gln Asp Leu Gln His Gly Arg Leu Val Phe Gln Thr Ser Lys Arg His
180     185     190
Gly Asp Lys Ser Phe Cys Pro Glu Ser Pro Gly Ile Leu Pro Arg Ser
195     200     205
Ser Val Gly Pro Cys Ile Gln Ser Gln Leu Arg Lys Ser Arg Leu Gly
210     215     220
Pro Gln Pro Ala Gln Gly Gln Leu Ala Gly Arg Gln Gln Gly Gly Ser
225     230     235     240
Gly Ser Ile Arg Ala Arg Val His Pro Ser Ser Trp Gly Thr Val Gly
245     250     255
Val Glu Pro Ser Gly Ser Gly Pro Thr His Asn Cys Ala Ser Ser Ser
260     265     270
Ser Ser Cys Leu His Gln Ser Ala Val Arg Lys Ala Ala Tyr Ser Leu
275     280     285
Ile Ser Thr Ser Lys Gly His Ser Ser Ser Gly His Ala Val Glu Leu
290     295     300
His His Phe Pro Pro Asn Ser Ser Arg Ser Gln Ser Gln Gly Pro Val
305     310     315     320
Leu Ser Cys Trp Trp Leu Gln Phe Arg Asn Ser Glu Pro Cys Ser Glu
325     330     335
Tyr Cys Leu Cys His Ile Val Asn Leu Ile Glu Asp Trp Gly Pro Cys
340     345     350
Thr Glu His Gly Glu His Arg Ile Arg Thr Pro Arg Thr Pro Ala Arg
355     360     365
Val Thr Gly Gly Val Phe Leu Val Asp Lys Asn Pro His Asn Thr Ala
370     375     380

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-continued

Glu	Ser	Arg	Leu	Val	Val	Asp	Phe	Ser	Gln	Phe	Ser	Arg	Gly	Asn	Thr	385	390	395	400
Arg	Val	Ser	Trp	Pro	Lys	Phe	Ala	Val	Pro	Asn	Leu	Gln	Ser	Leu	Thr	405	410	415	
Asn	Leu	Leu	Ser	Ser	Asn	Leu	Ser	Trp	Leu	Ser	Leu	Asp	Val	Ser	Ala	420	425	430	
Ala	Phe	Tyr	His	Leu	Pro	Leu	His	Pro	Ala	Ala	Met	Pro	His	Leu	Leu	435	440	445	
Val	Gly	Ser	Ser	Gly	Leu	Ser	Arg	Tyr	Val	Ala	Arg	Leu	Ser	Ser	Asn	450	455	460	
Ser	Arg	Ile	Asn	Asn	Asn	Glu	His	Arg	Thr	Met	Glu	Asn	Leu	His	Asn	465	470	475	480
Ser	Cys	Ser	Arg	Asn	Leu	Tyr	Val	Ser	Leu	Met	Leu	Leu	Tyr	Lys	Thr	485	490	495	
Tyr	Gly	Gln	Lys	Leu	His	Leu	Tyr	Ser	His	Pro	Ile	Ile	Leu	Gly	Phe	500	505	510	
Arg	Lys	Ile	Pro	Met	Gly	Val	Gly	Leu	Ser	Pro	Phe	Leu	Leu	Ala	Gln	515	520	525	
Phe	Thr	Ser	Ala	Ile	Cys	Ser	Val	Val	Arg	Arg	Ala	Phe	Pro	His	Cys	530	535	540	
Leu	Ala	Phe	Ser	Tyr	Met	Asp	Asp	Val	Val	Leu	Gly	Ala	Lys	Ser	Val	545	550	555	560
Gln	His	Leu	Glu	Ser	Leu	Tyr	Ala	Ala	Val	Thr	Asn	Phe	Leu	Leu	Ser	565	570	575	
Leu	Gly	Ile	His	Leu	Asn	Pro	His	Lys	Thr	Lys	Arg	Trp	Gly	Tyr	Ser	580	585	590	
Leu	Asn	Phe	Met	Gly	Tyr	Val	Ile	Gly	Ser	Trp	Gly	Thr	Leu	Pro	Gln	595	600	605	
Glu	His	Ile	Val	Gln	Lys	Ile	Lys	Met	Cys	Phe	Arg	Lys	Leu	Pro	Val	610	615	620	
Asn	Arg	Pro	Ile	Asp	Trp	Lys	Val	Cys	Gln	Arg	Ile	Val	Gly	Leu	Leu	625	630	635	640
Gly	Phe	Ala	Ala	Pro	Phe	Thr	Gln	Cys	Gly	Tyr	Pro	Ala	Leu	Met	Pro	645	650	655	
Leu	Tyr	Ala	Cys	Ile	Gln	Ala	Lys	Gln	Ala	Phe	Thr	Phe	Ser	Gln	Thr	660	665	670	
Tyr	Lys	Thr	Phe	Leu	Ser	Lys	Gln	Tyr	Leu	Asn	Leu	Tyr	Pro	Val	Ala	675	680	685	
Arg	Gln	Arg	Pro	Gly	Leu	Cys	Glu	Val	Phe	Ala	Asp	Ala	Thr	Pro	Thr	690	695	700	
Gly	Trp	Gly	Leu	Ala	Ile	Gly	His	Gln	Arg	Met	Arg	Gly	Thr	Phe	Val	705	710	715	720
Ser	Pro	Leu	Pro	Ile	His	Thr	Ala	Glu	Leu	Leu	Ala	Ala	Cys	Phe	Ala	725	730	735	
Arg	Ser	Arg	Ser	Gly	Ala	Lys	Leu	Ile	Gly	Thr	Asp	Asn	Ser	Val	Val	740	745	750	
Leu	Ser	Arg	Lys	Tyr	Thr	Ser	Phe	Pro	Trp	Leu	Leu	Gly	Cys	Ala	Ala	755	760	765	
Asn	Trp	Ile	Leu	Arg	Gly	Thr	Ser	Phe	Val	Tyr	Val	Pro	Ser	Ala	Leu	770	775	780	

-continued

Asn	Pro	Ala	Asp	Asp	Pro	Ser	Arg	Gly	Arg	Leu	Gly	Leu	Tyr	Arg	Pro	785	790	795	800
Leu	Leu	Arg	Leu	Leu	Tyr	Arg	Pro	Thr	Thr	Gly	Arg	Thr	Ser	Leu	Tyr	805	810	815	
Ala	Asp	Ser	Pro	Ser	Val	Pro	Ser	His	Leu	Pro	Asp	Arg	Val	His	Phe	820	825	830	
Ala	Ser	Pro	Leu	His	Val	Ala	Trp	Arg	Pro	Pro						835	840		

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 3:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- (A) LENGTH: 400 amino acids
(B) TYPE: amino acid
(C) STRANDEDNESS: single
(D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 3:

Met 1	Gly	Gly	Trp	Ser 5	Ser	Lys	Pro	Arg	Lys 10	Gly	Met	Gly	Thr	Asn 15	Leu
Ser	Val	Pro	Asn 20	Pro	Leu	Gly	Phe	Phe 25	Pro	Asp	His	Gln 30	Leu	Asp	Pro
Ala	Phe	Lys 35	Ala	Asn	Ser	Glu	Asn 40	Pro	Asp	Trp	Asp	Leu 45	Asn	Pro	His
Lys	Asp 50	Asn	Trp	Pro	Asp	Ala 55	Asn	Lys	Val	Gly	Val 60	Gly	Ala	Phe	Gly
Pro 65	Gly	Phe	Thr	Pro	Pro 70	His	Gly	Gly	Leu 75	Leu	Gly	Trp	Ser	Pro	Gln 80
Ala	Gln	Gly	Leu 85	Leu	Thr	Thr	Val	Pro	Ala 90	Ala	Pro	Pro	Pro	Ala 95	Ser
Thr	Asn	Arg	Gln 100	Ser	Gly	Arg	Gln	Pro 105	Thr	Pro	Leu	Ser	Pro	Pro	Leu
Arg	Asp	Thr 115	His	Pro	Gln	Ala	Met 120	Gln	Trp	Asn	Ser	Thr 125	Thr	Phe	His
Gln	Thr 130	Leu	Gln	Asp	Pro	Arg 135	Val	Arg	Ala	Leu	Tyr 140	Phe	Pro	Ala	Gly
Gly 145	Ser	Ser	Ser	Gly 150	Thr	Val	Ser	Pro	Ala	Gln 155	Asn	Thr	Val	Ser	Ala 160
Ile	Ser	Ser	Ile 165	Leu	Ser	Lys	Thr	Gly	Asp 170	Pro	Val	Pro	Asn	Met	Glu 175
Asn	Ile	Ala	Ser 180	Gly	Leu	Leu	Gly	Pro 185	Leu	Leu	Val	Leu	Gln	Ala	Gly
Phe	Phe 195	Leu	Leu	Thr	Lys	Ile	Leu 200	Thr	Ile	Pro	Gln	Ser 205	Leu	Asp	Ser
Trp	Trp 210	Thr	Ser	Leu	Asn	Phe 215	Leu	Gly	Gly	Thr	Pro 220	Val	Cys	Leu	Gly
Gln 225	Asn	Ser	Gln	Ser	Gln 230	Ile	Ser	Ser	His 235	Ser	Pro	Thr	Cys	Cys	Pro 240
Pro	Ile	Cys	Pro	Gly 245	Tyr	Arg	Trp	Met	Cys 250	Leu	Arg	Arg	Phe	Ile 255	Ile
Phe	Leu	Cys	Ile 260	Leu	Leu	Leu	Cys	Leu 265	Ile	Phe	Leu	Leu	Val	Leu	Leu
Asp	Tyr 275	Gln	Gly	Met	Leu	Pro	Val 280	Cys	Pro	Leu	Ile	Pro 285	Gly	Ser	Thr

-continued

Thr Thr Ser Thr Gly Pro Cys Lys Thr Cys Thr Thr Pro Ala Gln Gly
 290 295 300
 Thr Ser Met Phe Pro Ser Cys Cys Cys Thr Lys Pro Thr Asp Arg Asn
 305 310 315 320
 Cys Thr Cys Ile Pro Ile Pro Ser Ser Trp Ala Phe Ala Lys Tyr Leu
 325 330 335
 Trp Glu Trp Ala Ser Val Arg Phe Ser Trp Leu Ser Leu Leu Val Pro
 340 345 350
 Phe Val Gln Trp Phe Val Gly Leu Ser Pro Thr Val Trp Leu Ser Val
 355 360 365
 Ile Trp Met Met Trp Phe Trp Gly Pro Ser Leu Tyr Asn Ile Leu Ser
 370 375 380
 Pro Phe Met Pro Leu Leu Pro Ile Phe Phe Cys Leu Trp Val Tyr Ile
 385 390 395 400

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 4:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- (A) LENGTH: 212 amino acids
 (B) TYPE: amino acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

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

Met Gln Leu Phe His Leu Cys Leu Ile Ile Ser Cys Ser Cys Pro Thr
 1 5 10 15
 Val Gln Ala Ser Lys Leu Cys Leu Gly Trp Leu Trp Gly Met Asp Ile
 20 25 30
 Asp Pro Tyr Lys Glu Phe Gly Ala Ser Val Glu Leu Leu Ser Phe Leu
 35 40 45
 Pro Ser Asp Phe Phe Pro Ser Ile Arg Asp Leu Leu Asp Thr Ala Ser
 50 55 60
 Ala Leu Tyr Arg Glu Ala Leu Glu Ser Pro Glu His Cys Ser Pro His
 65 70 75 80
 His Thr Ala Leu Arg Gln Ala Ile Leu Ser Trp Gly Glu Leu Met Asn
 85 90 95
 Leu Ala Thr Trp Val Gly Ser Asn Leu Glu Asp Pro Ala Ser Arg Glu
 100 105 110
 Leu Val Val Ser Tyr Val Asn Val Asn Met Gly Leu Lys Ile Arg Gln
 115 120 125
 Leu Leu Trp Phe His Ile Ser Cys Leu Thr Phe Gly Arg Glu Thr Val
 130 135 140
 Leu Glu Tyr Leu Val Ser Phe Gly Val Trp Ile Arg Thr Pro Pro Ala
 145 150 155 160
 Tyr Arg Pro Pro Asn Ala Pro Ile Leu Ser Thr Leu Pro Glu Thr Thr
 165 170 175
 Val Val Arg Arg Arg Gly Arg Ser Pro Arg Arg Arg Thr Pro Ser Pro
 180 185 190
 Arg Arg Arg Arg Ser Gln Ser Pro Arg Arg Arg Arg Ser Gln Ser Arg
 195 200 205
 Glu Ser Gln Cys
 210

-continued

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 5:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 154 amino acids
 (B) TYPE: amino acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

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

```

Met Ala Ala Arg Leu Cys Cys Gln Leu Asp Pro Ala Arg Asp Val Leu
1           5           10           15
Cys Leu Arg Pro Val Gly Ala Glu Ser Arg Gly Arg Pro Leu Pro Gly
20           25           30
Pro Leu Gly Ala Leu Pro Pro Ala Ser Pro Pro Val Ile Pro Thr Asp
35           40           45
His Gly Ala His Leu Ser Leu Arg Gly Leu Pro Val Cys Ala Phe Ser
50           55           60
Ser Ala Gly Pro Cys Ala Leu Arg Phe Thr Ser Ala Arg Arg Met Glu
65           70           75           80
Thr Thr Val Asn Ala His Gly Asn Leu Pro Lys Val Leu His Lys Arg
85           90           95
Thr Leu Gly Leu Ser Ala Met Ser Thr Thr Asp Leu Glu Ala Tyr Phe
100          105          110
Lys Asp Cys Val Phe Asn Glu Trp Glu Glu Leu Gly Glu Glu Val Arg
115          120          125
Leu Lys Val Phe Val Leu Gly Gly Cys Arg His Lys Leu Val Cys Ser
130          135          140
Pro Ser Pro Cys Asn Phe Phe Thr Ser Ala
145          150

```

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 6:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 36 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

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

ATAAGCTTAT GCCCCTATCT TATCAACACT TCCGGA 36

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 7:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 25 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 7:

GAGTCTAGAC TCTGCGGTAT TGTGA 25

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 8:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 25 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 8:

-continued

GAGTCTAGAC TCGTGGTGA CTTCT

25

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 9:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 32 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 9:

TGAGAATTCT CACGGTGGTC TCCATGCGAC GT

32

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 10:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 16 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 10:

TTTGTTTACG TCCCGT

16

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO: 11:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 (A) LENGTH: 27 base pairs
 (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO: 11:

CTAAGCTTAG TTCCGGAAG TGTTGAT

27

1-11. (canceled)

12. A vector system for the production of a polypeptide which comprises, in a suitable host, a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine and operatively linked to a promoter of RNA transcription.

13. A vector system for the production of a polypeptide which comprises, in a suitable host, a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a peptide, wherein the peptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule comprising nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1.

14-16. (canceled)

17. A method of producing a polypeptide which comprises growing the host vector system of claim 12 under suitable conditions permitting production of the polypeptide and recovering the polypeptide so produced.

18. A method of producing a peptide which comprises growing the host vector system of claim 13 under suitable conditions permitting production of the polypeptide and recovering the polypeptide so produced.

19. A method of obtaining a polypeptide in purified form which comprises:

- (a) introducing into a suitable host cell a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine and operatively linked to a promoter of RNA transcription;
- (b) culturing the resulting host cell so as to produce the polypeptide;
- (c) recovering the polypeptide produced in step (b); and
- (d) purifying the polypeptide so recovered.

20. A method of obtaining a peptide in purified form which comprises:

- (a) introducing into a suitable host cell a vector comprising an isolated nucleic acid encoding a peptide, wherein the peptide is encoded by a nucleic acid molecule comprising nucleotides 527 through 595 of SEQ. I.D. No. 1;

- (b) culturing the resulting host cell so as to produce the polypeptide;
 - (c) recovering the polypeptide produced in step (b); and
 - (d) purifying the polypeptide so recovered.
- 21.** A purified polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine.
- 22.** A purified polypeptide obtained from the method of claim 19.
- 23.** A purified peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.
- 24.** A purified peptide obtained from the method of claim 20.
- 25-26.** (canceled)
- 27.** A method of obtaining antibodies to a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and not to the major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus, comprising:
- (a) obtaining the polypeptide in a purified form;
 - (b) immunizing an organism capable of producing antibodies against the purified polypeptide;
 - (c) collecting the produced antibodies;
 - (d) combining the produced antibodies and the purified polypeptide under conditions to form a complex; and
 - (e) determining which produced antibodies form a complex with the purified polypeptide so as to obtain antibodies to the polypeptide.
- 28.** The method of claim 27, wherein the polypeptide is being encoded by nucleotides 155 through 835 of the nucleic acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 1.
- 29.** The method of claim 27, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence substantially the same as amino acid residues 174 through 400 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3.
- 30.** The method of claim 27, wherein the organism comprises a rabbit or a mouse.
- 31.** A method of obtaining antibodies to a peptide, wherein the peptide has an amino acid sequence comprising amino acid residues 298 through 320 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. I.D. No. 3, comprising:
- (a) obtaining the peptide in a purified form;
 - (b) immunizing an organism capable of producing antibodies against the purified peptide;
 - (c) collecting the produced antibodies;
 - (d) combining the produced antibodies and the purified peptide under conditions to form a complex; and
 - (e) determining which produced antibodies form a complex with the purified peptide so as to obtain antibodies to the peptide.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the organism comprises a rabbit or a mouse.

33-36. (canceled)

37. A method for use of a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine for determining whether a subject is infected with a strain of Hepatitis B virus designated Human Hepatitis B Virus Surface Antigen-‘S’-145 Singapore Strain (Glycine to Arginine), wherein such method comprises

(a) obtaining an appropriate nucleic acid sample from the subject; and

(b) determining whether the nucleic acid sample from step (a) is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine.

38. (canceled)

39. The method of claim 37, wherein the nucleic acid sample in step (a) comprises mRNA corresponding to the transcript of DNA encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine, rather than a glycine, and wherein the determining of step (b) comprises:

(i) translating the mRNA under suitable conditions to obtain an amino acid sequence; and

(ii) comparing the amino acid sequence of step (i) with the amino acid sequence encoded by an isolated nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide which is a mutant major surface antigen of a strain of hepatitis B virus, such polypeptide having an amino acid sequence which differs from the amino acid sequence of a major surface antigen of a wild type hepatitis B virus in that the amino acid at position number 145 of such polypeptide is an arginine rather than a glycine, wherein the polypeptide has an amino acid sequence substantially the same as amino acid residues 174 through 400 of the amino acid sequence designated SEQ. ID NO. 3 so as to determine whether the nucleic acid sample is, or is derived from, a nucleic acid which encodes the polypeptide.

40. The method of claim 37, wherein the determining of step (b) comprises:

(i) amplifying the nucleic acid present in the sample of step (a); and

(ii) detecting the presence of polypeptide in the resulting amplified nucleic acid.

41. (canceled)

42. The method of claim 37, wherein the isolated nucleic acid, is labeled with a detectable marker.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein the detectable marker is a radioactive isotope, a fluorophor, or an enzyme.

44. The method of claim 37, wherein the sample comprises blood, tissue, or sera.

45-74. (canceled)

* * * * *

专利名称(译)	疫苗诱导的乙型肝炎病毒株及其用途		
公开(公告)号	US20070026422A1	公开(公告)日	2007-02-01
申请号	US11/385013	申请日	2006-03-20
申请(专利权)人(译)	新加坡政府的共和国		
当前申请(专利权)人(译)	新加坡政府的共和国		
[标]发明人	OON CHONG JIN LIM GEK KEOW LEONG AI LIN ZHAO YI CHEN WEI NING		
发明人	OON, CHONG JIN LIM, GEK KEOW LEONG, AI LIN ZHAO, YI CHEN, WEI NING		
IPC分类号	C12Q1/68 G01N33/53 C12N15/09 A61K38/00 A61K38/17 A61K38/22 A61K39/00 A61K39/29 A61K45/00 A61K48/00 A61P1/16 A61P9/00 A61P11/06 A61P13/12 A61P17/00 A61P17/02 A61P19/02 A61P27/02 A61P29/00 A61P31/00 A61P31/14 A61P31/20 A61P35/00 A61P43/00 C07K14/02 C07K14/71 C07K16/00 C07K16/08 C07K19/00 C12N1/19 C12N1/21 C12N5/10 C12N7/00 C12N7/01 C12N15/12 C12N15/51 C12N15/62 C12P21/02 C12P21/08 C12Q1/70 G01N33/566 G01N33/576		
CPC分类号	C07K14/005 C12N7/00 C12N2730/10122 C12Q1/706 A61K39/29 C07K14/71 C07K2319/00 C07K2319/30 G01N33/5764 A61K39/12 A61P1/16 A61P11/06 A61P13/12 A61P17/00 A61P17/02 A61P19/02 A61P27/02 A61P29/00 A61P31/00 A61P31/14 A61P31/20 A61P35/00 C12N2730/10134		
优先权	09/719533 2001-07-10 US PCT/SG1998/000045 1998-06-19 WO		
外部链接	Espacenet USPTO		

摘要(译)

本发明提供了一种分离的乙型肝炎病毒株，命名为人乙型肝炎病毒表面抗原-S&S-145新加坡株（甘氨酸至精氨酸），其组成病毒基因组以保藏号P97121504，P97121505和P97121506保藏于欧洲本发明还提供了编码多肽的分离的核酸，所述多肽是乙型肝炎病毒株的突变主要表面抗原，这种多肽的氨基酸序列不同于a的氨基酸序列。野生型乙型肝炎病毒的主要表面抗原，其中这种多肽的第145位氨基酸是精氨酸而不是甘氨酸，并且纯化的肽本发明还提供了编码肽的分离的核酸，其中肽由包含SEQ.ID.NO.5的核苷酸527至595的核酸分子编码。ID. No.1和纯化的肽。本发明还提供了使用所公开的分离的核酸和多肽的各种方法。

