In Silico Analysis Shows That Single Aminoacid Variations In Rhesus Macaque Fcγreceptor Affect Protein Stability And Binding Affinity To IgG1

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IN SILICO ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT SINGLE AMINOACID VARIATIONS IN Rhesus MACACQUE FcγRECEPTOR AFFECT PROTEIN STABILITY AND BINDING AFFINITY TO IGG1

by

RASHESH SANGHVI

Under the Direction of Dr. Roberta Attanasio

ABSTRACT

Rhesus macaques are a widely used animal model of human diseases and related immune responses. Fc receptors (FcRs) mediate the interaction between antibody molecules and innate killing mechanisms, consequently eliminating the pathogen. In rhesus macaques, FcRs are highly polymorphic. To evaluate the potential influence of FcγR polymorphisms on the interaction with antibody molecules, we performed in silico analysis using SIFT, Provean, nsSNPAnalyzer, I-Mutant, MuSTAB and iPTREE-STAB web servers. V20G in FcγRI, I137K in FcγRII and I233V in FcγRIII were further analyzed structurally using FOLD-X, AMMP and Chimera to calculate changes in folding and interaction energy and for structure visualization. Results from our analysis suggest that the selected variations destabilize protein structure. Additionally, Q32R increases the binding affinity of FcγRI, whereas A131T decreases the binding affinity of FcγRII towards IgG1. Together, our results indicate that these substitutions might influence effector and regulatory mechanisms resulting from antibody/FcR interactions.
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RASHESH SANGHVI

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS............................................................................................................. iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS.............................................................................................................. v

LIST OF TABLES....................................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF FIGURES..................................................................................................................... viii

1 INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................. 1

1.1 Rhesus Macaque as Animal Models of Human Diseases............................................. 1

1.2 Molecules of Adaptive Immunity................................................................................. 2

1.3 Interaction of Fc Receptors and Antibody.................................................................. 3

1.4 In Silico Analysis of Single Nucleotide Polymorphism................................................. 4

1.5 Purpose of the Study....................................................................................................... 6

1.6 Results.............................................................................................................................. 7

2 EXPERIMENT....................................................................................................................... 8

2.1 Data................................................................................................................................ 8

2.1.1 Sequence..................................................................................................................... 8

2.1.2 Homology Modeling................................................................................................. 9

2.2 Web-Based Servers for Sequence Analysis.................................................................. 9

2.3 Structural Analysis......................................................................................................... 11

2.4 FOLDX............................................................................................................................ 12

2.4.1 Optimizing Models................................................................................................. 12
2.4.2 Energy Calculations ................................................................. 13

3 RESULTS ....................................................................................... 14

3.1 Proximity of SNPs to IgG Binding Site ......................................... 14

3.2 Sequence Based Predictions ....................................................... 20

3.3 Structure Homology Modeling and FOLDx Analysis ...................... 24

3.4 FOLDx Analysis .............................................................................. 25

3.4.1 Effect of Single nsSNP on Protein Stability and Protein Interaction 26

3.4.2 Effect of nsSNPs on Protein Stability and Protein Interaction as per Allelic Sequences ................................................................. 27

3.5 Analysis of Structure Using UCSF Chimera ................................ 29

4 CONCLUSIONS .............................................................................. 33

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 38
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1  Sequence based analysis by SIFT ............................................................... 22
Table 3.2  Sequence based analysis by I-Mutant for forward mutations. ....................... 22
Table 3.3  Sequence based analysis by I-Mutant for reverse mutations. ....................... 23
Table 3.4  Sequence based prediction tools for forward mutations. ............................... 23
Table 3.5  Sequence based prediction tools for reverse mutations. ............................... 24
Table 3.6  SNPs affecting protein stability and protein interaction by FOLDx............... 26
Table 3.7  Protein stability and protein interaction of allelic sequences by FOLDx........ 28
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1  Distinct receptors for the Fc region of the different immunoglobulin classes are expressed on different accessory cells. From: Janeway’s Immunobiology, 8th edition (©Garland Science) [10].......................................................................................................................... 3

Figure 2.1  Schematic diagram of the approach used to study the effect of single amino acid variations on protein stability and binding affinity. The programs and software used are indicated in the boxes. .................................................................................................................. 8

Figure 3.1  Alignment of rhesus macaque FcyRI allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423394-HQ423396) with a human FcyRIa (GenBank accession number BC020823.1).................................................. ................................................... 14

Figure 3.2  Interaction of the amino acids at the FcyRI and Fc region of IgG1. Hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted to be involved in FcyRI binding to IgG1 are indicated. FcyRI is in green, chain A of IgG1 is in blue and chain B of IgG1 is in red. ...............15

Figure 3.3  Sequence alignment of rhesus macaque FcyRII allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423389-HQ423393) with a human FcyRIIa (GenBank accession number AAH20823.1). ............................................................................................................................. 16

Figure 3.4  Interaction of the amino acids at the FcyRII and Fc region of IgG1. Hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted to be involved in FcyRII binding to IgG1 are indicated. FcyRII is in green, chain A of IgG1 is in blue and chain B of IgG1 is in red. ..............17

Figure 3.5  Sequence alignment of rhesus macaque FcyRIII allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423386-HQ423388) with a human FcyRIIIa (GenBank accession number CAA34753.1). ......................................................................................................................... 18
Figure 3.6 Interaction of the amino acids at the FcγRIII and Fc region of IgG1. Hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted to be involved in FcγRIII binding to IgG1 are indicated. FcγRIII is in green, chain A of IgG1 is in blue and chain B of IgG1 is in red. 19

Figure 3.7 Position of Single amino acid variations on FcγRs with respect to the interaction site of the FcγRs with the Fc region of the antibodies. The grey shaded region indicates the binding sites to the antibody Fc region. .................................................................20

Figure 3.8 A) Superimposed structures of Gly and Val at position 20 in FcγRI. B) Superimposed structures of Ile and Lys at position 137 in FcγRII. C) Superimposed structures of Ile and Val at position 233 in FcγRIII ..........................................................................................31

Figure 3.9 Superimposed structures of Ala (Blue) and Thr (Red) at position 131 in FcγRII, along with IgG1 (Green). ...........................................................................................................32
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rhesus Macaque as Animal Models of Human Diseases

Animal models are an indispensable part for biomedical research. They are of paramount importance for studying pathogenesis, host immune responses to viral infections as well as immunogenicity and protective efficacy of vaccines. Nonhuman primates, specifically rhesus macaque models have been used in large number of studies on human infectious diseases such as yellow fever, degenerative neurologic disease like prion disease, childhood disease such as polio and tropical diseases like hepatitis E and bartonellosis as well as newly emergent, sexually transmitted disease caused by immunodeficiency virus. Macaque models are also used in study of oncogenic and bioterrorism associated diseases [1]. Macaques serve as models for studying passive immunization and various therapeutic approaches.

Rhesus macaques (Macaca mulatta), are very closely related to humans anatomically, physiologically and phylogenetically [1,2]. The patho-physiological responses of humans and nonhuman primates to internal and external insults are remarkably similar[3]. Nonhuman primates play an important role in understanding significant infectious diseases such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis and malaria, their treatment and prevention. They are also used for studying chronic neurological degenerative disorders like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases [4]. Simian immunodeficiency virus-infected macaques show a decrease in CD4+T cells and also develop opportunistic diseases, malignancies and diseases of the central nervous system as would be seen in humans with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) [5]. Thus, rhesus macaques provide an efficient model for studies related to diseases caused by single etiologies like HIV and influenza virus. Rhesus macaques play an important role as animal model in understanding the host innate and adaptive immune responses elicited
by HIV vaccines, and are considered the best animal model currently available for AIDS re-
search [6,7].

1.2 Molecules of Adaptive Immunity

Neutralizing antibodies play an important role in protective responses to HIV/SIV infec-
tion. Antibodies (Abs), also known as immunoglobulin (Igs), interact with their specific cellular 
membrane bound Fc receptors (FcRs) to give rise to effector functions that ultimately destroy 
the pathogen. The Ab/FcR interaction is also involved in immune responses operating during 
autoimmune diseases and cancer and can be manipulated for therapeutic applications.

FcRs are a family of membrane-bound glycoproteins mainly expressed on the surface of 
phagocytic effector cells like macrophages and neutrophils. They are also expressed on natural 
killer (NK) cells. FcRs interacts with the Fc region of the antibody, when the antibody binds the 
antigen forming immunocomplexes, setting into motion the cellular responses.

FcRs belong to the immunoglobulin super family. Chromosome mapping and cloning 
experiments indicate that FcR genes are the result of gene duplication of a common ancestor. 
FcγR interact with the Fc region of the IgG family of antibodies. The three basic classes of hu-
man FcγR are: FcγRI(CD64), FcγRII(CD32) and FcγRIII(CD16)[8]. All the FcγRs show overall 
similar intron-exon assembly consisting of a leader region, 2 c-like domains for FcγRII and 
FcγRIII and 3 for FcγRI, and the connecting transmembrane-cytoplasmic region[9]. Figure 1.1 
shows the different types of human FcRs, their structure, the cell types expressing the various 
FcRs, and the binding affinity to the different antibody classes. The association of FcRs with 
different intracellular chains is cell type-dependent [10].
Figure 1.1 Distinct receptors for the Fc region of the different immunoglobulin classes are expressed on different accessory cells. From: Janeway's Immunobiology, 8th edition (©Garland Science) [10]

In humans, there are 8 genes coding for FcγRs which are present as a gene cluster in chromosome 1. Their gene products show highly diversified binding affinity towards the IgG group. The diversity of FcγRs is further increased due to the presence of various single nucleotide polymorphisms in the extracellular c-like domains. FcγR-related mechanisms are also involved in autoimmune diseases and inflammation [11]. Therefore, it is important to characterize FcR polymorphisms and study the effects of these polymorphisms on the interaction of FcγR with Igs.

1.3 Interaction of Fc Receptors and Antibody

Antibody Fc-dependent mechanisms include antibody-dependent cell-mediated cytotoxicity (ADCC), FcR-dependent increase in uptake of antibody-antigen complex by antigen-presenting cells [12,13], FcR-mediated enhancement of MHC class I-restricted cross-presentation [14] and modulation of immune responses by differential engagement of antibodies with activating and inhibitory Fc receptors [15]. FcγR-mediated immune responses result in removal of pathogens and virus-infected or cancer cells. They are also involved in hypersensitivity reactions [11,16,17]. FcγRs are present on various cells like natural killer cells, dendritic cells, mast
cells, monocytes, B-cells, eosinophils and neutrophils. The Fc portions of IgG-sensitized antigens are recognized by the FcγR present on the membranes of the cells, resulting in cell activation through the immune-receptor tyrosin-based activation/inhibitory motif. The cell response depends on the type of FcγR, antibody isotype and cell type. The interaction of the FcγRIIa with immune complex (IC) leads to cell activation of neutrophils, which results in phagocytosis of the antigen, degranulation of the neutrophil and oxidative burst. The degranulation process in turn results in local inflammation. NK cells destroy the antibody coated cells by recognizing them using the NK-membrane bound FcγRIIIa (CD16). IC interaction with FcR on the B-cells leads to maturation, thus resulting in differentiation to plasma cells and memory B-cells. The plasma cells secrete antibodies specific for the pathogen. Differential engagement with either activating or inhibitory FcγR leads to either MHC class I restricted or MHC class II restricted antigen presentation. For all the immune responses mediated by FcγR, the interaction of the FcγR with the Fc region of the IgGs is essential.

Different classes of FcγRs show differential binding affinity towards the IgG subclasses. In order to understand this behavior, it is essential to investigate the 3D structure of the FcγRI-IgG complex and determine the amino acids involved in the interaction. The FcγRI-IgG complex crystal structure is yet to be solved and hence exact interacting amino acids cannot be determined. Ile88, Trp90, Trp113, His134, Val158, Gly159 and Lys 161 at the interface of the FcγRIII and IgG1 are involved in hydrophobic interactions. Thr116, Lys120, His134, His 135, Val158 and Lys161 are involved in hydrogen bonds and salt bridges [18]. Similarly Trp90, Trp113, Pro117, Val119, Lys120, Lys128, Ser129, Phe132, Arg134, Leu135 and Tyr160 are involved in interaction of FcγRII with the IgG Fc ligand [19].

1.4 In Silico Analysis of Single Nucleotide Polymorphism

Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNP) is commonly found across the genome. The non-synonymous (ns) mutations that result into amino acid residue changes, play an important
role in diversifying protein function [20]. nsSNPs result in amino acid variations that may cause changes in protein stability. The physiochemical properties of the mutant residues differ from the wild type, resulting in this change. The amino acid change may also disrupt salt bridges or hydrogen bonding affecting protein dynamics and thus stability. It may also disrupt the binding site and affect protein interaction by altering the specificity of the protein, blocking the active site or affecting the binding affinity [21]. Identifying possibly deleterious nsSNPs or those responsible for a specific phenotype is of a major concern and requires testing thousands of SNPs in the respective genes. Because it is not feasible to analyze all SNPs experimentally, there is obvious need for in silico analysis.

Computational methods are needed to analyze the effects of such large number of nsSNPs. Several in silico analysis tools have been developed based on machine learning to predict protein stability changes due to single amino acid substitutions. These tools identify the deleterious nsSNPs from the neutral ones based on sequence and structure approaches [22] and take into consideration the physicochemical properties like acidic, basic, or hydrophobic, the conservation of the amino acid at a specific position and protein structure. Some of these tools predict just the direction of the stability change which, in certain biological applications, may be more relevant than magnitude.

The 3D structure has not been analyzed and deposited in the Protein Data Bank (PDB) for all proteins, thus a sequence-based approach is more appealing than structural information based methods [23]. In this study, different sequence based algorithms like Sorting Intolerant from Tolerant (SIFT) and PROVEAN, I-Mutant 2.0, nsSNPAnalyzer, MuSTAB and iPTREES-TAB were used for the prioritization of high-risk nsSNPs in FcomprisecyRs.

Since structural information for most proteins is not available, it is necessary to predict the 3D structure of the protein by comparative modeling. The resulting models can be used to predict the effects of the nsSNPs on protein stability and protein-protein interaction by mapping the mutations on the predicted structures. The mutated structures are predicted using homol-
ogy modeling and then are compared to the wild type structure to estimate the effects of the single amino acid substitution at the structural level.

Another method of analyzing the effect of the nsSNPs is by estimating changes in the protein stability. This can be investigated by measuring the difference of Gibbs free energy ($\Delta\Delta G$) between the wild type and mutated state of the protein ($\Delta G = \Delta G_{\text{wild}} - \Delta G_{\text{mutated}}$) where $\Delta G =$ Gibbs protein unfolding energy. The discrimination among deleterious or functionally effective nsSNPs from the neutral ones is based on the notion that protein stability perturbation should be above a certain threshold $\Delta\Delta G (\pm 1 \text{ kcal/mol})$ [24] for it to be functionally important.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Various Studies have shown correlation between the polymorphisms and the function of the FcγRs. The polymorphism at position 158 of human FcγRIII, which codes for valine (V) or a phenylalanine (F) results in low or high susceptibility for antilymphocyte globulins (AGL), respectively [25]. FcγRIIA R131 polymorphism has less affinity towards IgG2 compared to H131 [26,27]. S48N polymorphism also affects the affinity towards IgG binding and causes recurrent infections [28]. V158/F158 polymorphism in FcγRIIIA causes difference in affinity for IgG1 and IgG3 and differential glycosylation of FcγRIIB causes difference in affinity for IgG1 [29]. These allelic variants have shown to affect the susceptibility to various diseases like systemic lupus erythematosus [30] and inflammation following an organ transplant indicating the importance of these SNPs on the functional domain of FcγR. An I187T substitution in the transmembrane region of FcγRIIB affects the inhibitory function on B cells [27]. A study on clearance rates of RhD(Rhesus D)-positive RBCs showed faster clearance rates for FcγRIIA- H131 or FcγRIIA- V158 homozygous subjects [31]. A recent study on AIDS vaccine efficacy in rhesus macaques showed TLR7 variant M5 allele very likely destabilizes an RNA secondary structure predicted for the V5 allele and also affects the survival time post infection in SIV-infected rhesus macaques [32].
The research pertaining to AIDS is done with the assumption that the macaque FcγR and their interaction with the Fc receptors of the Igs represent that of humans. The sequence homology of the macaque FcγRI, FcγRII and FcγRIII is 94-95%, 88-90% and 91.7% with those of humans. In addition, 11 distinct allelic sequences were identified indicating high polymorphism in macaque, which contained total 15 nsSNPs [33]. Thus it is required to study the impact of the polymorphisms in the macaque FcγR on their interaction with IgG subclasses.

1.6 Results

Our in silico analysis suggests that the presence of mutations (V20G in FcγRI, I137K in FcγRII and I233V in FcγRIII) can affect the structure and thus the function of the FcγR in the form of protein stability. In addition, A131T in FcγRII affects the protein-protein interaction with IgG1.
2 EXPERIMENT

Based on the various in silico analyses carried out to predict the effects of single amino acid variations and to increase prediction accuracy, we combined prediction obtained from various in silico methods. We used in silico methods based on sequence and structure of the protein. The schematic diagram of the approach utilized is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Schematic diagram of the approach used to study the effect of single amino acid variations on protein stability and binding affinity. The programs and software used are indicated in the boxes.

2.1 Data

2.1.1 Sequence

The protein sequences of the Indian rhesus macaque FcγRs and IgGs were obtained from the Protein database at National Centre for Biological Information (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/protein). Three allelic sequences of FcγRI (CD64), five allelic sequences of FcγRII (CD32) and three allelic sequences of FcγRIII (CD16) having GenBank accession numbers: AEC03710.1-AEC03712.1, AEC03702.1-AEC03706.1
and AEC03707.1- AEC03709.1 respectively, were analyzed in this study [33]. In these sequences, 16 polymorphic sites were analyzed, three in FcγRI, nine in FcγRII and four in FcγRIII. The protein sequence of Indian rhesus macaque IgG1 sequenced in a previous study having GenBank accession numbers: AAQ57554.1 [34] was used to form the complex with FcγRs. The 3D protein structures, 1T83 and 3RY6, were obtained from Protein Data Bank (PDB).

### 2.1.2 Homology Modeling

All sequences were used for sequence based homology modeling. They were submitted to an online server at [http://bmcc3.cs.gsu.edu/](http://bmcc3.cs.gsu.edu/), which uses the molecular mechanics program AMMP to predict the 3D structure of a protein based on sequence. The modeler uses two techniques for optimization of the predicted structure. The first is the genetic algorithm that builds a set of 20 structures varying from the start point and is optimized by conjugate gradient method. The second is the four-dimensional embedding. This method is useful in solving the three-dimensional problem in four-dimensions and then forcing the solution back into three dimensions.

3D structures of the FcγRI and FcγRIII predicted by AMMP structure prediction server were superimposed on the chain C of the reference Protein Data Bank structure (PDB) 1T83 and the predicted structures of FcγRII on the chain C of the reference Protein Data Bank structure (PDB) 3RY6. The predicted structure of Indian macaque IgG1 was superimposed on the IgG chains A and B of both the reference structures.

### 2.2 Web-Based Servers for Sequence Analysis

Many web servers are available to predict the effect of single amino acid variations on protein stability and protein binding efficiency. SIFT, I-Mutant2.0, I-Mutant3.0, MuStab, iPTreestab and snpAnalyser were used in this study. The first sequence in all the FcγRs was as-
sumed to be the base sequence. Then the observed polymorphisms in other sequences were analyzed.

Sorting Intolerant From Tolerant (SIFT) predicts intolerant mutations using homology and requires only the sequence to obtain position specific information from alignments. SIFT scores the mutation at a specific position based on a position-specific scoring matrix (PSSM). SIFT also takes into consideration the physiochemical properties of each amino acid and predicts if the amino acid change is tolerant or intolerant, i.e whether the change severely affects the protein function. The output from SIFT includes a score from 0-1, where <=0.05 is the threshold for tolerance [35].

Protein Variation Effect Analyzer (PROVEAN), a sequence based predictor, estimates the effect of protein sequence variation on protein function. It is based on a clustering method where BLAST hits with more than 75% global sequence identity are clustered together and top 30 such clusters form a supporting sequence set. A delta alignment scoring system is used, where the scores of each supporting sequence are averaged within and across clusters to generate the final PROVEAN score. A protein variant is said to be “deleterious” if the final score is below a certain threshold (default is -2.5), or is predicted to be “neutral” if the score is above the threshold [36].

I-Mutant2.0 and I-Mutant3.0 is based on Support Vector Machine algorithm to predict the stability of the protein on single amino acid variations. It can predict protein stability changes by using protein sequence or structure. It has an overall accuracy of 77% when prediction is based on protein sequence. I-Mutant2.0 and I-Mutant3.0 predicts the DDG values as a regression estimator and also the sign of the stability change. I-Mutant3.0 furthermore classifies mutations into three categories: neutral mutation (-0.5<=DDG<=0.5), large decrease (<=-0.5) and large increase (>0.5).

MuSTAB is another SVM based web server that uses various biochemical features, structural features and various biological features to predict the effect of the amino acid change
on the protein stability and function. It uses amino acid composition, conformational parameters for alpha helix, beta sheet, and average buried area in folded state, polarity and number of codons for amino acid as a classifier to predict protein stability changes due to single amino acid variations. It has 84.59% accuracy, 70.29% sensitivity and 90.98% specificity [23].

IPTREE-STAB web server is based on an adaptive boosting algorithm and utilizes decision trees for accessing the protein stability and also predicts the DDG value. It provides a binary classification as stabilizing or destabilizing depending on the DDG value. While discriminating proteins due to single amino acid change, it also considers three residues adjacent to the polymorphism site in N and C terminal. iPTREEESTAB achieves an overall accuracy of 82.1%, 75.3% sensitivity and 84.5% specificity [23,37].

nsSNPAnalyzer is a random forest algorithm based tool. nsSNPAnalyzer uses the multiple sequence alignment information along with the structural information like solvent accessibility, secondary structure and polarity to distinguish between neutral and disease mutation. It also considers the similarity and dissimilarity between the wild type and the mutant residue [38].

2.3 Structural Analysis

The predicted structures were viewed in University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) chimera. It is a computationally intensive program for visualization of molecular models and it provides an interactive interface for the user for analyzing the models and model related data. It provides a platform for analyzing sequence alignments, generating homology models, molecular docking, viewing various density models, and also comparing different models by superimposition [39].

The mutant and wild type structures were superimposed and the effect of the non synonymous variation was observed in terms of steric hindrance due to the changes of the side chains and change in the charge of the amino acid. Then, the degree of change in the hydro-
phobicity or hydrophilicity of the mutated amino acid and its effect on the interacting intra chain and inter chain molecules was analyzed.

2.4 FOLDX

FOLDx is a computer algorithm that computes the protein stability and protein-protein interaction values. It compares between the wild type and the mutant protein structures based on various energy interactions like van der Waals clashes, electrostatic interactions and hydrogen bonding. The FOLDx energy function includes the terms that have been determined as crucial by protein stability experiments, and the unfolding energy is calculated using the following equation:

\[ \Delta G = \Delta G_{vdw} + \Delta G_{solvH} + \Delta G_{solvP} + \Delta G_{wb} + \Delta G_{Hbond} + \Delta G_{el} + \Delta G_{kon} + TDS_{mc} + TDS_{sc} + TDS_{tr} \]

where \( \Delta G_{vdw} \) depicts the total van der Waals contributions of all atoms compared to that with solvent; \( \Delta G_{solvH} \) and \( \Delta G_{solvP} \) give the changes in the folded and unfolded state salvation energy; \( \Delta G_{wb} \) gives the stabilizing free energy generated due to formation of more than one hydrogen bond between water molecules and protein; \( \Delta G_{Hbond} \) is the free energy difference between the formation of an intramolecular hydrogen bond compared to intermolecular hydrogen bond formation (with solvent); \( \Delta G_{el} \) gives the energy by electrostatic bonds formed by charged groups; \( \Delta G_{kon} \) reflects the effect of electrostatic interactions on the kon. \( \Delta S_{mc} \) depicts the changes in entropy due to the back bone of the protein in the folded state; \( \Delta S_{sc} \) depicts the entropic cost of side chain optimization in a particular protein conformation [40,41]

2.4.1 Optimizing Models

The modeled structures were subjected to an optimization procedure using the repairPDB function of FoldX. This corrects the poor torsion angles and van der Waals clashes if found in any residue. It checks if any other rotamer exists for the same residue that is more stable and avoids steric clashes in a specific position.
2.4.2 Energy Calculations

The difference in the energy of the folded and unfolded protein gives an estimate of the Gibbs free energy of folding. The effect of the single amino acid variations on the stability of the protein is analyzed by computing the difference between the Gibbs free energy of folding of the mutant structure and the wild type

$$\text{DDG} = \text{DG}_{\text{Mutant}} - \text{DG}_{\text{WT}}$$

where DG is the Gibbs free energy of folding.

FoldX calculates the Gibbs free energies of the two molecules A ($\text{DG}_A$) and B ($\text{DG}_B$) as well as the complex AB ($\text{DG}_{AB}$). The interaction energy can be estimated from the difference between these energies using the formula listed below:

$$\text{DG}_{\text{binding}} = \text{DG}_{AB} - (\text{DG}_A + \text{DG}_B)$$

The difference in the binding energies ($\text{DG}_{\text{binding}}$) of the mutant and wild type structures estimates the effect of the single amino acid variation on the stability of the protein-protein interaction.
RESULTS

A total of 3 nsSNP from 3 allelic FcγRI sequences, 9 nsSNP from 5 allelic FcγRII sequences and 4 nsSNP from 3 allelic FcγRIII sequences obtained from the 9 Indian macaques were identified.

3.1 Proximity of SNPs to IgG Binding Site

Figure 3.1 Alignment of rhesus macaque FcγRI allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423394-HQ423396) with a human FcγRIa (GenBank accession number BC020823.1). The allelic sequences are labeled based on the animal number used to obtain the respective sequence [33]. The horizontal blue lines represent the start of the D1, D2 and D3 domains. TM-CO represents the transmembrane and cytoplasmic region. The vertical red arrows indicate the SNP positions in the allelic sequences of rhesus macaque CD64. The red boxes indicate the amino acids involved in binding with IgG1 as per FOLDx prediction.

FcγRI has three Ig like domains and all the three SNPs are present in the N-terminal domain (D1). Since crystal structure of human FcγRI-IgG complex has not been solved yet, no information regarding the amino acids involved in the interaction with IgG is currently available.
However, on the basis of the information related to other human FcR-IgG complex structures, it is reasonable to assume that most of the interacting amino acids lie within the second domain (D2).

Using the AnalyzeComplex method of FOLDx, we determined the amino acids present at the FcγRI-IgG1 interface. Another command of FOLDx, PrintNetworks, independently predicted the amino acids involved in intramolecular hydrogen bond formation and electrostatic interaction. Arg99, Lys127, Tyr130, Tyr145, His164 and Tyr173 were common amino acids predicted from both commands of FOLDx and were predicted to be involved in hydrogen bond formation with IgG1. Arg99, Asp100, Lys125, Lys127, Tyr130, Phe143, Phe144, Tyr145, Arg146, Lys170 and Arg172 were predicted to be involved in electrostatic interactions with IgG1. Since none of the SNPs are present in the FcR-IgG binding site, they would not affect the binding af-
finity of the rhesus FcγRI to IgG1. However, these SNPs have potential to affect protein stability and may result in change of function or loss of function. Figure 3.2 indicates the hydrogen bonds formed by amino acids predicted to be involved in FcγRI interaction with IgG1 by FOLDx. The Gln at position 32 forms a hydrogen bond with His at position 99.

Figure 3.2  Sequence alignment of rhesus macaque FcγRII allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423389-HQ423393) with a human FcγRIIA (GenBank accession number AAH20823.1). The allelic sequences are labeled based on the animal number used to obtain the respective sequence [33]. The horizontal blue lines represent the start of the D1 and D2 domains. TM-CO represents the transmembrane and cytoplasmic region. The vertical red arrows indicate the SNP positions in the allelic sequences of rhesus macaque CD32. The red boxes indicate the amino acids involved in binding with IgG1 as per FOLDx prediction. The grey shaded regions represent the amino acids involved in human FcγRII-IgG1 binding.

FcγRII has two Ig like domains and two SNPs are present in the N-terminal domain (D1). The remaining 7 SNPs are present in the C-terminal domain (D2). The amino acids involved in human FcγRII-IgG1 interaction are Trp90, Trp113, Pro117, Val119, Lys120, Lys128, Ser129, Phe132, Arg134, Leu135 and Tyr160 [19]. These are highlighted in Figure3.2 in grey shade.

Using the AnalyzeComplex method of FOLDx, we determined the amino acids present at the rhesus FcγRII-IgG1 interface. Another command of FOLDx, PrintNetworks, independ-
ently predicted the amino acids involved in intramolecular hydrogen bond formation and electrostatic interaction. Arg30, Lys125, Lys129, Ser138, Ser142, His162, Cyc163 and Ser173 were common amino acids predicted from both commands of FOLDx and were predicted to be involved in hydrogen bond formation with IgG1. Arg30, Glu31, Glu98, Lys123, Lys125, Lys129, Asp160, Tyr161, Tyr172 and Lys175 were predicted to be involved in electrostatic interactions with IgG1.

Figure 3.4  Interaction of the amino acids at the FcγRII and Fc region of IgG1. Hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted to be involved in FcγRII binding to IgG1 are indicated. FcγRII is in green, chain A of IgG1 is in blue and chain B of IgG1 is in red.

Figure 3.4 indicates the hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted from the human FcγRII-IgG1 crystal structure analysis [19] and by FOLDx analysis, to be involved in FcγRII interaction with IgG1. The hydrogen bonds formed by residues predicted by crystal structure analysis are indicated in black. The ones formed by the residues predicted by FOLDx
analysis are indicated in orange and those formed by residues predicted by both the techniques are indicated in yellow.

FcyRIII has two Ig like domains and out of the four SNPS, one is present in the N-terminal domain (D1), another one is present in the C-terminal domain (D2) and the other two are within the cytoplasmic resion of FcyRIII. The amino acids involved in human FcyRIII-IgG1 interaction are Ile88, Trp90, Trp113, Thr116, Lys120, His134, His 135, Val158, Gly159 and Lys 161 [18], These are highlighted in Figure 3.3 in grey shade.

![Figure 3.5](image1.png)

**Figure 3.5** Sequence alignment of rhesus macaque FcyRIII allelic sequences (GenBank accession numbers: HQ423386-HQ423388) with a human FcyRIla (GenBank accession number CAA34753. 1). The allelic sequences are labeled based on the animal number used to obtain the respective sequence [33]. The horizontal blue lines represent the start of the D1 and D2 domains. TM-CO represents the transmembrane and cytoplasmic region. The vertical red arrows indicate the SNP positions in the allelic sequences of rhesus macaque CD16. The red boxes indicate the amino acids involved in binding with IgG1 as per FOLDx prediction. The grey shaded regions represent the amino acids involved in human FcyRIII-IgG1 binding.

Using the AnalyzeComplex method of FOLDx, we determined the amino acids present at the rhesus FcyRIII-IgG1 interface. Another command of FOLDx, PrintNetworks, independently predicted the amino acids involved in intramolecular hydrogen bond formation and electro-
static interaction. Thr134, Lys138, Lys146, Arg148, Tyr150, Phe171, Ser178, Lys179, Ser182, Ser183 and Thr185 were common amino acids predicted from both commands of FOLDx and were predicted to be involved in hydrogen bond formation with IgG1. Glu39, Lys132, Lys138, Lys146, Arg148, Lys149, Tyr150, Phe151, Arg173, Lys179 and Glu184 were predicted to be involved in electrostatic interactions with IgG1.

Figure 3.6 Interaction of the amino acids at the FcγRIII and Fc region of IgG1. Hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted to be involved in FcγRIII binding to IgG1 are indicated. FcγRIII is in green, chain A of IgG1 is in blue and chain B of IgG1 is in red.

Figure 3.6 indicates the hydrogen bonds formed by the amino acids predicted from the human FcγRIII-IgG1 crystal structure analysis [18] and by FOLDx analysis, to be involved in FcγRIII interaction with IgG1. The hydrogen bonds formed by residues predicted by crystal structure analysis are indicated in black. The ones formed by the residues predicted by FOLdx analysis are indicated in orange and those formed by residues predicted by both the techniques are indicated in yellow.
3.2 Sequence Based Predictions

SIFT, a sequence based predictor, estimates the effect of amino acid variations on protein function based on homology of the sequence and the physio-chemical properties of the amino acid residues. It also takes into account the conservation of the sequence through evolution. SIFT scores were classified as damaging (0.00–0.05) or tolerant (0.051–1.00). Of the 15 nsSNPs, V20G and V74A in FCyRI, R67M, P105T, K140N in FCyRII and V233I in FCyRIII showed the tolerance score of 0.00, 0.03, 0.04, 0.01, 0.02 and 0.03 respectively [35].

PROVEAN predicts the effect of the variant on the biological function of the protein based on sequence homology. PROVEAN scores are classified as “deleterious” if below a certain threshold (here -2.5) and “neutral” if above it. Of the 15 nsSNPs, V20G in FCyRI, P105T, T131A, K137I and K140N in FCyRII and L96P in FCyRIII were predicted “deleterious” with PROVEAN scores of -4.951, -4.714, -2.88, -4.084, -2.783 and -5.504 respectively.

Figure 3.7 Position of Single amino acid variations on FcγRs with respect to the interaction site of the FcγRs with the Fc region of the antibodies. The grey shaded region indicates the binding sites to the antibody Fc region.
I-Mutant 3.0 is a SVM based tool used to predict the DDG stability values and the reliability index for the DDG value. It also classifies the prediction as largely destabilizing (DDG<-0.5 Kcal/mol) or largely stabilizing (DDG>0.5 Kcal/mol) or having a weak effect (-0.5<=DDG<=0.5 Kcal/mol). For this study we have considered a threshold of -1.5 Kcal/mol to consider a SNP to be destabilizing. Of the 15 nsSNPs, V20G and V74A in FCyRI and I137K in FCyRII were considered destabilizing with DDG values -2.19, -1.65 and -1.85 Kcal/mol respectively.

nsSNPAnalyzer predicts whether an nsSNP has a phenotypic effect. It considers the structural environment, conservation of the residue at that position by sequence homology and the difference in the physical properties of the mutant compared to the wild type amino acid. nsSNPAnalyzer classifies mutations as “disease” or “neutral” depending on its internal score. Of the 15 nsSNPs, V20G in FCyRI and I233V in FCyRIII were considered to be “disease” causing.

MuSTAB predicts the effect of the nsSNP on protein stability depending on various biochemical, empirical and biological features. Along with predicting whether the nsSNP increases or decreases the stability of the protein, it also gives the prediction confidence. For this study we have considered nsSNP to be destabilizing if the prediction confidence is above 95%. V20G in FCyRI, I137K in FCyRII and I233V in FCyRIII were predicted to decrease the protein stability considerably.

iPTREE-STAB is a decision tree-based, predictive tool that not only discriminates the nsSNP on the basis of increase or decrease in thermal stability but also predicts the DDG values. The nsSNP having DDG values > -2.5 kcal/mol were considered to be truly destabilizing. V20G in FCyRI and I137K in FCyRII were predicted to decrease the thermal stability of the protein.

The nsSNPs predicted to have a phenotypic effect according to SIFT or PROVEAN and destabilize the protein according to at least two of the tools from I-Mutant3.0, nsSNPAnalyzer,
MuSTAB and iPTREE-STAB were used for further analysis. V20G in FCγRI, I137K in FCγRII and I233V in FCγRIII were further analyzed structurally to understand their effect.

### Table 3.1 Sequence based analysis by SIFT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid Substitution</th>
<th>Straight Mutations</th>
<th>Reverse Mutations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Prediction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20V</td>
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<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32R</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A74V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R67M</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>AFFECT PROTEIN FUNCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I91V</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T105P</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A131T</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I137K</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S138A</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K140N</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>AFFECT PROTEIN FUNCTION</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>P96L</td>
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<td>TOLERATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A113T</td>
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<td>TOLERATED</td>
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<tr>
<td>M229V</td>
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<tr>
<td>I233V</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

### Table 3.2 Sequence based analysis by I-Mutant for forward mutations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid Substitution (WT Position MT)</th>
<th>Straight Mutations</th>
<th>IMutant2.0</th>
<th>IMutant3.0 (Structure Based)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DDG (Kcal/mol)</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>RI</td>
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<tr>
<td>G20V</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q32R</td>
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<td>Decrease</td>
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<td>-0.35</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R67M</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I91V</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>-0.42</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>Decrease</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>S138A</td>
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Table 3.3  Sequence based analysis by I-Mutant for reverse mutations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reverse Mutations</th>
<th>IMutant2.0</th>
<th>IMutant3.0 (Structure Based)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DDG (Kcal/mol)</td>
<td>Stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amino Acid Substitution (WT Position MT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V20G</td>
<td>-3.95</td>
<td>Decrease 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R32Q</td>
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<td>Decrease 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>V74A</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Decrease 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P105T</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
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<td>Decrease 3</td>
</tr>
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<td>A138S</td>
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<td>Decrease 3</td>
</tr>
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<td>N140K</td>
<td>-2.03</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Q152R</td>
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<tr>
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<td>T113A</td>
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</tr>
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<td>V229M</td>
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<td>V233I</td>
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Table 3.4  Sequence based prediction tools for forward mutations.

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<td>G20V</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q32R</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>92.32%</td>
<td>-0.9691 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A74V</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>INCREASED</td>
<td>29.11%</td>
<td>-1.3200 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R67M</td>
<td>-1.254</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>INCREASED</td>
<td>30.89%</td>
<td>-1.1536 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I91V</td>
<td>0.723</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>92.50%</td>
<td>-2.5446 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.5 Sequence based prediction tools for reverse mutations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid Substitution (WT Position MT)</th>
<th>Provean Score</th>
<th>Provean Prediction</th>
<th>SNPAnalyser Prediction</th>
<th>MuSTAB Prediction (protein stability)</th>
<th>MuSTAB confidence</th>
<th>iPTREE-STAB Prediction</th>
<th>iPTREE-STAB Discrimination</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FoRRII</strong></td>
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<td>V20G</td>
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<td>Disease</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
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<td>-3.1872 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R32Q</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>93.04%</td>
<td>-0.9691 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V74A</td>
<td>-1.165</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>94.64%</td>
<td>-1.8655 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M67R</td>
<td>1.254</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>79.64%</td>
<td>-1.1536 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V91I</td>
<td>-0.723</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>92.50%</td>
<td>-2.5446 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P105T</td>
<td>-4.714</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>78.39%</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>92.50%</td>
<td>-0.1405 kcal/mol</td>
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<tr>
<td>K137I</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>1.5851 kcal/mol</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D145N</td>
<td>1.723</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>88.93%</td>
<td>1.7270 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q152R</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>INCREASED</td>
<td>25.18%</td>
<td>0.8900 kcal/mol</td>
<td>negative (destabilizing)</td>
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<td><strong>FoRRI</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>L96P</td>
<td>-5.504</td>
<td>Deleterious</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>87.86%</td>
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<td>T113A</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>91.07%</td>
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<td>V229M</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
<td>DECREASED</td>
<td>96.79%</td>
<td>-0.3474 kcal/mol</td>
<td>positive (stabilizing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Structure Homology Modeling and FOLDx Analysis

Single amino acid mutations can drastically modify the protein structure stability. Thus, the modeling of a protein’s 3D structure and the knowledge of its structural information is necessary for complete understanding of its functionality. The 3D structure of the 3 allelic se-
quences of FcγRI, 5 allelic sequences of FcγRII and 3 allelic sequences of FcγRIII were predicted via homology modeling using AMMP. Model 1 for each of the prediction was considered to be the structure for the respective sequence. The available structure PDB ID 3RJD was the reference for FcγRI. PDB ID 3RY4 was the reference structure for FcγRII except for sequence HQ423391, which used PDB ID 3D5O as the reference. PDB ID 1T83 was the reference structure for FcγRIII except for sequence HQ423388, which used PDB ID 1E4J as the reference. The 3D structures obtained for FcγRI and FcγRIII were superimposed over chain c of 1T83 and those of FcγRII were superimposed over chain c of 3RY6.

The IgG1 sequences of Indian macaques were obtained from NCBI [34]. The 3D structure of the IgG1 was predicted via homology modeling using AMMP. The predicted structures were superimposed over chains A and B of 1T83 and 3RY6. The FcγR and IgG1 predicted superimposed structures were combined into single PDB file using UCSF Chimera.

3.4 FOLDx Analysis

The effects of the nsSNPs on protein stability and protein interaction were computed with Foldx, which uses an empirical energy equation to calculate the Gibbs free energy DDG. The empirical energy terms consider the location, type of a mutated residue [42]. FOLDx is a structure based prediction tool. Two different analysis protocols were utilized to obtain maximum information over the effect of the single amino acid substitutions: 1) All the nsSNPs were considered singularly and their effect on the protein stability and interaction potential was determined, 2) The nsSNPs were considered according to the allelic sequences obtained from the previous study. Initially, all the structures were minimized using the RepairPDB function of Foldx to obtain a stable protein stability value. Then the structures for each single amino acid variation were generated using the BuildModel feature of Foldx3.0. Finally, the effect of each single amino acid variation on the interaction between the FcγRs and IgG1 was determined us-
ing the Analyze Complex feature. When the DDG > 0, then the mutation is considered destabilizing and when DDG < 0, it is considered stabilizing.

### 3.4.1 Effect of Single nsSNP on Protein Stability and Protein Interaction

BuildModel feature of FOLDx3.0 was used to generate structures for each single amino acid variations. For this purpose, the amino acid residues at the mutation sites in the first allelic sequence in each FcyR were considered as the wild type and the amino acid residues from other sequences were considered to be mutant residues. To avoid any miscalculation in obtaining the effect on the stability, reverse mutations were also analyzed, where the structures generated from the previous step by BuildModel were used as wild type structure and used as input for the same procedure of BuildModel. The threshold of +- 1kcal/mol was considered to differentiate between neutral and deleterious amino acid substitution, based on its effect on the protein stability [24]. The interaction energy between the chain c and chain a + chain b, which forms the IgG1, was determined using the AnalyzeComplex feature of FOLDx3.0. Then, the difference between the wild type structure and mutant structure interaction energies was determined. If the difference is greater than zero, the mutation decreases the affinity between the two molecules. When the difference is less than zero, it increases the affinity. A threshold of +-1kcal/mol was considered to analyze whether or not the amino acid substitution affects the protein interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino Acid Substitution</th>
<th>Straight Mutations</th>
<th>Reverse Mutations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DDG for protein</td>
<td>Difference in Interaction Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FcyRI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G20V</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32R</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A74V</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R67M</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I91V</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T105P</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A131T</td>
<td>-0.57</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FcyRII                  |                    |                   |                  |                                |
| I91V                    | 1.62               | 0                 | -0.3             | 0                              |
| T105P                   | 0.94               | 0                 | 1.04             | 0                              |
| A131T                   | -0.57              | 4.62              | 0.53             | -1.2                           |
V20G and Q32R in FcγRI were predicted to affect protein stability having DDG values of 1.13 kcal/mol and 1.01 kcal/mol. As the DDG value of Q32R is very near to the threshold value, it was considered to have neutral effect on protein stability. R67M, V91I, P105T and K140N in FcγRII were predicted to affect protein stability having DDG values 1.55, 1.62, 1.04 and 1.42 kcal/mol. Although the DDG value of P105T is near the threshold value, SIFT also predicted deleterious effects on the protein and was thus considered for further analysis. A113T in FcγRIII was predicted to affect protein stability significantly, having DDG values 2.34 kcal/mol. Q32R in FcγRI is predicted to increase the affinity towards IgG1 and A131T in FcγRII is predicted to affect the protein interaction by greatly decreasing the affinity towards IgG1.

### 3.4.2 Effect of nsSNPs on Protein Stability and Protein Interaction as per Allelic Sequences

Only the DDG (change) values of FOLDx are trained to approach experimental values. Thus the DG values of the wild type or mutant structures do not provide any inference on their own. Again the first allelic sequence of each FcγR is considered as reference sequence and using the BuildModel feature of FOLDx3.0 the remaining allelic sequence structures were generated. This feature also provides the change in the Gibbs free energy (DDG) as compared to the wild type allelic sequence. The threshold of +/- 1kcal/mol was considered to analyze whether or not the amino acid substitution affected the protein stability [24]. Utilizing the AnalyzeCom-
plex feature of FOLDx3.0, the interaction energy between the chain c and chain a + chain b, which forms the IgG1, was determined. The interaction energy of all the allelic sequences was compared. A similar threshold of ± 1kcal/mol was used to analyze the effect of amino acid substitution on the protein interaction.

**Table 3.7 Protein stability and protein interaction of allelic sequences by FOLDx**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allelic Sequences</th>
<th>DDG for protein</th>
<th>Difference in Interaction Energy</th>
<th>DDG for protein</th>
<th>Difference in Interaction Energy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhe3_Rhe8</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-2.17</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe3_Rhe9</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe8_Rhe9</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe2_Rhe4</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe2_Rhe6</td>
<td><strong>2.9</strong></td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>-1.28</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe2_Rhe7</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td><strong>4.64</strong></td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>-3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe2_Rhe9</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe4_Rhe6</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe4_Rhe7</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe4_Rhe9</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe6_Rhe7</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td><strong>4.24</strong></td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe6_Rhe9</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe7_Rhe9</td>
<td><strong>4.68</strong></td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td><strong>1.18</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe3_Rhe4</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2.67</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe3_Rhe9</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhe4_Rhe9</td>
<td>-3.79</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td><strong>2.72</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FcγRI has three allelic sequences isolated from Rhe3, Rhe8 and Rhe9 [33] (GenBank accession numbers HQ423394-HQ423396). Rhe3 has G, Q and A at positions 20, 32 and 74 respectively, whereas Rhe8 has V, R and V and Rhe9 have V, Q and V at those positions respectively. Rhe8 is more stable than Rhe3 where the protein stability increases by 2.17 Kcal/mol. Rhe8 has more affinity for IgG1 compared to HQ423396.

FcγRII has five allelic sequences isolated from Rhe2, Rhe4, Rhe6, Rhe7 and Rhe9 [33] (GenBank accession numbers HQ423389-HQ423393). Rhe2 has R, I, T, A, I, S, K, N and R at
positions 67, 91, 105, 131, 137, 138, 140, 145 and 152. Rhe4 has V91, P105 and D145; Rhe6 has M67, V91 and D145; Rhe7 has V91, P105, T131, A138, D145 and Q152; Rhe9 has M67, V91, K137, N140 and Q152 compared to Rhe2. Rhe7 is the most stable allelic sequence and Rhe9 is the most unstable with a 4.68 Kcal/mol difference in stability. The order of sequence stability in decreasing order is Rhe7 > Rhe4 > Rhe2 > Rhe6 > Rhe9. The highest difference in affinity towards IgG1 is between allelic sequences Rhe6 and Rhe7 with a difference of 6.05 Kcal/mol in interaction energy, where Rhe6 has more affinity towards IgG1. Rhe2 also has more affinity towards IgG1 compared to Rhe7, with a difference of 4.64 Kcal/mol in interaction energy. It can be concluded that P105, T131, A138 and Q152 decrease the affinity for IgG1, from which only the positions 131 and 138 are in the binding site. Thus, a Thr at 131 and Ala at 138 affect the FcγRII-IgG1 interaction.

FcγRIII has three allelic sequences isolated from Rhe3, Rhe4 and Rhe9 [33] (GenBank accession numbers HQ423386-HQ423388). Rhe3 has P, A, M and I at positions 96, 113, 229 and 233. Rhe4 has L96, T113, V229 and V233; Rhe4 has L96 compared to Rhe3. Rhe9 is the most stable allelic sequence and Rhe4 is the least stable. Thus, a Leu at position 96 makes FcγRIII more stable. However, due to the other mutations in Rhe4 at positions 113, 229 and 233 it becomes more unstable. Results from single amino acid variation analysis with FoldX indicated that the Thr at position 113 destabilizes the protein compared to Ala. Thus, we can infer that the effect of Leu at 96 on the stability of the protein is not only masked by the Thr at 113, but also further destabilizes the protein.

3.5 Analysis of Structure Using UCSF Chimera

Only the single amino acid variations that were indicated as affecting protein stability or interaction energy by more than three analysis tools used were chosen to be analyzed structurally by UCSF Chimera. Thus, structural analysis of the mutant and wild type modeled structures for V20/G20 in FcγRI, I137/K137 in FcγRII and I233/V233 in FcγRIII was carried out by superimposing
the structures and comparing the physical properties, solvent accessibility, hydrophobicity and charge density.

\(V_{20}/G_{20}\) mutation site in FcγRI indicated that the effect of the mutation may be due to lower hydrophobicity of Gly compared to Val in a hydrophobic patch and decrease protein stability. Gly at 20 has higher solvent accessibility and RSA compared to Val at 20. Val interacts with Leu at position 3 which may take part in stabilizing the protein while folding.

\(I_{137}/K_{137}\) mutation site in FcγRII indicated that the effect of the mutation may be due to a strong positive charge and the hydrophilic nature of Lys compared to Ile, which has no charge and is hydrophobic in nature. The hydrogen bond present between Lys137 and Asn135 may stabilize the protein as compared to Ile137. The strong positive charge of Lys137 leads to electrostatic interactions with Lys139, Lys140 and Asp160, further affecting the stability of the protein.

\(I_{233}/V_{233}\) mutation site in FcγRIII Ile233 causes additional VdWClashes with Asp253, which may result in decreased protein stability. Furthermore, both residues have similar hydrophobicity properties. FcγR is a membrane bound protein and this mutation site is at the c-terminal of the protein which forms the proximal cytoplasmic tail of the protein. Probably due to this reason the residue is highly conserved and may play an important role in the cell signaling pathways. In which, any change in the residue may affect protein functionality.
A131/T131 mutation in FcγRII decreases the affinity of FcγRII for IgG1 as indicated by FoldX analysis. The mutant residue Thr is hydrophilic in nature and is involved in hydrogen bonding as opposed to the hydrophobic nature of Ala. The mutation site is present in a buried region with a very low RSA value. Because of this, the introduction of a hydrophilic residue may affect protein functionality. Thr131 interacts with Ser183 of chain B by hydrogen bonding.

Figure 3.8  A) Superimposed structures of Gly and Val at position 20 in FcγRI. B) Superimposed structures of Ile and Lys at position 137 in FcγRII. C) Superimposed structures of Ile and Val at position 233 in FcγRIII
Thr131 also causes VdWClashes AsnB182 and SerB183, which may prevent interaction between FcγRII and IgG1.

Figure 3.9 Superimposed structures of Ala (Blue) and Thr (Red) at position 131 in FcγRII, along with IgG1 (Green).
4 CONCLUSIONS

The number of SNPs reported in the SNP databases such as dbSNP at NCBI is increasing. Due to the large number of SNPs it becomes difficult to plan population based experiments to identify the SNP that can potentially affect the protein function. Various non synonymous SNPs are reported to be involved in disease development. Thus, it becomes necessary to identify potential diseases causing SNPs from the neutral ones. Many *in silico* methods provide information on the effect of the polymorphisms on protein structure and function. Various studies have been performed using *in silico* analysis approaches to predict the functional nsSNPs for genes such as G6PD, BARF and PTEN [1, 2]. The current *in silico* methods have wide range of performance and are chosen depending on different aspects of the proteins. Thus, a single method would be insufficient to provide an accurate prediction of functional SNPs and their effects. Therefore, to increase prediction accuracy, a combination of various methods based on evolutionary conservation, physio-chemical properties and protein structure are utilized [43].

The nsSNPs in FcRs can affect their affinity towards the immunoglobulin and thus affect the response of the adaptive immune system. nsSNPs in FcγRs have been reported to affect the binding affinity towards the IgGs and clearance rates of the Rhesus D-positive red blood cells [31]. In our study, we investigated naturally present polymorphisms in FcγRs of rhesus macaque to identify functionally important ones. An *in silico* analysis approach was undertaken using SIFT, PROVEAN, nsSNPAnalyzer, I-Mutant, MuSTAB and iPTREE-STAB online web servers. SIFT and nsSNPAnalyzer are highly utilized pathogeneticity prediction methods [44]. Provean is a relatively new prediction method by JCVI [36]. According to SIFT and nsSNPAnalyzer V20G in FCγRI and I233V in FCγRIII were predicted to affect protein function and cause disease. Whereas, V20G in FCγRI and P105T and K140N in FCγRII were predicted by SIFT and PROVEAN to affect protein function. I-Mutant, MuSTAB and iPTREE-STAB predict the
affect of the SNP on the protein stability. MuSTAB only gives the direction of the stability change, whereas I-Mutant and IPTREE-STAB also predict the value of the protein stability change (DDG). V20G in FCyRI and I137K in FCyRII were predicted to decrease protein stability considerably. MuSTAB also predicted I233V in FCyRIII to decrease protein stability, which correlated with the SIFT and nsSNPAnalyzer predictions. FOLDx is also a protein stability predictor, but it utilized structure as compared to the sequence based prediction of the above three predictors. I-Mutant3.0 and FOLDx were reported to give best predictive performance [45].

Structures of the human FCyR are available in Protein Data Bank (PDB) and have been used to analyze the effect of polymorphisms [46,47]. Although the FCyRs of rhesus macaque are highly similar to their human counterparts, a 3D structure is essential for analyzing the impact of the SNPs. Therefore, we predicted the 3D structure of the rhesus macaque FCyRs through homology modeling using the AMMP program. Depending on the highest sequence similarity according to AMMP profiling, the FCyRI modeled structure was based on PDB structure 3RJD, FCyRII was based on 3RY4 and FCyRII was based on 1T83. The first sequence from each FCyR was considered to be the native sequence and their structures were predicted. The predicted structures were superimposed on to 1T83 for FCyRI and FCyRII and 3RY6 for FCyRIII. The PDB structures were utilized to superimpose the modeled structures of rhesus FCyR, as the BLAST search of the sequences gave the respective hits. 1T83 is a complex of human FCyRIII and IgG1 and 3RY6 is a complex of human FCyRII and IgG1. There is no significant difference in the native FCyR and FCyR in FCyR-IgG1 complex[47]. Using the FOLDx program, the mutant structures were modeled and analyzed. Each mutation was considered individually to study the inherent effect of the SNP. In addition, the allelic sequences were analyzed to investigate if the polymorphisms neutralize each other by occurring simultaneously as an act of preservation of function by nature.

FOLDx was used to analyze the effects of single amino acid variations on the structure and stability of the protein. Further, differences between the folding energies (kcal/mol) of the
wild type structure and the mutated modeled structures were analyzed. A threshold of ±1 kcal/mol was used to discriminate between functionally important and neutral SNPs. Studies have suggested that a ±1 kcal/mol threshold is not too strict and considers possible SNPs affecting protein stability [24]. A difference of 1 kcal/mol was observed between forward mutation and reverse mutation stability analysis over the conventional sign reversal of DDG, using FOLDx [48]. The amino acids predicted by FOLDx commands AnalyseComplex and PrintNetwork, for rhesus FcγRII and FcγRIII coincided to a certain extent with the amino acids known to be involved in human FcγRII and FcγRIII interaction with human IgG1 [18,19]. The crystal structures of the rhesus FcγRI, FcγRII and FcγRIII should be solved in order to confirm the involvement of the FOLDx predicted amino acids in interaction with rhesus IgG1.

Our results indicate that Val -> Gly at position 20 in FcγRI decreases protein stability having DDG values 1.13 kcal/mol, which may be due to the introduction of a hydrophilic amino acid in a hydrophobic pocket. Val -> Gly at position 20 in FcγRI was predicted deleterious by all the computational methods used in this study.

Polymorphism may not always manifest into a disease, it may lead to change in specificity instead if the mutations are present near the binding site. Thus, decrease in protein stability predicted by FOLDx can lead to change in specificity of FcγR towards IgGs. Our FOLDx analysis suggested Gln -> Arg at position 32 in FcγRI to decrease the stability by 1.01 kcal/mol. The decrease in stability may be caused due to replacement with a strong positive charge. The mutation site is also near the glycosylation site and may interact with 2-(Acetilamino)-2-Deoxy-A-D-Glucopyranose (NDG) molecule. The carbohydrate molecules are important for protein folding [49] and thus the folding energy may be affected due to the addition of a strong positive charged amino acid. Arg -> Met at position 67 in FcγRII is predicted to decrease the stability by 1.55 kcal/mol. The wild type amino acid, Arg, is hydrophilic and has a very strong positive charge, which is replaced by a hydrophobic, no charged amino acid. This may possibly disturb the electrostatic interactions. Ile -> Val at position 91 in FcγRII decreases the protein stability by
1.62 kcal/mol. This decrease could possibly result from the interference in hydrogen bond formation and surface accessibility. Pro -> Thr at position 105 in FcγRII may affect protein stability due to the replacement of the not hydrophobic amino acid with hydrophilic amino acid and decrease the protein stability by 1.04 kcal/mol. SIFT and PROVEAN also predicted the Pro -> Thr change at position 105 to be deleterious, which indicates that the change is in a conserved region. Lys -> Asn at position 140 in FcγRII decreases the protein stability by 1.42 kcal/mol, possibly due to the loss of strong positive charge of Lys. The PDB structure 3RY6 used to superimpose the FcγRII modeled structures had a GLYCEROL (GOL) molecule present at the hinge of the two domains of FcγRII. The mutation site Lys -> Asn at position 140 in FcγRII lies in the vicinity of the GOL molecule and the electrostatic interaction may be disturbed causing loss in stability. Ala -> Thr at position 113 in FcγRIII decreases protein stability significantly by 2.34 kcal/mol, which may be caused by the introduction of hydrophilic amino acid in a hydrophobic pocket, as the wild type residue is also hydrophobic. Further, if a single amino acid variation shows a change in protein stability (DDG values) or protein-protein interaction (DDGbinding values), it should give comparable values with the sign reversal for the reverse mutation. This would indicate that the prediction of the effect of the single amino acid variation on the protein structure or protein-protein interaction is substantial. Val -> Gly at position 20 in FcγRI Arg -> Met at position 67 in FcγRII and Lys -> Asn at position 140 in FcγRII give comparable values with the sign reversal for the protein stability and protein-protein interaction analyses by FOLDx, which suggests that these polymorphisms should also be considered as a potential target for future experiments.

In conclusion, in silico analysis of the FcγRs indicates that V20G in FcγRI decreases protein stability and is not tolerated. In FcγRII, the I137K destabilizes the protein and A131T causes decrease in affinity of FcγRII towards IgG1. In FcγRIII, I233V and A113T destabilize the protein and may result in loss of function. Val at positions 229 and 233 in FcγRIII were found in the group of SIV infected rhesus macaque which were unable to make ant-SIV antibodies com-
pared to those having Met and Ile at those positions, respectively [50]. Thus for further analysis, these mutations should be given priority to obtain detailed information on their effects. In order to confirm the structure modeled in this study, the actual structures should be determined by X-Ray crystallography or Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy. In addition, binding studies should be carried out to investigate the effect of the mutations on the interaction with IgGs [28].
REFERENCES