

Evolutionary Divergence of an Elongation Factor 3 from *Cryptococcus neoformans*

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Received 30 October 2000/Accepted 11 January 2001

Elongation factor 3 (EF3) is considered a promising drug target for the control of fungal diseases because of its requirement for protein synthesis and survival of fungi and a lack of EF3 in the mammalian host. However, EF3 has been characterized only in ascomycete yeast. In order to understand the role of EF3 in a basidiomycete yeast, we cloned the gene encoding EF3 from *Cryptococcus neoformans* (CnEF3), an important fungal pathogen in immunocompromised patients, including those infected with human immunodeficiency virus. CnEF3 was found to encode a 1,055-amino-acid protein and has 44% identity with EF3 from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (YEF3). Expressed CnEF3 exhibited ATPase activity that was only modestly stimulated by ribosomes from *S. cerevisiae*. In contrast, CnEF3 showed tight binding to cryptococcal ribosomes, as shown by an inability to be removed under conditions which successfully remove *Saccharomyces* EF3 from ribosomes (0.5 M KCl or 2 M LiCl). CnEF3 also poorly complemented a YEF3 defect in a diploid null mutant and two temperature-sensitive mutants which have been shown previously to be complemented well by EF3 from other ascomycetes, such as *Candida albicans*. These data clearly identify the presence of a functioning EF3 in the basidiomycete yeast *C. neoformans*, which demonstrates an evolutionary divergence from EF3 of ascomycete yeast.

Cryptococcus neoformans is an important fungal pathogen which causes a lethal meningoencephalitis in a significant number of persons with AIDS and afflicts an increasing number of immunocompromised patients on steroids, chemotherapy, or posttransplant immunosuppressives (18). Therapy of cryptococcosis is limited by toxicity of such agents as amphotericin B (1); newer agents such as the azole inhibitors are less toxic, but increasing reports of resistance may limit their eventual usefulness (3, 15, 17). Echinocandins and pneumocandins are important new antifungal agents which are inhibitors of 1,3- β -glucan synthetases and show excellent activity against ascomycete pathogens such as *Candida albicans* and *Aspergillus fumigatus*, but alterations in this enzyme from basidiomycetes make this important class of agents ineffective against *C. neoformans* (27). The latter example shows the potential gap in antifungal coverage which may occur when inhibitors are chosen without consideration of possible evolutionary differences in drug targets within various fungal pathogens.

Elongation factor 3 (EF3) has been shown to be a required translation cofactor in the ascomycete *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (7). The factor is also present in a variety of pathogenic ascomycete fungi, including *Candida albicans* (8) and the pathogen *Pneumocystis carinii* (34), which has been shown to be closely related to ascomycete yeasts based on analysis of its rRNA gene as well as genes encoding dihydrofolate reductase, thymidylate synthetase, β -tubulin, and ATP (for a review, see reference 31). While an anti-EF3 antibody has been shown to react with basidiomycete yeasts (4), EF3 has not been characterized from this class of fungi. When present, EF3 is a re-

quired translational cofactor essential for growth of the organism. EF3 is believed to modulate the inverse relationship between protein translation rate and amino acid fidelity by altering the binding affinities of the ternary complex to the ribosomal A site and that of the deacylated tRNA to the E site (29). It is unique among the translational factors in that it is not present or required in mammalian translational systems (4). This makes EF3 a putative drug target for a wide variety of fungal pathogens while offering the possibility of a favorable side effect profile in the mammalian host. Many valuable antibacterial agents such as the macrolides and aminoglycosides are inhibitors of the prokaryotic translational apparatus. These antibiotics have had a profound and long-lasting impact on the outcome of bacterial infections and show the extensive precedent for the role of translational inhibitors in the chemotherapy of infectious agents.

While studies in model yeasts such as the ascomycete *Saccharomyces* may yield important information about essential biological systems, recent advances in the molecular biology of *C. neoformans* allow the study of drug targets such as EF3 in the pathogen itself, allowing direct application of findings to the rational design of antifungal agents. The present study seeks to identify and characterize EF3 from *C. neoformans* in order to extend the role for this factor to basidiomycete fungi. This will allow further study of its properties in protein translation and may enable the design of antifungal compounds directed against recombinant cryptococcal EF3.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Strains. *C. neoformans* ATCC 34873 was a generous gift of K. J. Kwon-Chung. *S. cerevisiae* strain BJ3505/G was from Eastman Kodak (New Haven, Conn.). *Escherichia coli* SURE (Stratagene, La Jolla, Calif.) was the host strain used for screening the cDNA library after mass excision of the Uni-Zap cDNA library. *E. coli* XL1-Blue (Stratagene) was the recipient strain of the Bluescript phagemid

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following in vivo excision for the Uni-Zap XR vector (Stratagene)-containing cDNA clones. *E. coli* DH10B (Life Technologies, Bethesda, Md.) was the host strain for recovery of ligated plasmids.

Enzyme assay. The pyruvate kinase/lactate dehydrogenase-coupled ADP assay for EF3 ATPase activity was performed according to the method of Sarthy et al. (25). Activity was expressed in nanomoles of ADP produced per minute at 30°C.

Nested PCR amplification and screening a cryptococcal cDNA library. A stationary-phase cryptococcal cDNA library in Uni-Zap described previously (32) was mass excised and inserted into *E. coli* SURE according to the manufacturer's directions (Stratagene). Library plasmid was prepared from cells (Qiagen, Valencia, Calif.) and subjected to endonuclease digestion with *NotI*. Linearized library plasmids were used as the template (50 ng) and subjected to 25 cycles of amplification by PCR using *Taq* polymerase (Life Technologies, Bethesda, Md.), an annealing temperature of 40°C, and degenerate primers constructed from amino acid sequence contained in two of the ATP-binding regions of *S. cerevisiae* EF3 (primer 1360S, CCNAAAYGGNTGYGGNAAA, and primer 2760A, RTARTTNGTNGGYTCRTC). Products of 1,200 to 1,800 bp were gel purified and subjected to a second round of 25 cycles of PCR amplification using an annealing temperature of 48°C and internal degenerate primers from *S. cerevisiae* EF3 (primer 1690S, GAYCCNACNAAAYCAT, and primer 2100A, YTTNCCNGCNCRTTNGG). A 420-bp single band was gel purified, labeled with [α -³²P]ATP, and used to screen the cryptococcal stationary-phase cDNA library by standard techniques (23). Clone p5a was selected based on the size of its insert and its ability to bind the PCR probe described above, and both strands were sequenced by automated methods (CRC-DNA Sequencing Facility, University of Chicago).

Northern and Southern blot analysis of *CnEF3*. Cryptococcal cells were grown to mid-log phase ($A_{600} < 1.0$), and total RNA was obtained as described (32). DNA was obtained from cryptococcal cells as described (30). Northern blots were performed by standard methods (23) using *CnEF3* from plasmid p5a.

Construction of expression plasmid myep.NS-*CnEF3*. A double-stranded oligonucleotide (sense, TCGACCACCACCACCACCACCACTAGGCTAGC; antisense, TAGCCTAGTGGTGGTGGTGGTGGTGG) was inserted into *S. cerevisiae* expression plasmid YepFLAG-1 (IBI/Kodak, Rochester, N.Y.) between restriction sites *ApaI* and *SacII* to produce the plasmid myep (myep was kindly obtained from K. Williamson). The Flag affinity tag and hydrophobic leader sequence were removed from myep by divergent PCR using primers YEP-1496S (GCCGCCGAATTCCTCGAGCCCGGG) and YEP-1217A (GCCGCCGAATTCTGAAGGAAATCTCATCGC) to create plasmid myep.NS. Plasmid myep.NS was selected for its correct size, ability to transform *S. cerevisiae* strain BJ3505/G by a polyethylene glycol-lithium acetate (PEG-LiAc) protocol (Stratagene), and the presence of an *EcoRI* site. The *CnEF3* open reading frame (ORF) was PCR amplified using *Pfu* polymerase (Stratagene, La Jolla, Calif.) using primers *CnEF3*5Ba (GCCGCCGGATCCCTCTGCTGCTACCGCTGCTG) and *CnEF3*ApaI (GCCGCCGGGCCAAGCTCTTCATCAC TGAAGAC). The amplified product was restriction endonuclease digested with *BamHI* and *ApaI* and inserted into the respective sites of myep.NS to produce plasmid myns.*CnEF3*.1. Use of the multiple cloning site of myep.NS resulted in a 43-nucleotide addition to the 5' region of the *CnEF3* ORF, resulting in a putative polypeptide having 14 additional amino acids at the N terminus with the sequence MRFPEFREIYRWIP. Integrity of sequence was verified by automated sequencing of the *CnEF3* ORF (CRC-DNA Sequencing Facility).

Expression and purification of recombinant *CnEF3*. *S. cerevisiae* strain BJ 3505/G was transformed with myns.*CnEF3*.1 by means of a PEG-LiAc protocol (Stratagene). Transformants containing the myns.*CnEF3*.1 plasmid were selected by Southern blot and for ability to overexpress a 116-kDa protein band on sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) (approximately 20-fold that of untransformed BJ3505/G). To induce recombinant protein, a selected transformant was grown in yeast expression medium (3% glycerol, 1% glucose, 20 mM CaCl₂, 1% yeast extract, 8% peptone) according to the manufacturer's instructions (Invitrogen). Cells were isolated by centrifugation and subjected to glass bead (0.45 μ m) breakage in a Braun homogenizer (Germany) for 1.5 min at 4°C in buffer A containing 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 10 mM MgSO₄, 0.2 mM EDTA, and 10% glycerol. Cell debris was removed by centrifugation, and the supernatant was adsorbed on a 20-ml column of carboxymethyl (CM)-Sepharose equilibrated in buffer A, washed, and eluted with buffer A containing 100 mM KCl. Fractions were assayed by SDS-PAGE, and fractions containing the predominant 116-kDa band were pooled, dialyzed in buffer B (20 mM Tris-HCl pH[7.0], 50 mM KCl, 10 mM magnesium acetate, 0.2 mM EDTA, 1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride [PMSF], 1 mM dithiothreitol [DTT], 10% [vol/vol] PMSF, glycerol) and adsorbed on a 1-ml ATP-agarose column (Sigma) equilibrated in buffer C, and then washed and eluted with buffer C containing 2

mM ATP. Fractions were again assayed on SDS-PAGE, and suitable fractions were pooled, tested for ATPase activity, and subjected to N-terminal sequencing.

Cryptococcal ribosome isolation. The method used was based on that by Otaka and Kobata (16). Briefly, cryptococcal cells were grown in 2 liters of YPD (2% glucose, 1% yeast extract, 2% Bacto-peptone) to an A_{600} of 0.8, followed by homogenization in a Braun homogenizer using 0.46- μ m glass beads for 2 min at 4°C. Two milliliters of cold buffer A (50 mM Tris-HCl [pH 7.0], 50 mM NH₄Cl, 10 mM magnesium acetate, 5 mM DTT, 0.1 M EDTA, 0.2 mM PMSF, 10% glycerol) was added, and the mixture was centrifuged at 5,000 \times g for 10 min. The supernatant was clarified by centrifuging twice at 35,000 \times g for 15 min, and the supernatant was then centrifuged for 3 h at 4°C at 150,000 \times g. The pellet from the 150,000 \times g centrifugation was resuspended in buffer B (buffer A plus 0.5 M KCl) and centrifuged at 10,000 \times g for 10 min to remove aggregates, and the supernatant was overlaid on a cushion of buffer C (buffer B plus 25% glycerol) and centrifuged at 150,000 \times g at 4°C for 3 h, and the pellet was recovered. These two sets of low-speed and high-speed centrifugations were repeated once again in the same way, and the pellet was resuspended in buffer A containing 25% glycerol. Cryptococcal ribosomes were also prepared in the presence of buffers excluding 0.5 M KCl. Cryptococcal ribosomes were assayed by ultracentrifugation using a 5 to 30% sucrose gradient (110,000 \times g for 10 h) and showed a protein profile similar to that of *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes prepared as described (16).

Antibody production to recombinant *CnEF3*. Purified recombinant cryptococcal EF3 was subjected to SDS-PAGE, and the 116-kDa band was excised, homogenized in the presence of Freund's adjuvant, and administered to 6-week-old CAF1/J mice (20 μ g of protein/mouse) by intraperitoneal injection on days 0, 21, 49 and 74. Serum was obtained from the mice prior to the first injection and 1 week after the fourth injection. Western blots and dot blots were performed using the indicated amount of protein and primary antibody and a 1:1,000 dilution of horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-labeled anti-mouse immunoglobulin (Ig) antibody (Accurate Antibodies, Westbury, N.Y.).

ELISA. For the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), 96-well plates were incubated with antigen (10 mg/ml μ) overnight at 4°C, washed three times with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), and blocked with 5% milk for 1 h. The serum was then diluted as indicated with PBS and added to the wells. Following an overnight incubation at 4°C, the wells were washed PBS, and then alkaline phosphatase-labeled goat anti-mouse Ig antibody (1:2,000 dilution) was added. After incubation at room temperature for 1 h, the wells were washed with PBS, 3 mM *p*-nitrophenyl phosphate in 0.05 M NaCO₃-0.05 mM MgCl₂ was added, and the optical density of 405 nm of the wells was read on a microtiter plate reader (Titertek, Huntsville, Ala.).

Construction of complementation plasmid Y24EF-*CnEF3* 7. Divergent PCR in the direction away from the plasmid insert was used to remove the *S. cerevisiae* EF3 ORF and insert a *NotI* site into plasmid YepEF3 using primers YE24-EF5 (GCCGCCGGCCGCATCTTTAATGTTATCGATGGATT) and YE24-EF3 (GCCGCCGGCCGCATCACTGCTTTACAGTTTTCTT). The modified YepEF3 plasmid retained sufficient 5' untranslated region and 3' termination sequence necessary for complementation and expression in *S. cerevisiae* (24). Plasmid YepEF3 ϕ -4 was selected for its correct size, ability to transform *S. cerevisiae* strain BJ3505/G by a PEG-LiAc protocol (Stratagene), and presence of a *NotI* site. The *CnEF3* ORF was PCR amplified in from *NotI* endonuclease-treated p5a using *Pfu* polymerase (Stratagene) and primers Crypto 5 (GCCGCCGCCGCTGCTACCGCTGCTGCCTC) and Crypto 3 (GCCGCCGCCGCTTAAAGCTCTTCATCACTGAAGA). The amplified fragment was ligated to *NotI* digested plasmid YepEF3 ϕ -4. Insertion of the *NotI* site resulted in a nine-nucleotide substitution after the ATG codon of the ORF which would be expected to lead to a two-amino-acid alteration of the *CnEF3* ORF at the N terminus, resulting in an expected N-terminal sequence of MRPPATA in the recombinant protein. Suitable clones were screened for the presence of a suitably sized insert in the correct orientation by means of PCR using appropriate primers. Clone Y24EF-*CnEF3*#7 was further characterized by automated sequencing (CRC-DNA Sequencing Facility) to establish fidelity of sequence.

Nucleotide sequence accession number. The nucleotide sequence data reported in this paper have been submitted to GenBank and assigned accession number AF316889.

RESULTS

Isolation and sequence of *C. neoformans* EF3 gene. Initial unsuccessful cloning attempts using full-length *S. cerevisiae* EF3 cDNA clones suggested poor conservation of nucleotide sequence of this factor between ascomycetes and basidiomycetes. Thus, a nested PCR approach was used to produce a

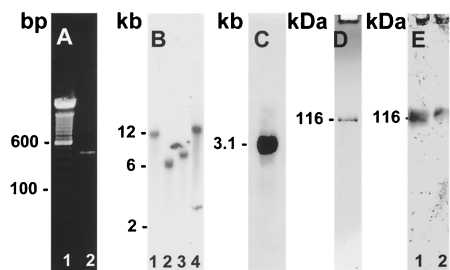


FIG. 1. Cloning and characterization of cryptococcal EF3. (A) Lane 1, 100-bp ladder; lane 2, PCR-amplified product from cryptococcal cDNA library. (B): Southern blot of *CnEF3*. Digestions: lane 1, *SpeI* and *BamHI*; lane 2, *SpeI* and *ApaI*; lane 3, *SpeI* and *XbaI*; lane 4, *SpeI* alone. (C) Northern blot of *CnEF3*. (D) SDS-PAGE of 1 μ g of recombinant cryptococcal EF3. (E) Western blot of whole-cell extract of *C. neoformans* (lane 1) and 1 μ g of purified recombinant CnEF3 (lane 2).

suitable probe for cloning using fully degenerate oligonucleotide primers derived from conserved *S. cerevisiae* sequence within the ATP-binding cassettes and use of a cryptococcal cDNA template from a mass-excised stationary-phase library of *C. neoformans* to avoid untranscribed sequences. This approach yielded a single 420-bp amplified fragment of the expected size (Fig. 1A), which was then radiolabeled and used to screen a *C. neoformans* cDNA library (a gift from J. Edman). Two cDNA clones of appropriate size were obtained; p5a was selected, and both strands were sequenced. Southern blots of cryptococcal DNA showed the presence of a single-copy gene (Fig. 1B) using restriction enzymes predicted to cut outside the *CnEF3* ORF according to sequence generated from clone p5a. Northern blot analysis of *CnEF3* showed the presence of a 3.1-kb transcript which was present in cells obtained in log-phase growth (Fig. 1C).

Analysis of *CnEF3* suggests evolutionary sequence divergence from other fungi. Clone p5a was found to contain a 3,447 bp insert containing a 3,165-bp ORF which encoded a putative 1,055 amino acid polypeptide having a calculated molecular mass of 116.4 kDa (Fig. 2). Amino acid sequence was used to query the nonredundant combined nucleotide databases of GenBank, EMBL, DDBI, and PDB using MacVector software and the Blast search engine (1). Comparison of amino acid sequence showed significant amino acid homology to EF3 of *S. cerevisiae*, especially within the two ATP-binding "cassettes" (motifs A and B). Overall conservation of amino acid sequence between *C. neoformans* and *S. cerevisiae* (44% identity) is lower than that reported between *S. cerevisiae* and *Candida* (78% identity) (8) and between *S. cerevisiae* and *Pneumocystis* (57% identity) (34). In addition, there is no serine at position 277, a proposed phosphorylation site for EF3 in *S. cerevisiae* (20). However, there were three putative phosphorylation sites that were conserved between ascomycetes and *C. neoformans*, T₂₄₄, T₆₈₀, and T₇₇₂. There were also observed regions of homology between ribosome-binding sites within the N terminus and C terminus of the CnEF3 protein.

Production and analysis of recombinant cryptococcal EF3. To assess the ability of cryptococcal EF3 to function with *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes, recombinant CnEF3 was heterologously expressed in *S. cerevisiae* using a new expression plasmid,

pmyep.NS, designed for intracellular expression of proteins using the *ADH2*-promoter. Plasmid pmyep was constructed from the yeast expression plasmid FLAG1 by addition of a terminal histidine affinity tag, divergent PCR was used to remove the pro- α -leader sequence, and Flag affinity sequence was used to construct plasmid pmyep.NS. The *CnEF3* ORF was inserted into pmyep.NS and used to transform *S. cerevisiae*. Transformed yeast cells expressed 20-fold-higher levels of CnEF3 over background YEF3. Recombinant CnEF3 was successfully purified from native YEF3 because CnEF3 did not bind to negatively charged affinity matrices and showed only minimal binding to positively charged matrices such as DEAE-Sephacel (eluted with 0.1 M KCl) in contrast to YEF3, which binds more strongly to both (25). As shown in Fig. 1D, recombinant cryptococcal EF3 purified as a 116 kDa protein, consistent with its predicted size based on cDNA sequence. Western blot analysis of cryptococcal cell extract using antibody prepared from recombinant CnEF3 showed a single band at 116 kDa (Fig. 1E) which showed no reactivity against *Saccharomyces* cell extracts, ribosomes, or EF3 (data not shown). N-terminal sequencing of the purified factor showed exclusively the expected CnEF3 fusion protein sequence MRFPS. Steady-state kinetics of ATP hydrolysis by CnEF3 using heterologous *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes showed a ribosome-dependent alteration in K_m (709 μ M with versus 318 μ M without ribosome), whereas there was no significant ribosome-dependent alteration in V_{max} (11 versus 13 nM/min). This is in contrast to previous work showing a 100-fold increase in V_{max} of the *S. cerevisiae* factor with the same species ribosomes (9). The stimulation in K_m observed in the present case was also not as marked as that reported previously for *Saccharomyces* EF3 and may be due to a suboptimal interaction between CnEF3 and ribosomes from *S. cerevisiae*. It is possible that the suboptimal interaction between recombinant CnEF3 and ribosomes could have been due to the additional 14 amino acids at the N terminus of the expressed protein construct, although a lack of significant homology between the elongation factors within the first 100 amino acids makes this less likely to be a region of critical importance. Stimulation of CnEF3 by cryptococcal ribosomes could not be assessed because of an inability to remove ATPase activity from cryptococcal ribosomes, as described in the next section. Western blot of whole cryptococcal extract using an anti-CnEF3 antibody showed a single 116-kDa band, consistent with the size of the recombinant protein and the expected size based on the cDNA sequence (Fig. 1E). Anti-CnEF3 antibody did not cross-react with either cell wall extract or ribosomes from *S. cerevisiae* (data not shown).

Analysis of CnEF3 binding to cryptococcal ribosomes. Typically, extraction with 0.5 M KCl removes essentially all ATPase activity from *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes and allows the ready separation of elongation factors from ribosomal proteins in *S. cerevisiae* systems. In contrast, we found that extraction of *C. neoformans* ribosomes yielded a preparation with a large amount of residual ATPase activity which prevented assay of ribosome-dependent ATPase activity of the cryptococcal EF3. For example, ribosomes prepared in the absence of 0.5 M KCl exhibited ATPase activity of 78 nmol min⁻¹ A_{260-rib}⁻¹ which, after washing three times with 0.5 M KCl, continued to show an ATPase activity of 200 nmol min⁻¹ A_{260-rib}⁻¹. (An increase in ATPase activity with washing may have been due to the

C. neo	MAPAATAAAS	SGKGSFDLAT	LFVADKAARD	EAGLALADAV	KKSGVEFFTQ	IGFNDAIVKA	LNDKKSQSAR	EGACEVISTL	CENGAQALLE	PHVISSAENT
PCP						eskdtLAR		EqaIkak-ll	tlatnkrve	Pylv-r1--l
Calb		Isk	IqVADn--kD	EaAsnistfl	nsSiVEhdvp	veFfedlKq	iqskdakvsl	aaldaykhia	stNGIspsvE	Pyvdlvsev
Sacc		fqk	LsVatadmRh	BiasevAsfl	ngniiEhdvp	ehFfgelag	ikDKkt-aa-	nam-qavahi	-an-qsn-ls	Psvpeyivql
Vir						fike	visetllkr	detyrg-kym	ydrImnifLk	rqfyShimNm
										101
C. neo	FPFALLEAPA	DKVAAVKTAA	IAAOKAIVQS	MNPWASFVLL	PALNLRIRTS	GKWLKAGSL	EILQOLITSA	PYQMGAMPD	LVPVLGAVW	DTKSDYRKA
PCP	P-rvLkqvgl	eKVAAvrTqA	stvaeIikt	MNPYAvktil	shvtNsikTS	GKWekmcaf	rllDmLveka	PcQMSyrlPe	LiPilisemW	DTrtDiKnqA
Calb	--A-vkA-g	DKnkdvqTAA	sdAllAIasa	itPtAvkail	PkLiDnlnt	nKWteKvail	ravsQLvdtA	kaQialrMPE	LiPVLsesmW	DTKkeVKeAA
Sacc	-vPAictnag	nKdkeiqsvA	setIisIVna	vNPvAikall	PhItNaIvet	nKWQeKiail	aafsamvdaA	kdQvalrMPE	LiPVLsetmW	DTKkeVKeAA
Vir	sFvpmtihin	eliyIi-lrc	InhIrkmaKS	fNssln-eLf	sgvsNkdkvr	deW-IskGS-	sfinism--A	Pysvkmvlpk	vfsamkdpkW	qTK-ef--Ac
										201
C. neo	KATLEKAVSL	VENKDIEKFV	PALVKSLLNP	IEEVPKTIISL	LSATTFVSEV	TAPTISLIAP	LLIRGLDERP	TATKRKVCVI	ADNMCKLIVDS	EYTRPFFLPQ
PCP	rkftmtsvctL	isNpDIdkFi	Pvlidciaqp	-EkVPeTItc	LgATTFVqEV	hAsTlSimvp	LlyRGLnERE	TtIKRKSaVI	iDNMCKLIVed	pYiiaPFLPk
Calb	tAftmtKstet	iDNKDIEKFi	PqLisciaKp	-tEVPeTvhL	LgATTFVSEV	TmaTlSimAP	LLsRGLaERD	TAlKRKkaVI	vDNMCKLIVed	pqiVaPFmdk
Sacc	tAamtKAtet	VnNKDIERFi	PsLiQciadP	-tEVPeTvhL	LgATTFVaeV	TpaTlSimvp	LLsRGLnERE	TgiKRKSaVI	iDNMCKLIVed	pqviaPFLgk
Vir	-gflEn-1aL	-thKnvcvyl	PeiVpvtDc	mldlkqvvdK	natkaliaqi	dnkdIepfip	hLvksig-sp	gdv-pe-cVh	nlSattfvqS	daktIiLtp
										301
C. neo	LLPRLIKTAE	TIADPEARSV	ANRAIVTLRR	IGKVPVESDG	SDLPLPVAE	GPHLATNFVA	LVRKHGGVSV	EQTNPGLAYA	GVLAAASLVNH	HNFDQKTWES
PCP	LiPtLehike	TIgDPECRSV	vNRslaTLIR	vGnVk-Egki	pevlniakpE	n-cmeT-lls	iLkqcelVpV	sdvy--lnyi	sciAsqlide	kNnevvdWdv
Calb	LLPgLknnfa	nmADPEAREv	tqRALnTLRR	vGav-gEnD-	t-iPevstAg	didvtneFnk	Lvack-kiA-	krfavaLnyI	aaIagdlVde	reiIqpeaWlq
Sacc	LLPgLksnfa	TIADPEAREv	tLRAlkTLRR	vGnV-gE-Dd	a-iPeLshAg	dvsttlqvVn	eIlkDetVa-	prfkiVveyi	aaIgaDLide	riidQgaWft
Vir	LlVRLadrTt	pvrirkcvil	rNmAvddpsd	aaKfaVdkvk	SaaegmsnpE	arkvAeeclD	iIstidtsfv	ntfent-dit	sVv-kkytdD	yeyvsgivEi
										401
C. neo	TLPPYKLAAL	PSYDSLPAVR	ELLQKKADEA	ETDDAKFPDE	ELEGDLNIE	QFNLAYGAKI	LlHHANMRLK	RGRYGLCGR	NGSGKSTIMN	AIINNQVEGF
PCP	nispYLqpii	lkaD-incii	dqfrKrsisg	fhssaaeseE	ELEGDLNCE	-FslAYGAKI	LlnrtslnLK	RGYRYGLCpP	NGSGKSTlIr	sIFngQLEGF
Calb	nvlPfatifL	hekea-keii	EefrKrAidn	ipqppsFeDE	ELEGDLNCE	-FslAYGAKI	LlnktqfRLK	RnrRYGLCpP	NGaGKSTIMr	AIaNgQVEGF
Sacc	hitPYmtifil	he-kkakdil	defrKrAvdn	ipvgpnFfDE	ELEGDLNCE	-FslAYGAKI	LlnktqLRK	RarRYGiCpP	NGcGKSTIMr	AIaNgQVGGF
Vir	dLkefnvdiw	kSaidvedfs	gLydtcfeEv	kkknvtnDd	ELEGDLCDCE	-FslAYGGKI	LlnntrfnLK	RgnRYGLCpP	NGaGKSTIMr	AIvNgQLEGF
										501
C. neo	PPPTEVRTFY	VQHDIDGSEA	EISILDWVLS	DKRLLATPEE	IKSTLESVGF	DEVKQKNSIG	LSGQWKMKL	ALARAIlFKA	LlLlLDEHTN	HI DVLNVdWL
PCP	--PTElKtAy	VeHDIDdtEs	ktSVdfian	DpsvvvnkqE	viSsLlehsF	tEdmlsipis	rLSGQWKMKL	ALvRAMlrcq	LlLlLDEHTN	HI DvKNvAWL
Calb	PtqDEctvY	VeHDIDGthA	dttvvefVie	DgevglTkdv	vvdKlrefnF	sdeminnpIq	rLSGQWKMKL	ALARA VLkna	LlLlLDEHTN	HI DtvNVaWL
Sacc	PtqeEcRTvY	VeHDIDGths	dtSVLdfVf-	esg-vgtkEa	IkdkLiefGf	tdemiampIs	rLSGQWKMKL	ALARA VLrlnA	LlLlLDEHTN	HI DtvNVaWL
Vir	PsadvlKtAy	VeHDLDGSds	ntaIIdfian	DegvKentEK	IvtTLESVGF	DierQsapIn	rLSGQWKMKL	ALARA mLda	LlLlLDEHTN	HI sVsNVRWL

601	C. neo	INYLTSLTRC	TSIIIVSHDS	FLNRTVTVDVL	HLNMFKLKRY	PGNLEEFVKH	VPEAKSYQQL	DVAEDYQFKL	PNPPLLDGVK	TKKESLLKMR	NVSFOYPGSS
	PCP	enFlTSqThi	TSIIIVSHDSK	FLdnvVqaii	HyeHFKLKkY	mCNmSkFit1	VPEArSYqdi	smsE-iefSf	PePgyLeGVK	TKqraicrMR	dieFOYeGtS
	Calb	vNYLnt-cgi	TSIIIVSHDSG	FLdnvtqyii	HyeGFKLrky	kGNLSEFVKk	cPEsAqSYeL	g-AsDleFrI	PePgflLeGVK	TKqKaivKvS	NmsFOYPGtS
	Sacc	vNYLnt-cgi	TSItiSHDSV	FLdnvceyii	nyeglKlrky	kGNfTEFVKk	cPaAKaYeel	s-ntDleFKf	PePgyLeGVK	TKqKaivKvt	NmeFOYPGtS
	Vir	IeYLtnLedv	scvIVSHDSG	FLdavnctsii	HyeNlKLKkY	kGNLSEFVKk	rPEsaSYaL	tetkt-twKf	PePglfLeGit	srdraimKlR	gVgFkYpGte
701	C. neo	IQQLYDISLQ	VSLSSRVAVL	GPNGSGKSTI	VKLtTGTEPE	NLGGQVWKHP	NLVIGYVAQH	AFHIDNHLD	STPLEYMLWR	YQTGEDLEEM	HKANRVMTFA
	PCP	epQiknvSLQ	VSLSSRIAVI	GPNGAGKSTI	iKvLcGELiP	q-kGeVWcHP	NLrIayVAQa	AFVHlgsHen	kTPSEYiqWR	YrfaEDsEtI	drAsRqlTEN
	Calb	kpQicDInfQ	cSLSSRIAVI	GPNGAGKSTI	invLTGELLP	t-tGeVYvHe	NcrIaYikQH	AFAHIDNHLD	kTPSEYiqWR	fQTGEDrEtM	drAsRqInEe
	Sacc	kpQitDInfQ	cSLSSRIAVI	GPNGAGKSTI	invLTGELLP	t-sGeVytHe	NcrIaYikQH	AFaHiesHLD	kTPSEYiqWR	fQTGEDrEtM	drANRqInEn
	Vir	klifdvnaQ	VSLnSRigVv	GeNGaCKSal	flvfsGgmwa	p-pGvVfgrP	hmcvfvVwQr	mlsttsdHLD	mTPnqYiqWR	YasGEDkEt1	dvvsRknnEe
801	C. neo	ELAKMKEGAT	VIKGVKRII	DELVARKKLK	QSYEYEVSFK	GMSSAENIWI	SRDELVARGF	EKKVMELDTR	EAQRUGLMRP	LVRREIEKHF	EDFGLDAEFV
	PCP	d-ehlmmkif	ki-ngtsRki	qgihsRrKlK	nSYEYECsFv	plpSmnNeWl	pRgELie-sh	sKmVaEvDmk	EALksGsFRP	LVRkEIEKHC	EsFGLDAEiV
	Calb	deqmMnk-if	ki-eGtpRrI	agihARrKfK	nSYEYeiSmK	pMmSvdntWl	pRgELme-th	aKlIvAEvDmk	EALasGqFRP	LtRkEIEEhc	amlGLDAEiV
	Sacc	daeaMnk-if	ki-eGtpRrI	agihSRrKfK	ntYEYECsFi	GmK-SedNaWi	pRgELVe-sh	sKmVaEvDmk	EALasGqFRP	LtRkEIEEhc	smlGLDpEiV
	Vir	ELkKMyd-tk	Vv-DGVKkII	DkilgRrKlK	kSYEYEVqWk	n-dettq-Wm	SRerLeeyGF	gKlIIndiDtk	EAVanGmfkP	LtaknvEeHm	anvGLDpEft
901	C. neo	SHNSMRGLSG	QOKVKVVLGA	ATWRRPHIIC	LDEHTNYLIR	ESLAALIAAL	KNPEGGVLI	THNREFSESI	CTEVWAMREG	HLEASGHNWV	EGQSGGERID
	PCP	tHsrirGLSG	QOKVKlVLaA	gsWlkPHvIV	LDEHTNYLIR	dSLgALSkaL	KsPEGGVvII	THsvEftknl	teEYVsvqng	qmtpsGHNWV	qGGGtGpRlq
	Calb	SHsrirGLSG	QOKVKlVLaA	cTWqRPHIIV	LDEHTNYLIR	dSLgALSkaL	KaFEGGivII	THsaEftkdl	teEYVAVldG	rmtpsGHNWV	qGGSGpRIe
	Sacc	SHsrirGLSG	QOKVKlVLaA	gTWqRPHIIV	LDEHTNYLIR	dSLgALSkaL	KePEGGvIII	THsaEftknl	teEYVAVkdg	rmtpsGHNWV	SGQGaGpRIe
	Vir	tHsrirGLSG	QOKlKlViGA	AlWqpPHvIV	LDEHTNYLIR	ESLgAmaeAL	KNPggGVvVI	sHsaEftknl	CvEnWAVvggG	vvqitGqS--	aamldaikle
1001	C. neo	KKAGDDEVE	YDALGNPIVK	AKKEKkLSAA	DKRKAKKDRM	ARRKRGEeVF	SDEEL				
	PCP	kk-eeed-t	fdALGNkIea	kKkAKkLtsS	eLRKkKkERM	ARRKkGEEVF	SDEd>				
	Calb	kk-dDeeEdk	fdAmGNkIaa	AKKkKkLSSa	eLRKkKkERM	kKkKelgday	vssd>				
	Sacc	KK-eDeed-k	fdAmGNkIag	gKkKkKkLSSa	eLRKkKkERM	kKkKelgday	vssd>				
	Vir	iK--ketEyt	-DALGntI-K	vKeEKRLSrg	eKkKraKn>						

FIG. 2. Predicted amino acid sequence of *CnEF3* product compared to EF3 from other organisms. Shaded boxes indicate regions of identity, and the arrow indicates the previously proposed serine phosphorylation site. amino acid sequences encoding ABC cassettes A and B and associated hydrophobic elements are indicated by boxes. Putative phosphorylation sites proposed by Qin et al. (25) are shown by arrows. Sequences shown are from *C. neoformans* (*C. neo*) this study), *P. carinii* (PCP) (34), *C. albicans* (Calb) (8), *S. cerevisiae* (Sacc) (19), and *Chlorella* virus CVK2 (Vir) (33).

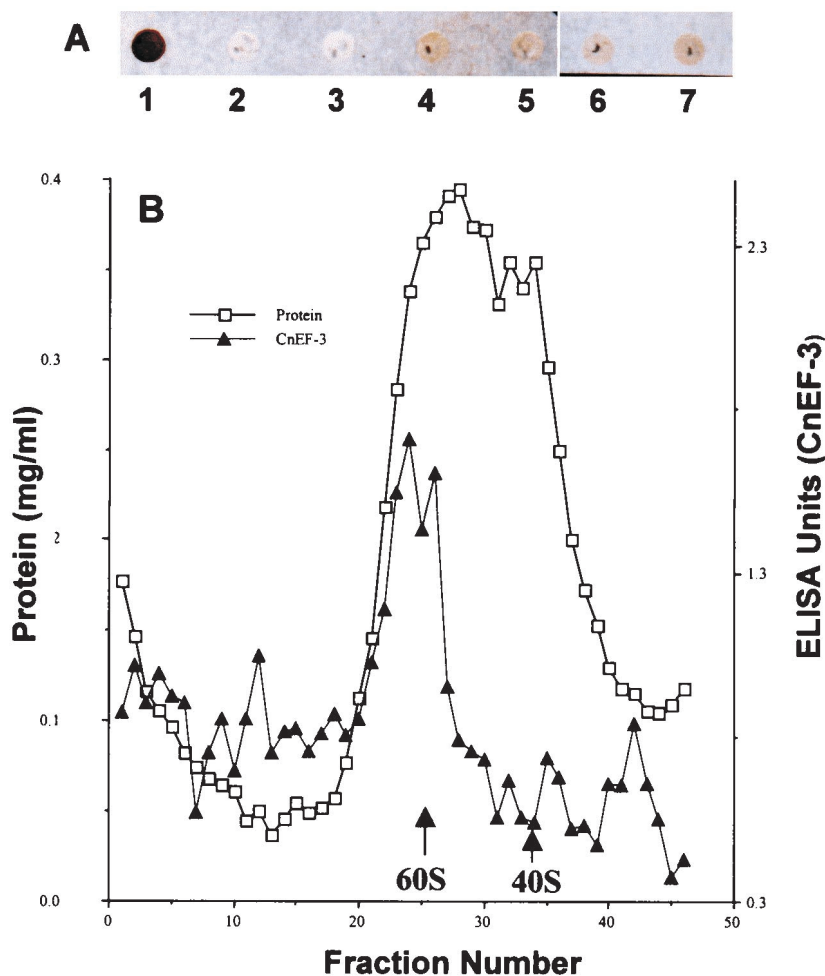


FIG. 3. Extraction of cryptococcal ribosomes with KCl and LiCl. (A) Dot blots of ribosomes from *S. cerevisiae* and *C. neoformans*. Lane 1, 0.6 μ g of recombinant CnEF-2; lane 2, 0.5 μ g of unwashed *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes; lane 3, 0.5 μ g of *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes washed with 0.5 M KCl; lane 4, 0.5 μ g of unwashed ribosomes from *C. neoformans*; lanes 5 to 7, 0.5 μ g of *C. neoformans* ribosomes washed with 0.5 M KCl (lane 5), 1 M LiCl (lane 6), or 2 M LiCl (lane 7). Blots were treated with anti-CnEF3 antibody (1:1,000) and HRP-conjugated anti-mouse Ig as described in Materials and Methods. (B): Cryptococcal ribosomes were washed three times with 0.5 M KCl and subjected to sucrose density centrifugation as described in Material and Methods. Fractions were assayed for protein and CnEF3 protein by ELISA. 40S and 60S refer to expected positions of cryptococcal ribosomes based on centrifugation of purified *S. cerevisiae* ribosome subunits.

removal of ATPase inhibitors.) Since one source of ATPase activity could be cryptococcal EF3, we investigated the binding properties of the cryptococcal factor for its homologous ribosome. Dot-blot analysis of nitrocellulose-absorbed cryptococcal ribosome preparations showed that extraction of ribosomes with 0.5 M KCl, 1 M LiCl, or 2 M LiCl did not remove significant amounts of immunoreactive EF3 from the ribosome preparation (Fig. 3A). Western blot of 0.5 M KCl-washed ribosomes using anti-CnEF3 antibody showed an immunoreactive band at 116 kDa, consistent with the presence of CnEF3 (data not shown). These conditions have been shown previously to remove *S. cerevisiae* but not mammalian ATPase activity from ribosomes (13).

Since aggregation of CnEF3 under these extraction conditions could also result in coprecipitation of CnEF3 with ribosomes, additional experiments were performed to assess the molecular mass of the precipitated CnEF3-containing ribosomes after extraction with salt. Purified cryptococcal ribo-

somes were extracted with 0.5 M KCl, subjected to 5 to 30% sucrose gradient ultracentrifugation in buffer containing 5 mM DTT and 0.1 M EDTA, and assayed for fractions containing CnEF3 by ELISA. As shown in Fig. 3B, CnEF3 comigrates with ribosomal subunits (fractions 20 to 30) even after extraction with 0.5 M KCl, whereas fractions either at the top of the gradient (fraction 47) or in the pellet (fraction 1) did not contain significant amounts of CnEF3 reactivity. The magnesium-free conditions of the gradient were severe enough to dissociate the cryptococcal ribosome, as has been reported previously for *S. cerevisiae* (16), but still did not dissociate CnEF3 from cryptococcal ribosomes, as shown by lack of soluble CnEF3 at the top of the gradient (fraction 47), and did not cause aggregation, as shown by lack of CnEF3 reactivity in the pellet (fraction 1). These data suggest that cryptococcal EF3 remains associated with the ribosome even after 0.5 M KCl extraction.

Complementation between *YEF3* of *S. cerevisiae* and *CnEF3* of *C. neoformans*. Diploid strain KC44 of *S. cerevisiae*, bearing one wild-type and one disrupted *YEF3* gene (*MATa/MAT α Δ yef3::LEU2/leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112 lys2/+ met2-1/+trp1-7/+ura3-52/ura3-52*) (24) was transformed with plasmid-borne *CnEF3* driven by the *YEF3* promoter in a 2 μ m, Y24 vector (y24-CnEF3.7). The diploid yeasts were sporulated and dissected by standard protocols (26). The viable spores showed a segregation pattern of 2:2, 3:1, and 4:0. In all dissected spores, two of the spores grew equally to the wild-type strain, while the rest grew at a much slower rate (data not shown). Complementation of two strains of haploid *S. cerevisiae* bearing a temperature-sensitive mutation in the *YEF3* gene (strains ts22 and ts27) revealed the appearance of significantly slower-growing colonies at the nonpermissive temperature of 34°C. Similar complementation with wild-type *YEF3* genes from *S. cerevisiae* and *C. albicans* gave normal-sized colonies, as reported previously (6, 8). From these results, we conclude that *CnEF3* complements the function of *YEF3* poorly, although it does show that *CnEF3* has functional capability. To verify that the cryptococcal factor was expressed from y24-CnEF3.7 under the *YEF3* promoter, CnEF3 protein was purified from ts22 complemented with y24-CnEF3.7 using the purification procedure which resolves CnEF3 from YEF3 (see Materials and Methods). The protein was readily expressed at the permissive temperature as a protein having the predicted 116-kDa size on SDS-PAGE, intact ATPase activity ($V_{\max} = 90$ mol/min/mg), and the expected unique N-terminal sequence of the cryptococcal fusion protein from Y24EF-CnEF3#7, MRPPA. It is possible that poor complementation was due to the two-amino-acid substitution in the N terminus of the cryptococcal fusion protein, although this is unlikely, as very little homology exists between the cryptococcal factor and the *Saccharomyces* factor in the first 100 amino acids of the N terminus.

DISCUSSION

While EF1 and EF2 are required for efficient protein translation for all eukaryotic organisms, EF3 is unique in its identification and requirement only within the kingdom Fungi. Since inhibition of protein synthesis by targeting EF3 might represent an effective drug strategy for the control of fungal diseases, identification and characterization of this factor among diverse fungi of medical importance are essential to allow design of pharmacological inhibitors having the broadest application. Thus far, EF3 has only been cloned and characterized from yeasts of the order Ascomycota as well as the fungus-like organism *Pneumocystis carinii* (6). Basidiomycete yeasts are distinct from ascomycete yeasts in both morphology (2) and 18S ribosomal DNA sequence criteria (21). Of the more than 20,000 species described (11), *C. neoformans* represents the most important human pathogen within this phylum. Various properties of this fungus, such as less efficient homologous recombination, complex transcriptional processes, and a promiscuous telomerase (2), suggest that essential cellular machinery may be distinct from that in the more highly studied ascomycetes such as *S. cerevisiae* and *Neurospora crassa*.

In order to compare the functional properties of EF3 among fungi, we undertook the characterization of EF3 from the

basidiomycete *C. neoformans*. Consistent with its more distant relationship to the ascomycetes, *CnEF3* showed less homology to EF3 from *S. cerevisiae* (46% identity) than to EF3 from ascomycetes such as *C. albicans* (78% identity to *S. cerevisiae*) and the ascomycete-like organism *P. carinii* (57% identity to *S. cerevisiae*) (5). An EF3-like gene cloned from the *Chlorella* virus shows a similar low identity (36%), but the functional significance of this latter gene has not been established (33). In contrast, the homology of *EF1* between the two classes is much higher (84.7% identity) (28) and suggests a greater evolutionary drift of the third translational cofactor within phyla of Fungi. Low identity between *CnEF3* and ascomycete fungi may also help in determining the functional significance of amino acids within the protein. For example, lack of a conserved serine at position 277, corresponding to a proposed phosphorylation site in *YEF3* (19), makes this amino acid unlikely to have a role in regulation by phosphorylation in *C. neoformans*. In contrast, important ATP-binding regions A and B that form the ATP-binding cassette are conserved in *CnEF3*, consistent with their role in ATP hydrolysis and protein translation in *Saccharomyces* (4).

Ribosome binding is believed to be an important function of EF3 and to be essential for the factor's translation-modulating effects (29). Analysis of peptide regions of EF3 believed to be involved in ribosome binding may shed light on possible structural differences in EF3-ribosome binding interactions between ascomycetes and basidiomycetes. Previous studies have shown that an acidic N-terminal region of *S. cerevisiae* (amino acids 98 to 388) (10) and a basic C-terminal region (775 to 1044) (12) of EF3 are both involved in ribosome binding. Comparison of the amino acid sequence of the homologous regions of CnEF3 (N-terminal residues 108 to 404 and C-terminal residues 796 to 1055) show that the cryptococcal N-terminal region is less acidic (12 versus 17 D and 16 versus 23 E) with a calculated pI of the cryptococcal fragment of 8.98 versus 4.85 for the *S. cerevisiae* fragment. In addition, the cryptococcal C-terminal fragment is much less basic (26 versus 31 K), yielding a calculated pI of 6.73, versus 8.82 for the *S. cerevisiae* fragment. Indeed, differences in surface charge of the cryptococcal factor were also suggested by its lack of binding to CM-cellulose and its relatively poor binding to DEAE-cellulose, in contrast to the stronger binding of the *S. cerevisiae* factor to both matrices. Such differences in amino acid sequence and CnEF3 binding characteristics suggest an evolutionary drift in the nature of CnEF3-ribosome binding from that of ascomycetes.

Recombinant CnEF3 showed significant ATPase activity, as has been shown for YEF3 (4). Since ribosome-dependent ATPase activity is a key characteristic of EF3, the ability of *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes to stimulate CnEF3 ATPase activity was assessed. While previous reports have shown a 50- to 100-fold increase in V_{\max} of YEF3 ATPase activity in the presence of homologous ribosomes, we found no significant increase in ATPase V_{\max} of the cryptococcal EF3 in the presence of *S. cerevisiae* ribosomes and only a small decrease in K_m . This suggests that evolutionary divergence from ascomycetes exhibited by the CnEF3 sequence results in alterations in properties leading to poor EF3-*S. cerevisiae* ribosome interactions.

In order to study the nature of the interaction of CnEF3 with cryptococcal ribosomes, attempts were made to remove

CnEF3 from a ribosome preparation with 0.5 M KCl, which typically removes all *S. cerevisiae* elongation factors. Even after extraction with potassium (0.5 M) or lithium (2 M) salts, significant ribosome-ATPase activity remained, preventing the measurement of CnEF3-*Cryptococcus* ribosome-dependent ATPase activity. Both dot-blot and sucrose sedimentation experiments showed that CnEF3 exhibited an unusually strong binding to ribosomes, which may account for at least part of the observed residual ATPase activity of salt-extracted *Cryptococcus* ribosomes. It is interesting that in higher eukaryotes such as mammals, 80S ribosomes are able to hydrolyze ATP without the addition of soluble protein factors. In addition, mammalian ribosomal ATPase activity cannot be removed with 0.5 M KCl and is only poorly removed with 2 M LiCl (14, 22). However, there has been no evidence of a third elongation factor in mammalian ribosomes, and the identity of the mammalian ribosomal ATPase activity remains unknown.

In order to further characterize the functional significance of EF3 amino acid differences between basidiomycetes and ascomycetes, *CnEF3* was tested for its ability to replace the function of *YEF3* in vivo. It was found that *CnEF3* only poorly complemented either of two temperature-sensitive mutants of *S. cerevisiae* (*ts22* and *ts27*). In addition, the sizes of colonies of a *KC44 Δyef3::LEU2* null mutant rescued by *CnEF3* were significantly smaller than those rescued by *YEF3*. These results are in contrast to those of Colthurst et al., who showed good complementation and normal colony size after complementation of these same strains using *EF3* from the ascomycete *C. albicans* (6). The poor complementation by *CnEF3* in vivo may again be a reflection of structural or functional differences between the elongation factors of ascomycetes and basidiomycetes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by NIH grant AI38258-04 and a grant from the American Lung Association.

We appreciate helpful comments from K. J. Kwon-Chung.

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