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## EVOLUTION OF *Nf2e1/ dKeap 1* SIGNALING PATHWAY IN ACTIVATING *CYP6M2* GENE REGULATION: POTENTIAL ROLE IN RESISTANCE TO INSECTICIDES IN *ANOPHELES GAMBIAE* GILES, 1902 (DIPTERA: CULICIDAE) – A REVIEW

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Insecticide resistance is a worldwide menace in the control of vector borne diseases evolving in substantial vector control program. Cytochrome P450s including *CYP6M2* is known to be involved in the metabolism of insecticides preceding resistance. Information on regulatory mechanisms involved in the control of P450s in *Anopheles gambiae* Giles, 1902 is not yet clear. In this review, we analyze the potential function of Nuclear factor erythroid factor 2 (*Nf2e1*), which is an ortholog to Nuclear factor E2-related factor 2 (*Nrf2*) in vertebrates and Cap 'n' collar isoform C (*CnCC*) in *Drosophila melanogaster* in the countenance of the expression of *CYP6M2* gene encoding enzymes and conceivably to alienate insecticide resistance in the control of *Anopheles gambiae*. Under normal conditions, *Nf2e1* aggregates in the cytoplasm where it synergizes with the actin binding protein, Kelch-like ECH associating protein 1 (*Keap1*) ortholog AGAP003645, and is instantaneously degenerated by the ubiquitin-proteasome pathway. This review article depicts contemporary knowledge of the *Nf2e1*/ AGAP003645 complex, consolidating chiefly on the molecular mechanism of *Nf2e1* regulation and its potential implication in the control of mosquito borne diseases including malaria.

**Keywords:** *Anopheles gambiae*, *Drosophila melanogaster*, *Nf2e*1, d*Keap*1, insecticide resistance **DOI:** 10.31857/S1234567806030050

Nuclear factor-erythroid 2 (NF-E2)-related factor 2 (Nrf2) is a redox-sensitive basic leucine zipper transcription factor, which is implicated in the transcription of antioxidant defence enzymes including cytochrome P450s (Ramprasath et al., 2014; Swamy et al., 2016). The body defense system in vertebrates and insects is armed with the amplitude upregulating expression levels of these target genes including cytochrome P450s (Li et al., 2015). Nrf2 (nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2) is the dominant participant in the empirical expression insect cellular enzymes (Ben-Yehuda et al., 2016). These Nrf2-regulated enzymes are differentiated by the existence of a cis-acting element called antioxidant responsive element (ARE), which lies within the regulatory region (Ramprasath et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2015). ARE-mediated response to oxidative stress pathway is conserved in all vertebrates and invertebrates including mosquitoes (Kumar et al., 2018). In sub-Saharan Africa, Anopheline mosquito vectors, including Anopheles gambiae s. s. is the target in most insecticide based malaria control activities, particularly those involving the use of residual pyrethroid insecticides (Ranson, Lissenden, 2016; Sinka et al., 2016). Resistance to pyrethroids is chiefly attributed to two principal mechanisms; increased detoxification by enzymes or reduced target site sensitivity (Horstmann, Sonneck, 2016). The detoxification enzymes typically linked with insecticide resistance in Anopheles gambiae include; Cytochrome p450s, carboxyl/ choline Esterases and glutathione S-transferase (GSTs) genes (Zhou et al., 2015; Chang et al., 2017). Additionally, p450s are the largest in comparison to all the other detoxification genes and are known to have synergistic effects with estrases and GSTs in insecticide resistance in Anopheles species (Chang et al., 2017). Of the p450s, CYP6 sub-family and especially CYP6M2 is involved mainly in developmental process and is crucial for the metabolic detoxification of insecticides in Anopheles gambiae (Guo et al., 2013). CYP6M2 is found exclusively in insects and repeatedly implicated in resistance to all three distinct classes of WHO recommended insecticides (Pyrethroids, carbamate, and organophosphates) that are important in mosquito vector control (Edi et al., 2014; Mohammed et al., 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2018). Erstwhile microarray investigations on insecticide-resistant mosquitoes, including Anopheles gambiae has established a comparatively modest number of up-regulated CYP genes consequent to exposures of the mosquitoes to various concentrations of insecticides (Liang et al., 2015). Up-regulation of these cytochrome oxidases (P450s) including CYP6M2 has been associated with resistance and enzymatic metabolism of insecticides by CYP6M2 has been demonstrated in vitro (Stevenson et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2012; Edi et al., 2014). The transcriptional up-regulation of CYP6M2 in mosquitoes results in increased levels of protein production and enzymatic activities, which leads to the development of resistance (Liu, 2015). Contemporary investigations have established that the evolutionarily conserved Nrf2 / Keap 1 pathways orthologs perform a significant part in regulation of the correspondent transcriptional response to xenobiotic compounds in D. melanogaster (Misra et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2013; Guio et al., 2014; Kuzin et al., 2014).

In *Drosophila melanogaster*, some genes associated with metabolic activity are established to be upregulated by the transcription factors Cap 'n' collar isoform (CnCC) /

*Drosophila* Kelch-like-ECH-associated protein 1 (dKeap 1). These are orthologs to Nuclear factor erythroid -2 related factor-2 (Nrf2) / Kelch-like–ECH-associated protein 1 (Keap 1) signalling pathways in higher mammalians respectively (Cao et al., 2013; Misra et al., 2013; Das et al., 2014; Siller et al., 2014). No study appears to have been made in understanding these complex mechanisms regulating *CYP6M2* gene expression in insecticide resistance in *Anopheles gambiae*.

The recognition of these transcription factor binding sites (TFBSs) will improve knowledge of how wild populations of *Anopheles gambiae* become resistant to insecticide and are activated by different endogenous and exogenous xenobiotic challenges. One of such pathways is the *Nrf2/Keap* 1 signaling pathway, which was first shown to regulate P450s. The orthologs to this gene in *Drosophila melanogaster* an insect model are also known to be Cap 'n' collar isoform C (*CnCC*)/*Keap* 1) (Mohammed et al., 2014; Chatterjee et al., 2016). Significant explorations with regards to evolutionarily conserved signalling pathways have been accomplished employing *D. melanogaster* (Altintas et al., 2016).

Preliminary investigations employing insilico resources revealed the orthologs of *CnCC/* d*Keap* 1 genes in *Anopheles gambiae* to be Nuclear factor erythroid 2 invertebrate (*Nf2e1*)/ AGAP003645. In contrast to the detailed studies in higher vertebrates and *D. melanogaster*, the complex regulatory mechanism regulating P450 gene including *CYP6M2* gene expression in *An. gambiae* is yet to be identified. Here we use bioinformatics and molecular biology technique to show that Nuclear factor erythroid 2, invertebrate) (*Nf2e1*) (*Nrf2*) / d*Keap*1 pathway play a key role in the regulation of xenobiotic responses in *An. gambiae*.

As a pre-requisite for understanding the molecular mechanism involved in the regulation of *CYP6M2*, searches for potential regulatory elements were made insilico using bioinformatic resources.

## Insilico identification of Nrf2 / are orthologs

Searches were made insilico for the identification of the orthologs of *Nrf2* / ARE in *Anopheles gambiae*, Ensembl genome browser (http://www.ensembl.Org/Human/Search/ Results? q=%20*Nrf2*;m%20y=%203;site=ensemblallx=3;;page=1;facetspeciesHuman) was used to search for the *Nrf2* gene in *Homo sapiens*. Whilst Fly base (http://flybase.org/reports/ FBgn 0262975.html) data base was used to search for its orthologs in *Drosophila melanogaster* (Dm) and VectorBase data base (https://www.VectorBase.org/Anophelesgambiae/ Gene) was used to search for the orthologs in *Anopheles gambiae* (Ag). The insilico analysis results revealed that the orthologs to vertebrate *Nrf2* is identified as *CnCC* in *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Nf2e1* in *Anopheles gambiae* gene promoters respectively (Mohammed et al., 2014) (Table 1).

While the orthologs to higher vertebrate *Keap* 1 in *Drosophila melanogaster* is d*Keap*1 and AGAP003645 in *Anopheles gambiae* respectively. In this review therefore, we have described the components mediating *Nrf2* signaling in *Anopheles gambiae* and their relationship to human and *Drosophila melanogaster* (Figure 1).

Vertebrates	D. melanogaster	An. gambiae	Source
Nrf2	CnCC	Nf2e1	Mohammed et al., 2014
Keap 1	d <i>Keap</i> 1	AGAP003645	Mohammed et al., 2014

 Table 1. The CnCC (ortholog to Nrf2 /Keap 1) of vertebrates

 in Drosophila melanogaster and Anopheles gambiae

K e y: Nrf2 – Nuclear factor erythroid-2 related factor-2; CnCC – Cap 'n' collar isoform C; Nf2e1 – Nuclear factor erythroid-2, invertebrate.



**Figure 1.** Graphic illustration of the vertebrate *Nrf2- Keap1-* Kelch-like ECH-Associated Protein *Keap1* and its -Cap'n' Isoform C *CnCC* and Nuclear factor 2 invertebrate *-Nf2e1-AGAP003645* orthologs of *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Anopheles gambiae* respectively and the and ARE-Antioxidant responsive element (Adopted and modified Mohammed, 2014).

#### Nrf2 / Keap1 signaling pathway in vertebrates

In unstressed conditions, *Nrf2* (Nuclear factor erythroid-2 related factor-2) in vertebrates, and *CnCC* (Cap 'n' collar isoform C) in *Drosophila* are repressed by d*Keap1* (*Drosophila* Kelch-like ECH-associated protein 1), which also functions as a sensor of oxidants and other electrophilic compounds (Mohammed et al., 2014; Loboda et al., 2016). In the absence of stress, *Nrf2* is maintained in the cytoplasm by the actin-binding protein *Keap1*, which also functions as an E3 ubiquitin ligase to stimulate *Nrf2* degradation by the 26S proteasome. Activation of this pathway through oxidative stress impedes the *Nrf2–Keap1* synergy, allowing *Nrf2* to translocate to the nucleus, where it can heterodimerize with the small Maf (muscle aponeurosis fibromatosis) proteins and bind to antioxidant response elements (AREs) in the genome (Atia, Bin Abdullah, 2014). Overexpression of *Nrf2* and reduction of *Keap1* in higher vertebrates switches on the transcription of numerous genes including *CYP6A2* that safeguards cells from xenobiotic compounds. *Nrf2*, *Maf* and *Keap1* are all conserved in *D. melanogaster* and exert to maintain cognate regulatory synergy as described in vertebrates (Si, Liu, 2014; Dhanoa et al., 2013).

## CnCC/dKeap1 signaling pathway in Drosophila melanogaster

Under oxidative stress situations, the repression of *CnCC* by d*Keap*1 are annihilated permitting these transcription factors to bind, together with other proteins, to ARE sequences upregulating downstream genes such as P450s. The *Drosophila* d*Keap*1 incorporates Kelch repeats homologous to those that intercedes d*Keap*1 synergy with *Nrf2* as well as a sequence motif that is mandatory for vertebrate *Keap*1 export from the nucleus (Deng, Kerppola, 2013). Overexpression of *CnCC* and reduction of d*Keap*1 in *Drosophila* melanogaster switches on the transcription of numerous genes including *CYP6G1* and *CYP6A2* that safeguard cells from xenobiotic compounds, albeit d*Keap*1 overexpression supresses their transcription, demonstrating that the activities of these protein families in the xenobiotic response are conserved amongst vertebrates and *Drosophila* (Deng, Kerppola, 2013; Misra et al., 2013).

Activation of this pathway through electrophilic xenobiotics / oxidative stress is necessary and sufficient for xenobiotic-induced transcription of a wide range of detoxification genes in *Drosophila* species (Misra et al., 2011; Deng, Kerppola, 2013).

Up-regulation of these cytochrome oxidases (P450s) including *CYP6M2* has been associated with resistance and enzymatic metabolism of insecticides by *CYP6M2* has been shown *in vitro* (Stevenson et al., 2011; Mitchell et al., 2012; Edi et al., 2014). In *Drosophila melanogaster*, some genes involved in metabolic activity are known to be upregulated by the transcription factors Cap 'n' collar isoform (*CnCC*) / *Drosophila* Kelch-like-ECH-associated protein 1 (*dKeap* 1). These are orthologs to Nuclear factor erythroid -2 related factor-2 (*Nrf2*) / Kelch-like–ECH-associated protein 1 (*Keap* 1) signalling pathway in higher mammalians respectively (Cao et al., 2013; Misra et al., 2013; Das et al., 2014; Siller et al., 2014).

The over-expression of *Nf2e1* and repression of AGAP003645 (d*Keap* 1) in *Anopheles* gambiae potentially initiates the transcription of many P450 genes including *CYP6M2* and protect cells from xenobiotic compounds, whereas d*Keap*1 overexpression potentially represses their transcription, suggesting that the functions of these protein families in the xenobiotic response are conserved between vertebrates, *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Anopheles* gambiae. This has revealed therefore a connection between *Nf2e1* / AGAP003645 signal-ling pathways and *CYP6M2* in insecticide resistance. A proposed scheme for the *Nf2e1*/AGAP003645 pathway and that of its inhibition are described in Figures 2 and 3.

# The potential nuclear factor erythroid 2 invertebrate (*Nf2e1*) / AGAP003645 signalling pathway in *Anopheles gambiae*

#### Activation of the Nf2e1/AGAP003645 pathway in Anopheles gambiae

Under oxidative stress situations, the restriction of *Nf2e1* by AGAP003645 is abolished permitting these transcription factors to bind together with other proteins, as maf (muscle aponeurosis fibromatosis) to ARE sequences up regulating downstream P450 genes such as *CYP6M2* responsible for detoxification of insecticides thereby conferring protection and possibly resistance to insecticides in *Anopheles gambiae* as seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Schematic illustration for the induction of N/2e1/AGAP003645-(d*Keap*1) signalling pathway. The antioxidant response element (ARE) in the promoter region of select genes allows the coordinated up-regulation of antioxidant and detoxifying enzymes in response to oxidative/electrophilic stress. This up-regulation is mediated through Nuclear factor erythroid 2, invertebrate (N/2e1) that may be activated by endogenous and exogenous molecules or stressful conditions. These agents disrupt the association between N/2e1 and AGAP003645 with subsequent nuclear translocation of N/2e1. In the cell nucleus, N/2e1 interacts with small MAF-S (Muscle apoptosis fibromatosis) protein, forming a heterodimer that binds to the ARE (Antioxidant response element) sequence in the promoter region and up-regulates transcription of many genes encoding detoxifying enzymes such as P450s (*CYP6M2*) (Adopted and modified from Mohammed, 2014).



**Figure 3.** Schematic illustration general scheme for the inhibition of NF2e1/ AGAP003645 (dKeap 1) – signalling pathway. This up-regulation is mediated through Nuclear factor erythroid 2 invertebrate (Nf2e1) that may be activated by endogenous and exogenous molecules including xenobiotics (ligands) or stressful conditions. When these agents are inhibited, the association between Nf2e1 and AGAP003645 remains intact in the cytoplasm. This disrupts the up-regulation and transcription of many genes encoding detoxifying enzymes such as P450s (*CYP6M2*) (Adopted and modified from Mohammed, 2014).

## Inhibition of the Nf2e1/AGAP003645 pathway in Anopheles gambiae

Figure 3 is an Illustration of the hypothetical inhibition of the *Nf2e1*/AGAP003645 signalling pathway which potentially hinders the up-regulation *CYP6M2* responsible for insecticide metabolism in *Anopheles gambiae*.

However, activation of this pathway is unlikely to be the only factor that contributes to insecticide resistance in *Anopheles gambiae*. Nevertheless, inhibition of the *Nf2e1* / d*Keap* 1 (Figure 3) in particular response may potentially improve the efficacy of insecticides and development of methods to knock down or inhibit these pathways may prove fruitful. This work has increased our knowledge of the regulatory mechanisms involved in the control of *CYP6M2* in insecticide resistance in *Anopheles gambiae*. Even if the underlying mechanisms are still not very clear, the work shows the importance of these regulatory genes in the control of *CYP6M2* in response to insecticide selection.

The functionality of *Nf2e1* can only be proven through wet-laboratory experiments with predetermined parameters, particularly since a potential binding site in a promoter can be functional in certain cells and non- functional under different conditions (Cartharius et al., 2005). These findings have implications in the ability to control the spread of malaria due to the reduction in insecticide resistance in *Anopheles gambiae*.

## Activators and Inhibitors of CnCC signalling pathway

#### Activators of CnCC signalling pathway

Previous studies have identified Phenobarbital, Paraquat, Caffeine and GAL4UAS system among others as major activators of *CnCC*/Keap 1 signaling pathway (Misra et al., 2011; Deng, Kerppola, 2014) (Table 2).

## Inhibitors of Nrf2 signalling pathway

Inhibitors of *CnCC*, such as Drosophila Keap1 induce beneficial effects on survival and synaptic function in *Drosophila melanogaster* (Spiers et al., 2019). Furthermore, over expression of *Drosophila* Keap1 is also known to inhibit *CnCC* activity in vivo (Sykiotis, Bohmann, 2008). Other inhibitors such as Bromodomain and Extra-Terminal (BET) protein family in *Drosophila*, Fs (1) h, as an inhibitor of the stress responsive transcription factor *CnCC*, the fly ortholog of *Nrf2*. The mechanism by which Fs (1) h inhibits *CnCC* function is distinct from the canonical mechanism that stimulates *Nrf2* function by abrogating Keap1-dependent proteasomal degradation (Chatterjee et al., 2016). Finally, using an inducible *Drosophila* model, it was confirmed that Aβ42 inhibits activity of the fly homolog of *Nrf2* (cap-n-collar isoform C, *CnCC* (Sykiotis, Bohmann, 2008; Kerr et al., 2017). It is conceivable that the *CnCC* inhibition activity plays similar role in *Anopheles gambiae*.

S/ No	Insect	Activators	P450	References
1	<i>Drosophila melanogaster</i> (Fruit fly)	Phenobarbital (PB)	<i>CYP6D1, CYP6A2,</i> <i>CYP6A8</i> and <i>CYP12D1</i>	Misra et al., 2011; Deng, Kerppola, 2014
2	Aphis gossypii (Glover)	RNA interference (RNAi)	CYP6A2	Peng et al., 2016a
3	<i>Tribolium castaneum</i> (Red flour beetle)	Double stranded RNA (dsRNA)	CYP6BQ	Kalsi, Palli, 2015
4	Aphis gossypii (Glover)	Paraquat	CYP6DA2	Peng et al., 2016b
5	Drosophila melanogaster (Fruit fly)	Paraquat	<i>CYP6A2</i> and <i>CYP6A8</i>	Pitoniak, Bohmann, 2015
6	Drosophila melanogaster (Fruit fly)	GAL4/UAS system	<i>CYP6G1, CYP6A2,</i> <i>CYP6A8</i> and <i>CYP6A21</i>	Daborn et al., 2007; Misra et al., 2011
7	<i>Drosophila melanogaster</i> (Fruit fly)	chlorpromazine	CYP6A2	Misra et al., 2011
8	Drosophila melanogaster (Fruit fly)	caffeine	<i>CYP12D1</i> , <i>CYP6A8</i> and <i>CYP6D5</i>	Misra et al., 2011; Coelho et al., 2015
9	<i>Spodoptera litura</i> (Tobacco cutworm)	Piperonyl butoxide	CYP6AB12	Lu et el., 2020
10	Bombyx mori (Silk worm)	Curcumin High temperature	<i>CYP302A1, CYP306A1,</i> <i>CYP314A1</i> and <i>CYP315A1</i>	Li et al., 2019
11	Aedes aegypti	Fluoranthene	СҮР6М6	Poupardin et al.,
12	Aedes aegypti	Copper	CYP6M11	Poupardin et al., 2008
13	<i>Tribolium castaneum</i> (Red flour beetle)	Latrophilin (Lph)	CYP4BN6 and CYP6BQ11	Xiong et al., 2019
14	Anopheles gambiae	RNA interference (RNAi)	<i>CYP6M2, CYP6Z2,</i> <i>CYP6Z3</i> and <i>CYP6P4</i>	Ingham et al., 2017
15	<i>Leptinotarsa decemlineata</i> Colorado potato beetle	RRNA interference (RNAi)	<i>CYP6BJ, CYP6BJ1,</i> <i>CYP9Z25</i> and <i>CYP9Z29</i>	Kalsi, Palli, 2017a
16	Tribolium castaneum (Red flour beetle)	Double stranded RNA (dsRNA)	CYP6BQ11	Kalsi, Palli, 2015
17	Leptinotarsa decemlineata Colorado potato beetle	RNA interference (RNAi)	CYP6BJ	Kalsi, Palli, 2017b
18	Drosophila melanogaster (Fruit fly)	Tert- butylhydroquinone (tBHQ)	CYP6BQ	Deng, Kerppola, 2014

Table 2. Typical activators of CnCC (Nrf2 ortholog) signaling pathway in insects

#### CONCLUSIONS

In this review, we have described findings regarding potential mechanisms by which Nf2e1 influences insecticide resistance in Anopheles gambiae. The roles of many Nf2e1 and its orthologs in xenobiotics are remarkably well conserved between higher mammals and other living organisms. The intervention of the Nf2e1 leads to an extended lifespan all living organisms. This suggests that the role of Nf2e1 xenobiotics is likely to be conserved across all living organisms. In addition, genetic variants of Nf2e1 components, including muscle apoptosis fibromatosis-S (MAF-S) and antioxidant response element (ARE), are associated with insecticide resistance. Thus, the evidence for the evolutionarily conserved nature of Nf2e1 and its orthologs-mediated longevity is extremely strong, ranging from invertebrates to humans. Further wet laboratory experiments such as qPCR (quantitative polymerase chain reaction) are required to establish the functionality of Nf2e1. We therefore conclude that inhibition of this Nf2e1 / dKeap 1 may potentially improve the efficacy of insecticides. Consistent with the previous studies on the Drosophila model pathway, these studies have established that the Nrf2 / Keap 1(Nf2e1 / dKeap 1) pathway is differentially active as a key regulator of xenobiotic responses. These studies have implications for understanding the regulatory mechanisms of acquirement of insecticide resistance and its impact in the control of mosquito-borne diseases.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no competing interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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# ЭВОЛЮЦИЯ СИГНАЛЬНОГО ПУТИ Nf2e1/ dKeap1 В ПРОЦЕССЕ РЕГУЛЯЦИИ ЭКСПРЕССИИ ГЕНА *СУР6M2*: ПОТЕНЦИАЛЬНАЯ РОЛЬ В РЕЗИСТЕНТНОСТИ К ИНСЕКТИЦИДАМ У ANOPHELES GAMBIAE GILES, 1902 (DIPTERA: CULICIDAE) – ОБЗОР

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**Ключевые слова:** *Anopheles gambiae*, *Drosophila melanogaster*, *Nf2e*1, d*Keap* 1, резистентность к инсектицидам

#### РЕЗЮМЕ

Невосприимчивость (резистентность) к инсектицидам является угрозой мирового значения, т.к. препятствует борьбе с переносчиками возбудителей инфекций. Известно, что цитохром P450s, включая *CYP6M2*, вовлечен в метаболизм инсектицидов, и служит одной из причин возникновения резистентности. Работа регуляторных механизмов, участвующих в контроле цитохрома P450s у комара *Anopheles gambiae*, остается неясной. В настоящем обзоре авторы анализируют потенциальную роль ядерного эритроидного фактора 2 (*Nf2e*1), который является ортологом фактора 2 (*Nrf2*) у позвоночных животных и изоформой C белка Cap-n-Collar (*CnCC*) у *Drosophila melanogaster*, в экспрессии гена *CYP6M2*, раскодирующего энзимы и возможно препятствующего возникновению резистентности к инсектицидам у комара *Anopheles gambiae*. В нормальных условиях *Nf2e*1 накапливается в цитоплазме, где он объединяется со связывающим актин белком *Keap* 1 (Kelch-like ECH associating protein 1), ортологом AGAP003645, и мгновенные сведения о комплексе *Nf2e*1/ AGAP003645, причем особое внимание уделяется молекулярным механизмам регуляции и потенциальной возможности использования комплекса для борьбы с инфекционными болезнями, передаваемыми комарами, включая малярию.