

Gene Editing, Synthesis, and Assembly

(Engineering DNA)



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Gene Editing, Synthesis, and Assembly

Summary

Gene Editing, Synthesis, and Assembly focuses on the development and advancement of tools to enable the production of chromosomal DNA and the engineering of entire genomes. Advancements are needed in the design and construction of functional genetic systems though the synthesis of long oligonucleotides, assembly of multiple fragments, and precision editing with high specificity.

Introduction and Impact

Fundamentally, an organism's sensing, metabolic, and decision-making capabilities are all encoded within their genome, a very long double-stranded DNA molecule. By changing an organism's genome sequence, we have the ability to rationally alter these cellular functions, and thereby engineer them to address a myriad of societal challenges. The ability to rationally alter DNA sequences, combining gene editing, DNA synthesis, and DNA assembly, are therefore considered a cornerstone capability of engineering biology, enabling us to construct engineered genetic systems to reprogram organisms with targeted functions. Advances in gene editing, synthesis, and assembly have significant transformative impacts on all sectors impacted by engineering biology by broadening the complexity and breadth of functionality that can be introduced into an engineered organism.

The market for synthesized DNA is both mature and ripe for disruption. Using existing technologies, several service providers currently synthesize single-stranded DNA molecules (oligonucleotides) and double-stranded DNA molecules (DNA fragments). They actively compete across several criteria, including cost-per-DNA base pair, sequence fidelity, turnaround time, confidentiality of intellectual property, and customer service. However, several early-stage technologies have the potential to dramatically alter the commercial landscape by enabling the manufacture of much longer DNA fragments at significantly reduced costs.

Gene Editing, Synthesis, and Assembly highlights several technological routes to achieving the overall goal of manufacturing mega-base length DNA molecules, and designing genes and genomes with desired functionalities. We also illustrate how new technological developments in one process (e.g., oligonucleotide synthesis, or coupled synthesis and sequencing) can directly lead to improvements in downstream processes (e.g., DNA fragment synthesis).

Transformative Tools and Technologies

Oligonucleotide synthesis technologies

Currently, phosphoramidite-based chemistry is the predominant approach for synthesizing oligonucleotides. Even after significant optimization, per-cycle synthesis yields are about 99.5%, meanwhile synthesis of a 200-nucleotide oligonucleotide has a yield of only 35% (Hughes & Ellington, 2017). New technologies seek to improve this process by: 1) synthesizing thousands of oligonucleotides in parallel, using either on-chip supports or within tiny microtiter wells (Kosuri & Church, 2014); or 2) improving synthesis processivity by replacing the



phosphoramidite-based chemistry, for example, using enzyme catalysis (e.g., terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferases) to extend primers with defined nucleotides (Palluk et al., 2018). Clearly, achieving picomole production of 1000-mer oligonucleotides with error-free sequences would significantly improve the overall DNA assembly protocol.

Technologies for oligonucleotide assembly into non-clonal DNA fragments

Currently, multiple 60- to 200-mer oligonucleotides are assembled into non-clonal DNA fragments using a combination of annealing, ligation, and/or polymerase chain reaction. The cost of synthesizing non-clonal DNA fragments is \$0.10 to \$0.30 per base pair, depending on size and complexity. DNA fragments between 300 and 1800 base pairs can be synthesized by multiple providers and DNA fragments up to 5800 base pairs can be synthesized by select providers at increased cost. Errors are introduced whenever two oligonucleotides form undesired base pairings, when two oligonucleotides are incorrectly ligated together, or when DNA polymerases extend a synthesized DNA fragment with an incorrect nucleotide. Certain sequence determinants will increase the error rate, resulting in a mixture of undesired fragments. Computational sequence design can reduce the frequency of these errors. Mismatch repair enzymes may be added (with added cost) to eliminate DNA fragments with mis-paired nucleotides, for example, as a result of mis-annealing or DNA polymerase errors. This process has been scaled up to assemble thousands of non-clonal DNA fragments per day. The purification of full-length, error-free DNA fragments remains a challenge. Utilizing longer oligonucleotides (see Oligonucleotide synthesis technologies) would enable the synthesis of longer non-clonal DNA fragments with the same error rate. New technologies utilizing nanopore sequencing have the potential to couple sequencing and purification at single-molecule resolution.

Multi-fragment DNA assembly techniques for clonal genetic systems and genomes

Currently, multiple DNA fragments (300 to 3000 base pairs long) are assembled into large genetic systems (10,000 to 1,000,000 base pairs long) using single-pot DNA assembly techniques that combine cocktails of bio-prospected and/or engineered enzymes, including exonucleases, endonucleases, DNA polymerases, ligases, and/or recombinases (Gibson et al., 2009; Hughes & Ellington, 2017). Enzyme costs are currently about \$25 per assembly. Assembled DNA is then introduced into cells for clonal separation and replication. Most assembly techniques have essential sequence determinants, for example, regions of overlapping homology or flanking Type IIs restriction sites (Engler, Kandzia, & Marillonnet, 2008). Errors are introduced when two fragments anneal together at incorrect overlap regions, when two fragments are mis-ligated at incorrect ligation junctions, or when DNA polymerases incorporate incorrect nucleotides during DNA synthesis. Computational sequence design can limit the frequency of errors. A major challenge for DNA assembly is the trial-and-error identification of a full-length, error-free genetic system. For example, an optimized assembly technique with a per-junction efficiency of 90% will assemble a 10-part (3000 base pairs per part) system with 35% yield. At the same per-junction efficiency, assembling a 1,000,000 base pair genome from 3000 base pair DNA fragments will have a miniscule yield of 5.2x10⁻¹⁴ %. This limitation to DNA assembly has motivated the synthesis of longer non-clonal DNA fragments



(see <u>Technologies for oligonucleotide assembly into non-clonal DNA fragments</u>). For example, 1,000,000 base pair genomes could be assembled from 10,000 base pair, 30,000 base pair, or 50,000 base pair DNA fragments with a 0.002%, 2.7%, or 11% efficiency, respectively. If longer non-clonal DNA fragments are unavailable, then hierarchical approaches to DNA assembly are required, which increases the number of DNA assembly reactions and verification costs.

Sequencing costs become significant once assembled genetic systems are large and/or assembly yields are exceedingly small. For example, after assembling a 30,000 base pair genetic system with a 35% yield, it is necessary to sequence at least seven clonal isolates to achieve at least a 95% chance of identifying a fully-correct one. At low throughput, this cost is about \$1000 (using Sanger sequencing). Using next generation sequencing, this cost can be greatly reduced to about \$0.70, but only when a large amount of DNA (2 billion base pairs) is sequenced at the same time (Goodwin, McPherson, & McCombie, 2016). Similarly, if a 1,000,000 base pair genome is assembled from 30,000 base pair fragments with a 2.7% yield, then it would be necessary to sequence 100 clonal isolates to achieve a 93% chance of identifying a fully correct one (about \$275 in sequencing costs). Finally, hierarchical DNA assembly can be performed by first assembling and purifying smaller genetic systems (e.g., up to 30,000 base pairs) and then using them to perform a multi-fragment assembly to build larger genetic systems (e.g., up to 35 five times larger than the smaller systems) (Richardson et al., 2017). Hierarchical DNA assembly increases sequencing costs by a multiplier roughly equal to the number of hierarchical cycles. Overall, DNA assembly costs are greatly reduced by utilizing longer non-clonal DNA fragments and by parallelizing operations such that at least 2 billion base pairs of DNA are verified across multiple DNA assembly reactions.



GENE EDITING, SYNTHESIS, AND ASSEMBLY

Goal

Breakthough Capability Milestone

Manufacture thousands of very long oligonucleotides with high fidelity.

Highly efficient o	igonucleotide synthesis to increase	the number, length, and fidelity of	oligonucleotides.
Robustly synthesize one million 200-mer oligonucleotides with a per-nucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 500 nucleotides.	Robustly synthesize 1,000-mer oligonucleotides with a per-nucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 1,000 nucleotides.	Reduce per-nucleotide error rates for 1,000-mer oligonucleotide synthesis to fewer than one in 5,000 nucleotides.	Synthesize 10,000-mer oligonucleotides at 99,99% cycle efficiency within one minute with a per-nucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 30,000 nucleotides.
ny-fragment DNA assembl	y with simultaneous, hig	h-fidelity sequence valid	lation.
Predictive design o	f DNA sequences for improved asse	mbly of longer, more information-r	ich DNA fragments.
Coupled design of DNA sequences to optimize nucleotide composition to support synthesis, while maintaining genetic system function.	Incorporate machine learning to identify poorly-understood problematic sequences and process conditions.	Design algorithms that identify optimal synthesis strategies for assembling megabase-length genetic systems.	Design algorithms for optimal one-pot-assembly of billions of unique genomic/chromosomal variants with defined sequences.
Methods for o	one-step, simultaneous assembly ar	nd sequence-verification of long DN	IA fragments.
Reliable assembly of 10,000 base pair non-clonal DNA fragments.	Reliable assembly and verification of 10,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.	Reliable assembly and verification of 100,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.	Reliable assembly and verificatior of 1,000,000 to 10,000,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.
Pipelin	ed synthesis, assembly, and functio	nal testing of engineered genetic sy	ystems.
Achieve desired functionalities in lower-fidelity, error-prone genetic systems.	Achieve reliable Design-for-Testing in engineered genetic systems.	Achieve readily-swappable modules within large genetic systems.	Achieve one-month Design-to-Test cycles for megabase-length genetic systems
cision genome editing at r	nultiple sites simultaneo	usly with no off-target e	ffects.
Ability to reliably create any prec	ise, defined edit(s) (single nucleoti	de polymorphisms or gene replacer	ment) with no unintended editin
in any organ	ism, with edits ranging from a singl	e base change to the insertion of en	ntire pathwa.

Ability to generate any defined single base pair change in model organisms. High efficiency editing (> 90%) across the genome with no off-target activity. High-efficiency gene insertion or deletion of moderately large changes (< 10 kb) via homologous recombination. Precise, parallel editing or regulatory modifications (10 to 1000 modifications) across model and non-model organisms, including plants and animals.

Precise, predictable, and tunable control of gene expression for many genes inside diverse cells and organisms across different timescales.

Achieve long-lasting gene repression and activation.

Ability to regulate expression in non-model organisms.

Technologies to monitor and manipulate genetic and epigenetic mechanisms controlling tissue-wide and organism-wide expression levels over time.

Ability to precisely regulate gene expression in whole-body organisms, with single-cell resolution using dynamic or static control.

Ability to reproducibly deliver editing cargo efficiently and specifically to a given target cells or tissues, and control dosage and timing of the editing machinery. Improve editors to function Enhance specificity of delivery Quantitative, specific, and without sequence requirements Routine use of editors without modalities for high efficiency multiplexed editing of any site, in any with activity comparable to 2019 detectable off-target effects. (>90% efficient) editing of cells cell, in any organism. state-of-the-art capabilities. in a defined tissue. 2 Years **5** Years **10 Years** 20 Years



Roadmap Elements

Goal 1: Manufacture thousands of very long oligonucleotides with high fidelity.

[Current State-of-the-Art]: Existing synthesis chemistries manufacture oligonucleotides up to 200 nucleotides long with cycle efficiencies of 99.5% and yields of 35%. Parallel synthesis of oligonucleotides is carried out on solid supports, producing up to 300,000 oligonucleotides with defined sequences (Hughes & Ellington, 2017; Kosuri & Church, 2014).

[Breakthrough Capability]: Highly efficient oligonucleotide synthesis to increase the number, length, and fidelity of oligonucleotides.

- 2 years: Robustly synthesize one million 200-mer oligonucleotides with a pernucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 500 nucleotides.
 - [Bottleneck]: Scaling-up the production of chip-based or semiconductor-based oligonucleotide synthesis chemistries.
 - [Potential Solution]: Microfabrication of nanotiter plates and patterned nanometer-scale chips.
 - [Potential Solution]: Improved process dynamics taking into account inherent stochasticity and improved electronic control of reaction chemistries.
- 5 years: Robustly synthesize 1,000-mer oligonucleotides with a per-nucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 1,000 nucleotides.
 - [Bottleneck]: Current phosphoramidite-based chemistries have peaked at 99.5% per-nucleotide efficiencies, resulting in only 0.66% yields when producing 1,000-mers; efficiencies must be 99.9% to achieve more than 35% yields and cycle times must also be reduced for commercial scalability.
 - [Potential Solution]: Enzyme-based, non-templated synthesis (e.g., via terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferases) has the potential to achieve greater than 99.9% per-nucleotide efficiencies and synthesis rates exceeding one nucleotide-per-second.
- 10 years: Reduce per-nucleotide error rates for 1,000-mer oligonucleotide synthesis to fewer than one in 5,000 nucleotides.
 - [Bottleneck]: Non-templated DNA synthesis is currently slow with lower fidelity than templated synthesis and improvements in enzyme substrate selectivity or substrate availability are needed to control sequence-specific synthesis.
 - [Potential Solution]: Significant bioprospecting, rational design, and directed evolution of enzymes responsible for non-templated DNA synthesis can improve selectivity and increase catalytic efficiencies.
- 20 years: Synthesize 10,000-mer oligonucleotides at 99.99% cycle efficiency within one minute with a per-nucleotide error rate of fewer than one in 30,000 nucleotides.
 - [Bottleneck]: Multiple synergistic improvements are needed, including improved non-templated DNA polymerases, fast substrate switching at the nanoliter scale, multi-nucleotide same-cycle addition, and electronic control of substrate selection.



 [Potential Solution]: Inspiration from natural DNA polymerases, ligases, recombinases, and helicases, working together in a dynamic molecular machine, potentially using non-natural nucleotides for greater specificity.

Goal 2: Many-fragment DNA assembly with simultaneous, high-fidelity sequence validation.

[Current state-of-the-art]: Oligonucleotides are assembled into double-stranded DNA fragments up to 6000 base pairs long using *in vitro* techniques (e.g., polymerase cycling assembly, ligation cycling) as well as *in vivo* techniques (yeast-mediated homologous recombination), producing non-clonal DNA fragments (Gibson, 2011; Li & Elledge, 2007; Richardson et al., 2017; Smith, Hutchison, Pfannkoch, & Venter, 2003). Clonal (isogenic) fragments are then identified using a combination of enzyme-based removal of mismatched base pairs (e.g., MutS) and DNA sequencing (Sanger or NGS). Multiple verified DNA fragments are then assembled together into longer fragments (10,000 to 100,000 base pairs long) using hierarchical approaches employing DNA assembly techniques (e.g., Gibson assembly, ligation cycling reaction, Golden Gate). Megabase length DNA is then assembled from 100,000 base pair fragments using yeast-mediated homologous recombination. More detailed descriptions of commonly used techniques follow:

- Polymerase Cycling Assembly (PCA) is a method to assemble larger DNA constructs from shorter oligonucleotides (Smith et al., 2003). PCA is an efficient method for assembling constructs between 200 to 1,000 base pairs in length. The process is similar to PCR, but utilizes a set of overlapping "seed" oligonucleotides that are designed to hybridize to one another leaving gaps that are then filled in using a thermostable DNA polymerase. The oligonucleotides are generally 50 to 100 nucleotides in length to ensure uniqueness in the hybridization with their complement. The reactions are cycled from ~60 and ~95 C° for 15 to 30 cycles. The full-length assembled product is then usually amplified by PCR using two terminal-specific primers. PCA is an efficient method for assembling constructs between 200 and 1,000 base pairs in length and can be performed in individual tubes or multiplexed using microtiter well plates.
- Emulsion PCA is a method developed by Sriram Kosuri for highly multiplexing the assembly of larger constructs from small amounts of shorter DNA fragments (Plesa, Sidore, Lubock, Zhang, & Kosuri, 2018). In this method, the oligos required for a given construct are designed with a unique barcode on the terminus which specifically hybridizes with a complementary barcoded attached to a bead from a complex pool of oligonucleotides. The bead mixture is then emulsified into picoliter-sized droplets containing a Type IIs restriction endonuclease (RE), dNTPs, and a thermostable DNA polymerase. The oligonucleotides are released from the bead by the Type II RE and then assembled by PCA through thermal cycling of the emulsion. Using this method, thousands of specific constructs can be assembled in a single emulsion tube depending upon the number uniquely barcoded beads.
- Ligase Cycling Assembly (LCA) is a method to assemble larger DNA constructs from shorter oligonucleotides or double-stranded DNA fragments (de Kok et al., 2014). LCA is an efficient method for assembling constructs between 500 and 10,000 base pairs in length. LCA assembly uses shorter, single-stranded bridging oligonucleotides that are complementary to the termini of adjacent DNA fragments that are to be joined using a thermostable ligase. Like PCA, LCA



utilizes multiple temperature cycling to denature, re-anneal, and then ligate the fragments to assemble the larger DNA construct, and can be performed in individual tubes or multiplexed using microtiter well plates.

Gibson Assembly is a method to assemble larger DNA constructs from shorter oligonucleotides or double-stranded DNA fragments (Gibson et al., 2009). Gibson assembly is an efficient method for assembling constructs up to many tens of kilobase-pairs in length. This method, which is isothermal, utilizes up to 15 double-stranded DNA fragments having around 20 to 40 base pair overlaps with the adjacent DNA fragments. The DNA fragments are first incubated with 5' to 3' exonuclease, resulting in single-stranded regions on the adjacent DNA fragments that can anneal in a base pair-specific manner. The gaps are then filled in with a DNA polymerase and the final nicks closed with a DNA ligase. This method can be performed in individual tubes or multiplexed using microtiter well plates.

Importantly, the final fidelity (error rate) of the assembled constructs using the above methods are at the mercy of the quality of the input oligonucleotides. These methods usually incorporate some type of error reduction or correction methods which include removing errored duplexes (mismatches and insertions) with the MutS protein after denaturation and reannealing of the construct, or degradation of the error containing DNA using T7 or CEL endonuclease. (For review please see: Ma, S., Saaem, I., & Tian, J. (2012). Error correction in gene synthesis technology. *Trends in Biotechnology*, 30(3), 147–154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tibtech.2011.10.002)

[Breakthrough Capability 1]: Predictive design of DNA sequences for improved assembly of longer, more information-rich DNA fragments.

- 2 years: Coupled design of DNA sequences to optimize nucleotide composition to support synthesis, while maintaining genetic system function.
 - [Bottleneck]: Many genetic systems contain polymeric sequences, long repeats, and non-canonical DNA structures that inhibit the assembly process.
 - [Potential Solution]: Genetic systems can be rationally designed to eliminate problematic sequence elements, while maintaining their function, thus reducing their "synthesis complexity".
 - [Potential Solution]: Toolboxes of highly non-repetitive genetic parts can be designed and characterized to enable design of non-repetitive genetic systems.
- 5 years: Incorporate machine learning to identify poorly-understood problematic sequences and process conditions.
 - [Bottleneck]: The complete list of sequence elements that inhibit DNA assembly is not fully known and the process conditions leading to undesired byproducts are not well understood.
 - [Potential Solution]: Machine learning algorithms have the ability to identify problematic DNA sequences and undesired process conditions that lead to inefficient DNA assembly.



- 10 years: Design algorithms that identify optimal synthesis strategies for assembling megabase-length genetic systems.
 - [Bottleneck]: The functions of some genetic system components are more strictly reliant on problematic sequences and trade-offs between design-for-function versus design-for-synthesis are likely.
 - [Potential Solution]: Design algorithms can identify regions with problematic sequences and identify optimal strategies for mixing and matching megabase-length assembly strategies accounting for these regions.
- 20 years: Design algorithms for optimal one-pot-assembly of billions of unique genomic/chromosomal variants with defined sequences.
 - [Bottleneck]: Mixtures of oligonucleotides can be used to construct combinatorial libraries of DNA fragments, though assembling those fragment libraries into diversified mega-base genetic systems has not been achieved.
 - [Potential Solution]: Parallel evaluation of sequence design criteria across billions (or trillions) of potential sequence variants can be carried out; as the diversification of libraries increase, the number of sequence variants increases combinatorially.

[Breakthrough Capability 2]: Methods for one-step, simultaneous assembly and sequence-verification of long DNA fragments.

- 2 years: Reliable assembly of 10,000 base pair non-clonal DNA fragments.
 - [Bottleneck]: The availability of high-fidelity long oligonucleotides, the optimization of process conditions, and the presence of problematic sequences.
 - [Potential Solution]: Higher fidelity 100-mer and 200-mer oligonucleotides.
 - [Potential Solution]: Identification of optimal process conditions and removal (by design) of problematic sequence elements.
- 5 years: Reliable assembly and verification of 10,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.
 - [Bottleneck]: Low assembly yields and decoupled sequencing leads to more costly hierarchical processes with higher failure rates.
 - [Potential Solution]: Enzyme-based selection (e.g., via MutS) can eliminate DNA fragments containing errors.
 - [Potential Solution]: Approaches using simultaneous DNA synthesis and sequencing can rapidly sort DNA fragments, excluding fragments with errors (for example, using nanopore-based sequencing and dynamic pore flicking).
- 10 years: Reliable assembly and verification of 100,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.
 - [Bottleneck]: Reliable, low-cost assembly of clonal 10,000 base pair fragments.
 - [Potential Solution]: Higher efficiency, ten-part assemblies using lowercost, clonal 10,000 base pair DNA fragments.
 - [Potential Solution]: Extra long read sequencing for verification of 100,000 base pair fragments (e.g., nanopore sequencing).



- 20 years: Reliable assembly and verification of 1,000,000 to 10,000,000 base pair clonal DNA fragments.
 - [Bottleneck]: Reliable, low-cost assembly of clonal 100,000 base pair fragments.
 - [Potential Solution]: *In vivo*, yeast-mediated assembly of clonal 100,000 base pair fragments into megabase-length genetic systems.
 - [Potential Solution]: Extra long read sequencing for verification of 1,000,000 base pair fragments (e.g., nanopore sequencing).

[Breakthrough Capability 3]: Pipelined synthesis, assembly, and functional testing of engineered genetic systems.

- 2 years: Achieve desired functionalities in lower-fidelity, error-prone genetic systems.
 - [Bottleneck]: Unpredictable relationship between synthesis and assembly errors versus undesired functional outcomes.
 - [Potential Solution]: Elimination of problematic sequences via rational design and incorporation of robust, mutation-invariant design into genetic systems.
 - [Potential Solution]: Routine application of low-cost -omics technologies to verify the functions of genetic systems (e.g., DNA-Seq, RNA-Seq, Ribo-Seq, and metabolomics).
- 5 years: Achieve reliable Design-for-Testing in engineered genetic systems.
 - [Bottleneck]: Costly to assay diverse genetic functions to verify desired behaviors.
 - [Potential Solution]: Synthesized and assembled genetic systems can directly incorporate a suite of sensors and genetic circuits for self-testing of genetic system function; sensor-circuit outputs could be tailored for desired high-throughput assays, including surface display, Flow-Seq, and RNA-Seq.
- 10 years: Achieve readily-swappable modules within large genetic systems.
 - [Bottleneck]: Synthesis of megabase-length genetic systems may contain commonly used and re-used genetic modules.
 - [Potential Solution]: Previously synthesized and assembled genetic modules (of more than 100,000 base pair fragments) can be re-used in downstream processes and models can be developed to predict intermodule interactions and overall system function.
- 20 years: Achieve one-month Design-to-Test cycles for megabase-length genetic systems.
 - [Bottleneck]: Design algorithms, synthesis chemistries, assembly techniques, simultaneous sequencing, and functional testing must be seamlessly integrated within a commercially viable suite of services with fast turnaround times.
 - [Potential Solution]: A combination of cooperative horizontal service providers and well-integrated vertical service providers operating within a healthy commercial ecosystem.

Engineering Biology: A Research Roadmap for the Next-Generation Bioeconomy

Technical Themes - Gene Editing, Synthesis, and Assembly



Goal 3: Precision genome editing at multiple sites simultaneously with no off-target effects.

[Current State-of-the-Art]: A variety of current tools can be used for DNA sequence edits and for non-editing-based genome engineering including gene regulation and chromatin engineering. Transcription activator-like effector nucleases (TALEN)-based or clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR)-based genome engineering techniques introduce site-specific nicks or double-stranded breaks, which are then repaired using natural repair pathway (Doudna & Charpentier, 2014). Additional state-of-the-art editing technologies include adeno-associated virus (AAV)-mediated homologous recombination and meganuclease activity. With CRISPR and TALEN technologies, up to six distinct sites, and up to 15,000 identical sites, have been targeted simultaneously, with efficiencies ranging from 2% to 90%. Gene regulation is achieved through site-specific DNA-binding proteins (zinc-finger proteins, transcription activator-like effectors, and Cas proteins), which fuse to gene regulatory domains to carry out activation or repression of desired genes. In these cases, up to six distinct genes have been targeted for regulation, with repression magnitudes up to 300-fold (knockdown) and activation magnitudes up to 20-fold (knock-up) (L. A. Gilbert et al., 2013; Qi et al., 2013).

[Breakthrough Capability 1]: Ability to reliably create any precise, defined edit(s) (single nucleotide polymorphisms or gene replacement) with no unintended editing in any organism, with edits ranging from a single base change to the insertion of entire pathways.

- 2 years: Ability to generate any defined single base pair change in model organisms.
 - [Bottleneck]: Performance of current editing technology and known-unknowns (e.g., chromatin, double-stranded break repair) and unknown-unknowns regarding basic biology.
 - [Potential Solution]: Improved base editing enzymes capable of catalyzing all possible nucleotide transitions.
 - [Potential Solution]: Engineered nucleases and recombinases to control repair of double-stranded breaks using either non-homologous endjoining or homologous recombination.
- 5 years: High-efficiency editing (beyond 90%) across the genome with no offtarget activity.
 - [Bottleneck]: A better understanding of canonical protospacer adjacent motif (PAM) specificities, non-canonical R-loop formation, types of double-stranded breaks, the effects of DNA supercoiling, and the double-strand DNA repair pathway mechanisms.
 - [Potential Solution]: A quantitative, predictive understanding of the coupled chromatin, editing, and repair interactions.
 - [Potential Solution]: A suite of genome editors covering all possible nucleotide (PAM) specificities.
 - [Potential Solution]: Genome editors with improved on-target and reduced off-target effects.



- [Potential Solution]: Design algorithms for predicting single guide RNA (sgRNA) guide RNA sequences, sgRNA concentrations, and genome editor concentrations to achieve desired on-target activities with minimal off-target activities.
- [Bottleneck]: Need for a better understanding of chromatin effects on editing in higher order systems.
 - [Potential Solution]: Fusion of epigenetic effectors to Cas9.
- 10 years: High-efficiency gene insertion or deletion of moderately large changes (but less than 10 kilobases) via homologous recombination.
 - [Bottleneck]: The ability to manipulate double-stranded DNA break repair at high efficiency in non-model cells.
 - [Potential Solution]: Single-effector base editors that catalyze insertions and deletions with high efficiency.
 - [Potential Solution]: Improving the targeted delivery of DNA repair templates to nuclei in model and non-model organisms.
 - [Potential Solution]: Inducible control of DNA break repair pathways with significantly higher efficiency.
 - [Potential Solution]: Retron-mediated synthesis of DNA repair templates from co-delivered crRNAs, sgRNAs or RNPs.
 - [Bottleneck]: Ability to efficiently deliver large DNA constructs into cells.
 - [Potential Solution]: Expand viral packaging size.
 - [Potential Solution]: Develop and/or enhance non-viral DNA delivery tools and technologies.
- 20 years: Precise parallel editing or regulatory modifications (10 to 1000 modifications) across model and non-model organisms, including plants and animals.
 - [Bottleneck]: Co-expressing many crRNAs or sgRNAs within arrays can trigger genetic instability, due the presence of many repetitive sequences.
 - [Potential Solution]: Toolboxes of highly non-repetitive CRISPR genetic parts can be designed and characterized, enabling the design of manysgRNA arrays that do not trigger genetic instability.

[Breakthrough Capability 2]: Precise, predictable, and tunable control of gene expression for many genes inside diverse cells and organisms across different timescales.

- 2 years: Achieve long-lasting gene repression and activation.
 - [Bottleneck]: Insufficient quantitative understanding of transcriptional regulation, epigenetic mechanisms, and cross-regulatory interactions.
 - [Potential Solution]: Quantitative characterization of additional genome editors with diverse protein fusions for more potent CRISPRa and CRISPRi.
 - [Potential Solution]: Systematic characterization of gene regulatory effects when changing RNP binding site locations, affinities, and RNP-PIC interactions.



- [Potential Solution]: Engineered pioneer transcription factors that can reliably generate desired epigenetic states.
- 5 years: Ability to regulate expression in non-model organisms.
 - [Bottleneck]: A quantitative understanding of promoter-specific, epigeneticspecific, and tissue-specific gene regulatory interactions.
 - [Potential Solution]: Organism- and tissue-specific promoters to express CRISPR components in desired non-model organisms.
 - [Potential Solution]: Organism- and tissue-specific protein fusion domains for potent activation or repression of genes in non-model organisms.
 - [Potential Solution]: Improved delivery and/or expression of CRISPR components into non-model organisms.
- 10 years: Technologies to monitor and manipulate genetic and epigenetic mechanisms controlling tissue-wide and organism-wide expression levels over time.
 - [Bottleneck]: Insufficient methodologies for measuring and quantifying epigenetic, mRNA level, protein level, and metabolite level changes at genome-wide, single-cell resolution with sufficient precision to be relevant to clinical phenotypes.
 - [Potential Solution]: Single-cell epigenetic modification (histone modification, IncRNA, nucleosome position), protein level, and metabolite level determination.
 - [Potential Solution]: Single-cell, primary cell line measurements quantifying epigenetic modifications, protein levels, and metabolite levels, for example, using clinical tissues.
- 20 years: Ability to precisely regulate gene expression in whole-body organisms, including humans, with single-cell resolution using dynamic or static control. This capability excludes germline genome editing.
 - [Bottleneck]: Improved delivery and expression of large genetic constructs in primary cell lines.
 - [Potential Solution]: Coupled transfection, genome editing, and genome repair to insert large genetic constructs into site-specific regions within chromosomes.
 - [Bottleneck]: Poorly understood tissue-specific cell states.
 - [Potential Solution]: Predictive models quantifying relationships between genetic, epigenetic states, and cellular phenotypes.
 - [Potential Solution]: Organ-, tissue-, and site-specific chromatin effectors with predictable/controllable effects on chromatin structure, gene expression, and gene accessibility.



[Breakthrough Capability 3]: Ability to reproducibly deliver editing cargo efficiently and specifically to a given target cells or tissues, and control dosage and timing of the editing machinery.

- 2 years: Improve editors to function without sequence requirements (such as protospacer adjacent motif (PAM) sequences) with activity comparable to 2019 state-of-the-art capabilities.
 - [Bottleneck]: Current editors are large and prone to off-target activity.
 - [Potential Solution]: "Version 2.0" of high-fidelity editors.
 - [Potential Solution]: Smaller editors suitable for enhanced delivery.
 - [Potential Solution]: Regulated editors that are active in a contextdependent fashion (cell type, small molecule regulation, etc.).
- 5 years: Routine use of editors without detectable off-target effects (less than 0.001% off-target editing).
 - [Bottleneck]: Limit of detection for current sequencing technologies.
 - [Potential Solution]: Technology improvement to lower detection limits and achieve more targeted detection.
 - [Potential Solution]: Reliable assays to discover potential off-target sites.
- 10 years: Enhance specificity of delivery modalities for high efficiency (>90% efficient) editing of cells in a defined tissue.
 - [Bottleneck]: Current delivery modalities have low cell-type specificity.
 - [Potential Solution]: Large scale development of virus engineering for tropism/specificity.
 - [Potential Solution]: RNPs engineered with cell-type specificity via receptor interactions, and other modalities.
 - [Bottleneck]: Editing *in vivo* often leads to low efficiency of edits.
 - [Potential Solution]: Enhanced viral delivery with long half-life and low immunogenicity (likely needed for every organism of interest, including plant viruses and animal viruses).
 - [Potential Solution]: Viruses with large capacity (up-to or greater than 10 kilobase capacity) needed to deliver editor, guide RNAs, and any donor DNA molecule.
 - [Potential Solution]: Engineered effector complexes (such as RNPs) that can be delivered directly *in vivo* and maintain activity.
- 20 years: Quantitative, specific, and multiplexed editing of any site, in any cell, in any organism.
 - [Bottleneck]: Specificity, efficiency, genetic stability, and off-target effects all pose challenges.
 - [Potential Solution]: Continued improvement of delivery vectors for plants, non-model animals, and other organisms.
 - [Potential Solution]: Development of toolboxes of non-repetitive CRISPR components to enable highly-multiplexed editing without triggering genetic instability.



 [Potential Solution]: Tools for editing in humans and animals for therapeutics, specifically those that overcome or mask the immune response.



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