



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ADENOVIRUS-VECTORED IMMUNOCONTRACEPTION IN RAT MODEL

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By

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

ADENOVIRUS-VECTORED IMMUNOCONTRACEPTION IN RAT MODEL

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April 2012

Chairman : Associate Professor Zeenathul Allaudin Nazariah, PhD

Faculty : Veterinary Medicine

The rat is an invasive threat to human health, agriculture and environment. Current control methods such as trapping, poisoning and by biological means are less than satisfactory to bring the growing population under control. As such, reproductive control by immunocontraceptive technique would be a more effective method for pest management. Immunocontraceptive vaccine prevents conception by stimulating the production of antibodies that bionutralize gamete or hormone antigen and block to fertility. Conventional booster vaccine requires recapturing of the target animal and not practical in wild. Therefore, a virus-vectored immunocontraceptive vaccine is an alternative delivery system for wild pest population control. Virus-based immunocontraceptive vaccine offers several advantages that enable natural self

spreading through the pest population which is suitable for pest with high population densities and high reproductive potential. The critical involvement of the female gamete protein zona pellucida 3 (ZP3) in the fertilization process has been well documented. Therefore, an adenovirus (Ad) vector encoding rat ZP3 (rZP3) protein has been constructed. Briefly, rZP3 gene was first cloned into the shuttle vector, pSCMV (pSCMV-rZP3) followed by subsequent cloning into Ad vector (rec pAd-rZP3). Restriction enzyme analysis and PCR detection gave a distinct 1.3 kb rZP3 band. The rec pAd-rZP3 was then further transfected into the human embryonic kidney (HEK-293A) complementary cell to produce infectious replication-defective recombinant adenovirus-rZP3 (rec Ad-rZP3). Transfected HEK-293A cells showed cytopathic effect (CPE) at 12 days post infection (p.i). It was then followed by *in vitro* and *in vivo* protein expression assessment. The *in vitro* expression of rZP3 gene produced was screened for the presence of rZP3 gene and gene expression using PCR and reverse transcriptase PCR (RT-PCR) that gave a distinct 1.3 kbp band. The expression of rZP3 was further confirmed by SDS-PAGE and western blot analysis. High-leveled expression of rZP3 was achieved which gave an ~75kDa protein band. Furthermore, immunofluorescence staining of HEK-293A cells infected with rec Ad-rZP3 emitted strong fluorescence at the nucleus of the cells. This showed that the rZP3 gene is being expressed *in vitro*. The efficacy of the rec Ad-rZP3 construct was evaluated in rat model. Vaccination of laboratory rats with rec Ad-rZP3 resulted in reduction of fertility up to 30%, although statistically still below significant level ($p>0.05$). Histological examination of the treated rats demonstrated a normal follicular development. ELISA results showed that rats treated with rec Ad-rZP3 raised low anti-rZP3 antibody titers. Rat ZP3 protein was successfully expressed *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Immunization with rec Ad-rZP3 has shown

incomplete suppression of fertility in the target. This may be due to the vector triggering strong innate immunity which leads to the elicitation of humoral and cellular immune response that results in suppression of rZP3 protein expression. Another reason may be due to the low antibody titers produced, as it has been demonstrated that high titer of antibody was directly associated with the ability to induce infertility. As infertility is associated with ZP3 antibodies, enhancing the antibody response of rec Ad-rZP3 construct would be beneficial. However, this study serves as an important platform to transfer the rZP3 gene into a host specific viral immunocontraceptive vaccine delivery vector such as rat cytomegalovirus (RCMV).

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

VEKTOR ADENOVIRUS IMUNOKONTRASEPSI DALAM MODEL TIKUS

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Tikus merupakan haiwan pengancam kesihatan manusia, pertanian dan alam sekitar. Kaedah pengawalan masa kini seperti memerangkap, keracunan dan cara biologi adalah kurang memuaskan untuk mengawal populasi yang semakin meningkat. Oleh itu, kawalan pembiakan menggunakan teknik imunokontraseptif akan menjadi satu kaedah yang lebih berkesan untuk pengurusan haiwan perosak. Vaksin imunokontraseptif merangsang penghasilan antibodi yang meneutralkan antigen gamet atau hormon bagi menghalang penghamilan. Vaksin berganda konvensional memerlukan penangkapan semula haiwan sasaran dan tidak praktikal bagi hidupan liar. Oleh yang demikian, virus vektor vaksin pencegah penghamilan merupakan sistem alternatif untuk mengawal populasi perosak liar. Vaksin imunokontraseptif berasaskan virus menawarkan beberapa

kelebihan yang membolehkan merebak secara semulajadi melalui populasi perosak yang sesuai untuk haiwan perosak dengan kepadatan populasi dan potensi pembiakan yang tinggi. Penglibatan kritikal gamet perempuan protein zona pelusida 3 (ZP3) dalam proses persenyawaan telah didokumentasikan dengan luas. Oleh itu, adenovirus (Ad) vektor mengkodkan gen tikus ZP3 (*rZP3*) telah dibangunkan. Secara ringkas, gen *rZP3* diklonkan ke dalam vektor shuttle, *pSCMV* (*pSCMV-rZP3*) diikuti oleh pengklonan berikutnya ke dalam vektor Ad (*rec pAd-rZP3*). Analisis sekatan enzim dan pengesanan PCR memberikan 1.3 kb jalur *rZP3* yang tersendiri. Rekombinan *pAd-rZP3* kemudiannya dijangkitkan kepada sel pelengkap buah pinggang embrio manusia (*HEK-293A*) untuk menghasilkan rekombinan adenovirus-*rZP3* (*rec Ad-rZP3*) yang berjangkit tidak mampu bereplikasi. Sel *HEK-293A* yang dijangkiti menunjukkan kesan sitopatik (*CPE*) pada 12 hari selepas jangkitan (p.i). Ia kemudian diikuti oleh penilaian ekspresi protein secara *in vitro* dan *in vivo*. Ekspresi gen *rZP3* yang dihasilkan secara *in vitro* telah disaring untuk kehadiran gen *rZP3* dan ekspresi gen menggunakan PCR dan PCR transkrip berbalik (*RT-PCR*) yang memberikan 1.3 kb jalur tersendiri. Ekspresi gen *rZP3* telah disahkan selanjutnya melalui *SDS-PAGE* dan *Western blot* analisis. Gen *rZP3* diekspres pada paras yang tinggi yang memberikan satu jalur protein bersaiz ~75kDa. Tambahan pula, sel-sel *HEK-293A* yang dijangkiti dengan *rec Ad-rZP3* melalui pewarnaan imunopendafluor memancarkan pendarfluor yang kuat di nukleus sel-sel. Ini menunjukkan bahawa gen *rZP3* telah diekspreskan secara *in vitro*. Keberkesanan *rec Ad-rZP3* telah dinilai pada model tikus. Vaksinasi dengan *rec Ad-rZP3* mampu menyebabkan pengurangan kesuburan sehingga 30%, walaupun statistik masih di bawah paras yang ketara ($p>0.05$). Pemeriksaan histologi tikus-tikus yang menerima rawatan *rec Ad-rZP3* menunjukkan perkembangan folikel yang normal.

Keputusan *ELISA* menunjukkan bahawa tikus yang dirawat dengan *rec Ad-rZP3* memperoleh titer antibodi anti-*rZP3* yang rendah. Protein *rZP3* telah berjaya diekspreskan secara *in vitro* dan *in vivo*. Imunosasi menggunakan *Rec Ad-rZP3* telah menunjukkan pengawalan kesuburan yang tidak lengkap pada sasaran. Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh vektor mencetuskan imuniti semula jadi yang kuat yang seterusnya merangsangkan imun humoral dan selular yang menyebabkan penekanan ekspresi protein *rZP3*. Sebab lain yang mungkin ialah titer antibodi yang rendah dihasilkan, dimana ia telah ditunjukkan bahawa titer antibodi yang tinggi adalah dikaitkan secara langsung dengan keupayaan untuk mendorong kemandulan. Sebagai kemandulan adalah dikaitkan dengan *ZP3* antibodi, meningkatkan tindak balas antibodi konstruk *rec Ad-rZP3* akan mendatangkan manfaat. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian ini berfungsi sebagai penanda aras yang penting untuk memindahkan gen *rZP3* ke perumah khusus imunokontraseptif virus vektor seperti virus sitomegalo tikus (*RCMV*).

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on **6th April 2012** to conduct the final examination of Lo Sewn Cen on her thesis entitled “**Adenovirus-Vectored Immunocontraception in Rat Model**” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

The logo of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a red and white stylized design with a book in the center. The letters 'UPM' are prominently displayed in red at the top left of the shield.

LO SEWN CEN

Date: 06 April 2012

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(His) ₆ -rZP3	Yeast-rZP3 Fusion Protein
Ad	Adenovirus
Ad2	Adenovirus Serotype 2
Ad5	Adenovirus Serotype 5
Ad5E3 ⁻	E3-deleted Ad5
AMH	Anti-Mullerian Hormone
APCs	Antigen Presenting Cells
BMGY	Buffered Glycerol-complex Medium
BMMY	Buffered Methanol-complex Medium
BMP15	Bone Morphogenetic Factor 15
bmZP1	Bonnet Monkey Zona Pellucida 1
bmZP3	Bonnet Monkey Zona Pellucida 3
BSA	Bovine Serum Albumin
BVDV	Bovine Viral Diarrhea Virus
CAR	Coxsackievirus and Adenovirus Receptor
cDNA	Complementary Deoxyribonucleic Acid
CFA	Complete Freund's Adjuvant
CFCS	Consensus Furin Cleavage -site
CHO	Chinese Hamster Ovary Cells
CHV	Canine Herpesvirus
CHV-BAC	Canine Herpesvirus-Bacterial Artificial Chromosome
CPE	Cytopathic Effect
CTL	Cytotoxic T-lymphocytes
Cx	Connexins
DAB	3'-3' Diaminobenzidine

DMEM	Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DNase	Deoxyribonuclease
DT	Diphtheria Toxoid
dZP3	Dog Zona Pellucida 3
E1	Early Region 1
E2	Early Region 2
E3	Early Region 3
E4	Early Region 4
EDTA	Ethylene Diamine Tetra-Acetate
ELISA	Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay
FA-1	Fertilisation Antigen-1
FBS	Foetal Bovine Serum
FIG- α	Factor In the Germline, Alpha
FSH	Follicle Stimulating Hormone
fZP3	Fox Zona Pellucida 3
fZPC	Fox Zona Pellucida C
GDF9	Growth Differentiation Factor 9
GFP	Green Fluorescence Protein
GnRH	Gonadotrophin Releasing Hormone
GonaCon-B TM	GnRH-Blue Protein Hemocyanin
GonaCon TM	GnRH Peptide-KLH
GPI	Glycosyl Phosphatidylinositol
H&E	Hematoxylin & Eosin
hAd	Human Adenovirus
hCG	Human Chorionic Gonadotropin
HCMV	Human Cytomegalovirus

HEK-293A	Human Embryonic Kidney Cells
HIS-rZP3	Hyperimmune Serum against rZP3
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
hZP2	Human Zona Pellucida 2
hZP3	Human Zona Pellucida 3
i.m	Intramuscular
i.p	Intraperitoneal
IFA	Incomplete Freud's Adjuvant
ITR	Inverted Terminal Repeats
IVF	<i>In Vitro</i> Fertilization
KLH	Keyhole Limpet Hemacyanin
L1-5	Late Region 1 to 5
LB	Luria Bertani
LDH-C ₄	Lactate Dehydrogenase C ₄
LF2000	Lipofectamine 2000
LH	Luteinizing Hormone
m.u.	Map Unit
mAb	Monoclonal Antibodies
MCMV	Murine Cytomegalovirus
MHCI	Major Histocompatibility Complex I
MHCII	Major Histocompatibility Complex II
MII	Metaphase II
mRNA	Messenger Ribonucleic Acid
mstZP3	Marmoset Zona Pellucida 3
MV-ZPB	Myxoma Virus Encoding Rabbit Zona Pellucida B
mZP3	Mouse Zona Pellucida 3
NP	Nucleoprotein

OTC	Ornithine Transcarbamylase
p.i.	Post Infection
P1	Program 1
P2	Program 2
PBS	Phosphate Buffer Saline
PBST	Phosphate Buffer Saline Tween
PEG8000	Polyethylene Glycol 8000
Pfu	Plaque Forming Unit
PH-20	Sperm Surface Protein
pSCMV	Shuttle Vector
pSCMV-rZP3	Recombinant Shuttle Plasmid
PVDF	Polyvinylidene Difluoride
pZP	Porcine Zona Pellucida
pZP3	Porcine Zona Pellucida 3
pZPC	Porcine Zona Pellucida C
RCMV	Rat Cytomegalovirus
rec Ad-rZP3	Recombinant Adenovirus rZP3
rec pAd-rZP3	Recombinant rZP3 Adenovirus Plasmid
REF	Rat Embryonic Fibroblast Cells
RNA	Ribonucleic Acid
RNase	Ribonuclease
RT-PCR	Reversed-Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction
rZP3	Rat Zona Pellucida 3
SARS-CoV	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus
SDS-PAGE	Sodium Dodecyl Sulphate-polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis
SIV	Simian Immunodeficiency Virus
SOC	Super Optimal Broth with Catabolite Repression

SP10	Sperm Protein 10
TA	Tibialis Anterior
TCID ₅₀	Tissue Culture Infectious Dose 50
TE	Tris-EDTA
TGF- β	Transforming Growth Factor β
<i>tk</i>	Thymidine Kinase
TNF	Tumor Necrosis Factor
TP	Terminal Protein
TPL	Tripartite Leader
TT	Tetanus Toxoid
VSV	Vesicular Stomatitis Virus
wtAd5	Wild Type Ad5
YNB	Yeast Nitrogen Base
YPD	Yeast Extract Peptone Dextrose Medium
ZP	Zona Pellucida
ZP1	Zona Pellucida 1
ZP2	Zona Pellucida 2
ZP3	Zona Pellucida 3
α^v -integrins	Alpha-v-Integrins

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rats have become world major pests with huge economic impact. They are important reservoirs of numerous diseases such as plaque, leptospirosis, salmonellosis (food poisoning), murine typhus and rat bite fever. They consume stored food and grain and damage the storage structures and containers. Spillage, spoilage or contamination due to rat gnawing caused condemnation or rejection of crop shipments. In Indonesia, they annually consume enough rice to feed 20 million people sufficiently (Ylönen, 2001). Similar threats from this pest species occur in many Southeast Asian and African countries that also have severe problems in producing sufficient food. In close association with people in dense settlements, they cause problems by gnawing on electrical wiring resulting in fires and wooden structures such as doors, ledges and in wall materials. They cause a devastating impact on many native ecosystems; for example by preying on the eggs or young wild birds thus become important concerns in the recovery of endangered species especially in island environments (Dunlevy *et al.*, 2000).

Current control methods for wild rats population involve trapping, poisoning and biological means. Trapping generally is not practical for managing large infestations or removing entire populations over extensive areas. It is very labor intensive and requires skill to be used effectively. Most measures to control rats depend on the application of poison. Although rodenticides have the potential for rapid knock down of the pest population but success often declines with repeated applications because animals that

survive quickly learn to avoid the bait. The naturally cautious behavior of rats helps them to survive poisoning campaigns. This method of population control can cause negative side effects through primary and secondary poisoning of non-target species.

Biological control or the introduction of exotic vertebrate predators into new areas for pest control purposes has never been successfully demonstrated and, in some cases, has resulted in unanticipated, calamitous ecological effects. During the late 1800s, the small Indian mongoose (*Herpestes javanicus*) was introduced into both the West Indies and Hawaii to control rats populations in sugarcane fields. Although this predator survives in some areas on a diet composed mainly of rats, the introductions failed to achieve the desired result of reducing rats populations in sugarcane fields (Baldwin *et al.*, 1952; Kami, 1964). In both the West Indies and Hawaii, mongooses have severely impacted ground-nesting bird species by preying on their eggs and young (Ebenhard, 1988). In some areas in the Caribbean, the species has become a reservoir for rabies. The predators exert a controlling influence on their prey only under rare circumstances, such as when prey populations are already at low densities and alternative prey are scarce. More commonly, the presence of high rodent or other prey populations attracts and sustains predators which relocate when prey animals become more difficult to find and capture. Thus, except under rare conditions, predators do not hunt their prey to the low levels required for effective management of rodent damage. There are also dangers of the introduced predators becoming pests themselves.

Biological rodenticide using the *Sarcocystis singaporensis*, has been reported (Jäkel *et al.*, 1999; Jäkel *et al.*, 2006; Wood, 1985; Wood and Fee, 2003). This protozoan reproduces in the intestine of reticulated pythons and is transmitted via faeces to rats. Rats eat coprophagic invertebrates which carry sporocysts or drink water from streams in which reticulated pythons preferably defecate. It causes a debilitating muscle infection and a fatal pneumonia to rats (Wood, 1985; Zaman and Colley, 1975). However, the use of disease and parasites has only temporary effects on the population and rats can easily adopt and become resistant.

Reproductive control would seem to be a more effective method for pest animal management. The rapid reproductive potential of rats often enables them to rapidly overcome other population reduction measures. Three basic available techniques include surgical sterilization, hormonal contraception and immunocontraception (Artois, 1997; Cowan and Tyndale-Biscoe, 1997; Sinclair, 1997). However, it is costly and impractical to conduct surgical sterilization for free ranging wild pest population. Hormonal contraception using highly conserved reproductive steroid sex hormones such as gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH), follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH) to disrupt the estrus cycle is not species-specific. It often leads to undesirable side effects that raise ethical issues, such as premature termination of pregnancies or damage to non-reproductive tissues (Delves, 2004; Ferro and Mordini, 2004; Talwar, 1997), alterations in sexual and social behavior in the target species (Tuytens and Macdonald, 1998; Tyndale-Biscoe, 1994). Therefore, immunocontraception remains an attractive alternative for fertility control. It aims to trick the host's immune system into generating an immune reaction against cells or

molecules that are essential for reproduction, such as hormones (e.g. FSH and LH) or against the gamete themselves. If successful, this approach will effectively reduce the rat population density. It is a non-lethal and more humane alternative with the potential to provide long-lasting control.

The first step in the development of a contraceptive vaccine is selecting a potential agent to deliver the vaccine and the second step to identify the antigen to use in the vaccine. Conventional vaccination of anaesthetized individuals which require frequent repetitive doses works well for large vertebrates. For pest with high population densities and high reproductive potential, the most effective distribution of the immunocontraceptive agent is via a virus or some other contagious agent that spreads naturally through the pest population. In a previous study, RCMV was identified as a suitable vector to carry the vaccine (Lai *et al.*, 1998). RCMV is a promising vector for fertility associated gene due to its narrow host range and the capability of establishing latent and persistent infections. However, RCMV vector construction is still ongoing by our group.

Currently, recombinant Ad vectors have become one of the most useful gene-delivery vehicles in the study of gene transfer *in vitro*, vaccination *in vivo*, and gene therapy (Brun *et al.*, 2008; Vanniasinkam and Ertl, 2005; Verma and Weitzman, 2005; Xing *et al.*, 2005). Several reasons have made Ad vectors an attractive candidate for gene expression such as well characterized viral genome and high titers virus can be produced. They are stable and can be lyophilized and administered through various routes. They express transgenes to high levels, activate the innate immune system, and stimulate dendritic cell maturation (Morelli *et al.*, 2000; Rea *et al.*, 1999; Tan *et al.*,

2005) leading to elicitation of strong immune responses. Therefore, Ad vector was chosen to serve as a model laboratory system for examining the potential of viral-based immunocontraception for managing wild rat populations before engineering the RCMV-vectored immunocontraceptive vaccine.

Target for immunocontraception can be grouped into three main categories, targeting: a) gamete production (GnRH); b) targeting gamete function (sperm or oocyte); c) gamete outcome (hCG). Targeting gamete function was adopted because gamete proteins are tissue-specific and non-circulatory therefore complications arising from an immune complex formation should not happen. It was reported that 70% of vasectomized men produce anti sperm antibodies and up to 30% of cases of human infertility is associated with the production of anti sperm antibodies in an infertile couple (Govind *et al.*, 2001; Lo *et al.*, 2011; Scarselli *et al.*, 1973; Witkin and David, 1986). Autoantibodies against the egg protein, zona pellucida (ZP) have also been reported in infertile patients that otherwise appear healthy (Buckshee and Mhaskar, 1985; Kamada *et al.*, 1992; Nishimoto *et al.*, 1980). This indicates that an immunological block to fertility is prevalent in human situation without side effects. Egg proteins is preference for this study because the ova surfaces consist of only three proteins and their individual functions are well understood compared to sperm antigens.

ZP is an extracellular glycoprotein matrix that surrounds the oocyte. It comprises three sulfated glycoproteins, zona pellucida 1 (ZP1), zona pellucida 2 (ZP2) and zona pellucida (ZP3) (Dunbar *et al.*, 1994; McLeskey *et al.*, 1997; Prasad *et al.*, 2000), which are expressed by the developing oocyte and are unique to the ovary (Epifano *et al.*,

1995; Philpott *et al.*, 1987). ZP plays a critical role during mammalian fertilization, which includes species-specific recognition and binding of spermatozoa to the oocyte, induction of acrosome-reaction, prevention of polyspermy and providing protection to the pre-implanted blastocyst. The crucial role of tissue specific ZP in mammalian fertilization has made it an ideal target antigen for the development of an immunocontraceptive vaccine.

The use of ZP in the development of immunocontraceptive vaccine has been widely documented. Porcine zona pellucida (pZP) has been extensively used in these studies due to its easy accessibility at slaughterhouses. Immunization with pZP has resulted in significant zona antibody titers and inhibition of fertility in a number of species including rabbits (Skinner *et al.*, 1984; Wood *et al.*, 1981), primates (Bagavant *et al.*, 1994; Paterson *et al.*, 1992), horses (Kirkpatrick and Turner, 2008; Turner Jr *et al.*, 2002), hamsters (Hasegawa *et al.*, 1992), elephant (Perdock *et al.*, 2008) and deer (Curtis *et al.*, 2007). Unfortunately, rats and mice inoculated with whole pZP remained fertile (Sacco *et al.*, 1981; Wood *et al.*, 1981). Hence, 'self' ZP is required to suppress fertility in these animals.

As such, hypothetically, a recombinant adenovirus encoding rZP3 gene express rZP3 protein *in vitro* and *in vivo*. The infected rat will raise antibodies against the self ZP3 protein of oocytes, thus providing an immunocontraceptive barrier to fertility.

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) to construct and characterize a recombinant adenovirus immunocontraceptive vaccine expressing rat zona pellucida 3 protein.
- 2) to evaluate the *in vitro* expression of the recombinant adenovirus expressing rat zona pellucida 3 (rec Ad-rZP3) protein.
- 3) to evaluate the immunocontraceptive efficacy of the recombinant adenovirus expressing rat zona pellucida 3 protein in rat model.

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