

**METABOLIC ENGINEERING OF *SACCHAROMYCES*
CEREVISIAE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF
BENZYLISOQUINOLINE ALKALOIDS**

Thesis by
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In partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California
2009
(Defended October 28, 2008)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis work was a long and arduous journey which has consumed the past five years of my life and I have many people to thank. First I would like to thank my research advisor Christina Smolke for taking me on as one of her first students. When I started in the lab, I did not even know how to use a pipette or basic principles of molecular biology. Christina gave us our first lessons in cloning but later allowed us the freedom to direct much of our own research work.

I also have to thank my colleagues in the lab that have become some of my best friends. In particular, Stephanie Culler is an amazing scientist and one of the most genuine people I have ever met. Her work ethic is unparalleled and she has kept me company during many late nights and weekends. I also have to acknowledge Dr. Kevin Hoff who has always taken the time to dwell on others' research problems, and more often than not, come up with some valuable suggestions if not solutions. Chase Beisel is another lab member who is always willing to lend an ear, and it has been a pleasure getting to know both him and his lovely wife Amy. Finally, I have to thank Michael Siddiqui for being brave enough to take on this challenging project so that my work building the BIA pathway is not lost. Michael also assisted me with some of the upstream pathway experiments presented here.

For never-ending support and unconditional love, I have to thank my parents Barbara and Terry Hawkins. They have always been incredible role models without even trying. And lastly, I have to recognize Branden Ray who has been my rock for the past

year. When I doubt myself, he reassures me; when my enthusiasm is lost, he helps me find it; and when I have a breakthrough, he is the first person I run to tell.

ABSTRACT

The engineering of synthetic metabolic pathways in microbial hosts holds much promise for the synthesis of new chemicals and materials, including a variety of natural and non-natural products. The benzyloisoquinoline alkaloids (BIAs) represent a large and structurally diverse class of plant secondary metabolites that exhibit a broad range of pharmacological activities. The reconstitution of a BIA biosynthetic pathway in an engineered microbial host offers several advantages over isolation from plants, including the targeted production of key intermediate molecules, rapid biomass accumulation, ease of purification, and the availability of genetic tools for strain engineering and pathway optimization.

Here we describe the development of a synthetic BIA pathway in an engineered yeast host which incorporates heterologous enzymes from a variety of organisms. The BIA backbone is derived from two molecules of tyrosine and is assembled through a heterologous pathway comprising enzymatic activities from plants, bacteria, and humans. Simultaneous efforts have focused on the downstream portion of this pathway to convert a commercially available substrate to the major branch point intermediate reticuline. By synthesizing both stereoisomers of reticuline from a racemic substrate, we have demonstrated production of BIA metabolites along the diversified sanguinarine/berberine and morphinan branches. Further optimization, scale-up, and a combination of bioconversions and chemical synthesis will potentially revolutionize drug discovery and manufacturing of these compounds.

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