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A human gut microbial gene catalogue established by metagenomic sequencing

Junjie Qin[1,24], Ruiqiang Li[1,24], Jeroen Raes[2,3], Manimozhiyan Arumugam[2], Kristoffer Solvsten Burgdorf[4], Chaysavanh Manichanh[5], Trine Nielsen[4], Nicolas Pons[6], Florence Levenez[6], Takuji Yamada[2], Daniel R. Mende[2], Junhua Li[1,7], Junming Xu[1], Shaochuan Li[1], Dongfang Li[1,8], Jianjun Cao[1], Bo Wang[1], Huiqing Liang[1], Huisong Zheng[1], Yinlong Xie[1,7], Julien Tap[6], Patricia Lepage[6], Marcelo Bertalan[9], Jean-Michel Batto[6], Torben Hansen[4], Denis Le Paslier[10], Allan Linneberg[11], H. Bjørn Nielsen[9], Eric Pelletier[10], Pierre Renault[6], Thomas Sicheritz-Ponten[9], Keith Turner[12], Hongmei Zhu[1], Chang Yu[1], Shengting Li[1], Min Jian[1], Yan Zhou[1], Yingrui Li[1], Xiuqing Zhang[1], Songgang Li[1], Nan Qin[1], Huanming Yang[1], Jian Wang[1], Søren Brunak[9], Joel Doré[6], Francisco Guarner[5], Karsten Kristiansen[13], Oluf Pedersen[4,14], Julian Parkhill[12], Jean Weissenbach[10], MetaHIT Consortium, Peer Bork[2], S. Dusko Ehrlich[6] & Jun Wang[1,13]

1. BGI-Shenzhen, Shenzhen 518083, China
2. European Molecular Biology Laboratory, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
3. VIB—Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
4. Hagedorn Research Institute, DK 2820 Copenhagen, Denmark
5. Hospital Universitari Val d'Hebron, Ciberehd, 08035 Barcelona, Spain
6. Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, 78350 Jouy en Josas, France
7. School of Software Engineering, South China University of Technology, Guangzhou 510641, China
8. Genome Research Institute, Shenzhen University Medical School, Shenzhen 518000, China
9. Center for Biological Sequence Analysis, Technical University of Denmark, DK-2800 Kongens Lyngby, Denmark
10. Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, Genoscope, 91000 Evry, France
11. Research Center for Prevention and Health, DK-2600 Glostrup, Denmark
12. The Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, Hinxton, Cambridge CB10 1SA, UK
13. Department of Biology, University of Copenhagen, DK-2200 Copenhagen, Denmark
14. Institute of Biomedical Sciences, University of Copenhagen & Faculty of Health Science, University of Aarhus, 8000 Aarhus, Denmark
15. Hospital Universitari Val d'Hebron, Ciberehd, 08035 Barcelona, Spain.
16. Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, Genoscope, 91000 Evry, France.
17. Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, 78350 Jouy en Josas, France.
18. Danone Research, 91120 Palaiseau, France.
19. UCB Pharma SA, 28046 Madrid, Spain.
20. Center for Biological Sequence Analysis, Technical University of Denmark, DK-2800 Kongens Lyngby, Denmark.
21. Wageningen Unviersiteit, 6710BA Ede, The Netherlands.
22. Hagedorn Research Institute, DK 2820 Copenhagen, Denmark.
23. Istituto Europeo di Oncologia, 20100 Mila, Italy.
24. These authors contributed equally to this work.
25. Lists of authors and affiliations appear at the end of the paper.

Correspondence to: S. Dusko Ehrlich[6]Jun Wang[1,13] Correspondence and requests for materials should be addressed to Ju.W. (Email: wangj@genomics.org.cn) or S.D.E. (Email: dusko.ehrlich@jouy.inra.fr).

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Abstract

To understand the impact of gut microbes on human health and well-being it is crucial to assess their genetic potential. Here we describe the Illumina-based metagenomic sequencing, assembly and characterization of 3.3 million non-redundant microbial genes, derived from 576.7 gigabases of sequence, from faecal samples of 124 European individuals. The gene set, ~150 times larger than the human gene complement,

contains an overwhelming majority of the prevalent (more frequent) microbial genes of the cohort and probably includes a large proportion of the prevalent human intestinal microbial genes. The genes are largely shared among individuals of the cohort. Over 99% of the genes are bacterial, indicating that the entire cohort harbours between 1,000 and 1,150 prevalent bacterial species and each individual at least 160 such species, which are also largely shared. We define and describe the minimal gut metagenome and the minimal gut bacterial genome in terms of functions present in all individuals and most bacteria, respectively.

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