CORRESPONDENCE

Systematic analysis and nomenclature of mammalian F-box proteins

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Much of the targeted protein ubiquitylation that occurs in eukaryotes is performed by cullin-based E3 ubiquitin ligases, which form a superfamily of modular E3s. The best understood cullin-based E3 is the SCF ubiquitin ligase (Feldman et al. 1997; Skowyra et al. 1997), which is composed of a modular E3 core containing CUL1 and RBX1 (also called ROC1), and a substrate specificity module composed of SKP1 and a member of the F-box family of proteins (Cardozo and Pagano 2004). The CUL1/RBX1 complex functions as a scaffold to assemble the E2 ubiquitin conjugating enzyme with the substrate specificity module (Zheng et al. 2002). CUL1 interacts with RBX1 through its C terminus and with SKP1 through its N terminus. The interaction of F-box proteins with SKP1 occurs through the F-box motif, an ~40-amino acid motif first identified in budding yeast Cdc4p and human cyclin F, the latter giving the name to the entire family (Bai et al. 1996). F-box proteins contain additional protein interaction domains that bind ubiquitylation targets. The overall architecture of SCF complexes is conserved in the superfamily of SCF-like ubiquitin ligases that use cullin proteins as a scaffold. All cullins characterized to date (CUL1–5) are known to interact with RBX1 or RBX2 but use distinct specificity modules, which generally display structural and functional similarities with the SKP1/F-box protein module. For example, CUL2 and CUL5 are known to interact with the SKP1-like protein elongin C, which, in turn, interacts with F-box protein-like specificity factors called BC/SOCS-box proteins (Deshaies 1999; Guardavaccaro and Pagano 2003). In addition, CUL3 interacts with the BTB/POZ family of proteins, which appear to merge the functions of SKP1 and the F-box protein into a single polypeptide (Furukawa et al. 2003; Geyer et al. 2003; Pintard et al. 2003; Xu et al. 2003), with the BTB domain displaying structural relationships with SKP1 (Schulman et al. 2000; Xu et al. 2003). Cul4 forms a complex wherein DDB1/DDB2 and CSA proteins appear to function as substrate specificity modules (Groisman et al. 2003). Thus, the current expectation is that all cullin-containing ligases will share the modular nature of the original SCF family of ligases.

A major strategy employed by the SCF is the use of extended protein families as specificity factors. In 1999, we reported the identification of 47 F-box proteins in mammals (Cenciarelli et al. 1999; Winston et al. 1999). These proteins fell into three major classes, depending on the types of substrate interaction domains identified in addition to the F-box motif. The two largest classes of interaction domains are WD40 repeats (Smith et al. 1999) and leucine-rich repeats (LRRs) (Kobe and Kajava 2001). A third generic class of F-box proteins contained various other types of protein interaction domains or no recognizable domains. These classes of F-box proteins were designated FBWs, FBLs, and FBXs, respectively, followed by a numerical identifier (Cenciarelli et al. 1999; Winston et al. 1999). Paralogous genes in the same species used the same number followed by a letter (a, b, …) representing the individual genes in the paralogous group. The Human Genome Organization (HUGO) Gene Nomenclature Committee adopted a related four-letter gene nomenclature: FBXW, FBXL, and FBXO, respectively, where "O" in FBXO refers to "other" domains. Since this initial work, subsequent efforts, particularly cDNA and genomic sequencing projects, have facilitated the further identification of F-box protein-coding genes. However, the inconsistent use of nomenclature standards has greatly limited the utility of the sequence database. This inconsistency is due in part to the rapid pace of research in this area that has precluded coordination of gene names. A survey of F-box proteins in GenBank revealed several issues: (1) several different F-box protein

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Table 1. *Mammalian F-box proteins*

F-box protein	Revised HUGO gene symbol	Aliases	Human Entrez gene ID	Human location	Mouse accession	% identity	Mouse location	Fly ortholog	Worm ortholog	Other domains (c)
FBXW1 (β-TRCP1)	*BTRC*	Fwd1, FBXW1A	8945	10q24.32	NM 009771	99	19C3	*slmb* (CG3412)	*lin-23* (K10B2.1)	
FBXW2	*FBXW2*	Fwd2, MD6	26190	9q34	NM 013890	98	2B			
FBXW4 (Dactylin)	*SHFM3*	FBXW4	6468	10q24	NM 13907	92	19C3			
FBXW5	*FBXW5*		54461	9q34.3	NM 013908	88	2A3	CG9144		
FBXW7	*FBXW7*	FBXW6, Cdc4, Sel-10, Fbx30	55294	4q31.3	NM 080428	97	3E3.3	*ago* (CG15010)	*sel-10* (F55B12.3)	transmembrane domain in β-isoform
FBXW8	*FBXW8*	Fbx29, FBXO29, Fbw6	26259	12q24.23	NM_172721	71	5F			
FBXW9	*FBXW9*		84261	19p13.2	BC043658.1	64	9		T01E8.4	
FBXW10	*FBXW10*	C17orf1A	10517	17p12	XM 126264.2	62	11B2			
FBXW11 (β-TRCP2)	*FBXW11*	Hos, FBXW1B, BTRC2, Fbx1b	23291	5q35.1	NM 134015	99	11A4	*slmb* (CG3412)	*lin-23* (K10B2.1)	
FBXW12	*FBXW12*	FBXO35	285231	3p21.31						
Fbxw13	*Fbxw13*				NM 177598		9F2			
Fbxw14	*Fbxw14*	Fbx12, Fbxo12			NM 015793		9F2			
Fbxw15	*Fbxw15*				AK087669		9F2			
Fbxw16	*Fbxw16*				AK078661		9F2			
Fbxw17	*Fbxw17*				AAH40428		13A5			
Fbxw18	*Fbxw18*				XM 356193		9F2			
Fbwx19	*Fbxw19*				AK087808		9F2			
FBXL1 (SKP2)	*SKP2*	FBXL1	6502	5p13	NM 013787.1	86	15A2	CG9772		
FBXL2	*FBXL2*	Fbl3	25827	3p22.3	NM 178624.2	95	9F3	CG9003	C02F5.7	
FBXL3	*FBXL3*	Fbl3a, FBLX3A	26224	13q22	AF 176521.1	93	14E2.3			
FBXL4	*FBXL4*	Fbl5	26235	6q16.1	NM 172988.1	93	4A3	CG1839		
FBXL5	*FBXL5*	Fbl4, Fir4	26234	4p15.33	AK085100	88	5B3			
FBXL6	*FBXL6*		26233	8q24.3	NM 013909	75	15			
FBXL7	*FBXL7*	Fbl6	23194	5p15.1	AK129227.1	93	15B1	CG4221		
FBXL8	*FBXL8*		55336	16q22.1	NM 015821	61	8D3			
FBXL10	*FBXL10*		84678	12q24.31	AK129479.1	84	4A5	DG11033		PHD, ZF, Jmjc
FBXL11	*FBXL11*	Lilina, Fbl7	22992	11q13.1	BC057051	90	19A	CG11033		PHD, ZF, Jmjc
FBXL12	*FBXL12*		54850	19p13.2	AF176525.1	93	9A3			
FBXL13	*FBXL13*		222235	7q22.1	NM 177076.2	63	5A3			
FBXL14	*FBXL14*		144699	12p13.33	AK084506.1	100	6F1	*ppa* (CG9952)		
FBXL15	*FBXL15*	FBXO37	79176	10q24.32	NM 133694.1	87	19C3	CG8873		
FBXL16	*FBXL16*	C16orf22	146330	16p13.3	XM 128530.4	81	17A3.3	CG32085		
FBXL17	*FBXL17*	Fbx13, FBXO13	64839	5q21.3	XM 128716.2	93	17E1.1			
FBXL18	*FBXL18*		80028	7p22.2	Bl853840	89	5G2			
FBXL19	*FBXL19*		54620	16p11.2	NM 172748.2	95	7F3			PHD, ZF
FBXL20	*FBXL20*	Fbl2	84961	17q21.2	XM 126674.3	99	11D	CG9003	CO2F5.7	
FBXL21	*FBXL21*	FBXL3B, Fbl3B	26223	5q31	AK035290	81	13B1			
FBXL22	*FBXL22*		400380	15q22.1	NM 175206	80	9C			
FBXO1 (Cyclin F)	*CCNF*	FBX1, FBXO1	899	16p13.3	NM 007634.2	75	17A3.3			cyclin box
FBXO2	*FBXO2*	Nfb42, Fbs1, Fbg1, Ocp1	26232	1p35.21	BC027053.1	87	4E2.0			FBA
FBXO3	*FBXO3*	FBA	26273	11p13	AK004544.2	92	2E2.0			ApaG-like domain (SCOP)
FBXO4	*FBXO4*		26272	5p12	NM 134099.1	83	15A1			
FBXO5 (EMI1)	*FBXO5*	FBXO31	26271	6q25	BC053434.1	70	10A1	*Rca1* (CG10800)		IBR domain

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Table 1. (*continued*)

F-box protein	Revised HUGO gene symbol	Aliases	Human Entrez gene ID	Human location	Mouse accession	% identity	Mouse location	Fly ortholog	Worm ortholog	Other domains (c)
FBXO6	*FBXO6*	Fbs2, Fbg2, Fbx6b	26270	1p36.23	NM 015797	75	4E2.0		C14B1.3	FBA domain
FBXO7	*FBXO7*	Fbx	25793	22q12-q13	NM 153195.1	70	10C1			UBL-domain (SCOP)
FBXO8	*FBXO8*	Fbs	26269	4q34.1	NM 015791.2	90	8B1.3			Sec7
FBXO9	*FBXO9*	Ny-ren-57	26268	6p12.3-p11.2	AK077607.1	89	9E1.0	CG5961		TPR, HNHc (SCOP)
FBXO10	*FBXO10*		26267	9p13.1	XM_194139.2	84	4B1	CG9461	K04A8.6	CASH
FBXO11	*FBXO11*		80204	2p21	XM_110248.4	98	17E5.0	CG9461	K04A8.6	CASH
FBXO15	*FBXO15*		201456	18q22.3	AF176530	60	18E4.0			
FBXO16	*FBXO16*		157574	8p21.1	NM 015795.1	81	14D1			
FBXO17	*FBXO17*	Fbg4, FBXO26	115290	19q13.2	AF176532/ NM 015796	80	7A3			FBA
FBXO18	*FBXO18*	Fbh1	84893	10p15.1	NM 015792	87	2A1			Helicase
FBXO20	*LMO7*	FBXO20	4008	13q21.33	AK129231	68	14E2.2			CH, PDZ, Lim
FBXO21	*FBXO21*		23014	12q24.23	AB093270	91	5F			
FBXO22	*FBXO22*		26263	15q23	NP 028049	96	9B			
FBXO24	*FBXO24*		26261	7q22	XM 132440	84	5G2			RCC1-fold (SCOP)
FBXO25	*FBXO25*		26260	8p23.3	NM 025785	84	8A1.1	CG11658	DY3.6	
FBXO27	*FBXO27*	Fbg5	126433	19q13.2	AK053292	79	7A3			FBA
FBXO28	*FBXO28*		23219	1q42.12	NM 175127	89	1H5	CG3428		
FBXO30	*FBXO30*		84085	6q24	XM 125493	87	10A1			
FBXO31	*FBXO31*	Fbx14, FBXO14	79791	16	AU066822/NM 133765.2	95	8.00E+01			
FBXO32	*FBXO32*	Mafbx, Atrogin-1	114907	8q24.13	NM_026346	96	15D1	CG11658	DY3.6	
FBXO33	*FBXO33*		254170	14q13.3	XM_127032	90	12C1	CG4911		RNI-like (SCOP)
FBXO34	*FBXO34*		55030	14q22.2	NM 030236.1	71	14B			
FBXO36	*FBXO36*		130888	2q37.1	NM 025386	78	1C5			
FBXO38	*FBXO38*	MOKA	81545	5q33.1	AK 031347	86	18E2.0			RNI-like (SCOP)
FBXO39	*FBXO39*		162517	17p13.2	XM 282966	78	11B4	CG2010		RNI-like (SCOP)
FBXO40	*FBXO40*		51725	3q21.1	XM 156082	80	16A1			TDL (SCOP)
FBXO41	*FBXO41*		150726	2p13.2	AK129466	80	6C3			
FBXO42	*FBXO42*		54455	1p36.23–p36.11	AK028867	89	4D3	CG6758		Kelch repeats
FBXO43	*FBXO43*		286151	8q22.3	NM_175281	70	15B3.1	*Rca1* (CG10800)		IBR domain
FBXO44	*FBXO44*	Fbx30, FBG3, FBXO6a	93611	1p36.21	NM 173401	90	4E2.0		C14B1.3	FBA domain
FBXO45	*FBXO45*		20093	3q29	BC026799	99	16A1			SPRY
FBXO46	*FBXO46*	FBXO34L	23403	9q13.3	NM 175530	80	7A2			

coding genes have been given the same gene name; (2) multiple individual F-box genes have been given several different names; (3) the nomenclature used for clearly orthologous mouse and human genes is inconsistent; (4) several genes present in GenBank encode F-box proteins but are not annotated as such; (5) mRNA sequence revisions and refinement of algorithms for detection of F-box motifs have led to the removal of some genes from the F-box category; and (6) improvements in structural domain identification suggest that genes previously designated in the FBXO subclass may be more appropriately placed in the FBXL or FBXW subclasses. The need for clear communication in this field necessitates a unified nomenclature for F-box proteins.

To develop a comprehensive nomenclature for mammalian F-box proteins, we have systematically analyzed F-box proteins in the human and mouse genomes and have organized these genes in a manner that largely conforms to previous nomenclature standards, as explained below. This nomenclature has now been adopted and implemented by the HUGO Gene Nomenclature Committee. Several factors were considered in devising the most appropriate nomenclature for the future. First, genes whose symbols were approved by the nomenclature committee prior to the discovery of these genes as F-box proteins will remain as the approved symbol. Second, the previous nomenclature used letters (a, b, …) to indicate what appeared to be paralogous genes (e.g., *FBXL3a* and *FBXL3b*). However, because it is now appreciated that many F-box proteins exist as multiple splicing variants, the use of such a designation scheme has been avoided, necessitating the complete renaming of a small number of F-box proteins. Finally, mouse and human orthologs have been given the same symbols to facilitate comparative studies in the future. A detailed description of how the nomenclature changes have affected individual F-box genes is provided in the Supplemental Material.

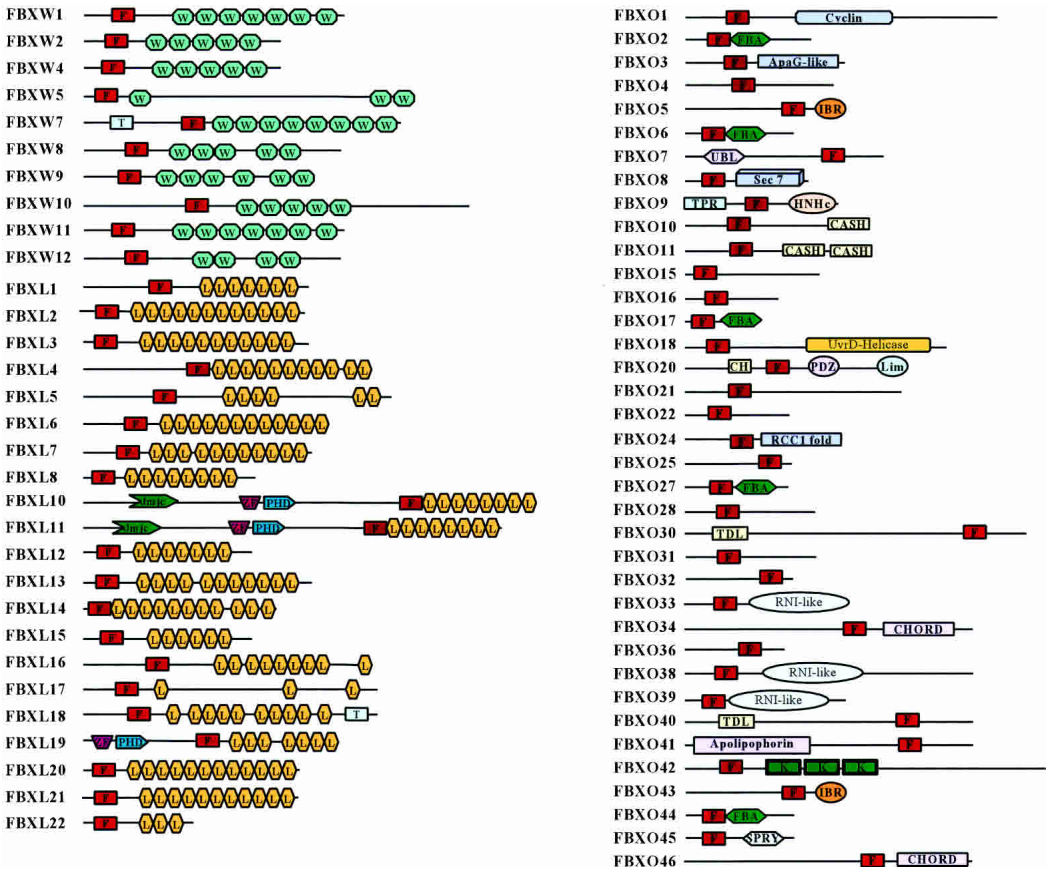

Figure 1. Domain structures of mammalian F-box proteins. Domains identified by the Hidden Markov Model algorithms of SMART or PFam include F-box motif (F), WD40 repeat (WD), leucine-rich repeat (L), transmembrane domain (T), F-box-associated domain (FBA), between-ring domain (IBR), domain in carbohydrate binding proteins and sugar hydrolases (CASH), kelch repeat (K), calponin homology domain (CH), domain found in cupin metalloenzyme family (Jmjc), domain present in PSD-95, Dlg, and ZO-1 (PDZ), zinc-binding domain found in Lin-11, Isl-1, and Mec-3 (Lim), HNH nuclease family (HNHc), novel eukaryotic zinc-binding domain (CHORD), and tetratrico peptide repeat (TPR). The following domains were found via the Structural Classification of Proteins (SCOP) database, which can be used to predict protein sequences that can adopt known protein folds: ApaG-like, which is structurally similar to bacterial ApaG; Apolipophorin, the apolipophorin-III-like fold; Ubl, the ubiquitin-like fold; TDL, which is Traf-domain like; RNI-like, which may form structure similar to that of leucine-rich repeats in placental RNase inhibitor; and RCC1, which is a possible regulator of chromatin condensation-1 fold.

Our analysis led to the identification of 68 human and 74 mouse genes encoding recognizable F-box motifs, as detected by Hidden Markov Models (Table 1; Fig. 1) (Bateman et al. 2004; Letunic et al. 2004). A phylogenetic representation of human F-box motifs is shown in Figure 2. The phylogeny of F-box domain sequences only, which gives the cleanest available view of the evolutionary signature of the family, shows two major groups of F-box proteins (an evolutionary divergence). Different protein interaction domains are scattered throughout the two groups indicating that similar domain swapping mechanisms acted on both, but ruling out that all *FBXW* subfamily members diverged from a single *FBXW* ancestor, for example.

Clear mouse orthologs were identified for all human F-box proteins except *FBXW12*, with the majority of mouse genes displaying >80% identity with their human counterparts (Table 1). In the mouse, *FBXW12*-related sequences have been dramatically expanded to seven genes (one at chromosome 13A5 [*Fbxw17*] and a cluster of six genes at chromosome 9F2 [*Fbxw13*, *Fbxw14*, *Fbxw15*, *Fbxw16*, *Fbxw18*, *Fbxw19*]). Each of these seven mouse genes is equally related to *FBXW12*, and, therefore, we are unable to unambiguously designate a mouse ortholog of human *FBXW12*. The mechanism and significance of expansion of this subclass of F-box proteins in the mouse are unknown. Three human proteins with F-box like motifs—Tome-1 (CDCA3), TBL1, and TBLR1 (TBL1XR1)—were not included because the presumptive F-box sequence did not reach the threshold sufficient for this classification.

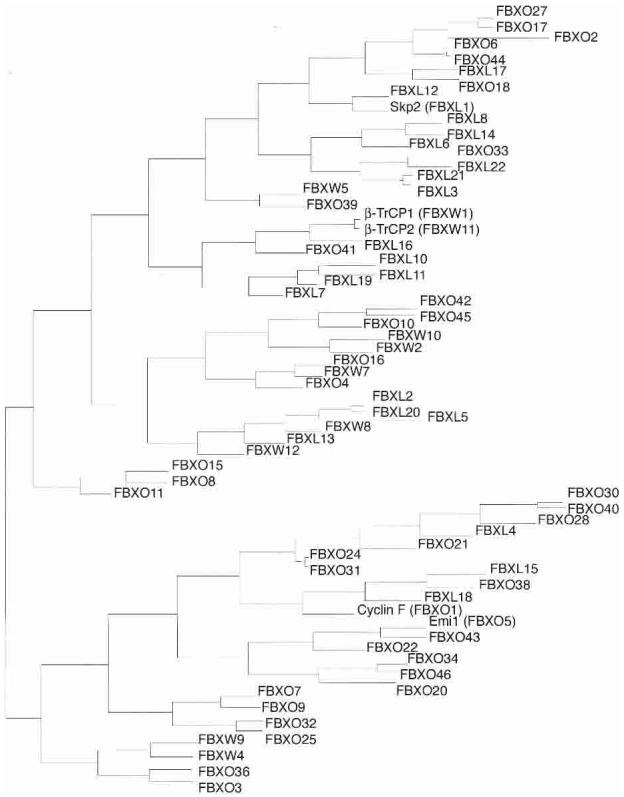

Figure 2. Phylogenetic tree depiction of interrelationships between human F-box proteins. The tree is generated from the pairwise ZEGA distances (Abagyan and Batalov 1997) within the set of amino acid sequences comprising the F-box domain only by the neighbor-joining method (Saitou and Nei 1987) as adapted in ICM software (Molsoft LLC; http://www.molsoft.com).

A combination of BLAST analyses and phylogenetic tree construction using putative substrate interaction domains together with the F-box motif revealed possible orthologs of mammalian F-box proteins in *Drosophila melanogaster* and *Caenorhabditis elegans* (Table 1; Fig. 3). The inclusion of substrate interaction domains allows confirmation of some relationships with the mammalian proteins (e.g., FBXL12 with SKP2), but also demonstrates, in comparison to the F-box domain only tree, that the phylogenetic spread of each subgroup is as wide as that of the whole family. Interestingly, the *D. melanogaster* genome contains several possible orthologs of the human FBXL series that are not found in *C. elegans* (Table 1; Fig. 3). The fact that *C. elegans* has more than 300 F-box proteins but that only a few display relationships with mammalian genes indicates significant diversification of the F-box proteins in this organism. This expansion is species-specific because the *Caenorhabditis briggsae* genome is predicted to encode a similar number of F-box proteins as found in human and mouse genomes (Stein et al. 2003). Six genes encoding F-box proteins appear to be conserved in *C. elegans*, *D. melanogaster*, and mammals: *BTRC* (*FBXW1*), *FBXW7*, *FBXL2*, *FBXO10*, *FBXO25*, and *FBXO45* (Table 1; Fig. 3). Interestingly, in mammals four of these six genes have a paralog: *FBXW1* (*BTRC*, β-*TRCP1*) for *FBXW11* (β-*TRCP2*), *FBXL20* for *FBXL2*, *FBXL11* for *FBXL10*, and *FBXO32* for *FBXO25*, respectively. The FBA-containing subclass of FBXO proteins are contained in the *C. elegans* genome but are absent in *D. melanogaster* (Table 1; Fig. 3). Thus, it is possible that much of the core SCF signaling common to metazoans is performed by a relatively small number of highly conserved F-box proteins. To date, conserved degradation pathways have been found for targets of mammalian FBXW7 and β-TRCP1/2 in both *C. elegans* and *Drosophila*. c-MYC and cyclin E are targeted by ago/FBXW7 in both *Drosophila* and mammals (Koepp et al. 2001; Moberg et al. 2001, 2004; Strohmaier et al. 2001; Tetzlaff et al. 2004; Welcker et al. 2004), and Notch is targeted by sel-10/FBXW7 in both mammals and *C. elegans* (Hubbard et al. 1997; Wu et al. 2001; Tetzlaff et al. 2004; Tsunematsu et al. 2004). Similarly, β-TRCP1/2/*slmb* has been linked to the β-catenin, IκB, and cell cycle pathways in both *Drosophila* and mammals (for review, see Maniatis 1999; Guardavaccaro and Pagano 2003).

Despite the large number of mammalian F-box proteins, in addition to β-TRCP1/2 and FBW7, only one other mammalian F-box protein has been matched to its downstream substrates, namely, SKP2 (Ang and Harper 2004; Cardozo and Pagano 2004). Interestingly, SKP2 is the product of a proto-oncogene, FBW7 is a tumor suppressor (Pagano and Benmaamar 2003; Yamasaki and Pagano 2004), and overexpression of β-TRCP1 can contribute to transformation at least in some epithelial tissues

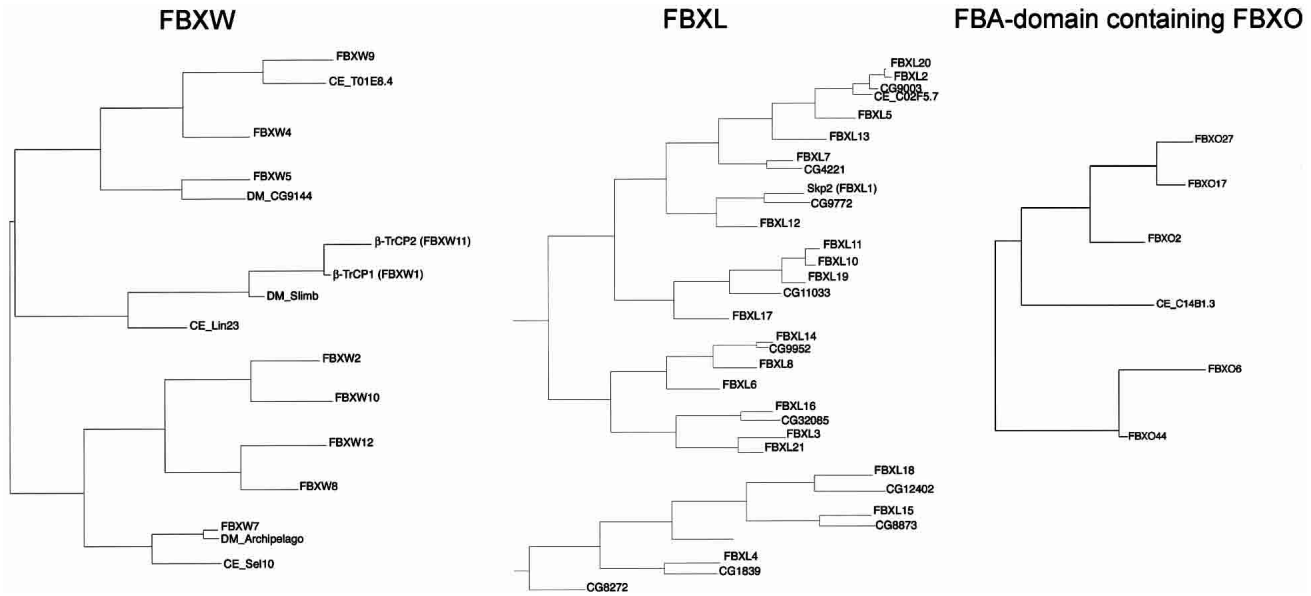

Figure 3. Phylogenetic trees for FBXW, FBXL, and FBA-domain-containing subfamilies of F-box proteins, along with orthologous sequences from *D. melanogaster* and *C. elegans*. Only the contiguous portions of the sequence corresponding to the F-box domain followed by the indicated protein interaction domain were included and aligned.

(Kudo et al. 2004). Finally, EMI1/FBXO5, an inhibitor of the mitotic ubiquitin ligase APC/C, is overexpressed in tumor cell lines and certain breast tumors (Hsu et al. 2002; van 't Veer et al. 2002). Other F-box proteins appear to play a role in different diseases. For example, Dactylin/FBW4 is encoded by *SHFM3*, the split hand–foot malformation syndrome gene 3 (Basel et al. 2003). *FBXO3* expression is increased in proliferating synovium of patients with rheumatoid arthritis (Masuda et al. 2002). FBXO32 is up-regulated during muscle atrophy (Bodine et al. 2001; Gomes et al. 2001). Thus, F-box proteins are attractive candidates for drug discovery because they play crucial roles in many important signaling pathways.

Validated protein structure prediction tools revealed inappropriately classified F-box proteins as well the association of new functional or structural domains with the F-box motif (Fig. 1). For example, certain F-box proteins previously placed in the FBXO class (e.g., FBXO13) were found to have LRRs and were reclassified accordingly (Table 1; also see Supplemental Material). FBXO14 was found to have WD40 repeats and was reclassified as FBXW12 (Table 1). Three FBXO members (FBXO33, FBXO38, and FBXO39) may display structural similarity to RNase inhibitor, the prototypical LRR, but these sequences do not reach the threshold required to be fingered as authentic LRRs based on sequence information alone (Fig. 1). Additional protein folds new to the mammalian FBX class include ubiquitin-like folds (FBXO7), TPR-like domain (FBXO9), RCC1 (FBXO24), and Kelch repeats (FBXO42). In addition to the five FBA-containing F-box proteins that bind glycosylated proteins (Cardozo and Pagano 2004), two additional proteins (FBXO10 and FBXO11) contain the CASH domain frequently found in carbohydrate-binding proteins and hydrolases (Fig. 1). Both *D. melanogaster* and *C. elegans* contain possible orthologs of *FBXO10* and/or *FBXO11* (Table 1). Finally, F-box proteins containing a SPRY domain (FBXO45 in mammals) are found in all metazoans. The SPRY domain is of unknown function but is frequently present in ryanodine receptors. Recent studies have linked the *C. elegans* SPRY domain F-box protein (C26E6.5) with presynaptic differentiation (Liao et al. 2004).

The use of this systematic nomenclature should facilitate comparative genomics and drug discovery approaches, as well as the communication of experiments designed to elaborate the functional properties of F-box proteins.

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