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Cloning and Sequence Analysis of Phosphomevalonate Kinase Gene (*McPMK*) from *Matricaria chamomilla*

Yishan Xu¹, Xiaomeng Liu¹, Jie Chang^{2,3} and Feng Xu^{1*}

¹College of Horticulture and Gardening, Yangtze University, Jingzhou 434025, China

²Hubei Collaborative Innovation Center of Targeted Antitumor Drug, Jingmen, Hubei 448000, China

³College of Chemical Engineering and Pharmacy, Jingchu University of Technology, Jingmen, Hubei 448000, China

*Corresponding author.

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ABSTRACT

The phosphomevalonate kinase gene (*PMK*) is one of the core enzymes in the biosynthetic pathway of sesquiterpenoids and catalyzes the formation of mevalonate-5-diphosphate (MVAPP). In order to isolate and identify the *PMK* gene, a specific primer was designed based on the *McPMK* gene sequence in the transcriptome of *Matricaria chamomilla*. The full-length cDNA was 1782 bp of *PMK* gene and named *McPMK* (GenBank Accession No.MG778909). *McPMK* contains a 1479 bp open reading frame (ORF) encoding a total of 493 amino acids. *McPMK* proteins were analyzed online with molecular weights and isoelectric points of 53.58 KDa and 5.55, respectively. Amino acid multiple alignment showed that the *McPMK* encoded amino acid sequence is highly similar to other plant *PMK* proteins and has a GHMP kinase superfamily-specific ATP binding site. Phylogenetic tree analysis showed that *McPMK* clustered with Asteraceae *PMKs* in dicotyledonous species, and had the closest genetic relationship with *Chamemelum nobile*. The gene fragment of *PMK* amplified from *M. chamomilla* laid the foundation for the analysis of its function in the biosynthesis of terpenoids.

Introduction

Matricaria chamomilla L., a year-old herb of Asteraceae, is one of the most commonly used medicinal plants in Europe (Raal et al., 2012; Sayadi et al., 2014). *M. chamomilla* is rich in essential oils, pharmacological evidence shows that its essential oil has a significant anti-inflammatory, inhibit fungi,

antispasmodic and analgesic, improving lung cancer and other effects. Thus is widely used in medicine, cosmetics, medicine and other fields (Pirzad et al., 2006). *M. chamomilla* flowers contain 0.24-2.0 percent volatile oil that is blue in color. α -Bisabolol and chamazulene are their main active pharmaceutical ingredients. α -Bisabolol, a sesquiterpenoid compound, has the pharmacological effects of sedation, anti-

inflammatory, anti-oxidation and is an important component of topical health products and skin care products (Murti et al., 2012; Son et al., 2014). Medically, it is often used to treat conditions such as vomiting, headache, and indigestion (Chadwick et al., 2013; Bonifacio et al., 2012). In general, *M. chamomilla* is a kind of medicinal plant with great development and utilization value.

Terpenoids are one of the most abundant type secondary metabolites (Yonekura-Sakakibara and Saito, 2009). Over 60,000 terpenes and derivatives are found in nature (Cheng et al., 2007; Bohlmann and Keeling, 2008). Terpenoids are synthesized in plants through two independent pathways: the mevalonate (MVA) pathway in the cytoplasm and the 2Cmethyl-D-erythritol 4-phosphate (MEP) pathway in the plastids (Vranová et al., 2013). MVA pathway is the main source for the synthesis of terpenoids. Acetyl-CoA is formed by two molecules of acetyl-CoA under the action of acetoacetyl-CoA transporter (AACT), 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-CoA synthase (HMGS) catalyzes the formation of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl CoA (HMG-CoA) and then forms mevalonate (MVA) catalyzed by the 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutarylCoA reductase (HMGR), followed by mevalonate kinase (MVK), phosphomevalonate kinase (PMK) and diphosphomevalonate decarboxylase (MVD) to form isopentenyl-diphosphate (IPP) or dimethylpropenyl pyrophosphate (DMAPP) (Zhang et al., 2007). IPP and DMAPP condense to form geranyl pyrophosphate (GPP). The combination of GPP and one IPP unit generates farnesyl pyrophosphate (FPP) as a precursor to sesquiterpene, eventually forming a sesquiterpenoid by means of isomerization, cyclization, complexation and so on (Yun-Fei et al., 2011).

PMK, a member of the GHMP kinase superfamily, is an important site of regulation of terpenoid metabolism in organisms that synthesize terpenoid skeletons by the traditional MVA pathway, is an essential enzyme in the synthesis pathway and the catalytic reaction step is the rate-limiting step in the MVA to IPP pathway (Chang et al., 2008). There are three rate-limiting reactions that are continually

dependent on ATP in this pathway, where PMK catalyzes the second rate-limiting reaction, which acts to transfer the gamma phosphate group on ATP to mevalonate-5-phosphate (MVAP) generation of mevalonate-5-diphosphate (MVAPP). PMK is one of the key enzymes that control the entire metabolic pathway (Garcia and Keasling, 2014).

We analyzed the data of the *M. chamomilla* transcriptome data obtained by our group in the early stage and found a large number of genes involved in the MVA pathway. In this study, we first cloned the cDNA sequence of *PMK* gene (*McPMK*) from *M. chamomilla* and analyzed the bioinformatics, which laid the foundation for the further study on the role of *PMK* gene in terpenoids synthesis pathway in *M. chamomilla*.

Materials and methods

Plant material and reagents

In this study, we used the *M. chamomilla* cultivated in glass greenhouse of college of horticulture and gardening of Yangtze University as material to collect the leaves. After frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored in -80 °C refrigerator for the cloning of *McPMK*. MiniBEST Plant RNA Extraction kit, PrimeScript™ 1st Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit, one-step RTPCR kit, Agarose Gel DNA Purification Kit Ver. 4.0, pMD19-T vector, dNTP, RNase and DNA polymerase were purchased from Dalian Bao Bio Co. (TaKaRa). Primer synthesis and DNA sequencing were entrusted to Shanghai Sangon Biotechnology Company, China.

Cloning of *McPMK*

Total RNA was isolated from frozen plant tissues using the TaKaRaMiniBEST Plant RNA Extraction kit. Based on the *PMK* unigene sequence of *M. chamomilla* transcriptome data (GenBank accession No. MG778909), a pair of specific primers, *McPMK*-u: 5'-GTGAAAAAGATGGCTGTGGTTGC-3' and *McPMK*-d: 5'-CTTCTGGGAGTGGAGTGCAAATG-3' were designed and synthesized. The first-strand cDNA was synthesized using PrimeScript cDNA Synthesis Kit.

McPMK cDNA was amplified with the one-step RTPCR kit under the following conditions: 94°C for 4 min; 30 cycles of amplification at 94°C for 30 s, 62°C for 30 s, and 72°C for 90 s; and a final extension at 72°C for 10 min. The amplified products purified using agarose gel DNA purification Kit Ver. 4.0. The purified PCR product was cloned into the pMD19-T vector, and then transformed into *Escherichia coli* DH5 α . Positive clones were selected and sent to Shanghai Sangon Biotechnology Company for sequencing.

Bioinformatic analysis of *McPMK*

The obtained nucleotide sequence and deduced amino acid sequence were compared by a BLAST tool on the <http://www.ncbi.com> (NCBI) website. The isoelectric point (pI) and molecular weight of the deduced *McPMK* protein were computed using the software of Compute pI/Mw Tool at http://web.expasy.org/compute_pi/. Multiple sequence alignment was performed using the Vector NTI 10.0 program. A phylogenetic tree was constructed through the neighbor-joining (NJ) method with CLUSTALX 2.0 and MEGA 6.0 software.

Results

Cloning and characterization of *McPMK*

According to the sequence of the transcriptome of *M. chamomilla*, a pair of specific primers was designed and the *McPMK* gene was cloned using the template of reverse transcribed cDNA. The sequencing results showed that the full-length cDNA was 1782 bp and contained a 1479 bp ORF, which encodes a total of 493 amino acids (Fig. 1). The results of BLASTN analysis at NCBI site showed that the nucleotide sequence of *McPMK* had a high similarity to those of other *PMK* genes. The nucleotide sequence of *McPMK* was 93%, 85%, 84%, 76%, 75%, 74%, 74% and 72% identical to those of the *PMK* genes from *Chamaemelum nobile*, *Helianthus annuus*, *Taraxacum kok-saghyz*, *Citrus sinensis*, *Ziziphus jujuba*, *Hevea brasiliensis*, *Prunus avium* and *Spinacia oleracea*, respectively (Table 1).

Collectively, these results indicated that the gene we cloned is the cDNA sequence of *McPMK*.

Characterization of the deduced *McPMK* protein

ExPASy-ProtParam online analysis of *McPMK* gene encoded protein, the results showed that the protein molecular weight and PI were 53.58KDa and 5.77. Multiple alignment results showed that the protein sequence of *McPMK* gene shared high homology with *PMK* protein sequences of other plants, all of which were more than 70%. The *McPMK* protein showed 93%, 83%, 76%, 73%, 73%, 75% and 74% identical to the counterparts of *C.nobile* (ASJ80966.1), *H.annuus* (XP_021970137.1), *Panaxnoto ginseng* (AIK21784.1), *Populus euphratica* (XP_011028097.1), *Vitis vinifera* (XP_002275808.1), *Daucus carota* (XP_017223228.1) and *Ziziphus jujube* (XP_015868326.1), respectively. Meanwhile, *McPMK* protein was found to have a GHMP kinase superfamily-specific ATP binding site (Fig. 2). The above analysis further shows that the *McPMK* gene is a member of the *PMK* gene family.

Molecular evolution analysis

Based on the deduced amino acid sequence of *McPMK* and the amino acid sequence of other plant *PMK* genes, phylogenetic tree was constructed to study the evolutionary relationships among different plant *PMK* genes. As shown in Fig. 3, the evolutionary tree is divided into two major categories, one is monocotyledonous, *Zea mays* of Poaceae; one is dicotyledonous plants, including Asteraceae, Araliaceae, Cucurbitaceae and Malvales. Phylogenetic analysis of *PMK* protein showed that *McPMK* was clustered in Asteraceae, and the closest relationship with the *C. nobile*, the most distant genetic relationship with *Z. mays*. Probably because both *M. chamomilla* and *C. nobile* belong to Asteraceae dicotyledonous plants, while *Z. mays* belongs to Poaceae monocotyledonous plants. Explaining the *PMK* genes of Asteraceae plant have a common evolutionary ancestor.

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1      GTA AACGGT TACTGTTTCATTCTCAGTCCCATTGCTTGTCTAAGGTATCTCCGTC AACAATCCATAACT
73     GTTCTAGGTTGTTTCGAGGTTAATCTTTCAAACACAGACTGTAAACTGTGAAAAAAATGCTGGTGGTTGCT
25                                     M A V V A
145    TCGGCTCCGGGGAAGGTTTAAATGGCTGGTGGTTATTGGTATTGGAGAGGCCTAATGCAGGAATCGTGCTT
49     S A P G K V L M A G G Y L V L E R P N A G I V L
217    AGTACTAATGCCCGGTTTATGCGATTCTTAAGCCTCTTATGATGCACTTGAATCTGACATTTGGCAGCG
73     S T N A R F Y A I L K P L Y D A L E S D I L A A
289    GAGTGGATGGATCTAAAGTCAACTCTCCTCAAATGTCAAGAGAACTACATACAAATGTGCATTAAGAT
97     E W M D L K V N S P Q M S R E T T Y K L S L K D
361    TTTACACTACAGTGTGAGTGAATCAAGGAACCCCTTGTGCGAGTATGCAGTCCAATATCCATAGCAGCA
121    F T L Q C L S E S R N P F V E Y A V Q Y S I A A
433    GCATATGCCACTCGACAAGAATGAAAGGAATAGATTGCTTAAATTAAGTGCACAAGGATGGATATTACA
145    A Y A T L D K N E R N R L L K L L S Q G M D I T
505    ATCCTAGGTTGCAATGACTTCTATTATCATATCGGAATCAGATTGAAGCACGTGGCCTCCCTTAGTCCAGAC
169    I L G C N D F Y S Y R N Q I E A R G L P L V P D
577    TCATTAGCGACTCTTCAGCCATTACATCAATTACTTCAATGCCGAAGAATCAAATGTAGAAAACCTCAAAA
193    S L A T L Q P F T S I T F N A E E S N V E N S K
649    CCAGAAGTTGCAAAAAGTGGATTAGGGTCGCTGCGGCTATGACAACTGCTGTAGTGTGCTTGGTAAAT
217    P E V A K T G L G S S A A M T T A V V A A L L N
721    TATCTAGGAGTTGTTGATCTCCGCTTATAGTACAAATCAAAGAATGATAAAATTTGGATCTTGATTTA
241    Y L G V V D L P L Y S T N Q K N D K I L D L D L
793    GTACATATGATCGCTCAAACAGCGCATTGTATCGCTCAAGGGAAGTTGGCAGTGGATTGATGTTAGCTCT
265    V H M I A Q T A H C I A Q G K V G S G F D V S S
865    GCTGTTATGGCAGTCATCGTTATGTTGCTTTTCGCCGAATATCATTCTCAGCTCAGGAAACTGTCGGT
289    A V Y G S H R Y V R F S P N I I S S A Q E T V G
937    AACACACCCTTAGAAGAAGTCAATGGCGATGCTTGAAGGGAAGTGGGATCATGAAAGGACTAAATCTCG
313    N T P L E E V I G D V L K G K W D H E R T K F S
1009   TTGCCACCATAATGAATCTGATTTGGGAGAACCAGGAAGTGGAGATCGTCTACACCGTCAATGGTTGGC
337    L P P L M N L I L G E P G S G G S S T P S M V G
1081   GCTGTCAAGAAATGGCAAAAGTCTGACCACAAAAGTCAAAGGATACGTGGAACAAGTTGTGAGAGGCAAT
361    A V K K W Q K S D P Q K S K D T W N K L S E A N
1153   TCAGCACTGTAGCAGGTTAACTGTTAAGTAAATCAGCTGCAGATAGCTGGGACTCGTACAAGCTGTC
385    S A L V A Q F N L L S K S A A D S W D S Y K A V
1225   ATCACCAGGCTGCAGCATGTTAAATCAGAAAAGTGGATGGAGCAATTCAGTGAAGCAACTCATGTAGAAATC
409    I T G C S M L K S E K W M E Q F S E A T H V E I
1297   GTTAAAGCATTATTGGGAGCTAGAGATGCAATGCTTAAGATTGCGTTCCATATGAGGAGATGGCCGACGCT
433    V K A L L G A R D A M L K I R F H M R Q M G D A
1369   GCAGGCATCCGATCGAACCTGAATCACAACCTGACTCCTGGACGTGACCATGAACACAGAAGGTGCTTG
457    A G I P I E P E S Q T R L L D V T M N T E G V L
1441   TTAGGTGGAGTTCTGGTGCAGGTGGATTGATGCCGTTTTGCTATTACTTAAAGTACTCAAGTACAAT
481    L G G V P G A G G F D A V F A I T L S D S S T N
1513   TTGACCAAAATATGGAGTTCCATAATGTTTGGCCATGCTAGTGCGGGAAGATCCGCGCGGTGTTCTATA
505    L T K I W S F H N V L A M L V R E D P R G V S I
1585   GAAAGTGGTATCTCGGCCAAGTAAATATATCTCAAGTAACGCATTCTTGTTCATTGATGTCATATCAA
529    E S G D P R A K *
1657   TGGCACATTTGCACTCCACTCCAGAAGTATGGTGTATTATCATTGACGGTTTCTCATTCTTATACGTGA

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Fig. 1: Nucleotide sequence and deduced amino acid sequence of *McPMK*. The initial codon and the stop codon are highlighted in red square box.

Table 1. Nucleotide sequence of *McPMK* similarity to the *PMK* genes from other plant species.

Species	Accession No.	E-value	Identity/%
<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	KX894316.1	0.0	93
<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	XM_022114445.1	0.0	85
<i>Taraxacum kok-saghyz</i>	KT899411.1	0.0	84
<i>Citrus sinensis</i>	XM_006471412.2	0.0	76
<i>Ziziphusjuba</i>	XM_016041830.1	0.0	75
<i>Hevea brasiliensis</i>	AF429385.1	5e-155	74
<i>Prunus avium</i>	XM_021952904.1	4e-151	74
<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>	XM_021996129.1	9e-98	72

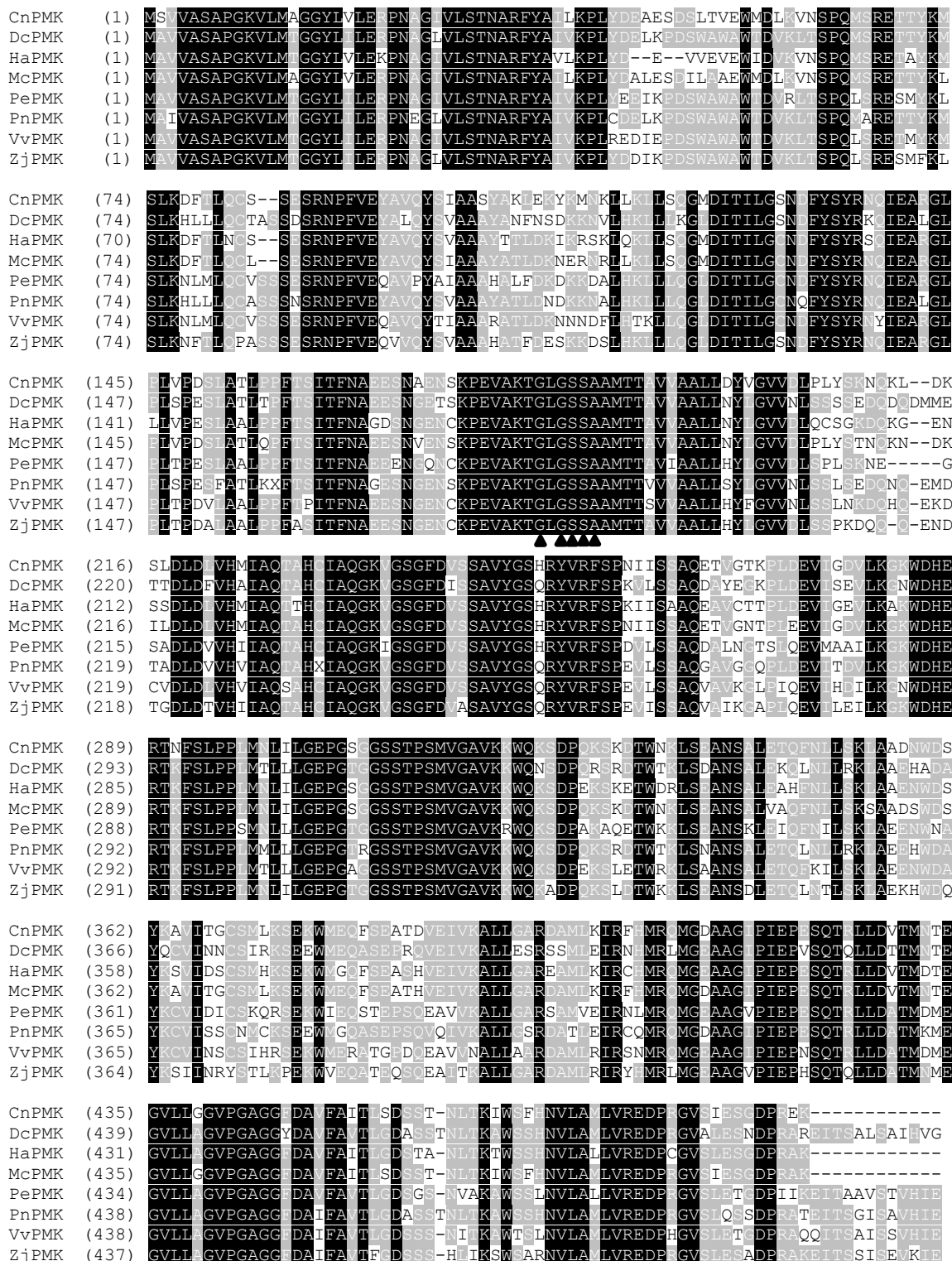


Fig. 2: Sequence multi-alignment of the deduced McPMK protein with other PMK proteins. The species name and GenBank accession number are shown as following: CnPMK, *C. nobile* (ASJ80966.1); DcPMK, *D. carota* (XP_017223228.1); HaPMK, *H. annuus* (XP_021970137.1); McPMK, *M. chamomilla*; *P. euphratica* (XP_011028097.1); PnPMK, *P. notoginseng* (AIK21784.1); VvPMK, *Vitis vinifera* (XP_002275808.1); ZjPMK, *Z. jujube* (XP_015868326.1). The black triangle indicates the ATP binding site.

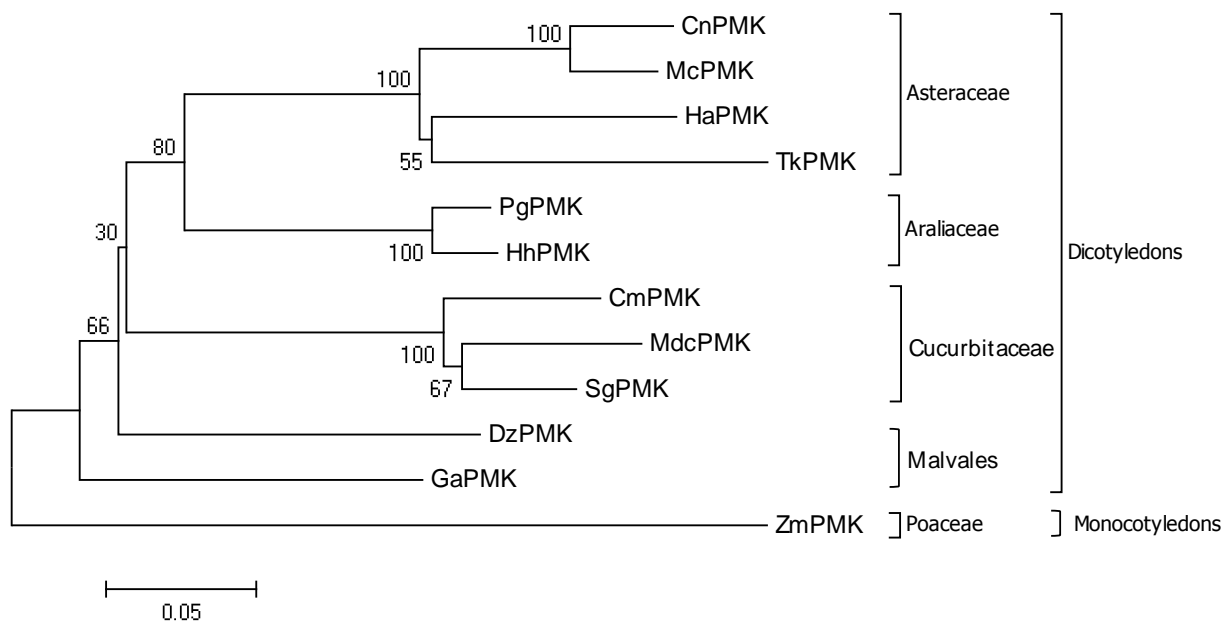


Fig. 3: Phylogenetic tree of PMKs from different species using the neighbor-joining method. The species, protein names and GenBank accession number are as following: *M. chamomilia*: McPMK; *C. nobile*: CnPMK (ASJ80966.1); *H. annuus*: HaPMK (XP_021970137.1); *T. kok-saghyz*: Tkpmk (AMB19700.1); *Panax ginseng*: PgPMK (AGZ15314.1); *Hedera helix*: HhPMK (APY22352.1); *Cucurbita moschata*: CmPMK (XP_022951530.1); *Momordica charantia*: MdcPMK (XP_022145447.1); *Siraitia grosvenorii*: SgPMK (AEM42973.1); *Durio zibethinus*: DzPMK (ALD84323.1); *Gossypium arboretum*: GaPMK (XP_019080389.1); *Z. mays*: ZmPMK (NP_001149345.1).

Discussion

Terpenoids are the most abundant natural products and 60% of known natural products can be attributed to these substances (Buntrock, 2012). Terpenoids are one of the largest families of plant secondary metabolites that have important physiological roles in living organisms and are widely used in industrial and agricultural production and in medical and health care (Henry et al., 2015). However, the amount of terpenoids in organisms is very low, often reaching only one part per million in the plant, and it is extremely difficult to chemically synthesize most of the natural products with important biological activity. The extraction of these active ingredients from raw materials such as plants can no longer satisfy people's needs. In recent years, along with the research on terpenoid biosynthesis pathway and its key enzyme, synthetic biology and metabolic engineering based on molecular biology technology

have become one of the most potential ways to improve the production of terpenoid in plants.

Tanshinones, paclitaxel, α -Bisabolol, chamazulene and other terpenoids have important medicinal and economic value, while there are few reports on the terpenoid biosynthesis pathway in *M. chamomilla*. The whole plant of *M. chamomilla* can be used as medicine. In this study, *McPMK* gene with 1782 bp in length was cloned from leaves of *M. chamomilla*. The amino acid sequence of *McPMK* gene is highly homologous to the PMK protein of MVA pathway in other plants. And it also contains a GHMP kinase superfamily-specific ATP binding site, suggesting that the *McPMK* gene is the second rate-limiting enzyme in the MVA pathway and is also one of the key enzymes that control the entire MVA metabolic pathway (Zhang et al., 2007). The *McPMK* protein as terpenoid biosynthetic pathway key enzyme, has important research value. Studies have shown that the *MK* and *PMK* gene expression is low in plants

MVA pathway, increased their expression can increase the production of terpenoids in plants, while if PMK overexpression in plants can increase the content of isoprenoid derivatives (Redding-Johanson et al., 2011; Ajikumar et al., 2008; Singh et al., 2012).

Therefore, in the follow-up experiment, the eukaryotic expression vector of *McPMK* gene will be constructed by means of genetic engineering and transformed to *M. chamomilla* by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated genetic transformation system, and genetically modifying it. We hope to obtain transgenic plant with high content of terpenoid, ultimately improve the medicinal and economic value of *M. chamomilla*. This research will help to understand the pathway and regulation mechanism of terpene biosynthesis and provide candidate gene for further study.

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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