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Brief Communications

## Identification of *Sonic hedgehog* as a candidate gene responsible for the polydactylous mouse mutant *Sasquatch*

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### Abstract

The mouse mutants of the hemimeliaâ€“luxate group (*lx*, *lu*, *lst*, *Dh*, *Xt*, and the more recently identified *Hx*, *Xpl* and *Rim4*; [1], [2], [3], [4], [5]) have in common preaxial polydactyly and longbone abnormalities. Associated with the duplication of digits are changes in the regulation of development of the anterior limb bud resulting in ectopic expression of signalling components such as *Sonic hedgehog* (*Shh*) and fibroblast growth factor-4 (*Fgf4*), but little is known about the molecular causes of this misregulation. We generated, by a transgene insertion event, a new member of this group of mutants, *Sasquatch* (*Ssq*), which disrupted aspects of both anteroposterior (AP) and dorsoventral (DV) patterning. The mutant displayed preaxial polydactyly in the

(AP) and dorsoventral (DV) patterning. The mutant displayed preaxial polydactyly in the hindlimbs of heterozygous embryos, and in both hindlimbs and forelimbs of homozygotes. The *Shh*, *Fgf4*, *Fgf8*, *Hoxd12* and *Hoxd13* genes were all ectopically expressed in the anterior region of affected limb buds. The insertion site was found to lie close to the *Shh* locus. Furthermore, expression from the transgene reporter has come under the control of a regulatory element that directs a pattern mirroring the endogenous expression pattern of *Shh* in limbs. In abnormal limbs, both *Shh* and the reporter were ectopically induced in the anterior region, whereas in normal limbs the reporter and *Shh* were restricted to the zone of polarising activity (ZPA). These data strongly suggest that *Ssq* is caused by direct interference with the *cis* regulation of the *Shh* gene.



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