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**METHODS FOR IDENTIFYING NON-ESSENTIAL
GENES OF THE HUMAN CYTOMEGALOVIRUS GENOME
AND FOR SCREENING FOR INHIBITORS OF HUMAN CYTOMEGALOVIRUS**

Abstract of the Disclosure

This invention relates to a method for identifying non-essential genes of the human cytomegalovirus (HCMV) genome through the insertion of a β -glucuronidase marker gene into a specified HCMV gene, such that, if the product of the HCMV gene is not expressed, the gene is identified as non-essential for replication of HCMV. This invention also relates to a method of screening for compounds which inhibit HCMV by the insertion of the β -glucuronidase marker gene into a HCMV gene, such that the enzyme marker is expressed and cleaves a conjugate chemical substrate in an assay system to yield a detectable fluorescing product or to result in a color change. This invention further provides the gene responsible in HCMV early cytopathic effect.

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