

Zebrafish Retinoic Acid Receptor Alpha, isoform A
(nr1b1 isoA; zfRARaa; zfRAR α)
Reporter Assay System

96-well Format Assays
Product # Z02201

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Technical Manual
(version 7.1b)

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Zebrafish RARα Reporter Assay System 96-well Format Assays

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I. Description

▪ The Assay System ▪

This nuclear receptor assay utilizes proprietary mammalian cells engineered to provide constitutive, high-level expression of the **Zebrafish (*Danio rerio*) Retinoic Acid Receptor, Alpha A (nr1b1 isoform A)**, a ligand-dependent transcription factor referred to herein as **zfRARaa**.

INDIGO's Reporter Cells express a hybrid zebrafish RARaa receptor in which the native N-terminal ligand binding domain (LBD) has been substituted with that of the yeast GAL4 LBD sequence. Accordingly, the resident luciferase reporter gene is functionally linked to tandem copies of the Gal4 upstream activation sequence (UAS). Thus, quantifying changes in luciferase expression in the treated reporter cells provides a specific and sensitive surrogate measure of ligand-induced changes in zfRARaa activity. The principal application of this assay is in the screening of test samples to quantify any functional bioactivity that they may exert against zebrafish RARaa. In particular, zebrafish reporter assays are used in the monitoring of environmental samples for the presence of bio-active chemical pollutants.

Reporter Cells are prepared using INDIGO's proprietary **CryoMite™** process. This cryo-preservation method yields exceptional cell viability post-thaw, and provides the convenience of immediately dispensing healthy, division-competent cells into assay plates. There is no need for cumbersome intermediate treatment steps such as spin-and-rinse of cells, viability determinations, cell titer adjustments, or the pre-incubation of the cells prior to assay setup.

INDIGO Bioscience's Nuclear Receptor Assays are all-inclusive cell-based assay kits. In addition to zfRARaa Reporter Cells, this kit provides two optimized media for use during cell culture and in diluting the user's test samples, a reference agonist, Luciferase Detection Reagent, and a cell culture-ready assay plate.

▪ The Assay Chemistry ▪

INDIGO's nuclear receptor assays capitalize on the extremely low background, high-sensitivity, and broad linear dynamic range of bio-luminescence reporter gene technology.

Reporter Cells incorporate the cDNA encoding beetle luciferase, a 62 kD protein originating from the North American firefly (*Photinus pyralis*). Luciferase catalyzes the mono-oxidation of D-luciferin in a Mg^{+2} -dependent reaction that consumes O_2 and ATP as co-substrates, and yields as products oxyluciferin, AMP, PP_i , CO_2 , and photon emission. Luminescence intensity of the reaction is quantified using a luminometer, and is reported in terms of Relative Light Units (RLU's).

INDIGO's Nuclear Receptor Assays feature a luciferase detection reagent specially formulated to provide stable light emission between 5 and 90+ minutes after initiating the luciferase reaction. Incorporating a 5 minute reaction-rest period ensures that light emission profiles attain maximal stability, thereby allowing assay plates to be processed in batch. By doing so, the signal output from all sample wells, from one plate to the next, may be directly compared within an experimental set.

▪ Preparation of Test Compounds ▪

Small molecule test compounds are typically solvated in DMSO at high concentrations; ideally 1,000x-concentrated stocks relative to the highest desired treatment concentration in the assay. Using high-concentration stocks minimizes DMSO carry-over into the assay plates. NOTE: The final concentration of total DMSO carried over into assay reactions should never exceed 0.4%.

Immediately prior to setting up the assay plate(s), test compound master stocks are serially diluted using **Compound Screening Medium (CSM)**; as described in *Step 2 of the Assay Protocol*) to generate *2x-concentrated* treatment media.

NOTE: CSM is formulated to help stabilize hydrophobic test compounds in the aqueous environment of the assay mixture. Nonetheless, high concentrations of hydrophobic test compounds diluted in CSM will lack long-term stability and/or solubility, especially if further stored at low temperatures. Hence, it is advised that test compound dilutions are prepared in CSM immediately prior to assay setup and are considered to be 'single-use' reagents.

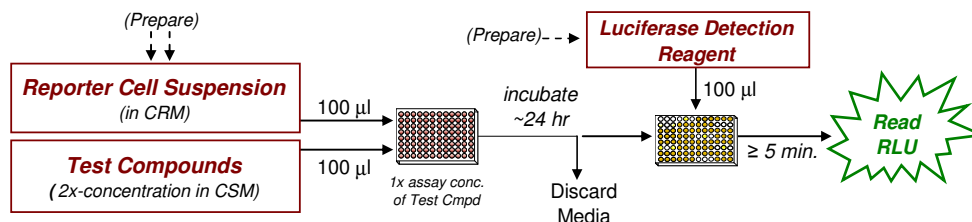
▪ Considerations for Automated Dispensing ▪

When processing a small number of assay plates, first carefully considered the dead volume requirement of your dispensing instrument before committing assay reagents to its setup. In essence, "dead volume" is the volume of reagent that is dedicated to the instrument; it will *not* be available for final dispensing into assay wells. The following Table provides information on reagent volume requirements, and available excesses.

Stock Reagent & Volume provided	Volume to be Dispensed (96-well plate)	Excess rgt. volume available for instrument dead volume
Reporter Cell Suspension 12 ml (prepared from kit components)	100 µl / well 9.6 ml / plate	~ 2.4 ml
LDR 12 ml (prepared from kit components)	100 µl / well 9.6 ml / plate	~ 2.4 ml

▪ Assay Scheme ▪

Figure 1. Assay workflow. *In brief*, Reporter Cells are dispensed into wells of the assay plate and then immediately dosed with the user's test compounds. Following 22 -24 hr incubation, treatment media are discarded and prepared Luciferase Detection Reagent (LDR) is added. Light emission from each assay well is quantified using a plate-reading luminometer.



▪ Assay Performance ▪

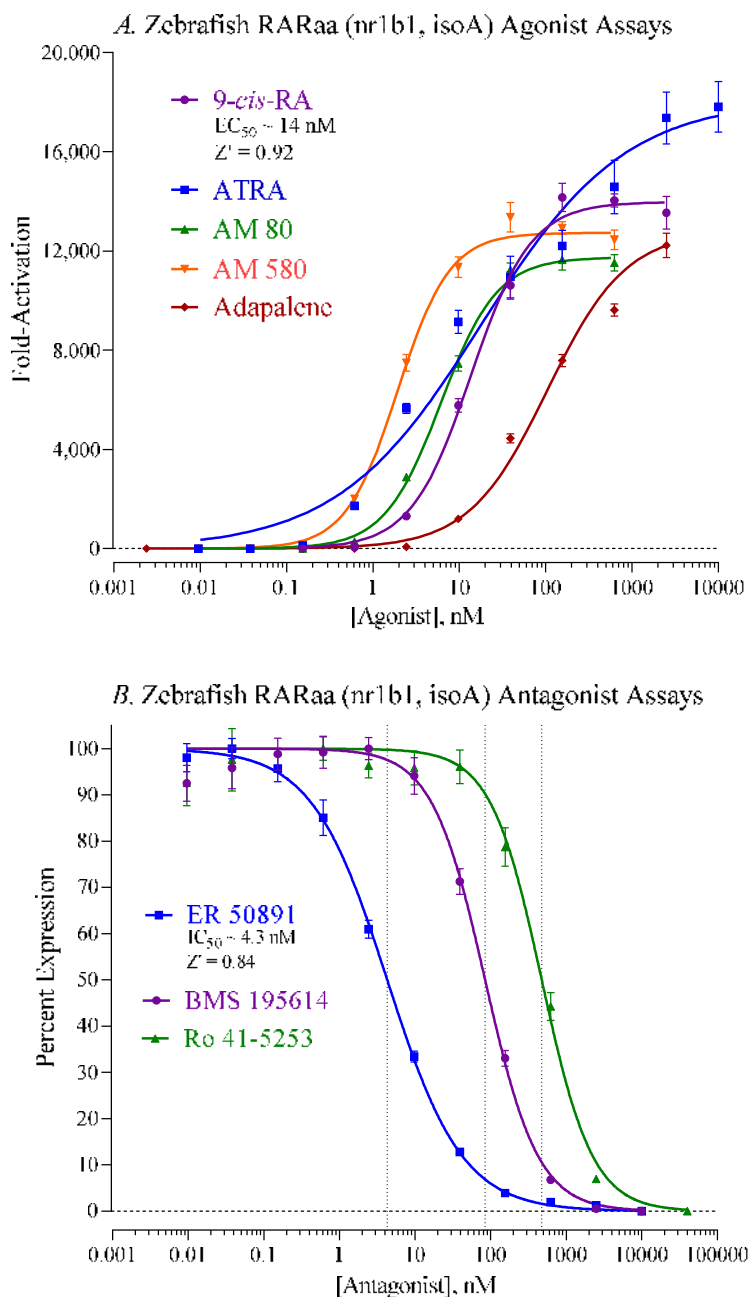


Figure 2 Validation of the zfRARα Assay was performed using manual dispensing and following the protocol described in this Technical Manual. *A.) Agonist dose-response analyses.* Reference agonists 9-*cis*-Retinoic Acid (9-*cis*-RA; provided), all *trans*-Retinoic Acid (ATRA), AM 80, AM 580, and Adapalene (all from Tocris); $n \geq 3$ / treatment. APPENDIX 1 describes a 7-point dilution scheme for the provided reference agonist 9-*cis*-RA. *B.) Antagonist dose-response analyses.* Assay wells were co-treated with a fixed EC_{50} concentration of the agonist 9-*cis*-RA and varying concentrations of the individual antagonists ER 50891, BMS 195614 (Tocris) and Ro 41-5253 (Enzo). Luminescence was quantified and average Relative Light Units (RLU) and their respective values of standard deviation (SD), coefficient of variation (CV), and signal-to-background (S/B) were determined for each treatment concentration. Z' values were calculated as described by Zhang, *et al.* (1999)¹. Non-linear regression analyses were performed and EC_{50} / IC_{50} values determined using GraphPad Prism software.

¹ Zhang JH, Chung TD, Oldenburg KR. (1999) A Simple Statistical Parameter for Use in Evaluation and Validation of High Throughput Screening Assays. *J Biomol Screen.*:4(2), 67-73.

$$Z' = 1 - [3 * (SD^{Control} + SD^{Bkg}) / (RLU^{Control} - RLU^{Bkg})]$$

II. Product Components & Storage Conditions

This Zebrafish RAR α Assay kit contains materials to perform assays in a single 96-well culture plate.

Reporter cells are temperature sensitive! To ensure maximal viability the tube of Cells must be maintained at -80°C until immediately prior to the rapid-thaw procedure described in Step 2 of this protocol.

Assay kits are shipped on dry ice. Upon receipt of the kit transfer it to -80°C storage. If you wish to first inventory the individual kit components be sure to first transfer and submerge the tube of cells in dry ice.

The aliquots of Reporter Cells are provided as single-use reagents. Once thawed, the cells can NOT be refrozen or maintained in extended culture with any hope of retaining downstream assay performance. Therefore, extra volumes of these reagents should be discarded after assay setup.

The date of product expiration is printed on the Product Qualification Insert (PQI) enclosed with each kit.

<u><i>Kit Components</i></u>	<u><i>Amount</i></u>	<u><i>Storage Temp.</i></u>
▪ zfRAR α Reporter Cells	1 x 2.0 mL	-80°C
▪ Cell Recovery Medium (CRM)	1 x 10.5 mL	-20°C
▪ Compound Screening Medium (CSM)	1 x 35 mL	-20°C
▪ 9- <i>cis</i> -Retinoic Acid, 800 μ M (in DMSO) (reference agonist)	1 x 30 μ L	-20°C
▪ Detection Substrate	1 x 6.0 mL	-80°C
▪ Detection Buffer	1 x 6.0 mL	-20°C
▪ 96-well assay plate (white, sterile, cell-culture ready)	1	ambient

III. Materials to be Supplied by the User

The following materials must be provided by the user, and should be made ready prior to initiating the assay procedure:

DAY 1

- dry ice bucket (*Step 3*)
- cell culture-rated laminar flow hood.
- 37°C, humidified 5% CO₂ incubator for mammalian cell culture.
- 37°C water bath.
- 70% alcohol wipes
- 8-channel electronic, repeat-dispensing pipettes & sterile tips
- disposable media basins, sterile.
- sterile multi-channel media basins (such as the Heathrow Scientific "Dual-Function Solution Basin"), or deep-well plates, or appropriate similar vessel for generating dilution series of reference compound(s) and test compound(s).
- *Optional*: antagonist reference compound.
- *Optional*: clear 96-well cell culture assay plate for viewing cells on Day 2.

DAY 2 plate-reading luminometer.

IV. Assay Protocol

Review the entire Assay Protocol before starting. Completing the assay requires an overnight incubation. *Steps 1-8* are performed on **Day 1**, requiring less than 2 hours to complete. *Steps 9-14* are performed on **Day 2**, and require less than 1 hour to complete.

▪ A word about Antagonist-mode assay setup ▪

Receptor inhibition assays expose the Reporter Cells to a constant, sub-maximal concentration (typically between EC₅₀ – EC₈₅) of a known agonist AND the test compound(s) to be evaluated for antagonist activity. This assay kit includes an 800 µM stock solution of **9-*cis*-Retinoic Acid**, an agonist of zfRARα that may be used to setup antagonist-mode assays. 40 nM 9-*cis*-Retinoic Acid typically approximates EC₈₀ in this assay. Hence, it presents a suitable assay concentration of challenge agonist to be used when screening test compounds for inhibitory activity.

Adding the reference agonist to the bulk suspension of Reporter Cells (*i.e.*, prior to dispensing into assay wells) is the most efficient and precise method of setting up antagonist assays, and it is the method presented in *Step 5b* of the following protocol. Note that, in *Step 6*, 100 µl of treatment media is combined with 100 µl of pre-dispensed [Reporter Cells + agonist]. Consequently, one must prepare the bulk suspension of cells to contain a **2x**-concentration (~80 nM) of the challenge agonist 9 *cis*-RA. **APPENDIX 1** provides a template dilution scheme that may be adjusted to prepare cell suspension supplemented with the desired 2x-concentration of agonist.

DAY 1 Assay Protocol: All steps must be performed using aseptic technique.

1.) Remove Cell Recovery Medium (CRM) and Compound Screening Medium (CSM) from freezer storage and thaw in a 37°C water bath.

2.) Prepare dilutions of treatment compounds (first see *Note 5.3*): Prepare Test Compound treatment media for *Agonist*- or *Antagonist-mode* screens.

The final concentration of total DMSO carried over into assay reactions should never exceed 0.4%.

Note that, in *Step 6*, 100 µl of the prepared treatment media is added into assay wells that have been pre-dispensed with 100 µl of Reporter Cells. Hence, to achieve the desired *final* assay concentrations one must prepare treatment media with a 2x-concentration of the test and reference material(s). Use **CSM** to prepare the appropriate dilution series. Plan dilution volumes carefully; this assay kit provides 35 ml of CSM.

Preparing the positive control: This assay kit includes an 800 µM stock of the reference agonist **9-*cis*-Retinoic Acid**. The following 7-point treatment series, with concentrations presented in 4-fold decrements, provides a complete dose-response: 800, 200, 50.0, 12.5, 3.13, 0.781 and 0.195 nM. Always include a 'no treatment' control. **APPENDIX 1** provides an example for generating such a dilution series.

3.) Rapid Thaw of the Reporter Cells: *First*, retrieve the tube of **CRM** from the 37°C water bath and sanitize the outside surface with a 70% ethanol swab.

Second, retrieve **Reporter Cells** from -80°C storage and immerse in dry ice to transport the tube to a laminar flow hood. Perform a *rapid thaw* of the frozen cells by transferring a 10 ml volume of 37°C CRM into the tube of frozen cells. Recap the tube of cells and immediately place it in a 37°C water bath for 5 - 10 minutes. The resulting volume of cell suspension will be 12 ml.

4.) Retrieve the tube of cell suspension from the water bath. Sanitize the outside surface of the tube with a 70% alcohol swab, then transfer it into the cell culture hood.

5.) *a. Agonist-mode assays.* Gently invert the tube of cells several times to disperse cell aggregates and gain a homogenous cell suspension. Without delay, dispense 100 µl of cell suspension into each well of the assay plate.

~ or ~

b. Antagonist-mode assays. Gently invert the tube of cells several times to disperse any cell aggregates, and to gain a homogenous cell suspension. Supplement the bulk suspension of Reporter Cells with the desired 2x-concentration of reference agonist (refer to "A word about antagonist-mode assay setup", pg. 7). Dispense 100 µl of cell suspension into each well of the assay plate.

NOTE 5.1: Take special care to prevent cells from settling during the dispensing period. Allowing cells to settle during the transfer process, and/or lack of precision in dispensing uniform volumes across the assay plate *will* cause well-to-well variation (= increased Standard Deviation) in the assay.

NOTE 5.2: Users sometimes wish to examine the cells using a microscope. If so, the extra volume of cell suspension provided with each kit may be dispensed (100 µl/well) into a clear 96-well cell culture treated assay plate, followed by 100 µl/well of CSM. Incubated overnight in identical manner to those cells contained in the white assay plate.

NOTE 5.3: For logistical reasons, some users find it more convenient to first plate the reporter cells and then prepare their test compound dilutions. That strategy works equally well. Once plated, cells may be placed in an incubator for up to 3 hours before proceeding to *Step 6*.

NOTE 5.4: If well-to-well variation due to 'edge-effects' is a concern this problem *may* be mitigated by dispensing sterile liquid into the *inter-well* spaces of the assay plate. Simply remove 1 tip from the 8-channel dispenser and dispense 100 µl of sterile water into each of the seven inter-well spaces per column of wells.

6.) Dispense 100 µl of 2x-concentration treatment media into appropriate assay wells.

7.) Transfer the assay plate into a 37°C, humidified 5% CO₂ incubator for 22 - 24 hours.

NOTE: Ensure a high-humidity (≥ 85%) environment within the cell culture incubator. This is critical to prevent the onset of deleterious "edge-effects" in the assay plate.

8.) For greater convenience on Day 2, retrieve **Detection Substrate** and **Detection Buffer** from freezer storage and place them in a dark refrigerator (4°C) to thaw overnight.

DAY 2 Assay Protocol: Subsequent manipulations do *not* require special regard for aseptic technique and may be performed on a bench top.

9.) 30 minutes before intending to quantify receptor activity, remove **Detection Substrate** and **Detection Buffer** from the refrigerator and place them in a low-light area so that they may equilibrate to room temperature. Once at room temperature, gently invert each tube several times to ensure homogenous solutions.

NOTE: Do NOT actively warm Detection Substrate above room temperature. If these solutions were not allowed to thaw overnight at 4°C, a room temperature water bath may be used to expedite thawing.

10.) Set the plate-reader to "luminescence" mode. Set the instrument to perform a single 5 second "plate shake" prior to reading the first assay well. Read time may be set to 0.5 second (500 mSec) per well, *or less*.

11.) *Immediately before proceeding to Step 12*, transfer the entire volume of Detection Buffer into the vial of Detection Substrate, thereby generating a 12 ml volume of **Luciferase Detection Reagent (LDR)**. Mix gently to avoid foaming.

12.) Following 22 - 24 hours of incubation discard all media contents by ejecting it into an appropriate waste container. *Gently* tap the inverted plate onto a clean absorbent paper towel to remove residual droplets. Cells will remain tightly adhered to well bottoms.

13.) Add 100 µl of **LDR** to each well of the assay plate. Allow the assay plate to rest at room temperature for at least 5 minutes. Do not shake the assay plate during this period.

14.) Quantify luminescence.

V. Related Products

<i>Product No.</i>	<i>Product Descriptions</i>
Zebrafish RARα Assay Products	
Z02201-32	Zebrafish RAR α Reporter Assay System 3x 32 assays in 96-well format
Z02201	Zebrafish RAR α Reporter Assay System 1x 96-well format assay
Human RARα Assay Products	
IB02201-32	Human RAR α Reporter Assay System 3x 32 assays in 96-well format
IB02201	Human RAR α Reporter Assay System 1x 96-well format assay
IB02202	Human RAR α Reporter Assay System 1x 384-well format assays
Bulk volumes of assay reagents may be custom manufactured to accommodate any scale of HTS. Please Inquire.	
LIVE Cell Multiplex (LCM) Assay	
LCM-01	Reagent volumes sufficient to perform 96 Live Cell Assays in 1x96-well, or 2x48-well, or 3x32-well assay plate formats
LCM-05	Reagent in 5x-bulk volume to perform 480 Live Cell Assays in any combination of 1x96-, 2x48-, or 3x32-well assay plate formats
LCM-10	Reagent in 10x-bulk volume to perform 960 Live Cell Assays in any combination of 1x96-, 2x48-, or 3x32-well assay plate formats

Please refer to INDIGO Biosciences website for updated product offerings.

www.indigobiosciences.com

VI. Limited Use Disclosures

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APPENDIX 1

Example scheme for the serial dilution of 9-*cis*-Retinoic Acid reference agonist, and the setup of a zfRARaa dose-response assay.

