### **Supporting Information**

### Synthesis of fully protected trinucleotide building blocks on a disulphidelinked soluble support

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### S1: Abbrevations

ACN	acetonitrile
Bz	benzoyl
CV	column volume
DCE	dichloroethane
DCM	dichloromethane
DEPT	distortionless enhancement by polarization transfer
DMAc	dimethylacetamide
DMF	dimethylformamide
DMT	dimethoxytrityl
DQF-Cosy	double quantum filtered correlation spectroscopy
EE	ethyl acetate
EtOH	ethanol
HEPES	4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid
HPLC	high performance liquid chromatography
HSQC	heteronuclear single quantum coherence
Ibu	isobutyryl
MeOH	methanol
MS	mass spectrometry
MTM	methylthiomethyl
NMR	nuclear magnetic resonance
PLC	preparative layer chromatography
TCEP	tris(2-carboxyethyl)phosphine
TEA	triethylamine
TEAAc	triethylammonium acetate
THF	tetrahydrofuran
TLC	thin layer chromatography

# S2: General information

Mass spectra were recorded on a Bruker microflex MALDI-TOF MS. HPLC spectra were performed on an Äkta Purifier (Amersham Biosciences) with Nucleodur 125/4, CV = 1.571 ml. DNA Oligomers were synthesized using a Gene Assembler Special DNA synthesizer from Amersham Bioscience. NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker Avance 300 MHz ( $\mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}_{a-b}$ ) or 600 MHz ( $\mathbf{13}_{a-b}$ ) and analyzed via TopSpin 4.0.7. Pyridine was dried overnight over KOH, heated to reflux, distilled off and stored over molecular sieve and argon. TEA was freshly distilled and stored over molecular sieve. DCM used during work-up procedure after coupling reaction was stored over NaHCO3. ACN used for coupling was extra dry (10 ppm H<sub>2</sub>O). Solid support (Thymidine 3'-Icaa CPG 500 Å) and Phosphoramidites (5'-O-DMT-3'-Omethyl phosphoramidites) were purchased from ChemGenes. All other reagents, chemicals and solvents were obtained commercially and used without further purification. All products were visualized via TLC chromatography on aluminium silica gel 60 F254 plates and UV shadowing. Synthesis of 3'-O-methylthiomethyl modified nucleosides (3<sub>a-b</sub>) has been described previously.<sup>[1,2]</sup> Synthesis of Oligomers (5'-CTACTT-3', 5'-GGTCTT-3') was carried out according to Suchsland et al.<sup>[2]</sup> Synthesis of Tetrakis-O-{4-[4-(acetylthiomethyl)-1H-1,2,3-triazol-1-ylmethyl]phenyl}-pentaerythritol (1) conducted according to Jabgunde et al. by using less amount of propargyl thioacetate and achieving equally high yields.<sup>[3]</sup> Phosphitylation was done according to McBride and Caruthers.<sup>[4]</sup>

### S3: Experimental procedures

# S3.1: Tetrakis-*O*-{4-[4-(acetylthiomethyl)-1*H*-1,2,3-triazol-1-ylmethyl]phenyl}-pentaerythritol (**1**)

0.29 g Tetrakis-{[4-(azidomethyl)phenoxy-]methyl}methane (0.44 mmol), 8.6 mg sodium ascorbate (44 µmol) and 33 mg Cul (0.18 mmol) were dissolved in 1 ml DMAc under dry conditions. Then 250 mg propargylthioacetate (2.2 mmol) were added. After four Pump-Freeze-Thaw cycles, the solution was stirred at 50 °C for 16 h. 2.5 ml H<sub>2</sub>O were added and the crude product was extracted three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layer was washed with saturated aqueous NaHCO<sub>3</sub> solution and dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>. After evaporation to dryness the crude product was purified via column chromatography (DCM:MeOH / 97:3). Upon lyophilisation the product **1** was obtained with 70% yield (0.36 g, 0.32 mmol).

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  [ppm] = 7.92 (s, 4H, H5 of triazole), 7.22 (d, *J* = 8.71 Hz, 8H, H2/H6 of Ph), 6.94 (d, *J* = 8.71 Hz, 8H, H3/H5 of Ph), 5.43 (s, 8H, N-CH<sub>2</sub>-Ph), 4.23 (s, 8H, AcS-CH<sub>2</sub>-), 4.11 (s, 8H, CH<sub>2</sub>-pentaerythritol), 2.33 (s, 12H, -SAc).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (300 MHz, DMSO): δ [ppm] = 194.47, 158.32, 143.29, 129.53, 128.34, 122.93, 114.80, 66.00, 52.22, 44.25, 30.20, 23.21.

MS: calculated: 1117.33 m/z, found: 1117.19 m/z.

### S3.2: Coupling of start nucleoside to soluble support $(6_{a-b})$

0.22 g Tetrakis-O-{4-[4-(acetylthiomethyl)-1H-1,2,3-triazol-1-ylmethyl]phenyl}pentaerythritol (1, 0.19 mmol) was dissolved in 1.4 ml degassed ACN and 0.7 ml MeOH. Then 1 ml degassed 5 M butylamine solution (in MeOH) was added. The reaction mixture was stirred over night at room temperature. 2.8 ml of a 1:1 solution DCM:ACN were added. After 10 min 50 mg Amberlyst 15 were added. The ion exchange resin was filtered off and the solvents were removed in vacuo to get the deprotected soluble support **2**.

0.58 g (0.80 mmol) 5'-O-DMT-3'-O-MTM-N-Bz-dA ( $\mathbf{3}_a$ ) were dissolved in 3.2 ml DCM under dry conditions. Then 0.35 ml TEA (3 eq) were added. The solution was stirred in an ice bath. 70 µl (1 eq) freshly distilled SO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> in 0.65 ml dry DCM were added dropwise. The reaction mixture was stirred for another 10 min in an ice bath. 0.23 g (1.5 eq) potassium thiotosylate (in 0.45 ml dry DMF) were added at room temperature and the mixture was stirred for 10 min. The deprotected soluble support with the free thiol ( $\mathbf{2}$ ) was completely dissolved in 1.4 ml DCM:ACN / 1:1 and added to the reaction mixture. The solution was stirred for 3.5 h at room temperature. The solution was divided over three 50 ml plastic tubes and each was refilled with MeOH. The tubes were stored in the freezer at -20 °C overnight. Then the tubes were centrifuged at 6000 rpm for 30 min, the solid was isolated and lyophilized. MS: calculated: 3756.37 m/z, 940.09 (4H<sup>+</sup>/4), found: 940.9 m/z.

Accordingly, 5'-O-DMT-3'-O-MTM-T ( $\mathbf{3}_{b}$ ) was coupled to soluble support using 0.19 mmol soluble support and 1.54 mmol 5'-O-DMT-3'-O-MTM-T.

Yield over two steps: **6**<sub>a</sub>= 54% (0.10 mmol, 0.38 g), **6**<sub>b</sub>= 49% (0.09 mmol, 0.32 g)

### S3.3: General procedure for detritylation, coupling, oxidation and cleavage:

### Detritylation $(7_{a-b}, 10_{a-b})$

7.5 ml Dichloroacetic acid solution (4% in DCE) were added to 0.24 g 5'-O-DMT-*N*-Bz-dA bound on soluble support (63 µmol, **6**<sub>a</sub>) and stirred for 5 min, whereby the solution turned red. 7.5 ml pyridine were added, thereby the solution turned colourless again. Pyridine was evaporated, and the residue was divided over two 50 ml plastic tubes, each of which was filled up with about 40 ml MeOH. After 15 min at -20 °C, the tubes were centrifuged at 6000 rpm for 30 min, the solid was filtered and lyophilized to yield in 5'-OH-3'-O-MTM-*N*-Bz-dA bound on soluble support **7**<sub>a</sub> to be used for the following phosphoramidite coupling.

Detritylation was carried out in the same manner to get the other 5'-OH-derivatives:

34  $\mu$ mol **9**<sub>a</sub> (5'-*O*-DMT-TdA<sup>Bz</sup> on soluble support) and 4 ml acid solution to give **10**<sub>a</sub> 89  $\mu$ mol **6**<sub>b</sub> (5'-*O*-DMT-T on soluble support) and 11 ml acid solution to give **7**<sub>b</sub> 46  $\mu$ mol **9**<sub>b</sub> (5'-*O*-DMT-dG<sup>Ibu</sup>T on soluble support) and 6 ml acid solution to give **10**<sub>b</sub>

### Coupling (8<sub>a-b</sub>, 11<sub>a-b</sub>)

5 ml of a 0.1 M solution of 5'-O-DMT protected 3'-O-methylphosphoramidite of T in ACN (6 eq) was added under dry conditions to the detritylated nucleoside bound on the soluble support ( $7_a$ , 63 µmol). Then 2.1 ml 5-(benzylmercapto)-1*H*-tetrazole (0.3 M in ACN) were added, and the reaction mixture was stirred for 3 h at room temperature under argon to form the protected dimer  $8_a$  which was used immediately for oxidation.

Coupling was carried out in the same manner with the following compounds:

**10**<sub>a</sub> (TdA<sup>Bz</sup> on soluble support, 34 µmol), 2.2 ml of a 0.1 M solution of the 5'-*O*-DMT-dC<sup>Bz</sup>-3'-*O*methylphosphoramidite in ACN and 1.2 ml BMT-solution to give **11**<sub>a</sub> **7**<sub>b</sub> (T on soluble support, 89 µmol), 5.4 ml of a 0.1 M solution of the 5'-*O*-DMT-dG<sup>Ibu</sup>-3'-*O*methylphosphoramidite in ACN and 3 ml BMT-solution to give **8**<sub>b</sub> **10**<sub>b</sub> (dG<sup>Ibu</sup>T on soluble support, 46 µmol), 2.8 ml of a 0.1 M solution of the 5'-*O*-DMT-dG<sup>Ibu</sup>-3'-*O*methylphosphoramidite in ACN and 1.6 ml BMT-solution to give **11**<sub>b</sub>

### Oxidation (9<sub>a-b</sub>, 12<sub>a-b</sub>)

0.2 M iodine solution (Trimethylpyridine/ACN/H<sub>2</sub>O (1:11:5)) were added until a yellow colour remained (about 70 ml). A few drops of a 1 M trimethyl phosphite solution in DMF were added until the solution was colourless again. The solution was divided over four 50 ml plastic tubes, refilled with MeOH and stored in the freezer at -20 °C overnight. The solid was filtered and the product  $\mathbf{9}_{a}$  was lyophilized (34 µmol, 0.17 g, 53%).

Oxidation was carried out in the same manner for the other oxidation reactions:

**11**<sub>a</sub> (5'-*O*-DMT-dC<sup>Bz</sup>TdA<sup>Bz</sup> on soluble support) and about 35 ml iodine solution to give **12**<sub>a</sub> (70%, 24  $\mu$ mol, 0.16 g)

 $\mathbf{8}_{\mathbf{b}}$  (5'-*O*-DMT-dG<sup>Ibu</sup>T on soluble support) and about 95 ml iodine solution to give  $\mathbf{9}_{\mathbf{b}}$  (55%, 46 µmol, 0.23 g)

 $\mathbf{11}_{b}$  (5'-*O*-DMT-dG<sup>ibu</sup>-dG<sup>ibu</sup>T on soluble support) and about 40 ml iodine solution to give  $\mathbf{12}_{b}$  (70%, 33 µmol, 0.22 g)

All yields for oxidized compounds were calculated in relation to DMT-protected starting materials  $6_{a-b}$  and  $9_{a-b}$ .

#### Cleavage from support (13<sub>a-b</sub>)

0.30 g TCEP were dissolved in a mixture of 2 ml aqueous HEPES buffer (pH 7.5) and 4 ml ACN. This TCEP solution was added to trinucleotide linked soluble support (0.16 g, 27  $\mu$ mol, **12**<sub>a</sub>) and stirred overnight at room temperature under argon. The reaction mixture was evaporated and lyophilized. The soluble support was washed extensively with ACN, acetone, EtOH, THF and EE, until no colour appeared when the soluble support was treated with acid-solution (dichloroacetic acid, 4% in DCE). The combined organic layers were evaporated and lyophilized. Purification was carried out by PLC (DCM:MeOH / 95:5 + 1% TEA). The product was eluted from silica gel first with DCM + 1% TEA and afterwards with ACN/acetone + 1% TEA. The combined organic layers were evaporated and lyophilized to give **13**<sub>a</sub> (44%, 48  $\mu$ mol, 66 mg).

Cleavage from support was achieved in the same manner for trinucleotide  $12_b$  (31 µmol) with 0.39 g TCEP to give  $13_b$  (39%, 48 µmol, 0.07 g).

#### **13**<sub>a</sub> (5'-*O*-DMT-dC<sup>Bz</sup>TdA<sup>Bz</sup>):

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  [ppm] = 11.21 (s, 1H, NH), 11.17 (s, 1H, NH), 10.44 (s, 1H, NH), 7.81 (m, 4H, Bz-arom), 7.68-7.65 (m, 2H, A-H6, H8), 7.38 (m, 1H, T-H6), 7.21 (m, 1H, C-H6), 7.20-7.19 (m, 13 H, DMT-arom), 6.88-6.87 (m, 6 H, Bz-arom), 6.48 (m, 1H, H1'), 6.11 (m, 1H, H1'), 5.79 (m, 1H, H1'), 5.39 (m, 1H, C H5), 5.32 (m, 1H, H4'), 4.82 (m, 1H, H4'), 4.68 (m, 1H, H4'), 4.27 (m, 1H, H3'), 3.84 (m, 1H, H3'), 3.76-3.71 (m, 12H, CH<sub>3</sub> (DMT/POCH<sub>3</sub>)), 3.69 (m, 1H, H3'), 3.59 (m, 2H, H5'/H5''), 3.46 (m, 2H, H5'/H5''), 3.25 (m, 2H, H5'/H5''), 2.85 (m, 2H, H2'/H2''), 2.58 (m, 2H, H2'/H2''), 2.35 (m, 2H, H2'/H2''), 1.34 (s, 3H, T-CH<sub>3</sub>).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (600 MHz, DMSO): δ [ppm] = 174.25, 166.98, 165.79, 164.76, 158.35, 158.33, 157.71, 156.66, 147.02, 146.98, 144.05, 137.97, 136.23, 131.60, 130.23-128.44, 129.79, 127.18, 127.75-114.88, 118.45, 109.69, 89.54, 89.40, 84.48, 83.74, 78.25, 74.32, 72.90, 69.79, 69.30, 67.80, 65.95, 65.17, 62.62, 55.05, 43.4, 35.11, 31.93, 26.53, 29.8. For more information see table S1 in section NMR spectra (**13a**).

MS: calculated: 1382.41 m/z, found: 1405.63 (**13a** +Na) m/z.

#### **13**<sub>b</sub> (5'-*O*-DMTdG<sup>Ibu</sup>dG<sup>Ibu</sup>T):

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, DMSO): δ [ppm] = 11.31 (s, 2H, NH), 10.46 (s, 1H, NH), 9.07 (s, 2H, NH lbu), 7.91 (s, 2H, G-C8), 7.80 (m, 1H, T-H6), 7.16-6.86 (m, 13 H, DMT-arom), 6.65 (m, 2H, H1'), 5.97 (m, 1H, H1'), 5.31 (m, 1H, H3'-OH), 4.46 (m, 1H, H4'), 4.31 (m, 2H, H4'), 4.01 (m, 1H, H3'), 3.87 (m, 2H, H3'), 3.76-3.71 (m, 12H, CH<sub>3</sub> (DMT/POCH<sub>3</sub>)), 3.51 (m, 2H, H5'/H5''), 3.36 (m, 2H, 2H''), 3.01 (m, 4H, 2H' + 2x lbu-H), 2.87 (m, 4H, 2x H5'/H5''), 1.97 (m, 2H, H2'/H2''), 1.23 (s, 3H, T- CH<sub>3</sub>).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (600 MHz, DMSO): δ [ppm] = 180.90, 163.70, 158.41, 158.39, 158.35, 157.71, 143.08, 136.23, 130.23-128.33, 122.95, 122.25, 120.88, 119.24, 113.31, 87.16, 86.37, 84.45, 83.60, 81.42, 77.19, 74.66, 69.78, 65.75, 55.05, 45.69, 39.47, 32.14, 29.96, 18.04. For more information see table S2 in section NMR spectra (**13b**).

MS: calculated: 1370.44 m/z, found: 1370.80 m/z.

#### S3.4: Synthesis of fully protected phosphoramidite trinucleotides (14a-b)

Trinucleotide (**13**<sub>a</sub>, 27 µmol, 37 mg) was dried under high vacuum and dissolved in 250 µl DCM under dry conditions. 20 µl TEA were added. 10 µl *N*,*N*-Diisopropylmethyl-phosphonamidic-chloride were

added dropwise. The reaction mixture was stirred for 3.5 h at room temperature under argon. Synthesis was controlled via TLC (EE:DCM:TEA / 45:45:10). Samples were visualized with ethanolic ninhydrin solution. Reaction was stopped by addition of 40  $\mu$ l MeOH. The organic reaction mixture was washed with saturated NaHCO<sub>3</sub>-solution containing 2% TEA. The separated organic layer was evaporated at 35 °C, and the remaining oil (32 mg, 21  $\mu$ mol, **14a**) was lyophilized and stored under argon at -20 °C.

Phosphitylation was carried out in the same manner with trinucleotide  $\mathbf{13}_{b}$  to give  $\mathbf{14b}$  (66 mg, 48  $\mu$ mol).

### S3.5: Coupling of trinucleotides on DNA synthesizer - 6mer synthesis

The trinucleotide phosphoramidite (5'-CTA-3', **14**<sub>a</sub>) was dissolved in DCM (0.1 M) under dry conditions and used for coupling to the sequence 5'-CTT-3' on CPG, assembled directly prior to trinucleotide coupling from standard monomer 3-*O*-methyl-phosphoramidites. Synthesis scale was 1  $\mu$ mol. Coupling time was 2 x 300 s (double-coupling) for the trinucleotide building block. Synthesis was performed via DMT-on method.

The trinucleotide phosphoramidite (5'-GGT-3',  $\mathbf{14}_{b}$ ) was dissolved in DCM:ACN/3:1 (0.1 M) under dry conditions. Coupling to the sequence 5'-CTT-3' on CPG was carried out as described above for  $\mathbf{14}_{a}$ .

### S3.6: Deprotection of synthesized 6mers

The solid support of each individual synthesis was divided over two screw cap plastic tubes. 1 ml 32% aqueous ammonia solution was added to each vial, and the vials were shaken at room temperature overnight. The oligonucleotide solution was transferred to a new screw cap plastic tube, the support was washed with another 1 ml of ammonia solution, which was then added to the solution in the tube. The tube was sealed and treated at 55°C overnight. The supernatant was removed and the solid support was washed four times with each time 100  $\mu$ l EtOH:H<sub>2</sub>O/1:1. The combined supernatant and washing solutions were evaporated to dryness and the remaining solid was dissolved in buffer A (5% ACN, 0.1 M TEAAc) and analyzed by HPLC.

### S3.7: HPLC analysis of 6mers

HPLC conditions: Nucleodur 125/4, CV = 1.571 ml; 1 ml/min; room temperature; buffer A: 5% ACN, 0.1 M TEAAc; buffer B: 30% ACN, 0.1 M TEAAc; Gradient: starting with 0% buffer B for 4 CV, to 40% buffer B over 3 CV, to 60% buffer B over 7 CV, to 100% buffer B over 2 CV, then 100% buffer B for another 2 CV and to 0% buffer B over 3 CV. Detection was by UV-light absorption at 260 nm. Collected fractions corresponding to Peak 2 (see Fig. 4 HPLC Purification of CTACTT (A) and GGTCTT (B) (DMT-on) in main text) were analyzed by MALDI mass spectroscopy.

MS: full length 5'-CTACTT-3' (Peak 2, Fig. 4A) calculated: 1742.18 m/z, found: 1742.15 m/z. MS: full length 5'-GGTCTT-3' (Peak 2, Fig. 4B) calculated: 1798.21 m/z, found: 1799.21 m/z (+H<sup>+</sup>).

### S3.8: Coupling yields for GGT and CTA building blocks

Coupling yields for trinucleotide phosphoramidites were determined from peak areas of the HPL chromatogram (Figure 4, main text), corrected by the extinction coefficients.

Coupling yield for CTA: 17%.

Coupling yield for GGT: 72%.

# S4: NMR Spectra

Tetrakis-*O*-{4-[4-(acetylthiomethyl)-1*H*-1,2,3-triazol-1-ylmethyl]-phenyl}-pentaerythritol (1), <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C spectra

<sup>1</sup>H spectrum (1):



<sup>13</sup>C spectrum (1):



Trinucleotide C<sup>Bz</sup>TA<sup>Bz</sup> (**13**<sub>a</sub>), <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, DEPT, DQF-COSY, HSQC spectra

# <sup>1</sup>H spectrum (13a):



# <sup>13</sup>C spectrum (13a):



### DEPT spectrum (13a):



HSQC spectrum (13a):



### DQF-COSY spectrum (13a):



#### Details of <sup>1</sup>H and Cosy spectra (13a):



ppm	DEPT	Signal
174.25	/	Cyt C1
166.98, 165.79	/	BZ C=O
164.76	/	Thy C3
158.35, 158.33	/	DMT arom
157.71	/	Ade C5
156.66	/	Cyt C3
147.02, 146.98	/	Ade C3/4
144.05	/	DMT arom
137.97	/	Bz arom
136.23	/	DMT arom
131.60	+	Ade C2
130.23-128.44	+	DMT arom
129.79	+	Cyt C5
127.18	+	Cyt C6
127.75-114.88	+	Bz arom
118.45	+	Thy C6
109.69	/	Thy C5
89.54	+	C1'
89.40	/	DMTq
84.48	+	C1'
83.74	+	C1'
78.25	+	C4'
74.32	+	C4'
72.90	+	C4'
69.79	-	C5'/''
69.30	-	C5'/''
67.80	+	C3'
65.95	+	C3'
65.17	+	C3'
62.62	-	C5'/''
55.05, 43.40	+	O-CH <sub>3</sub> (DMT/POCH <sub>3</sub> )
35.11	-	C2'/''
31.93	-	C2'/''
26.53	-	2'/"
10.50	-	Thy methyl

**Table S1:** Details of <sup>13</sup>C and DEPT spectra of **13**<sub>a</sub>, DEPT: +  $\triangleq$  positive signal, -  $\triangleq$  negative signal, /  $\triangleq$  no signal.



Trinucleotide G<sup>Ibu</sup>G<sup>Ibu</sup>T, (**13**<sub>b</sub>), <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, DEPT, DQF-COSY, HSQC spectra

### <sup>1</sup>H spectrum (13b):



# <sup>13</sup>C spectrum (13b):



### DEPT spectrum (13b):





### HSQC spectrum (13b):



#### Details of <sup>1</sup>H and COSY spectra (13b):



ppm	Dept	Signal
180.90	/	Ibu C=O
163.70	/	Thy C4
158.41, 158.39	/	DMT arom
158.35	/	Gua C6
157.71, 147.02	/	Thy C2; Gua C4
143.08	/	Gua C2
136.23	/	DMT arom
130.22-128.33	+	DMT arom
122.95, 122.25	+	Thy C6, Gua C8
120.88, 119.24	/	Gua C5; Thy C5
113.31	+	DMT arom
87.16	/	DMTq
86.37	+	C4'
84.45	+	C4'
83.60	+	C1'
81.42	+	C1'
77.19	+	C3'
74.66	+	C3'
69.78	-	C5'
65.75	-	C5'
55.05, 39.47	+	O-CH <sub>3</sub> (DMT/POCH <sub>3</sub> )
45.69	-	C2'
32.14	-	C2'
29.60, 18.04	+	Methyl Thy/Ibu

**Table S2:** Details of <sup>13</sup>C and DEPT spectra of **13**<sub>b</sub>, DEPT: +  $\triangleq$  positive signal, -  $\triangleq$  negative signal /  $\triangleq$  no signal.



#### References

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