

Zfp521 works its zinc fingers to the bone



The clavicle (arrow) is underdeveloped in mice lacking one copy of *Runx2* (left) but is partially restored when *Zfp521* expression is also reduced (right).

The zinc finger protein *Zfp521* also controls bone formation and is a binding partner of *Runx2*. Hesse et al. examined how the two proteins combine to regulate osteogenesis in vivo.

Mice lacking one copy of *Runx2* have underdeveloped bones similar to cleidocranial dysplasia patients. This phenotype was largely rescued by removing one copy of *Zfp521*, whereas overex-

A zinc finger protein controls two stages of bone formation by opposing the master regulator of osteogenesis, Hesse et al. report.

Runx2 is a transcription factor essential for the differentiation of mesenchymal precursors into bone-forming osteoblasts. Mutations in human *Runx2* cause the skeletal disorder cleidocranial dysplasia, in which certain bones are

underdeveloped. The zinc finger protein *Zfp521* also controls bone formation and is a binding partner of *Runx2*. Hesse et al. examined how the two proteins combine to regulate osteogenesis in vivo.

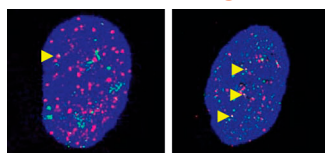
Mice lacking one copy of *Runx2* have underdeveloped bones similar to cleidocranial dysplasia patients. This phenotype was largely rescued by removing one copy of *Zfp521*, whereas overexpressing the zinc finger protein exacerbated the bone defects. Accordingly, Hesse et al. found that *Zfp521* inhibits *Runx2* to limit the differentiation of mesenchymal cells into osteoblasts. *Zfp521* blocked *Runx2* by recruiting the histone deacetylase HDAC3 to switch off *Runx2*-mediated transcription. *Zfp521* was unable to inhibit *Runx2* activity in the absence of HDAC3.

Some evidence suggests that *Runx2* itself has an inhibitory function at later stages of bone development, preventing osteoblasts from reaching their fully mature state. Indeed, overexpressing *Runx2* in adult mice resulted in reduced bone density and the accumulation of immature osteoblasts. This was reversed by simultaneously overexpressing *Zfp521*, suggesting that the zinc finger protein antagonizes *Runx2* at this stage of bone development as well.

Zfp521 therefore maintains the correct balance of *Runx2* activity for osteoblast commitment and maturation. The authors now want to identify other transcription factors regulated by *Zfp521*.

Hesse, E., et al. 2010. *J. Cell Biol.* doi:10.1083/jcb.201009107.

Telomeres get SIRT-ified



A cell lacking SIRT1 (right) shows increased DNA damage (green) at chromosome ends (red).

Budding yeast telomeres are partly maintained by a deacetylase called Sir2, but whether the mammalian orthologue of this protein, SIRT1, has a similar function is unclear. Mice overexpressing SIRT1 have an increased healthspan—remaining healthy for longer than wild-type littermates. Palacios et al. examined telomeres from these mice, as well as from animals that lack SIRT1 entirely.

SIRT1-deficient mice had shorter telomeres, whereas SIRT1 overexpression boosted telomere length, preventing them from short-

A protein that protects against aging-related diseases maintains telomere length and integrity, Palacios et al. reveal.

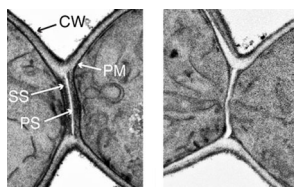
Telomeres protect chromosome ends but grow shorter with age, potentially contributing to several age-associated illnesses.

ening as the mice grew older. This latter effect required the activity of telomerase enzyme, a major contributor to telomere production. Yet SIRT1 may also influence a second maintenance pathway called alternative lengthening of telomeres, or ALT. SIRT1 overexpression increased the amount of homologous recombination at chromosome ends, a key step in the ALT pathway. SIRT1 boosted homologous recombination along the rest of chromosomes as well, suggesting that the deacetylase promotes DNA repair. On the other hand, SIRT1-deficient cells showed increased damage at their chromosome ends.

SIRT1 therefore maintains telomere length and integrity, which may explain why SIRT1-overexpressing mice stay healthier for longer. Telomeres re-grow when differentiated cells are reprogrammed into an embryonic stem cell-like state. Palacios et al. found that SIRT1 binds to the elongated telomeres of these induced pluripotent stem cells. Senior author Maria Blasco now wants to investigate whether SIRT1 contributes to telomere extension during reprogramming.

Palacios, J.A., et al. 2010. *J. Cell Biol.* doi:10.1083/jcb.201005160.

Myo1 provides a ring in the tail



Yeast expressing the *Myo1* tail (right) still form a primary septum (PS), which promotes cytokinesis in the absence of *Myo1* motor activity.

Fang et al. describe two distinct pathways that target the tail of yeast myosin II to the bud neck to direct cell division.

Myosin II motors drive cytokinesis by assembling a contractile actomyosin ring at the site of cell division. The budding yeast myosin II, *Myo1*, is targeted to the bud neck by its C-terminal tail, and this domain alone is sufficient to separate mother and daughter cells, even though it

lacks the actin-binding and motor activity of *Myo1*'s head domain.

By constructing a series of deletion mutants, Fang et al. discovered two separate mechanisms that localize the tail of *Myo1* at different points in the cell cycle. Before cytokinesis, *Myo1* localized to the bud neck by binding Bni5, a protein that in turn binds to septin GTPases. During cytokinesis, however, *Myo1* targeting depended on the actin-binding protein IQGAP instead.

Fang, X., et al. 2010. *J. Cell Biol.* doi:10.1083/jcb.201005134.