CRNKL1 is a highly selective regulator of intron-retaining HIV-1 and cellular mRNAs

Han Xiao[1], Emanuel Wyler[2#], Miha Milek[2#], Bastian Grewe[3], Philipp Kirchner[4], Arif Ekici[4], Ana Beatriz

Oliveira Villela Silva[1], Doris Jungnickl[1], Markus Landthaler[2,5], Armin Ensser[1], and Klaus Überla[1*]

[1] Institute of Clinical and Molecular Virology, University Hospital Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander

Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany

[2] Berlin Institute for Medical Systems Biology, Max-Delbrück-Center for Molecular Medicine in the

Helmholtz Association, Robert-Rössle-Strasse 10, 13125, Berlin, Germany

[3] Department of Molecular and Medical Virology, Ruhr-University, Bochum, Germany

[4] Institute of Human Genetics, University Hospital Erlangen, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-

Nürnberg, Erlangen, Germany

[5] IRI Life Sciences, Institute für Biologie, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Philippstraße 13, 10115, Berlin,

Germany

[#] these two authors contributed equally

[*]Corresponding author:

Prof. Dr. Klaus Überla

Institute of Clinical and Molecular Virology, University Hospital Erlangen

Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Schlossgarten 4, 91054 Erlangen

Germany

Tel: (+49) 9131-8523563

e-mail: klaus.ueberla@fau.de

Abstract

The HIV-1 Rev protein is a nuclear export factor for unspliced and incompletely-spliced HIV-1 RNAs.

Without Rev, these intron-retaining RNAs are trapped in the nucleus. A genome-wide screen identified

nine proteins of the spliceosome which all enhanced expression from the HIV-1 unspliced RNA after

CRISPR/Cas knock-down. Depletion of DHX38, WDR70 and four proteins of the Prp19-associated

complex (ISY1, BUD31, XAB2, CRNKL1) resulted in a more than 20-fold enhancement of unspliced HIV-1

RNA levels in the cytoplasm. Targeting of CRNKL1, DHX38, and BUD31 affected nuclear export

efficiencies of the HIV-1 unspliced RNA to a much larger extent than splicing. Transcriptomic analyses

further revealed that CRNKL1 also suppresses cytoplasmic levels of cellular mRNAs with selectively

retained introns. Thus, CRNKL1 dependent nuclear retention seems to be a novel mechanism for the

regulation of cytoplasmic levels of intron-retaining cellular mRNAs that is harnessed by HIV-1 to direct

its complex splicing pattern.

Introduction

Intron retention is increasingly recognized as a regulatory mechanism of gene expression and diversification of the cellular proteome (1). Transcriptomic analyses indicate that a large percentage of eukaryotic genes encode transcripts retaining introns (2, 3). Intron-retaining transcripts may be trapped in the nucleus leading to their degradation. Alternatively, specialized nuclear export pathways may enable certain intron-retaining transcripts to reach the cytoplasm, where they can be translated or undergo nonsense-mediated decay. Retroviruses use intron retention to encode multiple proteins from one primary transcript. RNA-secondary structures or cellular or viral adaptor proteins link intron-retaining retroviral transcripts in the nucleus to the TAP/NXF1 or the CRM-1 nuclear export factors (4), leading to the export of intron-retaining RNAs. While a number of studies explored how nuclear retention can be overcome, the factors mediating nuclear retention of intron-containing mRNAs are mostly unknown, but are likely linked to partial assembly of splicing complexes on intron-containing RNA (5).

The first evidence for a regulated export and expression of intron-retaining RNAs in mammalian cells was obtained in studies investigating the replication of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1). Alternative splicing and intron retention leads to three types of transcripts: fully-spliced (FS) mRNAs, incompletely-spliced (IS) mRNAs, and the unspliced (US) genomic RNA (6). The process of viral gene expression is temporally regulated, resulting in early expression of regulatory proteins and late expression of structural proteins (7, 8). In the early phase, the US and IS transcripts are retained in the nucleus, and are subjected to the nuclear splicing or degradation machinery (9). Only FS transcripts are transported to the cytoplasm via the default mRNA export pathway, TAP/NXF1, leading to expression of Tat, Rev and Nef proteins (10, 11). The regulatory proteins Tat and Rev are nuclear cytoplasmic shuttle proteins and regulate viral gene expression. While Tat transactivates transcription by enhancing RNA elongation, Rev fine-tunes posttranscriptional processes and acts as a switch to initiate the late phase of the viral replication cycle (reviewed in Grewe and Uberla, 2010; Mousseau and Valente, 2017). It binds to the Rev-responsive element (RRE) which is present in the HIV-1 US and IS transcripts, but not in the FS transcripts, and multimerizes on the RRE. The protein exporting factor CRM1 and associated factors are recruited by the Rev-RRE complex, leading to the nuclear-cytoplasmic export of these two classes of RNA (14).

Nuclear retention of intron-retaining HIV-1 RNAs has been explained by their suboptimal splice sites, leading to the trapping of the intron-retaining RNAs in the spliceosome and subsequent degradation

(15). In addition, multiple inhibitory sequences (INS) were identified in the retained introns (16–20). The

presumed inactivation of these inhibitory sequences by codon-optimizing the AT-rich HIV-1 sequence

abolished nuclear retention (21) independent of the presence or absence of HIV-1 splice donor and

splice acceptor sites (22, 23). Why AT-rich intron-containing HIV-1 sequences, but not the codon-

optimized variants are retained remains elusive. It has been reported that knock-down of the

paraspeckle lncRNA NEAT1 could promote HIV Gag production through increased nucleocytoplasmic

export of INS-containing RNAs, implicating the nuclear paraspeckles in the nuclear retention of HIV US

and IS RNAs (24). However, this has been questioned by a study demonstrating that HIV-1 US RNA was

not actually colocalized with paraspeckles (25), despite that several paraspeckle proteins (PSF, Martin3

and RBM14) have been reported to associate with HIV-1 INS elements and/or promote the Rev-

dependent RNA export (26–28).

In addition to these viral determinants and lncRNA contributing to nuclear mRNA retention, depletion

of hnRNPA2/B1 has been shown to increase cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 genomic RNA, but this

increase did not enhance Gag expression levels and the precise mechanism remains unknown (29).

With regard to nuclear retention of mRNA in general, a cellular complex named pre-mRNA retention

and splicing complex (RES) has been identified in yeast (30). The RES is composed of Bud13, Snu17p, and

Pml1P and inactivation of either of these genes in yeast reduces splicing of an intron with a weak

5′splice donor. In addition, Pml1P inactivation enhanced expression of a pre-mRNA reporter construct

without substantial reduction of the spliced mRNA suggesting a role of Pml1P and the RES in nuclear

retention. More recently, BUD13 was identified to bind to the poorly-spliced mRNA of mammalian IRF7,

a master regulator of the interferon response (31). Knock-down of BUD13 specifically enhanced

retention of intron 4 of IRF7 in stimulated cells thus reducing IRF7 protein levels and dampening the

interferon response. However, intron-containing IRF7 mRNA could not be detected in the cytoplasm (31),

indicating additional nuclear trapping mechanisms or rapid cytoplasmic degradation of intron-containing

IRF7 mRNA. HIV-1 introns also differ from typical RES-dependent introns (31–33) by their low GC

content, challenging the hypothesis that HIV-1 splicing may be regulated by the RES.

An alternative nuclear trapping mechanism could be a cellular quality control mechanism for mRNAs

located at the nuclear pore complex (NPC). Experimental or stress-induced interference with this

complex results in leakage of intron-retaining mRNAs into the cytoplasm (34–37). This finding suggests

that the NPC-associated quality control complex also has a role in nuclear retention of intron-containing

mRNAs, probably as a back-up mechanism not influencing the initial splicing events. Here we identified

cellular proteins involved in nuclear trapping of intron-retaining HIV-1 mRNAs by performing a genome-
wide screen for cellular factors, whose depletion resulted in enhanced expression from HIV-1 unspliced
transcripts in the absence of its export factor Rev. Furthermore, we examined the effect of identified
cellular factors on HIV US and FS RNAs localization and expression. This revealed that CRNKL1 is a
nuclear retention factor of the HIV-1 unspliced RNA and a highly selective regulator of cytoplasmic levels
of intron-retaining HIV-1 and cellular mRNAs.

Results

Reporter cell lines for HIV-1 Rev-independent expression from the unspliced RNA

The overall strategy to identify cellular proteins involved in the nuclear trapping of intron-retaining HIV-

1 mRNAs was to inactivate cellular genes by a genome-wide lentiviral CRISPR-Cas knock-out library and

to select knock-out cells that show enhanced Gag-expression from a proviral Rev-deficient HIV-1

reporter construct. To easily quantify HIV-Gag expression in living cells, its ORF was fused to the blue-

fluorescent protein (BFP) gene. The *rev* gene was inactivated by two point mutations and the DsRed

reporter gene was expressed in place of *nef* from a fully-spliced HIV-1 transcript in order to mark HIV

infected cells in the absence of Rev (Fig. 1A). Since we aimed to establish stable cell clones containing

such proviral reporter constructs, expression of *pol, vif, vpr, and vpu* was also blocked by point

mutations to avoid difficulties due to potential cytotoxic or cytostatic effects of these viral proteins (38–

40). The *env* gene was inactivated by a 4-bp deletion resulting in a frame shift. Although this reporter

construct, designated HIV-dual-GT only encodes the G̲ag-BPF fusion protein, DsRed, and T̲at (for

sufficient transcriptional activation), all known *cis*-acting sequences potentially interacting with cellular

components should be maintained.

To characterize the expression pattern of HIV-dual-GT, HEK293T cells were transfected with plasmids

containing HIV-dual-GT or a *rev*-deficient *env*-deletion mutant of HIV in the presence or absence of a

Rev-expression plasmid. Western blot analyses revealed Rev-dependent expression of the Gag-BFP

fusion protein (Fig. 1B). Flow cytometric analysis of HEK293T cells transfected with HIV-dual-GT revealed

a major DsRed positive, but BFP negative cell population, that shifted to a double positive population by

co-transfection of a Rev-expression plasmid (Fig. 1C). DsRed expression seemed to decrease in the

presence of Rev consistent with reduced splicing and consequently reduced generation of fully-spliced

DsRed mRNA due to rapid export of unspliced transcripts (7).

To generate reporter cell lines harboring a properly integrated proviral DNA of HIV-dual-GT, it was

encapsidated and pseudotyped by cotransfection with HIV-gag-pol and VSV-G expression plasmids. The

Rev deficiency was also complemented by cotransfection of a Rev-expression plasmid. Titers of the HIV-

dual-GT vector were in the range of $5x10^5$ TU (transforming units)/ml. Flow cytometric analysis of Jurkat

cells transduced with this VSV-G pseudotyped HIV-dual-GT vector particles revealed a distinct

population of cells that was DsRed positive, but BFP negative (Fig. 1D). Transient transfection of this

transduced bulk culture with a Rev-expression plasmid shifted approximately 10% of the DsRed positive

population to a DsRed and BFP double-positive population. The magnitude of this effect was lower than

in the co-transfection experiments in 293T cells (Fig. 1C) consistent with the lower transfection

efficiency for Jurkat cells.

To obtain more homogenous reporter cells, Jurkat cell clones containing HIV-dual-GT were established

by transducing Jurkat cells at an MOI of 0.1, followed by flow cytometric sorting of single DsRed positive,

BFP negative cells into wells of a 96-well plate (Fig. 1E). Two of the expanded DsRed positive cell clones,

showing a rather homogenous population of DsRed positive and BPF-negative cells and designated J-

dual#3 and J-dual#6, were transduced at an MOI of 2 with VSV-G peudotyped *env* deletion mutants of

HIV containing or lacking a functional *rev* gene. In the presence of a functional *rev* gene the BFP

fluorescence was strongly induced in both reporter cell clones (Fig. 1F). Therefore, both clones were

selected for the screening for cellular genes that suppress BFP expression from the HIV-dual-GT reporter

virus.

Genome-wide screening for cellular factors suppressing expression from intron-containing HIV-1

genomic RNA

Poor expression levels of HIV-1 structural genes in the absence of Rev that can be overcome by

modifying the codon-usage, suggest that there is an active cellular suppressive mechanism acting on the

level of the viral transcript. To identify cellular proteins necessary for this postulated suppressive

mechanism, we used a GeCKOv2 genome-wide CRISPR-Cas knock-out library kindly provided by the

laboratory of Feng Zhang (41, 42). The plasmid library contains 122,411 different single guide RNA genes

(sgRNA) targeting 19,050 human genes (6 sgRNAs per gene) and 1,864 sgRNA genes targeting miRNA

genes (4 sgRNAs per miRNA gene), and includes 1,000 non-targeting (NT) sgRNA genes. Cas9, sgRNA and

puromycin-resistance genes are expressed from a single lentiviral vector construct, lentiCRISPRv2. After

amplification of the plasmid library and confirmation of its diversity by next generation sequencing (data

not shown), a stock of a VSV-G pseudotyped lentiviral vector library was prepared by transient

transfection of 293T cells and titrated on the Jurkat reporter cell clones, J-dual#3 and J-dual#6, and

parental Jurkat cells. All three cell lines were then transduced with the lentiviral CRISPR-library at an

MOI of around 2. Four days after transduction, the 0.01 to 0.02% DsRed positive cells showing the

highest BFP expression levels were sorted for next generation sequencing of the sgRNA genes delivered

to these cells by the lentiviral vector library. To be able to determine enrichment of sgRNA genes

enhancing Gag-BFP expression levels, the representation of each sgRNA gene from non-selected Jurkat

cells transduced with the lentiviral CRISPR-library was also determined. Selective enrichment of sgRNA

sequences in sorted J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 cells compared to non-sorted Jurkat cells was then

determined by MAGeCK, a computational tool developed for the analysis of CRISPR screens (43, 44). The

calculated robust ranking aggregation (RRA) score reflects enrichment of sgRNA sequences targeting the

same gene in the selected cells. The distribution of the RRA score for all targeted genes is plotted in Fig.

2C with the top 12 candidate genes highlighted. For eleven of these, at least two different sgRNA

sequences targeting the same gene were enriched in the selected cells arguing against confounding off-

target effects of single sgRNA (Fig. 2D). The probability of false discovery of the top 12 candidate genes

ranged from 0.0012 to 0.15.

Analyzing interaction of validated hits shows a network of pre-mRNA splicing factors

Based on the enrichment of the individual sgRNAs targeting each of the top 12 candidate genes in the

Gag-BFP positive cells selected by flow cytometry (Fig. S1), two sgRNA sequences were chosen for each

of the candidate genes (Table S1A) for further validation. Gene-specific sgRNA sequences and a non-

targeting sequence, named NT1, were cloned individually into the lentiCRISPRv2 vector plasmid. J-

dual#3 and J-dual#6 reporter cells were then transduced with lentiviral vector particles transferring

these sgRNA sequences. Upregulation of BFP expression was observed by flow cytometry for 10 of the

12 candidate genes. For nine of them, transfer of both sgRNA sequences upregulated BFP expression in

both reporter cell clones (Fig. S2A). For DUS2 and ZNF221 the screening results could not be confirmed.

Since long half-lifes of mRNAs and proteins may prolong the time from inactivation of the targeted gene

to the decline of protein levels, we continued to monitor the reporter cells transduced with sgRNA

genes targeting DUS2 and ZNF221 for up to 2 weeks post infection. However, upregulation of Gag-BFP

remained undetectable (data not shown). In addition, we confirmed sufficient transduction rates by the

lentiviral DUS2 and ZNF221 targeting vectors, excluding the possibility that reduced lentiviral vector

titers are responsible for their failure to upregulate BFP expression (Fig. S2B). Despite this, the entire

screening approach was highly specific showing a false discovery rate of only 0.166.

A first hint on potential mechanisms by which inactivation of the identified cellular genes could enhance

Gag-BFP expression in the reporter cell lines was obtained by searching for functional protein

association networks between the identified genes using the STRING online database (https://string-

db.org/). Strikingly, 9 of the 10 confirmed hits are involved in pre-mRNA splicing (Fig. 3). Among them is,

ESS2/DGCR14 for which no interactions with the other identified factors have been reported, but which

is associated with U6 snRNA as well as U1 and U4 snRNAs (45). WDR70 is not linked to splicing, however,

it contains a WD40 repeat domain which is shared by a number of splicing factors (46). The pre-mRNA

splicing process includes two excision-steps catalyzed by a large and dynamic RNP machine. The

confirmed hits DHX38, DHX8, SLU7 and DGCR14 are typical second-step factors. In contrast, XAB2, ISY1,

CRNKL1, CWC22 and BUD31 should be recruited at the first step, and intriguingly all belong to the

nuclear PPR19-associated complex (47–50). This complex is involved in diverse nuclear functions such as

DNA double strand break (DSB) repair, transcriptional elongation, and splicing (51). The core factor of

the complex, PRPF19 (human Prp19), however, was not identified in the screen. Consistently, targeting

PRPF19 by two sgRNAs in J-dual#3 did not affect Gag-BFP expression (Fig. S3A). Since most of the

confirmed hits are components of the spliceosome, we analyzed whether PRPF8, a ATPase/helicase at

the core of the spliceosome (52), could also regulate the HIV Gag expression. Moreover, BUD13 from

the RES complex and Tpr from the NPC, which were reported to have a nuclear retention function, were

tested as well by using two different CRISPR/Cas sgRNAs targeting each of the genes. None of these

targeting sgRNAs tested induced BFP expression (Fig. S3B-D).

CRINKL1 and other cellular factors impact on HIV-1 unspliced and fully-spliced mRNA levels

To follow-up on the reduction of splicing as the potential mechanism of enhanced Gag-BFP expression,

the top 5 hits and WDR70 were analyzed for their effect on HIV-1 mRNA splicing. Attempts to generate

J-dual#3 cells with a stable knock-out of the six selected target genes were not successful, presumably

due to the fact that the selected genes are essential for cell viability (53). We therefore analyzed HIV

RNA splicing and nuclear export after knock-down of these genes in short-term cultures. J-dual#3 cells

were transduced with the lentiviral vectors encoding the different guide RNA genes and Gag-BFP

positive cells were sorted to enrich for cells with the desired gene knock-down. Total RNA was then

extracted from the sorted cells and the copy numbers of unspliced HIV RNA per ng extracted total RNA

were determined and compared to the copy numbers of unspliced RNA in J-dual#3 cells transduced with

a negative control vector (NT1). Consistent with the stronger BFP expression, unspliced HIV RNA copy

numbers were also enhanced 3- to 9-fold (Fig. 4A). Fully-spliced HIV-1 RNAs were also quantified,

revealing a marginal decrease in cells transduced with XAB2 and WDR70 targeting sgRNAs, but not with

the other gene targeting sgRNA (Fig. 4A). Differential effects of the gene targeting on HIV-1 FS and HIV-1

US RNA also lead to decreased ratios of FS over US transcripts (Fig. 4A). For comparative reasons we also transduced J-dual#3 cells in an independent experiment with a lentiviral vector expressing Rev, sorted Gag-BFP positive cells and quantified HIV-1 US and FS transcripts. Rev enhanced the US HIV-1 RNA levels approximately 5-fold, which coincided with a minor reduction in FS transcripts (Fig. 4A).

The splicing process is closely linked to nuclear mRNA trafficking (54, 55). Therefore, we also determined the effect of targeting the six selected candidate genes on the cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 US and FS RNA (Fig. 4B). Proper separation of the cytoplasm from nuclear components was controlled by examining GAPDH pre-mRNA levels and a nuclear marker protein in the cytoplasmic fraction from Jurkat cells (56, 57) . GAPDH pre-mRNA levels per ng total RNA extracted from the cytoplasm were approximately 50-fold lower than GAPDH pre-mRNA levels per ng total RNA extracted from whole cells. Consistently, the nuclear LaminB protein could not be detected in the cytoplasmic fractions (Fig. S4).

After transduction with the different targeting vectors, HIV-1 US RNA in the cytoplasm of Gag-BFP positive cells was enhanced approximately 22 to 116-fold, while the cytoplasmic FS RNA levels were affected only 0.6 to 2.7-fold. The magnitude of the enhancement of cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 US RNA exceeded the enhancement of HIV-1 US RNA in whole cell extracts, indicating that knocking-down the selected target genes not only reduced splicing but also enhanced nuclear export of the HIV-1 US RNA. Strong enhancement of cytoplasmic HIV-1-US RNA export was also observed in Rev-expressing cells. However, in contrast to the cells transduced with the targeting vectors, cytoplasmic FS RNA levels in Rev-transduced cells were significantly reduced, consistent with the previously reported suppression of the TAP/NXF1 mediated RNA export by Rev (58).

To dissect the relative contributions of inhibition of splicing and enhancement of nuclear export of HIV-1 US RNA, we compared the ratio of HIV-1 FS RNA to HIV-1 US RNA in whole cell extracts as a measure of splicing efficiency and the ratio of HIV-1 US RNA in cytoplasmic extracts to the HIV-1 US RNA in whole cell extracts as a measure of nuclear export efficiency. This revealed two different patterns of responses. The fold-reduction of the splicing efficiencies in cells transduced with ISY1, XAB2 and WDR70 targeting vectors mirrored the fold-enhancement of the respective nuclear export efficiencies. Expression of Rev induced a similar pattern of response. In contrast, transduction with DHX38, BUD31 or CRNKL1 targeting vectors predominantly enhanced the nuclear export efficiency with at least three-fold lower effects on splicing efficiency (Fig. 4C). In particular, knock-down of CRNKL1 enhanced the ratio of HIV-1 US RNA in cytoplasmic extracts to HIV-1 US RNA in total cell extracts more than 34-fold, while the ratio of HIV-1 FS RNA to HIV-1 US RNA in whole cell extracts was only decreased 4-fold. Targeting of CRNKL1 also led to

the strongest enhancement of cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 US RNAs without reducing cytoplasmic HIV-1

FS RNA levels (Fig. 4C), indicating that CRNKL1 is a major nuclear retention factor of the genomic HIV-1

US RNA.

CRNKL1 knock-down shifts cytoplasmic levels HIV-1 splice variants

To confirm the role of CRNKL1 in the regulation of cytoplasmic HIV RNA levels and to explore potential

effects of CRNKL1 on cytoplasmic levels of cellular RNAs a transcriptomic analysis was performed after a

short-term knock-down of CRNKL1. J-dual#3 reporter cells were again transduced with the CRNKL1

targeting vector and Gag-BFP-positive cells were sorted by flow cytometry. RNA was extracted from the

cytoplasmic fraction of sorted cells and J-dual#3 cells transduced with a control vector. The extracted

RNAs from 4 biological replicates each were then enriched for mRNAs and sequenced by the Illumina

High-seq procedure. In addition to this, cytoplasmic mRNA was extracted from J-dual#3 cells expressing

Gag-BFP after transduction with the Rev-encoding lentiviral vector and sequenced.

To confirm the effectiveness of Cas9/sgRNA-mediated knock-down by transcriptomic analysis, a core

target region in exon 3 of the CRNKL1 gene was defined as nucleotides -3 to +3 relative to the SpCas9

cleavage site. The number of RNA-seq reads that contained 10 nucleotides upstream and downstream

of the core target region were then determined (Fig. S5). While 55 reads on average mapped to the

region flanking the core target region in the control cells, only a mean of 5.8 reads were detected in cells

transduced with the CRNKL1 knock-down vector (Fig. S5). Larger deletions and substitutions outside the

core target region probably reduce the number of reads that can be mapped to the flanking region.

Comparison of the reads from CRNKL1 knock-down cells that can be mapped to the flanking region with

the wild type CRNKL1 core target region revealed insertions, deletions and point mutations in 22 out of

23 reads. In control cells, only 2 out of 219 reads contained single point mutations clearly indicating

efficient inhibition of CRNKL1 expression after Cas9/sgRNA targeting (Fig. S5).

HIV reads were mapped to the proviral DNA of HIV-dual-GT revealing more reads mapping to intronic

regions after CRNKL1 knock-down and Rev expression than in the controls (Fig. 5A). The percentage of

reads mapping to HIV among all the reads uniquely mapping to either the human or the viral genome

(total uniquely mapped reads) was enhanced two fold in CRNKL1 knock-down cells (Fig. 5B). This was

not due to an enhanced transcriptional activity since the percentage of reads mapping to Exon 1, which

is shared by all HIV transcripts, was only affected marginally(Fig. 5C). Changes in HIV-1 US RNA were

assessed by determining the percentage of reads mapping to the first intron of HIV-1 between SD1–SA1

(5D) or mapping to the unspliced SD1 site (5E) revealing 4 and 12-fold increases under CRNKL1 knock-

down conditions, respectively. The percentage of reads mapping to the unspliced SD4 site and therefore

containing the *env* intron also increased by a factor of 9 (Fig. 5F). The change in the percentage of all

spliced HIV reads was negligible (Fig. 5G) indicating that knock-down of CRNKL1 does not reduce splicing

of HIV RNAs in general.

To further explore differences in cytoplasmic levels of differentially spliced HIV-1 transcripts the precise

splice site usage was also systematically analyzed by calculating the percentage of reads covering

specific SD-SA pairs among all spliced HIV reads (Fig. S6A,B). This revealed that knock-down of CRNKL1

reduced cytoplasmic HIV transcripts spliced from SD1 to SA1 approximately two-fold, while transcripts

spliced from SD1 to SA3 were enhanced three-fold (Fig. 5H). To further assess the effect of the CRNKL1

knock-down on the major Env encoding transcript, the percentage of reads spliced to SA5 was

determined (Fig. 5I). Independent of the SD sites, usage of SA5 trended to be reduced, which is similar

to an effect recently reported for the splicing factor DDX17 (59). Moreover, the level of fully spliced

transcripts seemed unaffected by the CRNKL1 knock-down since the percentages of reads spliced either

from SD1 to any splice acceptor site or from SD4 to SA7 were nearly the same (Fig. 5J).

CRNKL1 is a regulator of cytoplasmic cellular mRNA levels

The influence of the CRNKL1 knock-down on cytoplasmic mRNA levels was also determined (Fig. S7A,B).

To display the results the log2-transformed expression differences were plotted against the expression

level for each gene in a MA-plot (Fig. 6A). To reduce noise and arbitrarily large fold changes from low

expressed genes the log2 fold changes are shrunk putting less weight on low expressing genes.

Significant differences after correction for multiple testing revealed the upregulation of 1249 and

downregulation of 2569 mRNAs, respectively. Two hundred and ten mRNAs even showed a more than

4-fold (log2 fold change >2) increase after knock down of CRNKL1. Interestingly, upregulated mRNAs

were enriched for the functional categories involved in transcription (Fig. 6B) while downregulated

mRNAs were more frequently associated with functions in cell cycle and organelle organization (Fig. 6B).

Given the close link between RNA export and splicing, a more general role of CRNKL1 on cytoplasmic

levels of splice variants was analyzed upon CRNKL1 knock-down. Individual splicing events (including

skipped exons, alternative splice sites and retained introns) were quantified using the percent spliced-in

metric (PSI, Schafer et al., 2015) and differential analysis was carried out by SUPPA (61). Of all quantified

splicing events in cytoplasmic mRNAs upon CRNKL1 depletion, 2.4 % were upregulated and 1.6%

downregulated (Fig. S7C,D). Introns were more frequently retained upon CRNKL1 depletion compared to

wild-type cells (Fig. 6C). Similarly, alternative 3' and 5' splice sites were more frequently detected upon

CRNKL1 knock-down, suggesting that CRNKL1 inhibits usage of alternative splice sites (Fig. 6C).

A total of 295 introns were more frequently retained in cytoplasmic mRNAs after CRNKL1 knock-down.

Further analyses revealed that not all introns of the same transcript were affected in the same way (Fig.

S8), but rather that intron retention was highly specific for one or a few introns of the same gene.

Enhanced cytoplasmic levels of intron-retaining mRNAs could be confirmed by real-time PCR with

primers spanning the respective exon – intron junctions (Fig. S8).

Genes containing introns or alternative splice sites that were upregulated after CRNKL1 knock-down

were not enriched for particular functional categories (data not shown). Enhanced detection of introns

or alternative splice sites in cytoplasmic mRNAs after CRNKL1 knock-down indicates that CRNKL1

suppresses either these splicing events or the nuclear export of the respective splice variants. To gain

insight into the principles of regulation of these CRNKL1 knock-down dependent introns and alternative

splice sites, we analyzed common features of these splicing events, including splice site strength, branch

point and polypyrimidine tract score, GC content and intron length. CRNKL1 knock-down-dependent

alternative 3' splice sites showed significantly lower branch point scores than constitutive 3' splice sites

(Fig. 6D), but a similar length of polypyrimidine tracts (Fig. S7E). We also found that CRNKL1-dependent

introns were significantly longer than CRNKL1-independent introns within the same transcript (Fig. 6E)

and trended to have longer polypyrimidine tracts (Fig. S7F) but showed no difference in GC content (Fig.

S7G).

Discussion

Using a genome-wide screen for cellular factors repressing expression of an HIV-1 structural protein

from the unspliced RNA, we identified ten target proteins linked to mRNA metabolism, with nine of

them associated with the spliceosome. Interestingly, five of them (ISY1, BUD31, XAB2, CRNKL1 and

CWC22) are found in the Prp19-associated complex. This complex is important for stabilizing the

spliceosome, which is also involved in DNA repair, transcriptional elongation, and RNA export (51). Given

that the yeast homolog of WDR70 was reported to interact with Prp19 (62) and is now shown to affect

RNA splicing, it could be a new member of the Prp19-associated complex. Due to the close linkage of

splicing with RNA stability and nuclear RNA export, it is difficult to disect the precise mechanism by

which deletion of the identified nuclear proteins enhance cytoplasmic RNA levels of HIV-1-US RNA.

Theoretically, enhanced transcription, reduced nuclear or cytoplasmic degradation, decreased splicing,

and/or enhanced nuclear export can increase cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 US RNA ($US_{cyt.}$) (Fig. 7).

Enhanced transcription and decreased nuclear degradation seem unlikely since the percentage of reads

mapping to the first HIV-1 Exon present on all viral transcripts was not significantly enhanced (Fig. 5B).

The absence of enhanced cytoplasmic levels of FS RNAs and DsRed expression levels from the dual

reporter construct (Fig. 4B, Fig. S2A) also argues against such a mechanism. Assuming a single pool of

nuclear HIV-1 US RNA that could follow either of the two remaining pathways, differential effects on the

nuclear export efficiency ($US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$) and splicing efficacy (FS_{whole}/US_{whole}) are expected (Fig. 7).

Enhancing nuclear export of HIV-1 US RNA should strongly enhance the ratio of $US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$. Since rapid

export may reduce splicing and degradation, the ratio of FS_{whole}/US_{whole} may responsively decrease,

although to a lower extent. Reduced splicing should primarily decrease the ratio of FS_{whole}/US_{whole}, but

not the ratio of $US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$ (Fig. 7). Similar to an enhanced nuclear export, reduced degradation of

cytoplasmic HIV-1 US RNA should also lead to enhanced $US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$ and decreased FS_{whole}/US_{whole} ratios

(Fig. 7), but the association of the identified proteins with the spliceosome localized in the nucleus

argues against such a cytoplasmic effector mechanism.

Clearly, ablation of all 6 target genes tested reduced the splicing efficacy (FS_{whole}/US_{whole}) indicating that

the targeted genes are enrolled in splicing and/or nuclear retention. The relative contribution of

reduced splicing versus enhanced nuclear export of the HIV-1 US RNA differed between the different

target genes. The XAB2 knock-down decreased the splicing efficacy 12.5-fold and the nuclear export

efficacy of the HIV-1 US RNA 11.7-fold. Since splicing and nuclear export efficacy were affected to a

similar degree, it is not possible to conclude whether XAB2 predominantly acts as a splicing or nuclear

retention factor. This is consistent with previous observations that depleting splicing factors (e.g. SF1,

U2AF65 and Prp19) can cause pre-mRNA leakage into the cytoplasm (30, 63–65). In contrast to the

effect of the XAB2 knock-down, the splicing efficacy after knock-down of CRNKL1 is only decreased 4.0-

fold, while the nuclear export efficiency based of the HIV-1 US RNA increases 34.6-fold. Since the ratio of

HIV-1 FS to US transcripts in the cytoplasmic RNA is also reduced to a larger extent than in the whole cell

RNA, enhanced nuclear export of the HIV US RNA after inactivation of the target gene seems to play a

dominant role. This indicates that CRNKL1 is primarily required for retention of the HIV-1 US RNA in the

nucleus and not for its splicing. The precise molecular mechanism by which the CRNKL1 knock-down

leads to a more than 100-fold enhancement of cytoplasmic HIV US RNA levels remains to be clarified.

CRNKL1 has been previously reported to regulate splicing and assist the export of cellular intron-less

mRNAs in cooperation with the TREX (TRanscription-EXport) complex, U2AF65 and other NTC members

(66–68). Our observation that targeting of CRNKL1 did not enhance cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 FS RNA,

which uses the default TAP/NXF1 export pathway, indicates that CRNKL1 is not a global nuclear mRNA

retention factor. Our transcriptomic analysis also indicates a highly selective differential regulation of

cytoplasmic levels of HIV-1 splice variants. The only spliced HIV-1 transcripts that were clearly

upregulated by CRNKL1 knock-down have spliced SD1 to the SA3 site (Fig. 5G) and may encode Tat.

Whether this represents an upregulation of *env* intron retaining transcripts or the tat-encoding fully-

spliced transcript is unclear. The enhanced percentage of cytoplasmic HIV transcripts harbouring an

unspliced SD4 site (Fig. 5F) and the unchanged percentage of transcripts harbouring a spliced SD4 site

(Fig. 5J) argue for the former.

The transcriptomic analyses after CRNKL1 knock-down also revealed a selective regulation of

cytoplasmic levels of cellular mRNAs. We found that 11.0% and 20.1% of expressed mRNAs in the

cytoplasm were up- and downregulated, respectively. Functionally, the upregulated mRNAs are

associated with transcription, while downregulated mRNAs are more frequently associated with the cell

cycle and organelle organization suggesting that CRNKL1 participates as a master regulator in these

cellular programs. Since altered nuclear export after CRNKL1 depletion could result in differences in the

abundance of different cytoplasmic mRNA isoforms, we investigated alternatively spliced cytoplasmic

isoforms upon CRNKL1 knock-down. Upon CRNKL1 depletion a much higher number of included introns

and alternative 3' and 5' splice sites than the excluded ones were detected, suggesting that CRNKL1

promotes splicing of these events or highly selective nuclear retention. Intron retention in the absence

of CRNKL1 was highly restricted and even varied among introns of the same gene (Fig. S8). Searching for

common properties of introns that were retained revealed that their mean length was significantly

greater compared to introns with unchanged inclusion upon CRNKL1 depletion. In addition, usage of 3'

splice sites with lower branch point scores seems to be blocked in the presence of CRNKL1. Therefore,

the sequence features of CRNKL1-dependent splicing events seem to reside at the 3' rather than at the

5' end of the intron.

Mechanistically, one plausible hypothesis based on the nuclear retention observed for the HIV-1

unspliced RNA is that a nuclear RNP complex binds in a CRNKL1 dependent manner to RNA motifs

present in a highly selective subset of cellular and viral introns leading to their nuclear retention and

splicing. CRNKL1 dependent binding to binding motives on cellular transcripts leading to nuclear
retention and degradation may also explain the increase in cytoplasmic levels of cellular mRNAs upon
CRNKL1 knock-down.

In summary, our study identifies three spliceosomal proteins that are required for nuclear retention of
the HIV-1 unspliced RNA and indicates that CRNKL1-dependent nuclear retention is a novel mechanism
for the regulation of cytoplasmic levels of intron-retaining cellular mRNAs that is hijacked by HIV-1.

Materials and Methods

Plasmids   Plasmids expressing viral proteins, HIV-1 Rev (pcRev), HIV-1 Tat (pcTat), HIV-1 codon-
optimized Gag-Pol (Hgp^{syn}) and VSV-G (pHiT-G) were described previously (23, 56). Lentiviral packaging
plasmid pPAX2 and pMD2.G were obtained from Addgene (#12260 and #12259). HIV-1 proviral plasmid
HIVΔe is based on the HIV-1 molecular clone NL4-3 and contains a 4-nucleotide deletion at its NheI site
leading to inactivation of *env*. The plasmid HIVΔr-e contains an additional mutation of the start codon of
rev and a premature stop codon in the first *rev* exon (57).

Proviral reporter plasmid HIV-dual-GT was constructed based on HIVΔr-e. A cassette containing
mTagBFP2, a PEST coding sequence (destabilized BFP) and two stop codons were ligated in frame to the
3' end of *gag*, forming a new ORF for Gag-BFP. The Slippery Sequence TTTTTTA (nt 2085 to nt 2091 of
the GenBank entry AF324493.2) was mutated to CTTCCTG to prevent Gag-Pol translation (69). The
coding sequence of Nef close to its 5´end (nt 8796 to nt 8880 of the GenBank entry AF324493.2) was
replaced by a cassette consisting of a 3 x Ala linker sequence and the DsRed max coding region followed
by two stop codons. The sequence (nt 5131 to nt 6297 of the GenBank entry AF324493.2) ranging from
vif to *vpu* was replaced by the corresponding region of NL4-3-Δ6-drEGFP (70) harboring inactivating
point mutations in *vif*, *vp*r and *vpu*. The *rev* ORF was inactivated as described above for HIVΔr-e by PCR
mutagenesis. The plasmid HIV-dual-GT including the final sequence is available from AddGene (plasmid
ID 122696). Individual CRISPR knock-out plasmids were constructed based on lentiCRISPRv2 (#52961,
Addgene) and GeCKOv2 sgRNA target sequences. All sgRNA sequences of the GeCKO v2 library can be
found at www.addgene.org/pooled-library/zhang-human-gecko-v2/. The different sgRNA sequences
selected for validation are provided in Supplementary Table S1A. Each of the sgRNA sequences were
cloned into the vector following the instructions on the Addgene webpage (www.addgene.org/52961/).

GeCKO v2 library   The pooled Human GeCKO v2 CRISPR knockout plasmid library was a gift from Feng Zhang (41) and obtained from Addgene (#1000000048 and #1000000049). It is supplied as two sub-libraries, each containing 3 different sgRNA constructs targeting each gene in the genome. Amplification of the lentiviral vector plasmid library was performed essentially as described by the contributors' protocol (41). The complexity of the library was confirmed by HiSeq NGS of the pooled plasmid library (data not shown).

Cell culture   HEK293T (DSMZ) and TZM-bl (71) (NIH AIDS reagent program) cell lines were maintained in DMEM medium supplemented with 10% FCS and 1% penicillin/streptomycin. Jurkat, Clone E61 (ATCC) and reporter cell lines J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 were maintained in RPMI 1640 supplemented with 10% FCS, 1% penicillin/streptomycin. After expansion, J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 stocks were stored frozen in aliquots at -80℃. A fresh aliquot was thawed and expanded in each assay.

Cell transfection   HEK293T cells were routinely transfected by the polyethylenimine (PEI)-precipitation method (56). In general, 3.5 million cells per T25-flask (CELLSTAR) were seeded 24 h before transfection. For each transfection, plasmid DNA was mixed with calf thymus carrier DNA (Thermo Fisher Scientific) to give a total of 10 µg DNA. The 10 µg DNA were mixed with 15 µl PEI (1µg/µl, Sigma Aldrich) and added to the cells. After 8 h of incubation with the cells, the transfection medium was exchanged with fresh culture medium. Supernatants or cells were harvested 48 h post transfection. To produce pseudotyped HIVΔe, HIVΔr-e and HIV-dual-GT vector particles, 3 µg proviral plasmid, 3 µg Hgp^{syn},   2 µg pHiT-G, 1 µg pcTat and 1 µg pcRev were used. To produce individual CRISPR-KO lentiviral vector particles, 5 µg lentiCRISPRv2 plasmid, 3.75 µg pPAX2 and 1.25µg pMD2.G were used. To produce the pooled human GeCKO v2 lentiviral vector library, 24 millions of 293T cells were seeded into a T175 tissue culture flask. 24 h later, 20 µg GeCKO v2 library plasmids, 15 µg pPAX2, 5 µg pMD2.G, and 120 µl GenJet transfection reagent (SignaGen) were used for transfection. HIV-dual-GT-transduced Jurkat cells were transfected by the electroporation method described elsewhere (72). In brief, 5.0 millions of stably transduced cells were electroporated with 50 µg plasmids by the Gene Pulser X cell^{TM} Electroporation System (Bio-Rad) at 250 V and 1500 microfarads. 48 h post transfection, cells were harvested for flow cytometry analysis. The transfection efficiency after expression of a GFP reporter plasmid was estimated to be between 10% - 20%.

Western blot analyses   Immunoblotting for HIV-1 Gag/CA p24 was described previously (57). Immunoblotting for Rev was performed with primary antibody Sheep Anti-Rev (1:4,500, #H6006, US

Biological Life Sciences) and secondary antibody Rabbit Anti-Goat Ig/HRP (1:5,000, #P0160, Dako).

Immunoblotting for α-Tubulin was performed using polyclonal Rabbit Anti-α-Tubulin antiserum as

primary antibody (1:4,000, #600-401-880, Rockland), and Swine Anti-Rabbit Ig/HRP (1:5,000, #P0217,

Dako) as secondary antibody. In the experiment of Figure 1B, anti-α-Tubulin blotting was conducted

after stripping the blotted anti-CA membrane by stripping buffer (#2504, Millipore). The membrane was

then re-blocked, and subsequently re-blotted with antibodies as described above. Immunoblotting for

LaminB was performed with primary antibody Goat anti-LaminB (C-20) (1:500, #sc-6216, Santa Cruz

Biotechnology) and secondary antibody Rabbit anti-goat Ig HRP (1:5,000, #P0160, Dako).

Lentiviral vector preparation, infection and titration   Lentiviral vector particles were produced by

transfection of 293T cells with the plasmids mentioned above. HIV-1 proviruses were packaged with a

3rd generation packaging system (Hgp^{syn}, pcRev, pcTat and pHiT-G) (23, 73, 74). CRISPR-KO constructs

and a pool of the two GeCKO v2 plasmid A and B sublibraries were packaged with a 2nd generation

packaging system (pPAX2 and pMD2.G) (42, 75) for higher infectious titers. 48 h after transfection, the

supernatants from transfected 293T cells were centrifuged at 1,500 rpm for 5 min to remove cell debris,

and afterwards filtered through 0.45 μm filters. Viral stocks were aliquoted and stored under -80℃.

Two batches of the GeCKO v2 lentiviral vector library were prepared. HiSeq NGS analyses of sgRNA

representation in cells transduced with both batches showed an almost 100% identification of the

sgRNAs encoded by the two GeCKO v2 plasmid sublibraries.

Jurkat, J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 cells were infected with the lentiviral vectors or the lentiviral vector library

by spinoculation. 1.5 million of cells were centrifuged with 1 ml vector preparation, in the presence of 8

μg/ml polybrene (Sigma-Aldrich), at 2,000 rpm, for 3 h, at 33℃. After spinoculation, the supernatants

were removed and the cells were continued to be cultured.

VSV-G-pseudotyped HIVΔe, HIVΔr-e and HIV-dual-GT vector particles were titrated on TZM-bl cells as

previously described (57). The titers were 5.8×10^6 and 5.1×10^6 TU/ml for two independent titrations of

HIVΔe, 4.3×10^6 and 5.7×10^6 TU/ml for two independent titrations of HIVΔr-e and 6.4×10^5 and 5.0×10^5

TU/ml for two independent titrations of HIV-dual-GT. VSV-G-pseudotyped HIV-dual-GT vector particles

were also titrated on Jurkat cells. The lentiviral reporter vector was serially diluted to 1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 1:8

and 1:16. The infection was done by spinoculation method. At 48 hpi, cells were analyzed by flow

cytometry to determine the percentage of DsRed positive cells in each dilution. Vector titers on Jurkat

cells were calculated as follows for all dilutions: (initial cell number) X (percentage of DsRed$^+$ cells) X

(dilution factor). The highest value resulting from these dilutions was taken as vector titer on Jurkat cells.

The determined titers for two independent titrations of HIV-dual-GT were 4.9×10^5 and 6.9×10^5 TU/ml.

The individual CRISPR-KO vectors, as well as the GeCKO v2 lentiviral vector library, were titrated on J-

dual reporter cells and parental Jurkat cells. The cells infected by the serially diluted virus were grown

for 24 h, afterwards divided into two equal aliquots. One aliquot was then cultured in 2 µg/ml

puromycin, the other without puromycin. After 30 h of growth, viable cells were counted by trypan blue

staining. The transduction percentage was calculated in the following way: (number of living cells in

treated population) x100/ (number of living cells in untreated population). For the GeCKO v2 lentiviral

vector library the transduction percentage was multiplied by the number of cells exposed to calculate

the titer for the different dilutions of the library. The highest value obtained from the different dilutions

of the same batch of the lentiviral vector library was taken as its titer. The titers were 1.3×10^7 TU/ml for

the first batch and 2.2×10^6 TU/ml for the second batch.

Flow cytometry analysis and Cell Sorting   Flow cytometry analyses were done using the BD™ LSRII flow

cytometer (BD Biosciences). FACS data were analyzed by the Flowjo software. Cell sorting was done on a

MoFlo XDP (Beckman Coulter) at the FACS core facility of the medical faculty.

Next-Generation Sequencing of sgRNA libraries   Genomic DNA was extracted from the sorted or the

control cells either using the Quick-DNA Mini Kit or the Midi Plus Kit (Zymo Research). The integrated

LentiCRISPRv2 vector sgRNA sequences were amplified through three rounds of PCR using the Taq DNA

Polymerase S (high specificity) (Genaxxon Bioscience). All obtained genomic DNA was used as template

in parallel reactions in PCR1, with the cycling conditions 94℃ 2 min, then 18 cycles' 95-55-70℃, 15-20-

45 s, final extension 70℃ for 3 min. PCR1 reactions of respective cell samples were then combined and

10 µl of the pooled PCR1 product was used as template in PCR2, consisting of 95℃ 2 min, then 15

cycles' 95-60-72℃, 15-20-30 s, final extension 72℃ for 3 min. In the indexing PCR3, 10 ng of purified

PCR2 product were subjected to 95℃ 2 min, then 8 cycles' 95-59-72℃, 15-20-30 s, final extension 72℃

for 3 min. The primer sequences and primer combinations used for each sample at each step are

presented in Tables S1B,C. After PCR2 and PCR3, PCR products were purified by the AMPure XP PCR-

Cleanup Kit (Beckman Coulter); DNA concentrations were measured by the Qubit Quant-iT dsDNA HS

Assay Kit (Thermo Fischer Scientific). Manipulations followed the manufacturers' instructions. DNA

libraries were sequenced on Illumina MiSeq (for enriched samples) or Ilumina HiSeq 2500 (for

unselected control) instruments. NGS readouts were subjected to MAGeCK analysis (43).

Cell fractionation, RNA isolation and RNA quantification   The cell fractionation protocol has been described previously (76). The plasma membrane was lysed with chilled NP40-Buffer consisting of 10 mM Hepes (pH 7.8 adjusted by KOH); 10 mM KCl; 20% Glycerol; 0.25% NP40. DTT was added to a final concentration of 1 mM just before use. After incubation on ice for a maximum of two minutes, the supernatant consisting of the cytoplasmic fractions was collected after centrifugation at 400 g, for 5 min, at 4℃. Cytoplasmic RNA was extracted by the TRIzol (Thermo Fisher Scientific) -Chloroform (Sigma-Aldrich) method (77) or by the Direct-zol RNA miniprep plus kit (Zymo Research). RNA from the whole cell extracts was purified using the RNA-Easy Kit (Qiagen). RNA extracted by TRIzol-Chloroform or the RNA-Easy kit was treated with DNaseI (NEB) to remove DNA contamination. Under the protection of 5 mM EDTA, DNaseI was inactivated at 75℃ for 10 min. For the Direct-zol RNA miniprep plus kit purified RNA, DNA contamination was removed by in-column DNA digestion reagents supplied. Total RNA concentration was measured by the Qubit Quant-iT RNA HS Assay Kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific) according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Reverse-transcription PCRs (RT-qPCR) for quantification of HIV-1 US, FS RNAs and cellular GAPDH pre-mRNAs were done with the QuantiTect SYBR Green RT-PCR Kit (Qiagen), and performed essentially as described previously (56, 78). Using the applied Biosystems 7500 Real-Time PCR machine cycling conditions were as follows: HIV-1 US RNA: 95℃ 10 sec for denaturation, 65℃ 60 sec for annealing, 72℃ 30 sec for elongation and fluorescence detection; for HIV-1 FS RNA: 95℃ 10 sec for denaturation, 64℃ 15 sec for annealing, 72℃ 15 sec for elongation, and 81℃ 30 sec for fluorescence detection.

RT-qPCRs for relative quantification of Intron 6-retaining RPL10 mRNAs and Intron 1-retaining C19orf53 mRNAs were done with primers illustrated in Table S1D. Cycling conditions for both: 95℃ 10 sec for denaturation, 50℃ 60 sec for annealing, 72℃ 60 sec for elongation and fluorescence detection.

Calculation of the ratios of HIV FS and US RNA levels and fold changes   To measure the effect of candidate genes and Rev on RNA splicing efficacy, we first determined the ratio between FS_{whole}:US_{whole} by dividing the FS copy numbers/ng extracted RNA by the US copy numbers/ng extracted RNA for each sample of each treatment group (knock-down or +Rev) and then calculated the mean of the ratios of replicates of each treatment group. The mean of the ratios of each treatment group were then divided by the mean of the ratios observed in matched control cells transduced with the NT1 or the GFP-expression vector to calculate the fold changes given in Table 2.

To measure the effect of candidate genes and Rev on the nuclear export efficacy (35) for HIV-1 US RNA
for each treatment group, the mean US copy numbers/ng RNA extracted from the replicates of the
cytoplasmic fractions were divided by the mean US copy numbers/ng RNA extracted from replicates of
the whole cell lysates. The ratio of each treatment group were then again divided by the ratios observed
in controls cells transduced with the NT1 or the GFP-expression vector to calculate the fold changes
given in Table 2.

Fold changes for cytoplasmic levels of US or FS RNA were calculated by dividing the mean US or FS copy
numbers per ng of extracted RNA of each treatment group by the mean derived from the control groups.

RNA-seq   Cytoplasmic RNAs were extracted from the sorted BFP+ or unsorted control J-dual#3 cells
with the Direct-zol RNA miniprep plus kit. RNA qualities were controlled by the 2100 Bioanalyzer
instrument (Agilent) (data not shown). For each sample, a DNA fragment library was generated from the
total RNA input using the Illumina TrueSeq Stranded mRNA kit and performed essentially as described
by the manufacturer's protocol (https://support.illumina.com/downloads/truseq-stranded-mrna-
reference-guide-1000000040498.html). The libraries were sequenced on an Illumina HiSeq 2500
platform and the reads were saved together with a quality score. Raw data were converted to reads
including a quality score by Software bcl2fastq v2.17. Sequences matching Illumina TrueSeq adapters
were masked. Low quality bases, poly-A or poly-T stretches as well as masked bases were trimmed by
Software fqtrim v0.9.5. Read quality was checked after sequencing and after base trimming by Software
fastqc v0.11.8. For the viral genome, reads were aligned to HIV-Dual-GT using hisat2 (79). Read counting
for the different features was performed using samtools (80) and regtools (81).

For splicing and differential expression analysis, reads were aligned to the human transcriptome using
RSEM v1.2.20 (82) and Bowtie v1.1.2 (82) as read alignment program using default parameters.
Differential expression analysis was performed by DESeq2 v1.18.1 (82) using the RSEM output for read
counts per gene. We considered genes that showed an absolute log2-transformed fold change greater
than 1 and a Padj value of less than 0.1 as differentially expressed. To exclude lowly expressed genes, we
only considered those with mean TPM greater than 1 in either untreated or knockdown samples.
Gencode v19 annotation was used in all steps of the analysis, including in the definition of protein
coding genes. The reads mapping profiles were exhibited via the Integrative Genomics Viewer (IGV) v2.3
(83). Differential splicing analysis was performed with SUPPA (61) using TPM values from the RSEM
transcript isoform output. For PSI calculation, events were required to pass the expression filter of TPM
greater than 1 (-f 1 parameter). We considered splicing events with Padj values lower than 0.01 and

absolute ΔPSI greater than 0.25 as differentially included or excluded. Polypyrimidine track length, and

branch point scores were calculated using BPfinder (84). Splice-site strength was calculated using

MaxENT (85) (hollywood.mit.edu/burgelab/software.html).

Data availability

594 The raw and processed data of RNA-seq are accessible via the GEO (Gene Expression Omnibus)

595 Accession Number GSE144347.

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601 3-Δ6-drEGFP was kindly provided by Dr. Robert Siliciano.

Author Contributions

603 K. Ü., A. E., B. G. and M.L. designed and supervised the study. H. X. and D. J. performed the experiments.

604 H. X., E. W., M. M, P. K., A. B. O. V. S., A. E. and K. Ü. analyzed the data. H. X. and K. Ü. wrote the

605 manuscript. A.E., B.G., E. W., M. M, P. K., A. E., A.B.O.V.S., M.L. and D.J. reviewed the manuscript.

Declaration of Interests

607 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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 Figure legends

Figure 1. Establishment of HIV-dual-GT reporter cell clones. (A) Map of the HIV-dual-GT proviral
reporter construct. (B) Western blot analysis of lysates of HEK293T cells transfected with HIV-dual-GT or
HIVΔr-e in the presence or absence of an Rev expression plasmid (pcRev) with antibodies to the p24
capsid protein, αTublin or Rev. (C) 293T cells transfected with HIV-dual-GT and pcRev or pcDNA3.1 were
analyzed by flow cytometry for Gag-BFP and DsRed expression. (D) Jurkat cells transduced with the HIV-
dual-GT reporter vector (MOI 0.3) and transiently transfected with pcRev or pcDNA control plasmid
were analyzed by flow cytometry. (E) Scheme for the generation of reporter cell clones. (F) HIV-dual-GT-
transduced Jurkat reporter cell clones J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 were superinfected with VSV-G-
pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses only differing in the expression of Rev and analyzed by flow cytometry. All
assays were performed at least twice and results of one representative experiment are shown.

Figure 2. Genome-wide CRISPR/Cas screen. (A) Outline of screening strategy. (B) Flow cytometric
analysis of J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 reporter cells without transduction and four days after transduction by
the GeCKO v2 lentiviral vector library (MOI around 2) immediately prior to the sorting process. Total
number of events shown in the graph, total number of cells analyzed in the screen and total numbers of
cells sorted are indicated. (C) Enrichment analysis for guide RNAs in transduced and selected J-dual#3
and J-dual#6 reporter cells compared to transduced but unselected Jurkat cells by the MAGeck program.
The robust ranking aggregation (RRA) score reflects the enrichment of guide RNA targeting the same
gene in cells selected from both reporter cell clones. The distribution of the negative log10 of the RRA
score for all targeted genes in alphabetical order on the X-axis is shown with the top 12 candidate genes
highlighted. (D) Additional MAGeck ranking parameters of the top 12 candidate genes. fdr, false
discovery rate; # sgRNA, number of enriched guide RNAs targeting the same gene.

Figure 3. Protein interaction network of confirmed screening hits. The 10 validated hits were analyzed
by the online database STRING for protein-protein interactions. The graph shows known and predicted
protein-protein interactions for the most enriched pathway, the "mRNA splicing" pathway (pathway ID:
GO 0000398; false discovery rate: 5.07e-14; minimum required interaction score: 0.400 (medium
confidence)).

Figure 4. Role of confirmed screening hits in HIV-1 RNA splicing and export. (A) J-dual#3 cells were co-
infected at an MOI of 3 with a lentiviral vector encoding Cas9 and a lentiviral vector expressing the guide
RNAs indicated. In addition, J-dual#3 cells were transduced by a lentiviral vector encoding GFP or Rev at
an MOI of 1. At 4 days after infection, BFP positive cells were sorted by flow cytometry from cells
transduced with lentiviral vectors encoding Rev or the guide RNAs targeting the confirmed hits. Matched
controls expressing NT1 or GFP were used without sorting. Total RNA was purified from whole cell
extracts. HIV-1 US and FS RNAs copy numbers in these samples were quantified by RT-qPCR and are
shown as log copies per ng total RNA extracted from whole cells. Log copies from at least three
experiments, as well as their mean and SEM are shown. The mean of the ratio of FS_{whole}/US_{whole} of each
experiment is shown above the x-axis for each of the treatment groups. (B) J-dual#3 knockout cells and
control cells were prepared as described in (A), but total RNA was extracted from the cytoplasmic
fraction of each cell sample. Log copies per ng total cytoplasmic RNA and mean ratios of $FS_{cyt.}/US_{cyt.}$ were
calculated and presented as in (A). (C) The fold changes in the different treatment groups for the splicing
efficacy (FS_{whole}/US_{whole}), the nuclear export efficacy ($US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$), and cytoplasmic levels of unspliced

(US $_{cyt.}$) and fully spliced (FS $_{cyt.}$) transcriptes were calculated by dividing the values in the treatment
groups by the ones obtained from the matched control cells (NT1, GFP) as described in the Materials
and Methods. Paired t-test was performed on the log copy numbers/ng total RNA between each of the
treatment groups and the matched control.   * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Unless otherwise
indicated, differences were not significant. Dotted lines separate experiments that were not performed
in parallel and therefore contain independent controls. WDR70.KD cells were sorted on day 7 after
transduction, while other cells were sorted on day 4.

Figure 5. Effect of CRNKL1 depletion on HIV RNA splicing efficiency, accuracy, and export. (A)
Alignments of reads from the transcriptomic analysis to HIV-dual-GT. Shown are coverage profiles for
the individual RNA-seq samples, colored, from top to bottom the non-targeting control (NT1, red),
CRNKL1 knock-down (cyan), and rev overexpression (purple). Splice sites are shown in orange (donors)
and dark yellow (acceptors). Coding regions and LTRs are indicated in dark blue. (B) Percentage of all HIV
reads among the total (HIV + human) uniquely mapped reads. (C) Percentage of reads mapping to HIV
Exon 1 (from the transcription start site to SD1) among the total uniquely mapped reads. (D) Percentage
of reads in the first intron between SD1 and SA1 among the total uniquely mapped reads. (E) Percentage
of reads across the unspliced SD1 site among the total uniquely mapped reads. (F) Percentage of reads
across the unspliced SD4 site among the total uniquely mapped reads. (G) Percentage of reads spanning
SD and SA sites (spliced reads) among the total uniquely mapped reads. (H) Percentages of reads
spanning SD1 and the indicated splice acceptor sites among all spliced HIV reads. For SD1-SA4abc, reads
spliced from SD1 to SA4a, SA4b and SA4c are summed up. (I) Percentages of reads spanning the
indicated splice donor sites and SA5 among all spliced HIV reads. (J) Percentage of reads spliced from
SD1 to any SA site or from SD4 to SA7 among all spliced HIV reads. (B-J) Shown are averages and
standard deviations for the control and CRNKL1 knock-down samples. Individual values are shown as
black dots. For the rev overexpression sample (purple), the individual value is shown.

Figure 6. Changes in the host transcriptome upon CRNKL1 knock-down. (A) RNA-seq differential
expression analysis of mRNA abundance upon CRNKL1 KD. MA plot shows differences in the abundance
of protein-coding transcripts in CRNKL1 KD vs. control (NT1) conditions. mRNAs with significant
differences are depicted in red (Padj <0.1). (B) Gene Ontology enrichment analysis of mRNAs with
upregulated and downregulated expression upon CRNKL1 KD. Top enriched GO Biological Process terms
are shown. (C) Upregulated (included) (ΔPSI (KD-NT1) >0.25, Padj <0.01) and downregulated (excluded)
(ΔPSI (KD-NT1) <-0.25, Padj<0.01) splicing events were quantified from the RNA-seq CRNKL1 KD
experiment. Bar plot shows absolute numbers of splicing events that are up or down regulated upon
CRNKL1 knock-down. (D) Branch point scores were calculated by BPfinder and alternative 3'splice sites
with higher usage in CRNKL1 KD condition were compared to 3'splice sites of the same genes with
unchanged (constitutive) usage. Box plots and data points are shown. Wilcoxon rank sum test was used
to test for significance. Absolute numbers of 3' splice sites included in the analysis for each group are
indicated. (E) Length of retained introns with higher inclusion upon KD (CRNKL1-dependent) was
compared to the length of unchanged introns upon KD (CRNKL1-independent), which were located in
the same transcripts as CRNKL1-dependent ones. Box plots and data points are shown. Wilcoxon rank

sum test was used to test for significance. Absolute numbers of retained introns analyzed in both groups
are indicated. PSI, percent spliced-in for splicing events.

Figure 7. Potential mechanisms leading to increased cytoplasmic levels of unspliced HIV-1 RNA.
Graphical representation of HIV-1 RNA metabolism and expected consequences of up- (↑) or down- (↓)
regulation or no change (→) of the respective steps on the nuclear export efficacy ($US_{cyt.}/US_{whole}$) and
splicing efficacy (FS_{whole}/US_{whole}). The nuclear export pathway is highlighted in bold.

Supplementary figure legends

Figure S1. Enrichment of individual sgRNAs targeting the top 12 candidate genes. NGS data from
unselected Jurkat cells (control) and selected J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 cells were analyzed by MAGeCK.
Results are shown as normalized counts for each of the six guide RNAs targeting the indicated candidate
genes.

Figure S2. Validation of screening hits. (A) J-dual#3 and J-dual#6 reporter cells were co-infected with a
lentiviral vector encoding Cas9 and a lentiviral vector expressing the indicated guide RNAs at an MOI of
1. Flow cytometric analyses were performed 7 days after infection. Each of the 12 candidate genes was
targeted by two different sgRNAs. A non-targeting sgRNA (NT1) was used as a control. Representative
results from at least 2 experiments are shown. (B) Percent transduction by individual lentiviral knock-out
vectors**.** All individual lentiCRISPR-KO constructs were packaged into VSV-G pseudotyped lentiviral
vector particles under the same conditions. The same volume of individual lentiCRISPR vector
preparation was used to infect J-dual#3 cells. The percent transduction was calculated as described in
Materials and Methods.

Figure S3. Influence of selected proteins reported to be involved in pre-mRNA splicing and nuclear
retention on Gag-BFP expression. Two sgRNAs for each gene were picked from the GeCKO v2 library to
target PRPF8, PRPF19, TPR and BUD13, respectively. The individual lentiCRISPR knockout vectors were
constructed and used to transduce the J-dual#3 reporter cell line. Transduction efficiencies were
confirmed (data not shown) and cells were analyzed by flow cytometry 7 days after transduction (A-D).

Figure S4. Validation of fractionation. (A) Representative Western blot analyses for LaminB (nuclear)
and αTublin (cytoplasmic) in whole cell extracts and nuclear and cytoplasmic fractions from $1x10^6$ Jurkat
cells. (B) Differences in GAPDH pre mRNA levels. CT values obtained by real time PCR from whole cell or
cytoplasmic extracts from three experiments are shown. Numbers indicate the fold difference between
GAPDH pre mRNA levels/weight of extracted RNA from whole cell and cytoplasmic extracts, assuming 2-
fold differences in the targeted RNA copy numbers per ΔCT and adjusting for minor differences in the
amounts of RNA added to the PCR reactions.

Figure S5. Number of reads and deviations from the wild type CRNKL1 target region after knock down
of CRNKL1. The CRNKL1 sgRNA target region with the predicted Cas9 cleavage site (arrow) and the PAM
region (shaded in orange) are aligned with reads from the transcriptome from four control (NT1 exp1-4)

and four CRNKL1 knock down experiments (KD exp1-4). Underlined sequences were used to map reads
to the target region. Point mutations, deletions (Δ) and insertions (I with number of nucleotides inserted
given above) are indicated. "n": number of reads with the respective sequence. "m": percent mutation
rate calculated as [100 x number of mutated reads / number of total reads mapped to the CRNKL1
target region].

Figure S6. Changes in splice site usage of HIV RNAs upon CRNKL1 depletion. (A) Heat map representing,
for every row, the relative frequency of indicated HIV-1 splice donor-splice acceptor pairs. Colors
represent the log10 transformed percentages relative to all spliced HIV reads, as shown in the color bar
underneath the heat map. Rows are sorted according to the splice donor sites. (B) As in A, but sorted for
splice acceptor sites.

Figure S7. Quality control analyses for the transcriptomic data and additional analyses on differential
splicing and intronic features. (A) Principal component analysis (PCA) of exonic read counts. Variance
was assessed between biological replicates (1-4) and conditions (NT1, KD, REV). (B) Pairwise assessment
of Pearson correlation coefficients between all exonic read counts from all RNA-seq samples. (C)
Differential analysis of splicing events upon CRNKL1 KD. Volcano plot of ΔPSI (KD-NT1) values vs.
negative log10-transformed Padj values is shown. To select up- and downregulated splicing events upon
CRNKL1 KD (blue and red data points) the following cutoffs were used, respectively: ΔPSI (KD-NT1) >0.25,
Padj <0.01; and ΔPSI (KD-NT1) <-0.25, Padj <0.01. (D) Pairwise assessment of Pearson correlation
coefficients between all splicing event PSI values from all RNA-seq samples. (E) The length of
polypyrimidine tracts of alternative 3'splice sites with higher usage under CRNKL1 KD condition were
compared to those of constitutive 3'splice sites present in the same mRNAs. Wilcoxon rank sum test was
used to test for significance. Absolute numbers of 3'splice sites in both groups are indicated. (F)
Polypyrimidine track length was obtained by BPfinder for retained introns with higher inclusion upon KD
(CRNKL1-dependent) and compared to that of unchanged retained introns upon KD (CRNKL1-
independent), which were located in the same transcripts as CRNKL1-dependent ones. Box plots and
data points are shown. Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to test for significance. Absolute numbers of
retained introns in both groups are indicated. (G) GC content of retained introns with higher inclusion
upon KD (CRNKL1-dependent) was compared to the GC content of unchanged introns upon KD (CRNKL1-
independent), which were located in the same transcripts as CRNKL1-dependent ones. Box plots and
data points are shown. Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to test for significance. Absolute numbers of
retained introns in both groups are indicated.

Figure S8. Examples and validation of intron retention in cellular transcripts after CRNKL1 knock-down.
Mapping of the reads to genes with enhanced intron retention (RPL10, C19orf53 CD320), an alternative
5´and 3´splice site usage (5th intron of AURKB) and an unaffected gene (EIF6) are shown for the four
replicates of control (NT1) and CRNKL1 knock-down cells and the rev expressing cells. For RPL10 and
C19orf53, intron retention was confirmed by RT-qPCR. Binding sites for specific primers spanning the
exon-intron junctions are indicated by green arrows. RT-qPCRs were performed for relative
quantification of respective intron-retaining transcripts using the cytoplasmic RNAs from the RNA-seq
experiment. ΔCT(NT1-KD) ±SEM values obtained from the 4 replicates are indicated.

Table S1. Primer sequences and combinations. (A) Sequences of sgRNAs used for screening hits
validation. (B) Sequences of primers used for NGS libraries construction. (C) Primer combinations for
NGS libraries construction. (D) Sequences of primers used for validation of retained introns.

Figure 1

A   HIV-dual-GT

B

HIVΔr-e   HIV-dual-GT

Rev   −   +   −   +

kd

anti-p24

80   ← Gag-dBFP

46   ← Gag

anti-αTublin

anti-Rev

C

pcDNA   pcRev

DsRed

15.1   0.34   2.93   6.51

84.5   0.033   81.36   8.93

293T

BFP

D

pcDNA   pcRev

DsRed

24.2   0.78   24.2   2.26

75.0   0.071   73.3   0.21

Transduced Jurkat

BFP

E

Jurkat cells   HIV-dual-GF reporter virus

Transduced reporter Jurkat

FACS sorting

Clonal expansion

Reporter cell clones

J-dual#3   J-dual#6

F

HIVΔr-e virus   HIVΔe virus

DsRed

95.4   0.56   15.3   77.0

3.98   0.011   6.85   0.87

        J-dual#3

98.0   0.53   21.5   77.4

1.44   0.010   0.97   0.17

        J-dual#6

clonal reporter cells

BFP

Figure 2

A

B

C

D Table 1. Ranking parameters for the top 12.

Genes	RRA score	p-value	fdr	rank	# sgRNA
DHX38	5.17E-12	2.28E-07	0.001238	1	4
ISY1	2.71E-11	2.28E-07	0.001238	2	4
BUD31	4.28E-09	2.28E-07	0.001238	3	4
XAB2	2.13E-08	2.28E-07	0.001238	4	4
CRNKL1	1.92E-07	1.60E-06	0.006931	5	2
CWC22	3.99E-07	2.05E-06	0.007426	6	4
DGCR14	7.95E-07	4.33E-06	0.013437	7	2
SLU7	1.18E-06	6.16E-06	0.016708	8	2
ZNF221	5.08E-06	2.08E-05	0.04505	9	2
DUS2	7.68E-06	1.66E-05	0.040154	10	3
WDR70	2.00E-05	6.77E-05	0.133663	11	3
DHX8	2.51E-05	8.42E-05	0.152228	12	1

Figure 3

Figure 4

C   Table 2. Fold changes of RNA levels & ratios.

Knock-down	Fold change of			
	splicing efficiency	export efficiency	$US_{cyt.}$	$FS_{cyt.}$
-DHX38	1/2.9	10.8	31.4	1.1
-ISY1	1/3.7	7.7	62.0	0.6
-BUD31	1/2.2	13.8	26.5	1.4
-XAB2	1/12.5	11.7	68.0	1.0
-CRNKL1	1/4.0	34.6	116.4	1.4
-WDR70	1/4.6	6.5	22.1	2.7
+Rev	1/7.8	4.6	22.0	0.3

Figure 5

B total HIV reads / total uniquely mapped reads [%]

- NT1
- CRNKL1.KD
- REV

C HIV Exon1 reads / total uniquely mapped reads [%]

D SD1-SA1 intronic reads / total uniquely mapped reads [%]

E reads covering unspliced SD1 site/ total uniquely mapped reads [%]

F reads covering unspliced SD4 site / total uniquely mapped reads [%]

G all spliced HIV reads / total uniquely mapped reads [%]

H reads spliced from SD1 / all spliced HIV reads [%]

SD1 - SA1   SD1 - SA2   SD1 - SA3   SD1 - SA4abc

I reads spliced to SA5 / all spliced HIV reads [%]

SD1 - SA5   SD2 - SA5   SD3 - SA5

J reads spliced from SD1 or SD4 / all spliced HIV reads [%]

SD1- any SA   SD4 - SA7

Figure 6

Figure 7