Uptake of endogenous serine is important to maintain sphingolipid homeostasis in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*

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Abstract

Sphingolipids are abundant and essential molecules in eukaryotes that have crucial functions as signaling molecules and as membrane components. Sphingolipid biosynthesis starts in the endoplasmic reticulum with the condensation of serine and palmitoyl-CoA. Sphingolipid biosynthesis is highly regulated to maintain sphingolipid homeostasis. Even though, serine is an essential component of the sphingolipid biosynthesis pathway, its role in maintaining sphingolipid homeostasis has not been precisely studied. Here we show that serine uptake is an important factor for the regulation of sphingolipid biosynthesis in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Using genetic experiments, we find the broad-specificity amino acid permease Gnp1 to be important for serine uptake. We confirm these results with serine uptake assays in *gnp1Δ* cells. We further show that uptake of exogenous serine by Gnp1 is important to maintain cellular serine levels and observe a specific connection between serine uptake and the first step of sphingolipid biosynthesis. Using mass spectrometry-based flux analysis, we further observed imported serine as the main source for *de novo* sphingolipid biosynthesis. Our results demonstrate that yeast cells preferentially use the uptake of exogenous serine to regulate sphingolipid biosynthesis. Our study can also be a starting point to analyze the role of serine uptake in mammalian sphingolipid metabolism.

Author Summary

Sphingolipids (SPs) are membrane lipids globally required for eukaryotic life. In contrast to other lipid classes, SPs cannot be stored in the cell and therefore their levels have to be tightly regulated. Failure to maintain sphingolipid homeostasis can result in pathologies including neurodegeneration, childhood asthma and cancer. However, we are only starting to understand how SP biosynthesis is adjusted according to need. In this study, we use genetic and biochemical methods to show that the uptake of exogenous serine is necessary to maintain SP homeostasis in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Serine is one of the precursors of long chain bases in cells, the first intermediate of SP metabolism. Our results suggest that the uptake of serine is directly coupled to SP biosynthesis at ER-plasma membrane contact sites. Overall, our study identifies serine uptake as a novel regulatory factor of SP homeostasis. While we use yeast as a discovery tool, these results also provide valuable insights into mammalian SP biology especially under pathological conditions.

92 ## Introduction

93 Sphingolipids (SPs) are essential structural components of membranes and can also
94 act as signaling molecules. SPs constitute up to 20% of the plasma membrane lipids and form
95 tightly packed lipid bilayers together with sterols in the outer layer of the plasma membrane
96 [1]. In contrast to glycerol-phospholipids (GPLs) and sterols, SPs cannot be stored in the cell.
97 Thus, maintaining SP homeostasis is crucial to sustain membrane integrity and trafficking.

98 SPs are synthesized at the ER by two metabolic branches in yeast. In one branch, the
99 serine palmitoyltransferase (SPT) catalyzes the condensation of serine and palmitoyl-CoA to
100 yield 3-ketodihydrosphingosine. This short-lived intermediate is directly processed to long
101 chain bases (LCBs). In a second branch, palmitoyl-CoA is elongated to up to 24 or 26 carbons
102 chain length, the very long chain fatty acids (VLCFAs). LCBs and VLCFAs are amide linked to
103 form ceramide [2]. In mammalian cells, ceramide transfer protein (CERT) transports ceramides
104 to the Golgi apparatus [3]. A similar mechanism may occur in yeast cells, but the corresponding
105 ceramide transfer protein has yet to be identified. Nvj2 has been suggested as a possible
106 candidate transfer protein in this context [4]. At the yeast Golgi apparatus, ceramides receive
107 various head groups to yield complex SPs. Complex SPs are transported from the Golgi
108 apparatus to reach their destination at the plasma membrane by vesicular transport [5].

109 SP levels are regulated by post-translational modifications of key enzymes involved in
110 their synthesis. When SP levels at the plasma membrane are low, the target of rapamycin
111 complex 2 (TORC2) is activated and phosphorylates the yeast Akt homologue Ypk1 (reviewed
112 in Heinisch and Rodicio, 2018). This leads to phosphorylation of the Orm proteins, negative
113 regulators of the SPT, and releases the inhibition of SP biosynthesis [7–9]. Other mechanisms
114 include the regulation of ceramide biosynthesis by Ypk kinases [10], the regulation of Pkh
115 kinases [11], and the regulation of VLCFA biosynthesis [12,13]. Phospho-proteomic studies of
116 SP homeostasis further suggested that the complex SP biosynthetic enzymes are also subject
117 to regulation [14].

118 In fact, SP metabolism in yeast is regulated at several steps. However, little is known
119 about the role of serine, one of the two substrates of the first and rate-limiting step in this
120 pathway. Serine can be synthesized via the 3-phospho-glycerate pathway [15] or converted
121 from glycine in a reversible reaction catalyzed by the serine hydroxymethyltransferases Shm1
122 and Shm2 [16]. Additionally, serine can be imported from the medium by plasma membrane
123 permeases, as suggested by overexpression of the encoding genes [17]. Which portion of the
124 different serine pools are incorporated into SPs is unknown. However, serine uptake and flux
125 into the SP biosynthesis pathway has been shown to increase upon heat stress [18].
126 Interestingly, the catabolic serine deaminase Cha1 is upregulated by exogenous serine, and
127 LCBs may serve as sensors of serine availability and mediate up-regulation of Cha1 in this
128 response [19]. This indicates a regulatory control between exogenous serine and SP
129 metabolism.

130 We therefore investigated the role of serine as an additional regulatory factor for SP
131 homeostasis. We analyzed the impact of Gnp1 and Agp1, members of the yeast amino acid
132 transporter (YAT) family [20], on serine uptake and intracellular amino acid concentrations and
133 studied their role in SP homeostasis. Both proteins are dispensable for SP homeostasis under
134 standard growth conditions. However, when SP metabolism is challenged by inhibition of the
135 first steps in the synthetic pathway, Gnp1-dependent serine uptake becomes essential. Using
136 mass spectrometry-based flux analysis we demonstrated the direct integration of imported
137 serine into SPs and found extracellular serine to be the main source for *de novo* SP
138 biosynthesis. Combined, these data reveal an additional, previously unknown, regulatory
139 mechanism to maintain cellular SP homeostasis.

140

141 # Results

142 ## Serine is required for SP homeostasis

143 SP biosynthesis starts with the condensation of serine and palmitoyl-CoA by the rate
144 limiting enzyme SPT. Serine can be synthesized from 3-phospho-glycerate via reactions

145 catalyzed by Ser3/Ser33, Ser1 and Ser2 (Fig 1a) or from glycine by the action of the serine
146 hydroxymethyltransferases Shm1 and Shm2 [16]. To assess the effects of altered serine
147 availability we first tested whether deletion mutants of the 3-phospho-glycerate pathway are
148 auxotroph for serine under different conditions. For this purpose, all available serine
149 biosynthesis mutants from the yeast deletion collection [21] were spotted onto the respective
150 drop-out media. When *SER1* or *SER2* were deleted, cells did not grow on medium lacking
151 serine, while single mutants in the redundant gene pair (*ser3Δ* or *ser33Δ*) were able to grow
152 (Fig 1b). This confirms the previously observed serine auxotrophy for a single *SER1* or *SER2*
153 deletion [22].

154 In a genome wide chemical genetic screen we had previously identified a *ser2Δ* strain
155 as sensitive to the depletion of SPs by myriocin [23]. Myriocin is a suicide inhibitor of the SPT,
156 consisting of the subunits Lcb1, Lcb2 and the regulatory subunit Tsc3 (Fig 1c, [24] . We
157 therefore tested growth of a *ser2Δ* strain and a wild-type (WT) strain on control plates, plates
158 lacking serine, plates containing myriocin and plates containing myriocin and lacking serine.
159 As shown in Fig 1d, *ser2Δ* cells were highly sensitive to chemical depletion of SPs by myriocin,
160 demonstrating the importance of serine availability for the maintenance of SP homeostasis. In
161 addition, media without serine renders WT cells more sensitive to chemical depletion of SPs
162 (Fig 1d), suggesting that the presence of exogenous serine is also an important factor to
163 maintain SP homeostasis.

164 ## *GNP1* genetically interacts with serine metabolic genes in yeast

165 Due to the essential nature of serine for metabolism, one would expect that a defect in a major
166 serine permease would be lethal for a serine auxotroph strain. In contrast, impairment of either
167 serine uptake or serine biosynthesis should be tolerable under growth conditions where serine
168 is available (Fig 2a). We therefore specifically screened high throughput genetic interaction
169 data for interactions with a *ser2Δ* deletion [25]. We plotted the genetic interaction score of
170 *ser2Δ* (epsilon score) with each gene deletion against the significance of the genetic interaction
171 (Fig 2b; note that similar results were obtained for *ser1Δ*). Interestingly, the strongest and most

172 significant genetic interaction of the *SER2* gene was observed with two ORFs, *GNP1* and
173 *YDR509W*, with the latter being annotated as a dubious open reading frame partially
174 overlapping with *GNP1*.

175 Other significant hits were part of the TORC1 signaling pathway (S1 Fig). In line with
176 our hypothesis, *GNP1* encodes a broad-specificity amino acid permease that was previously
177 suggested to be necessary for the uptake of serine and other amino acids [17].

178 We proceeded by studying the genetic interaction of *SER2* and *GNP1* using tetrad
179 analyses. As expected, the double knockout of *ser2Δgnp1Δ* showed a very strong negative
180 genetic interaction as reflected by slow growth and very small colonies (Fig 2c). *GNP1* has a
181 paralog, *AGP1,* which was presumably generated by the whole genome duplication in *S.*
182 *cerevisiae* [26]. The respective epistasis analysis with the *ser2Δ* mutant did not reveal any
183 synthetic phenotype (Fig 2d), suggesting that Gnp1 is the major permease with regard to serine
184 uptake. The fact that the triple knockout *ser2Δgnp1Δagp1Δ* mutants did not produce any viable
185 progeny indicates a complete lack of serine import in the absence of both permeases, Agp1
186 and Gnp1 (Fig 2e).

187 **Gnp1 is the major serine transporters in yeast cells**

188 Our genetic analyses suggested Gnp1 to be the major serine permease in yeast with
189 only minor contributions of its paralog Agp1. This was confirmed by determination of serine
190 uptake kinetics with radioactively labelled serine in *gnp1Δ*, *agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* mutants
191 as compared to WT cells (Fig 3a). As expected, the *gnp1Δ* strain showed a strong reduction
192 (65%) in serine uptake compared to WT cells already 5 minutes after adding the labelled
193 substrate (Fig 3a). Similarly, *agp1Δ* cells displayed a pronounced effect on serine uptake
194 although substantially weaker than *gnp1Δ* cells with about 34% decrease in serine uptake
195 compared to WT cells after 5 minutes. This observation is not reflected in our genetic analyses
196 where Gnp1 appears to be responsible for most of the serine uptake and potentially represents
197 a difference in the serine availability of the respective growth media. A strain lacking both,

198 *GNP1* and *AGP1,* showed almost no transport activity (Fig 3a). These results confirm that
199 Gnp1 is the major serine transporter in yeast under the used growth conditions.

200 Serine is a metabolic precursor in multiple pathways besides SP biosynthesis. Thus, it
201 is a donor of one-carbon units to folate (Ramos and Wiame, 1982), important for the synthesis
202 of GPLs such as phosphatidylserine [28,29] and phosphatidylethanolamine [30], and it is
203 required for protein synthesis. To test the effect of a *GNP1* deletion on protein biosynthesis,
204 we grew WT cells, *gnp1*Δ cells and *ser*2Δ cells in the presence of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine and
205 measured its incorporation into proteins using mass spectrometry-based proteomics.
206 Extracted proteins were digested with the endo-proteinase Lys-C and only peptides containing
207 exactly one serine were analyzed. In WT cells 28% of the analyzed peptides contained a
208 [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]- serine (Fig 3c). This suggests that either only a quarter of the intracellular serine is
209 imported or that the majority of the imported serine is directed towards metabolic pathways
210 other than protein biosynthesis. In line with the data reported above, only half of the [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-
211 serine was incorporated into proteins in *gnp1Δ* cells resulting in a reduction to a total of 14%
212 (Fig 3c). The remaining incorporation of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine is probably due to serine uptake
213 mediated by Agp1. Interestingly, the serine auxotroph *ser2Δ* reached only an incorporation
214 rate of 56% (Fig 3c). This suggests that *ser2Δ* cells can still synthesize significant amounts of
215 serine, for example by the reverse action of the serine hydroxymethyltransferases Shm1 and
216 Shm2 from glycine [16]. However, this pool of serine appears to be too small to render the cells
217 serine prototroph. Again, these results confirm that Gnp1 is the major serine transporter in
218 yeast with only minor contributions of its paralog Agp1.

219 In the course of proteomics analyses of *gnp1Δ* cells we gained further evidence that
220 Gnp1 directly contributes to intracellular serine levels. We measured the entire proteome of
221 *gnp1Δ* cells compared to WT cells using stable isotope labelling by amino acids in cell culture
222 (SILAC; Ong et al., 2002) combined with mass spectrometry-based proteomics. Among the
223 2322 proteins quantified (Fig 3 – source data 1) we found an up-regulation of several metabolic
224 enzymes, with a prevalence in amino acid metabolic processes (according to GO term

225 analysis). Amongst these enzymes are the 3-phosphoglycerate dehydrogenase Ser3
226 catalyzing a rate limiting step in serine and glycine metabolism, as well as a subunit of the
227 glycine decarboxylase Gcv1 (Fig 3d). Interestingly, the most down-regulated protein was the
228 catabolic serine deaminase Cha1 (Fig 3d). Cha1 is under strong transcriptional control of the
229 Cha4 transcription factor and is known to be upregulated by exogenous serine [19]. Together,
230 this indicates that intracellular serine levels in *gnp1Δ* cells are decreased, and thus forces cells
231 to adjust by reprogramming their metabolism.

232 **Intracellular serine concentrations depend on serine uptake**

233 To predict how serine biosynthesis and uptake are correlated, we used flux variability
234 analysis (FVA) which allows a prediction of possible fluxes through a reconstructed metabolic
235 network. First, we analyzed the contribution of cellular processes involving serine (Fig 4a). Our
236 results highlighted the glycine hydroxymethyltransferases Shm1 and Shm2 as two main
237 producers and consumers of serine within the cell, respectively (Fig 4a). Additionally, serine
238 synthesis by the phosphoserine phosphatase Ser2 and uptake of external serine were
239 identified as potential serine sources. To establish how serine uptake is determined by the
240 relevant serine fluxes, we modelled the net flux through Ser2, Shm1 and Shm2 at varied serine
241 uptake rates. According to the model, serine synthesis outweighs serine consumption only at
242 low serine uptake rates (Fig 4b). At higher serine uptake rates, excess serine appears to be
243 converted to glycine by Shm2. The flux prediction for the sum of Shm1 and Shm2 fluxes was
244 not changed compared to the flux prediction including Ser2 (S5 Fig). Thus, the impact of the
245 3-phospho-glycerate pathway seems to be very low regarding total serine fluxes.

246 To test this model, we measured cellular amino acid concentrations by mass
247 spectrometry. We used media without amino acids (except for serine where indicated) together
248 with prototrophic WT and *gnp1*Δ cells. The amount of detected serine in WT cells was
249 significantly increased by 67% in media containing serine compared to cells grown in the
250 absence of serine. This indicates a pronounced effect of serine uptake on intracellular serine
251 concentrations (Fig 4c). In contrast, serine levels in *gnp1Δ* cells with and without serine were

252 comparable to WT cells grown in the absence of serine. This suggests that intracellular serine
253 levels are directly depending on Gnp1 mediated serine uptake. This observation was also
254 reflected in detected glycine levels, which were 120% increased for WT cells grown in media
255 with serine compared to WT cells grown without serine (Fig 4c). In addition, glycine levels also
256 did not increase in *gnp1Δ* cells grown in the presence of serine. As there was no glycine in the
257 media, this indicates conversion of the transported serine to glycine as predicted by the FVA.

258 **Serine uptake by Gnp1 is important to maintain SP homeostasis**

259 To test if serine availability is important to maintain SP homeostasis, we next analyzed
260 the contribution of Gnp1-dependent serine uptake on SP metabolism. First, serial dilutions of
261 WT, *gnp1Δ*, *agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells were spotted on different drop-out media in the
262 presence or absence of serine and myriocin. As expected, all strains grew well on all plates in
263 the absence of myriocin (Fig 5a). This also rules out any important role of Gnp1 and Agp1 in
264 serine biosynthesis. Interestingly, *gnp1Δ* cells showed strong growth defects after inhibition of
265 SP biosynthesis by myriocin, even under conditions were growth of WT cells was not affected
266 (Fig 5a). Thus, Gnp1-mediated serine uptake is essential under conditions of impaired SP
267 metabolism. In line with our genetic analyses and serine uptake assays, growth of *agp1Δ* cells
268 was not affected by the presence of myriocin, while an additive effect was observed in the
269 *gnp1Δagp1Δ* double mutant (Fig 5a). Confirming the initial results, all strains were highly
270 sensitive to myriocin in the absence of external serine (Fig 5a).

271 To exclude possible side effects of myriocin, we tested if the effect of myriocin can be
272 recovered by the addition of phytosphingosine (PHS). PHS, together with dihydrosphingosine
273 (DHS) is one of the two LCBs in yeast. Myriocin inhibits the synthesis of 3-
274 ketodihydrosphingosine, the short-lived precursor of LCBs (Fig 1c). We used serial dilutions to
275 test the effect of myriocin and PHS on WT, *gnp1Δ, agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells. We found
276 that addition of 25 µM PHS recovered the growth deficiency of *gnp1Δ* cells at 0.5 µM myriocin
277 (Fig 5c), suggesting that there are no side effects of myriocin treatment.

278 Gnp1 is a general amino acid permease which was previously described to transport
279 glutamine, leucine, threonine, cysteine, methionine and asparagine in addition to serine [17].
280 For this reason, we tested if the transport of the other amino acids affects the connection
281 between Gnp1 and SP metabolism. We performed serial dilutions of prototrophic WT, *gnp1Δ*,
282 *agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells on media without amino acids (except of serine were indicated).
283 Without serine in the media, *gnp1Δ* cells showed no increased sensitivity to myriocin compared
284 to WT cells (Fig 5c). This indicated that the sensitivity of *gnp1Δ* cells to myriocin is induced by
285 amino acids in the media. On plates containing serine and 1.5 µM myriocin *gnp1*Δ cells were
286 slightly decreased in growth compared to WT cells (Fig 5c). However, this effect was not as
287 pronounced as observed before (Fig 5a). The *gnp1*Δ*agp1*Δ cells were highly decreased in
288 growth on plates with serine and 1.5 µM myriocin (Fig 5c). Together, this indicates the
289 presence of serine as the cause of sensitivity for *gnp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells to SP depletion
290 and suggests no contribution of other transported amino acids. The difference in the sensitivity
291 of *gnp1Δ* cells towards myriocin in media with amino acids (Fig 5a) and media without amino
292 acids except of serine in the media (Fig 5c) could be a result of different expression levels of
293 the two permeases Gnp1 and Agp1 in these media [32]. So far, we were not able to add a tag
294 to Gnp1 to control the expression of the permease in different conditions. N- and C-terminal
295 tagging as well as tagging of a cytosolic loop of the enzyme with different tags rendered the
296 protein non-functional. This was verified by negative genetic interactions with *ser2Δ* in tetrad
297 dissection analysis (S7a, b, c, d and e Fig). In addition, we were not able to detect Gnp1 and
298 Agp1 levels with and without serine by mass spectrometry-based proteomics (S7f Fig).
299 Nevertheless, the *agp1Δ* strain showed no sensitivity to myriocin in both experiments (Fig 5a
300 and 5c). Additionally, the general sensitivity of the cells to myriocin was highly increased in the
301 media without amino acids, consistent with our previous observations that the absence of
302 serine increased the sensitivity towards SP depletion (Fig 5c).

303 In the next step, we asked if the observed connection between serine uptake and SP
304 homeostasis results in other genetic interactions. As Lcb1 and Lcb2, the two catalytic subunits

305 of the SPT are essential; we used deletions of *ORM1* and *ORM2* as a read-out for genetic
306 interactions of this step of SP biosynthesis. Orm1 and Orm2 are negative regulators of the
307 SPT and release their inhibition after phosphorylation. Moreover, *orm1Δorm2Δ* strains were
308 shown to have increased amounts of LCBs [7]. A *gnp1Δagp1Δ* strain mated with an
309 *orm1Δorm2Δ* strain was therefore subjected to tetrad analysis. The *orm1Δorm2Δ* double
310 mutants showed a growth defect, which was partly restored by the additional deletion of *GNP1,*
311 but not by that of *AGP1.* The *orm1Δorm2Δgnp1Δagp1Δ* quadruple mutants showed the same
312 growth defect as the triple mutants of *orm1Δorm2Δgnp1Δ,* again in line with Gnp1 being the
313 major serine transporter under the tested conditions. The recovery of the growth defect by the
314 deletion of *GNP1* indicates a rescue of increased SP levels due to decreased serine uptake.
315 Together, this suggests a regulatory effect of serine uptake on SP metabolism.

316 To exclude a general effect of diminished serine uptake towards the SP biosynthesis
317 pathway, we performed genetic interaction studies with additional enzymes of the SP
318 biosynthesis pathway. None of the tested gene deletions (*sur2Δ*, *sur4Δ*, *lcb3Δ*, *lcb4Δ*, *scs7Δ*;
319 see Fig 1c for an overview of the SP biosynthesis pathway) displayed a synthetic phenotype
320 with *gnp1Δ* or *ser2Δ* (S8 Fig). This indicates a specific genetic interaction of Gnp1 with the first,
321 serine-consuming step of SP biosynthesis.

322 To further substantiate these findings, we performed serial dilutions of WT, *gnp1Δ*,
323 *agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells on media containing the inhibitor Aureobasidin A, which blocks
324 the formation of inositol-phosphorylceramides (IPCs). All tested strains showed comparable
325 sensitivity to Aureobasidin A, indicating no interaction of serine uptake with this step of SP
326 biosynthesis (S9a Fig). We also monitored the effect of fatty acid availability with Gnp1-
327 mediated serine uptake by spotting WT, *gnp1*Δ, *agp1*Δ and *gnp1*Δ*agp1*Δ cells on plates
328 containing cerulenin, an inhibitor of the fatty acid synthase. All tested strains (WT, *gnp1*Δ,
329 *agp1*Δ and *gnp1*Δ*agp1*Δ) showed comparable growth defects, ruling out an effect of Gnp1 on
330 palmitoyl-CoA availability (S9b Fig). All these results are in line with our genetic studies,
331 indicating a prominent interaction of the first SP catalyzing step and serine uptake.

332 **Gnp1-transported serine is the main source for sphingolipid biosynthesis**

333 Finally, we decided to analyze the direct effect of serine uptake on yeast LCB levels as
334 a readout of SPT activity. FVA predicted a direct relationship between increased SPT flux and
335 increased serine uptake (Fig 6a). To experimentally test this connection, we measured PHS
336 levels of WT and *gnp1Δ* cells under high and low concentrations of myriocin by LC-MS. It was
337 previously shown that yeast cells can maintain constant levels of LCBs in the presence of low
338 myriocin concentrations [7]. This was attributed to a negative feedback loop involving TORC2,
339 Slm1/2 proteins, the Ypk kinases and the Orm proteins as negative regulators of the SPT
340 [8,9,33]. At low myriocin concentrations, the SPT is partially inhibited, while the remaining SPT
341 molecules are most likely upregulated by the described feedback mechanism, resulting in the
342 tolerance of WT cells to low concentrations of myriocin (Fig 6c). Our analysis revealed that the
343 *GNP1* deletion had no significant effect on PHS levels as compared to WT cells (Fig 6b). As
344 expected, treatment with a high concentration of 100 ng myriocin per ml (0.25 μM) resulted in
345 a strong depletion of PHS in WT and *gnp1Δ* cells (Fig 6b), suggesting that the cells are not
346 able to compensate the inhibition of SP biosynthesis. However, treatment of the cells with 10
347 ng myriocin per ml (0.025 μM) resulted in only a small, non-significant decrease in PHS levels
348 in WT cells confirming previous studies [7]. In contrast, PHS levels in *gnp1Δ* cells decreased
349 significantly compared to equally treated WT cells (Fig 6b), suggesting a regulatory impact of
350 serine uptake on SP metabolism.

351 To establish the correlation between extracellular serine uptake and SP metabolism
352 more directly, we measured the incorporation of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine and [$^{2}H_6$]-inositol into SPs.
353 We labelled WT, *gnp1Δ*, *gnp1Δagp1Δ* and *ser2Δ* cells in duplicates for 90 minutes with
354 [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine and [$^{2}H_6$]-inositol and measured their incorporation into the lipidome by high-
355 resolution shotgun lipidomics. The analysis of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine labelled IPCs revealed a 64%
356 decrease in serine labelling in *gnp1Δ* cells and a decrease of 73% in *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells
357 compared to WT cells (Fig 6d). This effect was also observed in the detected ceramides (S13
358 Fig). The decreased serine labelling of SPs without Gnp1 and the low difference in labelling

359 between the *GNP1* deletion and the *GNP1 AGP1* deletion indicate Gnp1 again as the major
360 serine permease in yeast. The results further demonstrate the integration of transported serine
361 into SPs and thus the direct connection between serine uptake and SP metabolism. In addition,
362 [$^{2}H_{6}$]-inositol labelled IPCs were slightly increased in *gnp1*Δ cells and in *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells
363 compared to WT cells, indicating perturbances in SP metabolism in the absence of serine
364 uptake (Fig 6e).

365 In serine auxotrophic cells (*ser2Δ* cells) [$^{13}C_{3}{}^{15}N_{1}$]-serine and [$^{2}H_{6}$]-inositol labelled IPC
366 levels remained in the same range as in WT cells (Figs 6d and 6e), pointing to the direct use
367 of exogenous serine for *de novo* SP biosynthesis. If mainly serine synthesized by yeast cells
368 would be used for SP metabolism, a decrease in labelling between WT cells and serine
369 auxotrophic cells would be expected. Together, these results suggest a model in which Gnp1-
370 transported serine is the main source of serine for the synthesis of SPs.

371

372 Discussion

373 Here we show that external serine uptake is crucial to maintain SP homeostasis in *S.*
374 *cerevisiae.* We identify the broad-specificity amino acid permease Gnp1 as the main serine
375 transporter in yeast. Loss of Gnp1 leads to a major reduction in serine uptake and renders the
376 cells sensitive to chemical inhibition of SP biosynthesis. While LCB levels in *gnp1Δ* cells are
377 relatively constant under normal growth conditions, the cells are unable to regulate SP
378 biosynthesis according to need. Using metabolic flux analysis, we further show that *de novo*
379 SP biosynthesis mainly depends on the uptake of extracellular serine by Gnp1 and its paralog
380 Agp1. Together, these findings add serine uptake as another mechanism to maintain SP
381 homeostasis in yeast.

382 Our data confirm previous studies that have found the overexpression of Gnp1 and
383 Agp1 to result in increased uptake of serine [17]. In addition, it has been reported that heat
384 stress results in the upregulation of SP biosynthesis. Serine for increased SP biosynthetic rates

385 is mainly taken from external sources [18]. This suggests that the cytosolic pools of serine are
386 not sufficient or spatially unavailable for increased SP biosynthesis rates. Intracellular serine
387 concentrations in yeast differ significantly across the literature [34,35]. In the experimental
388 conditions applied herein, the internal serine concentration is in the range of 3 to 6 nmol/10^8
389 cells. Since the majority of amino acids, including serine, are sequestered in the yeast vacuole
390 [36,37], this pool of serine would not be available for SP biosynthesis. This could be especially
391 important under conditions where yeast has to synthesize large amounts of SPs in a short
392 time. Thus, it is a very interesting model that serine uptake is directly coupled to *de novo* SP
393 biosynthesis by the SPT (Fig 7).

394 The SPOTS complex (SPT, Orm1/2, Tsc3, and Sac1) is present in both, the nuclear as
395 well as the cortical ER of yeast cells [7,38]. The cortical ER has recently been shown to be
396 closely associated with the plasma membrane in ER-membrane contact sites [39,40]. Thus,
397 Gnp1-mediated serine uptake could be directly coupled to SP biosynthesis. Besides all efforts,
398 we were so far unable to localize a functional Gnp1 construct in cells. Thus, it remains open,
399 if Gnp1 co-localizes with the SPOTS complex of the cortical ER.

400 Amongst other mechanisms, SPT is negatively regulated by phosphorylation of the
401 associated Orm proteins [7]. This signaling cascade starts at the plasma membrane with the
402 re-localization of the Slm1/2 proteins to the TOR complex 2 and subsequent phosphorylation
403 of the Ypk1 kinase, which then phosphorylates the Orm proteins [8,9]. The exact mechanism
404 that leads to upregulation of SPT activity after Orm phosphorylation is still not clear, but recent
405 data suggest that phosphorylated Orm2 is transported to the Golgi and degraded by the
406 endosome-Golgi associated degradation (EGAD) pathway [38]. Since TORC2 and the Ypk
407 kinases are located at the plasma membrane [8,10] it seems likely that downstream effectors,
408 such as the SPOTS complex, are also located in close proximity. In this model, two pools of
409 SPT are present in the cells i) a pool localized at the nuclear envelope that is responsible for
410 constant SP biosynthesis and ii) a pool that can be actively regulated to synthesize large
411 amounts of SPs according to need (Fig 7). In addition, this model could also be an explanation
412 of the different behavior of Orm1 and Orm2. While Orm2 appears to be a target of the EGAD

413 pathway and is mainly regulated by Ypk1, Orm1 seems to be mainly regulated via the Npr1
414 kinase, via the TOR complex 1 signaling pathway [9,38]. However, data obtained from our
415 metabolic flux analysis suggest that external serine is the main source for SP biosynthesis.

416 In summary, we propose a model where the upregulation of the SPT is directly coupled
417 to nutrient uptake, most likely at ER/plasma membrane contact sites (Fig 7). This system could
418 work similar to other processes where the uptake/release of a small molecule is directly
419 coupled to downstream pathways. One such example is local calcium dynamics at
420 ER/mitochondria contact sites [41]. Another example where substrate availability is directly
421 coupled to a downstream process is the recently described fatty acid channeling into
422 phospholipid biosynthetic enzymes at sites of autophagosome formation [42]. In any case, our
423 model would also require direct regulation of Gnp1. This could be achieved by manipulating
424 the abundance of Gnp1 via regulated biosynthesis or degradation, or by regulating its transport
425 activity by post-translational modifications. Gnp1 mRNA was shown to be regulated by the
426 Ssy1p–Ptr3p–Ssy5 (SPS) sensor of extracellular amino acids upon the addition of leucine [43].
427 Yet, we did not detect changes in Gnp1 abundance by proteomics experiments in response to
428 serine depletion (S7e Fig and S12). As an alternative regulatory mechanism, we have
429 previously identified a phosphorylation site at serine 124 of Gnp1 after myriocin treatment,
430 indicating its regulation in response to SP depletion [14]. In addition, Gnp1 is differentially
431 phosphorylated in response to the TORC1 inhibitor rapamycin in *npr1Δ* cells. Npr1 has been
432 shown to regulate plasma membrane proteins by regulated endocytosis via the arrestin
433 proteins [44–46]. Thus, it is interesting to speculate that Gnp1 could be affected by TORC1,
434 which has also been linked to SP homeostasis [47]. Interestingly, the genetic data presented
435 herein also revealed synthetic phenotypes with multiple components of the TORC1 in serine
436 auxotroph cells (S1). Testing this hypothesis will require functional fluorescent tags of Gnp1
437 for cell biological and biochemical approaches, whose construction failed so far.

438 Varying extracellular serine concentrations have been linked to SP metabolism in
439 mammalian cells [48,49]. Therefore, it is possible that salient features of the serine uptake-SP
440 regulatory system are also conserved. While Gnp1 does not have a clear homolog in

441 mammalian cells, ASCT1 has been identified as a serine transporter in brain cells [50].
442 Interestingly, mutations in the brain serine transporter ASCT1 (Slc1a4) have been linked to
443 neurodevelopmental/neurodegenerative disorders [51,52]. Although no changes in SP levels
444 were observed in ASCT1 knockout mice so far, this could be explained by the sole
445 determination of steady state SP levels in these studies [53]. In another neurological condition,
446 HSNA1 (hereditary sensory and autonomic neuropathy 1), mutations in SPT result in the
447 incorporation of alanine yielding desoxy-SPs [41]. Interestingly, high dose oral serine
448 supplementation appears to have positive effects on patients, suggesting a functional serine
449 uptake in their cells [54,55]. While the regulation of SP homeostasis by the ORMDL proteins
450 in mammalian cells still remains mechanistically poorly understood, the components we
451 identified in the yeast system are generally also present in mammalian cells. Thus, the coupling
452 of serine uptake and SP homeostasis might be evolutionary conserved.

453

454 # Materials and Methods

455 ## Yeast strains and plasmids

456 Yeast strains used in this study are listed in Table 1. Serine metabolism knockout strains were
457 from the yeast deletion collection [21]. All tetrad analysis experiments were performed in the
458 W303 strain background. All other experiments including serine uptake assays, proteomics
459 and lipidomics experiments were performed in the SEY6210 background.

460 ## Yeast media and growth conditions

461 Tetrad dissections were performed on standard YPD plates. To generate a synthetic medium
462 (SDC) with or without serine we used 6.7 g/l yeast nitrogen base, 20 g/l glucose and self-made
463 drop out mix consisting of 20 mg/l adenine; 60 mg/l leucine; 20 mg/l alanine; 100 mg/l aspartic
464 acid; 100 mg/l glutamic acid; 20 mg/l histidine; 30 mg/l isoleucine; 30 mg/l lysine; 20 mg/l
465 methionine; 50 mg/l phenylalanine; 200 mg/l threonine; 20 mg/l tryptophan; 30 mg/l tyrosine;
466 20 mg/l uracil and 150 mg/l valine. To generate synthetic medium without amino acids we used

467 6.75 g/l yeast nitrogen base and 20 g/l glucose. Serine was added where indicated to a final
468 concentration of 400 mg/l.

469 For serine incorporation measurements into proteins, cells were grown in SDC (see dropout
470 mix above) containing 400 mg/l [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine overnight for at least 15 doublings.

471 For SILAC labeling, lysine auxotrophic strains SEY6210 and FFY727 were grown in SDC
472 medium containing the same dropout mix with either 30 mg/L lysine (SEY6210) or 30 mg/L
473 [$^{13}C_6{}^{15}N_2$]-lysine (FFY727) to OD_{600}=0.7 for at least 15 generation times to ensure full labeling.

474 **Spotting assays**

475 For spotting assays, cells were grown to exponential growth phase and serial diluted. Cells
476 were spotted on the corresponding plates and incubated at 30 °C for three days. YPD and SD
477 media with and without amino acids were used as indicated. Chemicals were added in the
478 indicated concentrations.

479 **Serine uptake assays**

480 Amino acid uptake assays were performed as previously described [56] with minor
481 modifications. Briefly, WT, *gnp1Δ*, *agp1Δ* and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells were grown in synthetic
482 medium with serine for at least 13 doublings to reach an OD_{600}=0.5. With the aid of a vacuum
483 system, cells were filtered and resuspended from the filters (MF™ Membrane Filters 0.45 µm,
484 Merck KGaA, 64293 Darmstadt, Germany) in the same volume of synthetic medium without
485 serine. OD_{600} was measured and 0.72 mM [^{14}C]-serine were added. At 5, 15 and 30 min 1 ml
486 of the culture was filtered with serine-saturated filters. To measure the background 1 ml of the
487 0.72 mM [^{14}C]-serine solution was also filtered the same way. The filters were covered by a
488 scintillation liquid and the radioactivity was measured with a scintillation counter (Beckman
489 Coulter LS 6500 Multi-Purpose Scintillation Counter, GMI Trusted Laboratory Solutions, MN
490 55303, USA). The transport was expressed as nmol/mg of protein per unit of time and reported
491 as the mean ± S.D. (n = 3).

492 **Proteomics**

493 Proteomics analysis was performed as described previously [57]. Briefly, yeast cells were
494 lysed using the filter aided sample preparation method [58]. For full proteome analysis,
495 samples were eluted from a PepMap C18 easy spray column (Thermo) with a linear gradient
496 of acetonitrile from 10–35% in H_2O with 0.1% formic acid for 118 min at a constant flow rate of
497 300 nl/min.

498 For serine incorporation assays using [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine (Cambridge Isotope Labs) samples
499 were eluted from a PepMap C18 easy spray column (Thermo) with a linear gradient of
500 acetonitrile from 10–50% in 0.1% formic acid for 33 min at a constant flow rate of 300 nl/min.

501 The resulting MS and MS/MS spectra were analyzed using MaxQuant (version 1.6.0.13, www.
502 maxquant.org/; Cox et al., 2011; Cox and Mann, 2008) as described previously [57]. For
503 incorporation tests, [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine was added as a modification to the MaxQuant database
504 (mass change =4.0070994066 Da). For the calculation of incorporation rates, the peptide list
505 was filtered for serine containing peptides with a valid heavy/light ratio. For each peptide, the
506 incorporation was calculated as 1 - (1/(ratio H/L - 1)). The maximum of a density distribution of
507 all peptides represents the estimated incorporation level. All calculations and plots were
508 performed with the R software package (www.r-project.org/; RRID:SCR_001905).

509 **LCB Analysis**

510 For LC-MS analysis of LCBs, cells were grown in YPD to exponential growth phase and
511 labelled for 3 hours with the indicated concentrations of myriocin. Lipids were extracted from
512 lysed yeast cells according to 50 µg of protein by chloroform/methanol extraction [61]. Prior to
513 extraction sphingosine (LCB 17:0) was spiked into each sample for normalization and
514 quantification. Dried lipid samples were dissolved in a 65:35 mixture of mobile phase A (60:40
515 water/acetonitrile, including 10 mM ammonium formate and 0.1% formic acid) and mobile
516 phase B (88:10:2 2-propanol/acetonitrile/H_20, including 2 mM ammonium formate and 0.02%
517 formic acid). HPLC analysis was performed on a C30 reverse-phase column (Thermo Acclaim
518 C30, 2.1 × 250 mm, 3 µm, operated at 50°C; Thermo Fisher Scientific) connected to an HP
519 1100 series HPLC (Agilent) HPLC system and a QExactive*PLUS* Orbitrap mass spectrometer

520 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) equipped with a heated electrospray ionization (HESI) probe. The
521 analysis was performed as described previously [62]. Peaks were analyzed using the Lipid
522 Search algorithm (MKI, Tokyo, Japan). Peaks were defined through raw files, product ion and
523 precursor ion accurate masses. Candidate molecular species were identified by database
524 (>1,000,000 entries) search of positive ($+H^+$) ion adducts. Mass tolerance was set to five ppm
525 for the precursor mass. Samples were aligned within a time window 0.5 min and results
526 combined in a single report. From the intensities of the lipid standard absolute values for each
527 lipid in pmol/mg protein were calculated. Data are displayed as fold change from WT.

528 **Quantification of cellular amino acids**

529 Prototroph strains were grown in synthetic medium without amino acids (except of the addition
530 of serine were indicated), collected by centrifugation and washed with ice-cold H_20 for three
531 times. Cell lysis and amino acid extractions were performed following the modified protocol
532 from Mülleder et al., 2016. Ethanol containing the non-proteinogeneic amino acid norleucin
533 was added to the pellet, mixed and heated to 80° C for 5 minutes. The extract was sonicated
534 for 15 minutes and the heating step was repeated. The extract was cleared by centrifugation,
535 dried and resolved in H_20 with 10% acetonitrile. The amino acids were derivatized with dansyl-
536 chloride and analysed by LC-MS/MS.

537 Amino acids were separated by hydrophilic interaction liquid chromatography using a
538 Shimadzu Nexera HPLC with ThermoFisher Accurore RP-MS C18 column (0.21 x 150 mm;
539 2.6 µm particle size). For the mobile phases 0.1% formic acid in water (A) and 0.1% formic
540 acid in 80% acetonitrile (B) was used. For the gradient 0 to 50% B over 0.7 min, 50% to 60%
541 over 3.7 min, 60% to 100% B over 0.1 min, 100% B kept for 0.5min and 0% B for 1.5 min and
542 a constant flow rate of 0.4 ml/min was used with a total analysis time of 6 minutes and an
543 injection volume of 1 µl. The samples were analyzed by a QTRAP® 5500 LC-MS/MS system
544 (SCIEX), with IonDrive™ TurboV source. The MS data were acquired in positive, scheduled
545 MRM mode with 20 sec detection windows (Gly: Q1 309, Q3 170, RT 2.65min, DP 111V, CE,
546 27V, CXP 26V; Ser: Q1 339, Q3 170, RT 2.02min, DP 36V, CE, 29V, CXP 6V). For peak

547 integration SciexOS™ software was used. The Amino Acid Standard H from Thermo Fischer
548 was used to quantify the amino acids. The amino acid concentrations were expressed in nmol
549 per 10^8 cells and reported as the mean ± S.D. (n = 3).

550 **Modelling flux variability**

551 Flux variability analysis (FVA) [63] was performed on the yeast consensus genome-scale
552 model yeast-GEM-v7.6.0 [64] and constraints were adjusted to simulate growth in SDC
553 medium and to account for the gene deletions in the SEY6210 mutant. The computed minimum
554 and maximum fluxes correspond to the solution space which supports 99 % of maximum
555 feasible biomass growth. We used COBRA Toolbox v3.0 [65] in MATLAB (The MathWorks,
556 Inc.) and employed the algorithm fastFVA [66] and CPLEX 12.8 (IBM Corp.) to solve
557 optimization problems. The metabolic model is available at
558 https://github.com/SysBioChalmers/yeast-GEM/tree/v7.6.0. Our MATLAB script is provided in
559 S9 Script.

560 **Lipidomics flux analysis**

561 Yeast strains were pre-cultured in YPD. At an OD_{600} of 0.8, 5 ml cell suspensions were spiked
562 with a tracer cocktail resulting in final concentrations of 4.59 mM [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine and 0.22
563 mM [$^2H_6$]-inositol. After 90 minutes, the cell suspensions were incubated at 4 °C for 10 min
564 with 1M perchloric acid. The cells were centrifuged and washed with 4 ºC 155 mM ammonium
565 formate, frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at –80 ºC.
566 In-depth lipidome analysis was performed as described previously [67,68]. In short, yeast cell
567 pellets (~5 ODunits) were resuspended in 1 ml of 155 mM ammonium formate and lysed at 4
568 °C with 400 µl of acid-washed glass beads using a Mini-Beadbeater (Biospec). Lysates
569 corresponding with 0.4 OD units were subsequently spiked with internal lipid standards and
570 subjected to two-step lipid extraction [68]. Lipid extracts were vacuum evaporated and re-
571 dissolved in 100 µl chloroform/methanol (1:2; v/v) and analyzed by MS^{ALL} [69] using an Orbitrap
572 Fusion Tribrid (Thermo Fisher Scientific) equipped with a TriVersa NanoMate robotic nanoflow

573 ion source (Advion Biosciences). Lipid identification and quantification was done using ALEX[123]
574 software [70–72]. The results were expressed in mol % per all detected lipids (*n* = 2).
575

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814

815 ## Supplementary material

816 **S1 Fig: (a)** The genetic interaction score (epsilon score) of *SER2* is plotted against the
817 negative LOG_{10} of the *p*-value of the interactions. The volcano plot shows significant negative
818 genetic interactions on the left side of the plot. Dots are color coded according to the respective
819 signaling pathways (orange – TORC1; read – SEA complex, purple – EGO complex, green –
820 unknown signaling pathway). Data are taken from [25].

821 **S2 Source Data Fig 3a:** Data set for serine uptake assays presented in figure 3a

822 **S3 Source Data Fig 3c:** List of all peptides identified including SILAC ratios and intensities.

823 **S4 Source Data Fig 3d:** List of all proteins identified including SILAC ratios and intensities
824 from the comparison of WT and *gnp1Δ* cells.

825 **S5 Fig: (a)** Predicted serine hydroxymethyltransferases (Shm) net fluxes. Variability of net flux
826 through Shm1 and Shm2 at varying serine uptake rates, as predicted by FVA. Positive and
827 negative fluxes correspond to net production of serine and glycine, respectively. Fluxes and
828 serine uptake rates are represented in mmol per gram dry weight per hour.

829 **S6 Source Data Fig 4c:** Data set of serine and glycine levels of WT and *gnp1Δ* cells with and
830 without serine presented in figure 4c.

831

832 **S7 Fig: (a)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with Gnp1-mcherry (red). **(b)**
833 Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with GFP-Gnp1. **(c)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ*
834 (blue) mutants crossed with *gnp1Δ* (red) pRS405-Gnp1 (purple). **(d)** Outline of the position of
835 GFP in the Gnp1 gene. **(e)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with *gnp1Δ* (red)
836 pRS405-*GNP1*$_{211}$*GFP* (green) **(f)** Proteome comparison of lysine labelled WT cells with serine
837 and [$^{13}C_6{}^{15}N_2$]-lysine labelled WT cells depleted of serine. Protein intensities are plotted against
838 normalized SILAC ratios of heavy (-serine) to light (+serine). Significant outliers are colored in
839 red ($p < 1e^{-11}$), orange ($p<1e^{-4}$) or dark blue ($p < 0.05$); other proteins are shown in light blue.

840 **S8 Fig: (a)** Tetrad analysis of *gnp1Δ* (red) mutants crossed with *sur2Δ* (orange). **(b)** Tetrad
841 analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with *sur2Δ* (orange). **(c)** Tetrad analysis of *gnp1Δ*
842 (red) mutants crossed with *scs7Δ* (orange). **d)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed
843 with *scs7Δ* (orange). **(e)** Tetrad analysis of *gnp1Δ* (red) mutants crossed with *sur4*Δ (orange).
844 **(f)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with *sur4Δ* (orange). **(g)** Tetrad analysis of
845 *gnp1Δ* (red) mutants crossed with *lcb4Δ* (orange). **(h)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants
846 crossed with *lcb4Δ* (orange). **(i)** Tetrad analysis of *gnp1Δ* (red) mutants crossed with *lcb3Δ*
847 (orange). **(j)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with *lcb3Δ* (orange).

848 **S9 Fig: (a)** Serial dilutions of WT, *gnp1Δ* cells, *agp1Δ* cells, *gnp1Δ agp1Δ* cells and two
849 different clones of *pdr5Δ* cells on YPD plates. Control plates (left) and plates containing 1.8 µM
850 cerulenin (right) were used. **(b)** Serial dilutions of WT, *gnp1Δ* cells, *agp1Δ* cells, *gnp1Δ agp1Δ*
851 cells and *fat1Δ* cells on YPD plates. Control plates (left) and plates containing 0.075 µM
852 Aureobasidin A (right) were used.

853 **S10 Source Data Fig 6b:** Data set of long chain base levels of WT and *gnp1Δ* cells with and
854 without myriocin presented in figure 6b.

855 **S11 Source Data Fig 6d and e:** Data set of serine (6d) and inositol (6e) labelled IPCs
856 presented in figure 6b.

857

858 **S12 Source Data S4:** List of all proteins identified including SILAC ratios and intensities from
859 the comparison of control cells and serine depleted cells as presented in.

860 **S13 Fig: (a)** Integration of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine into ceramides. Cells were labelled with [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-
861 serine and [$^{2}H_6$]-inositol over 90 minutes in YPD media. Lipids were extracted and analyzed
862 via mass spectrometry. Displayed are the amounts of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine labelled ceramides of
863 WT cells, *gnp1Δ* cells, *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells and *ser2Δ* cells in mol% per all detected lipids. The
864 average is displayed in bars. Dots correspond to the values of two independent experiments.

865 **S14 Skript:** MATLAB script used for the flux variability analysis.

866

867 **Table 1: List of all yeast strains and their genotypes used in this study.**

	Mat a *his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 met15Δ0 ura3Δ0*	EUROSCARF
	Mat a *his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 met15Δ0 ura3Δ0 ser1Δ::KAN*	EUROSCARF
	Mat a *his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 met15Δ0 ura3Δ0 ser2Δ::KAN*	EUROSCARF
	Mat a *his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 met15Δ0 ura3Δ0 ser3Δ::KAN*	EUROSCARF
	Mat a *his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 met15Δ0 ura3Δ0 ser33Δ::KAN*	EUROSCARF
TWY138	Mat a *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100*	Walther et al. 2007
TWY139	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100*	Walther et al. 2007
FFY1260	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::KAN GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1420	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 AGP1/agp1Δ::HPH GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT SER2/ser2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1534	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 AGP1/agp1Δ::HPH SER2/ser2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2104	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 ORM1/orm1 Δ::NAT ORM2/orm2 Δ::HPH AGP1/agp1Δ::HIS GNP1/gnp1Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2306	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::KAN GNP1/Gnp1-mcherry::KAN*	this study

FFY1901	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::NAT SUR2/sur2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1902	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT SUR2/sur2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1897	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::NAT SCS7/scs7Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1898	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT SCS7/scs7Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1899	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::NAT SUR4/sur4Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1900	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT SUR4/sur4Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2051	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::KAN LCB4/lcb4Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY2152	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 GNP1/gnp1Δ::KAN LCB4/lcb4Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY2144	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::NAT LCB3/lcb3Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2146	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT LCB3/lcb3Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2501	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::KAN GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT* pRS405-GNP1	this study
FFY2489	Mat a/α *ura3-52/ura3-52; trp1Δ 2/trp1Δ 2; leu2-3,112/leu2-3,112; his3-11/his3-11; ade2-1/ade2-1; can1-100/can1-100 SER2/ser2Δ::KAN GNP1/gnp1Δ::NAT* pRS405-GNP1$_{211}$GFP	this study
FFY2577	*his3Δ 1/his3Δ 1 leu2Δ 0/ leu2Δ 0 lys2Δ 0/ lys2Δ 0 ura3Δ/ura3Δ GFP-Gnp1 SER2/ser2Δ::NAT*	this study
	MATα his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 lys2Δ0 ura3Δ0 GFP-GNP1	[73]
FFY1254	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 ser2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1251	Mat a *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 gnp1Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1545	Mat a *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 agp1Δ::HPH gnp1Δ::NAT*	this study

FFY1533	Mat a *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 agp1Δ::HPH*	this study
FFY1861	Mat a *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 orm1Δ::NAT orm2Δ::HPH*	this study
FFY1815	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 gnp1Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1058	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 fat1Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1422	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100* Gnp1-mcherry::KAN	this study
FFY978	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 sur2Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1829	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 scs7Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY197	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 sur4Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1978	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 lcb4Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY2102	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 lcb3Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY1816	Mat α *ura3-52 trp1Δ 2 leu2-3112 his3-11 ade2-1 can1-100 ser2Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY2439	*ura3Δ0; leu2Δ0; his3Δ1; met15Δ0 ser2⊿::NAT*	this study
SEY6210	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL*	Robinson et al. 1988
FFY727	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp1-Δ901 suc2-Δ9 lys2-801; GAL gnp1Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY848	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL ser2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1379	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL ser2Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1375	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL agp1Δ::KAN*	this study
FFY1385	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL gnp1Δ::NAT agp1Δ::HPH*	this study
FFY2337	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL pdr5Δ::NAT*	this study
FFY2338	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL pdr5Δ::HPH*	this study
FFY2150	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL* pHLUK pRS414	this study
FFY2151	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp1-Δ901 suc2-Δ9 lys2-801; GAL gnp1Δ::NAT* pHLUK pRS414	this study
FFY2152	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL agp1Δ::KAN* pHLUK pRS414	this study
FFY2153	Mat α *leu2-3,112 ura3-52 his3-Δ200 trp-Δ901 lys2-801 suc2-Δ9 GAL gnp1Δ::NAT agp1Δ::HPH* pHLUK pRS414	this study

868

869 **Table 2: List of all plasmids used in this study.**

	pHLUK	ADDGENE
	pRS414	[74]
	pRS405	[74]
FFP255	pRS405-GNP1	this study
FFP286	pRS405-GNP1$_{211}$GFP	this study

870

871

872 # Fig captions

873 **Fig 1: Serine metabolism is essential for sphingolipid homeostasis in yeast. (a)** Model of
874 serine metabolism via the 3-phospho-glycerate pathway. **(b)** Serial dilutions of knockouts of
875 serine biosynthesis genes in the presence (control) or absence of serine (- serine) on synthetic
876 medium. The strains used are from top to bottom: wild-type (WT;SEY6210), *ser1Δ*, *ser2Δ*,
877 *ser3Δ* and *ser33Δ*. **(c)** Model of sphingolipid (SP) metabolism in yeast. Myriocin (red) is an
878 inhibitor of the SPT (Lcb1, Lcb2, Tsc3). **(d)** Exogenous serine is essential for survival under
879 SP depleted conditions. Serial dilutions of WT and *ser2Δ* cells on synthetic medium. Control
880 plates (upper left), plates without serine (upper right panel), plates containing 1 µM myriocin
881 (lower right) and plates containing 1 µM myriocin with no serine available (lower right) are
882 displayed.

883 **Fig 2: GNP1 genetically interacts with serine metabolism. (a)** Outline for the identification
884 of the plasma membrane serine transporter in yeast. WT cells (I, upper left) as well as *SER2*
885 knockout cells (II, upper right) and knockouts of the serine transporter in yeast (gene XXX, III
886 lower left) should grow fine. Deletion of both, *SER2* and the serine transporter should result in
887 synthetic lethality (IV, lower right). **(b)** The genetic interaction score (epsilon score) of *SER2* is
888 plotted against the negative LOG_{10} of the P-value of the interactions. The volcano plot shows
889 significant negative genetic interactions on the left side of the plot. Highly significant

890 interactions are shown in green. Data are taken from (25). **(c)** Tetrad analysis of *gnp1Δ* (red)
891 mutants crossed with *ser2Δ* (blue). **(d)** Tetrad analysis of *agp1Δ* (green) mutants crossed with
892 *ser2Δ* (blue). **(e)** Tetrad analysis of *ser2Δ* (blue) mutants crossed with *gnp1Δagp1Δ* (red and
893 green, respectively).

894 **Fig 3: Gnp1 and Agp1 are essential for the uptake of exogenous serine. (a)** WT cells
895 (black line), *gnp1Δ* cells (red line), *agp1Δ* cells (green line) and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells (purple line)
896 were grown in synthetic complete medium. Cells were washed and incubated with [^{14}C]-serine.
897 The uptake rate of [^{14}C]-serine was measured. Error bars correspond to standard deviations.
898 n=3. **(b)** Schematic outline of the main serine consuming and producing processes. **(c)** WT
899 cells (black line), *gnp1Δ* cells (red line) and *ser2Δ* cells (blue line) were grown in the presence
900 of stable isotope labelled, [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine. Graphs represent the density function of the rates
901 of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine incorporation into all peptides containing a single serine. **(d)** Proteome
902 comparison of lysine labeled WT cells and [$^{13}C_6{}^{15}N_2$]-lysine labeled *gnp1Δ* cells. Protein
903 intensities are plotted against normalized SILAC ratios of heavy (*gnp1Δ*) to light (WT).
904 Significant outliers are colored in red ($p < 1e^{-11}$), orange ($p<1e^{-4}$) or dark blue ($p < 0.05$); other
905 proteins are shown in light blue.

906 **Fig 4: Intracellular serine concentrations are dependent on serine uptake (a)** Predicted
907 fluxes of serine. Flux variability of metabolic reactions, which produce or consume serine, as
908 predicted by flux variability analysis (FVA). Positive and negative fluxes correspond to serine
909 production and consumption, respectively. Fluxes are represented in mmol per gram dry
910 weight per hour. **(b)** Predicted net flux of serine producing reactions at varying serine uptake
911 rates. Variability of net flux through Shm1, Shm2 and Ser2 at varying serine uptake rates, as
912 predicted by FVA. Positive and negative fluxes correspond to serine production and
913 consumption, respectively. Fluxes and serine uptake rates are represented in mmol per gram
914 dry weight per hour. **(c)** Cellular serine and glycine concentrations. Prototroph WT and *gnp1Δ*
915 cells were grown in the absence of amino acids and with and without serine. Serine and glycine
916 concentrations from whole cell lysates were analyzed by mass spectrometry. Error bars

917 represent standard deviations. n=3. *, P-value <0.05, calculated from t-test. Differences
918 between data that are not labelled with a star are not significant.

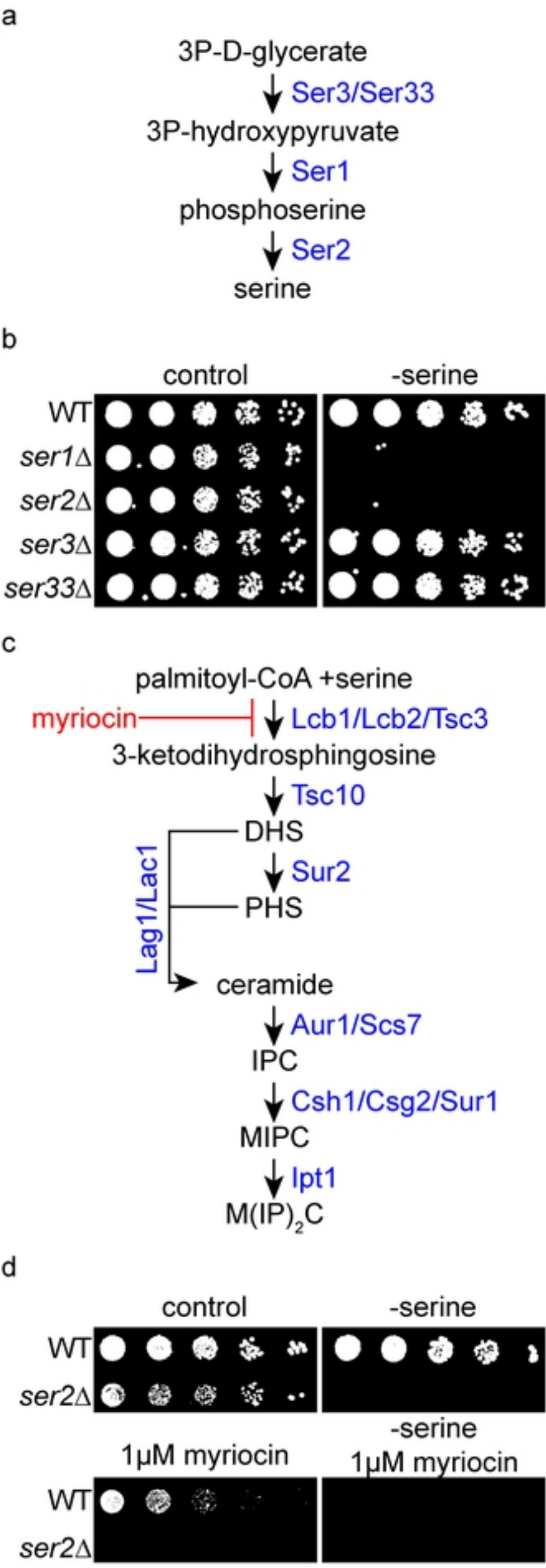
919 **Fig 5: Gnp1 dependent serine uptake is essential to maintain sphingolipid homeostasis.**
920 **(a)** Serial dilutions of WT, *gnp1Δ* cells, *agp1Δ* cells and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells on synthetic medium.
921 Control plates (upper left), plates without serine (upper right), plates containing 1 μM myriocin
922 (lower left) and plates containing 1 μM myriocin with no serine available (lower right) are
923 displayed. **(b)** Serial dilutions of WT, *gnp1Δ* cells, *agp1Δ* cells and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells on YPD
924 medium. Control plates (left), plates containing 0.5 μM myriocin (middle) and plates containing
925 0.5 μM myriocin and 25 μM phytosphingosine (PHS) (right) are displayed. **(c)** Serial dilutions
926 of prototroph WT, *gnp1Δ* cells, *agp1Δ* cells and *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells on plates without amino
927 acids (upper row) and plates without amino acids (-AAs) with serine (lower row), each with 0.5
928 μM (middle) and 1.5 μM myriocin (right). **(d)** Tetrad analysis of *orm1Δorm2Δ* cells (dark blue
929 and yellow, respectively crossed with *gnp1Δ* (red) cells and followed by the deletion of *AGP1*
930 (green).

931 **Fig 6: Imported serine is the main source for SP biosynthesis (a).** Predicted flux of SPT
932 at varying serine uptake rates. Variability of flux through SPT at varying serine uptake rates,
933 as predicted by FVA. Positive and negative fluxes correspond to serine production and
934 consumption, respectively. SPT fluxes and serine uptake rates are represented in mmol per
935 gram dry weight per hour. **(b)** GNP1 is essential to maintain SP homeostasis. Mass
936 spectrometric analysis of phytosphingosine (PHS) concentrations in WT and *gnp1Δ* cells
937 grown in the presence or absence of 0.25 μM myriocin or 0.025 μM myriocin in YPD medium.
938 Error bars represent standard deviations. n=3. *, P-value <0.05, calculated from t-test. **(c)**
939 Model of SPT activity under high and low concentrations of myriocin. Under high
940 concentrations of myriocin (left panel) most SPT complexes are inhibited by myriocin and de
941 novo SP biosynthesis is significantly impaired resulting in decreased SP concentrations. Under
942 low concentrations of myriocin (right panel), only few SPT complexes are inhibited by the
943 suicide inhibitor myriocin while the cell regulates against the decreasing SP levels resulting in

944 the upregulation of the remaining SPT molecules and constant SP concentrations. **(d)**
945 Integration of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine into inositol-phosphorylceramides (IPC). Cells were labelled
946 with [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine and [$^{2}H_6$]-inositol over 90 minutes in YPD medium. Lipids were extracted
947 and analyzed via mass spectrometry. Displayed are the amounts of [$^{13}C_3{}^{15}N_1$]-serine labelled
948 IPCs of WT cells, *gnp1Δ* cells, *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells and *ser2Δ* cells in mol% per all detected
949 lipids. The average is displayed in bars. Dots correspond to the values of two independent
950 experiments. (e) Integration of [$^{2}H_6$]-inositol into IPCs. Displayed are the amounts of [2H6]-
951 inositol labelled IPCs of WT cells, *gnp1Δ* cells, *gnp1Δagp1Δ* cells and *ser2Δ* cells in mol% per
952 all detected lipids. The average is displayed in bars. Dots correspond to the values of two
953 independent experiments.

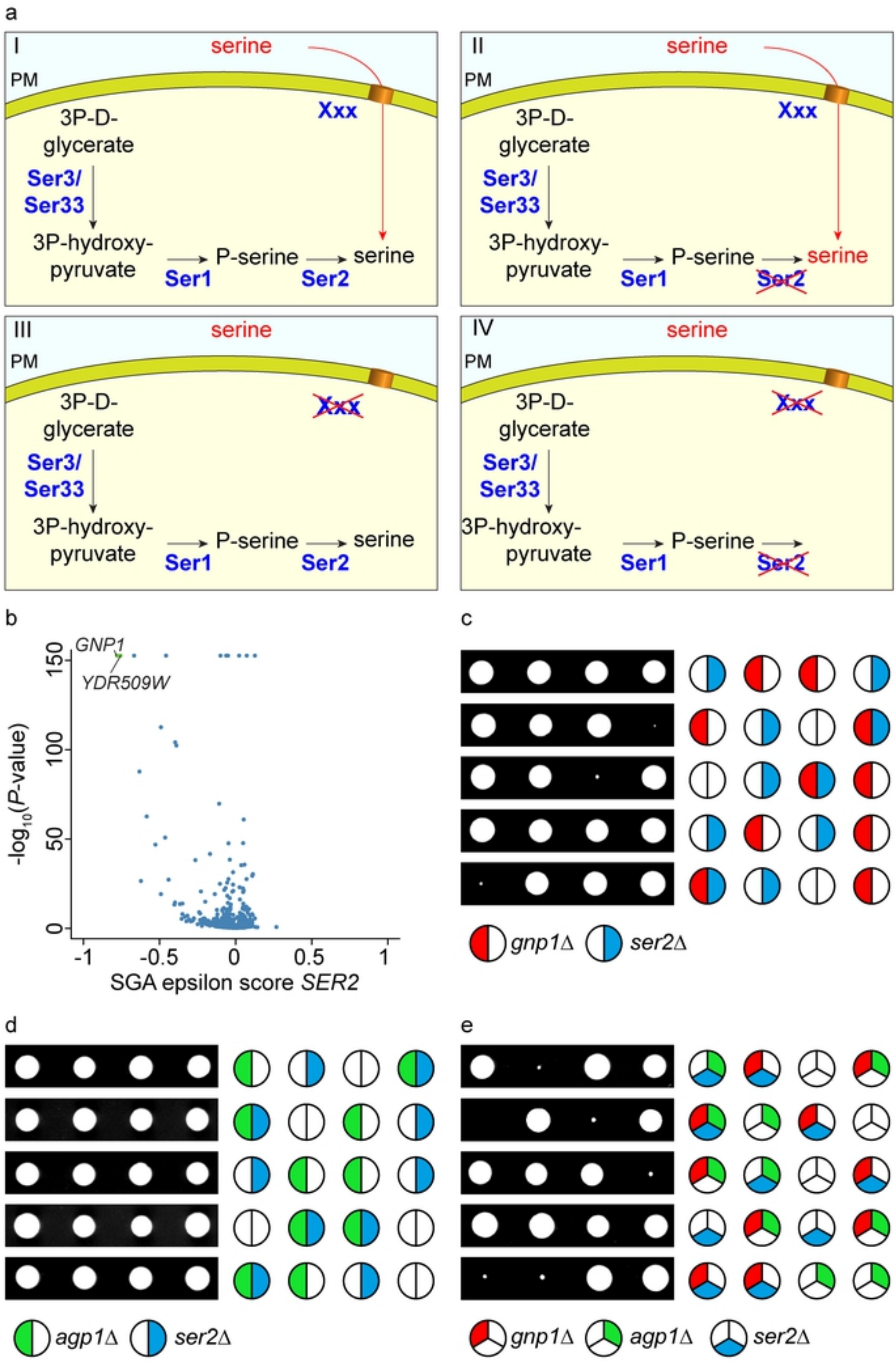
954 **Fig 7: Model for direct coupling of Gnp1 mediated serine uptake and regulated SP**
955 **biosynthesis.** SP biosynthesis is directly coupled to Gnp1-mediated serine uptake. The SPT
956 pool at the cortical ER is highly regulated by serine uptake and the TORC1/Ypk1/Orm1/2
957 signaling network. The nuclear envelope localized SPT pool is responsible for constant SP
958 biosynthesis. This model adds serine uptake as another factor to previously described
959 mechanisms regulating SP homeostasis by the signaling cascade of Slm1/2-TORC2-Ypk1/2
960 and the Orm proteins (7–9).

961



Esch et al. 2020 Figure 1

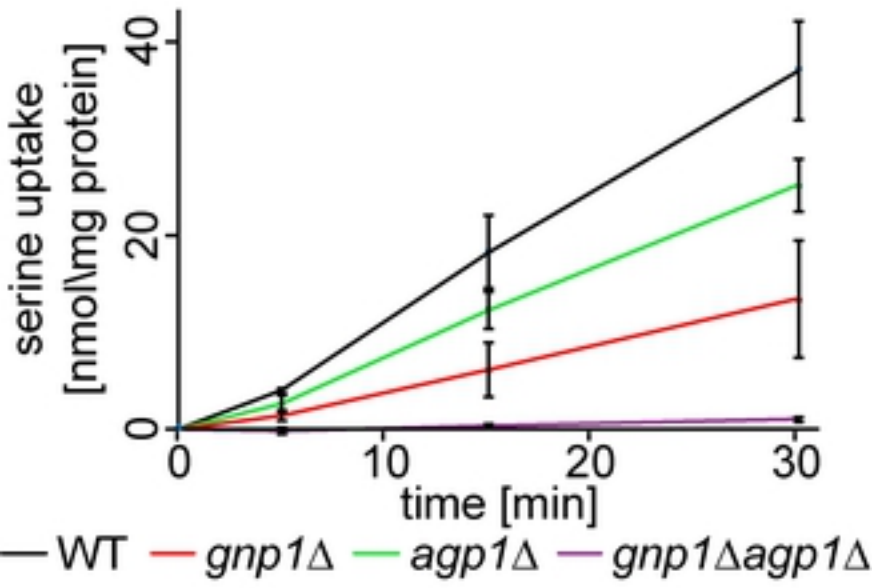
Figure 1



Esch et al. 2020 Figure 2

Figure 2

a



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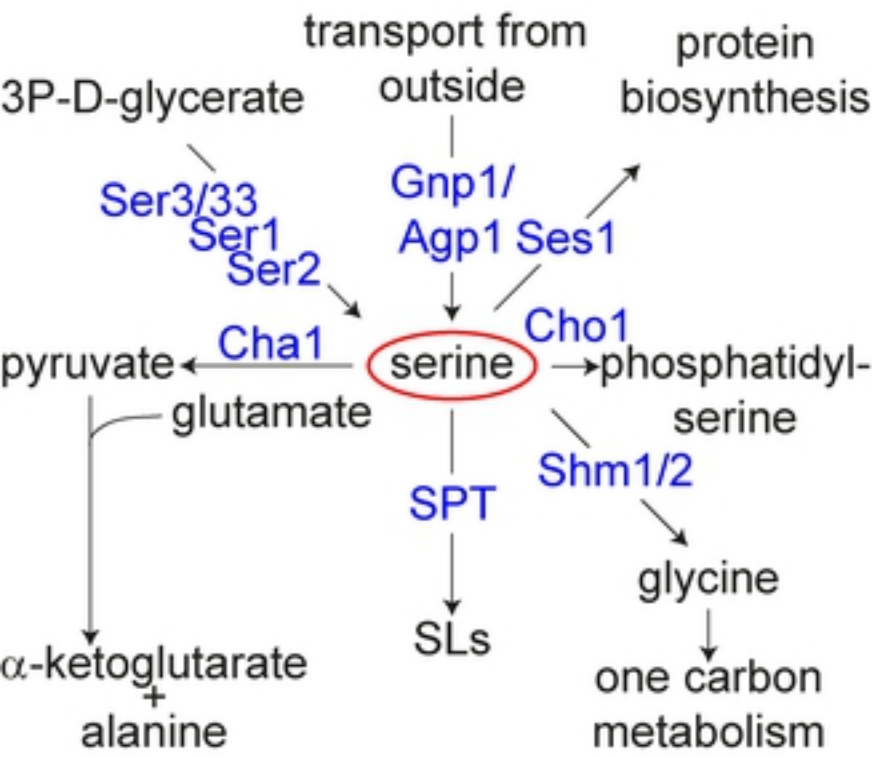

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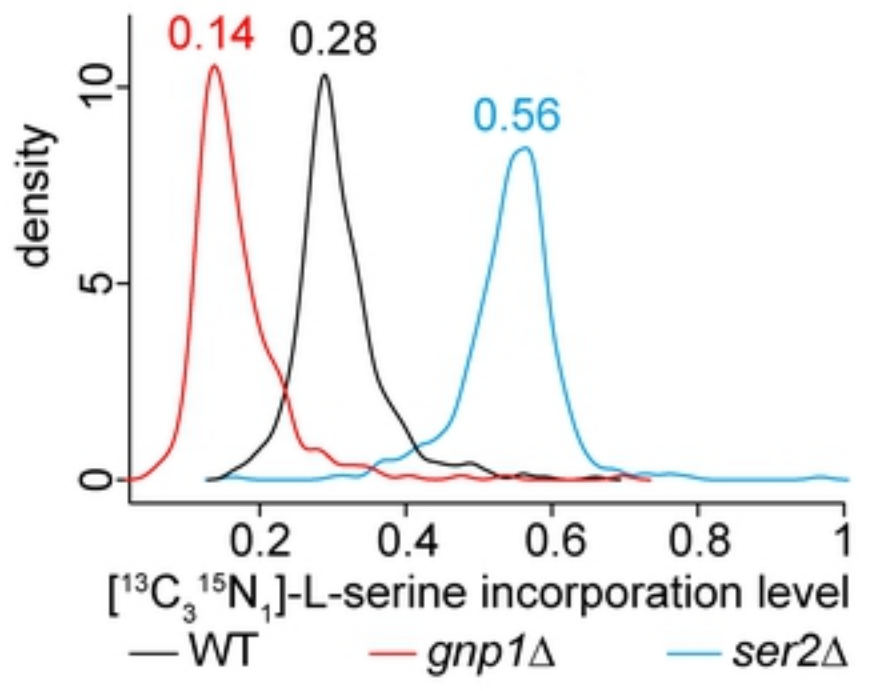

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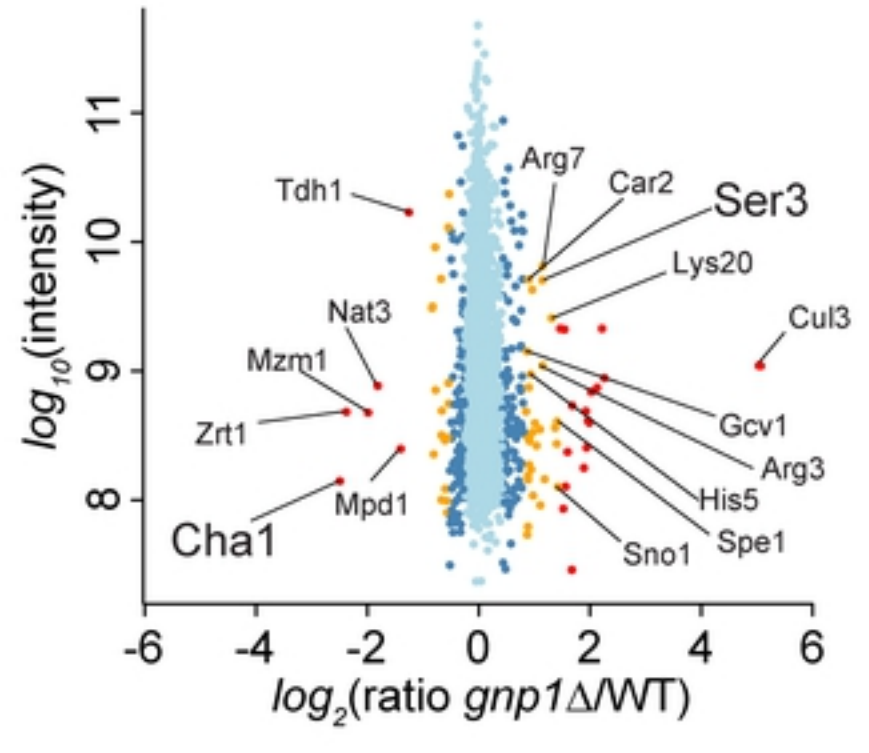
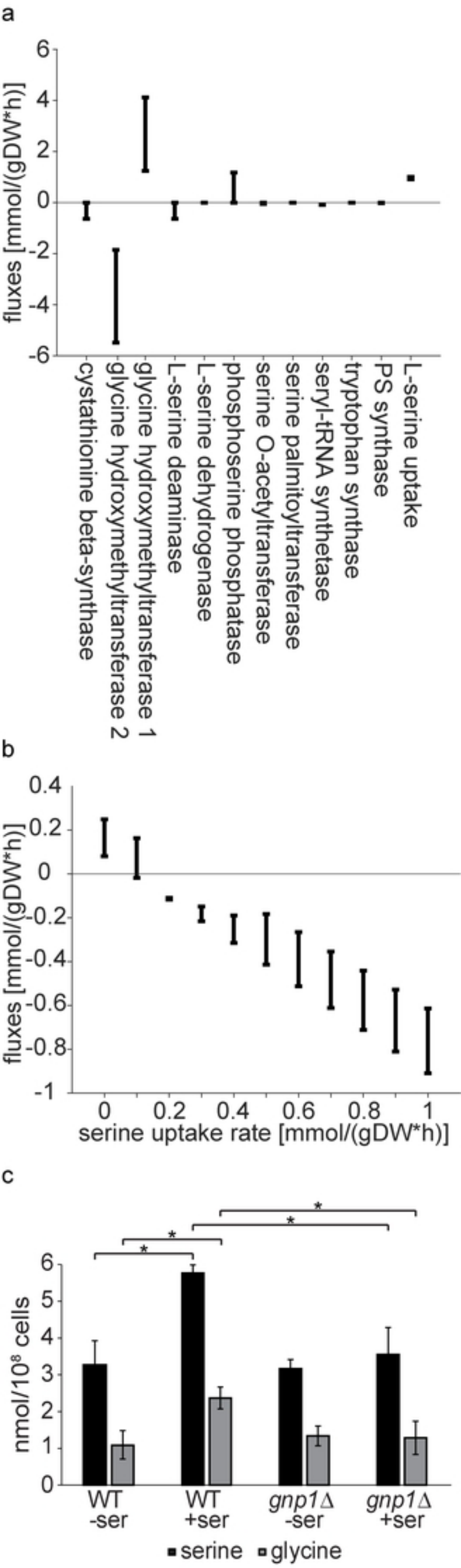


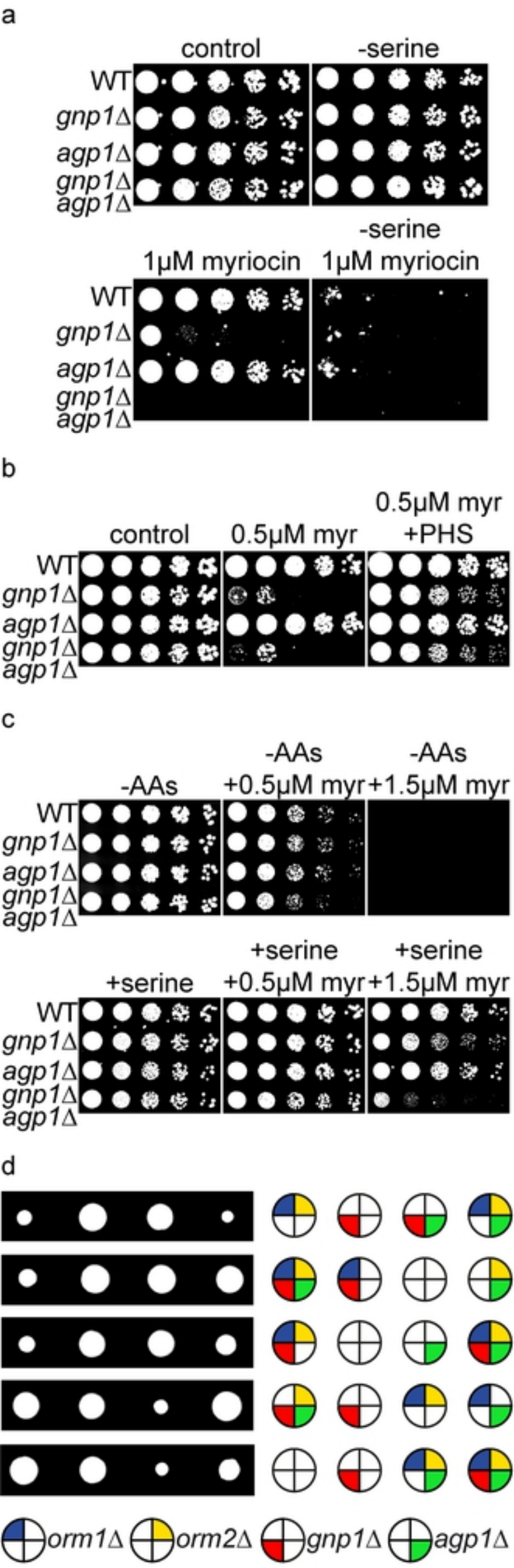
Esch et al. 2020 Figure 3

Figure 3



Esch et al. 2020 Figure 4

Figure 4



Esch et al. 2020 Figure 5

Figure 5

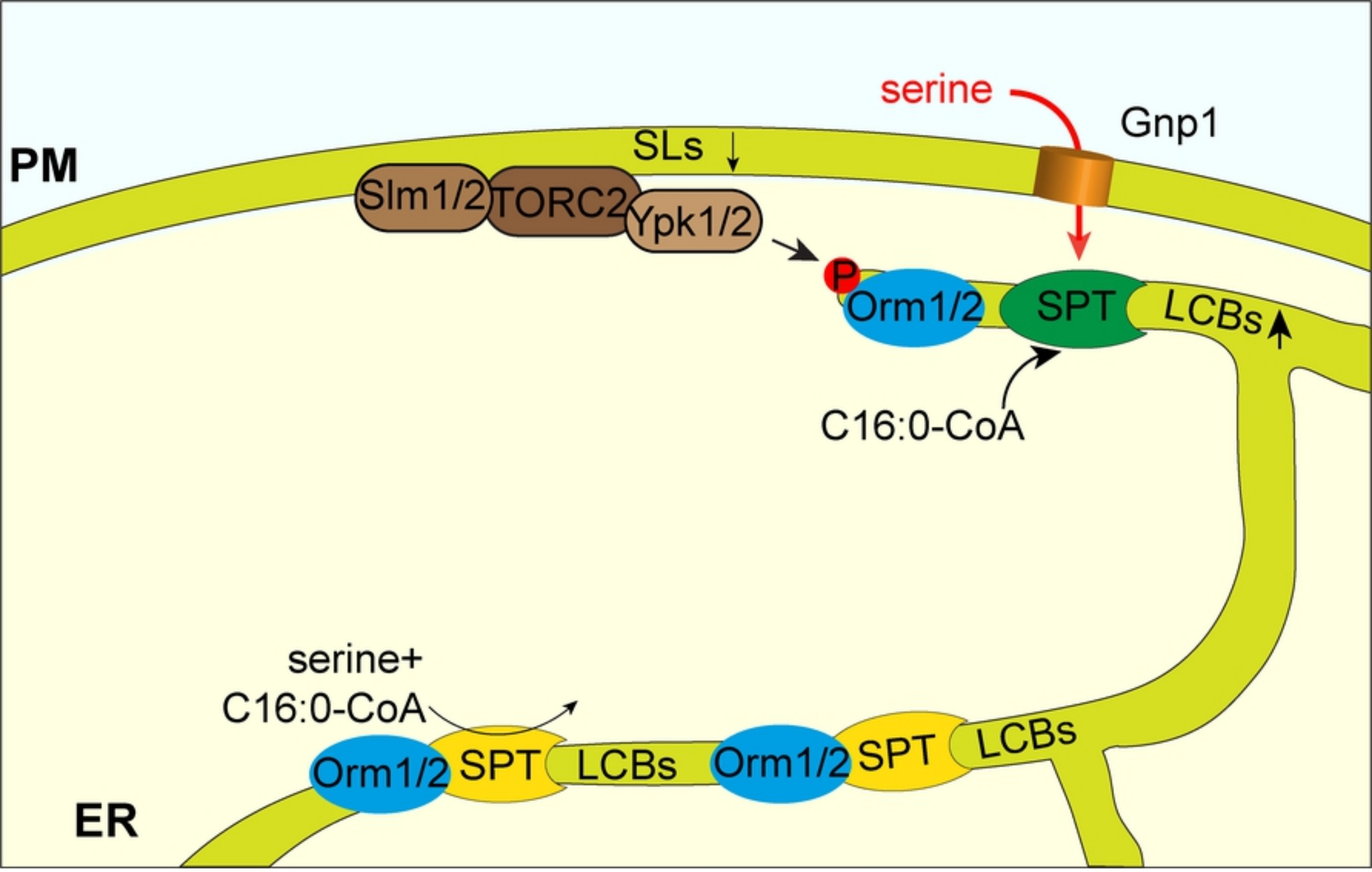
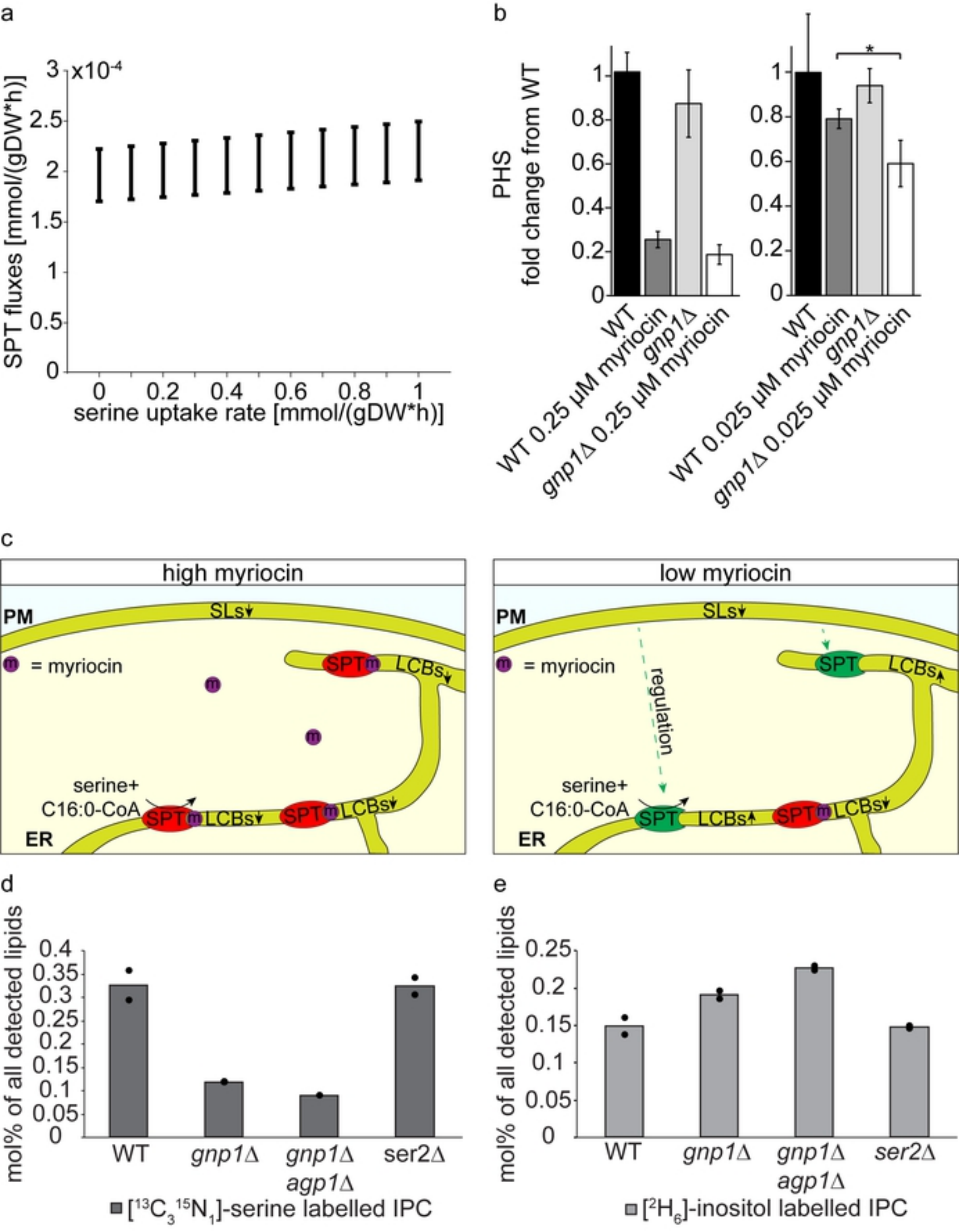

serine
Gnp1
PM
SLs
Slm1/2
TORC2
Ypk1/2
P
Orm1/2
SPT
LCBs
C16:0-CoA
serine+
C16:0-CoA
Orm1/2
SPT
LCBs
Orm1/2
SPT
LCBs
ER

Figure 7



Esch et al. 2020 Figure 6

Figure 6