# Transient *grb10a* Knockdown Permanently Alters Growth, Cardiometabolic Phenotype and the Transcriptome in *Danio rerio*

Bridget L Evans[1], Terence Garner[1], Chiara De Leonibus[1], Oliver H Wearing[2], Holly A Shiels[2], Adam F L Hurlstone[3], Peter E Clayton[1], Adam Stevens[1*]

**Affiliations:**

[1] Division of Developmental Biology and Medicine, School of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Biology, Medicine, and Health, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

[2] Division of Cardiovascular Sciences, School of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Biology Medicine and Health, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

[3] Division of Infection, Immunity, and Respiratory Medicine, School of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Biology, Medicine, and Health, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

BLE - bridget.evans@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0001-7481-606X

TG - terence.garner@manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0003-3962-9730

CDL - c.deleonibus@tigem.it ORCID 0000-0003-4440-3402

OHW- wearingo@mcmaster.ca ORCID 0000-0002-1866-0416

HAS - holly.shiels@manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0001-5223-5205.

AFLH - adam.hurlstone@manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0001-5260-9457.

PEC - peter.clayton@manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0003-1225-4537.

AS* - adam.stevens@manchester.ac.uk ORCID 0000-0002-1950-7325.

*Corresponding author.

**Abstract**

Embryonic growth trajectory is a risk factor for chronic metabolic and cardiovascular disorder. Grb10 is a negative regulator of the main pathways driving embryonic growth. This study investigates the long-term cardiometabolic consequences and transcriptomic profiles of transient disruption of grb10a expression in Danio rerio. Knockdown was associated with increased embryonic growth (+7%) and metabolic rate (+25%), and decreased heart rate (-50%) in early life. Juvenile growth and respiratory rate were also elevated (+30% and 7-fold increase respectively). The transcriptome was permanently remodelled by this transient disruption, with dysregulation of multiple growth, cardiac, and metabolic pathways. Phenotypic alteration persisted into adulthood, resulting in a leaner body with elevated skeletal and cardiac muscle content and aerobic scope (43%). This study not only confirms for the first time that transient disruption of a single gene can result in permanent transcriptomic remodelling but correlates this remodelling with persistent alterations to the adult cardiometabolic phenotype.

35 **Introduction**

36 The Foetal Origins of Adult Disease (FOAD) hypothesis proposes that diseases occurring in
37 adulthood have their origins during development. While this hypothesis was first proposed
38 in relation to coronary heart disease and foetal undernutrition in humans[1], it is now
39 accepted that a wide range of diseases have early developmental origins. In humans, small
40 and large for gestational age (SGA, LGA) status are early risk factors for chronic metabolic
41 and cardiovascular disorders, including type II diabetes (TIID), obesity, cardiac dysfunction,
42 and hypertension[1-3]. Therefore, understanding the impact of altered embryonic growth
43 trajectory on later life disease is important to identify at-risk individuals.

44 During embryonic development, temperature, circulating glucose levels, and oxygen
45 availability serve as indicators of the mature, external environment[2–4]. Small changes to the
46 phenotype occur in response to external cues to promote immediate survival in a process
47 termed "developmental plasticity". This is important for healthy development, though
48 immediate survival can come at the expense of elevated disease risk in later life, particularly
49 when there is mismatch between the developing and mature environments[3,5]. While these
50 correlations have been observed across a wide number of species, targeted, longitudinal in-
51 vivo studies to elucidate the developmental origins of health and disease, and the pathways
52 involved, are lacking.

53 Zebrafish are an ideal model organism for both longitudinal and developmental study owing
54 to a rapid generation time, large clutch sizes, and ease of access to embryos. As in
55 mammals, embryonic growth in zebrafish is primarily driven by the insulin/insulin like
56 growth factor (Ins/IGF) signaling pathway[6]. Circulating insulin and IGF levels give an
57 indication of the caloric and nutrient condition of the mature environment, allowing

58 modulation of developmental rate to match the prevailing conditions and improve survival
59 prospects.

60 Growth factor receptor bound protein 10 (GRB10) is a negative regulator of the Insulin/IGF
61 signaling pathway. GRB10 downregulates the growth response, promoting a switch from
62 glucose to fat metabolism and halting cell cycle progression[7–9]. GRB10 expression limits
63 placental growth and efficiency[10] and correlates with small body size [11] in mammals. In
64 humans, GWAS show *GRB10* is associated with TIID[12], and *GRB10* copy number variation is
65 associated with Silver Russell Syndrome[13], a rare growth disorder typically characterised by
66 intrauterine growth restriction, SGA status, hypoglycemia, poor muscle development, and
67 increased fat deposition. The role of GRB10 in the regulation of human growth is notably
68 associated with response to recombinant human growth hormone in children with growth
69 hormone deficiency, where lower GRB10 expression correlates with a greater response[14,15].

70 Variability in Grb10 expression is also linked to the dramatic range of body sizes observed
71 between cetaceans[16]. Average daily mass gain is elevated in beef cattle with a *grb10*
72 associated deletion[17], and *grb10* SNPs impact muscle and lipid mass, angularity, and body
73 conditioning score[18]. Global *grb10* knockout in mice correlates with a "leaner" phenotype,
74 including elevated muscle and reduced lipid mass, and insulin sensitivity[19,20]. Therefore,
75 understanding the impact transient disruption to early-life growth trajectory has on mature
76 organism size, average daily gain, and lipid to muscle ratio may provide the groundwork for
77 boosting meat yield and quality, necessary to match the growing global demand for protein.

78 In this study, *grb10a* expression was transiently supressed in wild-type zebrafish (*Danio*
79 *rerio*) embryos by antisense oligonucleotide directed blocking of mRNA splicing, resulting in
80 increased insulin/IGF signalling during development. The importance of *grb10a* as a

81 coordinator of growth, metabolism, and cardiac health was assessed over the first 5 days
82 post fertilisation (dpf). The impact of early-life growth disruption on the transcriptomic
83 landscape was also investigated, together with the lasting impact on later-life body
84 morphology, metabolism, and cardiac phenotype, linking together the distinct pathways
85 commonly associated with the FOAD hypothesis.

86 **Materials and Methods**

87 **Zebrafish Husbandry**

88 AB zebrafish were maintained under standard conditions (≈28 °C; 14/10 h light/dark cycle; <
89 5 fish per litre) within the Biological Services Unit of The University of Manchester.
90 Regulated procedures received ethical approval and were performed under a Home Office
91 Licence (PPL P005EFE9F9). To generate embryos, breeding pairs of similar ages were
92 selected at a ratio of 1 male to 1 female and fasted overnight in breeding tanks. Dividers
93 were removed at the start of the following light cycle and embryos were collected after 20
94 minutes of free breeding. Embryos were kept at a stocking density of < 50 per petri dish and
95 raised in embryo water (Instant Ocean salt 60 µg/mL) up to 5 dpf and transferred to the
96 main aquarium.

97 **Transient Knockdown of *grb10a* Expression**

98 Morpholino-modified antisense oligonucleotide knockdown (KD) of grb10a was validated in
99 accordance with current guidelines for morpholino use in zebrafish[21]. Morpholinos targeting
100 exon three (e3i3) and four (e4i4) were designed by and obtained from Gene Tools, LLC
101 (Philomath, OR, USA) along with a standard control (SC) oligonucleotide targeting human β-
102 globin, used to control for microinjection (sequences - *Table 1,* microinjection solutions -

103 *Table 2*[21]). Phenol red and nCerulean (nuclear-targeting blue fluorescent protein) mRNA
104 were included to ensure successful injection. Embryos received a single injection into the
105 yolk directly below the cell mass at the single-cell stage, as per established methods[21].
106 Embryos were screened for fluorescence at 48 hours post-fertilisation (hpf) to ensure
107 constitutive and even uptake of the injection material. Non-uniformly or weakly-fluorescent
108 embryos were removed.

109 **Validation of *grb10a* Knockdown**

110 Primer sequences, outlined in Table 1, were designed using SnapGene® (GSL Biotech, San
111 Diego, CA, USA) and synthesised by Thermo Fisher Scientific (Waltham, MA, USA). Specificity
112 was confirmed using Primer BLAST[22]. To confirm antisense oligonucleotide activity, RNA was
113 extracted from pooled zebrafish embryos at 24, 48, 72, 96, and 120 hpf (n=3, 5 embryos per
114 pool). Extraction was performed using QIAGEN RNeasy lipid extraction kit according to the
115 manufacturer's instructions, and cDNA was generated by reverse transcription using the
116 ProtoScript® II First Strand cDNA Synthesis Kit (NEB). cDNA was amplified with primers
117 flanking each splice site by Taq polymerase (NEB, Hitchin, UK) (thermocycling parameters
118 outlined in Table 3). β-actin (*actb1*) was used as a positive control for cDNA integrity.

119 **Analysing Downstream Signalling by Western Blot**

120 96 hpf embryos were deyolked in Ringer's Buffer to limit background interference (n=15,
121 performed in triplicate). Embryos were resuspended in 100 µl RIPA buffer (150 mM NaCl,
122 1% Nonident P-40, 0.5% Sodium deoxycholate, 0.1% SDS, 25 mM Tris pH 7.4) containing
123 protease and phosphatase inhibitors, and homogenised. Samples were incubated on ice for
124 30 minutes, clarified by centrifugation at 4 °C, and denatured at 98 °C for 5 minutes in
125 Laemmli buffer (2% SDS, 10% glycerol, 60 mM Tris-Cl, 0.01% bromophenol blue, 0.1% β-

126 Mercaptoethanol). Proteins were separated by 10% SDS acrylamide gel electrophoresis and
127 transferred using established methods. The transfer membrane was incubated in blocking
128 buffer (3% BSA in TBS-T) for one hour, primary antibody (Table 4) at 4 °C under constant
129 agitation overnight, and secondary antibody (Table 4) for one hour at room temperature.
130 The membrane was covered with ECL Western Blotting Substrate (Promega, Southampton,
131 UK) and imaged immediately. Protein expression was quantified from band intensity in
132 ImageJ[23].

133 ***grb10a* mRNA for Overexpression and Rescue**

134 Total RNA was extracted, and cDNA generated from a pool of 96 hpf embryos, as previously
135 described. *Grb10a* was amplified from cDNA by high specificity PCR (NEB Q5 Hot Start) with
136 primers flanking open reading frame (Table 1). The product was purified using QIAGEN
137 Quick Gel Extraction, blunt ligated into pCR-Blunt II-TOPO (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and
138 transformed into *E. coli* following an established protocol. The purified plasmid was Sanger
139 sequenced to confirm successful cloning. The insert was liberated by digestion with *Cla I* and
140 *Xba I* restriction enzymes (NEB) and subcloned into pCS2+[24]. Capped RNA was generated
141 using the mMESSAGE mMACHINE® SP6 Transcription Kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific) according
142 to the manufacturer's instructions. RNA was purified by MEGAclear™ Transcription Clean-
143 Up. 1 µl of the purified RNA was analysed by gel electrophoresis to confirm amplification
144 and structural integrity.

145 **Embryonic Physiological and Metabolic Measurements**

146 Whole body length, the longest straight-line distance between the snout and tip of the
147 notochord, and yolk area measurements were taken at 24-hour intervals from 48 to 120
148 hpf. Embryos were dechorionated and acclimatised for ≥ one hour before imaging. Images

149 were imported into ImageJ, which was calibrated with an image of a graticule of known size.
150 Data were imported into GraphPad Prism version 7.00 for Windows (GraphPad Software, La
151 Jolla, CA, USA, www.graphpad.com).

152 To investigate embryonic cardiac phenotype, embryos were sedated using an anaesthetic
153 concentration known to have no impact on cardiac function (0.04% MS-222 solution[25]).
154 Heart beats were counted over a 20 second period and converted to beats per minute
155 (bpm).

156 A Glucose Uptake-Glo TM Assay (Promega) was performed on 96 hpf zebrafish to detect
157 differences in metabolic rate. Individual embryos (n = 5 per treatment) were injected with 1
158 mM 2-deoxyglucose-6-phosphate directly into the yolk and allowed to recover for 30
159 minutes. Embryos were processed according to an established protocol[26]. Luminescence
160 was measured by plate reader with 8 readings per well. Readings were adjusted for
161 background luminescence.

162 **Quantitative PCR**

163 QPCR primers amplifying *grb10a* and markers of cardiac dysfunction were designed (Table
164 1) and their efficiency validated[27]. RNA was extracted from pooled (n=10) embryonic
165 zebrafish and pooled (n=3) adult (> 1 year) heart samples by QIAGEN RNEasy Lipid Tissue
166 Extraction kit according to the manufacturer's instructions. Samples were repeated in
167 triplicate and tested for gene expression by qPCR (Applied Biosystems Power SyBr Green)
168 (Table 3). Relative fold change in gene expression was calculated using the ΔΔCt method
169 according to the following equation:

170 $$\Delta\Delta Ct = \Delta Ct_{e3i3} - \Delta Ct_{SC}$$

171 where

172 $$\Delta Ct = Ct_{gene\ of\ interest} - Ct_{housekeeping\ gene}$$

173 and

174 $$Fold\ change = 2^{-\Delta\Delta Ct}$$

175 Data were imported into GraphPad and unpaired t-tests were performed on ΔCt values to
176 assess the statistical difference between samples.

177 **Transcriptomic Analysis**

178 Age-associated changes in gene expression were assessed by computational analysis of
179 transcriptomic data. Pooled samples (n=5) were generated from each treatment group (SC,
180 KD) at 5, 10, 15, 20, and 30 dpf, with three repeats per sample. Zebrafish were culled under
181 terminal anaesthesia, and RNA was extracted from tissue anterior to the gills.
182 Transcriptomic data were generated using Affymetrix Zebgene 1.0st arrays. Data for all
183 75212 gene probes were imported into Qlucore Omics Explorer 2.2 (Lund, Sweden) as .cel
184 files and normalised using the robust multi-array average (RMA) approach with a gene level
185 summary. Zebrafish gene identities were assigned using Affymetrix gene definitions. Human
186 orthologues (GRCh 38) were mapped using the *biomaRt* R-package[28]. A workflow pipeline of
187 the transcriptomic analyses is outlined in *Supplementary Figure 1*.

188 Unsupervised analysis of gene expression by age group was conducted by generating
189 hierarchically clustered heat maps. Standard deviation filtering (standard deviation of
190 specific gene expression divided by maximum gene standard deviation $[s/s_{\text{max}}]$) was
191 performed on the dataset to remove genes with low variance, as these were unlikely to be

192 informative. Projection scores[29] were used to determine the threshold for filtering by

193 calculating the maximum separation in principal component analysis (PCA).

194 **Hypernetwork Modelling**

195 Hypernetwork analysis was performed to investigate higher order interactions between target

196 genes, a general model of which is outlined in *Supplementary Figure 1*[30]. All analyses were

197 performed in R (version 3.4.2). Pearson's correlation coefficients (*r*) were calculated

198 between age-associated genes identified by unsupervised analysis ($g$, KD = 119, SC = 297)

199 and the rest of the transcriptome ($g^c$, KD = 75093, SC = 74915). R-values were binarized to

200 generate the incidence matrix of the hypernetwork (*M*). Positive and negative correlations

201 greater than $\pm 1$ standard deviation (sd) from the mean of the R-values were assigned as '1' (i.e.,

202 present) and values closer to zero were assigned '0'. In this way, each element ($\in$) of *g* can be

203 described as:

204 $$\in \text{ of } g \text{ in } M = \begin{cases} 1, & x > \pm 1sd|r| \\ 0, & x \leq \pm 1sd|r| \end{cases}$$

205 The resulting binary incidence matrix ($M$) was multiplied by its transpose ($M^t$) to generate

206 the adjacency matrix of the hypernetwork ($M.M^t$) which quantifies the shared correlations

207 between any pair of genes ($g$). This hypernetwork adjacency matrix represents the higher

208 order interactions between pairs of genes in a manner not captured by traditional

209 transcriptomic approaches. As a measurement of co-ordination, hypernetworks have been

210 suggested to model functional relationships[30]. Coordination between age-related genes and

211 the rest of transcriptome was investigated by interrogating the incidence matrix of the

212 hypernetwork and identifying a subset of edges and nodes which could form a complete

213 subgraph. This represents the subset of the transcriptome ($\subset g^c$) showing correlated
214 expression with all the transcripts from the hypernetwork central cluster ($\subset g$).

215 **Quantification of Network Topology**

216 All subsequent analyses focused on genes defined as the central cluster of the
217 hypernetwork (86 genes in SC fish, 67 in KD) of 20-30 dpf zebrafish. Correlation networks
218 model functional relationships within gene networks[32] and allow identification of clusters of
219 highly connected genes[33]. Quantification of hypernetwork properties (connectivity and
220 entropy) was performed on the hypernetwork ($M.M^t$), where connectivity is the sum of
221 connections shared by each element of the network ($g$) and entropy is the degree of
222 disorder within the distribution of shared correlations. Entropy is positively correlated with
223 the cellular differentiation potential[34], where a high entropy indicates an earlier cell lineage
224 and multiple potential signalling pathways, and low entropy indicates a more specific
225 function. Entropy has also been used as an index of regularity and patterning[35]. Entropy was
226 measured using R package BioQC[36].

227 To identify the impact of age-association on the transcriptome and compare the effect
228 between the SC and KD data sets, connectivity and entropy were calculated and averaged
229 for 1000 hypernetworks of genes randomly selected from each dataset (having no age-
230 association). The difference in connectivity and entropy that age-association conveyed on
231 the transcriptome could then be determined by comparing the age-associated datasets with
232 their corresponding random datasets. As entropy scales proportionally with the size of a set,
233 entropy was normalised for each dataset, generating a proportional measure of the
234 maximum entropy possible for a given set size (ranging from 0 - 1), calculated by dividing
235 the measured entropy by log(n) where n is the set size.

236 **Gene Ontology**

237 Gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) was performed[37] to associate gene expression with
238 biological processes. Genes were mapped to human orthologues using Qlucore and GSEA
239 was performed to rank genes by age group associated ANOVA p-values. Additional GSEA
240 was carried out through Webgestalt[38] using genes ranked by R-value, derived from a rank
241 regression analysis of gene expression against age. Over-representation analysis (ORA) was
242 used to identify gene ontology associated with unranked gene sets (Webgestalt). All gene
243 ontology analysis used the GO Biological Process Ontology gene list[37,39].

244 **Hypernetwork Modelling of Ontology**

245 Pathways identified by GSEA were modelled using a hypernetwork approach to investigate
246 the association between each pathway and the two treatment groups. Hypernetworks were
247 generated separately for SC and KD fish using human genes associated with each pathway[40].
248 Pathways with fewer than 15 associated genes were removed, and all remaining gene sets
249 were converted to zebrafish homologues using the Ensembl database (release 104)[41],
250 queried using BiomaRt for R[28,42].

251 Hypernetworks were generated on 10 genes from each pathway, iterated 1000 times.
252 Hypernetwork entropy was assessed on each iteration. A Bayesian approach was used to
253 model the entropy distributions for each pathway to identify differences between SC and
254 KD. This was performed using Bayesian generalized linear modelling via the r package
255 rstanarm[43,44]. Differences between SC and KD entropy distributions were calculated as a β
256 value and significance was assigned to pathways for which the 89% credible interval of the
257 beta values did not include 0, as per established methods[45].

258 **Stop-Flow Respirometry**

259 Individual 30 dpf zebrafish were placed into one of four stop-flow respirometry chambers
260 (volume 2 ml) and allowed to acclimate at 28 °C for > one hour. Optical oxygen sensors
261 paired with oxygen sensor spots (Pyroscience, Aachen, Germany) were used to measure
262 oxygen saturation within the chambers and recorded using a FireStingO2 Fiber-optic oxygen
263 and temperature meter, simultaneously recording and maintaining temperature at 28 ± 0.3
264 °C. Probes were calibrated according to the manufacturer's instructions. Chambers were
265 randomised per trial, with one chamber left empty to correct for background bacterial
266 respiration. Chambers were refreshed immediately prior to the experiment until oxygen
267 saturation measured 100%. Oxygen consumption curves were recorded in triplicate with
268 five trials per individual. Chambers were manually refreshed when oxygen saturation
269 reached 80%. To calculate the rate of oxygen consumption, linear regression in Microsoft
270 Excel was used to calculate the change in oxygen saturation during each trial. This was
271 normalised against the dry mass of the subject, length of the trial, and volume of the
272 respirometry chamber according to the following equation:

273 $$Oxygen\ consumption\ (\mu g O_2 h^{-1} g^{-1}) = \frac{\Delta O2\% \times \frac{7900 \mu g L^{-1}}{100} \times chamber\ volume\ (L)}{time\ (h) \times mass\ (g)}$$

274 Where 7900 $\mu gL^{-1}$ is equivalent to 100% oxygen saturation at 28 °C.

275 A closed-circuit stop-flow respirometer was used to investigate aerobic scope in adult
276 zebrafish (18 months). Sealed chambers (70 ml) were combined with recirculation loops
277 containing an oxygen flow-through cell (Pyroscience, Aachen, Germany), paired with an
278 optical oxygen sensor (Pyroscience, Aachen, Germany), calibrated according to the
279 manufacturer's instructions. A stop-flow pump, controlled by a Cleware USB-Switch

280 (Cleware GmbH, Germany) programmable switch and AquaResp v.3 software (AquaResp, v3,
281 Python 3.6[46]) was incorporated into the circuit to automatically refresh the water in the
282 chambers after each trial (60 s flush, 30 s wait, 300 s measure). To maintain a constant
283 temperature of 28 °C ± 0.3 °C, the respirometry system was immersed in a recirculation
284 chamber under constant aeration. Oxygen saturation and water temperature were recorded
285 as previously described. Regression curves were automatically generated by AquaResp, and
286 oxygen consumption was extracted and normalised against the length of the trial and
287 volume of the respirometry chamber. Zebrafish were manually stressed for 2 minutes
288 immediately prior to the start of the first trial. Maximum oxygen consumption was
289 identified as the trial with the greatest difference in oxygen saturation. Standard metabolic
290 rate was calculated as the mean of the lowest 10% of the trials[47]. Aerobic scope was
291 calculated as the difference between the maximum oxygen consumption and standard
292 metabolic rate. Data are presented as individual data points alongside the mean and SEM.

293 **Glucose Tolerance and Insulin Sensitivity**

294 Adult zebrafish (18 months) were fasted overnight and allocated to either glucose tolerance
295 testing or insulin sensitivity testing. All blood samples were acquired following the protocol
296 outlined by Zhang et al.[48]. Mass, body length, and fasting blood glucose were measured
297 immediately prior to the start of the protocol.

298 Fish were anaesthetised in 0.02% MS-222, placed on their side and patted dry. A single IP
299 injection of glucose (0.5 mg glucose/g) or glucose and insulin (0.5 mg glucose/g and 0.0075
300 U insulin/g) was performed before recovery in 28 °C system water[49,50]. Blood samples were
301 taken at 30- and 120-minutes post-injection (glucose tolerance) or 30- and 60-minutes post
302 injection (insulin sensitivity). Blood samples were immediately tested for blood glucose

concentration (Sinocare Safe AQ blood glucose monitor). Individuals were culled in MS-222 during the final blood draw. Data are presented as the mean and the SEM (glucose tolerance n = 10, insulin sensitivity n = 8-12).

**Adult Physiological Measurements**

To assess the end-stage body morphology induced by *grb10a* KD, dry mass and body length were measured in adult (18 month) zebrafish and Fulton's condition factor was calculated. Body length was measured as the greatest straight-line distance between the snout and the end of the tail. The caudal fin was not included as fin length can be influenced by factors such as damage or variation between strains. Fulton's condition factor was calculated according to the formula[51]:

$$K = \frac{M}{L^3} \times 100$$

Where M = mass in grams and L = length in centimetres. Higher K values indicate thicker, more rounded bodies. Data are presented as the mean ± SEM (n = 21-34).

**Histology**

Whole adult zebrafish (18 months) were embedded longitudinally in paraffin wax. 5 µm sagittal sections were taken from each tissue at a consistent depth and stained with Masson's Trichrome (IHC World Masson's Trichrome Staining Protocol for Collagen Fibres, Woodstock, MD, USA) to differentiate skeletal muscle (red), connective tissue (blue), and nuclei (black). Slides were scanned and visualised at 20x magnification (3D Histech CaseViewer v2.4.0.119028, Budapest, Hungary).

Skeletal muscle measurements were performed on a site lateral to the dorsal fin. The perpendicular width of individual muscle fibres was recorded and are presented as the

325 mean of five measurements of each muscle fibre (ten fibres from five individuals, 50 fibres
326 total).

327 Red blood cells were digitally removed from images of the ventricle before importing into
328 ImageJ. The ratio of compacta to spongiosa was calculated by measuring the area of each
329 tissue type. Data are presented as the ratio of compacta to spongiosa as a percentage.
330 Cardiac tissue density was calculated by restricting the region of interest to the boundary of
331 the ventricle and calculating the total number of pixels in the image. Threshold_Colour was
332 used to threshold the images, which were converted to 8-bit black and white images.
333 Voxel_Counter.class was used to calculate the number of black pixels in the image.

334 **Statistical Tests**

335 For transcriptomic analyses, rank regression (least squares method) was used to generate
336 the most appropriate linear model for each probe (the smallest degree of variance over the
337 sample). Multi group analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to associate each gene ID with
338 time dependent gene expression. Wilcoxon rank sum test (ggpubR package for R[52]) was
339 used to test for differences in network topology. False discovery rate (FDR) adjustment was
340 made using the Benjamini-Hochberg method and applied to the gene ontology analysis[53].

341 All data were ROUT tested[54] for outliers and subject to D'Agostino and Pearson normality
342 tests. All comparisons between SC and KDs were performed using unpaired t-tests.
343 Comparisons of multiple groups were performed using one-way ANOVAs. Post-hoc power
344 calculations were performed to confirm sample sizes were sufficient, where $\alpha = 0.05$.

345 **Results**

346 **Knockdown of *grb10a* Expression by Splice-Blocking Antisense Oligonucleotide**

347 As *grb10* has been linked to embryonic growth trajectory, expression was examined over
348 the first 120 hpf. QPCR analysis of *grb10a* expression at 24-hour intervals revealed a strong
349 upregulation at 48 hpf (*Figure 1a*). Expression of the *grb10* paralogue, *grb10b*, was not
350 detectable at any time point.

351 To knock down *grb10a* expression, zygotes were microinjected with splice-blocking
352 antisense oligonucleotides e3i3 and e4i4. Exon 3 and 4 donor splice sites (*Figure 1b*) were
353 targeted in order to confirm the specificity of the phenotype, in accordance with current
354 guidelines[21]. Multiplexed RT-PCR amplification using primers flanking the splice sites (*Figure*
355 *1b*) showed a single product of the anticipated size for e3i3 and e4i4 embryos, and no
356 product was detected for SC embryos (*Figure 1c*), consistent with successful incorporation
357 of the corresponding intron.

358 To confirm grb10a KD induced a quantifiable impact on the downstream insulin signalling
359 pathway, phosphorylation of key proteins was analysed by Western Blot. As shown in *Figure*
360 *1d*, phosphorylated (active) versus total protein ratios of AKT and S6 were significantly
361 elevated in *grb10a* KD zebrafish at 96 hpf compared to SC ($p = 0.0007$ and 0.0413
362 respectively, n=3), consistent with the expected impact of grb10a KD.

363 **Growth Trajectory and Early Life Cardiometabolic Phenotype is Significantly Impacted by**
364 **Transient *grb10a* Perturbation**

365 To determine the effect of *grb10a* KD on growth, total body length was measured at 24-
366 hour intervals over the first 5 dpf. As shown in *Figure 2a,* total body length was initially
367 comparable between KD and SC zebrafish (2.857 ± 0.0549 mm vs 2.826 ± 0.0962 mm,
368 $p=0.7896$, n=9 and n=10 respectively). Subsequently, KD zebrafish began to diverge from the
369 SCs at 48 hpf, corresponding to the peak in *grb10a* expression observed in WT zebrafish

370 (*Figure 1a*). KD zebrafish were longer on average than SCs (3.411 ± 0.0165 mm vs 3.177 ±
371 0.0231 mm at 72 hpf, p<0.0001, n=46 and n=41 respectively). This phenotype was reversed
372 in zebrafish overexpressing *grb10a,* which were significantly shorter than SC counterparts
373 (3.361 ± 0.0239 mm vs 3.505 ± 0.0339, p=0.001, n=24 and n=25 respectively), as shown in
374 *Figure 2b*. Co-injection of e3i3 and *grb10a* RNA returned body length to SC levels (3.505 ±
375 0.0339 mm vs 3.564 ± 0.0265 mm, p=0.3792, n=25), confirming the validity of e3i3 induced
376 *grb10a* KD. Moreover, *grb10a* KD induced by e4i4 (*Figure 2c*) also resulted in increased body
377 length, and the ability of *grb10a* overexpression to suppress growth was shown to be dose
378 dependent (*Figure 2c*). Intriguingly, by 120 hpf, body length converged, indicating activation
379 of compensation to regulate growth and return to an "ideal" length post-hatch.

380 To investigate the impact of *grb10a* KD on the developing cardiac system, heart rate was
381 measured over the first 5 dpf. As shown in *Figure 2d*, average heart rate began to diverge
382 between the treatment groups at 48 hpf, again correlating with the WT peak in *grb10a*
383 expression. While heart rate increased slightly over time in SC zebrafish, in-line with
384 increasing body size, average KD heart rate fell. By 120 hpf, average heart rate was almost
385 50% lower in the KD compared to SC (61.5 ± 6.97 bpm vs 118.4 ± 2.83 bpm, p<0.0001, n=14
386 and n=19 respectively).

387 To determine whether *grb10a* KD had an impact on metabolic rate, yolk absorption was
388 measured to indicate energy demand. As shown in *Figure 2e*, there was initially no
389 difference in yolk area between the groups (p=0.8185, n=10). As with body length and heart
390 rate, SC and KD yolk consumption began to diverge at 48 hpf (0.298 ± 0.0055 $mm^2$ vs 0.390
391 ± 0.0104 $mm^2$, p<0.0001, n=18 and n=19 respectively). The elevation in yolk consumption
392 observed in the KD fish suggests an elevated metabolic rate. To support this conclusion, a

393 Glucose Uptake-Glo™ Assay was performed to compare the rate of glucose uptake. As
394 shown in *Figure 2f*, 2D6P accumulation was significantly higher in KD zebrafish compared to
395 SC, an increase of almost 30% (p=0.0002, n=5), indicating glucose uptake was elevated.
396 These findings are consistent with the role of *grb10a* as a negative regulator of the insulin
397 signalling pathway[55] and a coordinator of growth and metabolism.

398 **Transient *grb10a* Knockdown Persistently Dysregulates Age-Associated Gene Expression**

399 To understand whether the observed changes were coupled with lasting changes in gene
400 expression, the transcriptomic landscape of SC and KD zebrafish was investigated over the
401 first 30 dpf. Unsupervised hierarchical clustering, standard deviation filtering, and
402 maximised projection scores (MPS) were used to define a set of genes with strong age-
403 association in the SC zebrafish (297 genes, MPS = 0.43). These genes fell into four distinct
404 clusters, associating with 5, 10, 15, and 20-30 dpf (163, 15, 32, and 87 genes respectively)
405 (*Figure 3a*).

406 When performing the same analysis in KD zebrafish, the 5 dpf cluster was significantly
407 disrupted (*Figure 3b*). While the clustering was largely conserved in the latter three clusters
408 (10 dpf – 14/15, 15 dpf - 29/32, and 20-30 dpf – 74/87 genes), genes strongly associated
409 with 5 dpf in the SCs were generally expressed at different time points in the KDs (dotted
410 white lines, *Figure 3a* and *Figure 3b*), with a mapping of only 38/163 genes (23%). Notably,
411 five genes associated with 5 dpf in SC zebrafish mapped to 20-30 dpf in the KD. This
412 suggests the expression of these genes is usually associated with early larval development,
413 but instead, in the KDs, is associated with the late-juvenile stage. Human orthologues of
414 these dysregulated genes include *DGAT2* (fatty acid metabolism), *GAMT* (energy storage,

415 muscle contraction, and fatty acid oxidation), and *PDIA2* (thiol-disulphide interchange,
416 particularly in the pancreas).

417 As the SC gene clusters were disrupted in the KD dataset, unsupervised analysis of the KD
418 data was performed to identify the subset of age-associated genes in the KD zebrafish. 119
419 genes were identified (MPS = 0.37) which segregated into 5-15, 15-30, and 20-30 dpf (37,
420 16, and 66 genes) (*Figure 3c*).

421 To assign functionality to these age-related genes, Gene Set Enrichment Analysis was
422 performed for genes identified in both the SC and KD datasets. Functionality conserved
423 between the SC and KD is described in *Supplemental Table 1*. Dissimilar pathways (*Figure*
424 *3e*) included several actin and collagen related pathways, and extracellular structure and
425 RNA processing, which were age-related in KD but not SC zebrafish. Conversely, several
426 metabolic pathways were age-associated in SC zebrafish but not in KD animals. This clear
427 dysregulation of age-related gene expression in the KD zebrafish implies transient *grb10a*
428 KD induces persistent remodelling of the transcriptome.

429 **Transient *grb10a* Knockdown Disrupts Transition Between Larval Gene Clusters**

430 To investigate the co-ordination of the whole transcriptome with age-associated gene
431 expression, hypernetwork models were constructed for the SC and KD datasets based on
432 the gene sets identified in the cluster analysis (297 and 119 genes respectively). This
433 approach has been used to model functional relationships[31]. *Figure 4* describes the results,
434 where colour intensity represents the number of shared interactions between each gene
435 pair. In SCs, shared interactions segregated into three groups, correlating to 5, 10-15, and
436 20-30 dpf (161/297, 50/297, and 86/297 genes) (*Figure 4a*). In KD animals, however, genes
437 segregated into only two groups, either 5-15 dpf or 20-30 dpf (31/119 and 65/119 genes)

438 (*Figure 4b*). Notably, the large group of co-ordinated interactions at 5 dpf was absent in the
439 KD dataset, with a combined group of genes correlating with 5-15 dpf identified instead.

440 ***Grb10a* Knockdown is Associated with Increased Connectivity and Crosstalk Within the**
441 **Transcriptome**

442 To quantify these differences in the co-ordination of the transcriptome, two network
443 topology parameters were used: connectivity and entropy. Hypernetwork connectivity
444 quantifies the number of higher order interactions within the transcriptome and is related
445 to function[31,56], while entropy is a measure of information content and serves as an
446 indicator of "disorder". I.e. lower entropy (more order) describes a network with little
447 crosstalk and a more discrete function[34,57], while a network with greater entropy has
448 increased crosstalk and pleiotropic functions.

449 Changes in connectivity (*Figure 4c*) and entropy (*Figure 4d*) were calculated for genes
450 identified as active at 20-30 dpf by the previously described analyses. The impact of KD on
451 the co-ordination of age-associated genes in the network was identified by comparing the
452 connectivity and entropy of SC and KD datasets. To provide a comparison between age-
453 associated genes and genes associated with other functions, connectivity and entropy were
454 also calculated for randomly selected gene sets (*Supplemental Figure 2*).

455 Genes associated with 20-30 dpf were more highly connected and less entropic (more
456 ordered) than random genes in both the KD and SC datasets ($p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$). Comparison of
457 age associated genes in KD and SC revealed a higher entropy (1.05-fold, $p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$) and
458 higher connectivity in the KD (1.20-fold, $p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$). This suggests age-associated genes
459 in the KD zebrafish transcriptome have more interactions and are less ordered (have more
460 crosstalk) than in the SC.

461 **Pathways Associated with Transcriptome-Wide Remodelling Support an Alteration in**
462 **Cardiometabolic Phenotype**

463 Having identified a core set of age-related genes, a broader set of genes which coordinate
464 with these genes was defined as the complete subgraph between the central age-related
465 genes of the hypernetwork and their correlates. 12775 (KD) and 459 (SC) genes were
466 defined in this set from the 20 to 30 dpf hypernetwork clusters described previously, all
467 significantly associated with age (rank-regression: KD $q < 1.50 \times 10^{-6}$, SC $q < 4.44 \times 10^{-2}$;
468 *Supplementary Table 2*). 28 times more genes were implicated in the KD. Both datasets
469 showed a skew towards a positive association with age (68% SC vs 59% KD) (*Figure 5a,*
470 *Figure 5b*). The overlap in gene expression between the two datasets was 244 (77.9% of SC)
471 and 60 (41.1% of SC) in the positively and negatively correlated sets, respectively. Thus,
472 genes in the wider transcriptome with co-ordinated expression at 20-30 dpf in SC zebrafish
473 demonstrated a similar pattern of expression in KD (*Figure 5c*). However, the inverse is not
474 true, as genes with co-ordinated expression at 20-30 dpf in the KD zebrafish were
475 dysregulated in the SC (*Figure 5d*).

476 To assign functionality, GSEA was performed as previously described (ranked by R-value, top
477 100 pathways with weighted set cover). Results of this ontology analysis are outlined in
478 *Figure 5e* and *Figure 5f*. The two datasets featured distinctly different regulated pathways.
479 RNA processing, a variety of metabolic pathways, and cardiovascular development featured
480 in the KD dataset, whereas growth and immune signalling were featured in the SC dataset.
481 Functional analysis of these determined that the greatest differences in activity between the
482 KD and SC were in *Positive Regulation of Lipid Localization*, *Amino Acid Transport* and
483 *Cellular Modified Amino Acid Biosynthetic Process* **(***Figure 6*).

484 A distinct pattern of gene expression was identified in the group of genes dysregulated at
485 20-30 dpf in the KD dataset (white box, *Figure 5d*). These genes were upregulated at 15 dpf,
486 downregulated at 20 dpf, and re-upregulated at 30 dpf. This subgroup of 3460 genes
487 (*Supplemental Table 3*) was associated with a range of gene ontologies related to
488 metabolism and development (*Figure 5g*) and was synchronous with the spike in growth
489 identified in *Figure 7a*. Specific pathways following this pattern of expression included
490 cardiovascular system development, muscle structure development, and developmental
491 maturation.

492 **The Impact of Transient *grb10a* KD Persists into Adulthood**

493 As *grb10a* KD significantly impacted early-life growth, metabolism, and cardiovascular
494 development and was associated with persistent remodelling of the transcriptome,
495 investigation was conducted into the phenotypical differences in older zebrafish.

496 Total body length measurements up to 30 dpf are shown in *Figure 7a*. Growth was
497 significantly elevated in the KDs compared to SCs between 15 and 20 dpf (30% increase,
498 7.493 ± 0.2726 mm vs 4.320 ± 0.1594 mm, $p < 0.0001$, $n = 10$). This corresponded to the
499 cluster of dysregulated genes identified by hypernetwork modelling (*Figure 5g and white*
500 *box in Figure 5d*). The growth profile of the KDs was shifted to an earlier age compared to
501 the SC, suggesting a faster rate of maturation. The GSEA highlighted a reduction in activity in
502 developmental maturation pathways (normalised enrichment score < 1) in SCs vs. KDs,
503 which was reflected in the growth rate at approximately 20 dpf.

504 Late-life body length and mass measurements were recorded in 18-month zebrafish to
505 investigate the lasting impact of *grb10a* KD on the phenotype. Final body length (*Figure 7b.*)
506 was higher, with KDs 1.7 mm longer than SCs (3.20 ± 0.029 cm vs 3.03 ± 0.021 cm, p <

507 0.0001). These fish were also approximately 10% heavier (0.54 ± 0.012 mg vs 0.49 ± 0.011
508 mg, p = 0.005). On the other hand, the Fulton's condition factor (an indicator of body
509 condition) was closer to 1 in the KDs (1.64 ± 0.026 vs 1.75 ± 0.034, p=0.0215) despite the
510 increase in mass. To equate this to differences in body composition, skeletal muscle fibres,
511 isolated from the base of the dorsal fin, were embedded and stained with Masson's
512 Trichrome (*Figure 7c.*). The average muscle fibre diameter was approximately 20% greater in
513 the KDs (27.01 µm ± 0.728 vs 22.71 µm ± 0.698, p < 0.0001), likely contributing to the
514 increase in mass despite a decrease in roundness.

515 The impact on cardiac health was assessed by qPCR and histology. As shown in *Figure 8a*,
516 *myl7* expression (an index of muscle mass and hypertrophy) in the heart was over 20%
517 greater in KDs (p < 0.0001, n = 3), while *nppa* expression (activated in response to
518 ventricular stress during hypertrophy and heart failure[58-60]) was reduced by approximately
519 40% (p = 0.0012, n = 3). There was no difference in *pcna* expression (proliferating cell
520 nuclear antigen), suggesting there was no difference in proliferation in the cardiac tissue. To
521 support these findings, ventricular morphology was also assessed. As shown in *Figure 8b*,
522 the ratio of compact myocardial layer to trabeculated was significantly greater in the KD
523 zebrafish (0.369 +/- 0.07 vs 0.185 +/- 0.03, p-value = 0.0288). This was coupled with an
524 overall increase in tissue density (76.3% vs 64.4%, p-value = 0.0289).

525 To determine whether metabolic rate was persistently altered, stop-flow respirometry was
526 conducted on juvenile (30 dpf). As shown in *Figure 8b*, KDs consumed 7 times more oxygen
527 than SCs (134.4 ± 15.60 $\mu gO_2h^{-1}g^{-1}$ vs 19.0 ± 3.28 $\mu gO_2h^{-1}g^{-1}$, p < 0.0001, n = 5), suggesting
528 metabolic rate remained significantly elevated in juvenile fish.

529 To determine whether this was a permanent change, adult (18-month) zebrafish were also
530 investigated. Peak and basal oxygen consumption were recorded to further investigate the
531 "lean" phenotype. Maximum oxygen consumption, achieved following exhaustive activity,
532 was elevated by ~25% in KDs, as shown in *Figure 8c* (1645 ± 90.11 $mgO_2kg^{-1}h^{-1}$ vs 1309 ±
533 26.48 $mgO_2kg^{-1}h^{-1}$, vs $p < 0.0001$). There was no significant difference in basal metabolic rate
534 (486.5 ± 46.75 $mgO_2kg^{-1}h^{-1}$ vs 474.1 ± 27.78 $mgO_2kg^{-1}h^{-1}$, $p = 0.8132$). Consequently, aerobic
535 scope was greater in the KDs (1158 ± 100.7 vs 810.1 ± 42.95, $p = 0.0007$), supporting the
536 conclusion that the fish conform to a "leaner" phenotype.

537 As grb10a is involved in regulating the insulin signalling pathway, glucose tolerance and
538 insulin sensitivity tests were performed on adult zebrafish (18 months) to determine
539 whether there was a lasting biological impact. Fasting blood glucose (*Figure 8d*) was
540 significantly higher in KDs (7.96 ± 0.867 mmolL-1 vs 6.04 ± 0.493 mmolL-1, $p = 0.0463$).
541 Glucose tolerance testing showed both groups produced a similar response to glucose
542 challenge and were similarly able to respond to introduction of insulin.

543 **Discussion**

544 The first key finding from this study is that grb10a regulates embryonic growth in zebrafish,
545 consistent with its role in mammalian embryogenesis[47-49], and transient knockdown is
546 sufficient to have an impact on downstream pathways. This is consistent with its role as a
547 negative regulator of insulin signalling[50-51]. Western Blotting showed a clear upregulation in
548 insulin signalling pathway activation downstream of grb10a, which was coupled with
549 significant changes to the early phenotype, including elevated growth rate, increased
550 metabolism, and distinct cardiac alterations.

551 The observed changes in phenotype coincided with the peak in grb10a expression,
552 confirming the role of *grb10a* as a coordinator of embryonic growth and development. The
553 elevated growth coincided with higher metabolic rate, consistent with an increase in energy
554 demand due to a larger population of highly proliferating cells. Cardiac changes were also
555 present, supporting the conclusion that grb10a has a role in coordinating growth,
556 metabolism, and cardiac development. This is the first study, to our knowledge, to provide
557 *in vivo* evidence for the coordination of these distinct pathways.

558 This study also provides clear evidence for a compensatory growth mechanism activated
559 during early larval development, which regulates adherence to an "ideal" body length. Both
560 elevated embryonic growth and growth suppression were compensated for by 5 dpf, with
561 body length returning to comparable values in all treatment groups. This suggests there may
562 be a benefit to entering life at this controlled size. The altered phenotype established by day
563 5 served as a basis for life-long changes to the organism. Body length, metabolism, and
564 cardiac physiology were all significantly altered in 1.5-year-old zebrafish, despite no further
565 manipulation to the organism. This provides essential, novel, *in vivo* evidence for the Fetal
566 Origins of Adult Health hypothesis, which proposes that events during development can
567 have life-long impacts on an organism.

568 Furthermore, this study has shown for the first time that a transient disruption in the
569 expression of a single gene can result in permanent remodelling of the transcriptome. This
570 highlights the importance of regulated control during embryogenesis and the significant
571 impact small changes, such as increase in growth, can have on the developed organism.
572 Age-associated genes in both transcriptomes showed increased connectivity and decreased
573 entropy compared to non-age associated genes. This demonstrates that the genes identified

574 as age-associated are better connected to one another and more ordered in their
575 interactions than randomly selected genes. Entropy and connectivity were both higher in KD
576 than SC which demonstrates that age-associated genes share more interactions in KD but
577 with less discrete organization than in SC. These results support the conclusion that the KD
578 transcriptome is dysregulated, compared to the SC transcriptome.

579 Notably, gene expression at 5 dpf was significantly dysregulated in the KD zebrafish
580 compared to the SCs. An early transition in gene expression identified in the SCs, occurring
581 between 5 and 10 dpf, likely corresponding to a shift away from early developmental
582 pathways, was lost in KD zebrafish. This loss was reflected both in the age-related genes and
583 the coordination of the wider gene set. This fundamental difference in the transcriptome
584 during larval development was particularly notable in a subset of genes with fluctuating
585 gene expression in the KD zebrafish. Genes associated with cardiovascular development,
586 muscle development, and developmental maturation showed a distinct pattern of
587 upregulation at 15 dpf, downregulation at 20 dpf, and re-upregulation at 30 dpf, coinciding
588 with the spike in growth in the larval zebrafish. This pattern may contribute to the left-shift
589 in growth rate observed in the KD zebrafish, which is reflected in human cohorts
590 experiencing early puberty[61]. Furthermore, functional differences in cardiac and skeletal
591 muscle and metabolic phenotype were confirmed to persist into the adult zebrafish,
592 suggesting these transient changes in gene expression have long-lasting implications for the
593 organism.

594 This model of embryonic growth perturbation may also yield significant insights into the
595 propensity for early growth disruption to correlate with increased risk of cardiovascular and
596 metabolic disease in later life[62–65]. It is widely accepted that many disorders are likely to

597 have their origins during embryonic development[66–69], but the mechanisms involved are not
598 fully understood, and targeted *in vivo* research is lacking. Mammalian models have been
599 used to investigate the immediate impact of embryonic growth disruption[69–71], findings
600 which are replicated in this study. However, longitudinal studies are absent from the
601 literature, and little research has been conducted into the whole-life significance of early
602 growth disruption. Multiple distinct growth trajectories can yield similar birth weights,
603 including catch-up and catch-down growth[62] (both of which were achievable by modulation
604 of grb10a expression). Catch-up and catch-down growth have been reported to correlate
605 with increased risk of chronic health disorders[65,72,73], and as *grb10a* modulation is sufficient
606 to alter embryonic growth trajectory, metabolic rate, and cardiac function, the model
607 generated in this study may prove key in understanding the mechanisms involved in the
608 developmental origins of health and disease and identifying novel avenues for prevention
609 and treatment.

610 As identified in mammalian studies[19,20], *grb10a* KD was associated with a "leaner"
611 phenotype. KD zebrafish displayed an elevation in skeletal muscle fibre thickness and an
612 increase in body mass, likely as a result of altered body composition in favour of skeletal
613 muscle. Body condition also conformed to a leaner morphology in the KDs, where Fulton's
614 condition factor, used by fisheries and in research to assess the condition of fish stocks[74],
615 was closer to 1. Healthy fish in good condition have condition scores close to 1, while higher
616 or lower scores indicate overly fat or "skinny" fish respectively. Together, these findings
617 support the existence of a "lean" phenotype associated with suppressed grb10a activity and
618 greater insulin signalling activation. This is expected, as circulating insulin levels positively
619 correlate with growth, and serve as an indicator of resource availability in the mature
620 environment.

621 This study further extended the “lean” phenotype to include cardiovascular and metabolic
622 changes, the first *in vivo* work to combine these aspects. The establishment of an altered
623 cardiac phenotype during embryogenesis was followed by a notable change in ventricle
624 morphology. To maintain optimal cardiac output, a reduction in the rate of contraction must
625 be paired with increased cardiac efficiency and an increase in force or volume of
626 contraction. The increased demand on the cardiac tissue resulting from the reduction in
627 heart rate resulted in compacta thickening and an increase in ventricular density. This is
628 consistent with increased stroke volume and greater cardiac efficiency due to an increase in
629 contractility. Gene expression analysis of cardiac tissue, coupled with histological evidence,
630 supported this conclusion, and indicated the increase in musculature was due to an increase
631 in cell size rather than cell number. The greater degree of *myl7* expression in the absence of
632 an increase in *pcna* expression suggests an increase in hypertrophy (muscle size) rather than
633 hyperplasia (cell number) in the cardiac tissue.

634 Aerobic scope was also elevated as a result of grb10a KD, consistent with a “lean”
635 phenotype. This greater aerobic scope suggests the potential energy for non-essential
636 activities is elevated in KDs. As a result, these fish may have the capacity to outperform SC
637 counterparts in other energy-heavy tasks, such as swimming and courtship. The difference
638 in peak oxygen consumption between the groups suggests there is either increased oxygen
639 demand or an increased ability to extract oxygen from the environment in KD zebrafish.

640 Glucose homeostasis control was also altered in KD zebrafish. Glucose uptake was elevated
641 during embryogenesis and energy stores were depleted more rapidly, which was reflected
642 in elevation of fasting blood glucose in later life. Taken together with the elevation in
643 oxygen consumption observed in juvenile and adult zebrafish, this indicates greater

644 metabolic rate. This suggests KD zebrafish, while having a comparable basal energy demand,
645 have a greater demand for energy when performing non-essential activities. This may be
646 due to higher contribution of skeletal muscle to body composition, as heavily respiring
647 tissues require more energy when active than other tissues. KD zebrafish showed a greater
648 ability to maintain glucose homeostasis compared to SCs, responding more rapidly to
649 glucose challenge. As metabolic rate was greater in the KD zebrafish, this increase in the
650 rate of glucose clearance may be a direct consequence of heavily respiring tissue removing
651 glucose from the bloodstream at a higher rate.

652 Findings from this study may also provide important for the agri- and aquaculture industries.
653 The promotion of embryonic growth induced by *grb10a* KD may be a key alternative to
654 growth hormone treatment for improving meat yield and production efficiency, and larger
655 juvenile fish with greater aerobic scope are likely to be more capable of overwintering[75,76],
656 and thus improve fish stocks. This is particularly key, as the impact of climate change on
657 fisheries is an increasing global concern[77–79]. The increase in skeletal muscle contribution to
658 body composition also has relevance for industry, as lean products have greater value and
659 marketability, particularly as current health trends are increasing demand for low-fat
660 products.

661 **Conclusion**

662 This study proves for the first time that transient knockdown of *grb10a* expression is
663 sufficient to permanently alter growth trajectory, metabolic rate, and cardiac physiology.
664 We have presented significant evidence to suggest grb10a plays a previously unidentified,
665 fundamental role in the coordination of these distinct physiological pathways and could
666 represent a promising target for enhancement of meat yield and quality in agri- and aqua-

667 cultural. Furthermore, this study shows that altering the expression of a single gene during
668 embryogenesis can remodel the entire transcriptome. We have shown that remodelling
669 established during embryogenesis provides a basis on which the adult phenotype is formed,
670 clearly demonstrating the lasting impact of early-life events on the whole life course of an
671 organism. This provides the first longitudinal *in vivo* support for the Foetal Origins of Health
672 hypothesis in *Danio rerio*. We have also expanded on the "lean" phenotype associated with
673 grb10 KO to include a distinctly altered metabolic phenotype and improved ventricular
674 efficiency. These life-long alterations may have ongoing implications for survival, and the
675 model generated in this study, featuring easily measurable phenotypic characteristics, a
676 short developmental window, and rapid generation time, will be indispensable for future
677 research into the mechanisms underpinning the foetal origins of health.

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880 **Competing Interests**

881 The authors declare the research was conducted in the absence of any conflicts of interest.

882 **Data and Code Availability**

883 Transcriptomic data is available from the Gene Expression Omnibus (GSE162474). R code is
884 available online at: https://github.com/terencegarner/GRB10_KD_ZF.

885 **Figure Legends**

886 ***Figure 1:*** **Grb10a** ***is successfully knocked down in zebrafish injected with splice-blocking***
887 ***antisense oligonucleotides. 1a.*** *Grb10a* qPCR of WT embryos (24-120 hpf, triplicated, n = 5
888 embryos per well). Data is shown as gene expression relative to β-actin and shows a
889 significant peak at 48 hpf. ***1b.*** Schematic of the first five exons of the zebrafish *grb10a* gene.
890 5' splice sites are highlighted with the forward and reverse primer triad indicated. ***1c.***
891 Multiplexed PCR amplification of the e3i3 and e4i4 splice site in embryos treated with either

892 Standard Control morpholino, e3i3, or e4i4. β-actin was used as a positive control. ***1d.***
893 Western blot results of phosphorylated vs total protein ratios for two major signalling
894 molecules of the insulin signalling pathway: AKT and S6. Quantitation using densitometry
895 depicts mean + SEM. Activation of both proteins was found to be significantly elevated in KD
896 zebrafish compared to SC (n = 3, unpaired t-test *** p = 0.0007, * p = 0.0413).

897 ***Figure 2: Growth and cardiometabolic phenotype are significantly impacted by* grb10a**
898 ***perturbation. 2a.*** Mean total body length ± SEM of SC and KD zebrafish from 24 to 120 hpf.
899 T-test significance *** = 0.0006 **** < 0.0001 *** = 0.0001. ***2b.*** Mean total body length ±
900 SEM and individual data points of 96 hpf zebrafish embryos (n = 25). *Grb10a* KD phenotype
901 was reversed in *grb10a* overexpression zebrafish. Coinjection resulted in phenotype rescue.
902 One-way ANOVA revealed KD zebrafish were significantly longer, while *grb10a*
903 overexpression zebrafish were significantly smaller than SC (*** = 0.0001). Rescue zebrafish
904 were of similar length to SC (ns = 0.3792). ***2c.*** Mean body length measurements relative to
905 SC ± SEM. E3i3 and e4i4 both exhibit a propensity to elevate body length, while *grb10a* RNA
906 shows a dose-dependent ability to inhibit body length. ***2d.*** Mean heart rate ± SEM in beats
907 per minute of SC and KD zebrafish. Heart rate was significantly lower in KD embryos
908 compared with SC after 48 hpf (*** = 0.0006, **** < 0.0001). ***2e.*** Mean yolk area ± SEM of
909 SC and KD embryos over the embryonic life stage. Following the initial 24 hours, KD zebrafish
910 had significantly smaller yolks compared to SC, indicating yolk content was metabolised at a
911 much higher rate (** = 0.0084 **** < 0.0001). ***2f.*** Glucose Uptake-Glo™ Assay of 96 hpf KD
912 and SC zebrafish, where higher luminescence indicates a greater accumulation of
913 intracellular 2D6P. Luminescence was approximately 30% greater in KD zebrafish compared
914 to SC (*** = 0.0002). All SC vs KD comparisons by unpaired t-test.

915 ***Figure 3. Transcriptomic analysis of Standard Control and grb10a Knockdown gene***
916 ***expression over the first 30 dpf.*** Hierarchically clustered heat maps of gene expression
917 generated from an Affymetrix GeneChip™ Zebrafish Genome Array of SC (***3a***) and KD (***3b*** and
918 ***3c***) zebrafish RNA, taken at 5, 10, 15, 20, and 30 dpf. Expression segregates into three
919 clusters in SC zebrafish (***3a***). Clustering of the same genes identified in ***3a*** are disrupted in
920 the KD dataset (***3b***). Analysing the KD dataset independently shows age-related hierarchical
921 gene expression in the falls into two clusters (***3c***). ***3d***. Venn diagram of age associated genes.
922 ***3e***. Gene set enrichment analysis, using the GO Biological Process Ontology gene list, of the
923 age-related genes in the SC and KD datasets. The top 20 most enriched pathways with
924 differential expression are included here, with associated normalised enrichment scores and
925 q-values.

926 ***Figure 4: Coordination within the transcriptome is altered by grb10a KD, as assessed by***
927 ***hypernetwork analysis 4a.*** Hypernetwork analysis defined three clusters of highly
928 connected genes in Standard Control zebrafish, corresponding to 5 dpf, 10-15 dpf, and 20-
929 30 dpf respectively. ***4b***. Two clusters were defined in the KD data, corresponding to 5-15 dpf
930 and 20-30 dpf. ***4c*** *and* ***4d****.* Violin plots of connectivity (left) and entropy (right) in the 20-30
931 dpf cluster. The KD transcriptome was more connected with greater entropy compared to
932 Standard Controls, suggesting more diverse functionality.

933 ***Figure 5: Analysis of the set of genes in the wider transcriptome shows a 27.8-fold increase***
934 ***in the KD ZF. 5a-5b****.* Venn diagrams of genes positively (***a***) and negatively (***b***) correlating
935 with age. ***5c-5d***. Hierarchically clustered heat maps of gene expression of the genes
936 identified in the wider transcriptome. Gene expression in the standard control (***5c***) cluster
937 into two age related groups, whereas expression in the knockdown (***5d***) show significant

938 dysregulation. ***5e-5f*** Gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) ranked by R-value of rank age
939 regression in the standard control (***5e***) and knockdown (***5f***). ***5g*** GSEA ranked by R-value of
940 rank age regression of the cluster of genes in the white box in ***5d***.

941 ***Figure 6: Hypernetwork modelling of ontology highlights pathways with functional***
942 ***difference between SC and KD.*** Hypernetworks were iteratively generated from genes
943 attributed to each pathway and entropy was modelled across the two treatment groups. β
944 values represent the difference in entropy between SC and KD, with a β value of 0 indicating
945 no difference between groups. Ontology classes are considered to be significantly different
946 if the distribution of β values (89% CI) does not include 0. *Actin filament based movement*
947 and *negative regulation of extrinsic apoptotic signalling pathway* were the only two
948 pathways with no functional difference identified between the groups.

949 ***Figure 7: Length and cardiac function are permanently altered. 7a.*** Mean total body length
950 of SC and KD zebrafish up to 30 dpf. Following the embryonic growth spurt, KD zebrafish
951 experienced an additional period of rapid growth between 15 and 20 dpf (**** < 0.0001).
952 ***7b.*** Individual total body length (left), mass (middle), and condition factor scores (right) for
953 18-month KD and SC zebrafish (n = 21-24). Length and mass were significantly higher in the
954 KD (**** $p < 0.0001$, ** $p = 0.005$), while condition factor was significantly lower (* $p =$
955 $0.0215$), indicating KD zebrafish have leaner bodies. ***7c.*** Thickness of 10 individual skeletal
956 muscle fibres stained with Masson's Trichrome from 5 individuals (left) and means grouped
957 by individual (right) taken from a position posterior to the dorsal fin. Fibres were consistently
958 thicker in the KD zebrafish (**** $p < 0.0001$). All comparisons by unpaired t-test. Data are
959 presented as mean or individual values ± SEM.

960 ***Figure 8: Changes established during embryonic development perpetuate into variations in***
961 ***adult function. 8a.*** qPCR results of three genes associated with cardiac performance in adult
962 cardiac tissue, relative to β-actin. *Myl7* expression was significantly elevated in KD zebrafish
963 (**** $p < 0.0001$) while *nppa* expression was significantly down regulated (*** $p = 0.0012$)
964 compared to SC zebrafish. There was no significant difference between the expression of
965 *pcna* ($p = 0.3041$). 8***b.*** Ventricular morphometrics obtained by Masson's Trichrome histology
966 comparing KD and SC compacta thickness and tissue density. The compacta layer was
967 significantly thicker (* $p = 0.0288$) and overall density was higher (* $p = 0.0289$) in the KD
968 zebrafish, suggesting greater cardiac efficiency (n = 5-6). ***8c***. Maximum (MMR) and Basal
969 (BMR) oxygen consumption of adult (18 month) zebrafish, adjusted for body mass. BMR was
970 comparable between the two groups, while MMR was greater in the KD zebrafish (**** $p <$
971 $0.0001$), resulting in a greater aerobic scope (dotted line, *** $p = 0.0007$). ***8d.*** Fasting blood
972 glucose concentrations of adult zebrafish from each treatment group (n = 14-21). KD
973 zebrafish had significantly higher circulating blood glucose levels (* $p = 0.0463$). ***8d.*** Glucose
974 tolerance (top) (n = 10) and insulin sensitivity (bottom) (n = 8–12) trials in adult (18 month)
975 KD and SC zebrafish. The treatment groups were equally able to tolerate glucose challenge
976 and responded similarly to insulin. Treatment started immediately after the first
977 measurement. Data are presented as either mean or individual values ± SEM, and all
978 comparisons are by unpaired t-test.

979 **Tables**

980 **Table 1. Oligonucleotide sequences**

| **A) Morpholino-modified antisense oligonucleotides** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Accession no.** | **Sequence** | |
| e3i3 | | CATACAGTATGCATTACCTGACAGC | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| e4i4 | BX571825 | GTGTCTGTTTTCAGCTCTTACATGT | |
| Standard Control | | CCTCTTACCTCAGTTACAATTTATA | |
| **B) Primers for cloning *grb10a* cDNA and for validating splicing interruption** | | | |
| **Name** | **Accession no.** | **Forward** | **Reverse** |
| *grb10a* cDNA | NM_0010042 | gacagaatcgatGACTGAGTATGGC | gacagatctagaTCATAAGGCC |
| *grb10a* exon3- | BX571825 | TGGTGAATGACATGGCCTCT | CTGCATGGTCAAGACACAC |
| *grb10a* exon3- | | TGGTGAATGACATGGCCTCT | CTGACGGATAATAGCTACA |
| **B) Primers for qPCR** | | | |
| **Gene** | **Accession no.** | **Forward** | **Reverse** |
| *grb10a* | NM_0010042 | TGGATGACTGCTTTTAGACTGC | CGACCAGTCCTTCCAGAAA |
| *actb1* | NM_131031. | CTTCCAGCAGATGTGGATCA | GCCATTTAAGGTGGCAACA |
| *myl7* | NM_131329. | TCACTGTCTTCCTCACCCTC | CACGTCTATTGGAGCCACT |
| *pcna* | NM_131404. | AGGCAACATCAAGCTCTCAC | ATTTGACGTGTCCCATGTCT |
| *nppa* | NM_198800. | AAGCAAAAGCTTGTCTGG | ACTGTATCCGCGTATTGCA |

981 **Table 2. Microinjection Solutions**

| Injection | Oligonucleotide | nCerulean | Phenol Red |
|---|---|---|---|
| Standard Control (5 | 0.5 mM human beta globin | 50 ng/µl | 1 µl |
| *grb10a* KD (5 µl) | 0.5 mM e3i3 or e4i4 morpholino | 50 ng/µl | 1 µl |
| *grb10a* OE (5 µl) | 500 ng/µl *grb10a* RNA | 50 ng/µl | 1 µl |

982 **Table 3. Thermocycling Parameters**

| Procedure | Temperature (°C) | Time (S) | Cycles |
|---|---|---|---|
| NEB Q5 Hot Start | 95 | 300 | |
| | 95 | 30 | 35 |
| | 55 | 30 | |
| | 72 | 120 | |
| | 72 | 600 | |
| NEB Taq | 95 | 30 | |
| | 95 | 15 | 30 |
| | 55 | 15 | |
| | 68 | 30 | |
| | 68 | 300 | |
| SyBr Green qPCR | 95 | 30 | |
| | 95 | 5 | 40 |
| | 51 | 15 | |
| | 72 | 10 | |

983 **Table 4. Western Blot Antibodies**

| Target | Species | Supplier | Dilution |
|---|---|---|---|
| AKT | Mouse | Cell Signalling #2920 | 1:1000 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| p-AKT | Rabbit | Cell Signalling - #5831 | 1:1000 |
| S6 | Mouse | Cell Signalling - #2317 | 1:1000 |
| p-S6 | Rabbit | Cell Signalling - #2215 | 1:1000 |
| Anti-Mouse HRP linked IgG | Horse | Cell Signalling - #7076 | 1:5000 |
| Anti-Rabbit HRP linked IgG | Goat | Cell Signalling - #7074 | 1:5000 |

984 **Supplementary Figures**

985 ***Supplementary Figure 1: Pipeline of transcriptomic analysis and hypernetworks. 1a.***
986 Analysis pipeline of transcriptomic data. **(i)** Unsupervised hierarchical clustering was
987 performed to identify age-associated gene clusters. Genes were filtered by variance, using a
988 projection score to maximise the informativeness of the genes selected. Clusters of age-
989 associated genes were identified for SC and KD animals. **(ii)** Hypernetworks were generated
990 using age associated genes for each group. Hypernetwork structure was quantified using
991 connectivity and entropy. Clusters of highly connected genes were identified, and a wider
992 set of transcripts were implicated as important by identifying the complete subgraph
993 between cluster nodes and edges in the hypernetwork incidence matrix. **(iii)** GSEA was used
994 to investigate biological functions associated with genes clustered by the hypernetwork or
995 implicated by the complete subgraph in the hypernetwork incidence matrix. **(iv)** Biological
996 processes identified by GSEA were assessed for functional activity. Hypernetworks were
997 iterated, using subsets of genes associated with each process, and calculating hypernetwork
998 entropy. A Bayesian modelling approach was used to detect differences in entropy
999 distributions between processes. **1*b.*** A general model of a hypernetwork, shown as a three-

1000 dimensional representation of genes (coloured tetrahedra) correlating with the expression
1001 of other genes (black spheres). Shared correlations are represented by matching vertices,
1002 edges, and faces of the tetrahedra. The dimensionality of the connection between genes is
1003 defined by the number of shared correlations between those genes. ***1c.*** A hypernetwork
1004 representation of the "higher order" interactions within the transcriptome. This summary of
1005 the genes with shared correlations can be considered as the incidence matrix of a multi-
1006 dimensional network.

1007 ***Supplementary Figure 2. Connectivity (A) and entropy (B) of 20-30 dpf associated genes in***
1008 ***the SC and KD zebrafish compared with randomly selected gene sets.*** **2*A.*** Connectivity in
1009 the experimental data was significantly greater than in the random iterative data, and
1010 greater in the KD data than SC ($p < 0.0001$). **2*B.*** Entropy was significantly lower in the
1011 experimental data than the random iterative data. The reduction in entropy between the
1012 experimental data and interated data was greater in the SC than the KD.

1013 **Supplementary Tables**

1014 ***Supplementary Table 1*.** Gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) on age related gene
1015 expression in morpahlino and control animals. 3733 orthologous human genes from 75212
1016 probsets. Gene probe sets collapsed to gene summary by average. Group ANOVA by age
1017 groups. q value is the false discovery rate (fdr) modified p-value of the GSEA, ES = edge
1018 score, NES= normalised edge score, abs(ES)= absolute edge score. GSEA performed in
1019 Qlucore Omics Explorer (v3.6) using Gene Ontology Biological Process. Significance level of
1020 the fdr coloured from blue (highly significant) to red (not significant).

1021 ***Supplementary Table 2*.** Gene sets from the wider connected transcriptome of the 20-30dpf
1022 Control and Morpholino Zebrafish (460 and 12775 respectively). Age rank regression

1023 analysis of gene expression presented with R-statistic and p-value. Zebrafish gene symbol

1024 and corresponding human orthologue shown.

1025 ***Supplementary Table 3*.** A Gene probe sets (3460) from the wider connected transcriptome

1026 of 20-30dpf Morpholino Zebrafish dysregulated in controls. Age rank regression analysis of

1027 gene expression presented with p-value and q-value (false discovery rate modified p-value).

1028 ZF gene symbol and corresponding human orthologue shown.

1029 ***Supplementary Table 4*.** Dysregulated expression of cardiac phenotype marker genes in the

1030 KD zebrafish. False discovery rate modified p-value (q-value) shown for age group ANOVA.

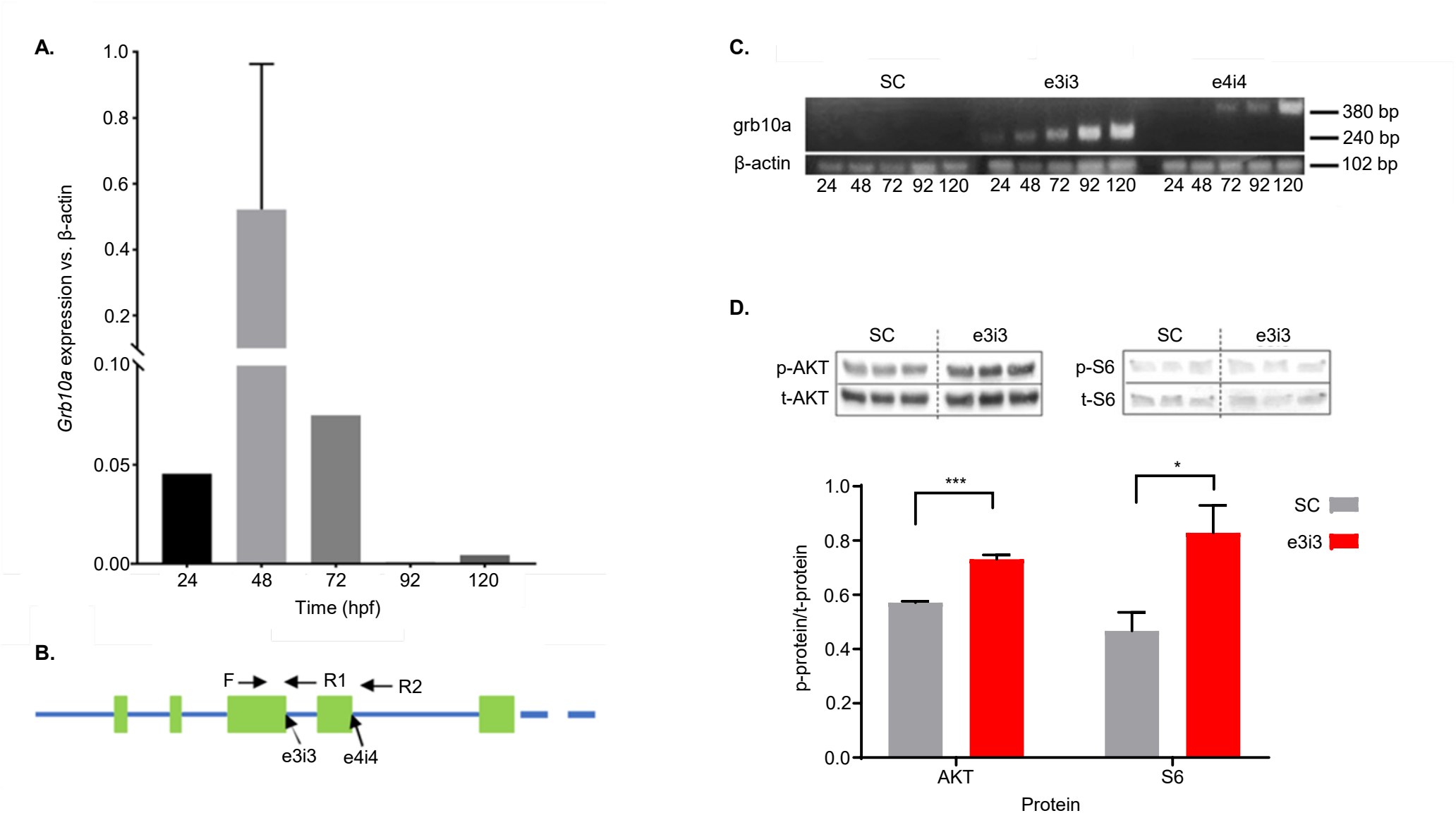



***Figure 1:*** **Grb10a** ***is successfully knocked down in zebrafish injected with splice-blocking antisense oligonucleotides***

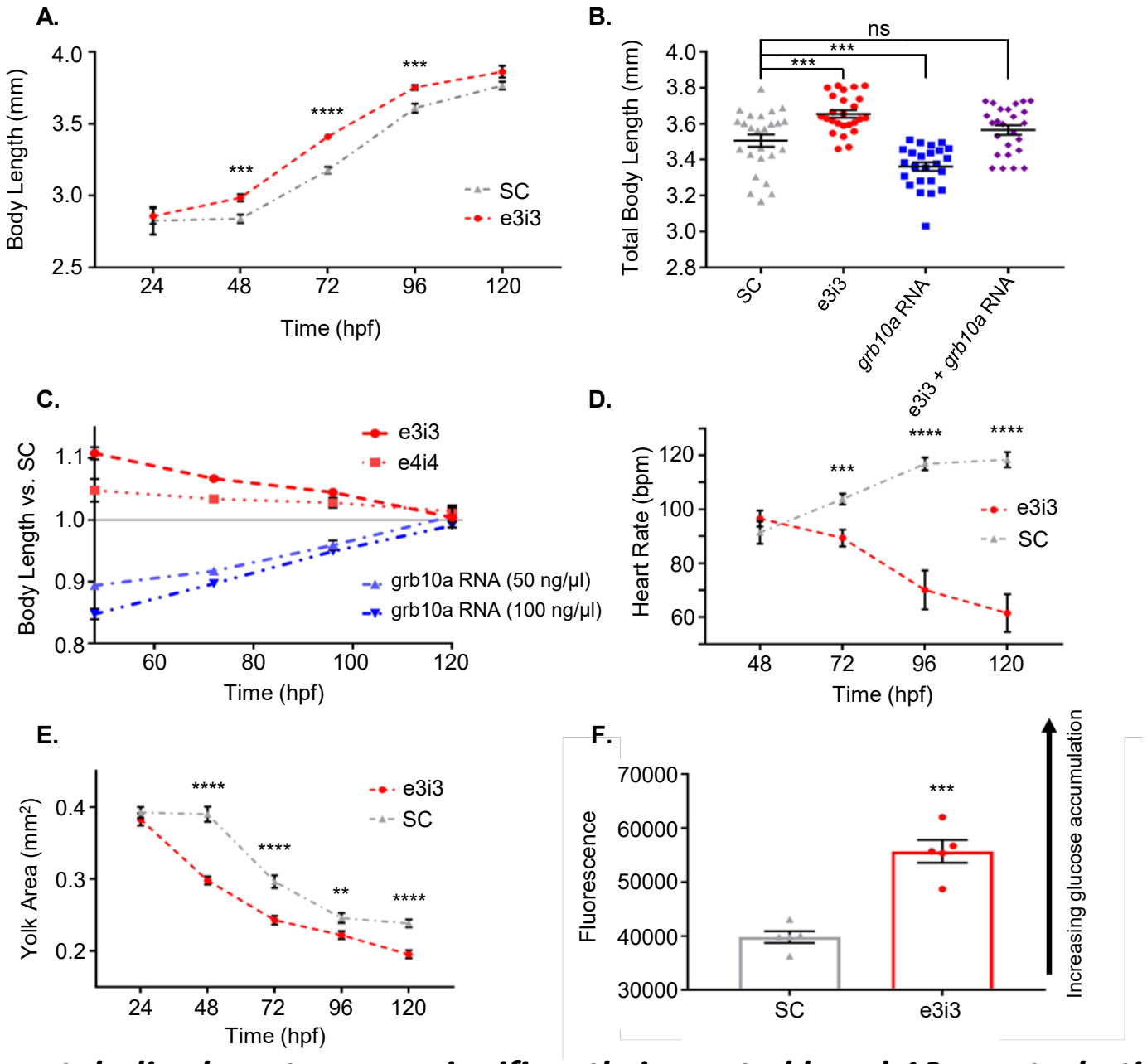
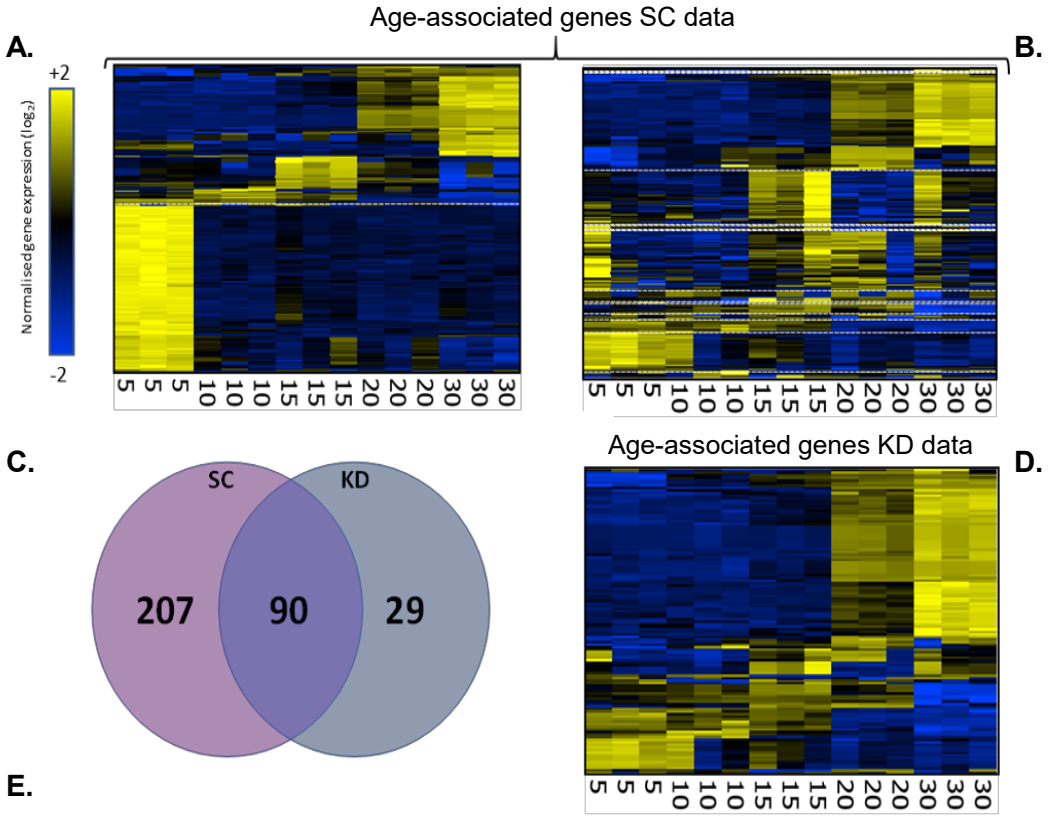



***Figure 2: Growth and cardiometabolic phenotype are significantly impacted by* grb10a *perturbation.***




| Name | KD NES | KD q | SC NES | SC q |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ACTIN FILAMENT BASED MOVEMENT | 2.088 | 0.012 | 2.176 | 1.000 |
| PLATELET ACTIVATION | 2.068 | 0.013 | 2.236 | 1.000 |
| EXTRACELLULAR STRUCTURE ORGANIZATION | 2.011 | 0.013 | 2.246 | 1.000 |
| COLLAGEN FIBRIL ORGANIZATION | 2.026 | 0.014 | 2.257 | 1.000 |
| REGULATION OF RNA SPLICING | 1.608 | 0.039 | 0.726 | 0.855 |
| GLUTATHIONE METABOLIC PROCESS | 1.660 | 0.031 | 0.735 | 0.848 |
| RIBOSOME ASSEMBLY | 1.700 | 0.026 | 0.743 | 0.840 |
| REGULATION OF MRNA PROCESSING | 1.609 | 0.039 | 0.810 | 0.772 |
| PLATELET DEGRANULATION | 1.753 | 0.022 | 2.155 | 0.757 |
| METANEPHROS DEVELOPMENT | 1.709 | 0.026 | 0.841 | 0.733 |
| DICARBOXYLIC ACID TRANSPORT | 0.690 | 0.895 | 1.693 | 0.048 |
| POSITIVE REGULATION OF WOUND HEALING | 0.876 | 0.703 | 1.672 | 0.048 |
| FAT SOLUBLE VITAMIN METABOLIC PROCESS | 0.950 | 0.597 | 1.655 | 0.049 |
| POSITIVE REGULATION OF SMOOTH MUSCLE CELL PROLIFERATION | 0.986 | 0.543 | 1.708 | 0.048 |
| REGULATION OF STEROL TRANSPORT | 1.012 | 0.503 | 1.704 | 0.049 |
| POSITIVE REGULATION OF PROTEIN BINDING | 1.033 | 0.471 | 1.663 | 0.049 |
| AMINO ACID TRANSPORT | 1.037 | 0.466 | 1.703 | 0.048 |
| POSITIVE REGULATION OF LIPID LOCALIZATION | 1.059 | 0.436 | 1.757 | 0.050 |
| CELLULAR MODIFIED AMINO ACID BIOSYNTHETIC PROCESS | 1.068 | 0.423 | 1.664 | 0.049 |
| NEGATIVE REGULATION OF EXTRINSIC APOPTOTIC SIGNALING PATHWAY | 1.097 | 0.383 | 1.674 | 0.049 |

***Figure 3. Transcriptomic analysis of Standard Control and grb10a Knockdown gene expression over the first 30 dpf.***

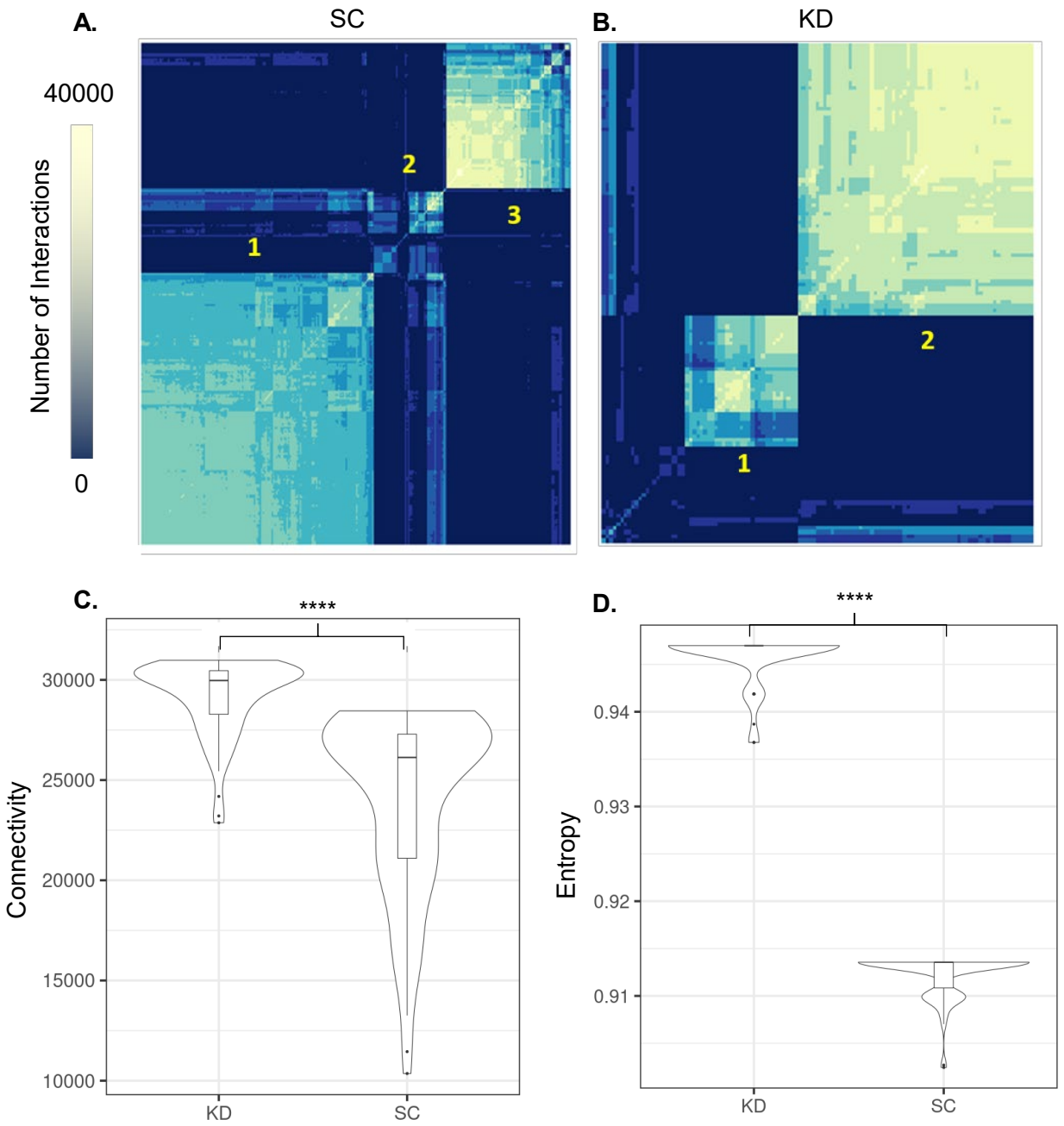



***Figure 4: Coordination within the transcriptome is altered by grb10a KD, as assessed by hypernetwork analysis.***

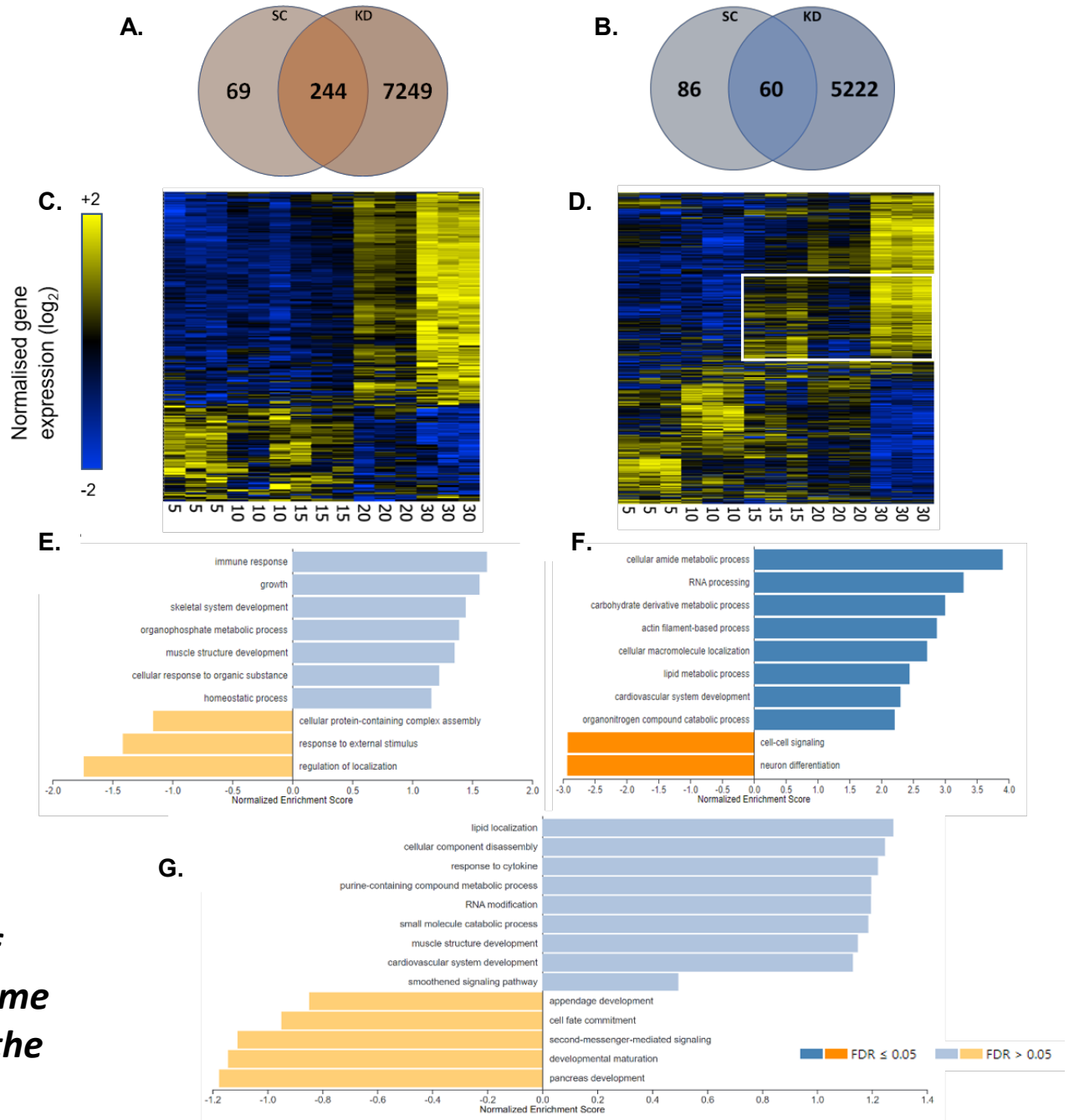



***Figure 5: Analysis of the set of genes in the wider transcriptome shows a 27.8-fold increase in the KD ZF.***

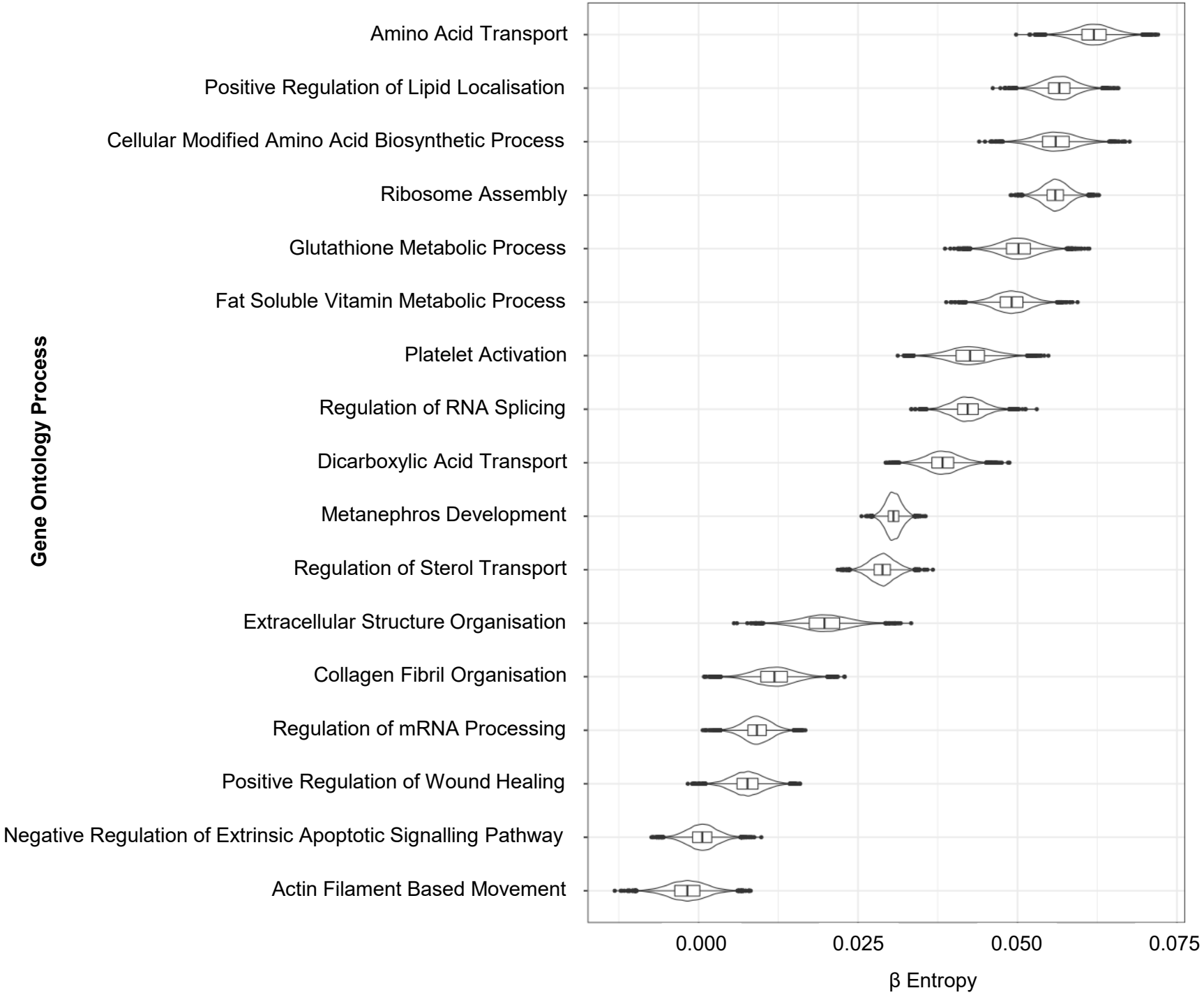



***Figure 6: Hypernetwork modelling of ontology highlights pathways with functional difference between SC and KD.***

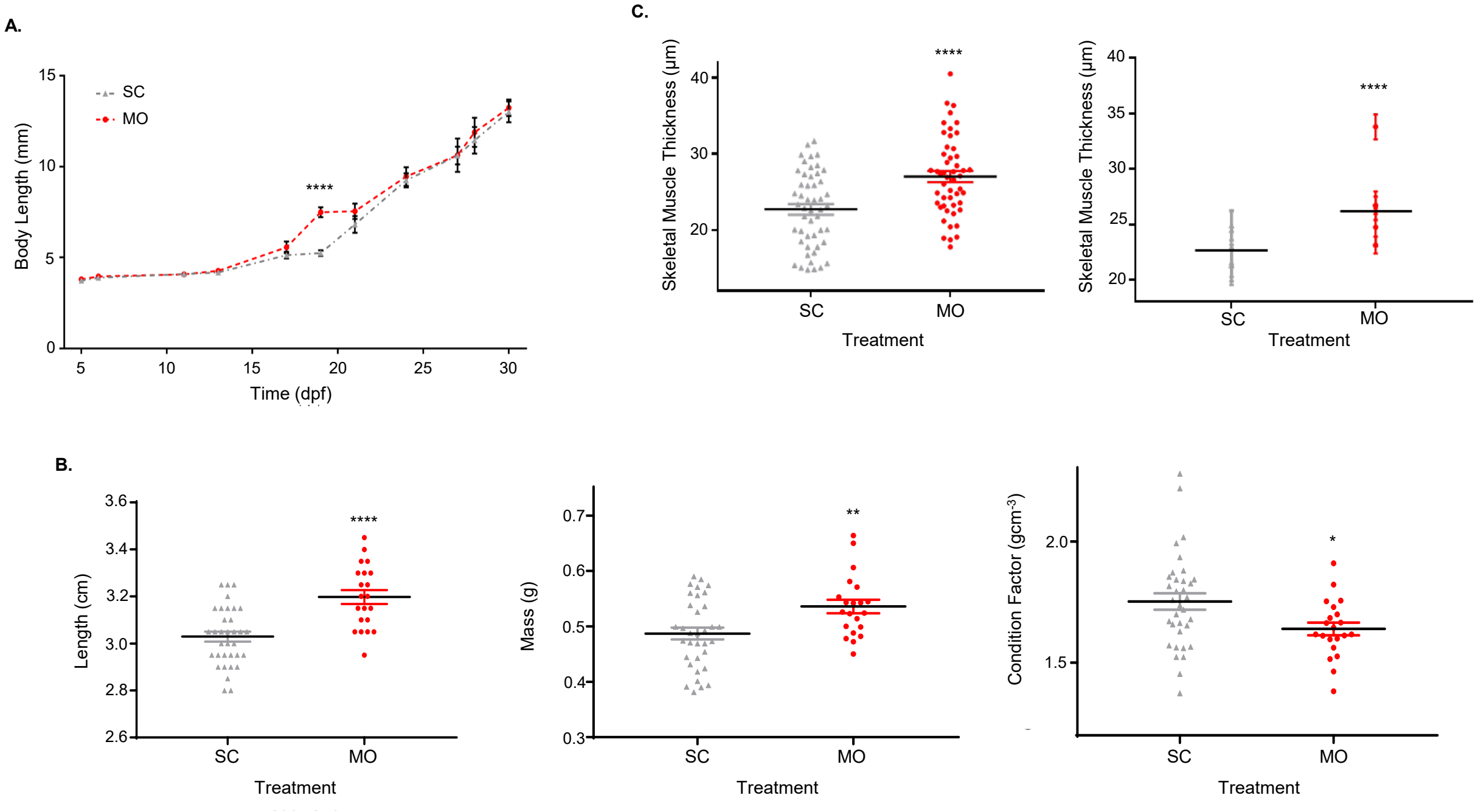



***Figure 7: Length and cardiac function are permanently altered.***

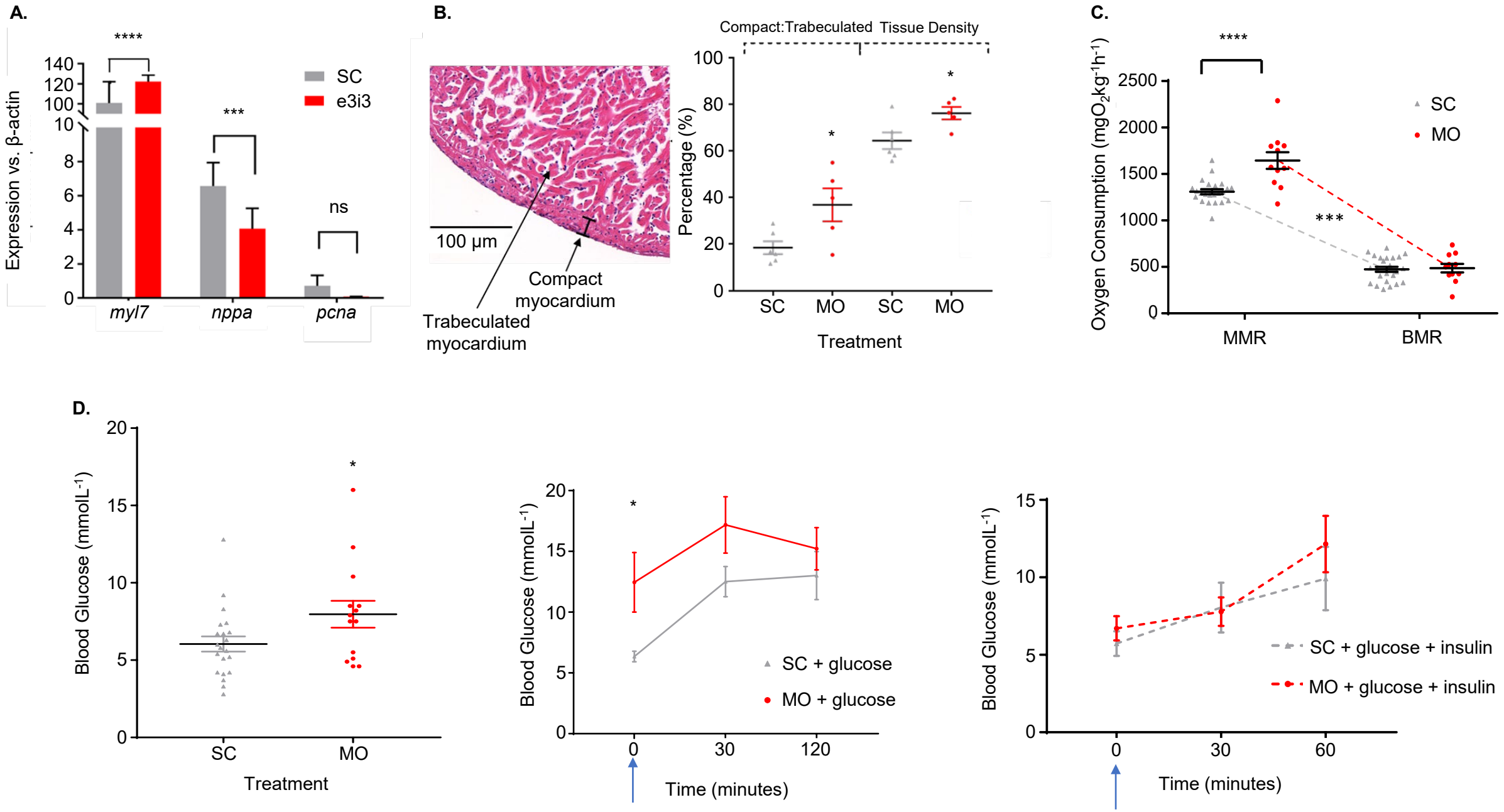
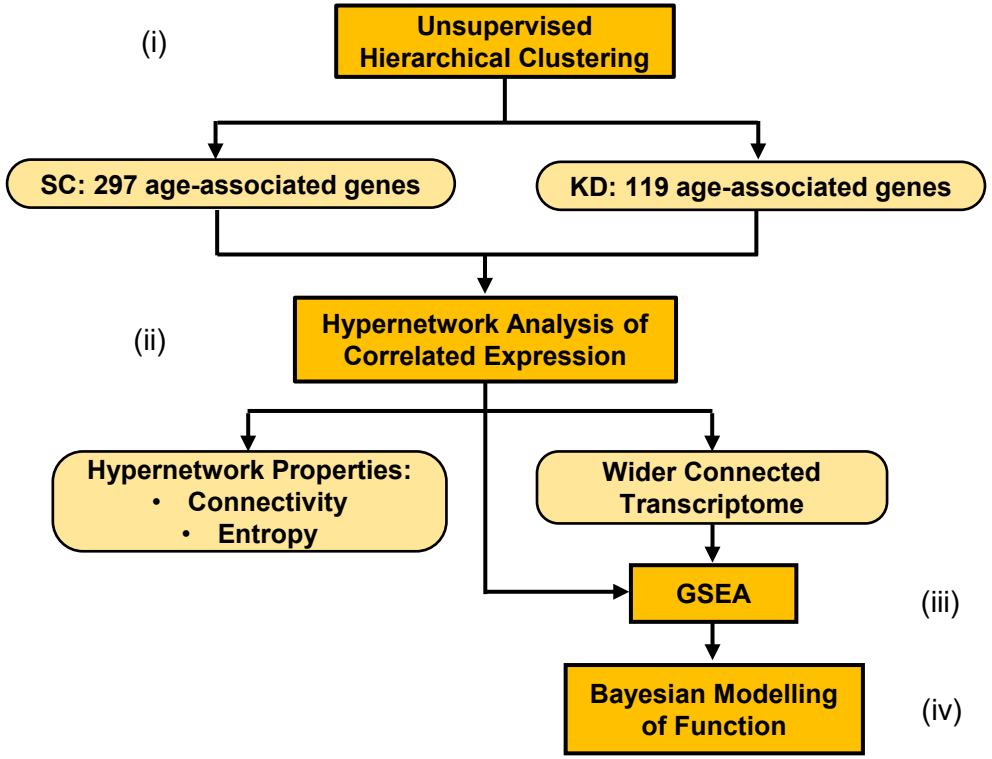


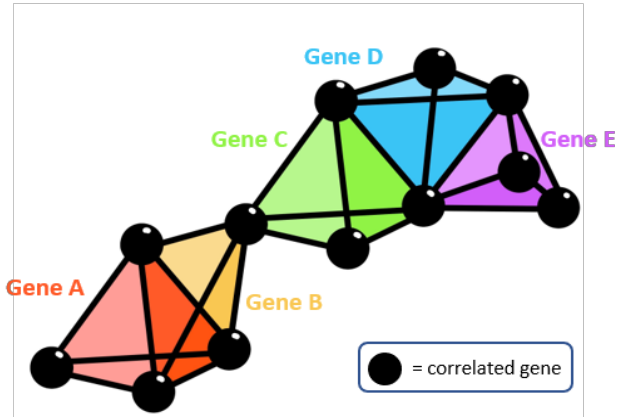

***Figure 8: Changes established during embryonic development perpetuate into variations in adult function.***

**A.** **Analysis Pipeline**



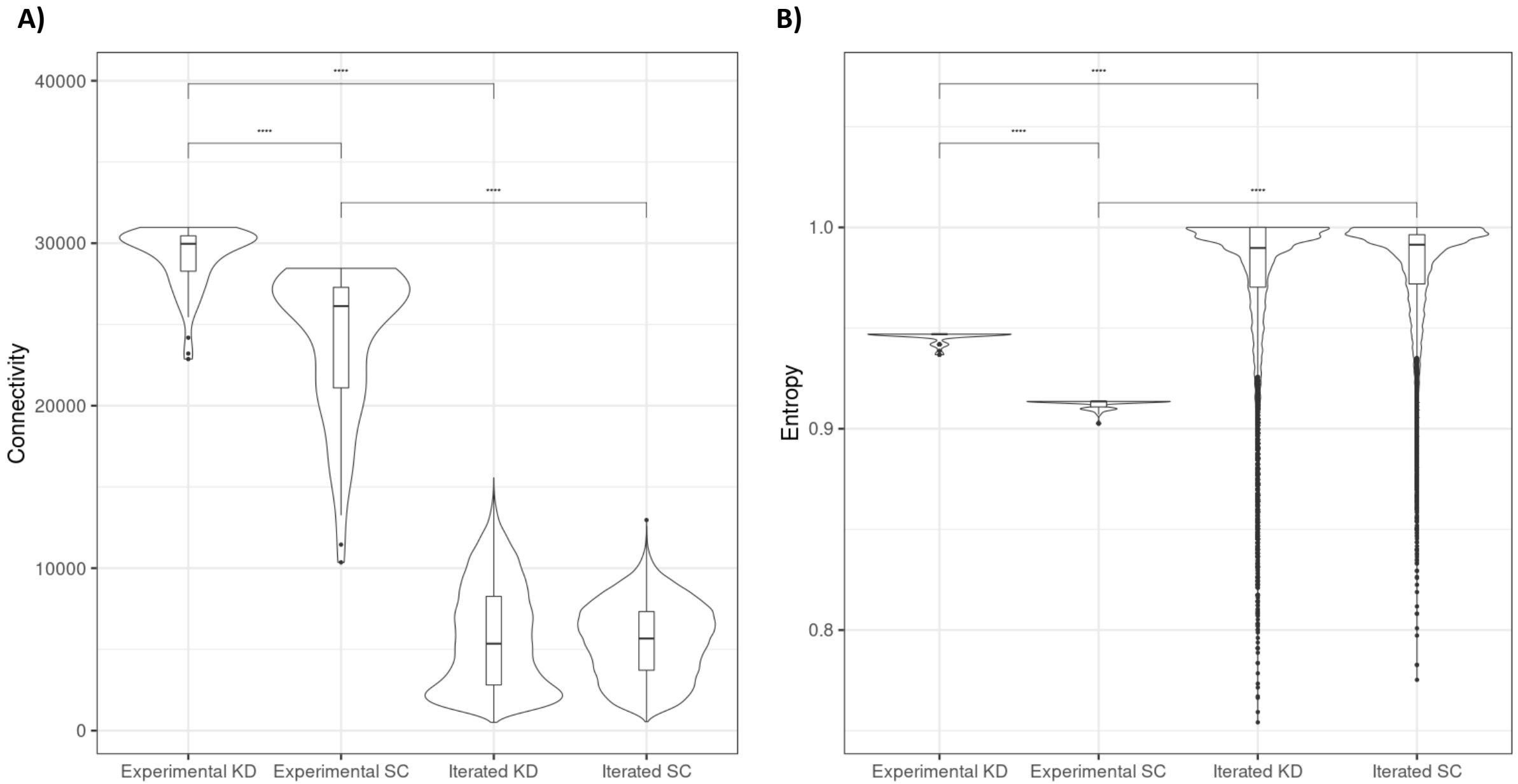

***Supplementary Figure 1: Pipeline of transcriptomic analysis and hypernetworks.***

**B.**




**C.**

| | Gene A | Gene B | Gene C | Gene D | Gene E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gene A | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gene B | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Gene C | 0 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Gene D | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Gene E | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |




***Supplementary Figure 2. Connectivity (A) and entropy (B) of 20-30 dpf associated genes in the SC and KD zebrafish compared with randomly selected gene sets.***