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Insulin secretion deficits in a Prader-Willi syndrome β-cell model are associated

with a concerted downregulation of multiple endoplasmic reticulum chaperones

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ABSTRACT

Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS) is a multisystem disorder with neurobehavioral, metabolic, and hormonal phenotypes, caused by loss of expression of an imprinted gene cluster. Prior evidence from a PWS mouse model identified abnormal pancreatic islet development with deficient insulin secretion. To investigate PWS-genes in β-cell function, we used genome-editing to generate isogenic, clonal INS-1 insulinoma lines having deletions of the silent, maternal (control) or active, paternal PWS-alleles. PWS β-cells demonstrated a cell-autonomous reduction in insulin secretion. Further, proteomic analyses revealed reduced levels of cellular and secreted insulin peptides concomitant with reduction of numerous endoplasmic reticulum (ER) chaperones, including GRP78 and GRP94. Critically, transcriptomic studies demonstrated that only the ER chaperone deficit originated from transcriptional downregulation. Thus, a chronic widespread deficit of ER chaperones in PWS β-cells, similar to reports of acute ablation of single ER chaperones but precluding dosage compensation, is hypothesized to lead to a delay in folding and/or ER transit of insulin and other secretory pathway cargo. These findings implicate PWS-imprinted genes in concerted regulation of ER chaperone biosynthesis and β-cell secretory pathway function, illuminating the pathophysiological basis of hormone deficits in PWS.

INTRODUCTION

Prader-Willi syndrome (PWS) is a multisystem disorder caused by loss of expression of a large contiguous cluster of paternally-expressed, imprinted genes from human chromosome 15q11.2 (Chung et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2019; Tauber and Hoybye, 2021). Clinically, PWS is characterized by failure to thrive (FTT) with hypotonia, developmental and cognitive delay, behavioral problems, short stature, hypogonadism, hyperphagia, and early-onset obesity (Muscogiuri et al., 2019; Tauber and Hoybye, 2021). Prominent endocrine features of PWS include deficiencies of multiple hormones, including growth hormone (GH), oxytocin, gonadotropins, insulin-like growth factor (IGF-I), thyroid hormones, amylin (IAPP), and pancreatic polypeptide (PP) (Costa et al., 2019; Deal et al., 2013; Fountain and Schaaf, 2015; Hirsch et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2011; Muscogiuri et al., 2019; Tomita et al., 1989). In addition, plasma insulin is lower than expected in PWS relative to the degree of obesity (Goldstone et al., 2005; Paik et al., 2007; Schuster et al., 1996). Episodes of hypoglycemia have been reported in PWS patients, suggesting an imbalance in glucose homeostasis (Harrington et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2012). In contrast, plasma ghrelin is grossly elevated in PWS (Cummings et al., 2002; Goldstone et al., 2005; Tauber and Hoybye, 2021). Although the PWS literature suggests a hypothalamic etiology (Tauber and Hoybye, 2021), the mechanisms for endocrine and metabolic dysfunction in PWS have not been elucidated.

The PWS-imprinted domain is comprised of ten paternally-expressed imprinted genes conserved in human and rodents (with an additional two genes each unique to human and rodents), encoding lncRNAs, snoRNAs, miRNAs, or distinct proteins (Cavaillé et al., 2000; Chen et al., 2020; Chung et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2019; Gray et al., 1999a; Kishore and Stamm, 2006; Nicholls and Knepper, 2001; Wu et al., 2016). These imprinted

genes are predominantly expressed in neuronal (Castle et al., 2010; Cavaillé et al., 2000;

Kishore and Stamm, 2006) and neuroendocrine lineages (Chen et al., 2020), as well as

pancreatic endocrine cells (α-, β-, δ-, and PP cells, with only low expression in acinar,

ductal, or undefined cells) based on recent gene-specific (Stefan et al., 2011) and single

cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq) studies (Benner et al., 2014; Li et al., 2016a;

Segerstolpe et al., 2016). Further, *SNRPN* has decreased islet expression in β-cell failure

due to saturated fatty acids (Cnop et al., 2014) or cytokines (Eizirik et al., 2012), while

SNORD116 and *SNORD107* occur in islet exosomes and decrease by IL-1β and IFN-γ

treatment (Krishnan et al., 2019). Finally, *SNORD116* RNA levels are greatly reduced in

MODY3 β-cells (Low et al., 2021). These observations suggest that PWS-gene products

function in the endocrine pancreas including in β-cells.

Our earlier studies of a transgenic-PWS (TgPWS) mouse model harboring a

deletion of the orthologous PWS-imprinted domain demonstrated severe FTT,

abnormalities in fetal pancreatic islet development and architecture, reduced α- and β-

cell mass, increased apoptosis, and postnatal onset of progressive hypoglycemia that led

to lethality within the first postnatal week (Stefan et al., 2005; Stefan et al., 2011). Plasma

insulin and glucagon levels were low during fetal and neonatal life of TgPWS mice (Stefan

et al., 2005; Stefan et al., 2011), and, at postnatal day 1 (P1) prior to onset of

hypoglycemia, there was significantly reduced basal and glucose-stimulated insulin

secretion (GSIS) from cultured TgPWS islets (Stefan et al., 2011). Furthermore, using an

insulin-Timer fluorescent protein biomarker to image P1 β-cells *in vivo*, TgPWS mice

showed a striking accumulation of aged insulin whereas wildtype control littermates only

displayed newly synthesized insulin (Stefan et al., 2011). These results suggested that

PWS-imprinted genes are required for the development and secretory function of

pancreatic endocrine cells.

Based on the salient insulin secretion dysfunction in the PWS-mouse model

(Stefan et al., 2011), we sought to assess the role of PWS genes in pancreatic β-cell

secretory pathway function in a cellular model system. Herein, we used CRISPR/Cas9

genome editing within the INS-1(832/13) insulinoma (β)-cell line (Hohmeier et al., 2000)

to generate deletions of the complete PWS-domain. Following validation of a cell-

autonomous insulin secretion deficit in the PWS INS-1 model, we performed molecular

profiling by proteomic and transcriptomic approaches. The data revealed deficits in

multiple secreted hormones as well as endoplasmic reticulum (ER) chaperones that are

components of secretory protein folding and trafficking pathways (Kalwat et al., 2021;

Rajpal et al., 2012; Sharma et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2019; Yong et al., 2021; Zhu and Lee,

2015), providing mechanistic insight into PWS-gene function in pancreatic β-cells.

RESULTS

Generation of INS-1 cell lines with PWS-gene deletions: Various insulinoma cell lines, predominantly of rodent origin, are widely utilized to investigate β-cell mechanisms as a tractable *in vitro* model system (Skelin et al., 2010). To investigate the functions of PWS-genes in β-cells, we used CRISPR/Cas9 genome-editing to target 3.16 Mb deletions encompassing the PWS-genes (**Fig. 1A**; **Fig. S1A**) in rat INS-1(832/13)::mCherry insulinoma cells (hereafter termed INS-1) that secrete rat and human insulin (Hohmeier et al., 2000) and express a mouse *Ins2* C-peptide-mCherry biosensor in insulin secretory granules (Watkins et al., 2002). The large deletions were visualized in about 9% of unselected, transfected cells as determined by fluorescence *in situ* hybridization (FISH) (**Fig. S1B**). INS-1 lines with PWS-domain deletions were derived through sequential targeting and clonal isolation of cell lines initially harboring deletions of the silent maternal allele, followed by targeting of the remaining paternal loci, culminating in the creation of homozygous PWS-deletion lines (**Fig. 1B**). This process first led to isolation of two lines with a PWS-region deletion (5-5, 5-9) identified by deletion-breakpoint PCR (**Fig. 1C**) and DNA sequencing (**Fig. S2A,B**), and confirmed by FISH using BAC probes from within and outside the PWS-domain (**Fig. S1C-F**). One PWS allele was deleted in all interphase and metaphase cells of line 5-5 (**Fig. S1D**), indicating clonal isolation of a cell line with a PWS-domain deletion. Initially, line 5-9 was more complex, as FISH showed two cell types with either no deletion (most cells) or a PWS-domain deletion (**Fig. S1E**); additionally, similar proportions of cells lacked mCherry fluorescence, likely due to epigenetic silencing (as DNA analysis indicated the transgene was present) or were mCherry-positive, respectively. This allowed separation by fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS), with

establishment of a clonal mCherry-positive cell line (5-9) harboring a PWS-domain

deletion (**Fig. S1F**). Clonal engineered cell lines 5-5 and 5-9 were inferred to have

maternal-deletions of the rat PWS-domain as evidenced by **1)** detection of only an

unmethylated allele at the PWS-imprinting center (PWS-IC) by bisulfite PCR whereas

parental INS-1 and control lines had biparental DNA methylation (**Fig. 1D**); and **2)**

expression of PWS-imprinted loci by reverse-transcription-PCR (RT-PCR) (**Fig. S1G**),

indicating the presence of an active, paternal-allele (**Fig. S1H**). Finally, the presence of

mutations at sgRNA target sites on the intact, paternal chromosome, termed scarred

mutation alleles, identified a single nucleotide insertion at the sgRNA1 site (**Fig. S1I**; **Fig.**

S2C-E) but different nucleotide insertions at the sgRNA3 site (**Fig. S1I**; **Fig. S2F-H**), the

latter indicating an independent origin for the cell lines, 5-5 and 5-9. In contrast, no

sequence changes occurred at top-ranked off-target sites for sgRNA1 or sgRNA3 (**Fig.**

S3).

To specifically target the paternal allele of lines 5-5 and 5-9, we used rat-specific

sgRNA sets internal to the first targeting sites to generate slightly smaller 3.143 Mb PWS-

deletions (**Fig. S4A-C**). The use of FISH demonstrated that about 5% of unselected,

transfected cells had a PWS-deletion (**Fig. S4D**). We chose maternal deletion (control)

line 5-9 for a second round of transfections and clonal isolation, generating control lines

2 and 16 (**Fig. 1B,E**; **Fig. S4E,F**) as well as PWS lines 19 and 25, with an expected

paternal deletion-PCR product and PWS line 3 with a larger than expected deletion-PCR

product (**Fig. 1B,E**; **Fig. S4G**). DNA sequencing confirmed PWS-deletion breakpoints for

lines 19 and 25 (**Fig. S5A-C**) as well as for line 3, although the latter arose from a larger

deletion at an alternate (alt) proximal alt-sgRNA70-3 targeting site with a DNA repair event

that inserted a fragment of *E. coli* DNA in the breakpoint junction (**Fig. S5D**). FISH studies

confirmed that lines 3 and 25 had deletions of the PWS-domain on each allele (**Fig.**

S4H,I); however, FISH analysis also revealed that line 25 was mosaic for cells with diploid

or tetraploid PWS-signals (**Fig. S4I**). Consequently, line 25 was not used further. In

contrast, line 19 had a residual fraction of cells (1-3.7%) with an intact paternal allele as

shown by FISH (**Fig. S4J**) and droplet digital PCR (ddPCR) (**Fig. S6**) which was removed

by cell dilution and isolation of five clonal lines 19-1 through 19-5 (**Fig. 1B**; **Fig. S4K,L**;

Fig. S10A). Finally, sgRNA target sites not deleted or involved in a deletion breakpoint

were assessed for scarred mutation alleles identifying a 28-nt deletion at alt-sgRNA70-3

in PWS lines 19-1 and 19-4 (**Fig. S4N**; **Fig. S5E-L**), while no sequence changes occurred

at top-ranked off-target sites for sgRNA70-3 (**Fig. S7**) or sgRNA79-1 (**Fig. S8**).

Genomic copy number was confirmed by ddPCR (**Fig. 1F**; **Fig. S6**; **Fig. S9**),

establishing a set of three control lines (5-9, 2, 16) with hemizygosity for maternal-allele

deletions (**Fig. S1H**) and three PWS INS-1 lines (3, 19-1, 19-4) with homozygosity for

PWS-domain deletions (**Fig. S4M**). An absence of PWS-gene expression in all PWS lines

was shown by RT-PCR for each PWS-imprinted gene (**Fig. 1G**; **Fig. S10A,B**) and by

western blot analysis for the SmN polypeptide encoded by *Snrpn* (**Fig. 1H**). Intriguingly,

PWS INS-1 lines showed a very low level of apparent expression of the PWS-imprinted

gene *Snurf* by RT-PCR (**Fig. S10A**; **Fig. S11A,B**). Sequencing of the RT-PCR products

identified an expressed *ψSnurf* sequence within a recently evolved *ψSnurf-ψSnrpn* locus

located in an intron of the *Mon2* gene (**Fig. S11B,C**). Using a *Pml*I variant between *Snurf*

and *ψSnurf* (**Fig. S11D**), we confirmed expression specifically of *ψSnurf* with complete

silencing of *Snurf* (**Fig. S11B**), as expected for PWS INS-1 lines. Scattered mutations in

the *ψSnurf* (**Fig. S11D**) and *ψSnrpn* (**Fig. S11E,F**) segments likely inactivate any coding

potential (**Fig. S11G, H**). In summation, these results establish a panel of clonal INS-1

lines homozygous for ~ 3.16 Mb deletions, also termed PWS β-cell lines, and similarly, of

clonal control lines with a deletion only involving the silent, maternal allele.

PWS INS-1 cell lines show deficits in insulin secretion and ER chaperones: To

determine whether PWS INS-1 cell lines have secretory deficits, we carried out insulin

secretion assays under low (2.2 mM) and high (22 mM) glucose conditions. The three

PWS cell lines displayed a striking deficit in both basal and glucose-induced insulin

secretion as compared to the isogenic control INS-1 lines (**Fig. 2**). However, both the

PWS and control cell lines had a similar increase from each basal level for GSIS (**Fig. 2**),

indicating that PWS β-cells were not deficient in glucose responsiveness.

Next, mass spectrometry was used to assess changes in the cellular proteome

and all secreted peptides in PWS *vs.* control INS-1 cell lines, under insulin secretion

conditions of 22 mM glucose, separating cellular proteins by methanol-acetic acid

extraction into soluble (mostly small) and insoluble (mostly large) protein fractions with

the latter analyzed by quantitative proteomics (**Fig. 3A**). Unexpectedly, in PWS INS-1

cells there was a striking deficiency of multiple ER chaperone proteins, including

GRP78/BiP (HSPA5), GRP94/endoplasmin (HSP90B1), PDIA4, HYOU1, CRELD2, and

DNAJB11, with lesser reductions in SDF2L1, DNAJC3, PDIA6, and PDIA3, and a modest

decrease in PPIB (**Fig. 3B**). Similar deficits of residual amounts of many of these ER

chaperones as well as MANF were detected in the soluble protein fraction (**Fig. 3C**).

Furthermore, in PWS β-cell lines there was reduced abundance of numerous hormones

co-secreted from INS-1 cells, including rat insulin-1 and insulin-2, mouse insulin-2, and

human insulin (pre-pro-, pro-, C-peptide, and mature versions of each), as well as

reductions in processed and precursor forms of IAPP and NPY, detected in both the

cellular small protein fraction (**Fig. 3C**) and residual amounts in the large protein fraction

by quantitative proteomics (**Fig. 3B**). In contrast, the full-length secretory granule protein,

chromogranin B (CHGB), and the C-terminal CHGB (CCB)-peptide were increased 2-fold

(**Fig. 3B,C**). Extending both the insulin secretion data (**Fig. 2**) and the cellular protein

deficiencies (**Fig. 3B,C**), mass spectrometry analysis of peptides secreted into the culture

media demonstrated reduced levels of all forms of insulins and IAPP in PWS β-cell media

compared to control (**Fig. 3D**). There was also a reduction in secreted levels of the 14

amino acid WE14 peptide processed from chromogranin A (CHGA), but no changes in

the CHGA precursor and processed forms in either secreted or cellular fractions.

Secreted levels of chromogranin B were increased in PWS (**Fig. 3D**), further illustrating

the concordance between cellular and secreted peptide levels in PWS *vs.* control INS-1

lines. These results indicate that deletion of PWS-genes sharply lowers secretion of

insulin and other peptide hormones (IAPP, NPY, CHGA-WE14) and this reduction is

associated with deficiencies in many ER chaperones.

Reduced mRNA levels for hormones and ER chaperones in PWS INS-1 cell lines:

Many of the PWS-imprinted genes (**Fig. 1A**) are suggested to function in gene expression

(Cavaillé et al., 2000; Gray et al., 1999a; Gray et al., 1999b; Kishore and Stamm, 2006;

Liu et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2016). To gain insight into the molecular basis for insulin

secretion and ER chaperone deficits in PWS INS-1 lines, high-throughput total RNA

sequencing (RNA-seq) was used to identify differentially expressed genes (DEGs) (**Fig.**

4A-C; **Tables S1,S2**). Visualization by a heatmap clustergram (**Fig. 4A**) indicates that

PWS clonal lines and control clonal lines each grouped together with similar expression

profiles. A volcano plot depicting the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of

DEGs in the 3 PWS *vs.* 3 control lines illustrates no appreciable expression (Log2 Fold

Change < -5) of PWS-imprinted genes with remaining DEGs symmetrically orientated

around the ordinate axis with a near equivalent number of significantly upregulated (105)

and downregulated (123) genes (**Fig. 4B**). The PWS transcripts with complete loss of

expression specifically in PWS INS-1 lines include *Snurf*, *Snrpn*, *Ipw*, *Mkrn3*, all four

snoRNAs (*Snord116, Snord115, Snord107* and Snord*109*), miRNA (*Mir344* isoforms),

and duplicated U1-*Snurf* sequences (**Fig. 4B**), as also seen by RT-PCR (**Fig. 1G**; **Fig.**

S10A,B; **Fig. S11A,B**). Three PWS-imprinted genes, *Ndn*, *Magel2*, and *Frat3* (*Peg12*),

were not detected as DEGs as these are not expressed by RT-PCR or RNA-sequencing

in any of parental, control, or PWS INS-1 lines. These loci are present by genomic PCR,

suggesting an epigenetic inactivation in the INS-1 founder cell line, although silencing is

not widespread, as *Mkrn3* and *Mir-344* are interspersed with the silenced loci (see **Fig.**

1A) and are well-expressed in control INS-1 lines (**Fig. S10B**; **Fig. S12**).

To ensure complete coverage of the INS-1 transcriptome, RNA-seq of small stable

RNAs in the PWS *vs.* control cell lines was carried out, culminating in the identification of

58 significant differentially expressed miRNAs and snoRNAs (**Fig. S12A,B**; **Table S3**).

Congruent with the RNA-seq data, all but three correspond to PWS-imprinted small

RNAs, including duplicated *MiR-344*, *Snord116* and *Snord115* loci, as well as single copy

Snord107 and *Snord64* loci (**Fig. S12A,B**). In addition, *Mir135b*, *Mir3065*, and *Mir212*

were downregulated in PWS INS-1 lines (**Fig. S12B**), although predicted targets were not

DEGs by RNA-seq. Eleven of the top 25 highly expressed miRNAs in the rat INS-1 β-cell

model (**Table S4**), including *Mir375*, *Mir148a*, *Mir183*, *Mir30d*, *Mir27b*, *Mir25*, *Mir26a2*,

Mir26a, *Mir192*, *Mir125a*, and *Mir141* are also in the top 25 expressed miRNAs for a

human β-cell model (Lawlor et al., 2019). Within INS-1 cells, expression of PWS-region

Snord116 copies make up 13.8% of the top 188 highly expressed snoRNAs and

cumulatively would be the thirteenth highest expressed, with *Snord64* also in and

Snord107 just outside the top 100 (**Table S5**), although snoRNAs are poorly studied as

a small RNA class.

In addition to the loss of PWS-imprinted gene expression in the PWS INS-1 lines,

four additional classes of DEGs were identified by manual annotation analysis of RNA-

seq data (**Fig. 4B**). These DEG classes encoded: **1)** hormones (e.g., *Iapp*, *Npy*,

mIns2::mCherry) that were significantly reduced; **2)** nine ER chaperones that were

lowered including *Sdf2l1*, *Hspa5*, *Creld2*, *Dnajb11*, *Hyou1*, *Pdia4*, *Dnajc2*, *Hsp90b1*, and

Pdia6; **3)** "neuronal active zone" proteins that had increased expression, including

Cacna1a, *Rph3al*, *Bsn*, *Rimbp2*, *Cacna1d*, *Pclo*, and *Chgb*, many of which also play a

role in insulin exocytosis (Fan et al., 2017; Fujimoto et al., 2002; Matsunaga et al., 2017;

Obermuller et al., 2010; Proverbio et al., 2013; Reinbothe et al., 2013); and **4)** two related

transmembrane proteins involved in vesicle acidification (*Tmem176a,b*) (Drujont et al.,

2016) whose expression were also enhanced. Gene ontology and pathway analysis of

downregulated genes (excluding PWS-imprinted genes) through Enrichr or DAVID

highlighted enrichment of multiple ER functional groups including those in ER protein

processing, and the unfolded protein response (UPR) that are linked with both IRE1 and

ATF6 (**Fig. 4C**; **Fig. S13A-C**). Finally, based on the input of downregulated DEGs, Enrichr

predicted potential upstream transcriptional regulatory factors, including NFYA/NFYB (a

cofactor of ATF6α, hereafter ATF6), CPEB1, RFX5, IRF3, CREB1, SREBF1, XBP1, and

PPARB/D (**Fig. S14**).

Transcriptional changes observed by RNA-seq were corroborated by RT-droplet

digital PCR (RT-ddPCR) analyses using RNA from independent biological replicates of

each PWS and control INS-1 line (**Fig. 4D-H**; **Fig. S15**; **Fig. S16**). We validated equal

expression of the housekeeping gene, *Gapdh*, and loss of expression of *Snord116* (**Fig.**

4D), as well as significant down-regulation in PWS INS-1 lines of 10 genes encoding ER

chaperones (**Fig. 4E**: *Hspa5*, *Hsp90b1*, *Pdia4*, *Pdia6*, *Ppib*, *Creld2*, *Sdf2l1*, *Dnajb11*,

Dnajc3, and *Hyou1*), of endogenous hormones (**Fig. 4F**: *Npy*, *Iapp*), and of the mouse

Ins2-mCherry transgene (**Fig. 4G**). Further, another eight downregulated genes in PWS

β-cells were verified (**Fig. S16**) including *Syt1*, encoding a Ca^{2+}-sensor (Nakajima-Nagata

et al., 2004) and *Jph3*, encoding a junctophilin involved in ER-plasma membrane contact

bridges (Li et al., 2016b); each with roles in insulin secretion (Li et al., 2016b; Nakajima-

Nagata et al., 2004); *Derl3*, involved in ER-associated degradation (ERAD) (Oda et al.,

2006), *Mylip*, encoding an E3 ubiquitin ligase regulating the LDL receptor (van Loon et

al., 2019), *Atp10a*, encoding a lipid flippase (Naito et al., 2015), and *Tap1* and *Tap2*,

encoding ER antigenic peptide transporters that play a role in type 1 diabetes

(Kronenberg-Versteeg et al., 2018). Additionally, up-regulation of four genes was

confirmed by RT-ddPCR (**Fig. 4H**), including *Cacna1a*, *Chgb*, *Tmem176a*, and

Tmem176b.

Several other observations merit note. In contrast to the proteomics data wherein

all endogenous forms of insulin were decreased in PWS INS-1 lines, neither rat *Ins1* nor

Ins2 mRNA levels were statistically different between PWS and control lines in the RNA-

seq or RT-ddPCR (**Fig. 4F**) expression profiling. Only a minority of DEGs identified by

RNA-seq did not validate by RT-ddPCR, including several encoding neuronal active zone

proteins (**Fig. S16**), possibly arising from cell culture media differences between biological

replicates. Additionally, an apparent increase in expression of the human *INS-neoR*

transgene in PWS lines (**Fig. 4G**) was an artifactual consequence of epigenetic silencing

of the transgene, specifically in control line 16 (**Fig. S15A,I-K,M**). Interestingly, although

both mRNA (*Pcsk1*) and protein levels of prohormone convertase PC1 were reduced in

iPSC-derived neurons from PWS patients and in whole islets of inbred *Snord116*-deficient

mice (Burnett et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2020), neither PC1 protein nor *Pcsk1* mRNA levels

were changed in PWS INS-1 cell lines (**Fig. 4F**). Finally, no markers of activation of

apoptotic or other cell death pathways were observed by RNA-seq or proteomics,

consistent with the absence of any increase in cell death observed in cultured PWS or

control INS-1 cells. Indeed, electron microscopy showed normal mitochondria, rough ER,

and other subcellular organelles in PWS and control INS-1 lines (**Fig. S17**). The

difference in observations *in vivo* where increased apoptosis was observed in a subset of

α- and β-cells in TgPWS fetal islets (Stefan et al., 2011) and *in vitro* (this study) may

reflect the use of enriched culture medium with reduced cellular stress under cell culture

conditions. In summary, the transcriptome studies show that loss of PWS-gene

expression in PWS β-cell lines is accompanied by widespread alterations in mRNA levels

most notably encoding secreted peptides and ER chaperones.

Confirmation of insulin and ER chaperone protein deficits in PWS INS-1 lines: To

further address the predicted disruptions of the ER and secretory pathway, we used

western blot analyses to measure cellular levels of insulin and ER chaperones in control

and PWS INS-1 lines. Levels of numerous forms of insulin polypeptides detected by an

anti-insulin antibody were each significantly decreased in PWS INS-1 lines compared to

controls, including diminished amounts of pro-insulin, pre-pro-insulin, and pro-mInsulin-

2::mCherry bands (**Fig. 5A,D**). Additionally, using an anti-mCherry antibody, we observed

that PWS cells have significantly lower levels of the proinsulin form of the mouse insulin2-

mCherry transgene but no decrease in the processed C-peptide (CP) form (**Fig. 5B,E**).

Indeed, confocal microscopy of the processed CP-mCherry shows punctate cytoplasmic

compartmentalization without a discernable difference between PWS and control INS-1

lines (**Fig. S18**). Importantly, use of a KDEL antibody to identify proteins with the ER

retention motif confirmed significant deficiencies in levels of the two major ER chaperone

proteins, GRP78/BiP and GRP94, in PWS INS-1 cell lines (**Fig. 5C,F**). These results

indicate that there are major disruptions of the protein folding machinery and attendant

reductions in insulin processing and secretion in the PWS INS-1 cells.

PWS INS-1 cells are more sensitive to activation by ER stressors: Chaperones, such

as GRP78 and GRP94, not only have essential roles in protein folding and trafficking in

the ER but disruptions of chaperone functions sensitize cells to agents that stress this

organelle (Bertolotti et al., 2000; Braakman and Bulleid, 2011; Hong et al., 2004; Shen et

al., 2002; Teske et al., 2011; Tsuchiya et al., 2018). Therefore, we assessed whether the

PWS INS-1 lines and their reduced levels of ER chaperones (**Fig. 3-5**) would accentuate

activation of the three sensory proteins of the UPR. First, ER stress activates IRE1α to

catalyze mRNA processing of the *Xbp1* mRNA to generate the functional XBP1

transcription factor (Tsuchiya et al., 2018); this non-canonical "splicing" of *Xbp1*

transcripts occurs at low and equal levels in PWS and control INS-1 cells under DMSO

control growth conditions but is enhanced by treatment with thapsigargin to initiate ER

stress (**Fig. 6A,D**; **Fig. S19A,B**). Importantly, production of "spliced" *Xbp1* mRNA in

thapsigargin-treated cells occurs significantly more robustly at earlier 2 h and 3 h

timepoints for PWS than for control INS-1 lines (**Fig. 6A,D**; **Fig. S19A,B**) but normalizes

by 4-5 h (**Fig. S19A,B**). These results reveal that while the initial magnitude of IRE1

activation is greater in the PWS INS-1 cells, the duration and cumulative response is

comparable. Second, phosphorylation of eIF2α by PERK (Teske et al., 2011) was

assessed, with PWS INS-1 lines showing significantly higher levels of eIF2α pSer51

phosphorylation than control lines when ER stress was induced by 5 h of thapsigargin

treatment (**Fig. 6B,E**). Phosphorylated eIF2α inhibits general translation but preferentially

translates certain stress adaptive genes, including ATF4 and CHOP; transcripts of these

genes were unaffected in unstressed PWS INS-1 cells as measured by RNA-seq.

Third, dissociation of ER-retained ATF6 from GRP78 by ER stressors such as de-

glycosylation agents (Hong et al., 2004; Shen et al., 2002) enable it to move to the Golgi,

where it is processed to an activated nuclear (N) form, ATF6-N, which regulates

expression of genes encoding many ER chaperones, including GRP78 and others. In

PWS and control INS-1 cells, ER stress induced by tunicamycin, as expected, de-

glycosylates full-length glycosylated (FL-G) ATF6 of ~ 102-kD to an unglycosylated 90-

kD (FL-UG) form and the processed ATF6-N form of 55-kD (**Fig. 6C**; **Fig. S20A**). The

loss of the ATF6 FL-G form by deglycosylation occurs at the same rate for PWS and

control cell lines (**Fig. S20B**). However, the ratio of the processed ATF6-N (due to higher

production in PWS than control INS-1 cells) to full-length unglycosylated 90-kD (with a

higher level in control than PWS INS-1 cells) is significantly greater for PWS compared

to control INS-1 cells at 2-5 h timepoints (**Fig. 6C,F**; also see **Fig. S20A,B**). Thus, ATF6

is being activated to ATF6-N earlier and more robustly in PWS than in control INS-1 β-

cell lines. Combined, these results on ER stress activation of the IRE1α/XBP1,

PERK/eIF2α, and ATF6-N pathways indicate that PWS INS-1 β-cells are more sensitive

than control INS-1 β-cells to ER stressors.

DISCUSSION

Although PWS has long been assumed to be a neuroendocrine disease of the hypothalamus (Chen et al., 2020; Tauber and Hoybye, 2021), studies using mouse models have implicated a role for the pancreatic endocrine system (Burnett et al., 2017; Stefan et al., 2011). Here, we generated a novel INS-1 β-cell model through deletion of the ~ 3.16 Mb PWS-orthologous imprinted domain in which to investigate PWS β-cell biology. The PWS deletion results in a β-cell autonomous defect in both basal and regulated insulin secretion, although the latter is at least in part consequent to the effect on basal insulin secretion. The PWS deletion also results in cell autonomous deficits in the secretion of other peptide hormones and in deficiencies of β-cell ER chaperones required for folding, exit and trafficking of secretory peptides. Presciently, studies reported 25 years ago demonstrated that PWS adults compared to matched obese controls had significantly reduced first- and second-phase insulin secretion during intravenous glucose tolerance tests (Schuster *et al.*, 1996), attesting to the translational relevance of the PWS INS-1 model. These findings strongly support a hypothesis that PWS-genes are required for fundamental β-cell mechanisms affecting production of peptide hormones.

Basal insulin secretion and GSIS are dramatically reduced both *in vivo* in the TgPWS-deletion mouse model (Stefan et al., 2011) and the new *in vitro* PWS INS-1 β-cell model. As PWS β-cells in both models are glucose-responsive this indicates the defect is in a fundamental component of the secretory apparatus. In TgPWS mice, perinatal pancreatic insulin secretion dysfunction was associated with intracellular retention of aged insulin and reduced islet insulin and C-peptide content as well as reduced islet glucagon content and plasma glucagon levels suggestive of broader

endocrine cell dysfunction (Stefan et al., 2011). Similarly, in our current study we have

found that all insulin isoforms that are expressed in and secreted from the PWS INS-1 β-

cell are decreased, as measured by proteomics and western blot analyses. Remarkably,

these equivalent insulin secretion deficits between PWS mice (Stefan et al., 2011) and

the cell autonomous INS-1 model of PWS (this work) were associated with distinct

transcriptional responses. *In vivo*, an apparent physiological compensatory mechanism

increased levels of mRNAs encoding all major pancreatic hormones, including insulin,

amylin, glucagon, somatostatin, and PP, and several other secretory polypeptides (Stefan

et al., 2011). In contrast, in PWS INS-1 cell lines no changes in gene expression were

found for the endogenous rat *Ins1* or *Ins2* genes while there was diminished mRNA

expression of a *mIns2::mCherry* transgene and those encoding two other secreted

peptides (*Iapp* and *Npy*). Taken together, either translation or post-translational protein

folding and/or trafficking of insulins must be dysregulated in PWS β-cells.

A further critical finding in the PWS INS-1 model is a concurrent down-regulation

at the transcriptional and polypeptide levels of numerous ER chaperones, including for

GRP78 and GRP94 that are major facilitators of insulin folding and trafficking in the ER.

GRP94 directly binds pro-insulin, and chemical inhibition or shRNA knockdown or genetic

ablation of the *Hsp90b1* gene results in diminished insulin processing and secretion,

larger but immature insulin granules, and activation of the PERK ER stress pathway

(Ghiasi et al., 2019). Similarly, knockdown of *Hspa5* in INS-1(832/13) cells reduced insulin

biosynthesis and secretion (Zhang et al., 2009), a finding validated in human EndoC-βH1

cells (Szczerbinska et al., 2022). The acute reduction of single ER chaperones resulting

in reduced insulin production and secretion indicates a direct impact at the level of ER

insulin protein folding and trafficking that is recapitulated in the PWS INS-1 model where

we describe a chronic shortage of multiple ER-chaperones. Therefore, we interpret the broad ER-chaperone deficiency in the PWS INS-1 model as a primary molecular abnormality that directly results in diminished insulin secretion.

Prior evidence from mouse knockout models of key ER chaperone genes has shown that they are subject to dosage compensation to maintain homeostasis. Although knockouts for either *Hspa5* (GRP78) or *Hsp90b1* (GRP94) are lethal early in mouse embryogenesis, heterozygous mice are viable (Luo et al., 2006; Mao et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2010; Zhu and Lee, 2015). Intriguingly, upregulation of GRP94 and other ER chaperones occurs in *Hspa5* +/- mice (Luo et al., 2006) and similarly for GRP78 in *Hsp90b1* -/- ES cells (Mao et al., 2010), indicative of dosage compensation among ER chaperones. A similar mechanism operates in *Hspa5* +/- mice to attenuate diet-induced obesity and insulin resistance (Ye et al., 2010). Compensatory changes with upregulation of GRP94 or GRP78 and other ER chaperones including PDIA6 also occurred with shRNA knockdown of *Hspa5* or *Hsp90b1*, respectively, in a mouse cell line (Eletto et al., 2012). In contrast, the widespread deficiency of ER chaperones, including GRP78 and GRP94, that we describe for PWS INS-1 β-cells would preclude compensatory increases. Because of an inability to compensate, we hypothesize that PWS β-cells have a chronic deficit in ER chaperone production which would interfere with folding of proinsulin and/or delay ER transit of cargo (e.g., hormones) along the secretory pathway. Consistent with this hypothesis, our previous *in vivo* results using a Timer fluorescent protein demonstrated an accumulation of aged insulin in islets of PWS mice (Stefan et al., 2011).

ER chaperones also function as sensors of ER stress, a physiological quality control mechanism responding to accumulation or failure in degradation of misfolded secretory proteins (Bertolotti et al., 2000; Braakman and Bulleid, 2011; Sun et al., 2015;

Tauber and Hoybye, 2021; Tiwari et al., 2013). ER stress responses, governed by the

IRE1α/XBP1, PERK/eIF2α/Ddit3(CHOP), and ATF6 regulatory pathways, aim to recover

ER homeostasis by upregulating ER chaperone gene expression as part of the UPR

(Bertolotti et al., 2000; Braakman and Bulleid, 2011; Sharma et al., 2021). In unstressed

cells, GRP78 forms stable complexes with each of IRE1α, PERK, and ATF6 in the ER

lumen (Bertolotti et al., 2000; Shen et al., 2002), whereas ER stress releases GRP78 and

induces each pathway. Due to the demand to fold high levels of insulin, a protein

notoriously difficult to fold (Sun et al., 2015), β-cells have a basal level of ATF6 activation

to maintain higher levels of GRP78 than for most cell types (Teodoro et al., 2012). In

contrast, unresolved ER stress within β-cells leads to diabetes in mouse models and

human (Salpea et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2021). For example, insulin gene mutations

lead to insulin misfolding with induction of ER-stress and broad upregulation of the UPR

(Hartley et al., 2010), a converse mechanism to the reduced ER chaperone levels we

demonstrated within PWS INS-1 cells under both basal conditions and during GSIS.

Indeed, lower GRP78 levels in PWS β-cells likely accounts for the earlier and more robust

ER stress induction by thapsigargin or tunicamycin by lowering the threshold required to

dissociate ER stress activators resulting in cells that are poised to a greater degree for

response by all three master regulatory pathways. Although normal β-cells *in vivo* cycle

through states of elevated and low UPR coordinate with insulin gene expression and ER

protein folding load (Preissler and Ron, 2019; Sharma et al., 2015; Xin et al., 2018), our

omics data on steady-state mRNA and protein levels of bulk PWS INS-1 cells under basal

unstressed or GSIS conditions suggests a stress independent defect in ER chaperone

gene expression.

The coordinate downregulation of at least ten ER chaperone genes, including

Hspa5 and *Hsp90b1*, in PWS β-cells, but not the whole suite of UPR genes, supports the

hypothesis that a PWS-imprinted gene or genes governs a pathway that coordinately

regulates ER chaperones in a unique gene regulatory network (GRN). Although many of

the DEGs that encode ER chaperones in PWS INS-1 β-cells are known ATF6 and/or

XBP1 targets, numerous ATF6, IRE1α/XBP1, and ATF4/CHOP (PERK pathway) target

genes (Acosta-Alvear et al., 2007; Adachi et al., 2008; Adamson et al., 2016; Belmont et

al., 2008; Bergmann et al., 2018; Park et al., 2021; Plate et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2020;

Wiseman et al., 2022) are not dysregulated in PWS INS-1 lines, suggesting a novel GRN

in PWS β-cells. Candidate transcription factors (TFs) within the PWS-ER chaperone GRN

are those with binding site motifs enriched in the promoters of DEGs in PWS β-cells,

including, but not limited to the known ATF6 co-factor NFYA, which has roles in insulin

secretion and glucose homeostasis (Liu et al., 2021), as well as PPARB/D also with

known roles in β-cell mass and insulin secretion (Iglesias et al., 2012). Intriguingly, a

recently published study found that TFs of the nuclear receptor 4A (NR4A) family that

participate in long-term memory in mice act through coordinate regulation of numerous

ER chaperones (Chatterjee et al., 2022), with a high degree of concordance with the

dysregulated ER chaperones that we identified in PWS INS-1 cell lines; nevertheless,

NR4A pathway factors are not DEGs in PWS β-cells.

It also remains to be determined which PWS gene or genes regulates the putative

PWS→TF→ER chaperone network. Neither *Magel2* nor *Ndn* have a role, as they are not

expressed in INS-1 cells. The top candidate PWS genes that are highly expressed in INS-

1 cells are *Snrpn*, encoding the SmN spliceosomal protein (Gray et al., 1999b), *Snurf*,

encoding a small arginine-rich nuclear protein (Gray et al., 1999a), and *Snord116*, a

tandemly duplicated C/D-box snoRNA that may function as a sno-lncRNA that

sequestrates FOX2 and other RNA binding proteins in alternative splicing pathways (Wu

et al., 2016; Yin et al., 2012), or through direct binding and regulation of as yet undefined

RNA targets. Further studies are necessary to distinguish amongst the candidate PWS

genes and to identify downstream GRN steps leading to coordinated ER chaperone

expression.

Recent work has shown hypothalamic deficiencies in *Magel2*-null mice as well as

for iPSC- and dental-pulp stem cell neuronal models, specifically in secretory granule

components including PCSK1, PCSK2, CPE, granins (e.g., CHGB and others), and

numerous neuropeptides (Chen et al., 2020). These studies established that MAGEL2

plays a role in hypothalamic neuroendocrine cells by regulating neuropeptide production

and secretion via endosome recycling to prevent lysosomal degradation of secretory

granule proteins (Chen et al., 2020), a process downstream of the ER in protein trafficking

and secretory pathways. As discussed above, our study shows that another PWS-gene

(e.g., *Snrpn*, *Snurf*, and/or *Snord116*) is putatively responsible for regulating ER

chaperone and hormone (e.g., insulin) biosynthesis and secretion from pancreatic β-cells.

In contrast to the reported reduction of prohormone convertase PC1 in PWS iPSC-derived

neurons and in *Snord116*-null mice (Burnett et al., 2017), no deficiency in *Pcsk1* mRNA

or PC1/3 levels or in *Pcsk2* or PC2 was observed in PWS β-cell lines, which may reflect

differences in cell type, genetics, or experimental conditions. Combined, these

observations in hypothalamic neuroendocrine cells and pancreatic β-cells indicate that at

least two PWS-imprinted genes regulate related neuropeptide and peptide hormone

secretory pathways, suggesting that the PWS domain may function as a "mammalian

operon" or synexpression group (Nicholls, 1999; Niehrs and Pollet, 1999). As the PWS-

domain arose evolutionarily in a eutherian mammalian ancestor (Rapkins et al., 2006),

this suggests emergence of functions acting as molecular rheostats to regulate secretory

pathways in endocrine cells that control growth, metabolism, and neural pathways.

Maintaining glucose homeostasis relies on exquisite coordination between

secretion of the opposing hormones insulin and glucagon from pancreatic β- and α-cells,

respectively, in response to changes in blood glucose; disruption of these processes

contributes to the pathogenesis of metabolic disorders, including type 2 diabetes (T2D)

(Chen et al., 2018; Roder et al., 2016; Rorsman and Braun, 2013; Sandoval and

D'Alessio, 2015; Sharma et al., 2021). Although insulin and glucagon play opposite

regulatory roles both in normal metabolic homeostasis and dysfunction in T2D, PWS mice

are remarkable in having low blood levels of both insulin and glucagon (Stefan et al.,

2005; Stefan et al., 2011). As recent studies indicate that GRP78 interacts with glucagon

in α-cells (Asadi and Dhanvantari, 2018), it will be important to further assess

dysregulation of ER chaperones and glucagon secretion in PWS α-cells both in cell

culture and within PWS mouse models. Intriguingly, quantitative trait locus (QTL) studies

in mice link genetic variation in blood insulin and glucose levels in or near to the PWS-

orthologous domain (Lawson et al., 2011). Further studies are warranted to examine the

role of PWS-imprinted genes in these metabolic traits in humans, and whether β-cell or

other endocrine cell deficits in ER chaperones and hormone secretion contribute to

clinical phenotypes, including episodes of hypoglycemia in PWS subjects (Harrington et

al., 2014; Ma et al., 2012). As PWS genes regulate islet development, β- and α-cell

secretion (Schuster et al., 1996; Stefan et al., 2005; Stefan et al., 2011), and a GRN

affecting ER chaperone and insulin secretion (this study), identifying mechanisms by

which PWS-genes carry out these critical β-cell functions will illuminate the pathogenesis

and may reveal effective treatments for not only PWS, but for common disorders with

deficits in glycemic homeostasis and islet hormone secretory pathways.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cell culture

INS-1 lines were cultured using "RPMI 1640 media without glucose" (Life Technologies) supplemented with 10% FBS, 10 mM HEPES, 1 mM sodium pyruvate, 0.05 mM 2-mercaptoethanol, 7.5 mM glucose, and antibiotics (1% Pen-Strep, 10 µg/ml each piperacillin and ciprofloxacin). Chemical treatments included 0.1 µM thapsigargin (Sigma) for either 5 hr or a 0-5 hr time-course, and 10 µg/ml tunicamycin (Sigma) for 5 hr or a 0-8 hr time-course. The INS-1 lines used for genome editing in this study were generated from parental INS-1(832/13) cells that have integrated a human *INS*-neoR transgene (Hohmeier et al., 2000) as well as a mouse *Ins2*-C-mCherry transgene (Costa RA, et al., manuscript in preparation).

Genome editing

Pairs of sgRNAs (**Table S6**) were designed (http://crispr.mit.edu/) to target sites flanking the rodent PWS-orthologous domain to delete all paternally-expressed imprinted genes (**Fig. 1A**), and cloned into the pX330 CRISPR/Cas9 vector (Ran et al., 2013) (Addgene). INS-1 parental cells were transfected using lipofectamine 3000 with pX330-vectors encoding sgRNAs targeting proximal of *Frat3* and distal (between *Snord115* and *Ube3a*) of the PWS-domain and/or the control pEGFP-N3 vector (using 3 µg or 500 ng of DNA per vector per T75 flask or 6-well plate, respectively). After 4 days culture at 30°C or 37°C, cells were harvested for DNA isolation or flow cytometry (FACS ARIAII in the Rangos Flow Cytometry Core Laboratory) with ~ 300 GFP-positive cells plated in five 96-well plates and clonally expanded to 12-well plates for DNA isolation. Clonal lines were

screened by deletion-PCR and positive lines further expanded for DNA, RNA, protein,

and molecular cytogenetic analyses. PCR primers for deletion-PCR, inversion-PCR, and

scarred- or intact-allele PCRs are in **Table S7**. For DNA sequencing (Genewiz) of deletion

breakpoints and scarred or intact sgRNA sites, we Sanger sequenced PCR products

directly or from pJET (Thermo Fisher) cloned PCR products. Potential CRISPR/Cas9 off-

target sites were predicted *in silico* using CRISPOR (http://crispor.tefor.net/); top

predicted off-targets were PCR amplified (**Table S7**) and directly Sanger sequenced.

<u>*Molecular cytogenetics*</u>

Cytogenetic studies were carried out in the University of Pittsburgh Cell Culture

and Cytogenetics Facility. Briefly, cultured INS-1 cell lines were treated with 0.1 µg/ml

Colcemid 1 hr, harvested, fixed, and slides processed for metaphase FISH by standard

methods (Parikh et al., 2014). Fluorescent probes were prepared by labeling BAC

(BACPAC Genomics) DNA using nick translation (Enzo Life Sciences, Inc.), including

CH230-114P11 from the central PWS-domain (encodes U1A-*Snurf-Snrpn-Snord107-*

Snord64) with Orange-dUTP and control CH230-2B12 mapping several Mb distal of the

PWS domain (encodes *Cyfip1-Nipa2-Nipa1-Herc2*) with Green-dUTP. Probe and slide

preparation, hybridization, and DAPI staining were by standard cytogenetics methods,

with FISH analyses on an Olympus BX61 epifluorescence microscope (Olympus

Microscopes) and image capture and analysis using the Genus software platform on the

Cytovision System (Leica Microsystems) (Parikh et al., 2014).

<u>*Droplet digital PCR (ddPCR) genomic copy number assays*</u>

For genomic copy number 5 ng of *EcoR*I digested genomic DNA was used as input

with amplification of *Snord107*, PWS-IC, and *Mirh1* as targets and *Ube3a* as a reference;

during clonal derivatization EvaGreen chemistry was used whereas Fam/Hex TaqMan

probes were used in a final analysis. Absolute copy number of *Snord107* and Poisson

confidence intervals were calculated by numerical approximation (Dube et al., 2008).

Primers and probes for copy number ddPCR are listed in **Table S7**.

DNA methylation

592    Genomic DNA was bisulfite converted using the EZ DNA methylation Gold kit

(Zymo Research). Outer first round genomic PCR was performed using primers to amplify

the *Snurf-Snrpn* promoter region (annealing temperature or Ta of 64°C; **Table S7**), with

subsequent second round genomic PCR performed using PCR primers specific for the

maternal, methylated or paternal, unmethylated alleles (Ta of 60°C; **Table S7**). HotStart

Taq polymerase (Qiagen) was used for all methylation PCR.

Insulin secretion assays

600    Cells were plated at 1.0×10^6 cells/well, then 24 hr later at ~ 80% confluency were

washed with PBS containing Mg^{++} and Ca^{++} (Gibco), pre-incubated 1.0 hr in KRBH (129

mM NaCl, 5 mM $NaHCO_3$, 4.8 mM KCl, 1.2 mM $KH2PO_4$, 1.2 mM $MgSO_4$, 2.5 mM $CaCl_2$,

10 mM HEPES, 0.1% BSA) with low glucose (LG; 2.8 mM) and washed in KRBH (without

glucose). Following a 30 min incubation in KRBH-LG, 1.0 ml low glucose secreted

fractions were removed and centrifuged 13,000 rpm for 5 min., aliquoted and stored at -

80°C. The cells were then incubated 30 min in KRBH-high glucose (HG; 22 mM), and

high glucose secreted fractions similarly centrifuged and stored at -80°C. Finally, cells

were washed in PBS containing Mg^{++} and Ca^{++}, harvested in RIPA lysis buffer and

protease inhibitor, centrifuged at 13,000 rpm for 15 min at 4°C and the supernatant

(protein) stored at -80°C. Protein was determined using Pierce BCA protein assay kit

(Thermo Fisher). Insulin was measured by the RIA and Biomarkers Core of the Penn

Diabetes Research Center, University of Pennsylvania, using an ultrasensitive rat insulin

ELISA kit (Alpco Diagnostics). ANOVA followed by the Tukey HSD post-hoc test was

used to assess differences between different conditions and genotypes using Prism 8

(GraphPad Software, Inc).

Reverse transcription-PCR

Total RNA was isolated from PWS and control INS-1 lines grown as above (7.5

mM glucose) by Trizol harvest and miRNeasy (Qiagen) column purification. RNA quality

was assessed by RNA TapeStation (Agilent) and quantified by broad range Qubit

(Thermo Fisher) fluorometric analysis. First strand cDNA synthesis from 1 µg RNA was

carried out using random hexamer primed RT by using Super Script IV (Thermo Fisher).

Primers for gene specific RT-PCR amplification are in **Table S8**.

RT-Droplet digital-PCR (RT-ddPCR) assays

Template cDNA pools were generated from 1 µg RNA using cells grown under

standard glucose conditions (as above) by using iScript (Bio-Rad) RT with first-strand

synthesis priming from a mixture of random hexamers and oligo-dT. Droplet generation,

PCR and reading of EvaGreen based ddPCR reactions was carried out using an

automated QX200 ddPCR system (Bio-Rad). A total template input volume of 2 µl of

cDNA diluted in a range from undiluted to 1:200 (30 ng to 0.15 ng RNA equivalents per

reaction) determined empirically based on the absolute expression level of target genes

was used per 20 µl reaction. Primer sequences are listed in **Table S8**. Expression of

target genes was normalized to the stable and modestly expressed *Gpi* (1:5 diluted, 6.0

ng RNA equivalents) as the ratio of positive droplet concentration and normalized to the

average expression levels of target genes in the control INS-1 lines. Relative expression

of target genes in PWS and control lines was compared using the Welch's t-test for

unequal variance with a significant threshold of $P < 0.05$.

Proteomics

Each of the 3 control cell lines (5-9, 2, 16) and the 3 PWS cell lines (3, 19-1, 19-4)

were grown in 6-well plates, harvested and then washed with PBS containing Mg^{++} and

Ca^{++}, incubated 30 min in KRH-high glucose (22 mM, glucose-induced insulin secretion

condition, with BSA excluded from the KRBH buffer) after which the media was collected,

centrifuged 10 min 1300 rpm, and supernatant (secretory fractions 1-6; **Fig. 3A**) collected

and stored at -80°C. Cellular proteins were harvested by direct addition of 1.0 ml of

methanol-acetic acid (90% methanol, 9% water, 1% acetic acid) to each well, transferred

to a microcentrifuge tube and centrifuged at 1300 rpm 15 min. The supernatant (soluble

protein fractions 7-12; **Fig. 3A**) and pellets (insoluble protein fractions 13-18; **Fig. 3A**)

were collected and stored at -80°C. The secretory and cellular fractions were dried *in*

vacuo and stored at -80°C. In preparation for mass spectrometry, proteins from each

fraction were dissolved in 8 M urea, 100 µM Triethylammonium bicarbonate (TEAB) pH

8.5, reduced with tris(2-carboxyethyl)phosphine (TCEP) and alkylated with

chloroacetamide, then diluted to 2 M urea with 100 mM TEAB, addition of 0.5 µg trypsin

(Promega) and placed in a 37°C shaker for 16 hrs. Secretory protein fractions were

analyzed on an Orbitrap Elite mass spectrometer (Thermo Fisher) while cellular protein

fractions were analyzed on an Orbitrap Fusion mass spectrometer (Thermo Fisher). The

6-plex Tandem Mass Tag (TMT) system for quantitative proteomics (Thermo Fisher) was

used to compare methanol-acetic acid insoluble cellular proteins (fractions 13-18) for

control and PWS cell lines. The TMT labeled samples were analyzed on an Orbitrap

Fusion Lumos mass spectrometer (Thermo Fisher).

Peptide/protein identification and quantification were determined using IP2

(Integrated Proteomics Applications). The MS raw data files were converted using

RawConverter (He et al., 2015) (version 1.1.0.23) with monoisotopic option. For peptide

identification, tandem mass spectra were searched against a database including the

UniProt Rat database one entry per gene (21589 entries released 5/30/2021), these

entries scrambled between K and R to make a decoy database, common contaminants,

peptides and custom proteins using ProLuCID (Xu et al., 2015), and data filtered using

DTASelect (Tabb et al., 2002). Quantitation of TMT samples was calculated with Census

version 2.51 (Park et al., 2014) and filtered with an intensity value of 5000 and isobaric

purity value of 0.6 (Sandberg et al., 2014). The Quantitative@COMPARE feature of IP2

was used to determine statistical significance.

Immunoblot analyses

Cells were grown under standard glucose conditions with or without the addition

of DMSO, thapsigargin or tunicamycin (as above). Whole cell lysates were harvested by

direct lysis in cold radioimmunoprecipitation buffer (RIPA) with the addition of EDTA and

combined protease and phosphatase inhibitors (Thermo Fisher) followed by clearing of

insoluble material by centrifugation at 13,000 RPM for 10 minutes. Proteins were

separated by SDS-PAGE with 2-mercaptoethanol as a reducing agent using criterion

sized 4-15% gradient tris-glycine for broad range of molecular weights greater than 30

kDa or 16.5% tris-tricine for high resolution of smaller proteins (Bio-Rad). Proteins were

transferred to nitrocellulose membranes and probed with antibodies [commercially

obtained except for ATF6 (Teske et al., 2011), with dilutions as in **Table S9**].

Chemiluminescence detection of HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies was performed

with either Clarity or Clarity Max Western ECL detection kits on a Bio-Rad Chemi-Doc

XRS+ imager. Densitometry measurements were made using Image Lab (Bio-Rad)

software and exported for analysis in R. Statistical comparison of normalized protein

levels between PWS and control samples was made by either Welch's unequal variance

t-test or by ANOVA with Tukey's HSD post-hoc test for multiple comparison where

appropriate, with a significance threshold of $P < 0.05$.

Transmission electron microscopy

Monolayers of INS-1 cells were fixed in 2.5% glutaraldehyde in 100 mM PBS, post-

fixed in aqueous 1% osmium tetroxide, 1% Fe_6CN_3 for 1 hr, and dehydrated prior to

embedding in Polybed 812 resin (Polysciences). Ultrathin cross sections (60 nm) of the

cells were obtained on a Riechart Ultracut E microtome, post-stained in 4% uranyl acetate

for 10 min and 1% lead citrate for 7 min. Sections were viewed on a JEOL JEM 1400

FLASH transmission electron microscope (JEOL) at 80 KV. Images were taken using a

bottom mount AMT digital camera (Advanced Microscopy Techniques).

Confocal microscopy

For each of the 3 control and 3 PWS INS-1 lines 750,000 live cells were seeded

on a 35 mm dish with an uncoated 14 mm glass bottom insert (Mattek) and allowed to

grow for 36 hr in basal glucose conditions. Live cell imaging was performed on a Zeiss

LSM 710 confocal microscope at 20x magnification to capture mCherry fluorescence and

brightfield images.

RNA-seq and bioinformatics

Total RNA (from cells grown under 7.5 mM glucose) was used to prepare rRNA

depleted Illumina TruSeq 75-bp paired-end stranded (fr-firststrand) sequencing libraries

and sequenced to a depth of ~ 40 million reads on a NextSeq500 instrument at the UPMC

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Genomics Core. RNA-seq data analysis was performed

using computational resources available from the University of Pittsburgh Center for

Research Computing. Quality of reads was assessed by FastQC and sequencing

adapters trimmed by cutadapt using the combined TrimGalore tool (Krueger, 2015). The

sequencing reads were aligned to the Ensembl v98 rat genome to which the sequence

and annotation of the human *INS*-neo^R and mouse *Ins2*-C-mCherry transgenes had been

added along with annotation of previously undefined genomic features (e.g., *Ipw*, *ψSnurf*,

and upstream *U1 Snurf-Snrpn* exons) using the STAR splice-aware aligner (Dobin et al.,

2013). Gene feature counts were tabulated with HTSeq using either the default (--

nonunique none) or customized (--nonunique all) options to enable the inclusion of multi-

copy (i.e., *Snord116*) and overlapping (bicistronic *Snurf-Snrpn*) genes which otherwise

were excluded as ambiguous reads under the default options (Anders et al., 2015).

Differential expression analysis was performed with DESeq2 using a cutoff of Padj < 0.1

as calculated by the Benjamini-Hochberg multiple comparison procedure (Love et al.,

2014). Similar overall transcriptomic results were obtained with RSEM based analysis (Li

and Dewey, 2011) but had lower counts for both multi-mapped reads for *Snord116* and

for ambiguous bicistronic *Snurf-Snrpn* reads. Gene ontology enrichment analysis of up-

and down-regulated gene sets was done using DAVID (Dennis et al., 2003). Additional

gene ontology and upstream analysis utilized Enrichr (Chen et al., 2013).

Sequencing libraries of small RNAs including snoRNAs were made from the same

total RNA isolation but using a miRNA-Seq (Qiagen) library prep kit with a modified size

selection for up to 200-bp fragments. Single end reads were generated and sequenced.

UMI tools (Smith et al., 2017) and Cutadapt (Martin, 2011) were used to deduplicate and

remove adapters in preprocessing of the fastq reads for alignment with Bowtie2

(Langmead and Salzberg, 2012). Similar to the total RNA-seq, HTSeq required the --

nonunique all option to accurately quantitate the multicopy snoRNA and miRNA genes,

and DESeq2 was used for differential expression analysis to compare genotypes. A full

set of bash scripts for analysis of both total and small RNA-seq data sets including custom

annotations are provided at the github repository (https://github.com/KoppesEA/INS-

1_PWS_RNA-Seq).

DATA STATEMENT

The RNA-seq FASTQ files and processed data associated from this study have been deposited in the NCBI Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) under SuperSeries GSE190337 including GSE190334 (total RNA-seq) and GSE190336 (small RNA-seq), assigned to BioProject PRJNA786769.

The TMT quantitative proteomics data files have been deposited at ProteomeXchange under accession number PXD#.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

EAK, MAJ, JJM, PL, DWL, DBS, JKD performed experiments and analyzed data; EAK performed bioinformatics analyses; EAK, JJM, DBS, JRY, SCW, SMG, HJP, PD,

767   RDN designed experiments and interpreted data; RCW provided a critical reagent; EAK,

768   RDN wrote the manuscript; all co-authors reviewed and approved manuscript drafts and

769   final version.

771   **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

772   None declared.

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FIGURES and FIGURE LEGENDS

1248   **Figure 1:**

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Figure 1. CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing to generate INS-1 lines with 3.16 Mb
deletions of the silent (maternal) and active (paternal) PWS-imprinted domain. (A)
Gene map of the rat PWS-imprinted domain and CRISPR/Cas9-targeted deletions.
Symbols: circles, protein-coding genes; thin ovals, RNA genes; blue, (paternal; pat) and
red (maternal; mat), imprinted genes; IC, imprinting control region (purple bar); green
boxes, CRISPR gRNA target sites; blue and red horizontal bars, extent of deletions. Not
all copies of tandemly repeated loci (*miR-344*; U1, *Snord116*, *Snord115*) are shown. **(B)**
Schematic showing generation of genome edited, clonal INS-1 lines with 3.16 Mb
deletions on the silent maternal allele only (5-9, 2, 16; dark pink) or homozygous deletion
of both maternal and active paternal alleles (3, 19-1, 19-4, 25; blue). **(C)** First round
deletion-PCR on genomic DNA identifies two INS-1 lines with deletions (5-9, 5-5). **(D)**
DNA methylation analysis of bisulfite-modified genomic DNA at the PWS-IC establishes
that lines 5-5 and 5-9 have deletions on the maternal allele. **(E)** Second round deletion-
PCR identifies three INS-1 lines (3, 19, 25) with deletions on the paternal allele, with line
3 having an alternate proximal breakpoint. **(F)** Gene dosage of *Snord107* normalized to
Ube3a as determined by ddPCR using genomic DNA from the INS-1 panel of cell lines
(also see **Fig. S9**). **(G)** PWS-deletion lines (3, 19-1, 19-4) lack mRNA expression of the
PWS-imprinted genes, *Snrpn* and *Snord116*, as detected by RT-PCR, whereas control
lines (5-9, 2, 16) express PWS-imprinted genes. All cell lines express the control genes
(*Gapdh*, *Ins2*). The full panel of PWS-imprinted genes is shown in **Fig. S10A,B**. **(H)** Use
of whole cell extracts for a western blot shows that PWS-deletion lines (3, 19-1, 19-4) lack

expression of the spliceosomal SmN polypeptide (24.6 kDa) encoded by *Snrpn*, but retain
expression of the paralogous SmB polypeptide (23.6 kDa) encoded by the unlinked *Snrpb*
gene. The control is α-Tubulin.

Figure 2:

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Figure 2. Deficient basal and GSIS in PWS-deletion INS-1 lines. PWS INS-1 cell lines
have insulin secretion deficits at both low (2.8 mM) and high (22 mM) glucose, based on
the pooled insulin secretory rates for each of PWS (3, 19-1, 19-4) and control (5-9, 2, 16)
groups (n=36 biological replicates per group, with n=12 per cell line). Although GSIS
increased 1.75-fold for control and 1.85-fold for PWS, loss of the PWS genes decreased
the secretory rate by 36% in basal 2.8 mM glucose conditions and by 32% in stimulatory
22 mM glucose conditions. Statistical comparison by ANOVA with Tukey post hoc test
(***, $P < 0.0001$).

Figure 3:

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Figure 3. Proteome-wide alterations in PWS-deletion *vs.* control INS-1 lines identifies reductions in levels of ER chaperones and hormones. (A) Multiple fractions of PWS and control INS-1 cell cultures grown under GSIS conditions were assessed by mass spectrometry (MS). These included peptide hormones released from secretory granules (pink circles) into the media [see **Fig. 3D**] and cellular proteins methanol-acetic acid extracted into soluble proteins [see **Fig. 3C**], or an insoluble protein fraction assessed by quantitative Tandem Mass Tag (TMT) MS [see **Fig. 3B**]. **(B-D)** Relative protein detection of proteins in PWS of Log2 Fold Change (PWS/Control) of protein detection plotted against spectral counts indicating overall protein abundance. **(B)** Relative comparison of insoluble cellular proteins in PWS and control INS-1 β-cell lines detected by quantitative TMT MS. Protein levels of eleven ER chaperones (green) as well as secreted hormones (red) insulin [various processed forms of INS1, INS2, mouse (m) mINS2-mCherry (mCh), human (h) INS, and C-peptide (CP); mature INS is the 21 amino acid peptide identical between rat INS1, rat INS2 and mouse INS2] and amylin (full length and processed IAPP) were markedly reduced in PWS INS-1 cell lines. In contrast, chromogranin B (CHGB) levels are noticeably increased in PWS INS-1 cell lines (blue). The boxed Key indicates the identity of the 10 numbered peptide spots. **(C)** Comparison of soluble cellular peptides detected in PWS *vs.* control INS-1 lines, with reductions observed in PWS lines for highly expressed peptide hormones (red) including insulins [various processed forms of INS1, INS2, mINS2-mCh and CP], amylin (processed and unprocessed IAPP), and neuropeptide Y (processed and unprocessed NPY), as well as lower levels in the soluble fraction of the ER chaperones (green). Additionally, two isoforms of chromogranin B (full-length CHGB and the CCB C-terminal fragment of chromogranin B) are increased in PWS INS-1 cell lines (blue). The boxed Key indicates the identity of the 12 numbered peptide spots. **(D)** Comparison of secreted peptides highlighting reduced levels for PWS relative to control INS-1 lines for numerous secreted hormones (red) including insulins [various processed forms of INS1, INS2, mINS2-mCh

1317   and CP] and amylin (processed and unprocessed IAPP), as well as reduced secreted
1318   levels from PWS INS-1 lines of the CHGA-derived WE14 peptide (orange), while secreted
1319   levels of CHGB (blue) were increased in PWS INS-1 cell lines.

Figure 4:

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Figure 4. Genome-wide transcriptome alterations in PWS-deletion *vs.* control INS-1 lines identifies significant differentially expressed genes (DEGs) including those encoding ER chaperones and hormones. (A) Heatmap clustergram of 228 DEGs demonstrates tight clustering of PWS *vs.* control groups (*Padj* < 0.05). Scale: green (enriched) to red (depleted). RNA-seq was performed for 3 PWS (3, 19-1, 19-4) *vs.* 3 control (5-9, 2, 16) INS-1 cell lines. (B) Volcano plot showing statistical significance (-log10 FDR *P*-value) *vs.* magnitude of change (Log2 Fold Change) for all expressed genes. Colored data points indicate PWS-imprinted genes (purple), ER chaperones (green), secreted proteins (pink), synaptotagmins involved in insulin secretion (yellow), proteins involved in neuronal active zone/exocytosis and vesicle acidification (blue), and all other significant genes (red, without labels). (C) Gene set enrichment analysis

identifies key biological pathways involved in protein processing and the unfolded stress response in the ER. **(D-H)** Relative gene expression of control (Con, black; 5-9, 2, 16) *vs.* PWS (red; 3, 19-1, 19-4) determined by RT-ddPCR normalized to *Gpi* levels and to the average expression in control INS-1 lines, including for **(D)** *Gapdh* and *Snord116* (PWS) control genes, **(E)** ten downregulated DEGs encoding ER chaperones, **(F)** endogenous *Rattus norvegicus* (Rn) genes encoding β-cell hormones and secretory proteins, **(G)** exogenous insulin transgenes in the INS-1 lines (*Mm*, *Mus musculus*; *Hs*, *Homo sapiens*) as well as mCherry and neomycin resistance (*Neo*R) marker proteins, and **(H)** upregulated DEGs involved in the secretory pathway. Statistical comparison by Welch's t-test: *, $P < 0.05$; **, $P < 0.005$; ***, $P < 0.0005$; ****, $P < 0.00005$.

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Figure 5. Reductions in insulins and ER chaperone levels in PWS-deletion *vs.*
control INS-1 lines. (A-C) Western blots of whole cell lysates from PWS (3, 19-1, 19-4)
and control (5-9, 2, 16) INS-1 β-cell lines grown under control (DMSO) conditions for 5 h
were assessed using a panel of antibodies. **(A)** Anti-insulin, detecting all cellular forms of
insulin (Pre-Pro-, Pro-, and fully processed rat INS) as well as mouse proinsulin2 (Pro-
mINS2)-mCherry. **(B)** Anti-mCherry, detecting mouse proinsulin2 (Pro-mINS2)-mCherry
and C-peptide (CP)-mCherry. **(C)** Anti-KDEL, detecting the two major ER chaperones
GRP94 (endoplasmin; HSP90B1) and GRP78 (BiP; HSPA5). Anti-α-Tubulin, anti-
GAPDH, and anti-GPI were used as controls for protein loading levels in **(A)**, **(B)**, and
(C), respectively. For **(A)** and **(B)**, control cell lines included INS-1::mCherry (mCh), INS-
1(832/13) parental, and INS1-E. **(D)** Quantitation of Pro-mINS2-mCherry, Pre-Pro-INS
and Pro-INS detected with anti-insulin in the PWS and control INS-1 lines (n=6 each
genotype). **(E)** Quantitation of Pro-mINS2-mCherry and CP-mCherry detected with anti-
mCherry in the PWS and control INS-1 lines (n=6 each). **(F)** Quantitation of GRP78,
GRP94, and total KDEL detected with anti-KDEL in the PWS and control INS-1 lines (n=9

each). For **(D-F)**, statistical comparison by Welch's t-test: *, $P < 0.05$; **, $P < 0.005$; ***, P
< 0.0005; ns, not significant.

 Figure 6:

 Figure 6. More sensitive activation of all three ER stress master regulatory
 pathways in PWS-deletion *vs.* control INS-1 β-cell lines. (A) For the IRE1α pathway,
 we assessed its mRNA processing of *Xbp1* from unspliced (U) to spliced (S), with control
 gene *Gpi* and PWS-*Snord116* also assayed by RT-PCR, using RNA from PWS (3, 19-1,
 19-4) and control (5-9, 2, 16) INS-1 cell lines treated with DMSO or 0.1 µM thapsigargin
 for 3 h. At bottom, the *Xbp1* S/T (spliced/total) ratios for each cell line are shown, under
 both control (DMSO) and ER stress (thapsigargin) conditions. **(B)** The PERK pathway
 was assessed by comparison of total eIF2α to PERK phosphorylated eIF2α-P (pSer51),
 using whole cell lysates from PWS and control INS-1 cell lines treated with DMSO or 0.1
 µM thapsigargin for 5 h. Anti-αTUB was used as a control for protein-loading levels. At
 bottom, the eIF2α P/T (phosphorylated/total) ratios for each cell line are shown under the
 ER stress (thapsigargin) condition. **(C)** For the ATF6 pathway, we used whole cell lysates
 from PWS and control INS-1 cell lines treated with DMSO or 10 µg/ml tunicamycin for 5
 h. Under control DMSO conditions, full-length (FL) and glycosylated (G) ATF6 of ~ 100-
 kD is ER-localized. tunicamycin inhibits biosynthesis of N-linked glycans, resulting in
 unglycosylated (UG) ATF6-FL of 90-kD in the ER, with proteolytic processing in the Golgi
 to produce nuclear (N) ATF6-N of ~ 55-kD. *, non-specific band detected by the anti-ATF6
 antibody. Anti-GAPDH was used as a control for protein-loading levels. At bottom, the
 ATF6 N/FL-UG (nuclear/FL-unglycosylated) ratios for each cell line are shown under the

ER stress (tunicamycin) condition. **(D)** Quantitation of the ratio of spliced/total (S/T) *Xbp1* mRNA in the PWS and control INS-1 lines under control (DMSO; n=9 each genotype) and thapsigargin (3 h; n=6 each) conditions. PWS β-cells are more sensitive to thapsigargin-induced ER stress with earlier and more robust activation of *Xbp1* mRNA "splicing" than control cell lines. **(E)** Quantitation of the relative (rel.) level of phosphorylated (pSer51) to total eIF2α in the PWS and control INS-1 lines (n=3 each) under control (DMSO) and thapsigargin conditions. PWS cells are more sensitive to thapsigargin-induced ER stress with more robust activation of eIF2α phosphorylation. **(F)** Quantitation of the ratio of nuclear/FL-unglycosylated (N/UG) for ATF6 in the PWS and control INS-1 lines under ER stress (tunicamycin) conditions (n=6 each, from two biological replicates). PWS cells are more sensitive to tunicamycin-induced ER stress with more robust activation of ATF6-N. For **(D-E)**, statistical comparison by ANOVA and for **(F)** by Welch's t-test with Tukey's HSD post-hoc: *, $P < 0.05$; **, $P < 0.005$; ***, $P < 0.0005$; ns, not significant.