**Transcriptional inhibition after irradiation occurs preferentially at highly expressed genes in a manner dependent on cell cycle progression**

Zulong Chen[1,^], Xin Wang[2,3,^], Xinlei Gao[2,3], Nina Arslanovic[1], Kaifu Chen[2,3,*] and

Jessica Tyler[1,*]

[1]Weill Cornell Medicine, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, New York, NY

10065, USA

[2]Basic and Translational Research Division, Department of Cardiology, Boston Children's

Hospital, Boston, MA 02115, USA

[3]Department of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA 02115, USA

^Equal contribution

*Corresponding Authors: jet2021@med.cornell.edu, kaifu.chen@childrens.harvard.edu

**Abstract**

In response to DNA double strand damage, ongoing transcription is inhibited to facilitate accurate DNA repair while transcriptional recovery occurs after DNA repair is complete. However, the mechanisms at play and identity of the transcripts being regulated in this manner are unclear. In contrast to the situation following UV damage, we found that transcriptional recovery after ionizing radiation (IR) occurs in a manner independent of the HIRA histone chaperone. Sequencing of the nascent transcripts identified a programmed transcriptional response, where certain transcripts and pathways are rapidly downregulated after IR, while other transcripts and pathways are upregulated. Specifically, most of the loss of nascent transcripts occurring after IR is due to inhibition of transcriptional initiation of the highly transcribed histone genes and the rDNA. To identify factors responsible for transcriptional inhibition after IR in an unbiased manner, we performed a whole genome gRNA library CRISPR / Cas9 screen. Many of the top hits in our screen were factors required for protein neddylation. However, at short times after inhibition of neddylation, transcriptional inhibition still occurred after IR, even though neddylation was effectively inhibited. Persistent inhibition of neddylation blocked transcriptional inhibition after IR, and it also leads to cell cycle arrest. Indeed, we uncovered that many inhibitors and conditions that lead to cell cycle arrest in $G_1$ or $G_2$ phase also prevent transcriptional inhibition after IR. As such, it appears that transcriptional inhibition after IR occurs preferentially at highly expressed genes in cycling cells.

## Introduction

DNA double strand breaks (DSB) are one of most deleterious types of DNA lesions. Failure to repair a single DSB can lead to loss of a chromosome arm or cell death and inaccurate repair can lead to changes such as insertions, deletions, and translocations. Accordingly, the cell has developed an intricate DNA damage response (Jackson and Bartek, 2009). In vertebrate cells, the DNA damage response is mediated through activation of three PI3-like kinases: ataxia telangiectasia mutated (ATM), Ataxia telangiectasia and Rad3-related (ATR) and DNA dependent protein kinase (DNA-PK) (Blackford and Jackson, 2017), which coordinates DNA repair and the DNA damage cell cycle checkpoint which arrests cells until DSBs are repaired.

Additionally, ATM and DNA-PK have been shown to inhibit transcription in response to DSBs in a manner that occurs so transiently that it can only be detected when examining the nascent, not bulk, transcripts (Pankotai and Soutoglou, 2013). The transcription resumes or "recovers" immediately after DSB repair (Pankotai and Soutoglou, 2013). This transient inhibition of transcription after DSBs was initially shown for RNA polymerase I (Pol I) transcripts, where ATM triggered the reduction of nascent ribosomal gene transcripts, shown by visualization of a labelled ribonucleotide analog within the nucleolus, after exposure to ionizing radiation (IR) (Kruhlak et al., 2007). Mechanistically, the DSBs triggered a reduction in Pol I initiation complex assembly and led to premature displacement of elongating Pol I from the rDNA genes (Kruhlak et al., 2007). Using a reporter that allowed for visualization of repair protein recruitment and local transcription within cells, it was subsequently shown that ATM also mediates the inhibition of RNA polymerase II (Pol II) transcriptional elongation of genes in the vicinity of I-SceI endonuclease induced DSBs (Shanbhag et al., 2010). This transcriptional inhibition was partly dependent on the E3 ubiquitin

ligases RNF8 and RNF168, whereas transcriptional recovery depended on the USP16 enzyme that

deubiquitylates histone H2A (Shanbhag et al., 2010). Additional mechanistic analyses using this

same system revealed that ATM dependent phosphorylation of the ATP-dependent nucleosome

remodeler PBAF is required for local transcriptional inhibition of Pol II transcription flanking a

DSB (Kakarougkas et al., 2014), indicating that chromatin changes are also required for

transcriptional inhibition in response to DSBs. The purpose of local transcriptional inhibition is to

allow efficient and accurate DSB repair (Kakarougkas et al., 2014, Meisenberg et al., 2019).

Polycomb group proteins and cohesin have also been shown to be required for local transcriptional

inhibition of Pol II transcription flanking a DSB, although their role is unclear (Meisenberg et al.,

2019, Kakarougkas et al., 2014), further indicating that chromatin structure and potentially

chromosome architecture also regulate transcriptional inhibition in response to DSBs.

Somewhat surprisingly, a distinct mechanism has been reported for the inhibition of Pol II

transcription at genes containing a DSB induced by the endonuclease I-PpoI (Pankotai et al., 2012).

In this case, both Pol II initiation and elongation were reduced adjacent to the DSB, in a manner

dependent on DNA-PK and the proteasome (Pankotai et al., 2012). Mechanistically, DNA-PK

appeared to help recruit the E3 ubiquitin ligase WWP2 to DSBs, which then promoted the

proteosome-dependent eviction of Pol II (Caron et al., 2019). In the absence of WWP2, the DNA

repair machinery was not efficiently recruited, indicating again that the reason for transcriptional

inhibition *in cis* flanking a DSB is to promote DNA repair (Caron et al., 2019). The papers

examining transcriptional inhibition around DSBs induced by endonucleases generally find the

transient repression occurs locally or *in cis* to the DSB (Iannelli et al., 2017). However, another

study found induction of the same set of ~ 200 transcripts soon after irradiation and endonuclease

break induction that occurred in a manner dependent on ATM and p53, while only 33 nascent

transcripts were down regulated after DSB induction (Venkata Narayanan et al., 2017). Yet

another study found that more genes were repressed than induced after inducing global DSBs with

neocarzinostatin, and this occurred via p53 mediated down-regulation of MYC (Porter et al.,

2017). As such, there are contradictory findings in the field at present. Furthermore, the mechanism

of transcriptional recovery after DSB repair is far from clear. In response to UV damage, global

transcriptional inhibition and recovery occurs, and this transcriptional recovery after UV repair is

dependent on the histone variant H3.3 histone chaperone HIRA (Bouvier et al., 2021, Adam et al.,

2013). Mechanistically, HIRA functioned to repress the transcriptional repressor ATF3, in turn

promoting transcriptional recovery after UV repair (Bouvier et al., 2021).

In contrast to the studies to date that have only examined local transcription inhibition occurring

*in cis* after DSB damage, we sought to examine transient transcriptional inhibition after induction

of global DSBs by IR exposure, and the subsequent transcriptional recovery after DSB repair, via

fluorescent labelling of a ribonucleotide analog incorporated only into nascent transcripts. Unlike

the situation following UV repair, we do not find a role for HIRA in transcriptional recovery after

DSB repair. Our sequencing of the nascent transcripts after irradiation identified a programmed

transcriptional program where a larger number of protein-coding genes were upregulated than

downregulated. The genes that were immediately downregulated after IR tended to be highly

transcribed genes including the rRNAs and histones, while the upregulated genes tended to be

transcribed at a lower level. We developed a flow cytometry-based assay of nascent transcripts

and used it as the basis for a whole genome gRNA screen to identify factors required for

transcriptional inhibition after IR. In addition to finding ATM as being required for inhibition of

transcription after DSB induction, we found that depletion of factors leading to cell cycle arrest

also blocked transcriptional inhibition.

**Results**

***HIRA independent transcriptional inhibition and recovery after ionizing radiation***

To detect bulk changes in nascent transcripts after irradiation *in situ*, we added the uridine analog

ethynyl uridine (EU) to human U2OS cells for 30 minutes. The incorporated EU was detected by

click chemistry to a fluorescent azide followed by immunofluorescence microscopy (Jao and Salic,

2008). A reduction in bulk nascent transcripts was apparent 30 minutes after exposure to 10 Gray

ionizing radiation (IR), and the transcriptional recovery was already occurring two hours after

irradiation (Fig. 1A). Co-immunofluorescence with γH2AX showed that the DNA damage signal

was greatly reduced at the same time point after IR where transcriptional recovery occurred (Supp.

Fig. 1), consistent with transcriptional recovery occurring after DSB repair. Given that the histone

variant H3.3 histone chaperone HIRA promotes transcriptional recovery after UV repair (Bouvier

et al., 2021, Adam et al., 2013), we tested whether that was also the case for transcriptional

recovery after IR. We found that shRNA depletion of HIRA (Supp. Fig. 2) had no effect on

transcriptional inhibition nor recovery after IR (Fig. 1A). In agreement, depletion of transcripts

encoded from both H3.3 genes (Supp. Fig. 2) had no effect on transcriptional inhibition or

transcriptional recovery after IR (Fig. 1B). As such, the requirement for HIRA for transcriptional

recovery differs following IR and UV exposure, suggesting differences in the mechanism of these

processes.

***Establishment of a flow cytometry-based assay for transcriptional inhibition and recovery after***

***irradiation***

Given that the read out of nascent EU labelled transcripts after irradiation is fluorescence, we

established a flow cytometry-based assay to allow us to screen for factors regulating transcriptional

inhibition and recovery after IR. We established this assay in a murine Abelson virus transformed

pre-B cell line (termed Abl pre-B cells) (Bredemeyer et al., 2006) which are non-adherent and are

stably transformed with doxycycline inducible Cas9 (Chen et al., 2021). By flow cytometry

analysis, effective incorporation of EU into nascent transcripts was apparent in a manner

dependent on ongoing transcription because it was inhibited by the global RNA polymerase

inhibitor Actinomycin D (Fig. 2A). The EU signal had 2 peaks (Fig. 2A) and we asked whether

this reflects cell cycle differences in the cells with higher and lower EU incorporation into the

nascent transcripts. We conducted cell cycle analysis by labeling newly synthesized DNA with

BrdU and staining DNA contents with FxCycle Violet at the same time as using EU to label

nascent transcripts. It was apparent that the peak with less EU was from the $G_1$ phase cells, while

the peak with more EU was derived from S and $G_2$ phase cells (Fig. 2B). To determine whether

there was a detectable reduction in EU incorporation by flow cytometry after irradiation, we

irradiated cells, waited different lengths of times before EU labelling of nascent RNA (Fig. 2C).

The transcriptional inhibition after irradiation was clearly detectable by flow cytometry as early as

15 minutes after IR, while transcriptional recovery was complete by 4 hours after IR (Fig. 2D).

Also, the extent of transcriptional repression was similar regardless of whether the IR dose was 2,

5 or 10 Gray (Fig. 2D, Supp. Fig. 3), suggesting that most of the reduction of nascent transcripts

after IR is a programmed / signaling response rather than due to proximity of the genes to the DSB,

which would have led to a dose response.

***Bulk reduction of nascent transcripts after IR is mainly due to a decrease in rDNA and histone***

***gene transcription***

To gain a better understanding of transcriptional inhibition after IR, we sought to identify the genes

whose transcription was being inhibited after IR. We isolated EU labelled nascent total RNA

transcripts 30 minutes after IR and prior to IR from two independent experiments (Supp. Fig. 4)

and sequenced the EU-RNA with included ERCC spike-in controls for normalization (Fig. 3A).

We observed that the total read count of nascent transcripts declined after IR (Fig. 3B). Most of

the read counts were due to rDNA transcripts, and the decline in bulk transcripts after IR was

mostly due to a significant decline in rDNA transcripts (Fig. 3B, Supp. Fig. 5A). By contrast, the

total read count from the protein coding transcripts significantly increased after IR (Fig. 3B).

Analysis of the protein coding transcripts showed that the transcripts of 3,026 and 1,388 protein-

coding genes increased and decreased after IR, respectively (Fig. 3C and 3D, Supp. Table 1). To

validate our EU-RNA sequencing results, we performed quantitative RT-PCR to measure the

nascent transcript levels of genes that were up- and down-regulated after IR. Consistently, we

found rDNA transcripts of *28S* and *18S* were significantly downregulated after IR; while the p53

regulated gene *Cyclin-dependent kinase inhibitor 1* (*Cdkn1a*/p21) was highly induced (Supp. Fig.

6). The gene ontology terms describing the genes that were activated after IR included known

DNA damage response pathways and immune related genes (Fig. 3E, Supp. Table 2). For

examples, the intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway in response to DNA damage (GO:0008630),

type 2 immune response (GO:0042092), and cytokine-mediated signaling pathway (GO:0019221)

were up regulated significantly. The later may reflect immune responses triggered by cytosolic

DNA in the pre-B cells. Meanwhile many of the genes that were downregulated after IR included

gene products that are involved in chromatin organization and nucleosome assembly (Fig. 3E,

Supp. Table 3). For examples, chromatin silencing (GO:0006342), DNA packaging (GO:0006323),

and nucleosome assembly (GO:0006334) genes were down regulated significantly.

To gain more insights on how the transcription of protein coding genes was regulated after IR, we

defined differentially expressed genes (DEGs) between samples before and after IR. We found

read number from these DEGs became significantly greater after IR (Fig. 4A). We sorted the

protein-coding DEGs by average expression level of each gene in all 4 samples: two replicate

samples before IR and two replicates after IR. The number of reads derived from the mostly highly

expressed protein-coding DEGs became significantly smaller after IR (Fig. 4A, 4B). If the gene

repression after IR is due to their being *in cis* to the DNA lesion, it would be expected that genes

that were repressed after IR would tend to be longer, because they would be more likely to be

damaged. However, this was not the case because the length of the nascent transcripts was

equivalent regardless of whether their transcription was repressed, activated, or not changed after

IR (Fig. 4C). Intriguingly, we found that the repressed genes of the top 100 high-expression DEGs

tended to be shorter (Fig. 4C). Next, we inspected the expression level of individual protein-coding

genes and confirmed that most changes in gene expression after IR tended to occur for the genes

that were activated after IR, while many of the genes that had a high-expression level were

repressed after IR, for example, the histone encoding genes (Fig. 4D). Strikingly, we found that

vast majority of the histone genes showed reduced transcription after IR (Fig. 4E, Supp. Fig. 5B),

and was validated by RT-PCR analysis (Supp. Fig. 6). Finally, To determine whether

transcriptional repression was occurring at the initiation, elongation or both stages of transcription,

we examined the read counts throughout the open reading frames of the repressed protein coding

genes, before and after IR. We found that the decrease of transcripts mainly occurred in the gene

body of these genes with similar intensity at both the 3' and 5' ends of the gene body, which

indicates transcriptional repression after IR occurred at the initiation stage of transcription (Fig.

4F). Therefore, these data indicate that the bulk reduction in nascent transcripts after IR is mainly

due to reduced transcriptional initiation of the rDNA and histone genes.

***A CRISPR-Cas9 screen identifies ATM, neddylation and CUL4B as promoting transcriptional***

***inhibition after IR***

We performed a genome-wide gRNA library CRISPR-Cas9 screen in Abl pre-B cells, allowing 7

days for the gRNAs to inactivate their target genes (Fig. 5A). We then sorted the 10% of the cells

with the most nascent RNA (high EU) 30 minutes after IR, as these would include cells with

gRNAs corresponding to gene products that are required for transcriptional inhibition after IR. We

sequenced the gRNAs within the high EU cells and within the total cell population. We calculated

an enrichment score for each of the 5 gRNAs that were included in the library against each gene

(Supp. Table 4, Supp. Fig. 7). Fig. 5B shows the enrichment scores for the 5 gRNAs for some of

the top hits (high EU) from the screen. We found that gRNAs against ATM were enriched in the

high EU cells, consistent with the fact that transcriptional inhibition of a gene after induction of a

DSB requires ATM signaling (Shanbhag et al., 2010). Other top hits included most of the

machinery that mediates neddylation, the post translational covalent addition of NEDD8, a small

ubiquitin-like peptide, onto other proteins (Rabut and Peter, 2008). These hits included the *Nedd8*

gene encoding the NEDD8 ubiquitin like modifier, *Nae1* encoding NEDD8 activating enzyme E1

subunit 1 NAE1, *Uba3* encoding the Ubiquitin like modifier activating enzyme 3 UBA3,

*Ube2m/Ubc12* encoding the NEDD8-conjugating enzyme UBC12, *Ube2f* encoding a neddylation

E2 enzyme UBE2F, and *Rbx1* and *Rbx2* which encode linkers that facilitate NEDD8 transfer from

the E2 enzyme to Cullins (Fig. 5B). We also uncovered gRNAs against the gene encoding the

neddylation substrate CUL4B enriched in the high EC cells (Fig. 5B). These data suggested that

neddylation may have a novel role in transcriptional inhibition after IR.

We validated the role of ATM in bulk transcriptional inhibition after IR with the ATM inhibitor

Ku55933 (Fig. 5C). To validate a role for neddylation in transcriptional shut off after IR, we

depleted NAE1 with a gRNA to *Nae1* (Supp. Fig. 8) and showed that NAE1 also greatly reduced

transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 5D). Similarly, a 16-hour treatment with the neddylation

inhibitor MLN4924 also greatly reduced transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 5E). To ensure

that the role of neddylation in transcriptional inhibition after IR is not unique to the murine Abl

pre-B cells, we found that transcriptional inhibition, detected by fluorescence microscopy, in

U2OS cells was significantly reduced upon inhibition of neddylation (Fig. 5F). As such, these data

suggest that neddylation is required for efficient transcriptional inhibition after IR.

While most neddylation substrates have only been identified upon overexpression of the

neddylation machinery, the Cullins have been shown to be *bone fide* neddylation substrates *in vivo*

(Pan et al., 2004). Given that we found gRNAs to Cul4b encoding CULLIN 4B enriched in the EU

high cells (Fig. 5B) we asked whether its neddylation is induced after IR. We found that when

compared to the level of unneddylated CUL4A there was not a significantly higher proportion of

neddylated CUL4A or CUL4B in U2OS cells after IR (Fig. 6A). We used the neddylation inhibitor

MLN4924 as a positive control to confirm which bands were neddylated CUL4A and CUL4B

(Fig. 6A). To determine whether CUL4B or CUL4A were required for IR induced transcriptional

inhibition, we made stable Abl pre-B cell lines lacking each protein by gRNA-mediated disruption

of the *Cul4a* or *Cul4b* genes. Loss of CUL4A had no effect on transcriptional inhibition after IR,

while loss of CUL4B partially reduced transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 6B, Supp. Fig. 9A).

Given that CUL4B and CUL4A show some functional redundancy (Hannah and Zhou, 2015,

Brown et al., 2015), we depleted both proteins at the same time. Additional transient bulk gRNA

transfection-mediated depletion of CUL4A from cells lacking CUL4B (depletion of both CUL4A

and CUL4B is lethal) did not further increase the block of transcriptional inhibition after IR (Supp.

Fig. 9B). As such, these data indicate that CUL4B but not CUL4A contributes to transcriptional

inhibition after IR. Given that neddylation of CUL4A/CUL4B regulates cell cycle progression

(Hannah and Zhou, 2015), and we saw changes in the distribution of the cell cycle phases upon

CUL4A/CUL4B depletion and upon blocking neddylation as indicated by the change in relative

heights of the EU low ($G_1$) and EU high ($S/G_2$) peaks (Fig. 5D, 5E, 6B and Supp. Fig. 9B, 9C), we

wondered if cell cycle arrest may be influencing transcriptional inhibition after IR. Accordingly,

we inhibited neddylation for 1-3 hours in Abl pre-B cells, which effectively inhibited neddylation

(Fig. 6C) and tested the effect on transcriptional inhibition after IR. Strikingly, we observed

transcriptional inhibition after IR even upon neddylation inhibition treatment for 1-3 hours (Fig.

6D), indicating that neddylation is not required for transcriptional inhibition after IR. We also

observed that the length of time required for treatment with the neddylation inhibition to block

transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 5E) caused arrest of the cell cycle in $G_2$ phase (Supp. Fig.

10). Therefore, these data indicate that neddylation *per se* is not required for transcriptional

inhibition after IR. They also raise the possibility that the cell cycle arrest caused by persistent loss

of neddylation may prevent transcriptional inhibition after IR.

***Cell cycle arrest in G₁ or G₂ phase blocks inhibition of transcription after IR***

To directly determine the relationship between cell cycle arrest caused by prolonged neddylation

inhibition and transcriptional inhibition after IR, we labelled the Abl pre-B cells with both EU

(nascent transcripts) and 7-Aminoactinomycin D (7-AAD) (DNA stain). Prolonged neddylation

inhibition led to accumulation of cells with a 4N DNA content and greatly reduced transcriptional

inhibition after IR (Fig. 7A, Supp. Fig. 10). To investigate if this correlation was specific to

neddylation inhibition, we used an unrelated inhibitor that causes cell cycle arrest with a 4N DNA

content, RO-3306, a CDK1 inhibitor (Vassilev et al., 2006). We also saw accumulation of cells

with a 4N DNA content and no transcriptional inhibition after IR upon CDK1 inhibition (Fig. 7B,

Supp. Fig. 10). To determine whether this effect was unique to cells arrested with a 4N DNA

content or was shared with conditions that cause arrest in $G_1$ phase, we treated cells with 10% or

0.1% FBS, where the later lead to arrest in $G_1$ phase (due to serum depletion) and prevented

transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 7C). It is relevant to point out that the level of bulk nascent

transcripts in cells arrested in $G_1$ by serum depletion is still far higher than cells lacking EU (Fig.

7C), suggesting that the limited transcriptional inhibition after IR in $G_1$ arrested cells is not just

because there is only minimal transcription occurring. In agreement, two CDK4/6 inhibitors,

Ribociclib and Palbociclib, that lead to $G_1$ arrest also prevented transcriptional inhibition after IR

(Fig. 7D, 7E). Intriguingly, these data indicate that multiple different treatments that lead to cell

cycle arrest in $G_1$ or $G_2$ *per se* prevent transcriptional inhibition after IR.

To gain molecular insight into why ATM-dependent bulk transcriptional inhibition occurs after IR

in cycling cells but not in arrested cells, we investigated the possibility that ATM-dependent

pathways that inhibit rDNA transcription after IR in cycling cells (Kruhlak et al., 2007) fail in

arrested cells. In cycling cells, DSBs within the rDNA trigger formation of nucleolar caps due to

damaged rDNA and associated proteins relocalizing to the nucleolar periphery (van Sluis and

McStay, 2017). In cycling cells, DSBs within the rDNA trigger ATM-dependent phosphorylation

of Treacle which promotes recruitment of NBS1 and TOPBP1 to the nucleolar caps to inhibit

rDNA transcription (Larsen et al., 2014, Mooser et al., 2020). Accordingly, in cycling cells,

TOPBP1 accumulates in the nucleolar caps after induction of DSBs, concomitant with repression

of rDNA transcription (Sokka et al., 2015, Mooser et al., 2020). We asked whether TOPBP1-eGFP

recruitment to nucleolar caps was disrupted after DNA damage in cells arrested by treatment with

MLN4924 or RO-3306. The overall induction of TOPBP1 expression was not affected by inhibitor

treatment (Supp. Fig. 10). However, the percentage of cells with TOPBP1-eGFP localizing to

nucleolar caps after IR was markedly reduced upon MLN4924 and RO-3306 treatment (Fig. 7F,

7G). These results are consistent with arrested cells failing to repress rDNA expression after global

DNA damage, as a consequence of compromised ATM-dependent localization of TOPB1 to

nucleolar caps.

**307     Discussion**

We find that while the bulk abundance of nascent transcripts is rapidly reduced after IR, more

protein coding genes are induced than inhibited after IR. Instead, the reduction in bulk nascent

transcript levels that occurs after IR is due to reduced transcriptional initiation of a subset of genes

that are the most highly expressed in the cell – the rDNA and histone encoding genes. Notably,

bulk transcriptional inhibition after IR did not occur in cells arrested in $G_1$ or $G_2$ phases of the cell

cycle indicating that cells have to be cycling for IR to rapidly inhibit bulk transcription. The length-

independent and dose-independent reduction in bulk abundance of nascent transcript after IR (Figs.

5C, Supp. Fig 3) suggests that the reduced bulk abundance of nascent transcripts after IR occurs

*in trans* and is a programmed event. This is in contrast to studies that have found transcriptional

inhibition *in cis* of a gene immediately adjacent to an endonuclease-induced DSB. Our work

indicates that the genome wide transcriptional response to DSBs after IR cannot be extrapolated

from single gene studies.

Analysis of nascent transcripts at early times after irradiation revealed a different transcriptional

response compared to changes in total mRNAs after irradiation (Lieberman et al., 2017). These

changes in mRNA levels typically occurred in an IR dose-dependent manner. By contrast, the bulk

changes in nascent transcripts occurred in a dose-independent manner (Fig. 2D). Analysis of total

mRNAs changes following IR showed altered expression of genes involved in signal transduction,

regulation of transcription, and metabolism (Su et al., 2004). Similarly, the upregulated nascent

transcript changes identified pathways including signal transduction, while nascent transcripts

from protein-coding genes that affected nucleosome assembly and chromatin structure (histones)

were downregulated after IR (Fig. 3B, 3E). Finally, most of the gene expression changes detected

by analysis of total mRNA continued to increase or decrease over long periods of time, up to 48

hours (Su et al., 2004), whereas the reduction of bulk nascent transcript levels occurred in a very

transient manner and was already returning to normal by 4 hours after IR (Fig. 1, Fig. 2D).

How is bulk nascent transcription being inhibited after irradiation? Reminiscent of the ATM

dependence on the changes in mRNA levels after IR (Artuso et al., 1995), the reduction in bulk

nascent transcript levels after IR was also dependent on ATM (Fig. 5C). Given that most of the

reduction in bulk nascent transcript levels was due to the rRNA (Fig. 3B), this is consistent with

the previous report of ATM-dependent inhibition of RNA Polymerase I transcription in response

to DSBs (Kruhlak et al., 2007). In this case, the Pol I transcription appeared to be inhibited at both

the initiation and elongation stages (Kruhlak et al., 2007). Sequencing analysis of nascent

transcripts of protein-coding genes whose expression significantly decreased 30 minutes after IR

indicated that it is the initiation of Pol II transcription that is inhibited, given that the reduction in

sequencing reads at the 5' end and 3' ends of open reading frames was equivalent (Fig. 4F). Studies

that examined the mechanism of Pol II transcriptional inhibition of one gene adjacent to an

endonuclease induced DSB identified a reduction in transcriptional elongation as indicated by

reduced Pol II Ser2 phosphorylation (Shanbhag et al., 2010), while other studies found a defect in

both Pol II initiation and elongation of a different gene adjacent to an endonuclease induced DSB,

in a manner dependent on DNA-PK and the proteasome  (Caron et al., 2019, Pankotai et al., 2012).

From our analysis, the major mechanism for the repression of the ~1,000 protein coding genes

after IR occurs at the transcriptional initiation stage.

Rapid inhibition of transcription *in cis* has been observed following endonuclease-mediated DSB

induction, where a DSB-proximal transcriptional reporter was inhibited while a second

transcriptional reporter inserted elsewhere in the genome without a proximal FokI nuclease site

was not inhibited after induction of Fok1 (Shanbhag et al., 2010). If the transcriptional inhibition

after IR that we observe was occurring *in cis,* we would expect that longer genes would be more

inhibited than shorter genes after IR, as they are more likely to experience a DSB induced by IR.

However, this was not the case because the length of the nascent transcripts was equivalent

regardless of whether their levels were increased, didn't change, or were decreased after IR (Fig.

4C). We would also expect that bulk transcript levels would be more reduced with a higher dose

of IR if it occurred *in cis*, but that was not the case (Fig. 2D). In fact, transcriptional repression

around a nuclease-induced DSB can spread hundreds of kb away from the break, throughout a

whole topological associated domain marked by gamma H2AX (Purman et al., 2019). Importantly,

our data do not contradict that DSBs can induce transcriptional inhibition *in cis*, rather it likely

reflects the random nature of the DNA damage induced by IR is not sufficient to detect inhibition

*in cis*, as every cell will have DNA DSBs at different locations. We also are examining the effect

following global DNA damage induced IR versus the effect of induction of a single or limited

numbers of DSBs by endonuclease induction. It is noteworthy that the nascent transcript levels of

more genes rapidly increased after IR than were reduced (Figs. 3 and 4), such that the situation, at

least after IR, is more complex than transcriptional inhibition *in cis* to the DSBs.

The change in transcript levels after irradiation tended to depend on the expression level of the

genes before irradiation. Those genes that were normally most highly transcribed were repressed

after IR, while genes that were normally expressed at intermediate or low levels tended to be

induced after IR (Fig. 4A). The mechanistic reason for this is unclear. Among the genes that were

most repressed after IR treatment were many of the histone encoding genes (Fig. 4D, 4E). Histone

gene expression has been shown to be reduced after IR previously in a manner dependent on ATM

and p53, as seen at the mRNA level 10 hours or more after irradiation (Su et al., 2004). By contrast,

reduction in nascent histone transcript levels occurred 30 mins after IR (Fig. 4D, 4E). Interestingly,

we observed a tremendous expression induction of *Cdkn1a/p21* gene, which encodes a potent

cyclin-dependent kinase inhibitor, after IR (Supp Fig. 6). The histone transcriptional coactivator

NPAT induces histone transcription when it is phosphorylated by cyclin E/CDK2 (Zhao et al.,

1998, Zhao et al., 2000, Ma et al., 2000). As such, highly elevated levels of Cdkn1a/p21 after IR

might inactivate cyclin E/CDK2, leading to hypo-phosphorylation of NPAT and an immediate

repression of histone gene expression after IR.

In response to UV exposure, bulk inhibition of transcription occurs, followed by transcriptional

recovery after repair of UV-induced damage, where transcriptional recovery after repair of UV-

induced damage is dependent on the histone variant H3.3 histone chaperone HIRA (Bouvier et al.,

2021, Adam et al., 2013). Mechanistically, HIRA functioned to repress the transcriptional

repressor ATF3, in turn promoting transcriptional recovery after repair of UV-induced damage

(Bouvier et al., 2021). We find that neither HIRA nor H3.3 is required for recovery of bulk nascent

transcripts after DSB repair (Fig. 1). Additionally, we find that the genes that have altered levels

of nascent transcripts after UV damage (Bouvier et al., 2021) and after IR are quite distinct (data

not shown). However, the UV studies were performed on nascent mRNA from a human cell line,

while our studies were performed on total nascent RNA from a mouse cell line.

Why didn't our CRISRP/Cas9 screen of factors responsible for bulk nascent transcript inhibition

after IR identify previously reported factors involved in Pol II transcriptional inhibition proximal

to an endonuclease-induced DSB? This is likely because most of the reduction in bulk nascent

transcript level that we were detecting after IR was due mainly to reduced transcript abundance

from the rDNA, rather than Pol II transcripts (Fig. 3B). We did find ATM in the screen (Fig. 5B,

5C), and this is consistent with the fact that ATM is required for rDNA transcriptional inhibition

after IR (Kruhlak et al., 2007). Many of the most significant hits from the screen encoded factors

that are involved in the neddylation pathway and the neddylation substrate CUL4B (Fig. 5D, 5E,

5F and Fig. 6B). However, short times of neddylation inhibition were sufficient to inhibit

neddylation but did not prevent transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 6C, 6D). Longer times of

neddylation inhibition did prevent transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 5E, 5F), but also caused

cell cycle arrest (Fig. 7A, Supp. Fig. 10). These results lead us to speculate that neddylation is not

directly involved in transcriptional inhibition after IR, but that neddylation promotes cell cycle

progression, and that it is the cell cycle arrest occurring upon neddylation inhibition that prevents

the bulk reduction of nascent transcript levels after IR. Consistent with cell cycle arrest *per se*

preventing transcriptional inhibition after IR, we also found that CDK1 inhibition leading to $G_2$

arrest, and serum starvation and CDK4/6 inhibition leading to $G_1$ arrest, also prevented bulk

transcriptional inhibition after IR (Fig. 7). Indeed, transcription of rDNA is known to be reduced

when in non-cycling cells when total transcript levels were measured (Moss and Stefanovsky,

1995, O'Mahony et al., 1992) while transcription of histone genes requires ongoing DNA

replication (Sittman et al., 1983). As such, one possibility for failure to see bulk reduction in

nascent transcript abundance after IR in arrested cells may be that rDNA and histone transcription

is already reduced in $G_1$ and $G_2$ arrested cells. However, we found that the total level of bulk

nascent transcripts during $G_2$ arrest before IR were equivalent to, or more than, the level of bulk

nascent transcripts before cell cycle arrest (compare grey (no arrest) to black lines (cell cycle

arrest) in Figs. 5C-E, 7A, 7B) which suggest that the levels of rDNA transcripts may not be reduced

during $G_2$ arrest given that most of the nascent transcripts are from the rDNA in the conditions of

our experiments (Fig. 7B). It is also possible that a factor that is required for transcriptional

inhibition of the rDNA after IR is absent or inactive in arrested cells.

In addition to ATM, NBS1 was previously shown to be required for transcriptional inhibition of

rDNA after IR (Kruhlak et al., 2007). The mechanism for this was unclear, but it is tempting to

speculate that the requirement of ATM for transcriptional inhibition after IR in cycling cells may

be mediated through ATM-dependent phosphorylation of Treacle. In this form, Treacle functions

with TOPBP1 to promote recruitment of NBS1 to nucleolar caps to repress rDNA transcription

(Larsen et al., 2014, Mooser et al., 2020). That TOPB1 fails to relocalize to nucleolar caps after

IR in arrested cells (Fig. 7F, 7G) is consistent with a potential loss of ATM-dependent treacle

phosphorylation in arrested cells, which would prevent reduction in rDNA transcription after DNA

damage. Future experiments will reveal further insight into the cell cycle dependent control of

transcriptional inhibition of highly transcribed genes after DNA damage.

**Figure legends**

**Figure 1. Transcriptional inhibition after irradiation and transcriptional restart after DNA**

**repair in a HIRA independent manner. A.** U2OS cells were transfected with either a scrambled

shRNA or shRNA against HIRA, and were either incubated with EU or not, as indicated, and were

irradiated (10 Gy) or not as indicated, followed by detection of EU by click chemistry of a

fluorophore and DNA was detected by DAPI staining. The right panel shows quantitation of the

mean intensity of EU in at least 80 cells for each condition. **** indicates $p<0.001$, ** indicates

$p<0.01$, by students T-test. **B.** U2OS cells were transfected with either a control siRNA (siRNA-

Ctrl) or two siRNAs against each gene encoding H3.3 (siRNA-H3). EU and DAPI were detected

as described in A and quantitated as described in A. **** indicates $p<0.001$, *** indicates

$p<0.005$, * indicates $p<0.05$ by students T-test.

**Figure 2. Development of a flow cytometry assay for nascent transcripts shows that**

**transcriptional inhibition after IR is not dose dependent. A.** The EU positive signal in murine

Abl pre-B cells detected by flow cytometry is due to transcripts, as indicated by the addition of

5μM of the general RNA polymerase inhibitor Actinomycin D for 1 hour. **B**. The two EU peaks

observed by flow cytometry correspond to $G_1$ (low peak) and $G_2$ (high peak) cells. Cycling Abl

pre-B cells (left panel) were gated for those with 2N DNA ($G_1$) content or 4N ($G_2$) content as

detected by FxCycle Violate or with BrdU incorporation (S) as indicated and were individually

analyzed for EU incorporation into nascent transcripts (right panel). **C.** Schematic of the assay to

detect transcriptional inhibition and transcriptional recovery after IR. **D.** Time course of

transcriptional inhibition and recovery in Abl pre-B cells after IR with the indicated times after IR

at the indicated doses of IR.

**Figure 3. Reduction of nascent transcript levels after irradiation is mainly of the rDNA.**

**A.** Schematic of nascent transcript sequencing. **B.** Read counts for the total nascent transcripts,

rDNA transcripts and protein coding transcripts before and 30 minutes after IR, normalized to

ERCC spike in controls. **C.** Significantly changed nascent transcripts from protein coding genes

are indicated upon irradiation, and the numbers indicate the number of upregulated and

downregulated genes 30 minutes after IR. Data shown are an average of the two independent

experimental repeats. **D.** Heat map of significantly increased and decreased nascent transcripts 30

minutes after IR, shown for two independent experimental repeats. Expression z-score was

calculated by subtracting the overall average gene abundance from the raw expression for each

gene and dividing that result by the standard deviation (SD) of all of the measured counts across

all samples. **E.** Gene Ontology analysis of the top significantly enriched GO terms most

upregulated after IR (pink) and most downregulated after IR (blue). Enriched gene number (red)

and fold enrichment (blue) were showed in each GO term.

**Figure 4. The highly transcribed protein coding genes tend to be repressed after irradiation, due to a decrease in the transcription of the histone genes. A.** Plot of the transcript abundance of differentially expressed genes (DEGs) showing that highly expressed genes have reduced nascent transcript levels 30 minutes after IR, while moderately expressed and low level expressed genes tend to have increased nascent transcript levels 30 minutes after IR. Mean gene expression and standard deviation is shown in million reads mapped to genes normalized by ERCC spike-in reads. Data are shown from two independent experimental repeats (rep) of the experiment. **B.** Heat map showing nascent transcript levels of the top 100 highly expressed DEGs, ranked by gene expression from top (highest) to bottom, 30 minutes after IR, shown for two independent experimental repeats. Expression z-score was calculated by subtracting the overall average gene abundance from the raw expression for each gene and dividing that result by the standard deviation (SD) of all the measured counts across all four samples. **C.** Among the top 100 of highly expressed protein-coding genes, repressed genes are significantly shorter compared to activated genes. The activated, non-changed and repressed genes show little difference in gene size (the data are averaged for each gene between two independent experimental repeats). **D.** Plot of change in gene expression after IR against mean gene expression ($log_2$), ranked by mean gene expression in samples before IR on the x axis, for all nascent transcripts. Some of the highly expressed genes whose nascent transcript levels decreased after IR are labelled in the rectangle, including histone genes. **E.** Heat map of nascent transcripts of all histone genes 30 minutes after IR, shown for two independent experimental repeats. **F**. The average read counts for repressed protein coding genes throughout their gene length before and after IR for 2 independent repeats of the experiment.

**Figure 5. Whole genome gRNA screen CRISPR-Cas9 screen for factors involved in transcriptional inhibition after irradiation identifies the neddylation pathway. A.** Schematic of whole genome gRNA CRISPR-Cas9 screen for gene products that promote transcriptional inhibition after IR**. B.** Fold enrichment of 5 guide RNAs against the indicated genes in the 10% of cells with most EU incorporated into transcripts 30 minutes after IR. **C**. Inhibition of ATM greatly reduces transcriptional inhibition 30 minutes after IR in Abl pre-B cells. The inhibitor was used at 15 µM for 1 hours. **D.** gRNA mediated depletion of Nae1 greatly reduces transcriptional inhibition 30 minutes after IR in Abl pre-B cells. **E.** Inhibition of neddylation greatly reduces transcriptional inhibition 30 minutes after IR. The inhibitor was used at 1µM for 16 hours in Abl pre-B cells. **F.** Inhibition of neddylation reduces transcriptional inhibition after IR in U2OS cells, as detected by fluorescence analysis of nascent transcripts as described in legend to Fig. 1 and quantitated as in Fig. 1. Significant difference after IR compared to before IR are indicated by asterisks, where **** indicates $p<0.001$, * indicates $p<0.05$ by students T-test. All experiments in this figure are in murine Abl pre-B cells.

**Figure 6. CUL4B but not CUL4A contributes to transcriptional inhibition after irradiation. A.** Analysis of CUL4A and CUL4B neddylation in U2OS cells after IR, in the absence of presence of 10 µM treatment for 3 hours with the neddylation inhibitor. N8 indicates the neddylated species. **B.** Analysis of nascent transcripts in Abl pre-B cell lines stably depleted of CUL4A or CUL4B 30 minutes after IR, as indicated. **C.** Short treatment of Abl pre-B cells with neddylation inhibitor MLN4924 is sufficient to block neddylation of CUL4B. **D.** The same cells used in C were analyzed for EU incorporation into nascent transcripts 30 minutes after irradiation, without or with the indicated time of MLN4924 treatment before irradiation.

**Figure 7. Cell cycle arrest in $G_1$ or $G_2$ prevents transcriptional inhibition after DNA damage.**

**A.** Abl pre-B cells were treated with MLN4924 (1 μM) for 16 hours, followed by IR and staining of DNA with 7-AAD and nascent transcripts with EU 30 minutes after IR. **B.** Abl pre-B cells were treated with RO-3306 (10 μM) for 16 hours, followed by IR and staining of DNA with 7-AAD and nascent transcripts with EU 30 minutes after IR. **C.** The left two panels show the cell cycle distribution of Abl pre-B cells after growth for 72 hours in 1% FBS or 0.1% FBS. The rectangles and numbers indicate the % of cells with a 2N DNA content. The right panel shows the EU incorporated into nascent transcripts 30 minutes after IR for the same samples. **D.** Abl pre-B cells were treated with Ribociclib (5 μM) for 24 hr., followed by IR and staining of DNA with 7-AAD and nascent transcripts with EU 30 minutes after IR. **E.** Abl pre-B cells were treated with Palbociclib (5 μM) for 24 hr, followed by IR and staining of DNA with 7-AAD and nascent transcripts with EU 30 minutes after IR. **F.** The U2OS cells were treated with doxycycline (1 μg/mL) for 12 hours to express eGFP-TOPBP1. Then, DMSO, MLN4924 and RO3306 were added to the cells for another 16 hours. TOPBP1 localization was shown in cells before IR or 2 hours after IR (10 Gy). Scale bar is 10 μm. **G.** Quantification of TOPBP1 expressing cells with nucleolar caps before and after IR (10 Gy) in cells treated with MLN4924 and RO-3306. Data shown are an average of the three independent experimental repeats. Significant differences are indicated by asterisks, where ** indicates $p < 0.01$ by students T-test.

**Supplementary Figure 1. Transcriptional inhibition after irradiation and transcriptional restart after DNA repair in U2OS cells. A.** U2OS cells were either incubated with EU or not, as indicated, and were irradiated (10 Gy) or not as indicated, followed by detection of the EU by click

chemistry of a fluorophore, and immunofluorescence staining of gamma H2AX in the same cells

and the DNA was detected by Hoechst staining.

**Supplementary Figure 2. Confirmation of knockdown of HIRA and H3.3**. The samples were

from the same experiments shown in Figure 1.

**Supplementary Figure 3. The mean intensities of the EU peaks shown in Figure 2D are**

**indicated.** The mean value of each sample was calculated by Flowjo software.

**Supplementary Figure 4. Nascent transcript levels before and after 30 minutes of IR.** The

samples from two independent experiments were used for the EU-seq and analyses in Fig. 3 and

4.

**Supplementary Figure 5. Screen shot from the UCSC browser of nascent transcripts. A.**

Nascent transcripts before and after IR over ribosomal DNA (rDNA). **B.** Nascent histone

transcripts before and after IR over histone cluster 1.

**Supplementary Figure 6. Validation of nascent transcript levels of DEGs from EU-RNA seq**

**by real-time quantitative RT-PCR.** Samples from three independent experiments were used for

the analyses. Ct value is presented to show the absolute amounts of EU labeled RNA transcripts

from the same number of cells before and after 30 minutes of IR (10 gray). Significant difference

after IR compared to before IR are indicated by asterisks, where ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates

$p < 0.05$ and ns indicates non-significant by students T-test.

**Supplementary Figure 7. CRISPR-Cas9 screen identifies genes promoting transcriptional inhibition after IR.** A volcano plot of guide RNA changes between Eu high cells and unsorted cells. Labeled genes are some of those that have P adjust $<= 10^{-6}$.

**Supplementary Figure 8. Confirmation of knockdown of Nae1.** gEV is an empty vector. The samples were from the same experiments shown in Figure 5D.

**Supplementary Figure 9. Analysis of CUL4A and CUL4B depletion. A.** The western blot shows the CUL4A and CUL4B levels from the experiment shown in Fig. 6B. Additionally gRNAs were used to deplete CUL4A in cul4b cells and CUL4B in cul4a cells and their western blot analyses are also shown. **B.** The EU analysis of these double depleted cells is shown**. C.** Cell cycle analysis of the experiment shown in A and B and Fig. 6B.

**Supplementary Figure 10. Cell cycle analysis of cells treated with MLN4924 and RO3306**. MLN4924 or RO3306 treatment leads cell cycle arrest in $G_2$ phase. **B.** Quantification of cells with TOPBP1 expression before and after IR (10 Gy) in cells treated with MLN4924 and RO-3306. The samples were from the same experiments shown in Fig. 7F, 7G.

**Supplementary Table 1.** Nascent RNA profiles of each gene using EU RNA-seq.

**Supplementary Table 2.** Significantly enriched GO terms for up-regulated gene after irradiation.

**Supplementary Table 3.** Significantly enriched GO terms for down-regulated genes after

irradiation.

**Supplementary Table 4.** Whole genome CRISPR-Cas9 screen detects the abundance of all

gRNAs and target genes for EU high cells and unsorted cells.

**Methods and materials**

**Cell culture and transfections**

U2OS cells (ATCC, HTB-96) were cultured in McCoy's 5A (Corning, 10050CV) medium

supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and 1% Penicillin-Streptomycin. Abelson virus-

transformed pre-B cells were maintained in DMEM (Thermo Fisher, 11960-077) supplemented

with 10% FBS, 1% Penicillin-Streptomycin, 1x nonessential amino acids, 1 mM sodium pyruvate,

2 mM L-glutamine, and 0.4% beta-mercaptoethanol. HEK-293T cells were maintained in DMEM

(Corning, 10-013-CM) supplemented with 10% FBS and 1% Penicillin-Streptomycin. All the cells

were grown at 37 °C under a humidified atmosphere with 5% $CO_2$.

SiRNA oligos against human H3F3A and H3F3B (SMARTPool) for RNAi in U2OS cells were

purchased from Horizon Discovery (Dharmacon). 100 nM of H3F3A and H3F3B were mixed with

Lipofectamine RNAiMAX transfection reagent (Thermo Scientific, 13778150) according to the

manufacturer's protocol to knockdown H3.3 for 48 hours. The siRNA control (ON-TARGETplus

non-targeting) was also purchased from Horizon Discovery (Dharmacon) and used as negative

control. shRNA lentiviral plasmids against HIRA (5'-TAGAGCATACCAAGATGCC-3') and the

control were described in a previous study (Huang et al., 2018). HEK-293T cells were transfected

with a mixture of shRNA plasmids and the viral packaging and envelope vectors, pCMV-dR8.2

and pCMV-VSVG. The media containing shRNA virus particles were collected 48 to 72 hours

after transfection and filtered through a 0.45 μm filter. Cells were incubated with the lentiviral

supernatant containing 5 μg/ml polybrene (Sigma-Aldrich, S2667) for 24 hours, followed by 1

μg/mL Puromycin selection for another 48 hours. To inactivate Nae1, Cul4a and Cul4b in bulk

cell populations, guide RNAs (gRNAs) against each gene were cloned into pKLV-U6gRNA-

EF(BbsI)-PGKpuro2ABFP (Addgene, #62348) modified to express human CD2 or Thy1.1 as cell

surface markers. The pKLV-gRNAs lentiviruses were prepared in 293T cells as described above.

The Abl pre-B cells containing pCW-Cas9 (addgene, #50661), which can express Cas9 with

doxycycline induction, were mixed with viral supernatant supplemented with 5 μg/ml polybrene

and centrifuged at 1800 rpm for 1.5 hours at room temperature. After the spin-infection, the

transduced cells were maintained in DMEM with 3 μg/ml doxycycline (Sigma-Aldrich, D9891)

for 3 days before flow cytometric cell sorting based on hCD2 or Thy1.1 expression. To make stable

cell lines depleted of Cul4a and Cul4b, serial dilution of the sorted cells into 96-well plate was

used to isolate single cells. Western blot analysis was used to determine the knockdown efficiency

of each target genes.

In EU flow cytometric and immunofluorescence analysis, final concentrations of 15 μM ATM

inhibitor Ku55933 (Selleck Chemicals, S1092) and 5 μM of Actinomycin D (Sigma-Aldrich,

A9415) were added to cell culture 1 hour prior to irradiation. 1 μM and 10 μM of neddylation

inhibitor MLN4924/Pevonedistat (Active Biochem, A-1139) were used for long (16 hours) and

short (1 to 3 hour) treatments, respectively. To arrest cells in $G_1$ cell cycle phase, cells were

incubated in media supplemented with 5 μM Palbociclib (Selleck Chemicals, S1116) or 5 μM

Ribociclib (Selleck Chemicals, S7440) for 24 hours. For serum starvation, Abl pre-B cells were

grown in complete medium containing 10% of FBS to desired density and collected and washed

in medium with reduced concentration (0.1%) of FBS. The cells were maintained in the medium

with reduced FBS for 72 hours to arrest in $G_1$ phase. Representative data are shown for experiments

repeated three of more times with consistent results.

**Western blots**

The following antibodies were used for western blot: CUL4A (Cell Signaling Technology, 2699S,

1:1000), CUL4B (Proteintech, 12916-1-AP, 1:1000), H3.3 (Millipore Sigma, 09-838, 1:1000),

HIRA (Abcam, ab20655, 1:1000), NAE1 (Thermo Fisher, PA5-59836, 1:500), GAPDH (Sigma-

Aldrich, G8795, 1:5000). Representative data are shown for experiments repeated three of more

times with consistent results.

**Fluorescence microscopy**

For immunofluorescence, Click-iT RNA Alexa Fluor Imaging Kit (Thermo Fisher, C10330) was

used to label newly synthesized RNAs in the cells. Briefly, 50,000 U2OS cells grown on cover

slips in 24-well plate were irradiated with 10 Gray and allowed to recover for indicated times at

37°C with 5% CO2. 0.5 mM EU was added to the medium and incubated for 45 minutes for EU

incorporation. Cells were then washed with PBS, fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde PBS for 15

minutes at room temperature, and permeabilized in cold 0.5% Triton X-100 PBS for 10 minutes.

Cells were blocked in 3% BSA-PBS for 1 hour at room temperature and subsequently incubated

overnight at 4 °C in primary antibody (anti-γH2AX (S139), EMD Millipore, 05-636). Coverslips

were then washed 3x with PBST (0.05% Tween 20), incubated with secondary antibody diluted in

3% BSA PBS (Alexa Fluor 488 Goat anti-mouse IgG, BioLegend, 405319) in the dark for 1 hour

at room temperature and washed 3x with PBST. Click-iT reaction cocktail was prepared according

to the manufacturer's protocol and immediately added to the cells to perform click reaction in the

dark for 30 minutes at room temperature. After washes with Click-iT reaction rinse buffer

(Component F) and PBS, cells were stained with Hoechst (1:2000) or DAPI (Sigma-Aldrich,

D9542) in PBS for 10 minutes and mounted in Prolong Gold Antifade Mountant (Life

Technologies, P-36930). Images were taken on Biotek Lionheart Automatic Microscope and EU

intensity quantification was conducted using Biotek Gen5 software. For eGFP-TOPBP1

fluorescence microscopy, 50,000 cells grown on coverslips in 24-well plates were treated with

doxycycline (1 μg/mL) for 12 hours to express eGFP-TOPBP1. MLN4924 (1 μM) and RO3306

(10 μM) were added to the cell culture, and the cells were incubated for another 16 hours followed

by IR (10 Gy) and recovery for 2 hours. Cells were fixed in 4% Paraformaldehyde for 20 minutes

followed by Hoechst (1:2000) staining for DNA and mounting in Prolong Gold Antifade Mountant.

Images were taken and quantified on Biotek Lionheart Automatic Microscope. Representative data

are shown for experiments repeated three of more times with consistent results.

**Flow cytometry and cell cycle analysis**

Click-iT RNA Alexa Fluor Imaging Kit was adapted to label newly synthesized RNAs in the cells

for flow cytometry. Abl pre-B cells grown in 24-well plate were irradiated with 10 Gray and

allowed to recover for different times. 2 mM EU was added to the medium and incubated for 30

minutes for EU incorporation. Cells were then washed with PBS, fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde

PBS for 15 minutes at room temperature, and permeabilized in cold 0.5% TritonX-100 PBS for 5

minutes. Click-iT reaction cocktail was prepared according to the manufacturer's protocol and

immediately added to the cells to perform click reaction in the dark for 30 minutes at room

temperature. Cells were then washed with Click-iT reaction rinse buffer (Component F) and 3%

BSA-PBS, respectively. For cell cycle analysis, BrdU (10 ug/mL) was added to the cells and

incubated for 30 minutes to label new DNAs. Cells were washed with PBS, fixed in 4%

paraformaldehyde PBS for 15 minutes at room temperature, and permeabilized in cold 0.5% Triton

X-100 PBS for 5 minutes. Cells were then digested with DNase (BD Biosciences, 51-2358KC) for

1 hour at 37 °C. Subsequently, cells were incubated with Alexa Fluor 488 Mouse anti-BrdU (BD

Biosciences, 51-9004981, 1:500) in 3% BSA-FBS for 1 hour at room temperature and washed 2x

with PBS, followed by FxCycle Violet (Thermo Scientific, R37166) or 7-AAD (BD Pharmingen,

559925) staining for 10 minutes. Cells were resuspended in PBS and analyzed on BD LSRII Flow

Cytometer or BD LSRFortessa Flow Cytometer. Flow cytometry results were further analyzed

using FlowJo software. Representative data are shown for experiments repeated three of more

times with consistent results.

**CRISPR-Cas9 screen**

More than 140 million wild type Abl pre-B cells carrying inducible Cas9 transgene were

transduced with a lentiviral gRNA library containing 90,230 gRNAs targeting over 18,000 mouse

genes (Addgene, 67988) by spin-infection as described above. 3 days post infection, cells

transduced with gRNAs were sorted on a BD FACSAria II Cell Sorter based on BFP expression.

BFP positive cells were treated 3 µg/ml doxycycline for 7 days to induce gRNA expression and

gene inactivation. Cells were irradiated with 10 Gray, allowed to recover for 30 minutes, processed

as described above for EU labeling of newly synthesized RNAs and analyzed on BD FACSAria II

Cell Sorter. Cells with high (top 10%) EU staining and unsorted cells were collected, and genomic

DNA of the cells were isolated for library preparation using nested-PCR. The library was

sequenced on an Illumina HiSeq 2500 platform. Raw fastq files were demultiplexed by the

Genomics and Epigenomics Core Facility of the Weill Cornell Medicine Core Laboratories Center.

The gRNA sequence region was then retrieved from the sequencing data using Seqkit (Shen et al.,

2016) and mapped to the gRNA sequence library (Koike-Yusa et al., 2014, Tzelepis et al., 2016).

The number of reads of each library sequence was counted and then normalized as follows (Shalem

et al., 2014). Normalized reads per gRNA = reads pers gRNA total reads for all sgRNAs in

sample$\times 10^6$+1. Hereby, the generated normalized reads from each guide RNA were used and

compared between the EU high cell and unsorted cell. P values were measured by Poisson test to

compare guide RNAs between EU high cell and unsorted cell. FDR was used for adjusting P value.

CRISPR score = log2 (final sgRNA abundance/initial sgRNA abundance). The EU high genes

were defined as these genes that have at least one guide RNA with P adjust value <=0.01 & FC

>=1.5. Gene ontology (GO) analysis was performed by the R package cluster Profiler v3.18.1.

**Isolation and deep sequencing of EU labeled nascent transcripts**

Click-iT Nascent RNA Capture Kit (Thermo Fisher, C10365) was used to label and capture the

nascent transcripts. In brief, the same number of Abl pre-B cells was plated in two T-25

Polystyrene flasks, one for irradiation (10 Gray) and the other for no IR control. After irradiation,

both flasks of cells were recovered for 30 minutes and incubated in medium with 2 mM EU for 30

minutes to allow for the incorporation of EU into the nascent transcripts. Total RNAs were

harvested using TRIzol reagent (Thermo Fischer, 15596018) following the manufacturer's

protocol. The click-iT reaction was performed as per manufacturer's protocol in 50 µL total

volume for 30 minutes in the dark. Subsequently, 1 µL ultrapure glycogen, 50 µL 7.5 M

ammonium acetate, and 700 µL of chilled 100% EtOH were added to the reaction. The mixture

was incubated at −80 °C for 16 hours. RNA pellet was spun down at 13000 ×g for 20 minutes at

4 °C, washed 2x with chilled 75% EtOH and resuspended in nuclease free water. EU-RNAs were

pulled down with Dynabeads MyOne Streptavidin T1 magnetic beads and extracted with TRIzol

reagents. The same amount of ERCC spike-ins (Thermo Fisher, 4456740) were added to the

purified EU-RNAs, followed by cDNA library generation using NEBNext Ultr II Directional RNA

Library Prep Kit for Illumina (NEB, E7760) according to the manufacturer's protocol and deep

sequencing on Illumina HiSeq 2500 platform.

**Real-time quantitative RT-PCR of EU labeled nascent transcripts**

EU labeled RNA was prepared from the same number of cells as described above. All the isolated

EU-RNAs were used for cDNA synthesis using Superscript III (Thermo Fischer, 18080044)

reverse transcription with random hexamer as primers following the manufacturer's protocol. The

same proportion of cDNA products of each sample was used as template for the quantitative RT-

PCR reaction with Light Cycler 480 SYBR Green I Master Mix (Roche, 04707516001). The Ct

value was used to represent the absolute amount of EU-RNAs in each sample, in which a smaller

Ct value indicates higher nascent transcript levels of an individual gene, given the same initial

number of cells and the same proportion of EU-RNAs were used for the analyses. Primer

sequences for the analyses are as follows:

ms28S-fwd, 5'-TGGGTTTTAAGCAGGAGGTG-; ms28S-rev, 5'-

GTGAATTCTGCTTCACAATG-3'(Watada et al., 2020); ms18S-fwd, 5'-

CTTAGAGGGACAAGTGGCG-3'; ms18S-rev, 5'-ACGCTGAGCCAGTCAGTGTA-3'

(Stephens et al., 2011); msHist1h2ab-fwd, 5'-GCCTGCAGTTCCCCGTA-3'; msHisth2ab-rev,

5'- ATCTCGGCCGTCAGGTACTC-3'; msHist1h2ac-fwd, 5'-GGCTGCTCCGCAAGGGT-3';

msHist1h2ac-rev, 5'-CTTGTTGAGCTCCTCGTCGTT-3'; msH2afz-fwd, 5'-

ACTCCGGAAAGGCCAAGACA-3'; msH2afz-rev, 5'-GTTGTCCTAGATTTCAGGTG-3'

(Nishida et al., 2005); msCdkn1a-fwd, 5'-GTGGCCTTGTCGCTGTCT-3'; msCdkn1a-rev, 5'-

TTTTCTCTTGCAGAAGACCAATC-3' (Béguelin et al., 2017).

**Analysis of nascent transcripts**

The mouse genome version GRCm38.p6 release M23 and the associated GENCODE version of

mouse     reference     gene     set     were     downloaded     from     the     GENCODE     website

(https://www.gencodegenes.org/mouse/release_M23.html). We trimmed adapter sequences and

low-quality sequences in RNA-seq data using the Trim Galore v0.6.6 (Martin, 2011) with default

parameters. To avoid rRNA homologous sequences (i.e., in the intron regions of Zc3h7a or Cdk8)

prior to subsequent genomic and other RNA analysis, we first mapped the reads to mm10 rDNA

sequences by TopHat v2.1.1 (Kim et al., 2013). The unmapped reads were then further mapped to

the mouse genome version mm10 and ERCC spike-in version ERCC92 using TopHat v2.1.1 (Kim

et al., 2013). Successfully mapping reads were sorted by SAMtools v1. 5. Afterward, read counts

in several types of genomic feature, i.e., protein-coding genes, rDNA and ERCCs (ERCC92.gtf),

were quantified by Htseq-count v0.11.2 (Anders et al., 2015) using the union gene region option.

The read number per gene was normalized based on total ERCC read numbers in each sample.

To visualize read coverage across the genome, DeepTools v3.5.0 (Ramírez et al., 2014) was used

to convert BAM files into bigwig files using scale factors calculated by total ERCC read number

in each sample. Next, DeepTools was used to plot average read depth per sample across interested

groups of genomic regions (i.e., repressed protein coding genes from 3 kb upstream to 3kb

downstream of gene bodies). Screenshots of reads density at individual regions were generated by

IGV 2.8.13 (Thorvaldsdóttir et al., 2013).

We then used one tail Poisson test to evaluate difference in gene expression level based on the read

counts normalized by total ERCC read counts. We defined differentially expressed RNAs as those

with a fold change greater than 1.5 and an FDR value smaller than 0.05. To detect highly expressed

genes, we ranked genes by RPKM in the control cells, whereas RPKM was calculated using

ERCC-normalized read counts further normalized by gene length. Gene ontology (GO) analysis

was performed by the R package clusterProfiler v3.18.1 (Wu et al., 2021). Heatmap were generated

by pheatmap.

**Data availability**

All raw datasets of nascent EU RNA-seq  and CRISPR screen data have been submitted to GEO

(GSE217123) and available by Project: PRJNA895065.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors thank Yinan Wang for performing the bioinformatics for the high throughput screen.

We thank the Weill Cornell Flow Cytometry Core for flow cytometry. We thank the Weill Cornell

Epigenomics Core for performing the sequencing for the high throughput screen and the

Transcriptional Regulation & Expression Facility at Cornell University, Ithaca for providing

advice and performing the sequencing of the nascent transcripts. The stable doxycycline-inducible

eGFP-TOPBP1 U2OS cell lines were a kind gift from Dr. Helmut Pospiech (Fritz Lipmann

Institute, Germany). We are grateful to Pengbo Zhou for advice on Cullin 4A and B. We also thank

Barry Sleckman, Bo-Ruei Chen and Faith Fowler for advice throughout the project. JKT is

supported by NIH R35 GM139816 and RO1 CA95641. K.C is supported by NIH R01GM138407,

R01GM125632, R01HL148338, and R01HL133254.

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**Figure 1**

# Figure 2

**Figure 3**

**Figure 4**

**Figure 5**

**Figure 6**

# Figure 7

**Supp Fig. 1**

**Supp Fig. 2**

**Supp Fig. 3**

| Dose | No EU | No IR | 15 m | 30 m | 1 h | 2 h | 4 h |
|------|-------|-------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| 2 Gy | 314 | 2690 | 1440 | 1261 | 1282 | 1640 | 2349 |
| 5 Gy | 314 | 2690 | 1379 | 1169 | 1101 | 1345 | 2004 |
| 10 Gy | 314 | 2690 | 1224 | 1094 | 1053 | 1347 | 1803 |

**Supp Fig. 4**

**Supp Fig. 5**

**A**

rDNA: 1-14,000

**B**

chr13: 23,525,853-23,624,883

**Supp Fig. 6**

**Supp Fig. 7**

**Supp Fig. 8**

# Supp Fig. 9

**A**

**B**

**C**

**Supp Fig. 10**

A

B

■ DMSO before IR     ■ DMSO 2 hr (10 Gy)

■ MLN4294 before IR     ■ MLN4294 2 hr (10 Gy)

■ RO3306 before IR     ■ RO3306 2 hr (10 Gy)