Mitochondrial Phosphopantetheinylation is Required for Oxidative Function

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Abstract

Sub-cellular compartmentalization of metabolism has important implications for the local

production of metabolites and redox co-factors, as well as pathway regulation. 4'-

phosphopantetheinyl (4'PP) groups are essential co-factors derived from coenzyme A and

added to target proteins in both the cytoplasm and mitochondria by <u>ph</u>os<u>pho</u><u>p</u>antetheinyl

<u>t</u>ransferase (PPTase) enzymes. Mammals express only one PPTase, thought to localize to

the cytoplasm: aminoadipate semialdehyde dehydrogenase phosphopantetheinyl

transferase (AASDHPPT); raising the question of how mitochondrial proteins are 4'PP-

modified. We found that AASDHPPT is required for mitochondrial respiration and oxidative

metabolism via the mitochondrial fatty acid synthesis (mtFAS) pathway. Moreover, we

discovered that a pool of AASDHPPT localizes to the mitochondrial matrix via an N-terminal

mitochondrial targeting sequence contained within the first 13 amino acids of the protein.

Our data show that mitochondrial localization of AASDHPPT is required to support mtFAS

function, and further identify two variants in *Aasdhppt* that are likely pathogenic in humans.

Keywords:

Mitochondria, fatty acid synthesis, electron transport chain, reductive carboxylation,

metabolism, respiration, compartmentalization, phosphopantetheine

Abbreviations:

4'PP – 4'-phosphopantetheine/yl, AASDHPPT – aminoadipate semialdehyde

dehydrogenase phosphopantetheinyl transferase, ALDH1L2 – Aldehyde Dehydrogenase 1

Family Member L2, CoA – coenzyme A, DHRS2 – mitochondrial Dehydrogenase/Reductase

2, ETC – electron transport chain, FAS – fatty acid synthesis, FASN – fatty acid synthase,

LYRM – leucine tyrosine arginine motif, mtFAS – mitochondrial fatty acid synthesis, NAD$^+$ -

nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (oxidized form), OGDH – oxoglutarate dehydrogenase,

PAGE – polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, PDH – pyruvate dehydrogenase, PPT –

mammalian AASDHPPT, PPTase – phosphopantetheinyl transferase, PTM –

posttranslational modification, SDHB – succinate dehydrogenase subunit B, TCA –

tricarboxylic acid, VUS – variant of uncertain significance

Introduction

Mitochondria are well known for their ability to perform oxidative metabolism and produce

cellular energy via the citric acid (TCA) cycle and the electron transport chain (ETC). The

ability of mitochondria to perform these functions relies heavily on the transcriptional

regulation of nuclear genes that encode mitochondrially localized proteins which participate

in these pathways[1]. As a double-membraned organelle, proteins localized to the mitochondria

often participate in the same biochemical reactions as proteins localized in the cytoplasm, but

are encoded by separate genes[2,3]. These genes often perform essential functions to underpin

biological processes that are independent from their cytosolic counterparts. Several examples

of parallel enzymatic pathways in the mitochondria and cytoplasm exist, and have been shown

to have specific and distinct roles in both metabolism and the metabolic control of cell

behaviors[4,5].

4'-phosphopantentheinylation is an essential post translational modification (PTM)

whereby a 4'-phosphopantetheine (4'PP) group, derived from coenzyme A (CoA), is covalently

attached to both mitochondrial and cytosolic target proteins by a

phosphopantetheinyltransferase (PPTase) enzyme[6]. The yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisae*

have at least three PPTases: 1) the PPTase domain of Fas2, a subunit of the yeast cytosolic

fatty acid synthase, 2) Ppt1, another cytoplasmic PPTase, and 3) Ppt2, which localizes to the

mitochondrial matrix[3]. Loss of Ppt2 cannot be compensated for by the cytoplasmic PPTases,

providing strong evidence for the compartmentalization of this reaction in yeast[7]. In

mammalian genomes, however, there is only one annotated PPTase: aminoadipate-

semialdehyde dehydrogenase- phosphopantetheinyl transferase (AASDHPPT), which is
thought to exist solely in the cytoplasm[8].

A total of six proteins in the mammalian proteome have been found to have a 4'-PP-
modified serine, and all have been assumed to be catalyzed by AASDHPPT[6]. However, three
of these six proteins are localized to the mitochondria: NADH:Ubiquinone Oxidoreductase
Subunit AB1 (NDUFAB1), Aldehyde Dehydrogenase 1 Family Member L2 (AL1L2), and
mitochondrial Dehydrogenase/Reductase 2 (DHRS2). Of these three, NDUFAB1, also known
as the mitochondrial acyl carrier protein (mtACP), is unique because its functions are essential
for life and it requires a 4'PP PTM to carry out these functions[9–11].

NDUFAB1 is a structural subunit of complex I of the ETC, as well as an integral part of the
mitochondrial fatty acid synthesis (mtFAS) pathway. mtFAS builds *de novo* fatty acyl chains
on NDUFAB1, which acts as a soluble scaffold for the new fatty acid in the mitochondrial
matrix. As this newly synthesized fatty acid is added to the terminal sulfhydryl group of the
4'PP, the addition of a 4'PP group to NDUFAB1 is absolutely necessary for mtFAS to occur[9].
Once synthesized, acyl chains built by mtFAS can be donated to the lipoic acid synthesis
machinery, which further modify the fully saturated fatty acid created by mtFAS to make lipoic
acid (LA)[12]. LA is an essential cofactor for alpha-keto acid dehydrogenases such as pyruvate
dehydrogenase and alpha-ketoglutarate dehydrogenase in the TCA cycle. Alternatively, if not
donated to lipoic acid machinery, longer acyl chains on NDUFAB1 facilitate interactions with
ETC assembly factors to support ETC complex assembly[13]. The yeast mtACP can interact
with ETC assembly factors without an acyl chain, but a 4'PP group is essential and may
provide a different regulatory signal depending on the presence or absence of an acyl chain[9].
NDUFAB1 is therefore central to two major arms of mitochondrial oxidative metabolism: TCA
cycle activity through lipoic acid, and ETC assembly through protein-protein interactions.
Despite this pivotal role, how NDUFAB1 is activated with its 4'PP group in mammals is still
unclear.

Because yeast have a dedicated mitochondrial PPTase, we questioned whether an
unidentified PPTase gene existed in mammals, or conversely if AASDHPPT was important for
mitochondrial function regardless of its reported cytoplasmic localization. One prior study has
demonstrated that AASDHPPT is sufficient to add a 4'PP group to NDUFAB1 *in vitro*[8]. We
therefore set out to understand if AASDHPPT was required for mitochondrial function *in vivo*
and, if so, how it modifies mitochondrial targets like NDUFAB1 despite existing in separate
cellular compartments. To do so, we created clonal mouse skeletal myoblast (C2C12) cell
lines with hypomorphic mutations in AASDHPPT, and discovered that AASDHPPT was

necessary for mitochondrial respiration and oxidative metabolism due to its action on
NDUFAB1 and downstream effects on the mtFAS pathway. Furthermore we found, contrary
to prior reports, that a pool of endogenous AASDHPPT localized to the mitochondrial matrix
via an N-terminal mitochondrial targeting sequence. Our data suggest that this previously
undescribed mitochondrial localization of AASDHPPT is required for mtFAS and mitochondrial
oxidative function.
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AASDHPPT is a major determinant of mitochondrial oxidative function
To test whether AASDHPPT (hereafter abbreviated PPT) is required for mitochondrial
oxidative function, we used a CRISPR/Cas-9-based strategy to mutate *Aasdhppt* in C2C12
mouse skeletal muscle myoblasts. Similar to our previous experiences attempting to knockout
mtFAS genes in this cell line[13], no complete null clones were generated, however we were
able to expand two clonal cell lines with hypomorphic mutations in *Aasdhppt* (Supplemental
Figure S1A) that resulted in decreased PPT expression (PPT-1 and PPT-2, Figure 1A). We
next investigated whether PPT deficiency resulted in altered respiratory-dependent growth by
performing proliferation assays in cell culture media containing either glucose or galactose,
the latter requiring functional mitochondrial respiration. Clonal mutant PPT-2 showed
significantly reduced growth in glucose media at 72 hours (Figure 1B, Supplemental Figure
S1B), while clonal mutant PPT-1 showed a modest, yet non-statistically significant, reduction
in growth compared to control cells. In contrast, both PPT mutants showed markedly reduced
proliferation in galactose-containing media (Figure 1C, Supplemental Figure S1B). We next
performed a Seahorse mitochondrial stress test in high glucose medium and observed that
PPT-deficient mutants exhibited a reduction in both basal respiration rate and spare
respiratory capacity compared to controls (Figure 1D). To assess whether PPT-deficient
respiratory function was associated with perturbed OXPHOS complex expression and
assembly, we performed blue-native PAGE analysis on isolated mitochondria from PPT-
deficient and control cells. PPT-deficient mutants displayed reduced levels of fully assembled
ETC complex I (CI), complex II (CII) and complex IV (CIV) (Figure 1E). Complex V (CV) was
largely unaffected, with only a modest reduction observed in clonal PPT-2 mutant cells.
Additionally, complex III (CIII) was not affected by PPT-deficiency but reductions in CIII-
containing supercomplexes (SC) were observed (Figure 1E). Together, these data
demonstrate that PPT deficiency results in dysfunctional mitochondrial respiratory and ETC

assembly phenotypes similar to those of yeast and skeletal muscle myoblasts with impaired
mtACP acylation[9,13].

As we observed reduced proliferative activity in galactose media alongside a loss of ETC
assembly, we hypothesized that nutrient oxidation by the mitochondria would likely be altered
in PPT-deficient cells. Therefore, to assess the activity of the TCA cycle we cultured cells in
fully labeled ^{13}C-glutamine for up to 6 hours and evaluated carbon entry into TCA cycle
intermediates to assess reductive (blue) versus oxidative (red) use of glutamine (Figure 1F).
At steady state, PPT-deficient cells demonstrated an increase in the pool size of succinate
and a decrease in downstream metabolites such as fumarate, malate, and aspartate (Figure
1G, Supplemental Figure S1C-E). Pool sizes of citrate and α-ketoglutarate were variable
(Supplemental Figure S1F and G). However, the ratio of malate to citrate is consistently
reduced in PPT mutants compared to controls (Figure 1H). The reduction of TCA metabolites
downstream of succinate relative to citrate suggests a block in oxidative (NAD$^+$ consuming)
TCA cycle activity.

To assess whether this was due to a loss of oxidation of glutamine, citrate labeling
patterns were plotted. Citrate M+4 results from the oxidation of glutamine to oxaloacetate and
consumes NAD$^+$, whereas Citrate M+5 results from the reductive carboxylation of glutamine
to citrate and regenerates NAD$^+$. PPT-deficient cells had a reduction in M+4 citrate and an
increase in M+5 citrate compared to controls, indicating increased reductive carboxylation of
glutamine (Figure 1I). This is further supported by the increase in the ratio of citrate M+5:citrate
M+4 at isotopic steady state (Figure 1J).

Citrate produced in the mitochondria can also be transported to the cytosol to be broken
down by ATP-citrate lyase (ACLY) into malate and acetyl-CoA, with citrate M+4 producing
malate M+4 and citrate M+5 producing malate M+3 (Figure 1F). PPT-deficient cells displayed
a reduction in malate M+4, which likely results from the loss of M+4 citrate (Figure 1K).
However, the PPT-deficient cells did not display a concordant increase in M+3 malate,
indicating that differences in malate labeling patterns result from mitochondrial malate, and
conversion of citrate to malate in the cytosol is similar or reduced in PPT mutants (Figure 1K).
One possibility as to why ACLY activity appears to be similar or decreased in PPT-deficient
cells may relate to a loss of PPT's action on cytosolic fatty acid synthase (FASN), which likely
lowers consumption of cytosolic acetyl-CoA. In sum, the glutamine labeling patterns in PPT-
deficient cells support the loss of oxidative metabolism in the mitochondria, with an increase
in the reductive carboxylation of glutamine that is typical of cells with loss of ETC activity[14].

AASDHPPT is required for mtFAS

As *Aasdhppt* was clearly important for mitochondrial oxidative function, we next asked

which mitochondrial targets were likely to be most prominently involved in this phenotype. As

mentioned above, there are six known 4'PP-modified proteins in mammals, three of which are

localized within the mitochondria[6]. To explore which of these putative targets displayed the

strongest genetic relationships to PPT, we analyzed gene co-dependency relationships from

genome-wide CRISPR screens conducted by the DepMap project[15], using the DepMap Public

23Q4+ Score Chronos dataset, as an effective method to identify gene functionality within the

same biological pathway[16]. Gene effect score comparison between *AASDHPPT* and

NDUFAB1 showed a positive correlation (Pearson r = 0.24) (Figure 2A), whereas non-

significant or negative correlations were identified with the genes encoding the two other

mitochondrial phosphopantetheinylated proteins, *ALDH1L2* (Pearson r = 0.04) and *DHRS2*

(Pearson r = -0.12), respectively (Figure 2B and C). Additionally, *AASDHPPT* gene effect

scores showed a similar positive correlation with *FASN* as to *NDUFAB1* (Pearson r = 0.25)

whereas the genes encoding other cytoplasmic 4'PP-modified proteins, aminoadipate-

semialdehyde dehydrogenase (*AASDH*) and aldehyde dehydrogenase 1 family member L1

(*ALDH1L1*), were also non-significant (Supplemental Figure S2A-C).

Of note, we observed that the mtFAS pathway gene *OXSM* ranked third overall for co-

dependency with *AASDHPPT* (Pearson r = 0.42)[17] out of all genes in the Depmap database

(Figure 2D). Additional mtFAS pathway genes also ranked highly in terms of Aasdhppt co-

dependency, including *MCAT* and *MECR,* which like *OXSM* showed postive correlation scores

that were stronger than that of *NDUFAB1* or *FASN* (Pearson r = 0.36 and 0.32 respectively)

(Supplemental Figure S2D and E). Given that the 4'-PP modification is necessary for acyl

synthesis on NDUFAB1, these data suggested to us that impaired mitochondrial respiration

and TCA cycle metabolism in PPT-deficient cells may be primarily attributable to altered

mtFAS function.

To further explore the genetic relationships between *AASDHPPT* and mtFAS, we

performed clustering and two-dimensional mapping analysis of pairwise correlations of gene

essentiality scores with *AASDHPPT*. We included the genes that encode known

phosphopantetheinylated proteins, mtFAS pathway genes, downstream genes that encode

proteins involved in lipoic acid synthesis and ETC assembly - such as the l̲eucine, t̲yrosine,

a̲rginine m̲otif (LYRM) assembly factors which are regulated by mtFAS[13] - as well as genes

associated with the GO term "pantothenate metabolism" from the DepMap project database

(Figure 2E, Supplemental Figure S2F and G). Clustering analysis of co-dependency

correlations showed that mitochondrial and cytosolic fatty acid synthesis (clusters 1 and 2,

respectively) were distinctly separated (Supplemental Figure S2F). Two-dimensional mapping

of correlation distance then showed that these clusters were linked by *AASDHPPT* (Figure

2E). *AASDHPPT* most strongly correlated with mtFAS pathway genes, as well as LYRM family

members *NDUFA6* (*LYRM6*) and *NDUFB9* (*LYRM3*). This co-dependency suggested that PPT

may act as a critical regulator of mtFAS functional activity.

To test this hypothesis, we examined whether PPT-deficiency directly altered known

mtFAS pathway endpoints, including protein lipoylation and succinate dehydrogenase subunit

B (SDHB) stability, which is a reliable surrogate of the LYRM-dependent ETC assembly

mechanism we previously described[13]. PPT-deficient cells exhibited reduced lipoylation of

pyruvate dehydrogenase (PDH) and α-ketoglutarate dehydrogenase (OGDH) subunits (DLAT

and DLST, respectively) along with reduced stability of SDHB (Figure 2F), similar to the

molecular phenotype of mtFAS-deficient cells. 4'PP-modification of NDUFAB1 has been

demonstrated by SDS-PAGE of purified proteins, as unmodified apo-mtACP has a lower

molecular weight and thus migrates faster than 4'PP-modified holo-mtACP[8]. We found that

apo-mtACP accumulated, while holo-mtACP was depleted, in PPT-deficient cells (Figure 2F).

PDH and OGDH lipoylation, SDHB stability, and detection of holo-mtACP by SDS-PAGE

were all rescued in part by transient retroviral-mediated re-expression of full length

AASDHPPT with a C-terminal GFP-Flag tag (PPT-GFP) compared to a control vector

expressing mitochondrial-localized DSRed (mtDSRed) (Figure 2G). Additionally, basal

respiration and spare respiratory capacity were also both restored by retroviral-mediated

expression of PPT-GFP for both PPT-deficient cell lines (PPT-1 + PPT and PPT-2 + PPT,

Figure 2H). From these data, we conclude that AASDHPPT is required for 4'-PP modification

of NDUFAB1 and, therefore, for downstream mtFAS activity, protein lipoylation, ETC assembly

and mitochondrial respiration[11].

A pool of AASDHPPT localizes to the mitochondrial matrix

NDUFAB1 is localized within the mitochondrial matrix where it carries out its functions in

both *de novo* fatty acid synthesis and as a stable subunit of ETC complex I[18,19]. Previous work

has definitively demonstrated PPT activity in the cytoplasm, but it is unclear whether PPT is

only active in the cytoplasm, or if it also localizes to mitochondria in order to modify targets in

that compartment. To address this question, we performed immunofluorescence staining for

endogenous PPT expression and mitochondrial ATP synthase subunit ATP5a as a

mitochondrial marker protein (Figure 3A). PPT expression was significantly reduced in PPT-

deficient cells compared to controls, with clonal mutant PPT-2 exhibiting a stronger loss of
PPT intensity compared to PPT-1 (Figure 3B). Within the cytoplasm, PPT demonstrated a
punctate, perinuclear expression pattern that co-localized with ATP5a staining in control cells
(Pearson r = 0.60 and 0.62), and which decreased with PPT deficiency (Figure 3C).
Additionally, we used Mander's Colocalization Coefficient[20] to measure the fraction of PPT
that colocalizes with ATP5a, and conversely, the fraction of ATP5a that colocalizes with PPT.
As with Pearson co-localization, we found that PPT signal strongly overlapped with ATP5a in
control cells. In PPT-deficient cells, this overlap was only significantly reduced in PPT-2 clonal
mutants (Supplemental Figure S3A), characteristic of its strongly reduced fluorescent signal.
Conversely, ATP5a overlap with PPT was significantly reduced in both PPT-deficient clones
(Supplemental Figure S3B). Additionally, PPT expression was surprisingly observed in the
nucleus of some, but not all, cells; a finding that we did not pursue further in the present study
but which raises intriguing questions for future work.

Next, we performed Western blot analysis of subcellular fractions of control and PPT-
deficient clonal mutants. We detected endogenous PPT expression in both mitochondrial and
post-mitochondrial supernatant (PMS) fractions, which was reduced in PPT-deficient cells
(Figure 3D). We further characterized subcellular localization of PPT-GFP in skeletal
myoblasts with immunofluorescent staining of ATP5a. PPT-GFP showed strong signal overlap
with ATP5a in addition to nuclear expression and punctate distribution within the cytoplasm
(Figure 3E). Together with our immunofluorescence analyses, these data demonstrate that a
pool of PPT exhibits mitochondrial localization.

We next asked whether this pool of mitochondrially-localized PPT was actually inside the
mitochondrial matrix, where NDUFAB1 and the rest of the mtFAS machinery reside. To tackle
this question, we first used a Proteinase K protection assay in which intact, isolated
mitochondria were treated with increasing concentrations of detergent to permeabilize first the
outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM) and later the inner mitochondrial membrane (IMM).
Western blotting and comparison to control proteins with known sub-mitochondrial localization
thus reveals which sub-compartment of the mitochondria a target protein localizes to. OMM
proteins (such as mitofusin 2, Mfn2) are degraded sooner than matrix-localized proteins (such
as citrate synthase, CS) (Figure 4A). Blotting for PPT-GFP revealed two bands in whole
isolated mitochondria; the top band corresponded to the predicted molecular weight of PPT-
GFP, while the lower band ran at the molecular weight of free GFP. The higher molecular
weight PPT-GFP band behaved similarly to MFN2, while the lower molecular weight band
exhibited a similar pattern to CS (Figure 4A). These data led us to propose a model in which

PPT-GFP associates with mitochondria, and is imported into the mitochondrial matrix, where

the GFP tag may be proteolytically cleaved, giving rise to the free GFP band in our Proteinase

K protection assay.

To further test this model using an orthogonal method, we employed a bimolecular

fluorescence complementation (BiFC) system[21] to visualize and provide additional confidence

in the sub-mitochondrial localization of PPT. We used a split-Venus fluorophore tag system in

which the N-terminus of the split-Venus tag (VN, residues 1-172) was attached to either the

N- or C-terminus of PPT, while the C-terminus of the split-Venus tag (VC, residues 155-238)

was attached to the C-terminus of a sub-mitochondrial localization control protein (MFN2 or

CS) or NDUFAB1. This system allows us to observe fluorescent signal only when both halves

of the split-Venus tag are able to spatially associate within a compartment[21]. Flow cytometric

analysis was performed to quantify Venus fluorescence in each of our BiFC conditions. Cells

expressing individual split-Venus constructs (i.e., VC or VN, but not both) were used to

determine a background level of fluorescence, against which a true Venus-positive signal

could be detected. Using this method, we validated that these single construct cell lines, as

expected, were Venus-negative (Figure 4B and C). In cells expressing N-terminally tagged

PPT (VN-PPT), positive Venus fluorescence was only detected when co-expressed with

MFN2-VC (Figure 4B-D), indicating that N-terminally tagged VN-PPT is mitochondrially

associated on the OMM. Opposingly, in cells expressing C-terminally tagged PPT (PPT-VN),

Venus signal was observed when co-expressed with either CS-VC or NDUFAB1-VC (Figure

4B-D). Together with our Proteinase K assay (Figure 4A), these data provide strong evidence

that a pool of PPT indeed localizes to the mitochondrial matrix.

Mitochondrial localization of AASDHPPT is required for functional mtFAS

Most mitochondrial proteins are encoded by nuclear genes and are targeted to and

imported into mitochondria via an N-terminal mitochondrial targeting sequence (MTS). Most

MTS consist of approximately 20 to 40 amino acid residues, and direct proteins destined for

the mitochondria to the TIM/TOM complex for import[22]. In addition, our BiFC data showed that

tagging PPT on the N-terminus prevented its localization in the mitochondrial matrix (Figure

4B-D). We therefore hypothesized that mitochondrial localization of PPT may also be driven

by a N-terminal MTS. To test this, we generated truncation constructs lacking the first 13 or

36 amino acids of PPT (PPT$_{\Delta1-13}$-GFP and PPT$_{\Delta1-36}$-GFP), as its amino acid sequence contains

two methionine residues downstream of the start codon at positions 14 and 37. Fluorescent

microscopy revealed that while PPT-GFP signal overlapped strongly with ATP5a, PPT$_{\Delta1-13}$-

GFP exhibited diffuse localization throughout the nucleus and cytoplasm (Figure 5A).
Moreover, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP exhibited weak fluorescent expression mostly within the nucleus,
suggesting that this N-terminal truncation destabilizes PPT (Figure 5A). Pearson's correlation
analysis showed a strong correlation for full length PPT-GFP and ATP5a, which was
significantly reduced with PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP and even more so with PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP (Figure 5B).
Similarly, Mander's colocalization coefficients demonstrated that the percent of total PPT-GFP
overlapping with ATP5a signal was significantly reduced only in PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP expressing
cells, whereas the diffuse distribution pattern of PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP within the cell maintained strong
fluorescent signal overlap with ATP5a (Supplemental Figure S5A). In contrast, the total ATP5a
overlap with PPT-GFP was reduced for both truncation mutants (Supplemental Figure S5B).
Sub-cellular fractionation and Western blotting supported our microscopy results, showing
that while PPT-GFP and PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP are both present in post-mitochondrial supernatant
(PMS) and mitochondrial fractions, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP accumulates in the PMS (Figure 5C),
suggesting difficulty in localizing to mitochondria. As expected, based on our microscopy
analysis, weak expression of PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP was detected only in the PMS (Figure 5C),
indicating that this truncation cannot be imported into the mitochondria and appears to be less
stable.

To test whether this newfound mitochondrial localization is required for PPT to modify
mitochondrially localized target proteins, we transduced PPT-deficient cells with a control
mitochondrial DSRed (mtDSRed) construct, PPT-GFP, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP, or PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP, and
assessed mtFAS pathway activity. Expression of PPT-GFP rescued protein lipoylation and
SDHB stability in PPT-deficient cells, whereas PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP and PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP both failed to
significantly increase either of these mtFAS-dependent endpoints (Figure 5D, Supplemental
Figure S5C). These data suggest that mitochondrial localization of PPT is required for 4'PP-
modification of NDUFAB1. To further investigate whether mitochondrial localization of PPT is
required for OXPHOS activity, we performed growth assays in glucose- and galactose-
containing media, with cells expressing mtDSRed, PPT-GFP, or PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP as above, to
assess the ability of each construct to rescue respiration-dependent growth. Regardless of
rescue construct, PPT-deficient cells all still exhibited significantly reduced growth in glucose
media (Figure 5E, Supplemental Figure S5D). However, in galactose media, while expression
of PPT-GFP and PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP both partially rescued growth of PPT-deficient cells, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-
GFP rescued less well than the full length PPT-GFP construct (Figure 5F, Supplemental
Figure S5D). Together, these data demonstrate that mitochondrial localization of PPT is

necessary for phosphopantetheinylation of NDUFAB1, mtFAS pathway activity, and cellular
respiration.

Identification of AASDHPPT patient variants of unknown significance

We recently described a pathogenic variant in the mtFAS gene *MCAT* c.812T>C; p.T271I
(rs760294168; NM_173467.4), which displayed perturbed ETC complex assembly and
cellular respiration[23]. As our data demonstrate that perturbed *Aasdhppt* expression results in
similar phenotypes in cultured mouse skeletal myoblasts, we wondered whether there may
be patients with pathological variants in *AASDHPPT*. We searched the ClinVar database[24]
and identified several missense variants of uncertain significance (VUS) in *AASDHPPT* that
were associated with inborn genetic diseases. We selected six of these variants for analysis:
c.343C>T; p.P12S (NM_015423.3), c.140G>A; pR47H (NM_015423.3), c.214G>T; pA72T
(NM_015423.3), c.235T>G; pW79G (NM_015423.3), c.247C>T; pR83C (NM_015423.3), and
c.286A>G; pK96E (NM_015423.3). The P12S variant corresponds to an alteration in the
putative MTS of PPT (Figure 5) whereas the other VUS correspond to alterations in the acetyl-
CoA binding domain[25]. We created each of these missense mutations in our full length PPT-
GFP construct and assessed their ability to rescue perturbed mtFAS activity in our PPT-
deficient cells (Figure 6A-B). Although each construct showed some rescue capability, PPT-
GFP R47H and PPT-GFP W79G exhibited weaker rescue effects compared to the other
variants (Figure 6A-B). In particular, cells expressing the PPT-GFP W79G variant showed
reduced protein lipoylation and SDHB, along with low levels of GFP signal compared to the
other variants, despite expression from the same promoter (EF-1α promoter). This suggests
that this variant may have reduced protein stability. These data serve to highlight the R47H
and W79G variants of *AASDHPPT* as potential clinical pathologic variants, with phenotypes
attributable to altered mtFAS activity and perturbed cellular respiration.

Discussion

Here we show for the first time that a pool of PPT localizes to the mitochondrial matrix via
a N-terminal MTS, and that this mitochondrial localization is required for 4'PP-modification of
NDUFAB1, the mitochondrial ACP. Loss of PPT results in impaired mtFAS activity, ETC
assembly, and mitochondrial respiration, with a concurrent increase in reductive
carboxylation, as seen in other models of ETC dysfunction. We further identify two clinical
VUS in *AASDHPPT* that fail to rescue PPT-deficient cells, which we therefore hypothesize
may be disease-causing variants in human patients. Our data position PPT as a critical

mediator of mitochondrial oxidative function, owing to its requirement for proper function of

the mtFAS pathway. The observation that *AASDHPPT* most closely correlated with mtFAS

genes in the DepMap co-dependency dataset (Figure 2A,B, Supplemental Figure S2D,E)

supports the idea that activation of mtFAS, through 4'-PP modification of NDUFAB1, is the

essential function of PPT, followed closely by 4'-PP modification of FASN. Importantly, our

findings identify several fundamental unknowns: What factors regulate PPT activity, and how

might the sub-cellular compartment affect regulation? What process(es) control PPT targeting

to the mitochondria versus other compartments? How might we target the mitochondrial

functions of PPT in patients with disease-causing *AASDHPPT* variants?

The discovery of distinct pools of PPT raises questions about what factors control PPT

activity in each compartment. As an enzyme, PPT activity could be controlled via PTMs,

protein-protein interactions, or substrate availability, all of which are likely to differ between

the cytoplasm and mitochondria. For instance, PPT uses CoA as the substrate for 4'PP-

modification of target proteins. CoA abundance is drastically different between the cytoplasm

and mitochondria; mitochondrial free CoA is thought to be in the range of 2.55–3.35mM,

whereas cytoplasmic concentrations range from 50–90µM[26]. How CoA synthesis is controlled

and directed to various subcellular compartments is an area of active study. The first step in

CoA synthesis is both compartmentalized and highly regulated by pantothenate kinases

(PANKs), which have been proposed to act as metabolic sensors that coordinate CoA

synthesis and availability with the metabolic needs of the cell[26]. However, the localization of

some enzymatic steps further down the synthesis pathway remain unknown. Moreover, CoA

is transported into mitochondria via the solute carrier (SLC) protein SLC25A42, and perhaps

also via SLC25A16, the Graves' disease carrier protein[26], thus alterations to CoA transport

are another potential mechanism that could affect CoA availability in mitochondria. The effect

of perturbations in CoA availability on PPT enzymatic activity remains unclear, but may have

important implications for PPT targets such as mtFAS in diseases with CoA dysregulation

(synthesis defects, transport defects).

Beyond substrate-level regulation, PPT activity may also be controlled via regulation of its

own localization to the cytoplasm or mitochondria. Our data demonstrate that PPT is targeted

to mitochondria via a N-terminal MTS, but how this localization is controlled in cells to produce

two distinct pools is completely unstudied. We hypothesize several possibilities that may affect

the outcome of where PPT is localized: 1) at the level of transcription, via an alternate start

site that would exclude the MTS, 2) at the level of mRNA processing, via an alternatively

spliced isoform that would remove the MTS, or 3) via a post-translational modification or

association that would preclude the function of the MTS. Irrespective of which of these

mechanisms is involved, it is plausible that the choice of PPT localization may be dynamic

and influenced by changes in cellular state, such as differentiation or metabolic status. We

also unexpectedly observed a pool of PPT within the nucleus. None of the known 4'PP-

modified proteins are nuclear, raising the exciting possibility that PPT may have an

undescribed nuclear function. Future work aimed at understanding the nuclear function(s) of

PPT and their regulation will be crucial to developing a full understanding of PPT function in

cells.

Of note, we identified two potentially pathogenic patient variants in *AASDHPPT*. Our

results predict that patients harboring these mutant alleles may exhibit impaired mtFAS,

leading to diminished mitochondrial function. These data add to the growing list of patients

with mutations in mtFAS genes and other CoA metabolism genes, such as the PANKs, and

support the notion that impairments in CoA metabolism may cause disease via mtFAS

dysfunction[27,28]. Importantly, we evaluated the functionality of each variant in this study by

testing their ability to rescue mtFAS impairment in PPT-deficient cells. As described above, to

do so we ectopically expressed the missense mutation construct under the control of the

constitutively expressed EF-1α promoter, a strategy that we have successfully employed in

the past to identify a functionally impaired variant of the mtFAS gene MCAT[23]. However,

because this strategy relies on overexpression, it is possible that variants that cause weak

impairments would be able to rescue fully in this assay, because of the high levels of

expression. Thus, our data do not rule out the possibility that the VUS tested herein might still

cause mtFAS defects in endogenous settings.

Altogether, this study identifies AASDHPPT as the PPTase responsible for the addition of

4'-PP to NDUFAB1, and further demonstrates that mitochondrial localization of PPT is

required for this function. Future studies are needed to illuminate the processes that regulate

PPT activity and sub-cellular localization. Such work will be critical in improving our

understanding of how this pleiotropic enzyme controls mitochondrial oxidative function.

Methods

Aasdhppt mutant cell lines, growth assays, and viral transduction

C2C12 immortalized mouse skeletal myoblasts (ATCC CRL-1772, verification provided by

ATCC) were grown in DMEM supplemented with 4.5 g/L glucose, glutamine, and sodium

pyruvate (Corning, 10-013-CV) and 10% FBS (Sigma, F0926) in humidified tissue culture

incubators at 37°C, 5% CO_2. To generate *Aasdhppt* mutant clones, four sgRNA sequences

(**Table 1)** were designed targeting exon 1 or exon 2 of the mouse *Aasdhppt* gene and

subcloned into the pLentiCRISPR v2 vector using previously described methods[29]. Parental

C2C12s were transfected with pLentiCRISPRv2_sgAasdhppt or empty vector. 48 hours after

transfection, cells were sorted on GFP signal intensity and plated into 96-well plates to obtain

single cell colonies for expansion and establishment of stable, clonal cell lines. Clones were

screened for AASDHPPT protein expression levels and two control clones and two *Aasdhppt*

mutant clones were selected for further experiments. For growth assays 10,000 cells/well

were plated in 12-well plates or 1,000 cells/well in 48-well plates and grown in DMEM with

either no sodium pyruvate, 4 mM glutamine, and 25 mM glucose or no sodium pyruvate, 4

mM glutamine, and 10 mM galactose for 3 days in technical triplicates. Tissue culture plates

were placed in an IncuCyte® chamber (Sartorius) and percent confluency was measured from

sixteen, 10X magnification fields per well for 12-well plates, or nine, 10X magnification fields

for 48-well plates every 6 hours. For rescue experiments, control and *Aasdhppt* mutant clonal

lines were transiently infected with retrovirus harboring a control transfer plasmid expressing

mtDSRed (pQXCIP mtDSRed) or pMMLV retrovirus vectors custom designed, synthesized,

and purchased from VectorBuilder (Chicago, IL, USA), harboring full length, or N-terminal

truncations of residues 1-13 or 1-36, of AASDHPPT with C-terminal GFP and Flag tag- fusion.

For generation of retrovirus constructs harboring single point mutations in the full length

AASDHPPT-GFP-Flag construct, primers in **Table 2** were used with a New England Biolabs

Q5 Site-Directed Mutagenesis Kit. Plasmid reactions were transformed into competent *E. coli*

and selected colonies were sequence validated for successful incorporation of point

mutations.

Genomic Sequence Analysis of AASDHPPT Mutants

Approximately five million cells of each clonal mutant cell line, PPT-1 and PPT-2, were

pelleted and washed with PBS then frozen at -80ºC. Genomic DNA was extracted using a

column-based kit assay (Qiagen 69504). Aasdhppt was amplified using primers described in

Table 3, and sanger sequenced using the forward primer. Sanger sequencing peaks were

deconvoluted using the Indigo web-based software (https://www.gear-genomics.com)[30].

SDS-PAGE and immunoblotting

Cultured cells were scraped from tissue culture plates directly into RIPA buffer

supplemented with mammalian protease inhibitor cocktail (mPIC, Millipore Sigma) and Pierce

Universal Nuclease, incubated at 4°C with constant agitation on a microcentrifuge tube orbital
shaker, then centrifuged at 17,000 x g for 20 minutes at 4°C to remove insoluble material.
Supernatant was then transferred to a new microcentrifuge tube to be saved as whole cell
lysate (WCL). For denoted protein analysis, WCL, PMS, and/or crude mitochondrial fractions
were first normalized for total protein content via Pierce BCA Protein assay (Thermo Fisher
Scientifc 23225). Samples were resolved by SDS-PAGE and transferred to nitrocellulose
membranes. Immunoblotting was performed using the indicated primary antibodies (**Table 4**)
with visualization and analysis of protein signal using Rabbit and Mouse IgG Antibody DyLight
680, or 800, Conjugated secondary antibodies and Bio-Rad ChemiDoc Imaging System.
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Seahorse Extracellular Flux Rate Assay
Extracellular flux rate assays were performed on a Seahorse XFe96 Analyzer (Agilent).
Cells from the indicated clones were plated in approximately 22 wells of a 96-well seahorse
plate at a density of 10,000 cells/well in DMEM +10% FBS and allowed to adhere overnight.
The morning of the assay, cells were washed twice and media was replaced with non-buffered
seahorse media (Agilent 103680) supplemented with 25 mM glucose, 2 mM glutamine, and 1
mM sodium pyruvate. A standard mitochondrial stress test was then performed using 1 µM
oligomycin, 3 µM FCCP, and 0.5 µM Rotenone + 0.5 µM Antimycin A. Baseline oxygen
consumption was measured three times, followed by acute injection of oligomycin, followed
by FCCP and finally Rotenone + Antimycin A. Measurements were standard, with acute
injection of drug followed by 3 minutes of mixing then measurements of oxygen levels over 3
minutes, with three measurements per phase. Data were normalized with crystal violet
absorption for approximation of cell number. Results were analyzed in WAVE software.
499

Crude mitochondrial isolation
Cells were harvested and processed as previously described[13]. Briefly, cells were
harvested by trypsinization, washed once with cold, sterile PBS (Gibco, 10010-023), then
stored at -80°C. At the time of mitochondrial isolation, cell pellets were thawed and
resuspended in 1 mL CP-1 buffer (100 mM KCl, 50 mM Tris-HCL, 2 mM EGTA, pH 7.4)
supplemented with mammalian protease inhibitor cocktail (mPIC, Millipore Sigma P8340) and
mechanically lysed by 10 passes through a 1 mL insulin syringe with 26-guage needle and
centrifuged at 700 x g for 10 minutes to pellet unlysed cells and debris. Supernatant was
transferred to a new microcentrifuge tube and centrifuged at 10,000 x g for 10 minutes to
pellet the crude mitochondrial fraction. Post-mitochondrial supernatant (PMS) was used for

Western blot analysis or discarded. Mitochondrial pellets were resuspended in a small volume
of either RIPA buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0, 1 mM EDTA, 0.5 mM EGTA, 1% Triton X-100,
0.1% Sodium Deoxycholate, 0.1% SDS, 140 mM NaCl) supplemented with mPIC, or CP-1
buffer, equal to approximately twice the pellet volume. Resuspended pellets were then used
for applications described below.

Blue Native-PAGE

Crude mitochondrial fractions were prepared and normalized for total protein content as
previously described. 100 µg of mitochondria were pelleted at 10,000 x g for 10 minutes at
4°C. Supernatant was removed and pellets were resuspended in 60 µL of 1x pink lysis buffer
(Invitrogen BN2003). Digitonin (GoldBio D-180-2.5) was added to samples at a final
concentration of 1% mass/volume and samples were incubated on ice for 15 min. Insoluble
material was pelleted by centrifugation at 17,000 x g for 20 minutes and supernatant was
transferred to new microcentrifuge tubes. 6 µL of NativePAGE sample buffer (Invitrogen
BN2004) was added to samples and 10 µL of sample (~15 µg of crude mitochondrial fraction)
was loaded per lane on pre-cast 3-12%, Bis-Tris NativePAGE gels (Invitrogen BN1001BOX)
with NativePAGE anode buffer (Invitrogen 2001) and dark blue cathode buffer (Invitrogen
BN2002) at 150V for 30-40 minutes then switched to light blue cathode buffer and run at 20
V overnight. Gels were then transferred to PVDF membranes at 100 V for 2 hours and blotted
with the indicated primary antibodies (**Table 4**. Secondary anti-mouse HRP antibody and
SuperSignal West Femto Maximum Sensitivity Substrate (Thermo Fisher Scientific 34096)
was used to visualize bands with a Bio-Rad ChemiDoc Imaging System.

Glutamine Tracing

The indicated clonal cell lines were plated in 6-well plates in triplicate at a density of 200K
for PPT-1 and PPT-2, and 175K for Ctrl-1 and Ctrl-2 to account for differences in growth rate.
Cells were allowed to adhere for two hours, at which point the media was changed to
unlabeled media (Corning DMEM 17-207-CV with 1mM sodium pyruvate, 5mM glucose, and
4mM glutamine). After twenty hours in unlabeled media, wells were changed to labeled media
at the indicated time points prior to harvest (Corning DMEM 17-207-CV with 1mM sodium
pyruvate, 5mM glucose, and 4mM U^{13}C-glutamine). Three wells per cell line were left
unlabeled for natural isotope abundance correction, and another three per cell line were used
to determine cell number at the time of freezing. 24 hours after cells were in unlabeled media,
all wells were washed with normal saline once and frozen at -80°C. Plates were then extracted

for metabolites using a volume of 40:20:20 methanol:acetonitrile:water scaled to the number

of cells determined by the cell count wells (average from three wells). Lysates were sonicated

and incubated on ice for 60 minutes. At this point any insoluble material was spun out of the

sample at 17,000 x g for 10 minutes at 4°C. 1000 µL of supernatant was dried using a

SpeedVac concentrator. Dried metabolomics extracts were next resuspended in 100% water

containing 25 µg/mL D5-Glutamate (DLM-556, Cambridge) such that resuspension sample

equivalents were 5.82E+3 cells/µL. 2 µL of resuspended samples were injected on column, a

process blank was analyzed before and after experimental samples, and a pooled sample

was injected twice before experimental samples for column conditioning, and every 7-10

sample injections thereafter. Data dependent MS2 (ddMS2) data was collected from pooled

experimental replicates to identify group-specific compounds.

Data were collected on a Vanquish liquid chromatography system coupled to an Orbitrap

Exploris 240 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) using a heated electrospray ionization (H-ESI) source

in ESI negative mode. All samples were run through a 24-minute reversed-phase

chromatography ZORBAX extend-C18 column (1.8 µm, 2.1mm × 150mm, 759700-902,

Agilent, California, USA) combined with a guard column (1.8 µm, 2.1 mm × 5 mm, 821725-

907, Agilent). Mobile phase A was LC/MS H_2O (W6-4, Fisher) with 3% LC/MS grade MeOH

(A456-4, Fisher), mobile phase B was LC/MS grade methanol (A456-4, Fisher), and both

mobile phases contained 10 mM tributylamine (90780-100ML, Sigma), 15 mM acetic acid,

and 0.01% medronic acid (v/v, 5191-4506, Agilent). For the re-equilibration gradient, mobile

phase A was kept the same, and mobile phase B was 99% LC/MS grade acetonitrile (A955-

4, Fisher). Column temperature was kept at 35ºC, flow rate 0.25 mL/min, and the solvent

gradient was as follows: 0-2.5 min held at 0% B, 2.5-7.5 min from 0% B to 20% B, 7.5-13 min

from 20% B to 45% B, 13-20 min from 45% B to 99% B, and 20-24 min held at 99% B. The

analytical solvent gradient was followed by a 16 min re-equilibration gradient to prep the

column before the next sample injection that went as follows: 0-0.05 min held at 99% B at

0.25 mL/min, 0.05-1 min from 99% B to 50% B and 0.25 mL/min to 0.1 mL/min, 1-11 min held

at 50% B and 0.1 mL/min, 11-11.05 min from 50% B to 0% B at 0.1 mL/min, 11.05-14 min held

at 0% B at 0.1 mL/min, 14-14.05 min held at 0% B and increased flow rate from 0.1 mL/min

to 0.25 mL/min, and 14.05-16 min held at 0% B and 0.25 mL/min. The mass spectrometer

acquisition settings were as follows: source voltage -2,500V, sheath gas 60, aux gas 19,

sweep gas 1, ion transfer tube temperature 320ºC, and vaporizer temperature 250ºC. Full

scan data were collected with a scan range of 70-800 m/z at a mass resolution of 240,000.

Fragmentation data was collected using a data-dependent MS2 (ddMS2) acquisition method

with MS1 mass resolution at 120,000, MS2 mass resolution at 15,000, and HCD collision
energy fixed at 30%.

Natural isotope abundance correction was done using the FluxFix Isotopologue Analysis
Tool*14* (version 0.1) web-based application[31]. Data analysis was conducted in Skyline (version
23.1.0.268), consisting of peak picking and integration, using an in-house curated compound
database of accurate mass MS1 and retention time derived from analytical standards and/or
MS2 spectral matches for the specified chromatography method.

AASDHPPT co-essentiality analysis and network modeling

Gene essentiality scores and gene co-dependency Pearson correlation values were
obtained from the DepMap Portal Project Achilles 23Q4 release[17,32–34] in which genome-wide
CRISPR loss-of-function screens were performed in 1100 human cancer cell lines. Co-
Dependency plots between AASDHPPT and other genes were generated from gene
essentiality scores for each cancer line obtained directly from the DepMap Portal. For two-
dimensional network analysis, gene essentiality correlations for a custom list of genes were
used to create a data matrix (see Supplementary Excel File**)**. From this matrix, methodologies
and code originally published by Arnold et al.[35] and available at: https://github.com/finley-
lab/coessentiality-network were first used to generate a correlation matrix heatmap of
codependent gene modules. Co-dependent gene modules were then visualized as a network
diagram and genes with low correlation scores (Pearson r < 0.2) were filtered out as previously
described[35]. Graph edges were weighted according to the strength of pairwise gene
correlations.

Cell immunostaining and microscopy analysis

Denoted C2C12 cell lines were seeded into chambered cover glass slides and cultured
overnight. The following day, cells were fixed in ice-cold 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) in PBS
solution for 10 minutes at room temperature, followed by 3 washes in 1X PBS solution. Cells
were then permeabilized and blocked in PBS solution containing 0.5% BSA, 5% goat serum,
and 0.3% Triton X-100 for 1 hour at room temperature. Cells permeabilized/blocked with
blocking buffer were then incubated with denoted primary antibodies overnight at 4°C followed
by washes with 1X PBS prior to incubation with Alexa Fluor conjugated secondary antibodies
(**Table 4**) for 2 hours at room temperature. Washes were repeated and cells were then stained
with Hoechst Dye for 10 minutes at room temperature. After subsequent washes, samples

were then imaged on a Zeiss LSM 880 with Airyscan and non-linear optics microscope, using
a 40X water objective and 1.2 NA to collect z-stacks.

For quantification of endogenous AASDHPPT expression in control and *Aasdhppt* mutant
clonal lines, regions of interest (ROIs) were manually drawn with Fiji software for individual
cells from channels with fluorescent ATP5a expression. Area was then measured for each
ROI with corresponding mean fluorescent intensity of signal from the AASDHPPT fluorescent
channel. Mean fluorescent intensity per cell area was then calculated.

For colocalization analysis of endogenous AASDHPPT or AASDHPPT-GFP fusion
constructs with mitochondrial proteins in maximum intensity projections of each imaged field,
nuclear signal detected by Hoechst Dye staining was first used to create ROIs in Fiji. Pixels
with signal detected in nuclear ROIs in red and green channels were then removed from
images of the same field prior to merging of red and green channels so that colocalization
analysis would be exclusive of nuclei and limited to subcellular organelles and cytoplasmic
regions. Merged channels were then processed by the BIOP JACoP Fiji plugin
(https://c4science.ch/w/bioimaging_and_optics_platform_biop/image-
processing/imagej_tools/jacop_b/) using the Otsu method of thresholding for each channel to
generate Pearsons Correlation values and Manders Colocalization Coefficients.
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Sub-mitochondrial Localization Assay

The crude mitochondrial fraction and post-mitochondrial supernatant (PMS) fractions were
isolated as described above from C2C12 cells expressing C' GFP-tagged AASDHPPT via a
EF-1α promoter. The crude mitochondrial fraction was washed with CP-1 buffer without mPIC
twice, and resuspended at a concentration of 5µg/µL, as determined by BCA assay. A total of
25 µg was then diluted to 100 µL with CP-1 buffer with or without 2 µg/mL proteinase K (New
England Biolabs P8107S) and the indicated concentration of digitonin or 2% Triton. Samples
were incubated on ice for 30 minutes, then the proteinase activity was halted with the addition
of mPIC, and the remaining crude mitochondria pelleted at 12,500 x g for 5 minutes at 4°C.
Pellets were then resuspended in 50uL Laemli buffer, and samples were resolved on SDS-
PAGE 4-20% gradient gels (BioRad 4561094). Proteins were transferred to nitrocellulose
membranes and immunoblotted for the GFP tag and for proteins of known mitochondrial
localization using the indicated primary antibodies (**Table 4**)
642

Bimolecular fluorescence complementation (BiFC) assay

To generate BiFC cell lines, five split-Venus constructs were designed and synthesized by
VectorBuilder in a pMMLV retroviral backbone. Constructs were designed to contain either the
C' terminal half of the Venus tag with blasticidin resistance (VC), or the N' terminal half of the
Venus tag with puromycin resistance (VN). VC constructs were tagged to the C' terminal end
of *citrate synthase* (CS-VC), *mitofusin 2* (MFN2-VC) or *Ndufab1* (NDUFAB1-VC). VN
constructs were tagged to either the C' or N' terminal end of *Aasdhppt* (PPT-VN and VN-PPT,
respectively). Following retroviral packaging in HEK293T cells, 40,000 wildtype C2C12 cells
were transduced to express either PPT-VN or VN-PPT in combination with each VC construct.
Negative control lines were generated by transducing cells with individual VC or VN constructs
alongside an empty vector control (PQXCIP for VC constructs, and PQXCIB for VN
constructs). This ensured that all cells were transduced with an approximately equal total viral
load. Stable populations were derived via combined puromycin and blasticidin selection (2
µg/mL each), yielding 11 cell lines in total; 6 with combined VC/VN constructs plus 5 single
construct controls.

For measurement of fluorescence, approximately 100,000 cells were trypsinized and
resuspended in 200 µL PBS. Cell suspensions were then assessment on an Accuri bench-top
cytometer, recording a minimum of 20,000 events per sample. The percentage of Venus-
positive cells was analyzed using FlowJo (v. 10.10.0). Fluorescence intensity histograms were
generated using FlowJo Layout Editor. Visual confirmation of fluorescence achieved by
imaging all BiFC cell lines on a Nikon Eclipse Ti2 microscope. Briefly, 20,000 cells per cell line
were seeded in chamber cover slides (Cellvis, C4-1.5H-N). After 24 hours, cells were fixed in
4% PFA for 30 mins at room temperature before imaging the following day (20X objective,
0.75 NA).

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism 10. Unless otherwise note, data
were analyzed by one-way ANOVA followed by Dunnett's multiple comparison test (when
compared to only control) or Šídák's or Tukey's multiple comparison test (when comparing all
groups). A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant. Data that included a third
vairable (ex. time) was analyzed by two-way ANOVA followed by Tukeys multiple comparison
test.

Table 1

sgRNA cloned into pLentiCRISPRv2	sequence

PPT 1	GATGCGGTCTATCCAGCCGG
PPT 2	GCAGACGGATATGATCCCAA
PPT 3	AGCGGACCGAGCCGGTCGTA
PPT 4	GGAACACCATACGACCGGCT

678 **Table 2**

Primers for site-directed mutagenesis	sequence
P12S Fwd	GTGCGTGGTGAGCTCCATGGAGG
P12S Rev	AGCCTCTTAGCGGGG
R47H Fwd	GGAGAAGGAGCATATCGGCAAGTTC
R47H Rev	TCCGGCTGGATAGAC
A72T Fwd	GAAATTAGTTACCGAGAAATTGAATATCCC
A72T Rev	CTTATCATCAAACGACCAG
W79G Fwd	GAATATCCCTGGCGATCATATCCGTC
W79G Rev	AATTTCTCTGCAACTAATTTC
R83C Fwd	GGATCATATCTGCCTGCAGAGAAC
R83C Rev	CAAGGGATATTCAATTTCTC
K96E Fwd	GGTTCTTGCGGAAGACTCGTTGA
K96E Rev	GGCTTTCCCTTTGAAGTTCTC

680 **Table 3**
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Primers for Genomic Amplification of *Aasdhppt*	
Forward Primer	TACCTGGCTTGAGGATCAGC
Reverse Primer	GGTTCTGCAGCAAGAACTGCAT

684 **Table 4**

Antibodies	Source and reference number
AASDHPPT	Proteintech 11244-1-AP
β-actin	Proteintech 66009-1-Ig
GRIM19	Abcam ab110240

SDHA	Abcam ab14715
UQCRFS1	Abcam ab14746
MTCO1	Abcam ab110270
ATP5a	Abcam ab14748
Lipoic acid	Millipore 437695
SDHB	Abcam ab14714
Mfn2	Cell Signaling Technologies 9482S
Citrate Synthase	Cell Signaling Technologies 14309S
NDUFAB1	Abcam ab96230
GFP	Abcam ab290
Goat anti-Mouse IgG (H+L) AlexaFluor 568	Thermo Fisher A-11004

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analysis, the Optical Imaging Core (RRID:SCR_021968) for their assistance with airyscan
microscopy, and the Bioinformatics and Biostatistics Core (RRID:SCR_024762) for their
assistance with gene essentiality score correlation network analysis.

Figure Legends

Figure 1. AASDHPPT is required for mitochondrial oxidative metabolism.

(A) Whole cell lysates were immunoblotted for the denoted targets. Data are representative of three biological replicates (B-C) Cells were grown in either 25 mM glucose (B) or 10 mM galactose (C) in an IncuCyte® system with images captured every 6 hours for 3 days. Data represent the mean confluency; error bars denote SEM * = $p < 0.05$. ns = no significance. (D) Seahorse mitochondrial stress test for Oxygen Consumption Rate (OCR). (E) Blue-native PAGE separation of isolated mitochondrial protein complexes from denoted cell lines, followed

by immunoblot with the indicated antibodies. Data are representative of three biological

replicates. (F) Schematic of isotopomeric labeling patterns upon substitution of $U^{13}C$-

glutamine for unlabeled glutamine. Open circles indicate ^{12}C carbons, where circles with grey,

red, or blue, indicate ^{13}C carbons. (G-H) Triplicate samples of the indicated cell lines cultured

in $U^{13}C$-glutamine for the indicated time points, harvested, and analyzed via LC-MS. Steady

state metabolite pool sizes and ratios are shown for the 4-hour labeling time point. (I-K)

Fractional enrichment of given isotopologues is represented as percentage of the total pool

at each indicated time point. Ratio of Citrate M+5 to Citrate M+4 and statistical comparisons

are shown for the four-hour time point. Error bars represent SEM (B, C), SD (D, G, H, J). * =

$p<0.05$ ** = $p<0.01$, *** = $p<0.001$, **** = $p<0.0001$ as determined by one-way ANOVA (G, H,

J) or two-way ANOVA (I, K) and Tukey multiple comparisons test

Figure 2. AASDHPPT is required for mitochondrial fatty acid synthesis pathway

function.

(A-D) Codependency plots of gene essentiality scores comparing *AASDHPPT* with

NDUFAB1 (A), *ALDH1L2* (B), *DHRS2* (C)*, and *OXSM* (D) from DepMap CRISPR screens[17,32–

34,36]**. (E) Two-dimensional network diagram representing gene essentiality score correlations

between selected genes associated with *AASDHPPT* and known substrate targets, mtFAS

pathway members, LYRM family members, and the GO term "pantothenate metabolism" using

a minimum threshold correlation score > 0.2. Different colors represent genes associated with

clusters as shown in Supplemental Figure 2F. Correlation strength is represented by the length

and thickness of the connecting edge. (F) Whole cell lysates immunoblotted for the denoted

targets. Data are representative of three biological replicates. # denotes non-specific bands.

Red asterisk denotes positive PPT expression band in clonal controls that is reduced in PPT-

deficient mutants. (G) Whole cell lysates from indicated cell lines expressing either mtDSRed

or PPT-GFP fusion protein were immunoblotted for protein expression of the denoted targets.

Data are representative of three biological replicates. (H) Seahorse standard mitochondrial

stress test to determine Oxygen Consumption Rate (OCR). Data are representative of three

independent experiments. Error bars represent SD.

Figure 3. A portion of AASDHPPT localizes to mitochondria.

(A) Representative 40X HPF images of *Aasdhppt* mutants and control clonal cell lines

immunostained with Hoechst dye to visualize nuclei and antibodies against AASDHPPT (red)

and ATP5a (green). (B) Quantification of mean fluorescent intensity of AASDHPPT expression

per cell area (μm^2) in *Aasdhppt* mutants and control clonal cell lines as represented in (A). (C)

Quantification of AASDHPPT and ATP5a signal colocalization outside of the nucleus

assessed by Pearson's correlation coefficient in double immunostained control and *Aasdhppt*

mutant clonal lines as represented in (A). (D) Subcellular fractionation of *Aasdhppt* mutant cell

lines and control. Post-mitochondrial supernatant (PMS) and mitochondrial lysate (Mito) was

isolated from the denoted cell lines, normalized for total protein via BCA assay, and

immunoblotted for AASDHPPT, ATP5a, and GAPDH. (E) Representative 40X HPF images of

WT skeletal muscle myoblasts expressing AASDHPPT-GFP (PPT-GFP) immunostained with

Hoechst dye and antibody against ATP5a (red). Scale bars represent 100 μm. Dashed

outlines denote magnified regions shown in panels with solid outlines. For all statistical

analysis data represent the mean; error bars denote SD. **** = $p<0.0001$ as determined by

one-way ANOVA with Šidák's multiple comparisons test.

Figure 4. Mitochondrial AASDHPPT is inside the mitochondrial matrix.

(A) Proteinase K protection assay for sub-mitochondrial localization. Crude isolated

mitochondria were incubated with proteinase K and treated with increasing concentrations of

digitonin or Triton X-100, as indicated, then blotted for GFP to assess PPT-GFP sub-

mitochondrial localization by comparing with proteins with known localization. MFN2 localizes

to the outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM) and citrate synthase (CS) localizes to the matrix.

Data are representative of three biological replicates. (B) Representative histograms of Venus

(FITC) fluorescence in the indicated BiFC cell lines. (C) Percentage of Venus-positive cells in

the indicated cell lines as measured by flow cytometry. Data represent the mean; error bars

denote standard deviation (n = 3 per group). Statistical significance was determined by one-

way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison test. (D) Representative 20X images of

endogenous Venus fluorescence in VC + VN BiFC cell lines. Scale bars represent 50 μm.

Figure 5. Mitochondrial localization of AASDHPPT is required for mtFAS function.

(A) Representative 40X HPF images of WT skeletal muscle myoblasts expressing

mtDSRed, PPT-GFP, 13 residue N-terminal truncation of PPT (PPT$_{\Delta1-13}$-GFP), or 36 residue

N-terminal truncation of PPT (PPT$_{\Delta1-36}$-GFP) constructs immunostained with Hoechst dye and

antibody against ATP5a. Scale bars represent 100 μm. Dashed outlines denote magnified

regions shown in panels with solid outlines. Arrows denote weak expression of GFP signal

detected. (B) Quantification of PPT-GFP and ATP5a signal colocalization outside of the

nucleus assessed by Pearson's correlation coefficient in immunostained cells as represented

in (A). Data represent the mean; error bars denote SD. **** = p<0.0001, ns = not significant

determined as by one-way ANOVA with Dunnett's multiple comparisons test. (C) Subcellular

fractionation of WT cells expressing PPT-GFP, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP, or PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP. Post-

mitochondrial supernatant (PMS) and mitochondrial lysate (Mito) was isolated from the

denoted cell lines, normalized for total protein via BCA assay, and immunoblotted detection of

the indicated targets. Immunoblots are representative of three biological replicates. (D) Whole

cell lysates from cells expressing mtDSRed, PPT-GFP, PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}13}$-GFP, or PPT$_{\Delta1\text{-}36}$-GFP were

immunoblotted for the denoted targets. Data are representative of n > 3 biological replicates.

(E and F) Cells were seeded in either 25 mM glucose or 10 mM galactose and grown in an

IncuCyte® system with images captured every 6 hours for 3 days. Percent confluency

measured by IncuCyte® software. Statistical analysis for measurements at 72 hrs was

performed with one-way ANOVA and Tukey's multiple comparisons test. * = p <0.05. *** = p

<0.001. **** = p <0.0001. Data presented are mean ± SEM from one experiment

representative of three biological replicates.

Figure 6. Two variants of uncertain significance in AASDHPPT fail to rescue mtFAS

activity in PPT-deficient cells.

(A and B) Whole cell lysates from clonal control and duplicate *Aasdhppt* mutant clones

transduced with retrovirus expressing mtDSRed, PPT-GFP P12S, PPT-GFP R47H, PPT-GFP

A72T, PPT-GFP W79G, PPT-GFP R83C, or PPT-GFP K96E were separated by SDS-PAGE

and immunoblotted for the denoted targets. Immunoblots are representative of three biological

replicates.

Supplemental Figure 1. AASDHPPT is required for mitochondrial oxidative metabolism.

(A) Sequence analysis of sgRNA-targeted region in clonal Aasdhppt mutant cell lines, and

corresponding mutations generated. (B) Representative IncuCyte® phase contrast images

from cells denoted in Figure 1B and C at 72 hours grown in glucose or galactose

supplemented DMEM. Scale bars represent 200 μm. (C-G) Pool size of the indicated

metabolites from steady state metabolomics analysis at the four-hour labeling time point. Error

bars represent SD. Significance was determined by one-way ANOVA. ** = p <0.01. *** = p

<0.001. **** = p <0.0001. NS = not significant.

Supplemental Figure 2. AASDHPPT is required for mitochondrial fatty acid synthesis

pathway function.

(A-E) Codependency plots of gene essentiality scores comparing *AASDHPPT* with *FASN*
(A), *AASDH* (B), *ALDH1L1* (C), *MCAT* (D), and *MECR* (E) from DepMap CRISPR screens[17,32–]
[34,36]. **(**F) Heatmap depicting hierarchical clustering of pairwise gene essentiality score
correlations of PPT, known PPT substrate targets, mtFAS pathway members, LYRM family
members, and genes associated with the GO term "pantothenate metabolism." (G) Two-
dimensional network diagram representing gene essentiality score correlations between all
genes denoted in (F), no significance cutoff filter.

Supplemental Figure 3. A portion of AASDHPPT localizes to mitochondria
(A and B) Quantification of AASDHPPT and ATP5a signal colocalization outside the
nucleus assessed by Manders' colocalization coefficient in double immunostained control and
Aasdhppt mutant clonal lines as represented in (Figure 3A). Data represent the mean; error
bars denote SD. **** = p<0.0001, NS = not significant as determined by one-way ANOVA with
Šidák's multiple comparisons test.

Supplemental Figure 5. Mitochondrial localization of AASDHPPT is required for mtFAS
function
(A and B) Quantification of PPT-GFP and ATP5a signal colocalization outside the nucleus
assessed by Manders' colocalization coefficient in immunostained cells as represented in
(Figure 5A). (C) Quantification of lipyol-DLAT, lipoyl-DLST, and SDHB levels relative to β-actin
from SDS-PAGE analysis as shown in Figure 5DI. (D) Representative IncuCyte® phase
images from cells denoted in Figure 5E and F at 72 hours grown in glucose or galactose
supplemented DMEM. Scale bars represent 200 µm.For all statistical analysis data represent
the mean; error bars denote SD. * = p <0.05. ** = p <.01. **** = p<0.0001, ns = not significant
as determined by one-way ANOVA with Dunnett's multiple comparisons test.

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

A Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + NDUFAB1
R = 0.24 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

B Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + ALDH1L2
R = 0.04 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

C Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + DHRS2
R = -0.12 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

D Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + OXSM
R = 0.42 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

E 2D network: Gene essentiality score correlations

Cluster 1
Cluster 2
Cluster 3
Cluster 4

H Oxygen consumption

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

FIGURE 1 SUPPLEMENTAL

A PPT-1/2 mutations

Cell line	NC_000075.7	Protein
PPT-1	c.342_344delAGC c.398G>C c.478C>G c.479T>G c.739C>T c.740T>G c.744C>T c.745G>T c.752G>A c.754T>A c.758G>A c.764A>T c.767Tdel c.771G>A c.773G>A c.779G>A	p.Q41del p.A60P p.A62G p.R64F p.M66I p.I67K p.L70F p.A72Q p.E73K p.K74N p.L75*
	c.342_346delAGCCG	p.0? (Frameshift)
PPT-2	c.366G>T c.394G>C c.757G>T c.771G>T	p.G49V p.K58N p.R68M p.E73*
	c.342_346delAGCCG	p.0? (Frameshift)

B Brightfield: Proliferation (72 hrs)

C Fumarate **D** Malate **E** Aspartate **F** Citrate **G** α-Ketoglutarate

A Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + FASN
R = 0.25 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

B Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + AASDH
R = 0.0055 (Pearson)
P = 0.8561

C Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + ALDH1L1
R = -0.033 (Pearson)
P = 0.2771

D Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + MCAT
R = 0.36 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

E Co-Dependency: AASDHPPT + MECR
R = 0.32 (Pearson)
P < 0.0001

F

G **2D network:** Gene essentiality score correlations

Gene essentiality score correlations

FIGURE 3 SUPPLEMENTAL

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