DHHC PROTEIN ACYLTRANSFERASES CATALYZES THE LYSINE PALMITOYLATION OF MEMBERS OF THE RAS SUPERFAMILY OF SMALL GTPASES

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DEDICATION

To my parents for their countless sacrifices that have allowed me the opportunity to pursue higher education. Everything I am and ever will be is a product of their selflessness to ensure the success of myself and my brothers. To my partner, Xin, this achievement is both yours and mine.

To Dr. Hening Lin, I am forever indebted and grateful for your mentorship, wisdom, and belief in our ability to succeed.

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Abstract

Protein fatty acylation is the attachment of a long-chain fatty acyl group, generally 14–16 carbons in length to the side chain of an amino acid. Cysteine palmitoylation or S-palmitoylation is best understood and widespread post-translational modification in this class, followed closely by N-terminal glycine myristoylation and lastly by O-serine fatty acylation. In recent years, a previously underappreciated member of this class, lysine N^{ε}- fatty acylation, has gained traction due to work by Jiang et al with their discovery that SIRT6 can defatty-acylate TNF α and regulate its secretion, providing the first example for the function of protein lysine fatty acylation in mammalian cells^{1.2}. Additional substrates such as K-Ras4a, and RRAS2 further highlight the importance of this modification. However, while advances have been made in the identification of the writers of this modification. The goal of my thesis project is to identify the writers of lysine fatty acylation.

We report the identification of the first mammalian N^ε-lysine fatty acyl transferase. We identified the writer through screening various acyl transferases characterized as S-palmitoyl transferases, O-serine fatty acyl transferases, and lipid fatty acyl transferases, against substrates

identified to have lysine fatty acylation. Multiple family members of the DHHC class of Spalmitoyl transferases were identified as lysine fatty acyl transferases. Utilizing alkynyl-fatty acid labeling with in-gel fluorescence, we observed members DHHC2/3/7/15 of the DHHC family of S-palmitoyl transferase labeling the lysine residues of multiple GTPases. This acylation event is confirmed as lysine fatty acylation through the use of the SIRT2 in-vitro defatty-acylation assay and mutagenesis of the modification sites and P-32 NAD⁺ assay. Knockdown of the zDHHC7 gene was able to perturb the lysine fatty acylation of KRAS4A. Screening additional GTPases, not known to have lysine fatty acylation, against DHHC7 identified additional substrates such as CDC42. We identified DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation of CDC42 inactivates the GTPase and induces morphological change in a similar manner as a CDC42 inactive mutant. Expression of a lysine mutant of CDC42 which cannot be acylated by DHHC7 is able to rescue the cell and prevent DHHC7 induced cell rounding. The discovery of the novel lysine acyltransferase activity of the DHHC enzymes highlights the importance of lysine fatty acylation and provides insights to further understanding the function of DHHC enzymes and protein lysine fatty acylation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Xiao Chen was born on December 23, 1990 in Fuzhou City, China and grew up in multiple cities. Many years were spent in Lang Qi, China followed by consecutive five year stays in New York City, Osage (Iowa), and Apple Valley (MN). In 2008, he began undergraduate studies at Iowa State University of Science and Technology (ISU), majoring in the field of Chemistry and field of Genetics. In the spring of 2012 he graduated with a degree in Chemistry and a second degree in Genetics. In the fall of 2012, he moved to Ithaca, NY to pursue a Ph. D. in Chemical Biology from Cornell University. He studied under the guidance of Dr. Hening Lin and toiled to identify the writers of lysine fatty acylation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

2BP: 2-Bromopalmitate

Alk14: Palmitic Acid Alkyne

ABHD17: α/β -hydrolase domain 17

ACAT: Acyl-coenzyme A:cholesterol acyltransferase

ARF1: ADP-ribosylation factor 1

APT1: acyl protein thioesterase 1

CBB: Coomassie Brilliant Blue

CRD: cysteine-rich domain

COP: coatomer protein complex

DGAT: acyl-CoA:diacylglycerol acyltransferase

ER: endoplasmic reticulum

Erf2: effect on Ras function

FT: Farnesyltransferase

GGT-1: Geranylgeranyl transferase

GPI: glycosylphosphatidylinositol

Hhat: Hedgehog acyltransferase

HPLC: High Pressure Liquid Chromatography

IL-1α: Interleukin 1-α

LPAT: lysophospholipid acyltransferases

MBOAT: Membrane-bound O-acyltransferase

NMT: myristoyl-CoA:protein N-myristoyltransferase

PAT: protein acyltransferase

PM: Plasma Membrane

PORCN: Protein-serine O-palmitoleoyltransferase porcupine

Shh: Sonic Hedgehog

TMD: transmembrane domains

TNFα: Tumor Necrosis Factor α

Yck2: yeast casein kinase 2

CHAPTER ONE

2

1

INTRODUCTION

3 Protein post-translational modifications encompass a vast variety of functional groups that 4 can be attached to the side chain of a multitude of amino acids, ranging from phosphorylation, 5 acetylation, ubiquitination, and lipidation. The various lipidation events on proteins can be divided 6 into several distinct types based upon the type of lipid attached: isoprenoids, sterols, 7 glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchors, phospholipids, and fatty acids. These lipidation events are now known to occur on over one thousand proteins³, affecting many aspects of cellular 8 9 physiology. In general, lipidation increases the hydrophobicity of the protein which promotes and 10 regulates membrane-protein interactions. Surprisingly, some forms of lipidation can also regulate 11 protein-protein interactions, protein stability, and enzymatic activities. Some lipidation events are 12 highly dynamic such as S-palmitoylation with turnover rates in the seconds, while N-13 myristoylation and prenylation are irreversible. Over the years, the identification and extensive 14 characterization of the writers and erasers of these modifications have greatly advanced the 15 scientific community's appreciation of each particular form of lipidation. Unfortunately, certain lipid modifications have been overlooked and underappreciated such as lysine fatty acylation 16 which was first reported in 1992 and 1993 on $\text{TNF}\alpha^4$ and $\text{IL}-1\alpha^5$, respectively. Only recently, as 17 18 the erasers have been identified, has the community begun to recognize the importance of this 19 forgotten modification.

20 Protein Prenylation. Prenylation is among the best understood and appreciated lipid post 21 translational modifications. The five carbon isoprene unit is the building block of prenylation.
 22 Farnesylation, formed by three isoprene blocks totaling 15 carbons, and geranylgeranylation,

23 formed by four isoprene blocks totaling 20 carbons, are the two forms of prenylation. The isoprene 24 chain is attached through a thioether bond on the thiol side chain on a cysteine residue. Currently, 25 no enzyme has been identified as capable of reversing this modification, leading to the general 26 belief that the modification is irreversible. Farnesylation of Ras protein was first reported in 1989, 27 and since then it has been well established that the Ras superfamily of proteins are initially 28 prenylated on the cysteine found in a C-terminal CaaX (where C indicates cysteine, a indicates an 29 aliphatic amino acid, X indicates any amino acid) motif. Proteolytic cleavage of the terminal aaX⁶ and subsequent carboxymethylation of the prenylated cysteine⁷ occur after the lipidation event. 30 31 The modification is critical for the function of many Ras proteins as mutation of the farnesylated 32 cysteine renders the protein inactive⁸. The prenylation functions as a lipid anchor, allowing the Ras proteins to interact with the membrane lipids, whereas non-prenylated Ras is generally 33 34 dispersed throughout the cell.

35 The writers of prenylation in eukaryotes are well studied and characterized. 36 Farnesyltransferase (FT) utilizes farnesyl diphosphate (FPP), while Geranylgeranyl transferase 37 (GGT-1), and Rab geranylgeranyl transferase (RGGT) utilizes geranylgeranyl diphosphate (GGPP) 38 as their donor molecules. Initially isolated from rat brain, crystal structures of FT and GGT-1 have 39 been solved providing valuable insight into how the transferases achieve selectivity for FPP or GGPP^{9,10}. In short, in the binding pocket of the GGT-1 β subunit the critical determining residue, 40 41 Thr49, allows for a fourth isoprene chain to bind but the corresponding Trp102 in the FT β subunit 42 is too bulky, preventing GGPP from binding. The substrate selectivity for FPP by FT can be switched by a single point mutation of the critical Trp102 to Thr⁹. 43

Fatty acylation. This class of modification is the covalent addition of a short or long fatty
 acyl chain that varies in length from very short chains of two carbons¹¹ to longer chains such as

palmitoylation (C16) and stearic acid (C18)¹². For the purpose of this thesis, subsequent references
to fatty acylation only consider long chain fatty acyl chains. The degree of saturation can also vary
as well as the stoichiometry of this modification whereas. N-terminal myristoylation and Spalmitoylation are the two most common and best-studied examples of protein fatty acylation.
Less studied are O-fatty acylation and lysine ^{*e*}N-fatty acylation. ^{13,14}.

51 N-terminal myristoylation is the addition of a myristate (C14) to the amino group of an Nterminal glycine. The resulting amide bond is considered stable and irreversible as there are no 52 53 known mammalian erasers. Interestingly, a protein injected into host cells by Shigella flexneri 54 during infection, called IpaJ, was shown cleave the peptide bond between the N-myristoylated glycine-2 and asparagine-3 of ARF1.¹⁵ While not directly erasing the modification, IpaJ treatment 55 56 offers an opportunity to study demyristoylated proteins. The writer of N-myristoylation is myristoyl-CoA:protein N-myristoyltransferase (NMT). NMT recognizes the following Gly-X-X-57 58 X-Ser/Thr consensus sequence obtained after cleavage of the initial methionine by methionine aminopeptidase¹⁶. In general, this modification functions similarly to prenylation and is important 59 60 for membrane association, ensuring proper protein localization and consequently function. A 61 classic example is the Src kinase whose N-myristoylation controls its localization, stability, and kinase activity^{17,18}. 62

O-fatty acylation is characterized by the attachment of a fatty acyl group to the hydroxyl group of a serine. Various acyl groups have been reported including palmitoleoyl (C16:1), palmitoyl (C16), and octanoyl (C8).¹⁹⁻²¹ O-Palmitoleoylation and O-octanoylation are catalyzed by the membrane bound O-acyltransferase (MBOAT) family of PATs, while serine Opalmitoylation is catalyzed by LPCAT1 of the glycerol-*3*-phosphate acyltransferase (GPAT) family of glycerolipid acyltransferases. The MBOAT family is divided into three subfamilies,

69 based upon substrate specificities. Class I enzymes are mainly involved in neutral lipid 70 biosynthesis.²² Class I members, acyl-CoA cholesterol acyltransferase 1 and 2 (ACAT1/2) 71 esterifies cholesterol using oleoyl-CoA as the acyl donor, while diacylglycerol acyltransferase 1 (DGAT1) catalyzes the biosynthesis of retinyl esters, wax esters, and triacylglycerol.²³ Class II 72 members acylate protein substrates and includes PORCN, Hhat, Hhat-like, and GOAT.^{19,24-26} Class 73 74 III is made up of lysophospholipid acyltransferases (LPAT), which remodel phospholipid using arachidonoyl-CoA.²⁷ Hhat is unique in that it catalyzes the -S to N transfer of palmitate of 75 76 Hedgehog. The lipid is transferred from the cysteine side chain to its amine, resulting in N-77 palmitoylation of a cysteine. O-fatty acylation is considered to be a stable irreversible modification, 78 and generally thought to remain on the protein substrate throughout its lifespan. The best-studied 79 example is the O-palmitoleoylation of the Wnt proteins, which is crucial for the binding of Wnt to its receptors and downstream signaling.^{28,29} 80

81 Lysine [®]N-fatty acylation is characterized by the attachment of a myristate (C14) or palmitate (C16) to the ^ɛN-amine of a lysine.^{4,30} The importance of lysine myristoylation has been 82 83 demonstrated in bacteria with studies into E. coli hemolysin, a pore-forming toxin. The toxin requires lysine myristoylation for activity.^{31,32} In mammalian systems, the function of lysine fatty 84 85 acylation is poorly understood and underappreciated. Recently, the discovery that the sirtuin class 86 of histone deacetylases are capable of efficiently removing the long-chain fatty acyl group from 87 lysine has reignited interest in this modification.¹ This discovery has challenged the stability of 88 this modification and suggests that lysine fatty acylation may have a regulatory function. Studies 89 coupling sirtuins with the acylated substrates have revealed the importance of this modification. 90 Furthermore these studies suggest that lysine fatty acylation may be more abundant than previously 91 thought. Lysine ^eN-fatty acylation is also characterized by an amide bond, reminiscent of N-

92 terminal myristoylation, which suggest that the modification may also require an enzyme catalysis.
93 An exogenous bacterial ^eN-fatty acyltransferase has been reported³³ to target host proteins, but
94 there has been no mammalian ^eN-fatty acyltransferase reported to date.

95 S-palmitoylation is catalyzed by the DHHC family of proteins, which is a major focal point
96 of this thesis and warrants extensive coverage and discussion which will be presented in the
97 following sections.

99 Table 1. Protein lipidation



103

PROTEIN S-PALMITOYLATION

104 S-palmitoylation is the addition of palmitate (C16) to the thiol on the side chain of a 105 cysteine residue, from a palmitoyl-CoA. The modification was first observed in the early 1970's in bovine brain^{34,35}. Although essential proteins such as GPCRs and Ras proteins were later 106 107 demonstrated to be palmitoylated, it took another thirty years before the identification of the 108 writers of the modification. The current dogma is that the majority of S-palmitoylation is catalyzed 109 by an evolutionarily conserved family of protein acyltransferases (PATs), however non-enzymatic autoacylation has also been observed³⁶⁻³⁸. The palmitate from palmitoyl-CoA can, in vitro, 110 111 spontaneously form a covalent bond on the same modified residues *in vivo*³⁸. Interestingly, the 112 autoacylation event requires the presence of detergent, and the reaction rate is limited by the 113 detergent micelle concentration. This suggests that autoacylation is dependent on the interaction 114 of the substrate with the detergent micelle where the palmitoyl-CoA is embedded. The leading 115 admonition with these non-enzymatic autoacylation observations is the high, non-physiological 116 concentrations of palmitoyl-CoA required (10 µM), whereas the cellular concentration of free palmitoyl-CoA is $< 1 \mu M^{39,40}$. While these conditions are not representative of *in vivo* conditions, 117 118 it raises the possibility that high, localized concentration of acyl-CoAs could potentially serve as 119 an acylation mechanism in vivo. The first PAT was discovered and characterized in S. cerevisiae 120 as an essential enzyme complex for the palmitoylation of Ras2. The complex comprised of two 121 distinct proteins, Erf2 and Erf4. Erf2 carries the catalytically active residues, however, Erf2 alone 122 could not palmitoylate Ras2. It is dependent on Erf4's stabilizing effects to form a stable enzyme 123 complex. Another yeast protein, Akr1 was also identified to have PAT activity against yeast casein 124 kinase, Yck2. Akr1 and Erf2 share a common sequence found within a cysteine-rich domain (CRD) 125 generally referred to as an aspartic acid-histidine-histidine-cysteine (DHHC) motif. It was later

126 demonstrated that this DHHC domain is the signature of palmitoyltransferases, and used to identify 127 the mammalian S-palmitoyltransferases. The first mammalian DHHC enzyme (GODZ, also 128 known as DHHC3) was identified in 2004 by a yeast two-hybrid screen using the γ -aminobutyric acid A receptor $\gamma 2$ subunit as a bait.⁴¹ Subsequent co-expression studies demonstrated upon 129 130 overexpression, DHHC3 increased the S-palmitoylation of the γ 2 subunit. Genomic analysis of the 131 human and mouse genomes for proteins with DHHC domains identified 23 family members in 132 total (Table 2). Co-expression of several family members with PSD-95 increased the substrate's palmitoylation with ³H-palmitate⁴², indicating that the DHHC family of enzymes are protein 133 134 palmitoyltransferases. These co-expression studies will later develop into the classical approach 135 used to identify new enzyme-substrate pairs.

136 THE TOPOLOGY OF DHHC ENZYMES.

137 The DHHC enzymes contain multiple transmembrane domains (TMD) with the conserved

138 DHHC-CRD located on the loop between TMD2 and TMD3 facing the cytosol. The number of

139 TMDs varies depending on the family member, with all members containing a minimum of four

140 TMDs and up to six TMDs predicted for DHHC13, 17, and 23. The DHHC-CRD was

141 characterized by the following consensus sequence⁴³, $CX_2CX_9HCX_2CX_2$

142 $CX_4DHHCX_5CX_4NX_3FX_4$. This sequence is similar to the C_2H_2 type of zinc finger motifs and

143 predicted to function as a zinc-binding domain⁴⁴. The cysteine in the DHHC motif is required for

144 catalytic activity, whereas the other cysteine residues within the conserved sequence are involved

145 in the structural folding of the enzyme. Generally, mutations of these conserved cysteines result

- 146 in an unstable protein with no activity^{45,46}. Although the vast majority of the DHHC PATs follow
- 147 this consensus sequence, there are exceptions. DHHCs with zero, one or two zinc fingers are
- 148 known, further indicating that the zinc finger motif is not involved in the catalytic step and is

instead vital for structural integrity. Surprisingly, structural integrity can be achieved without the
actual ability to bind zinc. These DHHC PATs instead rely on hydrogen bonds⁴⁵ for structural
integrity. The remaining resides within the DHHC-CRD form a binding pocket that controls
acyl-CoA and substrate selectivity. In addition, the variable N- and C- termini also help
determine substrate selectivity. These attributes will be covered below in the following section.



155 Figure 1. A cartoon representation of the topology of the DHHC enzymes⁴⁷.

156 SUBSTRATE SELECTIVITY.

157 As there is a large number of DHHC PATs known, understanding how each DHHC PAT 158 recognize its substrates is imperative. Protein interacting domains, amino acids surrounding the 159 modification site, subcellular localization and residues in the acyl-CoA binding pocket, all 160 contribute to the acyl-CoA and substrate selectivity of a DHHC PAT. Enzyme-substrate pairs are 161 generally identified through co-expression screening studies. In short, a substrate is co-expressed 162 with a DHHC member and its fatty acylation level assessed by ³H-palmitate radiography. Newer 163 techniques such as acyl-biotin exchange (ABE), acyl-resin-assisted capture (acyl-RAC) and 164 palmitate alkyne/azide orthologues have enhanced our ability to identify S-palmitoylated 165 substrates and is discussed in detail in a later section. These classical DHHC screens are now known as the Fukata screen in honor of the first DHHC screen against PSD-95⁴². Occasionally 166 only one DHHC member increases the acylation of a substrate⁴⁸⁻⁵⁰, but more commonly 167 168 observed is that multiple members increasing a substrate's fatty acylation. These screens 169 highlight two traits of the DHHC family of enzymes. First is the broad specificities of several 170 DHHCs such as DHHC3 and DHHC7, which share many overlapping substrates. Second is the 171 inherent redundancies built into the DHHC PATs that allows for another family member to 172 acylate a substrate in the event the primary PAT is compromised. These two traits also highlight the challenges in identifying true enzyme-substrate pairs.^{42,51,52} Knocking down a DHHC, 173 174 identified through the initial screening experiments, is not guaranteed to abolish a substrate's fatty acylation.^{52,53} Complete abolishment of the substrate's palmitoylation may require multiple 175 176 deletions, which can be challenging in mammalian systems.

177 The DHHC PATs have distinct cellular localization and can be found at the plasma
178 membrane, endoplasmic reticulum, Golgi membranes, and endosomal membranes. In general,

179 the sorting mechanism of the DHHCs is not clear, but the sorting of several members are well 180 characterized. Both DHHC4 and DHHC6 contain a canonical dilysine motif that interacts with 181 coat protein complex 1 to restrict the PATs to the ER. The dilysine motif from DHHC4 or DHHC6 when fused to the Golgi-specific DHHC3 is sufficient to relocalize it to the ER^{54} . 182 183 DHHC1 contains a classical KDEL sequence explaining its ER localization⁵⁵. Swapping the C-184 terminal portion of DHHC2 onto DHHC15 is sufficient to alter the localization of the chimeric DHHC15 to intracellular membranes similar to that of WT DHHC2⁵⁶. Interestingly, the 185 186 localization of DHHC2 is altered in response to external stimuli. In dendritic cells, blocking 187 synaptic activity relocalizes DHHC2 to the dendritic spine from the shaft. The relocalized 188 DHHC2 increases PSD-95 palmitoylation which in turns upregulates 2-amino-3-(hydroxy-5methyl-4-isoxazole) propionic acid type glutamate receptor activity to maintain homeostasis⁵⁷. 189 190 These localization studies have shortcomings as they utilized overexpressed DHHCs which may 191 not be properly localized. The overproduction of protein may cause it to spill out of its endogenous compartment.⁵⁸ Endogenous DHHC3 was reported to be preferentially localized to 192 193 the cis-Golgi, while overexpressing the protein may have resulted in localization to nonphysiological cellular compartments⁵⁹. The mislocalized DHHC enzyme likely retains its 194 195 catalytic activity which could acylate non-natural substrates resulting in false positive enzyme-196 substrate pairs. This further highlights the challenge in understanding the relationship of the 197 DHHC enzyme-substrate pairs identified in the classical Fukata screens. It is interesting to note 198 that DHHC7, the closely related cousin to DHHC3 and also Golgi-specific, was shown to be 199 preferentially localized to the trans-Golgi compartments. Both enzymes are known to palmitoylate the $\gamma 2$ subunit of GABA type A receptors⁶⁰, however, palmitoylation of the $\gamma 2$ 200 subunit is not affected in DHHC7 KO mice⁵⁹. These observations suggest that overexpressed 201

DHHC7 may leak into the cis-Golgi compartments. Furthermore this study reminds us to be
 cautious when attributing a substrate's palmitoylation to a specific DHHC identified through co expression studies as their specificities may be narrower than previously thought.

205 The variable N- and C-termini of the DHHC PATs contain domains that confer substrate specificity.⁶¹ DHHC17, also known as huntingtin-interacting protein 14 (HIP14), interacts with 206 huntingtin through its ankyrin repeat domain⁶². A chimeric DHHC3 with the ankyrin repeat 207 208 domain of DHHC17 gains the ability to interact with huntingtin and redistribute it to the perinuclear region through palmitoylation-dependent vesicular trafficking.⁶³ Several members 209 210 have been reported to contain PDZ-interacting domains that allow for enzyme-substrate interactions, conferring substrate specificity^{64,65}. A crystal structure⁶⁶ of the DHHC17 ankyrin 211 212 repeat domain in complex with a truncated form of Snap25b showed that the interaction 213 primarily involve hydrogen bonding and hydrophobic interactions centered on a previously identified ΨβXXQP.⁶⁷ This motif is present in all of the known DHHC17 substrates including 214 215 huntingtin. The motif is dependent on the glutamine and proline (QP), whereas the other residues 216 can vary. Mutation of the QP motif is sufficient to disrupt binding of huntingtin to DHHC17. 217 The DHHC-CRD domain itself can also convey substrate selectivity. A chimeric DHHC15 218 containing the DHHC-CRD of DHHC3 is able to palmitoylate SNAP23, which is modified by WT DHHC3 but not WT DHHC15.⁶¹ Swapping out the DHHC-CRD of yeast Swf1 with the 219 DHHC-CRD domain of Pfa3, Pfa4, or Erf2 is unable to restore the function of Swf1.⁶⁸ These 220 221 findings indicate that interactions between the catalytic domain and the substrate may also 222 determine enzyme-substrate selectivity.

The amino acid sequence surrounding the palmitoylation site also has a role in substrate recognition by the DHHC-enzyme. The PSD-95 palmitoylation sites are surrounded by several

225 hydrophobic residues (Leu4, Ile6, and Val7), and mutation of these residues result in diminished 226 palmitoylation levels and PSD-95 mislocalization. Mutation of surrounding hydrophilic residues Asp2, Thr8, or Thr9, did not alter the localization.⁶⁹ SNAP23 can be mutated into a DHHC15 227 228 substrate when its Cys79 is mutated to phenylalanine. The C79F mutant is highly similar to SNAP25b, which is a substrate of DHHC15.⁶¹ Structural elements such as the secondary 229 230 structure near the palmitoylation site have also been shown to be significant. Surprisingly, a 21 231 amino acid sequence, predicted to be an amphipathic α -helix near the palmitoylation site of a 232 sodium-calcium exchanger (NCX), is capable of converting nonpalmitoylated cysteines into modification sites when placed adjacently⁷⁰. In NCX, this α -helix appears to finely direct the 233 234 DHHC to the correct cysteine to ensure proper palmitoylation. The surrounding amino acid 235 sequence is not always involved in determining whether a cysteine can be modified⁷¹. Instead, the distance of the palmitoylated cysteine from the transmembrane domain can be the 236 237 determining factor. Mutating the surrounding residues of the palmitoylated Cys100 of p63 and 238 Cys36 of the H1 subunit of mammalian hepatic asialoglycoprotein receptor does not alter their palmitoylation.^{71,72} Altering the cysteine residue position relative to the TMD could abolish 239 240 palmitoylation.

Many palmitoylated proteins are integral membrane proteins, cytosolic proteins that undergo prenylation, or myristoylated proteins. Notably, the reported palmitoylation sites of the majority (>95%) of palmitoylated single-pass integral membrane proteins are located adjacent to or inside the annotated transmembrane domain. One hypothesis is that various DHHC-PATs prefer a particular set of substrates. There is some limited evidence supporting this. For example, Swf1 preferentially targets transmembrane proteins whereas, Akr1 targets mainly soluble proteins⁵². These trends are more difficult to identify among the mammalian DHHCs as the list

of enzyme-substrates are incomplete and associating a substrate's palmitoylation to a singleDHHC member remains challenging.

250 Researchers have demonstrated that DHHCs also show broad specificity for the acyl-251 CoA donor molecules. While palmitoyl-CoA (C16) is the preferred substrate, myristoyl-CoA 252 (C14) and stearoyl-CoA (C18) also serve as efficient substrates. DHHC2 has a broad acyl-CoA specificity, efficiently transfer acyl chains 14 carbons and longer⁷³. Surprisingly, the 253 254 promiscuous DHHC3 has a narrower acyl-CoA substrate selectivity, being only capable of 255 transferring acyl chains no longer than 16 carbons. This may support the hypothesis that DHHC3 256 is a general PAT while other PATs may have unique substrates. Another interesting finding 257 compared the acyl-CoA selectivity of DHHC7 to its cousin, DHHC3, and found that DHHC7 258 preferred longer acyl chains of 18 carbons compared to DHHC3's preference of 16 carbons⁷⁴. 259 The differences in acyl-CoA length preference are attributed to Ile182 in TM3 of DHHC3 which 260 is bulkier than the corresponding serine found in DHHC7. This extra steric hindrance likely 261 prevents the binding of the longer 18 carbon acyl chain. These observations are supported by the 262 recent crystal structures of full-length human DHHC20 (hDHHC20) and zebrafish DHHC15 (zfDHHC15)⁷⁵. The crystal structures contain a hydrophobic cavity, formed by the four 263 264 transmembrane helices, where the acyl chain is bound. Near the tapering end of the hydrophobic 265 cavity of hDHHC20, is Tyr181, which forms a hydrogen bond with Ser29 that closes off the 266 cavity. Mutation of Tyr181 to a less bulky alanine, allows hDHHC20 to utilize the longer 267 stearoyl-CoA (C18), while mutation of the serine to a bulky phenylalanine increases preference 268 for a shorter chain acyl-CoA. It is important to note that the vast majority of studies assume that 269 palmitate is the acyl group being attached by the DHHCs; however, the broad specificity of acyl-270 CoA efficiently transferred by the DHHCs suggest otherwise. While palmitate is the most likely,

there is a general lack of mass spectrometry (MS) data to validate the acyl group transferred by
each DHHC. The variety of S-fatty acids reported^{12,76-82} suggest that the DHHC PAT family are
not just palmitoyl transferases. Instead it may be more correct to consider them as general fatty
acyl transferases.

The high degree of redundancy associated with the DHHCs for their substrate proteins and acyl-CoA substrate selectivity is remarkable. Understanding how the cell ensures proper acylation of the right substrates with the right acyl group will require extensive research and provide the scientific community a fertile field for study.

279

DHHC MECHANISM OF PALMITOYLATION.

280 S-palmitoylation is characterized as a thioester bond with similar energy as to the 281 precursor thioester bond of its donor molecule, palmitoyl-CoA. The reaction is energy neutral 282 and does not require an energy source such as ATP. In vitro reconstitution assays require no energy sources⁴². The DHHC PATs themselves are autoacylated both *in vivo* and *in vitro*^{41,42,83} 283 and can occur in the absence of a substrate with only palmitoyl-CoA⁸³. The autoacylation is 284 285 dependent on an intact DHHC motif. If the cysteine is mutated to serine, the resulting enzyme 286 cannot be autoacylated. This suggests that the enzyme is acylated on the cysteine of its DHHC 287 motif. Incubating a ³H-palmitoyl-CoA autoacylated DHHC2 or DHHC3 with myristoylated Gi_a results in the transfer of the acyl group to the substrate⁷³. These experiments demonstrate both 288 289 the chemical and kinetic competence of the acyl intermediate and indicates that the catalytic 290 mechanism proceeds through a two-step ping-pong mechanism. The first step is a fast transfer of 291 palmitate to the DHHC cysteine, followed by a slower second step, where the palmitate is 292 transferred to the substrate. This mechanism assumes that the autoacylated residue is the DHHC 293 cysteine, although it was not known for a long time whether the DHHC cysteine could indeed be

modified. A recent report identified, through MS, a palmitoylated DHHC peptide with the acyl
group attached to the catalytic cysteine⁴⁶. This result confirmed that DHHC cysteine can indeed
carry the palmitoyl group and is likely the form of the acyl intermediate. This is also supported
by a crystal structure of hDHHC20 alkylated on its catalytic cysteine by 2-BP.⁷⁵

298 The function of the three other residues in the motif are less certain. Initial studies 299 suggest that the first histidine is critical for the transfer of palmitate from the acyl intermediate to 300 the substrate. Mutation of the first histidine abolishes PAT activity but does not prevent the formation of the acyl intermediate.⁸³ It is thought that the histidine is important for deprotonation 301 302 of the substrate's thiol to make it more nucleophilic. Analysis of the hDHHC20 crystal structure 303 suggests another function. The structure shows the aspartic acid and first histidine forming a 304 hydrogen bond that can accept a hydrogen from the catalytic cysteine. This deprotonation of the 305 DHHC cysteine enables its nucleophilic attack on the carbonyl thioester of the palmitoyl-CoA, 306 forming the acyl intermediate. The histidine with its captured proton can then donate it to the 307 carbonyl oxygen of the acyl-intermediate to activate it. This would allow the substrate's thiol to 308 capture the palmitoyl group. This mechanism is reminiscent of the Cys-His-Asp catalytic triad 309 found in cysteine proteases. The second histidine coordinates Zn^+ to position the catalytic cysteine for its the nucleophilic attack, according to the structure.⁸⁴ 310

Interestingly, there are DHHC enzymes with mutations in the DHHC motif that retain activity. In particular, DHHC13 possesses a natural DQHC motif, instead of the canonical DHHC motif. As expected, DHHC13 has low levels of autoacylation⁸⁵ but is surprisingly able to palmitoylate huntingtin.⁸⁶ While glutamine can participate in hydrogen bonding with aspartic acid, it is unable to function as an acid-base catalyst.⁸⁷ This may explain the low autoacylation levels observed, but does not explain how DHHC13 is able to retain its PAT activity. Akr1,

317	Akr2, and Pfa2 has a tyrosine instead of a second histidine (DHYC) and still has
318	palmitoyltransferase activity. ⁸⁸ Also a DHHR mutant of Swf1 retains its ability to able to acylate
319	its substrates. ⁸⁹ How these variants transfer palmitate to their substrates is not clear, but is likely
320	dependent on the nucleophilicity of their substrate's thiol. The nucleophilicity of a cysteine,
321	which differs depending on its molecule environment ^{90,91} , may be sufficient to capture the
322	palmitoyl group from the DHHC acyl intermediate. Even without forming an acyl intermediate,
323	DHHC enzymes may still bind both the palmitoyl-CoA and substrate at the same time. This
324	could bring the two close enough for the acyl transfer to occur through a non-catalytic protein-
325	assisted mechanism. ⁹² These observations again highlight the complexity that exists within the
326	DHHC family and the need to further study these remarkable enzymes.
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328	
329	





- (a) Cartoon representation of ping pong mechanism. (b) Example Line-weaver Burk plot of
- 335 DHHC activity as a function of palmitoyl-CoA concentration in increasing protein substrate (S)
- 336 concentration. The series of parallel lines obtained indicate a "Ping Pong" mechanism.



Figure 3. Detailed reaction mechanism⁹⁴.

341 The mechanism by which the DHHCs catalyze S-palmitoylation is generally well 342 understood, but how this activity is regulated is poorly understood. DHHC6 was recently 343 demonstrated to be a downstream substrate for the PAT DHHC16 and the depalmitoylase APT2⁹⁵. Palmitoylated DHHC6 has detectable activity, whereas its depalmitoylated form does 344 345 not. Interestingly, DHHC6 exists in multiple differentially palmitoylated states that have variable 346 activity and stability. These variable states are reminiscent of protein phosphorylation. 347 Phosphorylation of DHHC enzymes could potentially be a means by which the DHHCs are 348 regulated. A phosphorylation-deficient DHHC3 was reported to have increased interaction with 349 neural cell adhesion molecule (NCAM) and also increased its palmitoylation when compared to WT DHHC3⁹⁶. Another study reported that DHHC2 and DHHC3 could form homodimers which 350 reduced its enzymatic activity⁹⁷. The oligomerization of the DHHC enzymes may potentially be 351 352 a mechanism to regulate activity. Protein-protein interactions are one common mechanism by 353 which enzymes are regulated and the DHHC9-GCP16, Erf2-Erf4 complexes demonstrate that the 354 DHHCs could be regulated in such a manner. These interactions generally help to stabilize the DHHC proteins^{49,98}. Whether other DHHCs form protein-protein complexes or have accessory 355 356 subunits are not known. It is interesting to note that not all of the mammalian DHHCs form detectable acyl intermediates⁸⁵. Perhaps those that do not, require an accessory subunit. Lastly, a 357 358 cofactor which could regulate DHHC enzyme activity is zinc. While not all DHHCs bind zinc, those that do have reduced protein stability if they lose their ability to coordinate zinc. 359 Reminiscent of intracellular Ca²⁺, an important cofactor for many enzymes and their activities⁹⁹, 360 differential levels of zinc could potentially affect the stability and conversely the DHHC-enzyme 361 362 activity, however this requires further study.

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FUNCTIONS OF S-PALMITOYLATION.

S-palmitoylation is now known to occur on a vast and diverse set of proteins, from
cytosolic proteins, integral membrane proteins, and transmembrane proteins. Not surprisingly, Spalmitoylation has been reported to have functions other than membrane tethering. These
reported functions will be covered in this section.

369 Regulation of protein trafficking. The hydrophobic nature of the palmitoyl group allows 370 modified proteins to interact with membranes of various organelles and facilitates the trafficking 371 of such proteins to and from these membranes. Among the best-studied examples of protein 372 trafficking due to palmitoylation are members of the Ras Superfamily of GTPases, in particular, 373 H-RAS, N-RAS, and K-RAS. The Ras proteins are initially prenylated at a C-terminal cysteine 374 that is part of a CaaX motif at the ER. After prenylation, the –aaX amino acids are cleaved and carboxymethylated at the newly formed terminal –COOH^{6,7}. Prenylation itself is not sufficient to 375 376 anchor the modified protein to the plasma membrane where Ras is destined^{100,101}. Something 377 extra is needed; for H-RAS, NRAS, and K-Ras4a, that something extra is S-palmitoylation. S-378 palmitoylation occurs at the Golgi where the Ras protein translocates after carboxymethylation. 379 The palmitoylated cysteine is located near the CaaX cysteine, and the stoichiometry differs as H-Ras has two cysteines which are dually palmitoylated¹⁰². Dually lipidated Ras is then trafficked 380 381 to the PM via the secretory pathway. Whenever Ras is depalmitoylated, it will redistribute to all 382 membranes until it is repalmitoylated at the Golgi and directed back to the PM. This cycle of 383 palmitoylation, depalmitoylation helps to ensure accurate localization of the Ras proteins to the 384 PM¹⁰³. The K-Ras4b isoform of K-Ras, lacks an extra cysteine near the CaaX motif and 385 consequently is not palmitoylated. This isoform instead utilizes the positive charge of eight

lysine residues found at the C-terminus to electrostatically interact with the negatively charged
 plasma membrane¹⁰⁴.

388 Regulation of Protein Stability. Another function of S-palmitoylation is its ability to 389 regulate the stability of its protein substrates. A WT huntingtin protein typically contains a patch 390 of 6-35 repeated glutamine residues, whereas, in Huntington's disease, the huntingtin protein has more than 40 repeated glutamines¹⁰⁵. The extra glutamines cause the huntingtin protein to 391 392 aggregate, and this aggregation is a biomarker of the disease. The huntingtin protein can be 393 palmitoylated by DHHC17 (HIP14) and DHHC13 (HIP14L) on Cys214¹⁰⁶. Overexpressing 394 DHHC17 reduces huntingtin protein aggregation while knockdown of DHHC17 increases 395 aggregation and induces neuronal cell death. Another well-studied example is Tlg1, a yeast 396 protein. Tlg1 is involved in the regulation of protein recycling between endosomes and the Golgi^{107,108}. Palmitoylation traps Tlg1 at the trans-Golgi membranes and prevents degradation. 397 398 Mutation of its palmitoylation site or inactivation of its PAT, Swf1, leads to Tlg1 ubiquitination 399 and subsequent degradation¹⁰⁹. Here, S-palmitoylation prevents protein ubiquitination and 400 therefore increasing protein half-life and stability. Surprisingly, palmitoylation-deficient Tlg1 401 has similar cellular localization as WT Tlg1, which supports the ability of S-palmitoylation to 402 function in roles other than protein localization. Other examples where S-palmitoylation 403 increases protein stability include HIV receptor C-C chemokine receptor type 5 (CCR5)¹¹⁰, estrogen receptor- α^{111} , and regulator of G protein signaling 4 (RGS4)¹¹². In these examples, S-404 405 palmitoylation also inhibits the substrate's ubiquitination; how S-palmitoylation prevents 406 ubiquitination is not clear. S-palmitoylation can also stabilize a protein and promote its ER exit. 407 A palmitoylation-deficient lipoprotein receptor-related protein 6 (LRP6) is trapped at the ER and 408 is recognized by an ubiquitin-dependent ER quality control mechanism. Mutation of the
ubiquitinated lysines allows ER exit of a palmitoylation-deficient LRP6. Yeast chitin synthase
Chs3¹¹³, and amyloid precursor protein (APP)¹¹⁴ also share a similar phenotype, in that blocking
the substrate's palmitoylation result in ER retention of the palmitoylation-deficient substrates. A
general hypothesis would be that during the translation process an improperly folded protein
would not be palmitoylated and instead be ubiquitinated. Once the protein achieves the proper
fold required for palmitoylation, this prevents ubiquitination and allow the protein to exit the ER.

415 Regulation of protein-protein interactions. S-palmitoylation can also affect protein-416 protein interactions. A demonstrated example is the palmitoylation of the α -amino-3-hydroxy-5-417 methyl-4-isoxazole propionate (AMPA) receptor, GluR1. C-terminal palmitoylation of GluR1 418 reduces its interaction with the 4.1N protein which in turn reduces its internalization by 419 endocytosis at the PM¹¹⁵. How palmitovlation affects these protein-protein interactions is not 420 clear, but one likely explanation is that the lipidation affects the conformation of the modified 421 protein. Palmitoylation and subsequent membrane integration could force the flanking residues 422 into a closer membrane proximity. If these residues are involved in protein-protein interactions, 423 then palmitoylation will inhibit these interactions. The modification could also potentially 424 regulate protein-protein interactions by spatially segregating proteins to the proper membrane 425 organelles and microdomains. Lastly, the modification itself could be recognized by another protein like that of PDE68 recognizing the prenylation on K-Ras4b and other GTPases¹¹⁶. 426

427 BIOLOGICAL FUNCTION AND DISEASE RELEVANCE OF THE DHHC ENZYMES.

The functional role of protein S-palmitoylation is generally well studied and understood; however, the role of the DHHC PATs, which mediate nearly all S-palmitoylation events, remain poorly understood. Various knockdown and genetic deletion studies have identified a multitude of phenotypes that can be attributed to a specific DHHC PAT. In general, these changes correlate

432 with neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Huntington's and schizophrenia. Diseases 433 such as cancer and developmental defects have also been correlated and attributed to the 434 DHHCs. The modified substrate proteins ultimately determine the biological phenotypes of the 435 DHHCs, however in many cases, the substrates remain to be identified. As such, a complete 436 understanding of the biological function of the DHHCs and their roles in the disease phenotypes 437 is limited. Several challenges also impede the study of the biological function of the DHHCs. 438 These challenges include but are not limited to redundancies among the DHHCs, difficulties 439 purifying and reconstituting the activity *in vitro*, and a general lack of suitable antibodies against 440 endogenous DHHCs.

441 Huntington's disease. The biological function of DHHC17 and DHHC13 in Huntington's 442 disease is a well-studied case. DHHC17 and DHHC13 are respectively known as huntingtin 443 interacting protein 14 (HIP14) and huntingtin interacting protein 14 like (HIP14L). They were 444 initially discovered to interact with the huntingtin protein through their ankyrin repeat domains. 445 Both DHHCs are also able to palmitoylate huntingtin. The Huntington's disease mutation 446 expands the polyQ region (a patch of repeated glutamines) of huntingtin. This expansion reduces 447 the interaction between the PATs and huntingtin; leading to lower levels of huntingtin palmitoylation. This ultimately results in cell death.⁶² Interestingly, when WT huntingtin protein 448 449 levels are low, DHHC17 itself has significantly reduced activity. In mice lacking one allele for 450 huntingtin, the palmitoylation of SNAP25 and GluR1 is also reduced. SNAP25 and GluR1 are 451 DHHC17 substrates. Deletion of the huntingtin gene using antisense oligos further reduces the 452 palmitoylation. These phenotypes are further supported by the observation that mice deficient in 453 DHHC17 share a neurological and behavioral phenotype similar to that of patients who have Huntington's disease¹¹⁷. DHHC17 and DHHC13 knockout mice also share a lethal embryonic 454

phenotype similar to that of huntingtin (-/-) embryos¹¹⁸. The critical role which DHHC17 plays 455 456 in the progression of Huntington's disease is well established, but the exact mechanism of how 457 DHHC17 contributes to the disease is not clear. It appears that the huntingtin protein acts as a 458 protein scaffold to bring together DHHC17 and its substrates. As many DHHC17 substrates are 459 part of neurological processes, loss of normal huntingtin or DHHC17 function could easily result 460 in the observed neurological defects and disease progression. Another mechanism by which 461 DHHC17 may contribute to Huntington's disease is through the palmitoylation of caspase-6, a 462 cysteine protease involved in neurological disorders. Palmitoylation inhibits caspase-6 activity, 463 and in the DHHC17 -/- mice, caspase-6 has increased activity which is required for the progression of Huntington's disease.¹¹⁹ 464

465 Schizophrenia and X-linked mental retardation. Patients with schizophrenia often have a 466 deletion located at the chromosome 22q11 region. The zDHHC8 gene is found here, and studies have linked the loss of zDHHC8 to this disease.^{120,121} However, other studies have also argued 467 that there is no link between the two.¹²²⁻¹²⁵ Mutations in the zDHHC15 and zDHHC9 have also 468 been associated with X-linked mental retardation.^{126,127} The mutations in these studies generally 469 470 implicate a loss of function of the PAT. How deficiencies in these two PATS cause the severe phenotype is not known, but it is not surprising as their substrates are involved in neural 471 472 development (see TABLE1).

<u>Other neurological disorders.</u> Mice with zDHHC5 reduced function are deficient in
contextual fear conditioning which is an indicator of defective hippocampal-dependent learning.
Two substrates are potentially the link between DHHC5 and its role in postsynaptic function,
learning, and memory. The first substrate is PSD-95 which is vital for normal neural
development and function. DHHC5 interacts with PSD-95 through a PDZ3 domain found on

PSD-95.⁶⁴ The second substrate is the GPCR SSTR5, which is found in neural tissue.¹²⁸ The 478 479 effect of palmitoylation near the C-terminus of SSTR5 is not evident but it is known that the Cterminus of GCPRs is essential for interaction with its downstream effectors^{129,130} and 480 481 palmitoylation could potentially regulate GPCR SSTR5 signaling. 482 Cancer. It has been implicated that DHHC2 functions as a tumor suppressor. Reduced 483 expression predicts a poor prognosis in gastric adenocarcinoma patients and is associated with lymph node metastasis.¹³¹ Knocking down zDHHC2 reduces the palmitovlation levels of 484 485 cytoskeleton-associated protein 4 (CKAP4), which regulates its interaction with antiproliferative 486 factor (APF) and decreases the ability of APF to regulate cellular proliferation and tumorigenesis.¹³² Gastric cancer tissue with elevated levels of DHHC14 are characterized with 487 488 more aggressive tumor invasion in vivo. Overexpressing DHHC14 in TMK-1 cells resulted in 489 increased migration and invasion while knockdown of zDHHC14 in HSC-44PE and 44As3 gastric cancer cells reduced invasiveness.¹³³ These observations link zDHHC14 to gastric cancer 490 491 but the mechanism by which the PAT contributes to the disease is not known. Knockdown of 492 zDHHC5 inhibits non-small cell lung cancer cell proliferation, colony formation, and cell invasion. Overexpression of WT DHHC5 can rescue the cell growth.¹³⁴ 493

494 Additional phenotypes. A loss of function mutation in the zDHHC21 gene is sufficient 495 for hair loss in mice.¹³⁵ Fyn, an Src-family kinase involved in keratinocyte differentiation, is the 496 linking substrate between hair loss and DHHC21. zDHHC21 deficient mice have also been 497 reported to be more resistant to injury, linking DHHC21 to endothelial inflammation. The 498 linking substrate is likely PLC β 1.¹³⁶ DHHC21 may also be involved in vascular function as it 499 can palmitoylate the α 1D adrenoceptor.¹³⁷ A nonsense mutation in the zDHHC13 gene results in 499 amyloidosis, alopecia, and osteoporosis.¹³⁸ This osteoporosis phenotype is attributed to the

501 DHHC22 (zDHHC13) substrate membrane type-1 matrix metalloproteinase (MT1-MMP), a 502 factor that controls skeletal development. zDHHC13's role in hair anchoring, skin barrier, and hair loss are likely mediated through its substrate cornifelin.¹³⁹ zDHHC13 knockout mice also 503 504 show diminished mitochondrial function attributable to verified substrates such as malonyl-CoAacyl carrier protein transacylase.¹⁴⁰ Lastly, zDHHC13 deficient mice are more susceptible to 505 bacteria resulting in skin inflammation.¹³⁶ Mice deficient in zDHHC16 (Aph2) exhibit 506 507 cardiomyopathy and cardiac defects. The mediating substrate is phospholamban (PLN). 508 Palmitoylated PLN interacts with protein kinase A and protein phosphatase 1 to control the 509 pentamer formation of PLN. In the zDHHC16 deficient mice, PLN has reduced phosphorylation 510 which in turn inhibits its function.

511 The DHHCs highlighted above, have substrate pools smaller than that of DHHC3 or 512 DHHC7. Surprisingly, genetic deletion of zDHHC3 or zDHHC7 in mice does not have apparent phenotypes.⁵⁹ Double knockout mice, however, do exhibit reduced body and brain mass and 513 514 perinatal lethality. This is a strong indication of the functional redundancies for DHHC3 and 515 DHHC7. Some studies have reported potential biological functions of DHHC7 in glucose tolerance, hyperglycemia¹⁴¹, and tumorigenesis¹⁴² and cell migration¹⁴³. Viral proteins require 516 palmitoylation for proper function, but viral transferases are not known¹⁴⁴. It is more likely that 517 viral proteins are capable of hijacking the cellular DHHCs to ensure virus survival. Promiscuous 518 519 DHHCs such as DHHC3 are a likely target and indeed HSV-1 envelope protein UL20 was shown to interact with and serve as a substrate for DHHC3.¹⁴⁵ Cells expressing DHHS3 have 520 521 lower viral titers and altered UL20 localization. The hijacking of host palmitoylation machinery 522 is not limited to viruses. The GobX protein from L. pneumophila and SifA from Salmonella are

523 both palmitoylated once inside the host cell and requires palmitoylation for proper

524 localization.146,147

525 The DHHCs have essential roles for healthy cellular functions and are involved in the 526 progression of multiple neurological diseases and various cancers. Similar to the protein kinases, 527 the DHHCs are part of signaling pathways, but the modifications they catalyze do not turn on 528 their substrates, instead directing them to the correct cellular membranes. In order to understand and treat the diseases associated with the DHHCs, we must determine how their activities are 529 530 regulated.

531

ERASERS OF S-PALMITOYLATION

532 The first enzyme discovered capable of deacylating palmitoylated substrates was palmitoyl-protein thioesterase (PPT1).¹⁴⁸ PPT1 was later shown to reside in the lysosome and 533 534 remove S-palmitoyl groups from peptides and proteins during lysosomal degradation.^{149,150} The 535 localization of PPT1 prevents it from participating in the regulation of the dynamic S-536 palmitoylation of cytoplasmic proteins. That role would later be attributed to the cytosolic acyl 537 protein thioesterase 1 (APT1), and APT2. Originally isolated from rat liver, APT1 has been demonstrated to be a protein defatty-acylase with substrates such as Ras^{151} , G protein α 538 subunit¹⁵¹, and SNAP23¹⁵² through *in vitro* assays and *in vivo* experiments.¹⁵³ APT1 has an 539 540 expected broad substrate specificity as it must catalyze the removal of S-palmitoylation from a 541 multitude of substrates. This means there is a lack of a consensus sequence for APT1 recognition 542 among its substrates. APT1 is capable of depalmitoylating substrates which are dually N-543 terminal myristoylated and cysteine acylated, substrates that are prenylated and acylated, and 544 acylated integral membrane proteins. Its specificity is not with any discrimination as not all 545 acylated proteins are APT1 substrates, for example, Caveolin.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, APT1 deacylates

546 Ga_i tenfold more efficiently than Ras. The governing factors behind this selectivity are not vet 547 apparent. APT1 belong to the α/β hydrolase superfamily of proteins and contains a conserved catalytic triad.¹⁵⁵ This family also includes lipases, esterases, and dehalogenases. The homolog 548 549 APT2 functions similarly as a thioesterase and is capable of deacylating palmitoylated 550 substrates.¹⁵⁶ Both APT1 and APT2 are palmitoylated, and this modification is hypothesized to 551 target the thioesterases to membranes where they can then interact with and access their substrates palmitoyl group, which is usually embedded in those membranes.¹⁵⁷ However, it has 552 also been suggested that autodepalmitoylated APT is the active form of the enzyme.¹⁵⁸ 553

The α/β hydrolase domain 17 (ABHD17) family of depalmitoylases were identified by profiling novel serine hydrolase targets of the APT1/2 inhibitor, Palmostatin B.¹⁵⁹ The founding member, ABHD17, catalyzes the depalmitoylation of PSD-95 and N-Ras. Other ABHD17 family members were later demonstrated to be capable of deacylating PSD-95.¹⁶⁰ An increasing number of cellular depalmitoylases suggest that like the DHHC PATs, there may be substrate selective depalmitoylases while a few members exhibit a generally broad and redundant depalmitoylating activity.

561 TECHNIQUES USED TO DETECT PROTEIN S-PALMITOYLATION

562 <u>Radioactive isotope labeled palmitic acid.</u> Commonly used isotope labeled palmitic acids 563 are ³H-, ¹⁴C-, and ¹²⁵I-palmitic acids.^{21,49,161} Radioactive-isotope labeled palmitic acid was the 564 first reported method by which protein S-palmitoylated could be detected.¹⁶² Radiolabeled 565 palmitic acid added to the cell culture media is readily taken up and converted to palmitoyl-CoA 566 inside the cell. This radiolabeled palmitoyl-CoA serves as a substrate for the DHHC PATs and is 567 readily used to modify their substrate proteins. Enrichment, by immunoprecipitation or 568 fractionation, allows for visualization of palmitoylated proteins. While ³H- and ¹⁴C-palmitic

569 acids are near perfect mimics of endogenous palmitate, the signal generated by these isotopes are 570 weak and generally require an exposure time that can extend from weeks into months.¹²⁵I-571 palmitic acid has a stronger radioactive signal; however, it is structurally different from palmitic 572 acid and may not give an accurate depiction of palmitoylation. Radiolabeled palmitic acid probes 573 operate via metabolic labeling, which may disrupt the metabolic state and normal cell functions 574 due to the addition of exogenous fatty acids. Conditions which affect the metabolic conversion of 575 the palmitate into palmitoyl-CoA and its ratio to unlabeled palmitate further decreases the 576 sensitivity of radioactive isotope labeling.

577 Acyl-Biotin Exchange. Acyl-biotin exchange (ABE) is a three-step procedure that 578 harnesses the sensitivity of the thioester bond of S-palmitoylation to cleavage by hydroxylamine 579 to indirectly visualize protein S-palmitoylation.^{163,164} The first step utilizes N-ethylmaleimide to 580 block all the free thiols, including cysteines on proteins. The second step is treatment with 581 hydroxylamine which cleaves the thioester bond and removes the palmitoyl group from modified 582 cysteines. The third step is the addition of biotin-N-[6-(biotinamido) hexyl]-3'-(2'-pyridyldithio) 583 propionamide (biotin-HPDP), which reacts with the newly freed cysteines. The modified 584 proteins are then enriched, via streptavidin pull-down, and the modification site can be 585 determined via MS identification. ABE can be coupled with a precursor immunoprecipitation 586 step to enrich for a particular protein. Additionally, the biotin moiety can be detected by 587 streptavidin western blot to visualize the degree of palmitoylation. ABE does not operate via 588 metabolic labeling, which means it can be utilized to detect dynamic S-palmitoylation under any 589 conditions, including stress conditions. Another advantage is its applicability to animal studies in 590 which metabolic labeling is less feasible.¹⁶⁵ The ABE procedure is adaptable due to the 591 simplicity of the chemistry involved. Fluorescent dyes can replace the biotin moiety to allow for

592 in-gel fluorescence visualization of palmitovlation. Thiol-reactive sepharose beads can also be 593 directly added to the hydroxylamine treated proteins to simplify the procedure and reduce the 594 number of steps performed; this adapted procedure is also known as acyl-resin assisted capture (acyl-rac).¹⁶⁶ Replacing biotin-HPDP with maleimide-functionalized polyethylene glycol 595 596 reagents induces a mobility shift on S-acylated proteins that can be detected by western blot, also known as an acyl-PEG exchange (APE).¹⁶⁷ APE allows for the detection of multi-palmitoylated 597 598 states of a protein, such as the dually palmitoylated H-Ras, and provide insight into the stoichiometry of protein palmitoylation.¹⁶⁷ The major drawback to ABE is the hydroxylamine 599 600 treatment step, which removes all forms of lipidation from cysteines (myristoylation, 601 palmitoylation, and other acyl groups). This means identification of the actual acyl group on the 602 cysteine is impossible via ABE. Additionally, not all S-palmitoyl modifications are equally 603 susceptible to hydroxylamine treatment; junction adhesion molecule C is reported to be Spalmitoylated yet is surprisingly hydroxylamine resistant.¹⁴³ Also, an incomplete hydroxylamine 604 605 treatment can result in false negatives while incomplete alkylation of proteins during the first 606 step can result in false positives.

607 Bioorthogonal Palmitic Acid Probes. Bioorthogonal palmitic acid probes generally 608 contain a terminal azido or alkynyl group that allows the installation of a variety of handles via click chemistry for downstream procedures.¹⁶⁸ Biotin can be installed to facilitate affinity 609 610 purification and subsequent protein identification by MS, or visualization by streptavidin western 611 blot. Fluorescent probes can also be installed for visualization by in-gel fluorescence. The 612 bioorthogonal palmitic acid probes function similarly to the radiolabel palmitic acid probes, in 613 that both utilize metabolic labeling to install the probes onto the protein substrates. While the 614 bioorthogonal probe suffers from similar drawbacks as radiolabel probes due to the nature of

615 metabolic labeling, it offers significant advantages and improves upon the radiolabel technique.
616 These probes have improved sensitivity compared to their radiolabeled counterparts, are easier to
617 handle (does not require a radiation safety permit), and allows affinity purification and
618 identification of the palmitoylated substrates. In general, alkynyl fatty acids are the preferred
619 probe as they are more structurally similar to palmitic acid and have reduced background
620 labeling compared to their azido cousins.¹⁶⁹

621 Mass spectrometry. Analysis of post-translational modifications by MS is the gold standard 622 which provides quantitative information, direct visualization of the modified site and the real 623 identity of the modification. Unfortunately, protein and peptide palmitoylation by MS is a 624 challenging task due to the hydrophobicity of the modification and instability of the thioester 625 bond under the ionizing conditions of MS.¹⁷⁰ While challenging, the task is not impossible and 626 S-palmitoylated peptides have been identified and their corresponding protein sites assigned.^{46,171,172} Improvements to the methodology and MS conditions will require further 627 628 development for routine MS analysis.

629 Bioinformatics software to predict protein S-palmitoylation site. An increasing number of 630 palmitoylated proteins identified by proteomic studies has led to the development of software 631 designed to predict potential protein S-palmitoylation sites. CSS-Palm 1.0 (CSS: Clustering and 632 scoring strategy) is the first of such programs. CSS-Palm 2.0 was used to successfully predict the 633 palmitoylation sites of 16 known palmitoylated proteins, which were subsequently validated experimentally.¹⁷³ The software is currently in its 4.0 iteration. Additional software includes 634 NBA-palm¹⁷⁴ (naive Bayes algorithm) and CKSAAP-Palm (composition of k-spaced amino acid 635 pairs).¹⁷⁵ 636

637

638 Conclusion

639 Protein lipidation is a well-recognized post-translational modification that has significant 640 impact on cell health and function. Among the variety of lipidations is the uniquely reversible S-641 palmitoylation. The significance of S-palmitoylation was revolutionized by the discovery of the 642 DHHC family of enzymes. It allowed the scientific community to link a variety of pathologies to 643 almost all the DHHC members. This certainly means that the DHHCs are an invaluable 644 pharmacological target in our pursuit of health. Although significant progress has been achieved 645 in the two decades since the discovery of the DHHCs, the field can still be considered in its 646 infancy. S-palmitoylation and DHHCs will provide a rich field for study for years to come. 647 Another recently identified reversible lipidation modification is lysine ^eN-fatty acylation. Like S-palmitoylation in the early 2000's, lysine fatty acylation has been demonstrated to be 648 649 important for the function of several GTPases. Although exogenous lysine $^{\circ}$ N-fatty 650 acyltransferases have been reported, no mammalian lysine fatty acyltransferases has been 651 identified. The need for a mammalian lysine fatty acyltransferase is unquestionable; without one, 652 our understanding of lysine fatty acyltransferases will remain limited. One can imagine how the 653 field will change with an identified transferase simply by looking at S-palmitoylation. My work 654 will to contribute to the field by reporting the first mammalian lysine ^eN-fatty acyltransferase. 655 Our finding that DHHC2/3/7/15 are capable lysine fatty acyltransferases will help push us into a new era in the study of lysine fatty acylation. 656

657

A. Using radiolabeled palmitic acid as a probe



- 659 Figure 4. Different analytical methods to identify and characterize protein S-
- 660 palmitoylation.¹⁷⁷

⁶⁶¹ *Readout for A should be autoradiography or scintillation counter, not fluorography.

DHHC enzyme [Gene symbol]	Cellular localization	Disease association	Known substrates
DHHC1 [zDHHC1]	ER, extracellular vesicular exosome		NCDN ^{179a}
DHHC2 [zDHHC2]	plasma membrane, recycling endosome ^e	Lymph node metastasis and independently predicts an unfavorable prognosis in gastric adenocarcinoma patients; colorectal cancer. ¹⁸⁰	Lck, ^{181a} R7BP (RGS7), ^{182a} CKAP4/p63, ^{183a} CD9 and CD151, ^{184ad} PSD-95 ^{42,57ab} and GAP43, ^{42b} SNAP23/25, ^{61b} eNOS, ^{185bd} gp78, ^{186b} AKAP79/150 ^{187a}
DHHC3 [zDHHC3]	Golgi		(TARP γ-2, TARP γ-8, CNIH2, CaMKIIα, Syd-1, zyxin, TRPM8, TRPC1, HCRTR2), ^{179b} integrin $\alpha 6/\beta 4$, ^{188a} TRAIL-R1, ^{189a} γ2 subunit of GABA _(A) , ^{41bc} NCDN, ^{179a} SNAP25/23, ^{61b} Gα, ^{190a} CSP, ^{191b} PI4KIIα, ^{192a} RGS4, ^{112b} STREX, ^{193ac} eNOS, ^{185bd} PICK1, ^{194acd} GluR1/2, ^{63b} PSD-95, ^{42b} CALHM1 ¹⁹⁵ , PPT1 ^{196b}
DHHC4 [zDHHC4]	Golgi, ER		No known substrates
DHHC5 [zDHHC5]	Plasma membrane, dendrite	Post-synaptic function affecting learning and memory. ⁶⁴	δ-catenin, ^{197a} FLOT2, ^{198a} SSTR5, ^{128adc} GRIP1b, ^{65acd} STREX, ^{193ac} PLM ¹⁹⁹
DHHC6 [zDHHC6]	ER		Calnexin, ^{50a} gp78, ^{186b} IP3R ²⁰⁰

Table 2. Mammalian DHHC enzyme-substrates, localization, and disease association¹⁷⁸

DHHC7 [zDHHC7]	Golgi		(TARP γ-8, CaMKIIα, Syd-1, NCDN) ^{179b} SNAP25/23, ^{61b} PSD-95, ^{42b} PI4KIIα, ^{192a} RGS4, ^{112b} Gα, ^{190a} CSP, ^{191b} estrogen ^d , progesterone, and androgen receptors, ^{201a} STREX, ^{193ac} eNOS, ^{185bd} Glut4 ^{141a} , Fas ^{202b} JAMC ^{143a} , Scribble, ¹⁴² PPT1, ^{196b} NMNAT2 ^{203a}
DHHC8 [zDHHC8]	Golgi, Cytoplasmic vesicle, mitochondrion	Genetic deletion may be linked to susceptibility to schizophrenia. Synaptic regulation. ZDHHC8 knockdown enhances radio-sensitivity of mesothelioma cells.	PICK1, ^{194acd} GRIP1b, ^{65acd} ABCA1, ^{204b} paralemmin-1, ^{63 bd} eNOS ^{185bd}
DHHC9 [zDHHC9]	Golgi, ER, cytoplasm	Mutations in the gene are associated with X-linked mental retardation.	H-Ras, ⁴⁹ N-Ras, ⁴⁹ STREX ^{193ac}
DHHC10 [zDHHC11]	ER	Gain of ZDHHC11 gene may be a potential biomarker for bladder cancer and non-small cell lung cancer.	NCDN ^{179a}
DHHC11 [zDHHC23]	Plasma membrane		KCNMA1, ^{205a} gp78 ^{186b}
DHHC12 [zDHHC12]	ER, Golgi	Alzheimer's disease ²⁰⁶	No known substrates
DHHC13 [zDHHC24]	ER ⁵⁸		gp78 ^{186b}
DHHC14 [zDHHC14]	ER ⁹	Deletion may be linked to development delay ²⁰⁷ . Activation through chromosomal translocation in patients with acute biphenotypic leukemia. ²⁰⁸	No known substrates
DHHC15 [zDHHC15]	Golgi	Mutations in the gene cause X-linked mental retardation type 91. ¹²⁷	CSP, ^{191b} SNAP25b, ^{61b} PSD-95, ^{42b} JNK3 ²⁰⁹
DHHC16 [zDHHC16]	ER, cytoplasm ²¹⁰		PLN, ²¹¹ DHHC6

DHHC17 [zDHHC17]	Golgi, Golgi- associated vesicle membrane, cytoplasmic vesicles ⁶²	Memory and synaptic deficits in KO mice. ²¹²	SNAP25/23, ^{61b} CSP, ^{191b} STREX, ^{193ac} ClipR-59, ²¹³ PSD-95, ^{214b} GAD65, ^{214b} SYT1, ^{214b} huntingtin, ^{106a} MPP1/p55, ^{215a} LCK, ^{42b} JNK3, ^{216bd} GLUR1, ^{63b} GLUR2, ^{63b} Caspase-6 ¹¹⁹
DHHC18 [zDHHC18]	Golgi		H-Ras, ^{42b} Lck ^{42b}
DHHC19 [zDHHC19]	ER		R-Ras ^{48b}
DHHC20 [zDHHC20]	Plasma membrane		EGFR, ²¹⁷ Peptide mimic of N terminal myristoylated proteins, ²¹⁸ δ-catenin, ^{197b} CALHM1 ¹⁹⁵
DHHC21 [zDHHC21]	Golgi, plasma membrane	Loss of protein function result in delayed hair shaft differentiation and hyperplasia of interfollicular epidermis and sebaceous glands.	Estrogen ^{<i>d</i>} , progesterone, and androgen receptors, ^{201<i>a</i>} PECAM- 1, ^{219<i>a</i>} Fyn, ^{135<i>bc</i>} eNOS ^{185<i>ad</i>}
DHHC22 [zDHHC13]	Golgi, Golgi- associated vesicle membrane ²²⁰ , ER,	ZDHHC13 deficient mice develop alopecia, amyloidosis and osteoporosis ¹³⁸ and have reduced bone mineral density. ²²¹ Huntington's disease	MT1-MMP, ^{221bc} huntingtin, ^{86b} CNFN ^{139a}
DHHC24 [zDHHC22]	Golgi, ER		KCNMA1, ^{205<i>a</i>} gp78 ^{186<i>b</i>}

a - knockdown evidence *b* - overexpression evidence c = murine orthologue d = protein/substrate interaction *e* - localization may depend on cell type

CHAPTER TWO

665

DHHC protein acyltransferases catalyzes the lysine palmitoylation of 666 members of the Ras superfamily of small GTPases 667 668 **INTRODUCTION** 669 Modification of protein lysine residues by long-chain fatty acyl groups has been known for 670 over three decades. However very little had been known about its prevalence, regulation, and 671 biological function.³¹ In mammalian cells, the first two proteins reported to contain myristoyl lysine were tumor necrosis factor-alpha $(TNF\alpha)^4$ and interleukin-1 alpha.⁵ Lens integral 672 673 membrane protein aquaporin-0 reportedly undergoes lysine palmitoylation and oleylation. In the 674 past five years or so, studies on a class of enzymes called sirtuins have begun to shed light on the 675 function of lysine long-chain fatty acylation. Sirtuins regulate numerous biological processes, including transcription, metabolism, genome stability, and aging.²²²⁻²²⁴ They were initially 676 known to be NAD⁺-dependent protein lysine deacetylases,²²⁵ but several of the seven 677 678 mammalian sirtuins that lack efficient deacetylase activity were found to catalyze the hydrolysis of other acyl lysines efficiently.²²⁶ Among these, several sirtuins have been reported to have the 679 ability to remove long-chain fatty acyl groups.¹ In particular, SIRT6 can defatty-acylate 680 681 TNF α regulates its secretion, providing the first example for the function of protein lysine fatty acylation in mammalian cells.¹ 682 683 Recently, several other proteins found to be regulated by reversible lysine fatty

acylation^{30,227} and sirtuins. The most exciting examples are two members of the Ras superfamily
 of proteins, K-Ras4a and R-Ras2.²²⁷ The Ras superfamily of proteins contain more than 150

members in mammals and they play essential roles in various signaling events. The finding that
lysine fatty acylation regulates several Ras proteins provides compelling support to the
hypothesis that lysine fatty acylation has important regulatory functions in biology. Lysine fatty
acylation is likely more abundant than previously thought, as many sirtuins and zinc-dependent
histone deacetylase are capable of removing long-chain fatty acyl groups.^{1,30,228,229}

These findings support that protein lysine fatty acylation is emerging as a physiologically important protein post-translational modification. To gain further insights into its occurrence and function, the enzymes that install the fatty acyl groups onto protein lysine residues must be identified, if there are any. Recently, a bacterial toxin is reported to palmitoylate its host GTPase. However, whether mammalian cells possess endogenous lysine palmitoyltransferases remains unknown. Here we report the first mammalian lysine palmitoyltransferases.

RESULTS

699	DHHC2/3/7/15 expression can increase K-Ras4a lysine fatty acylation.
700	We started the work with the attempt to identify the acyltransferases responsible for the
701	lysine acylation of K-Ras4a, which was recently reported to have lysine palmitoylation and
702	regulated by SIRT2. We focused on the 23 members of the DHHC family of protein
703	palmitoyltransferases. Overexpressing the 23 DHHCs in HEK293T cells showed that DHHC3,
704	DHHC7, and DHHC15 were potential writers of K-Ras4a fatty acylation as increased fluorescent
705	signals (an indication of fatty acylation level) were observed when these DHHCs were
706	overexpressed. Surprisingly, after treating with 400 mM (2.5%) hydroxylamine, the increased K-
707	Ras4a fatty acylation levels by DHHC3/7 expression could still be detected. Quantification and
708	normalization of the fluorescent signal against the protein level indicated that DHHC3 was able
709	to increase the hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation by approximately $64\% * \pm 38\%$, DHHC7
710	by $57\% * \pm 7\%$ (Figure 5a). DHHC2 and DHHC8 did not express in our initial screens (Figure
711	S1). Later on, we were able to express these two enzymes individually and observed that
712	expression of DHHC2, but not DHHC8, was able to increase the hydroxylamine-resistant fatty
713	acylation of K-Ras4a similarly as DHHC3 and DHHC7 (Figure S2a,b). Additionally, we
714	observed DHHC15, closely related to DHHC2 ²³⁰ , is also capable of increasing K-Ras4a
715	hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation to DHHC2/3/7 (Figure S3b).
716	The results from our screening experiments were unexpected as members of the DHHC
717	enzymes are well known as cysteine palmitoyl transferases. We anticipated increases in
718	hydroxylamine-sensitive fatty acylation (S-palmitoylation), not hydroxylamine-resistant fatty
719	acylation. One possible explanation as to why expressing DHHCs could increase lysine fatty
720	acylation could be that cysteine fatty acylation served as a signal for the lysine fatty

721 acyltransferase to modify the lysine residues. Thus by increasing cysteine fatty acylation through 722 the ectopic expression of the DHHC, it could increase lysine fatty acylation. Alternatively, lysine 723 fatty acylation could be the result of a Cys-to-Lys acyl shift as the palmitoylated lysine residues 724 in K-Ras4a are close to the palmitoylated Cys. To investigate this possibility we co-expressed 725 DHHC2/3/7/15 with the non-palmitoylated K-Ras4a mutant C180S. Surprisingly, we still 726 observed increased hydroxylamine-resistant labeling on K-Ras4a C180S mutant in cells 727 expressing DHHC2/3/7/15, suggesting that the DHHC enzyme is still able to modify this mutant 728 that cannot be Cys acylated (Figure 6b, c). The gain in fatty acylation is almost completely 729 hydroxylamine resistant giving us the first indication that the modification is likely attached to 730 K-Ras4a through an amide bond as hydroxylamine treatment readily removes S- and O-731 acylation²³¹. The hydroxylamine resistant and SIRT2-regulated palmitoylation on K-Ras4a has 732 previously been attributed to three lysine residues in the C-terminal region. When these three 733 lysine residues were mutated to arginine (the 3KR mutant), DHHC2/3/7/15 expression did not 734 increase the hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation, in contrast to what was observed with K-735 Ras4a WT and the C180S mutant. This indicated that the endogenous lysine fatty acylation sites 736 were the modification sites for the overexpressed DHHC2/3/7/15.

To rule out the possibility the fatty acylation is an artifact due to artificially high levels of ectopic DHHC expression, DHHC1 was also overexpressed with the K-Ras4a WT, C180S, and 3KR mutants as a control. DHHC1 was expressed at similar or higher levels than DHHC2/3/7 (Figure S2a), but we did not observe any increases in fatty acylation. Thus, certain specificities exist among the DHHCs on catalyzing the lysine fatty acylation of K-Ras4a.

The second isoform of K-RAS known as KRAS4B lacks a palmitoylated cysteine at the
C-terminal region and appears similar to our K-Ras4a C180S mutant. We wondered if this

744	isoform would serve as a lysine palmitoylation substrate for DHHC2/3/7. When we expressed
745	with DHHC7, K-Ras4b had a threefold increase in fatty acylation before and after
746	hydroxylamine treatment. The absolute fluorescence intensity, however, was lower than that with
747	for K-Ras4a, suggesting that K-Ras4b had lower levels of lysine fatty acylation. The combined
748	acylation data of the K-Ras4a C180S mutant and K-Ras4b with DHHC7 overexpression strongly
749	suggest that the DHHCs are capable of directly acylating the ε -amino group on a lysine side
750	chain and lysine palmitoylation is not a result of an S-to-N acyl shift.



Figure 5. K-Ras4a fatty acylation is increased by ectopic expression of DHHC3/7 in HEK293T cell

(a) Quantification and normalized hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation of WT K-Ras4a with over-expressed DHHC1 – 23 (n = 2). (b) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a mutants with overexpressed DHHC1 (n = 2) and quantifications. (c) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a mutants with overexpressed DHHC3 (n = 2) and quantifications. (b) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a mutants with over-expressed DHHC3 (n = 2) and quantifications. The individual plotted values are normalized to the WT control sample before and after 0.4 M hydroxylamine treatment (error bars represent

- 762 S.D.)
- 763
- 764

Further confirmation that DHHC-mediated hydroxylamine-resistant acylation on K-RAS is lysine acylation.

767 We next set out to further confirm that the increased hydroxylamine resistant acylation 768 when we co-expressed DHHC2/3/7/15 with K-Ras4a was due to lysine acylation. We previously 769 reported certain cysteine fatty acylation was resistant to hydroxylamine treatment¹⁴³. In that 770 study, treatment of JAM-C was able to remove a significant amount of fatty acylation but could 771 not remove all of the fatty acylation. The hydroxylamine resistant signal was thought to be on a 772 lysine but mutation of multiple lysine residues did not affect the fatty acylation. Mutation of the 773 cysteine acylation sites however could inhibit the fatty acylation which indicates that the 774 acylation are indeed on cysteines. These observations suggest that the acylation are on a cysteine 775 yet somehow hydroxylamine resistant. Thus, for this study it remains possible that the increased 776 hydroxylamine resistant acylation we observed is located on a cysteine residue not previously 777 reported to be modified. To address this, we mutated all of the cysteines found on K-Ras4a 778 including the palmitoylated cysteine, but excluding the farnesylated cysteine (when the 779 farnesylated cysteine is mutated, DHHC3/7 was unable to acylate this mutant), generating the 780 mutant referred to as 4CS. When K-Ras4a 4CS was co-expressed with DHHC2/3/7, we observed 781 increased acylation that was completely hydroxylamine resistant (Figure 6a). This gain of 782 acylation was similar to that observed when the DHHCs were co-expressed with the C180S 783 single mutant. This indicates the three other cysteines were not the modified sites by the 784 ectopically expressed DHHC2/3/7.

Our lab previously reported SIRT2 is capable of removing the endogenous lysine acyl modification on K-Ras4a, but not cysteine acylation. We sought to utilize the SIRT2 deacylation assay to confirm that the DHHC-catalyzed fatty acylation of K-Ras4a was on a lysine. K-Ras4a

788	C180S was co-expressed with DHHC2/3/7 to generate the hydroxylamine-resistant fatty
789	acylation as we previously described in Figure 5. This C180S mutant has only hydroxylamine-
790	resistant fatty acylation so when treated with SIRT2 there would be no interference from cysteine
791	fatty acylation. As expected when treated with SIRT2 and NAD ⁺ in vitro, the hydroxylamine-
792	resistant signal was completely removed (Figure 6b). When NAD ⁺ was omitted in the control
793	reaction, the acylation remained. As SIRT2 is only able to remove acyl groups from lysine
794	residues and not cysteine residues, we concluded that the increased fatty acylation signal on K-
795	Ras4a by DHHC2/3/7 expression was indeed lysine fatty acylation.



Figure 6. Further confirmation DHHC mediated hydroxylamine resistant acylation on K Ras4a is lysine fatty acylation.

800 (a) Fatty acylation of the additional cysteine mutant of K-Ras4a (4CS) co-expressed with

801 DHHC2/3/7 shows almost exclusive increases in NH₂OH resistant fatty acylation. (b) The

802 increased hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation of K-Ras4a C180S by DHHC2/3/7 co-

803 expression can be removed by purified SIRT2 enzyme. SIRT2 in the presence of NAD⁺ in the *in*

804 *vitro* deacylation reaction completely removed the DHHC mediated hydroxylamine resistant

fatty acylation signal. (c) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a C180S co-expressed with DHHC3/7 and
 the respective catalytically inactive DHHS mutants.

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809 DHHC-mediated lysine acylation of K-Ras4a is dependent on DHHC catalytic activity.

810 The fatty acylation of lysine residues on K-Ras4a was dependent on the catalytic activity 811 of the DHHC enzyme as overexpression of the DHHS3/7 mutant, where the catalytic cysteine 812 was mutated to serine, dramatically reduced the hydroxylamine-resistant fatty acylation on K-813 Ras4a C180S (Figure 6c). The DHHC canonical cysteine fatty acylation activity proceeds through a ping pong mechanism⁷³ where the acyl donor is thought to first modify the catalytic 814 815 cysteine of the DHHC forming a DHHC-acyl intermediate followed by a subsequent transfer of 816 the acyl group from the intermediate to the cysteine on the substrate. The same DHHC-acyl 817 intermediate is likely also utilized for the lysine fatty acyl transfer. Instead of deprotonation of a 818 cysteine residue on the substrate, deprotonation of a lysine residue on the substrate through the 819 same histidine of the DHHC motif could generate the required nucleophile to capture the acyl 820 group from the catalytic cysteine residue.

821 DHHC7 knockdown perturbs K-RAS lysine fatty acylation

822 Our co-expression data strongly suggest that DHHC2/3/7/15 possess lysine fatty 823 acylation activity. To further confirm this, we used shRNAs (Sigma Aldrich) to generate 824 lentiviral particles to obtain DHHC2/3/7/15 stable knockdown cells in the HEK293T cells. We 825 chose this cell line as we are able to easily detect the basal lysine fatty acylation of 826 overexpressed K-Ras4a without overexpression of a DHHC. The knockdown efficiencies are 827 verified by qPCR, as antibodies for endogenous DHHC proteins are, in our hands, generally 828 unreliable. On average we obtained an average of 70% reduction in DHHC mRNA level over 829 multiple independent repeats. When WT K-Ras4a is expressed in the DHHC7 stable knockdown 830 cells, we were able to observe a 37% decrease in hydroxylamine resistant fatty acylation (Figure 831 7a). We did not observe a significant effect on K-Ras4a lysine acylation in the DHHC2 and the

- 832 DHHC3 stable knockdown cells. DHHCs have been demonstrated to share overlap substrates.
- 833 This redundancy makes it challenging to confirm the substrate of DHHCs by knockdown. None
- the less, our data at least showed that endogenous DHHC7 is capable of acylating the lysine
- 835 residues of K-Ras4a.





838 Figure 7. DHHC7 knockdown perturbs K-Ras4a lysine fatty acylation.

- (a) Representative fluorescence gel of WT K-Ras4a overexpressed in DHHC2/3/7/15 stable
- knockdown HEK293T cells with quantification (n = 3). The individual plotted values are
- 841 normalized to the WT control sample before and after 0.4 M hydroxylamine treatment. (b)
- 842 Relative mRNA level of DHHC2/3/7/15 in stable knockdown cells compared to the control
- 843 knockdown sample determined by qPCR (n=3). (c) Western blot against endogenous DHHC7 in
- the DHHC2/3/7/15 stable knockdown HEK293T cells. Arrow denotes endogenous DHHC7.

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DHHC3/7 ectopic expression promotes the lysine acylation of various GTPases

849 Next, we asked if other small GTPases could serve as lysine acylation substrates for 850 DHHC3 or DHHC7 when ectopically expressed together in HEK293T cells. We screened 851 several small GTPases from different subfamilies and found a few different outcomes. TC10 and 852 Rac1 overall acylation were not affected by DHHC7 overexpression (Figure S4). RalA total fatty 853 acylation is increased upon DHHC7 overexpression, but no differences were observed post 854 hydroxylamine treatment. CDC42, which lacks a palmitoylated cysteine is similar to K-Ras4b 855 and our K-Ras4a C180S mutant, had increased acylation before and after hydroxylamine 856 treatment when overexpressed with DHHC3 and DHHC7. The acylation was little affected by 857 hydroxylamine, which suggests that the acylation is located on a lysine residue. It is important to 858 note that RALA in our hands served as a robust S-palmitoylation only substrate for DHHC7. 859 This was somewhat surprising in contrast to our results with K-Ras4a, so we further screened 860 RALA against all four DHHCs. DHHC2/3/7/15 increased the total acylation and did not affect 861 the hydroxylamine resistant acylation, which indicates this gained acylation is on a cysteine 862 (Figure S5). Additionally, we were able to confer lysine fatty acylation onto RALA by mutation 863 of the arginine residue nearby the palmitoylated cysteine. This RALA arginine to lysine mutant 864 when overexpressed with DHHC3/7 but not DHHC2/15 had hydroxylamine resistant fatty 865 acylation. Overall, the acylation of RALA by DHHC2/3/7/15 serves a control to our K-Ras4a 866 acylation results as it demonstrates there is a degree of selectivity regarding the protein substrate 867 which can be lysine fatty acylated by the DHHCs. It further demonstrates that this novel 868 enzymatic activity is not as promiscuous as one may think, particularly when working with 869 DHHC3. The factors which govern which GTPase may serve as a DHHC lysine fatty acyl 870 substrates require further investigation.

- 871 For later studies, we chose to focus on CDC42, which allow us to investigate the function of its
- 872 lysine fatty acylation without the complications of potential cysteine-palmitoylation.

876 DHHC3/7 promotes lysine acylation of CDC42 in a manner similar to K-Ras4a.

877 CDC42 does not have cysteine palmitoylation and in our screen, exhibited a robust 878 increase in hydroxylamine resistant fatty acylation when DHHC3/7 was overexpressed (Figure 879 8a). This increase in acylation is dependent on the enzymatic activity of the DHHC3/7 as the 880 corresponding DHHS mutants had little activity (Figure 8b, c). The increased fatty acylation 881 could also be removed by SIRT2 in an NAD⁺ dependent manner (Figure 8d) similar to K-882 Ras4a's lysine fatty acylation. Through mutagenesis, we identified Lys184 as the major acceptor 883 residue of the DHHC-dependent acylation as the K184R mutant could not be fatty acylated by 884 DHHC3/7 while the K183R mutant could still be partially fatty acylated by DHHC3/7 (Figure 885 8e, f). Mutation of both lysine residues also blocked the effects of DHHC3/7 overexpression on 886 CDC42 fatty acylation. Taken together, these results demonstrate that CDC42 is similar to K-887 Ras4b and K-Ras4a C180S as a lysine fatty acyl substrate for the DHHCs.



890 Figure 8. DHHC3/7 promotes lysine fatty acylation of CDC42.

891 (a) DHHC3/7 promotes pCDC42 NH₂OH-resistant fatty acylation (b, c) Increased CDC42 fatty

acylation by DHHC3/7 is dependent on the DHH<u>C</u> catalytic cysteine. (d) DHHC7-dependent

893 NH₂OH-resistant fatty acylation on CDC42 can be removed by SIRT2 *in vitro*. (e, f) K184 is the

major acceptor site of the DHHC3/7 dependent fatty acylation on CDC42. (g) DHHC2/3/7/15

 $895 \qquad over expression \ increases \ RALA \ NH_2OH \ susceptible \ fatty \ acylation \ but \ not \ NH_2OH \ resistant$

acylation.

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889

899 Ectopic expression of DHHC7 induces cell rounding through the lysine fatty acylation of900 CDC42

901 CDC42 is known to regulate cytoskeleton and thus cell migration and morphology²³². We 902 thus decided to examine whether DHHC3/7 expression could regulate cell morphology through 903 the lysine acylation of CDC42. Rounded cells are a classical phenotype observed when CDC42 is either deleted or loses its function due to being locked in its GDP bound form.^{233,234} Using live 904 905 cell confocal imaging, we observed that ectopic expression of a DsRed tagged DHHC7 in 906 HEK293T resulted in a majority (74%) of the cells adopting a round shape (Figure 9a). GFP is 907 co-expressed with DHHC7 to highlight the shape of the cell. 908 We then investigated whether the cell rounding effect was due to the increased lysine 909 fatty acylation on CDC42. In cells expressing GFP and DHHC7, we examined whether 910 overexpression of a WT CDC42 or the lysine mutant could rescue the cell rounding phenotype. 911 The addition of a K184S or a 2KS mutant reduced the amount of rounded cells, while the 912 addition of WT CDC42 showed similar levels of rounded cells (Figure 9b Our observations 913 indicate that the DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation of CDC42 inhibits its normal function 914 resulting in the rounded morphology observed. Introduction of the K184S mutant of CDC42 915 "rescues" this phenotype as it remains functional because it cannot be acylated.



917 Figure 9. DHHC7 induced cell rounding is reversed by a nonacylated K184S CDC42.

918 (a) DHHC7 (DsRed-tagged) ectopic expression induces cell rounding in HEK293T cells. GFP is

919 overexpressed to highlight cell morphology by confocal microscopy. Quantification shows

average percentage of rounded cells from 3 independent repeats. (b) The non-acylatable CDC42

921 K184S and 2KS rescues DHHC7 induced cell rounding in HEK293T cells. Quantification shows

922 average percentage of rounded cells from 3 independent repeats.

DISCUSSION

925 We report the first mammalian enzyme capable of catalyzing lysine fatty acylation. Surprisingly, 926 we identified multiple DHHC proteins that are well established to function as cysteine fatty acyl 927 transferases can also transfer fatty acyl groups to lysine. In particular, the promiscuous and 928 robust cysteine fatty acyltransferases DHHC3 and DHHC7 were shown to possess novel lysine 929 fatty acyltransferase activity against K-Ras and CDC42, members of the GTPase super family. 930 Additionally the closely related cousins to DHHC3/7, DHHC2 and DHHC15 were also observed 931 to possess this novel enzymatic activity (albeit weaker, but may due to the lower protein 932 expression level). As K-Ras4a has previously been reported to possess lysine fatty acylation that 933 can be removed by SIRT2, we confirmed that the modification placed onto K-Ras4a is indeed 934 lysine residues a by utilizing the *in vitro* SIRT2 deacylation assay. Only knockdown of DHHC7 935 was able to perturb the lysine fatty acylation of K-Ras4a, while knockdown of DHHC2/3/15 did 936 not affect K-Ras4a fatty acylation. This is likely due to the substrate redundancy commonly 937 found within the DHHC family as multiple DHHC enzymes are able to acylate the same 938 substrate.

939Our study identified a physiological consequence of the novel lysine fatty acyltransferase940activity. DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation of CDC42 produces a phenotype reminiscent of941CDC42 null cells and of inactive CDC42 cells. Similar to K-Ras4a, CDC42 is fatty acylated by942DHHC7 at its C terminal hyper variable region on two adjacent lysine residues. HEK293T cells943overexpressing DHHC7 were more rounded than controls cells. Overexpression of WT CDC42944was unable to revert the cell morphology while the K184S mutant could.

945 The importance of lysine fatty acylation has become clearer in recent years due to the 946 finding that the sirtuin class of HDACs and several HDACs themselves have robust defatty-

acylase activity. Several defatty-acylated substrates of these erasers have been identified while
the writers of these modifications remain elusive. Our study identifies the DHHC family of
cysteine palmitoyl acyltransferases as enzymes capable of catalyzing both cysteine and lysine
fatty acylation, opening the field to identify new lysine fatty acylated substrates and their writers.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

953 Antibodies and reagents

954	Fugene [®] 6 transfection reagent (Promega) was used for cell transfection with at a 3:1
955	DNA:Fugene ratio. Monoclonal anti-FLAG® (SIGMA) M2-peroxidase (HRP) produced in
956	mouse was used for all FLAG western blots (catalogue A8952). Anti-FLAG® M2 affinity gel
957	was used for immunoprecipitation (catalogue A2220). Anti-DHHC7 (Assay Biotech R12-3691)
958	antibody was used at 1:1000 dilution. Anti-DHHC3 (Abcam ab31837) was used at 1:1000
959	dilution. Anti-HA antibody HRP conjugate (sc-7392 HRP) and other HRPconjugated secondary
960	antibodies were purchased from Santa Cruz Biotechnology. Alkyne-14 was synthesized and
961	kindly provided by Nicole Spiegelman as previously described ²³⁶ . Hydroxylamine solution
962	(SIGMA) was diluted to 4 M in water and pH adjusted to ~9-10.

963 Plasmids and shRNAs

K-Ras4a and mutants was obtained as previously describe.³⁰ DHHC1 – 23 murine 964 965 plasmids were kindly gifted by Professor Maurine Linder with permission from Professor Masaki Fukata. K-Ras4b, CDC42, and RalA plasmid were gifted by Professor Maurine Linder. 966 DHHS2/3/7/15 clones and CDC42 mutants were generated by site-directed mutagenesis²³⁷. K-967 968 Ras4a 4CS mutant was generated using site-directed mutagenesis. Ds-Red DHHC7 plasmid was 969 obtained by cloning human zDHHC7 from cDNA library into the dsRed2-N1 vector (Clontech) 970 using the NheI and BamHI restriction sites. shRNAs used to generate DHHC stable knockdown 971 cells were purchased from Sigma (catalogue numbers DHHC2 TRCN0000143212, DHHC3 972 TRCN0000133710, DHHC7 TRCN0000122203, DHHC15 TRCN0000145091, with non-973 mammalian shRNA SHC002 as the control).
5 Cell culture and generation DHHC stable knockdown cells

976 Cell lines used are HEK-293T from ATCC. HEK-293T cells were cultured in DMEM
977 (gibco) media with 10% fetal bovine serum (life technologies). Cell were cultured at 37°C in a
978 humidified incubator supplemented with 5% CO₂. DHHC stable knockdown cells were
979 generated as previously described¹⁴³.

980 Western blotting

981 Cells were washed once with ice cold PBS and lysed in 1% Nonidet P-40 (NP-40) lysis buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.0, 150 mM NaCl, 1% (v/v) NP-40 (SIGMA), and 10% glycerol 982 983 with protease inhibitor cocktail (Sigma P8340)). 20 µg of whole cell lysate as determined by Bradford assay (PierceTM Coomassie Protein Assay Kit) was separated by 12% SDS-PAGE and 984 985 subsequently transferred to a PVDF membrane (Bio-Rad) for 120 minutes at 350 mA. The 986 membrane was blocked using 5% milk (SCBT) in TBST (25 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.4, 150 mM 987 NaCl, 0.1% Tween 20) and incubated for 1 hour at room temperature for hrp conjugated primary antibodies or overnight at 4°C for other primary antibodies. Three washes with TBST are 988 989 performed before imaging or incubation with secondary antibodies (in TBST) for 1 hour at room 990 temperature. Three more washes are performed after incubation with secondary antibodies. The 991 membranes are developed using ECL-plus reagent (GE Healthcare). The chemiluminescent 992 signal was visualized using a Typhoon 9400 variable mode imager with the 457 nm excitation 993 and 526 nm detection settings with a photomultiplier setting of 600 V. The signal was analyzed 994 and quantified using ImageJ.

995

996 Alkyne labeling of K-Ras4a and CDC42 fatty acylation.

997 In brief, 1 µg or 3 µg of plasmid with or without an equal amount of DHHC plasmid or 998 empty vector was transfected into a single well of a 6-well plate or a 10 cm dish, respectively, 999 using Fugene[®]6. After 24 hours, Alk14 was added to a final concentration of 50 µM and cultured 1000 for 6 hours. Cells were washed with PBS and lysed in 1% NP-40 lysis buffer and 20 µg of whole 1001 cell lysate was used for FLAG and HA western blot, which served to normalize protein 1002 expression level. Approximately 500 μ g of whole cell lysate is added to 10 μ L of anti-FLAG 1003 affinity gel slurry and brought up to a volume of 500 µL. The mixture is incubated at 4°C for a 1004 minimum of 2 hours with gentle agitation. The beads are centrifuged and washed three times 1005 with 0.1% NP-40 buffer at 500 g. After the last wash, all remaining buffer is removed using a gel 1006 loading tip. A click chemistry master mix is prepared with the final concentrations of 100 μ M 1007 BODIPY azide (Active Motif, catalogue 16317), 600 µM Tris(benzyltriazolylmethyl)amine 1008 (TBTA) (Cayman chemicals), 2 mM CuSO₄. 19 uL of the master mix is added to the beads and 1 1009 ul of 40 mM tris(2-carboxyethyl)phosphine is added to initiate the reaction at room temperature 1010 for 1 hour in the dark. After the click chemistry, 10 µL of 6x protein loading dye was added and 1011 the mixture boiled at 95°C for 5 minutes. The supernatants were divided in two equal portions, 1012 with one half treated with 50 mM Tris pH 8.0 and the other half with 0.4 M hydroxylamine. Both 1013 halves were incubated at 95°C for 5 minutes. The samples were then separated on a 12% SDS-1014 PAGE gel and 1.5 µL of the click reaction were reserved to run a western blot to serve as the 1015 loading control. Thee fluorescence signal was then visualized with a Typhoon 9400 (GE 1016 Healthcare) variable mode imager using 526 nm excitation and 520 nm detection filter with a 1017 photomultiplier setting of 600 V. The signal was analyzed and quantified using ImageJ.

1018 SIRT2 deacylation assay

The assay was performed as previously described.³⁰ In brief, K-Ras4a with or without 1019 1020 DHHC was transfected into HEK-293T cells for 24 hours and subsequently treated with 50 µM 1021 of Alk14 for 6 hours before collecting and lysis in 1% NP-40 lysis buffer. K-Ras4a was 1022 immunoprecipitated using anti-FLAG beads for 2 hours at 4°C. After three washes with 0.1% 1023 NP-40 buffer, the beads are suspended in reaction buffer (50 mM Tris pH 8.0, 100 mM NaCl, 2 1024 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM DTT) with 5 µM SIRT2. NAD⁺ is omitted or added to initiate the reaction at 1025 37°C for 1 hour. The reaction was stopped by removing the reaction mixture and washing three 1026 times with 1 mL of 0.1% NP-40 buffer. The beads were then used for on-bead click chemistry 1027 and fluorescence imaging as described above.

1028 Confocal imaging

1029 HEK293T cells were seeded in glass bottom dishes the night before transfection with the

1030 necessary plasmids. 1 ug of plasmid per protein was transfected in with 3 uL of Fugene 6. After

1031 24 hours, cells were incubated in the Live Cell Imaging Solution (A14291DJ, Thermo Fisher

1032 Scientific) for live cell imaging. Cells were imaged with a Zeiss LSM710 confocal/multiphoton

inverted microscope (Carl Zeiss MicroImaging, Inc., Thornwood, NY) in a humidified metabolic
chamber maintained at 37°C and 5% CO₂. EGFP was expressed to show the shape of the cell and

1035 demonstrate rounding of the cell.

1036 Statistical analysis

1037 Quantification values were obtained using ImageJ²³⁸ and are expressed as mean \pm s.d 1038 (standard deviation). Student's two tailed t-test were used to analyze differences between two 1039 groups of values with *P < 0.02, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001.

1040	*It is important to note that due to the size of our K-Ras4a construct, it overlaps very well
1041	with the antibody light chain, which affected our ability to precisely quantify the fluorescence
1042	without interference from the light chain. The light chain can also at times be detected on the
1043	fluorescence image due to a combination of its high levels of protein and weak fluorescence
1044	signal from the substrate.
1045	
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1051	microscopy, which is supported by NIH S10RR025502.
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CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSIONS

1063 Protein post-translational modifications vastly increase the complexity and diversity of 1064 the proteome, often in rapid response to external and internal stimuli. These modifications 1065 ranging from phosphorylation to acetylation are critical for cellular function and pathogenesis. It 1066 cannot be understated how important it is to identify and understand protein post-translational 1067 modification. The work performed by our lab has pushed our collective understanding of post-1068 translational modifications through the discovery of lysine succinvlation and lysine long-chain 1069 fatty acylation. More importantly, our lab discovered the ability of sirtuins to remove these 1070 modifications. However without the writers our understanding will always be limited. To achieve 1071 a complete understanding of the role of these novel modifications, I sought to identify the 1072 writers. When I began my studies, little information was available to hint at the potential identity 1073 of these novel modifications. Several studies further suggested that these modifications were 1074 non-enzymatic events which made the identification of these hypothetical writers an unattractive 1075 and challenging endeavor. Progress was further hindered as few were substrates available to 1076 screen potential transferases against. For lysine long-chain fatty acylation, TNF- α was the only 1077 known substrate to be regulated by lysine fatty acylation. Breakthrough research by fellow lab 1078 members identified new substrates belonging to the GTPase family of proteins. This vastly 1079 increased the pool of substrates available to screen against my list of potential transferases. This 1080 led to the discovery that the DHHC family of protein-palmitoyl transferases were able to affect 1081 the lysine fatty acylation levels of these new substrates. Of particular interest was the ability of 1082 the DHHC enzymes to directly fatty acylate the substrate's lysines in the absence of a 1083 palmitoylated cysteine residue. The nature of this acylation was confirmed to be lysine fatty

acylation by the SIRT2 in-vitro defatty acylation assay. Overexpression of DHHC2, 3, 7, and 15
with a variety of GTPases showed varied effects ranging from, increased cysteine palmitoylation
only, increased lysine fatty acylation only, increased cysteine and lysine fatty acylation and
GTPases whose acylation was not affected at all. These findings reveal a novel enzymatic
activity of DHHC family of enzymes as lysine fatty acyltransferases in addition to its reported
function as cysteine fatty acyltransferases.

1090 The lysine fatty acylation modification of $TNF\alpha$, K-Ras4a, and R-Ras2 established the 1091 precedent that this modification has a biological impact. Our work identified the DHHC 1092 mediated lysine fatty acylation of CDC42 also has a biological impact. The mechanism by which 1093 the DHHC mediated lysine fatty acylation elicits this effect is currently under study. It is well 1094 established that a loss of CDC42 function, by point mutation or gene deletion, results in a 1095 morphological change resulting in rounded cells. Overexpression of DHHC7 increases CDC42 1096 lysine fatty acylation, leading to the rounding of HEK293T in the absence or presence of 1097 overexpressed WT CDC42. Expressing the lysine fatty acylation deficient mutant of CDC42 1098 (KR) diminished the effects of DHHC7 induced cell rounding. This finding is the first to 1099 demonstrate a biological impact of DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation of CDC42.

1100 The work here contributes to our understanding of lysine fatty acylation and the function 1101 of the DHHC family of enzymes. Several members of the DHHC family have yet to be 1102 characterized as cysteine fatty acyltransferases and our work suggests that it is possible these 1103 DHHCs may instead function as lysine fatty acyltransferases. The pathologies linked to the 1104 DHHCs highlight the importance of their cysteine palmitoyltransferase activity for disease 1105 progression. Now with our finding, the stage is set to determine the function of the DHHC's

1106 lysine fatty acyltransferase activity in these pathologies and if this activity can be exploited to1107 develop treatments.

1108

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

1109 **IDENTIFY RESIDUES CRITICAL FOR LYSINE FATTY ACYLATION.**

1110 Our finding demonstrates that lysine fatty acylation activity of the DHHC is dependent 1111 on the catalytic cysteine of the DHHC motif. This is identical to its cysteine transferase activity, 1112 which is also dependent on the catalytic cysteine. Of particular interest is the observation that 1113 DHHC7 overexpression with WT K-Ras4a resulted mostly increases in lysine fatty acylation 1114 whereas its cousin DHHC3 increased in both cysteine and lysine fatty acylation. DHHC3 and 1115 DHHC7 share 71% amino acid homology which further increases when examining the DHHC-1116 CRD. It would be exciting and highly informative to determine the residues that result in this 1117 differing effect. Even more exciting would be to obtain a mutant DHHC enzyme that performs 1118 only one of the two possible activities, i.e., a DHHC enzyme capable of lysine fatty acylation but 1119 not cysteine fatty acylation or vice versa.

1120 While this study is not challenging as the potential resides critical for this activity may be 1121 readily identified, the investigation itself is time and material consuming. Site-directed 1122 mutagenesis can provide all the mutants, and the activities tested using a non-palmitoylated 1123 substrate such as K-Ras4a C180S, CDC42 or K-Ras4b. This allows for the detection of a lysine 1124 fatty acyltransferase capable or defective DHHC enzyme by looking for a gain or no gain of fatty 1125 acylation, respectively. Subsequent comparison against a lysine fatty acylation deficient substrate 1126 and a WT substrate would reveal the cysteine fatty acylation ability of the DHHC mutant. 1127 Obtaining a DHHC capable of only one activity would greatly help in dissecting the importance 1128 of each modification in the various pathologies associated with the DHHCs.

1129	Our data demonstrated that a RalA 2RK mutant gained the ability to serve as a lysine
1130	fatty acylation substrate for DHHC7. This initial observation suggests we may be able to
1131	investigate the contributing factors on the substrate that determine which lysines may serve as
1132	fatty acylation site. These factors also appear to confer selectivity as to which DHHC may fatty
1133	acylate the substrate as DHHC2 and DHHC15 were not able to fatty acylate this RalA 2RK
1134	mutant, whereas these two DHHCs readily acylated K-Ras4a and WT RalA.
1135	
1136	INVESTIGATE HOW LYSINE FATTY ACYLATION ACTIVITY OF THE DHHCS IS
1137	REGULATED
1138	In general, how the DHHCs are regulated is poorly understood both at the activity and
1139	protein level. How the cell regulates the DHHCs is an important question that remains to be
1140	answered. Some studies have begun to provide insight into this critical question ⁹⁵ , and it would
1141	be interesting to determine if different mechanisms regulate the DHHC's lysine and cysteine fatty
1142	acylation. Several DHHCs have already been demonstrated to require an accessory protein for
1143	proper cysteine fatty acyltransferase activity. One potential mechanism to control whether a
1144	DHHC prefers to function as a cysteine or lysine fatty acyltransferase is the association of an
1145	"adapter" protein that precisely controls the conformation of the enzyme-substrate complex to
1146	position either the lysine or cysteine residue closer to the fatty acyl intermediate. Both an amine
1147	and thiol are capable of serving as a nucleophile, and the preference of one over the other is
1148	likely determined in the enzyme-substrate complex by their proximities to the acyl-thiol
1149	intermediate.
1150	This investigation can be accomplished using mass spectrometry to identify DUUC

This investigation can be accomplished using mass spectrometry to identify DHHC
interacting proteins in the presence of a lysine fatty acylated substrate. Deletion of these potential

adapter proteins may abolish the ability of the DHHC to function as a lysine fatty acyltransferase and can be added to the *in vitro* reconstitution assays to drive the lysine fatty acylation activity of the DHHCs. We also observed that low levels of expressed DHHC protein do not readily increase the substrate's fatty acylation, hinting at a dose-dependent effect. How does the cell increase DHHC protein level to replicate the effects of overexpressed DHHC will be critical to understanding the importance of DHHC mediated lysine fatty acylation.

1158

1159 INVESTIGATE THE EFFECTS OF DHHC MEDIATED LYSINE FATTY ACYLATION 1160 ON CDC42'S CELL TRANSFORMING ABILITY.

1161 It has been reported that a fast cycling F28L CDC42 (effectively constitutively active) 1162 mutant transforms cells with cancer like phenotypes. This ability reportedly requires CDC42 to interact with the COP complex, specifically the γ subunit.²³⁹ Additionally, the mentioned 1163 1164 interaction is dependent on the dilysine motif found at the C-terminus of CDC42. Mutation of the 1165 two lysines to serine abolishes the interaction with the γ COP subunit and subsequently prevents 1166 the F28L CDC42 mutant from transforming NIH 3T3 cells into cancer like cells. These two 1167 lysines are the same lysine residues reported by our lab to be the acceptor sites by which DHHC7 1168 fatty acylate CDC42. Our data also suggest that the DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation of 1169 WT CDC42 can inhibit its normal function, whereas DHHC7 does not inhibit the dilysine 1170 mutant.

1171 It would be interesting to overexpress or elevate DHHC7 protein or activity levels in NIH 1172 3T3 cells that are overexpressing the F28L mutant of CDC42. If the cell transforming ability of 1173 CDC42 can be inhibited as determined by the soft agar colony formation assay, then a potential 1174 treatment may be developed. In essence, to treat cancer cells with a constitutively active CDC42

background, one would exploit the novel DHHC7 mediated lysine fatty acylation activity to
inhibit CDC42. While the soft agar colony formation assay is a standard lab experiment and
relatively simple to perform, the challenge remains with elevating and maintain a high DHHC
protein level to affect the transforming ability over the extended period required for the assay.
Another approach would be to search for a condition or treatment in which the DHHC protein
level would be upregulated; however, little is known about how DHHC7 is regulated.

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1182 **RECONSTITUTION OF DHHC LYSINE FATTY ACYLTRANSFERASE ACTIVITY.**

1183 Preliminary attempts at reconstituting the lysine fatty acyltransferase activity of DHHC7 1184 produced results not reflective of the activity observed in cells. Whereas in cells, we observe 1185 little to no increase in cysteine fatty acylation (NH₂OH susceptible fatty acylation) with DHHC7 1186 overexpressed with K-Ras4a, in vitro reconstitution assays show DHHC7 increasing the cysteine 1187 fatty acylation of K-Ras4a in addition to the lysine fatty acylation. The difference between the in 1188 cell and reconstitution assay is likely attributed to three factors. First, the *in vitro* assay does not 1189 represent the biological environment in which the actual acylation event would occur in; in 1190 particular, both the DHHC enzyme and substrate should be interacting with a lipid membrane 1191 which the DHHC enzyme is embedded and the substrate tethered to via its farnesylation. The *in* 1192 vitro assay is an in-solution assay which is more representative of reactions with soluble 1193 proteins. Second, because the *in vitro* reconstitution uses only purified enzyme and substrate, an 1194 important adapter protein may be missing which could facilitate the lysine fatty acylation activity 1195 of the DHHC. The first factor may be addressed by utilizing lipid nanodiscs which allow the 1196 enzyme and substrate to interact within a lipid membrane environment. The second factor is 1197 more challenging as the adapter protein is not known, but reconstitution of the enzyme activity in 1198 the presence of whole cell lysate may provide sufficient levels of this hypothetical adapter

1199 protein to drive the reaction. Lastly, while palmitoyl-CoA is generally to be the acyl-donor in

1200 this reaction, the acyl group may actually come from some other source such as a fatty acylated

1201 phospholipid or an acyl carrier protein. Screening various acyl donors may enhance the lysine

- 1202 fatty acyl transferase activity of the DHHC while palmitoyl-CoA may serve as the acyl donor for
- 1203 its cysteine palmitoyltransferase activity.



1206 Figure 10. In vitro reconstitution of DHHC7 lysine fatty acylation with purified K-Ras4a

1207 a) K-Ras4a was transfected into HEK-293T cells for 24 hours and then collected and lysed in 1% 1208 NP-40 lysis buffer. 10 µL of anti-FLAG slurry is used to immunoprecipitate K-Ras4a per 1 mg 1209 of whole cell lysate. The beads are washed 3X with 0.1% NP-40 buffer. K-Ras4a is eluted from the anti-FLAG beads using three separate "washes" of 300 µg/mL of 3X FLAG peptide (Sigma 1210 1211 F4799) in enzyme dilution buffer (EDB) (50 mm MES pH 6.4, 100 mm NaCl, 10% glycerol, 0.1% DDM). The K-Ras4a concentration was determined by SDS-PAGE gel with a linear BSA 1212 1213 curve. 1 µg of K-Ras4a is then incubated with 0.7 ug of DHH7 in 50 µL of EDB with 3.34 uM 1214 Alk14-CoA (Cayman Chemicals 15968) at 37°C for 1 hour. The reaction is stopped by 1215 methanol/chloroform precipitation with 10 µg of BSA added to assist in pellet formation. The pellet is dissolved using 4% SDS lysis buffer (4% SDS, 50 mM triethanolamine pH 7.4, and 150 1216 1217 mM NaCl). Click chemistry is performed to attach fluorophore to visualize the acylation at room 1218 temperature for 1 hour. K-Ras4a is precipitated once more to remove excess fluorophore and 1219 dissolved in a 4% SDS in water only solution and treated with hydroxylamine, and gel imaged. 1220 **b**) Quantification of fluorescence gel and divided by K-Ras4a CBB signal then normalized to 1221 lane 1. Half of the fluorescent remains after hydroxylamine treatment. That is the lysine fatty

1222 acylation signal.



Figure 11. *In vitro* reconstitution of DHHC7 lysine fatty acylation with purified K-Ras4a 3KR

1226 K-Ras4a WT and 3KR are purified as described above. Acylation experiment is identical as 1227 described above, except the K-Ras4a sample was dissolved in the 4% SDS lysis buffer at the last step instead of the 4% SDS in water only solution, and then boiled for five minutes at 95°C. 3KR 1228 1229 sample shows less acylation particularly post hydroxylamine treatment than WT sample. The 1230 weak reduction in fluorescent signal compared to above is due to the reduced total acylation 1231 before hydroxylamine treatment. Here, we observe less cysteine fatty acylation because the 1232 sample was boiled in the 4% SDS lysis buffer solution. The 3KR sample has reduced acylation 1233 because these lysine sites are modified by DHHC7 as observed in the in cell data. Extra signal 1234 leftover may be due to additional lysine sites being modified due to loss of selectivity in the in 1235 vitro assay.

1237 INVESTIGATION OF NOVEL FATTY ACYLATION EVENT ON K-Ras4a DUE TO 2 1238 BP TREATMENT

1239 In the course of linking the DHHC enzymes to the basal lysine fatty acylation of K-1240 Ras4a, I serendipitously discovered that WT K-Ras4a treated with 2-BP does not completely 1241 inhibit its fatty acylation as predicted. Although this initially suggests that the DHHC enzymes 1242 are not responsible for K-Ras4a's lysine or cysteine fatty acylation, closer analysis revealed that 1243 this remaining fatty acylation observed on K-Ras4a is entirely different from that of untreated K-1244 Ras4a. The fatty acylation itself is entirely hydroxylamine resistant, and the fluorescent band is 1245 shifted higher. Furthermore, mutation of the seven lysine residues in the hypervariable region did 1246 not affect this acylation event. Only when the palmitoylated cysteine is mutated is the 2-BP 1247 induced acylation event abolished. Furthermore, this acylation cannot be removed by SIRT2, 1248 pfSir2 or HDAC11 in the *in vitro* deacylation assay. The combined observations suggest that 2-1249 BP treatment of K-Ras4a's alk14 labeling does inhibit its fatty acylation, both lysine and 1250 cysteine, through inhibition of the DHHCs, but additionally at the same time, generates a novel 1251 PTM on K-Ras4a. This is surprising as 2-BP treatment is known to inhibit the various steps in 1252 long-chain fatty acid metabolism from fatty acid synthase (FA) to the DHHC transferases and 1253 APT depalmitoylases. How the cell generates this long-chain fatty acylation event in the 1254 presence of 2-BP is an interesting question.

1255 The nature of this acylation is not clear and which residue it is found on is also not 1256 known. Mass spectrometry may help in identifying the acylation site and the nature of the 1257 acylation, however, may still prove challenging due to difficulties in the recovery of hydrophobic 1258 peptides from digested proteins and simply because we do not know what or where to look for 1259 the modification. However, as the modification is hydroxylamine resistant, it is likely to be on a

lysine residue, but even this is not certain as sirtuin and HDAC11 *in vitro* treatment was not able
to remove the modification. A simple and straightforward approach to shed some light on this
unusual acylation event is to mutate relevant residues until the acylation is perturbed.

1263 This acylation event may be an artifact but interestingly also observed when other 1264 substrate proteins with cysteine palmitoylation are subjected to the same experimental conditions 1265 as K-Ras4a. Whether this is a general indication of a novel PTM or an artifact warrants further 1266 investigation. Furthermore, these observations suggest an intriguing hypothesis where 2-BP 1267 alkylates the substrate's palmitoylated cysteine through its brominated α carbon. This would lock 1268 the substrate into a constitutively acylated state which cannot be removed by conventional 1269 means, and the cell then uses this unusual acylation event to help restore function or lead to 1270 degradation or clearance of the damaged protein. Additionally, perhaps the Alk14 is interacting 1271 with the covalently bonded 2-BP, and that allows us to detect the modification and grants it 1272 hydroxylamine resistance and HDAC resistance.



1275 Figure 12. K-Ras4a and its mutants Alk14 fatty acylation in the presence of 2-BP.

- 1276 K-Ras4a and mutants were overexpressed for 24 hours in HEK293T cells followed by one-hour
- 1277 pre-incubation with 100µM of 2-bromopalmitate and then six hours of combined 2-BP and
- 1278 50µM Alk14 treatment. The cells were lysed and processed for in-gel fluorescence detection.
- 1279 Bottom membrane shows loading by western blot.



1282 Figure 13. HRAS, NRAS, RALA, RALB Alk14 fatty acylation in the presence of 2-BP.

1283 GTPases were overexpressed for 24 hours in HEK293T cells followed by one-hour pre-

1284 incubation with 100µM of 2-bromopalmitate and then six hours of combined 2-BP and 50µM

1285 Alk14 treatment. The cells were lysed and processed for in-gel fluorescence detection. Bottom

1286 membrane shows loading by western blot.



Figure 14. WT K-Ras4a fatty acylation with 2-BP and Alk14, in the SIRT2 in-vitro deacylation assay.

- 1295 WT K-Ras4a fatty acylation with 2-BP and Alk14, in SIRT2 in-vitro deacylation assay. K-Ras4a
- 1296 was overexpressed with DHHC7 (as the positive control) for 24 hours in HEK293T cells
- 1297 followed by one-hour pre-incubation with $100\mu M$ of 2-bromopalmitate and then six hours of
- 1298 combined 2-BP and 50µM Alk14 treatment. The cells were lysed and processed for in-gel
- 1299 fluorescence detection. Bottom membrane shows loading by western blot. DHHC7 mediated
- 1300 fatty acylation of K-Ras4a is removed while 2-BP treated K-Ras4a fatty acylation cannot be
- 1301 removed when NAD^+ is added.



1304 Figure 15. K-Ras4b fatty acylation in the presence of 2-BP.

- 1305 K-Ras4b was overexpressed for 24 hours in HEK293T cells followed by one-hour pre-incubation
- 1306 with 100μ M of 2-bromopalmitate and then six hours of combined 2-BP and 50μ M Alk14
- 1307 treatment. The cells were lysed and processed for in-gel fluorescence detection. Bottom gel
- 1308 shows loading by CBB. There is no gain in fluorescence signal (unusual fatty acylation event)
- 1309 when treated with 2-BP.



1312 Figure 16. K-Ras4b DHHC dependent fatty acylation when treated with 2-BP.

1313 K-Ras4b was overexpressed with the DHHC enzymes for 24 hours in HEK293T cells followed

1314 by one-hour pre-incubation with $100\mu M$ of 2-bromopalmitate and then six hours of combined 2-

1315 BP and 50µM Alk14 treatment. The cells were lysed and processed for in-gel fluorescence

1316 detection. Bottom membrane shows loading by western blot. 2-BP treatment can block the

1317 DHHC mediated fatty acylation of K-Ras4b, demonstrating the efficacy of 2-BP treatment in

1318 inhibiting DHHC mediated fatty acylation events. No 2-BP mediated novel fatty acylation is

1319 observed on K-Ras4b because it lacks a palmitoylated cysteine. Arrow denotes increased K-

1320 Ras4b fatty acylation due to DHHC overexpression.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

1325 Our investigation has discovered a novel enzymatic activity by members of a family of 1326 enzymes thought only to catalyze a single enzymatic reaction. A mammalian lysine fatty 1327 acyltransferase has yet to be reported as of this publication, and our work demonstrates that 1328 members of the DHHC family are capable of directly transferring the modification on to the 1329 lysine residue of several members of the superfamily of GTPases. When we began our 1330 investigation, lysine fatty acylation was re-entering the scientific community's consciousness, 1331 and with our contributions, we hope to expand interest further, and our understanding of this 1332 poorly appreciated and understood modification as there are many questions to answer. Lysine 1333 fatty acylation has the potential to be a highly important modification such as that of 1334 phosphorylation and ubiquitination as we learn more about its functions. Our work has also 1335 expanded on our understanding of the DHHC family of enzymes. Not only does their cysteine 1336 fatty acyltransferase activity have biological consequences but so does their lysine fatty 1337 acyltransferase activity. A variety of pathologies have already been attributed to the cysteine 1338 transferase activity of the DHHCs, but the question is raised as to the importance of the DHHC's 1339 lysine fatty acyltransferase activity for these same pathologies. Differentiating the two function 1340 will be essential to understanding each activities' contribution to the pathologies associated with 1341 the DHHCs. Lastly, our findings demonstrate that one must remain open-minded when studying 1342 enzymes with a reported function; it may have an unknown activity.

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Figure S1. (a) Western showing expression level of the ectopically expressed DHHC enzymes in the K-Ras4a – DHHC screening. (b) Expression level of overexpressed DHHC7 compared to endogenous DHHC7.

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Figure S2. (a) K-Ras4a fatty acylation with over-expressed DHHC2 with quantification (n = 1). (EV: empty vector) (b) K-Ras4a fatty acylation with over-expressed DHHC8 with quantification (n = 1).



Figure S3. (a) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a mutants with over-expressed DHHC2 and quantification (n = 3). (b) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4a mutants with over-expressed DHHC15 and quantification (n = 2). (c) Fatty acylation of K-Ras4b with overexpressed DHHC7 with quantification (n = 1). The individual plotted values are normalized to the WT control sample before and post 0.4M hydroxylamine treatment (error bars represent S.D.)

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- 1371 Figure S4. Full fluorescence images of K-Ras4a mutants co-expressed with (a) DHHC1, (b)
- 1372 DHHC2, (c) DHHC3, (d) DHHC7, and (e) DHHC15



- 1374 Figure S5. Fatty acylation of GTPases (a) TC10, (b) Rac1, (c) RalA) with overexpressed DHHC7.
- 1375 Here, we do not observe effect on either TC10 or Rac1 fatty acylation.

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- 1378 Figure S6. RalA 2RK mutant gains hydroxylamine resistant fatty acylation when overexpressed
- 1379 with DHHC7. This gain of function acylation does not occur with DHHC2 or DHHC15 and
- 1380 weakly with DHHC3.
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1383 Figure S7. (a) Full fluorescence gel images of K-Ras4a coexpressed with DHHC1 – 23. Arrow



1390 Figure S8. (a) (b) Additional K-Ras4a fatty acylation in DHHC2, 3, 7, 15 stable knockdown



Quantification by ImageJ

Draw rectangles around fluorescence band



- 1393 Figure S9. Quantification process by ImageJ. Shown fluorescence gel is the K-Ras4a fatty
- 1394 acylation in DHHC2, 3, 7, 15 stable knockdown in HEK293T cells.
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