

Mitochondrial biogenesis and clearance: a balancing act

Christina Ploumi^{1,2}, Ioanna Daskalaki^{1,3} and Nektarios Tavernarakis^{1,2}

1 Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Heraklion, Greece

2 Department of Basic Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Crete, Heraklion, Greece

3 Department of Biology, University of Crete, Heraklion, Greece

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Correspondence

N. Tavernarakis, Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, N. Plastira 100, Vassilika Vouton, PO Box 1385, Heraklion 70013, Crete, Greece
Fax: +30 2810 391067
Tel: +30 2810 391069
E-mail: tavernarakis@imbb.forth.gr

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Mitochondria are semi-autonomous organelles of prokaryotic origin that are postulated to have been acquired by eukaryotic cells through an early endosymbiotic event. Except for their main role in energy production, they are also implicated in fundamental cellular processes, including ion homeostasis, lipid metabolism, and initiation of apoptotic cell death. Perturbed mitochondrial function has been correlated with severe human pathologies such as type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular, and neurodegenerative diseases. Thus, proper mitochondrial physiology is a prerequisite for health and survival. Cells have developed sophisticated and elaborate mechanisms to adapt to stress conditions and alterations in metabolic demands, by regulating mitochondrial number and function. Hence, the generation of new and the removal of damaged or unwanted mitochondria are highly regulated processes that need to be accurately coordinated for the maintenance of mitochondrial and cellular homeostasis. Here, we survey recent research findings that advance our understanding and highlight the importance of the underlying molecular mechanisms.

Abbreviations

AGO2, argonaute 2; AMPK, AMP-activated protein kinase; ATFS1, activating transcription factor associated with stress 1; Atg32, autophagy-related 32; Bcl-2, B-cell lymphoma 2; BCL2L13, Bcl-2-like 13; Bnip3, Bcl-2/adenovirus E1B 19kDa-interacting protein 3; Bnip3L/Nix, Bnip3-like/NIP3-like protein X; CCCP, carbonyl cyanide m-chlorophenyl hydrazone; CerS1, ceramide synthase 1; CL, cardiolipin; COXIV, cytochrome C oxidase subunit IV; CREB, cAMP response element-binding protein; DAF-16, abnormal DAur Formation 16; DCT-1, DAF-16/FOXO controlled germline tumor-affecting 1; DRP1, dynamin-related protein; ER, endoplasmic reticulum; ERR α , estrogen-related receptor alpha; FOXO, forkhead box O; FUNDC1, FUN14 domain-containing 1; GABARAP, GABA(A) receptor-associated protein; GABP, GA-binding protein transcription factor; GCN5L1, general control of amino acid synthesis 6-like 1; HO-1, heme oxygenase-1; ILS, insulin-like signaling; IMM, inner mitochondrial membrane; IMS, intermembrane space; KEAP1, Kelch-Like ECH-associated protein 1; LC3-II, lipidated form of LC3; LC3, light chain 3; LIR, LC3-interacting region; MAPK, mitogen-activated protein kinase; Mba1, multi-copy Bypass of AFG3; MDVs, mitochondrial-derived vesicles; MFN2, mitofusin 2; miRNA, micro RNA; MPP, mitochondrial processing peptidase; MtCK, mitochondrial creatine kinase; mtDNA, mitochondrial DNA; MTHFD2, methylenetetrahydrofolate dehydrogenase (NADP⁺ dependent) 2; mTOR, mechanistic target of rapamycin; NAC, nascent polypeptide-associated complex; NBR1, neighbor of BRCA 1 gene 1; NDP52, nuclear dot protein 52 kDa; NDPK-D, nucleoside diphosphate kinase-D; NFE2L, nuclear factor erythroid 2-like; NRF, nuclear respiratory factor; OMM, outer mitochondrial membrane; OPA1, optic atrophy 1; p62, nucleoporin 62; PARIS, Parkin-interacting substrate; PARL, presenilin-associated rhomboid-like protease; PGAM-5, phosphoglycerate mutase homolog-5; PGC1 α , proliferator-activated receptor gamma coactivator 1 alpha; PGC1 β , proliferator-activated receptor gamma coactivator 1 beta; PINK1, propeptide of phosphatase and tensin homolog-induced kinase 1; PKA, protein kinase A; PLS3, phospholipid scramblase 3; rRNA, ribosomal RNA; SAM, sorting and assembly machinery; SIRT, sirtuin; SKN-1, skinhead-1; SOD1, superoxide dismutase 1; SQSTM1, sequestosome 1; TFAM, transcription factor A mitochondrial; TFB1M, transcription factor B1 mitochondrial; TFB2M, transcription factor B2 mitochondrial; TFE3, transcription factor binding to IGHM enhancer 3; TFEB, transcription factor EB; TIM, translocase of the inner membrane; TOMM34, translocase of outer mitochondrial membrane 34kDa subunit; TOM, translocase of the outer membrane; ULK1, unc-51-like autophagy-activating kinase 1; UPR^{mt}, mitochondrial unfolded protein response; UPS, ubiquitin proteasome system; $\Delta\Psi_m$, mitochondrial membrane potential.

Introduction

Mitochondria, the so-called ‘powerhouses of the cell’, are double-membrane organelles that form highly dynamic and multifunctional networks in the cytoplasm of eukaryotic cells. Owing to their bacterial origin, mitochondria carry multiple copies of their own circular DNA. Nevertheless, the majority of mitochondrial proteins are encoded by nuclear genes. Aside from their crucial role in energy production, mitochondria constitute major regulators of cellular homeostasis and survival. Lipid metabolism, calcium signaling, metabolite synthesis, as well as apoptotic cell death are only some of the pathways in which mitochondria play pivotal roles.

Proper mitochondrial function is maintained through mechanisms that tightly regulate the biogenesis and clearance of mitochondria. As mitochondria cannot be generated *de novo*, new organelles arise from pre-existing ones, through a multi-step process which involves both fusion and fission events. Mitochondrial biogenesis also entails replication of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), transcription, and translation of mtDNA-encoded genes, as well as loading of phospholipids and nuclear-encoded proteins in different mitochondrial subcompartments [1,2]. Perturbed mitochondrial function may trigger cell death and is a hallmark of various human pathologies ranging from diabetes to neurodegeneration and age-related disorders [3]. Thus, cells have developed efficient mechanisms to remove damaged or dysfunctional mitochondria, with autophagy the most prominent one. Autophagic elimination of mitochondria is achieved either nonselectively through general autophagy, or selectively, through specific, mitochondria-targeting autophagy, termed mitophagy. In this review, we discuss recent findings that shed light on the pathways that govern mitochondrial biogenesis and turnover, focusing primarily on the regulatory mechanisms underlying their crosstalk and proper coordination.

Mitochondrial biogenesis

Mitochondrial biogenesis is a tightly regulated process, dependent on the activity of both mitochondrial and nuclear factors (Fig. 1). Although almost 90% of mitochondrial proteins are nuclear-encoded, synchronous transcription and translation of nuclear and mitochondrial genes is needed for the generation of new organelles. For example, the formation of respiratory chain complexes involves both nuclear- and mitochondrial-encoded products. Imbalance in the composition of these complexes leads to proteotoxic

stress and subsequent activation of mitochondrial turnover mechanisms [4,5].

Following transcription and translation, nuclear-encoded proteins are folded in a process coupled to the translocase of the outer membrane (TOM)-mediated import [6]. After being folded, mitochondrial proteins are directed by their presequence to different mitochondrial subcompartments: the outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM), the intermembrane space (IMS), the inner mitochondrial membrane (IMM), or the matrix [7]. These steps are controlled by the AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK), the mechanistic target of rapamycin (mTOR), and insulin-like signaling (ILS) pathways, as well as, by signaling cascades triggered by calcium and nitric oxide [8–12].

Nuclear transcription regulation

Mitochondrial biogenesis is orchestrated by specific nuclear transcription factors that regulate the expression of genes encoding mitochondrial proteins. The nuclear respiratory factors (NRF1 and NRF2) are key components of the regulatory network that controls mitochondrial biogenesis. Studies in cell cultures reveal that NRF1 forms homodimers and regulates multiple target genes, encoding proteins of the respiratory complex [cytochrome C oxidase subunit IV (COXIV), cytochrome c], the mitochondrial protein import machinery (TOMM34), the detoxification response (i.e. components of glutathione biosynthesis pathway and metallothionein-1 and 2), the heme biosynthetic pathway (globin), and the transcription of mtDNA [transcription factor A mitochondrial (TFAM), transcription factor B1 mitochondrial (TFB1M), transcription factor B2 mitochondrial (TFB2M)], among others [13–15]. Notably, NRF1 transcriptional activity is methylation-dependent [16]. NRF2 [also known as GA-binding protein transcription factor (GABP)], similar to NRF1, regulates the expression of mitochondrial transcription factors (TFAM, TFB1M, TFB2M) and components of the respiratory chain (COXIV subunits) [17]. Furthermore, the GABP beta subunit 1 (GABP β 1) is deacetylated by SIRT7, a modification that triggers its binding to GABP alpha subunit (GABP α) and enhances GABP transcriptional activity in mice [18].

Nuclear factor erythroid 2-like 2 (NFE2L2) is another transcription factor implicated in the regulation of mitochondrial biogenesis. Importantly, NFE2L2 indirectly regulates NRF1 target genes by inducing NRF1 gene expression, as tested in mice and mammalian cell cultures [19]. NFE2L2 also targets several genes implicated in various mitochondrial

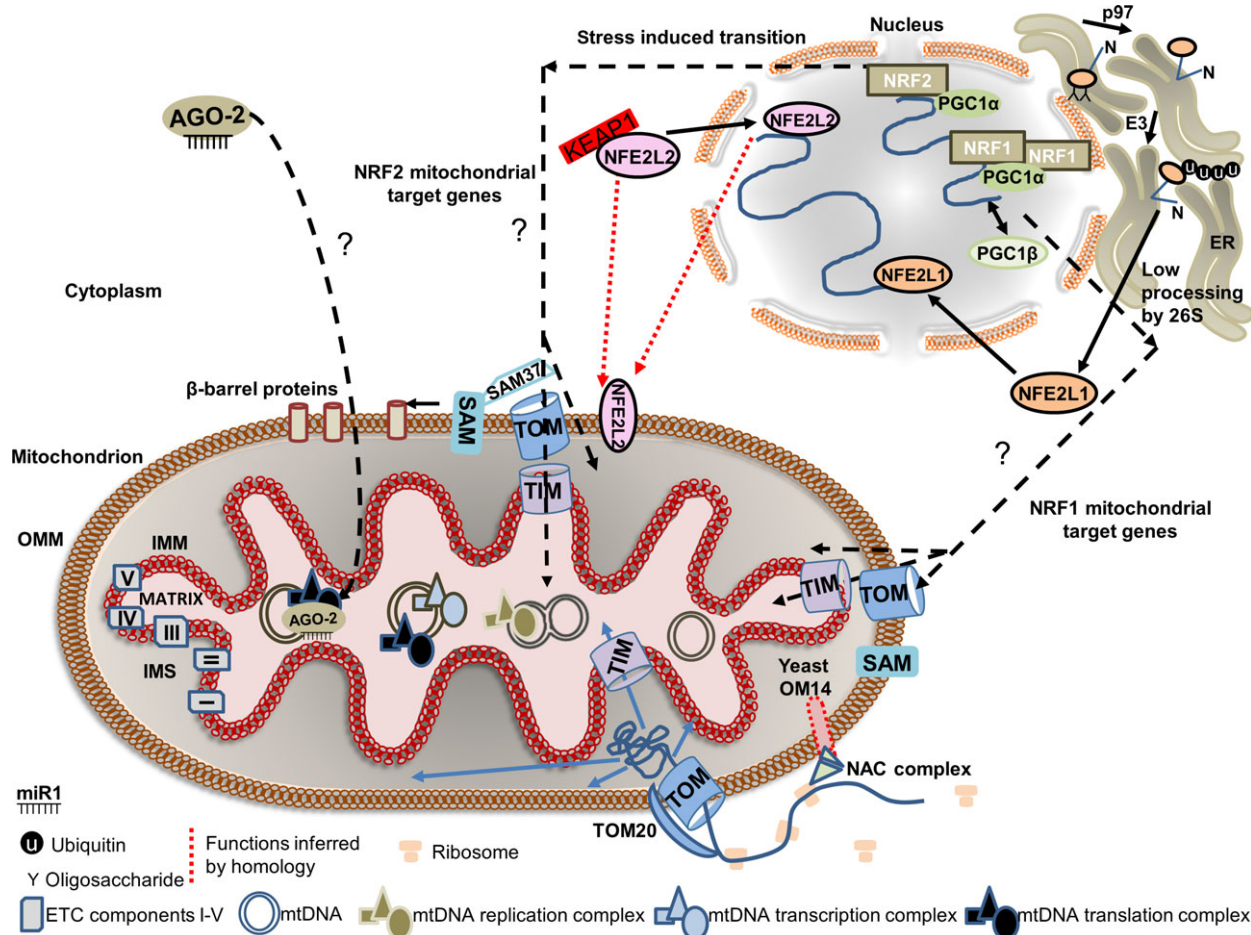


Fig. 1. Mechanisms that contribute to mitochondrial biogenesis. Transcription of mitochondrial genes by NRFs and their cofactors in the nucleus, is followed by transport of these mRNA in the mitochondrial vicinity, where mRNA translation takes place in association with the TOM20 and NAC complexes. Newly synthesized proteins are transported and positioned in the proper mitochondrial subcompartments. In parallel, mitochondria-encoded proteins are produced through transcription and translation of the mtDNA, which is maintained in many copies through replication in mitochondria. Alternatively, mitochondrial translation can be regulated by cytoplasmic factors, with the involvement of AGO2 and its associated miRNA. Except for NRFs, transcription factors NFE2Ls also target mitochondrial genes and their transcriptional activity is regulated by their subcellular localization.

processes and biosynthetic pathways such as the heme oxygenase-1 (HO-1), the methylenetetrahydrofolate NADP⁺-dependent dehydrogenase 2 (MTHFD2), and the superoxide dismutase 1 (SOD-1) [19–21]. NFE2L2 is predominantly retained in the cytoplasm by interacting with the Kelch ECH-associated protein 1 (KEAP1). In response to stress, NFE2L2 dissociates from KEAP1 and translocates to the nucleus, where it transcriptionally regulates its target genes [22]. Similarly, the *Caenorhabditis elegans* homolog of NFE2L2, skinhead-1 (SKN-1), transcribes genes involved in mitochondrial biogenesis, including factors of the mitochondrial protein import machinery, ATP synthase subunits, as well as mitochondrial transcription factors [23]. Notably, SKN-1 has also been reported to

be anchored on the OMM by interacting with the phosphoglycerate mutase homolog-5 (PGAM-5). This mitochondrial fraction of SKN-1 is released upon stress and enters the nucleus, where it regulates gene targets, distinct from those regulated by the cytoplasmic fraction. This indicates that SKN-1 may exert an, as yet unexplored mitochondrial-specific function, and further adds to the complexity of NFE2L2 regulation [24]. NFE2L1, another member of the nuclear factor erythroid 2-like family, has been implicated in the regulation of detoxification mechanisms [25]. It is also likely involved in mitochondrial biogenesis, as mitochondrial genes are among its potential targets. Post-translational modifications, such as proteolysis, ubiquitination, and deglycosylation have been

suggested to regulate NFE2L1 subcellular localization, and thus its transcriptional activity in human cell lines [26,27]. Nonetheless, elucidation of the involvement of NFE2L1 in mitochondrial-related functions requires further investigation.

PGC1 α and PGC1 β are tissue-specific transcriptional coactivators of the PPAR- γ coactivator-1 family, as it has been shown in goldfish, among others [28]. Both factors have been implicated in the regulation of mitochondrial biogenesis. Recently, Necdin has been identified as a novel regulator of PGC1 α in studies performed in mice and extracted primary cortical neurons. Particularly, Necdin prevents the ubiquitination of PGC1 α , thus leading to its stabilization. In turn, PGC1 α upregulates the expression of genes encoding mitochondria-specific proteins, thereby contributing to mitochondrial biogenesis. Moreover, it is suggested that Necdin has a neuroprotective role in experimental models of human diseases [29]. The entire range of upstream regulators of PGC1 α and β , in combination with their downstream effectors constitute a complex and interconnected mitochondria-related regulatory network. Indeed, PGC1 α is a known partner of both NRFs and the estrogen-related factor α (ERR α), while PGC1 β is a partner of NRF1, ERR α , ERR β , and ERR γ , as indicated by studies performed in mouse myoblasts and primary hepatocytes, as well as in Huntington disease patients [30–32]. In myotubes of isolated mouse primary myoblasts, PGC1 α is positively regulated by the deacetylase SIRT1 and the transcription factors TFE3 (transcription factor binding to IGHM enhancer 3), CREB (cAMP response element-binding protein), and the forkhead transcription factor FoxO1 [33]. Similarly, PGC1 β is also regulated by CREB and c-MYC [34,35]. Several questions pertinent to the different transcriptional targets of PGC1 α and PGC1 β , as well as the full spectrum of their regulatory functions and modulation remain to be answered. An important open issue is whether PGC1 α stabilization (Necdin-dependent or independent) protects somatic tissues against mitochondrial insults, as it happens in neurons. It would be relevant to investigate whether PGC1 β exerts similar effects to those of PGC1 α .

Mitochondria-associated regulatory mechanisms

In addition to nuclear-specific regulation, mitochondria-related mechanisms, such as mitochondrial protein import, mtDNA replication, transcription, and translation have an indispensable role in mitochondrial biogenesis. The OMM, TOM, and sorting and assembly machinery (SAM) complexes, as well as the IMM, translocase of the inner membrane (TIM) complex are

the main mediators of mitochondrial protein import, and their role in mitochondrial biogenesis is well documented. TOM40 is the import pore of the OMM, and is permeable by all mitochondria-targeted precursor proteins. β -barrel precursors are translocated from TOM to the SAM complex which in turn mediates their integration to the OMM. In yeast, the SAM component Sam37, in addition to stabilizing the complex, also binds to Tom22 and facilitates the transfer of β -barrel precursors from TOM to SAM [36]. Tom20, another component of the TOM complex, anchors nuclear-encoded transcripts and stabilizes them in the mitochondrial vicinity, making them available for local translation by resident ribosomes. Tom20 also participates in their concomitant import through the TOM pore, as shown in yeast [37]. The function of Tom20 is likely fine-tuned by the nascent polypeptide-associated (NAC) complex, a ribosome-bound chaperone, which, as shown in *C. elegans*, prevents the formation of protein aggregates and thus enhances polypeptide import in mitochondria during translation [38]. In yeast, cytoplasmic ribosomes are attached to the OMM through a specific receptor, the outer membrane protein 14 (OM14). This association is NAC-dependent and possibly modulates mitochondrial biogenesis [39].

The processes of mtDNA replication, transcription, and translation are also major contributors to mitochondrial biogenesis. In mammals, mitochondrial transcription requires the mitochondrial RNA polymerase and the transcription factors TFAM and TFB2M [40,41]. Translation is mainly executed on the matrix-facing side of the IMM. In yeast, mitochondrial ribosomes are tethered to the IMM by two contact sites. One involves the 21S rRNA and the other a novel membrane receptor, the multi-copy bypass of AFG3 (Mba1), which is integrated in the IMM, facing the matrix [42]. In addition to ribosomes, tRNA, and coactivators, the mitochondrial translation initiation factors mIF2 and mIF3 (the AIM23 homolog in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) are critical for the translation of mtDNA-encoded transcripts [43].

Importantly, cytoplasmic factors also translocate to mitochondria to facilitate translation in the matrix. For example, in cardiomyocytes and myoblasts, Argonaute 2 (AGO2) was reported to specifically enter mitochondria in complex with miRNA-1 during myogenesis, although, it is not clear how AGO2 and specific miRNA enter mitochondria. In mitochondria, both AGO2 and miRNA-1 enhance translation, in contrast to their typical cytoplasmic role. Association of mitochondrial AGO2 with rRNA species and specific transcripts suggests a modulatory role in mitochondrial

translation [44]. Additional emerging findings further highlight the important role of miRNA in regulating mitochondrial physiology [45,46]. Notably, miRNA-494, miRNA-149, and miRNA-761 in mice, as well as miRNA-27b in Hep2 HeLa derivatives, differentially regulate mitochondrial biogenesis [47–50]. However, the mechanistic aspects of the involvement of miRNA in the regulation of mitochondrial gene expression remain largely elusive.

Mitochondrial turnover

During aging and under stress, mitochondrial function is perturbed by damage accumulating in mitochondria. As a first line of defense, cells have developed intricate mechanisms to repair damage and rescue the affected organelles. Intramitochondrial ATP-dependent proteases recognize misfolded and/or oxidized polypeptides in various mitochondrial subcompartments and trigger their proteolysis, whereas the cytosolic ubiquitin proteasome system (UPS) selectively targets OMM proteins [51]. In parallel, activation of the mitochondrial unfolded protein response (UPR^{mt}) initiates a retrograde signaling cascade to the nucleus, to ameliorate mitochondrial proteotoxic stress by upregulating the expression of specific mitochondrial chaperones [52]. Another interesting repair mechanism that recently came out is the generation of mitochondrial-derived vesicles (MDVs). MDVs are formed by the enclosure of mitochondrial components in mitochondrial membranes, which are subsequently cleaved through fission—*independent mechanisms*, released to the cytosol, and finally targeted to lysosomes for degradation [53]. In addition, mitochondrial dynamics, orchestrated by ongoing fission and fusion events contribute to the dilution and sequestration of mitochondrial damage. Failure of such mitochondrial quality control mechanisms leads to activation of pathways that ultimately mediate the destruction of injured organelles [51].

The most prominent mechanism of mitochondrial turnover is autophagy. Autophagy—meaning ‘self-eating’ in Greek—is a catabolic process, through which eukaryotic cells degrade cytoplasmic constituents, with the aim to salvage vital metabolites and also to protect from toxicity caused by damaged organelles or aggregated proteins. Three main types of autophagy have been identified in eukaryotic cells: macroautophagy, chaperone-mediated autophagy, and microautophagy, with macroautophagy (hereafter referred to as autophagy) being mostly responsible for organelle targeting [54].

Autophagy commences with the engulfment and sequestration of cytoplasmic material in double-

membrane vesicles, called autophagosomes. The autophagosomes are subsequently fused with endolysosomes to form the autolysosomes, in which the engulfed cargo is finally degraded by resident acid hydrolases [55]. Although, it was originally believed that autophagy acts in a nonselective/bulk manner, it has now become clear that it is mainly a selective process [56]. Mitophagy, the mitochondrial-specific form of autophagy, targets mitochondria for degradation through receptor-mediated mechanisms. Three main types of mitophagy receptors have been characterized: receptors that bind ubiquitinated mitochondrial proteins, receptors constitutively localized at the OMM, and receptor-like lipid molecules of mitochondrial membranes (Fig. 2).

PINK1/Parkin-mediated mitophagy

The best known pathway of mitophagy is mediated by PINK1 and Parkin and it is mainly studied in mammalian cell cultures. Under normal conditions, the nuclear-encoded propeptide of phosphatase and tensin homolog-induced kinase 1 (PINK1) is rapidly translocated to the mitochondrial matrix of healthy mitochondria, where it is cleaved by the mitochondrial processing peptidase (MPP) [57]. The remaining transmembrane fragment of PINK1 is subsequently cleaved by the IMS presenilin-associated rhomboid-like (PARL) protease, and released in the cytoplasm, where it is finally degraded by the UPS [58]. Notably, cleaved PINK1 fragments act as mitophagy inhibitors in the cytosol, by binding directly to the E3 ubiquitin ligase Parkin and blocking its translocation and stabilization on the OMM [59].

In mitochondria with dissipated membrane potential ($\Delta\Psi_m$), PINK1 remains stably associated with the TOM complex and thus escapes MPP- and PARL-dependent processing [60]. Upon homodimerization, PINK1 is autophosphorylated in T257, S228, and S402; modifications that render it capable of recruiting Parkin in the OMM [61]. PINK1-mediated phosphorylation of ubiquitin and the ubiquitin-like domain of Parkin, both at S65, are sufficient for activation of the E3 ligase Parkin [62]. Interestingly, studies in mouse embryonic fibroblasts and cardiomyocytes have shown that Mitofusin 2 (MFN2) is an additional PINK1 substrate, indicating a functional interplay between mitochondrial dynamics and mitophagy. Phosphorylated MFN2 acts as a receptor of Parkin in the OMM of damaged mitochondria [63]. However, the indispensability of MFN2 for Parkin recruitment should be further validated, given that Parkin can be efficiently stabilized on peroxisomes (organelles that lack

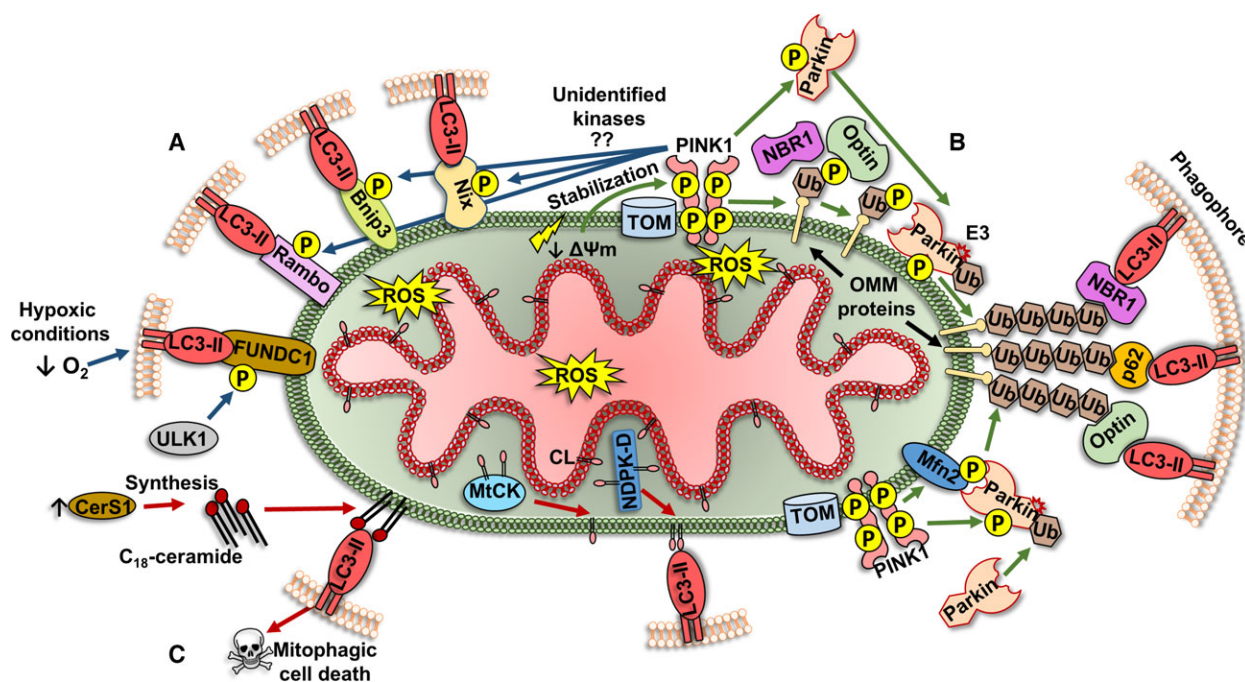


Fig. 2. Mitophagy mechanisms. Mitophagy selectively targets mitochondria for degradation through receptor-mediated mechanisms. (A) OMM receptor-mediated mitophagy. Constitutively OMM-localized proteins (Bnip3, Nix, FUNDC1, Bcl-Rambo) can directly bind to lipidated LC3 (LC3-II), through their phospho-regulated LIR domains. (B) PINK1/Parkin-mediated mitophagy. Disrupted mitochondrial membrane potential ($\Delta\Psi_m$) results in OMM stabilization and subsequent activation of PINK1. Targets of phosphorylated PINK1 (Ubiquitin/Ub and MFN2) recruit the E3 Ligase Parkin in the OMM. Upon PINK1-dependent activation, Parkin ubiquitinates numerous OMM proteins that, in turn, attract specific autophagy receptors (p62/SQSTM1, NBR1, optineurin/optin) to mediate mitochondrial engulfment. (C) Lipid-mediated mitophagy. OMM-localized lipids can also function as mitophagy receptors. In damaged mitochondria, cardiolipin (CL) is translocated to the OMM through specific transporters (MtCK, NDPK-D) and directly binds to LC3-II on the phagophore. Furthermore, induced synthesis of the sphingolipid C_{18} -ceramide leads to its integration in the OMM, triggering a mitophagic type of cell death.

MFN2), in which PINK1 is ectopically expressed [60]. It is likely that phosphorylated ubiquitin acts as a Parkin receptor in this case; however, the involvement of alternative Parkin interactors cannot be excluded. Upon efficient stabilization and activation on the OMM, Parkin ubiquitinates numerous OMM proteins, which in turn attract specific autophagy receptors to trigger engulfment by autophagosomes. Nucleoporin 62/sequestosome 1 (p62/SQSTM1), the neighbor of BRCA 1 (NBR1), and optineurin are such receptors, encompassing an ubiquitin-binding domain and a light chain 3 (LC3)-interacting region (LIR), which mediate interaction with the phagophore. Recent studies in HeLa cells, deficient for some autophagy receptors, have shown that optineurin and nuclear dot protein 52 kDa (NDP52) can directly interact with PINK1-dependent phospho-ubiquitin chains at the OMM of damaged mitochondria, even in the absence of Parkin [64]. These findings suggest that additional E3 ligases participate in the ubiquitination of OMM proteins and the induction of mitophagy.

OMM receptor-mediated autophagy

In addition to ubiquitin-binding receptors, proteins localized constitutively to the OMM, including the Bcl-2/Adenovirus E1B 19 kDa-interacting protein 3 (Bnip3), the Bnip3-like/NIP3-like protein X (Bnip3L/Nix), Bcl-2-like 13 (Bcl2L13), and the FUN14 domain-containing protein 1 (FUNDC1) are capable of recruiting the autophagic machinery to mitochondria. These receptors contain phosphorylation-regulated LIR motifs, which mediate direct interaction with the LC3-II-labeled phagophore. Bnip3 and its homolog Bnip3L/Nix are pro-apoptotic members of the Bcl-2 (B-cell lymphoma 2) family with a putative Bcl-2 homology 3 domain. Aside from their pro-apoptotic role, both proteins have been implicated in autophagy induction. They serve as selective mitophagy receptors, by directly binding to LC3 and GABA(A) receptor-associated proteins (GABARAP) of the phagophore and are ultimately degraded through mitophagy, as shown in mouse embryonic fibroblasts and HeLa cells

[65–67]. Recent findings in mouse embryonic fibroblasts indicate that during mitophagy, the anti-apoptotic proteins Bcl-2 and FKBP38 escape degradation, by translocating from mitochondria to the ER [68]. Rescue of anti-apoptotic, combined with degradation of pro-apoptotic proteins, likely serve prosurvival functions that prevent initiation of cell death upon mitophagy induction. Similarly, in mammalian cells, the S17 and S24 residues of Bnip3 LIR domain can serve as phosphorylation targets, resulting in the induction of mitophagy and inhibition of apoptotic cell death [69]. However, the relevant kinases and/or phosphatases remain unidentified, and PINK1 might be involved.

Recent studies have shown that DCT-1 (DAF-16/FOXO controlled, germline tumor affecting-1), the *C. elegans* homolog of Bnip3/Nix, acts downstream of PINK1/Parkin and is ubiquitinated in a PINK1-dependent manner under oxidative stress. Evidence suggests that DCT-1 ubiquitination does not induce its proteasomal degradation but likely promotes its mitophagic activity [23]. These findings are consistent with a recent study in *Drosophila melanogaster*, demonstrating that ubiquitination of BNIP3L/Nix by Parkin results in the recruitment of ubiquitin-binding receptor NBR1 to mitochondria, thereby promoting mitophagy [70]. BCL2L13, also known as Bcl-Rambo, is another member of the Bcl-2 family, which was recently identified as the mammalian functional homolog of autophagy-related 32 (Atg32) in yeast. BCL2L13 can function as an efficient mitophagy receptor in Atg32 deficient yeast cells, and promotes mitochondrial fragmentation and mitophagy in mammalian cell cultures [71]. FUNDC1 is an additional OMM mitophagy receptor in mammalian cells, which is activated under hypoxic conditions. Dephosphorylation of Y18 as well as ULK1 (UNC-51-like autophagy-activating kinase 1)-dependent phosphorylation of S17 are modifications in the LIR motif of FUNDC1 that have recently been suggested to induce its interaction with LC3 [72,73]. Interestingly, a recent study in HeLa cells showed that FUNDC1 interacts with both dynamin-related protein 1 (DRP1) and optic atrophy 1 (OPA1) factors, thus indicating that mitochondrial fission and fusion are coordinated during mitophagy [74].

Lipid-mediated mitophagy

In addition to protein receptors, OMM-localized lipids can function as efficient baits for the recruitment of the mitophagic machinery. In eukaryotic cells, cardiolipin (CL), a dimeric phospholipid, predominantly localized on the IMM, is translocated to the OMM, in

damaged mitochondria, where it directly interacts with the lipidated form of LC3 (LC3-II). Several enzymes participate in CL externalization to the OMM. The nucleoside diphosphate kinase-D (NDPK-D) and the mitochondrial creatine kinase (MtCK) are IMS proteins that mediate CL transfer from the IMM to the IMS-facing side of the OMM. Subsequently, the phospholipid scramblase 3 (PLS3) facilitates transmigration of CL to the cytoplasm-facing side of the OMM, where it functions as an ‘eat-me’ signal [75,76]. In addition to CL, ceramide is a sphingolipid that can also interact with LC3-II. Notably, overexpression of ceramide synthase 1 (CerS1), or exogenous supplementation with C₁₈-ceramide initiates a mitophagic type of cell death in various cell carcinomas [77]. Relevant to the upstream signals that regulate intracellular levels of ceramide, overexpression of the FLT3 tyrosine kinase receptor suppresses expression of CerS1 and reduces levels of ceramide in acute myeloid leukemia cells, impinging on tumor progression. In this case, mitophagy appears to be DRP1-dependent, indicating that mitochondrial fission predisposes mitochondria for engulfment by autophagosomes [78].

Coordination of mitochondrial biogenesis and clearance

To uphold mitochondrial homeostasis, cells maintain a dynamic balance between the opposing processes of mitochondrial biogenesis and clearance. Coordination of the underlying mechanisms is primarily achieved through transcriptional and post-translational regulation of key factors (Fig. 3).

The cAMP is one of the upstream signals that regulate both mitochondrial biogenesis and mitophagy. Increased cAMP levels lead to the protein kinase A (PKA)-dependent activation of the cAMP response element-binding protein (CREB), which in turn upregulates the expression of PGC1 α , the master regulator of mitogenesis [79]. In addition to its nuclear function, CREB transcriptionally activates expression of mtDNA-encoded genes as shown by *in vitro* experiments [80]. The cAMP pathway has also been suggested to negatively regulate mitophagy, as its effector, PKA, phosphorylates and inhibits LC3-II, as shown in HeLa cells [81].

The *C. elegans* NFE2L2 homolog, SKN-1, can also stimulate mitophagy, in addition to its role in mitogenesis. Indeed, accumulation of dysfunctional mitochondria activates the oxidative stress-sensitive SKN-1, which in turn initiates a retrograde response, promoting the coordinated activation of both mitophagy and mitogenesis-related genes, in the nematode.

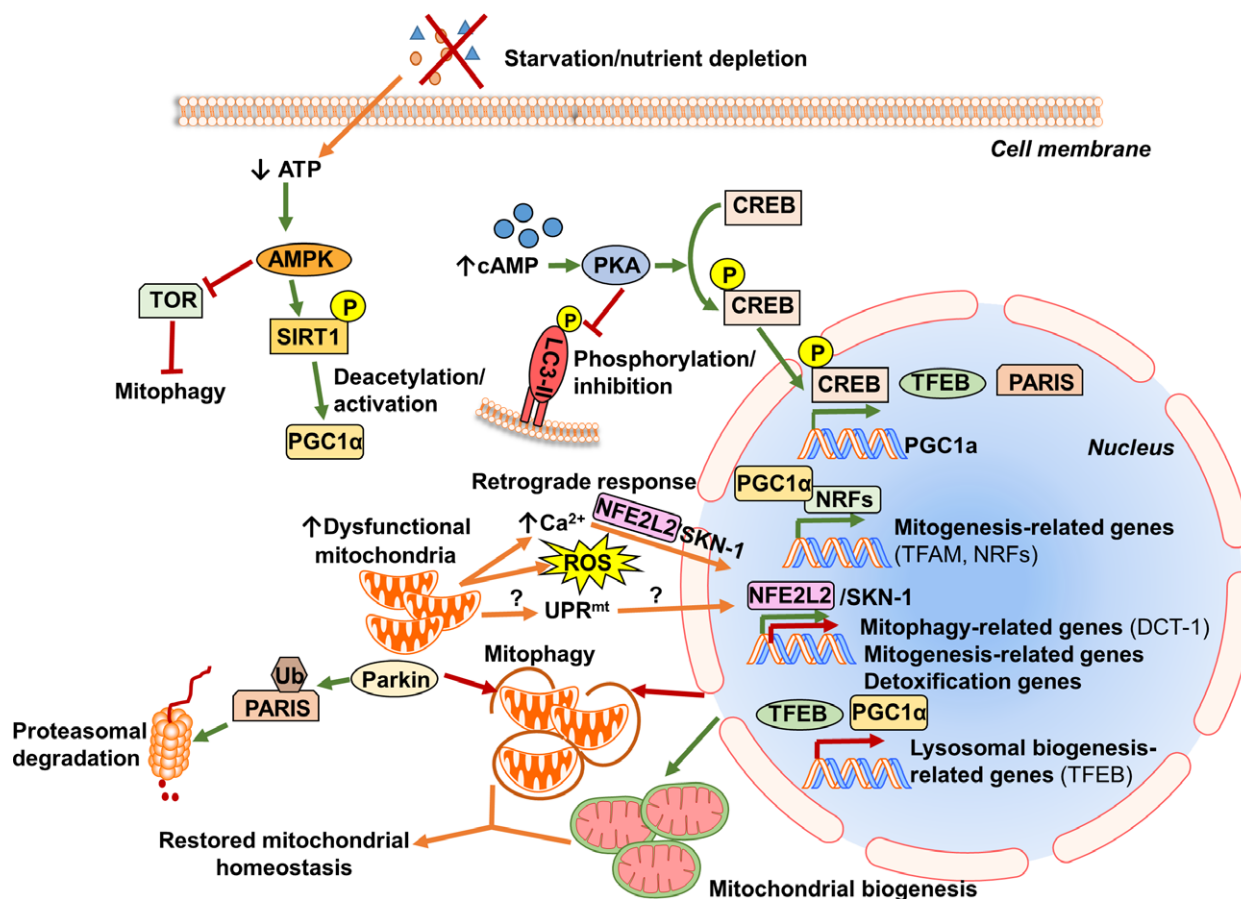


Fig. 3. Coordination of mitochondrial biogenesis and turnover. Mitochondrial homeostasis is maintained through proper coordination of both mitochondrial biogenesis and turnover. cAMP signaling tilts the balance in favor of mitogenesis as its effector, PKA, transcriptionally upregulates PGC1 α and in parallel inhibits lipidated LC3 (LC3-II). In this context, the AMPK pathway has a dual role: it induces autophagy through mTOR inhibition and in parallel promotes mitochondrial biogenesis by activating PGC1 α . The mitogenesis-promoting program of PGC-1 α also interfaces with mitophagy by regulating lysosomal biogenesis-genes (TFEB). In *C. elegans*, excessive mitochondrial damage activates the NFE2L2 homolog SKN-1. This, in turn, initiates a retrograde response (likely also engaging UPR^{mt}) that coordinates the upregulation of mitophagy and mitogenesis-related genes. The E3 ligase Parkin is an additional regulator of mitochondrial homeostasis: Aside from triggering mitophagy, Parkin enhances mitochondrial renewal, by inhibiting PARIS, a PGC1 α repressor.

Importantly, the BNIP3L/Nix homolog DCT-1 is among SKN-1 targets, and its expression is nonredundantly coregulated by the DAF-16/FOXO transcription factor [23]. Part of the retrograde response from mitochondria to the nucleus is mediated by the induction of UPR^{mt} upon mitochondrial proteotoxic stress. In this context, activation of the transcription factor associated with stress-1 (ATFS-1), which is normally located in the mitochondrial matrix, translocates to the nucleus, under mitochondrial stress conditions, in *C. elegans*. In turn, ATFS-1 transcriptionally activates genes encoding mitochondrial chaperones to restore homeostasis [82]. Whether UPR^{mt} and mitophagy function synergistically or in a mutually exclusive manner to alleviate mitochondrial damage is not fully understood. Unidentified factors could sense the

inability of UPR^{mt} to fully restore mitochondrial homeostasis, and in turn lead to removal of proteotoxically damaged mitochondria through upregulation of mitophagy-related genes.

In addition to its well-known mitogenesis-promoting functions, PGC1 α positively regulates general autophagy and mitophagy by directly inducing the expression of transcription factor EB (TFEB), which mediates lysosomal biogenesis [83]. In turn, TFEB upregulates expression of PGC1 α , establishing a positive feedback loop that maintains the balance between mitochondrial biogenesis and degradation. Furthermore, it was recently shown that the general control of amino acid synthesis 5-like 1 (GCN5L1) functions to negatively regulate both mitochondrial biogenesis and degradation pathways, acting on both PGC1 α

and TFEB, as shown in mouse embryonic fibroblasts [84].

AMP-activated protein kinase is an additional regulator of mitochondrial homeostasis, which in response to nutrient depletion, promotes mitophagy through inhibition of mTOR and activation of ULK1. By contrast, in rat hepatocytes, AMPK-mediated phosphorylation of SIRT1 results in the deacetylation and subsequent activation of PGC1 α , likely as an adaptive response to compensate for enhanced mitochondrial turnover [85]. In mice, the MEK/ERK pathway and specifically the activity of p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase (p38 MAPK) have been correlated with increased mitochondrial mass through the positive regulation they exert on PGC1 α [86]. Notably, the same pathway has also been implicated in the regulation of mitochondrial degradation. In this case, MAPK1 and MAPK14, instead of p38 MAPK, promote both starvation- and hypoxia-induced mitophagy in HeLa cells [87].

Intriguingly, studies in mice showed that in addition to its well-characterized role in carbonyl cyanide *m*-chlorophenyl hydrazone-induced mitochondrial clearance, Parkin is also involved in the induction of mitochondrial biogenesis, via ubiquitination and UPS-dependent elimination of the Parkin-interacting substrate (PARIS), a transcription factor that negatively regulates PGC1 α and its target NRF1 [88]. Additionally, Parkin enhances transcription of mtDNA-encoded genes through direct association with TFAM in proliferating cells [89].

Concluding remarks

Perturbations in mitochondrial number and function severely impair cellular homeostasis and trigger the onset of disease. Thus, cells have developed multiple and well-conserved mechanisms that regulate mitochondrial biogenesis and degradation. Precise coordination of these processes promotes longevity and stress resistance, whereas disruption of their balance accelerates aging and eventually leads to cellular and organismal death. Indeed, the study and validation of possible pharmacological targets that would restore the coordination of both pathways in related pathologies has recently received particular attention.

While significant progress has been attained toward elucidating the specifics of mitochondrial content homeostasis, important questions still remain. How cells shape and adapt their mitochondrial network in response to various physiological or stress cues is not fully understood. The molecular origin of the mitochondrial network specialization in different cell types also remains obscure. Moreover, the interface between

signaling pathways implicated in diverse pathologies, or known to influence longevity, and the mechanisms that modulate mitochondrial biogenesis and turnover is in need of further characterization. These are just some of the issues that require attention. Ongoing research efforts are poised to reveal new components and shed light on the mechanistic aspects of the complex regulatory network that manages cellular bioenergetics by fine-tuning mitochondrial content.

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Author contributions

CP and ID summarized the literature, created the initial figures, and wrote the paper. NT edited the paper, revised the figures, and contributed to the writing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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