# Abstract

# Background

* TOR
* why muscle and aging
* Flies
* GAL4/UAS

# Methods

## Materials

Rapamycin was purchased from XXX. The fly stocks were ordered from the Bloomington stock center (Table 1). Food was made prepared according to XXX **.**

## Tissue Culture and Myotube Formation

## Real Time Quantitative PCR

## Fly Breeding

To prepare the crosses, virgin females were picked out from each of the GAL4 driver strains. Ten virgin females were used per cross. Males with the appropriate genotype were chosen from each of the shRNA strains, and four males were used per cross. Flies were maintained in an incubator at 25° C. When cooler temperatures were required, flies were maintained at 18° C. The parents were flipped into a new vial every five days. The progeny began to eclose after ten days, at which point the progeny was sorted according to phenotype and gender. During each sorting, the number of flies of each phenotype was recorded. The sorted flies were put into new vials, with males and females separated and with 5-10 flies in each vial. The progeny was stored in an incubator at 25° C. This process was continued until at least 100 flies of each genotype had been collected. At least three replicates of each cross was performed.

## Examining Pupal Cases

Twenty days after the *C179-GAL4/Raptor* and *Mef-GAL4/Raptor* crosses were made, the progeny flies were emptied from the vials. The empty pupal cases were counted and the cases containing dead flies were counted. A pupal case with a dead fly in it was markedly darker in color than the empty cases, and contained a black, shrunken fly.

## Crawling Assay

To perform the crawling assay, the flies were tapped to the bottom of the vial at the same time a stopwatch was started. The stopwatch was stopped each time a fly in the vial crawled 4 cm. up the side of the vial. A separate time was recorded for each fly in the vial. This was performed soon after eclosure and repeated every ~30 days for a total of 3 trials.

# Results and Discussion

## Rapamycin Inhibits Differentiation of Muscle Cells in Culture

## Muscle Specific Knockdown of *Raptor* Leads to Lethality in Drosophila

In order to study the role of TORC1 signaling on muscle development *in vivo*, we manipulated dTORC1 function in fruit flies. First, we tested whether inhibition of the dTORC1 pathway affected the development of these flies. As previously reported, high doses of rapamycin prevent egg laying by the maternal fly [1]. We performed dose curves and found that at much lower doses (EC50 of ~860 nM) there was an absence of pupae and flies (Supplmentary Figure 1). There was no obvious distinction between inhibition of pupal lethality and prevention of fly eclosure. These data suggest that rapamycin inhibits fly development, similar to what has been observed in mice [2]. It also supports studies showing that whole animal knockout of *Raptor* leads to developmental lethality in several model organisms [3–6].

To look specifically at the role of dTORC1 in muscle, we knocked out either *Tsc1* or *Raptor* to generate constitutive gain and loss of function alleles in fly muscles using the *GAL4*-UAS system [7]. We used *GAL4* drivers that cause expression of the UAS driven shRNA cassettes in both skeletal muscle and cardiac muscle. Skeletal muscle was targeted through the use of *24B-GAL4, C179-GAL4,* and *Mef-GAL4* drivers, while cardiac muscle was targeted using the *Hand-GAL4* driver. To minimize potential off target effects, three different shRNAs for each of the two regulators were used.

First, we crossed heterozygous, balanced *24B*-*GAL4* flies with heterozygous, balanced shRNA constructs. The flies expressing both balancer chromosomes had decreased viability, and this genotype was excluded from the analysis. The flies eclosed from crosses using the *Hand-GAL4* driver occurred in roughly equal ratios (Figure 2A). Therefore there is dramatic effect of manipulating dTORC1 with the cardiac *GAL4* driver. Similarly, *24B-GAL4* driven expression of *Tsc1* shRNA had no significant effect on birth rates. However, when the driver was used to express *Raptor* shRNA, the progeny exhibited a dramatic decrease in the number of eclosed flies (Figure 2B). This indicates that *24B-GAL4* driven expression of *Raptor* shRNA is lethal at some point prior to eclosure. This was not observed in mice where muscle-specific *Raptor* knockout mice are viable [8, 9].

We attempted to rescue the lethality phenotype of *Raptor* suppression in skeletal muscle by repeating the *24B-GAL4* x *Raptor* shRNA crosses in a colder environment. Colder temperatures are which decreases GAL4 driver expression [7]. This was unable to rescue the lethality of the *24B*-*GAL4/Raptor* shRNA flies, and the birth rates of the two control genotypes were congruent with those produced at 25° C (Supplementary Figure 2A).

To test alternative skeletal muscle *GAL4* drivers we used *C179-GAL4* driver and *Mef-GAL4* driver and repeated these studies. In these experiments, we crossed flies which were homozygous for the driver with flies that were homozygous for the shRNA. As a control, we used a fly line that was identical to the TRiP fly lines, but did not have a shRNA inserted. The *Mef-GAL4* driver resulted in complete lethality of *Raptor* knockdown flies (see Figure 2C). The *C179-GAL4* driver was sufficient to produce *Raptor* knockdown flies, although partial lethality was still demonstrated in the significantly lower birth rate of the knockdown genotype (p-value < 0.002) (see Figure 2D). Additionally, the cross using one of the three *Raptor* shRNA trasgenics in combination with *C179-GAL4* demonstrated a gender-specific increase in genotype lethality, in which far fewer male knockdowns were produced, other combinations had both female and male lethality (Supplmentary Figure 2B). These results indicate that the *C179-GAL4* driver is less efficient at mediating *Raptor*-specific lethality than the *Mef-GAL4* and the *24B-GAL4* drivers.

## Muscle Raptor Knockdown Flies Fail to Eclose from Pupae

We next wanted to determine at which point prior to eclosure were the *Raptor* knockdown flies dying. To do this, we examined the pupal cases on the sides of the vials from the *Cl79-GAL4/Raptor* crosses and the *Mef-GAL4/Raptor* crosses. Twenty days after the crosses were prepared the empty pupal cases were counted and the cases containing dead flies were counted. We observed no significant differences in the number of pupal cases from either of these crosses (Figure 3A–B). For the *Mef-GAL4* driven *Raptor* knockdown nearly 100% of the pupal cases contained dead flies (Figure 3C). There was also a significant number of dead flies in pupal cases from the *Cl79-GAL4/Raptor* crosses (Figure 3D). The relative number of dead flies in the different *Cl79-GAL4/Raptor* crosses corresponds to the number of knockdown flies produced from those crosses (Figure 2C-D); the fewer the number of live knockdown flies from a cross, the more dead flies produced from that cross. These results indicate that *Raptor* knockdown in skeletal muscle produced lethality after pupal development, but prior to eclosure.

## Co-Knockdown of Raptor and Atg5 in Drosophila Muscles Does not Rescue Lethality

Inhibition of dTORC1 in muscle alters the activity of its various downstream targets. One major target is that when dTORC1 is suppressed, autophagy levels are increased [10]. To determine whether an increase in autophagy was the source of the lethality in the *Raptor* knockdown genotype, crosses were made in which both *Raptor* and autophagy were simulataneously knocked down in skeletal muscle. The co-knockdown of *Atg5* along with *Raptor* did not lead to any rescue of *Raptor* mediated lethality (Supplementary Figure 3).

## Effects of Muscle-Specific Raptor Knockdown on Longevity

We next turned our attention to the few flies that survived in the case of *the C179-GAL4* cross. The lifespan of the *Raptor* knockdown flies was measured to determine the effects of dTORC1suppression on longevity. When *Raptor* was knocked down in skeletal using the *Cl79-GAL4* driver, even after the decrease in viability, a large proportion of the flies died shortly after eclosure, but interestingly, among the flies that survived, they generally had quite normal lifespan (see Figure 4). This suggests that there is a critical period of about 20 days after eclosure during which the *Raptor* knockdown flies are still prone to early death. The flies that lived past this critical period generally lived to reach the same age as the controls. This was especially dramatic for male flies for each of these crosses, consistent with male flies being smaller and weaker than female flies.

## Effects of Muscle Specific Raptor Knockdown on Muscle Function

To study the effects of TORC1 suppression on muscle function, a crawling assay was performed on the *Raptor* knockdown flies driven by the *C179-GAL4* driver at several ages. The progeny flies from the crosses were each timed for how long it took them to climb 4 cm. up the side of the vial. The average times for each cross are shown in Figure 5. The results indicate that dTORC1 suppression leads to reduced muscle function in the flies that eclose. Interestingly, as the flies age and the “escaping” flies which do not die become a higher proportion, these changes decrease. These data support the hypothesis that the flies which survive *Raptor* knockdown long-term tend to not have as strong of defects in muscle function.

## Summary

In this work, we have described a role for TORC1 in the regulation of myogenesis *in vitro* and shown in fruit flies, that inhibition of the dTORC1 complex results in lethality and weakened muscle function. Together these data support a *in vivo*, evolutionarily conserved role for the TORC1 complex in the early stages of muscle development.

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# Figure Legends

Figure 1. A visualization of the location and strength of the skeletal muscle drivers was provided by using the three GAL4 drivers to drive GFP expression. The GFP fluorescence was visualized by examing the flies under a miscropscope with a GFP filter. The control contained the GFP-UAS line with no GAL4 driver. From the images, it appears as though the Mef-GAL4 driver has the strongest expression while the C179-GAL4 driver has the weakest expression. This is consistent with the complete lethality and partial lethality effects of the Mef-GAL4 and C179-GAL4 drivers, respectively. The fluorescence in the control is the result of autofluorescence in the tissues.

Figure 2. The graph depicts the birthrates of the progeny produced from the Hand-GAL4 and 24B-GAL4 drivers crossed with Tsc and Raptor shRNA. The GAL4 driver strains were heterozygous with the GAL4 gene over a balancer chromosome expressing either the stubble or serated marker. The shRNA strains were heterozygous with the shRNA gene over a balancer chromosome expressing the Tm6B marker. The birth rates of the progeny expressing the double balancer phenotype were excluded from the chart due to decreased viability. The dashed line represents the expected birth rate of the genotypes. We found a lethality effect associated with Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle using the 24B-GAL4 driver.

Figure 3. The graph depicts the relative birth rates of the progeny produced when the 24B-GAL4/Raptor shrRNA crosses were repeated at 18° C. The double balancer genotype is excluded from the graph. The dashed line represents the expected birth rates of the three genotypes. The colder environment was unable to rescue the lethality effect of Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle.

Figure 4. The graph depicts the birthrates of the progeny from the Cl179-GAL4/shRNA and Mef-GAL4/shRNA crosses. The GAL4 driver strains and the shRNA strains were both homozygous for the gene. Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle using the Mef-GAL4 driver resulted in complete lethality, while Raptor knockdown using the C179-GAL4 driver resulted in partial lethality. The different birth rates for the Raptor knockdown flies using the C179-GAL4 driver reflect the relative strengths of the three Raptor shRNAs. The 36304 shRNA is a control line for TRiP RNAi lines.

Figure 5. The figure on the right shows dead flies stuck in their pupal cases, and the figure on the left shows empty pupal cases post-eclosure. The pictures were taken 20 days after the crosses were made. The control is using 36304 shRNA, which is a control line for TRiP RNAi lines. We found that the lethality effect of Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle was occurring in the pupal stage.

Figure 6. The graphs on the left show the number of total pupal cases produced in the Mef-GAL4/shRNA and C179-GAL4/shRNA crosses. The graphs on the right show the percentage of the cases that contained dead flies. The cases were counted around 20 days after the crosses were made. Homozygous strains of both the GAL4 driver and the shRNA lines were used for the crosses. Nearly 100% of the pupal cases in the Mef-GAL4/Raptor shRNA crosses contained dead flies. There was also a high percentage of dead flies in the cases of the C179-GAL4/Raptor shRNA crosses, and the percentage of dead flies correlates with the relative strengths of the three different Raptor shRNA lines.

Figure 7. The graphs show the average amount of time it took the flies from each of the crosses to climb 4 cm up the vial during three different points in their lifespan. The crosses were made using homozygous strains of C179-GAL4 and homozygous strains of Raptor and Tsc shRNA. The general pattern shows that Tsc and Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle causes decreased muscle function throughout lifespan as compared to the control.

Figure 8. The line graphs show the survival rate of flies with Tsc and Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle. The graph on the left shows the effects of Tsc knockdown using the 24B-GAL4 driver, and the graph on the right shows the effects of Raptor knockdown using the C179-GAL4 driver. The crosses were flipped twice a week to count for dead flies. Both Tsc and Raptor knockdown in skeletal muscle result in decreased longevity. The controls contained either the GAL4 driver strain over a marker, or the shRNA strain over a marker. Knocking down Tsc and Raptor in cardiac muscle using the Hand-GAL4 driver had no significant effects on longevity.