

# We stand on the shoulders of Giants

## ACADEMIC TREE

<https://academictree.org/chemistry/tree.php?pid=384817>

**Christian Bohr**  
Copenhagen University

**August Steenberg Krogh**  
Københavns Universitet

**Knut Schmidt-Nielsen**  
Duke University

**Peter W. Hochachka**  
University of British Columbia)

**Kenneth B. Storey**  
Carleton University



**100 Graduate Students, 1000 publications, \$\$ & Decades**  
**HYPOTHESES [not]**

# The Dawn of Comparative Physiology

*1865: Claude Bernard*

*“There are also experiments in which it is proper to choose certain animals which offer favorable anatomic arrangements or special susceptibility to certain influences. This is so important that the solution to a physiological or pathological problem often depends solely on the appropriate choice of the animal for the experiment so as to make the result clear and searching.”*



# Comparative Biochemistry Unfolds

1920: A. Krogh ~ Nobel Prize

Mid-1900's ~ Viking Physiologists

P. Scholander

K. Schmidt-Nielsen

K. Johansen

A Canadian ~ F. Fry

Biochemistry ~ F. Lippman

H. Krebs

O. Warburg

Comparative Textbook ~ E. Baldwin





# SYNTHETIC INTUITION

**Something Old,  
Something New,  
Something  
Borrowed,  
Some Glue.**



# SYNTHETIC INTUITION

## FILTER

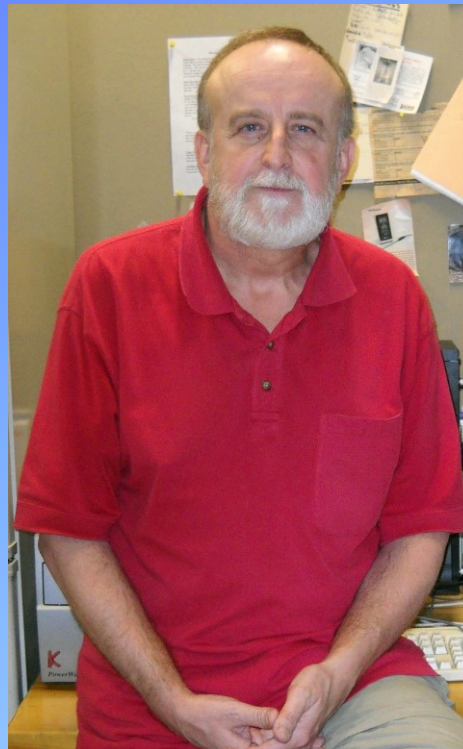
- ~ Transducer
- ~ Organizer
- ~ \*Revamp\*
- ~ IDEA LENS

## IDEAS IN

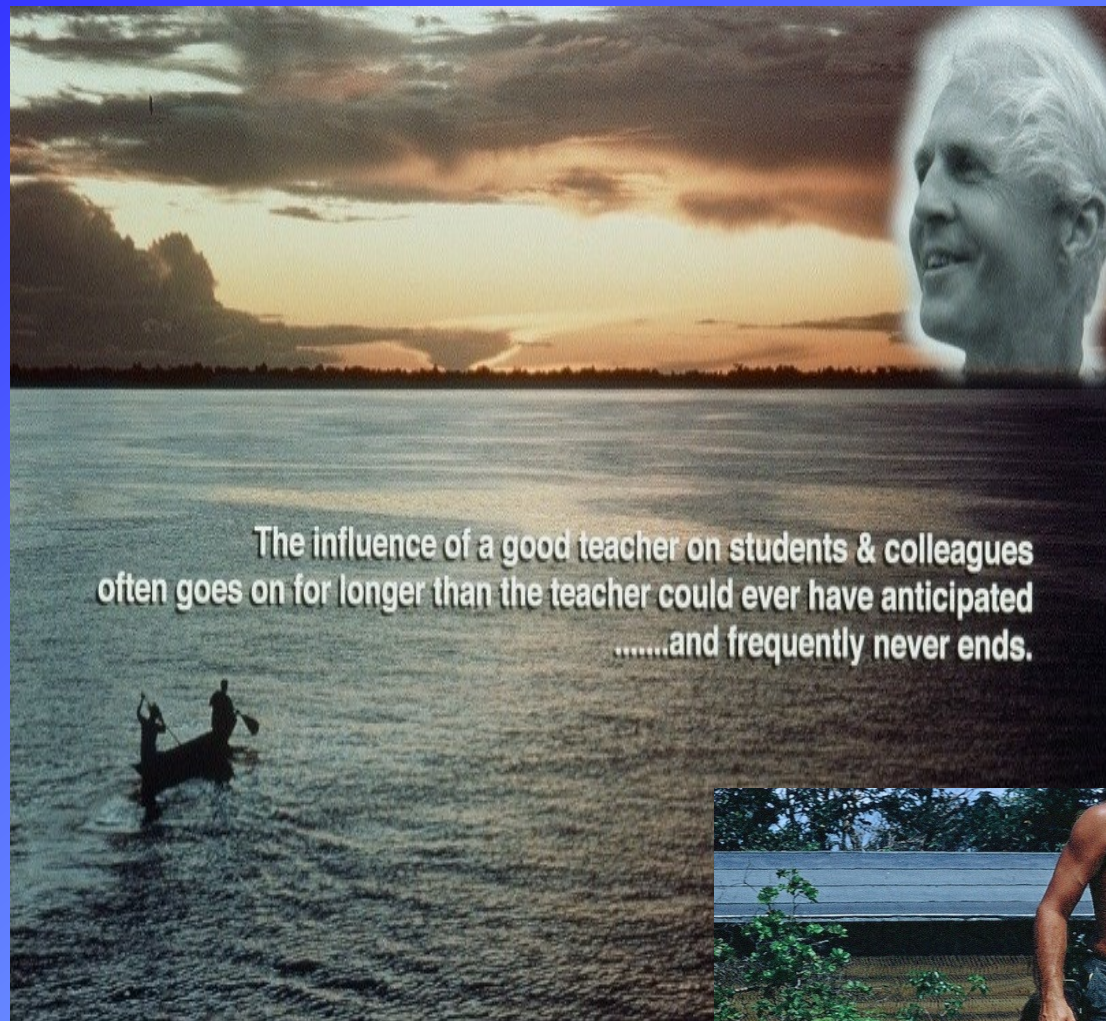
- ~ Ecology
- ~ Physiol. Ecology
- ~ PHYSIOLOGY
- ~ Metabolism
- ~ Methods of Biochemistry
- ~ Molecular Biology
- ~ Genetics

## IDEAS OUT

- ~ Metabolic Arrangement
- ~ Reorganization of Metabolism
- ~ Adaptive Change at Pathway Level
- ~ Integration: multi-levels of Biological Organization

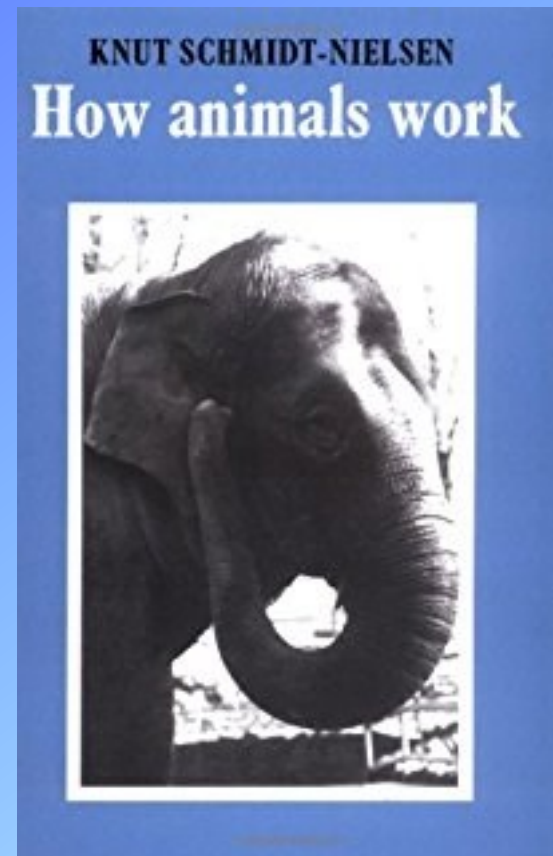






**Knut Schmidt-Nielsen:  
A giant that Peter made  
my faculty colleague**









**Froze the first  
frog as a  
scientist**



**Kjell Johansen – Viking and Physiologist**







A photograph of a cemetery with numerous tombstones of various shapes and sizes, some covered in moss. The background is filled with tall evergreen trees, and a misty atmosphere hangs over the scene.

Metabolic Arrest

"Life in Limbo"

Ken Storey

[www.kenstoreylab.com](http://www.kenstoreylab.com)



# METABOLIC RATE DEPRESSION



**Hibernation**



**Anoxia**



**Estivation**



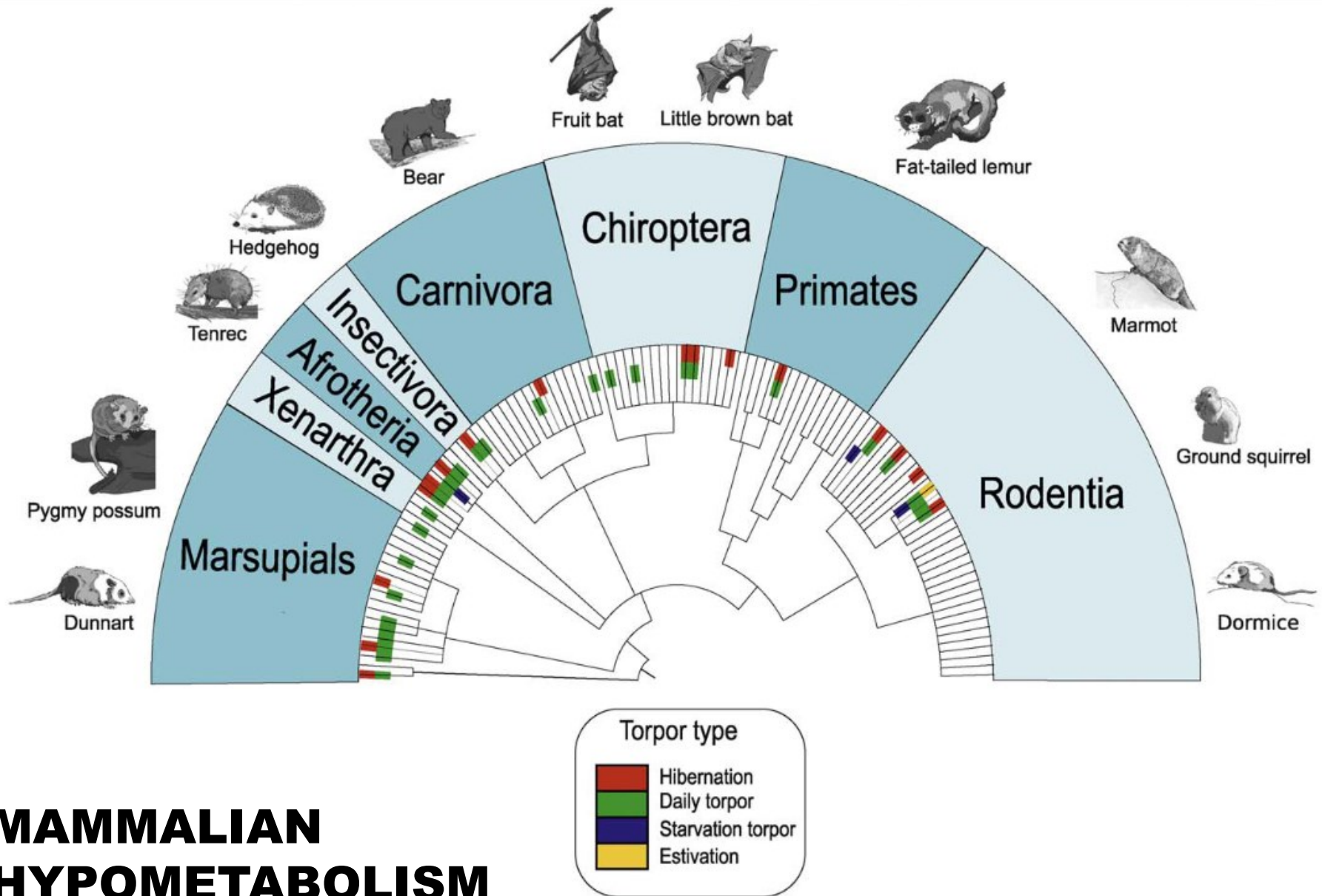
**Freezing**



**Diapause**



# MAMMALIAN HYPOMETABOLISM





# Model Hibernators

*Spermophilus richardsonii*,  
Richardson's ground squirrel



*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*,  
13-lined ground squirrel



*Myotis lucifugus*, little brown bat



# MONITO del MONTE

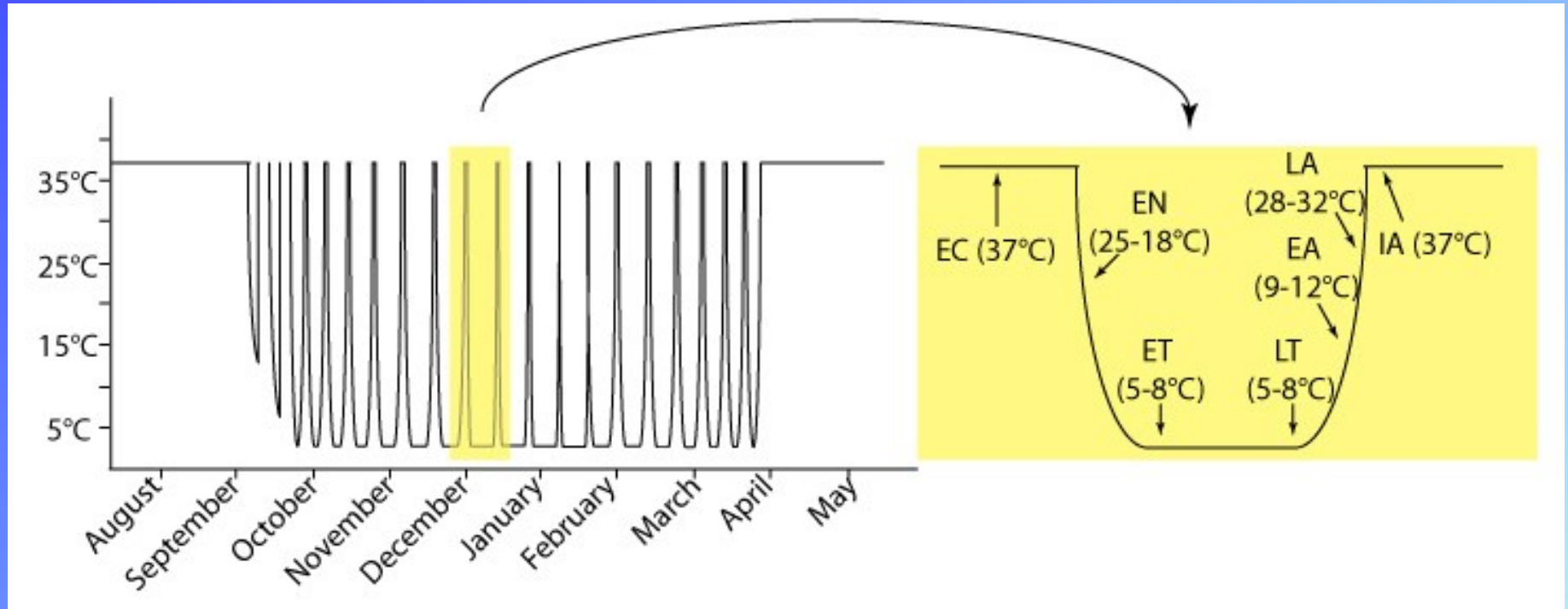
*Dromiciops gliroides*



South American marsupial

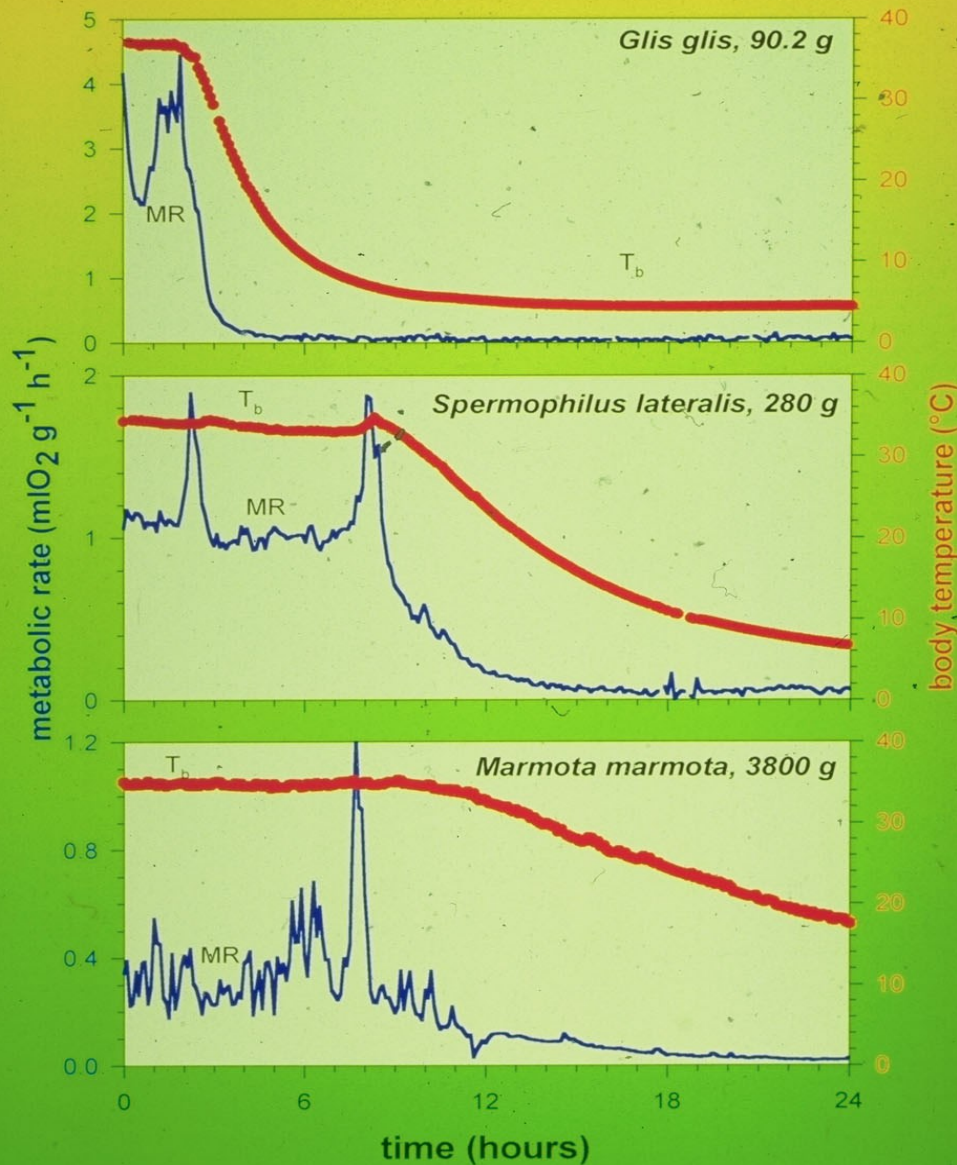


# TORPOR-AROUSAL IN HIBERNATORS



Animal studies by Dr. JM Hallenbeck and Dr. DC McMullen, NIH

# Entrance into Hibernation



- Metabolism inhibited causing  $T_b$  to fall
- Metabolic rate falls to  $<5\%$  of normal
- Smaller animals cool down faster
- $Q_{10}$  values up to 15
- Reversible in arousal
- Torpor bout duration 4 days to 2 weeks



# COLD HIBERNATION

Pubmed: Storey kb



Lessons from mammalian hibernators: molecular insights into striated muscle plasticity and remodeling.

Tessier SN, **Storey KB**.

Biomol Concepts. 2016, 7(2):69-92. PMID: 26982616

Insight into post-transcriptional gene regulation: stress-responsive microRNAs and their role in environmental stress survival of tolerant animals.

Biggar KK, **Storey KB**.

J Exp Biol. 2015, 218(Pt 9):1281-9. PMID: 25954040

To be or not to be: the regulation of mRNA fate as a survival strategy during mammalian hibernation.

Tessier SN, **Storey KB**.

Cell Stress Chap. 2014, 19(6):763-76. PMID: 24789358

Biochemical adaptations of mammalian hibernation: exploring squirrels as a perspective model for naturally induced reversible insulin resistance.

Wu CW, Biggar KK, **Storey KB**.

Braz J Med Biol Res. 2013, 46(1):1-13. PMID: 23314346

Out cold: biochemical regulation of mammalian hibernation - a mini-review.

**Storey KB**.

Gerontology. 2010, 56(2):220-30. PMID: 19602865

Life in the cold: links between mammalian hibernation and longevity.

Wu CW, **Storey KB**.

Biomol Concepts. 2016, 7(1):41-52. PMID: 26820181

Regulation of hypometabolism: insights into epigenetic controls.

**Storey KB**.

J Exp Biol. 2015, 218(Pt 1):150-9. PMID: 25568462

Biochemical adaptations of mammalian hibernation: exploring squirrels as a perspective model for naturally induced reversible insulin resistance.

Wu CW, Biggar KK, **Storey KB**.

Braz J Med Biol Res. 2013, 46(1):1-13. PMID: 23314346

The emerging roles of microRNAs in the molecular responses of metabolic rate depression.

Biggar KK, **Storey KB**.

J Mol Cell Biol. 2011, 3(3):167-75. PMID: 21177365

Metabolic rate depression: the biochemistry of mammalian hibernation.

**Storey KB**, Storey JM.

Adv Clin Chem. 2010, 52:77-108. PMID: 21275340



# TORPOR Warm



Gray mouse lemur,  
*Microcebus murinus*



# BEARS !



# PRINCIPLES OF HIBERNATION

- 1. Metabolic rate reduction**
- 2. Cold or Warm temperature**
- 3. Most Genes & Processes OFF**
- 4. miRNA Control of Pathways**
- 5. Epigenetics as Central Controller**

**Same for ALL MRD**



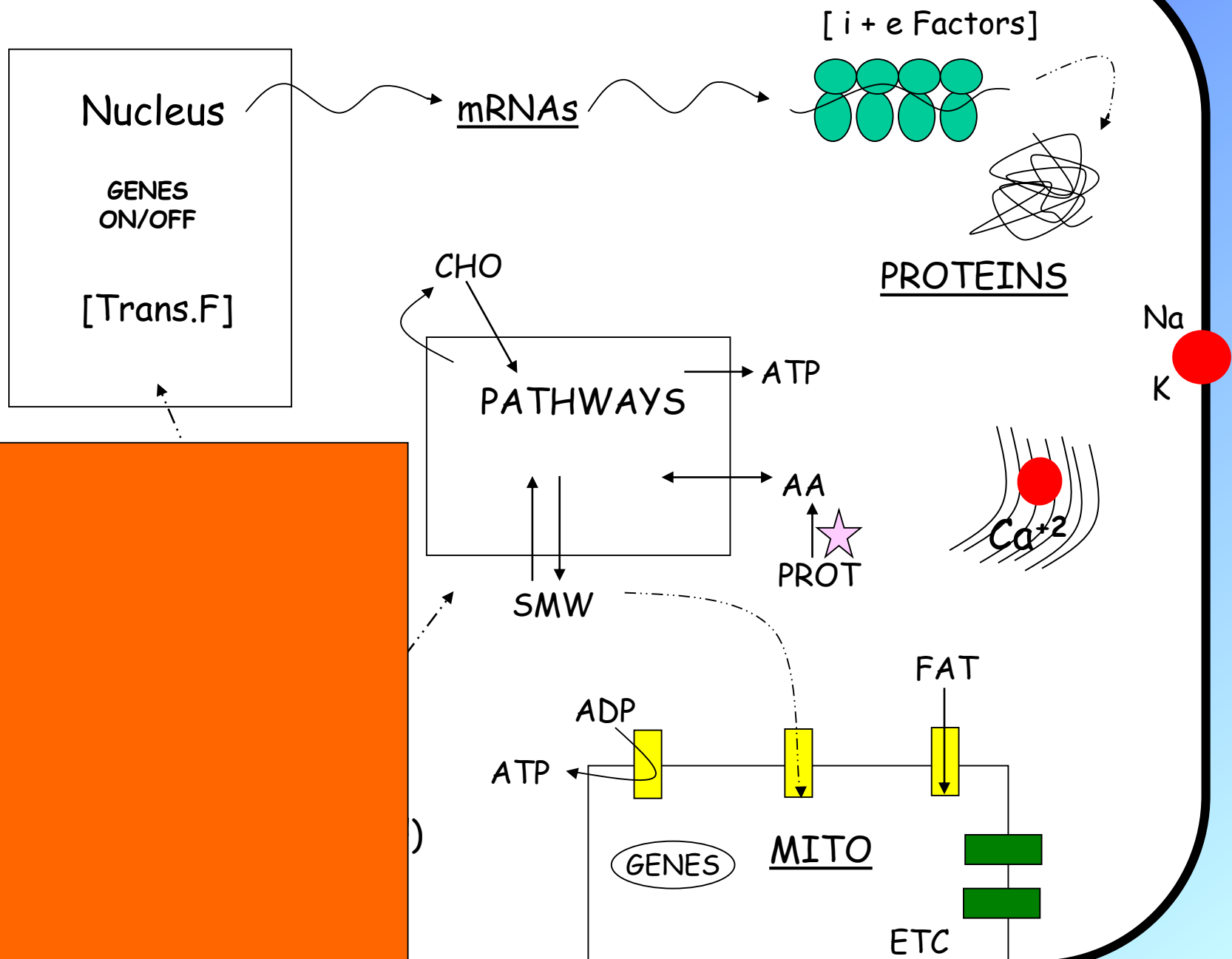
# PRINCIPLES OF HIBERNATION

1. Metabolic rate reduction

2. Control by protein kinases  
(SAPKs, 2<sup>nd</sup> messenger PKs)

- p38, ERK (1/2), JNK, AMPK, AKT (mTOR)

**Same for ALL MRD**





# Metabolic Rate Depression CHANGES



- **\*Thousands of processes OFF\***
- **Gene 'inactivation' ( ↓ mRNA )**
- **Few Genes activated (1-2%)**

# TURNING OFF GENES: Role of Epigenetics

## Epigenetics:

- **Stable changes in gene activity that do not involve changes in DNA sequence**

## Common mechanisms:

- **DNA methylation**
- **Histone modification / histone variants  
e.g. acetylation, phosphorylation**
- **Regulatory non-coding RNAs**



Global changes in methylation of gene promoters to reduce transcription rates

Global changes in histone modifications to reduce accessibility to promoter regions by transcription machinery

**Transcription and translation are ATP-expensive**  
**Epigenetic modifications can alter rates of transcription/translation to produce energy savings in hypometabolism**

MicroRNAs can coordinate expression of cell proteins via post-transcriptional action

Other post-transcriptional controls can apply –

- formation of stress granules &
- action of RNA binding proteins

# DNA METHYLATION

DNA methylation and regulation of DNA methyltransferases in a freeze tolerant vertebrate.

Zhang J, Hawkins LJ, Storey KB. Biochem Cell Biol. 2020; 98, 145-153

Transcriptional regulation of metabolism in disease: From transcription factors to epigenetics.

Hawkins LJ, Al-Attar R, Storey KB. PeerJ 2018; 6: e5062.

Gene structure, expression, and DNA methylation characteristics of sea cucumber cyclin B gene during aestivation.

Zhu A, Chen M, Zhang X, Storey KB. Gene 2016; 594(1): 82-88

The role of DNA methylation during anoxia tolerance in a freshwater turtle (*Trachemys scripta elegans*).

Wijenayake S, Storey KB. J Comp Physiol B. 2016; 186(3) :333-42.

Dynamic changes in global and gene-specific DNA methylation during hibernation in adult thirteen-lined ground squirrels,

*Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*. Alvarado S, Mak T, Liu S, Storey KB, Szyf M. J Exp Biol. 2015; 218: 1787-95.

DNA methylation levels analysis in four tissues of sea cucumber *Apostichopus japonicus* based on fluorescence-labeled methylation-sensitive amplified polymorphism (F-MSAP) during aestivation.

Zhao Y, Chen M, Storey KB, Sun L, Yang H. Comp Biochem Physiol B. 2015; 181: 26-32.

Global DNA modifications suppress transcription in brown adipose tissue during hibernation.

Biggar Y, Storey KB. Cryobiology. 2014; 69(2): 333-8.

The dynamic nature of DNA methylation: a role in response to social and seasonal variation.

Alvarado S, Fernald RD, Storey KB, Szyf M. Integr Comp Biol. 2014; 54: 68-76.

Mammalian hibernation: differential gene expression and novel application of epigenetic controls.

Morin P Jr, Storey KB. Int J Dev Biol. 2009; 53(2-3): 433-42.



# TURNING OFF GENES: Role of Epigenetics

Common mechanisms of epigenetic control:

- **DNA methylation**
- **Histone modification / histone variants**  
e.g. acetylation, phosphorylation
- **Regulatory non-coding RNAs [microRNA]**

# HISTONE MODIFICATION

Hibernation impacts lysine methylation dynamics in the 13-lined ground squirrel, *Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*.

Watts AJ, Storey KB. J Exp Zool A Ecol Integr Physiol. 2019; 331: 234-244.

Transcriptional regulation of metabolism in disease: From transcription factors to epigenetics.

Hawkins LJ, Al-Attar R, Storey KB. PeerJ. 2018; 6: e5062.

Roles for lysine acetyltransferases during mammalian hibernation.

Rouble AN, Hawkins LJ, Storey KB. J Therm Biol. 2018; 74: 71-76.

Dynamic regulation of six histone H3 lysine (K) methyltransferases in response to prolonged anoxia exposure in a freshwater turtle. Wijenayake S, Hawkins LJ, Storey KB. Gene 2018; 649: 50-57.

Metabolic suppression in the pelagic crab, *Pleuroncodes planipes*, in oxygen minimum zones.

Seibel BA, Luu BE, Tessier SN, Towanda T, Storey KB. Comp Biochem Physiol B. 2018; 224: 88-97.

Histone methylation in the freeze-tolerant wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*).

Hawkins LJ, Storey KB. J Comp Physiol B. 2018; 188(1): 113-125.

The role of global histone post-translational modifications during mammalian hibernation.

Tessier SN, Luu BE, Smith JC, Storey KB. Cryobiology. 2017; 75: 28-36.

Regulation of torpor in the gray mouse lemur: transcriptional and translational controls and role of AMPK signaling.

Zhang J, Tessier SN, Biggar KK, Wu CW, Pifferi F, Perret M, Storey KB. Genom Proteom Bioinform. 2015; 13(2): 103-10.

Regulation of hypometabolism: insights into epigenetic controls.

Storey KB. J Exp Biol. 2015; 218: 150-9

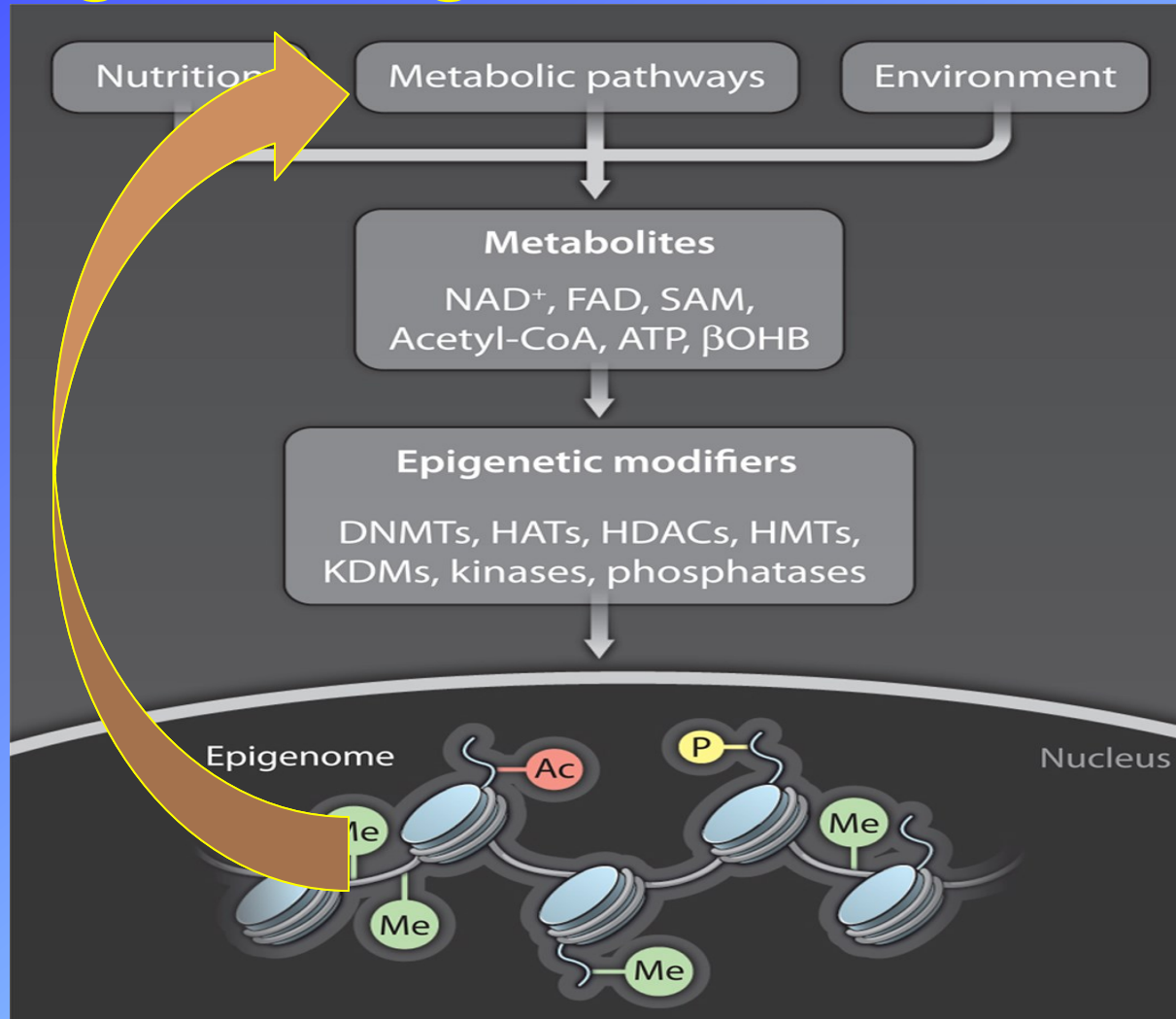
Global DNA modifications suppress transcription in brown adipose tissue during hibernation.

Biggar Y, Storey KB. Cryobiology 2014; 69(2): 333-8.

Metabolic suppression during protracted exposure to hypoxia in the jumbo squid, *Dosidicus gigas*, living in an oxygen minimum zone. Seibel B, Häfker N, Trübenbach K, Zhang J, Tessier S, Pörtner H, Rosa R, Storey K. J Exp Biol. 2014; 217: 2555-68.



# Principle: use epigenetic reprogramming to remodel chromatin



Global changes in methylation of gene promoters to reduce transcription rates

Global changes in histone modifications to reduce accessibility to promoter regions by transcription machinery

Transcription and translation are ATP-expensive.  
Epigenetic modifications can alter rates of transcription/translation to produce energy savings during hypometabolism.

MicroRNAs can coordinate expression of cell proteins via post-transcriptional action

Other post-transcriptional controls can apply –

- formation of stress granules &
- action of RNA binding proteins

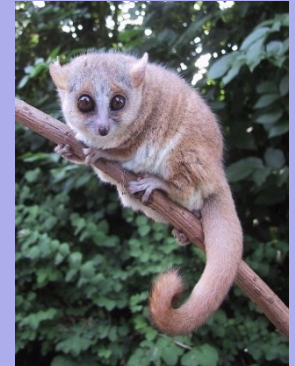




# MRD: Hibernation & MICRO RNA:

**PUBMED:**

**Storey KB microRNA**



# Turning it all off

doi:10.1093/jmcb/mjx053  
Published online January 9, 2018

Journal of Molecular Cell Biology (2018), 10(2), 93–101 | 93

## Review

### Functional impact of microRNA regulation in models of extreme stress adaptation

Kyle K. Biggar and Kenneth B. Storey\*

Institute of Biochemistry & Department of Biology, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6, Canada

\* Correspondence to: Kenneth B. Storey, E-mail: kenneth\_storey@carleton.ca

Edited by Zefeng Wang

When confronted with severe environmental stress, some animals are able to undergo a substantial reorganization of their cellular environment that enables long-term survival. One molecular mechanism of adaptation that has received considerable attention in

recent years has been high-throughput sequencing. Indeed, recent studies are essential to probe the regulation of a myriad of genes in the frog and insect free of microRNA stress adaptation, this review

Biochimica et Biophysica Acta 1779 (2008) 628–633

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Biochimica et Biophysica Acta

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/bbagrm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/bbagrm)



### Differential expression of microRNA species in organs of hibernating ground squirrels: A role in translational suppression during torpor

Pier Jr. Morin, Adrian Dubuc, Kenneth B. Storey\*

Institute of Biochemistry and Department of Chemistry, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6

#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article history:

Received 25 April 2008

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Available online 5 August 2008

##### Keywords:

MicroRNA

Hibernation

*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*

Dicer

Reversible control of translation

#### ABSTRACT

Mammalian hibernation includes long periods of profound torpor where the rates of all metabolic processes are strongly suppressed in a reversible manner. We hypothesized that microRNAs (miRNAs), small non-coding transcripts that bind to mRNA, could play a role in the global suppression of mRNA translation when animals enter torpor. Selected miRNA species (4–9 of the following: mir-1, mir-24, mir-15a, mir-16, mir-21, mir-122a, mir-143, mir-146 and mir-206) were evaluated in four organs of euthermic versus hibernating ground squirrels, *Spermophilus tridecemlineatus* using RT-PCR. Levels of mir-24 transcripts were significantly reduced in heart and skeletal muscle of torpid animals as were mir-122a levels in the muscle. Mir-1 and mir-21 both increased significantly in kidney during torpor by 2.0- and 1.3-fold, respectively. No changes were found for the four miRNA species analyzed in liver. Protein levels of Dicer, an enzyme involved in miRNA processing were also quantified in heart, kidney and liver. Dicer protein levels increased by 2.7-fold in heart during hibernation but decreased by 60% in kidney. These data are the first report that differential regulation

miRNAs &  
Dicer enzyme  
show organ-  
specific changes  
in mammalian  
hibernation



# **Regulatory non-coding RNAs**

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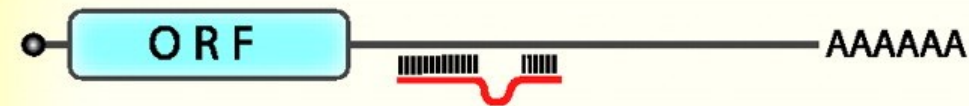
## **microRNA**

- Small RNAs of ~22 nucleotides in length
- Highly conserved across species
- Reach out to control genes of ALL cell processes
- Could be 1000, affect 85 % of genes
- Disease involvement
- Act to :
  - Block translation of mRNA
  - Target mRNA for degradation



# MICRO RNA: Drosha & Dicer

imperfect complementarity = translational repression



**Ago-1** ↑

mature  
microRNA

**Ago-2 (Slicer)** ↓



perfect complementarity = RNA interference

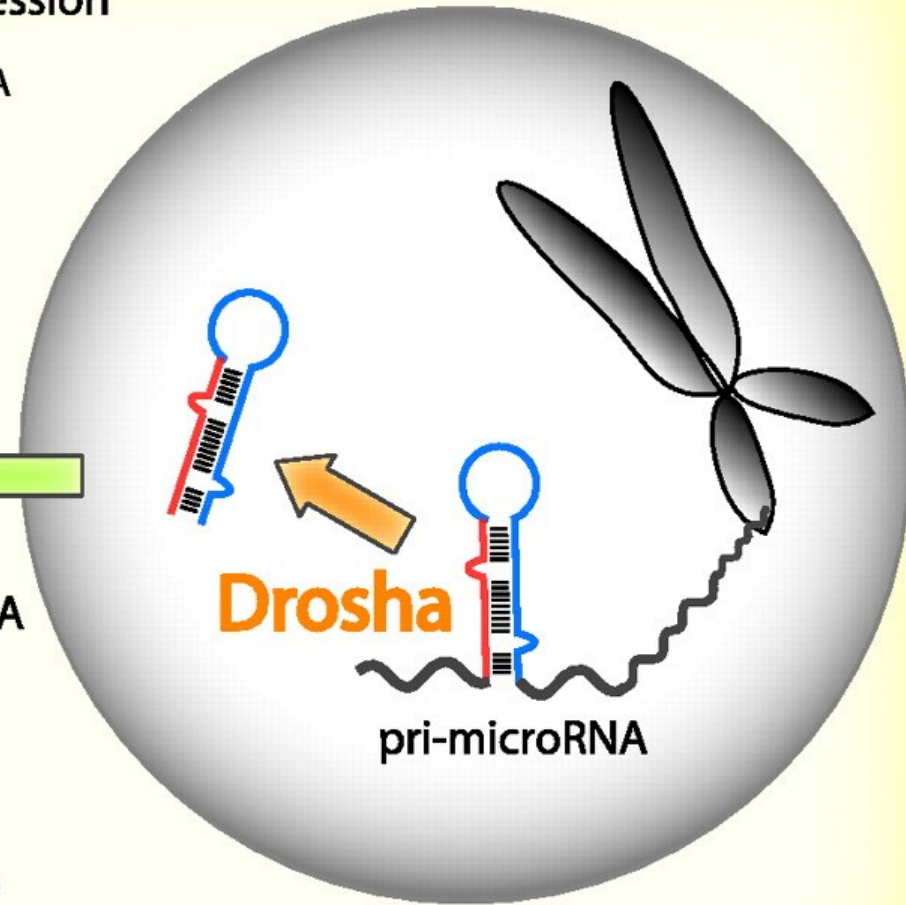
**Dicer** ←

pre-microRNA



**Drosha** ←

pri-microRNA



# MicroRNA & Hibernation

*Physiol Genomics* 48: 388–396, 2016.  
First published April 15, 2016; doi:10.1152/physiolgenomics.00005.2016.

## Analysis of microRNA expression during the torpor-arousal cycle of a mammalian hibernator, the 13-lined ground squirrel

Cheng-Wei Wu, Kyle K. Biggar,\* Bryan E. Luu,\* Kama E. Szereszewski, and Kenneth B. Storey  
*Institute of Biochemistry and Department of Biology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

Submitted 6 January 2016; accepted in final form 4 April 2016

Wu CW, Biggar KK, Luu BE, Szereszewski KE, Storey KB. Analysis of microRNA expression during the torpor-arousal cycle of a mammalian hibernator, the 13-lined ground squirrel. *Physiol Genomics* 48: 388–396, 2016. First published April 15, 2016; doi:10.1152/physiolgenomics.00005.2016.—Hibernation is a highly regulated stress response that is utilized by some mammals to survive harsh winter conditions and involves a complex metabolic reprogramming at the cellular level to maintain tissue protections at low temperature. In this study, we profiled the expression of 117 conserved microRNAs in the heart, muscle, and liver of the 13-lined ground squirrel (*Ictidomys tridecemlineatus*) across four stages of the torpor-arousal cycle (euthermia, early torpor, late torpor, and interbout arousal) by real-time PCR. We found significant differential regulation of numerous microRNAs that were both tissue specific and torpor stage specific. Among the most significant regulated microRNAs was *miR-208b*, a positive regulator of muscle development that was found to be upregulated by fivefold in the heart during late torpor (13-fold during arousal), while decreased by 3.7-fold in the skeletal muscle, implicating a potential regulatory role in the development of cardiac hypertrophy and skeletal muscle atrophy in the ground squirrels during torpor. In addition, the insulin resistance marker *miR-181a* was upregulated by 5.7-fold in the liver during early torpor, which supports previous suggestions of hyperinsulinemia in hibernators during the early stages of the hibernation cycle. Although microRNA expression profiles were largely unique between the three tissues, GO annotation analysis revealed that the putative targets of upregulated microRNAs tend to enrich toward suppression of progrowth-related processes in all three tissues. These findings implicate microRNAs in the regulation of both tissue-specific processes and general suppression of cell growth during hibernation.

tional level, with reversible protein phosphorylation shown to play an integral role in the regulation of key glycolytic enzymes, histone modifications, RNA polymerase II activity, and protein translation initiation (17, 30, 39).

Recent discoveries of microRNAs (miRNAs) have introduced a new dimension of cellular regulation that is highly conserved among species ranging from nematodes, fruit flies, to human (3). MiRNAs are small noncoding RNA transcripts that are ~22 nucleotides in length and are known to exert posttranscriptional control by binding to target mRNAs near the 3'-untranslated region (UTR) to promote translational silencing through either sequestration or degradation. Transcripts targeted by miRNAs have been shown to localize to cytoplasmic foci, which can serve as sites for mRNA storage or degradation leading to translational repression (23). We have recently shown evidence for the formation during hibernation of stress-induced granules that comprised RNA-binding proteins, and these could serve as potential mRNA storage foci that would complement the regulatory roles of miRNAs during torpor (40). A single miRNA can regulate hundreds of genes, and a single gene can be targeted by multiple miRNAs, creating a complex network that is thought to regulate up to 60% of all protein-coding genes in human (21). We have previously reported the regulatory roles of miRNAs during hibernation and have begun to show miRNA regulation as part of a global response to other environmental stressors that include estivation, anoxia, and freezing, with select miRNAs

- Skeletal muscle atrophy
- Cardiac hypertrophy
- Insulin resistance
- Suppression of cell growth



# MARSUPIAL TORPOR

## SCIENTIFIC REPORTS

SCIENTIFIC REPORTS | 6:24627 | DOI: 10.1038/srep24627

### OPEN The hibernating South American marsupial, *Dromiciops gliroides*, displays torpor-sensitive microRNA expression patterns

Received: 08 January 2016

Accepted: 31 March 2016

Published: 19 April 2016

Hanane Hadj-Moussa<sup>1,\*</sup>, Jason A. Moggridge<sup>1,\*</sup>, Bryan E. Luu<sup>1</sup>, Julian F. Quintero-Galvis<sup>2</sup>, Juan Diego Gaitán-Espitia<sup>3</sup>, Roberto F. Nespolo<sup>2</sup> & Kenneth B. Storey<sup>1</sup>

When faced with adverse environmental conditions, the marsupial *Dromiciops gliroides* uses either daily or seasonal torpor to support survival and is the only known hibernating mammal in South America. As the sole living representative of the ancient Order Microbiotheria, this species can provide crucial information about the evolutionary origins and biochemical mechanisms of hibernation. Hibernation is a complex energy-saving strategy that involves changes in gene expression that are elicited in part by microRNAs. To better elucidate the role of microRNAs in orchestrating hypometabolism, a modified stem-loop technique and quantitative PCR were used to characterize the relative expression levels of 85 microRNAs in liver and skeletal muscle of control and torpid *D. gliroides*. Thirty-nine microRNAs were differentially regulated during torpor; of these, 35 were downregulated in liver and 11 were differentially expressed in skeletal muscle. Bioinformatic analysis predicted that the downregulated liver microRNAs were associated with activation of MAPK, PI3K-Akt and mTOR pathways, suggesting their importance in facilitating marsupial torpor. In skeletal muscle, hibernation-responsive microRNAs were predicted to regulate focal adhesion, ErbB, and mTOR pathways, indicating a promotion of muscle maintenance mechanisms. These tissue-specific responses suggest that microRNAs regulate key molecular pathways that facilitate hibernation, thermoregulation, and prevention of muscle disuse atrophy.

- Activation of mTOR
- Activation of MAPKs
- Tissue-specific responses:
  - Hibernation
  - Thermal regulation
  - Disuse atrophy



Monito del Monte  
from Chile



HOSTED BY



## Genomics Proteomics Bioinformatics

[www.elsevier.com/locate/gpb](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/gpb)  
[www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)



### PREFACE

# The Gray Mouse Lemur: A Model for Studies of Primate Metabolic Rate Depression



Kenneth B. Storey <sup>\*,a</sup>

*Institute of Biochemistry and Department of Biology, Carleton University, Ottawa*

Received 15 April 2015; accepted 11 June 2015

Available online 21 June 2015



**Overview: Fewer cell changes needed when torpor is at higher body temperature !**

**Gray mouse lemur, *Microcebus murinus*  
- Native to Madagascar**

# LEMUR model

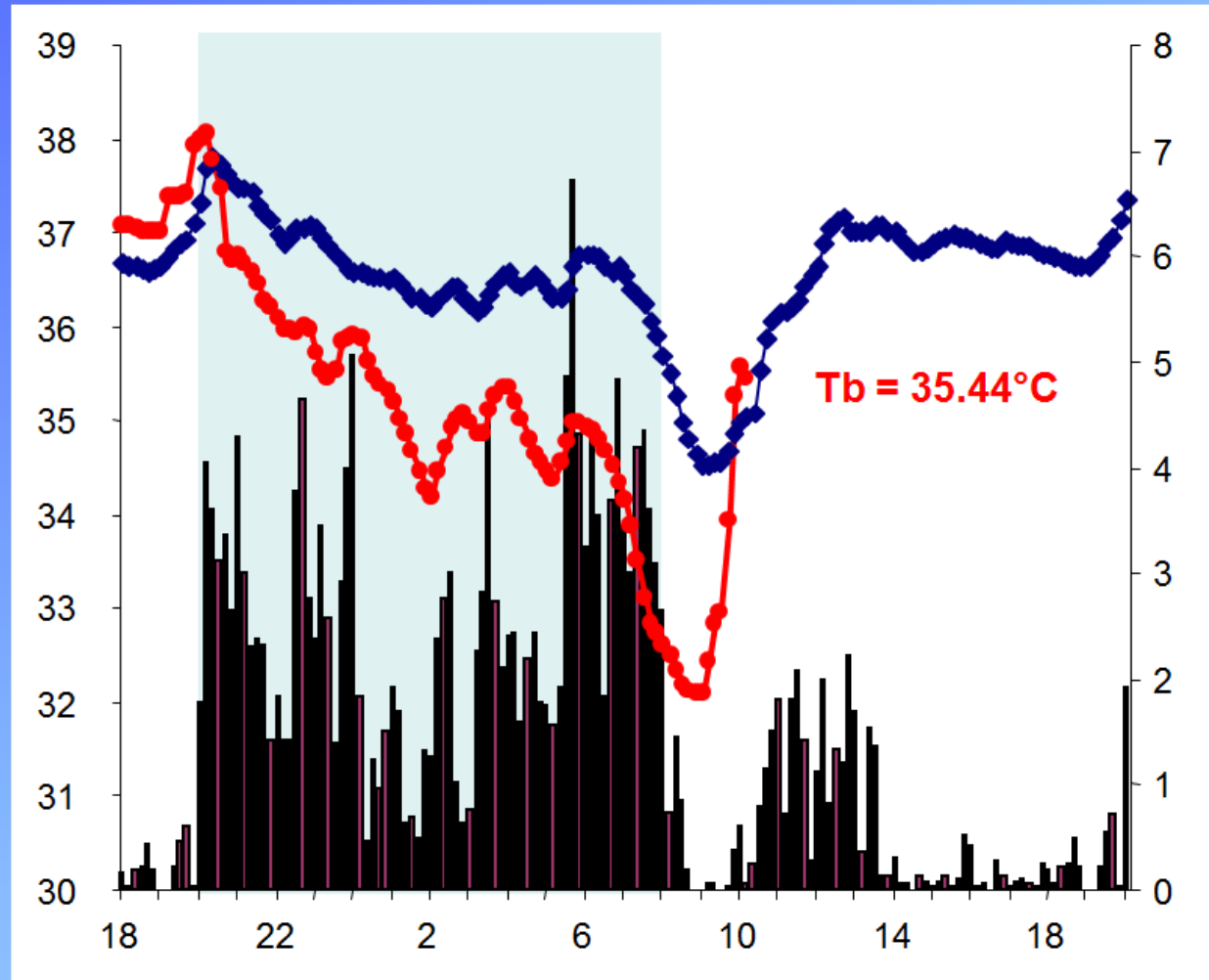


- Primates, native to Madagascar
- Use daily torpor while sleeping
- Hibernate long term to deal with chronic food shortages in the dry season
- The most closely related species to man that exhibit natural hypometabolism
- Enter torpor at high ambient temperatures ( $T_b \sim 28-32^\circ\text{C}$ ) i.e. not confounded by the additional biochemical adaptations needed for low temperature function

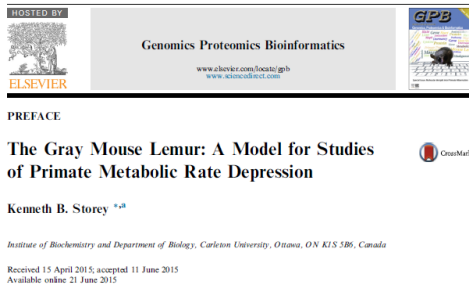
# PRIMATE TORPOR: GRAY MOUSE LEMUR



## DAILY TORPOR







# Primate Torpor Series

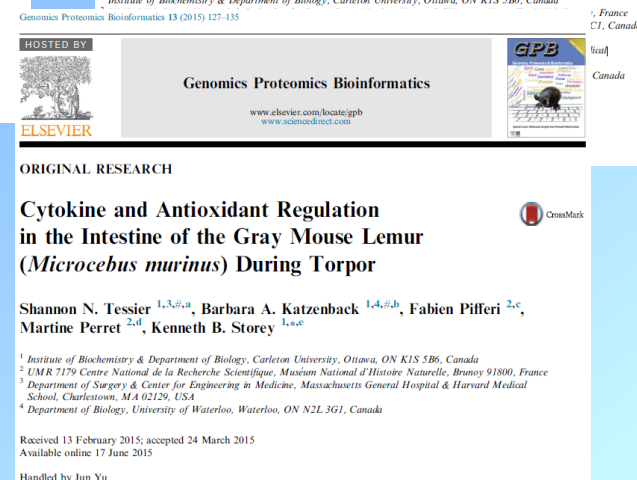
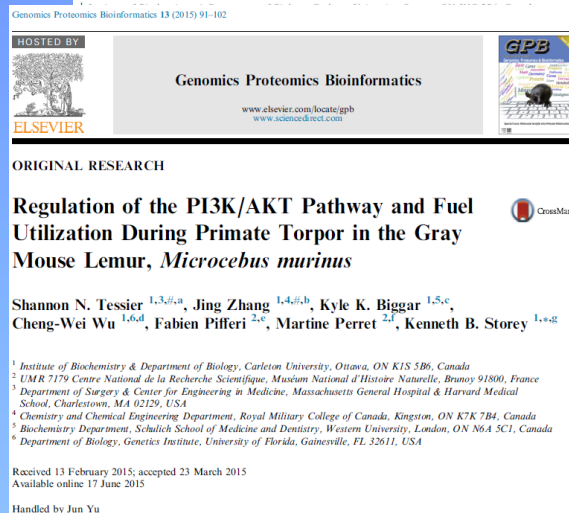
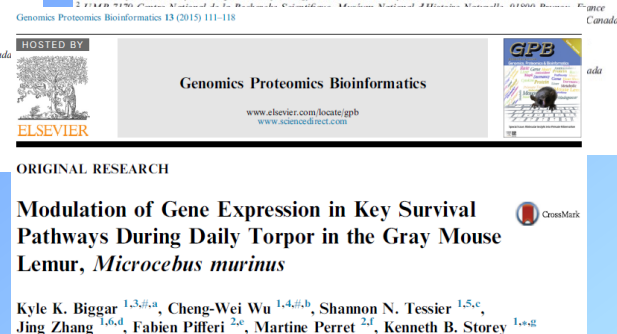
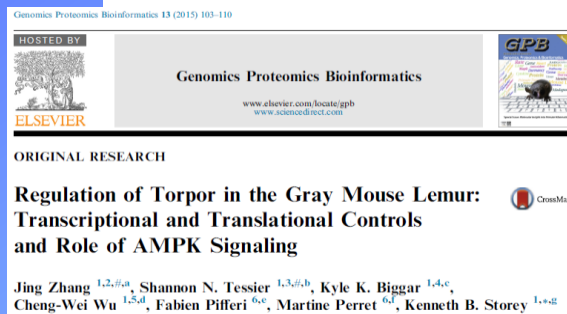
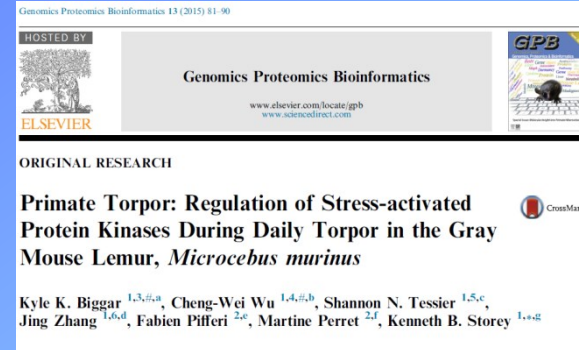
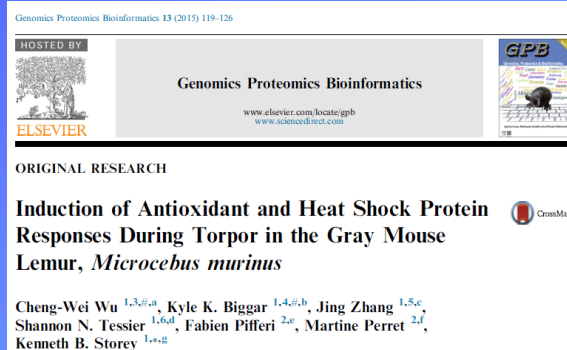
Stress response  
& signal  
transduction



Regulation of  
gene/protein  
expression



Metabolism,  
fuel use &  
cytokines



# LEMUR model



- Enter torpor at high ambient temperatures ( $T_b$  may only fall to  $\sim 28-32^\circ\text{C}$ ) so MRD is not confounded by adaptations needed to endure  $T_b$  at  $0-5^\circ\text{C}$  as during hibernation in most mammals
- Fewer Changes [ 5% of changes of cold hibernation]
- Ex. lack of “stress response” & shock proteins
- Translation Arrest occurs : mTOR, eIF4E
- AMPKinase increases for fuel shifting
- **miRNA responses** = pathway control

# LEMUR miRNA

BBA - Gene Regulatory Mechanisms 1863 (2020) 194473

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

BBA - Gene Regulatory Mechanisms

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/bbagrm](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/bbagrm)



## Profiling torpor-responsive microRNAs in muscles of the hibernating primate *Microcebus murinus*

Hanane Hadj-Moussa<sup>a</sup>, Jing Zhang<sup>b,c</sup>, Fabien Pifferi<sup>d</sup>, Martine Perret<sup>d</sup>, Kenneth B. Storey<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Institute of Biochemistry and Department of Biology, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Department of Diagnostic Imaging, Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto ON, Canada

<sup>c</sup> Neurosciences & Mental Health, SickKids Research Institute, Toronto ON, Canada

<sup>d</sup> Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique UMR 7179, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Brunoy 91800, France

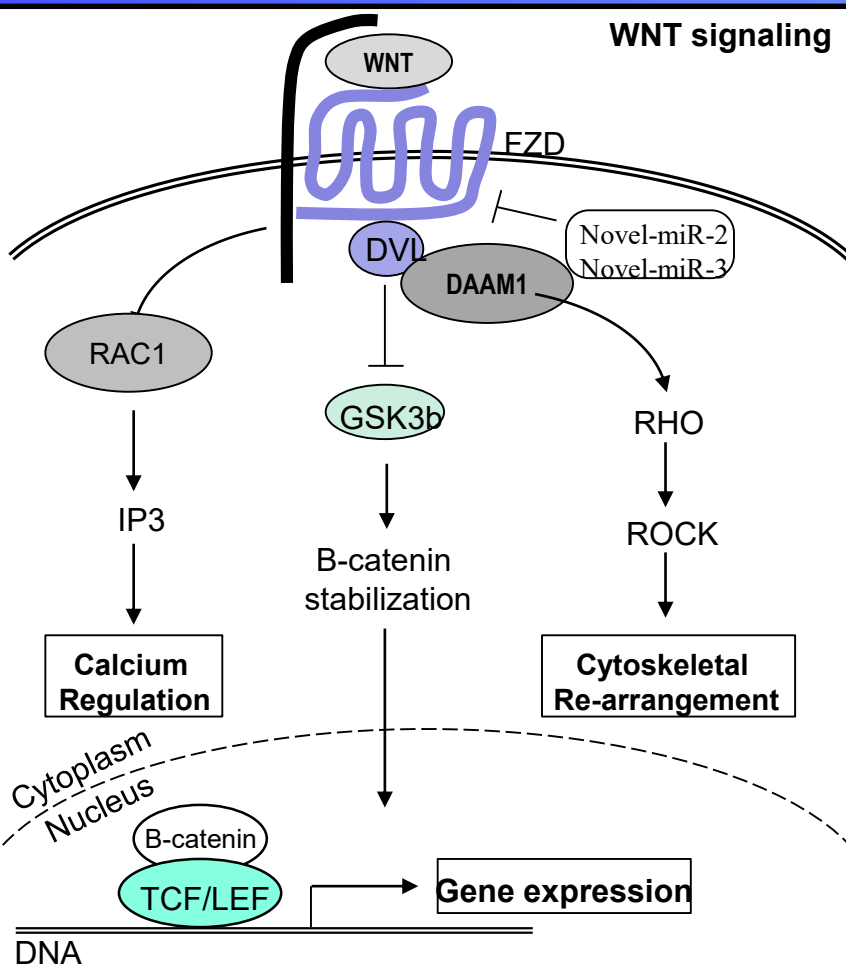
### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Gray mouse lemur  
Small RNA transcriptomics  
MyomiR  
miR-133

### ABSTRACT

When food scarcity is coupled with decreased temperatures, gray mouse lemurs (*Microcebus murinus*) depress their metabolic rates and retreat into bouts of either daily torpor or multi-day hibernation, without dramatically dropping body temperatures like other 'traditional hibernators'. Rapid and reversible mechanisms are required to coordinate the simultaneous suppression of energetically expensive processes and activation of pro-survival pathways critical for successful torpor-arousal cycling. MicroRNAs, a class of endogenous non-coding small RNAs, are effective post-transcriptional regulators that modulate all aspects of cellular function. The present study hypothesizes that miRNAs are intimately involved in facilitating the molecular reorganization events necessary for lemur skeletal muscle torpor. Small RNA-Sequencing was used to compare miRNA profiles from skeletal muscles of torpid and control primates. We characterized 234 conserved miRNAs, of which 20 were differentially expressed during torpor, relative to control. Examples included downregulation of key muscle-specific (myomiR) members, miR-1 and miR-133, suggesting a switch to muscle-specific energy-saving strategies. *In silico* target mapping and logistic regression-based gene set analysis indicated the inhibition of energy costly pathways such as oxidative phosphorylation and muscle proliferation. The suppression of these metabolic pathways was balanced with a lack of miRNA inhibition of various signaling pathways, such as MAPK, mTOR, focal adhesion, and ErbB. This study identifies unique miRNA signatures and 'biomarkers of torpor' that provide us with primate-specific insights on torpor at high body temperatures that can be exploited for human biomedical concerns.





# PRIMATE TORPOR: Shutting down primates, LIKE YOU !!

The FEBS Journal



VIEWPOINT

## Bringing nature back: using hibernation to reboot organ preservation

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### Keywords

biostasis; metabolic rate depression; microRNA; normothermic perfusion; organ transplantation; torpor; warm preservation

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Recently, organ transplant therapy has received a major boost from a change in perspective – a move away from damaging, cold static organ storage to the use of *warm* normothermic perfusion. The concept for warm preservation is one that has been borrowed from Nature, and it is only fitting that we go back to the wild for more 'tricks' to further improve warm organ stabilization. Current warm preservation strategies are designed to mimic natural conditions in the human body as closely as possible, but what if we could mimic these conditions while simultaneously inducing a reversible state of torpor that would further extend the viability window of donor organs? Indeed, the original driver for using cold organ storage was its ability to strongly reduce metabolic rate many-fold when organs were cooled from 37 to 5 °C. Herein, we discuss the adaptations that allow warm hibernators such as bears and lemurs (fellow primates) to naturally depress their metabolic rate and retreat into states of suspended animation, and how these can be applied to improve organ transplant therapy. Can we look to Nature for instructions to induce torpor in human organs? This article discusses the possibilities.

## The \$1,000,000 Question → What is needed for long term human MRD ?

- **Many less genes & fewer tissues affected in RT torpor than in long-term hibernation at cold body temperatures.**
- **Organs: identify key processes in each organ that need adjusting**
- **Warm preservation may be the least injurious**

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## The Storey Lab

"If we knew what we were doing, we wouldn't call them experiments"

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#### Research Interests

The Storey Lab studies the biochemical adaptations and molecular mechanisms that allow animals to adapt to and endure severe environmental stresses such as the deep cold, oxygen deprivation, and desiccation.

#### Positions Available

New projects are available for Graduate students and Honours students. For a more detailed description of the projects currently available for Graduate and Honours students visit the Opportunities page.

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Global changes in methylation of gene promoters to reduce transcription rates

Global changes in histone modifications to reduce accessibility to promoter regions by transcription machinery

**Transcription and translation are ATP-expensive.  
Epigenetic modifications can alter rates of  
transcription/translation to produce energy savings in  
hypometabolism**

**MicroRNAs can coordinate expression of  
cell proteins via post-transcriptional action**

**Other post-transcriptional controls can apply**

- formation of stress granules &
- action of RNA binding proteins