



PES1 Repression Triggers Ribosomal Biogenesis Impairment and Cellular Senescence Through p53 Pathway Activation*

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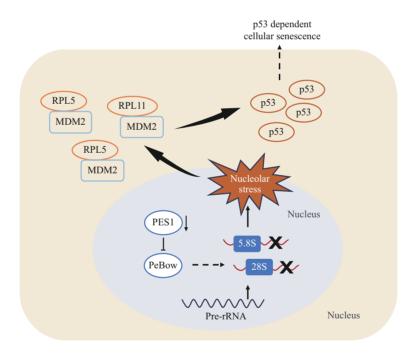
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Graphical abstract



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Abstract Objective The nucleolar protein PES1 (Pescadillo homolog 1) plays critical roles in ribosome biogenesis and cell cycle regulation, yet its involvement in cellular senescence remains poorly understood. This study aimed to comprehensively investigate the functional consequences of PES1 suppression in cellular senescence and elucidate the molecular mechanisms underlying its regulatory role. Methods Initially, we assessed PES1 expression patterns in two distinct senescence models: replicative senescent mouse embryonic fibroblasts (MEFs) and doxorubicin-induced senescent human hepatocellular carcinoma HepG2 cells. Subsequently, PES1 expression was specifically downregulated using siRNA-mediated knockdown in these cell lines as well as additional relevant cell types. Cellular proliferation and senescence were assessed by EdU incorporation and SA-β-gal staining assays, respectively. The expression of senescence-associated proteins (p53, p21, and Rb) and SASP factors (IL-6, IL-1β, and IL-8) were analyzed by Western blot or qPCR. Furthermore, Northern blot and immunofluorescence were employed to evaluate pre-rRNA processing and nucleolar morphology. Results PES1 expression was significantly downregulated in senescent MEFs and HepG2 cells. PES1 knockdown resulted in decreased EdU-positive cells and increased SA-β-gal-positive cells, indicating proliferation inhibition and senescence induction. Mechanistically, PES1 suppression activated the p53-p21 pathway without

affecting Rb expression, while upregulating IL-6, IL-1β, and IL-8 production. Notably, PES1 depletion impaired pre-rRNA maturation and induced nucleolar stress, as evidenced by aberrant nucleolar morphology. **Conclusion** Our findings demonstrate that PES1 deficiency triggers nucleolar stress and promotes p53-dependent (but Rb-independent) cellular senescence, highlighting its

Key words PES1, cellular senescence, ribosomal biogenesis, p53

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crucial role in maintaining nucleolar homeostasis and regulating senescence-associated pathways.

Cellular senescence is a state of irreversible cell cycle arrest that results from a variety of stresses^[1-3]. Senescent cells accumulate across tissues during aging, contributing to the functional decline of organs and aging-related diseases^[4-7]. The nucleolus is the most prominent subnuclear structure involved in ribosomal RNA (rRNA) synthesis and ribosome biogenesis in cells and thus linked to the regulation of cellular homeostasis and senescence^[8-10]. nucleolus has a typical tripartite organization and morphology^[11], and pathologists have recognized the correlation between changes in nucleolar size and/or number and senescence. For example, small nucleolar size and transcriptionally refractive heterochromatic rDNA are often regarded as cellular hallmarks of longevity in diverse model organisms^[12]. By contrast, increased nucleolar size is observed in premature aging cells in humans^[13].

In the process of ribosome biogenesis, rRNAs are transcribed from 47S rRNA genes and processed by many cofactors and finally cleaved to form 5.8S, 18S and 28S rRNAs, while 5S rRNA is synthesized in the nucleoplasm^[14]. Several lines of evidence suggest that senescent cells exhibit reduced ribosome biogenesis, an extremely energy-demanding process, due to an ageing related reduced energy metabolism. Conversely, inhibition of ribosome biogenesis through knockdown of processing factors can trigger cellular

senescence which can be explained by a delay in rRNA processing eventually leading to the accumulation of the ribosomal proteins L5 (uL18) and L11 (uL5), which form a complex with the 5S rRNA and disable the E3 ligase mouse double minute 2 (MDM2), thus activating p53^[15]. Lessard *et al.*^[16] also revealed that overexpression of the ribosomal protein S14 (RPS14 or uS11) is sufficient to inhibit Rb phosphorylation, inducing cell cycle arrest and senescence.

Pescadillo ribosomal biogenesis factor 1 (PES1) is a nucleolar protein of 588 amino acids that involved in rRNA processing and 60S subunit assembly, and it can form a complex with block of proliferation 1 (BOP1) and WD repeat domain 12 (WDR12) that plays an important role in the procession of the 32S pre-rRNA into mature 28S rRNA^[17]. Numerous studies have shown that PES1 is associated with tumor cell proliferation, invasion and metastasis in many types of cancers^[18], including prostate cancer^[19], liver cancer^[20], pancreatic cancer^[21], thyroid cancer^[22], breast cancer^[23], ovarian cancer^[24], gastric cancer^[25] and colon cancer^[26]. Our previously study revealed that PES1 can directly interact with telomerase to control telomerase activity, maintain telomere length, and regulate cellular senescence^[27]. Whether and how PES1 regulates cellular senescence through rRNA processing remains largely unknown.

In this study, we reported that PES1 was down-regulated in senescent mouse embryonic fibroblast (MEF) cells and HepG2 cells. Knockdown of PES1 in HepG2 cells led to retardation in rRNA processing, which in turn activates p53 rather than Rb pathway, leading to cellular senescence. We demonstrated that PES1 affected cellular senescence by regulating ribosomal biogenesis, providing a novel perspective on the mechanisms involved in the senescence regulated by PES1.

1 Materials and methods

1.1 Reagents

Doxorubicin (DOX, 23214-92-8, MedChemExpress) was dissolved in dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMSO, D8371, Solarbio) to a concentration of 10 g/L and stocked at -20°C until use.

1.2 Cell culture

HepG2 cells, HCT116 cells (wild type (wt) and p53^{-/-}) and DU145 cells were purchased from the American Type Culture Collection. MEFs were isolated from mouse embryos at day 14.5 of gestation as previously described^[27]. Briefly, embryos were surgically extracted and separated from maternal tissues and the yolk sac. The tissues were then finely minced and incubated in a trypsin-EDTA solution while shaking at 37°C for 30 min. Following incubation, the solution was allowed to settle for 2 min, after which the supernatant was centrifuged at 1 000g for 3 min. The resulting pellet was resuspended in culture medium to obtain MEFs. Cells were maintained in DMEM containing 1 000 mg/L glucose supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS). The cells were cultured in 5% CO2 and 20% oxygen conditions.

1.3 SA-β-gal staining

senescence-associated β-galactosidase (SA-β-gal) staining was carried out according to the manufacturer's instructions (Byeotime, C0602). Cells were washed once with PBS and fixed with 0.5% glutaraldehyde in PBS at pH7.2 for 15 min. After washing in PBS, cells were stained in X-gal solution (100 mmol/L Na₃PO₄, 2 mmol/L MgCl₂, 150 mmol/L NaCl, 0.01% sodium deoxycholate, 0.02% NP40, 5 mmol/L potassium ferricyanide, 5 mmol/L potassium ferrocyanide, and X-gal (1 g/L) at pH6.0)

overnight at 37°C. Tissue sections were then stained with eosin.

1.4 siRNA transfection

One hour after their plating, cells were transfected with a final concentration of 10 nmol/L siRNA (a mix of 3 siRNA sequences) using RNAiMax transfection Lipofectamine reagent Scientific, according (Thermo CA) the manufacturer's instructions. Cells treated under the same conditions with transfection reagent without siRNA were used as controls (mock-depleted cells). Six hours after transfection, the medium was replaced by fresh medium supplemented with 5% FBS, and the next day, by complete MEM. Phenotypes were analyzed and quantified at 72 h post-transfection. The sequences of all siRNAs used in this study are as follows. sihPES1: 5'-ACCCAAACACAAGAAGAA-GGUUAAC-3', 5'-UGUCAACAAGUUCCGUGAA-UACAAG-3', 5'-GGCAGGCCAGAGGACCUAAGU-GUGA-3'; simPES1: 5'-GGTGTTCTGGCTGCCTTG-AATTTCT-3', 5'-GCGCAAGGTCTTCCTGTCCA-TTAAA-3', 5'-GCTCTACTCTGAACCTCCTTCCT-CA-3'; sihp53: 5'-GCAUCUUAUCCGAGUGGAA-3', 5'-CCCGGACGAUAUUGAACAA-3', 5'-CACUAC-AACUACAUGUGUA-3'.

1.5 Western blot

Cells were seeded in a 6-well plate (8×10⁵ cells/ well) and cultured overnight. After exposure to gliotoxin with or without the indicated pharmacological agents pretreatment, the cells were washed with cold PBS and then lysed in cold RIPA lysis buffer. Equal amounts of protein were separated by sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (10% gradient) and then transferred to polyvinylidene fluoride membrane. antibodies targeting human PES1 (1: 200, sc-166300, Santa-Cruz), p53 (1: 2 000, 10442-1-AP, Proteintech), p21 (1: 2 000, 10355-1-AP, Proteintech), p16 (1: 1 000, 10883-1-AP, Proteintech), Rb (1: 100, 554164, BD Pharmingen), p-Rb (1: 500, #3590, CST), IL-1β (1: 1000, 16806-1-AP, Proteintech), IL-8 (1:1000, 27095-1-AP, Proteintech), IL-6 (1: 1000, 10395-MM19, Sino Biological), β-actin (1: 3 000, sc-47778, Santa-Cruz) were employed at room temperature for 2 h or at 4°C overnight, and subsequently with the HRP-conjugated secondary antibody at room temperature for 1 h. The proteins were visualized using enhanced chemiluminescence (Santa Cruz Biotechnology).

1.6 Immunostaining

Cells were fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde at room temperature for 20 min and permeabilized with 0.4% Triton X-100 in PBS for 20 min at room temperature. After incubation with 10% donkey serum in PBS for 1 h, the cells were incubated with primary anti-bodies (PES1, 13553-1-AP, Proteintech, 1: 200; NPM1, PTM-61291, PTMBIO, 1:200) at 4°C overnight. Subsequently, cells were incubated with secondary antibodies at room temperature for 20 min. Nuclei were counterstained with 4, 6-diamidino-2phenylindole (DAPI). Confocal images were collected using an LSM 780 confocal microscope (Zeiss).

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1.7 EdU incorporation assay

To assess the proliferative activity of cells, 5-ethynyl-2'-deoxyuridine (EdU) (20 μmol/L; Invitrogen, Darmstadt, Germany) was added to cells for 3 h before each time point monitored. Coverslips were fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) for 15 min, washed with 10% FBS, and permeabilized with 0.3% Triton X-100 in PBS for 7 min. Instructions from the Click-iT EdU Alexa Fluor 594 imaging kit (Invitrogen) were then followed. Subsequently, cell nuclei were stained with DAPI. For each coverslip, 6 fields were randomly taken using LSM 780 confocal microscope (Zeiss). The numbers of EdU-labled and DAPI-stained cells were counted by Image-Pro Plus 6.0.

1.8 Quantitative RT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted using TRIzol reagent according the manufacturer's instructions to (Invitrogen). First-strand cDNA was reversetranscribed with random primers using moloney leukemia virus reverse transcriptase (Promega). The first-strand cDNA was used for PCR amplification with the following primers. IL-6 forward, 5'-AGGAGAAGATTCCAAAGATGTAGC-CGCCC-3'; IL-6 reverse, 5'-TCTGCCAGTGCCTCT-TTGCTGCT-3'. IL-8 forward, 5'-ACACTGCGCC-AACACAGAAATTA-3'; IL-8 reverse, 5'-TTTGCT-TGAAGTTCACTGGCATC-3'. IL-1β forward, 5'- AC-GATGCACCTGTACGATCACT-3'; IL-1β reverse, 5'-CACCAAGCTTTTTTGCTGTGAGT-3'. hPES1 5'-GTGTTTAGAGCCACAAGAGGT-3'; forward. hPES1 reverse, 5'-GGTCTTGTCTTCCCGTTTC-TC-3'. mPES1 forward, 5'-CACATATGCATTGGAC-TCTGAG-3'; mPES1 reverse, 5'-TCCAGCTCTTT-CTTCCGATCTT-3'. mß-Actin forward, 5'-ACCCA- CACTGTGCCCATCTA-3'; m\beta-Actin reverse, 5'-CAC-GCTCGGTCAGGATCTTC-3'. hβ-Actin 5'-AGAAGAGCTACGAGCTGCCTGA-3'; hβ-Actin reverse, 5'-CAATGATCTTGATCTTCATTGTGCT-3'. β-Actin was used as an internal control. The relative expression was calculated by the comparative Ct method.

1.9 Northern blot

Total cellular RNA was extracted using Trizol extraction according to the manufacturer's protocols. 5 μg of total RNA per lane was resolved on agarose denaturing gels (6% formaldehyde/1% agarose in HEPES-EDTA buffer), and gels were migrated for 4 h at 75 V. After washing, the gels were transferred to nylon membranes by capillarity overnight in 10× saline sodium citrate (SSC). The membranes were UV cross-linked (120 mJ/cm²), followed prehybridized for 1 h at 65°C in 50% formamide, 5×SSPE, 5× Denhardt's solution, 1% w/v SDS, 200 g/L fish sperm The ³²P-labeled DNA solution (Roche). oligonucleotide probe was added and incubated for 1 h at 65°C and then overnight at 37°C. Sequences of the probes are as follows. mITS2: 5'-ACCC-ACCGCAGCGGGTGACGCGATTGATCG-3'; 7564: 5'-GCGCGACGGCGGACGACACCGCGGCGTC-3'.

1.10 Statistical analysis

Charting and statistical analyses were conducted utilizing the Prism software. To assess distinctions in means between groups, Welch's t-test was deployed, while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine disparities in means across three or more groups. A significance threshold of P<0.05 was adopted to ascertain statistical significance.

Results

2.1 PES1 was downregulated in senescent cells

To investigate the potential association between PES1 and cellular senescence, we examined the levels of PES1 in senescent MEFs and senescent HepG2 cells. Cellular senescence is characterized by typical alterations in cell morphology (flattened cells with enlarged cytoplasm) and SA-β-gal activity^[28]. Initially, we monitored the proliferation dynamics of HepG2 cells, which revealed a time-dependent increase in cell growth without observable signs of senescence (Figure 1b). To induce senescence, HepG2 cells were treated with DOX, a topoisomerase II inhibitor and widely used chemotherapeutic agent

known for inducing senescence across various cancer cell lines^[29-30]. HepG2 cells were exposed to $100 \mu g/L$ DOX for 17.5 h, followed by 24, 48, 72 h without drug. Results indicated that the growth rates of P9 MEF cells (Figure 1a) and DOX-treated HepG2 cells (72 h group) (Figure 1c) displayed a marked increase in SA- β -gal activity and flattened morphology,

suggesting that these stresses induced cellular senescence. Additionally, Western blot analysis revealed a significant reduction in PES1 expression levels in P9 MEF cells and DOX-treated HepG2 cells (Figure 1a, c). These findings suggested that the downregulation of PES1 may contribute to the process of cellular senescence.

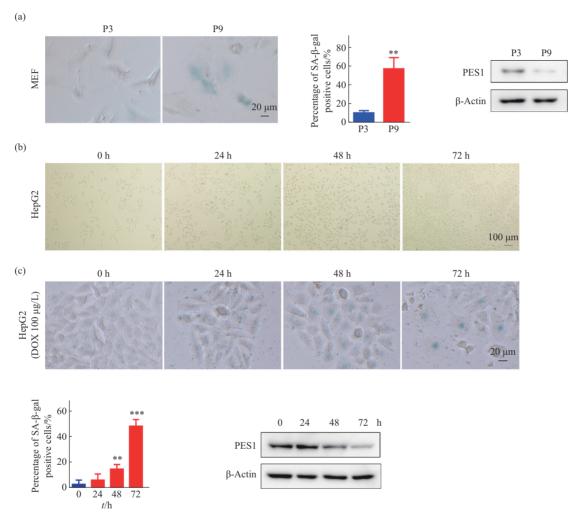


Fig. 1 PES1 is downregulated in senescent cells

(a) SA- β -gal staining in MEFs derived from different growth rates (P3, P9). Percentage of SA- β -gal positive cells were presented as the mean±SEM (n=5). Western blot analysis of PES1 protein in MEFs. β -Actin was used as the loading control. (b) SA- β -gal staining in HepG2 cells cultured for varying durations. (c) SA- β -gal staining and Western blot analysis of PES1 protein in DOX-treated HepG2 cells. Percentage of SA- β -gal positive cells were presented as the mean±SEM (n=5). **P<0.01, ***P<0.001.

2.2 PES1 knockdown induces cellular senescence

To elucidate the role of PES1 in cellular senescence, we generated PES1 knockdown (PES1-KD) MEFs and HepG2 cells by transfecting small interfering RNAs targeting PES1 (siPES1). Notably, the number of SA-β-gal positive cells in PES1-KD MEFs and HepG2 cells was significantly elevated

compared to control cells transfected with a negative control siRNA (siNC) (Figure 2a, b). Furthermore, we transfected PES1-KD HepG2 cells with a siRNA-resistant PES1 plasmid (Flag-pes1) to restore PES1 levels. Remarkably, the proportion of SA- β -gal positive cells in this restoration group was decreased to the basal level (Figure 2b). Moreover, the

proportion of cells undergoing DNA synthesis, as measured by EdU incorporation, reduced in PES1-KD cell cultures (Figure 2c).

We also examined senescence-related marker proteins, Western blot analysis revealing that p53 and p21 were upregulated in PES1-KD HepG2 cells (Figure 2d). Furthermore, we conducted reverse transcription-quantitative **PCR** (RT-qPCR)

Western blot analyses to assess the expression of senescence-associated secretory phenotype (SASP) genes. Notably, the transcription and expression levels of inflammatory cytokines (IL-1\beta, IL-6, IL-8) were elevated in PES1-KD HepG2 cells (Figure 2e, f), highlighting the role of PES1 inhibition in the regulation of cellular senescence.

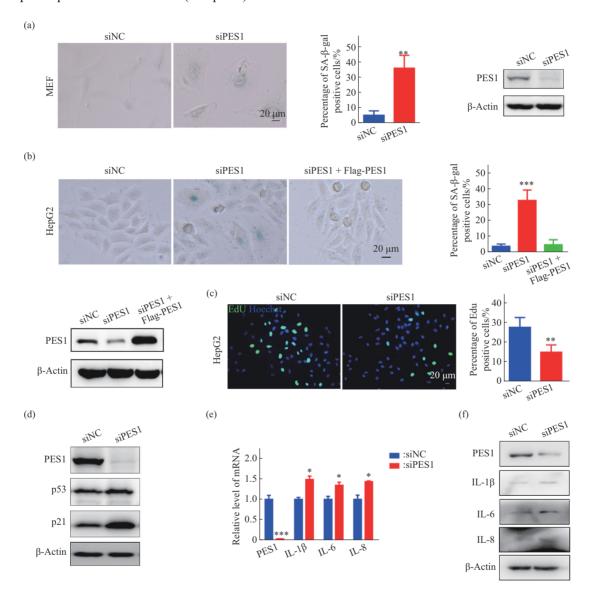


Fig. 2 Knockdown of PES1 induces cellular senescence

(a) SA-β-gal of MEFs treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1). Data are presented as the mean±SD (n=5). Western blot analysis of PES1 protein in MEFs. β-Actin was used as the loading control. (b) SA-β-gal of HepG2 cells treated with the indicated combinations (siNC, siPES1, siPES1+Flag-PES1). Data are presented as the mean±SD (n=5). Western blot analysis of PES1 protein in HepG2 cells. β-Actin was used as the loading control. (c) HepG2 cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) labeled for EdU (green) and Hoechst (blue). Percentage of EdU+ cells wre presented as the mean±SD (n=5). (d) HepG2 cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) were immunoblotted using indicated antibodies (PES1, p53, p21). β-Actin was used as the loading control. (e) HepG2 cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) were analyzed for the expression of SASP genes (IL-1\(\beta\), IL-6, IL-8) by RT-qPCR. (f) HepG2 cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) were analyzed for the expression of IL-1β, IL-6 and IL-8 by Western blot. *P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001.

2.3 Downregulation of PES1 expression induces p53-dependent cellular senescence

Recent studies have revealed that the nucleolus senses various stressors and activates p53. Next, we examined whether PES1-KD-mediated senescence is p53-dependent. we transfected HepG2 cells with siPES1 and sip53, and found that knockdown of p53 dramatically decreased siPES1 induced cellular senescence (Figure 3a). Next, wt HCT116 cells (HCT116 wt) and p53-deficient HCT116 cells (HCT116 p53^{-/-}) were used to further determine the role of p53 in siPES1 induced cellular senescence. SA-β-gal staining assay (Figure 3b) and EdU staining assay (Figure 3c) showed that knockdown of PES1 significantly inhibited EdU incorporation and induced cellular senescence in wild type HCT116 cells but not in HCT116 p53^{-/-} cells. Additionally, Western blot showed that the expression levels of p53, p21 and p16 in HCT116 wt cells were significantly up-regulated after PES1 silenced, while the expression levels of p21 and p16 in HCT116 p53^{-/-} cells did not change significantly (Figure 3d). These results indicated that PES1 inhibition induced cellular senescence dependent on p53. ribosomal biogenesis inhibition induces cellular senescence can also be mediated by Rb signaling^[16], the expressions of Rb, p-Rb, in normal HCT116 cells and HCT116 p53^{-/-} cells were also detected in this study. Results showed no significant changes in the levels of Rb, P-Rb, suggesting that Rb was not be involved in PES1 mediated cellular senescence (Figure 3d).

To further confirm this conclusion, we knockdown of PES1 in Rb-deficient cells DU145, prostate cancer cells. SA-β-gal staining assay (Figure 3e) and EdU staining assay (Figure 3e) showed that PES1-KD inhibited DU145 cell proliferation and increased senescence. Western blot results showed that transfection of siPES1 up-regulated the expression of p53 and p16 (Figure 3f). These results indicated that inhibition of PES1 expression induced cellular senescence independent of Rb pathway.

2.4 Down-regulation of PES1 expression inhibits rRNA processing

It is known that PES1 plays an important role in the processing of 32S pre-rRNA to mature 28S rRNA, blocking this process leads to the accumulation of intracellular 47S pre-rRNA and rRNA intermediates (such as 45S, 41S, 32S, 17S, etc.). In this study, Northern blot was used to detect the level of rRNA intermediates to explore the effect of PES1 down-regulation on pre-rRNA processing, by using oligonucleotide probes that hybridize to specific sites within the pre-rRNA transcript (Figure 4a). Results showed that the 45S/47S, 32S pre-rRNAs were significantly accumulated, accompanied by a decrease of 28S rRNAs in the PES1-KD MEFs and HepG2 cells (Figure 4b). These results indicated that the down-regulation of PES1 expression inhibited rRNA synthesis process.

Impaired ribosomal biogenesis could induce noticeable structural alterations in the nucleolus, including enlarged and irregular changes in its structure and morphology, when the ribosomal organisms are obstructed, the most noticeable outcome is the alteration in the nucleolus's structure, including morphological changes in the nucleolar structure (resulting in an enlargement and irregular shape). To assess whether the knockdown of PES1 induces structural alterations, we employed siPES1 to reduce PES1 expression in HepG2 cells and observed the resulting fragmentation of the nucleoli (Figure 4c). Furthermore, immunostaining also shown that PES1 knockdown induced the nucleoplasmic translocation of nucleolar proteins NPM1 (Figure 4d), suggesting a morphological change of nucleoli caused by PES1 silencing.

3 Discussion

In higher eukaryotes, the nucleolus displays concentric arrangement of 3 structural components: fibrillar center (FC), dense fibrillar component (DFC), and granular component (GC)^[31]. The most well-known function of the nucleolus is ribosome biogenesis, which included pre-rRNA transcription, processing, and mature rRNA assembly with ribosomal proteins.

Nucleolar stress reflects a misfunction of the nucleolus caused by a failure in ribosome biogenesis and defective nucleolar architecture^[32]. It can be triggered by multiple conditions interfering with nucleolar integrity: mutation of ribosome biogenesis factors or processing factors, intracellular stress, such as reactive oxygen species (ROS) and extrinsic stress, such as UV irradiation or chemotherapeutic drugs^[32]. Activation of the classical nucleolar stress response

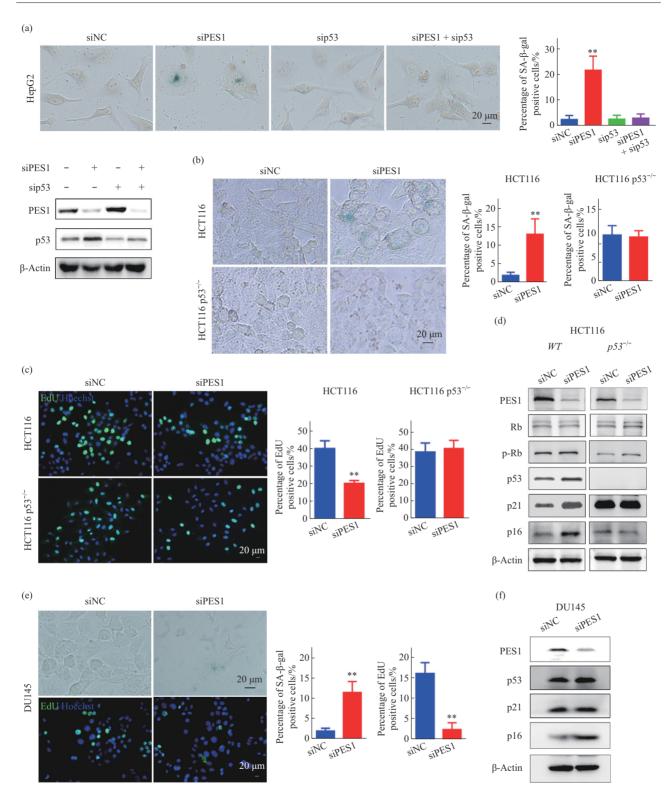


Fig. 3 PES1 regulates cellular senescence in p53-dependent manner

(a) SA-β-gal of HepG2 cells treated with the indicated combinations (siNC, siPES1, sip53, siPES1+sip53). Data were presented as the mean±SD (*n*=5). Western blot analysis of PES1 and p53 protein in HepG2 cells. β-Actin was used as the loading control. (b) SA-β-gal of HCT116 and HCT116 53^{-/-} cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1). Data were presented as the mean±SD (*n*=5). (c) HCT116 and HCT116 p53^{-/-} cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) labeled for EdU (green) and Hoechst (blue). Percentage of EdU⁺ cells were presented as the mean±SD (*n*=5). (d) HCT116 and HCT116 p53^{-/-} cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) were immunoblotted using indicated antibodies (PES1, p53, p21, p16, Rb, p-Rb). β-Actin was used as the loading control. (e) SA-β-gal and EdU staining assay of DU145 cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1). Data were presented as the mean±SD (*n*=5). (f) DU145 cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) were immunoblotted using indicated antibodies (PES1, p53, p21, p16). β-Actin was used as the loading control. **P<0.01.

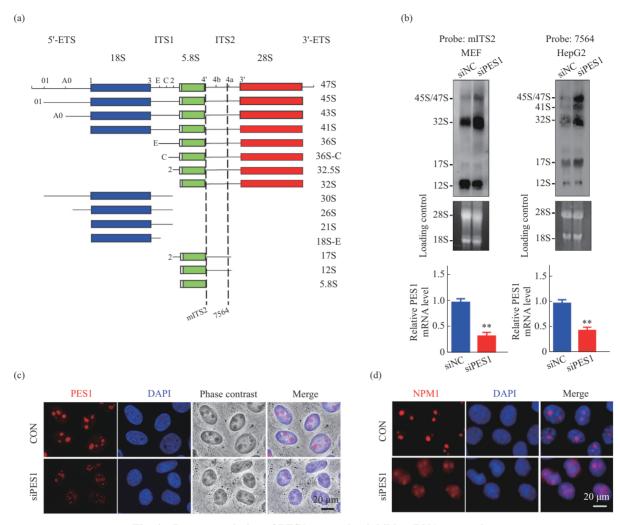


Fig. 4 Down-regulation of PES1 expression inhibits rRNA processing

(a) The main pre-rRNA processing intermediates in eukaryotic cells. Major cleavage sites in the primary 47S pre-rRNA and oligonucleotide probes that hybridize to specific sites within the pre-rRNA transcript were shown at the top. (b) Northern blot analysis of pre-rRNA processing in MEFs and HepG2 cells treated with indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1). Data were presented as the mean±SD (n=3). **P<0.01. (c) Immunostaining of HepG2 cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) labeled for PES1 (red) and DAPI (blue). (d) Immunostaining of HepG2 cells treated with the indicated siRNA (siNC, siPES1) labeled for NPM1 (red) and DAPI (blue).

pathway triggers the release of ribosomal proteins from the nucleolus into the nucleoplasm. This event inactivates the E3-ubiquitin ligase MDM2, which normally keeps p53 levels low via proteasomal degradation^[33-35]. As a result, the tumor suppressor p53 is stabilized and mediates p53-dependent nucleolar stress responses, such as cell cycle arrest, senescence, DNA damage or apoptosis^[36-38]. In addition, nucleolar stress could also mediate tumor suppression through p53-independent signaling pathways. Specific ribosomal proteins, including RPL5, RPL11, and RPS14, have been demonstrated to activate TAp73, a p53 homologue^[39], and inactivate

the oncoprotein c-Myc in response to nucleolar stress $^{[40-42]}$.

PES1 is a nucleolar protein located in GC layer of nucleolus and associates with BOP1 and WDR12 to form the PeBoW complex in mammalian cells, which modulated pre-rRNA processing for the synthesis of 28S and 5.8S rRNAs. Dysfunction of this complex disrupts the assembly of the 60S large ribosomal subunit, leading to perturbations in ribosome biogenesis^[17]. Notably, the perturbations in rRNA synthesis or ribosome assembly results in the release of an excess of ribosome proteins^[43-44]. Ribosomal proteins like RPL11, RPL5, RPL23, and

RPS7 are accumulated as free proteins and bind the E3 ubiquitin ligase MDM2 that targets the tumor degradation^[15, 33-35]. p53 suppressor for This mechanism is consistent with our findings that PES1 knockdown elevates p53 levels, as impaired rRNA processing diminishes the production and export of mature ribosomes, paralleling the demand for ribosomal proteins RPL5, RPL11, and RPL23. Meanwhile, the dominant-negative mutants WDR12 and BOP1 could also induce significant nuclear accumulation of p53 and transcriptional activation of its target gene $p21^{[45]}$, suggesting that PES1, BOP1 or WDR12 is required for pre-rRNA processing by regulating the stability of the PeBoW complex. Additionally, BRIX1 (ribosome biogenesis protein BRX1 homolog) facilitated the processing of pre-rRNA by supporting the formation of the PeBoW complex^[46]. Depletion of BRIX1 triggered nucleolar stress by impairing the processing of pre-rRNA resulting in increased interactions between RPL5/ RPL11 and MDM2 and the consequent stabilization and activation of p53^[46]. Collectively, these findings suggest PES1 dysfunction as a potent activator of p53 signaling. Conversely, we observed no alterations in Rb signaling following PES1 knockdown. This pathway's activation depends on the accumulation of the 40S ribosomal subunit protein RPS14, which was likely unaffected by PES1 knockdown.

Recent study had revealed that some nucleolar proteins, such as ribosomal L1 domain containing 1 (RSL1D1), nucleostemin (NS), DExD-Box helicase 21 (DDX21) and EBNA1 binding protein 2 (EBP2) were downregulated at the protein level in senescent cells^[16]. Depletion of these factors induced a proliferation arrest, a decrease in the proliferation markers KI67 and CENPA, and an increase in SA-β -gal^[16]. Other nucleolar protein, like WDR3, BMS1 ribosome biogenesis factor, UTP6 small subunit processsome component, G-patch domain containing 4 (GPATCH4) deficient could also induce cellular senescence, developed an enlarged nucleolus, accumulated p53, p21, and p16, increased SA-β-gal activity[15, 47], which was similar to results observed in PES1 KD cells. Furthermore, in contrast to the decreased expression of nucleolar proteins, the selective overexpression of certain nucleolar proteins has been observed in multiple types of cancer^[48], suggesting a high rate of ribosome biogenesis. This was associated with the upregulation of PES1 in tumor cells.

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Previous investigations concerning nucleolar protein implicated in cellular senescence have examined the morphological shifts within the nucleolus. The phenomenon observed in senescent cells was a decline in nucleolus number and an increase in individual nucleolus size[47, 49-50], However, the phenomenon was the fragmentation of the nucleolus in cells with PES1 knockdown. Further research shown that the nucleoli of aging cells could be enlarge or fragment, and fragment was the final form^[51]. PES1 is a nucleolar protein located within the GC layer of the nucleolus. Its expression level plays a critical role in maintaining the morphology and function of nucleoli. Consequently, PES1 knockdown represents a significant stressor for nucleolar integrity, which may explain the observed fragmentation of the nucleolus in cells with PES1 knockdown.

PES1 is necessary for the processing of the 32S precursor rRNA, and prominent accumulation of the 32S pre-rRNA indicates defective processing in the rRNA internal transcribed spacer 2 (ITS2), which was crucial for functional ribosome production. However, the specific role of PES1 on ITS2 processing remains unknown. Previous investigations have revealed that the Las1L-Nol9 endonuclease-kinase complex was essential for the cleavage of the ITS2^[52]. The endonuclease Las1L cleaves the 32S rRNA at ITS2^[53]. Additionally, Nol9 phosphorylates the 5'-hydroxyl end of ITS2^[54], thereby facilitating degradation by the 5' to 3'-exonuclease XRN2^[55-56] and 28S rRNA maturation. Nonetheless, whether the regulation of the Las1L-Nol9 complex by PES1 occurred in cellular contexts remains unclear.

PES1 could directly interact with TERT to control telomerase activity, maintain telomere length, and regulate cellular senescence^[27]. However, critically short telomeres trigger DNA damage responses and activate p53 which leads to apoptosis or replicative senescence^[57-60], our results could not exclude the function of telomers on PES1-KD induced p53. Additionally, numerous studies have emphasized the pivotal role of p53 in tumor suppression, with its dysfunction implicated in a broad spectrum of cancers^[61]. Notably, mutations in the *p53* gene are observed in over 50 % of human tumors^[62], indicates that PES1 deficient could not induce senescence in these tumors.

4 Conclusion

We reported that the nucleolar protein PES1 was down-regulated in senescent cells, and knockdown of PES1 led to abnormalities in ribosomal biogenesis, which in turn activates p53 rather than Rb pathway, leading to cellular senescence, providing a novel perspective on the mechanisms involved in the senescence regulated by PES1.

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PES1表达缺陷介导核糖体生成抑制并通过激活 p53信号诱导细胞衰老*

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摘要 目的 本研究旨在探讨核仁蛋白PES1表达抑制对细胞衰老的影响及其可能的分子机制。方法 首先检测复制性衰老 的小鼠胚胎成纤维细胞(MEFs)及阿霉素诱导衰老的人肝癌细胞系 HepG2内 PES1的表达水平。然后利用 siRNA 技术敲低 MEFs 和 HepG2 细胞中 PES1 的表达,采用 EdU 染色和 SA-β-gal 染色分别评估细胞增殖和衰老状态。通过 Western blot 检测 p53、p21和Rb等衰老相关蛋白的表达水平, qPCR和Western blot分析IL-6、IL-1β和IL-8等SASP因子的表达变化。最后利 用 Northern blot 及免疫荧光技术检测 PES1 表达抑制对细胞内 pre-rRNA 成熟及核仁形态的影响。结果 衰老的 MEFs 及 HepG2细胞内PES1表达下调。抑制MEFs、HepG2等细胞内PES1表达,可诱导细胞内EdU阳性细胞比例减少,SA-β-gal阳 性细胞比例增加。分子水平上, PES1 敲低激活了细胞内 p53-p21 信号通路, 但对 Rb 表达无显著影响, 同时显著上调了 IL-6、IL-1β和IL-8的表达。进一步研究发现,抑制PES1的表达可阻碍细胞内pre-rRNA的成熟并诱导核仁形态异常。 结论 核仁蛋白 PES1 的表达抑制可诱导核仁应激,并激活细胞内依赖于 p53 而非 Rb 信号的衰老信号,进而诱导细胞发生 衰老。

关键词 PES1,细胞衰老,核糖体生物合成,p53

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