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DOI:

[10.1083/jcb.202005095](https://doi.org/10.1083/jcb.202005095)

[10.1083/jcb.202005095](https://doi.org/10.1083/jcb.202005095)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Junyent Espinosa, S., Reeves, J., Gentleman, E., & Habib, S. (2021). Pluripotency state regulates cytoneme selectivity and self-organization of embryonic stem cells. *Journal of Cell Biology*, 220(4), Article e202005095. <https://doi.org/10.1083/jcb.202005095>, <https://doi.org/10.1083/jcb.202005095>

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1 **PLURIPOTENCY STATE REGULATES CYTONEME SELECTIVITY AND SELF-ORGANIZATION OF**
2 **EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS**

3 Sergi Junyent¹, Joshua Reeves¹, Eileen Gentleman² and Shukry J. Habib¹

4
5 ¹Centre for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine, King's College London, London (UK).

6 ²Centre for Craniofacial and Regenerative Biology, King's College London, London (UK).

7 Correspondence to: shukry.habib@kcl.ac.uk

8 **RUNNING TITLE**

9 Stem cell state regulates self-organization

10 **SUMMARY**

11 Junyent et al. describe how the cell communication through cytonemes that leads to synthetic
12 embryogenesis is altered upon pluripotency state transition in stem cells. They show that in more
13 developmentally advanced stem cells, Wnt-iGluR crosstalk in the cytonemes is impaired, resulting in
14 reduced formation of synthetic embryo structures.

15 **ABSTRACT**

16 To coordinate cell fate with changes in spatial organization, stem cells (SCs) require specific and
17 adaptable systems of signal exchange and cell-to-cell communication. Pluripotent embryonic stem
18 cells (ESCs) utilize cytonemes to pair with trophoblast stem cells (TSCs) and form synthetic embryonic
19 structures, in a Wnt-dependent manner. How these interactions vary with pluripotency states remains
20 elusive. Here we show that ESC transition to an early primed ESC (pESC) state reduces their pairing
21 with TSCs and impairs synthetic embryogenesis. pESCs can activate the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway in
22 response to soluble Wnt ligands, but their cytonemes form unspecific and unstable interactions with
23 localized Wnt sources. This is due to an impaired crosstalk between Wnt and glutamate receptor
24 activity, and reduced generation of Ca^{2+} transients on the cytonemes upon Wnt source contact.
25 Induced iGluR activation can partially restore cytoneme function in pESCs, while transient
26 overexpression of E-cadherin improves pESC-TSC pairing. Our results illustrate how changes in
27 pluripotency state alter the mechanisms SCs use to self-organize.

1 INTRODUCTION

2 Pluripotent stem cells (PSCs) have an unlimited capacity to self-renew and can give rise to the three
3 germ layers that make all adult tissues. *In vitro*, PSCs can exist in at least two defined pluripotent states
4 (naïve and primed) that likely recapitulate different developmental stages of the early embryo (Nichols
5 and Smith, 2009). Naïve embryonic stem cells (ESCs) are derived from the inner cell mass of the
6 blastocyst before implantation and display robust self-renewal and differentiation potential (Ying et
7 al., 2008; Bradley et al., 1984). Conversely, primed ESCs (pESCs) encompass a range of pluripotent
8 states that resemble the more developmentally advanced post-implantation epiblast (Wu and Izpisua
9 Belmonte, 2015), and have biases towards lineage-specific differentiation (Tsakiridis et al., 2014;
10 Brons et al., 2007). Importantly, naïve ESCs can colonise the blastocyst and contribute extensively to
11 all lineages, resulting in chimeric animals (Bradley et al., 1984). Early pESCs retain a reduced capacity
12 to contribute to blastocyst chimaeras (Kinoshita et al., 2020), while later pESC populations are only
13 able to engraft in the post-implantation embryo (Ohtsuka et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2012). While much
14 is known about the transcriptional and epigenetic changes in these pluripotent states (Neagu et al.,
15 2020), the signalling mechanisms driving these differences remain poorly understood. By comparing
16 naïve and early primed ESCs we can investigate how transitions in pluripotency state change the
17 signals and mechanisms cells use to communicate.

18 *In vitro*, both intrinsic and extrinsic cues regulate the state of PSCs. Addition of soluble Wnt ligands or
19 small molecules that activate the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway promote the self-renewal of naïve ESCs (ten
20 Berge et al., 2011; Ying et al., 2008; Augustin et al., 2017; Merrill, 2012). Blocking Wnt signalling leads
21 to their transition to an early pESC stage (ten Berge et al., 2011; Neagu et al., 2020). In these
22 conditions, pESCs grow in flattened colonies that downregulate NANOG and alkaline phosphatase
23 expression, upregulate epiblast markers (*e.g.* *Otx2*, *Fgf5*) and undergo X chromosome inactivation in
24 female cell lines (ten Berge et al., 2011).

25 Wnt ligands undergo post-translational acylation by the O-acyltransferase Porcupine (Kadowaki et al.,
26 1996; Takada et al., 2006), which makes them hydrophobic (Langton et al., 2016; Willert et al., 2003).
27 Therefore, Wnts are often secreted locally *in vivo* and presented in a restricted manner to responsive
28 stem cells (Mills et al., 2017). To activate the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway, Wnt proteins bind to the Frizzled
29 receptor and the co-receptors low-density lipoprotein receptor-related protein 5 and 6 (LRP5/6) on
30 the recipient cell. This binding induces receptor clustering and phosphorylation (Bilic et al., 2007),
31 leading to the inactivation of the destruction complex that targets β -catenin for degradation.
32 Consequently, β -catenin is stabilized and translocated to the nucleus to initiate the Wnt-mediated
33 transcription program (Garcin and Habib, 2017).

1 We have previously explored how Wnt-responsive stem cells interact with localized sources of Wnt
2 (Junyent et al., 2020). We have shown that ESCs generate specialized cytonemes that selectively react
3 to Wnt ligands required for self-renewal. When co-cultured with trophoblast stem cells (TSCs), ESC
4 cytonemes respond to locally TSC-produced Wnts and establish cell-cell pairing. This is achieved
5 through a crosstalk between LRP6, localized Ca^{2+} transients on the cytonemes and members of the
6 ionotropic glutamate receptor family (iGluRs). As a result, stable ESC-TSC pairing activates the Wnt/ β -
7 catenin pathway in ESCs and initiates synthetic embryogenesis (Junyent et al., 2020). In this study we
8 induced the transition of naïve ESCs to an early pESC state by the inhibition of Wnt/ β -catenin
9 signalling. We examined how this transition affects the interaction of pESCs with Wnt signals, their
10 pairing with TSCs and subsequently the formation of synthetic embryo structures.

11 We found that, similarly to naïve ESCs, pESCs contact TSCs through cytonemes. However, the
12 frequency of pESC-TSC pairing, and consequently the formation of synthetic embryo-like structures,
13 was significantly reduced compared with ESCs. Wnt ligands regulate ESC-TSC pairing and ESCs can
14 selectively recruit localized Wnt ligands that are covalently immobilized to a microbead. However,
15 while pESCs activate the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway upon exogenous addition of soluble Wnt3a proteins
16 (a cytoneme-independent mechanism), their cytonemes are non-selective and cannot form a stable
17 interaction with a Wnt source. To explore the mechanisms behind these differences, we investigated
18 the components that underpin cytoneme functionality in ESCs: Wnt-iGluR crosstalk and stable cell
19 adhesion with TSCs. ESCs and pESCs have functional iGluRs, but in pESCs, interactions between
20 cytonemes and Wnt-beads fail to generate localized Ca^{2+} transients at the contact site. This correlates
21 with a significantly reduced capacity of pESCs to polarize components of the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway
22 upon Wnt-bead contact. Upregulation of iGluR activity, but not overexpression of the Wnt co-receptor
23 LRP6, ameliorates cytoneme-mediated communication and cell polarization of pESCs. Furthermore,
24 transient overexpression of E-cadherin in pESCs facilitates their pairing with TSCs but does not rescue
25 synthetic embryogenesis. Altogether, our results show that changes in developmental potential alter
26 the mechanisms that stem cells use to self-organize, and that a complex protein network, rather than
27 a single factor, orchestrates this process.

28

29

1 RESULTS

2 Primed ESCs have reduced ability to form synthetic embryo-like structures

3 The activation of the Wnt/ β -catenin pathway supports the self-renewal of naïve ESCs, while its
4 inhibition leads ESC to progress to a more developmentally restricted “primed” pluripotent population
5 (ten Berge et al., 2011; Neagu et al., 2020). ESCs cultured with soluble Wnt3a grew round, dome-
6 shaped colonies that express high levels of NANOG and β -catenin (**Fig. 1A, S1A**). Inhibition of the O-
7 acyltransferase Porcupine with IWP2 blocks the secretion of Wnts (Chen et al., 2009). Treatment of
8 ESCs with IWP2 for three days led to flattened primed ESC (pESC) colonies that express lower levels of
9 NANOG and β -catenin and upregulate epiblast markers *Otx2* and *Fgf5* (**Fig. 1A-D, S1A**). The ESC to
10 pESC transition (mediated by Wnt pathway inhibition) enabled us to compare between two stem cell
11 populations that represent different pluripotency states (ten Berge et al., 2011), but remain closely
12 related.

13 Synthetic embryos, resembling aspects of naturally-developing embryos (Shahbazi and Zernicka-
14 Goetz, 2018) are tractable and easy-to-observe experimental systems to explore how mechanisms of
15 cell communication direct self-organization. We investigated how the ESC to pESC transition affects
16 synthetic embryo formation by co-culturing ESCs or pESCs with green fluorescent protein (GFP)-
17 expressing TSCs in 3D conditions that promote ESC-TSC synthetic (ETS) embryo structure formation
18 (Harrison et al., 2018, 2017). As well as ETS embryo structures, cells in these conditions also form
19 unorganized structures containing both ESCs and TSCs, or clusters of only one cell type (**Fig. 2A, S1B**).
20 Overall, a higher proportion of mixed-cell structures were observed with ESCs than with pESCs when
21 mixed with TSCs (ETS embryo structures and unorganized ESC-TSC structures) (**Fig. 2B and C**). By 72h,
22 ETS embryo structures form with internal cavitation. At 96h, some larger ETS embryo structures had
23 a connected cavity, indicating structural maturation (**Fig. 2A**) (Harrison et al., 2017, 2018). pESCs
24 formed a significantly lower proportion of ETS embryo structures than ESCs did (7.27% and 22.04% of
25 total structures at 96h, respectively; total structures are the sum of the structures/clusters of all types)
26 (**Fig. 2B, S1B, I and J**). Immunostaining of the ETS embryo structures at 96h indicated that expression
27 of OCT3/4 and EOMES (Eomesodermin), and localization of E-cadherin was similar in ETS embryo
28 structures formed by ESCs or pESCs (**Fig. 2D and E, S1C and D**). Moreover, the overall ETS embryo
29 structure size, cavity size within the ESC- and TSC-compartments, and the proportion of ETS embryo
30 structures with a connected cavity were comparable in both ESC-TSC and pESC-TSC cultures (**Fig. S1E-**
31 **H**).

32 Our findings indicate that pESCs formed a significantly lower proportion of organized (ETS embryos)
33 and unorganized ESC-TSC clusters than ESCs did. This suggests that the pluripotency state transition,

1 induced by Wnt inhibition, affects the interaction of pESCs with TSCs, which is required to initiate
2 synthetic embryogenesis.

3 **Primed ESCs have an impaired capacity to pair with TSCs**

4 We have previously shown that ESCs generate specialized protrusions – termed cytonemes – that
5 interact with TSCs and initiate a stable contact and ESC-TSC pairing, an essential step in synthetic
6 embryogenesis (**Fig. 3A**)(Junyent et al., 2020). We examined whether pESCs utilize a similar
7 mechanism. We co-cultured TSCs with ESC or pESCs and followed their interaction by time-lapse
8 imaging. As observed in ESCs (Junyent et al., 2020), pESCs use cytonemes to contact TSCs (**Fig. 3A**).
9 pESCs have significantly higher motility compared to ESCs cells, whereas TSCs have significantly
10 restricted motility (**Fig. S2H**). We measured the distance between cells after initial contact with a TSC
11 through a cytoneme. On average, ESC to TSC distance was reduced after initial cell contact. However,
12 pESCs to TSCs distance remained unchanged (**Fig. S2A-C**). Detailed analysis revealed that an ESC
13 cytoneme-mediated interaction with a TSC often resulted in a stable ESC-TSC pairing through reactive
14 interactions (RIs, 74% of total interactions), whereas pESC-TSC interactions resulted in significantly
15 reduced pESC-TSC pairing (25% RIs) (**Fig. 3B**). To investigate if reduced pESC-TSC interaction
16 contributes to impaired ETS structure formation, we measured the number of mixed cell clusters
17 (containing TSCs and either ESC or pESC) after short-term (12h) co-culture. Indeed, cluster formation
18 was significantly compromised in pESCs when compared to ESCs (**Fig. S2G**).

19 ESC-TSC interaction requires the secretion of Wnt by the TSCs (Junyent et al., 2020). TSCs secrete Wnts
20 locally that can be recognized by ESC cytonemes, resulting in ESCs pairing with TSCs and activating the
21 Wnt/ β -catenin pathway (Junyent et al., 2020). To examine if pESCs respond to Wnt ligands, we
22 generated ESC and pESC lines that harbor the Wnt-reporter 7xTCF-enhanced GFP (eGFP) (Fuerer and
23 Nusse, 2010), we incubated them with exogenous soluble Wnt3a ligands and monitored eGFP
24 expression after 24 hours by FACS. Our results indicate that pESCs can activate the Wnt/ β -catenin
25 pathway similarly to ESCs (**Fig. 1E and F**).

26 Next, we investigated locally presented Wnts on the pESCs-TSCs interaction. Culturing TSCs with IWP2
27 for 24 hours blocks the secretion of Wnt ligands (Chen et al., 2009; Junyent et al., 2020). Pre-treatment
28 of TSCs with IWP2 significantly reduced ESC-TSC pairing (24% RIs) (**Fig. 3B, S2A-C**), as previously
29 reported (Junyent et al., 2020). Similarly, the low number of pESC-TSC pairs was further reduced by
30 this treatment to only 10% RIs (**Fig. 3B, S2C**). The initial distance between ESCs or pESCs and TSCs, the
31 time of initial cell contact and the time between contact and pairing (reaction time) remained similar
32 between conditions (**Fig. S2B and D-F**).

1 Together, this indicates that while pESCs respond to soluble Wnt3a added globally to the media, pESC
2 cytonemes had an impaired ability to form stable interactions with TSCs upon initial contact, resulting
3 in fewer pESC-TSC structures.

4 Soluble Wnt ligands added to the media can reach the cell membrane by diffusion, a cytoneme-
5 independent mechanism (Lippert et al., 2017). In contrast, ESCs extend cytonemes to recruit and
6 respond to locally secreted Wnts by TSCs. We previously used a reductionist approach that allows the
7 examination of cell-ligand interaction. We covalently immobilized Wnt3a proteins (and controls) onto
8 microbeads and presented them to single ESCs. Our results demonstrated that Wnt3a-bead
9 recruitment by the ESC requires a directional, active and selective process, which is cytoneme-
10 mediated (Junyent et al., 2020).

11 To further explore the differences between ESCs and pESCs we compared their selectivity and
12 response to immobilized Wnt3a ligands covalently tethered to microbeads.

13 **Primed ESC cytonemes are non-selective and have unstable interactions with localized Wnt3a** 14 **ligands**

15 We incubated single ESCs or pESCs near to Wnt3a-beads or control beads: inactive Wnt3a-beads,
16 (Dithiothreitol (DTT)-treated to break the disulfide bridges within Wnt ligands, disrupting the tertiary
17 structure of the protein and rendering it inactive) or uncoated beads (**Fig. S3A**). To improve the
18 visualization of the cell-bead contact, we used cells that express the F-actin reporter Ftractin-mRuby
19 (Hayer et al., 2016), and monitored the initial cell-bead contact by live cell imaging. Similar to the
20 interaction with TSCs, both cell lines utilize cytonemes to contact the bead and recruit it to the plasma
21 membrane (reactive interaction, **Fig. 3C**). We also observed non-reactive interactions, where the
22 contact does not lead to recruitment (non-reactive interaction, **Fig. 3C**).

23 ESCs had a significantly higher proportion of reactive interactions when cells contacted Wnt3a-beads
24 (80% RIs) than inactive Wnt3a-beads or uncoated beads (20% and 17% RIs, respectively), as previously
25 reported (Junyent et al., 2020) (**Fig. 3D**). In comparison, pESCs were efficient in the recruitment of
26 both Wnt3a- and inactive Wnt3a-beads (76% and 76% RIs, respectively) as well as uncoated beads,
27 but to a lower extent (67% RIs) (**Fig. 3D**). Measurement of the cell-bead distance after initial cytoneme-
28 mediated contact reinforced these results (**Fig. S3B and C**). However, the bead retention time on pESC
29 was significantly shorter for all bead types, compared to ESCs, with uncoated bead retention time
30 being the shortest (**Fig. 3E, S3E**). The reaction time (time between initial Wnt3a-bead contact and
31 recruitment) was longer in pESCs (**Fig. 3F, S3B and F**). Importantly the time of initial cell-bead contact

1 was similar between cell lines (**Fig. S3B and D**), indicating that the starting conditions were comparable
2 between experiments.

3 In summary, our results suggest that the transition of ESCs to pESCs, mediated by inhibition of Wnt
4 signaling, alters cytoneme function. As a result, the cytonemes of pESCs are not selective and do not
5 form stable contacts with the Wnt source, subsequently reducing the efficiency of synthetic
6 embryogenesis.

7 To investigate underlying changes that may alter the function of pESC cytonemes we analyzed their
8 composition and dynamics.

9 **F-actin and tubulin are required for primed ESCs cytoneme formation**

10 ESCs generate a median of 5 cytonemes per cell, while pESCs form 2-3 cytonemes per cell (**Fig. 4A**).
11 The maximum cytoneme length in both cell types is comparable, with a mean of ~30 μm for ESC and
12 ~35 μm for pESC (**Fig. 4A**). Next, we analyzed the cytoskeleton composition of the cytonemes.
13 Immunostaining revealed that all cytonemes in ESCs and pESCs contain F-actin, with tubulin restricted
14 to larger cytonemes (**Fig. 4B**). Inhibition of F-actin polymerization by Cytochalasin D treatment blocked
15 cytoneme formation in both cell types (**Fig. 4C and D, S3G**), while inhibition of tubulin polymerization
16 by Colcemid affected cytoneme formation only in pESCs (**Fig. 4E and F, S3G**). This indicates that pESCs
17 rely on both F-actin and tubulin polymerization for cytoneme generation, pointing to a change in the
18 composition of the cytonemes that might contribute to their function.

19 Next, we characterized the signaling properties of the cytonemes.

20 **Primed ESCs have reduced Wnt-mediated Ca^{2+} response at the cytonemes upon contact with a** 21 **localized Wnt source**

22 ESCs express subunits of the ionotropic glutamate receptors (iGluRs) (Junyent et al., 2020; Gundry et
23 al., 2010; Nagano et al., 2005) (**Fig. 5A**). Using an ESC line stably expressing the free-cytoplasmic Ca^{2+}
24 sensor GCaMP6s (Chen et al., 2013), we demonstrated that a contact with a TSC or a Wnt3a-bead
25 induces localized Ca^{2+} transients in the ESC cytoneme (**Fig. 5B-D**). Pharmacological inhibition of the α -
26 amino-3-hydroxy-5-methyl-4-isoxazolepropionic acid (AMPA)/Kainate iGluRs impairs the generation
27 of Wnt-induced Ca^{2+} transients, ESC-TSC pairing and reduces the formation of ETS embryo structures
28 (Junyent et al., 2020).

29 We investigated whether the cytonemes of pESCs have similar functionality. pESCs express subunits
30 of the AMPA and Kainate receptors at similar or higher levels than ESCs (**Fig. 5A**). To analyze the
31 activity of the iGluRs on pESCs, we used GCaMP6s-expressing cells and recorded whole-cell Ca^{2+} levels

1 by fast time-course live imaging (**Fig. S4A**). Addition of 100 μ M Kainate (an agonist of AMPA/Kainate-
2 iGluRs) induced a sustained Ca^{2+} increase in pESC, comparable to that observed in ESCs (**Fig. S4A**).
3 Importantly, pre-treatment of the cells with 10 μ M cyanquixaline (CNQX, a competitive inhibitor of
4 the AMPA and Kainate receptors) reduced the Ca^{2+} response to Kainate in both pESCs and ESCs (**Fig.**
5 **S4A**). Our results indicated that pESCs expressed functional iGluRs.

6 We examined the generation of Ca^{2+} transients in the cytonemes of pESC upon contact with a Wnt3a-
7 bead. Only 40% (n = 20 cells) of pESCs generated localized Ca^{2+} transients at the area of Wnt3a-bead
8 contact, compared to 91% of ESCs (n = 24 cells, **Fig. 5B and C**, first two conditions). The mean rate of
9 Ca^{2+} transients per minute was 0.12 transients/min in pESCs in comparison to 0.33 transients/min in
10 ESCs (**Fig. 5D**, first two conditions).

11 Our results demonstrate that, although pESCs express functional iGluRs, the prevalence and rate of
12 Wnt-mediated Ca^{2+} transients in pESC cytonemes was significantly reduced. We speculated that this
13 impairment could be due to a compromised crosstalk between Wnt receptors and iGluRs.

14 **LRP6 overexpression cannot recover pESC-TSC pairing**

15 LRP6 is key for the function of ESC cytonemes, and knock-out of LRP5/6 reduces the generation of
16 localized Ca^{2+} transients and impairs cytoneme-mediated ESC-TSC pairing (Junyent et al., 2020). Thus,
17 we asked whether differences in LRP6 expression in pESCs may underlie the loss of Wnt-iGluR crosstalk
18 in these cells. Transcriptionally, ESCs and pESCs express similar levels of *Lrp5* and *Lrp6* (**Fig. S4B**). The
19 prevalence of LRP6 and β -catenin positive cytonemes is similar between ESCs (LRP6⁺, 58.9%; β -
20 catenin⁺, all cytonemes (Junyent et al., 2020)) and pESCs (~71.5% LRP6⁺ and β -catenin⁺ cytonemes,
21 **Fig. 6A-C**). Nevertheless, we tested whether LRP6 overexpression recovers pESC cytoneme activity.
22 Transfection of pESCs with LRP6-eGFP followed by cell sorting (**Fig. S5A and B**) led to increased levels
23 of *Lrp6* mRNA (**Fig. 6D**) and LRP6 protein (**Fig. 6E**), with LRP6 distributed in the cytonemes of sorted
24 pESCs. However, this did not improve their cytoneme-mediated pairing with TSCs (**Fig. 6F**, first three
25 conditions **and S2B-G**), suggesting that reduced LRP6 expression does not drive the impaired Wnt-
26 iGluR crosstalk in pESCs.

27 **Upregulated iGluR activity improves cell polarization to Wnt3a but cannot rescue pESC-TSC pairing**

28 Contact between an ESC cytoneme and a localized Wnt source (Wnt-bead or TSC) results in the
29 polarization of LRP6 and β -catenin at the base of the cytoneme, towards the Wnt3a bead (Junyent et
30 al., 2020)(**Fig. 6G-I**). Cell polarization (including Wnt pathway components) is an evolutionarily
31 conserved feature in the response to localized Wnt signals (Garcin and Habib, 2017). Therefore, we
32 measured cell polarization in pESCs. We observed that, while ~68% of ESCs exhibited an accumulation

1 of LRP6 and β -catenin near the area of Wnt-bead contact, only ~20% of pESCs were polarized (**Fig. 6H**
2 **and I, Fig. S4C-E**). We also expressed FZD1-GFP in ESC and pESCs and performed live cell imaging. Of
3 the cells contacting a Wnt3a-bead, 67% of ESCs, but only 33% of pESCs, showed polarization of FZD1-
4 GFP in the bead contact area (**Fig. S4F-H**). Together, these results indicate that the ESC to pESC
5 transition impairs the polarization of Wnt pathway components towards a localized Wnt signal.

6 Cell polarization and the generation of iGluR-mediated Ca^{2+} transients are impaired in pESC
7 cytonemes. Therefore, we investigated the distribution of AMPA/Kainate iGluRs in response to
8 localized Wnt3a. We found that iGluR subunits GluA4, GluK1 and GluK3 appear to co-localize with
9 polarized LRP6 and β -catenin at the Wnt-bead contact area, in both ESCs and pESCs. GluA3 co-
10 localization was reduced in pESCs (**Fig. 6G and J**).

11 We next tested whether regulation of iGluR activity modified the observed phenotype. First, we
12 treated ESCs with CNQX, which reduces the generation of localized Ca^{2+} transients in response to Wnt-
13 cytoneme contact (Junyent et al., 2020). Only ~36% of CNQX-treated ESCs displayed polarized LRP6
14 and β -catenin at the area of Wnt3a-bead contact (**Fig. 6H and I**). Second, we stimulated iGluR activity
15 in pESCs using Kainate. 100 μM Kainate increased the proportion of pESCs generating localized Ca^{2+}
16 transients in the cytonemes in response to Wnt, from 40% in control cells to 63.2% in treated cells (n
17 = 19) (**Fig. 5C**). The mean transient rate was increased from 0.12 transients/min in control pESCs to
18 0.22 transients/min in Kainate-treated cells (**Fig. 5D**). Moreover, Kainate treatment improved pESC
19 polarization, with ~49% of Kainate-treated pESCs with polarized LRP6 and β -catenin near the Wnt-
20 bead (**Fig. 6H and I**).

21 Finally, we assessed pESC-TSC pairing upon treatment with 100 μM Kainate. In these conditions, most
22 cytoneme-mediated interactions between the pESC and TSC did not lead to stable cell pairing (only
23 33% RIs) (**Fig. 6F, S2B-G**). However, cell-cell contact through a cytoneme did lead to cell
24 approximation, as the distance between Kainate-treated pESCs and TSCs was reduced after initial
25 contact, in contrast to untreated cells (**Fig. 6K-M, S2C**).

26 Altogether, our results show that the ESC to pESC transition is associated with impaired Wnt-iGluR
27 crosstalk at the cytonemes by downregulation of Wnt-mediated iGluR activity. Upregulation of iGluR
28 activity with Kainate partially restores pESC cytoneme function. However, stable pESC-TSC pairing –
29 the process involving adhesion between the two cells – remained compromised.

30 **E-cadherin overexpression improves pESCs-TSC pairing but does not result in increased ETS embryo**
31 **structure formation**

1 Selective cell adhesion is mediated by adherens junctions, involving cadherins (Takeichi, 2011). TSCs
2 (Ishiuchi et al., 2019) and ESCs express high levels of E-cadherin (Takeichi et al., 1981), which are
3 decreased in pESCs (Tesar et al., 2007; Brons et al., 2007). To investigate the requirements of cell
4 adhesion in the cell pairing of ESC/pESCs and TSCs, we modified the expression of cadherins. In E-
5 cadherin expressing cells, N-cadherin upregulation leads to cell separation in many systems (Niessen
6 et al., 2011; Thiery, 2002). Hence, we overexpressed N-cadherin in ESCs to disrupt their interaction
7 with TSCs, and we overexpressed E-cadherin in pESCs to promote pESC-TSC pairing.

8 We transfected ESCs or pESCs with N-cadherin-eGFP or E-cadherin-mCherry, respectively, sorted them
9 to pure populations and validated overexpression at both protein and RNA levels (**Fig. 7A-D**). Then,
10 we analyzed the interaction of these cells with TSCs. N-cadherin overexpression in ESCs led to a
11 reduction in ESC-TSC pairing following initial cytoneme contact (45% RIs versus 74% RIs in control ESCs)
12 (**Fig. 7F**). Consequently, the percentage of ETS embryo structures formed by these cells was also
13 reduced (**Fig. 7G and S1I and J**). However, approximation in these cells still occurs, although to a lesser
14 extent (**Fig. S2C**). Meanwhile, TSC contact by an E-cadherin-overexpressing pESC triggered the
15 clustering of E-cadherin complexes at the contact site (**Fig. 7E**). As a result, a majority of cytoneme-
16 mediated interactions in this condition resulted in pESC-TSC pairing (59% RIs versus 25% RIs in control
17 pESCs) (**Fig. 7E-F, S2B-G**). However, transient E-cadherin overexpression in pESCs did not significantly
18 improve ETS embryo structure formation (**Fig. 7G and S1I and J**). These results show that although
19 cadherins play a role in the pairing of ESCs/pESCs and TSCs, their transient actions alone are not
20 sufficient to allow synthetic embryogenesis.

21

1 DISCUSSION

2 During embryogenesis and adult tissue homeostasis, transitions in cell fate coincide with changes in
3 spatial organization (Shahbazi et al., 2017; Jones and Wagers, 2008). This coordination can be achieved
4 through specific and adaptable mechanisms of cell-to-cell communication. *In vivo* tissues are complex,
5 which can make studying such mechanisms and their dynamics throughout development challenging.
6 On the other hand, reductionist systems offer advantageous platforms to scrutinize how cells
7 communicate and organize at the single-cell level.

8 Here, we explored how differences in the pluripotency state between two stem cell populations
9 affected the mechanisms they use to self-organize *in vitro*. We have previously described that ESCs
10 utilize cytonemes to interact with TSCs and initiate synthetic embryogenesis (Junyent et al., 2020).
11 Synthetic embryos represent powerful tools to understand the mechanisms of cell communication
12 that lead to the self-organization of structures, in a technically auspicious system. In pluripotent stem
13 cells, inhibition of autocrine Wnt signaling in naïve ESCs leads to their progression to a more
14 developmentally restricted, early pESC population (ten Berge et al., 2011; Neagu et al., 2020). Recent
15 reports indicate that early primed populations retain the capacity to form blastocyst chimaeras, in a
16 reduced manner (Kinoshita et al., 2020). To interrogate how this transition affects self-organization,
17 we cultured ESCs or pESCs with TSCs in conditions that allow the formation of ETS-embryos (Harrison
18 et al., 2018, 2017). The culture with pESCs formed significantly fewer synthetic embryos in comparison
19 to the ESC-containing culture, suggesting that pESCs may be defective in the initiation step of embryo
20 structure formation. Indeed, detailed examination revealed that the ESC to pESC transition
21 significantly reduces the stable pairing with TSCs after initial contact through a cytoneme, a crucial
22 first step for synthetic embryogenesis.

23 Developmental progression has been shown to impair the self-organization of stem cells. In many
24 tissues (Sato et al., 2009; Rock et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2017; Karthaus et al., 2014; Kale et al., 2000;
25 Jamieson et al., 2017), multipotent tissue-specific stem cells can form organoids when cultured *in*
26 *vitro*. However, when organoids are initiated from more developmentally restricted tissue
27 progenitors, the efficiency of organoid formation is reduced. Using pluripotent stem cells, some
28 studies have shown that forms of pESCs cannot generate blastoids when cultured together with TSCs
29 (Rivron et al., 2018), or gastruloids when cultured alone in suspension (Cermola et al., 2019). However,
30 the mechanisms behind these intriguing results remained unstudied.

31 Wnt signalling regulates a wide range of cellular functions. Throughout development and adulthood,
32 Wnt ligands function as patterning cues that control tissue formation and organization, in coordination
33 with other developmental signals (Garcin and Habib, 2017). All mammalian Wnts undergo post-

1 translational acylation which makes them hydrophobic (Langton et al., 2016; Willert et al., 2003;
2 Metab et al., 2016). Consequently, patterning can be achieved through the localized production of
3 Wnt from specialized cells in the stem cell niche (Farin et al., 2016; Clevers et al., 2014; Mills et al.,
4 2017; Alexandre et al., 2014). Long-range diffusion of Wnts has also been observed in various
5 developmental systems (Pani and Goldstein, 2018; Neumann and Cohen, 1997; Tian et al., 2019;
6 Mulligan et al., 2012; Zecca et al., 1996; Ching et al., 2008). We have previously demonstrated that
7 ESC-TSC pairing is dependent on locally produced Wnt by the TSCs, and that inhibition of Wnt
8 exchange impairs this process (Junyent et al., 2020). Now, we show that while pESCs activate the
9 Wnt/ β -catenin pathway when presented with diffusible solubilized Wnt ligands, pESC cytonemes fail
10 to form stable and selective interactions with sources of locally presented Wnts, impacting their ability
11 to form synthetic embryos. Previously, we also explored how the difference in Wnt ligand
12 presentation can affect cellular response. Soluble Wnt3a induces self-renewal of ESCs and human
13 skeletal stem cells (hSSCs) through symmetric divisions, but local presentation of Wnts to one side of
14 the cell promotes asymmetric cell division in ESCs and a three-dimensional cascade of osteogenic
15 differentiation in hSSCs (Habib et al., 2013; Lowndes et al., 2016, 2017; Okuchi et al., 2021). Here we
16 further emphasize that two cell populations with similar ability to activate the Wnt/ β -catenin reporter
17 can react differently to localized Wnts. This difference coincides with a developmental stage transition
18 and impacts the capacity of the cells to form tissue structures.

19 At the mechanistic level, the composition and functionality of the cytonemes changes with the ESC to
20 pESC transition. In contrast to ESCs, pESCs require both F-actin and Tubulin polymerization to form
21 cytonemes, suggesting structural and dynamic differences. Although both ESCs and pESCs express
22 functional iGluRs, developmental stage transition to pESCs uncouples the crosstalk between Wnt and
23 the iGluRs exhibited by ESCs. This is driven by the loss of iGluR activity, as LRP6 levels (the main Wnt
24 co-receptor involved in the Wnt-iGluR crosstalk) are similar between ESCs and pESCs, and LRP6
25 overexpression does not affect pESC-TSC interaction. Meanwhile upregulation of iGluR activity
26 partially rescues pESC cytoneme functionality.

27 Upon Wnt source contact, pESCs or CNQX-treated ESCs show reduced polarization of Wnt/ β -catenin
28 machinery, and lower prevalence and rate of Ca^{2+} transients on their cytonemes. In contrast,
29 polarization and Ca^{2+} transient generation is improved in pESCs treated with Kainate. We have
30 previously shown that Wnt-iGluR crosstalk is important for ESC-TSC pairing, and alteration of these
31 processes in pESCs might contribute to the differences observed. Indeed, iGluR activation in pESCs led
32 to cell approximation after initial cytoneme-mediated interaction with TSCs. Interestingly,
33 glutamatergic signaling has evolutionarily conserved roles in chemotaxis and spatial cell-cell
34 communication (Ortiz-Ramírez et al., 2017).

1 Stable cell pairing was not achieved solely with iGluRs activation. Transient overexpression of the cell
2 adhesion molecule E-cadherin on pESCs improved their stable pairing with TSCs, and overexpression
3 of N-cadherin interfered with ESC-TSC interaction. This suggests that pluripotency state transition
4 from ESCs to pESCs alters the mechanisms of cytoneme-mediated communication in a multifactorial
5 manner. Loss of Wnt-mediated iGluR activity in the cytonemes of pESCs disrupts the Wnt-iGluR
6 crosstalk driving cytoneme-mediated self-organization in ESCs. While cell adhesion mediates cell-cell
7 pairing, it is not sufficient to allow synthetic embryogenesis alone. Notably, E-cadherin overexpression
8 in pESCs incompletely restores the capacity of these cells to form blastocyst chimaeras (Ohtsuka et al.,
9 2012). It will be important to investigate how cell adhesion and iGluR-mediated cell polarization are
10 functionally connected to localized Wnt presentation in different contexts.

11 In summary, we use a reductionist approach that allows studying the dynamics of cell-cell
12 communication in stem cells. Our data illustrates how changes in developmental potential impact the
13 mechanisms that stem cells use to self-organize leading to tissue formation. By comparing the
14 response of ESCs and pESCs to TSCs, as well as to soluble or immobilized Wnt ligands, we have gained
15 unique insights into the modes of ligand recognition at different developmental stages. The
16 mechanisms identified in this study may also prove relevant to Wnt-responsive- and iGluR expressing-
17 adult stem cells and their progeny.

18

19

1 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2 Cell culture and differentiation of primed ESCs

3 W4 (129S6/SvEvTac) mouse ESCs were maintained in ESC basal media containing Advanced DMEM/F-
4 12 (cat. num. 12634028, Life Technologies), 10% ESC-qualified foetal bovine serum (eFBS, cat. num.
5 ES-009-B, Millipore), 1% penicillin-streptomycin (P-S, cat. num. P4333, Sigma), 2 mM Glutamax (cat.
6 num. 35050061, Life Technologies), 50 μ M β -mercaptoethanol (2ME, cat. num. 21985-023, Gibco) and
7 1000 U/mL recombinant Leukaemia Inhibitory Factor (LIF; cat. num. 130-095-775, Miltenyi Biotec),
8 supplemented with 100 ng/mL soluble Wnt3a (homemade). Media was changed daily, and cells were
9 grown at low density ($\sim 1 \times 10^3$ cells/cm²) until formation of mid-sized (100-200 μ m) colonies before
10 passaging (every 3-4 days). To passage ESCs, colonies were washed with PBS, trypsinized, neutralized
11 and centrifuged at 1.2 x g for 4 minutes. Pelleted cells were resuspended in ESC basal media and
12 counted to obtain 7,000 cells/well and transferred to a clean tissue culture-treated 6-well plate. Cells
13 were grown at 37°C, 5% CO₂. ESC lines with knock-in NANOG-Venus (Habib et al., 2013), or stably
14 expressing Ftractin-mRuby3 (Addgene plasmid #85146), GCaMP6s (Addgene plasmid #40753)
15 (Junyent et al., 2020) and 7xTCF-eGFP//SV40-mCherry (Fuerer and Nusse, 2010) were used in some
16 experiments.

17 To induce ESC to pESC transition, ESCs were passaged as described above, but pelleted cells were
18 resuspended in ESC basal media (without Wnt3a) supplemented with 2 μ M Inhibitor of Wnt
19 Production-2 (IWP2, cat. num. 72122, StemCell Technologies). Cells were cultured for 3 days in ESC
20 basal media + 2 μ M IWP2, changing media daily, before using them for experiments.

21 TSCs expressing GFP (derived by the Rossant Laboratory (University of Toronto, Canada) (Tanaka et
22 al., 1998)) were cultured on a layer of mitotically inactivated mouse embryonic fibroblasts (MEFs)
23 (Tanaka, 2006; Junyent et al., 2020). Briefly, irradiated MEFs (cat. num. PSC001, R&D systems) were
24 thawed in a 6-well plate at 3×10^5 cells/well in MEF media containing DMEM (Life Technologies), 10%
25 FBS, 100 μ M 2-ME, 2 mM Glutamax, 1% P-S. MEFs were cultured for at least 24h before thawing TSCs.
26 TSCs were cultured on MEFs in TSC media containing RPMI 1640 (cat. num. 11875093, Life
27 Technologies), 20% eFBS, 100 μ M 2-ME, 2 mM Glutamax, 1% P-S, 2 mM sodium pyruvate (Life
28 Technologies), 25 ng/mL FGF4 (cat. num. 5846-F4, R&D Technologies) and 1 μ g/mL Heparin (cat. num.
29 H3393, Sigma). Media was changed daily, and colonies were split as required. 24h before experiment,
30 TSCs were weaned from MEFs; cells were trypsinized (0.05% Trypsin-EDTA), centrifuged (4 min, 1,000
31 x g) and resuspended in TSC media. To remove MEFs, cells were twice transferred to a clean tissue
32 culture-treated plate, and MEFs were allowed to attach for 15 min at 37°C, 5% CO₂. TSCs in the
33 supernatant were then transferred to a clean culture plate and incubated for 24h in TSC-conditioned

1 media (70% TSC-MEF conditioned media for 3 days plus 30% fresh TSC media, with a final
2 concentration of 25 ng/mL FGF4 and 1 µg/mL Heparin).

3 In some experiments 2 µM IWP2, 10 µM CNQX (cat. num. C127, Sigma) or 100 µM Kainate (cat. num.
4 15467999, Thermo Fischer Scientific) were added to the media (indicated in the text).

5 All cell lines were maintained at 37°C, 5% CO₂ and were routinely tested for mycoplasma infection.

6 ETS embryo structure formation

7 ESC-TSC synthetic (ETS) embryo structures were generated following published protocols (Harrison et
8 al., 2018). Briefly, ESCs, pESCs and TSCs cultured as described above were dissociated to single cells
9 (ESCs and pESCs) or small cell clusters (2-4 cells, TSCs). After three washes with PBS, 4,000 cells or
10 clusters of ESC-TSC or pESC-TSC were seeded together in a Matrigel (cat. num. 354330, Corning) -
11 coated IBIDI µ-well glass slide (cat. num. 80827, IBIDI). After 10 min incubation at 37°C, 5% CO₂ to
12 allow cell attachment, wells were filled with ETS culture media composed of 40% RPMI 1640, 25%
13 Advanced DMEM/F-12, 25% Neurobasal A (cat. num. 10888022, Gibco), 10% eFBS, 2 mM Glutamax,
14 0.1 mM 2-ME, 0.5 mM sodium pyruvate, 0.25x N2 supplement (cat. num. 17502048, Life
15 Technologies), 0.5x B27 supplement (cat. num. A3582801, Life Technologies), 12.5 ng/mL FGF4 and
16 500 ng/mL Heparin, plus 10% Matrigel. ETS embryo structures were cultured for 4 days at 37°C, 5%
17 CO₂, changing the media daily. For analysis of structure formation, wells were imaged daily for
18 Brightfield and GFP channels on a Zeiss inverted Axio Imager (equipped with a CoolSNAP HQ2 camera)
19 using a Plan-Neofluar 10x/0.3 dry objective at 37°C, 5% CO₂, using the Zen software (Blue edition,
20 Zeiss). An average of 7 representative positions were chosen per condition, replicate and day. Images
21 were analysed in Fiji (ImageJ) by counting the number of ETS embryo structures, unorganized ESC-TSC
22 structures and ESC-only or TSC-only structures in each n. Results are reported as percentage of total
23 structures, which is the sum of all the quantified structures in each n. Details and a break-down of the
24 quantification can be found in **Fig. S1**.

25 Preparation of Wnt3a-microbeads

26 Recombinant Wnt3a proteins were produced in *Drosophila* S2 cells grown in suspension in Schneider's
27 *Drosophila* Medium (cat. num. 21720024, Life Technologies). Conditioned media was collected,
28 filtered, and passed through a Blue Sepharose Column at constant flow rate to recover the majority
29 of the Wnt3a proteins. Following loading of the conditioned media, the column was washed with
30 binding buffer (1% (w/v) CHAPS, 150 mM KCl, 20 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.5, sterile filtered). Protein was
31 eluted with elution buffer (1% (w/v) CHAPS, 1.5 M KCl, 20 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.5, sterile filtered) and
32 collected as fractions, which were all tested for the presence of Wnt proteins via Western blotting.

1 Wnt3a activity was tested via LS/L assay: L cells stably transfected with the SuperTOPFlash Wnt/ β -
2 catenin pathway reporter (Fuerer and Nusse, 2010) (LS/L cells) cultured in DMEM containing 10% FBS
3 and 1% P-S were exposed to soluble Wnt3a proteins or control conditions for >14 hours before cell
4 lysates were collected. Wnt-induced luciferase activity was determined via the Dual-Light System (cat.
5 num. T2176, Applied Biosystems) and Luciferase readings were taken on a Glomax-Multi detection
6 system (Promega). Alternatively, recombinant Wnt3a proteins were purchased (cat. num. 1324-WN,
7 R&D systems).

8 Wnt3a proteins were immobilized to 2.8 μ m carboxylic acid coated Dynabeads[®] (cat. num. 14305D,
9 ThermoFisher), following published protocols (Junyent et al., 2020; Habib et al., 2013; Lowndes et al.,
10 2017). Briefly, the carboxylic acid groups on the Dynabeads[®] were activated by 30-minute incubation
11 with N-(3-Dimethylaminopropyl)-N'-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride (cat. num. E7750-1G, Sigma)
12 and N-hydroxysuccinimide (cat. num. 56480-25G, Sigma) (50 mg/mL each, dissolved in 25 mM cold 2-
13 (N-morpholino)-ethanesulfonic acid (MES) (cat. num. M3671-50G, Sigma) buffer, pH5) with constant
14 rotation. Following activation, beads were retained by using a magnet and washed three times with
15 25 mM MES buffer (pH5). Soluble Wnt3a protein (500 ng) was diluted 1:5 in MES buffer (pH5) and
16 incubated with the beads for 1 hour with constant agitation, at room temperature (RT). Beads were
17 washed again three times with PBS (pH7.4) before storage in media containing 10% FBS at 4°C.
18 Inactivation of Wnt3a beads was achieved through incubation with 20 mM Dithiothreitol (DTT; cat.
19 num. P2325, Life Technologies) for 30 minutes at 37°C. Following incubation with DTT, beads were
20 washed three times in PBS before storage in media containing 10% FBS at 4°C (up to 10 days). Bead
21 activity was validated by LS/L assay (described above).

22 Cell transfection

23 For transient transfection, 8×10^4 ESCs or pESC were seeded into one well of a 12-well plate, and
24 incubated overnight at 37°C, 5% CO₂. 2 μ g DNA was transfected using JetPEI (cat. num. 101-10,
25 Polyplus-transfection). Cells were incubated overnight, and construct expression was verified prior
26 use in the experiments.

27 Plasmids used in this manuscript include Frizzled-1-GFP-CS2P+ (Addgene #16817), pEGFP-N3-LRP6
28 (Habib et al., 2013), N-Cadherin-EGFP (Addgene #18870) and E-cadherin-mCherry (Addgene #71366).

29 Fluorescence Activated Cell Sorting

30 Fluorescence activated cell sorting (FACS) was employed to detect Wnt3a response of ESCs or pESCs
31 stably transduced with 7xTCF-eGFP//SV40-mCherry (Junyent et al., 2020). Transduced cells were
32 sorted to gain a pure mCherry+ population. To do so, cells were trypsinized and centrifuged as

1 described above. Pelleted cells were resuspended in FACS buffer (3% FBS in PBS, with or without 0.1
2 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ DAPI), passed through a 35 μm nylon cell strainer and stored on ice until analysis. Cell sorting
3 was performed using a FACSAria system (BD Biosciences). The gating strategy included gating for side
4 scatter (SSC)-forward scatter (FSC), SSC-area (A)-SSC- width (W), FSC-A-DAPI (alive cells) and SSC-PE
5 Texas Red (mCherry+ cells), with the necessary controls. Sorted cells were collected in ESC basal media
6 and transferred to a tissue culture plate for expansion. To assess Wnt responsiveness, cells were
7 cultured in standard conditions and stimulated with Wnt3a or control media (ESC basal media) for
8 24h. Then, cells were prepared as described above and analysed using a FACSFortessa system (BD
9 Biosciences). The same gating strategy was used, followed by an SSC-FITC (GFP+ cells) gate. FACS was
10 also used to analyse Nanog-Venus expression levels in ESCs or pESCs, or to sort LRP6-eGFP⁺, N-
11 cadherin-eGFP⁺ or E-cadherin-mCherry⁺ cells. Cell sorting was performed as described previously, and
12 cells were used immediately for experiments. Gating strategy for these experiments is described in
13 **Fig. S5**. For all experiments, analysis was performed using FlowJo software (FlowJo).

14 Live-cell imaging

15 To measure ESC and pESC interaction with TSCs, 1,500 ESCs or pESCs were co-cultured with 1,500 TSCs
16 in a well of a tissue culture-treated, imaging grade 96-well plate, in ESC basal media (no Wnt3a). In
17 some experiments, ESCs or pESCs were pre-transfected with pEGFP-N3-LRP6, E-cadherin-mCherry or
18 N-cadherin-eGFP plasmids and sorted before experiment (described above). For ESC and pESCs
19 interaction with Wnt3a-beads, 3,000 ESCs or pESCs plus 0.3 μg Wnt3a- or control-beads were seeded
20 per well, in ESC basal media. Plates were incubated for 1h at 37°C, 5% CO₂ to allow cell attachment.
21 Cells were transferred to a Nikon Eclipse Ti Inverted Spinning Disk confocal (equipped with a Yokogawa
22 CSU-1 disk head and an Andor Neo sCMOS camera) with an incubation system at 37°C, 5% CO₂.
23 Between 15-25 positions were selected, laser intensity was adjusted as required and three z-positions
24 were defined. Cells were imaged using a Plan Apo VC 20x/0.75 dry objective for DIC and the
25 corresponding fluorescent channel (GFP and/or RFP) every 10 minutes for 12h, using the NIS Elements
26 software (Nikon). Analysis was performed using Fiji (ImageJ) to analyse the number of reactive and
27 non-reactive interactions between ESCs or pESCs and TSCs or beads (as described in **Fig. 3**). Distance
28 measurement tool in Fiji was used to measure the distances between cells or between cells and beads
29 (as described in **Fig. S2 and S3**).

30 To measure FZD1-GFP polarization, 3,000 ESCs or pESCs transfected with FZD1-GFP plus 0.3 μg Wnt3a-
31 beads were seeded per well, in ESC basal media. Imaging was performed as described above. Analysis
32 was performed using the "Plot profile" tool on Fiji.

1 To analyse the percentage and characteristics of the cytonemes in ESCs or pESCs, 3,000 cells were
2 seeded per well in ESC basal media supplemented with increasing concentrations of Colcemid (Deme-
3 colcine, cat. num. D-7385, Sigma) or CytochalasinD (CytoD, cat. num. PHZ1063, ThermoFisher) and
4 H₂O or DMSO as controls, respectively. Cells were transferred to a Zeiss inverted Axio Imager
5 (equipped with a CoolSNAP HQ2 camera) at 37°C, 5% CO₂. Cells were imaged every 15 min for 4h using
6 a Plan-Neofluar 20x/0.8 dry objective, with the Zen software (Blue edition, Zeiss). After imaging cells
7 were fixed and stained (see below). Percentage of cells with cytonemes as well as the dynamics of the
8 cytonemes were measured using Fiji.

9 Immunofluorescence

10 For immunofluorescence analysis of single cells, ESCs or pESCs were seeded at 3,000 cells/well with
11 or without 0.3 µg Wnt3a-beads, and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO₂. When required, 10 µM CNQX or 100
12 µM Kainate were added to the media. Cells were fixed with 2% paraformaldehyde in PBS + 0.05%
13 TritonX 100 for 8 minutes at RT. A blocking-permeabilization step was performed by incubation with
14 0.3% bovine serum albumin (BSA), 0.05% TritonX 100 in PBS, for 1h at RT. Primary antibody solution
15 was prepared in blocking solution, added to the cells and incubated overnight at 4°C. After incubation,
16 cells were washed four times in PBS + 0.1% Tween 20 and incubated in AF488, AF555 or AF647-tagged
17 secondary antibodies diluted in blocking buffer for 1h at RT. Sometimes, AF488-Phalloidin (cat. num.
18 A12379, ThermoFisher) was added to the secondary antibody incubation. Cells were washed four
19 times in PBS + 0.1% Tween 20 + DAPI and mounted with ProLong™ Gold Antifade Mountant (cat. num.
20 P36935, ThermoFisher) or kept in PBS for imaging. Cells were imaged in a Nikon Eclipse Ti Inverted
21 Spinning Disk confocal (equipped with a Yokogawa CSU-1 disk head and an Andor Neo sCMOS camera)
22 using a Plan Apo VC 20x/0.75 dry, a Plan Apo lambda 40x/0.95 dry or a Plan Apo lambda 100x/1.45 oil
23 immersion objective, with type F oil, at 37°C, with the NIS Elements software.

24 LRP6, β-catenin and iGluR polarization was measured using the “Plot profile” tool on Fiji. A 10 pixel-
25 wide, 20 µm long line was drawn from the position of the bead to the centre of the cell (exemplified
26 on **Fig. S4**). Intensity on that line was measured, as well as the background intensity next to the cell.
27 Fluorescence intensity was processed by subtracting the background and normalizing to the maximum
28 intensity value of the profile and was presented as a normalized intensity profile (ranging from 1 =
29 maximum intensity to 0 = background intensity).

30 For analysis of ESCs and pESCs colonies, cells were grown in optical-grade, tissue culture-treated slides
31 for three days prior fixation and staining as described above. Stained colonies were imaged using a
32 Leica SP8 confocal and a HC Plan Apo 20x/0.75 dry objective (using the LAS-X software). For analysis
33 of ETS embryo structures, cells cultured for 4 days (96h) were fixed and stained as described above.

1 Correct ETS structures (as described in **Fig. 2** and **Fig. S1**) were imaged using a Leica SP8 confocal and
2 a HC Plan Apo 20x/0.75 dry objective (using the LAS-X software). Structure exterior size, as well as
3 ESC/pESC-compartment and TSC-compartment structure and cavity size was measured in Fiji. Oct3/4
4 and EOMES intensity was measured in the ESC/pESCs and TSC compartment, respectively.

5 To verify protein overexpression, sorted cells expressing E-cadherin-mCherry, N-cadherin-eGFP or
6 LRP6-eGFP, or control (CNTRL) ESCs or pESCs, were seeded in a tissue culture-treated, optical grade
7 96-well plate and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO₂ overnight. Cells were fixed and stained as described
8 above, and images were acquired in a Nikon Eclipse Ti Inverted Spinning Disk confocal (equipped with
9 a Yokogawa CSU-1 disk head and an Andor Neo sCMOS camera), using a Plan Apo VC 20x/0.75 dry
10 objective at 37°C, with the NIS Elements software, and keeping the same laser intensities and exposure
11 times for controls and experiments. Images were analysed on Fiji and are presented at the same
12 intensity range to allow comparison between panels.

13 Antibodies

14 The antibodies used were: anti- α -tubulin [YL1/2] (rat; Abcam, ab6160), anti- β -catenin (mouse; BD
15 Transduction, #610154), anti-LRP6 [EPR2423(2)] (rabbit; Abcam, ab134146), anti-NANOG (rabbit;
16 Reprocell, RCAB002P-F), anti-OCT3/4 (mouse; BD Transduction, #611202), anti-EOMES (rabbit;
17 Abcam, ab183991), anti-GriA3 (mouse; Sigma, MAB5416), anti-GriA4 (rabbit; Sigma, AB1508), anti-
18 GriK1 (rabbit; Alomone labs, AGC-008), anti-GriK3 (rabbit; Alomone labs, AGC-040), anti-N-cadherin
19 (mouse; ThermoFisher, #33-3900), anti-E-cadherin [DECMA-1] (rat; Abcam, ab11512), anti-GFP
20 (chicken; Aves, GFP-1020), anti-mCherry (goat; Rockland, #200-101-379), and AF488, AF555 or AF647-
21 conjugated secondary antibodies (ThermoFisher).

22 Imaging of whole cell and cytoneme-localized Ca²⁺ transients

23 For cytoneme-localized Ca²⁺ analysis, ESCs or pESCs stably carrying pGP-CMV-GCaMP6s were seeded
24 at a density of 4,500 cells/well in imaging plates (ibiTreat μ -Slide 8 well, cat. num. 80826, IBIDI) and
25 incubated for \geq 6h in ESC basal media, at 37°C, 5% CO₂. In some experiments, 100 μ M Kainate was
26 added to the media. Cells were transferred to a Nikon Eclipse Ti Inverted Spinning Disk confocal
27 (equipped with a Yokogawa CSU-1 disk head and an Andor Neo sCMOS camera) with an incubation
28 system at 37°C, 5% CO₂, and beads were added *in situ* at a concentration of 0.6 μ g beads/well. Cells
29 were further incubated to allow the beads to precipitate for 15 min. Cells near beads were chosen.
30 Images of GCaMP6s (GFP) and DIC on the larger cytonemes were acquired every 6 seconds for \approx 20
31 min, using a Plan Apo VC 20x/0.75 dry objective and the NIS Elements software (Nikon). The
32 generation of localized calcium transients near the bead at the cytonemes was analysed. Acquired

1 time-course images where analysed using Fiji, and the GCaMP6s (GFP) signal was normalized to
2 background.

3 For whole-cell Ca^{2+} analysis, GCaMP6s expressing cells were seeded at 25,000 cells/well in imaging
4 plates and incubated overnight at 37°C, 5% CO_2 . 10 minutes before experiment, cell culture media was
5 changed to bath solution for imaging (140 mM NaCl, 5mM KCl, 2 mM MgCl_2 , 5 mM glucose, 10 mM
6 HEPES and 4 mM CaCl_2 , pH 7.3). Cells were transferred to a Nikon Eclipse Ti Inverted Spinning Disk
7 confocal (equipped with a Yokogawa CSU-1 disk head and an Andor Neo sCMOS camera) with an
8 incubation system at 37°C, 5% CO_2 . To record changes in Ca^{2+} in response to Kainate, a representative
9 position was chosen, and GFP fluorescence images were taken every 2.5 seconds for 5 min, using a
10 Plan Apo VC 20x/0.75 dry objective and the NIS Elements software (Nikon). Approximately 1 min after
11 imaging start, a final concentration of 100 μM Kainate (cat. num. 15467999, ThermoFisher) or control
12 was added as a single drop to the well. In some conditions, cells were pre-treated with 10 μM CNQX
13 (cat. num. C127, Sigma) for 10 minutes before imaging. Acquired time-course images where analysed
14 using Fiji, and the GCaMP6s (GFP) signal was normalized to background and to pre-addition basal
15 intensity level ($\Delta F/F_0$).

16 RNA extraction and RT-qPCR analysis

17 For transcription analysis of ESCs or pESCs, cells were grown as described, and RNA was extracted
18 using the RNeasy mini kit (cat. num. 74106, Qiagen). mRNA was retrotranscribed to cDNA using the
19 QuantiTect Reverse Transcription Kit (cat. num. 205311, Qiagen). qPCR was performed using SYBR™
20 Green PCR Master Mix (cat. num. 4344463, ThermoFisher) and primers against iGluR subunits (**Table**
21 **1**). Alternatively, qPCR was performed using TaqMan Fast Advanced Master Mix (cat. num. 444496,
22 ThermoFisher) and TaqMan probes against *Otx2* (Mm00446859_m1, ThermoFisher), *Fgf5*
23 (Mm03053745_s1, ThermoFisher), *Lrp6* (Mm00999795_m1, ThermoFisher), *Lrp5* (Mm01227476_m1,
24 ThermoFisher) and *Gapdh* (Mm99999915_g1, ThermoFisher). To validate overexpression of LRP6, E-
25 cadherin or N-cadherin, sorted cells were lysed and RNA was extracted and retrotranscribed as
26 described before. RNA levels of the transgenes were assessed by TaqMan-based qPCR (*Lrp6*), or
27 SYBR™ Green-based qPCR (*Cdh1* and *Cdh2*), using the primers reported in **Table 1**. For all experiments,
28 Ct values of targeted genes were normalized to housekeeping gene levels (DCt) and plotted as $2^{-\text{DCt}}$,
29 or as fold-change to control conditions ($2^{-\text{DDCt}}$).

30 Statistical analysis

31 Data representation and statistical analysis were performed using Prism (GraphPad), as described in
32 the figure legends. The statistical tests used were as follows: unpaired two-sided T-test for Fig. 3E and

1 F, Fig. 4A, Fig. 6D and M, Fig. 7C-D and Fig. S1C-G; one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison
2 test for Fig. 1C and F, Fig. 5D, Fig. S2C-H and Fig. S3C-F; one-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple
3 comparison test for Fig. 5A; two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison test for Fig. 4C-F and
4 Fig. 7G; two-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple comparison test for Fig. 1D, Fig. 2B-C and Fig. S4B, and
5 one or multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests for Fig. 3B and D, Fig. 5C, Fig. 6F and H-J, Fig. 7F, Fig. S1
6 H and Fig. S4H. For all parametric tests, data distribution was assumed to be normal, but this was not
7 formally tested. For all figures, symbols indicate statistical significance, as follows: # $p \approx 0.05$, * $p < 0.05$,
8 ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, **** $p < 0.0001$. We set the threshold for significance as $p < 0.05$, unless
9 specified otherwise.

10 Supplementary materials

11 The supplement contains Supplementary Figures 1 to 5, with Supplementary Figure Legends.

1 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

2 We thank the Nikon Imaging Centre at King's College London for help with light microscopy. This work
3 was supported by a Sir Henry Dale Fellowship (102513/Z/13/Z) to S.J.H.

4 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

5 S. Junyent planned and performed experiments, analysed data, prepared figures and wrote the
6 manuscript; J. Reeves performed experiments and analysed data; E. Gentleman provided critical
7 review of the experiments and manuscript; S.J. Habib conceived the idea, supervised the project,
8 planned experiments, interpreted data and wrote the manuscript.

9 **COMPETING INTERESTS**

10 The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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2

3

1 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

2 **Figure 1. ESCs and Primed ESCs represent progressive developmental stages of Wnt responsive**
3 **pluripotent stem cells.**

4 **A.** Representative images of differential interference contrast (DIC) and NANOG-Venus levels in
5 colonies of embryonic stem cells (ESCs) or primed ESCs (pESCs). pESCs were generated by treating
6 ESCs with 2 μ M IWP2 for 3 days. Scale bars, 50 μ m.

7 **B.** Representative flow cytometry histogram of the NANOG-Venus intensity in ESCs or pESCs,
8 compared to control (CNTRL) cells. CNTRL are ESCs without the NANOG-Venus transgene. NANOG-
9 Venus intensity for >10,000 cells/condition, expressed in \log_{10} .

10 **C.** Quantification of NANOG-Venus intensity by flow cytometry. Box-and-whiskers represent pooled
11 data from n = 3 experiments, >10,000 cells analysed/n. Error-bars are range, middle line is median.
12 Statistical significance calculated by one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison tests:
13 **** $p < 0.0001$. A.U. are arbitrary units.

14 **D.** Fold-change expression of *Otx2* and *Fgf5* in pESCs relative to ESCs. Bars are mean of n = 3. Error-
15 bars are S.E.M. Statistical significance calculated by two-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple comparison
16 test: # $p = 0.061$, * $p < 0.05$.

17 **E.** Flow cytometry plot of 7xTCF-eGFP expressing ESCs and pESCs upon addition of 200 ng/mL soluble
18 Wnt3a protein or CNTRL solution. >10,000 cells/condition. Vertical line indicates threshold of 7xTCF-
19 eGFP⁺ cells.

20 **F.** Percentage of 7xTCF-eGFP⁺ cells as shown in E for n = 3. Bars are mean, error-bars are S.E.M. ns are
21 non-significant differences, calculated by one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test.

22

23 **Figure 2. Primed ESCs have a reduced ability to form synthetic embryo-like structures.**

24 **A.** Representative DIC, green fluorescent protein (GFP) and merged images of ESC-trophoblast stem
25 cell (TSC) synthetic (ETS) embryo structures after 72h and 96h of co-culture. TSCs constitutively
26 express GFP. At 72h, opposing TSC and ESC clusters with internal cavitation are observed. At 96h,
27 larger structures with merged cavities appear. Dashed yellow line outlines cavities. Scale bars, 50 μ m.

28 **B - C.** Proportion of structures formed by ESCs (blue) or pESCs (orange) at 72h and 96h of co-culture
29 with TSCs. **B.** Proportion of ETS embryo structures. Values are percentage of total structures (*i.e.* ETS
30 embryo structures + unorganized ESC-TSC clusters + TSC clusters + ESC clusters). For detailed
31 quantification see **Fig. S1B, I and J**. **C.** Proportion of unorganized ESC-TSC clusters. Values are

1 percentage of total structures (same as **B**). For extended quantification see **Fig. S1B, I and J**. For **B and**
2 **C**. $n = 3$, $N \geq 80$ total structures per n . Bars are mean, error-bars are S.E.M. Statistical significance
3 calculated by two-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple comparison test: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$.

4 **D and E**. Representative images of ETS embryo structures formed by ESCs (blue, *top*) and pESCs
5 (orange, *bottom*) after 96h of co-culture with TSCs. **D**. ETS structures are labelled with antibodies
6 against EOMES (magenta) and OCT3/4 (white) plus 4',6'-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI, yellow),
7 presented as merged. **E**. ETS structures labelled with antibodies against E-cadherin (white) and DAPI
8 (yellow). TSCs express GFP. For **D and E**, yellow dashed lines indicate internal cavities. Scale bars, 20
9 μm .

10

11 **Figure 3. Primed ESCs cytonemes are non-selective and cannot facilitate stable interactions with**
12 **TSCs.**

13 **A**. Frames from time-lapse imaging of ESCs (blue, *top*) or pESCs (orange, *bottom*) interacting with TSCs
14 that express GFP. Examples of reactive interactions (*left*) or non-reactive interactions (*right*) shown.
15 Time in minutes. Arrowheads (yellow) indicate initial contact through cytonemes. Scale bars, 20 μm .

16 **B**. Percentage of reactive interactions between ESCs (blue) or pESCs (orange) and TSCs in different
17 conditions. Where indicated, TSCs were pre-treated with 2 μM IWP2 for 24h. $N \geq 71$ cells pooled from
18 $n = 3$ experiments. Statistical significance calculated by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests:
19 $*p < 0.05$, $***p < 0.001$.

20 **C**. Frames from time-lapse imaging of ESCs (blue, *top*) or pESCs (orange, *bottom*) expressing the F-
21 actin reporter Ftractin-mRuby3 (presented as inverted grayscale), interacting with Wnt-beads.
22 Reactive (*left*) and non-reactive (*right*) interactions are shown. Time in minutes. Wnt beads are
23 highlighted by yellow dashed circle. Inserts are magnified and contrast-enhanced for clarity. Scale
24 bars, 20 μm for larger images or 5 μm for inserts. CNTRL is control.

25 **D**. Percentage of reactive interactions between ESCs (blue, *top*) or pESCs (orange, *bottom*) and
26 different types of beads. $N \geq 40$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ experiments. Statistical significance calculated
27 by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests: *ns* (*non-significant*, $p > 0.05$), $***p < 0.001$.

28 **E. and F**. Box and whiskers plots describing the distribution of the (**E.**) Wnt3a-bead retention time and
29 (**F.**) time between initial Wnt3a-bead contact and recruitment for ESCs (blue) or pESCs (orange). For
30 details on the measurement see **Fig. S3B**. Whiskers are 5 - 95% of data, middle line is median, dots are
31 data outside range. $N \geq 40$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ experiments. Statistical significance calculated by
32 unpaired two-sided T-tests: $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.

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Figure 4. F-actin and tubulin are required for Primed ESC cytoneme formation.

A. Box and whiskers plots describing the average number of cytonemes (*left*) or maximum cytoneme length (*right*) in ESCs (blue) and pESCs (orange). Whiskers are 5 - 95% of data, middle line is median. $N \geq 24$ cells. Statistical significance calculated by unpaired two-sided T-tests: *ns* (*non-significant*, $p > 0.05$), $***p < 0.001$.

B. Representative images of ESCs (blue) and pESCs (orange) stained with Phalloidin (F-actin) or antibodies against α -tubulin, presented as inverted grayscale. Arrowheads (yellow) indicate larger cytonemes, arrows (red) indicate thin cytonemes. Scale bars, 20 μm .

C – D. The percentage of cells with cytonemes in ESCs (**C**) or pESCs (**D**) treated with a range of Cytochalasin D (CytoD) concentrations or DMSO. X-axis is time, in hours. Points are mean of $n = 3$ independent experiments, $N \geq 25$ cells per n . Error-bars are S.E.M. Table below indicates statistical significance against DMSO, calculated by two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison tests: $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.

E – F. The percentage of cells with cytonemes in ESCs (**E**) or pESCs (**F**) treated with a range of Colcemid concentrations or H_2O . X-axis is time, in hours. Points are mean of $n = 3$ independent experiments, $N \geq 23$ cells per n . Error-bars are S.E.M. Table below indicates statistical significance against H_2O control calculated by two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparison tests: *ns* (*non-significant*, $p > 0.05$), $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.

Figure 5. Primed ESCs have reduced glutamate receptor activity at the cytonemes

A. Transcription levels of ionotropic glutamate receptor subunits in ESCs (blue) and pESCs (orange). RNA levels are expressed relative to β -actin expression. Bars are mean of $n = 3$, error-bars are S.E.M. Statistical significance calculated by one-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple comparison test: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.

B. Frames from time-lapse imaging of an ESC (blue, *left*) or a pESC (orange, *right*) expressing GCaMP6s, where a cytoneme contacts a Wnt3a-bead. (*Top*) generation of Ca^{2+} transients upon cytoneme-Wnt3a bead contact; (*Bottom*) absence of Ca^{2+} transients. Bead is highlighted with a yellow dashed circle. Time is expressed in minutes and seconds. GCaMP6s intensity is presented using the Fire LUT (Fiji), and the calibration bar is shown in the figure. Scale bars, 10 μm .

1 **C and D.** Percentage (%) of cells with Ca²⁺ transients in the cytonemes (**C.**), and number (#) of
2 transients per minute (per cell) (**D.**) in ESCs (blue, n = 20), control pESCs (CNTRL, orange, n = 24) or
3 pESCs treated with 100 μM Kainate (pink, n = 19). Cells for each condition are pooled from multiple
4 independent experiments. In **D**, bar indicates mean, error-bars indicate S.E.M. Statistical significance
5 calculated by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests (**C**) or one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple
6 comparison test (**D**): *ns* (non-significant, $p>0.05$), $**p<0.01$, $***p<0.001$.

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8 **Figure 6. iGluR activity, but not Lrp6 overexpression, control cell polarization to Wnt3a-beads, and**
9 **pESC-TSC approximation.**

10 **A and B.** Representative images of pESCs stained with antibodies against LRP6 (**A.**), β-catenin (**B.**) and
11 with Phalloidin (F-actin). Inserts are magnification of boxes, contrast enhanced for clarity. Scale bars,
12 20 μm for larger images, 5 μm for inserts.

13 **C.** The percentage of cytonemes positive for LRP6 or β-catenin in pESCs. N = 62 cells.

14 **D.** *Lrp6* RNA expression levels in control (CNTRL) pESCs or pESCs transiently overexpressing LRP6-eGFP
15 (LRP6 *OE*), presented as fold-change to CNTRL pESCs. Bars are mean of n = 3 experiments. Error-bars
16 are S.E.M. Statistical significance calculated by unpaired two-sided T-test: $***p<0.001$.

17 **E.** Representative images of CNTRL or LRP6-eGFP overexpressing pESCs, stained with antibodies
18 against LRP6. BF is brightfield. Yellow arrowhead indicates high levels of LRP6 in the cytoneme. Images
19 are maximum intensity projections presented at equal intensity range to allow comparison between
20 panels. Scale bars, 20 μm.

21 **F.** The percentage of reactive interactions (defined in **Fig. 3A and B**) between ESCs, CNTRL pESCs,
22 pESCs overexpressing LRP6 (LRP6 *OE*) or pESCs treated with 100 μM Kainate and TSCs. N ≥ 58 cells
23 pooled from n ≥ 3 independent experiments. Statistical significance calculated by multiple Fisher's
24 exact two-sided tests: $****p<0.0001$.

25 **G.** Representative images of ESCs contacting a Wnt3a bead at the base of the cytonemes, stained with
26 antibodies against LRP6 or β-catenin (cyan) and GluA3, GluA4, GluK1 and GluK3. Bead is black sphere
27 in brightfield (BF) panel and is highlighted with a dashed yellow circle. Scale bars, 10 μm.

28 **H and I.** The percentage of control ESCs (CTRL, blue), 10 μM CNQX-treated ESCs (green), pESCs (CTRL,
29 orange) or pESCs treated with 100 μM Kainate (pink) with polarized presentation of LRP6 (**H**) or β-
30 catenin (**I**) upon Wnt3a-bead contact. n ≥ 41 cells. Further quantification is shown in **Fig. S4C-E**.
31 Statistical significance calculated by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests: $*p<0.05$, $**p<0.01$,
32 $***p<0.001$, $****p<0.0001$.

1 **J.** The percentage of ESCs (blue) or pESCs (orange) with polarized distribution of both Wnt/ β -catenin
2 pathway components and GluA3, GluA4, GluK1 or GluK3. $n \geq 26$ cells. Statistical significance calculated
3 by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests: $**p < 0.01$.

4 **K and L.** Representative frames of a time-course live cell imaging experiment showing a pESC
5 (magenta) treated with 100 μ M Kainate contacting a TSC (green) through a cytoneme, approaching it
6 and then separating (**K.**). Time is minutes, yellow dashed line indicates distance between cells. Scale
7 bar, 20 μ m. Plot on **L** indicates pESC-TSC distance over time (panel **K** cell only). Arrows point to distance
8 at initial contact (X_c) and distance at 50 minutes after initial cytoneme-mediated contact (X_{c+50}).

9 **M.** The difference in distance between CNTRL pESCs (orange) or 100 μ M Kainate-treated pESCs (KA,
10 pink) and TSCs at the initial cytoneme-mediated contact (X_c) or 50 minutes after contact (X_{c+50} , Δ
11 Distance = $X_{c+50} - X_c$). Bars are mean of $N \geq 58$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ experiments. Error-bars are
12 S.E.M. Stars indicate statistical significance calculated by unpaired two-sided T-test: $**p < 0.01$.

13

14 **Figure 7. E-cadherin overexpression in pESCs improves their pairing with TSCs but cannot sustain**
15 **synthetic embryogenesis**

16 **A.** Representative images of control (CNTRL) or N-cadherin-eGFP expressing pESCs stained with
17 antibodies against N-cadherin (magenta) and GFP (green). For each staining, images are shown at
18 equal intensity ranges to allow comparison between panels. Scale bars, 20 μ m.

19 **B.** Representative images of CNTRL or E-cadherin-mCherry expressing pESCs stained with antibodies
20 against E-cadherin (magenta) and mCherry (red). For each staining, images are shown at equal
21 intensity ranges to allow comparison between panels. Scale bars, 20 μ m.

22 **C and D.** *Cdh2* (N-cadherin) and *Cdh1* (E-cadherin) RNA expression levels in CNTRL or overexpressing
23 ESCs (**C**) or pESCs (**D**), presented as fold-change to the control population. Bars are mean of $n = 3$
24 experiments. Error-bars are S.E.M. Statistical significance calculated by unpaired two-sided T-test:
25 $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$.

26 **E.** Representative frames of a time-course live imaging showing a pESC overexpressing E-cadherin-
27 mCherry (magenta) contacting and pairing with a TSC (green). Yellow arrowheads indicate high levels
28 of E-cadherin at the cell-cell contact zone. Time in minutes. Scale bar, 20 μ m.

29 **F.** The percentage of reactive interactions (defined in **Fig. 3A and B**) between CNTRL ESCs (blue), ESCs
30 overexpressing N-cadherin (Ncad *OE*, green), CNTRL pESCs (orange) or pESCs overexpressing E-
31 cadherin (Ecad *OE*, red) and TSCs. $N \geq 63$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ independent experiments. Statistical

1 significance calculated by multiple Fisher's exact two-sided tests: ns (*non-significant, p>0.05*), **p<0.05*,
2 ****p<0.001*, *****p<0.0001*.

3 **G.** The percentage of ETS embryo structures over the number of total structures (*i.e.* the sum of all
4 quantified structure types, according to **Fig. S1B**) in CNTRL ESCs (blue), ESCs overexpressing N-
5 cadherin (green), CNTRL pESCs (orange) and pESCs overexpressing E-cadherin (red). Bars are mean of
6 $n \geq 3$, $N \geq 80$ total structures/ n . Error bars are S.E.M. Statistical significance calculated by 2-way ANOVA
7 with Tukey's multiple comparisons test: ns (*non-significant, p>0.05*), ***p<0.01*, ****p<0.001*. A
8 complete break-down of the quantification can be found in **Fig. S1I and J**.

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Supplementary material for:

**PLURIPOTENCY STATE REGULATES CYTONEME SELECTIVITY AND SELF-
ORGANIZATION OF EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS**

Sergi Junyent, Joshua Reeves, Eileen Gentleman and Shukry J. Habib

1 SUPPLEMENTARY FIGURE LEGENDS

2 **Supplementary Figure 1. Immunofluorescence of NANOG and β -catenin in Primed** 3 **ESCs, and quantification of ETS structures**

4 **A.** Representative images of ESC or Primed ESC (pESC) colonies stained with antibodies
5 against NANOG, β -catenin or with DAPI. pESCs are obtained by culturing ESCs for 3 days in
6 media supplemented with 2 μ M IWP2. Intensity range displayed is equal between the two
7 conditions. Scale bar, 50 μ m.

8 **B.** Representative images of cell clusters/structures formed at 96h of ETS induction. From *left*
9 to *right*, TSC-only cell cluster, ESC-only cell cluster, unorganized ESC-TSC cluster and ETS
10 embryo structure. Images are merged of brightfield and GFP (TSCs). Yellow dashed line
11 highlights cavity. Scale bar, 50 μ m. For all quantifications, total structures are the sum of the
12 quantified structures for all cluster/structure types.

13 **C and D.** Quantification of marker expression in ETS structures formed by ESCs (blue) or
14 pESCs (orange) at 96h of co-culture with TSCs. **C.** EOMES intensity on the TSC compartment,
15 normalized to background intensity. **D.** OCT3/4 intensity on the ESC compartment, normalized
16 to the background intensity. For **C.** and **D.** *ns* indicates non-significant differences, calculated
17 by unpaired two-sided T-tests. N = 17 ETS structures for ESCs and 14 for pESCs, pooled
18 from 3 independent experiments. Bars are mean, error-bars are S.E.M.

19 **E - G.** Quantification of the size of ETS embryo structures formed by ESCs (blue) or pESCs
20 (orange) at 96h of co-culture with TSCs. **E.** ETS embryo structure size at maximum width, in
21 μ m². **F.** TSC-compartment cavity size normalized to TSC compartment size, expressed as
22 ratio. **G.** ESC-compartment cavity size normalized to ESC-compartment size, expressed as
23 ratio. N = 17 ETS structures for ESCs and 14 for pESCs, pooled from 3 independent
24 experiments. For **E. - G.** *ns* indicates non-significant differences, calculated by unpaired two-
25 sided T-tests. Bars are mean, error-bars are S.E.M.

26 **H.** Number of ETS embryos formed by ESCs or pESCs at 96h of co-culture with TSCs with
27 connected or non-connected cavities. *ns* indicates non-significant differences, calculated by
28 Fisher's exact two-sided test. N = 17 ETS structures for ESCs and 14 for pESCs, pooled from
29 3 independent experiments.

30 **I and J.** Break-down of the quantification of ETS embryo structures, unorganized ESC-TSC
31 clusters, TSC clusters or ESC clusters at 72h (**I.**) and 96h (**J.**) of co-culture. Numbers within
32 bars indicate percentage. Number of total structures counted is at least 80 per independent
33 experiment, and a minimum of 3 independent experiments per condition. CNTRL is control;
34 Ecad OE is E-cadherin overexpression; Ncad OE is N-cadherin overexpression.

1

2 **Supplementary Figure 2. Quantification of ESC or Primed ESC interaction with TSCs.**

3 **A.** Schematic depicting the experimental conditions.

4 **B.** Representative annotated frames of a time-lapse live cell imaging showing an ESC
5 contacting a TSC with a cytoneme and pairing with it. TSCs express GFP and are labelled in
6 green. Annotations refer to measurements in **C – F**, as follows: “Original distance” between
7 the cells at $t = 0'$; Distance between the cells at the time of cytoneme-mediated contact
8 (“Distance at contact”, X_c); Time at initial cytoneme-mediated contact (“Time at contact”, t_c);
9 Distance between cells 50 minutes after contact (“Distance at contact + 50 minutes”, X_{c+50} ,
10 found empirically to be enough to capture the behaviour of the cells after initial contact); Time
11 at which cell-cell-pairing is established (“Time of reaction”, t_r , only quantified for reactive
12 interactions). Time is in minutes. Scale bars, 20 μm .

13 **C.** Quantification of the differential between the distance at contact (X_c) and distance at contact
14 + 50 minutes (X_{c+50}) expressed in μm , for all conditions. $N \geq 58$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$
15 independent experiments.

16 **D.** Quantification of the original ESC-TSC distance (in μm) for all conditions. $N \geq 58$ cells
17 pooled from $n \geq 3$ independent experiments.

18 **E.** Quantification of the time of ESC-TSC contact through a cytoneme (in minutes) for all
19 conditions. $N \geq 58$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ independent experiments.

20 **F.** Quantification of reaction time between ESCs and TSCs, calculated as the differential
21 between time at contact (t_c) and time at reaction (t_r) in minutes, for all conditions. Reaction
22 time is only calculated for cells that react (according to **Fig. 3A**). $N \geq 8$ cells from $n \geq 3$
23 independent experiments.

24 **G.** Quantification of the number of mixed ESC-TSC structures after 12h co-culture, presented
25 as percentage of total TSC clusters. $n = 3$, $N \geq 66$ total structures per n .

26 **H.** Quantification of cell movement for ESCs (blue), pESCs (orange) and TSCs (green),
27 presented as mean squared displacement (MSD). $N = 40$ cells, $n \geq 3$.

28 For **C – H**, bars indicate mean and error-bars are S.E.M. Symbols indicate statistical
29 significance calculated by one-way ANOVA with Tukey’s multiple comparison tests: *ns* (*non-*
30 *significant*, $p > 0.05$), $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$.

31 **Supplementary Figure 3. Quantification of ESC or Primed ESC interaction with Wnt3a-**
32 **or control-beads, and representative images of CytochalasinD or Colcemid treatment.**

1 **A.** Schematic depicting the three types of beads used in the experiments.

2 **B.** Representative annotated frames of a time-lapse live imaging of an ESC contacting and
3 recruiting a Wnt3a bead through a cytoneme. Annotations refer to measurements in **C, D and**
4 **F**, as follows: Distance between the cell and the bead at the time of cytoneme-mediated
5 contact (“Distance at contact”, X_c); Time at initial cytoneme-mediated contact (“Time at
6 contact”, t_c); Distance between cell and bead 30 minutes after contact (“Distance at contact +
7 30 minutes”, X_{c+30} , found empirically to be enough to capture the behaviour of the cells after
8 initial bead contact); Time at which the bead is recruited by the cell (“Time of reaction”, t_r , only
9 quantified for reactive interactions). Scale bar, 20 μm .

10 **C.** Quantification of the differential between distance at contact (X_c) and distance at contact +
11 30 minutes (X_{c+30}) expressed in μm , for all conditions. $N \geq 40$ cells pooled from $n \geq 3$
12 independent experiments.

13 **D.** Quantification of the ESC – bead initial contact with a cytoneme (t_c , in minutes). $N \geq 40$
14 cells pooled from $n \geq 3$ independent experiments.

15 **E.** Quantification of the time of bead retention after reaction (in minutes) for all conditions.
16 Bead retention time is only calculated for cells that react (according to **Fig. 3C**). Data for ESC
17 or pESC with Wnt3a beads is reused from **Fig. 3E**. $N \geq 9$, $n = 3$.

18 **F.** Quantification of the reaction time, calculated as the difference between time at contact (t_c)
19 and time at reaction (t_r) in minutes, for all conditions. Reaction time is only calculated for cells
20 that react (according to **Fig. 3C**). Data for ESC or pESC with Wnt3a beads is reused from **Fig.**
21 **3E**. $N \geq 9$, $n = 3$.

22 For **C – F**, bars indicate mean and error-bars are S.E.M. Symbols indicate statistical
23 significance calculated by one-way ANOVA with Tukey’s multiple comparison tests: *ns* (*non-*
24 *significant*, $p > 0.05$), *#* $p = 0.051$, *** $p < 0.05$, **** $p < 0.01$, ***** $p < 0.001$.

25 **G.** Representative images of ESCs (blue, *left*) or pESCs (orange, *right*) treated with DMSO,
26 0.25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ Cytochalasin D, H_2O or 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ Colcemid (*top to bottom*) for 4h, and stained
27 with antibodies against α -Tubulin (magenta) or Phalloidin (F-actin, green) and DAPI (yellow).
28 BF is brightfield. Scale bars, 20 μm .

29

30 **Supplementary Figure 4. Primed ESCs present functional iGluR receptors and similar**
31 ***Lrp5/6* levels to ESCs but exhibit impaired polarization of Wnt pathway components**
32 **upon contact with a Wnt source. Primed ESC polarization is recovered by Kainate**
33 **addition.**

1 **A.** Whole cell time-course Ca^{2+} measurements of ESCs (blue, *left*) or pESCs (orange, *right*)
2 expressing GCaMP6s. Lines indicate Ca^{2+} response to the addition of: Control (CNTRL)
3 solution (green), 100 μM Kainate (pink) or 100 μM Kainate to cells pre-treated with 10 μM
4 CNQX (orange). GCaMP6s intensity is expressed as fold-change to basal intensity before
5 addition ($\Delta\text{F}/\text{F}_0$). Points are mean of $n \geq 4$, error bars are S.E.M. Black arrow indicates time of
6 addition.

7 **B.** *Lrp5* and *Lrp6* RNA expression levels in ESCs (blue) or pESCs (orange), presented as
8 normalized expression to *Gapdh*. Bars are mean of $n = 3$, error bars are S.E.M. ns is not
9 significant, calculated by two-way ANOVA with Šídák's multiple comparison test.

10 **C and D.** Examples of the quantification in **E.** (*left*) representative image of a cell contacting a
11 Wnt3a bead and exhibiting a polarized (C) or non-polarized (D) distribution of Lrp6. Yellow
12 line and arrow represent a 10 pixel-wide, 20 μm long line used to measure the intensity profile.
13 Wnt3a-bead is highlighted with white dashed line. Scale bar, 20 μm . (*right*) Normalized
14 quantification of the Lrp6 intensity profile, expressed as fold-change to maximum value across
15 the distance from the Wnt3a-bead.

16 **E.** Intensity profile of LRP6 (*top*) and β -catenin (*bottom*) in ESCs (CNTRL, blue), 10 μM CNQX-
17 treated ESCs (green), control pESCs (CNTRL, orange) or 100 μM Kainate treated pESCs
18 (pink) contacting Wnt3a beads. Background-normalized intensity is plotted relative to the
19 distance from Wnt3a bead and reported as fold-change to maximum intensity value
20 (expressed as ratio). Grey lines represent individual intensity measurements, coloured lines
21 represent mean, error bars are S.E.M. $N \geq 41$ cells.

22 **F.** Representative images of ESCs expressing FZD1-GFP and contacting a Wnt3a-bead.
23 Wnt3a-bead is black sphere in brightfield (BF) panel, highlighted by white dashed circle. Fzd-
24 GFP intensity is presented using the Fire LUT (ImageJ), and the calibration bar is shown in
25 the figure. Scale bars, 20 μm .

26 **G.** Intensity profile of FZD1-GFP in ESCs (*top*) or pESCs (*bottom*) contacting a Wnt3a-bead.
27 Background-normalized intensity is plotted relative to the distance from Wnt3a bead and
28 reported as fold-change to maximum intensity value (expressed as ratio). Grey lines represent
29 individual intensity measurements, coloured lines represent mean, error-bars are S.E.M. $N \geq$
30 12 cells.

31 **H.** Percentage of ESCs or pESCs contacting Wnt3a-beads that show polarised FZD1-GFP. N
32 ≥ 12 cells. Statistical significance calculated by Fisher's exact two-sided test: $*p < 0.05$.

33

1 **Supplementary Figure 5. Gating strategy for Fluorescence Activated Cell Sorting**
2 **(FACS) of ESCs or Primed ESCs overexpressing tagged proteins**

3 **A, C and D.** Schematic representation of the overexpression strategy.

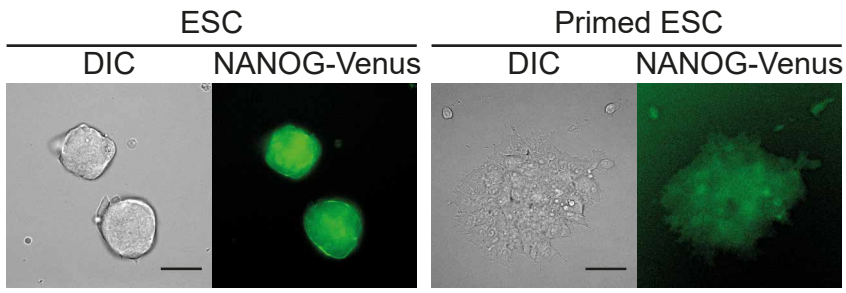
4 **B and E.** Representative example of the FACS sorting of pESCs overexpressing LRP6-eGFP
5 **(B)**, ESCs overexpressing N-cadherin-eGFP or pESCs overexpressing E-cadherin-mCherry
6 **(E)**. Gates used were SSC-A vs FSC-A for cells, SSC-A vs SSC-W for single cells, FSC-A,
7 DAPI⁻ for alive cells, followed by sorting by eGFP (FITC) or mCherry (PE-CF549). Control
8 populations were used to set DAPI⁺/DAPI⁻, eGFP⁺/eGFP⁻ and mCherry⁺/mCherry⁻ gates.
9 eGFP⁺ cells were sorted for LRP6-eGFP (pESCs) and N-cadherin-eGFP (ESCs) conditions.
10 mCherry⁺ cells were sorted for E-cadherin-mCherry condition.

11

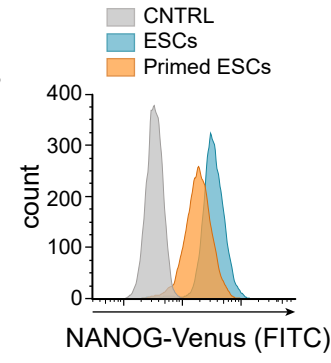
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Figure 1

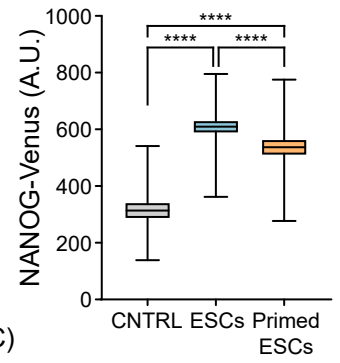
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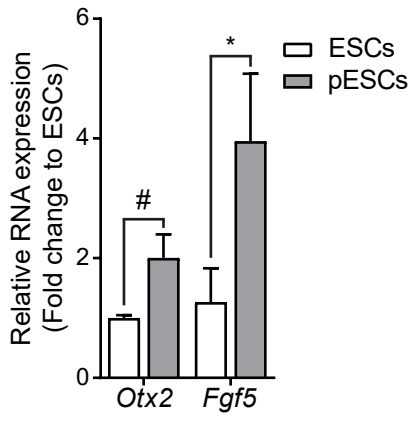
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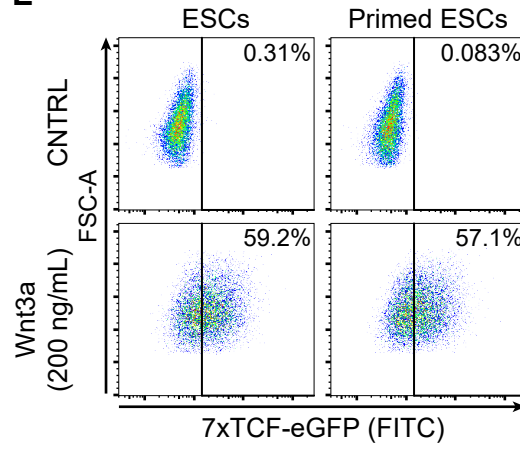
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E



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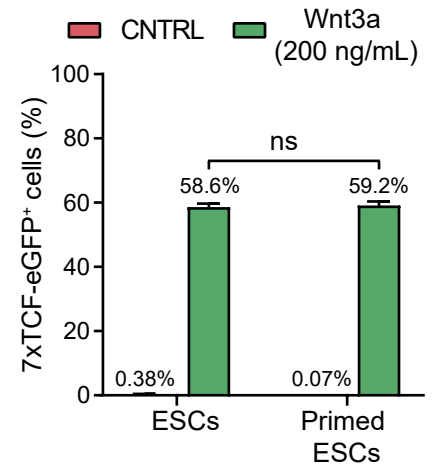
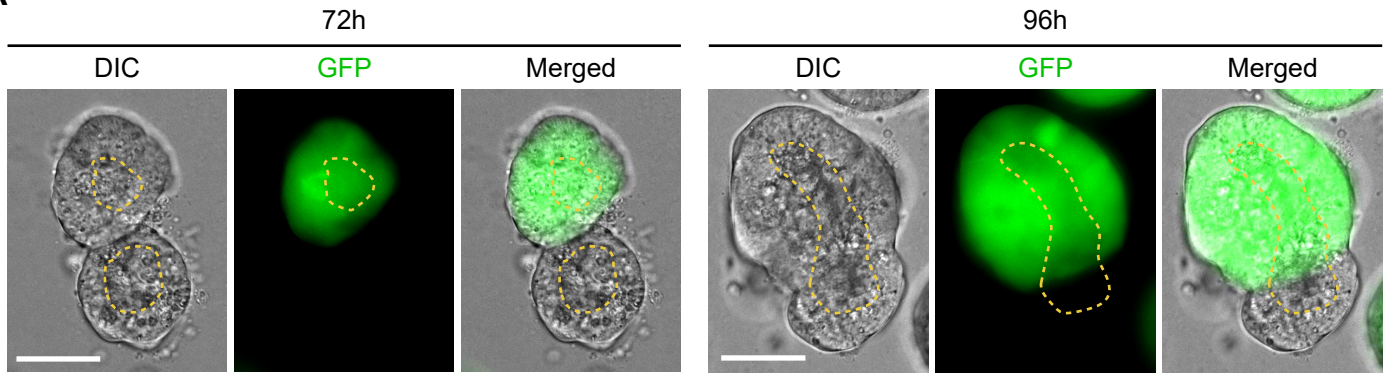
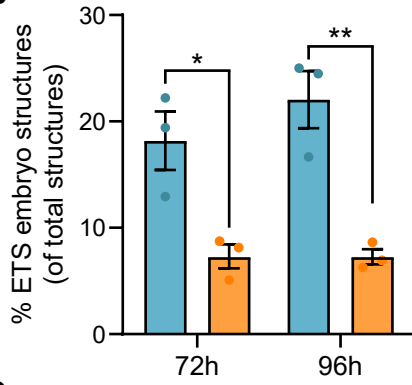


Figure 2

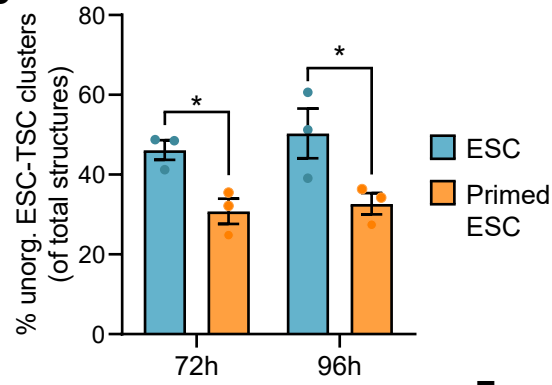
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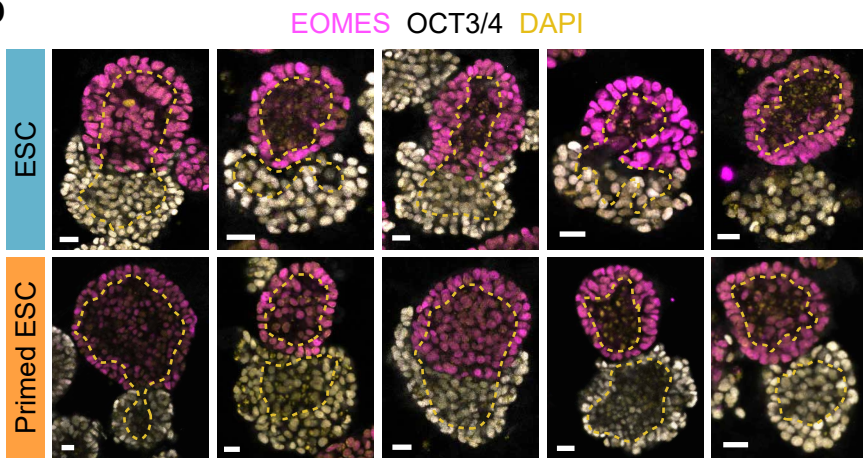
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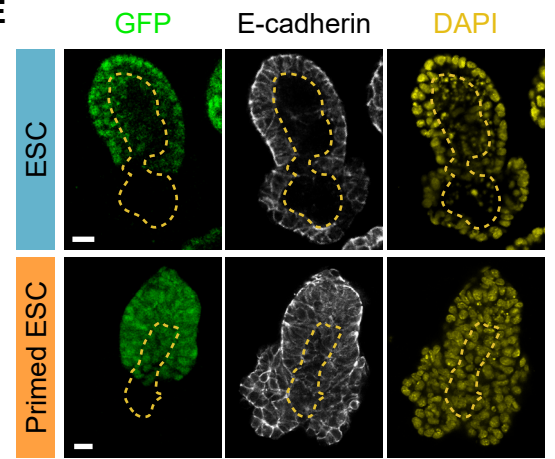
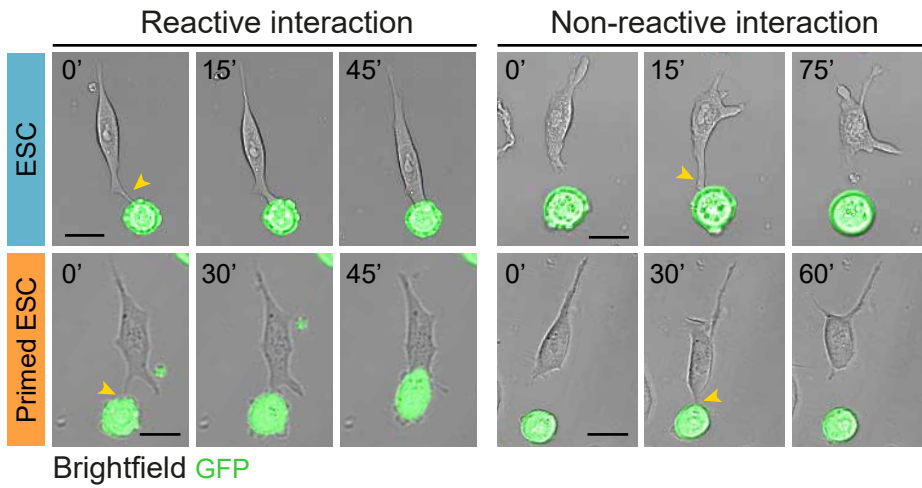
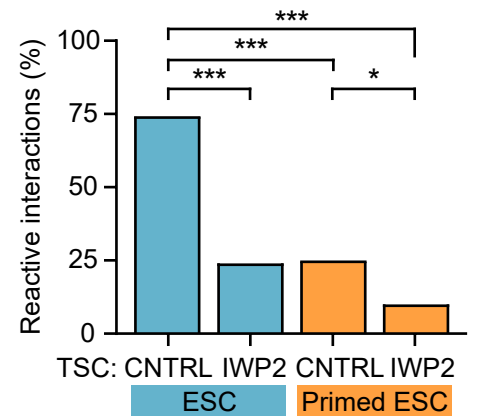


Figure 3

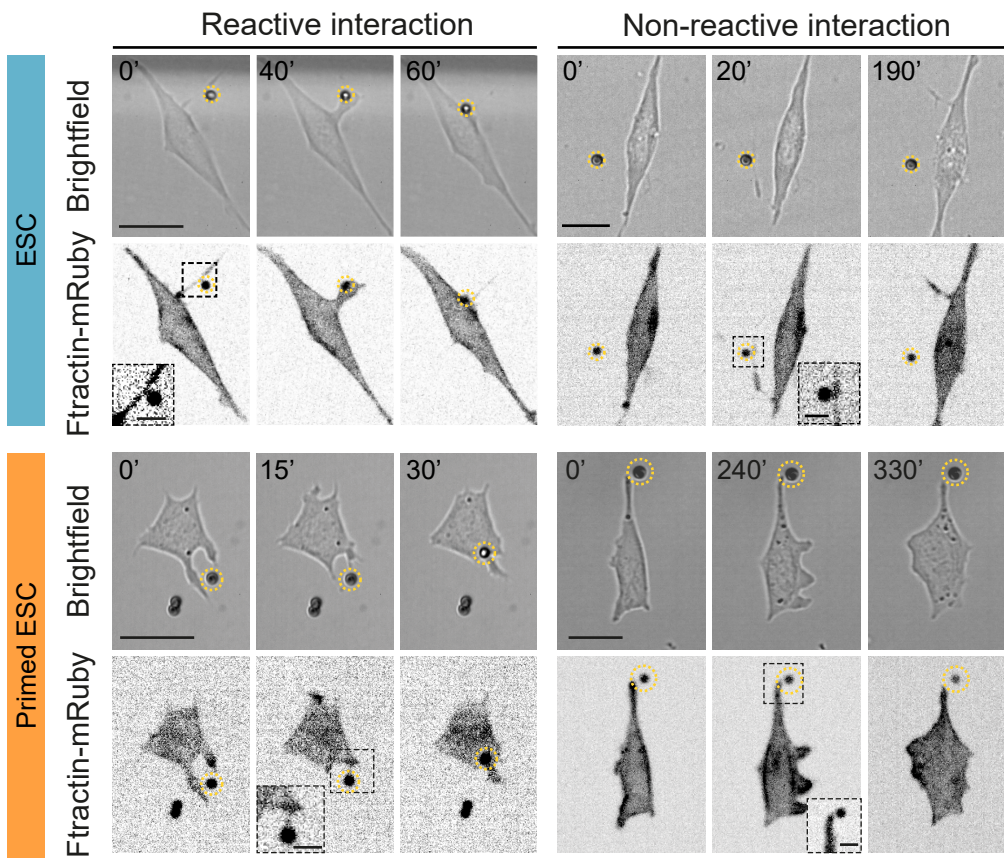
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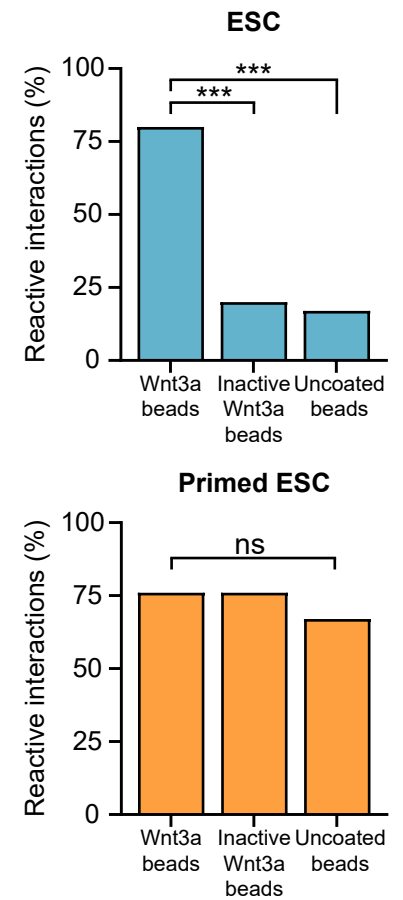
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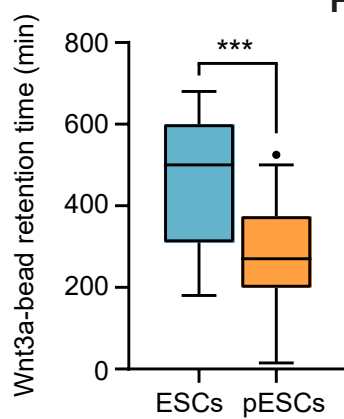
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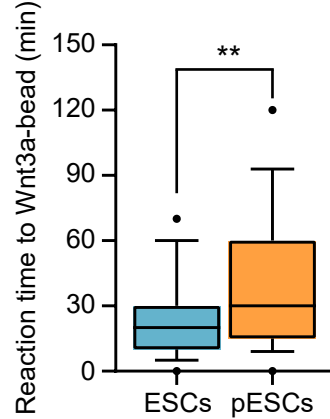
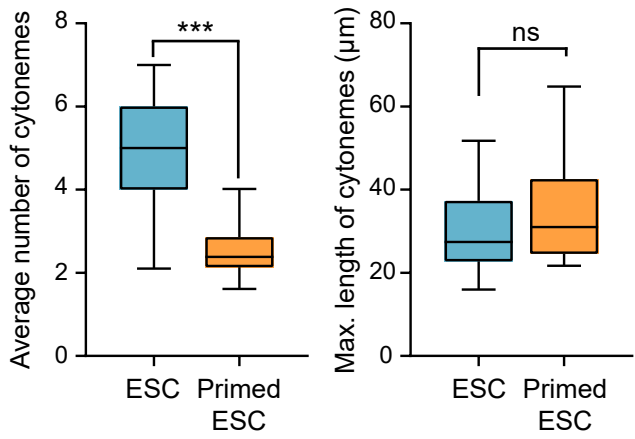
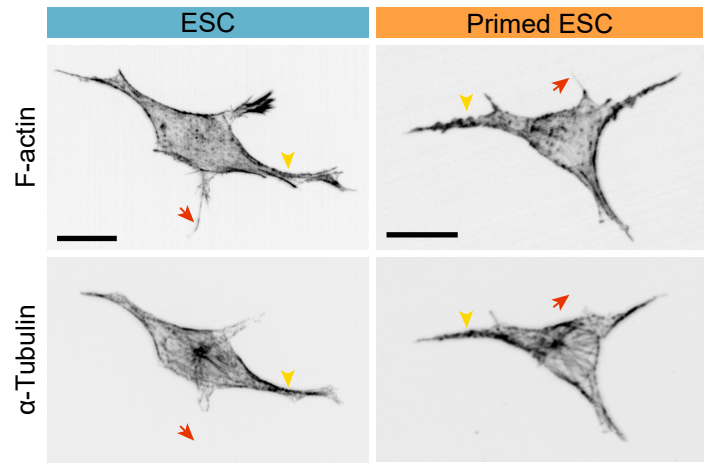


Figure 4

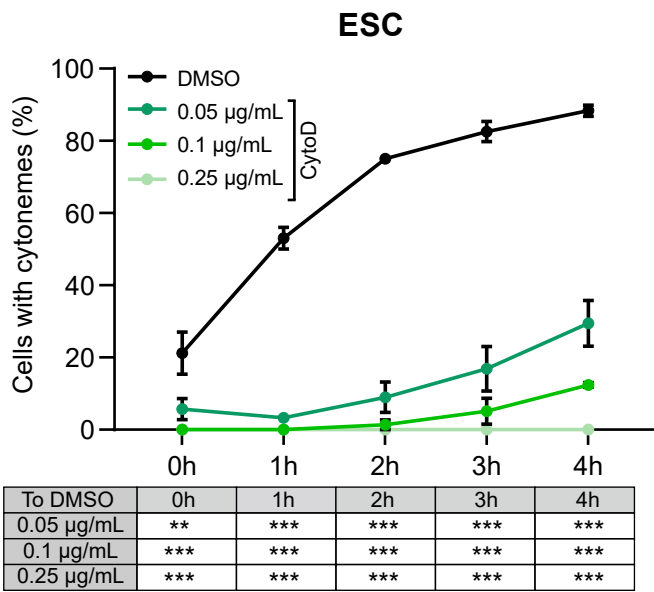
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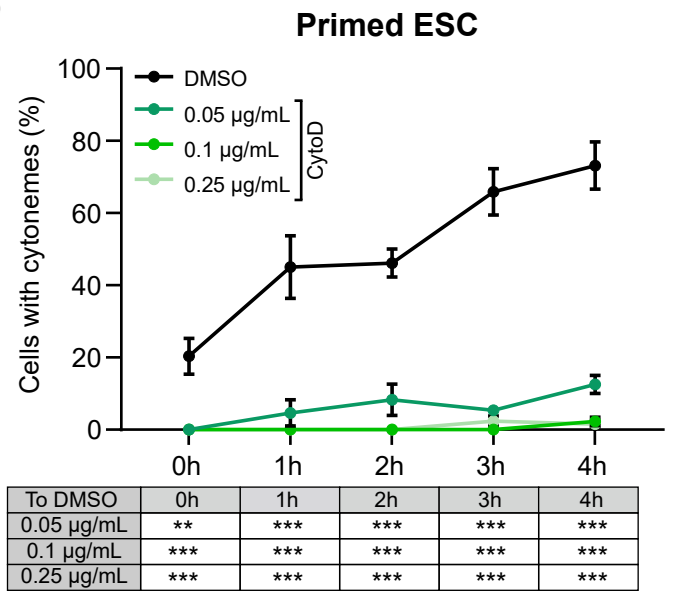
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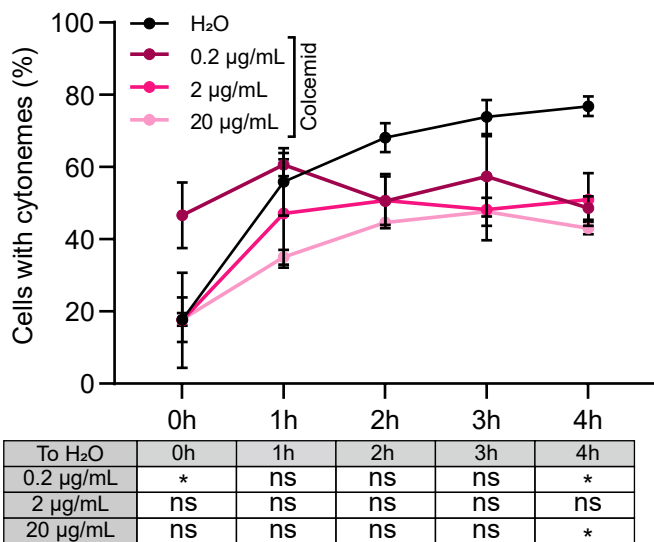
C



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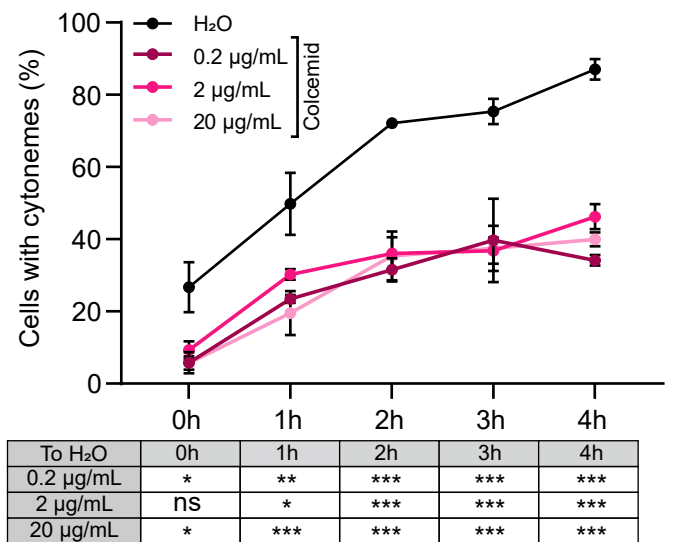
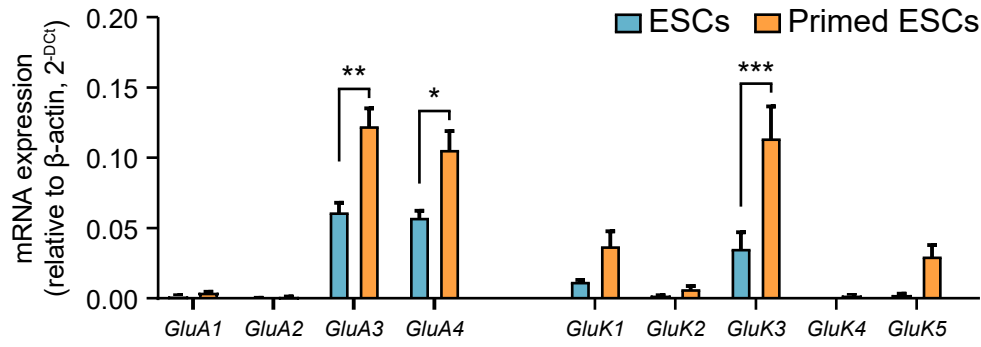
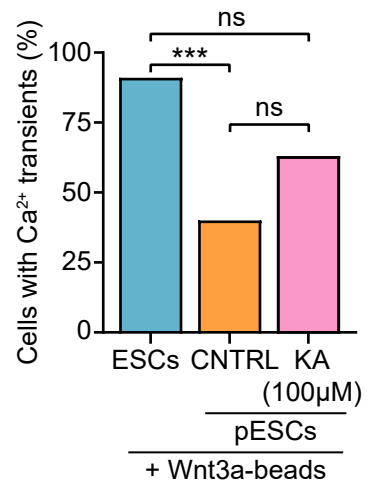


Figure 5

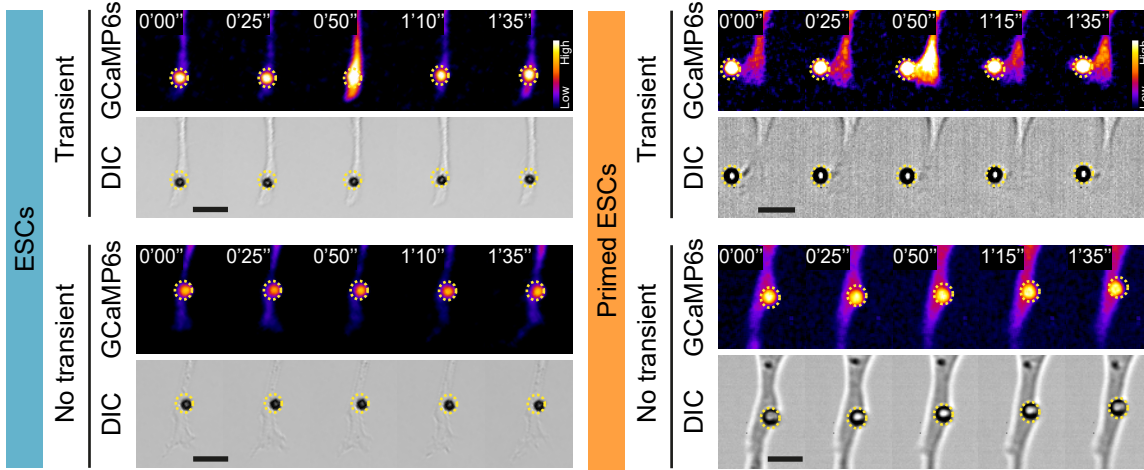
A



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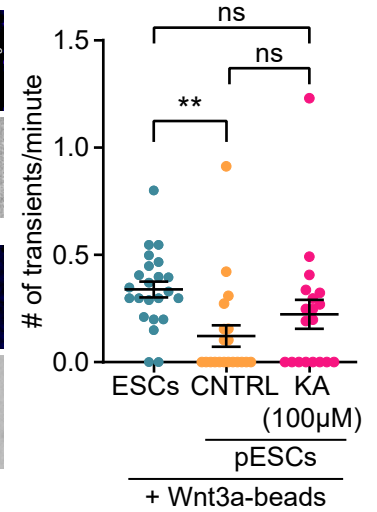


Figure 6

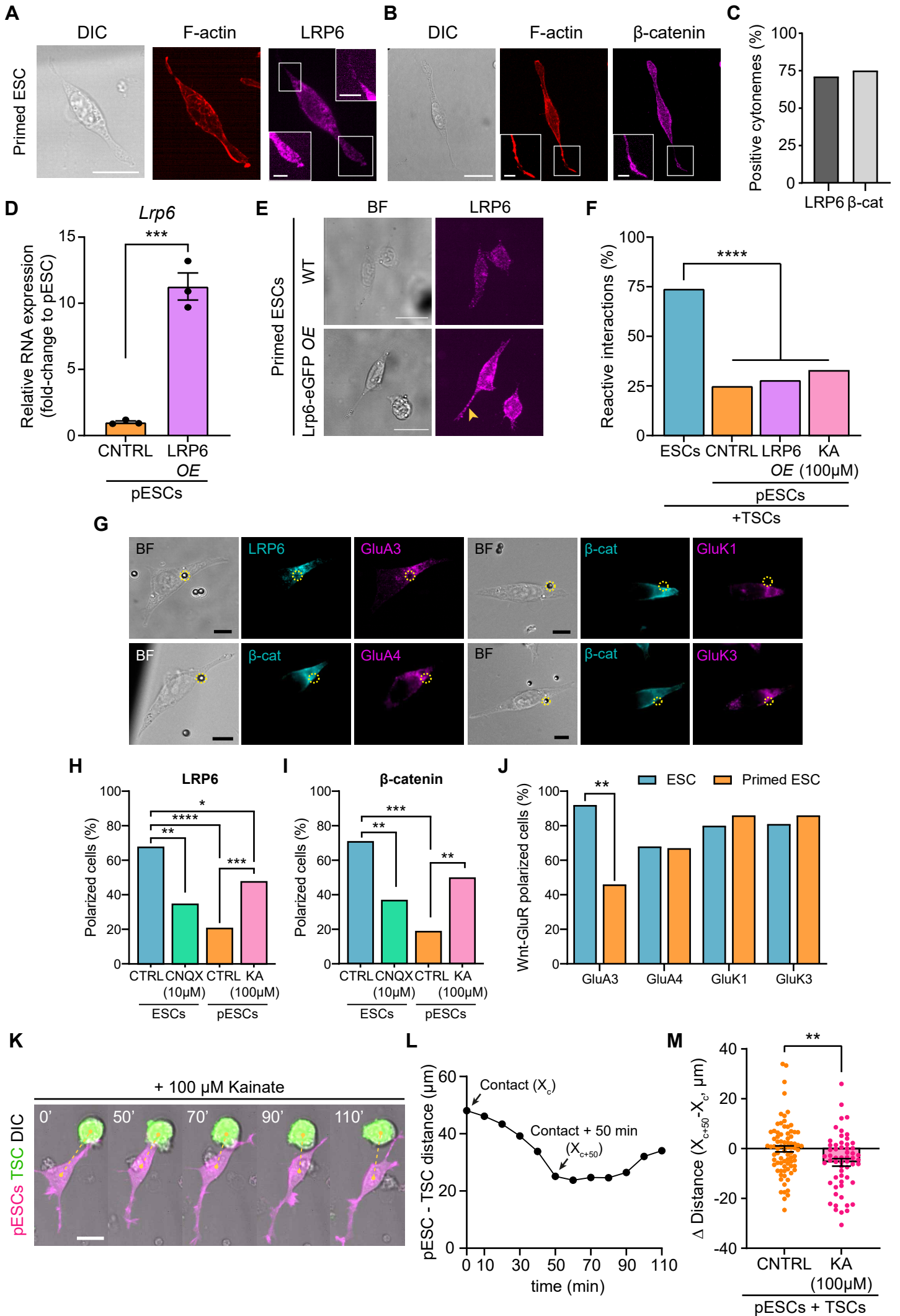


Figure 7

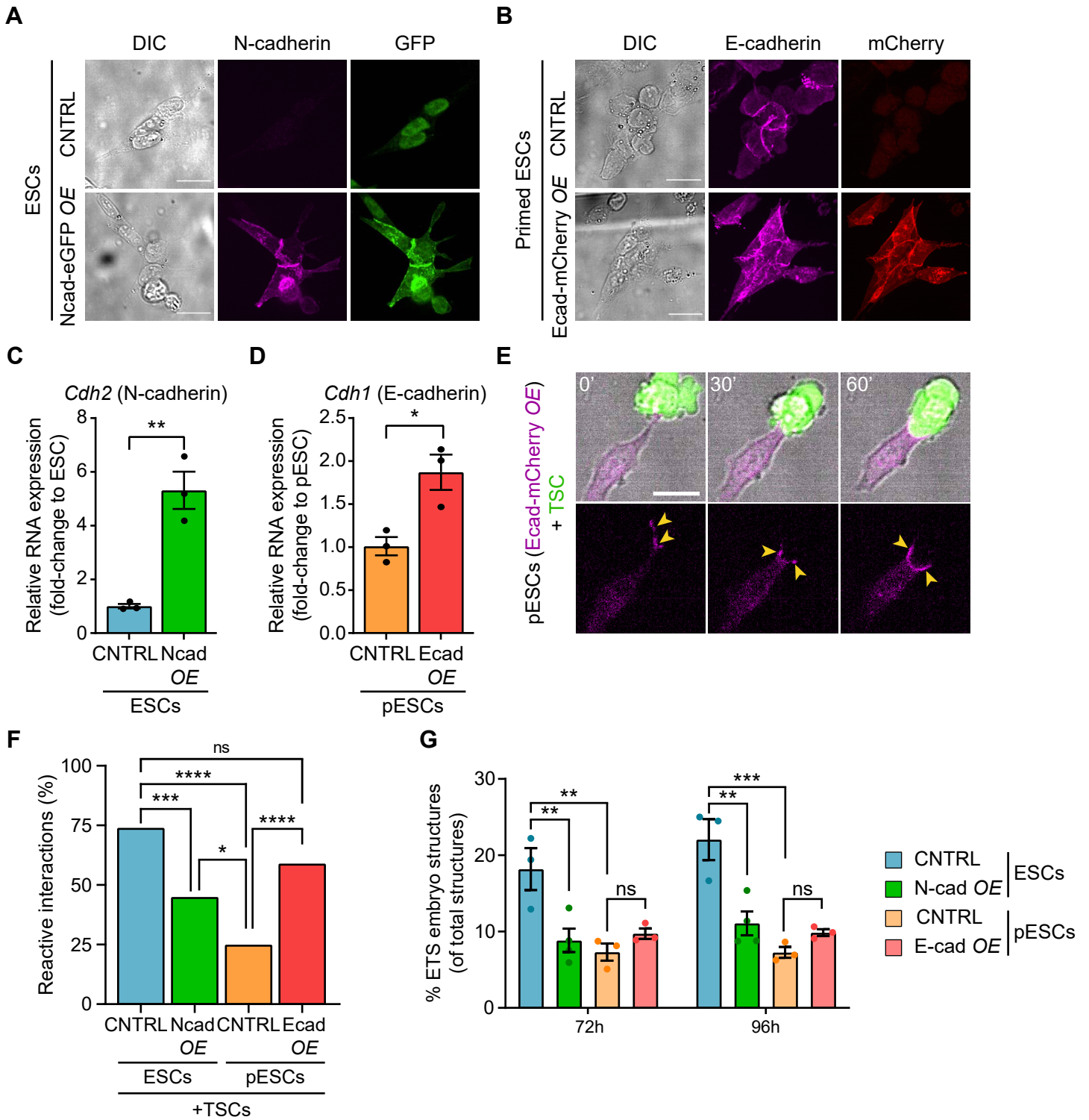


Figure S1

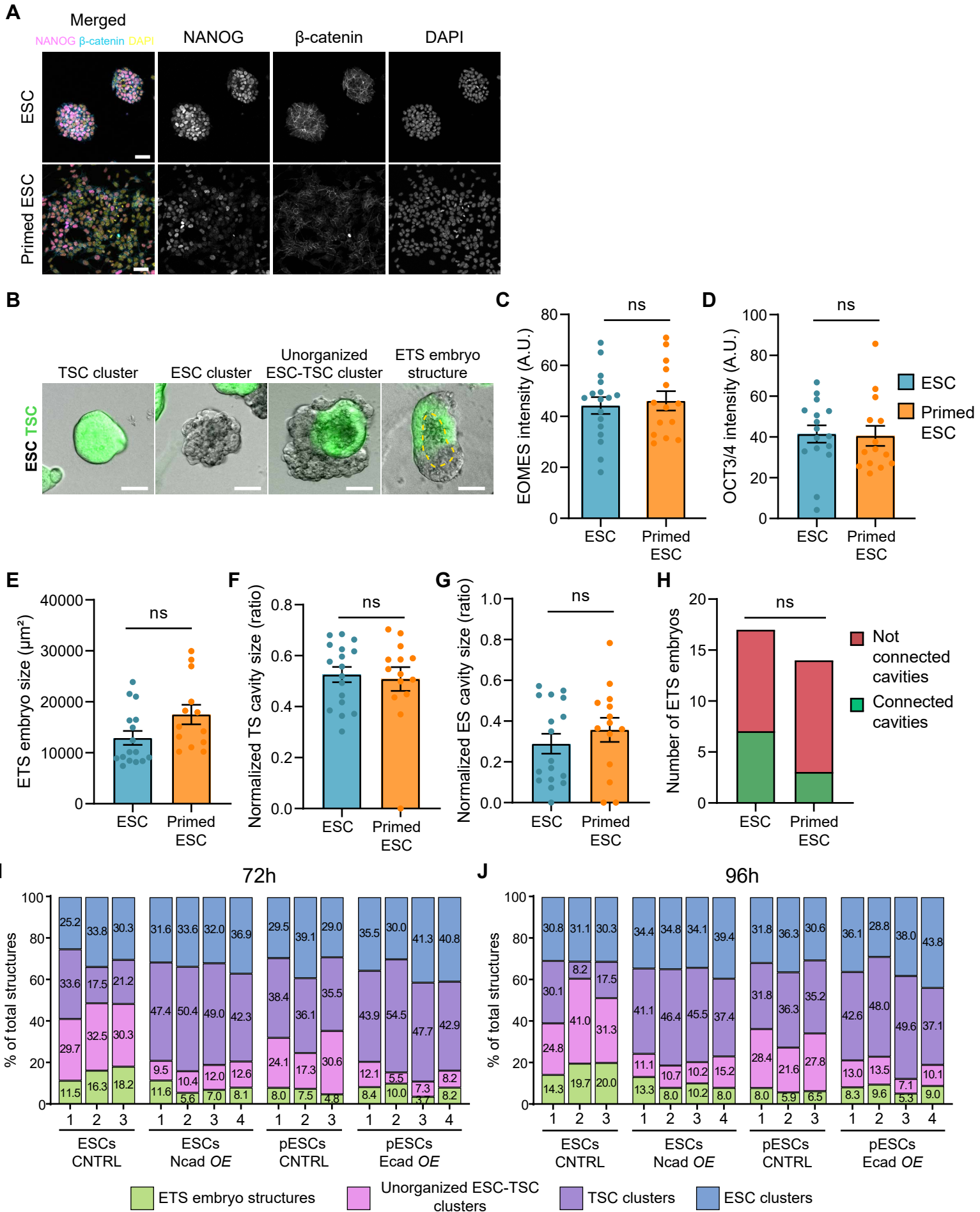


Figure S2

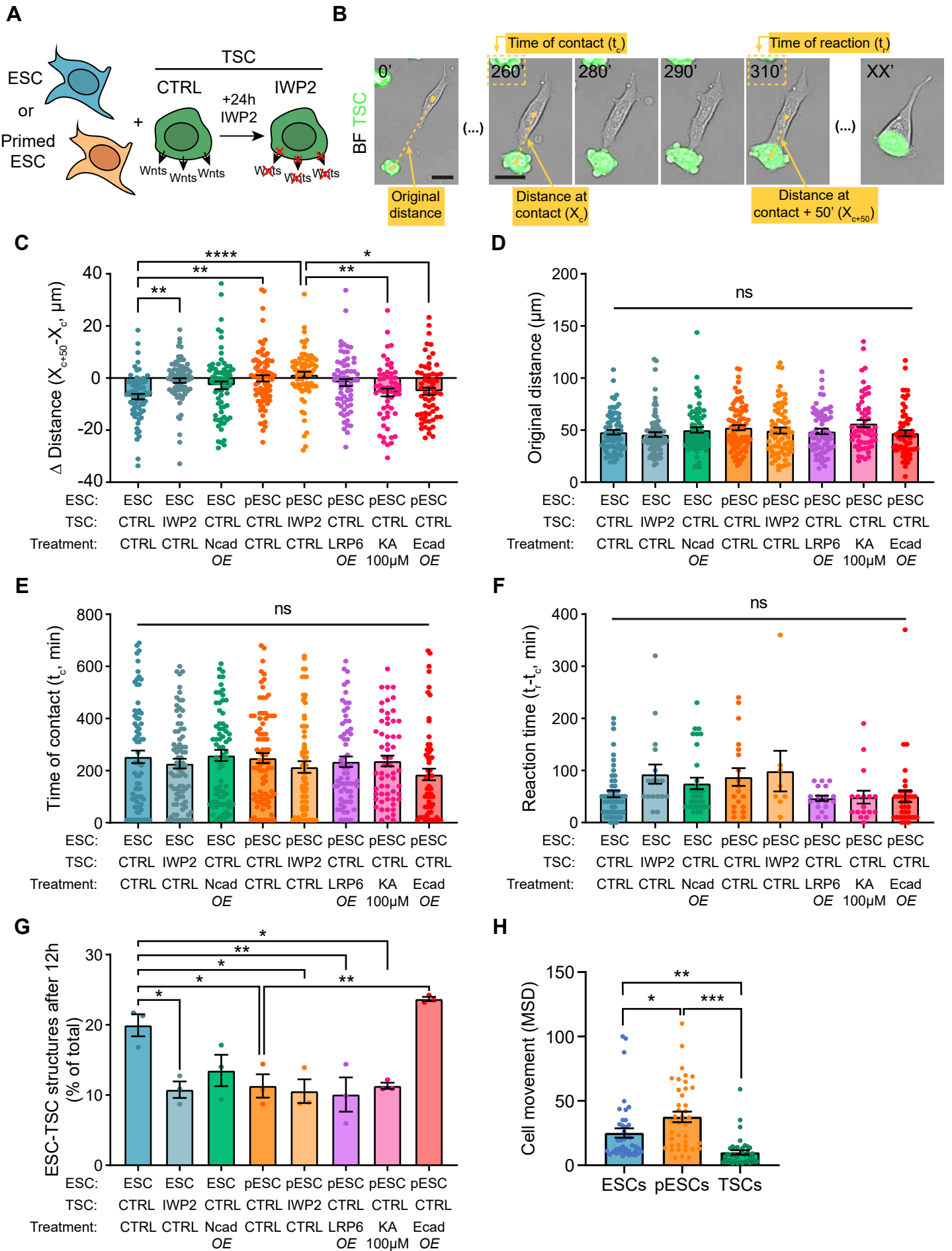
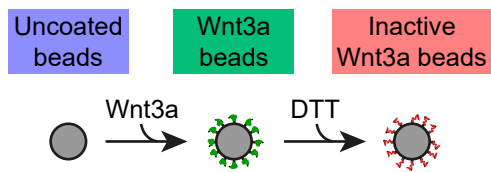
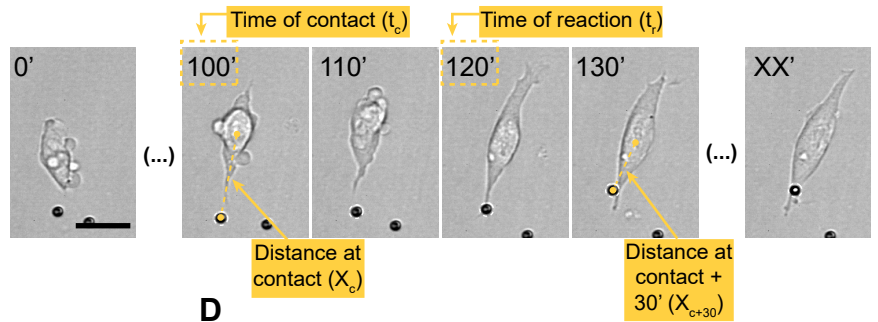


Figure S3

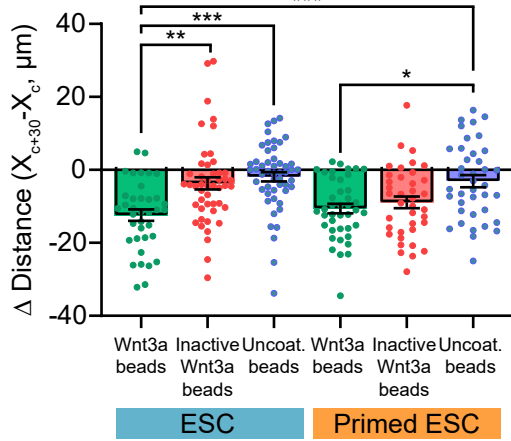
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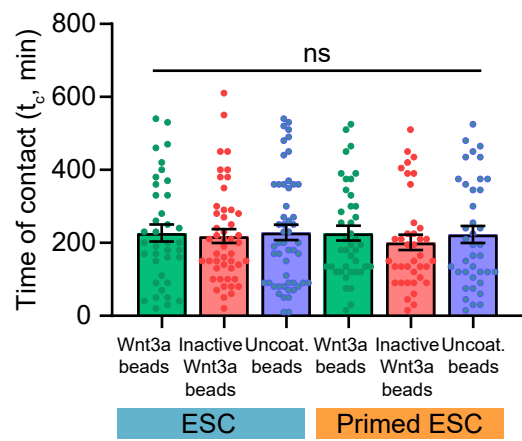
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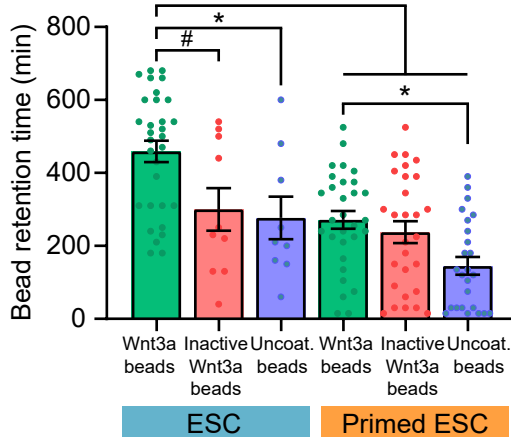
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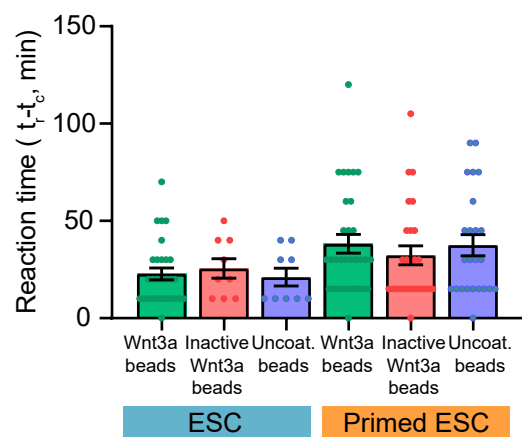
D



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G

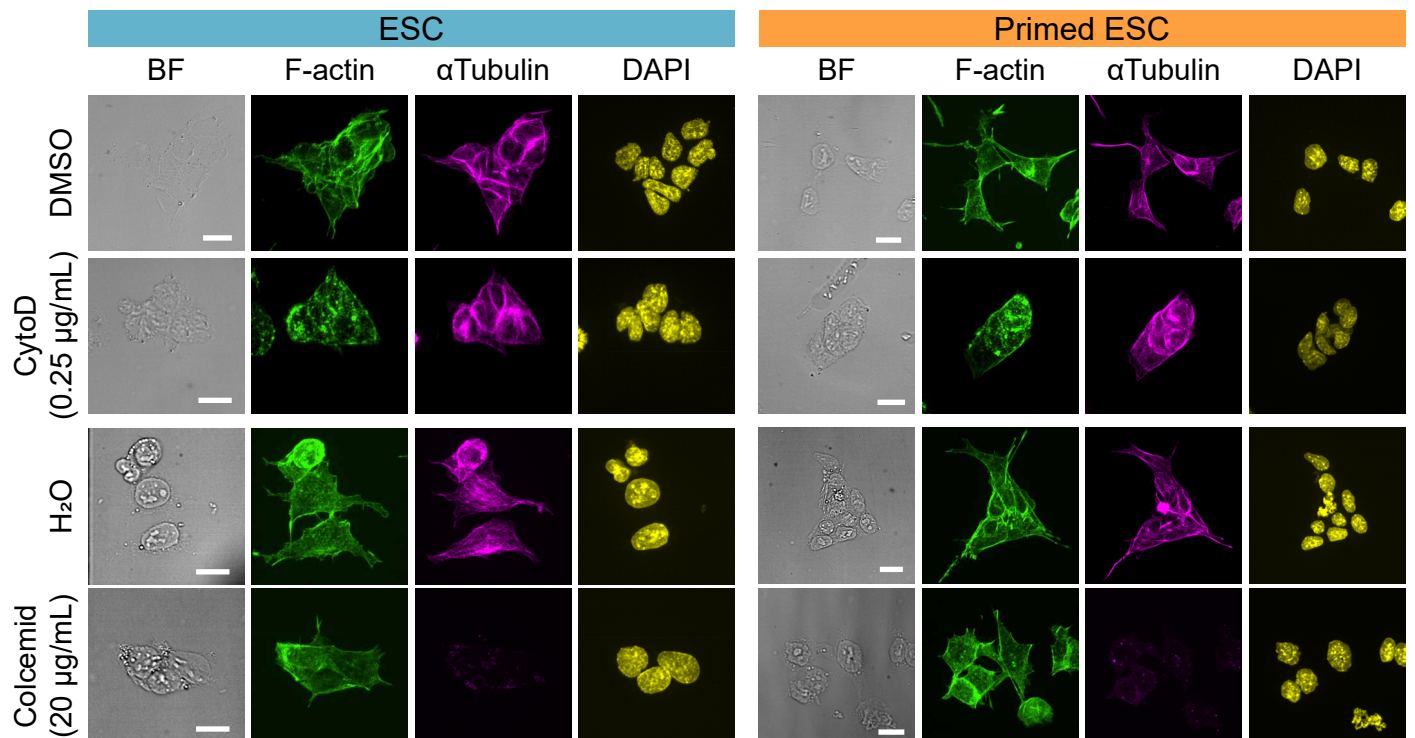


Figure S4

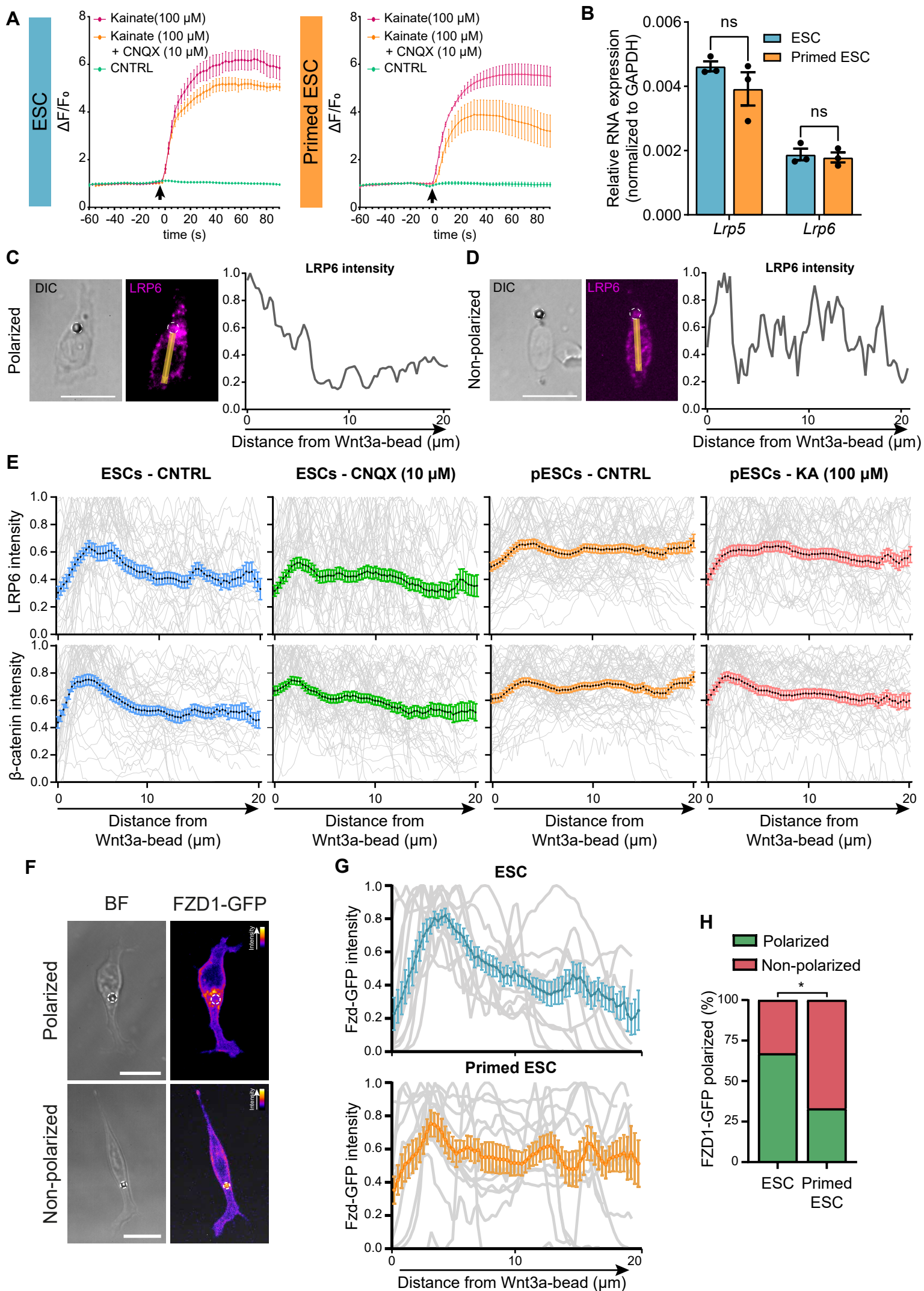
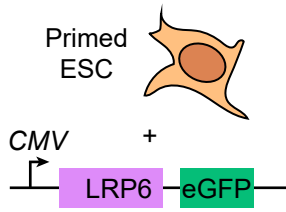
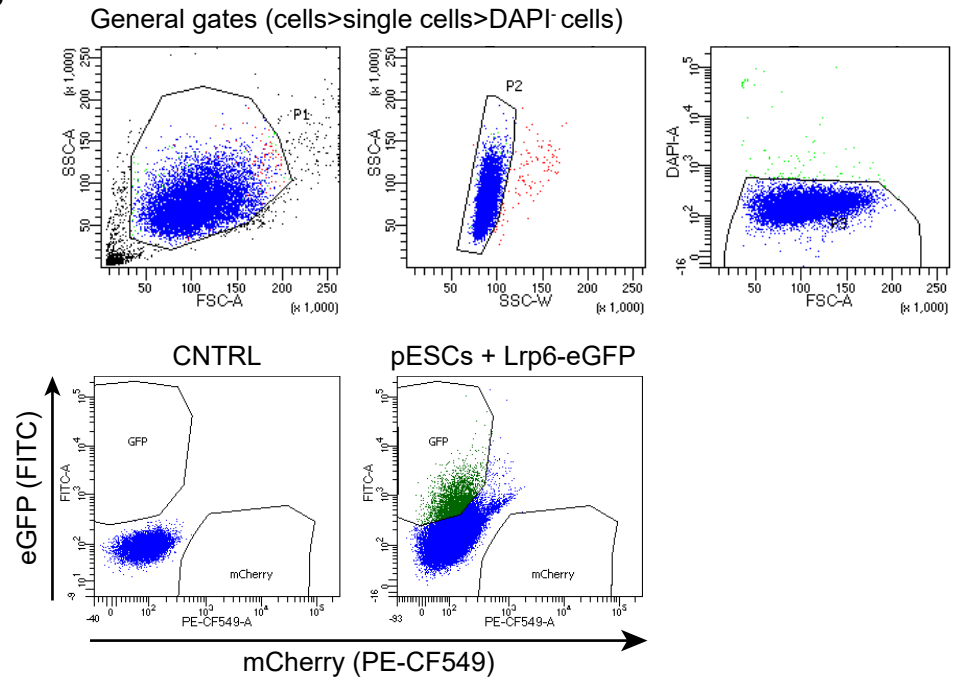


Figure S5

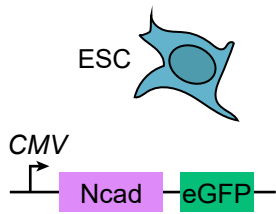
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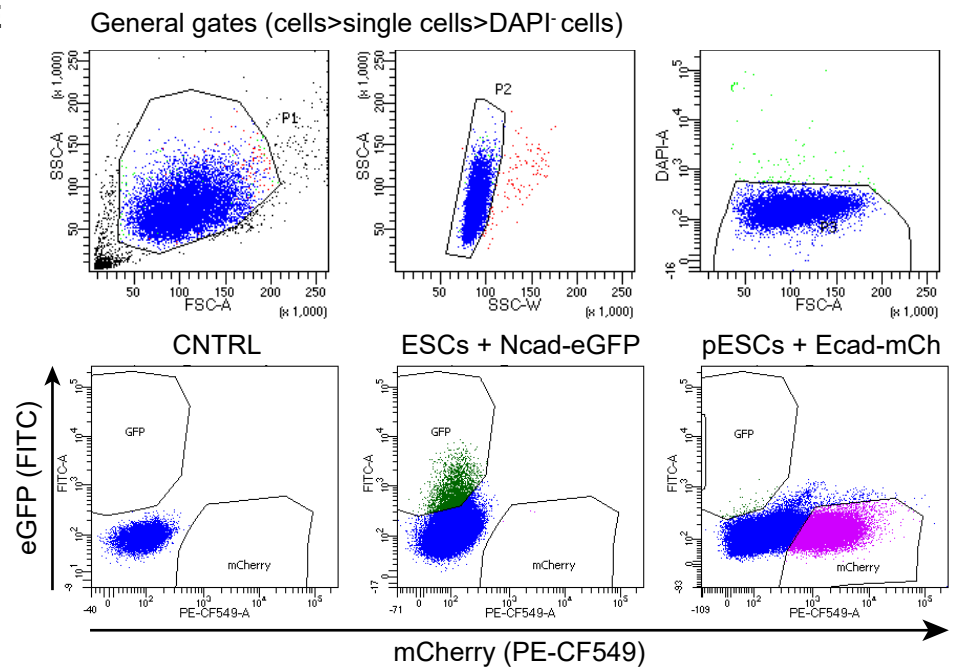
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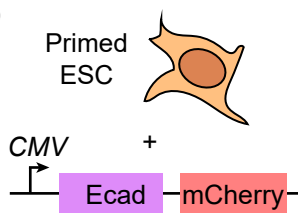


Table 1. Primers used for RT-qPCR

Gene	Forward primer sequence (5' to 3')	Reverse primer sequence (5' to 3')
GriA1	GACAACCTCAAGCGTCCAGAA	CGTCGCTGACAATCTCAAGT
GriA2	GACCAGAACGGAAAACGAAT	TTCAAGCCCAGATGTGTCAT
GriA3	CCTCCTGATCCTCCCAATG	CGCTCTCTATGGGGGACACC
GriA4	AGAAGGACCCAGTGACCAAC	ATGCAGCCAGATTAGCAGTG
GriK1	GCCCCTCTCACCATCACGTAT	TGGTCGATAGAGCCTTGGGCA
GriK2	TTCCTGAATCCTCTCTCCCT	CACCAAATGCCTCCCCTATC
GriK3	GGGTGTCAGCTGTGTCCTCT	GACAGAGCTTTGGGCATCAGT
GriK4	CAAAGGCCTGGGAATGGAGAATA	CCGCCGCCTGGGATGGATA
GriK5	CGACACCAAGGGCTACGGCAT	CCGCCACGAAGACAGCAATGA
Beta-actin	CGTTGACATCCGTAAAGACCT	CAAAGCCATGCCAATGTTGTCTCT
Cdh1	GGTTTTCTACAGCATCACCG	GCTTCCCCATTTGATGACAC
Cdh2	ATCAACCCCATCTCAGGACA	CCATTCAGGGCATTGGATC