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# Ultrastructural analysis reveals abnormal mitochondria in cloned blastocysts

**Marta Czernik [1,3],** Paola Toschi [1], Domenico Iuso [1, 2], Jacek A. Modlinski [3], Pasqualino Loi [1]

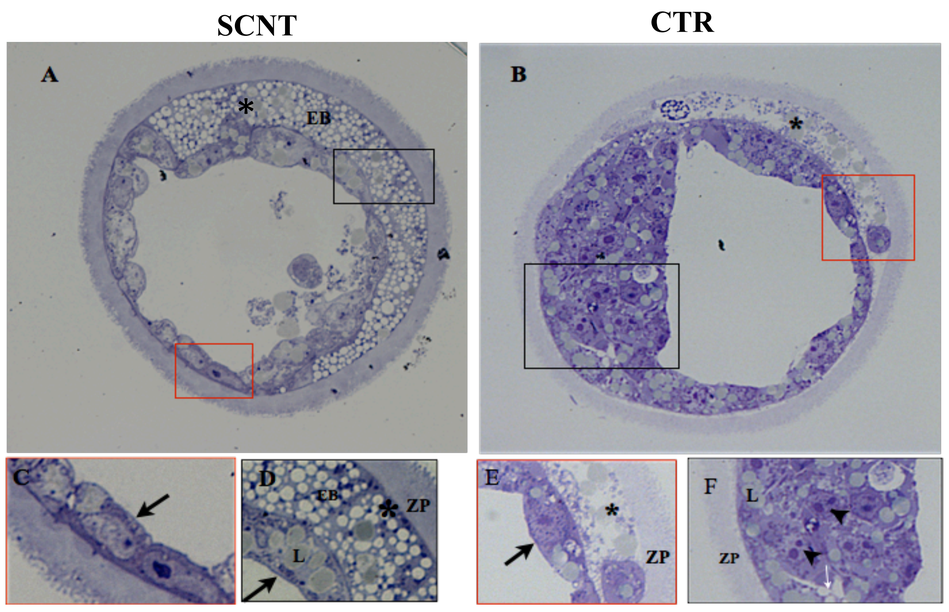
[1] Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Teramo,Via Balzarini 1, 64100 Teramo, Italy
[2] RIKEN BioResource Center, Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305-0074, Japan
[3] Institute of Genetics and Animal Breeding, PAS, Jastrzębiec, Poland

**INTRODUCTION** Somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) is a powerful technique, but still very inefficient despite 20 years passed by since the first cloned mammal was born. We have recently shown that the major cause of abnormalities observed in cloned fetuses are mitochondrial dysfunctions in placenta collected from cloned sheep.

**AIM** Here we wanted to know whether mitochondrial abnormalities are observed already in cloned blastocysts. SCNT and *in vitro* processed (IVP) blastocysts were produced and analysed for mitochondrial structure and functionality.

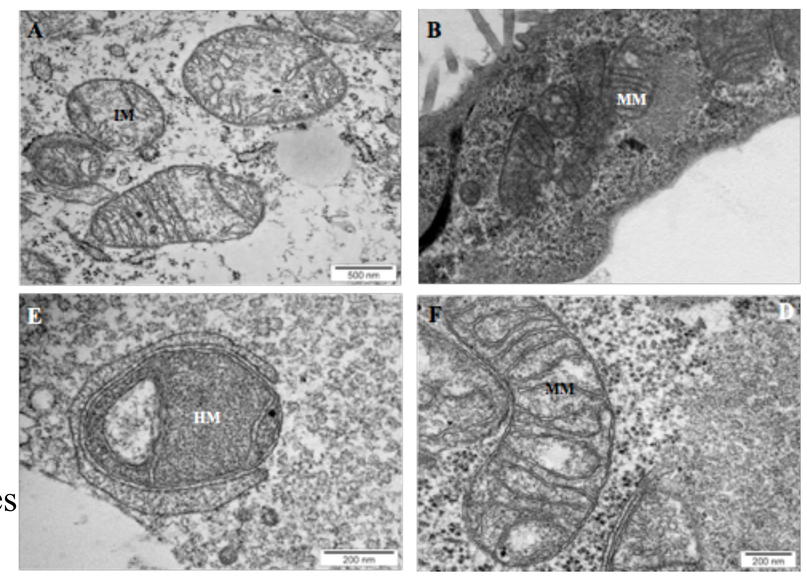
## RESULTS

### Drastic abnormalities in mitochondrial structure in SCNT blastocysts

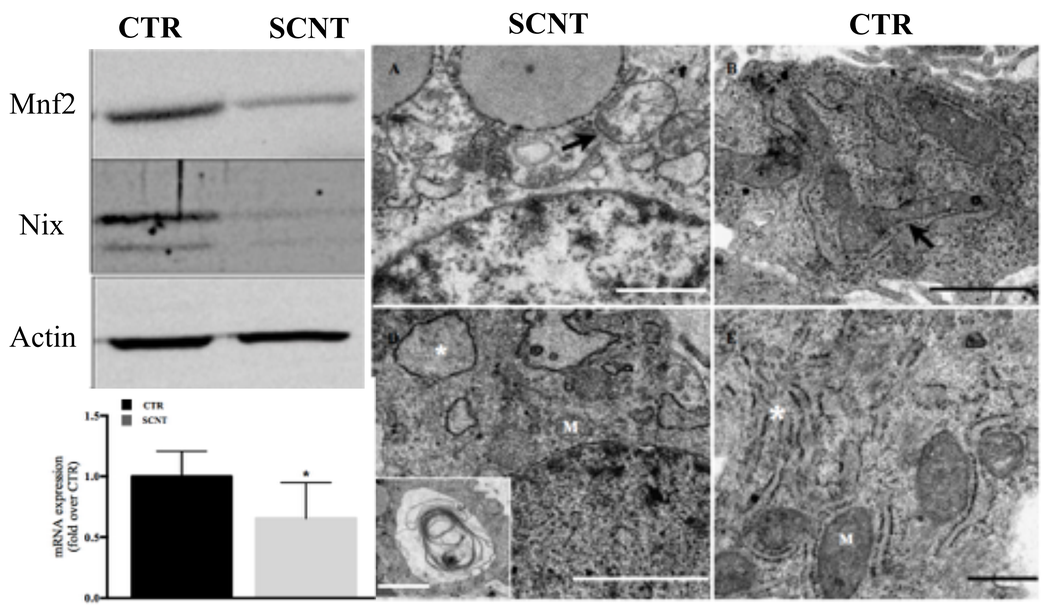



**SCNT blastocysts**

- intact zona pellucida (ZP);
- many lipid droplets (L);
- excluded blastomers (EB)
- accumulation of degenerated material within perivitelline space (*stars A, D*);
- immature mitochondria (IM) (C, E);
- lack of mitochondrial fusion;
- numerous incomplete autophagosomes (E);




### Mitochondrial abnormalities in SCNT blastocysts affect on placenta development







**SCNT placenta**

- very low expression of mitochondrial proteins (Mfn2 and Nix) and mRNA;
- mitochondria radomly dispersed, swollen, fragmented and devoid of cristae (*black arrows*);
- swollen endoplasmic reticulum (*white stars*);
- lack of mitochondrial fusion process;

**CONCLUSION** Mitochondrial abnormalities are already observed in blastocysts stage embryos and affect on poor placenta development. Moreover, mitochondria are strictly controlled by nuclear signals, thus, incomplete nuclear reprogramming in cloned nucleus might be responsible for the impaired mitochondrial function in cloned embryos/fetuses.

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mczernik@unite.it