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## **The role of chromatin at transcription-replication conflicts as a genome safeguard**

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Word count: 3311

33 **ABSTRACT**

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DNA replication ensures the correct copying of the genome and the faithful transfer of the genetic information to the offspring. However, obstacles to replication fork (RF) progression cause RF stalling and compromise efficient genome duplication. Since replication uses the same DNA template as transcription, both transcription and replication must be coordinated to prevent Transcription-Replication Conflicts (TRCs) that could stall RF progression. Several factors contribute to limit the occurrence of such conflicts and their harmful impact on genome integrity. Increasing evidence indicates that chromatin homeostasis plays a key role in the cellular response to TRCs as well as in the preservation of genome integrity. Indeed, chromatin regulating enzymes are frequently mutated in cancer cells, a common characteristic of which is genome instability. Therefore, understanding the role of chromatin in TRC occurrence and resolution may help identify the molecular mechanism by which chromatin protects genome integrity, and the causes and physiological relevance of the high mutation rates of chromatin regulating factors in cancer. Here we review the current knowledge in the field, as well as the perspectives and future applications.

Abstract: 178 words

*Keywords:* transcription-replication conflicts, R-loops, DNA breaks, genome instability, chromatin, epigenetics, cancer,

## 70 **Introduction**

71

72 Genome stability ensures cell viability, even though certain variability is required for  
73 species adaptation and survival. DNA is constantly subjected to either exogenous or  
74 endogenous damaging agents that might result in DNA damage and eventually  
75 genome instability if not properly addressed.

76 In eukaryotes, DNA replication is bidirectional and initiates at multiple origins to  
77 produce a new copy of the whole genome. During this process, replication forks (RFs)  
78 have to deal with multiple obstacles to their progression that may compromise accurate  
79 genome duplication (1,2). Obstacles include DNA-bound proteins, DNA damage,  
80 topological stress, chromatin structure or transcription. Replication and transcription  
81 use the same DNA substrate, and several reports have shown the potential of  
82 transcription to stall DNA replication, thus compromising genome integrity (3–5).  
83 Interestingly, hazardous RF stalling may be further enhanced by the formation of  
84 transcription-associated obstacles, including non-B DNA structures. Consequently,  
85 cells have developed several mechanisms to prevent and solve transcription-  
86 replication conflicts (TRCs).

87 TRCs are actively prevented via different pathways that avoid the formation of  
88 transcription-associated obstacles (2). Nevertheless, when occurring, transcription-  
89 mediated RF stalling may be solved via a coordinated response involving checkpoint  
90 activation, RF stabilization and obstacle removal. Thus, cancer-associated genes as  
91 BRCA1/2 and Fanconi Anemia factors have been shown to play a key role during this  
92 process (6–9). Recently, however, chromatin remodeling has also emerged as a major  
93 player in this response. Indeed, the SWItch/Sucrose Non-Fermentable (SWI/SNF),  
94 INOsitol requiring 80 (INO80) or FAcilitates Chromatin Transcription (FACT) chromatin  
95 remodeling complexes counteract TRC occurrence (10–13). Interestingly, SWI/SNF  
96 components, in particular its main ATPase activity SMARCA4, best known as Brahma-  
97 Related Gene 1 (BRG1), are frequently altered in cancer, reaching mutation  
98 frequencies only surpassed by Tumor Protein P53 (TP53) (14).

99 Increasing evidence suggests that genes highly mutated in cancer play key  
100 roles during tumorigenesis, which may pose an important endogenous instigator of  
101 genome instability. Therefore, understanding the underlying mechanisms through  
102 which cells prevent TRCs from resulting in genome instability-associated diseases is  
103 essential to achieve new therapeutic opportunities against the disease. In this review,  
104 we try to gather our current knowledge on how the chromatin network impacts on TRC  
105 occurrence and resolution to preserve genome stability. Other reviews have been  
106 published on the causes and consequences of TRCs (1,15–17).

## 107 **Transcription as a source of replication stress**

108 The essential fine-tuned process of transcription uses as template the DNA, which has  
109 to be replicated at each cell cycle. Consequently, it is possible that conflict scenarios  
110 between transcription and replication raise during S phase at regions in which both  
111 processes occur concomitantly. Indeed, numerous reports show that transcription is a  
112 potential source of RF stalling and DNA replication stress (1). Thus, the transcription  
113 machinery itself and transcription-induced structures such as DNA supercoiling, non-B  
114 DNA structures (DNA-RNA hybrids; G4s), DNA damage or closed chromatin states  
115 may pose an obstacle to RF progression (Figure 1).

116

### 117 The transcription machinery

118 Similar to tightly-bound proteins, the transcription machinery may become a roadblock  
119 to RF progression. Indeed, yeast mutants undergoing RNA Polymerase II (RNAPII)  
120 retention at chromatin result in DNA replication stress (18) and RNAPII has been  
121 shown to be released from chromatin after replication stress thru a process involving  
122 INO80C and the RNA processing PAF complex in yeast (11). Ongoing RNAPs may  
123 also pause, arrest and/or backtrack when facing DNA damage, from which cells take  
124 advantage by promoting transcription-coupled repair (TCR) (19). In human cells, the  
125 RECQL5 helicase of the RecQ family has been shown to prevent RNAPII backtracking  
126 and promote transcription elongation, thus avoiding TRCs (20,21), and supporting the  
127 view that backtracked RNAPs may be important obstacles to advancing RFs.  
128 Transcription termination factors (TTFs) also prevent RNAPs from becoming a barrier  
129 to replication. Thus, yeast transcription termination mutants affecting RNA 5' and 3'  
130 end processing factors Rna14 and Rna15, Fip1, Usp6/Hrp1, the 5'-3' Exoribonuclease  
131 2 Xrn2 or the RNA helicase Sen1 (ortholog of human Senataxin) present inefficient  
132 termination and transcription-dependent replication hampering (22–24). Altogether, the  
133 data indicate that cells have developed several mechanisms acting at different steps  
134 during the transcription process to avoid that the transcription machinery becomes a  
135 barrier to RF progression.

136

### 137 Transcriptional topological stress

138 Positive and negative supercoiling accumulate ahead and behind RNAP, respectively,  
139 during transcription elongation (25). While positive supercoiling limits further unwinding  
140 of DNA, negative supercoiling can result in DNA alterations making it prone to open  
141 and form non-B DNA structures. On the other hand, positive supercoiling accumulated  
142 between RNAP and an RF advancing in head-on orientation may stall RF progression  
143 without the need of a physical collision between the transcription and replication

144 machineries (Figure 1). Nevertheless, topoisomerases are capable of dealing with  
145 transcription-induced supercoiled DNA structures ensuring they do not compromise  
146 genome integrity (26–29). Therefore, enzymatic activities acting on supercoiled DNA  
147 such as topoisomerases plus their interacting partners might play an important role in  
148 preventing transcription-associated genome instability.

149

#### 150 Co-transcriptional DNA-RNA hybrids

151 Current evidence indicates that nascent transcripts can hybridize with the template  
152 DNA resulting in the formation of a DNA-RNA hybrid, which may further interfere with  
153 the DNA replication process (1) (Figure 1). Hybrids may form during transcription in the  
154 form of an R-loop containing in addition the displaced ssDNA identical to the RNA  
155 moiety of the hybrid. R-loops can also form at the vicinity of double strand breaks  
156 (DSBs) and evidence has also been provided that TRCs may lead to R loops (30,31),  
157 In addition, the cell cycle phase is a major determinant of the type of molecular event  
158 resulting in an R-loop (32,33). R-loops may occur naturally with a physiological role, as  
159 in the S regions of the Immunoglobulin genes. Nevertheless, unscheduled R-loop  
160 formation compromises genome integrity (2). Current data supports the view that  
161 persistent unscheduled R-loop accumulation results in DNA damage mainly as a  
162 consequence of replication blockage, even though other mechanisms, such as the  
163 action of nucleotide excision repair (NER) nucleases XPG or XPF can also cause such  
164 DNA breaks (34). Consequently, cells have developed mechanisms to prevent  
165 unscheduled R-loop accumulation (Figure 1). These strategies include proper  
166 assembly of the messenger ribonucleoprotein (mRNP), activities to resolve the R-loops  
167 as DNA-RNA helicases or ribonuclease H (RNH), which degrades the RNA moiety of  
168 the hybrids, and the DNA Damage Response (DDR), as recently reviewed (35).

169

#### 170 **A role of chromatin in the coordination of transcription and replication**

171 The involvement of chromatin in regulation of gene expression has been largely  
172 explored and several epigenetic mechanisms have been described to help regulate  
173 transcription (36). In the last years, growing evidence indicates that chromatin  
174 homeostasis must also be properly preserved to prevent transcription-associated  
175 genomic instability. DNA methylation, histone post-translational modifications, ATP-  
176 dependent chromatin remodeling and even RNA modifications have been described to  
177 influence TRC-mediated DNA damage (Figure 2).

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181 DNA methylation

182 Initial genome-wide analysis of DNA-RNA hybrids unveiled that they are enhanced at  
183 CpG island (CGI)-promoters and its occurrence correlates with unmethylated states of  
184 CGIs. Indeed, R-loops protect CGI from the methyltransferase 3B1 (DNMT3B1)  
185 activity, a major *de novo* DNMT in early development (37) (Figure 2a). Interestingly,  
186 low R-loop levels lead to high DNA methylation and gene silencing in Amyotrophic  
187 Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) 4 patient cells, as suggested by the observation that DNMTs  
188 bind much more efficiently to dsDNA than to DNA-RNA hybrid-prone sequences (38).  
189 A different study also points to a role for the GADD45 factor in this process (39).  
190 Notably, GADD45A was found to bind R-loop-prone regions next to promoters and  
191 trigger DNA demethylation thru recruitment of Ten-Eleven Translocation 1 (TET1)  
192 (Figure 2a), suggesting that GADD45A might work as an epigenetic reader that  
193 induces promoter CGI demethylation in response to R-loop formation. Thus, R-loops  
194 formed at CGI-promoters seems to favor gene transcription by reducing DNMTs'  
195 affinity to genomic DNA containing DNA-RNA hybrids thus leading to promoter  
196 demethylation.

197

198 Histones and their post-translational modifications

199 Physiological R-loops occurring at promoter regions have been found enriched in  
200 histone post-translational modifications (PTMs) associated with active transcription  
201 (40). In particular, high levels of histone H3 lysine 4 di/trimethylation (H3K4me2/me3),  
202 lysine 9/27 acetylation (H3K9/K27ac) and of certain H3.3 histone variants, but low  
203 histone H3 lysine 9 trimethylation (H3K9me3) are observed close to TSSs at R-loop-  
204 prone promoters. Instead, histone H3 lysine 4 mono-methylation (H3K4me1) and lysine  
205 36 methylation (H3K36me) are enhanced at the R-loop-accumulating sites of such  
206 promoters. On the other hand, R-loops emerging at transcription termination  
207 sequences show an association with increased H3K4me1 levels. Interestingly,  
208 H3K4me has been shown to play a key role ensuring S-phase checkpoint activity and  
209 reliable DNA duplication under replication stress as seen in highly transcribed yeast  
210 genes (41). Histone H3 lysine 9 dimethylation (H3K9me2) has also been reported to  
211 promote efficient transcription termination in mammalian protein-coding genes prone to  
212 R-loop formation at transcription termination sites (TTSs) (42).

213         Unscheduled R-loops have been associated with increases in repressive  
214 epigenetic marks such as histone H3 serine 10 phosphorylation (H3S10P) and  
215 H3K9me2/3 (Figure 2b). R-loop-dependent H3S10P accumulation was found in R-  
216 loop-prone mutants in yeast, *C. elegans* and human cells, suggesting the effect is  
217 conserved among species (43). Further investigation in yeast unveiled that such a

218 modification was causative of the observed genomic instability, as yeast mutants  
219 impaired in histone H3S10P formation result in R-loop accumulation not associated  
220 with increased DNA damage (44). Interestingly, Aurora Kinase A (AURKA) was  
221 recently revealed to mediate R-loop-dependent H3S10P deposition during S phase  
222 and its inhibition results in TRCs and checkpoint activation in MYCN-amplified  
223 neuroblastoma cells (45). Thus, H3S10P and AURKA, might play key roles preventing  
224 transcription-dependent RF stalling and its deleterious consequences in S phase.  
225 Aberrant R-loops have also been reported in triplet-repeat expansions, a feature of  
226 Friedrich's ataxia and Fragile X syndrome that are associated with ectopic repressive  
227 H3K9me2/3 that impedes RNAPII progression and results in gene silencing (46).

228 Linker histone H1, which has been related to chromatin compaction and  
229 heterochromatin, prevents R-loop-mediated DNA damage as well (Figure 2b). Histone  
230 H1 depletion in *Drosophila* results in R-loop-dependent genome instability in  
231 heterochromatin (47), and accumulation of transcription-dependent stalled forks and  
232 DNA damage are observed in histone H1 triple knock-out (TKO) human cells (48).  
233 Therefore, linker histones might help coordinate transcription and DNA replication to  
234 prevent transcription-induced DNA damage.

235

### 236 Chromatin modifiers

237 Genome-wide analyses have revealed that components of COMPASS (RBBP5),  
238 PAF1C (PAF1), SIN3 complex (SIN3A; SAP30; HDAC2), p300 acetyltransferase,  
239 EZH2 methyltransferase and KDM4A and PHF8 histone demethylases are found at  
240 high frequency at R-loop-prone promoters, and higher abundance of PAF1, CTCF and  
241 cohesin components ZNF143 and RAD21 are detected at R-loop-prone TTSs (40).

242 However, deficiencies in several chromatin-modifying activities have been  
243 observed to promote R-loop-dependent genome instability. Regulators of histone  
244 acetylation/deacetylation might play a key role in this process, as several reports have  
245 connected deficiencies in such activities with unscheduled R-loop formation and DNA  
246 damage. Thus, depletion of Sin3A histone deacetylase (HDAC) complex factors (SIN3;  
247 SAP130) as well as histone deacetylation inhibition produced by trichostatin A (TSA),  
248 suberoylanilide hydroxamic acid (SAHA) results in an accumulation of R-loops and R-  
249 loop-dependent DNA damage in human cells (49) (Figure 2c). Similarly, R-loop-  
250 dependent genome instability phenotypes are also induced by deficiencies in sirtuins  
251 (NAD<sup>+</sup>-dependent deacetylases). R-loop-dependent DSBs arise in *hst3* and *hst4* yeast  
252 mutants of the hSIRT6 homologs (50) and in SIRT7-deficient human cells (51). In  
253 human cells the HDAC inhibitor romidepsin also causes R-loop-mediated ssDNA  
254 breaks (52). On the other hand, the Tip60-400 histone acetyltransferase complex

255 associates with genes harboring promoter-proximal R-loops and influence genome-  
256 wide occupancy of polycomb repressor complex (PRC)-2 (PRC2) histone  
257 methyltransferase (53). Deficiency of Bromodomain-containing protein 4 (BRD4), a  
258 reader that recognizes and binds acetylated histones, was also shown to cause an  
259 increase in R-loops, TRCs and DNA damage, consistent with a major role for histone  
260 acetylation state on R-loop homeostasis (54).

261 Chromatin-modifying enzymes regulating other epigenetic marks different from  
262 histone acetylation participate either in this process. PRC1 was reported to act in  
263 parallel with Mdm2, a chromatin modifier modulating PRC-driven histone modifications,  
264 suppressing R-loop formation and promoting productive DNA replication via a direct  
265 impact on histone H2A lysine 118/119 (K118/K119) ubiquitination (55). Indeed, R-loops  
266 drive Polycomb repression at a subgroup of developmental genes (56) (Figure 2c). At  
267 these genes, decreased PRC1 and PRC2 abundance, RNAPII activation and  
268 productive transcript elongation were observed upon R-loop removal. Furthermore, a  
269 connection between R-loop formation and Euchromatic Histone Lysine  
270 Methyltransferase 2 (EHMT2), also known as G9a, has also been described at TTSS  
271 (42) (Figure 2c). At these sites, R-loop formation was suggested to drive G9a  
272 recruitment and results in histone H3K9me2, promoting RNAPII pausing and facilitating  
273 termination.

274

### 275 Histone chaperones

276 In agreement with a major impact of the content of histones and their PTMs, histone  
277 turnover also mediates transcription-associated RF stalling. The histone chaperone  
278 FACT was observed to prevent transcription-mediated genome instability, since its  
279 deficiency results in transcription-associated DNA damage and RF progression  
280 impairment in yeast and human cells (13) (Figure 2d). The observation that the MCM2-  
281 7 helicase dissociates from chromatin in FACT-deficient cells causing loss of ssDNA-  
282 RPA binding and checkpoint activation (57) may be behind the replication deficiency,  
283 even though it needs experimental evidence.

284 FACT and Chromatin Assembly Factor-1 (CAF1) histone chaperones have  
285 been described to be specifically recruited at transcribing loci to facilitate RF  
286 progression (58) (Figure 2d). Notably, CAF-1 depletion was shown to slow down DNA  
287 replication and promote CHK1 phosphorylation at serine 317, a mark associated with  
288 DNA replication stress (59). Similarly, the Anti-Silencing Function 1 (ASF1) factor has  
289 also been implicated in promoting RF progression by driving recycling of H3-H4  
290 tetramers in conjunction with CAF-1 (60). Indeed, ASF1 deficiency promotes  
291 replication-dependent genome instability and sensitizes cells to replication stress-



292 inducing compounds (61,62). The results suggest that histone turnover must be  
293 properly regulated to ensure efficient RF progression, especially at regions enriched in  
294 transcription-associated obstacles.

295

#### 296 ATP-dependent chromatin remodeling

297 Nucleosome positioning on chromatin depends directly on the coordinated action of  
298 histone chaperons and ATP-dependent chromatin remodelers. Consistent with the idea  
299 of a major contribution of chromatin to the resolution of TRCs, remodeling activities are  
300 also emerging as required to prevent transcription-associated genome instability.

301 Indeed, members of different chromatin remodeling families (SWI/SNF, INO80, ISWI)  
302 have been shown to protect against transcription-dependent DNA damage.

303         The SWI/SNF complex, the ATP-dependent chromatin remodeling complex  
304 most frequently altered in cancer (63), has recently being shown to control TRCs (10).  
305 Depletion of BRG1, the main SWI/SNF ATPase, is epistatic to FANCD2 deficiency in  
306 its capacity to help solve TRCs, especially those occurring in a head-on orientation  
307 (Figure 2e). Consistently, BRG1 co-localizes with DNA replication factors and promote  
308 RF progression. In addition, AT-Rich Interaction Domain 1A (ARID1A) and Polybromo  
309 1 (PBRM1), members of the canonical BRG1-associated factor (cBAF) and polybromo  
310 BRG1-associated factor (PBAF) SWI/SNF complex subtypes, respectively, were also  
311 reported to protect from transcription-associated DNA damage. Similarly, ARID1A and  
312 PBRM1 deficiencies also induce R-loop-dependent DNA damage. Additionally, a  
313 recently observed connection between ARID1A and topoisomerase IIa (TOP2A) at  
314 TRCs (64) and high levels of replication stress, micronuclei and R-loops in PBRM1-  
315 deficient human cells (65), further supports the involvement of SWI/SNF at TRCs.  
316 Interestingly, another member of the SWI/SNF family, Alpha Thalassemia/Mental  
317 Retardation Syndrome X-Linked (ATRX), suppress R-loop formation in telomeric  
318 repeats (66). All these factors present high mutation frequencies in malignant cells,  
319 suggesting a possible relation with the high mutation rates observed in cancer.

320         INO80C has been implicated in RNAPII release from chromatin together with  
321 the PAF RNA processing complex thus limiting TRCs in budding yeast (11).  
322 Interestingly, INO80 prevents R-loop-dependent DNA damage in prostate cancer PC3  
323 human cells (12) (Figure 2e), and R-loops promote recruitment of INO80 protein to  
324 chromatin. In agreement, yeast Ino80, the ATPase component of the INO80 complex,  
325 was reported to function in parallel with Isw2, the catalytic component of the ISW2  
326 complex, promoting RF progression (67). Transcription-dependent hyper-  
327 recombination was shown to increase also in yeast cells lacking Isw1, the catalytic  
328 subunit of the yeast ISW1 complex (68). Similar mechanisms might also exist in human

329 cells as the human Isw1 orthologue SMARCA5, best known as SNF2H, the core  
330 subunit in several ISWI-family complexes in human cells, has also been reported to be  
331 recruited to DNA breaks and prevent genome instability (69).

332

### 333 RNA modification and editing

334 Novel regulatory mechanisms involving RNA modification and editing have been  
335 reported as suppressors of unscheduled R-loop formation. Methylation of the N6  
336 position of adenosine (m6A) of RNA has been described to promote co-transcriptional  
337 R-loops at TTSs and, thus, prevent RNAPII readthrough and favor termination (70).  
338 m6A methyltransferase METTL3 depletion results in diminished R-loops at TTSs and  
339 aberrant termination in m6A+ genes. Interestingly, METTL3 has been reported to  
340 methylate m6A in DNA damage-associated RNAs, thus inducing recruitment of the  
341 m6A reader YTHDC1 (71), and that METTL3-m6A-YTHDC1 joint action regulates  
342 DNA-RNA hybrid accumulation at DSBs. Similarly, the “tonicity-responsive enhancer  
343 binding protein” (TonEBP) is able to recognize R-loops and recruit METTL3 and RNase  
344 H1 to promote R-loop suppression (72) (Figure 2f).

345 m6A RNA modification was also identified in DNA-RNA hybrids from human  
346 pluripotent stem cells (73). Such a modification was found to regulate R-loop  
347 accumulation through the cell cycle by promoting m6A+ RNA degradation in dividing  
348 cells, a process involving the m6A reader YTHDF2 (Figure 2f). In *Arabidopsis*, R-loops  
349 promote chromatin silencing via a mechanism involving also m6A RNA modification at  
350 the FLC gene (74).

351 In addition to m6A, methylation of N5 position of cytosine (m5C) in mRNAs  
352 promoted by methyltransferase TRDMT1 also occurs at DSBs (75) (Figure 2f).  
353 Interestingly, m5C increases the affinity of RAD52 recombination factor to DNA-RNA  
354 hybrids, suggesting a direct involvement of the m5C modification in the DDR.

355 Recently, RNA editing by ADAR RNA adenosine deaminase enzymes has also  
356 been unveiled to influence R-loop homeostasis (76). Nuclear-localized ADAR1p110  
357 was shown to mediate R-loop-dependent genome instability at telomeres in cancer  
358 cells carrying non-canonical variants of telomeric repeats (Figure 2f). Notably, editing  
359 of A-C mismatches to I:C matched pairs by ADAR1p110 at DNA-RNA hybrids was  
360 observed to promote R-loop resolution by RNase H2. On the other hand, recent  
361 observations indicate that ADAR2 edits DNA-RNA hybrids to facilitate its dissolution  
362 close to DSBs and promote efficient DNA end resection and repair (77).

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## 366 **Conclusions and future perspectives**

367

368 TRCs are an important endogenous source of DNA damage and genome instability, a  
369 hallmark of cancer cells. Interestingly, the epigenome is emerging as a key regulator of  
370 such TRCs and increasing evidence indicates that the functional chromatin network  
371 needs to be properly preserved to ensure genome integrity. Epigenetic mechanisms  
372 including DNA methylation, histone turnover and PTMs, histone chaperones, chromatin  
373 modifying and remodeling enzymes and RNA modification and edition limit TRCs  
374 helping preserve genome stability. Notably, chromatin factors involved in these  
375 processes are frequently altered in cancer, pointing to a direct connection between  
376 their deficiencies and the transformation process. Defining the molecular basis of this  
377 connection is essential to understand the causes and consequences of genome  
378 instability, frequently associated with cancer and some genetic diseases. Therefore,  
379 determining the underlying molecular mechanisms used by the cell to limit TRCs as a  
380 source of genome instability should help understand the transformation process and  
381 explore new therapeutic approaches of the disease. Future investigations should better  
382 define the impact of the chromatin network on the mechanisms that help prevent and  
383 resolve TRCs, as well as to test novel strategies such as those based on synthetic  
384 lethality, to specifically target malignant cells with high levels of TRC-driven genome  
385 instability. Thus, drugs targeting specific factors involved in this process may be used  
386 to selectively kill cancer cells and improve patient's prognosis.

387

## 388 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

389 A.B.-F and A.A. wrote the manuscript, discussed and agreed with the final version of  
390 this manuscript.

391

## 392 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

393 The authors declare no competing interests.

394

## 395 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

396 Research in A.A. lab is funded by grants from the European Research Council,  
397 the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, the European Union (FEDER) and  
398 Foundation "Vencer el Cancer". A.B.-F. is funded by a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral  
399 contract from the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

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643 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

644

645 **Figure 1. Transcription-associated obstacles to DNA replication.**

646 Transcription occurs at the same template as DNA replication, posing an obstacle to  
647 RF progression that needs to be surpassed to proceed with efficient DNA duplication.

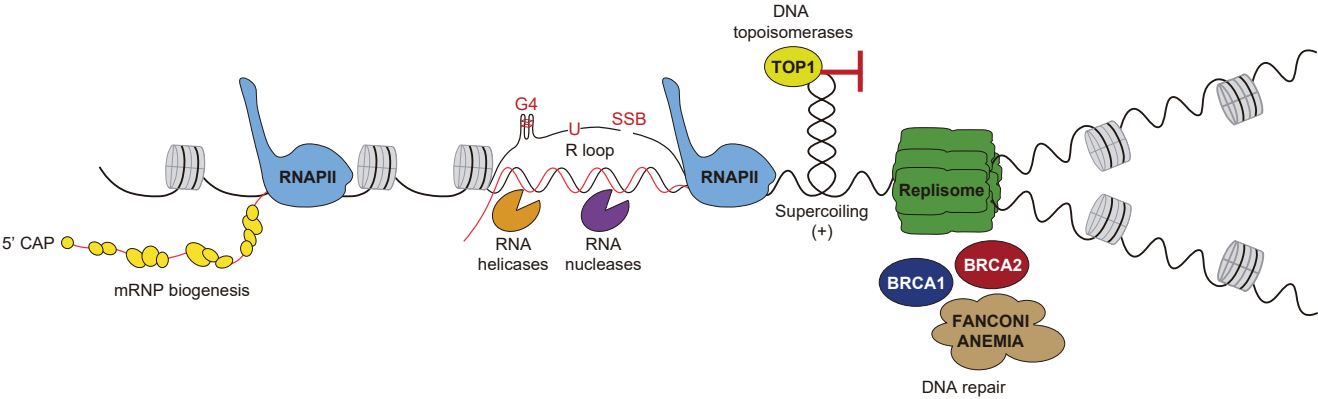
648 The transcription machinery itself is tightly bound to DNA and this may impede RF  
649 progression. In addition, transcription induces the occurrence of additional structures  
650 such as DNA supercoiling, non-B DNA structures (R-loops; G4s), DNA damage or  
651 closed chromatin states that can further hinder DNA replication. Coordinated action of  
652 several cellular activities (messenger ribonucleoprotein (mRNP) biogenesis factors,  
653 RNA helicases, nucleases or topoisomerases) prevents the accumulation of such  
654 structures, and the DNA Damage Response (DDR) helps solve transcription-replication  
655 conflicts (TRCs).

656

657 **Figure 2. Epigenetic mechanisms at transcription-replication collisions.**

658 Multiple chromatin factors contribute to the prevention of TRCs to warrant genome  
659 integrity. **a**, Promoter proximal R-loops prevent DNMTs and promote DNA  
660 demethylation of CpG islands (CGI) and gene activation. **b**, Linker histones prevent  
661 unscheduled R-loops, which induce repressive epigenetic marks that may block RF  
662 progression. Aurora-A phosphorylate histone H3 serine 10 in S phase in response to  
663 R-loop formation. G9a and PRC are well-known interphase methyltransferase  
664 complexes that could be involved in histone H3 di/tri-methylation of lysine 9 in  
665 response to unscheduled R-loop accumulation. **c**, FACT and CAF-1 histone chaperons  
666 promote RF progression at transcribing loci. Evidence also indicates that ASF-1 could  
667 have a role in this process. **d**, Histone deacetylation complexes (Sin3A, Sirtuins)  
668 protect against R-loop-mediated genome instability. BRD4, which binds histone  
669 acetylated residues through its bromodomain, prevent R-loop-dependent genome  
670 instability. Polycomb-repressive complexes 1 and 2 (PRC1, PRC2) and the G9a  
671 complex are also connected to R-loop metabolism. **e**, ATP-dependent chromatin  
672 remodelers have a major impact on TRCs. The SWI/SNF complex would act together  
673 with FANCD2 preventing TRCs, while INO80 complex prevent unscheduled R-loop  
674 formation and promote RNAPII release in response to TRCs. **f**, RNA modifications also  
675 influences R-loop occurrence. METTL3 methylates N6 position of adenosine  
676 ribonucleotides that have been suggested to drive cell cycle regulation of R-loop  
677 homeostasis through YTHDF2. TonEBP binds R-loops and recruits METTL3.  
678 Methylation of N5 position of cytosine ribonucleotide by TRDMT1 was shown to  
679 increase RAD52 affinity for DNA-RNA hybrids.

Figure 1



**Figure 2**

