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Control of nucleus positioning in mouse oocytes

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**Abstract** 

The position of the nucleus in a cell can instruct morphogenesis in some cases, conveying

spatial and temporal information and abnormal nuclear positioning can lead to disease. In

oocytes from worm, sea urchin, frog and some fish, nucleus position regulates embryo

development, it marks the animal pole and in *Drosophila* it defines the future dorso-ventral

axis of the embryo and of the adult body plan. However, in mammals, the oocyte nucleus is

centrally located and does not instruct any future embryo axis. Yet an off-centre nucleus

correlates with poor outcome for mouse and human oocyte development. This is surprising

since oocytes further undergo two extremely asymmetric divisions in terms of the size of the

daughter cells (enabling polar body extrusion), requiring an off-centring of their

chromosomes. In this review we address not only the bio-physical mechanism controlling

nucleus positioning via an actin-mediated pressure gradient, but we also speculate on

potential biological relevance of nuclear positioning in mammalian oocytes and early

embryos.

Key words: mouse oocyte, nucleus, actin, advection, active diffusion, early embryo

development

Introduction

Regulation of nuclear position is essential for the achievement of a variety of cellular and

developmental functions. In the female gamete of most species, nuclear positioning close to

the oocyte cortex prepares for the very asymmetric divisions allowing the maintenance of

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