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# The Bmp signaling pathway regulates development of left-right asymmetry in amphioxus

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## Abstract

Establishment of asymmetry along the left-right (LR) body axis in vertebrates requires interplay between Nodal and Bmp signaling pathways. In the basal chordate amphioxus, the left-sided activity of the Nodal signaling has been attributed to the asymmetric morphogenesis of paraxial structures and pharyngeal organs, however the role of Bmp signaling in LR asymmetry establishment has not been addressed to date. Here, we show that Bmp signaling is necessary for the development of LR asymmetric morphogenesis of amphioxus larvae through regulation of Nodal signaling. Loss of Bmp signaling results in loss of the left-sided expression of *Nodal*, *Gdf1/3*, *Lefty* and *Pitx* and in gain of ectopic expression of *Cerberus* on the left side. As a consequence, the larvae display loss of the offset arrangement of axial structures, loss of the left-sided pharyngeal organs including the mouth, and ectopic development of the right-sided organs on the left side. Bmp inhibition thus phenocopies inhibition of Nodal signaling and results in the right isomerism. We conclude that Bmp and Nodal pathways act in concert to specify the left side and that Bmp signaling plays a fundamental role during LR development in amphioxus.

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