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Title	Biochemical properties of fission yeast homologous recombination enzymes
Authors	Hideo Tsubouchi, Bilge Argunhan, Hiroshi Iwasaki
Citation	Current Opinion in Genetics & Development, Vol. 71, p. 19-26
Pub. date	2021, 12
DOI	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gde.2021.06.006
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2	Biochemical properties of fission yeast homologous recombination enzymes
3	(short title: Biochemistry of fission yeast recombination)
4	
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14	
15	Summary
16	Homologous recombination (HR) is a universal phenomenon conserved from viruses
17	to humans. The mechanisms of HR are essentially the same in humans and simple
18	unicellular eukaryotes like yeast. Two highly diverged yeast species, Saccharomyces
19	cerevisiae and Schizosaccharomyces pombe, have proven exceptionally useful in
20	understanding the fundamental mechanisms of eukaryotic HR by serving as a
21	source for unique biological insights and also complementing each other. Here, we
22	will review the features of S. pombe HR mechanisms in comparison to S. cerevisiae
23	and other model organisms. Particular emphasis will be put on the biochemical
24	characterization of HR mechanisms uncovered using <i>S. pombe</i> proteins.
25	
26	Key words:
27	Rad51, Dmc1, fission yeast, homologous recombination, DNA double-strand break
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29	

#### 1 Introduction

2

One of the biggest threats to the genome are DNA double-strand breaks (DSBs),
which strongly induce genome rearrangements. Homologous recombination (HR) is
central to maintaining genome integrity because it provides the only means to
accurately repair DSBs, which is in contrast to non-homologous end joining, an
alternative DSB repair pathway known to be more error prone.

8 Generation of single-stranded DNA (ssDNA) at DSB ends promotes usage of 9 HR for DSB repair [1]. This involves unwinding of duplex DNA and strand-specific 10 degradation where 5'-ended strands are selectively resected. Exposed 3'-ended 11 ssDNA serves as a loading site for homologous recombinases (homologues of 12 bacterial RecA). Homologous recombinases cooperatively bind ssDNA and form a 13 helical nucleoprotein filament [2]. This filament conducts homology search and 14 invades duplex DNA once homology is identified, forming a displacement loop (D-15 loop). Repair synthesis begins from the 3'-end of the invading strand while the 16 opposite end, the leading edge of strand exchange known as a branch, is subjected to regulation that determines D-loop stability [3]. If the branch moves toward the 3' 17 18 end of the invading strand, the invading strand eventually dissociates from the target duplex, and having been extended, the released ssDNA can anneal to the other end 19 20 of the DSB, sealing the break. Alternatively, the D-loop can be further stabilized if the 21 other end of the DSB also anneals to its complementary strand of the target duplex 22 (i.e., the displaced strand). This leads to a stable recombination intermediate called a 23 double Holliday junction (HJ), which is the predominant species observed in the 24 budding yeast Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Single HJs are more common in the 25 fission yeast Schizosaccharomyces pombe [4]. HJs can be resolved by structure-26 specific endonucleases called resolvases (HJ resolution). Double HJs can also be 27 disentangled by dissociating and decatenating the heteroduplexes (HJ dissolution) 28 [3].

Two highly diverged yeast models, *S. cerevisiae* and *S. pombe*, have proven exceptionally useful in understanding the fundamental mechanism of eukaryotic HR Although they share many common characteristics, these two organisms also provide unique insights into the mechanisms of HR. Here, we review the features of

- 1 S. pombe HR in comparison to S. cerevisiae and other model organisms, with
- 2 particular emphasis on the biochemical properties of HR enzymes.
- 3

## 4 Prelude to HR: exposing ssDNA at a DSB end

5 Like many eukaryotic species, S. pombe has a set of proteins involved in end 6 resection of DSBs [5]. The most prominent factors among them are the Mre11-7 Rad50-Nbs1 complex (MRN) and its activator Ctp1 (CtIP in humans). In S. 8 cerevisiae, the Ctp1 ortholog Sae2 is practically dispensable for general resection of 9 DSB ends to produce 3'-ended ssDNA [6], while Ctp1 and CtIP are considered 10 essential [5]. MRN-Ctp1 is primarily responsible for the initial short-range resection, 11 which is succeeded by two long-range exonucleases, Exo1 and Dna2-Rgh1 [5]. 12 Interestingly, Rad52, a major auxiliary factor of Rad51 (see below), restricts ssDNA 13 formation by inhibiting the Dna2-Rqh1 pathway [7]. All Ctp1 orthologs (including 14 Sae2) are indispensable for promoting the MRN-dependent processing of DSB ends 15 that are covalently attached to topoisomerase-family proteins such as Top1, Top2, 16 and the meiotic topoisomerase-like protein Spo11, as well as ends that are occluded 17 by KU and RPA complexes [5]. 18 Ctp1 is by and large a disordered protein with its conserved,  $\alpha$ -helical N-

19 terminus forming a homotetramer [8]. Multivalent interaction of Ctp1 with DNA allows 20 tethering of two DNA molecules, or DNA bridging, which may contribute to efficient 21 DSB repair. Recently, two mechanisms critical for stimulating the endonuclease 22 activity of Mre11 by Ctp1 have been identified [9,10]. The first mechanism involves 23 DNA damage-induced phosphorylation of Ctp1 and its binding to the Nbs1-FHA 24 domain, triggering the association between MR and Ctp1. The second involves the 25 very end of the C-terminus of Ctp1; a peptide consisting of only 15 amino acids of 26 the C-terminus is essential and sufficient for stimulating the Mre11 endonuclease, 27 and this mechanism is conserved in humans [10]. 28

29 HR during the mitotic cell cycle: Rad51 and its many auxiliary factors

30 Overview

1 Consistent with observations in *S. cerevisiae*, *S. pombe* strains lacking Rad51

2 display severe sensitivity to DNA damaging agents but are nevertheless viable [11],

3 which is in contrast to the embryonic lethality observed in mammals [12].

Furthermore, *Sp*Rad51 forms nucleoprotein filaments akin to *Sc*Rad51 and *Hs*Rad51
[13].

6 Recombinational DNA repair in *S. pombe* is dependent on a variety of 7 evolutionarily conserved auxiliary factors that function with Rad51 [14]. As is the 8 case in S. cerevisiae, both Rad52 and the Swi2/Snf2-family DNA translocase Rad54 9 are essential for Rad51-dependent DNA repair in S. pombe, and Rad52 also has 10 additional roles in Rad51-independent DNA repair [15,16]. Rad55-Rad57 are both Rad51 paralogues and Rad51-dependent DNA repair is reduced, but not abolished, 11 in their absence [17,18]. A similar reduction in Rad51-dependent DNA repair is 12 13 observed in the absence of Swi5-Sfr1, and based on the observation that the rad57 14 *sfr1* $\Delta$  double mutant phenocopies *rad51* $\Delta$ , it was proposed that Rad55-Rad57 and 15 Swi5-Sfr1 function in parallel to promote Rad51-dependent DNA repair [19]. Other 16 than the genetic analysis suggesting that the Shu complex functions in an early 17 stage of HR [20], perhaps in collaboration with Rad55-Rad57 [21], little is known 18 about its function.

19 There are two interesting differences in Rad51 regulation that sets *S. pombe* 20 apart from S. cerevisiae. The first concerns the Swi5-Sfr1 complex. Although first identified in S. pombe [19], Swi5-Sfr1 orthologues have been shown to promote HR 21 22 in a variety of organisms including S. cerevisiae, mice, and humans, firmly 23 establishing Swi5-Sfr1 as a widely conserved Rad51 activator [22]. However, while 24 S. pombe Swi5-Sfr1 potentiates both Rad51 and Dmc1, the meiosis-specific RecA 25 orthologue [23], the S. cerevisiae orthologue Mei5-Sae3 is meiosis-specific and only 26 stimulates Dmc1 (discussed below) [22]. By contrast, mammalian SWI5-SFR1 27 promotes RAD51-dependent DNA repair like its S. pombe orthologue [22]. The 28 second difference of note is the regulation of SpRad51 by Fbh1, an F-box containing DNA helicase [24]. F-box proteins are the specificity-conferring E3 ubiquitin ligases 29 30 of the Skp1–Cullin–F-box protein (SCF) complex, which ubiquitylates proteins to 31 target them for proteasomal destruction [16]. While Fbh1 is conserved in humans

1 [25] and has been shown to regulate *Hs*RAD51 through similar mechanisms [26,27],

- 2 S. cerevisiae apparently lacks an Fbh1 homologue.
- 3

### 4 Biochemical characterization of SpRad51 and its regulation

Biochemical reconstitutions demonstrated that SpRad51 drives the pairing of ssDNA 5 6 with dsDNA and subsequent strand exchange in a homology-dependent manner 7 [13]. Bacterial RecA drives branch migration over an ssDNA-dsDNA junction in a 8 process known as four-strand exchange, leading to the formation of HJ 9 recombination intermediates [28]. SpRad51 was the first eukaryotic homologous 10 recombinase shown to possess this activity, except the reaction proceeded with 11 opposite polarity (3'-5' direction) to RecA: similar observations were also made with 12 HsRAD51 [29]. Furthermore, the analysis of SpRad51-driven strand exchange by real-time fluorescence resonance energy transfer (FRET)-based techniques 13 14 provided strong evidence for the existence of two distinct recombination 15 intermediates: a paranemic joint, in which the ssDNA is complexed with the 16 homologous dsDNA but does not stably pair with the complementary strand of the 17 duplex; and a plectonemic joint, in which the ssDNA is stably base paired and 18 intertwined with the complementary strand of the duplex [30,31]. 19 The most extensively characterised auxiliary factor in S. pombe is Swi5-Sfr1. 20 Initial biochemical reconstitutions demonstrated that Swi5-Sfr1 stimulates Rad51-21 driven DNA strand exchange by stabilising Rad51-ssDNA filaments and potentiating 22 the Rad51 ATPase [23,32]. Kinetic analysis of DNA strand exchange suggested that 23 Swi5-Sfr1 stimulates maturation of the paranemic intermediate into the plectonemic 24 intermediate, as well as the ATP hydrolysis-dependent release of the non-25 complementary strand that signifies completion of DNA strand exchange [30]. 26 Mechanistically, circular dichroism spectroscopy experiments indicated that Swi5-27 Sfr1 elicits a change in configuration of the nucleotides in the Rad51 filament [33], 28 and FRET analysis suggested that Swi5-Sfr1 induces the extended form of the 29 filament that represents the active state [31]. Swi5-Sfr1 has a modular structure: the 30 intrinsically disordered N-terminal half of Sfr1 (Sfr1N) is responsible for interacting 31 with Rad51 via two distinct sites, while the C-terminal half of Sfr1 in complex with 32 Swi5 (Swi5-Sfr1C), which forms a parallel coiled-coil heterodimer, functions as the

Rad51 activator [34,35]. It was proposed that Sfr1N plasters along the side of the
Rad51-ssDNA filament, which allows the complementary geometry of Swi5-Sfr1C to
insert into the grooves of the filament, leading to its stabilisation [36]. This
stabilisation antagonises the disruption of Rad51 filaments by RPA [32], arguing for
its physiological importance. This is bolstered by the fact that cells lacking Sfr1 show
a reduction in DNA damage-induced Rad51 foci [37,38], which are cytological
manifestations of nucleoprotein filaments at sites of ongoing DNA repair.

8 Much like its *S. cerevisiae* orthologue, *Sp*Rad52 possesses ssDNA annealing 9 activity [39] and can promote Rad51 filamentation on RPA-coated ssDNA [32], 10 indicating that it is a bonafide recombination mediator. Although the intrinsic 11 mediator activity of *Sp*Rad52 is relatively weak in comparison to *Sc*Rad52, this basal 12 activity is substantially enhanced by the presence of Swi5-Sfr1, pointing towards 13 synergism between the two auxiliary factors [32].

14 Rad51 paralogues are notorious for their biochemical intractability and there 15 are currently no studies detailing the biochemical characterisation of SpRad55-16 Rad57. However, we recently reported that a Rad55-Rad57-dependent mechanism 17 suppresses the DNA damage sensitivity associated with defects in the physical 18 interaction of Swi5-Sfr1 with Rad51. Indeed, partially purified Rad55-Rad57 interacted with purified Swi5-Sfr1, suggesting that, while capable of functioning 19 20 independently [19], the two auxiliary factors collaborate to promote Rad51dependent DNA repair [35]. As for SpRad54, it was recently shown to interact with 21 22 Rad51 and stimulate its strand exchange activity [38], mirroring results obtained with 23 orthologous systems [14]. Notably, an evolutionarily conserved protruding acidic 24 patch (PAP) of Rad51 was shown to be essential for the interaction with Rad52 and 25 important for the interactions with both Rad55-Rad57 and Rad54, indicating that 26 multiple auxiliary factors utilise the same motif to interact with Rad51 in S. pombe 27 [38]. Mutation of the PAP in ScRad51 also sensitises cells to DNA damage (B.A., 28 unpublished data), arguing that this motif has an evolutionarily conserved role in 29 promoting HR.

Unlike the auxiliary factors described above, Fbh1 functions as an anti recombinase [40–42], negatively regulating Rad51 by disrupting the Rad51
 nucleoprotein filament. Biochemical reconstitutions revealed that Fbh1 disassembles

1 Rad51 filaments and functions as a E3 ubiquitin ligase to facilitate ubiquitylation of

2 Rad51; importantly, Fbh1-dependent filament destabilization is antagonized by Swi5-

3 Sfr1 [43].

4

## 5 HR during meiosis: Rad51 and Dmc1

#### 6 **Overview**

7 Dmc1 is the meiosis-specific RecA orthologue found in many (but not all)

8 eukaryotes, including S. pombe [44]. However, unlike in S. cerevisiae where the

9 absence of Dmc1 causes severe cell cycle arrest/delay at meiotic prophase, the

10 meiotic cell cycle is only slightly delayed and spores are viable in the *S. pombe* 

11 *dmc1*<sup>Δ</sup> mutant [44–46]. The cell cycle arrest/delay phenotype of the S. cerevisiae

12 *dmc1*<sup>Δ</sup> mutant is thought to be due to mechanisms that suppresses Rad51 during

13 meiosis [46]. Thus, it is likely that *S. pombe* does not possess such mechanisms.

14 Meiotic cell cycle arrest is not caused by the *dmc1* mutation in *Arabidopsis thaliana* 

15 while the absence of Dmc1 leads to meiotic prophase arrest and subsequent

16 apoptosis in mice [47–49]. In contrast to  $dmc1\Delta$ , the absence of Rad51 leads to a

17 drastic reduction in spore formation viability, suggesting a predominant role for

18 Rad51 in *S. pombe* meiosis [50]. The absence of both Rad51 and Dmc1 confers a

19 further reduction in spore formation and viability, pointing towards some functional

20 overlap between them.

Swi5-Sfr1 in *S. pombe* is the counterpart of *S. cerevisiae* Mei5-Sae3 (Sfr1 and
Swi5 correspond to Mei5 and Sae3, respectively). While Mei5-Sae3 is meiosisspecific and functions exclusively with Dmc1, Swi5-Sfr1 also functions with Rad51 to
promote HR in vegetative cells (discussed above). In *S. cerevisiae*, the localization
of Dmc1, Mei5, and Sae3 to meiotic chromosomes as foci is mutually dependent
[51,52], suggesting that Mei5-Sae3 promotes Dmc1 filament formation/stability.
Based on biochemical reconstitutions (discussed below), similar results are expected

in S. pombe.

The Hop2-Mnd1 complex (Meu13-Mcp7 in *S. pombe* but referred to as Hop2-Mnd1 hereafter) functions as another auxiliary factor [53,54]. The absence of this complex compromises Dmc1 functionality in both yeasts, leading to a reduction in homologous chromosome pairing [53,55]. In *S. cerevisiae*,  $hop2\Delta/mnd1\Delta$  mutants

1 show meiotic cell cycle arrest with a robust accumulation of unrepaired DSBs,

2 reminiscent of  $dmc1\Delta$  [55]. Importantly, the absence of these proteins leads to the

3 chromosomal accumulation of Dmc1 in *S. cerevisiae*, suggesting a role downstream

4 of Dmc1 nucleoprotein filament formation. Although Hop2-Mnd1 is meiosis-specific

5 in both yeasts , HOP2-MND1 is produced in vegetative cells in mice, where it

6 functions as an activator of RAD51 as well [56]. Mouse HOP2-MND1 also plays a

7 role in telomere maintenance [57].

8 Unlike in *S. cerevisiae*, Rdh54, a homolog of Rad54, is meiosis-specific in *S.* 

9 *pombe,* although deleting *rdh54*<sup>+</sup> does not confer a major meiotic defect [58].

10 Deleting both *rad54*<sup>+</sup> and *rdh54*<sup>+</sup>, however, causes a severe meiotic HR defect,

11 suggesting some functional redundancy during meiosis. Yeast two hybrid

12 experiments suggested preferential binding of Rad54 to Rad51 and Rdh54 to Dmc1

13 [58]. The much milder meiotic defect of  $rad54\Delta$  compared to the  $rad51\Delta$  mutant, as

seen in *S. cerevisiae* [59,60], might imply that either Rdh54 can also function with

15 Rad51 or Dmc1-Rdh54 can substitute for Rad51.

16

## 17 Biochemical characterization of meiotic HR

Dmc1 exhibits ATP-dependent ssDNA binding and forms nucleoprotein filament
structures similar to Rad51 [13,23]. Dmc1 also drives ATP-dependent four-strand
exchange, but the polarity (5'-3' direction) is opposite to Rad51 and the same as
RecA [29]. Analogous to Rad51, Dmc1-driven strand exchange is greatly stimulated
by the addition of its auxiliary factors, which include Swi5-Sfr1, Hop2-Mnd1, and
Rdh54.

24 Swi5-Sfr1 stimulates Dmc1-driven DNA strand exchange by promoting Dmc1 25 nucleoprotein filament formation/stability and stimulating the Dmc1 ATPase [23,61]. 26 Swi5-Sfr1 serves as a much better mediator to Dmc1 than to Rad51, efficiently 27 facilitating the loading of Dmc1 onto RPA-coated ssDNA. Mei5-Sae3 also functions 28 as a mediator for Dmc1 [62], suggesting that this function of Swi5-Sfr1 is 29 evolutionarily conserved. In stark contrast to Rad51-driven DNA strand exchange, 30 Rad52 appears to inhibit the activity of Dmc1 [61]. 31 Hop2-Mnd1 is another major auxiliary factor of Dmc1. Hop2-Mnd1 facilitates

32 the association of the Dmc1 nucleoprotein filament with dsDNA in a homology-

1 independent manner [63]. Hop2-Mnd1 greatly stimulates strand exchange by Dmc1 2 via a mechanism that is distinct from Swi5-Sfr1; Hop2-Mnd1 facilitates the initiation 3 step of strand exchange while Swi5-Sfr1 stimulates subsequent strand transfer [63]. 4 The stimulation of strand transfer by Swi5-Sfr1 might be related to stabilization of the Dmc1 nucleoprotein filament, consistent with its mediator function. Unlike Swi5-Sfr1, 5 6 Hop2-Mnd1 does not display mediator activity, does not stabilize the Dmc1 7 nucleoprotein filament, and does not protect the Dmc1 filament from displacement by 8 RPA. Consistent with these complementary attributes, simultaneous incubation of 9 these two auxiliary factors with Dmc1 synergistically stimulates Dmc1-driven strand 10 exchange. Finally, SpRdh54 has been shown to stimulate D-loop formation by Dmc1 11 in a ATP-dependent manner, which mirrors results obtained with ScRdh54 [2,64]. 12 SpRdh54 also removes Dmc1 from dsDNA [64].

13

#### 14 Maturation of recombinants: resolving intermediates

Branch migration is a critical determinant for formation of Holliday junctions (HJs). S. 15 16 pombe has Fml1 and Fml2, orthologues of human FANCM, a tumour-suppressor gene product [65]. Fml1 is an ATP-dependent 3'-to-5' DNA helicase/translocase that 17 18 preferentially destabilizes D-loop/HJ structures by dissociating the invading strand [66]. Thus, meiotic crossover formation is elevated in the absence of Fml1 [67]. 19 20 In S. cerevisiae, double HJs, the major meiotic HR intermediates, can be 21 separated into two dsDNA molecules through dissolution or resolution. In dissolution, 22 Bloom-related helicases with the help of a type III topoisomerase dissolve double 23 HJs without using endonucleolytic activity. There are three general eukaryotic HJ 24 resolvases: Mus81-Eme1 (Mms4 in S. cerevisiae), Slx1-Slx4, and Gen1 [68]. S. 25 pombe lacks Gen1 and SpSIx1-SIx4 does not resolve HJs [69]. Furthermore, Mus81-26 Eme1 primarily resolves nicked HJs, which are supposedly major meiotic HR 27 intermediates [4]. However, Mus81-Eme1 can also resolve intact HJs to the level 28 comparable to the bacterial RuvC resolvase [70]. Thus, single intact HJs are likely to 29 be primarily dealt with by Mus81-Eme1 in S. pombe. 30

#### 31 Conclusions

1 Although both S. cerevisiae and S. pombe are very successful model organisms, each has its own unique features. In S. pombe, Ctp1 is indispensable for efficient 2 3 DSB end resection and Rad51 is subjected to positive and negative regulation by 4 Swi5-Sfr1 and Fbh1, respectively. These features are reminiscent of vertebrate HR. 5 In the later step of HR, however, multiple endonucleases that act on HR 6 intermediates, as seen in the human system, only exist in S. cerevisiae. Thus, the 7 two yeasts complement each other with regards to HR research. Furthermore, S. pombe has the RNA interference and related heterochromatin formation 8 9 mechanisms that S. cerevisiae lacks; it would be interesting to understand how such 10 fundamental differences in DNA structure influence HR. As we are witnessing an 11 ever-increasing number of DSB repair genes that only exist in higher eukaryotes. 12 there is certainly a limitation to using these yeast models. Two prominent examples 13 are BRCA1 and BRCA2, which are encoded by human tumor suppressor genes 14 whose mutation dramatically increases the risk of breast and ovarian cancer [71]. Nonetheless, as seen in the recent advances reviewed here, S. pombe will remain a 15 16 rich source of insight into the fundamental principles of HR mechanisms, which we 17 are far from having understood completely.

18

## 1 Fig. 1 Homologous recombination steps and fission yeast recombination

## 2 proteins

3 Homologous recombination steps represent the combined view of *S. cerevisiae* and

4 *S. pombe* models. *S. pombe* proteins whose activity was validated using purified

5 materials are shown in bold. *S. pombe* proteins whose involvement in a particular

6 step is implicated based on genetic observations in *S. pombe* and/or biochemical

7 reconstitutions with *S. cerevisiae* proteins are shown in regular font. *S. cerevisiae* 

8 protein names can be found in parentheses only when they are different from *S*.

9 pombe names.

10

11

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- 12 patch completely abolished Rad51-dependent DNA repair, despite the mutant Rad51
- 13 protein being completely functional. This acidic patch of Rad51 was shown to be

14 critical for the binding of Rad52 to Rad51, and important for the binding of Rad55-

- 15 Rad57 and Rad54 to Rad51, demonstrating that multiple auxiliary factors bind the
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- 23 its two key auxiliary factors: Swi5-Sfr1 and Hop2-Mnd1. Whereas Swi5-Sfr1 was
- 24 found to foster Dmc1-ssDNA nucleoprotein filament formation and promote filament
- stability, Hop2-Mnd1 had little effect on Dmc1 filaments. Hop2-Mnd1 could
- 26 nevertheless strongly stimulate the ability of Dmc1-ssDNA filaments to engage
- 27 homologous dsDNA molecules. Combining the two auxiliary factors led to a
- 28 synergistic stimulation of Dmc1-driven strand exchange, indicating that Swi5-Sfr1
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7 conversion at stalled replication forks and suppress crossing over in mitotic DSB

8 repair. Purified C-terminally truncated Fml1 exhibited HJ branch migration, D-loop

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16 How S. pombe produces crossovers during meiosis is not well known. It was

17 proposed that Mus81-Eme1 primarily resolves nicked HJ, which explains

18 predominant formation of crossovers in meiotic DSB repair. This paper identified the

19 robust activity of resolving intact HJs by Mus81-Eme1, which is comparable to the

20 archetypal HJ resolvase RuvC. This versatility of Mus81-Eme1 may not only be

21 relevant to meiotic recombination but also to mitotic recombination and DNA

22 replication.

23

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Figure