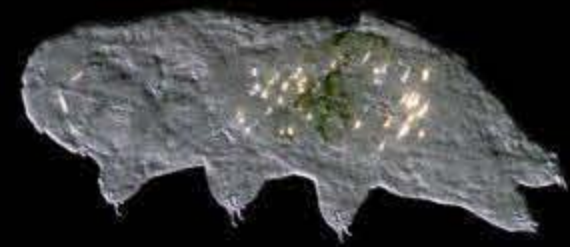
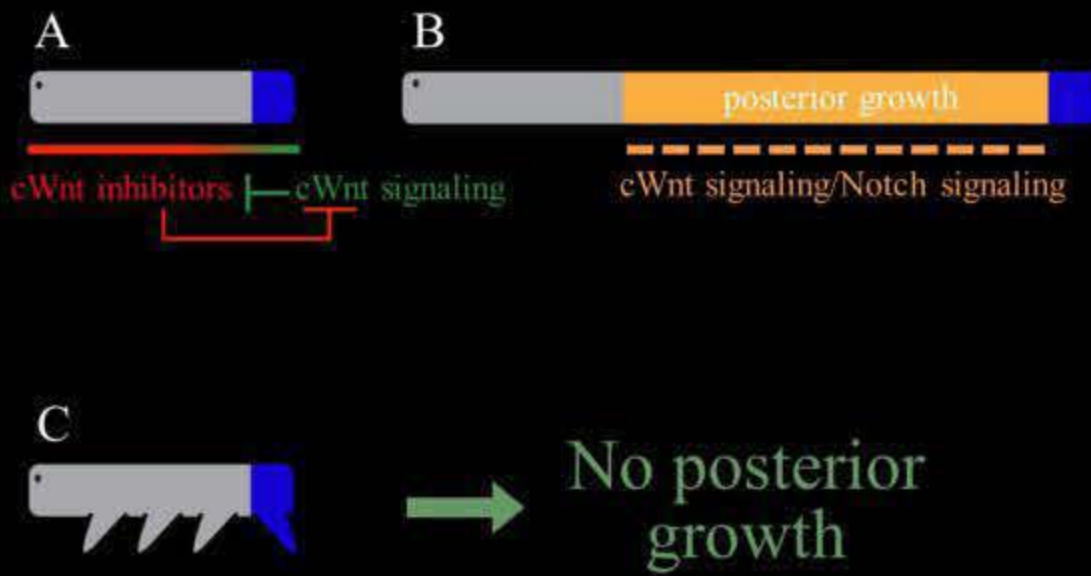


Investigating the roles of the canonical Wnt and Notch signaling pathways in establishment of the tardigrade anteroposterior axis

Raul Chavarria | Frank W. Smith



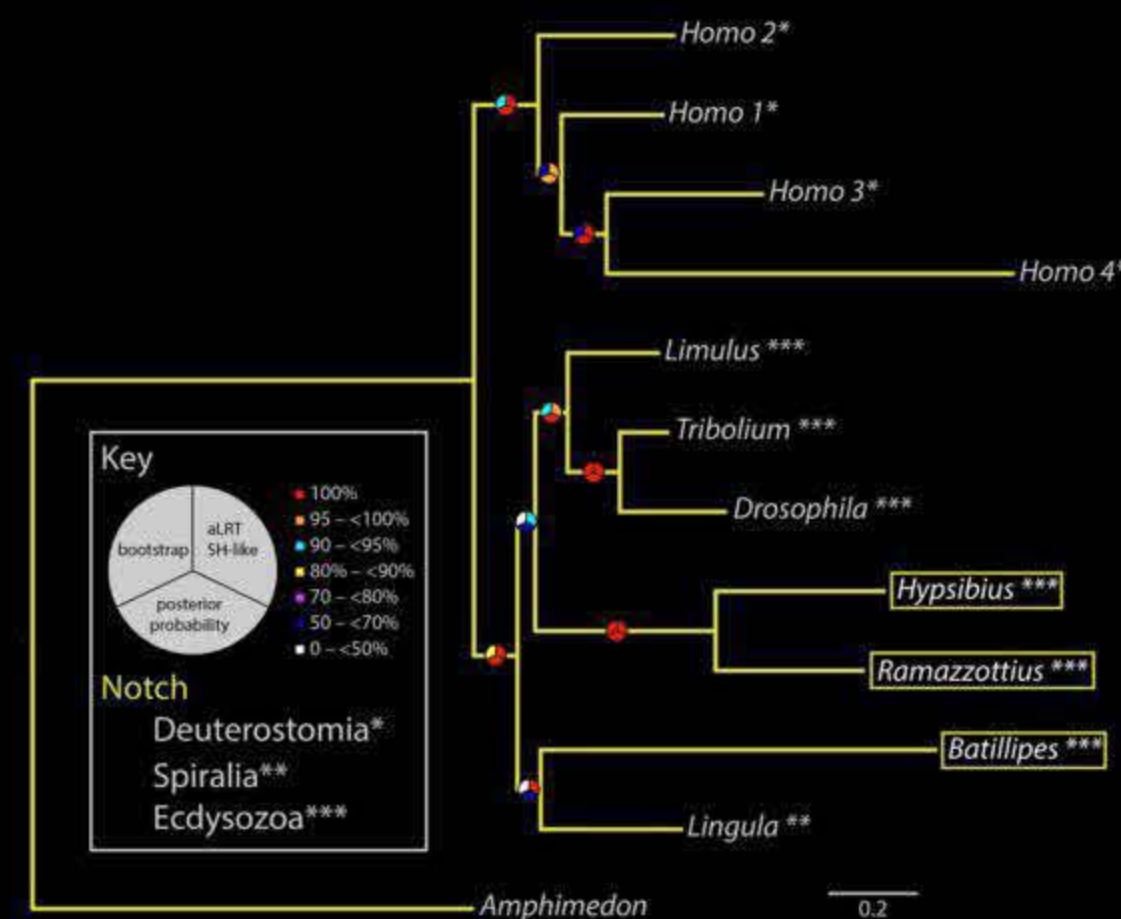
Introduction: Canonical Wnt (cWnt) signaling establishes the A/P axis in many animals (A). Later, the cWnt pathway interacts with the Notch signaling pathway to regulate posterior growth (B). Tardigrades lack posterior growth (C) but retain posterior identity.



Aim 1: Determine whether cWnt signaling establishes the highly compact A/P axis in tardigrades.

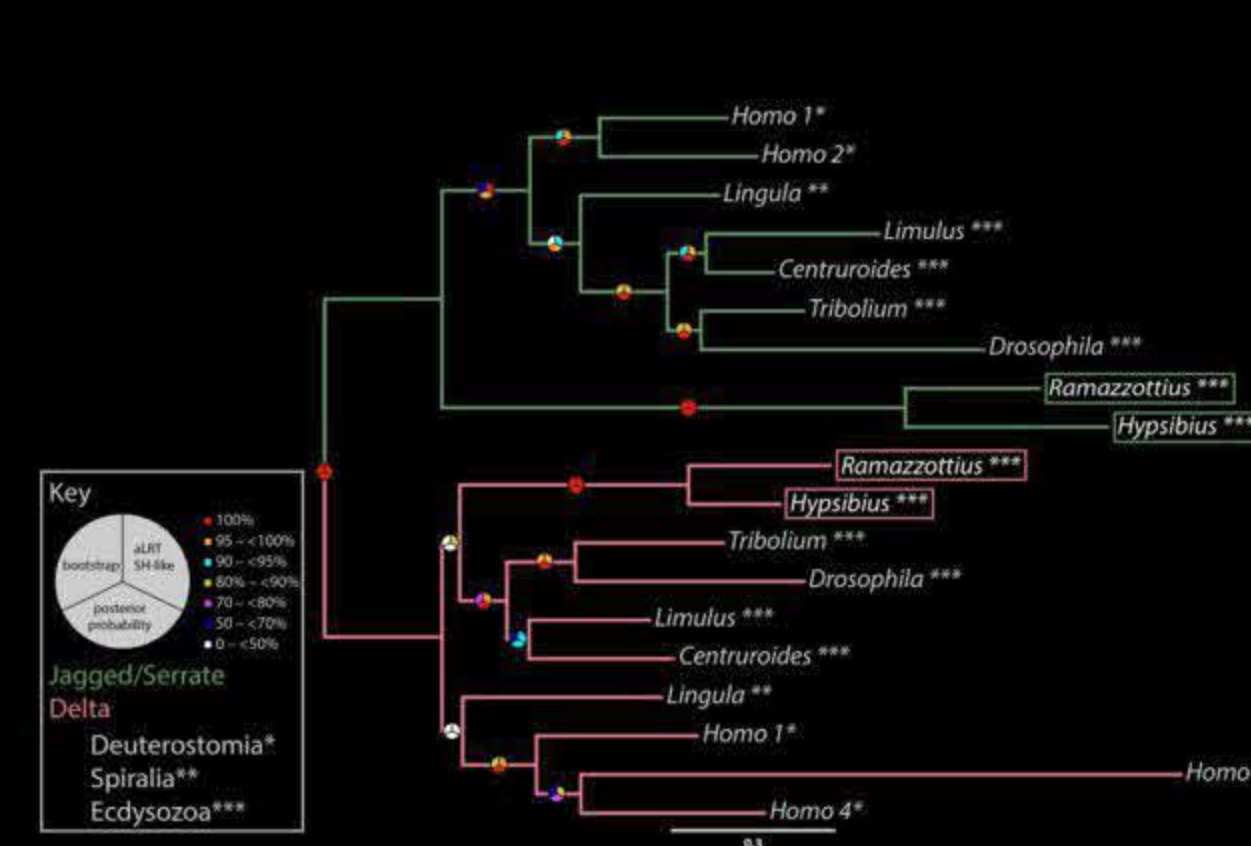
Aim 2: Determine the role of the Notch signaling pathway during establishment of the A/P axis in tardigrades.

Part I: Tardigrades retain the receptor component of the canonical Notch signaling pathway.



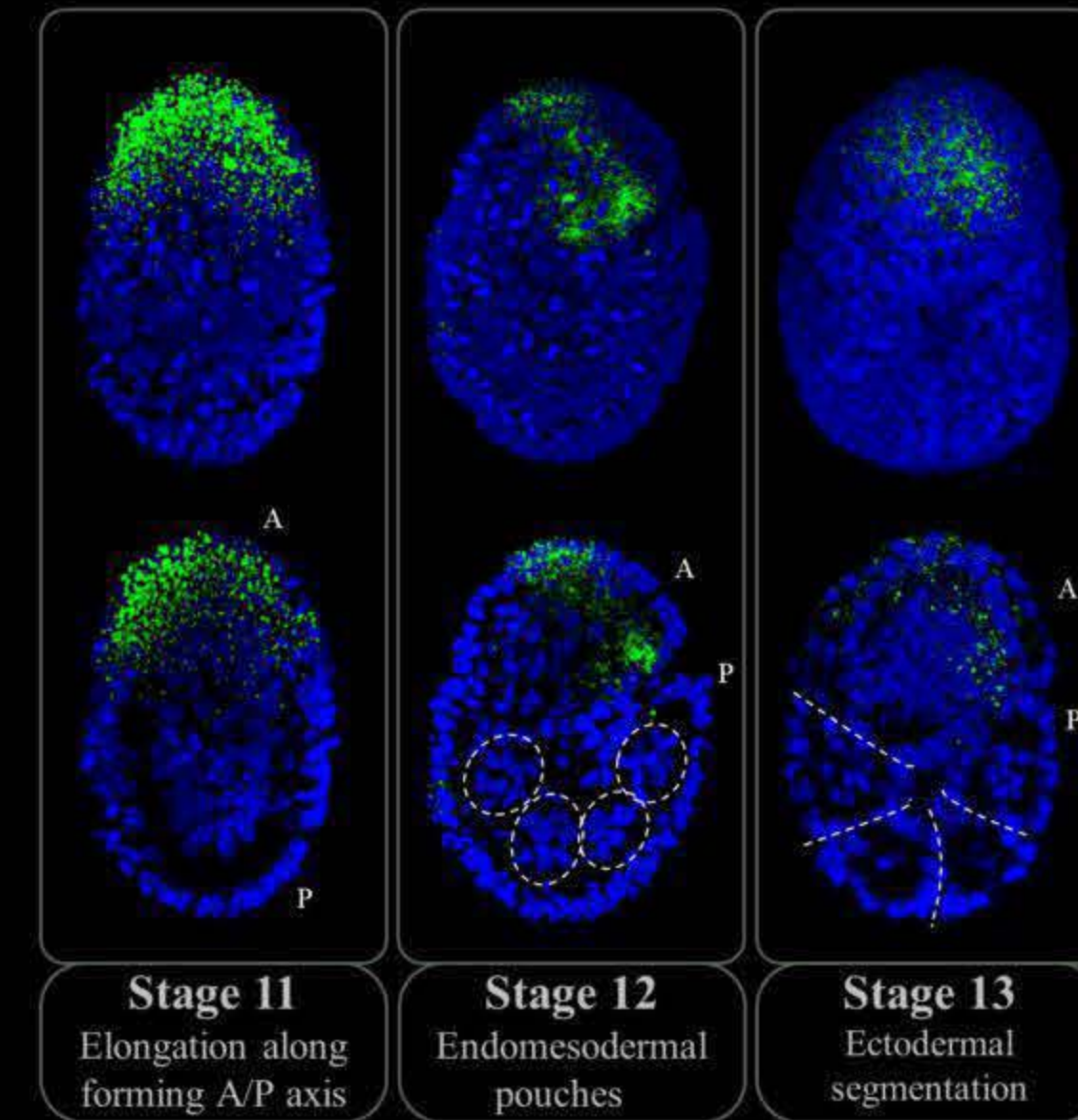
Tardigrade genes are boxed. Spiralian, ecdysozoan, and deuterostome genes are included. Bootstrap support out of 500 replicates.

Part II: Tardigrades have both DSL class ligands.



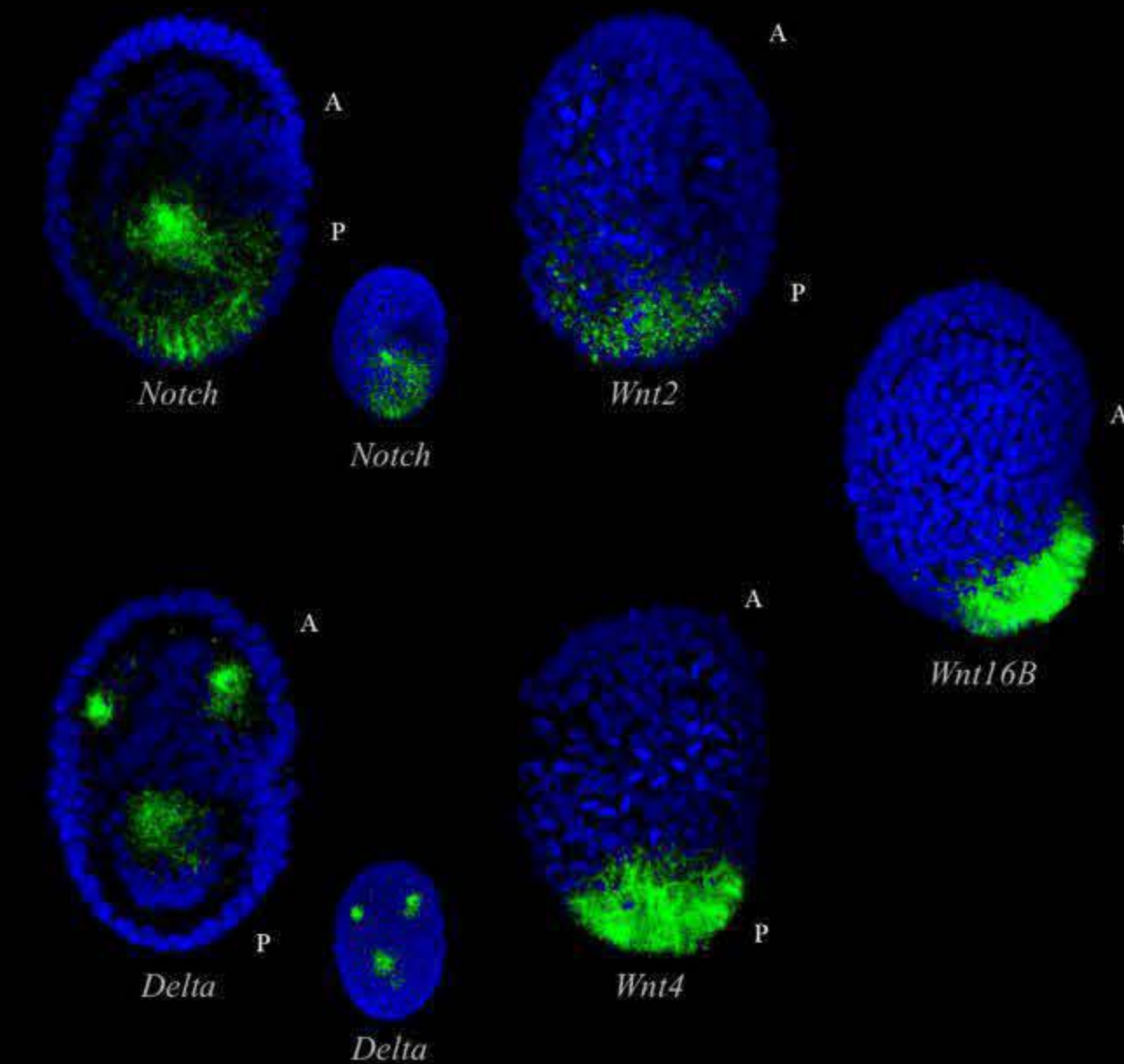
Tardigrade genes are boxed. Spiralian, ecdysozoan, and deuterostome genes are included. Bootstrap support out of 500 replicates.

Part III: Establishment of anteroposterior axis during early tardigrade development.



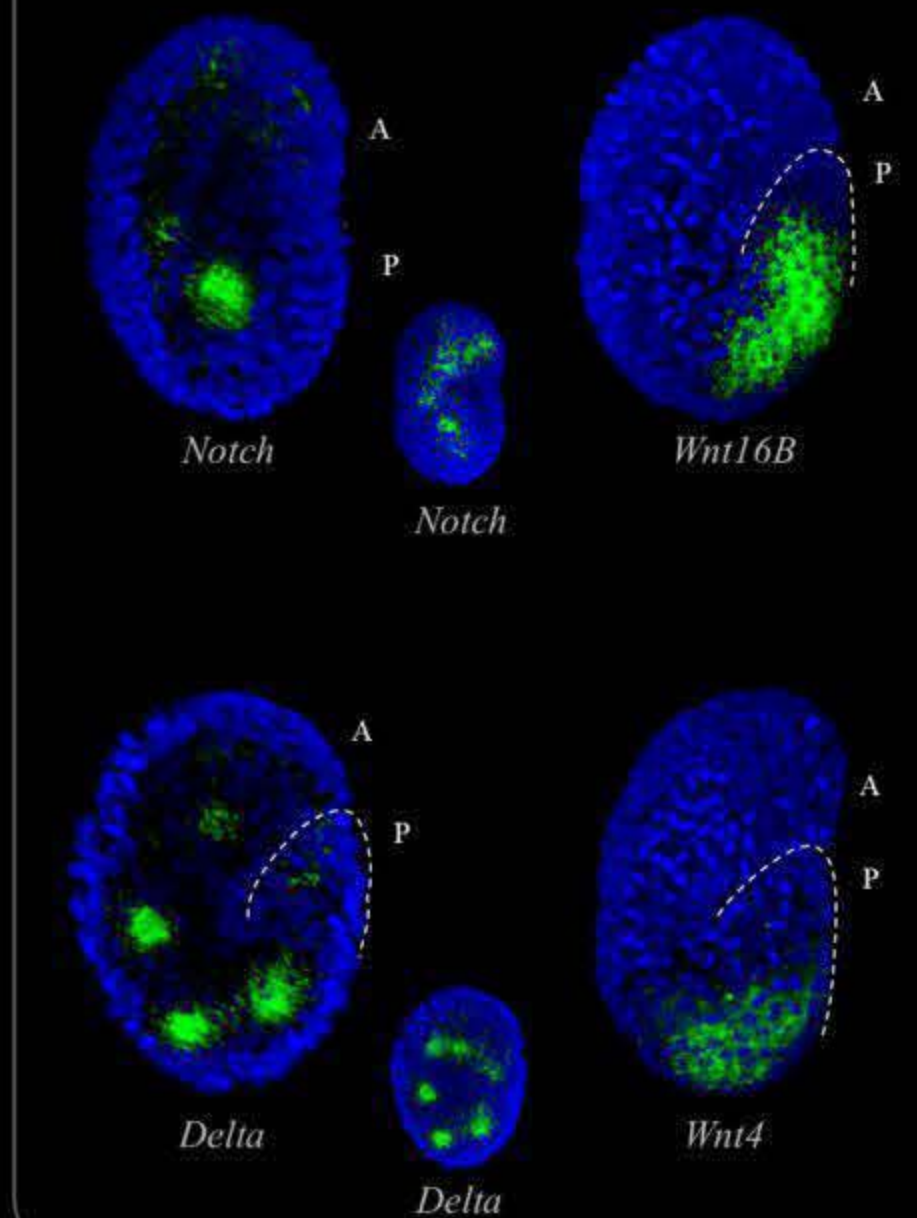
Six3 (green) as a genetic marker for anterior identity. DAPI (blue). Stage 11 embryos are dorsoventrally mounted. Stage 12 and stage 13 embryos are laterally mounted and facing right. Top row is whole mount; bottom row is longitudinal section of same embryo. A, anterior; P, posterior.

Part IV: Stage 11 Elongation.



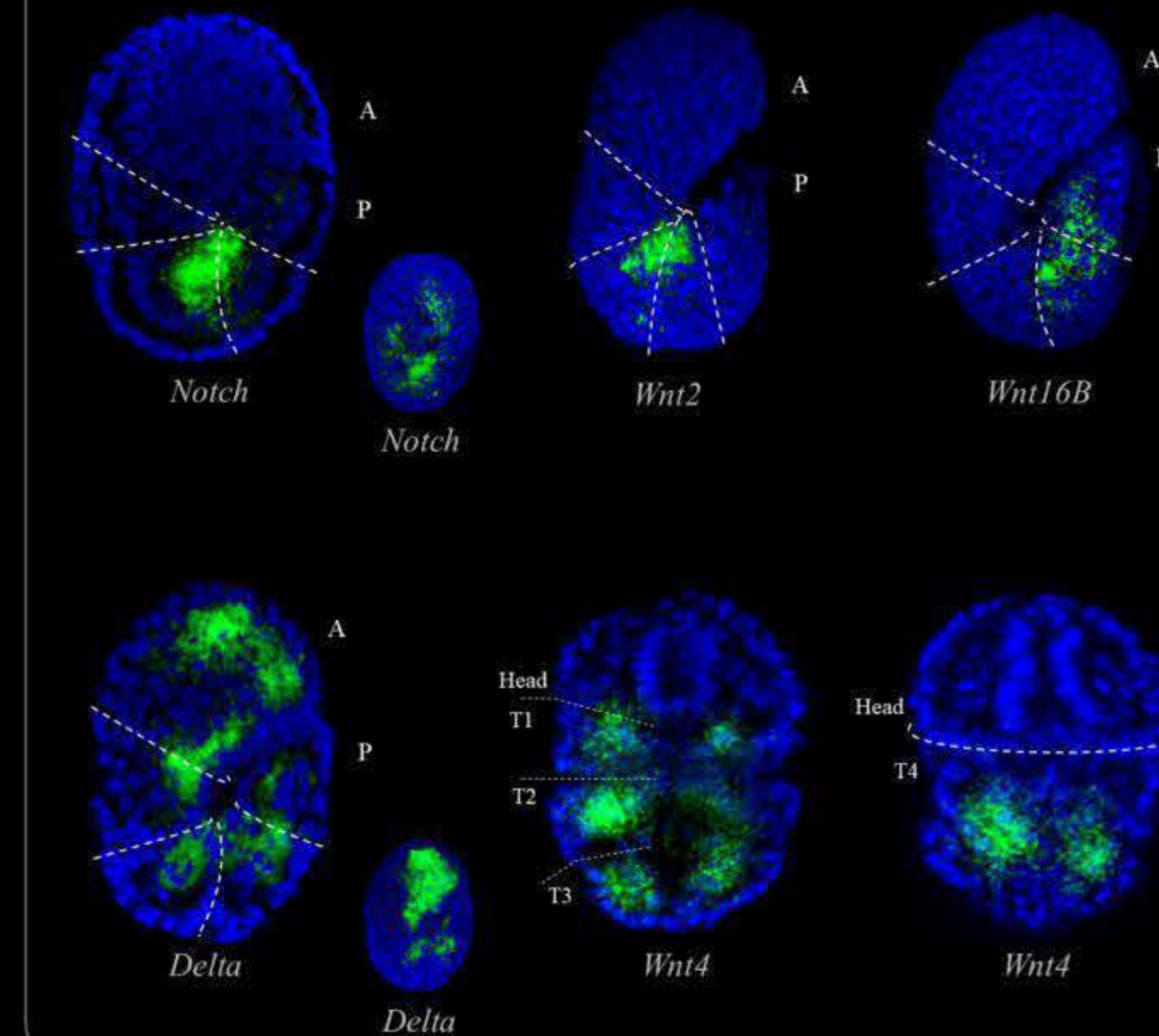
Notch and *Wnt16B* embryos are laterally mounted and facing right; the rest are dorsoventrally mounted. Whole mount embryo for *Notch* and *Delta* are shown as smaller images. In situ stain (green). DAPI (blue). A, anterior; P, posterior.

Part V: Stage 12 Endomesodermal Pouches.



Embryos are laterally mounted and facing right. Posterior tip is outlined. No *Wnt2* expression at this stage. In situ stain (green). DAPI (blue). A, anterior; P, posterior.

Part VI: Stage 13 Ectodermal Segmentation.



Wnt4 embryo is dorsoventrally mounted; the rest are laterally mounted and facing right. Segment boundaries are outlined. In situ stain (green). DAPI (blue). A, anterior; P, posterior; T1-T4, trunk segment 1-4.

Conclusions

- Tardigrades retain core components of the canonical Notch signaling pathway.
- Delta/Notch* expression patterns are predominantly around an endomesodermal region during establishment of A/P axis.
- Wnt2*, *Wnt4*, and *Wnt16B* are restricted to posterior regions during the earliest stage of A/P axis establishment.
- This suggests that the compact body plan of tardigrades evolved by conservation of the A/P axis establishment function of the cWnt signaling pathway, with loss of the later acting posterior growth functions of the cWnt and Notch signaling pathways.

Future Directions

- Perform gene knockdown experiments on the cWnt and Notch signaling pathways to identify their functional roles in Tardigrada.



This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1951257