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Anoctamin 5 Knockout Mouse Model Recapitulates LGMD2L Muscle Pathology and Offers Insight Into *in vivo* Functional Deficits

⁵ Girija Thiruvengadam^{a,1}, Sen Chandra Sreetama^{a,1}, Karine Charton^b, Marshall Hogarth^a,

⁶ James S. Novak^{a,d}, Laurence Suel-Petat^b, Goutam Chandra^a, Bruno Allard^c,

⁷ Isabelle Richard^{b,*} and Jyoti K. Jaiswal^{a,d,*}

⁸ ^aCenter of Genetic Medicine Research, Children's National Health System, MW Washington, DC

^bGénéthon INSERM, U951, INTEGRARE Research Unit, University Paris-Saclay, Evry, France

- ¹⁰ ^cUniversité Lyon, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, Institut NeuroMyoGene, Centre National de la Recherche
- Scientifique, Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale, Lyon, France
- ¹² ^dDepartment of Genomics and Precision Medicine, George Washington University School of Medicine and

13 Health Sciences, Washington DC

Abstract. Mutations in the Anoctamin 5 (Ano5) gene that result in the lack of expression or function of ANO5 protein, cause 14 Limb Girdle Muscular Dystrophy (LGMD) 2L/R12, and Miyoshi Muscular Dystrophy (MMD3). However, the dystrophic 15 phenotype observed in patient muscles is not uniformly recapitulated by ANO5 knockout in animal models of LGMD2L. 16 Here we describe the generation of a mouse model of LGMD2L generated by targeted out-of-frame deletion of the Ano5 17 gene. This model shows progressive muscle loss, increased muscle weakness, and persistent bouts of myofiber regeneration 18 without chronic muscle inflammation, which recapitulates the mild to moderate skeletal muscle dystrophy reported in the 19 LGMD2L patients. We show that these features of ANO5 deficient muscle are not associated with a change in the calcium-20 activated sarcolemmal chloride channel activity or compromised in vivo regenerative myogenesis. Use of this mouse model 21 allows conducting in vivo investigations into the functional role of ANO5 in muscle health and for preclinical therapeutic 22

23 development for LGMD2L.

¹Equal Contribution.

*Correspondence to: Isabelle Richard, Généthon INSERM, U951, INTEGRARE Research Unit, University Paris-Saclay, Evry, France. Tel.: +33.1.69.47.29.38; E-mail: RICHARD@ Genethon.fr.; Jyoti K. Jaiswal, Department of Genomics and Precision Medicine, George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Washington DC Tel.: +1.202.476.6456; E-mail: jkjaiswal@cnmc.org.

INTRODUCTION

Muscular dystrophies are a diverse group of inherited diseases that result in progressive loss of muscle structure and function, that leads to weakness and wasting of skeletal muscle. Among these, the Limbgirdle muscular dystrophies (LGMD) represent a group of myopathies where severely affected muscles include the hip and shoulder girdles, with subsequent involvement of other limb muscles. LGMD

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results in progressive muscle weakness from early 33 childhood to late adulthood. Over two dozen genes 34 responsible for LGMD have been identified, which 35 lead to either recessive or dominant inheritance [1, 36 2]. LGMD2L/ LGMDR12 is a recessive disorder 37 with a prevalence of 0.2-2 patients / 100,000 that 38 is amongst the 5 most common LGMDs [3-5]. It 30 is caused by mutations in the gene that encodes 40 the Anoctamin 5 (ANO5) or the Transmembrane16E 41 (TMEM16E) protein [6-9]. ANO5/TMEM16E pro-42 tein belongs to a family of 10 related transmembrane 43 proteins that function either as calcium-activated ion 44 channels, lipid scramblases, or both [10, 11]. Among 45 these, ANO1 (TMEM16A) and ANO2 (TMEM16B) 46 encode calcium-activated chloride channels, while 47 ANO6 (TEME16F) and ANO10 (TMEM16K) are 48 phospholipid scramblases (PLS) [10-22]. ANO5 is 49 the only member of this family that is associated 50 with muscular dystrophy. This gene is expressed in 51 bones, skeletal muscles, testes, and cardiac mus-52 cles [23-25]. Unlike the recessive Ano5 mutations, 53 dominant mutations in Ano5 lead to the bone disor-54 der, gnathodiaphyseal dysplasia 1 (GDD1) [25, 26]. 55 While GDD1 is characterized by bone fragility and 56 jawbone lesions, LGMD2L/R12 is characterized by 57 increased serum level of muscle enzyme, myofiber 58 damage, sporadic rhabdomyolysis, exercise-induced 59 myalgia, proximal limb muscle pain and weakness, 60 and difficulty walking and standing on toes [6, 8]. 61 Many of these clinical features are shared with other 62 muscular dystrophies such as LGMD2B/R2, where 63 mutations reduce or prevent expression of the mem-64 brane protein dysferlin, leading to increased myofiber 65 death and muscle degeneration [27-29]. 66

Endogenous ANO5 protein localizes to the Sarco/ 67 Endoplasmic Reticulum (SER) membrane, but exo-68 genously expressed ANO5 is detected at the plasma 69 membrane where it exhibits calcium-activated scr-70 amblase as well as ion channel activity [21, 25, 71 30-34]. We recently identified the requirement of 72 endogenously expressed ANO5 for calcium-act-73 ivated calcium uptake by the SER during cellular cal-74 cium overload [24, 35]. The ion channel and lipid 75 scramblase activities of ANO5 have been implicated 76 in sarcolemmal repair, myoblast fusion during muscle 77 regeneration, and mouse sperm motility [24, 34–39]. 78 Further, biochemical studies of ANO5 and targeted 79 GDD1 and LGMD2L patient mutations suggest that 80 while the GDD1 associated mutations result in gain of 81 ANO5 function, LGMD2L/R12 mutations are asso-82 ciated with the loss of ANO5 activity [30]. This 83 view is supported by the observation that patient cells 84

lacking detectable ANO5 protein exhibit poor membrane repair [24, 35], indicating that *Ano5* knockout would be a suitable animal model for LGMD2L/R12.

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Knockout animal models targeting different regions of Ano5 gene have been generated previously. While deletion of the first two exons of Ano5 results in no detectable muscle deficits [23, 39], Ano5 disruption in mouse by insertional deletion of exons 8-9 results in notable muscle pathology [37], and deletion of exons 11-12 leads to bone weakness [40]. Deletion of exons 12-13, with consequent disruption of the Ano5 reading frame in rabbits faithfully recapitulates the dystrophic muscle features [41]. With these diverse outcomes identified from Ano5 knockout animal models, here we describe a ANO5 knockout mouse model to investigate the ANO5 function in muscular dystrophy. Our works build on two previous findings - symptomatic animal models involve disruption of Ano5 gene in the region spanning exons 8-12, and cells lacking ANO5 protein exhibit ion homeostasis and sarcolemmal repair deficit [30, 35]. With ANO5 function linked to muscle cell membrane repair, in vitro myoblast fusion, and plasma membrane ion channel activity [24, 30-39], we have examined these activities in vivo and assessed their impact on muscle pathology in our model. Our findings establish a new mouse model of LGMD2L and the characterization we present here offers insights into the in vivo relevance of ANO5 function for muscle pathology in LGMD2L.

METHODS

Animals and knockout mouse generation

All animal procedures were conducted in accordance with guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals and were approved by the Children's National Research Institute Animal Care and Use Committee (#00030709), the local animal ethics committee of University Lyon 1 and Ethical Committee for Animal Experimentation C2EA-51 of Evry (#APAFIS#01304.01). C57BL/6J (WT) mice were obtained from the Jackson Laboratory (Bar Harbor, ME) and maintained in our animal facility for the purpose of this study. All animals were maintained in an individually vented cage system under a controlled 12 h light/dark cycle with free access to food and water and animals of both genders were used for experiments.

Construction of the targeting vector and generation of the ANO5 knockout mouse was performed

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by Genoway (Lyon). A bacterial artificial chromo-134 some (BAC) library was screened using Ano5 primers 135 allowing the identification of 3 clones covering the 136 genomic region around exons 11 to 13 of the Ano5 137 gene. These BAC were used to construct the targe-138 ting vector, which was electroporated into ES cells. 139 After selection and analysis of the homologous 140 recombination events, two positive ES clones were 141 selected and then injected into C57BL/6J blasto-142 cysts that were reimplanted into foster mothers to 143 generate chimeric mice. Five highly chimeric males 144 were obtained and bred first with the deleter mice, 145 constitutively expressing the Flp recombinase for 146 deletion of the neomycin selection cassette. Result-147 ing animals were mated with mice transgenic for 148 CMV-CRE, which permits the excision of the floxed 149 Ano5 segment. The Cre transgene was segregated 150 by a first cross on C57BL/6 background and the 151 resulting heterozygous mice were backcrossed for 152 10 generations on the C57Bl/6 and then interbred. 153 For genotyping, genomic DNA from mouse tail was 154 extracted and amplified using KAPA2G Fast Hot-155 Start Genotyping Mix, (Sigma, St. Louis, MO, USA) 156 with the following: 49683cre-IRII.F: attcctgagaata 157 tgtgtaattgtggcagc 49698flp-IRII.R: 5'-ccctagaactaca 158 taatcttggtgtggtggtag -3'. A PCR fragment of 2,68 kb 159 is generated for the WT allele and of 890 bp for the 160 mutant allele. 161

In vivo muscle injury, bromodeoxyuridine (BrdU) labelling, and immunostaining

Muscles were injured by local injection of notexin 164 in 10-month-old animals under isofluorane anaesthe-165 sia (42). Following removal of fur from the anterior 166 hindlimb, 40 µl notexin (5 µg/ml, Latoxan, #L8104) 167 was delivered by intramuscular injection into the tib-168 ialis anterior (TA) using a 0.3 ml ultrafine insulin 169 syringe (BD Biosciences, #324906). Immediately 170 prior to injection, the needle was dipped in green 171 tattoo dye (Harvard Apparatus, #72-9384) to mark 172 the needle track. For the first 7 days post injury, 173 BrdU (Sigma-Aldrich, B9285) was administered ad 174 libitum in sterile drinking water at a concentration 175 of 0.8 mg/ml. Animals were euthanized either 7- or 176 14-days post-injury, and tissues were harvested for 177 analysis [43, 44]. 178

Skeletal muscles were dissected out and frozen
in isopentane cooled in liquid nitrogen. Transverse
cryosections (8-μm thickness) were prepared from
frozen muscles and were processed for hematoxylin
and eosin (H&E) and Laminin staining. Frozen

sections were cut and fixed in ice-cold acetone 184 for 10 min, followed by incubation in 2 N HCl at 185 37°C for 30 min, and then briefly neutralized with 186 0.15 M sodium tetraborate (Sigma-Aldrich, MO). 187 Following this, sections were blocked for 1 h in 188 phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) supplemented with 189 20% goat serum (GeneTex, CA), 0.1% tween-20 190 (Sigma-Aldrich, MO), and 10 mg/ml BSA (Sigma-191 Aldrich, MO). Primary antibodies against BrdU 192 (B35138, 1: 100, Life Technologies, CA) and laminin 193 (L9393, 1:400, Sigma-Aldrich, MO) were incubated 194 overnight at 4°C. Sections were then washed and 195 probed with the appropriate Alexa Fluor secondary 196 antibody (Life Technologies, MA) at a dilution of 197 1:500 for 1 h at room temperature. Prior to mounting, 198 nuclei were counterstained with propidium iodide 199 (P4170, 2.5 µ g/ml, Sigma-Aldrich, MO). Digital 200 images were captured with a VS120 virtual slide 201 microscope, and images were processed and quan-202 tified using CellSens and ImageJ software. 203

Muscle force measurements

Forelimb and hindlimb grip-strength measurement (GSM) were carried out using a grip strength meter (Columbus Instruments, Columbus, OH, USA) as previously described [45]. The animals were acclimatized for 3 days before actual data collection. The forelimb and hindlimb grip-strength data were then collected over 5 consecutive days. Data were represented as averaged grip strength/kg body weight over 5 days.

To measure in vivo torque production of the anterior crural muscles (TA, extensor digitorum longus (EDL), peroneus tertius, and extensor hallucis longus), mice were anesthetized with 1.5% isoflurane-mixed O₂ and hair was removed from the lower hind limbs, while the foot was attached to the dual-mode lever and maintained at a 90° angle for isometric torque assessment (Aurora Scientific, Aurora, Canada). Isometric muscle contractions were stimulated at 1.0-2.0 mA using Pt-Ir needle electrodes inserted percutaneously adjacent to the peroneal nerve. Peak isometric torque was measured in response to tetanic stimulations at 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, 120, 140, 160, 180, and 200 Hz, providing a 60s rest period between stimuli. The rate of rise in torque was modeled using the exponential equation $T = C(1-e^{-Df})$, where T = torque produced at the given frequency (f), C = maximal torque, and D = the rate of rise in torque [46]. Here, we tested 10-monthold, male WT and ANO5^{-/-} mice (n = 5).

233 Myofiber isolation and electrophysiology

Mice were euthanized by cervical dislocation fol-234 lowed by removal of *flexor digitorum brevis* (FDB) 235 muscles. Single fibers were isolated by a 50-minute 236 enzymatic treatment at 37° C using a Tyrode solu-237 tion containing 2 mg/mL collagenase type I (Sigma). 238 Fibers were voltage-clamped using the silicone clamp 239 technique as previously described [47]. Briefly, a 240 major part of a single fiber was electrically insu-241 lated with silicone grease and a micropipette was 242 inserted into the fiber through the silicone layer to 243 voltage clamp the portion of the fiber free of grease 244 (50 to 150 µm length) using a patch-clamp ampli-245 fier (Bio-Logic RK-400, Claix, France) in whole-cell 246 configuration. Analog compensation was systemati-247 cally used to decrease the effective series resistance. 248 The tip of the micropipette was then crushed into 249 the dish bottom to allow intracellular dialysis of the 250 fiber with the intra-pipette solution. Cell capacitance 251 was determined by integration of a current trace 252 obtained with a 10-mV hyperpolarizing pulse from 253 the holding potential and was used to calculate the 254 density of currents (A/F). Currents were acquired at 255 a sampling frequency of 10 kHz. Data are given as 256 means \pm S.E.M. 257

The external solution contained (in mM) 140 258 TEA-MeSO₃ (9 mM Cl⁻ containing solution) or 259 140 TEA-Cl (149 mM Cl⁻ containing solution), 2.5 260 CaCl₂, 2 MgCl₂, 0.002 tetrodotoxin, 1 4-amin-261 opyridine and 10 HEPES adjusted to pH 7.2 with 262 TEA-OH. The internal dialyzed solution contained 263 (in mM) 140 K-glutamate, 2 EGTA, 5 Na₂-ATP, 5 264 Na₂-phosphocreatine, 5 MgCl₂, 5 glucose and 10 265 HEPES adjusted to pH 7.2 with K-OH. The 2 mM 266 internal [EGTA] prevented deterioration of the mus-267 cle fiber in response to large depolarizing pulses 268 but preserved fiber contraction upon suprathresh-269 old depolarizations. Fibers were dialyzed with the 270 intracellular solution through the micropipette during 271 10 min prior starting the experiments. 272

273 RNA isolation and quantitative RT-PCR

RNA was extracted by the Trizol method from 274 muscles previously sampled and frozen in liquid 275 nitrogen. Residual DNA was removed from the sam-276 ples using Free DNA kit or Turbo DNA-free Kit 277 (Ambion). One µg of RNA was reverse transcribed 278 using the SuperScript II first strand synthesis kit 279 (Invitrogen) or revertAid H Minus First Strand cDNA 280 Synthesis kit (ThermoFisher) and random hexamers. 281

Real-time PCR was performed using LightCycler480 29437 (Roche) Taqman Gene Expression or miR Assays (ThermoFisher) or $0.2 \,\mu$ M of each primer and $0.1 \,\mu$ M of the probe according to the protocol Absolute QPCR Rox Mix (ThermoFisher).

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Endogenous gene expression was quantified using Taqman Gene Expression Assay: ANO5: Mm 00624629_m1; ANO6: Mm00614693_m1; ANO8: Mm01343244_m1, MYMK Mm00481256_m1, CD 11b Mm00434455_m1, MYH3 Mm01332463_m1, CD3G Mm00438095_m1, TIMP-1 Mm0131, IL1B Mm00434228_m1, IL6 Mm00446190_m1, PLIN5 Mm00508852_m1, and COL6A3 Mm00711678_m1. The ubiquitous acidic ribosomal phosphoprotein (P0) was used to normalize the data across samples. The primer pairs and Tagman probe used for P0 amplification were: m181PO.F (5'-CTCCAAG CAGATGCAGCAGA-3'), m267PO.R (5'-ACCAT GATGCGCAAGGCCAT-3'), m225PO.P (5'-CCG TGGTGCTGATGGGCAAGAA-3') and each experiment was separately replicated.

Expression of miRNA were performed using Taq-Man Assays miRNA: miR-21 (hsa-miR-21-5p) ref: 000397, miR-142 (hsa-miR142-3p) ref: 000464, miR-31 (mmu-miR-31-5p) ref: 000185, miR 1(hsamiR1-3p) ref: 000385, miR-29a (hsa-miR29a-3p) ref: 002112, and normalized using the expression of U6 (U6 snRNA) ref: 001973. Fold change in RNA expression (Fc) in tissues from ANO5-KO mice was calculated using the traditional $2^{\wedge}(-\Delta\Delta C_t)$ method: $F_c = 2^{(-(\Delta C_t - Avg \ \Delta C_t \ WT))}$, allowing comparison of C_t value with that obtained from tissue of WT animals. Evaluation of consequences at RNA level of the mutation in the model was performed by RT-PCR on muscle extracts with the following primers (Ex6.F : GAAGACGAGAGTTTGAACAA AATCTCAGAAAAAACAG, Ex14.R : CAAAGTAC-CATGGGATGCGATGGC). The PCR generated fragments of 1080 bp in WT and 778 bp in ANO5-/-.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out using the 322 GraphPad 8.0 Prism Software, where the data were 323 examined by pairwise testing by Mann-Whitney U 324 test or by Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Outcome 325 of the statistical test is represented in the figures by 326 way of p values as indicated in figure legends. Each 327 plot shows the individual data point with the average 328 representing statistical mean and errors bars, unless 329 noted otherwise, indicate standard deviation (SD).

330 **RESULTS**

Generation of ANO5 knockout mouse model for LGMD2L

To generate the mouse model of LGMD2L/R12. 333 we synthesized a mouse Ano5 targeting vector com-334 posed of a long homology arm of 5.7 kb and a short 335 arm of 1.9 kb on each side of a region encompassing 336 exons 11-13 flanked by LoxP sites. Positive selec-337 tion by neomycin gene flanking by FRT sequences 338 was also added in the vector. Through homologous 339 recombination using this vector we disrupted the pre-340 dicted transmembrane domain of the mouse ANO5 341 protein, by out of frame deletion of exons 10 to 12 342 (Fig. 1A). In the resulting chimeric animals, the neo 343 gene and rest of the insertional cassette was excised 344 by crossing with Flp and CRE recombinase under 345 the control of the ubiquitous CMV promoter. Ano5 346

deficient mice were generated by a targeted 1793 bp deletion in the *Ano5* genomic loci, which was confirmed by PCR genotyping (Fig. 1B). Absence of the 301 bp spanning exons 10–12 in the resulting mRNA transcript was confirmed by RT-PCR analysis and RNA sequencing (Fig. 1C–E). Congenic ANO5 deficient mice were backcrossed onto the C57BI/6 genetic background for 10 generations with subsequent interbreeding. Homozygous *Ano5-/-* mice are viable and fertile with no gross abnormalities or increased mortality up to 1 year of age.

To assess the consequences of the targeted knockout of *Ano5*, we quantified *Ano5* transcript levels in skeletal muscle by quantitative RT-PCR (qRT-PCR) analysis. This revealed low-levels of *Ano5* transcript (<10 % of WT level) in various muscles (Fig. 1F). In view of the role of ANO5 protein in regulating plasma membrane (PM) and Sarco/Endoplasmic Reticulum (SER) function [24, 48, 49], we used qRT-PCR



Fig. 1. Generation and genetic characterization of ANO5–/– mouse model. (A) Schematic showing the genetic modifications used to disrupt the mouse Ano5 gene in the ANO5–/– mouse model. WT gene and the homologous recombination of the genome that led to the ANO5–/– mice. (B) PCR analysis of the genomic region containing the deleted exonic regions shown in panel A. (C) Schematic of mRNAs resulting from WT and Ano5-/- allele. Arrows indicate the region around which primers are designed for PCR amplification and sequencing. (D) Gel image showing PCR amplified product of the marked region of Ano5 gene in panel C from mRNAs isolated from WT and ANO5–/– mice. (E) Chromatogram showing the sequence of disrupted Ano5 allele in the ANO5–/– mouse. Plots showing qRT-PCR quantification of (F) Ano5, (G) Ano6, and (H) Ano8, in 9-months-old male mouse muscles (quadriceps, LA (EDL+TA), gastrocnemius). Each dot on the plot represents an individual muscle and the black bar indicates median of these values. p values are measured by unpaired Mann-Whitney t test and indicated by ****p < 0.0001.

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analysis to assess the expression of an anoctamin 366 localized to the PM (ANO6), and one localized to 367 the SR/PM (ANO8). Neither of these transcripts were 368 found to be altered in their expression in the ANO5-/-369 muscles, suggesting no compensatory change in the 370 levels of these anoctamins in ANO5 deficient skeletal 371 muscles (Fig. 1G, H). 372

Characterization of ANO5 deficient muscle 373

Mutations leading to loss of ANO5 protein in 374 patients result in damage, weakness, and wasting of 375 muscle starting from late adulthood to middle age 376 [8, 9, 50]. Given the relative age match of middleaged human with 9-10 month old mice, we assessed 378 mice at this age [51]. Analysis of the body and 379 muscle weight in ANO5-/- mice compared to WT 380 mice showed a significant drop in both body weight

and weights of multiple muscles including quadriceps, gastrocnemius, and TA (Fig. 2A-D). In view of the muscle loss induced by ANO5 deficit, we next examined if this is associated with changes in muscle histology. Cross sections of quadriceps were stained with H&E and independently immunostained to mark the basement membrane (laminin) and nuclei (DAPI) (Fig. 2E). These analyses identified the presence of a significant increase in the number of centrally nucleated myofibers in the ANO5-/muscles when compared to WT, but there were no signs of overt muscle inflammation (Fig. 2E, F). Further, the increase in regenerated (centrally nucleated) fibers occurred without any corresponding decrease in myofiber cross-sectional area of ANO5-/- muscles (Fig. 2E, G). Taken together, the data suggest a lack of myofiber atrophy and/or a high rate of myofiber turnover, which would result in accumulation



Fig. 2. Effect of ANO5 deficit on muscle size and histopathology. Plots showing (A) body weight and weights of (B) Gastrocnemius, (C) Quadriceps, and (D) TA muscles. Each dot represents an individual mouse/muscle. Images showing cross sections of quadriceps muscle (E) stained with H&E (top) and for nuclei (DAPI) and basement membrane (Laminin immunostain) (bottom). Yellow arrows mark the centrally nucleated fiber (CNF) and these were quantified to measure (F) proportion of CNFs and (G) myofiber cross-sectional areas. Each dot represents value averaged from multiple cross sections per muscle, black line represents the median value of the distribution. Scale bars are 50 μ m (top) and 100 μ m (bottom). p values are measured by unpaired Mann-Whitney t test and indicated by *p<0.05; **p<0.01; A–D (n > 15), F, G (n = 5).

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of small caliber regenerated myofibers. As an inde-400 pendent assessment of inflammation and extracellular 401 matrix (ECM) remodeling, we performed qRT-PCR 402 analysis to assess the expression of different regu-403 lators of inflammation, including CD3G, interleukin 404 1B, interleukin 6, CD11b, and miR-142. We observed 405 no indication for altered inflammation in the Psoas 406 (Fig. S1A) and other ANO5-/- muscles examined 407 (Fig. S1B). Similar analysis of the expression of ECM 408 modulating genes - TIMP-1, Perilipin, collagen, and 409 micro RNAs - miR-21, miR-29a, showed lack of 410 ANO5 did not detectably alter the genes responsi-411 ble for ECM remodeling in the Psoas (Figure S1C) 412 and other muscles we examined (Figure S1D) in 413 ANO5-/- mice. 414

Next, we examined the expression of multiple 415 myogenic regulators to assess the extent of ongoing 416 regenerative myogenesis. The expression of the myo-417 genic indicators - embryonic myosin heavy chain 418 (MYH8), myomaker (MYMK), embryonic myosin 419 (MYH3), miR-01, and miR-31 were unaltered in the 420 ANO5-deficient muscles (Figure S2A-C). Indepen-421 dently, to examine if the muscle of the 10-months 422 old ANO5-/- mice undergo spontaneous myofiber 423 damage and regeneration in vivo, we labeled spon-424 taneously regenerating myonuclei over a 1-week 425 period to mark all nascent myonuclei produced dur-426 ing this period with the nucleotide analogue BrdU 427 delivered through the drinking water [43, 44]. As 428 can be expected, WT mice showed no spontaneous 429 BrdU-labeled myonuclei over this period, and we 430 found the same is true in case of the ANO5-/-431 mice (Figure S2D). Thus, quantification of myogenic 432 gene expression and spontaneous in vivo regenerative 433 myogenesis in ANO5-/- mice showed a low-level 434 spontaneous myofiber regeneration, without chronic 435 inflammation. This is unlike the severe muscular dys-436 trophies that are associated with extensive muscle 437 regeneration, chronic inflammation, and excessive 438 ECM remodeling [43, 44]. 439

Effect of ANO5 deficit on muscle strength and sarcolemmal ion channel activity

With some of the previous ANO5 null models hav-442 ing reported underwhelming muscle histopathology 443 and weakness [23, 39], we next examined muscle 444 functional deficits in our ANO5-/- mouse model. For 445 this we measured force production by grip strength 446 analysis of the forelimb and hindlimb muscles of 447 10-month-old ANO5-/- mice. Similar to the reduced 448 muscle strength noted in LGMD2L patients, we 449

found ANO5-/- mice demonstrated reduced grip strength of both the forelimb (by 4.5 KgF/Kg) and hindlimb (by 8.5 KgF/Kg), in comparison to WT controls (Fig. 3A, B). To further characterize the muscle force deficits in our ANO5-/- model, we evaluated in vivo muscle torque generated in response to increasing tetanic stimulations of the anterior crural muscles. Here we elicited isometric contractions by subcutaneous stimulation of the peroneal nerve across a range of frequencies from 20-200 Hz to generate a force-frequency plot. The muscles of ANO5-/mice generated contractile force similar to the WT mice at stimulation frequencies below 80 Hz, but at tetanic stimulation frequencies (> 100 Hz) contractile force of the ANO5-/- muscle was reduced (1.2 mNm) as compared to the WT muscle (1.6 mN-m) (Fig. 3C). These results independently demonstrate greater weakness of ANO5-/- limb muscle and reduced contractile force of these muscle during tetanic stimulation.

ANO5 protein has been suggested to operate as a plasma membrane ion channel that can be activated by a rise in intracellular $Ca^{2+}[31, 34, 52]$. Thus, we examined if weakness of ANO5-/- muscle is related to altered anion channel activity in the myofiber sarcolemma. For this we recorded plasma membrane currents elicited by 500 ms-duration depolarizing voltage pulses in isolated muscle fibers from WT and ANO5-/- mice in the presence of an external solution containing 149 mM or 9 mM Cl⁻ and blockers of voltage-gated Na⁺ and K⁺ channels (Fig. 3D). Depolarizations of increasing amplitudes in the presence of 149 mM Cl⁻ elicited currents displaying an early phase during which L-type voltage-gated Ca²⁺ currents activated, followed by a late phase during which voltage-gated Ca²⁺ currents inactivated and positive currents developed. These late phase positive currents were strongly reduced in the presence of 9 mM Cl⁻ in wild type and in ANO5-KO fibers indicating that the positive current recorded in the presence of the 149 mM Cl⁻ solution was mostly carried by Cl⁻ ions. In each fiber, the remaining current recorded in the presence of 9 mM Cl⁻ was subtracted from the current recorded in the presence of 149 mM Cl⁻ to extract the Cl⁻ current. The amplitude of these Cl⁻ current differences, and of the currents recorded in the presence of 149 mM Cl- were measured at the end of voltage pulses in each fiber and plotted as a function of voltage. The relationships between mean current amplitudes and voltages obtained in ANO5-/- myofibers were indistinguishable from the WT myofibers (Fig. 3E). It is also noteworthy that

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Fig. 3. Muscle strength and chloride currents in ANO5 deficient muscle. Plots for (A) hindlimb and (B) forelimb grip strength of the mice (each dot representing individual animal, black line represents the median value of the distribution.). (C) Plot showing the force-frequency relationship for the TA of mice (n = 5; mean \pm SD). Difference between genotypes along the frequencies was significant beyond 80Hz (Twoway ANOVA). (D) Cl⁻ currents were recorded in the same wild type (upper traces) and ANO5–/– myofibers (middle traces) in the presence of either 149 mM or 9 mM external Cl⁻, in response to the voltage protocol shown in the lower traces. Voltage pulses were delivered every 5 s. (E) Relationships between the voltage and the mean end-pulse amplitude of the current measured in the presence of 149 mM Cl⁻ and of the current difference (current in 149 mM Cl⁻ minus current in 9 mM Cl⁻) in 12 fibers from wild type and in 13 fibers from two ANO5-KO mice. *p* values are measured by unpaired Mann-Whitney *t* test (A, B) or 2-way ANOVA (C) and indicated by **p < 0.01, $n \ge 5$.

all fibers we tested contracted in response to voltage 502 pulses given above $-30 \,\mathrm{mV}$, allowing us to exclude 503 the possibility that ANO5 did not activate due to 504 absence of intracellular Ca²⁺ rise. Lack of detectable 505 difference in depolarization evoked Cl⁻ currents on 506 myofiber sarcolemma between WT and ANO5-/-507 myofibers indicates that ANO5 does not function as 508 a sarcolemmal Cl⁻ channel in muscle fibers and that 509 weakness of ANO5-/- myofibers cannot be attributed 510 to altered sarcolemmal Cl⁻ channel activity. 511

512 In vivo role of ANO5 on muscle regeneration

The ability to regulate myoblast fusion is another role attributed to ANO5 [34, 37]. In previous analysis of ANO5 deficient patient myoblasts we did not observe a myogenic deficit in vitro [35]. With the availability of the ANO5-/- model, we next examined the role of ANO5 in regenerative myogenesis in vivo. For this we used BrdU-labeling of activated myogenic cells to monitor spontaneous regenerative myogenesis [43, 44]. We used this approach in combination with notexin-based, sterile injury to investigate myogenic cell fusion after synchronized muscle damage [42, 53]. Here, the quantification of BrdU-labeled central nuclei in recently regenerated myofibers provides a readout of satellite cell activation and myogenic cell fusion in response to in vivo muscle injury. Following injury, BrdU was administered to the WT and the ANO5-/- mice for 7- or 14-days and the muscle cross-sections were scored for presence of BrdU stained central-myonuclei to

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Fig. 4. Analysis of regenerative myogenesis *in vivo*. (A) Images of NTX-injured TA muscle cross-sections stained for regenerated myonuclei (Brdu), nuclei (propidium iodide – PI) and basement membrane (Laminin) from WT and ANO5–/– mice at 7 days (upper panel) or 14 days (lower panel) post single bout of injury. (B) Plot showing number of myofibers in individual muscle cross section that contained BrdU-labeled myonuclei (C, D) Plot showing mean fiber cross-sectional area for (C) myofibers containing BrdU-labeled nuclei. (D) all myofibers in the muscle cross-section. Scale bar - 100 μ m. Data represents mean \pm SD with each dot representing value from whole muscle cross-section from individual mouse muscle. *p* values are measured by two-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test and indicated by ***p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001, *n* = 4.

identify the newly regenerated myofibers, while 532 all nuclei were stained with propidium iodide and 533 myofiber boundary was marked with laminin stain-534 ing (Fig. 4A). Both WT and ANO5-/-muscle showed 535 abundant BrdU labeled myofibers at 7-days and at 536 14-days post injury (Fig. 4A). Quantification of the 537 number of BrdU-labeled myofibers identified no dif-538 ference between the WT and ANO5-/- muscles at 539 either 7-days or 14-days post injury (Fig. 4B). This 540 indicated no detectable deficit in regenerative myo-541 genesis on account of in vivo myoblast fusion deficit 542 in ANO5-/- mouse muscle. Previous studies identi-543 fied that the size of the newly regenerated myofibers 544 was reduced at 30 days or 90 days post myotoxin 545 injury [37]. We thus measured growth of newly 546 regenerated myofibers at 7- and 14-days post injury. 547 While average myofiber size at 7-days post injury 548

was not different between the WT and ANO5-/mouse muscles, the average size of freshly regenerated (BrdU-labeled) ANO5-/- fibers was lower at 14-days post injury relative to control (Fig. 4C). This difference was significant even when fibers that did not contain a BrdU labeled nuclei were also included in the quantification of the myofiber cross-sectional area (Fig. 4D). These findings indicate that while the lack of ANO5 does not compromise myoblast fusion *in vivo*, it slows subsequent myofiber growth.

DISCUSSION

With the increasing identification of LGM D2L/R12 muscular dystrophy patients [54–56], there is a growing need to develop suitable animal models to help understand the *in vivo* role of ANO5

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protein and test therapies which target this deficit. 564 Our study has generated such a mouse model that 565 mimics several clinical features of ANO5 deficit 566 in LGMD2L/R12 ranging from muscle weakness, 567 myofiber damage, and progressive muscle loss. We 568 created this model by the deletion of exons 10-12 569 of mouse Ano5 gene, which selectively prevented the 570 expression of this gene without affecting the expres-571 sion of the other anoctamin family members tested. 572 This is different from a previous ANO5 mouse model 573 with a reading frameshift caused by exon 11-12 dele-574 tion that results in the loss of Ano5 transcript in bone 575 and 71% reduction in muscle, leading to GDD-like 576 bone defects [40]. Our observation of muscle pathol-577 ogy caused by the deletion of exons 10-12 aligns with 578 muscle pathology caused by the deletion of exons 8–9 579 in the mouse, and of exons 12-13 in the rabbit, but 580 not in mice where exons 1, 2 are deleted [23, 37, 39, 581 41]. 582

The mouse model we describe shows reduced 583 total body mass and reduced muscle mass, recapit-584 ulating the muscle wasting and loss reported in the 585 human patients [6, 8, 57]. These ANO5-deficient 586 mouse muscles also showed reduced muscle strength 587 reported in the patients [6, 8]. In addition to the 588 reduced forelimb and hindlimb grip strength in 589 ANO5-/- mice, the TA muscle of these mice also 590 fatigue faster and show reduced isometric force at 591 tetanic stimulation as compared to the WT mice. This 592 latter response of ANO5-/- muscle is in addition 593 to our recent observation that lengthening contrac-594 tion (LC) of the EDL muscle leads to greater muscle 595 force drop in the ANO5-/- muscle as compared to 596 WT muscle [24]. Poor recovery of ANO5-/- mus-597 cle from LC injury occurs due to impaired ability 598 of these myofibers to undergo sarcolemmal repair 599 - a deficit documented in patient muscle cells and 600 another ANO5-deficient mouse model [24, 35, 37, 601 38]. Poor sarcolemmal repair caused by ANO5 deficit 602 could also contribute to muscle loss and to muscle 603 weakness observed here in the ANO5-/- mice. 604

Impaired myofiber sarcolemmal repair in the 605 LGMD2L/R12 mouse model is shared with the 606 LGMD2B/R2 mouse model, where mutations affect 607 the dysferlin protein [27, 58]. Similar to dysferlin, 608 ANO5 protein also translocate to the injured plasma 609 membrane in myoblasts and in mature myofibers [27, 610 35, 38, 59]. However, unlike the LGMD2B patients 611 and mice, which show adipogenic muscle loss [42, 612 57], we did not observe this as a feature of ANO5-/-613 muscle. This suggests that dysferlin and ANO5 pro-614 tein have different functions leading to different 615

manifestation of disease symptoms. In support of this, our previous work has shown that AAV-based expression of ANO5 in dysferlin-deficient mouse muscle fails to rescue the sarcolemmal repair and other symptoms of the dysferlin-deficient mouse [60]. Indeed, ANO5 and dysferlin have distinct roles in sarcolemmal repair. While dysferlin regulates membrane repair through regulation of lysosome fusion, loss of ANO5 compromises handling of cytosolic Ca²⁺ and impairs membrane repair mediated by annexin, mitochondrial signaling, and phosphatidylserine lipids [24, 35-38]. Dysferlin deficit alters the homeostasis of another membrane lipid - sphingomyelin, and use of the sphignomyelinase enzyme as well as improving the stability of the dysferlinopathic myofiber membrane improves repair and reduces muscle loss [45. 58]. Aside from membrane lipid alteration, dysferlinand ANO5-deficient muscles also show cellular Ca²⁺ dysregulation upon myofiber stress/damage [24, 61, 621.

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The above role of ANO5 in SR Ca²⁺ homeostasis is due to its ability to function as an anion channel at the ER membrane [24]. Cellular models with exogenous ANO5 overexpression leading to the presence of ANO5 at the plasma membrane enables Ca^{2+} -activated ion channel activity [30, 31, 63]. However, our analysis of the chloride channel activity at the plasma membrane of ANO5-deficient mouse myofibers showed no difference in this activity between ANO5-/- and WT myofibers. This could be either due to the lack of anion channel activity of the plasma membrane-localized ANO5, or that endogenous ANO5 protein shows little (or no) expression at the plasma membrane, resulting in no detectable channel activity at the sarcolemma. Indeed, ANO5 localizes at the ER membrane and alters ER ion homeostasis when absent [24, 26, 35]. Aside from ion channel activity, ANO5 also possesses lipid scramblase activity, which has been implicated in regulation of myoblast fusion in vitro [34, 37]. Our in vivo analysis shows no significant spontaneous regenerative myogenesis in the adult ANO5-/- muscle and no difference in the ability of the satellite cells in the injured muscle to undergo fusion to regenerate the lost myofibers, which is in agreement with the in vitro studies using patient-derived myoblasts [35]. Interestingly, we observed that growth of the freshly regenerated ANO5-/- myofibers is slower as compared to the matched WT myofibers, recapitulating a similar observation in another ANO5-deficient mouse model [37]. Thus, while ANO5 deficit in mouse myoblast was found to impair their myogenic

fusion in vitro, this role of ANO5 does not extend 668 in vivo in mouse muscle nor to in vitro patient 669 cell fusion. Additional studies will be needed to 670 extend this analysis to other patient mutations and to 671 determine the basis of such in vivo versus in vitro dif-672 ferences. Lack of myogenic fusion deficit in human 673 myoblasts in vitro, and in mouse myofibers in vivo 674 indicate that poor myogenesis may not be the basis 675 for muscle loss in the LGMD2L/R12 patients, but 676 the slower growth of nascent regenerated myofibers 677 could contribute to the muscle weakness. 678

In summary, the findings we report in this study 679 establishes a new mouse model for LGMD2L/R12 680 that manifests multiple muscle pathologies reported 681 in ANO5 deficient muscular dystrophy patients. 682 Description of these muscle pathologies and physio-683 logical deficits reported here and our earlier studies 684 identifying a therapeutic approach to improve repair 685 of ANO5-/- myofibers demonstrate the utility of this 686 model to improve our understanding of the mech-687 anisms of ANO5 function in skeletal muscle and 688 testing therapies to treat muscular dystrophy caused 689 by its deficit. 690

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709 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

710 Authors declare no conflict of interests.

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