Cardiovascular diseases remain the leading cause of death worldwide, with pathological fibrotic remodeling mediated by activated cardiac myofibroblasts representing a unifying theme across etiologies. Despite the profound contributions of myocardial fibrosis to cardiac dysfunction and heart failure, there currently exist limited clinical interventions that effectively target the cardiac fibroblast and its role in fibrotic tissue deposition. Exploration of novel strategies designed to mitigate or reverse myofibroblast activation and cardiac fibrosis will likely yield powerful therapeutic approaches for the treatment of multiple diseases of the heart, including heart failure with preserved or reduced ejection fraction, acute coronary syndrome, and cardiovascular disease linked to type 2 diabetes. In this Review, we provide an overview of classical regulators of cardiac fibrosis and highlight emerging, next-generation epigenetic regulatory targets that have the potential to revolutionize treatment of the expanding cardiovascular disease patient population.

Introduction
Cardiovascular diseases represent the leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for nearly 18 million deaths annually (1). The origins of cardiovascular disease are diverse, predominantly because of the heart’s complexity and the necessity to deliver blood continuously over the course of a lifetime. Cardiac pathology can arise from atherosclerotic vascular disease, obstructive coronary artery disease culminating in myocardial infarction (MI), rhythm abnormalities, valvular dysfunction, cardiac inflammation, primary diseases of the cardiac muscle, and genetic disorders (2). While these etiologies of cardiovascular dysfunction are heterogeneous, a unifying theme in the progression of nearly all forms appears to be the development of cardiac fibrosis. Pathological fibrotic remodeling involves changes in myocardial tissue caused by proliferation and activation of resident cardiac fibroblasts (CFs) and alteration of the extracellular matrix (ECM) composition. While structural collagen is essential for maintaining physiological cardiac function, fibrosis represents pathological changes that correspond with worsened clinical outcomes (3).

The progression of fibrosis from physiological to pathological is perhaps best exemplified by myocardial ischemia and infarction, the most common cause of cardiovascular disease resulting from reduced perfusion of myocardial tissue. Cardiomyocytes, which generate the contractile force mediating cardiac output, require constant energy to maintain function and viability. However, when proper tissue perfusion is lost, cardiomyocytes are deprived of critical sources of energy production, resulting in cell death through either apoptosis or necrosis (4). Myocardial death leads initially to an inflammatory response where granulocytes, macrophages, and fibroblasts are recruited to the region of injury, an area that is ultimately replaced by secreted ECM proteins such as collagen to form scar tissue (5, 6). Reparative scar formation is beneficial in replacing dead cardiomyocytes, preventing myocardial rupture, and maintaining myocardial continuity. However, the replacement of cardiomyocytes with a fibrotic scar following infarction or other forms of cardiac injury reduces contractility and leads to regional or global systolic dysfunction (7). Fibrotic remodeling is also associated with increased passive myocardial stiffness and the development of diastolic dysfunction (DD), an essential contributor to the development of heart failure (HF) with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) (8), and can disrupt cardiac electrical conduction by slowing action potential propagation, increasing the risk of arrhythmias and other conduction abnormalities (9).

Despite the substantial contributions of fibrotic remodeling to cardiac dysfunction in both HFpEF and HF with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF), novel therapies to treat cardiac fibrosis have not emerged in the clinical realm. One principal limitation in the exploration and implementation of antifibrotic therapies stems from the challenge of accurately quantifying fibrotic burden. While definitive diagnosis of cardiac fibrosis by histology is possible, the obtaining of cardiac tissue is limited to invasive endomyocardial biopsy or biopsy during cardiac surgery. Historically, cardiac imaging modalities have not been capable of quantifying cardiac fibrosis. For example, echocardiography, which represents the most common cardiac imaging technique, has not been able to accurately detect fibrosis. In addition, while previous efforts have attempted to correlate diastolic tissue Doppler with collagen deposition by histology, these techniques have not yet been widely adopted (10). Recent advances in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technolo-
TGF-β signaling pathway

Canonical

Noncanonical

SMAD2/3 TAK1/p38

GSK2 GRK5

cAMP

EPAC

PKG

AT1R

Ang II

ANP/BNP

NO

sGC

Cardiac fibroblast activation

Therapeutic approaches

TGF-β pathway inhibition (pifithrin), p38 or TAK1 inhibition

β2-AR agonism, GRK2 inhibitors (panopatine, gallein, βARKct), GRK inhibitors (GRK5nt), EPAC activator

β1-AR agonism (mirabegron)

ACE inhibitors/ARBs/aldosterone antagonists

Dual AT1R inhibition and NPR-A/B agonism (saquinavir/valsartan), sGC stimulator (verapamil)

Figure 1. Classical signaling pathways regulating CF activation and approaches for targeting fibrosis of the heart. Numerous signaling pathways have been implicated in the regulation of CF activation and fibrotic remodeling. Therapeutic targeting of these pathways is of intense scientific and clinical interest. TGF-β stimulation of the TGF-β receptor (TGFβR) drives fibroblast activation canonically through SMAD2/3 activation and nuclear translocation, or non-canonically by inducing TGF-β–activated kinase 1–mediated (TAK1-mediated) phosphorylation of p38. While activation of the β2-adrenergic receptor (β2-AR) is thought to be antifibrotic through induction of cAMP production and activation of exchange protein directly activated by cAMP (EPAC), this signaling can be uncoupled through GPCR kinase 2–mediated (GRK2-mediated) or GRK5–mediated receptor phosphorylation. β1-AR agonists, such as mirabegron, may ameliorate fibroblast activation through yet unknown mechanisms. Angiotensin II (Ang II) mediates fibroblast activation through stimulation of the Ang II type 1 receptor (AT1R), by both promoting TGF-β production and inducing systemic release of the mineralocorticoid aldosterone from the adrenal cortex. Induction of cGMP-dependent protein kinase (PKG), through either B-type natriuretic peptide–mediated (BNP-mediated) activation of type A and B natriuretic peptide receptors (NPR-A/B) or stimulation of soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) by nitric oxide (NO), has also demonstrated antifibrotic properties. Established and investigatory therapeutic strategies targeting these pathways are listed below. ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme; ARB, angiotensin receptor blocker.

Classical therapeutic targets for cardiac fibrosis

Cardiac fibrosis represents a common terminal pathway seen in diverse cardiac pathologies. The cardiac fibroblast is an essential myocardial cell type responsible for ECM homeostasis; however, stress and pathological stimulation invoke differentiation to a myofibroblast state characterized by increased deposition of ECM proteins, ultimately leading to cardiac fibrosis and dysfunction (3). The cardiac myofibroblast can be activated via numerous cell signaling pathways following cardiac injury, including the transforming growth factor-β (TGF-β) pathway, as well as the adrenergic and angiotensin receptor systems (Figure 1). Below we review these traditional pathways and therapeutic targets.

TGF-β signaling pathway. The TGF-β family of peptides represents perhaps the most thoroughly investigated mediator of pathological fibroblast activation and fibrotic remodeling in the heart (15). TGF-β expression is markedly upregulated both in cardiac injury models and in human HF patients (16, 17). Canonical TGF-β signaling involves activin receptor-like kinase 5 (ALK5) and the type II TGF-β receptor (TGFβR2), by both promoting TGF-β production and inducing systemic release of the mineralocorticoid aldosterone from the adrenal cortex. Induction of cGMP-dependent protein kinase (PKG), through either B-type natriuretic peptide–mediated (BNP-mediated) activation of type A and B natriuretic peptide receptors (NPR-A/B) or stimulation of soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) by nitric oxide (NO), has also demonstrated antifibrotic properties. Established and investigatory therapeutic strategies targeting these pathways are listed below. ACE, angiotensin-converting enzyme; ARB, angiotensin receptor blocker.
tissue growth factor (CTGF) has historically been recognized in response to TGF-β stimulation, it now appears as though CTGF is not a major TGF-β effector in the regulation of tissue fibrosis, and unlikely represents a viable therapeutic target (22).

As major players in driving myofibroblast differentiation and pathological ECM deposition, TGF-β and its receptors remain attractive therapeutic targets to combat cardiac fibrosis (23). For example, pharmacological inhibition of ALK5 was recently demonstrated to dedifferentiate cultured cardiac myofibroblasts isolated from failing explanted hearts of transplant recipients, demonstrating to dedifferentiate cultured cardiac myofibroblasts (24).

However, cardiovascular toxicities were recently observed upon general inhibition of the pathway with a TGF-β neutralizing antibody in healthy monkeys (25), suggesting that a more refined approach will be needed to safely inhibit TGF-β signaling to treat human cardiac fibrosis, such as by targeting downstream effectors. In this regard, non-canonical TGF-β signaling, predominantly mediated by TGFβR2, induces activation of TGF-β-activated kinase 1 (TAK1) (26), which represents an attractive therapeutic target as its inhibition has revealed potential antifibrotic effects on TGF-β-induced fibroblast ECM production (27). Further downstream, p38α functions as a nodal regulator of CF differentiation, in part through its ability to drive profibrotic epigenetic regulatory factors to distinct genomic loci (see below). Together, the data suggest that targeted inhibition of p38 may represent a viable therapeutic approach to attenuate myofibroblast activation and fibrosis in response to ischemic injury (28–30).

Pirfenidone is an FDA-approved medication for the treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), which is thought to mediate its effects through a reduction in oxidative stress and TGF-β expression. While the clinical effects of pirfenidone in treating IPF are controversial, a pooled data analysis of randomized clinical trials does reveal clinical benefit (31). In animal models of cardiac fibrosis, pirfenidone was shown to reduce atrial fibrosis, limit fibrotic expansion after infarction, and attenuate hypertension-induced cardiac fibrosis (32–34). In the PIROUETTE clinical trial, in which 47 HFpEF patients were randomized to receive either pirfenidone or placebo, pirfenidone treatment led to a 1.2% decrease in cardiac tension after infarction, and attenuate hyperten-

sion-induced cardiac fibrosis (32–34). In the review of randomized clinical trials does reveal clinical benefit (31). In animal models of cardiac fibrosis, pirfenidone was shown to reduce atrial fibrosis, limit fibrotic expansion after infarction, and attenuate hypertension-induced cardiac fibrosis (32–34). In the PIROUETTE clinical trial, in which 47 HFpEF patients were randomized to receive either pirfenidone or placebo, pirfenidone treatment led to a 1.2% decrease in cardiac fibrosis, as determined by MRI assessment of myocardial extracellular volume, but did not improve diastolic function (35); these modest cardioprotective effects are potentially due to redundancy of TGF-β signaling with other pathways that induce pathological fibrotic remodeling and dysfunction, including the adrenergic and angiotensin systems. These data establish a roadmap for using MRI to assess efficacy of antifibrotic therapies for the heart, but also highlight the need to develop more robust interventions to reverse fibrosis and improve clinical outcomes.

Adrenergic receptor system. Changes in cardiac physiology in response to stress and reduced cardiac output lead to systemic and local activation of neurohormonal pathways, which are activated to maintain circulatory homeostasis in the setting of cardiac dysfunction and decreased perfusion (36). One important pathway involves activation of the sympathetic nervous system and endogenous release of norepinephrine, a potent, nonselective adrenergic receptor (AR) agonist that stimulates α-ARs in the peripheral vasculature to increase blood pressure, and binds β1-ARs in cardiomyocytes to increase inotropy and chronotropy. These effects are beneficial acutely in increasing cardiac output and maintaining adequate blood pressure. However, chronic sympathetic activation becomes maladaptive, and pharmacological blockade of

**Figure 2. Epigenetic regulation of CF activation and next-generation therapeutic strategies.**

The most notable histone acetyltransferase (HAT) in the control of cardiac fibrosis is p300, which mediates acetylation of histone tail lysine residues in enhancers and super-enhancers that control expression of profibrotic genes. p300 has a bromodomain, which mediates binding of the enzyme to acetyl-histones in chromatin. Bromodomain-containing protein 4 (BRD4) also binds acetyl-histones and initiates a profibrotic gene program by activating RNA polymerase II (RNA Pol II). (B) The small-molecule acetyl-lysine mimic JQ1 binds the bromodomains of BRD4 to displace it from chromatin, thereby attenuating profibrotic gene expression. Similarly, CBP30 inhibits the p300 bromodomain, while A-485 inhibits p300 catalytic activity. Pharmacological inhibition of histone deacetylases (HDACs) using compounds such as ITF2357/givinostat creates spurious acetyl-histone marks, resulting in mislocalization of p300 and BRD4 in the cardiac fibroblast genome, with resulting disruption of the profibrotic gene program. (C) In activated CFs, BRD4 associates with an enhancer element approximately 65 kb downstream of the gene encoding a homeobox transcription factor, Meox1. Enhancer-bound BRD4 loops to associate with the Meox1 promoter, resulting in stimulation of its expression and initiation of a profibrotic gene expression cascade.
β1-ARs remains the most proven therapy for the treatment of HF and prevention of adverse remodeling (57–59).

In contrast to the β1-AR, signaling via the β2-AR, which appears to be the dominant isoform in CFs, promotes antifibrotic effects, at least in part by activation of exchange protein directly activated by cAMP (EPAC) (40, 41). However, while acute β2-AR activation is a potent inhibitor of collagen synthesis in healthy CFs, myofibroblasts isolated from patients with HF appear to be resistant to β2-AR agonists, most likely because of receptor uncoupling as a result of elevated GPCR kinase 2 (GRK2) activity (42–44). Targeting GRK2 activity became an attractive antifibrotic strategy following the discovery that its inhibition, pharmacologically with paroxetine (45), or via viral delivery of a peptide inhibitor (βARKct) (46), conferred significant protection against cardiac dysfunction and myocardial fibrosis in numerous animal models of HF. Subsequent studies using genetic ablation of GRK2 specifically in the CF population revealed potent antifibrotic effects in a murine ischemia/reperfusion model of cardiac injury (47, 48), as well as attenuation of myofibroblast differentiation by pharmacological inhibition with gallein (48). The role of GRK5 in cardiac fibrosis has also recently been explored, providing evidence that genetic ablation as well as inhibition using an amino-terminal domain peptide inhibitor (GRK5nt) possesses potential antifibrotic properties (49). Manipulation of GRKs, as they relate to adrenergic signaling in CFs, represents a promising therapeutic strategy to combat myocardial fibrosis.

Unlike β1- and β2-ARs, the β3-AR is thought to be resistant to desensitization because it lacks phosphorylation sites for GRKs (50). β3-AR expression is low in nonfailing hearts but is upregulated in response to pathological stress (37, 51–53). Initial evidence of the cardioprotective properties of β3-AR signaling was provided by the demonstration that mice lacking this receptor developed exacerbated cardiac remodeling in response to transverse aortic constriction (TAC) due, in part, to augmented nitric oxide synthase–dependent oxidative stress (54). Conversely, β3-AR agonists block adverse remodeling in association with reduced cardiac fibrosis in models of pressure overload, MI, and DD (55–57). Based on the beneficial effects of stimulating β3-ARs in the heart, mirabegron, a β3-AR–selective agonist that is FDA approved for the treatment of overactive bladder, is being assessed for efficacy on LV mass and diastolic function in patients with structural heart disease (58). Future studies to address the mechanisms by which β3-AR agonists ameliorate cardiac fibrosis are warranted, including examining whether the antifibrotic effects of β3-AR stimulation are due to direct effects on CFs versus indirect effects on cardiomyocytes, endothelial cells, or immune effectors.

Renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system. In chronic cardiac dysfunction, there is significant activation of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system (RAAS), which has a direct association with the development of cardiac fibrosis (59). As cardiac dysfunction progresses, decreased cardiac output causes a reduction in renal perfusion, stimulating release of renin from the juxtaglomerular apparatus (60). This release leads indirectly to the formation and systemic release of angiotensin II (Ang II) via angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE). As the integral effector molecule of the RAAS, levels of Ang II are rapidly induced following cardiac injury, and it has been shown to promote numerous myofibroblast characteristics, including elevated cellular proliferation, migration, and ECM synthesis. These effects are secondary to Ang II–mediated stimulation of the Ang II type 1 receptor (AT1R) (61–63), and Ang II’s promotion of TGF-β production in CFs (64).

The benefits of RAAS inhibition in the treatment of HF and prevention of adverse remodeling have been convincingly documented in animal studies as well as human clinical trials. Prevention of Ang II production in patients with HFrEF using ACE inhibitors (ACEIs) reduced hospitalization and all-cause mortality (65). While ACEIs exhibit several salutary effects, including a reduction in blood pressure, there is evidence supporting a direct role in reducing fibrotic tissue burden (66). Similarly, attenuation of Ang II signaling can be achieved using angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), which reduce CF activation and block cardiac fibrosis following ischemic insult (67). Interestingly, while global ablation of the Ang II type 1A receptor is cardioprotective following acute MI (68), direct activation of AT1R in cardiomyocytes has only a minimal impact on cardiac hypertrophy (69), suggesting a more important role for this receptor in cardiac nonmyocytes; these data are corroborated by studies demonstrating a reduction in aortic fibrosis in mice lacking AT1R in fibroblasts (70). Clinical trials have also demonstrated improved cardiovascular-related mortality and hospital admissions in patients with HFrEF treated with ARBs (71).

More recently, ARB treatment in combination with a nephrilysin inhibitor (NI), which slows degradation of natriuretic peptides, has been shown to function synergistically to reduce fibrosis after experimental ischemic injury (72). Clinically, ARB and NI treatment reduces circulating biomarkers of cardiac fibrosis (73), and was shown to improve outcomes in human patients compared with treatment with ACEIs (74), leading to the FDA approval of sacubitril/valsartan. Multiple lines of evidence have demonstrated that B-type natriuretic peptide (BNP), the levels of which are increased by NI treatment, possesses antifibrotic properties via stimulation of its receptors, NPR-A and NPR-B, with consequent activation of cGMP-dependent protein kinase (PKG) (75). In line with this protective mechanism, vericiguat (76), which elevates cGMP by functioning as a soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) stimulator, was recently approved for the treatment of HFrEF.

Ang II also promotes cardiac fibrosis indirectly via ATIR activation within the adrenal cortex, inducing systemic release of the mineralocorticoid aldosterone (36). Aldosterone levels are significantly elevated in patients with cardiac dysfunction, leading to increased reabsorption of sodium in the distal convoluted tubule. Aldosterone also possesses direct profibrotic effects in the myocardium, where it induces fibrotic remodeling via activation of mineralocorticoid receptors in CFs (77, 78). Interestingly, the profibrotic effects of aldosterone persist even when the angiotensin system is deactivated, suggesting independent aldosterone-mediated fibrosis (79). Inhibition of aldosterone signaling using the mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists spironolactone and eplerenone has revealed potential antifibrotic effects clinically. The RALES trial, a placebo-controlled study in HFrEF patients, demonstrated a reduction in mortality and hospitalizations following spironolactone administration (80). Furthermore, spironolactone treatment corresponded with reduced serum markers of fibrosis and collagen synthesis (81).
Progressing beyond the classical regulators of cardiac fibrosis. Inhibitors of the adrenergic and angiotensin systems are, and will continue to be, a mainstay in the care of the ever-expanding HF patient population. It is important to note, however, that while therapies targeting RAAS appear effective in reducing collagen deposition, recent clinical trials have unfortunately failed to demonstrate benefit in the HFpEF patient population, suggesting an inability to broadly diminish profibrotic pathways (82, 83). In addition, despite evidence supporting the cardioprotective role of pirfenidone, there is an elevated risk of hepatotoxicity associated with prolonged treatment (84), efficacy of the compound in HFpEF patients is modest (35), and the molecular mechanism(s) of action of the compound remain obscure. These disappointing trials may suggest that clinical therapies should be tailored to address the specific etiology underlying cardiac disease, rather than seeking a “universal treatment” for cardiac fibrosis. One possibility for why promising treatments of HFpEF, such as antagonism of angiotensin and aldosterone, have been marginally successful is that beneficial effects may only be observed in a subset a patients in whom fibrosis is driven by the RAAS pathway. In patients who are resistant to such therapy, differential mechanisms regulating CF activation could be operative.

Targeting epigenetics as an antifibrotic therapeutic approach

Cardiovascular epigenetic mechanisms are rapidly gaining interest for their contributions to the development of myocardial fibrosis and potential to serve as innovative therapeutic targets (85). At its core, epigenetics refers to modifications at the level of chromatin, the basic unit of which is the nucleosome or histone octamer wrapped in DNA, which culminate in alterations in gene expression independent of changes to nucleotide sequence. While the modification varieties are numerous, classical epigenetic events such as acetylation and methylation have been extensively documented for their roles in the pathogenesis of cardiac fibrosis and myofibroblast activation (86). Epigenetic regulators are attractive therapeutic targets since they serve as key nodal points through which redundant upstream pathways, such as those emanating from the cell surface receptors described above, must transmit signals to elicit the gene program for CF activation. Indeed, pharmacological manipulation of several epigenetic modifying enzymes, along with cognate proteins that recognize these modifications and arbitrate differential gene expression, has been shown to mitigate pathological fibrotic remodeling of the heart.

Histone acetyltransferases. Acetylation of histone tail lysine residues is a posttranslational modification catalyzed by histone acetyltransferases (HATs). HATs have a profound impact on gene expression, in part by creating docking sites for transcriptional regulators and chromatin-modifying factors that contain acetyl-lysine binding modules, such as bromodomains (87). Among the 28 human HATs (88), the isoform most highly implicated in the control of cardiac fibrosis is p300 (Figure 2A), along with the highly related protein CREB-binding protein (CBP). Nevertheless, efforts to advance HAT inhibitors as a therapeutic strategy for cardiac fibrosis have been hindered by the lack of potent and selective pharmacological inhibitors of p300. The earliest exploration of p300 inhibition in cardiac fibrosis employed curcumin, a natural product HAT inhibitor, which was shown to ameliorate peri-vascular fibrosis in response to chronic hypertension or following MI (89, 90), as well as reduce ECM production in a high glucose–induced myocardial fibrosis model (91). However, given the pleiotropic actions of curcumin, these data should be approached cautiously. Synthetic p300 inhibitors, such as L002 and C646, have also been shown to block cardiac fibrosis (92–94), but these compounds suffer from a lack of selectivity and potency, respectively. More recently, through virtual screening and a subsequent medicinal chemistry optimization campaign, A-485, a potent and orally bioavailable small-molecule inhibitor that is highly selective for p300 and CBP, was developed (Figure 2B). A-485 has drug-like properties, providing an excellent opportunity to assess the efficacy of HAT inhibition in preclinical models of pathological cardiac fibrosis, and thereby further address the translational potential of p300/CBP catalytic activity inhibition for the treatment of HF in humans.

p300 and CBP have a single acetyl-lysine binding bromodomain that is required for chromatin targeting of the HATs (95, 96). CBP112 and CBP30 have been developed as small molecules that target the p300/CBP bromodomain and function as acetyl-lysine competitive inhibitors (Figure 2B) (97, 98). Proteomics and transcriptomics were used to quantify acetylation as well as mRNA and protein abundance in mouse embryonic fibroblasts after cellular p300 inhibition with A-485 versus CBP112 (99). Remarkably, gene expression changes triggered by CBP112 were modest compared with those observed upon catalytic inhibition of p300 with A-485, suggesting that the HAT bromodomain is required for the regulation of only a subset of target genes. To our knowledge, p300/CBP bromodomain inhibitors have yet to be tested in models of cardiac fibrosis. However, the recent demonstration that CBP30 potently blocks activation of fibroblasts from patients with Dupuytren’s disease, a localized fibrotic disorder of the palm, suggests antifibrotic potential of this approach (100).

Histone deacytases. Seemingly paradoxically, inhibiting deacetylation of histones by targeting histone deacetylases (HDACs) also blocks cardiac fibrosis. Mammalian HDACs are divided into four classes: class I (HDAC1, HDAC2, HDAC3, and HDAC8), class II (HDAC4, HDAC5, HDAC6, HDAC7, HDAC9, and HDAC10), class III (SIRT1–7), and class IV (HDAC11). Class II is further subdivided into IIa (HDAC4, HDAC5, HDAC7, and HDAC9) and IIb (HDAC6 and HDAC10). Class I, II, and IV HDACs are zinc-dependent, while class III HDACs (also known as sirtuins) use NAD+ as a cofactor for catalytic activity. We focus on the potential of inhibiting zinc-dependent HDACs for the treatment of cardiac fibrosis. Nonetheless, it should be noted that sirtuins clearly regulate fibrosis of the heart, but that their activity is generally cardioprotective (101, 102), and thus therapeutic strategies should likely focus on stimulating sirtuin activity. Consistent with this, enhancing sirtuin catalytic activity by providing animals with NAD+ precursors or by stimulating NAD biosynthesis was shown to improve diastolic function in murine models of HFpEF (103, 104).

The ability of “pan” inhibitors of zinc-dependent HDACs, such as the FDA-approved compound suberoylanilide hydroxamic acid (SAHA; vorinostat), to block cardiac fibrosis in MI, TAC, and genetic models of systolic HF has been well documented and reviewed extensively (105, 106). More recently, it was shown that pan-HDAC
inhibition with the clinical-stage compound ITF2357/givinostat improved cardiac relaxation in murine models of hypertension- or aging-induced DD with preserved ejection fraction, and that SAHA was efficacious in a feline model of HFrEF due to slow, progressive ascending aortic banding (107-109). Surprisingly, in the murine models of DD, cardiac fibrosis was not observed by standard histological readouts, such as Picrosirius red staining (107, 108), and improved diastolic function upon HDAC inhibition was attributed exclusively to augmented myofibril relaxation (107). However, further evaluation of hearts of mice with DD revealed “hidden fibrosis,” a process in which increased ECM deposition and remodeling were not detected by standard histological methods, but were uncovered by quantitative mass spectrometry and atomic force microscopy (AFM). This covert type of cardiac fibrosis was profoundly inhibited by ITF2357/givinostat in a manner that correlated with improved diastolic function (108), implicating HDAC inhibition as a potential therapeutic strategy to combat HFrEF induced by pathological ECM remodeling and resulting ventricular stiffening.

Employing histological methods to assess the role of fibrosis in the pathogenesis of human HFrEF has yielded equivocal findings. In one autopsy study, individuals with HFrEF were shown to have more pronounced cardiac fibrosis than control subjects (110), while in an independent study using endomyocardial biopsies from HFrEF patients with severe DD, approximately 30% of the samples examined did not have significant fibrosis (111). Reevaluation of these human and murine hearts, as well as additional samples from HFrEF patients and preclinical models, using ECM mass spectrometry and AFM should more clearly define whether ECM expansion serves a generalizable role in the control of DD and HFrEF.

There are two pressing questions related to HDAC inhibitor-mediated inhibition of cardiac fibrosis: (a) Which HDAC isoforms are profibrotic? (b) What are the molecular mechanisms by which these enzymes promote fibrosis? Regarding the first question, hydroxamic acid pan-HDAC inhibitors such as SAHA and givinostat are far more effective at blocking the catalytic activity of class I and IIb HDACs than class IIa HDACs (112), which have catalytic domains but no known physiological substrates (113), or class IV HDAC11, which is a lysine defatty acylase as opposed to a deacetylase (114-116). While nothing is known about the cardiac function of HDAC10 (117), which is a spermidine deacetylase, knockout of HDAC6 had no effect on cardiac fibrosis (118), suggesting that class IIb HDACs are not generally profibrotic. Thus, class I HDACs are likely the targets of SAHA and givinostat that promote cardiac fibrosis. Consistent with this, selective class I HDAC (HDAC1, -2, -3) inhibition with mocetinostat blocked cardiac fibrosis in response to chronic Ang II infusion in mice (119), and blunted progression of fibrosis in a chronic rat MI model, resulting in a reduction in LV end-diastolic pressure (120). Furthermore, in a 7-day model of mouse MI, induced by left anterior descending coronary artery ligation, administration of the class I HDAC inhibitor PD-106 after MI resulted in reduced LV remodeling and improved cardiac function at study endpoint, with concomitant suppression of matrix metalloproteinase-2 and -9 expression (121).

It remains possible that other HDAC isoforms serve profibrotic roles in the heart that have gone unnoticed owing to reagent limitations. In this regard, new, highly selective inhibitors of class IIa HDACs or HDAC11 catalytic domains have been developed, and should be employed to assess the roles of these obscure HDACs in the control of cardiac fibrosis (122, 123).

Surprisingly little is known about the molecular mechanisms by which HDAC inhibitors block cardiac fibrosis. Class I HDAC inhibition has been shown to suppress CF proliferation by preventing retinoblastoma protein (Rb) phosphorylation, thereby preventing expansion of ECM-producing myofibroblasts (119). Class I HDAC inhibition was also shown to stimulate expression of antifibrotic microRNA-133 (miR-133), leading to suppression of TAC-mediated cardiac fibrosis in mice (124). More recently, suppression of CF activation by HDAC inhibition was linked to mislocalization of the chromatin “reader” protein bromodomain-containing protein 4 (BRD4) (see below) (108).

Bromodomain and extraterminal proteins. The bromodomain and extraterminal (BET) family of proteins, BRD2, BRD3, BRD4, and BRDT, associate with acetylated lysine residues of histones to regulate gene transcription. BRD4 and BRDT (testis-specific) possess carboxy-terminal domains capable of activating RNA polymerase II (Pol II) through the positive transcription elongation factor (P-TEFb) complex to initiate gene transcription (125, 126). While several small-molecule inhibitors of BET proteins have been developed, the best characterized is JQ1, an acetyl-lysine mimetic that competitively displaces BET bromodomains from chromatin, resulting in suppression of Pol II-mediated transcription (Figure 2B) (127). JQ1 prevented several hallmarks of HF, including cardiomyocyte hypertrophy, cardiac fibrosis, and systolic dysfunction, in a mouse model of TAC (128, 129), and in a model of genetic dilated cardiomyopathy caused by a mutant form of phospholamban (PLN9R9C) (130). Furthermore, administration of JQ1 in a therapeutic mode after the heart had remodeled also attenuated cardiac dysfunction both in the murine TAC model and in post-MI cardiac remodeling in mice (131).

Integrated transcriptomic analyses across rodent HF models and human induced pluripotent stem cell systems have clearly revealed that BET inhibition suppresses transactivation of a broad profibrotic and proinflammatory gene program in the heart (131). Mechanistically, BRD4 is known to contribute to the formation of dynamic, cell state–specific enhancers, referred to as super-enhancers (SEs). BRD4 disproportionately associates with acetyl-H3K27–containing SEs, which are thought to signal proximal promoters to stabilize BRD4-containing coactivator complexes near transcription start sites, and thereby facilitate P-TEFb-mediated Pol II phosphorylation and transcription elongation (132-134). In CFs, TGF-β signaling targets BRD4 binding to discrete SEs in a p38 kinase–dependent manner, providing a circuit for coupling extracellular cues to the cardiac epigenome to drive profibrotic gene expression (135). Subsequent studies, using single-cell technologies, identified distal regulatory elements in CFs that had increased chromatin accessibility after TAC that were closed upon JQ1 treatment (136). One of the most highly regulated elements was a large enhancer downstream of the gene encoding Mefox1, a homeodomain-containing transcription factor whose expression was highly upregulated in myofibroblasts after TAC and suppressed by JQ1. Regulation of Mefox1 expression in CFs involved TAC-inducible association of the Mefox1 promoter with BRD4 bound to this enhancer region, which is located approximately 65 kb downstream (Figure 2C). Follow-on studies with cultured CFs
established a new role for Meox1 as a profibrotic transcription factor in the heart. Thus, these studies uncovered a stress-inducible, BRD4-dependent, long-range chromatin interaction as an important, druggable regulator of cardiac fibrosis.

A recent study determined chromatin quantitative trait loci in human hearts by assessing H3K27 acetylation by ChIP-Seq and follow-up chromatin conformation assays (137). The work identified 62 putative enhancers with increased H3K27 acetylation enrichment, corresponding gene expression differences, and overlap with published subthreshold GWAS hits, suggesting potential disease and phenotype association. Given the propensity of BRD4 to associate with acetyl-H3K27, it is intriguing to speculate that BET inhibitors could target these loci to block HF pathogenesis.

BRD4 may also regulate cardiac fibrosis by mediating crosstalk between myocytes and fibroblasts or other nonmyocyte populations in the heart. ChIP-Seq studies revealed that, in addition to controlling pro-growth genes, many of the BRD4-enriched SEs identified in cardiomyocytes were associated with profibrotic genes, including those encoding the secreted factors CTGF, plasminogen activator inhibitor-1 (PAI-1/Serpine1), and TGF-β2 (138). These findings suggest the possibility that BRD4 signaling in cardiomyocytes regulates expression of paracrine factors that activate fibroblasts and other stress-activated cell types in the heart to elicit fibrotic remodeling.

BET proteins contain tandem bromodomains, BD1 and BD2, which are simultaneously targeted by inhibitors such as JQ1. Emerging evidence exploring other inhibitors, such as the BD2-selective inhibitor apabetalone, suggests that inhibiting one BRD4 bromodomain over the other may improve the overall safety profile for HF patients requiring chronic therapy. Indeed, apabetalone is the only BET inhibitor to be tested in a phase III trial for any cardiac indication, being assessed for its ability to reduce major cardiovascular events in more than 2400 individuals with combined acute coronary syndrome (ACS), type 2 diabetes (T2D), and low LDL levels. While apabetalone failed to diminish ischemic cardiovascular events in this patient population, the BD2-selective inhibitor was found to be well tolerated, and secondary subgroup analyses revealed a reduction in hospitalizations for HF in patients with T2D and recent ACS (139), and fewer HF-related hospitalizations in patients with chronic kidney disease and T2D (140). Therefore, the feasibility of safely targeting BRD4 as a therapeutic strategy for cardiovascular disease is established.

How is it that inhibition of HATs, HDACs, or BET proteins results in inhibition of CF activation? Clearly there is crosstalk between these epigenetic regulatory factors (Figure 2B). HAT activity is required to create acetyl-marks at profibrotic enhancers that are subsequently bound by BRD4. Furthermore, there is evidence demonstrating that HDAC inhibition, which creates spurious acetyl-histone marks, results in mislocalization of BRD4 in the CF genome (108) and prevents HATs from properly acetylating certain gene regulatory elements in the heart (141), which may also involve altering genomic targeting of bromodomain-containing HATs.

Only the tip of the epigenetics iceberg. We have focused much of this Review on a single epigenetic modification, acetylation, and a small number of regulators of the posttranslational modification. However, it is important to note that other mediators of the epigenome have been shown to regulate fibrosis of the heart. For example, genetic ablation or pharmacological inhibition of the K3K9me2-specific demethylase KDM3a was shown to diminish collagen deposition in the mouse TAC model (142), and myofibroblast-specific ablation of lysine-specific demethylase 1 (LSD1/KDM1) was found to alleviate systolic dysfunction and fibrosis in the TAC model by broadly interdicting pathological TGF-β1 signaling (143). Furthermore, the vast majority of epigenetic regulatory factors have yet to be studied in the context of cardiac fibrosis and HF, underscoring a deep reservoir for basic and translational research discoveries that have the potential to profoundly impact patients suffering from various cardiovascular diseases.

It is our view that the most expeditious path forward is to blend genetic and pharmacological, “chemical biology” approaches. In this regard, exhaustive and sophisticated medicinal chemistry programs in industry and academia have led to the development of highly selective and potent inhibitors of a wide array of epigenetic targets, and many of these compounds are available to the scientific community through programs such as the Structural Genomics Consortium (144). Coupling the use of these compounds with well-validated ex vivo phenotypic assays and in vivo models of cardiac fibrosis has the potential to rapidly uncover novel roles for epigenetic regulators in the control of HF, providing crucial mechanistic insights, and to advance lead compounds into in vivo effi-
cacy go/no-go experiments in the march toward the clinic (Figure 3). However, we acknowledge that this stance could be viewed as “old school,” since we have not touched on other exciting therapeutic modalities, such as gene editing, RNA, or antibody therapies, or the promising discovery that chimeric antigen receptor T cells engineered to specifically target activated fibroblasts are able to reduce cardiac fibrosis in a mouse model (145).

Finally, identification of the optimal therapeutic window for targeting cardiac fibrosis will be paramount for effective treatment. First, premature disruption of reparative scar formation holds significant risk for cardiac rupture, as is observed when physiological fibroblast function is disturbed too abruptly following infarction (146–148). Similarly, a key therapeutic concern for antifibrotic therapies relates to ECM maturity, specifically the point in a disease process at which the matrix has become so heavily cross-linked that it is potentially no longer degradable. At least in regard to cell therapy, there exists a “point of no return” following ischemic injury when the infarct scar has reached a mature state and the cardioprotective effects may no longer be possible (149). In this regard, in addition to targeting fibroblast activation and ECM deposition, approaches aimed at enhancing turnover of the fibrotic matrix in the heart should also be pursued.

Conclusions
While standard-of-care medications have proven invaluable in the fight against cardiovascular diseases over the last several decades, there remains a critical need to pursue novel therapeutic strategies targeting fibroblasts and fibrotic remodeling. A considerable amount of research effort is now dedicated to exploring myriad exciting and promising lines of investigation to combat cardiac fibrosis, including expansion of classical regulators of fibrosis as well as more novel strategies in the area of epigenetics. Furthermore, incredible technological advancements in our ability to probe complex cellular systems and screen compound libraries for antifibrotic agents will undoubtedly prove instrumental in driving this field forward. Innovative therapeutic interventions targeting cardiac myofibroblasts and the pathological fibrotic remodeling they promote have high potential to lead to advancements in the treatment of human cardiovascular diseases.

Acknowledgments
TAM was supported by the NIH by grants HL116848, HL147558, DK119594, HL127240, and HL150225. JGT was supported by the NIH by grant HL147463. TAM, JGT, and MR were supported by the American Heart Association (16SFRN31400013). MR was supported by a postdoctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association. CAT was supported by the NIH by grant HL007822.

Address correspondence to: Timothy A. McKinsey, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, 12700 E. 19th Ave, Box B139 (8450E), Aurora, Colorado 80045-0508, USA. Phone: 303.724.5476; Email: timothy.mckinsey@cuanschutz.edu.

1. Virani SS, et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics—2021 update: a report from the American Heart Association. Circulation. 2021;143(8):e254–e743.
2. Braunwald E. Heart failure. JACC Heart Fail. 2013;1(1):1–20.
3. Travers JG, et al. Cardiac fibrosis: the fibroblast awakens. Circ Res. 2016;118(6):1021–1040.
4. Klener RA, Jennings RB. Consequences of brief ischemia: stunning, preconditioning, and their clinical implications: part 2. Circulation. 2001;104(25):3158–3167.
5. Abbate A, Narula J. Role of apoptosis in adverse ventricular remodeling, Heart Fail Clin. 2012;8(3):79–86.
6. Zhang W, et al. Necrotic myocardial cells release damage-associated molecular patterns that provoke fibroblast activation in vitro and trigger myocardial inflammation and fibrosis in vivo. J Am Heart Assoc. 2015;4(6):e001993.
7. van den Borne SW, et al. Myocardial remodeling after infarction: the role of myofibroblasts. Nat Rev Cardiol. 2010;7(9):30–37.
8. Zile MR, et al. Myocardial stiffness in patients with heart failure and a preserved ejection fraction: contributions of collagen and titin. Circulation. 2015;131(14):1247–1259.
9. Nguyen MN, et al. Cardiac fibrosis and arrhythmogenesis. Compr Physiol. 2017;7(3):1009–1049.
10. Kasner M, et al. Diastolic tissue Doppler indexes correlate with the degree of collagen expression and cross-linking in heart failure and normal ejection fraction. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2011;57(8):977–985.
11. Schelbert EB, et al. Employing extracellular volume cardiovascular magnetic resonance measures of myocardial fibrosis to foster novel therapeutics. Circ Cardiovasc Imaging. 2017;10(6):e005619.
12. Kockova R, et al. Native T1 relaxation time and extracellular volume fraction as accurate markers of diffuse myocardial fibrosis in heart valve disease—comparison with targeted left ventricular myocardial biopsy. J Cir. 2016;80(5):1202–1209.
13. Gibb AA, et al. Myofibroblasts and fibrosis: mitochondrial and metabolic control of cellular differentiation. Circ Res. 2020;127(3):427–447.
14. Rurik JG, et al. Immune cells and immunotherapy for cardiac injury and repair. Circ Res. 2021;128(11):1766–1779.
15. Frangogiannis NG. Transforming growth factor-β in tissue fibrosis. J Exp Med. 2017;215(3):e20190103.
16. Bujak M, Frangogiannis NG. The role of TGF-beta signaling in myocardial infarction and cardiac remodeling, Cardiovasc Res. 2007;74(2):184–195.
17. Khan S, et al. Enhanced bioactive myocardial transforming growth factor-β in advanced human heart failure. Circ J. 2014;78(11):2711–2718.
18. Bujak M, et al. Essential role of Smad3 in infant healing and in the pathogenesis of cardiac remodeling. Circulation. 2007;116(19):2127–2138.
19. Khalil H, et al. Fibroblast-specific TGF-β/Smad2/3 signaling underlies cardiac fibrosis. J Clin Invest. 2017;127(10):3770–3783.
20. Bhandary B, et al. Cardiac fibrosis in proteotoxic cardiac disease is dependent upon myocardial fibroblast TGF-β signaling. J Am Heart Assoc. 2018;7(20):e010013.
21. Meng Q, et al. Myofibroblast-specific TGFβ receptor II signaling in the fibrotic response to cardiac myosin binding protein C-induced cardiomyopathy. Circ Res. 2018;123(2):1285–1297.
22. Accornero F, et al. Genetic analysis of connective tissue growth factor as an effector of transforming growth factor β signaling and cardiac remodeling. Mol Cell Biol. 2015;35(2):2154–2164.
23. Koitabashi N, Kass DA. Reverse remodeling in heart failure—mechanisms and therapeutic opportunities. Nat Rev Cardiol. 2011;9(3):147–157.
24. Nagaraju CK, et al. Myofibroblast phenotype and reversibility of fibrosis in patients with end-stage heart failure. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2019;73(18):2267–2282.
25. Mitra MS, et al. A potent pan-TGFβ neutralizing monoclonal antibody elicits cardiovascular toxicology in mice and cynomolgus monkeys. Toxicol Sci. 2020;175(1):24–34.
26. Zhang D, et al. TAK1 is activated in the myocardium after pressure overload and is sufficient to provoke heart failure in transgenic mice. Nat Med. 2000;6(5):556–563.
27. Ono K, et al. A dominant negative TAK1 inhibits cellular fibrotic responses induced by TGF-beta. Biochem Biophys Res Commun. 2003;307(2):332–337.
28. Bugg D, et al. Infarct collagen topography regulates fibroblast fate via p38-yes-associated protein transcriptional enhanced associate domain protein signals. Circ Res. 2020;127(10):1306–1322.
29. Molkentin JD, et al. Fibroblast-specific genetic manipulation of p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase in vivo reveals its central regulatory role in fibrosis. Circulation. 2017;136(6):549–561.
30. Stratton MS, et al. p53r2: a profibrotic signaling nexus. Circulation. 2017;136(6):562–565.
The Journal of Clinical Investigation

REVIEW SERIES: NEW THERAPEUTIC TARGETS IN CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES

31. Nathan SD, et al. Effect of pirenidone on mortality: pooled analyses and meta-analyses of clinical trials in idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Lancet Respir Med. 2017;5(3):33–41.

32. Lee KW, et al. Pirenidone prevents the development of a vulnerable substrate for atrial fibrillation in a canine model of heart failure. Circulation. 2006;114(16):1703–1712.

33. Mirkovic S, et al. Attenuation of cardiac fibrosis by pirenidone and amiloride in DOCA-salt hypertensive rats. Br J Pharmacol. 2002;135(4):961–968.

34. Nguyen DT, et al. Pirenidone mitigates left ventricular fibrosis and dysfunction after myocardial infarction and reduces arrhythmias. Heart Rhythm. 2010;7(10):1438–1445.

35. Lewis GA, et al. Pirenidone in heart failure with preserved ejection fraction: a randomized phase 2 trial. Nat Med. 2021;27(8):1477–1482.

36. Hartoppe J, Mann DL. Neurohormonal activation in heart failure with reduced ejection fraction. Nat Rev Cardiol. 2017;14(1):30–38.

37. No authors listed. Effect of metoprolol CR/XL in chronic heart failure: Metoprolol CR/XL Randomised Intervention Trial in Congestive Heart Failure (MERIT-HF). MERIT-HF Study Group. Lancet. 1999;353(9169):2001–2007.

38. No authors listed. The cardiac insufficiency bisoprolol study II (CIBIS-II): a randomised trial. Lancet. 1999;353(9146):9–13.

39. Packer M, et al. Effect of carvedilol on the morbidity of patients with severe chronic heart failure: results of the carvedilol prospective randomized cumulative survival (COPERNICUS) study. Circulation. 2002;106(17):2194–2199.

40. Surinakwa S, et al. Exchange protein activated by cyclic-adenosine monophosphate (Epac) regulates atrial fibroblast function and controls cardiac remodelling. Cardiorenasc. Res. 2019;115(5):94–106.

41. Yokoyama U, et al. The cyclic AMP effector Epac integrates pro- and anti-fibrotic signals. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2008;105(17):6386–6391.

42. Swaney JS, et al. Inhibition of cardiac myofibroblast formation and collagen synthesis by activation and overexpression of adenylyl cyclase. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2005;102(2):437–442.

43. Liu X, et al. cAMP inhibits transforming growth factor-beta-stimulated collagen synthesis via inhibition of extracellular signal-regulated kinase 1/2 and Smad signaling in cardiac fibroblasts. Mol Pharmacol. 2006;70(6):1992–2003.

44. Li J, et al. β-Arrestins regulate human cardiac fibroblast transformation and collagen synthesis in adverse ventricular remodeling. J Mol Cell Cardiol. 2014;76:73–83.

45. Schumacher SM, et al. Paroxetine-mediated GRK2 inhibition reverses cardiac dysfunction and remodeling after myocardial infarction. Sci Transl Med. 2015;7(277):277ra31.

46. Raka PW, et al. AVE6946 inhibits cardiac gene therapy ameliorates cardiac function and normalizes the catecholaminergic axis in a clinically relevant large animal heart failure model. Eur Heart J. 2015;36(19):1437–1447.

47. Woodall MC, et al. Cardiac fibroblast GRK2 deletion enhances contractility and remodeling following ischemia/reperfusion injury. Circ Res. 2016;119(10):1116–1127.

48. Travers JG, et al. Pharmacological and activated fibroblast targeting of Gβγ-GRK2 after myocardial ischemia attenuates heart failure progression. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2017;70(8):958–971.

49. Coleman RC, et al. A peptide of the N-terminus of GRK5 attenuates pressure-overload hypertrophy and heart failure. Sci Signal. 2021;14(676):eaav5968.

50. Nantel F, et al. The human beta 3-adrenergic receptor is resistant to short term agonist-promoted desensitization. Mol Pharmacol. 1995;43(4):548–555.

51. Cheng HJ, et al. Upregulation of functional beta(3)-adrenergic receptor in the failing canine myocardium. Circ Res. 2001;89(7):599–606.

52. Michel LYM, et al. The beta3 adrenergic receptor in healthy and pathological cardiovascular tissues. Cells. 2020;9(12):E2584.

53. Moniote S, et al. Upregulation of beta(3)-adrenoceptors and altered contractile response to inotropic amines in human failing myocardium. Circulation. 2001;103(12):1649–1655.

54. Moens AL, et al. Adverse ventricular remodelling and exacerbated NOS uncoupling from pressure-overload in mice lacking the beta3-adrenoceptor. J Mol Cell Cardiol. 2009;47(5):576–585.

55. Kamiya M, et al. β3-Adrenergic receptor agonist prevents diastolic dysfunction in an angiotensin II-induced cardiomyopathy mouse model. J Pharmacol Exp Ther. 2021;376(3):473–481.

56. Niu X, et al. Cardioprotective effect of beta-3 adrenergic receptor agonism: role of neuronal nicotinic acetylcholine. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2012;59(22):1979–1987.

57. Niu X, et al. β3-Adrenoceptor stimulation protects against myocardial infarction injury via eNOS and NOS activation. PLoS One. 2014;9(6):e89713.

58. Pouleur AC, et al. Rationale and design of a multicentre, randomized, placebo-controlled trial of mirabegron, a Beta3-adrenergic receptor agonist with reduced systolic function-new insights. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014;65(20):2093–2097.

59. Poduri A, et al. Fibroblast angiotensin type II 1a receptors contribute to angiotensin II-induced medial hyperplasia in the ascending aorta. Arterioscler Thromb Vasc Biol. 2015;35(9):1995–2002.

60. Granger CB, et al. Effects of candesartan in patients with chronic heart failure and reduced left-ventricular systolic function on angiotensin-converting-enzyme inhibitors: the CHARM-Alternative trial. Lancet. 2003;362(9368):772–776.

61. van Lueder TG, et al. Angiotensin receptor neprilysin inhibitor LCZ696 attenuates cardiac remodeling and dysfunction after myocardial infarction by reducing cardiac fibrosis and hyper trophy. Circ Heart Fail. 2015;8(1):71–78.

62. Cunningham JW, et al. Effect of sacubitril/valsartan on biomarkers of extracellular matrix regulation in patients with HfPEF. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2020;76(5):503–514.

63. McMurray JJ, et al. Angiotensin-neprilysin inhibition versus enalapril in heart failure. N Engl J Med. 2014;371(1):993–1004.

64. Hofmann F. A concise discussion of the regulatory role of cGMP kinase 1 in cardiac physiology and pathology. Basic Res Cardiol. 2018;113(4):31.

65. Armstrong PW, et al. Vericiguat in patients with heart failure and reduced ejection fraction. N Engl J Med. 2020;382(20):1883–1893.

66. Brilla CG, et al. Remodeling of the rat right and left ventricles in experimental hypertension. Circ Res. 1990;67(6):1355–1364.

67. Brilla CG, et al. Collagen metabolism in cultured adult rat cardiac fibroblasts: response to angiotensin II and aldosterone. J Mol Cell Cardiol. 1994;26(7):809–820.

68. Shafiq MM, Miller AB. Blocking aldosterone receptors contribute to angiotensin II-induced cardiac fibrosis and hypertension. Circ Heart Fail. 2012;77(2):393–404.

69. Pitt B, et al. The effect of spironolactone on mortality and morbidity in patients with severe heart failure. Randomized Aldactone Evaluation Study Investigators. N Engl J Med. 1999;341(10):709–717.

70. Zannad F, et al. Limitation of excessive extracellular matrix turnover may contribute to survival benefit of spironolactone therapy in patients with congestive heart failure: insights from
the randomized aldatoacetone evaluation study (RALES). RALES Investigators. Circulation. 2000;102(22):2700–2706.

82. Massie BM, et al. Irbesartan in patients with heart failure and preserved ejection fraction. N Engl J Med. 2008;359(23):2456–2467.

83. Yusuf S, et al. Effects of candesartan in patients with chronic heart failure and preserved left-ventricular ejection fraction: the CHARM-Preserved Trial. Lancet. 2003;362(9356):777–781.

84. Fang L, et al. A clinical perspective of anti-fibrotic therapies for cardiovascular disease. Front Pharmacol. 2017;8:186.

85. Fang L, et al. A clinical perspective of anti-fibrotic therapies for cardiovascular disease. Trends Pharmacol Sci. 2003;19(6):321–329.

86. Stratton MS, McKinsey TA. Epigenetic regulation of cardiac fibrosis. J Mol Cell Cardiol. 2016;92:206–213.

87. Allis CD, Jenuwein T. The molecular hallmarks of epigenetic control. Nat Rev Genet. 2016;17(8):487–500.

88. Carrozza MJ, et al. The diverse functions of histone acetyltransferase inhibitor, curcumin, in cardiac fibroblasts and circulating fibrocytes. J Mol Med. 2008;86(3):868–878.

89. Sunagawa Y, et al. A natural p300-specific histone acetyltransferase inhibitor, curcumin, in addition to angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor, exerts beneficial effects on left ventricular systolic function after myocardial infarction in rats. Circ J. 2011;75(9):2151–2159.

90. Buggei-Twam A, et al. High glucose induces Smad activation via the transcriptional coregulator p300 and contributes to cardiac fibrosis and hypertrophy. Cardiovasc Diabetol. 2014;13:89.

91. Rai R, et al. Acetyltransferase p300 inhibitor reverses hypertension-induced cardiac fibrosis. J Cell Mol Med. 2019;23(4):3026–3031.

92. Rai R, et al. A novel acetyltransferase p300 inhibitor ameliorates hypertension-associated cardiac fibrosis. Epigenetics. 2017;12(11):1004–1013.

93. Su H, et al. Histone acetyltransferase p300 inhibitor improves coronary flow reserve in SIRT3 (Sir2 homolog 3) knockout mice. J Am Heart Assoc. 2020;9(8):e01716.

94. Manning ET, et al. p300 forms a stable, template-committed complex with chromatin: role for the bromodomain. Mol Cell Biol. 2001;21(2):3876–3887.

95. Ragvin A, et al. Nucleosome binding by the bromodomain and PHD finger of the transcriptional cofactor p300. J Mol Biol. 2004;347(4):773–788.

96. Hammitzsch A, et al. CBP/p300 bromodomain inhibitor, suppresses human TH17 responses. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2011;108(34):12753–12758.

97. Picard S, et al. Generation of a selective small molecule inhibitor of the CBP/p300 bromodomain for leukemia therapy. Cancer Res. 2015;75(23):5106–5119.

98. Weinert BT, et al. Time-resolved analysis reveals rapid dynamics and broad scope of the CBP/p300 acetylome. Cell. 2018;174(1):231–244.

99. Williams LM, et al. Identifying collagen VI as a target of fibrotic diseases regulated by CREBBP/EP300. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2020;117(34):20753–20763.

100. Alcendor RR, et al. Sirt1 regulates aging and resistance to oxidative stress in the heart. Circ Res. 2007;100(10):1512–1521.

101. Hafner AV, et al. Regulation of the mPTP by SIRT3-mediated deacylation of CypD at lysine 166 suppresses age-related cardiac hypertrophy. Aging (Albany NY). 2010;2(12):914–923.

102. Abdelatif M, et al. Nicotinamide for the treatment of heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. Sci Transl Med. 2021;13(580):eaabd7064.

103. Tong D, et al. NAD+ repletion reverses heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. Circ Res. 2021;128(11):1629–1641.

104. Gillette TG, Hill JA. Readers, writers, and erasers: chromatin as the whiteboard of heart disease. Circ Res. 2015;116(7):1245–1253.

105. McKinsey TA. Therapeutic potential for HDAC inhibitors in the heart. Annu Rev Pharmacol Toxicol. 2012;52:303–319.

106. Wallner M, et al. HDAC inhibition improves cardiopulmonary function in a feline model of diabetic fibrosis. J Transl Med. 2020;12(525):eaay7025.

107. Mohammed SF, et al. Coronary microvascular rarefaction and myocardial fibrosis in heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. Circulation. 2015;131(6):550–559.

108. Travers JG, et al. HDAC inhibition reverses pre-existing diabetic dysfunction and blocks covert extracellular matrix remodeling. Circulation. 2021;143(19):1874–1891.

109. Wallner M, et al. HDAC inhibition improves cardiopulmonary function in a feline model of diabetic fibrosis. J Transl Med. 2020;12(525):eaay7025.

110. Bruder JF, et al. Chemical phylogenetics of histone deacetylases. Nat Chem Biol. 2010;6(3):238–243.

111. Lahm A, et al. Unraveling the hidden catalytic activity of vertebrate class IIa histone deacetylases. Nat Chem Biol. 2010;6(3):653–658.

112. Lahm A, et al. Unraveling the hidden catalytic activity of vertebrate class IIa histone deacetylases. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2007;104(14):17335–17340.

113. Cao J, et al. HDAC11 regulates type 1 interferon signaling through defatty-acylation of SHMT2. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2019;116(2):5478–5492.

114. Cao J, et al. HDAC11 regulates type 1 interferon signaling through defatty-acylation of SHMT2. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2019;116(2):5478–5492.

115. Kim YL, et al. Histone deacetylase 11 is a fatty-acid deacetylase. ACS Chem Biol. 2018;13(3):685–693.

116. Moreno-Yuela C, et al. Histone deacetylase 11 is an ε-N-myristoyllysine hydrolase. Cell Chem Biol. 2018;25(7):849–856.

117. Hail Y, et al. Histone deacetylase 10 structure and function in pressure overload-induced cardiac fibrosis. Circ Res. 2015;8(6):1094–1104.

118. Jang MK, et al. The bromodomain protein Brd4 is a positive regulatory component of P-TEFb and stimulates RNA polymerase II-dependent transcription. Mol Cell. 2005;19(4):523–534.

119. Yang Z, et al. Recruitment of P-TEFb for stimulation of transcriptional elongation by the bromodomain protein Brd4. Mol Cell. 2005;19(4):535–545.

120. Filipiakopoulos P, et al. Selective inhibition of BET bromodomains. Nature. 2010;468(7327):1067–1073.

121. Anand P, et al. BET bromodomains mediate transcriptional pause release in heart failure. Cell. 2015;164(3):569–582.

122. Spiliotir JI, et al. BET acetyl-lysine binding proteins control pathological cardiac hypertrophy. J Mol Cell Cardiol. 2013;63:375–179.

123. Antolic A, et al. BET bromodomain proteins regulate transcriptional reprogramming in genetic dilated cardiomyopathy. JCI Insight. 2020;5(15):138687.

124. Duan Q, et al. BET bromodomain inhibition suppresses innate inflammatory and profibrotic transcriptional networks in heart failure. Sci Transl Med. 2017;9(390):eaah5084.

125. Brown JD, et al. NF-kB directs dynamic super enhancer formation in inflammation and atherosclerosis. Mol Cell. 2014;56(2):219–231.

126. Li G, et al. Extensive promoter-centered chromatin interactions provide a topological basis for transcription regulation. Cell. 2012;148(3):284–98.

127. Zhang Y, et al. Chromatin connectivity maps reveal dynamic promoter-enhancer long-range associations. Nature. 2013;504(7479):306–310.

128. Stratton MS, et al. Dynamic chromatin targeting of BRD4 stimulates cardiac fibroblast activation. Circ Res. 2019;125(7):662–677.

129. Alexanian M, et al. A transcriptional switch governs fibroblast activation in heart disease. Nature. 2021;595(7867):438–443.

130. Tan LW, et al. Epigenomes of human hearts reveal new genetic variants relevant for cardiac disease and phenotype. Circ Res. 2020;127(6):761–777.

131. Stratton MS, et al. Signal-dependent recruitment of brd4 to cardiomyocyte super-enhancers is suppressed by a microRNA. Cell Rep. 2016;16(10):1366–1378.
139. Nicholls SJ, et al. Apabetalone and hospitalization for heart failure in patients following an acute coronary syndrome: a prespecified analysis of the BETonMACE study. *Cardiovasc Diabetol*. 2021;20(1):13.

140. Kalantar-Zadeh K, et al. Effect of apabetalone on cardiovascular events in diabetes, CKD, and recent acute coronary syndrome: results from the BETonMACE Randomized Controlled Trial. *Clin J Am Soc Nephrol*. 2021;16(5):705–716.

141. Ooi JY, et al. HDAC inhibition attenuates cardiac hypertrophy by acetylation and deacetylation of target genes. *Epigenetics*. 2015;10(5):418–430.

142. Zhang QJ, et al. Histone lysine dimethyl-demethylase KDM3A controls pathological cardiac hypertrophy and fibrosis. *Nat Commun*. 2018;9(1):5230.

143. Huo JL, et al. Myofibroblast deficiency of LSD1 alleviates TAC-induced heart failure. *Circ Res*. 2021;129(3):400–413.

144. Muller S, et al. Donated chemical probes for open science. *Elife*. 2018;7:e34311.

145. Aghajanian H, et al. Targeting cardiac fibrosis with engineered T cells. *Nature*. 2019;573(7774):430–433.

146. Ichihara S, et al. Targeted deletion of angiotensin II type 2 receptor caused cardiac rupture after acute myocardial infarction. *Circulation*. 2002;106(17):2244–2249.

147. Oka T, et al. Genetic manipulation of periostin expression reveals a role in cardiac hypertrophy and ventricular remodeling. *Circ Res*. 2007;101(3):313–321.

148. Shimazaki M, et al. Periostin is essential for cardiac healing after acute myocardial infarction. *J Exp Med*. 2008;205(2):295–303.

149. Vagnozzi RJ, et al. Cardiac cell therapy fails to rejuvenate the chronically scarred rodent heart. *Circulation*. 2021;144(4):328–331.