Moesin is involved in polarity maintenance and cortical remodeling during asymmetric cell division

Namal Abeysundaraa, Andrew J. Simmondsb, and Sarah C. Hughesa,b,*
aDepartment of Medical Genetics and bDepartment of Cell Biology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2H7, Canada

ABSTRACT An intact actomyosin network is essential for anchoring polarity proteins to the cell cortex and maintaining cell size asymmetry during asymmetric cell division of Drosophila neuroblasts (NBs). However, the mechanisms that control changes in actomyosin dynamics during asymmetric cell division remain unclear. We find that the actin-binding protein, Moesin, is essential for NB proliferation and mitotic progression in the developing brain. During metaphase, phosphorylated Moesin (p-Moesin) is enriched at the apical cortex, and loss of Moesin leads to defects in apical polarity maintenance and cortical stability. This asymmetric distribution of p-Moesin is determined by components of the apical polarity complex and Slik kinase. During later stages of mitosis, p-Moesin localization shifts more basally, contributing to asymmetric cortical extension and myosin basal furrow positioning. Our findings reveal Moesin as a novel apical polarity protein that drives cortical remodeling of dividing NBs, which is essential for polarity maintenance and initial establishment of cell size asymmetry.

INTRODUCTION
Coordinated self-renewal and differentiation via asymmetric cell division (ACD) is essential for generating cellular diversity during development. Drosophila neuroblasts (NBs) are an effective model for studying mechanisms involved in progenitor cell self-renewal and differentiation during cell division (Jiang and Reichert, 2014; Li et al., 2014). During Drosophila neurogenesis, NBs undergo asymmetric division, renewing the NB and producing a ganglion mother cell (GMC), which differentiates into adult neurons and glia. Neuroblast ACD requires segregation of basal cell fate determinants, such as Prospero (Pros) and Numb, through adaptor proteins Miranda and Partner of Numb (Pon), respectively, into the GMC (Doe et al., 1991; Ikeshima-Kataoka et al., 1997; Li et al., 1997; Shen et al., 1997; Lu et al., 1998). Segregation of basal determinants depend on the localization of two apical protein complexes linked by the adaptor protein Insctuable (Insc) (Kraut and Campos-Ortega, 1996; Schöber et al., 1999; Tio et al., 1999; Parmentier et al., 2000; Schaefer et al., 2000; Yu et al., 2000). The Par polarity complex, consisting of Bazooka (Baz), Par-6, and atypical PKC (aPKC), is the first to localize to the NB cortex. It is primarily involved in excluding basally localized proteins from the apical cortex (Wodarz et al., 1999; Petronczki and Knoblich, 2001; Betschinger et al., 2003). The second apical complex, consisting of Partner of Insctuable (Pins), the heterotrimeric G protein subunit Goi, and Mushroom body defect (Mud), is involved in regulating mitotic spindle formation and alignment relative to the polarity axis (Schaefer et al., 2000; Yu et al., 2000; Schaefer et al., 2001; Yu et al., 2003; Izumi et al., 2004; Bowman et al., 2006; Nipper et al., 2007). Basal protein targeting during ACD is also dependent on the cortical tumor suppressor proteins Discs large (Dlg), Lethal [2] giant larvae (Lgl), and Scribble (Ohshiro et al., 2000; Peng et al., 2000; Albertson and Doe, 2003; Betschinger et al., 2003). Thus, proper localization of apical polarity proteins, orientation of the mitotic spindle, and segregation of cell fate determinants all ensure the appropriate balance between NB self-renewal and differentiation.
An intact actin cytoskeleton has also been shown to be essential for cortical anchoring of apical/basal proteins to their respective NB poles (Kraut et al., 1996; Broadus and Doe, 1997; Knoblich et al., 1997; Shen et al., 1998; Lu et al., 1999). Furthermore, Drosophila nonmuscle Myosins function downstream of the apical complex during basal targeting of cell fate determinants and are involved in maintaining cell size asymmetry (Ohshiro et al., 2000; Peng et al., 2000; Barros et al., 2003; Petritsch et al., 2003; Cabernard et al., 2010; Connell et al., 2011). During early anaphase, nonmuscle moesin has been shown to localize asymmetrically to the basal cortex, contributing to asymmetric cortical extension of the apical cortex and the formation of a basally displaced furrow, independent of microtubules (Cabernard et al., 2010; Connell et al., 2011). However, the precise mechanisms underlying actomyosin regulation and dynamics during Drosophila ACD have not been studied extensively.

Ezrin, radixin, and moesin (ERM) proteins are essential organizers of the cell cortex through the ability to bind directly to filamensous actin and link membrane-associated proteins to the underlying actin cytoskeleton (Algrain et al., 1993; Turunen et al., 1994; Hiroa et al., 1996). ERM proteins are regulated by an intramolecular interaction between the N-terminal Four-point-one ERM domain and the C-terminal tail (Gary and Bretscher, 1993; Nguyen et al., 2001). Phosphorylation of a conserved threonine residue in the actin-binding region of the ERM proteins relieves this intramolecular interaction and is essential for protein activation (Nakamura et al., 1995; Matsui et al., 1998; Oshiro et al., 1998; Hayashi et al., 1999; Tran Quang et al., 2000). In the closed inactive form, the proteins are unable to interact with transmembrane proteins or filamentous actin (Matsui et al., 1998; Nakamura et al., 1999). As functional redundancy among the ERM proteins has been proposed (Doi et al., 1999), studies investigating the single Drosophila ERM orthologue Moesin can provide relatively unambiguous insight into ERM function (McCarty and Febh, 1996). Drosophila Moesin has been implicated in regulating epithelial tissue integrity (Speer et al., 2003; Hjftner et al., 2004; Karagiosis and Ready, 2004; Molnar and de Celis, 2006), and numerous studies in Drosophila cell culture have shown that phosphorylated Moesin (p-Moesin) is involved in cortical remodeling in symmetrically dividing cells (Carreno et al., 2008; Kunda et al., 2008, 2012; Roubinet et al., 2011). In mitotic Schneider 2 (S2) cells, p-Moesin is distributed uniformly at the metaphase cortex, and the loss of Moesin leads to the formation of cytoplasmic bulges and an irregular distribution of actomyosin regulators during metaphase (Carreno et al., 2008; Kunda et al., 2008). Thus, the uniform distribution of Moesin is essential for maintaining a round and stable cell cortex. However, the significance of an asymmetric Moesin distribution in cortical remodeling during mitosis has not been investigated in vivo.

Here we show that Moesin is essential for proliferation and stable cortical remodeling in asymmetrically dividing NBs of the Drosophila brain. We identify Moesin as a novel apical polarity protein involved in polarity maintenance and cortical integrity in NBs undergoing metaphase. We further show that Slik kinase, a known regulator of Moesin phosphorylation (Hjftner et al., 2004), is essential for Moesin phosphorylation in mitotic NBs and thus NB proliferation and polarity maintenance. Finally, we find that known components of the apical polarity complex are important for the polar distribution of p-Moesin in metaphase NBs. During early anaphase, p-Moesin contributes to myosin basal furrow positioning and the initial establishment of cell size asymmetry. Thus, the dynamic and asymmetric distribution of p-Moesin during mitosis is important for cortical remodeling during ACD.

RESULTS

Phosphorylated Moesin is asymmetrically localized in mitotic NBs

Using an antibody specific to the conserved phosphorylated residue of mammalian ezrin/radixin/moesin (Hayashi et al., 1999), we found that phosphorylated Moesin (p-Moesin) localized to the cell cortex of both larval central brain and optic lobe NBs (Figure 1A). P-Moesin appeared asymmetrically enriched at the cell cortex of central brain NBs (Figure 1A; yellow arrows) and was largely reduced in the surrounding differentiated cells, indicated by the GMC-specific marker Prospero (Figure 1A) (Matsuzaki et al., 1992). As NB polarity is established at the onset of mitosis (Spana and Doe, 1995), the localization of p-Moesin was examined throughout NB ACD. We found that p-Moesin had a dynamic asymmetric distribution pattern as NBs progressed through mitosis (Figure 1, B–H). When the relative mean fluorescence intensity (FI) of p-Moesin was measured along the NB cortex, from the apical to basal pole (schematic in Figure 1C), we found that p-Moesin was enriched at the apical cortex during metaphase (Figure 1, B and C; compartment I). During anaphase, the relative mean FI of p-Moesin was reduced at the apical cortex (Figure 1, D and E) and p-Moesin was enriched at the basal NB cortex during telophase (Figure 1, F–H; compartment IV). The polar enrichment of p-Moesin was most likely established during the prophase-to-metaphase transition, as p-Moesin was cortical but discontinuous in 75% of NBs and 25% of NBs showed a polar distribution of p-Moesin during prophase (n = 20; Supplemental Figure 1, A and B); whereas 100% of metaphase NBs displayed an apical enrichment of p-Moesin (n = 27; Figure 1B). Previously, p-Moesin was shown to increasingly localize to the cell cortex on mitotic entry and remained uniformly distributed from prophase to metaphase in Drosophila S2 cells (Carreno et al., 2008). In contrast, we found a polar distribution of p-Moesin was established by metaphase in NBs, leading us to hypothesize that Moesin is essential for asymmetric NB divisions.

Moesin is essential for NB proliferation and mitotic progression

To investigate the functional significance of Moesin in the larval NBs, we analyzed the effect of double-stranded RNA (dsRNA)-mediated knockdown of Moesin (Moe dsRNA) in the NBs, using Insc-GAL4 (Brand and Perrimon, 1993). We expressed Dicer as well, to enhance Moesin knockdown levels. The Moesin immunofluorescence (IF) signal was reduced in the Moe dsRNA larval CNS, confirming reduction of Moesin expression (Supplemental Figure 2, A and B). At 96 h after larval hatching (ALH), the overall size of the CNS was reduced in the Moe dsRNA larvae compared with controls (Figure 2, A–C, and Supplemental Figure 2, A and B). In control larval brains, the mitotic NBs were marked using the NB-specific marker Deadpan (Dpn) and phospho-histone H3 (PH3) to mark mitotic cells (Figure 2, A and B) (Bier et al., 1992). When Moesin was knocked down, the CNS was reduced in size and fewer mitotic NBs were observed (Figure 2C). Previous studies have shown that all NBs, except the mushroom body NBs, exit the cell cycle and either undergo apoptosis or become quiescent by late embryogenesis (Green et al., 1993; White et al., 1994; Younossi-Hartenstein et al., 1996; Prokop et al., 1998; Peterson et al., 2002). During early larval stages, NBs enlarge, reenter the cell cycle and continue dividing throughout larval development, giving rise to the majority of adult neurons and glia (Truman and Bate, 1988; Prokop and Technau, 1991; Ito and Hotta, 1992; Britton and Edgar, 1998). Thus, the observed reduced larval CNS size may be due to a failure of NBs to reenter the cell cycle, decreased NB divisions, or increased cell death.
Moesin drives cortical changes in ACD

The proportion of mitotic NBs decreased from 24 to 48 h and remained largely the same from 48 to 96 h ALH (Figure 2E). Furthermore, the optic lobes were reduced in size, and no mitotic NBs were observed in the ventral nerve cord in 87% of Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> larvae at 96 h ALH (n = 30 larvae; Supplemental Figure 2C). The NBs within the Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> ventral nerve cord also appeared smaller, and the Dpn IF signal was weak and diffuse (Supplemental Figure 2C). Reduced NB size and a weaker Dpn signal were previously shown to be characteristic of quiescent NBs (Chell and Brand, 2010). We also found that the Moesin knockdown NBs undergoing metaphase in the brain lobes had a reduced cell diameter compared with controls (Figure 2F). At 48 h ALH, the Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> metaphase NBs had a mean diameter of 8.31 ± 0.17 μm (n = 44, p < 0.0001) compared with control NBs (11.74 ± 0.28 μm; n = 35) (Figure 2F). At 96 h ALH, the mean diameter of control NBs was 11.56 ± 0.27 μm (n = 23), while the mean diameter of Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> NBs was further reduced in size to 6.30 ± 0.34 μm (n = 23, p < 0.0001) (Figure 2F). To determine whether NB cell size was specifically affected during mitotic entry, the area of interphase NBs was measured at 48 h ALH (Figure 2G). At this time point, Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> interphase NBs had a reduced mean area of 62.15 ± 2.98 μm<sup>2</sup> (n = 39, p < 0.0001) compared with control interphase NBs (122.30 ± 5.60 μm<sup>2</sup>; n = 30) (Figure 2G). Together, these findings suggest that NB divisions and overall size are impaired when Moesin levels are reduced.

To further examine the role of Moesin in mitotic NBs, the proportion of PH3-positive NBs in each mitotic stage was quantified in the Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> and control larval brain lobes. We found a reduced proportion of mitotic NBs in stages prophase to telophase per Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> brain lobe compared with controls at 96 h ALH (Figure 2H). We found that 60% of PH3-positive Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup> NBs could not be classified to a particular stage of mitosis and thus were scored as “mitotic defective” (Figure 2H and Supplemental Figure 3A). In these mitotic-defective NBs, the spindle poles were not visible, and only cortical microtubules were observed using α-tubulin (Supplemental Figure 3A). However, the nuclear envelope appeared to be broken down as Miranda was diffuse throughout the cytoplasm. Furthermore, aPKC polarity was not established and only PH3-positive condensed chromosomes were observed in these NBs (Supplemental Figure 3A). To confirm specificity of Moe<sup>dsRNA</sup>, we expressed a second independent Moesin dsRNA (Moe<sup>IR</sup>) (Karagiosis and Ready, 2004) using Insc-GAL4 and found mitotic defective NBs within Moe<sup>IR</sup> brain lobes as well (Supplemental Figure 3B). The presence of mitotic defective NBs suggests that Moesin is involved in mitotic progression during ACD.
The proportion of mitotic NBs undergoing the specific stages was also measured at 48 h ALH to confirm that the defects observed at later stages do not arise as a result of abnormal larval development. At 48 h ALH, 64% of mitotic NBs were defective in mitosis, and there was a reduced proportion of NBs undergoing the specific stages of mitosis compared with controls (Supplemental Figure 3C). These proportions observed at 48 h ALH were comparable to the proportions observed at 96 h ALH (compare Supplemental Figure 3C and Figure 2H). Thus, mitotic progression was impaired in the Moesin knockdown during early and late stages of larval development. Furthermore, a significant amount of cell death was not observed in the Moes*RNA NBs (Supplemental Figure 3, D–G). When we measured the proportion of TUNEL-positive/Dpn-positive cells, we did not observe any apoptotic NBs in control brain lobes at 48 and 96 h ALH (n = 16 brain lobes each). In Moes*RNA larvae, only two brain lobes with one apoptotic NB at 48 and 96 h ALH (n = 16 brain lobes each) were detected. Thus, the reduced size of the Moes*RNA CNS was due to a lack of NB divisions and not an increase in cell death during larval development.

Slik regulates NB proliferation and Moesin phosphorylation

To confirm that the active, phosphorylated form of Moesin is essential for NB divisions, the role of the Sterile20-like kinase Slik was also examined. Previously, Slik was shown to regulate Moesin phosphorylation in Drosophila cell culture and epithelial tissues (Hipfner et al., 2004; Hughes and Felton, 2006; Carreno et al., 2008). As the role for Slik in Drosophila NBs was unknown, Slik localization in the larval NBs was determined. We found that Slik localized to the cell cortex of NBs and Prospero-expressing GMCs (Figure 3A). As p-Moesin was shown to be enriched at the apical cortex of metaphase NBs (Figure 1, B and C), we also analyzed Slik distribution at the metaphase cortex. The mean FI of p-Moesin and Slik at the apical and basal poles was measured to determine the apical/basal FI ratio (see Materials and Methods). An apical/basal FI ratio greater than 1.10 was considered an apical enrichment, whereas an apical/basal FI ratio close to 1 (between 0.90 and 1.09) represented an absent polar crescent. Although p-Moesin was apically enriched during metaphase, with an apical/basal FI ratio of 1.99 ± 0.12 (mean ± SE; n = 23), Slik was not apically enriched and was uniformly distributed at the metaphase cortex (0.93 ± 0.04, p < 0.0001; Figure 3, B and C). Thus, Slik localized to the NB cortex but did not display a polar distribution during metaphase.

To determine whether Slik function is required in the larval CNS, we analyzed brains from slik1 homozygous null mutants (Hipfner and Cohen, 2003). The CNS from slik mutant larvae was reduced in size (Figure 3, D and E), with a decrease in the number of NBs at 96 h ALH (Figure 3F). Furthermore, there was a reduced proportion of mitotic NBs per brain lobe in the slik mutant (Figure 3G), suggesting that NB divisions were affected with the loss of Slik. The mean diameter of metaphase NBs was reduced in slik mutant larval brain...
Moesin is important for apical polarity maintenance in mitotic NBs

As p-Moesin was apically enriched in metaphase NBs, we asked if Moesin was required for apical polarity maintenance during NB ACD. Consistent with previous studies, we found that Bazooka and aPKC polarity was established during prophase in control NBs (Figure 4, A and C, and Table 1) (Schober et al., 1999; Wodarz et al., 1999; Siegrist and Doe, 2006). However, in Moesin RNAi NBs, Bazooka and aPKC crescents were not observed in a proportion of NBs undergoing prophase (Figure 4, B and D, and Table 1). An absent polar crescent was defined as an apical/basal FI ratio between 0.90 and 1.09. In 58% of Moesin RNAi prophase NBs, the apical/basal FI ratio for Bazooka was 1.05 ± 0.06 (mean ± SD; n = 33) and in 48% of NBs, the mean apical/basal FI ratio for aPKC was 1.04 ± 0.06 (n = 46), whereas 0% of control NBs had an apical/basal FI ratio less than 1.10 (Table 1). The overall apical/basal FI ratio for Bazooka was 1.23 ± 0.05 (mean ± SE; n = 33, p < 0.0001) in Moesin RNAi prophase NBs, which was significantly less than controls (1.72 ± 0.07, n = 29). Furthermore, the overall apical/basal FI ratio for aPKC was also significantly less in Moesin RNAi prophase NBs when compared with controls (Table 1). Thus, it appeared that aPKC and Bazooka polarity maintenance was affected in Moesin RNAi NBs during prophase. This defect in apical polarity maintenance coincided with a disorganized actin cytoskeleton in Moesin RNAi NBs (Figure 4, C and D). In control NBs, cortical actin appeared well defined; whereas cortical actin appeared discontinuous in Moesin RNAi prophase NBs (Figure 4, C and D; arrows).

During metaphase, an absence of a Bazooka crescent was found in only 9% of Moesin RNAi NBs (1.06 ± 0.04, n = 55; Table 1). A polar crescent, which was defined as an apical/basal FI ratio greater than 1.40, was observed for Bazooka in 64% of Moesin RNAi NBs (n = 55; Table 1). A weak polar Bazooka crescent was defined as an apical/basal FI ratio between 1.10 and 1.39, which was observed in 27% of Moesin RNAi NBs (n = 55; Table 1). Although, the overall mean apical/basal FI ratio for Bazooka was less in Moesin RNAi metaphase NBs (1.61 ± 0.06, n = 55; p < 0.0001), when compared with controls (2.11 ± 0.08, n = 54), the mean FI was greater than 1.40. The overall mean apical/basal FI ratio for Pins was also greater than 1.40 in Moesin RNAi metaphase NBs (1.56 ± 0.10, n = 17; Table 1). Thus, although Bazooka polarity maintenance was initially affected in the prophase Moesin RNAi NBs, defects in Bazooka and Pins polarity were less apparent during metaphase.

A more severe effect with aPKC and Par-6 polarity maintenance was observed in Moesin RNAi metaphase NBs. The Par-6 IF signal was

**FIGURE 3:** Slik is essential for NB proliferation and Moesin phosphorylation. (A) w1118 larval NBs labeled with DAPI (blue), anti-Moesin (green), anti-Slik (red), and anti-Prospero (cyan). Slik partially colocalizes with Moesin at the NB cortex and localizes to the GMC cortex. (B) w1118 larval NB undergoing metaphase labeled with DAPI (blue), anti-p-Moesin (cyan), anti-Slik (green), and anti-α-tubulin (red) as shown in merged panel. (C) The apical/basal FI ratios of p-Moesin and Slik in metaphase NBs (n = 23) show that p-Moesin is apically enriched (1.99 ± 0.12; mean ± SE) and Slik is uniformly distributed at the apical and basal cortices (0.93 ± 0.04, p < 0.0001). The red line marks the mean ratio. (D, E) w1118 and slik1 larval CNS labeled with anti-Deadpan (Dpn; green) and anti–phospho-histone H3 (PH3; magenta) at 96 h ALH. (F) The mean number of Dpn-positive cells and (G) the mean proportion of PH3-positive, Dpn-positive cells per central brain lobes of w1118 (n = 35) and slik1 (n = 26) at 96 h ALH. (H) The diameter of metaphase NBs in w1118 (n = 25) and slik1 (n = 29) –5–6 d AEL. The red line marks the mean diameter. (I, J) w1118 and slik1 larval metaphase NBs labeled with DAPI (blue), anti–p-Moesin (cyan), anti-Numb (green), and anti–β-tubulin (red) at –5–6 d AEL. (J) The p-Moesin signal is reduced in slik1 mutant NBs during metaphase, compared with w1118 controls. Scale bars represent (A) 10 μm, (B, I, J) 5 μm, and (D, E) 100 μm. Error bars represent SE. ***p < 0.0001 using an unpaired t test.
Moesin is involved in apical polarity maintenance in NBs undergoing prophase and metaphase. UAS-Dicer-UAS-Moesin dsRNA was crossed to w1118 (Ctrl) and Insc-GAL4 (Moe dsRNA) and larval NBs undergoing (A–D) prophase and (E–J) metaphase were analyzed (~96 h ALH).

(A) Bazooka (Baz) and (C) aPKC crescents form in control NBs during prophase. (B) Baz and (D) aPKC crescents are not observed in a proportion of Moe dsRNA NBs during prophase. (C, D) Filamentous actin (Phalloidin; red) appears discontinuous in Moesin knockdown NBs undergoing prophase (yellow arrows) compared with controls. (E) Par-6 crescents form in control NBs during metaphase. (F) A weak polar Par-6 signal (yellow asterisk) and (G) an absent polar Par-6 signal is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs during metaphase. (H) aPKC crescents form in control NBs during metaphase. (I) A weak polar aPKC signal (yellow asterisk) and polar Miranda is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs during metaphase. (J) An absent polar aPKC and polar Miranda is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs. Refer to Table 1 for summary of phenotypic proportions observed. Merged panels are single focal plane images and show DAPI (blue), Miranda (cyan), α-tubulin or aPKC/PH3 (green), and specified apical polarity protein or Phalloidin (red). Grayscale images are maximum intensity projections, with the exception of Phalloidin panels, which are single focal plane images. Scale bars represent 5 μm.

FIGURE 4: Moesin is involved in apical polarity maintenance in NBs undergoing prophase and metaphase. UAS-Dicer-UAS-Moesin dsRNA was crossed to w1118 (Ctrl) and Insc-GAL4 (Moe dsRNA) and larval NBs undergoing (A–D) prophase and (E–J) metaphase were analyzed (~96 h ALH). (A) Bazooka (Baz) and (C) aPKC crescents form in control NBs during prophase. (B) Baz and (D) aPKC crescents are not observed in a proportion of Moe dsRNA NBs during prophase. (C, D) Filamentous actin (Phalloidin; red) appears discontinuous in Moesin knockdown NBs undergoing prophase (yellow arrows) compared with controls. (E) Par-6 crescents form in control NBs during metaphase. (F) A weak polar Par-6 signal (yellow asterisk) and (G) an absent polar Par-6 signal is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs during metaphase. (H) aPKC crescents form in control NBs during metaphase. (I) A weak polar aPKC signal (yellow asterisk) and polar Miranda is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs during metaphase. (J) An absent polar aPKC and polar Miranda is observed in Moe dsRNA NBs. Refer to Table 1 for summary of phenotypic proportions observed. Merged panels are single focal plane images and show DAPI (blue), Miranda (cyan), α-tubulin or aPKC/PH3 (green), and specified apical polarity protein or Phalloidin (red). Grayscale images are maximum intensity projections, with the exception of Phalloidin panels, which are single focal plane images. Scale bars represent 5 μm.

weak but polar in 54% of Moe dsRNA NBs (n = 24; Figure 4F, asterisk, and Table 1). In 38% of Moe dsRNA NBs, a polar Par-6 signal was absent during metaphase (n = 24; Figure 4G and Table 1). Similarly, a weak polar or an absent aPKC crescent was observed in the majority of Moe dsRNA NBs during metaphase (n = 82; Figure 4J and Table 1). However, the basal polarity protein, Miranda, remained localized to a cortical pole in the majority of Moe dsRNA NBs (Figure 4, I and J), even when an aPKC crescent was absent during metaphase (Figure 4J). Thus, polar Miranda can be established in an aPKC-independent manner when Moesin levels were reduced. We also found that aPKC polarity maintenance was impaired in Moe dsRNA larval NBs at 48 h ALH (Table 1), confirming that polarity defects did not accumulate over time but occurred at earlier larval stages. Together, these findings showed that Moesin was involved in apical polarity maintenance during prophase. However, during metaphase, Par-6 and aPKC polarity maintenance was more sensitive to the loss of Moesin, whereas Bazooka and Pins localization at the apical cortex occurred in a largely Moesin-independent manner.

The effect of Silk on the regulation of polarity maintenance during ACD was also assessed. We found that in 87% of silk mutant NBs, an aPKC crescent did not form during prophase (n = 23; Figure 5, A–C). The mean apical/basal FI ratio for aPKC was 1.03 ± 0.02 (n = 23, p < 0.0001) in silk mutant NBs, whereas the ratio was 1.66 ± 0.07 in controls (Figure 5C). During metaphase, 65% of silk mutant NBs formed a weak polar aPKC signal (n = 26; Figure 5E, asterisk), and an aPKC crescent was not observed in 27% of NBs (n = 26; Figure 5F), although Miranda was still able to localize to a cortical pole in both cases. The overall mean apical/basal FI ratio for aPKC was significantly less in silk mutant NBs (1.12 ± 0.03, n = 26; p < 0.0001), when compared with controls during metaphase (1.94 ± 0.08, n = 26; Figure 5G). Together, these findings suggested that Silk was also involved in aPKC polarity maintenance during NB ACD, likely through regulating Moesin activity.

The apical polarity complex is important for asymmetric Moesin localization during metaphase

To further investigate the proteins that affect the asymmetric distribution of Moesin, we examined whether loss of known apical polarity proteins altered the apical enrichment of p-Moesin during metaphase. The dsRNA-mediated knockdown of apical polarity proteins Cdc42, Par-6, aPKC, and Lgl in the NBs resulted in a uniform distribution of p-Moesin in a proportion of NBs during metaphase (Figure 6, A–E). The mean apical/basal FI ratio of p-Moesin was significantly less in the respective knockdowns compared with controls (Figure 6F). Thus, not only is Moesin involved in apical polarity maintenance, but also components of the apical Par complex in turn are important for the proper asymmetric distribution of p-Moesin in NBs.

How the loss of Pins affected p-Moesin distribution during metaphase was also examined. In pins hypomorphic mutant larval brains (Parmentier et al., 2000), a wide range of phenotypes were observed compared with controls (Figure 6, G–L). P-Moesin and Numb displayed both a polar and uniform or discontinuous distribution at the cortex of pins mutant NBs during metaphase (n = 138; Figure 6, H–L). In 17% of pins mutant NBs, p-Moesin and Numb were enriched at opposite poles, similarly to control NBs (n = 138; Figure 6L). However, in 19% of pins mutant NBs, p-Moesin and Numb crescents were found at the same cortical pole (n = 138; Figure 6I). Although p-Moesin displayed a polar enrichment, Numb appeared uniformly distributed at the cortex in a proportion of NBs (17%, n = 138; Figure 6J). A uniform or
discontinuous distribution of p-Moesin was also observed in pins mutant NBs, with either a polar (16%, n = 138) or a uniform (20%, n = 138) distribution of Numb at the cortex (Figure 6, K and L, respectively). Furthermore, the mitotic spindle was misoriented in 40% of pins mutant NBs that formed either p-Moesin or Numb crescents (n = 109; Figure 6, H–K, merge panels). These findings suggested that Pins was important for proper asymmetric distribution of p-Moesin opposite of Numb and relative to the mitotic spindle during metaphase.

**Moesin is essential for cortical stability and remodeling during asymmetric cell division**

To further explore Moesin function in the larval NBs, we examined a Moesin hypomorphic mutant (Moe<sup>G0323</sup>) that survives further into third instar larval stages (Speck et al., 2003). The overall brain morphology of the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> larvae appeared relatively unaffected and the number of NBs per brain lobe was not significantly different when compared with w<sup>118</sup> control brains (Supplemental Figure 4, A–C). Thus, the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> brain phenotype was not as severe as that observed in the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> larvae. Notably, the p-Moesin IF signal was reduced in Moe<sup>G0323</sup> brains (Supplemental Figure 4, A and B). As the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs displayed defects in polarity maintenance, we analyzed aPKC polarity in Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs. In contrast to the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> metaphase NBs, the aPKC crescent was absent in 2% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutant NBs and 98% of mutant NBs displayed a polar aPKC signal (n = 116). A polar aPKC crescent similar to controls was observed in 65% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutant NBs (n = 116; Figure 7B). However, aPKC also localized to ectopic sites at the NB cortex in 35% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs, when an aPKC crescent was also present (n = 75; Figure 7B arrow). In addition, cortical instability was observed in mitotic Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutant NBs as indicated by the presence of cortical blebs (Figure 7B, asterisk). In 21% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutant NBs, the integrity of the aPKC polar domain appeared disorganized and reduced in size compared with the polar aPKC crescents formed in controls (n = 116; Figure 7C). Miranda localized to the cortical pole opposite of aPKC in 74% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutant NBs, although polar Miranda appeared reduced or diffuse in some cases (Figure 7, B and C). Thus, Moesin was found to be important for maintaining polar domain integrity and organization, likely through regulating cortical stability during ACD.

As Moe<sup>G0323</sup> phenotypes were less severe than those induced by Moe<sup>G0323</sup>, we were able to observe NBs undergoing anaphase and telophase, which were rarely observed in the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> brains (Figure 2H). In control NBs, an asymmetric basal furrow was induced by late anaphase, as indicated by Miranda localization at the smaller basal cortex and the segregating chromosomes reaching their respective poles (Figure 7D, arrowheads). Although, aPKC and Miranda localized to opposite cortical poles in the majority of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs undergoing anaphase (Figure 7E), a misoriented polarity axis relative to the mitotic spindle was observed in 11% of Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs undergoing anaphase and early telophase (n = 45). Furthermore, Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NB divisions appeared symmetric during initial constriction at the presumptive cleavage furrow site in a proportion of NBs (Figure 7E; arrowheads). The extent of asymmetry was quantified by measuring the distance from the furrow to the apical (A) and basal (B) cortices and determining the A/B ratio during late anaphase and telophase (Figure 7F; schematic diagram). The A/B ratio of control NBs was 2.00 ± 0.10 (mean ± SE, n = 8) (Figure 7F). The mean A/B ratio was significantly reduced in Moe<sup>G0323</sup> NBs during anaphase (1.53 ± 0.10, n = 9; p < 0.0001) (Figure 7F). In the Moe<sup>G0323</sup> mutants,
44% of NBs had an A/B ratio less than 1.50 (n = 9), which was not observed in controls (n = 8). Thus, asymmetric basal furrow positioning appears to be impaired in the Moe\(^{G0323}\) hypomorphic mutant NBs undergoing anaphase. However, the A/B ratio of Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs was not statistically different from controls during late cleavage furrow formation (Figure 7F), suggesting that cell size asymmetry was rescued by late telophase in the Moesin mutant NBs.

To further investigate cortical dynamics of control and Moesin hypomorphic mutant NBs undergoing ACD, we used live imaging to visualize filamentous actin and the mitotic spindle in NBs expressing LifeAct–green fluorescent protein (GFP) (Riedl et al., 2008) and chRFP-Tubulin (Rusan and Peifer, 2007). We found that ACD of control NBs lasted 12:21 ± 0:22 (mean ± SE in minutes:seconds; n = 24) measured from the point of nuclear envelope breakdown (NEB) to cytokinesis. In Moe\(^{G0323}\) mutant NBs, ACD lasted 16:13 ± 0:55 (mean ± SE in minutes:seconds; p = 0.0001 compared with controls, n = 20). The increased time for ACD to complete in the Moe\(^{G0323}\) mutant was due to the delay in anaphase onset, as the NBs remained in metaphase for an extended period of time (Figure 8A and B, and Supplemental Videos 1 and 2). In control NBs, the cell cortex appeared round and stable during metaphase (Figure 8A and Supplemental Video 1). However, in Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs, the metaphase cortex was unstable and irregular cortical actin dynamics were observed (Figure 8B, yellow arrows, and Supplemental Video 2). A nonuniform distribution of phosphorylated Myosin Light Chain II (p-Myosin) at the Moe\(^{G0323}\) metaphase cortex, along with Rho kinase (Rok), was also observed (Figure 8, C–F). In control NBs, Rok-GFP and p-Myosin appeared cortical with a slight apical enrichment in metaphase NBs (Figure 8, C and D). However, Rok-GFP and p-Myosin was enriched at the lateral cortex or discontinuous at the Moe\(^{G0323}\) metaphase cortex (Figure 8, E and F, yellow arrows). Thus, Moesin was essential for maintaining a round and stable actomyosin cortex in metaphase NBs.

As the loss of Moesin led to defects in basal furrow positioning (Figure 7, E and F), actomyosin organization during early anaphase was further examined. Control NBs displayed restricted cortical actin at the site of furrow induction (Figure 9A, yellow arrowheads). In Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs, although basal furrow formation was induced following a delay in anaphase onset, cortical actin did not appear to be as restricted to the presumptive cleavage furrow site compared with controls (Figure 9B, yellow arrowheads).

Cortical instability was observed throughout ACD of Moe\(^{G0323}\) mutant NBs, indicated by the presence of cortical blebbing (Figure 9B, yellow arrow). Previously, Myosin was shown to localize asymmetrically to the basal cortex in NBs undergoing anaphase (Barros et al., 2003; Cabernard et al., 2010). The Myosin-induced basal furrow contributes to asymmetric cortical extension and formation of a basally displaced cleavage furrow, independent of the mitotic spindle (Cabernard et al., 2010; Connell et al., 2011). Consistent with previous studies, p-Myosin was found to be enriched at the basal furrow in control NBs undergoing early anaphase (80%, n = 5; Figure 9, C and D). However, in Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs, p-Myosin was not enriched at the basal cortex during early anaphase (100%; n = 5). The nonuniform distribution of p-Myosin at the lateral cortex observed in metaphase Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs (Figure 8, E and F) persisted into early anaphase, or p-Myosin localized to the equatorial region (Figure 9, E and F). Thus, the impaired basal furrow and the initial appearance of symmetric divisions observed in Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs (Figure 7, E and F) was likely due to the absence of an induced p-Myosin basal furrow during early anaphase. These findings suggest that Moesin functions in the spindle-independent cleavage furrow positioning pathway. However, during late cleavage furrow formation, p-Myosin localization in Moe\(^{G0323}\) NBs was similar to controls and accumulated at the cleavage furrow site (unpublished data), supporting the observation that Moe\(^{G0323}\) NB divisions eventually appeared asymmetric (Figure 7F).

FIGURE 5: Silk is important for aPKC polarity maintenance in NBs. w\(^{1118}\) and slik\(^{1}\) larval NBs labeled with DAPI (blue), anti-α-tubulin (green), anti-aPKC/anti-phospho-histone H3 (aPKC/PH3; red), and anti-Miranda (Mira; cyan). ∼5–6 d AEL. (A) An aPKC crescent forms in w\(^{1118}\) NBs undergoing prophase. (B) An aPKC crescent is not observed in 87% of slik\(^{1}\) mutant NBs undergoing prophase (n = 23). (C) The apical/basal FI ratios of aPKC in w\(^{1118}\) (n = 20) and slik\(^{1}\) (n = 23) prophase NBs are shown. The red line marks the mean ratio. (D) An aPKC crescent is observed in w\(^{1118}\) metaphase NBs. (E) A weak polar aPKC signal is observed in 65% of slik\(^{1}\) NBs, indicated by the yellow asterisk, and (F) a polar aPKC signal is absent in 27% slik\(^{1}\) NBs during metaphase (n = 26). (G) The apical/basal FI ratios of aPKC in w\(^{1118}\) (n = 26) and slik\(^{1}\) (n = 26) metaphase NBs are shown. The red line marks the mean ratio. Merged panels are single focal plane images, and grayscale images are maximum intensity projections. Scale bars represent 5 μm. ***p < 0.0001 using an unpaired t test.
these findings show that Moesin regulates NB cortical stability and actomyosin dynamics essential for timely mitotic progression and the initial establishment of cell size asymmetry during ACD.

**DISCUSSION**

Studies investigating ERM function have highlighted the importance of the ERM proteins in regulating the mechanical properties of the cell cortex. We provide new insight into the role of Moesin in organizing the cortex of cells that establish intrinsic polarity and undergo ACD in vivo. When Moesin was knocked down in Insc-expressing cells, the larval CNS was reduced in size due to a decrease in the proportion of dividing NBs throughout larval development. We found that expressing MoesinRNA using the Insc-GAL4 driver affected overall larval development and resulted in larval lethality. However, we were able to obtain viable progeny when Moesin levels were reduced using other NB-GAL4 drivers, asense-GAL4 (Zhu et al., 2006) and worniu-GAL4 (Albertson et al., 2004). When upstream activation sequence–GFP (UAS-GFP) was expressed using the different NB GAL4 drivers, GFP mRNA expression was ~5 fold greater using Insc-GAL4 compared with asense- or worniu-GAL4 (unpublished data). Thus, the differences in viability are likely due to the increased strength of Insc-GAL4. Recent studies that identified the Hippo pathway as an essential regulator of NB quiescence also used Insc-GAL4 in their analyses (Ding et al., 2016; Poon et al., 2016). As we cannot exclude that the reduced proportion of mitotic NBs may partially be due to impaired cell cycle reentry or an overall delay in larval development, we focused our analysis on the mitotic NBs that had exited quiescence. We confirmed that defects in mitotic progression and polarity maintenance were observed at both early and late stages of the Moesin knockdown and in the late hypomorphic mutants, demonstrating a functional requirement of Moesin within the larval NBs.

Proper regulation and function of the ERM proteins are required during cell division in both flies (Carreno et al., 2008; Kunda et al., 2008; Cheng et al., 2011) and mammals (Luxenburg et al., 2011). In Drosophila S2 cells, the increased and uniform distribution of p-Moesin at the metaphase cortex enhanced cortical rigidity and cell rounding, proposed to be essential for stable spindle positioning (Carreno et al., 2008; Kunda et al., 2008). Drosophila Moesin was also shown to bind and stabilize microtubules at the cortex of cultured cells (Solinet et al., 2013). Thus, an asymmetric ERM distribution during metaphase would be predicted to influence spindle position and orientation accordingly. In human colorectal Caco2 cells, polarized ezrin locally stabilized actin, providing a physical platform for astral microtubule-mediated centrosome positioning during interphase (Hebert et al., 2012). HeLa cells cultured on L-shaped micropatterns also displayed restricted ERM activation at the cell cortex adjacent to the adhesive substrate, which was essential for LGN/NuMA polarization and guiding spindle orientation (Thery et al., 2005; Machicoane et al., 2014). In Drosophila wing imaginal epithelial cells, p-Moesin was enriched at the basal cortex of mitotic cells and the loss of Moesin led to defects in planar spindle orientation and recruitment of the pericentriolar material marker, Centrosomin (Nakajima et al., 2013; Sabino et al., 2015). Thus, a role for Moesin in guiding spindle orientation and centrosome behaviour has been well documented. In Drosophila NBs, we found that p-Moesin was apically enriched at the metaphase cortex, although the mitotic spindle has been
Moesin is important for apical integrity and cortical asymmetric divisions. NBs from w^{1118} and Moe^{G0323} third instar larvae were labeled with DAPI (blue), anti-α-tubulin (green), anti-aPKC/anti-phospho-histone H3 (aPKC/PH3; red) and anti-Miranda (Mira; cyan). (A) A polar aPKC crescent forms in w^{1118} metaphase NBs. (B) A polar aPKC crescent, similar to controls, forms in 65% of Moe^{G0323} metaphase NBs (n = 116); however, aPKC localizes to ectopic cortical sites in 35% of these Moe^{G0323} NBs (yellow arrow; n = 75). Cortical blebbing is present in Moe^{G0323} NBs (yellow asterisk). (C) The polar aPKC domain appears disorganized in 21% of Moe^{G0323} NBs during metaphase (n = 116). (B, C) Miranda localizes to the opposite cortical pole of aPKC in 74% of Moe^{G0323} NBs (n = 116), although polar Miranda crescents appear reduced in size or diffuse compared with control NBs. (D) An asymmetric basal furrow is observed in w^{1118} NBs undergoing anaphase (yellow arrowheads). (E) Initial constriction at the presumptive cleavage furrow site (yellow arrowheads) appears symmetric in Moe^{G0323} NBs undergoing anaphase. (F) The quantification of A/B ratios in w^{1118} and Moe^{G0323} NBs undergoing anaphase (n = 8 and 9, respectively) and telophase (n = 5). The red line marks the mean ratio. Merged panels are single focal plane images, and grayscale images are maximum intensity projections. Scale bars represent 5 μm. ns = not significant using an unpaired t test.
Discs large are still able to form (Rolls et al., 2003). Thus, Moesin may be specifically maintaining Par-6/aPKC polarity during metaphase but have little effect on other apical polarity proteins such as Bazooka and Pins. Furthermore, the aPKC polar domain was disorganized, and cortical blebbing was observed in the MoeG0323 mutant NBs. Thus, Moesin regulates the integrity and maintenance of the apical domain, likely through affecting cortical stability during ACD.

The complex spatiotemporal regulation of Moesin activity during mitosis has been demonstrated in symmetrically dividing S2 cells and requires the coordinated activities of PP1-87B phosphatase, Slik kinase, and regulators of phosphatidylinositol 4,5-bisphosphate (PI[4,5]P2) levels at the cell cortex (Carreno et al., 2008; Kunda et al., 2008, 2012; Roubinet et al., 2011). We showed that Slik was uniformly distributed at the NB cell cortex. As Slik is regulated by phosphorylation (Panneton et al., 2015), it is possible that the phosphorylated Slik is asymmetrically distributed in mitotic NBs. Furthermore, we found that Slik is essential for NB proliferation and polarity maintenance, likely through affecting cortical stability during ACD.

Confirming a role for p-Moesin in stabilizing cortical actin, we found that Bazooka and aPKC crescents were not observed in a proportion of MoeG0323 NBs undergoing prophase and actin appeared discontinuous at the cell cortex. As Bazooka and aPKC polarity is established by prophase (Schober et al., 1999; Wodarz et al., 1999; Siegrist and Doe, 2005), prior to the polar enrichment of p-Moesin, we conclude that Moesin is involved in polarity maintenance rather than establishment. Similarly, in the Mus musculus and Caenorhabditis elegans intestinal epithelium, ERM proteins are involved in apical membrane assembly and integrity but do not appear to be required for polarity establishment (Saotome et al., 2004; Van Furden et al., 2004). During metaphase, we observed a proportion of MoeG0323 NBs lacking both Par-6 and aPKC polar crescents. However, the majority of MoeG0323 NBs displayed Bazooka and Pins polar crescents at the metaphase cortex. In the absence of Par-6 and aPKC, apical domains consisting of Bazooka, Insuteable, Pins, and discs large are still able to form (Rolls et al., 2003). Thus, Moesin may be specifically maintaining Par-6/aPKC polarity during metaphase but have little effect on other apical polarity proteins such as Bazooka and Pins. Furthermore, the aPKC polar domain was disorganized, and cortical blebbing was observed in the MoeG0323 mutant NBs. Thus, Moesin regulates the integrity and maintenance of the apical domain, likely through affecting cortical stability during ACD.

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the mitotic cortex in the absence of physical constraint or external cues. While this work was under review, the Cabernard group showed that Rok and Protein Kinase N are involved in the precise spatiotemporal regulation of Myosin flow during the establishment of physical asymmetry (Roubinet et al., 2017; Tsankova et al., 2017). Components of the apical polarity complexes also mediate spindle asymmetry and asymmetric cortical extension during anaphase, leading to the generation of unequal-sized daughter cells (Chenn and McConnell, 1995; Cai et al., 2003; Fuse et al., 2003; Cabernard et al., 2010). Similarly, we found that Moesin was important for initial positioning of an asymmetric basal furrow during anaphase.

In Drosophila NBs, a cortical polarity-induced pathway, consisting of Pins and the heterotrimeric G-proteins, is essential for apical cortical extension and formation of a Myosin-induced basal furrow, independent of the mitotic spindle (Cabernard et al., 2010; Connell et al., 2011). We found that the relative FI of p-Moesin was reduced at the apical cortex during anaphase when compared with metaphase NBs. Furthermore, the loss of Moesin resulted in the absence of p-Myosin at the basal cortex, affecting basal furrow positioning during anaphase. In Drosophila S2 cells, reduced p-Moesin at the cell poles was shown to lead to cortical relaxation and membrane elongation (Kundra et al., 2012). Thus, we propose that p-Moesin regulation at the apical cortex is important for asymmetric cortical extension and furrow positioning during early anaphase, likely along with Pins and the heterotrimeric G-proteins. However, Moesin also appeared to influence Myosin-mediated cortical contractility during metaphase as well. We showed that with the loss of Moesin, p-Myosin and Rok-GFP displayed a nonuniform distribution at the metaphase cortex, revealing unstable actomyosin dynamics and a delay in anaphase onset. Although we did not find any observable differences in cortical Rho1 localization on onset. Although we did not find any observable differences in cortical Rho1 localization at the metaphase cortex (unpublished data), future studies using alternative biosensor approaches may allow for more precise visualization and analysis of Rho1 signaling (Verboon and Parkhurst, 2015). In addition, further investigation of the mechanical properties of cultured NBs will provide great insight into how Moesin function influences (unpublished data). Future studies examining other phosphatases and regulators of PI(4,5)P2 levels at the NB cortex are essential for further understanding Moesin regulation during ACD.

In addition to Slik kinase, we found that known apical polarity proteins (Cdc42, Par-6, aPKC, Lgl, and Pins) are important for the proper apical enrichment of p-Moesin during metaphase. As Moesin is also important for maintenance of the apical domain, these findings support a mutually dependent interaction among the apical polarity proteins that has been extensively reported in NBs
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fly strains and genetics

The following lines were obtained from the Bloomington Drosophila Stock Centre: Insc-GAL4 (P. Kolodziej, Vanderbilt University; FBst0008751), Insc-GAL4;UAS-chRFP-Tubulin (M. Peifer, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; FBst005726), pins193 (M. Parmentier, CNRS; FBst0006491), UAS-Dicer (B. Dickson; FBst0024646), UAS-MoeG126W (MoeG126W) (Transgenic RNAi Project; FBst0031872), UAS-Moe.IR.327-775 (MoeIR) (D. Ready and S. Karagiosis, Purdue University; FBst0008629) UAS-Cdc42RNAi (Transgenic RNAi Project; FBst0033576), UAS-Par6RNAi (Transgenic RNAi Project; FBst0038361), UAS-APKCyRNAi (Transgenic RNAi Project; FBst0034334), and UAS-LgRNAi (Transgenic RNAi Project; FBst0033773). UAS-MoeG126W (Transgenic RNAi Project) and UAS-Moe.IR.327-775 was combined with UAS-Dicer. MoeG126W 19A FRT/FM7, Krupple-GFP was obtained from R. Fehon (University of Chicago) (Speck et al., 2003). Slk1 42D FRT/CyO, actin-GFP was obtained from D. Hipfner (IRCM) (Hipfner and Cohen, 2003). Ubi-Rok-GFP was obtained from Y. Bellaïche (Institute Curie) (Bardet et al., 2013). When necessary, stocks were maintained over actin-GFP balancer chromosomes and larvae of interest were chosen by lack of GFP. w1118 flies were used as wild-type control. Flies were maintained on the following: 5 g/l agar, 75 g/l cornmeal, 32 g/l yeast, 90 g/l sugar, and 2.5 g/l methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate (Schwarz et al., 2013). 1118 flies were used as wild-type control. Flies were maintained on the following: 5 g/l agar, 75 g/l cornmeal, 32 g/l yeast, 90 g/l sucrose, and 2.5 g/l methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate (Schwarz et al., 2014).

Time-course experiments

Embryos were collected for 2 h (MoeG126W and control experiments) and 4 h (slk1 mutant and control experiments) on apple juice plates. Embryos or non-GFP larvae were transferred to Petri dishes containing food (recipe mentioned above) and covered with a plastic cage (100-ml plastic beaker with a cut-out bottom and covered with mesh) that was parafilmed to the dish. Cages containing embryos/larvae were sprayed twice daily with water to maintain moisture, and larvae were dissected at indicated hours after larval hatching (~22–24 h after egg laying [AEL]). The above setup was used for all Moe knockdown, slk1, pins193 experiments and respective controls, as these larvae are very weak.

Immunofluorescence

Larvae were dissected in 1x phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) and fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde for 20 min. Dissected larvae were rinsed at least 5 times in 1x PBS and blocked in 0.1% Triton X-100, and 1% normal donkey serum in 1x PBS (PTN) for at least 1 h at room temperature (RT). Primary antibodies in PTN were incubated overnight at 4°C. Larvae were rinsed/washed for at least 1 h in PTN at RT. Secondary antibodies in PTN were incubated for 2–4 h at RT and rinsed/washed for at least 2 h in PTN at RT. Larvae were incubated in 4,6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) for 10 min and rinsed at least 3 times in PTN and at least 3 times in 1x PBS prior to mounting in ProLong Gold Antifade Reagent. For cell death analysis, the In Situ Cell Death Detection Kit, TMR red (TUNEL; Roche), was preabsorbed on fixed wild-type tissue for 30 min. Secondary antibodies were removed from larval brains and the preabsorbed TUNEL reagent was added. Larval brains were incubated with the cell death reagent for 2 h at RT. Tissues were rinsed with PTN for at least 2 h at RT and rinsed with 1x PBS prior to mounting. For rabbit anti–phospho-Ezrin (Thr567)/Radinix (Thr564)/Moe (Thr558), dissected larvae were fixed in 10% trichloroacetic acid (Hayashi et al., 1999) for 45 min on ice and rinsed at least 5 times in 30 mM glycine in 1x PBS.

For rabbit anti–phospho-Myosin light chain 2 (p-Myosin), dissected larvae were fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde containing 0.5 mM ethyl glycol-bis-tetraacetic acid (EGTA) and 5 mM MgCl2 for 20 min and rinsed at least five times in 0.3% Triton X-100 in 1x PBS. Primary antibodies used were as follows: rabbit anti–phospho-Ezrin (Thr567)/Radixin (Thr564)/Moe (Thr558) (1:100; Cell Signaling #3149 and #3726; referred to as p-Moesin), rabbit anti–phospho-Myosin light chain 2 (1:30; Cell Signaling #3671), rabbit anti–Moesin D44 (1:2000; D. Kiehart; referred to as Moesin), rat anti-α-tubulin (1:100; Bio-Rad MCA77G), mouse anti-β-tubulin (1:1000; DSHB E7), rabbit anti-Bazooka (1:1000; A. Wodarz), rabbit anti-Pins (1:1000; F. Yu), rabbit anti–PKC ζ (1:500; Santa Cruz sc-216), rabbit anti–Par-6 (1:500; J. Knoblich), guinea pig anti–Par-6 (1:1000; A. Wodarz), mouse anti-Miranda (1:200; F. Matsuoka), guinea pig anti-Miranda (1:1000; A. Wodarz), guinea pig anti-Numb (1:1000; J. Skeath), guinea pig anti-Dpn (1:100; Y. N. Jan), mouse anti-Prospero (1:500; DSHB MR1A), rat anti-Elav (1:500; DSHB 7E8A10), rabbit anti–phospho-histone H3 (1:2000; Millipore #06-570), mouse anti–phospho-histone H3 (1:1000; abcam 14955), guinea pig anti–Slik (1:10,000; D. Hipfner), mouse anti–GFP 3E6 (1:500; Invitrogen), and Phalloidin Alexa Fluor 546 (1:1000; Invitrogen). Secondary antibodies used were as follows: donkey anti-rabbit, -mouse, -guinea pig, and -rat Alexa Fluor 488/555/647 (1:2000; abcam). Imaging was performed using a Zeiss LSM 700 confocal microscope using 20x NA 0.8 objective (Plan-Apochromat; Zeiss), 40x NA 1.3 oil immersion objective (EC Plan-Neofluar; Zeiss), and 63x NA 1.4 oil immersion objective (Plan-Apochromat; Zeiss). The acquisition software used was Zen 2009. Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator CS4 were used to generate figures.

Neuroblast quantification and measurements

Measurement of cortical and apical/basal Fls. For the quantification of relative mean FI of p-Moesin during mitosis (Figure 1), the maximum intensity projections were divided into four equal compartments (I, II, III, IV) from the apical to basal cortical poles in Fiji. A segmented line of 5.0-pixel width was drawn along the NB cortex within each compartment in an apical to basal direction. The XY coordinates of the plot profiles were copied into Excel. The gray values were divided by the maximum gray value within each compartment and the relative mean gray value (%) was determined. The above steps were repeated for each lateral half of the cortex and the overall relative mean Fls within each compartment were determined for each NB.

For quantification of apical/basal Fl ratios, the NBs were segmented in Bitplane Imaris x64 7.3.1. The maximum intensity projections of the segmented NBs were divided into four equal compartments (I, II, III, IV) from the apical to basal cortical poles in Fiji. The mean gray value within compartments I and IV were measured and the apical/basal Fl ratio was determined by dividing the mean gray value of compartment I (apical) by the mean gray value of compartment IV (basal). An apical/basal Fl ratio between 0.90 and 1.09 was considered “absent.” An apical/basal Fl ratio between 1.10–1.39 was considered “weak polar” and a ratio greater than 1.40 was considered “polar.” The dot plots were generated and statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism 7.

The relative Fl of Rok-GFP and p-Myosin along the apical and basal cortices (Figure 8) was determined by drawing a segmented line of 5.0-pixel width along the entire NB cortex (maximum projections of cell midplanes), starting from the apical half and ending with the basal half. The XY coordinates of the plot profiles were copied into Excel and divided by the maximum gray value to determine the relative Fl along NB cortex.

The relative Fl of p-Myosin during anaphase (Figure 9) was determined by drawing a segmented line of 5.0-pixel width along the lateral cortex from the apical to basal pole. The XY coordinates of the plot profiles were copied into Excel and divided by the maximum gray value to determine the relative Fl along the lateral cortex.
Quantification of NBs and mitotic NBs. Central brain NBs (Type I and II; excluded intermediate progenitors based on size, proximity, and location within the brain lobe) fluorescently labeled with antibodies specific to Deadpan and PH3 were quantified per brain lobe from confocal sections taken at ~0.4-μm intervals using the Zen 2 software. The number of PH3-positive and Dpn-positive cells were divided by total number of Dpn-positive cells per central brain lobe to determine proportion (% of PH3-positive, Dpn-positive cells per central brain lobe. Exact sample sizes (n = number of central brain lobes quantified) for Control/Dicer/MoeRNA NB and mitotic NB quantifications were as follows: Control at 24 h (n = 40), 48 h (n = 38), 72 h (n = 37), and 96 h (n = 38) ALH; Dicer at 24 h (n = 33), 48 h (n = 39), 72 h (n = 38), and 96 h (n = 30) ALH; MoeRNA at 24 h (n = 38), 48 h (n = 36), 72 h (n = 28), 96 h (n = 44) ALH.

Neuroblast diameter/area measurements. The diameter of metaphase NBs and the area of interphase NBs was measured from maximum intensity projections of central brain NBs fluorescently labeled with antibodies specific to apical polarity marker (aPKC, Bazooka, etc.), Miranda, α-tubulin, and PH3. Using Fiji software, the diameter was measured by averaging the axis bisecting the PH3-positive metaphase chromosomes and the orthogonal axis of the apical and basal crescents. The interphase area was measured by drawing a segmented line along the entire NB cortex. The length and area of the scale bars within each projection was measured as a reference. The dot plots were generated and statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism 7.

Quantification of NBs in the stages of mitosis. The proportion of PH3-positive NBs in the specific stages of mitosis were quantified from central brain NBs fluorescently labeled with antibodies specific to aPKC, Miranda, α-tubulin, and PH3. Mitotic NBs were confirmed using Miranda and PH3 as a NB and mitotic marker, respectively. The stages of mitosis were determined using PH3 and α-tubulin to visualize the chromosomes and mitotic spindle, respectively: Prophase NBs displayed condensed chromosomes and mitotic spindle poles forming as microtubule organizing centers. Metaphase NBs were identified as the mitotic spindle aligning PH3-positive chromosomes at metaphase plate. NBs undergoing anaphase displayed the mitotic spindle separating chromosomes to their respective poles. NBs undergoing telophase were identified as cells that displayed separated chromatids at their respective poles and diffuse/basal Miranda localized to the cleavage furrow formation and the daughter cell.

Measurement of cell asymmetry. Using Fiji software, a straight line was drawn at the site of furrowing in NBs undergoing late anaphase and late telophase. A perpendicular line was drawn from the apical NB cortex to the line at the furrow and the length of the line was measured (A). Another perpendicular line was drawn from the basal/GMC cortex to the line at the furrow and the length of this line was also measured (B). The A/B ratio was determined by dividing the length of A by the length of B.

Live imaging and processing. Lifeact-GFP and chRFP-Tubulin localization in wild-type and Moeitin hypomorphic mutant NBs were imaged in brains from third instar male larvae collected from crosses between Insc-GAL4; UAS-Lifeact-GFP, UAS-chRFP-Tubulin and w1118 and Moe(1G32)fM7c, P[Dfd-GMR-uvYFP] flies, respectively. The live imaging protocol was adapted from (Lerit et al., 2014). Larval brains were dissected in filter sterilized Schneider’s Insect medium (Sigma) supplemented with penicillin–streptomycin. Larval brains with ventral nerve cords facing down were submerged in 30-μl drop of supplemented media on 25-mm-diameter round Deckgläser cover glass (neuVitro) placed in Attocoupler cell chamber for microscopy (Invtrogen). Four drops of 30 μl Halocarbon oil 700 (Sigma-Aldrich) were placed on a cover glass at four corners centered around drop of media containing larval brains. YSI Model 5793 gas-permeable membrane (cut to size of round cover glass) was placed on top of cover glass with drops of media and halocarbon oil. Media and oil was allowed to disperse (5 min) before assembling cell chamber. Imaging was performed at 24°C using a Zeiss coupled to a Ultraview spinning disk confocal microscope (Perkin Elmer) using a 63x NA 1.4 oil immersion objective (Plan-Apochromat; Zeiss) and Hamamatsu C9100-50 camera. 15-25 z sections were taken at 1 μm intervals and recorded every 30–60 s. The acquisition software used was Volocity 6.3.0 (Perkin Elmer). Fiji, Adobe Photoshop, and Illustrator CS4 was used for data analysis and figure formatting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Richard Feohon, Gary Etizen, and Shelagh Campbell for critical review of the article. We are grateful to Yohanns Bellaiche and Richard Feohon for fly stocks and David Hipfner, Dan Keihart, Yuh-Nung Jan, Jürgen Knoblich, Fumio Matsuzaki, James Skeath, Andreas Wodarz, and Fengwei Yu for antibody reagents. We also thank Martin Srayko and members of the Hughes and Simmonds labs for valuable discussions. Furthermore, stocks obtained from the Bloomington Drosophila Stock Center (National Institutes of Health P40OD018537) were used in this study.

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