

Contents

Résumé	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Abbreviations	11
List of figures	14
Introductory comments: Life from the RNA world	16
CHAPTER 1:	17
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	17
1. Epigenetics.....	19
1.1. Introduction	19
1.2. Physio-pathological roles of epigenetics	21
1. 3. Chromatin	23
1.4. Histone modifications	25
1.4.1. Introduction	25
1.4.2. Histone acetylation	25
1.4.3. Histone methylation	26
1.4.4. Histone phosphorylation	27
1.4.5. Other modifications.....	27
1.4.6. Histone modification mapping.....	28
1.5. DNA modifications	30
1.5.1. Introduction	30
1.5.2. Adenosine methylation	30
1.5.3. Cytosine methylation	31
1.5.4. Cytosine hydroxymethylation	33
1.5.5. DNA modification mapping	35
1.6. Non-coding RNAs	37
1.6.1. Introduction	37
1.6.2. Non-coding RNA classification.....	38
1.6.3. microRNAs.....	38
1.6.3.1. Discovery	38
1.6.3.2. miRNA biogenesis and mode of action	39
1.6.3.3. Physio-pathological roles of miRNAs	39
1.6.3.4. Clinical relevance of miRNAs.....	40
1.6.4. long non-coding RNAs	41
1.6.4.1. Discovery	41

1.6.4.2. lncRNA biogenesis	41
1.6.4.3. lncRNAs classification.....	41
1.6.4.4. lncRNAs mode of action	43
1.6.4.5. lncRNAs in cancer	46
1.6.4.6. Clinical relevance of lncRNAs.....	48
1.6.5. Non-coding RNA investigation technologies	49
2. Colorectal Cancer.....	50
2.1. Introduction	50
2.2. Diversity of colorectal cancers	52
2.2.1. Clinical characterization of CRC	52
2.2.2. Molecular characterization of CRC	53
2.2.2.1. mRNA-based CRC subtypes	53
2.2.2.2. lncRNA-based CRC subtypes.....	55
2.2.2.3. DNA methylation-based subtypes of CRC	56
2.3. Management and treatment.....	57
2.3.1. Diagnosis	57
2.3.2. Surgery and chemotherapy.....	57
2.3.3. Targeted therapy	58
3. RNA epigenetics.....	59
3.1. Introduction	59
3.2. Relevant mRNA modifications	60
3.2.1. Methylation of adenosine	60
3.2.1.1. Distribution.....	60
3.2.1.2. m6A Machinery	61
3.2.1.3. Function	62
3.2.2. Methylation of cytosine	63
3.2.2.1. Distribution.....	63
3.2.2.2. mrC machinery	64
3.2.2.3. Function	64
3.2.3. RNA modifications mapping technologies	65
4. Aim of the projects	66
CHAPTER 2: RESULTS.....	67
1. Comprehensive identification of long non-coding RNAs in colorectal cancer.....	69
1.1 Introduction	69
1.2 Results	70

1.2.1. Identification of lncRNAs associated to CRC heterogeneity markers	70
1.2.1.1. lncRNAs are associated to anatomical and genomic features of CRC .	70
1.2.1.2. lncRNAs are associated to oncogene mutations in CRC	72
1.2.1.3. lncRNAs are associated to mRNA-based CRC subtypes	73
1.2.1.4. lncRNA association to relapse-free survival (RFS) rates	76
1.2.2. Differential expression and methylation patterns of lncRNAs in cancer ...	78
1.2.3. Functional prediction of identified lncRNAs.....	81
1.2.3.1. Feature-related lncRNAs are associated with key CRC-related processes	
.....	81
1.2.3.2. Subtype-related lncRNAs are associated with key CRC-related processes	
.....	83
1.2.3.3. RFS-related lncRNAs associate with key CRC-related processes	84
1.2.4. Experimental investigation of predicted functions	86
1.3. Key findings	89
1.4. Material and methods.....	90
1.4.1. Culture of the CRC cell lines	90
1.4.2. Protein extraction and western blot analyses.....	90
1.4.3. RNA purification and real-time quantitative PCR	90
1.4.4. Statistical analyses	91
2. RNA cytosine methylation regulates RNA-protein interactions.....	92
2.1. Introduction	92
2.2. Results	93
2.2.1. Identification of an mrC reader.....	93
2.2.1.1. Establishment of a technical control	93
2.2.1.2. SRSF2 preferentially binds methylated cytosines	94
2.2.1.3. SRSF2 directly binds methylated RNA through its RRM region.....	97
2.2.1.4. P95H mutation affects SRSF2's preference for methylated RNA	100
2.2.2. Identification of a methylation writer.....	102
2.2.2.1. NSUN2 regulates mrC levels in HeLa cells.....	102
2.3. Key findings	104
2.4. Material and methods.....	105
2.4.1.Expression plasmids and site-directed mutagenesis	105
2.4.2. Cell culture and transient transfections	105
2.4.3. Histidine-tagged protein production and purification	105
2.4.4. Btn-RNA pull-down experiment, western blot and mass spectrometry analyses	106

2.4.5. NanoBRET experiments (Promega)	107
2.4.6. RNA Interference, retroviral infection and RT-PCR analysis.....	108
2.4.7. RNA purification and real-time quantitative PCR	108
2.4.8. Mass spectrometry analysis of mrC.....	109
CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION.....	111
1. Comprehensive identification of long non-coding RNAs in colorectal cancer.....	113
2. Cytosine methylation-mediated regulation of SRSF2 RNA binding properties ...	121
3. Concluding remarks	129
REFERENCES.....	131
APPENDIX	147