

Targeting Hepatitis B cccDNA with a Sequence-Specific ARCUS Nuclease to Eliminate Hepatitis B Virus In Vivo

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PRECISION
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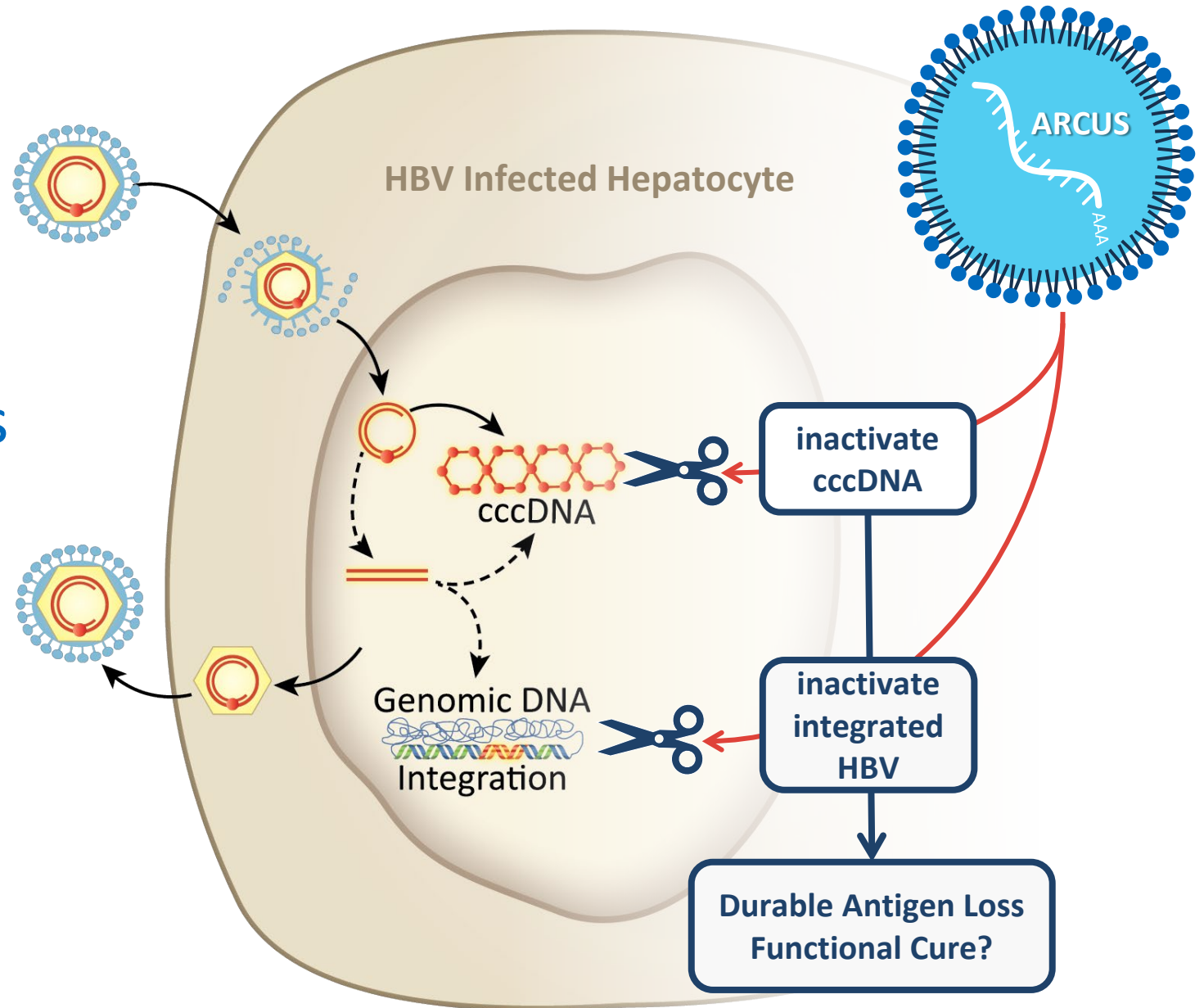


Disclosures

- I am an employee of Precision BioSciences

Chronic Hepatitis B affects
~250 million people

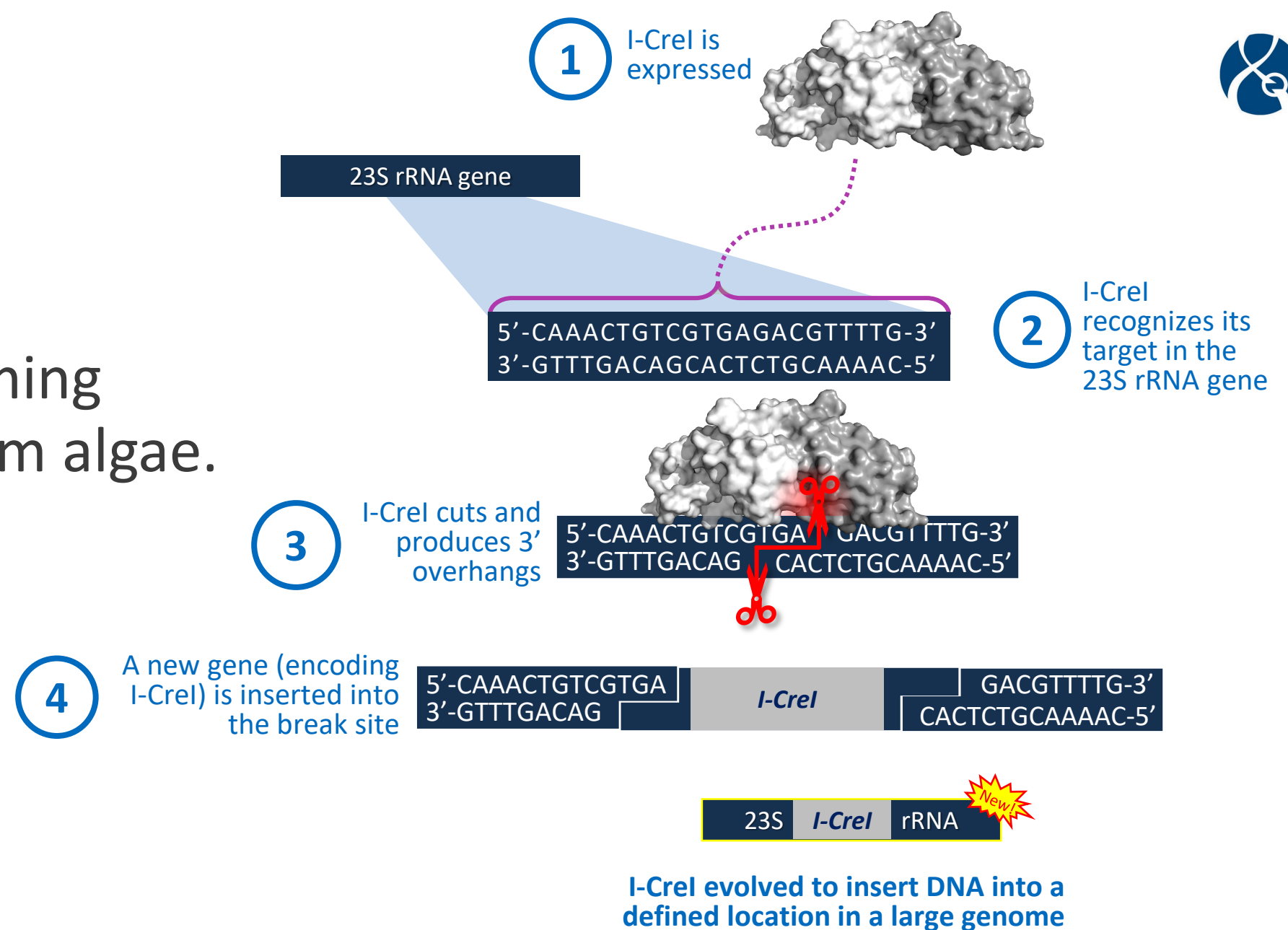
cccDNA and integrated HBV
have complicated efforts to
cure the disease





ARCUS is derived from **I-Crel**, a homing endonuclease from algae.

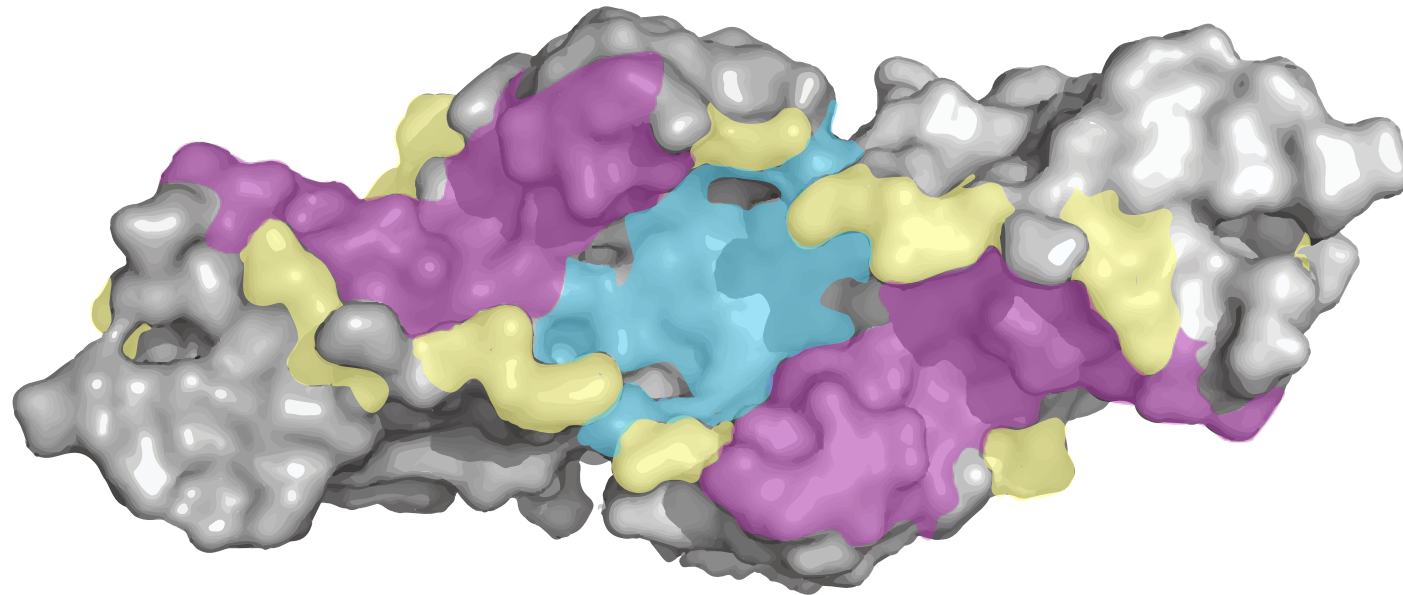
- High Specificity
- Small Size
- High Rate of HDR





Creating and Optimizing ARCUS Nucleases

The DNA-binding surface of I-CreI must be extensively re-engineered to produce each new ARCUS nuclease



 Controls
Efficiency

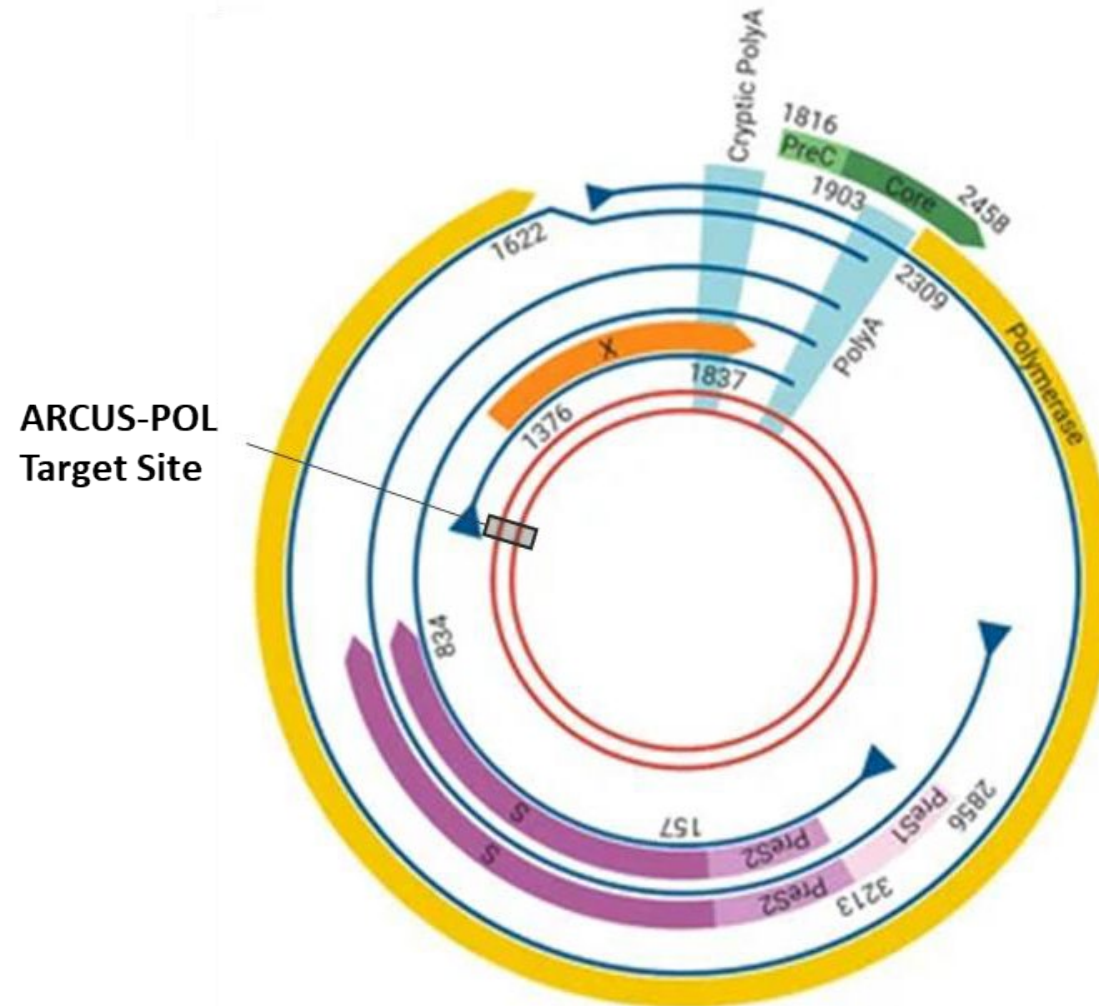
 Controls
Specificity

 Controls
Affinity



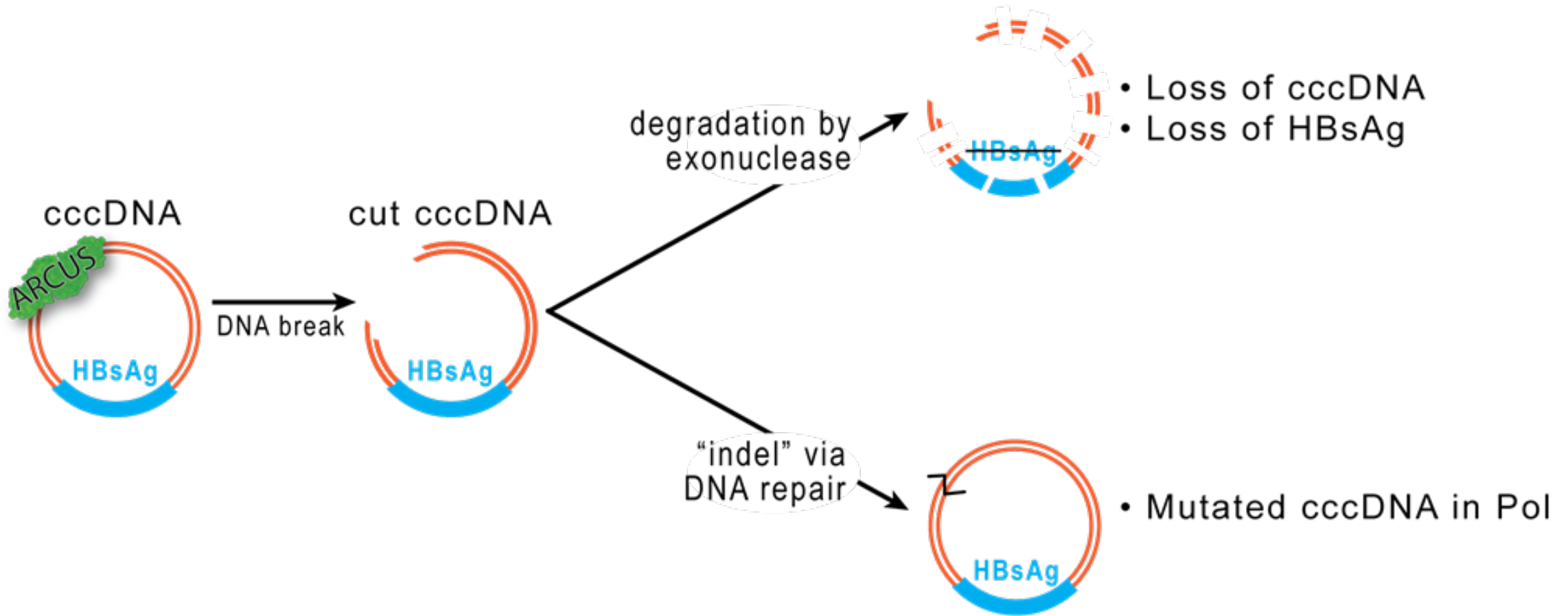
Engineering ARCUS to Recognize HBV

An ARCUS enzyme was designed to cut a conserved sequence in the HBV polymerase (POL) gene





cccDNA Fate after ARCUS Cleavage

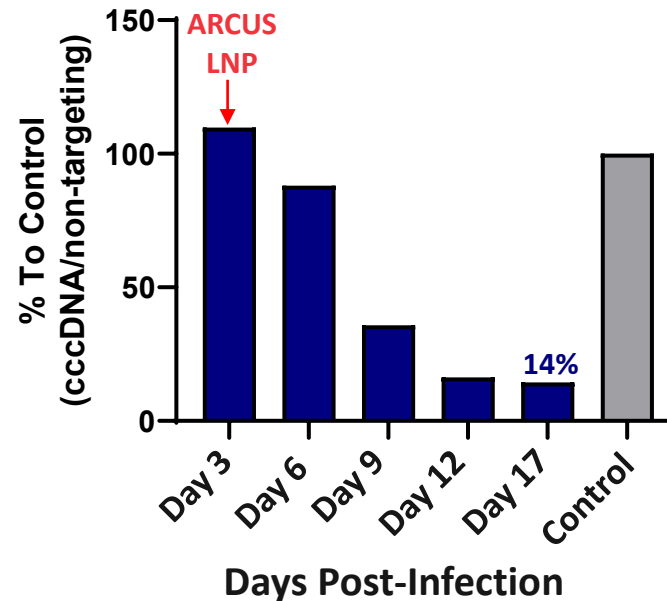
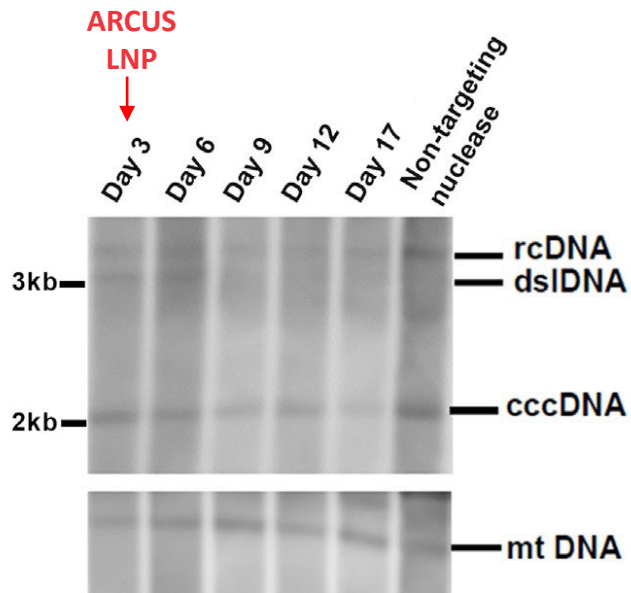




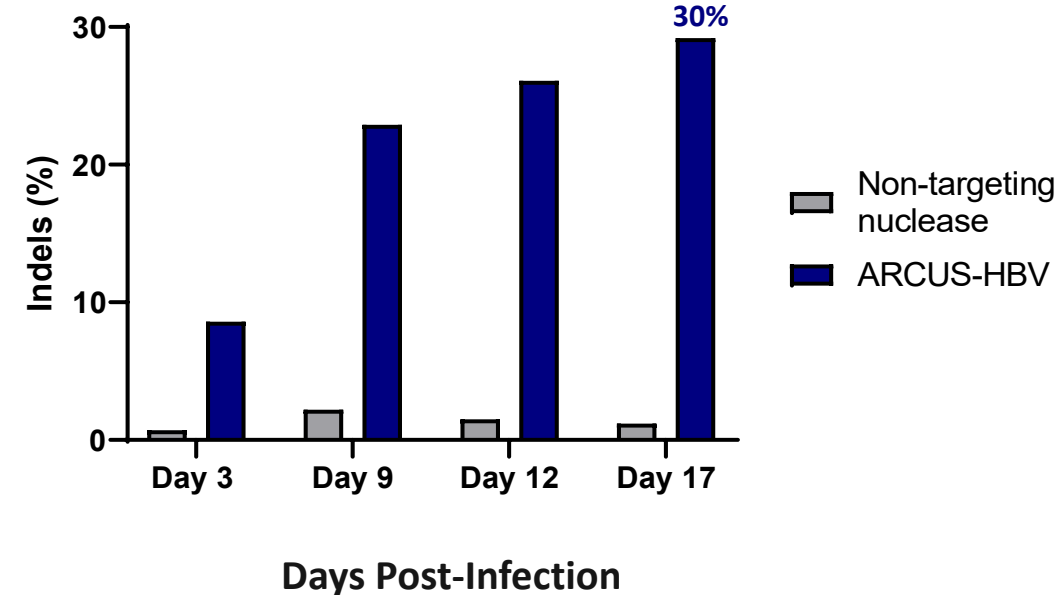
ARCUS Activity in HBV-Infected Primary Human Hepatocytes

- In HBV-infected primary human hepatocytes (PHH), ARCUS delivered via LNP reduced cccDNA by 86% and created indel mutations in 30% of the remaining cccDNA.

cccDNA Degradation



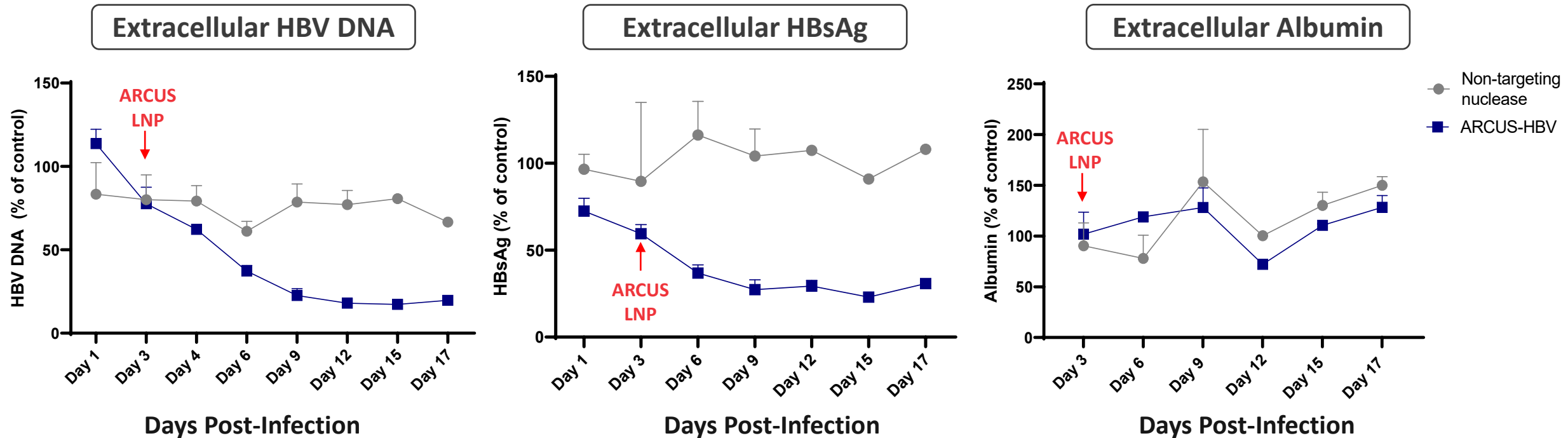
cccDNA Indels



ARCUS Activity in HBV-Infected Primary Human Hepatocytes

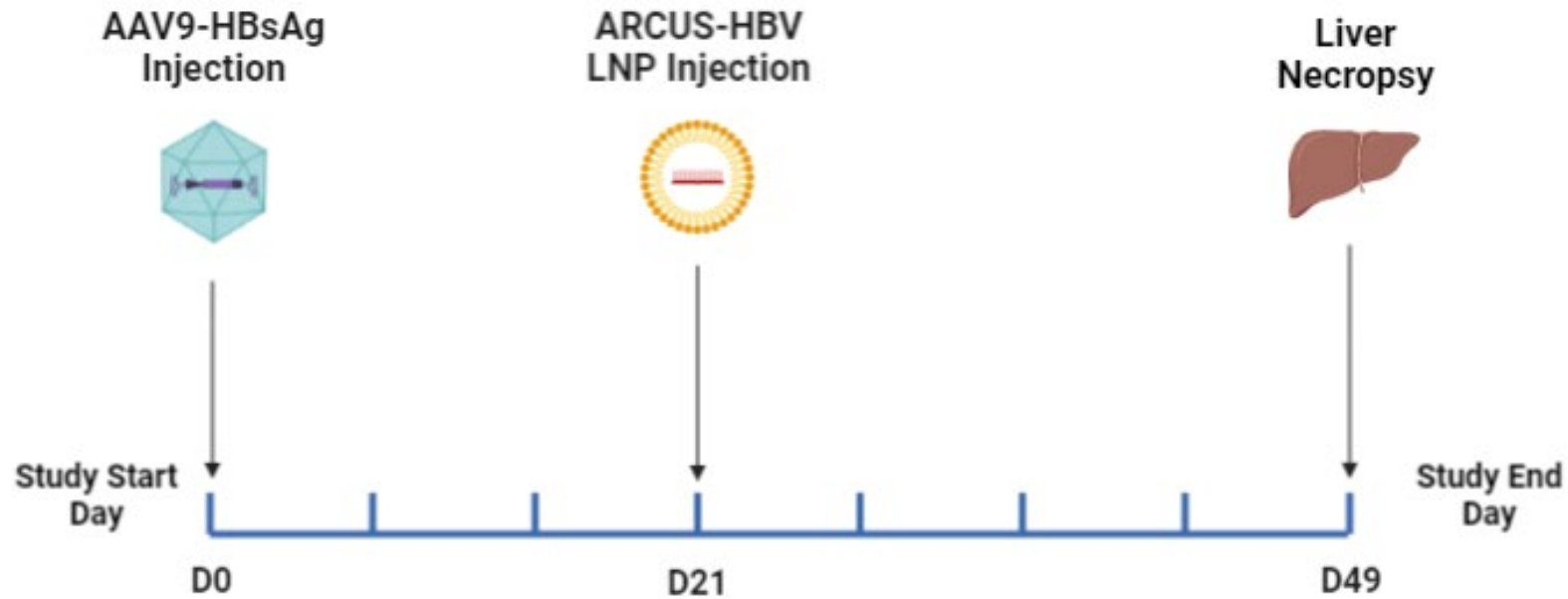


- ARCUS treated cells demonstrated an 80% reduction in extracellular HBV DNA and a 77% reduction in secreted sAg with no change in albumin.





Episomal Mouse Model Study Design

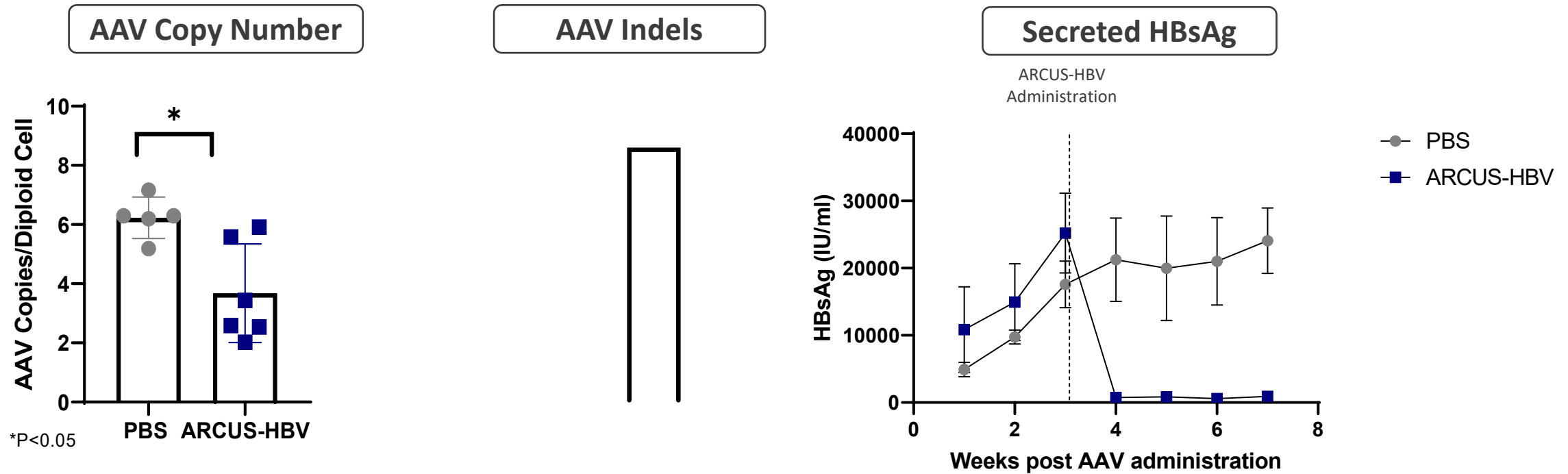


- **AAV8 HBsAg Dose:** 5e11vg
- **ARCUS LNP Dose:** 2 mg/kg
- Weekly blood draws for HBsAg

Episomal Mouse Model—Molecular Analyses



- The ARCUS-HBV nuclease significantly reduced AAV copies in the liver compared to the PBS control group.
- The remaining AAV had an average of 86% indels in the ARCUS-HBV treated group.
- The AAV degradation and indel formation resulting from ARCUS-HBV cutting resulted in a 96% sustained reduction in HBsAg from one week post ARCUS-HBV administration until necropsy at week 7.



Episomal Mouse Study—Liver HBsAg Immunohistochemistry

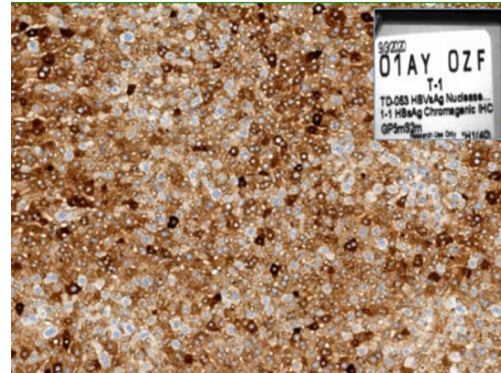


- Mice treated with ARCUS show a significant loss in HBsAg in the liver compared to untreated mice.

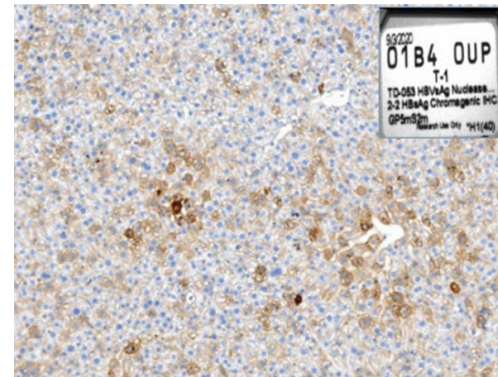
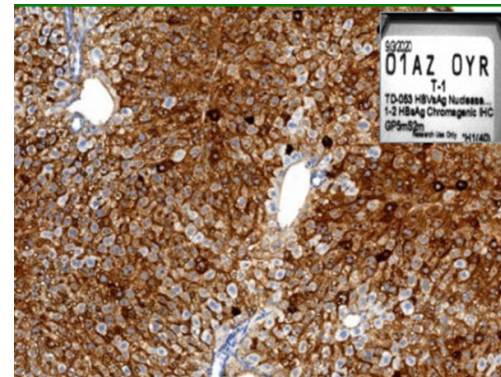
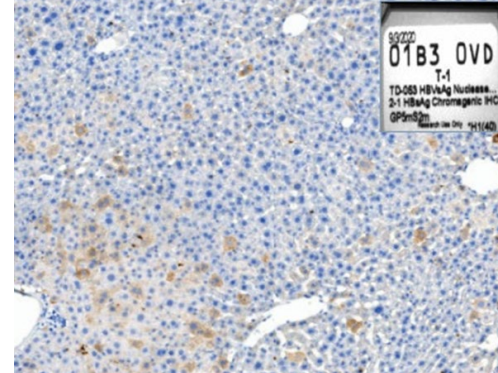
Blue = Nucleus

Brown = HBsAg

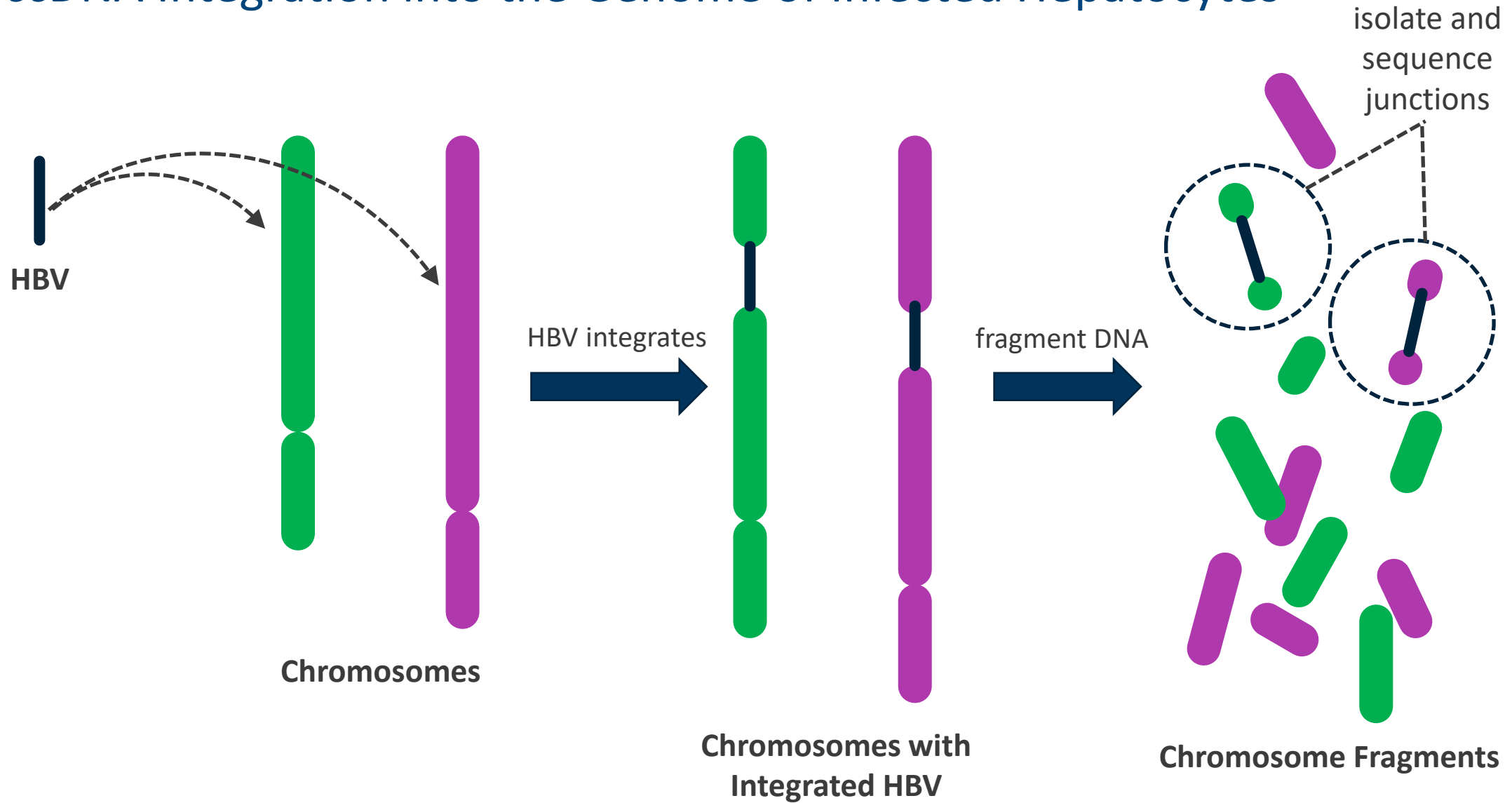
Group 1—No Nuclease



Group 2—ARCUS-HBV



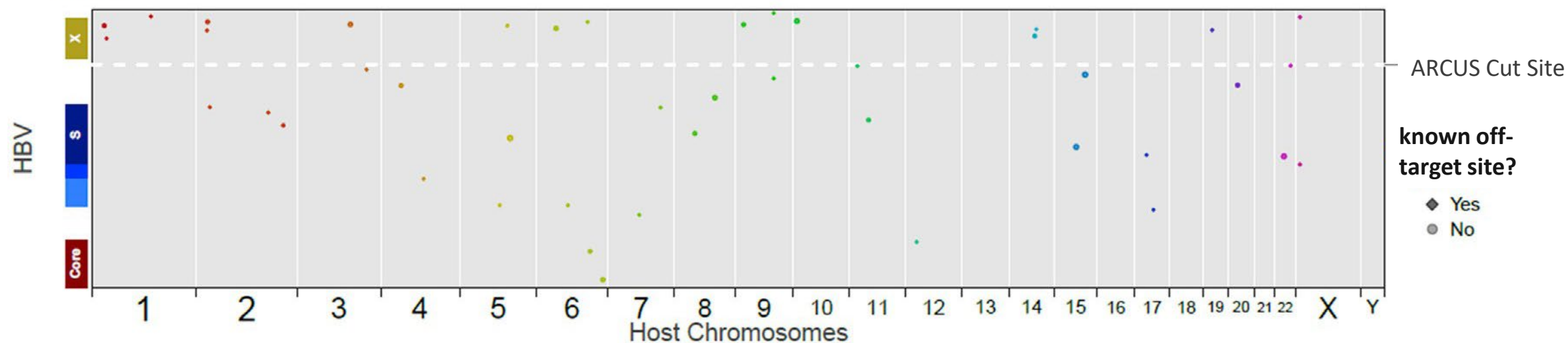
cccDNA Integration into the Genome of Infected Hepatocytes



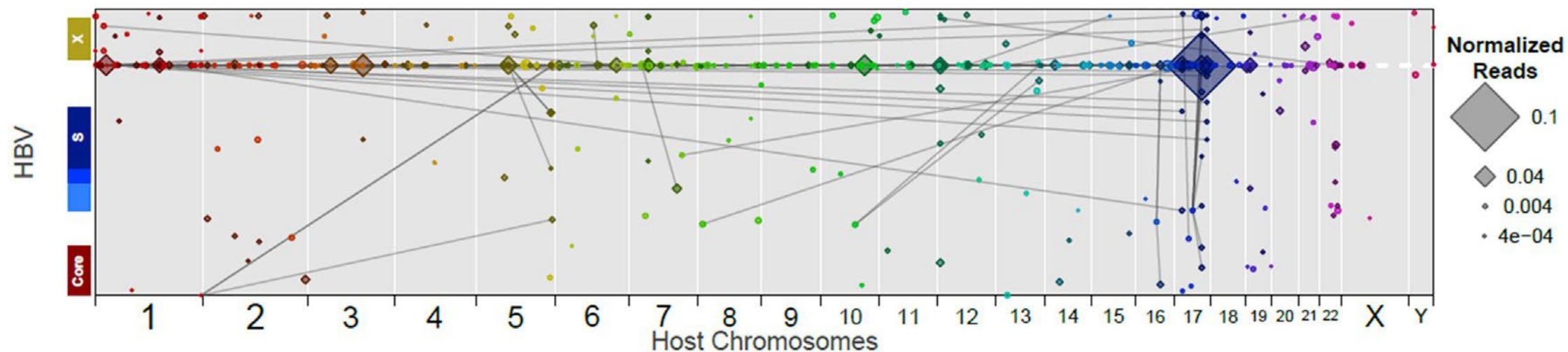
cccDNA Integration into the Genome of Infected Hepatocytes



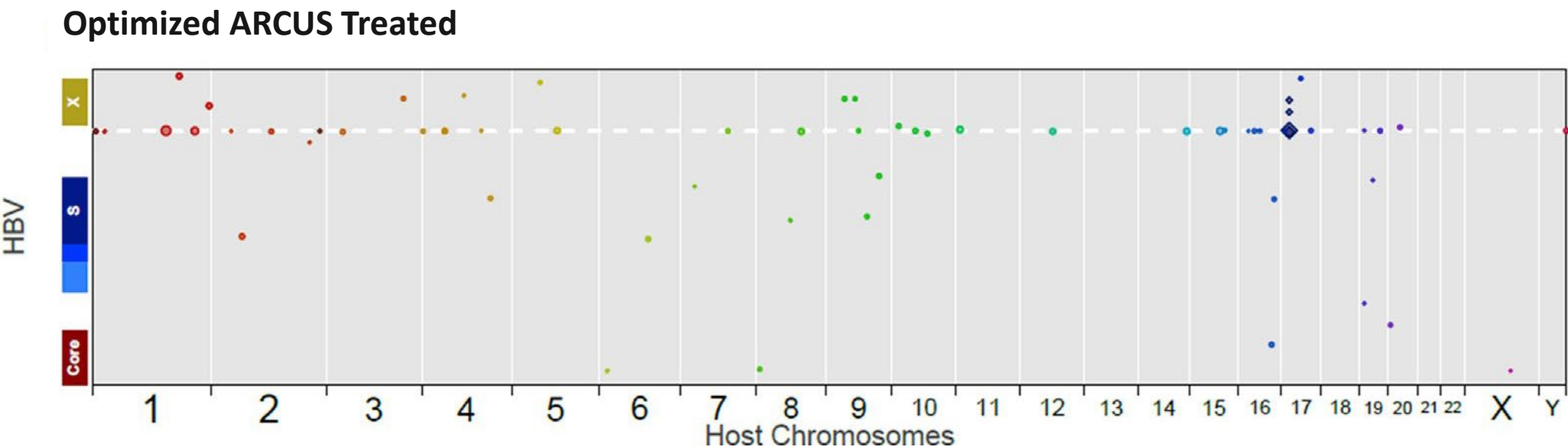
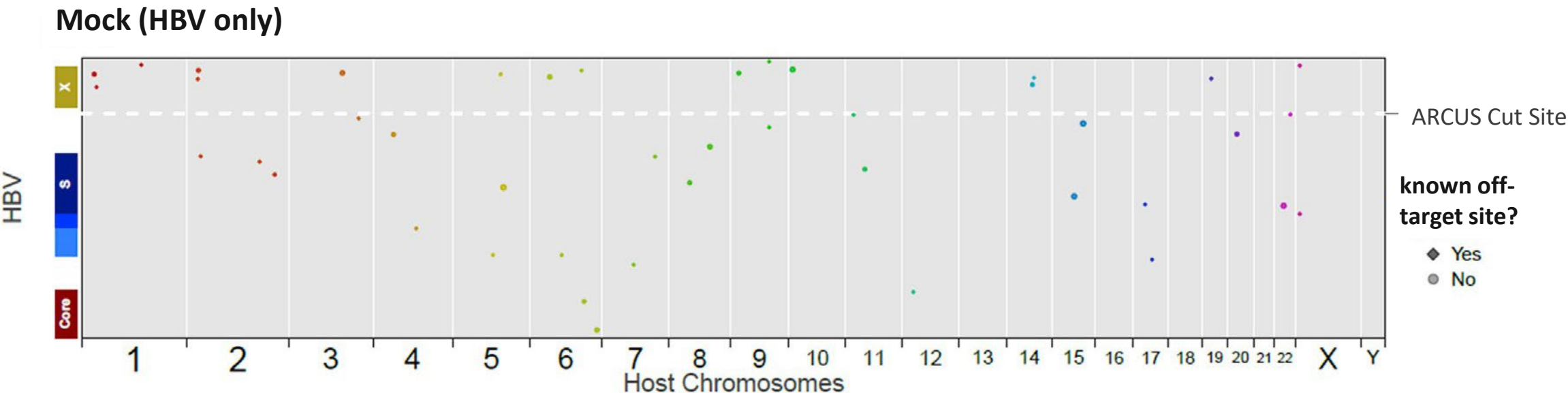
Mock (HBV only)



Early Generation ARCUS Treated



cccDNA Integration into the Genome of Infected Hepatocytes



Conclusions



- ARCUS demonstrates high levels of editing against cccDNA with subsequent reduction of HBsAg levels in PHHs.
- We have developed a novel HBV model suitable for mice and NHPs which demonstrated high levels of editing and HBsAg reductions.
- Our gene editing approach demonstrates high on-target activity and specificity against the HBV polymerase gene and could be a promising therapeutic approach for an HBV cure.

Acknowledgements



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