

The Evolution of the Cell State Splitter: Motility to Embryogenesis

Presented in the International
Embryo Physics Course

<http://www.embryophysics.org>

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By

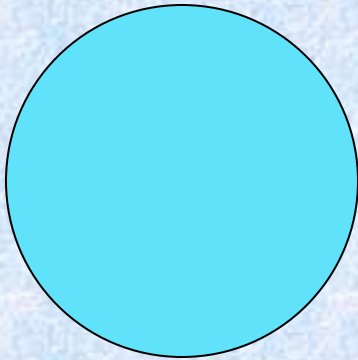
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Embryogenesis:
The Fundamental Problem
Given a spherical cow....



Fundamental Problem

- ◎ Go from one cell to many cells with many different functions.
- ◎ Get the different cells into
 - The right place
 - The right time
 - The right numbers



Normal mammalian development

1. Fertilized egg goes through multiple cell divisions to form a loose ball.
2. Cells on the outside of the ball form the trophoblast (future placenta, membranes)
3. Inner cells form inner cell mass which will be the embryo proper.
4. Embryo forms three basic cell layers
 1. Endoderm
 2. Mesoderm
 3. Ectoderm

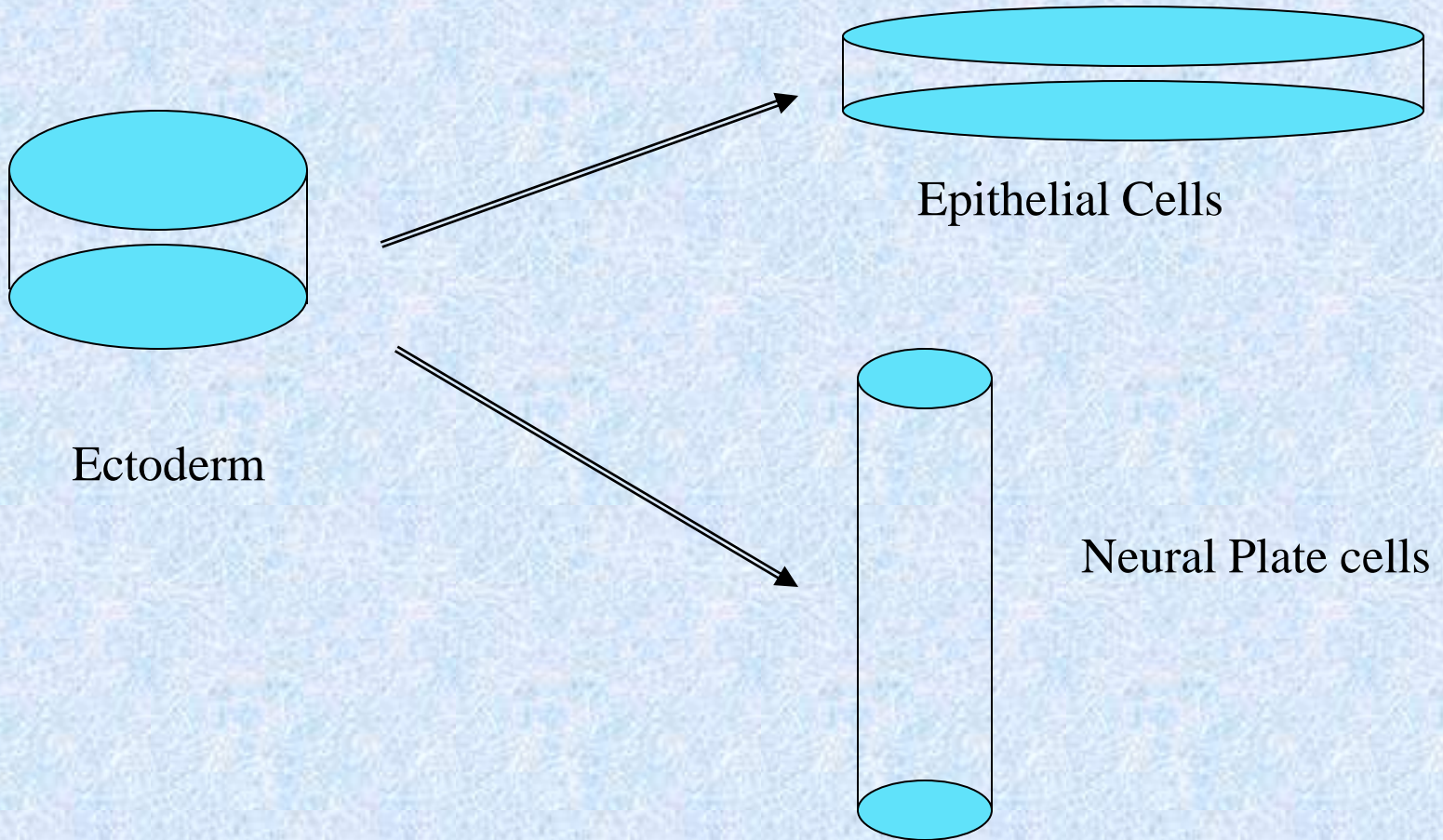
Gastrulation

1. Endoderm and mesoderm is tucked inside
2. Ectoderm stretches to cover the entire outside.

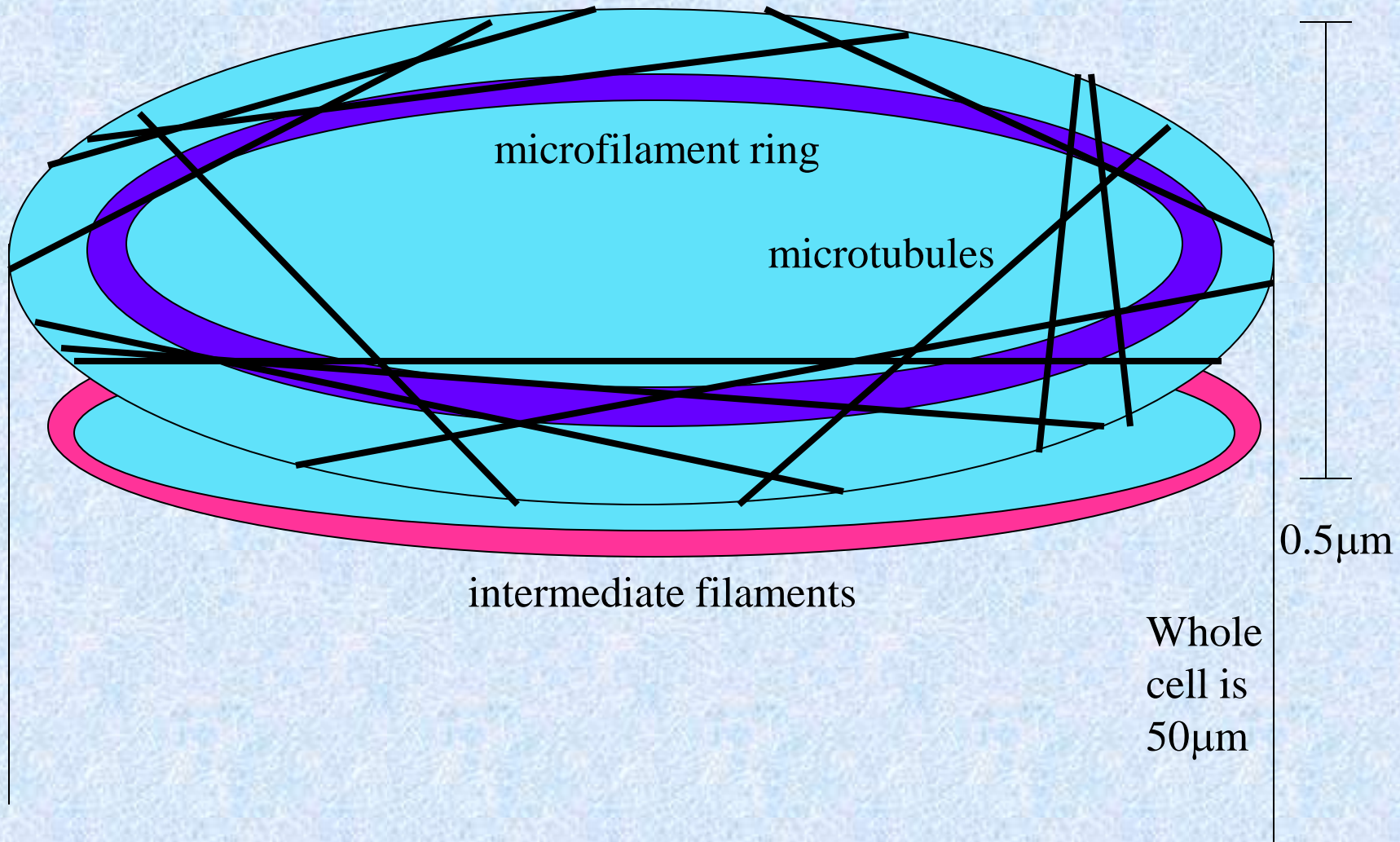
Neurulation

1. Ectoderm – forms all cells of the skin, neural tissue, brain, pigment cells, sweat glands
2. One half of ectoderm becomes neural tissue
3. One half becomes epithelial tissue
4. Neural ectoderm forms flat plate
5. Flat plate of neural cell sinks in the middle and the edges rise and join to form a tube.
6. Tube becomes fold to form brain, spinal cord

Ectoderm Differentiation

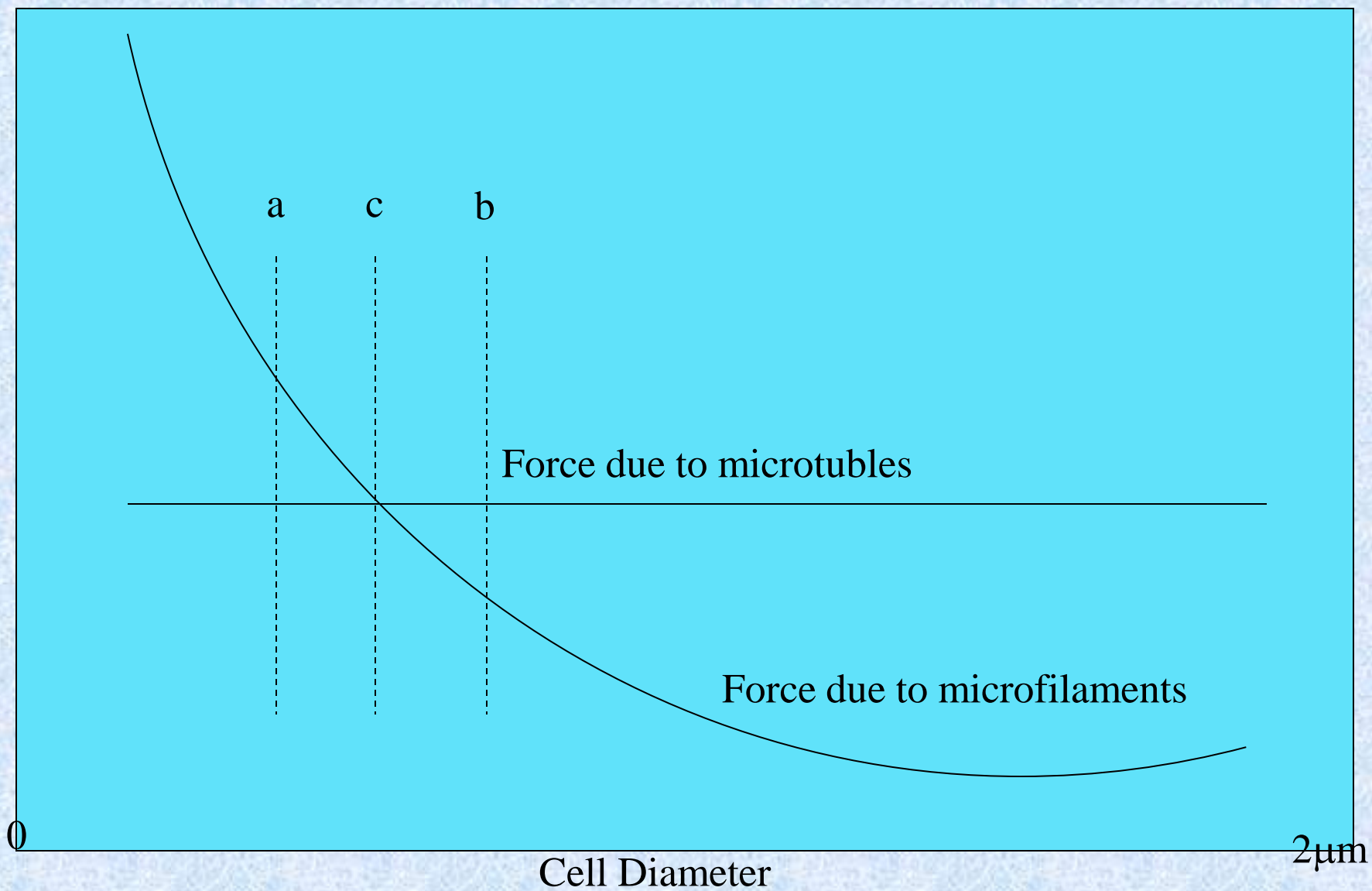


Apical end of ectoderm cell



The Cell State Splitter Model

- ⊙ Cell state splitter is an organelle
 - Microtubules
 - Intermediate filaments
 - Actin filaments
- ⊙ Microtubules exert steady force by polymerization
- ⊙ Actin filaments in a ring exert a force that is proportional with the diameter (thick ring large force, thin ring less force)
- ⊙ Intermediate filaments are elastic (resist change)

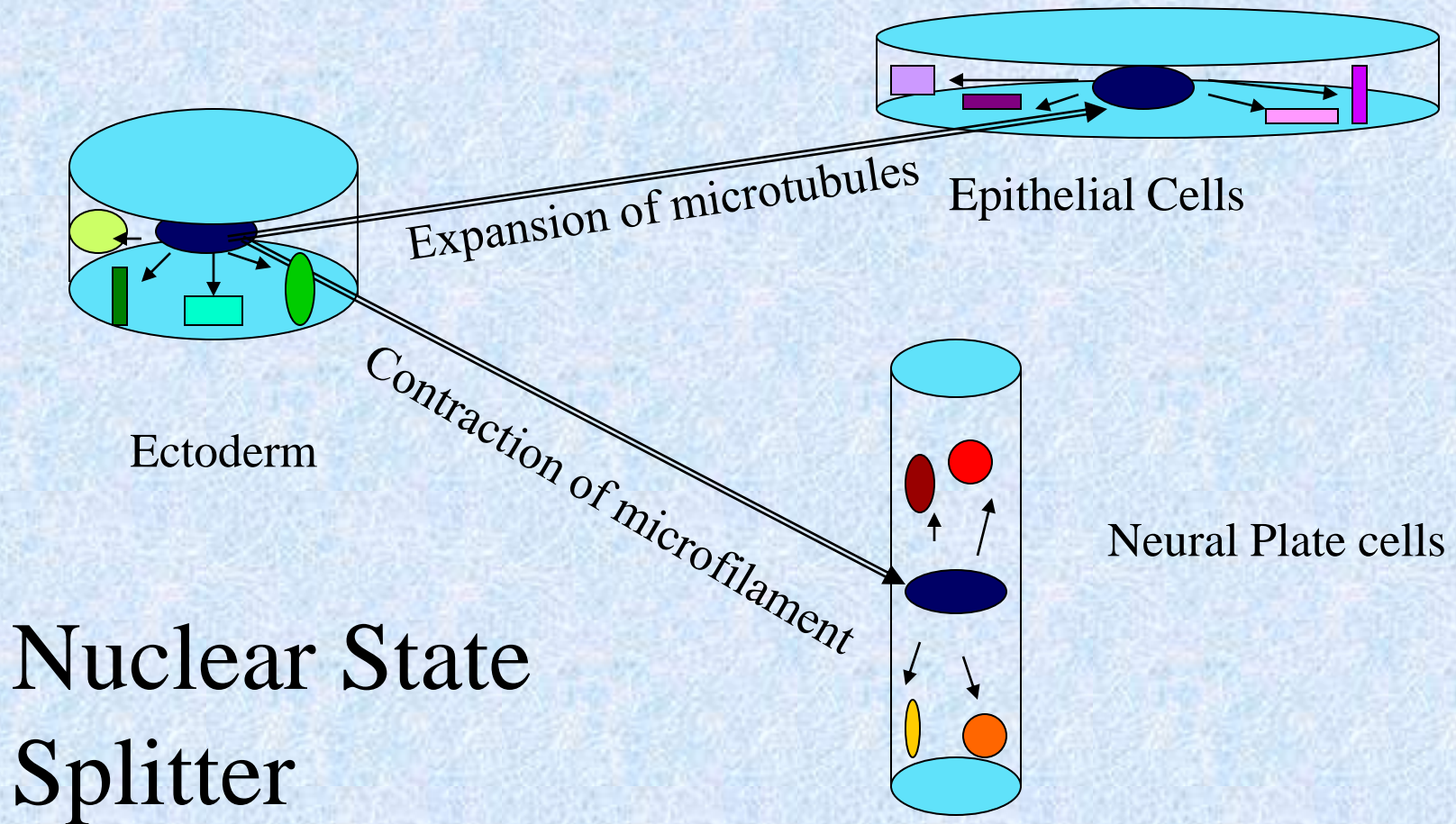


Force balance

- a) $F_{\text{microfilament}} > -F_{\text{microtubules}} = \text{contraction}$
- b) $F_{\text{microfilament}} < -F_{\text{microtubules}} = \text{expansion}$
- c) $F_{\text{microfilament}} = -F_{\text{microtubules}}$

Bistable organelle – resolve to one of possible two states

Ectoderm Differentiation



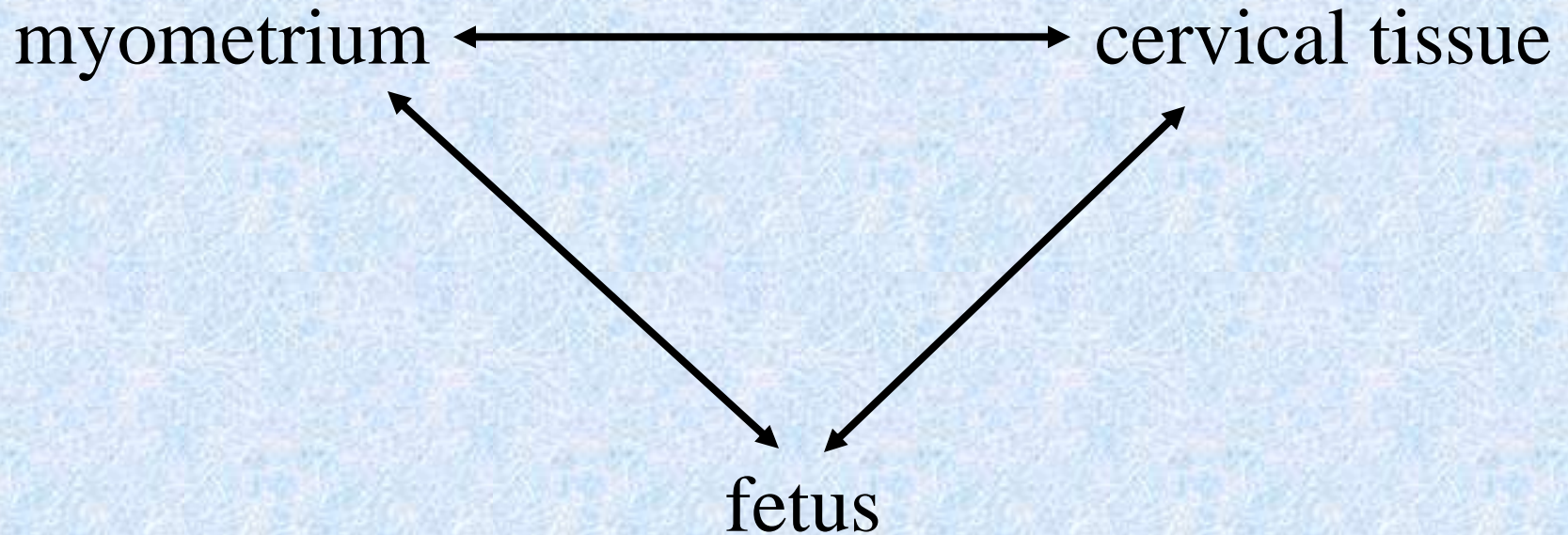
A bit of embryological jargon

- ⊙ **Induction** = signal from cell to cell and from exterior of cell into nucleus that it is time to change into a new cell.
- ⊙ (Determination)
- ⊙ **Differentiation** = process of changing from one cell type to another.
- ⊙ (Begins with changes in gene expression.)
- ⊙ Cell state splitter = induction
- ⊙ Nuclear state splitter = differentiation

Advantages to our model

- ⊙ Requires physics – mechanical forces
- ⊙ Mechanical forces trigger either an expansion or a contraction in a localized area.
- ⊙ Genome responds to mechanical signal.
- ⊙ Genome makes next cell state splitter and waits for next signal.
- ⊙ Cell need not “know” anything going on around it or what any other cell is doing.
 - No reacting, reading, assessing, mediating, influencing, communicating, controlling, knowing required by any cell.

Initiation of labor



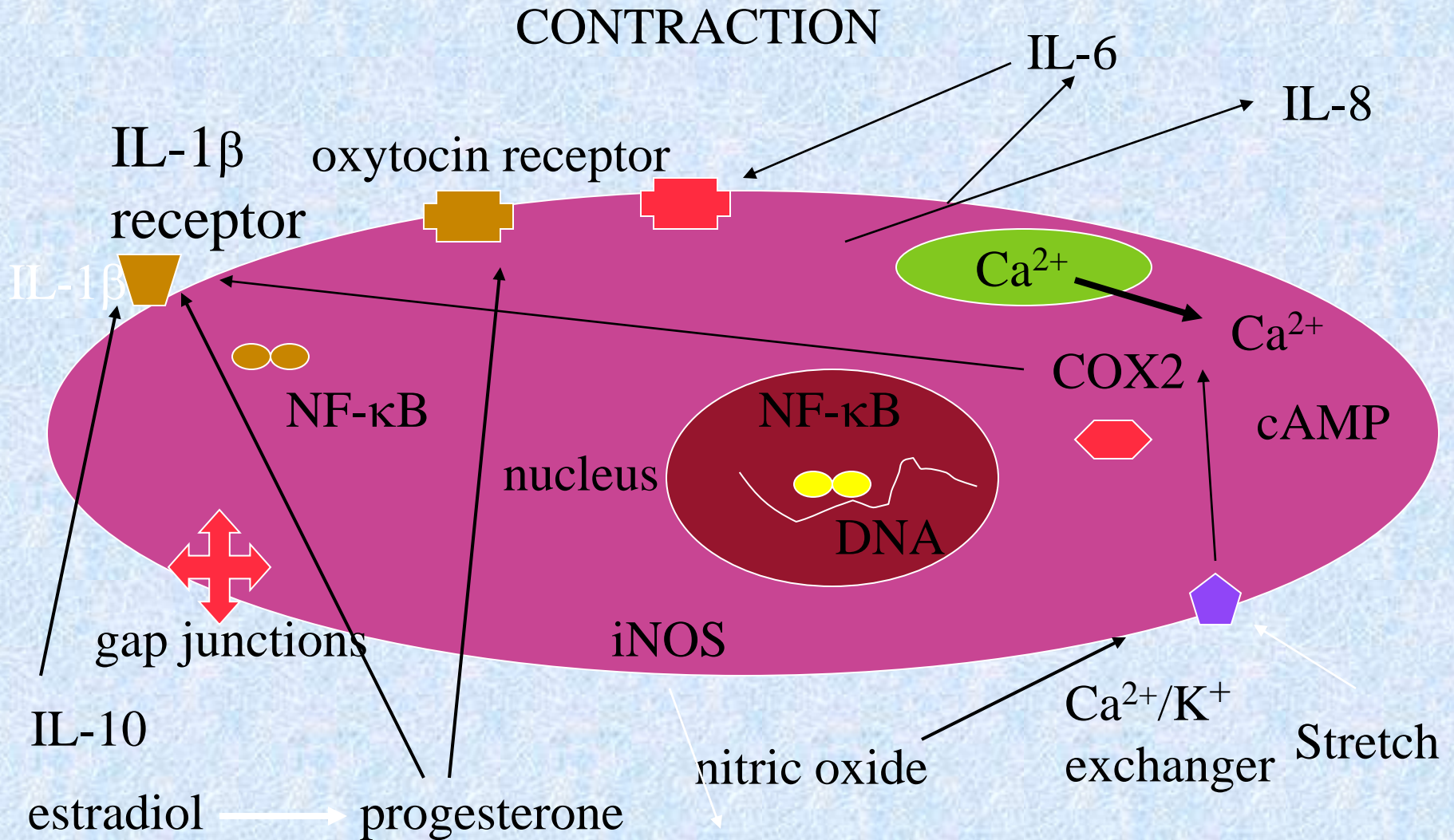
Initiation includes both mechanical (especially shear stress) of myometrium and chorioamniotic interface, hormonal signals, signals from the immune system via release of specific cytokine.

Myometrium

A signal, likely mechanical, perhaps chemical, perhaps both (IL-1 β or TNF- α), occurs due to changes in the cervix. The result is an entire set of new proteins is expressed as labor begins.

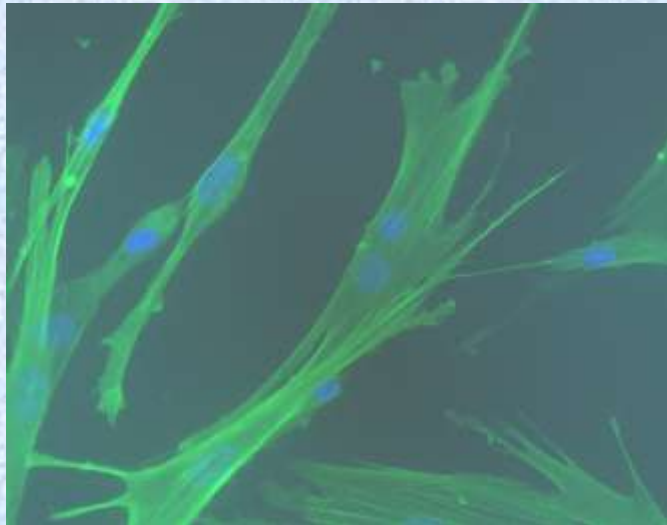
- 1) Ion channels (regulate membrane potential)
- 2) Agonist receptors to compounds that control the strength of labor contractions
- 3) GAP junctions to allow coordinated cell-cell coupling of the uterus.
- 4) cAMP down regulated

UtSM Cell Activation

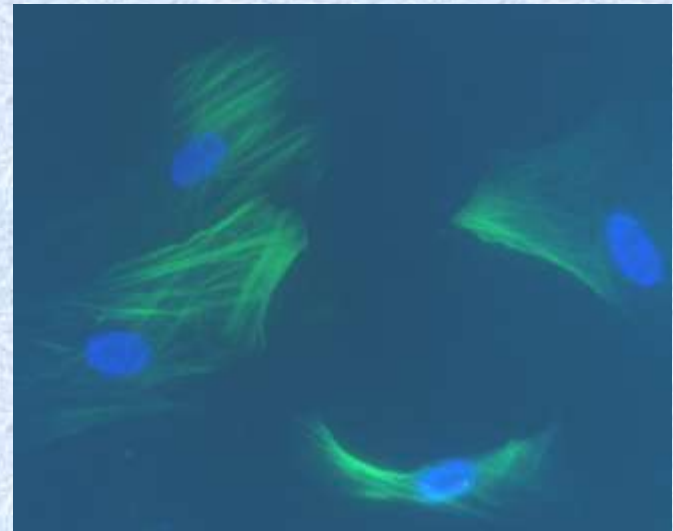


Fully Activated UtSM Cell.

UtSM-CS04 cells (P3) prepared by the explant method stain for markers of smooth muscle cells: α -smooth muscle actin and calponin.

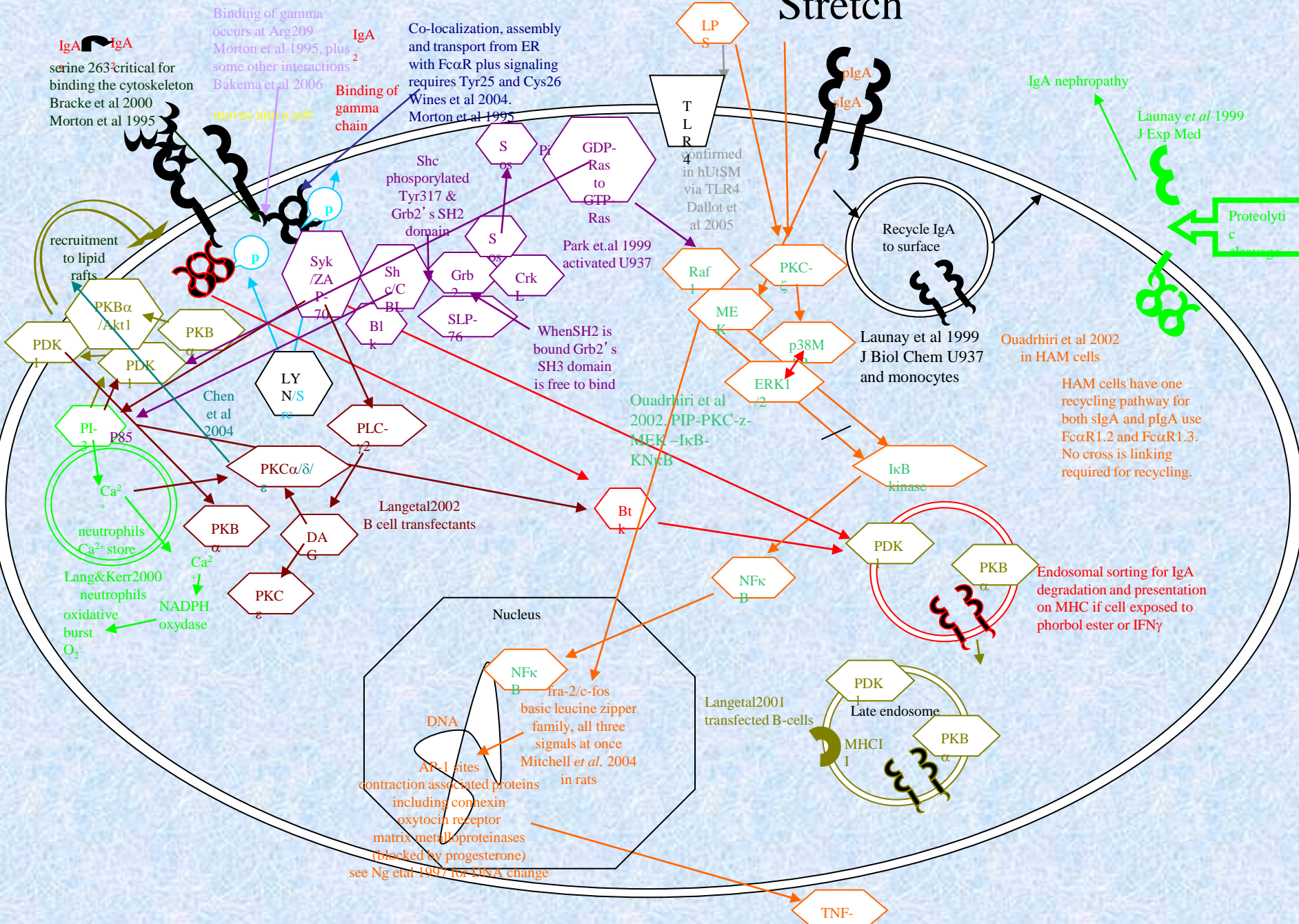


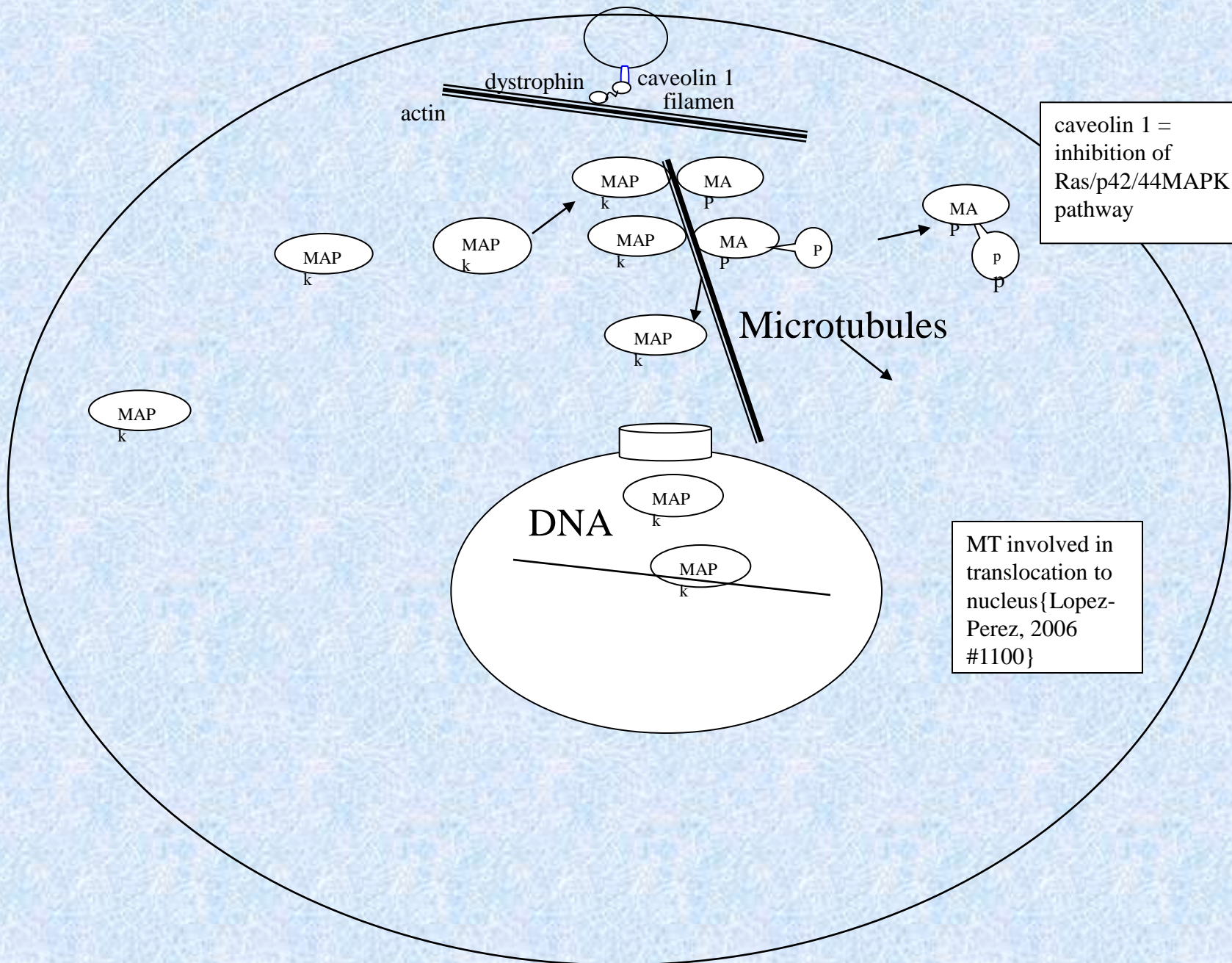
α -smooth muscle actin



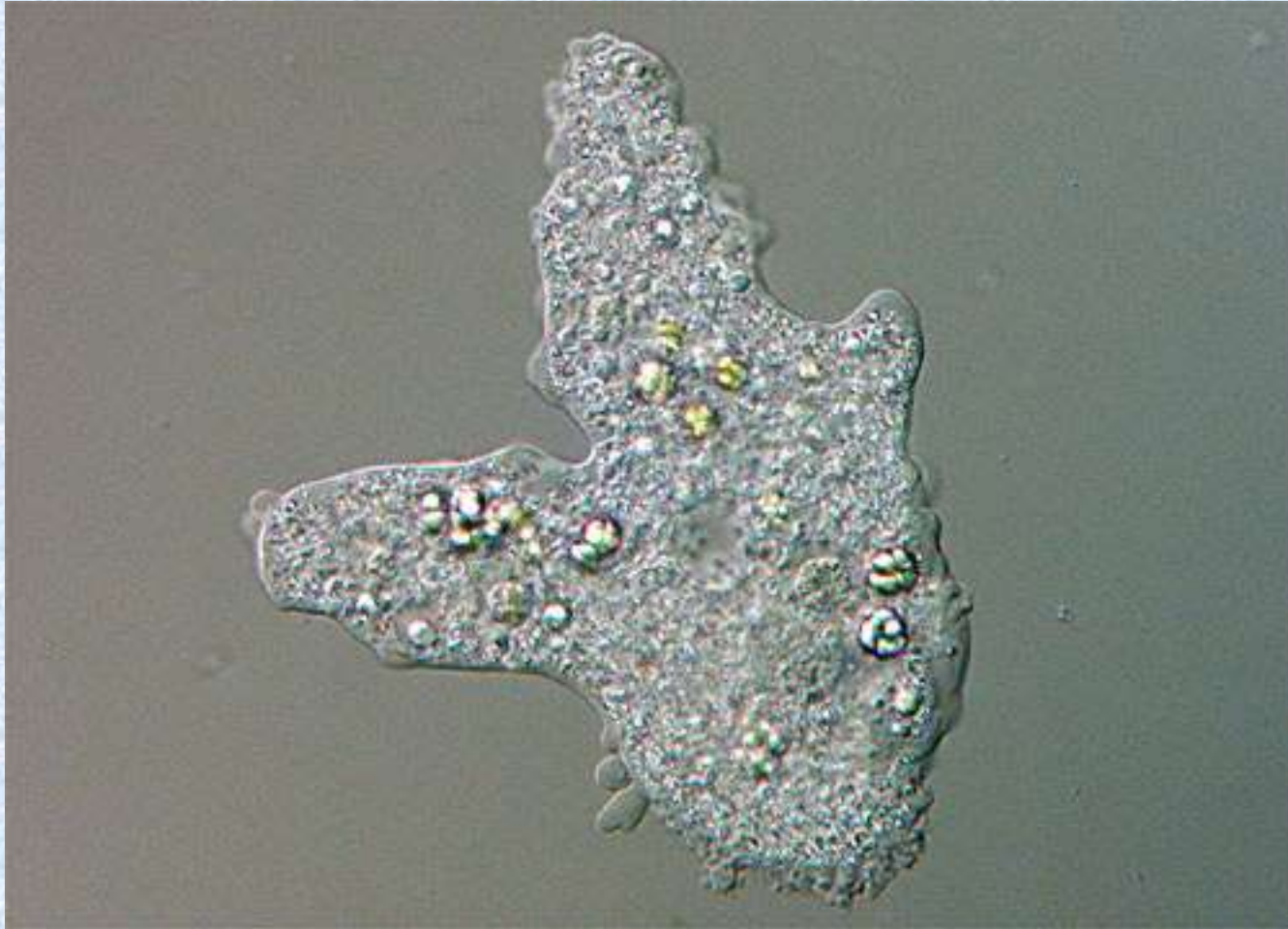
calponin

Stretch

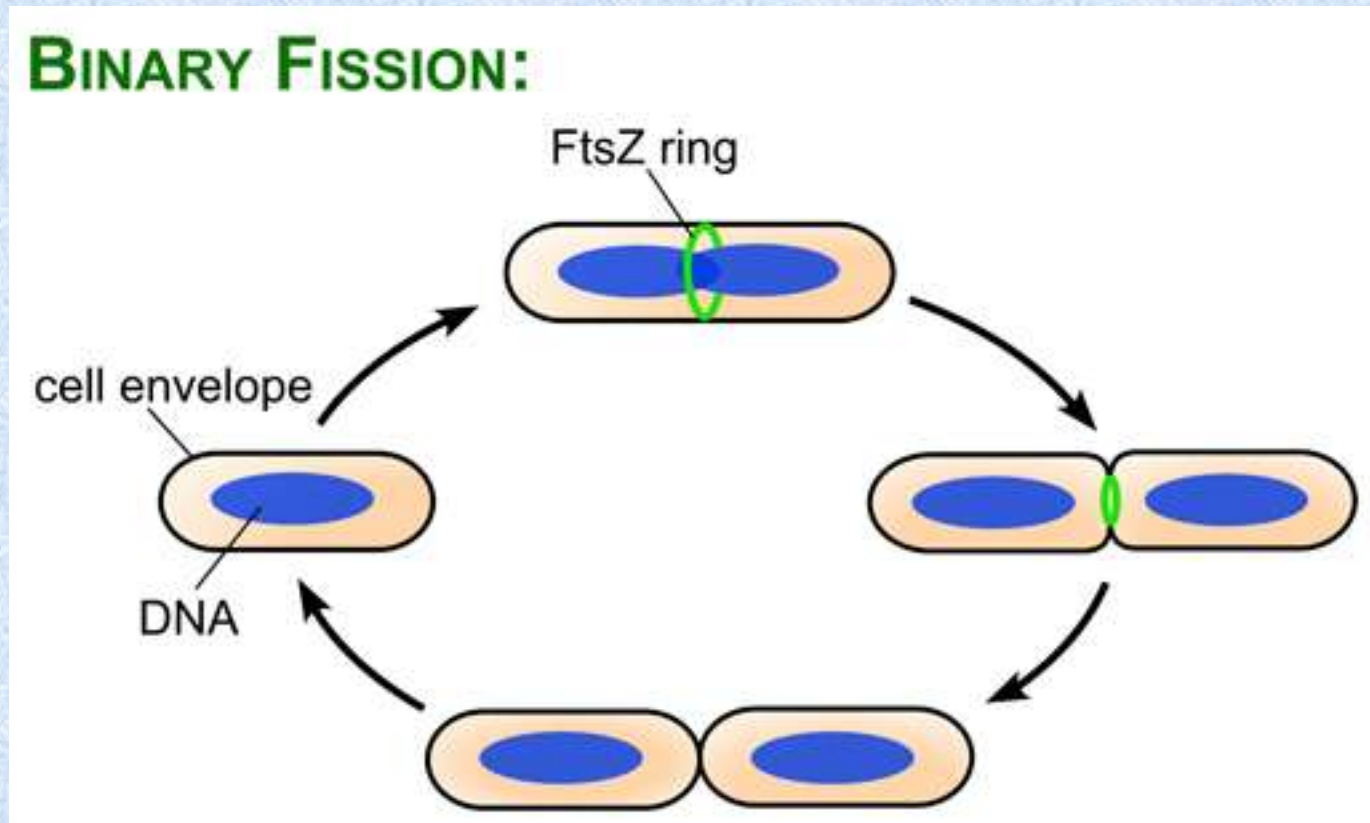




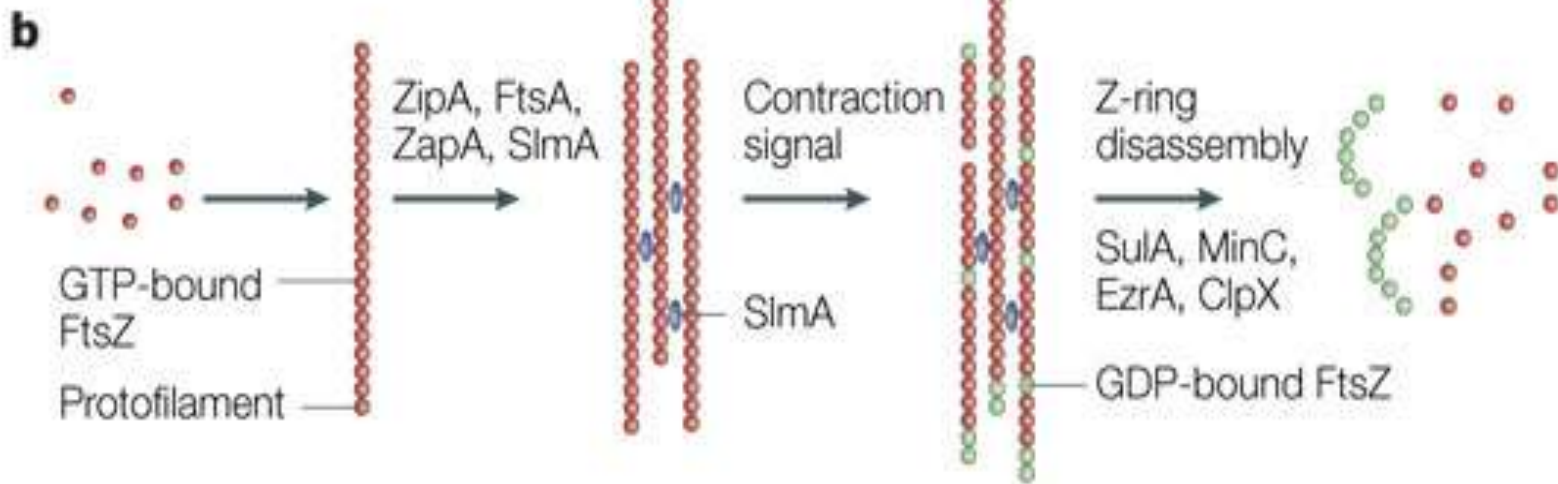
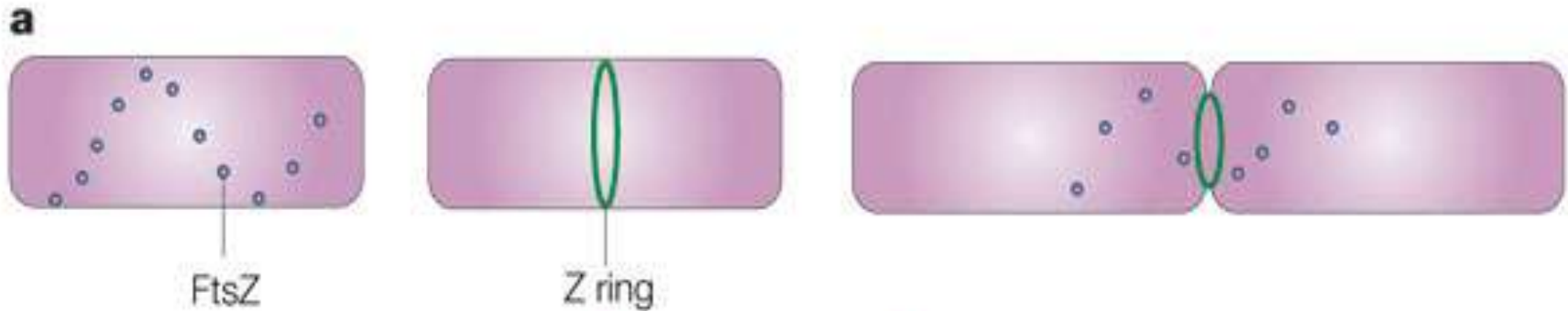
Where Did This System First Evolve From?



Where Did Microtubules First Evolve From?



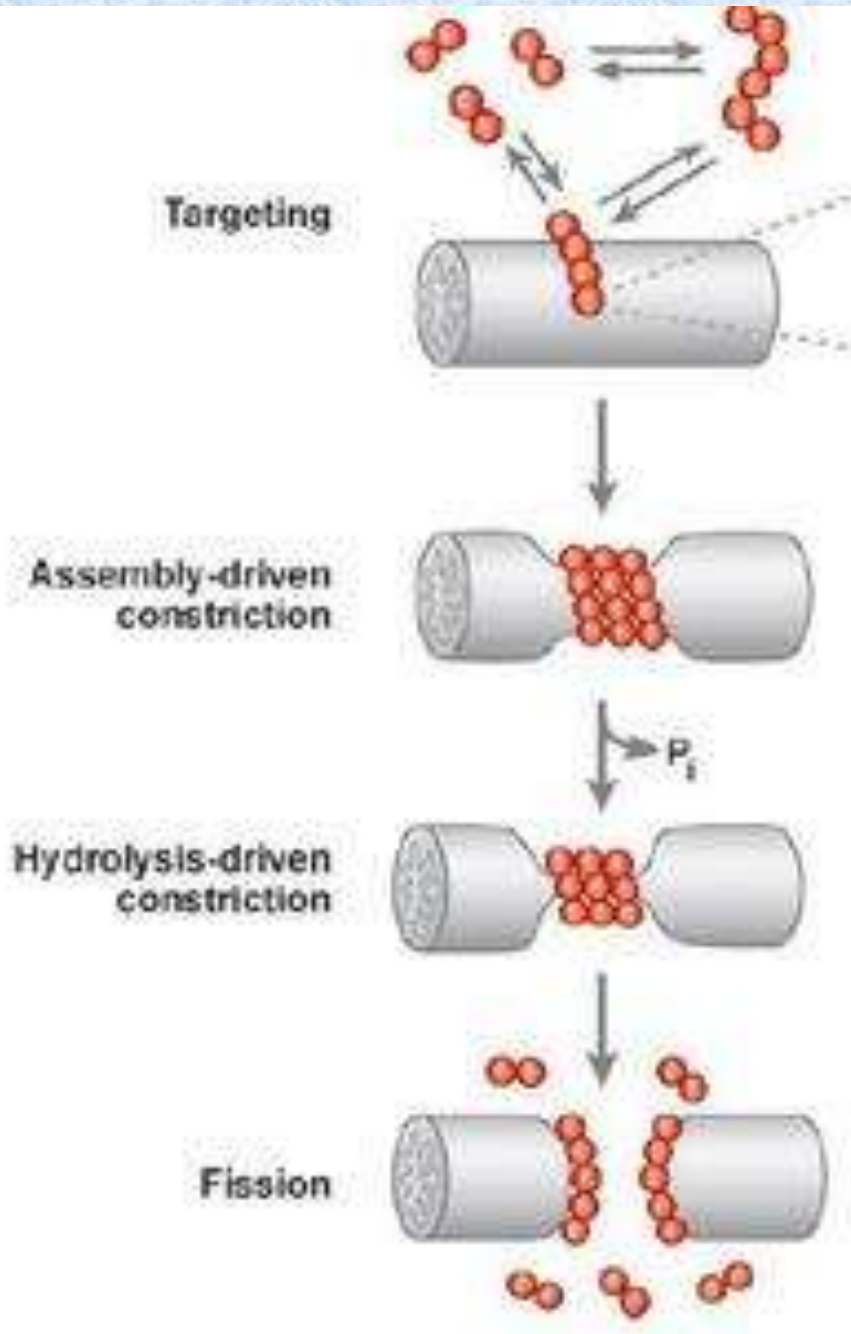
Divide Now? Yes or No.



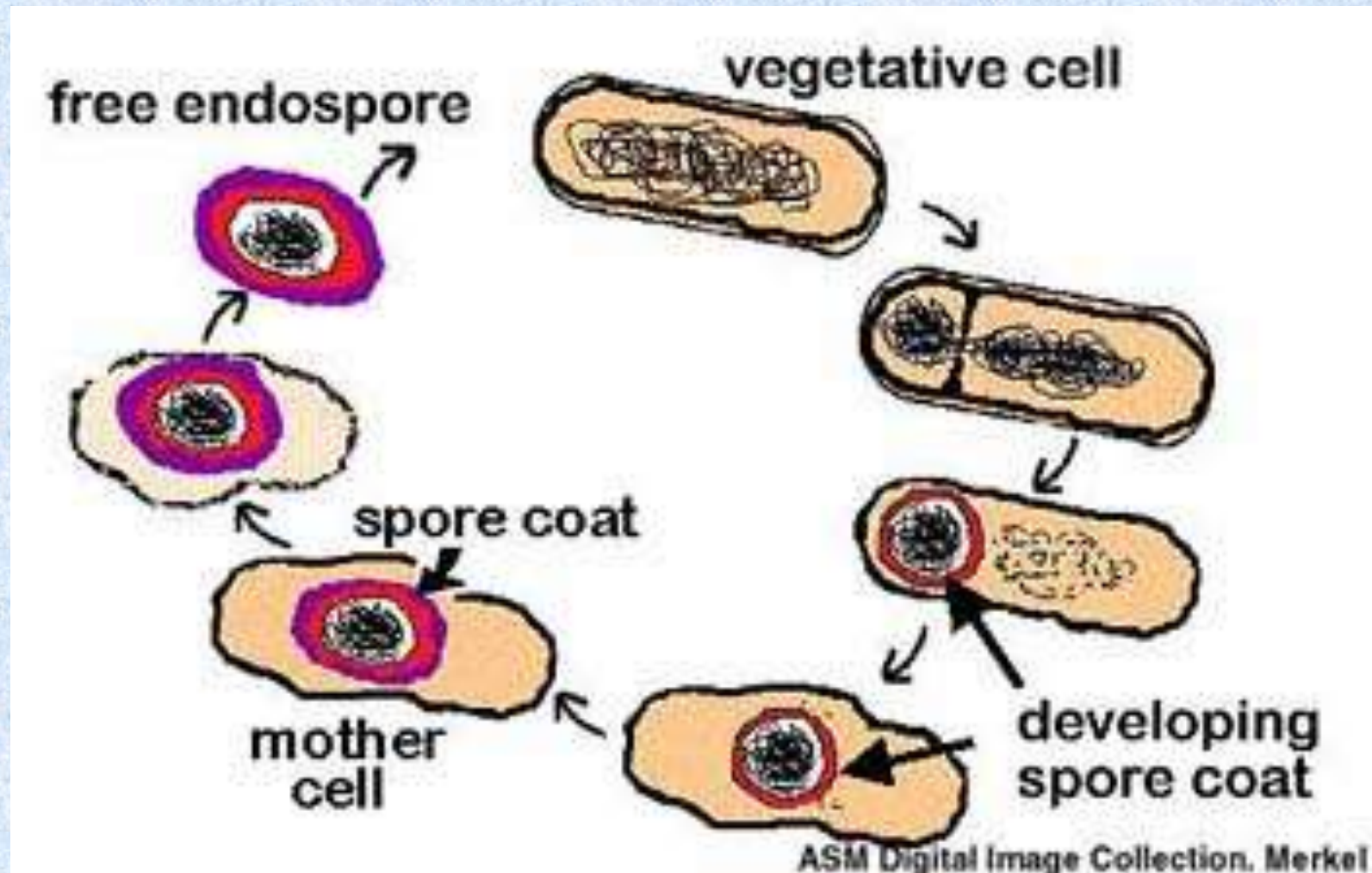
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Divide Now?
Yes or No.

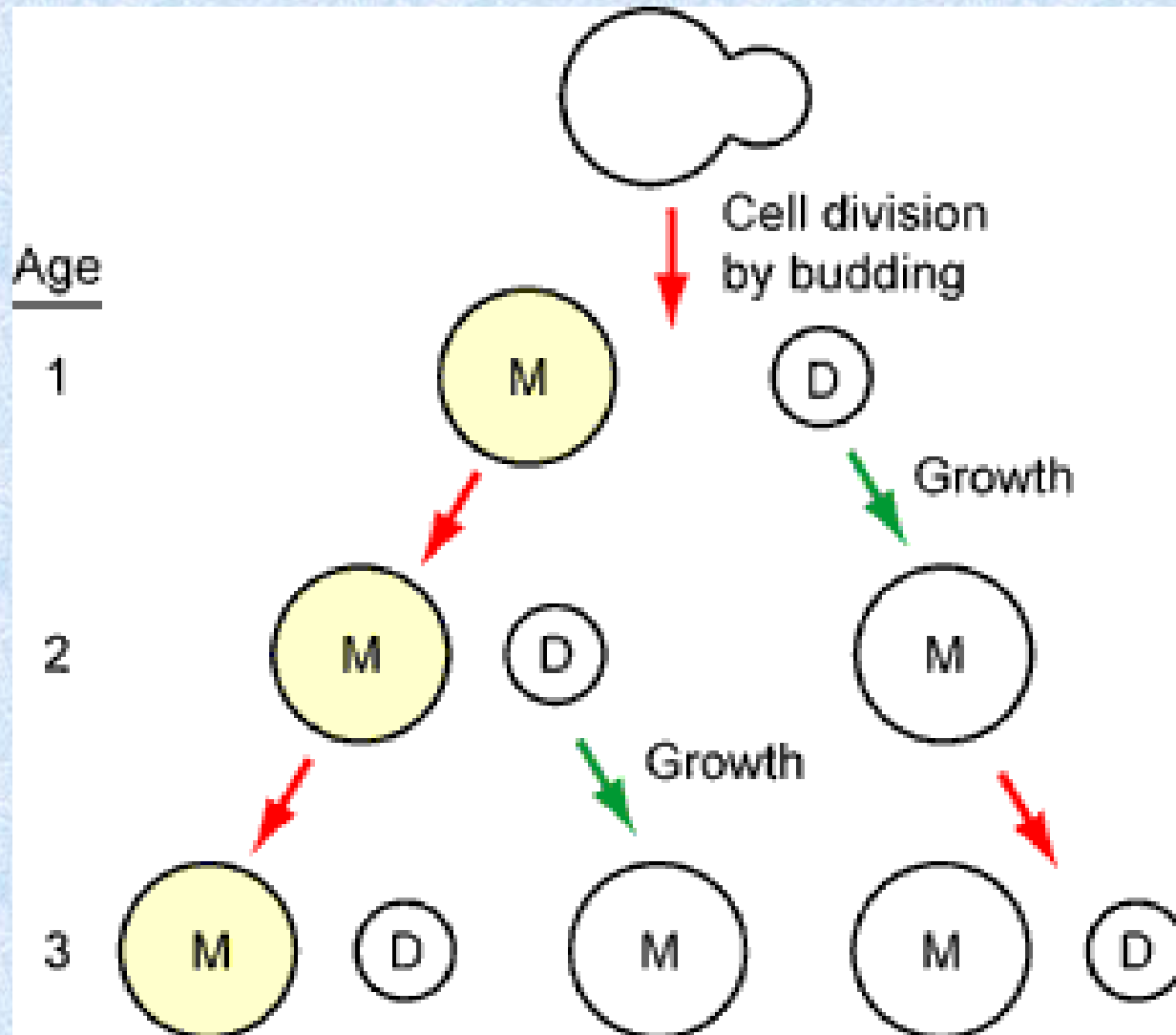
FtsZ = early
tubulin

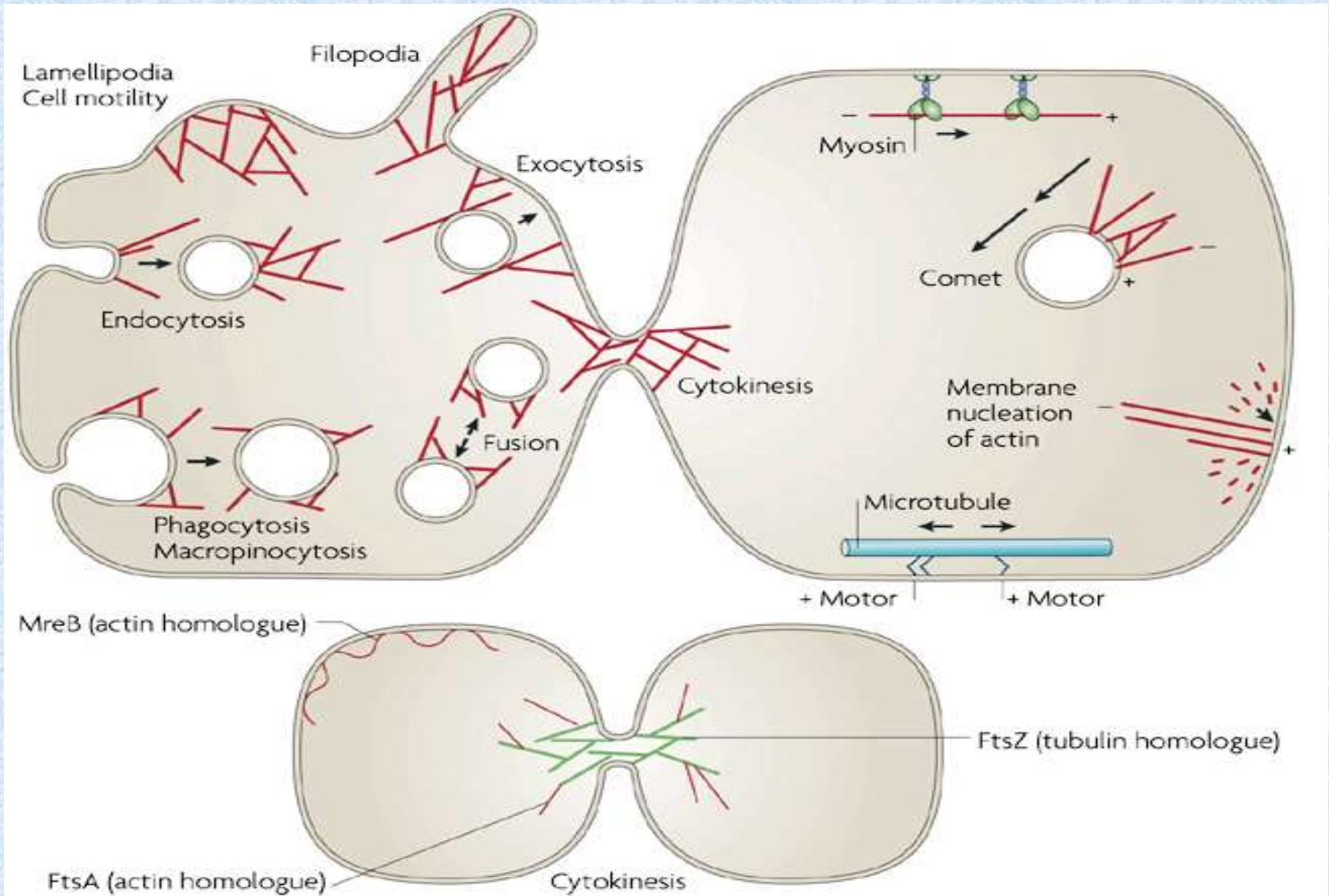


Divide and make a spore instead? Yes or No.

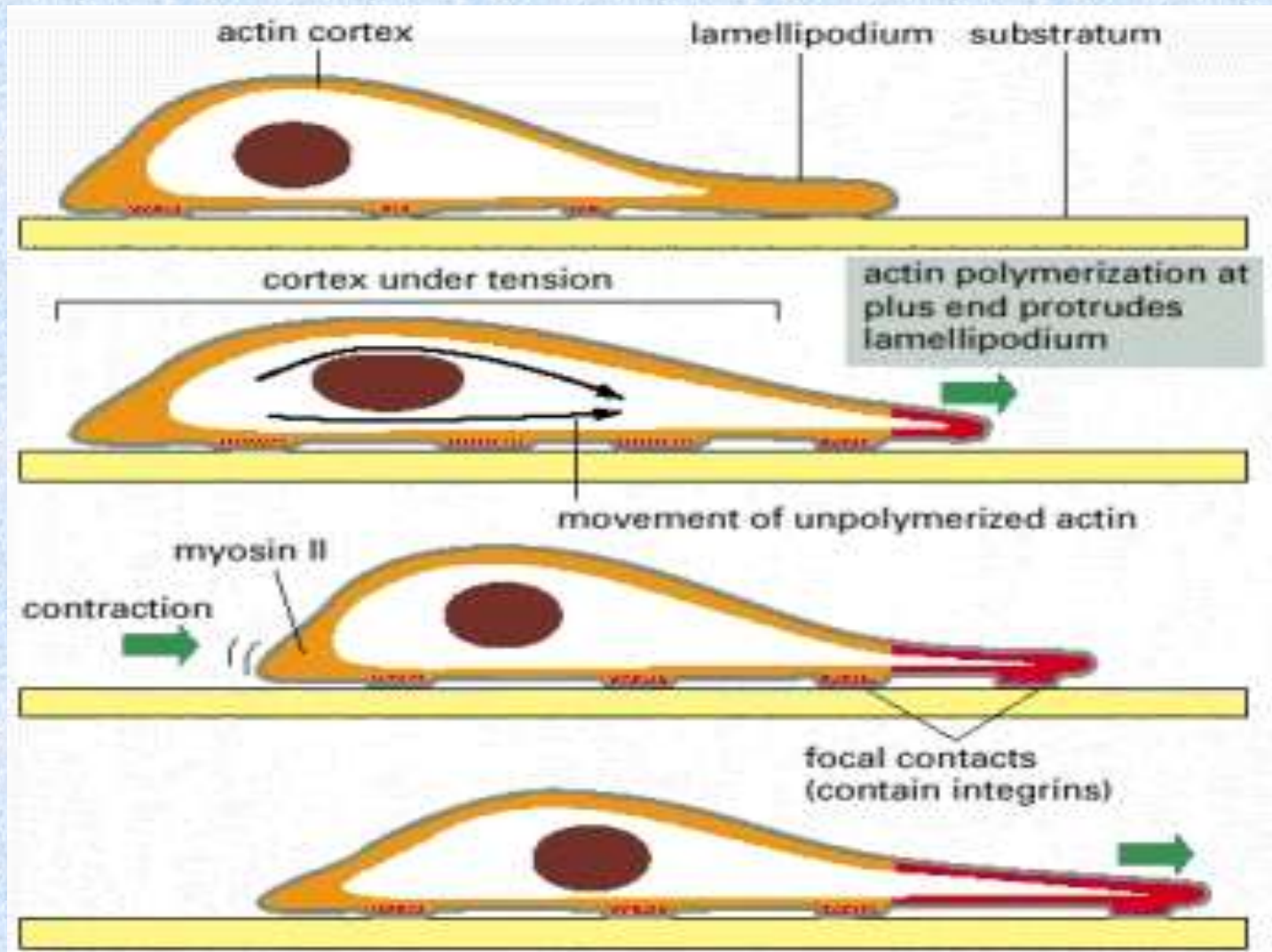


Divide and make two cells types

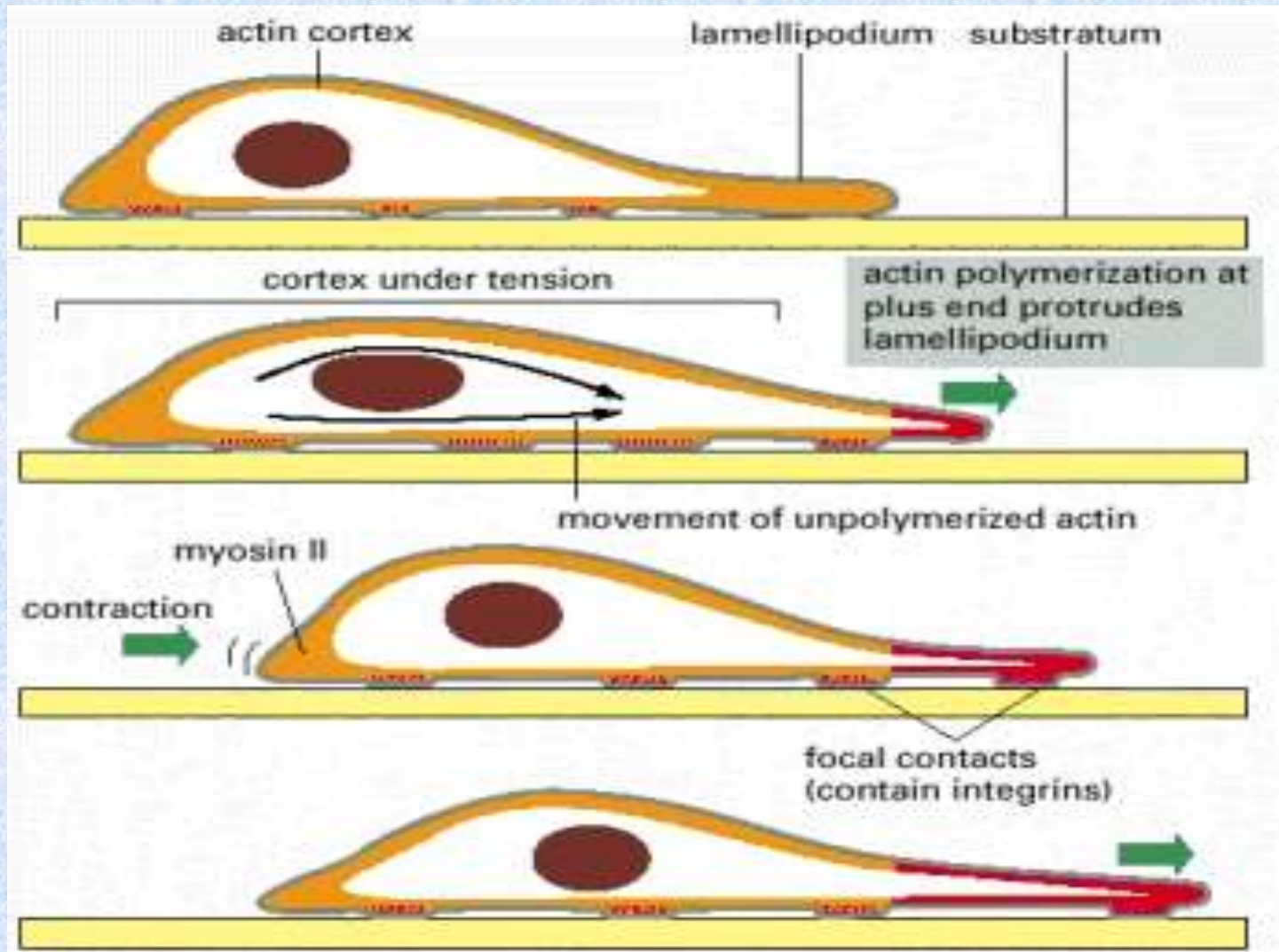




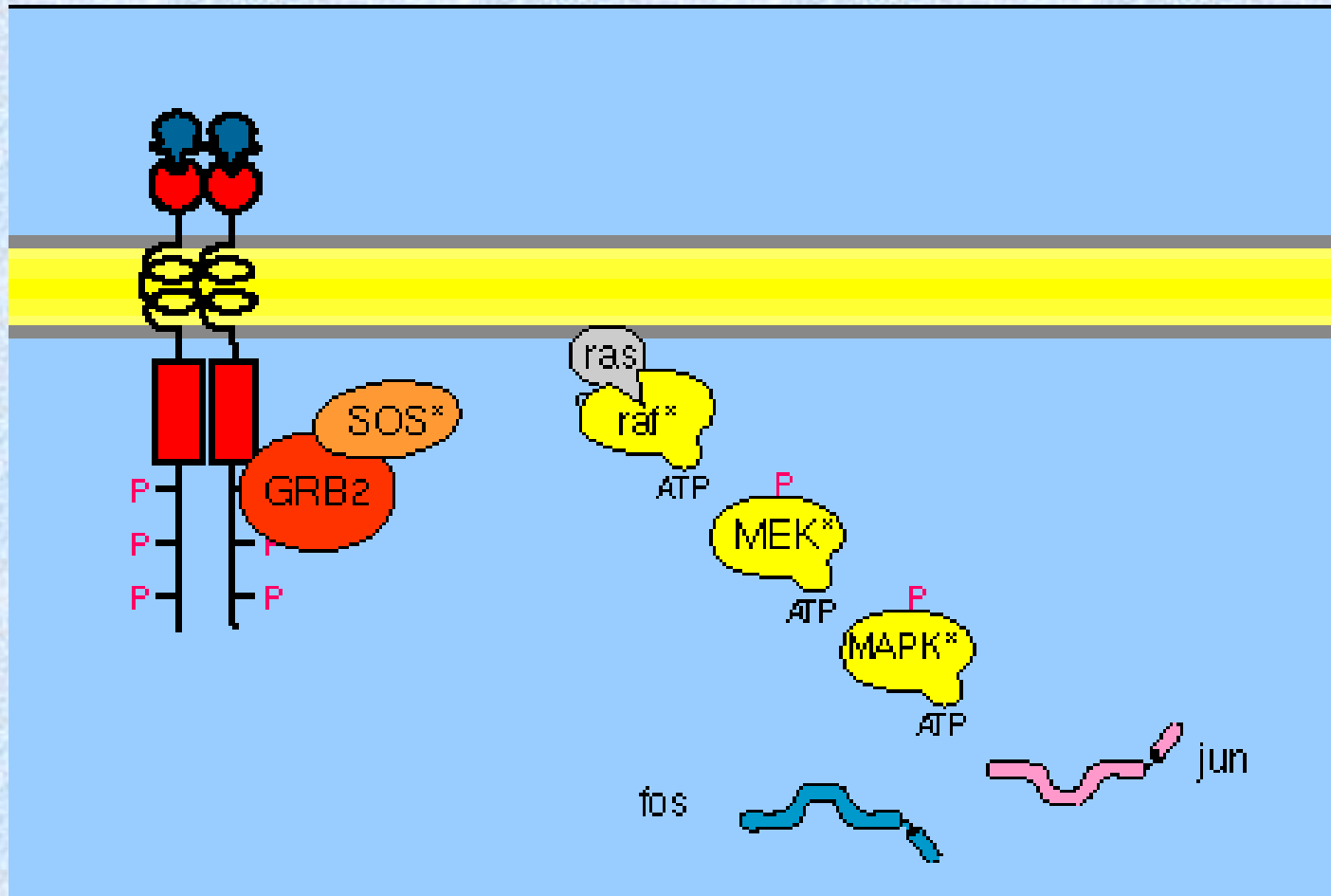
Where Did Actin Come From?

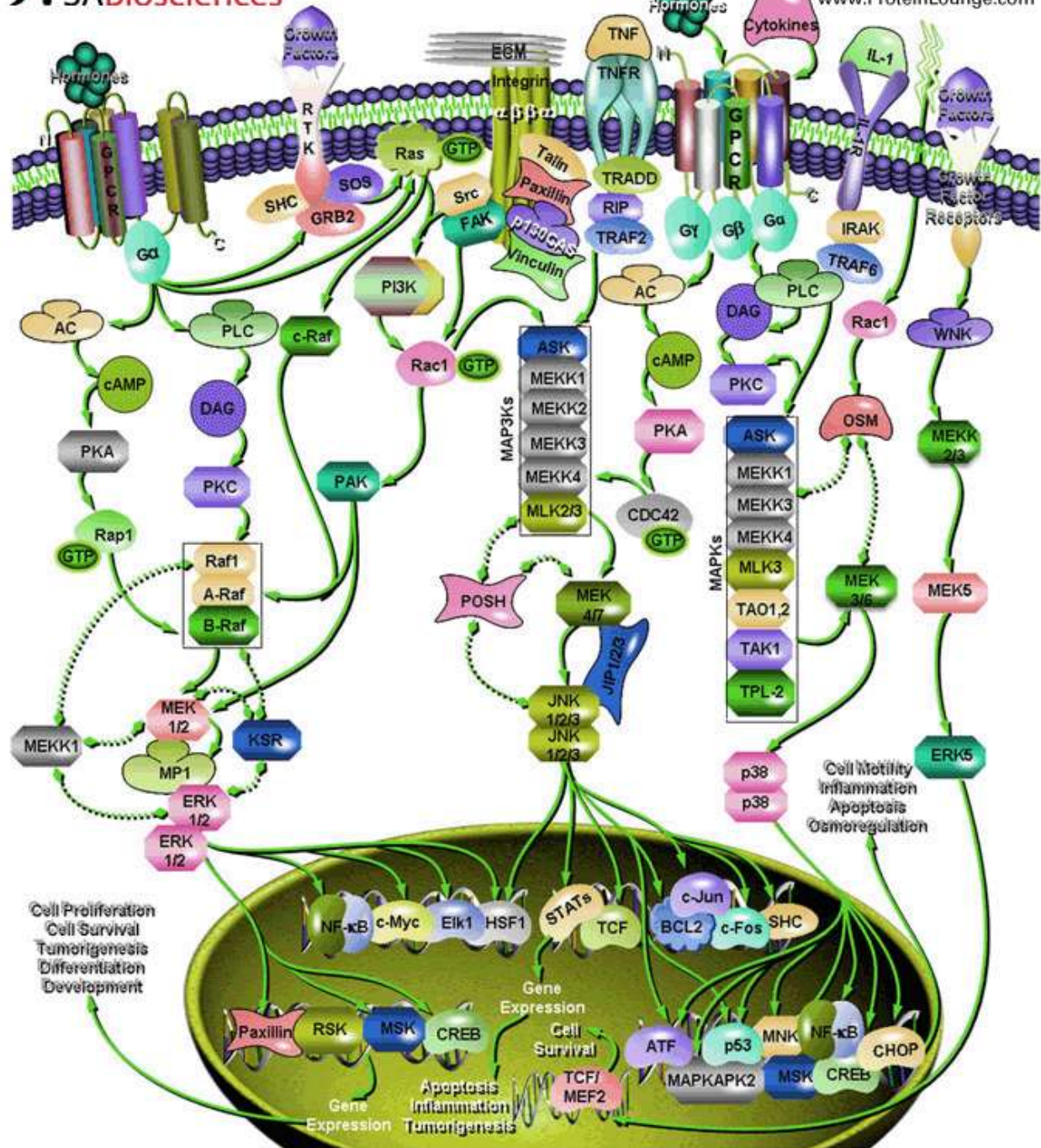


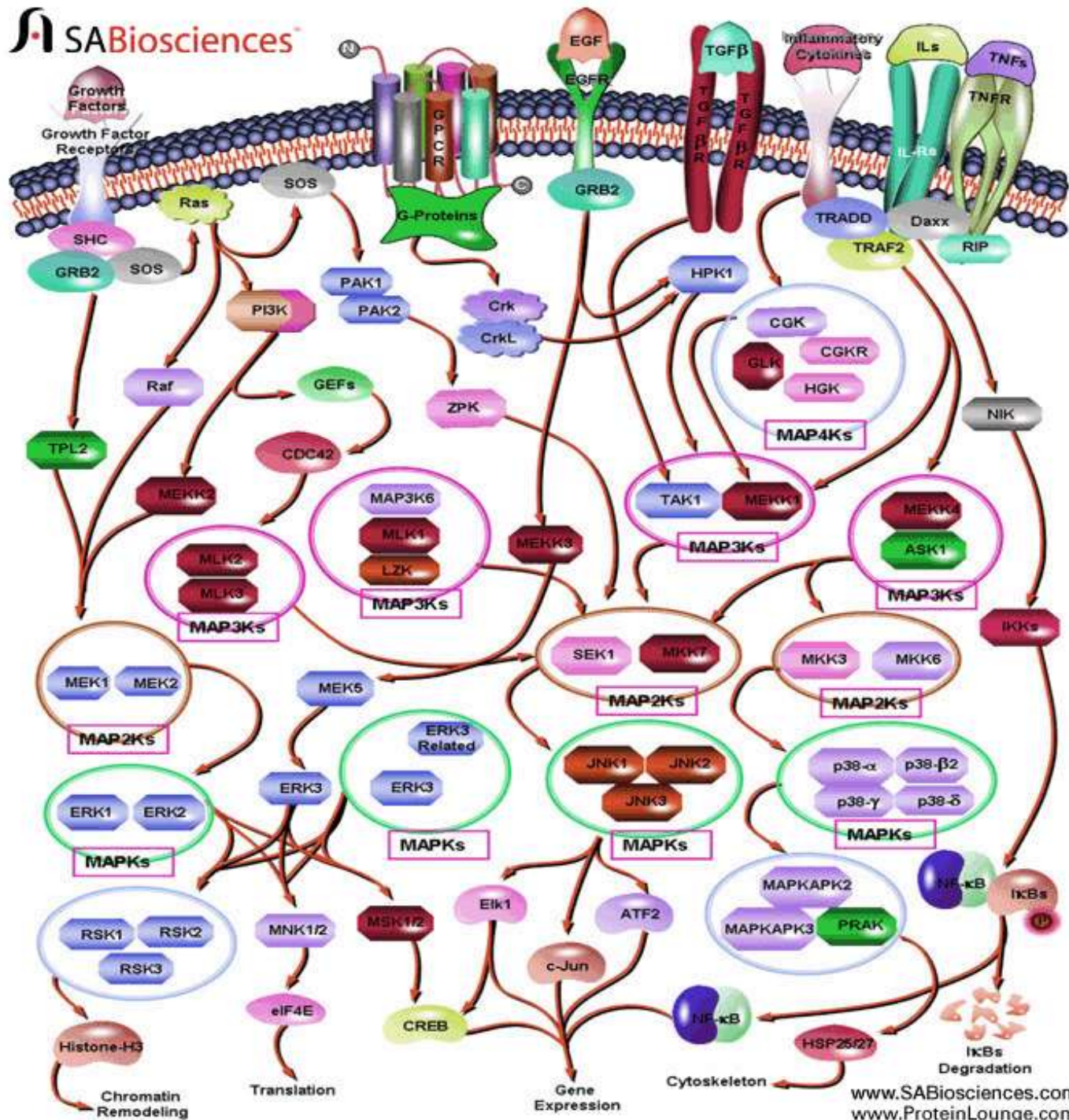
Move towards, Move Away?

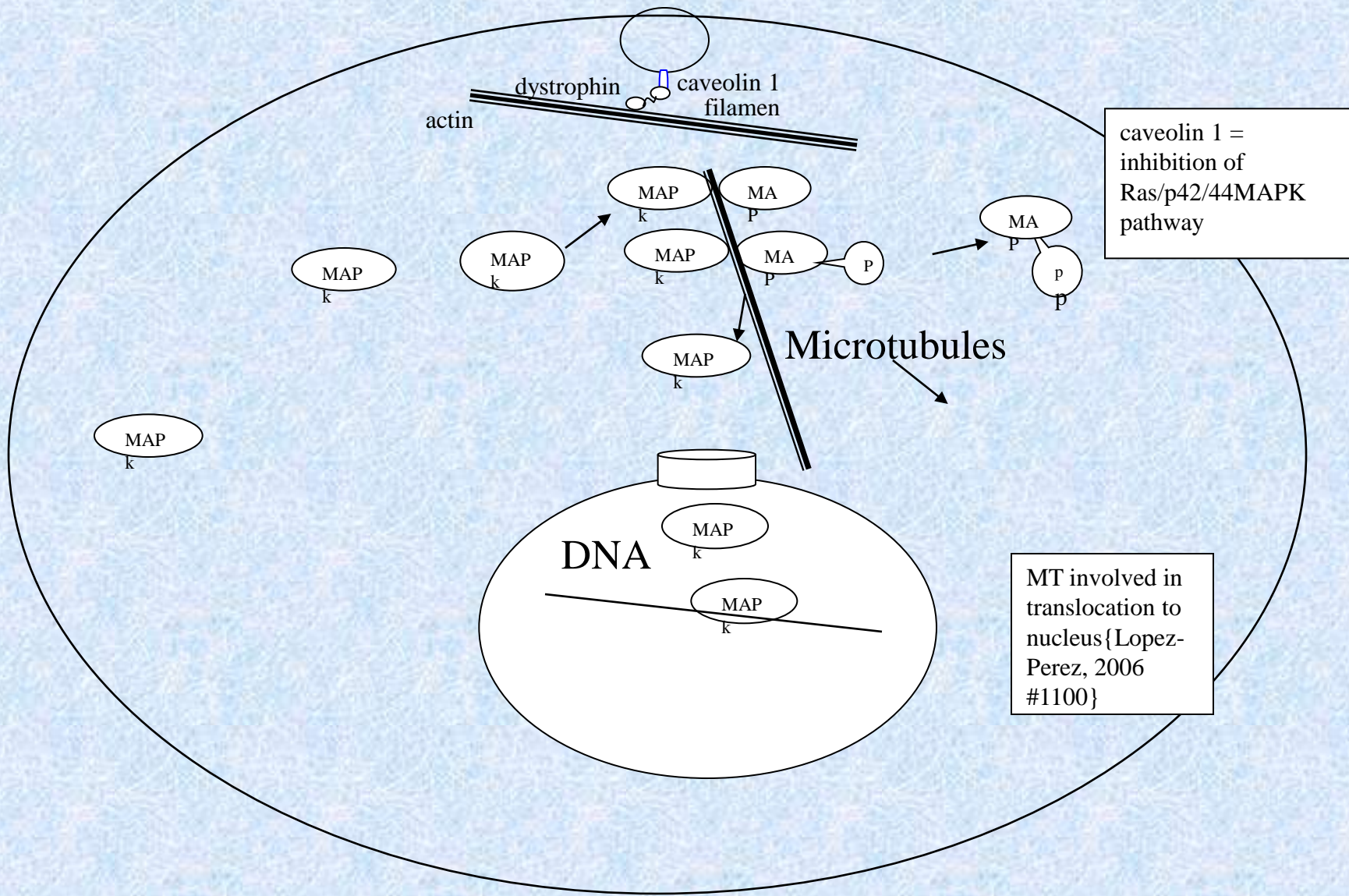


Actin Contraction or Microtubule Elongation?

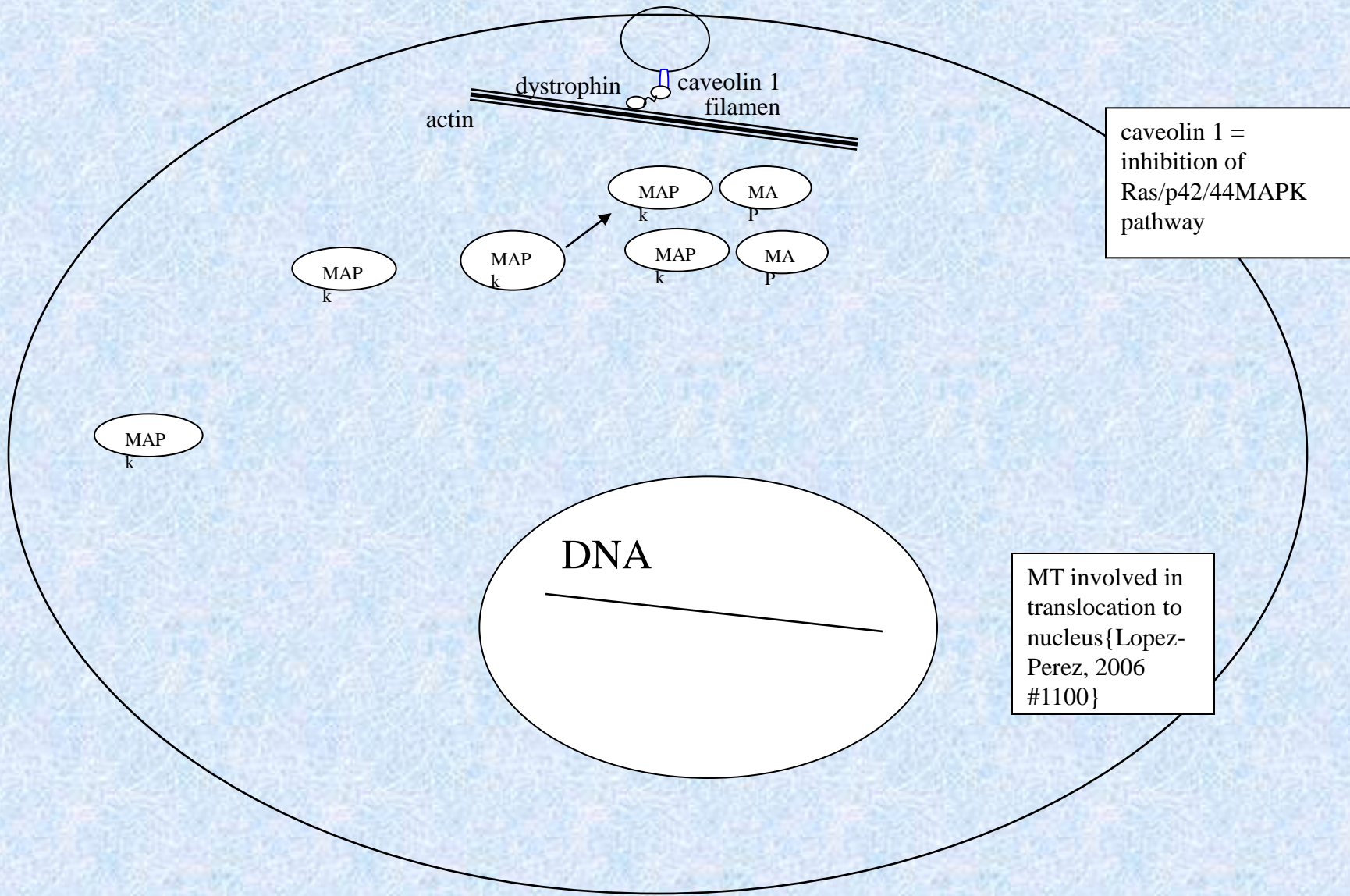








Microtubules present - Signal Sent



Microtubules absent - No Signal

All signal transduction systems, evolved from “move to, move away from” “divide, don’t divide”.

- For the complex multicellular organism, the environment to which the cell responds now includes the environment created by all the cells surrounding an individual cell and by that cell itself.
- The original and simple move away, move towards system, with cross talk, dependant on external stimulus has replaced the external stimuli with self-created and internalized stimuli.
- External stimuli cannot be controlled and regulated but self created internalized stimuli can be.

Conclusion

- Signal transduction = nuclear state splitting
- Cytoskeleton is a mechanically sensitive structure responding to both internal and external signals.
- All signal transduction (changes in gene expression) require aggregates of proteins moving on and/or off the cytoskeleton.
- All these systems evolved from simple components required for cell division and motility in the early single protocellular organism.
- Current understanding of biology which does not include the physical effects of cytoskeleton are inadequate

Take home message

- Follow the cytoskeleton, see what it is doing and everything else follows from that.