# Building a Comprehensive Search of Epigenetic Studies as Part of the 10 Key Characteristics of Carcinogens (KCCs):

# Experience from the Report on Carcinogens (RoC)

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## Background

 Key characteristics of carcinogens (KCCs) are used for Report on Carcinogens (RoC) hazard evaluations that use systemic review approach to unbiasedly search and organize mechanistic information.











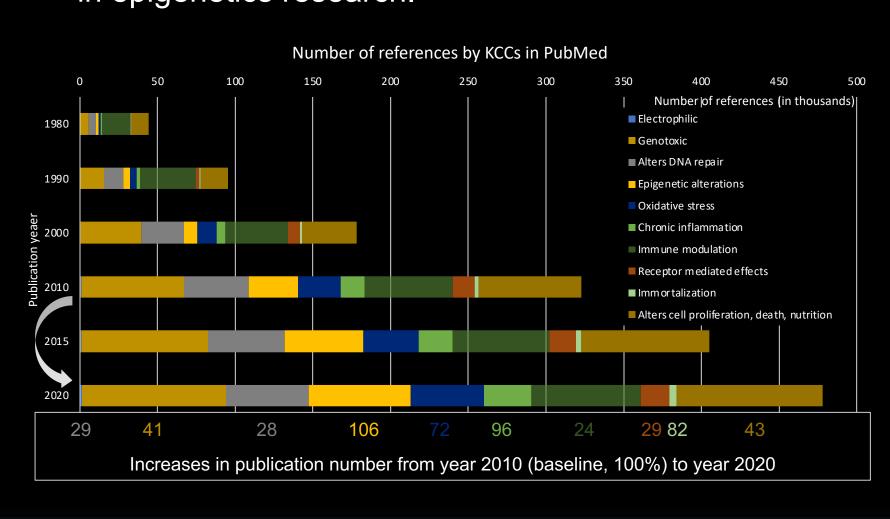






**Key characteristics of carcinogens** 

- Search and screen literature for systematic review
- We use pre-defined KCC-based search terms and substance terms for literature searches.
- All references are screened by title and abstract inclusion criteria, and those passing title and abstract screening are screened in full text.
- References meeting full text inclusion criteria are used in the RoC evaluation.
- In 2021, RoC updated epigenetic mechanism search terms (originally developed in 2016) due to progress in epigenetics research.



### Develop search strings

- Use published reviews of epigenetics methods and research areas to identify the 6 topic areas.
- Develop new search strings in each topic area based on the review articles.
- The topic areas with the largest number of new search terms added were histone modification,

chromatin remodeling and organization, and RNA nucleotide modification and methylation.

### Overall/general epigenetics

inactivation"[tiab] OR "Polycomb group proteins" OR "PcG silencing")

### Chromatin remodeling and organization (((Chromatin[mh] OR chromatin[tiab] OR

nucleosom\*[tiab]) AND (remodel\*[tiab])) OR modification" OR "open chromatin") OR (("Euchromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR ("Chromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR "Chromatin")) "Chromatin") AND relax\*) OR ("Heterochromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR Terms] OR "Chromatin") AND compact\*) OR (("Chromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR "Chromatin") AND condens\*) OR (("Heterochromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR "Heterochromatin") AND constitutive) OR (("Heterochromatin"[MeSH Terms] OR "Heterochromatin") AND facultative) OR (pericentromer\* AND DNA) OR (satellite AND DNA) OR (DNA and "transposable elements") OR (tandem AND repeats) OR (interspersed AND repeats))



methylation" OR ((DNA[mh] OR DNA[tiab]) AND (genome, human[mh] OR "genome wide association study"[mh] OR epigenesis, genetic[mh] OR epigenomics[mh] OR genome-wide\*[tiab] OR GWAS[tiab] OR genome-scale[tiab] OR Genome[tiab] OR "epigenome-wide"[tiab] OR EWAS[tiab] OR "whole genome"[tiab] OR Methylation-profil\*[tiab] OR methylation-pattern\*[tiab] OR Methylom\*[tiab] OR (("CpG islands"[mh

hypomethylat\*[tiab] OR demethylat\*[tiab] OR nonmethylat\*[tiab] OR remethylat\*[tiab] OF unmethylat\*[tiab] OR Methyltransferases[mh] OR "DNA" modification methylases"[mh] OR methylas\*[tiab] OR transferase\*[tiab] OR 5-methylcytosine[mh] OR "5methylcytosine"[tiab] OR 5-methyl-cytosine[tiab] OR 5mc[tiab] OR 5meC[tiab] OR "5 hydroxymethylcytosine"[tiab] OR 5hmc[tiab] OR Hydroxymethylat\*[tiab] OR 5-hydroxymethylcytosine[tiab] OR 5hydroxy-methylcytosine[tiab] OR 5-hydroxymethyl-cytosine[tiab] OR 5hmC[tiab] OR "5-Formylcytosine" OR "5-Carboxsylcytosine" OR

Hydroxymethylcytosine [tiab] OR Formylcytosine [tiab] OR Carboxylcytosine [tiab] OR methyladenosine OR methylcytosine OR methylguanosine OR ((nucleotide\*[tiab] OR cytosine[mh] OR cytosine\*[tiab] OR Alu[tiab] OR genes[tiab] OR genom\*[tiab]) AND (methylat\*[tiab]))))

### **DNA** methylation

"DNA Methylation"[mh] OR "DNA Methylation"[tiab] OR "Promoter

demethylas\*[tiab] OR methyltransferase\*[tiab] OR methyl-Methyladenine [tiab] OR Methylcytosine [tiab] OR

# Test search strings

Compare old and new search terms: to see if the new search terms found articles relevant to epigenetic mechanisms that were not found the old search terms.

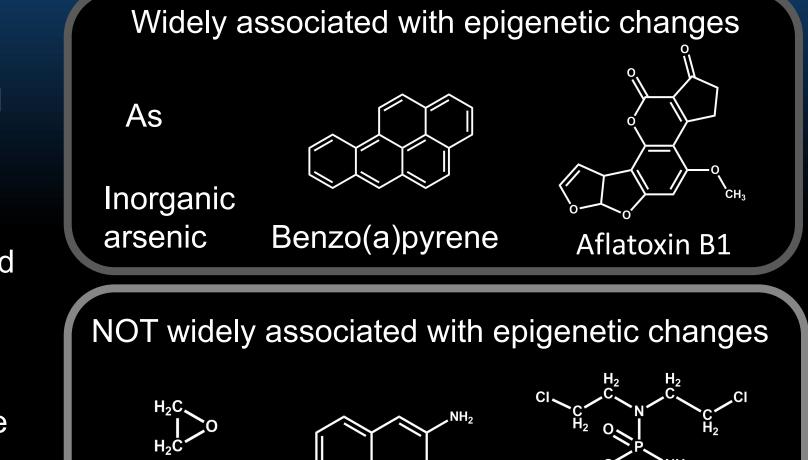
### Method:

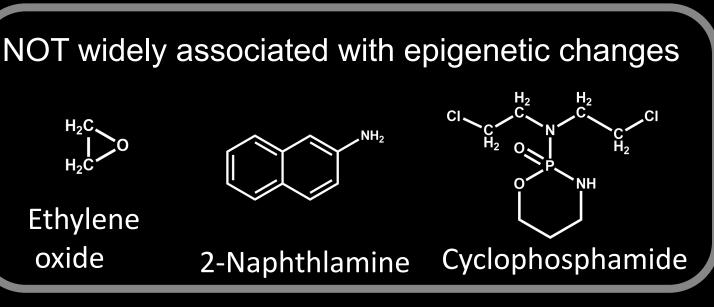
- 1. Literature search on six chemical carcinogens with both the old and new search terms.
- 2. Title and abstract screening on up to 50 references per carcinogen and topic.
- 3. Full text screening on any reference identified only through the new search terms to determine the utility of the reference.

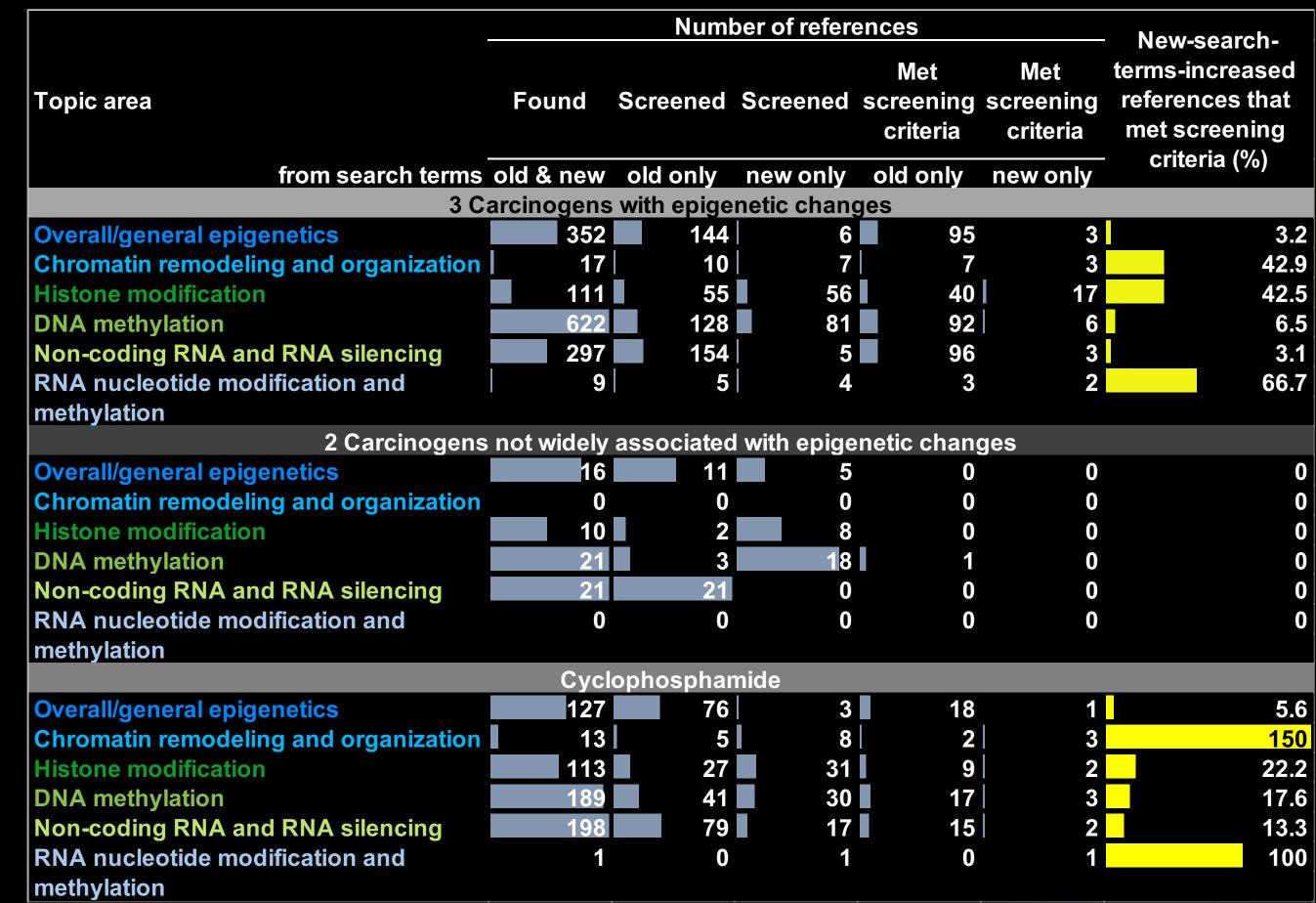
### Results;

1. For each epigenetic carcinogen, < 20 to > 600 references were found per topic, and 47%-65% of the references per topic met title abstract screening criteria.

- New search terms for DNA methylation, non-coding RNA and RNA silencing, and RNA nucleotide modification and methylation contributed 43%-67% increases in references passing title abstract screening per topic.
- 71% of references identified through the new search terms and passing title abstract screening met full-text inclusion criteria, showing updated search terms helped identify additional relevant, and likely informative, references.
- 2. Carcinogens not widely associated with epigenetic changes (except cyclophosphamide), as expected, found few new references.







3. For cyclophosphamide, however, higher than expected number of references (100–200 per topic area) were found for DNA methylation, non-coding RNA and RNA silencing, and RNA nucleotide modification and methylation, although the percentage of references meeting title and abstract screening criteria (<30%) was much lower than those for the three epigenetic carcinogens (47%–65%).

# Conclusion

- The large increase in epigenetic references that met inclusion criteria indicates the new search terms are effective at identifying studies on epigenetic mechanisms.
- These updated epigenetic search terms will be used for all new RoC evaluations.

## **RNA** nucleotide modification and methylation

((RNA[mh] OR RNA[tiab]) AND (Queuosine OR Pseudouridine OR Methyladenosine OR Methylcytidine OR Methylguanosine OR Methylinosine OR Methyluridine OR Ribosyladenosine OR Ribosylguanosine OR Formyladenosine OR Formylcytidine OR methylcytosine OR cap methylation OR uridylation OR inosine editing))

# Non-coding RNA and RNA silencing

To download the complete

epigenetic changes search

strings (including new terms

on black background and old

terms on blue background)

("Non-coding RNA"[tiab] OR ncRNA\*[tiab] OR "RNA Interference" [mh] OR "Guide RNA" OR "gRNA" OR "Ribonuclease P" OR "Rnase P" OR "Y RNA" OR "Telomerase RNA Component" OR "TERC" OR "Spliced Leader RNA" OR "SL RNA" OR IncRNA\*[tiab] OR "IncRNA" OR "RNA, long noncoding" [MeSH] OR "short interfering RNA"[tiab] OR siRNA\*[tiab] OR "small interfering RNA"[tiab] OR "RNA. Small Interfering" [mh] OR "RNA interference"[mh] OR "small silencing RNA"[tiab] OR "small inhibitory"[tiab] OR "small interfering"[mh] OR "small RNA" OR "smallRNA" OR "small inhibitory RNA\*"[tiab] OR miRNA\*[tiab] OR microRNA\*[tiab] OR "micro RNA"[tiab] OR "micro RNAs"[tiab] OR piRNA\*[tiab] OR PiwiRNA\* OR "piwi-interacting RNA"[tiab] OR "snRNA" OR "small nuclear RNA" OR "spliceosomal RNA" OR "snoRNA" OR "small nucleolar RNA" OR "SmY RNA" OR "Small-Cajalbody-specific RNA" OR "scaRNA" OR "RNA editing" OR "RNA splicing" OR "intron retention")