

The Bystander Effect in Hepatitis C Virus Infection: Cellular Interactions Between Infected Cells and Uninfected Cells

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xvii
Abstract	xviii
Declaration	xx
Acknowledgements	xxi
Presentations, Publications and Awards	xxii
Abbreviations used	xxiv
Materials Providers	xxx
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Hepatitis C virus	1
1.1.1 <i>Epidemiology</i>	1
1.1.2 <i>Natural history of HCV infection</i>	2
1.1.3 <i>Treatment</i>	3
1.1.4 <i>The HCV genome</i>	5
1.1.5 <i>HCV genotypes</i>	6
1.1.6 <i>HCV proteins</i>	7
1.1.7 <i>The HCV life cycle</i>	10
1.1.8 <i>HCV model systems</i>	14

1.2 Disease progression in HCV infection.....	17
1.2.1 Background.....	17
1.2.2 Pathogenesis and pathophysiology of inflammation in HCV infection ..	17
1.2.3 Pathogenesis and pathophysiology of fibrosis in HCV infection.....	22
1.3 Hepatic HCV burden <i>in vivo</i>	24
1.4 The ‘bystander’ effect.....	25
1.5 Hypothesis and Aims	27
Chapter 2.....	28
Materials and Methods	28
2.1 Molecular biology techniques.....	28
2.1.1 Synthetic oligonucleotides	28
2.1.2 Plasmids	29
2.1.3 Bacterial transformation.....	30
2.1.4 Plasmid DNA preparation	31
2.1.5 Restriction endonuclease digestion.....	31
2.1.6 Agarose gel electrophoresis.....	32
2.1.7 Gel extraction of DNA	32
2.1.8 Dephosphorylation with Antarctic Phosphatase	33
2.1.9 Oligonucleotide annealing.....	33
2.1.10 DNA ligation.....	34
2.1.11 DNA sequencing.....	34
2.1.12 RNA extraction.....	34
2.1.13 Estimation of DNA and RNA concentrations.....	35

2.1.14 cDNA preparation.....	35
2.1.15 Polymerase Chain Reaction.....	36
2.1.16 PCR purification	36
2.1.17 Real-Time Quantitative RT-PCR	37
2.1.18 PCR Array.....	37
2.1.19 Microarray.....	38
2.2 Cell culture techniques.....	38
2.2.1 Cell lines	38
2.2.2 Stable cell lines generated and used in this thesis.....	40
2.2.3 Cell culture medium.....	40
2.2.4 Maintenance of cell lines	41
2.2.5 Trypan blue exclusion.....	42
2.2.6 Cryopreservation of cells.....	42
2.2.7 Resuscitation of frozen cells.....	43
2.2.8 Transfection	43
2.2.9 Lentivirus production.....	44
2.2.10 Lentivirus infection	44
2.2.11 Retrovirus production	45
2.2.12 Retrovirus infection.....	46
2.2.13 Treatment of cells with dsRNA.....	46
2.2.14 Inhibition of exosomes	47
2.2.15 Production of conditioned media.....	47
2.2.16 Fractionation of conditioned media.....	47
2.2.17 Co-culture of cell lines.....	48

2.3 Cell-culture propagated HCV (HCVcc).....	48
2.3.1 Preparation of HCV RNA	48
2.3.2 HCV RNA transfection and preparation of viral stocks	49
2.3.3 Concentration of HCV (PEG precipitation)	49
2.3.4 Amplification of viral stocks	50
2.3.5 Titration of infectious HCV.....	50
2.3.6 General infection protocol.....	51
2.4 Fluorescence microscopy techniques.....	51
2.4.1 Cell fixation.....	51
2.4.2 Antigen labeling	52
2.4.3 Light fluorescence microscopy	54
2.4.4 Confocal fluorescence microscopy	54
2.5 Flow cytometry techniques	54
2.5.1 Labeling of cell surface antigens	54
2.5.2 Flow Cytometric Analysis	55
2.5.3 Fluorescence-activated Cell Sorting.....	55
2.6 Magnetic bead cell separation.....	56
2.7 Protein chemistry techniques	57
2.7.1 Extraction of cellular protein.....	57
2.7.2 SDS-PAGE	58
2.7.3 Western blotting	58
2.7.4 Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) Array.....	60
2.8 Luciferase assays	60
2.9 Data analysis	61

Chapter 3.....	62
An <i>in vitro</i> model system to examine the bystander effect in HCV infection.....	62
3.1 Introduction.....	62
3.2 Generation of stable cell lines refractory to HCV infection	63
3.2.1 <i>Generation of stable Claudin-1 and CD81 knockdown cell lines.....</i>	<i>64</i>
3.2.2 <i>Fluorescence-activated cell sorting of knockdown cell lines</i>	<i>66</i>
3.3 Huh-7 CD81 knockdown cell lines are refractory to HCV infection	67
3.4 Conditioned media from HCV-infected Huh-7 cells has minimal impact on the transcriptome of uninfected Huh-7 cells.....	68
3.5 Discussion	70
Chapter 4.....	78
The Toll-like receptor 3 response to HCV infection in Huh-7 cells.....	78
4.1 Introduction.....	78
4.2 Generation of a TLR3-positive Huh-7 cell line	79
4.3 Reintroduction of TLR3 into Huh-7 cells restores dsRNA-induced cytokine and chemokine expression	80
4.4 Reintroduction of TLR3 into Huh-7s restores HCVcc-induced cytokine and chemokine expression.....	82
4.5 Multiple genes are upregulated in Huh-7+TLR3 cells in response to dsRNA and HCVcc.....	84
4.5.1 <i>Pathway-focused Real-time PCR Array.....</i>	<i>84</i>
4.5.2 <i>Microarray.....</i>	<i>87</i>

4.6 Discussion	90
Chapter 5.....	96
The bystander effects mediated by soluble factors	96
5.1 Introduction.....	96
5.2 Conditioned media from HCV-infected cells does not affect the transcriptome of bystander hepatocytes.....	97
5.3 Conditioned media from HCV-infected cells decreases HCV-replication in sub-genomic replicon-harboursing Huh-7 cells	98
5.3.1 <i>Identification of antiviral mediators secreted from Huh-7+TLR3 cells</i>	100
5.4 Conditioned media from HCV-infected cells increases expression of pro- fibrogenic markers in hepatic stellate cells.....	102
5.5 Conditioned media from bystander cells enhances chemokine expression in HCV-infected cells.....	103
5.5.1 <i>Identification of the active factor secreted from LX2 and Huh-7+TLR3 cells</i>	105
5.6 Discussion	107
Chapter 6.....	115
The bystander effects mediated by cell-to-cell contact	115
6.1 Introduction.....	115
6.2 Generation of a stable cell line for use in a cell separation system	116
6.2.1 <i>Generation of stable cell lines expressing cell surface mCherry</i>	117

6.2.2 Utilization of the magnetic bead system in ‘bystander effect’ experiments	118
6.3 Co-culture and fluorescence-activated cell sorting of HCV-infected and uninfected bystander cells.....	118
6.4 Co-culture with HCV-infected cells has a minor effect on the transcriptome of bystander hepatocytes.....	120
6.5 HCV replication is decreased in hepatocytes co-cultured with TLR3-positive hepatocytes stimulated by dsRNA or infected by HCV	121
6.6 Discussion.....	122
Chapter 7.....	129
Conclusions and Future Directions	129
Appendix I	136
Plasmids	136
Appendix II.....	142
Infectious HCV Constructs	142
Appendix III	143
General Solutions and Buffers	143
Appendix IV	146
Short hairpin RNA (shRNA) sequences	146
Appendix V	147
Principal component analysis	147

Appendix VI	152
Human Antiviral Response PCR Array	152
Appendix VII.....	154
Affymetrix Microarray – Δ TIR vs TLR3 – Poly I:C	154
Appendix VIII	164
Affymetrix Microarray – Δ TIR vs TLR3 – HCV Jc1.....	164
Appendix IX	166
Affymetrix Microarray – Huh-7+CD81 knockdown hepatocytes following co- culture with HCV-infected Huh-7+TLR3.....	166
References.....	169

List of Figures

Figure Number		Follows page:
Chapter 1		
Figure 1.1	Global prevalence of HCV infection	1
Figure 1.2	Natural history of HCV infection	3
Figure 1.3	Progression of HCV induced liver disease	3
Figure 1.4	HCV genome and polyprotein	5
Figure 1.5	Global HCV genotype distribution	6
Figure 1.6	Life cycle of HCV	10
Figure 1.7	HCV entry	10
Figure 1.8	HCV model systems	15
Figure 1.9	Innate immune signalling in HCV infection	18
Figure 1.10	(a) Stages of fibrosis (b) The stellate cell in hepatic fibrosis	22
Figure 1.11	The bystander effect in HCV infection	27

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1	Claudin-1 expression by Western blot in Huh-7 Claudin-1 knockdown cell lines	64
Figure 3.2	Real time RT-PCR demonstrates Claudin-1 knockdown in Huh-7 Claudin-1 knockdown cell lines	65
Figure 3.3	Claudin-1 expression demonstrated by immunofluorescence	65
Figure 3.4	Repeat qRT-PCR analysis of Claudin-1 knockdown in the Huh-7 + 'H-4' Claudin-1 shRNA cell line	65
Figure 3.5	Real time RT-PCR demonstrates CD81 knockdown in Huh-7 CD81 knockdown cell lines	65
Figure 3.6	Flow cytometry demonstrates reduction in CD81 expression in Huh-7 CD81 knockdown cell lines	66
Figure 3.7	CD81 expression demonstrated by immunofluorescence	66
Figure 3.8	Entry factor knockdown post-fluorescence-activated cell sorting	67
Figure 3.9	Huh-7 CD81 knockdown cell lines are refractory to HCV Jc1 infection	67
Figure 3.10	Infection rate in Huh-7 cells infected with HCV Jc1 for 72 hours	68

Figure 3.11	Experimental design of conditioned media studies to determine the effect of HCV-infected Huh-7 cells on bystander Huh-7 cells	68
Figure 3.12	Bioanalyser assessment of RNA quality	68
Figure 3.13	Microarray analysis of Huh-7 cells exposed to conditioned media from Nneo-C5B cells for 72 hours	69
 Chapter 4		
Figure 4.1	Schematic diagram showing TLR3 and the TLR3 mutant Δ TIR	79
Figure 4.2	TLR3 and Δ TIR expression in Huh-7 cells by immunofluorescence	80
Figure 4.3	Detection of TLR3 in Huh-7+TLR3 and Huh-7+ Δ TIR cell lines by western blot	80
Figure 4.4	Expression of TLR3 in Huh-7 cells restores cytokine and chemokine production in response to stimulation by dsRNA	81
Figure 4.5	Immunofluorescence demonstrates high MOI is required to achieve a robust HCV Jc1 infection of Huh-7+TLR3 cells	82
Figure 4.6	Expression of TLR3 in Huh-7 cells restores cytokine and chemokine production in response to infection with HCV Jc1	83

Figure 4.7	Human Antiviral Response PCR Array	85
Figure 4.8	Microarray analysis reveals multiple differentially expressed genes in TLR3-expressing Huh-7 cells in response to stimulation with dsRNA	88
Figure 4.9	Microarray analysis reveals multiple differentially expressed genes in TLR3-expressing Huh-7 cells in response to infection with HCV Jc1	88
Chapter 5		
Figure 5.1	Characteristics of conditioned media used to stimulate Huh-7+CD81 knockdown cells or PH5CH8 cells	97
Figure 5.2	Conditioned media from HCV-infected Huh-7+TLR3 cells decreases viral replication in SGR-JFH1-RLuc cells	99
Figure 5.3	The decrease in viral replication in SGR-JFH1-RLuc cells in response to conditioned media from HCV-infected Huh-7+TLR3 cells is at least partially TLR3-dependent	99
Figure 5.4	Conditioned media from dsRNA-treated Huh-7+TLR3 cells decreases viral replication in SGR-JFH1-RLuc cells	99
Figure 5.5	Conditioned media from dsRNA-treated Huh-7+TLR3 cells decreases viral replication in HCV Jc1-infected Huh-7.5 cells	100

Figure 5.6	The factors responsible for the anti-viral effect of conditioned media from stimulated TLR3 expressing cells are greater than 50 kDa	100
Figure 5.7	Exosomes mediate the anti-viral effect of conditioned media from stimulated TLR3 expressing cells	102
Figure 5.8	Conditioned media from HCV Jc1-infected Huh-7 + TLR3 cells induces expression of the pro-fibrogenic marker COL1a1 in primary rat hepatic stellate cells	103
Figure 5.9	Conditioned media from HCV Jc1-infected Huh-7 + TLR3 cells induces expression of the pro-fibrogenic marker TIMP-1 in primary rat hepatic stellate cells	103
Figure 5.10	Conditioned media from HCV Jc1-infected Huh-7 + TLR3 cells downregulates expression of the pro-fibrogenic marker TGF- β in primary rat hepatic stellate cells	103
Figure 5.11	Conditioned media from LX2 cells enhances MIP1 β expression in HCV-infected Huh-7.5 cells	104
Figure 5.12	Conditioned media from Huh-7+TLR3 cells enhances MIP1 β expression in HCV-infected Huh-7.5 cells to a greater degree than conditioned media from LX2 cells	105
Figure 5.13	Enhanced upregulation of MIP1 β in HCV-infected Huh-7.5 cells is dependent on functional TLR3 expression in bystander cells	105

Figure 5.14	The mediator of upregulation of MIP1 β in HCV-infected Huh-7.5 cells is enriched in the 50 kDa trap fraction of conditioned media from LX2 cells	106
Figure 5.15	Upregulation of MIP1 β in HCV-infected Huh-7.5 cells is not significantly altered by fractionation of media from Huh-7+TLR3 cells	106
Figure 5.16	Summary of the interactions between HCV-infected hepatocytes and bystander cells as mediated by soluble factors	114
 Chapter 6		
Figure 6.1	Fluorescence microscopy demonstrates stable mCherry expression in Huh-7+CD81 knockdown cells, in a cell-surface distribution	117
Figure 6.2	Confocal microscopy demonstrates cell-surface expression of mCherry	117
Figure 6.3	Fluorescence microscopy demonstrates mCherry-positive Huh-7+CD81 knockdown cells in co-culture with Huh-7+TLR3 cells infected with HCV Jc1	117
Figure 6.4	Fluorescence microscopy performed after magnetic bead sorting shows expression of mCherry by captured cells	117
Figure 6.5	Flow cytometry demonstrates high purity of captured cells post-magnetic bead sorting	118

Figure 6.6	HCV-infection rate by immunofluorescence microscopy prior to cell sorting	118
Figure 6.7	Immunofluorescence microscopy and qRT-PCR post-sorting	119
Figure 6.8	SOCS3 is upregulated in bystander hepatocytes co-cultured with HCV-infected Huh-7+TLR3 cells	121
Figure 6.9	dsRNA-treatment decreases viral replication in SGR-JFH1-RLuc cells co-cultured with Huh-7+TLR3 cells	122
Figure 6.10	Viral replication is decreased in SGR-JFH1-RLuc cells co-cultured with Huh-7+TLR3 cells infected with HCV Jc1	122
Figure 6.11	Suppressor of cytokine signalling 3 (SOCS3) pathways	126
Chapter 7		
Figure 7.1	Summary of the interactions between HCV-infected hepatocytes and bystander cells	135

List of Tables

Table Number		On page:
Chapter 2		
Table 2.1	Primer sequences	28
Table 2.2	Cell lines, culture media and supplements	41
Table 2.3	Primary antibodies used in fluorescence microscopy	53
Table 2.4	Secondary antibodies used in fluorescence microscopy	53
Table 2.5	Primary and secondary antibodies used in flow cytometry	55
Table 2.6	Primary antibodies used in western blotting	59
Table 2.7	Secondary antibodies used in western blotting	59
Chapter 4		
Table 4.1	ELISA confirms expression of cytokines in response to Poly I:C stimulation	82
Table 4.2	ELISA confirms expression of cytokines in response to HCV Jc1 stimulation	84
Table 4.3	Human Antiviral Response PCR Array	87
Table 4.4	Selected differentially expressed genes – Affymetrix Microarray	89

Abstract

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a major cause of chronic liver disease worldwide that often results in progressive liver disease in the form of fibrosis, cirrhosis and in some cases, hepatocellular carcinoma. The mechanisms responsible for progression to advanced liver disease are poorly understood, but this primarily occurs as a result of chronic hepatic inflammation. Despite universal involvement of the liver in this inflammatory and fibrogenic process, only a small percentage of hepatocytes are infected. We therefore hypothesised that the pathological effect of the virus is extended beyond the infected hepatocyte to uninfected ‘bystander’ cells by cellular interactions between these cells. To study this hypothesis, we developed *in vitro* cell culture model systems to observe the interactions between HCV-infected and uninfected Huh-7 cells and stellate cells.

HCV permissive Huh-7 cells are relatively unresponsive to virus infection with regard to the innate immune response. This is due to a lack of expression of the pattern recognition receptor Toll-like receptor 3 (TLR3), which is known to play an important role in the innate immune response to HCV infection. To restore the response of infected Huh-7 cells to HCV we generated a Huh-7 cell line stably expressing functional TLR3. We subsequently demonstrated by microarray analysis upregulation of TLR3 response genes such as chemokines and classical interferon response genes (ISGs) in response to HCV infection of these cells.

To prevent HCV infection of Huh-7 ‘bystander’ cells we also generated a line refractory to HCV infection by shRNA knockdown of the essential HCV entry

receptor CD81. This cell line was also tagged with GFP to allow for FACS sorting of uninfected cells in co-culture.

We subsequently employed these cell lines in conditioned media and co-culture model systems to examine the cell interactions mediated by soluble factors and cell-to-cell contact at the level of the transcriptome using Affymetrix microarray analysis. Although the effect of HCV-infected hepatocytes on uninfected ‘bystander’ hepatocytes was not dramatic, preliminary data suggested that suppressor of cytokine signalling 3 (SOCS3), a known inhibitor of endogenous interferon signalling pathways, is upregulated in uninfected Huh-7 cells co-cultured with HCV-infected TLR3-positive Huh-7 cells. Furthermore we also demonstrated that HCV-infected cells exert an antiviral effect on other infected cells, possibly via exosome-mediated signalling, and can increase expression of pro-fibrogenic markers in hepatic stellate cells. We also showed that TLR3-positive uninfected Huh-7 cells enhance chemokine expression in HCV-infected hepatocytes.

In summary, we have generated stable cell lines that can be employed in an *in vitro* cell culture model system to study the interactions between HCV-infected hepatocytes and other resident liver cells such as uninfected hepatocytes and hepatic stellate cells. We have demonstrated bidirectional cross-talk between cell types, and the observed exerted effects are likely to contribute to the pathogenesis of chronic liver disease in HCV infection by recruiting uninfected cells into the pro-inflammatory and pro-fibrogenic response to HCV infection. The knowledge gained from this work contributes to our understanding of the mechanisms underlying progression of liver disease in HCV infection.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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Kate Rebecca Muller

March 2015

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Presentations, Publications and Awards

Presentations

HCV-induced changes in gene expression in non-infected 'bystander' Huh-7 cells.
18th International Symposium on Hepatitis C and Related Viruses, Seattle, USA,
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HCV-induced changes in gene expression in non-infected 'bystander' Huh-7 cells.
ACH2 Workshop, Adelaide, Australia, June 2012 (oral).

HCV-induced changes in gene expression in non-infected 'bystander' Huh-7 cells.
HCV 2012: 19th International Symposium on Hepatitis C and Related Viruses,
Venice, Italy, October 2012 (poster).

The effect of hepatitis C infected Huh-7 cells on 'bystander' cells. Australian
Gastrointestinal Week, Melbourne, Australia, October 2013 (poster of merit).

The effect of hepatitis C infected Huh-7 cells on 'bystander' cells. HCV 2013: 20th
International Symposium on Hepatitis C and Related Viruses, Melbourne,
Australia, October 2013 (poster).

Publications

TLR3-dependent cross-talk between HCV-infected and uninfected hepatocytes.
Muller, K.R., Eyre, N.S., Van der Hoek, K.H., Li, K., Beard M.R. (in preparation).

Awards

MSD Hepatology Young Achiever Award, 2012

Abbreviations used

ATP	adenosine triphosphate
bp	base pairs
BSA	bovine serum albumin
°C	degrees Celsius
CCL	chemokine (C-C motif) ligand
cDNA	complementary DNA
CLDN	claudin
cm	centimetres
CMV	cytomegalovirus
COL1a1	collagen type 1 alpha 1
C _T	threshold cycle
CXCL	chemokine (C-X-C motif) ligand
CXCR	chemokine (C-X-C motif) receptor
Da	daltons
DAPI	4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole
dATP	deoxyadenosine-5'-triphosphate
dCTP	deoxycytosine-5'-triphosphate
DDIT4	DNA damage inducible transcript 4
DDX60	DEAD (Asp-Glu-Ala-Asp) Box Polypeptide 60
dGTP	deoxyguanosine-5'-triphosphate
dH ₂ O	deionised water
DMEM	Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium
DMSO	dimethyl sulfoxide
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTP	deoxyribonucleotide triphosphate

dsRNA	double stranded RNA
dTTP	deoxythymidine-5'-triphosphate
ECM	extracellular matrix
EDTA	ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
ELISA	enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
EMCV	encephalomyocarditis virus
ER	endoplasmic reticulum
FACS	fluorescence-activated cell sorting
FBS	foetal bovine serum
ffu	focus-forming units
g	grams
GAGs	glycosaminoglycans
GFP	green fluorescent protein
HABP2	hyaluronic acid binding protein 2
HCV	hepatitis C virus
HCVcc	cell-culture propagated hepatitis C virus
HCC	hepatocellular carcinoma
HEPES	4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HRP	horseradish peroxidase
IFI6	interferon alpha-inducible protein 6
IFIT	interferon-induced protein with tetratricopeptide repeats
IFITM	interferon induced transmembrane protein
IFN- α	interferon alpha
IFN- β	interferon beta
IL	interleukin
IP-10	interferon gamma-induced protein 10
IRES	internal ribosome entry site

IRF	interferon regulatory factor
ISG	interferon stimulated gene
ISGF3	interferon-stimulated gene factor-3
ISRE	interferon-stimulated response element
JAK	janus kinase
kb	kilobases
kDa	kilo Daltons
kV	kilovolts
LDL	low-density lipoprotein
LDL-R	low-density lipoprotein receptor
μ F	microfarad
μ g	micrograms
μ l	microlitres
μ M	micromolar
mA	milliamps
MAVS	mitochondrial antiviral-signalling protein
MCP1	monocyte chemotactic protein-1
mg	milligrams
MIG	monokine induced by gamma interferon
MIP1 β	macrophage inflammatory protein-1 β
ml	millilitres
mM	millimolar
MOI	multiplicity of infection
mRNA	messenger RNA
MSR1	class A scavenger receptor type 1
MW	molecular weight
NCR	non-coding region
NF- κ B	nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells

ng	nanograms
nm	nanometres
nM	nanomolar
NK	natural killer
NS	non-structural
OAS	2'-5'-oligoadenylate synthetase
OCLN	occludin
OD	optical density
ORF	open reading frame
PAGE	polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PAMP	pathogen-associated molecular pattern
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PEG	polyethylene glycol
pg	picograms
pM	picomolar
pmol	picomoles
poly I:C	polyinosinic:polycytidylic acid
PKR	protein kinase R
PRR	pattern recognition receptor
qPCR	quantitative polymerase chain reaction
qRT-PCR	real-time reverse-transcription PCR
RANTES	Regulated on Activation, Normal T cell Expressed and Secreted
RdRp	RNA-dependent RNA polymerase
RELN	reelin
RIG-I	retinoic acid-inducible gene I
RIPA	radio-immunoprecipitation assay
RNA	ribonucleic acid

ROS	reactive oxygen species
rpm	revolutions per minute
SCID	severe combined immunodeficiency
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulfate
shRNA	short hairpin RNA
siRNA	small interfering RNA
SOC	super optimal broth with catabolite repression
SOCS3	suppressor of cytokine signalling 3
SPP	secreted phosphoprotein 1
SR-B1	scavenger receptor class B1
STAT	signal transducer and activator of transcription
SV40	simian virus 40
SVR	sustained virological response
TAE	Tris-Acetic Acid-EDTA
TARC	thymus and activation-regulated chemokine
TBS-T	Tris-buffered saline-Tween 20
TEMED	N,N,N',N'-tetramethylethylenediamine
TfR/TCA	transferrin receptor-truncated amino terminus
TGF- β	transforming growth factor beta
TIMP-1	tissue inhibitor of metalloproteinase 1
TIR	toll IL-1 receptor
TLR3	toll-like receptor 3
TNF	tumour necrosis factor
TRIF	toll-interleukin-1 receptor domain-containing adaptor inducing IFN- β
Tris	3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine
U	units
uPA	urokinase-type plasminogen activator
UTR	untranslated region

UV	ultraviolet
V	volts
VLDL	very low-density lipoprotein
VSV	vesicular stomatitis virus
v/v	volume per volume
w/v	weight per volume
x g	G-force

Materials Providers

Addgene	Massachusetts, USA
Affymetrix	California, USA
Agfa	Mortsel, Belgium
AppliChem	Darmstadt, Germany
Beckman Coulter	Miami, FL, USA
Becton Dickinson	New Jersey, USA
Bioline	Sydney, Australia
BioRad Laboratories	California, USA
Biotium	California, USA
Biovision	California, USA
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