Single-cell transcriptomic analysis identifies neocortical developmental differences between human and mouse

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Abstract

Background: The specification and differentiation of neocortical projection neurons is a complex process under precise molecular regulation; however, little is known about the similarities and differences in cerebral cortex development between human and mouse at single-cell resolution.

Results: Here, using single-cell RNA-seq (scRNA-seq) data we explore the divergence and conservation of human and mouse cerebral cortex development using 18,446 and 7,610 neocortical cells. Systematic cross-species comparison reveals that the overall transcriptome profile in human cerebral cortex is similar to that in mouse such as cell types and their markers genes. By single-cell trajectories analysis we find human and mouse excitatory neurons have different developmental trajectories of neocortical projection neurons, ligand-receptor interactions and gene expression patterns. Further analysis reveals a refinement of neuron differentiation that occurred in human but not in mouse, suggesting that excitatory neurons in human undergo refined transcriptional states in later development stage. By contrast, for glial cells and inhibitory neurons we detected conserved developmental trajectories in human and mouse.

Conclusions: Taken together, our study integrates scRNA-seq data of cerebral cortex development in human and mouse, and uncovers distinct developing models in neocortical projection neurons. The earlier activation of cognition -related genes in human may explain the differences in behavior, learning or memory abilities between the two species.

Keywords:

Cerebral cortex development, Cross-species clustering, Neocortical projection neurons, Cognition

Background

The mammalian cerebral cortex develops via a complex process of cell proliferation, differentiation, and migration events. The molecular features of the human brain at gestational weeks 7-23 are similar to those of the mouse at postnatal days 14.5 to birth (P0) and reveal gene expression differences between the two species [1, 2]. Interneurons and projection neurons, which are the two major classes of neurons, populate the neocortex. Interneurons show largely GABAergic, connecting locally within the neocortex, and are generated by progenitors in the ventral telencephalic (inhibitory cortical interneuron producing) radial glia, before migrating from sub pallial ganglionic eminences into the cortex [3-6]. By contrast, projection neurons are excitatory, which are generated by progenitors in the dorsal telencephalic (excitatory cortical neuron producing) radial glia [7-9].

Despite immense efforts over the past decades to study the cell types, function, differentiation for the mammalian cerebral cortex, especially human and mouse, large differences and conservation are observed in human versus animal models [10-12]. Elucidating the conserved, divergent and cellular architecture of developing the cerebral cortex, especially projection neurons developments, may highlight to understanding susceptibility to neurological diseases and the occurrence of cognition and memory abilities in the early stages.

Recently, with the advance of next-generation sequencing (NGS) techniques, single-cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq) technologies has been paved the way for study cell phenotype and cell behavior at single-cell resolution [13, 14]. More significantly, scRNA-seq can overcome the heterogeneity of cross-species analysis, bypassing the need for pure cell sorting strategies [15, 16]. Moreover, although many studies have been reported the single species cerebral cortex using scRNA-seq, there is no systematic research to

integrate the human and mouse scRNA-seq data, and compare the conservation and

divergence of developing neocortex.

Here we comprehensively characterize the conservation and divergence of the cerebral

cortex program between human and mouse [9, 17, 18]. We present a cross-species cell

atlas and in which no obvious differences in cell type composition was observed. However,

we identified different developing trajectories of projection neurons that in human the

subventricular zone (SVZ) migration to deeper neocortical layers and more superficial

layers are two independent processes. Additionally, the deeper and upper layers are more

precisely differentiated in human than those in mouse, and lack of neuron migration signal

in human. By comparing excitatory neurons gene expression across species, we also

observed significant expression differences of function genes for cell migration, cognition,

learning and memory in humans compared with mice. We next evaluated whether further

refinement of neuronal subtypes occurs as neurons mature, indicating that human

neuronal subtypes resolve from coarse laminar distinctions to refined transcriptional states

in the later development, whereas mouse may not show precise subtype differentiation. In

summary, we show the importance of cross-evolutionary comparison to better

characterize the differences of human and mouse projection neurons development, and

the relevance of these to cognition pathway. In conclusion, our study offers essential clues

for researching neurodevelopment, especially for the projection neurons development,

and the differences of occurrence of cognition ability in human and mouse.

RESULTS

Integration of single-cell transcriptomics of the human and mouse cerebral cortex

In order to compare cellular and molecular processes of the late corticogenesis between human and mouse, we collected published scRNA-seq data sets of human and mouse cerebral cortex at different development stages [9, 17, 18]. We reanalyzed the transcriptome profiles of 18,446 mouse neocortical cells at two key time points for corticogenesis development including 10,836 cells at embryonic day 14.5 (E14.5) from six biological replicates (Fig. 1A), and 7,610 cells at birth (P0) from three biological replicates (Fig. 1A). Because 7- to 23-post-conception-week (pcw) human brain cells are analogous to E14.5 to P0 mouse brain cells (Fig. 1A) [1, 2], we incorporated the transcriptome profiles of 6,655 human brain cells including 100 cells between 5.85 and 7 pcw, and 800 cells between 23-37 pcw (Fig. 1A). To ensure that cells from different species and data sets can be properly integrated, we performed unbiased clustering using Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP) [19]. The major cell lineages in cerebral cortex such as excitatory neurons, inhibitory neurons, neuronal progenitor cells and glial cells were able to be identified using their lineage markers [20, 21] (Fig. 1D, E). Moreover, there was no obvious bias because the majority of the cell types could be identified in all three data sets (Fig. S1C).

Because the number of mouse cells (18,446) was about 3 times higher than that of human cells (6,655) which may cause bias, we randomly extracted 6,655 mouse cells in further analysis. Finally, 13,278 cells (6,655 mouse cells and 6,623 human cells) were used (Fig. 1A) in further analysis which covers all major cell types (Fig. 1D, E).

Identification and characterization of cortical cell types

We first compared the cell composition and found that mouse had more interneuron than

human (Fig. 2A). We next compared the cell number in each cluster and found that cluster

06 Inh_striatal and cluster 09 Layer [19P] had more cells in mouse (20%-30%) than in

human (70%-80%). In contrast, cluster 16 Microglia and 17 Mesenchyme had more human

cells (80%-90%) (Fig. 2B).

We next examined the correlation among clusters by cross-species clustering (Fig. 2C).

As there were still considerable species differences between humans and mice, we used

the integrated matrix. Remarkably, excitatory neuron exhibited a profile highly similar to

interneuron, and Glia showed itself a high degree of correlation (Fig. 2C). Interestingly,

Cluster 16 Microglia were distinct from excitatory neuron, interneuron and other Glia cells

(Fig. 2C). We also calculated the correlation using human and mouse cells respectively

and found that human and mouse had similar results with cross-species (Fig. S2A, B).

We checked the top 10 highly expressed genes of each cluster and found most of them

were consistent among human and mouse (Fig. 2D, S2C, D). For example, two SVZ

clusters (Clusters 00 SVZ and 01 SVZ) were featured by predominant expression of

EOMES (*TBR2*) and *ZBTB20* [22-24]. Cells in Cluster 01 SVZ also expressed markers of

both excitatory (*NEUROD6*) and inhibitory (*CALB2*) neurons [25-27] which exhibited the

expression patterns of rostral migratory steam [18]. Cells in deep-layer populations

(Clusters 02 Exc deep and 03 Exc deep) exhibited high expression levels of *CTIP2* and

BCL11B [28]. Cells in Clusters 04 Exc upper and 05 Exc upper expressed upper layer

marker *MEF2C* [8, 29]. We identified NEUROD6 and NEUROD1 kept consistently high

expression in excitatory inhibitory, and EOMES expressed in subventricular zone (SVZ),

and STMN2 expressed strongly in deep and upper layer and increased the levels of

expression with neuron maturation, which conversed the transformation known genes

expression trajectories in neurogenesis among human and mouse (from EOMES to

STMN2) [9, 30] (Fig. 2D). Three interneuron clusters (Clusters 06 Inh_striatal, 07 Inh and

08 Inh) were characterized by expression of *GAD2* and *NRXN3*. Specifically, in Cluster 08

Inh we found high expression of *LHX6*, *SST* and *MAF* indicating 08 Inh is somatostatin

(SST) expressing interneurons but not parvalbumin (PV). *LHX6* is a transcription factor

associated with PV and SST interneuron [31, 32], whereas *SST* and *MAF* regulate the

potential of interneurons to interneurons to acquire SST+ interneuron identity [33].

Interneuron migrate tangentially from the ganglionic eminences, and ganglionic

eminences (Cluster 13 GE) expressed high levels of inhibitory marker *DLX1* and

proliferation markers *TOP2A* and *MKI67* [34]. RG marker *HES5* was in two RG clusters

(Clusters 10 RG and 11 RG), while Cluster 11 RG expressed high levels of *MKI67* and

TOP2A genes. We also found *GAP43*, a key regulator in early brain development, was

constitutively expressed in all these cell types in both human and mouse [35].

We identified Clusters 06 Inh_striatal and 09 Layer[19P] as inhibitory neurons and they

had similar gene expression patterns and cell numbers in human and mouse. Striatal

inhibitory neurons (Cluster 06 Inh_striatal) expressed inhibitory markers *GAD2* and lower-

layer marker *BCL11B* [36]. Layer 19-P (Cluster 09 layer[19P]) expressed canonical Cajal-

Retzius cell markers *RELN* and Purkinje cell marker *PCP4*. In addition, they also

expressed non-coding RNAs *SNHG11* and *MEG3* (Fig. 2D, S2C). Microglia (Cluster 16

Microglia) had higher cell numbers in human than in mouse and exhibited low expression

correlation with other clusters. They expressed microglial markers such as *LAPTM5*,

C1QA, *C1QB*, and *C1QC* [37], as well as several microglia-specific pathways such as

TREM2-TYROBP pathway [37-40] (Fig. 2D). Interestingly, Cluster 20 Unknown exhibited

an intermediate state between excitatory neuron and interneuron: it had high expression

correlation with both excitatory neuron and interneuron, and expressed several marker

genes such as *STMN2* (excitatory neuron) and *NNAT* (interneuron) (Fig. 2D, S2C, D).

Different developmental trajectories of excitatory neuron between human and

mouse

To compare the developmental trajectories in excitatory neuron between human and mouse, we split the data into 6,623 human cells and 6,655 mouse cells, and performed unbiased clustering using UMAP again. We identified 23 clusters and also observed lineage separation of the major cell types (Fig. S3A, B, C, D). We used *NEUROD6* as marker gene and identified 6 excitatory neuron clusters in human (Cluster 00 SVZ, 01 Exc deep, 02 Exc deep, 03 Exc upper, 04 Exc upper and 05 Exc upper) and 7 excitatory neuron clusters in mouse (Cluster 00 SVZ, 01 SVZ, 02 Exc deep, 03 Exc deep, 04 Exc deep, 05 Exc upper and 06 Exc upper) (Fig. S3A, B). We then reconstructed the corticogenesis developmental trajectories using Monocle analysis. Both human cells and mouse cells were distributed along pseudo-temporally ordered paths from SVZ to neocortical layers, including deeper neocortical layers (layer VI, then layer V) and superficial layers (layer IV, then layer II/III) [28] (Fig. 3A, B). Surprisingly, we found that the developmental trajectory in mouse was a continuous process without any branch, in which SVZ migrated to deeper neocortical layers and then to superficial layers. By contrast, in human this process had two branches in which SVZ migrated to both deeper neocortical layers and superficial layers (Fig. 3A, B, S3E, F). Consistent with this observation, we found that SVZ marker *EOMES* was specifically expressed in the beginning of trajectories, deep-layer marker *BCL11B* was specifically expressed in the upper branch in human, whereas migratory and upper-layer markers *POU3F2* and *SATB2* were specifically expressed in the lower branch, which was different from those in mouse trajectory (Fig. 3A, B, S3I). More important, when we further split the data based on development stages, we still found that the lower-layer neurons were present in 7 to 23 pcw in human and E14.5 and P0 in mouse, with high expression of *BCL11B*. Meanwhile, a large number of Layer II-IV (upper layer) cells at P0 in mouse and 20-23 pcw in human was identified, with high expression of *SATB2* (Fig. S3G, H)*.*

We identified 109 differentially expressed genes in human that may determine cell fate commitment. They were fall into 4 clusters which exhibited successive waves of gene expression in different branches (Fig. 3E). In addition, Gene Ontology (GO) enrichment analysis revealed that the functions of genes predominantly expressed at the SVZ branch were enriched in cerebral cortex development, olfactory bulb development and olfactory lobe development as previously reported [41]. Among these genes, transcription factor *PAX6* is crucial for SVZ neurogenesis and also acts via retinoid signaling to regulate eye development [42] suggesting that eye development may have relative to SVZ neurogenesis (Fig. 3E). Lower-layer from human cortex showed increased expression of genes for modulation of synaptic signaling and chemical synaptic transmission, which have a mechanistic link with learning and memory by plasticity regulation [43]; whereas upper layer CPN from human cortex exhibited increased expression of genes involved in regulation of sodium ion transport and calcium-mediated signaling (Fig. 3E). Genes related to forebrain neuron fate commitment and forebrain neuron differentiation were expressed in both lower-layer and upper layer. More interestingly, the functions of genes that were highly expressed in SVZ, lower layer and upper layer were all enriched in cognition and learning (Fig. 3E).

We further analyzed the migratory marker genes expression in neocortical. We found these genes had continuously increased expression in SVZ, and decreased expression in deep-layer and upper-layer in human. Specifically, *NRP1* and *PALMD*, which were involved in the regulation of cell morphogenesis and cerebral cortex cell migration, exhibited increased expression in the SVZ lineage and then declined in deep layer and upper layer lineage, suggesting that neuronal migration in projection neurons in the cerebral cortex may occur from the SVZ's maturity stage to the early development of deep and shallow layers, rather than the late deep layer [44] (Fig. S3J, K). By contrast, in mouse

cerebral cortex we found migratory genes showed increased expression in SVZ and deep layer, and decreased expression in upper layer suggesting that in mouse the deep layer continuously process cell migration from SVZ to upper layer. Representative genes include *Meis2*, *Nrp1* and *Pou3f2*, whose functions are relative to cell migration and regulation of cell morphogenesis involved in differentiation (Fig. S3K).

Divergence in neocortical between human and mouse

In order to better understand the distinct layers in neocortical in human and mouse, we performed a comparison of cortical expression models through single-cell analysis, including deeper neocortical cortex (layer VI, then layer V) and late-born neurons migrate through deep layers to gradually fill more shallow layers (layer IV, then layer II/III). Pairwise comparison of human and mouse cortical layer data sets identified a large number of differentially expressed genes (DEGs) (Fig. 4A). We observed a considerably bigger number of differentially expressed genes in human than in mouse, meanwhile we also found some co-expression marker genes, for example, fez family zinc finger 2 *Fezf2* (high expressed in deeper layers), special AT-rich sequence binding protein 2 (*SATB2*) and *POUEF2*, a marker of layer II/III with function of migration and differentiation [28]. More interestingly, we detected the differentially expressed gene: *CLSTN2*, high expressed in human deep layer and mouse upper layer, which significantly associated with pathway of cognitive and memory behavior and reduction in functional inhibitory synapses [45], suggesting that genes, relating to cognition and memory pathways, expressed earlier in human than mouse.

Pathway analysis of two layers specific to humans revealed enrichment of axon development, such as axon guidance and axonal fasciculation, compared with mouse (Fig. 4B). Additionally, enriched pathway contained in many aspects, including visual system,

facial nerve, trigeminal nerve and motor neuron in human — more specifically, retinal ganglion cell axon guidance, facial nerve development, trigeminal nerve development, motor neuron axon guidance and regulation of synaptic transmission, glutamatergic (Fig. 4C). In contrast, some pathways were enriched in mouse, mainly in cell fate commitment, neuron fate commitment and neuron migration (Fig. 4C).

To continuously process research in neocortical in human and mouse, we expanded our analysis included SVZ. Pairwise comparison of human and mouse SVZ and upper cortical layers scRNA-seq transcriptomics data identified a large number of DEGs (Fig. S4A). The number of DEGs detected in mouse was 6 times higher than that derived from human. SVZ marker genes, *EOMES* and *NHLH1*, related to cell-type determination within developing neurons, upper layer markers, *SATB2* and *MEF2C*, had co-expression in human and mouse. We found more than 200 significant gene ontology (GO) terms in human and mouse respectively. Specifically, for human, pathways focused on neuron migration and axon development. In addition, human-specific genes also revealed enrichment of "eye development", "visual system development", and "sensory system development". For mouse, we detected mouse-specific pathways "learning or memory", and "synapse organization" (Fig. S4B). we also identified the DEGs between SVZ and deeper layer among human and mouse (Fig. S4C). The number of DEGs are equal in human and mouse (Fig. S4D).

We next examined the correlation between each cluster in neocortical between human and mouse (Fig. 4D). We identified mouse SVZ and mouse upper layer showed remarkably low degree correlation (Fig. 4D). In contrast, the correlation of human SVZ with human deep layer were nearly similar to those of human SVZ with human upper layer (Fig. 4D). Taken together, we conclude that the differences of deeper layer and upper layer has larger in human than mouse, while the differences of SVZ and upper layer has larger

in mouse than human (Fig. 4D).

Having defined the populations of SVZ, deeper layer and upper layer cells, we further used

CellPhoneDB to perform an unbiased ligand receptor interaction analysis between these

populations [46]. To detect how neocortical projection neurons are generated in human,

we focused functional analyses on interactions with SVZ, deeper layer and upper layer

(Fig. 4E). SVZ expressed *PTN* and *MDK*, signaling to receptors *ALK* on upper layer, that

are known to regular nervous system development, function, and repair, especially,

regulating the sympathetic neuron growth during development and aberrant signaling to

neuroblastoma predisposition [47-49] (Fig. 4E). SVZ expressed *PTN* and *MDK*, signaling

to the receptor tyrosine phosphatase family *PTPRZ1* on deeper and upper layers, which

shows the significant function in activate cell growth, migration and cellular activities (Fig.

4E). More importantly, *PTPRZ1* interaction with *MDK* promotes neuron migration [50]. SVZ

expressed high levels of *NOTCH3* interacting with receptor *DLL3* on deeper layer cells

and upper layer cells, which could modulate cellular differentiation, fates for terminal

neuronal differentiation and links to progression toward a neuronal fate in the developing

cortex [51, 52](Fig. 4E). In addition, ephrin family showed high level of expression in

human cortical. Firstly, *EPHA8_EFNA5* could promotes neurite outgrowth and axon

guidance [53], which showed significance in process SVZ to deep layer (Fig. 4E).

EFNA1_EPHA4 involves in dendritic spine morphogenesis in deep layer to upper layer

[54] (Fig. 4E). Deep layer expressed *WNT* genes interacting with receptors *FZD4* and

ROR1 on upper-layer cells. *WNT5A_ROR1* promotes the formation of presynaptic [55]

(Fig. 4E). Upper layer expressed Atypical Chemokine Receptor 2 ligands (*ACKR2*)

receptors that are known to be required for immature/mature dendritic cells [56] (Fig. 4E).

ESAM_ESAM helps cell-cell adhesion in deep layer to upper layer (Fig. 4E).

In summary, our trajectory, cell-type and unbiased ligand-receptor interactions analysis

between mouse and human indicates that human and mouse have differences in development neocortical models, the correlation between deep layer and upper layer are lower in human than mouse, and the ligand-receptor analysis indicate that deep layer and upper layer may not have various neuron migration interactions in human. These phenomena may therefore show SVZ migration to appropriate layers are relatively independent in human neocortical projection neurons.

Characterization of the excitatory neuron gene expression pattern across species

To better understand the divergence and conservation of excitatory neuron gene expression across evolution, we used developmental time course reconstructed by monocle analysis to process the further analysis of gene expression pattern. Although a large part of genes keep conservation across evolution, some genes showed converse expression trends in human and mouse. We defined two gene expression clusters, with cluster a representing up-regulated genes during the frontal development excitatory neuron in human, mainly including SVZ cells (Fig. 5A), and in mouse, the expression patterns are converse (Fig. 5B). Cluster a contained genes *VCAN*, *BCL11B*, *SOX5*, *PTN* and *CNR1*, whereas Cluster b contained genes *ST18*, *KLHL13* and *NHLH2* (Fig. 5A, B). We focused some genes have key functions in neuron development, for example, we detected *CNR1* have various difference in expression pattern, in human, it expressed in SVZ cells, whereas it expressed in deeper and upper layer cells in mouse, in other words, CNR1 expressed earlier in human than mouse in cortex (Fig. 5A, B, C). CNR1, known as cannabinoid receptor 1, is expressed in the peripheral nervous system and central nervous system and combine cannabinoid to regulate the release either glutamate or GABA, and the endocannabinoids (*eCBs*) and their receptors (*CNR1*) express in cortex that can act as the significant function as cell proliferation and migration and axon guidance during the critical stages of brain development [57-62]. In addition, *CNR1* also

likely plays an important role in the development of memory and cognition, and is relative

to many emotional, neurological diseases, such as novelty [63-65]. *ST18*, expressing

earlier in mouse than human, shows key factor in breast cancer [66] (Fig. 5A, B, D).

In order to detect the function of cluster a genes and cluster b genes, we found more

genes with similar expression patterns to process GO terms, function protein network and

transcriptional regulatory relationships analysis. We detected some neuron differentiation

and synaptic pathways, including chemical synaptic transmission, cell morphogenesis

involved in neuron differentiation, active in human SVZ (Fig. S5E, F). More interesting,

axon development, learning or memory, neuron recognition, cognition, regulation of

behavior and regulation of synaptic transmission, glutamatergic were more active in the

human SVZ than mouse SVZ (Fig. 5E). The key genes, enriching in cognition, learning or

memory, neuron differentiation and neuron regeneration pathways, including *PTPRZ1*,

PTN, *CNR1*, *ATP1A2*, *SOX5* and *JUN*, showed the different expression pattern in human

and mouse excitatory neuron, suggesting human probably develop these function,

especially for cognition, learning or memory, earlier than mouse (Fig. 5F, S5A, B, C, D).

According to protein and transcription factor analysis, we observed key protein or

transcription factor: *JUN* connected with *FOS*, as a classic marker for neuronal activation,

which has important regulator of axonal regeneration and neuronal activation. [67] (Fig.

5A, 5B, S5E, F). Moreover, *JUN-PTN* was detected TF-target regulatory relationship,

which directly indicated activation of neuronal migration during later brain development

[68-70], and ligand-receptor interaction: activating *PTN_PTPRZ1* in human SVZ to deeper

layer and SVZ to upper layer before (Fig. 4E), which activates cell growth, migration and

cellular activities [70, 71], and we found these genes have different expression pattern in

human and mouse, for human, they showed highly expression in SVZ, whereas *Ptprz1*

and *Ptn* performed low expression in mouse SVZ, and increase expression in deeper layer

and upper layer cells (Fig. 5A, B, S5A, B), indicating that neuron cell migration performs

in human SVZ to deeper layer and upper layer or mouse deeper layer to upper layer

process. We also found genes expressing in mouse SVZ, like *ST18* and *UACA*, relative

to reactive oxygen species biosynthetic process (Fig. 5D, E).

Single-cell transcriptomic analysis identifies human excitatory neuron subsets

In order to examine whether the excitatory neuron of human and mouse display similar

cell types or contain several subtypes, we further observed the clustering of human and

mouse (Fig. S3A, B). Surprisingly, distinct clusters of maturing neurons (04 Exc upper and

05 Exc upper) reproducibly emerge according to the distinct expression profiles, including

reciprocal expression of PFC (The prefrontal cortex) marker (*ABCA1*) and V1 (Visual

cortex) marker (*LPL*) [9] (Fig. 6A). By contrast, the gene with reciprocal expression in

human 04 Exc upper and 05 Exc upper don't have similar expression patterns in mouse

(Fig. 6B).

In order to further make sure the cell types, we used known labels to tag the clustering

and processed statistics (Fig. S6A, B, C, D), we found that the proportion of PFC and V1

cells have remarkable difference in 05 Exc upper (Fig. S6C), suggesting that the coarse

laminar distinctions among newborn neurons are resolved into refined transcriptional state

in human later development, whereas the phenomenon disappeared in cross-species

clustering that the number of PFC and V1 cells in each cluster are similar, especially in

excitatory neuron, indicating that the newborn neurons probably don't have refined

expression states in mouse among the E14.5 and P0 stages (Fig. S6D).

In order to detect the biological processing of PFC and V1 in human, We therefore selected

expression differentially genes for pathway analysis by gene ontology resource and

functional protein association networks (STRING) [72](Fig. 6C, S6D, E, F). Axon guidance,

axonogenesis, axon development were active in PFC and V1 (Fig. 6C). Pathway relative

to synapse signaling, including synapse organization, modulation of chemical synaptic

transmission, regulation of trans-synaptic signaling and synapse structure or activity,

synapse maturation, axonal transport of mitochondrion, were more active in V1 (Fig. 6C).

In PFC area, we enriched sensory system development and cognition, rather in V1, and

in PFC and V1, we all discovered visual system development and eye development (Fig.

6C).

To further examine the notion of typological distinction between PFC and V1 inner human

and mouse, we compared distinct co-expression profiles of genes involved in the

specification of projection patterns during development, for example, *SATB2* and *BCL11B*

co-expressed in human maturing PFC deep layer and upper layer at later stages of

development (Fig. 6D). In contrast, neurons in V1 had distinguish expression pattern of

BCL11B and *SATB2* (Fig. 6D). More interestingly, *Bcl11b* and *Satb2* also had co-

expression phenomenon in mouse, but it appeared in the immature neurons, indicating

that the early fate specification [18] (Fig. 6D). Then, we found that it is common that

maturing PFC neurons co-expressed genes in deeper and upper layer cells, for example,

ABCA1 and *VCAN*, which couldn't express in deep layer in mouse (Fig. 6E, F). Additionally,

we focused on the function of these genes, which may play role in intercellular signaling

and extracellular structure organization.

Conservation of radial glia developmental trajectories

The comparison of excitatory neurons is crucial for our understanding of many differences

between human and mouse developing cortex. However, they are many cell types that

haven't been compared. We further analyzed the developmental trajectories in radial glia.

We observed there are two RG clusters in cross-species clustering (cluster 10 RG and 11

RG) (Fig. 1D), which had similar human and mouse cells proportions (Fig. 2A, B). During

early development, dorsal telencephalic radial glia produces excitatory cortical neurons,

while ventral telencephalic produces inhibitory cortical interneuron during 7 to 23 pcw in

human that have been reported [9]. We applied principal component analysis (PCA) for

cross-species clustering that observed 11 RG migrate to 13 GE (Interneuron migrate

tangentially from the ganglionic eminences) and 12 G2/M, and 10 RG migrate to 00 SVZ

(Fig. S7A, B), and then, we chose these clusters to reconstruct the trajectories analysis

(Fig. 1D), that we found two lineages: from 11 RG to 13 GE and 12 G2/M or 10 RG to 00

SVZ (Fig. 7A). Group of cells expressing *MKI67*, markers of proliferating and glia, were

detected at early timepoint at the pseudo-time analysis by Monocle, while *EOMES* and

NEUROD6 expressed in SVZ branch, and *GAD2* expressed in GE branch (Fig. 7B). We

detected that these developing processes have been emerged at stage 2 (E14.5 in mouse

and 7- to 11.5 pcw in human). We use species-specific clusters to analysis with four

markers to depict the expression profile (Fig. S7B, C, D, E).

In order to detect the gene expression relative to cell fate commitment, we identified 80

genes highly dispersed in human and mouse. DE genes that fall into 5 clusters and

depicted successive waves of gene expression in different branches (Fig. S7F). Genes

predominantly expressing at the 11 RG branch enriched in pathways, including nuclear

division, mitotic nuclear division and sister chromatid segregation, suggesting that these

cells stayed in G2/M stages (Fig. S7F). Genes co-expressed in 10 RG and 11 RG enriched

in epithelial cell proliferation, gliogenesis, astrocyte differentiation, as expected in radial

glia (Fig. S7F). GE cells expressed genes, relating to cerebral cortex GABAergic

interneuron differentiation (Fig. S7F).

To examined two RG expression profile and enrichment pathways in human and mouse,

we detect expression differentially genes in these two clusters (Fig. 7C). 11 RG expressed

some proliferating marker genes, including *MKI67*, *TOP2A* and *UBE2C*, and regulate cell

cycle genes, like *CDK1* and *TPX2*, which co-expressed in human and mouse ventral

telencephalic radial glia (Fig. 7C); while dorsal telencephalic radial glia expressed three

kinds genes, *HES5* (RG marker), *EOMES* (SVZ markers) and *DACH1* (enriched in

ventricular radial glia cells) [73] (Fig. 7C), that related to olfactory bulb development and

olfactory lobe development, which also enriched in SVZ (Fig. 7D).

As many proliferating and cell cycle genes high expressed in 11 RG, rather than 10 RG,

we further analysis the cell cycle of cell types. Excitatory neuron exhibited a profile highly

similar to interneuron that stay at S states, and 10 RG kept at G1/S states. In contrast, 11

RG, 12 G2/M and 13 GE continued cell division (Fig. 7E, F).

DISCUSSION

We have systematically analyzed scRNA-seq data to integrate and compare developing human and mouse cerebral cortex, including identified cell type diversities, developing trajectories, gene expression patterns, functional protein association networks, signal transduction pathways and ligand receptor interaction analysis.

According to previous reports, neocortical projection neurons are generated in an "inside-out" fashion by diverse progenitor types in the VZ and SVZ, for example, cut-like homeobox 2-positive (*Cux2*+) progenitors produce the most superficial-layer (upper) [74, 75], which is resided callosal projection neurons (CPN) and high expression marker gene (SATB2), whereas corticofugal-layer (deep) neurons derive from Cux2-negative (*Cux2*–) progenitors, which include a large number of corticothalamic projection neurons (CThPN) that reside in layer VI, and subcerebral projection neurons (SCPN) that reside in layer V and express BCL11B and FEZF2 [28]. As the result of the basis of current evidence, a number of different models are produced, In line with a previous report, we detected the 'sequential competence states' model is undesirable in mouse and human [28], because the mouse early developing deep layer (02 EXC deep) expressed an upper layer marker (*SATB2*), a deep layer marker (*BCL11B*), a migratory marker (*TIMA2*) and a transcription factor that is expressed in Layer II–III neurons during their migration and differentiation (*POU3F2*) (Fig. S8B), and human developing trajectories (Fig. 3A), suggesting that there is unreasonable that individual progenitors (*Cux2*–) produce a single neuronal subtype: CThPN at a time [28] (Fig. S8F). More significantly, according to our study, we indicated human and mouse exist two developing models. For human, we observed the reconstructed excitatory neuron trajectory, indicating that the deep and upper layer migrate from SVZ independently (Fig. 3A), whereas the deep layer and upper layer ordering are chaos in mouse developing neocortex trajectory (Fig. 3B), and then, we detected the

ligand and receptors have differentially expression in human and mouse (Fig. 4E, S5A, B).

Additionally, *CUX2* expressed differentially in human and mouse, for example, *CUX2* only

expressed in upper layer in human (Fig. S8C), while *Cux2* have expression in maturing

mouse deep layer neuron (Fig. S8D), indicating that *Cux2*- positive lineage after

generating deep-layer neuronal sub-types change their competence state to express *Cux2*

and produce CPN to generate upper-layer. The results may suggest that human is more

likely to similar the model "independent lineages" and the model "nested multipotential

lineages" is more likely to exist in mouse [28] (Fig. 8A).

We further summary the divergence and conservation of ligand receptor interaction

analysis between human and mouse neocortical projection neurons [46] (Fig. 8B). We

predicted the neuron migration and differentiation between SVZ and layers that could

potentially be triggered by protein-interactions: *PTN_PTPRZ1* and *MDK_PTPRZ1* [50]

(Fig. 8B), meanwhile these expression patterns show high expressed in human SVZ to

deep layers and upper layers, and mouse SVZ to deep layers and upper layers, and deep

layers to upper layers, which are consistent with our predicted two models: human for

"independent lineages" and mouse for "nested multipotential lineages" (Fig. 8B, S8E, F).

Then, we observed *NOTCH, EFNA*, *EPHA*, *WNT*, *ACKR* and *CCL* signaling in human

deep and upper layer with significant function in the development of synaptic and dendritic

cells [53] (Fig. 8B).

Our data also suggest that cognition-linked genes might form robust groupings according

species-specific and cell-type expression profiles. We detected many cognition-relative

genes expressed earlier in human than mouse, including *PTPRZ1*, *CNR1*, *PTN*, and

CLSTN2 (Fig. 4A, 5A, B, C, S5A, B), that enriched in cognition, learning and memory and

behavior pathways [45, 63, 76] (Fig. 5E, S5F), therefore understanding human cognition

development is probably earlier than those of mouse. In conclusion, our single-cell

analysis provides an essential resource for future studies directed at understanding the

difference developing neocortical trajectories, and excitatory neuron sub-types expression

profiles, and cognition-relative genes expression profiles during the early human and

mouse brain development.

METHODS

Data processing of scRNA-seq from Chromium system

In the early data processing, we applied the processed gene-cell data matrix without poor-quality cells from published study. We used Seurat package (v3.1.2) to process secondary filtration [77]. Only cells that expressed more than 500 genes were considered, only genes expressed in at least 5 single cells were included for further analysis. Additionally, we selected the homologous genes between human and mouse to process further analysis. In total, 12350 genes across 18446 mouse and 6623 human single cells remained for subsequent analysis. The data were normalized to a total of 1×10^4 molecules per cell for the sequencing depth using the Seurat package. The batch effect was mitigated by using the ScaleData function of Seurat (v3.1.2).

Data integration of scRNA-seq and identification of cell types

The Seurat package (v3.1.2) was used to integrate human and mouse scRNA-seq data. We applied the new normalization method 'SCTransform' to process cross-species clustering in order to better operation downstream integration [77]. Then, the Seurat package was used to perform linear dimensional reduction. we used SelectIntegrationFeatures or FindVariableFeatures function from Seurat and further analysis used 'FindIntegrationAnchors' to select 2000 highly variable genes as input for PCA. Then we identified significant PCs based on the JackStrawPlot function. Strong PC1-PC30 were used for UMAP to cluster the cells by FindClusters function with resolution 0.8. Clusters were identified by the expression of known cell-type markers. The markers EOMES, NEUROD6, GAD2 and MKI67 were used to identify the basic cell-type, including progenitor cells, excitatory neurons, inhibitory neurons and astrocytes, respectively.

Identification of DEGs between clusters

The DEGs of each cluster were identified using FindAllMarkers function (min.pct = 0,

logfc.threshold = 0, test.use = "wilcox") with the Seurat R package [77]. We used the

Wilcoxon rank-sum test (default), and top 10 DE genes (p < 0.05) by fold change were

identified for each cluster.

Correlation Analysis

For correlation analysis of merged human single cell and mouse single cell data, we used

integrated data from Seurat package and the Pearson-correlation coefficient calculated in

Hmisc package (version 4.3-0), and the relative visualization used package pheatmap

(version 1.0.12).

Constructing single cell trajectories in cerebral cortex

The Monocle 2 R package (version 2.10.1) were applied to construct single cell pseudo-

time trajectories to discover developmental transitions [78]. We used data matrix from

Seurat with 2000 highly variable genes into pseudo-time order. we then called

'differentialGeneTest' to process DEGs analysis in different cell-types. 'DDRTree' were

applied to reduce dimensional space and "orderCells" were used to sort cells. The

minimum spanning tree on cells and marker genes expression profiles were plotted using

the visualization functions "plot_cell_trajectory" for Monocle 2

Identifying genes relative to cell fate choices

We analyzed branches in single cell trajectories by BEAM and calILRs function, and we

selected genes with q-value < 0.01 and a mean expression value ≥ 0.18, Genes

dynamically expressed along the different branches were clustered using the

plot_multiple_branches_heatmap function and plot_genes_branched_heatmap function,

and Enriched GO terms of cluster-grouped genes were identified using clusterProfiler

package (version 3.10.1) [79]. Then, genes were clustered into different clusters by using

'plot_multiple_branches_pseudotime' and 'plot_genes_branched_pseudotime' to

visualize the expression profiles in different cell-types.

GO enrichment analysis

Gene ontology (GO) biological process enrichment analysis were performed on differently

expressed genes (DEGs) (p-value < 0.05, fold change (FC) > 1) using clusterProfiler

package (version 3.10.1) and Metascape [79, 80].

Analysing inter-lineage interactions within the neocortex

For comprehensive systematic analysis of inter-lineage interactions within the neocortex,

we use CellPhoneDB [46]. We used gene-cell matrix data from Seurat packages after

integration as the input data, and we considered only ligands and receptors expressed in

greater than 10% of the cells in any given subpopulation. Then, we seted the P-Value 0.05

to ensure the prominence. We called 'cellphonedb plot dot_plot' to visualize the ligand-

receptor interactions within the neocortical projection neuron.

Comparing gene expression pattern divergence

The pseudo-time of each cell was assigned by Monocle2, and used median function in R

to calculate the mean of pseudo-time in mouse and human trajectories, dividing cells into

two categories, including early stage of the cells and the latter stage of cells. and we

reconstructed the clustering included 132500 homologous genes within human and

mouse by using Seurat package [77, 78]. FindMarkers function helps us to calculate the

expression profiles between these two groups, and genes with average expression

difference > 0.585 natural log with $P < 0.05$ were selected as DEGs between human and

mouse. a part of genes visualized by 'plot_pseudotime_heatmap' function.

Functional protein association networks analysis

Functional protein association networks were calculated on DEGs using STRING, the

results visualized using Cytoscape [72, 81].

Connecting transcription factors to target genes

To find the potential transcription factors, TRRUST was used for search transcritional

regulatory interactions [82], and the results visulized using Cytoscape [72, 81].

Cell-cycle analysis

In the cell-cycle analysis, we applied scran packge in R (version 1.10.2) to score G1, S

and G2/M states of each cells [83]. we selected a cell-cycle related gene set with 43 genes

expressed during S and 54 genes expressed during G2/M from Seurat package [77].

These gene sets should be anti-correlated in their expression levels, and cells expressing

neither are likely to be in the G1 phase (not cycling).

Statistical analysis

Comparisons between two groups were made using wilcox. Sample size and P values

are given in the Figure legends.

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Figure1

A

Species	Age	Cells	Tissue	Gene number	Reference
Mouse	E14.5 and P0	18,446/18446	Cerebral cortex	13,250	
Human	5.85 to 37 pcw	6,655/6623	Cerebral cortex	13,250	
Species	Age	Cells	Tissue	Gene number	Reference
Mouse	E14.5 and P0	6,655/6655	Cerebral cortex	13,250	
Human	5.85 to 37 pcw	6,655/6623	Cerebral cortex	13,250	

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

A

• 00 SVZ • 10 RG • 11 RG • 12 G2/M • 13 GE

End

Start

Start

End

B

EOMES

NEUROD6

MKI67

GAD2

C

TOP2A

UBE2C

MKI67

CDK1

FBXO45

MLH3

DACH1

NPY

−log10(p_val)

avg_logFC

• 10 RG
• 11 RG
• NOT

D

Human   Mouse

pallium development
cerebral cortex development
forebrain development
telencephalon development
forebrain cell migration
central nervous system neuron development
central nervous system neuron differentiation
innervation
limbic system development
olfactory bulb development
olfactory lobe development
cell cycle G2/M phase transition
G2/M transition of mitotic cell cycle
regulation of chromosome segregation
regulation of nuclear division
regulation of mitotic nuclear division
mitotic sister chromatid segregation
sister chromatid segregation
nuclear chromosome segregation
organelle fission
chromosome segregation
nuclear division
mitotic nuclear division

68 60 52 44 36 28 20 12 4 4

−log(p value)

E

G1   S   G2M

SVZ
SVZ
Exc deep
Exc deep
Exc upper
Exc upper
Inh_striatal
Inh
Inh
Layel[19P]
RG
RG
G2/M
GE
Astrocytes
OPC
Microglia
Mesenchyme
Endothelial
Endothelial
Unknow
Unknow
Unknow

F

00 SVZ   10 RG   11 RG   13 GE

MCM5
GINS2
CDCA7
PRIM1
HELLS
NASP
GMNN
ATAD2
RAD51
RRM2
TIPIN
CASP8AP2
CLSPN
HMGB2
CDK1
NUSAP1
UBE2C
BIRC5
TPX2
TOP2A
NDC80
NUF2
CKS1B
MKI67
CENPF
FAM64A
SMC4
CCNB2
CKAP2L
CKAP2
AURKB
ANP32E
CDCA3
CDC20
AURKA
CKAP5
CENPE
GAS2L3

Module 1
s.genes

Module 2
g2m.genes

Figure 8