Interrogation of cancer gene dependencies reveals novel paralog interactions of autosome and sex
chromosome encoded genes

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Abstract

Genetic networks are characterized by extensive buffering. During tumour evolution, disruption of these
functional redundancies can create *de novo* vulnerabilities that are specific to cancer cells. In this regard,
paralog genes are of particular interest, as the loss of one paralog gene can render tumour cells
dependent on a remaining paralog. To systematically identify cancer-relevant paralog dependencies, we
searched for candidate dependencies using CRISPR screens and publicly available loss-of-function
datasets. Our analysis revealed >2,000 potential candidate dependencies, several of which were
subsequently experimentally validated. We provide evidence that *DNAJC15-DNAJC19*, *FAM50A-FAM50B*
and *RPP25-RPP25L* are novel cancer relevant paralog dependencies. Importantly, our analysis also
revealed unexpected redundancies between sex chromosome genes. We show that chrX- and chrY-
encoded paralogs, as exemplified by *ZFX-ZFY*, *DDX3X-DDX3Y* and *EIF1AX-EIF1AY*, are functionally linked
so that tumour cell lines from male patients with Y-chromosome loss become exquisitely dependent on
the chrX-encoded gene. We therefore propose genetic redundancies between chrX- and chrY- encoded
paralogs as a general therapeutic strategy for human tumours that have lost the Y-chromosome.

Introduction

Paralog genes that fulfill similar functions provides a degree of robustness of gene regulatory networks
to deleterious events[1–3]. These paralog genes arise as a result of gene duplications and subsequent
divergent evolution[4,5]. Paralog redundancies are of interest to cancer biology, as tumour-specific
processes like hypermethylation, mutations or copy number alterations can inactivate genes and
thereby reduce the extent of genetic buffering. Genes whose loss is buffered in non-neoplastic cells by a
paralog can thus become dependencies in tumours where the redundant paralog is absent. Examples for
such paralog dependencies in cancer cells have been identified and validated before, and include *ENO1-*
ENO2[6], *SMARCA2-SMARCA4*[7–9], *ARID1A-ARID1B*[10] or *STAG1-STAG2*[11,12].

In all validated cases, the tumour-specific loss of one paralog gene creates a specific dependency on a
remaining paralog. Accordingly, therapeutic inhibition of the remaining paralog gene is assumed to be
safe, because non-tumour cells still retain the genetic buffer to tolerate the inhibition without systemic
side effects. Another advantage of tumour-specific vulnerabilities created by loss of a paralogous gene is
the availability of a tractable biomarker; i.e. measuring loss of Paralog A in tumours allows to select
patients that would respond to inhibition of the synthetic lethal Paralog B. Therefore, paralog
dependencies represent a highly attractive concept for cancer drug target identification. However, a
systematic understanding of cancer-relevant paralog dependencies is still elusive to date, although
CRISPR-based combinatorial screens and bioinformatics discovery pipelines are beginning to shed light
on the tumour redundancy map[3,13−20].

In addition to mutagenic processes such as gene silencing, point mutations or gene amplification, human
cancers frequently lose large amounts of their genetic material during the process of tumourigenesis[21].
Deletions can involve one or multiple genes or, as is being appreciated, extend to loss of whole
chromosomes, one of the most prevalent being loss of chromosome Y (LOY). Cancer incidence is
generally higher in males[22,23], a fact that has been attributed to the general protective effect of the
chrXX status in females that allows buffering of deleterious mutations[24,25]. LOY has been reported in ~93%
of esophageal adenocarcinomas[26], ~12% of male breast cancers[27] and ~23% of urothelial bladder cancer
samples[28]. Mosaic loss of chrY has also been observed outside of the oncology context, where it has
been correlated with increased age[29−31]. LOY has been associated with a number of pathophysiological
conditions, including clonal hematopoiesis and Alzheimer's disease[32,33]. Due to the plethora of disease
states in which LOY occurs, strategies to eliminate cells involved in pathological conditions, including
neoplastic transformation is clearly of general medical interest.

We set out to discover cancer-relevant paralog dependencies by an integrative approach of combining
multiple -omics datasets in panels of human cancer cell lines. This analysis reveals 2,040 candidate
paralog gene interactions, a subset of which we validate experimentally. Importantly, we uncover a sex-
chromosome-specific set of genes that is functionally buffered between the X and Y chromosomes. We
demonstrate that targeted depletion of the chrX-encoded gene in LOY tumour cell lines offers an
attractive strategy to treat tumours that have lost chrY. In addition, these results provide a generalizable
framework of how to eliminate putative pre-pathogenic LOY cells.

Results

CRISPR/Cas9 screens identify *CSTF2-CSTF2T* as a paralog dependency

We devised a set of proof-of-principle CRISPR screens to investigate the concept of cancer-specific
paralog dependencies. We started by cataloging potential human paralog genes from Ensembl BioMarT,
as defined by all genes with at least one other paralog in the same family without any further
constraints on homology or family size. Most of the multi-gene families contain two to five paralog
genes and the biggest class of genes are protein-coding genes (Figure 1a,b). A compact protein domain-
focused CRISPR gRNA library[34] of ~10,000 gRNAs was generated to permit screening across multiple
tumour cell lines. The library genes were manually curated to contain genes that are frequently deleted

in human solid tumours, including 460 unique paralog genes from 199 families. Loss-Of-Function (LOF)
screens were then carried out across seven cancer cell lines (Hep 3B2.1-7, HuP-T4, MIA PaCa-2, NCI-
H1373, NCI-H1993, NCI-H2009, PC-9) with annotated deep deletions (see Methods).

Paralog genes scoring as significantly depleted in our screens were cross-referenced across the different
cell lines to understand whether any of their family members were annotated as deleted (Figure 1c,
Supplementary Table 1). Accordingly, we found that *ATP4B* was specifically required in Hep 3B2.1-7 cells
that harbor a deletion of *ATP1B2*. Both genes are subunits of potassium-transporting ATPases, but
physical or functional interactions have not been described. Furthermore, we observed that NCI-H1993
cells were particularly sensitive to loss of *CSTF2*, likely due to a deletion of its paralog *CSTF2T*. *CSTF2* and
CSTF2T encode the CstF-64 and CstF-64tau proteins respectively, that have partially overlapping
functions in the Cleavage stimulation Factor (CstF) complex, a regulatory component of the mRNA
cleavage and polyadenylation machinery[35–37]. We confirmed the sensitivity of *CSTF2T*-negative cells to
depletion of *CSTF2* (Figure 1d, Supplementary Figure 1). Mechanistically, we observed that depletion of
CSTF2 leads to compensatory induction of *CSTF2T* in *CSTF2T*-proficient cells (Figure 1e), confirming
previous reports describing that *CSTF2* and *CSTF2T* can regulate each other's expression[36–38]. This
compensatory upregulation is not observed in *CSTF2T*-deficient cell lines (Figure 2f), providing a
hypothesis for the dependency on *CSTF2*. Of note, *CSTF2* and *CSTF2T* are encoded by a single essential
gene in yeast, *RNA15* (*YGL044C*)[39], suggesting that cellular viability might depend on the activity of both
paralogues in mice and humans. In mice, previous studies suggest that *Cstf2* and *Cstf2t* form a
functionally redundant pair of genes with an essential function in certain contexts. Embryonic stem cells
lacking *Cstf2* had altered pluripotency and could be differentiated into mesoderm and ectoderm, but
not endoderm[38,40]. Autosomally encoded *CSTF2T* is required in pachytene spermatocytes to overcome
the lack of expression of X-encoded *CSTF2* due to meiotic sex chromosome inactivation, leading to male
sterility[35]. Hence, some but not all functions of Cstf2 can be assumed by Cstf2t.

In summary, this set of proof-of-concept screens - despite their limited scope - demonstrates that *bona*
fide paralog dependencies are detectable using pooled LOF screens in cancer cell lines.

Bioinformatic identification of cancer-relevant candidate paralog dependencies

Due to the limited search space and number of paralog dependencies retrieved from our focused
experimental approach, we decided to search for candidate interactions in a systematic manner,
leveraging publicly available LOF and expression data from hundreds of cancer cell lines. We
hypothesized that candidate genetic interactions between paralogous genes could be detected by
looking at the relationship between expression of Paralog A and dependency on Paralog B. In essence, if
low expression of Paralog A ("biomarker") was correlated with sensitivity to loss of Paralog B ("query"),
this would identify a potential genetic interaction that could subsequently be evaluated. Depletion
scores from complementary datasets[41] of pooled CRISPR and shRNA screens (AVANA[42], Sanger[43] and
DRIVE[44]) and corresponding gene and protein expression data[45,46] for paralog genes were collected.
Correlation coefficients and corresponding p-values between expression levels of biomarkers and
depletion scores of queries for as many pairs within each paralog family where expression/depletion
data were available were then calculated. This approach resulted in a large matrix of correlation tests,

containing 14,064 unique genes (biomarkers or queries) and 108,092 unique biomarker-query pairs
(Supplementary Table 2), hereafter called PaCT (Paralog Cancer Targets). The obtained correlation
coefficients was then filtered via a cutoff of 3*SD (standard deviation) and p-value < 0.05 to generate a
hit set (Figure 2a,b; Supplementary Table 2). Simulating the distribution of Spearman correlation
coefficients by randomly assigning each query to a gene from different family yields very few
interactions at similarly strong correlations, indicating the specificity of PaCT candidate pairs (see
Methods; Figure 2c).

In contrast to other recent paralog studies, we did not limit the PaCT search space to paralog pairs by a
similarity cutoff or membership in a paralog gene family of a given (small) size[13,19]. An additional
advantage of PaCT is the ability to identify candidate interaction partners for genes that have not been
targeted themselves as queries, as long as expression data are available for them to act as biomarkers.
Overall, of 3,084,147 possible pairs (including self-interactions) from 3,587 paralogue families, PaCT is
blind to 2,975,741 pairs (2,795 genes), due to missing depletion and/or expression data for either query
or biomarker or both. This also includes pairs where information is available only for a single cell line and,
therefore, where no correlation can be calculated. From the remaining 108,406 paralogue pairs, 2,040
unique pairs (1.9%) were identified as significant interactions, and for 106,366 paralogue pairs (98.1%;
14,055 genes), we identified a non-significant correlation in our analysis (Figure 2d).

We then sought to identify possible differences between hit and non-hit paralogue pairs. Insufficient
variability in gene/protein expression and/or depletion scores across the cell lines could underlie low
correlation coefficients across our dataset. We investigated this for gene expression levels and depletion
scores from the AVANA dataset as an example. Indeed, we identified a small, but statistically significant
difference in variabilities for both modalities (p-value < 2.2×10^{-16}, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test) between
hits and non-hits (Figure 2e,f). We further hypothesized that sequence similarity between individual
paralog genes could impact the likelihood for an interaction between them. Indeed, based on Ensembl
BioMarT DNA sequence similarity, we observed a significant trend that genes involved in significant
paralog interactions exhibit higher similarity than those of non-significant pairs (Figure 2g).

Interestingly, significant pairwise candidate interactions are observed between paralogs in families of
any size (Figure 2h). Even though many candidate pairs are interactions within 2-member paralog
families, we scored significant correlations in larger families of up to 20 members or more. In smaller
families, the majority are positive correlations; with increasing family size, the balance shifts towards an
even split with negative correlations. On average (AVANA data), we identified 8.4% significant
interactions per family when family size is <= 10 that decreased to 1.4% for families containing more
than 10 genes (Figure 2i, Supplementary Figure 2 a,b). Finally, we looked at connectivity within paralog
families and observed that this varies widely (Figure 2j,k, Supplementary Figure 2c-f). Among the hit
pairs, some queries and biomarkers act as hubs, being involved in multiple or all significant interactions,
independent of family size. However, other candidates have a more uniform distribution, being
identified in only a subset of hit pairs. It remains to be determined what factors underlie these different
degrees of connectivity.

As previously described by others[18,47], some gRNAs in the Sanger and AVANA datasets are promiscuous
and match to sites beyond the intended target. For PaCT, we used processed AVANA and Sanger scores
[42,43] and we confirmed (for the AVANA data as an example) that most genes had zero or one gRNA
excluded from the analysis for reasons identified by the investigators of the study (Supplementary

Figure 2g; Supplementary Table 2). However, we confirmed previous observations that a sizeable
fraction of query genes (25%) had non-uniquely mapping gRNAs assigned to them (Supplementary
Figure 2h; Supplementary Table 2), constituting a potential source of false negatives [18,47] in our analysis.

Of the 2,472 candidate hit query-biomarker pairs (2,040 of which are non-redundant, involving 2,451
unique genes), 57% displayed a positive correlation between query dependency score and biomarker
expression. Most pairs (70%) were found using gene expression data, reflecting the greater robustness
of this dataset. We also included genes whose genetic dependency correlates with their own expression,
and 20% of our hits are indeed such "self-pairs". 20 of them have been previously described as CYCLOPS
(copy number alterations yielding cancer liabilities owing to partial loss) genes[48,49] that, when expressed
at low levels, are associated with greater sensitivity to further LOF. Similar to previous observations[49],
CYCLOPS genes are overrepresented among the significant hits identified by PaCT (20%), compared to
their representation among all potential interactions (13%), mirroring the high frequency of genomic
loss in cancer cell lines. In total, our PaCT analysis highlighted 370 unique candidate self-interactions.

The largest proportion of candidate hit query-biomarker pairs (46%) was detected in the AVANA dataset
– representing the largest and most comprehensive database in terms of cell lines included -, followed
by Sanger (37%) and DRIVE (17%). The covered cell lines and genes overlap to a certain extent, but each
dataset contains unique cell lines and genes, in addition to differences in methodologies for generating
LOF phenotypes (RNAi in DRIVE vs. CRISPR in AVANA and Sanger)[41]. Thus, it is not surprising that many
hits are found uniquely within one dataset or data domain (gene or protein expression; Figure 3a).
Nevertheless, 17% (432/2,472) of candidate pairs are recovered more than once, strengthening our
confidence in the PaCT approach. The largest overlap was observed between AVANA and Sanger
positive correlations pairs using gene expression as a biomarker, confirming those as high-quality
candidates. To illustrate the PaCT approach, Figure 3b shows examples of strong negative or positive
correlations within small paralog families along the diagonal, i.e. between expression and depletion of
the same gene or closely related paralogs, which are listed next to each other.

We complemented the PaCT approach by an additional analysis of the AVANA, DRIVE and Sanger data.
First, we classified cell lines as sensitive and resistant to depletion of a given query gene by k-means
clustering (k=3, leaving out the intermediate group). Then, we tested whether the expression of a given
biomarker gene was significantly different between the sensitive and resistant cluster. The most significant
negative correlation hits are almost exclusively self-interactions (Supplementary Figure 3a-c), consistent
with the notion of increased sensitivity to loss of highly expressed genes that might act as proliferation
drivers. On the other hand, the most significant positive correlation hits are pairs of paralogs
(Supplementary Figure 3a-c), supporting the hypothesis of functional redundancy and synthetic lethality
between those genes. Overall, the PaCT top hits also emerged as most significant in this analysis.

In order to characterize the PaCT hits, we investigated gene-centric parameters of the candidate pairs
(without self-interactions) that have been hypothesized by us and others to affect the likelihood of
genetic interaction between paralog genes[13,18]. We observed that some of our candidate interacting
paralog pairs (13%) are involved in protein-protein interactions (PPI) with each other, as annotated in
BIOGRID[50] (v4.3.196; Supplementary Figure 3d). We then checked the candidate pairs for homo- and
heteromeric interactions[3], where homomeric means the assembly of a protein with itself whereas
heteromeric paralogs assemble with each other. None of the candidate pairs is found on the (short) list

of heteromers, and ~3% of queries or biomarkers are annotated as homomers (Supplementary Figure
3d). We also compared our list of candidate pairs to the Critical Paralog Groups (CPGs) defined by
Modos et al.[51], i.e. paralog groups that play important roles in signaling flow and pathway cross-talk. ~2%
of PaCT pairs and 4-6% of query or biomarker genes are annotated as members of CPGs (Supplementary
Figure 3d). Finally, we investigated whether the candidate interacting pairs share the same common
ortholog and whether that ortholog is essential in different model organisms (Supplementary Figure 3e).
While these numbers provide a mere estimate, due to the caveats of ambiguous and incomplete
ortholog mapping, we expected and observed increasing fractions of common essential orthologs with
increasing evolutionary distance – from 0.4% in *M. musculus* to >5.5% in *S. cerevisiae*. Accordingly, the
fraction of orthologs that could not be mapped also increased, while the fraction of non-shared
orthologs decreased.

Together, these characteristics of shared evolutionary origin and essentiality, or physical interaction,
describe some but not all parameters that underlie potential genetic and functional interaction between
paralogous genes. Recently, several groups have investigated paralog redundancy and interaction using
various computational and experimental methods[13–20]. We compared our PaCT candidates with their
sets of potentially interacting paralogs and recovered 12-67% of published pairs in our hit list
(Supplementary Figure 3f). Conversely, 15% of PaCT pairs are found in any other dataset. The published
sets originate from vastly different search spaces – from a few hundred experimentally tested pairs to
computational predictions of the complete interaction matrix of all annotated paralogs. Therefore, the
variation in recovery is not surprising and consistent with comparisons between the published
datasets[13–20].

In addition, PaCT also identified several paralog dependencies that have recently been described,
including *SMARCA2-SMARCA4* or *SLC25A28-SLC25A37*[19]. We used CRISPR GFP-depletion assays to
experimentally validate the genetic dependencies on *FAM50A* in cells where *FAM50B* expression is low,
and on *VPS4A* in *VPS4B*-low cell lines (Figure 3c,d and Supplementary Figure 3g,h), two paralog
interactions that have recently been functionally characterized[19,52,53].

While most hits from dual-LOF screens and experimentally validated paralog dependencies rely on the
absence of Paralog A to detect dependency on Paralog B (or partial loss in a CYCLOPS interaction), PaCT
in principle identifies candidate interactions at any level of expression. To illustrate this, we calculated
the fraction of hit pairs with a relevant query depletion (AVANA or Sanger score < -0.5 or DRIVE score < -
3) in at least one cell line when the biomarker expression is low, medium or high (Supplementary Figure
3i). Indeed, the theoretical validation rate of candidate interactions is ~60% for all expression bins.

Overall, these findings validate PaCT as a complementary approach to retrieve validated as well as novel
candidates for interactions between paralog genes.

RPP25-RPP25L and DNAJC15-DNAJC19 are novel cancer-relevant paralog interactions

In addition to previously described paralog interactions, we discovered several novel high-confidence
candidate dependencies, among them *RPP25-RPP25L*. RPP25 has been described as a component of the

RNase P and RNAse MRP ribonuclease complexes that process pre-tRNA and pre-rRNA sequences,
respectively[54–57]. Little is known about RPP25L, a role in tRNA or rRNA processing has not been
functionally validated. Sensitivity to loss of *RPP25L* was observed to be correlated with low expression of
RPP25 (Figure 4a, Supplementary Figure 4a,b). This was then experimentally validated using CRISPR
depletion assays. No depletion of *RPP25L*-targeting gRNAs was observed in cell lines that express *RPP25*
(Figure 4b,c). Overexpression of either *RPP25* or *RPP25L* in the sensitive U-2OS and KYSE-150 fully
rescued sensitivity to *RPP25L* LOF, demonstrating functional redundancy between these two paralogs
(Figure 4d, Supplementary Figure 4c). Interestingly, we observed a reduction in levels of endogenous
RPP25L upon ectopic overexpression of RPP25 (Supplementary Figure 4d,e) suggesting the existence of
feedback mechanisms that regulate the levels of RPP25L in response to changes in the abundance of its
paralog protein. In order to elucidate the underlying molecular mechanism of this paralog interaction,
further investigation of their role in pre-tRNA and pre-rRNA processing will be required.

Gene silencing is often accompanied by promoter hypermethylation[58]. We calculated the correlation of
methylation levels[46] of Paralog A with depletion scores of Paralog B and compared the methylation
correlation coefficients to the expression correlation coefficients from PaCT. As shown in Figure 5a,
(Supplementary Figure 5a,b; Supplementary Table 2) for some of the pairs, methylation status of Paralog
A could be a useful biomarker for dependency on Paralog B. In particular, we could also detect a
negative correlation between methylation and gene expression for multiple CpGs in the promoter
regions of *FAM50B* and *DNAJC15* (Figure 5b,c, Supplementary Figure 5c). Although correlation does not
necessarily imply causation, it is feasible that methylation could underlie low expression of the
biomarker paralog in these cases. DNAJC15-DNAJC19 has not been described as a paralog redundancy
before, therefore we set out to validate this interaction experimentally. *DNAJC15* expression levels
predict sensitivity of cell lines to loss of its paralog *DNAJC19* according to our PaCT analysis (Figure 5d,
Supplementary Figure 5d,e). We confirmed the sensitivity to *DNAJC19* knockout in cell lines that do not
express *DNAJC15* (Figure 5e) in CRISPR depletion assays (Figure 5f), including cells with high levels of
DNAJC15 as negative controls. Cell lines that do express *DNAJC15* were predicted to be insensitive to
loss of *DNAJC19* and accordingly, *DNAJC19*-targeting gRNAs are not depleted from the pool of cells over
time. To conclusively demonstrate functional redundancy between the two paralogs, we overexpressed
DNAJC15i in the sensitive cell line NCI-H1975 and found that we could thereby rescue the dependency
on *DNAJC19* (Figure 5g and h).

Paralog buffering between chrX- and chrY-encoded genes

Loss of chromosomes have been reported to be frequently occur during cancer development[21].
Assessing gene expression and copy number data across The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA), did not
reveal obvious bimodal distributions for any chromosome except chrY, suggesting that that whole
chromosome loss is not frequent enough to be detected in this manner across this dataset
(Supplementary Figure 6a,b). As described above, LOY has been associated with increasing age and
noted in some cancers derived from male patients[21,26–28]. In agreement with this, a bimodal expression
distribution for chrY genes within 1.5% of all male TCGA samples, was observed (Figure 6a). Binning
samples by tumour purity shows that LOY is more prevalent in samples with higher tumour purity,
indicating that LOY could indeed happen more frequently in cancers compared to adjacent normal tissue

(Supplementary Figure 6c). Due to the absence of matched non-tumour samples from TCGA, we used
data from the Genotype-Tissue Expression (GTEx) project to estimate the frequency of LOY in normal
tissues. In corroboration of our hypothesis, at the same 99th percentile cutoff, no LOY was observed
across normal samples GTEx (Supplementary Figure 6d).

These studies were further strengthened by analysis of the prevalence of LOY across cancer cell lines
used for the AVANA, DRIVE and Sanger screens. LOY was calculated as for the TCGA samples using copy
number and expression data and observed in 142 of 459 male cell lines (31% of male, 14% of all cell lines)
in our dataset (Figure 6b,c). These studies were supported by analysis of STR profiles for 455 cell lines
(46% of cell lines used for PaCT) and analysis of the amelogenin marker for presence or absence of chrY
(Figure 6i, Supplementary Table 3)(Figure 6i, Supplementary Table 3). We found that the previous sex
assignment was accurate, and LOY status was confirmed for all previously identified cell lines. We
further validated the sex chromosome status for a subset of cell lines by a PCR strategy (Figure 6j).

We next investigated whether PaCT retrieved any candidate interactions where the biomarker gene is
located on chrY to potentially exploit tumour LOY. Only 24 chrY genes were screened in the AVANA,
DRIVE or Sanger datasets, 22 of which are part of our paralog families. Interestingly, in four of these
pairs, the query genes are located on chrX: *DDX3X-DDX3Y, RPS4X-RPS4Y1, ZFX-ZFY, EIF1AX-EIF1AY*
(Figure 6d). These pairs also rank highly in the predictions by DeKegel *et al.*[13]. Notably, all four chrX
query genes are genes that escape X chromosome inactivation[59,60], and DDX3X is among a small set of
tumour-suppressor genes that escape from X-inactivation (EXITS genes)[61], where mutations occur more
frequently in male cancers and co-occur with LOY.

In order to validate dependency on the chrX paralog when the chrY paralog is not expressed (or chrY is
lost), we used CLIFF (*Cell Line dIFFerences*)[62], a web application for the analysis of differences between
two sets of cell lines in terms of differential gene or protein expression, DNA copy number, gene signatures,
sensitivity to shRNA depletion or CRISPR gene knock-out and other parameters. First, we used k-means
clustering to classify cell lines as sensitive and resistant (k=3, leaving out the intermediate group) based on
their depletion scores in the AVANA dataset for each of the four chrX paralog hit genes. We then analyzed
these groups in CLIFF and looked for the parameters that are most significantly different between the
sensitive and resistant cell lines. As a control, we checked that the top gene in the AVANA category is the
respective query, i.e. *DDX3X* for the classification run on the *DDX3X* depletion scores (Figure 6e,
Supplementary Figure 6e-g). Other AVANA discriminators included some or all of the other chrX hit genes.
Conversely, chrY genes, with the respective paralog gene at the top, are the main discriminators based on
gene and protein expression, confirming LOY as a potential biomarker that predicts sensitivity to loss of
the four selected chrX genes (Figure 6e, Supplementary Figure 6e-g). As expected, LOY cell lines are
therefore enriched among the sensitive cell lines for all four chrX genes (Figure 6f, Supplementary Figure
6h-j; p-value sensitive vs. resistant = 10^{-4} for all four genes, Fisher's exact test). Accordingly, AVANA
depletion scores for *DDX3X* (Figure 6g), *EIF1AX, ZFX* and *RPS4X* (Supplementary Figure 6h-m) are generally
lower in LOY cell lines than male cell lines. However, some male cell lines are also sensitive to loss of the
chrX-encoded paralog, indicating that the genetic buffering by the chrY-encoded gene might be
incomplete in some contexts.

Consistent with these analyses, a Random Forest (RF) machine-learning model trained with chrY gene and
DDX3X paralog family gene expression data on the Sanger depletion dataset predicted sensitive and

insensitive cells for the AVANA dataset with an accuracy of 0.82. A variable importance analysis revealed
KDM5D, *DDX3Y*, *EIF1AY* and *RPS4Y1* expression as the top predictors for *DDX3X* sensitivity (Figure 6h).
Similar models for *ZFX* and *EIF1AX* were trained on Sanger data, predicted AVANA data with an accuracy of
0.715 and 0.82 respectively (Supplementary Figure 6n,o).

Genetic rescue experiments were performed to validate the putative functional redundancy between
chrX/Y-encoded paralogs. *DDX3X* dependency negatively correlates with the expression levels of *DDX3Y*
across a panel of >600 cancer cell lines (Figure 7a) i.e. across the AVANA dataset, low expression of
DDX3Y- but not other family members correlated with sensitivity to *DDX3X* depletion (Supplementary
Figure 7a, b). The *DDX3X-DDX3Y* functional redundancy was previously suggested in a hamster cell line[63]
and Raji cells[64] but has not been studied in the context of LOY. In HT-1080 cells, that possess chrY,
whereas gRNAs targeting *DDX3X* do not impact the proliferative capacity of these cells, rapid depletion
was observed in the context of a gRNA simultaneously targeting *DDX3X* and *DDX3Y* (Figure 7b).
Importantly, the effects of the *DDX3X-DDX3Y* dual-specific guide could be completely rescued by
expression of gRNA-resistant cDNA constructs for *DDX3X* or *DDX3Y*. Similar results were obtained for
another male cancer cell line, HCT 116 (Supplementary Figure 7c). KURAMOCHI cells, derived from a
female patient, are dependent on *DDX3X* (Supplementary Figure 7d) demonstrating that buffering of the
Y-encoded gene is *a priori* not part of the genetic makeup. Finally, loss of Y-chromosome was confirmed
in KNS-42 cells by PCR (Figure 6j). Rapid depletion was observed with gRNAs targeting both *DDX3X* and
DDX3Y simultaneously as well as gRNA targeting *DDX3X* alone (Figure 7c). Ectopic expression of either
DDX3X or *DDX3Y* completely reversed the phenotype whereas a functionally unrelated X chromosome
located gene X, *ZFX*, did not.

These findings were then extended to additional PaCT genes with a putative chrX/Y-encoded
redundancy. Sensitivity to *EIF1AX* correlates with the expression of *EIF1AY*, similar to *DDX3X-DDX3Y*,
(Figure 7d, Supplementary Figure 7e, f). LOY resulted in a strong dependency on *EIF1AX* (Figure 7f)
whereas cells retaining chrY were only sensitive to gRNAs simultaneously targeting *EIF1AX* and *EIF1AY*
(Figure 7e). Depletion could be reversed upon expression of gRNA-resistant cDNA constructs encoding
for *EIF1AX* or *EIF1AY* (Figure 7e, f). Similar results were obtained with gRNAs targeting *RPS4X* or *RPS4Y*,
(Supplementary Figure 7g). In addition to *DDX3X-DDX3Y* and *EIF1AX-EIF1AY*, *ZFX-ZFY* emerged as an
additional functionally redundant paralog pair from our PaCT analysis. Sensitivity of cancer cell lines to
the loss of *ZFX* correlates with the expression of *ZFY* and, less strongly, with *ZNF711* (Figure 7g,
Supplementary Figure 7h,j). As the sensitivity to *ZFX* loss-of-function is less pronounced in KNS-42 cells
in the AVANA dataset[42], we turned to female Cal-120 cells for depletion and rescue experiments.
CRISPR/Cas9-mediated loss of *ZFX* resulted in depletion of GFP- and gRNA-expressing cells. This
phenotype could be rescued with gRNA-resistant cDNA constructs encoding for *ZFX* or *ZFY*, validating
the functional redundancy between the two proteins (Figure 7h).

In order to confirm that loss of chrY is the causative event in dependency on the paralogs encoded on
chrX we designed an approach to engineer removal of chrY (induced LOY, iLOY). Similar to published
approaches that have demonstrated loss of the targeted chromosome [65,66], a pool of 18 gRNAs targeting
chrY genes was introduced in HT-1080 cells ectopically expressing either *DDX3X* or *ZFX* [62,63] (Figure 7i).
LOY was validated by PCR (Figure 6j). Two independent clones were derived and subsequently treated
with gRNAs targeting *DDX3X*, *ZFX* and *EIF1AX*. Whereas no phenotype was observed in parental HT-1080
cells (Figure 7b,f), LOY clones were sensitive to gRNAs for the chrX-encoded paralog genes. This

sensitivity was lost or reduced upon ectopic expression of corresponding gRNA resistant constructs, e.g
HT-1080 iLOY *ZFX* are sensitive to a gRNA targeting *DDX3X* whereas HT-1080 iLOY *DDX3X* are not (Figure
7j and Supplementary Figure 7j).

Altogether, these data suggest that selective targeting of paralogs encoded on the X-chromosome, for
which genetic buffering with a chrY-encoded gene exists, might be a generalizable strategy to target LOY
tumours. The iLOY experiments validate the loss of chrY as the root cause for this dependency. To the
best of our knowledge, these are the first examples for synthetic lethal interactions between paralogs
located on the X and Y chromosomes.

Discussion

Exploiting distorted genetic buffering in human malignancies represents a promising therapeutic
concept. The clinical activity of poly ADP ribose polymerase (PARP) inhibitors in cancers with defects in
the homologous recombination-based DNA damage repair pathway[67–69] underlines this point. Paralog
genes, originating from gene duplication events, represent an additional subset of these general
synthetic lethal genetic interactions where tumour-specific loss of a paralog gene creates a
therapeutically exploitable dependency on the remaining paralog gene. In this study, we
identified >2000 candidate paralog dependencies relevant to human cancer. We have experimentally
validated a subset of these paralog pairs and provide evidence that genetic buffering between the sex
chromosomes could provide an attractive therapeutic strategy for human cancers of individuals that
have lost the Y chromosome in malignant cells.

Our analysis was confined to cancer-relevant interactions that can be identified in the respective cell
lines used and genes targeted in publicly available CRISPR/RNAi LOF screens. Due to lack of equal
representation of different cancers within the datasets this could lead to a bias for certain tumour types.
As described, our discovery pipeline is also "blind" to certain other cases, including uniform expression
or depletion of a paralog across all screened cell lines. This is because expression-dependency
calculations rely on varying gene expression and depletion scores of one paralog gene across these cell
lines. Therefore, approaches like PaCT together with combinatorial genetic screens will further advance
our understanding of genetic redundancies. It will be interesting to determine if paralog interactions can
be tissue specific and if, within larger families, subsets of genes can have a greater or lesser functional
redundancy – a result suggested by our study. If true, this could hint towards the resistance of sub-
families and help to functionally annotate understudied paralog genes.

As the PaCT approach relies on publicly available screening data, the caveats of the original experiments,
such as suboptimal gRNA design in some instances, are carried over into our dataset. The *DNAJC15-*
DNAJC19 example illustrates such a case, where all gRNAs in the public dataset also target a pseudogene
sequence. While our experimental validation uses independently designed gRNAs, a potential partial
function of the presumed pseudogene will have to be determined. Furthermore, additional
investigations will show whether *DNAJC15* and *DNAJC19* indeed both play a role in mitochondrial
morphogenesis, and whether *RPP25L* is a *bona fide* subunit of the RNase P/MRP complexes.

A number of mechanisms can underlie the paralog loss. In addition to mutation and deletion we provide
evidence that epigenetic mechanisms can also play a role. Validated paralog pairs *DNAJC15-DNAJC19*
and *FAM50A-FAM50B*, provide examples where high promoter methylation could, in part, account for
decreased expression of one paralog gene. This suggests that DNA hypermethylation in tumours could
expose novel vulnerabilities that could be exploited therapeutically. Future research will have to clarify if
vulnerabilities originating from DNA hypermethylation are stable enough to permit long-term treatment.

Our study revealed extensive genetic redundancy between the sex chromosomes. We identified four
candidate paralog dependencies (*EIF1AX-EIF1AY*, *DDX3X-DDX3Y*, *RPS4AX-RPS4Y1* and *ZFX-ZFY*) of which
we validated three experimentally. Our data suggest that cell lines originating from individuals with chrX
and chrY become sensitive to the loss of the chrX-encoded gene upon loss of chrY. While this concept
could in principle be exploited therapeutically to treat LOY tumours, premalignant states of mosaic LOY
in hematopoiesis or ageing-associated LOY, several hurdles would have to be overcome. It would be
important to ensure selectivity of the targeting therapeutic between highly similar paralogs. Although
we have not observed LOY across the GTEx dataset, it is possible that alternative mechanisms may also
lead to down-regulation of the chrY expressed paralog in normal tissues. While not explicitly addressed,
recent studies imply incomplete redundancy for *EIF1AX-EIF1AY* and *DDX3X-DDX3Y* in different contexts
in absence of LOY[70–72].

Overall, our study identifies cancer-relevant paralog dependencies and provides a framework for
validation and future discovery as further panels of functionally validated cancer cell lines become
available. While our PaCT approach currently addresses gene expression, deletion and methylation in
the paralog genetic space, the approach is generalizable and could be performed analogously for non-
paralog genes as queries, and mutations, passenger deletions or other tractable aberrations as
biomarkers. We envisage that this will identify additional testable hypotheses for targeted cancer
treatment.

Materials and Methods

424 **Materials and Methods**

425 <u>Cell culture</u>

426 All cell lines and the respective media are listed in Supplementary Table 4. Cell lines were regularly
427 checked for mycoplasma, authenticated by STR profiling (Eurofins Genomics) and kept at low passage
428 numbers in humidified incubators at 37°C and 5% CO_2.
429

<u>Generation of Cas9- and paralog-expressing cell lines</u>

cDNA sequences for Cas9 and paralog genes were human codon-optimized, synthesized and cloned into
their respective vector backbone (Supplementary Table 4) at Genscript Biotech Corporation. Cells were
lentivirally transduced. Viral particles were generated using the Lenti-X Single Shot System (Clontech).
72 hours later, stable transgenic cell pools were selected using puromycin or blasticidin (see
Supplementary Table 4 for details).
436

<u>CRISPR/Cas9 library design, cloning and virus production</u>

The majority of genes in the gRNA library were manually selected from (i) paralog families of 2-5
members, (ii) genes frequently deleted in TCGA samples with a focus on deep deletions in lung
adenocarcinoma, lung squamous cell carcinoma, colon adenocarcinoma, liver hepatocellular carcinoma,
pancreatic adenocarcinoma, ovarian serous cystadenocarcinoma and prostate adenocarcinoma. gRNA
sequences were selected to target protein domains (annotated using PFAM domain identifiers) as
described[34], as well as control sequences for a total of 9574 gRNAs (Supplementary Table 1).

Pooled gRNA oligonucelotides (20-mer target sequences plus cloning adapters;
TGCTGTTGACAGTGAGCGCGTCTCTCACCG[20xN]GTTTGGAGACGCCTAGGATCGACGCGGACAACA; Twist
Bioscience) were PCR-amplified (0.1 ng DNA input, 24 parallel reactions, 15 cycles). Pooled reactions
were purified using the QIAquick PCR purification kit (Qiagen) and digested with BsmBI. The vector
backbone (lentiviral vector coexpressing sgRNA, GFP and NeoR, similar to sgETN[73]) was prepared by
BsmBI digestion, dephosphorylation and purification as above. Ligation was performed in 14 parallel
reactions using T7 ligase and remaining uncut backbone was removed by BsmBI digestion. Ligation
products were purified by phenol extraction, transformed into MegaX DH10B T1 electrocompetent
bacterial cells (Invitrogen) following manufacturer's protocol and plated on LB/Ampicillin plates.
Colonies were combined and maxi-preps were performed at ~7000x colonies per sgRNA.

Lentivirus was produced in 293T-Lenti-X cells (Clontech) using 10 µg of library DNA and Ready-to-use
Lentiviral Packaging Plasmid Mix (Cellecta, 0.5 µg/µL) per 10 cm dish (20 dishes in total). 293T-Lenti-X
were plated without antibiotics and transfected the next day using Lipofectamine LTX & Plus (Thermo
Fisher). Medium was changed after 7 h of incubation and viral supernatant was harvested after 48 h.
Virus titration was carried out individually for each cell line using three different amounts of viral
supernatant in the presence of 8 µg/mL polybrene. Transduction efficacy was evaluated 72 h after
infection by measuring GFP expression by flow cytometry.

Primer sequences are listed in Supplementary Table 4.
462

CRISPR/Cas9 screens

Cas9-expressing cell lines were transduced with the sgRNA library at a multiplicity of infection of ~0.3 in
the presence of 8 μg/mL polybrene. To this end, 44 x 10^6 cells were cultured in four or more T175 flasks
for 12/18 population doublings, representing 1000-fold library coverage. Cell numbers were adapted
according to measured GFP percentage after initial infection. From a pellet of the respective cell number
at the end point, genomic DNA was isolated using the QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (Qiagen). Amplicons around
the sgRNA sequences were PCR amplified (1 μg input per PCR reaction, 29 cycles) with barcoded primers.
The total amount of genomic DNA input was calculated by dividing the used total cell number by the
assumed value of 6 pg genomic DNA per cell. PCR products were purified using the QIAquick PCR
purification kit (Qiagen) and a 2% agarose gel using the QIAquick gel extraction kit (Qiagen). In a second
PCR, 10 ng of the purified product per reaction were amplified (5 cycles). The pooled PCR products were
purified using the QIAquick PCR purification kit. 50 ng of amplicons were used for the library generation
with the TruSeq Nano DNA Library Prep kit for NeoPrep (Illumina). The sequencing was conducted on a
HiSeq1500 (Illumina) in rapid mode with the paired end protocol for 50 cycles. For the 7 cell lines (MIA
PaCa-2, Hep 3B2.1-7, NCI-H1373, NCI-H1993, NCI-H2009, PC-9, HuP-T4) total read counts ranging from
3.1M to 41.6M were generated. Primer sequences are listed in Supplementary Table 4.
479

CRISPR/Cas9 library quality control and screen analysis

For the plasmid library, 20 million reads were generated and the gRNA representation was tested for
uniformity. gRNA counts ranged from 50 to 8708 reads (25th percentile: 983; median: 1682; 75th
percentile 2560 reads). For screen analysis, we used the 'mageck test' function of the MAGECK tool
(version 0.5.6)[74] to determine the log2-fold-changes and significance estimates (p-values, FDR) for gRNA
representation differences between any of the 7 cell lines and those observed in the plasmid library
using the following parameters: "mageck test --norm-method control --gene-lfc-method median".

To further assess the technical quality of the screens, we overlapped the library with known core-
essential (n=625) and never-essential (n=1344) genes constructed from genome scale screens. We found
that 307 and 596 gRNAs targeted a subset of the core- and never-essential genes, respectively. We
observed a good separation of both guide sets (strictly standardized mean difference < -0.9) and a
strong enrichment of core-essential genes in the top depleted genes (AUC > 0.9). Both quality metrics
were calculated based on log2-fold-changes from the comparison to the gRNA representation in the
plasmid library.

To compensate for the variable effect sizes from the different cell lines, we scaled all gene-level log2-
fold-changes such that the median log2-fold-change of all never-essential and core-essential genes
where set to 0 and −1, respectively. We call this scaled log2-fold-change escore (essentiality score).

For hit calling, we selected genes that were specifically depleted (cutoffs for escore < -0.4 and FDR < 0.1)
in cell lines that harbor a deletion of a member of the same paralog family (absolute copy number = 0
and log2 relative copy number < -1).
500

TCGA data

For gene expression data, the GDC Data Portal's interface (https://portal.gdc.cancer.gov/) was used to
compile all data files that mapped the fields "Program" = "TCGA", "Data Type" = "Aligned Reads",
"Experimental Strategy" = "RNA-Seq", and "Workflow Type" = "STAR 2-Pass". Using the GDC Data
Transfer Tool, the data was transferred and pre-processed using samtools[75] collate and fastq to generate
FASTQ files, containing the unmapped reads. All samples were subsequently processed with a
harmonized RNA-seq pipeline[76].
TCGA SNP6 copy number segmentation data was downloaded from NIH GDC
(https://portal.gdc.cancer.gov/) on December 3 2018. The segmentation information was obtained from
the files *nocnv_grch38.seg.v2.txt. Gene-wise copy numbers were determined by overlapping the
segmentation information with Ensembl v86 gene annotation. If a gene was covered by a single segment,
the copy number of the segment was assigned to the gene. If a gene was covered by multiple segments,
a weighted average copy number was computed based on the size of the overlap between the gene and
each segment. Relative copy numbers <= 1.0 were considered as "deep deletion".
The R package TCGAbiolinks (v2.5.9)[77] was used to extract sample and patient information for TCGA
samples by using a custom-made R script.
The sample cohorts COADREAD, FPPP, GBMLGG, KIPAN, and STES were excluded.
Data for TCGA methylation loci plots were downloaded from http://www.bioinfo-zs.com/smartapp/[78].
Gene expression levels (log2(TPM)) were plotted against methylation levels of CpGs belonging to islands
located in promoter regions of genes of interest.
521

<u>Cancer Cell Line Encyclopedia (CCLE) data</u>

Cell line names and descriptions (including sex) were taken from the provider's cell-line data sheet. If a
cell line was available from various vendors, the cell-line name was taken from the top rank in a
hierarchy of vendors in the following order: ATCC, DSMZ, ECACC, JCRB, ICLC, RIKEN, KCLB.
For gene expression, raw FASTQ data for all CCLE cell lines[46] were downloaded via the European
Nucleotide Archive (accession number PRJNA523380). All data were processed identically to TCGA data
as described above.
For copy number determination, SNP6 CEL files were downloaded from https://cghub.ucsc.edu/ in
October 2012. Relative copy number segments were computed using the R packages aroma.affymetrix
(v3.1.0)[79] and Rawcopy (v1.1)[80]: SNP6 data were processed with the AROMA method CRMA v2, where
the 50 samples with the least amount of copy number alterations based on Rawcopy were used to
calculate the reference intensities. This was followed by CBS segmentation. Afterwards, the copy
number segments were overlapped with Ensembl v86 gene annotation as described for the TCGA data
in order to obtain gene-wise relative copy number values. "Deep deletion" status was assigned as for
TCGA data. Absolute copy number segments were computed using PICNIC version c_release 2010-10-
29[81] with reference files adapted for reference genome hg38 and default parameters. The resulting
segments were overlapped with Ensembl v86 gene annotation as for TCGA data in order to obtain gene-
wise absolute copy number values.
Methylation[46] data are 'CCLE_RRBS_TSS1kb_20181022.txt.gz', downloaded from
https://portals.broadinstitute.org/ccle/data. Protein expression[45] data were directly exported from the
indicated reference.
543

<u>GTEx data</u>

GTEx v8 gene expression data (phs000424.v8) where processed as described above (RNA-seq pipeline
v2.0 (C-GET)[76]). For 4 samples processing failed, and 582 samples failed QC based on sequence length,
GC content, assigned reads, intronic bases, 3'/5' biases, uniquely mapped reads or *GAPDH* detection,
and were not included into the final object. Samples from the "Cells - Transformed fibroblast", "Cells -
EBV-transformed lymphocytes" and "Cells - Leukemia cell line (CML)" classes are omitted from the data
set.
551

<u>CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assays</u>

All CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assays were conducted as previously described[82]. In brief, gRNA sequences
were cloned into their respective vector backbone, typically containing GFP (Supplementary Table 4), at
Genscript Biotech Corporation. Lentiviral particles were produced in 293T-Lenti-X (Clontech) cells
cultured in DMEM, 10% Tet-system approved FCS, 1X Glutamax, 1X NaPyr. 4×10^6 cells were plated in 8
ml medium in 10 cm dishes and transiently transfected with 7 µg of plasmid DNA mixed with Lenti-X
Packaging Single Shots (VSV-G) (TakaraBio) according to the manufacturer's instructions on the following
day. 4 hours after transfection, 6 ml fresh medium was added to the plates. Supernatant was harvested
48 hours after transfection, filtered through a 0.45 µm PVDF filter (Millipore) and stored at -80°C in
unconcentrated aliquots until further use. Relevant cell lines stably expressing Cas9 (see Supplementary
Table 4) were plated at approximately 50 –60 % confluence in 12 or 24 well plates and transduced with
250-500 µl of gRNA virus to achieve 10%-95% transduction efficiency. After transduction, the fraction of
GFP positive cells was determined at indicated timepoints using flow cytometry.
Where cell lines expressing doxycycline-inducible cDNA constructs were included in depletion assays,
expression was induced at the start of the experiment by addition of 0.5-1 µg/ml doxycycline to the
medium, which was thereafter replenished twice per week.
568

<u>siRNA assay</u>
Cells were seeded at a density of 4×10^5 in 6-well plates in standard culture media. 24 hours after
seeding, cells were transfected with OTP Smartpool reagents (Horizon Discovery) targeting *CSTF2*
individually or in an equimolar mixture, *CSTF2T* or negative control at a final concentration of 20 nM
using RNAiMAX (Invitrogen) as specified by the manufacturer. 24 hours post transfection media was
exchanged and cells further incubated for 48 hours. siRNA details are listed in Supplementary Table 4.
575

<u>cDNA overexpression</u>

Constructs based on the pMSCV-Linker-PGK-Blasti backbone (see Supplementary Table 4) were
packaged into viral particles using the Platinum-GP Retrovial Packaging Cell line (). Briefly, 5×10^6 cells
were plated in 10 cm dishes and co-transfected with 3 µg VSV-G plasmid and 9 µg of the respective
construct Lipofectamine LTX (Thermo Fisher) the following day. Medium was exchanged after 16 h and
harvested 48 h later for filtration using 0.45 µm PVDF filter (Millipore) and subsequent storage at −80 °C
before transduction of target cells and subsequent selection of successfully transduced cells through
addition of Blasticidin to the medium.

Constructs based on the RT3REN backbone (see Supplementary Table 4) were packaged into lentiviral
particles using the Platinum-E packaging cell line (Cell Biolabs). In brief, 600,000 cells were plated in 6

well plates and transfected with 2 µg plasmid DNA using 6 µl Lipofectamine LTX reagent (Thermo Fisher).
Medium was exchanged after 16 h and harvested 24 h later, filtered through a 0.45 µm PVDF filter
(Millipore) and added directly to recipient cells stably expressing an ecotropic receptor (pRRL-RIEH),
followed by selection with Geneticin. Lentivirus for pRRL-RIEH was produced in lenti X 293T-Lenti-X
(Clontech). 4 x 10^6 cells were plated in 8 ml medium in 10 cm dishes and transiently transfected with 7
µg of plasmid DNA mixed with Lenti-X Packaging Single Shots (VSV-G) (TakaraBio) according to the
manufacturer's instructions on the following day. 4 hours after transfection, 6 ml fresh medium was
added to the plates. Supernatant was harvested 48 hours after transfection, filtered through a 0.45 µm
PVDF filter (Millipore) before addition to cells and subsequent selection with Hygromycin.

<u>Western blot</u>

Cells were lysed using RIPA buffer (Sigma) supplemented with HALT protease and phosphatase inhibitor
cocktail (Thermo Fisher). Lysates were incubated on ice for 30 min, centrifuged at 14,000 rcf for 20 min
at 4°C and protein amounts in the supernatant determined using the Bradford assay (BioRad) according
to the manufacturer's instructions. Laemmli buffer was added to samples followed by boiling at 95 °C for
5 min. Samples were loaded on a pre-cast gel (Criterion XT Precast 4-12 % Bis-Tris Gel, BioRad), run at
150 V for 1.5 hours in XT MOPS running buffer (BioRad) before transfer onto a nitrocellulose membrane
(Transblot Turbo Transfer Pack Midi 0.2 µm) for 7 min using the Transblot Turbo Transfer System
(BioRad, program: Quickblot Mixed MW, Midi Gel). Membranes were incubated for 1 hour in blocking
buffer (10% BSA, 10% PBS-T in water) followed by overnight incubation at 4 °C with primary antibody in
BSA antibody buffer (5 % BSA in PBS-T). The next day, membranes were washed three times with PBS-T
(10 min per wash) and incubated with secondary antibody in Casein antibody buffer (0,1% Casein in PBS-
T) for 1 hour in the dark at room temperature. Membranes were washed three times in PBS-T (10 min
per wash) and visualized on an Odyssey CLx imaging system (LI-COR Biosciences).

All antibody details can be found in Supplementary Table 4.
611

<u>Correlation analysis (PaCT)</u>

Depletion data for individual genes were obtained from three studies: DRIVE[44] (2017-10-01), AVANA[42]
(21Q1) and Sanger[43] (Release 1). Subsequently, depletion values for every screened gene with unique
gene symbols were correlated to expression values (TPM, see above), methylation[46] or protein
expression[45] data across the screened cell lines. Methylation data were summarized for genomic regions
mapping to a gene. Pearson, Spearman and Kendall correlation coefficients and corresponding p-values
were collected. The gene with depletion data is referred to as *query (q)* gene and the gene with
expression/methylation data is referred to as *biomarker (b)* for pairwise correlations. Subsequently, data
were filtered for genes which are part of a paralog family, such that every pairwise correlation between
q and *b* is considered if *q* and *b* are part of the same paralog family:

$$A = \{q, b \mid q \wedge b \in of\ same\ paralog\ family\}\ where\ A \subseteq B$$

where *B* denotes all correlations between *query* and *biomarker* pairs (screened genes (*q*) and genes with
protein and/or mRNA expression values(*b*)) and *A* denotes all correlations for a given paralog family.

We used Spearman coefficients and p-values for all subsequent analyses to account for possible non-
normal distributions in the data and minimize the impact of outlier values. Due to differences in query
and cell line libraries used, and different scoring systems, each sub-dataset that was processed
separately (AVANA, Sanger and DRIVE scores for gene and protein expression). For each sub-dataset, we
calculated its own cutoff at 3*SD (standard deviation) and additionally filtered for p-value < 0.05. For
gene expression data, all p-values at the 3*SD cutoff were highly significant, likely due to the more
complete source data for this domain.

The complete PaCT results can be found in Supplementary Table 2.
632

633 PaCT exploratory space

For all 3,587 paralog families with at least two members, we computed all possible pairwise interactions
across members of the same paralog family, including self-interactions. This approach resulted in a total
of 3,0841,147 potential pairs. We then assessed the potential of our approach to detect and quantify
pairwise dependencies by depletion-expression correlation. Pairs where the query gene was not
targeted in any depletion dataset and/or targeted in zero cell lines, and without gene expression data
for the biomarker gene expression were labeled as "no info both". Pairs for which information was
missing for either depletion or gene expression were labeled as "no info query" and "no info biomarker",
respectively. Pairs for which information was available in only a single cell line do not allow calculation
of a correlation and were labeled "1 cell line". Pairs for which information was available both for the
query and biomarker in at least two cell lines was labeled as "info query & biomarker". Protein
expression data were not included in this analysis.
645

646 PaCT simulation analysis

647 To identify the difference between PaCT hit correlations and random correlations, we performed 1000
648 simulations for each gene from each family with significant interactions. For each query gene q from
649 each family f, we generated a vector of genes v with same size as f. The new set of genes in v contains
650 only the query gene from f but the remaining genes in v are sampled without replacement from the
651 remaining paralogue families. Then pairwise correlations were computed as above.
652

653 Wilcoxon-test analysis

Cell lines were split into sensitive, resistant and intermediate groups using a k-means clustering
algorithm with k=3 for the depletion scores of every gene in the DRIVE[44], AVANA[42] and Sanger[43] datasets.
For cell lines in the sensitive and resistant bins, gene and protein expression data were collected.
Subsequently, a non-parametric test (Wilcoxon test) was conducted for all query-biomarker pairs. p-
values were collected and corrected for multiple testing (Benjamini-Hochberg). The query-biomarker
pairs were then filtered as described above.
660

661 Random Forest model

662 CCLE gene expression data of chrY-encoded and *DDX3X, EIF1AX, ZFX* and *RPS4X* paralog family genes
663 were used to train a Random Forest (RF) model on the Sanger[43] depletion data. k-means clustering (as

664 described above) was used to separate sensitive and insensitive cell lines. Subsequently, AVANA[42]
665 sensitivity data were predicted using the RF model.
666

Ortholog analysis

We first converted our list of human paralogs to the best match ortholog in *M. musculus*, *D.*
melanogaster, *D. rerio*, *C. elegans* or *S. cerevisiae* using DIOPT[83] (v8). Then we added information on
each gene's essentiality from OGEE[84] (v2), with a majority vote decision on calling a gene essential or
non-essential in cases where more than one dataset with ambiguous calls existed. For all paralog
interaction hit pairs, we then checked whether query and biomarker share the same ortholog gene and
if so, whether the ortholog is essential.
674

Multi-mapping gRNA analysis

We downloaded information on dropped gRNAs and gRNA mapping for the AVANA library from
https://depmap.org/portal/download/. Based on this information, we extracted the number of dropped,
uniquely mapped or multi-mapping gRNAs for each query gene in the list of PaCT pairs.

LOY inference

In addition to gene expression and copy number (CN) data, TCGA, GTEx and CCLE provide annotation of
the sex of the patients where a sample/cell line originated from. We calculated (i) the average TPM, (ii)
the maximum TPM, (iii) the average raw count, (iv) the average relative CN, and (v) the average absolute
CN for all genes located on chrY for all samples. TCGA and GTEx do not provide CN data for chrY. For
samples originally annotated as male, we checked whether *all* of their values (i)-(v) for cell lines and (i)-
(iii) for tissue samples were below the respective 99th percentile of female samples. If this was the case,
we re-annotated the sample as LOY.
688

PCR validation of LOY

Genotyping primer pairs for different genes on chrX and chrY were designed and tested for specificity.
Genomic DNA was extracted from female, male and LOY cells using the QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (Qiagen)
following the manufacturer's protocol. PCR was run using AmpliTaqGold DNA polymerase (Thermo
Fisher Scientific) with 100 ng genomic DNA as input. 55°C annealing temperature was used for all primer
pairs. Resulting amplicons analyzed on a 2% agarose gel. All primer sequences are listed in
Supplementary Table 4.
696

Induction of LOY

One million HT-1080 cells expressing Cas9 (puromycin) and *DDX3X* (blasticidin) or *ZFX* (blasticidin)
constructs were transiently transfected with a pool of 18 GFP-containing plasmids encoding for gRNAs
targeting different chrY genes (RN-gRNA_429-434, RN-gRNA_441-443, RN-gRNA_458-466 using
Lipofectamine 3000 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) according to the manufacturer's instructions. 48 hours

after transfection, GFP-positive cells were isolated by FACS and diluted to obtain single cell clones.
Clones were screened for LOY by PCR from genomic DNA (as described above) using standard laboratory
techniques. Clones with PCR products for chrX but without PCR products for chrY were selected. gRNA
sequences are listed in Supplementary Table 4.
706

<u>Software and data availability</u>

All calculations were performed in R. Data were visualized using R or GraphPad Prism. All data are
publicly available through the indicated references and provided as Supplementary Material, including
an R Markdown script containing all code and versioning information to reproduce analyses and figures.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors are full time employees of Boehringer Ingelheim.

Author Contributions

A.K., A.H., F.S., T.P., S.O., C.W., M.C., and C.R. conducted wet lab experiments. A.K., A.S., A.P., V.T., F.S.,
B.M. and R.A.N. conducted bioinformatic analyses. R.A.N. and B.M. conceived study. B.M., R.A.N. and
M.P. oversaw study. J.P., S.W., A.S., led paralog library screens. A.S. helped conceptualize study. A.K.,
B.M. and R.A.N. wrote manuscript with input from all other

<u>Figure 1: Proof-of-concept paralog dependency CRISPR screens reveal a functional interaction of *CSTF2*</u>
<u>and *CSTF2T.*</u>

a-b)   Distribution of paralog families in study by family size (a) and gene type (b).
c)   CRISPR screen results in 7 cancer cell lines. Only genes with escore < -0.4 and FDR < 0.1 are
732   displayed. Shades of green indicate effect size (escore), box color indicates whether paralog
733   family contains deleted gene different from listed gene (del) or not (wt).
734   d)   CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines resistant (green) and sensitive (purple) to loss of *CSTF2*.
735   gRNAs targeting positive control genes (*RPA3, POLR2A, PCNA*), negative controls (*NegCon03/-07*),
736   and *CSTF2* are indicated. Cells were lentivirally transduced with the gRNA plasmid containing GFP;
737   GFP percentage in transduced cell line pool was measured by flow cytometry at the indicated time
738   points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction.
739   e-f)   Western blots for *CSTF2* and *CSTF2T* in lysates from indicated cell lines after siRNA treatment
740   (3d). β-actin was used as loading control.
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<u>Figure 2: Correlation analysis of public loss-of-function screens yield to identify paralog genetic</u>
<u>interactions.</u>

a) PaCT analysis workflow and volcano plot of tested pairs by dataset (CYCLOPS, self-interactions;
Paralogs, pairwise paralog interactions within same family). See Methods for details.
b) Distribution of PaCT correlations (Spearman) by input datasets. Triangles indicate specific hit
pairs mentioned in subsequent analyses. Dashed lines mark the 3-standard-deviations cutoff
used for hit filtering.
c) Distribution of Spearman correlation coefficients of randomly assigned genes to each query
compared to the correlation distribution of original PaCT hits.
d) Pie chart displaying different categories of query-biomarker pairs across the complete
theoretical PaCT exploratory space. Only pairs for which information for both query and
biomarker is available can yield hit interactions. See Methods for details.

e, f) Expression (e) and depletion score (f) variability distribution of genes involved in hit and non-hit
interactions across cell lines.

g) Nucleotide sequence similarity difference between hit and non-hit pairs.
h) Number of unique hit pairs in paralog families of different size, grouped by type of correlation.
i) Percentage of hit pairs identified in each family plotted against family size. Color legend
indicates the percentage of genes of the respective family involved in hit interactions, either as
query or biomarker.

j, k) Percentage of hit interactions per gene as a query (j) and as a biomarker (k) is plotted against
percentage of hit interactions per family. Color indicates family size.
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766 <u>Figure 3: Correlation analysis of public loss-of-function screens yield known and novel candidate paralog</u>
767 <u>genetic interactions.</u>

    a) Overlap of hit pairs between different input datasets. Y-axis shows the number of overlapping pairs by dataset. Comparisons are indicated by dots and lines on the x-axis, colored by type of expression data (gene, protein) and interaction (pos, neg). Inset shows number of hit pairs by dataset.

    b) Exemplary pairwise correlation matrix for paralog families of 2-4 members and Spearman correlation > 0.42 for at least one pair in the family including CYCLOPS interactions.

    c) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines resistant (green) and sensitive (purple) to loss of *FAM50A*. gRNAs targeting positive control genes (*POLR2A*), negative controls (*AAVS1*) and *FAM50A* are indicated. Cells were lentivirally transduced with the gRNA plasmid containing GFP; GFP percentage in the transduced cell line pool was measured by flow cytometry at the indicated time points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction.

    d) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines resistant (green) and sensitive (purple) to loss of VPS4*A*. gRNAs targeting positive control genes (*POLR2A*), negative controls (*non-targeting*) and *VPS4A* are indicated. Cells were lentivirally transduced with the gRNA plasmid containing GFP; GFP percentage in the transduced cell line pool was measured by flow cytometry at the indicated time points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction.

<u>Figure 4: Validation of paralog redundancy between *RPP25* and *RPP25L*.</u>

a) AVANA-based depletion scores (CERES) for *RPP25L,* color-coded by *RPP25* expression levels.

b) Western blot for *RPP25* in indicated cancer cell lines. β-actin was used as loading control.

c) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines predicted to be sensitive (purple) or resistant (green) to

loss of *RPP25L*. gRNAs targeting *RPP25L* (gRNA-290, gRNA-291, gRNA-292, gRNA-293), positive

controls (*PCNA*, *POLR2A*) and negative controls (non-targeting, *AAVS1*) are indicated. Cells were

lentivirally transduced with the gRNA plasmid containing GFP; GFP percentage in transduced cell

line pool was measured by flow cytometry at the indicated time points and normalized to day 3

post-transduction (n=3 independent replicates of the experiment).

d) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay as in (c) following ectopic expression of *RPP25* or *RPP25L* in KYSE-

150 cells that are sensitive to loss of *RPP25L* (parental). *DNAJC15* expression served as a

negative control.

<u>Figure 5: Paralog redundancies for *FAM50A-FAM50B* and *DNAJC15-DNAJC19* can be attributed to</u>
<u>expression loss by DNA methylation.</u>

    a) Scatter plot identifying putative paralog dependencies due to DNA hypermethylation. X-axis:
        Spearman correlation coefficient between depletion data (CERES score (AVANA data)) and DNA
        methylation. Y-axis: Spearman correlation coefficient between depletion data (CERES score
        (AVANA data)) and gene expression (TPM). Pairs with correlation coefficients <|0.2| are
        displayed as density plots, strongest correlations are labeled.

    b) Scatter plot of mRNA expression levels (log2(TPM)) of *FAM50B* versus CpG island methylation at
        indicated loci across tumour types from TCGA. Samples from bladder urothelial carcinoma
        (BLCA), prostate adenocarcinoma (PRAD) and stomach adenocarcinoma (STAD) studies are
        highlighted.

    c) Scatter plot of mRNA expression levels (log2(TPM)) of *DNAJC15* versus CpG island methylation at
        indicated loci across tumour types from TCGA. Samples from bladder urothelial carcinoma
        (BLCA), prostate adenocarcinoma (PRAD) and stomach adenocarcinoma (STAD) studies are
        highlighted.

    d) Boxplot summarizing expression data (log2(TPM)) for members of the *DNAJC19-DNAJC15*
        paralog family in cell lines resistant and sensitive to *DNAJC19* loss.

    e) Western blot of *DNAJC15* levels in selected sensitive (CAL-12T, NCI-H1915, NCI-H1975) and
        resistant (DMS53, IPC-298, SCC-25) cell lines. β-actin was included as a loading control.

    f) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines predicted to be sensitive (purple) or resistant (green) to
        loss of *DNAJC19*. gRNAs targeting *DNAJC19* (gRNA-318, gRNA-523, gRNA-565, gRNA-566),
        positive controls (*PCNA*, *POLR2A*) and negative controls (non-targeting, *AAVS1*) are indicated.
        Cells were lentivirally transduced with the gRNA plasmids also containing a GFP expression
        cassette. The percentage of GFP expressing cells in the transduced cell line pool was measured
        by flow cytometry at the indicated time points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction (n=3
        independent replicates of the experiment).

    g) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in cell lines following ectopic expression of *DNAJC15* in NCI-H1975
        cells that are sensitive to loss of *DNAJC19*. Expression was induced by addition of 1 µg/ml
        doxycycline to the medium at the start of the experiment, which was replenished twice per
        week. Cells were lentivirally transduced with a gRNA targeting *DNAJC19* (gRNA-318), positive
        control (*POLR2A*) or negative control (non-targeting). The plasmid also expresses GFP. The
        percentage of GFP-positive cells in transduced cell line pool was measured by flow cytometry at
        the indicated time points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction (n=2 independent
        replicates of the experiment).

    h) Western blot for RPP25, DNAJC15, and DNAJC19 in NCI-H1975 cells expressing the indicated
        overexpression constructs upon culture in the presence of doxycycline (1 µg/ml) for 72 hours. β-
        actin was included as a loading control.

<u>Figure 6: Loss of chrY as potential biomarker for paralog dependencies between sex chromosome genes.</u>

a)   Distribution of average gene expression (TPM) across genes located on chrY for TCGA samples
for which data were available. Sex (male, female) as annotated in TCGA or inferred (LOY) as
described in Methods.
b)   As in (a) for cell lines (CCLE) with available gene expression data.
c)   As in (b) for average relative copy number (CN).
d)   Schematic depiction of chrX and chrY with location of interacting paralogs indicated.
e)   Analysis of factors that are most significantly different between *DDX3X*-loss-sensitive and
DDX3X-loss-resistant cell lines, as defined using k-means clustering based on AVANA data. For
each data domain, the most significant discriminators are displayed.
f)   Sensitive vs. resistant cell lines (as in (e)) by sex (as in (b and c)).
g)   *DDX3X* sensitivity (CERES depletion score from AVANA dataset) by sex (as in (b and c)). p-values
were calculated using a two-sided Fisher's exact test for count data with Monte-Carlo-simulated
p-value (based on 10000 replicates).
h)   Variable importance plot for Random Forest model to predict *DDX3X* sensitivity. Gene
expression values were used as variables for the Indicated genes on y-axis.
i)   Fraction of cell lines that harbor chrX and chrY or chrX only, grouped by sex ((as in (b and c)), as
assessed by the amelogenin marker in standard STR analysis.
j)   PCR validation of sex chromosome status in selected cell lines used for further analyses. 8 chrY-
specific primer pairs and 2 chrX-specific primer pairs were tested in female patient-derived
(KURAMOCHI and Cal-120), male patient-derived chrY retaining (HT-1080 and HCT 116), and
male LOY cells (KNS-42).
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Figure 7: Validation of chrX-chrY paralog dependencies.

a) AVANA-based depletion scores (CERES) for *DDX3X,* color-coded by *DDX3Y* expression levels.

b) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in male HT-1080 cells that carry chrY. gRNAs targeting a positive
control gene (*PCNA*), negative control locus (*AAVS1*), *DDX3X* (gRNA-395, gRNA-396) and *DDX3X*
and *DDX3Y* simultaneously are indicated. Cells were lentivirally transduced with the gRNA
plasmid containing GFP; GFP percentage in transduced cell line pool was measured by flow
cytometry at the indicated time points and normalized to day 3 post-transduction. Cells were
additionally transduced with empty vector (control), unrelated cDNA encoding *ZFX* (control), or
rescue constructs with cDNA encoding *DDX3X* or *DDX3Y*. Points in line graph represent mean,
and error bars denote the standard deviation (n= 3 independent experiments).

c) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in male KNS-42 cells that lost chrY (LOY). Assay, gRNAs and cDNA
constructs as in (b). Points in line graph represent mean, and error bars denote the standard
deviation (n= 3 independent experiments).

d) AVANA-based depletion scores (CERES) for *EIF1AX*, color-coded by *EIF1AY* expression levels.

e) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in male HCT 116 cells that carry chrY. gRNAs targeting positive
control (*PCNA*), negative control (*AAVS1*), and *EIF1AX* and *EIF1AY* simultaneously are indicated.
Cells were additionally transduced with empty vector (control), unrelated cDNA encoding *ZFX*
(control), or rescue constructs with cDNA encoding *EIF1AX* or *EIF1AY*. Assay as in (b), points in
line graph represent mean, and error bars denote the standard deviation (n= 3 independent
experiments).

f) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in male KNS-42 cells that lost chrY (LOY). gRNAs targeting positive
control (*PCNA*), negative control (*AAVS1*), *EIF1AX, EIF1AX/EIF1AXP1,* and *EIF1AX/EIF1AXP1* and
EIF1AY simultaneously are indicated. Cells were additionally transduced with empty vector
(control) or rescue constructs with cDNA encoding *EIF1AX* or *EIF1AY*. *EIF1AX/XP1* indicates
EIF1AX and the *EIF1AXP1* pseudogene. Assay as in (b), points in line graph represent mean, and
error bars denote the standard deviation (n= 3 independent experiments).

g) AVANA-based depletion scores (CERES) for *ZFX,* color-coded by *ZFY* expression levels.

h) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in female Cal-120 cells. gRNAs targeting positive control (*PCNA*),
negative control (*AAVS1*), and *ZFX* (gRNA-569, gRNA-571) are indicated. Cells were additionally
transduced with empty vector (control) or rescue constructs with cDNA encoding *ZFX* or *ZFY*.
Assay as in (b), points in line graph represent mean, and error bars denote the standard
deviation (n= 3 independent experiments).

i) Schematic depiction of workflow for induction of LOY in male HT-1080 cells expressing Cas9 and
DDX3X or ZFX.

j) CRISPR/Cas9 depletion assay in male HT-1080 cells where LOY was induced. Two clones each
expressing cDNA constructs encoding DDX3X or ZFX were transduced with gRNAs targeting
positive control (*POLR2A*), negative control (*AAVS1*), *DDX3X,* ZFX or *EIF1AX/EIF1AXP1.*
EIF1AX/XP1 indicates *EIF1AX* and the *EIF1AXP1* pseudogene. Assay as in (b), points in line graph
represent mean, and error bars denote the standard deviation (n= 3 independent experiments).

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Figure 1

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7