

1 **A distal enhancer is required for *TNF* gene transcription in**
2 **human macrophages in response to TLR3 stimulation**

3 Junfeng Gao¹, Yapeng Li¹, Dianzheng Zhao¹, Xiaoyu Guan¹, Hong Wei Chu², Hua
4 Huang^{1,3*}

5 ¹Department of Immunology and Genomic Medicine, National Jewish Health, Denver,
6 CO 80206, USA.

7 ²Department of Medicine, National Jewish Health, Denver, CO 80206, USA.

8 ³Department of Immunology and Microbiology, University of Colorado Anschutz
9 Medical Campus, Aurora, CO 80045, USA.

10

11 * Correspondence should be addressed to H.H. (email: huangh@njhealth.org).

12

13 Key words: Macrophage, Poly(I:C), TLR3, *TNF* gene enhancers, E-16.0

14

15 Grant support:

16 Supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health R01AI107022 and

17 R01AI083986 (H.H.).

18 **Abstract**

19 Macrophages play a critical role in inflammatory responses during infections.
20 Activated macrophages by infections through stimulation of TLRs expressed their cell
21 surface produce pro-inflammatory cytokines, including TNF. However, distal
22 enhancers that regulate *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages have not been
23 investigated. In this study, we identified the five putative *TNF* enhancers using
24 H3K27ac ChIP-seq and ATAC-seq. We showed proximal enhancer (PE), E-16.0, and
25 E-6.5 possessed enhancer activity in a reporter gene assay. Deletion of the distal
26 *TNF* E-16.0 enhancer resulted in 73% reduction in *TNF* gene transcription in human
27 macrophage cell line THP-1 in response to ploy(I:C) stimulation. Our study identifies
28 a novel distal enhancer that regulates *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages.

29 **Introduction**

30 Macrophages are among the first immune cells to encounter pathogens (1,2). These
31 cells play a critical role in inflammatory responses during infections. Macrophages
32 sense infections via pattern-recognition receptors, including Toll-like receptors (TLRs)
33 (3,4). Toll-like receptors (TLRs) play a major role in the activations of macrophages
34 (5). TLRs bind to viral and bacterial productions derived from many bacteria and
35 viruses at some point of their replication cycle (6,7). TLR4 binds to bacterial product
36 lipopolysaccharide (LPS) (8). TLR7 and TLR8 detect single stranded RNA, while
37 TLR3 recognizes double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) (6,9,10) which can be mimicked by
38 synthetic dsRNA poly(I:C). Activated macrophages by infections through stimulation
39 of TLRs expressed their cell surface produce pro-inflammatory cytokines such as
40 tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF- α), interleukin 1 beta (IL-1 β), interleukin 6 (IL-6),
41 interleukin 8 (IL-8), chemokines (chemokine (CC motif) ligand 5 (CCL-5);
42 chemokine (CXC motif) ligand 10 (CXCL10)) (11,12). Overproduction of pro-
43 inflammatory cytokines and chemokines, such as IL-1 β , IL-6, and IL-8, CCL2 and
44 CXCL10, can lead to fatal outcomes during severe infections (13,14) and severe toxic
45 side effects in cancer immune therapies (15). However, transcriptional codes, which
46 consist of combinatorial transcription factor (TF) binding sites and interacting TFs
47 and cofactors, detecting the numerous signal inputs triggered by TRL stimulations and
48 infected epithelial cells is still poorly understood.

49 Enhancers play a critical role in regulating gene expression. Enhancers are
50 segments of DNA located in the non-coding regions of genes (16). Decoding
51 enhancers has been a longstanding goal in the field of gene transcription
52 (17). *cis* regulatory elements, such as enhancers, work from a distance in animals.

53 Transcriptional codes hidden in the distal regions are often required for full
54 transcription. Locating critical enhancers can be a significant challenge because
55 critical enhancers can be located up to 100kb from the transcription start sites in non-
56 coding regions that make up 99% of a genome (18). In this study, we focus on
57 enhancer regulation of one of the most potent pro-inflammatory cytokine *TNF* gene in
58 human lung macrophages.

59 The *TNF* gene locus lies in mouse chromosome 17 and human chromosome 6
60 and is comprised by the *TNF* gene and the genes encoding lymphotoxin-a and
61 lymphotoxin-b (*LTA* and *LTB*) (19). However, how the *TNF* gene is regulated by
62 distal enhancers in macrophages are not completely understood. A distal enhancer
63 element 9 kb upstream of the mouse *Tnf* mRNA cap site (HHS-9) can bind NFATp
64 and participate in intrachromosomal interactions with the *Tnf* promoter in mouse T
65 cells upon activation (20). Additionally, A distal hypersensitive site ~8 kb upstream of
66 the human *TNF* TSS (human hypersensitive site -8kb, hHS-8) is required for and
67 mediates IFN- γ -stimulated augmentation of LPS-induced *TNF* gene expression via
68 binding of IRF1 to a cognate hHS-8 site in human monocytes/macrophages (21).
69 hHS-8 is also coordinately regulated with *TNF* and *LTA* gene expression in activated
70 human T cells via a discrete and highly conserved NFAT binding site (22). However,
71 distal enhancers that regulate *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages is
72 incompletely understood.

73 In this study, we identified the five putative *TNF* enhancers using H3K27ac
74 ChIP-seq and ATAC-seq. We showed proximal enhancer (PE), E-16.0, and E-6.5
75 possessed enhancer activity in reporter gene assay. Deletion of the distal *TNF* E-16.0
76 enhancer resulted in 73% reduction in *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophage
77 cell line THP-1 in response to ploy(I:C) stimulation. Deletion of the PE enhancer

78 resulted in 52% reduction in *TNF* gene transcription. Our study identifies a novel
79 distal enhancer that regulates *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages.

80 **Results**

81 **Identification of putative *TNF* enhancers that respond to poly(I:C) stimulation**

82 To determine the time course for *TNF* mRNA expression in human alveolar
83 macrophages (AMs) in response to poly(I:C) stimulation, we treated primary human
84 AMs from 7 donors without or with poly(I:C) for 4, 8, or 24 hours. We observed that
85 *TNF* mRNA started to increase 4 hours after stimulation and reached the highest
86 levels at 8 hours after stimulation (104.8-fold compared with the *TNF* mRNA in
87 resting human primary AMs) and remained 15.6-fold higher than that in resting cells
88 at 24 hours after stimulation (Fig. 1).

89 To identify potential enhancers, we treated AMs without or with poly(I:C) for
90 four hours to detect early changes in permissive histone modification and chromatin
91 accessibility. We performed H3K27ac ChIP-seq and Omni-ATAC-seq to identify
92 non-coding DNA regions associated with increased H3K27ac modification and
93 chromatin accessibility. We showed that there were four potential enhancer regions
94 that were associated with increased chromatin accessibility and H3K27ac
95 modification within 28.1 kb of the human *TNF* gene, which covers the intergenic
96 regions between the *LTA* and *LTB* genes (Fig. 2). We named these potential enhancers
97 proximal enhancer (PE), E-16.0, E-6.5, E+5.6 and E+6.3 based on the distances of the
98 putative enhancers to the transcription start site (TSS) of the *TNF* gene.

99

100 **The *TNF* E-16.0 and PE enhancers possess enhancer activity**

101 Not all non-coding regions associated with H3K27ac modification and increased
102 chromatin accessibility possess enhancer activity. To access the enhancer activity of
103 the potential enhancers, we cloned the potential enhancers into the LentiMPRA vector
104 containing a minimal promoter and barcoded *Gfp* reporter gene (23) (Fig. 3A). We

105 used a non-coding DNA fragment that was not associated with H3K27ac or chromatin
106 accessibility as non-enhancer (NE) control (Fig. 2). We transduced human lung
107 macrophage cell line THP-1 cells with the recombinant lentivirus containing
108 enhancers. Because THP-1 cells expressed low levels of pro-inflammatory cytokine
109 genes, we matured THP-1 cells with phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate (PMA) for three
110 days and found that matured THP-1 transcribed high levels of *TNF* mRNA in
111 response to poly(I:C) stimulation (unmatured, 8.3-fold of induction after poly(I:C)
112 treatment; matured, 91.6-fold of induction after poly(I:C) treatment, Supplemental Fig.
113 1), consistent with previous studies (24,25). Three days later, we treated the
114 enhancers-transduced-THP-1 cells with poly(I:C) for four hours. We measured the
115 number of RNA and DNA barcodes in RNA and DNA samples prepared from the
116 enhancers-transduced-THP-1 cells. Barcodes in the RNA and DNA samples prepared
117 from transduced cells were sequenced to determine the number of RNA barcode
118 transcripts and DNA inserts. The log₂ ratios of barcode RNA transcripts to barcode
119 DNA inserts (as input controls) were used to determine enhancer activity. We found
120 that the *TNF* PE, E-16.0, and E-6.5 showed significant enhancer activity (Fig. 3B). To
121 determine which of *TNF* PE, E-16.0, and E-6.5 can respond to poly(I:C) stimulation
122 with increased enhancer activity, we treated enhancers-transduced-THP-1 cells with
123 poly(I:C) for four hours and measured barcodes in RNA and DNA barcodes by qPCR.
124 Our results showed that *TNF* PE and *TNF* E-16.0 enhancers showed significant
125 increase enhancer activity in response to poly(I:C) treatment (Fig. 3C).

126

127 **The *TNF* E-16.0 enhancer is essential in *TNF* gene transcription in response to**
128 **poly(I:C) stimulation**

129 Not all enhancers identified using reporter gene assay are required for gene
130 transcription in the context of naïve chromatin. To determine whether *TNF* E-16.0 and
131 PE enhancers are required or contribute to *TNF* gene transcription in response to
132 poly(I:C) stimulation, we deleted these enhancers and NE using CRISPR/Cas9. The
133 current CRISPR deletion method using two sgRNA guides often resulted in deletions
134 occurring in one chromosome, creating heterozygous deletion that does not have a
135 phenotype. To overcome this technical challenge, we targeted each enhancer with
136 four sgRNA guides, each contained within a bicistronic gene co-encoding for a
137 different fluorescence protein GFP, RFP, BFP, or Thy1.1 molecule (Fig. 4A). We
138 found that 9.4 % of THP-1 cells transduced with lentivirus containing the four sgRNA
139 guides expressing BFP, GFP, RFP, and Thy1.1 (Fig. 4B). FACS-sorted cells positive
140 for BFP, GFP, RFP, and Thy1.1 achieved complete homozygous deletion of WT *TNF*
141 NE, E-16.0, and PE enhancers in bulk using this newly improved method (Fig. 4C).
142 Deletion of the *TNF* E-16.0 enhancer resulted in 72.5 % reduction in *TNF* mRNA
143 expression and deletion of the *TNF* PE enhancer led to 51.9 % reduction in
144 *TNF* mRNA expression. In contrast, deletion of the *TNF* E-16.0 or the *TNF* PE did
145 not affect *LTA* and *LTB* mRNA expression (Fig. 4 E and F). These data demonstrate
146 that *TNF* E-16.0 is critical in *TNF* gene transcription in response to poly(I:C)
147 stimulation.

148

149 **Discussion**

150 Distal enhancers regulating *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages have not
151 been determined. In this study, we demonstrated that a distal *TNF* E-16.0 is critical in
152 *TNF* gene transcription in human macrophages in response to TLR ligand poly(I:C)
153 stimulation.

154 Distal enhancers are critical in the assembly of TF-TF and TF-coF interactions
155 with core promoters through a looping mechanism (26,27). Locating critical
156 enhancers can be a great challenge because critical enhancers can be located up to
157 100kb from the transcription start sites in non-coding regions that make up 99% of a
158 genome. The bioinformatics approach often assigns enhancers to the nearest genes
159 (18). The bioinformatics approach thus is limited in finding distal enhancers. Thus, it
160 is necessary to use CRISPR method to delete enhancer candidates. The CRISPR
161 deletion method that uses two sgRNA guides often results in heterozygous deletion
162 that does not have a phenotype. We targeted one enhancer with four sgRNA guides,
163 each contained within a bicistronic gene encoding for a different fluorescence protein
164 GFP, BFP, RFP, or Thy1.1 molecule. By coupling this with fluorescence activated
165 cell sorting to select for cells that express all four marker genes, we achieved around
166 complete enhancer deletion at two chromosomes without single-cell cloning. This
167 technical improvement has allowed us to analyze *TNF* gene transcription in the
168 context of naïve chromatin.

169 Previous studies reported that a distal hypersensitive site ~8 kb upstream of
170 the human *TNF* TSS (human hypersensitive site -8kb, hHS-8) is required for LPS-
171 induced *TNF* and *LTA* gene expression in macrophages and T cells (21,22). Although
172 our results showed that deletion of the *TNF* E-16.0 did not affect *LTA* or *LTB* gene

173 transcription in human macrophages, we should take caution in interpreting this
174 finding because human macrophages do not transcribe *LTA* and *LTB* genes at levels
175 comparable to T cells (28,29). Our finding discovers a novel enhancer in human
176 macrophages *TNF* E-16.0 and advance knowledge of *TNF* gene transcription in
177 human macrophages.

178 **Methods and Materials**

179 **Human alveolar macrophages**

180 Human lung was obtained from de-identified organ donors whose lungs were not
181 suitable for transplant and were donated for medical research. We obtained the donor
182 lungs through the International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine (Edison,
183 NJ) and the National Disease Research Interchange (Philadelphia, PA). Research on
184 these human lungs has been deemed as nonhuman subject research and is given IRB
185 exemption because the donors are deceased and de-identified. Alveolar macrophages
186 (AMs) were isolated from lavage of the lung before the instillation of elastase, as
187 described previously (30). The purity of the AMs was $92.6 \pm 2.8\%$ as measured by
188 immunostaining of cytocentrifuge preparations. AMs were frozen. Previous studies
189 have compared freshly isolated and frozen AMs and did not find noticeable
190 differences (30). AMs were cultured in DMEM (CAT # SH3024301) plus 10% FBS,
191 100 units/mL penicillin, 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ streptomycin, 2.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ amphotericin B in the
192 presence of 50 ng/ml GM-CSF (PeproTech, 300-03) in a humidified 37°C, 5% CO₂
193 incubator.

194

195 **Chromatin Immunoprecipitation and ChIP-seq**

196 Human macrophages (5×10^6) were not treated or treated with 1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ Poly(I:C) for
197 four hours were fixed with 1% formaldehyde (PI28908, Thermo Fisher Scientific),
198 sonicated by using the Covaris S220 Focused-ultrasonicator in the SDS lysis buffer (1%
199 SDS, 10 mM EDTA, 50mM Tris.HCl pH8) and precleared with Protein A Beads at
200 4 °C for 1h according to established protocols. The samples were incubated with 10
201 μg of following antibodies (1:100 dilution): anti-H3K27ac antibody (ab4729, Abcam,

202 Abcam, Cambridge, MA) at 4°C overnight and then with protein A agarose/salmon
203 sperm DNA slurry (Millipore, Cat# 16-157) at 4°C for 1h. The beads were washed
204 and eluted as described. The crosslinking of eluted immunocomplexes was reversed
205 and the recovered DNA was recovered using a QIAGEN QIAquick PCR purification
206 kit (Qiagen, Valencia, CA). ChIP-seq library was prepared using TruSeq ChIP
207 Library Preparation Kit (IP-202-1024, Illumina, San Diego, CA) according to the
208 manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, 10 ng of ChIPed DNA was converted into blunt-
209 ended fragments. A single adenosine nucleotide was added to the 3' ends of the blunt-
210 ended fragments before ligation of indexing adapters to the adenylated 3' ends. The
211 ligated products were purified, size-selected and PCR amplified according to the
212 manufacturer's instructions. The quality and quantity of the DNA library were
213 assessed on 4150 TapeStation System (Agilent, CA). Paired-ended sequencing was
214 performed on an Illumina NovaSEQ6000 platform.

215

216 **Omni-ATAC-seq**

217 Omni-ATAC-seq was performed according to the published method (31). Briefly,
218 50,000 AMs that were untreated, treated with Poly(I:C) for four hours were spun
219 down and washed once with cold PBS. The cells were resuspended in 50 µl cold
220 ATAC-RSB-lysis buffer and incubated for 3 minutes. The ATAC-RSB-lysis buffer
221 was immediately washed out with 1 mL ATAC-RSB buffer. The cell pellet was
222 resuspended in 50 µl transposition mix and incubated for 30 minutes at 37 °C. The
223 reaction was stopped by adding 2.5 µl pH 8 0.5 M EDTA. The Qiagen MiniElute PCR
224 purification kit (Qiagen) was used to purify the transposed DNA. Purified DNA was
225 amplified using the following condition: 72°C for 5 min, 98 °C for 30 s, and 13 cycles:

226 98 °C for 10s, 63 °C for 30 s, 72 °C for 1min. The amplified libraries were purified,
227 size-selected, and the quality and quantity of libraries were assessed on 4150
228 TapeStation System (Agilent, CA). The pair-ended sequencing of DNA libraries was
229 performed on an Illumina NovaSEQ6000 platform.

230

231 **ChIP-seq and Omni-ATAC-seq data analysis**

232 Raw sequencing reads (average 40-80 million reads, 2 biological replicates for each
233 treatment) were aligned to the hg38 reference genome using Bowtie2 with very-
234 sensitive and -x 2000 parameters. The read alignments were filtered using SAMtools
235 to remove mitochondrial genome and PCR duplicates. Peaks were identified by
236 MACS2 with the q-value cut-off of 0.05 and the sequencing data was displayed using
237 IGV.

238

239 **Lentiviral MPRA barcoded enhancer and CRISPR plasmids constructions**

240 The lentiviral MPRA vector pLS-SceI (Addgene, Plasmid #137725) containing a
241 minimal promoter and barcoded *Gfp* reporter gene was used for reporter assay. The
242 candidate enhancers were cloned into the lentiMPRA pLS-SceI vector through the
243 AgeI and SbfI restriction sites. Polymerases, restriction and modification enzymes
244 were obtained from New England Biolabs (Beverly, MA). All plasmids were verified
245 by sequencing.

246 The bicistronic sgRNA guides targeting *TNF* enhancers were designed using
247 the online CRISPick tool from Broad Institute
248 (<https://portals.broadinstitute.org/gppx/crispick/public>). Each of four sgRNA

249 sequences targeting the same enhancer was cloned into LentiCRISPRv2GFP
250 (Addgene, Plasmid # 82416), LentiCRISPRv2-mCherry (Addgene, Plasmid #99154),
251 LentiCRISPRv2-BFP, or LentiCRISPRv2-THY1.1 vectors via the BsmBI cloning site.
252 LentiCRISPRv2-THY1.1 vector was modified by replacing GFP gene in
253 LentiCRISPRv2-GFP with the gene encoding THY1.1 using the SacII and BamHI
254 restriction sites.

255

256 **Lentivirus production and transduction**

257 The 10cm dishes were coated with 4mL 10 µg/mL poly D lysine (Sigma, P0899) for 5
258 minutes at room temperature in H₂O. Plate cells at 2-3 x 10⁶ HEK293T cells/dish in
259 DMEM (10% FBS, but no antibiotics). Twenty-four hours later, HEK293T cells were
260 transfected with 10 µg of pLS-SceI-BE plasmid or four color bicistronic sgRNA
261 guides LentiCRISPRv2 plasmids, 9 µg PΔ8.9 and 1 µg VSV-G using CaCl₂. Seventy-
262 two hours after transfection, the supernatants were collected and filtered with a 0.45
263 µm filter.

264 THP-1 cells were cultured in RPMI 1640 medium plus 10% FBS, 100
265 units/mL penicillin, 100 µg/mL streptomycin and 2mM beta-mercaptoethanol in a
266 humidified 37°C, 5% CO₂ incubator. The 1×10⁶ THP-1 cells were seeded into one
267 well of a 6-well plate with 10 mL lentivirus medium. The polybrene was added to
268 each plate at the final concentration of 8 µg/mL and the HEPES was added to each
269 plate at final concentration of 25 mM. Lentivirus supernatants were added to each
270 plate. The plates were wrapped with parafilm and centrifuged at 2,500 rpm for 90
271 minutes at room temperature. The supernatant was removed by aspiration and 2 mL
272 fresh medium per well was added. The spin infection step was repeated at the next

273 day and the day after for a total of three spin infections. Two days after the last spin
274 infection, the cells for four color sgRNA guides deletion that expressed BFP, GFP,
275 RFP, and Thy1.1 were FACS-sorted. For the reporter assay, the transduced THP-1
276 cells can be used for further analysis.

277

278 **PMA maturation and Poly(I:C) stimulation**

279 THP-1 cells express low levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines upon Poly(I:C)
280 stimulation. These cells can be matured to become robust pro-inflammatory cytokine-
281 producing cells by Phorbol 12-Myristate 13-Acetate (PMA, Sigma-Aldrich).
282 Transduced-THP-1 cells were incubated with PMA (200 ng/mL) for three days. The
283 matured THP-1 cells were not treated or treated with 20 µg/mL Poly(I:C) (4287, R&D
284 Systems, Minneapolis, MN) for four additional hours before the cells were collected
285 for analysis.

286

287 **Sequencing RNA barcode transcripts and DNA barcode inserts and**

288 **bioinformatics analysis**

289 The untreated or Poly(I:C)-stimulated cells were washed with PBS three times, and
290 genomic DNA and total RNA were extracted using a DNA/RNA mini kit (Qiagen)
291 according to the manufacturer's instructions. LentiMPRA barcoded RNA-seq and
292 DNA-seq libraries were constructed according to the published method (23).
293 Barcodes were associated with enhancer sequences and the number of barcodes in the
294 RNA and DNA samples was counted using software MPRAflow as described in the
295 published bioinformatics workflows (23). Briefly, the genomic DNA was treated with
296 RNase to remove contaminating RNA and the total RNA was treated with DNase to

297 remove contaminating DNA. For the enhancer–barcode association, a P5 flowcell
298 sequence, the sample index sequence and a P7 flowcell sequence were added to the
299 LentiMPRA barcoded libraries. For the RNA and DNA barcode counts, cDNA was
300 synthesized by reverse transcription using construct-specific primers that contain P7
301 flowcell sequences and unique molecular identifiers (UMIs), to preserve the true
302 counts of molecules through the amplification process. DNA or cDNA was amplified
303 with the primers that contain the P5 flowcell sequence, sample index sequence, 16-bp
304 UMI and P7 flowcell sequence. The pair-ended sequencing of DNA libraries was
305 performed on an Illumina NovaSEQ6000 platform.

306 We analyzed the NGS sequencing data on Linux. The codes was downloaded
307 from <https://docs.conda.io/en/latest/miniconda.html> and the MPRAflow was
308 downloaded from <https://github.com/shendurelab/MPRAflow.git>. For the barcode
309 association, the code is “nextflow run association.nf --fastq-insert "R1_001.fastq.gz" -
310 -fastq-insertPE "R3_001.fastq.gz" --design "ordered_candidate_sequences.fa" --fastq-
311 bc "R2_001.fastq.gz"”. For the barcode counting, the code is “nextflow run count.nf -
312 -dir "bulk_FASTQ_directory" --e "experiment.csv" --design
313 "ordered_candidate_sequences.fa" --association
314 "dictionary_of_candidate_sequences_to_barcodes.p”.

315

316 **qPCR analysis**

317 The untreated or Poly(I:C)-stimulated THP-1 cells were collected, genomic DNA and
318 total RNA were extracted using a DNA/RNA mini kit (Qiagen) according to the
319 manufacturer’s instructions. Quantitative PCR was performed in a QuantStudio 7 Flex
320 Real-Time PCR System (ThermoFisher, MA). The sequences of qPCR primers are

321 listed in Supplemental Table \square . Relative mRNA amounts were calculated as follows:

322 Relative mRNA or DNA amount = $2^{[Ct(\text{Sample})-Ct(HPRT)]}$. The barcode reporter activity

323 was measured as the ratio of RNA and DNA.

324

325 **Statistical analysis**

326 The nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test or two-tailed student's *t*-test was used to

327 determine significant differences between the two samples.

328 **Acknowledgement**

329 We thank laboratory members for thoughtful discussions. We are grateful to Kirby
330 Motsinger and Marlene Gallegos Sanchez for technical assistance. We are grateful to
331 Dr. Bifeng Gao and the staff of the Genomics Shared Resource Facility at the
332 University of Colorado Cancer Center for Next-Generation Sequencing.

333

334 **Funding:** Supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health R01AI107022
335 and R01AI083986 (H.H.).

336

337 **Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest
338 with the contents of this article.

339 References

- 340 1. Hussell, T., and Bell, T. J. (2014) Alveolar macrophages: plasticity in a tissue-
341 specific context. *Nature reviews. Immunology* **14**, 81-93
- 342 2. Martin, W. J., 2nd, Wu, M., and Pasula, R. (2005) A novel approach to restore lung
343 immunity during systemic immunosuppression. *Trans Am Clin Climatol Assoc* **116**,
344 221-226; discussion 226-227
- 345 3. Beutler, B. A. (2009) TLRs and innate immunity. *Blood* **113**, 1399-1407
- 346 4. Akira, S., and Takeda, K. (2004) Toll-like receptor signalling. *Nature reviews.*
347 *Immunology* **4**, 499-511
- 348 5. McCoy, C. E., and O'Neill, L. A. (2008) The role of toll-like receptors in
349 macrophages. *Front Biosci* **13**, 62-70
- 350 6. Alexopoulou, L., Holt, A. C., Medzhitov, R., and Flavell, R. A. (2001) Recognition
351 of double-stranded RNA and activation of NF-kappaB by Toll-like receptor 3. *Nature*
352 **413**, 732-738
- 353 7. Fitzgerald, K. A., and Kagan, J. C. (2020) Toll-like Receptors and the Control of
354 Immunity. *Cell* **180**, 1044-1066
- 355 8. Poltorak, A., He, X., Smirnova, I., Liu, M. Y., Van Huffel, C., Du, X., Birdwell, D.,
356 Alejos, E., Silva, M., Galanos, C., Freudenberg, M., Ricciardi-Castagnoli, P., Layton,
357 B., and Beutler, B. (1998) Defective LPS signaling in C3H/HeJ and C57BL/10ScCr
358 mice: mutations in Tlr4 gene. *Science* **282**, 2085-2088
- 359 9. Lund, J. M., Alexopoulou, L., Sato, A., Karow, M., Adams, N. C., Gale, N. W.,
360 Iwasaki, A., and Flavell, R. A. (2004) Recognition of single-stranded RNA viruses by
361 Toll-like receptor 7. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United*
362 *States of America* **101**, 5598-5603
- 363 10. Vollmer, J., Tluk, S., Schmitz, C., Hamm, S., Jurk, M., Forsbach, A., Akira, S., Kelly,
364 K. M., Reeves, W. H., Bauer, S., and Krieg, A. M. (2005) Immune stimulation
365 mediated by autoantigen binding sites within small nuclear RNAs involves Toll-like
366 receptors 7 and 8. *The Journal of experimental medicine* **202**, 1575-1585
- 367 11. Takeuchi, O., and Akira, S. (2009) Innate immunity to virus infection. *Immunol Rev*
368 **227**, 75-86
- 369 12. Ren, X., Wen, W., Fan, X., Hou, W., Su, B., Cai, P., Li, J., Liu, Y., Tang, F., Zhang,
370 F., Yang, Y., He, J., Ma, W., He, J., Wang, P., Cao, Q., Chen, F., Chen, Y., Cheng, X.,
371 Deng, G., Deng, X., Ding, W., Feng, Y., Gan, R., Guo, C., Guo, W., He, S., Jiang, C.,
372 Liang, J., Li, Y. M., Lin, J., Ling, Y., Liu, H., Liu, J., Liu, N., Liu, S. Q., Luo, M., Ma,
373 Q., Song, Q., Sun, W., Wang, G., Wang, F., Wang, Y., Wen, X., Wu, Q., Xu, G., Xie,
374 X., Xiong, X., Xing, X., Xu, H., Yin, C., Yu, D., Yu, K., Yuan, J., Zhang, B., Zhang,
375 P., Zhang, T., Zhao, J., Zhao, P., Zhou, J., Zhou, W., Zhong, S., Zhong, X., Zhang, S.,
376 Zhu, L., Zhu, P., Zou, B., Zou, J., Zuo, Z., Bai, F., Huang, X., Zhou, P., Jiang, Q.,
377 Huang, Z., Bei, J. X., Wei, L., Bian, X. W., Liu, X., Cheng, T., Li, X., Zhao, P.,
378 Wang, F. S., Wang, H., Su, B., Zhang, Z., Qu, K., Wang, X., Chen, J., Jin, R., and
379 Zhang, Z. (2021) COVID-19 immune features revealed by a large-scale single-cell
380 transcriptome atlas. *Cell* **184**, 1895-1913 e1819
- 381 13. Merad, M., and Martin, J. C. (2020) Pathological inflammation in patients with
382 COVID-19: a key role for monocytes and macrophages. *Nature reviews. Immunology*
383 **20**, 355-362
- 384 14. Mehta, P., McAuley, D. F., Brown, M., Sanchez, E., Tattersall, R. S., Manson, J. J.,
385 and Hlh Across Speciality Collaboration, U. K. (2020) COVID-19: consider cytokine
386 storm syndromes and immunosuppression. *Lancet* **395**, 1033-1034
- 387 15. Grupp, S. A., Kalos, M., Barrett, D., Aplenc, R., Porter, D. L., Rheingold, S. R.,
388 Teachey, D. T., Chew, A., Hauck, B., Wright, J. F., Milone, M. C., Levine, B. L., and
389 June, C. H. (2013) Chimeric antigen receptor-modified T cells for acute lymphoid
390 leukemia. *The New England journal of medicine* **368**, 1509-1518

- 391 16. Spitz, F., and Furlong, E. E. (2012) Transcription factors: from enhancer binding to
392 developmental control. *Nature reviews. Genetics* **13**, 613-626
- 393 17. Vaishnav, E. D., de Boer, C. G., Molinet, J., Yassour, M., Fan, L., Adiconis, X.,
394 Thompson, D. A., Levin, J. Z., Cubillos, F. A., and Regev, A. (2022) The evolution,
395 evolvability and engineering of gene regulatory DNA. *Nature* **603**, 455-463
- 396 18. Wang, S., Sun, H., Ma, J., Zang, C., Wang, C., Wang, J., Tang, Q., Meyer, C. A.,
397 Zhang, Y., and Liu, X. S. (2013) Target analysis by integration of transcriptome and
398 ChIP-seq data with BETA. *Nat Protoc* **8**, 2502-2515
- 399 19. Falvo, J. V., Jasenosky, L. D., Kruidenier, L., and Goldfeld, A. E. (2013) Epigenetic
400 control of cytokine gene expression: regulation of the TNF/LT locus and T helper cell
401 differentiation. *Advances in immunology* **118**, 37-128
- 402 20. Tsytsykova, A. V., Rajsbaum, R., Falvo, J. V., Ligeiro, F., Neely, S. R., and Goldfeld,
403 A. E. (2007) Activation-dependent intrachromosomal interactions formed by the TNF
404 gene promoter and two distal enhancers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of
405 Sciences of the United States of America* **104**, 16850-16855
- 406 21. Chow, N. A., Jasenosky, L. D., and Goldfeld, A. E. (2014) A distal locus element
407 mediates IFN-gamma priming of lipopolysaccharide-stimulated TNF gene expression.
408 *Cell Rep* **9**, 1718-1728
- 409 22. Jasenosky, L. D., Nambu, A., Tsytsykova, A. V., Ranjbar, S., Haridas, V., Kruidenier,
410 L., Tough, D. F., and Goldfeld, A. E. (2020) Identification of a Distal Locus
411 Enhancer Element That Controls Cell Type-Specific TNF and LTA Gene Expression
412 in Human T Cells. *J Immunol* **205**, 2479-2488
- 413 23. Gordon, M. G., Inoue, F., Martin, B., Schubach, M., Agarwal, V., Whalen, S., Feng,
414 S., Zhao, J., Ashuach, T., Ziffra, R., Kreimer, A., Georgakopoulos-Soares, I., Yosef,
415 N., Ye, C. J., Pollard, K. S., Shendure, J., Kircher, M., and Ahituv, N. (2020)
416 lentiMPRA and MPRAflow for high-throughput functional characterization of gene
417 regulatory elements. *Nat Protoc* **15**, 2387-2412
- 418 24. Park, E. K., Jung, H. S., Yang, H. I., Yoo, M. C., Kim, C., and Kim, K. S. (2007)
419 Optimized THP-1 differentiation is required for the detection of responses to weak
420 stimuli. *Inflamm Res* **56**, 45-50
- 421 25. Starr, T., Bauler, T. J., Malik-Kale, P., and Steele-Mortimer, O. (2018) The phorbol
422 12-myristate-13-acetate differentiation protocol is critical to the interaction of THP-1
423 macrophages with Salmonella Typhimurium. *PloS one* **13**, e0193601
- 424 26. Schoenfelder, S., and Fraser, P. (2019) Long-range enhancer-promoter contacts in
425 gene expression control. *Nat Rev Genet* **20**, 437-455
- 426 27. Reiter, F., Wienerroither, S., and Stark, A. (2017) Combinatorial function of
427 transcription factors and cofactors. *Current opinion in genetics & development* **43**,
428 73-81
- 429 28. Sedy, J., Bekiaris, V., and Ware, C. F. (2014) Tumor necrosis factor superfamily in
430 innate immunity and inflammation. *Cold Spring Harb Perspect Biol* **7**, a016279
- 431 29. Koroleva, E. P., Fu, Y. X., and Tumanov, A. V. (2018) Lymphotoxin in physiology
432 of lymphoid tissues - Implication for antiviral defense. *Cytokine* **101**, 39-47
- 433 30. Wang, J., Nikrad, M. P., Travanty, E. A., Zhou, B., Phang, T., Gao, B., Alford, T., Ito,
434 Y., Nahreini, P., Hartshorn, K., Wentworth, D., Dinarello, C. A., and Mason, R. J.
435 (2012) Innate immune response of human alveolar macrophages during influenza A
436 infection. *PloS one* **7**, e29879
- 437 31. Corces, M. R., Trevino, A. E., Hamilton, E. G., Greenside, P. G., Sinnott-Armstrong,
438 N. A., Vesuna, S., Satpathy, A. T., Rubin, A. J., Montine, K. S., Wu, B., Kathiria, A.,
439 Cho, S. W., Mumbach, M. R., Carter, A. C., Kasowski, M., Orloff, L. A., Risca, V. I.,
440 Kundaje, A., Khavari, P. A., Montine, T. J., Greenleaf, W. J., and Chang, H. Y. (2017)
441 An improved ATAC-seq protocol reduces background and enables interrogation of
442 frozen tissues. *Nat Methods* **14**, 959-962

444 **Figure legends**

445 **Figure 1. Primary human alveolar macrophages transcribe *TNF* genes to**
446 **extremely high levels in responding to poly(I:C) stimulation.** Human alveolar
447 macrophages were untreated (UN), treated by poly(I:C) for four hours (4h), eight
448 hours (8h) or twenty-four hours (24h). qPCR analysis of the mRNA expression of
449 *TNF* genes. *P* values were calculated using the Mann-Whitney U test. Data represent
450 mean \pm SEM of seven biological samples.

451

452 **Figure 2. Identification of the putative *TNF* enhancers.** Representative Integrated
453 Genome Viewer (IGV) tracks from H3K27ac ChIP-seq and Omni-ATAC-seq. Human
454 alveolar macrophages with unstimulation (UN) or poly(I:C) stimulation for four hours
455 were used for H3K27ac ChIP-seq and Omni-ATAC-seq. Red bars indicate putative
456 *TNF* enhancers that show increased H3K27ac modifications and chromatin
457 accessibility. RPM: reads per million mapped reads; E: enhancer; PE: proximal
458 enhancer; NE non-enhancer. The numbers following E indicate the distance (kb) of
459 enhancer to the TSS of the *TNF* gene; + means the enhancers are located at the
460 downstream of the TSS, and – means the enhancers are located at the upstream of the
461 TSS. One IGV track was from one biological sample, representing two biological
462 replicates with similar patterns.

463

464 **Figure 3. *TNF* E-16.0 and PE possess enhancer activity in response to poly(I:C)**
465 **stimulation. A. Barcoded GFP reporter gene constructs. B. Barcoded enhancer**
466 **activity.** The number RNA barcode transcripts and DNA barcode inserts in RNA and
467 DNA samples prepared from the enhancers-transduced-THP-1 cells were determined

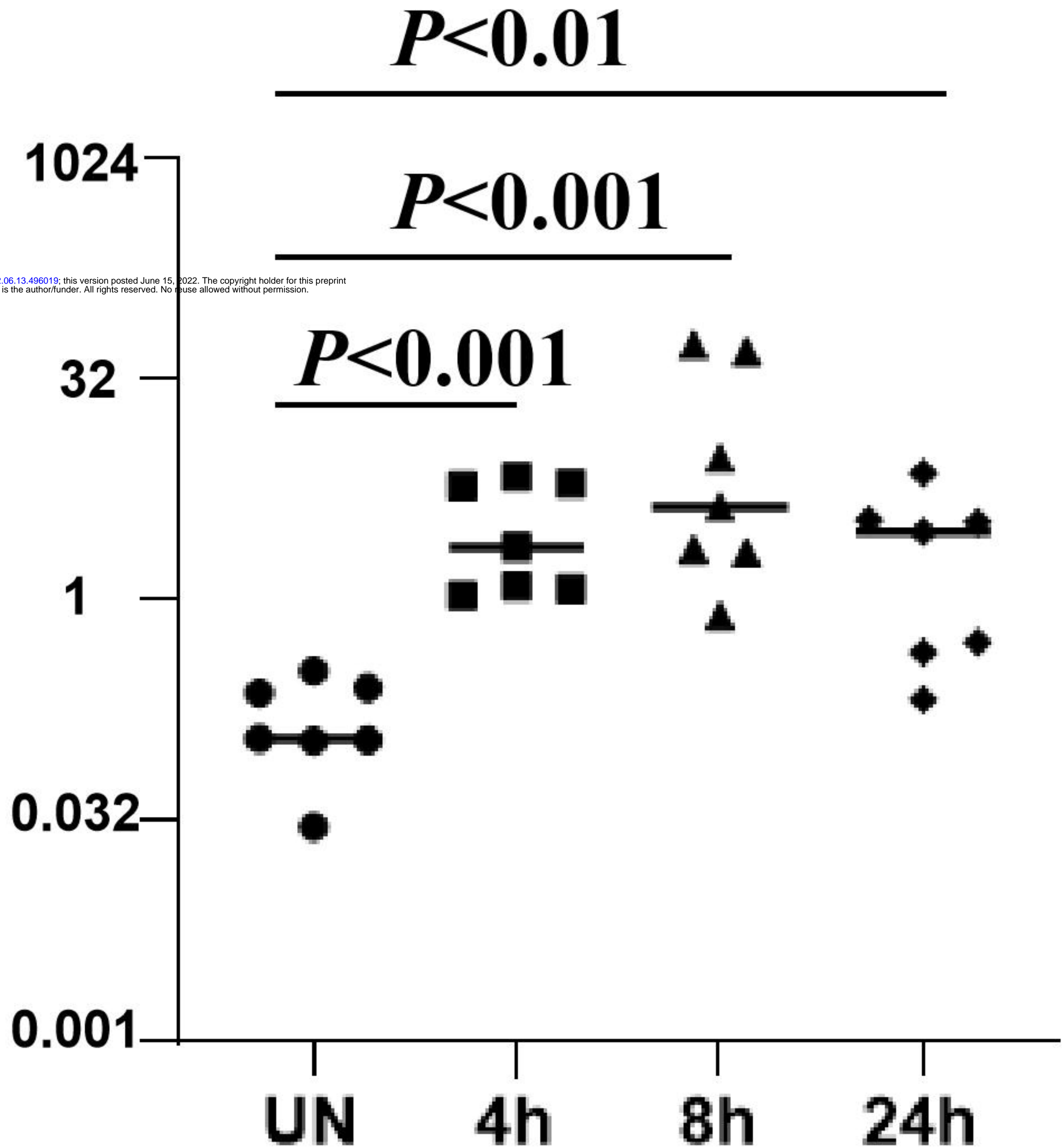
468 by NGS sequencing. The log₂ ratios of barcode RNA transcripts to barcode DNA
469 inserts (as input controls) were used to determine enhancer activity. Data represent
470 mean ± SEM of two biological samples. **C.** qPCR analysis of RNA barcodes or DNA
471 barcode inserts in samples prepared from the enhancers-transduced-THP-1 cells
472 untreated or treated with poly(I:C) for four hours. Data represent mean ± SEM of
473 three transduced samples. *P* values were calculated using two-tailed student's *t* test.

474

475 **Figure 4. The *TNF* E-16.0 is required for *TNF* gene transcription in response to**
476 **poly(I:C) stimulation. A.** Targeting one enhancer with bicistronic sgRNA guides co-
477 expressing BFP, GFP, RFP, and Thy1.1. **B.** FACS sorting gates. THP-1 cells were
478 transduced with BFP, GFP, RFP, and Thy1.1 sgRNA guides (4c sgRNA guides).
479 BFP⁺, GFP⁺, RFP⁺, and Thy1.1APC⁺ transduced cells were FACS-sorted using
480 sorting gates indicated. **C.** DNA deletion efficiency analysis. Vector control (VC) and
481 deleted DNA fragments in FACS-sorted BFP⁺, GFP⁺, RFP⁺, and Thy1.1APC⁺ cells
482 were analyzed with PCR. **D.** *TNF* mRNA expression in the FACS-sorted transduced
483 cells was measured by qPCR. The percentages indicate the percent reduction in *TNF*
484 mRNA expression in enhancer-deleted (del) relative to non-transduced or vector-
485 transduced THP-1 cells. **E.** *LTA* mRNA expression in the FACS-sorted cells was
486 measured by qPCR. **F.** *LTB* mRNA expression in the FACS-sorted cells was
487 measured by qPCR. *P* values were calculated using two-tailed student's *t* test. Data
488 represent mean ± SEM of three transduced samples.

TNF

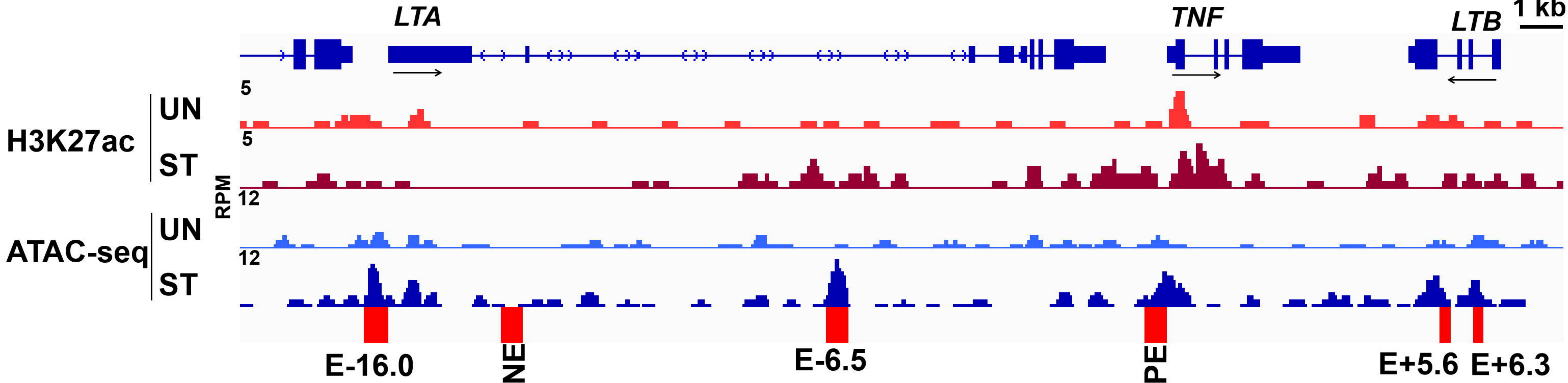
mRNA expression
relative to *HPRT* (Log₂ scale)

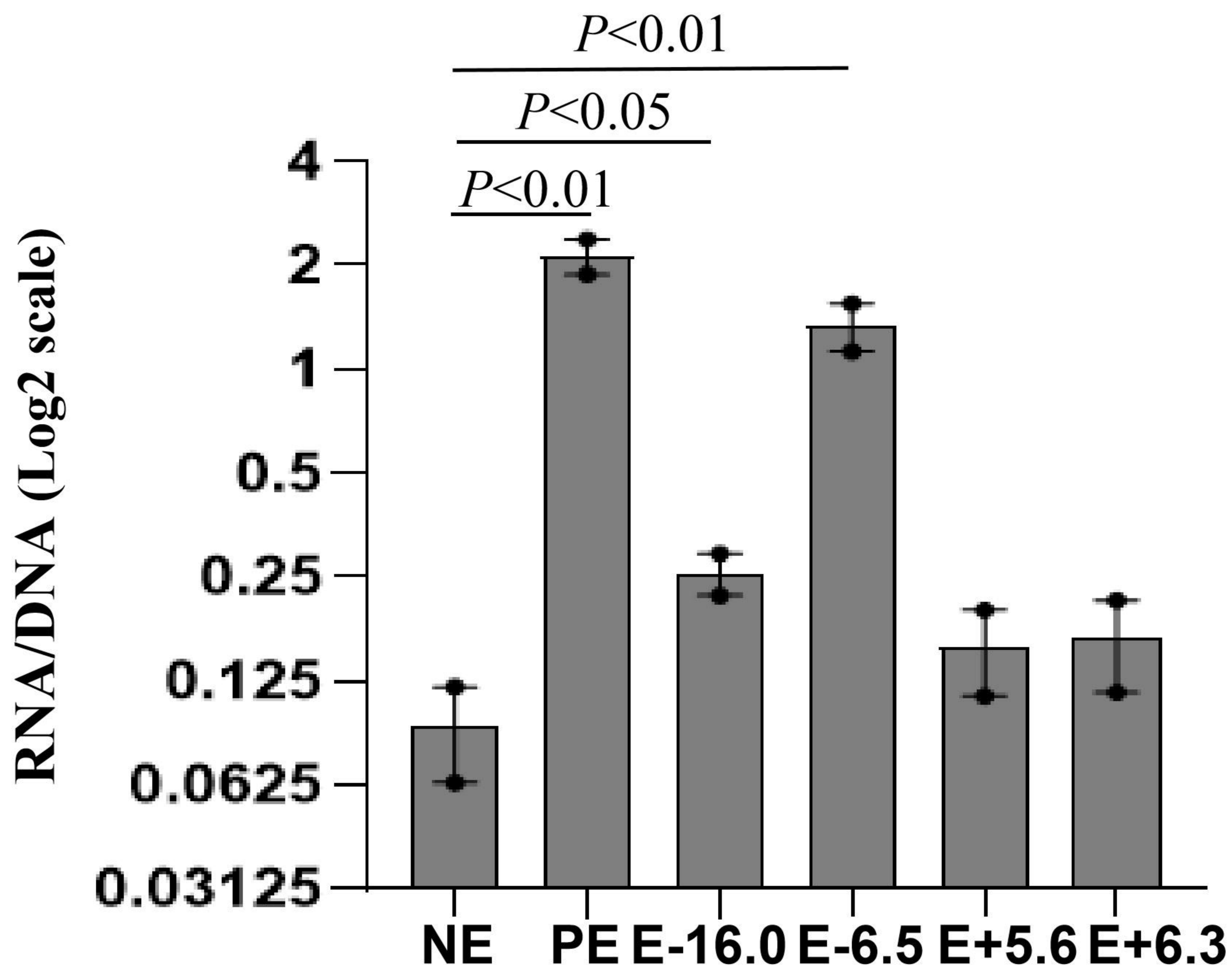
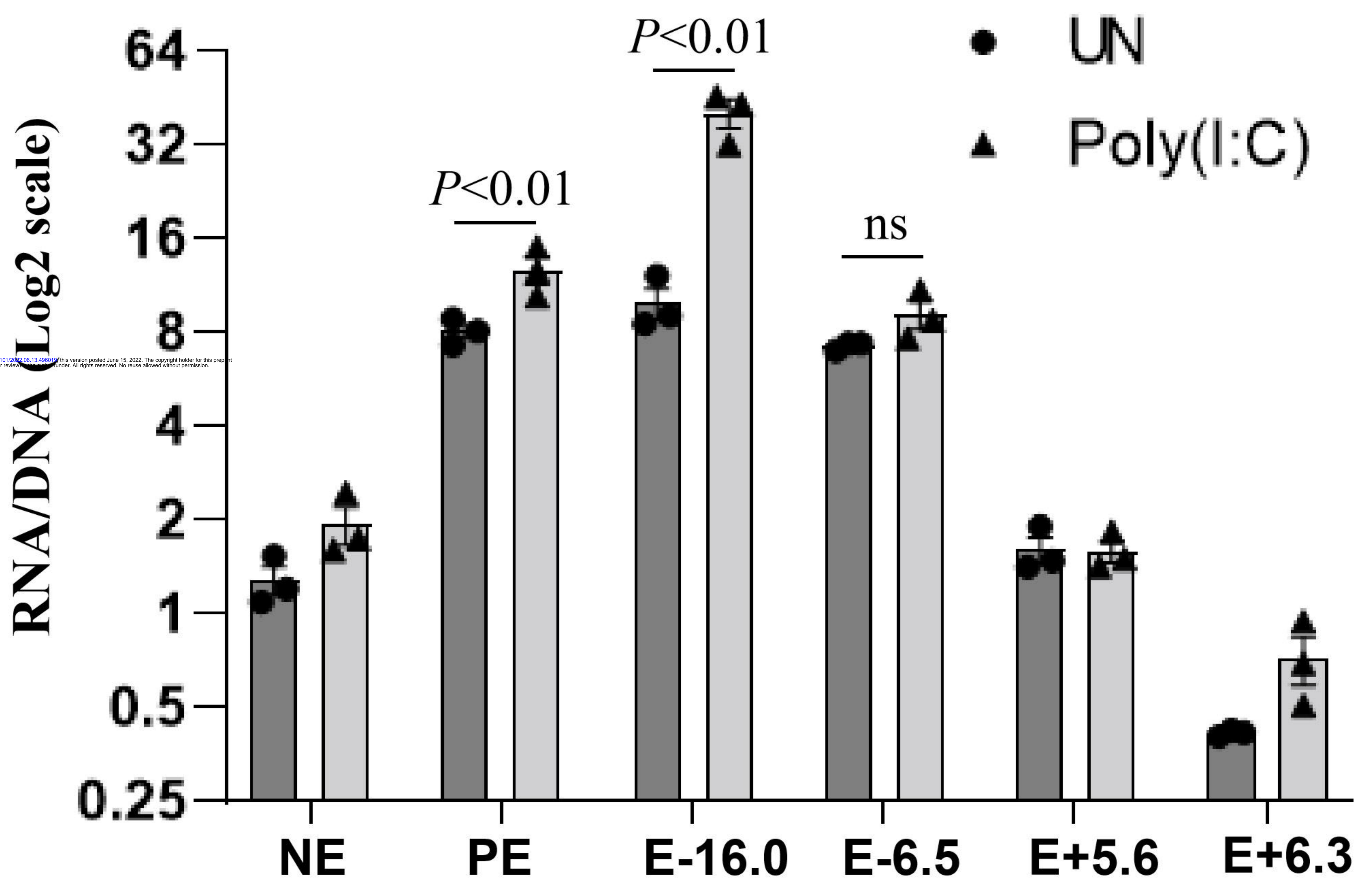


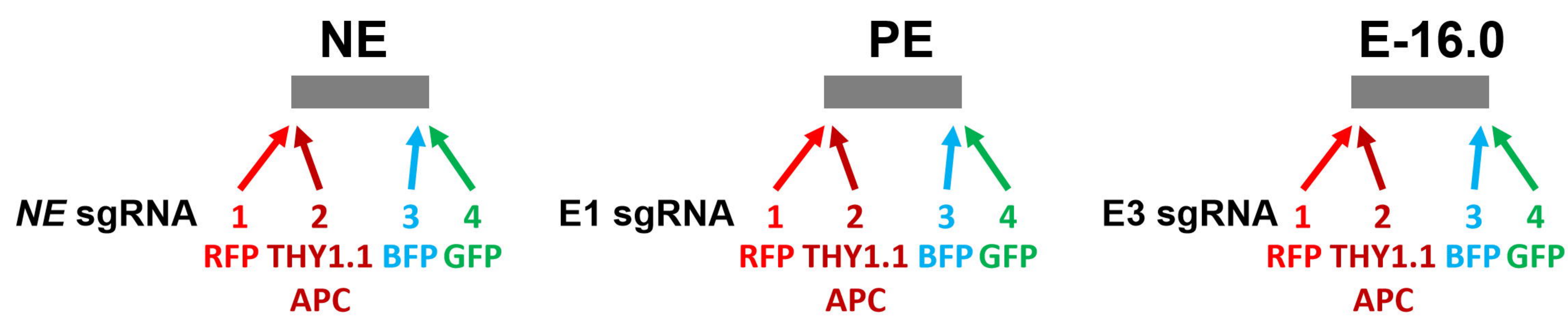
Chr6: 31,556,059

Chr6: 31,575,565 Chr6: 31,584,146

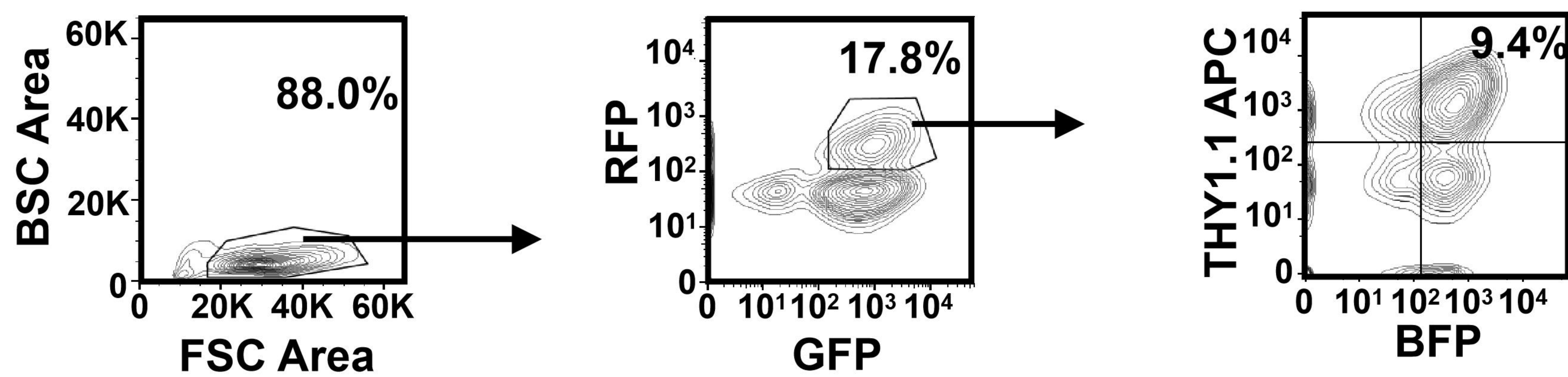
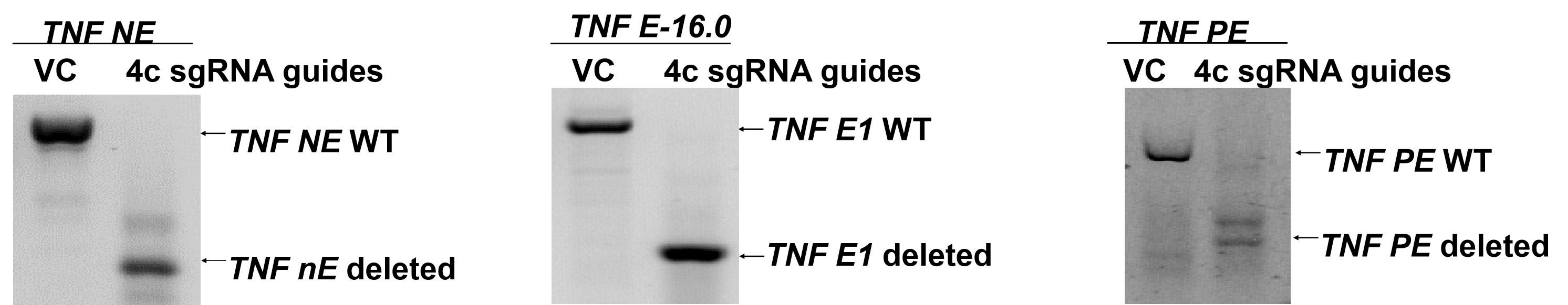
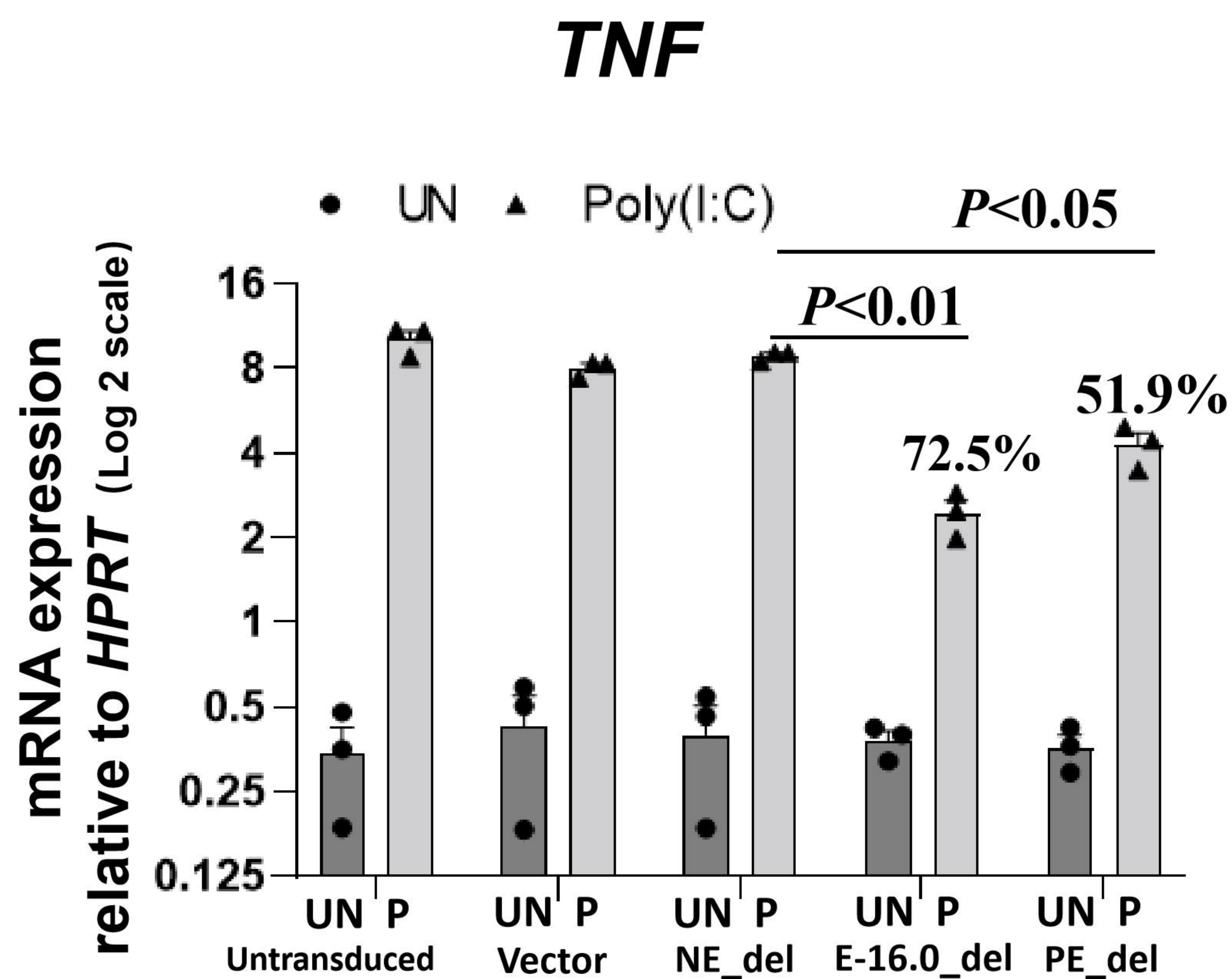
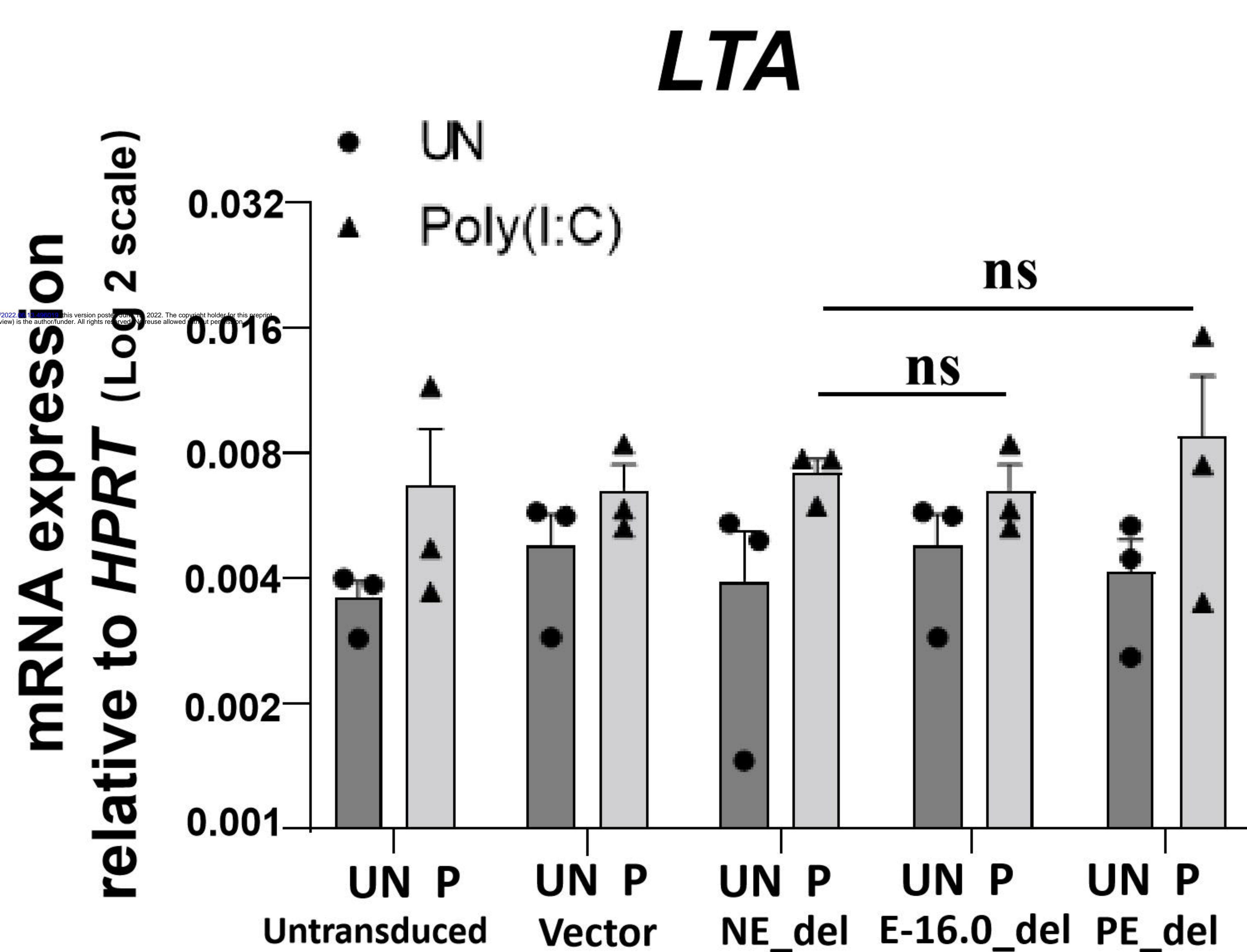
bioRxiv preprint doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2022.06.13.496019>; this version posted June 15, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission.



A**B****C**

A**B**

Four color sgRNA guides

**C****D****E****F**