

1 **PipeIT2: A tumor-only somatic variant calling workflow for Molecular**
2 **Diagnostic Ion Torrent sequencing data**

3

4 Desiree Schnidrig^{1,2*}, Andrea Garofoli^{3*}, Andrej Benjak^{1,2}, Gunnar Rätsch^{2,4}, Mark A.
5 Rubin^{1,5}, SOCIBP consortium, Salvatore Piscuoglio^{3,6} and Charlotte K. Y. Ng^{1,2,5}

6

7 ¹Department for BioMedical Research, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

8 ²SIB Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, Lausanne, Switzerland

9 ³Institute of Medical Genetics and Pathology, University Hospital Basel, University of Basel,
10 Basel, Switzerland

11 ⁴Department of Computer Science, ETH Zurich

12 ⁵Bern Center for Precision Medicine, Bern, Switzerland

13 ⁶Department of Biomedicine, University Hospital Basel, University of Basel, Basel,
14 Switzerland

15 *Co-first authors

16

17 **Number of text pages: 12**

18 **Number of tables: 1**

19 **Number of figures: 3**

20 **Running head:** Ion Torrent somatic variants pipeline

21

22 **Grants and other funding sources:** C.K.Y.N. and S.P. were supported by the Swiss
23 Cancer Research foundation (KFS-4543-08-2018, KFS-4988-02-2020-R, respectively). The
24 SOCIBP (Swiss Molecular Pathology Breakthrough Platform) is a driver project funded by
25 the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN). S.P. was supported by the Surgery
26 Department of the University Hospital Basel and by The Prof. Dr. Max Cloëtta foundation.

27 The funders had no role in study design, data collection, and analysis, decision to publish, or
28 preparation of the manuscript.

29

30 **Disclosures:** C.K.Y.N. is a consultant for Repare Therapeutics.

31

32 **Correspondence:** Dr. Charlotte K. Y. Ng. Department for BioMedical Research, University
33 of Bern, Murtenstrasse 40, Bern, 3008, Switzerland. Tel: +41 31 632 8779; E-mail:

34 charlotte.ng@dbmr.unibe.ch

35 **ABSTRACT**

36 Precision oncology relies on the accurate identification of somatic mutations in cancer
37 patients. While the sequencing of the tumoral tissue is frequently part of routine clinical care,
38 the healthy counterparts are rarely sequenced. We previously published PipelT, a somatic
39 variant calling workflow specific for Ion Torrent sequencing data enclosed in a Singularity
40 container. PipelT combines user-friendly execution, reproducibility and reliable mutation
41 identification, but relies on matched germline sequencing data to exclude germline variants.
42 Expanding on the original PipelT, here we describe PipelT2 to address the clinical need to
43 define somatic mutations in the absence of germline control. We show that PipelT2 achieves
44 a >95% recall for variants with variant allele fraction >10%, reliably detects driver and
45 actionable mutations and filters out most of the germline mutations and sequencing artifacts.
46 With its performance, reproducibility and ease of execution, PipelT2 is a valuable addition to
47 molecular diagnostics laboratories.

48

49

50

51

52

53 INTRODUCTION

54 Detection of genomic alterations is becoming a critical component in the standard-of-care in
55 modern oncology^{1,2}. Typically, the detection of genomic alterations is performed using
56 targeted sequencing panels to profile previously described cancer and actionable gene
57 regions. The Ion Torrent sequencing platform is frequently used for targeted sequencing in
58 the diagnostic setting due to its relatively low costs, ability to profile limited genetic material
59 and rapid turnaround³. While Ion Torrent library preparation and sequencing are relatively
60 straightforward, the methods for sequencing data analysis are not very well-developed. Due
61 to the technical differences between Ion Torrent and other sequencing platforms, most of the
62 variant calling tools previously tested, validated and extensively used by the community are
63 not suited for Ion Torrent data. Ion Torrent sequencing data are typically analyzed on its own
64 analysis platform Ion Reporter. We and others have reported the high false positive rate of
65 Ion Reporter analyses, especially for custom panels that lack built-in analysis workflows^{4,5}.
66 Consequently, analyses performed on the Ion Reporter platform typically require extensive
67 manual review of the results.

68

69 We recently published PipeIT, a pipeline to detect somatic variants in matched tumor-
70 germline samples from Ion Torrent sequencing data⁵, providing a reliable and automated
71 workflow to perform variant calling analysis, outperforming a standard Ion Reporter analysis.
72 We previously benchmarked the variant calling analysis of Ion Reporter using both standard
73 parameters provided by the manufacturer and a set of optimized parameters. In both cases,
74 Ion Reporter was indeed able to detect genuine somatic mutations, validated by whole-
75 exome sequencing and/or Sanger sequencing on two different matched tumor-germline
76 cohorts), but it also showed the presence of several false positives, notably when the
77 analysis was performed using the standard, non optimized parameters provided by the
78 machine⁵. To ensure reproducibility and ease of deployment, PipeIT was built as a

79 Singularity⁶ container image file that can be easily executed with a single command, without
80 the need of additional software other than the Singularity platform.

81

82 The main drawback of PipelT is the need for germline matched control data. When the goal
83 is to identify somatic mutations, the sequencing of normal controls can be critical in order to
84 remove germline mutations^{1,7,8}. In routine clinical care, however, the sequencing of tumor-
85 only tissue is often preferred, for time, costs and sample availability reasons. Moreover,
86 researchers might want to analyze old, archived samples, for which matched germline
87 controls may not be available. These scenarios significantly limit the contexts where PipelT
88 can be used and, ultimately, prevent the software from fully achieving its original aim.

89

90 Here we present PipelT2, an extension of PipelT to enable variant calling analyses on tumor
91 samples without matched germline controls with a single command. PipelT2 identifies and
92 filters likely germline mutations by leveraging their allele frequencies in population databases
93 and, if provided, by detecting their presence in unmatched Panel of Normal (PoN) samples.
94 We demonstrate that PipelT2 was able to detect clinically relevant somatic mutations, while
95 correctly identifying and removing most of the germline genomic alterations.

96

97

98 MATERIALS AND METHODS

99 Building the PipelT2 Singularity Container Image

100 The original PipelT Singularity container has been updated to include the PipelT2 tumor-only
101 workflow. The file is a read-only squashfs file system Singularity image built on a CentOS7
102 Docker image as a base, as previously described⁵. PipelT2 provides the entry points to
103 perform both the matched tumor-germline and the new tumor-only workflow. Similar to
104 PipelT, the new PipelT2 Singularity image provides most of the data needed to perform the
105 complete analysis, except the population datasets due to file size. The population datasets
106 can be downloaded with PipelT2 using a utility provided in the Singularity image.

107

108 The PipelT2 tumor-only analysis workflow

109 The PipelT2 tumor-only analysis workflow comprises the following steps: 1) variant calling,
110 2) variant post-processing, 3) variant annotation, 4) read count and quality-based variant
111 filtering, 5) annotation-based variant filtering and, 6) optionally, PoN-based variant filtering
112 (**Figure 1**). Due to their likely role in cancer development, hotspot variants are annotated
113 and whitelisted from all filtering steps^{9,10}. This workflow requires a Binary Alignment Map
114 (BAM)¹¹ file for the tumor sample from the Ion Torrent Server aligned using the Torrent
115 Mapping Alignment Program (TMAP) aligner, a Browser Extensible Data (BED)¹² file
116 defining the target sequenced regions, Annovar¹³ annotation files comprising of population
117 minor allele frequencies, and optionally blacklist BED file and/or a Variant Call Format
118 (VCF)¹⁴ file containing the mutations found in the PoN. In contrast to the original PipelT
119 tumor-germline analysis workflow, PipelT2 does not use sequencing data from matched
120 germline controls.

121

122 Variant calling (step 1) is performed using the Torrent Variant Caller (TVC, v5.12-27 with
123 tvcutils 5.0-3, Thermo Fisher Scientific) using the same low stringency parameters used in

124 the original PipeIT tumor-germline analysis workflow⁵, packaged in a JSON file within
125 PipeIT2. Specifically, we use a quality threshold of 6.5, a variant score equal or higher than
126 10, a minimum coverage of 8 reads for single nucleotide variants (SNVs) and 15 reads for
127 small insertion/deletions (INDELs) and a variant allele frequency (VAF) of 2% for both SNVs
128 and INDELs. It is possible to customize the parameters by providing PipeIT2 a JSON file
129 following the format required by TVC. Some commercially available gene panels come with
130 a blacklist, consisting of recurrent artifacts identified through the sequencing of normal
131 samples. The blacklist is typically included in the hotspot BED file and these variants are
132 tagged with "BSTRAND=F" (on the forward strand), "BSTRAND=R" (on the reverse strand),
133 or "BSTRAND=B" (on both strands). If a blacklist BED file is provided, it will be used by TVC.
134 Normalization of the raw variants (step 2, splitting multiallelic into biallelic variants and left-
135 aligning) is then performed as in PipeIT to facilitate downstream processing.

136

137 In the next step, normalized variants are annotated using snpEff¹⁵ and Annovar¹³ (step 3).
138 Aside from the transcript and protein effects of the variants, PipeIT2 also annotates the
139 variants with their homopolymer lengths and their minor allele frequencies observed in
140 populations using data from the 1000 Genomes Project (1KG)¹⁶, the Exome Aggregation
141 Consortium (ExAC)¹⁷, the NHLBI Exome Sequencing Project (ESP)¹⁸ and the Genome
142 Aggregation Database (GnomAD)¹⁹. Additionally, variants in mutation hotspot regions^{9,10}
143 [https://github.com/charlottekyng/cancer_hotspots, last accessed March 9, 2022] are
144 annotated.

145

146 Variant filtering is then performed in three stages. First, read count and quality-based
147 filtering (step 4) is performed to remove variants of low confidence. By default, PipeIT2
148 removes variants with fewer than 20 total reads (corresponding to the INFO field FDP),
149 fewer than 8 reads supporting the variant (FAO), less than 10% VAF (FAO/FDP), fewer than
150 3 forward (FSAF) and 3 reverse reads (FSAR), strand bias (FSAF/FSAR) below 0.2 in either

151 direction, a quality score below 15, or variants in homopolymer regions of length greater
152 than 4 (**Table 1**).

153

154 Second, PipelT2 leverages population data to remove likely germline variants (step 5).
155 Specifically, variants are removed if they are observed with minor allele frequencies equal to
156 or higher than 0.5% in any of the four population-level databases 1KG, ExAC, ESP and
157 GnomAD. Variants with VAF between 0.4 and 0.6, or greater than 0.9 are removed if they
158 are found at any allele frequency in any of the four population-level datasets.

159

160 Third, as an optional step, PipelT2 can use a user-defined Panel of Normals (PoN) in order
161 to further reduce the number of likely false positive variants (step 6), including germline
162 variants not removed in step 5 and systematic sequencing and alignment artifacts. Accepted
163 inputs are either a pre-generated PoN VCF file or a list of unmatched germline BAM files
164 from samples sequenced on the same platform as the tumor sample. If a list of BAM files is
165 provided, PipelT2 automatically calls variants in each of these normal samples as per
166 variant calling and post-processing steps in the tumor-only workflow. These germline VCF
167 files are then merged with the GATK 'CombineVariants' function using the UNIQUIFY option
168 and retaining mutations found in at least two of the input samples.

169

170 The final post-filtering output is returned as a VCF file.

171

172 **Evaluation of the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow**

173 Sequencing data from 15 formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded colon adenomas²⁰ (COAD
174 cohort) and 10 frozen hepatocellular carcinoma samples²¹ (HCC cohort) were retrieved from
175 our previous publication⁵. The performance of the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow and the
176 contribution of the PoN-based variant filtering step (step 6 above) was assessed using the
177 outputs from the tumor-germline workflow as the benchmark. The PoN files used in these

178 analyses were generated from 8 randomly selected unmatched germline samples from the
179 corresponding cohorts. The mutations detected in PipeIT2 were classified as: true positives
180 (TP, mutations called by both workflows), false positives (FP, mutations called by the tumor-
181 only workflow but not the tumor-germline workflow), and false negatives (FN, mutations
182 detected by the tumor-germline workflow but not the tumor-only workflow). Performance of
183 PipeIT2 was evaluated as recall (TP/(TP+FN)), precision (TP/(TP+FP)) and F1 score
184 ($2 * \text{precision} * \text{recall} / (\text{precision} + \text{recall})$).

185 **Visualization of BAM files**

186 Integrative Genomics Viewer (IGV)²² was used to visualize the BAM files and search for the
187 presence of false positive mutations across the original matched tumor-germline pairs and
188 the unmatched germline samples used to build the PoN files for these benchmarking
189 analyses.

190

191 **SOFTWARE AVAILABILITY:** PipeIT2 is available at <https://github.com/ckynlab/PipeIT2>.

192

193 **RESULTS**

194 **Running the PipeIT2 tumor-only workflow**

195 To provide an effective somatic variant calling analysis on tumor data originated from Ion
196 Torrent platform in the absence of a matched germline, we updated the original PipeIT
197 functionality to allow the users to choose between the classic tumor-germline (PipeIT) and
198 the new tumor-only (PipeIT2) analyses. The PipeIT2 tumor-only workflow (**Figure 1**) can be
199 executed in a single command as follows:

```
200 singularity run PipeIT.img -t path/to/tumor.bam -e path/to/region.bed -c  
201 path/to/annovar/humandb/folder (-d path/to/PoN/file.vcf)
```

202 Using this command, somatic variants are called with an Ion Torrent-specific variant caller
203 (TVC), followed by a normalization step to facilitate downstream processing. Raw variant

204 calls are filtered in a multi-step process, specifically optimized to remove likely germline and
205 artefactual variants in the absence of a matched germline control. Specifically, low
206 confidence variants are removed with read- and quality-based filters. Then, information from
207 population sequencing data is leveraged to identify likely germline variants. An optional
208 panel of unmatched normal samples (PoN) can be used to further reduce the number of
209 germline and artefactual variants. In order to ensure the detection of known cancer hotspot
210 variants, they are annotated and whitelisted from all filtering steps^{9,10}.

211 **Evaluation of the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow**

212 To evaluate the performance of the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow, we analyzed the 10 fresh
213 frozen hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) samples and 15 formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded
214 colon adenomas (COAD) used in our previous publication⁵. The 10 HCCs and their matched
215 germline were sequenced using a previously published custom HCC targeted sequencing
216 panel²¹ and the 15 COADs with corresponding germline samples using the OncoPrint
217 Comprehensive Panel v3²³. We ran the tumor-only workflow with default parameters (**Table**
218 **1**) to call somatic variants and compared the non-synonymous and *TERT* promoter
219 mutations to those called using the tumor-germline workflow. To investigate whether the use
220 of a PoN could improve the performance, for each of the 25 samples, a PoN VCF was
221 generated from 8 randomly chosen unmatched germline samples (i.e. excluding the
222 matched germline) of the corresponding cohort. We analyzed each of these 25 samples with
223 and without the PoN and evaluated the performance of the tumor-only workflow in terms of
224 precision, recall and F1 value.

225

226 Across the 10 HCC samples, we identified 53 true positive, 11 false positive and 15 false
227 negative variants (**Figure 2A**). Of the 53 true positive variants, 10 were annotated hotspot
228 variants. All 11 false positive variants were confirmed as rare germline variants on IGV
229 (**Supplemental Figures 1 and 2**). Nine of them are the same recurring dinucleotide variant
230 (DNV) *chr2:21232803:TG>CA* in *APOB*, which upon closer inspection appeared to be 2

231 distinct SNPs - rs584542 (*chr2:21232803:T>C*) and rs1041968 (*chr2:21232804:G>A*) which
232 were validated as germline by orthogonal whole-exome sequencing²¹ (**Supplemental**
233 **Figure 2**). This variant was also present in the PoN and therefore successfully filtered out in
234 the PoN analysis (**Supplemental Figure 2**). All 15 false negative variants were removed by
235 filters specific to the tumor-only workflow to limit the number of artifactual variants. In
236 particular, 14 variants were below the VAF filtering threshold of 10% and one variant was
237 located in a homopolymer region of length greater than 4. It is worth mentioning that one of
238 the HCC samples (HPU207) was previously identified as hypermutated²¹ and 13/15 of the
239 false negative variants were missed in this sample. Overall, the analysis without a PoN
240 achieved recall, precision and F1 of 0.78, 0.83 and 0.80 respectively (**Figure 2B**). With the
241 use of a PoN, precision improved to 0.96, resulting in an F1 score of 0.86. When we only
242 considered variants >10% VAF, a threshold typically used in the molecular diagnostic
243 setting, the recall increased from 0.78 to 0.98 with an F1 score of 0.90 in the analysis
244 without a PoN and 0.97 with the additional use of a PoN (**Figure 2B**).

245

246 In the cohort of 15 COADs, we identified 26 true positives, including 19 hotspot variants, as
247 well as 12 false positive and 12 false negative variants (**Figure 2A**). Most (9/12) false
248 positive variants were confirmed as rare germline variants, including one that was
249 successfully removed in the PoN analysis. Another two artifactual variants were present in
250 the respective PoNs and hence successfully filtered out in the PoN analysis. Similar to the
251 analysis of the HCC cohort, nearly all (11/12) false negative variants were filtered out due to
252 their low allele frequency (VAF <10%). The remaining false negative variant was removed
253 due to its strand-bias. Without the use of a PoN, the recall, precision and F1 score were all
254 0.68, while the precision increased to 0.74 (F1=0.71) with the use of a PoN (**Figure 2B**).
255 Excluding variants with VAF<10%, the recall was 0.96, increasing the F1 score to 0.80 and
256 0.84 in the analysis with and without PoN, respectively (**Figure 2B**).

257

258 Overall, PipelT's recall of variants with a VAF $\geq 10\%$ was nearly perfect, with only one variant
259 missed in each cohort. Misclassification of rare germline variants as somatic was the main
260 reason for false positive variants (20/23; 87%) and represents a known limitation of tumor-
261 only variant calling. The additional use of a PoN has helped to reduce the overall number of
262 false positives by 52% (12/23).

263

264 **Evaluation of the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow in a clinical context**

265 To evaluate whether the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow would detect clinically and biologically
266 significant variants, we used oncoKB²⁴ to annotate the oncogenicity and clinical actionability
267 (levels 1-3, namely FDA-approved drugs, standard care and clinical evidence) of the
268 variants. Across both cohorts, the PipelT2 tumor-only workflow successfully detected all
269 cancer hotspot variants. In the HCC cohort, we detected the known oncogenic *TERT*
270 promoter (c.-150C>T) and *CTNNB1* (p.S33C; p.T41A) mutations, likely oncogenic variants in
271 *CTNNB1* (p.D32A; p.S37C) and likely oncogenic truncating variants in *ARID1A* (p.Y128*;
272 p.S255fs), *ATM* (p.C117*), *AXIN1* (p.Q559*), *RB1* (p.E545*) and *TP53* (p.C135*; **Figure**
273 **3A**). In the COAD cohort, PipelT2 identified several targetable oncogenic variants such as a
274 *KRAS* p.G12C and *BRAF* p.V600E, as well as mutations linked to anti-EGFR resistance
275 such as the *KRAS* and *NRAS* p.Q61K variants (**Figure 3B**). In addition, oncogenic variants
276 in *BRAF* (p.N581I), *CTNNB1* (p.T41A; p.S45A) and *PIK3CA* (p.C420R), a likely oncogenic
277 truncating variant in *ARID1A* (p.Y815fs) and a likely oncogenic variant in *KDR* (p.C482R)
278 were also identified.

279

280 Among the 23 false positive variants (11 in the HCC cohort and 12 in the COAD cohort), 20
281 were germline variants in genes such as *APOB* and *NOTCH2*, of which 10 were removed
282 with the PoN (**Figure 3**). Of the remaining three false positives, two were likely sequencing
283 artifacts which were filtered out with the PoN and one was likely an artifact. All 27 false

284 negative variants were low VAF variants. Of those, 25 had a VAF <10% and the remaining
285 two had a VAF between 10% and 15%. Only five of these low-VAF variants, *ATM* (p.E281*),
286 *HNF1A* (p.G375fs) and *KEAP1* (p.R554*) in the HCC cohort and *CDK12* (p.S133fs) and
287 *CDKN1B* (p.R152fs) in the COAD cohort are likely oncogenic but none of them was reported
288 as potential resistance variant.

289

290 **DISCUSSION**

291 Precision oncology care is increasingly reliant on the identification of somatic DNA
292 alterations in cancer patients. DNA sequencing of tumor tissues with targeted genomic
293 assays represents, to date, the best means to retrieve this information^{25,26}. Furthermore, the
294 additional sequencing of a healthy tissue sample from the same cancer patient is the
295 definitive way to determine which of the genetic alterations found in the tumor tissue are
296 likely somatic⁸.

297

298 Ion Torrent is one of the most popular sequencing platforms in the routine diagnostic setting
299 due to its low costs and low sample input requirements, but the proprietary Ion Reporter
300 software requires a paid license and lacks a streamlined data analysis, particularly for
301 custom target panels. We previously developed PipeIT, a somatic variant calling workflow
302 specific for Ion Torrent sequencing data enclosed in a Singularity image file⁵. The strength of
303 PipeIT lies in its ease of deployment and use, reproducible results, and demonstrated
304 accuracy. On the other hand, the need for tumor-germline matched sequencing data limits
305 the use of PipeIT in the clinical setting where germline samples are frequently not
306 sequenced. The main reasons for the lack of sequencing data of a matched normal sample
307 are time, costs and sample availability. To address this shortcoming, we developed PipeIT2,
308 a Singularity container which contains the original PipeIT tumor-germline workflow and an
309 additional tumor-only workflow.

310

311 To overcome the challenges associated with the lack of a matched germline control, PipelT2
312 leverages three filtering steps. The first filter relies on more stringent filtering thresholds
313 compared to those used in the tumor-germline workflow, including a VAF threshold of 10%,
314 compared to the previous 5%, and additional strand-bias and homopolymer filters. The
315 second makes use of data obtained from the 1KG¹⁶, ExAC¹⁷, ESP¹⁸ and the GnomAD¹⁹.
316 Mutations detected in at least 0.5% (or any other user-defined percentage) of the samples in
317 any of these databases are removed from the final output. The last filter is the optional PoN
318 filter, which consists of user-defined mutations obtained from unmatched normal samples or
319 otherwise blacklisted variants. This third step is not mandatory, to enable the use of the
320 tumor-only workflow even if there are no unmatched germline samples available.

321

322 To evaluate the performance of PipelT2, the mutations identified by PipelT2 from 10 HCCs
323 and 15 COADs were compared to the ones identified by the tumor-germline workflow. Using
324 panels of 8 randomly chosen unmatched normal samples for each tumor sample, a total of
325 79 non-synonymous or *TERT* promoter mutations, including several important clinical
326 biomarkers, were correctly detected across the two cohorts. These include targetable
327 mutations such as *KRAS* p.G12C and *BRAF* p.V600E, several mutations implicated in anti-
328 EGFR resistance such as the *KRAS* and *NRAS* p.Q61K variants and various known
329 oncogenic variants in genes such as *BRAF*, *CTNNB1*, *PIK3CA* and *TERT*. Nevertheless, 27
330 mutations were mistakenly removed from the PipelT2 output. The primary reason for the
331 removal (25/27; 93%) was the low allele fraction of these mutations. This is a result of the
332 more stringent VAF-based filtering in the tumor-only workflow which is necessary to limit the
333 number of false positive calls in the absence of a matched germline sample. Given that
334 clinically important resistance mechanisms typically involve recurrent hotspots and PipelT2
335 actively whitelists such hotspot mutations, these mutations would still be identified even if
336 they are found at low VAF.

337

338 By providing a variant calling analysis able to detect somatic mutations in tumor samples
339 lacking a matched germline control, PipeIT2 offers an important improvement over the
340 original PipeIT workflow. Thanks to filters based on population allele frequencies and
341 variants found in panels of unmatched germline samples, PipeIT2 was able to detect most of
342 the somatic mutations previously identified in the matched tumor-germline analysis,
343 including several important clinical biomarkers. In conclusion, PipeIT2 offers a powerful, user
344 friendly and easily reproducible tool specific for Ion Torrent targeted sequencing analyses.

345

346 **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

347 Development of PipeIT2 was performed at the Leonhard Med platform at ETH Zurich and
348 the sciCORE scientific computing center at University of Basel.

349

350 **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

351 S.P. and C.K.Y.N. conceived and supervised the study. D.S., A.G., A.B., the SOCIBP
352 consortium and C.K.Y.N. developed the methodology. G.R and M.A.R. provided critical
353 review of the results. D.S., A.G. and C.K.Y.N. interpreted the results and wrote the
354 manuscript. All authors agreed to the final version of the manuscript.

355

356 Members of the SOCIBP consortium: Andrej Benjak, Andre Kahles, Charlotte K. Y. Ng,
357 Salvatore Piscuoglio, Gunnar Rätsch, Mark A. Rubin, Desiree Schnidrig, Senija Selimovic-
358 Hamza

359

360

361

362 **TABLES**

363 **Table 1.** Filtering parameters and default values of the tumor-only workflow.

364

Parameter	Description	Default value
--min_supporting_reads	Minimum number of reads supporting the variant	8
--min_tumor_depth	Minimum read depth at the locus	20
--min_allele_fraction	Minimum allele fraction (i.e. the number of read supporting the variant divided by the read depth at the locus)	0.1
--homopolymer_run	Maximum homopolymer region length	4
--max_pop_af	Maximum frequency of mutation in population databases	0.005
--quality	Minimum quality score	15

365

366

367 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

368 **Figure 1. Overview of the PipeIT2 tumor-only workflow.** Flowchart showing the steps of
369 the workflow. The workflow takes the BAM file for the tumor sample, the BED file for the
370 target regions, the Annovar datasets for the population databases and, optionally, a Panel of
371 Normals. Variant calling is then performed using the Torrent Variant Caller with the
372 packaged parameters file. Mutations are filtered based on read count and quality, population
373 frequencies and, when provided, the Panel of Normals. The output is returned as a VCF file.

374

375 **Figure 2. Performance evaluation of PipeIT2. (A)** Barplots showing the number of true
376 positive (TP), false positive (FP) and false negative (FN) variants in the (left) HCC and (right)
377 COAD cohorts. Mutation classification is indicated in the color key. **(B)** Heatmaps showing
378 the recall, precision and F1 of PipeIT2 in a VAF range of (left) 1%-100% ('all variants') and
379 (right) 10%-100% in the (top) HCC and (bottom) COAD cohorts. Boxes are colored
380 according to the color key.

381

382 **Figure 3. Variants detected by PipeIT2.** Oncoprints of the variants called in the **(A)** HCC
383 and **(B)** COAD cohorts. Variant types are color-coded as indicated in the color key. Multiple
384 variant types indicate multiple variants of different types. False positive mutations are
385 marked with a dot. Red dots indicate likely sequencing artifacts found in the PoN, yellow
386 dots indicate confirmed germline variants found in the PoN, gray dots indicate confirmed
387 germline variants absent in the PoN and black dots indicate other false positive mutations.
388 False negative mutations are highlighted with an empty square if their VAF is <10% and with
389 a filled square if $\geq 10\%$.

390

391

392

393 REFERENCES

- 394 1. Vogelstein B, Papadopoulos N, Velculescu VE, Zhou S, Diaz LA Jr, Kinzler KW. Cancer
395 genome landscapes. *Science*, 2013, 339:1546–58
- 396 2. Garraway LA, Verweij J, Ballman KV. Precision oncology: an overview. *J Clin Oncol*,
397 2013, 31:1803–5
- 398 3. Singh RR, Patel KP, Routbort MJ, Reddy NG, Barkoh BA, Handal B, Kanagal-
399 Shamanna R, Greaves WO, Medeiros LJ, Aldape KD, Luthra R. Clinical validation of a
400 next-generation sequencing screen for mutational hotspots in 46 cancer-related genes.
401 *J Mol Diagn*, 2013, 15:607–22
- 402 4. Deshpande A, Lang W, McDowell T, Sivakumar S, Zhang J, Wang J, San Lucas FA,
403 Fowler J, Kadara H, Scheet P. Strategies for identification of somatic variants using the
404 Ion Torrent deep targeted sequencing platform. *BMC Bioinformatics*, 2018, 19:5
- 405 5. Garofoli A, Paradiso V, Montazeri H, Jermann PM, Roma G, Tornillo L, Terracciano LM,
406 Piscuoglio S, Ng CKY. PipelIT: A Singularity Container for Molecular Diagnostic Somatic
407 Variant Calling on the Ion Torrent Next-Generation Sequencing Platform. *J Mol Diagn*,
408 2019, 21:884–94
- 409 6. Kurtzer GM, Sochat V, Bauer MW. Singularity: Scientific containers for mobility of
410 compute. *PLoS One*, 2017, 12:e0177459
- 411 7. Oh S, Geistlinger L, Ramos M, Morgan M, Waldron L, Riester M. Reliable Analysis of
412 Clinical Tumor-Only Whole-Exome Sequencing Data. *JCO Clin Cancer Inform*, 2020,
413 4:321–35
- 414 8. Schrader KA, Cheng DT, Joseph V, Prasad M, Walsh M, Zehir A, Ni A, Thomas T,
415 Benayed R, Ashraf A, Lincoln A, Arcila M, Stadler Z, Solit D, Hyman DM, Zhang L,
416 Klimstra D, Ladanyi M, Offit K, Berger M, Robson M. Germline Variants in Targeted
417 Tumor Sequencing Using Matched Normal DNA. *JAMA Oncology*, 2016, 2:104–11
- 418 9. Chang MT, Asthana S, Gao SP, Lee BH, Chapman JS, Kandoth C, Gao J, Socci ND,
419 Solit DB, Olshen AB, Schultz N, Taylor BS. Identifying recurrent mutations in cancer
420 reveals widespread lineage diversity and mutational specificity. *Nat Biotechnol*, 2016,
421 34:155–63
- 422 10. Gao J, Chang MT, Johnsen HC, Gao SP, Sylvester BE, Sumer SO, Zhang H, Solit DB,
423 Taylor BS, Schultz N, Sander C. 3D clusters of somatic mutations in cancer reveal
424 numerous rare mutations as functional targets. *Genome Med*, 2017, 9:4
- 425 11. Li H, Handsaker B, Wysoker A, Fennell T, Ruan J, Homer N, Marth G, Abecasis G,
426 Durbin R, 1000 Genome Project Data Processing Subgroup. The Sequence
427 Alignment/Map format and SAMtools. *Bioinformatics*, 2009, 25:2078–9
- 428 12. Quinlan AR, Hall IM. BEDTools: a flexible suite of utilities for comparing genomic
429 features. *Bioinformatics*, 2010, 26:841–2
- 430 13. Wang K, Li M, Hakonarson H. ANNOVAR: functional annotation of genetic variants from
431 high-throughput sequencing data. *Nucleic Acids Res*, 2010, 38:e164
- 432 14. Danecek P, Auton A, Abecasis G, Albers CA, Banks E, DePristo MA, Handsaker RE,
433 Lunter G, Marth GT, Sherry ST, McVean G, Durbin R, 1000 Genomes Project Analysis
434 Group. The variant call format and VCFtools. *Bioinformatics*, 2011, 27:2156–8
- 435 15. Cingolani P, Platts A, Wang LL, Coon M, Nguyen T, Wang L, Land SJ, Lu X, Ruden
436 DM. A program for annotating and predicting the effects of single nucleotide
437 polymorphisms, SnpEff: SNPs in the genome of *Drosophila melanogaster* strain w1118;
438 iso-2; iso-3. *Fly*, 2012, 6:80–92
- 439 16. Consortium T 1000 GP, The 1000 Genomes Project Consortium. A global reference for
440 human genetic variation. *Nature*, 2015, 526:68–74
- 441 17. Karczewski KJ, Weisburd B, Thomas B, Solomonson M, Ruderfer DM, Kavanagh D,
442 Hamamsy T, Lek M, Samocha KE, Cummings BB, Birnbaum D, The Exome
443 Aggregation Consortium, Daly MJ, MacArthur DG. The ExAC browser: displaying
444 reference data information from over 60 000 exomes. *Nucleic Acids Res*, 2017,
445 45:D840–5

- 446 18. Fu W, O'Connor TD, Jun G, Kang HM, Abecasis G, Leal SM, Gabriel S, Rieder MJ,
447 Altshuler D, Shendure J, Nickerson DA, Bamshad MJ, NHLBI Exome Sequencing
448 Project, Akey JM. Analysis of 6,515 exomes reveals the recent origin of most human
449 protein-coding variants. *Nature*, 2013, 493:216–20
- 450 19. Karczewski KJ, Francioli LC, Tiao G, Cummings BB, Alföldi J, Wang Q, Collins RL,
451 Laricchia KM, Ganna A, Birnbaum DP, Gauthier LD, Brand H, Solomonson M, Watts
452 NA, Rhodes D, Singer-Berk M, England EM, Seaby EG, Kosmicki JA, Walters RK,
453 Tashman K, Farjoun Y, Banks E, Poterba T, Wang A, Seed C, Whiffin N, Chong JX,
454 Samocha KE, Pierce-Hoffman E, Zappala Z, O'Donnell-Luria AH, Minikel EV, Weisburd
455 B, Lek M, et al. The mutational constraint spectrum quantified from variation in 141,456
456 humans. *Nature*, 2020, 581:434–43
- 457 20. Piscuoglio S, Ng CKY, Murray MP, Guerini-Rocco E, Martelotto LG, Geyer FC, Bidard
458 F-C, Berman S, Fusco N, Sakr RA, Eberle CA, De Mattos-Arruda L, Macedo GS, Akram
459 M, Baslan T, Hicks JB, King TA, Brogi E, Norton L, Weigelt B, Hudis CA, Reis-Filho JS.
460 The Genomic Landscape of Male Breast Cancers. *Clin Cancer Res*, 2016, 22:4045–56
- 461 21. Paradiso V, Garofoli A, Tosti N, Lanzafame M, Perrina V, Quagliata L. Diagnostic
462 targeted sequencing panel for hepatocellular carcinoma genomic screening. *J Mol*
463 *Diagn*, 2018, 20:836–48
- 464 22. Thorvaldsdóttir H, Robinson JT, Mesirov JP. Integrative Genomics Viewer (IGV): high-
465 performance genomics data visualization and exploration. *Brief Bioinform*, 2013,
466 14:178–92
- 467 23. Tornillo L, Lehmann FS, Garofoli A, Paradiso V, Ng CKY, Piscuoglio S. The Genomic
468 Landscape of Serrated Lesion of the Colorectum: Similarities and Differences With
469 Tubular and Tubulovillous Adenomas. *Front Oncol*, 2021, 11:668466
- 470 24. Chakravarty D, Gao J, Phillips SM, Kundra R, Zhang H, Wang J, Rudolph JE, Yaeger
471 R, Soumerai T, Nissan MH, Chang MT, Chandarlapaty S, Traina TA, Paik PK, Ho AL,
472 Hantash FM, Grupe A, Baxi SS, Callahan MK, Snyder A, Chi P, Danila D, Gounder M,
473 Harding JJ, Hellmann MD, Iyer G, Janjigian Y, Kaley T, Levine DA, Lowery M, Omuro A,
474 Postow MA, Rathkopf D, Shoushtari AN, Shukla N, et al. OncoKB: A Precision
475 Oncology Knowledge Base. *JCO Precis Oncol*, 2017, 2017
- 476 25. Kruglyak KM, Lin E, Ong FS. Next-generation sequencing in precision oncology:
477 challenges and opportunities. *Expert Review of Molecular Diagnostics*, 2014, 14:635–7
- 478 26. Kadri S, Long BC, Mujacic I, Zhen CJ, Wurst MN, Sharma S, McDonald N, Niu N,
479 Benhamed S, Tuteja JH, Seiwert TY, White KP, McNerney ME, Fitzpatrick C, Wang YL,
480 Furtado LV, Segal JP. Clinical Validation of a Next-Generation Sequencing Genomic
481 Oncology Panel via Cross-Platform Benchmarking against Established Amplicon
482 Sequencing Assays. *J Mol Diagn*, 2017, 19:43–56

483

Figure 1

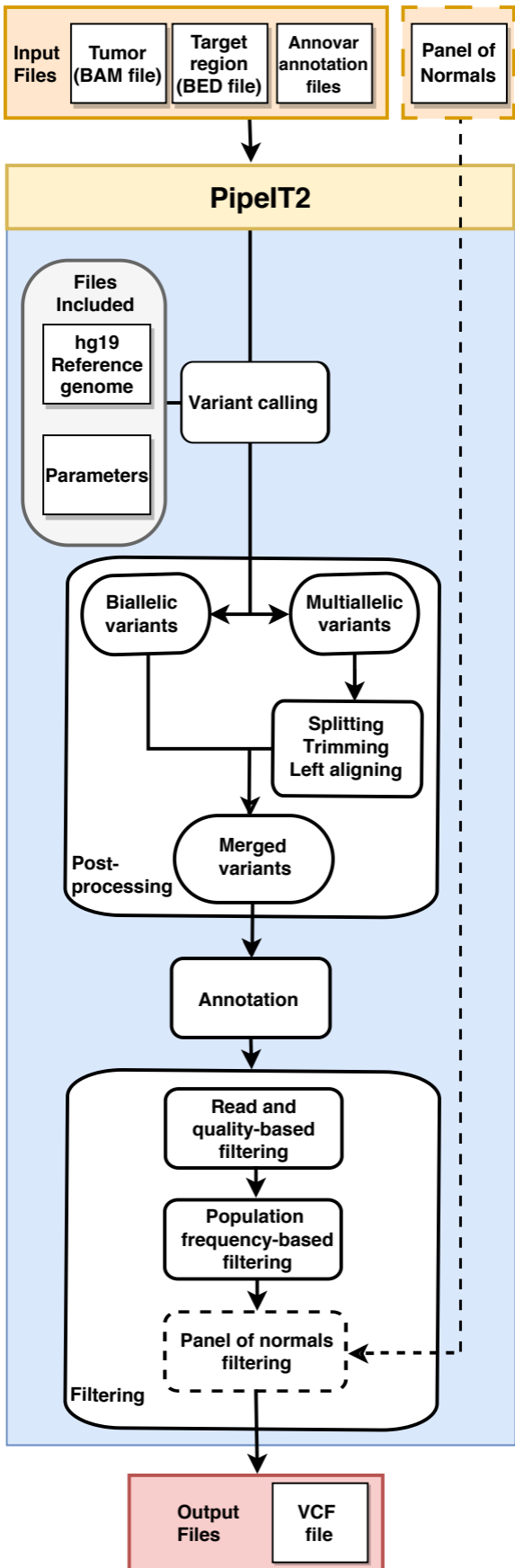


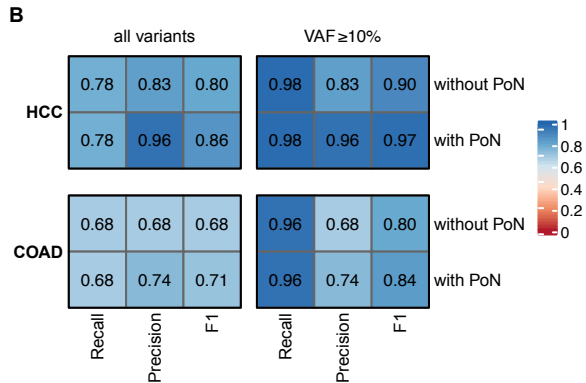
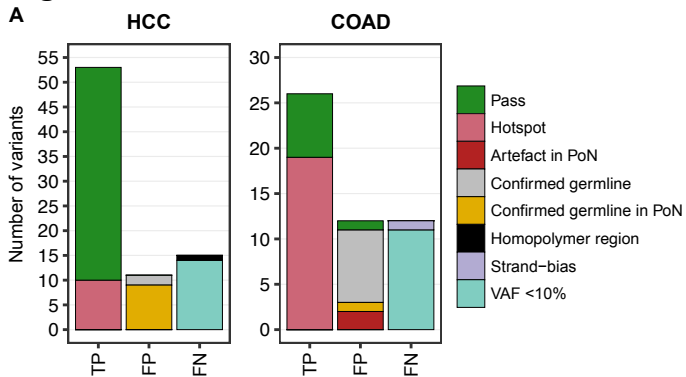
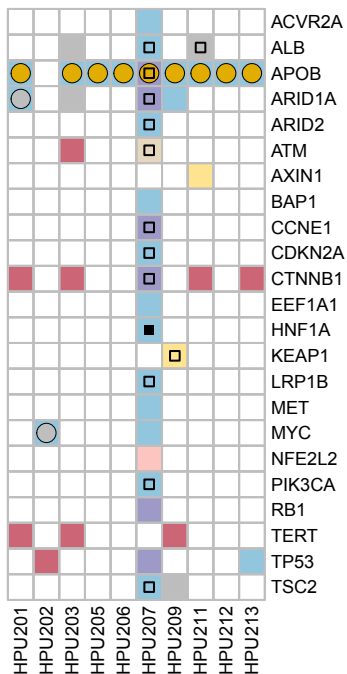
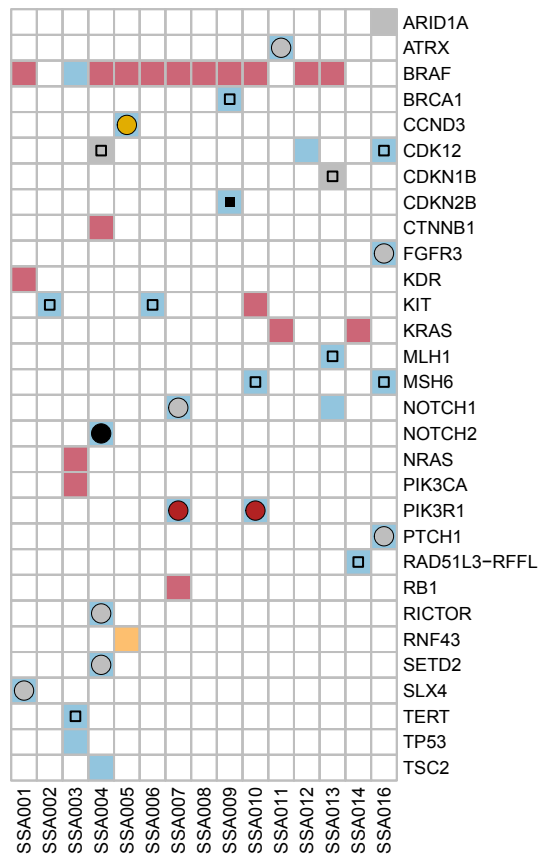
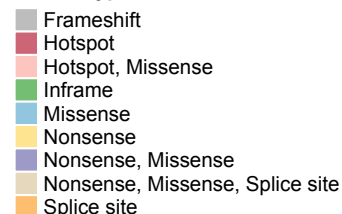
Figure 2

Figure 3**A****HCC****B****COAD****Variant type****Variant info**