Redefining hematopoietic progenitor cells and reaffirming lineage commitment by transcriptional atlas

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Abstract

Tracing the differentiation of the hematopoietic progenitor cells(HPCs) in human blood, particularly with the scarcity in adults, has been challenging owing to unable capture the entire differentiation stages and subgroups of HPCs. Deciphering the underlying hematopoiesis mechanism, including progenitor cells definition and fate decisions identification, is critical to understanding fundamental questions of hematopoietic lineage commitment. Often, the use of classic and traditional surface markers has been shown to be inadequate, speciosity, and ineffective in accurately defining hematopoietic progenitors. The lineage definition and commitment of hematopoietic progenitors in adult peripheral blood remains to be elucidated by a reliable transcriptional atlas. Here, single cell RNA sequencing (scRNA) was employed to define the lineage of HPCs and reaffirm the hierarchy of hematopoiesis. A total of 27,566 adult peripheral blood CD34+ cells were enriched and sequenced, capturing most differentiation stages and subgroups of HPCs. HPCs lineages were redefined by unique makers and key factor genes. We are the first to clearly depict the transcriptional atlas and define each subgroup of adult peripheral blood progenitors. We recovered the key transcript factors involved in lineage fate decision, and restructured the lineage commitment model of HPCs that can reconcile previous models and explain conflicts among functional studies. Several fate decision key factors of progenitors were identified as major switches that controlled hematopoietic lineage formation. Moreover, we are also the first to identify the cell fate decision transcriptional factors in each branch among hematopoietic hierarchy formation. Our reaffirmed lineage commitment also revealed that the erythroid lineage commitment process is a continuous process but the lymphoid lineage commitment process is more likely a discrete stepwise process that showed distinct lineage-committed populations during the hematopoiesis. With these information, an elaborate and comprehensive transcriptional atlas of all types of hematopoietic progenitors was then constructed, which enabled the whole map of the transcriptional signal and pathway among lineage commitment. Importantly, this newly created atlas can enable accurate definition, transplantation, and biological insights of hematopoietic progenitors for facilitating

new research development in cell engineering, regenerative medicine, and disease treatment, which we call Artificial Operation of HPCs. Furthermore, this opens up a wide variety of possibilities for artificial precise control progenitor cell differentiation and targeted treatment of immune disease, providing hope for untreatable diseases.

Graphical abstract

The reaffirmed lineage commitment model of HPCs

Highlights

- Classic and traditional surface markers are often inadequate, speciosity, and ineffective in accurately defining hematopoietic progenitor cells.
- Multiple hematopoietic lineages progenitor cells of adult peripheral blood were clearly depicted and redefined by unique makers and key transcript factors.
- Key fate decision transcript factors and genes in each branch among hematopoietic hierarchy formation were recovered by transcriptional atlas.
- Several key factors, including NFE2, LYL1, MYB, CDK4, ETV6, TESPA1, ZBTB16, and GATA2 of myeloid progenitors and RUNX2, HOXA9, JUN/FOS, TCF4, DDIT4, HOPX, KLF10, HOXA3, and TSC22D1 of lymphoid progenitors, were identified as major regulators that controlled hematopoietic lineage formation.
- Fate decision transcription factors were identified in progenitor cells of erythrocyte (GATA1, KLF1), monocyte (MAFB, IRF8), B cells (PAX5, PRDM1), NK cells (DDIT4, HOPX), and T cells (TCF7, GATA3).
- Plasma progenitor cells were first identified and defined, and the rearrangements of IGHV, IGKV, and IGLV genes were already existed and occurred during the progenitor state of plasma cells.

• The erythroid lineage commitment process is a continuous process but the

lymphoid lineage commitment process is more likely a discrete stepwise process

that showed distinct lineage-committed populations during the hematopoiesis.

• The lineage commitment model of HPCs was reaffirmed that can reconcile

previous models and explain the conflict among functional studies.

• Transcriptional atlas of HPCs helps to provide a well explanation of the immune

reconstitution in adults and on its cytokines secretion and regulation.

• Application of this atlas can enable artificial precise control progenitor cell

differentiation, in vitro accurate culture of each lineage cells, and targeted

treatment of immune cell disease to be made possible for future development.

Introduction

Deciphering the hematopoiesis mechanism that underlies progenitor cells definition and fate decision are critical to understanding fundamental questions of hematopoietic lineage commitment. Toward the diversities of peripheral blood cells in the human body, it is like the multifarious stars existing in our galaxy. Although we know their existence, the exact characterization of these cell subsets remains a challenge.

Among the various cell types in peripheral blood (PB), hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs) are one of such rare cell subsets. These cells possess self-renewal capacity and can differentiate to all blood lineage cells. Such that, HSCs reside at the top of a hierarchy and differentiate to all blood lineage cells with tree-like pattern in classical hematopoietic hierarchical models [1]. Single-cell sequencing technique has been successfully implemented to explore molecular heterogeneity and hierarchy of HSCs [2-4]. The lineage commitment is affected by transcription factors (TFs) with a continuum fate decision process [5, 6]. Though *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies have reaffirmed their critical role of transcription factors in lineage commitment, the function and regulatory mechanism of HSCs is still unclear [7]. In addition, the transcriptional atlas and the differentiation among subtypes of progenitors in adult peripheral blood remain to be elucidated.

The reason for the molecular mechanisms that controlled lineage commitment and progenitor behaviors remaining an enigma is due to various reasons. Firstly, the definition of hematopoietic progenitor cells (HPCs) is not standardized. Based on the classical and traditional definition, the characterization of HPCs is based on the presence of surface markers, such as CD34, CD38, FLT3 and KIT [5]. Similarly, the combination of surface markers has been proposed for the identification toward common lymphoid progenitors (CLP) and common myeloid progenitors (CMP). These markers include CD10 (MME), FLT3, and CD38. Yet, owing to the rare and transient nature, the subtypes of CLP and CMP from HSCs have never been stringently identified and accurately captured. The capacity of surface markers is very limited in capturing the internal state of progenitor cells and reflecting the dynamic

differentiation mechanisms underlying hematopoiesis [8]. Secondly, the functional

studies were also used surface markers for the characterization of HPCs. These

include the selection of CD34 positive cell from bone marrow or cord blood. However,

this approach can be affected by the type of culture methods and surface markers

being used for the identification. Simply, the use of classical and traditional markers

may be not insufficient, such as KIT, to differentiate mature subset cells. Thus, the use

of combined surface markers for HPCs may cause biased and arbitrary. Thirdly, bone

marrow progenitors have been widely used in functional studies and subgroups

identification. However, the limitation is mainly comprised quiescent progenitors and

the absence of the whole spectrum of all progenitor stages. Finally, it is still challenge

to capture the entire spectrum of adult peripheral blood HPCs.

In recent years, many studies have identified the lineage by using single cell

sequencing. However, there are still several limitations of the transcriptional atlas

being defined. The scRNA expression data of CD34 positive cells showed two

well-defined subtypes of progenitor CLP and CMP being scattered and mixed

distribution in T-SNE plots. This result implies that the transcriptional atlas for these

type of cells are not distinguishable by unsupervised dimensionality reduction and

clustering. When compared with others mature cells, HPCs should exist as a relatively

homogeneous progenitor population. The idea classification and defined subset of

lineage cells should be separately distinguishable by unsupervised dimensionality

reduction which carried the PCA key markers of genes as factors.

In addition, the hematopoietic hierarchical models are also inconsistent among

the literature studies [1, 9, 10]. Most of the established lineage fate decision models

were based on *in-vitro* / *in-vivo* functional studies or cell fate induces experiments [11,

12]. The use of cellular conditions can often lead to inaccurate interpretations of

HPCs cell fate decision because cell lineages were induced by diverse experimental

conditions and cannot be permissive to all possible branches of lineage commitment

[12]. Similarly, single cell studies would have modified some aspects of classical

hematopoiesis hierarchical model, as the hematopoietic progenitors are changing

continuously among the progenitors differentiation process [5, 13]. In addition,

progenitor cells were defined by classical markers and selected by surface markers [5,

6]. As each type of progenitors is very rare in whole blood, the captured cell numbers

are often very low with less than one hundred cells[5]. This implies that some key

progenitor subgroups may be missed. Most of the bone marrow HPCs was

quiescent state progenitors. scRNA Sequencing of bone marrow progenitors can't

clearly depict the whole lineage commitment of hematopoietic progenitors. Thus, this

would affect the reliability of results. As the classic definition of hematopoietic

progenitors remains inefficient and inaccurate, this can cause the disorganization

among the subgroups and without a reliable identification of the boundary among

them [2]. Moreover, unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering of lineage

cells demonstrated farraginous model [4]. The measurement of lineage definition, fate

decision, and establishing the reliable lineage commitment between them are still a

challenge [9, 14].

Herein, we redefined the adult hematopoietic progenitors, and recovered the key

transcript factors in lineages fate decision, and reaffirmed the lineage commitment

model of HPCs by single-cell sequencing. Our HPCs atlas defined the cellular biology

of differentia stage progenitors among hematopoietic lineages generation. Our study

can help to open new perspectives for the characterization, definition, and

classification of HPCs.

Results

Single-cell sequencing identified subtypes of progenitor cells in adults peripheral

blood.

In order to enrich the whole spectrum of HPCs and intermediate state progenitors,

matured lymphocyte and granulocyte were removed by surface marker panel

(Lineage−) and progenitor cells were enriched by negative deletion (Fig. 1A). 10X

genomics scRNA was conducted and unsupervised dimensionality reduction and

clustering analysis showed 32 clusters by Seurat and UMAP (Fig. 1B). A total of

159603 cells were captured and sequenced. Our single cell expression atlas level

showed heterogeneity of several CD34 positive progenitors clusters. We further
analyzed the significantly identified genes among progenitor clusters with the other
clusters. Genes of *SXO4, CDK6, CYTL1,* and *EGFL7* were identified to be highly
expressed in progenitor clusters (Fig. 1C, D), which consistent with bone marrow
progenitors (Fig. S1). It is very obviously that the gene of *EGFL7* and *CYTL1* are very
high and specific expressed in progenitors clusters, so that they are likely key
functional gene in hematopoietic progenitor cells lineage differentiation and mature.
The top 30 highly expression genes of progenitor cells were presented (Fig. 1E). The
gene set enrichment of differentially expressed genes showed hematopoietic cell
lineage, MAPk, and PI3K-Akt pathways were enriched in progenitor cells but not
significant (Fig. 1F). Additionally, GO analysis displayed the biological process
enriched in DNA replication, cell differentiation, and so on (Fig. 1G). Based on the
surface markers and the above hematopoietic stem cells key functional genes, we can
confirm that the identified CD34+ clusters are hematopoietic progenitor cells.

The effective and accuracy of classic and traditional surface markers for
progenitors classification

To assess diversity, a re-clustering of analysis was conducted on 27566 CD34+
cells, resulting in 17 clusters, including 21244 mobilization progenitors and 6322
quiescent progenitors respectively (Fig. 2A). Most clusters contained a large number
of progenitor cells (Table. S1). The identified progenitor subgroup cells present
category and functional heterogeneity. Based on our finding, the subgroup of cells
aggregated in three main differentiation directions. Traditionally, membrane markers
of progenitor CMP and GMP (Granulocyte-monocyte progenitors) were defined with
CD38+MME-FLT3+, while megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors (MEP) were
defined with CD38+MME-FLT3-. However, progenitor clusters based on these
markers were not distinguishable among the subgroups. KIT (CD117) and FLT3 were
expressed in different clusters (Fig. 2B). This indicates that the progenitors of
CD34+KIT and CD34+FLT3 belonging to two different differentiation directions. As
the expressions of CD38 and FLT3 were almost contradictory, this demonstrated most

FLT3 positive cells were negative of CD38 expression in clusters (Fig 2B). This

implies that surface markers of CD38, FLT3, KIT, and MME can be used to

distinguish myeloid progenitors and lymphoid progenitor differentiation directions,

but not suitable to use in subtypes and intermediate stages classification.

Our study showed the canonical markers of CD49f and THY1 were almost not

found in HPCs progenitors. The expression of THY1 (CD90) is very rare (only 17

cells) in progenitor clusters which may cause as the progenitors were isolated from

adult PBMC (Fig. S1A). In addition, our data showed that the use of CD49f, THY1,

FLT3 and KIT to classify or define the progenitor cells groups were very artificial and

subjective. To confirm whether the traditional classification markers THY1 and

CD49f (ITGA6) expressed in progenitor cells, we analyzed four bone marrow single

cell projects data of GSE120221, GSE117498, GSE145531 and GSE181989 (Fig.

S1B). Total 8296 CD34 positive cells were extracted of the four projects merged data.

The results showed positive expression cell numbers of THY1 is only 84 and CD49f

is 824, and the expression distribution is scattered. This is similar with the other

identified markers of FLT3, CD38 and KIT (Fig. S1C). The traditional classification

progenitor cells (CMP or CLP) were also not distinguishable by unsupervised

dimensionality reduction and clustering in bone marrow CD34+ cells. With the

progenitors of CD34+FLT3+ cells defined a mixed population of progenitors, this

finding may help to provide a well explanation that previously functional study of

selected progenitors (such as CD34+FLT3+) presented multiple differential potential.

Although the expression tendency of FLT3+ was consistent with previously definition,

it remained inefficient and inaccurate to classify the differentiation stages among the

myeloid lineages. Classic and traditional surface markers displayed inadequate,

speciosity, and ineffective in accurately defining hematopoietic progenitor cells. The

efficient and accurately of classical hematopoietic progenitors markers which be used

to distinguished CMP, GMP, and CLPs, should be reconsideration.

 New transcriptional atlas of adult peripheral blood progenitors

Unsupervised dimensionality reduction analysis was conducted to identify new

efficient marker genes for progenitor clusters distinguishing. The progenitors were

clustering into several directions (Fig. 2A). As AVP was known to be uniquely

expressed in HSC, our data showed both of AVP and CSF3R were mainly expressed

in cluster 0 and 3 (Fig. 2B, C). The other is myeloid progenitors comprised with

cluster 1, cluster 2, cluster 6, and cluster 5, with the gradual up-regulation of CD38,

GATA1, and KIT (Fig 2B). Our results demonstrated that one direction lineage

clusters of 1, 2, and 6 can be clearly distinguished by the expression of transcription

factors KLF1, GATA1 and GATA2 (Fig 2B). That indicated these clusters are

megakaryocyte or erythrocyte progenitors. Cluster 5 was presented with markers

genes of MPO and CSF3R (Fig. 2C). As myeloperoxidase (MPO) is the most

abundant and uniquely expressed protein in human neutrophil and plays an important

role in neutrophil antimicrobial responses[15, 16]. The other marker gene PRSS57 of

neutrophils was also presented and up-regulated expression in the cluster [17]. This

indicated that the progenitor branches were most likely the granulocyte-monocyte

progenitors, shown to be in a completely different direction with megakaryocyte or

erythrocyte progenitors. Our results showed the expression of IGHM, MME, and

HOXA9 [18] was presented in cluster 4, which confirmed the cluster was lymphoid

progenitor cells (Fig. 2C). The expression level is increasing of the transcription

factors HOXA9 from cluster 0 to cluster 4. Transcription factors presented enormous

capacity to fully distinguish the intermediate state and to faithfully reflect the

mechanisms underlying hematopoietic lineage commitment. Importantly, this

demonstrated that the expression and activation of transcription factors combined with

unique marker genes would be more efficient for lineage definition of HPCs.

To examine whether any different among the mobilization and quiescent

(unperturbed) progenitors, cell distribution analysis was conducted in the G-CSF

mobilization peripheral blood progenitors. Our results indicated that the total number

of all types of progenitors were remarkable increased. All kinds of subtype

progenitors were shown to be existed in the quiescent state when compared before

and after mobilization (Fig. 2D). This signifies that all types of progenitors were existed in the quiescent state of peripheral blood, which also consistent with the cluster distributions of mobilization state. This may also indicated that the unperturbed adult hematopoiesis depends on replenishment from multiple potential progenitors. Since the progenitor was shown to gradually differentiate to mature stages in the peripheral blood, it would be expected fold changes of the more primitive progenitors to be higher than mature progenitors. Based on our analysis, the highest cell numbers and folder changed among the clusters were found to be in clusters 0 and 3 (Fig. 2E). Those clusters were the most original multi-potent clusters named as MPCs, which can prime to all types of lineages. The expression characterization of CSF3R was consistent with G-CSF mobilization in peripheral blood HSC transplantation.

To identify the common myeloid progenitor, re-clustering was conducted of myeloid clusters. Interestingly, the common intermediate progenitor stage was not observed among myeloid lineages indicating that the common myeloid progenitor did not exist (Fig. S2). Furthermore, the expression of myeloid representative genes gradually accumulated during differentiation, revealing distinct differentiation characteristics. That indicated the myeloid progenitor hierarchical organization in hematopoiesis is likely a continuum process. In summary, there are three clusters which nearby the original progenitor of MPCs (Fig. S2A). Common myeloid progenitors were not identified during the lineage commitment. The lymphoid progenitors, neutrophils progenitors, and megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors were presented at the same time point at the first step of HPCs priming process. It is clearly shown that during the HPCs priming and differentiation procedures, the original MPCs priming into three progenitor cell types coinstantaneous and later maturing to diversity hematopoietic lineages. Self-renewal capacity of MPCs is generally reduced once differentiation into next stages. Taken together, based on the successful capture the whole spectrum of adult peripheral blood progenitors, including both mobilization and quiescent progenitor states, we are the first to clearly depict the transcriptional atlas of adult peripheral blood progenitors.

Re-definition of hematopoietic progenitor cells and reaffirming the hierarchy of hematopoiesis

To clearly re-define the subgroups of progenitors hematopoietic, the characterization of all subtype progenitors cells were re-analyzed. Our result showed the selected unique and specific marker genes and key transcript factors of each lineage progenitors (Table 1, Fig. 2F). Additionally, the negatively expressed genes were listed to distinguish each subgroup and clearly define the lineages progenitors (Table 1). As previously shown, cluster 0 and 3 were the most original progenitors in the peripheral blood that was identified and designated as MPCs. The transcriptional atlas between cluster 3 and cluster 0 is very similar, with cluster 3 presenting an early tendency towards lymphoid progenitors. All of the later mature progenitors are originate from those initial cells. Based on this rationale, we re-defined the three directions with common lymphoid progenitors (CLPs), GAPs (GATA genes controlled progenitors), and neutrophilic and monocyte progenitors (NMPs), which cannot be characterized by CD38, FLT3, and KIT (Fig. 3A, Table 1). Most of the top five specific marker genes for each lineage progenitor were canonical marker genes of classically defined hemopoietic cells, indicating the reliable characterization of subgroups (Fig. 2F).

The expression of unique genes gradually accumulated during the differentiation process among megakaryocytic–erythroid lineages, such as GATA2, CPA3, CNRIP1, and SLC40A1. The differentiation of GAPs lineages was independently with the other two branches. The shape of each branch was controlled by the expression of key regulated genes which was shown to function like a gradually activate switch. During the myeloid progenitor differentiation process, the expression of GATA2 and CSF3R genes is the first branch being formed and presented (Fig. 3). This was shown to be followed by the down-regulation of CSF3R genes and up-regulation of GATA2, which implies the progenitors were priming to oligo-potent progenitor GAPs. The

expression of GATA1 and KLF1 were presented and gradually up-regulated at later stage (Fig. 2B). This subgroup was GAPs mature stage defined as megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors (MEPs). The expression of CSF3R was mainly showed in the original progenitors and almost disappeared in the later stage of MEPs. The cytokine receptors will co-express or co-silence with the relevant lineage key regulators, which indicated the progenitor lineages priming was multiple genes regulate process. With the differentiation of MEPs enhancement, the second branch was presented in the mature stage of MEPs. Toward the final stages of the MEPs, the expression of KIT, CDK4, GATA1, KLF1 or LMO4, controlled the differentiation of progenitor to megakaryocyte progenitors, erythrocyte progenitors (Pro-ME), or mast cell and basophil progenitors (MBPs). Our results showed the expression of KIT, MS4A2 and TPSB2 were up-regulated or unique expression in MBPs, indicating that the cluster was consisted of mast cell and basophil progenitors (Fig. S1A). In contrast to the other branch of myeloid progenitor differentiation process, the expression of GATA2 and KLF1 were restrained during differentiation trajectories when the progenitors were priming to neutrophilic and monocyte progenitors (NMPs, Fig. 3A, B). The expression of GATA2 and CSF3R genes was shown to be the boundary for GAPs and NMPs. Our study revealed the original of basophils, eosinophils, and neutrophils was completely different, though the original of eosinophils was not confirmed. Through the transcription factors expression switches gradually on-or-off and further gradually accumulated, generally synergistic with key receptor genes expression and signals activation, the original progenitor cells will be primed and differentiated to various progenitors. That provided evidence of megakaryocytic–erythroid lineages hierarchical organization in hematopoiesis is a continuum process controlled by the activation and suppression of fate decision genes.

During lymphoid progenitor branch priming, the critical transcription factor of HOXA9 and HOPX were identified to be up-regulated during CLPs differentiation (Fig. 2C). Similarly, marker genes of lymphocyte lineages were found to be specific presented and stepwise up-regulated, such as CSF1R, MS4A1, GNLY, and GATA3.

Some genes displayed co-expression among lineage restricted progenitors and CLPs. These genes were more prominently specific expressed in lineage restricted progenitors, such as IGHM, FCMR, BLNK, and LTB for B progenitors; SPI1, FOS, PECAM1, and LST1 for monocyte progenitors; CD79A and JCHAIN for plasma progenitors; and NKG7 for NK progenitors. The expression characterization of these genes also indicated a differentiation correlation of lymphoid lineage commitment. Lymphoid lineage commitment process is more likely a discrete stepwise process, showing distinct lineage-committed populations during the hematopoiesis. That also presented in monocyte lineages differentiating into macrophages and dendritic cells (DCs) progenitors. Interestingly, we identified co-expression of ETV6, LYL1, and NFE2 among NMPs and monocyte lineage restricted progenitors, which was same as the co-expression of SPI1, FOS, PECAM1, and LST1 among monocyte and CLPs (Fig. 2C, Fig. 3B,). The differentiation of each progenitor stage is controlled by the expression of key regulated genes, which function like a stepwise activation switch. Through the expression switches on-or-off of transcription factors, generally synergistic with key receptor genes expression and signals activation, the original progenitor cells will be primed and divided into the next stages of lymphoid lineage progenitors. The fate decisions and lineage commitment of progenitor cells were mainly controlled by a combination of critical TFs and key receptor genes (Fig. 3). These findings provide strong evidence that lymphoid and monocyte lineages progenitors include a gradient of heterogeneity. This finding is the first to validate that the erythroid lineage process is a continuous process, while the lymphoid lineage process is more likely a discrete stepwise process showing distinct lineage-committed populations during hematopoiesis, opening a new perspective on hematopoiesis (Fig. 3C).

Essential genes in HPCs state maintain and differentiation

Several fate decision factors were identified, including NFE2, LYL1, MYB, CDK4, ETV6, TESPA1, ZBTB16, and GATA2 of myeloid progenitors and RUNX2,

HOXA9, JUN/FOS, TCF4, DDIT4, HOPX, KLF10, HOXA3, and TSC22D1 of

lymphoid progenitors (Fig. 3B). Our data revealed RUNX1 monitored the

differentiation of most progenitors (Fig. S3), while RUNX2 mainly controlled the

differentiation of lymphoid progenitors. Importantly, these key factors were shown to

play reversely functional role during the differentiation of the HPCs. Through the

up-regulated combination of NFE2, LYL1, MYB, CDK4, ETV6, TESPA1, GATA2

and in restraining the expression of RUNX2, HOXA9, JUN/FOS,TCF4, DDIT4,

HOPX, KLF10, HOXA3, and TSC22D1, the HPCs will diverse to differentiate to

myeloid progenitors. Together with the activation of other receptors and unique

transcript factors in each lineages progenitor, such as CSF3R for neutrophils and

GATA2 for GAPs, the whole hematopoietic lineage commitment was precisely

controlled and gradually formed (Table 1, Fig. 3C).

To confirm the essential genes in HPCs state maintain and differentiation. We

compared the expressions among three single cells data sheets, including bone

marrow cells, control PBMC cells and our CD34+ cells subsets. Our study showed

ITGA4 (CD49d) was highly expressed in most of the progenitors, which is key

molecular regulation of HSC homing [19]. Some reported HSC functional related

marker genes was broadly expressed in most of the progenitor cells but not specific,

such as PTPRC, HMGB1, CD74, CD37, PFN1, TXN, ZFP36L2, SERPINB1,

TMSB4X, SMIM24, MYADM, and HSP90AA1 (Table 1 and Fig. 1E)[20-26]. As

most of these genes were confirmed by functional validation, our data demonstrated

that those high expression genes of CD34 progenitor subsets were essential genes in

progenitor state and differentiation. These genes were shown to mediate the

self-renewal, differentiation, mobilization, and maintenance of hematopoietic

progenitor cells. In addition, two new genes of PPIA and EIF1 were identified. These

genes were similarly to previous reported genes that pan-expressed in progenitors and

highly expressed in matured subgroups of peripheral blood cells.

A few progenitors' specific genes of CDK6, SOX4, CD82, EGFL7, SPINT2,

IMPDH2, TSC22D1, CYTL1, FOXP1, SPI1[6], LY6E (SCA-2), and ETV6 were also

widely identified in most progenitors[27-33] (Table 1). These genes were highly

expressed in bone marrow and our identified progenitor cells when compared with

mature PBMC cells (Fig S4). This indicates those genes are essential to regulating

genes in HPCs state for maintenance and differentiation. And ERG, BCL11A, LMO2,

and RUNX1 were also widely expressed in around half percentages of cells in each

progenitor subgroup (Fig. S3). Interestingly, some transcription factors of them

showed different expression tendency in specific progenitor subgroups, such as SPI1

for monocyte progenitors and ETV6 for eosinophil progenitors.

Differentiation dynamics of progenitor cells

To confirm the differentiation trajectory of progenitor cells, pseudotime analysis

was conducted using Monocle3, which revealed three distinct differentiation

directions of progenitor cells. The results clearly show that along the trajectory of

progenitor differentiation, MPCs gradually primed into three separate progenitor cell

branches, and later transitioned into diverse lineage stages (Fig. 4A). Common

myeloid progenitors were not identified among the lineage priming process.

Additionally, pseudotime analysis demonstrated that lineage signature genes exhibited

unique expression patterns along the differentiation trajectory, such as KLF1, GATA1,

and CSF1R, which were separated from other lineages. The expression trajectory of

signature genes was highly consistent with the differentiation trajectory of lineages

(Fig. 4B).

Likewise, SCENIC assesses the activity of transcription factors and regulons

showed the activation and expression of key transcription factors was different among

different progenitor subgroups (Fig. 4C). RFX2 was activated in original progenitor

of MPCs. The transcription factors of MAZ, HOXA9, KLF3, STAT1, JUND,

POLR2A, and KLF13 were identified as the key regulators in CLP priming. Several

TFs were identified in eosinophilic progenitors, including SF1, RUNX1, ZMIM1, and

BCLAF1. And GATA1, MYC, SOX4, and HMGB1 played critical role in the lineage

progression of megakaryocytic–erythroid lineages (Fig. 4C). XBP1 and IRF7 were

activated in plasma progenitor cells. IRF8, CEBPD, JUNB/FOSB, SPI1, KLF2, and

CEBPB were the key TFs which play the fate decision role in moncyte lineage

differentiation. It is clearly that the activation characteristics of TFs were similar

among the same original lineages, such as megakaryocytic–erythroid lineages and

monocyte lineages (Fig. 4C). Interestingly, unsupervised dimensionality reduction

analysis showed that the two nearby CLPs and Pro-eosinophilic clusters had similar

TFs activation characteristics, indicating that they are possible primed from the same

original cells (C3). The combination of multi-omics and epigenetic analysis by

scRNA ATAC (assay for transposase-accessible chromatin) will provide stronger

evidence for the fate decision process of HPCs. Our results displayed highly

consistent expression and activation patterns of TFs throughout the lineage priming

process, reflecting the synergistic effects of key regulators depression and activation.

These findings suggest that the original progenitor cells can be primed and

differentiated into various progenitors during hematopoietic lineage commitment.

Pathways of each subgroups

Diversity pathways affect and control the differentiation of HPCs. Our analysis

results showed that JUN/FOS (AP-1), JUNB, and JUND were enriched and highly

expressed in most progenitors (Fig. 2C and 3B). This indicated that the JUN related

signaling pathway may play a critical role in the differentiation, mobilization, and

maintenance of hematopoietic progenitor cells. The DEPTOR gene is highly

expressed in clusters of MEPs (Fig. S3) and acts as a negative regulator of the

mTORC1 and mTORC2 signaling pathways [34]. This meaning the mTOR signaling

pathway should be suppressed during MEPs mature and differentiation. NFKBIA is

widely expressed in over 80% of the progenitor cells, while NFKBIZ is highly

expressed in progenitors of monocyte and macrophages (Fig. S3). NFKBIZ is a

member of the NF-kappa-B inhibitor family [35], indicating that the NFKB signaling

pathway is suppressed in progenitors, especially during monocyte and macrophages

mature and differentiation.

Genes set enrichment analysis of clusters by GSVA revealed the pathways and

signaling that affect the differentiation of each branch and progenitor subgroup (Fig.

4D). TGF-b signaling was enriched in the original progenitor cells (C0, MPCs), which

plays a key role in maintaining the quiescent state of HPCs[36]. Our study showed

that the Notch, KRAS, and TNF-α signaling pathways were enriched and may play a

crucial role in maintaining monocyte progenitors (Fig. 4D). Other studies have

indicated the novel role of Notch in regulating monocyte survival during

hematopoiesis[37]. Heme metabolism and hedgehog pathway gene sets were enriched

in erythroid progenitors. The activation of TGF-β and hedgehog pathway gradually

decreased during the mature stage of erythroid progenitors. Hallmark cell

proliferation-related gene sets (G2M Checkpoint, E2F Targets, MYC Targets V1 and

V2, p53 pathway) defined by MSigDB were highly enriched among erythroid and

neutrophilic progenitors, but the TNF signaling gene set were restrained (Fig. 4D).

The Wnt beta catenin signaling was enriched in NK and T cell progenitors, which was

reported to regulate aspects of peripheral T-cell activation and migration[38].

Interferon response gene sets were enriched in B cell and monocyte progenitors. It is

clear that the enriched gene sets among myeloid progenitors (C2, C5, C6, C13) and

lymphoid progenitors were different.

Fate decision genes of each redefined subgroups

Advanced analysis was conducted to clearly re-define the progenitor subgroups

and identify fate decision genes, particularly transcription factors. Unique and specific

marker genes were used to define each progenitor subgroup (Fig 5.A), while negative

expression genes helped distinguish similar or identical original lineages subgroups

(Table 1). Six genes of SPINK2, HOPX, C1QTNF4, CSF3R, NPDC1, and SELL were

highly expressed in the original progenitors of HPCs (MPCs), but gradually restrain

during differentiation from GAPs to MEPs (Fig 5.B). CSF3R, S100A10, and

C1QTNF4 were also gradually restrained during differentiation of lymphoid early

progenitors (C4 cluster, Fig 5.B). Interestingly, we identified a few genes which are

completely contrary and specifically expressed among erythrocyte lineages (C2,C6,13)

and other progenitors, such as SPINK2, HOPX, C1QTNF4, and FCER1A, GATA1,

SLC40A1(Fig 5.A, B). This indicated the fate decision among erythrocyte lineages

(C2, C6, 13) and other progenitors may be controlled by those genes during the

lineage commitment. Two class A basic helixloop-helix protein genes of TAL1 and

LYL1 were highly expressed among erythrocyte lineages. HBD was the early protein

in erythrocyte cell development. mini-chromosome maintenance proteins gene of

MCM2, MCM6, MCM5, MCM4, MCM3, and MCM7 which acts as component of

the MCM2-7 complex, were highly expressed in erythrocyte progenitors(Pro-ME) and

NMPs (Table 1). MCM complex is the replicative helicase that may play an

essential role in erythrocyte denucleation and neutrophilic progenitors maturation.

LMO4 is the most specific TF gene of MBPs.

Three key TFs of GATA3, TCF7, and DDIT4 were identified in T progenitor cells

(Fig 5.C), especially the two novel expression genes of GATA3 and TCF7. These

three TFs play a critical role in the fate decision of T cells lineages differentiation

(Table 1, Fig 3B). Previous studies have reported TCF7 and GATA3 to be important

TFs in T cell development and differentiation[39, 40], which is highly consistent with

our redefined characterization of T progenitor cells. LTB was widely expressed in

Pro-TBN, Pro-T, and Pro-B progenitor cells, with an up-regulation in the later stages

of lymphoid progenitor differentiation. Two distinct types of B progenitor cells were

identified and redefined as having different fate decision TFs and marker genes in C9

and C12 clusters. This indicates the development and differentiation of B cells occur

early on in the progenitor stages. Cluster 9 is the progenitor of plasma cells, whereas

cluster 12 represents classical B progenitor cells (Table.1). Interestingly,

immunoglobulin variable genes were mainly expressed in the progenitors of Cluster 9

cells, and rearrangements of IGHV, IGKV and IGLV genes had already occurred

during the progenitor state of plasma cells. It's widely accepted that plasma cell are

the final stage of B cell proliferation and are unable to proliferate. However, our

single cell data confirmed the existence of plasma progenitor cells in whole blood.

The two factors PRDM1 and IRF4 were specifically expressed in cluster 9, while

PAX5 was specifically expressed in cluster 12. XBP1 was widely expressed in both

clusters and up-graduated in cluster 9. These four TFs factors play a critical role in the

fate decision of B lineage cells. HOPX was found to be very highly expressed in the

progenitor and mature NK cells but negative in the erythrocyte lineages (C2, C6, 13),

which was one of the most important TF for NK cells (Fig 3B, Fig 5A, Table 1).

Two types of monocyte progenitor cell in C7 and C14 clusters were identified and

redefined. One of the most specially expressed genes in monocyte lineages is IFI30,

which is related to interferon gamma signaling pathway. SPI1 and LST1, were widely

expressed in most progenitors but were highly expressed in the monocyte

subgroups(C7), which were also highly expressed in mature states of monocyte

original cells, such as macrophages and dendritic cells (Data not showed). This

suggests that SPI1 and LST1 are critical genes for monocyte progenitors. The

monocyte progenitors of C7 and C14 were controlled by various TFs including KLF4,

EGR1, MAFB, IRF8, and DDIT4 (Table 1, Fig 5B). The two clusters of C7 and C14

were CD86 and CD68 positive. C7 highly expressed EGR1, CEBPB, and MAFB, but

were negative for IRF8 and DDIT4. C7 was FCGR3A positive, which indicates more

likely to be macrophage progenitors, and CSF1R was novel and highly expressed in

that group. The cluster C7 preferred differentiation to macrophages which expressed

the secreted cytokine of TNF. The monocyte progenitor of C14 was positively

expressed CLEC9A, ANPEP, and THBD (Table 1), which indicates it is more likely to

differentiate into DCs. These TFs and receptors were the main fate decision factors

that affect the differentiation of monocyte progenitor lineages. Although we have

identified the fate decision factors of B cell and monocyte progenitor, the association

between these cell types is still unknown in the HPCs differentiation procedure.

Future investigation is required to determine whether the two types of progenitor cells

derive from the same or independent original cells. It's widely accepted that

neutrophilic and monocyte progenitors originate from the same myeloid progenitors.

However, our results showed that fate decision TFs and characterization genes among

the two types of progenitors were highly different, which reminds us that the original

and association of these two types of lineages should be reconsider.

PECAM1 (CD31) was widely expressed in more than 50% of progenitors and

CST3 was widely expressed in more than 60% of progenitors, both of them are

mainly high expression in monocyte progenitors. Previous studies defined endothelial

progenitor cell by the markers of CD31, CD34, and THBD (CD141). Our study

showed one cluster (C14) cells positively expressed those markers which were

re-defined and confirmed as monocyte progenitor (DCs) (Table 1, Fig. 5A). That

reminds us the classical definition of endothelial progenitor cell should be

reconsideration.

Functional validation and primary culture

Previously studies already conducted many functional validations of HSCs key

regulated genes. We hypothesis that our HPCs definitions and hematopoiesis model

were right, that meanings the functional studies phenotype results would be consistent

or can be explanation by our reaffirmed model. And furthermore, those conflicting

and confusing results can be clearly interpretation by the reaffirmed hematopoiesis

hierarchical organization model.

Our analysis results were found to be consistent with other functional studies

results. KLF1 and GATA1 were well-known play a key role in the erythroid and

megakaryocytic differentiation [41, 42]. The expression of GATA1 progenitors

generated mast cells, eosinophils, megakaryocytes and erythroid cells, and lacking

expression can drive generated monocytes, neutrophils, and lymphocytes[41]. Our

results revealed that GATA1 was unique expressed in the later stages of MEPs and

negatively expressed in the monocytes, neutrophils and lymphocytes progenitors (Fig.

2B). The result implies that the key transcript factor of GATA1 was very critical for

the MEPs progenitor lineages differentiation. Other evidence is transcript factor NFE2.

It was reported that NFE2 acts as a critical regulator in hematopoietic cells. The

knockout of NFE2 in mouse model displayed mild erythroid abnormalities and major

defect in megakaryocyte biogenesis [43, 44]. Likewise, our results revealed NFE2

was up-regulated in the NMPs and GAPs lineage directions (Fig. 3B).

Based on findings from primary culture, M-CSF was shown to be critical for the

survival of macrophage, which is consistent with our results that the receptor CSF1R

of M-CSF only expression in monocyte progenitors and matured macrophages (Fig 5.

D). In addition, SCGF, also known as CLEC11A, is a secreted glycoprotein that

exhibits erythroid burst (BFU-E) promoting activity in the absence of SCF/c-kit

Ligand[45, 46]. Our results showed stem cell growth factor (SCGF) was highly

expression in NMP and GAP progenitors, especially in the whole lineages of MEPs

that can explain SCGF burst promote erythroid activity. Furthermore, SCGF

cooperates   with   GM-CSF,   or   G-CSF   to   enhance   the   growth   of

granulocyte-macrophage colonies (CFU-GM)[45, 46]. Because the CSF3R receptor of

G-CSF was highly expression in progenitors of myeloid, SCGF cooperates with

G-CSF would activate and induced the progenitor differentiation to neutrophils and

macrophages but reduce MEPs lineages generation. The IL15 receptor of IL2RB was

novel expressed in NK progenitors (Fig 5. D). The common receptor beta chain

CSF2RB of IL-3, IL-5, and GM-CSF, was novel expressed in erythroid lineage

progenitors. IL7R was novel expressed in T cell progenitors which is an essential

driver of T cell development and homeostasis. IL2RG and IL1B were expressed

across most progenitor subgroups (Fig 5. D). IL18 was identified as one of the most

essential cytokines in early stage of progenitors (Data not shown). Our study indicated

that cytokine IL1B plays a critical role in hematopoiesis. The transcription of IL1B

was regulated by TFs of SPI1 and CEBPB[47], which exhibit high expression in

monocytes progenitors (Table 1). ALDH1A1 was highly expressed in erythroid

lineage progenitors, and its product participates in retinoic acid synthesis. It's widely

reported that retinoic acid is required for progenitor cell maintenance [48]. The

expression characterization of these receptors and genes was highly consistent with

previous studies, providing strong evidence that our re-definition of these progenitors

was reliable and reasonable.

Discussion

Taken together, we demonstrated the transcription atlas data of original state

HPCs in adult peripheral blood with large number of HPCs. We redefined the

characterization of progenitor lineages and identified specific TFs and marker genes

that are critical for their development during hematopoiesis. Our transcription atlas

data provided novel insights into the fate decision factors and characterization genes

of hematopoietic progenitor cells. Our study further reaffirmed and established a

comprehensive model of hematopoiesis that can reconcile previous models and

explain conflicts among functional studies. This helps to provide a detailed insight

into lineage commitment from HPCs into almost branches of human peripheral blood

progenitors, and revealed the mechanism of HPCs self-renewal and multipotent

differentiation. Our single-cell transcriptional atlas provides a integrated landscape of

heterogeneity, development, hierarchy of the adults peripheral blood progenitor cells.

Currently, there is without a standard consensus for the definition of all HPCs

lineages. This is owing to the inconsistent classification with conflict functional

outcomes among the current literatures [10, 14]. Our study succeed enriched the large

numbers and almost whole spectrum of HPCs in adult peripheral blood. This will be

particularly attractive for large single cells studies to establish the comprehensive

model of hematopoiesis with clearly HPCs definition and reliable lineage

commitment. All of the hematopoietic progenitors were reaffirmed by unique makers

and key factor genes, which can be well distinguishable. We are the first clearly

definition all lineages of HPCs by unsupervised and inartificial clustering, which

provide the unambiguous transcription atlas of each type of HPCs lineages. The

unique markers genes of progenitor subgroups were highly consistent with previously

characterization descriptions, such as KLF1 of MEPs, HPGDS of mast cell, and MPO

of neutrophils[15, 49, 50].

It is widely known that the HPCs would differentiate into common myeloid

progenitors (CMPs) and common lymphoid progenitors (CLPs). Our data showed

none of the MME positive cells co-expressed CD38, suggesting that classification of

CLPs using solely CD38+ and MME+ was not sufficient. CMPs are defined with

CD34+CD38+MME- which is consistent with classic definition, but our single cell

expression atlas showed the CD34+CD38-MME+ progenitor cells is inconsistent with

the traditional define of CLPs[4, 5]. Based on our study, we identified subgroups of

progenitors by single cell sequencing which are not consistent with classical

definition, and showed specific classify surface or characterization markers genes,

such as GATA1, MPO and KLF1. Likewise, we provided a clearly evidence that the

classical surface markers of CD38, KIT, THY1, CD49f and FLT3 were non-specific

and inefficient to identify HPCs. This remind us the traditional lineage definition of

HSC by above markers was imperfect and need to be improved. Evidently, the

combination of transcriptional factors with unique marker genes would be more

efficient for lineage definition of HPCs.

Our classification and definition of HPCs also help to explain the conflict and

mechanism of *in vitro* and *in vivo* progenitor cell studies. It is well known that KLF1

and GATA1 are the keys regulate genes of erythrocyte or megakaryocyte

differentiation [51, 52]. Functional study have been shown that the upregulated

transcriptional factor of GATA-1 can affect mast cells, eosinophils, megakaryocytes

and erythroid cells generation, and downregulation to affect monocytes, neutrophils

and lymphocytes generation[41]. Our finding reaffirmed the definition of GAPs

lineages to show GATA1 to be solely expressed in the MEPs and up-regulated during

maturation. Previously studies reported TAL1 and LYL1 are essential for maintenance

of adult HSC function [53-55]. Since the induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) was

established through activation of four transcript factors, reprogram of pluripotent stem

cells was widely investigated in various somatic cells[56]. GATA1 and TAL1 have

been validated in the reprogram of megakaryocytes and erythroid cells[51, 57].

Although they finally induced mature erythroid cells based on those key transcript

factors, but there are still many functional capacity limited during differentiation.

The CSF3R was mainly expressed in the original clusters (MPCs), which was the

receptor of G-CSF [58]. The underlying molecular mechanisms of G-CSF induces

enhancement of hematopoietic remain unclear. Our results provide a new model of

hematopoietic through scRNA of unperturbed and G-CSF mobilized progenitors

lineages in peripheral blood. All types of the progenitors were remarkable increased,

especially the MPCs. G-CSF directly activates the downstream activation signals of

HPCs through bind with CSF3R, which converted the quiescent state HPCs to

activation progenitors. After the mobilization procedures, HPCs was priming and

differentiation to all kinds of progenitors which can differentiate to mature myeloid

and lymphocyte cells. As key transcriptional factors and regulators controlled the

whole hematopoietic lineage commitment formation, the use of primary cultures also

showed factors of G-CSF and SCGF to induce the lineages formation. Both of these

mechanisms would cooperate to play key roles during the lineage commitment

formation. That reminds us two questions: First, how did the key transcript factors

was activated during the lineage commitment procedure? Secondly, the receptors

activated the signaling cascade and transcript factors, or the transcript factors were

activated independently and factors enhance the commitment formation?

Three aspects strongly support the definition and classification of HPCs to be

distinctly verifiable, reliable and reasonable. In brief, the unique markers were highly

consistent with characterization of most progenitor subgroups. Secondly, the

definition can very well explanation the conflict of functional studies. Thirdly, the

expression of distinguished receptor of cytokines can perfectly explain the primary

culture phenomenon of progenitor subgroups, such as CSF3R for neutrophilic and

CSF1R for monocyte culture[59].

Our transcriptional atlas revealed that the transcriptional factors activation and

suppression play a critical role in the differentiation among lineage commitment. The

bias during HPCs differentiation was gradually accumulated by activation of multiple

lineage-specifying TFs, such as NFE2, LYL1, MYB, and GATA2 of myeloid and

RUNX2, HOXA9, and HOPX of lymphoid progenitors. These TFs play critical role

during the progenitor priming with dynamic entail quantitative expression and abundances change. By the multiple TFs activation and suppression, the downstream signal pathway would be activated. The stepwise or continuous controlled the differentiation of each branch during HPCs lineage commitment. During the process, individual progenitors would gradually acquire lineage biases along multiple directions during homeostasis. Our atlas results showed that key transcriptional factors priming HPCs for distinct downstream lineages, which finally generated and formatted the whole lineage commitment. The expression of key TFs could be considered as the relative reliable boundary among stages during progenitor mature. Our findings have highlighted the importance of TFs and characterization genes in hematopoietic lineage fate decision, providing additional insights into the molecular mechanisms underlying the hematopoietic lineage commitment. These transcription factors hold great potential for reprograming progenitor cell. Through the control of TFs genes, the artificial precise committed progenitor cell differentiation can be made possible.

Moreover, our transcriptional atlas revealed the major role of each progenitor subgroups in hematopoiesis and the fate decision of downstream various hematopoietic cells. Through the expression changes of the four key transcription factors of KIT, KLF1, LMO4, and GATA1, the later stage of MEPs can differentiate into two directions. The expression of transcriptional factors, both in original and mature stage of progenitors, revealed a basic split between myeloid-lymphocyte development and megakaryocyte-erythroid development. This provides strong evidence that the transcription factors were the key regulators in each stages of the progenitor's differentiation. Generally, progenitor cells can be priming by key transcription factor activation, which derived progenitor differentiated to downstream specific mature lineages [60]. But previously study showed that transcriptional programs were not strictly lineage affiliated, and expression changes between HSCs and early progenitors occur independently of lineage choice[61]. That may cause by not reliable classification and definition of the subgroups and different stage of

progenitor among lineage commitment, which based on the traditional cell surface

markers in most of those investigations. We demonstrated the unique markers or

transcriptional factors which control the progenitors differentiate to all kind of blood

lineages in a continuum or stepwise differentiation process. Our results strongly

supported that in an ideally cell fate decision model, the activation of transcription

factors and expression of progenitor lineage unique markers demonstrated a consistent

lineage affiliated with relatively obvious subgroups boundary.

It was reported the HSC lineage commitment is a continuous process in recently

single cell sequencing studies [5, 13]. But HSC heterogeneity and unclearly definition

of HSC subgroups caused the mechanism of hierarchy formation still an enigma. The

established hematopoietic lineage models were inconsistent and incompatible. This

was due to the limitation of captured cell numbers and inefficient definition by

identification using surface markers. Based on our clear definition and atlas of HPCs,

it revealed that a gradient of hematopoietic progenitors existed during the lineage

commitment and can be distinguished by the expression of unique TFs. Those

progenitors gradually acquired lineage biases, divergence and prime to each branch.

Our elaborate and comprehensive transcriptional atlas of HPCs can provide accurate

definition, hierarchy, and biological insights of hematopoietic progenitors. As our

study further explained how the diversified progenitor cells were primed, induced,

and differentiated to the whole lineages of immune system cells, this enable the

transcriptional atlas of HPCs to provide new perspective and well explanation about

how the immune was reconstituted in adult. Recently, cytokines storm was reported in

severe infection and coronavirus[62, 63]. Our atlas can clearly demonstrate the

expression cytokines receptor in specific progenitor. By controlling the original stage

and generation of cytokines, especially suppress the initial cytokines activation of the

cascade activation, this could inhibit or reduce the effect of the follow-up cascade

activation. Technically, this would be helpful in controlling the excessive activation

by cytokines and preventing the occurrence of cytokines storm as a new therapeutic

strategy. Our reaffirmed taxonomy will enhance more accurate prevention and

treatment as well as immune monitoring in health and disease.

There were some limitations in our current study. Firstly, our study did not define

the original progenitors with HSCs. Even though the characterization of these

progenitors was most likely originated with stem cells, the markers of CD49f and

THY1 were found to be rarely or negatively expressed. Monocyte lineage was

priming from myeloid progenitors, generally original from the same progenitor with

granulocyte. However, our study showed progenitor cells of NMPs and CLPs

displayed co-expression characterization among monocyte lineage restricted

progenitors. We speculated that another possibility that monocyte progenitor may also

can original from CLPs. Monocyte progenitors have two types of state progenitors,

which located far away from the main cell populations. We speculated two

possibilities to cause this phenomenon. One may be from the limitation of our

enrichment method. This can cause the loss of major state progenitors from these two

types of cells. This will have an effect to cause only the capture from the later stages.

Secondly, the original source of monocyte progenitors was found to be independent

and distinct with all of other progenitor cell types. As the whole atlas of our definition

was established by unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering from

statistical approach, the accuracy and efficiency should be considered. Artificial

intelligence and deep learning would provide a more accurate, reliable, and

distinguishable definition for each state and all progenitor subgroups during the whole

procedure of hematopoiesis.

Importantly, our study helped to re-defined hematopoietic progenitor cells and

reaffirming lineage commitment by transcriptional atlas. We are the first to clearly

depict the transcriptional atlas and defined each subgroups of adult peripheral blood

progenitor. Our results will enable the whole map of the transcriptional signal and

pathway among lineage commitment. Moreover, we are also the first to identify the

cell fate decision transcriptional factors in each branch among hematopoietic

hierarchy formation. The precise control on the hematopoietic progenitor cells

priming and differentiation can then be interfere by the key transcriptional factors and

receptors signals, which we call Artificial Operation of HPCs.

In summary, our transcriptional atlas of HPCs established a comprehensive key

regulators controlled model of the human adult peripheral blood hematopoiesis.

Toward this transcriptional atlas, it provides accurate definition, hierarchy, and

biological insights of hematopoiesis and lineage commitment of HPCs. Importantly,

this can enable new research development in cell engineering, regenerative medicine,

and disease treatment. Also, this can have critical insight and implications for the

etiology and treatment of hematologic disorders. Moreover, this opens up a wide

variety of possibilities for artificial precise control progenitor cells differentiation and

targeted treatment of immune disease, providing hope for untreatable diseases.

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Author Contributions

Y.Y conceived the original idea, designed the study, and performed experiments on HPC's enrichment. Y.Y and L.C conducted the bioinformatics and statistical analysis of sequencing data. Y.Y and Q.S wrote the manuscript and revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final draft of the manuscript. Q. H and G. L conducted the sample collection, and S. C draws the schematic diagram.

Declaration of Interests

The authors have declared no competing financial interest.

Declaration

The correspondence author YJ Yue would like to clarify that we already identified most marker genes, receptors, and transcript factor genes of each redefined subgroups based on the transcriptional atlas, which we didn't and can't show all of them in that version. Based on the redefined marker genes, all of the other receptors and fate decision factors can be easily identify by our transcriptional atlas of progenitors. We will present these results and reference data in the future. We welcome collaborations and funding support.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets used or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. Anyone who want validate the expression of genes in our datasets, please contact with Correspondence author.

Methods

Sample collection and HPCs enrichment

Totally, 8mL peripheral blood was draw from each donor. Prior to blood collection, mobilizated donors will received subcutaneous recombinant human granulocyte colony-stimulating factor with 300ug in each 12 hours for five days. After five days of continuous treatment, a total of 10mL of peripheral blood was collected in heparinized tubes from the stem cell donor, and kept at room temperature. PBMC and total white blood cells were obtained according to standard protocols. The protocol of peripheral blood mononuclear cell (PBMC) isolation was based on separation by density gradient centrifugation with Ficoll® (Cytiva, GE), a highly branched polysaccharide. Lineages (Lin−, CD3-CD19-CD56-) negative cells were removed by STEMCELL reagents (15272). Self-design method was applied to enrich the HPCs. Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the Shenzhen People's Hospital, as per the ethical standards recommended in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was obtained from the subjects in the study.

Single cell RNA preparation and sequencing

RNA-sequencing was also performed on human enriched HPCs (Lin−) purified from donors, including three mobilization PBMC progenitor cells by G-CSF. The single cells suspension was loaded and captured by Chromium microfluidic chips and barcoded with a 10× Chromium Controller (10X Genomics). Barcoded single cells RNA was subsequently reverse-transcribed and sequencing libraries constructed with reagents from a Chromium Next GEM Single Cell 5' reagent kits v2 according to the

manufacturer's instructions (10X Genomics). Sequencing was conducted by Illumina

Nova 6000 (PE150).

Single-cell RNA-seq data processing

The raw sequencing reads of all samples were demultiplexed and aligned to the

reference genome hg38 by Cellranger pipeline. All downstream single-cell

unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering was conducted by Seurat[64].

Gene Ontology (GO) enrichment analysis of marker genes was implemented by the

cluster Profiler R package. Trajectory analysis was conducted by Monocle3 [65].

Transcription factors regulation inference and gene regulatory networks analyses

were performed using SCENIC [66]. Genes set variation enrichment analysis was

conducted by a non-parametric, unsupervised method of GSVA[67].

Integrated analysis with online single cell dataset

The online scRNA data of GSE120221[68], GSE117498[4], GSE145531[69], and

GSE181989[70], GSE96583[71] were downloaded from GSE database. Integrated

analysis was performed by Seurat. Bone marrow scRNA datasets was merged by

datasets of GSE120221, GSE117498, GSE145531 and GSE181989. PBMC scRNA

datasets were merged using data from GSE120221 and GSE96583.

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Progenitor Cell Types	Marker genes and fate decision genes (partly)	Transcription factors	Negative
Pan-Progenitors	EIF1,PPIA, HMGB1, CD74, PFN1, TXN, ZFP36L2, CD37, SERPINB1,HSP90AA1, TMSB4X, SMIM24		
Progenitors(Specific)	CD34, CDK6, SOX4, CD49d, CD82, EGFL7, CYTL1, IMPDH2, TSC22D1, SPI1(PU.1), FOXP1, EVT6, XBP1	CDK6, SOX4, IMPDH2, TSC22D1, SPI1(PU.1), EVT6, XBP1	
CLP (C4)	SPINK2, HOPX, HOXA9, RUNX2, LTB, IGHM, DNTT, PRSS2, SLC2A5, MME, CCR7, NKG7, LST1, BASP1, CD79A	HOPX,DDIT4, HOXA9, RUNX2	CNRIP1,FCER1A,GATA1, S100A10
Pro-NK (C8)	GNLY,NKG7, CD247, CCL5, FCGR3A, PRF1, GZMA, GZMB, KLRD1, KLRB1 ,CD3E,CD7. HOPX	DDIT4, HOPX	IL7R,GATA3
Pro-B2 (C9, Pro-Plasma cell)	CD27, IGKC, IGHA1, SLAMF7, CD79A, CD79B, PRDM1, IRF4, CD38, JCHAIN	PRDM1, IRF4	MS4A1, FCER2
Pro-T (C11)	TCF7, IL7R, GATA3, KLRB1, CD3E, CD3D, CD7, CD247, LTB, DDIT4	TCF7,GATA3,DDIT4	GNLY, FCGR3A, GZMA
Pro-B1 (C12)	CD19, MS4A1,FCER2,CD79A, CD79B, IGHM, LTB, IGKC, PAX5, VPREB3, CD22, CD24	PAX5	CD27
NMPs(C5)	CSF3R, MPO, MGST1, IGLL1, S100A10, C1QTNF4, NPDC1, MYB, CDK4, CDCA7	MYB, CDK4	GATA2, SLC40A1, CNRIP1,LTB
Lineages(C2,C6,C13)	CNRIP1, CPA3 ,FCER1A, GATA1, KLF1, HPGDS, SLC40A1, GATA2, ZBTB16 ,TAL1, TESPA1, MYB, CDK4, ITGA2B	GATA1, ZBTB16,TAL1, CDK4, TESPA1,KLF1	SPINK2,HOPX, C1QTNF4, CSF3R

GAPs (C1)	GATA2, NFE2, LYL1, MYB, SLC40A1, TESPA1, CSF3R	GATA2, NFE2, LYL1, MYB	GATA1, KLF1
Pro-ME(C6)	HBD,CDT1, MCM2, MCM6, MCM5, MCM4, MCM3, MCM7, CDCA7, CDK4, TYMS	CDK4	MS4A2, MS4A3
MBPs (C13)	TPSAB1,LMO4, HDC, MS4A2, TPSB2, MS4A3, KIT, HPGDS, PRG2, CLC, MCM2-MCM7, APOC1	LMO4, CDK4	HBD
Eosinophil (C10)	CLC, HDC, RFLNB, ETV6	ETV6	MS4A2,TPSB2,MS4A3
Pro-Monocytes1 (C7, Macrophages)	EGR1,SPI1,KLF4,CEBPB,FCGR3A, CSF1R,CD68, CD86, ITGAX, FCGR2A , LYZ , LST1, EGR2, CEBPA, MAFB, TNF	SPI1,KLF4,CEBPB, EGR1, EGR2, CEBPA, MAFB	CLEC9A, THBD, IRF8
Pro-Monocytes2 (C14, DCs)	CLEC9A, ANPEP, THBD, IRF8, KLF4, CD68, CD86, ITGAX, LYZ, SPI1 , LST1, DDIT4, SLAMF7	SPI1,KLF4,IRF8,DDIT4	FCGR3A, CSF1R, MAFB

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1121 **Figure Legends**

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1123 **Graphical abstract:** The reaffirmed lineage commitment model of HPCs

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Figure 1. Progenitor subtypes were identified by unsupervised dimensionality
reduction and clustering analysis in adults peripheral blood. A, Schematic
showing the progenitor cells enrichment and sequencing workflow. B, Integrated 32
clusters were identified by UMAP analysis. C, Expression feature plots of progenitor
markers CD34 and CYTL1. D, Violin plot presenting the expression of newly
identified and known progenitor cell marker genes of CDK6, EGFL7, CYTL1, and
SOX4. E, Dotplot results illustrating the expression of progenitor cells related marker
genes in all clusters. F, Enrichment results of three signaling pathways in progenitors
cells. G, Dotplot displaying the enriched categories of GO analysis.

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Figure 2. Characterization of progenitor subtypes in quiescent and activated
states. A, UMAP illustrating 17 clusters of integrated CD34 positive progenitor cells.
B, Violin plots presenting the expression of traditional surface markers and unique
marker genes, which demonstrated GATA2, CSF3R, and MME were more efficient
and accurate markers than traditional surface markers KIT and FLT3 for myeloid,
granulocyte, and lymphoid progenitor classification. C, Dot plots presenting the
expression of representative marker genes and lineage specific genes. D, UMAP
showing the distribution of cells in the quiescent (Control) and activated (G_CSF)
states, displaying the persistence of all types of progenitors in the quiescent state of
adult peripheral blood. E, Column plot displaying the percentage changes of all
progenitor clusters. The primitive cluster 0 and 3 exhibit the most obviously changes
in cell numbers and folder change. F, Volcano plot showing the top five fold change
genes in progenitor clusters.

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Figure 3. Newly reaffirmed hematopoietic hierarchy of hematopoietic progenitor

cells differentiation. A, UMAP plots demonstrating the re-defined progenitor clusters.

B, Dotplots presenting the expression patterns of representative fate decision

transcription factor genes of each subgroup progenitors. C, Reaffirmed lineage

commitment model through scRNA transcriptional atlas. In the new hematopoietic

hierarchy, the MPCs are primed into three progenitor cell types simultaneously and

later mature into diverse hematopoietic lineages. The first progenitor cell type is

common lymphoid progenitors (CLPs), which stepwise differentiate into T cell, B cell

and NK progenitor cells. The second progenitor cell type is GAPs, which

continuously differentiate into the intermediate stage of megakaryocytic–erythroid

progenitors (MEPs) first, controlled by GATA2 and GATA1. In the later stages, MEPs

differentiate into two directions controlled by KIT, LMO4, and KLF1. The KIT and

LMO4 high expression branches will be derived to mast cell or basophil, eosinophil

progenitors (MBPs). The other branch differentiates into megakaryocytic and

erythroid pro-progenitors (Pro-ME). The third progenitor cell type is neutrophilic and

monocyte progenitors (NMPs), which differentiate into neutrophils and monocytes.

Dashed lines meaning partial lineage connections that lack strong direct evidence of

differentiation relationships. The shaded area indicates the GATA2 and GATA1

expression domains.

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Figure 4. Dynamics of lineage unique marker genes and activity **of lineage**

priming transcription factors regulons**.** A, UMAP visualizing the differentiation

trajectory of progenitor cells using pseudotime analysis with monocle3. B, UMAP

displays feature plots of transcription activities for lineage signature genes related to

differentiation trajectory. C, Heatmap results depicting the different activation of

transcription factors regulons among all progenitor subgroups. D, Heatmap plot

showing gene set enrichment analysis results of clusters by GSVA.

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Figure 5. Expression of markers genes and fate decision genes (partly) of redefinition hematopoietic progenitor cells. A, Heatmap showing the expression of marker genes and fate decision genes of re-defined progenitor clusters. B, Violin plot illustrating the expression of feature markers genes of SPINK2, HOPX, C1QTNF4, CSF3R, NPDC1, and SELL, which were highly expressed in the original progenitors of HPCs but restrained during the differentiation from GAPs to MEPs. C, Feature plot displaying the expression of LTB, TCF7, and MAFB. D, Violin plot demonstrating the expression of receptor genes, including CSF1R, IL7R, IL2RB, and others, which were specifically expressed in the redefined progenitor subgroups.

Classical hierarchy of hematopoiesis

Reaffirming hierarchy of hematopoiesis

A

B

C

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