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 seq) 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 hematopoiesis is a continuum process controlled by the activation and suppression of transcription factors with identified boundary. 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

48 treatment, which we call Artificial Operation of HPCs. Furthermore, this opens up a

49 wide variety of possibilities for artificial precise control progenitor cell differentiation

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

Graphical abstract

53 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 status of plasma cells.

• Hematopoiesis is a continuum procedure controlled by the activation and

suppression of fate decision factors, with a relative identified boundary.

• 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 procedure[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) 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. 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.

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

types 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, 8, 9]. Most of the established lineage fate decision models

were based on *in-vitro* / *in-vivo* functional studies or cell fate induces experiments [10,

11]. 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

[11]. 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, 12]. In addition,

progenitors 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 status 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 [8, 13].

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 identified two subtypes of progenitor cells in adults peripheral blood.

In order to enrich most of the subset of HPCs and later progenitors, such as CLP

and CMP, 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 totally 79,655 cells were captured after quality

filters of mitochondrial RNA, low gene expression cells and erythrocyte cell.

Unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering analysis showed 17 clusters by

Seurat and UMAP (Fig. 1B). Total 3180 CD34 positive cells were identified in the

dataset. Besides, samples from all donors were highly reproducible for cell

composition. The HPCs marker of CD34 mainly expressed in two nearby clusters 6

and 14 with the co-expression of FLT3 and KIT (Fig. 1C).

To confirm whether the two clusters are subset of progenitor cells, the different

expression of lymphocyte and granulocyte surface markers and known HSC related

genes were compared (Fig. 1C). Both of the two clusters were found to express KIT

and FLT3, but do not contained the expression of lymphocyte and granulocyte surface

markers. Based on this, the two clusters can then be well distinguishable by three

markers, defined with CD34+CD38+MME- and CD34+CD38-MME+ (Fig. 1C).

However, a portion of the cells can positively expressed CD38 or MME in the two

subgroups, respectively. KIT (CD117) and FLT3 were mainly expressed in one of the

CD34+ clusters, with low positive percentages but also high expressed in the other

clusters. This indicates that the progenitors of CD34+KIT and CD34+FLT3 belonging

to two different clusters which may control the two differentiation directions.

We further analyzed the significantly identified genes among the two clusters

with the other clusters. As found, we presented 16 progenitors related genes which

expressed in more than 80% cells in the two clusters (Fig. 1C). Several HSCs key

regulate genes were identified, such as high expression of *CDK6, SERPINB1, SPINT2,*

IMPDH2, TXN, SOX4, MYADM, HMGA1, CDK2AP1, CD82, TSC22D1, LYL1, and

middle expression of SPI1[6], IFITM3, HMGB1, and PPIA. Based on the surface

markers and the above hematopoietic stem cells functional key gens, we can confirm

that the two identified clusters are hematopoietic progenitor cells. We also identified

three new progenitor key genes of *PPIB, HMGA1,* and *EGFL7*. It is very obviously

that the gene of EGFL7 are very high and specific expressed in the two progenitors

clusters, so that EGFL7 is a key functional gene in hematopoietic progenitor cells

lineage differentiation and mature (Fig. 1D). The single cell sequencing identified two

subgroups which are progenitor cells with category and functional heterogeneity.

The differentiation of transcript markers among progenitors

Our single cell expression atlas level showed the two clusters of myeloid

progenitors (CD38+) and lymphoid progenitors (MME+) presented heterogeneity in

these progenitors, suggesting that functional of the two-cluster subset are diversity. To

determine the diversity, re-clustering of analysis was conducted and 11 clusters was

generated (Fig 2A). Based on our finding, the subgroup of cells aggregated in two

main directions. One is the cluster 0 called lymphoid progenitors, which showed the

up-regulated expression of MME. The other is myeloid progenitors comprised with

cluster 1, cluster 2, and cluster 5, with the gradual up-regulation of CD38 and KIT (Fig 2B). The three genes expression demonstrated contrary among the direction of myeloid progenitors and lymphoid progenitors. But the expression is not whole positive of the two direction cell types. This implies that CD38 and MME can be used as the markers distinguished myeloid progenitors and lymphoid progenitor differentiation directions, but not suitable to use in subtypes classification.

The efficient and accurately of classical hematopoietic progenitors markers which be used to distinguished CMP, GMP (Granulocyte-monocyte progenitors) and CLPs, were also re-analyzed. Our data demonstrated the expression of THY1 (CD90) is very rare (only 17 cells) in the two progenitor clusters which may cause as the progenitors were isolated from adult PBMC. To confirm whether the traditional classification markers THY1 and CD49f (ITGA6) expressed in progenitor, we analyzed four bone marrow single cell projects data of GSE120221, GSE117498, GSE145531 and GSE181989 (Fig. S1). Total 8296 CD34 positive cells were extracted and merged of the four projects data. The results showed positive expression cell numbers of THY1 is only 84 and CD49f is 824, and the distribution is inconsistent. This is similar with the other identified markers of FLT3, CD38 and KIT (Fig. S1). The different progenitor types of cells (CMP or CLP) were not distinguishable by unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering in bone marrow CD34+ cells. 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. 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.

The essential regulate genes of HPCs lineages differentiation

To confirm the essential genes in HPCs status maintain and differentiation. We compared the expressions among three single cells data sheets, including bone marrow, PBMC and our CD34- cells subsets. The genes of SERPINB1, CDK6, HMGA1, IMPDH2, SPINT2, TXN, and EGFL7 were highly expressed in bone

marrow and in our identified progenitor cells when compared with mature PBMC

cells (Fig S2A). Those genes also high expressed in most of the subgroups of our

CD34+ cells. This indicates those genes are essential to regulating genes in HPCs

status for maintenance and differentiation.

Classifications of the lineages differentiation

The transcriptomes among membrane marker-defined and transcriptomes-defined

cells were thoroughly compared. Traditionally, membrane markers of progenitor CMP

were defined with CD38+MME-FLT3+, while megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors

(MEP) were defined with CD38+MME-FLT3-. However, single cell clusters based on

these markers were not distinguishable among the subgroups. As the expressions of

CD38 and FLT3 were contradictory, this demonstrated FLT3 positive cells were

negative of CD38 expression in most clusters (Fig 2B). With the CD38-FLT3+

subgroups progenitors were more original than the FLT3 negative cells, they are more

likely to be CMPs. The expression is changed gradually and presented a continuum

procedure. Although the expression tendency of FLT3+ was consistent with

previously definition, it remained inefficient and inaccurate to classify the

differentiation stages among the CMPs lineages. On the other hand, our result

demonstrated clearly that CMPs lineages clusters can be distinguishable with the

expression of KLF1, GATA1 and CSF3R (Fig 2B).

Our results showed KLF1 and GATA1 were uniquely expressed in the three

clusters of 3, 8 and 9. This indicated that three clusters are likely to be either

megakaryocyte progenitors (MkPs) or erythrocyte progenitors (ErP) of MEPs

progenitors. The expression of KLF1 and GATA1 only presented in the late stage of

CMPs directions, which indicated those two genes are the keys regulated genes in the

differentiation from CMPs to MkPs or ErP. The other gene of GATA2 was widely

expressed in most of the others clusters but mainly highly expressed in CMPs clusters.

Interestingly, the expression of CSF3R disappeared in the MEPs or MkPs clusters

(Fig 2B). During the lineage differentiation of CMPs, GATA2 play a very important

role in all types of myeloid cell lines. The procedure of MEPs or MkPs differentiation

was managed by up-regulated KLF1 and GATA1, and down-regulated with CSF3R.

Hence, the cluster 5 was MEPs would act as the key progenitor to control the

differentiation to MkPs or ErP progenitors.

As AVP was known to be uniquely expressed in HSC, our data showed both of

AVP and CSF3R were mainly expressed in cluster 1 and 2 (Fig 2C and 2D). The high

expression of CSF3R was consistent with G-CSF mobilization in peripheral blood

HSC transplantation. Those clusters were the original multipotent clusters named as

HPCs, which can prime to lineages of CLPs and CMPs. MPO was uniquely expressed

in neutrophils in the border of cluster 1 (Fig S2B and S2C). This indicated that the

granulocyte-monocyte progenitor branches were also present in the CMPs clusters.

Our results showed the expression of IGHM, MME, and HOXA9[14] was presented

in cluster 0, which confirmed the cluster was lymphoid progenitor cells (Fig 2C). The

expression level is increasing gradually of the transcription factors HOXA9 from

cluster 1 to cluster 0 (Fig 2C).

Based on traditional surface markers, our data showed the classification of the

progenitor subgroups or stages among lineage differentiation were inefficient and

inaccurate. 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.

Differentiation and enrichment analysis

Differentiation and enrichment analysis was conducted among the clusters. As the

expression changed gradually and presented in a continuum procedure, simple

analysis on the different genes among clusters, especially when compared with nearby

clusters, may not be efficient. To overcome this, we conducted the differentiation

analysis among cluster 0 (CLPs) and cluster 3 (MEPs). Both of the two clusters are

original clusters of CLPs or MEPs. The biology procedure analysis of Gene Ontology

showed the highly expression genes of CLPs were enriched in the regulation of

leukocyte and T cell activation (Fig. 2E). While for CMPs, the genes expressions were

high enriched in mononuclear cell differentiation, erythrocyte differentiation and

homeostasis (Fig. 2F). This was consistent with our previous results on CLPs and

CMPs progenitors differentiation to two directions with strictly lineage affiliated by

unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering.

Dynamics of progenitors cells subpopulations

It is clearly visible that CD38 and MME subgroups predominantly occupied the

two directions of the progenitor differentiation, respectively. To confirm the trajectory

change of the cells, trajectory analysis was conducted and three directions of

progenitor cells differentiation were presented. Along the trajectory of right direction

(State 1) which was specific expressed MME, only the cluster 0 and 4 were

distributed (Fig. 3A and 3B). In contrast, the left direction (State 3) was composed by

the CD38 positive expression clusters, such as cluster 1, 2, 3 and 5 (Fig. 3A and 3B)

(Fig. S3). The expression tendency of MME and FLT3 was consistent with CLP

differentiation, with contrary of KIT and CD38 which expressed with CMP lineages.

Heatmap analysis showed the expression tendency of selected marker genes in

CMPs and CLPs. The CLPs branch highly expressed lymphoid marker genes of MME,

IGHM and FLT3 (Fig. 3C). The CMPs branch was highly expressed with myeloid

marker genes of GATA1, KLF1 and CD38. The expression of MME and CD38 were

clearly inverse during the CLP and CMP lineages priming procedures (Fig. 3D). The

last branch was highly expressed with NKG7, CD68 and FCGR3A (CD16), which are

the markers of NK cells, monocyte and macrophages progenitor cells. This indicated

lineage priming of these three types of cells may be distinct with CLPs and CMPs.

Our study showed CD16 ~~and CD14~~ were widely positive expression in monocyte

progenitor cells. In addition, the expression of transcription factors was distinguished

among CLPs and CMPs directions. The expression of KLF1 and GATA1 only

appeared in the later stage of myeloid progenitors named MEPs. This indicated that

the HPCs lineages priming is likely controlled by key transcription factors. This may

also indicated that the unperturbed adult hematopoiesis depends on replenishment

from multiple potential progenitors.

Transcription factors promote the progenitor lineage priming with key receptors

To identify and characterize the committed cellular status, the critical co-expression of transcription factors for lineage fates were re-analyzed. Our study showed the CMP multipotent progenitors, which co-express with transcription factors GATA2, can differentiate into the lineage of myeloid and megakaryocyte cells (Fig. 2B). The expression of KLF1 was only present in the later stage of MEPs status. Furthermore, the expression of CSF3R was mainly showed in the original progenitors and almost disappeared in the later stage of MEPs progenitor. 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 procedure.

Likewise, the transcription factors regulation by SCENIC analysis showed the expression of transcription factors was completely distributed differently among CLP and CMP progenitors priming directions (Fig. 4A). The activation and expression of key regulators was much different among the priming stage of progenitors, such as GATA1 (Fig. 4B). As shown in our analysis, the transcription factors of BCL11A, YY1 and REL were the key regulators in CLP priming. And the KLF1, GATA1, and GATA2 were found to play a critical role during the lineage procedure of CMPs (Fig. 4C, Fig. S4).

To confirm which cluster was a megakaryocyte progenitor, the analysis on the expression of marker genes was performed. When compared with the key different genes and transcription factors among cluster 8 and cluster 9, the expression of KLF1 and GATA1 were gradually up-regulated in cluster 9 (Fig. 4A). The expression of KLF1 and GATA1 were up-regulated when the progenitor cells differentiate to megakaryocyte and erythrocyte lineages (Fig. S5). Our results also showed the expression of KIT, MS4A2 and TPSB2 were up-regulated or unique expression in cluster 8, indicating that the cluster was consisted of mast cell and basophil progenitors (Fig. S5).

G-CSF mobilization various type of progenitors in peripheral blood

Various types of progenitors were shown to exist in the PBMC of adults in the quiescent status. To examine whether any different among the mobilization and quiescent (unperturbed) progenitors, single cell sequencing was conducted in the G-CSF mobilization peripheral blood progenitors. A total of 159603 cells were captured and 27566 CD34+ cells were enriched and sequenced, among which 17 clusters subgroups were showed after re-clustering (Fig. 5A, B). 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 status when compared before and after mobilization (Fig. 5C). This signifies that all types of progenitors were existed in the quiescent status of peripheral blood.

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. 5D). The distribution and characterization of the featured markers were consistent with previously CD34 subgroups (Fig. 5E, F). Additionally, the AVP was expressed in cluster 0 which was consistent with the analyzed results in the quiescent status of the progenitor cells. Hence, cluster 0 was the most original progenitor in the peripheral blood that can be identified as HPCs. In contrast, the expression of THY1 (CD49f) were only identified in very few cells. Gene expression analysis also demonstrated five genes, including *AVP*, *SOX4*, CDK6, *C1QTNF4*, and *JUN*, were high expressed in cluster 0 (Fig. 5G).

The progenitors were clustering into several directions which also consistent with the cluster distributions of quiescent status (Fig. 5B and Fig. 5E). One new direction of cluster 5 was presented in the all cells merged populations (Fig. 5F). The markers genes of that cluster were MPO and CSF3R. As myeloperoxidase (MPO) is the most abundant 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]. So the cluster 5 was the

progenitor of neutrophils, this was shown to be in a completely different direction

with megakaryocyte or erythrocyte progenitors. Based on this analysis, it further

showed NK cells progenitors and monocyte progenitor cells were not clustering

nearby the other lineages (Fig. 5B, G). Most of the top five specific marker genes for

each lineage progenitor were known marker genes of classically defined hemopoietic

cells, indicating the reliable characterization of subgroups (Fig. 5H). Genes set

enrichment analysis of clusters by GSVA revealed the pathways and signaling that

affect the differentiation of each branch and progenitor subgroup (Fig5 I).

In summary, there are three clusters which nearby the original progenitor of HPCs.

It is clearly shown that during the HPCs priming and differentiation procedures, the

HPCs priming into three progenitor cell types coinstantaneous and later maturing to

diversity hematopoietic lineages. The lymphoid progenitors, neutrophils progenitors,

and megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors were presented at the same time point and

stage during the HPCs first step of priming process.

Re-definition of hematopoietic progenitor cells (HPCs)

As previously shown, cluster 0 was the most original progenitor in the peripheral

blood that can be identified and defined as HPCs. All of the later mature progenitors

are found to be developed from those original 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. 6A, Table 1).

Most of the unique and specific marker genes and transcription factors were identified

in re-defined subgroups (Table 1). The transcriptional atlas between cluster 3 and

cluster 0 is very similar. The expression of unique genes gradually accumulated

during the differentiation procedure, such as GATA2 and SLC40A1. That provided

evidence of hematopoiesis is a continuum procedure controlled by the activation and

suppression of fate decision genes. 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. 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.

During the myeloid progenitor differentiation procedure, the expression of GATA2 and CSF3R genes is the first branch being formed and presented (Fig. 6). 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 5E). This subgroup was defined as GAPs mature stage named with megakaryocytic–erythroid progenitors (MEPs). 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). 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 6A, B). In the lymphoid progenitor branch priming, critical transcription factor of HOXA9 and HOPX were identified and was shown to gradually up-regulated during the process of CLPs lineage differentiation (Fig. 6B). Similarly, the marker genes IGHM and MME of lymphocyte were also found to be up-regulated. This result provided strong evidence that the whole peripheral blood progenitors include a gradient of heterogeneity hematopoietic progenitors. The progenitor cells fate decisions and lineage commitment were mainly controlled by a combination of critical TFs and key receptor genes (Fig. 6). Also, the hierarchical organization of hematopoiesis was a continuum procedure, with key gene expressions presented and gradually being regulated. After the switch genes were activated and up-regulated, the progenitor cells would then differentiated into the next stages of priming. During this

process, the decision of cell fate will be controlled and divided into different lineage

branches. The fate deciding boundaries were then identified among the differentiation

stages. The expression of GATA2 and CSF3R genes was shown to be the boundary

for GAPs and NMPs. This finding is the first to validate that hematopoiesis was

controlled by a switch-like model with identified relatively boundary, opening a new

perspective on hematopoiesis (Fig. 6C). Interestingly, the erythroid lineage process is

a continuous process but the lymphoid lineage process is more likely a discrete

stepwise process that showed distinct lineage-committed populations during the

hematopoiesis.

Cell Atlas and characterization of all re-defined subtype progenitors cells

To clearly define the subgroups of progenitors hematopoietic, the characterization

of all re-defined subtype progenitors cells were re-analyzed. Each of subgroups

presents specific highly expression genes or negative express genes. These activated

genes may enrich in some signal pathways which play a critical role in the lineages

differentiation.

Pan markers of HPCs and unique makers of each subgroups

Our study showed the classical markers of CD49f and THY1 were not found in

the multipotent HPCs progenitors. In contrast, ITGA4 (CD49d) was highly expressed

in most of the progenitors, which is key molecular regulation of HSC homing[18].

Some reported HSC functional related marker genes was broadly expressed in most of

the progenitor cells, such as PTPRC, HMGB1, CD74, CD37, PFN1, TXN, ZFP36L2,

SERPINB1, TMSB4X, SMIM24, and HSP90AA1 (Table 1 and Fig. 1B)[19-25].

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, IMPDH2, TSC22D1, CYTL1, FOXP1, SPI1, and ETV6 were also widely

identified in most progenitors[26-32] (Table 1). And ERG, BCL11A, LMO2, and

RUNX1 were also widely expressed in half percentages of cells in each progenitor

subgroup (Fig. S6). 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. Among these specific genes,

EGFL7 and CYTL1 were identified as being pan-expressed in HPCs, CLPs and MEPs

(Table 1). 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 status and differentiation.

Several key 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. 6B). Our data revealed RUNX1 monitored the differentiation of

most progenitors (Fig. S6), 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 progenitors, such as CSF3R for neutrophils and GATA2 for

GAPs, the whole hematopoietic lineage commitment was precisely controlled and

gradually formed (Table 1, Fig. 6C).

Our result also showed the selected specific marker genes and key transcript

factors of each lineage progenitors (Table 1, Fig 5. G, H, Fig6. B). Additionally, the

negatively expressed genes were listed to distinguish each subgroup and clearly

define the lineages progenitors (Table 1). It was identified that SLC40A1 and

CNRIP1 were unique new markers and key regulator of the whole lineages during

GAPs differentiation. The CNRIP1 gene is highly potential a key neurotransmitter

related receptor, which activate related signaling pathways and plays role during

HPCs differentiation. Our studies showed TAL1 only expressed in MEPs progenitors,

which is the later stages of GAPs. LYL1 was up-regulated in the lineages of GAPs but

decreased in the lymphoid lineages. Our studies further confirmed that those two

genes were critical regulators during myeloid lineages differentiation.

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 7.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, but gradually restrain during

differentiation from GAPs to MEPs (Fig 7.B). CSF3R, S100A10, and C1QTNF4 were

also gradually restrained during differentiation of lymphoid early progenitors (C4

cluster, Fig 7.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 7.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 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 7.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 6B). Previous studies have reported TCF7 and GATA3 to be important TFs in T cell development and differentiation[33, 34], 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 status 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 6B, Fig 7A, 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(DCs, 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 7B). 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 it is 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. 7A). That reminds us the classical definition of endothelial progenitor cell should be reconsideration.

Pathways of each subgroups

Diversity pathways affect and control the differentiation of HPCs. Our current analyses results showed the JUN/FOS (AP-1) and JUND were enriched and highly expressed in most of the progenitors (Fig. 5 and 5F). This indicated that the JUN

related signaling pathway may play a critical role in differentiation, mobilization, and maintenance of hematopoietic progenitor cells. The DEPTOR gene was found to be highly expressed in the clusters of MEPs (Fig. S6). As DEPTOR was a negative regulator of the mTORC1 and mTORC2 signaling pathways [35]. That meaning the mTOR signaling pathway should be suppressed in the MEPs mature and differentiation. NFKBIA was widely expressed in more than 80% of the progenitor cells. The expression of NFKBIZ was very high expressed in the progenitors of monocyte and macrophages (Fig. S6), which is a member of the NF-kappa-B inhibitor family [36]. This meanings the NFKB signaling pathway was suppressed in progenitors, especially in the monocyte and macrophages mature and differentiation.

All enriched gene sets were shown in figure 5I by GSVA analysis. TGF-b signaling was enriched in the original progenitor cells (C0, HPCs), which plays a key role in maintaining the quiescent state of HPCs[37]. 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. 5I). Other studies have indicated the novel role of Notch in regulating monocyte survival during hematopoiesis[38]. 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. 5I). 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[39]. 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.

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[40, 41]. The expression of GATA1 progenitors

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

expression can drive generated monocytes, neutrophils, and lymphocytes[40]. 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.

5E, F). 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[42, 43]. Likewise, our results revealed NFE2 was

up-regulated in the NMPs and GAPs lineage directions (Fig. 6B).

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 7.

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[44, 45]. 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)[44, 45]. 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 7. 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 7. D). Our study indicated that cytokine IL1B plays a critical role in hematopoiesis. The transcription of IL1B was regulated by TFs of SPI1 and CEBPB[46], 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 [47]. 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 status 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.

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 [9, 13]. Our study succeed enriched the large

numbers and almost whole subgroups of HPCs. 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, 48, 49].

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 two 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 HSCs. 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[50, 51]. 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[40]. 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 [52-54]. 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[55]. GATA1 and TAL1 have been validated in the reprogram of megakaryocytes and erythroid cells[50, 56]. 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 (HPCs), which was the receptor of G-CSF [57]. 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 HPCs. G-CSF directly activates the downstream activation signals of HPCs through bind with CSF3R, which converted the quiescent status 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?

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[58]. These three aspects strongly support the definition and classification of HPCs to be distinctly verifiable, reliable and reasonable.

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 three key transcription factors of KIT, KLF1 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 a 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[59]. 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[60]. 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 differentiation procedure. 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.

Our analysis on the 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 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.

It was reported the HSC lineage commitment is a continuous process in recently single cell sequencing studies [5, 12]. 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[61, 62]. 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 negatively expressed. Our study showed two types of

progenitor cells that are not clustering nearby the other lineages. One is the NK cells

progenitors and the other is monocyte progenitors. Monocyte progenitors have more

than two types of status 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 status

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 NK cells progenitors

and the monocyte progenitors were 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 status

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

continuum and 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 conducted the bioinformatics and statistical analysis of sequencing data.Y.Y wrote the manuscript and revised the manuscript. All authors approved the final draft of the manuscript.

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.

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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.

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 10 donors, including one 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[63]. Gene Ontology (GO) enrichment analysis of marker genes was implemented by the cluster Profiler R package. Trajectory analysis was conducted by Monocle2 [64]. Transcription factors regulation inference and gene regulatory networks analyses were performed using SCENIC [65]. Genes set variation enrichment analysis was conducted by a non-parametric, unsupervised method of GSVA[66].

Integrated analysis with online single cell dataset

The online scRNA data of GSE120221[67], GSE117498[4], GSE145531[68], and GSE181989[69] was downloaded from GSE database. Integrated analysis was performed by Seurat.

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1144   **List of Table and Legends**

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1146   **Table 1. The selected specific marker genes and fate decision genes (partly) of all**

1147   **re-defined subgroups**

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	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,	GATA1, ZBTB16,TAL1, CDK4, TESPA1,KLF1	SPINK2,HOPX, C1QTNF4, CSF3R

	TESPA1, MYB, CDK4		
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	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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1151 **Graphical abstract**

1152 The reaffirmed lineage commitment model of HPCs

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Figure 1. Two distinct subtypes of progenitors that were identified by
unsupervised dimensionality reduction and clustering analysis of single cell data.
A, Schematic showing the progenitor cell enrichment and sequencing workflow. B,17
clusters were identified by UMAP analysis. The progenitors marker of CD34 is
mainly expressed in two adjacent clusters 6 and 14. C, The heatmap results illustrated
the expression of different surface markers and known progenitors cell related
markers in all clusters. Progenitor cells key regulate genes were identified, such as
high expression of CDK6, SERPINB1, and SOX4. D, Violin plot presented the

expression of HSCs traditional classification marker genes and known progenitor cell
marker genes.

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Figure 2. The transcriptome differentiation and characterization among
re-clustered CD34 positive subgroups of progenitor cells. A, UMAP analysis
reveals the aggregation of CD34 positive subgroup cells in two mainly distinguished
directions. B, Violin plots presented the expression of unique marker genes, which
demonstrated GATA2 expression of common myeloid progenitors (CMPs) and MME
expression of common lymphoid progenitors (CLPs) characterization. C, The
heatmap results displayed the different expression marker genes, which confirmed
that the two distinguished directions belong to different lineage cells of CLPs and
CMPs. D, Feature plot of AVP and CSF3R expression indicating cluster 1 was the
most original progenitors in all of CD34 positive cells. E, The biological process
analysis of Gene Ontology, indicating that the highly expressed genes of CLPs were
enriched in the regulation of leukocyte and T cell activation. F, CMPs mainly high
expression genes were enriched in mononuclear cell differentiation, erythrocyte
differentiation and homeostasis.

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Figure 3. Dynamics of myeloid progenitor and lymphoid progenitor cell
transcriptomes. A, Trajectory analysis illustrated all cell clusters distributed in three
branches. B, The expression tendency of unique markers genes was completely
different among the two lineages of myeloid and lymphoid progenitor. MME and
FLT3 were up-regulated with CLP differentiation branch, contrary to KIT and GATA2
up-regulated in CMP lineages. C, Heatmap analysis displayed the expression
tendency of selected marker genes in CMP and CLP. D, The expression of MME and
CD38 showed an inverse correlation during the CLP and CMP lineages priming
procedures.

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Figure 4. Different transcription factors promote the progenitor lineage priming.
A, Heatmap results depicted the different expression of transcription factors among all

progenitor subgroups. B, The activation and expression of the key regulators GATA1

were obviously different during the priming stages of progenitors. C, Feature plots of

key transcription factors. BCL11A, YY1, and REL were identified as key regulators

in CLP priming. KLF1, GATA1, and GATA2 played a critical role in the lineage

priming of CMPs.

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Figure 5. Characterization of progenitor subtypes in quiescent and activated

status. A, All integrated cells were presented by UMAP analysis. B, UMAP analysis

illustrated 17 clusters of integrated CD34 positive progenitor cells . C, The cells

distribution among the quiescent (Control) and activate (G_CSF) status, which

showed all kinds of progenitors were persisting existence in the quiescent status of

adult peripheral blood. D, Column plot displayed percentage changes of CLP and

CMP clusters. The primitive cluster 0 showed the most obviously changes in cell

numbers and folder. E, Violin plot showed the distribution and characterization of

feature markers in activated status were consistent with quiescent status. F, Feature

plots of unique marker genes. G, Dot plots presented expression of unique marker

genes and lineages specific genes. H, Volcano plot showed the top five fold change

genes in progenitor clusters. I, Heatmap depicted gene set enrichment analysis results

of clusters by GSVA.

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Figure 6. Newly reaffirmed hematopoietic hierarchy of hematopoietic progenitor

cells differentiation. A, T-SNE plots showed the re-defined progenitor clusters. B,

Dot plots presented the expression of fate decision transcription factor genes of each

subgroup progenitors. C, Reaffirmed lineage commitment model through scRNA

transcriptional atlas. In the new hematopoietic hierarchy, the HPCs priming into three

progenitor cell types simultaneously and later maturing to diverse hematopoietic

lineages. The first progenitor cell type is lymphoid progenitors (CLPs), which

stepwise branch out and differentiate to T cell, B cell and NK cells. The second

progenitor cell type is GAPs, which continuously differentiate into the middle 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 meanings partial lineage connections that lack strong direct evidence of differentiation relationship. The shaded area indicates the GATA2 and GATA1 expression domains.

Figure 7. Expression of markers genes and fate decision genes of redefinition hematopoietic progenitor cells. A, Heatmap showed the expression of markers genes and fate decision genes of re-defined progenitor clusters. B, Violin plot illustrated 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, The expression feature plot of LTB, TCF7, and MAFB. D, Violin plot demonstrated the expression of receptor genes, including CSF1R, IL7R, IL2RB, and others, which were specifically expressed in the redefined progenitor subgroups.

Classical hierarchy of hematopoiesis

HPCs
CLP
CMP
Pro-TBNK
GMP
MEP
T-cells
B-cells
NK-cells
Basophil
Neutrophilic
Pro-Monocyte
Eosinophil
Megakaryocyte
Erythrocyte

Reaffirming hierarchy of hematopoiesis

HPCs
HOXA9
CSF3R
NFE2
GAPs
GATA2
CLP
NMPs
MEPs
GATA1
Pro-TBNK
Pro-Monocyte
Pro-Neu
Pro-ME
MBPs
T-cells
B-cells
NK-cells
Macrophages
Dendritic cell
Neutrophilic
Megakaryocyte
Erythrocyte
Basophil
Mastcell
Eosinophil