Mitochondrial complex I deficiency stratifies idiopathic Parkinson's disease

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Abstract

Idiopathic Parkinson's disease (iPD) is believed to have a heterogeneous pathophysiology,

but molecular disease subtypes have not been identified. Here, we show that iPD can be

stratified according to the severity of neuronal respiratory complex I (CI) deficiency, and

identify two emerging disease subtypes with distinct molecular and clinical profiles. The CI

deficient (CI-PD) subtype accounts for approximately a fourth of all cases, and is

characterized by anatomically widespread neuronal CI deficiency, a distinct cell type-specific

gene expression profile, increased load of neuronal mtDNA deletions, and a predilection for

non-tremor dominant motor phenotypes. In contrast, the non-CI deficient (nCI-PD) subtype

exhibits no evidence of mitochondrial impairment outside the dopaminergic substantia nigra

and has a predilection for a tremor dominant phenotype. These findings constitute a step

towards resolving the biological heterogeneity of iPD with implications for both mechanistic

understanding   and   treatment   strategies.

Introduction

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a heterogeneous, clinicopathologically defined neurodegenerative disorder, with an age-dependent incidence and a rapidly rising global prevalence[1]. More than 95% of affected individuals, in most populations, have idiopathic forms of PD (iPD), i.e., not of monogenic or other known etiology[1,2]. Available treatments for PD provide limited symptomatic relief, while attempts to develop neuroprotective agents have been consistently unsuccessful[3,4].

One of the major challenges in understanding and treating iPD lies in its biological heterogeneity. While all iPD cases exhibit degeneration of the dopaminergic neurons of the substantia nigra pars compacta (SNpc) in the presence of α-synuclein positive Lewy pathology (LP)[5], the disease shows significant clinicopathological variation beyond this common core. Widespread neuronal dysfunction and loss of variable anatomical distribution and severity gives rise to different constellations of motor and non-motor symptoms, with variable rates of progression, across affected individuals[1,4,6,7]. This phenotypical diversity has prompted the hypothesis that iPD may encompass multiple distinct disorders, each with its own underlying mechanisms and potential responses to treatments[4,6]. Previous efforts to identify subtypes of iPD have mainly focused on clinical features, with age of onset, and motor or cognitive phenotype being the most common. Several phenotypical subtypes have been proposed based on these classification features, including tremor dominant (TD), akinetic rigid (AR), postural instability and gait disorder (PIGD), and PD dementia (PDD)[8–10]. However, these classifications offer little insight into the pathogenic heterogeneity of iPD. Indeed, top-down approaches attempting to link consensus phenotypical subtypes to specific underlying molecular processes, have thus far been unsuccessful, indicating the need for alternative approaches[4]. It has been proposed that a bottom-up strategy, stratifying iPD

according to distinctive molecular features rather than clinical profiles, may prove more

fruitful in defining disease subtypes amenable to specific therapies[4].

Major biological processes which have been associated with iPD include

mitochondrial dysfunction, impaired proteostasis, and neuroinflammation[1,3,4]. Mitochondrial

dysfunction is considered a key feature of iPD, proposed to be integral to its pathogenesis and

pathophysiology[11]. Evidence of impaired mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) maintenance, and

respiratory complex I (CI) deficiency has been consistently reported in the dopaminergic

SNpc of individuals with iPD[11–14]. While the causes of these mitochondrial defects are

unknown, it is hypothesized that they contribute to the neurodegenerative process, based on

the facts that chemical CI inhibition[15–17], genetic CI defects[18,19], and mutations in genes

regulating mtDNA homeostasis[20,21] can cause degeneration of the dopaminergic SNpc and

other neuronal populations in humans. In addition to the SNpc, CI deficiency has been

reported in neurons across multiple brain regions, as well as in extra-neural tissues, including

muscle and blood[12,13]. However, reported findings are variable and contradictory, with nearly

half the studies showing no significant difference between individuals with PD and controls at

the group level[13]. While this variability may be in part methodological in nature, it also raises

a valid question regarding the pervasiveness of CI deficiency in iPD. In line with this notion,

studies of CI activity in platelets have shown a large inter-individual spread in PD, with some

but not all individuals below the range of controls [22,23] and studies in skin fibroblasts from

individuals with iPD have identified evidence of mitochondrial dysfunction in only a minority

of the subjects[24,25].

In light of this evidence, we wished to explore whether mitochondrial dysfunction is a

universal feature of iPD, or one which occurs in a subpopulation of affected individuals,

potentially defining a molecular subtype of the disease. To test this hypothesis, we studied the

pervasiveness of neuronal CI deficiency in 92 individuals with genetically validated iPD and

24 neurologically healthy controls from two independent cohorts. We show that iPD can be

stratified according to the severity of neuronal respiratory complex I (CI) deficiency, and

identify two emerging disease subtypes with distinct molecular and clinical profiles.

Results

CI deficiency shows specificity for iPD in the prefrontal cortex

To select a robust marker for neuronal CI immunodetection, we tested antibodies against different CI subunits across the functional domains of the complex[26] in the SNpc of 5 individuals with iPD and 3 controls. All tested subunits exhibited a similar pattern and severity of neuronal CI deficiency, consistent with a quantitative reduction of the entire CI in affected cells (Supplementary Fig. S1). Subunit NDUFS4 was chosen for downstream analyses due to superior staining quality. Neuronal CI status was subsequently assessed, along with the total mitochondrial mass marker VDAC1, in the dopaminergic SNpc and prefrontal cortex (PFC) of two independent cohorts from Norway (NOR, n = 54) and Spain (ESP, n = 62). The demographic and clinicopathological information of the cohorts, and experimental allocation of the samples are shown in Table 1 and Supplementary Data 1 and 2.

Neurons were classified as either negative or positive (Fig. 1a-b) by two independent investigators, and the percentage of positive neurons per region and individual was used as a measure of CI status. There was excellent inter-investigator reliability (ICC coefficient = 0.91, 95% C.I (0.87,0.94), P = 1.9×10^{-29}) (Fig 1c-d, Supplementary Data 3). At the group level, the SNpc exhibited pronounced CI deficiency in both iPD and control subjects, with considerable overlap between the groups. iPD had a significantly lower proportion of CI positive dopaminergic neurons in the combined cohorts (P = 0.003) and the NOR cohort (P = 8.2×10^{-4}), but not in the ESP cohort (P = 0.26) (Fig. 1e, Table 2, Supplementary Data 3). In the PFC, controls showed no or mild CI deficiency, whereas high variation was observed in the iPD group. A significantly lower proportion of CI positive neurons among individuals with iPD was observed in each cohort individually (NOR: P = 7.0×10^{-4}, ESP: P = 0.031) and in the combined cohorts (P = 5.0×10^{-5}; Fig. 1f, Table 2, Supplementary Data 3). The neuronal CI status in the PFC showed a significant association with disease state (i.e., iPD vs ctr),

whereas that of the SNpc did not (linear regression, PFC: P = 0.006, SNpc: P = 0.06). CI

deficiency in the PFC was not associated with post-mortem interval (PMI) (ρ(109) = -0.08, P

= 0.42), age of death (ρ(110) = 0.03, P = 0.73), or disease duration (ρ(79) = 0.06, P = 0.60)

(Supplementary Data 1). The VDAC1 staining showed no deficient neurons in iPD or

controls of either cohort (Fig. 2a-b, Supplementary Data 3).

Neuronal CI deficiency stratifies iPD

To assess the pervasiveness of CI deficiency in iPD, individuals were stratified based on the

proportion of CI positive neurons in the PFC. This region was chosen over the SNpc for two

reasons. First, neuronal CI deficiency was found to be more specific to PD in the PFC than in

the SNpc (Fig. 1e-f). This is in line with previous findings, showing that dopaminergic SNpc

neurons can exhibit severe CI deficiency and other markers of mitochondrial dysfunction with

healthy aging, making it challenging to distinguish between disease-specific and age-related

changes[27–29]. Second, the severe neuronal loss in the SNpc of iPD[30] complicates the

comparison between cases and controls. Specifically, surviving SNpc neurons are likely to be

resilient cells, introducing survival bias.

Individuals with iPD were classified by k-means clustering of the NOR and ESP

cohorts individually (cases and controls). The number of clusters was set to three based on

visual inspection of the data. In each cohort, two subgroups clustered away from the controls

and were termed mild and severe CI deficient PD (CI-PD mild; CI-PD severe), whereas one

clustered with the controls and was termed non-CI deficient PD (nCI-PD). The combined CI-

PD clusters accounted for 33% and 22% of the iPD cases, in the NOR and ESP cohorts,

respectively. A similar pattern was observed when the combined cohorts were clustered,

resulting in three clusters: CI-PD severe (*n* = 6/89, 6.7%), CI-PD mild (*n* = 18/89, 20.2%),

and nCI-PD clustering with the controls (*n* = 65/89, 73.0%) (Fig 1g, Supplementary Data 3).

Since the severe CI-PD cluster only contained six samples, the mild and severe clusters were

combined into a single CI-PD group for downstream statistical analyses.

CI-PD is characterized by anatomically widespread CI deficiency

To determine the anatomical distribution of neuronal CI deficiency in the iPD subgroups, we

studied 15 additional brain regions in representative individuals with CI-PD, nCI-PD and

controls from the NOR cohort. All individuals with iPD had Braak scores of 5-6 and the

median disease duration was 12 years in both subgroups (Supplementary Data 1 and 2).

Subjects in the CI-PD group showed an anatomically widespread neuronal CI-deficiency

compared to controls, including the temporal cortex, occipital cortex, CA1 region of the

hippocampus, amygdala, putamen, and the cingulate gyrus. Lower proportions of CI intact

neurons were also seen in the internal globus pallidus and the subiculum, but these did not

reach statistical significance. No difference from controls was observed in CA4-2 of the

hippocampus, the external globus pallidus, inferior olivary nucleus, cerebellar Purkinje cells

and the dentate nucleus. The nCI-PD group was similar to controls, with the single exception

of the SNpc. The difference in SNpc was, however, less pronounced compared to the CI-PD

group. Finally, we noted that, similar to the SNpc, the inferior olivary nucleus, Purkinje

neurons and dentate nucleus showed high proportions of CI negative neurons in several of the

controls, suggesting that these neuronal populations may be prone to age-dependent CI loss

(Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Supplementary Data 3 and 4).

To assess the state of the other mitochondrial respiratory chain (MRC) complexes in

the iPD groups, we performed IHC for selected subunits of complexes II-V (CII-V) and

VDAC1 in 12 brain regions from two to four subjects from each of the CI-PD and nCI-PD

groups (Supplementary Table S2). Irrespective of group, individuals with iPD exhibited no or

few neurons staining negative for CIII, CIV and CV (generally ≤5%). No negative neurons

were observed in sections stained against VDAC1 or CII (Supplementary Data 3,

Supplementary Fig. S2).

CI-PD is associated with a non-TD phenotype

The CI-PD and nCI-PD groups were similar in terms of age of first reported symptom, age of

death, disease duration, and total UPDRS score at the final examination before death.

Individuals with severe CI-PD tended to have an earlier age of onset and age of death, but the

small size of that group did not allow any conclusions to be drawn (Fig. 4a-c, Supplementary

Data 5). The groups differed significantly in the distribution of motor phenotype classified as

AR/TD[9] (available from both cohorts), or PIGD/TD[10] (available from the NOR cohort only),

at the time of diagnosis. In the CI-PD group, the AR and PIGD phenotypes accounted for

88% (14/16) and 75% (9/12) of the individuals, respectively. In the nCI-PD group, the AR or

PIGD phenotypes were significantly less prevalent, accounting for 60% (25/42) and 29%

(6/21) of the individuals, respectively. Notably, individuals with severe CI-PD exhibited

exclusively AR or PIGD phenotype (Fig. 4h-i). Furthermore, the CI-PD group exhibited a

significantly higher proportion of females (CI-PD: 54.2%, nCI-PD: 26.2%, P = 0.013),

compared to the nCI-PD group, and a significantly lower level of ethanol consumption than

the nCI-PD group (Fig. 4e-f). There was no significant difference between the groups in the

prevalence of dementia at the final examination before death (Fig. 4g). Following multiple

testing correction (Benjamini Hochberg), the difference in the distribution of the PIGD/TD

phenotype (P = 0.04), sex (P = 0.04), and number of weekly alcoholic units (P = 0.04)

remained significant. However, since the tested variables were highly correlated with each

other and the sample size was relatively small, the risk of type 2 error by correcting for

multiplicity, is higher than the risk of type 1 error by not correcting[31]. Individual clinical and

demographic features are given in Supplementary Data 1 and 5.

In terms of neuropathology, there were no significant between-group differences in either

Thal phase staging of beta amyloid, Braak staging of neurofibrillary tangles, or Braak staging

of LP. Moreover, there was no difference in the load of LP in the PFC (available from the

NOR cohort only) between the groups (Supplementary Fig. S3).

CI-PD and nCI-PD show different neuronal mtDNA profiles

Neuronal mtDNA copy number and deletion burden were assessed by qPCR in single neurons

microdissected from the PFC (Fig. 5a-b) of individuals with CI-PD ($n = 6$), nCI-PD ($n = 9$)

and controls ($n = 7$; Supplementary Data 2). Eight to sixteen single neurons were assessed per

individual. There was a significant difference in neuronal mtDNA deletions between the

groups (ANOVA, P = 0.037, $\eta^2 = 0.30$). Post-hoc analyses showed that the CI-PD group had

significantly higher levels of mtDNA deletions compared to the nCI-PD group (P = 0.037;

Fig. 5b). No differences were observed in neuronal mtDNA copy number (total or non-

deleted) between the groups (Fig. 5c-d). The mtDNA data is shown in Supplementary Data 6.

CI-PD and nCI-PD exhibit distinct transcriptomic profiles

Hierarchical clustering of RNA-seq data from the PFC of 98 of the individuals previously

assessed for CI deficiency (Supplementary Data 2) indicated that individuals with CI-PD

tended to cluster together (Fig. 6a), with a similar behavior observed in each of the cohorts

(Supplementary Fig. S4). The CI-PD group was associated with lower DV200 values, a

measure of RNA integrity indicating the percentage of RNA fragments with 200 nucleotides

or more, compared to both nCI-PD and controls (Fig. 6a). However, this association could not

be explained by PMI, since the PMI range of the CI-PD group was similar to that of the

controls within each cohort (Supplementary Fig. S5).

To control for between-group differences in the cell composition of the samples, we

assessed Marker Gene Profiles (MGPs)[32] of different cell types in each iPD group and the

controls. Linear regression adjusting for age of death, sex, PMI and cohort, indicated a

significant change in the MGP of multiple cell types in the CI-PD group compared to the

controls. However, step-wise regression analysis suggested that the observed changes were

not independent, but rather driven by a decrease in the MGP of GABAergic interneurons

expressing both vasoactive intestinal peptide-expressing (VIP) and reelin (GabaVIPReln)

(Fig. 6b, Supplementary Fig. S6). No difference was observed in the MGPs of the nCI-PD

group compared to the controls (Fig. 6b, Supplementary Fig. S6).

To account for the effects of different cell composition on the differential gene

expression (DE) profile of CI-PD, we performed DE analysis using two alternative models: 1)

Correcting for the confounding MGP of GabaVIPReln (Model_1) and 2) not correcting for

MGPs (Model_2). Both models included the demographic variables and oligodendrocyte

MGPs to adjust for any variation in the grey/white matter content between the samples[33,34].

Adjusting for GabaVIPReln MGPs resulted in a striking reduction of the number of

differentially expressed genes in the CI-PD group, from 11,138 to 10 (Supplementary Data 7).

Notably, oxidative phosphorylation (OXPHOS)-related genes were among the top

differentially downregulated genes in CI-PD, in the non-adjusted model. However, none of

these genes remained significant after adjusting for cell composition (Fig 6c). In contrast,

MGP correction had no major impact on the DE analysis of the nCI-PD group (Fig 6c).

nCI-PD exhibits altered expression in multiple PD-linked pathways but no decrease in

OXPHOS genes

We next performed functional enrichment analyses of the DE results. Since the DE analysis

of the CI-PD group was highly confounded by the underlying tissue composition, we were

unable to determine whether the results represented true regulatory changes or simply altered

cell composition. We therefore chose not to further focus on these results, which are given in

Supplementary Data 8. The transcriptomic signature of nCI-PD, which was not confounded

by estimated cell composition, was characterized by changes in numerous pathways,

including the downregulation of processes related to proteostasis (lysosome and proteasome),

GABAergic signaling, synaptic function and lipid metabolism. Upregulated processes

included pathways related to epigenomic regulation, steroid synthesis, and potassium

channels. Notably, there were no changes in genes or pathways related to mitochondrial

respiration (Fig. 6d, Supplementary Fig. S7 and S8, Supplementary Data 8).

Single-nuclei RNA-seq shows distinct cell type-specific profiles in the iPD subtypes

To mitigate the bias of cell composition indicated by the bulk RNA-seq data and assess cell

type-specific transcriptomic similarities between CI-PD and nCI-PD, we performed massively

parallel single-nuclei RNA-seq (snRNA-seq) in fresh-frozen PFC from $n = 7$ individuals with

CI-PD, $n = 5$ individuals with nCI-PD, and $n = 6$ controls (Supplementary Data 2). After

filtering and quality control, a total of 117,105 nuclei (mean: 6,506±2,952 nuclei per

individual) were included in the analyses. There was no significant difference in the number

of captured nuclei between groups (ANOVA: F =3.65, degrees of freedom = 2, P = 0.051).

Default clustering using Seurat identified a total of 28 clusters that could be

unequivocally assigned to a major cortical cell type, based on established cell type markers

(12 excitatory neuron clusters, 8 inhibitory neuron clusters, 3 oligodendrocyte clusters, 2

astrocyte clusters, 1 microglia cluster, 1 oligodendrocyte precursor cells (OPC) cluster, and 1

endothelial cluster, Fig. 7a-b). Unique molecular identifier (UMI) counts and number of

identified genes per nucleus were not significantly different between groups in any of the

identified cell type clusters.

Differential gene expression analysis comparing each of the iPD groups to the controls

revealed distinct cell type-specific transcriptomic profiles between CI-PD and nCI-PD. After

FDR correction, we found a total of 148 significantly differentially expressed genes in CI-PD

and 466 significantly differentially expressed genes in nCI-PD, distributed among several cell

type clusters, with 47 genes overlapping between the groups (Fig. 7c). CI-PD showed

differential expression in most excitatory and inhibitory neuronal subtypes, and a notable

upregulation in microglia, including *PRKN* – encoding parkin, a key component of mitophagy

– in which mutations cause autosomal recessive PD[35]. nCI-PD exhibited multiple

differentially expressed genes, with most of the signal observed in neurons and

oligodendrocytes, while no differential expression was seen in microglia. The differentially

expressed genes per cell type and group are shown in Supplementary Data 9 and 10. A visual

map of significantly differentially expressed genes (FDR < 5%) with fold change $\geq$ 25%, in at

least one cell type, is shown in Supplementary Fig. S10.

To directly identify features differentiating CI-PD and nCI-PD, we performed DE

between the two groups. In this contrast, we identified a total of 909 genes differentially

expressed in at least one cell type, suggesting that differences between the iPD subtypes were

larger than between each subtype and the controls. We, therefore, focused further analyses on

this contrast. Significant differential expression was found across all cell types, neuronal and

glia, with the highest number of differentially expressed genes seen in excitatory neuron

clusters ex_09 and ex_19. According to the expression of known neuronal markers[36], ex_09

are located in cortical layers L4c/L6, and express relatively high levels of *OPRK*, encoding

kappa opioid receptors. These neurons are, therefore, potentially involved in nociception.

Neurons classified as ex_19 are located in layers (L6/L6b), and have a high relative

expression of *ADRA2A*, encoding the alpha 2A adrenoreceptor, consistent with adrenergic

afferentation.

308   Most differentially expressed genes were specific to 1-2 cell types, with few notable

309 exceptions, including *SRSF5*, *MAK*, and *RAB11A* which were downregulated in CI-PD across

310 several excitatory and inhibitory neurons, and/or glia. A focused analysis of the nuclear genes

311 encoding MRC proteins revealed a general trend for downregulation in CI-PD, compared to

312 nCI-PD, including significantly lower expression of multiple subunits of complexes I, III, IV,

313 and V. Similar to the overall differential expression signature, these changes were

314 predominantly seen in neuronal clusters ex_09 and ex_19 (Supplementary Fig. S11).

315 Transcriptional differences in MRC genes between either iPD subtype and controls did not

316 reach statistical significance. Nevertheless, there was a notable trend for upregulation in nCI-

317 PD (Supplementary Figs. S12 and S13).

318   Functional enrichment of the differentially expressed genes was carried out

319 independently for each cell type cluster by overrepresentation analysis of the Kyoto

320 Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) pathways. Most cell types showed no

321 significant enrichment, with the exception of ex_19 which showed significant enrichment for

322 pathways relating to OXPHOS, the ribosome, and Parkinson's and Huntington's disease (the

323 latter two also driven by OXPHOS genes). Additionally, the ribosome pathway was enriched

324 in clusters ex_09 and ex_24 (Supplementary Data 12). Finally, we performed

325 overrepresentation analysis on the union of significantly differentially (FDR = 0.05)

326 expressed genes in excitatory neurons, inhibitory neurons, and glia. This analysis showed a

327 highly significant enrichment in OXPHOS- and ribosome related pathways in excitatory

328 neurons (Supplementary Data 13).

Discussion

Identifying and exploring molecular subtypes of iPD is a critical step towards mechanistic and

therapeutic advancements. We show that iPD can be stratified according to the severity of

neuronal CI deficiency and identify two emerging disease subtypes with distinct molecular

and clinical features, indicating a divergent pathophysiology. CI-PD is characterized by

widespread neuronal CI deficiency across multiple brain regions. In contrast, nCI-PD,

exhibits a neuronal CI profile similar to that of demographically matched controls, with the

single exception of the dopaminergic SNpc, where higher levels of CI deficiency are

observed, albeit to a lesser extent than in CI-PD. Importantly, this difference is not driven by

disease duration or age, indicating that it does not reflect two different stages of the same

process. The existence of the CI-PD and nCI-PD subtypes is shown independently in two

different populations, suggesting that this is generalizable to- and representative of iPD.

It is likely that the observed CI deficiency contributes to neuronal dysfunction and

death in CI-PD. Neurons depend on CI function to maintain a high ATP turnover[37]. Brain

mitochondria exhibit impaired energy metabolism with major decreases in ATP production

upon 60% reduction of CI activity, and this threshold is much lower (~25%) for synaptic

mitochondria[38]. While functional assessment of CI activity is currently not feasible in

individual neurons from postmortem brain, it is reasonable to assume that neurons with no

detectable CI staining (i.e., CI negative neurons) in our samples must have substantially

decreased CI levels and, therefore, a compromised bioenergetic status. This is further

corroborated by the fact that isolated CI deficiency of either chemical[15,17] or genetic[18,39]

etiology is an established cause of neuronal dysfunction and death in humans and other

animals.

With the single exception of mild deficiency in the dopaminergic SNpc, the nCI-PD

group exhibited a neuronal CI profile similar to that of age-matched controls. Thus, we

postulate that CI deficiency does not make an important contribution to the pathogenesis of

PD-specific neurodegeneration outside the SNpc in these individuals. CI deficiency may still

contribute to the degeneration of the dopaminergic SNpc neurons in nCI-PD. However, given

that this deficiency was significantly milder compared to CI-PD, and showed substantial

overlap with the aged-matched controls, its disease-specific pathophysiological significance

remains uncertain.

The CI-PD and nCI-PD groups differed in terms of motor disease subtype at the time

of diagnosis. Our data indicate that CI dysfunction is significantly more common in the non-

TD form of iPD, which has also been shown to harbor more severe neurodegeneration[40]. The

mechanism underlying this association is currently unknown but may be related to more

widespread and severe neuronal dysfunction and loss in CI-PD, induced by the CI deficiency.

This is corroborated by the bulk RNA-seq data indicating more pronounced neuronal loss in

CI-PD.   Until clinically applicable biomarkers of CI-PD and nCI-PD can be developed,

enabling us to classify individuals in vivo, perhaps clinical studies could benefit by

distinguishing between TD and non-TD phenotypes. Since individuals with a non-TD

phenotype at the time of diagnosis are substantially more likely to belong to the CI-PD

subtype, they may be more likely to benefit from experimental treatments targeting

mitochondria. While there are currently no drugs specifically targeting CI, several agents

targeting mitochondrial biogenesis and/or function have been tested in clinical trials with

negative results[3], while others are still in the pipeline[41]. In light of our findings, it would be of

interest to revisit the data of previously conducted trials and assess how the treatment

impacted individuals with a non-TD or TD phenotype. In addition to the motor phenotype, we

observed an association of CI-PD with the female sex and a lower consumption of ethanol.

The latter may be driven by the female preponderance in this subtype.

Neuronal mtDNA profiles in the PFC corroborated the stratification of iPD into CI-PD

and nCI-PD groups. mtDNA deletions are an established cause of MRC deficiencies in post-

mitotic cells[42–44]. However, given the small effect size of the mtDNA deletion increase in the

CI-PD group, and the fact that neuronal deletion levels were generally below 60%, i.e., the

threshold at which MRC dysfunction has been proposed to occur[42], the biological significance

of the detected difference in mtDNA deletion levels remains uncertain. It should be noted

that, since most PFC neurons of individuals with CI-PD remain CI positive, it is possible that

few or none of the captured neurons in our experiments were CI negative. Thus, the

possibility that CI-negative neurons harbor higher deletion levels, driving the CI deficiency,

cannot be ruled out by this work. An alternative explanation is that mtDNA deletions in CI-

PD individuals may be the result, rather than the cause, of CI deficiency. Under this

hypothesis, mtDNA deletions may arise during the repair of double-strand breaks, caused by

increased reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation in CI deficient neurons[45,46].

RNA-seq revealed distinct transcriptomic profiles between the CI-PD and nCI-PD

groups. In bulk tissue data, the transcriptomic signature of CI-PD exhibited downregulation of

OXPHOS-related genes but was also severely confounded with cell-type-specific expression

profiles (i.e., MGPs), indicating differences in the cell type composition of the samples. The

observation that CI-PD exhibited decreased estimates for GABAergic interneurons is

consistent with a mitochondrial defect. GABAergic interneurons have high bioenergetic

demands, due to their fast-spiking firing pattern, and have been shown to be selectively lost in

mitochondrial disease characterized by neuronal CI deficiency disease [47]. While MGPs are

not direct cell counts, they are indicative of a simultaneous shift in multiple cell-type specific

genes. Regardless of whether this reflects a difference in the underlying cellular composition

of the tissue, synaptic loss, decreased transcriptional output, or phenotypic change[39], this

association indicates that any regulatory changes cannot be disentangled from differences due

to altered tissue composition[33,48]. Thus, no further conclusions should be drawn from

transcriptomic analyses of bulk brain tissue data from CI-PD individuals. In contrast, the nCI-

PD group exhibited no difference in MGPs compared to controls. Thus, we believe that the

DE signature of this group reflects regulatory changes associated with the disease. The

transcriptional profile of nCI-PD showed altered expression in multiple pathways, many of

which have been previously linked to PD[49–51].

snRNA-seq allowed us to compare the iPD subgroups within each cell-type, thus

circumventing the confounder of different cell composition. These analyses revealed a highly

distinct cell type-specific transcriptomic profile for each of CI-PD and nCI-PD, supporting

that the two subtypes harbor distinct molecular processes. While single-nucleus

transcriptomics are not sufficient to adequately characterize these processes, since they only

capture a small part of the cell's transcriptional state, the data provides us with some hints.

Neurons and astrocytes were affected in both groups, albeit by largely different genes.

However, microglia and oligodendrocytes showed subgroup-specific involvement. The CI-

PD-specific changes in microglia are suggestive of mitophagy activation, which indicates the

presence of mitochondrial dysfunction and stress in these cells[52]. In contrast, nCI-PD showed

no changes in microglia, but harbored substantial transcriptional alterations in

oligodendrocytes. Oligodendrocyte involvement has been previously reported in PD[53]. Our

findings suggest that this may be a feature of nCI-PD.

Direct comparison of the CI-PD and nCI-PD groups further highlighted their distinct

molecular profiles, as it revealed substantially more differentially expressed genes than in

each of the subtypes compared to controls. At the single-nucleus level, CI-PD was

characterized by a significantly lower expression of MRC-encoding genes compared to nCI-

PD. This difference was largely driven by an upregulation trend in nCI-PD, compared to

controls. One possible interpretation of this observation is that, in the majority of individuals

with PD (i.e., nCI-PD), neurons exhibit an upregulation of mitochondrial respiration and/or

biogenesis, potentially indicative of a compensatory response to disease-related stress.

Conversely, individuals with CI-PD may represent cases where this compensatory response

fails, possibly due to underlying mitochondrial pathology.

Our findings must be interpreted considering certain limitations. Although we defined

subgroups of iPD, the exact threshold between them remains arbitrary, and the severity of

neuronal CI deficiency across individuals can also be seen as a continuum. Nevertheless, this

does not alter the fact that only a subset of individuals with iPD show neuronal CI deficiency

outside the SNpc, and this subpopulation exhibits distinct clinical and molecular features.

Functional assessment of specific CI activity was not undertaken in this work, because

it is currently not feasible to assess in individual cells. Measurement of CI activity in bulk

tissue would be unreliable because of both low sensitivity due to the mosaic distribution of

the CI defect, and low specificity in the sense that it cannot adequately distinguish between

cell-specific reduction in CI activity or a decrease in neuronal and synaptic content in the

sample. We have previously shown that the PFC of iPD exhibits markers of decreased

neuronal content[33], and our current data suggests that these differences may be more

pronounced in CI-PD, thereby biasing any comparison in bulk tissue. In terms of the gene

expression data, the cell-type composition bias is mitigated by the snRNA-seq. However,

when interpreting this data, it is important to consider that nuclear transcriptomes do not

reflect post-transcriptional RNA turnover and subcellular segregation and do not, therefore,

necessarily capture the full transcriptomic state of the cell. This is particularly true in neurons,

where RNA composition varies considerably between the soma, processes, and synapses.

Furthermore, snRNA-seq cannot capture the mitochondrial transcriptome.

In summary, this work establishes that anatomically widespread neuronal CI

deficiency is not a pervasive feature of iPD, but one that occurs in a subset of individuals,

accounting for approximately a fourth of all cases. These results have important scientific and

clinical implications for the field. First, the existence of the CI-PD and nCI-PD subtypes

provides an explanation for the variable and conflicting findings in previous studies of

mitochondrial pathology in iPD, which were performed on unstratified samples. Second,

given the major molecular differences between the two iPD subtypes, we recommend that

future studies employing iPD brain tissue should stratify their material according to CI

subtype. This would decrease the biological heterogeneity of the sample and allow for more

consistent and biologically meaningful observations to be made. Finally, it is plausible that

the CI-PD and nCI-PD subtypes exhibit different susceptibility to therapeutic interventions

targeting mitochondria or other subtype-associated pathways. Thus, we believe that

harnessing this classification in clinical practice may be an essential step towards

implementing precision medicine in iPD. While our findings suggest that the non-TD motor

phenotype may be used as a proxy for CI-PD to some extent, the accuracy of this approach is

limited. To efficiently translate these findings into clinical practice requires the development

of clinically applicable biomarkers, allowing us to classify individuals in vivo.

Methods

Ethics approval

Ethics approval for this work was obtained from The Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics, Western Norway (REK Vest; REK 2017/2082, 2010/1700, 2016/1592).

Subject cohorts and tissue samples

Brain tissue was obtained from four independent cohorts of European origin. The Norwegian cohort (NOR, n = 55) comprised 41 individuals with iPD from the ParkWest study, a prospective population-based cohort followed since 2004[54], and 13 neurologically healthy controls (i.e., no clinical diagnosis of neurological disease or pathological evidence of α-synucleinopathy), who had been prospectively collected by our group. The NOR samples were stored at our in-house brain bank. The Spanish cohort (ESP, n = 62) comprised 51 individuals with iPD and 11 neurologically healthy controls from the Neurological Tissue Bank, Hospital Clínic – IDIBAPS Biobank, Barcelona, Spain. For the snRNA analyses, two additional controls were added from the Medical Research Council London Neurodegenerative Disease Brain Bank, King's college London, Great Britain, and one additional control from the Netherlands Brain Bank, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Analysis of whole-exome sequencing data from the NOR cohort [55] and RNA-sequencing (RNA-seq) data from both cohorts (described below), revealed no pathogenic mutations in nuclear genes linked to monogenic PD or mitochondrial diseases, thus ruling out monogenic causes. Prospectively collected systematic clinical and environmental exposure data were available for the iPD cases of the NOR cohort, as previously described[54]. In the NOR cohort, probable PDD was diagnosed according to the Movement Disorder Society Level 1 criteria[8]. Cognitive deficiency severe enough to impair daily life was defined based on the Unified

Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale (UPDRS) score 1-1[56]. Impairment in cognitive domains

was determined based on tests of attention ("serial 7's" test), visuo-constructive ability

(correct drawing of the pentagons), and memory impairment (3-word recall), from the Mini-

Mental State Examination (MMSE)[57]. Appropriate tests on executive function were not

available, thus the diagnosis of PDD in the NOR cohort was based on data from three, rather

than four cognitive domains, as required by the MDS Level 1 criteria[8]. Two individuals had

impairment in only one cognitive domain in addition to fulfilling the remaining criteria for

PDD. These two individuals may thus have been potentially misclassified and as non-PDD

cases. Individuals were classified by motor phenotype as TD or AR according to the Schiess

classification[9], and TD or PIGD according to the Jankovic classification[10]. Detailed

retrospective clinical data were available on the controls of the NOR cohort from the hospital

records. Retrospective clinical data on disease duration, dementia (yes/no) and PD phenotype

(TD/AR/mixed) were available from the hospital records of individuals of the ESP cohort.

There was no significant difference between controls and iPD subjects in PMI or

assigned sex distribution in either of the cohorts, or in the combined cohort. Both sexes were

included in the study as available from our cohort. Age of death was similar between controls

and iPD subjects in the NOR cohort, while the control subjects were older in the ESP cohort

and in the combined cohort. Subsets of samples used in downstream analyses were matched

for age of death, sex and PMI-range, with the exception of the transcriptomic analyses, where

the controls were older as reflected by the age distribution in the ESP and combined cohorts.

The demographic data of the cohorts and descriptive statistics of each cohort included in the

IHC experiments are shown in Table 1.

Brains were collected at autopsy and processed according to either in-house[27] or

Neurological Tissue Bank protocol[58]. For the neuropathological evaluation, Lewy and tau

pathology were staged according to the Braak criteria[59–62], and β-amyloid phases were

evaluated according to the Thal criteria[62,63]. All cases fulfilled the essential pathological

criteria for PD: loss of the dopaminergic neurons of the SNpc in the presence of LP[64]. Subject

demographics, pathology scores and clinical data are summarized in Supplementary Data 1.

Experimental allocation of subjects is summarized in Supplementary Data 2.

Immunohistochemistry

Immunohistochemistry (IHC) for mitochondrial markers was carried out on formalin-fixed,

paraffin-embedded brain tissue from individuals of both the NOR and ESP cohorts. Serial 3

μm thick sections were stained with primary antibodies against the following epitopes;

NDUFS4 (ab137064, polyclonal, dilution 1:1500, Abcam), NDUFB8 (ab110242,

monoclonal, isotype IgG1, dilution 1:300, Abcam, validated in frozen IHC and tested in

human samples), NDUFA9 (ab14713, monoclonal, isotype IgG1, dilution 1:750, Abcam),

NDUFS1 (ab169540, dilution 1:300, Abcam), SDHA (ab14715, monoclonal, isotype IgG1,

dilution 1:10,000, Abcam), UQCRC2 (ab14745, monoclonal, isotype IgG1, dilution 1:10,000,

Abcam), MTCOI (459600, monoclonal, isotype IgG2a, dilution 1:15,000, Thermo Fisher

Scientific, validated by Cell treatment), ATP5A (ab14748, dilution 1:20,000, Abcam), and

VDAC1 (ab14734, monoclonal, isotype IgG2b, dilution 1:20,000, Abcam). Antibodies

against NDUFS4, NDUFA9, NDUFS1, SDHA, UQCRC2, ATP5a and VDAC1 were all

validated in IHC in paraffin embedded tissues and tested in human samples according to the

supplier (Abcam).

Sections were stained in the intelliPATH FLX Automated Slide Stainer (Biocare).

Deparaffinization and antigen retrieval was performed in the low pH EnVision FLEX Target

Retrieval Solution at 98 °C for 24 minutes in the DAKO PT link from Agilent. Antibodies

were diluted in DaVinci Green Diluent (Biocare, PD900) and incubated for 1 hour at room

temperature. MACH4 Universal HRP-polymer (Biocare, M4U534) and DAB chromogen kit

(Biocare DB801) were used for visualization. Tacha's Automated Hematoxylin (Biocare,

NM-HEM) was used for visualization of nuclei. Sections were washed in the TBS

Automation Wash buffer from Biocare (TWB945M). Experimental allocation is given in

Supplementary Data 2.

Image analysis

All sections were scanned using the NanoZoomer XR (Hamamatsu). Visual analysis was

performed on all sections, and neurons with clearly visible nucleus and nucleolus were

classified as either negative or positive (Fig. 1a). After classification was performed, the total

percentage of positive neurons was calculated for each individual and area. From the

prefrontal cortex (PFC) in the NOR cohort, three regions of 3.5 mm^2 spanning cortical layers

2-6 were chosen at a low magnification (1.5X), before analyses were carried out in the

selected area at 40X magnification. Area selection from one region spanning 3.5 mm^2 was

performed in a similar manner in the PFC from the ESP cohort, and in the occipital and

temporal cortex, the cingulate gyrus, subiculum, putamen and the amygdala. All neurons per

section were analyzed in the CA-areas of the hippocampus (CA4-1), globus pallidus, dentate

nucleus, inferior olivary nucleus, and Purkinje cell layer of the cerebellar cortex. In the SNpc,

all neuromelanin containing neurons were analyzed per section. SNpc sections with fewer

than 25 identifiable neuromelanin containing neurons were excluded from downstream

analyses of neuronal CI status because data resulting from these sections would entail high

levels of statistical uncertainty, at the range of the expected group differences (i.e., any

misclassified neuron as CI positive or negative would result in at least 4% (1/25) difference in

the estimated proportion of positive neurons.) An uncertainty greater or equal to 4% was

deemed unacceptable since it is close to the difference between the medians of the groups

being compared in our analyses. Independent evaluation of the PFC from the NOR cohort was

performed by two observers (IHF and CT). All analyses were carried out at 40X

magnification. Visual analysis was carried out using the NDP.view2plus version(v)2.7.25

software (Hamamatsu).

Single neuron laser-microdissection studies

Qualitative and quantitative mtDNA studies were performed in single laser-microdissected

neurons from 20 µm thick sections of fresh-frozen tissue from the PFC, which had been

stained with 0.25% cresyl violet in ddH$_2$O as described[28]. Neurons were recognized based on

their morphology. Laser microdissection was performed on a LMD7 microscope (Leica

microsystems). A total of 162 cells (8-16 from each individual) were cut, of which 55 were

from controls (n = 7) and 107 were from individuals with iPD (n = 14). Experimental

allocation is shown in Supplementary Data 2. Single neurons were collected in the cap of 0.2

ml PCR tubes and lysed at 56°C overnight in 15 μL lysis buffer (50mM Tris pH 8.0, 0.5%

Tween 20, 200 μg/mL proteinase K). Following lysis, cells were centrifuged at 2250 g for 10

minutes before proteinase K was deactivated at 95°C for 10 minutes, and the samples were

centrifuged again. Total mtDNA copy number and the fraction of major arc deletion were

determined using a duplex real-time PCR assay which targeted the mitochondrial genes

MTND1 and *MTND4* as described[28]. Amplification was performed on a Step One Plus Real-

Time PCR System (Applied Biosystems by Thermo Fisher Scientific) using TaqMan Fast

Advanced Master Mix (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Thermal cycling consisted of one cycle at

95°C for 20 seconds, and 40 cycles at 95°C for 1 second and 60°C for 20 seconds. The

following primers and probes were used: MTND1: forward primer:

5'CCCTAAAACCCGCCACATCT-3', reverse primer: 5'-

GAGCGATGGTGAGAGCTAAGGT-3', TaqMan MGB Probe: 5'-FAM-

CCATCACCCTCTACATCACCGCCC-3'. MTND4: forward primer: 5'-

CCATTCTCCTCCTATCCCTCAAC-3',   reverse   primer: 5'-

CACAATCTGATGTTTTGGTTAAACTATATTT-3', TaqMan MGB probe: 5'-VIC-

CCGACATCATTACCGGGTTTTCCTCTTG-3'. For absolute quantification, target

amplification was compared with a standard curve made form a serial dilution containing

equal amounts of PCR-generated and purified full length *MTND1* and *MTND4* template (10^2-

10^6). The following primers were used for the standard curve; *MTND1*: forward primer: 5´-

CAGCCGCTATTAAAGGTTCG- 3', reverse primer: 5´- AGAGTGCGTCATATGTTGTTC-

3´; *MTND4*: forward primer: 5´- TCCTTGTACTATCCCTATGAG-3´, reverse primer: 5´-

GTGGCTCAGTGTCAGTTCG-3´. All primers and probes were custom made and purchased

from ThermoFisher Scientific.

RNA sequencing

RNA-seq was performed on frozen PFC tissue samples from 98 individuals from both cohorts

(Supplementary Data 2). Total RNA was extracted from tissue homogenates using RNeasy

plus mini kit (Qiagen) with on-column DNase treatment according to manufacturer's

protocol. Final elution was made in 65 μl of ddH2O. The concentration and integrity of the

total RNA were estimated by Ribogreen assay (Thermo Fisher Scientific), and Fragment

Analyzer (Advanced Analytical), respectively, and 500 ng of total RNA was used for library

prep using the TruSeq™ Stranded Total RNA With Ribo-Zero™ Plus rRNA Depletion

protocol (Illumina). Library quantity was assessed by Picogreen Assay (Thermo Fisher

Scientific), and the library quality was estimated by utilizing a DNA High Sense chip on a

Caliper Gx (Perkin Elmer). Accurate quantification of the final libraries for sequencing

applications was determined using the qPCR-based KAPA Biosystems Library Quantification

kit (Kapa Biosystems, Inc.). Each library was diluted to a final concentration of 1.4 nM and

pooled equimolar prior to clustering. Sequencing was performed on a NovaSeq 6000

(Illumina, Inc.), to yield 100 million, 100 base pair paired-end reads per sample. Sequencing

was performed at HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, AL, USA. RNA integrity number

(RIN) and DV200 index (percentage of fragments > 200 nucleotides) were lower in the NOR

cohort compared to the ESP cohort: (mean [min-max]), NOR_{RIN}: 4.3 [1.7-7.7], ESP_{RIN}: 6.9

[2.7–9.1]; NOR_{DV200}: 85.3 [71.8-93.2], ESP_{DV200}: 92.2 [80.1–96.2]. No significant difference

in the RNA quality measures between individuals with iPD and controls was observed in

either of the cohorts (linear model, NOR_{RIN}: P = 0.26, NOR_{DV200}: P = 0.33; ESP_{RIN}: P = 0.11,

ESP_{DV200}: P = 0.11).

RNA-seq analysis

Salmon v1.3.0 [58] was used to quantify the abundance at the transcript level with the

fragment-level GC bias correction option (--gcBias) against GENCODE v35. Transcript-level

quantification was collapsed onto gene-level quantification using the tximport R package

v1.8.0[65] according to the gene definitions provided by the same Ensembl release. Non-

canonical chromosomes and scaffolds, and genes encoded by the mitochondrial genome were

excluded from the analysis. In addition, we removed genes accounting for >0.6% of the reads

in more than half of the samples, resulting in the removal of 4 transcripts (*RN7SL2*, *RN7SL1*,

RN7SK, *LINC00632*; Supplementary Fig. S9, as well as low-expressed genes (expression <5

reads in 80% of the samples). At the final step, we used the expression level of the sex-

specific genes *XIST, KDM5D* and *RPS4Y1* to define the noise threshold for our data[32].

Relative cell abundance was estimated using cell-type specific marker gene profiles (MGPs),

as previously described[32,66]. Difference in the cell type MGPs between the groups were

assessed through linear regression adjusting for age, sex, PMI and cohort, using "lm" function

from the R "stats" function v4.1.0. Differential expression (DE) analysis between each of iPD

clusters and controls was performed using "DESeq2" R package v1.32, using the protein-

coding genes to calculate the normalization factor, while adjusting for sex, age, PMI, cohort

and the relevant MGPs. Functional enrichment analysis was performed based on the one-

sided P-value, previously described[32,33], using the gene score resampling method

implemented in the ermineR package v1.0.1[67], an R wrapper package for ermineJ[68].

Enrichment was calculated for the combined list of gene-sets of Gene Ontology (GO)

database [69] and Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) pathways [70,71] v7.2 as

well as An Inventory of Mammalian Mitochondrial Genes v3 (MitoCarta3.0)[72]. Only gene-

sets of size >=20 and <=500 were included in the analysis, resulting in 5,397 testable gene-

sets. To visualize the enrichment results, pair-wise similarity between significant gene-sets

(excluding gene-sets from the MitoCarta database) was first assessed using Jaccard Index.

Next, the obtained similarity matrix was used to cluster the gene-sets using the "hclust"

function from the "stats" R package v4.1.2, with the "ward.D2" method. The phylo tree was

then created using the "ape" R package v5.5. The count matrix and the code necessary to

reproduce these results are available through github repository: github.com:

https://github.com/gsnido/pd_complex-i_stratification.. All the information regarding the

version of the software and the packages used for the analysis are provided in the

SessionInfo.Rds file.

Single nucleotide variant discovery

RNA-seq reads were aligned against the hg38 reference genome using Hisat2 v2.2.1[73].

Genome Analysis Toolkit (GATK) v4.1.9.0[74] was used to mark duplicate reads and split the

CIGAR signatures using the *MarkDuplicates* and *SplitNCigarReads* tools, respectively. Base

quality score recalibration was then performed using the *BaseRecalibrator* and *ApplyBQRS*

tools to generate the final alignment files. For each alignment, *HaplotypeCaller* was used in

GVCF mode (option *-ERC GVCF*) with optional arguments *-dont-use-soft-clipped-bases* and

--max-alternate-alleles 4. Joint genotyping was carried out for all resulting sample gVCF files

using the *GenomicsDBImport* and *GenotypeGVCFs* tools. The final analysis-ready

multisample VCF consisted only of single-nucleotide variants filtered using *VariantFiltration*

with the conditions QD < 5; DP < 10; FS > 60; MQ < 40. Samples were classified into the

major mitochondrial haplogroups using HaploGrep2 [75] based on the Phylotree Build 17[76].

Genotypes with < 10 reads were removed, and the genetic data was recoded into

binary PLINK format using VCFTools v0.1.15[77]. PLINK v1.90 was used for individual and

variant-level quality control (QC)[78]. Only autosomes were considered, and variants within the

sex chromosomes and mtDNA were removed. Individuals were excluded if their genomic

data showed a missing rate > 20%, abnormal heterozygosity ($\pm$ 3 standard deviations) or

cryptic relatedness (identity by descent (IBD) > 0.2). Population stratification was studied

using multidimensional scaling (MDS) against the HapMap populations[79].

Single nucleotide variants (SNVs) were excluded if the missing genotype rate was >

20%, the call rates between PD and controls differed significantly (P < 0.02) or they displayed

departure from the Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium ($P < 1.0 \times 10^{-5}$). Monomorphic variants were

removed, and the dataset contained no multiallelic variants after QC. Principal component

(PC) analysis was performed using Eigensoft[80,81].

Single-nuclei isolation

Nuclei isolation procedure was performed as described in[82] with minor modifications. For

each sample, 50 - 85 mg of frozen human prefrontal cortex were homogenized. All

procedures were performed on ice. Tissue was dissociated in 2 mL of homogenization buffer

(320 mM sucrose, 5 mM CaCl2, 3 mM Mg(CH3COO)2, 10 mM Tris HCl [pH 7.8], 0.1 mM

EDTA [pH 8.0], 0.1% IGEPAL CA-630, 1 mM DTT, and 0.4 U/μL RNase Inhibitor

(ThermoFisher Scientific) inside a 7 mL KIMBLE Dounce tissue grinder set (Merck), using

10 strokes with loose pestle followed by 10 strokes with tight pestle. Homogenized tissue was

filtered through a 30 µm cell strainer and centrifuged at 1000 x g for 8 min at 4°C.

Supernatant was discarded, and pellet was resuspended in 450 µL of 2% BSA (in 1x PBS)

containing 0.12 U/µL RNase Inhibitor. Cleanup of the nuclei suspension was achieved with

density gradient centrifugation. Equal volumes (450 µL) of nuclei suspension and working

solution (50% OptiPrep density gradient medium (Merck), 5 mM CaCl2, 3 mM

Mg(CH3COO)2, 10 mM Tris HCl [pH 7.8], 0.1 mM EDTA [pH 8.0], and 1 mM DTT) were

mixed. The density gradient was prepared by carefully layering 750 µL of 30% OptiPrep

Solution (134 mM sucrose, 5 mM CaCl2, 3 mM Mg(CH3COO)2, 10 mM Tris HCl [pH 7.8],

0.1 mM EDTA [pH 8.0], 1 mM DTT, 0.04% IGEPAL CA-630, and 0.17 U/µL RNase

Inhibitor) on top of 300 µL of 40% OptiPrep Solution (96 mM sucrose, 5 mM CaCl2, 3 mM

Mg(CH3COO)2, 10 mM Tris HCl [pH 7.8], 0.1 mM EDTA [pH 8.0], 1 mM DTT, 0.03%

IGEPAL CA-630, and 0.12 U/µL RNase Inhibitor) inside a 2 mL Sorenson Dolphin

microcentrifuge tube (Merck). The mixture containing the nuclei (800 µL) was slowly

pipetted onto the top of the OptiPrep density gradient and samples were centrifuged at 10,000

x g for 5 min at 4°C using a fixed angle rotor (FA-45-24-11-Kit). Nuclei were recovered by

withdrawing a volume of 200 µL from the 30 – 40% interface of the OptiPrep density

gradient and transferring to a new 2 mL Sorenson Dolphin microcentrifuge tube (Merck).

Nuclei were washed with 2% BSA (in 1x PBS) containing 0.12 U/µL RNase Inhibitor and

then pelleted by centrifugation at 300 x g for 3 min at 4°C using a swing-bucket rotor (S-24-

11-AT) for a total of three times. The nuclear pellet was resuspended in a minimum volume

of 100 µL of 2% BSA (in 1x PBS) containing 0.12 U/µL RNase Inhibitor and carefully mixed

by pipetting 20 times on ice. The nuclei suspension was filtered through a 40 µm FlowMe cell

strainer (Merck) to remove any remaining nuclei aggregates. Nuclei were stained with Trypan

blue and counted manually on a hemocytometer.

10,000 nuclei per sample were targeted for droplet-based snRNA sequencing. cDNA

synthesis and libraries were prepared using the Chromium Next GEM Single Cell 3′ Reagent

Kit v3.1 Dual Index (10x Genomics) according to the manufacturer's protocol. Libraries from

each sample were pooled and run using paired-end (300 million read pairs per sample)

sequencing on the NovaSeq 6000 platform (Illumina) at Novogene (Cambridge).

snRNA-seq analyses

Raw FASTQ files were aligned to the human genome (GRCh38) using CellRanger v.6.1.2

(10x Genomics) accounting also for intronic reads to include all nuclear transcripts (include-

introns option) and excluding secondary mappings (nosecondary option). In order to estimate

intronic:exonic ratio, an additional alignment was carried only accounting for reads mapped

to exonic reads. Version 35 of the ENCODE transcriptome assembly was used (Ensembl

101).

To minimize the confounding effect of non-nuclear ambient RNA and discard empty

droplets, we employed CellBender[83] on the raw data prior to importing the counts into R.

Percentage of mitochondrially-encoded genes and ribosomal genes were then calculated for

each droplet using the Seurat R Package (*PercentageFeatureSet*)[84]. Each biological sample

was independently normalized, and automatic feature selection was carried out using Seurat

(*NormalizeData*, *FindVariableFeatures*). In order to collectively analyze the datasets,

samples were integrated using the standard Seurat integration strategy. Briefly, features

(genes) were automatically selected using *SelectIntegrationFeatures* to scale each sample and

obtain a principal component analysis (PCA) of gene expression. Using the first 50 principal

components, samples were integrated using reciprocal PCA with automatically detected

anchors (*FindIntegrationAnchors*) and using controls to build the reference (*IntegrateData*).

Clusters were first identified using the standard Seurat analysis with excess barcodes (i.e.,

including twice as many barcodes in each sample to ensure the inclusion of a large population

of empty droplets). On each sample the largest cluster always corresponded to the cluster with

the largest proportion of empty droplets (as defined by DropletUtils[85]). Visual inspection of

the UMAP plots allowed the identification of other smaller ambient clusters which were

removed together with the main empty droplet cluster for downstream analyses. Resulting

non-empty droplets were then further screened and only droplets with at least 500 transcripts,

at least 1,000 UMIs, and below 3% mitochondrially-encoded transcripts were analyzed.

Transcripts detected in fewer than 10 cells were also filtered out. Doublets were assessed

independently for each sample using the DoubletFinder R package[86] assuming 7% doublet

rate. Standard clustering using Seurat with 0.5 resolution resulted in a total of 28 clusters (Fig.

7a) which could be assigned to the main cortical cell types based on known markers (SATB2

and SLC17A7 for excitatory neurons, GAD1 and SLC6A1 for inhibitory neurons, MOG and

MOBP for oligodendroglia, GFAP and AQP4 for astrocytes, CLDN5 and SLC2A1 for

endothelial cells, OLIG1 and VCAN for oligodendrocyte precursor cells, and CSF1R and

CSF3R for microglia[87], Fig. 7b). Finally, to increase the within-cluster cell type homogeneity

and minimize the number of doublets, we used two alternative approaches. First, the

Euclidean distance in PCA space was calculated between each single cell and the average of

each cluster using the first 5 PCs. Barcodes for which the shortest distance did not correspond

to their cluster membership were removed from the analyses. We then calculated the first PC

of the cell type specific markers for each barcode (marker gene profiles, MGP[66]). MGPs

correspond to the first PC of the cell type specific markers. In this way, we obtained for each

droplet a value for each major cell type (i.e., neuron, oligodendrocyte, endothelial cell,

microglia, astrocyte, OPC) scaled across all droplets. We then calculated a score for each

droplet, corresponding to the MGP for the annotated cell type divided by the sum of the other

MGPs. Droplets with poor scores (i.e., below 0.4) were filtered out. The filtering procedure

resulted in a total of 117,105 nuclei. The cluster labels were used to compare cell type

composition of the diseased and control groups using ANOVA.

To assess the statistical significance of the difference in the number of captured nuclei

between groups (nCI-PD, CI-PD and Ctrl) we used an ANOVA test at $\alpha = 0.05$. Differences

between groups in the number of genes per nucleus were assessed for each cell type cluster

with linear mixed-effects models (LMM) with disease status as fixed effect and individual as

random effect. P-values for each LMM were estimated using the Satterthwaite's method. The

resulting p-values were considered significant above a false discovery rate (FDR) of 5%. The

same statistical approach was used to assess differences in the number of unique molecular

(UMI) counts between disease groups.

Differential expression within clusters between diseased groups and controls was

carried out using the MAST R package[88] using sex, post-mortem interval and age as fixed

effects, and individual as random effect[89] (Fig. 7c). For each cluster, only autosomal, protein-

coding genes that were expressed were considered (i.e., with counts > 0 in 25% of the

barcodes). The same methodology was used to compare between the CI-PD and nCI-PD

subtypes. Overrepresentation analysis was carried out using the fora function from the fgsea R

package[90] independently for each cell type cluster. The background ("universe") for each

overrepresentation test consisted of the set of expressed genes for each specific cell type

cluster.

UMI counts and code necessary to reproduce these results is available through a

github repository: https://github.com/gsnido/pd_complex-i_stratification.

Statistical analyses and reproducibility of the demographic, clinical, IHC and mtDNA

data

Subject demographics, clinical data, and pathology scores are given in Supplementary Data 1.

Experimental allocation is given in Supplementary Data 2. The sample size was not

predetermined. No data were excluded from the analyses. Apart from the IHC staining of the

tissues from the ESP cohort, the experiments were not randomized. Observer 1 was blinded to

allocation during IHC staining and outcome assessments of the CI positivity in the ESP

cohort. Observer 2 in the IHC analyses of CI positive staining was blinded to group

specificity. Investigators were blinded during the preprocessing of the RNAseq data. Apart

from this, the investigators were not blinded to allocation during experiments and outcome

assessments. The visual analysis of the IHC stainings for CI was performed by two

independent observers (IHC and CT). IHC findings from the NOR cohort were replicated in

the ESP cohort. The samples from single cell qPCR were run in triplicates on the same 96

well plate.

Data were tested for normality and equality of variances, using the Shapiro-Wilk test

and Levene's test. Clustering was performed in R (v4.1.2), using k-means with three centers,

20 random starting partitions, 100 iterations, and the Hartigan-Wong algorithm. Between

group-comparisons were consequently performed using either independent student's t-test or

Mann-Whitney U-test, depending on data normality, and descriptive data are given either as

mean (standard deviation) or median [25th-percentile-75th-percentile], respectively.

Comparisons of grouped data were performed using either Chi-Square (X^2) or Fisher's exact

test depending on the group size of each variable. Data is given as X^2 and/or odds ratio (95%

confidence interval). Correlation analyses were performed using Spearman's rank correlation

due to non-normality of the data, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient is given as $\rho(n -$

$2)$. Between-group (Ctrl, CI-PD and nCI-PD) comparison of neuronal mtDNA deletion

proportion and copy number was performed by one-way ANOVA on the individual median

values. Due to the unequal sample sizes, Welch's test for unequal variance was used. Eta

squared (η^2) was used to determine the effect size of any significant difference. The Games-

Howell post hoc test was used to assess the statistical significance of pairwise differences

between groups, due to their unequal sample sizes and variance. Hierarchical clustering

analysis was performed in R v4.1.2 with the "ward.D2" method. Correlation analyses and

between-group comparisons were done in SPSS v28.0.0. Plots were created in R v4.1.2 or

GraphPad Prism v9.3.0. A P-value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant. All tests are

2-sided unless else is noted in the text. Statistical tests performed in the context of omics data

analyses are described in the corresponding methods sections.

Data availability

The raw IHC, transcriptomic and clinical data are protected and are not available due to data

privacy laws. The IHC and mtDNA qPCR data generated in this study are provided in the

Supplementary Information/Source Data file. The raw and filtered counts from the

transcriptomic data are available from Synapse.org: (https://doi.org/10.7303/syn53502566.1

Code availability

The code required to reproduce the results of the transcriptomic analyses are available in

github.com: https://github.com/gsnido/pd_complex-i_stratification[91].

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1085
Authors' contributions

IHF: participated in the study conception and design, designed and performed the IHC and

qPCR experiments, assessed the neuropathology of the NOR cohort, analyzed the IHC,

mtDNA, clinical and pathology data, and drafted the manuscript. LT: participated in the study

design, analysed and interpreted the transcriptomics data, participated in, and advised on

statistical approaches, and drafted parts of the manuscript. EFV: critical revision of the

manuscript. DAS and OS: performed part of the IHC stainings. MG and SM: nuclei isolation

from brain tissue and library preparation for snRNA-seq. NL: contributed to the preparation

of Figure 2, advised on the statistical approach, and provided critical input for the manuscript.

GA and OBT: contributed biological material and clinical data and provided critical input to

the manuscript. AP-S, CP, YC: contributed clinical data and input to the manuscript. LMP:

contributed biological material, pathological data and critical input to the manuscript. CD:

contributed to the qPCR analyses and provided critical input for the manuscript. GSN:

participated in the study design, performed the prepossessing of all transcriptomic and genetic

data, performed the mtDNA variant analyses, participated in the interpretation of the

transcriptomic and genetic data, and drafted parts of the manuscript. CT: conceived, designed

and directed the study, contributed to data analyses and interpretation, drafted the manuscript,

and acquired funding for the study. All authors have read and approved the manuscript.

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1105   **Competing interests**

1106   The authors declare no competing interests.

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1108   **Table 1. Demographic information**

Variable	Group	n	Median	IQR	U	P-value (Two-sided Mann-Whitney U test)
PMI	NOR: Ctrl	13	43.0	31.5-60.0	188.0	0.16
	NOR: PD	39	30.0	24.0-48.0		
	ESP: Ctrl	11	7.5	6.0-10.3	242.0	0.48
	ESP: PD	51	8.0	6.0-14.0		
	Combined: Ctrl	24	27.0	7.5-46.8	933.5	0.31
	Combined: PD	90	16.0	7.0-30.0		

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	t	P-value (Two-sided Student's t-test)
Age of death	NOR: Ctrl	13	82.8	10.5	-1.20	0.24
	NOR: PD	41	79.6	7.3		
	ESP: Ctrl	11	83.5	8.9	-2.10	0.038
	ESP: PD	51	78.0	7.4		
	Combined: Ctrl	24	83.1	9.6	-2.40	0.018
	Combined: PD	92	78.8	7.4		

Variable	Group	n	OR male (PD/Ctrl)	95% C.I.	P-value (Two-sided Fisher's exact test)
Sex	NOR: Ctrl, male	4	3.90	1.0-14.9	0.056
	NOR: Ctrl, female	9			
	NOR: PD, male	26			
	NOR: PD, female	15			
	ESP: Ctrl, male	7	1.25	0.3-4.9	0.74
	ESP: Ctrl, female	4			
	ESP: PD, male	35			
	ESP: PD, female	16			
	Combined: Ctrl, male	11	2.33	0.9-5.9	0.097
	Combined: Ctrl, female	13			
	Combined: PD, male	61			
	Combined: PD, female	31			

1109
1110   Demographic information and group comparisons for individuals included in the

1111   immunohistochemistry experiments. PMI: post-mortem interval, IQR: interquartile range, SD:

1112   standard deviation, OR: odds ratio, C.I.: confidence interval. NOR: Norwegian cohort, ESP:

1113   Spanish cohort, PD: Parkinson's disease, Ctrl: controls.

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1116 **Table 2. Between group comparisons of percentage CI positive neurons**
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Tissue	Cohort	Group	*n*	Median	IQR	U-value	P-value (Two-sided **Mann-Whitney U**)
SNpc	NOR	iPD	25	78.6	67.1-83.9	44.5	8.2×10^{-4}
	NOR	Ctrl	11	90.8	83.6-97.8		
	ESP	iPD	35	75.0	65.7-87.1	148.5	0.26
	ESP	Ctrl	11	80.1	60.7-89.4		
	Combined	iPD	60	76.3	66.7-84.2	372.5	0.003
	Combined	Ctrl	22	87.1	77.1-94.7		
PFC	NOR	iPD	40	96.6	90.3-98.1	84.0	7.0×10^{-4}
	NOR	Ctrl	12	98.6	98.0-99.1		
	ESP	iPD	49	97.1	94.1-98.1	138.0	0.031
	ESP	Ctrl	10	98.3	97.0-99.7		
	Combined	iPD	89	96.8	92.8-98.1	431.0	5.0×10^{-5}
	Combined	Ctrl	22	98.6	97.8-99.2		

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1119   IQR: interquartile range, SNpc: substantia nigra pars compacta, PFC: prefrontal cortex, NOR:

1120   Norwegian cohort, ESP: Spanish cohort, iPD: idiopathic Parkinson's disease, Ctrl: controls

Fig. 1. Neuronal CI deficiency stratifies iPD

(a-b) SNpc (a) and PFC (b) sections immunohistochemically stained for CI (NDUFS4). The stippled lines in (a) indicate neuromelanin in dopaminergic neurons of the SNpc. Arrowheads show examples of CI deficient (green) and -intact (black) neurons. Scalebar: 50 µm. (c-d) Inter-rater and inter-region replicability of the proportion of CI-positive neurons in the PFC. Bland-Altmann plots showing the difference between the measurements of observer 1 (O1) and observer 2 (O2) (c), and the difference between measurements by observer 1 in three different regions of the same PFC sections: region 1 (R1) vs region 2 (R2), or region 3 (R3) (d). The Y-axes show the respective average percentages of CI-positive neurons. (e-f) Scatter plots showing the proportion (in %) of CI positive neurons (y-axes) of controls and individuals with iPD (x-axes) in the SNpc (controls NOR: $n = 11$, PD NOR: $n = 25$, controls ESP: $n = 11$, PD ESP: $n = 35$; e) and PFC (controls NOR: $n = 12$, PD NOR: $n = 40$, controls ESP: $n = 10$, PD ESP: $n = 49$; f). Bars show median and interquartile range. The groups were compared using a two-sided the Mann Whitney U-test. The test statistics are given in Table 2. Multiple comparison adjustments were not made. (g) Scatter plots showing the proportion (in %) of CI positive neurons (y-axes) in the PFC of controls and individuals with iPD (x-axes). K-means clustering classified the iPD subjects into three groups: nCI-PD (purple), CI-PD mild (dark green) and CI-PD severe (light green), in each of the NOR and ESP cohorts and in the combined cohorts.

1140 **Fig. 2. CI and VDAC1 immunostaining in selected brain regions**

1141 Representative images of immunostaining against CI (NDUFS4) and VDAC1, in areas

1142 showing CI deficiency in iPD. Green arrowheads show examples of CI negative neurons. No

1143 negative neurons were observed in the VDAC1 staining. Scalebar: 50 µm.

1144

Fig. 3. Anatomical distribution of neuronal CI deficiency in the nCI-PD and CI-PD

groups

(a) Box plots showing the proportion (in %) of CI positive neurons (Y-axes) in 16 brain

regions from controls (grey), and individuals with nCI-PD (purple) and CI-PD (green). The

boxplot from PFC represents the spread in all individuals, dots show individuals included in

downstream analyses for regional CI staining. Box plots show individual values (dots),

median and interquartile range (box) and minimum-maximum range (whiskers). Statistical

analysis was not performed in the PFC, since this region was used to classify the samples, and

the samples were selected to represent the full spectrum of CI status for each group. Nominal

p-values of two-sided tests are shown. Multiple testing correction was not performed for these

analysis, due to the relatively small sample size and high correlation between the CI state of

different anatomical regions per individual, as illustrated in the heatmap (c). All individuals

with CI-PD goup are shown in the same green box, but differentiated by the color of the

points into mild (dark green) and severe (light green) CI-PD. (b) Structural brain maps

illustrating the anatomical distribution of neuronal CI deficiency in the control, nCI-PD and

CI-PD groups. The median proportion of CI positive neurons is shown as a heatmap. Brain

illustrations are modified images from the 7MRI atlas published by Edlow et al[92]. (c)

Hierarchical clustering of the median proportion of CI positive neurons in each group. SNpc:

substantia nigra pars compacta, PFC: prefrontal cortex, OC: occipital cortex, TC: temporal

cortex, Sub: subiculum, Am: amygdala, CG: cingulate gyrus, Put: putamen, GPe: external

globus pallidus, GPi: internal globus pallidus internus, ION: inferior olivary nucleus, CC:

cerebellar cortex, DN: dentate nucleus, Hi: hippocampal regions CA4-CA1, Ctrl: controls.

Statistical test: Mann-Whitney U-test, n/a: statistical comparison not performed.

1168

Fig. 4. Clinical differences between CI-PD and nCI-PD

Box plots show individual values (dots), median and interquartile range (box) and minimum-

maximum range (whiskers) of clinical data (y-axes) for the three iPD groups (nCI-PD: purple,

CI-PD mild: dark green, CI-PD severe: light green). Statistical significance was tested

between nCI-PD and the entire CI-PD group (i.e., not differentiating between mild and

severe), due to the low number of individuals in the severe group, using the two-sided Mann-

Whitney U-test. Bar plots show percentages of individuals within each iPD group (y-axis).

Statistical significance was tested using the X^2 test. Demographic data, data on dementia at

time of death, and the AR/TD-clinical phenotypes were available from both cohorts. All other

clinical variables were available only from the NOR cohort. The number of included

individuals is not equal in the different comparisons and is shown in Supplementary Data 5.

AR: akinetic rigid, TD: tremor dominant, PIGD: postural instability and gait disorder,

UPDRS: Unified Parkinson's Disease Rating Scale.

1182

Fig. 5. The nCI-PD and CI-PD groups show different neuronal mtDNA profiles

Single neurons were collected from frozen PFC sections using laser-microdissection and

mtDNA was analysed for copy number (CN) and deletion proportion using qPCR. Eight to

sixteen single neurons were assessed per individual from individuals with CI-PD ($n = 6$), nCI-

PD ($n = 9$) and controls ($n = 7$). (a) Microphotograph of a representative PFC section, stained

with cresyl violet and showing neurons before (#) and after (*) microdissection. Scale bar 10

µm. (b) Total neuronal mtDNA copy number. (c) Neuronal mtDNA deletion levels. (d) Non-

deleted neuronal mtDNA levels. Box plots show median and interquartile range (box) and

minimum-maximum range (whiskers) of the mean values for each individual (points) per

group. Statistical significance of group difference was tested using two-sided

ANOVA. CN: copy number, Ctrl: control.

1194

Fig. 6. nCI-PD and CI-PD groups exhibit distinct transcriptomic profiles in the PFC

(a) Hierarchical clustering of the samples based on sample-sample correlation. The heatmap

colors indicate Pearson's correlation values between each pair of samples. AGE: age of death.

(b) The estimated group difference (y-axis) in MGPs of the cell types (x-axis) based on linear

regression using the three different models are shown. The cell types are described in

Mancarci et al [56]. The estimate and the 95%CI are indicated by the point and the whiskers,

respectively (c) Significance (shown as -log10 of the adjusted p-value) of genes included in

the KEGG OXIDATIVE_PHOSPHORYLATION pathways (blue) or all other genes (grey)

among the downregulated/upregulated genes based on a model not adjusting (Model_2) or

adjusting (Model_1) for the confounded MGPs, in each of the iPD subtypes. Dashed line

indicates adjusted pvalue of 0.05. Boxplots represent the interquartile range (IQR) with the

median indicated by the bold line. Whiskers are extensions from the top and the bottom of the

boxplot by a value of 1.5*IQR. Values outside of the whisker range are indicated by circles

(d) Enrichment analysis outcome of the nCI-PD group, based on DE analysis using Model_2.

Each leaf of the tree represents one significantly enriched gene-set. Jaccard similarity was

used to cluster the gene-sets based on semantic similarity. Each cluster was annotated to

represent the main function represented by its members. The names of the gene-sets are

shown in Supplementary Fig. S7 (downregulated) and Supplementary Fig. S8 (upregulated).

1213

Fig. 7. Single-nuclei RNA-seq shows distinct cell type-specific transcriptional profiles for

CI-PD and nCI-PD

(a) UMAP plot of the filtered snRNA-seq dataset (117,105 nuclei) showing the clustering in

the main cortical cell types (ex: excitatory neurons, in: inhibitory neurons, oligodendrocytes,

astrocytes, microglia, oligodendrocyte precursor cells;OPC, and endothelial cells). (b) Dotplot

showing the average cell type markers' expression in each of the 28 subclusters identified by

Seurat, unequivocally mapping the nuclei to the main cortical known cell types. The color of

the dots indicates average scaled expression, the size representing the proportion of nuclei in

the cluster that express the marker. (c) Summary of the number of differentially expressed

genes in autosomes (at FDR < 5%) within each cluster for the CI-PD *vs* controls (left hand

side panel, green bars), for the nCI-PD *vs* controls (center panel, purple bars), and common

between the two contrasts (right hand side panel, grey bars).