Tick extracellular vesicles undermine epidermal wound healing during hematophagy

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Abstract

Wound healing has been extensively studied through the lens of inflammatory disorders and cancer, but limited attention has been given to hematophagy and arthropod-borne diseases. Hematophagous ectoparasites, including ticks, subvert the wound healing response to maintain prolonged attachment and facilitate blood-feeding. Here, we unveil a strategy by which extracellular vesicles (EVs) ensure blood-feeding and arthropod survival in three medically relevant tick species. We demonstrate through single cell RNA sequencing and murine genetics that wildtype animals infested with EV-deficient *Ixodes scapularis* display a unique population of keratinocytes with an overrepresentation of pathways connected to wound healing. Tick feeding affected keratinocyte proliferation in a density-dependent manner, which relied on EVs and dendritic epidermal T cells (DETCs). This occurrence was linked to phosphoinositide 3-kinase activity, keratinocyte growth factor (KGF) and transforming growth factor β (TGF-β) levels. Collectively, we uncovered a strategy employed by a blood-feeding arthropod that impairs the integrity of the epithelial barrier, contributing to ectoparasite fitness.

Introduction

Ectoparasitic arthropods obtain their nourishment by feeding on a vertebrate host, providing an avenue for microbial transmission during hematophagy (Sonenshine & Roe, 2014). In North America, tick encounters account for approximately 77% of all arthropod-borne diseases, with most interactions attributed to *Ixodes*, *Amblyomma* and *Dermacentor* species (Eisen, 2022; Rosenberg et al., 2018). Notably, *Ixodes scapularis* is an arthropod vector of several human illnesses, including Lyme disease (Eisen, 2022). The Lone star tick *Amblyomma americanum* transmits bacteria that cause ehrlichiosis, while the American dog tick *Dermacentor variabilis* and *Dermacentor andersoni* carry pathogens associated with Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia (Eisen, 2022; Rosenberg et al., 2018).

The unique microenvironment generated at the skin interface during a tick bite is conducive to arthropod hematophagy and pathogen transmission (Wikel, 2013). Unlike other blood-feeding arthropods, the development of hard ticks incorporates a series of events which necessitate long-term attachment to the skin (Sonenshine & Roe, 2014). This prolonged disruption of the host physical barrier poses a new challenge for tick survival as defense mechanisms are engaged. Tick saliva has been shown to be critical to subvert inflammation, blood coagulation, and nociception and antagonizes host immunity to enable attachment to the skin (Esteves et al., 2017; Francischetti et al., 2009; Kazimirova & Stibraniova, 2013; Kotal et al., 2015; Kotsyfakis et al., 2007; Kramer et al., 2011; Poole et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al., 1992; Ribeiro et al., 1985; Ribeiro et al., 1988; Simo et al., 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2002). Observations across various species further demonstrate a conserved ability whereby tick effectors perturb pro-inflammatory mediators responding to ectoparasite feeding (Bakshi et al., 2019; Dickinson et al., 1976; Esteves et al., 2017; Karim & Ribeiro, 2015). Such antagonism of host responses has been implicated in the dissemination and persistence of vector-borne pathogens (Chen et al., 2014; Kotsyfakis et al., 2010; Oliva Chávez et al., 2021).

87 As the largest organ in the body, the skin serves as the first line of defense against
88 arthropod infestation and pathogen transmission (Eyerich et al., 2018; Glatz et al., 2017;
89 Kabashima et al., 2019). The skin is comprised of three primary layers: the outermost
90 epidermis, the underlying dermis, and the hypodermis or subcutaneous fat (Eyerich et al.,
91 2018). The complex architecture and specialized cell populations comprising the skin affords the
92 mammalian host a protective barrier against environmental and microbial threats, in addition to
93 aiding in thermoregulation and prevention of trans-epidermal water loss (Kabashima et al.,
94 2019; Proksch et al., 2008). During injury, such as laceration of the skin by a tick hypostome,
95 various immune and sentinel cells are activated and release soluble factors that prompts the
96 highly complex and intricate process of wound healing (Singer & Clark, 1999). Proper wound
97 healing requires a high degree of coordination to orchestrate a response to an insult, which is
98 broadly comprised of four overlapping stages: hemostasis, inflammation, proliferation, and
99 tissue remodeling (Peña & Martin, 2024).
100 Little attention has been paid to the latter phases of skin healing during tick
101 hematophagy, including proliferation, which drives the process of re-epithelialization. Re-
102 epithelialization, which is largely dependent on the proliferation of keratinocytes, culminates in
103 the regeneration of the epidermal-dermal junction and restoration of barrier integrity (Pastar et
104 al., 2014; Rousselle et al., 2019). Keratinocytes function as structural cells which serve as the
105 outermost layer in mammals (Pastar et al., 2014; Rousselle et al., 2019). Keratinocytes have
106 also been recognized as sentinels, facilitating crosstalk with immune cells, and partaking in the
107 initiation of the wound healing response upon injury (Piipponen et al., 2020). Dysfunction in
108 keratinocyte-mediated closure has been reported in chronic wounds indicating their crucial role
109 in skin homeostasis (Pastar et al., 2014; Wikramanayake et al., 2014).
110 The current paradigm at the tick-skin interface is that salivary molecules are deposited
111 within the dermis during feeding, where they actively regulate the cutaneous response to an
112 insult (Bernard et al., 2020; Wikel, 2013). The impact of tick feeding on the epidermis, which

interfaces with the external environment, has been mostly neglected. The significance of the epidermis in countering tick infestation was documented in the late 1970s wherein Langerhans cells were shown to respond to salivary antigens (Allen et al., 1979). We also implicated extracellular vesicles (EVs) originating from the tick *I. scapularis* in promoting tick fitness and generating distinct outcomes of pathogen transmission in mammals. This mechanism was accomplished through the tick SNARE protein Vamp33 and epidermal γδ T cells (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021).

In this article, we combined single cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq), murine genetics, intravital microscopy and flow cytometry to reveal that tick EVs disrupt intraepithelial homeostasis. We discovered a unique population of keratinocytes in wildtype animals with an overrepresentation of pathways connected to wound healing during a bite from EV-deficient ticks. We further underpinned this biological network by demonstrating that tick EVs impacted epithelial proliferation through the disruption of phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K) activity, keratinocyte growth factor (KGF) and transforming growth factor β (TGF-β). Collectively, we illustrate a tick-induced interference of wound healing via the skin epidermis, contributing to the process of arthropod hematophagy.

Results

Tick extracellular vesicles enable arthropod fitness. We previously observed that EVs derived from *I. scapularis* enabled hematophagy (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). We sought to corroborate our findings in other tick species of public health importance and assess the impact of EVs on arthropod fitness. Total genetic ablation in ticks remains beyond current technical capabilities because editing through clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR) has only been applied to score morphological phenotypes, but not signaling pathways (Sharma et al., 2022). Thus, we silenced the expression of the *vesicle associated membrane protein 33* (*vamp33*) through RNA interference (RNAi) to study the effect of tick EVs.

We designated arthropods that had reduced *vamp33* gene expression as si*V33*, EV-deficient ticks, and the scramble control treatment as sc*V3*3, EV-sufficient ticks. Si*V33* and sc*V33* microinjected nymphs were placed on C57BL/6 mice and allowed to feed for 3 days (Fig. 1A). On day 3, *I. scapularis* were assessed for efficiency of *vamp33* silencing, attachment, and collected for weight and post-feeding survival (Fig. 1B-E). We observed a statistically significant difference in attachment between si*V33* and sc*V33* nymphs (Fig. 1C) compared to our previous evaluation (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). Diminished feeding was also measured for EV-deficient ticks as demonstrated by a 53% reduction in tick weight (Fig. 1D). Interrupted feeding in *I. scapularis* led to reduced survival post-detachment (Fig. 1E). An EV-associated fitness cost upon *vamp33* silencing was observed in all three clinically relevant tick species (Fig. 1B-M). A notable exception was the lack of phenotypic differences in attachment for *A. americanum* compared to *I. scapularis* and *D. variabilis* (Fig. 1C, G, and K). Collectively, these findings offer the prospect of a cross-species integrated management for mammalian infestation despite the distinct tick phylogeny.

Tick EVs alter epidermal immune surveillance. Recently, we reported that tick EVs within saliva affect the frequency of dendritic epidermal T cells (DETC) and alter the cytokine

155 and chemokine milieu of the skin (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). DETC surveillance of
156 keratinocytes via various cell surface receptors is critical in a wounding response, leading to the
157 activation and recruitment of immune cells, stimulation of keratinocytes for proliferation and
158 survival, and anti-microbial responses (Jameson et al., 2002; Jameson et al., 2004; Keyes et al.,
159 2016; Macleod & Havran, 2011; Sharp et al., 2005) (Fig. 2A). This crosstalk and surveillance
160 between DETC and keratinocytes led us to reason that tick EVs might not solely impact DETCs,
161 but also likely influence the most abundant epidermal cell, the keratinocyte. Hence, we allowed
162 EV-deficient (si*V33*) and EV-sufficient (sc*V33*) *I. scapularis* nymphs to feed on mice for 3 days
163 and collected the skin biopsy for flow cytometry evaluation (Supplementary Fig. 1). We
164 observed a decrease in DETC frequency during sc*V33* tick feeding on mice compared to naïve
165 skin (Fig. 2B). Conversely, DETC frequency remained at homeostatic levels after impairment of
166 tick EVs (si*V33*) and ectoparasite feeding on murine animals (Fig. 2B).
167 DETCs exhibit a dendritic shape that allows for continuous surveillance of neighboring
168 keratinocytes through various receptor-ligand interactions (Jameson et al., 2002; Witherden et
169 al., 2012) (Fig. 2A). Upon tissue damage, stressed keratinocytes upregulate ligands and
170 antigens that stimulate DETCs in a non-major histocompatibility complex (MHC)-restricted
171 manner (Havran et al., 1991). Activated DETCs will then alter their morphology by retracting
172 dendrites and assuming a rounded configuration to facilitate migration to the site of injury
173 (Jameson et al., 2002; Nielsen et al., 2017). To determine the possible role of keratinocytes
174 during tick feeding, we assessed the DETC co-stimulatory markers that facilitate immune
175 surveillance. We observed an elevated co-receptor frequency among DETCs found at the skin
176 interface where EV-sufficient ticks fed on mice, including the junctional adhesion molecule-like
177 (JAML) and the C-type lectin-receptor NKG2D (also known as KLRK1) (Girardi et al., 2001;
178 Whang et al., 2009) (Fig. 2C-D). Similar findings were also observed for the activation markers
179 CD69 and CD25 (Fig. 2E-F). Conversely, JAML, NKG2D, CD69 and CD25 were not
180 upregulated in the bite of EV-deficient ticks during murine feeding (Fig. 2C-F).

181 Morphologically, the hallmark of DETC activation is the conversion of a dendritic to a
182 rounded morphology that facilitates intraepidermal migration, a phenomenon that is partially
183 regulated by CD100 signaling (Thelen & Witherden, 2020; Witherden et al., 2012). To capture
184 morphological changes in DETCs, we employed intravital microscopy of EV injection into the
185 ear of a triple-reporter mouse model. Intravital microscopy of EV injection into the ear of this
186 mouse model revealed that tick EVs did not promote rounding of DETCs, as compared to the
187 positive control cytochalasin D (Fig. 2G). Supporting epidermal intravital imaging findings,
188 expression of CD100 was not altered during a tick bite regardless of the EV status (Fig. 2H).
189 Altogether, these findings provided evidence that tick EVs functionally alter immune surveillance
190 of the epidermal niche by DETCs.
191
192 **ScRNA-seq characterization of epidermal cells during tick feeding.** Given the
193 functional perturbations in DETCs during tick feeding, and the well documented importance of
194 the DETC-keratinocyte crosstalk during wounding, we hypothesized that the epidermal healing
195 circuitry is likely being altered during tick feeding. To evaluate this hypothesis, we utilized
196 scRNA-seq to analyze the impact of tick EVs on the epidermal immune environment in both
197 DETC-deficient (FVB-Tac) and DETC-sufficient (FVB-Jax) mice three days after tick feeding.
198 FVB-Tac mice are depleted of functional DETCs due to a failure of thymic selection because of
199 a natural mutation of the *skint1* gene (Barbee et al., 2011; Boyden et al., 2008; Lewis et al.,
200 2006). Skin punch biopsies were obtained from the bite site, and the epidermis was
201 enzymatically separated from the dermis. Live cells were sorted by fluorescence activation and
202 libraries were generated for Illumina sequencing (Fig. 3A).
203 Our analysis encompassed approximately 20,640 cells, with an average of 88,027
204 reads. Our initial investigation resulted in 23 clusters (Supplementary Dataset 1). Next, we
205 applied a fixed threshold to retain cells with more than 2500 UMIs (Supplementary Fig. 2A-B)
206 and applied the DoubletFinder R package to predict doublets (Supplementary Fig. 2C-D). We

207 identified 10 distinct groups of cells through an analysis of marker genes within each cluster
208 relative to the entire dataset (Supplementary Dataset 2). Keratinocytes, T cells, fibroblasts and
209 endothelial cells were observed in our scRNA-seq results (Supplementary Fig. 2D). The
210 presence of dermal clusters in our study was likely due to an incomplete epidermal-dermal
211 border separation during the enzymatic dissociation of skin biopsies. Thus, we subjected
212 keratinocytes, T cells, and antigen-presenting cells (APCs) to a second round of clustering
213 (Supplementary Dataset 3). This dataset revealed a total of 8 clusters visualized in t-distributed
214 stochastic neighbor embedding (t-SNE) (Fig. 3B) for a total of 5,172 total cells with a median
215 UMI count of 13,910 per cell.

216 Throughout the process of differentiation, keratinocytes express different types of
217 keratins, including keratins (*Krt*) *1*, *5*, *10*, and *14* (Fuchs, 1993). Elevated levels of *Krt5* and
218 *Krt14* expression enabled the recognition of undifferentiated cells residing within the basal layer
219 of the epidermis (Fig. 3C, Supplementary Dataset 4). *Krt1*, *Krt10*, and *Involucrin* were used to
220 discern early and late-stage differentiation of keratinocytes (Fig. 3C, Supplementary Fig. 3,
221 Supplementary Dataset 4). APCs and T cells were identified by the T cell receptor alpha
222 constant (*Trac*), the T cell receptor delta constant (*Trdc*), and the histocompatibility class II
223 antigen (*H2-Aa*) (Supplementary Dataset 3, Supplementary Table 2). The mouse epidermis
224 harbors hair follicles with distinct physiological functions (Joost et al., 2018; Joost et al., 2016).
225 Our dataset only accounted for compartments in anatomical proximity to the epidermis
226 (Supplementary Fig. 4, Supplementary Table 2).

227 We then determined the percent distribution of interfollicular epidermal cells per
228 treatment. In the skin biopsy where ticks fed on immune intact mice (FVB-Jax sc*V33* and FVB
229 Jax si*V33*), we observed a decrease in keratinocytes and an overrepresentation of T cells and
230 APCs compared to the naïve skin (Supplementary Fig. 5A-B, Supplementary Dataset 5). A
231 similar effect was not observed when ticks fed on the skin of DETC-deficient mice, presumably
232 due to the diminished wound healing capacity in FVB-Tac animals (Keyes et al., 2016). We

233 confirmed the depletion of DETCs in the epidermis of FVB-Tac mice. Gene expression of *Trdv4*
234 in the T cell cluster, which encodes for the receptor Vδ1 in DETCs, was reduced in FVB-Tac
235 compared to the FVB-Jax mouse strain (Supplementary Fig. 5C). Notably, partitioning of
236 epidermal clusters by experimental conditions revealed an unidentified keratinocyte population
237 found solely when EV-deficient ticks fed on FVB-Jax mice (Fig. 3D-I, Supplementary Dataset 3).
238 The presence of this distinct cluster raised the hypothesis that EVs might exert an influence on
239 keratinocytes within the context of DETCs, given its absence in FVB-Tac mice.
240
241 **Tick EVs impact a keratinocyte population with a prominent wound healing**
242 **signature.** The emergence of this unique keratinocyte population responding to si*V33* tick
243 feeding prompted us to further investigate their role by subjecting these cells to a subsequent
244 round of clustering. This examination revealed keratinocyte populations at various differentiated
245 states and highlighted the presence of an unidentified epidermal population (Fig. 4A,
246 Supplementary Dataset 6). Next, we relied on pseudotime to align keratinocytes along an
247 inferred developmental trajectory based on their expression profile (Fig. 4B). Gene expression
248 signatures mirrored the sequence of differentiation, starting with markers associated with
249 undifferentiated basal states to terminally differentiated keratinocytes (Supplementary Fig. 6).
250 We identified a unique keratinocyte population present along the pseudotime axis of the
251 condition where EV deficient ticks fed on FVB-Jax mice (FVB-Jax si*V33*), setting it apart from
252 the other treatments (Fig. 4B).
253 The heterogeneity of keratinocytes is crucial for various functions, both during
254 homeostasis and in response to external stimuli (Rice & Rompolas, 2020). Their transcriptional
255 program has been recently explored to elucidate how different populations aid in the
256 coordination of broader cellular circuits (Joost et al., 2020; Joost et al., 2018; Joost et al., 2016).
257 Thus, we unraveled the transcriptional program employed by this unique keratinocyte population
258 where EV deficient ticks fed on FVB-Jax mice. We computationally separated keratinocyte

populations according to their respective experimental conditions (Supplementary Fig. 7). Then, we assessed marker genes in the keratinocyte population where EV deficient ticks fed on FVB-Jax mice, which revealed elevated expression of *Col1a1*, *Col1a2*, and *Col3a1* (Fig. 4C). Evaluation of the marker gene *Col1a1* across pseudotime further underscored the distinct transcriptional program of this unique keratinocyte subcluster (Fig 4D). Altogether, these results suggested an increase in the collagen production by this keratinocyte population in response to feeding of EV-deficient ticks.

Pathway enrichment analysis of all significant marker genes in the unidentified keratinocyte population revealed an overrepresentation of genes associated with the wound healing circuitry, including growth factor, collagen, fibronectin and heparin binding, and phosphoinositide 3-kinase (PI3K) activity (Fig. 4E, Supplementary Dataset 7). These molecules have been implicated in keratinocyte function during wound healing, primarily by enhancing keratinocyte proliferation and migration to support re-epithelialization and tissue repair (Bártolo et al., 2022; Matsuura-Hachiya et al., 2018; Misiura et al., 2020). Our findings suggested that a unique keratinocyte population with a prominent wound healing signature was selectively responding to EV-deficient ticks during hematophagy. To make a comparison between EV-deficient and EV-sufficient ticks in the murine skin, we subjected keratinocytes to a differential expression analysis and assessed enriched pathways through ingenuity pathway analysis (IPA). Notably, we observed a wound healing signature in the skin of DETC-sufficient mice fed with EV-deficient ticks, which was not detected in animals deficient for DETCs (Fig. 4F).

Further inspection of differentially expressed genes annotated for wound healing revealed a decrease in transcript levels for *Fos* and *Jun* and an increase of expression for *Col1a1* and *Col1a2* (Fig. 4G, Supplementary Dataset 8). *Fos* and *Jun* are subunits of AP-1, which is important for epithelial proliferation and differentiation (Angel et al., 2001; Li et al., 2003). Conversely, collagens have various roles during all stages of wound healing, aiding in the regulation of the wound healing response, reinforcing barrier integrity and facilitating the

285 stratification of epidermal layers (Matsuura-Hachiya et al., 2018). Collectively, tick EVs impaired
286 wound healing through specific molecular pathways in keratinocytes.
287
288 **Tick EVs interfere with keratinocyte proliferation.** To understand how tick EVs
289 influenced wound healing in keratinocytes, we then evaluated molecular networks altered in the
290 epidermis of DETC-sufficient and DETC-deficient mice. We performed a similar analysis in
291 naive animals to exclude confounding effects originated from genetic differences occurring
292 between these two strains. Four pathways were identified: eukaryotic Initiation Factor 2 (EIF2),
293 natural killer (NK) cell, sirtuin signaling, and the unfolded protein response (UPR) (Fig. 5A,
294 Supplementary Dataset 9). The results obtained concerning NK cell, sirtuin signaling, and the
295 UPR pathways were likely due to the *skint1* deficiency in FVB-Tac mice. However, the EIF2
296 cascade was dependent on tick EVs because the computational prediction occurred regardless
297 of the mouse genetic background (yellow highlight, Fig. 5A).
298 A granular view of the EIF2 signaling pathway displayed PI3K as part of the biological
299 circuit targeted by tick EVs (Fig. 5B, Supplementary Dataset 10). The PI3K/Akt pathway is
300 important for skin development and wound healing, two processes dependent on keratinocyte
301 proliferation and differentiation (Calautti et al., 2005). Upon injury, keratinocytes adjacent to the
302 wound are quiescent, opting for a migratory phenotype that allows for the initiation of re-
303 epithelialization (Dekoninck & Blanpain, 2019). Conversely, keratinocytes farther from the
304 wound edge undergo a proliferative burst, allowing for the closure of the gap generated by
305 migratory keratinocytes (Aragona et al., 2017). Given that the PI3K/Akt/mTOR pathway has
306 been observed in the proliferative zone and correlates with accelerated wound closure, we
307 reasoned that tick EVs interfered with keratinocyte proliferation. To evaluate this hypothesis, we
308 used the protein Ki-67 and flow cytometry as a readout for proliferative keratinocytes
309 (Supplementary Fig. 8). We observed a significant reduction in keratinocyte proliferation when
310 EV-sufficient ticks fed on wildtype mice (Fig. 5C). However, the effect of keratinocyte

311 proliferation was not observed in the absence of tick EVs (Fig. 5C). As noted above, the impact
312 of tick feeding on keratinocyte proliferation was fully dependent on DETCs. In the absence of
313 DETCs, the observed phenotype for keratinocyte proliferation in EV-sufficient ticks did not occur
314 (Fig. 5C). Taken together, our reductionist approach orthogonally validated our scRNA-seq
315 results, demonstrating that tick EVs decrease keratinocyte proliferation, which is a key step in
316 wound healing.

317 The genetic constitution of a mouse may lead to substantial alterations in phenotypic
318 traits (Tanner & Lorenz, 2022; Woodworth et al., 2004). We therefore investigated the ability of *I.*
319 *scapularis* to interfere with keratinocyte homeostasis in C57BL/6 mice, a more commonly used
320 strain. We ascertained the keratinocyte PI3K status by flow cytometry due to its ability to assess
321 protein expression on limited cell counts. Variation in the total PI3K comparing keratinocyte
322 populations among treatments was not observed (Fig. 5D). However, a decrease in phospho-
323 PI3K-positive keratinocytes was recorded when ticks deficient in EVs fed on C57BL/6 mice (Fig.
324 5E). Additionally, the bite of *I. scapularis* ticks reduced levels of the growth factor KGF and
325 increased levels of TGF-β in the skin, compared to the EV-deficient treatment (Fig. 5F-G).
326 These findings correlated to a significant decrease in the frequency of $EpCAM^+$ keratinocytes
327 expressing the negative regulator of TGF-β signaling, Smad7, in skin infested with *scV33* ticks
328 compared to *siV33* ticks. (Fig. 5H; Supplementary Fig. 8). Next, we observed a significant
329 decline in the frequency of $EpCAM^+$ $Ki67^+$ keratinocytes when EV-sufficient ticks fed on
330 C57BL/6 mice (Fig. 5I). Remarkably, the ability of ticks to impair keratinocyte proliferation was
331 observed in a density-dependent manner. As the number of ticks feeding on C57BL/6 mice
332 increased, the capacity of keratinocytes to proliferate decreased (Fig. 5J). This observation was
333 not recorded in mice infested with ticks deficient for EVs (Fig. 5K). In summary, we uncovered
334 that tick EVs: (*i*) impacted keratinocyte proliferation; (*ii*) suppressed KGF and PI3K activity; and
335 (*iii*) enhanced TGF- β levels, thereby, maintaining successful arthropod hematophagy.

Discussion

Ticks are ancient hematophagous arthropods that co-evolved with their hosts for millions of years (Sonenshine & Roe, 2014). Currently, we have a limited understanding of the mechanisms employed by these ectoparasites to feed on a mammal and enable pathogen transmission. Previously, we implicated *Ixodes scapularis* EVs in promoting fitness and generating distinct outcomes of pathogen transmission. This was accomplished through the SNARE protein Vamp33 and DETCs (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). Here, we connect the mammalian wound healing circuitry as a target of tick-mediated host immunomodulation via salivary EVs. Our work connects *in vivo* proliferation of keratinocytes as a tick EV regulatory process during hematophagy.

We established the importance of EVs as a conserved strategy for arthropod fitness in three medically relevant tick species: *I. scapularis*, *A. americanum*, and *D. variabilis*. We demonstrated that *I. scapularis* EVs led to a decrease in DETCs at the bite site; yet DETCs present in the skin epidermis displayed upregulated co-stimulatory molecules. During skin injury, DETCs are activated whereby recognition of self-antigens on damaged or stressed keratinocytes allows for the orchestration of a host response (Jameson et al., 2004). Reduction of DETCs at the tick-skin interface may not be a result of cellular migration. DETC migration is facilitated by the conversion of a dendrite to a rounded morphology, which is partially regulated by CD100 signaling (Jameson et al., 2002; Witherden et al., 2012). To capture morphological changes, we employed intravital microscopy in an EV-injected triple-reporter mouse model (Park et al., 2021). Our results suggested that DETCs may not migrate during tick feeding due to the lack of cell rounding and CD100 upregulation. Importantly, DETCs regulate epidermal homeostasis and coordinate a wound healing response together with epidermal cells (Jameson et al., 2002). Collectively, our data suggest that tick EVs alter epidermal immune surveillance by restricting DETC presence and altering cell surface receptor expression, ultimately disrupting epidermal function and promoting hematophagy.

362 By employing a scRNA-seq approach in a mouse model naturally devoid of DETCs, we
363 characterized the epidermal response to tick infestation. We revealed a unique keratinocyte
364 population when EV-deficient ticks fed on DETC-sufficient mice. The absence of this unique cell
365 population when EV-deficient ticks fed on DETC-deficient mice suggested that EVs may alter
366 keratinocyte function within the context of intraepithelial γδ T cells. Sub clustering and
367 pseudotime analysis of keratinocytes further emphasized the distinct nature of this unique
368 population. Remarkably, this subcluster exhibited an overrepresentation of pathways associated
369 with the wound healing circuitry, including growth factor, collagen and fibronectin binding, and
370 cell proliferation. Moreover, specific biological signatures were associated with down regulation
371 of AP-1 and upregulation of PI3K transcripts in EV-deficient tick fed on DETC-sufficient mice.
372 These molecular circuits have been linked to epithelial proliferation and maintenance of barrier
373 integrity in the skin epidermis (Angel et al., 2001; Jochum et al., 2001; Li et al., 2003; Matsuura-
374 Hachiya et al., 2018).
375 Consistent with our systems level approach, EV-sufficient ticks fed on DETC-sufficient
376 mice led to a decrease in keratinocyte proliferation. This observation was dependent on the role
377 of DETCs as DETC-deficient mice did not exhibit a decrease in Ki67^{+} keratinocytes. Wound
378 healing is marked by keratinocyte proliferation and migration to restore barrier function of the
379 epidermis (Dekoninck & Blanpain, 2019). For instance, proliferation was deemed as a
380 necessary step for proper wound closure at the leading edge in the murine tail (Aragona et al.,
381 2017). Conversely, proliferation was judged dispensable for wound closure in the murine ear
382 (Park et al., 2017). Our work was done using the natural site of tick infestation in mammals, the
383 skin of the dorsal neck. Whether proliferation is necessary for migration during a tick bite
384 remains to be determined.
385 KGF serves as a strong mitogenic factor for both mouse and human keratinocytes, and
386 its overexpression can lead to a hyperproliferative state associated with skin disorders (Ni & Lai,
387 2020). Upon damage of the skin, activated DETCs secrete KGF to promote wound repair

388 (Jameson et al., 2002). We observed that tick feeding on mice led to decreased KGF levels
389 compared to the EV-deficient treatment. We also postulated that tick EVs interfered with other
390 components of the wound healing biological program, including PI3K and TGF-β. We observed
391 decreased levels of phosphorylated PI3K during EV-sufficient tick feeding on C57BL/6 mice,
392 mirroring the findings from the scRNA-seq studies. Furthermore, we observed an increase in
393 TGF-β release during tick feeding, which correlated to lower Smad7 levels compared to EV-
394 deficient feeding at the bite site. Increased levels of TGF-β in the epidermis have been
395 associated with the inhibition keratinocyte proliferation (Sellheyer et al., 1993). Moreover, TGF-β
396 transduction is mediated by SMAD proteins, with Smad7 acting as a negative regulator of the
397 TGF-β signaling network (Schmierer & Hill, 2007). Thus, we suggest that the observed
398 reduction of DETCs during tick feeding may obstruct the necessary levels of KGF and TGF-β in
399 the epidermis during wounding.

400 Extracts from tick salivary glands have shown their capability to impede cellular growth
401 *in vitro* (Hajnicka et al., 2011). Accordingly, we demonstrated *in vivo* that tick EVs led to a
402 significant reduction in the frequency of Ki67^{+} keratinocytes. Strikingly, the ability of ticks to
403 impair epithelial cell proliferation was observed in a quantitative-dependent manner. An increase
404 in the number of ticks fed simultaneously at a given skin site, resulted in a decrease of
405 proliferative keratinocytes. In sum, this study unveiled the immunomodulatory effects of tick EVs
406 in the epidermal layer, deviating from the established viewpoint that arthropod saliva mainly
407 influences dermal responses.

408 **Materials and Methods**

409 **Reagents and resources**

410 All primers, reagents, resources, and software used in this study, together with their
411 manufacturer's information and catalog numbers are listed in Supplementary Tables 1 and 3.

412

413 **Ticks**

414 *I. scapularis* nymphs were obtained from two independent sources: (1) Dr. Ulrike
415 Munderloh and Dr. Jonathan Oliver at the University of Minnesota; and the (2) tick rearing
416 facility at Oklahoma State University. *A. americanum* and *D. variabilis* nymphs were obtained
417 from the tick rearing facility at Oklahoma State University. Partially engorged *I. scapularis* adult
418 ticks were obtained from Dr. Albert Mulenga and Dr. Adela Oliva Chavez at Texas A&M
419 University. Upon arrival, ticks were maintained in a Percival I-30BLL incubator at 23°C with 85%
420 relative humidity and a 12/10-hours light/dark photoperiod regimen.

421

422 **Mice**

423 Experiments were performed on C57BL/6, FVB/N Jax, and FVB/N Tac mice. Breeding
424 pairs were purchased from the Jackson Laboratory except FVB/N Tac mice, which were
425 purchased from Taconic Biosciences. All mouse strains were bred at the University of Maryland
426 School of Medicine, unless otherwise indicated. Male mice (7–9 weeks) were used for all
427 experiments. All mouse experiments were approved by the Institutional Biosafety (IBC-
428 00002247) and Animal Care and Use (IACUC numbers 0119012 and 1121014) committees at
429 the University of Maryland School of Medicine and complied with the National Institutes of
430 Health (NIH) guidelines (Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare [OLAW] assurance number A3200-
431 01). *huLangerin-CreER;Rosa-stop-tdTomato;CX3CR1-GFP*$^{+/-}$*;K14-H2B-Cerulean* mice used for
432 intravital microscopy imaging were housed at Michigan State University as described elsewhere
433 (Park et al., 2021) (IACUC number PROTO202300065). To activate DETCs, Cytochalasin D

(Sigma-Aldrich, C8273) was delivered topically as previously described (Park et al., 2021). Briefly, Cytochalasin D was dissolved in a 25 mg/ml stock solution in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), and later, the stock solution was diluted 100 times in 100% petroleum jelly (Vaseline; final concentration is 250 µg/ml). One hundred micrograms of the mixture of Cytochalasin D and the petroleum jelly were spread evenly on the skin once every 24 hours for 2 days. A mixture of 100% DMSO in petroleum jelly (1:100) was used as a vehicle control.

RNA interference

siRNAs and scRNAs for *vamp33* were designed as previously described (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). Both siRNAs and scRNAs were synthesized according to the Silencer® SiRNA construction kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Primers are described in Supplementary Table 1. Unfed nymphs were microinjected with 60-80 ng of siRNA or scRNA using a Nanoject III (Drummond Scientific Company). Ticks recovered overnight at 23°C with saturated humidity before being placed on respective mice.

EV-depleted media

L15C300 medium was supplemented with 5% FBS (Millipore-Sigma), 5% tryptose phosphate broth (TPB) (BD), 0.1% lipoprotein concentrate (LPC) (MP Biomedicals), 0.25% sodium bicarbonate (Millipore-Sigma), and 25 mM HEPES (Millipore-Sigma). Media was cleared from EVs by ultracentrifugation at 100,000×g for 18 h at 4 °C in a LE-80 ultracentrifuge (Beckman Coulter) with a 60Ti rotor. EV-free media was then passed through a 0.22-µm Millipore Express® PLUS (Millipore-Sigma). The absence of EVs was confirmed by determining the particle size distribution with the NanoSight NS300 (Malvern Panalytical) for nanoparticle tracking analysis (NTA).

Tick salivary gland culture

Salivary gland EVs were purified from *ex vivo* cultures that originated from partially engorged adult female ticks. Adult *I. scapularis* females were fed on New Zealand white rabbits for 5–6 days at either Dr. Albert Mulenga or Dr. Adela Oliva Chavez laboratories at Texas A&M University, as previously described (Oliva Chávez et al., 2021). Then, ticks were shipped to the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Partially-fed adult female ticks (90-120) were dissected 1–2 days post-removal. Briefly, midguts, Malpighian tubes, and other organs were removed. PBS was added to samples to avoid desiccation. Salivary glands were dissected and cultured in 24-well cell culture plates (Corning). 10 salivary glands from adult ticks were placed in each well, containing 500 µl of L15C300 EV-free medium supplemented with 1x penicillin/streptomycin (Corning) and 1x Amphotericin B (Gibco). Salivary glands were incubated for 24 h at 34 °C to allow EV secretion.

EV purification

Medium collected from salivary gland cultures were cleared of any live cells by centrifugation at 300 × g for 10 minutes at 4 °C. Dead cells were removed by a second centrifugation at 2,000 × g for 10 minutes at 4 °C. The supernatant was collected, and apoptotic bodies were removed by a third centrifugation at 10,000 × g for 30 minutes at 10°C. The supernatant was filtered through a 0.22-µm Millipore syringe filter (Millipore-Sigma) to reduce the number of EVs >200 nm in size. EVs were pelleted by ultracentrifugation (100,000 × g) for 18 hours at 4 °C. Supernatant was discarded and EVs were resuspended in PBS. EV concentration and sizes were determined using the NanoSight 300 machine (Malvern Panalytical) with the software versions 2.0 or 3.0. The mean of the size generated in the reports was used to calculate the average size of the EVs in each sample. The concentration of proteins in tick EVs was determined using the BCA assay (Thermo Scientific), following the manufacturer's procedure.

485

486 **Mouse capsule placement**

487 Capsules made from the upper portion of a snap or screw top tube were adhered to the
488 dorsal neck of each mouse to contain the ticks in one area. This technique is referred to as the
489 capsule-feeding method and was adapted from a previous study (Schoeler et al., 1999). Briefly,
490 capsule adhesive solution was made from 3 parts gum rosin (Sigma-Aldrich) and 1 part
491 beeswax (FisherScience). Mice were anesthetized using isoflurane and shaved between the
492 shoulder blades to the top of the cranium. Capsules were applied with the warmed adhesive
493 and allowed to dry up for 24 hours prior to tick placement. Capsules were sealed with either a
494 glued piece of mesh or a screw top after tick placement. Naïve groups consisted of capsule
495 placement without ticks.

496

497 **Tick feeding experiments**

498 Microinjected ticks were placed on mice using either the free-feeding or capsule-feeding
499 method and allowed to feed for 3 days. On day 3, ticks were collected, weighed, and either
500 placed in a humidified chamber for survival analysis or frozen at −80°C for RNA purification. To
501 purify the mRNA, ticks were flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen and crushed with small plastic
502 pestles. TRIzol® reagent (200 µl) was added to the crushed tick and RNA was purified using the
503 PureLink™ RNA mini kit. cDNA was synthesized from 50 to 200 ŋg (5–10 µl) of RNA using the
504 Verso cDNA synthesis kit (Thermo scientific).

505

506 **Quantitative reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (qRT-PCR)**

507 qRT-PCR was performed to measure gene expression. qRT-PCR was performed with
508 the CFX96 Touch Real-Time PCR Detection 233 System (Biorad). No template controls were
509 included to verify the absence of primer-dimers formation and/or contamination. Reactions on

510 each sample and controls were run in duplicate. Gene expression was determined by relative
511 quantification normalized to the tick *actin*, using the primers listed in Supplementary Table 1.
512
513 **Flow cytometry of skin cell populations**
514 *I. scapularis* nymphs fed on C57BL/6, FVB/N Jax, or FVB/N Tac male mice. On the third
515 day of feeding, mice were euthanized with CO_2. A 10- or 5-mm skin punch biopsy was taken
516 while ticks were still attached. Skin samples from un-infested control mice were collected from
517 matching locations. Single cell suspensions were prepared from each skin sample. Briefly, skin
518 samples were cut into small pieces with sterile surgical scissors and placed into round-bottom
519 tubes containing digestion buffer consisting of 90% RPMI-1640 (Quality Biological), 10%
520 Liberase™ TL Research Grade (Roche), and 0.1% DNAse I (Millipore-Sigma). Digestions were
521 carried out for 1 hour and 15 minutes at 37°C with constant shaking. Single cell suspensions
522 were obtained by passing the digested tissues through a 40-µm cell strainer (Corning),
523 homogenizing the tissue with a plunger and flushing cells with wash buffer consisting of PBS
524 and 2 mM EDTA. Cells were centrifuged at 300 x g for 5 minutes at 4 °C, resuspended in 1 ml
525 FACS buffer (PBS containing 1% BSA, 2 mM EDTA, and 0.05% NaN3) or FACS intracellular
526 buffer (PBS containing 1% BSA and 0.05% NaN3). Cell suspensions were placed into a 96-well
527 U-bottom plate and stained with respective antibody panels.
528 Live and dead cells were discriminated using Zombie Violet Fixable Live Dead stain
529 (BioLegend). Cells were washed with FACS buffer. Cells were then blocked with anti-FcR
530 (CD16-CD32) (BioLegend 156603), and subsequently stained with the respective antibody
531 panel for 15 minutes at 4°C and washed with FACS buffer. Whenever appropriate, anti-rat IgM
532 was added to the cells, incubated for 15 minutes at 4°C, and washed twice with the FACS
533 buffer. Finally, cells were resuspended in 4% paraformaldehyde. For intracellular staining, cells
534 were further processed following the instructions for the BioLegend's FOXP3 Fix/Perm Buffer
535 Set kit. Cells were measured with a LSRII flow cytometer (BD) at the Flow & Mass Cytometry

536 Facility at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Analysis was performed using the
537 FlowJo software.
538 DETC populations in the murine skin were labeled with APC anti-CD45 (BioLegend
539 103111) or PE/Cyanine7 anti-CD45 (BioLegend 103114), FITC anti-CD3 (BioLegend 100203),
540 BV60 anti-Vγ5 (BD 743241), APC anti-Thy1.2 (BioLegend 105312), and/or monoclonal antibody
541 17D1 (kindly provided by Dr. Adrian Hayday, King's College London, and Dr. Robert Tigelaar,
542 Yale University), and PE mouse anti-rat IgM (BD 553888). DETC costimulatory markers were
543 measured with PE anti-JAML (BioLegend 128503), BV711 anti-CD100 (BD 745492),
544 PE/Cyanine5 anti-CD44 (BioLegend 103010), APC/Cyanine7 anti-CD25 (BioLegend 102026),
545 PerCP/Cyanine5.5 anti-CD69 (BioLegend 104522), and APC anti-CD314 (BioLegend 130212).
546 Keratinocyte populations in the murine skin were labeled with BV711 anti-CD324 (BioLegend
547 118233), PE anti-CD200 (BioLegend 123807), PE/Cyanine5 anti-CD34 (BioLegend 119312),
548 BV605 Sca1 (BioLegend 108133), and/or PE anti-CD49f (BioLegend 313612). Keratinocyte
549 proliferation was labeled with the Alexa Fluor 700 anti-Ki-67 (BioLegend 652420). Smad7 was
550 labeled with the anti-MADH7/SMAD7 polyclonal antibody (Abcam ab216428) and Alexa Fluor
551 405 goat anti-Rabbit IgG secondary antibody (Thermo Fischer Scientific A-31556).
552
553 **Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay**
554 To determine levels of KGF, 5 mm skin biopsies were placed in 200μL of RPMI media
555 tissue bath for one hour shaking at 32°C (150 revolutions per minute). KGF levels in tissue bath
556 supernatant were determined using the R&D Systems KGF/FGF-7 Quantikine ELISA kit
557 according to manufacturer instructions. To determine levels of TGF-β, 5mm skin biopsies were
558 homogenized in lysis buffer containing 1X RIPA buffer (catalogue number 20-188, Millipore) with
559 1X protease-phosphatase inhibitor cocktail (catalogue number 78420, Thermo Scientific). TGF-
560 β levels in tissue supernatant were determined using the R&D Systems TGF-β 1 Quantikine

ELISA kit according to manufacturer instructions. Total protein in samples was determined using the Pierce BCA Protein Assay Kit (catalogue number 23227 Thermo Scientific). Sample concentration of KGF/TGF-β were normalized to the total protein in a sample.

Intravital microscopy

Epidermal intravital imaging studies were done in collaboration with Dr. Sangbum Park at Michigan State University. All *in vivo* imaging and analysis were performed, as described previously (Park et al., 2021). Simultaneous visualization of Langerhans cells, DETCs and epithelial cells was achieved by utilizing the *huLangerin-CreER;Rosa-stop-tdTomato;CX3CR1-GFP*$^{+/-}$*;K14-H2B-Cerulean* mice.

Epidermal single-cell isolation, scRNA-seq library preparation and sequencing

I. scapularis nymphs were microinjected with *vamp33* si or *vamp33* sc and fed on FVB/N Jax or FVB/N Tac mice. On the third day of feeding, mice were euthanized with CO_2. Partially fed ticks were removed and the sites where ticks bit were shaved followed by an application of a light layer of Nair depilatory lotion. A total of three 5-mm skin punch biopsies were obtained from the dorsal neck for each mouse. 5-mm skin punch biopsies were obtained from the same physiological site of naïve mice. Skin samples were incubated in dispase solution (4 U/mL dispase, 5mM MgCl2, and 0.4mM CaCl2 in PBS) for 2.5 hours at 37°C with constant shaking/stirring. Epidermal sheets were separated from the dermal layer using forceps. Epidermal sheets were then incubated in a digestion solution (2.5mg/mL collagenase D and 0.2mg/mL DNase in RPMI Medium) for 1 hour at 37°C with constant shaking/stirring.

Cells were resuspended using a wide-bore pipette tip and three samples per treatment per mouse were combined. Samples were passed through a 40 μM cell strainer and washed with RPMI +10% FBS. Cells were counted using the Countess II FL Automated Cell Counter, stained with 5 μl of 7-AAD per million cells, and incubated in the dark for 10 minutes at 4°C.

587 Samples were then sorted at the CIBR Flow Cytometry Core Facility at the University of
588 Maryland School of Medicine. Cells were sorted into a PBS in the absence of calcium and
589 magnesium + 10% FBS collection buffer. They were then transported on ice to the Institute of
590 Genome Sciences at the University of Maryland School of Medicine for library preparation and
591 sequencing. Single cell libraries were generated with the 3' NextGEM v3.1 kit targeting 3800-
592 5000 cells. Libraries were sequenced with a NovaSeq 6000, S2 flowcell targeting 375M read
593 pairs per sample.
594
595 **Bioinformatics**
596 All scRNA-seq reads were processed and mapped to the mouse mm10 reference
597 genome using 10X Genomics' Cell Ranger software. Approximately 20,640 total cells were
598 profiled with 88,027 mean reads per cell across all conditions. A count matrix (gene-by-cell)
599 generated by cell ranger count for each library was then aggregated into a single count matrix.
600 Expression matrices were generated using the Bioconductor packages scater (v1.22.0) (Lun,
601 McCarthy, et al., 2016) and scran (v1.22.1) (Lun, Bach, et al., 2016). Cells with less than 2,500
602 or greater than 60,000 UMIs were removed after calculating cell metrics using scater (v1.22.0).
603 DoubletFinder (v2.0.1) (McGinnis et al., 2019) was applied removing 1,364 cells, which yielded
604 a total of 10,715 cells. The remaining transcriptomes were normalized by first calculating size
605 factors via the scran functions quickCluster and computeSumFactors. Then, we computed
606 normalized counts for each cell with logNormCounts function in scran (v1.22.1).
607 For downstream analysis, highly variable genes were selected using getTopHVGs before
608 performing the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and the tSNE projection. Clustering was
609 conducted using kmeans function based on the calculated tSNE. Differential gene expression
610 between clusters was calculated using find Markers function. Only identified epidermal cells of
611 interest (Keratinocytes, T cells, and APCs) were further analyzed, resulting in a total of 5,172
612 cells with a median UMI count of 13,910 per cell. For pseudotime analysis, the Bioconductor

613 matrix was imported into slingshot (v2.2.1) (Street et al., 2018). To compare the T cell receptor
614 delta variable 4 (*Trdv4*) expression, normalized counts were used for visualization by the violin
615 plot. The permutation test was applied to calculate the significance of the difference in the mean
616 expression between two groups. A list of differentially expressed keratinocyte genes between
617 treatments was generated by MAST (v1.24.0) (Finak et al., 2015) with significance testing under
618 the Hurdle model for downstream analysis by the IPA.
619
620 **Gene set enrichment analysis**
621 Gene set enrichment analysis was performed using DAVID, version 2021. Default DAVID
622 parameters were employed and included the following categories for the enrichment analysis:
623 GOTERM_BP_DIRECT, GOTERM_CC_DIRECT and GOTERM_MF_DIRECT (from
624 Gene_Ontology), KEGG_PATHWAY (from Pathways) and INTERPRO (from Protein_Domains).
625 *p* value and FDR< 0.05 were set as a threshold.
626
627 **Ingenuity pathway analysis**
628 Differentially expressed keratinocyte genes from the following samples were analyzed in
629 the IPA as independent datasets: 1) FVB-Tac Naïve versus FVB-Jax Naïve 2) FVB-Jax si*V33*
630 versus FVB-Jax sc*V33* and 3) FVB-Tac si*V33* versus FVB-Tac sc*V33*. Genes were considered
631 differentially expressed if the *p* value and FDR were < 0.05. Dataset input criteria for the IPA
632 included expression, *p* value, log ratio, FDR, and Ensemble ID codes. All datasets were
633 examined for canonical pathway and upstream regulator analysis. FVB-Tac Naïve versus FVB-
634 Jax Naïve dataset had 591 IDs, including 589 mapped and 2 unmapped IDs. FVB-Jax si*V33*
635 versus FVB-Jax sc*V33* dataset had 1207 IDs, including 1204 mapped and 3 unmapped IDs.
636 FVB-Tac si*V33* versus FVB-Tac sc*V33* had 732 IDs, including 728 mapped and 4 unmapped
637 IDs. The IPA proprietary algorithm segments the network map between molecules into multiple
638 networks and assigns scores for each network as described previously (Calvano et al., 2005).

639 For the canonical pathway analysis, −log (P-value) >2 was taken as threshold and for the
640 upstream regulator analysis, the *p* value of overlap <0.05 was set as the threshold. A positive *Z*-
641 score was defined as the predicted activation, and a negative *Z*-score was defined as the
642 predicted inhibition.
643
644 **Statistical analysis**
645 Statistical significance was assessed as follows: percent tick attachment was calculated
646 by the Fisher's exact test, tick weight by the *t* test or the Mann Whitney test, and survival curve
647 by the Log-rank (Mantel-Cox) test. One-way ANOVA followed by Tukey's *post hoc* test for
648 multiple comparisons was also used. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA was implemented if the dataset
649 failed normality of residuals or displayed heterogeneity of variance. We used GraphPad
650 PRISM® (version 9.1.0) for all statistical analyses. Outliers were detected by a GraphPad
651 Quickcals program (https://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/Grubbs1.cfm). *p* values of < 0.05
652 were considered statistically significant.
653

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673 of Health and Human Services, the USDA-NIFA or the United States government.

674

675 **Data and Code Availability**

676 All scRNA sequences are deposited into the NCBI Sequence Read Archive under the
677 BioProject accession PRJNA905677. R codes for scRNA sequencing datasets were adapted
678 from https://bioconductor.org/books/3.16/OSCA/ and specified R package vignettes. Tokens can
679 be made available upon request.

680

681 **Resource Availability**

682 Further information and request for resources and reagents should be directed to and
683 will be honored by the corresponding author: Joao HF Pedra (jpedra@som.umaryland.edu)

684

685 **Author contributions**

686 LM and JHFP designed the study. LM and LMV performed the experiments. HNB, HJL-Y
687 and AR performed computational analysis. AJO, LRB, CRF, ADS-S, DMR, MTM, SS, NS, and
688 FECP aided with experimentation. EBC, T-TN, BL-G, ASOC, AM, UGM and JDO provided ticks.
689 LM, LV and JHFP wrote the manuscript. LRB created illustrations. JMJ, SP, and DS supervised
690 experiments and/or provided resources and guidance. JHFP supervised the study. All authors
691 analyzed the data, provided intellectual input into the study, and contributed to editing of the
692 manuscript.

693

694 **Figure Legends**

695 **Figure 1: Tick EVs affect hematophagy and survival. (A)** Graphical illustration of
696 experimental design. **(B-M)** *Vamp33* siRNA (*siV33*) (red) or *vamp33* scramble control (*scV33*)
697 (blue) microinjected nymphs were placed on C57BL/6 mice and allowed to feed for 3 days. On
698 day 3, ticks were harvested and assessed for fitness measurements. Efficiency of *Vamp33*
699 silencing and tick attachment, weight, and survival curves for **(B-E)** *I. scapularis,* **(F-I)** *A.*
700 *americanum* and **(J-M)** *D. variabilis.* Graphs represent at least three independent experiments
701 combined. Statistical significance shown as *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ns = not significant was
702 assessed by *t* test **(B, F, J)**; Fisher's exact test **(C, G, K)**; Mann Whitney test **(D, H, L)**; and Log-
703 rank (Mantel-Cox) test **(E, I, M)**.

704

705 **Figure 2: Tick EVs alter epidermal immune surveillance. (A)** Schematic representation of
706 the DETC-keratinocyte crosstalk at the skin epidermis. **(B-F, H)** *I. scapularis scV33* (blue) or
707 *siV33* (red) ticks were placed on C57BL/6 mice and allowed to feed for 3 days. On day 3,
708 biopsies were taken from the skin at the bite site and compared to the naïve treatment (gray).
709 **(B)** DETC (Vγ5), **(C)** JAML, **(D)** NKG2D, **(E)** CD69, **(F)** CD25, and **(H)** CD100 cells were
710 assessed by flow cytometry. Graphs represent 1 of 3 independent experiments. **(G)** Epidermis
711 containing Langerhans cells (red), DETCs (green), and keratinocytes (white) imaged on day 3
712 after injection with phosphate buffered saline (PBS - mock) or EV ($4x10^7$ particles) into the
713 mouse ear. Cytochalasin D (100 µg) was applied topically on the mouse ear every 24 hours for
714 2 days to induce DETC rounding as a positive control. Langerhans cells, DETCs and epithelial
715 cells were simultaneously visualized in the *huLangerin-CreER; Rosa-stop-tdTomato; CX3CR1-*
716 *$GFP^{+/-}$; K14-H2B-Cerulean* mouse strain. Cre expression was induced with an intraperitoneal
717 injection of tamoxifen (2 mg). Images from one out of three independent experiments. Statistical
718 significance shown as *p<0.05, ns = not significant. Data are presented as a mean with

719 standard deviation. Significance was measured by One-way ANOVA followed by Tukey's *post*
720 *hoc* test.
721
722 **Figure 3: Epidermally-enriched scRNA-seq of the tick bite site. (A)** Overview of the
723 experimental design. *ScV33* and *siV33 I. scapularis* nymphs were placed on FVB-Jackson
724 (FVB-Jax) or FVB-Taconic (FVB-Tac) mice and fed for 3 days. Skin biopsies at the bite site were
725 digested with dispase and collagenase for epidermal cell isolation. Cells were sorted and
726 prepared for scRNA-seq. **(B)** Composite tSNE plot of keratinocyte, T cell and antigen presenting
727 cells in FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac mice in the presence or absence of *I. scapularis* nymphs
728 microinjected with *scV33* or *siV33*. tSNE plot represents 5,172 total cells following filtration as
729 described in the materials and methods. **(C)** Heatmap depicting expression of the top 5 marker
730 genes present in clusters from the epidermally enriched tSNE plot clusters (as shown in **B**). **(D-**
731 **I)** Individual tSNE plots separated by mouse strain (FVB-Jax or FVB-Tac) in the presence or
732 absence of *I. scapularis* nymphs microinjected with *scV33* or *siV33*.
733
734 **Figure 4: Impact of tick EVs on wound healing circuitry. (A)** Composite tSNE plot of
735 keratinocytes in FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac mice in the presence or absence of *I. scapularis* nymphs
736 microinjected with *scV33* or *siV33*. **(B)** Cells colored by clusters originated from the keratinocyte
737 tSNE plot (as shown in **A**) ordered across pseudotime (x-axis) for naïve, *scV33*-, and *siV33*-tick
738 bites of FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac mice. **(C)** Dot plot of the top 5 marker genes present in the
739 keratinocyte clusters (as shown in **A**). Average gene expression is demarked by the intensity of
740 color. Percent of gene expression within individual clusters is represented by the dot diameter.
741 **(D)** Expression of *Col1a1* across treatments ordered across pseudotime (x-axis) for naïve,
742 *scV33*-, and *siV33*-tick bites of FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac mice. **(E)** Enriched pathways in the
743 unidentified cell cluster based on functional annotation in DAVID. Fold enrichment is indicated in
744 a Log2 scale. *p value and false discovery rate (FDR)<0.05 were set as threshold. KEGG, GO

745 and InterPro were used as reference annotation databases. **(F)** Ingenuity pathway analysis
746 comparing keratinocytes of skin biopsies from FVB-Jax *siV33* to FVB-Jax *scV33*. Blue denotes
747 pathways predicted to be inhibited (negative z-score) whereas orange indicates pathways
748 predicted to be activated (positive z-score) based on default parameters. Differential expression
749 datasets were assessed for canonical pathway analysis. Results are shown in a -log (*p*-value)
750 scale. **p* value and FDR< 0.05 were set as threshold. **(G)** Volcano plot of genes representing
751 the wound healing signaling pathway in keratinocytes of FVB-Jax *siV33* compared to FVB-Jax
752 *scV33* datasets (highlighted in yellow; **F**). Blue denotes decrease whereas red indicates
753 increase in the coefficient (coef) of expression.
754
755 **Figure 5: Tick EVs impact keratinocyte proliferation. (A)** Ingenuity pathway analysis derived
756 from *siV33* compared to the bite of *scV33* ticks on FVB-Jax or FVB-Tac mice. Canonical
757 pathways predicted to be inhibited (blue, negative z-score) or activated (orange, positive z-
758 score) based on differential expression profile. The solid line indicates the *p* value significance
759 threshold of 0.05 (-log=1.3). **(B)** The signaling cascade of EIF2 (highlighted in yellow, **A**),
760 yielding (→) or inhibitory (┤) arrows. Orange indicates activation whereas blue shows inhibition
761 according to the IPA prediction. Gene expression based on the scRNA-seq experiment is
762 indicated in red (increased) or green (decreased). Gray – denotes no expression or prediction.
763 **(C)** *ScV33* (circle) or *siV33* (square) injected *I. scapularis* nymphs were fed on FVB-Jax (white)
764 or FVB-Tac (gray) mice for 3 days. Biopsies were taken from the skin at the bite site and
765 assessed for EpCAM$^+$ Ki67$^+$ keratinocytes by flow cytometry. **(D-H)** *ScV33* or *siV33* ticks fed on
766 C57BL/6 mice for 3 days. Biopsies were taken from the skin at the bite site and processed for
767 flow cytometry analysis. **(D)** PI3K p85$^+$, and **(E)** phospho-PI3K p85/p55$^+$. **(F)** ELISA analysis of
768 KGF levels normalized to total protein per 5 mm skin punch biopsy. **(G)** ELISA analysis of TGF-
769 β levels normalized to total protein per 5 mm skin punch biopsy. **(H)** EpCAM$^+$ Smad7$^+$
770 keratinocytes assessed by flow cytometry. **(I)** EpCAM$^+$ Ki67$^+$ keratinocytes assessed by flow

771 cytometry. Graph displays proliferation changes within the *scV33* or *siV33* treatments compared
772 to the naïve skin. **(C-I)** Significance was measured by One-way ANOVA followed by Tukey's
773 post hoc test. **(J-K)** Flow cytometry histogram plots of $EpCAM^+$ $Ki67^+$ keratinocytes. **(J)** *scV33*
774 or **(K)** *siV33* treatments displayed according to the number of ticks bitten per biopsy. X-axis
775 shows fluorescence intensity, and the Y-axis indicates the count of events in the fluorescence
776 channel. All experiments have statistical significance shown as ***$p<0.001$, **$p<0.01$, *$p<0.05$,
777 ns = not significant. Data are presented as a mean with standard deviation.

Supplementary Figure Legends

Supplementary Figure 1: DETC flow cytometry gating strategy. 5 mm skin punch biopsies were obtained from the bite of ticks and compared to the naïve skin followed by flow cytometry analysis. Representative flow cytometry plots were gated for **(A)** DETCs ($Vy5^+$) and **(B)** DETC co-receptors ($JAML^+$, $NKG2D^+$, $CD25^+$, $CD69^+$, $CD100^+$ or $CD44^+$).

Supplementary Figure 2: ScRNA-seq data filtration. Composite datasets of FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac samples included 20,640 cells **(A)** before filtration by scran (R package). **(B)** tSNE plot of fixed threshold filtration, set to 2500-60,000 UMIs. **(C)** Doublet finder (R package) of dataset. tSNE was colored by the doublet score. **(D)** tSNE plot after fixed threshold filtration and doublet finder analysis.

Supplementary Figure 3: Expression of keratinocyte-specific markers. (A) Graphical illustration of keratinocyte stratified layers with select marker genes. tSNE of keratinocyte clusters depicting gene expression of **(B)** *Krt14*, **(C)** *Krt5*, **(D)** *Krt1*, **(E)** *Krt10* and **(F)** *Ivl*.

Supplementary Figure 4: Expression of hair follicle-specific markers. (A) Graphical illustration of hair follicle microanatomy with select marker genes. tSNE of keratinocyte clusters depicting gene expression of **(B)** *Shh*, **(C)** *Krt75*, **(D)** *Lgr5*, **(E)** *Mgst1* and **(F)** *Krt79*.

Supplementary Figure 5: Epidermal cell type characterization. Cluster frequency of keratinocytes, antigen presenting and T cells in **(A)** FVB-Jax and **(B)** FVB-Tac mice in the presence or absence of *I. scapularis* nymphs microinjected with *scV33* or *siV33*. **(C)** Violin plot displaying the expression of the TCR-Vδ1 gene, *Trdv4*, in the epidermal T cell cluster of naïve FVB-Jax and FVB-Tac mice. Significance shown as $*p<0.05$ based on a permutation test using R statistical packages.

804

805 **Supplementary Figure 6: Keratinocyte-specific markers along pseudotime trajectory. (A)**
806 *Krt14*, **(B)** *Krt1*, and **(C)** *Ivl* gene expression along pseudotime values (x axis) for naïve, *scV33*-,
807 or *siV33*-tick bites on FVB-Jax or FVB-Tac mice. Cells colored by clusters from keratinocyte
808 tSNE plot (as shown in Figure **4D**) ordered across the pseudotime (x-axis).

809

810 **Supplementary Figure 7: Individual tSNE plots of keratinocyte clusters**. Subclustering
811 analysis of keratinocytes across samples: **(A)** FVB-Jax, **(B)** FVB-Jax *scV33*, **(C)** FVB-Jax *siV33*,
812 **(D)** FVB-Tac, **(E)** FVB-Tac *scV33*, and **(F)** FVB-Tac *siV33*.

813

814 **Supplementary Figure 8: Flow cytometry gating strategy in keratinocytes.** 5 mm punch
815 biopsies were obtained from the bite site of ticks or naïve skin and processed for flow cytometry.
816 Representative flow cytometry plots were gated for **(A)** EpCAM$^+$ keratinocytes, **(B)** Ki67$^+$, **(C)**
817 Anti-rabbit IgG$^+$ for PI3K and Smad7, and **(D)** p-PI3K$^+$ keratinocytes.

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1069

1070 **Supplementary Table 1:** Primers and siRNA sequences

Target	Type	Location Within mRNA	SiRNA/Primer Name	Strand	Primer Sequence
I. scapularis Vamp33	siRNA	Start at 300	Vamp33SiF	Forward	AAGGACACAGTGTGGAGAGATCCTGTCTC
			Vamp33SiR	Reverse	AAATCTCTCCACACTGTGTCCCCTGTCTC
	Scrambled		Vamp33ScF	Forward	AAGTGAGGGACGCATAGTAGACCTGTCTC
			Vamp33ScR	Reverse	AATCTACTATGCGTCCCTCACCCTGTCTC
	qRT-PCR	Start at 76	Vamp33qR-F	Forward	TCATACCTGAAGTTGTCCAA
		Start at 180	Vamp33qR-R	Reverse	CTCAAGAATGCCACTGTTG
D. variabilis Vamp33	siRNA	Start at 280	Vamp33Derm-SiF	Forward	AACCGGATGGTGATGTTAATCCCTGTCTC
			Vamp33Derm-SiR	Reverse	AAGATTAACATCACCATCCGGCCTGTCTC
	Scrambled		Vamp33Derm-ScF	Forward	AAGCCTCAGGTGGAATTAGTTCCTGTCTC
			Vamp33Derm-ScR	Reverse	AAAACTAATTCCACCTGAGGCCCTGTCTC
	qRT-PCR	Start at 78	Vamp33DqR-2F	Forward	TCACCTAAAGTTGTCCAACCC
		Start at 160	Vamp33DqR-2R	Reverse	TCAAGGATTCCACTGTTGGG
	qRT-PCR	Start at 64	Vamp33DqR-F	Forward	GACGTGGTTACTTCTCACCTAAA
		Start at 148	Vamp33DqR-R	Reverse	CTGTTGGGCCGTACACAATA
A. americanum Vamp33	siRNA	Start at 280	Vamp33AA-SiF	Forward	AACCAGATGGTGATGTGAACCCCTGTCTC
			Vamp33AA-SiR	Reverse	AAGGTTCACATCACCATCTGGCCTGTCTC
	Scrambled		Vamp33AA-ScF	Forward	AAGGGTGCTAACACGGACTTACCTGTCTC
			Vamp33AA-ScR	Reverse	AATAAGTCCGTGTTAGCACCCCCTGTCTC
	qRT-PCR	Start at 76	Vamp33AA qR-F	Forward	TCTCATCTAAAGCTTTCCAACCC
		Start at 160	Vamp33AA qR-R	Reverse	AAGGATGCCACTGTTGGG
I. scapularis β-actin	qRT-PCR	Start at 618	ActinIS 2F	Forward	GGTCATCACAATCGGCAAC
		Start at 742	ActinIS *2*R	Reverse	ATGGAGTTGTACGTGGTCTC
A. americanum β-actin	qRT-PCR	Start at 285	ActinAA F	Forward	GTCATGGTCGGCATGGG
		Start at 365	ActinAA R	Reverse	ATGCCGTGCTCAATGGG
D. variabilis β-actin	qRT-PCR	Start at 798	ActinIS 2F	Forward	GGTCATCACAATCGGCAAC
		Start at 905	ActinIS *2*R	Reverse	ATGGAGTTGTACGTGGTCTC

1071

1072 **Supplementary Table 2:** Cell markers

Cell type	Cell population	Gene	Ensembl
Antigen presenting cells	All	*H2-Aa*	ENSMUSG00000036594
		H2-Ab1	ENSMUSG00000073421
	Langerhans	*Cd207*	ENSMUSG00000034783
	Dendritic cells	*Itgax*	ENSMUSG00000030789
		Cd80	ENSMUSG00000075122
		Cd86	ENSMUSG00000022901
		Ly75	ENSMUSG00000026980
		Cd209a	ENSMUSG00000031494
	Macrophage	*Adgre1*	ENSMUSG00000004730
		Itgam	ENSMUSG00000030786
Keratinocytes	Undifferentiated (Stratum basale)	*Krt5*	ENSMUSG00000061527
		Krt14	ENSMUSG00000045545
		Krt15	ENSMUSG00000054146
	Differentiating (Stratum spinosum)	*Krt 1*	ENSMUSG00000046834
		Krt2	ENSMUSG00000064201
		Krt10	ENSMUSG00000019761
	Terminally differentiated (Stratum granulosum)	*Ivl*	ENSMUSG00000049128
		Flg	ENSMUSG00000102439
	Corneocytes (Stratum corneum)	*Klk5*	ENSMUSG00000074155
T cells	All	*Cd3d*	ENSMUSG00000032094
		Cd3e	ENSMUSG00000032093
		Cd3g	ENSMUSG00000002033
	αβ T cell	*Trac*	ENSMUSG00000076928
		Trbc1	ENSMUSG00000076490

		Trbc2	ENSMUSG00000076498
		CD4	ENSMUSG00000023274
		CD8a	ENSMUSG00000053977
	γδ T cell	*Trdc*	ENSMUSG00000104876
		Tcrg-C1	ENSMUSG00000076749
		Tcrg-C2	ENSMUSG00000076752
		Tcrg-C4	ENSMUSG00000076757
	DETCs	*Trdv4*	ENSMUSG00000076867
		Sema4d	ENSMUSG00000021451
		Jaml	ENSMUSG00000048534
		Klrk1	ENSMUSG00000030149
Endothelial		*Cldn5*	ENSMUSG00000041378
		Cdh5	ENSMUSG00000031871
		Egfl7	ENSMUSG00000026921
Fibroblasts		*Dcn*	ENSMUSG00000019929
		Fgf2	ENSMUSG00000037225
		Fgf7	ENSMUSG00000027208
Hair follicle	Upper hair follicle	*Krt79*	ENSMUSG00000061397
		Krt17	ENSMUSG00000035557
	Sebaceous gland	*Mgst1*	ENSMUSG00000008540
		Scd1	ENSMUSG00000037071
	Outer bulge	*Postn*	ENSMUSG00000027750
		Lgr5	ENSMUSG00000020140
	Inner bulge	*Krt6a*	ENSMUSG00000058354
		Krt75	ENSMUSG00000022986
	Base of follicle	*Shh*	ENSMUSG00000002633
	Hair germ	*Gli1*	ENSMUSG00000025407
Melanocytes		*Dct*	ENSMUSG00000022129

		Mlana	ENSMUSG00000024806
		Tyr	ENSMUSG00000004651
Red blood cells		*Hbb-bs*	ENSMUSG00000052305
		Hbb-bt	ENSMUSG00000073940
Schwann cells		*Mal*	ENSMUSG00000027375
		Plp1	ENSMUSG00000031425
		Sox10	ENSMUSG00000033006
Smooth muscle cells		*Acta2*	ENSMUSG00000035783
		Myh11	ENSMUSG00000018830
		Myl9	ENSMUSG00000067818
		Myocd	ENSMUSG00000067818
		Rgs5	ENSMUSG00000026678

1073

1074 **Supplementary Table 3**: Resources and reagents available

Antibody	Source	Identifier	Dilution/ Concentration
7-AAD Viability Staining Solution	Biolegend	420404	1:500
Zombie Violet Fixable Live Dead stain	Biolegend	423113	1:500
Zombie NIR Fixable Live Dead stain	Biolegend	423105	1:500
Anti-mouse CD16/32 Antibody	Biolegend	156603	1:500
APC anti-mouse CD45 Antibody clone: 30-F11	Biolegend	103111	1:100
FITC anti-mouse CD3 Antibody clone:17A2	Biolegend	100203	1:100
BV650 anti-mouse Vy3 Antibody clone: 536	BD	743241	1:50
PE Mouse Anti-Rat IgM clone:G53-238	BD	553888	1:100
Monoclonal antibody 17D1	Adrian Hayday, Kings College London and Robert Tigelaar, Yale University	N/A	1:50
PE/Cyanine7 anti-mouse CD45 Antibody clone: 30-F11	Biolegend	103114	1:100
APC anti-mouse Thy1.2 Antibody clone: 30-H12	Biolegend	105312	1:100
PE anti-mouse JAML Antibody clone: 4E10	Biolegend	128503	1:100
BV711 anti-mouse CD100 Antibody clone: BMA-12	BD	745492	1:100
PE/Cyanine5 anti-mouse CD44 Antibody clone: IM7	Biolegend	103010	1:100
APC/Cyanine7 anti-mouse CD25 Antibody clone: PC61	Biolegend	102026	1:100
PerCP/Cyanine5.5 anti-mouse CD69 Antibody clone: H1.2F3	Biolegend	104522	1:100
APC anti-mouse CD314 (NKG2D) Antibody clone: CX5	Biolegend	130212	1:100
Alexa Fluor 700 anti-mouse Ki-67 Antibody clone: 16A8	Biolegend	652420	1:50
BV711 anti-mouse CD326 (Ep-CAM) Antibody clone: G8.8	Biolegend	118233	1:100
PE anti-mouse CD200 Antibody clone: OX-90	Biolegend	123807	1:100
PE/Cyanine5 anti-mouse CD34 Antibody clone: MEC14.7	Biolegend	119312	1:100
BV605 anti-mouse Sca1 Antibody clone: D7	Biolegend	108133	1:100

PE anti-mouse CD49f Antibody clone: GoH3	Biolegend	313612	1:100
FITC Phospho-PI3K p85/p55 (Tyr458, Tyr199) Monoclonal Antibody clone: PI3KY458-1A11	ThermoFisher Scientific	MA5-36955	1:50
PI3K p85α Monoclonal Antibody clone: SU04-07	ThermoFisher Scientific	MA5-41128	1:50
Alexa Fluor 405 Goat anti-Rabbit IgG (H+L) Secondary Antibody	ThermoFisher Scientific	A-31556	1:100
Anti-MADH7/SMAD7 polyclonal antibody	Abcam	ab216428	1:100

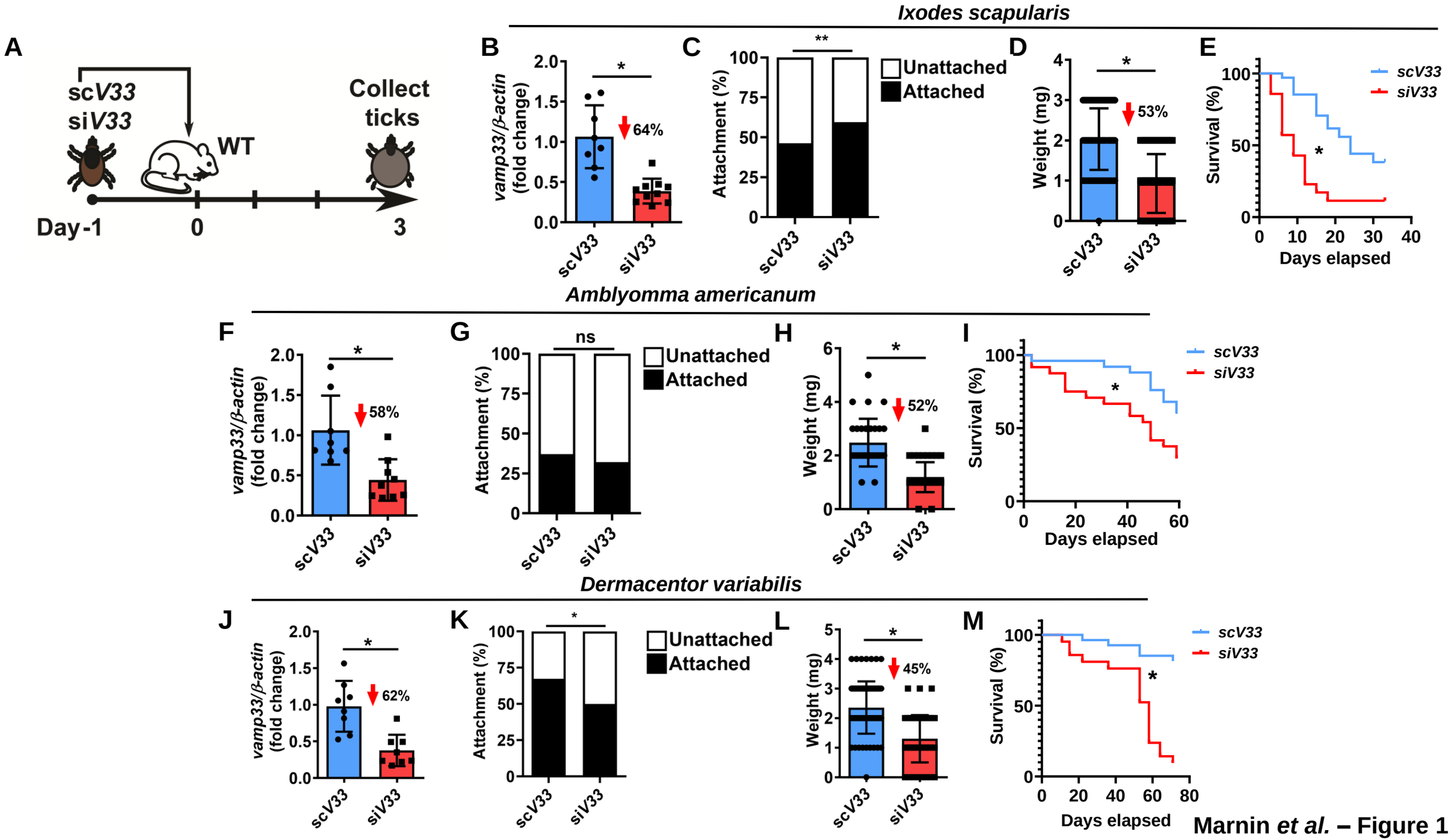
Cell media			
Leibovitz's L-15 Medium, powder	Gibco	41300039	N/A
L-aspartic acid	Millipore-Sigma	11189	0.449 g/L
L-glutamine	Millipore-Sigma	G8540	0.500 g/L
L-proline	Millipore-Sigma	81709	0.450 g/L
L-glutamic acid	Millipore-Sigma	49449	0.250 g/L
α-ketoglutaric acid	Millipore-Sigma	K1128	0.449 g/L
Sodium hydroxide	Millipore-Sigma	S8045	10 N
D-glucose	Millipore-Sigma	G7021	18.018 g/L
FBS (USDA approved; for tick media)	Millipore-Sigma	F0926-500ML	0.1
Bacto™ Tryptose Phophate Broth	BD	260300	5%
Lipoprotein Concentrate	MP Biomedicals	191476	0.1%
Corning® 100 mL Penicillin-Streptomycin Solution, 100x	Corning	30-002-CI	1:100
Amphotericin B	Gibco	15290-026	1:100
Distilled water	Gibco	15-230-147	N/A
Materials			
Cell culture plate with lid (6 well, flat bottom)	Sigma	SIAL0516	N/A

Cellstart®, 96 well cell culture plate, F-bottom	Greiner bio-one	655 160	N/A
Costar® cell culture plate with lid (24 well, flat bottom)	Corning	CLS3526-1EA	N/A
Nunc™ 96-Well Polystyrene Round Bottom Microwell Plates	Thermo Scientific	262162	N/A
Vannas spring scissors, 4 mm cutting edge straight	Fine Science	15018-10	N/A
Integra Miltex 2 mm biopsy punches	Integra	95039-098	N/A
Integra Miltex 5 mm biopsy punches	Integra	33-35	N/A
AcuPunch biopsy punches 10 mm	Acuderm	P1050	N/A
FALCON® 14 ml Polypropylene round-bottom tube	Corning	352059	N/A
Corning® cell strainer size 40 µm, blue, sterile	Corning	431750	N/A
Falcon 5 mL Round Bottom Polystyrene Test Tube, with Cell Strainer Snap Cap	Corning	352235	N/A
12x75mm Plastic Tubes	Globe Scientific	110441	N/A
1.5 mL Eppendorf Safe-Lock Tubes	USA Scientific	1615-5500	N/A
1.5ml Microcentrifuge Tubes with Socket Screw Caps	VWR	525-1238	N/A
Lo-bind tubes	Eppendorf	22431048	N/A
Vannas Spring Scissors - 4mm	Fine Science Tools	15018-10	N/A
Reagents			
Trypsin/Lys-C Mix, Mass Spec Grade	Promega	V5071	N/A
Bovine Serum Albumin	Millipore-Sigma	A2058-5G	N/A
BenchMark™ FBS	Gemini Bio-products	100-106	1:10
Methanol anhydrous, 99.8%	Millipore-Sigma	322415-1L	0-20%
Ethyl alconol, Pure; 200 proof for molecular biology	Millipore-Sigma	E7023-1L	1:1
TRIzol reagent	Ambion	15596018	N/A
Liberase™ TL Research Grade	Roche	5401020001	10%
RPMI-1640 with L-Glutamine	Quality Biological	722461	N/A

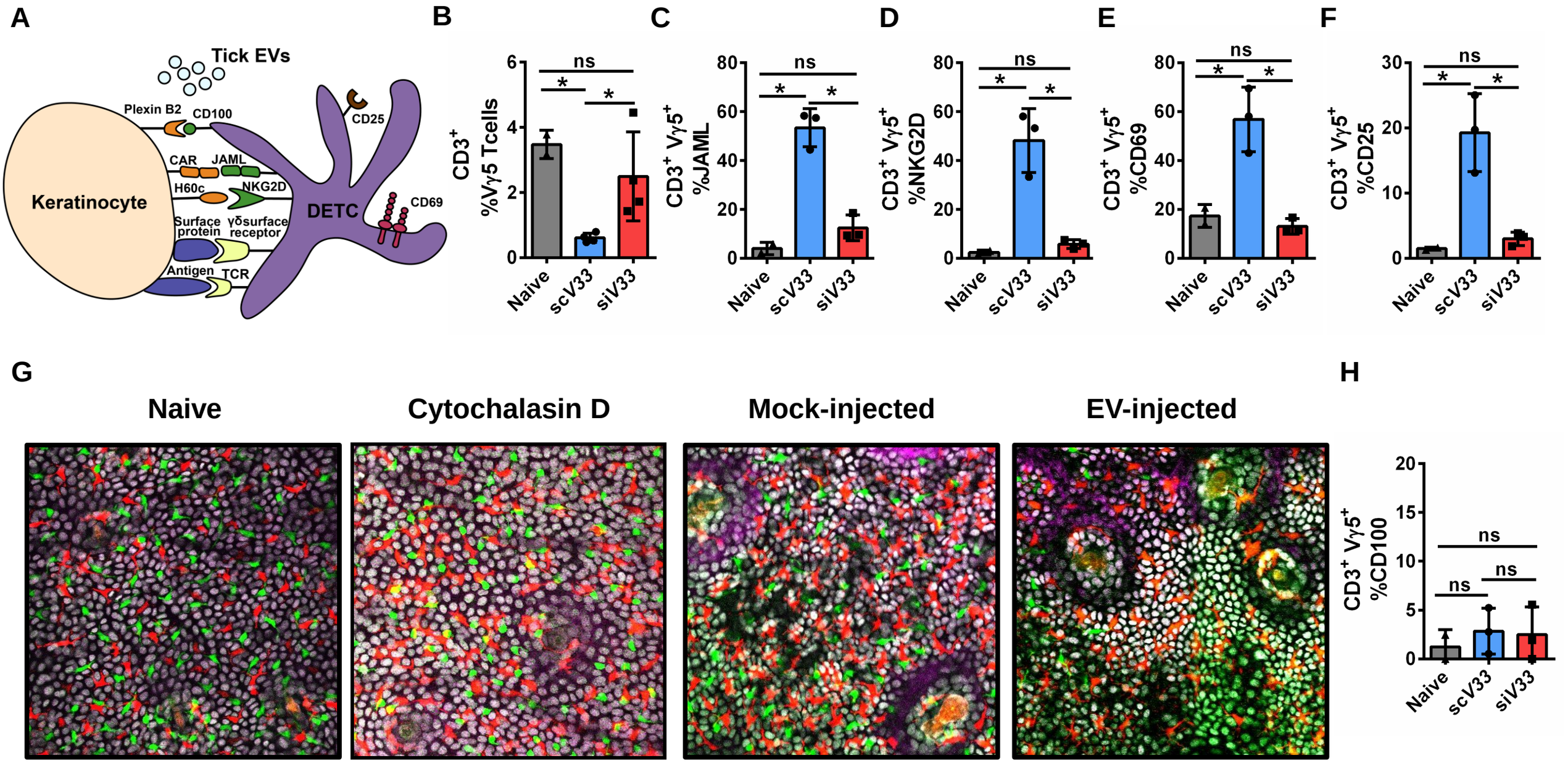
DNase I	Roche	11284932001	N/A
10X Phosphate-buffered saline (PBS)	Quality Biological	119-069-131	1X
Phosphate-buffered saline (PBS)	Gibco	10010-023	N/A
0.5M Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA), pH 8.0	Boston BioProducts	BM-150	N/A
Sodium azide (NaN3)	Sigma-Aldrich	S2002-25G	N/A
Paraformaldehyde	Thermo Fisher Scientific	J61899-AP	N/A
RIPA lysis buffer	Millipore	20-188	1X
Halt Protease Inhibitor Cocktail	Thermo Fisher Scientific	87786	1X
Halt™ Phosphatase Inhibitor Cocktail	Thermo Fisher Scientific	78420	1X
Dispase II	Sigma-Aldrich	D4693-1G	NA
Dispase	Gibco	17105-041	4 U/mL
Magnesium chloride (MgCl2)	Sigma-Aldrich	M2393-100G	5mM
Calcium chloride (CaCl2)	Sigma-Aldrich	C1016-100G	0.4mM
Collagenase D	Sigma-Aldrich	11088866001	2.5mg/mL
Gum rosin	Millipore-Sigma	60895	75% (3/4 parts)
Beeswax	Thermo Fisher Scientific	S25192A	25% (1/4 parts)
Cytochalasin D	Sigma-Aldrich	C8273	1:100
Commercial Assays			
Pure Link RNA mini kit	Ambion	12183025	N/A
Silencer™ siRNA Construction Kit	Thermo Scientific	AM1620	N/A
Verso cDNA Synthesis Kit	Thermo Scientific	AB-1453B	N/A
Pierce BCA Protein Assay Kit	Thermo Scientific	23227	N/A
DNeasy® Blood and Tissue kit	Qiagen	69506	N/A

FOXP3 Fix/Perm Buffer Set	BioLegend	421403	N/A
Human KGF/FGF-7 Quantikine ELISA Kit	R&D Systems	DKG00	NA
Human/Mouse/Rat/Porcine/Canine TGF-β 1 ELISA – Quantikine kit	R&D Systems	DB100C	NA
Organisms			
Ixodes scapularis adult partially fed female ticks	Albert Mulenga, Texas A&M University	N/A	N/A
Ixodes scapularis adult partially fed female ticks	Adela Oliva Chavez, Texas A&M University	N/A	N/A
Ixodes scapularis nymph ticks	Jon Oliver and Ulrike Munderloh, University of Minnesota	N/A	N/A
Ixodes scapularis nymph ticks	Tick Lab, Oklahoma State University	N/A	N/A
Amblyomma americanum nymph ticks	Tick Lab, Oklahoma State University	N/A	N/A
Dermacentor variabilis nymph ticks	Tick Lab, Oklahoma State University	N/A	N/A
C57BL6J (WT) mice	University of Maryland	N/A	N/A
C57BL6J (WT) mice	Jackson Laboratories	#000664	N/A
FVB/NJ mice	The Jackson Laboratory	001800	N/A
FVB/NTac mice	Taconic Biosciences	N/A	N/A
Equipment			
CFX96 Touch Real-Time PCR Detection System	Biorad	N/A	N/A
Nanoject III	Drummond Scientific Company	3-000-207	N/A
NanoSight NS300	Malvern Panalytical	N/A	N/A
Percival I30BLL incubator	Percival	I30BLL	N/A
Software			
GraphPad Prism v9.1.2	https://www.graphpad.com/	N/A	N/A
GraphPad Quick Cals Outlier Calculator	https://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/Grubbs1.cfm	N/A	N/A

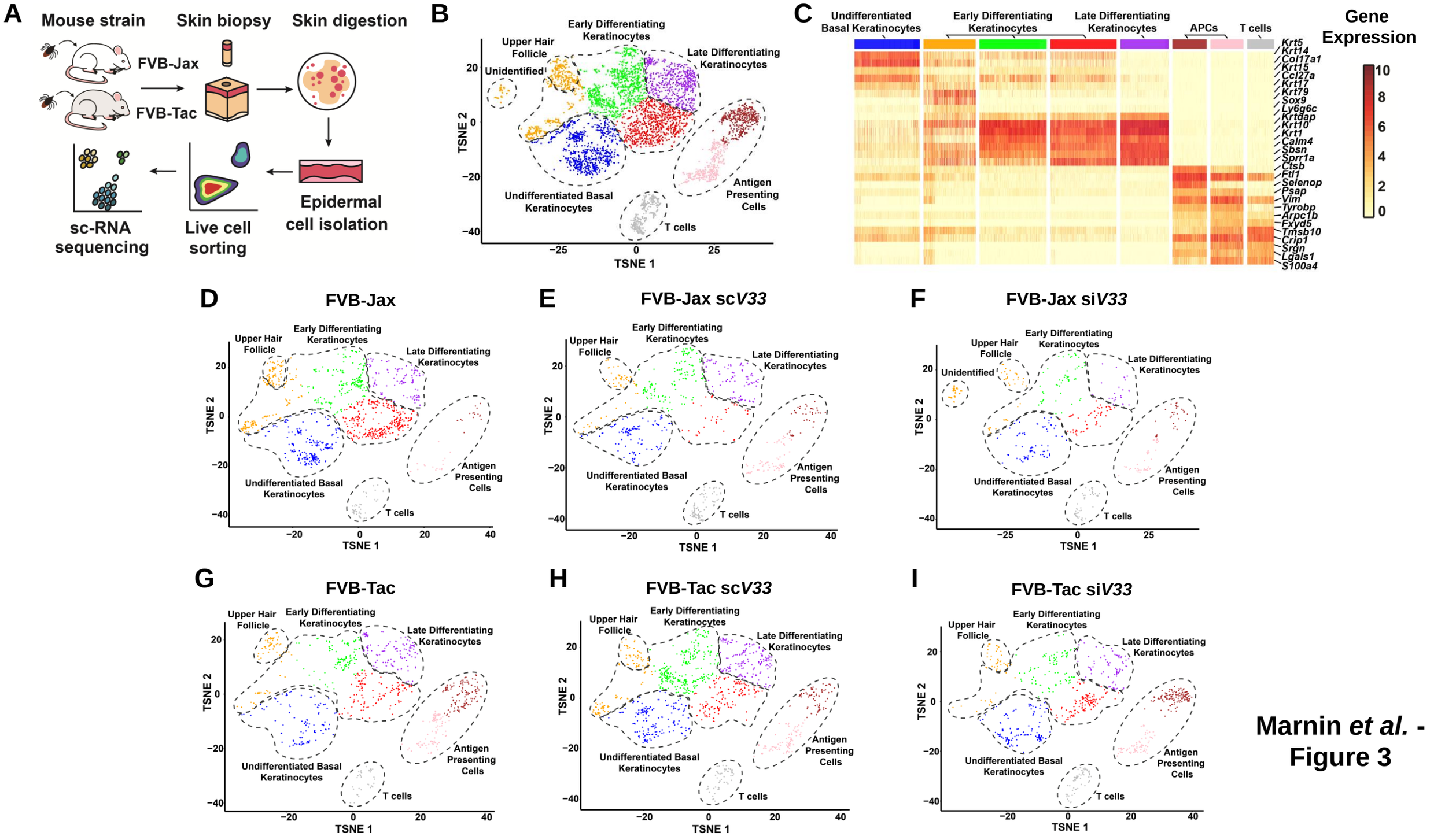
FlowJo (v10.6.1 – 10.8.1)	https://www.flowjo.com/	N/A	N/A
QIAGEN Ingenuity Pathway Analysis	https://digitalinsights.qiagen.com/products-overview/discovery-insights-portfolio/analysis-and-visualization/qiagen-ipa/	N/A	N/A
Database for Annotation, Visualization and Integrated Discovery (DAVID) (version 2021)	https://david.ncifcrf.gov/	N/A	N/A



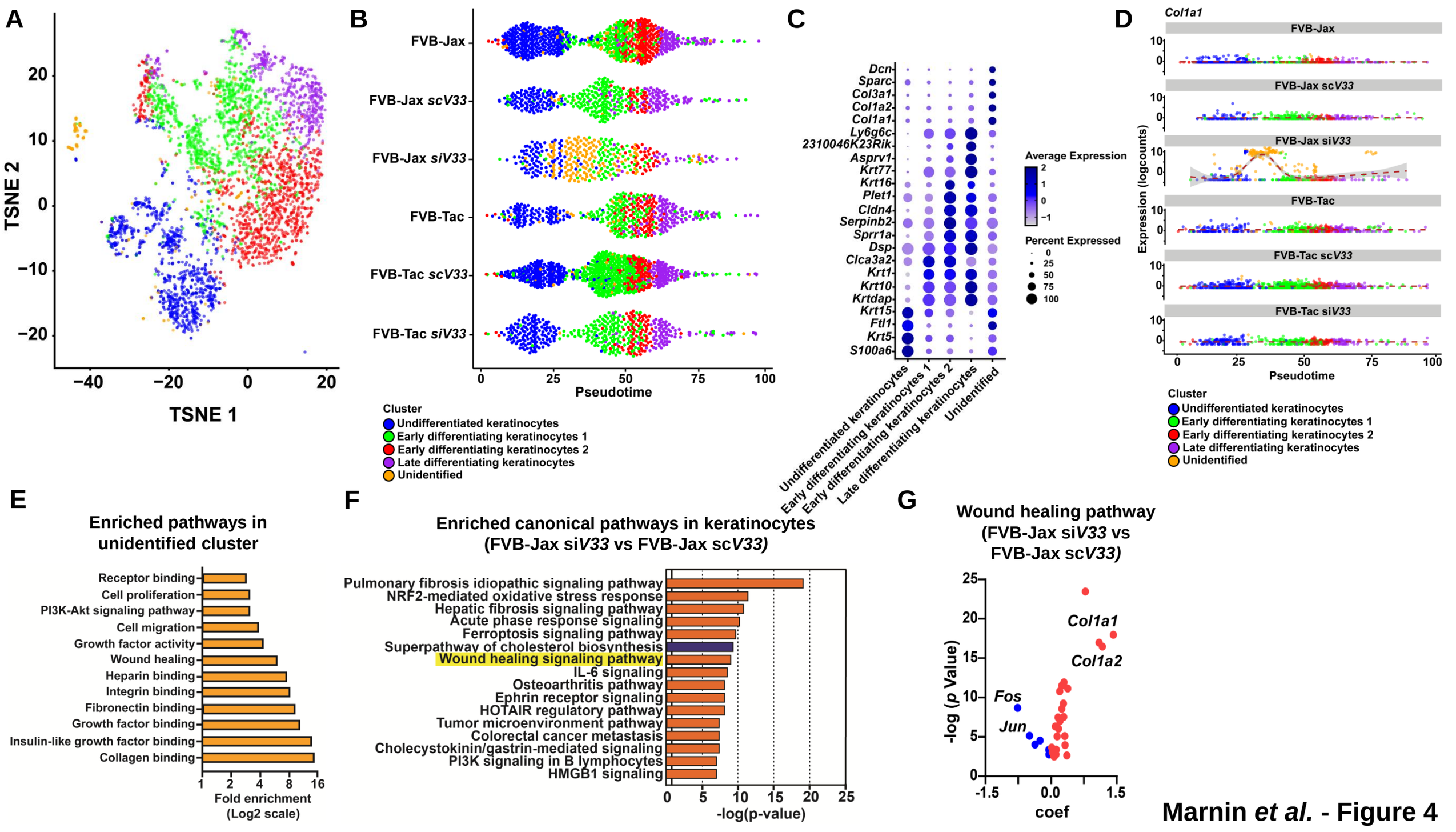
Marnin *et al.* – Figure 1



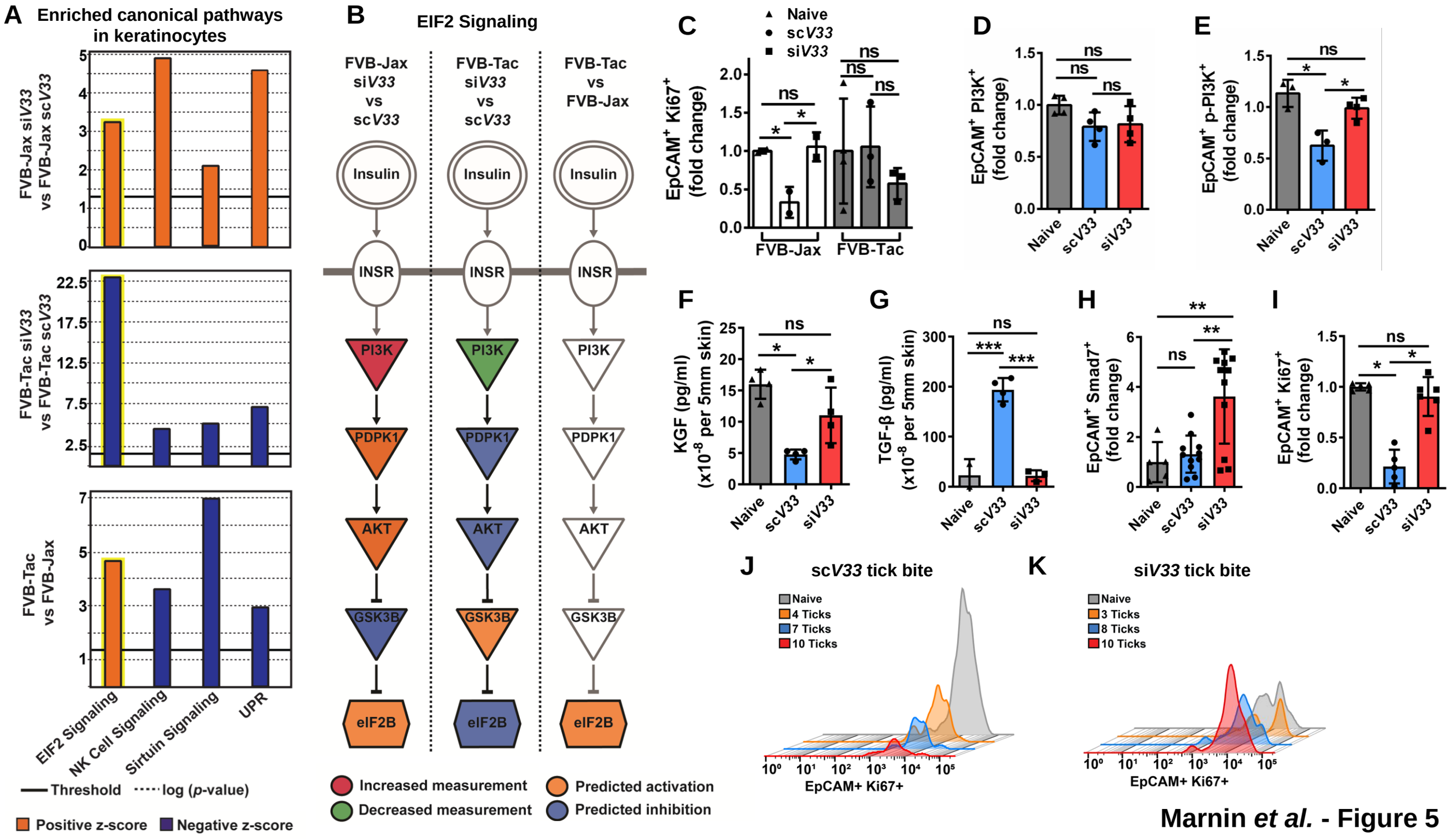
Marnin *et al.* – Figure 2



Marnin *et al.* - Figure 3



Marnin *et al.* - Figure 4



Marnin *et al.* - Figure 5