Decoding critical targets and signaling pathways in EBV-mediated diseases

using large language models

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Abstract

Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), a member of the gamma-herpesvirus, is the first identified human oncovirus and is associated with various malignancies. Understanding the intricate interactions between EBV antigens and cellular pathways is crucial to unravel the molecular mechanisms in EBV-mediated diseases. However, fully elucidating EBV-host interactions and the associated pathogenesis remains a significant challenge. In this study, we utilized large language models (LLMs) to screen 36,105 EBV-relevant scientific publications, presenting a descriptive overview of the interactions between EBV antigens and host cellular pathways through comprehensive interaction diagrams. Furthermore, we described the critical roles of EBV antigens by constructing functional subsets of host proteins targeted by EBV antigens and illustrating these interactions through protein-protein interaction (PPI) networks. Finally, our model delineates the core attributes of host proteins targeted by LMP1, providing unique insights into potential therapeutic strategies against EBV-associated diseases.

Introduction

Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) was discovered in 1964 and has infected over 90% of the world's population[1]. The oncovirus contributes to various human diseases, such as infectious mononucleosis (IM), nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC), Burkitt lymphoma (BL), Hodgkin lymphoma (HL), multiple sclerosis (MS), and so on. In the 60 years since its discovery, the intricate roles of EBV in regulating interconnected host

cellular pathways have provided valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying

EBV-related disease progression. EBV infection in human cells triggers a series of

changes in cellular biology including cell cycle transition, cell apoptosis, DNA

mismatch repair, and multiple cellular signaling pathways. Such modulations are

mediated by various EBV antigens, promoting viral latency and oncogenesis. For

instance, EBV-encoded Latent Membrane Protein 1 (LMP1) mimics CD40 signaling

via its two C-terminal activating regions, namely CTAR1 and CTAR2, which are

shown to activate both the canonical and noncanonical NF-κB pathways[2–5]. EBV

nuclear antigen 1 (EBNA1) inhibits the canonical NF-κB pathway by inhibiting the

phosphorylation of IKKα/β[6]. Although the NF-κB pathway serves as a key factor in

EBV latent infection and oncogenesis, the intricate and intertwined network of EBV

antigens and NF-κB factors presents a significant challenge for the development of

anti-EBV therapeutic strategies. Therefore, it is imperative to comprehensively

examine the current landscape of studies on EBV antigens and their interactions with

cellular signaling pathways.

Traditional literature mapping techniques, including systematic reviews and

meta-analyses, often fall short of capturing the full breadth of literature in a

biomedical field. However, the rapid development in machine learning offers

promising tools for analyzing potential key factors in EBV-mediated pathogenesis

from vast amounts of literature. A recent study characterizes the biomedical literature

into a 2D map[7]. The embedding contains 21 million papers, presenting the unlimited

possibilities of LLMs-assisted literature study. Another work introduced a knowledge

graph of the m6A regulatory pathway utilizing GPT-4 to elucidate m6A's regulatory

mechanisms in cancer phenotypes across various cancers[8]. This burgeoning

technology has catalyzed a proliferation of studies exploring its capabilities and

applications in the fields of biological and medical research, driving innovation and

prompting ongoing discourse on its potential impacts and future developments.

Our study aims to utilize LLMs for the first time to analyze decades of research

on how EBV antigens regulate cellular factors and signaling pathways. We present a

comprehensive framework of EBV antigens, their interacting host targets, and

associated pathways, constructing an extensive network that delineates virus-host

interaction. Collectively, this study offers a unique overview of current EBV-host

interactions and provides valuable insights for the development of anti-EBV

therapeutic strategies in the future.

Results

LLMs-assisted data mining reveals the key insights in EBV research

To create an appropriate dataset for information extraction, our initial dataset

comprised 36,105 EBV-related research articles available in the PubMed database as

of the start date of this project (February 28, 2024). These publications span a

temporal range of 57 years, from 1968 to 2024 (Figure 1a). Overall, there has been a

steady increase in the number of research articles related to EBV over these years,

with an average of approximately 1000 publications annually.

Next, to better characterize the current EBV studies, we summarized the available

articles into a table of PubMed ID, EBV antigens, target proteins, and the related

signaling pathways using ChatGPT-4. The returned dataset contained information

from 2,827 publications related to EBV antigen-pathway interactions and was

subsequently subjected to rigorous data reduction and filtering (Figure 1b).

Furthermore, to ensure the precision of our research and to independently study the

functionality of each factor, we deliberately excluded all studies that investigated

three or more EBV antigens. The final dataset includes 2,289 documented entries of

EBV antigens and their associated pathways, derived from 1,839 publications (Figure

1b). To validate the accuracy of the information extracted using ChatGPT, we

manually compared the GPT-4 generated summaries with the corresponding original

abstracts. The dataset selected for validation comprised 102 entries related to

EBNA3C and LMP2. Our results indicate that our prompts achieved an average

accuracy of 96.08% (Figure 1c, Table S1), demonstrating that our GPT-4-based in-

house pipeline can effectively analyze additional literature.

Analysis of EBV antigens and their impacts on cellular pathways reveals that

LMP1 is the most frequently studied antigen, followed by EBNA1, BZLF1, LMP2A,

and EBNA2, which are primarily latent or lytic proteins (Figure 1d). Notably, the

functions of LMP1 and LMP2A have consistently remained a hot research focus, with

BZLF1 and EBNA1 also receiving significant attention. Throughout the 2010s, the

significance of EBNA3C has increased, making it the fourth most studied antigen

(Figure 1e).

The most studied pathways focus on the mechanisms underlying EBV infection

(Figure 1f). Pathways involving EBV-mediated cell apoptosis are the next most

thoroughly studied areas. Abundant studies concentrate on the oncogenic mechanism

of EBV infection, mainly on how EBV antigens regulate cell cycle and replication.

The most extensively studied mechanisms include the NF-κB signaling pathway,

MAPK signaling pathway, TLR signaling pathway, PI3K/Akt signaling pathway, TNF

signaling pathway, and TGF-β signaling pathway (Figure 1f). In addition, within the

top 20 most scrutinized pathways, the B-cell-specific BCR (B-cell receptor) signaling

pathway and the antigen presentation pathways are prominently featured, which are

integral to the immune response. Other research focuses include protein modification

or DNA homologous recombination related to EBV infection. On the temporal scale,

research on cell apoptosis, NF-κB signaling pathway, cell cycle, and MAPK signaling

pathway have always been the four unyielding topics (Figure 1g), suggesting their

critical roles in EBV-mediated diseases.

Pathway mapping reveals distinct signatures of EBV antigens

To clarify the critical pathways that EBV antigens regulate, we manually

annotated the GPT-generated pathways to the KEGG pathway entries (Figure S1). The

chord diagram denotes the frequency of top 33 most studied EBV antigens and

correlated pathways, indicating an intricate and interconnected network of cellular

pathways induced by EBV infection (Figure 2a). To clearly illustrate the concentrated

interactions between EBV antigens and their related pathways, we present a chord

diagram as a heatmap. In this figure, the pathways are clustered using the maximum

linkage clustering method, and EBV antigens are arranged empirically based on their

roles in EBV latent or lytic infection (Figure 2b). We observed that EBV latent

membrane proteins, LMP1 and LMP2A, exhibit similar interaction patterns across

different host cellular pathways, although research on LMP1 has been more thorough

as previously discussed (Figure 1d). The resemblance of these two EBV antigens lies

in the shared role in their ability to reprogram host immune response through the

MAPK, PI3K/Akt, or TNF pathways, and their oncogenic functions in regulating the

p53 or PD1/PD-L1 checkpoint pathway. Despite the significant scarcity of LMP2A-

related publications compared to LMP1, the studies collectively indicate that LMP2A

contributes more to the BCR signaling pathway and the Wnt pathway than LMP1

(Figure 2b).

EBV nuclear antigens (EBNAs) contribute to the establishment and maintenance

of viral latency, especially EBNA1, which is present in all EBV latent programs

except for latency 0. EBNA1 directly binds to the host genome and is essential for the

replication and maintenance of EBV episome[1]. It also serves as a transcription factor

regulating multiple gene expression. Our analysis shows that EBNA1 differs from

other EBNAs in terms of regulating DNA replication, and oxidative phosphorylation.

EBNA2 plays a crucial role in the initial stage of EBV-mediated B-cell transformation.

Interestingly, EBNA2 has been confirmed to bind to super-enhancer sites that are

critical for the maintenance of EBV latency[9,10]. Our findings highlight the distinctive

role of EBNA2 in cAMP signaling pathways, fatty acid biosynthesis, and cell

adhesion lipid molecules, indicating its potential to facilitate B-cell transformation

and proliferation through lipid metabolism. Similar to EBNA1, EBNA3A and

EBNA3C are shown to interfere with the host genome and promote immune evasion,

cell cycle control, and inhibition of apoptosis as transcription factors. EBNALP binds

to EBNA2 and functions as a coactivator to promote the transformation of B-cells

during EBV infection[1]. For immediate-early lytic genes that are responsible for EBV

reactivation, both BZLF1 and BRLF1 are well-studied. BZLF1 activates lytic gene

expression, initiating the lytic cycle, while BRLF1 synergizes with BZLF1 to promote

lytic gene transcription, leading to viral replication and release. Studies on BZLF1

seem more diverse on multiple cellular oncogenic pathways.

Other EBV antigens have received relatively less attention compared to the

previously mentioned latent and lytic antigens (Table S2). EBV glycoproteins play

roles in infection and entry into host cells. Glycoprotein L (gL) cooperates with gH

and gB to form the infection complex, mediating EBV-cell fusion and entry.

Gene enrichment and pathway analysis uncover defining characteristics of EBV-

induced cellular modulations

To further investigate the associated diseases or pathways from the level of target

proteins, we annotated the EBV research literature on a higher resolution after

enrichment of GPT-generated target proteins using the KEGG database and the

Reactome database. Disease-wise, KEGG enrichment revealed that EBV infection

may be associated with traits typical of a wide range of diseases, including bladder

cancer, pancreatic cancer, colorectal cancer, small cell lung cancer, and others (Figure

3a). The results suggest a possible correlation between these malignant diseases and

EBV infection. Hepatitis B infection implies similarities between host response

induced by Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and EBV infections. Interestingly, HBV and

EBV are both oncogenic DNA viruses capable of directly interacting with the host

genome[11,12]. This finding suggests the potential for examining the common features of

HBV and EBV infections to gain complementary insights. The results also indicate a

possible link between immune compromise induced by Chronic Myeloid Leukemia

and EBV infection, opening up intriguing areas for future exploration. The pathways

enriched solely from target proteins and those retrieved from literature exhibit notable

similarities, with extensive studies on pathways such as apoptosis, VEGF signaling

pathway, TNF signaling pathway, Toll-like receptor signaling pathway, and IL-17

signaling pathway (Figure 3b). The last three pathways highlight the importance of

studying how innate immunity is affected by viral antigens. The IL-17 signaling

pathway triggers downstream NF-κB signaling pathway and is known to be a key

pathogenic factor of autoimmune diseases[13]. However, the relationship between the

IL-17 pathway and EBV infection remains unexplored. The high expression of IL-17

in multiple sclerosis patients could present a novel area of EBV research and provide

druggable candidates for certain autoimmune diseases.

To provide a more comprehensive overview of the functions of EBV-associated

target proteins within their host, we used the Reactome database for annotation and

identified 375 biological processes ($p<0.05$) related to EBV infection (Figure 3c).

This network shows that EBV-targeted host proteins predominantly form clusters in

approximately ten functional pathway groups. The largest clusters include innate

immunity pathways, represented by the TNF signaling pathway, Toll-like receptor

signaling cascades, and NF-κB signaling pathways. These are followed by cell growth

and differentiation pathways, exemplified by the PI3K/AKT signaling pathways and

related factors such as interleukins. Subsequently, DNA replication and mismatch

repair, along with cell cycle-related pathways, are prominently featured, particularly

those regulated by TP53. Moreover, the NOTCH signaling pathway and its regulation

of the TGF-β signaling pathways mediated by the SMAD proteins are also critical for

cell proliferation, differentiation, transitions, and apoptosis in our model of cellular

signaling crosstalk[14].

Intriguingly, we have identified some active mediators bridging the

interconnected cellular signaling crosstalk (Figure 3c). These active members include

deubiquitination and SUMOylation that regulate protein modification and proteostasis;

TP53-mediated cellular senescence on DNA replication and cell cycle; PTEN and

downstream AKT signaling activation mediated by PIP3; BCR signaling for multiple

pathways spanning the immune response to cell proliferation; Fc epsilon receptor

(FCERI) signaling for the same function. Targets related to SARS-CoV-2 infection are

enriched alongside the immune signaling pathways, suggesting a shared immune

response elicited by EBV and SARS-CoV-2. This indicates the potential for

developing broad-spectrum antivirals for both viruses by targeting shared oncogenic

factors. Additionally, more discrete, smaller clusters were identified, including the

Wnt signaling pathway, mRNA editing, as well as the unfolded protein response (UPR)

essential for maintaining cellular homeostasis and survival under conditions of protein

misfolding and ER stress.

Analysis of host protein-protein interactions identifies key mediators in EBV-
mediated diseases

To further identify critical cellular factors involved in EBV-associated diseases,

we focused on EBV-targeted host proteins independent of pathway enrichment, which

may provide insights into key target proteins. Bibliographic analysis of publications

over time reveals trends in EBV-related host proteins (Figure 4a). p53 and c-Myc are

the two most studied proteins across all periods. Genomic profiling has identified

frequent TP53[15–17] and MYC[18,19] mutations or rearrangements in EBV-positive

malignancies. CD23 and CD40 are two critical factors for EBV infection on the B-cell

membrane. Earlier studies identified that EBNA2 specifically induces CD23

expression vital for B-cell transformation[20] and verified the role of LMP1 in viral

latency maintenance via mimicry of the CD40 signaling pathways[21]. As previously

discussed in Figure 2, multiple EBV antigens including BHRF1 and LMP1 are

associated with Bcl-2 related apoptosis in lymphoma and immortalized B-cells[17,22,23].

To better characterize the pathways and networks of EBV-related host factors

described above, we annotated all the target proteins using the STRING database and

performed protein-protein interaction (PPI) analysis. The top 3 enriched clusters are

shown (Figure 4). The first PPI cluster centers around TP53 genes, apoptotic

pathways, mTOR signaling, and the MAPK pathway cascades along with gene

silencing mediated by DICER1 and m6A methylation (Figure 4b). This cluster reflects

the role of EBV in suppressing the host apoptotic pathways and related signaling

transduction pathways to promote viral latency and oncogenesis. Clinical trials and

genomic profiling studies have identified the downregulation and mutation of TP53 in

multiple EBV-associated cancers[24–27]. EBV-encoded microRNAs (EBERs) are shown

to help maintain Burkitt's lymphomas by targeting caspase 3 to inhibit apoptosis and

aid the transformation of naïve B-cells[28]. Such inhibition usually works in harmony

with other factors like Bcl-2. Besides triggering classic apoptotic pathways, EBV also

bypasses the host antiviral systems by decreasing host Dicer protein via EBNA1-

mediated microRNAs degradation[29]. Recent studies have also uncovered the role of

circular RNAs in promoting the progression of EBV-associated gastric carcinoma

through the transactivation of METTL3[30]. Along this pathway, caspases have been

found to inhibit the m6A RNA modification process, thereby promoting EBV

replication[31]. Additionally, EBV infection is known to induce TCL1 gene expression

in Burkitt's lymphoma, which also serves as an activator for the Akt pathway[32].

The second cluster highlights EBV's roles in transcriptional regulation and

epigenetic modification, particularly through transcriptional factors (TFs) (Figure 4c).

MYC is a key TF associated with multiple cancers including EBV-associated

lymphomas[33]. Moreover, MYC abundance represses EBV reactivation and controls

the lytic switch in Burkitt lymphoma[34]. 3D genome mapping of EBV-positive

lymphoblastoid cell lines (LCLs) revealed distinctive EBV super-enhancer (SE)

targets like MCL1, IRF4, and EBF[35]. Bioinformatic analysis identified that H3K27ac

SEs overlap with STAT5 and NFAT targets, indicating their roles in promoting EBV

latency[10]. On a larger scale, broad screening of TFs integrated over 700 high-

throughput sequencing datasets and provides an atlas of EBV-related transcriptomic

and epigenetic host-virus regulatory interactions[36]. These EBV-specific TFs, such as

SPI1, EBF1, and PAX5, collectively contribute to EBV-induced oncogenesis and

latency[10].

The last cluster primarily comprises factors related to the innate immune response,

including cellular receptors, cytokines, and chemokines that regulate immune cell

activation, inflammatory response, and the tumor microenvironment (TME) (Figure

4d). EBV orchestrates immune evasion by cellular receptors like CD40, CD80, IL4,

IL6, IL10 and their ligands[37,38]. For example, LMP1 mimics CD40 to activate

downstream NF-κB pathways to induce B-cell proliferation[21]. After infection, EBV

hijacks host signaling transduction factors like STATs[39,40] and IRFs[41] to promote cell

survival and proliferation. LMP1 and LMP2A then activate the JAK/STAT pathway,

to facilitate cell growth factors and anti-apoptotic signaling. Meanwhile, EBV and

other herpesviruses induce the PI3K/Akt pathway to aid viral infection, latency, and

reactivation[42]. This cluster is also rich in enzymes, multiple cellular growth factors

(CGFs), and extracellular matrix (ECM) proteins, which represent the invasiveness of

EBV-infected cells. Early research discovered that viral LMP1 and BZLF1 proteins

up-regulate the expression and activity of matrix metalloproteinase 1 (MMP1), and

thereby confer the invasive properties of the cells[43]. Besides common growth factors,

we also identified Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2 (ACE2) in this cluster. Study

indicates that the lytic replication of EBV induces ACE2 expression in human

epithelial cells, which enhances the entry of SARS-CoV-2[44].

Enrichment networks reveal the core attributes of LMP1

To validate and further refine the characterization of EBV antigen-cellular

pathway landscape, we employed our enrichment pipeline to investigate the most

studied EBV antigen, LMP1 (Figure 5a, Table S2). LMP1 is a multi-functional

membrane protein enriched in the lipid rafts of EBV-infected lymphocytes, which is

critical for EBV oncogenesis and B cell transformation. LMP1 notably enhances cell

proliferation and growth, activates numerous cellular signaling pathways, and

facilitates immune evasion. The enrichment of our dataset for LMP1 underscores its

profound impact, with related pathways representing nearly fifty percent of the critical

components mapped across all EBV antigens, particularly in areas related to cell

growth, cell cycle, and immune response (Figure S2a). A more refined analysis

focuses on the top 30 most interconnected pathways related to LMP1 (Figure 5b),

categorizing its functions into four main areas: Toll-like receptor signaling, FGR

signaling, cell cycle control via Retinoblastoma Protein (RB1), and cell apoptosis

through caspase activation. Notably, the FGR domain is split into two clusters that

distinctly address FGFR regulation in normal and disease states. Broadening our

perspective, we examined the top 100 pathways (Figure S2b). The cell growth and

cell cycle clusters converge through interactions mediated by PTK6 and signaling by

non-receptor tyrosine kinases. Meanwhile, Toll-like receptor pathways merge with the

cell growth cluster due to pathogen-induced inflammatory responses. These factors

bridging LMP1's core functional clusters could serve as potential drug candidates to

disrupt its activity.

Next, we questioned whether the pathways identified from our literature review

reflect biological processes at transcriptomic level. RNA-seq analysis indicates that

LMP1 overexpression induces differentially expressed genes (DEGs) that

predominantly constitute the LMP1-targeted pathway network (Figure 5c). The DEGs

based on literature show close interactions, demonstrating the efficacy of our analyses

(Figure 5d). To further explore the core protein factors of these host cellular pathways,

we employed the PPI analysis on the obtained LMP1 target proteins. The top three

enriched clusters encompass the apoptosis, immune response, and cell cycle-related

host factors (Figure 5e). The apoptotic cluster centers around TP53, with BCL2 and

PML showing the most differential expression. The second cluster consists of LMP1-

induced host immune response, including the interferon regulatory factors (IRFs),

TNF receptor associated factors (TRAFs), and NF-κB associated factors. The last

cluster includes various signaling transduction pathways contributing to LMP1-

induced B cell transformation marked by CD40 and STATs activation. These PPI

clusters encapsulate the current understanding of LMP1-targeted host proteins. By

strategically targeting the key factors within these networks, we could potentially

cripple the oncogenic pathways driven by LMP1, paving the way for novel

therapeutic interventions.

Discussion

This study, for the first time, presents a mapping between EBV antigens, host

factors, and cellular pathways through screening EBV-related articles using LLMs.

Beyond direct language processing and transformation through natural language

processing algorithms, this study is based on experimentally validated findings, which

adds to its credibility.

However, certain limitations in our research need to be addressed. While our

initial data pool contained 36,105 EBV-related publications, our strict prompts and

data filtering reduced this to 2,289 entries, encompassing 1,839 unique publications

(~5.1%) for downstream analyses. If loosening the criteria, we will be able to obtain

more entries for deeper analyses, although the accuracy may decrease. Secondly, our

literature study was based solely on conclusions drawn from abstracts of the available

publications. As LLM technology advances, generating summaries from complete

articles could become more cost-effective in terms of money and time. Future

analyses employing more flexible models are likely to provide a more accurate

interpretation of EBV-induced cellular changes. Lastly, although we used the

frequency of topics as a proxy for their importance in the EBV antigen-pathway

mapping, the sheer number of publications may not fully represent actual biological

significance. Future efforts may focus on using supervised machine learning

algorithms to explore the transcriptomic networks of EBV-induced cellular changes

for enhanced utility and usability.

This study represents a pioneering effort in the application of LLMs in EBV-

related research, highlighting the potential of LLMs in advancing our understanding

of viral interactions and cellular pathways. Unlike broad-scale context generation, our

study clarifies the relationships between EBV antigens and various cellular pathways,

presenting networks of EBV-related host proteins for future research. Beyond EBV,

the big data era and advancements in various LLMs underscore the urgent need for

advanced, digitized platforms in all areas of viral research. Such tools are pivotal for

accelerating research progress, advancing basic virology, and fostering the

development of novel antivirals.

Methods

Data sources

The data in this study were obtained from the PubMed database

(https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/) using EDirect[45]. The initial data collection was

performed on February 28, 2024. The final dataset comprises 36,105 EBV-related

articles, including only original articles and reviews published in English. The RNA-

seq dataset employed to investigate differentially expressed genes induced by LMP1

overexpression was obtained from the Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) database

under accession number GSE247495. Differential gene expression analysis was

conducted using the R package DESeq2 (1.40.2). Genes with an adjusted p-value

(padj) less than 0.05 and a log2 fold change greater than log2(2) were considered

significantly differentially expressed.

ChatGPT-4 prompting for publication acquisition and data processing

To ensure accuracy, we fine-tuned ChatGPT by providing it with the EBV antigen

list obtained from NCBI before submitting prompts. An example prompt is as follows:

"If the abstract concludes that EBV-encoded proteins affect another protein or

pathway, show me only the EBV protein, affected protein and pathway. If not, return

'Error' and nothing else. Keep your reply as consistent as possible. All EBV proteins

were listed before. The abstract: XXX".

To minimize costs, we initially utilized the free version GPT-3.5 Turbo via the

OpenAI API. Items not resulting in "Error" were then processed using GPT-4. Next,

we employed a combination of manual correction and synonym substitution for

invalid GPT-4 generated outputs using custom R scripts for further data cleaning.

Specifically, we standardized the naming of various aliases. For instance, "EBV

nuclear antigen 1", "EBNA1" and "EBNA-1" are all annotated as "EBNA1"; "EB2",

"Mta", "SM" and "BS-MLF1" are all annotated as "BMLF1".

GPT-4 generated data evaluation

To evaluate the accuracy of the GPT-generated results, we selected a total of 102

entries recorder for EBNA3C and LMP2 for manual inspection. The inspection

focused on the EBV antigens mentioned in the corresponding articles, the host factors

associated with these antigens, and the annotated KEGG pathways. The criteria for a

"correct result" are as follows: (1) the article clearly describes the interaction between

the EBV antigen and its corresponding host factors; (2) the article identifies the

biological changes influenced by this interaction and their relevance to the annotated

KEGG results.

Annotation from GPT summarized pathways to KEGG database

The results generated by LLMs are highly variable. To establish a unique

standard, we annotated the LLM-generated pathway outputs to the KEGG pathway

database due to its simplicity, accessibility, and widespread use within the academic

community. This mapping was performed based on our customized R script and

empirical manual substitution. A Sankey diagram shows a complete mapping of the

substitution (Figure S1).

Gene enrichment analysis

LLM-acquired target host protein annotation is performed using the R package

STRINGdb (2.12.1). Annotated IDs are submitted to UniProt for symbol conversion

(https://www.uniprot.org/). The generated list of genes of interest (GOIs) was

subjected to gene enrichment analysis using three primary tools: the KEGG database[46],

Reactome (https://reactome.org/), and STRINGdb.

Visualization

The figures were created with BioRender (https://biorender.com), the R package

wordcloud2 (0.2.1), circlize (0.4.16), or pheatmap (1.0.12) with customized scripts.

PPI network is visualized in Cytoscape (3.9.1) and colored based on protein family

types. Other visualizations are made by a combination of R packages including

ggplot2 (3.5.0), ggalluvial (0.12.5), and enrichplot (1.20.3).

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Figure legends

Figure 1. LLMs-assisted data mining reveals the key insights in EBV research. (a)

The trend of EBV-related publications in different years. (b) The pipeline in this study

is illustrated as a flowgraph. (c) Evaluation of GPT-generated output is conducted by

examining 102 entries recorded for EBNA3C and LMP2. (d) The relative frequency

of EBV antigens (log2 transformed) in our analysis is illustrated in the word cloud. (e)

Statistical analysis highlights the research focus on various EBV antigens over time,

showcasing only the four most studied antigens for each decade. (f) The relative

frequency of EBV-related pathways was shown in the word cloud. (g) Statistical

analysis highlights the research focus on various EBV-related pathways over time,

showcasing only the four most pathways for each decade.

Figure 2. Pathway mapping reveals the distinct signatures of EBV antigens. (a) The

chord diagram shows the linkage between the top 33 EBV antigens and their

corresponding pathways. (b) Heatmap view of the linkage between EBV latent or

lytic antigens and the associated pathways.

Figure 3. Gene enrichment and pathway analysis uncover defining characteristics of

EBV-induced cellular modulations. (a-b) KEGG enrichment shows the top 10 EBV-

related diseases or pathogens (a) and signaling pathways (b). (c) Reactome

enrichment maps the landscape of EBV-targeted pathways and their interactions based

on host proteins.

Figure 4. Analysis of host protein-protein interactions identifies key mediators in

EBV-mediated diseases. (a) Statistical analysis reveals the focus of study every

decade on EBV-targeted host proteins. TF, transcription factor; GPCR, G Protein-

Coupled Receptor. (b-d) Top 3 PPI networks describe the basic functional clusters of

EBV-targeted host proteins.

Figure 5. Enrichment networks reveal the core attributes of LMP1. (a) The bar plot

shows the numbers of total articles of the top 7 most studied EBV antigens. (b) The

enrichment network highlights the top 30 most highly connected LMP1-associated

pathways. (c) The enrichment network shows the active transcription of LMP1-

targeted pathways. Pathways containing LMP1-induced DEGs are highlighted. (d)

The correlation heatmap shows the relationships between genes up-regulated by

LMP1 overexpression. (e) The top 3 PPI networks demonstrate the functional clusters

of LMP1-targeted host proteins. Differentially expressed genes induced by LMP1 are

highlighted in orange.

Supplementary materials

Figure S1. The Sankey diagram illustrates the manual annotation from GPT-4

generated pathways to the corresponding formal KEGG pathway entries.

Figure S2. Enrichment networks reveal the core attributes of LMP1. (a) The

enrichment network of all LMP1 targeted host proteins (P.adjust<0.05). (b) The

enrichment network shows the top 100 most highly connected LMP1-associated

pathways.

Table S1. Validation for GPT-generated results.

Table S2. Ranking of most studied EBV antigens (with >10 related articles).

a

b

log2(associated publications)

a

Bcl-2	Bcl-2	p53	PD-L1
p53	p53	NF-kappa B	c-Myc
CD23	NF-kappa B	STAT3	BZLF1
c-Myc	c-Myc	Myc	p53
CD40	Akt	Akt	IL-6

Top 5 Most studied

1990s   2000s   2010s   2020s   Years

b

TP53-associated apoptotic signaling pathways

c

EBV-associated TFs and TF-related factors

d

Immune response and related factors

Node family
- Enzyme
- Epigenetic
- GPCR
- Ion Channel
- Kinase
- Nuclear Receptor
- TF
- TF-Epigenetic
- Transporter
- Others