YAP engages RIF1 to dampen replication stress in squamous cell carcinoma.

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Abstract

Squamous cancers are the most frequently diagnosed solid tumours world-wide. The closely

related transcriptional co-regulators YAP and TAZ (WWTR1) have emerged as important

drivers of tumour initiation and progression in various types of squamous cell carcinoma. How

YAP and TAZ execute their oncogenic functions in squamous cancers is still not fully

understood. Here, we report that in addition to controlling transcriptional programmes that

determine the balance between proliferation and terminal differentiation, YAP also engages

with RIF1, a key regulator of DNA replication timing and protector of stalled replication forks

under replication stress. YAP modulates gene expression of RIF1 via TEAD transcription factors,

and also stabilizes RIF1 protein on the chromatin. YAP-RIF1 complex formation increases in

response to exogenous replication stress, and treatment with hydroxyurea to induce

replication fork stalling acts synergistically with YAP depletion to impair cell proliferation. Our

results thus demonstrate that YAP's oncogenic functions in squamous cell carcinoma involve

both transcriptional and non-transcriptional mechanisms, and that RIF1 is key for squamous

cell carcinoma cells to survive with their high levels of endogenous replication stress.

Introduction

Squamous cancers develop in squamous (also called 'stratified') epithelia and are by far the

most frequently diagnosed solid tumours globally, with incidences continuing to rise (1).

Common risk factors for developing squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) are smoking, alcohol, and

viral infections (human papilloma virus and Epstein-Barr virus)(1). SCC of the skin epidermis

(cutaneous SCC; cSCC) is the most common type of squamous cancer, and a significant burden

to health care systems world-wide due to its very high incidence (2). The major risk factor for

cSCC development is life-long chronic exposure to UV radiation in sunlight (1, 2). In contrast,

SCCs originating in the head and neck region (HNSCC), which include squamous cancers of the

oral cavity, oropharynx, nasopharynx, hypopharynx, and larynx, are less common, but are

associated with a far higher mortality rate (3). This is due to their aggressiveness and high risk

of progression to metastatic disease (3). There is ample evidence that the cells of origin of

SCCs are the stem and progenitor cells which are located in the deepest tissue layers and

maintain and repair squamous epithelia during the life course (4). Tissue homeostasis of the

highly proliferative squamous epithelial tissues is maintained by a tightly controlled balance

of cell proliferation and terminal differentiation (5). Proliferating cells that have committed to

undergoing terminal differentiation withdraw from the cell cycle and undergo a programmed

series of biochemical and morphological changes whilst moving towards the epithelial surface

(6). In well differentiated SCCs the terminal differentiation programme continues to be

executed to some extent, often giving rise to regions with concentric layers of differentiated

cancer cells called 'keratin pearls' (1, 7). It is widely understood that the ability of SCC cells to

undergo terminal differentiation acts as a 'brake' to tumour progression (1-3). Accordingly, in

poorly differentiated SCCs the cancer cells have lost the ability to undergo terminal

differentiation, which contributes to the rapid growth and increased aggressiveness of such

tumours (2, 3). Lung squamous cell carcinoma (LUSC) is a form of non-small cell lung cancer,

and contrary to other types of SCC, develops through acquisition of a squamous differentiation

programme of the basal stem/progenitor cells in the otherwise pseudo-stratified epithelium

covering the trachea and the airways, or by trans-differentiation of a lung adenocarcinoma

into a LUSC (8, 9).

Like other cancers, SCC arises from genetic alterations that invariably lead to dysregulated

transcriptional programmes (1-3, 10). These dysregulated programmes can cause cancer cells

to become highly dependent on certain regulators of gene expression (11). Such

transcriptional dependencies are not typically identified by cancer genome sequencing but arise through focused mechanistic studies of gene control programmes operating in both normal and neoplastic cells (11). The closely related transcriptional co-regulators Yes-associated protein (YAP; gene symbol: *YAP1*) and transcriptional co-activator with PDZ-binding motif (TAZ, also called WW Domain Containing Transcription Regulator 1 (*WWTR1*)) have surfaced as essential drivers of cancer initiation, progression and metastasis in many tumour types, including SCC (12-15). YAP/TAZ do not bind DNA directly, but rely on the interaction with different transcription factors (TFs; predominantly those of the TEAD family (12, 13, 16)) and associated cofactors (e.g. bromodomain-containing protein 4 (BRD4) (17) and the BRG1- or BRM-associated factors (BAF)-type SWItch/Sucrose Non-Fermentable (SWI/SNF) chromatin regulation complex (18)) to bind to enhancer and super-enhancer elements (large chromatin domains bountiful in cell-type specific TF binding motifs that enable cooperative binding of TFs) to drive the execution of transcriptional programmes that promote proliferation, chemoresistance, epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EMT), and metastasis (12, 13, 19). YAP/TAZ can operate as both transcriptional co-activators and co-repressors (20). Although YAP/TAZ are classified as oncoproteins (http://ongene.bioinfo-minzhao.org/browse_gene.html), activating mutations of YAP/TAZ are rarely identified (21). Instead, activation of YAP/TAZ occurs through de-regulation of upstream inhibitory signalling pathways, leading to increased nuclear YAP/TAZ accumulation and consequently, chromatin binding and downstream signalling (12, 13, 16, 19). In addition to the well documented transcriptional functions of YAP/TAZ, evidence for non-transcriptional roles has also begun to emerge (22, 23). Intriguingly, a recent study demonstrated that YAP regulates DNA replication during early stages of *Xenopus* development, when transcription is still largely absent (24). Studies in mice have demonstrated an absolute requirement of YAP/TAZ for initiation and

progression of both cSCC and HNSCC (25-28), while YAP/TAZ appear to be largely dispensable

for normal squamous epithelial tissue homeostasis (26, 28, 29). This highlights the possibility

that targeting YAP/TAZ in SCC may display a large therapeutic window (14, 15).

One of the hallmarks of cancer cells is their ability to sustain chronic proliferation (30). Since

oncogene expression drives cancer cell proliferation by interfering with the regulatory

pathways of cell cycle progression control, cancer cells usually experience replication stress,

which occurs when DNA replication fork progression in S phase slows or stalls (31, 32). This

leads to the collapse of forks into DNA double-strand breaks (DSBs), as well as incomplete

sister chromatid separation in the following mitosis, and ultimately genomic instability (31,

32). In addition to de-regulated cell cycle control, another source of replication stress is the

upregulation of transcription, which can cause direct collisions or torsional stress between the

transcriptional and replication machineries as well as collisions with RNA-DNA hybrids (R

loops) (32, 33). As endogenous replication stress is higher in cancer cells, they depend on

replication stress response and DNA damage response (DDR) pathways for survival (31, 34,

35). Markers of endogenous replication stress have been found in tumour samples and cells

expressing active oncogenes (36-38). Of note, the stem and progenitor cells in healthy human

epidermis already have high levels of endogenous replication stress due to their high

proliferation rates, and the resulting activation of DDR pathways directly couples replication

stress to polyploidisation and terminal differentiation as a homeostatic mechanism (39, 40).

This mechanism is mediated by G2 and mitotic checkpoints that determine the fate of

epidermal stem/progenitor cells towards differentiation or apoptosis (41-43). Importantly, the

same mechanism operates to eliminate pre-cancerous cells in the epidermis in response to

activation of oncogenic signalling ('oncogene-induced differentiation'; (44)), such as

overexpression of MYC or Cyclin E (*CCNE1*) (42, 45), or inactivation of TP53 (43). The key cell cycle regulator p21 (*CDKN1A*) is a transcriptional target of TP53, but squamous epithelial cells (keratinocytes) also express a pool of p21 that is regulated in a TP53-independent fashion (41, 43). Interestingly, depletion of this TP53-independent pool of p21 was shown to alleviate the differentiation response caused by knockdown of TP53, allowing DNA-damaged keratinocytes to escape differentiation and continue to proliferate (41). Intriguingly, several studies have reported that reduced p21 expression inversely correlates with cell proliferation and invasion in HNSCC patient samples (46, 47), suggesting that suppression of p21 may be an important step in human SCC progression similar to what was reported in mice (48). While YAP plays an essential role in stimulating proliferation of human epidermal stem cells in response to tissue injury (49, 50), overexpression of an oncogenic, hyperactive YAP variant in these cells was found to induce rapid senescence (50). It is likely that this oncogene-induced senescence mechanism is linked to YAP-driven transcription and the resulting replication stress, similar to what was reported in neuronal progenitors upon YAP/TAZ activation (51).

How YAP/TAZ control oncogenic signalling in SCC at the molecular level, and how SCC cells deal with YAP/TAZ hyperactivation-induced replication stress remains poorly understood. Here, by characterising the YAP-controlled transcriptome and the protein interactome of chromatin-associated YAP, we have identified transcriptional and non-transcriptional mechanisms that underly YAP's oncogenic functions in SCC, including engagement of the DNA replication and damage repair factor RIF1 to dampen replication stress.

Results

The protein interactome of chromatin-associated YAP in squamous cell carcinoma cells.

To characterise the protein interactome of transcriptionally engaged, chromatin-associated

YAP in SCC cells, we chose SCC13 as a relevant cell model. SCC13 cells are a widely used human

cSCC cell line and are derived from the rapid recurrence of a cSCC (T2N0) in a patient's facial

epidermis following radiotherapy (52, 53). As is typical for cSCC, SCC13 cells carry an

inactivating mutation in *TP53* (p.Glu258Lys (c.772G>A) (54, 55). SCC13 are representative of a

subclass of cSCC with reduced expression of αE-catenin (49, 56), which likely explains the

constitutive nuclear localisation of YAP/TAZ in these cells and their strong YAP-dependency

(49). Like most cSCC cell lines, SCC13 require feeder layer support for optimal growth in culture

(52, 57).

Rapid immunoprecipitation mass spectrometry of endogenous protein (RIME) analysis (58)

was performed on two independent cultures of SCC13 cells and normal human epidermal

keratinocytes (NHK, strain Km), using a knockdown-validated YAP-specific antibody that does

not recognise TAZ (Supplementary Figs. 1A and 2D) and isotype-matched IgG as control. Low

passage cells were cultured on a mitotically inactivated fibroblast feeder layer to maintain the

stem cell state of NHKs characterised by predominantly nuclear localisation of YAP

(Supplementary Fig. 1B) (49, 59). YAP immunoprecipitation (IP) was performed on

formaldehyde-fixed chromatin fractions of SCC13 and NHK cells. IP efficiency was consistently

high across all YAP-RIME replicates, with high YAP peptide coverage (63-65%) detected by

mass spectrometry analysis (Supplementary Fig. 1C), and with zero spectral counts (MS/MS

events, total number of spectra associated to a single protein or protein group) for YAP in the

IgG-control IPs (Supplementary Dataset 1). Proteins detected by mass spectrometry in the YAP

IPs (Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 1) were stringently filtered (see Materials and Methods,

and Supplementary Dataset 1 – Tables 2–7) to remove potential false positive hits and to

compile a list of high confidence interactors of chromatin-associated YAP in SCC13 and NHK

cells (Supplementary Dataset 1 – Tables 6, 7). YAP-RIME enabled identification of 48 high

confidence YAP-interacting proteins in SCC13 cells (Fig. 1A, Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table

6) and 15 high confidence YAP-interacting proteins in NHK cells (including the bait protein YAP

in both cases) (Supplementary Fig. 2A, Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 7). Using the

'Compartments' database (https://compartments.jensenlab.org/Search), most identified

proteins had a high confidence score (≥4) for nuclear localization (Supplementary Dataset 1 –

Tables 6, 7). Moreover, significantly enriched gene ontology terms for molecular functions

(GO MF) and biological processes (GO BP) in both protein interactomes were all related to

processes occurring in the nucleus (Fig. 1B, Supplementary Fig. 2B). This confirms that, as

expected, the YAP-RIME predominantly identified protein interactions of YAP on the

chromatin.

STRING analysis was used to identify known interactions occurring between the YAP-

interacting proteins in SCC13 (Fig. 1A) and NHK (Supplementary Fig. 2A) cells, and proteins

were manually grouped by cellular function (60). Because our aim was to identify proteins

that facilitate YAP's functions in squamous cancers, we focused on the protein interactome of

chromatin-associated YAP in SCC13 cells. Among these YAP-interacting proteins were several

known regulators of YAP, including Neurofibromatosis type (NF2, also called Merlin) (61),

Angiomiotin-like 1 (AMOTL1), PPP1CB, one the catalytic subunits of protein phosphatase 1

(PP1) (62), and Prolyl 4-Hydroxylase subunit alpha 2 (P4HA2). The identification of NF2 in the

interactome of chromatin-bound YAP was, at first look, at odds with the established dogma

that the canonical Hippo signalling pathway operates in the cytoplasm. However, nuclear

localization of NF2 has been widely documented (63), and nucleocytoplasmic shuttling of NF2

has been implicated in YAP regulation (64-66). AMOTL1, a member of the Motin protein family

(67), was previously shown to enhance YAP stability and to help translocate YAP into the

nucleus (68, 69). P4HA2 was shown to hydroxylate YAP at multiple proline residues, with

implications in cell migration and invasion (70). Consistent with the results from a previous

study which used a similar YAP chromatin-IP/mass spectrometry approach (71), our YAP-RIME

also identified five subunits of the BAF-type SWI/SNF chromatin remodelling complex (72) in

the interactome of chromatin-associated YAP in SCC13 cells. These included the YAP binding

partner AT-rich interactive domain-containing protein 1A (ARID1A), and SWI/SNF-related

matrix-associated actin-dependent regulator of chromatin (SMARC) subfamily A member 4

(SMARCA4, also called BRG1), subfamily E member 1 (SMARCE1), subfamily D member 2

(SMARCD2), and subfamily C member 1 (SMARCC1) (Fig. 1A). Two key components of the

NuRD chromatin remodelling complex, Chromodomain-helicase-DNA-binding protein 4

(CHD4) and Metastasis Associated 1 Family Member 2 (MTA2), were also identified as

interactors of chromatin-bound YAP in SCC13 cells. Of note, the NuRD complex was previously

implicated in mediating co-repressor functions of YAP (73). While key components of the

general transcriptional machinery (POLR2A, POLR2B, GTF21, TOP1) were present in the SCC13

YAP interactome, TEAD TFs were notably absent (Fig. 1A). A closer inspection of our mass

spectrometry data revealed that TEADs, as well as other known YAP-interacting transcription

factors, such as JunB and TP63 (74, 75), had been identified but did not pass our stringent

bioinformatics filtering criteria (Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 4). The overall poor

identification of TFs by our YAP-RIME was likely due to their insufficient crosslinking to the

DNA by formaldehyde alone, as previously observed for the highly dynamic transcription

factor NFκB (76).

To identify physiologically relevant interactions, the YAP-interacting proteins identified by

RIME in SCC13 were also compared to candidate positive and negative regulators of cell

proliferation and survival identified in a genome-wide RNA interference screen that had

previously been performed in the same cell lines (49). This revealed that 22 out of the 47 high

confidence YAP-interacting proteins in SCC13 cells were likely relevant for cell proliferation

and/or survival (Fig. 1A, Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 8).

A fraction of chromatin-associated YAP interacts with RIF1.

Our attention was drawn to RIF1, a key regulator of DNA replication timing and DDR (77-85).

An involvement of RIF1 in transcription regulation has been reported previously (86, 87). RIF1

was detected as a YAP-interacting protein in both the SCC13 and NHK YAP-RIME experiments

(Fig. 1A; Supplementary Fig. 2A) with a much stronger enrichment in the SCC13 cells

(Supplementary Fig. 2C, Supplementary Dataset 1 – Tables 6, 7). Of note, PPP1CB, one of the

three catalytic subunits of PP1—a key effector of RIF1 (77, 81, 84, 85), was also present in the

SCC13 YAP-RIME (Fig. 1A; Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 6). Like YAP, RIF1 featured among

the positive regulators of cell proliferation and survival of SCC13 cells identified in a genome-

wide RNA interference screen (49)(Fig. 1A; Supplementary Dataset 1 – Table 8). As expected,

YAP and RIF1 were both localised in the nucleus of SCC13 cells (Fig. 1C) and were present in

chromatin fractions (Supplementary Fig. 2D), confirming their chromatin-association. To

biochemically validate the YAP-RIF1 interaction identified by RIME, co-IP experiments were

performed under native non-cross-linking conditions using a different YAP-specific antibody

that also does not detect TAZ (Supplementary Fig. 3A). Indeed, RIF1 could be

immunoprecipitated together with YAP from both, whole-cell detergent extracts and nuclei-

enriched fractions (Fig. 1D, E). Further validating our RIME results, CHD4 and ARID1A also co-

immunoprecipitated with YAP under native conditions. We also found that under these

conditions, TEAD transcription factors could be immunoprecipitated together with YAP (Fig.

1E). Of note, compared to the TEADs, smaller amounts of RIF1, ARID1A, and CHD4 co-

immunoprecipitated with YAP from nuclei-enriched fractions, possibly indicating weaker

interactions of these proteins with YAP. Indeed, significantly more RIF1 co-

immunoprecipitated with YAP under milder lysis conditions (Fig. 1D). In-situ proximity ligation

assays (PLA) confirmed YAP-RIF1 interactions in the nucleus of SCC13 cells (Fig. 1F). The YAP-

RIF1 PLA signal was significantly decreased upon YAP/TAZ knockdown. To achieve a sufficient

knockdown of both YAP and TAZ we combined our doxycycline-inducible YAP-targeting shRNAs

with an siRNA pool targeting YAP and TAZ (Fig. 1F, Supplementary Fig. 3B). Consistent with our

co-IP results, YAP was also found in very close proximity to TEAD1 in the nucleus of SCC13 cells

by PLA (Fig. 1G). The YAP-RIF1 PLA signal was completely absent when either both or one of

the two primary antibodies were omitted during the experiments (Supplementary Fig. 3C, D),

and was also largely absent from mitotic chromosomes (Supplementary Fig. 3E). To test if the

YAP-RIF1 interaction also occurred in other types of SCC, we used the lung SCC cell line HARA

(88). YAP and RIF1 co-expression in HARA cell nuclei was confirmed by immunofluorescence

microscopy (Supplementary Fig. 3F). Co-IP was performed with nuclei-enriched HARA cell

fractions treated with Benzonase nuclease to enzymatically digest DNA and RNA

(Supplementary Fig. 3G, H), demonstrating that YAP and RIF1 interact on the chromatin and

are not co-immunoprecipitated because of a DNA bridge between the two proteins. In

summary, our results show that RIF1 is a binding partner of chromatin-associated YAP in NHKs

and cutaneous and lung SCC cells.

YAP/TAZ-mediated oncogenic signalling controls the balance between proliferation and

differentiation and contributes to replication stress in squamous cell carcinoma cells.

In normal epidermal keratinocytes, but also in basal cell carcinoma (BCC) cells, YAP/TAZ control

the transcription of genes driving cell proliferation and survival through TEAD transcription

factors and suppress the expression of genes promoting terminal differentiation through

TEAD-independent mechanisms (89, 90). To test if YAP/TAZ execute similar transcriptional

programmes in cSCC, and to investigate a potential involvement of RIF1 in YAP/TAZ-mediated

transcriptional regulation, we performed bulk RNAseq analysis on samples of SCC13 cells with

acute (48 hours) siRNA-mediated knockdown of either YAP/TAZ or RIF1 (siY/T, siRIF1; Fig. 2A,

Fig. 3A). We were unable to robustly deplete TAZ(WWTR1) (Fig. 2A), but the TAZ-targeting

siRNA pool was able to block compensatory upregulation of TAZ in response to YAP

knockdown (Supplementary Fig. 3B) (49). DESeq2 analysis revealed a large number of

differentially expressed genes (DEGs) upon siY/T treatment (977 DEGs downregulated, 2,209

DEGs upregulated; $p<0.05$, FC>1.5; Supplementary Dataset 2 - Tables 1–3). Gene set

enrichment analysis (GSEA) revealed significant enrichment of pathways associated with cell

cycle regulation, DNA replication, and mitosis among the downregulated DEGs, and of

pathways associated with keratinization, cornification, extracellular matrix (ECM) remodelling,

and immunoregulation among the upregulated DEGs upon siY/T treatment (Fig. 2C;

Supplementary Fig. 4A, B; Supplementary Dataset 2 - Tables 4–6). DEGs downregulated upon

siY/T comprised both, genes known to be positively regulated by YAP/TAZ in cooperation with

TEADs (26), as well as genes known to be regulated by YAP/TAZ in cooperation with the Myb-

MuB (MMB) complex (91, 92) (Supplementary Fig. 4C; Supplementary Dataset 2 – Tables 10,

11). YAP/TAZ knockdown in SCC13 also led to increased terminal differentiation which was

evident from (i) enrichment of an epidermal terminal differentiation gene signature (93) in

the upregulated DEGs and of an epidermal progenitor cell signature (93) in the downregulated

DEGs (Supplementary Fig. 4D), and (ii), upregulation of genes belonging to the epidermal

differentiation complex (EDC) (94), as well as transcriptional regulators of terminal

differentiation (Fig. 2C; Supplementary Dataset 2 – Tables 13, 14). These data suggest that

YAP/TAZ regulate terminal differentiation indirectly by supressing the transcription of key

regulators of the terminal differentiation programme, and that this function is conserved

between normal keratinocytes and neoplastic keratinocytes of both BCC (90) and cSCC. In

accordance with the detected transcriptomic changes, we observed that cell proliferation was

impacted in SCC13 cells upon expression of doxycycline-inducible YAP-targeting shRNAs

(shYAP) (Fig. 2C). This was evident from reduced levels of Ser10-phosphorylated histone H3, a

marker of mitotic cells, and strong upregulation of p21 (Fig. 2D). Consistent with the reduced

expression of several key regulators of DNA replication (Supplementary Fig. 4C;

Supplementary Dataset 2 – Table 15), shYAP SCC13 cells arrested in G1 and progressed much

slower through S phase (Fig. 2E). Compromised cell cycle progression and increased terminal

differentiation led to reduced clonal growth of shYAP SCC13 cells (Fig. 2F).

Reduced activation of the replication stress checkpoint (phosphorylation of CHK1 on Ser317;

(34, 35)) was evident in SCC13 cells upon induction of shYAP (Fig. 2G), while depletion of

either YAP or TAZ in SCC13 cells reduced accumulation of replication stress-induced DNA

DSBs, marked by decreased γH2Ax expression (34, 39, 41, 43) (Fig. 2G). Furthermore, using

mRNA expression data from the DepMap project (https://depmap.org/portal/), we

discovered a strong correlation between the expression of a replication stress signature (36)

and an in-house generated SCC-specific YAP/TAZ activity signature comprising 10 YAP/TAZ

target genes (Supplementary Dataset 2 – Table 16) from our SCC13 RNAseq dataset in a panel

of 64 HNSCC cell lines (Supplementary Fig. 5A–D). Together, these findings indicated that

YAP/TAZ-driven oncogenic signalling contributed to the endogenous replication stress of SCC

cells.

Of note, reduced cell proliferation was reversible upon doxycycline withdrawal

(Supplementary Fig. 6), demonstrating that YAP knockdown slows down cell cycle progression,

but does not cause permanent growth arrest. The effects of shTAZ on SCC13 proliferation were

less dramatic (Fig. 2D, F). We conclude that, like in NHKs, YAP/TAZ regulate the balance

between proliferation and terminal differentiation also in cSCC cells, thereby promoting a

highly proliferative and undifferentiated cell state.

We next used the YAP/TAZ target gene expression signature derived from our RNA-seq data to

perform gene set variation analysis (GSVA; see materials and methods) on one of the largest

bulk RNA-seq datasets from patients with cSCC (237 patients) (95). This revealed that genes

that are positively regulated by YAP/TAZ in SCC13 cells are expressed significantly higher in

cSCC tumours (as well as their perilesional skin tissue) that have progressed to metastatic

disease, compared to those cSCC tumours that have not (Supplementary Fig. 7A). Genes that

were positively regulated by YAP/TAZ in SCC13 cells were also highly expressed in cSCC

metastases (Supplementary Fig. 7A). Conversely, genes that were negatively regulated by

YAP/TAZ in SCC13 cells displayed significantly reduced expression in cSCC metastases

(Supplementary Fig. 7B). This finding provides intriguing evidence for the involvement of

YAP/TAZ in the metastatic progression of human cSCC.

RIF1 is not directly involved in YAP/TAZ-controlled transcription.

Compared to siY/T treatment, knockdown of RIF1 affected the expression of a smaller number

of genes (Fig. 3A). 165 DEGs (of which 33 are protein-coding) were downregulated, and 942

DEGs (of which 749 are protein-coding) were upregulated (p<0.05, FC>1.5; Fig. 3A,

Supplementary Dataset 2 - Tables 1–3). GSEA revealed that theses DEGs were predominantly

involved in cell cycle regulation, although the statistical significance of pathway enrichment

was generally quite low (Supplementary Fig. 8A–C; Supplementary Dataset 2 - Tables 7–9).

Interestingly, 710 out the 782 differentially expressed protein-encoding genes upon siRIF1

knockdown appeared to be co-regulated by YAP/TAZ, since the observed expression changes

were going into the same direction in both siRIF1 and siY/T experiments (Fig. 3B). However,

GSEA did not reveal any significantly enriched pathways (data not shown) among these

putative RIF1 and YAP/TAZ co-regulated genes. This is reminiscent of findings in mouse

embryonic stem cells, where limited gene expression changes in response to *Rif1* knockout

could neither be linked to any specific functions/pathways nor to the genome-wide

distribution of Rif1 on the chromatin (80). Instead, the gene expression changes in response

to *Rif1* knockout were suggested to be effects that are secondary to changes in DNA

replication timing (79, 80). Accordingly, an intriguing possibility is that the observed

expression changes of those genes that appear to be co-regulated by YAP/TAZ and RIF1 in

SCC13 cells are the consequence of altered replication timing (Fig. 6 and text below) and

changes to YAP/TAZ chromatin accessibility, and not of a direct involvement of RIF1 in YAP/TAZ-

regulated transcription.

YAP modulates RIF1 transcription and promotes RIF1 protein stability.

Our RNAseq analysis revealed that *RIF1* mRNA expression was moderately downregulated in

response to siY/T knockdown (Fig. 2A), and a similar trend could be confirmed in independent

siY/T samples by RT-qPCR analysis (Fig. 3C). Accordingly, RIF1 protein expression was slightly

but reproducibly lower in siY/T compared to siNTC SCC13 cells (Fig. 3D) and was more strongly

reduced in shYAP cells with a more prominent depletion of YAP protein (Fig. 3E, F).

Interestingly, shTAZ had no impact on RIF1 protein levels (Fig. 3E), suggesting a specific

relationship between YAP and RIF1. Analysis of published RNAseq data of siY/T in N/TERT-2G

immortalized human keratinocytes (89) revealed that this relationship was conserved also in

NHKs (Fig. 3G). Moreover, we observed a significant correlation between *RIF1* mRNA

expression and single-sample enrichment scores of a generic Hippo/YAP/TAZ pathway gene

signature in a panel of 64 HNSCC cell lines using the DepMap portal

(https://depmap.org/portal/) (96) (Fig. 3H). An even stronger correlation was observed when

we used our in-house generated SCC-specific YAP activity signature (Supplementary Dataset

2 – Table 16, Supplementary Fig. 5C, F). Summarized, RIF1 expression closely correlates with

YAP/TAZ transcriptional activity in both normal and neoplastic human keratinocytes.

Combined siRNA-mediated knockdown of TEAD1, 3, and 4 (siTEAD1/3/4) in SCC13 cells

reduced RIF1 protein to levels similar to those observed in siY/T cells (Fig. 3I), indicating that

YAP modulates *RIF1* transcription through TEADs. Since our biochemical experiments had

revealed direct binding of YAP and RIF1 proteins, we also tested if this interaction additionally

stabilizes RIF1 protein. Indeed, by combining shYAP with cycloheximide treatment to stop

protein translation, we could reduce RIF1 protein expression in SCC13 cells to levels below

the detection limit of our chemiluminescence imaging system (Fig. 3J). Interestingly, YAP

protein levels remained stable during the treatment time course and were even upregulated

during the first 4 hours of cycloheximide treatment. This suggests that YAP protein

homeostasis is precisely fine-tuned in SCC cells. We conclude that YAP modulates *RIF1*

transcription trough TEADs, but additionally stabilizes RIF1 protein on the chromatin through

a direct interaction.

Increased association of YAP with RIF1 in response to replication stress.

Our discovery of RIF1 as a YAP interaction partner in NHK and SCC cell lines raised the exciting

possibility that in normal and cancerous squamous epithelial tissues YAP could have dual,

transcriptional and non-transcriptional roles. In *Xenopus laevis* embryo*s,* the YAP-RIF1

complex was previously shown to control the dynamics of DNA replication by limiting

replication origin firing (24). Using *Xenopus* egg extracts, a classical model for studying DNA

replication, Melendez Garcia et al. (24) showed that *Xenopus* YAP became recruited onto the

chromatin upon S phase induction, following the formation of the pre-replication complex

and in parallel with PCNA (proliferating cell nuclear antigen) loading (24). Here, we used a

double thymidine block to arrest human SCC13 cells at the G1/S phase boundary (83) and

assessed the levels of YAP on the chromatin upon S phase entry following thymidine washout.

We noticed an increase in the amount of chromatin-bound YAP as SCC13 cells where entering

S phase that correlated with the increased loading of PCNA (Fig. 4A). Consistent with the

reduced expression of key DNA replication regulators in siY/T cells (Supplementary Fig. 4C;

Supplementary Dataset 2 – Table 15) and the slowed S phase progression of shYAP cells (Fig.

2E), PCNA loading onto the chromatin was reduced in shYAP cells (Fig. 4A). Only a very limited

number of YAP-RIF1 PLA speckles overlapped with replication foci, marked by DNA

incorporation of EdU during a 1-hour pulse (Fig. 4B), suggesting that YAP is not associated

with nascent chromatin behind the replication fork. Moreover, only very few YAP-RIF1 PLA

speckles were present on the DNA of mitotic cells (Fig. 4C), consistent with the absence of

RIF1 from mitotic chromosomes (83, 97).

In addition to controlling origin firing and DNA replication timing, another key function of RIF1

is the protection of stalled replication forks from resection by nucleases in response to

replication stress and the promotion of replication restart (77, 78, 82, 98, 99). To test if YAP

might be recruited to either stalled or collapsed replication forks, we treated SCC13 cells with

4 mM hydroxyurea (HU) (100, 101) for periods of up to 24 hours. As shown in Fig. 4D, this

triggered strong activation of the replication stress checkpoint (phosphorylation of CHK1 on

Ser317; (34, 35)) and accumulation of DNA DSBs, marked by γH2Ax expression (39, 41, 43).

Persisting γH2Ax expression following washout of HU indicated accumulation of DNA damage

at stalled and subsequently inactivated replication forks upon 24 hours of HU treatment (100)

(Fig. 4D). While the YAP-RIF1 PLA signal remained unchanged upon short-term HU treatment,

it increased significantly after long-term (24 hours) HU treatment (Fig. 4E). Moreover, upon

long-term HU treatment, more YAP molecules were found in close vicinity of γH2Ax by in-situ

PLA (Fig. 4F), indicating that YAP associates with RIF1 preferentially near DNA DSBs at

insctivated replication forks. Summarized, these data provided evidence that in SCC cells, a

fraction of YAP is involved in RIF1-mediated DDR at replication forks.

RIF1 is highly expressed in several types of squamous cell carcinoma and upregulated during

tumour progression.

The strong effect of YAP depletion on the cell cycle-regulatory transcriptome (Fig. 2,

Supplementary Fig. 4) and the resulting cell cycle exit and commitment to terminal

differentiation (Fig. 2B–F) precluded a further in-depth analysis of non-transcriptional YAP

functions specific to DNA replication. Consequently, we focused on RIF1 itself, given its

regulation by YAP (Fig. 3) and the previously unknown function(s) of RIF1 in SCC.

We first assessed RIF1 protein expression levels in a panel of human cSCC cell lines, which

also included an isogenic cSCC progression series (102). Increased expression of RIF1 protein

was notable in all cSCC cell lines when compared to NHKs, including a cell line derived from a

pre-malignant cSCC precursor lesion (PM1) (102) (Fig. 5A). Consistent with our findings that

YAP controls RIF1 expression (Fig. 3), the protein levels of RIF1 were highest in SCC13 cells

featuring constitutively nuclear YAP (Supplementary Fig. 1B) (49) (as also indicated by a low

ratio of S127-YAP to total YAP, Fig. 5A). All cSCC lines in our panel, as well as the PM1 cells,

displayed higher levels of γH2Ax compared to NHKs, indicating elevated endogenous

replication stress (Fig. 5A).

To investigate if increased RIF1 expression was a general hallmark of cancers originating from

epidermal keratinocytes, we next quantified the nuclear abundance of RIF1 protein in a tissue

array comprising cSCCs of different differentiation grades, as well as different types of BCCs

(Fig. 5B, C). There were increased number of RIF1-expressing cells within the keratin-positive

tumour cell masses of both BCC and cSCC compared to normal skin epidermis, in particular

within the more aggressive tumour types of infiltrative BCC and poorly differentiated cSCC

(Fig. 5B, C). The pattern of RIF1 expression in cSCC correlated well with the known localisation

of cycling cells, which are located at the periphery in well-differentiated tumours, but diffusely

distributed throughout the tumour mass in moderately/poorly-differentiated tumours (103,

104). By examining publicly available immunohistochemistry data from the Human Protein

Atlas (https://www.proteinatlas.org/), we also observed increased numbers of RIF1-

expressing tumour cells in HNSCC and cervical SCC (CeSCC) (Supplementary Fig. 9A–C). To

obtain a pan-cancer overview of RIF1 protein expression levels, we used the UALCAN portal

(https://ualcan.path.uab.edu/) (105) to access protein expression data from the Clinical

Proteomic Tumour Analysis Consortium (CPTAC) (106). This revealed increased RIF1 protein

expression in several cancer types (Supplementary Fig. 9D). Importantly, in HNSCC, RIF1

protein expression increased with tumour grade (Fig. 5D). The UALCAN portal also allows

assessment of the impact of somatic alterations (small mutations or copy number alterations)

in several signalling pathways on the cancer proteome (105, 106). The CPTAC data include

somatic alterations in *NF2*/Merlin, *WWC1*, and *SAV1* as a proxy for Hippo pathway alterations

(106). WWC1 expression was previously shown to strongly correlate with YAP activity in

HNSCC (107), and knockout of the Hippo pathway scaffold proteins Sav1 or Mob1a/b in mice

caused rapid YAP-driven squamous carcinogenesis (28, 108, 109). *NF2* mutations have been

discovered in various types of SCC, with frequencies varying between 2.6% and 17%,

depending on study and cancer context (110-114). Of note, a distinct tumour subtype with

alterations in Hippo pathway genes exists in CeSCC that also displays increased expression of

YAP/TAZ target genes (110). Thus, in the context of human squamous cancers, somatic

alterations in *NF2*, *WWC1*, and *SAV1* can serve as reasonable indicators of Hippo pathway

activity status. We found that in both HNSCC (Fig. 5E) and LSCC (Supplementary Fig. 9E)

increased RIF1 protein expression predominantly correlated with somatic Hippo pathway

alterations in contrast to alterations in other signalling pathways, implying altered Hippo

pathway activity in the regulation of RIF1 expression. This agrees with our finding that RIF1 is

regulated by YAP at both the transcriptional and post-translational levels (Fig. 3).

Interestingly, in other cancer types, alterations in pathways other than Hippo signalling also

had a strong impact on increased tumour expression of RIF1 (Supplementary Fig. 9F, G).

Collectively, our multi-omics analysis confirmed a close relationship between Hippo/YAP/TAZ

signalling, replication stress, and RIF1 expression, and pointed towards a role of RIF1 in

squamous cell carcinogenesis.

Depletion of RIF1 causes increased origin firing in early S phase and accelerated S phase

progression of squamous cell carcinoma cells.

A highly conserved role of RIF1 is the genome-wide orchestration of DNA replication timing

(24, 79, 83, 84, 115). Although the precise mechanisms are still not fully understood, multiple

pieces of evidence point to a scenario where RIF1 serves as a molecular hub that co-regulates

spatiotemporal replication patterns and nuclear architecture. Through its abilities to bind

multiple molecules of DNA and to interact with the nuclear lamina, RIF1 organizes higher

order chromatin structure into zones of coordinated DNA replication (RIF1-associated

domains) (80, 83, 84, 115, 116). In addition, through its interaction with PP1, RIF1 was shown

to suppress the firing of late replicating origins within RIF1-associated domains by preventing

MCM subunit phosphorylation through Dbf4-dependent kinase (DDK; composed of Cdc7

kinase and its activator, Dbf4; MCM, minichromosome maintenance complex, core of the

replicative helicase containing six subunits MCM2-7), thereby antagonizing the activation of

the CMG (Cdc45–MCM–GINS) helicase complex (77, 81, 83, 85).

Consistent with a role of RIF1 in controlling S phase progression of SCC cells, we observed that

on release from a double thymidine block, shRIF1 SCC13 cells progressed more rapidly

through S phase (Fig. 6A). The phosphorylation levels of MCM2 and MCM4 proteins, targets

of the Cdc7 kinase (77, 83), were increased in RIF1-depleted SCC13 cells in a RIF1 dosage-

dependent manner (Fig. 6B), particularly in early S phase (Fig. 6C), indicating alterations in the

dynamics of origin firing (77, 81, 83, 85). Accordingly, chromatin loading of PCNA, which is

required for DNA replication after the action of Cdc7, was also increased during the early S

phase of shRIF1 SCC13 cells (Fig. 6C). Therefore, the faster progression of SCC13 cells through

S phase after RIF1 depletion likely reflects an increase in DNA replication initiation events in

early S phase (77, 83), suggestive of an altered replication timing programme. This could also

explain the changes in gene expression observed upon siRIF1 in SCC13 cells (Fig. 3A).

RIF1 protects against endogenous and exogenous replication stress in squamous cell

carcinoma cells.

Since a key function of RIF1 is the protection of stalled replication forks and the promotion of

replication restart (77, 78, 82, 98, 99), increased expression of RIF1 in SCC cells could therefore

indicate a role for RIF1 in enabling cells to deal with high levels of endogenous replication

stress. Indeed, there was a strong correlation between the expression of *RIF1* and a

replication stress signature (36) in HNSCC cell lines (Supplementary Fig. 5A, E). Knockdown of

RIF1 in SCC13 cells increased their endogenous replication stress, as evident from increased

levels of pS4/8-RPA32 (indicating accumulation of single stranded DNA at replication forks

and recruitment and activation of the replication stress kinases ATR/ATM/DNA-PK) as well as

increased levels of γH2Ax (indicating accumulation of DNA DSBs) (Fig. 7A). In contrast to the

strong activation of the replication stress checkpoint (phosphorylation of CHK1 on Ser317;

(34, 35)) observed upon HU treatment, the elevated endogenous replication stress in shRIF1

SCC13 cells did not translate into robust CHK1 activation (Fig. 7A). Consequently,

asynchronously proliferating shRIF1 cells displayed no dramatic alterations to their cell cycle

profiles (Fig. 7B). However, the accumulation of DNA damage in cultures of shRIF1 SCC13 cells

became more accentuated after a few passages, when cells had undergone multiple rounds

of cell division (Fig. 7C), resulting in reduced clonal colony growth (Fig. 7D). Together, our

results are thus consistent with a scenario where SCC cells depend on elevated RIF1

expression to deal with high levels of endogenous replication stress that are, at least in part,

controlled by YAP-driven oncogenic mechanisms.

Since we found that depletion of YAP reduced RIF1 protein levels (Fig. 3), we hypothesised

that shYAP SCC13 cells should therefore be more sensitive to exogenous replication stress

induced by treatment with HU (Fig. 7A). Indeed, we observed a synergistic effect of YAP

depletion and low doses of HU on SCC13 clonal colony growth (Fig. 7E, F).

Discussion

Our findings provide a novel insight into the oncogenic mechanisms of hyperactive YAP/TAZ

in SCC. While YAP/TAZ promote proliferation by regulating transcriptional programmes that

drive cell cycle progression, they also suppress commitment to terminal differentiation. Thus,

the functions of YAP/TAZ appear to be highly conserved within the epidermal lineage, as both

normal epidermal stem cells (49, 50, 89) and neoplastic keratinocytes in BCC (90) and cSCC

(this study) show strong dependency on YAP/TAZ signalling for cell proliferation. This suggests

that cancers originating from epidermal stem/progenitor cells 'hijack' the tissue regeneration-

promoting functions of YAP/TAZ to fuel their high rates of proliferation while remaining in an

undifferentiated cell state. The increased expression of genes that are positively regulated by

YAP/TAZ in both non-lesional and tumour tissue of human cSCCs that underwent metastatic

progression (Supplementary Fig. 7) provides strong support for this idea. Our RIME

experiments revealed that the transcriptional co-regulator functions of YAP/TAZ are likely

mediated by the BAF-type SWI/SNF and the NuRD chromatin remodelling complexes. Indeed,

in HNSCC cells, BAF-type SWI/SNF and YAP-TEAD complexes were shown to be co-dependent

for chromatin binding, whereby they create a positive-feedback mechanism to maintain open

chromatin for transcription (18). In contrast, recruitment of the NuRD complex (73) could be

involved in the observed co-repressor functions of YAP/TAZ.

We found that the cyclin-dependent kinase inhibitor p21/CDKN1A became strongly

upregulated in response to YAP depletion, suggesting that suppression of p21 is a key function

of YAP in squamous cancers. Of note, p21 was shown to act as an important brake to SCC

development (48, 117). Previous studies have also noted that keratinocytes express a pool of

p21 that is regulated in a TP53-independent fashion (41, 43). YAP/TAZ thus appear to serve as

an extra control layer for p21 expression in keratinocytes. In future work, it will be important

to establish if *CDKN1A* is direct transcriptional target of YAP-TEAD. A previous study which

employed a transgenic mouse model where cSCC development was driven by expression of

oncogenic *Kras*^{G12D} and knock-out of *Tp53* in epidermal stem cells (25), that simultaneous

activation of Kras^{G12D} and YAP/TAZ knock-down induces apoptosis. In our human cSCC cell line-

focused study we found that YAP/TAZ depletion has cytostatic- and differentiation-promoting,

rather than cytotoxic effects. It is worth noting that activating mutations in the *RAS* proto-

oncogenes are not very frequent in human cSCC (2), with some tumours (~10%) actually

showing copy number loss of *HRAS* (118). Induction of apoptosis in response to YAP/TAZ

depletion might thus be specific only to cSCCs expressing oncogenic RAS (25).

A major finding of this study was the identification of a complex functional relationship

between YAP and RIF1, whereby YAP modulates *RIF1* gene expression via TEAD TFs, but also

forms a complex with RIF1 on the chromatin. We found that the key functions of RIF1

(regulation of DNA replication dynamics (77, 79, 83, 115) and protection of replication forks

under replication stress (78, 82, 98, 99)) are conserved in squamous cancers. RIF1 enables SCC

cells to deal with their high levels of endogenous replication stress, since RIF1 depletion leads

to accumulation of DNA damage, which ultimately reduces clonal colony growth. Increased

formation of the YAP-RIF1 complex in response to HU treatment suggested a specific role of

YAP in enabling RIF1's functions at stalled and deactivated replication forks (82, 99). Indeed,

we found that YAP depletion and the concomitant reduction in RIF1 expression sensitised cSCC

cells to HU treatment. Of note, HU is sometimes used in chemoradiotherapy for HNSCC

patients (119). RIF1 protein is subject to proteolytic degradation (86, 120). We thus speculate

that the interaction with YAP on the chromatin stabilizes RIF1 and enables its proper functions

for DDR. This scenario is supported by our observation that the combination of YAP

knockdown and inhibition of protein synthesis caused a much stronger depletion of RIF1

protein than shYAP alone. Our findings thus provide evidence for a non-canonical role of YAP

in SCC, whereby it engages RIF1 to dampen the high levels of endogenous replication stress in

these cancers, which are—at least in part—caused by YAP's oncogenic functions itself. Since

normal human epidermal keratinocytes respond to expression of constitutively nuclear YAP

with oncogene-induced senescence (50), upregulation and stabilization of RIF1 expression in

cSCC cells through YAP-TEAD serves as an elegant mechanism whereby cancer cells with

hyperactivated YAP are able to escape senescence.

Materials and Methods

Human tissues

All human tissue work was performed in the lab of Dr Beate Lichtenberger at the Medical

University of Vienna, Austria. Written informed patient consent was obtained before tissue

collection in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The study was approved by the

Institutional Review Board under the ethical permits EK#1695/2021 and EK#1783/2020.

Cell culture

All cell lines were routinely (quarterly test intervals) confirmed to be free of mycoplasma

infection using PCR LookOut® Mycoplasma PCR Detection Kit (Merck, UK).

Mouse 3T3 embryonic fibroblasts (subclone J2), originally established from random-bred

Swiss mice (121), were used to provide optimal clonal growth support to normal and

neoplastic human epidermal keratinocytes grown in co-culture (122). Stocks were kindly

provided by Prof Fiona Watt (Centre for Gene Therapy and Regenerative Medicine, King's

College London, UK; EMBL, Heidelberg, Germany; not authenticated), or were purchased from

Kerafast (Catalogue #EF3003). 3T3-J2 fibroblasts were routinely cultured in high-glucose

DMEM (Merck) supplemented with 10% (v/v) bovine serum (Fisher Scientific), 100 IU/mL

penicillin and 100 μg/mL streptomycin (Merck), and 2 mM L-glutamine (Merck) (complete

fibroblast medium) at 37°C, 5% CO_2. Fibroblast cultures were not allowed to grow to

confluence and were not grown beyond passage 12 to prevent senescence or spontaneous

transformation. To prepare feeder cell layers, 3T3-J2 fibroblasts were treated for 3 hours with

4 µg/mL mitomycin C (Merck) at 37°C, 5% CO_2, to irreversibly stall the cell cycle (123).

Stock cultures of primary normal human keratinocytes (NHKs, strain km) were obtained from

surgically discarded foreskin (49). SCC13 cells are a cell line established from a recurring

cutaneous SCC (cSCC) of facial epidermis and were obtained from Dr James Rheinwald

(Department of Dermatology, Harvard Skin Research Centre, USA), not authenticated (52). To

study the progression of human cSCC, we used four isogenic human cell lines that were

isolated from skin biopsies from a immune-suppressed patient at progressive disease stages:

PM1 cells were derived from a pre-malignant dysplastic lesion on the patient's head, MET1

was derived from a primary invasive cSCC growing on the patient's right hand, MET2 was

established from a rapid local recurrence after surgical removal of the primary tumour, and

MET4 was established from an axillary lymph node metastasis that developed from the

primary cSCC (102). The progression series cell lines were purchased from Ximbio (PM1

#153571, MET1 #153539, MET2 #153569, MET4 #153570), and were last re-authenticated in

Autumn of 2023. SCC-NR cells were isolated by Dr Nicholas Rabey at Addenbrooke's Hospital

(Cambridge, UK) from a portion of a surgically excised cutaneous SCC from the back of the

hand of an elderly male patient and were used in all experiments at passages 3 or 4 (49). All

other cell lines were used at passages 2–8. NHKs and cSCC cells were grown in FAD medium

(1 part high glucose DMEM GlutaMAX™ supplemented with pyruvate (Fisher Scientific) plus 3

parts Ham's F12 GlutaMAX™ (Fisher Scientific), supplemented with 1.8×10^{-4} M adenine

(Merck), 10% (v/v) foetal bovine serum (Fisher Scientific, batch-tested for optimal clonal

growth support), 5 µg/ml insulin (Merck), 0.5 µg/ml hydrocortisone (Merck), 10 ng/mL

epidermal growth factor (Peprotech), 8.5 ng/mL cholera toxin (Merck), 2 nM T3 supplement

(3,3',5-triiodo-l-thyronine sodium salt) (Merck), and 100 IU/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL

streptomycin (Merck) on a feeder layer of mitotically inactivated 3T3-J2 cells, and grown at

37°C at 5% CO_2, as previously described (49).

HARA lung SCC cells (124) were purchased from the National Institutes of Biomedical

Innovation, Health, and Nutrition (NIBIOHN) JCRB Cell Bank, Japan (catalogue #JCRB1080.0),

and were re-authenticated in August 2024. HARA cells were cultured in complete RPMI

medium (10% (v/v) fetal bovine serum, 100 IU/mL penicillin and 100 μg/mL streptomycin

(Merck), and 2 mM L-glutamine (Merck).

Generation of stable shRNA-expressing cell lines

SCC13 cells, cultured on feeder cells to ~70% confluence, were disaggregated in trypsin/EDTA

and cells (2.5×10^5) were seeded into 6-well cell culture plates (Corning™ Costar™, UK) and

cultured for 24 h in FAD medium. Medium was then changed to Opti-MEM (Fisher Scientific).

To generate stable SCC13 cell lines expressing RIF1-targeting shRNAs, SCC13 cells were

infected with MISSION® lentiviral particles (Merck, the sequences of the shRNAs can be found

in (Supplementary Table 1A) at a multiplicity of infection (MOI) of 2–3 in the presence of

5 μg/ml polybrene (Hexadimethrine bromide, Merck). For creating stable SCC13 cell lines

expressing YAP- or TAZ-targeting shRNAs, the SMARTvector™ inducible lentiviral platform was

used, which implements a microRNA-scaffolded Tet-On 3G bipartite induction system

(Horizon Discovery-Dharmacon™, the sequences of the shRNAs can be found in

Supplementary Table 1B). The lentiviral vector included a puromycin resistance element

(PuroR) for selection post-infection, as well as a 2A self-cleaving peptide which allowed for

PuroR and Tet-On 3G expression from a single mCMV promoter that was selected for

negligible basal expression and strong activation when induced (data not shown). A

doxycycline-inducible TRE3G promoter was driving expression of the shRNA as well as a

fluorescent turbo-RFP reporter. After 24 h incubation with viral particles, medium was

changed to FAD medium, and shRNA-expressing cells were selected for 7 days using

puromycin (2.5 µg/ml, Merck) in co-culture with puromycin-resistant 3T3-J2 fibroblasts

(kindly provided by Prof Fiona Watt, Centre for Gene Therapy and Regenerative Medicine,

King's College London, UK; EMBL, Heidelberg, Germany). For experiments using the stable

SCC13 cell lines with doxycycline inducible shRNAs, cells were incubated with FAD medium

supplemented with 5 µg/mL doxycycline (Tocris) for 48 hours before trypsinisation and

seeding for downstream experiments.

siRNA transfection

24 hours after seeding, cells were transfected with 10-20 nM of ON-TARGET plus SMARTpool

siRNAs (Horizon Discovery, Supplementary Table 1C) using INTERFERin® transfection reagent

(Polyplus, VWR) in Opti-MEM (|Fisher Scientific) for 5 hours, then washed with PBS and grown

in FAD medium for up to 72 hours.

Colony Formation Assay

1×10^3 cells per well were seeded in triplicate technical replicates into 6-well cell culture

plates (Corning™ Costar™, UK) without feeder cells and were cultured for 10-14 days with

frequent (every 2–3 days) media changes, then fixed in 4% PFA for 30 minutes at room

temperature. In case of treatment with hydroxyurea, different drug concentrations were

added 24 hours after seeding and fresh drug was added with each medium change. Colonies

were stained using crystal violet solution (2% (w/v) crystal violet (Merck, UK) dissolved in 20%

(v/v) methanol) for one hour at room temperature, and then washed extensively in deionised

water and air-dried. Colonies were either imaged using a transilluminator and cell phone

camera or were scanned using a flat-bed scanner. Quantification of culture area covered by

colonies were performed using ImageJ.

Cell synchronisation by double thymidine block

671 Cells were seeded in FAD medium and treated with 2.5 mM thymidine (Merck, UK) for 24

672 hours at 37°C, 5% CO_2. Cells were then washed with FAD medium (without thymidine), fresh

673 FAD medium (without thymidine) was added, and cells were incubated for 15 hours before

674 the medium was supplemented again with 2.5 mM thymidine for a further 24 hours. Following

675 thymidine washout, cells were grown in FAD medium.

Cell cycle analysis by flow cytometry

Prior to trypsinization, Click-iT™ EdU (Fisher Scientific, UK) was added to the cell culture

medium to a final concentration of 10 µM, and cells were incubated for 30 minutes at 37°C.

Trypsinized cells were then centrifuged at 500 x g for 3 minutes (RT), the supernatant was

removed, and the pellet resuspended in 3 mL PBS, followed by another centrifugation at 500

x g (RT) for 5 minutes. Pelleted cells were next resuspended in 100 µl 0.9% (w/v) NaCl and

added dropwise to 1.8 ml ice cold 70% (v/v) ethanol for fixation and stored at -20°C for a

minimum of 2 hours before being centrifuged again for 5 minutes at 400 x g (4°C). The cell

pellet was then resuspended in 0.5 ml PBS and transferred to a clean tube, and cells were

centrifuged for 5 minutes at 400 x g (4°C). This cell pellet was then resuspended in 100 µl Click-

iT™ cell reaction buffer (Fisher Scientific, UK) and incubated at RT in the dark for 30 minutes.

EdU-labelled cells were then centrifuged for 5 minutes at 400 x g (4°C), cell pellets were

resuspended in 500 µl 1% (w/v) BSA in PBS and centrifuged for 5 minutes at 400 x g (4°C), then

resuspended in 500 μl PBS. RNase (Merck) was added to a final concentration of 0.5 μg/ml

and the sample was incubated on a heat block at 37°C for 15 minutes. Propidium iodide

(Merck) was added to a final concentration of 20 μg/ml and the sample was incubated on ice

for 20 minutes in the dark before a minimum of 20,000 cells were analysed on a FACS Canto™

cell sorter (BBD Biosciences). Data were analysed using FCS Express™, De Novo Software

(version 7.14.0020).

Rapid immunoprecipitation mass spectrometry of endogenous proteins (RIME)

NHK and SCC13 cells were seeded at clonal density (500,000 cells) into 15 cm dishes

containing a mitotically inhibited 3T3-J2 fibroblast feeder layer and cultured for 4 days. This

enabled the formation of small colonies with predominantly nuclear YAP/TAZ expression

(Supplementary Fig. 1B). Two independent cultures (=independent experiments, starting from

separate cell stocks) were grown for each cell type. Following removal of the feeder layer on

day 4 of culture, cells were grown in complete FAD medium (conditioned by mitotically

inhibited 3T3-J2 fibroblast cells) for a further 24 hours. Cells were fixed with 1% (v/v)

methanol-free formaldehyde for 8 min at RT and the fixation reaction was subsequently

rapidly quenched with 0.125 M glycine for 5 min. Fixed cells were gently scraped into ice-cold

washing buffer (0.5% (v/v) IGEPAL CA-630, 100 μm PMSF, in PBS, pH 7.4) and were washed

three times by centrifugation (800 x g, 10 minutes, 4°C) and resuspension. The final cell pellets

(containing between 2×10^7 and 7×10^7 cells) were stored at -80°C and shipped to Active Motif

on dry ice.

For each cell pellet, chromatin isolation and immunoprecipitation was performed in technical

replicates for YAP and IgG control. Control RIME was performed using isotype-matched IgG,

and for each independent experiment, the two replicate IgG control immunoprecipitations

were pooled for mass spectrometry analysis. Chromatin was isolated from formaldehyde-fixed

cell pellets by the addition of lysis buffer (custom, proprietary to Active Motif), followed by

cell disruption with a Dounce homogenizer (15 ml volume with tight-fitting pestle) to release

nuclei. Nuclei were sonicated on ice in ChIP buffer (custom, proprietary to Active Motif) using

an EpiShear Probe Sonicator (68% pulsed sonication: 30sec on/30sec off, 10 minutes total

sonication time) to lyse the cells and shear the DNA to an average fragment length of 300-500

bp. Genomic DNA for chromatin quantification was prepared by treating aliquots of chromatin

with RNase (Merck), proteinase K (Merck) and heat treatment (65°C overnight) for de-

crosslinking, followed by ethanol precipitation. Pellets were resuspended in 1/5 volume Tris-

EDTA buffer, and the DNA concentration was quantified on a NanoDrop 2000 (Fisher Scientific,

USA) spectrophotometer. An aliquot of sheared chromatin (150 ug) was precleared with

protein G agarose beads (Invitrogen). Chromatin immunoprecipitation was performed using

15 ug of purified rabbit polyclonal YAP-specific antibody (US Biologicals, Y1200-01D) or rabbit

IgG (control) and protein G magnetic beads (Active Motif). Immunoprecipitated chromatin-

protein complexes were washed extensively with RIPA buffer (1x, Active Motif) and then with

100 mM ammonium bicarbonate (Merck, USA). On-bead proteolytic digestion was performed

using trypsin (Worthington Biochemical, USA; 10 ng/µl). Protein digests were separated from

the beads using a magnetic rack, and digested peptide mixtures were desalted by solid-phase

separation using a C18 spin column (Harvard Apparatus, USA). The eluted peptides were

vacuum dried using a speedvac.

Digested peptides were reconstituted in 5% (v/v) acetonitrile and 0.1% (v/v) trifluoroacetic

acid and analyzed by LC-MS/MS on a Thermo Scientific Q Exactive Orbitrap Mass spectrometer

linked to Dionex Ultimate 3000 HPLC (Thermo Scientific, USA) and a nanospray Flex™ ion

source. The digested and desalted peptides were loaded directly onto the separation column

(Waters BEH C18, 75 µm x 100 mm, 130Å 1.7u particle size). Peptides were eluted using a 120-

minute gradient with a flow rate of 323 nl/min. The gradient was formed using

increasing/decreasing concentrations of buffer B (0.1% formic acid in acetonitrile); (1)

increase to 5% (v/v) B over 12 min, (1) gradual increase to 25% (v/v) B until the 90 min mark,

(3) gradual increase to 95% (v/v) B for 5 min, (4) 95% (v/v) B for another 4 min, (5) gradual

decrease to 5% (v/v) B over 20 min. An MS survey scan was obtained for the m/z range 340-

1600; MS/MS spectra were acquired using a top 15 method, where the top 15 ions in the MS

spectra were subjected to HCD (High Energy Collisional Dissociation). An isolation mass

window of 1.6 m/z was set for precursor ion selection, and normalized collision energy of 27%

was used for fragmentation. A 20-second duration was used for the dynamic exclusion.

Tandem mass spectra were extracted and analyzed by PEAKS Studio (version X+,

Bioinformatics Solutions Inc., Canada). Charge state deconvolution and de-isotoping were not

performed. Reference databases consisted of the UniProtKB/Swiss-Prot database (version

180508; 71,771 curated entries) and the cRAP database of common laboratory contaminants

(www.thegpm.org/crap; 114 entries). Databases were searched with a mass tolerance of 0.02

Da for fragment ions in MS/MS mode, and a parent ion tolerance of 10 PPM in MS mode. Post-

translational protein modifications allowed were methionine oxidation, asparagine and

glutamine deamidation, which were searched as variable modifications.

PEAKS Studio software built-in decoy sequencing and FDR determination was used to validate

MS/MS-based peptides. PEAKS Studio uses the "Decoy Fused Method" when calculating FDR

where the default cut-off is set to -10logP > 20 to ensure high-quality peptide spectrum

matches and to increase confidence in the proteins list obtained. Protein identifications were

accepted if they could pass the -10logP of > 20 and contained at least 1 identified unique

peptide. FDR for peptide spectrum matches was set at <1%. Proteins that contained similar

peptides and could not be differentiated based on MS/MS analysis alone were grouped to

satisfy the principles of parsimony. Proteins sharing significant peptide evidence were

grouped into protein groups.

RIME proteomics data analysis

The following filtering criteria were applied to the raw proteomics data obtained from PEAKS

studio for each cell type (Supplementary Dataset 1). (1) Identified proteins with <2 unique

peptides, an average spectral count >2 in the IgG immunoprecipitation controls for

experiments 1 and 2, or a spectral count of <4 in any of the four YAP RIME technical replicates

were removed from further analysis. (2) Proteins matched to commonly identified IgG

contaminant proteins (data downloaded from the contaminant repository for affinity

purification (CRAPome, Crapome.org, accessed November 2019)) and to mitochondrial

proteins were excluded from further analysis. (3) Proteins displaying a fold change <4 of mean

spectral counts in YAP immunoprecipitations vs spectral counts in the respective IgG control

immunoprecipitation in any of the two independent experiments were removed to eliminate

low confidence hits that were not considerably more represented in the YAP

immunoprecipitation than the IgG immunoprecipitation. High confidence YAP-interacting

proteins were further screened for potential physiological significance by filtering against lists

of candidate genes positively and negatively regulating clonal growth of NHK and SCC-13 cells

(Walko et al., 2017). Interaction networks were created using Cytoscape version 3.9.1 and

using the Cytoscape STRING app version 1.7.1, and manually curated into functional groups

using input from Gene Ontology Enrichment Analysis performed using gprofiler

(https://biit.cs.ut.ee/gprofiler/gost) functional profiling tool with electronic GO annotations

unselected (Reimand et al., 2019) and visualised using EnrichmentMap (Cytoscape app

version: 3.3.4) in Cytoscape (version:3.9.1).

Immunofluorescence Microscopy

Cells were seeded onto acid-washed and UV-sterilized glass coverslips coated with rat tail

collagen I (10 μg/ml; Fisher Scientific, UK) and fixed using 4% (v/v) paraformaldehyde (PFA)

for 30 minutes at RT. Immunostaining was performed in a PBS-humidified chamber. Cells were

permeabilised with 0.1% (v/v) Triton-X100 (Merck, UK) for 25 minutes then blocked in 10%

(v/v) BSA (Merck, UK) + 0.1% (v/v) Triton-X100. Primary antibodies (Supplementary Table 2)

were diluted in antibody diluent buffer (2% (v/v) BSA + 0.1% (v/v) Triton-X100) and incubated

overnight at 4°C. Coverslips were washed thoroughly with PBS, secondary antibodies

(Supplementary Table 2), diluted in antibody diluent, were added, and the samples incubated

for 1 hour at RT in the dark, then washed multiple times with PBS and once with MilliQ water.

Coverslips were mounted onto glass microscope slides using ProLong Gold™ anti-fade

mounting medium with DAPI (Fisher Scientific, UK,) or alternatively, incubated with 2 μg/ml

Hoechst 33342 (Fisher Scientific, UK) in PBS for 5 minutes, washed once with PBS, and

mounted with ProLong Gold™ anti-fade glass mounting medium without DAPI (Fisher

Scientific, UK). For confocal microscopy, images were acquired using a ZEISS LSM 880 laser

scanning confocal microscope using 40x/1.3 Oil DIC UV-IR M27 or 63x/1.4 Oil DIC UV-IR M27

objectives at 16 Bit depth, 0.5 μm optical Sections for Z-stacks, and 2048x2048 pixel

resolution. Images were processed using ImageJ (https://imagej.nih.gov/ij/) or ZEN blue

(Zeiss) with maximal orthogonal projection of Z-stacks. Quantification was performed using

CellProfiler (version 4.0.7). Immunofluorescence images in Supplementary Figure 1B were

obtained on a ZOE® Fluorescent Cell Imager (Bio Rad) using standard setup (20x objective)

and digital zoom. Minimal processing (changes in brightness and contrast) was applied equally

across entire images and applied equally to controls.

Quantification of RIF1 expression in human tissues

Immunofluorescence staining was performed on 4 μm human FFPE sections according to

standard protocols. Antigen retrieval was conducted in Dako Target Retrieval Solution, pH 9.0

(Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, California, USA), and 3% (w/v) BSA in PBS containing 0.05%

(v/v) Tween 20 (PBS-T) was used for blocking. Primary antibodies against Keratin 14 (chicken

pAb (Poly9060), BioLegend Cat# 906004, RRID:AB_2616962; 1:250) and RIF1 (rabbit mAb

(D2F2M), Cell Signalling Technology Cat# 95558, RRID:AB_2800249; 1:50) were diluted in 1%

(w/v) BSA in PBS-T and incubated overnight. Fluorescently labelled donkey anti-chicken (IgY

(H+L) highly cross adsorbed, Alexa Fluor™ 594, Fisher Scientific, catalogue # A78951, RRID

AB_2921073; 1:500,) and donkey anti-rabbit (IgG (H+L) highly cross-adsorbed secondary

antibody, Alexa Fluor™ 488, Fisher Scientific, catalogue # A-21206, RRID AB_2535792; 1:500,)

secondary antibodies were incubated for 90 minutes at ambient temperature. DAPI was used

for nuclear counter-staining. Images were captured using the Vectra Polaris™ imaging system,

and image analysis was conducted with the HALO® image analysis platform v3.6.4134. The

HighPlex FL v4.2.14 plugin was employed for image analysis, with signal intensity thresholds

set for the Opal620 (AF594) channel to differentiate positive from negative cells. The

DenseNet V2 (Halo AI) classifier was trained and applied to differentiate between tumour and

stroma regions. Depending on the size of the tissue, between 2-13 regions of interest with an

area of 1 mm^2, representing the tumour were analyzed. Data analysis was performed using

GraphPad Prism version 8.0.0 for Windows (GraphPad Software, San Diego, California USA,

www.graphpad.com).

Additional images of human squamous cell carcinoma samples were obtained by datamining

the www.proteinatlas.org database (125, 126).

Proximity Ligation Assay

Cells were fixed and permeabilised as described above. Coverslips were blocked in Proximity

Ligation Assay (Duolink®, Sigma) blocking buffer, and primary antibodies (Supplementary

Table 2), diluted in Duolink® antibody diluent, were added overnight. Proximity ligation assay

reactions were performed as per the manufacturer's instructions. Coverslips were mounted

onto glass slides using Duolink® PLA mounting medium with DAPI and sealed with clear nail

polish. Images were acquired on a Zeiss LSM-880 confocal microscope using a 40x/1.3 Oil DIC

UV-IR M27 objective. All images belonging to the same experimental repeat were acquired in

one imaging session at 16-Bit depth using a Z-stack (0.5 μm slice interval) and a 2048x2048

pixels dimension. Images were analysed on ZEN blue version 3.3.89.0000 and processed using

a maximal frontal orthogonal projection including all Z-stack slices. Background fluorescence

was removed using the same parameters for each image belonging to the same image set (=

experimental repeat). Image quantifications were performed using CellProfiler version 4.0.7.

Nuclei were defined as parent objects using the 'IdentifyPrimaryObjects' module based on

DAPI fluorescence signal and intensity of PLA signal per nucleus was quantified within the

defined nuclear area using the 'MeasureIntensity' module. To account for differences in YAP-

RIF1 and YAP-TEAD fluorescence signal intensities between different experimental repeats

(Figure 1), mean nuclear PLA signal fluorescence intensity in shYAP/TAZ cells was normalized

to that in shNTC cells (24). A one sample two-tailed t test was then used to test for statistical

significance (24). Statistical significance between the mean PLA signal intensities in the shNTC

and shY/T cell populations (assessed by Mann-Whitney test) was high (p<0.0001) for each

individual experiment (not shown).

Preparation of protein extracts for immunoblotting

RIPA buffer (1x) (Cell Signalling Technologies) or Cell Lysis buffer (1x; Cell Signalling

Technologies, #9803; for co-immunoprecipitation experiments), supplemented with protease

inhibitors (cOmplete™ ULTRA, EDTA-free, Merck, UK) and phosphatase inhibitors (PhosStop,

Merck, UK), was added to cell culture plates and cells were lysed on ice for 15 minutes. Cell

remnants were then scraped into the lysis buffer, the lysate was transferred into a tube and

sonicated in an ice bath using an MSE Soniprep 150 plus sonicator at 12 Amp for 15 minutes

with shaking. Lysates were centrifuged at 16,000 x g for 10 minutes (4°C). For co-

immunoprecipitation experiments, sample sonication was not performed. The supernatant

was collected, and BCA assay was performed to measure protein concentration using Pierce

BCA Protein Assay Kit (Thermo Fisher, UK).

Preparation of chromatin-bound protein fractions

Chromatin fractions were prepared as described (77). Briefly, cytoskeleton buffer (300 mM

sucrose, 3 mM $MgCl_2$, 100 mM NaCl, 0.5% (v/v) Triton X-100, 10 mM HEPES (pH 7.4))

supplemented with protease inhibitors (cOmplete™ ULTRA Tablets, EDTA-free, Merck, UK) and

phosphatase inhibitors (PhosStop, Merck, UK) was added to cells growing in cell culture

dishes, and these were incubated on ice for 5 minutes. Cells were then scraped into the buffer

and the extract was transferred to a microcentrifuge tube and incubated on ice for further 10

minutes. Samples were then centrifuged at 500 x g for 5 minutes at 4°C, and the supernatant

was removed and discarded. Chromatin pellets were washed twice in cytoskeleton buffer

without Triton-X100 and resuspended in 50 µl RIPA buffer (Cell Signalling Technologies, UK)

containing protease and phosphatase inhibitors, and incubated on ice for 5 minutes. 50 units

Benzonase® Nuclease (Merck, UK) and MgCl$_2$ (Sigma, UK, final concentration: 3 mM) were

added, and the chromatin fraction was incubated on ice for 20 minutes until it had visibly

reduced viscosity. The chromatin fraction was then centrifuged at 16,000 x g for 10 minutes

at 4°C, and the supernatant was recovered for immunoblotting analysis.

Co-immunoprecipitation from nuclei-enriched fractions

Cells were grown to ~70% confluency and were washed twice with ice-cold PBS before

incubation on ice for 15 minutes with nuclear extraction buffer (50 mM KCl, 2 mM MgCl$_2$, 1

mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT, 0.1% (v/v) IGEPAL CA-630, 10 mM HEPES (pH 7.4)), supplemented with

protease inhibitors (cOmplete™ ULTRA, EDTA-free, Merck, UK) and phosphatase inhibitors

(PhosStop, Merck, UK)). Cell remnants were then scraped into the buffer, the suspension was

collected into pre-cooled microcentrifuge tubes, vortexed for 10 seconds, and centrifuged at

750 x g for 5 minutes (4°C) to pellet nuclei. The cytoplasmic fraction was removed and the

nuclear pellet was washed once in ice-cold PBS, resuspended in ice-cold nuclear lysis buffer

(450 mM NaCl, 0.1 mM EDTA, 3 mM MgCl$_2$, 0.1% Triton X-100, 1% (v/v) IGEPAL CA-630, 1 mM

DTT, 20 mM HEPES (pH 7.4)) supplemented with protease inhibitors (cOmplete™ ULTRA, EDTA-

free, Merck, UK) and phosphatase inhibitors (PhosStop, Merck, UK), transferred to a clean pre-

cooled micro-centrifuge tube, and incubated on ice for 15 minutes. Chromatin was then

sheared either by passaging 10 times through a 27G needle attached to a 1 ml syringe or by

the addition of Benzonase® Nuclease (Merck, UK). Needle-sheared nuclear fractions were

centrifuged at 13,000 x g for 10 minutes (4°C) and the supernatant was diluted (1:3) to a final

concentration of 150 mM NaCl using nuclear lysis buffer without NaCl. For Benzonase®-

treatment of nuclear fractions, chromatin suspension in nuclear lysis buffer was similarly

adjusted to 150 mM NaCl using nuclear lysis buffer. Benzonase® was then added, and the

chromatin suspension was incubated on ice for 15 minutes with intermittent vortexing. EDTA

was added to a 1 mM final concentration and samples were centrifuged at 13,000 x g for 10

minutes (4°C).

BCA assay was performed to measure protein concentration, and agarose gel electrophoresis

of DNA was used to validate the Benzonase digest. To this end, a 1% (w/v) agarose (Sigma, UK)

gel was prepared using 1x Tris-acetate-EDTA buffer (Fisher Scientific, UK) and GelRed® Nucleic

Acid Stain (Merck, UK). 10 μl of sample was incubated with 1 μl proteinase K for 1 hour at 65C

and then diluted with TriTrack DNA loading dye (Fisher Scientific, UK) and run for 1-2 hours at

100V in parallel with GeneRuler1 kb Plus DNA Ladder (Thermo Fisher, UK). Gels were imaged

using a Syngene Gel Doc system.

Nuclear protein samples (containing 2 mg/ml protein) were incubated with 0.07 ug anti-YAP

(D8H1X, Lot 4, Cell Signalling Technology) antibody or 0.07 ug of isotype-matched IgG control

antibody (Supplementary Table 2) and DTT (1 mM) in micro-centrifuge tubes overnight at 4°C

with constant rotation. Protein G Dynabeads™ (Thermo Fisher, UK) were washed four times in

PBS supplemented with 0.05% (v/v) Tween-20 (PBS-T, IP wash buffer) using a DynaMag™

magnetic rack (Thermo Fisher, UK), transferred to a new tube and washed once in IP wash

buffer. Protein G Dynabeads were then resuspended in 50 μL IP-buffer and added to IP

reactions, which were then incubated with the beads for 4 hours at 4°C with constant rotation.

To pellet the beads, samples were then placed on the DynaMag™ magnetic rack, the

supernatant was removed, bead-bound protein complexes were washed 3 times in PBS-T,

transferred to a fresh micro-centrifuge tube, resuspended in 20 μl 50 mM glycine (pH 2.8) and

10 µl 3x Laemmli buffer (BioRad, UK) + β-mercaptoethanol (elution buffer), and incubated for

10 minutes at 95°C. Beads were removed using the DynaMag™ magnetic rack and the eluted

proteins were analysed by SDS-PAGE (alongside 10 ug (1%) of input lysate) and

immunoblotting.

Immunoblotting analysis

Protein samples were denatured and reduced in Laemmli buffer (BioRad, UK) containing 10%

(v/v) β-mercaptoethanol for 5 minutes at 95°C and loaded onto precast 4-20% or 4-15%

polyacrylamide mini-PROTEAN Tris-Glycine eXtended (TGX) gels (BioRad, UK). Proteins were

transferred onto either 0.2 µm pore-size Nitrocellulose membranes or methanol-activated

0.45 µm pore-size PVDF membranes (BioRad, USA), using either the Trans-Blot Turbo Transfer

System (BioRad, UK) or tank (wet) transfer depending on protein molecular mass. Large

proteins were transferred by wet transfer in wet transfer buffer (3.05 g/l Tris-base, 14.4 g/l

glycine) either overnight at 25V (4°C) or for 60 minutes with extensive cooling in wet transfer

buffer containing 20% (v/v) methanol at 300 mA. Membranes were blocked in 5% (w/v) BSA

dissolved in Tris-buffered saline (TBS) containing 0.1% (v/v) Tween 20 (TBS-T)(=blocking

buffer) for 1 hour at RT and primary antibodies (Supplementary Table 2), diluted in blocking

buffer, were incubated with the membranes overnight at 4°C with agitation. Membranes were

washed three times for 10 minutes with TBS-T and then incubated with secondary horseradish

peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated antibodies. Clarity western ECL substrate reagent (BioRad, UK)

was used to image immunoblots using a Fusion Solo chemiluminescence imager (Vilber

Lourmat, UK). Where possible, over-saturated images were avoided and exposures within the

dynamic range were selected. Band intensities were quantified based on pixel volume of the

bands using Fusion software (Vilber Lourmat, UK) or Image software (Bio Rad).

RNA preparation and next generation sequencing

RNA was extracted from cells using the RNeasy Plus Mini kit (Qiagen, UK) and the QIAshredder

shredding system (Qiagen, UK) as per the manufacturer's instructions. RNA yield and purity

were analysed using the Quant-iT™ Qubit RNA BR Assay Kit (Thermo Fisher, UK) in Qubit™

Assay Tubes (Thermo Fisher, UK) on a Qubit 4 Fluorometer (Thermo Fisher, UK). RNA

sequencing was outsourced to Novogene Ltd. (UK). Messenger RNA was purified from total

RNA by poly-A enrichment method using poly-T oligo-attached magnetic beads. RNA library

preparation was performed using the Novogene in-house kit NGS RNA Library Prep Set

(PT042) for the preparation of a 250~300 bp insert cDNA library (unstranded). The library was

checked with Qubit and real-time PCR for quantification and bioanalyzer for size distribution

detection. Paired end PE150 sequencing was performed on Novaseq6000 short-read

sequencing machine (6Gb raw data per sample) platform. Base calling was performed by

Novogene using RTA (Real Time Analysis) software. All samples had a Phred score >30.

RNA sequencing data analysis

Paired reads were aligned to Ensembl GRCh38.105 2.7.4a (127) using bowtie2 (v2.4.4)(128)

default settings, sorted and indexed with Samtools (v1.2)(129), and unstranded exonic read

pairs were counted using FeatureCounts (v2.0.7)(130) using a slightly modified Ensembl gtf

with 'chr' prefix nomenclature. DESeq2 (v1.44.0)(131) was used in R (v4.4.2) to assess features

with >10 reads across conditions and differential expression of transcripts with a fold change

>1.5 and FDR <0.05. All other results were given the value 0 and genes with no differential

expression were removed from the final data frame for visualisation purposes only.

Pathway analysis

Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (132) was performed in R, using clusterProfiler (v4.12.6)(133)

on all genes annotated with Entrez IDs using AnnotationDbi (v1.66.0) and org.Hs.eg.db.Hs

(v3.19.1) packages. GO Biological Processes (134, 135), Hallmark (136) and Reactome (137)

pathway gene sets were downloaded from the Molecular Signature Database

(https://www.gsea-msigdb.org/gsea/msigdb) using msigdbr (v7.5.1). Specific sets of genes

defining progenitor cell populations, early differentiation and late (terminal) differentiation

have been experimentally validated using organotypic models (93). 'set.seed' in R (v4.4.2) was

set to '1234' and Benjamini-Hochberg correction (adjusted p-value <0.05) was used for

multiple comparison corrections.

Gene Set Variation Analysis

A more stringent p-value threshold ($<1\times10^{-8}$) was applied to the SCC13 siYAP/TAZ RNA-

seq dataset to reduce the gene set size to <500, as recommended for robust gene set

variation analysis (GSVA) (138). This yielded 486 upregulated and 250 downregulated

DEGs in siYAP/TAZ compared to siNTC SCC13 cells. GSVA was performed using the GSVA

function (GSVA R package v1.52.3) with default settings. The input comprised the selected

SCC13 RNA-seq gene sets and an expression matrix from 237 cSCC patients with known clinical

outcome (95), covering primary cSCC (metastatic and non-metastatic), perilesional normal

skin and metastasis where available. GSVA enrichment scores were calculated for each

sample, and boxplots were used to visualize differential pathway activity across tissue types.

T-tests were applied to assess significant differences in enrichment scores between groups.

RT-qPCR

mRNA was converted to cDNA (including the removal of genomic DNA) using the QuantiTect

Reverse Transcription Kit (Qiagen, UK) as per the manufacturers' instructions. For the

Comparative C_T method, qPCR reactions were set up using 50 ng cDNA, 10 µL 2x TaqMan™

Fast Advanced Master Mix (Applied Biosystems™, Fisher Scientific, UK), 1 µL 20x TaqMan™

Gene Expression Assay (FAM) (Fisher Scientific, UK) (Supplementary Table 1D) and nuclease-

free water. Reactions were performed in technical triplicates in MicroAmp® Fast 96-Well

reaction plates (Applied Biosystems™, Fisher Scientific, UK)) and run on a StepOnePlus™ Real-

Time PCR System (Fisher Scientific, UK) for 40 cycles; 20 seconds at 95°C, 1 second at 95°C, 20

seconds at 60°C. Relative gene expression was analysed by the $2^{-\Delta\Delta C_T}$ method. GAPDH was

used as housekeeping gene for normalization.

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Reproducibility of experiments

RIME was performed on two independent cell cultures for each cell type, starting from freshly

frozen cell stocks. For each fixed cell pellet prepared from the independent cell cultures,

chromatin isolation and immunoprecipitation were then performed in technical replicates for

YAP and IgG control. Control RIME was performed using isotype-matched IgG, and for each

independent experiment, the two replicate IgG control immunoprecipitations were pooled for

mass spectrometry analysis. For RNA-seq analysis, two independent cell cultures, starting

from freshly frozen cell stocks were separately transfected with siRNA SMARTpools. For co-

immunoprecipitations two to three independent experiments were performed with similar

results. For immunostainings of cells, representative images from one out of three

experiments are shown. Western blots are representative of at least two independent

experiments. Cell cycle analysis was performed on two to four independent experiments. For

clonal growth assays at least three independent experiments were performed with three

technical replicates per condition. RT-qPCR analysis was performed on three independent

experiments with three technical replicates.

Statistical analysis and data presentation

Statistical analyses were performed with GraphPad Prism software (version 10.3) or R (v7.5.1).

No statistical method was used to predetermine sample size. Statistical tests used to

determine p-values are specified in Figure Legends. Sample size is indicated in Figure Legends,

Data sets with sufficient *n* numbers were first analysed for normal distribution. In cases where

the data were not found to be normally distributed, they were subsequently analysed using

appropriate non-parametric tests (specified in Figure Legends), provided that the variance was

comparable between the groups analysed. In some figures, superplots (139) were used to

communicate both the cell-level variability and the experimental reproducibility. The

investigators analysing the data were not blind to the identity of the samples. Further R

(v7.5.1) data manipulation packages included genefilter (v1.86.0), dplyr (v1.1.4), tibble

(v3.2.1), reshape2 (v1.4.4), plyr (v1.8.9), gage (v2.54.0), gageData (v2.42.0), and rrvgo

(v1.16.0), and data were visualised in R using gplots (v3.2.0), ggplot2 (v3.5.1), viridis (v0.6.5),

DOSE (v3.30.5), pheatmap (v1.0.12), RColorBrewer (v1.1-3), eulerr (7.0.2), and ggrepel

(v0.9.6) packages.

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Figure legends

Figure 1. RIME identifies RIF1 as an interactor of chromatin-associated YAP in squamous cell

carcinoma cells.

(**A**) Interaction network of YAP protein interactors identified by RIME in SCC13 cells. Oval

nodes indicate proteins that were previously identified as candidate regulators of SCC13 cell

proliferation and/or survival in a genome wide RNA-interference (RNAi) screen (hit: 'Yes')(49),

while rectangular shaped nodes indicate proteins that were not identified in the RNAi screen

(hit: 'No'). Red connecting lines (edges) show previously identified YAP interactions according

to the STRING Homo sapiens database, and nodes with red borders indicate known YAP

interactors (manually curated from STRING and literature search); dashed red lines show

manually curated known YAP interactions that were not yet present in the STRING database.

Proteins were manually grouped based on function (gene names displayed, generated in

Cytoscape 3.9.1 using STRING app 1.7.1). (**B**) Gene ontology terms ('molecular functions' and

'biological process') enriched within the high-confidence YAP-interacting proteins identified

by RIME. (**C**) Confocal fluorescence images (z-projections) of YAP (green) and RIF1 (red)

nuclear localisation in SCC13 cells. DNA was counterstained with Hoechst dye DAPI (blue).

Scale bar, 10 μm. (**D**, **E**) Immunoblotting analysis of YAP and IgG-control immunoprecipitates

and respective inputs from SCC13 (D) whole cell extracts and (E) and nuclei-enriched fractions

using the indicated antibodies. Blots from one representative experiment out of two (D) and

three (E) are shown. (**F**, **G**) Representative confocal microscopy images (z-projections) and

image quantifications of (F) YAP-RIF1 and (G) YAP-TEAD1 in-situ PLA in control (siNTC/shNTC)

and YAP/TAZ knockdown (siYAP&TAZ/shYAP) cells (PLA signal, green; DNA (DAPI) blue; n >250

cells (YAP-RIF1), n >500 cells (YAP-TEAD1) per condition in n-3 independent experiments).

Scale bars, 5 μm. Datapoints show fold decrease in mean nuclear PLA signal intensity in

siYAP&TAZ/shYAP cells compared to siNTC/shNTC cells. Lines show means from all three

experiments, error bars show SD. Exact p-values are shown, one sample two-tailed *t* test.

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Figure 2. YAP/TAZ-mediated oncogenic transcriptional programmes control the balance

between proliferation and differentiation in squamous cell carcinoma.

(**A,**) Significantly enriched or depleted RNAs in siYAP/TAZ SCC13 cells identified by RNA-Seq

analysis using DESeq2. Volcano plot shows statistical significance (-log 10 (p-value)) versus

relative RNA abundance (log2 -fold change) in siYAP/TAZ compared to siNTC cells. The vertical

dotted grey lines identify the log2-fold change cut-off (0.58, 1.5-fold change). The horizontal

grey dotted lines identify the cut-off for statistical significance (p<0.05). (**B**) Heatmaps show

the log2-fold change of selected genes relating to cell cycle control, the epidermal

differentiation complex, and transcriptional regulators of terminal differentiation. Black colour

indicates that the gene is not differentially regulated in the pairwise comparison. (**C**)

Photograph shows lack of medium acidification by doxycycline-induced shYAP SCC13 cells

compared to shNTC cells during a 4-day culture period indicative of decreased proliferation.

(**D**) Immunoblot analysis of SCC13 cells expressing doxycycline-induced shYAP, shTAZ, or

shNTC, using the indicated antibodies. Actin and cyclophilin B (CBP) were used as loading

controls. (**E**) Cell cycle analysis by propidium iodide (PI) labelling of asynchronous populations

of shNTC and shYAP SCC13 cells (grey profiles) and of cells synchronised at the G1/S boundary

by double thymidine block (dTb) at indicated time points. Note that the doxycycline treatment

required for induction of shRNA expression slightly reduces cell proliferation (compare with

Fig. 6A). One out of n=2 independent experiments is shown. (**F**) Colony formation assays were

quantified by measuring the percentage of well area occupied by colonies. Bars show the

means from n=3 independent experiments (performed with 3 technical replicates), individual

data points show the means from each experiment, error bars show SD. Exact p-values are

shown, RM one way ANOVA with Geisser-Greenhouse correction and Dunnett's multiple

comparison test. (**G**) Immunoblot analysis of shNTC, shYAP, and shTAZ SCC13 cells using the

indicated antibodies. Tubulin was used as loading control.

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Figure 3. YAP modulates RIF1 transcription and promotes RIF1 protein stability.

(**A,**) Significantly enriched or depleted RNAs in siRIF1 SCC13 cells identified by RNA-Seq

analysis using DESeq2. Volcano plot shows statistical significance (-log 10 (p-value)) versus

relative RNA abundance (log2 -fold change) in siRIF1 compared to siNTC cells. The vertical

dotted grey lines identify the log2-fold change cut-off (0.58, 1.5-fold change). The horizontal

grey dotted lines identify the cut-off for statistical significance (p<0.05). (**B**) Scatter plot shows

correlations between the 710 genes that were found to be differentially expressed in both

siYAP/TAZ and siRIF1 SCC13 cell datasets. (**C**) qRT-PCR analysis of *RIF1* mRNA expression in

SCC13 cells transfected with an siRNA SMARTpool targeting YAP/TAZ (siY/T) or siNTC. Data

shown are from n=3 independent experiments performed with three technical replicates.

Individual data points represent the mean fold change in mRNA abundance (normalized to

GAPDH) compared to siNTC in each experiment. Bars represent the means from all

experiments, error bars represent SD. Exact p-values are shown, paired *t* test. (**D, E**)

Immunoblot analysis of SCC13 cells transfected with (D) an siRNA SMARTpool targeting

YAP/TAZ (siY/T) or an siNTC SMARTpool or (E) expressing doxycycline-induced shYAP, shTAZ or

shNTC, using the indicated antibodies. Tubulin or cyclophilin B (CBP) were used as loading

controls. In (D) numbers below lanes represent protein ratios relative to an arbitrary level of

1.0 set for siNTC. (**F**) Quantification of RIF1 protein expression as shown in (E). Individual data

points show fold change in RIF1 protein levels (normalised to tubulin) in shYAP compared to

shNTC in n=3 different experiments, bars show the mean, error bars show SD. (**G**) Log2-fold

change in *YAP1* and *RIF1* mRNA abundances (based on RNA-seq analysis performed in (89)) in

N/TERT-2G immortalised NHKs transfected with YAP/TAZ-targeting siRNAs (siY/T) compared

N/TERT-2G cells transfected with siNTC. (**H**) Correlation analysis between the single sample

GSEA scores for the MSigDB GO:Hippo_Signalling gene set and *RIF1* mRNA expression levels

(batch corrected, 24Q2 release) in a panel of 64 HNSCC cell lines. Spearman correlation

coefficient and statistical significance are indicated. (**I**) Immunoblot analysis and quantification

of RIF1 protein levels in SCC13 cells transfected with siRNA SMARTpools targeting TEAD1,

TEAD3, TEAD4, or YAP/TAZ (siY/T), or an siNTC SMARTpool. Cyclophilin B (CBP) was used as

loading control. Quantification of RIF1 protein expression was done as in (F). (**J**) Immunoblot

analysis, using the indicated antibodies, of SCC13 cells expressing a doxycycline-induced shYAP

or a shNTC, treated for the indicated times with cycloheximide (CHX, 100 μg/ml). Cyclophilin

B (CBP) was used as loading control.

1478

Figure 4. Increased association of YAP with RIF1 in response to replication stress.

(**A**) Immunoblot analysis of chromatin fractions from SCC13 cells expressing a doxycycline-

induced shYAP or shNTC, using the indicated antibodies. Cells were synchronised at the G1/S

boundary by double thymidine block (dTB) and released into the S phase. Samples were taken

at the indicated timepoints. Histone H3 (HH3) was used as loading control. Blots from one

representative experiment out of two are shown. (**B**, **C**) Representative confocal microscopy

images of (B) z-projection and (C); orthogonal projection of YAP-RIF1 in-situ PLA in SCC13 cells

(PLA signal, green; DNA (DAPI) blue). In (B) cells were labelled with a 1-hour EdU pulse prior

to fixation (EdU signal, red). Arrows in (C) indicate cells completing mitosis. Scale bars, 5 μm.

(**D**) Immunoblot analysis of SCC13 control cells and cells exposed to 4 mM hydroxyurea (HU)

for 24 hours, using the indicated antibodies. Washout, medium removal and replacement with

fresh medium. Tubulin and cyclophilin B (CBP) were used as loading controls. (**E**, **F**) Image

quantifications of (E) YAP-RIF1 and (F) YAP-γH2AX in-situ PLA in SCC13 cells treated with 4 mM

HU for the indicated times. >200 cells were measured per experimental condition in n=3

independent experiments. Superplots show nuclear PLA signal intensity per cell (grey

datapoints), mean nuclear PLA signal intensity of the respective cell populations in each of

n=3 experiments (black datapoints), and mean nuclear PLA signal intensity from all three

experiments (lines). Error bars show SD from all three experiments. Exact p-values are shown.

(E) Brown-Forsythe and Welsh ANOVA test with Dunett's multiple comparison test, (F)

unpaired *t* test.

1499

Figure 5. Increased expression of RIF1 in squamous cell carcinoma.

(**A**) Immunoblot analysis of normal human epidermal keratinocytes (NHKs), keratinocytes

isolated from a pre-malignant dysplastic skin lesion (PM1), various cell lines isolated from

primary cutaneous SCCs (cSCC; SCC13, SCC-NR, MET1), a recurrent cSCC (MET2), and a lymph

node metastasis (MET4), using the indicated antibodies. Actin was used as loading control. (**B**,

C) Quantification (B) and representative images (C) of RIF1 expression in healthy adult human

skin (HS), nodular (Nod) and (Inf) infiltrative basal cell carcinoma (BCC), and well-differentiated

(WD) and poorly differentiated (PD) cSCC. Tissue sections were immunolabelled with

antibodies against RIF1 (green), and keratin 14 (Krt14, blue) to identify normal and neoplastic

epidermal keratinocytes. White dotted line demarcates dermal–epidermal boundary in HS.

Scale bar, 50 μm. Superplots in (B) show percentage of RIF1-positive keratinocytes in different

areas of the same tumour (coloured symbols), mean percentage of RIF1-positive keratinocytes

in 3–5 different patient samples (black datapoints), and mean percentage of RIF1-positive

keratinocytes in each sample group (lines). Error bars show SD from each sample group.

*$p < 0.05$, Brown-Forsythe and Welsh ANOVA test with Dunett's multiple comparison test. (**D**,

E) RIF1 protein expression in HNSCC samples from the Clinical Proteomic Tumour Analysis

Consortium (CPTAC), stratified according to (D) tumour stage, or (E) presence of alterations

in the Hippo pathway or other signalling pathways. Jitter plots (overlayed onto box plots) show

Z-values (standard deviations from the median across samples for the given sample type) from

individual samples. Box plots indicate the median (middle line), 25th percentile (bottom line),

75th percentile (top line), and minimum and maximum (whiskers). Log2 spectral count ratio

values from CPTAC were first normalized within each sample profile, then normalized across

samples.　　Graphs　　were　　downloaded　　from　　the　　UALCAN　　database

(https://ualcan.path.uab.edu/). (D) $p < 0.05$ for all pairwise comparisons, ANOVA test with

Dunett's multiple comparison test. In (E) exact p-values are shown.

1525

Figure 6. Depletion of RIF1 in squamous cell carcinoma cells affect DNA replication dynamics.

(**A**) Cell cycle analysis by PI labelling of asynchronous populations of shNTC and shRIF1 (shRIF1-

017, see (B)) SCC13 cells (grey profiles) and of cells synchronised at the G1/S boundary by

double thymidine block (dTb) and released into S-phase (T=hours post thymidine release,

coloured profiles). One of n=2 experiments is shown. (**B**, **C**) Immunoblot analysis of (B) cell

extracts and (C) chromatin fractions from shNTC and shRIF1 SCC13 cells, using the indicated

antibodies. In (C) cells were synchronised at the G1/S boundary by double thymidine block

(dTB) and released into the S phase. Samples were taken at the indicated timepoints. Note

that DDK-induced phosphorylation of MCM4 results in a band shift. Cyclophilin B (CPB),

tubulin, and histone H3 (HH3) were used as loading controls. shRIF1-017 was used in

experiments shown in (A, C).

1537

Figure 7. RIF1 protects against endogenous and exogenous replication stress.

(**A**) Immunoblott analysis of cell extracts from SCC13 cells expressing shNTC or different

shRIF1, using the indicated antibodies. Cyclophilin B (CPB), and tubulin were used as loading

controls. Cells treated for 24 hours with 4 mM HU served as positive controls for severe

replication stress. The position of the RPA32 band is indicated with an arrow. (**B**)

Representative cell cycle profile (PI labelling following a 30-minute EdU pulse) of

unsynchronised shNTC and shRIF1 SCC13 cells. Gates used for quantification and percentages

of cells in different cell cycle phases are indicated. One out of n=4 independent experiments

is shown. (**C**) Immunoblot analysis of cell extracts from SCC13 cells expressing shNTC or

different shRIF1, using the indicated antibodies. Tubulin was used as loading control. (**D**)

Representative images of colony formation efficiency of shNTC and shRIF1 SCC13 cells. Cells

in triplicate wells were stained with crystal violet. Colony formation assays were quantified by

measuring the percentage of well area occupied by colonies. Bars show the means from n=3

independent experiments (performed with 3 technical replicates), individual data points show

the means from each experiment, error bars show SD. Exact p-values are shown, RM one way

ANOVA with Geisser-Greenhouse correction and Dunnett's multiple comparison test. (**E, F**)

Synergism of YAP depletion (shYAP) and HU treatment on clonal colony growth was quantified

by measuring the percentage of well area occupied by colonies after 10 days in culture. In (F)

values have been normalized to controls (no HU treatment) for shYPA and shNTC. Bars show

the means from n=3 independent experiments (performed with 3 technical replicates),

individual data points show the means from each experiment, error bars show SD. p-values

are shown for multiple comparisons, RM two-way ANOVA with Geisser-Greenhouse

correction (matched values both stacked and spread across rows) and Šidak's multiple

comparison test. *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$. Sources of variation in (E): HU

concentration, p=0.04; shRNA, p=0.002; HU concentration x shRNA, $p<0.001$. Sources of

variation in (F): HU concentration, p=0.008; shRNA, p=0.02; HU concentration x shRNA,

p=0.007.

1565

Supplementary Figure 1. Validation of YAP antibody and cell culture conditions for RIME.

(**A**) Immunoblot analysis of cell extracts from SCC13 cells expressing a non-targeting control

shRNA (shNTC), two different shRNAs targeting YAP (shYAP-1, shYAP-2), or two different

shRNAs targeting TAZ (shTAZ-1, shTAZ-2) using the indicated antibodies. Note that the rabbit

anti-human YAP antibody used for RIME (Y1200-01D, US Biologicals) did not recognize TAZ.

Tubulin was used as loading control. (**B**) Representative wide-field microscopy images of

YAP/TAZ (monoclonal anti-YAP/TAZ antibody, clone 63.7, Santa Cruz) nuclear localisation in

NHK and SCC13 cells prior to RIME experiments. F-actin was counterstained with phalloidin.

Scale bar, 100 µm. (**C**) Coverage of bait protein YAP across both experiments and all technical

replicates. Regions shown in blue represent peptides detected by mass spectrometry. Km5 =

NHK cells, strain km, passage 5.

1577

Supplementary Figure 2. RIME identifies RIF1 as an interactor of chromatin-associated YAP

in normal human keratinocytes.

(**A**) Interaction network of YAP protein interactors identified by RIME in NHKs. Red connecting

lines (edges) show previously identified YAP interactions according to the STRING Homo

sapiens database, and nodes with red borders indicate known YAP interactors (manually

curated from STRING and literature search); dashed red lines show manually curated known

YAP interactions that were not yet present in the STRING database. Proteins were manually

grouped based on function (gene names displayed, generated in Cytoscape 3.9.1 using STRING

app 1.7.1). (**B**) Gene ontology terms ('molecular functions' and 'biological process') enriched

within the high-confidence YAP-interacting proteins identified by RIME in NHKs. (**C**) Mean

spectral counts (total number of identified peptide spectra per protein) for YAP and RIF1 in

the YAP-RIME from the two independently performed experiments in SCC13 and NHK cells.

(**D**) Immunoblot analysis of chromatin fractions from NHK and SCC13 cells, using the indicated

antibodies. Similar amounts of total chromatin-associated proteins were loaded on SDS-PAGE,

as validated by Coomassie staining.

1593

Supplementary Figure 3. Validation of YAP/TAZ knockdown efficiency and antibody

specificity for in-situ PLA experiments, and confirmation of YAP-RIF1 interaction in HARA

lung squamous cell carcinoma cells.

(**A**) Immunoblott analysis of YAP (rabbit monoclonal anti-YAP antibody; D8H1X, Cell Signalling))

and IgG-control immunoprecipitates and respective inputs from SCC13 cell extracts using the

indicated antibodies. (**B**) Immunoblot analysis of lysates from cells used in in-situ PLA

experiments shown in Fig. 1F and 1G. To achieve the strongest YAP/TAZ depletion possible,

SCC13 cells expressing inducible shNTC or shYAP were treated with doxycycline for 72 hours

and were in parallel also transfected with non-targeting control or YAP/TAZ-targeting siRNA

SMARTpools, respectively. Tubulin was used as loading control. (**C**, **D**) Representative confocal

microscopy images (z-projections) of in-situ PLA (PLA signal, green; DNA (DAPI)) blue) in cells

labelled with (C) no primary antibodies or (D) only one of the two primary antibodies. Scale

bars, 5 μm. (**E**) Representative confocal microscopy images (z-projections) of YAP-RIF1 in-situ

PLA (PLA signal, green; DNA (DAPI)) blue in miotic cells. Scale bars, 5 μm. (**F**) Confocal

fluorescence image (z-projection) of YAP (green) and RIF1 (red) nuclear localisation in HARA

cells. DNA was counterstained with Hoechst dye (DAPI, blue). Scale bar, 10 μm. (**G**)

Immunoblot analysis of YAP and IgG-control immunoprecipitates and respective inputs from

HARA cell nuclei-enriched fractions (treated with Benzonase® nuclease) using the indicated

antibodies. (**H**) Agarose gel electrophoresis of DNA extracts from Benzonase®-treated and

untreated HARA cells shows efficient DNA degradation upon Benzonase® treatment. Left lane:

Thermo Scientific™ GeneRuler 1 kb Plus DNA Ladder (Fisher, UK).

1615

Supplementary Figure 4. Gene set enrichment analysis in differentially expressed genes

upon YAP/TAZ knockdown in SCC13 cells.

(**A**, **B**) Bubble plots show results of gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) on RNA-seq data from

siYAP/TAZ SCC13 cells. The top 10 downregulated (suppressed) or upregulated (activated)

pathways in siYAP/TAZ SCC13 cells are shown. (**C**) Heatmaps show the log2-fold change of

selected genes representing high confidence YAP/TAZ-TEAD target genes, YAP-MMB target

genes, and genes directly involved in DNA replication, in the indicated pairwise comparisons.

Black colour indicates that the gene is not differentially regulated in that pairwise comparison.

(**D**) GSEA showing enrichment of epidermal late differentiation (upper panel) and progenitor

cell (lower panel) signatures (93) among the differentially expressed genes in siYAP/TAZ (siY/T)

versus siNTC SCC13 cells.

1627

Supplementary Figure 5. Correlation analysis of YAP/TAZ target genes, replication stress-

associated genes, and RIF1 in HNSCC cell lines.

(**A**–**C**) Correlation heatmaps of the indicated genes (mean mRNA expression) distinguished by

(A, C) 64 HNSCC or (B) 5 cSCC cell lines. Graphs were exported from the DepMap portal. (**D**–

F) Correlation analysis between the expression of replication stress-associated genes and (D)

YAP/TAZ target genes or (E) *RIF1* mRNA expression levels (expression public 24Q2 release),

and (F) correlation of YAP/TAZ target genes and *RIF1* mRNA expression levels in a panel of 64

HNSCC cell lines. Spearman correlation coefficient and statistical significance are indicated.

Data were accessed using the DepMap portal (https://depmap.org/portal/).

1637

Supplementary Figure 6. Cell cycle withdrawal and terminal differentiation commitment of

SCC cells upon conditional YAP depletion are reversible.

Phase contrast images show morphological appearance of shNTC and shYAP SCC13 cells

growing in the presence of doxycycline (dox), and at the indicated timepoint after doxycycline

withdrawal. Note reduced density, impaired colony formation, and elongated and flattened

shape (indicative of terminal differentiation (140)) of shYAP cells in the presence of

doxycycline, and rapid recovery of normal cell morphology and growth behaviour upon

doxycycline withdrawal leading to re-expression of YAP.

1646

Supplementary Figure 7. Involvement of YAP/TAZ target genes in human cSCC progression.

Boxplots show the distribution of Gene Set Variation Analysis (GSVA) scores for differentially

expressed genes (DEGs) that were (**A**) downregulated or (**B**) upregulated in siYAP/TAZ SCC13

cells across different cSCC patient samples (95). Norm_no_met / tum_no_met: perilesional

normal skin and primary cSCC tissue from patients with no metastasis over 3 years;

norm_with_met / tum_with_met: perilesional normal skin and primary cSCC tissue from

patients with metastasis during 3 years follow-up; met: tissue from metastasis. Pairwise

comparisons between sample groups were conducted using a *t* test. The p-values from these

comparisons are indicated above the boxplots with brackets linking the compared groups. The

significance levels are denoted as follows: *: $p <= 0.05$; **: $p <= 0.01$; ***: $p <= 0.001$; ****: p

$<= 0.0001$.

1658

1659 ***Supplementary Figure 8. Gene set enrichment analysis in differentially expressed genes***

1660 ***upon RIF1 knockdown in SCC13 cells.***

1661 (**A**–**C**) Bubble plots show results of gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) on RNA-seq data from

1662 siRIF1 SCC13 cells. The top 10 downregulated (suppressed) or upregulated (activated)

1663 pathways in siRIF1 SCC13 cells are shown.

1664

Supplementary Figure 9. RIF1 expression in different types of squamous cancers.

(**A**–**C**) Representative RIF1 immunohistochemistry (anti-RIF1 rabbit polyclonal antibody

HPA036887, Atlas Antibodies) of normal tissue and squamous cell carcinoma tissue from (A)

skin, (B) oral cavity and (C) cervix, exported from the Human Protein Atlas database. NS,

normal skin; cSCC-IS, cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma in-situ; WD cSCC, well differentiated

cSCC; PD cSCC, poorly differentiated cSCC; NOM, normal oral mucosa; WD OSCC, well

differentiated oral SCC; PD, poorly differentiated oral SCC; NC, normal cervix; CeSCC, cervical

SCC. (**D**) RIF1 protein expression across different cancers, with tumour and normal samples,

from the Clinical Proteomic Tumour Analysis Consortium (CPTAC). Box plots indicate median

Z-values (middle line), 25th percentile (bottom line), 75th percentile (top line), and minimum

and maximum (whiskers). Log2 spectral count ratio values from CPTAC were first normalized

within each sample profile, then normalized across samples. Graphs were downloaded from

the UALCAN database (https://ualcan.path.uab.edu/). BRCA, breast cancer (18 normal and

125 tumour samples); COAD, colon adenocarcinoma (100 normal and 97 tumour samples);

OV, ovarian serous cystadenocarcinoma (25 normal and 100 tumour samples); KIRC, kidney

renal clear cell carcinoma (84 normal and 110 tumour samples); UCEC, uterine corpus

endometrial carcinoma (31 normal and 100 tumour samples); LUAD, lung adenocarcinoma

(111 normal and 111 tumour samples); PAAD, pancreatic adenocarcinoma (74 normal and

137 tumour samples); HNSCC, head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (71 normal and 108

tumour samples); GBM, glioblastoma multiforme (10 normal and 99 tumour samples); LIHC,

liver hepatocellular carcinoma (165 normal and 165 tumour samples). (**E**–**G**) RIF1 protein

expression in (E) lung SCC, (F) GMB, and (G) OV samples from the Clinical Proteomic Tumour

Analysis Consortium (CPTAC), stratified according to presence of alterations in the Hippo

pathway or other signalling pathways. Jitter plots (overlayed onto box plots) show Z-values

(standard deviations from the median across samples for the given sample type) from

individual samples. Box plots indicate the median (middle line), 25th percentile (bottom line),

75th percentile (top line), and minimum and maximum (whiskers). Log2 spectral count ratio

values from CPTAC were first normalized within each sample profile, then normalized across

samples.   Graphs   were   downloaded   from   the   UALCAN   database

(https://ualcan.path.uab.edu/). Exact p-values are shown.

1695

Figure 1_Bojko et al.

Figure 2_Bojko et al.

Figure 3_Bojko et al.

Figure 5_Bojko et al.

Figure 6_Bojko et al.

Figure 7_Bojko et al.

C

Accession	Description	Coverage		#Spec	Sample
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		60%	40	1Km5_Exp1_R1
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		60%	31	1Km5_Exp1_R2
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		63%	52	2SCC13_Exp1_R1
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		63%	48	2SCC13_Exp1_R2
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		60%	38	3Km5_Exp2_R1
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		65%	49	3Km5_Exp2_R2
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		65%	51	4SCC13_Exp2_R1
P46937	Transcriptional coactivator YAP1...		63%	48	4SCC13_Exp2_R2

Figure S1_Bojko et al.

Figure S2_Bojko et al.

Figure S3_Bojko et al.

Figure S4_Bojko et al.

Figure S5_Bojko et al.

A

Continuous growth with Dox   120h post-dox withdrawal   196h post-dox withdrawal

shNTC

shYAP-1

Figure S6_Bojko et al.

Figure S7_Bojko et al.

A

B

C

Figure S8_Bojko et al.

Figure S9_Bojko et al.