Prematurity Reprograms Cerebellar Development and Long-Term Behavior

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Abstract

Premature survivors are at risk for motor and socio-cognitive impairments, implicating cerebellar dysfunction. However, underlying mechanisms remain unclear due to the heterogeneity of preterm insults, the most prominent being prenatal maternal immune activation (MIA) and neonatal hypoxia (Hx). To examine how individual or sequential insults affect cerebellar function, we utilized a double-hit (DH) mouse model that integrates both exposures. Comparative analysis showed that this model recapitulates key features of the human preterm cerebellum, allowing systematic evaluation of insult-specific outcomes. Isolated Hx triggered S-phase arrest in mature granule cells, disrupted Purkinje cell synaptic integration, and led to both motor and social deficits. In contrast, when Hx followed MIA (DH), it delayed granule cell maturation with G2-phase retention and triggered progressive mitochondrial dysfunction. While DH mice developed motor-cognitive impairments, sociability was preserved. These findings underscore the multiplicity of neurodevelopmental outcomes in prematurity, shaped by timing and interaction of early-life insults.

Keywords: Maternal immune activation, hypoxia, cerebellum, ASD, human, locomotor, social, behavior, spatial transcriptomics.

Introduction

Despite significant strides in neonatal critical care that have improved survival rates for extremely preterm infants (22-24 weeks gestation) [1,2,3], their neurocognitive outcome improvement has plateaued in recent years[4,2]. Preterm birth exposes the developing brain to a convergence of perinatal insults that disrupt key neurodevelopmental processes [4]. Maternal immune activation (MIA), a key driver of spontaneous preterm labor, often results from sterile intra-amniotic inflammation[4]. Implicated in approximately 40% of preterm birth cases linked to intrauterine infection or inflammation[5], MIA disrupts the delicate immune tolerance required for maintaining pregnancy[4,5,6], thereby triggering premature labor[4,5]. Beyond their direct role in triggering labor, the immune-mediated mechanisms underlying preterm birth have profound implications for fetal brain development, disrupting key processes such as neurogenesis, neuronal migration, and synaptogenesis[7,8]. These disruptions increase susceptibility to subsequent socio-emotional and cognitive impairments[9,10,11].

This is especially critical in preterm newborns, who face additional risks like hypoxia from immature respiratory control and underdeveloped lungs, resulting in prolonged need for ventilatory support[12]. Hypoxia during early postnatal period also disrupts neurodevelopmental processes, such as neuronal differentiation, synaptogenesis, and myelination, and is strongly linked to long-term behavioral deficits[13]. However, the sequential interaction between MIA and hypoxia remains poorly understood. Clarifying how MIA-induced inflammation and hypoxia interplay is essential to uncover mechanisms behind long-term neurodevelopmental deficits in preterm infants.

Perinatal insults are major drivers of long-term neurological morbidity[14]. Affected individuals

often exhibit social deficits and motor impairments, including ataxia - indicating cerebellar

dysfunction[2,15]. The cerebellum's rapid transition to the ex-utero environment during a critical

window of maturation renders it especially vulnerable to hypoxic and inflammatory challenges,

which can disrupt both its structural integrity and functional development. Nonetheless, the

precise mechanisms underlying these disruptions remain incompletely understood.

We hypothesize that cerebellar structural and functional alterations extend beyond basic motor

control, given the cerebellum's crucial role in adaptive motor learning[16,17]. We propose that

primary motor deficits caused by cerebellar disruption indirectly lead to social behavior

impairments by limiting opportunities for peer interaction, exploration, and complex social

play—foundational elements of normal social development[18,19]. Emerging evidence links

cerebellar dysfunction to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and emotional dysregulation[12, 20].

However, the mechanistic interplay between perinatal insults and cerebellar disruption in shaping

long-term behavioral outcomes remains unclear[21, 22]. While we previously demonstrated that

neonatal Hx alone disrupts cerebellar development and alters locomotion[23], the sequential impact

of MIA followed by Hx on cerebellar development remains unexplored. Since MIA precedes

preterm birth, it may prime the developing brain for increased vulnerability to postnatal Hx,

thereby exacerbating cerebellar dysfunction

To address these questions, we used a double-hit (DH) murine model of preterm encephalopathy

to dissect the independent and sequential effects of MIA and Hx on cerebellar development.

Grounded in comprehensive behavioral profiling, this approach aimed to define how these

insults impact locomotor learning and coordination. To establish the translational relevance of

our model, we performed comparative analyses with human preterm postmortem cerebellum,

evaluating the extent to which the DH paradigm recapitulates conserved cellular and molecular

signatures of injury across species.

To investigate how MIA and Hx disrupt cerebellar circuit formation, we applied spatial

transcriptomics within the anatomical context of the developing cerebellum, capturing molecular

profiles linked to cytoarchitectural changes during postnatal maturation. This approach allowed

us to define how each insult alters transcriptional programs governing progenitor differentiation,

laminar organization, and circuit assembly. We complemented this analysis with histological

evaluation and cell cycle mapping to delineate insult-specific effects on progenitor maturation

across cerebellar cortical layers. Finally, we assessed how locomotor dysfunction influences

social behavior by combining social behavioral analysis with detailed kinematic analysis to

dissect cerebellar contributions to socio-cognitive phenotypes.

Through this integrative approach, we aimed to uncover how fetal exposure to immune

activation and hypoxia disrupts cerebellar architecture and connectivity. We hypothesized that

these disruptions impair circuit formation across development, resulting in motor learning

deficits and altered social behavior, thereby providing critical insight into the pathogenesis of

neurodevelopmental disorders in preterm populations.

Results

A Double-Hit Mouse Model of Perinatal Brain Injury

To delineate the individual and sequential effects of preterm-associated insults on long-term

neurobehavioral outcomes, we utilized the DH mouse model. This model replicates two common

insults experienced by human preterm neonates: prenatal MIA, simulating events during or

preceding preterm labor, followed by sustained postnatal Hx, representing the consequences of

pulmonary immaturity and the associated need for respiratory support. A key challenge in

modeling human prematurity in mice is the significant difference in their gestational timelines

and developmental trajectories. A full-term mouse pregnancy lasts approximately 19-21 days,

producing a pup developmentally comparable to a late preterm or near-term human infant[24].

Consequently, inducing birth even one day early in a mouse is analogous to extreme human

prematurity (<28 weeks of gestation)[25]. Therefore, we modeled MIA in pregnant dams by

intraperitoneally injecting lipopolysaccharide (LPS) on embryonic days 15 and 16 (E15/E16),

while control dams received normal saline (**Fig. 1a).** This time point was selected because it

consistently triggers preterm delivery at E18-E19, a developmental stage that corresponds to

approximately 22–24 weeks of human gestation based on Theiler staging and other cross-species

developmental frameworks [26,27,28]. (**Fig. 1a**). To model postnatal hypoxic conditions, we

employed a well-established paradigm of sublethal neonatal Hx previously validated by our

group and others[29,30,31,30]. From postnatal day 3 (P3) to P11, pups were housed in a hypoxic

chamber while littermate controls were maintained under standard normoxic (N) conditions. This

design resulted in four experimental groups: a control group (Sal-N), two single-insult groups

(MIA alone; LPS-N and Hx alone; Sal-Hx), and the double-hit group (DH; LPS-Hx).

 MIA Exacerbates Hx-induced Long-term Cerebellar Functional Deficits

Preterm born children often exhibit elevated ataxia scores, reflecting of long-term impairments in

coordination and balance linked to cerebellar dysfunction[20]. To assess cerebellar-dependent

motor function following perinatal insults, we employed the ErasmusLadder, a high-precision

tool designed to evaluate cerebellar-mediated gait patterns and motor learning[13,32,33,34]. The

ErasmusLadder is a motorized apparatus with horizontal, touch-sensitive rungs that detect the

timing and position of each step taken by a mouse. To evaluate motor learning and adaptive

locomotion, the system automatically introduces obstacles, prompting the mouse to adjust its

stepping strategy in response to these perturbations. This system is highly sensitive to subtle

impairments in baseline locomotion, sensorimotor adaptation, and associative motor learning,

making it ideally suited for detecting cerebellar-related abnormalities[35] **(Fig. 1b-c)**.

We first assessed higher motor-cognitive functions by evaluating the locomotor response to

obstacle presentation. Locomotor learning and adaptability were impaired in all experimental

groups (LPS-N, Sal-Hx, and DH) compared to controls. However, the DH group showed the

most severe impairments, with an approximately twofold increase in post-perturbation step time

compared to controls, indicating markedly delayed adaptive responses to both obstacles and

auditory cues **(Fig. 1d and Extended Data Fig. 1a)**. These findings suggest that while MIA and

Hx each independently impair motor learning and response, their sequential occurrence in DH

mice synergistically worsens deficits in cerebellar-mediated sensorimotor plasticity.

Next, we assessed coordination and balance parameters. Locomotor missteps were primarily

influenced by Hx exposure. Mice in the Sal-Hx group exhibited a 10% increase in missteps

compared to other groups, indicating impaired motor coordination. In contrast, MIA-exposed

groups (LPS-N, DH) did not show significant differences in misstep frequency **(Fig. 1e and**

Extended Data Fig. 1b).

Collectively, these findings suggest that prenatal MIA and neonatal Hx each disrupt cerebellar-

dependent motor processes, though their sequential occurrence results in distinct and more

severe outcomes. Hx exposure primarily impaired coordination and was also linked to deficits in

motor adaptability and learning. In contrast, consecutive exposure to MIA and Hx in the DH

group led to the most profound impairments in sensorimotor integration, underscoring the

synergistic and additive impact of sequential prenatal and postnatal insults on cerebellar-

regulated functions.

MIA and Hx Reproduce Structural Features of the Preterm Human Cerebellum

To identify the cellular pathologies underlying the observed deficits in motor learning and

coordination, we conducted a neuroanatomical analysis of the mouse cerebellum at postnatal

days 11 (P11) and 45 (P45). At P11, all insult groups exhibited structural cerebellar alterations,

highlighting an early vulnerability to both isolated and consecutive combined insults.

Specifically, Purkinje cell (PC) counts were significantly reduced in the LPS-N and DH groups

(Fig. 2a-b). Granule cell (GC) abnormalities were also observed: the LPS-N and DH groups

showed an expanded external granule layer (EGL), while the Sal-Hx and DH groups exhibited a

decreased density in the mature internal granular layer (IGL) **(Fig. 2h-i)**. These findings suggest

that sequential MIA and Hx exposure impairs GC maturation across the cerebellar cortical

layers.

By P45, the cerebellar alterations became more distinct between groups, revealing divergent and

long-term effects of each insult. The LPS-N and DH groups showed the most pronounced

morphological PC injury, characterized with cellular shrinkage, poorly defined nuclei, and

perineuronal vacuolization **(Fig. 2c-g)**. These structural changes extended beyond individual cell

bodies, presenting as neuropil rarefaction **(Fig. 2a-f)**, which indicates disrupted connectivity.

This finding was further supported by a reduction in the length and complexity of PC dendritic

arborization, despite PC counts normalizing by adulthood **(Fig. 2c-f).** In contrast, hypoxia alone

(Sal-Hx) primarily reduced mature GC density in the IGL by adulthood—an effect also observed

in the DH groups **(Fig. 2h-j)**.

Building on the cerebellar abnormalities identified in the DH mouse model, we next assessed its

translational relevance by examining similar structural changes in human preterm cerebellar

tissue. We conducted a comparative analysis of postmortem cerebellar samples from preterm and

term infants (**Tables 1 and 2**) to evaluate the impact of preterm birth on cerebellar

cytoarchitecture. Preterm cerebella displayed pronounced abnormalities across cortical layers,

including disrupted GC distribution and maturation, closely resembling those observed in the DH

mouse (**Fig. 2l–q**).

While individual insults produced distinct effects - Hx primarily impacting mature GCs and MIA

compromising PC integrity and impairing granule cell precursor (GCP) maturation - the

consecutive exposure in DH mice resulted in a cellular phenotype closely resembling that of the

human preterm cerebellum. This convergence likely reflects the clinical progression in which

prenatal immune activation is followed by postnatal hypoxic events in preterm infants.

Therefore, the structural parallels between DH mice and human preterm cerebella support the

translational validity of the DH model in capturing the compounded impact of consecutive

perinatal insults on cerebellar development.

MIA Reconfigures the Cerebellar Response to Hx

Given the shared behavioral and cerebellar cellular phenotypes between our model and human

preterm infants, we next explored the molecular basis of the insult-specific cellular alterations.

Comparative transcriptomic analysis contrasting the DH mouse model at P11 with human

cerebellar tissue (preterm versus term; **Table 1-2)** revealed that a substantial subset of

differential expressed genes (DEGs) in the mouse insult groups exhibited corresponding

differential expression in human preterm samples **(Extended Data Fig. 2-1a)**.

Functional enrichment of the shared DEGs demonstrated convergence on biological processes

critical for cerebellar development, including axonogenesis, neuronal differentiation,

neurotransmitter signaling, and extracellular matrix remodeling **(Extended Data Fig. 2-1)**—

with the latter likely reflecting postmortem tissue effects in human samples[36]. Each comparison

highlights how distinct perinatal insults - whether isolated or sequential - differentially influence

cerebellar development at the molecular level. The observed overlap in gene expression between

each modeled insult and the human preterm cerebellum supports the view that preterm

cerebellopathy is not a uniform condition, but rather a spectrum of injury patterns shaped by

diverse clinical trajectories. These findings further establish the DH mouse model as a

translationally relevant in vivo platform for dissecting the molecular mechanisms underlying

human preterm cerebellar injury, highlighting how the type and sequence of perinatal insults

shape distinct molecular trajectories with potential long-term developmental consequences.

Having validated the relevance of the DH model to the human preterm cerebellum transcriptome,

we next leveraged this platform to dissect the molecular signatures associated with each perinatal

insult. We performed transcriptomic profiling at P11 and P45 to capture both the acute response

to Hx and the long-term molecular adaptations underlying recovery from late childhood into

adulthood. Given that the cellular analyses identified mature GCs as the primary targets of Hx,

we examined the transcriptional response to Hx at P11. Hx alone resulted in a striking 12,508

DEGs **(Extended Data Fig. 2-2a)**. Pathway enrichment analysis revealed disruptions in protein

metabolism and mitochondrial organization **(Extended Data Fig. 2-3a)**. By P45, the

transcriptomic landscape in Sal-Hx mice had shifted, showing enrichment in pathways related to

axonogenesis and membrane potential regulation - suggesting ongoing circuit-level

reorganization **(Extended Data Fig. 2-3c)**. In contrast, MIA alone did not elicit significant

transcriptional changes at P11. However, by P45, MIA-exposed mice displayed molecular

alterations resembling those observed in Sal-Hx mice, along with additional transcriptional

signatures related to cognition and learning **(Extended Data Fig. 2-2b-c)**. These findings

highlight distinct temporal patterns in the transcriptional response to Hx and MIA: whereas Hx

induces early molecular changes, MIA triggers a delayed transcriptomic reprogramming that

may gradually influence cognitive function later in development.

Given the sequential nature of perinatal insults in prematurity, we investigated how prior MIA

exposure modulates the cerebellar response to Hx by comparing the DH and Sal-Hx groups. At

P11, the DH group showed significant upregulation of genes involved in mitochondrial

respiration compared to Sal-Hx alone, with pathway enrichment in mitochondrial metabolism,

oxidative phosphorylation, and ATP synthesis **(Extended Data Fig. 2-3b)**. These results suggest

that MIA primes the cerebellum for an amplified metabolic response to hypoxic stress. By P45,

however, DH mice exhibited distinct transcriptional profiles, marked by alterations in pathways

related to synaptogenesis, cognition, learning, and locomotor behavior – changes not observed in

the Sal-Hx group alone **(Extended Data Fig. 2-3d)**.

These findings highlight that MIA modifies both the immediate and long-term molecular

consequences of neonatal Hx, leading to persistent alterations in cerebellar energy metabolism,

as well as changes in synaptic function and behavior. Together, these disruptions may contribute

to the locomotor deficit observed in DH mice.

Spatial Transcriptomics Reveal Insult-Specific Disruption of Cerebellar Developmental

Programs

To examine how each perinatal insult influences the transcriptional programs underlying circuit

assembly and cytoarchitectural organization in the developing cerebellum, we performed spatial

transcriptomics (Visium) on postnatal cerebellar tissue **(Fig. 3a)**. Using CoGAPS – an

unsupervised analysis framework for coordinated gene activity in patterned sets – we identified

13 biologically meaningful transcriptional patterns (M-patterns), each localized to specific

cerebellar cortical layers and cell types **(Fig. 3a-c)**. Gene set enrichment analysis of the high-

amplitude genes driving these M-patterns revealed significant associations with distinct

biological processes and cell-type-markers **(Fig. 3e).**

To determine how each perinatal insult alters spatial gene expression in the cerebellum, we

evaluated M-pattern enrichment across experimental groups. In control (Sal-N) mice, M-pattern

11 (M11) showed a strong positive correlation, reflecting the baseline spatial transcriptional

architecture of the postnatal cerebellum **(Fig. 3c)**. M11, which was not restricted to PCs or GCs

(Fig. 3b), was enriched for pathways related to protein synthesis, translation, and oxidative

phosphorylation **(Supplemental files)**. In contrast, M11 exhibited a negative correlation across

all insult-exposed groups **(Fig. 3c)**, indicating a common disruption of cellular energy

metabolism in response to perinatal injury.

Insult-specific transcriptomic patterns were also observed. Hx alone showed a positive

correlation exclusively with M1, which was negatively correlated in controls and broadly

distributed across the cerebellar cortex **(Fig. 3b, c)**. M1 was enriched for pathways related to

synaptic signaling and regulation, suggesting that Hx alters cerebellar circuit organization. In

contrast, MIA exposure alone (LPS-N) was positively associated with multiple M-patterns,

including M2, M4, and M9 **(Fig. 3b, c)**. Notably, pattern M4 was highly enriched in both LPS-N

and DH groups **(Fig. 3c)** and spatially localized to PCs and GCs **(Fig. 3b)**, consistent with

histological findings. M4 was linked to mitochondrial respiration and ATP production pathways,

indicating immune activation-induced metabolic stress **(Fig. 3d-e and Supplemental files)**. In

the DH group, however, none of the M-patterns showed significant correlation **(Fig. 3c)**, in

contrast to the distinct patterns observed with Hx or MIA alone. This loss of expected spatial

associations suggests that MIA modulates the cerebellar transcriptional response to Hx in a non-

additive manner – reorganizing rather than summing the molecular effects of each insult.

Collectively, these findings indicate that while Hx alone primarily disrupts synaptic signaling

pathways, prior MIA exposure reprograms cerebellar developmental trajectories in the context of

Hx, shifting the dominant molecular pathology toward the profound impairments in

mitochondrial respiration and cellular energy metabolism.

Neonatal Hx Exacerbates Mitochondrial Dysfunction Primed by MIA

Based on the observed mitochondrial-related transcriptional changes following MIA and

subsequent hypoxia, we hypothesized that MIA primes cerebellar mitochondrial function during

fetal development, increasing the tissue's susceptibility to hypoxic injury later in life. To test this,

we conducted Seahorse-based bioenergetic profiling of whole cerebellar tissue at P11 and P45,

capturing both the immediate metabolic response to oxygen deprivation and the long-term

consequences of recovery **(Fig. 4a)**. At P11, mitochondrial function did not differ significantly

across groups, However, by P45, DH mice exhibited a marked increase in proton leak relative to

both control and Sal-Hx mice, indicating persistent mitochondrial dysfunction and impaired

energy production as a result of the dual insult **(Fig. 4b-c)**.

Consistent with the bioenergetic findings, quantitative electron microscopy (EM) assessment

revealed distinct mitochondrial alterations across cerebellar cell types - GCs and PCs - in

response to single and serial insults at both neonatal and adulthood timepoints **(Fig. 4d)**. At P11,

GCs in both the DH and Sal-Hx groups exhibited reduced mitochondrial surface area, which

normalized by adulthood, indicating an acute but transient effect of Hx on GC mitochondria

(Fig. 4g-h). In contrast, by P45, DH mice showed a sustained reduction in mitochondrial density

in both GCs and PCs, along with decreased mitochondrial surface area specifically in PCs. These findings suggest a prolonged and cell type–specific mitochondrial impairment in DH mice, likely driven by MIA pre-exposure **(Fig. 4e-f, i-l).**

We next conducted a qualitative EM assessment of mitochondria integrity in GCs and PCs at P11 and P45, using a severity scoring system ranging from 1 (healthy, dark blue) to 5 (severely damaged/mitophagy, red)[37] **(Fig. 4m)**. In GCs, we observed progressive structural mitochondrial damage across both single-hit and DH groups by adulthood, with the most pronounced injury in groups exposed to Hx (Sal-Hx and DH) **(Fig. 4n)**. In contrast, PC mitochondrial damage observed at P11 in single-hit groups (Sal-Hx and LPS-N) largely resolved by P45, indicating recovery over time. However, in DH mice, PC mitochondria showed worsening injury, with a higher proportion of severely damaged mitochondria persisting into adulthood **(Fig. 4o)**. These findings confirm that hypoxia drives early mitochondrial injury in GCs, while MIA modulates and amplifies the long-term mitochondrial response to hypoxia in both cerebellar cell types—ultimately leading to cumulative and progressive damage, particularly in the DH group.

MIA Reprograms Hypoxia-Induced S- to G2-Phase Shift in Neuronal Cell Cycle Dynamics

Building on our findings of sustained mitochondrial damage, we next investigated the downstream consequences for neuronal development. Mitochondrial dysfunction is known to trigger cell cycle arrest through 'mitochondrial checkpoints' that regulate neuronal proliferation and maturation [38]. Based on this, we hypothesized that the cerebellar developmental arrest observed in the DH mouse arises from cell cycle abnormalities driven by impaired neuronal energy production following combined exposure to MIA and hypoxia[38].

Distinct neuronal populations in the cerebellum have specialized metabolic demands and occupy

defined spatial niches. To capture the impact of metabolic stress on cell cycle regulation within

this context, we performed spatially resolved cell cycle analysis using Visium-based Tricycle,

enabling phase-specific mapping across intact tissue sections **(Fig. 5a)**. This approach revealed

layer-specific patterns of cell cycle dysregulation, highlighting how mitochondrial dysfunction

disrupts the spatial coordination of cerebellar development.

At P45, Hx alone led to an increased proportion of GCs arrested in the S-phase, with minimal

progression into the G2/M and M/G1 phases - indicating a disruption in normal cell cycle

progression **(Fig. 5b)**. In contrast, the DH condition resulted in GC accumulation in the G2

phase, suggestive of a blockade prior to mitotic entry **(Fig. 5b)** Notably, PCs appeared resistant

to these cell cycle disruptions, at least in terms of detectable phase-specific alterations. These

findings underscore that cerebellar developmental injury is not uniformly distributed, but instead

selectively impacts specific neuronal populations based on their vulnerability to metabolic and

environmental stressors.

To investigate the mechanisms driving these adult-phase cell cycle abnormalities, we conducted

targeted validation experiments at P11 - a developmental stage characterized by active GC

proliferation. These analyses revealed significantly elevated expression of the cyclin-dependent

kinase inhibitors p21 and p27 in the DH cerebellum **(Fig. 5c-d)**, consistent with early activation

of cell cycle arrest pathways and impaired progression through the late phases of the cell cycle.

Together, these findings indicate that MIA followed by Hx induces an early and persistent shift

toward cell cycle arrest during cerebellar development, with effects extending into adulthood.

This sustained disruption of normal cell cycle dynamics is consistent with the long-term

mitochondrial dysfunction and histological evidence of impaired neuronal maturation observed

in the DH cerebellum.

Disrupted Cell–Cell Signaling Underlies Insult-Specific Rewiring of the Cerebellar Connectome

Given that perinatal insults disrupt not only individual neuronal populations but also their

integration into broader cerebellar circuits, we next investigated how arrested neuronal

development affects circuit connectivity. The integrity of cerebellar function depends on precise

intercellular communication - particularly between GCs and PCs. We hypothesized that

disruptions in cell–cell signaling would both reflect and contribute to the circuit-level

dysfunction underlying the motor deficits observed in the DH model. To identify transcriptional

changes in intercellular communication, we applied LIANA (LIgand receptor ANalysis

frAmework) to the Visium transcriptomic dataset, enabling inference of ligand–receptor

interactions across cerebellar cell types **(Fig. 6a-d)**.

The Hx-only group exhibited a broad reduction in intercellular signaling, most prominently from

GCs to PCs **(Fig. 6a, b)**. These pathways were primarily associated with synaptic plasticity and

glutamatergic transmission. Notably, signaling involving GRM1 – a critical synaptic receptor

whose impairment is implicated in ASD-like phenotypes[39] – was diminished. Based on the

transcriptomic findings on reduced excitatory input, we performed synaptic architecture analysis

which revealed a marked reduction vGLUT2-positive (vGLUT2+) synaptic puncta within the

molecular layer of Sal-Hx mice compared to controls (**Fig. 6e, f**).

In contrast, the LPS-N group exhibited a pronounced signaling imbalance, characterized by

enhanced GC-to-PC communication alongside reduced PC-to-GC signaling **(Fig. 6c)**. These

altered interactions affected multiple systems, including pathways involved in cell adhesion and

the regulation of excitatory/inhibitory balance. Consistent with a state of increased excitatory

drive, LPS-N mice showed a significant elevation in vGLUT2+ density compared to both control

and Sal-Hx groups **(Fig. 6e, f)**. DH exposure produced an entirely distinct pattern of network

disruption, impacting pathways critical for progenitor proliferation and synaptic maturation. GC-

to-PC signaling was reduced relative to the LPS-N group, while PC-PC communication was

markedly increased **(Fig. 6d)**. Among the most significantly altered interactions was CALM1-

GRM4 glutamatergic signaling. Although overall vGLUT2+ levels in DH mice were comparable

to controls, their spatial distribution was abnormal – showing increased labeling along distal

dendrites - suggesting disrupted synaptic targeting and altered integration of excitatory input

(Fig. 6e, f).

These findings show that perinatal insults disrupt cerebellar connectivity through distinct, insult-

specific alterations in intercellular signaling. Hx suppresses GC-to-PC communication and

reduces excitatory input; MIA enhances excitatory signaling in a dysregulated fashion; and DH

induces aberrant synaptic targeting alongside increased PC–PC connectivity, indicative of

maladaptive circuit remodeling. Collectively, these transcriptomic and structural alterations

implicate disrupted cell–cell communication as a core mechanism underlying circuit

dysmaturation and motor deficits in preterm brain injury.

MIA Modifies the Neurobehavioral Impact of Neonatal Hx

Given the disrupted GC–PC connectivity and motor learning deficits in DH mice, we asked

whether these microcircuit alterations extend to other cerebellar-dependent behaviors, focusing

on social interaction. Abnormal cerebellar connectivity is increasingly recognized as a hallmark

of neurodevelopmental disorders - including ASD - underscoring the cerebellum's influence on

social behavior [40]. We therefore assessed sociability with three-chamber social paradigm[41] (**Fig.**

7a). Continuous video recordings were analyzed in DeepLabCut™ for precise, automated

tracking of behavior in a modified 3-chamber apparatus (**Fig. 7b**). To further refine the assay, we

generated video-based heat maps that visualize chamber occupancy and movement

trajectories[41,42] (**Extended Data Fig. 3a-b**).

Sal-Hx mice exhibited a lack of sociability, showing a slight preference for the novel object over

the stranger mouse and spending the majority of their time in non-social areas (**Fig. 7c**). This

behavioral pattern is consistent with social withdrawal and an increased object-directed

exploratory drive. Similarly, LPS-N mice showed reduced sociability, with a more evenly

distributed pattern of exploration and comparable time spent across all three chambers **(Fig. 7c**

and Extended Data Fig. 3b). Interestingly, DH mice demonstrated normal sociability, spending

significantly more time with the novel mouse than with the object - similar to controls. However,

their social behavior was qualitatively distinct: DH mice frequently reared on their hind limbs

while in proximity to the novel mouse, suggesting altered patterns of social engagement **(Fig. 7c**

and Extended Data Fig. 3c).

We next examined cerebellar-associated motor impairments influenced general and spontaneous

exploratory behavior. To do this, we analyzed video recordings from the 10-minute-period

preceding the social test, during which mice explored the chambers freely in the absence of any

social or object stimuli. To capture overall exploratory drive, we computed a composite ratio that

compares time spent in open field areas to time spent stationary in the chamber corners or at gate

entrances. Lower ratio values reflected reduced exploratory behavior and a preference for

stationary or sheltered locations (**Fig. 7d-e**). Both Sal-Hx and DH mice exhibited significantly

lower exploration ratios compared to controls, with DH mice showing the most pronounced

deficits. These results suggest that early cerebellar-driven locomotor impairments may limit

spontaneous exploration, potentially contributing to altered social behavior and highlighting a

mechanistic link between motor dysfunction and impaired social engagement (**Fig. 7e**).

Overall, these findings highlight the distinct effects of individual early-life insults on sociability.

MIA exposure led to reduced social interaction, while neonatal hypoxia resulted in a lack of

sociability in the 3-chamber social approach test – both behavioral profiles consistent with ASD-

like features. Notably, while the combined immune and hypoxic challenge (DH) did not

significantly impair overall sociability, it resulted in qualitatively altered patterns of social

interaction and reduced exploratory behavior. The co-occurrence of motor and social/exploratory

deficits in the Sal-Hx and DH groups underscores the cerebellum's heightened vulnerability to

early-life insults and its central role in shaping complex neurodevelopmental phenotypes.

MIA Pre-Exposure Shifts Hx-Induced Motor Stereotypies toward Heightened Social Behavior

The pronounced social deficits observed in Sal-Hx mice, coupled with motor impairments and

reduced exploratory behavior, suggest that motor dysfunction may influence the quality of social

interactions. To further investigate the cerebellum's integrative role in motor and social domains,

we analyzed specific kinematic features – defined as distinct patterns of motor movement –

during the three-chamber social test.

To comprehensively characterize locomotor dynamics during the social exploration assay, we

applied B-SOiD - an unsupervised, pose-based behavioral segmentation algorithm that identifies

discrete kinematic motifs independent of spatial context **(Fig. 8a–b).** Using positional data from

the snout, ears, and body center, B-SOiD classified behavior into 14 reproducible kinematic

motifs (Clusters), each representing a recurring pattern of movement rather than a location-

bound activity **(Fig. 8c, Table 4, Extended Data Fig. 4-1)**. A key strength of this approach is its

ability to detect and classify motifs regardless of their location in the arena, enabling unbiased

analysis of motif frequency and duration across different zones (e.g., social, object, or neutral).

The 14 identified motifs captured a broad spectrum of behaviors, including high-velocity

exploration (Clusters 2, 11, 12), perimeter scanning (Cluster 4), stationary investigation (Clusters

3, 7, 8, 10, 13), transitional movements (Clusters 1, 6, 9), and pauses or disengagement (Clusters

0, 5) **(Fig. 8c, Table 4, Extended Data Fig. 4-1).** This data-driven framework enables objective

classification of motor strategies, including subtle movement patterns that may not be readily

discernible through visual observation alone.

We hypothesized that the distinct social phenotypes observed following early-life insults would

correspond to unique kinematic profiles, reflecting cerebellar contributions to social behavior.

Our results support this hypothesis: mice exposed to Hx-only or DH exhibited distinct movement

signatures compared to controls **(Fig. 8d)**. Sal-Hx mice demonstrated an increased frequency of

stereotyped motor motifs (Clusters 1, 12, and 13), characterized by repetitive head and body

turning. These low-variability patterns were observed across all chambers, suggesting restricted

and inflexible exploration consistent with an ASD-like behaviors. In contrast, DH mice engaged

more frequently in dynamic, socially relevant motifs (Clusters 8, 7, and 2), including standing

and approach behaviors. These interaction-related actions occurred most prominently within the

social chamber, indicating a distinct and highly interactive social profile **(Fig. 8e, Extended**

Data Fig. 4-2).

These findings demonstrate that early-life cerebellar insults fundamentally alter the organization

of movement during social behavior. The nature and timing of the insult dictate the extent and

pattern of neural circuit disruption, giving rise to distinct and measurable social behavioral

phenotypes.

Discussion

This study establishes a mechanistic framework linking both the isolated and sequential

occurrence of MIA and Hx to distinct patterns of disrupted cerebellar development and

behavioral outcomes. By delineating how these insults converge on the developmental trajectory

of neuronal progenitors, we present a translationally relevant model that illuminates context-

specific vulnerabilities of the developing cerebellum and identifies pathways associated with

abnormal neurobehavior, as well as critical windows for intervention.

Preterm birth remains a leading cause of neurodevelopmental disability worldwide[43]. Although

advances in neonatal care have reduced the incidence of overt structural brain injury, more subtle

yet persistent forms of developmental dysregulation – particularly within cerebellar circuits

essential for motor, cognitive, and affective function[34] – have emerged. The heterogeneous

etiologies of preterm birth give rise to diverse patterns of brain vulnerability, emphasizing the

need to move beyond one-size-fits-all models of encephalopathy.

The significance of this study lies in the use of the DH mouse model that mirrors key cellular and

molecular alterations observed in the human preterm cerebellum. Through parallel analyses in

both species, we validated the model's relevance by identifying convergent cellular and

molecular signatures of injury. Conserved DEGs revealed enrichment in pathways central to

circuit assembly and cerebellar function. This molecular alignment underscores the model's

utility for probing gene regulatory networks implicated in preterm brain injury and highlights

potential biomarkers and therapeutic targets.

Moreover, the identification of insult-specific molecular and cellular alterations reinforces the

importance of stratifying preterm infants based on underlying etiological factors – such as

perinatal inflammation or hypoxia – to refine risk assessment and inform precision interventions.

A key insight from this work is that both the timing and sequence of perinatal insults critically

shape the trajectory of cerebellar development. Sequential exposure to MIA followed by

postnatal Hx - common in preterm deliveries - produces a neurodevelopmental signature that is

mechanistically and functionally distinct from that of isolated insults. This shift in focus from the

identity of insults to their chronology has broad implications for experimental modeling and

clinical risk stratification

Our findings also highlight the cerebellum's dual vulnerability to disruptions in afferent and

efferent signaling. Injury from isolated hypoxia led to increased locomotor missteps, consistent

with disruptions in proprioceptive and sensorimotor input via mossy fibers from the

spinocerebellar tract[44]. In contrast, adaptive motor behavior – dependent on cerebellar output to

the red nucleus and thalamocortical circuits[45,46] – was selectively impaired in DH mice,

suggesting a breakdown in long-range connectivity and integrative cerebellar function. This

dissociation, wherein Hx impairs coordination while DH affects motor learning, illustrates

circuit-specific vulnerabilities shaped by the timing of injury. Recognizing these distinctions may

improve neurodevelopmental phenotyping in preterm infants and guide the development of

targeted interventions.

We further show that MIA and Hx exert temporally and mechanistically distinct effects on

cerebellar maturation. Hypoxia primarily disrupted differentiated GCs, while MIA altered PC

morphology and delayed GCP maturation. The DH condition exacerbated both injury profiles,

indicating a synergistic – not merely additive - effect. This compounded vulnerability likely

underlies the more severe structural and motor deficits observed in DH-exposed offspring,

aligning with clinical observations of heightened ataxia and sensorimotor dysfunction in preterm

infants[47,48,20].

A particularly intriguing and unexpected finding is the preservation of sociability in DH mice

despite marked cerebellar dysfunction and impaired motor learning. In contrast, mice exposed

solely to Hx exhibited significant social deficits, consistent with prior models of hypoxia-

induced ASD-like behavior[49]. One possible explanation is that prenatal MIA shifts the

developmental timing of vulnerable neuronal populations, altering their susceptibility to

subsequent hypoxic injury. Rather than compounding the effects of Hx, MIA may reshape

cellular sensitivity, thus mitigating social impairments. These findings underscore the importance

of injury timing and developmental context in modeling complex neurodevelopmental disorders.

A critical implication of this work is the need to disentangle motor impairments from primary

deficits in social cognition when interpreting atypical social behaviors. This distinction is

especially relevant for conditions like cerebral palsy, where motor dysfunction frequently co-

occurs with social developmental delays[50,51]. Social interaction depends on the precise

coordination of gaze, facial expression, gesture, and posture- behaviors requiring intact

sensorimotor integration[34,52]. Disruption in cerebellar or corticospinal circuits may lead to social

abnormalities that are misattributed to deficits in social cognition. Mechanistically informed

behavioral phenotyping is essential to distinguish between motor-driven and centrally mediated

social dysfunction, refine diagnostic criteria, and reduce the risk of diagnostic overshadowing.

This distinction also has therapeutic implications, guiding interventions that target both motor

and social domains.

Importantly, insult-specific kinematic features identified in this study may serve as early

biomarkers of cerebellar dysfunction, enabling timely detection of atypical neurodevelopment in

high-risk populations. These findings emphasize the cerebellum's central role not only in motor

control but also as a regulator of developmental timing and adaptive plasticity. Specific

behavioral and movement patterns correlate with cerebellar output to regions such as the

thalamus, ventral tegmental area, and medial prefrontal cortex, offering valuable indicators of

broader network health[53,54]. For instance, neonatal Hx impairs glutamatergic signaling

(vGLUT2+), leading to behavioral profiles marked by motor rigidity and social withdrawal,

consistent with ASD-like traits[,54]. In contrast, prior MIA redirects hypoxic injury to PCs and

their mitochondria, disrupting GABAergic output and excitatory-inhibitory balance[55] –

mechanisms likely underlying the motor learning deficits observed in DH mice.

This study underscores the cerebellum's vulnerability to sequential developmental insults and

establishes the DH model as a valuable platform for mechanistic and therapeutic research. By

linking molecular disruptions to distinct behavioral phenotypes, we offer a translationally

relevant framework for studying neurodevelopmental disorders in the context of prematurity and

early-life stress. Targeting mitochondrial dysfunction or synaptic disorganization during critical

windows may enable early intervention. Importantly, the co-occurrence of motor and social

deficits further highlights the need for integrated, multi-domain therapeutic strategies.

Collectively, these findings challenge traditional paradigms that rely on structural imaging or

static lesion identification to define preterm brain injury. Instead, they advocate for mechanistic

phenotyping based on developmental timing, functional circuit engagement, and longitudinal

outcomes. Framing preterm encephalopathy through this lens may enable targeted individualized

prognostication and enable more effective, developmentally timed interventions during critical

windows of cerebellar plasticity. Future studies should assess whether timely intervention can

restore cerebellar development and function.

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Resource availability

Materials availability
This study did not generate new unique reagents.

Data and code availability
Bulk and spatial RNA-seq data analysis from cerebellar mouse and human tissue have been deposited in the NoCodeSeg repository and are publicly available. The accession number is listed in the methods.
Any additional information required to reanalyze the data reported in this paper is available from the lead contact upon request.

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Declaration of interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Author contributions

P.K., conceived and designed the study. G.San., G.Sim., P.K., I.K., J.G., and K.W. performed the experiments and collected the data. K.W., G.Stein., R.V., D.S., H.S., E.G. and A.S. conducted the data analysis. G.San., G.Sim., P.K., N.W., M.T., C.B., and I.K. contributed to the interpretation of the results and provided critical feedback. G.San., G.Sim., V.G. and P.K. drafted the manuscript, and all authors contributed to the revisions and approved the final version.

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Figure 1

Figure 1 - MIA Exacerbates Hypoxia-induced Long-term Cerebellar Locomotor Deficits: a, experimental paradigm of the double-hit (DH) mouse model. Dams are injected intraperitoneally with lipopolysaccharide (LPS) or Saline at E15 and E16. Pups are exposed to prolonged hypoxia (Hx) or normal oxygen (N) postnatally from P3 to P11. **b-c,** Schematic side view of the ErasmusLadder paradigm used to test cerebellar-specific locomotor deficits in P45 mice. The ErasmusLadder cerebellar motor learning assay consists of 8 sessions of 42 trials per session. The mouse crosses the horizontal ladder, moving from the origin box to the goal box. Sessions 1-4 are training sessions, with no perturbance present (**b**). Sessions 5-8 are challenge sessions in which a sound cue, an obstacle consisting of a raised rung on the ladder, or both, are presented randomly to the mouse during trials (**c**). Bottom image: schematic representation of normal step pattern (top) and misstep pattern (bottom). The misstep parameter evaluates motor coordination. Circles with paw indicate mouse limb positioning. **d,** Graph indicating absolute learning step-time (reaction to the obstacle) by ErasmusLadder session assessed as a function of post-perturbation step-times (y-axis) by session (x-axis). Groups performed similarly during the Training sessions. Step time differed between groups during the obstacle sessions: Sal-N vs LPS: ***$p = 0.0002$; Sal-N vs Hx-Sal: **$p = 0.0038$; Sal-N vs DH: ****$p < .0001$. **e**, Misstep percentage (y-axis) by session (x-axis) assessed by ErasmusLadder for all four mouse groups. Sal-Hx vs. Sal-N: **$p = 0.0019$; Sal-Hx vs LPS-N: ***$p = 0.0008$; Sal-Hx vs DH: **$p = 0.0019$; ns, non-significant. For **d** and **e**, n=10-15 animals per group; two-way repeated measures (RM) ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test (additional statistics in Supplemental File). Data are represented as mean ± s.d. DH, double hit LPS-Hx; E, embryonal; P, postnatal; Sal, saline; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; ms, milliseconds; N, normoxia; Hx, hypoxia.

Figure 2

Figure 2 - Prematurity Insults Disrupt Cerebellar Cytoarchitecture and Mimic Human

Preterm Pathology: a, Representative 40x magnification H&E images of neuropathological

qualitative analysis of Purkinje cells (PCs) and granule cells (GCs); yellow contour evidenced

PC soma, cerebellar layers are labelled; note: DH exhibits rarified neuropil and shrunken PC

somas. **b-c,** Mouse cerebellar histological analysis showing, PC total number at two timepoints –

P11 (**b**) and P45 (**c**). **d,** Schematic illustration of dendritic arborization quantification: on the left

panel, H&E-stained section; middle panel, Calbindin-stained representative PC imaged in

confocal microscope; right panel, user-guided dendritic tracing example using Neurolucida 360

(all images are 40x magnification). **e-f,** Graphs displaying dendritic length (**e**) and complexity (**f**)

at P45. **g,** Representative electron microscopy images from neuropathological qualitative

analysis of PC soma; note: thicker membrane in Sal-Hx mice and darker cytoplasm and disrupted

PC contour in DH mice. **h**, EGL thickness (only at P11, since the EGL disappears by P20). **i-j,**

IGL layer GCs number at P11 (**i**) and at P45 (**j**). **k**, Representative electron microscopy images

from neuropathological qualitative analysis of GC soma; note: DH group exhibits karyorrhexis

nuclei **l-n,** Human cerebellar histological analysis showing **l,** Representative 40X magnification

H&E images of EGL – marked in yellow. **m-n,** Graphs displaying the EGL thickness **(m)** and

EGL layer GCP number **(n)**. **o,** Representative 40X magnification H&E images of IGL. **p-q**

Graphs displaying the IGL thickness **(p)** and IGL layer GP number **(q)**. For **b-j**, n=4-5 per

mouse group. For **b-c**, one-way ANOVA with uncorrected Fisher's LSD. For **e, f,** and **h-j,** one-

way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test (statistics in Supplemental File). For **m-q**,

n=4 term and n=4 preterm human subjects. For **m-n, p-q**, an unpaired t test was used. $*p < 0.05$,

$**p < 0.005$, $***p < 0.0005$. Data are represented as mean ± s.d; EGL, external granule layer;

GC, granule cell; HPF, high power field at 40x magnification; H&E, hematoxylin-eosin; Hx,

hypoxia; IGL, internal granule layer; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; ML, molecular layer; N,

normoxia; P, postnatal; PC, Purkinje cell; PCL, Purkinje cell layer; Sal, saline; WM, white

matter.

Figure 3

Figure 3 - Insult-Specific Alterations in Cerebellar Developmental Programs Revealed by

Spatial Transcriptomics: a, Schematic illustration of pipeline for mouse-derived CoGAPS

pattern expression. Left image show H&E-stained mouse cerebellar tissue stemming from a

mouse brain illustration, followed by a representative example of annotated cerebellar tissue 10x

magnified. 40x magnified H&E-stained image of cerebellar tissue for granule cell annotation

(blue) and Purkinje cell annotations (orange). Right image, representative example of the same

tissue area after CoGAPS loading showing gene expression level in tissue. Expression levels

(intensity scale) ranging from low (blue) to high (yellow). **b**, Heatmaps displaying the Spearman

correlation (*r*) of the mouse CoGAPS patterns with the DH insults. **c,** Heatmaps displaying the

Spearman correlation (*r*) of the mouse CoGAPS patterns with specific cerebellar cell

populations. Highlighted in yellow are two patterns of interest (M-1 and M-4) for their insult-

specific correlation. **d**, Representative image of whole tissue expression patterns (Pattern M-1

and M-4) following Visium assay and CoGAPS loading in all experimental groups. Expression

levels (intensity scale) ranging from low (blue) to high (yellow). **e**, Schematic illustration

displaying the main Gene Ontology-identified biological functions associated with the genes in

the two highlighted patterns (Pattern M-1 and M-4). For **b** and **c**, Spearman correlation (*r*) scale

ranging from 1 (red, high positive correlation) to -1 (blue, high negative correlation). *n* = 2 per

group. CoGAPS, Coordinated Gene Activity in Pattern Sets; DH, double-hit; GC, Granule cell;

Hx, hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; M, mouse; MIA; maternal immune activation; MLI;

Molecular layer interneuron; NES, Normalized Enrichment Score N, normoxia; ns, non-

significant; PC, Purkinje cell; PLI, Purkinje Layer Interneuron; Sal, saline; WM, white matter.

Figure 4

Figure 4 - Neonatal Hx Exacerbates Mitochondrial Dysfunction Primed by MIA: a,

Seahorse XF-derived graph output of metabolomic process in DH group at P45 showing the

oxygen consumption rate (y-axis) by time (x-axis) across metabolic phases. **b-c,** Bar graph

showing proton leak rates in mouse groups at postnatal days 11 (P11) and 45 (P45), as quantified

by Seahorse XF analysis. For **b**, n = 8-14 per group; one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple

comparisons. For **c**, n = 4-6 per group; ANOVA on ranks with pairwise comparisons, DH vs Sal-

Hx: *p = 0.0281; DH vs Sal-N: *p = 0.0484. **d**, Top image: schematic illustration from electron

microscopy of a PC with labelled mitochondria (colored); bottom image: example of magnified

illustration of three mitochondria (dark blue, green, orange) displaying the associated

mitochondria surface area. **e-f,** Quantification of mitochondrial density (number of mitochondria

per millimeter of GC) in GCs at P11 and P45 for each treatment group. For **e,** n = 16-21 per

group, Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparisons test. For **f**, n = 11-21 per group,

Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparisons test, Sal-N vs DH: *p = 0.012; LPS-N vs

DH: *p = 0.0168; DH vs Sal-Hx: *p = 0.0104. **g-h,** Quantification of mitochondrial surface area

in GCs at P11 and P45 for each treatment group. For **g**, n= 57-114 per group; one-way ANOVA

with Tukey's multiple comparisons test, Sal-N vs DH: *p = 0.0227; Sal-N vs Sal-Hx: **p =

0.003. For **h**, n = 669-757 per group, one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test.

i-j, Quantification of mitochondrial density (number of mitochondria per millimeter of PC) in

PCs at P11 and P45 for each treatment group. For **i**, n = 6-8 per group, Kruskal-Wallis test with

Dunn's multiple comparisons test. For **j**, n = 3-5 per group; one-way ANOVA with Tukey's

multiple comparisons test, Sal-N vs Sal-Hx: *p = .0087. **k-l**, Quantification of mitochondrial

surface area in PCs at P11 and P45 for each treatment group. For **k**, n = 669-757 per group, one-

way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test. For **l,** n = 528-1783 per group, one-way

ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test, **p = 0.0087, ****p < 0.0001. **m,**

Representative EM images displaying mitochondrial quality assessment with a severity scoring

from 1 (least severe, blue) to 5 (most severe, red). **n-o,** Qualitative quantification of

mitochondrial health in both GCs and PCs for each mouse group shown as pie charts. Pie charts

n-values in Supplemental File 7. For **b-l**, data are represented as mean ± s.d.; statistics in

Supplemental File 7b-l. DH, double-hit; EM, electron microscopy; GC, granule cells; Hx,

hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia; PC, Purkinje cells; Sal, saline.

Figure 5

Figure 5 - MIA Differentially Modulates Hx-induced Alterations in Neuronal Cell Cycle

Dynamics: a, Left panel, schematic illustration of the cell cycle phases associated with the theta

value with color scale. Right panel, representative images of mouse cerebellar tissue for each

mouse group with spatial cell cycle distribution, corresponding to cell cycle phases based on

color legend. Colored scale matches approximately the cell cycle position variable (theta), <0.25

and >.1.75 (blue/purple) G_1/G_0 phase, 0.5 to 1 (pink to yellow) S phase, and 1.25 to 1.75 G_2/M

phase (green). **b**, Bar graph displaying the proportion in percentage (y-axis) of GCs and PCs in

different phases of the cell cycle in each mouse group (x-axis). Different colors correspond to

different cell cycles. **c**, Left image, representative image of immunofluorescent staining of p21

and DAPI in mouse tissue at 60x magnification. Right image, bar graph of p21 expression

calculated as cell per millimeter cube. **d**, Left image, representative image of immunofluorescent

staining of p27 and DAPI in mouse tissue at 60x magnification. Right image, bar graph of p27

expression calculated as cell per millimeter cube. For **c** and **d**, n = 5-6 per group; one-way

ordinary ANOVA with uncorrected Fisher's LSD; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.005$, *** $p = 0.0008$.

Data are represented as mean ± s.d. GC, granule cell; Hx, hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide;

LSD, least significant difference; N, normoxia; PC, Purkinje cell; Sal, saline.

Figure 6

Figure 6 - Perinatal Insults Rewire the Cerebellar Connectome through Divergent

Disruption of Cell–Cell Signaling Networks: a-d, LIANA plots for each experimental group

displaying the specificity and expression magnitude of top 20 ligand-receptor interactions

between GC-GC, GC-PC and PC-PC, PC-GC. Interaction specificity scale going from 0.2 (small

circle) to 0.6 (big circle). Expression magnitude scale going from 0.2 (low, blue) to 0.8 (high,

yellow). Dashed line boxes indicate predicted interactions related to glutamatergic signaling and

synaptic transmission. **e**, Representative images of stained cerebellar tissue at 40x magnification

displaying in green (calbindin/Calb) PC and dendrites and in red (VGLUT2) excitatory synapse

puncta. **f**, Graph displaying the ratio of number of excitatory puncta divided by area

(number/mm^2). Ordinary one-way ANOVA with Tukey's multiple comparisons test; n=4-5 per

mouse group; *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.005$, ***$p < 0.0005$. Data are represented as mean ± s.d. GC,

granule cell; Hx, hypoxia; LPS, Lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia; PC, Purkinje cell; Sal, saline.

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Figure 7

a

Novel mouse

Novel object

b

c

Sal-N Sal-Hx LPS-N DH

Time spent in chamber
■ Novel Mouse ■ Novel Object ■ Empty

Time (seconds)

Open-Field Assessment

d

Sal-N Sal-Hx LPS-N DH

Second spent (per spatial bin)

◖ = Corners ◯ = Top gate ◯ = Bottom gate

e

Open exploration time /
Corner stationary time (min.)

**   *   *

Sal-N Sal-Hx LPS-N DH

Figure 7 - MIA Modifies the Neurobehavioral Impact of Neonatal Hx: a, Schematic

illustration of the modified apparatus for three-chambered social assay, which evaluates general

sociability tendencies in mice. On the left, the novel mouse chamber displaying an unfamiliar

mouse in a cylindric cage; in the middle chamber, illustration representing the test subject

mouse; on the right, cylindric novel object in green. **b,** Illustration reproducing the experimental

setup created utilizing a photograph of the original setup. **c**, Graph displaying amount of time

spent in chamber (y-axis) for each treatment group. $n = 6$-8 per group. ***$p <.001$; between

groups: one-way ANOVA with independent samples t-test (Welch's test); within groups:

independent samples t-test. Blue boxplot represents time spent in the chamber containing the

novel mouse. Red boxplot represents time spent in chamber containing the novel object. Green

boxplot represents time spent in any other area within the full arena (exploring). Data are

displayed as mean ± S.E.M. **d**, Sample traces of tracked movement from individual mice

representative of each experimental group during the three-chamber open field assessment.

Images show traces of movement between the three chambers, with the chamber corner

delimited by the semi-circle (light blue), the top gate area (green) and the bottom gate area (red).

Horizontal red and green line mark chambers' boundaries, vertical purple line represents

chamber midline. Heatmap scale represents second spent per spatial bin going from 0.01s (blue)

to 0.06s (red). **e**, Boxplot graph representing the [open exploration time / corner and gate

stationary time] ratio across experimental groups in the open field test. Horizontal dashed line

indicates balanced ratio (ratio =1). Statistical analysis was performed using One-way ANOVA

with Tukey's multiple comparison test. Data are presented as mean ± s.d. *$p < .05$, ** $p< .01$.

Hx, hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia; Sal, saline.

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Figure 8

Figure 8 - MIA Pre-Exposure Shifts Hx-Induced Motor Stereotypies Toward Heightened

Social Behavior: a, Schematic illustration of an experimental mouse and the corresponding

body points utilized to track mouse movement. **b**, 3D-graph displaying the 14 kinematic

behavioral clusters – groups comprised of same kinematic motifs (fraction of video representing

a specific movement) - identified by the B-SOiD algorithm. B-SOiD is an unsupervised

machine-learning tool that classifies high-resolution kinematics into distinct behavioral patterns.

c, Illustrations examples displaying the kinematic motifs associated with the corresponding

cluster. **d**, Heatmap depicting the kinematic motifs frequency assessed as fraction of frames with

B-SOiD for the identified 14 kinematic clusters in each of the groups. Dark blue indicates a

higher fraction of frames; light blue indicates a lower fraction of frames. Brackets show group

structure/pairings for statistical comparisons included in Results section. $n = 3\text{-}10$ per group. **e**,

Graphs showing the duration as Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF, y-axis) of kinematic

cluster 1 (top) and 8 (bottom) for all groups in each of the three chambers calculated as

successive frames log (x-axis). group. Wasserstein distance with Benjamini-Hochberg correction

applied to *p*-values. *indicates graph with at least one significant different interaction; statistics

in Supplemental File. For **d-e**, $n = 3\text{-}10$ per group. DH, double-hit; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; Hx,

hypoxia; N, normoxia; Sal, saline.

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Extended Data Figure 1

a

Two-way RM ANOVA	SS	DF	MS	F (DFn, DFd)	P value
Sessions x Condition	1696435	49	34621	F (49, 336) = 4.444	P<0.0001
Sessions	1245464	7	177923	F (7, 336) = 22.84	P<0.0001
Condition	1374825	7	196404	F (7, 48) = 11.54	P<0.0001
Subject	817223	48	17025	F (48, 336) = 2.185	P<0.0001
Residual	2617723	336	7791		

#	Tukey's multiple comparisons test	Predicted (LS) mean diff.	95.00% CIs	Summary	Adjusted P Value
5	Sal-N Post-perturbation vs. DH Post-perturbation	-366.1	-514.9 to -217.2	****	<0.0001
5	Sal-N Post-perturbation vs. LPS-N Post-perturbation	-219.8	-368.6 to -70.90	***	0.0002
5	Sal-N Post-perturbation vs. Sal-Hx Post-perturbation	-186.6	-335.4 to -37.71	**	0.0038

> Post-perturbation step-time

b

Two-way RM ANOVA	SS	DF	MS	F (DFn, DFd)	P value
Sessions x Condition	623.3	21	29.68	F (21, 168) = 1.694	P=0.0359
Sessions	878.3	7	125.5	F (7, 168) = 7.161	P<0.0001
Condition	283.5	3	94.49	F (3, 24) = 0.9169	P=0.4476
Subject	2473	24	103.1	F (24, 168) = 5.881	P<0.0001
Residual	2944	168	17.52		

#	Tukey's multiple comparisons test	Predicted (LS) mean diff.	95.00% CIs	Summary	Adjusted P Value
5	Sal-N vs. Sal-Hx	-10.03	-17.13 to -2.916	**	0.0019
5	LPS-N vs. Sal-Hx	-11.92	-19.87 to -3.970	***	0.0008
5	Sal-Hx vs. DH	11.22	3.269 to 19.16	**	0.0019

> Missteps

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Extended Data Fig. 1: a and **b,** Tables displaying the significant statistical results of two-way

Repeated Measure (RM) ANOVAs with Tukey's multiple comparisons test for between

experimental group comparison following ErasmusLadder testing. Top tables display ANOVA

statistics followed by between-group comparisons in post-perturbation step time (**a**) and missteps

(**b**). #, ErasmusLadder session number; CI, confidence intervals; DF, degrees of freedom; LS,

least squares; MS, mean square; SS, sum of squares.

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Extended Data Figure 2-1

Mouse DEG

Human DEG

DH vs LPS–N (513)

DH vs Sal–Hx (4085)

DH vs Sal–N (3925)

LPS–N vs Sal–Hx (5096)

LPS–N vs Sal–N (4751)

Sal–Hx vs Sal–N (1644)

15.0%

18.4%

18.9%

16.8%

16.6%

18.7%

Non Shared Genes

Shared Genes (3519)

How Hx adds injury to a brain exposed to MIA: Leukocyte Adhesion, NFkβ

How MIA alters the response of the brain to Hx: ECM, Synaptic transmission, Axonal development, small GTPase

Full combined effect of MIA and Hx: ECM, cell junction, Neurogenesis, Gliogenesis, Axonogenesis

MIA vs. Hx as single insults: ECM, Neurotransmitter secretion and release, Synapse signaling and transport

How MIA alone impacts brain: Neurotransmission, Neuronal differentiation, Sensory system

How Hx alone impacts brain: Synaptic function, Carbohydrate metabolism, Axonal development

Extended Data Fig. 2-1: a, On the right, diagram illustrating the shared (color-coded) vs. non-

shared (transparent) genes (*p*-value < 0.05) identified in DH mouse model comparisons between

experimental groups at P45 and human post-mortem cerebellar tissues human (Preterm vs Term).

Number below the label identify the number of identified genes, and percentage correspond to the

percentage of genes shared. On the left, color-coded boxes displaying top significantly GO-derived

enriched biological processes associated with each shared genes comparisons (color-coded; *p* <

0.05). *n* = 4 per human group, *n* = 7 per mouse group. DEG, differentially expressed genes; DH,

double-hit; ECM, extracellular matrix; GO, gene ontology; GTP, Guanosine Triphosphate; Hx,

hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia; NFkb, Nuclear Factor kappa-light-chain-

enhancer of activated B cells; Sal, saline.

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Extended Data Figure 2-2

Extended Data Fig. 2-2: a-c, Bar graphs display the number of significant DEGs (y-axis, *p*-value

< 0.05) identified in pairwise experimental comparisons at two developmental stages (P11 – blue

and P45 – red). Number of top of the bars represent exact number of DEGs. Comparisons: Sal-Hx

and Sal-N. **b-c**, Bubble plots displaying the top 20 significantly enriched biological process terms

identified via GO enrichment analysis for selected experimental comparisons. Bubble size

corresponds to the number of genes in each GO term, while the color gradient represents

significance level (-log10 adjusted p-value), with red indicating highly significant enrichment and

blue representing lower significance. Comparison: LPS-N and Sal-N groups. **b**, P11; **c**, P45. For

a-c, *n* = 2/5 per group. DEG, differentially expressed genes; DH, double-hit; GO, gene ontology;

Hx, hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia; Sal, saline.

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Extended Data Figure 2-3

Extended Data Fig. 2-3: a-b, Top image, PCA plot comparison between **a**, Sal-Hx and Sal-N; **b**,

DH and Sal-Hx at P11. PCA scatter plot demonstrates distinct separation between groups along

the first two principal components (**a**, PC1=50.93%, PC2=40.19%, total variance explained:

91.12%; **b**, PC1=57.22%, PC2=24.89%, total variance explained: 82.11%). *n*=4 per group. **c-d**,

Top image, PCA plot comparison between **c**, Sal-Hx and Sal-N; **d**, DH and Sal-Hx at P45. PCA

scatter plot demonstrates distinct separation between groups along the first two principal

components (**a**, PC1=51.39%, PC2=33.10%, total variance explained: 84.49%; **b**, PC1=67.66%,

PC2=20%, total variance explained: 87.66%). *n*=2/3 per group. **a-d**, PCA colored ellipses

represent 95% confidence intervals. Bottom image, corresponding GO enrichment bubble plot

displaying top significantly enriched biological processes associated with DEGs ($p < 0.05$). The

bubble size reflects the number of genes within each GO term (small size – lower number of genes,

big size – higher number of genes), color gradient and x-axis indicate significance (-log10 adjusted

P-value; red indicates higher significance, blue indicates lower significance). DEG, differentially

expressed genes; DH, double-hit; GO, gene ontology; Hx, hypoxia; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; N,

normoxia PC/PCA, principal component analysis; Sal, saline.

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Extended Data Figure 3

Extended Data Fig. 3: a, Representative schematic of the six-grid time outcome. Color scale

indicates second spent ranging from 50s (yellow) and 350s (red). **b**, Representative schematic of

the three-chamber social movement tracking for each condition. Stranger mouse is marked with

an x-symbol; novel object is marked with a circle-symbol. Dashed lines represent borders.

Colored scale shows second spent per spatial bin ranging from 0.005s (blue) to 0.020 (red). **c**,

Raw representative images of normoxic control or DH mice during the social test. Red circles

indicate the testing mouse position in the chamber. DH, double-hit; Hx, hypoxia; LPS,

lipopolysaccharide; N, normoxia

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Extended Data Figure 4-1

1159   **Extended Data Fig. 4-1:** Representative video segments illustrating distinct kinematic clusters

1160   identified by B-SOiD. Each clip exemplifies a characteristic locomotor motif corresponding to a

1161   specific data-driven behavioral cluster extracted from high-resolution movement tracking.

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Extended Data Figure 4-2

Extended Data Fig. 4-2: Graphs showing the duration as Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF,

y-axis) of each kinematic cluster for all groups in each of the three chambers calculated as

successive frames log (x-axis). $n = 3\text{-}10$ per group. Wasserstein distance with Benjamini-Hochberg

correction applied to p-values. *Indicates graph with at least one significant different interaction;

statistics in Supplemental File. DH, double-hit; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; Hx, hypoxia; N,

normoxia; Sal, saline.