Resistance to targeted therapies as a multifactorial, gradual adaptation to inhibitor specific selective pressures.

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ABSTRACT

Despite high initial efficacy, therapies that target oncogenic kinases eventually fail in advanced, metastatic cancers. This failure in initially responsive tumors is the direct result of the evolution of drug resistance under therapy-imposed selective pressures. In contrast to the massive body of experimental research on the molecular mechanisms of resistance, understanding of its evolutionary origins and dynamics remains fragmented. Using a combination of experimental studies and mathematical modeling, we sought to dissect the evolution of resistance to different clinical ALK inhibitors in an experimental model of ALK positive NSCLC. We found that resistance can originate from heterogeneous, weakly resistant, sub-populations with variable sensitivity to different ALK inhibitors. Instead of the commonly assumed stochastic single hit (epi) mutational transition, or drug-induced reprogramming, we found evidence of a hybrid scenario, of gradual, multifactorial development through acquisition of multiple cooperating genetic and epigenetic adaptive changes, amplified by selection. Additionally, we found that intermediate resistance phenotypes might present unique, temporally restricted collateral sensitivities, absent in therapy naïve or fully resistant cells, suggesting new opportunities for therapeutic interference.

INTRODUCTION.

Despite inducing strong clinical responses, inhibitors that target abnormal activities of oncogenic tyrosine kinases (TKIs), including front and second line TKIs directed against EML4-ALK fusion oncogene in non-small cell lung cancers (NSCLC), are rarely curative in advanced disease[1]. Since ALK targeting TKIs (ALK-TKIs) typically fail to eradicate all of the tumor cells, the survivors can evolve resistance-conferring phenotypic adaptations, culminating in the outgrowth of resistant subpopulations and eventual clinical relapse. Though we know that tumors change and evolve under drug-imposed selective pressures, this knowledge is not accounted for in the standard of care in clinical practice, where tumors are treated as static entities, with therapy switched only after relapse. Adequate understanding of the evolutionary trajectories and underlying dynamics might offer an opportunity to drastically improve clinical outcomes with therapeutic tools that are already at our disposal[2-5]. For example, by accounting for frequency dependent selection and fitness tradeoffs a pilot clinical trial in castration resistant prostate cancer significantly extended progression free survival while reducing side effects of the treatment, using different scheduling of standard therapy drugs[6].

In contrast to massive research efforts that have advanced our understanding of the molecular mechanisms of resistance, evolutionary dynamics during the acquisition of resistance remains understudied. Consequently, our conceptual understanding of how resistance evolves, which inform mathematical modeling studies, is often based on conjectures from mechanistic studies, rather than direct experimental inquiry suitable for informing quantitative models. For example, demonstrations of the pre-existence of therapy-associated molecular alterations in sub-populations of tumor cells within treatment naïve samples have led to the widely prevalent assumption that resistance to targeted therapies arises simply due to a competitive release of pre-existent genetically (or epigenetically) distinct, therapy-resistant subpopulations under drug-

imposed selective pressures[7,8]. On the other hand, a growing body of experimental studies
suggest that therapy resistance can emerge *de novo* from drug-tolerant persister (DTP) cells[9],
capable of surviving in the drugs and limited proliferation, but incapable of supporting robust
tumor growth. DTPs are often assumed to constitute a phenotypically well-defined sub-
population, and sometimes equated with cancer stem cells[10]. While DTP cells cannot sustain
positive net tumor growth in the face of therapy, they can maintain residual disease and serve
as a substrate for mutational or epigenetic conversions to therapy-resistant phenotypes,
capable of driving robust growth rates in the face of therapy[9]. Finally, as therapies can induce
adaptive phenotypic changes on shorter time scales, independent of selection for more fit
phenotypes, development of resistance has also been viewed from a
differentiation/reprograming paradigm[11-13].
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Motivated by our interest in developing evolutionary informed therapeutic scheduling to tackle
TKI resistance, we decided to investigate the origin and evolutionary dynamics that underlie the
rapid development of therapy resistance of an *in vitro* model of ALK+ NSCLC, the patient
derived H3122 cell line. We found that, upon exposure to different ALK-TKIs, NCI-H3122 cells
rapidly and predictably develop strong drug resistance. Resistance originates *de novo*, from
weakly resistant heterogeneous sub-populations, which differ in fitness when exposed to
different ALK-TKIs. Levels of resistance gradually increase under therapy, through acquisition of
multiple cooperating genetic and epigenetic mechanisms, through TKI-specific phenotypic
trajectories. In contrast to therapy naïve or fully resistant cells, these evolving populations show
strong collateral sensitivity to the dual EGFR/HER2 inhibitor lapatinib, suggesting a temporally
restricted opportunity to interfere with the development of resistance.
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113 **RESULTS**.
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I. Continuous exposure to ALK-TKIs leads to acquired resistance mediated by
predictably distinct phenotypes.
To understand the development of acquired resistance to ALK-TKIs, we took advantage of a
well-characterized ALK+ NSCLC cell line, NCI-H3122, which can rapidly develop resistance to
multiple clinically relevant ALK-TKIs using dose escalation protocols[14]. Using resistant cell lines
from our previous study[14], we continued dose escalation, eventually selecting for cells capable
of growing in high, clinically relevant concentrations of the drugs (up to 1 µM crizotinib, 4 µM
lorlatinib, 2 µM alectinib, 200 nM ceritinib). H3122 cells with **e**volved **r**esistance to ALK-TKI
(erALK-TKI) displayed strong collateral resistance toward all other tested ALK-TKIs, with 5-100x
higher IC50 (**Fig. 1A** and **Table S1**). Despite the similar shift in IC50 in all of the tested ALK-
TKIs, erALK-TKI cells developed through selection by different inhibitors displayed more
divergent sensitivities to higher drug concentrations. Consistent with the clinical efficacy of
alectinib and lorlatinib as a second line therapy after failure of crizotinib[15,16], high concentrations
of alectinib and lorlatinib strongly inhibited cells with evolved resistance to crizotinib (erCriz) and
ceritinib (erCer). The resistance was at least partially heritable, as the erALK-TKI phenotypes
were partially or completely maintained after drug holiday (**Fig. S1A**). Further, upon xenograft
transplantation into immunocompromised NSG mice, cells with **e**volved **r**esistance to alectinib
(erAlec) and lorlatinib (erLor), formed tumors capable of maintaining net growth when

challenged with clinically relevant concentrations of alectinib and lorlatinib, despite the 3 week
gap between tumor implantation and initiation of the treatment (**Fig. 1B, C**).

Whereas drug dose escalation protocols are commonly used in studies to identify resistance
mechanisms[17], they do not reflect the development of resistance in clinics, as patients are
treated upfront with the highest tolerated dose of the drugs. Therefore, we asked whether
resistance can develop in the face of acute exposure to clinically relevant concentrations of
ALK-TKIs. To this end, we plated treatment naïve H3122 cells in the presence of 0.5 µM
crizotinib, 2 µM alectinib and lorlatinib or 100 nM ceritinib, replating cultures as needed to
relieve contact growth inhibition of the surviving cells. After 3-4 months of this selection, we
obtained rapidly proliferating erALK-TKI cell lines, with resistance levels comparable to those
achieved with the dose escalation protocol (**Fig. 1D**).

We next asked to what extent the differences in cross-sensitivities of erALK-TKI cells towards
different ALK inhibitors are attributable to the choice of specific ALK inhibitor. To answer this, we
independently derived triplicate lines for each of the ALK-TKIs used in this study, with the acute
exposure protocol, and compared their cross-sensitivities to higher concentrations of the
inhibitors. Consistent with previous findings (**Fig. 1A**), erLor and erAlec cells demonstrated
stronger resistance to high concentrations of different ALK-TKIs, compared to erCriz and erCer
cell lines (**Fig. 1E**). Similar to the resistant cell lines derived by gradual exposure, resistant
phenotypes in cell lines derived by acute exposure to ALK-TKIs were largely heritable (**Fig.
S1B**).

Given the surprising predictability in ALK-TKI cross-sensitivity phenotypes, we interrogated the
extent of predictability of changes in EML4-ALK dependent signaling pathways. Immunoblot
analyses, performed on cells cultured in the absence of the drugs for 48 hrs (to reduce the
direct impact of ALK-TKIs on cell signaling) revealed that all of the erCriz cell lines displayed
increased phosphorylation of EML4-ALK, in most cases in association with elevated EML4-ALK
protein levels, as well as increased STAT3 phosphorylation (**Fig. 1F**). In contrast, all of the erLor
cell lines lacked the increase in STAT3 phosphorylation and displayed reduced ALK
phosphorylation. Instead, they expressed higher levels of EGFR, HER2, or both. erAlec and
erCer cell lines exhibited more diverse (less predictable) phenotypes. To assess the phenotypes
more globally, we examined mRNA expression levels of 230 cancer-related genes using
Nanostring nCounter GX human cancer reference panel. Principal component and hierarchical
clustering analyses for mRNA expression were largely consistent with the immunoblot
evaluation of phosphorylation (**Fig. S2A, B**). erCer, evolved through acute selection, as well as
acutely and gradually evolved erCriz and erLor cells formed distinct clusters; in contrast,
phenotypes of erAlec were more diverse.

Potentially, observed differences could reflect either cell population-wide phenotypic changes or
differences in relative abundance of distinct pre-existent subpopulations. To discriminate
between these two possibilities, we performed single cell RNA sequencing of erALK-TKI cell
lines, focusing on two cell lines per specific ALK-TKI, with the highest divergence in PCA
analysis of NanoString data (**Fig. S2A**). Uniform manifold approximation and projection

(UMAP)[18] dimension reduction of single cell expression data revealed relative phenotypic
homogeneity within individual ALK-TKI lines, with a high degree of similarity among cell lines
derived with the same inhibitor (**Fig. 1G**). Thus, despite a degree of stochasticity, acquired
resistance to specific ALK-TKIs is associated with highly convergent, inhibitor-specific
phenotypes.
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II. Resistance to distinct ALK TKIs develops from pre-existing heterogeneous weakly
resistant sub-populations.
Evolution of acquired resistance to targeted therapy is often assumed to reflect a simple
expansion of therapy resistant sub-populations[19]. Whereas the observation that predictable
distinctions between resistance associated phenotypes are selected in different ALK-TKIs
contradicts this notion, we decided to interrogate the pre-existence of fully resistant phenotypes
more directly. To this end, we seeded treatment naïve NCI-H3122 cells at clonogenic densities
in the presence of ALK-TKIs or DMSO (vehicle control). At 10 days post seeding, the majority of
treatment naïve cells plated in DMSO, as well as erALK-TKI cells plated in DMSO or ALK-TKIs,
formed macroscopic colonies. In contrast, whereas treatment naïve cells formed multiple
microscopic colonies, we could not detect colonies with comparable sizes to the large colonies
formed by resistant cells, upon plating as many as 10,000 treatment naïve cells in the presence
of ALK-TKIs (**Fig. 2A**). At the same time, limiting dilution experiments revealed that 1:338 -
1:660 of treatment naïve NCI-H3122 cells give rise to robustly growing drug-resistant colonies
within 10 weeks of drug exposure (**Fig. 2B, C**). Whereas these observations cannot exclude
pre-existence of rare (<0.01%) fully resistant sub-populations, acquired resistance, within our
experimental system, likely originates from weakly resistant intermediates, capable of survival
and limited proliferation under the drugs. This inference is consistent with time-lapse microscopy
examination of the dynamics of drug resistance emergence, where robust growth in the
presence of ALK-TKIs was observed, but only after significant delay (**Suppl. video 1**).
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The existence of a distinct weakly resistant phenotypic state which is a precursor to *bona fide*
resistance, termed "tolerance" or "persistence" has been widely studied in microbiology [20,21].
Based on the observation of a similar phenomenon in the context of response to TKIs, the term
"drug tolerant persisters" (DTPs) has been introduced to describe a weakly resistant
subpopulation in EGFR+ NSCLC[9], and later in other cancers[13,22,23]. DTPs are commonly viewed
as a main contributor to minimal residual disease[24]. Potentially, DTP cells can reflect a distinct
population that either pre-exists prior to therapy, or arise, either stochastically or
deterministically, in response to drug-induced stress. To discriminate between these scenarios,
we used tracing with selectively neutral DNA barcodes, an approach which has been previously
used to demonstrate pre-existence of sub-populations resistant to EGFR inhibitors in EGFR+
lung cancers[25]. We transduced H3122 with a high complexity lentiviral ClonTracer library at a
low multiplicity of infection (MOI) to ensure that most of the transduced cells are labelled with a
single unique barcode. Following the elimination of non-transduced cells with puromycin
selection, and ~100x expansion of the barcoded cells, we took a baseline aliquot, then
separated the cells into parallel quadruplicate cultures, and exposed them to 0.5 µM alectinib,
lorlatinib, and crizotinib or DMSO control. After 4 weeks of incubation, barcode frequencies were
determined by next generation sequencing, and compared to the baseline frequencies (**Fig.**

2E). Clear evidence of both negative and positive selection was observed in all treatment
groups (including DMSO controls), as barcode diversity, captured with Shannon diversity index,
decreased (**Fig. S3A**), while several subpopulations have expanded (**Fig. S3B**). Spearman
ranking of barcodes, which increased in frequency above the highest barcode frequency
observed in the baseline sample, indicated a strikingly high degree of correlation between
biological replicates within the same treatment condition, indicating pre-existence of relatively
stable weakly resistant subpopulations (**Fig. 2F**). However, correlation between samples treated
with different ALK TKIs was either absent or much less pronounced, indicating that selective
pressures exerted by different ALK TKIs might amplify distinct pre-existing weakly resistant sub-
populations. Unsupervised hierarchical clustering analysis revealed a partial overlap between
"winning" clones (barcodes) across multiple ALK TKIs, indicating that at least some of the
distinctions reflect quantitative rather than qualitative differences, and some of the pre-existent
phenotypes were equally adaptable to different ALK TKIs (**Fig. 2G**). Thus, resistance to an ALK-
TKI in H3122 cells originates from pre-existent, heterogeneous, subpopulations, with weak
resistance and varying sensitivity to distinct ALK-TKIs.
In contrast to the fitness cost of classical persistence under baseline growth conditions,
considered to be a form of bet hedging[21], clones enriched in ALK-TKIs, on average, were also
slightly enriched when cultured in the absence of the drugs (DMSO control) (**Fig. S3C**).
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III. Gradual development of ALK-TKI resistance.
Having established that resistance originates from heterogeneous pre-existing tolerant
populations, we next asked how it progresses toward full resistance. The prevalent assumption
in the modeling, experimental and clinical communities is that resistance results from a single-
hit, transition mediated by acquisition of a genetic mutation or by a (meta) stable change in
expression of resistance-conferring genes through a stochastic or drug-induced epigenetic
switch[7,26]. To test whether resistance in H3122 cells develops through a single hit transition, we
employed the following clonogenic assay (**Fig. 3A**). Therapy naïve cells were pre-cultured in the
presence of ALK-TKIs (crizotinib or lorlatinib) for 1-3 weeks, then harvested and seeded at
clonogenic densities in the presence or absence of the drug. After 7 days of culture, we
measured clonogenic survival as well as the sizes of the resulting colonies. Since prolonged
exposure to the drugs is expected to eliminate sensitive populations, while enriching for drug
tolerant and resistant ones, we expected the clonogenic proportion to increase over time.
Indeed, the clonogenic proportion in 0.5 µM crizotinib progressively increased from the initial
2.6% to 26% at week three, while the clonogenic proportion in 0.5 µM lorlatinib increased from
the initial 1% to 17% at week three (**Fig. 3B**). Consistent with the lack of proliferation penalty in
the barcoding experiments, we did not observe substantial changes in size of colonies, formed
by cells with evolved or evolving resistance, in the absence of the drugs (**Fig S4A, B**). If the
transition from tolerance to resistance were to result from a single-hit mutational or epigenetic
switch, we would expect to observe a bimodal distribution of colony sizes, representing tolerant
and resistant colonies, with the fraction of the latter gradually increasing (**Fig. 3A**). As expected,
longer ALK TKI exposure lead to an increase in the average colony size. However, instead of
the expected bimodal size distribution, this increase was apparently homogeneous, suggesting

a gradual development of resistance (**Fig. 3C**). Analysis of the colony size distributions at the
intermediate (2 and 3 weeks) time-points using Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics revealed that the
observed colony sizes cannot be explained by mixing colony size distributions of tolerant and
erALK-TKI cells (**Fig. S4C, D**).
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Inferences with Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics might be obfuscated by the fact that
(epi)mutations mediating transition from tolerance to *bona fide* resistance can potentially occur
not only during the 1-3 weeks growth preceding the clonogenic assay, but also during the
clonogenic stage of the assay. Therefore, to discriminate between a single step and multi-step
development of resistance, we developed an agent-based mathematical model of the evolution
of therapy resistance, which enabled *in silico* simulation of the experimental assay across a
range of mutational probabilities and numbers of mutational steps (**Fig. 3D**, **Mathematical**
Supplement). This model simulates growth of individually seeded cells and their progeny in the
presence/absence of the drug both prior and during the clonogenic assay. Cells are seeded into
a 2d lattice (simulating the surface of a culture dish). If space is available (no more than one cell
separating the cell from an empty space), a cell can proliferate with a given probability inferred
from the experimental data (**Fig. 3E**). To account for the variability in observed colony sizes,
the maximal proliferation probability is set for each simulated colony individually, based on
random sampling of sizes of colonies produced by resistant cells. For the initial proliferation
probability, we use one single value calibrated with the whole distribution of naïve cell colony
sizes, assuming minor variability in the proliferation rates of such cells. At each cell division, a
cell can increase in division rate, reflecting adaptive (epi-)mutations. Cells can transition from
the initial to maximal division probability by either a single step (n=1), or multiple (n>1) steps,
representing fractional increments of the single transition (**Fig. 3D and Mathematical**
Supplement).
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Whereas the initial and maximal growth rates are fixed based on the experimental data, the
intermediate rates within the *in silico* simulations are not. They can differ based on two
parameters: a) (epi) mutational probability and b) the number of mutational steps required to
reach maximum division probability (n). Since we do not know the (epi) mutation probability, we
explored the outcomes with the full range of possible values (0-1), and the number of mutational
steps ranging from 1 to 300. With each choice of parameters, we generated 100,000 random *in*
silico simulations (**Fig. 3F** and **Suppl. video 2**). Differences between *in vitro* and *in silico* colony
size distributions were assessed using Kullback-Leibler divergence. We found that a single
mutational step provided the poorest fit to the data for all mutation probabilities. The best fit was
achieved with a number of mutational steps in the range of 3-100 (**Fig. 3G, H**). Notably,
inclusion of death rates, bi-directional change in cell fitness and consideration of mutations that
combine multiple increments at a single cell division did not qualitatively change this outcome
(**Fig. S4 E, F and Mathematical Supplement**). Therefore, the experimentally observed
dynamics of the development of ALK TKI resistance is inconsistent with a transition toward
resistance occurring exclusively through a single step transition. Instead, our analyses suggest
a gradual evolution through incremental increases in drug resistance. Of note, since the
improvements could be achieved through multiple increments within a single cell division, our

analyses do not exclude a possibility of a hybrid scenario, where, in rare cases, resistance can
be acquired in a single step.
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These inferences of graduality of acquisition of ALK TKI resistance are inconsistent with a
prevalent idea of acquired resistance attributable to a single genetic or epigenetic mechanism.
Since molecular mechanisms of resistance to ALK-TKIs have been extensively characterized,
including numerous studies in H3122 experimental system, we decided to interrogate the
involvement of previously identified ALK-TKI resistance mechanisms in erALK-TKI phenotypes,
and their ability to mediate single-hit acquisition of resistance.
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Clinical resistance to ALK inhibitors is frequently associated with point mutations in the kinase
domain of ALK, which reduce drug binding[27]. However, hotspot mutations were absent in the
erALK-TKI cell lines, as revealed by targeted Sanger sequencing of PCR-amplified cDNA (**Fig.
S5**). Given that clinical ALK-TKI resistance is often associated with EML4-ALK amplification,
and that we observed an increase in the expression of EML4-ALK in some of the erALK-TKI
resistant cell lines (**Fig. 1F**), we tested the amplification status of EML4-ALK in treatment naïve,
as well as in representative erALK TKI resistant cell lines (lines "0" in **Fig. 1F**) using the
mutational break apart FISH assay. The majority of treatment naïve H3122 cells displayed 4
copies of the wild type allele and one copy of the fusion allele, with a minor sub-population
where the fusion gene signal could not be detected. Some of the erALK-TKI cells displayed
multiple copies of the fusion allele, consistent with gene amplification (**Fig. 4A**).
Extrachromosomal amplification of oncogene-containing DNA has been recently implicated in
the rapid evolution of TKI resistance[28], however examination of metaphase spreads revealed
that the amplified alleles were localized within the chromosome. Consistent with the
immunoblotting results shown in **Fig. 1F**, we observed substantial heterogeneity in the
amplification status of EML4-ALK, both between and within erALK-TKI cell lines (**Fig. 4B**). The
majority of erCriz cells, as well as a fraction of erAlec and erCer cells displayed EML4-ALK
amplification. In contrast, erLor cells not only lacked EML4-ALK amplification, but also the
proportion of oncogene negative cells was significantly higher (p<0.0001 in a Chi-square test)
than in the treatment naïve cells, suggesting that *loss of EML4-ALK* might have been selectively
advantageous under the more potent ALK-TKI.
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We next investigated whether differences in EML4-ALK copy numbers corresponded to
differences in oncogene dependence. We transfected treatment naïve, erCriz and erLor cells
with constructs expressing Cas9 and two different guide RNAs targeting ALK and selected for
puromycin resistant colonies. No colonies could be observed for erCriz cells, suggesting a
critical dependency on EML4-ALK (**Fig. 4C**). Parental cells formed few small colonies,
resembling tolerant colonies formed upon exposure to an ALK-TKI (**Fig. 1D**). In contrast, erLor
cells formed multiple colonies that displayed no evidence of growth inhibition (**Fig. 4C**), despite
complete ablation of the protein expression of EML4-ALK gene (**Fig. 4D**). Interestingly,
puromycin resistant naïve cells transfected with guide RNA directed against ALK displayed lack
of EML4-ALK ablation, consistent with strong selection for variants that uncouple antibiotic
resistance from guide RNA expression, indicating a strong selective disadvantage of
losingEML4-ALK expression. This observation is consistent with reduced baseline EML4-ALK

expression in erLor cells (**Fig. 1F**) and suggests a conversion into a phenotype that is
independent of EML4-ALK oncogenic activity.
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Given that EML4-ALK amplification, resulting in overexpression is considered to provide a *bona*
fide therapy resistance mechanism[29], we asked whether the observed increase in EML4-ALK
expression could explain the resistance observed in the erALK-TKI cell lines with EML4-ALK
amplification. Retroviral overexpression of EML4-ALK resulted in protein levels of total and
phosphorylated EML4-ALK which closely resemble those observed in EML4-ALK amplified
erALK-TKI cells (**Fig. 4E**). Further, after exposure to crizotinib, cells with retrovirally
overexpressed EML4-ALK retained residual levels of ALK phosphorylation similar to those
observed in the erALK-TKI cells (**Fig. S6A**). Despite this, EML4-ALK overexpressing cells
displayed only a marginal increase in crizotinib resistance (**Fig. 4F**), suggesting that while ALK
amplification contributes to resistance, it is insufficient to fully account for it.
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Given the insufficiency of EML4-ALK overexpression to fully account for resistance, we decided
to interrogate the functional impact of the most common resistance-associated point mutation,
L1196M, which is thought to provide a single hit resistance mechanism to crizotinib[29].
Surprisingly, at low expression levels, achieved with <1 retroviral MOI, L1196M expression only
moderately decreased crizotinib sensitivity (**Fig. 4G**). In contrast, higher overexpression of the
mutant protein, at levels similar to those observed with cells containing amplified "wild type"
fusion gene, achieved with high MOI, blocked the ability of crizotinib to shut down
phosphorylation of EML4-ALK, as well as its main downstream effector ERK (**Fig. 4E, S6A, B**),
and provided a resistance level that is similar or higher to that observed in erCriz cells (**Fig. 4F**).
Whereas the results with L1196M overexpression are consistent with previously reported
sufficiency to confer resistance in NIH-H3122 cells[30,31], and ALK mutations do co-occur with
EML4-ALK amplification[32], we are not aware of reports of amplification of ALK mutant alleles.
Thus, common resistance-associated mutational changes might be insufficient to provide a
single hit solution to the challenge posed by ALK-TKI induced selective pressures.
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Next, we examined resistant cell lines for the presence of additional copy number alterations.
Whereas Oncomine Focus Assay[33] failed to detect additional common mutations, CytoScanHD
SNP array revealed additional genetic changes, including recurrent chromosomal amplifications
in chromosomes 2, 3, 12 and 17. Interestingly, 2 out of 3 examined erLor lines contained Chr12
p12.1-p11.1 amplification, containing KRAS, whereas a third one contained Chr1 p13.2-p12
amplification containing NRAS (**Fig. S7A**). Notably, chromosomal amplification of genomic
regions containing KRAS and NRAS were associated with elevated expression of these proto-
oncogenes (**Fig. S7B**).
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Given the growing evidence for the importance of recurrent (semi)heritable non-genetic changes
in gene expression in resistance to targeted and cytotoxic therapies, we used RNA-Seq analysis
to examine changes in gene expression after a 48 hr drug holiday (to reduce the direct impact of
ALK TKI on gene expression). We found multiple gene expression changes, previously
implicated in TKI and chemotherapy resistance, including increased expression of multiple
RTKs (EGFR, HER2, FGFR, AXL, EPHA2, etc.), cytokines, ECM & ECM receptors and other

types of molecules, suggesting a complex, multifactorial nature of resistance (**Fig. 5A**).
Importantly, co-expression analysis of cell lines in the CCLE database revealed that the genes
with upregulated expression in erALK-TKI cells belonged to distinct gene co-expression
clusters, suggesting that the resistance-associated changes in gene expression are unlikely to
represent a single coordinated transcriptional program switch (**Fig. S8A, B**). Notably, gene set
enrichment analysis revealed several shared enriched gene sets (**Fig. S8C**). In particular, all of
the examined resistant cell lines displayed an epithelial to mesenchymal transition (EMT)
signature. Whereas EMT has been described as ALK-TKI resistance mechanism[34,35], our results
suggest a need for a more nuanced interpretation, given the differences in specific resistance
associated molecular changes observed in different erALK-TKI cell lines, which would be
missed under the EMT umbrella term.
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To gain further insights into the dynamics of phenotypic changes during the evolution of
resistance, we analyzed phenotypic changes following different exposure times to ALK TKIs
using single cell expression profiling. Notably, UMAP analysis revealed gradual phenotypic
progression from naïve to resistant phenotypes (**Fig. 5B, S9**). Even brief (4 hours) alectinib
exposure substantially impacted cell phenotypes, suggesting that acquisition of resistance might
reflect not only the action of drug-imposed selection, but also direct drug-induced cell
adaptation. On the other hand, some of the naïve cells mapped to a major phenotypic cluster of
one of the erCriz (erCriz3) samples (**Fig. S9**), consistent with the notion that some of the
resistant phenotypes might arise from selection of pre-existent sub-populations. To gain further
insight into the temporal dynamics of acquisition of resistance-conferring expression changes,
we analyzed the expression of ALK and HER2 at single cell levels, at different time points, after
exposure to an ALK-TKI. Consistent with high levels of ALK expression and genetic
amplification of EML4-ALK in erCriz cell lines, expression of ALK increased upon exposure to
crizotinib, but not alectinib. In contrast, expression of HER2 became elevated within 48 hours of
exposure to both drugs, suggesting a direct adaptive response, then decreased upon prolonged
incubation with crizotinib, while staying up-regulated or increasing further under alectinib (**Fig.
5C**).
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To explore a possible epigenetic mechanism underlying the observed early and heritable
changes in gene expression associated with ALK-TKI exposure, we analyzed the global
repatterning of Histone 3.3 lysine 27 acetylation (H3K27ac), a post-translational histone
modification associated with strong enhancer elements. We performed ChIP-Seq analysis to
characterize differential H3K27ac distribution at gene regulatory elements in naïve and evolved
resistant lines. We found that different ALK-TKI resistant phenotypes are associated with
distinct global patterns of H3K27 acetylation (**Fig. S10A**). Changes in gene expression in the
resistant cell lines were associated with changes in H3K27 acetylation (**Fig. S10B**).
Consistently, we found new H3K27ac peaks in the vicinity of genes upregulated in individual
ALK-TKI treated lines, e.g. ERBB2 / HER2 (**Fig. S10C**). Consistent with the differences in
protein expression (**Fig. 1F**) the new peaks were observed in erAlec and erLor lines, but not in
the erCriz lines. Interestingly, new peaks were also observed for genes with chromosomal
genomic amplification in relevant cell lines (EML4, K-RAS and N-RAS) (**Fig. 12D**), suggesting
the involvement of both genetic and epigenetic mechanisms in the elevated expression of

putative drivers of resistance. Taken together, these data suggest that stable gene expression
changes, in resistance-associated genes, might be established and maintained by a
combination of genetic and epigenetic changes.
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To evaluate the functional significance of elevated expression of the resistance-associated
genes on ALK-TKI sensitivity, we tested the impact of overexpression of selected genes,
previously implicated in TKI resistance. We found that lentiviral overexpression of HER2, FGFR,
AXL, and SLUG significantly increased resistance to multiple ALK-TKIs (**Fig. 5D**). However,
similar to the insufficiency of EML-4 ALK amplification to fully account for ALK-TKI resistance,
resistance levels observed in these engineered cell lines fell short of levels observed in the
erALK-TKI lines, suggesting that evolved resistance might reflect the combined effect of multiple
contributing changes. To directly evaluate this possibility, we interrogated the impact of the
combination of individual genetic and transcriptional changes. We combined overexpression of
EML4-ALK, which is amplified in many resistant cell lines (**Fig. 1F**) and provides a very modest
decrease in crizotinib sensitivity (**Fig. 4F**), with expression of HER2 (at lower levels compared to
overexpressing cells used for **Fig. 5B**), which is also elevated in multiple erALK-TKI cell lines
(**Fig. 1F**) and can provide modest resistance to different ALK inhibitors, when overexpressed at
high levels (**Fig. 5D**). Whereas HER2 overexpression had very limited impact on ALK-TKI
sensitivity, it significantly increased resistance conferred by EML4-ALK overexpression, though
still failing to recapitulate resistance levels observed in erALK-TKI cells (**Fig. 5E**). These results
support the notion that the evolution of resistance proceeds through acquisition of multiple
genetic and epigenetic changes, that, under inhibitor-specific selective pressures of ALK-TKIs,
shape resistant phenotypes in a combinatorial fashion.
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IV. Evolving resistance is associated with temporally restricted fitness tradeoffs.
It is frequently assumed that, according to the principle of an evolutionary fitness tradeoff[36],
resistance-conferring phenotypes should be associated with strong fitness penalties compared
to drug naïve tumor cells, when outside of the primary treatment[6,37-39]. This fitness penalty could
enable evolutionary informed adaptive therapy, based on creating a "tug of war" between
therapy sensitive and therapy resistant populations by sequencing primary drug with strategic
treatment breaks, informed by tumor's response to the drugs[4]. Thus, we examined growth of
erALK-TKI cell lines in the presence and absence of the drugs. Whereas in some cases, cells
taken off the drugs indeed proliferated slower than drug naïve control, some of the resistant cell
lines proliferated at similar or even higher rates (**Fig. S11A**). Interestingly, all of the examined
erCriz and 1 out of 3 of the examined erAlec cell lines displayed higher rates of proliferation in
the presence of the inhibitors, consistent with previously reported observations in
melanoma[40,41]. The remaining cell lines were either modestly inhibited, or unaffected by the
ALK-TKI used for their selection (**Fig. S11A**).
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Inferences obtained from *in vitro* 2d cultures, however, could be misleading. The fitness of
tumor cells is context dependent[42,43], and *in vitro* 2d cultures do not capture death/proliferation
dynamics within tumors *in vivo*. Further, non-cell autonomous interactions between
phenotypically distinct subpopulations could significantly alter fitness in competitive settings[44,45].
Therefore, we tested the fitness impact of resistance conferring adaptations by implanting

mixtures of differentially labelled (GFP and mCherry) resistant and naïve cells into
subcutaneous tumors or into the orthotopic environment of the lungs (via tail vein injections).
Only erCriz cells injected into the lungs displayed signs of reduced fitness compared to therapy
naïve cells (**Fig. S11B**). Interestingly, erLor cells had a significant selective advantage over
naïve cells both in subcutaneous and orthotopic tumor contexts. These data suggest that lower
fitness outside of the TKI is not an obligatory fitness tradeoff, and that acquisition of resistance
might be associated with increased fitness in the absence of treatment.
491
Growth out of the primary therapy is just one of many potential contexts where an evolutionary
tradeoff might be manifested. Altered context, created by application of a different drug, to which
phenotypes with acquired resistance to ALK-TKI are collaterally sensitive, could provide an
alternative strategy to expose cells to a resistance-linked fitness tradeoff[46,47]. Consistent with
the up-regulation of HER2 in alectinib resistant cells, H3122 cells failed to develop resistance to
alectinib in the presence of dual EGFR/HER2 inhibitor lapatinib (**Fig. S12A**). However, erAlec
cells were not sensitized to lapatinib as a single agent, and only some of the independently
derived erAlec cell lines were inhibited by the combination of alectinib and lapatinib (**Fig. S12B**).
To examine this apparent discrepancy, we examined the sensitivity of intermediate stages of
alectinib resistance to lapatinib. We found that evolving cells were remarkably sensitive to
lapatinib, even as a single agent, although this sensitivity gradually diminished as cells became
more resistant to alectinib (**Fig. 6A, B**). Notably, this sensitivity cannot be explained by pre-
existence of lapatinib sensitive, alectinib tolerant sub-populations, as treatment with 10 µM
lapatinib for up to 3 weeks did not substantially impact sensitivity of H3122 to alectinib (**Fig.
S12C**). Consistently, administration of lapatinib as a single agent, following an initial three
weeks in alectinib, or as a combination therapy, was able to achieve complete elimination of
H3122 cells *in vitro* (**Fig 6C**).
509
Encouraged by this observation, we asked whether alectinib/lapatinib cycling or a combination
treatment with the two drugs could outperform alectinib monotherapy *in vivo*. We found that
lapatinib was completely ineffective in adaptive cycling with alectinib, as tumor relapse during
lapatinib cycles was indistinguishable from the relapse observed with a drug holiday (**Fig. 6D**).
Most likely, this lack of efficiency *in vivo* reflects its inability to reach the high concentrations
required to achieve collateral sensitivity *in vitro*. Still, lapatinib significantly increased tumor
sensitivity to alectinib in a combination therapy setting (**Fig. 6D**). Whereas, at this point, the
clinical utility of our observations remains unclear, they provide a proof of principle that
temporally restricted collateral vulnerabilities of evolutionary intermediates might be exploited
therapeutically to improve responses, and potentially, to forestall the emergence of resistance.

Discussion.

Despite substantial advances in deciphering the molecular mechanisms of resistance to TKI based targeted therapies, and the development of more effective drugs, advanced "targetable" lung cancers remain incurable, as tumors eventually acquire resistance and relapse. Developing strategies to interfere with evolving resistance has the potential to substantially improve long term survival outcomes. However, this is contingent on a correct understanding of the underlying evolutionary dynamics. In contrast to the large body of experiment-derived knowledge on individual molecular mechanisms of resistance, our understanding of its evolutionary causes and dynamics remains less developed. The subject of evolutionary-informed therapies has received significant attention from mathematical modelers[48-51]. However, given the paucity of experimental data acquired to derive solid assumptions for building models, these modeling studies often have to rely on conjectures from reductionist, mechanism-centered studies, thus limiting their potential.

Acquired resistance is commonly viewed through two major conceptual frameworks. According to the first, currently dominant gene-centric framework, resistance arises from a selective expansion of genetically or epigenetically distinct (meta)stable sub-populations. The subpopulation(s) could either pre-exist therapy or arise *de novo* from mutational conversion of sensitive or tolerant cells. In either case, clinical and experimental studies operating within this paradigm typically reduce acquired resistance to a single cause, such as a point mutation (*e.g.* the L1196M gatekeeper mutation[52]), gene amplification (e.g., EML4-ALK[52], cMET[53], etc.), or a non-mutational stable change in expression of a resistance-conferring gene (e.g., IGFR[54]). Consequently, the assumption of a single hit resistance mechanism is highly prevalent in the mathematical modelling community[26,49,51].

The second framework views resistance as the result of drug-induced reprogramming, where phenotypic plasticity enables tumor cells to directionally "rewire" their signaling, metabolic and gene-expression networks to cope with inhibitor-induced perturbations[13,55,56]. In this system-biology based framework, resistance can be gradual and multifactorial, however the causal role of selection is sometimes rejected due to its link with the mutation-centric paradigm[13].

The two frameworks are not necessarily viewed as strictly mutually exclusive, as they can be bridged in a two-step process involving reprogramming mediated formation of DTP sub-populations followed by an (epi) mutational switch to full resistance. Our results, however, suggest an alternative scenario of gradual, multifactorial resistance, which integrates features of the two paradigms described above. Based on i) the observation of gradual development of resistance from heterogeneous weakly resistant sub-populations, ii) the co-occurrence of both genetic and non-genetic changes, of which at least some appear to be directly induced by drug exposure, iii) the insufficiency of single resistance-associated mechanisms to confer full resistance, and iv) the additive action of individual resistance-associated mechanisms, we propose the following model: Selective pressures imposed by therapies act on phenotypic heterogeneity, stemming from both stochastic (genetic and epigenetic) and drug-induced changes, leading to a gradual increase in population fitness through acquisition of additional

genetic and epigenetic changes until a local fitness peak is reached (**Fig. 6F**). We speculate
that different ALK inhibitors lead to different evolutionary trajectories, due to differences in both
selective pressures and direct drug-induced phenotypic changes (owing to different on and off
target inhibitory activities). Of note, this proposed framework essentially mirrors Darwin's
original concept of evolution by natural selection, as a gradual adaptation to environment-
imposed selective pressures, rather than the currently prevalent mutation-centric re-
interpretation of Darwin's idea within the cancer research community[57].
579
At this point, generalizability of this proposed framework beyond the H3122 experimental model
remains to be explored. However, gradual, multifactorial acquisition of resistance has been
recently observed in an elegant experimental study of acquired BRAF resistance in
melanoma[13]. The authors rejected the Darwinian explanation based on the lack of pre-existent
resistance and thus interpreted their observations strictly within a "reprogramming" paradigm.
We argue that their data is highly consistent with our model, which does not reduce Darwinian
selection to genetically distinct pre-existing variants. Likewise, a recent single cell sequencing
study in triple negative breast cancer demonstrated that while resistance to chemotherapy can
be traced to preexistent genetically distinct subpopulations, resistant cells have acquired new
phenotypic changes, most likely reflecting epigenetic modlifications[58].
590
The proposed concept of gradual resistance does not exclude the possibility of pre-existence of
full resistance, or a mixed scenario, where tumor relapse might reflect a combined contribution
of both pre-existing and gradually evolving *de novo* resistance. Indeed, our single cell profiling
experiments revealed pre-existence of phenotypes that mapped to a major phenotypic cluster in
one of the erCriz cell lines **(Fig. 1G)**. Our framework is also compatible with the possibility that
some mutational events lead to a dramatic fitness increase, which represents a special case
within a more inclusive paradigm. On the other hand, given the evidence of the insufficiency of
well-recognized "causes" of resistance such as EML-ALK amplification, single copy L1196M
mutation, and alternative RTK overexpression to confer maximal resistance in the H3122
experimental model (**Fig. 4F**), it is also possible that at least in some cases, attribution of
resistance to a single mechanism might be incorrect. We would like to point out that a
commonly used research study algorithm, which investigates how drug sensitivity is modulated
by up and down regulation of a putative resistance "driver", followed by validation of this
resistance association in clinical samples, does not discriminate between single hit and
multifactorial resistance.
606
Finally, our data suggests that intermediate stages during the evolution of drug resistance may
represent temporally restricted targets for combination or sequential therapies, using drugs that
expose collateral sensitivities in evolving cells, paralleling the previously reported existence of
collateral sensitivities in mutational intermediates in the evolution of resistance in Ph+ ALL[3].
Whereas the generalizability and translational potential of elevated sensitivity to lapatinib are
unclear at this point, our results support the notion that adequate understanding of the forces
that shape somatic evolution during the acquisition of drug resistance could open the way to
designing evolutionary-informed therapy approaches, focused on staying a step ahead of
resistance, rather than just reacting to it when it (inevitably) arises. Achieving progress in this

direction would require dedicated multidisciplinary studies, integrating clinical studies with
experimental and mathematical modeling.
623   **METHODS.**
624
Derivation of Resistant Cell Lines. Parental and ALK-TKI resistant H3122 cells were grown in
RPMI (Gibco, Thermo Fisher) supplemented with 10% FBS (Serum Source),
penicillin/streptomycin, insulin (Gibco) and anti-clumping agent (Gibco). ALK-TKI resistant cell
lines were generated by further evolving lines used in[14], derived through a progressive increase
in ALK TKI concentrations, eventually they were maintained in 0.5 μM crizotinib, 0.2 μM
ceritinib, 2.0 μM alectinib and 2.0 μM lorlatinib. Alternatively, resistant lines were derived by
exposing treatment naïve H3122 cells directly to the high ALK TKI concentrations, mentioned
above, for 3-4 months, with re-plating every 2-4 weeks to relieve spatial growth constraints.

Short Term Viability Assays. Short term cell viability was measured using Cell-Titer Glo
reagent (Promega). Typically, 2000 cells per well were plated in a 96-well plate (Costar). Drugs
were added 24h later, and the assays were performed using manufacturer recommended
protocol 3-4 days after drug addition. Viability was calculated first by subtracting the
luminescence of empty wells then by division by average DMSO luminescence. Dose response
curves were generated by fitting the following equation to the data: $y = b + \frac{100-b}{1+\left(\frac{x}{IC_{50}}\right)^k}$; where y is
luminescence, x is drug concentration, IC_{50} is the half maximal inhibitory concentration, k is the
hill slope and b is the luminescence as the drug concentration approaches ∞.

Clonogenic Assays. Cells were plated in the presence of ALK-TKIs or DMSO vehicle control at
varying densities into 6 cm dishes or multi-well plates in duplicates or triplicates, and grown for
10 days, at which points they were fixed and stained with crystal violet, following protocols
described in [59]. To measure the evolution of gradually increasing resistance, nuclear mCherry
expressing H3122 cells were plated at ~400,000 cells per 6cm dish, allowed to attach overnight,
and exposed to DMSO vehicle control, 0.5μM crizotinib or 0.5μM lorlatinib the following day.
After culturing for 1-3 weeks, cells were harvested and seeded in 96-well plates (Costar) at 50
cells/well for DMSO control, or between 50 and 500 cells for crizotinib and lorlatinib. Number of
colonies and colony sizes were measured 1 week later for colonies larger than 1000 pixels (~5
cells), based on fluorescent area. To minimize the impact of variability in seeding numbers,
clonogenic survival in the presence of ALK inhibitors was normalized to clonogenic data in the
DMSO controls.

Determining frequency of Resistance Initiating Cells. Cells were plated with initial seeding
densities of 400, 400, 800, 1400 and 400 cells/well in DMSO (0.1%), crizotinib (0.5μM), ceritinib
(0.1μM), alectinib (0.5μM) and lorlatinib (0.5μM) treated plates respectively, in a 96-well plate
(Falcon). Five additional 2x dilutions were generated from these wells, each with 10 separate
wells. ALK inhibitors were added after 24h. After 7 weeks of treatment, wells containing no

colonies larger than ~ 50 cells were counted. The natural log of the proportion of wells without
colonies was fitted linearly against the initial cell number in each well. The number of cells per
resistance - initiating cell was calculated as $\frac{1}{1-e^{slope}}$ and the error of this value as $\frac{error_{slope}e^{slope}}{\left(1-e^{slope}\right)^2}$.

Clone Tracing Assay. H3122 cells were transduced at 10% efficiency (as defined by FACS
analysis of dsRed expression) with ClonTracer neutral DNA barcode library[25], kindly provided by
Frank Stegmeier (Addgene #67267). Barcode containing cells were selected with puromycin
and expanded for 23 days. Cells were expanded from 10^5 cells (after puromycin selection) to
3.4×10^7 cells. Quadruplicate cultures of 1.5×10^6 cells each were plated into 10cm dishes in the
presence of 0.1% DMSO, 0.5 µM crizotinib, 0.5 µM alectinib and 0.5 µM lorlatinib. Two pellets of
1.5×10^6 cells were frozen to serve as an initial mixture. Cells were harvested following four
weeks of cell culture. Genomic DNA was extracted using proteinase K digest, followed by
phenol-chloroform purification. Barcodes were amplified, sequenced and analyzed following
protocols described in [25] and an updated procedure provided on the Addgene website
https://www.addgene.org/pooled-library/clontracer. A first round of amplifications was performed
for 35 cycles using the following primers TCG ATT AGT GAA CGG ATC TCG ACG and AAG
TGG ATC TCT GCT GTC CCT G for 35 cycles. Second round was performed for 15 cycles.
Heatmap.2 in R (using default parameters) was used for heatmap clustering. Corrplot[60] in R
(using spearman correlation coefficients) was used to visualize correlations.

Fluorescent *In Situ* Hybridization Analyses. Cells were cultured in 10 cm dishes in 10 ml of
1640 medium supplement with 10% FBS. After 24 hours, 100 µl of colcemid (10 µg/ml, Life
Technologies, Carlsbad, CA) was added to each culture, and culture replaced to incubator for
another one hour before harvesting. Cell suspension was transferred to 15 ml cortical
tubes. Culture medium was removed by centrifuge at 1000 rpm for 5 min. Cell pellets were
subjected to hypotonic treatment with 0.075M KCl and then fixed with Methanol and acidic acid
at 3:1v/v. Cell suspensions were dropped to slides, and treated with 0.005% (wt/vol) pepsin
solution for 10 min, followed by dehydration with 70%, 85%, and 100% (vol/vol) ethanol for 2
min each. Hybridization was performed by adding 10 µl of ALK dual color break apart probe on
each slide (Cytocell, Cambridge UK), a coverslip was placed, and the slides were sealed with
rubber cement. The specimens were subjected to denaturation at 75 °C for 3 min and
hybridized at 37 °C for 16 h. The slides were washed in 0.4× saline-sodium citrate at pH 7.2 and
then counterstained with DAPI. Results were analyzed on a Leica DM 5500B fluorescent
microscope. Cell images were captured in both interphase and metaphase cells.

RNAseq Analysis. Following 48 hours of culturing in the absence of inhibitors (to minimize the
impact of directly induced gene expression changes), RNA was isolated for erALK-TKI and
parental H3122 cells using an RNAEasy Minikit (Qiagen). Reads were generated using a MiSeq
instrument. Alignment was achieved using HiSat2 and the human hg19 reference genome.
Normalized reads were obtained from DeSeq2. Analysis was performed with genes with more
than 25 reads in at least one sample and more than two-fold change from ALK TKI naïve cells in
at least one resistant line.

Nanostring Assay. Following 48 hours of culturing in the absence of inhibitors (to minimize the
impact of directly induced gene expression changes), RNA was isolated for erALK-TKI and
parental H3122 cells using an RNAEasy Minikit (Qiagen). The nCounter GX Human Cancer

Reference Kit was used to determine gene reads. Genes more than one standard deviation
from and more than two-fold different from the mean parental value in any sample were retained
for further analysis. The $\log_2 \left(\frac{\text{Reads}}{\text{Median(Reads Across All Samples)}} \right)$ was used for all visualizations of the
data. ClustVis[61] was used to generate PCA plots. Heatmap and corresponding dendograms
were generated with heatmap.2 in R, using default parameters.

SNP Array. DNA was extracted from parental and several biological replicates of ALKi resistant
H3122 cells using DNeasy Blood and Tissue Kit (Qiagen). DNA SNP sequencing was done
using CytoScanHD (ThermoFisher). Reads were processed using Normal Diploid Analysis in
Chromosome Analysis Suite 3.2 (ChAS, ThermoFisher).

Single Cell Transcriptome Analysis. Single cell expression was performed using 10x
Genomics platform. ~1000 cells were analyzed per each sample, and ~40,000 reads per cell
were generated using an Illumina NextSeq 500 instrument. Demultiplexing, barcode processing,
alignment, gene counting was performed using the 10X Genomics CellRanger 2.0 software.
Dimension reduction was done using Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP)[18],
setting number of neighbors to 15. Cells were clustered using HDBSCAN on dimension reduced
space[62], with the minimum number of cells set to 30. All other parameters were set to default
values.

Gene Set Enrichment Analysis. GSEA version 4.0[63] was used to determine the gene sets
enriched in acquired resistant versus parental cell line RNA-seq profiles. We used the MSigDB
Hallmark [PMID: 26771021] as the predefined gene sets and performed 10,000 permutations by
gene set to determine the p-values. Gene sets with False Discovery Rate (FDR) q-value ≤ 0.25
were considered as significantly enriched.
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ChIPSeq. H3122 cells were fixed with 1% formaldehyde for 15 min and quenched with 0.125 M
glycine. Chromatin was isolated by the addition of lysis buffer, followed by disruption with a
Dounce homogenizer. Lysates were sonicated and the DNA sheared to an average length of
300-500 bp. Genomic DNA (Input) was prepared by treating aliquots of chromatin with RNase,
proteinase K and heat for de-crosslinking, followed by ethanol precipitation. Pellets were
resuspended and the resulting DNA was quantified on a NanoDrop spectrophotometer.
Extrapolation to the original chromatin volume allowed quantitation of the total chromatin yield.
An aliquot of chromatin (30 µg) was precleared with protein A agarose beads (Invitrogen).
Genomic DNA regions of interest were isolated using 4 µg of antibody against H3K27Ac (Active
Motif, cat# 39133, Lot# 01518010). Complexes were washed, eluted from the beads with SDS
buffer, and subjected to RNase and proteinase K treatment. Crosslinks were reversed by
incubation overnight at 65 °C, and ChIP DNA was purified by phenol-chloroform extraction and
ethanol precipitation. Quantitative PCR (qPCR) reactions were carried out in triplicate on
specific genomic regions using SYBR Green Supermix (Bio-Rad). The resulting signals were
normalized for primer efficiency by carrying out qPCR for each primer pair using Input DNA.
Illumina sequencing libraries were prepared from the ChIP and Input DNAs by the standard
consecutive enzymatic steps of end-polishing, dA-addition, and adaptor ligation. After a final
PCR amplification step, the resulting DNA libraries were quantified and sequenced on Illumina's
NextSeq 500 (75 nt reads, single end). Reads were aligned to the human genome (hg38) using
the BWA algorithm (default settings). Duplicate reads were removed and only uniquely mapped

reads (mapping quality ≥ 25) were used for further analysis. Alignments were extended in silico
at their 3'-ends to a length of 200 bp, which is the average genomic fragment length in the size-
selected library and assigned to 32-nt bins along the genome. Comparison with
Transcriptomics. RNASeq reads were reanalyzed using HISAT2 and hg38 for proper
comparison with ChIPSeq data. RseQC was used to check stranded information. HTSeq-count
was used for reads counting. Raw ChIPSeq files were marked-duplicate using picard and
MACS2 was used to call peaks (q<0.05). Peaks from four samples were merged using
bedtools. Black list was removed. Featurecounts was used for read counting. All genes within
±20kb of a peak are used for comparisons. Peaks with less than 15 reads in all samples with
ChIPSeq and RNASeq data (naïve, erCriz0, erAlec0 and erLor0) were excluded. Genes with
less than 25 reads in all samples with ChIPSeq and RNASeq data were excluded. Gene and
peak levels were normalized using the DESeq2 rlog function. Genes with a difference in rlog
values between erTKI and naïve cells of 1 or greater are considered upregulated. Genes with a
difference in rlog values between erTKI and naïve cells of -1 or less are considered
downregulated. All other genes are considered neutral. Peak values that are associated with
multiple genes are used multiple times. Tracks. MACS2 was used to call peaks. Partek was
used to visualize chromosomal tracks.

Immunoblots. Protein expression was analyzed using NuPAGE gels (ThermoFisher), following
manufacturer's protocols. The following antibodies, purchased from Cell Signaling, were used:
HER2 (4290), EGFR (2963), p-ALK Y1604 (3341), ALK (3633), p-Akt S473 (4060S), Akt (9272),
pERK T202/T204 (4370S), ERK (4695), p-Stat3 Y705 (9145), Stat3 (9139), p-S6 S235/S236
(4858S) and s6 (2317). Anti- β-actin antibody was purchased from Santa Cruz (47778) and
used at a 1:20,000 concentration. Secondary antibodies with H+L HRP conjugates were
purchased from BioRad (anti-rabbit: 170-6515, anti-mouse:170-6516). HRP chemiluminescent
substrate was purchased from Millipore (WBKLS0500). Images were taken using an Amersham
Imager 600 (GE Healthcare Life Sciences).

Xenografts Studies. erALK-TKI or parental H3122 were suspended in 1:1 RPMI/Matrigel
(ThermoFisher) mix and subcutaneously implanted into 4-6 week old NSG mice, with two
contralateral injections per animal, containing 10^6 tumor cells each.   After 3 weeks, the animals
were treated with 25mg/kg alectinib (purchased from Astatech), 6mg/kg lorlatinib (obtained from
Pfizer) or vehicle control via daily oral gavage. Tumor diameters were measured weekly using
electronic calipers, and tumor volumes were calculated assuming spherical shaped tumors.
Tumors in the collateral sensitivity experiments were treated with 11mg/kg alectinib for one
week before switching to 50mg/kg alectinib. Xenograft studies were performed in accordance
with the guidelines of the IACUC of the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center.

CRISPR Knockout Experiments. To produce gRNA the following DNA oligos purchased from
IDT were cloned into pSpCas9(BB)-2A-Puro (PX459) V2.0 vector (Addgene Plasmid #62988),
using the protocol in [64]): CAC CGT CTC TCG GAG GAA GGA CTT G with AAA CCA AGT CCT
TCC TCC GAG AGA C and CAC CGC ATC CTG CTG GAG CTC ATG G with AAA CCC ATG
AGC TCC AGC AGG ATG C. H3122 cells were transfected with the above constructs using
jetPrime reagent (polyPlus). 48 hours following transduction, 10^5 cells were seeded per 6 cm
dish for a clonogenic assay. To account for differences in transfection efficiency between

parental and resistant cell lines, control transfections were performed using MIG GFP
expressing plasmid and analyzed for percentage of GFP expressing cells using flow cytometry.
Normalization was performed by multiplying the number of colonies by the transfection
coefficient (ratio between fraction of GFP+ cells in the GFP control transfection between a given
cell line and parental cells).

cDNA Expression. Entry cDNA ORFs in pDONOR223 or pENTR221 were obtained from
human ORFeome collection v5.1 or Life Technologies, respectively. Lentiviral expression
constructs were generated by Gateway swap into pLenti6.3/V5-Dest vector (Life
Technologies). Oncogenic fusion gene *EML4-ALK* variant 1 wild type or the *L1196M* point
mutant was cloned into the retroviral pBabe-puro backbone[31] (provided by J. Heuckmann,
Universität zu Köln, Köln, Germany). Lentiviral and retroviral particles were produced, and used
for transduction of H3122 cells following standard protocols, described in
https://www.addgene.org/protocols/lentivirus-production/ and https://www.addgene.org/viral-
vectors/retrovirus/retro-guide/.
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Bioinformatics Core at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute.

Figures.
Fig. 1. Characterization of evolved resistance to distinct ALK-TKIs.
A. Sensitivities of the treatment naïve H3122 cell line and the indicated erALK-TKI derivative
cell lines to the indicated ALK inhibitors, measured by Cell Titer Glo assay. Error bars show
standard deviation. **B**. Experimental schemata of the xenograft experiment. **C**. Growth dynamics
of xenograft tumors produced by inoculation of the indicated cells. Treatment with indicated
doses of ALK TKIs or vehicle control is started 3 weeks post implantation. Error bars show
standard deviation. **D**. Comparison of resistance levels of erALK-TKI cells evolved by gradual
and acute drug exposure, measured by Cell Titer Glo assay. Error bars show standard
deviation. **E**. Sensitivity of independent derivates of erALK-TKI cells to the indicated ALK-TKIs,
measured by crystal violet assay. **F**. Immunoblot analysis of the expression levels of the
indicated proteins in the independent derivations of erALK-TKI cells. "0" denotes gradually
derived erALK TKI cell lines, presented in Figure A, "1-3" indicates independent derivate sub-
lines obtained by acute selection for resistance in high drug concentrations, same as in E. **G.**
UMAP analysis of single cell RNA-seq expression of the indicated cell lines.
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Fig. 2. Resistance to ALK TKIs arises from heterogeneous DT sub-populations.
A. Representative images of crystal violet stained whole plates and microscopic images of
colonies (at 10x magnification) following 10 days of culture. **B**. Illustration of the size cut-off

criteria used for quantitation of limiting dilution experiments. **C. D**, Fitting of limiting dilution
assay data and quantitation of the frequency of resistance-initiating cells. **E**. Schemata of the
clone tracing experiment. **F**. Spearman pairwise correlation analysis of barcodes, which have
reached frequency, exceeding the highest frequency barcode in the initial cell mix (0.0077),
from the indicated biological replicates. **G**. Hierarchical clustering analysis of the same "winning"
barcodes as in **F**.
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Fig. 3. Gradual development of acquired ALK TKI resistance.
A. Schemata of the experiment to assess the mode of progression from tolerance to resistance.
B. Clonogenic survival in the presence of the drug after pre-incubation for indicated times in
crizotinib and lorlatinib; data is normalized to clonogenic survival in DMSO control. Error bars
show standard deviation. **C.** Distributions of colony sizes in the presence of the indicated ALK
TKI. * and **** represent p-values of a Mann-Whitney non-parametric test, <0.05 and <0.0001
respectively. Error bars show standard deviation. **D.** Logical flow diagram for the agent-based
mathematical model. The model simulates growth from initial seeding through pre-incubation
and the clonogenic assay. **E.** Proliferation space check scheme. Blue and grey cells denote
occupied and empty spaces respectively. "P" stands for the parent cell, "D" for daughter cell, "d"
for displaced cell. Black arrows indicate options for placement of daughter cells, yellow arrows
indicate options for displaced cells. Proliferation can occur if a nearby space is either
immediately available, or separated by a single cell, in which case this cell is pushed into an
empty space, with an extra copy of the proliferating cell displacing it. **F.** Example of colony
growth simulations, initiated from cells pre-incubated in crizotinib for the indicated time, during
the final colony assay, contrasting n=1 versus n=30. Error bars show standard deviation. **G**.
Comparing divergence between *in silico* and experimental data, with n=1 and 30. Error bars
show standard deviation. **H.** Kullback–Leibler divergence-based comparison of the experimental
data with the outcomes of simulations, covering parameter space for the indicated mutation
probabilities and numbers of mutational steps.
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Fig. 4. Contribution of ALK expression changes to erALK-TKI phenotypes.
A. Representative images for interphase and metaphase FISH analysis for EML4-ALK fusions
and amplification status. Separation of 3' (red) probe from 5' (green) probe indicates ALK fusion
event (orange arrows). **B**. Frequency of cells with the indicated EML4-ALK fusion and
amplification status in the gradually evolved erALK-TKI cell lines. **C**. Impact of CRISPR
mediated genetic ablation of ALK on clonogenic survival of the indicated H3122 derivates. *
indicates p< 0.05 in a two-tail unpaired t-test. **D**. Evaluation of EML-ALK ablation status by
immunoblotting analysis. **E**. Immunoblot evaluation of the expression and activity of EML4-ALK
oncogenic signaling in the indicated cell lines with evolved and engineered resistance. **F**. Impact
of retrovirally mediated overexpression of "wild type" EML4-ALK and its L1196M mutant variant
on sensitivity to crizotinib, measured by Cell Titer Glo assay. Error bars show standard
deviation.
870
Fig. 5. Evolved resistance to ALK TKI integrates multiple mechanisms.
A. Elevated mRNA expression for the indicated genes, previously associated with
chemotherapy or targeted therapy resistance, in erALK-TKI cell lines across the indicated

functional categories. **B**. UMAP analysis of single cell mRNA expression data from cells
exposed to 0.5 µM alectinib for the indicated time duration. **C**. Violin plot of expression levels of
ALK and HER2 following indicated duration of exposure to the indicated ALK-TKIs. *, **, ***, ****
represent $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.001$ and $p<0.0001$ of a Mann-Whitney U-test. **D.** ALK-TKI
sensitivity of engineered cell lines, lentivirally overexpressing individual putative resistance
associated expression changes to the indicated ALK-TKIs (0.5 µM), determined by Cell Titer
Glo assay. Error bars show standard deviation. **E.** Impact of combination of individual resistance
mechanisms toward sensitivity to indicated ALK-TKIs (0.5 µM), determined by Cell Titer Glo
assay. *, **, ***, **** represent $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.001$ and $p<0.0001$ of ANOVA analysis with
Dunnett's (B) or Tukey's (C) multiple comparison correction. Error bars show standard
deviation.
885
Fig. 6. Gradual evolution of resistance provides a new therapeutic window for collateral
sensitivity. A. Differential lapatinib sensitivity of H3122 cells following indicated exposure time
to 0.5 µM alectinib toward alectinib or lapatinib, measured by Cell Titer Glo assay. One-way
ANOVA was used for both drugs ($p<0.0001$). Adjacent timepoints were compared using Sidak's
multiple comparison tests (*** and **** represent $p<0.001$ and $p<0.0001$). Error bars show
standard deviation. **B**. Schemata: evolving resistance to alectinib is associated with collateral
sensitivity to lapatinib. **C**. Lapatinib can prevent the development of resistance to alectinib *in*
vitro both as a combination treatment, or in drug cycling. Green shading indicates switching
from alectinib to lapatinib monotherapy. Residual signal in the combination therapy and cycling
groups reflects autofluorescence as visual examination revealed lack of surviving tumor cells. **D**.
Change in volume of H3122 xenograft tumors treated with indicated therapies; treatment
initiated 3 weeks post tumor implantation. Green shading indicates switching from alectinib to
lapatinib monotherapy or vehicle control. **** represents $p<0.001$ of the interaction term of a
repeated measurements 2-way ANOVA. Error bars indicate SEM. **D**. Evolving resistance
interpreted with a fitness landscape metaphor. Naïve cells occupy a local fitness peak. Drug
exposure reshapes the landscape, turning this fitness peak into a fitness trough. Different ALK
inhibitors act on partially distinct outliers, directing their evolution toward distinct fitness peaks.
903
904 **Supplementary Figures**:
905
Fig. S1. A. Stability of ALK-TKI resistance is assessed by analysis of ALK TKIs sensitivity of
indicated erALK TKI cell lines cultured in the absence of the drugs for indicated periods of time
using Cell Titer Glo assay. Error bars show standard deviation. **B.** Stability of ALK TKI
resistance of independently derived cell lines, assessed by sensitivity to 100 nM alectinib and
crizotinib following 4 weeks of culture in the absence of the drug. Notation of individual cell lines
is identical to that used in Fig. **1F**. Error bars show standard deviation.
912
913 **Fig. S2.** PCA analysis (**A**) and hierarchical clustering analysis (**B**) for the differentially expressed
914 Nanostring nCounter GX human cancer reference panel transcripts of the indicated samples.
915 Notation of individual cell lines is identical to that used in Fig. **1F**.
916

Fig. S3. A. Shannon diversity of all barcodes after treatment. Error bars show standard
devivation. ***, **** represent p<0.001 and p<0.0001 in a one-sample, two-tailed, t-test
comparing mean Shannon diversity to the initial. Error bars show standard deviation. **B.**
Distributions of clone sizes tagged with barcodes, exceeding the highest frequency pre-
treatment in at least one sample. In (**A**) and (**B**) replicates in the same treatment are merged,
using the mean frequency across all replicates. **C.** Frequency of barcodes under DMSO
conditions. Only barcodes exceeding the highest frequency in the initial mixture are shown.
Error bars show standard deviation. *, *** and **** represent p<0.05, p<0.001 and p<0.0001 in a
one sample, two-tailed, t-test comparing means to zero.
926
927
Fig. S4. A, **B**. DMSO control colony size distribution of treatment naïve H3122 cells, cultured in
the presence of 0.5 µM crizotinib (**A**) or lorlatinib (**B**) for the indicated amount of time prior to the
clonogenic assay. Error bars show standard deviation. **C-D**. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test estimate
for likelihood that the distribution at an intermediate time point can be explained by combined
sampling from DT cells (naïve cell colony distribution) and erALK-TKI cells, for growth in
crizotinib (**C**) and in lorlatinib (**D**). **E, F** Kullback–Leibler divergence-based comparison of the
experimental data with the outcomes of simulations, covering parameter spaces for the
indicated mutation probabilities and number of mutational steps, with the inclusion of death
probability (**E**) and an additional inclusion of mutations that cause bi-directional fitness changes
(**F**).
938
939 **Fig. S5**. Sanger sequencing traces for the indicated resistance-associated EML4-ALK hotspot
940 mutations.
941
942 **Fig. S6**. Quantitation of immunoblot data from Fig. **4E**. **A**. Phospho-EML4-ALK/actin ratio. To
943 account for changes in EML4-ALK expression in overexpressing cell lines, the data is
944 normalized to EML4-ALK/actin ratio in the DMSO control naïve cells. **B**. Phosphorylated to total
945 ERK ratio, normalized to the ratio in the DMSO control naïve cells.
946
947 **Fig. S7**. **A.** Weighted $\log_2$ ratio in regions selected based on differences between parental
948 H3122 and at least one resistant line, differences are highlighted by red boxes. The genomic
949 locations of KRAS and NRAS are highlighted. **B.** KRAS and NRAS reads obtained from
950 NanoString expression data.
951
952 **Fig. S8**. **A**. Correlation analysis for co-expression of resistance-associated genes, upregulated
953 in erALK-TKI cell lines. **B**. Hierarchical clustering dendrogram for the individual overexpressed
954 genes. **C.** GSEA results from three acquired resistant cell lines were plotted as a heatmap using
955 Normalized Enrichment Score (NES), where gene sets with FDR ≤ 0.25 is indicated as an
956 asterisk (*).
957
958 **Fig. S9. A, B.** Single cell RNA seq based UMAP analysis of phenotypes at indicated time points
959 post initiation of crizotinib (**A**) and lorlatinib (**B**) treatment, and in the indicated erALK TKI cell
960 lines (one outlier cell lies outside the axes). **C.** Cluster assignment for the UMAP of single cell

transcriptomics data from all samples shown in **Fig. 1G, 5B, S9 A, B**. Gray cells are unassigned. Ellipsoids show 95% confidence intervals. **D.** Heatmap reporting the number of cells in each cluster and sample. Shading is based on the proportion of cells in a sample that are in a specific cluster. Cluster-0 are unassigned cells.

Fig. S10. A. Clustered H3K27 acetylation of differentially acetylated peaks in the indicated cell lines. **B.** Changes in H3K27 acetylation in differentially expressed genes. Black dashed line represents zero, colored dashed lines are medians, colored dotted lines represent quartiles. **** represents $p<0.0001$ in a Kruskal-Wallis test. **C.** Elevated expression of HER2 is associated with formation of novel H3K27 peaks in the gene's vicinity. **D.** Changes in H3K27 acetylation in the vicinity of the indicated genes.

Fig. S11.
A. Net growth rates of the indicated erALK-TKI cell line in the presence and absence of 0.5 μM of the indicated ALK inhibitors, determined by counting cells over 4 weekly passages. Dashed line represents growth rates of therapy naïve cells cultured under DMSO control. **B**. Flow cytometry-based quantitation of the frequency of the indicated erALK TKI cells (evolved through dose escalation), transplanted while mixed with differentially labelled therapy naïve H3122 cells subcutaneously or orthotopically, via tail vein injection. Dashed lines represent frequency of cells in the initial mixtures. * and *** represent $p<0.05$ and $p<0.001$ respectively in a one-sample, two-tailed, t-test comparing means to the initial proportion of cells. Error bars show standard deviation.

Fig. S12. **A**. Drug naïve H3122 cells were cultured in the presence of the indicated ALK TKI (0.5 μM) or DMSO control with or without indicated concentrations of lapatinib for 6 weeks, then stained with crystal violet. **B**. Sensitivity of treatment naïve and er-ALK TKI to lapatinib mono or combined therapy, determined after 7 days of treatment by staining with crystal violet. **C.** Alectinib sensitivity of H3122 cells, cultured in the presence of 10 μM lapatinib for 1 and 3 weeks, was compared to the sensitivity of naïve H3122 cells using Cell Titer Glo viability assay. Error bars show standard deviation.

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1156

Figure 1

Figure 2

A

B

C

D

ALK TKI	RIC frequency
Crizotinib, 0.5μM	338 ± 136
Alectinib, 0.5μM	660 ± 100
Lorlatinib, 0.5μM	487 ± 435
Ceritinib, 0.1μM	447 ± 114

E

Transduce barcode library

Expand barcoded clones

4 weeks

"Count" barcodes by next-gen Seq

○ Parental H3122   Barcoded H3122

F

Spearman's Rho

G

log₂(Proportion Post/Pre Treatment)

Figure 3

Figure 4

A

Interphase   Metaphase

B

naïve, N=146   erCriz, N=20   erLor, N=77

☐ No Mut signal
🟧 Mut Single
🟥 Mut Amplified

erCer, N=34   erAlec, N=18

C

Norm. colony number

Naïve   erCriz   erLor

*

Naïve

erLor

D

Naïve   erLor

gRNA   -   #1   #2   -   #1   #2

ALK

Actin

E

Naïve | erCriz | erCer | erAlec | erLor | ALK o/e | ALK o/e` | L1196M o/e low | L1196M o/e high   0.5 µM Criz

- + | - + | - + | - + | - + | - + | - + | - + | - +

P* ALK
tot. ALK
P* ERK
ERK
actin

F

Viability, % of control

Crizotinib, nM

— Naïve
— erCriz
— ALK o/e
— L1196M o/e low
— L1196M o/e high

Figure 5

Figure 6

Fig. S1

Fig. S2

Fig. S3

Fig. S4

Wild Type	C1156	I1171	F1174	V1180	L1196	L1198	G1202	S1206	E1210
Resistance Conferring Mutations	C → Y TGC → A	I → T/N/S ATC → C/A/G	F → C TTC → G F → L TTC → A/G TTC → C	V → L GTT → C	L → M CTG → A	L → F CTC → T	G → R GGA → A/C	S → Y TCC → A	E → K GAG → A
Treatment Naïve	T GC	ATC	TTC	GTT	CTG	CTC	GGA	TCC	GAG
Alectinib Resistant	N GC	ATC	TTC	GTT	CTG	CTC	GGA	TCC	GAG
Ceritinib Resistant	N GC	ATC	TTC	GTT	CTG	CTC	GGA	TCC	GAG
Crizotinib Resistant	T GC	ATC	TTC	GTT	CTG	CTC	GGA	TCC	GAG
Lorlatinib Resistant	T GC	ATC	TTC	GTT	CTG	CTC	GGA	TCC	GAG

Fig. S5

A

B

Fig. S6

Fig. S7

Fig. S8

Fig. S9

Fig. S10

Fig. S11

Fig. S12