Single-cell analysis of human trophoblast stem cell specification reveals activation of fetal cytotrophoblast expression programs including coronavirus associated host factors and human endogenous retroviruses

Authors:

Ethan Tietze^{*a}, Andre Rocha Barbosa^{*a,b,c}, Veronica Euclydes^{*a,b,h}, Hyeon Jin Cho^a, Yong Kyu Lee^a, Arthur Feltrin^{a,d}, Joyce van de Leemput^{a,\$}, Pasquale Di Carlo^{a,i}, Tomoyo Sawada^{a,b}, Kynon J. Benjamin^{a,b,f}, Helena Brentani^{c,h}, Joel E. Kleinman^{a,f}, Thomas M. Hyde^{a,b,f}, Daniel R. Weinberger^{a,b,e,f,g}, Gianluca Ursini^{a,e}, Ronald McKay^{a,e}, Apua C.M. Paquola^{a,b}, Joo Heon Shin^{a,b}, and Jennifer A. Erwin^{#a,b,e}

^a Lieber Institute for Brain Development, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

^b Department of Neurology, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

^c Inter-institutional Graduate Program on Bioinformatics, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

^d Center for Mathematics, Computation and Cognition, Federal University of ABC, Santo André, SP, Brazil

^e Department of Neuroscience, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

^f Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA

^g Department of Genetic Medicine, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA

^h Department of Psychiatry, University of Sao Paulo, Medical School, São Paulo, Brazil

ⁱ Department of Basic Medical Science, Neuroscience, and Sense Organs – University of Bari Aldo Moro, Bari, Italy

^{*}Equal contributor

[#] Lead contact and corresponding author: Jennifer.Erwin@libd.org

^{\$} Present address: Center for Precision Disease Modeling and Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Nutrition, Department of Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine, 670 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD, 21201, USA

Summary

The human placenta is increasingly a focus of research related to early child development and the impact of maternal hyperimmune states. The ability to model human trophoderm disease states from human pluripotent stem cells, the nature of human pluripotent stem cell potency and the mechanisms regulating human trophoderm specification remains poorly understood. Recent work suggests that only the naive state can give rise to trophoderm and that primed iPSC generate mixed amnionic and mesoderm lineages. Here we identify conditions that efficiently drive the specification of primed iPSC to trophoderm, named Trophoblast Stem Cell (TSC). iPSC-derived-TSC share transcriptional, morphological and functional characteristics with human *in vivo* cytotrophoblasts including activation of human endogenous retroviruses, expression of COVID-19 associated host factors and generation of multinucleated syncytiotrophoblasts with a large fusion index. At high densities in 5% O₂, iPSC-derived-TSC form villi-like structures and express extravillous and syncytiotrophoblast proteins HCG- β and HLA-G. Using temporal single cell RNAseq, we define the molecular changes associated with specification under three separate conditions: 1) BMP4, 2) BMP4 and inhibition of WNT, 3) activation of EGF and WNT, inhibition of TGF β , HDAC and ROCK signaling (named TSC). With 9,821 high-quality single cell transcriptomes, we find that BMP4 gives rise to mesenchymal cells while TS conditions lacking exogenous BMP4 generate a stable proliferating cell type that is highly similar to six week placenta cytotrophoblasts. TFAP2A programs the specification of primed iPSC cells to TSC without transitioning through a naive state. TSC specification independent of exogenous BMP4 will allow for robust and reproducible studies of the cytotrophoblast component of human placenta.

Introduction

The first cellular specification occurs early in human development when blastomeres divide asymmetrically to generate the outer trophoderm and the inner cell mass of the pre-implantation embryo. Upon implantation, primitive syncytial trophoblast invades and remodels the maternal decidual environment before specifying into the cytotrophoblast and syncytiotrophoblast layers found in placenta villi. Currently, there is a limited understanding of the early developmental trajectories of human trophoblast differentiations (Rossant, 2018). Human models are essential to understanding how the human placenta is built. Placental structures and interaction of placental cells with the maternal environment vary tremendously across mammals. Comparative genome analysis demonstrates that genes involved in placenta and reproduction are amongst the most divergent between human and mouse (Mouse Genome Sequencing Consortium et al., 2002). The evolutionary tinkering between species is driven by endogenous retroviruses (ERVs) ((Johnson, 2019)). Now comprising 8% of the human genome, human endogenous retroviruses are retroviruses acquired by ancestral humans which then integrate into the genome and are passed onto the next generation (Lander et al., 2001). ERV-derived proteins have been repeatedly co-opted for placental functions to promote cell-cell fusion and formation of syncytial trophoblast by endogenous retrovirus group W member 1 (*ERVWE1* or *syncytin-1*) (Blond et al., 1999, 2000; Cornelis et al., 2013) and *ERVFRD-1* (Blaise et al., 2003). ERVs harbor regulatory sequences that function as enhancers to control placental

gene expression, such as a primate-specific ERV which functions as a placenta-specific enhancer for corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH), a hormone linked to the control of birth timing in humans (Blond et al., 2000; Dunn-Fletcher et al., 2018). Therefore, human cellular systems are crucial to understand the many human and primate-specific properties of human placenta.

Human induced pluripotent stem cells are powerful models to understand causal genetic mechanisms of human disease. For organs such as the brain, rapid progress has led to iPS models with increasing complexity and utility (Mansour et al., 2020). For the human placenta, which is increasingly implicated as a risk factor for developmental disorders associated with a maternal hyperimmune state, the ability to faithfully model human trophoderm disease states from human pluripotent stem cells is a matter of debate. Several model systems have been developed to differentiate primed and naive iPSC to trophoderm. Soon after the derivation of the first human stem cells, Bone Morphogenetic Protein 4 (BMP4) was shown to differentiate human stem cells to syncytial cytotrophoblasts (Xu et al., 2002). Since then, various BMP4-based methods have been described including the BAP protocol (BMP4, A83-01 an alk-5 inhibitor and PD173074 and FGF and VEGF inhibitor)(Roberts et al., 2018) and a combination of BMP4 and IWP2 (Horii et al., 2019), an inhibitor that blocks the biosynthesis of mature WNT proteins (Chen et al., 2009). Primed iPS differentiations have almost exclusively included the use of BMP4, despite the fact that single cell sequencing of the peri-implantation human embryo found the BMP signaling pathway and SMAD protein signal transduction to be enriched in primitive endoderm, not trophoderm (Blakeley et al., 2015; Petropoulos et al., 2016; Stirparo et al., 2018). BMP4 induces differentiation of mesendoderm of the embryo proper (Goldman et al., 2009; Schneider et al., 2003; Yang et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2008) and also extraembryonic endoderm (Vallier et al., 2009) in addition to upregulating some genes expressed in trophoblasts. TB differentiations using these model systems generate heterogeneous cells with mesodermal contamination and fail to maintain a trophoblast stem cell population (Bernardo et al., 2011; Drukker et al., 2012; Erb et al., 2011; Yabe et al., 2016). Models inconsistently manipulate morphogens including BMP and WNT to generate trophoblast-like cells that are characterized with a limited set of genes. Recent single cell analyses of the early placenta have characterized the expression of these genes in multiple placental cell types (Liu et al., 2018; Suryawanshi et al., 2018; Vento-Tormo et al., 2018). As many of these genes are either expressed in many different cell types or not detected at all, their findings call into question the confidence with which specific iPS derived placental cell types can be identified. Therefore, it is a matter of debate which pluripotent states can give rise to trophoderm and how similar these trophoderm cells are to *in vivo* placenta.

Understanding if and how induced pluripotent stem cells can generate human trophoderm is central to understanding human pluripotent stem cell potency and the mechanisms regulating human trophoderm specification. In the present study, we first ask if BMP4 is required for primed pluripotent stem cell specification to trophoderm. In the absence of BMP4, we find that activation of wingless/Integrated (Wnt) and epidermal growth factor (EGF) while inhibiting Transforming Growth Factor Beta (TGFβ) histone deacetylase (HDAC) and Rho-associated protein kinase (ROCK) efficiently specify multiple primed pluripotent stem cell lines to

trophectoderm. These factors were previously discovered to derive and grow trophoblast stem cells from blastocysts and the early placenta (Okada et al., 2018). We demonstrate that iPS-derived TS cells are capable of self-renewal for at least 30 passages, differentiate into syncytial cytotrophoblasts and villus cytotrophoblasts and generate villi-like structures in low oxygen. We used temporal single-cell sequencing analysis to elucidate the transcriptional landscape of this specification compared to previously implemented protocols involving BMP4. We find that BMP4 conditions alone largely generate extraembryonic mesoderm cells. BMP4 combined with inhibition of WNT shifts differentiation away from a mesodermal fate while upregulating trophoblast associated lineage markers but cells are transcriptionally distinct from *ex vivo* cytotrophoblasts. Trophoblast cells generated by TS conditions are transcriptionally highly similar to *ex vivo* cytotrophoblasts and uniquely upregulate endogenous retroviral genes. Specification of primed iPS cells to TS occurs without entering a naive state and *TFAP2A* and *ESRRG* are central genes regulating the specification. Defining the molecular mechanisms specifying the trophoctoderm is key to understanding placental associated diseases and improving iPS-derived models.

Results:

Derivation of trophoblast stem cells (TS) from primed human embryonic stem cells and induced pluripotent stem cells without BMP4

In search of alternative methods to specify iPS cells to trophoctoderm, we reasoned that primed human pluripotent stem cells might be capable of specification to trophoblast stem cells directly by activating wingless/Integrated (WNT) and epidermal growth factor (EGF) and inhibiting Transforming Growth Factor Beta (TGFβ) histone deacetylase (HDAC) and Rho-associated protein kinase (ROCK). While previously described primed iPS differentiations to trophoctoderm have added BMP4, BMP4 is not expressed in the early pre-implantation trophoblast and it is not known if iPS can differentiate to trophoctoderm in the absence of BMP4 ((Blakeley et al., 2015; Petropoulos et al., 2016; Stirparo et al., 2018). Activation of WNT and EGF and inhibition of TGFβ, HDAC and ROCK enable the long-term culture of human trophoblast stem cells derived from primary embryos (Okada et al., 2018). 24 hours after clump passage of the human embryonic stem cell line H1 (Thomson et al., 1998) in primed feeder-free stem cell conditions, ES colonies demonstrated domed tight packing with defined edges characteristic of primed cells (Figure 1A and B). 48 hours post passage, cells were switched directly to TSC media. By brightfield imaging over the subsequent 6 days, we observed that cells proliferated rapidly and adopted a flatter appearance with some cells adopting a cobblestone appearance (Figure 1A-D). After passaging, two morphologically distinct populations emerged. Circular colonies with an epithelial-like appearance could be seen surrounded by phase bright fibroblastic cells (Figure 1E,F). The inner epithelial-like cells continued to proliferate and appeared morphologically similar to TS cells derived from primary human embryos (Figure 1G). Immunofluorescence revealed that subpopulations of the colony cells expressed TP63 and/or KRT7 and minimally expressed VIM while surrounding fibroblastic cells strongly expressed VIM (Figure 1H). Over the course of several passages, the epithelial-like cells preferentially expand and reach purity between passage 5-7. These TSC widely express both TP63 and KRT7 (Figure 1I-K,

Supplemental Figure 1) without expressing the pluripotency genes SOX2 and NANOG (Supplemental Figure 1). In summary, we find that activating wingless/Integrated (Wnt) and epidermal growth factor (EGF) and inhibiting Transforming Growth Factor Beta (TGFB) histone deacetylase (HDAC) and Rho-associated protein kinase (ROCK) directly in primed iPS lines results in efficient specification of trophoblast stem cells.

Pluripotent stem cell lines vary in their propensity to differentiate to different cell types (Osafune et al., 2008). Therefore, we asked if TSC conditions without exogenous BMP4 could specify a variety of primed human stem cell lines. We confirmed TS specification by VIM, KRT7 and TP63 immunofluorescence on iPS lines reprogrammed from dermal fibroblasts by sendai, named 2014.06 (Supplemental Figure 2), and two postmortem dura fibroblast-derived iPS cell lines reprogrammed by episome, named LIBD7c6 and LIBD1c8 (Sawada et al., 2020)(Figure 1 H-K). To confirm the ability to proliferate as TS-like cells, iPS-derived TS lines were passaged for up to 32 passages and maintained KRT7 and TP63 expression (Figure 1K).

Hypoxia induces differentiation of iPS-derived TS cells into villi-like structures composed of differentiated syncytial cytotrophoblasts and villus cytotrophoblasts

To investigate the maturation potential of iPS-derived-TSC, we evaluated the ability of iPS-derived TS cells to differentiate to mature trophoblast cell types. Proliferative trophoblast stem cells are bipotential stem cells with the capacity to differentiate to syncytial cytotrophoblasts and extravillous cytotrophoblasts (Okabe et al 2018). Syncytial cytotrophoblast is a terminally differentiated multinucleated epithelial layer that infiltrates the maternal endometrium. The multinucleated cell forms from multiple cytotrophoblast cell fusions. When TS cells were grown to high density, we observed the spontaneous formation of multinucleated cells by brightfield microscopy. We confirmed that multinucleated syncytial cells are Ki-67 negative nuclei surrounded by the tight-junction protein ZO-1 positive cells (Figure 2A and B). We observed large areas of syncytial formation fused nuclei (Figure 2A and S3). Syncytiotrophoblasts produce and secrete high levels of human chorionic gonadotropin (hCGβ), a hormone essential for cytotrophoblast differentiation, immuno-suppression, and placental invasion (Cole, 2010). We observe expression of hCGβ in regions of the differentiated cytotrophoblast cultures, indicating differentiation to syncytiotrophoblasts (Figure 2C). Extravillous trophoblasts express human leukocyte antigen G (HLA-G), the main molecule involved in maternal immune system evasion upon placental invasion of the endometrium. We also readily detected regions of HLA-G positive cells, indicating iPS-derived TS cells are capable of differentiation to extravillous cytotrophoblast (Figure 2D). Expression of hCGβ and HLA-G was specific to iPS-derived TS cells and not detected in iPS cells (Supplemental Figure 1I).

To further induce differentiation of the iPS-derived-TSC, we tested if cells will respond to altering oxygen concentrations. Hypoxia is a natural cue that stimulates syncytial cytotrophoblast differentiation *in vivo* (Wakeland et al., 2017), therefore we transitioned a high density TS cell culture from atmospheric oxygen of 20% to 5%. In 5% oxygen, these cells demonstrate minimal contact inhibition and form 3D villi-like structures that protrude from the monolayer surface of

the culture dish (Figure 2 E-H). When imaged by confocal microscopy, these villi-like structures are approximately 50 microns in height. In summary, iPS-derived-TSC readily differentiate into both HLA-G positive villus cytotrophoblasts and hCGB3 positive syncytial cytotrophoblasts.

Single cell RNA sequencing reveals unique transcriptional programs for iPS-derived TS specification

To define the molecular events involved in the specification of iPS cells to trophoblast, we performed temporal single cell RNAseq analysis of human iPS cells specified to placental trophoblast cells by three separate conditions: 1) addition of BMP4 (Xu et al., 2002), 2) addition of BMP4 and inhibition of Wnt with the small molecule inhibitor IWP2 (Horie et al., 2019), 3) Trophoblast Stem Cell condition (TSC) activation of EGF and Wnt, inhibition of TGFbeta, HDAC and ROCK signaling to generate trophoblast stem cells (Figure 3A). Sequencing was generated for iPS cells before differentiation (day 0), for BMP4 on days 4 and 6, for BMP4+IWP2 on days 2, 4 and 6, and on days 2, 4, 6 and 8 for TS condition, resulting in 10 single-cell transcriptomes (Figure 3A). In TS condition, the day 8 is a timepoint two days after the first passaging annotated as p1. In the BMP4 and BMP4 + IWP2 conditions, no proliferative cells survived passaging, therefore the p1 time point was not sequenced. Using the highly parallel droplet based single cell sequencing method Drop-Seq (Macosko et al., 2015), 9,821 high-quality cells were obtained after removing cells with less than 1000 genes detected and more than 20% of mitochondrial mapping. The average ratio of mapping reads for mitochondrial genes in all cells were 3.9%, indicating good viability (Supplemental Figure 4A). The total number of genes detected ranged between 21804 for BMP4 + IWP2 day 4 to 27134 for TS day 4 (Supplemental Figure 4B) time point with between 563 to 1572 high quality cells per timepoint (Supplemental Figure 4C).

In order to explore the data in an unbiased manner, we performed dimensionality reduction for the most variable genes across all cells with Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP) embedding. Generally, single cells separated by differentiation stage and condition, with UMAP dimension 2 generally capturing the differentiation condition (Figure 3B). To identify transcriptionally similar groups of cells, we performed a graph-based clustering analysis of k nearest neighbors using the euclidean distance of the 30 first PCs in Seurat (Stuart et al., 2019). We identified 19 clusters, and clusters contained mostly a single time-point and media condition (Figure 3B-D and S4D and Table S1). IPS clusters 1, 2 and 3 mostly contained IPS cells with slight contributions from the first days of all three differentiation conditions. Cells from the BMP4+ IWP-2 condition were found predominantly in a group of five heterogeneous clusters termed BR (BMP responsive). BR1 was composed of roughly equal parts iPS cells and BMP4 + IWP-2 day 2 treated cells. BMP4+IWP2 cells made up the majority of the cells in the other BR clusters alongside a smaller population of BMP4 cells. BR2 and BR3 were predominantly derived from BMP4+IWP2 day 2 cells, while day 4 contributed to BR4, and day 6 contributed to BR. Cells from the BMP4 condition almost exclusively formed four clusters termed SC (Stromal cell). SC1 and SC3 were predominantly composed of cells from day 4 of the differentiation while SC2 and SC were predominantly from day 6 cells. In addition, cluster SC contained a small contribution of cells originating from the

final differentiation day of the TS condition termed TSP1 (TS passage 1). Cells from the TS differentiation almost exclusively populated 7 clusters termed TS. TS1 was exclusively composed of Day 2 cells and TS 2-5 were composed of a mixture of cells from days 2-6. The final TS day (TSP1) separated into two clusters named TS and TS6, which confirms the brightfield observations of 2 cell populations. Interestingly, 14 cells from BMP4+IWP2 d6 and 4 cells from the BMP4 d6 contribute to the final TS cluster (Figure 3D, Table S1).

To understand how transcriptional profiles change during the differentiation, we asked which cells express canonical pluripotent, trophectoderm and mesoderm specific genes. We find that the stem cell transcription factor *SOX2* is highest expressed in the iPS stage and is absent from the most differentiated BR, TS and SC clusters (Figure 3E). *SOX2* expression is maintained at a higher level in the initial days of the TS conditions compared to BMP WNTi and BMP treatment and absent from the most differentiated TS cells. The Paired-like homeodomain transcription factor 2 *PITX2* is highly expressed in the later stages of BMP4 differentiation, suggesting that BMP4 conditions generate placental stromal cells (Figure 3F). In single cell RNAseq of the human placenta, *PITX2* was identified as the top marker gene for a stromal fetal communicating cell type F1 by Vento-Tormo (Liu et al., 2018; Vento-Tormo et al., 2018). Keratin 7, *KRT7*, and human chorionic gonadotropin subunit alpha, *CGA*, are expressed in both stem cell derived cytotrophoblasts and *in vivo* placenta (Yabe et al., 2016). Indicating specification to trophectoderm transcriptional programs, we find both *KRT7* and *CGA* are expressed in the later stages of the BMP+ WNTi condition and TS condition (Figure 3G-H). Overall, both TS and BMP4+ WNTi treated cells demonstrated an increased expression for most TB markers including *GATA3* and *TFAP2C* (Figure S5A) while the BMP4 alone conditions demonstrated a more mesoderm associated expression of *GATA4*, *TBXT* and *PDGFRA* (Figure S5B). In mouse, the Caudal-type homeobox 2 (*CDX2*) is involved in the segregation of the ICM and trophectoderm lineages at the blastocyst stage by repressing *OCT4/POU5F1* and *NANOG* in the TE. Overexpression of *CDX2* in mouse embryonic stem cells causes differentiation to trophoblast stem cells (Erwin et al., 2012; Niwa et al., 2005). In humans, *CDX2* expression is initiated after blastocyst formation and has variable expression patterns in trophectoderm (Niakan and Eggan, 2013). Similar to TS cells derived from primary human embryos, *CDX2* is not expressed in the differentiated TS state, and there is sparse expression of *CDX2* at d4 of all differentiations (Figure S5A).

Next we asked which genes are preferentially expressed in each cluster by non-parametric Wilcoxon rank sum test (adj.p-value < 0.05; logFC > 0.25)(Figure 3I, Table S2). We defined cell-population markers by comparing gene expression of each cell population compared to all other cells. *DUSP6* and *THY1* are primed stem cell state genes and are among the top marker genes identified in the iPS cells. The SC cluster marker genes includes WNT signaling genes *RSPO2* a WNT agonist (Kazanskaya et al., 2004) and *PITX2* which interacts with both WNT signaling and regulates collagen expression during development (Hendee et al., 2018). Markers of the BR cluster include *PRSS23* a serine protease involved in Snail-dependent Epithelial to Mesenchymal Transition (Chen et al., 2013) and regulators of Insulin-like growth factor signaling *IGFBP7* (Oh et al., 1996) and *PAPPA2* (Overgaard et al., 2001). Markers of the TS clusters include genes involved in EGFR signaling *NPNT* (Arai et al., 2017), *IFI6* (Meyer et al., 2015),

and *MUC15* (Wang et al., 2013). Additionally, *ARHGAP18* is a Rho GTPase activating protein that functions as a downstream effector of YAP signaling (Porazinski et al., 2015) recently implicated in the specification HiPS to bipotent trophoblast stem cells (Mischler et al., 2019).

In sum, TSC, BMP4 and BMP4 with inhibition of WNT pattern different cell types. Activation of WNT and EGF and inhibition of TGFb, HDAC and ROCK specify primed iPSC to cytotrophoblasts, BMP4 alone induces mesenchymal fates and inhibition of WNT in the context of BMP4 generates a small percentage of TS cells. For use by the community, we provide a web browser of the single cell expression profiles (<http://erwinpaquolalab.libd.org/publications/singlecellTS>) and the differentially expressed genes for all pairwise cluster comparisons (Table S3).

iPS-derived trophoblast stem cells resemble first trimester placental cytotrophoblasts while BMP4 differentiation generates placental mesenchymal cells

We next asked how similar are the iPS-derived placental cells to *ex vivo* cells found in human placenta. There is considerable debate about the authenticity of iPS derived trophoblast cells and primary trophoblast stem cells, therefore we set out to directly compare the single cell transcriptional profiles to *ex vivo* datasets. To characterize the expression profiles of the 19 clusters, we analyzed the overlap with cell type-specific genes identified by two published single-cell studies of early human placenta (Liu et al., 2018; Vento-Tormo et al., 2018). We performed gene set enrichment analyses using Cell-Specific Expression Analysis (CSEA) (Xu et al., 2014). We identified cell type specific genes that were preferentially expressed in each cell type/cluster of the 19 clusters from iPS-derived cells by the specificity index probability (pSI) statistic at thresholds of $p < 0.05$. Next, we tested whether cell-type specific genes previously identified by single cell studies of human placenta are over-represented in the cell-type specific genes from our iPS specification by hypergeometric test and applied the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, considering all the tested gene lists [$\alpha = 0.05 / (19 \times (38+14)) = 5.1 \times 10^{-5}$]. Vento-Tormo identified a set of 38 cell types from maternal (decidua and blood) and fetal tissues (placenta) of first trimester placenta and reported 30 cell-type specific genes per cell type (Vento-Tormo et al., 2018). We found that the transcriptional profile from all iPS clusters and clusters from d2-d4 timepoints did not have significant enrichment for any of the placental cell type clusters (Figure S6A). In contrast, the most mature iPS-derived TS cluster was highly enriched for the syncytial cytotrophoblast (SCT) and villous cytotrophoblast (VCT) cluster ($p = \log_{10}^{-32}$ and $\log_{10}^{-17}$) (Figure 4A). The expression profile of the iPS-derived TS cluster was highly specific for SCT and VCT with no significant enrichment for any other cell-type in the maternal fetal interface. The D6 BMP4 cluster SC was most enriched in the two fibroblast clusters (F1 and F2) ($p = \log_{10}^{-26}$ and $p = \log_{10}^{-13}$). Vento-Tormo described these placental fibroblasts as mesenchymal stromal cells of fetal origin that derive from the primitive endoderm expressing GATA4, GATA6, PDGFRa, and SOX17 (Figure S6 and S7). The BMP4 + IWP2 conditions (BR) were not strongly enriched for any specific placental cell type and instead had weaker enrichment for several clusters including syncytial cytotrophoblast (SCT), and maternal decidua derived F1 endodermal cell type and dS1. In sum, iPS-derived TS cells are highly

enriched for expression of genes specific to syncytial cytotrophoblast and villous cytotrophoblast of *ex vivo* human placenta.

Next we compared the expression profiles to early placental dataset from the 8 week and 24 week placenta (Liu et al., 2018) (Figure 4B). Again, we found strong enrichment for the iPS-derived TS cells in the eight week fusion competent CTB1 (cytotrophoblast, $\log_{10}^{-9}$). BMP4 alone and BMP4 + IWP2 conditions were enriched for two different mesoderm cells identified by Liu et al ($\log_{10}^{-23}$ and $\log_{10}^{-4}$). To visualize placental cell-type specific expression patterns among the iPS-derived cell types, we plotted a heatmap of the top unique markers of the fetal cell types identified in Vento-Tormo and polar trophoblast markers identified in (Petropoulos et al., 2016) (Figure 4C). Consistent with the Gene Set Enrichment Analysis, we observed high expression for a majority of unique marker genes previously identified in polar trophoblast villus cytotrophoblasts (VCT) and syncytial cytotrophoblasts (SCT). We also compared the expression profiles of all iPS-derived cellular clusters to previously identified lineage and marker genes from pre-implantation datasets (Stirparo et al 2018, Figure S7A). Again, we found the highest expression of trophoblast genes KRT18, TEAD3, GATA3 and GATA2 in iPS derived TS, with moderate expression in BR cells. Primitive endoderm genes SOX17, GATA4, GATA6 were highest expressed in SC cells. When compared to primary trophoblast cells (Suryawanshi et al 2019, Figure S7B), we confirmed that TS cells expressed the highest level of cytotrophoblast and EVT specific genes. In summary, iPS cells specified via TS conditions have a transcriptional profile highly homologous to cytotrophoblasts taken directly from human placenta while BMP4 differentiation generates placental mesenchymal cells.

Primed iPS specify to trophoblast by activation of TFAP2A without activation of naive stem cell programs

It has been reported that primed stem cells are restricted in their potency and unable to differentiate to TSC while naive stem cells readily differentiate to TSC because they are poised to specify to trophoblast (Dong et al., 2020). Therefore, we asked if the primed iPS or TSCM treated cells adopt a naive stem cell program during differentiation. For 12 previously identified naive marker genes (Messmer et al., 2019), naive transcripts were nearly absent. Five genes HORMAD1, ALPPL2, KHD3L, TRIM60, and HYAL4 had no observed expression in any cell (Figure 5A, Table S4). Less than 1% of cells for any condition had detectable expression for six other marker genes ALPP, OLAH, LYZ, MEG8, KDC1L, and FAM151A. ZNF729 was the only gene expressed in 0.51% of TS_{p1} cells to 14.69% of IWP2d2. In contrast, primed marker genes were consistently expressed in iPS clusters and often throughout the differentiation state. For example, DUSP6 was detected in 74.87% of the iPS cells, indicating that the iPS initiated in the primed state. In sum, primed iPS transition to cytotrophoblasts without transitioning through a naive state.

We asked how BMP signaling contributes to the differentiation by evaluating BMP family signaling in all samples. Low percentages of cells expressed BMP4 in TS conditions, while BMP4 was significantly upregulated in several cell clusters including Day 4 BMP4 and BMP4 + IWP2 treated cells compared to iPS and TS cell clusters (Figure 5B, Table S4). BMP5 and

BMP7 were expressed in a larger portion of TSCM treated cells compared to iPS (BMP5: 0-0.67% iPS vs 24.72% TS1 cells and BMP7: 1.01-4.71% iPS vs 29.06% TS1 cells). The BMP effector proteins SMAD1,4, and 5 is expressed in the first days of all conditions and is absent from the mature TS cluster. We conclude that BMP5 and BMP7 signaling patterns iPS-derived TS specification instead of BMP4.

To identify the most significant gene expression changes associated with the initial stages of TS specification, we studied a subset of the sample using only cells from the iPS and TS day 2 samples and applied a single-cell trajectory inference and pseudotime estimation (STREAM) to the single cell transcriptome data (Chen et al., 2019). Briefly, single cells were ordered along probabilistic trajectories and a numeric value referred to as pseudotime was assigned to each cell to indicate how far it progresses along the dynamic differentiation. STREAM identifies an initial branch composed of both iPS and TS day2 cells (S3-S0). This level of analysis also identified branches containing IPS cells (S0-S2, S0-S4), reflecting the pluripotency continuum, as well as a TS day 2 (S0-S1) branch reflecting the exit from pluripotency (Figure 5C and Table S5). On branch S3-S0, node S3 was predominantly composed of iPS cells while TS day 2 cells are more abundant towards S0 (Figure 5C, S8A,B). We next identified the transcriptional states that contribute to the specification by identifying highly expressed genes within a branch that are correlated with the transition along the specification branches (see methods). Top positively correlated transition genes along branch S3-S0 include *LRRN3* which amplifies MAPK signaling through EGFR (Fukamachi et al., 2002), *MEIS2* which codes for a TALE homeobox protein that promotes tumor progression through the combined action of two isoforms increasing YAP nuclear translocation and activating the WNT/b-catenin pathway (Guan et al., 2019), *BMP5*, *BMPR1B* and *TFAP2A* a transcription factor key to the suppression of pluripotency and expression of trophoblast associated genes (Krendl et al., 2017) (Figure 5C, S8C). These genes were expressed not only along branch S3-S0 but also along branch S0-S1 (Figure S8C). The branch S0-S1 captures the transition out of the pluripotent state and into the TS state with upregulation of cytokeratins (*KRT18*, *KRT19*, *KRT8*) and calcium binding proteins (*S100A11*, *S100A10*) known to be expressed in trophoblast (Abd El-Aleem and Dekker, 2018; Liu et al., 2006) (Figure S8D). Also found as a top transition gene, *TMSB4X* is implicated in stemness of progenitor trophoblast cells of first trimester human placentas by increasing NOTCH1 activity (Huang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018; Lv et al., 2013). In summary, trophoblast transcriptional programming occurs early in the specification and utilizes previously identified trophoblast associated regulatory factors including *TMSB4X*, *YAP*, *BMP5*, and *TFAP2A*.

STREAM pseudotime analysis of trophoblast differentiations reveals upregulation of stromal mesenchyme upon BMP4 treatment and trophoblast transcriptional programming upon TS treatment.

To understand the transcriptional changes associated with the full trajectory of iPS to trophoblast specification, we repeated the STREAM analysis with the complete iPS to d8 dataset. STREAM identifies 4 main branching points among all single cells (Figure 6A). The early differentiation days for all conditions were mixed in pseudotime demonstrating a similar transcriptional state at the initial phases of IPS commitment when compared in the context of d6

and d8 cells. Similar to the UMAP projection (Figure 3B,C), STREAM inferred mixing of two iPS stages with cells from the d2 treatments. STREAM inferred three main branching points which separated based on the most differentiated cells from each condition. To reveal the transcriptional states that contribute to the branching, we carried out differential expression analysis to identify highly expressed genes within a branch that are differentially expressed compared to all other branches, termed leaf gene detection analysis in STREAM (see methods) (Figure 6B, Table S6). For the zero IPS branch point, pluripotent-specific genes including *DNMT3A* and *POU5F1/OCT4* were highly differentially expressed. For the branch of cells exposed to BMP4 (SC), mesoderm markers including *PITX2* were identified as differentially expressed. For the BMP+IWP2 branch, placental associated genes were identified including *RAB31*, a small GTPases highly expressed in placenta that regulates intracellular membrane trafficking of ligand bound *EGFR* (Chua and Tang, 2014). For the TS branch, significantly differentially expressed genes were associated with trophoctoderm commitment and implantation and preeclampsia including *GATA3*. We performed a Gene Ontology enrichment analysis for biological processes using the top 300 significantly differentially expressed leaf genes for the TS branch. Significantly overrepresented GO categories included placental development, female pregnancy, viral processes (Figure 6 C,D).

Human endogenous retrovirus derived genes participate in a regulatory subnetwork specifically within iPS-derived trophoblast stem cells

We found the set of genes involved in viral-like processes are upregulated in the later TS differentiation timepoints (Figure 6C). This echoes an increasing body of evidence demonstrating that endogenous retroviruses play a fundamental role in the evolutionary diversification of the mammalian placenta (Johnson, 2019). Therefore, we asked what is the expression of human ERV-derived genes during trophoctoderm specification? We found specific upregulation of five ERV-derived genes in the most differentiated TS cell type (Figure 7A).

To understand the place of ERV-derived genes in the regulatory TS regulatory network, we analyzed the participation of ERV-derived genes in a gene regulatory network. We built a transcription factor and target gene network model using the Passing Attributes between Networks for Data Assimilation (PANDA) algorithm to all clusters among the conditions. PANDA integrates information from TF-sequence-motif data, gene expression and protein-protein interaction (PPI) in a message-passing approach (Glass et al., 2013). Briefly, PANDA's algorithm makes the assumption that genes targeted by the same TF are more likely to be co-expressed than genes that are regulated by a different TF. Using a TF-sequence motif as initial network model, the algorithm refines and updates the model by computing the congruence between two measures: 1) Concordance in co-expression of genes presenting motif for a same TF, and 2) Concordance in the regulatory profile of a set of TFs that interact with each other via Protein-protein interaction data. Therefore, the likelihood of interaction between a TF and a target gene is given by its edge weight, which states for the coordination of targets' expression by a TF complex. PANDA outputs Z-score normalized edge weights, therefore positive and negative weights can be seen as likely and unlikely interactions respectively. One network was

created for each previously identified cell cluster based on the expression profile of the top 100 cells in each cluster (based on PC1) with genes expressed in at least 10% cells. We found that ERV interactions (Transcription Factors + ERV-derived genes) are prominent in the most differentiated TS cluster and in no other cell clusters. We found regulatory interactions for five ERV-derived genes (*ERVH48-1*, *ERV3-1*, *ERVMER34-1*, *ERVW-1* and *ERVFRD-1*) are highly unique to the TS cluster network, while only 0 or 1 ERV-derived gene was found in the other cell clusters (Figure 7B, S9A). Clusters SC and SC 3 (BMP4 cells) exhibited interactions for gene *ERVH48-1*, and clusters BR 1, BR 3 and BR 4 (BMP4+IWP2 cells) presented the gene *ERV3-1*. Interestingly, genes encompassed in ERV regulatory interactions of iPS derived TS cells were enriched in biological pathways related to hormone metabolism, cell differentiation and the immune system (adj. p value < 0.01) (Figure 7C, Table S7). In addition, we observed ERV regulatory interactions are also enriched for categories such as placenta development, trophoctodermal cell differentiation and syncytium formation (Table S7). To understand the significance of the ERV-subnetwork interactions, we next asked what is the strength of ERV edges in the network context of the TS cluster? We found that weights of ERV regulatory interactions were highly ranked among all network connections (Wilcoxon Rank Sum pval=1.6778e⁻³¹, permuted p value=0.001). In sum, we find that ERV-derived genes participate in a regulatory subnetwork specifically within TS cells.

Coronavirus associated host factors are expressed in iPS-derived TS cells and could potentially model cytotrophoblast involvement in infection

We next asked if these iPS-derived cells could be relevant to model the cytotrophoblast involvement in infection. Infections of pregnant women can severely impact both the developing fetus and pregnant women. Trophoblast cells at the maternal-fetal interphase play a crucial role in the impact of these infections. Syncytiotrophoblasts are the barrier that protects the fetus from some infections (Parry et al., 1997). The permissiveness of trophoblast cells to a specific infection largely determines if an infection reaches the fetus. Pathogens such as *Toxoplasma gondii*, Rubella, herpesvirus, cytomegalovirus, and Zika virus can cross the placenta, infect the fetus and cause congenital disease (Stegmann and Carey, 2002; Coyne and Lazear, 2016). It is still too soon to know the complete impact of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and the associated coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on pregnant women and fetus. But it has been established that the placenta can be infected by SARS-CoV-2 (Vivanti et al., 2020). Emerging data suggest that placental SARS-CoV-2 infections are rare (Vivanti et al., 2020), perhaps because the CoV-2 host entry substrate angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) and the serine protease TMPRSS2 are minimally expressed in the placenta (Pique-Regi et al., 2020). Although ACE2 and TMPRSS2 co-expression are rare in the maternal fetal interface, alternative entry receptors such as BSG (Aguiar et al., 2020). When considering expression analysis of confirmed and potential SARS-CoV-2 host factors, Singh et al reported that the cytotrophoblast is the cell type most susceptible to coronavirus infection in the first trimester placenta while confirming that *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* are lowly expressed (Singh et al., 2020).

To evaluate the potential tropism of SARS-CoV-2 in iPS-derived TS cells, we profiled SARS-CoV-2 and coronavirus associated factors. Overall, iPS-derived TS cells expressed coronavirus associated factors in similar patterns compared to *ex vivo* cytotrophoblasts (Singh et al., 2020), (Pique-Regi et al., 2020). *ACE2* and *TMPRSS2* are minimally expressed (Figure 8A, Table S8) and putative alternative entry receptors *BSG*, *HSPA5* and *DPP4* are more expressed. Other potential entry proteases *CTSB*, *CTSL* and *FURIN* are all expressed at a higher level (Figure 8B, Table S8). The placenta also protects the fetus from infection by the active transfer of maternal antibodies to the fetus. Syncytiotrophoblasts transfer protective humoral maternal IgG to the fetus via the neonatal Fc receptor encoded by the *FCGRT* gene (Leach et al., 1996). Consistent with the findings that iPS-derived TS cells are transcriptionally similar to cytotrophoblasts and syncytiotrophoblasts, iPS-derived TS cells also express *FCGRT*. In sum, iPS-derived TS cells are highly transcriptionally similar to *ex vivo* cytotrophoblasts and syncytiotrophoblasts with respect to placental host factors involved in infection. Therefore, iPS-derived TS cells may be useful to model the involvement of human cytotrophoblasts in infection.

Discussion

Here we demonstrate that primed iPS cells are specified to trophoblast without BMP4 and instead with EGF, TGF- β inhibitors, a WNT activator and Valproic acid induced HDAC inhibition. iPS-derived TS cells are highly transcriptionally similar to cytotrophoblasts found in human placenta. TS cells proliferate rapidly, display very variably sized nuclei, readily become multinucleated as observed in early post-implantation trophoblast and strongly express extravillous and syncytiotrophoblast associated proteins (HLA-G, HCG- β) in sub populations. After eight days of specification, iPS-derived TS cells display a uniquely active transcriptional network of human endogenous retroviruses similar to *in vivo* trophoblast. We demonstrate that in hypoxic conditions, iPS-derived TS cells create 3D villi-like structures, conditions which will likely be useful for future 3D organoid models.

The ability of primed human stem cells to differentiate into true trophoblast lineages is under debate. Here we demonstrate that primed human stem cells retain a broad potency to generate extra embryonic lineages which are transcriptionally highly similar to placenta. Our results are consistent with the model that the primed state is on a continuum of potency, rather than a fixed and restricted state (Weinberger et al., 2016). Methodological differences and the frequent use of BMP4 likely underlie previously reported differences in the ability of primed and naive pluripotent stem cells to generate TSCs. We confirm that the BMP4 model can generate cells with key features of trophoblast, but in the defined conditions used here BMP4 specified cells are less similar to *in vivo* cytotrophoblasts. Following the recent derivation of human TSCs from primary cells (Mischler et al., 2019; Okae et al., 2018), several attempts have been made to derive TSCs from ES/iPS from a range of pluripotent states. Mischler et al. 2019 used primed ES cells with a hybrid protocol that combined a three day treatment of BMP4 and SB431542 with long term culture in TM4 media (CYM554 a S1PR3 agonist, CHIR99021, A83-01, and FGF10) to generate a CDX2⁺ TSC-like population (Mischler et al., 2019; Okae et al., 2018). When transferred to TSCM media, these cells lost CDX2 expression and adopted characteristics of TSCs. Omitting TM4 media and directly transferring BMP4 treated cells to

TSCM resulted in a gradually enriching population of epithelial cells comparable with their CDX2- TSC-like population. Interestingly, this process mirrors the differentiation progression we observed when we directly treated primed iPS with TSCM. Our data suggest that BMP4 is not involved in this transition. TSC-like cells have also been generated from primed iPS cells using a micromesh culture system with primed pluripotent stem cell media followed by culture in TSCM (Li et al., 2019) although the comparison of these cells to *in vivo* placental cells is less extensive. In contrast, Dong et al. 2020 reported that only naive and not primed ES could generate TSC-like cells by direct exposure to TSCM (Dong et al., 2020). Human expanded potential stem cells (EPSCs) can also generate TSC-like cells when differentiated in TSCM (Gao et al., 2019). Interestingly, this group was unable to generate TSC-like cells using naive or primed ES cells under similar conditions. Here, we demonstrate that the continuum of pluripotency present in the primed state readily allows for specification to trophoblast.

The robust differentiation of primed iPS cells to trophoblast allows for modeling of placental diseases from patient-specific cells without first trimester primary tissue. Placental adaptive responses to insults can alter fetal development and program the fetus for later disease including diabetes and neurodevelopmental disorders (Myatt, 2006). As both the protective barrier and a component of the innate immune system, cytotrophoblasts and their progeny play important roles in the outcome of insults (Guleria and Pollard, 2000). Recent evidence that Covid19 leads to a hyperimmune state has implications for placental biology and fetal development, potentially analogous to the effects of other hyperimmune states during pregnancy (Al-Haddad et al., 2019). Genetic variation among individuals influences how a pathogen affects the fetus. iPS models of this genetic variation could be harnessed for therapeutic intervention. We anticipate that iPS-derived TS cells will be a powerful model to study the placental contribution to disease and the genetic regulation of human placental evolution.

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Declaration of Interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Figures and Figure Legends

Figure 1: Derivation Of Trophoblast Stem Cell Like (TS) Cells From Human Pluripotent Stem Cells.

A. Schematic of protocol used to derive TS cells from human pluripotent stem cells (PSCs) by activating wingless/Integrated (WNT) and epidermal growth factor (EGF) and inhibiting Transforming Growth Factor Beta (TGF β) histone deacetylase (HDAC) and Rho-associated protein kinase (ROCK).
B-G. Representative phase contrast images of differentiating TS cells (ES line H1). (B) Images of differentiating cells on days 2 (B), 4 (C), and 6 (D) after addition of differentiation (TS) media. **E,F.** Images of TS cell morphology 24 (E) and 72 (F) hours following passage (P1) on day 6. (G) Mature TS lines generated from ES line H1 after 10 passages.
H. Immunofluorescence for VIM (magenta), KRT7 (red), TP63 (green), and Hoechst 33342 (blue) in TS cells after 1 passage (P₀) (iPS line LIBD7c6).
I-K. Confocal images of KRT7 (red), TP63 (green), and DAPI (blue) for TS cells generated from passage 11 H1 (I) and 2014.06 (J) and passage 32 LIBD1C8 (K).
 All phase contrast images scale bars indicate 100 μ m. All immunofluorescence images scale bars indicate 50 μ m.

Figure 2: iPS-derived TS Cells Differentiate Into Syncytial Cytotrophoblast, Extra Villous Cytotrophoblasts and Villi-like Structures.

A,B. Immunofluorescent images of mature TS line LIBD1C8 stained for ZO-1 (red), KI-67 (green), and DAPI (grey).
C,D. Immunofluorescent images of mature TS line LIBD1C8 stained for DAPI (red) and hCG (C) or HLA-G (D) (grey).
E-H. Villi like structures spontaneously form when cultured in 5% O₂. (E) Three dimensional reconstruction of a “villi” from mature TS line 2014.06 using immunofluorescence images of nuclei visualized with Hoechst 33342. Virtual sections at the base (H), midpoint (G), and top (F) of the structure.
 All scale bars indicate 50 μ m.

Figure 3: Temporal Single Cell RNA Sequencing Of iPS To Trophoblast Differentiation

A. Experimental schematic of trophoblast differentiation experiment. HiPS cells were plated and allowed to adhere to culture dishes for 24 hours before addition of differentiation media. Cells were collected for single-cell RNA sequencing at indicated time points.
B,C. Dimensionality reduction for the most variable genes across all cells with Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection (UMAP) embedding of 9,821 single cell transcriptomes from three distinct media treatments with groupings based on (B) sample identity or (C) gene expression clusters calculated by k nearest neighbors using the Euclidean distance of the 30 first PCs which identifies 19 clusters. Cells from the BMP4 condition almost exclusively formed four clusters termed SC (Stromal cell indicated in blue). Cells from the BMP4+ IWP-2 condition were found predominantly in a group of five heterogeneous clusters termed BR (BMP responsive indicated in purple). iPS indicated in green and TS clusters are indicated in orange.

D. Plot of the proportion of cells from each differentiation condition which are present in the final k-means clusters TS, TS6, BR and SC. Color represents the differentiation condition scale in 3B BMP4+IWP2: purple, BMP4: blue, iPS: green, TS: orange. Cell proportions for all clusters can be found in supplemental table S1.

E-H. Single cell visualization of gene expression of selected markers of HiPS cells (E), placental stromal cells (F), and trophoblasts (G,H) on UMAP projections. Grey dots indicate cells with no expression and blue scale indicates normalized expression.

I. Dot plot displaying differentially upregulated marker genes for the most mature cell clusters from each treatment SC (BMP4), BR (BMP4+IWP2), and TS 6, TS (TS media) compared to the average expression of all other clusters. Size of dot indicates the percent of cells with expression and intensity of the blue indicates the average expression level.

Figure 4: Trophoblast Differentiations Are Enriched For First Trimester Placental Cell Types

A,B. Gene set enrichment analysis of most mature iPS-derived cell clusters (SC (Stromal Cell, BMP4), BR (BMP responsive, BMP4+IWP2), and TS 6, TS (Trophoblast stem cell media) to cell types identified in previous single cell sequencing of first trimester placenta. Cell types

C. Composite heatmap of normalized gene expression of the top unique markers of placental cell types of fetal origin identified in Vento-Tormo et al. 2018 and polar trophoderm markers (top 50) identified in Petropoulos et al. 2016.

Figure 5: Primed iPS Specification To Trophoblast Stem Cells Initiates With TFAP2A Rewiring Without Activation Of Naïve Stem Cell Programs

A. Dotplot displaying BMP signaling in each cellular cluster organized by the treatment identity of the majority cells. See table S3 for source data.

B. Dotplot displaying markers of naïve and primed human pluripotent stem cells for BMP4, BMP4 + IWP2, and TS cell differentiations by sample. See table S3 for source data.

C. STREAM pseudotime trajectory of HiPS differentiation for HiPS and TS D2 cells visualizing cells proportion along the smoothed pseudotime axis (orange represents TS, green represents HiPS). Nodes are labeled with numbers 0-4. Branches are defined as the cells between 2 nodes (Branch 1,4). Bottom: Top ranked (by STAT) genes with expression significantly correlated with the pseudotime transition of the branches. MEIS2, TFAP2A, and less differentiated TS d2 to more differentiated TSd2 (S0-S1) KRT18 (STAT 0.692). Ranks 2-4 for these branches is found in figure S4 C-D. Additional graphs showing the branch assignment with cells and a cell level representation of the pseudotime with the clusters Figure S9 and table S4.

Figure 6: STREAM Pseudotime Analysis Of Trophoblast Differentiations Reveals Upregulation Of Stromal Mesenchyme Upon BMP4 Treatment and Trophoderm Transcriptional Programming Upon TS Treatment.

A. STREAM pseudotime trajectory of HiPS differentiation including all samples highlighting the distribution of each previously described cell cluster along pseudotime.

B. Average gene expression of example genes which are significantly differentially expressed for each branch compared to other branches. S0 initial differentiation branch: 1284 significant genes, POU5F: p value = 1.032932e-297 by Kruskal-Wallis H-test. S4 branch dominated by BR

(BMP4+IWP2 cells): 538 significant genes, RAB3 p value = 0 by Kruskal–Wallis H-test. S2 branch. S2 branch dominated by SC (BMP4+ cells): 1395 significant genes, PITX2 p value = 0 by Kruskal–Wallis H-test and top ranked. S3 branch dominated by TS cells. 3855 significant genes, GATA3 p value = 0 by Kruskal–Wallis H-test and top ranked gene. The complete list of significant genes see Supplemental Table S5.

C. Upset plot of shared genes within significant Gene Ontology enrichment terms generated from the top 300 leaf genes for branch 1-3 (specification to TS). Gliogenesis p=7.92e-06, Leukocyte activation involved in immune response p=1.72e-05, Reproductive system development p=4.05e-05, Female pregnancy p=7.95e-05, Viral Process p=.0004, Blood Vessel Morphogenesis p=.003, Placenta Development p=.008

D. Gene expression of CTSB along the pseudotime trajectory. CTSB is a significant leaf gene for branch 1-3 that is annotated as associated with all GO processes listed in (6C).

Figure 7: Endogenous Retrovirus-derived Genes Participate In A Gene Regulatory Subnetwork Uniquely In TS Cells.

A. Dotplot of HERV expression in most mature cell clusters from each treatment and the HiPS cluster 1. Size of ball indicates the percent of cells expressing the gene and color represents the z-normalized expression value.

B. Cytoscape representation of the top transcription factor partners of ERVs detected in TS and SC. 164 TFs and 6 Targets. See Supplemental table S7.

C. Visual Representation of GO terms from most significant partners of ERVs shown in panel B (p<.0001). Specifics of programs and settings to obtain these results. Cytoscape 3.7.2, cluego v2.5.4, cluepedia version v1.5.4, go term fusion, levels 3-8, kappa .35, graph of highest significance within each group, input of 164 TFs from panel B supplemental table with analysis output and details of GO analysis includes all go terms off the

Figure 8: Coronavirus Associated Host Factors Are Expressed In iPS-derived TS Cells

Dotplot of Coronavirus associated host factor expression in the iPS-derived TS cell clusters TS and TS6. Size of ball indicates the percent of cells expressing the gene and color represents the average expression value.

A. Coronavirus associated host factors expressed in 0-10% of cells.

B. Coronavirus associated host factors expressed in >10% of cells.

Supplemental Tables

Table S1: Number of cells from each condition/day that are assigned to the cluster

Table S2: Differentially expressed genes in each cluster where a single cluster is compared to all other clusters

Table S3: Differentially expressed genes analyzed by pairwise comparisons of one cluster compared to another cluster

Table S4: Expression analysis of naive, primed and BMP signaling during differentiation

Table S5: Stream pseudotime analysis of transition and differentially expressed leaf genes for iPS to TSd2

730 Table S6: Stream pseudotime analysis of transition and differentially expressed leaf genes for
731 all cells
732 Table S7: ERV gene regulatory network and associated GO enrichment.
733 Table S8: Expression analysis of coronavirus associated factors.
734
735

Fig. 1: Derivation of trophoblast stem cell like (TS) cells from human pluripotent stem cells.

Figure 2: iPS-derived TS cells differentiate into syncytial cytotrophoblast, extra villous cytotrophoblasts and villi-like structures.

Figure 3: Temporal single Cell RNA Sequencing of iPS to trophoblast differentiation

Figure 4: Trophoblast differentiations are enriched for first trimester placental cell types.

Figure 5: Primed iPS specification to trophoblast stem cells initiates with TFAP2A rewiring without activation of naïve stem cell programs

Figure 6: STREAM pseudotime analysis of trophoblast differentiations reveals upregulation of stromal mesenchyme upon BMP4 treatment and trophectoderm transcriptional programming up TS treatment.

Figure 7: Endogenous retrovirus-derived genes participate in a gene regulatory subnetwork uniquely in TS cells.

Figure 8: Coronavirus associated host factors are expressed in iPS-derived TS cells

Supplemental Figures

Fig. S1: Differentiated TS cells lose expression of pluripotency markers while gaining expression of trophoblast specific markers.

(A-E) Immunofluorescent images of HiPS line LIBD7C6 stained for Hoechst 33342 (A), NANOG (B), and Sox2 (C), CGB (D), and in composite (E).

(F-J) Immunofluorescent images of HiPS line LIBD7C6 stained for Hoechst 33342 (F), TP63(G), and KI-67 (H), HLA-G (I), and in composite (J).

(K-N) Immunofluorescent images of TS line 2014.06 stained for Hoechst 33342 (K), NANOG(L), and Sox2 (M), and in composite (N).

(O-R) Immunofluorescent images of TS line 2014.06 stained for Hoechst 33342 (O), TP63 (P), KRT7 (Q), and in composite (R).

Fig. S2: iPS cell line characterization.

(A-C) Immunofluorescent images of HiPS line LIBD1C8 stained for Sox2 (A), NANOG (B), and TRA-1-60 (C).

(D-F) Immunofluorescent images of HiPS line 2014.06 stained for Sox2 (D), NANOG (E), and TRA-1-60 (F).

(G) Relative expression levels of pluripotency and germ layer specific markers in spontaneously differentiated cells of line 2014.06 normalized to their respective expression levels in undifferentiated HiPS of the same cell line determined by qPCR.

(H) Karyotype analysis of 2014.06

All scale bars 50 μ m.

Fig. S3: Tile Scan Confluent TS LIBD1C8 P20 demonstrating extensive syncytium

(A) Tile scan of confluent TS line LIBD1C8 passage 20 grown on Collagen IV and stained for Hoechst 33342 (blue), KI67 (green), and TJP1 (red).

Fig. S4: Single Cell RNAseq Quality Control.

(A) Boxplot of Mitochondrial Mapping rate per droplet in the final data set.

(B) Boxplot of number of detected genes per droplet in the final data set.

(C-D) Summary tables of cell number and percent composition by experimental sample (C) and cluster identity (D).

Fig. S6: Trophoblast differentiations are enriched for first trimester placental cell types.

(A,B) Gene set enrichment analysis of HiPS cell differentiations highlighting enrichment of cell clusters to cell types identified in first trimester placentas. Color and number in each square indicates the $-\log_{10}(p)$ Bonferroni Corrected hypergeometric test for enrichment of cell-specific genes in IPS-derived clusters and previous placental publications.

Fig. S7: Lineage specification and cellular cluster identity based on marker gene profiles.

- (A) Heatmap of detected high confidence markers for epiblast, primitive endoderm, and trophoblast from Stirparo et al. 2018.
- (B) Heatmap of trophoblast specific markers from Suryawanshi et al. 2018 including modified dotplot from their publication for primary Villous Cytotrophoblasts (VCT), Extravillous Trophoblasts (EVT), and Syncytial Trophoblasts (SCT).

Fig. S8: Developmental trajectory of HiPS and after two days of differentiation in TS media.

(A-B) Visualization of branch assignment using the first 3 SE components (A) and resulting subway map representation of the reconstructed pseudotime trajectory using HiPS and TS D2 cells samples (B).

(C-D) Averaged expression of significant transition genes along the pseudotime trajectory ordered left to right by rank (2-4) for branch S3-S0 (C) and S0-S1 (D).

(E) Averaged expression of selected primed pluripotency markers expressed along pseudotime.

A

Figure S9: PANDA network analysis reveals unique regulation of endogenous Retroviruses in TS cells.

(A) ERV48-1 connected network identified by PANDA in SC cells.

Methods

PSC culture

6-well plates were coated with reduced growth factor Cultrex (1mg/12 ml DMEM/F12) at 37°C for at least one hour. Human ES and iPS were maintained on coated plates in Stemflex media. Media was changed every 48hrs in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Cells were passaged in small clusters using Versene solution and a split ratio of 1:10-1:12. For cryopreservation, cells were suspended in PSC media and temporarily stored in a deep freezer at -80°C before being transferred to liquid nitrogen for long term storage.

Differentiations and Cell Maintenance

6-well plates were coated with reduced growth factor Cultrex (1mg/12 ml DMEM/F12) at 37°C for at least one hour. PSC were harvested in small clusters using Versene solution without centrifugation, seeded at a passage ratio of 1:12, and cultured in 2 mL of Stemflex medium. After 24 hours, cells were washed with DPBS and 2 mL of appropriate media was added to each differentiating well. For TS differentiation, TS medium [DMEM/F12 with Glutamax supplemented with 0.1 mM 2-mercaptoethanol, 0.2% FBS, 0.3% BSA, 1% ITS-X supplement, 1.5 µg/ml L-ascorbic acid, 50 ng/ml EGF, 2 µM CHIR99021, 0.5 µM A83-01, 1 µM SB431542, 0.8 mM VPA and 5 µM Y27632] was added to each well. For BMP4 based differentiations 10 ng/ml BMP4 and/or 2µM IWP2 was added to basal differentiation medium (DMEM/F12 with Glutamax supplemented with ITS and L-ascorbic acid 2-phosphate magnesium) was added to each well. Every 24 hours 2 mL of fresh medium was added to each well. Cells were collected on day 2, 4, and 6 for RNA sequencing. For the TS condition, after 6 days of differentiation cells were passaged using TrypLE express at a split ratio of 1:3 and plated on new Cultrex or col IV (5 ug/mL) coated plates. After the first passage, cells were fed every 48 hours and split at a ratio of 1:3-1:6 every 3-4 days. Mature TS cells between passages 10-20 were used for all experiments unless otherwise noted. Cells were cultured in humidified incubators 5% CO₂ and 20% O₂. For hypoxic cultures, O₂ levels were reduced to 5%. For cryopreservation, TS cells were suspended in Cell Banker 1 and temporarily stored in a deep freezer at -80°C before being transferred to liquid nitrogen for long term storage.

Immunofluorescence Staining

Cells were washed in Tris Buffered Saline (TBS), fixed with 4% Paraformaldehyde for ten minutes, and washed three times in TBS. Cells were then incubated in blocking solution (3% horse serum, 0.1% Triton-X in TBS) for one hour at room temperature before being incubated with primary antibodies in blocking solution overnight at 4°C. Cells were then rinsed twice and incubated with secondary antibodies in blocking solution for two hours at room temperature. After two washes in TBS cells were counterstained with Hoechst 33342 and rinsed twice in TBS. Cells were imaged using a Zeiss LSM770 or LSM780 confocal microscope. The brightness and/or contrast was globally adjusted for some images.

Single Cell sequencing by Dropseq

Dissociation of Cells for Dropseq

Human iPS cells were grown to 80-90% confluency. After washing cells with DPBS (Thermo Fisher Scientific 14190250) cells were incubated with Versene (Thermo Fisher Scientific

15040066) solution for approximately 10 minutes at 37 °C and gently washed up and down with a P1000 pipette to generate a single cell suspension. Cells were then diluted in Stemflex media and centrifuged at 200g for 4 min before being resuspended in 1 mL of 1X PBS, pH 7.4 (Gibco, # 10010023) with 0.01% BSA (Invitrogen, # AM2616) at the concentration of 100 cells/μL.

Droplet generation

Barcoded beads (Chemgenes, # Macosko-2011-10) were washed with 30 mL of ethanol (Sigma Aldrich, # E7023-500ML), then removed all ethanol after centrifugation at 1,000g for 1 minute. Washed beads were suspended in 30 mL of TE-TW (10 mM Tris pH8.0, 1 mM EDTA, 0.5% SDS) and spun down at 1,000g for 1 minute. TE-TW was discarded and re-suspended in 20 mL of TE-TW. 100 μm strainer (Corning, Cat# 352360) was used for size selection of beads. Beads were suspended as the concentration of 120 beads/μL in 1 mL of the lysis buffer. To generate droplets, cells, beads, and oil (BioRad, #186-4006) were loaded into the 125-μm microfluidic device after aquapel flush treatment (FlowJEM). The cells and barcoded beads suspension were flown at 2 mL/h each and at 13 mL/h for oil.

Droplet breakage, reverse transcription, and exonuclease I treatment

Droplets were collected into the 50 mL tubes and 30 mL of 6X SSC was added, then broken with 1 mL of perfluorooctanol (Sigma, # 370533). Collected beads were washed with 1 mL of 6X SSC twice and with 300 μL of RT buffer. On removing the RT buffer, reverse transcription mixture was added into the beads. To synthesize cDNA, beads in RT mix were incubated with rotation at room temperature for 30 minutes and 42 °C for 90 minutes. The reverse transcription mixture was prepared as in the reference, Macosko, E.Z. et. al., Cell 161, 1202-1214 (2015). Beads were washed once with 1 mL of TE-SDS, twice with 1 mL of TE-TW, and with 1 mL of 10 mM Tris pH 8.0. Exonuclease I treatment was performed to remove excess bead primers at 37 °C for 45 minutes with rotation followed by washing beads once with 1 mL of TE-SDS, twice with 1 mL of TE-TW, and with 1 mL of molecular grade water.

PCR amplification, clean-up with SPRI beads, and library preparation

Unique barcode STAMPs (Single-cell Transcriptomes Attached to MicroParticles) were resuspended in 1 mL H₂O, and loaded on a hemocytometer (Incyto, # DHC-N01). Aliquots of 3,000 beads in 24.6 μL of H₂O were amplified with 0.8 μM SMART PCR primer (IDT, 5'-AAG CAG TGG TAT CAA CGC AGA GT-3') and 2X KAPA HiFi Hotstart Ready Mix (Fisher Scientific, # KK2602) using the following PCR condition: (step 1) 95 °C for 3 min, (step 2) four cycles of: 98 °C for 20 sec, 65 °C for 45 sec, 72 °C for 3 min, (step 3) 10 cycles of: 98 °C for 20 sec, 67 °C for 20 s, 72 °C for 3 min, and (step 4) finally, 72 °C for 5 min. Purified cDNA with 0.6X SPRI beads were analyzed with High Sensitive DNA kit (Agilent, # 5067-4626), then tagmented and amplified using Nextera XT Library Preparation Kit (Illumina, # FC-131-1096) by manufacturer's manual for sequencing.

Sequencing

All libraries were checked its quality with Agilent High Sensitive DNA chips before sequencing. Each library was diluted at 3 nM for an Illumina HiSeq 3000. We used HiSeq SBS 50 cycle kits for sequence (paired-end): 21-bp for read 1 with Custom Read1 primer (IDT, 5'-

GCCTGTCCGCGGAAGCAGTGGTATCAACGCAGAGTAC-3'), 21-bp for read 2, and 8-bp for index 1.

Preprocessing of Drop-seq data

Raw sequencing data was preprocessed using the pipeline “Drop-seq Alignment Cookbook” v2.0.0 found at <https://github.com/broadinstitute/Drop-seq/releases/> and described in (Macosko et al., 2015). Briefly, paired-end reads were filtered in order to remove read pairs with any base with quality of less than 10 in both cellular and molecular barcodes. SMART adapters at 5' end and polyA tails at 3' end with 6 or more bp were removed from the second pair, and then aligned to the reference human (GRCh38) genome using HISAT2 v2.1.0 (Kim et al., 2015) with the default settings. Uniquely mapped reads were retained and grouped by cell barcode. UMI barcodes with a hamming distance = 1 were merged within each cell, and the number of transcripts of each gene was defined based on the total number of each distinct UMI sequence, for that gene, in a given cell.

Clustering and Differential Gene Expression analysis for Marker Genes

All downstream analysis for quality control, clustering, and differential expression were performed using Seurat (Stuart et al., 2019) v3.0 R package. Data was initially filtered to remove low quality cells and very low detected genes. We discarded cells with less than 1000 genes detected and with more than 20% of mitochondrial gene content. Genes expressed in less than 3 cells were also removed. Variance stabilizing and normalization was performed using SCTransform (Hafemeister and Satija, 2019) approach adjusting for library size and the percentage of mitochondrial genes in each cell. To cluster the cells, cell distances were defined with 30 first PCs using a graph-based approach implemented in Seurat, that briefly build a K-nearest neighbor (KNN) graph based on euclidean distance in PCA space, with subsequent refining of edge weights using Jacard similarity. Clusters were defined using Seurat default algorithm – a shared nearest neighbor (SNN) graph based on k-nearest neighbors with modularity optimization using original Louvain algorithm. Gene markers of cell clusters were defined using ROC analysis for only genes with at least 0.25 logFC average difference between the clusters. Graphic visualizations of clusters and gene expression were done using Seurat and ggplot2 in R.

Single-cell trajectory reconstruction

Reconstruction of cell differentiation trajectories for cell clusters was performed with STREAM (Single cell Trajectories Reconstruction, Exploration and Mapping) (Chen et al., 2019) Python package. The expression data of high quality cells (9,821 cells) was library size normalized, scaled, natural-log transformed and used as input for STREAM. Data dimension reduction was done with Spectral Embedding (SE) based on most variable genes found with LOESS fitting. Branches representing trajectory structure were learned based on 3 SE dimensions. Marker genes of each branch were defined by Leaf gene detection analysis implemented in the STREAM package. Initially, the average expression of each gene is calculated for all branches. Based on the average expressions, Z-scores are computed and genes are picked as candidates when greater than 1.5. Then a Kruskal–Wallis H-test is calculated for each candidate to test the difference of gene expression among branches. Finally, the Conover test for multiple

comparison is computed for the differentially expressed candidates (Kruskal-Wallis p-value < 0.01) between all branches, and genes with Conover p-value < 0.01 are picked as a Leaf gene for that branch. GO enrichment analysis of branch markers were performed for top 100 leaf genes using hypergeometric test with GOSTats v2.48.0 R package. Circos plot with GO terms was done using GOplot v1.0.2 R package.

Transition genes were found by performing transition gene analysis implemented in STREAM. The algorithm starts ordering cells based on their inferred pseudotime and splits them in two groups. One group contains 20% of cells closer to the pseudotime start point, and the other is composed of all remaining cells (80%). Gene average expressions are calculated for each group and genes with a log2 fold change greater than 0.25 between groups are picked as candidate genes. Then, Spearman's rank correlation is computed between inferred pseudotime and gene expression of the candidates. Genes with correlation coefficient above 0.4 are reported as transition genes.

Overrepresentation analysis was performed by using the algorithm MSET (Eisinger et al., 2013) implemented in R, using 10000 permutations. The list of transcription factors related to trophoblast differentiation used is described in (Krendl et al., 2017).

Clusters enrichment analysis for placental cell-specific genes.

To characterize the expression profiles of the 19 clusters detected in this work, we analyzed the overlap with cell-specific genes identified by previous single-cell studies. We used two sets of candidate genes. A set of 38 cell-specific gene lists (30 gene each) was drawn from the supplementary table 2 of (Vento-Tormo et al. 2018). These gene lists span both maternal (decidua and blood) and fetal tissues (placenta). Another set of 14 cell-specific gene lists was drawn from the supplementary table 1 of (Liu et al. 2018), which also span analogous tissues.

To profile the expression patterns of the 19 clusters detected in this work, we applied the Cell-Specific Expression Analysis (CSEA) as implemented in the pSI R package (Xu et al., 2014). This approach compares each profile with all the others and identifies genes expressed in one group but not in the others, calculates a score (specificity index, SI) for each gene and attributes a statistical level of significance (pSI). Here, we used the normalized expression matrix to compute cluster-level median gene expression for each gene, which defined 19 cluster profiles. Then, cluster profiles were used to compute SI and pSI for each gene, within each profile. Cluster-specific gene lists were obtained applying the statistical threshold, pSI < 0.05.

Finally, we tested whether cell-specific genes from previous studies are over-represented in our clusters. We used the hypergeometric test and applied the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons, considering all the tested gene lists [$\alpha = 0.05 / (19 \times (38+14)) = 5.1 \times 10^{-5}$].

PANDA regulatory networks

Gene regulatory networks were constructed using the pandaR v1.14.0 R package which integrates multiple types of data to infer direct interactions (edges) between TFs and target genes. PANDA initiates with a prior regulatory network that can be built by mapping TF binding sites to the genome, and refines this initial network integrating gene expression data of target genes and TF PPI data. The main idea behind the algorithm is that target genes from a given

TF are likely co-expressed, and TFs that interact with each other are more likely to regulate a similar group of target genes. These two assumptions are used to infer the edge weight of each TF-target interaction, and basically reflects the congruence between the regulatory profile of a TF with target gene co-expression. Iteratively the algorithm refine the initial network structure and infer a final consensus regulatory network.

A regulatory network was built for each cluster using as initial network a TF-motif binding map described in (Sonawane et al., 2017) and downloaded in (<https://sites.google.com/a/channing.harvard.edu/kimberlyglass/tools/resources>). Gene expression data was library size normalized, scaled, and natural-log transformed. Genes expressed in less than 10% of the cells of each cluster were filtered out. PPI network of TFs was built using STRING database v11.0 (downloaded from <https://string-db.org/>) and score interactions were divided by 1000 to initiate the PANDA. Edges with negative weights estimated by PANDA were discarded in order to explore only interactions with greater evidence. The relative importance of individual genes in the network topology was addressed with the betweenness centrality measure calculated using the lgraph v1.2.4 R package. For each cluster, the significance of betweenness values were calculated based on the betweenness probability distribution of 100 random networks constructed with the same number of edges of that cluster. Graphic visualization, gene clusterization, and GO enrichment analysis of gene clusters within networks were performed using Cytoscape v3.7.2 (Shannon et al., 2003) and ClueGO v2.5.4.ENRICHMENT/RANKING ANALYSIS (Bindea et al., 2009).

Software and Analysis:

Analysis pipelines are publicly deposited on Github:
<https://github.com/apuapaquola?tab=repositories>

Datasets:

Single cell RNA sequencing data is deposited at:

Key Reagents and Resources

Reagent or Resource Type	Name	Supplier	Product Number	Additional information
Antibody	anti-hCGb (mouse monoclonal)	Abcam	ab9582	1:100
Antibody	anti-HLAG (mouse monoclonal)	Abcam	ab52455	1:100
Antibody	anti-KI67 (rabbit polyclonal)	Abcam	ab15580	1:250
Antibody	anti-KRT7 (mouse monoclonal)	ThermoFisher Scientific	MA5-11986	1:1000
Antibody	anti-TJP1 (mouse monoclonal)	ThermoFisher Scientific	33-9100	1:100
Antibody	anti-TP63 (goat polyclonal)	Novus Biologicals	AF1916	1:100
Antibody	anti-VIM (rabbit monoclonal)	Abcam	ab92547	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-mouse IgG AF-488	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	715-545-151	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-mouse IgG Cy3	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	715-165-151	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-rabbit IgG AF-488	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	711-545-152	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-rabbit IgG Cy3	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	711-005-152	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-rabbit IgG AF-647	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	711-605-152	1:500
Antibody	Donkey anti-goat IgG Cy3	Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories	705-165-147	1:500
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	2-mercaptoethanol	ThermoFisher Scientific	21985023	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Bmp4	Peprtech	120-05-5ug	

Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Bovine Serum Albumin	Cell Signaling Technology	9998S	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Cell Banker 1 Cryopreservation Media	Amsbio	11888	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Collagen IV	Corning	354233	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Cultrex Reduced Growth Factor Basement Membrane Extract, PathClear	R&D Systems	3433-005-01	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	DMEM/F12, Glutamax supplement	ThermoFisher Scientific	10565018	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	DPBS, no calcium, no magnesium	ThermoFisher Scientific	14190250	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Epidermal Growth Factor	Peprtech	AF-100-15	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Fetal Bovine Serum	ThermoFisher Scientific	16140071	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Gelatin	Sigma-Aldrich	G1393-100mL	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Hoechst 33342	ThermoFisher Scientific	H3570	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Insulin-transferrin-selenium	Corning	25-800-CR	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	ITS-X	ThermoFisher Scientific	51500056	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	IWP2	BioGems	6866167-1mg	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	L-Ascorbic Acid	BioGems	2520691	

Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	L-ascorbic acid 2-phosphate magnesium	Sigma-Aldrich	A8960-5G	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	SB431542	BioGems	3014193	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	StemFlex Media	ThermoFisher Scientific	A3349401	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	TrypLE express	ThermoFisher Scientific	12604013	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Valproic Acid Sodium salt	BioGems	1066656	
Chemical, Peptide, or Recombinant Protein	Y-27632	BioGems	1293823	
Cell Line	2014.06 Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells	Lieber Institute	N/A	
Cell Line	CF-1 Mouse Embryonic Fibroblasts	ThermoFisher Scientific	A34181	
Cell Line	LIBD1C8 Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells	Sawada et al., 2020	N/A	Generated in lab
Cell Line	LIBD6C2 Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells	Sawada et al., 2020	N/A	Generated in lab
Cell Line	LIBD7C6 Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells	Sawada et al., 2020	N/A	Generated in lab
Cell Line	WA-01 (H1) Human Embryonic Stem Cells	Wicell	WB0197	

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