

1 Network Medicine Framework Shows Proximity of Polyphenol Targets and 2 Disease Proteins is Predictive of the Therapeutic Effects of Polyphenols

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15 16 **Abstract**

17
18 Polyphenols, natural products present in plant-based foods, play a protective role
19 against several complex diseases through their antioxidant activity and by diverse
20 molecular mechanisms. Here we developed a network medicine framework to uncover
21 the mechanistic roles of polyphenols on health by considering the molecular interactions
22 between polyphenol protein targets and proteins associated with diseases. We find that
23 the protein targets of polyphenols cluster in specific neighborhoods of the human
24 interactome, whose network proximity to disease proteins is predictive of the molecule's
25 known therapeutic effects. The methodology recovers known associations, such as the
26 effect of epigallocatechin 3-O-gallate on type 2 diabetes, and predicts that rosmarinic
27 acid (RA) has a direct impact on platelet function, representing a novel mechanism
28 through which it could affect cardiovascular health. We experimentally confirm that RA
29 inhibits platelet aggregation and alpha granule secretion through inhibition of protein
30 tyrosine phosphorylation, offering direct support for the predicted molecular mechanism.
31 Our framework represents a starting point for mechanistic interpretation of the health
32 effects underlying food-related compounds, allowing us to integrate into a predictive
33 framework knowledge on food metabolism, bioavailability, and drug interaction.

34 **Introduction**

35

36 Diet plays a defining role in human health. Indeed, while poor diet can significantly
37 increase the risk for coronary heart disease (CHD) and type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2D), a
38 healthy diet can play a protective role, even mitigating genetic risk for CHD¹.

39 Polyphenols are a class of compounds present in plant-based foods, from fruits to
40 vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans (e.g. coffee, cocoa), herbs, spices, tea, and wine, with
41 well documented protective role as antioxidants, which affect several diseases, from
42 cancer to T2D, cardiovascular, and neurodegenerative diseases^{2,3}. Previous efforts
43 profiled over 500 polyphenols in more than 400 foods^{4,5} and have documented the high
44 diversity of polyphenols to which humans are exposed through their diet, ranging from
45 flavonoids to phenolic acids, lignans, and stilbenes.

46 The underlying molecular mechanisms through which specific polyphenols exert
47 their beneficial effects on human health remain largely unexplored. From a mechanistic
48 perspective, dietary polyphenols are not engaged in endogenous metabolic processes
49 of anabolism and catabolism, but rather affect human health through their anti- or pro-
50 oxidant activity⁶, by binding to proteins and modulating their activity^{7,8}, interacting with
51 digestive enzymes⁹, and modulating gut microbiota growth^{10,11}. Yet, the variety of
52 experimental settings and the limited scope of studies that explore the molecular effects
53 of polyphenols have, to date, offered a range of often conflicting evidence. For example,
54 two clinical trials, both limited in terms of the number of subjects and the intervention
55 periods, resulted in conflicting conclusions about the beneficial effects of resveratrol on
56 glycemic control in T2D patients^{12,13}. We, therefore, need a framework to interpret the
57 evidence present in the literature, and to offer in-depth mechanistic predictions on the
58 molecular pathways responsible for the health implications of polyphenols present in
59 diet. Ultimately, these insights could help us provide evidence on causal diet-health
60 associations, guidelines of food consumption for different individuals, and help to
61 develop novel diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, which may lead to the synthesis of
62 novel drugs.

63 Here, we address this challenge by developing a network medicine framework to
64 capture the molecular interactions between polyphenols and their cellular binding

65 targets, unveiling their relationship to complex diseases. The developed framework is
66 based on the human interactome, a comprehensive subcellular network consisting of all
67 known physical interactions between human proteins, which has been validated
68 previously as a platform for understanding disease mechanisms^{14,15}, rational drug target
69 identification, and drug repurposing^{16,17}.

70 We find that the proteins to which polyphenols bind form identifiable
71 neighborhoods in the human interactome, allowing us to demonstrate that the proximity
72 between polyphenol targets and proteins associated with specific diseases is predictive
73 of the known therapeutic effects of polyphenols. Finally, we unveil the potential
74 therapeutic effects of rosmarinic acid (RA) on vascular diseases (V), predicting that its
75 mechanism of action is related to modulation of platelet function. We confirm this
76 prediction by experiments that indicate that RA modulates platelet function *in vitro* by
77 inhibiting tyrosine protein phosphorylation. Altogether, our results demonstrate that the
78 network-based relationship between disease proteins and polyphenol targets offers a
79 tool to systematically unveil the health effects of polyphenols.

80

81 **Results**

82

83 Polyphenol Targets Cluster in Specific Functional Neighborhoods of the Interactome

84

85 We mapped the targets of 65 polyphenols (see Methods) to the human
86 interactome, consisting of 17,651 proteins and 351,393 interactions (Fig 1a,b). We find
87 that 19 of the 65 polyphenols have only one protein target, while a few polyphenols
88 have an exceptional number of targets (Fig 1c). We computed the Jaccard Index (JI) of
89 the protein targets of each polyphenol pair, finding only a limited similarity of targets
90 among different polyphenols (average JI = 0.0206) (Supplementary Figure 1a). Even
91 though the average JI is small, it is still significantly higher ($Z = 147$, Supplementary
92 Figure 1b) than the JI expected if the polyphenol targets were randomly assigned from
93 the pool of all network proteins with degrees matching the original set. This finding
94 suggests that while each polyphenol targets a specific set of proteins, their targets are
95 confined to a common pool of proteins, likely determined by commonalities in the

96 polyphenol binding domains of the three-dimensional structure of the protein targets¹⁸.
97 Gene Ontology (GO) Enrichment Analysis recovers existing mechanisms⁸ and also
98 helps identify new processes related to polyphenol protein targets, such as post-
99 translation protein modifications, regulation, and xenobiotic metabolism (Fig 1d). The
100 enriched GO categories indicate that polyphenols modulate common regulatory
101 processes, but the low similarity in their protein targets, illustrated by the low average JI,
102 indicates that they target different processes within the same process.

103 We next asked whether the polyphenol targets cluster in specific regions of the
104 human interactome. We focused on polyphenols with more than two targets (n=46, Fig
105 2), and measured the size and significance of the largest connected component (LCC)
106 formed by the targets of each polyphenol. We found that 25 of the 46 polyphenols have
107 a larger LCC than expected by chance (Z-score > 1.95) (Fig 1e, Fig 2). In agreement
108 with experimental evidence documenting the effect of polyphenols on multiple
109 pathways¹⁹, we find that ten polyphenols have their targets organized in multiple
110 connected components of size > 2.

111 These results indicate that the targets of polyphenols modulate specific well
112 localized neighborhoods of the interactome (Fig 2, Supplementary Figure 1c). This
113 prompted us to explore if the interactome regions targeted by the polyphenols reside
114 within network neighborhoods associated with specific diseases, seeking a network-
115 based framework to unveil the molecular mechanism through which specific
116 polyphenols modulate health.

117

118 Proximity Between Polyphenol Targets and Disease Proteins Reveals their Therapeutic 119 Effects

120

121 Polyphenols can be viewed as drugs in that they bind to specific proteins, affecting their
122 ability to perform their normal functions. We, therefore, hypothesized that we can apply
123 the network-based framework used to predict the efficacy of drugs in specific
124 diseases^{16,17} to also predict the therapeutic effects of polyphenols. The closer the
125 targets of a polyphenol are to disease proteins, the more likely that the polyphenol will
126 affect the disease phenotype. We, therefore, calculated the network proximity between

127 polyphenol targets and proteins associated with 299 diseases using the closest
128 measure, d_c , representing the average shortest path length between each polyphenol
129 target and the nearest disease protein (see Methods). Consider for example (-)-
130 epigallocatechin 3-O-gallate (EGCG), a polyphenol abundant in green tea.
131 Epidemiological studies have found a positive relationship between green tea
132 consumption and reduced risk of T2D^{20,21}, and physiological and biochemical studies
133 have shown that EGCG presents glucose-lowering effects in both *in vitro* and *in vivo*
134 models^{22,23}. We identified 54 experimentally validated EGCG protein targets and
135 mapped them to the interactome, finding that the EGCG targets form an LCC of 17
136 proteins ($Z = 7.61$) (Fig 3a). We also computed the network-based distance between
137 EGCG targets and 83 proteins associated with T2D, finding that the two sets are
138 significantly proximal to each other. We ranked all 299 diseases based on the network
139 proximity to the EGCG targets in order to determine whether we can recover the 82
140 diseases in which EGCG has known therapeutic effects according to the CTD database.
141 By this analysis, we were able to recover 15 previously known therapeutic associations
142 among the top 20 ranked diseases (Table 1), confirming that network-proximity can
143 discriminate between known and unknown disease associations for polyphenols, as
144 previously confirmed among drugs^{16,17}.

145 We expanded these methods to all polyphenol-disease pairs, to predict diseases
146 for which specific polyphenols might have therapeutic effects. For this analysis, we
147 grouped all 19,435 polyphenol-disease associations between 65 polyphenols and 299
148 diseases into known (1,525) and unknown (17,910) associations. The known
149 polyphenol-disease set was retrieved from CTD, which is limited to manually curated
150 associations for which there is literature-based evidence. For each polyphenol, we
151 tested how well network proximity discriminates between the known and unknown sets
152 by evaluating the area under the Receiving Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve
153 (AUC). For EGCG, network proximity offers good discriminative power (AUC = 0.78, CI:
154 0.70 - 0.86) between diseases with known and unknown therapeutic associations (Table
155 1). We find that network proximity (d_c) offers predictive power with an AUC > 0.7 for 31
156 polyphenols (Fig 3b). The methodology recovers many associations well documented in
157 the literature, like the beneficial effects of umbelliferone on colonrectal neoplasms^{24,25}.

158 In Table 2 we summarize the top 10 polyphenols for which the network medicine
159 framework offers the best predictive power of therapeutic effects, limiting the entries to
160 predictive performance of AUC > 0.6 and performance over top predictions with
161 precision > 0.6. Given the lack of data on true negative examples, we considered
162 unknown associations as negative cases, observing the same trend when we used an
163 alternative performance metric that does not require true negative labels (i.e. AUC of
164 the Precision-Recall curve) (Supplementary Figure 2).

165 Finally, we performed multiple robustness checks to exclude the role of potential
166 biases in the input data. To test if the predictions are biased by the set of known
167 associations retrieved from CTD, we randomly selected 100 papers from PubMed
168 containing MeSH terms that tag EGCG to diseases. We manually curated the evidence
169 for EGCG's therapeutic effects for the diseases discussed in the published papers,
170 excluding reviews and non-English language publications. The dataset was processed
171 to include implicit associations (see Methods), resulting in a total of 113 diseases
172 associated with EGCG, of which 58 overlap with the associations reported by CTD (Fig
173 3c). We observed that the predictive power of network proximity was unaffected by
174 whether we considered the annotations from CTD, the manually curated list, or the
175 union of both (Fig 3d). To test the role of potential biases in the interactome, we
176 repeated our analysis using only high-quality polyphenol-protein interactions retrieved
177 from ligand-protein 3D resolved structures (Supplementary Figure 1d) and a subset of
178 the interactome derived from an unbiased high-throughput screening (Supplementary
179 Figure 1f). We find that the predictive power was largely unchanged, indicating that the
180 literature bias in the interactome does not affect our findings. Finally, we re-tested the
181 predictive performance by considering not only the therapeutic polyphenol-disease
182 associations, but also the marker/mechanism ones - another type of curated association
183 available in CTD - finding that the predictive power remains largely unchanged
184 (Supplementary Notes, Supplementary Figure 3).

185

186 Network Proximity Predicts Gene Expression Perturbation Induced by Polyphenols

187

188 To validate that network proximity reflects biological activity of polyphenols observed in
189 experimental data, we retrieved expression perturbation signatures from the
190 Connectivity Map database²⁶ for the treatment of the breast cancer MCF7 cell line with
191 21 polyphenols (Supplementary Table 1, Supplementary Figure 4). We investigated the
192 relationship between the extent to which polyphenols perturb the expression of disease
193 genes, the network proximity between the polyphenol targets and disease proteins, and
194 their known therapeutic effects (Fig 4a). For example, we observe different perturbation
195 profiles for gene pools associated with different diseases: for treatment with genistein (1
196 μM , 6 hours) we observe 10 skin disease genes with perturbation score > 2 , while we
197 observe only one highly perturbed cerebrovascular disorder gene (Fig 4b). Indeed,
198 network proximity indicates that skin disease is closer to the genistein targets than
199 cerebrovascular disorder, suggesting a relationship between network proximity, gene
200 expression perturbation, and the therapeutic effects of the polyphenol (Fig 4a). To test
201 this hypothesis, we computed an enrichment score that measures the
202 overrepresentation of disease genes among the most perturbed genes (see Methods),
203 finding 13 diseases that have their genes significantly enriched among the most
204 deregulated genes by genistein, of which 4 have known therapeutic associations. We
205 find that these four diseases are significantly closer to the genistein targets than the
206 nine diseases with unknown therapeutic associations (Fig 4c). We observed a similar
207 trend for treatments with other polyphenols, whether we use the same (1 μM , Fig 4c) or
208 different (100nM to 10 μM , Supplementary Figure 5) concentrations. This result suggests
209 that changes in gene expression caused by a polyphenol are indicative of its therapeutic
210 effects, but only if the observed expression change is limited to proteins proximal to the
211 polyphenol targets (Fig 4a).

212 Consequently, network proximity should also be predictive of the overall gene
213 expression perturbation caused by a polyphenol on the genes of a given disease. To
214 test this hypothesis, in each experimental combination defined by the polyphenol type
215 and its concentration, we evaluated the maximum perturbation among genes for each
216 disease. We then compared the magnitude of the observed perturbation between
217 diseases that were proximal ($d_c < 25^{\text{th}}$ percentile, $Z_{d_c} < -0.5$) or distal ($d_c > 75^{\text{th}}$
218 percentile, $Z_{d_c} > -0.5$) to the polyphenol targets. Figures 5a-b and Supplementary Figure

219 6 show the results for the genistein treatment (1 μ M, 6 hours), indicating that diseases
220 proximal to the polyphenol targets show higher maximum perturbation values than distal
221 diseases. The same trend is observed for other polyphenols when we use different d_c
222 and Z_{d_c} thresholds for defining proximal and distant diseases (Figs 5b, Supplementary
223 Figures 6-9), confirming that the impact of a polyphenol on cellular signaling pathways
224 is localized in the network space, being greater in the vicinity of the polyphenol targets
225 compared to neighborhoods remote from these targets. We also considered gene
226 expression perturbations in the network vicinity of the polyphenol targets, regardless of
227 whether the proteins were disease proteins or not, observing higher perturbation scores
228 for proximal proteins in 12 out of 21 polyphenols tested at 10 μ M (Supplementary Figure
229 10). Finally, we find that the enrichment score of perturbed genes among disease genes
230 is not as predictive of the polyphenol therapeutic effects as network proximity
231 (Supplementary Figure 11).

232 Altogether these results indicate that network proximity offers a mechanistic
233 interpretation for the gene expression perturbations induced by polyphenols on disease
234 genes. They also show that network proximity can indicate when gene expression
235 perturbations result in therapeutic effects, suggesting that future studies could integrate
236 gene expression (whenever available) with network proximity as they aim to more
237 accurately prioritize polyphenol-disease associations.

238

239 Experimental Evidence Confirms that Rosmarinic Acid Modulates Platelet Function

240

241 To demonstrate how the network-based framework can facilitate the mechanistic
242 interpretation of the therapeutic effects of selected polyphenols, we next focus on
243 vascular diseases (V). Of 65 polyphenols evaluated in this study, we found 27 to have
244 associations to V, as their targets were within the V network neighborhood
245 (Supplementary Table 3). We, therefore, inspected the targets of 15 of the 27
246 polyphenols with 10 or less targets. The network analysis identified direct links between
247 biological processes related to vascular health and the targets of three polyphenols:
248 gallic acid, rosmarinic acid, and 1,4-naphthoquinone (Supplementary Figure 12,
249 Supplementary Notes). The network neighborhood containing the targets of these

250 polyphenols suggests that gallic acid activity involves thrombus dissolution processes,
251 rosmarinic acid acts on platelet activation and antioxidant pathways through FYN and its
252 neighbors, and 1,4-naphthoquinone acts on signaling pathways of vascular cells
253 through MAP2K1 activity (Supplementary Figure 12, Supplementary Notes).

254 To validate the developed framework, we set out to obtain direct experimental
255 evidence of the predicted mechanistic role of rosmarinic acid (RA) in V. The RA targets
256 are in close proximity to proteins related to platelet function, forming the RA-V-platelet
257 module: a connected component formed by the RA target FYN and the V proteins
258 associated with platelet function PDE4D, CD36, and APP (Fig 6a). We, therefore, asked
259 whether RA influenced platelet activation *in vitro*. As platelets can be stimulated through
260 different activation pathways, RA effects can, in principle, occur in any of them. To test
261 these different possibilities, we pretreated platelets with RA and then activated with: 1)
262 glycoprotein VI by collagen or collagen-related peptide (CRP/CRPXL); 2) protease-
263 activated receptors-1,4 by thrombin receptor activator peptide-6 (TRAP-6); 3)
264 prostanoid thromboxane receptor by the thromboxane A₂ analogue (U46619); and 4)
265 P2Y_{1/12} receptor by adenosine diphosphate (ADP)²⁷. When we compared the network
266 distance between each stimulant receptor and the RA-V-platelet module (Fig 6a), we
267 observed that the receptors for CRP/CRPXL, TRAP-6, and U46619 are closer than
268 random expectation, while the receptor for ADP is more distant (Fig 6b). We expected
269 that platelets would be most affected by RA when treated with stimulants whose
270 receptors are most proximal to the RA-V-platelet module, i.e., CRP/CRPXL, TRAP-6,
271 and U46619, and as a control, we expect no effect for the distant ADP receptor. The
272 experiments confirm this prediction: RA inhibits collagen-mediated platelet aggregation
273 (Fig 6c) and impairs dense granule secretion induced by CRPXL, TRAP-6, and U46619
274 (Supplementary Figure 13). RA-treated platelets also displayed dampened alpha-
275 granule secretion (Fig 6d) and integrin α IIb β 3 activation (Supplementary Figure 13) in
276 response to U46619. As expected, RA did not affect platelet function when we used an
277 agonist whose receptor is distant from the RA-V-module, i.e., ADP. These findings
278 suggest that RA impairs basic hallmarks of platelet activation via strong network effects,
279 supporting our hypothesis that the proximity between RA targets and the neighborhood
280 associated with platelet function (Fig 6a) could in part explain RA's impact on V.

281 We next searched to clarify the molecular mechanisms involved in the impact of
282 RA on platelets. Given that platelet activation is coordinated by several kinases, we
283 hypothesized that RA inhibits platelet function by blocking agonist-induced protein
284 tyrosine phosphorylation. We observed that RA-treated platelets demonstrated a dose-
285 dependent reduction in total tyrosine phosphorylation in response to CRPXL, TRAP-6
286 and U46619 (Fig 6e). Given that RA caused a substantial decrease in phosphorylation
287 of proteins with atomic mass between 50-60 KDa (Fig 6e), we hypothesized that RA
288 may reduce phosphorylation of FYN (59 KDa), or other similarly sized members of the
289 same protein family (*i.e.* src family kinases, SFKs). To test this, we measured the level
290 of phosphorylation within the activation domain (amino acid 416) of SFKs, finding that
291 RA reduced collagen induced phosphorylation of FYN as well as basal tyrosine
292 phosphorylation of SFKs (Fig 6f). This indicates that RA perturbs the phospho-signaling
293 networks that regulate platelet response to extracellular stimuli.

294 Altogether, these findings support our prediction that RA modulates platelet
295 activation and function. It also supports the observation that its mechanism of action
296 involves reduction of phosphorylation at the activation domain of the protein-tyrosine
297 kinase FYN (Fig 6a) and the inhibition of general tyrosine phosphorylation. Finally, while
298 polyphenols are usually associated to their antioxidant function, here we illustrate
299 another mechanistic pathway through which they could benefit health.

300

301 **Discussion**

302

303 Here, we proposed a network-based framework to predict the therapeutic effects of
304 dietary polyphenols in human diseases. We find that polyphenol protein targets cluster
305 in specific functional neighborhoods of the interactome, and we show that the network
306 proximity between polyphenol targets and disease proteins is predictive of the
307 therapeutic effects of polyphenols. We demonstrate that diseases whose proteins are
308 proximal to polyphenol targets tend to have significant changes in gene expression in
309 cell lines treated with the respective polyphenol, while such changes are absent for
310 diseases whose proteins are distal to polyphenol targets. Finally, we find that the
311 network neighborhood around the RA targets and vascular disease proteins are related

312 to platelet function. We validate this mechanistic prediction by showing that RA
313 modulates platelet function through inhibition of protein tyrosine phosphorylation. These
314 observations suggest a role of RA on prevention of vascular diseases by inhibiting
315 platelet activation and aggregation.

316 The observed results also suggest multiple avenues through which our ability to
317 understand the role of polyphenols could be improved. First, some of the known health
318 benefits of polyphenols might be caused not only by the native molecules, but also by
319 their metabolic byproducts^{28,29}. We, however, lack data about colonic degradation, liver
320 metabolism, bioavailability, and interaction with proteins of specific polyphenols or their
321 metabolic byproducts. Future experimental data on protein interactions with polyphenol
322 byproducts and conjugates can be incorporated in the proposed framework, further
323 improving the accuracy of our predictions. The lack of this data does not invalidate the
324 findings presented here, since previous studies report the presence of unmetabolized
325 polyphenols in blood³⁰⁻³²; and it has been hypothesized that, in some instances,
326 deconjugation of liver metabolites occurs in specific tissues or cells³³⁻³⁵. Therefore, the
327 lack of data for specific polyphenols and the fact that other mechanisms exist through
328 which they can affect health (e.g. antioxidant activity, microbiota regulation) explain why
329 this methodology might still miss a few known relationships between polyphenols and
330 diseases. Second, considering that several experimental studies of polyphenol
331 bioefficacy have been observed in *in vitro* and *in vivo* models, the proposed framework
332 might help us interpret literature evidence, possibly even allowing us to exclude
333 chemical candidates when considering the health benefits provided by a given food in
334 epidemiological association studies.

335 Our assumption that network proximity recovers therapeutic associations is
336 based on its predictive performance on a ground truth dataset for observed therapeutic
337 effects and also relies on previous observations about the effect of drugs on
338 diseases^{16,17,36}. While the proposed methodology offers a powerful prioritization tool to
339 guide future research, the real effect of polyphenols on diseases might still be negative,
340 given other unmet factors such as dosage, comorbidities, and drug interactions, which
341 can only be ruled out by pre-clinical and clinical studies. Gene expression perturbation
342 profiles, such as the ones provided by the Connectivity map, can also be integrated with

343 network proximity to further highlight potential beneficial or harmful effects of chemical
344 compounds^{37,38}.

345 The low bioavailability of some polyphenols in food might still present challenges
346 when considering the therapeutic utility of these molecules. However, 48 of the 65
347 polyphenols we explored here are predicted to have high gastrointestinal absorption
348 (Supplementary Table 2) and different methodologies are available to increase
349 bioavailability of natural compounds^{39,40}. Additionally, in the same way that the
350 polyphenol phlorizin led to the discovery of new strategies for disease treatment
351 resulting in the development of new compounds with higher efficacy⁴¹, we believe that
352 the present methodology can help us identify polyphenol-based candidates for drug
353 development.

354 The methodology introduced here offers a foundation for the mechanistic
355 interpretation of alternative pathways through which polyphenols can affect health, e.g.,
356 the combined effect of different polyphenols^{36,42} and their interaction with drugs⁴³. To
357 address such synergistic effects, we need ground-truth data on these aspects. The
358 developed methodology can be applied to other food-related chemicals, providing a
359 framework by which to understand their health effects. Future research may help us
360 also account for the way that food-related chemicals affect endogenous metabolic
361 reactions, impacting not only signaling pathways, but also catabolic and anabolic
362 processes. Finally, the methodology provides a framework to interpret and find causal
363 support for associations identified in observational studies. Taken together, the
364 proposed network-based framework has the potential to reveal systematically the
365 mechanism of action underlying the health benefits of polyphenols, offering a logical,
366 rational strategy for mechanism-based drug development of food-based compounds.

367

368 **Methods**

369

370 Building the Interactome

371

372 The human interactome was assembled from 16 databases containing different types of
373 protein-protein interactions (PPIs): 1) binary PPIs tested by high-throughput yeast-two-

374 hybrid (Y2H) experiments⁴⁴; 2) kinase-substrate interactions from literature-derived low-
375 throughput and high-throughput experiments from KinomeNetworkX⁴⁵, Human Protein
376 Resource Database (HPRD)⁴⁶, and PhosphositePlus⁴⁷; 3) carefully literature-curated
377 PPIs identified by affinity purification followed by mass spectrometry (AP-MS), and from
378 literature-derived low-throughput experiments from InWeb⁴⁸, BioGRID⁴⁹, PINA⁵⁰,
379 HPRD⁵¹, MINT⁵², IntAct⁵², and InnateDB⁵³; 4) high-quality PPIs from three-dimensional
380 (3D) protein structures reported in Instruct⁵⁴, Interactome3D⁵⁵, and INSIDER⁵⁶; 5)
381 signaling networks from literature-derived low-throughput experiments as annotated in
382 SignaLink2.0⁵⁷; and 6) protein complex from BioPlex2.0⁵⁸. The genes were mapped to
383 their Entrez ID based on the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)
384 database as well as their official gene symbols. The resulting interactome includes
385 351,444 protein-protein interactions (PPIs) connecting 17,706 unique proteins
386 (Supplementary Data 1). The largest connected component has 351,393 PPIs and
387 17,651 proteins.

388

389 Polyphenols, Polyphenol Targets, and Disease Proteins

390

391 We retrieved 759 polyphenols from the PhenolExplorer database⁴. The database lists
392 polyphenols with food composition data or profiled in biofluids after interventions with
393 polyphenol-rich diets. For our analysis, we only considered polyphenols that: 1) could
394 be mapped in PubChem IDs, 2) were listed in the Comparative Toxicogenomics (CTD)
395 database⁵⁹ as having therapeutic effects on human diseases, and 3) had protein-
396 binding information present in the STITCH database⁶⁰ with experimental evidence (Fig
397 1a). After these steps, we considered a final list of 65 polyphenols, for which 598 protein
398 targets were retrieved from STITCH (Supplementary Table 1). We considered 3,173
399 disease proteins corresponding to 299 diseases retrieved from Menche *et al* (2015)¹⁵.
400 Gene ontology enrichment analysis of protein targets was performed using the
401 Bioconductor package clusterProfiler with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ and
402 Benjamini-Hochberg multiple testing correction with $q < 0.05$.

403

404 Polyphenol Disease Associations

405
406 We retrieved the polyphenol-disease associations from the Comparative
407 Toxicogenomics Database (CTD). We considered only manually curated associations
408 labeled as therapeutic. By considering the hierarchical structure of diseases along the
409 MeSH tree, we expanded explicit polyphenol-disease associations to include also
410 implicit associations. This procedure was performed by propagating associations in the
411 lower branches of the MeSH tree to consider diseases in the higher levels of the same
412 tree branch. For example, a polyphenol associated with heart diseases would also be
413 associated with the more general category of cardiovascular diseases. By performing
414 this expansion, we obtained a final list of 1,525 known associations between the 65
415 polyphenols and the 299 diseases considered in this study.

416

417 Network Proximity Between Polyphenol Targets and Disease Proteins

418

419 The proximity between a disease and a polyphenol was evaluated using a distance
420 metric that takes into account the shortest path lengths between polyphenol targets and
421 disease proteins¹⁶. Given S , the set of disease proteins, T , the set of polyphenol targets,
422 and $d(s, t)$, the shortest path length between nodes s and t in the network, we define:

423

$$424 \quad d_c(S, T) = \frac{1}{|T|} \sum_{t \in T} \min_{s \in S} d(s, t) \quad (1)$$

425 We also calculated a relative distance metric (Z_{d_c}) that compares the absolute distance
426 $d_c(S, T)$ between a disease and a polyphenol with a reference distribution describing the
427 random expectation. The reference distribution corresponds to the expected distances
428 between two randomly selected groups of proteins matching the size and degrees of the
429 original disease proteins and polyphenol targets in the network. It was generated by
430 calculating the proximity between these two randomly selected groups across 1,000
431 iterations. The mean $\mu_{d(S,T)}$ and standard deviation $\sigma_{d(S,T)}$ of the reference distribution
432 were used to convert the absolute distance d_c into the relative distance Z_{d_c} , defined as:

433

$$434 \quad Z_{d_c} = \frac{d_c - \mu_{d(S,T)}}{\sigma_{d(S,T)}} \quad (2)$$

435

436 We performed a degree-preserving random selection, but due to the scale-free nature
437 of the human interactome, we avoid repeatedly choosing the same (high degree) nodes
438 by using a binning approach in which nodes within a certain degree interval were
439 grouped together such that there were at least 100 nodes in the bin. The
440 Supplementary Data 2 reports the proximity scores d_c and Z_{d_c} for all pairs of diseases
441 and polyphenols.

442

443 Area Under ROC Curve Analysis

444

445 For each polyphenol, we used AUC to evaluate how well the network proximity
446 distinguishes diseases with known therapeutic associations from all of the others of the
447 set of 299 diseases. The set of known associations (therapeutic) retrieved from CTD
448 were used as positive instances, all unknown associations were defined as negative
449 instances, and the area under the ROC curve was computed using the implementation
450 in the Scikit-learn Python package. Furthermore, we calculated 95% confidence
451 intervals using the bootstrap technique with 2,000 resamplings with sample sizes of 150
452 each. Considering that AUC provides an overall performance, we also searched for a
453 metric to evaluate the top ranking predictions. For this analysis, we calculated the
454 precision of the top 10 predictions, considering only the polyphenol-disease
455 associations with relative distance $Z_{d_c} < -0.5^{16}$.

456

457 Analysis of Network Proximity and Gene Expression Deregulation

458

459 We retrieved perturbation signatures from the Connectivity Map database
460 (<https://clue.io/>) for the MCF7 cell line after treatment with 21 polyphenols. These
461 signatures reflect the perturbation of the gene expression profile caused by the
462 treatment with that particular polyphenol relative to a reference population, which
463 comprises all other treatments in the same experimental plate²⁶. For polyphenols having
464 more than one experimental instance (time of exposure, cell line, dose), we selected the
465 one with highest `distil_cc_q75` value (75th quantile of pairwise spearman correlations in

466 landmark genes, https://clue.io/connectopedia/perturbagen_types_and_controls). We
467 performed Gene Set Enrichment Analysis⁶¹ to evaluate the enrichment of disease
468 genes among the top deregulated genes in the perturbation profiles. This analysis offers
469 Enrichment Scores (ES) that have small values when genes are randomly distributed
470 among the ordered list of expression values and high values when they are
471 concentrated at the top or bottom of the list. The ES significance is calculated by
472 creating 1,000 random selection of gene sets with the same size as the original set and
473 calculating an empirical p-value by considering the proportion of random sets resulting
474 in ES smaller than the original case. The p-values were adjusted for multiple testing
475 using the Benjamini-Hochberg method. The network proximity d_c of disease proteins
476 and polyphenol targets for diseases with significant ES were compared according to
477 their therapeutic and unknown-therapeutic associations using the Student's t-test. The
478 relevant code for calculating the network proximity, AUCs, and enrichment scores can
479 be found on <https://github.com/italodovalle/polyphenols>.

480

481 Platelet Isolation

482

483 Human blood collection was performed as previously described in accordance with the
484 Declaration of Helsinki and ethics regulations with Institutional Review Board approval
485 from Brigham and Women's Hospital (P001526). Healthy volunteers did not ingest
486 known platelet inhibitors for at least 10 days prior. Citrated whole blood underwent
487 centrifugation with a slow brake (177 x g, 20 minutes), and the PRP fraction was
488 acquired for subsequent experiments. For washed platelets, PRP was incubated with 1
489 μ M prostaglandin E₁ (Sigma, P5515) and immediately underwent centrifugation with a
490 slow brake (1000 x g, 5 minutes). Platelet-poor plasma was aspirated, and pellets
491 resuspended in platelet resuspension buffer (PRB; 10 mM Hepes, 140 mM NaCl, 3 mM
492 KCl, 0.5 mM MgCl₂, 5 mM NaHCO₃, 10 mM glucose, pH 7.4).

493

494 Platelet Aggregometry

495

496 Platelet aggregation was measured by turbidimetric aggregometry as previously
497 described⁶². Briefly, PRP was pretreated with RA for 1 hour before adding 250 μ L to
498 siliconized glass cuvettes containing magnetic stir bars. Samples were placed in
499 Chrono-Log[®] Model 700 Aggregometers before the addition of various platelet agonists.
500 Platelet aggregation was monitored for 6 minutes at 37°C with a stir speed of 1000 rpm
501 and the maximum extend of aggregation recorded using AGGRO/LINK[®]8 software. In
502 some cases, dense granule release was simultaneously recorded by supplementing
503 samples with Chrono-Lume[®] (Chrono-Log[®], 395) according to the manufacturer's
504 instructions.

505

506 Platelet Alpha Granule Secretion and Integrin $\alpha_{IIb}\beta_3$ Activation

507

508 Changes in platelet surface expression of P-selectin (CD62P) or binding of Alexa
509 Fluor[™] 488-conjugated fibrinogen were used to assess alpha granule secretion and
510 integrin $\alpha_{IIb}\beta_3$ activation, respectively. First, PRP was pre-incubated with RA for 1 hour,
511 followed by stimulation with various platelet agonists under static conditions at 37°C for
512 20 minutes. Samples were then incubated with APC-conjugated anti-human CD62P
513 antibodies (BioLegend[®], 304910) and 100 μ g/mL Alexa Fluor[™] 488-Fibrinogen (Thermo
514 Scientific[™], F13191) for 20 minutes before fixation in 2% [v/v] paraformaldehyde
515 (Thermo Scientific[™], AAJ19945K2). Fifty thousand platelets were processed per
516 sample using a Cytex[™] Aurora spectral flow cytometer. Percent-positive cells were
517 determined by gating on fluorescence intensity compared to unstimulated samples.

518

519 Platelet Cytotoxicity

520

521 Cytotoxicity were tested by measuring lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) release by
522 permeabilized platelets into the supernatant⁶³. Briefly, washed platelets were treated
523 with various concentrations of RA for 1 hour, before isolating supernatants via
524 centrifugation (15,000 x g, 5 min). A Pierce LDH Activity Kit (Thermo Scientific[™],
525 88953) was then used to assess supernatant levels of LDH.

526

527 Immunoprecipitation and Western blot

528

529 Washed platelets were pre-treated with RA for 1 hour, followed by a 15 minute
530 treatment with Eptifibatide (50 μ M). Platelets were then stimulated with various agonists
531 for 5 minutes under stirring conditions (1000 rpm, 37°C). Platelets were lysed on ice
532 with RIPA Lysis Buffer System[®] (Santa Cruz[®], sc-24948) and supernatants clarified via
533 centrifugation (15,000 x g, 10 min, 4°C). For immunoprecipitation of FYN, lysates were
534 first precleared of IgG by incubating with Protein A agarose beads (Cell Signaling
535 Technologies, 9863S) for 30 minutes at 4°C, before isolation of the supernatant via
536 centrifugation (15,000 x g, 10 min, 4°C). Supernatants were incubated with anti-FYN
537 antibodies (Abcam, 2A10) overnight at 4°C before incubation with Protein A beads for 1
538 hour. Beads were then washed 5 times with NP-40 lysis buffer (144 mM Tris, 518 mM
539 NaCl, 6 mM EDTA, 12 mM Na₂VO₃, 33.3% [v/v] NP-40, Halt[™] protease inhibitor
540 cocktail (Thermo, 78429)).

541 For Western Blot analysis, total cell lysates or immunoprecipitated FYN were
542 reduced with Laemmli Sample Buffer (Bio-Rad, 1610737) and proteins separated by
543 molecular weight in PROTEAN TGX[™] precast gels (Bio-Rad, 4561084). Proteins were
544 transferred to PVDF membranes (Bio-Rad, 1620174) and probed with either 4G10
545 (Millipore, 05-321), a primary antibody clone that recognizes phosphorylated tyrosine
546 residues, or primary antibodies that probe for the site-specific phosphorylation of src
547 family kinases (SFks, p-Tyr416) within their activation loop. Membranes were incubated
548 with horseradish peroxidase-conjugated secondary antibodies (Cell Signaling
549 Technologies, 7074S) to catalyze an electrochemiluminescent reaction (Thermo
550 Scientific[™], PI32109). Membranes were visualized using a Bio-Rad ChemiDoc Imaging
551 System and densitometric analysis of protein lanes conducted using ImageJ (NIH,
552 Version 1.52a).

553

554 **Author Contributions**

555

556 I.F.V and A.L.B designed the study. I.F.V. performed all computational analyses. H.G.R,
557 M.W.M., E.B., and J.L designed and performed experimental validation. J.L. guided

558 I.F.V. on validation case studies. S.M and D.B guided I.F.V for data interpretation and
559 curation of disease associations obtained from literature. I.F.V and A.L.B wrote the
560 paper with input from all authors. All authors read and approved the manuscript.

561

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563

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568 Interactome, and Alice Grishchenko for help with data visualization.

569

570 **Declaration of Interests**

571

572 J.L. and A.L.B are co-scientific founder of Scipher Medicine, Inc., which applies network
573 medicine strategies to biomarker development and personalized drug selection. A.L.B is
574 the founder of Nomix Inc. and Foodome, Inc. that apply data science to health; I.F.V is a
575 scientific consultant for Foodome, Inc.

576

577 **Data Availability**

578

579 The authors declare that all data supporting the findings of this study are available at
580 <https://github.com/italodovalle/polyphenols> and within the paper and its supplementary
581 information files.

582

583 **Code Availability**

584

585 Computer code is available at <https://github.com/italodovalle/polyphenols>

586

587

588 **Table 1 – Top 20 Predicted Therapeutic Associations Between EGCG and Human**
 589 **Diseases.** Diseases were ordered according to the network distance (d_c) of their
 590 proteins to EGCG targets and diseases with relative distance $Z_{dc} > -0.5$ were removed.
 591 References reported in CTD for curated ‘therapeutic associations’ are shown.
 592

Disease	Distance d_c	Significance Z_{dc}	Known Therapeutic Effect (References)
nervous system diseases	1.13	-1.72	64,65
nutritional and metabolic diseases	1.25	-1.45	23
metabolic diseases	1.25	-1.41	23
cardiovascular diseases	1.27	-2.67	66–71
immune system diseases	1.29	-1.31	72
vascular diseases	1.33	-3.47	66,67,70
digestive system diseases	1.33	-1.57	73–77
neurodegenerative diseases	1.37	-1.71	78
central nervous system diseases	1.41	-0.54	78
autoimmune diseases	1.41	-1.30	72
gastrointestinal diseases	1.43	-1.02	79
brain diseases	1.43	-0.89	NA
intestinal diseases	1.49	-1.08	79
inflammatory bowel diseases	1.54	-2.10	NA
bone diseases	1.54	-1.18	NA
gastroenteritis	1.54	-1.92	NA
demyelinating diseases	1.54	-1.78	NA
glucose metabolism disorders	1.54	-1.58	23
heart diseases	1.56	-1.20	68,69,71
diabetes mellitus	1.56	-1.66	23

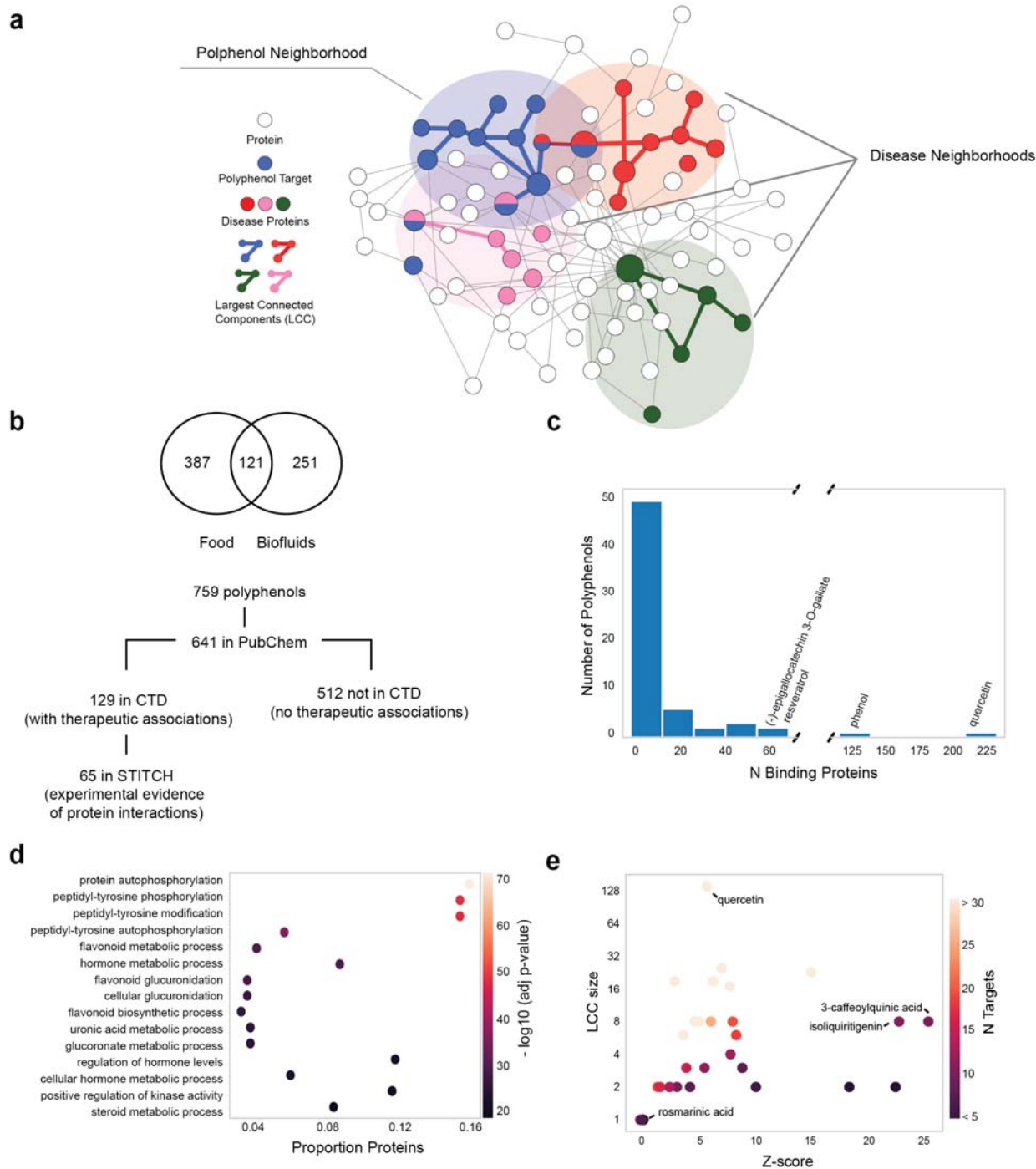
593

594 **Table 2 – Top Ranked Polyphenols.** Polyphenols for which network proximity to
 595 diseases best predicts their therapeutic effects. Table showing polyphenols with AUC >
 596 0.6 and Precision > 0.6. (*) Confidence intervals calculated with 2,000 bootstraps with
 597 replacement and sample size of 50% of the diseases (150/299). (**) Precision was
 598 calculated based on the top 10 polyphenols after their ranking based on the distance
 599 (d_c) of their targets to the disease proteins and considering only predictions with Z-score
 600 < -0.5.(***) Concentrations of polyphenols in blood were retrieved from the Human
 601 Metabolome Database (HMDB)

Polyphenol	AUC	AUC CI*	Precision**	Concentration in Blood***	N Mapped Targets	LCC Size
Coumarin	0.93	[0.86 - 0.98]	0.6		7	1
Piceatannol	0.86	[0.77 - 0.94]	0.6		39	23
Genistein	0.82	[0.75 - 0.89]	0.7	[0.006 - 0.525 uM]	18	6
Ellagic acid	0.79	[0.63 - 0.92]	0.6		42	19
(-)-epigallocatechin 3-O-gallate	0.78	[0.70 - 0.86]	0.8		51	17
Isoliquiritigenin	0.75	[0.77 - 0.94]	0.6		10	8
Resveratrol	0.75	[0.66 - 0.82]	1		63	25
Pterostilbene	0.73	[0.61 - 0.84]	0.6		5	2
Quercetin	0.73	[0.64 - 0.81]	1	[0.022 - 0.080 uM]	216	140
(-)-epicatechin	0.65	[0.49 - 0.80]	0.8	0.625 uM	11	3

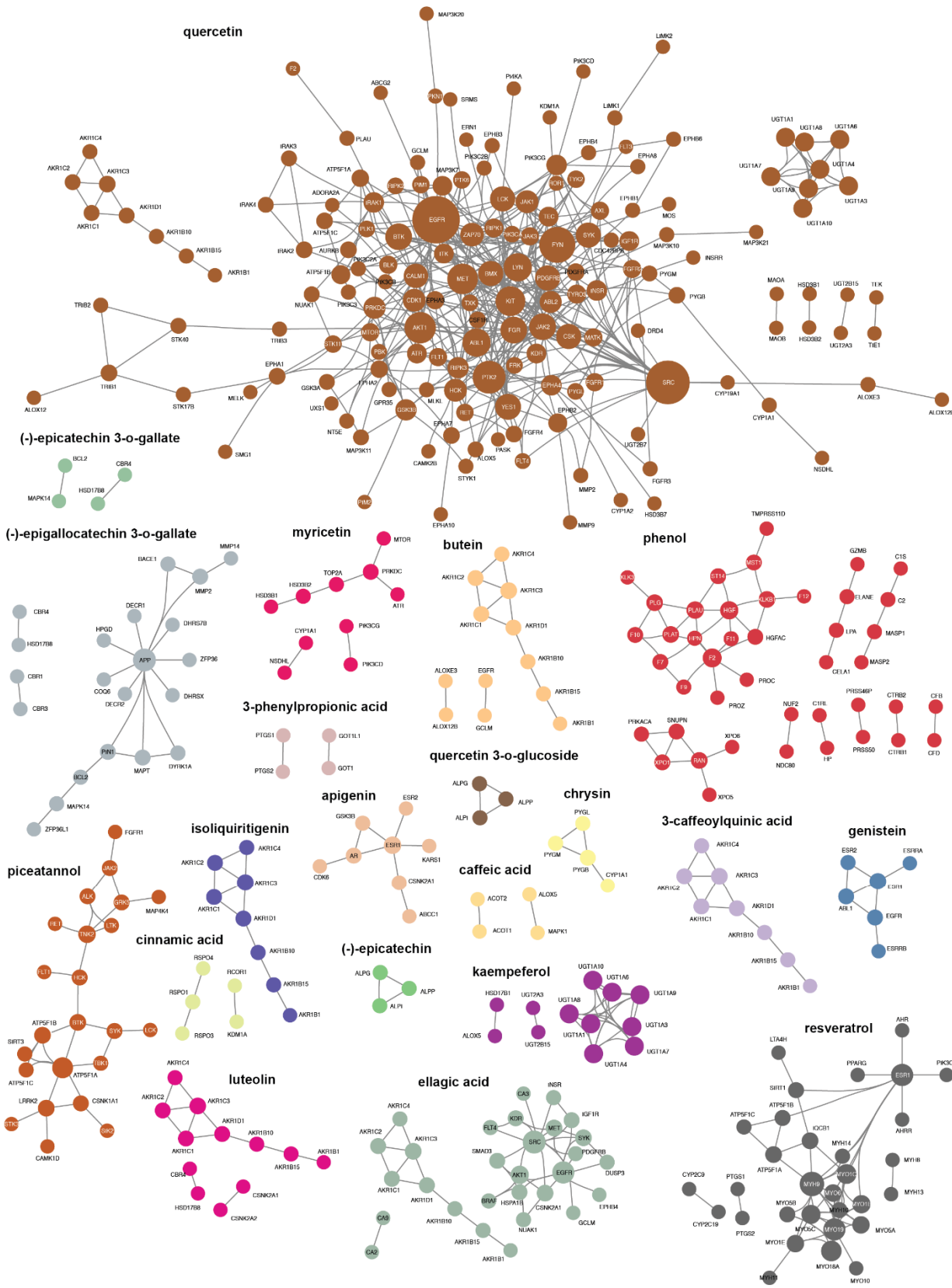
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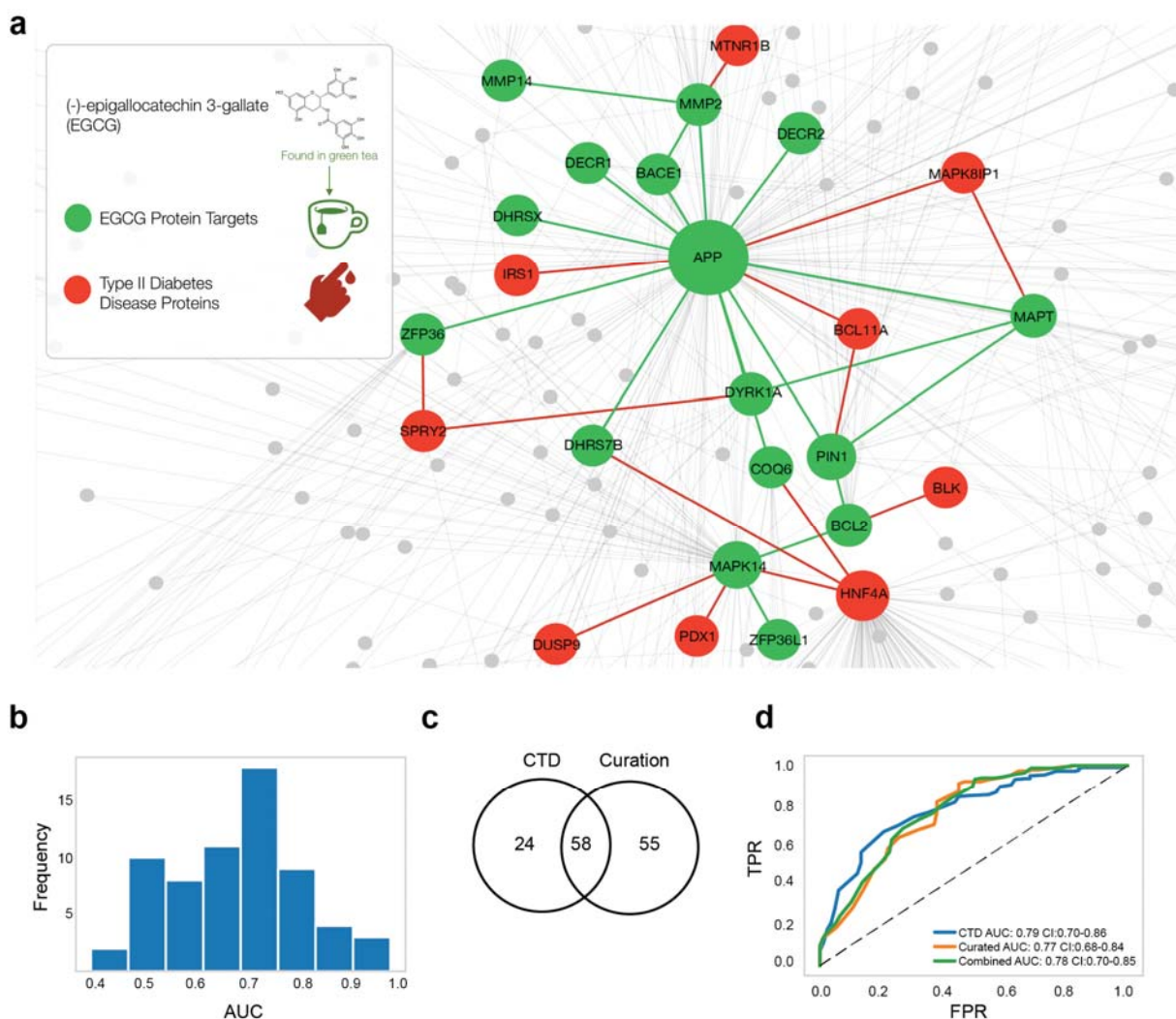


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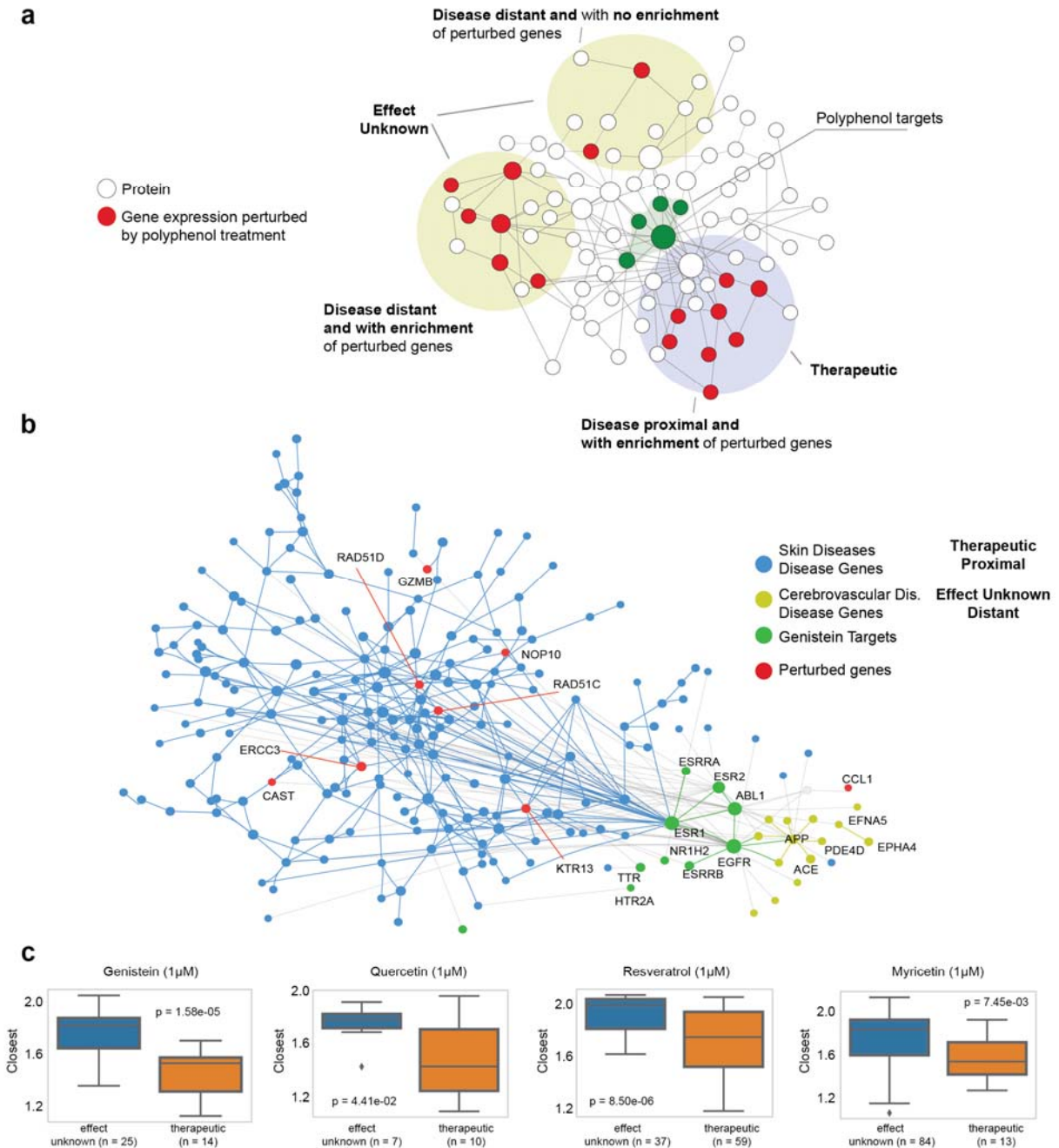
605 **Figure 1 – Properties of Polyphenol Protein Targets.** (A) Schematic representation of the human
 606 interactome, highlighting regions where polyphenol targets and disease proteins are localized. (B)
 607 Diagram showing the selection criteria of the polyphenols evaluated in this study. (C) Distribution of the
 608 number of polyphenol protein targets mapped to the human interactome. (D) Top ($n=15$) enriched GO
 609 terms (Biological Process) among all polyphenol protein targets. The X-axis shows the proportion of
 610 targets mapped to each pathway. (E) Size of the Largest Connected Component (LCC) formed by the
 611 targets of each polyphenol in the interactome and the corresponding significance (z-score).
 612



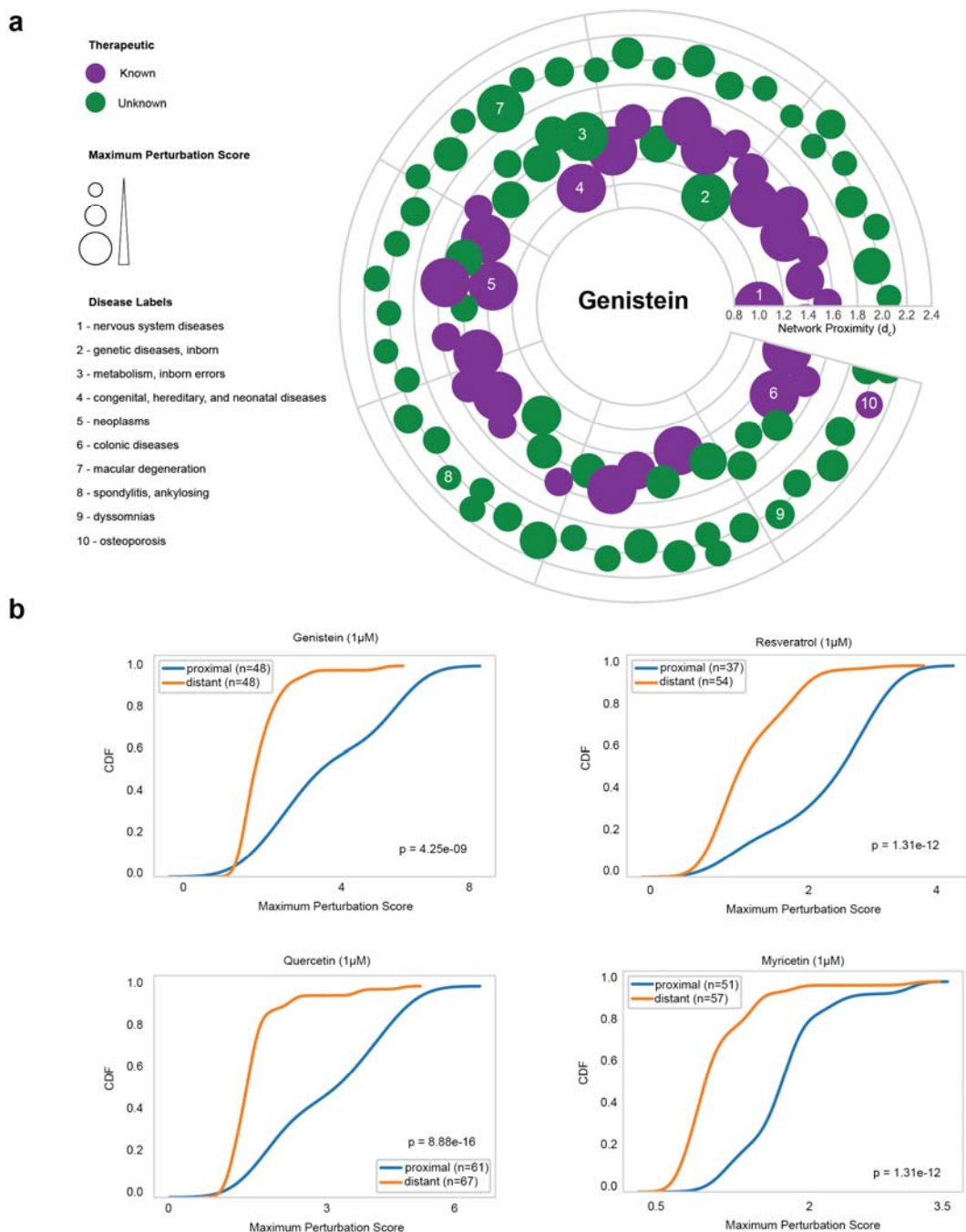
614 **Figure 2 – Protein-Protein Interactions of Polyphenol Targets.** The 23 polyphenols whose targets
 615 form connected components in the interactome and their respective subgraphs. For example, piceatannol
 616 targets form a unique connected component of 23 proteins, while quercetin targets form multiple
 617 connected components, the largest with 140 proteins. Polyphenol targets that are not connected to any
 618 other target are not shown in the figure. Colors distinguish connected component of different polyphenols.
 619



620
 621 **Figure 3 – Proximity Between Polyphenol Targets and Disease Proteins is Predictive of**
 622 **Therapeutic Effects of the Polyphenol.** (a) Interactome neighborhood showing the EGCG protein
 623 targets and their interactions with type 2 diabetes (T2D)-associated proteins. (b) Distribution of AUC
 624 values considering the predictions of therapeutic effects for 65 polyphenols. (c) Comparison of the EGCG-
 625 disease associations considering the CTD database and the in-house database derived from the manual
 626 curation of the literature. (d) Comparison of the prediction performance when considering known EGCG-
 627 disease associations from the CTD, in-house manually curated database, or combined datasets.
 628



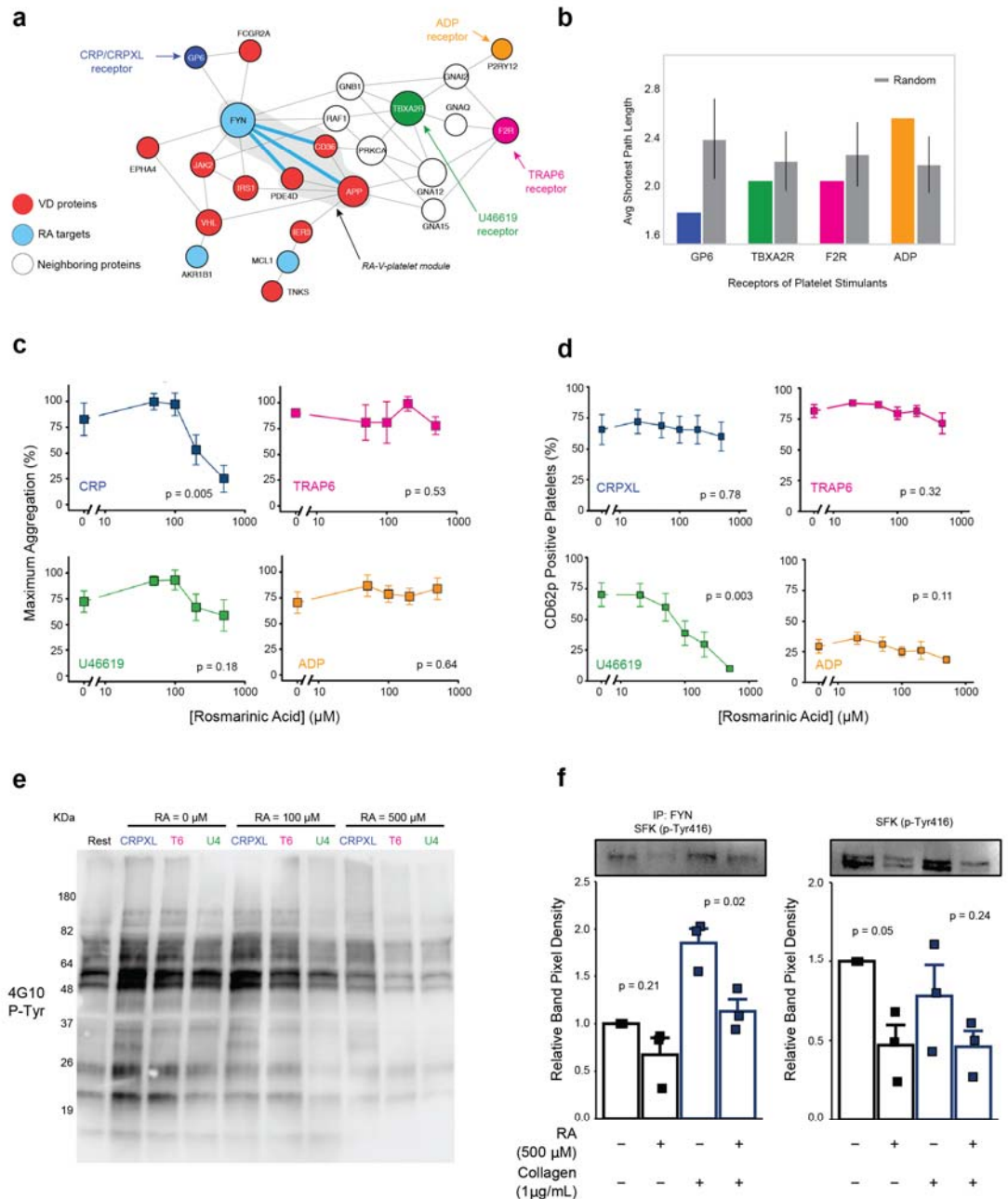
629
 630 **Figure 4 – Relationships among Gene Expression Perturbation, Network Proximity, and**
 631 **Therapeutic Effects of Polyphenols on Diseases.** (a) Schematic representation of the relationship
 632 between the extent to which a polyphenol perturbs disease genes expression, its proximity to the disease
 633 genes, and its therapeutic effects. (b) Interactome neighborhood showing the modules of skin diseases
 634 (SD), genistein, and cerebrovascular disorders (CD). The SD module has 10 proteins with high
 635 perturbation scores (>2) in the treatment of the MCF7 cell line with 1 µM of genistein. Genes associated
 636 to SD are significantly enriched among the most differentially expressed genes, and the maximum
 637 perturbation score among disease genes is higher in SD than CD. (c) Among the diseases in which
 638 genes are enriched with highly perturbed genes, those with therapeutic associations show smaller
 639 network distances to the polyphenol targets than those without. The same trend is observed in treatments
 640 of the polyphenols quercetin, resveratrol, and myricetin.
 641



642

643 **Figure 5 – Diseases Proximal to Polyphenol Targets Have Higher Gene Expression Perturbation**
 644 **Profiles.** (a) Proximal and distal diseases in relation to genistein targets. Each node represents a disease
 645 and the node size is proportional to the perturbation score after treatment with genistein (1 μ M, 6 hours).
 646 Distance from the origin represents the network proximity (d_c) to genistein targets. Purple nodes represent
 647 diseases in which the therapeutic association was previously known. (c) Cumulative distribution of the
 648 maximum perturbation scores of genes from diseases that are distal or proximal to polyphenol targets
 649 considering different polyphenols (1 μ M, 6 hours): genistein, quercetin, resveratrol, and myricetin.
 650 Statistical significance was evaluated with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

651



652

653 **Figure 6 – Rosmarinic Acid Modulates Platelet Function.** (a) Interactome neighborhood showing
 654 rosmarinic acid (RA) targets and the RA-V-platelet module - the connected component formed by the RA
 655 target FYN and the V proteins associated with platelet function PDE4D, CD36, and APP – and the
 656 receptor for platelet agonists used in our experiments (collagen/CRPXL, TRAP6, U46619, and ADP). (b)
 657 Average shortest path length from each platelet agonist receptor and the RA-V-platelet module formed by
 658 the proteins FYN, PDE4D, CD36, APP. Bars represent standard deviation of that same measure over
 659 1000 iterations of random selection of nodes in a degree preserving fashion. c-e) Platelet-rich plasma
 660 (PRP) or washed platelets were pre-treated with RA for 1 hour before stimulation with either collagen (1
 661 μg/mL), collagen-related peptide (CRP-XL, 1μg/mL), thrombin receptor activator peptide-6 (TRAP-6, 20
 662 μM), U46619 (1 μM), or ADP (10 μM). Platelets were assessed for either (c) aggregation, (d) alpha

663 granule secretion. Platelet lysates were also probed for either (e) non-specific tyrosine phosphorylation
664 (p-Tyr) of the whole cell lysate, or (d) site-specific phosphorylation of src family kinases (SFKs) and FYN
665 at residue 416. n = 3-6 separate blood donations, mean +/- SEM. p-values in (c) and (d) were determined
666 by Kruskal-Wallis test and by unpaired t.tests in (f).
667

668 References

669

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