REVIEW



The functional role of miRNAs in colorectal cancer: insights from a large population-based study

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ABSTRACT	Identification of causal microRNAs (miRNAs) in colorectal cancer (CRC) is elusive, due to our lack of understanding of how
	specific miRNAs affect biological pathways and outcomes. An miRNA can regulate many mRNAs and an mRNA can be associated
	with many miRNAs; appreciation of these complex networks in which miRNAs operate is necessary to transition from identifying
	dysregulated miRNAs to identifying individual miRNAs or groups of miRNAs that are suitable for therapeutic purposes. The aim
	of the paper is to compile results from a population-based study ($n = 1,954$ cases with matched carcinoma/normal tissue) of
	miRNAs in CRC. The information gained allows for cohesive and comprehensive insight into miRNAs and CRC in terms of
	function and impact. Comparison of miRNA expression with mRNA expression from nine signaling pathways in carcinogenic
	processes allowed us to identify miRNA targets within a biological context. MiRNAs that directly influence mRNA expression may
	be effective biomarkers or therapeutic targets.
KEYWORDS	mRNA; miRNA; pathwavs; colorectal cancer

Introduction

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are small, noncoding RNAs that posttranscriptionally regulate mRNA expression by binding to the 3'UTR of protein-coding genes. As such, miRNAs are thought to be key regulators in carcinogenesis. MiRNAs were first reported as being associated with colorectal cancer (CRC) in 2003¹. Since then, research focusing on miRNAs has expanded rapidly, in the number of studies, the miRNAs examined, and the types of studies conducted. Studies that focus on few miRNAs and those that have undertaken largescale discovery have identified hundreds of dysregulated miRNAs in CRC. However, findings are not unanimous as to which miRNAs are dysregulated in CRC nor is there a universal point at which miRNAs are considered dysregulated. Statistically significant associations have unknown biological significance when a fold change (FC) difference between carcinoma and normal mucosa is minimal (for instance a FC of 1.1). Correspondingly, the level of expression change between carcinoma and normal mucosa that is needed to have a biological significance is unknown,

Correspondence to: Martha L. Slattery E-mail: marty.slattery@hsc.utah.edu Received December 10, 2018; accepted February 19, 2019. Available at www.cancerbiomed.org Copyright © 2019 by Cancer Biology & Medicine however setting some threshold for meaningful differences, such as a 50% or twofold change, when considering important miRNAs for determining functionality, could help avoid considering small changes that stem from noise in the data. Determining important miRNAs can be difficult, since results can vary by type of study, which range from population-based epidemiologic approaches to those using cell lines to evaluate the influence of specific miRNAs. Small studies of targeted miRNAs can identify "statistically significant" miRNAs that would not hold the same level of significance after adjustment for multiple comparisons of all miRNAs conducted in large discovery studies. We have previously addressed some of the issues surrounding studying miRNAs in terms of measurement of miRNA expression, standardizing miRNA expression, and using existing databases to determine target genes^{2,3}.

The utilization of individually paired-carcinoma and normal mucosa is important when determining differential expression as well as the impact of miRNA expression on disease and prognosis⁴. As we have previously reported, repeat sampling of study data shows considerable variation in results when looking only at absolute miRNA expression in carcinomas or if using non-paired normal mucosa expression data, while much greater consistency in findings occurrs when differential expression is calculated from individually paired carcinomas and normal mucosa samples^{4,5}. We have shown that diet, alcohol, and smoking are associated with miRNA expression, as are genetic variants⁶⁻¹⁰. MiR-17-5p, miR-106b-5p, miR-19b-3p, and miR-20b-5p were downregulated in smokers; miR-106b-5p, miR-145-5p, and miR-17-5p were downregulated in subjects who consumed wine; and miR-145-5p was positively associated with whole grain intake. Individually paired tissue samples control for confounding factors, either genetic or environmental, that may influence miRNA expression. Using paired data also can help overcome variance in differential miRNA expression derived from tissue processing, since an individual's carcinoma and normal mucosa tissues are processed in the same manner. However, given the additional cost and availability of samples, individually paired analysis is often not undertaken, contributing to greater difficulty in determining important miRNAs.

The biggest obstacle in advancing miRNA into translational research is determining how miRNAs impact biological pathways and disease processes. It is well known that miRNAs regulate many genes and many genes are regulated by multiple miRNAs. These co-regulatory networks of genes and miRNAs complicate our understanding of functionality and bring into question the importance of pursuing a single miRNA as a therapeutic target without understanding the broader complex in which it belongs. Our goal in this paper is to summarize key findings from our large epidemiological study of miRNAs in CRC. This study was conducted both as a means of discovering new potentially important miRNAs as well as replicating previously reported miRNAs that were associated with CRC; we believe this summary can help focus further research. Additionally, consolidating our study findings may highlight which miRNAs will serve as the best therapeutic targets, either individually, or in groups. We believe that information gained from our large study of 1,954 individuals diagnosed with CRC, who have paired carcinoma and normal mucosa miRNA expression data on over 2,000 miRNAs (Agilent Human miRNA Microarray V19.0) allows for cohesive and comprehensive insight into miRNAs as they relate to CRC. Of the 1,954 individuals included in this study, 1,855 of these individuals had information on survival and 217 of the 1,954 individuals had paired carcinoma and normal gene expression data obtained from RNAseq data.

Differentially expressed miRNAs in CRC

In order for an miRNA to be functionally important in CRC, it is assumed that they have to be dysregulated in CRC tumors compared to normal mucosa. Of the 2,006 miRNAs analyzed in our study, 63.7% were expressed in carcinoma tissue and 63.26% were expressed in normal mucosa³. Of those miRNAs expressed in over 80% of the population (598 miRNAs), 86% of these miRNAs were statistically significantly (adjusted P value < 0.05) differentially expressed between carcinoma and normal mucosa. However, of those significantly and differentially expressed, 45 miRNAs (8.7%) had a FC of > 1.50 or < 0.68^3 . The level of FC that is biologically important is not clear and it should be recognized that utilization of FC as a tool to identify important miRNAs also has limitations, one being that if there are low levels of miRNA expression a large FC can be detected. Furthermore, calculation of FC is difficult when the miRNA is not expressed in either the carcinoma or normal mucosa. Identification of miRNAs that may have the greatest significance when functional most miRNAs are "dysregulated" can be challenging. In our study, we utilized a random forest technique that allowed us to identify a subset of these miRNAs that best distinguished differences in miRNA expression between carcinoma and normal mucosa¹¹. Using this statistical method we identified 16 miRNAs important in colon cancer and 17 miRNAs important in rectal cancer (Table 1); four miRNAs were uniquely associated with colon cancer (miR-663a, miR-4538, miR-215, and miR-192-5p) and five miRNAs were uniquely associated with rectal cancer (miR-4323, miR-150-5p, miR-4749-3p, miR-424-3p, and miR-6073)11. Three of the miRNAs identified in colon cancer had a FC of > 0.67 (miR-4538 FC 0.73, miR-378a-3p FC 0.75, and miR-378i FC 0.76) and two of the miRNAs identified in rectal cancer had a FC of > 0.67 (miR-378i FC 0.76 and miR-378a-3p FC 0.74); these miRNAs may not have been considered important if a strict FC cutpoint had been applied. These miRNAs (shown in Table 1 in numerical order) are one set of miRNAs that appear to predict differential expression when considered together. However, given the number of dysregulated miRNAs in CRC, it is highly probable that other miRNAs also have functional significance.

While at the population level miRNAs are up-regulated, down-regulated, or not dysregulated when comparing carcinoma tissue to normal mucosa; it should be kept in mind that not all individuals in the population have the upregulated or down-regulated miRNA in their carcinoma tissue. However, our data suggest that miRNAs appear to be more stable than mRNAs when considering the percentage of the population with a dysregulated miRNA compared to a dysregulated mRNA¹². Additionally, those miRNAs with a higher FC appear to have a greater percentage of the population with a dysregulated miRNA. The set of miRNAs identified by our random forest analysis were, for the most

Table 1 Summary of miRin	As identified as being important in CRC based on random forest assessment
Down-regulated miRNAs	MiR-145-5p, miR-150-5p, miR-192-5p, miR-215, miR-378a-3p, miR-378i, miR-4323, miR-4538, miR-4539, miR-4749-3p, miR-6073
Up-regulated miRNAs	MiR-17-59, miR-20a-5p, miR-21-5p, miR-3651, miR-424-3p, miR-4506, miR-663a, miR-663b, miR-92a-3p, miR-93-5p

part, highly dysregulated, making them targets that have an application at the population level. Knowing that dysregulated miRNAs with smaller FCs may be dysregulated in a smaller subset of the population also suggests the importance of focusing on higher FC in miRNA expression when determining which miRNAs to target for further functionality studies.

Infrequently expressed miRNAs

In our data, 38.79% of miRNAs were expressed in less than 20% of colorectal carcinomas (498 miRNAs) and 36.11% of miRNAs (457 miRNAs) were infrequently expressed in normal mucosa³. A reasonable question is, are these infrequently expressed miRNAs of biological importance or are they merely noise in the data? Given our large sample size we were able to examine in more detail infrequently expressed miRNA. Our approach to this question was to focus on those miRNAs that were infrequently expressed, but when expressed had higher levels of expression; what we hoped was beyond "noise" in the data.

Our data suggest that infrequently expressed miRNAs may be important in defining tumor phenotype¹³ and survival after a diagnosis with colorectal cancer¹⁴. Table 2 summarizes those miRNAs that may have a functional significance because they influence survival, mainly when up-regulated in the tumor. In most instances, having these miRNAs upregulated in tumors resulted in worse survival. While we do not understand how these miRNAs function, their association with survival implies that they may have a functional significance in the carcinogenic process.

Determining functionality

MiRNAs are key regulators of gene expression, hence they are

important to the carcinogenic process. An initial step in determining biological impact is to identify which genes are targeted by various miRNAs. Methods such as Western blot and reporter assays measure protein expression levels, an important consideration given that miRNAs are thought to work post-transcriptionally. However, most databases such as miRTarBase, have incorporated miRNA target gene data that are based on less strong evidence of associations such as microarray, RNASeq, and Northern blot15. While these methods don't validate miRNA targets using protein expression and instead measure gene expression, several studies have shown that, despite miRNAs having their impact post-transcriptionally, they usually also alter gene expression^{16,17}. Given that databases are restricted to existing literature and that the literature does not uniformly represent all miRNAs², we utilized RNASeq gene expression data to gain insight into miRNAs associated with gene expression. By examining how change in miRNA expression was associated with change in mRNA expression we gained insight into potentially important miRNAs and their targeted genes. Figure 1 provides an example of how these differences are correlated (beta coefficient -0.30).

Seed-region matches between the miRNA and the 3'UTR of the mRNA suggest a greater propensity for binding and therefore an increased likelihood that the miRNA directly influences mRNA expression; previously we investigated miRNA and mRNA FASTA sequences for matches of 6, 7, and 8 contiguous nucleotides to elucidate direct interactions, in which mRNA expression is reduced¹⁸. Thus, looking at seed region matches between miRNA and mRNA is one method to identify potentially important target genes for an miRNA. However, it has been suggested that other factors, such as binding at energy-based sites, may be important when identifying target genes. Ding and colleagues¹⁹ used energy-based sites as a second set of criteria when identifying

 Table 2
 Infrequently expressed miRNAs that may influence survival in CRC

Table 2 Innequent	y expressed minings that me	
	Improved survival	Worse survival
Up-regulated in carcinoma tissue	MiR-347a-5p, miR-590-5p, miR-362-5p, miR-632	MiR-124-3p, miR-143-5p, miR-145-3p, miR-31-5p, miR-99b-5p, miR-1, miR-124-3p, miR-133a, miR-143-5p, miR-3622b-3p, miR-378g, miR-548aw, miR-371-3p
Down-regulated in carcinoma tissue		MiR-645



Figure 1 Scatter plot of differentially expressed *CCNB1* (cyclin B1) with differentially expressed miR-145-5p.

candidate target sites; seed-region matching remained the first line of candidate site identification. It has been suggested that as much as 16% of miRNA:mRNA interactions may not involve contacts within seed regions and are considered seedless interactions²⁰. In our studies, we used seed-region matching to provide additional information on our miRNAmRNA associations, which, taken together with a negative beta coefficient between the two, provides additional support for their direct binding. A negative beta coefficient combined with the identification of a seed region match suggests that, as the miRNA binds to the mRNA, it decreases the mRNA expression. Because we only looked at seed matching, we did not consider seedless interactions. We believe that looking at seed-region matches between miRNA and mRNA provides support that miRNAs are targeting specific genes that may be important in CRC.

While direct binding between an miRNA and an mRNA shows support for that gene being a target of the miRNA, indirect associations between miRNAs and mRNAs also have potential biological importance. Indirect associations are seen in our studies when the differential expression of an miRNA is statistically significantly associated with the differential expression of an mRNA, but as one increases the other increases, or they are inversely associated but without a seed-region match. Indirect effects most likely occurr in feedforward loops²¹⁻²³. In feed-forward loops, regulators such as miRNAs can have either the same effect (repression of expression) or opposite effects on each other²². In feedforward loops, a transcription factor (TF) such as *TP53* can regulate the miRNA and the target gene (TG), which in turn is regulated by the miRNA. The miRNA may regulate the TG directly, through seed region binding, leading to mRNA degradation or translational repression, or indirectly, through repression of the TF that is influencing transcription of the same TG. Studies suggest that regulatory pathways involving miRNAs are prevalent mechanisms of altering gene expression²².

Tumor suppressor genes (TSG) and oncogenes (OG) play important roles in the carcinogenic process by controlling cell growth and inhibiting tumor formation. MiRNAs are thought to play similar roles in the carcinogenic process and it has been suggested that they work with OGs and TSGs²⁴. Determining the association between miRNAs and TSGs and OGs is another avenue in which to pursue insight into miRNA functionality. In our data, we observed that miRNAs most likely have both direct and indirect effects on TSGs and OGs²⁵, suggesting that they work as intermediary regulators between OGs and TSGs, and help balance up and down regulation of genes that in turn influence cell proliferation and apoptosis. Looking at the associated miRNAs, TSGs and OGs suggests that miRNA dysregulation in key signaling pathways is important to CRC²⁵. Increased inflammation, angiogenesis, and decreased immune response are hallmarks of many of the major pathways in which dysregulated TSGs and OGs operate with miRNAs. A comprehensive evaluation of all genes within these pathways, in conjunction with all miRNAs expressed in CRC, provided further insight into functionality of miRNAs and possible target sites for intervention.

Key pathways assessed with miRNAs were: apoptosis²⁶, cell cycle²⁷, JAK-STAT signaling²⁸, MAPK signaling²⁹, NF κ B signaling³⁰, PI3K/AKT³¹, TGF β signaling¹², p53 signaling³², and Wnt signaling pathways³³. Focusing on the those miRNAs (triangle shape) identified through random forrest analysis with an miRNA: mRNA seed region match (mRNAs designated by square shape), one can see how the same miRNA is associated with multiple genes in multiple pathways, and the same is true for mRNAs (**Figure 2**); **Supplementary Table S2** shows mRNAs and miRNAs in more detail. Likewise, mRNAs are associated with multiple miRNAs in different pathways.

Further evaluation of the miRNA:mRNA associations within these nine pathways shows that 88 of the 814 miRNAs (10.8%) expressed in either carcinoma or normal mucosa in over 20% of the population were associated with one or more of the nine pathways. As is shown in **Figure 3** (**Supplementary Table S2** shows mRNAs and miRNAs within pathways in more detail), the majority of associations were indirect, implying that many effects of the miRNAs come from their involvement in feedback loops, rather than directly binding



Figure 2 Overlap of key miRNAs and genes in various pathways in CRC.

to an mRNA. We determined that 40 miRNAs had a direct effect on gene expression because of a high likelihood of binding to the mRNA. Those miRNAs involved in regulating gene expression in various pathways are: miR-106b-5p (JAK-STAT-signaling), miR-1243 (Wnt-signaling), miR-1271-5p (NFkB-signaling), miR-145-5p (cell cycle control, apoptosis, and PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-150-5p (cell cycle control, p53-signaling, apoptosis), miR-17-5p (JAK-STAT-signaling, NFkB-signaling, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-193b-3p (MAPK-signaling), miR-195-5p (JAK-STATsignaling, cell cycle control, apoptosis), miR-196b-5p (p53signaling, apoptosis, NFkB-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-199a-5p (NFkB-signaling), miR-19b-3p (JAK-STATsignaling, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-203a (JAK-STAT-signaling, apoptosis, NFkB-signaling, MAPKsignaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling, Wnt-signaling), miR-204-3p (Wnt-signaling), miR-20a-5p (JAK-STAT-signaling, MAPKsignaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-20b-5p (JAK-STATsignaling, apoptosis, NFkB-signaling, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-2117 (MAPK-signaling), miR-214-3p (NFkB-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-215 (NFkB-signaling), miR-21-5p (JAK-STAT-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-221-3p (JAK-STAT-signaling, MAPKsignaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-23a-3p (JAK-STATsignaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-27a-3p (JAK-STATsignaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-29b-3p (apoptosis, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-324-5p (NFkBsignaling), miR-3591-3p (Wnt-signaling), miR-365a-3p (NFκB-signaling), miR-375 (cell cycle control, TGFβsignaling, NFkB-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-4243p (cell cycle control), miR-429 (JAK-STAT-signaling, NFκB-signaling, MAPK-signaling), miR-4749-3p (TGFβsignaling), miR-501-3p (apoptosis, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-590-5p (NFκB-signaling), miR-6071 (MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-650 (JAK-STAT-signaling, cell cycle control, p53-signaling, apoptosis, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-6515-5p (cell cycle control, PI3K-AKT-signaling), miR-663b (NFκB-signaling, PI3K-AKTsignaling), miR-663b (NFκB-signaling, PI3K-AKTsignaling), miR-92a-3p (JAK-STAT-signaling, apoptosis), miR-934 (NFκB-signaling), miR-93-5p (JAK-STATsignaling). These miRNAs also were involved indirectly in several pathways (**Supplementary Table S2**).

Many of the miRNAs have previously been reported associated with genes or biological responses that could impact CRC. For instance, miR-590-5p, miR-106b, and miR-93 have been associated with PTEN in the PI3K/AKT pathway^{34,35}; miR-145 has been associated with cell-cycle related factors such as CDK4 and cyclin E236; miR-150 has been associated with immune response³⁷ and reducing inflammatory cytokine production³⁸; miR-17-5p has been shown to inhibit proliferation and trigger apoptosis³⁹; miR-199 has previously been associated with IKKB⁴⁰ and with ITGA341; miR-203 as being associated with BIRC5 which encodes survivin42; miR-20 has previously been associated with cyclin D143; miR-221 has been reported as being associated with TNF α^{40} ; miR-650 has been associated with BCL2 and AKT2 and has been shown to promote cell proliferation and invasion44-46. However, our findings add to the functional information we have for these miRNAs in that we observed their associations with genes not previously reported and with specific disease pathways. Additionally, our findings show associations for other miRNAs that are directly related to signaling pathways and to genes that are dysregulated in CRC.

To further understand how miRNAs work in complex networks, we have assessed the interactions between TFs and miRNAs, both of which play important roles in regulating gene expression. We found that both miRNAs and TFs influence mRNA expression, and effect of one regulator influences the impact the other has on mRNA expression^{47,48}. In normal colonic mucosa we identified significant feed back loop (FBL) interactions involving miR-1258, miR-145-5p, miR-150-5p, 193b-3p, miR-330-3p, and miR-4469. In differential expression we identified FBL interactions involving miR-23a-3p and miR-4469. MiR-330-3p and miR-4469 were associated with one mRNA each in a few pathways, and no significant findings were identified with miR-1258. MiR-150-5p had numerous indirect associations in seven of the pathways (apoptosis, cell cycle, JAK-STAT-



Figure 3 Heatmap of direct and indirect associations of miRNAs within nine pathways.

signaling, MAPK-signaling, NF κ B-signaling, PI3K-AKTsignaling, and Wnt-signaling), and had direct associations in apoptosis, cell cycle, and p53-signaling. MiR-145-5p had numerous indirect associations in all pathways except apoptosis, and was involved in direct associations in apoptosis, cell cycle, and PI3K-AKT-signaling. MiR-23a-3p had a direct association with *IL6R* in JAK-STAT-signaling and PI3K-AKT-signaling, and indirect associations with seven mRNAs in the cell cycle, MAPK-signaling, PI3K-AKTsignaling, TGF β -signaling, p53-signaling, and Wnt-signaling pathways. While some mRNAs were consistent across these studies, such as *MYC*, which has roles in numerous pathways and is a TF, many of the mRNAs associated with these miRNAs varied between our pathway analysis and FBL analysis, highlighting the variance that occurs in these types of investigations.

The miRNAs and target genes we identified were limited to the nine pathways we determined as being important in CRC, given the number of TSGs, OGs, and TFs in these pathways that were associated with miRNAs. We undoubtedly missed associations utilizing only our gene expression data, however given the nature of the study, it was impossible to obtain

information on proteins. It is probable that important associations were not identified given the posttranscriptional role of miRNAs. However, it is also likely that the associations identified are real, and therefore merit validation in other similarily designed studies is needed.

Ongoing challenges and conclusions

While advancements are being made in understanding how miRNAs function in the carcinogenic process, there are many challenges when transitioning miRNAs from the discovery stage to their entering the realm of possible therapeutic agents. One of the biggest challenges stems from the fact that miRNAs target multiple genes and genes are targeted by multiple miRNAs. It is unclear if altering a single miRNA is sufficient to achieve a desired response, or if multiple miRNAs have to be considered as a complex that work within a given system to attain the outcome. Likewise, when investigating a specific miRNA that is associated with multiple genes, it is unclear whether regulation of a particular mRNA produces a certain outcome, or if this effect is the result of the regulation of a subgroup of the associated mRNAs or all of the mRNAs. Most functional studies have looked at single miRNAs when determining their functionality. Also of consideration is the fact that using a target miRNA may have unwanted effects, given that an miRNA can target many genes. It is unclear if a simple approach within the complex human system is sufficient to meaningfully pinpoint miRNAs for theraupeutic purposes. While we know that miRNAs are a part of a complex network, pinpointing their functionality within that framework remains a challenge.

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Conflict of interest statement

No potential conflicts of interest are disclosed.

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Supplementary materials

Table S1 Associations between miRNAs identified in random forest assessment that are associated with genes with a seed region match and negative beta coefficient in CRC related pathways

MiRNA	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK/STAT	МАРК	NFKB	PI3K/AKT	TP53	TGFB	WNT
MiR-106b-5p			IL10RA						
MiR-1243									ROCK2
MiR-1271-5p					TRAF5				
MiR-145-5p	BIRC5	MAD2L1, SMC1A				BRCA1			
MiR-150-5p	BIRC5	CCNA2, PRKDC			PRKCB		RPM2		
MiR-17-5p			IL10RA, IL6R	PDGFRA	TNFRSF11A	PDGFRA			
MiR-193b-3p				DUSP4					
MiR-195-5p	BIRC5	CDC6, SMC1A							
MiR-196b-5p						CREB3L1			
MiR-196b-5p	TNFRSF10B				TNFRSF11A		TNFRSF10B		
MiR-199a-5p					TNFRSF11A				
MiR-19b-3p			IL6R	PDGFRA		PDGFRA			
MiR-203a	BLC2		LIFR	MEF2C, PDGFRA, PRKCB	BTK, BCL2, PLCG2	PIK3CG; ITGA4; PDGFRA			
MiR-204-3p			BCL2						ROCK2
MiR-20a-5p			1L10RA, IL6R			PDGFRA; IL6R			
MiR-20b-5p	CTSS		IL10RA, IL6R		ΒΤΚ	PDGFRA; IL6R, BCL2, GNG2			
MiR-2117				TGFBR1				TGFBR1	
MiR-214-3p					TNFRSF11A	PHLPP2			
MiR-215					PLAU				
MiR-21-5p			IL6R						
MiR-221-3p			IL6R						
MiR-23a-3p			IL6R						
MiR-27a-3p			IL6R						
MiR-29b-3p	CASP7					PDGFRA			
MiR-324					CCL13				
MiR-3591-3p									SFRP5
MiR-3651			IL6R						
MiR-365a-3p					TNFRSF11A				

									Continued
MiRNA	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK/STAT	МАРК	NFKB	PI3K/AKT	TP53	TGFB	WNT
MiR-375		YWHAB			PLCG1	YWHAB, THBS2		TGIF2	
MiR-424-3p		CDC6							
MiR-429			IL10RA	RASGRP3	PLCG2				
MiR-4749-3p								TGIF2	
MiR-501-3p	CTSS					PDGFRA			
MiR-6071				TGFBR1		ITGAV		TGFBR1	
MiR-650	BIRC5	MAD2L1	PTPN11				PERP; RPM2		
MiR-6515-5p		YWHAB				YWHAB			
MiR-663b						PHLPP2			
MiR-92a-3p	CSF2RB		CSF2RB		TNFSF11A				
MiR-934					TNFRSF11A				
MiR-93-5p			IL10RA						

Table S2 MiRNA and mRNA associations by pathway

MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-let-7i-5p	Indirect		YWHAB		TGFBR1		COL1A2, COL6A3, F2R, ITGAV, THBS2, TNC, YWHAB	INHBA, TGFBR1	CCND1, CDK1	SFRP4, SFRP5
hsa-miR-106b-5p	Direct			IL10RA						
hsa-miR-106b-5p	Indirect	BIRC5	BUB3, CCNA2, CCND1, CDC25C, CDK1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, PTPN11			CCND1, ITGA2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	TGIF2	RRM2	CCND1
hsa-miR-10a-5p	Indirect						ITGA2			
hsa-miR-1203	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB	TGFBR1		ITGAV	TGFBR1		
hsa-miR-124-3p	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB						DAAM2
hsa-miR-1243	Direct									ROCK2
hsa-miR-1243	Indirect						ITGAV			

Continued

MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-1246	Indirect	BIRC5	ESPL1, MCM6, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, YWHAB	MYC, PTPN11	МҮС	PLCG1	BRCA1, MYC, YWHAB	MYC, RBL1, TGIF2		МҮС
hsa-miR-1271-5p	Direct					TRAF5				
hsa-miR-1291	Direct									
hsa-miR-1291	Indirect						ITGA2	TGIF2	PERP	
hsa-miR-130b-3p	Indirect		CCNA2, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM4, PRKDC, YWHAB			PLCG1	YWHAB	TGIF2		
hsa-miR-133b	Indirect			FHL1, LIFR		CXCL12	CHRM2, TNXB			DAAM2, PRICKLE2
hsa-miR-145-5p	Direct	BIRC5	MAD2L1, SMC1A				BRCA1			
hsa-miR-145-5p	Indirect		BUB1B, CCNB1, CDC20, CDC25C, CDC6, MCM4, TFDP1	FHL1, LIFR	PDGFRA	CXCL12	CHRM2, IGF1, PDGFRA, THBS1, TNXB	TFDP1, THBS1	CCNB1, GTSE1, IGF1, RRM2, THBS1	DAAM2, PRICKLE2 , SFRP4
hsa-miR-146a-5p	Indirect					TRAF5				
hsa-miR-146b-5p	Indirect			STAT1			F2R, TNC			
hsa-miR-150-5p	Direct	BIRC5	CCNA2, PRKDC						RRM2	
hsa-miR-150-5p	Indirect	BCL2, CSF2RB, ITPR1, PIK3CD, TUBA1B	SMC1A	BCL2, CSF2RB, IL10RA, IL24, IL6R, IL6ST, IL7R, LIFR, PIK3CD, PTPN11	MAP4K1, MEF2C, PDGFRA, PRKCB, RAC2, RASGRP2, RASGRP3	BCL2, BTK, CCL21, CD40, CXCL12, PLCG2, PRKCB, ZAP70	BCL2, CD19, GNG2, GNG7, IL6R, IL7R, ITGA4, PDGFRA, PHLPP2, PIK3CD, PIK3CG			DAAM2, PLCB2, PRKCB, RAC2
hsa-miR-151a-3p	Indirect		CDC16, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB				YWHAB	TGIF2	PERP	
hsa-miR-15a-5p	Indirect		CDC16, RAD21, YWHAB				YWHAB			
hsa-miR-17-5p	Direct			IL10RA, IL6R	PDGFRA	TNFRSF11A	PDGFRA, IL6R			

Continued

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MIRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-17-5p	Indirect	BIRC5	ANAPC1, CCNA2, CCND1, CDC16, CDC25C, CDK1, CDK4, E2F5, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, MYC, PTPN11	HSPA8, MYC	PLCG1	BRCA1, CCND1, CDK4, GNG4, ITGA2, LAMA5, MYC, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	E2F5, MYC, RBL1, TFDP1, TGIF2	CCND1, CDK1, CDK4, PERP, RRM2	CCND1, MYC, ROCK2
hsa-miR-1915-5p	Indirect									SFRP5
hsa-miR-193b-3p	Direct				DUSP4					
hsa-miR-193b-3p	Indirect	<i>CTSK</i>	YWHAB	FHL1, LIFR	IL1R1, MEF2C, PDGFRB	CXCL12, IL1R1, TNFRSF11A	COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, CREB3L1, F2R, ITGA11, ITGB5, LAMA5, PDGFRB, THBS2, YWHAB	TGIF2		PRICKLE2 , SFRP4, SFRP5
hsa-miR-195-5p	Direct	BIRC5	CDC6, SMC1A	PTPN11						
hsa-miR-195-5p	Indirect	BCL2, TUBA1B	CCNB1, MAD2L1	BCL2, FHL1, IL10RA, IL6ST, LIFR	MEF2C	BCL2, CCL21, CXCL12, PLCG2	BCL2		CCNB1, RRM2	DAAM2
hsa-miR-196a-5p	Indirect		ANAPC1, CCNA2, CDC25A, CDC6, MAD2L1, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB				YWHAB	TGIF2	GTSE1, STEAP3	
hsa-miR-196b-5p	Direct	TNFRSF10B				TNFRSF11A	CREB3L1		TNFRSF1 0B	
hsa-miR-196b-5p	Indirect		RBL1, YWHAB		DUSP4	PLCG1	PHLPP2, SGK2, YWHAB	RBL1, TGIF2		PLCB4

4

Continued

MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-199a-3p	Indirect	TUBA1B	YWHAB		PDGFRB, TGFBR1		COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, F2R, ITGA11, ITGAV, ITGB5, PDGFRB, THBS2, TNC, YWHAB	INHBA, TGFBR1		SFRP4
hsa-miR-199a-5p	Direct					TNFRSF11A				
hsa-miR-199a-5p	Indirect	TUBA1B	YWHAB		PDGFRB, TGFBR1		COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, F2R, ITGA11, ITGAV, ITGB5, PDGFRB, THBS2, TNC, YWHAB	INHBA, TGFBR1		SFRP4
hsa-miR-199b-5p	Indirect	TUBA1B	CDC16, YWHAB		PDGFRB		COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, F2R, ITGA11, ITGB5, PDGFC, PDGFRB, THBS2, TNC, YWHAB	INHBA	PERP	SFRP4
hsa-miR-19b-3p	Direct			IL6R	PDGFRA		IL6R, PDGFRA			
hsa-miR-19b-3p	Indirect	BIRC5	ANAPC1, BUB3, CCND1, CDC16, CDC25C, CDK1, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, MYC, PTPN11	МҮС		BRCA1, CCND1, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	MYC, RBL1, TFDP1, TGIF2	CCND1, CDK1, PERP, RRM2	CCND1, MYC, ROCK2
hsa-miR-203a	Direct	BCL2		BCL2, LIFR	MEF2C, PDGFRA, PRKCB	BCL2, BTK, PRKCB, PLCG2	BCL2, GNG2, ITGA4, PDGFRA, PIK3CG			PRKCB

					-			-	-	
MIRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-203a	Indirect		CCND1, CDC25C, PRKDC, RAD21	CCND1, IL10RA, IL6R, IL7R, PTPN11	HSPA8, RAC2	CCL21	CCND1, HSP90AA1, HSP90AB1, IL6R, IL7R, ITGA2		CCND1, PERP	CCND1, RAC2
hsa-miR-204-3p	Direct									ROCK2
hsa-miR-204-3p	Indirect						ITGAV			
hsa-miR-20a-5p	Direct			IL6R, IL10RA	PDGFRA		IL6R, PDGFRA			
hsa-miR-20a-5p	Indirect	BIRC5	ANAPC1, CCND1, CDC16, CDK4, E2F5, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, MYC, PTPN11	МҮС	PLCG1	BRCA1, CCND1, CDK4, GNG4, HSP90AB1, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	E2F5, MYC, RBL1, TFDP1, TGIF2	CCND1, CDK4, PERP, RRM2	CCND1, MYC, ROCK2
hsa-miR-20b-5p	Direct	CTSS		IL6R, IL10RA	PDGFRA	BTK,	IL6R,			
hsa-miR-20b-5p hsa-miR-21-3p	Indirect	BIRC5 BIRC5	ANAPC1, BUB3, CCNA2, CCND1, CDC16, CDC25C, CDK1, CDK4, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ PRKDC,	CCND1, MYC, PTPN11 PTPN11	МҮС	INFRSFILA CSNK2A2, PLCG1	ITGAV,	MYC, RBL1, TFDP1, TGIF2	CCND1, CDK1, CDK4, PERP, RRM2, STEAP3	CCND1, CSNK2A2 , MYC, ROCK2
- 1		-	RAD21, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ				YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ		RRM2	
hsa-miR-21-5p	Direct			IL6R			IL6R			
hsa-miR-21-5p	Indirect		CCND1, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAG	CCND1, PTPN11	TGFBR1		CCND1, ITGA2, ITGAV, LPAR1, TNC, YWHAB, YWHAG	INHBA, TGFBR1	CCND1, PERP	CCND1, ROCK2, SFRP5

Continued

MIRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-2117	Direct				TGFBR1					
hsa-miR-2117	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB, IL6R			IL6R	TGFBR1		
hsa-miR-214-3p	Direct					TNFRSF11A	PHLPP1			
hsa-miR-214-3p	Indirect	TUBA1B			IL1R1, PDGFRB, TGFBR1	IL1R1	COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, F2R, ITGA11, ITGAV, ITGB5, PDGFRB, THBS2, TNC	INHBA, TGFBR1		SFRP4
hsa-miR-215	Direct					PLAU				
hsa-miR-215	Indirect						COL1A1			
hsa-miR-221-3p	Direct			IL6R	MEF2C		IL6R			
hsa-miR-221-3p	Indirect	CASP7	CCND1, CDK1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, IL10RA, PTPN11	HSPA8	CCL13	CCND1, HSP90AB1, ITGA2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	TGIF2	CCND1, CDK1, RRM2, PERP	CCND1, CTNNB1
hsa-miR-222-3p	Indirect								PERP	SFRP5
hsa-miR-23a-3p	Direct			IL6R			IL6R			
hsa-miR-23a-3p	Indirect		PRKDC, YWHAB		TGFBR1		ITGA2, ITGAV, YWHAB	TGFBR1	PERP	SFRP5
hsa-miR-24-3p	Indirect		PRKDC, YWHAB		TGFBR1		ITGA2, ITGAV, ITGB5, YWHAB	TGFBR1	PERP	SFRP5
hsa-miR-25-3p	Indirect	BIRC5	BUB3, CCNA2, CCNB1, CDC25C, CDK1, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, SKP2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	PTPN11		PLCG1	BRCA1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	RBL1, TGIF2	CCNB1, CDK1, RRM2	

Continued

										Continueu
MIRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-27a-3p	Direct			IL6R			IL6R			
hsa-miR-27a-3p	Indirect		CCND1, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, PTPN11			CCND1, ITGA2, ITGAV, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ		CCND1, PERP	CCND1, CTNNB1
hsa-miR-29a-3p	Indirect		PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAQ			TRAF5	ITGA2, YWHAB, YWHAQ		PERP	ROCK2, SFRP5
hsa-miR-29b-3p	direct	CASP7			PDGFRA		PDGFRA			
hsa-miR-29b-3p	Indirect		CCND1, MCM3, MCM4, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, PTPN11	HSPA8		CCND1, ITGA2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ		CCND1, PERP	CCND1
hsa-miR-30a-5p	Indirect			FHL1, LIFR			TNXB			DAAM2
hsa-miR-3124-5p	Indirect	CSF2RB, TNFRSF10B		CSF2RB					TNFRSF1 0B	
hsa-miR-32-3p	Indirect		YWHAB	PTPN11			YWHAB			
hsa-miR-324-5p	Direct					CCL13				
hsa-miR-324-5p	Indirect		PRKDC						PERP	
hsa-miR-330-3p	Indirect					TNFRSF11A				
hsa-miR-331-3p	Indirect				TGFBR1		LAMA5	TGFBR1		
hsa-miR-34a-5p	Indirect		PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB	PTPN11		CCL13	ITGA2, ITGAV, YWHAB		PERP	
hsa-miR-3591-3p	Direct									SFRP5
hsa-miR-361-5p	Indirect		CDC16, PRKDC, YWHAB			TNFRSF11A	YWHAB	TGIF2		SFRP5
hsa-miR-3651	Direct			IL6R			IL6R			
hsa-miR-3651	Indirect		CDK4, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	IL10RA, MYC, PTPN11	МҮС		CDK4, GNG4, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	MYC, RBL1, TGIF2	CDK4, PERP	MYC, ROCK2, SFRP5
hsa-miR-365a-3p	Direct					TNFRSF11A				
hsa-miR-365a-3p	Indirect		PRKDC				ITGB5, TNXB		GTSE1	
hsa-miR-375	Direct		YWHAB			PLCG1	THBS2, YWHAB	TGIF2		
hsa-miR-375	Indirect		МҮС	МҮС	МҮС	TNFRSF11A	COL1A1, CREB3L1, MYC	МҮС		МҮС

8

hsa-miR-650

Direct

BIRC5

										continucu
MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-378g	Indirect					TRAF5				SFRP5
hsa-miR-3923	Indirect	CTSS				TRAF5				
hsa-miR-3976	Indirect						TNXB			
hsa-miR-424-3p	Direct		CDC6							
hsa-miR-424-3p	Indirect		YWHAB, YWHAE	OSM	DUSP4	PLCG1, TNFRSF11A	CREB3L1, GNG4, OSM, YWHAB, YWHAE	TGIF2		
hsa-miR-425-5p	Indirect	BIRC5	PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAB, YWHAQ	PTPN11			BRCA1, COMP, YWHAB, YWHAQ	TGIF2		
hsa-miR-4251	Indirect						ITGAV			SFRP5
hsa-miR-429	Direct			IL10RA	RASGRP3	PLCG2				
hsa-miR-429	Indirect		PRKDC, RAD21							
hsa-miR-4315	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB						CTNNB1
hsa-miR-4421	Indirect									SFRP5
hsa-miR-4469	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB						
hsa-miR-4638-3p	Indirect									SFRP5
hsa-miR-4749-3p	Direct							TGIF2		
hsa-miR-4749-3p	Indirect		YWHAB				YWHAB			ROCK2
hsa-miR-483-3p	Indirect							TGIF2		
hsa-miR-497-5p	Indirect			IL6ST, LIFR		CCL21, CXCL12	LPAR1, TNXB			DAAM2
hsa-miR-5008-3p	Indirect									SFRP5
hsa-miR-501-3p	Direct	CTSS			PDGFRA		PDGFRA			
hsa-miR-501-3p	Indirect		CDC25C, MAD2L1, MYC, PRKDC, YWHAB	МҮС	МҮС		GNG4, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB	MYC, TGIF2	PERP	МҮС
hsa-miR-518c-5p	Indirect			CNTF, IL6R			IL6R			
hsa-miR-520d-3p	Indirect					TRAF5				
hsa-miR-525-5p	Indirect	CSF2RB		CSF2RB						
hsa-miR-5685	Indirect					TRAF5				SFRP5
hsa-miR-583	Indirect		MAD2L1, MYC, SMC1A	МҮС	МҮС	PLCG1	МҮС	MYC, TGIF2	STEAP3	МҮС
hsa-miR-590-5p	Direct					TNFRSF11A				
hsa-miR-6071	Direct				TGFBR1		ITGAV			
hsa-miR-6071	Indirect							TGFBR1		

TGFBR1 MAD2L1 PTPN11 ITGA2 PERP, RRM2

Continued

Continued

MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-650	Indirect	BCL2, CSF2RB, ITPR1, PIK3CD	CCNA2, MCM4, PRKDC, RAD21, YWHAG, YWHAH	BCL2, CSF2RB, IL10RA, IL6R, IL6ST, IL7R, LIFR, PIK3CD	MAP4K1, MEF2C, PDGFRA, PRKCB, RAC2, RASGRP2, RASGRP3	BCL2, BTK, CCL21, CD40, PLCG2, PRKCB	BCL2, BRCA1, GNG2, GNG7, IL6R, IL7R, ITGA4, PDGFRA, PIK3CD, PIK3CG, YWHAG, YWHAH			PLCB2, PRKCB, RAC2
hsa-miR-6515-5p	Direct		YWHAB				YWHAB			
hsa-miR-6515-5p	Indirect					CSNK2A2	CREB3L1, HSP90AB1			CSNK2A2 , ROCK2
hsa-miR-663a	Indirect		MYC, YWHAB	МҮС	МҮС		GNG4, MYC, YWHAB	MYC		MYC, ROCK2
hsa-miR-663b	Direct					TNFRSF11A	PHLPP1			
hsa-miR-663b	Indirect		MYC, PRKDC, RBL1, YWHAB	МҮС	МҮС	PLCG1	GNG4, HSP90AB1, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB	MYC, RBL1, TGIF2	PERP	MYC, PLCB4, ROCK2
hsa-miR-6716-3p	Indirect									SFRP5
hsa-miR-92a-3p	Direct	CSF2RB		CSF2RB						
hsa-miR-92a-3p	Indirect	BCL2L1	ANAPC1, CDC16, MYC, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, TFDP1, YWHAB, YWHAQ	BCL2L1, IL6R, MYC, PTPN11	МҮС	BCL2L1, CSNK2A2, PLCG1, TNFRSF11A, TRAF5	BCL2L1, BRCA1, CREB3L1, GNG4, IL6R, ITGA2, MYC, YWHAB, YWHAQ	MYC, TFDP1, TGIF2, RBL1	PERP	CSNK2A2 , MYC, PLCB4, ROCK2
hsa-miR-93-5p	Direct			IL10RA						
hsa-miR-93-5p	Indirect	BIRC5	ANAPC1, BUB1, BUB3, CCNA2, CCNB1, CDC25C, CDC6, CDK1, CDK4, ESPL1, MAD2L1, MCM3, MCM4, MCM6, PRKDC, RAD21, RBL1, SKP2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	CCND1, PTPN11	HSPA8		BRCA1, CCND1, CDK4, ITGA2, YWHAB, YWHAG, YWHAQ	TGIF2, RBL1	CCNB1, CCND1, CDK1, CDK4, RRM2	CCND1, ROCK2
hsa-miR-934	Direct					TNFRSF11A				

										Continued
MiRNA	Direction	Apoptosis	Cell cycle	JAK-STAT	МАРК	NFkB	PI3K-AKT	TGFB	p53	WNT
hsa-miR-934	Indirect	TUBA1B		OSM	PDGFRB	PLAU	COL1A1, COL1A2, COL6A3, COMP, F2R, ITGA11, ITGAV, ITGB5, OSM, PDGFC, PDGFRB, THBS2, TNC	INHBA		SFRP4
hsa-miR-99a-5p	Indirect		LIFR			ITGA11, ITGB5, PDGFC, TNXB		GTSE1, RRM2	SFRP4	

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