Exploring the potential biomarkers for prognosis of glioblastoma via Weighted Gene Co-expression Network Analysis

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Background: Glioblastoma (GBM) is the most common malignant tumor in the central system with a poor prognosis. Due to the complexity of its molecular mechanism, the recurrence rate and mortality rate of GBM patients are still high. Therefore, there is an urgent need to screen GBM biomarkers to prove the therapeutic effect and improve the prognosis. **Results:** We extracted data from GBM patients from the Gene Expression Integration Database (GEO), analyzed differentially expressed genes in GEO and identified key modules by weighted gene co-expression network analysis (WGCNA). GSE145128 data was obtained from the GEO database, and the darkturquoise module was determined to be the most relevant to the GBM prognosis by WGCNA ($r = -0.62$, $p = 0.01$). We performed enrichment analysis of gene ontology (GO) and Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) to reveal the interaction activity in the selected modules. Then Kaplan-Meier survival curve analysis was used to extract genes closely related to GBM prognosis. We used Kaplan-Meier survival curves to analyze the 139 genes in the darkturquoise module, identified four genes (DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1) associated with prognostic GBM. Low expression of DARS/GDI2/TRUB1 and high expression of P4HA2 had a poor prognosis. Finally, we used tumor genome map (TCGA) data, verified the characteristics of hub genes through Co-expression analysis, Drug sensitivity analysis, TIMER database analysis and GSVA analysis. We downloaded the data of GBM from the TCGA database, the results of co-expression analysis showed that DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 could regulate the development of GBM by affecting genes such as CDC73/CDC123/B4GALT1/CUL2. Drug sensitivity analysis showed that genes are involved in many classic Cancer-related pathways including TSC/mTOR, RAS/MAPK. TIMER database analysis showed DARS expression is positively correlated with tumor purity($\text{cor} = 0.125, p = 1.07 \times 10^{-2}$), P4HA2 expression is negatively correlated with tumor purity($\text{cor} = -0.279, p = 6.06 \times 10^{-9}$). Finally, GSVA analysis found that DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 gene sets are closely related to the

occurrence of cancer. Conclusion: We used two public databases to identify four valuable biomarkers for GBM prognosis, namely DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1, which have potential clinical application value and can be used as prognostic markers for GBM.

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Abstract:

Glioblastoma (GBM) is the most common malignant tumor of the central system, with a poor prognosis. Due to the complexity of its molecular mechanism, the recurrence rate and mortality rate of GBM patients remain high. Therefore, screening of biomarkers for GBM is urgently needed to demonstrate therapeutic efficacy and improve prognosis. In this study, we extracted GBM patients' data from gene expression integration database (GEO), analyzed the differentially expressed genes in GEO by Weighted gene co-expression network analysis (WGCNA), constructed the co-expression network, and determined the correlation with the key recurrent modules of GBM. At the same time, based on Gene Ontology (GO) and Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG), the selected modules were analyzed. Then four genes (DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1) which are closely related to the prognosis of GBM were extracted by Kaplan-Meier survival curve analysis. The characteristics of these four genes were verified by tumor genome atlas (TCGA) data, Co-expression analysis, Drug sensitivity analysis, TIMER database analysis and Gene set variation analysis (GSVA) analysis. It was found that these four genes were differentially expressed genes in the initiation and progression of GBM, which could provide reference and basis for the observation of the clinical treatment and prognosis of GBM.

Introduction

Glioblastoma (GBM) is the most common primary neurogenic tumor, and the prognosis of most subtypes is poor (Tan et al. 2020). Despite of aggressive treatment strategies such as surgery followed by irradiation and chemotherapy, the prognoses of GBM patients remained unsatisfactory (Wu et al. 2020). According to the existing data, GBM patients have a survival of only 12–15 months after the standard treatment, with the 5-year survival rate of 3–5% (Gong et al. 2020; Szopa et al. 2017). The main reasons for the poor prognosis of GBM are due to tumor metastasis and postoperative recurrence (Tij et al. 2021). Given that tumors invade the brain aggressively, GBM tumors can rarely be completely removed by surgery (Reichel et al. 2020). And the resulting network by GBM enables multicellular communication through microtube-associated gap junctions, and increases tumor resistance to cell ablation and radiotherapy (Li et al. 2017a). Actively searching for biological markers related to the treatment and prognosis of GBM patients is of great significance for improving the survival rate of GBM patients.

In the past few decades, gene sequencing and bioinformatics analysis have been widely used for genetic variation screening at the gene level (Tingting et al. 2019), which helps us to identify differentially expressed genes (DEG) and functional pathways in the development of GBM. It has been found that the increased expression of SPRY2 mRNA indicates the decreased survival rate of GBM patients (Li et al. 2017a). Another study showed that the mRNA levels of NOTCH and Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) genes were increased in GBM tissues, which was related to the survival of patients (Irshad et al. 2015; Xing et al. 2015). However, most of

these studies are single gene analysis, which may limit the analysis of the pathogenesis and prognosis of GBM.

Weighted gene co-expression network analysis (WGCNA) is a platform to identify hub genes or therapeutic targets based on the interconnectivity of gene subsets and the association between gene subsets and phenotypes (Wang et al. 2020b; Zhang & Horvath 2005). WGCNA can use the information of thousands of genes to identify the gene modules of interest and perform important association analysis on phenotypes. Recently, many journals have published relevant studies using WGCNA (Schafer et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2020b; Zhou et al. 2018).

In this study, we extracted four GBM related biomarkers (DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1) by extracting data from GBM patients from the gene expression integrated database (GEO) and using WGCNA and Kaplan-Meier survival curves analysis. Then, we established GBM gene markers in the tumor genome atlas (TCGA), and confirmed the characteristics of these four genes by means of Co-expression analysis, Drug sensitivity analysis, TIMER database analysis, and GSVA analysis. In summary, our purpose is to find reliable biomarkers related to the prognosis of GBM by analyzing the relationship between DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 gene and GBM, so as to provide reference and basis for clinical treatment and prognosis observation of GBM.

Materials and methods

Data information and construction of WGCNA

The Series Matrix File data File of GSE145128 was downloaded from the NCBI GEO public database, which were contained 15 GBM patients and sets of transcriptional data, including untreated group (n=7) and recurrent group (n=8), for the construction of WGCNA co-expression network.

We constructed a weighted gene co-expression network to find co-expressed gene modules, and clarified the relationship between the gene network and phenotype and hub genes. The WGCNA-R package was used to construct a co-expression network of genes in the GSE145128 dataset, where the soft-thresholding power was set to 16. The weighted adjacency matrix is converted into a topological overlap matrix (TOM) to estimate the network connectivity, and a hierarchical clustering method is used to construct a clustering tree structure of the TOM matrix. Different gene modules are represented by different cluster tree branches and colors. All genes are divided into multiple modules through gene expression patterns, and genes with similar expression patterns are divided into one module based on weighted correlation coefficients and expression patterns.

Enrichment analysis of gene module function

In order to obtain the biological functions and signaling pathways involved in the interest module of WGCNA, the Metascape database (www.metascape.org) was used for annotation and visualization, and Gene Ontology (GO) analysis and Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) pathway enrichment analyses were performed on the genes in the specific module. Min overlap ≥ 3 & $p \leq 0.01$ was considered statistically significant.

Identifying Key Genes

To determine key genes, the most important thing is whether they have an impact on tumor prognosis. According to WGCNA theory, key genes have the highest connectivity in the module, which determines the biological significance of the module (Chen et al. 2019). So we think that key genes must exist in the interested module of WGCNA. Combined with the above two points, we analyzed the Kaplan-Meier survival rate of all genes in the interest module of WGCNA. We believe that the genes that can affect the prognosis of GBM patients are the key genes. And then, the next step is to explore and verify the specific molecular mechanism of key genes.

Download and Pre-processing Data From TCGA

TCGA database as the biggest cancer gene information database, including gene expression data, the miRNA expression data and copy number variation, DNA methylation, SNPS and other data. We downloaded the processed original mRNA expression data of GBM. A total of 159 specimens were collected (Supplementary table S1).

Co-expression analysis

The co-expression of the key genes were analyzed. The correlation coefficient filter condition was 0.3 and the p-value was 0.001. After screening the genes with the most significant expression of key genes, the correlation analysis circles of key genes were plotted using "corrplot" and "circlize" packages.

GSCALite and GDSC

GSCALite is a set analysis platform for cancer genes. It integrates cancer genomics data of 33 cancer types from TCGA, drug response data from GDSC and CTRP, and normal tissue data from GTEx, and conducts gene set analysis in the data analysis process. Our study through this analysis was carried out on the key genes. Then base on the largest publicly available pharmacogenomics database (GDSC, the Genomics of Drug Sensitivity in Cancer, <https://www.cancerrxgene.org/>), we used the R packet "pRophetic" to predict the chemosensitivity of each tumor sample, and the estimated IC₅₀ (50) of each specific chemotherapeutic drug treatment was obtained by ridge regression. The prediction accuracy was measured by 10-fold cross-validation with the GDSC training set. Select default values for all

parameters, including "combats" to remove batch effects, "allSolidTumours" for tissue types, and average values for summarizing repetitive gene expressions(Liu et al. 2018).

TIMER database analysis

TIMER is a website for systematically testing the molecular characteristics of tumor-immune interactions(Li et al. 2017b). This website has incorporated 10,897 samples ranging from 32 different kinds of cancer types from the TCGA dataset(Shi et al. 2020). In this study, TIMER was used to explore the relationship between key genes and the contents of immune cells and to compare the infiltration levels between tumors with different somatic copy number changes of key genes.

Gene functional analysis

GSVA uses a non-parametric and unsupervised method, and bypasses the traditional method of explicitly modeling phenotypes in affluent scoring algorithms(Hanzelmann et al. 2013). By comprehensively scoring the gene set of interest, GSVA converts the gene level change into the pathway level change, and then judges the biological function of the sample. In this study, the gene sets were downloaded from the Molecular signatures database (v7.0 version),and used the algorithm of GSVA comprehensive score of each gene set, evaluating the potential biological function change different samples.

Statistical analysis

All statistical analyses were performed in R language (version 3.6). All the statistical tests were bilateral, and $p < 0.05$ was statistically significant.

Result

Identification of gene co-expression modules

The Series Matrix File data File of GSE145128 was downloaded from the NCBI GEO public database. A total of 15 transcriptional data sets, including untreated group ($n=7$) and recurrent group ($n=8$), were used to construct the WGCNA co-expression network. In order to determine whether the 15 samples in GSE145128 were suitable for network analysis, a sample dendrogram and similar clinical features were studied. We confirmed that all samples were included in the group (Fig. 1A). The soft-thresholding power was set as 16 for the subsequent construction of co-expression network (Fig. 1B, Fig. 1C). The clustering tree structure of TOM matrix was constructed by hierarchical clustering method. The different branches and colors represent different gene modules (Fig. 1D). The network heatmap was used to analyze the interaction of 41

modules (Fig. 1E). The results showed that each module was independent of each other, indicating that each module was highly personalized and the gene expression of each module was relatively independent.

Correlation of modules and clinical traits

In order to study the relationship between these modules and the prognosis of GBM, we investigated the correlation between each module and the prognosis of GBM. We found that the darkturquoise module had the highest correlation with disease relapse ($r = -0.62$, $p=0.01$) (Fig. 2A, B). We used Metascape to analyze the function and pathway of the darkturquoise module. Metascape can identify the enrichment process in the gene list and the association between enrichment processes [14, 15] by querying many databases, such as GO functional, Hallmark Gene Sets, and KEGG pathways (Tripathi et al. 2015; Zheng et al. 2018). Based on GO enrichment analysis, it was found that the co-expressed genes within the modules of interest were mainly related to the steady state of cellular transition metal ion homeostasis, protein hydroxylation, intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway, ncRNA metabolic process (Fig. 2C). The KEGG pathway analysis revealed that the co-expressed genes within the modules of interest were mostly enriched in the 'Ferroptosis' (Fig. 2C). In addition, the enrichment processes were highly connected and could be clustered into a complete network (Fig. 2C). These results indicated that these functions were related in the occurrence and development of GBM.

Identification of key genes in darkturquoise module

According to the WGCNA theory, key genes have the highest connectivity in the module, which determine the biological significance of the module and therefore influence the survival of patients intensively (Chen et al. 2019). Therefore, we searched for hub genes in the darkturquoise module. We analyzed the Kaplan-Meier survival curves of 139 genes in the darkturquoise module. 14 genes with significant survival analysis results ($p<0.05$) were selected for sequencing (Table. 1). Further determination of the key gene requires a combination of its expression, typicality in previous studies, and previous research experience in our lab. Among the 14 candidate genes we selected, most genes have been confirmed to be related to the prognosis of GBM, such as: SPAG4, FKBP1B, DLEU1, PRKAR2B, NRL, CD24, GAS6; some genes have not been clearly studied to be related to the occurrence of any known tumors, such as CAMSAP2; the remaining genes have not been significantly expressed in GBM, such as CORO6 (Lo et al. 2009; Sun et al. 2021; Wang et al. 2019; Zhao et al. 2019). Finally, we found that four genes (DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1) had an impact on the survival rate of patients with GBM, and were also confirmed to be related to tumorigenesis. At the same time, they were not confirmed to participate in the occurrence and development of GBM, which met the conditions for our further research (Fig. 3). Survival analysis showed that the patients with low expression of DARS/GDI2/ TRUB1 and high expression of P4HA2 had poor prognosis.

187

188 Analysis of the co-expression of key genes

189 It was clear that the key genes can affect the process of disease progression by regulating related
 190 genes. It can be assumed that DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 was associated with the most
 191 abundant pathways and genes and could regulate more biological processes. In order to assess
 192 the gene correlation of DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1, we analyzed the co-expression of
 193 DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 through Pearson correlation analysis($\text{cor} > 0.3$, $p < 0.001$). We
 194 screened the 10 genes with the strongest correlation with the expression of DARS / GDI2 /
 195 P4HA2 / TRUB1, drew the correlation analysis map and heat map of DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 /
 196 TRUB1 (Fig. 4A-4H), and found that the correlation between DARS and CDC73 was the
 197 highest, and the correlation between GDI2 and CDC123 was the highest. P4HA2 and B4GALT1
 198 have the highest correlation, TRUB1 and CUL2 have the highest correlation (Fig. 4I-L).
 199 Then, we verified the modules of these four genes in WGCNA. We found that CDC73, CDC123
 200 and CUL2 all exist in the darkturquoise module, which is consistent with DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2
 201 / TRUB1(Supplementary table S2). Although B4GALT1 does not exist in the darkturquoise
 202 module, studies have confirmed that B4GALT1 can affect the development of GBM by
 203 regulating the apoptosis and autophagy(Wang et al. 2020a).Among them, CDC73 and CDC123
 204 are cyclins of cell division(Sun et al.),B4GALT1 is one of seven β - 1, 4-galactosyltransferases
 205 (B4GALT). CUL2 contributes to form E3 ubiquitin ligase that can recognize numerous
 206 substrates and is involved in a variety of cellular processes(Liu et al. 2019). These four genes
 207 have been shown to have a close relationship with many kinds of cancers(Cao et al. 2020a; Dou
 208 et al. 2020; Li et al. 2019a), such as thyroid carcinoma (Sarquis et al. 2019), breast cancer, etc.

209

210 Cancer-related pathways and drug sensitivity analysis of key genes.

211 First, we investigated the role of key genes in all well-known cancer-related pathways, as the
 212 following: TSC/mTOR, RTK, RAS/MAPK, PI3K/AKT, Hormone ER, Hormone AR, EMT,
 213 DNA Damage Response, Cell Cycle, Apoptosis pathways. The results found that DARS
 214 participated in the TSC/mTOR pathway activation; GDI2 was involved in Apoptosis,
 215 TSC/mTOR pathway activation; P4HA2 was involved in DNA Damage Response, EMT,
 216 Hormone AR, Hormone ER, RAS/MAPK and TSC/mTOR pathway; TRUB1 was involved in
 217 Apoptosis, DNA Damage Response, EMT, Hormone AR, PI3K/AKT and TSC/mTOR pathway
 218 (Fig. 5A). To investigate whether the expression of DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 in GBM
 219 had an impact on treatment (e.g. chemotherapies), we constructed a predictive model on six
 220 commonly used chemo drugs (i.e. AKT.inhibitor, Cisplatin, Dasatinib, Erlotinib, Gefitinib, and
 221 Gemcitabine) and confirmed that high expression of DARS was less sensitive to
 222 Cisplatin($p = 0.00026$) and Gemcitabine($p = 0.0024$), high expression of GDI2 was less sensitive to

223 AKT.inhibitor($p=5.2e-05$), Cisplatin($p=0.00067$), Dasatinib($p=0.012$) and
 224 Gemcitabine($p=3.5e-06$), low expression of P4HA2 was less sensitive to Cisplatin($p=0.0032$),
 225 and Gemcitabine($p=0.00017$), and high expression of TRUB1 was less sensitive to
 226 AKT.inhibitor($p=0.00043$)(Fig.5B).

227

228 ***Immune cells infiltration analysis***

229 In view of the obvious prognostic value of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 gene, we used the
 230 TIMER database to determine whether there was an association between tumor-infiltrating and
 231 immune cells and DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 expression. Results showed that DARS
 232 expression was positively correlated with tumor purity, P4HA2 and B cells (partial $cor=-0.239$,
 233 $p=7.89e-07$), P4HA2 and CD8+ T cells (partial $cor=-0.158$, $p=1.19e-03$), TRUB1 and CD8+ T
 234 cells (partial $cor=-0.206$, $p=1.87e-02$), DARS and neutrophils (partial $cor=0.245$, $p=3.73e-07$),
 235 GDI2 and neutrophils (partial $cor=0.184$, $p=1.62e-04$), GDI2 and Dendritic cells (partial
 236 $cor=0.167$, $p=6.21e-04$) P4HA2 and B cells (partial $cor=-0.239$, $p=7.89e-07$), P4HA2 and CD8+
 237 T cells (partial $cor=-0.158$, $p=1.19e-03$), TRUB1 and CD8+ T cells (partial $cor=-0.206$, $p=1.87e-$
 238 02), DARS and neutrophils (partial $cor=0.245$, $p=3.73e-07$), GDI2 and neutrophils (partial
 239 $cor=0.184$, $p=1.62e-04$), GDI2 and Dendritic cells (partial $cor=0.167$, $p=6.21e-04$) (Fig. 6A). We
 240 also explored the correlation between tumor immune cell infiltration and somatic copy number
 241 alterations (SCNAs). The samples were divided into four types according to the copy number of
 242 genes. The distribution of infiltrating immune cells among the four types of samples was
 243 compared, as shown in Fig. 6B. We found that the various forms of mutations carried by the
 244 DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 gene can usually suppress immune infiltration, including
 245 CD8+T cells, neutrophils, dendritic cells, macrophages, CD4+T cells, and B cells. Also, we
 246 found that these four pivotal genes had a greater effect on immune infiltration than alterations in
 247 the genes.

248

249 ***Genomic alterations of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 in GBM***

250 We then used the cBioPortal tool to determine the types and frequency of
 251 DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 alterations based on DNA sequencing data from GBM patients.
 252 The genetic variation rates of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 ranged from 0% to 4% (DARS was
 253 4%, GDI2 was 1.4%, P4HA2 was 4%, TRUB1 was 0.0%). These alterations include Missense
 254 Mutation, mRNA High, mRNA Low, Amplification (AMP), and Deep Deletion. (Fig. 7) In view
 255 of this, DARS and P4HA2 show potentially stronger cancer-driving properties at a higher
 256 mutation frequency. In contrast, TRUB1 is genetically stable and could potentially act as a stable
 257 biomarker.

258

259 **Gene functional analysis**

260 We downloaded the DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 gene sets from the Molecular signatures
261 database (v7.0 version) and comprehensively evaluated the gene sets through GSEA. Our
262 analysis showed that in the DARS gene set, 17 gene sets were up-regulated ($t > 1$) and 14 gene
263 sets were down-regulated ($t < 1$). In GDI2, 13 gene sets were up-regulated and 21 gene sets were
264 down-regulated. In P4HA2, 11 gene sets were up-regulated and 30 gene sets were down-
265 regulated. In TRUB1, 21 gene sets were down-regulated and 14 gene sets were down-regulated.
266 (Fig. 8A - D).

267

268 **Discussion**

269 Due to the complex mechanisms of GBM, it is one of the most threatening CNS
270 malignancies. Therefore, it is an urgent need to find biomarkers related to the occurrence and
271 prognosis of GBM to reveal the possible pathogenesis or predict the prognosis of patients, and
272 then develop personalized treatment plans for GBM patients. Based on gene sequencing
273 technology, we have discovered some biological markers with predictive value for patients
274 including GBM. However, the role of these markers are still limited. In order to better
275 understand GBM, there is an urgent need to screen out more biomarkers to improve the efficacy
276 of GBM treatment and prognosis.

277 GBM, as a highly heterogeneous tumor harboring multiple genetic alterations (Harter et al.
278 2014), molecular heterogeneity affects the effectiveness of single-molecule markers in predicting
279 prognosis (Tonry 2020). At the same time, some studies have found that the high recurrence rate
280 of GBM is related to the expression of strong proliferation genes of cells (Lara-Velazquez et al.
281 2020). And these processes usually involve multiple genes (Malik et al. 2020). Therefore, we
282 believe that multi-gene markers have a higher predictive power for GBM prognosis than single-
283 gene marker. We built a multi-gene markers model for predicting GBM prognosis, and validated
284 the multi-gene markers model through strategies including training, testing, and independent
285 cross-validation. The above strategies significantly improve the predictive ability of genetic
286 markers (Li et al. 2019b).

287 In our research and analysis, the results of GO and KEGG analysis indicate that cell transition
288 metal ion homeostasis, protein hydroxylation, intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway and other
289 processes may play an important role in GBM. Among them, transition metals are critical for
290 many metabolic processes (Nelson & N. 2014), and their steady state is vital to life. Aberrations in
291 the cellular metal ion concentrations may lead to cell death and severe diseases such as cancer (Pi
292 et al. 2020). Hydroxylation is a post-translational modification affecting protein stability, activity
293 or interactome (Zurlo & Zhang 2020). Many cancers are related to protein hydroxylation, such as
294 breast cancer (Zurlo & Zhang 2020), gastric cancer (Li et al. 2020), and prostate cancer (Della-Flora

et al. 2020). For example, a study found that a set of enzymes PLOD1, PLOD2 and PLOD3 involved in the hydroxylation of lysine and stabilization of collagen by crosslinks, which up-regulated expression in gastric cancer patients(Li et al. 2020). Similarly, intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway can activate or inactivate multiple signaling pathways and inhibit multiple tumor suppressor genes, thereby promoting tumor progression. Almost all cancers involve intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway, including renal cell carcinoma(Chae et al. 2020) and multiple myeloma(Chen et al. 2020a). Combined with the above results, we believe that DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 may be involved in these processes to affect the occurrence and development of GBM disease, which is also consistent with our Drug sensitivity analysis results. Among them, the DARS gene encodes the aspartyl-tRNA synthetase(Dominik et al. 2018), which pairs aspartate with its corresponding tRNA. Missense mutations in the gene encoding DARS can lead to leukocyte dystrophy, accompanied by a marked reduction in myelin sheath, abnormal movement and cognitive impairment (Fröhlich et al. 2018). There are no related reports about the relations between DARS and GBM. According to our research, DARS may participate in TSC/mTOR signaling, by regulating GBM cell growth process. GDI2 controls the activity of Rho GTPase's pathway to regulatory guanine nucleotide exchange factor and GTPase activating protein, and may play a role in tumor cell apoptosis. This is also in line with our results. At the same time, a recent study shows that RhoGDI2 suppresses lung metastasis in mice by reducing tumor versican expression and macrophage infiltration. The expression of P4HA2 increased in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC)(Kisoda et al. 2020), Oral Squamous Cell Carcinoma (OSCC)(Reis et al. 2020), cervical cancer(Cao et al. 2020b) and other cancers. Especially, we found that P4HA2 are markedly upregulated in cervical cancer tissues and upregulation of P4HA2 was associated with shorter overall survival (OS) and relapse-free survival (RFS)(Cao et al. 2020b). In GBM, we found that P4HA2 is mainly involved in the process of inhibiting DNA damage, and is also related to EMT, Hormone AR, Hormone ER, RAS / MAPK, TSC / mTOR and other pathways. TRUB1 mRNA is widely expressed in various human tissues (especially heart, skeletal muscle and liver), but there are few studies on its relationship with cancer(Zucchini et al. 2003). In our research, we analyzed that TRUB1 is mainly involved in Apoptosis, DNA damage, EMT, PI3K / AKT and other processes.

In the analysis of key genes co-expression, we found the four genes (CDC73 / CDC123 / B4GALT1 / CUL2) are most relevant to the expression of key genes and also related to the occurrence of many cancers. For example, CDC73 is a tumor suppressor, which can prevent cells from growing and dividing too fast or uncontrolled, and is closely related to parathyroid carcinoma(Cetani et al. 2019). CDC123 is a cell division cycle protein, and the regulatory effects of the entire cell cycle process can be stopped in one of the normal stages (G1, S, G2, M). CDC123 is highly expressed in choriocarcinoma(Hussain et al. 2018). B4GALT1 is one of the seven β -1,4-galactosyltransferase (beta4galt) genes. The β 1,4-galactosylation of glycans is very important for many biological events, including the development of cancer. In a variety of cancers, the B4GALTs family is associated with cancer cell proliferation, invasion, metastasis, and drug resistance. B4GALT1 is highly expressed in patients with lung adenocarcinoma(Zhang et al. 2019). CUL2 is one of the seven members of Cullin family. It can participate in the regulation of cell cycle, proliferation, apoptosis, differentiation, gene expression, transcription regulation, signal transmission, damage repair, inflammation and immunity. CUL2 affects the

occurrence of renal cell carcinoma by promoting the substrate ubiquitination and degradation(Liu et al. 2020).

Further TIMER analysis indicated that the immune system had a good effect on tumor microenvironment, and that the mutations of DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 had important application value in tumor immunology. Finally, we conducted a comprehensive evaluation of gene sets using GSVA and we found that the DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 gene sets are closely related to the occurrence of cancer. For instance, the APICAL_ JUNCTION in the DARS gene set is more common in highly differentiated epithelial cells, such as colon cancer cells(Nair-Menon et al. 2020). MITOTIC_ SPINDLE in the GDI2 gene set, the mitotic spindle inhibitor is one of the most commonly used chemotherapeutics now(Bukowski et al. 2020). DNA_ REPAIR in the P4HA2 gene set and ANGIOGENESIS in the TRUB1 gene set are also two important mechanisms of cancer development .

In recent years, with the GBM genes related to the occurrence and prognosis of feature recognition in many studies. Such as Chen X found the ASPM expression pattern from the database showed that it is highly expressed in GBM tissue, and patients with high expression of ASPM have a poor prognosis(Chen et al. 2020b). Recently, a bioinformatic analysis of 123 GBM patients has established a 14-mRNA prognostic signature, which could be used to classify GBM patients into low and high risk groups(Arimappamagan et al. 2013). To our knowledge, the DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 that we identified are new GBM biomarkers because they have never been reported to be associated with the development and progression of GBM(Lu et al. 2020). At the same time, compared with the traditional typing methods, the multi-gene markers model has many advantages, such as high prediction accuracy and personalized detection results(Albuquerque et al. 2012). Therefore, multi-gene markers have a good application prospect in clinical practice. In our study, we built and verified the characteristic of the four genes through analyzing the two independent data sets. More reasonable use of biometrics and multiple independent data sets of mutual verification makes our results more reliable.

However, our study had some limitations. Associated with disease, for example, age, race, sex, and some unknown prognostic factors may not be included in the model, which limits the prediction ability of the model. In the future, we plan to establish a more reasonable model of biological information analysis. Meanwhile, it should be acknowledged that the single gene analysis in this study does have limitations, and in future studies we will combine all the key genes or other factors together to find a biomarker with better sensitivity and accuracy using a multi-omics approach. In summary, our results had shown that DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 can be used as a new biological marker for GBM, which is related to the occurrence and prognosis of GBM, how to rationally apply various genetic characteristics at specific stages of GBM for diagnose and prediction of prognosis.

Conclusion

The molecular biological characteristics of GBM has changed the classification and treatment of tumors and become an important part of diagnosis and oncologic therapy. This study used

public databases to identify four valuable biomarkers for GBM prognosis, namely DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1, which have potential and clinical application values to act as prognostic markers of GBM.

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Figure Caption

Fig. 1. Identification of gene co-expression modules. (A) cluster samples to detect outliers. All samples are located in the cluster and pass the critical threshold at the same time. The blue highlighting means that the samples are in strong trait relationships established by correlation analyses. (B) The scale-free fit index was analyzed under the background of different soft-thresholding power (β). (C) Analyze average connectivity when using different soft-thresholding powers. (D) Dendrogram clustering of all genomic genes in GBM samples. (E) Heatmap of co-expressed genes. Different modules on the X and Y axis have different colors. The connection degree of different modules is indicated by the yellow intensity.

Fig. 2. Correlation of modules and clinical traits. (A) Module intrinsic genes and relapse Heatmap of the correlation between. (B) Scatter plot of the correlation between the darkturquoise module and relapse. All modules can be correlated with genes, and all continuous traits can be correlated with gene expression values. The two correlation matrices are combined and the vertical coordinate is the Gene significance for relapse when the module of interest is specified for analysis. "Module membership" as "correlation in expression between the given gene with the eigengene of the module". (C) Enrichment analysis of the function and pathway of the darkturquoise module. The rich biological process terms in the selected modules are described as interactive networks and listed according to their P-value. The size of the dots represents the number of genes that are co-expressed, the larger the dot, the more genes are co-expressed, presumably the more important they are and the more important they are as core genes in the network graph. Each node is a gene. The size of the node means degree of gene enrichment. Set $P < 0.01$ as the cutoff criterion. Enrich the term network, colored with cluster-ID, where nodes sharing the same cluster ID are usually close to each other.

Fig. 3. The Kaplan-Meier survival curve can evaluate the prognostic performance of core genes based on the expression status of selected biomarkers in the database. (A) DARS. (B) GDI2. (C) P4HA2. (D) TRUB1. All patients in each group were divided into high expression group and low expression group by gene expression. The cutoff for low versus high expression is 3-fold expression of controls.

Fig. 4. Gene co-expression. (A-H) In the TCGA dataset, selected the mRNA expression levels of DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1 related genes, analyzed the correlation of these genes through R, and visualize them with the circus and heatmap graph. (I-L) The four genes with the highest correlation with DARS / GDI2 / P4HA2 / TRUB1, drew scatter plots.

Fig. 5. Drug sensitivity analysis. (A) The role of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 in the famous cancer related pathways (GSCALite). The size of an area in the pie chart represents the extent of the role of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 in the well-known cancer-related pathway (GSCALite). (B) In the GDSC training set, high expression of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 was inferred to be less sensitive to commonly used chemotherapy drugs. The test for association between paired

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Fig. 6. Genetic and transcriptional changes and connections with immune cell populations.

(A) Correlation of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 expression with immune infiltration level in GBM. (B) DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 copy number alterations (CNV) affects the level of infiltration of B cells, CD8+ T cells, CD4+T cells, Macrophages, Neutrophils, and Dendritic cells in GBM.

Fig. 7. Genomic alterations of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 in GBM. OncoPrint of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 alterations in GBM cohort. The different types of genetic alterations are highlighted in different colors. Expression profiles of mRNAs showing different expression (≥ 3 -fold) compared to control were considered to be mRNA high, and vice versa for low.

Fig. 8. GSVA analysis. GSVA of DARS/GDI2/P4HA2/TRUB1 gene sets in GBM. (A) DARS. (B) GDI2. (C) P4HA2. (D) TRUB1. A t value > 1 or < -1 represents statistically significant changes.

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DARS

GDI2

P4HA2

TRUB1

Table 1 (on next page)

Table1: Statistics of genes in darkturquoise modules.

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Gene	P value
TRUB1	2.25E-02
P4HA2	1.02E-02
DARS	4.27E-02
FKBP1B	6.13E-03
NRL	2.20E-02
CORO6	1.83E-02
LRRC43	4.65E-02
GAS6	3.63E-02
SPAG4	2.07E-03
PRKAR2B	1.48E-02
CAMSAP2	1.31E-02
CD24	2.52E-02
GDI2	4.42E-03
DLEU1	1.45E-02