

Knockdown of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibits the progression of glioma (#76739)

1

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Knockdown of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibits the progression of glioma

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Background: Glioma is a tumor originating from glial cells in the central nervous system. Although significant progress has been made in diagnosis and treatment, most high-grade glioma patients are prone to recurrence. Therefore, molecular targeted therapy may become a new direction for adjuvant therapy of glioma. In recent years, many studies have revealed that Circular RNA (circRNA) may play an important role in the occurrence and development of many tumors including gliomas. Our previous study found that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was up-regulated in glioma tissues by RNA sequencing. However, the study of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma has not yet been reported. Therefore, in this study, we preliminarily outline the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma and try to understand its biological functions. **Methods:** The expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in forty glioma tissues and four glioma cell lines (A172, U251, SF763 and U87) was detected by quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qRT-PCR). The correlation between hsa_circ_0008922 expression and clinicopathological features of glioma patients was evaluated by Fisher's exact test. To understand the potential function of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma, we constructed small interfering RNA (siRNA) of hsa_circ_0008922 to downregulate its expression in glioma cell lines A172 and U251. With these hsa_circ_0008922 downregulated cells, a series of assay was carried out as followed. Cell proliferation was detected by CCK8 assay, migration and invasion were determined by wound healing assay and transwell assay, respectively. And colony formation ability was evaluated by plate clonogenic assay. Moreover, flow cytometry combined with Western

Blot was performed to analyze apoptosis status and the expression of apoptotic related proteins (caspase 3 and caspase 9). Finally, the possible biological pathways and potential miRNA targets of hsa_circ_0008922 were predicted by bioinformatics. **Results:** We found that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues was higher than that in normal tissues. And the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was related to the tumor grade of WHO classification, tumor size and Ki-67. After down-regulating the expression of hsa_circ_0008922, malignant biological behavior of glioma cells was inhibited, such as cell proliferation, colony formation, migration, and invasion. At the same time, it also induced apoptosis of glioma cells. Predicted analysis by bioinformatics demonstrated that hsa_circ_0008922 may be involved in tumor-related pathways by acting as a molecular sponge of multiple miRNAs (hsa-let-7e-5p, hsa-miR-506-5p, hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7c-5p and hsa-let-7a-5p). And we built a hsa_circ_0008922-miRNA-mRNA network.

Manuscript Title

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Abstract

Background: Glioma is a tumor originating from glial cells in the central nervous system. Although significant progress has been made in diagnosis and treatment, most high-grade glioma patients are prone to recurrence. Therefore, molecular targeted therapy may become a new direction for adjuvant therapy of glioma. In recent years, many studies have revealed that Circular RNA (circRNA) may play an important role in the occurrence and development of many tumors including gliomas. Our previous study found that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was up-regulated in glioma tissues by RNA sequencing. However, the study of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma has not yet been reported. Therefore, in this study, we preliminarily outline the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma and try to understand its biological functions.

Methods: The expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in forty glioma tissues and four glioma cell lines (A172, U251, SF763 and U87) was detected by quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qRT-PCR). The correlation between hsa_circ_0008922 expression and clinicopathological features of glioma patients was evaluated by Fisher's exact test. To understand the potential function of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma, we constructed small interfering RNA (siRNA) of hsa_circ_0008922 to downregulate its expression in glioma cell lines A172 and U251. With these hsa_circ_0008922 downregulated cells, a series of assay was carried out as followed. Cell proliferation was detected by CCK8 assay, migration and invasion were determined by wound healing assay and transwell assay, respectively. And colony formation ability was evaluated by plate clonogenic assay. Moreover, flow cytometry combined with Western Blot was performed to analyze apoptosis status and the expression of apoptotic related proteins (caspase 3 and caspase 9). Finally, the possible biological pathways and potential miRNA targets of hsa_circ_0008922 were predicted by bioinformatics.

Results: We found that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues was higher than that in normal tissues. And the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was related to the tumor grade of WHO classification, tumor size and Ki-67. After down-regulating the expression of hsa_circ_0008922, malignant biological behavior of glioma cells was inhibited, such as cell proliferation, colony formation, migration, and invasion. At the same time, it also induced apoptosis of glioma cells. Predicted analysis by bioinformatics demonstrated that hsa_circ_0008922 may be involved in tumor-related pathways by acting as a molecular sponge of multiple miRNAs (hsa-let-7e-5p, hsa-miR-506-5p, hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7c-5p and hsa-let-7a-5p). And we built a hsa_circ_0008922-miRNA-mRNA network.

Introduction

Glioma is one of the most common primary malignant tumors in the central nervous system. And glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) is the highest grade based on the WHO classification and has high invasiveness and lethality^[1, 2]. Despite of improvements in current treatment modalities

(surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy)^[3], the prognosis of GBM remains poor and the recurrence rate still remain high after treatment^[4, 5]. This poses a serious threat to the health of patients and brings heavy economic burden to patients and their families. Therefore, it is critical to identify potential molecules for adjuvant therapy option of glioma.

circRNA is a new class of non-coding RNAs with covalently closed-loop structures^[6], which is characterized by high stability and high conservation, and is mainly distributed in the cytoplasm. In recent years, a variety of high-throughput sequencing confirmed that many circRNAs were highly expressed in various tissues including tumors^[7-9]. In addition, circRNA can also act as a sponge for microRNAs (miRNA), endogenous competitive RNA to participate in many pathophysiological processes^[10]. Therefore, the expression profile and role of circRNA in gliomas can not only provide a new treatment strategy, but also promote the development of precision medicine in clinical diagnosis and treatment.

With RNA sequencing of a panel of glioma tissues and normal brain tissues we found hsa_circ_0008922 was highly expression in glioma tissues compared with normal brain tissues. As far as we know, there is only a report for hsa_circ_0008922 showing its abundant expression in hypopharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma and correlation with worse outcome of patients^[11]. So, we are very curious whether hsa_circ_0008922 has same feature in glioma. In this study, we found that hsa_circ_0008922 expression was significantly associated with tumor grade, tumor size and Ki-67. And the down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 expression in vitro can weaken the malignant behavior of glioma cells, such as decreasing cell proliferation, migration, invasion and inducing apoptosis. Additionally, bioinformatic analysis demonstrated that hsa_circ_0008922 may exert a molecular sponge role for some miRNAs in glioma. Therefore, these results provide a basis for further study of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma in future.

Materials & Methods

Patients and samples

From May 2018 to November 2021, forty glioma specimens were collected in the Department of Neurosurgery, the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University and confirmed by the Department of pathology of same hospital. These patients did not receive radiotherapy or chemotherapy before surgery. And ten normal brain tissues were collected (Table 1). The above tissues were frozen in liquid nitrogen after in vitro. The specimen collection was examined and authorized by Medical Ethics Committee of Guangxi Medical University (2018087). We received written informed consent from participants of our study.

RNA Sequencing

All 10 human glioma tissues and 5 normal brain tissues were attained from patients who underwent surgery at The First Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi Medical University. To achieve five repeated samples at each group, a sample was taken from each of one patient to reduce the impact of individual differences. The 10 tissues were divided into two groups: NB (normal brain tissue, n = 5) and GBM (glioblastoma, n = 5). The total RNA from tissue of patients was extracted by the TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen, USA) and sequenced by Aksonomics Biology Technology Co. Ltd (China). The RNA library was sequenced on the Illumina platform (Illumina, Santiago, CA, USA) and produced 150-bp pair-end reads. The NGS QC Toolkit (<http://www.nipgr.res.in/ngsqctoolkit.html>) was used to process the raw data (the original reads) of FASTQ format, and RPM (reads, mapped by splicing, per million) was taken as the expression of circRNA. Differential expression analysis was conducted using DESeq R package (Bioconductor.org). The circRNA with a P-value ≤ 0.05 and fold change \geq or ≤ 1.5 was considered significantly differentially expressed. The statistical power of this experimental design, calculated in RNASeqPower using the web page at https://rodrigo-arcoverde.shinyapps.io/rnaseq_power_calc/ is 0.8083.

Cell culture and transfection

Human glioma cell lines (A172, U251, SF763 and U87) were purchased from the cell bank of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Shanghai, China). Cells were cultured complete medium (10 % fetal bovine serum (Wisent, Canada); 1 % penicillin streptomycin (solarbio, Beijing); DMEM medium (Wisent, Canada)) and placed in 37 °C, 5 % CO₂ incubator.

Based on hsa_circ_0008922 sequence, two siRNAs (s1-hsa_circ_0008922 and s2-hsa_circ_0008922) and random siRNA (NC) fragments were ordered from Bioengineering Co., Ltd. (Shanghai, China). According to the instructions for siRNA usage, Lipofectamine 3000 (Invitrogen, CA, USA) was used to transfect siRNA into cells. The sequences of siRNA hsa_circ_0008922 as followed: s1_hsa_circ_0008922: (sense) 5'-AAG AUA AGU AAC GAU GAC U-3', (antisense) 5'-AGU CAU CGU UAC UUA UCU U-3'; s2_hsa_circ_0008922: (sense) 5'-UAA CGA UGA CUU GAA AGU A-3', (antisense) 5'-UAC UUU CAA GUC AUC GUU A-3'.

137 *qRT-PCR*

138 Total RNA was extracted by Vazyme Kit (RC101-01) (Vazyme, Nanjing, China). And RNA was
139 reverse transcribed into cDNA by HiScript III RT SuperMix 100 for qPCR (+gDNAwiper)
140 (Vazyme). ChamQSYBR qPCR Master Mix (Vazyme Q711-02) was used for polymerase chain
141 reaction in StepOne Real-time PCR System (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA). The
142 relative level was calculated with $2^{-\Delta\Delta C_t}$.

144 *RNase R exonuclease digestion experiment and electrophoresis*

145 According to the instructions of RNase R endonuclease digestion kit (Geneseed Biotech Co.,
146 Ltd., Guangzhou, China), the total RNA was divided into digestion group (RNase R treatment)
147 and control group, with 5 µg RNA (1 µg RNA required 8 U RNase R endonuclease digestion) in
148 each group. And the RNase R was not added in the control group. Above groups were incubated
149 at 37°C for 25 minutes Then 1 µg RNA was reversed and detected by qRT-PCR. The qRT-PCR
150 products amplified by the divergent primer were sent to Sangon Biotech (Shanghai) Co., Ltd. for
151 TA cloning sequencing to determine the full length of PCR products. The PCR products of
152 gDNA and cDNA were further detected by 1.3 % agarose gel electrophoresis. PCR products
153 were separated by 110 V electrophoresis for 35 min and detected by UV. GL DNA Marker 100
154 (AGbio, China) is used as a marker of DNA size. The sequences of primers are as followed:
155 hsa_circ_0008922 Divergent Primer: (sense) 5'-TCC ATC AGG ACC CCA GAT GTC-3',
156 (antisense) 5'-ACT GCA CAT GCA GAC TGT CAC-3'; hsa_circ_0008922 convergent Primer:
157 (sense) 5'-GGG CAT CCT TCA CCC ATC TG-3', (antisense) 5'-ATC TTG GTG TCA CAC
158 AGG GC-3'.

160 *Wound Healing assay*

161 After transfection with siRNA of hsa_circ_0008922 for 48 hours, 100 µL of 2×10^4 cells were
162 seeded into the single hole of ibidi plug-in and cultured for 22 hours. After the cells were full of
163 ibidi plug-in, the plug-in was removed. Then DMEM complete medium was replaced with
164 appropriate low serum DMEM complete medium (2 % FBS). And photographs were taken at 0,
165 6, 12 hours and 0, 12, 24 hours, respectively.

167 *CCK8 assay*

168 CCK8 detection kit (Vazyme A311-01) was used to detect the proliferation of glioma cells
169 treated with siRNA. 100 µL of 4×10^3 cells were inoculated in 96-well plates, 5 wells in each
170 group. 10 µL of CCK8 solution was added to each well and cells were incubated at 5 % CO₂ 37
171 °C for 2 hours. The optical density (OD) values at 450 nm were measured at 0, 24, 48, 72 and 96
172 hours, respectively.

175 *Transwell assay*

176 The migration and invasion ability of glioma cells were evaluated using transwell chamber

(Corning Incorporated, Corning, New York) with or without matrix glue (Absin). Forty-eight hours after transfection, a 200 μ L cell suspension (2×10^4 cells) was inoculated in the upper chamber of transwell chamber, and DMEM (500 μ L) containing 20 % FBS was added in the lower chamber of transwell chamber. And they were incubated at 37 °C for 24 h. Then, 4 % methanol was applied to fix the cells for 30 min following by staining with 0.1 % Crystal Violet Stain solution (Solarbio, Beijing, China) for 30 min. Staining cells were photographed by inverted microscope (Olympus) and counted manually.

Flow cytometry

Apoptosis was detected by using FITC Annexin V apoptosis detection Kit (BD Biosciences 556547). After glioma cells were transfected, the cells were completely digested with EDTA-free trypsin and washed twice with PBS buffered at 4 °C. The cells were dyed with 5 μ L FITC Annexin V and 5 μ L propidium iodide (PI) for 15 min at room temperature in the dark and then observed by flow cytometry (BD, USA). FlowjoV 1.8.1 (Becton, Dickinson & Company) was used to analyze the results.

Western Blot

Western Blot was used to detect apoptosis-related proteins in glioma cells. After transfecting siRNA into cells and culturing cells for 48 hours, the cells were harvested and lysed with protease inhibitor and phosphatase inhibitor to extract proteins. Then, the protein was separated by SDS-PAGE and transferred to PVDF membrane. 1: 1000 diluted primary antibodies (caspase 3, rabbit, #14220S; caspase 9, mouse, # 9508, Cell Signaling Technology and GAPDH, rabbit, # ab181602 Abcam) were incubated overnight at 4 °C. After completing incubation of primary antibodies, the secondary antibodies with 1: 5000 dilution were incubated at room temperature (rabbit, # ab6721; mouse, # ab6728 Abcam).

Plate cloning assay

3×10^3 of siRNA treated cells were inoculated in the 6-well plates at 37 °C in 5 % CO₂ for 11 days. After culture, cells were fixed with 4 % formaldehyde for 30 min and stained with 0.1 % Crystal Violet Stain solution for 12 min. And the photograph was recorded with a stereomicroscope (Olympus).

Bioinformatics analysis

ENCORI (<https://starbase.sysu.edu.cn/agoClipRNA.php?source=circRNA>) was used to predict hsa_circ_0008922 downstream miRNA. OECloud tools (https://cloud.oebiotech.cn/task/detail/array_miranda_plot/?version=old) was used to predict binding fraction and free energy. miRDB (<http://mirdb.org/index.html>), miRWalk (<http://mirwalk.umm.uni-heidelberg.de/>), Linkedomics (<http://linkedomics.org/login.php>) were used to predict miRNA downstream mRNA, respectively. Cytoscape was used to draw the interaction network of hsa_circ_0008922 with its downstream miRNA, and the interaction network of miRNA with its downstream mRNA^[12, 13]. GO (Gene Ontology)

217 and KEGG (Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes) enrichment analysis of miRNA downst
218 ream mRNA was performed on OECloud tools ([https://cloud.oebiotech.cn/task/detail/enrichment](https://cloud.oebiotech.cn/task/detail/enrichment-oehw/?id=57)
219 [-oehw/?id=57](https://cloud.oebiotech.cn/task/detail/enrichment-oehw/?id=57)).
220

221 *Statistical analysis*

222 Data analysis was performed using Graphpad and SPSS 22.0 statistical analysis software.
223 Student's t-test was used for comparison between the experimental groups. Fisher's exact test
224 was used for categorical variables. Quantitative data were expressed as mean \pm standard
225 deviation. $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Results

Identifying hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma cell

In order to seek circRNA aberrantly expressed in glioma, we performed RNA sequence of glioma tissues. A total of 879 differentially expressed circRNAs (FDR<0.01, fold change>2 or <0.5) was gained, including 244 up-regulated and 655 down-regulated circRNAs. Here, we selected a novel circRNA, hsa_circ_0008922, from circRNA identified above due to that there was no report in glioma except only one study in hypopharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma^[11]. As shown in Fig. 1A, hsa-circ-0008922 is produced from exon 3-4 of a human gene matrin 3 (MATR3, NM_199189) according to searching Circular RNA Interactome (<https://circinteractome.nia.nih.gov/>). The length of hsa_circ_0008922 spans from 92 bp to 252 bp on the sequence of MATR3. To evaluate the presence of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma cells, firstly, RNase R was added to the total RNA extracted to remove the linear mRNA before cDNA synthesis based on the circRNA nature resistant to RNase R digestion. Then, we designed divergent primers for hsa_circ_0008922 and convergent primers for MATR3 mRNA. As shown in Fig. 1B, hsa_circ_0008922 can be amplified by divergent primers with cDNA as template, whereas there was no amplification detected at similar sizes using gDNA as template. Contrary, using convergent primers RT-PCR could amplify MATR3 mRNA in the sample without RNase R treatment, while it was failed to amplify MATR3 mRNA in the sample with RNase R treatment. Moreover, PCR products amplified by divergent primers were used for TA cloning and sequencing to confirm that hsa_circ_0008922 had the reverse splicing site (Fig. 1C). These results indicated that the divergent primers we designed can specifically amplify hsa_circ_0008922 and can used for detection of its expression.

Up-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues

Searching for five public databases of circRNA (CIRCpedia v2, <http://yang-laboratory.com/circpedia/>; circRNADb, <http://reprod.njmu.edu.cn/cgi-bin/circrnadb/circRNADb.php>; TSCD, <http://gb.whu.edu.cn/TSCD/>; MiOncoCirc, <https://mioncocirc.github.io/>; and circRNADisease, <http://cgga.org.cn:9091/circRNADisease/>), we cannot gain any information for the expression profile of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma. Therefore, we tested our clinical samples as a primary study for hsa_circ_0008922 expression. As shown in Fig. 2A, the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues (n=40) and normal tissues (n=10) was detected by qRT-PCR. We found that the relative expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was significantly higher in gliomas than in normal tissues (P=0.027). And it was found that in low-grade tumor and high-grade tumor the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was significantly higher than normal tissues, respectively (Fig. 2B). Furthermore, we also detected the relative expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in different types of gliomas. We found that in astrocytoma and glioblastoma and oligodendroglioma the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was higher than normal tissues, respectively (Fig. 2C).

Correlation between hsa_circ_0008922 expression and clinicopathological parameters of glioma patients

As hsa_circ_0008922 was up-regulated in gliomas, we wonder whether it has some clinical significance. Therefore, we further investigate the correlation between the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 and clinical data such as age, gender, tumor size, WHO grade and GFAP (glial fibrillary acidic protein). As shown in Table 2, the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was correlated with the WHO grade, tumor size and Ki-67 of patients. However, the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was not significantly correlated with other clinical parameters of patients.

Screening highly efficient siRNA for hsa_circ_0008922

Considering up-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 correlating with some of clinicopathological parameters of glioma patients, we further explore depletion of hsa_circ_0008922 to observe the change of malignant behavior. We first detected the relative expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in a panel of glioma cells (A172, U251, U87 and SF763 cells) by qRT-PCR. Fig. 3A shown all of cells expressing hsa_circ_0008922 with different levels. A172 expressed the highest hsa_circ_0008922, which was three times of SF763. Whereas U251 expressed the second higher level of hsa_circ_000892 that was 1.6 times of SF763. As possessing high level of hsa_circ_0008922 expression, A172 and U251 were selected for hsa_circ_0008922 depletion cell models.

Subsequently, we determined the siRNA fragment and optimized its transfection time in vitro. Transfecting cells with two siRNA fragments, s1-hsa_circ_0008922 and s2-hsa_circ_0008922, respectively, it was found that s2-hsa_circ_0008922 had the best effect of -hsa_circ_0008922 down-regulation in the time point of forty-eight hours (Fig. 3B and C). Therefore, we chose s2-hsa_circ_0008922 for hsa_circ_0008922 depletion experiments and set the forty-eight hours after siRNA transfection to perform a series experiment for biological behavior in glioma cells.

Inhibiting migration and invasion in glioma cells with down-regulated hsa_circ_0008922

Because migration and invasion were closely related to the malignant degree of tumor, we used wound healing assays to evaluate lateral migration of glioma cells. Through the analysis of time series data and comparison between groups, it was found that the migration rate of s2-hsa_circ_0008922 treatment group in A172 (Fig. 4A and C) and U251 (Fig. 4B and D) was lower than that of the control. Further, the transwell assays of migration and invasion showed suppression of longitudinal migration and invasion of A172 (Fig. 5A, B and C) and U251 (Fig. 5D, E and F) following hsa-circ-0008922 silencing. In summary, the down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma cells can significantly inhibit the migration and invasion ability of glioma cells.

Influence of colony formation, proliferation, and apoptosis after hsa_circ_0008922 depletion of glioma cells

After down-regulating hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, the colony formation ability of cells was detected by plate cloning. It was found that compared with the NC group, the number of cell colonies in the s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group was significantly lower than that in the NC group (Fig. 6A and B). CCK8 experiment was used to detect the proliferation of A172 and U251. In this experiment, we detected cell viability at five time points (0 h, 24 h, 48 h, 72 h, 96 h). It was found that the cell viability in the s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group in A172 (Fig. 6C) and U251 (Fig. 6D) was significantly different from that in the NC group. This result indicated that the down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma cells can significantly inhibit the cell growth of glioma cells.

Moreover, flow cytometry was used to study whether hsa_circ_0008922 affected the apoptosis of glioma cells. We found that in A172 and U251, the apoptosis rate in the s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group was higher than that in the NC group, and there was significant indigenous difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$) (Fig. 7A and B and C). Furthermore, we also detected apoptosis proteins caspase 3 and caspase 9. It was found that in A172 (Fig. 7D and E) and U251 (Fig. 7D and F) the expression of caspase 3 and caspase 9 in the s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group was higher than those in the NC group, respectively. Taken together, hsa_circ_0008922 promoted the proliferation of glioma cells by playing an anti-apoptotic role.

Predicting hsa_circ_0008922-miRNA-mRNA networks with potential functions in glioma by bioinformatics

Generally, circRNA regulates gene transcription and expression by serving as a sponge of miRNA. And circRNA-miRNA-mRNA regulatory axis has been widely accepted to illustrate the biological functions of circRNA. To understand the potential function of hsa_circ_0008922 in regulation of glioma related genes, we first analyzed miRNAs binding to hsa_circ_0008922 by ENCORI, by which a total of 14 miRNAs (hsa-let-7e-5p, hsa-miR-506-5p, hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7c-5p, hsa-let-7g-5p, hsa-mir-98-5p, hsa-let-7d-5p, hsa-let-7i-5p, hsa-miR-377-3p, hsa-mir-605-3p, hsa-let-7a-5p, hsa-let-7f-5p, hsa-miR-4458 and hsa-miR-4500) were obtained (Fig. 8A). Then, OECloud tools were used to predict the binding fraction and free energy of hsa_circ_0008922 with its downstream miRNAs. The information of these miRNAs was presented in table 3. The miRNAs (hsa-let-7e-5p, hsa-miR-506-5p, hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7c-5p and hsa-let-7a-5p) with length greater than 22 bp, predicted score greater than 150 and predicted free energy less than - 15 were selected for further bioinformatic analysis. With combined analysis of three databases (miRDB, miRWalk and Linkedomics) we gained mRNAs that were all related to glioma. As shown in Fig. 8B, 103 mRNAs interact with hsa-let-7a-5p, 123 mRNAs interact with hsa-let-7b-5p, 99 mRNAs interact with hsa-let-7e-5p, 37 mRNAs interact with hsa-let-7c-5p, and 5 mRNAs interact with hsa-miR-506-5p. Finally, an interactive network between miRNA and mRNA was constructed (Fig. 8C).

Based on the **ceRNA hypothesis**, namely, mRNAs should be negatively correlated with targeted miRNAs and positively correlated with circRNA. The top 30 of mRNAs fitting this criterion were selected for further functional analysis. GO analysis showed that the functions of these mRNAs were mainly related to multiple signaling pathways, such as mitotic sister chromatid cohesion, stem cell population maintenance, negative regulation of intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway in response to DNA damage by p53 class mediator, negative regulation of cAMP-mediated signaling, and regulation of transcription involved in G1/S transition of mitotic cell cycle (Fig. 9A and Additional Table 1). And KEGG analysis indicated that these mRNAs were involved in signaling pathways regulating pluripotency of stem cells, cell cycle, and microRNAs in cancer and glioma (Fig. 9B and Additional Table 2).

Discussion

Glioma is a very common and aggressive intracranial tumor, which leads to brain dysfunction in many patients and poses a serious threat to the health of patients. The World Health Organization (WHO) divides glioma into four grades. Clinically, WHO I and WHO II grade gliomas were defined as low grade glioma (LGG); whereas WHO III and WHO IV grade gliomas were considered as high-grade glioma (HGG). And more than half of the gliomas in clinic are HGG [14]. At present, the traditional treatment of glioma is the comprehensive treatment of surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy, but the prognosis is still poor, and the postoperative recurrence rate is as high as 90% [4, 15, 16]. However, the pathogenesis and the progression of glioma still remain unclear. Therefore, it is very important to understand the related molecules for their expression features and their mechanisms in the occurrence and development of glioma.

With the development of high-throughput sequencing technology, it is found that about 50 % of DNA in human genome can be transcribed into RNA, but the RNA with translational function accounts for only 1.2 % of the transcribed RNA, and the RNA that cannot be translated into protein is defined as non-coding RNA [17, 18]. Among them, a kind of non-coding RNA produced by reverse splicing of precursor mRNA (pre-mRNA) is called circRNA [19]. In early studies, circRNA was considered as “noise” and had no biological function. However, in recent years, it was found that circRNAs mostly distributed in the brain and had significant biological functions, especially in cancer [20-22]. In 2019, Xia et al. showed that AKT3-174aa encoded by circ-AKT3 could inhibit the carcinogenicity of glioma mother cells [23]. In 2020, Peng et al. reported that circ-MAPK4 was up-regulated in glioma, but its expression in high-grade glioma was significantly higher than that in low-grade glioma [24]. At the same time, Chen et al. found that the expression level of hsa_circ_0074026 was significantly increased in the parent cell samples and cells of glioma, and was correlated with clinical parameters such as tumor size, WHO grade and overall survival [25]. All of these reports imply circRNA has potential for diagnostic and therapeutic application in gliomas. However, there are still less information about a circRNA in glioma.

Through RNA sequencing, we found that hsa_circ_0008922 highly expressed in glioma tissues. hsa_circ_0008922 is derived from exon 3 and exon 4 of Matrin3 (MATR3). MATR3 is a host gene of hsa_circ_0008922 and it is derived from human chromosome 5 and highly expresses in the brain^[26]. MATR3 participates in many cellular processes, including binding and stabilizing mRNA, regulating mRNA nuclear output, chromatin remodeling, RNA processing, transcription, translation, and apoptosis^[11, 27]. In addition, MATR3 has been widely studied in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis^[28-30]. However, the research progressed on circRNA from MATR3 in glioma remains unreported. In this study, we first verified that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues was higher than that in normal tissues. Statistical analysis showed that the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was significantly correlated with WHO grade, indicating that hsa_circ_0008922 could be a significant role in the progression of malignant glioma. And the expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was significantly correlated with tumor size and Ki-67, which indicated that hsa_circ_0008922 could have a significant function in proliferation of glioma cells. Down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 expression in glioma cell lines A172 and U251 can significantly inhibit the proliferation, migration, and invasion of the two cells, indicating that hsa_circ_0008922 may become a new molecule for molecular targeted therapy.

Previous studies have shown that circRNA is often used as a miRNA sponge to regulate the expression of miRNA in various cancers, forming a circRNA-miRNA-mRNA network to regulate the expression of downstream target genes and affect the development of cancer^[31, 32]. For example, hsa_circ_0003222 promoted stem cell differentiation and progression of non-small cell lung cancer through miR-527^[33]. Therefore, in this study, we predicted miRNAs regulated by hsa_circ_0008922 through bioinformatics analysis, and selected 5 miRNAs for bioinformatics prediction based on predicted binding fraction and free energy. Previous studies have shown that hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7e-5p and hsa-let-7c-5p were all tumor suppressors. In 2019, Xi et al. found that hsa-let-7b-5p could inhibit the migration, invasion, and cell cycle of glioma cells^[34]. Another study found that hsa-let-7e-5p as a tumor suppressor could inhibit the progression of head and neck squamous cell carcinoma by targeting CCR7 expression^[35]. A study reported by Fu et al in 2017 demonstrated that hsa-let-7c-5p may act as a tumor suppressor of breast cancer by negatively regulating ERCC6, providing a new strategy for breast cancer treatment^[36]. Thus, the interaction between the hsa_circ_0008922 and these three members of the hsa-let-7 miRNA family may broaden our view for their functions in glioma.

It was **interested** that a gene called DNA polymerase lambda (POLL) may be regulated by above mentioned three miRNAs (hsa-let-7b-5p, hsa-let-7e-5p and hsa-let-7c-5p), simultaneously, and its expression may be negatively correlated with the expression of these three miRNAs. Now, there is a report that POLL is differentially expressed in IDH (lactate dehydrogenase) mutant and wild type carriers, relating to the survival rate of patients with LGG^[37]. In future, a series of experiments such as RIP (RNA Binding Protein Immunoprecipitation Assay), RNA pull-down assay and luciferase reporter gene assay have to be performed to illustrate the complicate

function of hsa_circ_0008922 in this circRNA-miRNA-mRNA network.

We performed GO analysis and KEGG analysis on the target genes negatively correlated with 5 miRNAs, and the results showed that hsa_circ_0008922 regulates cancer-related functions and signaling pathways by regulating several miRNAs to play a carcinogenic role. GO analysis showed that the enriched functions of mRNA negatively correlated with miRNAs were mainly related to cell cycle, including regulation of transcription involved in G1/S transition of mitotic cell cycle and mitotic sister chromatid cohesion. Enriched functions were also demonstrated in relating to apoptosis, including negative regulation of intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway in response to DNA damage by p53 class mediator^[38, 39], negative regulation of cAMP-mediated signaling^[40]. In the result of KEGG analysis, enriched pathways of mRNA negatively correlated with miRNAs were mainly related to tumor, e. g. microRNAs in cancer signaling pathway, glioma signaling pathway. It was also included in cell cycle signaling pathway, Ras signaling pathway^[41], AMPK signaling pathway^[42], and mTOR signaling pathway^[43]. However, it needs to further confirmation.

In summary, this is first time to report the up-regulated hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma and use bioinformatics to analyze the possible biological processes and signaling pathways regulated by hsa_circ_0008922. This study may provide a future direction for further studying hsa_circ_0008922 in the auxiliary diagnosis and treatment of glioma.

Conclusions

Glioma highly expressed hsa_circ_0008922, which could affect the proliferation, migration, and apoptosis of glioma cells. And hsa_circ_0008922 may server as a sponge for multiple miRNAs.

Acknowledgements

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Figure legends

Figure 1 Identify hsa_circ_0008922. (A) Schematic diagram of the ring formation mechanism of hsa_circ_0008922. (B) Agarose gel electrophoresis was used to detect the stability of hsa_circ_0008922. M is DNA marker. RNase R⁺ represents RNA treated with RNase.R. RNase R⁻ represents RNA treated without RNase.R. “◄►” represents divergent primers. “►◄” represents convergent primers. (C) NCBI Blast was used to compare the consistency of PCR product sequencing results with the target sequence. Arrows and red line segments indicate circularization sites.

Figure 2 hsa_circ_0008922 expression in glioma tissues by qRT-PCR (A) The expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in glioma tissues (n=40) were compared as normal brain tissues (n=10). (B) The expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was investigated between the groups of normal brain tissues (n=10), low-grade tumor (n=20) and high-grade tumor (n=20). (C) The expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was analyzed in different pathological types of glioma (normal brain tissues n=10, astrocytoma n=23, glioblastoma n=15, oligodendroglioma n=2). Data is expressed as mean ± SEM. P < 0.05.

Figure 3 Identify hsa_circ_0008922 expression in glioma cell lines and select siRNA

fragments. (A) The relative expression of hsa_circ_0008922 in common glioma cell lines (SF763, U87, U251, A172) was detected. (B and C) The hsa_circ_0008922 was down-regulated in A172 and U251 cells, and the knock-down efficiency of the two siRNA fragments was detected at 48 h and 72 h. s1-hsa_circ_0008922 and s2-hsa_circ_0008922 represent two siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $**P < 0.01$, $***P < 0.001$, ns indicates no statistically significant difference.

Figure 4 hsa_circ_0008922 regulates wound healing of A172 and U251 cells. (A and B) After down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in A172, the scratch images at different time points were taken. (C and D) The quantitative results of scratch experiments in the NC group and the s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group in the A172 and U251 were counted. The ordinate is healing rate. The abscissa is the detection time point. s2-hsa_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $**P < 0.01$, $***P < 0.001$.

Figure 5 hsa_circ_0008922 attenuated migration and invasion of A172 and U251 cells. (A and D) After down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, the graphs of migration and invasion were taken. (B, C, D and F) After down-regulating hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, the quantitative results of migration and invasion experiments in NC group and s2-hsa_circ_0008922 group were counted. The vertical axis is the number of cells. s2-hsa_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $*P < 0.05$, $**P < 0.01$.

Figure 6 Down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibited the colony formation and cell viability of A172 and U251 cells. (A and B) Cell colony formation was detected by plate cloning after hsa_circ_0008922 was down-regulated in A172 and U251. (C and D) After down-regulating hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, cell viability was detected by CCK8. The ordinate is OD value. The abscissa is the detection time point (0 h, 24 h, 48 h, 72 h, 96 h). s2-hsa_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $*P < 0.05$, $**P < 0.01$.

Figure 7 Down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibited apoptosis of A172 and U251 cells. (A) Cell apoptosis was detected by flow cytometry after down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251. (B and C) The apoptosis results of A172 and U251 were calculated. The ordinate is the apoptosis rate. (D) After down-regulating hsa_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, WB was used to detect apoptosis-related protein expression. (E and F) The quantification results of A172 and U251 apoptosis protein were analyzed. The ordinate is the relative protein expression. The abscissa is the detected protein. s2-hsa_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $**P < 0.01$, $***P < 0.001$.

Figure 8 Prediction of the networks of circRNA-miRNA-mRNA. (A) The interaction network between hsa_circ_0008922 and its downstream miRNAs was constructed. The blue square represents hsa_circ_0008922. Red circles indicate miRNAs. The line segment between the blue square and the red circle indicates a targeting relationship. The darker the line segment, the lower the predicted free energy, and the wider the line segment, the higher the predicted binding score. (B) Venn plots of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 were drawn. Numbers in red circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs in Linkedomics. Numbers in blue circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs

in miRDB. Numbers in green circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs in miRWalk. (C) The interaction network between miRNA and its interacting mRNA was constructed. Red represents miRNA. white and blue represent mRNA; The larger the red circle, the higher the number of mRNAs interacting with the miRNA. The darker the circle, the higher the number of miRNAs interacting with the mRNA. The red line segment represents a positive correlation, and the wider the line segment, the stronger the positive correlation. The blue line segment represents a negative correlation, and the wider the line segment, the stronger the negative correlation.

Figure 9 Analysis of the function of mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs. (A) A bubble plot of the top 30 enriched GO terms in mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 was drawn. The y-axis represents the enrichment of the top 30 items, and the x-axis represents the enrichment score. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of mRNAs in the GO term. Bubble colors represent p-values. (B) A bubble plot of the top 30 enriched pathways in mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 was drawn. The y-axis represents the enrichment of the top 30 items, and the x-axis represents the enrichment score. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of mRNAs in the pathway. Bubble colors represent p-values.

Figure 1

Identify hsa_circ_0008922

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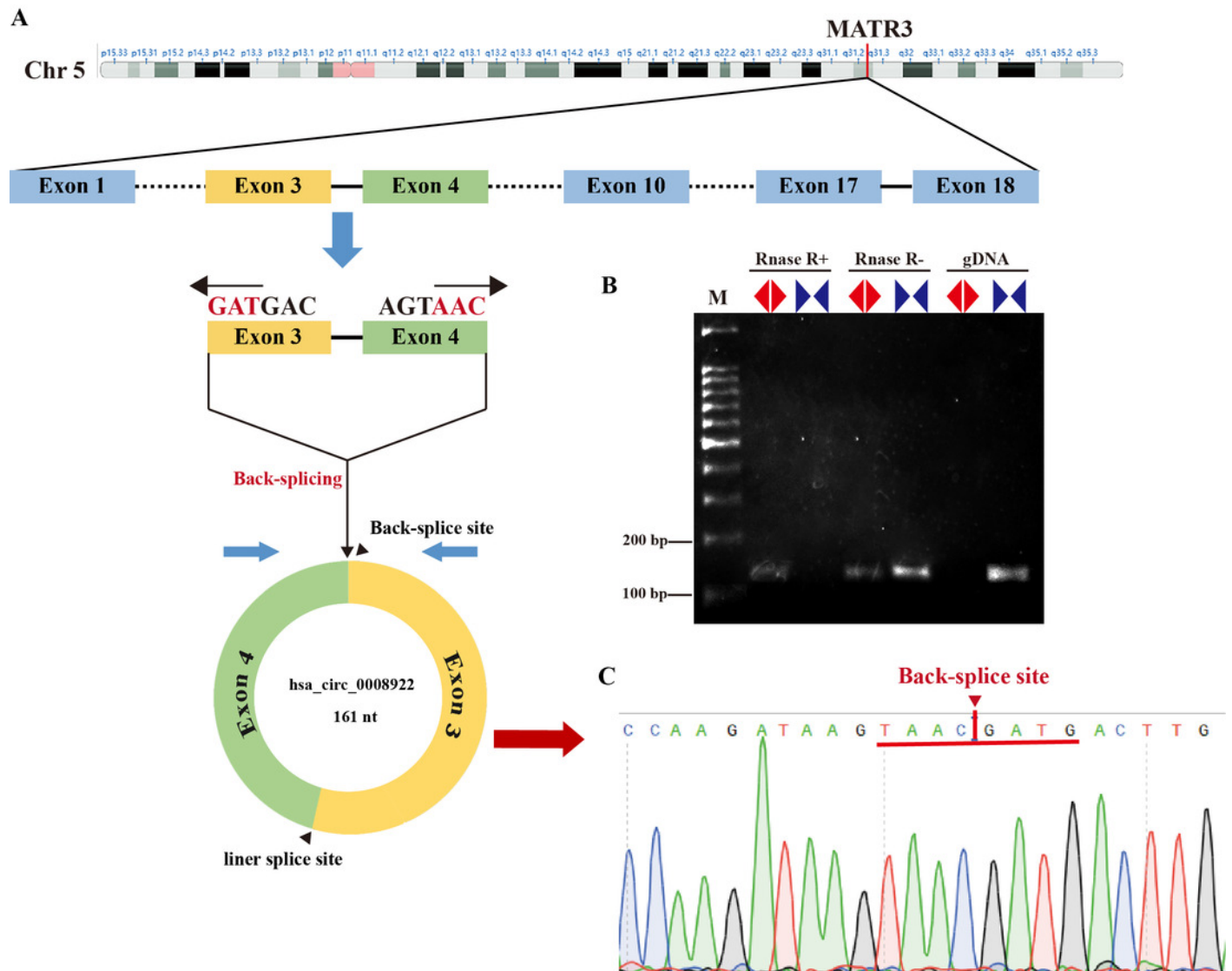


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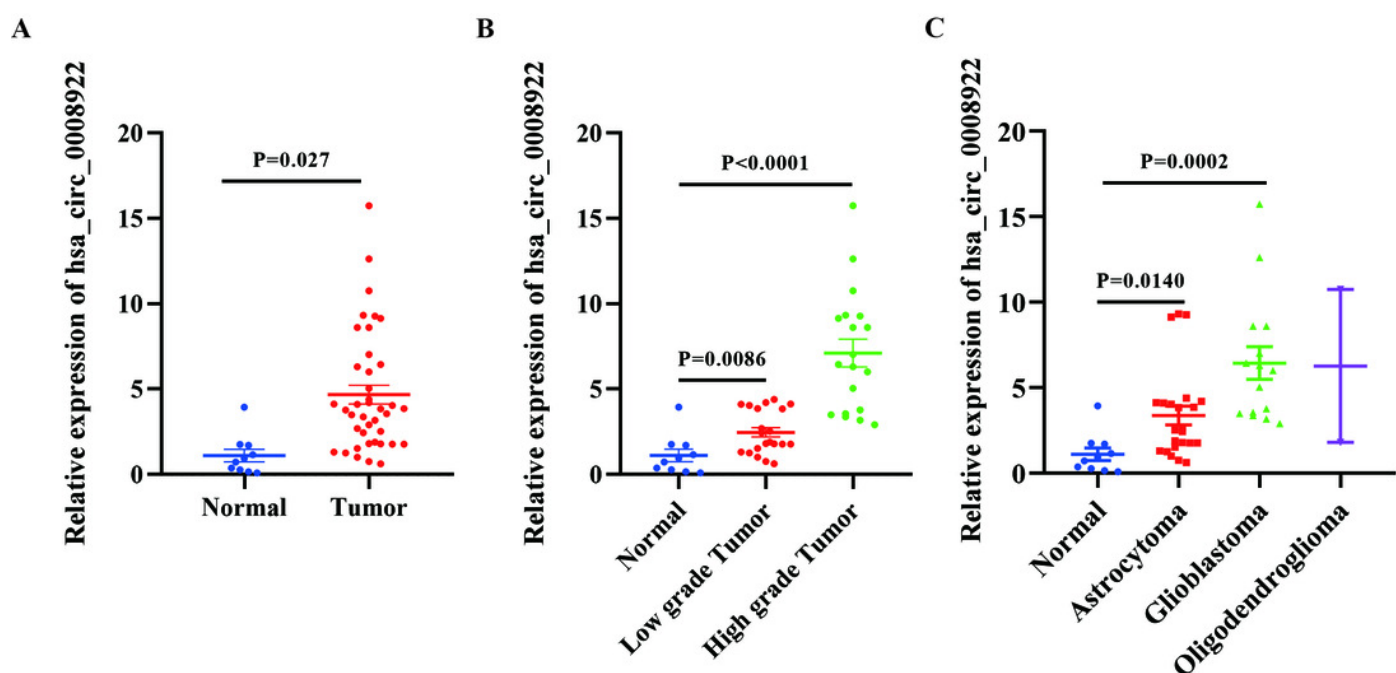


Figure 3

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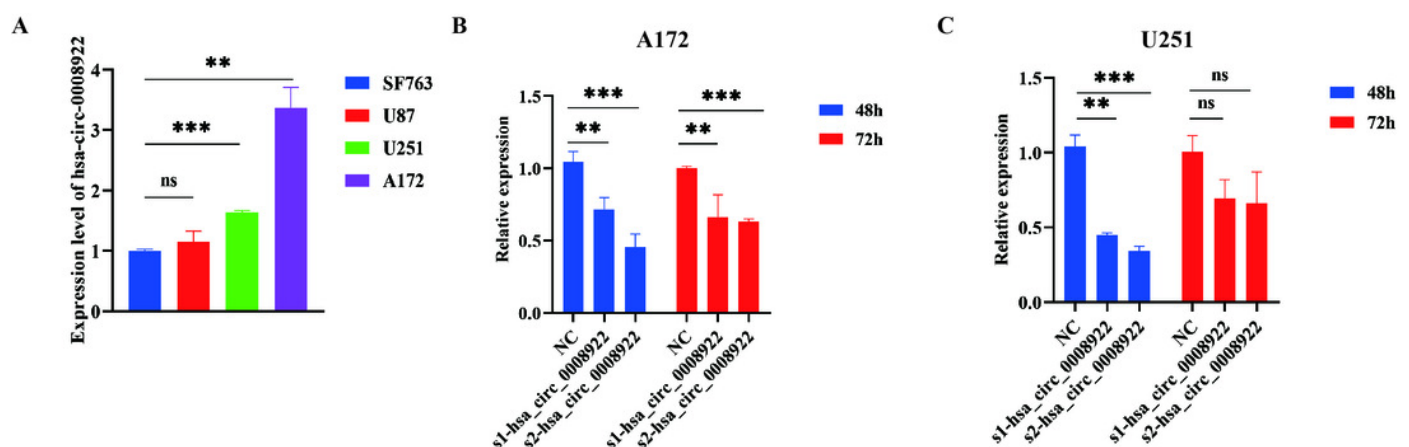


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hsa_circ_0008922 regulates wound healing of A172 and U251 cells

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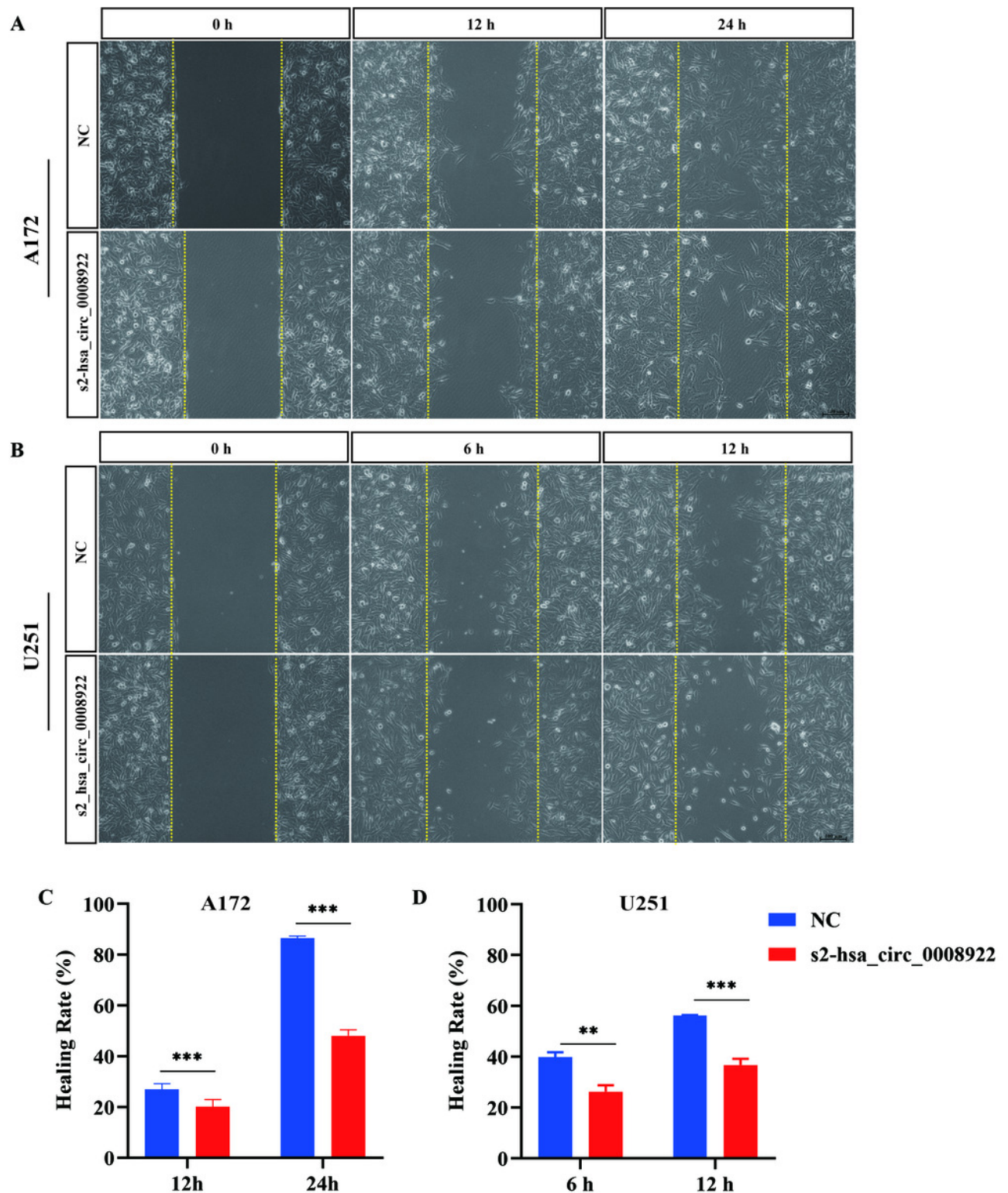


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hsa_circ_0008922 attenuated migration and invasion of A172 and U251 cells

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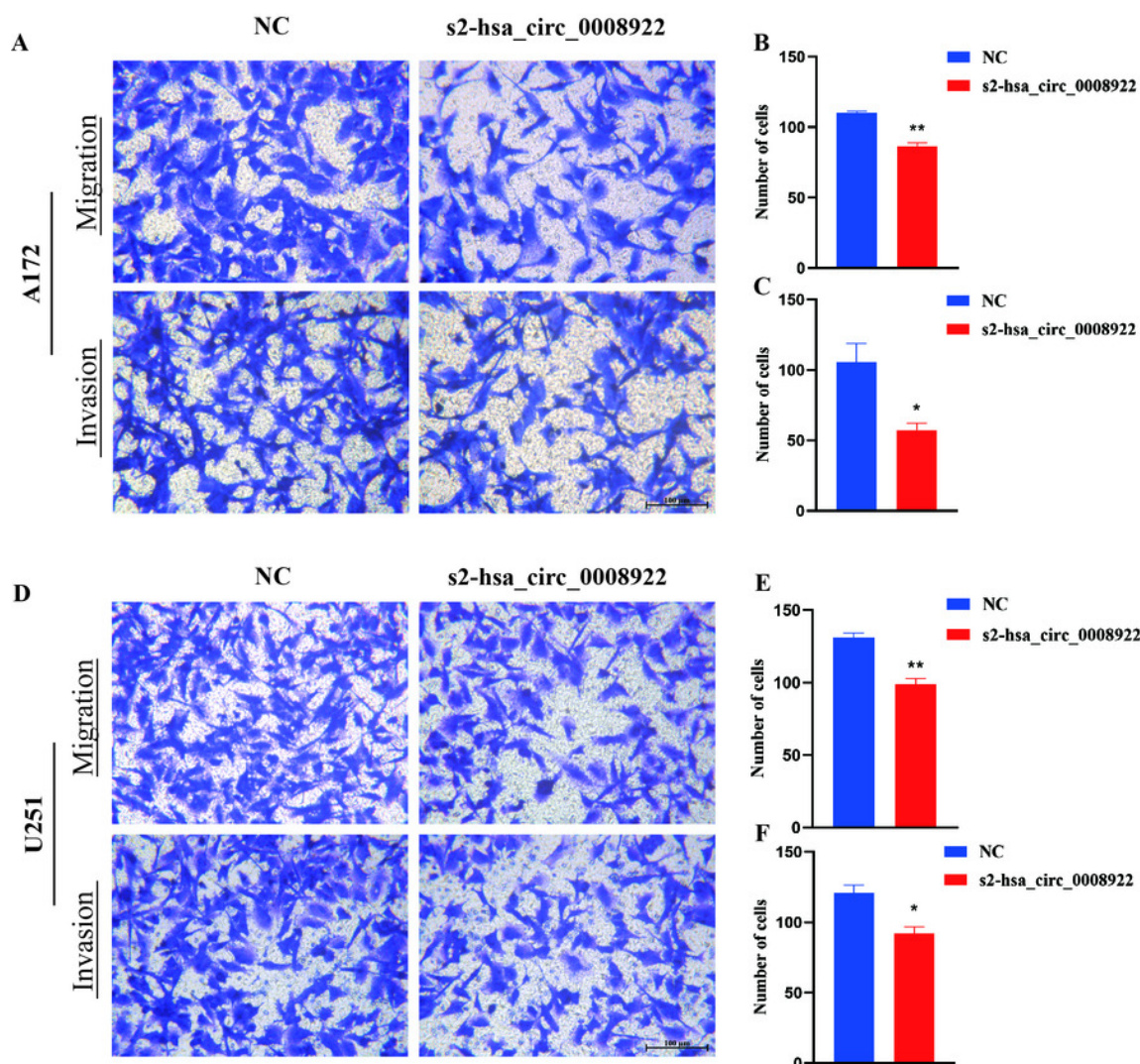


Figure 6

Down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibited the colony formation and cell viability of A172 and U251 cells.

(A and B) Cell colony formation was detected by plate cloning after has_circ_0008922 was down-regulated in A172 and U251. (C and D) After down-regulating has_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, cell viability was detected by CCK8. The ordinate is OD value. The abscissa is the detection time point (0 h, 24 h, 48 h, 72 h, 96 h). s2-has_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$.

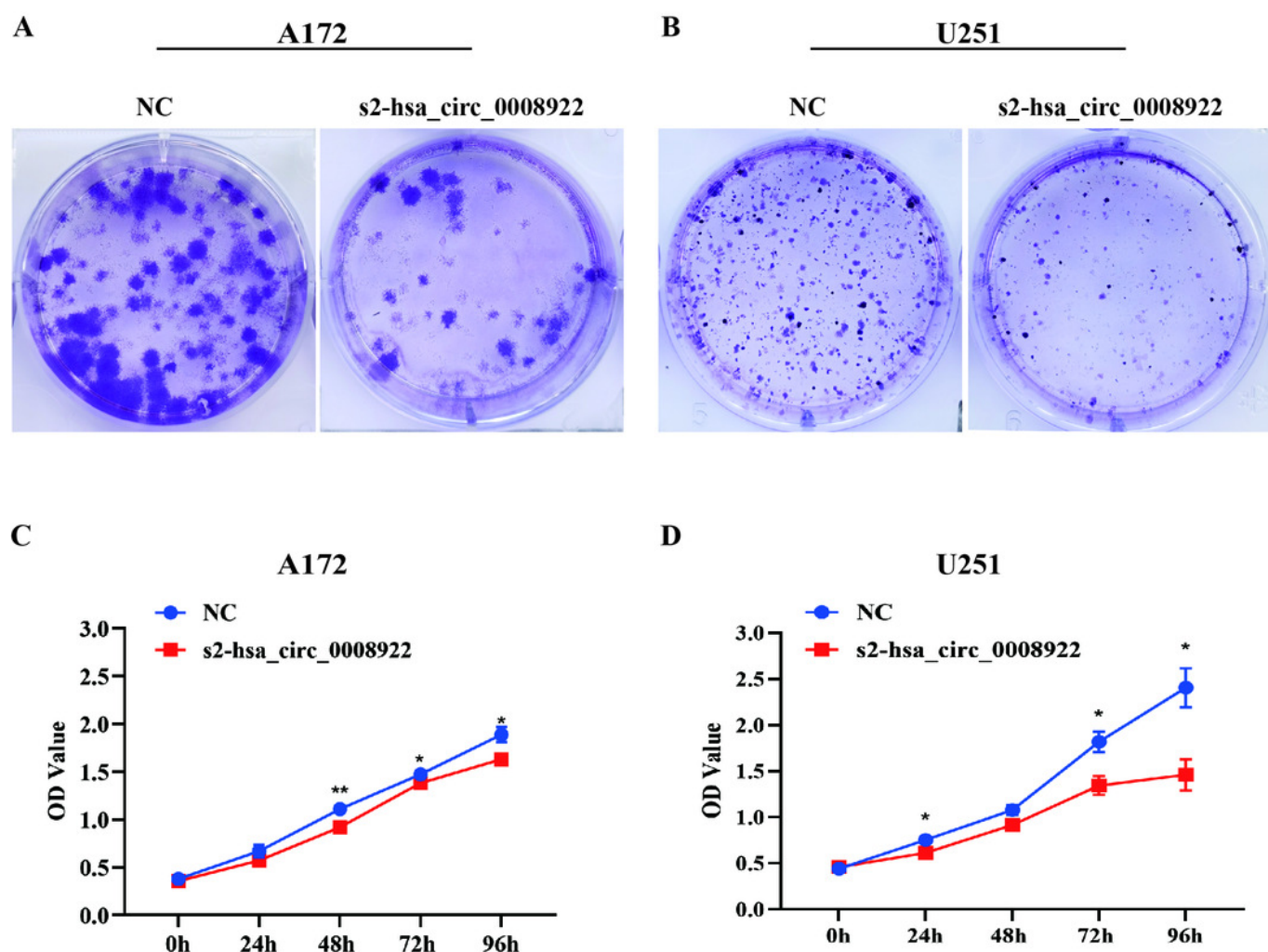


Figure 7

Down-regulation of hsa_circ_0008922 inhibited apoptosis of A172 and U251

.(A) Cell apoptosis was detected by flow cytometry after down-regulation of has_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251. (B and C) The apoptosis results of A172 and U251 were calculated. The ordinate is the apoptosis rate. (D) After down-regulating has_circ_0008922 in A172 and U251, WB was used to detect apoptosis-related protein expression. (E and F) The quantification results of A172 and U251 apoptosis protein were analyzed. The ordinate is the relative protein expression. The abscissa is the detected protein. s2-has_circ_0008922 represents the second siRNA fragments. Data is expressed as mean \pm SEM. $**P < 0.01$, $***P < 0.001$.

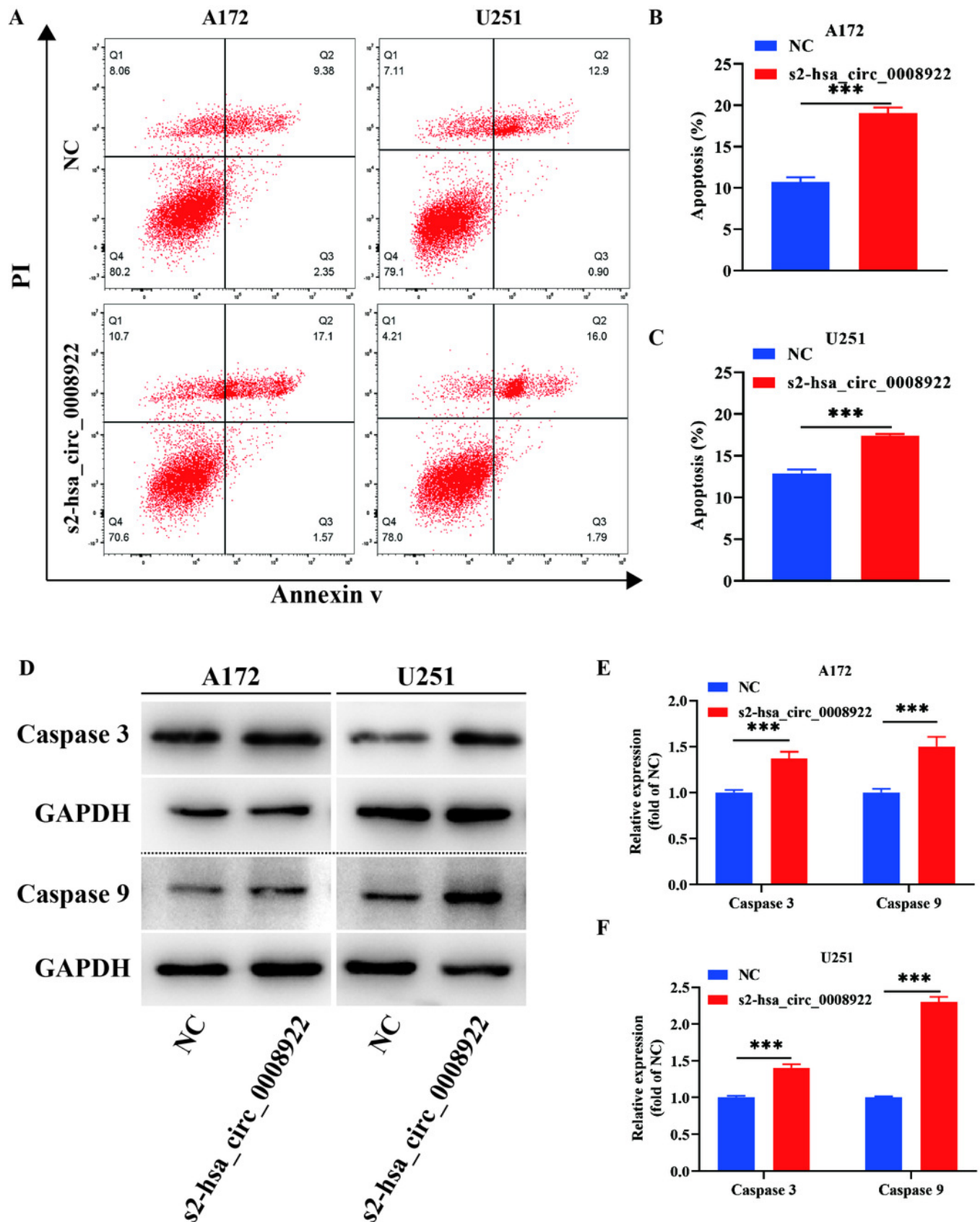


Figure 8

Prediction of the networks of circRNA-miRNA-mRNA

A) The interaction network between hsa_circ_0008922 and its downstream miRNAs was constructed. The blue square represents hsa_circ_0008922. Red circles indicate miRNAs. The line segment between the blue square and the red circle indicates a targeting relationship. The darker the line segment, the lower the predicted free energy, and the wider the line segment, the higher the predicted binding score. (B) Venn plots of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 were drawn. Numbers in red circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs in Linkedomics. Numbers in blue circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs in miRDB. Numbers in green circles indicate the number of mRNAs interacting with miRNAs in miRWalk. (C) The interaction network between miRNA and its interacting mRNA was constructed. Red represents miRNA. white and blue represent mRNA; The larger the red circle, the higher the number of mRNAs interacting with the miRNA. The darker the circle, the higher the number of miRNAs interacting with the mRNA. The red line segment represents a positive correlation, and the wider the line segment, the stronger the positive correlation. The blue line segment represents a negative correlation, and the wider the line segment, the stronger the negative correlation.

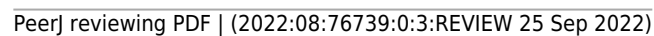


Figure 9

Analysis of the function of mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs

(A) A bubble plot of the top 30 enriched GO terms in mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 was drawn. The y-axis represents the enrichment of the top 30 items, and the x-axis represents the enrichment score. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of mRNAs in the GO term. Bubble colors represent p-values. (B) A bubble plot of the top 30 enriched pathways in mRNAs negatively correlated with miRNAs downstream of hsa_circ_0008922 was drawn. The y-axis represents the enrichment of the top 30 items, and the x-axis represents the enrichment score. The size of the bubbles indicates the number of mRNAs in the pathway. Bubble colors represent p-values.

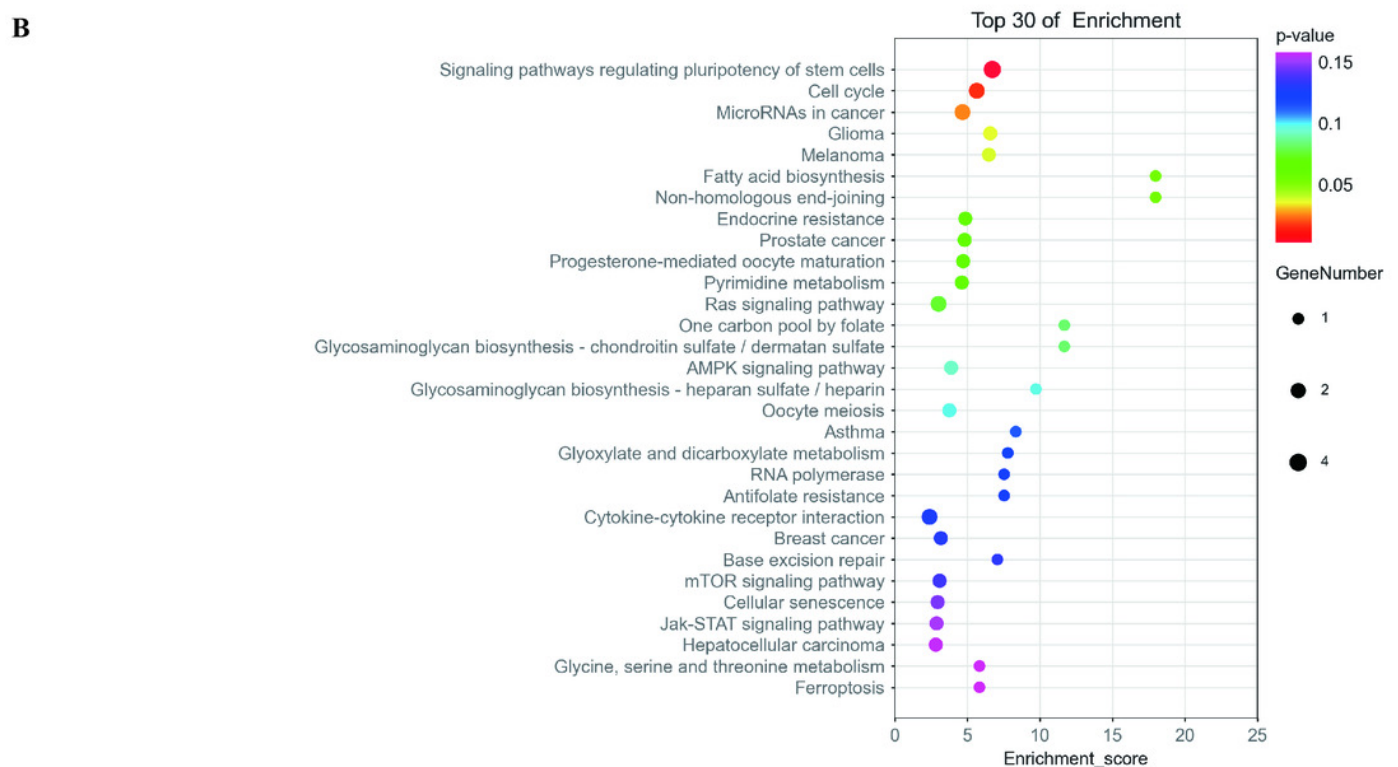
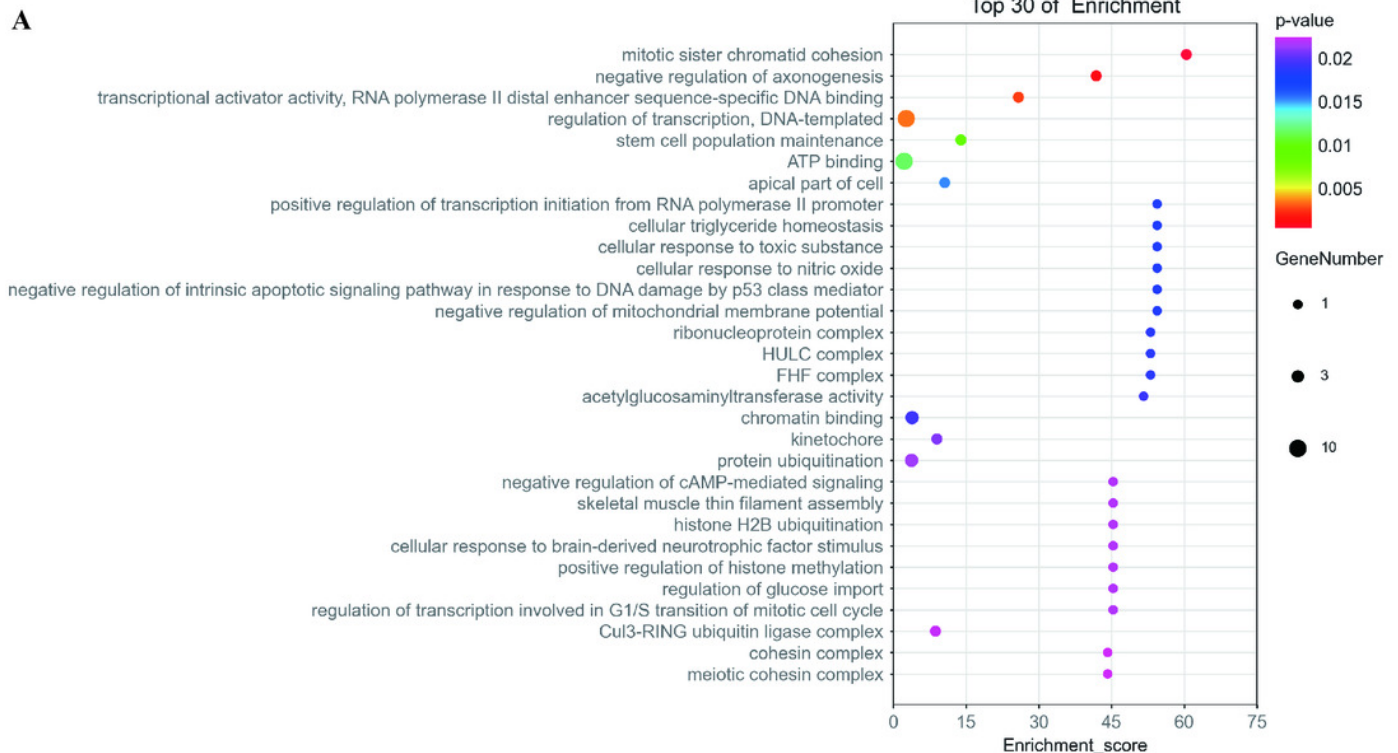


Table 1(on next page)

Clinicopathologic characteristics of GBM patients

GFAP: glial fibrillary acidic protein; P53: tumor protein p53; Ki67: marker of proliferation
Ki-67; MGMT: O6-methyl-guanine DNA methyltransferase; KPS: Karnofsky Performance
Status. IDH and 1p/19q CDeletion did not cover all specimens due to missing specimen
information.

1 Table 1 Clinicopathologic characteristics of GBM patients

Items	Groups	Overall Information, n
Age (years)	< 42	20
	≥ 42	20
Gender	Male	23
	Female	17
Tumor size (diameter)	< 5 cm	20
	> 5 cm	20
WHO grade	Low grade (I-II)	21
	High grade (III-IV)	19
GFAP	- / +	40
	++ / +++	0
P53	- / +	28
	++ / +++	12
Ki-67	< 20 %	22
	≥ 20 %	18
MGMT	-	16
	+	24
KPS	< 70	14
	≥ 70	26
1p/19q codeletion	codeletion	6
	non-codeletion	1
IDH	Wt	12
	Mut	10

2 GFAP: glial fibrillary acidic protein; P53: tumor protein p53; Ki67: marker of proliferation Ki-67; MGMT: O6-
3 methyl-guanine DNA methyltransferase; KPS: Karnofsky Performance Status. IDH and 1p/19q COdeletion did
4 not cover all specimens due to missing specimen information.

5

Table 2 (on next page)

Correlation between hsa_circ_0008922 expression and clinicopathological parameters of glioma patients

GFAP: glial fibrillary acidic protein; P53: tumor protein p53; Ki67: marker of proliferation Ki-67; MGMT: O6-methyl-guanine DNA methyltransferase; KPS: Karnofsky Performance Status. The relative expression of hsa_circ_0008922 was less than 3.8074, which was low expression. And conversely, it was high expression. ### indicated that statistical analysis cannot be carried out due to data distribution.

1 Table 2 Correlation between hsa_circ_0008922 expression and clinicopathological parameters of glioma patients

Items		hsa_circ_0008922 expression, n (%)		P
		Low	High	
Total		20	20	
Gender	Male	14 (70)	9 (45)	0.110
	Female	6 (30)	11 (55)	
Age (years)	< 45	13 (65)	11 (55)	0.519
	≥ 45	7 (35)	9 (45)	
Tumor size (diameter)	< 5 cm	18 (90)	2 (10)	0.000
	> 5 cm	2 (10)	18 (90)	
WHO grade	I-II	14 (70)	7 (35)	0.027
	III-IV	6 (30)	13 (65)	
GFAP	- / +	20 (100)	20 (100)	###
	++ / +++	0 (0)	0 (0)	
P53	- / +	15 (75)	13 (65)	0.49
	++ / +++	5 (25)	7 (35)	
Ki-67 (%)	< 20 %	16 (80)	6 (30)	< 0.001
	≥ 20 %	4 (20)	14 (70)	
MGMT	-	6 (30)	10 (50)	0.197
	+	14 (70)	10 (50)	
KPS	< 70	5 (25)	9 (45)	0.185
	≥ 70	15 (75)	11 (55)	

2 GFAP: glial fibrillary acidic protein; P53: tumor protein p53; Ki67: marker of proliferation Ki-67; MGMT: O6-
3 methyl-guanine DNA methyltransferase; KPS: Karnofsky Performance Status. The relative expression of
4 hsa_circ_0008922 was less than 3.8074, which was low expression. And conversely, it was high expression. ###
5 indicated that statistical analysis cannot be carried out due to data distribution.

6

Table 3(on next page)

Prediction of binding sites between miRNA and hsa_circ_0008922

Score: Score predicted by miranda; Energy: The free energy predicted by miranda; Target

Positions: The binding initiation site on hsa_circ_0008922.

1 Table 3 Prediction of binding sites between miRNA and hsa_circ_0008922

miRNA	Target	Score	Energy	miRNA Length	Target Positions
hsa-let-7e-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	158	-16.84	22	91
hsa-miR-506-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	155	-16.57	22	76
hsa-let-7b-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	154	-17.03	22	91
hsa-let-7c-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	154	-15.93	22	91
hsa-let-7g-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	154	-14.88	22	91
hsa-mir-98-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	150	-12	22	91
hsa-let-7d-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	150	-14.79	22	91
hsa-let-7i-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	147	-13.24	22	88
hsa-miR-377-3p	hsa_circ_0008922	143	-13.37	22	126
hsa-mir-605-3p	hsa_circ_0008922	157	-14.73	22	71
hsa-let-7a-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	158	-15.82	22	91
hsa-let-7f-5p	hsa_circ_0008922	150	-12	22	91
hsa-miR-4458	hsa_circ_0008922	156	-19.13	19	93
hsa-miR-4500	hsa_circ_0008922	146	-11.62	17	93

2 Score: Score predicted by miranda; Energy: The free energy predicted by miranda; Target Positions: The binding
 3 initiation site on hsa_circ_0008922.

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