

CD1C was identified as a potential biomarker by the comprehensive exploration of tumor mutational burden and immune infiltration in diffuse large B cell lymphoma (#82787)

1

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CD1C was identified as a potential biomarker by the comprehensive exploration of tumor mutational burden and immune infiltration in diffuse large B cell lymphoma

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Background: Tumor mutational burden (TMB) is a useful biomarker to predict prognosis. This study was to explore the prognostic value of TMB and the potential association between TMB and immune infiltration in DLBCL.

Methods: We downloaded the gene expression profile, somatic mutation and clinical data of DLBCL patients from the Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) database. TMB was calculated and we classified the samples into high- and low-TMB group in order to identify differentially expressed genes (DEGs). Functional enrichments analyzes were performed to identify the biological functiona of the DEGs. Besides, we utilized the CIBERSORT algorithm to estimate the abundance of 22 immune fractions, and the significant difference were determined by Wilcoxon rank-sum test between high- and low-TMB group. Hub gene had been screened as the prognostic TMB-related immune biomarker by the combination of the Immunology Database and Analysis Portal (ImmPort) database and the univariate Cox analysis from the Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) database including three DLBCL datasets. Various database application (TIMER, CellMiner, knockTF, GETx) verified the functions of target gene.

Results: SNP occurred more frequently than insertion and deletion, and C > T was the most common of SNV in DLBCL. Survival analysis showed that high-TMB group conferred poor survival outcomes. A total of 62 DEGs were obtained and 13 TMB-related immune genes were identified. Univariate Cox analysis result illustrated that CD1C mutation was associated with lower TMB and manifested a satisfactory clinical prognosis by analysis of large samples from GEO database. In addition, infiltration levels of immune cells in high-TMB group were lower. Using the TIMER database, we further systematically analyzed the relationships between mutants of CD1C and immune infiltration levels. Drug sensitivity showed that there was a significant correlation between CD1C expression level and clinical drug sensitivity from CellMiner database. KnockTF database was used to comprehensively explore the regulation of gene-related transcription factors and signaling pathways. We searched the GETx database to compare the mRNA expression levels of CD1C between lymphoma and normal tissues and the results suggested that there was significant difference between tumor and normal tissues in most studies.

Conclusions: Higher TMB correlated with poor survival outcomes and might inhibit the immune infiltrates in DLBCL. Our results suggest that CD1C is a TMB-related prognostic biomarker.

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords Diffuse large B cell lymphoma, tumor mutational burden, immune infiltration, CD1C, prognostic biomarker

INTRODUCTION

Diffuse large B-cell lymphomas (DLBCL), comprising approximately 30% of all non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL) cases, are the most common NHL types (Lenz & Staudt, 2010). And the incidence rate of DLBCL is over 40 per 100,000 individuals in adults ages 70 years and older (Morton et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2015; Teras et al., 2016). DLBCL is a heterogeneous subtype of aggressive B-cell neoplasm with varied clinical, immunophenotypic, cytogenetic, and genetic features (Berglund et al., 2002; Lossos & Morgensztern, 2006; Schmitz et al., 2018; Sehn & Gascoyne, 2015). About 70% of DLBCL patients are located in the advanced stage and require systemic therapy (Morin et al., 2011; Sehn & Gascoyne, 2015). Currently, the standard chemotherapy regimen is R-CHOP (B. Coiffier et al., 2002; Czuczman et al., 1999; Roschewski, Staudt, & Wilson, 2014; Vose et al., 2001), but about 10% to 15% of patients receiving R-CHOP is under a primary refractory disease (i.e., incomplete remission or relapse within 6 months of treatment) (Chaganti et al., 2016; B. Coiffier et al., 2002; Bertrand Coiffier et al., 2010; S. Li, Young, & Medeiros, 2018). Another 20%-25% of patients progress 2 years after initial remission (Chaganti et al., 2016; Crump et al., 2017; Sehn & Gascoyne, 2015). Therefore, it is urgent to identify new biomarkers for clinical diagnosis and treatment of DLBCL.

In recent years, immunotherapy has become a common treatment for metastatic and invasive tumors (Finn, 2012; Topalian et al., 2015; Tran, Robbins, & Rosenberg, 2017). Tumor immunotherapy is a treatment that uses the body's immune system to attack cancer cells (Conlon et al., 2015; Farkona, Diamandis, & Blasutig, 2016). Immunotherapy mainly includes tumor vaccines, biotherapy, CAR-T therapy, and immune checkpoint inhibitors (Efremova, Finotello, Rieder, & Trajanoski, 2017; Khalil, Smith, Brentjens, & Wolchok, 2016). More and more studies have shown that molecular targets related to the tumor microenvironment invasion may become the key of immunotherapy (Shain, Dalton, & Tao, 2015).

Based on advances in gene sequencing and expression profiling, studies have shown that the prognosis of DLBCL patients is related to TME (Ciavarella et al., 2019; Nicholas, Apollonio, & Ramsay, 2016). For example, immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICI) have shown significant efficacy in some refractory hematological malignancies (Thanarajasingam, Thanarajasingam, & Ansell, 2016). Tumor mutation burden (TMB) is the number of somatic mutations per megabase (Mb) of the genome in a tumor, representing genomic instability (Chalmers et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2020; Schumacher & Schreiber, 2015). Tumors with a high mutation burden are more likely to induce neoantigen production, so TMB has become a predictor of the response rate to immune checkpoint inhibitors (Schumacher & Schreiber, 2015). Previous studies have shown that TMB is associated with cancer immunotherapy response and cancer prognosis (Chan et al., 2019; Samstein et al., 2019; X. Wang & Li, 2019).

In this study, we collected somatic mutation data, transcriptome data, and clinical information from the TCGA database, aiming to study the association between TMB and gene mutation, immune response, and prognosis of DLBCL combined with immune infiltration. We attempted to elucidate the relationships between TMB groups and clinicopathological factors, between TMB groups and different immune-infiltrating cells, and between TMB groups and prognosis. The results of these studies may provide novel biomarkers and potential treatment options for DLBCL.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Acquisition of somatic mutation data and expression profile from TCGA.

We obtained the somatic mutation profile from the publicly available TCGA database via the GDC data portal (<https://portal.gdc.cancer.gov/>). Among the four subtypes of files, “Masked Somatic Mutation” data were selected and processed based on VarScan software. Summarizing, analyzing, annotating, and visualizing mutation annotation format (MAF) files used to store detected somatic variation using the “maftools” bioconductor package. In addition, we also downloaded HTseq-FPKM transcription profile from UCSC Xena (<https://xena.ucsc.edu/>), which were respectively of TCGA-DLBC tumor samples and normal samples of “Cells-EBV-Transformed Lymphocytes” locating in GETx database (<https://www.gtexportal.org/home/>). Corresponding clinical information was also collected from UCSC Xena, including age, sex, tumor grade, pathological stage, TNM stage, survival time, and OSensor.

Calculation of TMB score of each sample and prognostic analysis.

TMB values for each sample were determined by measuring the total number of nonsynonymous detected per million bases, which could be calculated as (whole counts of gene variants) / (the whole length of exons). In our study, we calculated the mutation frequency of variation/exon length (38 million) per sample based on the “maftools” R package. TCGA-DLBC samples were subdivided into low- (18 cases) and high- (19 cases) TMB groups according to the median data. Then, TMB mutation data were combined with the corresponding survival data by sample ID and Kaplan-Meier (KM) analysis was performed to compare survival differences between the low- and high-TMB groups with log-rank sum test. In addition, the association between TMB and clinical features was further assessed, in which the Wilcoxon rank-sum test was used to calculate the p-value for the two groups, and the Kruskal-Wallis (KW) test was used for three or more groups.

Differentially expressed genes and functional pathways analysis.

According to TMB level, the transcriptome profile was assigned into low- and high-TMB groups by R software. “limma” R package was used to identify the DEGs between the low- and high-TMB groups, and the thresholds were set at p-value < 0.05 and $|\log_2(\text{fold change})| > 1.0$. A heat map was drawn by using the “pheatmap” R package. Then, the entreID of each DEG was generated using the “org.Hs.eg.db” R package and we used the “clusterProfiler”, “GOplot”, “ggplot2” R packages for Gene Ontology (GO) analysis, and “enrichplot” for Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) enrichment analysis. Besides, we performed gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA; <https://genepattern.broadinstitute.org/>) (Hung, Yang, Hu, Weng, & DeLisi, 2012) based on the JAVA8 platform using the TMB group as the phenotype and TCGA-DLBC mRNA expression profile as expression spectrum data file. Then we selected “c2.cp.kegg.v6.2.symbol.gmt” gene set as a reference gene set which it is derived from MsigDB Database (<http://software.broadinstitute.org/gsea/msigdb/>). The significant enrichment pathway was considered only when p-value < 0.05.

Co-analyses of TMB and immune infiltration.

We evaluated the proportion of immune cells using the deconvolution algorithm CIBERSORT (<https://cibersort.stanford.edu/>). CIBERSORT (CIBERSORT R Script V1.03) was a general calculation method that can accurately estimate the composition of 22 immune cells in tumor tissues by combining the prior knowledge of the composition spectrum of purified leukocyte subsets with support vector regression (Newman et al., 2015). We then identified the differences in the composition of immune cells between low- and high-TMB groups and the number of permutations were set to 1000 as well as p-value < 0.05. The “pheatmap” R package showed the distribution of immune cells between the two groups and the “vioplot” package was used to show the differential immune infiltration by the Wilcoxon rank-sum test. The threshold p-value < 0.05 was the standard to calculate the significance of a single immune cell between the two groups. In addition, we obtained a list of 2483 immune-related genes from the Immunology Database and Analysis Portal (<https://www.immport.org/>). The “VennDiagram” R package was used to screen the intersecting genes between TMB-DEGs and immune-related genes. Univariate

Cox regression analysis was performed to determine the prognostic TMB-related immune genes using “survival”, “survminer” and “forestplot” R packages.

Validating the prognostic TMB-related immune genes in the GEO database.

We systematically searched for the GEO database (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/geo/>) open clinical annotations of DLBCL gene expression profile data, and obtained the three datasets, including GSE10846, GSE31312, GSE32918. Then proceed with datasets processing, (i) Data downloading, download dataset file of a series matrix; (ii) Background correction and standardization of data, such as quantile standardization; (iii) Using GPL570 and GPL8432 annotation files for ID translation; (iv) The same gene corresponds to multiple probes, and the average value of the probes was calculated as the expression level; (v) Complete expression profile data files and corresponding clinical information of patients, including survival time and survival status, were obtained. As a result, 1133 DLBCL samples were selected, including 470 (GSE31312), 249 (GSE32918), and 414 (GSE10846) samples. The Combat function in the “sva” R package was used to remove the batch effect and integrated three datasets to obtain the expression spectrum. Prognostic TMB-related immune genes were screened to verify whether there was a statistical significance between their expression and prognosis in GSE datasets. We selected 5 TMB-related immune genes with $|\log_2(\text{fold change})| > 1$ and p-value < 0.05 to further assess the prognostic value of differential immune genes in patients with low- and high-TMB levels. Kaplan-Meier analysis was conducted via a “for cycle” R script to find the hub immune genes associated with survival outcomes.

Copy number variations and correlated immune cells of prognostic TMB-related immune genes.

Tumor Immune Estimation Resource database (TIMER, <https://cistrome.shinyapps.io/timer/>), a web server for comprehensive analysis of tumor infiltrating immune cells, was used to estimate the abundance of six types of immune infiltrating cells such as B cells, CD4+ T cells, neutrophils, macrophages, and dendritic cells (T. Li et al., 2020). Changes in copy Number Variations (CNV) were observed in prognostic TMB-related immune genes, and the correlations between CNV and immune cells abundance, and between immune cells and survival were further assessed.

Analysis of drug sensitivity of target genes.

The drug sensitivity data used in this study were obtained from the CellMiner database (<https://discover.nci.nih.gov/cellminer/home.do>) (Reinhold et al., 2012). The transcriptome and drug sensitivity data of the same batch of samples were downloaded, and the expression profile of the target gene and drugs verified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) were retained by sorting the data. Then, the correlation between target gene expression level and drug sensitivity was extracted and further explored by Spearman correlation analysis. The higher the cor value, the stronger the correlation.

Target gene-related transcription factors signaling pathway and validation of target gene.

KnockTF (<http://www.licpathway.net/KnockTF/index.html>) was used to explore a combination of the regulation of gene-related transcription factors and log FC > 1.0 signaling pathways (Feng et al., 2020). Meanwhile, we searched the GETx database (<https://www.gtportal.org/home/>) to compare mRNA expression levels of target genes between lymphoma tissues and normal tissues. The difference of CD1C mRNA expression between tumor and normal tissues was verified by wet assay. 22 paraffin samples from 2021.12 to 2022.2 from the Department of Pathology of West China Hospital of Sichuan University were screened, of which 13 cases were confirmed as DLBCL samples and 9 samples of normal lymphoid tissue hyperplasia. Ethics Committee on biomedical Research, West China Hospital of Sichuan University approved this study (IRB:2020-703) and waived informed consent. Depending on the manufacturer's protocol, total RNA was extracted from FFPE samples and gDNA removed using the RNApure FFPE kit

(CW0535, CoWin Bioscience, Beijing, China). HiScript® III All-in-one RT SuperMix was utilized Perfect for qPCR (R333, Vazyme, NanJing, China) reverse transcription and used cDNA as a template for real-time fluorescence quantification. RT-qPCR was performed with the SYBR® Green Premix Ex Taq™ II (Tli RNaseH Plus) (RR820A, TaKaRa, Beijing, China) on a Real-time PCR Detection System (Bio-rad). Independent experiments are performed in triplicate, β actin as an internal control. The following primers (Tsingke Biotechnology Co., Ltd., Beijing, China) were used: CD1C: FP 5'-CACTTGCCCCGATTTCTCT-3'; RP 5'-ATGGAAAAGTGGTGTCCCCAG-3'. ACTIN: FP 5'-CCGCGAGAAGATGACCCAGA-3'; RP 5'-GATAGCACAGCCTGGATAGCA-3'.

RESULTS

The landscape of mutation profiles in DLBCL.

The research strategy is presented in (Fig. 1). Somatic mutation profiles of 37 DLBCL samples were downloaded from the TCGA database. We used the “maftools” R package to visualize mutation data in VAF format. In general, missense mutation accounted for the largest proportion of mutation types (Fig. 2A), and the occurrence frequency of single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) was higher than insertion and deletion (Fig. 2B). The most common type of base substitution was C>T (Fig. 2C). The boxplot (Fig. 2D and 2E) showed different mutation types in DLBCL patients, and Fig. 2F showed the top 10 genes with mutation frequency, including PIM1 (22%), IGLV3-1 (38%), IGLL5 (27%), IGHG1 (22%), IGHV2-70 (27%), BTG (27%), IGHM (24%), KMT2D (32%), IGLC2 (24%), CARD11 (22%). The mutation landscape displayed the mutation information of each sample, in which the mutation frequency of IGLV3-1 and KMT2D accounted for 38% and 32%, respectively (Fig. 2G). Heatmap of gene correlations shows gene-to-gene relationships, for example, there is a synergistic effect between MUC16 and FAT4, while SOCS1 and KMT2D are mutually exclusive (Fig. 2H). Meanwhile, the Genecloud plot displayed the frequency of mutations in genes (Fig. S1), and the higher the mutation frequency, the larger the gene name.

TMB correlated with survival outcomes and clinical pathological characteristics.

We calculated the mutation event per million bases as the TMB for DLBCL patients, worked out the optimal cutpoint using surv_cutpoint function in the “survival” R package, and set the parameter minprop = 0.1 to divide patients into low- (18 cases) and high- (19 cases) TMB groups. TMB ranged from 0.14 to 6.92 with a median of 1.9 per MB (Fig. 3A). Kaplan-Meier survival analysis was carried out, and the result showed that the 5-year survival rate of the high-TMB group was lower than the low-TMB group (Fig. 3B). In addition, none of the clinical traits was significantly correlated with TMB level, which may be due to the small samples (Table S1).

Identifying differentially expressed genes based on TMB grouping and functional enrichment analysis of GO, KEGG, and GSEA.

Differentially expressed genes (DEGs) were calculated by R software. A total of 62 DEGs were identified in low- and high-TMB group using “limma” R package by setting the p-value < 0.05 and $|\log_2(FC)| > 1$ (Table 1). The heatmap visualized DEGs between the low- and high-TMB groups (Fig. 4A). The volcano map showed 42 up-regulated genes and 20 down-regulated genes (Fig. 4B). Subsequently, we conducted GO enrichment analysis on DEGs and found that the differential genes were mainly involved in immune-related pathways, such as lymphocyte-mediated immunity, adaptive immune response based on somatic recombination of immune receptors built from immunoglobulin superfamily domains, immunoglobulin mediated immune response, and complement activation, classical pathway (Fig. 4C, Table S2). The enrichment information of the GO pathways is illustrated in Fig. 4D. CD1C, CCL21, TP63, ORM1, ACTG2, IGHG3, IGHM, TRPM4 and so on are involved in all of the top GO pathways (including Molecular Function, Cellular Component, Biological Process) and were identified as hub genes. KEGG pathways illustrated that the differential genes were mainly enriched in vascular

smooth muscle contraction, hematopoietic cell lineage, carbon metabolism, neuroactive ligand–receptor interaction pathway (Fig. S2, Table S3). In addition, we further selected the GSEA results of the top TMB-related items in Figs. 4E–G, including one carbon pool by folate, rig- I like receptor signaling pathway-creative diagnostics, and the tight junction, which were associated with the TMB level (p-value < 0.05).

Differential abundance of immune cells in the low- and high-TMB groups using CIBERSORT.

After DEGs screening, in order to further compare the difference in the degree of immune cells infiltration between low- and high-TMB groups, we calculated the composition ratio of immune cells per sample by the “CIBERSORT” R package. The boxplot in Fig. 5A showed a specific portion of 22 immune cells in each DLBCL sample. We also calculated the proportion of immune cells in the whole DLBCL cohort accounting for the most including B cells naive, CD8+ T cells, M2 Macrophages, M0 Macrophages (Fig. 5B). The heatmap showed the distribution of immune cells between low- and high-TMB groups, and the result displayed that the high-TMB group had a lower immune score (Fig. 5C). In addition, the Wilcoxon rank-sum test demonstrated that monocytes, dendritic cells activated, and dendritic cells resting were lower in the high-TMB group (p-value < 0.05) (Fig. 5D). According to the above analysis results, the high-TMB group inhibited the level of immune cells infiltration in DLBCL samples.

Screening TMB-related immune genes and verifying the prognosis of the screened genes using the GEO database.

The immune-related genes were downloaded from the ImmPort database and intersected with the selected DEGs. 13 TMB-related immune genes were obtained, including CD1C, ORM1, ORM2, CCL21, CR2, IGHG3, IGHM, IGHV1-69, IGHV3-23, IGKV1-5, IGKV1D-8, SSTR2, TRBJ2-1 (Fig. 6A). Subsequently, univariate regression analysis was performed on the above genes, and it was found that there was no significant correlation between these genes and prognosis (p-value > 0.05, Fig. S3), possibly due to the small samples in the TCGA-DLBC cohort. Therefore, we expanded the sample size and screened a total of 1133 samples of DLBCL gene expression microarray datasets (GSE31312, GSE10846, GSE32918) from the GEO database, as well as the clinical information of the corresponding samples. After ID translation, data homogenization and standardization, and removal of batch effect, 5 genes including CD1C, CCL21, ORM1, CR2, SSTR2 (the rest of the 13 genes were not included in the expression profile data) were obtained after joint analysis of the three datasets. Kaplan-Meier survival analysis was performed, and the results showed that the level of CD1C expression was significantly correlated with prognosis (p-value < 0.05, Figs. 6B–F).

CNV of CD1C, immune cells and survival in DLBCL using TIMER database.

In general, CNV refers to an increase or decrease in the copy number of large segments of the genome that is more than 1kb in length. To verify the CNV of CD1C and the relationship between immune cells content and prognosis, we utilized the TIMER database to obtain CD1C expression between normal and tumor tissues in various cancers (Fig. 7A). Especially in DLBCL, CD1C expression was positively correlated with B cells, neutrophils, dendritic cells and negatively correlated with CD8+ T cells, CD4+ T cells, and macrophages, among which, the correlation with B cells was the highest (cor = 0.693, p-value = 1.44E–03, Fig. 7B). In addition, high amplification of CD1C was significantly different compared to other CNVs (p-value < 0.01, Fig. 7C). As for the relationship between immune cells content and prognosis, high levels of CD8+ T cells and dendritic cells indicate a superiors survival result, while low expression of CD1C may promote better survival (Fig. 7D).

Analysis of the relationship between CD1C and drug sensitivity in DLBCL.

According to the correlation analysis of target genes and drug sensitivity in the CellMiner database, it was found that there was a significant correlation between the expression level of CD1C and clinical drug sensitivity, mainly with nelarabine, methylprednisolone, chelerythrine, ribavirin, fluphenazine was

positive (Figs .8A and 8B). Therefore, the lower the expression of CD1C, the more sensitive cells are to these drugs.

Modulated CD1C transcription factors and verified CD1C by GETx database and RT-qPCR.

KonckTF database result showed that the regulation of CD1C may be related to the effects of transcription factors such as CREB1, AHR, and TOX, resulting in the corresponding biological effects (Table 2). CD1C mRNA levels were compared between normal tissues downloaded by GETx and tumor tissues of TCGA-DLBC. The results showed that the expression level of CD1C was significantly different between normal tissue and tumor tissue (p -value < 0.05 , Fig. S4). To verify this results in the FFPE samples, RT-qPCR was employed. The expression levels of CD1C in DLBCL tissue and normal lymphoid tissue hyperplasia were significant difference (Fig. 9, p -value = 0.019458). The wet experiment further verified the reliability of bioinformatics consequences.

DISCUSSION

Recent studies have shown that the tumor microenvironment plays an important role in DLBCL initiation, progression and drug responsiveness (Solimando et al., 2020). The DLBCL immune microenvironment is composed of immune cells, stromal cells, blood vessels and extracellular matrix (Leivonen et al., 2019). Among them, immune cells are the key part of tumor microenvironment, including T cells, macrophages, NK cells and dendritic cells. Different immune cells have distinct prognostic effects on DLBCL, but even in the same cell population, the related research is still full of controversy. Studies have demonstrated that tumor infiltration and activation of CD4+ memory T cells are independent prognostic factors regardless of R-CHOP regimen (Keane et al., 2013). Khalifa et al. found that lymphomas with increased CD14 monocyte numbers and loss of HLA-DR expression were more aggressive and more frequently associated with refractory disease or recurrent therapy (Khalifa, Badawy, Radwan, Shehata, & Bassuoni, 2014). In DLBCL outcome, the prognosis of TAM is also controversial, which depends on M1/M2 macrophages. Riihijarvi et al. found that in patients treated with R-CHOP, both CD68 TAM and CD68 mRNA levels were associated with poor prognostic factors for OS, but in patients treated with R-CHOP, the prognosis of CD68 was favorable and OS was improved (Sari et al., 2015). However, Marchesi et al. ($n = 61$) (Marchesi et al., 2015), Nam et al. ($n = 165$) (Nam et al., 2014), and Wada et al. ($n = 101$) (Wada et al., 2012) found that M2 TAM was an important factor for poor prognosis and an independent predictor of shorter OS and PFS. Assessing the composition of the tumor microenvironment as well as the extent of immune cell infiltration could better distinguish subgroups of patients with poor prognosis, which would allow the implementation of personalized therapies (Steen et al., 2021).

Immunotherapy has made substantial progress in DLBCL. The tumor microenvironment (TME) can significantly affect the prognosis of DLBCL (Camicia, Winkler, & Hassa, 2015). Transcriptome analysis of the microenvironment of 4,655 DLBCL patients from multiple independent cohorts described four distinct lymphoma microenvironments (LME), i.e., germinal center-like type (GC), mesenchymal type (MS), inflammatory type (IN), and depleted type (DP). They closely relate to different biological aberrations and clinical behaviors (Kotlov et al., 2021). This measured tumor immunogenicity score (TIGS) shows consistently improved correlations with immunotherapy ORR in various types of cancer when compared to TMB, a novel biomarker that predicts response to immune checkpoint blockade (ICB) (S. Wang, He, Wang, Li, & Liu, 2019). For example, among Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer patients receiving anti-PD-1/L1 treatment, patients with high TMB were associated with longer Progression Free Survival (PFS) than those with low TMB (Rizvi et al., 2018). Birkbak et al. studied TMB in ovarian cancer with BRCA1 and BRCA2 and found that TMB coupled with BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations could be used as a genomic marker of prognosis and a predictor of treatment response (Birkbak et al., 2013). The association between the prognosis of TMB in DLBCL and immunotherapy has not been explored.

Therefore, we conducted this study to investigate the prognostic effect of TMB and its potential association with immune infiltration in DLBCL.

TMB was calculated based on the DLBCL mutation profile. The mutation landscape map showed the genes with a high mutation spectrum and the types of mutations, among which nonsense mutations account for the majority. The relationship between the survival curve and TMB suggested that TMB may not be just an independent prognostic factor for DLBCL. Therefore, we speculated that TMB combined with other prognostic factors may have a better predictive effect. Then according to the TMB groups, we selected DEGs, and GO enrichment analysis showed that the associated with TMB DEGs mainly involved in immune-related pathways, such as lymphocyte-mediated immunity, adaptive immune response based on somatic recombination of immune receptors built from immunoglobulin superfamily domains, immunoglobulin mediated immune response and complement activation, classical pathway, etc. 13 TBM-related immune genes were obtained by the intersection of immune genes in ImmPort database and DEGs, which were CD1C, ORM1, ORM2, CCL21, CR2, IGHG3, IGHM, IGHV1-69, IGHV3-23, IGKV1-5, IGKV1D-8, SSTR2, TRBJ2-1.

In order to investigate the relationship between TMB and immune infiltration, the CIBERSORT algorithm was utilized to prove that the content of neutrophils, and dendritic cells in the low-TMB group was lower than that in the high-TMB group. According to recent studies in DLBCL, a lower proportion of dendritic cells were associated with better outcomes ([Ciavarella et al., 2019](#)). On the other hand, tumor immunogenicity was high in the high-TMB group, leading to CD4+ T cells infiltration, memory T cells, and M0/M1 macrophages to activate the immune response. It had been observed that the proportion of immune checkpoint positive T cells in the tumor microenvironment in DLBCL was high, resulting in a poor prognosis ([Matias et al., 2020](#)).

In order to screen 13 TMB-related immune genes associated with prognosis, 1133 samples were screened from 3 datasets in GEO database, and their expression profiles and clinical information were downloaded. Survival analysis results showed that CD1C expression was associated with prognosis. CD1C was eventually identified as a TMB-related immune gene for DLBCL prognosis, and its function was further explored. CD1C is as known as T-cell surface glycoprotein CD1C. This gene encodes a member of the CD1 family of transmembrane glycoproteins and is associated with β 2-microglobulin ([Fairhurst, Wang, Sieling, Modlin, & Braun, 1998](#)). The CD1 family includes CD1a, CD1b, CD1c, CD1d, and CD1e ([Martin, Calabi, & Milstein, 1986](#)). As with thymic leukemia (TL), CD1 is expressed in cortical thymus and some lymphomas and resembles MHC Class I antigens ([Calabi & Milstein, 1986](#)). Study on early lung adenocarcinomas with EGFR mutations has found that the main types of tumor-infiltrating T cells are depletion and regulatory T cells, which are associated with an increase in dendritic cells specifically expressing CD1C genes ([He et al., 2021](#)). Expression analysis of B-cell chronic lymphocytic leukemia showed that CD1 mediated immune deficiency, polarization of cytokine response, altered adhesion, increased intracellular protein delivery, and leukemia cell processing ([Zheng, Venkatapathy, Rao, & Harrington, 2002](#)). In renal cell carcinoma, CD1C+ dendritic cells predicted progression-free survival ([van Crujisen et al., 2008](#)). In the peripheral blood of NSCLC, the percentage of CD1C+ dendritic cells was significantly lower than that of normal donors, suggesting that NSCLC cells may prevent the maturation of DC cells and thus avoid an effective immune response ([Tabarkiewicz, Rybojad, Jablonka, & Rolinski, 2008](#)). In hepatocellular carcinoma, the authors analyzed the expression of ILT4 in mDCs subsets in hepatocellular carcinoma microenvironment. The results showed that the percentage of CD1C+ decreased significantly in peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) of HCC patients compared with normal controls, suggesting that the increased ILT4+CD1C+ subsets in tumor tissues may play an important role in the immunosuppression of HCC patients ([L. Wang et al., 2019](#)). Study has also shown that CD1C+ restricted T cells exhibit potent anti-leukemia activity in mouse models, so this lipid antigen may represent a new target for immunotherapy of hematological malignancies ([Lepore et al., 2015](#)). At present, no studies have reported the biological behavior of CD1C or CD1C as a biomarker of immunotherapy in DLBCL, but in our study, we explored the relationship between CD1C and prognosis

of DLBCL through bioinformatics analysis, and the results showed that low expression of CD1C predicted better prognosis.

We further performed a series of in-depth analyses of CD1C, and the high amplification of CD1C in B cells and dendritic cells suggested that CD1C mutations inhibit the efficient mediating and maintenance of normal immune responses by antigen-presenting cells. The poor prognosis of patients with higher levels of dendritic cells supported this idea. Drug sensitivity analysis of target genes showed that CD1C was associated with multiple clinical drug sensitivities. Molecular studies had shown that transcription factors CREB1 and TOX drive tumor growth and metastasis and were associated with poor prognosis of DLBCL.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, based on the co-analysis of TMB and immune invasion, our study identified the immune genes associated with prognosis in DLBCL mutations and explored the internal correlation between TMB and immune invasion. CD1C was recognized as a potential marker of DLBCL, which may provide new insights into immunotherapy of DLBCL. CD1C is also a gene which shows an association with the tumor mutational burden of diffuse large B cell lymphoma. This predicts poor survival. According to bioinformatic analysis, CD1C is involved in tumor-related signaling pathways and immune and metabolic processes. Thus, the study offers a novel target to investigate the underlying mechanism for diffuse large B cell lymphoma.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND DECLARATIONS

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

Author Contributions

- Xiaoyu Xiang conceived and designed the experiments, performed the experiments, analyzed the dat, prepared figures and/or tables, authored or reviewed drafts of the article, and approved the final draft.
- Li-Min Gao analyzed the dat, authored or reviewed drafts of the article, and approved the final draft.
- Yuehua Zhang analyzed the dat, and approved the final draft.
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- Yuan Tang conceived and designed the experiments, analyzed the dat, authored or reviewed drafts of the article, and approved the final draft. 396 397
- Wenyan Zhang conceived and designed the experiments, analyzed the dat, prepared figures and/or tables, authored or reviewed drafts of the article, and approved the final draft. 398 399

Supplementary Information 400

Supporting information for this article can be found online at: 401

FigureS1: Genecloud plot showed mutation information of genes in DLBCL; 402

Figure S2: KEGG pathway analysis revealed that these DEGs were involved in immune-related pathways; 403

Figure S3: Forest map of 13 TMB-related immune genes by univariate Cox analysis; 404

Figure S4: Comparison of CD1C mRNA expression between tumor and normal tissues by combined 405

analysis of GETx and TCGA-DLBC database; 406

Table S1: The differences in clinical characteristics between low- and high-TMB groups were obtained from the TCGA cohort; 407 408

Table S2: Top GO items for differentially expressed genes; 409

Table S3: Top KEGG enrichment pathways for differentially expressed genes ordered by p-value (p-value < 0.05). 410 411

Data Availability 412

The following information was supplied regarding data availability: 413

The raw data is available at figshare: Xiaoyu Xiang (2022): Raw_data.zip. figshare. 414

Dataset. https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/Raw_Data_zip/22140245. 415

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Figure 1

The workflow of the study

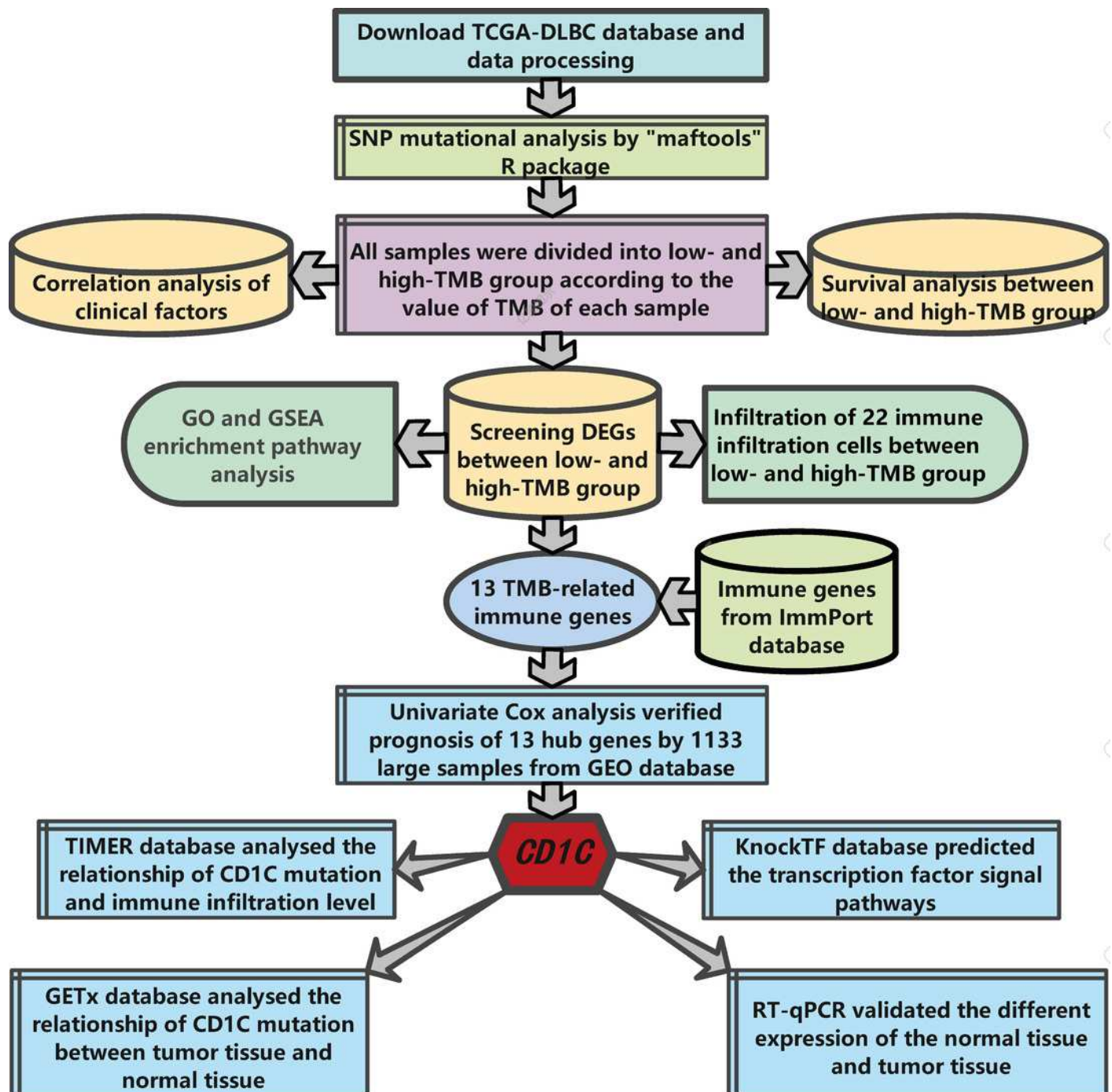


Figure 2

Summary of the mutation information with statistical.

(A-C) Classification of mutation types according to different categories, in which missense mutation accounts for the most fraction, SNP showed more frequency than insertion or deletion, and C>T was the most common of SNV. (D, E) Tumor mutation burden in specific samples. (F) The top 10 mutated genes in DLBCL. (G) The landscape of mutation profiles in DLBCL samples. Mutation information of each gene in each sample was shown in the waterfall plot, in which various colors with annotations at the bottom represented the different mutation types. The barplot above the legend exhibited the mutation burden. (H) The coincident and exclusive associations across mutated genes. (SNP, single nucleotide polymorphism; SNV, single nucleotide variants; DLBCL, diffuse large B cell lymphoma).

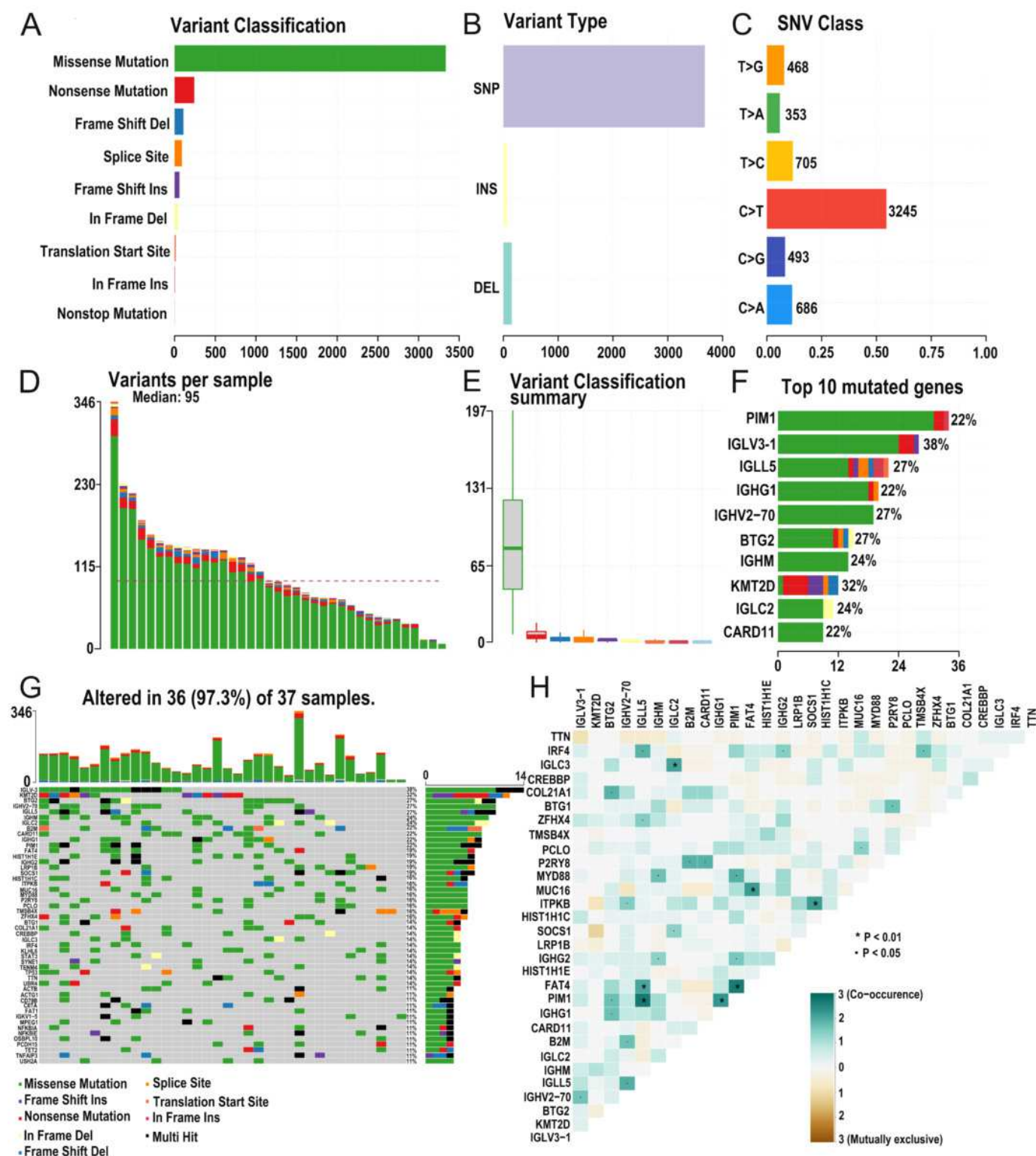


Figure 3

Distribution of TMB samples and prognosis of TMB.

(A) Distribution of TMB samples, those above the median value represented the samples with high mutation, and those below the median value represented the samples with low mutation. (B) Higher TMB levels correlated with poor survival outcomes with a p-value = 0.076.

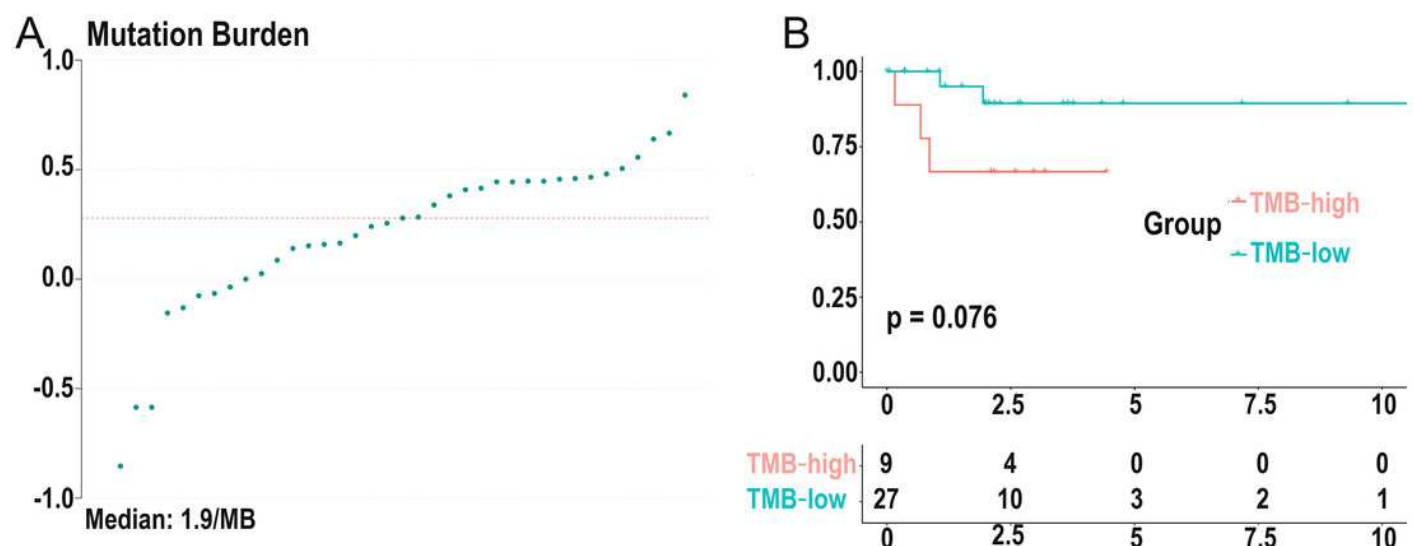


Figure 4

Comparisons of gene expression profiles in low- and high-TMB groups and enrichment pathway analysis.

(A) A total of 62 DEGs were shown in the heatmap plot. Vertical and horizontal axes represented genes and DLBCL samples respectively. Gene expression levels with higher and lower were displayed in red and blue, respectively. Color bars at the top of the heatmap represent sample types, with red and green indicating low- and high-TMB samples, respectively. (B) Volcano plot of all DEGs were drawn with $|\log_2(\text{FC})| > 1$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. Each symbol represented a gene, and red, grey and blue indicate upregulated, normal and downregulated genes, respectively. (C) GOplot revealed that these differentially expressed genes were involved in immune-related pathways. Different colors represented different GO terms, and the depth of gene color represented $\log_2(\text{FC})$. (D) The DEGs enrichment analysis information (red colour represents the pathway for CD1C gene enrichment). (E, F) GSEA analysis shown that high-TMB related crosstalk, including one carbon pool by folate and rig-I like receptor signaling pathway-creative diagnostics. (G) GSEA analysis shown that low-TMB related crosstalk, including tight junction. (NES represented a normal enrichment score. ES represented enrichment score. DEGs, differentially expressed genes; TMB, tumor mutation burden; GO, gene ontology; GSEA, gene set enrichment analysis).

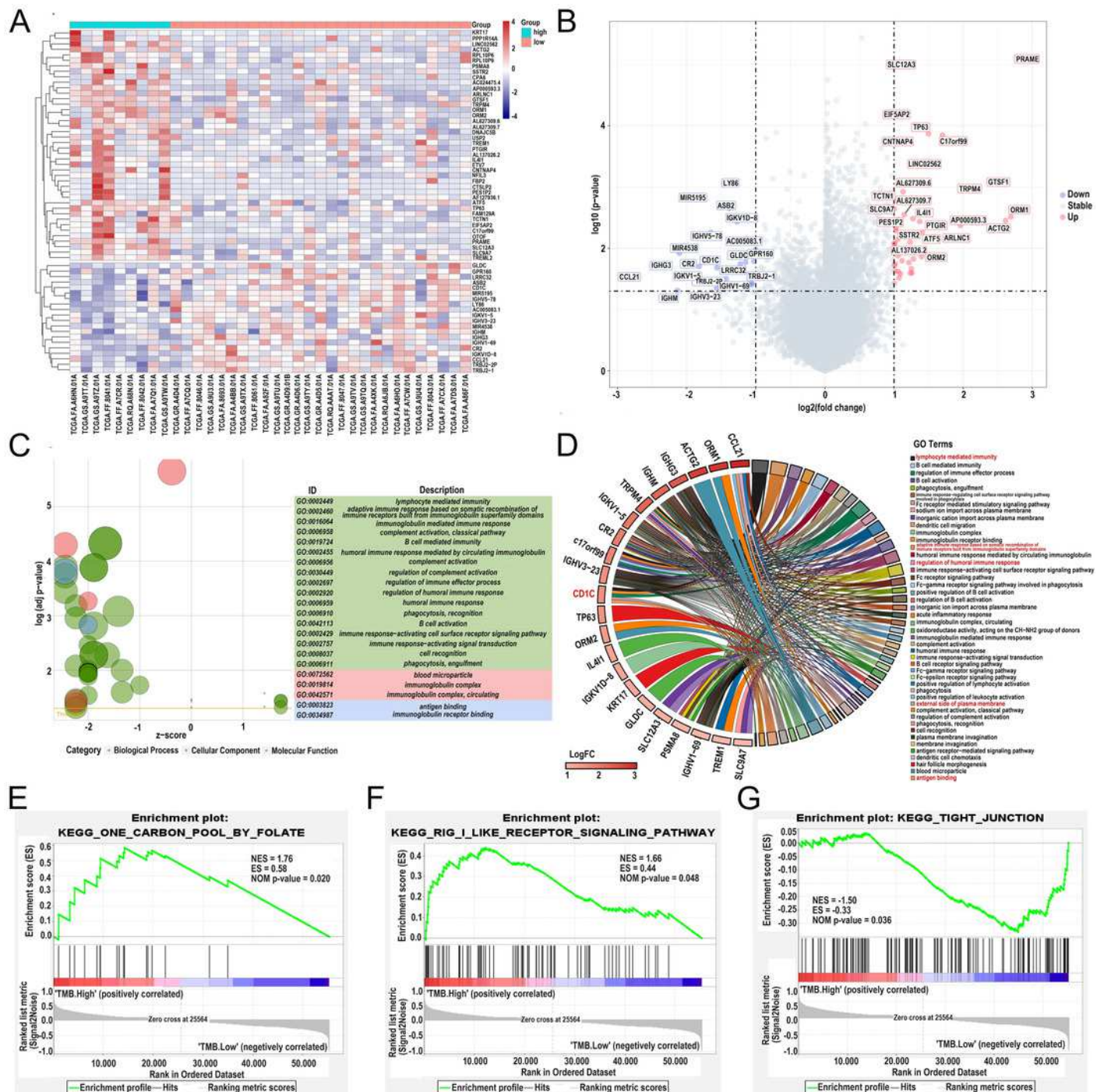


Figure 5

Relationship between TMB and immune infiltration.

(A) The stacked bar chart showed the distribution of 22 types of immune cells in each sample, the horizontal axis represented the sample name, and the vertical axis represented the proportion of 22 types of immune cells. (B) The boxplot was arranged according to the content of immune cells in all DLBCL samples, among which B cells naïve accounted for the largest proportion. (C) The difference analysis of the heatmap showed the distribution of immune cells in the low- and high-TMB samples. (D) The boxplot showed differentially infiltrated immune cells between low- and high-TMB groups, with green, represented the high-TMB group and red represented the low-TMB group.

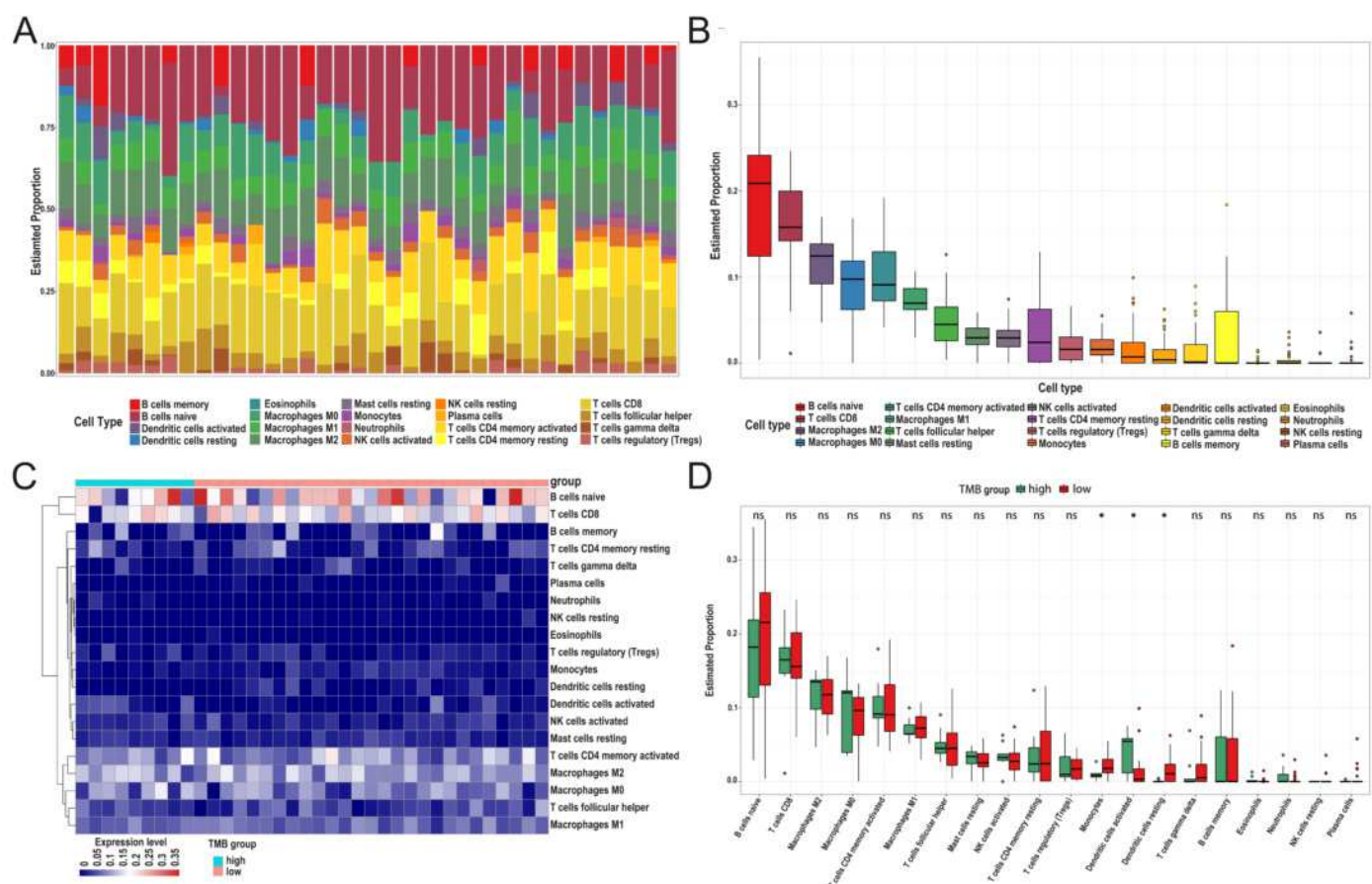


Figure 6

Identification of important TMB-related immune genes for DLBCL prognosis.

(A) Venn diagram showed that a total of 13 differential immune genes were associated with tumor mutation burden and immune infiltration. Kaplan-Meier survival analysis showed a relationship between the expression of CD1C, CCL21, ORM1, CR2, SSTR2 and the prognosis, suggesting that downregulation of CD1C was associated with better survival outcomes. (B) CD1C (p-value = 0.0012) (C) CCL21 (p-value = 0.0862) (D) ORM1 (p-value = 0.1745) (E) CR2 (p-value = 0.3151) (F) SSTR2 (p-value = 0.0715).

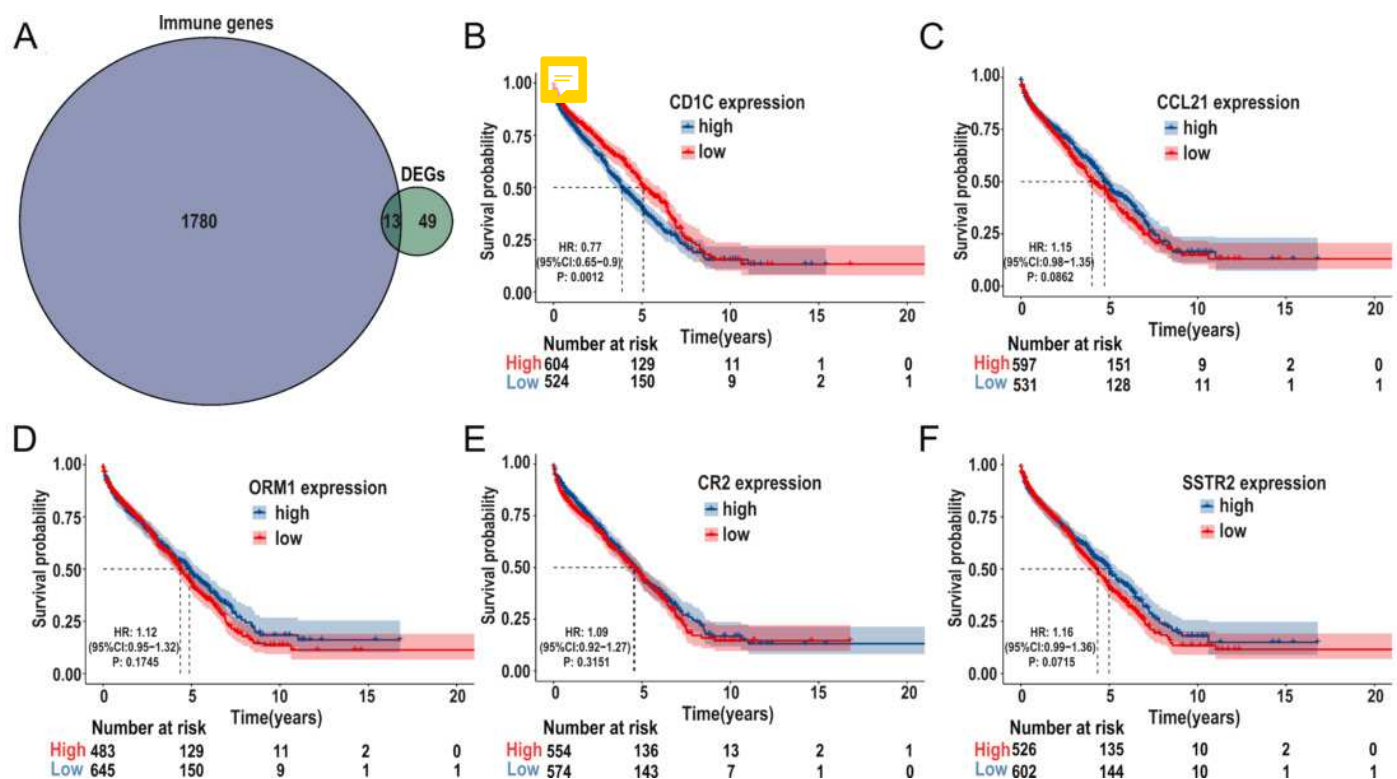


Figure 7

Correlations between the CNV of  immune cells infiltration, and prognosis using TIMER database.

(A) CD1C expression between normal and tumor tissues in various cancers. (B) The expression of CD1C was correlated with 6 types of immune infiltrating cells, of which the correlation with B cells was the highest ($\text{cor} = 0.693$, $p = 1.44\text{e}-03$). (C) High amplification of CD1C in B cells and dendritic cells ($p < 0.01$). (D) High levels of CD8+ T cells and dendritic cells indicated a good prognosis.

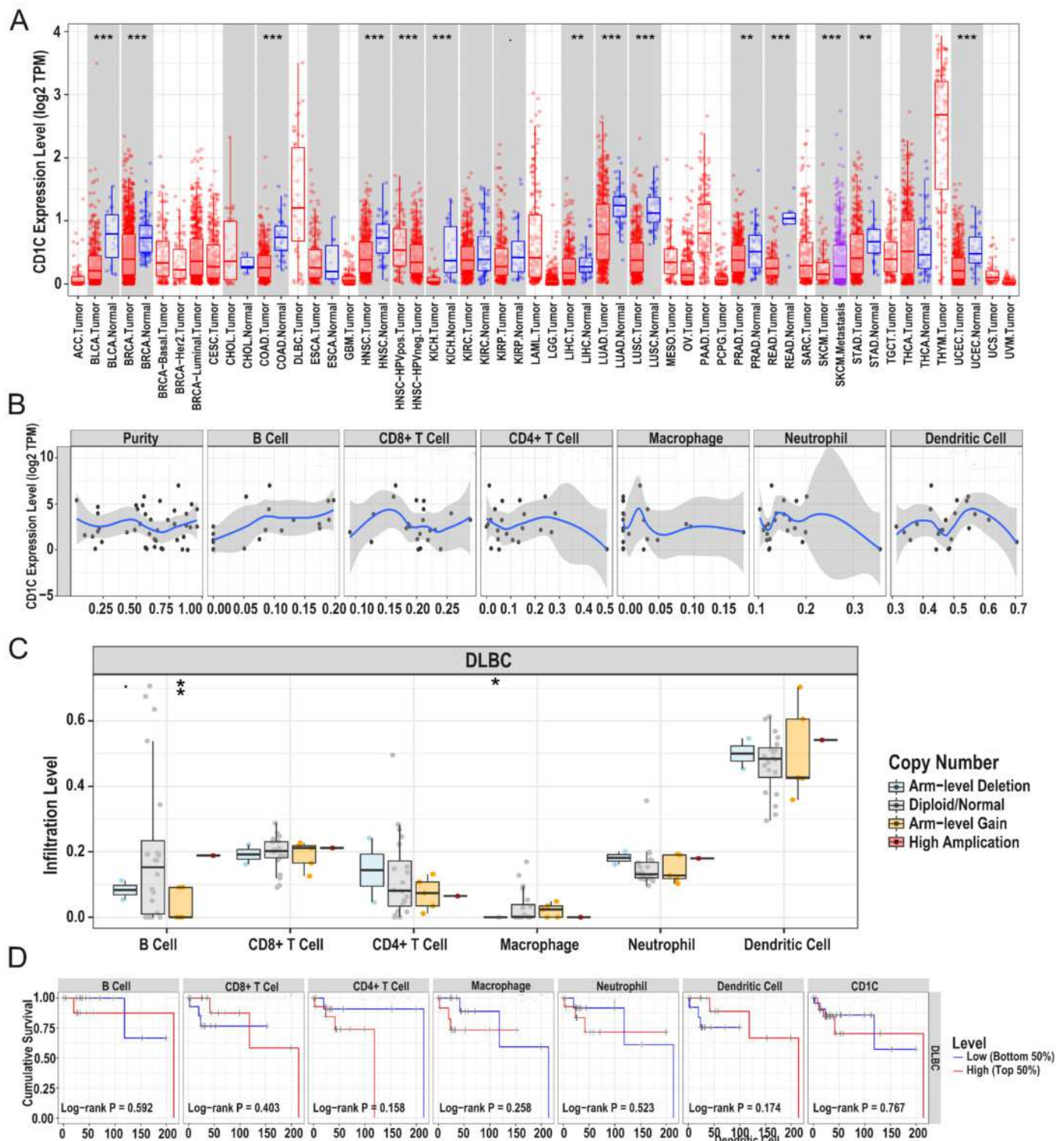


Figure 8

Analysis of the relationship between TMB target gene and drug sensitivity.

(A) Scatter plot of the top 20 clinical drug sensitivity and CD1C expression based on $|cor|$ value. (B) The lollipop plot also showed the relationship between CD1C expression and drug sensitivity, with the p-value indicating significance and cor indicating correlation.

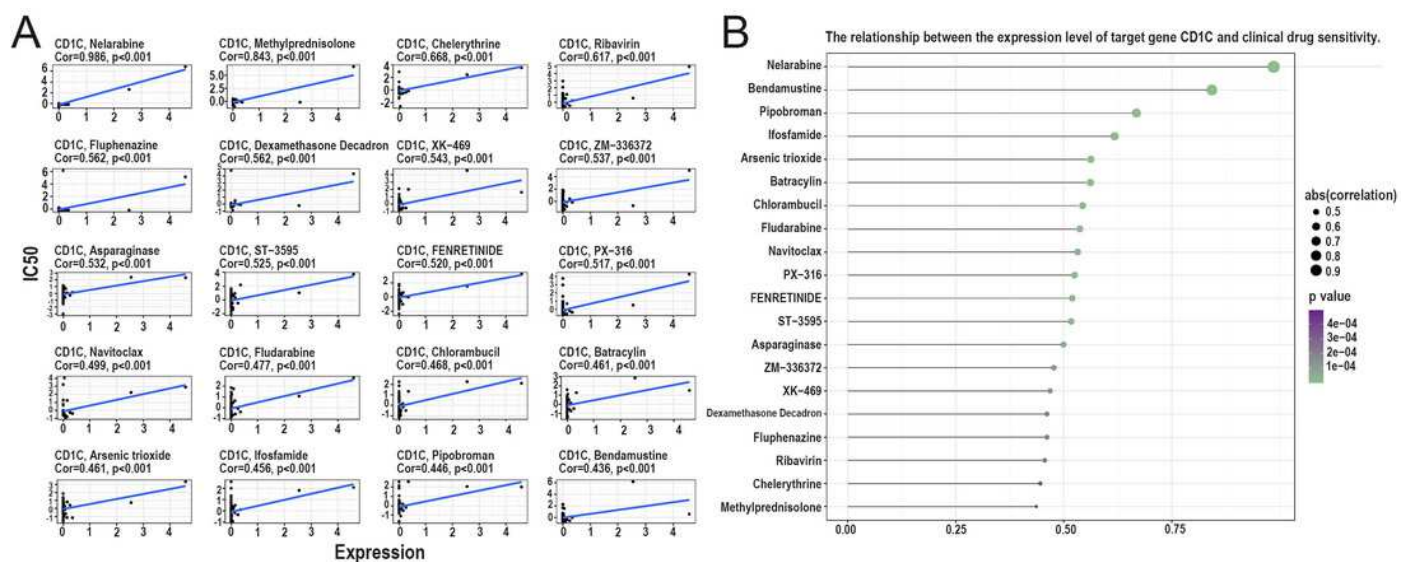


Figure 9

Validation of mRNA expression of the final key gene CD1C related to the degree of in FFPE samples (p-value = 0.019458).

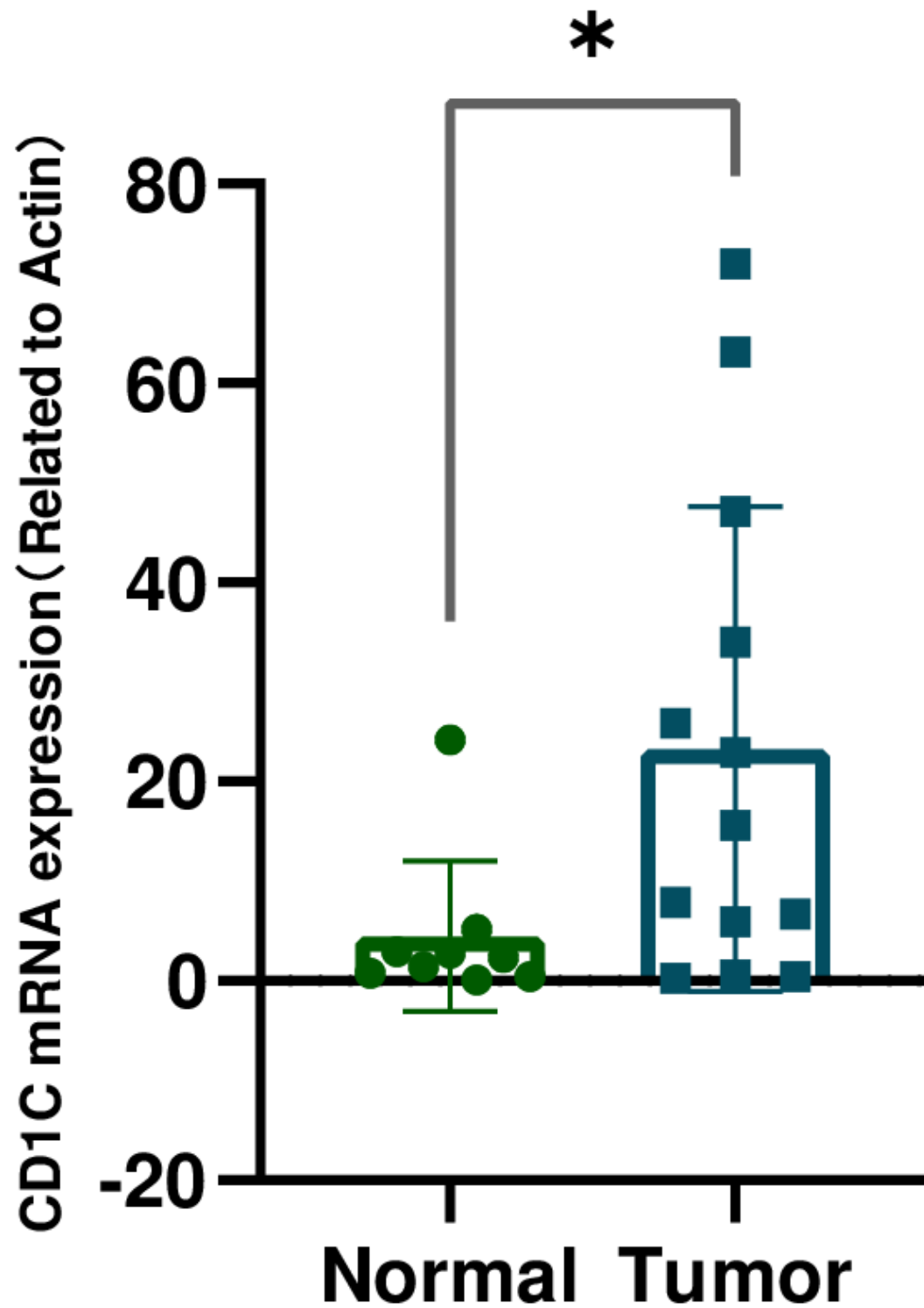


Table 1 (on next page)

Differentially expressed genes between low-TMB and high-TMB groups.

1 **Table 1.** Differentially expressed genes between low-TMB and high-TMB group.

Genesymbol	logFC	AveExpr	t	P.Value	adj.P.Val	B
PRAME	2.922405	1.672344	5.237783	8.14E-06	0.184374	2.785421
SLC12A3	1.100708	0.871668	5.168989	1.00E-05	0.184374	2.580099
EIF5AP2	1.037704	0.7309014	4.540696	6.55E-05	0.446506	0.725776
TP63	1.498609	1.72559	4.29477	0.000135	0.446506	0.015043
C17orf99	1.701547	1.3456096	4.276447	0.000143	0.446506	-0.03746
CNTNAP4	1.047761	0.3234867	4.189251	0.000184	0.446506	-0.28634
LINC02562	1.440104	0.682375	3.902082	0.000421	0.597317	-1.09357
LY86	-1.36579	4.6202479	-3.65037	0.000859	0.628234	-1.78272
GTSF1	2.491803	3.3402724	3.647969	0.000865	0.628234	-1.78919
TRPM4	2.112655	2.5636372	3.589926	0.001018	0.685802	-1.94525
AL627309.6	1.130337	1.5450149	3.531998	0.001195	0.691416	-2.09986
MIR5195	-1.90974	4.7542273	-3.45277	0.001487	0.77525	-2.30939
TCTN1	1.056882	1.3681228	3.418234	0.001635	0.799445	-2.40003
ASB2	-1.38053	3.2815049	-3.30631	0.002216	0.84459	-2.69058
SLC9A7	1.001124	3.0139012	3.296243	0.002277	0.84459	-2.71648
AL627309.7	1.147779	1.3959171	3.215333	0.002829	0.902441	-2.92307
ORM1	2.689855	2.1889532	3.185368	0.003065	0.934341	-2.99888
IL4I1	1.275177	5.8378104	3.159182	0.003286	0.945784	-3.06482
PES1P2	1.059463	0.3808462	3.144121	0.003419	0.955589	-3.10261
ACTG2	2.614232	2.8996668	3.131267	0.003538	0.96048	-3.13478
PTGIR	1.373384	2.2671073	3.119858	0.003646	0.96048	-3.16327
IGKV1D-8	-1.26761	1.4899645	-3.11549	0.003688	0.96048	-3.17417
AP000593.3	1.96134	1.6328582	3.061174	0.004254	0.979536	-3.30891
SSTR2	1.027005	1.0412898	3.029081	0.004626	0.999998	-3.38788
AF127936.1	1.028164	0.7326819	2.986073	0.005172	0.999998	-3.49296
ATF5	1.412084	6.6579457	2.967457	0.005427	0.999998	-3.53817
IGHV5-78	-1.64874	4.4896813	-2.9616	0.00551	0.999998	-3.55236
ARLNC1	1.842147	2.1616004	2.883652	0.006729	0.999998	-3.7396
OTOF	1.054667	0.5352778	2.858965	0.007165	0.999998	-3.79827
AL137026.2	1.234373	0.6788708	2.818765	0.007932	0.999998	-3.89314
CTSLP2	1.010085	0.3901514	2.797078	0.008378	0.999998	-3.94397
NFIL3	1.002554	3.2248748	2.796697	0.008386	0.999998	-3.94486
AC005083.1	-1.00218	1.4038589	-2.70415	0.010562	0.999998	-4.15895
MIR4538	-2.1038	2.6705054	-2.65241	0.011997	0.999998	-4.2766
PSMA8	1.058776	0.8946082	2.611077	0.01327	0.999998	-4.3695
ORM2	1.39914	1.4257549	2.597839	0.013704	0.999998	-4.39905
DNAJC5B	1.282866	2.7580284	2.563015	0.014907	0.999998	-4.47631

AC024475.4	1.115043	0.6922118	2.532595	0.016037	0.999998	-4.54321
GPR160	-1.02655	2.3532824	-2.52493	0.016334	0.999998	-4.55998
GLDC	-1.14561	1.4819458	-2.50791	0.017011	0.999998	-4.5971
KRT17	1.215934	0.8071803	2.505569	0.017106	0.999998	-4.60218
FAM129A	1.01797	2.6609447	2.484965	0.017965	0.999998	-4.64685
LRRC32	-1.22325	3.030123	-2.48445	0.017987	0.999998	-4.64797
IGHG3	-2.28464	5.678394	-2.48286	0.018055	0.999998	-4.65141
ETV7	1.003919	2.1068744	2.45744	0.019174	0.999998	-4.70613
CR2	-1.8187	3.1337495	-2.44458	0.019763	0.999998	-4.73365
CD1C	-1.56179	2.9112972	-2.42331	0.020775	0.999998	-4.77898
TREML2	1.251118	2.1785378	2.409244	0.02147	0.999998	-4.80879
TREM1	1.013126	1.0170469	2.369286	0.02356	0.999998	-4.89281
USP2	1.059806	0.9148026	2.362492	0.023933	0.999998	-4.907
RPL10P6	1.261382	2.1649398	2.339933	0.025211	0.999998	-4.95389
RPL10P9	1.236246	3.0773338	2.337468	0.025354	0.999998	-4.95899
PPP1R14A	1.094098	1.1728365	2.324857	0.026099	0.999998	-4.98504
CCL21	-2.82779	5.2870774	-2.27481	0.029253	0.999998	-5.08742
FBP2	1.072932	0.6428013	2.256376	0.030498	0.999998	-5.1247
TRBJ2-2P	-1.42691	3.7776966	-2.24323	0.031415	0.999998	-5.15115
TRBJ2-1	-1.05611	2.6341454	-2.16798	0.037154	0.999998	-5.30037
IGKV1-5	-1.88826	3.856146	-2.16686	0.037245	0.999998	-5.30255
CPA6	1.006875	0.7805608	2.165899	0.037325	0.999998	-5.30444
IGHV1-69	-1.05659	1.4366253	-2.14157	0.039378	0.999998	-5.35181
IGHV3-23	-1.56581	3.7508495	-2.08555	0.044491	0.999998	-5.45934
IGHM	-2.13098	9.540321	-2.04243	0.048817	0.999998	-5.54061

Table 2(on next page)

Transcription factors regulating CD1C in the Haematopoietic and lymphoid tissue by knockTF database.

1 **Table 2.** Transcription factors regulating CD1C in the Haematopoietic and lymphoid
2 tissue by knockTF database.

Target Gene	TF	Knock-Method	Tissue Type	Biosample Name	Fold Change	Log2FC
CD1C	CREB1	shRNA	Haematopoietic and lymphoid tissue	K562	0.43886	-1.18818
CD1C	AHR	siRNA	Haematopoietic and lymphoid tissue	THP-1	0.36694	-1.4464
CD1C	TOX	shRNA	Haematopoietic and lymphoid tissue	CCRF-CEM	0.32445	-1.62392