

Cellular heterogeneity map of diverse immune and stromal phenotypes within breast tumor microenvironment

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Background: Cellular heterogeneity within the tumor microenvironment is essential to tumorigenesis and tumor development. A high-resolution global view of the tumor-infiltrating immune and stromal cells in breast tumors is needed.

Methods: xCell was used to create a cellular heterogeneity map of 64 cell types in 1,092 breast tumor and adjacent normal tissues. xCell digitally dissects tissue cellular heterogeneity based on gene expression. Integrated statistical analyses were then performed.

Results: There were noticeable differences between the cell fractions in tumor tissues and normal tissues. Tumors displayed higher proportions of immune cells, including CD4+ Tem, CD8+ naïve T cells, and CD8+ Tcm compared with normal tissues. Immune inhibitory receptors (PD1, CTLA4, LAG3 and TIM3) were co-expressed on certain subtypes of T cells in breast tumors, and PD1 and CTLA4 were both positively correlated with CD8+ Tcm and CD8+ T cells. 28 cell types were significantly associated with overall survival in univariate analysis. CD4+ Tem, CD8+ Tcm, CD8+ T-cells, CD8+ naïve T-cells, and B cells were positive prognostic factors but CD4+ naïve T-cells were negative prognostic factors for breast cancer patients. TDRD6 and TTK are promising T cell and B cell targets for tumor vaccines. Endothelial cells and fibroblasts were significantly less prevalent in tumor tissues; astrocytes and mesangial cells were negatively correlated with the T stage. Mesangial cells and keratinocytes were found to be favorable prognostic factors and myocytes were negative prognostic factors. Five cell types were found to be independent prognostic factors and we used these to create a reliable prognostic model for breast cancer patients. Cellular heterogeneity was discovered among different breast cancer subtypes by Her2, ER, and PR status. Tri-negative patients had the highest fraction of immune cells while luminal type patients had the lowest. The various cells may have diverse or opposing roles in the prognosis of breast cancer patients.

Conclusions: We created a unique cellular map for the diverse heterogeneity of immune and stromal phenotypes within the breast tumor microenvironment. This map may lead to potential therapeutic targets and biomarkers with prognostic utility.

1 **Cellular heterogeneity map of diverse immune and stromal phenotypes within**
2 **breast tumor microenvironment**

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13

14

15 **Abstract**

16 **Background:** Cellular heterogeneity within the tumor microenvironment is essential to
17 tumorigenesis and tumor development. A high-resolution global view of the tumor-
18 infiltrating immune and stromal cells in breast tumors is needed.

19 **Methods:** xCell was used to create a cellular heterogeneity map of 64 cell types in 1,092
20 breast tumor and adjacent normal tissues. xCell digitally dissects tissue cellular
21 heterogeneity based on gene expression. Integrated statistical analyses were then
22 performed.

23 **Results:** There were noticeable differences between the cell fractions in tumor tissues
24 and normal tissues. Tumors displayed higher proportions of immune cells, including
25 CD4+ Tem, CD8+ naïve T cells, and CD8+ Tcm compared with normal tissues. Immune
26 inhibitory receptors (PD1, CTLA4, LAG3 and TIM3) were co-expressed on certain
27 subtypes of T cells in breast tumors, and PD1 and CTLA4 were both positively correlated
28 with CD8+ Tcm and CD8+ T cells. 28 cell types were significantly associated with overall
29 survival in univariate analysis. CD4+ Tem, CD8+ Tcm, CD8+ T-cells, CD8+ naive T-cells,
30 and B cells were positive prognostic factors but CD4+ naive T-cells were negative
31 prognostic factors for breast cancer patients. TDRD6 and TTK are promising T cell and
32 B cell targets for tumor vaccines. Endothelial cells and fibroblasts were significantly less
33 prevalent in tumor tissues; astrocytes and mesangial cells were negatively correlated with
34 the T stage. Mesangial cells and keratinocytes were found to be favorable prognostic
35 factors and myocytes were negative prognostic factors. Five cell types were found to be

36 independent prognostic factors and we used these to create a reliable prognostic model
37 for breast cancer patients. Cellular heterogeneity was discovered among different breast
38 cancer subtypes by Her2, ER, and PR status. Tri-negative patients had the highest
39 fraction of immune cells while luminal type patients had the lowest. The various cells may
40 have diverse or opposing roles in the prognosis of breast cancer patients.

41 **Conclusions:** We created a unique cellular map for the diverse heterogeneity of immune
42 and stromal phenotypes within the breast tumor microenvironment. This map may lead
43 to potential therapeutic targets and biomarkers with prognostic utility.

44

45 **Introduction**

46 Breast cancer is a common cancer in women and drug resistance and distal
47 metastasis remain major causes of mortality despite improvements in the early diagnosis
48 and treatment of the disease (Cassetta & Pollard, 2017). Tumors have complex
49 microenvironments composed of malignant cells, immune cells, and stromal infiltrate.
50 Growing evidence suggests that this microenvironment plays a fundamental role in the
51 development of malignancy and resistance to therapy (Noy & Pollard, 2014). Tumor-
52 infiltrating cells can demonstrate either tumor-suppressing or tumor-promoting effects,
53 depending on the cancer type. For instance, regulatory T cells (Tregs) and tumor
54 associated macrophages (TAMs) are associated with pro-tumor functions (De Palma &
55 Lewis, 2013; Nishikawa & Sakaguchi, 2014; Noy & Pollard, 2014), but CD8+ T cells are
56 associated with improved clinical outcomes and better responses to immunotherapy
57 (Tumeh et al., 2014). Research in cancer immunology has led to the development and
58 approval of checkpoint blockers. These remarkably effective drugs augment T cell activity
59 by blocking cytotoxic lymphocyte antigen-4 (CTLA4), programmed cell death protein 1
60 (PD1), and PD1 ligand (PDL1).

61 A better understanding of the cellular heterogeneity within the tumor
62 microenvironment may reveal predictive biomarkers, improve existing treatments, and
63 help to develop novel therapeutic strategies. Cellular heterogeneity is traditionally
64 determined using flow cytometry and immunohistochemistry, however, these methods
65 are extremely difficult to apply to solid tumors with limited throughput (Gentles et al.,

66 2015). Bioinformatics advancements have created novel methods that dissect cellular
67 heterogeneity based on gene expression profiles (Abbas et al., 2009; Newman et al.,
68 2015; Rooney et al., 2015; Shen-Orr & Gaujoux, 2013). For instance, CIBERSORT can
69 estimate the abundances of 22 immune cell types (Newman et al., 2015). However, rare
70 subsets of immune cells and stromal cells recognized to be important in the promotion or
71 inhibition of tumor growth, invasion, and metastasis are ignored by CIBERSORT (Galon
72 et al., 2006; Hanahan & Coussens, 2012). xCell can define 64 cell types within tissues,
73 including immune and stroma cells (Aran et al., 2017a; Aran et al., 2017b). Recent
74 analysis with xCell reveals that plasma cells and CD4+ Tcm in the tumor
75 microenvironment may play a role in the progression of triple-negative breast cancer
76 (Deng et al., 2019), although only immune cells were investigated. We used xCell to
77 digitally depict the cellular heterogeneity map within the breast tumor microenvironment
78 to reveal potential interactions and to uncover predictive biomarkers or therapeutic targets
79 for breast cancer.

80 **Methods and materials**

81 **Data curation and cohort characteristics**

82 The RNA-seq data and clinical parameters from 1,092 patients with breast cancer
83 were obtained from The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) data portal
84 (<https://portal.gdc.cancer.gov/>). Of the 1,092 breast cancer patients included in this study,
85 112 paired normal tissues were identified and recurrent tumor tissues were excluded. The
86 clinical characteristics of the cohort are listed in Table 1. 276 known Cancer/Testis (CT)

87 genes were downloaded from CTDatabase (<http://www.cta.lncc.br/>).

88 **Bioinformatics analysis**

89 xCell (<http://xcell.ucsf.edu/>) is a high-resolution gene-signature-based method for cell
90 type enrichment for up to 64 cell types, including immune and stroma cells. We used xCell
91 R package (Aran et al., 2017a) (Beta version) from GitHub in R (version 3.3.1) to
92 deconvolute the cellular heterogeneity within the breast tumor microenvironment from
93 RNA sequencing data. We determined the cellular heterogeneity of 1,092 breast tumor
94 tissues and 112 normal tissues using the xCell method. The 64 cell types were divided
95 into four groups, including 34 immune cells, 13 stromal cells, 9 stem cells, and 8 other
96 cells (**Table 2**). Over half of the 64 cell types were immune cells, providing a full view of
97 the innate and adaptive immune status with detailed cell subtypes, including CD4+ naive
98 cells, CD4+ T-cells, CD4+ Tcm, and CD4+ Tem. Stromal cells, including fibroblasts,
99 osteoblasts, and pericytes were also included. ImmuneScore and StromaScore were
100 generated by the xCell package using the sums of fractions of certain cell types (Aran et
101 al., 2017b). Tests for differences and correlations were performed. We used the t-
102 Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) method with tsne package (version
103 0.1-3) to perform cluster analysis based on cell fraction types.

104 **Survival analysis**

105 Univariate and multivariate COX regressions were performed using the survival
106 package (version 3.1-7) to search for survival-associated genes. The best cutoff value for
107 each factor was determined using the Survminer package (version 0.4.6). Significant

108 prognostic factors were displayed in a forest plot and the most significant factors were
109 further evaluated using multivariate analysis. The final prognostic model was built with
110 five independent factors including CD8+ T cells, mesangial cells, NKT, keratinocytes, and
111 class-switched memory B cells. We used the survivalROC package (Version 1.0.3) in R,
112 which uses a time-dependent ROC curve estimation with censored data (Heagerty et al.,
113 2000) to compare the aptitude of the individual prognostic factors. The final prognostic
114 model was used to generate the area under the curve (AUC) of the receiver-operator
115 characteristic (ROC) curve for each parameter.

116 **Statistical analysis**

117 Differentially enriched cell types between groups were compared using the Student's
118 t-test (two groups) or one-way ANOVA analysis (three groups). Correlation analyses were
119 performed using the Spearman method. The survival curves were compared using the
120 Kaplan-Meier method and log-rank test. All tests were two-sided and $p < 0.05$ was
121 considered to be statistically significant unless otherwise noted. Data were analyzed
122 using R (version 3.4.4).

123

124 **Results**

125 **Breast tumor tissues had higher fractions of immune cells than normal tissues.**

126 The median fractions for each cell type were calculated for normal and breast tumor
127 tissues and the proportions of the 64 cells were found to differ between breast tumor and
128 normal tissues (**Figure 1A, Table 2**). Breast tumor tissue had higher fraction of immune

129 cells with red to light blue markers whereas normal tissue had larger proportions of stem
130 and stromal cells with blue to red markers (**Figure 1A**). Unsupervised cluster analysis
131 revealed that breast tumor tissues and the adjacent normal tissues were clustered into
132 different groups. Immune cells were also clustered into several subgroups (**Figure 1B**),
133 indicating that the cellular heterogeneity in tumor vs. normal tissues was much greater
134 than that in a single sample. Dimensionality reduction and visualization by t-Distributed
135 Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) also suggested clear difference between the
136 tumor and normal tissues (**Figure 1C**).

137 We compared the fractions of each cell type between breast tumor and normal
138 tissues, revealing dramatic differences in the number of cell types between the tumor and
139 normal tissues (**Figure 1D-W**). Immune cells tended to be more diverse compared to
140 stem or stromal cells. For innate immune cells, neutrophils were more prevalent in normal
141 tissues whereas eosinophils were higher in tumor tissues (**Figure 1D-E**). There was not
142 a significant difference in DC cells between normal and tumor tissues. However, iDC was
143 significantly lower in tumor tissues but pDC and aDC were significantly higher (**Figure**
144 **1F-I**). This phenomenon was also seen in macrophages, in which macrophage M1 was
145 higher in tumor tissues while macrophage M2 was lower (**Figure 1J-K**). CD4⁺ Tcm was
146 found to be significantly lower in tumor tissues, while CD4⁺ Tem, CD8⁺ naïve T cells, and
147 CD8⁺ Tcm were significantly higher (**Figure 1L-O**). Plasma cells, pro B cells, Tgd, Th1,
148 Th2 cells, and Tregs were also found to be significantly higher in tumor tissues (**Figure**
149 **1P-U**). Representative stromal cells, such as endothelial cells and fibroblasts, were found

150 to be significantly lower in tumor tissues (**Figure 1V-W**). Differential analysis with paired
151 tumor and normal tissues showed similar patterns (Table 2).

152

153 **Inhibitory receptors were co-expressed on certain subtypes of T cells**

154 Inhibitory receptors, including PD1, CTLA4, LAG3, and TIM3, expressed on T cells
155 often led to T-cell exhaustion allowing tumors to evade the immune response (Huang et
156 al., 2017; Nirschl & Drake, 2013). The use of specific antibodies to inhibit CTLA4 or PD1
157 and overcome immune suppression and tumor regression is promising (Brahmer et al.,
158 2012; Callahan et al., 2010).

159 We investigated the correlations between these inhibitory receptors and CD4+/CD8+
160 T cells. Heatmaps suggested that the expression patterns of the inhibitory receptors
161 correlated with specific subsets of T cells with distinctions between tumor tissues and
162 normal tissues (**Figures 2A and 2B**). Correlation analyses also demonstrated that CD8+
163 T-cells, CD8+ Tcm, CD8+ naive T-cells, CD4+ memory T cells, and CD4+ naïve T cells
164 were all positively correlated with expressions of these inhibitory receptors in tumor
165 tissues, especially with PD1 and CTLA4 ($P < 0.05$) (**Figures 2C and D**). CD8+ Tem, CD4+
166 Tcm, and CD4+ T-cells were not strongly correlated with the expressions of the inhibitory
167 receptors (**Figure 2C**). Only a few T cells were significantly correlated with these inhibitory
168 receptors in normal tissues; TIM3 expression was negatively correlated with CD4+ Tcm
169 (**Figure 2C and F**). We observed a significant correlation among the expression of
170 inhibitory receptors (**Figure 2E and G**).

171

172 Cancer/testis genes TDRD6 and TTK show promise as breast cancer targets

173 Cancer/Testis (CT) genes are a cluster of tumor-associated proteins normally
174 expressed in germ cells and different cancers. However, they are not typically seen in
175 normal somatic cells (Scanlan et al., 2002). The limited expression of CT genes makes
176 them ideal cancer and immunotherapy biomarkers.

177 We studied the antitumor immunity response to antigens generated by CT genes by
178 examining 276 known CT genes (obtained from the CTDatabase) for their association
179 with immune components. The significant associations between immune cells and CT
180 genes ($P < 0.001$) are shown in **Figure 3A**. Most of the adaptive immune cells were
181 significantly correlated with CT genes. T cells, such as CD8⁺ T cells and aDC, which
182 belonged to adaptive and innate immune responses, were positively correlated with most
183 of the CT genes (**Figure 3A-C**). Moreover, two CT genes, TDRD6 and TTK, were
184 positively correlated with a number of immune cells, especially the CD4⁺/CD8⁺ T cells
185 (**Figure 3D and E**), implying strong host immune reactions to these two cancer antigens.

186

187 Cellular heterogeneity correlated with clinical pathology of breast cancer

188 Cellular heterogeneity is an important part of the tumor microenvironment and is
189 necessary for the growth and development of a tumor. We studied whether certain cell
190 types were significantly correlated with certain clinical parameters, including age, sex, T
191 stage, N stage, M stage, and TNM stage. A number of cell types were significantly

192 correlated with clinical parameters, especially T stage and M stage (**Figure 4A**).
193 Astrocytes, mesangial cells, and mast cells were negatively correlated with the T stage
194 and plasma cells were positively correlated with the T stage (**Figure 4B-E**). CD4+ Tcm,
195 CD4+ Tem, microvascular (mv) endothelial cells, NKT, and MSC were all significantly
196 higher at the M stage in patients with distal metastasis (**Figure 4F-J**). CLP was
197 significantly higher at the N stage in patients with lymph node metastasis (**Figure 4K**).
198 Th1 cells and MSC were both positively correlated with TNM stage (**Figure 4L-M**). The
199 12 male breast cancer patients studied tended to have higher proportion of CLP and NKT
200 compared with the female breast cancer patients (**Figure 4N-O**).

201

202 **Prognostic model with survival associated cell types**

203 Emerging evidence suggests that the number of tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes (TILs)
204 of primary tumors consistently predicts favorable outcomes for a number of tumor types,
205 including breast cancer. Therefore, survival analyses were performed to find survival-
206 associated cell types within the tumor microenvironment (**Figure 5A**). Immune cells were
207 more strongly associated with overall survival, especially CD4+ and CD8+ T cells (**Figure**
208 **5A**). Most T cells, including CD8+ T cells, CD8+ Tcm, CD8+ naïve T cells, and CD4 Tem,
209 were favorable prognostic factors. However, high CD4+ naïve T cells were associated
210 with worse overall survival (**Figure 5A-M**). NKT, class switched memory B cells, NK cells,
211 cDC, and pDC were also significantly associated with overall survival (**Figure 5A-M**). A
212 number of stromal cells, including mesangial cells and keratinocytes, were favorable

213 prognostic factors but myocytes were adverse prognostic factors (**Figure 5A-M**).
214 Multivariate COX regression revealed that CD8+ T cells, mesangial cells, keratinocytes,
215 NKT, and class switched memory B cells were independent prognostic factors. We built
216 a prognosis predictor model with five independent prognostic factors. Our model more
217 reliably determined the survival of breast cancer patients with the highest AUC of ROC of
218 0.708, versus when the factors were analyzed separately (**Figure 5N, 5O**).

219

220 **Subtypes of breast cancer had diverse phenotypes of cellular heterogeneity**

221 Emerging evidence suggests that the breast cancer transcriptome has a wide range
222 of intratumoral heterogeneity, as well as genomic heterogeneity based on ER, PR, and
223 Her2, which are determined by the tumor cells and immune cells in the surrounding
224 microenvironment (Chung et al., 2017). We explored cellular heterogeneity among
225 different subtypes of breast cancer by Her2, ER, and PR status. 1,092 breast cancer
226 patients were classified into five groups according the clinicopathological parameters
227 provided by TCGA, including 30 Her2+_HR- patients, 59 Her2+_HR+ patients, 426
228 Luminal type (Her2-_HR+) patients, 97 triple negative (Tri-negative) patients, and 480
229 unknown patients (Table 1). The relative proportion of different cells varied widely among
230 these five subtypes (Figure 6). Tri-negative patients had the highest fraction of immune
231 cells while luminal type patients had the smallest fraction of immune cells, especially
232 CD4+ and CD8+ T cells (**Figure 6A, Supplementary Figure S1**). Cluster analyses from
233 ImmuneScore, StromaScore, and heatmap suggested the absence of certain cell types

234 used to distinguish these five subtypes (**Figure 6B**). Furthermore, t-SNE cluster analysis
235 suggested a large difference in tumor-infiltrating cells among these five subtypes (**Figure**
236 **6C and D**). B cells, T cells, macrophages, Th cells and stromal cells, including
237 keratinocytes, were significantly differentially enriched in these subtypes (**Figure 6E-P**
238 **and Figure S2**). Tri-negative breast cancer tissues had the highest fractions of plasma
239 cells, pro B cells, macrophages M1, Th1, and Th2 cells, but M2 cells had the lowest
240 fraction of macrophages (**Figure 6E-L**). Keratinocytes, sebocytes, and pericytes were
241 found frequently in Tri-negative breast cancer whereas MSC cells were found in low
242 amounts (**Figure 6M-P**). Survival analysis revealed interesting differences between the
243 five subtypes (**Figure 7**). Each subtype of breast cancer had a unique pattern of survival-
244 associated tumor-infiltrating cells. Different cell types may have different functions in the
245 prognosis of breast cancer patients. Keratinocytes had a favorable effect on the
246 prognostic factors while neurons were associated with adverse prognosis factors in
247 luminal type patients (**Figure 7A**). However, in Tri-negative patients, keratinocytes
248 predicted a worse overall survival and neurons predicted a better overall survival (**Figure**
249 **7D**). Taken together, the diversity of cellular heterogeneity among the different subtypes
250 of breast cancers suggested that tumor-infiltrating cells within the tumor
251 microenvironment were essential in shaping the intratumor heterogeneity of breast
252 cancer.

253

254 **Discussion**

255 We observed distinct tumor-infiltrating cell types within the tumor microenvironment.
256 The abundance and activation status of these cell types is of interest to researchers for
257 their novel bioinformatic techniques. Tumor-infiltrating cells are known to play important
258 roles in the regulation of tumor proliferation, metastasis, and invasion (Galon et al., 2006;
259 Hanahan & Coussens, 2012). The rapid accumulation of high-throughput data and the
260 evolution of bioinformatics algorithms allows us to digitally dissect the interactions
261 between tumors cells and tumor-infiltrating cells, including immune cells and stromal cells
262 (Aran et al., 2017a; Hackl et al., 2016). The high-throughput approach may help
263 understand the complexity of the tumor microenvironment and lead to innovations in
264 breast cancer treatment and prognosis. xCell analysis reveals that plasma cells and CD4+
265 Tcm in the tumor microenvironment may play a role in the progression of triple-negative
266 breast cancer (Deng et al., 2019), although only immune cells were investigated.

267 We used the digital deconvolution from xCell to determine the cellular heterogeneity
268 within breast tumor and normal tissues. A total of 64 cell types with more than 30 immune
269 cell types were characterized at high resolution. This was the most studied set of cell
270 types, especially for tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes (TILs). We focused on immune cell
271 types, especially the CD4+/CD8+ T cells, and discovered differences between breast
272 tumor tissues and adjacent normal tissues with polarized enrichment of certain cell types.
273 Our results demonstrated that the expression of inhibitory receptors (including PD1,
274 CTLA4, LAG3, and TIM3) were positively correlated and were associated with certain
275 types of T cells in tumor tissues, especially CD8+ Tcm and CD8+ T cells. CD4+ Tem,

276 CD8+ Tcm, CD8+ T-cells, CD8+ naive T-cells, and B cells were associated with better
277 prognosis whereas CD4+ naive T-cells were negatively associated with prognosis for
278 breast cancer patients. Innate and adaptive immune cells had active immune responses
279 to tumor antigens, including T cells, B cells and DC. TDRD6 and TTK are promising
280 targets for cancer vaccines that could activate a number of immune cells, especially T
281 cells and B cells. Stromal cells were also widely involved in the development of breast
282 cancer. Endothelial cells and fibroblasts were not observed as frequently in tumor tissues.
283 Astrocytes and mesangial cells were negatively correlated with T stage. Mesangial cells
284 and keratinocytes were favorable prognostic factors and myocytes were adverse
285 prognostic factors. We built a prognosis predictor with survival-associated cell types to
286 determine the overall survival of breast cancer patients. Cellular heterogeneity was also
287 profiled in different subtypes of breast cancer based on Her2, ER, and PR status. Five
288 subtypes of breast cancer demonstrated various phenotypes and the cell types may have
289 had different or opposing roles in each subtype of breast cancer.

290 Immunotherapies, including immune checkpoint blockers, therapeutic vaccines, and
291 engineered T cells are being intensively investigated (Schumacher & Schreiber, 2015) to
292 determine how tumor cells interact with immune cells. The tumor-immune cell interaction
293 poses considerable challenges since the development of cancer and immune surveillance
294 by innate and adaptive immune cells with plasticity and memory are evolving ecosystems.
295 The complex interplay between solid tumors and host immunity has been widely studied
296 but is not well understood. Tumor infiltrating lymphocytes (TILs) have been associated

297 with clinical outcomes in many tumor types (Anagnostou & Brahmer, 2015; Schoenfeld,
298 2015). For example, CD8+ TILs are prognostically favorable in melanoma, colorectal,
299 ovarian, and non-small cell lung cancer. CD8+ TILs are able to kill tumor cells in specific
300 cancers (Yee et al., 2002). Immunity in breast cancer remains largely unstudied with only
301 a few preliminary evaluations on the prognostic value of CD4+/CD8+ T lymphocytes. The
302 presence of TILs is potentially predictive and prognostic in specific breast cancer
303 subtypes, especially in patients with human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 positive
304 and triple-negative breast cancer. Large adjuvant studies have shown that higher levels
305 of TILs in primary biopsies are associated with improved overall survival and fewer
306 recurrences, regardless of therapy (Adams et al., 2014; Dieci et al., 2015; Loi et al., 2013).

307 We provided detailed information about the immune cells in breast cancer with
308 numerous novel findings. Inhibitory receptors were expressed on certain types of T cells,
309 preferring CD8+ T cells and CD8+ Tcm. The co-expression of PD1, CTLA4, LAG3, and
310 TIM3 were more commonly observed in tumor tissues compared with normal tissues,
311 which may explain the limited effects of a single immune checkpoint inhibitor and the use
312 of combined strategies. The simultaneous inhibition of PD1 and CTLA4 (Wolchok et al.,
313 2013) or TIM3 (Fourcade et al., 2010) in advanced melanoma patients show promise in
314 clinical trials. CD8+ naive T cells versus CD4+ naive T cells were favorable prognostic
315 factors for the overall survival of breast cancer patients, suggesting that not all T cells
316 were protective. These results suggest that the upregulated co-expression of multiple
317 immune inhibitory receptors may contribute to immune suppression. More attention

318 should be paid to subtypes of T cells when using immune checkpoint blockers since
319 immune cells are highly conditional and may have different or even opposing roles in
320 response to tumor cells.

321 Growing evidence suggests that immune cells and tumor cell-extrinsic factors,
322 including fibroblasts, endothelial cells, adipocytes within the tumor microenvironment
323 have important roles in inhibiting apoptosis, enabling immune evasion, and promoting
324 proliferation, angiogenesis, invasion, and metastasis (Whiteside, 2008). We found that
325 endothelial cells were significantly higher in adjacent normal tissues (Figure 1J) and
326 breast cancer patients with metastasis had a higher fraction of microvascular (mv)
327 endothelial cells (Figure 4C). A high level of mv endothelial cells was significantly
328 associated with worse overall survival (Figure 5A). Recent studies have shown that
329 endothelial cells may promote triple-negative breast cancer cell metastasis via PAI-1 and
330 CCL5 signaling (Zhang et al., 2018). The presence of endothelial cells significantly
331 enhanced the angiogenic activity of breast cancer cells (Buchanan et al., 2012). These
332 results support our analysis and further study of the clinical relevance of these cell types
333 may provide novel insights into the initiation and progression of breast cancer.

334 We analyzed and described the potential roles of different tumor-infiltrating cells. Our
335 study would benefit from additional analysis and experimental validations to further
336 investigate the roles of the 64 types of cells profiled in this study.

337 **Conclusions**

338 We revealed the landscape of cellular heterogeneity at high resolution and provided

339 novel insights into cell interactions within the tumor microenvironment in breast cancer.
340 Our results may assist in the development of future therapeutic and predictive strategies.
341 Further study should focus on the subtypes of immune cells and stromal cells identified
342 in this study.

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448 **Figure legends:**

449 **Figure 1. Differences of cellular heterogeneity between breast tumor tissue and**
450 **normal tissues.** A. Median fractions of 64 cell types in breast tumor and normal tissues.
451 64 cell types were grouped into four groups: immune, stem, stromal, and other cells. B.
452 Heatmap of fractions of 64 cell types in 1,092 breast tumor tissues and 112 adjacent
453 normal tissues. C. Dimensionality reduction and visualization by t-Distributed Stochastic
454 Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) clustering based on cell fractions. D. to W. Dot plots of
455 fractions of certain cell types in breast tumor and normal tissues. Lines between dots
456 indicated paired tissues from the same breast cancer patient. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***,
457 $P < 0.001$.

458

459 **Figure 2. Expression patterns of inhibitory receptors on CD4+/CD8+ T cells.** A and
460 B. Heatmaps of expression of inhibitory receptors including PD1, CTLA4, LAG3 and
461 TIM3, and fractions of CD4+/CD8+ T cells in tumor tissues (A) and normal tissues (B).
462 Data were transformed by rank and normalized. C. Clustered correlation matrixes among
463 inhibitory receptors and CD4+/CD8+ T cells in tumor tissues (up-right triangle) and normal
464 tissues (low-left triangle). D. Dot plot of correlations between PD1 expression and
465 fractions of CD8+ Tcm in tumor tissues. E. Dot plot of correlations between PD1
466 expression and CTLA4 expression in tumor tissues. F. Dot plot of correlations between
467 TIM3 expression and fractions of CD4+ Tcm in normal tissues. G. Dot plot of correlations
468 between PD1 expression and LAG3 in normal tissues.

469

470 **Figure 3. Correlations between cancer/testis genes and immune cells.** A. Significant
471 correlations between cancer/testis (CT) genes and immune cells. Scaled color dots
472 represented significant correlations between CT genes and immune cells ($P < 0.001$) and
473 red dots represented positive correlations while blue dots represent negative correlations.
474 B. and C. CD8+ naïve T-cells and aDC were positively correlated with most of the CT
475 genes. D. and E. TDRD6 and TTK were positively correlated with a number of immune
476 cells.

477

478 **Figure 4. Involvement of cellular heterogeneity in clinic-pathology of breast cancer.**

479 A. A number of cell types were significantly correlated with clinical parameters. B. to O.
480 Examples of significant correlations between different cell types and clinical parameters,
481 y-axis represents the fractions of each cell type. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***, $P < 0.001$.

482

483 **Figure 5. Survival associated tumor-infiltrating cells in breast cancer.** A. Forest plot
484 of hazard ratios of survival associated cell types. B. to M. Kaplan-Meier curves of survival
485 associated cell types. Red lines indicated high fraction while blue lines indicated low
486 fraction of each cell types, respectively. N. Kaplan-Meier curves of predictor built with five
487 independent prognostic factors ($P < 0.01$). O. ROC curves of prognostic model and the five
488 independent prognostic factors.

489

490 **Figure 6. Differences of cellular heterogeneity among different subtypes of breast**
491 **cancer.** A. Median fraction of 64 cell types in five subtypes of breast tumor. B. Cluster
492 analysis by ImmuneScore and StromaScore, which were calculated by summing up the
493 fractions of immune and stromal cells, respectively. C. Dimensionality reduction and
494 visualization by t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) clustering with
495 fractions of all the 64 cell types. D. Heatmap of fractions of 64 cell types in five subtypes
496 of breast cancer. E. to P. Box plots with dots of fractions of certain cell types in five
497 subtypes of breast cancer. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***, $P < 0.001$, ****, $P < 0.0001$.

498

499 **Figure 7. Survival associated tumor-infiltrating cells in five subtypes of breast**
500 **cancer.** A. to E. Forest plots of hazard ratios of survival associated cell types in five
501 subtypes of breast cancer.

502

503 **Supplementary Figure S1. Median fractions of 64 types of cells in five subtypes of**
504 **breast cancer.**

505

506 **Supplementary Figure S2. Diverse differences of 64 types of cells among the five**
507 **subtypes of breast cancer.**

508

Figure 1

Differences of cellular heterogeneity between breast tumor tissue and normal tissues.

A. Median fractions of 64 cell types in breast tumor and normal tissues. 64 cell types were grouped into four groups: immune, stem, stromal, and other cells. B. Heatmap of fractions of 64 cell types in 1,092 breast tumor tissues and 112 adjacent normal tissues. C. Dimensionality reduction and visualization by t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) clustering based on cell fractions. D. to W. Dot plots of fractions of certain cell types in breast tumor and normal tissues. Lines between dots indicated paired tissues from the same breast cancer patient. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***, $P < 0.001$.

Figure 2

Expression patterns of inhibitory receptors on CD4+/CD8+ T cells.

A and B. Heatmaps of expression of inhibitory receptors including PD1, CTLA4, LAG3 and TIM3, and fractions of CD4+/CD8+ T cells in tumor tissues (A) and normal tissues (B). Data were transformed by rank and normalized. C. Clustered correlation matrixes among inhibitory receptors and CD4+/CD8+ T cells in tumor tissues (up-right triangle) and normal tissues (low-left triangle). D. Dot plot of correlations between PD1 expression and fractions of CD8+ Tcm in tumor tissues. E. Dot plot of correlations between PD1 expression and CTLA4 expression in tumor tissues. F. Dot plot of correlations between TIM3 expression and fractions of CD4+ Tcm in normal tissues. G. Dot plot of correlations between PD1 expression and LAG3 in normal tissues.

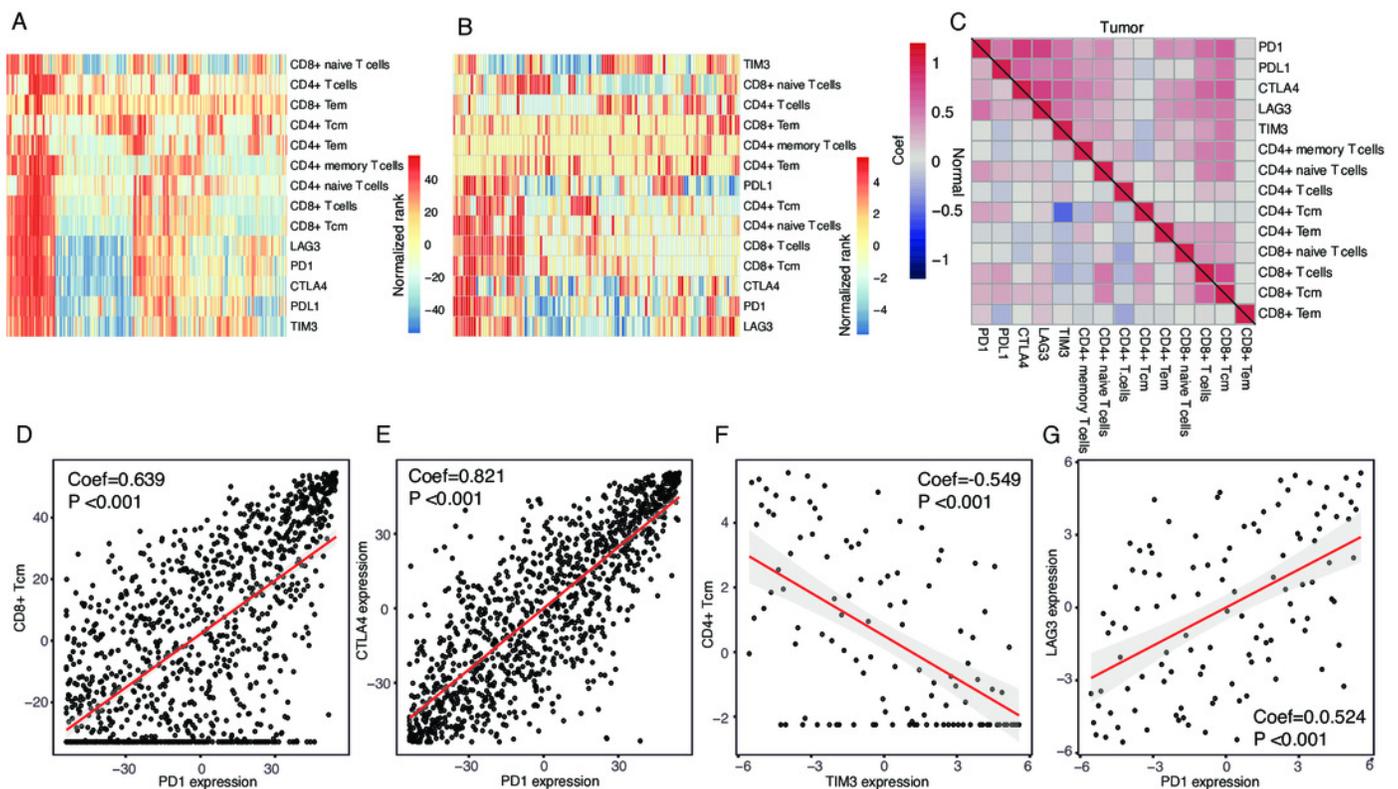


Figure 3

Correlations between cancer/testis genes and immune cells.

A. Significant correlations between cancer/testis (CT) genes and immune cells. Scaled color dots represented significant correlations between CT genes and immune cells ($P < 0.001$) and red dots represented positive correlations while blue dots represent negative correlations. B. and C. CD8+ naïve T-cells and aDC were positively correlated with most of the CT genes. D. and E. TDRD6 and TTK were positively correlated with a number of immune cells.

Figure 4

Involvement of cellular heterogeneity in clinic-pathology of breast cancer.

A. A number of cell types were significantly correlated with clinical parameters. B. to O. Examples of significant correlations between different cell types and clinical parameters, y-axis represents the fractions of each cell type. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***, $P < 0.001$.

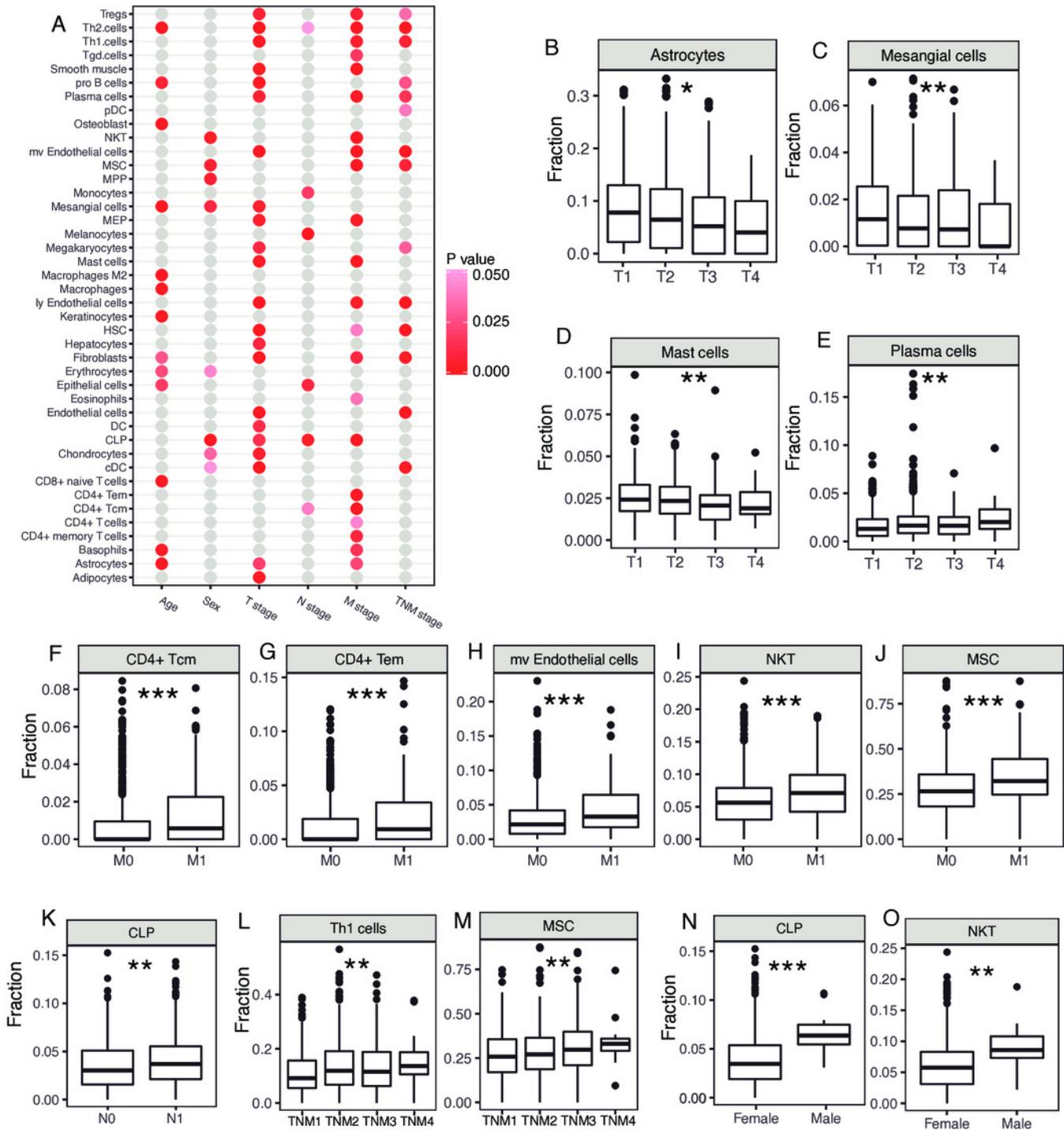


Figure 5

Survival associated tumor-infiltrating cells in breast cancer.

Forest plot of hazard ratios of survival associated cell types. B. to M. Kaplan-Meier curves of survival associated cell types. Red lines indicated high fraction while blue lines indicated low fraction of each cell types, respectively. N. Kaplan-Meier curves of predictor built with five independent prognostic factors ($P < 0.01$). O. ROC curves of prognostic model and the five independent prognostic factors.

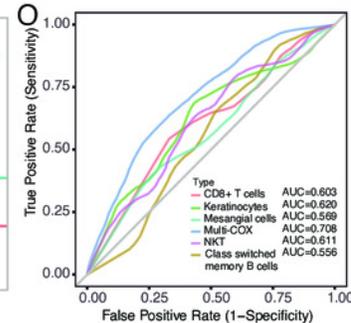
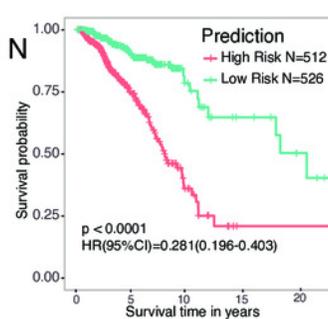
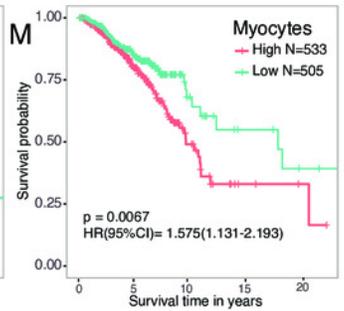
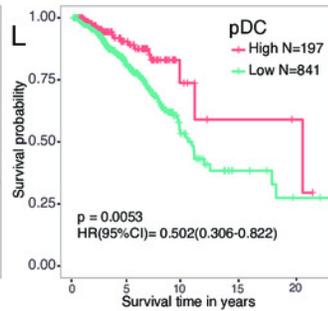
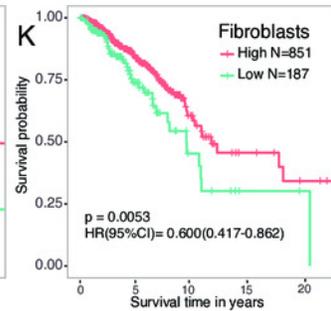
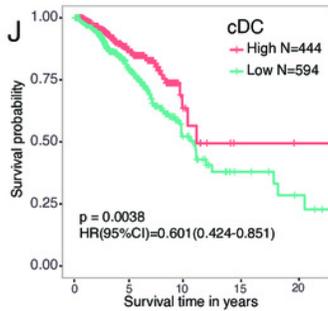
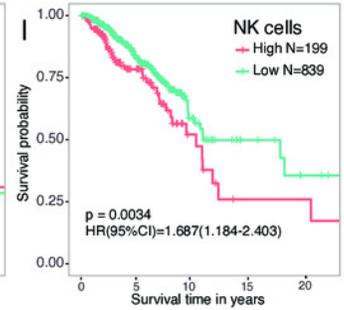
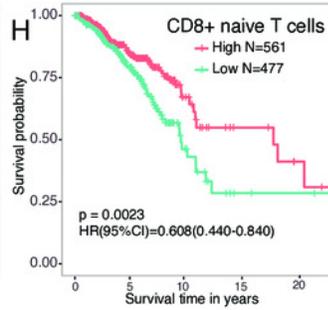
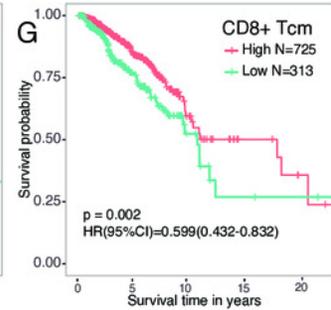
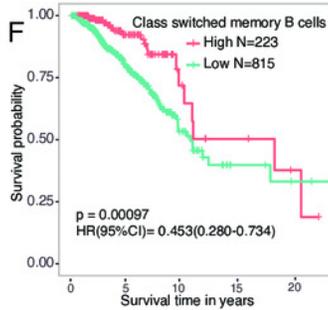
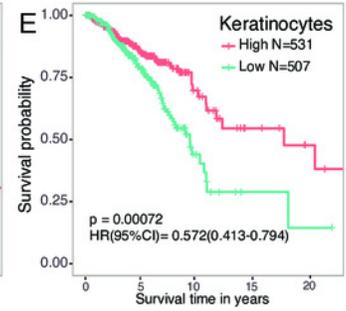
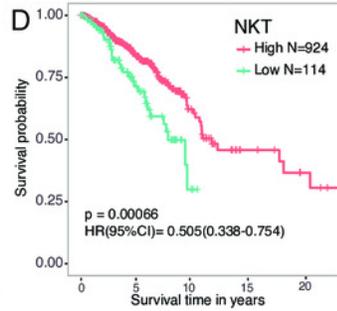
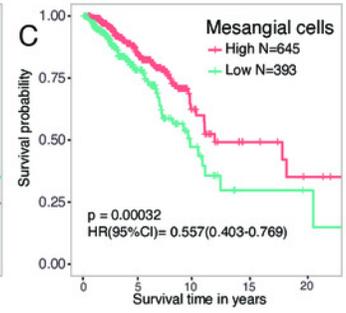
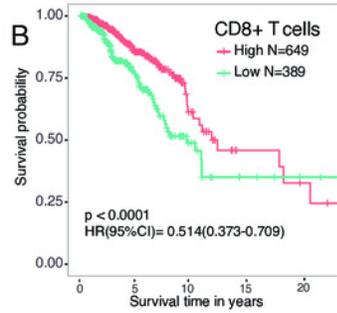
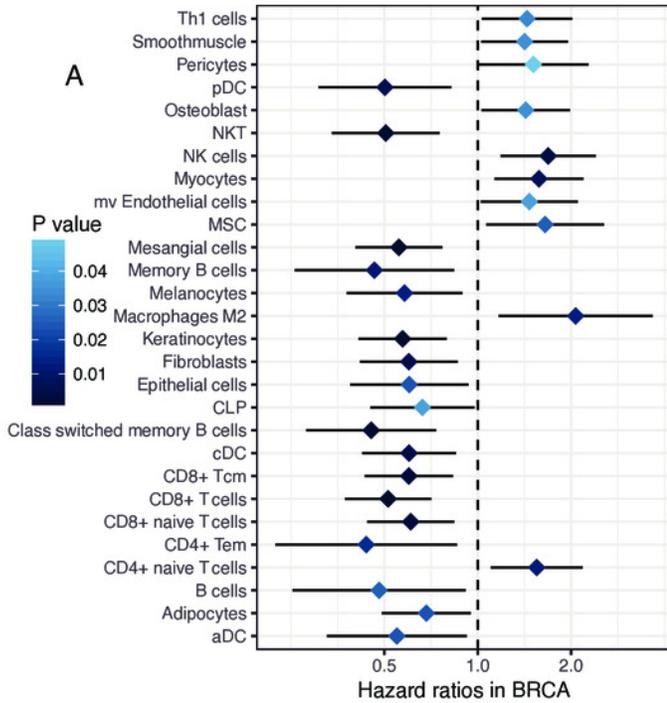


Figure 6

Differences of cellular heterogeneity among different subtypes of breast cancer.

A. Median fraction of 64 cell types in five subtypes of breast tumor. B. Cluster analysis by ImmuneScore and StromaScore, which were calculated by summing up the fractions of immune and stromal cells, respectively. C. Dimensionality reduction and visualization by t-Distributed Stochastic Neighbor Embedding (t-SNE) clustering with fractions of all the 64 cell types. D. Heatmap of fractions of 64 cell types in five subtypes of breast cancer. E. to P. Box plots with dots of fractions of certain cell types in five subtypes of breast cancer. *, $P < 0.05$. **, $P < 0.01$. ***, $P < 0.001$, ****, $P < 0.0001$.

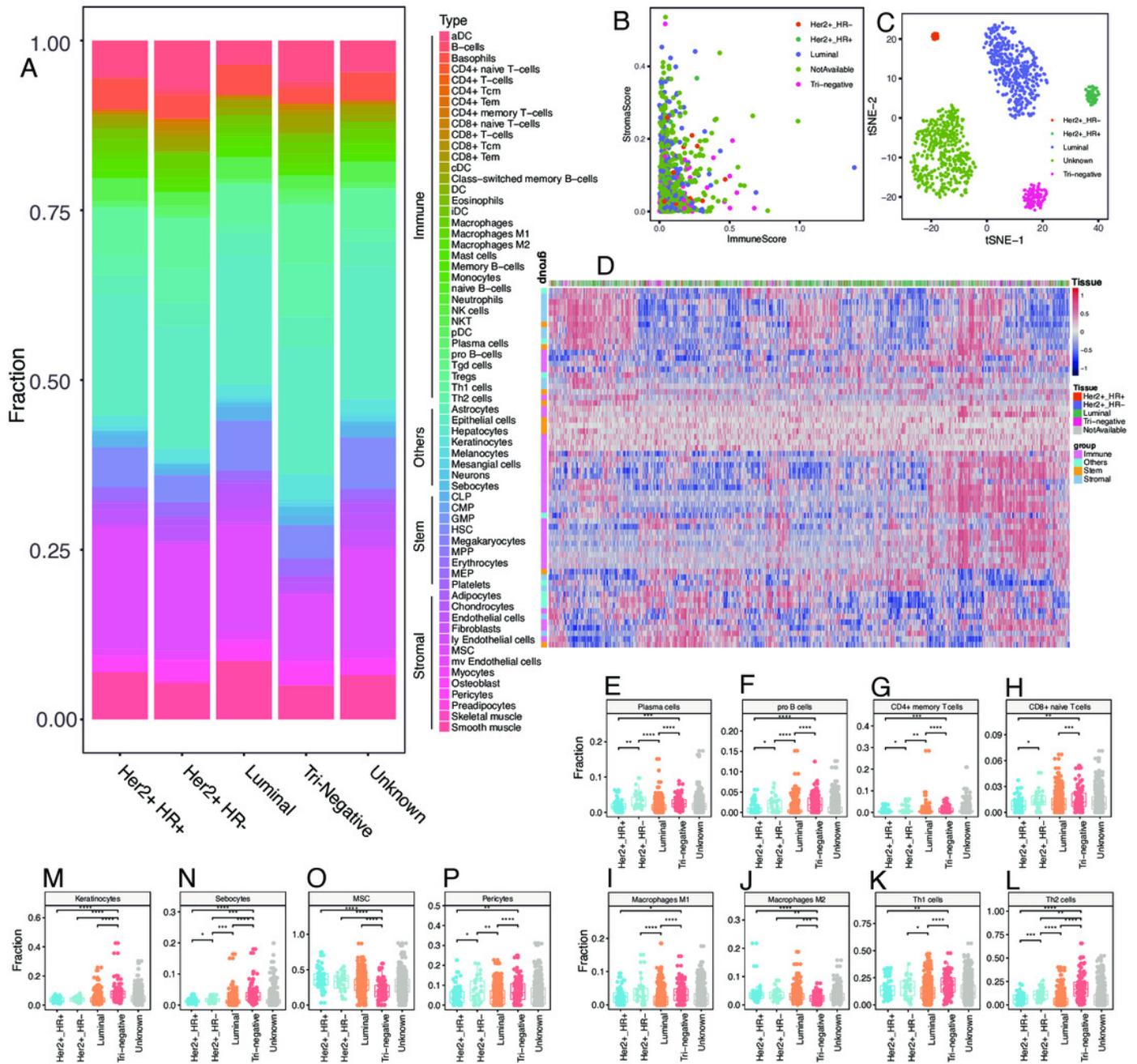


Figure 7

Survival associated tumor-infiltrating cells in five subtypes of breast cancer.

A. to E. Forest plots of hazard ratios of survival associated cell types in five subtypes of breast cancer.

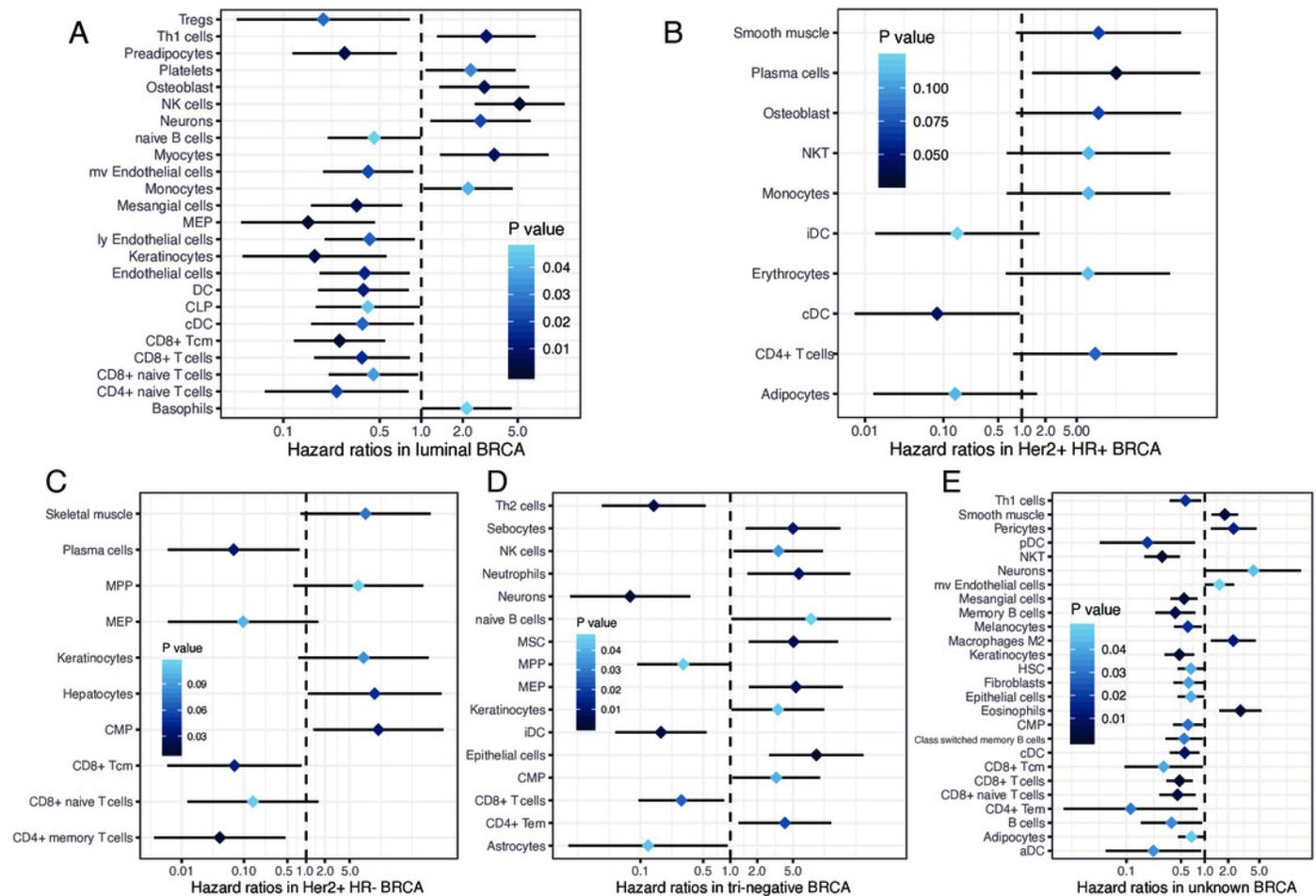


Table 1 (on next page)

Clinical characteristics of the 1,092 breast cancer patients from TCGA.

Clinical characteristics of the 1,092 breast cancer patients from TCGA.

1

Table 1. Clinical characteristics of the 1,092 breast cancer patients from TCGA.

Characteristic	TCGA (N=1,092)	BRCA
Age median (range)	59 (26-90)	
Sex		
Female	1,080 (98.9%)	
Male	12 (1.1%)	
Tumor stage		
T1	279 (25.5%)	
T2	635 (58.2%)	
T3	138 (12.6%)	
T4	40 (3.7%)	
Lymph node stage		
N (-)	333 (30.5%)	
N (+)	759 (69.5%)	
Metastasis stage		
M (-)	903(82.7%)	
M (+)	189(17.3%)	
TNM stage		
TNM I	181 (16.5%)	
TNM II	637 (58.3%)	
TNM III	254 (23.3%)	
TNM IV	20 (18.3%)	
Subtypes		
Luminal	426 (39.0%)	
Her2+_HR+	59 (5.4%)	
Her2+_HR-	30 (2.7%)	
Tri-negative	97 (8.9%)	
Unknown	480(44.0%)	
Status		
Living	940 (86.1%)	
Decreased	152 (13.9%)	

2

3

Table 2 (on next page)

Abbreviations and statistical summary of enriched fractions of the 64 cell types.

Abbreviations and statistical summary of enriched fractions of the 64 cell types.

1 **Table 2. Abbreviations and statistical summary of enriched fractions of the 64 cell types.**

Full name	Abbreviations	Group	Tumor N=1,092 (Mean ± SD)	Normal N=112 (Mean ± SD)	Paired Tumor N=112 (Mean ± SD)	P value	P value (paired)
Activated dendritic cells	aDC	Immune	0.116±0.110	0.016±0.045	0.103±0.104	<0.001	<0.001
B-cells	/	Immune	0.031±0.085	0.004±0.039	0.021±0.052	<0.001	<0.001
Basophils	/	Immune	0.078±0.056	0.058±0.040	0.071±0.054	<0.001	0.077
CD4+ naive T-cells	/	Immune	0.010±0.029	0.003±0.015	0.008±0.020	0.009	0.004
CD4+ T-cells	/	Immune	0.003±0.010	0.000±0.003	0.001±0.004	0.101	0.036
Central memory CD4+ T Cell	CD4+ Tcm	Immune	0.009±0.015	0.016±0.019	0.003±0.007	0.006	<0.001
Effector memory CD4+ T cell	CD4+ Tem	Immune	0.013±0.022	0.000±0.002	0.010±0.018	<0.001	<0.001
CD4+ memory T-cells		Immune	0.007±0.017	0.000±0.004	0.007±0.012	<0.001	<0.001
CD8+ naive T-cells	/	Immune	0.012±0.011	0.005±0.007	0.011±0.010	<0.001	<0.001
CD8+ T-cells	/	Immune	0.018±0.039	0.006±0.016	0.016±0.032	<0.001	0.001
Central memory CD8+ T Cell	CD8+ Tcm	Immune	0.026±0.049	0.005±0.015	0.027±0.046	<0.001	<0.001
Effector memory CD8+ T cell	CD8+ Tem	Immune	0.001±0.007	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.002	0.805	0.608
Conventional dendritic cells	cDC	Immune	0.037±0.046	0.072±0.057	0.040±0.043	<0.001	<0.001
Class-switched memory B-cells	/	Immune	0.026±0.031	0.002±0.014	0.020±0.023	<0.001	<0.001
Dendritic cells	DC	Immune	0.005±0.011	0.005±0.011	0.004±0.008	0.826	0.927
Eosinophils	/	Immune	0.000±0.001	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.001	0.737	0.763
Immature dendritic cells	iDC	Immune	0.042±0.073	0.167±0.171	0.047±0.053	<0.001	<0.001
Macrophages	/	Immune	0.038±0.036	0.008±0.023	0.038±0.034	<0.001	<0.001
Inflammatory (M1) macrophages	Macrophages M1	Immune	0.022±0.027	0.003±0.010	0.019±0.027	<0.001	<0.001
Reparative (M2) macrophages	Macrophages M2	Immune	0.031±0.021	0.030±0.034	0.031±0.017	0.001	0.003
Mast cells	/	Immune	0.024±0.012	0.015±0.008	0.025±0.010	<0.001	<0.001
Memory B-cells	/	Immune	0.006±0.028	0.001±0.011	0.003±0.014	<0.001	0.083
Monocytes	/	Immune	0.004±0.012	0.003±0.013	0.004±0.011	0.007	0.040

naive B-cells	/	Immune	0.004±0.016	0.001±0.009	0.003±0.009	<0.001	0.004
Neutrophils	/	Immune	0.000±0.001	0.003±0.005	0.000±0.000	<0.001	<0.001
Nature killer cells	NK cells	Immune	0.000±0.002	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.001	0.342	0.759
Natural killer cells	T NKT	Immune	0.061±0.039	0.028±0.036	0.043±0.028	<0.001	<0.001
Plasmacytoid dendritic cells	pDC	Immune	0.008±0.019	0.000±0.000	0.007±0.017	<0.001	0.004
Plasma cells	/	Immune	0.019±0.018	0.001±0.003	0.015±0.012	<0.001	<0.001
pro B-cells	/	Immune	0.009±0.017	0.000±0.000	0.006±0.013	<0.001	<0.001
Gamma delta cells	T Tgd cells	Immune	0.003±0.009	0.000±0.000	0.004±0.011	<0.001	0.003
Regulatory cells	T Tregs	Immune	0.012±0.016	0.004±0.009	0.013±0.016	<0.001	<0.001
Type 1 T helper (Th1) cells	Th1 cells	Immune	0.133±0.092	0.014±0.026	0.101±0.067	<0.001	<0.001
Type 2 T helper (Th2) cells	Th2 cells	Immune	0.075±0.096	0.002±0.007	0.082±0.091	<0.001	<0.001
Astrocytes	/	Others	0.076±0.069	0.110±0.065	0.081±0.064	<0.001	<0.001
Epithelial cells	/	Others	0.365±0.092	0.277±0.146	0.354±0.089	<0.001	<0.001
Hepatocytes	/	Others	0.001±0.002	0.005±0.003	0.002±0.002	<0.001	<0.001
Keratinocytes	/	Others	0.047±0.038	0.065±0.037	0.046±0.038	<0.001	<0.001
Melanocytes	/	Others	0.010±0.008	0.008±0.008	0.010±0.009	0.011	0.162
Mesangial cells	/	Others	0.014±0.015	0.034±0.013	0.015±0.015	<0.001	<0.001
Neurons	/	Others	0.004±0.008	0.004±0.002	0.004±0.006	<0.001	<0.001
Sebocytes	/	Others	0.016±0.019	0.009±0.009	0.017±0.024	<0.001	<0.001
Common lymphoid progenitor	CLP	Stem	0.039±0.026	0.013±0.015	0.041±0.026	<0.001	<0.001
Common myeloid progenitor	CMP	Stem	0.001±0.003	0.003±0.004	0.001±0.003	<0.001	0.008
Granulocyte-macrophage progenitor	GMP	Stem	0.002±0.006	0.002±0.006	0.002±0.008	0.001	0.025
Hematopoietic stem cells	HSC	Stem	0.150±0.110	0.492±0.191	0.174±0.125	<0.001	<0.001
Megakaryocytes	/	Stem	0.004±0.004	0.021±0.009	0.005±0.005	<0.001	<0.001
Multipotent progenitors	MPP	Stem	0.00±0.001	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.000	<0.001	0.027
Erythrocytes	/	Stem	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.000	0.000±0.000	0.471	0.306
Megakaryocyte-	MEP	Stem	0.035±0.030	0.011±0.017	0.027±0.022	<0.001	<0.001

erythroid progenitor							
Platelets	/	Stem	0.000±0.002	0.000±0.001	0.000±0.001	0.062	0.334
Adipocytes	/	Stromal	0.050±0.088	0.382±0.207	0.063±0.102	<0.001	<0.001
Chondrocytes	/	Stromal	0.035±0.037	0.053±0.022	0.040±0.038	<0.001	<0.001
Endothelial cells	/	Stromal	0.058±0.056	0.209±0.104	0.066±0.059	<0.001	<0.001
Fibroblasts	/	Stromal	0.058±0.068	0.172±0.078	0.063±0.074	<0.001	<0.001
Lymphatic endothelial cells	ly Endothelial cells	Stromal	0.020±0.027	0.110±0.071	0.021±0.025	<0.001	<0.001
Mesenchymal stem cells	MSC	Stromal	0.281±0.144	0.019±0.054	0.252±0.139	<0.001	<0.001
Microvascular endothelial cells	mv Endothelial cells	Stromal	0.032±0.032	0.104±0.062	0.029±0.028	<0.001	<0.001
Myocytes	/	Stromal	0.004±0.010	0.009±0.042	0.005±0.008	0.012	0.387
Osteoblast	/	Stromal	0.025±0.031	0.005±0.013	0.018±0.024	<0.001	<0.001
Pericytes	/	Stromal	0.053±0.052	0.027±0.035	0.057±0.055	<0.001	<0.001
Preadipocytes	/	Stromal	0.024±0.040	0.179±0.090	0.032±0.045	<0.001	<0.001
Skeletal muscle	/	Stromal	0.001±0.011	0.010±0.101	0.001±0.003	0.442	0.365
Smooth muscle	/	Stromal	0.133±0.091	0.125±0.067	0.175±0.088	0.345	<0.001
ImmuneScore	/	/	0.082±0.103	0.029±0.049	0.074±0.079	<0.001	<0.001
StromaScore	/	/	0.083±0.088	0.382±0.174	0.096±0.097	<0.001	<0.001

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