Systemic Microgravity Response: Utilizing GeneLab (genelab.nasa.gov) to Develop Hypotheses for Spaceflight Risks

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What is Systems Biology?

• Systems biology attempts to understand biological organisms or systems as a whole rather than researching their individual components in isolation from one another.

• NIH defines Systems Biology as: “Systems biology is an approach in biomedical research to understanding the larger picture—be it at the level of the organism, tissue, or cell—by putting its pieces together. It’s in stark contrast to decades of reductionist biology, which involves taking the pieces apart.”
General Approach to Studying a Systematic Response in the Host

An example for cancer research
GeneLab Data Used to Generate Results

International Space Station (ISS) Missions

Mice Sacrificed on ISS

Mice flown on STS and Sacrificed after Re-entry

Time in Space for Mice (days)

Liver
Soleus Muscle
Extensor Digitorum Longus Muscle
Mammary Gland
Thymus
Skeletal Muscle
Extensor Digitorum Longus Muscle
Gastrocnemius Muscle
Soleus Muscle
Extensor Digitorum Longus Muscle
Tibialis Anterior Muscle
Adrenal Glands
Kidney
Liver
Skin

Space Shuttle (STS) Missions

Data Used to Generate Results

Data Sharing
Data Collection & Curation
Data Submission
Next Generation Research
Modeling and Validation
Sample Processing
Process after mice are sacrificed
Number of Significant Genes from Each Dataset

Fold-Change $\geq |1.2|$  
Pathway/Functional Predictions:  
Ingenuity Pathway Analysis (IPA)  
Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA)
Determination of Key Genes/Drivers

Key Genes and the Connections

A) Direct Connections for Key Genes for Flight vs AEM

B) Connections Between all Key Genes for all Datasets (Flight vs AEM): Radial Plot with the most Connected Gene in the Middle
General Approach to Studying a Systematic Response in the Host

Circulating miRNAs

Systemic tumor-host effects
A single miRNA has been estimated to regulate up to 500 mRNAs.

- miRNAs are single-stranded RNA sequences, of about 22 nucleotides in length, processed from longer transcripts.
- miRNAs are important regulators that repress the translation of mRNA transcripts.
Impact of Circulating microRNAs

- Circulating miRNAs can carry signals from organs to other various parts of the body through the blood stream.
- The miRNAs can be transported in Exosomes, microparticles, lipoproteins, and outside any type of packaging.
- Our preliminary data shows that a miRNA signature is carried over from the spleen to the tumor with age.
Systems Biology View of miRNAs

Tumor Suppressor miRNAs
OncomiRNAs

Only looking at a single miRNA
looking at a pair of miRNAs

Tumors Inhibited
No Change in Tumors
Tumors Promoted

Tumors Inhibited

In pursuit of the elusive miRNA...

Systems Biology Approach: Looking at how the entire system impacts the most Important miRNAs
Predicted miRNAs Involved with Microgravity Effects

- miRNAs predicted from interaction from all key genes

A) Top 10 predicted miRNAs from p-values

B) All miRNAs with Z-scores > 2 or < -2

Research Article

Integration Analysis of MicroRNA and mRNA Expression Profiles in Human Peripheral Blood Lymphocytes Cultured in Modeled Microgravity

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Received 16 April 2014; Revised 22 May 2014; Accepted 22 May 2014; Published 23 June 2014

Academic Editor: Mariano Buzzetti

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We analyzed miRNA and mRNA expression profiles in human peripheral blood lymphocytes (PBLs) incubated in microgravity condition, simulated by a ground-based rotating wall vessel (RWW) bioreactor. Our results show that 47 miRNAs were differentially expressed in MSGB incubated PBLs compared with 1 g incubated ones. Among these, mir-9-3p, mir-9-5p, mir-155-5p, mir-150-3p, and mir-178-3p were the most dysregulated. To improve the detection of functional miRNA-miRNA pairs, we performed gene expression profiles on the same samples assayed for miRNA profiling and we integrated miRNA and mRNA expression datasets. The functional classification of miRNA-correlated genes evidenced significant enrichment in the biological processes of immune/inflammatory response, signal transduction, regulation of response to stress, regulation of programmed cell death, and regulation of cell proliferation. We identified the correlation of mir-9-3p, mir-155-5p, mir-150-3p, and mir-178-3p expression with that of genes involved in immune/inflammatory response (e.g., HPG and IL17) apoptosis (e.g., PDCD4 and PTEN), and cell proliferation (e.g., NR3X-1 and GADD45A). Experimental assays of cell viability and apoptosis induction validated the results obtained by bioinformatics analyses demonstrating that in human PBLs the exposure to reduced gravitational force increases the frequency of apoptosis and decreases cell proliferation.
Predicted miRNAs Involved with Microgravity Effects

Health Risk Due to miRNAs

**miR-26a-5p**

HRS = -12.79

**Biological Health Risk Increased**

- Predicted Activation
- Predicted Inhibition
- Negative Impact on Health
- Positive Impact on Health
- Both Positive and Negative Impact

HRS = Health Risk Score
Overall Summary of All Data

- Systems biology approach allows for systemic understanding of the impact of Microgravity.
- Circulating miRNAs can influence overall progression of health risk to the host.
- miRNAs can potentially be used for novel minimally invasive therapeutics and countermeasures.
- GeneLab (genelab.nasa.gov) is a powerful tool to generate hypotheses and direct future space research.
Acknowledgements

GeneLab Science Team:
Sylvain Costes, PhD
David Smith, PhD
Homer Fogle, PhD
Daniel Berrios, MD PhD MPH
Shayoni Ray, PhD
Jonathan Galazka, PhD
Egle Cekanaviciute, PhD
Sigrid Reinsch, PhD
Yared Kidane, PhD
Marla Smithwick
Samrawit Gebre

Sylvain Costes, PhD
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genelab.nasa.gov
Thanks to Systems Biology, we now have a clear picture of complex diseases!

Questions??