

Determination of XCI Using Allele-Specific RNA-seq

For gene i, let the number of allele-specific RNA-seq reads mapped to the inactivated/activated chromosomes be $n_{i,0}$ and $n_{i,1}$, and let $n_i \equiv n_{i,0} + n_{i,1}$. We first model $n_{i,0}$ by a binomial distribution:

$$
p(n_{i,0}|n_i, p_i) = {n_i \choose n_{i,0}} p_i^{n_{i,0}} (1-p_i)^{n_i-n_{i,0}},
$$

where p_i indicates the expected proportion of reads from the inactivated chromosome. We further assume that p_i follows a mixture of two beta distributions:

$$
f(p_i) = \pi_{i0} f_0(p_i; \alpha_0, \beta_0) + (1 - \pi_{i0}) f_1(p_i; \alpha_1, \beta_1), \qquad (1)
$$

where $f_0(p_i; \alpha_0, \beta_0)$ and $f_1(p_i; \alpha_1, \beta_1)$ are two beta distributions for inactivated genes and genes that escape inactivation, respectively, and α_0 , β_0 , α_1 , and β_1 are the unknown parameters to be estimated. Known inactivated genes, such as Rnf12, has p_i approaching 0. Therefore, in general, p_i 's from $f_0(p_i; \alpha_0, \beta_0)$ are small (e.g, < 0.01), reflecting possible sequencing errors. π_{i0} is the prior probability that gene i is inactivated. We integrate out p_i to obtain the posterior distribution of $n_{i,0}$ in terms of α_0 , β_0 , α_1 , and β_1 .

$$
p(n_{i,0}|n_i,\alpha_0,\beta_0,\alpha_1,\beta_1) = \int p(n_{i,0}|n_i,p_i)f(p_i)dp_i = \pi_{i0}h_{i0} + (1-\pi_{i0})h_{i1}
$$

where h_{i0} and h_{i1} are two beta-binomial distributions

$$
h_{i0} = {n_i \choose n_{i,0}} \frac{B(n_{i,0} + \alpha_0, n_i - n_{i,0} + \beta_0)}{B(\alpha_0, \beta_0)}
$$

$$
h_{i1} = {n_i \choose n_{i,0}} \frac{B(n_{i,0} + \alpha_1, n_i - n_{i,0} + \beta_1)}{B(\alpha_1, \beta_1)}
$$

and $B(\alpha, \beta)$ is beta function with parameters α and β . Beta-binomial distribution is a generalization of binomial distribution to allow extra variance, which has been used to model RNA-seq data before [Pickrell et al., 2010]. In this study, the extra variability comes from the fact that each gene has its own proportion of reads escaping inactivation.

For each read, we can obtain a base-calling quality score at the SNP location. We model the prior probability one gene escapes inactivation by a logistic regression with two predictors: the total number of escaping reads and the summation of quality scores of these reads (denoted by q_i):

$$
\log\left(\frac{\pi_{i0}}{1-\pi_{i0}}\right) = b_0 + b_1 n_{i,0} + b_2 q_i,\tag{2}
$$

where b_0 , b_1 , and b_2 are regression coefficients to be estimated.

Now we have finished the model setup and there are altogether seven parameters to be estimated: α_0 , α_1 , β_0 , β_1 , b_0 , b_1 , and b_2 . We estimated these parameters by Maximum Likelihood approach using Expectation-Maximization (EM) algorithm [Dempster et al., 1977]. For the robustness of the algorithm and based on the prior belief that most of genes are inactivated, we impose an extra restriction that $\pi_{i0} \geq$ 0.2. This is equivalent to adding a large penalty $\lambda I_{\pi_0 < 0.2}$ to the likelihood, where λ is an arbitrary large positive number and $I_{\pi_0 \leq 0.2}$ is an indicator function which equals to 1 if π_0 < 0.2 and 0 otherwise. To maximize this alternative likelihood, we simply maximize the original likelihood and set π_{i0} to be 0.2 if its estimate is smaller than 0.2. Our final results remain similar for any π_{i0} cutoff from 0.05 to 0.3. Given the parameter estimates from the EM algorithm, we can estimate the posterior probability that one gene is inactivated by

$$
\hat{\tau}_{i0} = \frac{\hat{\pi}_{i0}\hat{h}_0}{\hat{\pi}_{i0}\hat{h}_{i0} + \hat{\pi}_{i1}\hat{h}_{i1}},
$$

where the hat sign $\hat{\ }$ indicates the estimate of the corresponding parameter. We then assign one gene as activated or inactivated based on $\hat{\tau}_{i0}$. Note that $\hat{\tau}_{i0}$ can also be interpreted as local False Discovery Rate (FDR) [Efron et al., 2001]. If we claim one gene is activated when $\hat{\tau}_{i0} \leq \tau_C$, then the overall FDR is $\sum_i \hat{\tau}_{i0} I_{\hat{\tau}_{i0} \leq \tau_C} / \sum_i I_{\hat{\tau}_{i0} \leq \tau_C}$, where $I_{\hat{\tau}_{i0} \leq \tau_C}$ is an indicator function, which equals to 1 if $\hat{\tau}_{i0} \leq \tau_C$, and 0 otherwise.

References

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