In infants with severe bronchiolitis: Dual-transcriptomic profiling of nasopharyngeal microbiome and host response

Michimasa Fujiogi; Carlos A. Camargo Jr.; James P. Bernot; Robert J Freishtat; Brennan Harmon; Jonathan M. Mansbach; Eduardo Castro-Nallar; Marcos Perez-Losada; and Kohei Hasegawa, MD, MPH

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SUPPLEMENTAL METHODS

Design, Setting, and Sample

We analyzed data from an ongoing multicenter prospective cohort study of infants (aged <12 months) with severe bronchiolitis—the 35th Multicenter Airway Research Collaboration (MARC-35).(1,2) Using a standardized protocol, site investigators at 17 sites across 14 U.S. states enrolled 1,016 infants hospitalized with an attending physician's diagnosis of bronchiolitis during three consecutive bronchiolitis seasons (from November 1 to April 30) in 2011-2014. Bronchiolitis was defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines: acute respiratory illness with some combination of rhinitis, cough, tachypnea, wheezing, crackles, and retractions. (3) We excluded infants with known heart–lung disease, immunodeficiency, immunosuppression, or gestational age <32 weeks, those who were transferred to a participating hospital 24 hours after the original hospitalization, or those who were consented 24 hours after hospitalization. All patients were treated at the discretion of the treating physicians. The institutional review board at each of the participating hospitals approved the study. Written informed consent was obtained from the parent or guardian.

In the current proof-of-concept study, we performed dual-transcriptomic profiling of the nasopharyngeal samples from five infants with RSV infection and five infants with sole RV infection (i.e., no co-infecting RSV) in MARC-35.

Data Collection

At the index hospitalization, investigators conducted a structured interview that collected patients' demographic characteristics, medical and family history, and details of the acute illness. Emergency department and hospital medical record reviews provided further clinical data, such

as vital signs, physical examination, medical management, and disposition. Review of medical records was performed, after successful completion of training (lecture, practice charts), by board-certified physicians (e.g., from pediatric pulmonary, allergy/ immunology). All data were reviewed at the EMNet Coordinating Center at Massachusetts General Hospital (Boston, MA), and site investigators were queried about missing data and discrepancies identified by manual data checks.

Nasopharyngeal Sampling

On the basis of evidence that upper airway microbiome and inflammatory response are indicative of those in the lower respiratory tract,(4-6) we investigated nasopharyngeal airway specimens. In addition to the clinical data above, investigators also collected nasopharyngeal airway samples within 24 hours of hospitalization by using a standardized protocol that was utilized in a previous cohort study of children with bronchiolitis.(2) All of the sites used the same collection equipment (Medline Industries, Mundelein, IL) and collected the samples within 24 hours of a child's arrival on the medical ward or intensive care unit. These samples underwent real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) (for respiratory virus testing) and dualtranscriptomics profiling.

Respiratory Virus Measurement

We identified respiratory viruses by using singleplex or duplex two-step RT-PCR at Baylor College of Medicine (Houston, TX, USA). We used real-time reverse transcriptase-PCR to detect RNA respiratory viruses, including RSV,(7,8) RV,(9) and 12 other RNA viruses. All RT-PCR assays were tested in duplicate and samples with incongruent values (one well positive)

were retested. To reduce carryover contamination, sample preparation, RNA/DNA extraction, cDNA, and amplification were performed in separate areas. All PCR runs had extraction and reagent positive and negative controls.

Dual-transcriptomics Profiling with RNA Sequencing (RNAseq)

We extracted total RNA using Trizol reagent (ThermoFisher Scientific, Waltham, MA). We examined RNA quality by measuring 260/280 absorbance ratio on the NanoDrop 2000 Spectrophotometer (ThermoFisher Scientific) and by running the RNA on the Agilent Bioanalyzer 2100 (Agilent, Palo Alto, CA) using the RNA 6000 Nano kit. Total RNA underwent DNase treatment and rRNA reduction (Illumina Ribo-Zero Gold rRNA Removal Kit [Epidemiology]) before sequencing library preparation using llumina TruSeq Stranded Total RNA Library Prep Kit and sequencing on a HiSeq 4000 sequencer (Illumina, San Diego, CA).

We preprocessed the raw reads using PRINSEQ-lite 0.20.4 (trimming reads and bases <25 PHRED, removing exact duplicates, reads with undetermined bases, and low complexity reads using Dust filter=30).(10) We aligned the filtered reads to the human genome (hg19) using Bowtie2 (--very-sensitive-local).(11) We used the microbial reads for downstream analyses of microbiome composition and function while we utilized the human reads for downstream analyses of host differential gene expression.

Statistical Analysis

Microbiome *compositional profiling*

We used microbial RNA data to infer the microbiome composition with PathoScope.(12- 14) In brief, we examined potential contamination in silico when running PathoScope. We

discarded the transcripts that did not align to the human reference genome hg19 for the host gene expression analysis and to unique fungal, prokaryotic, protozoan, or viral genomes available in GenBank for the microbiome compositional and functional profiling analyses. Next, we constructed a "target" genome library containing all unique fungal, prokaryotic, protozoan, and viral genomes available in GenBank. Then, we aligned the clean microbial reads to our target using Bowtie2 (−−very-sensitive-local-k 100 –score- min L,20,1.0).(11) We used the identified taxonomic profiles to characterize the microbiome composition in each patient. We converted the sequence abundances and taxonomy to a BIOM file for subsequent analyses and all singletons were eliminated. We normalized our samples using the negative binomial distribution as recommended by McMurdie and Holmes(15) and implemented in the Bioconductor package DESeq2.¹⁶ This approach simultaneously accounts for library size differences and biological variability. Between the RSV and sole RV groups, we compared the taxonomic α -diversity (OTU richness, Chao1, Shannon, ACE, Simpson, and Fischer indices) using linear regression models. We also examined the differences in microbial species abundances using the Wald test with Cook's distance correction for outliers (R *DESeq* package)(16) and adjusted by the Benjamini-Hochberg method to correct for multiple hypotheses testing at α =0.05.(17)

Microbiome functional profiling

We inferred the microbial gene functions and Gene Ontologies from the metatranscriptomic contigs annotated with Prokka (metagenomics mode).(18) Briefly, we removed the reads of human origin by mapping against the human genome sequence. Then, we assembled unmapped reads using the metaSpades algorithm and, after gene annotation, we mapped reads back to contigs (bowtie2) to estimate gene abundances. We estimated differential

gene expression using R *DESeq2*(16) and visualized using *ggplot2*.(19) Additionally, we also performed Gene Ontology enrichment analysis as implemented in topGO(20) to identify the most represented GO between the two groups.

Host gene expression

We compared the level of host gene expression using HISAT2 (hierarchical indexing for spliced alignment of transcripts) and Cufflinks.(21-23) First, we aligned the human mRNA reads to the human reference genome (hg19) in HISAT2.(21) We used gene annotations from the UCSC knownGene database(24) to facilitate the mapping process. We assembled the RNAseq alignments into potential transcripts using Cufflinks with the UCSC annotation guiding the transcriptome assembly. We also used this program to estimate the expressed gene abundance as fragments per kilobase of exon per million fragments mapped (fpkm) under default parameters. We computed bias-corrected gene and transcript expression profiles for each sample using Cuffquant and normalized the RNA-seq libraries using Cuffnorm. We calculated fold change, statistical significance, and examined differentially expressed host mRNAs between the RSV and sole RV groups by treating samples as biological replicates in Cuffdiff 2.(25)

Host pathway enrichment analysis

To understand the virus-specific effects on the host response in the airway, we carried out a host pathway enrichment analysis as implemented in GAGE.(26) We linked the human gene names to the KEGG pathways (R *gageData* package)(27) using only signaling and metabolic pathways. Then, we used the fold changes from the differential expression analysis as input of GAGE for the enrichment analysis.

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Supplemental Table S1. Characteristics of infants hospitalized for bronchiolitis with respiratory syncytial virus infection or sole rhinovirus infection

Abbreviations: RSV, respiratory syncytial virus; IQR, interquartile range.

Data are no. (%) of infants unless otherwise indicated.

Continuous variables were tested by Mann-Whitney U test. Categorical variables were tested by Fisher's exact test.

^aWithin the RSV group, RV was also detected in 2 patients.

^b Defined as a child having cough that wakes him/her at night and/or causes emesis, or when the child has wheezing or shortness of breath without a cough.

Supplemental Table S2. Microbiome Gene Ontology enrichment analysis in respiratory syncytial virus and sole rhinovirus infection groups

Abbreviation: GO, Gene Ontology

^a Expression of 269 genes were significantly (q-value <0.05) different.

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Supplemental Table S4. Significantly-enriched pathways in respiratory syncytial virus and sole rhinovirus infection group $\overline{}$

^a2 pathways were significantly (q-value <0.05) enriched.

 b 49 pathways were significantly (q-value <0.05) enriched.

Supplemental Figure S1. Comparisons of α-diversity measures between respiratory syncytial virus and sole rhinovirus infection groups

Although Shannon and Simpson indices appeared higher in the RSV group, there were no statistically significant differences (all P>0.05).

Abbreviations: RSV, respiratory syncytial virus; RV, rhinovirus.

Supplemental Figure S2. Differential microbial species abundance in the nasopharyngeal airway microbiome between respiratory syncytial virus and sole rhinovirus groups

Differentially-abundant species in the RSV group are represented by positive fold changes, while those in the sole RV group are represented by

negative fold changes.

