In vivo **HSPC gene therapy with base editors allows for efficient reactivation of fetal -globin in β-YAC mice**

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

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Table S1. Top-scored off-target sites for sgHBG#2 in mouse genome.

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Supplementary materials and methods.

Figure S1. Comparison of different version of cytidine base editors. Cytidine base editors (BE4, AncBE4max, BE3RA, and FNLS) were subcloned under the control of a ubiquitously active EF1 α promoter. A second plasmid pSP-sgBCL11AE1 expressing a guide sequence (5'-CACAGGCTCCAGGAAGGGTT-3') specific to the +58 BCL11A enhancer was used for co-transfection. **A**) Comparison of base editor activity in 293FT cells. The cells were transfected with base editor:pSP-sgBCL11AE1 (3µg:1µg) plasmids. The editing frequency at the *BCL11A* enhancer target site was analyzed 4 days after transfection by T7EI assay. The first lane is the 100bp DNA ladder from New England Biolabs. **B**) The same study was performed in an erythroleukemia cell line (K562). Expected sizes of the PCR amplicon and cleaved bands are indicated on the right. The percentages of cleavage are shown below the gel pictures.

B

Figure S2. Virus preparations and alignment of TadA repeats after codon optimization. A) Information of generated HDAd vectors. Yields per 2L spinner were show. vp, viral particles.**B**) Sequence alignment of two 594bp TadA+32aa repeats after alternative codon usage to reduce repetitiveness. TadA^N+32aa is the first repeat; TadA^{N*}+32aa indicates the second repeat.

Figure S3. Base editing and -globin induction in HUDEP-2 cells (Data supporting Fig.2). A) Targeting base conversion at day 4 after transduction with HDAd-CBE-sgBCL#1, HDAd-CBE-sgHBG#1, and HDAd-ABE-sgHBG#4 (MOI = 1000vp/cell). The conversion was examined by Sanger sequencing. Data are supplementary to Fig.2D. **B)** Base substitutions in representative single cell-derived HUDEP-2 clones. The used vectors were indicated. Data are supplementary to Fig.2E. C) γ -globin expression in corresponding single cell HUDEP-2 clones in B). Data are supplementary to Fig.2F.

Figure S4. Representative HPLC chromatogram. Lysates from peripheral red blood cells at week 16 after transduction were used. untr, untransduced control.

Figure S5. Comparison of editing levels measured by Sanger sequencing versus NGS. Editing levels at A8 site are shown. Each symbol represents one animal. ns, not significant.

Figure S6. Histology analyses showing no aberrant extramedullary erythropoiesis after HDAd-ABE-sgHBG#2 treatment. Spleen and liver sections were prepared at week 16 to examine potential abnormal extramedullary hemopoiesis by hematoxylin/eosin (HE) staining, and iron deposition by Perl's staining. The scale bars are 20µm. Representative sections are shown. untr, untransduced control.

Figure S7. Secondary transplantation. Lineage minus cells collected from primary mice at week 16 after transduction were IV infused into lethally irradiated C57BL/6J secondary recipients. **A**) Engraftment measured by flow cytometry based on the percentage of human CD46-positive PBMCs at various weeks after transplantation. **B**) GFP expression in PBMCs. **C**) γ -globin expression in peripheral RBCs measured by flow cytometry. Each dot represents one animal.

Table S1. Top-scored off-target sites for sgHBG#2 in mouse genome.

Table S2. Top-scored off-target sites for sgHBG#2 in human genome.

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Supplementary materials and methods

Reagents for *in vivo* **transduction and selection:** G-CSF (Neupogen™) (Amgen, Thousand Oaks, CA), AMD3100 (MilliporeSigma, Burlington, MA), and Dexamethasone Sodium Phosphate (Fresenius Kabi USA, Lake Zurich, IL) were used. O⁶-Benzylguanine (O⁶-BG) and Carmustine (BCNU) were from Millipore/Sigma.

Generation of HDAd vectors: We used base editing systems developed by David R. Liu's lab at Harvard University¹. pCMV_AncBE4max and pCMV_ABEmax plasmids were purchased from Addgene (Watertown, MA). The following plasmids from Addgene were also used: BE4, ABE7.10, pLenti-BE3RA-PGK-Puro, pLenti-FNLS-PGK-Puro and BE3RA (Fig.S1)². The oligonucleotides and gBlocks described below were synthesized by Integrated DNA Technologies (IDT) (Coralville, IA) and listed in Table S4.

CBE and first version of ABE constructs: The cloning involved 3 steps. Step 1) The *BsmBI* site in BE4 was destroyed by replacing the *EagI*-*NaeI* fragment with gBlock #1. The *BsmBI* site in pCMV_AncBE4max was destroyed by replacing the *BsmBI*-*NarI* fragment with gBlock #2. A vector named pBST-CRISPR with a *BsmBI*sgRNA cloning site was generated by combining the following four fragments using infusion (Takara, Mountain View, CA): a 2.3kb U6-filler-gRNA scaffold fragment amplified from LentiCRISPRv2 (Addgene) using #3FR, two 1.4kb and 1.0kb fragments amplified from $pBST-sgBCL11Ae1³$ using #4FR and #5FR, respectively, and a 9.6k fragment of pBST-sgBCL11Ae1 released by *BsaI*-*BamHI* digestion. An intermediate plasmid pBS-U6-Ef1 α was composed by joining the following three fragments using infusion: a 3.6kb U6filler-gRNA scaffold-Ef1 α sequence and a 2.9kb vector backbone amplified from pBST-CRISPR using primers #6FR and #7FR, respectively, and a 0.5kb gBlock containing a *BseRI* cloning site (#8). This intermediate was digested with *BseRI* and recombined with the 5.5kb fragment of BE4-ΔBsmBI after *EagI*-*PmeI* treatment, generating pBS-BE4. A 6.6kb pBS backbone-U6-filler-gRNA scaffold-Ef1 α sequence was PCR amplified from pBS-BE4 using #9FR, followed by infusion with *NotI*-*AgeI*-digested pCMV-ABEmax and pCMV_AncBE4max- Δ BsmBI, generating pBS-AncBE4max and pBS-ABEmax, respectively. Next, sgRNA oligos were synthesized, annealed, and inserted into the *BsmBI* site of pBS-BE4, pBS-AncBE4max and pBS-ABEmax, generating shutter plasmids with all-in-one base editing components, such as pBS-ABEmaxsgHBG#2. Step 2) A 21.0kb pHCAS3-MCS vector with *PacI* cloning site was generated similarly as described previously⁴ except that the stuffer DNA was trimmed down by *EcoRI* restriction and re-ligation with the 1.8k *EcoRI* fragment. A 2.2kb PGK-mgmt^{P140K}-2A-GFP-bGHpolyA sequence was amplified from pHCA-Dualmgmt-GFP³ by #10FR and recombined with *PacI*-digested pHM5-FRT-IR-Ef1α-GFP⁵, resulting in pHM5-FI-PGK-mgmt-GFP. Subsequently, the fragment between *I-CeuI* and *PI-SceI* sites was transferred from this construct to the *PshAI* site of pHCAS3-MCS by #11FR and infusion cloning, forming pHCAS3-FI-PGK-mgmt-GFP-MCS. Step 3) The shuttle plasmids from step 1 and the resultant vector from step 2 was treated with *PacI* and recombined to generate the final constructs, such as pHCA-ABEmax-sgHBG#2-FI-mgmt-GFP. Final pHCA contructs with different sgRNA sequences were generated similarly except that different sgRNA were used in step 1.

Second version of ABE constructs: The second version of ABE constructs differs from the first version in promoters, alternative codon usage, and miRNA-regulated gene expression. The cloning also involved 3 steps. Step 1) A 1.5kb 3' β-globin UTR with miR183/218 target sequence was amplified from pBST-sgHBG1 miR³ using primers #12FR, followed by insertion into *NotI*-*HpaI* sites of pBS-ABEmax-sgHBG#2, generating pBS-ABEmax-sgHBG#2-miR. Shuttle plasmids for the second version of ABE constructs, for example, pBS-ABEopti-sgHBG#2-miR, were obtained by joining the following 4 fragments with *AscI*-*EcoRV*-digested pBS-ABEmax-sgHBG#2-miR by infusion cloning: a human PGK promoter amplified from pHM5-FI-PGK-mgmt-GFP using #13FR, two gBlocks (#14 and #15) containing the two *TadA* genes with alternative codon usage to reduce sequence repetitiveness, and a 1.9kb sequence amplified from pBS-ABEmax-sgHBG#2 using #16FR. Step 2) The SV40 polyA sequence between *PshAI-NotI* sites of pHM-FRT-IR-Ef1 α -mgmt(P140K)-

2A-GFP-pA was replaced with a bGH polyA sequence (gBlock #17), getting pHM-FI-Ef1 α -mgmt(P140K)-GFP-bGHpA. Then, the whole 4.9kb transposon between *I-CeuI* and *PI-SceI* sites was transferred to the $PshA$ I site of pHCAS3-MCS using #11FR, generating pHCAS3-FI-Ef1 α -mgmt-GFP-MCS. Step 3) The resultant constructs from step 1 and 2 were combined by infusion cloning following *PacI* treatment, generating pHCA-ABEopti-sgHBG#2-FI-mgmt-GFP. Final pHCA constructs with different sgRNA sequences were generated similarly.

The Phusion Hot Start II High-Fidelity DNA Polymerase (New England Biolabs) was used in all PCR amplifications involved in cloning. Final constructs were screened by several restriction enzymes (*HindIII*, *EcoRI* and *PmeI*) and confirmed by sequencing the whole region containing transgenes.

For the production of HDAd5/35++ vectors, corresponding pHCA plasmids were linearized with *PmeI* and produced in 116 cells⁶ with AdNG163-5/35++, an Ad5/35++ helper vector containing chimeric fibers composed of the Ad5 fiber tail, the Ad35 fiber shaft, and the affinity-enhanced Ad35++ fiber knob⁵. HD-Ad5/35++ vectors were amplified in 116 cells as described in detail elsewhere⁶. Helper virus contamination levels were found to be <0.05%. Titers were $1-5x10^{12}$ viral particles (vp)/mL and yields were listed in Fig. S2A.

The HDAd-HBG-CRISPR and HDAd-SB vectors have been described previously $3,7$.

Transfection of cell lines: 293FT (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and K562 cells (ATCC) were cultured according to the vendors' instructions. 293FT cells pre-seeded in 6-well plate were transfected with 4μg plasmids (3μg base editor or CRISPR/Cas9 + 1μg pSP-sgBCL11AE1 8) using lipofectamine 3000 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) per the manufacturer's protocol. K562 cells were transfected with 2.66μg plasmids (2μg base editor or CRISPR/Cas9 + 0.6µg pSP-sgBCL11AE1) using nucleofection (Catalog # V4XC-2024) (Lonza, Basel, Switzerland) according to the provider's protocol. Genomic DNA was isolated at 4 days after transfection for analyses.

HUDEP-2 cells and erythroid differentiation: HUDEP-2 cells⁹ were cultured in StemSpan SFEM medium (STEMCELL Technologies) supplemented with 100 ng/mL SCF, 3 IU/mL EPO, 10^{-6} M dexamethasone and 1 µg/mL doxycycline (DOX). Erythroid differentiation wasinduced in IMDM containing 5% human AB serum, 100 ng/mL SCF, 3 IU/mL EPO, 10 µg/mL Insulin, 330 µg/mL transferrin, 2 U/mL Heparin and 1 μg/mL DOX for 6 days.

CD34⁺ cell culture. CD34⁺ cells from G-CSF-mobilized adult donors were recovered from frozen stocks and incubated overnight in StemSpan H3000 medium (STEMCELL Technologies, Vancouver, Canada) supplemented with penicillin/streptomycin, Flt3 ligand (Flt3L, 25 ng/ml), interleukin 3 (10 ng/ml), thrombopoietin (TPO) (2 ng/ml), and stem cell factor (SCF) (25 ng/ml). Cytokines and growth factors were from Peprotech (Rocky Hill, NJ). CD34⁺ cells were transduced with HDAd5/35++ vectors in low- attachment 12-well plates.

Differentiation of human HSPCs into erythroid cells was done based on the protocol developed by Douay et al. 10 In brief, in step 1, cells at a density of 10⁴ cells/ml were incubated for 7 days in IMDM supplemented with 5% human plasma, 2 IU/ml heparin, 10 μ g/ml insulin, 330 μ g/ml transferrin, 1 μ M hydrocortisone, 100 ng/ml SCF, 5 ng/ml IL-3, 3 U/ml erythropoietin (Epo), glutamine, and penicillin/streptomycin. In step 2, cells at a density of 1x10⁵ cells/ml were incubated for 3 days in IMDM supplemented with 5% human plasma, 2 IU/ml heparin, 10 μg/ml insulin, 330 μg/ml transferrin, 100 ng/ml SCF, 3 U/ml Epo, glutamine, and Pen/Strep. In step 3, cells at a density of $1x10^6$ cells/ml cells were incubated for 12 days in IMDM supplemented with 5% human plasma, 2 IU/ml heparin, 10 μ g/ml insulin, 330 μ g/ml transferrin, 3 U/ml Epo, glutamine, and Pen/Strep.

Animal studies: β-YAC^{+/-}/CD46^{+/+} mice were described in the main text. The following primers were used for genotyping of mice: *CD46* forward, 5'-GCCAGTTCATCTTTTGACTCTATTAA-3', and reverse, 5'- AATCACAGCAATGACCCAAA-3'; β-YAC (y-globin promoter) forward, 5'-AAACGGTCCCTGGCTAAACT-3', and reverse, 5'-GCTGAAGGGTGCTTCCTTTTT-3'.

HSPC mobilization and in vivo transduction: HSPCs were mobilized in mice by subcutaneous (SC) injections of human recombinant G-CSF (5g/mouse/day, 4 days) followed by an SC injection of AMD3100 (5mg/kg) on day 5. In addition, animals received Dexamethasone (10 mg/kg, IP) 16 h and 2 h before virus injection. Thirty and sixty minutes after AMD3100, animals were intravenously injected with virus vectors through the retro-orbital plexus with two doses of viruses $(4x10^{10} \text{ vp/dose} \times 2 \text{ doses})$. The base editing and SB viruses were co-delivered at a 1:1 ratio.

In vivo selection: Selection was started at 4 weeks after transduction. Mice were injected with O⁶-BG (15mg/kg, IP) two times, 30 minutes apart. One hour after the second injection of $O⁶$ -BG, mice were injected (IP) with 5mg/kg BCNU. At week 6, 8, and 10, three more rounds were performed with BCNU doses at 7.5, 10, and 10mg/kg, respectively.

Secondary bone marrow transplantation: Recipients were female C57BL/6J mice, 6 – 8 weeks old from the Jackson Laboratory. On the day of transplantation, recipient mice were irradiated with 1000 Rad. Bone marrow cells from *in vivo* transduced CD46tg mice were isolated aseptically and lineage-depleted cells were isolated using MACS as described above. Six hours after irradiation cells were injected intravenously at 1x10⁶ cells per mouse. The secondary recipients were kept for 16 weeks after transplantation for terminal point analyses.

Transplantation of human CD34⁺ cells: The immunodeficient NOD-*scid IL2rγnull* (NSG) mice were obtained from the Jackson Laboratory (Bar Harbor, ME). NSG recipient mice received 300 Rad whole-body irradiation. 2.5×10⁵ whole bone marrow cells of non-irradiated NSG mice were mixed with 3x10⁵ human CD34⁺ cells and injected intravenously into recipient mice at 4 hours post irradiation.

Tissue analyses: Spleen and liver tissue sections of 2.5 μm thickness were fixed in 4% formaldehyde for at least 24 hours, dehydrated and embedded in paraffin. Staining with hematoxylin-eosin was used for histological evaluation of extramedullary hemopoiesis. Hemosiderin was detected in tissue sections by Perl's Prussian blue staining. Briefly, the tissue sections were treated with a mixture of equal volumes (2%) of potassium ferrocyanide and hydrochloric acid in distilled water and then counterstained with neutral red.

Blood analyses: Blood samples were collected into EDTA-coated tubes and analysis was performed on a HemaVet 950FS (Drew Scientific, Waterbury, CT). Peripheral blood smears were stained with Giemsa/May-Grünwald (Merck, Darmstadt, Germany) for 5 and 15 minutes, respectively. Reticulocytes were stained with Brilliant cresyl blue. The investigators who counted the reticulocytes on blood smears have been blinded to the sample group allocation. Only animal numbers appeared on the slides(4 random 1cm² sections loaded on 2 slides per animal).

Colony-forming unit (CFU) assay: Lineage minus (Lin–) cells were isolated by depletion of lineagecommitted cells in bone marrow MNCs using the mouse lineage cell depletion kit (Miltenyi Biotec, San Diego, CA) according to the manufacturer's instructions. CFU assays were performed using ColonyGEL 1202 (Reachbio, Seattle, WA) with mouse complete medium according to the manufacturer's protocol. Colonies were scored 10 days after plating. For human CD34⁺ cells, ColonyGEL 1102 (Reachbio, Seattle, WA) with human complete medium was used. Colonies derived from human HSPCs were counted at day 14.

T7EI mismatch nuclease assay: The T7EI assay is used for evaluating gene editing activities. Genomic DNA was isolated using PureLink Genomic DNA Mini Kit per provided protocol (Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA)¹¹. A genomic segment encompassing the target site of erythroid *BCL11A* enhancer was amplified by PCR primers: *BCL11A*_T7 forward, 5'-AGAGAGCCTTCCGAAAGAGG-3', reverse, 5'-GGCAGCTAGACAGGACTTGG-3'; *HBG*_T7 forward, 5'-CAGGGTTTCTCCTCCAGCATCTTCCACAT-3', reverse, 5'-AGCAGCAGTATCCTCTTGGGG-3'. Primers for off-target analysis were listed in Table S3. PCR products were hybridized and treated with 2.5 Units of T7EI (New England Biolabs) for 30 minutes at 37°C. Digested PCR products were resolved by 6% TBE PAGE (Bio-Rad) and stained with ethidium bromide. 100bp DNA Ladder (New England Biolabs) was used. Band intensity was analyzed using ImageJ software. % cleavage $=$ (1-sqrt (parental band/(parental band + cleaved bands)) \times 100%.

Measurement of base conversion by Sanger sequencing and Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS): For Sanger sequencing, genomic segments encompassing the target sites were amplified using primers: *HBG1* forward, 5'-CACACTCCACACTTTTTTGTTTAC-3', reverse, 5'-AAGTGTCTTTACTGCTTTTATTTGCT-3'; *HBG2* forward, 5'-TCCTTCTGTCATTTTGCCTCTGTT-3', reverse, 5'-CACTTCATTGTAGTTACCGTGGAAAGA-3'; *BCL11A* forward, 5'-AGAGAGCCTTCCGAAAGAGG-3', reverse, 5'-GGCAGCTAGACAGGACTTGG-3'. The amplicons were purified and sequenced with the following primers: *HBG1-seq*, 5'- TTTCCTTAGAAACCACTGCTAACTG-3'; *HBG2-seq*, 5'-CTTATTTGGAAACCAATGCTTACTA-3'; and *BCL11A-seq*, 5'-AGAGAGCCTTCCGAAAGAGG-3'. The base editing level was quantified based on Sanger sequencing (Eurofins Genomics) results by using EditR1.0.9¹².

For NGS, the HBG1/2 target site was amplified using the following primers: HBG-NGS forward, 5'- AGCCTTGTCCTCCTCTGTGA-3', reverse, 5'-AAACGGTCCCTGGCTAAACT-3'. After cleaning-up the amplicon using AMPure XP Beads (Beckman Coulter, Indianapolis, IN), libraries were prepared using the NEBNext Ultra II (New England Biolabs) workflow using End Repair/dA-Tailing, Ligation modules from IDT for Illumina TruSeq UD Indexes. Final libraries were purified using NEBNext sample purification beads, and quantified using Qubit (Invitrogen). Library sizes were confirmed on a gel. Purified libraries were pooled at equimolar concentration and deep sequenced on an Illumina NextSeq 550 machine. Approximately 500 thousand reads per amplicon were acquired to probe the types of mutations. Sequencing data were demultiplexed based on index sequence and filtered for high quality reads(q score > 30) using Trim Galore and aligned to the *HBG1/2* reference sequence using the CRISPResso2¹³, a python-based genome editing analysis tool.

Flow cytometry: Cells were resuspended at 1x10⁶ cells/100 μL in FACS buffer (PBS, 1%FBS) and incubated with FcR blocking reagent (Miltenyi Biotech, Auburn CA) for ten minutes on ice. Next the staining antibody solution was added in 100 μ L per 10 6 cells and incubated on ice for 30 minutes in the dark. After incubation, cells were washed once in FACS buffer. For secondary staining, the staining step was repeated with a secondary staining solution. After the wash, cells were resuspended in FACS buffer and analyzed using a LSRII flow cytometer (BD Biosciences, San Jose, CA). Debris was excluded using a forward scatter-area and sideward scatter-area gate. Single cells were then gated using a forward scatter-height and forward scatter-width gate. Flow cytometry data were then analyzed using FlowJo (version 10.0.8, FlowJo, LLC). For analysis of LSK cells, cells were stained with biotin-conjugated lineage detection cocktail (catalog # 130-092-613) (Miltenyi Biotec, San Diego, CA), antibodies against c-Kit (clone 2B8, catalog # 12-1171-83) and Sca-1 (clone D7, catalog # 25-5981-82), followed by secondary staining with APC-conjugated streptavidin (catalog # 17-4317-82) (eBioscience, San Diego, CA). Other antibodies from eBioscience included anti-mouse CD3-APC (clone 17A2) (catalog # 17-0032-82), anti-mouse CD19-PE-Cyanine7 (clone eBio1D3) (catalog # 25-0193-82), and anti-mouse Ly-66 (Gr-1)-PE, (clone RB6-8C5) (catalog # 12-5931-82). Anti-mouse Ter-119-APC (clone Ter-119) (catalog # 116211) was from Biolegend (San Diego, CA). Antihuman CD45-APC (clone: 5B1) was from Miltenyi Biotec (Catalog # 130-108-020).

For intracellular flow cytometry detecting human γ-globin expression, the FIX & PERMTM cell permeabilization kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific) was used and the manufacture's protocol was followed. \sim 5×10⁶ cells or 5μL blood was stained with 0.6μg anti-human γ-globin antibody (Clone 51-7, catalog# sc-21756-PE) (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Dallas, TX). Mouse RBCs were stained with anti-Ter-119-APC antibody prior to γ -globin staining.

Globin HPLC: Lysates prepared from mouse RBCs or differentiated HUDEP-2 cells were used. Individual globin chain levels were quantified on a Shimadzu Prominence instrument with an SPD-10AV diode array detector and an LC-10AT binary pump (Shimadzu, Kyoto, Japan). Vydac 214TP™ C4 Reversed-Phase columns for polypeptides (214TP54 Column, C4 ,300 Å, 5 µm, 4.6 mm i.d. x 250 mm) (Hichrom, UK) were used. A 40%-60% gradient mixture of 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid in water/acetonitrile was applied at a rate of 1 mL/min.

Real-time reverse transcription PCR: Total RNA was extracted from 5×10^6 differentiated HUDEP-2 cells or 100µL blood by using TRIzol™ reagent (Thermo Fisher Scientific) followed by phenol-chloroform extraction. QuantiTect reverse transcription kit (Qiagen) and power SYBR™ green PCR master mix (Thermo Fisher Scientific) were used. Real time quantitative PCR was performed on a StepOnePlus realtime PCR system (AB Applied Biosystems). The following primer pairs were used: mouse *RPL10* (housekeeping) forward, 5'-TGAAGACATGGTTGCTGAGAAG-3', reverse, 5'-GAACGATTTGGTAGGGTATAGGAG-3'; human γ-globin forward, 5'-GTGGAAGATGCTGGAGGAGAAA-3', reverse, 5'-TGCCATGTGCCTTGACTTTG-3'; human β-globin forward, 5'-CTCATGGCAAGAAAGTGCTCG-3', reverse, 5'-AATTCTTTGCCAAAGTGATGGG-3'; mouse β-major globin forward, 5'- ATGCCAAAGTGAAGGCCCAT-3', reverse, 5'- CCCAGCACAATCACGATCAT-3', mouse α globin forward, 5'- CTGGGGAAGACAAAAGCAAC -3', reverse, 5'- GCCGTGGCTTACATCAAAGT -3.

Measurement of vector copy number: For absolute quantification of adenoviral genome copies per cell, genomic DNA was isolated from cells using PureLink Genomic DNA Mini Kit per provided protocol (Life Technologies), and used as template for qPCR performed using the power SYBR™ green PCR master mix (Thermo Fisher Scientific). The following primer pairs were used: mgmt forward, 5'- GCTGTCTGGTTGTGAGCAGGGTCT-3', reverse, 5'-CGGGCTGGTGGAAATAGGCATTC-3'.

Statistical analyses*:* Statistical significance was calculated by two-tailed Student's t-test. For comparisons of multiple groups, one-way and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Bonferroni post-testing for multiple comparisons were employed. Statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism version 8.4.2 (GraphPad Software Inc., La Jolla, CA). P values <0.05 were considered statistically significant.

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