

Original Article

Interactions of *ABLIM1* and *CXCL5* with miRNAs as a prognostic indicator for clinical outcome of osteosarcoma

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Abstract: Osteosarcoma (OS) is a kind of high-grade bone-forming malignancy with poor prognosis, causing huge economic losses to the patients and society. Identification of novel biomarkers could be beneficial for the diagnosis and prognosis of OS patients. We aimed to explore the molecular mechanism of osteosarcoma by the differentially expressed miRNAs and mRNAs screened out by microarray data together with the function and metabolic pathway analysis of target genes. Expression data of miRNA and mRNA were downloaded from The Genome Expression Omnibus (GEO) dataset. Differentially expressed miRNAs of osteosarcoma were screened out by two-fold principle. Target genes of differentially expressed miRNAs were extracted out by miRTarBase software. Besides, DAVID dataset was used for the functional annotation. Differentially expressed genes of mRNA microarray were screened out for the study of relation between miRNA and mRNA. A total of 33 differentially expressed miRNAs were screened out, including 27 up-regulated miRNAs and 6 down-regulated miRNAs. Three miRNAs, hsa-miR-182, hsa-miR-486-5p and hsa-miR760, were found to be the most differentially expressed ones, which were all up-regulated and could be used to differentiate osteosarcoma tissues from the normal ones. Besides, two up-regulated genes and fifteen significant down-regulated genes were identified by analysis of mRNA microarray data. Two target genes, the up-regulated gene, *ABLIM1* (actin binding LIM protein 1) and the down-regulated gene, *CXCL5* (chemokine (C-X-C motif) ligand 5) were recognized as the critical genes. We found that miRNAs interacting with *ABLIM1* were hsa-miR-373-3p and hsa-miR-302e while miRNAs interacting with *CXCL5* was hsa-miR-3655. The screened miRNAs and critical genes, together with the interactions, could help in better understanding the role of miRNA and mRNA in the occurrence and development of osteoporosis, providing new insights into the treatment of osteosarcoma.

Keywords: Osteosarcoma, miRNA, mRNA, biomarker, pathway analysis

Introduction

Osteosarcoma (OS) is a kind of most common primary malignant bone tumor. Adolescents and young adults, with the age ranging from 15 to 39 years, are more susceptible to osteosarcoma than other people [1-3]. Survival rate of OS seem to reach the plateau despite with the improvement of survival rate thanks to the chemotherapy strategies. Currently, the survival time of 65% patients is five years [4] and it left the problem of significant chemotherapy-related toxicity after treatment [5]. What's worse, there was still a large number of patients who cannot exempt from amputation and even die

due to lung metastasis or relapse [6], causing a huge economic burden to families of patients and the society. Besides, some prior studies demonstrated that a significant risk for OS patients with increasing age was associated with the poorer prognosis of the disease [7, 8]. Therefore, there is still urgent need for the development of new markers that could be helpful for the prediction, therapeutic modalities and the prognostic development of OS disease [4, 9]. Therefore, in this study, we aimed to identify the differentially expressed miRNAs and mRNAs between OS patients and normal ones, with the attempt to find the new markers and therapy targets of OS.

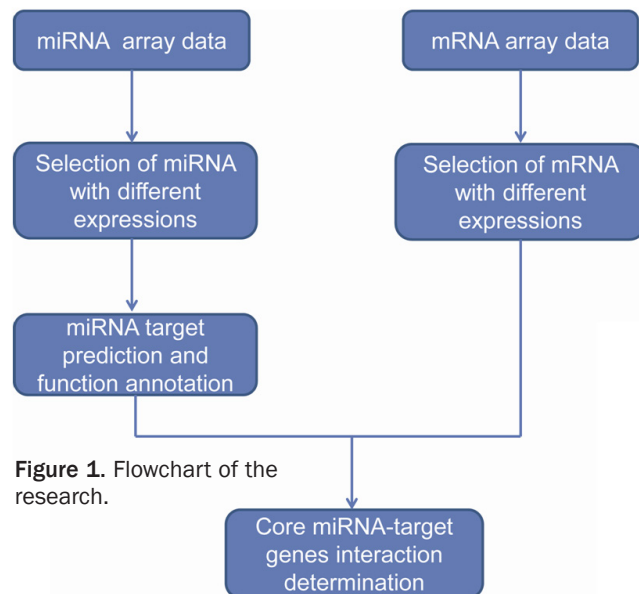


Figure 1. Flowchart of the research.

Recent studies showed that DNA damage would lead to genomic instability, malignant transformation, and cell death [6]. MicroRNAs are a series of non-coding RNA molecules that can negatively regulate gene expression and play important roles in various biological processes [10]. Increasing evidence has demonstrated that miRNAs are associated with several types of tumor by regulating cell migration and invasion. DNA microarray technology was used in this study to determine the differentially expressed miRNAs and mRNAs of OS. The new technology allows us to screen tens of thousands of genes simultaneously and be able to look at the molecular mechanism of disease development on a whole genome scale and the method has been used in many studies to identify genes. However, since there has been few public databases built to facilitate data sharing [11-13], it remains a big problem to integrate data from different organisms in order to make a reliable hypothesis.

In this study, three significantly up-regulated miRNAs, has-miR-182, has-miR-486-5p and has-miR-760, were identified, which may play important roles in the development and progression of OS. What's more, two genes were found to be regulated by related miRNAs in the interaction analysis, the up-regulated gene *ABLIM1* was regulated by has-miR-373-3p and has-miR-302e while the down-regulated gene *CXCL5* was regulated by has-miR-3655, suggesting their potential role as a novel diagnostic and prognostic marker of OS.

Materials and methods

Data source of miRNA and mRNA data of osteosarcoma

The microarray expression data profiling of miRNA and mRNA were downloaded from the Genome expression omnibus (GEO) dataset with the accession number GSE70415. A total of six samples, five osteosarcoma cell lines (MG63, Saos, HOS, NY, Hu09) and one normal mesenchymal stem cells sample (hMSC), were included. The whole datasets were mainly composed of two subsets. The expression dataset of miRNA with osteosarcoma was GSE70367 with the platform of GPL16384 ([miRNA-3] Affymetrix Multispecies miRNA-3 Array) while the mRNA expression data of osteosarcoma was GSE70414 with the platform of GPL570 ([HG-U133_Plus_2] Affymetrix Human Genome U133 Plus 2.0 Array).

Differentially expressed miRNA screening

Firstly, information of mature miRNA matching a single probe out of genome from GPL 16384 was screened out. Then, the expression level of normal and osteosarcoma samples of these mature miRNAs was extracted out. Differentially expressed miRNAs were screened out by two-fold principle. To be more specific, if the expression level of miRNA in osteosarcoma was two folds or more than the normal samples, we assumed that these miRNAs were significantly up-regulated in osteosarcoma samples. On the contrary, if the expression level of miRNA in normal samples was two folds or more than the osteosarcoma specimens, we assumed that these miRNAs were significantly down-regulated in osteosarcoma samples. The difference was assumed not significant in other circumstances.

Cluster analysis and principal component analysis of differentially expressed miRNAs in osteosarcoma

The heatmap of differentially expressed miRNAs of osteosarcoma were drawn by heatmap package in R language. The most differentially expressed miRNAs between osteosarcoma samples and normal specimens were determined by the heatmap. Then, principal component analysis (PCA) was performed on these miRNAs by the expression value in different

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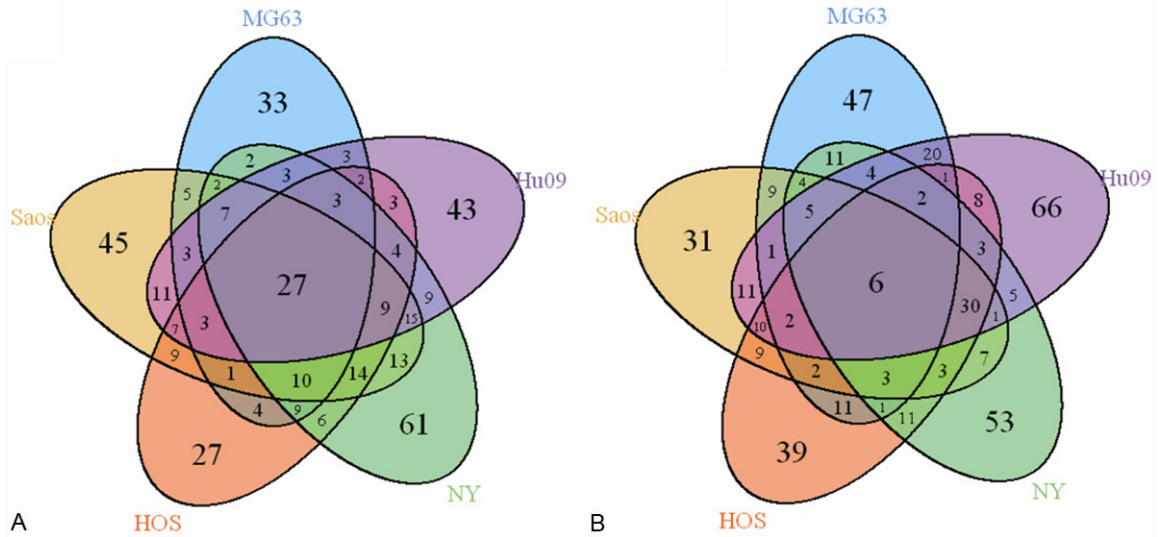


Figure 2. The up-regulated miRNA (A) and down-regulated miRNA (B) between osteosarcoma samples and controls. MG63, Saos, HOS, NY and Hu09 were used as five cell lines representing osteosarcoma. Expression changes with two-folds was used as criterion for differentially expressed miRNAs screening. A total of 27 up-regulated miRNAs and 6 down-regulated miRNAs in the five osteosarcoma cell lines were found out.

Table 1. Information of up-regulated miRNA and down-regulated miRNA of osteosarcoma samples compared to control specimens

miRNA	Origin	Position	Sequence
up-regulated			
hsa-miR-1273d	hsa-mir-1273d	1:10287776-10287861 (+)	GAACCCAUGAGGUUGAGGCUGCAGU
hsa-miR-135b-star	hsa-mir-135b	1:205417430-205417526 (-)	AUGUAGGGCUAAAAGCCAUGGG
hsa-miR-139-3p	hsa-mir-139	11:72326107-72326174 (-)	GGAGACGCGGCCUUGGAGU
hsa-miR-1538	hsa-mir-1538	16:69599711-69599771 (-)	CGGCCCGGCUGCUGCUGUUCU
hsa-miR-182	hsa-mir-182	7:129410223-129410332 (-)	UUUGGCAAUGGUAGAACUCACACU
hsa-miR-200a-star	hsa-mir-200a	1:1103243-1103332 (+)	CAUCUUACCGGACAGUGCUGGA
hsa-miR-208b	hsa-mir-208b	14:23887196-23887272 (-)	AUAAGACGAACAAAAGGUUUUGU
hsa-miR-302e	hsa-mir-302e	11:7255997-7256068 (+)	UAAGUGCUCUCCAUGCUU
hsa-miR-3176	hsa-mir-3176	16:593277-593366 (+)	ACUGGCCUGGGACUACCGG
hsa-miR-3655	hsa-mir-3655	5:140027429-140027511 (+)	GCUUGUCGUCGCGUGUUGUCU
hsa-miR-3682-5p	hsa-mir-3682	2:54076259-54076342 (-)	CUACUUCUACCGUGUUAUCAU
hsa-miR-3692	hsa-mir-3692	6:157950164-157950232 (+)	GUUCCACACUGACACUGCAGAAGU
hsa-miR-373-star	hsa-mir-373	19:54291959-54292027 (+)	ACUAAAAUGGGGCGCUUCC
hsa-miR-4275	hsa-mir-4275	4:28821204-28821290 (+)	CCAAUUACCACUUCUUU
hsa-miR-4295	hsa-mir-4295	10:114393929-114394013 (+)	CAGUGCAAUGUUUCCUU
hsa-miR-4322	hsa-mir-4322	19:10341089-10341161 (+)	CUGUGGGCUCAGCGGUGGGG
hsa-miR-4323	hsa-mir-4323	19:42637597-42637665 (-)	CAGCCCCACGCCUCAGA
hsa-miR-4504	hsa-mir-4504	14:50766573-50766664 (-)	UGUGACAAUAGAGAUGAACAU
hsa-miR-451b	hsa-mir-451b	17:27188389-27188456 (+)	UAGCAAGAGAACCAUACCAU
hsa-miR-4785	hsa-mir-4785	2:161264321-161264393 (-)	AGAGUCGGCGACGCCGACG
hsa-miR-4791	hsa-mir-4791	3:19356340-19356423 (-)	UGGAUAUGAUGACUGAAA
hsa-miR-486-5p	hsa-mir-486	8:41517959-41518026 (-)	UCCUGUACUGAGCUGCCCCGAG
hsa-miR-518d-3p	hsa-mir-518d	19:54238131-54238217 (+)	CAAAGCGCUUCCUUUGGAGC
hsa-miR-523-star	hsa-mir-523	19:54201639-54201725 (+)	CUCUAGAGGGAAGCGCUUUCUG

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hsa-miR-588	hsa-mir-588	6:126805777-126805859 (+)	UUGGCCACAAUGGGUUAGAAC
hsa-miR-602	hsa-mir-602	9:140732871-140732968 (+)	GACACGGGCGACAGCUGCGGCC
hsa-miR-760	hsa-mir-760	1:94312388-94312467 (+)	CGGCUCUGGGUCUGUGGGGA
down-regulated			
hsa-miR-199b-5p	hsa-mir-199b	9:131007000-131007109 (-)	CCCAGUGUUUAGACUAUCUGUUC
hsa-miR-323-3p	hsa-mir-323	14:101492069-101492154 (+)	CACAUUACACGGUCGACCUCU
hsa-miR-34a-star	hsa-mir-34a	1:9211727-9211836 (-)	CAAUCAGCAAGUAUCUGCCCU
hsa-miR-424	hsa-mir-424	X:133680644-133680741 (-)	CAGCAGCAAUUAUGUUUUGAA
hsa-miR-4757-3p	hsa-mir-4757	2:19548190-19548266 (+)	CAUGACGUCACAGAGGCUUCG
hsa-miR-875-3p	hsa-mir-875	8:100549014-100549089 (-)	CCUGGAAACACUGAGGUUGUG

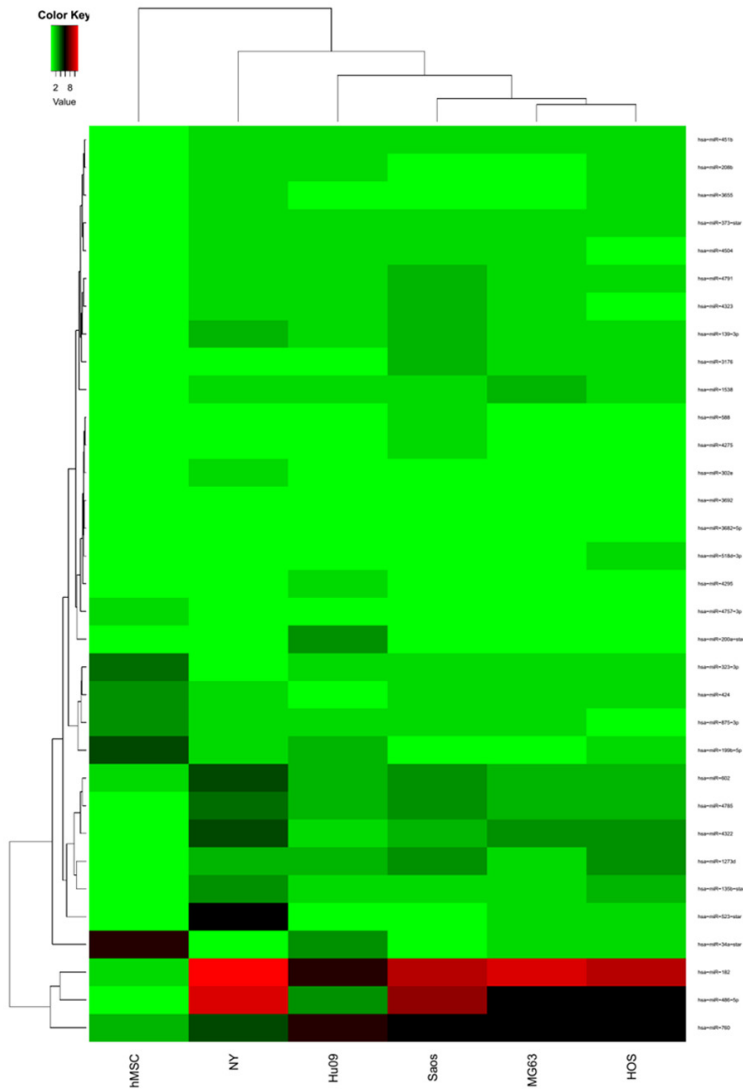


Figure 3. Cluster analysis of differentially expressed miRNAs of osteosarcoma. The horizontal axis represents the selected samples and hMSC was the control sample on the separated branch. The vertical axis stands for the result of cluster analysis of differentially expressed miRNA. Three most significant miRNAs, hsa-miR-182, hsa-miR-486-5p and hsa-miR-760, were clustered into one branch, indicating their important role in the occurrence of osteosarcoma disease.

samples, thus we can determine whether these miRNAs can clearly differentiate osteosarcoma samples from normal tissues.

Prediction of target genes of differentially expressed miRNA and functional enrichment analysis

Target genes of differentially expressed miRNA verified by experiment were extracted out by miRTarBase database [14]. Then, Go (Gene Ontology) enrichment analysis [15] and KEGG (Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes) pathway analysis [16] were conducted by DAVID (Database for Annotation, Visualization, and Integrated Discovery) [17]. In GO enrichment analysis, the p value justified after multi-testing by DAVID software was used as the threshold and p value less than 0.05 was extracted out.

Screening of differentially expressed mRNA

Differentially expressed mRNA in osteosarcoma samples were determined by two folds condition and these mRNAs were mapped to the above interaction of miRNA-target genes and mRNA, thus critical genes and interactions associated with osteosarcoma were screened out (Figure 1).

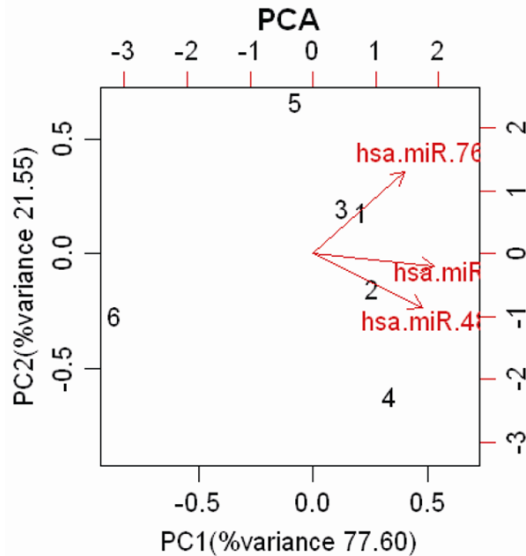


Figure 4. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) of differentially expressed miRNAs of osteosarcoma. The main role of PCA was to decrease the dimensions. PCA was performed on the three most significant miRNAs, hsa-miR-182, hsa-miR-486-5p and hsa-miR760. The accumulative contribution rate of the first and second dimension was 99.15%. In the figure, 1-5 represents osteosarcoma samples while 6 was the control one.

Results

Screening of differentially expressed miRNA in osteosarcoma

Five osteosarcoma cell lines (MG63, Saos, HOS, NY, Hu09) and one control group (hMSC) were included in our downloaded miRNA expression data with the accession number (GSE70415). The up and down-regulated miRNAs were determined between osteosarcoma samples and normal specimens. To be more specific, if the expression value of some miRNA in osteosarcoma samples was at least two folds than normal specimens, we assumed that it was up-regulated in osteosarcoma samples; if the expression value of some miRNA in normal samples was at least two folds than osteosarcoma specimens, we assumed that it was down-regulated in osteosarcoma samples. The usual and specific up and down-regulated miRNAs in osteosarcoma cells were shown in **Figure 2**.

A total of 1591 miRNAs had the single probe after excluding miRNAs originated from more than one miRNA and these miRNAs were used

for the screening of differentially expressed miRNAs. The up and down-regulated miRNAs were display by the form of Wine figure (**Figure 2**) and list table (**Table 1**). As can be seen from **Figure 2**, a total of 393miRNAs were up-regulated in osteosarcoma tissue and 27 among them were up-regulated in all osteosarcoma samples. As for the down-regulated condition, a total of 417 miRNAs were down-regulated in osteosarcoma samples and six among them were down-regulated in all osteosarcoma samples.

Cluster analysis and principal component analysis of differentially expressed miRNA in osteosarcoma

Heatmap was drawn based on the expression value of the 33 differentially expressed miRNAs and we found that the control group (hMSC) was on one single branch while the osteosarcoma was on the other. Meanwhile, the result of cluster analysis of differentially expressed miRNAs showed that three miRNAs that was most differentially expressed were on the same branch and these miRNAs were hsa-miR-182, hsa-miR-486-5p and hsa-miR760 (**Figure 3**). Therefore, we assumed that the three differentially expressed miRNAs were most obvious in the occurrence of osteosarcoma disease.

We conducted principal component analysis of miRNA expression value on the top three significantly differentially expressed miRNAs and we found that one dimension principal component had contribution rate of 77.6% while the two dimensions had the contribution rate of 21.55%. The accumulative contributions ratio of the two was 99.15% (**Figure 4**), which indicated that these three miRNAs can differentiate osteosarcoma samples perfectly from the control group perfectly.

Prediction of target genes of differentially expressed miRNAs in osteosarcoma and functional annotation

Firstly, we extracted the target genes of differentially expressed miRNAs testified by Mirtarbase and 2048 target genes corresponding with 28 miRNAs were obtained. The number of target genes corresponding with up-regulated miRNAs was 1866 and the number of target genes matching with down-regulated miRNAs was 67. Functional enrichment annotation was

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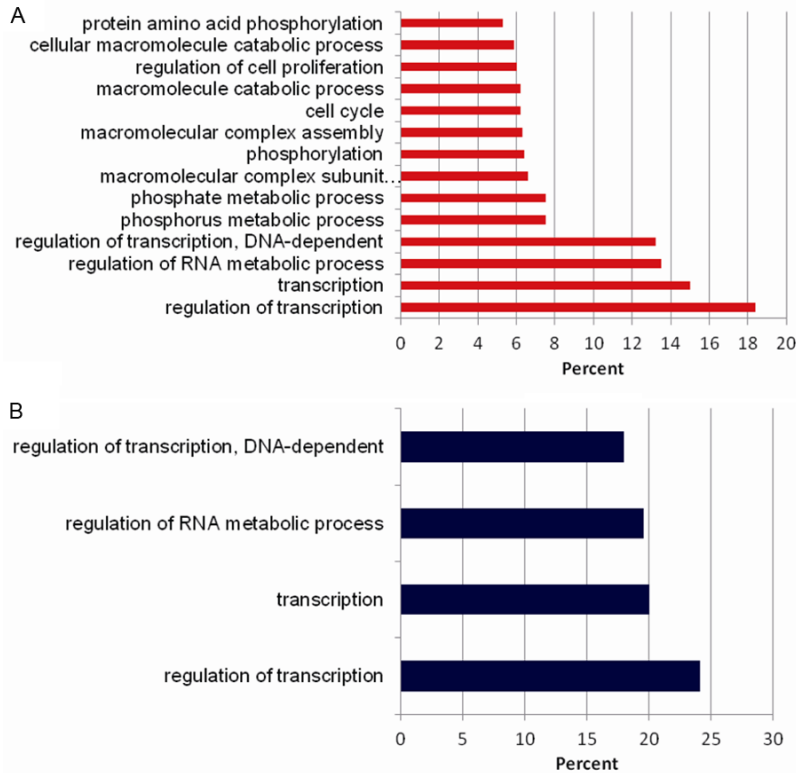


Figure 5. GO enrichment analysis of target genes of differentially expressed miRNA. The horizontal axis represents the rate of genes while the vertical axis stands for the GO terms. The red color represents the result of GO enrichment analysis result of target genes of up-regulated miRNA while the deep blue color represents the GO enrichment analysis of the target genes of down-regulated miRNAs. Both were mostly enriched in the transcriptional regulation process.

performed on these target genes and the result of GO enrichment analysis showed that the enriched GO terms of up-regulated miRNAs was much more than that of down-regulated miRNAs. Meanwhile, both target genes of up and down-regulated miRNAs were significantly enriched in the process of transcriptional regulation, confirming the transcriptional regulation role of miRNA in the occurrence of osteosarcoma disease. KEGG enrichment analysis was further conducted on these target genes of up and down-regulated miRNAs. We found that these target genes were significantly enriched in four metabolic pathways respectively and these pathways were all in high correlation with the occurrence of cancer (**Figure 5** and **Table 2**).

Screening of differentially genes between osteosarcoma samples and normal samples

Two folds principle was as well used in the determination of differentially expressed mRNA

between osteosarcoma samples and normal specimens. By the comparison with the normal samples, two significant up-regulated mRNA in all five osteosarcoma cells were selected while 15 significant down-regulated mRNA were found (**Figure 6**).

The result of differentially expressed mRNA was mapped to the interaction network of miRNA-target genes mRNA. Two gene, that is, *ABLIM1* (actin binding LIM protein 1), up-regulated in osteosarcoma tissue and *CXCL5* (chemokine (C-X-C motif) ligand 5), down-regulated in osteosarcoma, were regulated by relative miRNAs. *hsa-miR-373-3p* and *hsa-miR-302e* interacted with *ABLIM1* gene while *hsa-miR-3655* was in the interaction with *CXCL5* gene.

Discussion

In this study, five osteosarcoma cell lines, MG63, Saos, HOS, NY, Hu09, were used to screen the differentially expressed miRNAs. Genetic, phenotypic and functional characteristics have shown that cell lines can represent osteosarcoma clinical samples robustly [18-20]. As a result, a total of 27 miRNAs were found to be up-regulated in all five cell line while the number of down-regulated miRNAs was six. Three miRNAs, that is, *hsa-miR-182*, *hsa-miR-486-5p* and *hsa-miR760* were significantly up-regulated in osteosarcoma samples, indicating their potential significant role in the progression of the disease. It's been reported that dysregulation of miR-183 significantly impacts tumor metastasis in osteosarcoma via Ezrin [21, 22], however, as for the role of miR-182 in tumorigenesis and metastasis, there hasn't been much report. The discovery of miR-182 in this study indicated a possible new marker of OS, which needs further research for the specific mechanism. Besides, the result of GO enrichment analysis revealed that target genes

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Table 2. KEGG pathway enrichment analysis of target genes of up-regulated miRNAs

Category	Term	Count	%	P-Value	Fold Enrichment	Benjamini
up-regulated						
KEGG_PATHWAY	Systemic lupus erythematosus	28	1.5	2.00E-06	2.7	3.80E-04
KEGG_PATHWAY	Colorectal cancer	21	1.1	3.30E-04	2.4	3.10E-02
KEGG_PATHWAY	Endocytosis	35	1.9	6.80E-04	1.8	4.10E-02
KEGG_PATHWAY	Adherens junction	19	1	8.30E-04	2.3	3.80E-02
down-regulated						
KEGG_PATHWAY	Endometrial cancer	6	2.4	5.90E-04	8.5	6.20E-02
KEGG_PATHWAY	Prostate cancer	7	2.9	1.10E-03	5.8	5.80E-02
KEGG_PATHWAY	Pathways in cancer	13	5.3	1.20E-03	2.9	4.10E-02
KEGG_PATHWAY	Focal adhesion	10	4.1	1.30E-03	3.7	3.40E-02

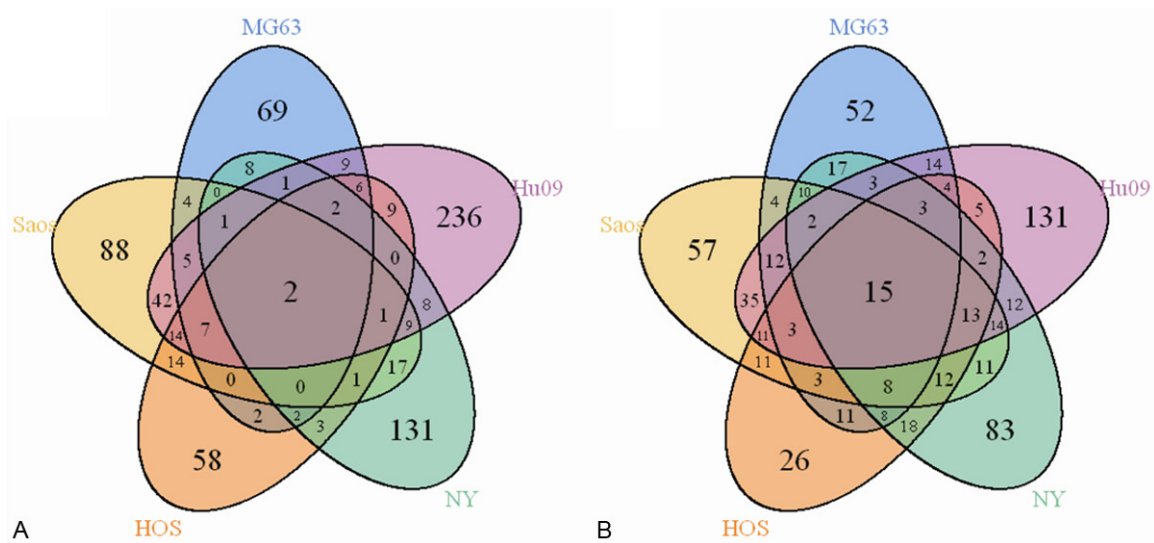


Figure 6. The up-regulated mRNA and down-regulated mRNA in OS samples. MG63, Saos, HOS, NY and Hu09, were used as five cell lines representing osteosarcoma. Expression changes with two-folds was used as criterion for differentially expressed mRNAs screening. The number of up-regulated mRNA was two while the number of down-regulated mRNA was fifteen edmiRNAs.

of differentially expressed miRNAs were mainly enriched in four pathways, that is, regulation of transcription, DNA dependent, regulation of RNA metabolic process, transcription and regulation of transcription, all in high relevance with the occurrence of cancer, confirming their potential role as indicator to clinical outcome of OS patients. Furthermore, target genes of the interested miRNAs were analyzed, which may clearly reflect the roles of miRNAs in tumor progression. The result of miRNA-target genes interactions showed that two genes were regulated by correlated miRNAs. The up-regulated *ABLIM1* (actin binding LIM protein 1) was significantly regulated by hsa-miR-373-3p and hsa-miR-302e while the down-regulated gene

CXCL5 (chemokine C-X-C motif ligand 5) was regulated by hsa-miR-3655.

It's been reported that aberrant splicing of *ABLIM1* gene was found in the skeletal muscle of patients with DM (dystrophia myotonica) [23], a kind of common form of muscular dystrophy that affects adults. In this study, *ABLIM1* was identified as one of the critical genes of OS, and regulated by hsa-miR-373-3p and hsa-miR-302e, providing us with new insights into exploring the molecular mechanism of the role of this gene played in the disease. One of the miRNAs, hsa-miR-373-3p was reported to be able to promote invasion and metastasis of lung adenocarcinoma cells. Si-

nce osteosarcoma is frequently accompanied with lung metastasis [24], we assumed that there was somehow correlation between the expression of hsa-miR-373-3p and the occurrence of OS disease, which obviously needed further research.

Another critical gene, *CXCL5*, has been reported to be an important factor in cancer biology and recent studies demonstrated that *CXCL5* directly stimulates cancer cells and endothelial cells proliferation and invasion [25-28]. Prior research revealed that it can promote tumor angiogenesis in many kinds of cancers, such as, non-small cell lung carcinoma and pancreatic cancer to modulate tumor growth metastasis [29, 30]. Besides, 80% of primary lung adenocarcinomas and 65% of lung adenocarcinoma cell lines were observed tumor-specific methylation of *CXCL5* [31]. However, the expression of *CXCL5* and mechanisms of how *CXCL5* functions in OS progress remain elusive.

In summary, we identified three markers hsa-miR-182, hsa-miR-486-5p and hsa-miR760, which may serve as the targets in the developments and treatments of OS. More importantly, two miRNA-target genes interactions were found out, providing new views on diagnosis and prognosis of OS patients.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

None.

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