

1 **A novel human pluripotent stem cell-derived neural crest model of Treacher Collins Syndrome shows**  
2 **defects in cell death and migration**

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35 **Running title:** Neural Crest Derivation and TCS.

36

37 **Footnotes and abbreviations:**

38 HPSC: human pluripotent stem cells, HIPSC: human induced pluripotent stem cells, HESC: human  
39 embryonic stem cells, MSC: mesenchymal stem cells, NC: neural crest,  
40 NC-SMC: neural crest smooth muscle cells, TCS: Treacher Collins Syndrome.

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44 **ABSTRACT**

45 The neural crest (NC) is a transient, multipotent cell population present during embryonic  
46 development. The NC can give rise to multiple cell types and is involved in a number of different  
47 diseases. Therefore, the development of new strategies to model NC in vitro enables investigations  
48 into the mechanisms involved in NC development and disease. Here we report a simple and efficient  
49 protocol to differentiate human pluripotent stem cells (HPSC) into NC using a chemically defined  
50 media, with basic fibroblast growth factor (FGF2) and the transforming growth factor- $\beta$  inhibitor SB-  
51 431542. The cell population generated expresses a range of NC markers including P75, TWIST1, SOX10  
52 and TFAP2A. NC purification was achieved in vitro through serial passaging of the population,  
53 recreating the developmental stages of NC differentiation. The generated NC cells are highly  
54 proliferative, capable of differentiating to their derivatives in vitro and engraft in vivo to NC specific  
55 locations. In addition, these cells could be frozen for storage and thawed with no loss of NC properties,  
56 nor the ability to generate cellular derivatives. We assessed the potential of the derived NC population  
57 to model the neurocristopathy, Treacher Collins Syndrome (TCS), by using siRNA knockdown of TCOF1  
58 and by creating different TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HPSC lines via CRISPR/Cas9 technology. The NC cells derived from  
59 TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HPSCs recapitulate the phenotype of the reported Treacher Collins Syndrome murine model.  
60 We also report for the first time an impairment of migration in TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> NC and mesenchymal stem  
61 cells. In conclusion, the developed protocol permits the generation of the large number of NC cells  
62 required for developmental studies, disease modeling, and for drug discovery platforms in vitro.

63

64 **INTRODUCTION**

65 In mammalian development, neural crest (NC) cells are a transient multipotent population arising from  
66 the neural plate border, usually contemporaneously with neural tube closure [1]. These migratory cells  
67 invade adjacent tissues and differentiate into multiple cell types including mesenchymal stem cells  
68 (MSC), vascular smooth muscle cells (SMC), adipocytes, osteocytes, chondrocytes, melanocytes, glia,  
69 and Schwann cells [2]. NC cells are also implicated in a broad range of pathologies making the in vitro  
70 generation of these cells of high clinical relevance.

71 The development and function of the NC have been well characterized in animal models including the  
72 chick, zebrafish, and mouse [3-6]. NC specification and induction depends on signaling molecules and  
73 transcription factors, whose actions are coordinated during gastrulation and neurulation. The neural  
74 plate border is specified by the cross talk between BMP, WNT and FGF signaling [7]. Initially,  
75 intermediate levels of BMP signaling induce neural folds with anterior character over the whole neural  
76 plate border. Next, the posterior regions of the neural plate border are transformed into NC under the  
77 effects of FGF, WNT and retinoic acid [8]. After specification, NC cells undergo epithelial-mesenchymal  
78 transition (EMT) before delaminating from the border of the neuroepithelium [9]. Subsequently the  
79 arising NC cells migrate in response to specific cues and express specific proteins including Twist [10],  
80 Sox10 [3,11], and p75 [12]. These factors control cellular events such as delamination, cell  
81 proliferation, migration, and differentiation [13-15]. Defects in the complex processes that  
82 choreograph NC development are involved in congenital human diseases known as neurocristopathies.

83

84 Human embryonic stem cells (HESC) and human induced pluripotent stem cells (HiPSC) are collectively  
85 referred to as human pluripotent stem cells (HPSC). Some of the most relevant NC differentiation  
86 protocols from HPSC are based on initially producing in vitro neuroectoderm [16-18] and then purifying  
87 the nascent NC population using different approaches such as dual SMAD inhibition [18-21] and/or  
88 WNT pathway activation [22-24]. A common limitation of these approaches is the use of undefined  
89 basement membrane extracts as a coating for cell adhesion, while only a few protocols have so far  
90 been validated in vivo [21,24-26]. Further optimization and validation of NC in vitro differentiation  
91 protocols would be valuable for studies into human development and disease.

92  
93 Treacher Collins Syndrome (TCS) [27,28] (OMIM: 154500) is a neurocristopathy resulting in a severe  
94 congenital craniofacial disorder which occurs one in every 50,000 births [29]. TCS is primarily  
95 associated with autosomal dominant haploinsufficiency-inducing mutations in the *TCOF1* gene located  
96 on chromosome 5 [30], which leads to deficient ribosome biogenesis [31]. *Tcof1* is expressed broadly  
97 throughout the mouse embryo, with high activity in the neuroepithelium where it plays an essential  
98 role in cell survival [32]. Extensive apoptosis of the neuroepithelial progenitor has been reported in  
99 TCS, resulting in impaired NC differentiation and subsequent defects in craniofacial development [32].

100  
101 In this study, we report a complete differentiation protocol using simple conditions that permits the  
102 generation of the NC from HPSCs using a combination of FGF signaling and TGF- $\beta$  inhibition. Derived  
103 NC cells are proliferative, can be maintained over multiple passages, can differentiate to a variety of  
104 cell types in vitro and have been validated in a developmental chick embryo model. Furthermore, we  
105 have utilized CRISPR/Cas9 technology to generate *TCOF1*<sup>+/-</sup> lines as a model of Treacher Collins  
106 Syndrome, and have revealed abnormalities in cell migration, which may play a role in the underlying  
107 pathology of the disease. The development of this protocol permits the generation of NC and its  
108 derivatives in a chemically-defined media for developmental studies, disease modeling, and drug  
109 discovery.

110

## 111 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### 112 **HPSC culture**

113 Human embryonic stem cells (HESC; H9s line, Wicell, Madison, WI) and human induced pluripotent  
114 stem cells (HiPSC; BBHX8 line [33], Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre HiPSC core facility) called  
115 together human pluripotent stem cells (HPSC) were maintained with chemically defined media (CDM),  
116 plus bovine serum albumin fraction A (CDM-BSA) as previously described [34]. CDM-BSA comprised of  
117 Iscove's modified Dulbecco's medium (ThermoFisher Scientific) plus Ham's F12 NUT-MIX  
118 (ThermoFisher Scientific) medium in a 1:1 ratio, supplemented with Glutamax-I (ThermoFisher  
119 Scientific), BSA (5mg/ml; Europa Bioproducts), chemically defined lipid concentrate (ThermoFisher  
120 Scientific), transferrin (15  $\mu$ g/ml, Roche Diagnostics), insulin (7  $\mu$ g/ml, Roche Diagnostics) and  
121 monothioglycerol (450 $\mu$ M, Sigma). For the maintenance of HPSCs, CDM-BSA was supplemented with  
122 Activin A (10 ng/ml, R&D Systems) and FGF2 (12 ng/ml, R&D Systems), and cells were maintained on  
123 tissue culture treated plastic coated with 0.1% gelatin (Sigma Aldrich).

124 HPSC were also cultured and maintained in TeSR™-E8™ media (STEMCELL Technologies) using  
125 Vitronectin XF (STEMCELL Technologies) as chemically defined xeno-free cell culture matrix.

### 126 **HPSC Differentiation to Neural Crest (NC)**

127 For NC differentiation, HPSC were detached from gelatin-coated plates using 1 mg/ml collagenase IV  
128 (Gibco). Clumps were triturated, counted and plated at a density of 300 colonies/well in 0.1% gelatin-  
129 coated 6 well plates in CDM-BSA supplemented with Activin A (10 ng/ml, R&D Systems) and FGF2 (12  
130 ng/ml, R&D Systems), referred to herein as CDM-BSA+FA.

131 After 24 hours in CDM-BSA, the media was changed to CDM-PVA supplemented with FGF2 (12ng/ml  
132 R&D Systems) and SB-431542 (10μM, Tocris), referred to herein as FSB, for four days without splitting.  
133 CDM-PVA has the same composition as CDM-BSA, with polyvinyl alcohol (PVA, 1 mg/ml, Sigma) instead  
134 of BSA. On day 4 in FSB, the differentiating HPSC were dissociated using TrypLE Express™ (Gibco) and  
135 seeded as single cells at a 1:3 ratio on 0.1% gelatin-coated plates in FSB. The single cells were  
136 maintained in FSB (with daily media changes) on 0.1% gelatin-coated plates over several passages, the  
137 splitting of those single cells was performed every 3-4 days (80-90% confluence) at 1:3 ratio using  
138 TrypLE Express™ (Gibco).

139 For differentiating HPSC grown on Vitronectin XF and maintained with TeSR™-E8™, the HPSC colonies  
140 were detached using 0.5mM EDTA (Gibco). Clumps were counted and seeded at a density of 300  
141 colonies/well in vitronectin XF-coated 6 well plates in TeSR™-E8™ media. After 24 hours in TeSR™-E8™,  
142 the media was changed to FSB and cells were maintained in FSB on vitronectin XF without splitting for  
143 4-days. At day 4 in FSB, the differentiating HPSC were dissociated with TrypLE Express™, seeded as  
144 single cells on 0.1% gelatin-coated plates and split every 3-4 days as described above.

### 145 **Quantitative real-time polymerase chain reaction (qRT-PCR)**

146 Total RNA was extracted using the RNeasy mini kit (Qiagen). cDNA was synthesised from 250 ng total  
147 RNA using the Maxima First Strand cDNA Synthesis kit (ThermoFisher Scientific). qRT-PCR reaction  
148 mixtures were prepared with the FAST-SYBR Green Master Mix (ThermoFisher Scientific) and analysed  
149 on a 7500 Fast Real-time PCR system (ThermoFisher Scientific). C<sub>T</sub> values were normalised to  
150 porphobilinogen deaminase (PBGD). Primer sequences are listed in Supplementary Table 1.

### 151 **Flow cytometry**

152 Cells were fixed with Cytofix/Cytoperm Fixation solution (BD Biosciences) for 20 min at 4°C, then  
153 washed with Perm Wash Buffer/PBS (1X, BD Biosciences) and permeabilized with Perm Wash  
154 Buffer/PBS + 0.1% Triton-X100 for 30 minutes. Cells were blocked with 3% BSA in 1X Perm Wash Buffer  
155 at room temp for 30 minutes. After blocking, cells were incubated in primary antibody (Supplementary  
156 Table 2) diluted in 1X Perm Wash Buffer + 0.1% Triton-X100 4°C for 45 minutes. Alexa Fluor®-tagged  
157 secondary antibody was added after primary incubation for 1 hour at room temperature. Samples  
158 were run on a Beckman Coulter CyAn-ADP flow cytometer, and subsequent datasets were analysed  
159 using FlowJo software.

160

161 **Immunocytochemistry**

162 Adherent cells were fixed using 4% PFA, permeabilised with 0.5% Triton-X100 in PBS (Sigma) and  
163 blocked with PBS + 3% BSA for 60 minutes at room temperature (RT). Primary antibody (Supplementary  
164 Table 2) incubations were performed at 4°C overnight and Alexa Fluor® tagged secondary antibodies  
165 applied for 45 minutes at RT the following day. Nuclei were counterstained with DAPI (0.1 µg/ml,  
166 Sigma). Images were acquired on a Zeiss LSM 700 confocal microscope and analysed with ImageJ  
167 software.

168 **Western Blotting**

169 Cells were lysed in RIPA buffer containing phosphatase inhibitor cocktail (Sigma) and protease inhibitor  
170 cocktail (Sigma), on ice for 15 minutes and protein content was quantified using a Pierce BCA Protein  
171 Assay Kit (ThermoFisher Scientific). 10µg of protein per sample was resolved by electrophoresis and  
172 transferred to PVDF membranes. Membranes were blocked for 1 hour at room temperature with 5%  
173 milk in Tris-Buffered Saline containing 0.1% Tween-20 (TBS-t, Sigma), and incubated overnight with  
174 either anti-TCOF1 (1:1,000 Abnova), or anti-beta actin (1:10,000 Sigma). Membranes were washed  
175 with TBS-t and incubated with HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies for 1 hour at room temperature.  
176 Membranes were washed and developed using the Pierce ECL2 Western Blotting Substrate  
177 (ThermoFisher Scientific).

178 **Migration assays**

179 Neural crest and mesenchymal stem cells were plated onto six-well plates and allowed to form a  
180 confluent monolayer. The cell monolayer was then scratched in a straight line to make a 'scratch  
181 wound' with a 1-ml pipette tip and the cell debris was removed by washing the cells with phosphate-  
182 buffered saline. Cells were maintained in FSB (for NC cells) or DMEM + 10% FBS (for MSC), and images  
183 of the closure of the scratch were captured at different time points as indicated.

184 A chemotaxis assay was performed using the CytoSelect™ 24-Well Cell Migration and Invasion Assay  
185 Combo Kit (Cell Biolabs) following the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, 5x10<sup>5</sup> cells were plated in a  
186 pre-warmed 24-well migration plate in FSB media. The chemo-attractant FGF8B (30 ng/ml, R&D  
187 Biosystems) was added separately to FSB media. Cell media was added to the lower well of the  
188 migration plate. FSB media was used as a control. Cells were incubated for 8 hours at 37 degrees and  
189 quantification was performed following the manufacturer's instructions.

190 For single cell analysis of cell migration, cells were imaged real-time on an In-Cell Analyser 2200 (GE  
191 Healthcare Life Sciences) with images collected every 30 minutes for a 12-hour period. Cells were  
192 tracked using the Pointing Cell Tracking plugin for ImageJ (<https://imagej.nih.gov/ij/plugins/pointing-cell-tracking/index.html>) and migratory profiles were generated using the freely available Chemotaxis  
193 and Migration Tool from Ibidi ([ibidi.com/chemotaxis-analysis/171-chemotaxis-and-migration-tool.html](http://ibidi.com/chemotaxis-analysis/171-chemotaxis-and-migration-tool.html)).

196 **Microarray Hybridization and Analysis**

197 RNAs isolated from H9s HESC, neuroectoderm [34] and NC passage 2 and 7 (NC P2, NC P7) were  
198 hybridized with Illumina Human HT-12 BeadChip (Illumina Inc., San Diego, <http://www.illumina.com>).  
199 All the data processing and analysis were performed using the algorithms included with the  
200 Bioconductor package beadarray and *Lumi* implemented in R software environment for statistical  
201 computing and graphics (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria, [http://www.r-](http://www.r-project.org)  
202 [project.org](http://www.r-project.org)).

### 203 **Microinjection of HPSC-derived NC cells and HPSC-derived endoderm cells in chicken embryos**

204 For injections into the cardiac neural crest pre-migratory region, chicken (*Gallus domesticus*) eggs  
205 (Winter Egg Farm, Cambridge, UK) were incubated in a digital cabinet incubator (OVA Easy 380,  
206 Brinsea) for 32 hours until Hamburger-Hamilton stage 9-10 (HH9-10). Eggs were windowed and  
207 injected under the embryo with India Ink to improve contrast. Small cuts were made with a BD  
208 Microlance needle (size 3) through the vitelline membrane and ectoderm directly adjacent to the  
209 neural tube, at a level just posterior to the forming otic vesicle. Clumps of 50-100 cells in Matrigel were  
210 injected into the cut site used a pulled glass capillary tube. Eggs were re-sealed with tape and cultured  
211 a further 20, 42 and 108 hours after injection to visualise migrating neural crest cells at HH16, HH17,  
212 and HH26 respectively. HPSC-derived endoderm cells were used as a negative control and generated  
213 as previously reported [35].

214 For systemic injections into developing chicken embryo, eggs were incubated until HH24. A small  
215 window was made, and 500-1000 NC cells were administered into the extraembryonic vessels. Either  
216 GFP<sup>+</sup> HPSC-derived NC cells or GFP<sup>+</sup> HPSC-derived endoderm cells were administered as previously  
217 reported [16] [36]. The window was covered with parafilm (VWR), and eggs were placed horizontally  
218 in the incubator until HH34. Embryos were staining using whole mount immunocytochemistry as  
219 previously described [36].

### 220 **Differentiation of the NC to various cell types**

221 NC populations were differentiated to smooth muscle cells (SMCs) using a combination of PDGF-BB  
222 (10ng/ml, Peprotech) and TGF- $\beta$ 1 (2ng/ml, Peprotech), as previously reported [37]. NC differentiation  
223 to neuronal populations and mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) was performed as previously reported  
224 [21]. NC differentiation to melanocytes was performed as previously described [38]. MSC populations  
225 were subsequently differentiated to chondrocytes, adipocytes, and osteocytes using the StemPro  
226 Chondrogenesis Differentiation Kit (ThermoFisher Scientific), StemPro Adipogenesis Differentiation kit  
227 (ThermoFisher Scientific), and StemPro Osteogenesis Differentiation Kit (ThermoFisher Scientific),  
228 respectively, following the manufacturer's instructions.

### 229 **Cell Proliferation assay**

230 To assess cell proliferation, the CellTiter 96 Non-Radioactive Cell Proliferation Assay (MTT, Promega)  
231 kit was used, as per the manufacturer's instructions.

### 232 **Freezing and thawing of neural crest cells**

233 Confluent NC cells were dissociated with TrypLE Express™ (ThermoFisher Scientific). NC cells were  
234 pelleted and resuspended in CDM-PVA media.  $2 \times 10^6$  cells were added to a cryovial using 90% CDM-  
235 PVA media with 10% DMSO. NC cryovials were thawed at 37 degrees, and cells transferred to a 15 ml  
236 Falcon tube containing 8 ml of fresh CDM-PVA media. Cells were centrifuged for 3 minutes at 1200  
237 rpm. Cell pellets were resuspended in 1 ml FSB media, and  $3 \times 10^5$  NC cells were plated per well of a  
238 0.1% gelatin-coated well of a 6 well plate. Cells were incubated at 37 degrees overnight in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub>  
239 incubator. Cell viability was assessed as previously reported [39].

#### 240 **siRNA knockdown and transient transfections**

241 *TCOF1* mRNA was knocked down with siRNA (ThermoFisher Scientific Assay ID S13920). siRNA  
242 transfection (25nM) was performed using DharmaFECT-1 transfection reagent (Dharmacon), following  
243 the manufacturer's instructions.

#### 244 **Generation of a TCOF1-targeting CRISPR guide RNA/Cas9 Construct**

245 A gRNA targeting the *TCOF1* gene was designed to target Exon1 according to the rule of 5'-GN20NGG-  
246 3' (sequence 5'-TGGCTATGTGCGTGCGGCGC-3'). Oligonucleotides were synthesized and ligated into  
247 pSpCas9(BB)-2A-Puro (PX459) V2.0 as previously reported [40].

#### 248 **Gene Targeting**

249 For gene targeting,  $2.5 \times 10^6$  HIPSC were electroporated with one  $\mu$ g of generated *TCOF1* targeting Cas9  
250 plasmid in 100ul of nucleofection mix from the P3 Primary Cell 4D-Nucleofector X Kit (Lonza) using a  
251 4D-nucleofector system (Lonza). Transfected cells were plated onto DR4 strain feeders (Jackson  
252 Laboratory) and cultured in advanced DMEM/F12 (Gibco) + 20% KOSR supplemented with FGF2  
253 (4ng/ml) and Rho Kinase inhibitor (Y-27632, 10 $\mu$ M). One day after transfection, cells were selected  
254 with puromycin (1 $\mu$ g/ml, Sigma) for 36 hours. Resistant colonies were picked, expanded, and mutation  
255 introduction was assessed by PCR and Sanger sequencing.

#### 256 **Statistics**

257 One-way ANOVA (Tukey's multiple comparisons test) and two-sided Student's t-test were used to  
258 determine statistically significant differences between the groups. Results are presented as mean  $\pm$   
259 s.e.m. P values  $\leq 0.05$  were considered statistically significant. All experiments represent the results of  
260 at least three independent biological replicates (measurements of biologically distinct samples). \*P<  
261 0.05; \*\*P < 0.01; \*\*\*P < 0.001.

262

## 263 **RESULTS**

### 264 **Dissociation of Differentiating Neuroectoderm During Early Development Promotes NC** 265 **Differentiation.**

266 It has been demonstrated that neuroectoderm can be generated from HPSCs utilizing a combination  
267 of FGF2 and the TGF- $\beta$  inhibitor SB-431542 (referred to herein as FSB) for seven days [16]. Our group

268 has previously reported the expression of some NC markers during this differentiation process,  
269 including *SNAI1*, *SNAI2*, and *PAX3*, suggesting that a mixed cell population may be generated at these  
270 stages [37]. We hypothesized that cell dissociation with trypsin, a serine protease, might facilitate EMT  
271 and the generation of the NC from this population [41-45]. We, therefore, differentiated the H9s HESC  
272 line to neuroectoderm over seven days with FSB media, with and without WNT3A (25ng/ml, R&D  
273 Systems). At day 7 of differentiation, the neuroectoderm was trypsinized and replated as single cells  
274 in CDM-PVA media supplemented with FGF2 and SB-431542 (FSB) +/- WNT3A for up to 5 passages.  
275 Quantitative RT-PCR over this period showed increased expression of NC differentiation-associated  
276 genes (*PAX3*, *ZIC1*, *CD49*, and *SOX9*) and the mesenchymal gene (*VIM*) (Fig.1A). Conversely,  
277 neuroectoderm genes (*OLIG3*, *PAX6*) and an epithelial gene (*CDH1*) were downregulated (Fig.1A),  
278 suggesting that cell dissociation promoted NC marker expression and EMT. Interestingly, the addition  
279 of WNT3A did not have any effect on the expression of these markers during the differentiation  
280 process (Fig.1A).

281 To further analyze the onset of NC markers during the differentiation of HESC to neuroectoderm over  
282 the first seven days, we assessed the expression of NC (*HNK1*, *P75*) and neuroectoderm (*PAX6*) genes  
283 on a daily basis. We observed the greatest expression of *HNK1* and *P75* on day 4 of the differentiation  
284 process (Supplementary Fig.1A). Therefore, we hypothesized that dissociation of the developing  
285 neuroectoderm at day 4 instead of day 7, may increase the efficiency of NC generation during the  
286 differentiation process. We analyzed *SOX1* and *P75* expression by flow cytometry in passaged and non-  
287 passaged neuroectoderm at day 4 or day 7 of differentiation in FSB. *SOX1* is the earliest known specific  
288 marker of the neuroectoderm lineage and is activated during gastrulation [46]. Neuroectoderm  
289 passaged at day 4 (D4 P1) demonstrated a higher induction of *P75* and lower expression of *SOX1* when  
290 compared with non-passaged cells or cells split at day 7 (Fig.1B). Furthermore, the cells split at day 4  
291 attached and survived better than the cells split at day 7 (data not shown). Consistent with these  
292 results, *TFAP2A*, an essential transcription factor for the development of the NC [47,48] was highly  
293 expressed in the D4 P1 population (Fig.1C). *SOX1* was detected at the edges of the neuroectoderm at  
294 day 4 and day 7 of differentiation in FSB by immunocytochemistry (Fig.1D). Following passage at day  
295 4, *SOX1* expression was significantly reduced. Conversely, *SOX1* positive cells remained if passaging  
296 was delayed until day 7 (Fig.1D), suggesting that the greatest reduction of *SOX1* was obtained by  
297 passaging the differentiating neuroectoderm in FSB on day 4. Furthermore, *HNK1* was highly expressed  
298 in passaged neuroectoderm at day 4 (Fig.1D) and qRT-PCR analyses confirmed these cells showed  
299 significantly higher levels of NC marker *TFAP2A* and lower levels of neuroectoderm marker *GBX2* [49]  
300 than cells from day 7 passaged neuroectoderm (Fig.1E).

301 Together, these findings suggest that differentiation of neuroectoderm from HPSCS can generate a  
302 mixed population containing both neuroectoderm and NC cells. The NC population can be enriched  
303 from the differentiating neuroectoderm by passaging at day 4 of the protocol.

### 304 **Serial Passage Increases Purity of NC Cells**

305 Following passaging at day 4, cells were maintained in FSB medium upon reaching confluence (NC P1).  
306 Every four days, the confluent NC cells were split at a 1:3 ratio and seeded for the next passage  
307 (Supplementary Fig.1B). After two passages cells expressed the NC proteins *SOX9*, *HNK1*, and *P75*, and  
308 did not express the neuroectoderm marker *SOX1* (Fig.2A). We detected expression of the NC markers

309 P75 and TFAP2A by flow cytometry following subsequent passaging (Fig.2B and C) [21]. While over 80%  
310 of the early NC population expressed P75, only 50% of the population was double positive for both  
311 P75 and TFAP2A at this stage (Fig.2C). Furthermore, SOX10, a marker of migratory NC, was induced at  
312 D4 of (Fig.2D). These data confirmed that we were generating NC at this time point of the  
313 differentiation process, although the yield was suboptimal.

314 We questioned whether the differentiated NC would retain their NC-like identity following further  
315 expansion. Interestingly, the expression levels of the NC markers *PAX3* and *ZIC1*, markers of early NC  
316 induction [50,51], peaked at passage 3 (P3). In contrast, *SOX9* which is an essential factor for the  
317 further development of migratory NC [52] was observed to be highly expressed at passage 8 (P8)  
318 (Fig.2E top). The expression levels of the neural crest markers *P75*, *TFAP2A*, and *TWIST1* increased  
319 significantly upon serial passaging (P1, P7, and P13), as assessed by qRT-PCR (Fig.2E bottom),  
320 suggesting that this approach could purify the NC population.

321 To further confirm the NC cells retain their NC identity and show purification with passaging, we used  
322 flow cytometry to examine the expression of NC and non-NC markers. Furthermore, we repeated the  
323 flow analysis of P75 and TFAP2A in late passages of NC (P12) and observed that 99% of the cells  
324 expressed P75, and 69% showed both P75 and TFAP2A (Fig.2G). Similar results were also obtained  
325 using HIPSC to generate NC cells (Supplementary Fig.2A-C). To assess if the purified NC population  
326 contained additional cell populations, we measured the expression of endoderm (*SOX17* and *EOMES*),  
327 mesoderm, (*NKX2.5* and *KDR*), and neuronal (*TUBB3* and *MAP2*) genes in the populations  
328 (Supplementary Fig.2E). We observed negligible expression of these genes in the NC populations when  
329 compared to HPSC-derived endoderm, mesoderm, or neurons, demonstrating that the NC did not  
330 contain a mixture of these populations in culture. Taken together, these data suggest that NC  
331 purification may be achieved by serial passaging of NC cells in FSB media. Furthermore, we found we  
332 could expand the NC cells up to passage 15 without losing their NC identity [53].

### 333 **NC Cells are proliferative and Migrate in Response to Specific Chemo-Attractants.**

334 To assess whether passage number or cell density affects the proliferation rate of the differentiated  
335 NC, we performed sequential cell counting and an MTT assay at different NC passages (Supplementary  
336 Fig.2C, D). The MTT Cell Proliferation Assay is used to calculate the cell proliferation rate. The yellow  
337 tetrazolium MTT (3-(4, 5-dimethylthiazolyl-2)-2, 5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide) is reduced by active  
338 cells, to purple formazan that can be solubilized and quantified by spectrophotometric means.

339 We found that the proliferation rate of NC was independent of passage number (Supplementary  
340 Fig.2C) or cell density (Supplementary Fig.2D). In vivo, NC cells migrate over great distances in response  
341 to chemotactic cues to contribute to tissue development during embryogenesis [54]. To validate a  
342 similar migratory function in our cells, we performed an in vitro scratch assay. NC cells were able to  
343 migrate and cover the scratch within 24 hours (Fig.2F). **FGF8 is chemotactic and chemokinetic for NC  
344 in vivo and in vitro [19,54].** We, therefore, examined whether the HESC-derived NC cells would respond  
345 to this cue using the CytoSelect 24-well Cell Migration Assay (8  $\mu$ m). In response to FGF8B, NC  
346 migration was significantly greater than in FSB media alone (Fig.2H). Overall, these data demonstrate  
347 that the HESC-NC cells recapitulate critical NC functions.

348 **Early Passages of HESC-NC Comprise a Mixed Population of Neural Progenitors and Pre-Migratory**  
349 **NC Cells that is purified with Serial Passage.**

350 To uncover the differences between early and later passages of NC, we performed a microarray gene  
351 expression analysis using H9s HESC and three independent differentiations of H9s HESC to  
352 neuroectoderm [34], NC at passage 2 (P2) and NC at passage 7 (P7). Hierarchical clustering separated  
353 these populations (Fig.3A). Interestingly, PCA analysis distributed NC P2 in between neuroectoderm  
354 and NC P7 population (Fig.3B). Based on this, we hypothesized that the early NC population could be  
355 a mixture of neuroectoderm and NC cells.

356 The NC P2 population expressed markers of neural progenitors including *AXIN2* [55], *FGFR3* [56] and  
357 *NOTCH3* [57] (Fig.3C). These genes however, were markedly downregulated at later passages (Fig.3C).  
358 Furthermore, the NC P2 population expressed markers of neural plate border / pre-migratory NC cells  
359 including *CDH2* [58], *CDH6* [59], *FOXD3* [60,61], *BMP7*, and *RHOB* [9,62] (Fig.3C). These neural plate  
360 border genes are thought to promote conversion of pre-migratory NC P2 to migratory cells as they also  
361 expressed migratory markers such as *B3GAT1* (HNK1) [63,64] in this mixed population (Fig.3C).

362 As the WNT signaling pathway has been identified as playing important roles in NC development in  
363 vivo [23,65-67], we wondered why exogenous WNT3A was not required in our in vitro differentiation  
364 system. Interestingly, genes related to activation of WNT signaling, such as *WNT1*, *FZD3*, *DVL2* [68],  
365 and *MSX1* [69], were significantly expressed in the early NC P2 population (Fig.3C). These data suggest  
366 there may be endogenous activation of WNT during the early stages of NC differentiation, as observed  
367 in the neural plate border intermediate cells in vivo [69] and in vitro [23]. Interestingly, it has been  
368 proposed that NC induction requires intermediate levels of BMP signaling [70], as part of a BMP  
369 gradient between epidermal ectoderm which expresses both BMP7 and BMP4 [71] and the neural  
370 plate. BMP7 induces the expression of the RHOB protein in the cells destined to become NC in the  
371 neural plate border [9,62]. Consistent with developmental NC induction, *BMP7* and *RHOB* were highly  
372 upregulated in the early NC P2 population compared with NC P7. In contrast, the NC P7 population  
373 expressed higher levels of migratory NC genes such as *SOX10*, *SOX9*, *TWIST1* and *P75* [52,58,72,73]  
374 when compared to the early NC P2 population (Fig.3C).

375 Finally, we plotted gene expression differences in the NC pathway using an open source pathway  
376 archive (WikiPathway WP2064 revision 47071). Most genes upregulated at NC P2 corresponded to  
377 genes expressed in premigratory NC cells (Fig.3D). This population also showed some migratory NC  
378 genes, suggesting a mixed population. However, genes upregulated in the NC P7 population  
379 corresponded for the most part with genes expressed in the migratory NC (Fig.3D). These data revealed  
380 evidence of endogenous WNT and BMP activity in the NC P2 population. In these early passages, a  
381 mixed NC population could be purified in vitro after several further passages to express a migratory  
382 NC transcriptional profile by passage 7.

383 **HESC-Derived NC Cells Survive, Engraft, Migrate and Differentiate In Vivo at NC Specific Location**  
384 **Within the Ascending Aorta and the Brain.**

385 NC cells should engraft in the appropriate locations for NC derivatives. In avian embryos, the fate of  
386 the neural crest is well established. The removal of the dorsal neural tube between the otic vesicle and

387 the third somite in chicken embryos results in a variety of defects of the derivatives of the arch arteries  
388 [74]. Chicken embryos have previously been used as a host for studying the differentiation potential  
389 of human stem cells [36,75,76]. To demonstrate that the NC cells have the potential to migrate and  
390 differentiate to their specific locations in vivo, and that freeze/thaw cycles do not affect the potential  
391 of the NC cells, we performed several experiments engrafting or injecting NC GFP+ cells into chicken  
392 developing embryos.

393 Fluorescent GFP+ HESC-derived NC P1 cells were thawed, harvested and passed to NC P2 cells. Those  
394 cells were split, counted and embedded into Matrigel for chicken embryo engraftment. Clumps of 50-  
395 100 cells were engrafted between the otic vesicle and the third somite, adjacent to the neural tube at  
396 Hamburger and Hamilton (HH) stage 9-10. Some embryos were harvested 20 and 42 hours post  
397 engraftment (HH16-17) to monitor the success of the engraftment. Observation under an inverted  
398 epifluorescent microscope showed they exhibited a lump of GFP+ cells in the region of the otic vesicle.  
399 Furthermore, migrating GFP+ cells were detected in all the embryos (Fig.4A and B). 4.5 days post  
400 engraftment (HH29), whole-mount confocal immunofluorescence imaging of the developing heart and  
401 ascending aorta was performed. A significant number of GFP+ cells were found in the ascending aorta  
402 expressing ACTA2 (Fig.4C). Furthermore, GFP+ cells were not found in the aorta following engraftment  
403 of GFP+ HESC-derived endoderm embedded into Matrigel. Additionally, we could not detect any NC-  
404 derived GFP+ cells in the epicardium or myocardium (Fig.4C). Taken together, this data demonstrates  
405 that the engrafted human NC cells can migrate into the ascending aorta and contribute to the SMC  
406 population within the chicken embryo.

407 We also utilized an alternative method that we have previously validated for using chicken embryos as  
408 a host to study the differentiation and integration of HESC-derived cells [36]. GFP+ NC cells were  
409 injected (500-1000 cells) into the extraembryonic circulation of chicken embryos at HH24. Embryos  
410 were harvested at HH34 and whole-mount confocal immunofluorescence was used for imaging of the  
411 brain, ascending aorta and heart. We detected 10-20 GFP+ NC cells per embryo, around the ascending  
412 aorta (Supplementary Fig.3A-F) and 40-50 GFP+ NC cells per embryo associated with the cerebral  
413 cortex vasculature (Supplementary Fig.3G-J). We could not detect any human NC cells in the  
414 subepicardium either the myocardium (Supplementary Fig.3K), areas we have previously seen the  
415 localization of HESC-derived epicardial cells [36]. HESC-derived NC cells could be clearly discriminated  
416 from the host cells by their cell size, high green fluorescence (Supplementary Fig.3A, D, G) and distinct  
417 nuclei (Supplementary Fig.3B, E, H). Some of the engrafted NC cells around the ascending aorta also  
418 expressed ACTA2, suggesting the onset of EMT and SMC differentiation in situ within the ascending  
419 aorta (Supplementary Fig.3C). Together, these results suggest that HESC-derived NC cells have access  
420 to ascending aorta in vivo and have the potential to contribute to tissue development in this location.

#### 421 **In Vitro Differentiation of NC to a Variety of Cell Types**

422 NC cells can differentiate in vivo into a wide range of cell types such as neurons, melanocytes [77-79]  
423 mesenchymal stem cells (MSC) [80], adipocytes [81], chondrocytes, osteocytes [82,83] and vascular  
424 SMC [84]. We, therefore, followed a wide range of established differentiation protocols to confirm that  
425 our purified NC cells (NC P7 and further passages) were able to differentiate into their known  
426 derivatives.

427 To assess the capability of the NC to differentiate into neurons, we plated cells on polyornithine-  
428 laminin-coated culture dishes [21]. After ten days of differentiation, these cells spontaneously  
429 differentiated into beta III Tubulin<sup>+</sup> neurons (Fig.5A). Neuronal morphology was confirmed by  
430 microscopy (Supplementary Fig.4B). Differentiation to SMC from NC was performed following our  
431 previous protocol [34]. SMC proteins such as ACTA2, SM22A, and CNN1 were detected by  
432 immunocytochemistry at twelve days of differentiation (Fig.5B). ACTA2, TAGLN and other SMC  
433 markers such as MYH11, SMTN-B and MYOCD were also upregulated in differentiated SMC as assessed  
434 by qRT-PCR (Supplementary Fig.4H).

435 Melanocyte differentiation was achieved following a previously reported protocol [38]. qRT-PCR  
436 assessed differentiation for melanocyte markers KIT and MITF [38] and NC markers such as P75 and  
437 FOXD3 (Fig.5C). NC-derived melanocytes showed statistically significant upregulation of KIT and MITF  
438 expression and a marked downregulation of P75 and FOXD3. Typical melanocyte morphology was  
439 confirmed by microscopy (Supplementary Fig.4C). Mesenchymal stem cells (MSC) were derived from  
440 the NC using a previously reported protocol [21]. Differentiated MSC were positive for CD44 and  
441 negative for P75 as assessed by flow cytometry (Fig.5D), and expressed the MSC marker CD105 (ENG)  
442 by qRT-PCR (Supplementary Fig.4D) [85]. Chondrocytes, adipocytes, and osteocytes were successfully  
443 differentiated from NC using specific commercial differentiation media, following the manufacturer's  
444 instructions (ThermoFisher Scientific). Chondrocyte differentiation was demonstrated by Alcian Blue-  
445 positive staining of NC-derived chondrocytes (Fig.5E). ACAN expression [86] also confirmed  
446 chondrocyte lineage (Supplementary Fig.4E). Adipocyte differentiation was determined by positive oil  
447 red O staining (Fig.5F) and PPARG [87] expression (Supplementary Fig.4F). Osteocyte differentiation  
448 was shown by positive alizarin red staining (Fig.5G). COL1A1 [88] and Osteocalcin [89] were detected  
449 by immunocytochemistry in osteocytes derived from NC (Supplementary Fig.4G, top panel).  
450 Furthermore, the expression levels of the osteocyte genes sclerostin (SOST) and COL1A1 were  
451 measured by qRT-PCR, revealing robust upregulation in NC-derived osteocytes (Supplementary Fig.4G,  
452 bottom panel).

453 Finally, we examined the ability of these cells to function as NC cells after freeze-thawing. NC cells were  
454 frozen at passage 7 then defrosted and cultured for 2 further passages and retained their NC marker  
455 expression comparable to passage 9 NC cells that had not undergone freeze-thawing (Supplementary  
456 Fig.4I, top panel). Similarly, freeze-thawing had no effect on the ability of the NC cells to generate  
457 derivatives such as smooth muscle cells (Supplementary Fig.4I, bottom panel). Furthermore, viability  
458 assays performed in thawed NC P2 and NC P7 cells [39] shown a recovery of 89±6.5% and 92.5± 6.25  
459 % respectively from frozen vials (Supplementary Fig.4J). The ability to freeze and store these cells is  
460 important for the practical utilization of these cells, which can now be bulked up for storage and use  
461 as required, without losing NC properties.

#### 462 **Down-Regulation of Treacle Expression by siRNA impairs cell migration in NC and MSC.**

463 Haploinsufficiency of TCOF1 in humans is associated with TCS; a condition characterized by craniofacial  
464 abnormalities thought to be due to impaired NC development [90]. To determine whether TCOF1  
465 haploinsufficiency results in NC defects in humans, we initially investigated its role in HPSC-derived NC  
466 by siRNA-mediated knockdown. Transfection of TCOF1-targeted siRNA reduced mRNA expression in  
467 both NC and MSC as assessed by qRT-PCR (Supplementary Fig.5A), and at the protein level in the NC

468 by flow cytometry (Supplementary Fig.5B). To investigate whether TCOF1 has any role in the  
469 differentiation of NC to MSC, we differentiated NC P7 cells transfected with siRNA against TCOF1 or  
470 Scramble siRNA to a MSC fate as previously reported [21]. We observed no difference in the capacity  
471 for MSC differentiation from TCOF1 knockdown NC with upregulation of CD44 and downregulation of  
472 P75 observed in both knock-down and control conditions (Fig.6A).

473 In mice, Treacle plays a role in NC development and proliferation [32]. We assessed if siRNA-mediated  
474 knockdown of TCOF1 impaired proliferation of HPSC-derived NC by performing an MTT assay. As in the  
475 mouse, we observed decreased proliferation in siRNA-mediated TCOF1 knockdown cells when  
476 compared controls (Fig.6B). It has previously been suggested that migration is not impaired in *Tcof1*<sup>+/-</sup>  
477 mice [32]. To assess the role played by TCOF1 in human NC, we performed a wound healing scratch  
478 assay following siRNA-mediated knockdown of TCOF1. We observed impaired migration and scratch  
479 closure in TCOF1 knockdown NC when compared to controls (Fig.6C). Furthermore, whilst the  
480 migratory defect in this assay could be attributed to the documented impaired proliferation (Fig.6B),  
481 the migration phenotype was detected as early as 6 hours post-scratch, suggesting that the phenotype  
482 was indeed due to impaired migration. We performed further validation of this migratory defect using  
483 a Cytoselect™ transwell cell migration assay (Fig.6D). siRNA-mediated knockdown of TCOF1 produced  
484 a significant reduction in NC migration compared with controls (Fig.6D). This migration impairment  
485 was observed in FSB medium alone and observed in response to different NC chemo-attractors such  
486 as FGF8B [19] or 10% fetal bovine serum (Fig.6D). NC-derived MSC transfected with siRNA against  
487 TCOF1 also showed a similar migratory defect in a wound healing scratch assay (Fig.6E). Taken  
488 together, these findings demonstrate that TCOF1 may play a role in both the proliferation and  
489 migration of the human NC.

#### 490 **Modeling TCS in Vitro with TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC using CRISPR/CAS9 technology.**

491 To further confirm the results observed using TCOF1 siRNA in our NC model and to try to model TCS in  
492 vitro, we created heterozygous TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> KO HIPSC lines using CRISPR/Cas9 technology to accurately  
493 target Exon 1 of the TCOF1 gene in wild-type HIPSC (Fig.7A). Cas9-induced double-strand breaks in  
494 TCOF1 genomic DNA were repaired by the non-homologous end joining pathway leading to insertions  
495 or deletions (INDEL) in different HIPSC clones (Fig.7B). HIPSC Clones 12 and 24 (C12 and C24) had the  
496 same single nucleotide deletion in Exon 1 as observed by Sanger sequencing. This removal created a  
497 premature stop codon, resulting in a heterozygous KO for TCOF1 (Fig.7B). HIPSC Clone 8 (C8) was also  
498 transfected, but no INDELS were detected in the TCOF1 gene (data not shown). We, therefore, used  
499 C8 as an isogenic wild-type HIPSC line to compare with the TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> clones (C12 and C24). NC was  
500 generated from all three clones, and NC P7 cells were used for subsequent studies. Immunoblotting  
501 for Treacle confirmed a significant reduction of protein levels in NC derived from TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC clones  
502 (C12 and C24) compared with isogenic wild-type clone 8 NC and wild-type HESC-derived NC (Fig.7C).

503 The downstream effect of defective ribosomal biosynthesis in mutant *Tcof1*<sup>+/-</sup> mice is a lower  
504 proliferative index than wild-type NC cells [32]. TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> NC derived from clones C12 and C24 had  
505 significantly lower proliferation rate than similar wild-type NC cells derived from the C8 line and WT  
506 HESC, validating the findings observed in the *Tcof1*<sup>+/-</sup> mouse (Fig.7D).

507 The underlying cause of the reported craniofacial anomalies in the *Tcof1*<sup>+/-</sup> mice is increased apoptosis  
508 in the neuroepithelium [32]. This developmental stage overlaps with the period of NC induction and  
509 migration from the neural plate border during embryogenesis [27]. To investigate whether our in vitro  
510 TCS model recapitulated this phenotype, we differentiated WT and TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC lines to  
511 neuroectoderm [34]. Flow cytometric analyses for Annexin V confirmed a marked induction of  
512 apoptosis in neuroectoderm cells derived from TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC (C12 and C24) compared with  
513 neuroectoderm derived from WT HIPSC Clone 8 or parental WT HESC (Fig.7E).

514 As we unveiled a previously unreported migratory defect in NC and NC-derived MSC deficient for  
515 TCOF1 by siRNA (Fig.6C and 6E), we performed the same analysis on the generated TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> lines. A  
516 wound healing scratch assay demonstrated impaired migration in both NC (Supplementary Fig.6A),  
517 and MSC (Supplementary Fig.6B) derived from TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC C24. To further investigate this  
518 migratory defect uncovered by the wound healing scratch assay, we performed single cell analysis of  
519 cell migration and directionality of movement using real-time imaging of cells over a 12-hour time  
520 course. This analysis demonstrated that whilst WT HIPSC Clone 8 derived NC cells migrated freely in  
521 multiple directions over a 12-hour period, TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC derived NC cell show considerable  
522 impairment of migration at a single cell level (Fig.7F). These findings further validate the reduced  
523 migration phenotype of TCOF1-deficient NC cells in the human context.

524

## 525 **DISCUSSION**

526 This study first describes a simple and efficient method of generating NC cells from HPSC using  
527 chemically defined media. Importantly, this in vitro system has great potential for investigating the  
528 molecular and cellular defects in neurocristopathies such as TCS. We have established a model of  
529 Treacher Collins Syndrome using CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing and identified novel NC and MSC migration  
530 defects in our in vitro model.

### 531 **Development of a Differentiation Protocol to Generate NC from HPSCs using a Chemically Defined** 532 **Media**

533 Several methods have been reported to produce NC from HPSCs, although further work is required to  
534 allow the production of cells in a fully chemically defined media and to reduce the complexity of the  
535 differentiation conditions. The limitations of the previously reported protocols include the use of  
536 biological substrates such as Geltrex™ [21] or Matrigel™ [23] that display original batch to batch  
537 variability. Other protocols used media enriched with complex Supplements such as N2™ and B27™  
538 [23,43].

539 We have demonstrated that we can generate NC cells from HPSC using minimal cytokines when  
540 compared with previous protocols [18-21] or WNT pathway activation [23]. This reduction of cytokines  
541 makes our protocol simpler and more economically viable. Furthermore, we do not need to perform  
542 cell sorting to generate our populations, as we have observed that serial passaging effectively purifies  
543 the populations generated. We have also demonstrated that our cells can undergo freeze-thawing with  
544 up to 90% recovery rates and viability, permitting these cells to be used to generate stocks of NC cells  
545 at the same passages (Supplementary Fig.4J). We have used thawed NC cells for multiple

546 differentiations and have not seen any alterations in their maintenance or differentiation capacity  
547 following thawing. Therefore, our protocol permits the generation of a high number of NC cells which  
548 can be banked and used at later dates.

549 The differentiation of NC from HPSCs using this approach recapitulates, to some extent, the normal  
550 embryonic developmental stages. In our protocol, the passage of neuroepithelial neuroectoderm at  
551 low density in FSB appeared to select the NC population in vitro. The genome-wide mRNA expression  
552 studies suggested that earlier passages of NC populations were a mixed population of neural  
553 progenitor cells and premigratory NC cells. Premigratory NC genes such as *RHOB*, *CDH6*, *FOXD3* and  
554 neural progenitor genes such as *AXIN2* [55], *LHX2* [91], *DVL2* [92] and *OLIG2* [93], were upregulated in  
555 these populations (Fig.3B). It has been previously reported that the patterning of neural versus NC  
556 lineages is based on the plating density of early progenitors [18]. Serial passage of our cells at low  
557 density, selected against the neural population, with a significant downregulation of neural genes by  
558 later passages (P7). Meanwhile, the P7 cells expressed markers of migratory NC cells, including *SOX9*,  
559 *SOX10*, *P75*, and *TWIST*, and downregulated pre-migratory markers such as *WNT1*, *PAX3*, and *RHOB*.  
560 Further validation of in vitro selection upon serial passaging is provided by the pattern of expression  
561 of *SOX10* and *WNT1*. In the mouse, *Sox10* expression follows *Wnt1* expression and marks virtually all  
562 NC cells immediately after their delamination from the neural tube [94]. In our system, *WNT1* is lowly  
563 expressed in mixed NC population, while it increases alongside *SOX10* expression in further passages,  
564 confirming NC purification in vitro with passaging.

565 In contrast to other in vitro protocols [18,19,21,43] we did not need to modulate WNT or BMP signaling  
566 exogenously. We hypothesized that the endogenous activation of WNT and BMP signaling, as  
567 evidenced by our microarray analysis, was sufficient in early passages to induce NC differentiation. This  
568 endogenous signaling may reflect the cross-talk and local gradients between a mixed population of the  
569 neural plate and non-neural plate ectoderm. Upon further passage of the mixed NC P2 population, we  
570 observed downregulation of both BMP and WNT signaling cells in these populations, suggesting that  
571 the combination of endogenous BMP and WNT signaling at the early stages of the differentiation  
572 protocol was sufficient to specify NC differentiation. The protocol imitates, in part, the steps involved  
573 in the development of NC cells in the embryo [9].

574 The properties of NC cells generated with this protocol were broadly characterized both in vitro and in  
575 vivo. We demonstrated the expression of NC markers from passage 7 to beyond. NC cells could  
576 proliferate, self-renew and migrate to appropriate cues such as FGF8B has previously been reported  
577 [54]. Furthermore, we successfully demonstrated that these NC cells differentiate into their derivatives  
578 lineages including MSC, melanocytes, peripheral neurons, smooth muscle cells, adipocytes,  
579 chondrocytes, and osteocytes (Supplementary Fig.4) [21,23,95].

580 Importantly, in vivo characterization provides a critical test of a progenitor population's developmental  
581 capacity. To determine whether HPSC derived NC cells demonstrated functionality in vivo, we  
582 evaluated the integration and migration of these cells in the developing chick embryo. We found the  
583 engrafted NC cells localized in the wall of the ascending aorta (Fig.4), the aortic arch and the meningeal  
584 vessels of the brain (Supplementary Fig.3). The absence of NC cells in the epicardium and sub-  
585 epicardial regions of the heart confirmed the specificity of these cells in localizing correctly to NC in  
586 vivo developmental location. There could be several factors that mediate the migration and

587 localization of human NC cells in vivo including paracrine signals from chicken NC-derived tissues or  
588 cell-cell and cell-matrix interactions at particular NC-derived locations. Whilst we have demonstrated  
589 that our HIPSC-derived NC can contribute to the aortic SMC population in vivo, we have not explored  
590 the broad differentiation of these cells using this approach. The ability to transplant HIPSC-derived  
591 cells in ovo provides an opportunity to further our understanding of the developmental potential of  
592 human progenitor cells within an in vivo context. Analysis of NC, neuron/glial and pericyte marker  
593 expression in the transplanted cells may provide additional insight into the differentiation potential of  
594 these cells in vivo and their cell fate.

### 595 **Modeling Treacher Collins Syndrome In Vitro**

596 The ability to generate NC from patient-derived HIPSC lines provides a unique tool to study  
597 neurocristopathies in the affected cell lineage. A complementary approach to study specific diseases  
598 is the *de novo* creation of a particular mutation in wild-type lines of HPSC using CRISPR/Cas9 gene  
599 editing. This method permits the investigation of multiple diseases causing mutations, without the  
600 requirement of patient tissue. Moreover, this approach removes the influence played by various  
601 genetic backgrounds from different patient samples.

602 A vast number of NC-related diseases have been reported in the literature, including TCS, although  
603 studies using human models are lacking. Treacle protein depletion has been attempted previously  
604 using knock-in of a destabilization domain-tagging TCOF1 in HEK293 cells, resulting in impaired cell  
605 proliferation [87]. Furthermore, mice haploinsufficient for Treacle have been reported and  
606 demonstrate robust developmental NC phenotypes [32].

607 To finally confirm the quality and utility of the HPSC-derived NC using this protocol we attempted to  
608 model Treacher Collins Syndrome in vitro. We created TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC lines from wild-type cells using  
609 CRISPR/Cas9 technology. The differentiation of TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC clones with our protocol provided the  
610 opportunity to study the functionality of the affected NC cells. TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC derived NC cells  
611 displayed significant depletion of Treacle protein and their phenotype corresponded to the mutant  
612 phenotype found in the Tcof1<sup>+/-</sup> mouse model [32].

613 Furthermore, neuroectoderm derived from TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC showed a dramatic increase in apoptosis,  
614 replicating the aberrant cell death in the neural plate in Tcof1<sup>+/-</sup> mice [32]. The haploinsufficiency of  
615 Treacle also leads to reduced proliferation of NC cells in Tcof1<sup>+/-</sup> mice [32]. NC derived from TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup>  
616 HIPSC also showed a significant reduction in proliferation compared with wild-type HIPSC-derived NC  
617 cells. Strikingly, we also demonstrated a previously unappreciated impairment in the migration of both  
618 TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> NC and NC-derived MSC in our in vitro model. Models of Treacher Collins syndrome have been  
619 reported in both the zebrafish and the mouse [32,96]. Both systems demonstrate extensive  
620 craniofacial abnormalities, yet the developing NC populations are shown to migrate and populate the  
621 maxillary and frontonasal regions normally. It is of interest to note that whilst there is no reported  
622 difference in the migration behavior of the NC, there is an overall reduction in the number of migrating  
623 NC cells, and this has been demonstrated to be due to a proliferation and cell death defect at the early  
624 stages of NC delamination from the neuroepithelium. However, it is possible that the finding of fewer  
625 migrating NC cells in this model may also be due to a proportion of cells which fail to migrate, in  
626 addition to the clear cell survival defects reported [32,97]. Whilst we report a migration defect in our

627 TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC-based NC system, it is important to acknowledge that this is an in vitro model and so is  
628 limited by the many missing developmental cues and triggers which are present in vivo. Therefore, it  
629 is possible that the migratory phenotype we report here may not be recapitulated during human in  
630 vivo development. Further engraftment studies using TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC-derived NC within the cranial NC  
631 may provide novel insights into the mechanisms involved during the migration of the human NC and  
632 their contribution to cells of the facial prominences and subsequent craniofacial compartments.  
633 Nevertheless, our TCOF1<sup>+/-</sup> HIPSC-based NC model now adds to the limited information available  
634 regarding human NC development and its contribution to Treacher Collins syndrome.

## 635 CONCLUSION

636 We believe that this protocol will serve as a resource for researchers seeking to produce NC and NC-  
637 derived tissues and to model neurocristopathies in vitro. Furthermore, we have shown that NC cells  
638 derived from HPSCs can be differentiated into a wide variety of cell lineages which is of great interest  
639 to the field. The ability to study the mechanisms of NC biology and disease should also accelerate the  
640 development of innovative therapies to treat, or even prevent, NC disorders such as TCS.

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## 647 AUTHOR DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

648 The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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