



A functional microRNA screen uncovers O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase as a host factor modulating hepatitis C virus morphogenesis and infectivity

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Complete List of Authors:	<p>Herzog, Katharina; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Bandiera, Simonetta; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Pernot, Sophie; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Fauvelle, Catherine; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Jühling, Frank; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Weiss, Amélie; Institut de Genetique et de Biologie Moleculaire et Cellulaire Bull, Anne; INSERM, U1259 Durand, Sarah; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; University of Strasbourg Chane-Woon-Ming, Béatrice; CNRS, Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002, Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS Pfeffer, Sébastien; CNRS, Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002, Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS; University of Strasbourg Mercey, Marion; INSERM, U1209 Institute for Applied Biosciences Lerat, Hervé; INSERM, U1209 Institute for Applied Biosciences Meunier, Jean-Christophe; INSERM, U1259 Raffelsberger, Wolfgang; Institut de Genetique et de Biologie Moleculaire et Cellulaire Brino, Laurent ; Institut de Genetique et de Biologie Moleculaire et Cellulaire Baumert, Thomas; INSERM, U1110 Zeisel, Mirjam; INSERM, U1110 Institute of Viral and Liver Diseases; INSERM, U1052 Cancer Research Center of Lyon</p>
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3 1 **A functional microRNA screen uncovers O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase as**
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5 2 **a host factor modulating hepatitis C virus morphogenesis and infectivity**
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9 4 Katharina Herzog^{1,2*}, Simonetta Bandiera^{1,2*}, Sophie Pernot^{1,2}, Catherine Fauvelle^{1,2}, Frank
10 5 Jühling^{1,2}, Amélie Weiss^{2,3,4,5}, Anne Bull⁶, Sarah C. Durand^{1,2}, Béatrice Chane-Woon-Ming^{2,7},
11 6 Sébastien Pfeffer^{2,7}, Marion Mercey⁸, Hervé Lerat⁸, Jean-Christophe Meunier⁶, Wolfgang
12 7 Raffelsberger^{2,3,4,5}, Laurent Brino^{2,3,4,5}, Thomas F. Baumert^{1,2,9,#}, Mirjam B. Zeisel^{1,2,10,#}
13
14
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19
20 9 ¹Inserm, U1110, Institut de Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, Strasbourg,
21 France; ²Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ³Institut de Génétique et de Biologie
22 10 Moléculaire et Cellulaire, Illkirch, France ; ⁴CNRS, UMR7104, Illkirch, France ; ⁵Inserm,
23 11 U1258, Illkirch, France ; ⁶Inserm U1259, Faculté de Médecine, Université François Rabelais
24 12 and CHRU de Tours, Tours, France ; ⁷Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002,
25 13 Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS, Strasbourg, France; ⁸Institute for
26 14 Applied Biosciences, Centre de Recherche UGA - Inserm U1209 - CNRS 5309, Grenoble,
27 15 France ⁹Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire, Pôle Hépato-digestif, Hôpitaux Universitaires de
28 16 Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ¹⁰Inserm, U1052, CNRS UMR 5286, Centre Léon Bérard
29 17 (CLB), Cancer Research Center of Lyon (CRCL), Université de Lyon (UCBL), Lyon, France
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41 19 *Authors contributed equally to this work
42
43
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51
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53

54 25 **#Corresponding authors.** Dr. Mirjam B. Zeisel, Inserm U1052 – CRCL, 151 cours Albert
55 26 Thomas, 69424 Lyon Cedex 03, France, Phone: +33472681970, Fax: +33472681971, E-
56 27 mail: mirjam.zeisel@inserm.fr and Prof. Thomas F. Baumert, Inserm U1110, Institut de
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 1 Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, 3 rue Koeberlé, 67000 Strasbourg,
4
5 2 France, Phone: +33368853703, Fax: +33368853724, Email: thomas.baumert@unistra.fr
6
7 3
8

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16 **Author contribution.** M.B.Z. coordinated and supervised research. K.H., S.B., S.P., C.F.,
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1 **Abstract**

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7 **Objective:** Infection of human hepatocytes by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a multistep
8 process involving both viral and host factors. microRNAs (miRNAs) are small non-coding
9 RNAs that post-transcriptionally regulate gene expression. Given that miRNAs were
10 indicated to regulate between 30% and 75% of all human genes, we aimed to investigate the
11 functional and regulatory role of miRNAs for the HCV life cycle.

12 **Design:** To systematically reveal human miRNAs affecting the HCV life cycle, we performed
13 a two-step functional high-throughput miRNA mimic screen in Huh7.5.1 cells infected with
14 recombinant cell culture-derived HCV. miRNA targeting was then assessed using a
15 combination of computational and functional approaches.

16 **Results:** We uncovered miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p as novel modulators of HCV
17 assembly/release. We discovered that these miRNAs regulate O-linked N-acetylglucosamine
18 (O-GlcNAc) transferase (OGT) protein expression and identified OGT and O-GlcNAcylation
19 as regulators of HCV morphogenesis and infectivity. Furthermore, increased OGT
20 expression in patient-derived liver tissue was associated with HCV-induced liver disease and
21 cancer.

22 **Conclusion:** miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p and their target OGT are previously undiscovered
23 regulatory host factors for HCV assembly and infectivity. In addition to its effect on HCV
24 morphogenesis, OGT may play a role in HCV-induced liver disease and
25 hepatocarcinogenesis.

Significance of this study

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What is already known about this subject?

- ◆ To establish chronic infection, the hepatitis C virus (HCV) hijacks cellular factors including microRNAs (miRNAs), known to post-transcriptionally regulate gene expression.
- ◆ miRNAs may positively or negatively modulate HCV infection either by directly targeting the viral genome or indirectly by regulating virus-associated cellular pathways[1, 2].

What are the new findings?

- ◆ A functional miRNA mimic screen uncovered miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p to enhance late steps of HCV infection.
- ◆ miR-501-3p regulates the expression of O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase (OGT) at the protein level.
- ◆ Silencing of OGT expression or inhibition of O-linked N-acetylglucosaminylation (O-GlcNAcylation) leads to an increase in the infectivity and size of HCV particles.
- ◆ OGT expression increases in patient-derived liver tissue during liver disease progression and cancer.

How might it impact on clinical practice in the foreseeable future?

- ◆ As upregulation of OGT and increased O-GlcNAcylation of proteins have been associated with various forms of cancer, OGT may play a dual role in HCV morphogenesis as well as pathogenesis of HCV-induced liver disease and carcinogenesis.

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1 Introduction

2 Chronic hepatitis C is a major cause of chronic liver disease and hepatocellular carcinoma
3 (HCC). Since the approval of pan-genotypic direct-acting antivirals (DAAs), it is considered a
4 curable disease in more than 90% of treated patients. Nonetheless, an estimated 71 million
5 individuals are still infected by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) and several challenges remain;
6 viral cure reduces but does not eliminate the HCC risk in patients with advanced fibrosis[3],
7 the majority of infected patients has limited access to therapy and DAA failure/viral
8 resistance has been reported in a subset of patients[4, 5]. To overcome these limitations,
9 approaches to target host factors involved in HCV infection and pathogenesis are
10 developed[6, 7]. Interestingly, defined host factors that contribute to the establishment of
11 chronic HCV infection and represent potential antiviral targets, e.g. epidermal growth factor
12 receptor[8], also play a role in liver disease pathogenesis and represent candidate targets for
13 treatment of advanced liver disease and HCC prevention[9]. Thus, uncovering host factors
14 usurped by HCV not only contributes to a better understanding of virus-host interactions
15 underlying the HCV life cycle but also to the identification of potential targets for treatment of
16 liver disease and prevention of HCC.

17 The establishment of various models to study HCV infection has shed light on the
18 molecular mechanisms that govern the HCV life cycle, which can be subdivided into early
19 steps, including viral entry, translation and replication as well as late steps, including
20 assembly and release of new virions. Each step of the HCV replication cycle relies on
21 specific virus-host interactions that involve host proteins and microRNAs (miRNAs)[7], small
22 non-coding RNAs that regulate gene expression at the post-transcriptional level. One miRNA
23 can target numerous messenger RNAs (mRNAs) by base-pairing with a complementary site
24 that is typically located within the 3' untranslated region (3'UTR) of the mRNA. Accumulating
25 evidence indicates that miRNAs participate to HCV replication by exerting pro- or antiviral
26 effects. The breakthrough discovery of the direct targeting of HCV by miR-122, the most
27 abundant miRNA in the liver, revealed the crucial role of this miRNA for HCV
28 translation/replication that contributes to progression to chronic HCV infection[1, 10]. miR-

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3 1 122 antisense oligonucleotides were subsequently developed as host-targeting antivirals[11,
4 2 12]. Other miRNAs can indirectly target HCV by regulating host factors that participate in
5 3 antiviral responses and immune surveillance[2, 13, 14]. Since up to 60% of all human
6 4 protein-coding genes were reported to be under miRNA-mediated regulation and miRNAs
7 5 are involved in basically every biological process, we hypothesized that miRNAs provide a
8 6 tool for loss-of-function approaches to uncover novel HCV host factors. We performed
9 7 genome-wide high-throughput modulation of the human miRNome and analyzed their impact
10 8 on HCV infection by combining computational and functional approaches.
11 9

10 **Material and methods**

11 **Cells, cell culture conditions, viruses, virus purification, infectivity assays, miRNAs,**
12 **antagomiRs, siRNAs, antibodies, immunoblot, immunocapture, electron microscopy**
13 **analysis of viral particles and gene expression analysis in liver tissue** are described in
14 the Supplementary information.
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16 **Functional miRNA/siRNA screens.** Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with the miRIDIAN
17 human miRNA mimic library (miRBase 19) comprising more than 2000 mature miRNAs or 28
18 ON-TARGETplus smart pool siRNAs (20 nM, Dharmacon) using Interferin HTS (Polyplus) in
19 a 96-well format[8]. After 48h, a viability test (Presto Blue, Thermo Scientific) was performed
20 prior to a two-step infection assay[15, 16, 17]. During part 1 of the protocol, 50 μ L of HCV cell
21 culture-derived particles (HCVcc, JcR2a) were incubated with cells during 4h. The inoculum
22 was removed and cells were incubated with 150 μ l of medium for 48h. In part 2, supernatants
23 from part 1 cells were transferred onto naive Huh7.5.1 cells and part 1 cells were lysed to
24 determine luciferase activity[17, 18]. After 72h, part 2 cells were lysed to determine luciferase
25 activity[17]. siCD81 (20 nM), antagomiR-122 (100 nM) and siApoE (20 nM) were used as
26 positive controls[17]. A non-targeting siRNA with no sequence complementarity to any
27 human gene or homology to any human miRNA was used as negative control.
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3 1 **Inhibitor treatment.** Four hours following HCV RNA electroporation[8], Huh7.5.1 cells were
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5 2 incubated with vehicle or inhibitors of OGT (peracetylated 5-thio-N-acetylglucosamine
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7 3 (Ac₄5S-GlcNAc)[19]) or OGA (Thiamet G (Sigma))[20]. After 96h, supernatants were
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9 4 transferred onto naïve Huh7.5.1 cells for 72h prior to determination of luciferase activity while
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11 5 electroporated cells were lysed to determine luciferase activity.
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16 7 **Gene expression analyses.** Total RNA was purified[17] and transcribed into cDNA using
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18 8 Maxima reverse transcriptase (Thermo Scientific). *GAPDH* and *OGT* mRNA was detected by
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20 9 real time qPCR using iTaq™ Universal Probes Supermix (Bio-Rad) and TaqMan Gene
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22 10 Expression Assay (Thermo Scientific). Relative *OGT/GAPDH* gene expression was
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24 11 calculated by the $\Delta\Delta C_t$ method[21].
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29 13 **Dual luciferase reporter gene assay.** The human *OGT* 3'UTR sequence was retrieved from
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31 14 NCBI (NM_181672.2) and Ensembl genome browser (ENST00000373719.3). A fragment of
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33 15 the *OGT* 3'UTR (positions 3380-3837, NM_181672.2) (Thermo Fisher Scientific GENEART)
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35 16 was cloned between the *NotI* and *XhoI* sites downstream of a *Renilla* luciferase cassette in a
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37 17 psiCHECK2 plasmid (Promega). A mutated version of this construct (9-bp substitution in the
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39 18 predicted miR-501-3p target site) was generated as described[22]. The functionality of the
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41 19 *OGT* 3'UTR was assessed as described[23]. The miRIDIAN mimic negative control 1 was
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43 20 used as control. *Renilla* and *firefly* luciferase activity was assessed 48h after transfection into
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45 21 HeLa cells using Dual-Luciferase Reporter assay (Promega).
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50 23 **Bioinformatic and statistical analysis.** Data analysis and statistical treatment for the
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52 24 miRNA mimic screen were performed in R (www.r-project.org). Cell measurement data used
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54 25 in further analysis were cell viability and luciferase activity. In total 26 sets of plates
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56 26 (performed in triplicate) were tested. The presence of multiple wells with negative and
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58 27 positive controls on each plate allowed stepwise normalization intra- and inter-plate. First,
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60 28 intra-plate zonal bias was examined and a model of median effects across the entire screen

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3 1 determined using the median-polish algorithm[24] and all plates corrected accordingly. Then
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5 2 the dataset was examined for outlier plates, i.e. plates where all individual measurements
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7 3 correlate very poorly with the other remaining replicates. Three and 9 plates were excluded
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9 4 for part 1 and part 2 of the screen, respectively, based on poor median correlation ($r < 0.7$)
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11 5 so that the remaining plates correlation improved substantially ($> 40\%$). Next, the plates were
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13 6 normalized inter replicates using the particularly robust quantile-quantile approach[25].
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15 7 Finally, the data were tested using a moderated t-test (empirical Bayes shrinkage, R-
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17 8 package limma[26]) for the null-hypothesis of no change of a given miRNA compared to the
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19 9 negative control. The resulting p -values for independent testing of each miRNA were
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21 10 corrected for the multiple testing situation and expressed as local false discovery rate (lfd,
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23 11 R-package fdrtool[27]). The testing was performed independently for part 1 and 2 of the
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25 12 screen and candidate miRNAs selected for each part. For data from part 1, a lfd threshold of
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27 13 0.00027 was used. Data from part 2 were subject to increase inherent stochastic noise and
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29 14 for this reason the minimum acceptable relative risk of false positives was increased to
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31 15 0.1226 (i.e. maximum 15% risk for each of the retained hits).

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34 16 Other datasets were analyzed using the two-tailed Mann-Whitney test, Wilcoxon test,
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36 17 Spearman correlation or the two-tailed unpaired t-test for data with normal distribution as
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38 18 assessed by D'Agostino and Pearson omnibus and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests (GraphPad
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40 19 Prism v.6 package).

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 22 **Results**

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49 23 **Genome-wide identification of human miRNAs affecting the HCV life cycle.** We
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51 24 performed a genome-wide screen in human hepatoma Huh7.5.1 cells using a genomic
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53 25 miRNA mimics library and a two-step infection assay[17] with a luciferase reporter virus
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55 26 (JcR2a), which allowed us to functionally assess the role of miRNAs during the early steps
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57 27 (part 1 - viral entry/translation/replication) and the late steps (part 2 - viral
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59 28 assembly/release/infectivity) of the HCV life cycle (Fig. 1A). Silencing of *CD81* and *ApoE*,

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3 1 two essential host factors required for HCV entry or assembly, respectively, was performed
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5 2 in parallel using small interfering RNA (siRNA) as controls. Silencing of *CD81* resulted in a
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7 3 reduction of HCV infection in part 1 and consequently in part 2 of the screen since reduced
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9 4 viral entry in the first part of the assay leads to a reduced production of viral particles (Fig.
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11 5 1B)[17]. Silencing of *ApoE* resulted in a marked inhibition of HCV infection only in part 2 of
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13 6 the assay, consistent with the role of ApoE in HCV assembly (Fig. 1B)[17]. The screen
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15 7 identified 427 miRNAs (corresponding to about 16% of the library) that significantly
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17 8 modulated HCV infection (Ifdr < threshold, Supplementary Table 1 and Fig. 1C): 186 miRNAs
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19 9 affected HCV infection in part 1, 309 miRNAs affected HCV infection in part 2, including 68
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21 10 hits in part 1 and part 2. The limited number of part 1 and 2 hits may be due to the fact that a
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23 11 single miRNA may modulate the expression of several proteins, which may have different
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25 12 roles in the viral life cycle. Most hits were observed to dampen HCV infection independently
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27 13 of any significant alteration of cell viability (data not shown). The 186 miRNAs modulating the
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29 14 early steps of HCV infection all decreased viral infection. Among the 309 miRNAs that had
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31 15 an impact in part 2, 11 miRNAs increased HCV infection by at least 3-fold while 298 miRNAs
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33 16 inhibited HCV infection by at least 2.7-fold. Hits from the screen included the let-7 family[2,
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35 17 28], miR-27a[29] and miR-29 family[30] that were already shown to inhibit HCV infection, as
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37 18 well as miR-21[31] and miR-146a-5p[17] that were shown to stimulate HCV infection thus
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39 19 supporting the relevance of our findings. Collectively, our screen identified a set of miRNAs
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41 20 whose overexpression overall impairs HCV infection by affecting viral
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43 21 entry/translation/replication and/or virion assembly/egress/infectivity.
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49 23 **miR-619-3p, miR-501-3p and OGT play a role in late steps of the HCV life cycle.** We
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51 24 focused our analysis on miRNAs that modulate late steps of the HCV life cycle, as the
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53 25 molecular mechanisms of HCV assembly/release remain only partially understood. Our
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55 26 screen identified 241 miRNAs that modulated late steps without affecting early steps of
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57 27 infection: 11 miRNAs increased HCV infection while 230 miRNAs decreased HCV infection.
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59 28 Among the miRNAs that increased HCV infection, miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and
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3 1 miR-4778-5p have not yet been associated with HCV. Since they enhanced HCV infection in
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5 2 part 2 without affecting part 1, these miRNAs may target host genes that control virus
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7 3 assembly/egress/infectivity. We first confirmed the effect of these miRNAs in independent
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9 4 experiments using the same protocol as for the screen. Overexpression of miR-619-3p or
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11 5 miR-501-3p consistently led to an increase in the infection of progeny virions (Fig. 1D) while
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13 6 infection was decreased with progeny virions from antagomiR-transfected cells
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15 7 (Supplementary Figure S1A). miR-619-3p or miR-501-3p were thus selected for further
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17 8 investigation. To study the molecular mechanisms by which these miRNAs affect HCV
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19 9 infection, we generated a list of predicted miRNA targets using DIANA, TargetScan Human
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21 10 v6.2 and miRDB databases, and selected candidate targets based on their expression in our
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23 11 Huh7.5.1 cells as assessed by microarray (data not shown). Ingenuity Pathway Analysis
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25 12 enabled us to refine the gene list by selecting 28 genes involved in the following functional
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27 13 networks or pathways that contribute to the HCV life cycle[32, 33, 34]: lipid metabolism and
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29 14 cholesterol biosynthesis, protein maturation and processing at the endoplasmic reticulum
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31 15 (ER), components of the endosomal sorting complex, adipocyte biogenesis, cellular
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33 16 morphology and cell inflammation (Table 1).

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37 17 To assess whether knock-down of these 28 candidate targets affects virus
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39 18 production, we performed a siRNA-based screen using siRNA pools exhibiting strong
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41 19 silencing without cytotoxicity (Fig. 2). Silencing of *CD81* and antagomiR-122 served as
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43 20 controls for part 1; knock-down of *ApoE* served as control for part 2 (Fig. 2). Hits were
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45 21 defined as genes whose knock-down modulated HCV infection in at least one part of the
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47 22 screen with high significance (Fig. 2, p -value < 0.0001, Mann-Whitney U-test). HCV
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49 23 entry/translation/replication was significantly modulated by silencing of *PPP3CA*, *CEBPA*,
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51 24 *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX* and *SLC35D1*. HCV assembly/egress/infectivity was significantly
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53 25 modulated by knock-down of *PPP3CA*, *CSDE1*, *GAN*, *USP37*, *CEBPA*, *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX*,
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55 26 *MAPK9*, *SLC35D1*, *DCC*, *RNF144A*, *PPP2R2C* and *OGT*. Strikingly, only the silencing of
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57 27 *OGT* was associated with an enhancement of HCV assembly/release/infectivity (p -value =
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59 28 0.0002), while that of the other hits was associated with reduced HCV infection (Fig. 2).

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3 1 These results indicate that the down-regulation of *OGT* phenocopies the effect of miR-501-
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5 2 3p and miR-619-3p on HCV infection (Fig. 2) and suggest *OGT* as a novel player in the HCV
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7 3 life cycle.
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11 5 **miR-501-3p post-transcriptionally regulates *OGT* expression.** To study whether miR-501-
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13 6 3p and miR-619-3p target *OGT*, we analyzed *OGT* RNA and protein levels in Huh7.5.1 cells
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15 7 following overexpression of miR-501-3p or miR-619-3p. While neither miRNA had an impact
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17 8 on *OGT* RNA levels (Fig. 3A), up-regulation of miR-501-3p significantly decreased *OGT*
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19 9 protein expression by ~65% (Fig. 3B, p -value < 0.05, t-test). miR-619-3p also decreased
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21 10 *OGT* expression but less robustly than miR-501-3p (Fig. 3B), prompting us to focus our
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23 11 investigation on miR-501-3p. To assess whether *OGT* is a functional target of miR-501-3p,
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25 12 we subcloned a fragment of the *OGT* mRNA 3'UTR that harbors the predicted miR-501-3p
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27 13 target site in the *Renilla* luciferase expression cassette (RLuc) of a dual luciferase reporter
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29 14 construct. Co-transfection of miR-501-3p mimic with the wild-type 3'UTR reporter (RLuc wt
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31 15 *OGT* 3'UTR) significantly decreased luciferase activity as compared to the empty vector (Fig.
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33 16 3C, p -value < 0.05, t-test). In contrast, the repression of luciferase expression was lost when
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35 17 the reporter with mutated miR-501-3p binding site (RLuc mt *OGT* 3'UTR) was used (Fig. 3C).
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37 18 These data are consistent in indicating that miR-501-3p mediates post-transcriptional
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39 19 regulation of *OGT*.
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45 21 **O-GlcNAcylation modulates HCVcc infectivity.** To investigate whether *OGT* modulates
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47 22 HCV assembly and/or infectivity, we determined infectious virus titer (TCID₅₀) and HCV RNA
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49 23 levels to calculate the specific infectivity of HCVcc particles generated in *OGT*-silenced
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51 24 Huh7.5.1 cells. Interestingly, *OGT*-silencing led to a significant increase in the TCID₅₀ and
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53 25 the specific infectivity of HCVcc (Fig. 4A, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test). Noteworthy,
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55 26 the effect of *OGT* on HCVcc infectivity was genotype-independent as demonstrated by
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57 27 increased infectivity of HCVcc bearing the envelope glycoproteins of genotypes 1a, 1b and
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59 28 2a upon *OGT*-silencing (Fig. 4B). We next sought to investigate how *OGT* could modulate

1 HCVcc infectivity. OGT is the only enzyme that catalyzes the addition of N-
2 acetylglucosamine (O-GlcNAc) to serine and threonine residues of proteins. Moreover, OGT
3 has a scaffold function and promotes binding of proteins in multiprotein complexes[35]. To
4 assess whether the enzymatic activity of OGT modulates HCVcc infectivity, we used
5 pharmacological inhibitors of OGT (Ac₄5S-GlcNAc) or O-GlcNAcase (OGA) (Thiamet G), the
6 OGT counterpart that removes O-GlcNAc (Fig. 4C). Ac₄5S-GlcNAc led to a significant
7 enhancement of HCVcc infectivity in a dose-dependent manner, while the opposite effect
8 was observed with Thiamet G (Fig. 4D, *p*-value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test). Collectively,
9 these results demonstrate that O-GlcNAcylation modulates HCVcc infectivity.

10

11 **OGT-silencing affects HCVcc biophysical properties and size distribution.** To further
12 assess how OGT may impact HCVcc morphogenesis, we analyzed the structural and
13 biophysical properties of HCVcc produced in siCtrl- and siOGT-transfected Huh7.5.1 cells
14 following iodixanol gradient ultracentrifugation. Silencing of OGT led to the production of
15 more infectious HCVcc with higher density (Fig. 5A-B) as well as higher ApoE concentrations
16 (Fig. 5C) suggesting that OGT/O-GlcNAcylation affects the biophysical properties of HCVcc.
17 No change in apoB concentrations were observed between HCVcc produced from siCtrl- or
18 siOGT-transfected cells (Fig. 5D), in line with the model that HCV lipovirions contain
19 several exchangeable ApoE molecules and one non-exchangeable apoB[36]. We also
20 visualized HCVcc by electron microscopy (EM) following anti-E2 antibody
21 immunocapture[36] to assess whether OGT-silencing had an impact on HCVcc size. Particle
22 size distribution was assessed from a series of randomly acquired electron micrographs. A
23 shift towards bigger sizes was observed for sucrose-cushion purified HCVcc generated in
24 OGT-silenced Huh7.5.1 cells as compared to control HCVcc (Fig. 6A-B). This shift was also
25 observed in different fractions of iodixanol gradient-separated HCVcc (Fig. 6C-F) in line with
26 the higher infectivity and ApoE concentrations of HCVcc generated in OGT-silenced
27 Huh7.5.1 cells (Fig. 5A-C). These data suggest that OGT-silencing affects the lipidation of
28 HCVcc.

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3 1 **OGT expression increases in liver disease.** Since silencing of OGT promotes HCV
4 infectivity, we assessed whether HCV infection in turn had an effect on miR-501-3p and OGT
5 expression. In Huh7.5.1 cells, HCV infection lead to small but significant increase of miR-
6 501-3p and decrease of OGT levels (Fig. 7A-B and Supplementary Fig. 1B; p -value < 0.05,
7 Mann-Whitney test), which may promote viral infection given the pro- and antiviral roles of
8 miR-501-3p and O-GlcNAcylation, respectively (Fig. 1C-D and 4D). In contrast, no significant
9 difference of OGT expression was observed between the livers of HCV transgenic and wild-
10 type mice[37] (data not shown) suggesting that HCV proteins do not directly modulate OGT
11 expression. In liver tissue from HCV-infected patients, HCV RNA levels were not correlated
12 with OGT expression (Fig. 7C, Spearman correlation: 0.06004019, p -value = 0.7661)
13 suggesting that in patients there is likely no direct effect of HCV on OGT expression.

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O-GlcNAcylation has been associated with a variety of cancers, including HCC
recurrence linked to increased O-GlcNAcylation after liver transplantation[38]. We therefore
investigated OGT expression in chronic liver disease and HCC. While there was a trend for
increased OGT expression in liver tissue from HCV-infected patients with fibrosis and
inflammation (Fig. 7D-E), OGT levels were markedly and significantly elevated in the tumor
liver tissue of patients chronically infected with HCV or hepatitis B virus and patients with
alcoholic liver disease or non-alcoholic fatty liver disease as compared to non-tumor tissue
(Fig. 7F, p -value < 0.05, Wilcoxon test). These data suggest that OGT expression increases
in HCC in an etiology-independent manner. Collectively, these results suggest that OGT
expression is likely increased in HCV-induced liver disease and cancer through inflammation
and fibrosis rather than by HCV itself.

25 Discussion

26 By focusing on miRNAs affecting late steps of the viral life cycle, we uncovered that i) miR-
27 501-3p regulates the expression of OGT; ii) silencing of OGT expression or inhibition of its
28 enzymatic activity increases the infectivity of HCV particles; and iii) OGT knock-down leads

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3 1 to the release of bigger HCV particles. Our data suggest that O-GlcNAcylation affects HCV
4 morphogenesis and infectivity.
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7 3 While we were characterizing the role of OGT/O-GlcNAcylation for HCV
8 morphogenesis, Li and colleagues published their functional genomics study of HCV-miRNA
9 interactions[2]. By conducting genome wide miRNA mimic and hairpin inhibitor screens, they
10 identified a set of miRNAs exhibiting a pro- or antiviral effect on HCV. Characterization of the
11 underlying molecular processes showed that miR-25, let-7 and miR-130 families restrict viral
12 infection by decreasing the expression of cellular HCV co-factors[2]. Despite similarities in
13 the cell type and HCV infection models used here and by Li and colleagues, our screen only
14 displays a small overlap with their study (9% common miRNA hits). This is not surprising
15 given the small overlap between previous siRNA screens to uncover HCV host factors[8, 15]
16 and is likely due i) to the different sizes of miRNA mimic libraries as the library used here was
17 more than 2-times larger than the one used by Li and co-workers, and ii) to the markedly
18 distinct pipelines for hit selection that were used in the two studies. Nonetheless, both
19 screens were consistent in confirming the proviral role of miR-146a-5p in promoting HCV
20 assembly/egress that we previously reported[17] and the global multistep inhibitory effects of
21 the let-7 family on HCV infection[28], further corroborating the involvement of these miRNAs
22 in fine-tuning the HCV life cycle. Both studies also consistently indicated that miR-518a-5p,
23 miR-517-3p, miR-185 and members of the miR-302 family inhibit early steps of HCV
24 infection, while miR-586, miR-620 and members of the miR-200 family inhibit late steps of
25 viral infection. Since none of these miRNAs except miR-185 has been previously associated
26 with HCV infection[39], it might be interesting to further characterize the involvement of these
27 miRNAs in HCV-host interactions. Interestingly, an overall proviral effect of miR-501-3p was
28 also observed by Li and colleagues[2], however the mechanism of action was not studied. By
29 characterizing the role of miR-501-3p in the HCV life cycle, we uncovered OGT as a miR-
30 501-3p target in liver-derived cells and showed for the first time a link between O-
31 GlcNAcylation and HCV infection. These results indicate that genome-wide miRNA functional
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3 1 screens represent a powerful strategy to dissect the role of miRNAs in pathogen-host
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5 2 interactions.

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7 3 While N-glycosylation of HCV envelope glycoproteins plays an important role for
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9 4 escape from virus-neutralizing antibodies[40], so far no functional association between HCV
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11 5 and O-glycosylation has been reported. In contrast to N-linked glycosylation that consists of
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13 6 the attachment of a glycan to a nitrogen of an asparagine residue of proteins in the ER/Golgi
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15 7 prior to their trafficking to the plasma membrane and/or their secretion, the glycosylation of
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17 8 serine and threonine residues with O-GlcNAc is a post-translational modification (PTM) of
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19 9 intracellular proteins that are localized in the nucleus, cytoplasm or mitochondria. The O-
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21 10 glycosylation/deglycosylation of proteins is catalyzed by a single pair of nucleo-cytoplasmic
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23 11 enzymes, OGT/OGA. O-GlcNAcylation is complementary to protein
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25 12 phosphorylation/dephosphorylation, another more broadly known abundant protein PTM that
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27 13 involves numerous kinases/phosphatases. OGT/OGA are often found in protein complexes
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29 14 that also include kinases/phosphatases and a protein can be either O-GlcNAcylated or
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31 15 phosphorylated on a same residue to fine-tune cellular signaling[41]. O-GlcNAcylation and
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33 16 phosphorylation on the same or neighboring serine or threonine residue is known as yin yang
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35 17 site[42].

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39 18 O-GlcNAcylation plays a major role in the regulation of metabolic pathways in the
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41 19 liver, including insulin signaling, bile acid metabolism and lipogenesis[35]. The large number
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43 20 of OGT/OGA substrates and cellular pathways regulated by O-GlcNAcylation hampers a
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45 21 detailed characterization of the role of these proteins in HCV infection. Since i) HCV
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47 22 assembly takes place at ER-derived membranes, ii) OGT/OGA are not known to localize in
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49 23 the ER lumen, and iii) O-GlcNAcylation of extracellular proteins containing EGF-like domains
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51 24 is catalyzed by EGF domain-specific OGT (EOGT) in the ER lumen in an OGT-independent
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53 25 manner[43]), OGT/OGA most likely modulate HCV infection by post-translationally modifying
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55 26 one or several cellular factors required for HCV morphogenesis rather than by affecting viral
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57 27 proteins, although HCV glycoproteins contain putative O-GlcNAcylation sites as determined
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59 28 using OGlcNAcScan, OGTsite and YingOYang1.2 bioinformatics tools (data not shown).

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3 1 Regarding HCV host factors that may be regulated by OGT/OGA, O-GlcNAcylation
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5 2 sites have been predicted in human CLDN1[44] and OCLN at serine sites that can also be
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7 3 phosphorylated and this has been suggested to potentially play a role for HCV entry[45].
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9 4 However, in our experimental setting we did not observe a significant effect of OGT-silencing
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11 5 on the early steps of HCV infection, suggesting that O-GlcNAcylation of CLDN1 and/or
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13 6 OCLN likely does not play a major role in HCV infection. Other host factors important for the
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15 7 HCV life cycle are well-known O-GlcNAcylated proteins, as for example various nuclear pore
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17 8 complex proteins (Nups) including Nup98, Nup153 and Nup155 that are involved in HCV
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19 9 replication and assembly and/or may be associated with viral particles[46, 47, 48]. However,
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21 10 since depletion of Nups was reported to alter HCV replication and/or assembly but to have
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23 11 no impact on the specific infectivity of HCV particles[46] in contrast to the depletion of OGT
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25 12 as shown here, it is unlikely that a modulation of Nup O-GlcNAcylation accounts for the
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27 13 effects of OGT-silencing and/or OGT/OGA inhibitors on HCVcc infectivity observed in our
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29 14 study. This is in line with our observation that OGT knock-down had no effect on Dengue
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31 15 virus (DENV) replication and infectivity (unpublished observations KH, MZ and Evelyne
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33 16 Schaffer, IBMC, Strasbourg), although Nup98 had been suggested to potentially play a role
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35 17 for DENV infection[46]. These data suggest that OGT does not broadly modulate the
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37 18 infectivity of viruses of the *Flaviviridae* family.

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41 19 However, OGT and/or O-GlcNAcylation have been reported to play a role in the
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43 20 infection with other viruses[49, 50, 51]. Interestingly, while OGT expression modulates the
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45 21 levels of human papillomavirus 16 (HPV16) oncoproteins E6 and E7[52], E6 in turn can up-
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47 22 regulate OGT to increase O-GlcNAcylation and the oncogene activities of HPV[53],
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49 23 suggesting that OGT/O-GlcNAcylation could play a role in virus-induced cancer. In cell
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51 24 culture, HCV infection appeared to be associated with a minor decrease in OGT expression
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53 25 in line with an antiviral role of O-GlcNAcylation. In contrast, an increased OGT expression
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55 26 was observed in HCC tissues of HCV-infected patients. Since OGT has been suggested to
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57 27 activate oncogenic signaling pathways in non-alcoholic steatohepatitis-related HCC[54] and
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59 28 O-GlcNAcylation has been associated with HCC recurrence linked to increased O-

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3 1 GlcNAcylation after liver transplantation[38], these data suggest that in addition to their effect
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5 2 on the HCV life cycle, OGT/O-GlcNAcylation may also play a role in HCV-induced
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7 3 hepatocarcinogenesis.
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1 **Figure legends**

2 **Figure 1. High-throughput screen identifies human miRNAs that regulate the HCV life**
3 **cycle.** (A) Schematic outline of the miRNA mimic screen strategy. Huh7.5.1 cells were
4 transfected with miRNA mimics or controls prior to infection with *Renilla* luciferase HCVcc
5 (JcR2a) two days later (part 1). Cell supernatants of part 1 were used to inoculate naïve
6 Huh7.5.1 cells (part 2). Cells from part 1 and part 2 were lysed at the end of each infection
7 step (2 and 3 days post infection, respectively) to determine luciferase activity. (B)
8 Modulation of HCV entry and replication (part 1) and/or assembly and infectivity (part 2) upon
9 transfection of control non-targeting siRNA (siCtrl, negative control), siCD81 (inhibiting viral
10 entry) or siApoE (inhibiting viral assembly). By inhibiting HCV entry, siCD81 impacts part 1
11 as well as part 2. In contrast, by specifically impairing late steps of HCV replication cycle,
12 siApoE inhibits HCV infection only in part 2. The box plots show the sample lower quartile
13 (25th percentile; bottom of the box), the median (50th percentile; horizontal line in box) and
14 the upper quartile (75th percentile; top of the box) of relative light units (RLU) in each lysate.
15 The whiskers indicate s.d. Data are from three independent experiments. (C) Effects of
16 miRNA overexpression on each part of the HCV life cycle. Data were tested using a
17 moderated t-test (empirical Bayes shrinkage, R-package limma[26]) for the null-hypothesis of
18 no change of a given miRNA compared to the negative control. The resulting p-values for
19 independent testing of each miRNA were corrected for the multiple testing situation and
20 expressed as local false discovery rate (lfdr, R-package fdrtool[27]). miRNAs having a
21 significant effect on either part 1 or 2 of the screen are below the thresholds indicated by
22 dashed lines (lfdr < 0.00027 or 0.1226, respectively). miRNAs that were previously reported
23 to impact on HCV infection as well as miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and miR-4778-
24 5p are highlighted in blue (Log₂(FC) < 0) or red (Log₂(FC) > 0). Data are from three
25 independent experiments. (D) Effect of miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and miR-4778-
26 5p on the HCV life cycle. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl (Ctrl), miR-140-3p, miR-
27 501-3p, miR-619-3p or miR-4778-5p and infection experiments were carried out as described
28 in A. HCV infection was determined as luciferase activity. Results represent mean

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3 1 percentage \pm s.d. from three independent experiments in triplicate. The dashed line indicates
4
5 2 values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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7 3 test.
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11 **Figure 2. OGT is a novel host cell factor involved in the late steps of the HCV life cycle.**

12
13 Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with a set of siRNAs against 28 predicted targets of miR-
14
15 501-3p and/or miR-619-3p, and infected with HCVcc JcR2A according to the two-step
16
17 protocol depicted in Fig. 1A. siCD81, antagomiR-122 and siApoE were used as loss-of-
18
19 function controls to perturb HCV entry, translation/replication and assembly, respectively.
20
21 miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p, which were ineffective in part 1 of the screen but enhanced
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23 HCV infection in part 2, were transfected in parallel. HCV infection was quantified as fold
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25 change of luciferase activity with respect to negative control (siCtrl). Results for different
26
27 replicates are shown as individual points. For each gene, median fold change of luciferase
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29 activity \pm s.d. is shown as black horizontal lines. The dashed line indicates a fold change of
30
31 1. Data are from three independent experiments in triplicate. Results for miR-501-3p, miR-
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33 619-3p and siOGT that increase HCV infection in part 2 are depicted in red. Results for
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35 siRNA targeting *PPP3CA*, *CEBPA*, *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX*, *SLC35D1*, *CSDE1*, *GAN*, *USP37*,
36
37 *MAPK9*, *DCC*, *RNF144A*, or *PPP2R2C* that significantly modulated HCV infection in part 1
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39 and/or part 2 but did not phenocopy the effect of miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p are depicted in
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41 blue.
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22 **Figure 3. miR-501-3p mediates post-transcriptional regulation of OGT by decreasing**

23 **its expression at the protein level.** Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl (Ctrl), a pool
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25 of siRNA against *OGT*, miR-501-3p or miR-619-3p. After 96h, RNA and proteins were
26
27 purified, and *OGT* expression analyzed by RT-qPCR and Western blot. (A) Percentage of
28
29 *OGT* mRNA expression in miRNA-transfected cells as compared to negative control. Results
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31 are presented as mean \pm s.d. and are from three independent experiments in triplicate. The
32
33 dashed line indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value

1 < 0.05, t-test (B) OGT protein expression. Left: percentage of OGT protein expression in
2 siRNA- or miRNA-transfected cells as assessed by quantification of Western blots. OGT
3 levels were normalized to actin levels using ImageLab™ 5.2.1 software (BioRad). Results
4 are presented as mean \pm s.d. and are from three independent experiments. The dashed line
5 indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, t-
6 test. Right: representative Western blot analysis. (C) Analysis of miRNA targeting of *OGT*
7 expression by dual luciferase reporter assay. Left: HeLa cells were co-transfected with a
8 miR-501-3p mimic and a dual luciferase reporter plasmid containing either wild type miR-
9 501-3p (RLuc wt *OGT* 3'UTR) or mutated miR-501-3p binding site (RLuc mt *OGT* 3'UTR) to
10 modulate RLuc expression. Co-transfection of the miR-501-3p mimic and empty RLuc vector
11 was used as control. Data are expressed as mean percentage of *Renilla* luciferase activity \pm
12 s.d. normalized to *firefly* luciferase, and relative to co-transfection of the vectors with non-
13 targeting miRNA (miR-Ctrl). Results are from three independent experiments in triplicate.
14 The dashed line indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -
15 value < 0.05, t-test. Right: Schematic representation of the used constructs.

16
17 **Figure 4. Silencing of *OGT* affects HCV morphogenesis and infectivity.** (A) Analysis of
18 HCV infectivity. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl, a pool of siRNA against *OGT* or
19 ApoE as a loss-of-function control to perturb HCV assembly, prior to infection with HCVcc
20 (Jc1) two days later (entry and replication). Mock-transfected cells were used as control
21 (Ctrl). After another 48h, intra- and extracellular HCVcc particles were used to infect naïve
22 Huh7.5.1 cells (assembly and infectivity). Virus supernatants of Huh7.5.1 cells were assayed
23 by (left) endpoint dilution assay (TCID50). Intra- and extracellular HCV RNA was purified and
24 analyzed by RT-qPCR to calculate (right) the specific infectivity (TCID50/RNA). Data are
25 expressed as mean percentage as compared to control \pm s.d. Results are from four
26 independent experiments in triplicate. The dashed line indicates values from control-
27 transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) Genotype-
28 independent effect of *OGT* on HCV infection. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl or

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3 1 siOGT prior to infection with HCVcc JcR2a (genotype 2a), H77R2a (genotype 1a) or
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5 2 Con1R2a (genotype 1b). Experiments were carried out and analyzed as described in A. Data
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7 3 are expressed as mean percentage of Renilla luciferase activity as compared to control \pm s.d.
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9 4 Results are from three independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates
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11 5 values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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13 6 test. (C) Activity of OGT/OGA inhibitors on O-GlcNAcylation. The activity of Ac₄5S-GlcNAc
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15 7 (OGT inhibitor) or Thiamet G (OGA inhibitor) on O-GlcNAcylation of proteins in Huh7.5.1
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17 8 cells was demonstrated by Western blot as described in Supplementary Methods. (D) Effect
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19 9 of O-GlcNAcylation on HCV infectivity. Huh7.5.1 cells were electroporated with HCVcc
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21 10 (JcR2a), prior to treatment with increasing concentrations of Ac₄5S-GlcNAc (OGT inhibitor,
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23 11 left) or Thiamet G (OGA inhibitor, right) 4h later. After 96h, supernatants were transferred
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25 12 onto naïve Huh7.5.1 cells and electroporated cells were lysed to determine luciferase
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27 13 activity. Luciferase activity in infected Huh7.5.1 cells was assessed 72h later. Data are
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29 14 expressed as mean percentage as compared to control \pm s.d. Results are from three
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31 15 independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates values from vehicle-
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33 16 treated cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test.
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39 18 **Figure 5. Silencing of OGT modulates HCVcc biophysical properties.** (A) Separation of
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41 19 HCVcc by iodixanol density gradient ultracentrifugation. HCVcc were produced in non-
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43 20 targeting siRNA control- or siOGT-transfected Huh7.5.1 cells. After overlaying HCVcc
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45 21 (JcR2A) on a 4%-40% iodixanol step gradient and ultracentrifugation for 16h, fractions of
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47 22 HCV particles were used to infect naïve Huh7.5.1 cells in order to determine TCID₅₀. HCV
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49 23 RNA of each fraction was purified and analyzed by RT-qPCR. Data are expressed as mean \pm
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51 24 s.d. from three independent experiments. (B) Specific infectivity (TCID₅₀/RNA) was
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53 25 calculated and the density was determined by weighting each fraction. Specific infectivity of
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55 26 each fraction is expressed as fold change as compared to the total infectivity of the control.
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57 27 Data are expressed as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments. (C-D) ApoE and
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59 28 ApoB concentrations in the individual fractions were determined by ELISA. The dashed lines
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3 1 indicate limits of quantification of the assays. Data are expressed as mean \pm s.d. from three
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5 2 independent experiments.
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9 4 **Figure 6. Silencing of *OGT* increases the size of HCVcc.** (A) Representative pictures of
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11 5 HCV particles generated in Huh7.5.1 cells transfected with non-targeting siRNA (siCtrl) or
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13 6 siOGT. (B-F) Comparative analysis of particle size distribution for immunocapture (IC) from
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15 7 HCV particles produced in Huh7.5.1 cells transfected with siCtrl or siOGT prior to infection
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17 8 with HCVcc (JcR2a) following sucrose-cushion purification (B) or iodixanol gradient
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19 9 fractionation (C-F) of HCVcc. HCVcc were transferred via anti-E2 antibody AR3A on electron
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21 10 microscopy (EM) grids through IC. Particle size distribution was assessed from a series of
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23 11 randomly acquired electron micrographs with Image-J software (NIH). Results from one of
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25 12 three (A-B) or two (C-F) independent experiments are shown. Black lines: size distribution of
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27 13 immunocaptured HCVcc produced in siCtrl-transfected cells. Grey lines: size distribution of
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29 14 immunocaptured HCVcc produced in siOGT-transfected cells.
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35 16 **Figure 7. *OGT* expression increases in HCC.** (A-B) Huh7.5.1 cells were infected with HCV
36
37 17 (JcR2a). After 72h, RNA and proteins were purified, and *OGT* expression analyzed by RT-
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39 18 qPCR and Western blot. (A) Percentage of *OGT* mRNA expression relative to uninfected
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41 19 Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl). Results are presented as mean \pm s.d. from three independent
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43 20 experiments in duplicate. The dashed line indicates values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells
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45 21 set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) *OGT* protein expression.
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47 22 Left: percentage of *OGT* protein expression relative to uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl)
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49 23 following quantification of Western blots as described in Supplementary Methods. Results
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51 24 are presented as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments. The dashed line
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53 25 indicates values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05,
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55 26 Mann-Whitney test. Right: representative Western blot analysis of *OGT* and actin. (C) *OGT*
56
57 27 expression and viral load in liver tissue from 22 HCV-infected patients and 6 patients not
58
59 28 infected with HCV described in[55]. Spearman correlation: $\rho = 0.06004019$, p -value = 0.77.

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3 1 (D-E) OGT expression in liver tissue from 22 HCV-infected patients and 6 patients not
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5 2 infected with HCV according to fibrosis (D) or activity (E) scores described in[55]. Wilcoxon
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7 3 test: F1 vs F0 p-value = 0,38; F2 vs F0 p-value = 0,18; F3 vs F0 p-value = 0,43; F4 vs F0 p-
8
9 4 value = 0,17; A1 vs A0 p-value = 0,28; A2 vs A0 p-value = 0,23; A3 vs A0 p-value = 0,09. (F)
10
11 5 OGT expression in tumor (HCC) and non-tumor (Ctrl) liver tissue from 39 HCV-infected
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13 6 patients, 83 HBV-infected, 80 patients with alcoholic liver disease (ALD) and 13 patients with
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15 7 non-alcoholic liver disease (NAFLD) as described in Supplementary Methods. *, *p*-value <
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17 8 0.05, Wilcoxon test.
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3 **Table 1. Computational analysis of miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p targets and pathway**
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5 **enrichment.**
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miRNA ID	Target gene symbol	Pathway or network	
miR-501-3p	<i>MEF2A; PPP3CA; PPP3CC</i>	<i>Calcium signaling</i>	
	<i>HMGCS1</i>	<i>Cholesterol biosynthesis</i>	
	<i>AFF4; CHMP1B; CUX1; DCLK1;</i> <i>LMX1A; PTBP2; RBMS1; RC3H1;</i> <i>SCN2A; SEC63; ZFH4</i>	Inflammatory response, dermatological diseases and conditions, inflammatory disease	
	<i>CDK6; CSDE1; GLI2; HOXD10;</i> <i>LSM5; MEF2A; MYCN; OGT;</i> <i>PPP2R2C; PPP2R5E; SEMA3C;</i> <i>TFDP2</i>	Cellular development, nervous system development and function; organ morphology	
	<i>CIT; COL10A1; FNBP1L; GAN;</i> <i>HERC1; KPNA4; NONO; SHPRH;</i> <i>STRN; TARDBP; UBE2H; USP37</i>	Cell death and survival; cellular compromise; free radical scavenging	
	<i>ATXN1; CBLL1; CEBPA; DCC;</i> <i>PEX5L; RCC2; RNF144A; ZC3H12C</i>	Cell morphology, cellular assembly and organization; cellular function and maintenance	
	miR-619-3p	<i>RUNX1T1; SMAD3</i>	<i>Adipocyte biogenesis</i>
		<i>FOXG1; GPBP1; MID1; MKL2; MSI1;</i> <i>PCBP2; WDFY3</i>	Cell cycle; organismal injury and abnormalities; cancer
		<i>ACVR2B; DCX; ESRRG; MAPK9;</i> <i>OGT; PCBP1; PDE3B; SMAD3;</i> <i>SMARCC1; TGFB3; PAPOLA</i>	Carbohydrate metabolism, energy production; small molecule biochemistry
		<i>RUNX1T1; SHANK2; SLC35D1</i>	Gene expression, lipid metabolism, small molecule biochemistry

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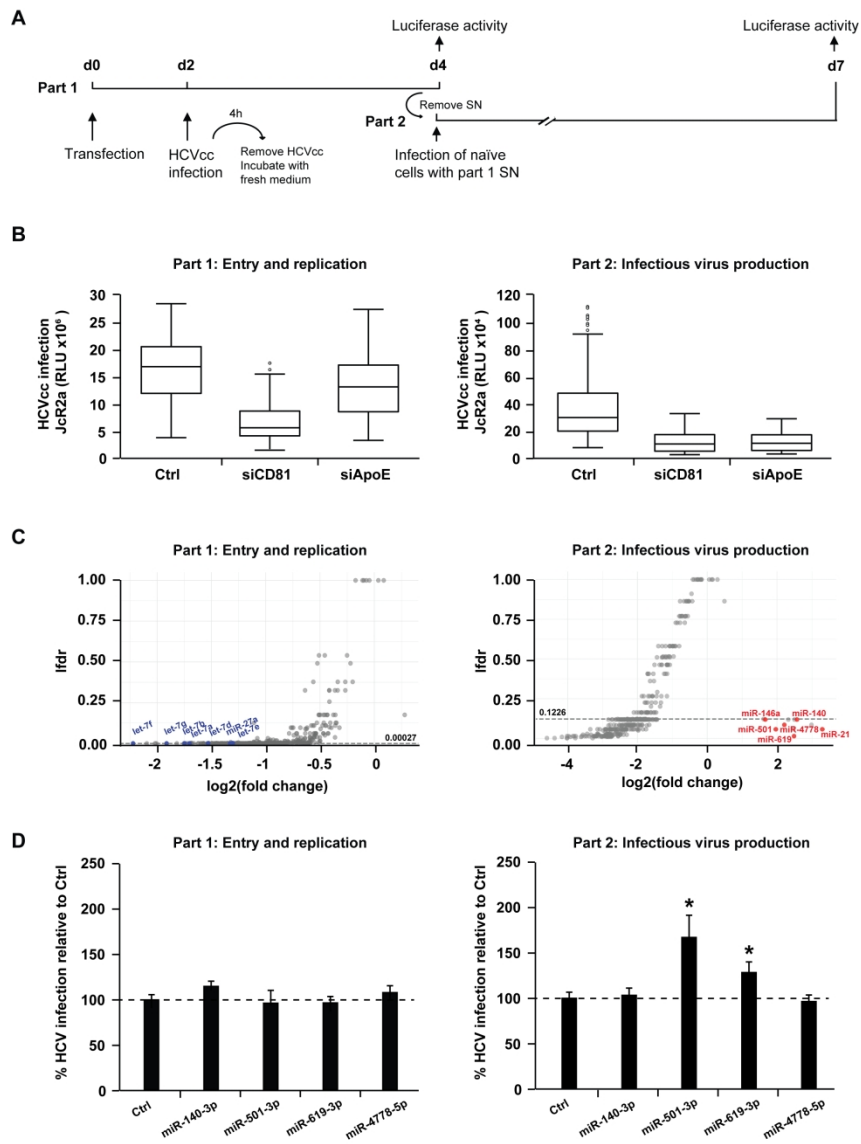


Figure 1

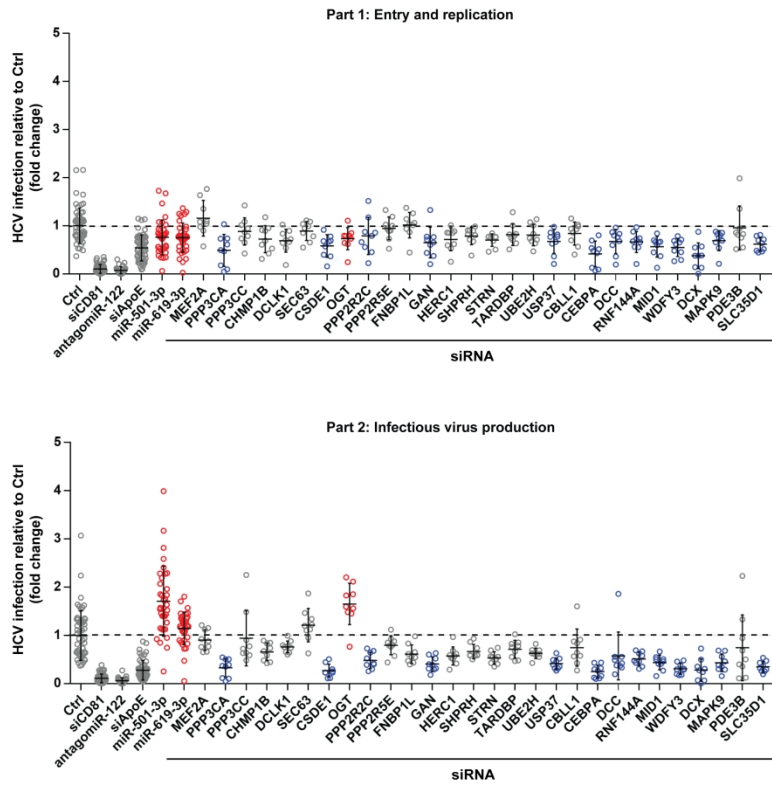


Figure 2

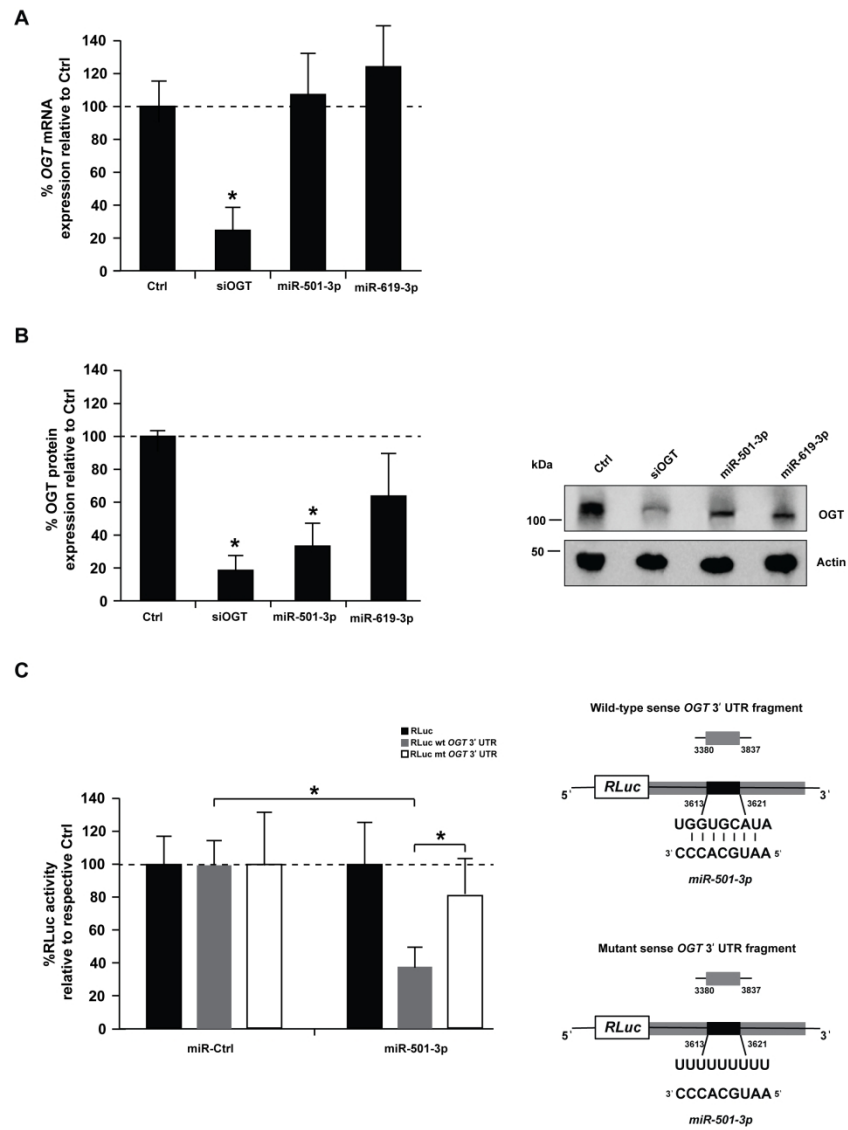


Figure 3

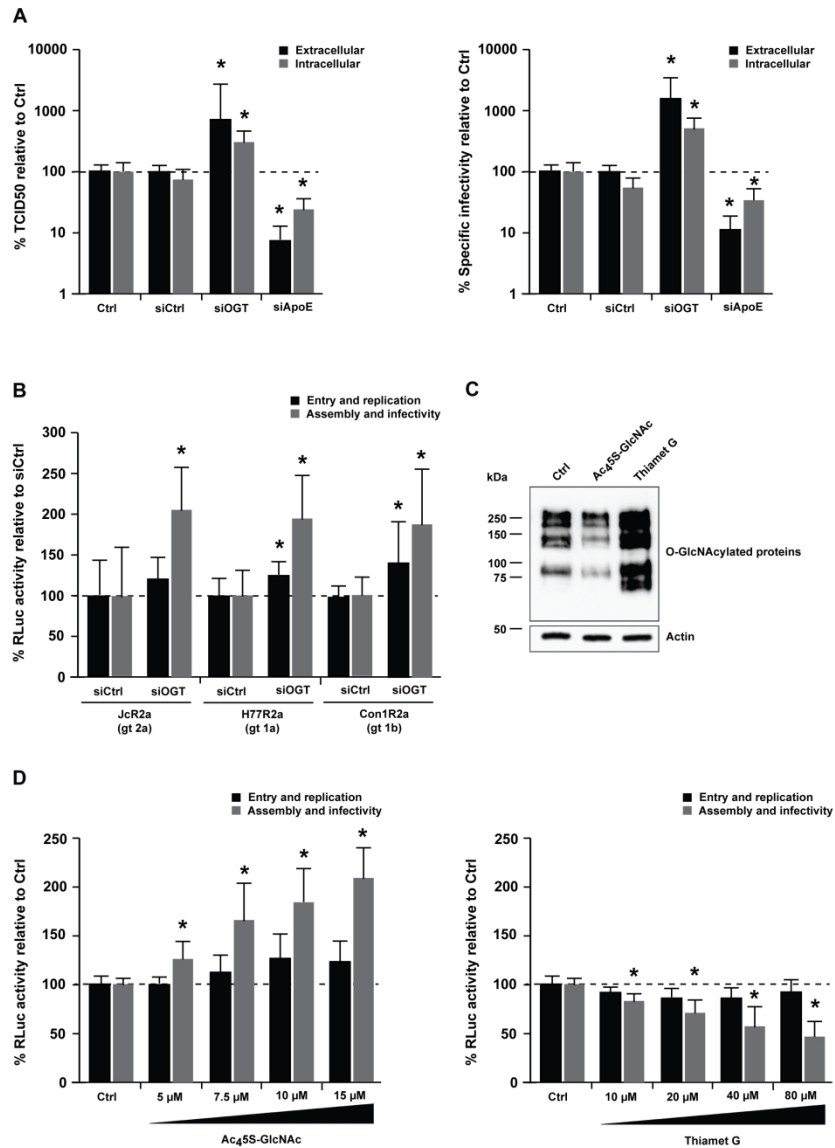


Figure 4

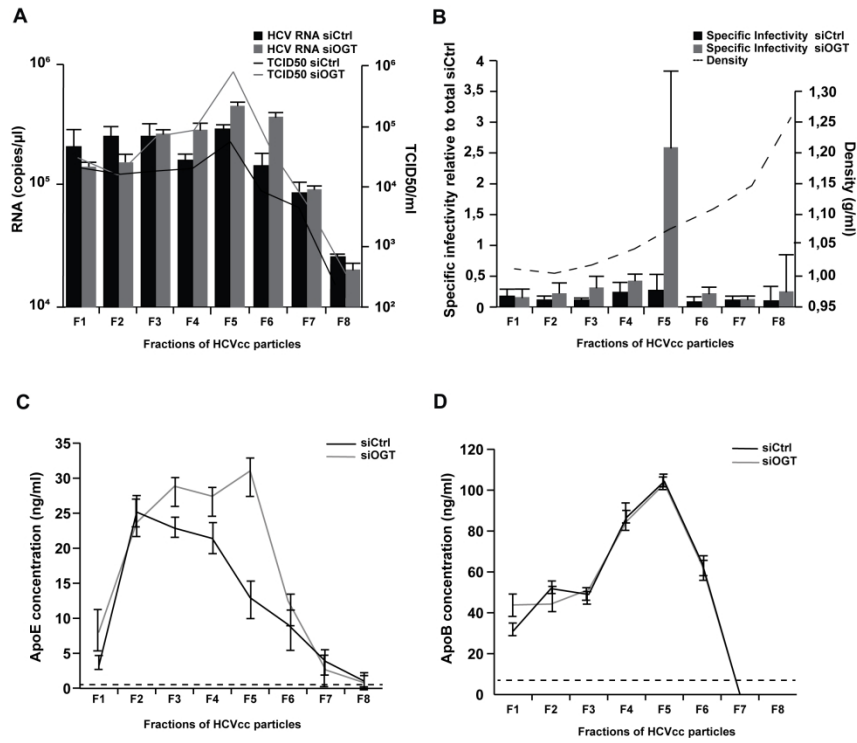


Figure 5

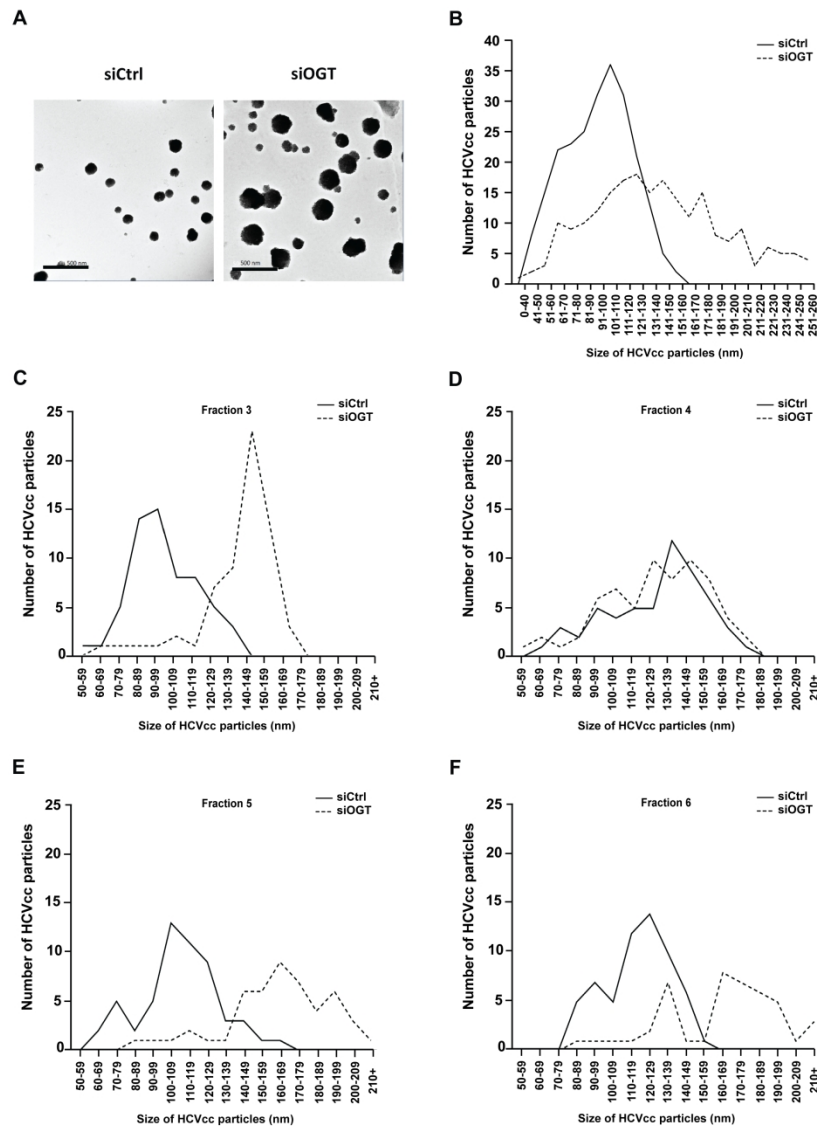


Figure 6

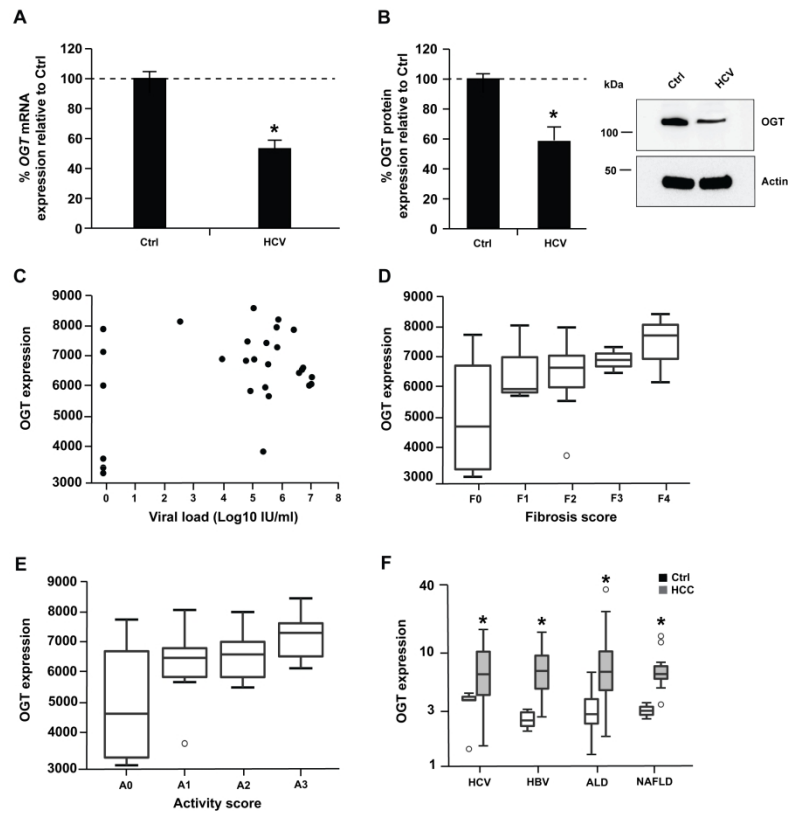


Figure 7

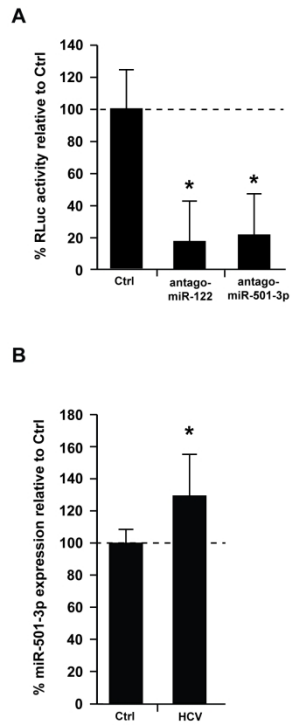


Figure S1

Supplementary Information

A functional microRNA screen uncovers O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase as a host factor modulating hepatitis C virus morphogenesis

Katharina Herzog^{1,2*}, Simonetta Bandiera^{1,2*}, Sophie Pernot^{1,2}, Catherine Fauvelle^{1,2}, Frank Jühling^{1,2}, Amélie Weiss^{2,3,4,5}, Anne Bull⁶, Sarah C. Durand^{1,2}, Béatrice Chane-Woon-Ming^{2,7}, Sébastien Pfeffer^{2,7}, Marion Mercey⁸, Hervé Lerat⁸, Jean-Christophe Meunier⁶, Wolfgang Raffelsberger^{2,3,4,5}, Laurent Brino^{2,3,4,5}, Thomas F. Baumert^{1,2,9,#}, Mirjam B. Zeisel^{1,2,10,#}

¹Inserm, U1110, Institut de Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, Strasbourg, France; ²Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ³Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire, Illkirch, France; ⁴CNRS, UMR7104, Illkirch, France; ⁵Inserm, U1258, Illkirch, France; ⁶Inserm U1259, Faculté de Médecine, Université François Rabelais and CHRU de Tours, Tours, France; ⁷Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002, Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS, Strasbourg, France; ⁸Institute for Advanced Biosciences, Centre de Recherche UGA - Inserm U1209 - CNRS UMR 5309, Grenoble, France; ⁹Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire, Pôle Hépatodigestif, Hôpitaux Universitaires de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ¹⁰Inserm, U1052, CNRS UMR 5286, Centre Léon Bérard (CLB), Cancer Research Center of Lyon (CRCL), Université de Lyon (UCBL), Lyon, France

*Authors contributed equally to this work

Supplementary Material and methods

Cells and cell culture conditions. The source and culture conditions of Huh7.5.1 cells have been described[1]. HeLa cells were purchased from ATCC and cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle medium (Gibco® DMEM GlutaMAX™, ThermoFisher Scientific) containing 1% sodium pyruvate as described for Huh7.5.1 cells[1].

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3 1 **Viruses and infectivity assays.** Cell culture-derived recombinant cell culture-derived
4 hepatitis C virus (HCVcc) Jc1 (genotype 2a/2a chimera), H77R2a (genotype 1a/2a chimera
5 engineered for *Renilla* luciferase expression), Con1R2a (genotype 1b/2b chimera engineered
6 for *Renilla* luciferase expression), and JcR2a (genotype 2a/2a chimera engineered for *Renilla*
7 luciferase expression) were generated in Huh7.5.1 cells as described[1, 2, 3, 4]. HCVcc
8 infectivity was determined by calculating the 50% tissue culture infectious dose (TCID₅₀)
9 using anti-NS5A antibody as described[5, 6] or by assessing luciferase activity. HCVcc were
10 used at 10⁵-10⁶ TCID₅₀/mL throughout the study. HCV RNA was purified using a QIAmp viral
11 RNA minikit (Qiagen) and analyzed by one-step RT-qPCR using a Sensi Fast NO ROX kit
12 (Bioline) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Standard curves were performed using
13 10-fold dilution series of HCV RNA.
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29 13 **Purification of HCVcc particles using sucrose cushion or iodixanol density gradient.**
30 HCVcc (JcR2a) were concentrated 10-fold using a Vivaspinn column (GE Healthcare). For
31 sucrose cushion purification, HCVcc were purified by overlaying 3.5 mL of culture media on
32 1.5 mL of 20% sucrose, and by ultracentrifuging samples for 4h at 40,000 rpm on a SW-55
33 rotor (Beckman Coulter). Purified HCVcc were resuspended in 30 µL of PBS for analysis via
34 immunocapture and electron microscopy. Density distributions of infectious HCVcc were
35 determined by overlaying 0.5 mL culture media on a 5 mL, 4%-40% iodixanol step gradient,
36 and ultracentrifuging samples for 16h at 40,000 rpm on a SW-55 rotor (Beckman Coulter): 625
37 µL fractions were carefully harvested from the top of each tube, and density was determined
38 by weighing. Infectivity of each fraction was quantified by TCID₅₀ using anti-NS5A antibody
39 as described[5, 6], while HCV RNA of fractions was purified and analyzed as described above.
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3 1 **miRNA mimics and siRNAs.** Non-targeting control miRNA, miR-501-3p mimic, miR-619-3p
4 2 mimic, antagomiR-122, antagomiR-501-3p, non-targeting control antagomiR, non-targeting
5 3 control siRNA, siRNAs targeting *OGT*, *CD81* or *apolipoprotein E (ApoE)* and a library of 28
6 4 custom ON-TARGETplus smart pool siRNAs were purchased from Dharmacon (GE
7 5 Healthcare).

8 6
9 7 **miRNA expression analysis.** Total RNA (100 ng) was purified from control or HCV-infected
10 8 Huh7.5.1 cells using Tri reagent® (Thermo Scientific) and Direct-zol™ RNA purification kit
11 9 (Zymo Research). Total RNA was first polyadenylated and reverse transcribed using a
12 10 miScript II RT system (Qiagen) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The obtained
13 11 cDNA was subjected to RT-qPCR using miScript SYBR Green kit (Qiagen). Primers were the
14 12 mature miRNA sequence for the forward primer (Thermo Scientific) and the universal miScript
15 13 primer (Qiagen) for the reverse primer. Data were analyzed by the $\Delta\Delta C_t$ method using small
16 14 nucleolar RNA, C/D box 61 (SNORD61) as an endogenous reference and the non-infected
17 15 samples as a calibrator[7].

18 16
19 17 **Antibodies.** Rabbit anti-OGT antibodies DM-17 and AL24 were purchased from Sigma or
20 18 kindly provided by Dr. G. W. Hart and Dr. S. Hardivillé (Johns Hopkins University School of
21 19 Medicine, Baltimore, MD)[8], respectively. Mouse anti- β -actin antibody was purchased from
22 20 Abcam and mouse, rabbit or sheep HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies (A9044, A0545
23 21 and A3415, respectively) were purchased from Sigma. Sheep anti-NS5A serum for
24 22 determination of TCID50 was a kind gift from M. Harris[9]. Human anti-E2 (AR3A) antibody[10]
25 23 for electron microscopy analysis was kindly provided by Mansun Law (SCRIPPS, California,
26 24 USA).

27 25
28 26 **Western blotting.** OGT and actin protein expression in human cells was assessed by
29 27 Western blot as described[8] with some modifications. Briefly, cells were lysed in lysis buffer
30 28 no. 6 (R&D Systems) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Equal amounts of protein

1 (40 µg) were size-separated through a Mini PROTEAN® TGX Stain-Free™ gel electrophoresis
2 (Bio-Rad) and transferred to PVDF membranes (Bio-Rad). Immunoblots were performed
3 using rabbit anti-OGT (1:2000) and mouse anti-β-actin (1:1000) antibodies[8, 11]. Antigen-
4 antibody complexes were detected by incubating the membrane with the appropriate HRP-
5 conjugated secondary antibodies (1:5000; 1:10,000) and imaged by enhanced
6 chemiluminescence with a ChemiDoc MP imager (Bio-Rad). Quantification of protein
7 expression was performed using ImageLab™ 5.2.1 software (BioRad). For analysis of OGT
8 and GAPDH expression in liver tissue from HCV transgenic (FL-N/35) or wild-type mice[12],
9 crude protein extracts were prepared by homogenization of frozen mouse livers (50–100 µg)
10 in tissue lysis buffer from the Ambion PARIS RNA (Thermo Scientific) and protein isolation kit,
11 supplemented with protease inhibitors (cOmplete™ EDTA-free protease inhibitor mixture,
12 Sigma-Aldrich) and phosphatase inhibitors (PhosSTOP™, Sigma-Aldrich), using a tissue
13 homogenizer (MP Fast Prep24, MP Biomedicals, Santa Ana, CA) and MP Lysing Matrix A
14 tubes. Proteins were quantified using the BCA assay (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Western
15 blotting was performed as described above.

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17 **Immunocapture and electron microscopy analysis of viral particles.** Sucrose-cushion
18 purified or iodixanol gradient fractionated HCVcc (JcR2a) produced in cells transfected with a
19 non-targeting siRNA control or a pool of siRNA against OGT were transferred via anti-E2
20 antibody AR3A on electron microscopy (EM) grids through immunocapture (IC) as
21 described[13]. Particles were stained with uranyl acetate dihydrate and observed in a JEOL
22 1230 electron microscope. Series of electron micrographs were acquired at random from IC
23 EM grids. The images were then analyzed with Image-J software, to determine the particle
24 size distribution.

25
26 **Gene expression analysis in patient-derived liver tissue.** For OGT expression analysis in
27 patient's samples, raw data were retrieved from the Gene Expression Omnibus (GSE84346)
28 and re-analyzed by quality-trimming (cutadapt) and mapping (HISAT2) to human genome

1 assembly hg19. Reads mapping to Gencode v.19 genes were counted using htseq-count and
2 normalized applying DESeq2. Activity and fibrosis scores as well as viral load were taken from
3 the supplemental data published in[14]. To analyze OGT expression in liver tissue of chronic
4 hepatitis B or C patients, FPKM values and clinical data were retrieved from The Cancer
5 Genome Atlas (TCGA, [https://www.cancer.gov/about-](https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga)
6 [nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga](https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga)). This data set includes samples from
7 39 HCV-infected patients, 83 hepatitis B virus (HBV)-infected, 80 patients with alcoholic liver
8 disease (ALD) and 13 patients with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

10 **Supplementary References**

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12 Natl Acad Sci U S A 2005;**102**:9294-9.
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14 hepatitis C virus NS5A is essential for integrity of the membranous replication compartment.
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41 **Supplementary figure legends**

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43 **Figure S1.** (A) Effect of miR-501-3p inhibition on HCV infectivity. Huh7.5.1 cells were
44 transfected with control antagomiR (Ctrl), antagomiR-122 as loss-of-function control to perturb
45 HCV replication and antagomiR-501-3p, prior to infection with HCVcc (JcR2a) according to
46 the two-step protocol depicted in Fig. 1A. After 48h, supernatants were transferred onto naive
47 Huh7.5.1 cells. After 72h, Renilla Luciferase activity of infected Huh7.5.1 cells was
48 determined. Data are expressed as mean percentage as compared to Ctrl \pm s.d. Results are
49 from four independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates values from
50 vehicle-treated cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) miR-
51 501-3p expression upon HCV infection. Huh7.5.1 cells were infected with HCVcc (JcR2a).
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3 1 After 72h, RNA was purified and miR-501-3p expression analyzed by RT-qPCR. Percentage
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5 2 of miR-501-3p expression relative to uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl). Results are presented
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7 3 as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments in duplicate. The dashed line indicates
8
9 4 values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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11 5 test.
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16 7 **Supplementary Table 1. A genome-wide miRNA mimic screen identifies cellular**
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18 8 **miRNAs modulating HCV infection.** Log₂(FC), lfd_r and effect on HCV infection in part 1 and
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20 9 part 2 of the screen are shown for the individual miRNAs of the miRNA mimic library. In red:
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22 10 proviral effect, in blue: antiviral effect. FC: fold change, lfd_r: local false discovery rate
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1	hsa-miR-6504-3p	MIMAT0025465	C-302672-00	CAUUACAGCACAGCCAUUCU	-0.219268298279075	0.49143	FALSE	-2.3682663259571	0.08542	TRUE
2	hsa-miR-6505-3p	MIMAT0025467	C-302675-00	UGACUUCUACCCUUCUCAAAG	-1.41016990839787	0.00054279	FALSE	-2.92045878806631	0.040079	TRUE
3	hsa-miR-6507-5p	MIMAT0025470	C-302679-00	GAAGAAUAGGAGGACUUUGU	-0.637513482741369	0.03164	FALSE	-2.6469629700191	0.057617	TRUE
4	hsa-miR-6514-3p	MIMAT0025485	C-302693-00	CUGCCUGUUCUCCACUCCAG	-1.57253367763337	0.00023985	TRUE	-0.857463656453242	0.72813	FALSE
5	hsa-miR-652-3p	MIMAT0022709	C-301928-00	CAACCCUAGGAGAGGUGCCAUUCA	-0.590578760859739	0.01741	FALSE	-2.0413301671663	0.11887	TRUE
6	hsa-miR-654-5p	MIMAT0003330	C-300988-01	UGUGGGCCGGAACAUGUGC	-1.24102088307823	0.00054279	FALSE	-4.37321715649902	0.0018396	TRUE
7	hsa-miR-659	MIMAT0003337	C-300994-01	CUUGGUUCAGGAGGGUCCCA	-0.865338332757254	0.0053924	FALSE	-2.2970254587848	0.12226	TRUE
8	hsa-miR-660-3p	MIMAT0022711	C-301897-00	ACCUCUGUGGCAUGGUAUA	-0.914364872105563	0.0018747	FALSE	-2.7989676696545	0.028781	TRUE
9	hsa-miR-661	MIMAT0003324	C-300981-01	UGCCUGGUCUCUGCCUGCGCGU	-0.966061272920722	0.0046172	FALSE	-2.04789510522588	0.11887	TRUE
10	hsa-miR-664b-3p	MIMAT0022772	C-302539-00	UUGAAUUGCCUCCAGCCUACA	-0.63588937093853	0.061384	FALSE	-2.38779084523873	0.057617	TRUE
11	hsa-miR-671-5p	MIMAT0003880	C-301000-03	AGGAAGCCUUGGAGGGGUGGAG	-1.01268622344544	0.00023985	TRUE	-0.995050180707598	0.5811	FALSE
12	hsa-miR-6721-5p	MIMAT0025852	C-302707-00	UGGGCAGGGGUUUAUUGAGGAG	-1.0522716652067	0.0021076	FALSE	-2.86092601806193	0.028781	TRUE
13	hsa-miR-7	MIMAT0000252	C-300546-07	UGGAAGACUAGUUAUUUGUUGU	-0.833080606802588	0.0014577	FALSE	-2.34382127982937	0.11887	TRUE
14	hsa-miR-718	MIMAT0012735	C-301486-00	CUUCGCGCCGCGGCGUCCG	-0.712476270533885	0.0014577	FALSE	-2.51688917044679	0.08542	TRUE
15	hsa-miR-744	MIMAT0004945	C-301242-01	UGCGGGCUAGGCUUACAGCA	-1.31292964878657	0.0027607	FALSE	-2.17130853543699	0.057617	TRUE
16	hsa-miR-744*	MIMAT0004946	C-301241-01	CUUGUCCGCUAACCCUAAACCU	-0.309425861300587	3.9917e-05	TRUE	-2.41920375944258	0.11887	TRUE
17	hsa-miR-764	MIMAT0010367	C-301640-00	GCAGGUGUCUACUUGUCCUCCU	-1.15960521227396	6.1693e-05	TRUE	-0.963991799367289	0.5811	FALSE
18	hsa-miR-767-3p	MIMAT0003883	C-301003-01	UCUGUCUACUCCUAGGUUUUCU	-0.875815222995269	0.0021076	FALSE	-2.87852305265755	0.009387	TRUE
19	hsa-miR-801	MIMAT0005202	C-301014-01	GAUUGCUGGCGGCGGAUUCGAC	-1.02838938735747	0.00023985	TRUE	0.128066636696993	1	FALSE
20	hsa-miR-873-3p	MIMAT0022717	C-301921-00	GGAGACUGAUGAUUCCCGGGA	-0.45500701580676	0.050037	FALSE	-2.17559760678154	0.08542	TRUE
21	hsa-miR-888*	MIMAT0004917	C-301227-01	GACUGACACCUUUUGGUGAA	-0.798719536763374	0.015067	FALSE	-1.83668949541677	0.11887	TRUE
22	hsa-miR-940	MIMAT0004983	C-301269-01	AAGGCAGGGCCCGCCUCCCC	-1.31504996360232	0.00054279	FALSE	-2.52010733193133	0.11887	TRUE
23	hsa-miR-96	MIMAT0000095	C-300514-07	UUUGCCAGUAGCACAUUUUGCU	-0.788957233607577	0.0074787	FALSE	-2.19234338350236	0.11527	TRUE
24	hsa-miR-99a	MIMAT0000097	C-300516-03	AAACCGUAGAUCCGAAUUCUGU	-0.986802247020601	0.0030028	FALSE	-2.42723567464877	0.11887	TRUE

Legend
 Antiviral effect
 Proviral effect

Note: Hits were selected using the following Local False Discovery Rate (fdr) thresholds: 0.00027 in screen part 1 and 0.1226 in screen part 2. Positive log2 fold change values indicate a proviral effect of the miRNA on the HCV life cycle, while negative log2 fold change values indicate an antiviral effect.

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3 1 **A functional microRNA screen uncovers O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase as**
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5 2 **a host factor modulating hepatitis C virus morphogenesis and infectivity**
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9 4 Katharina Herzog^{1,2*}, Simonetta Bandiera^{1,2*}, Sophie Pernot^{1,2}, Catherine Fauvelle^{1,2}, Frank
11 5 Jühling^{1,2}, Amélie Weiss^{2,3,4,5}, Anne Bull⁶, Sarah C. Durand^{1,2}, Béatrice Chane-Woon-Ming^{2,7},
13 6 Sébastien Pfeffer^{2,7}, Marion Mercey⁸, Hervé Lerat⁸, Jean-Christophe Meunier⁶, Wolfgang
15 7 Raffelsberger^{2,3,4,5}, Laurent Brino^{2,3,4,5}, Thomas F. Baumert^{1,2,9,#}, Mirjam B. Zeisel^{1,2,10,#}
17 8

19 9 ¹Inserm, U1110, Institut de Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, Strasbourg,
21 10 France; ²Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ³Institut de Génétique et de Biologie
23 11 Moléculaire et Cellulaire, Illkirch, France ; ⁴CNRS, UMR7104, Illkirch, France ; ⁵Inserm,
25 12 U1258, Illkirch, France ; ⁶Inserm U1259, Faculté de Médecine, Université François Rabelais
27 13 and CHRU de Tours, Tours, France ; ⁷Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002,
29 14 Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS, Strasbourg, France; ⁸Institute for
31 15 Applied Biosciences, Centre de Recherche UGA - Inserm U1209 - CNRS 5309, Grenoble,
33 16 France ⁹Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire, Pôle Hépatodigestif, Hôpitaux Universitaires de
35 17 Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ¹⁰Inserm, U1052, CNRS UMR 5286, Centre Léon Bérard
37 18 (CLB), Cancer Research Center of Lyon (CRCL), Université de Lyon (UCBL), Lyon, France

39 19 *Authors contributed equally to this work
41 20

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47 23 Figure)
49 24

51 25 **#Corresponding authors.** Dr. Mirjam B. Zeisel, Inserm U1052 – CRCL, 151 cours Albert
53 26 Thomas, 69424 Lyon Cedex 03, France, Phone: +33472681970, Fax: +33472681971, E-
55 27 mail: mirjam.zeisel@inserm.fr and Prof. Thomas F. Baumert, Inserm U1110, Institut de
59 60

1
2
3 1 Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, 3 rue Koeberlé, 67000 Strasbourg,
4
5 2 France, Phone: +33368853703, Fax: +33368853724, Email: thomas.baumert@unistra.fr
6
7 3

8
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34
35 17 A.W., L.B., J-C.M. and M.B.Z. designed experiments. K.H., S.B., S.P, C. F., A.W., A.B.,
36
37 18 S.C.D., M.M., H.L. and J-C.M. performed experiments. K.H., S.B., S.P., C. F., F.J., A.W.,
38
39 19 A.B., B.C.W.M., S.P., J-C.M., W.R., L.B., T.F.B. and M.B.Z. analyzed data. K.H., S.B., and
40
41 20 M.B.Z. wrote the paper.
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3 1 **Abstract**
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7 3 **Objective:** Infection of human hepatocytes by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a multistep
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9 4 process involving both viral and host factors. microRNAs (miRNAs) are small non-coding
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11 5 RNAs that post-transcriptionally regulate gene expression. Given that miRNAs were
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13 6 indicated to regulate between 30% and 75% of all human genes, we aimed to investigate the
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15 7 functional and regulatory role of miRNAs for the HCV life cycle.

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17 8 **Design:** To systematically reveal human miRNAs affecting the HCV life cycle, we performed
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19 9 a two-step functional high-throughput miRNA mimic screen in Huh7.5.1 cells infected with
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21 10 recombinant cell culture-derived HCV. miRNA targeting was then assessed using a
22
23 11 combination of computational and functional approaches.

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25 12 **Results:** We uncovered miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p as novel modulators of HCV
26
27 13 assembly/release. We discovered that these miRNAs regulate O-linked N-acetylglucosamine
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29 14 (O-GlcNAc) transferase (OGT) protein expression and identified OGT and O-GlcNAcylation
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31 15 as regulators of HCV morphogenesis and infectivity. Furthermore, increased OGT
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33 16 expression in patient-derived liver tissue was associated with HCV-induced liver disease and
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35 17 cancer.

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37 18 **Conclusion:** miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p and their target OGT are previously undiscovered
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39 19 regulatory host factors for HCV assembly and infectivity. In addition to its effect on HCV
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41 20 morphogenesis, OGT may play a role in HCV-induced liver disease and
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43 21 hepatocarcinogenesis.
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Significance of this study

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What is already known about this subject?

- ◆ To establish chronic infection, the hepatitis C virus (HCV) hijacks cellular factors including microRNAs (miRNAs), known to post-transcriptionally regulate gene expression.
- ◆ miRNAs may positively or negatively modulate HCV infection either by directly targeting the viral genome or indirectly by regulating virus-associated cellular pathways[1, 2].

What are the new findings?

- ◆ A functional miRNA mimic screen uncovered miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p to enhance late steps of HCV infection.
- ◆ miR-501-3p regulates the expression of O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase (OGT) at the protein level.
- ◆ Silencing of OGT expression or inhibition of O-linked N-acetylglucosaminylation (O-GlcNAcylation) leads to an increase in the infectivity and size of HCV particles.
- ◆ OGT expression increases in patient-derived liver tissue during liver disease progression and cancer.

How might it impact on clinical practice in the foreseeable future?

- ◆ As upregulation of OGT and increased O-GlcNAcylation of proteins have been associated with various forms of cancer, OGT may play a dual role in HCV morphogenesis as well as pathogenesis of HCV-induced liver disease and carcinogenesis.

2

3

1 Introduction

2 Chronic hepatitis C is a major cause of chronic liver disease and hepatocellular carcinoma
3 (HCC). Since the approval of pan-genotypic direct-acting antivirals (DAAs), it is considered a
4 curable disease in more than 90% of treated patients. Nonetheless, an estimated 71 million
5 individuals are still infected by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) and several challenges remain;
6 viral cure reduces but does not eliminate the HCC risk in patients with advanced fibrosis[3],
7 the majority of infected patients has limited access to therapy and DAA failure/viral
8 resistance has been reported in a subset of patients[4, 5]. To overcome these limitations,
9 approaches to target host factors involved in HCV infection and pathogenesis are
10 developed[6, 7]. Interestingly, defined host factors that contribute to the establishment of
11 chronic HCV infection and represent potential antiviral targets, e.g. epidermal growth factor
12 receptor[8], also play a role in liver disease pathogenesis and represent candidate targets for
13 treatment of advanced liver disease and HCC prevention[9]. Thus, uncovering host factors
14 usurped by HCV not only contributes to a better understanding of virus-host interactions
15 underlying the HCV life cycle but also to the identification of potential targets for treatment of
16 liver disease and prevention of HCC.

17 The establishment of various models to study HCV infection has shed light on the
18 molecular mechanisms that govern the HCV life cycle, which can be subdivided into early
19 steps, including viral entry, translation and replication as well as late steps, including
20 assembly and release of new virions. Each step of the HCV replication cycle relies on
21 specific virus-host interactions that involve host proteins and microRNAs (miRNAs)[7], small
22 non-coding RNAs that regulate gene expression at the post-transcriptional level. One miRNA
23 can target numerous messenger RNAs (mRNAs) by base-pairing with a complementary site
24 that is typically located within the 3' untranslated region (3'UTR) of the mRNA. Accumulating
25 evidence indicates that miRNAs participate to HCV replication by exerting pro- or antiviral
26 effects. The breakthrough discovery of the direct targeting of HCV by miR-122, the most
27 abundant miRNA in the liver, revealed the crucial role of this miRNA for HCV
28 translation/replication that contributes to progression to chronic HCV infection[1, 10]. miR-

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3 1 122 antisense oligonucleotides were subsequently developed as host-targeting antivirals[11,
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5 2 12]. Other miRNAs can indirectly target HCV by regulating host factors that participate in
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7 3 antiviral responses and immune surveillance[2, 13, 14]. Since up to 60% of all human
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9 4 protein-coding genes were reported to be under miRNA-mediated regulation and miRNAs
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11 5 are involved in basically every biological process, we hypothesized that miRNAs provide a
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13 6 tool for loss-of-function approaches to uncover novel HCV host factors. We performed
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15 7 genome-wide high-throughput modulation of the human miRNome and analyzed their impact
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17 8 on HCV infection by combining computational and functional approaches.
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20 21 22 10 **Material and methods**

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24 11 **Cells, cell culture conditions, viruses, virus purification, infectivity assays, miRNAs,**
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26 12 **antagomiRs, siRNAs, antibodies, immunoblot, immunocapture, electron microscopy**
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28 13 **analysis of viral particles and gene expression analysis in liver tissue** are described in
29
30 14 the Supplementary information.
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34 16 **Functional miRNA/siRNA screens.** Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with the miRIDIAN
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36 17 human miRNA mimic library (miRBase 19) comprising more than 2000 mature miRNAs or 28
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38 18 ON-TARGETplus smart pool siRNAs (20 nM, Dharmacon) using Interferin HTS (Polyplus) in
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40 19 a 96-well format[8]. After 48h, a viability test (Presto Blue, Thermo Scientific) was performed
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42 20 prior to a two-step infection assay[15, 16, 17]. During part 1 of the protocol, 50 μ L of HCV cell
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44 21 culture-derived particles (HCVcc, JcR2a) were incubated with cells during 4h. The inoculum
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46 22 was removed and cells were incubated with 150 μ l of medium for 48h. In part 2, supernatants
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48 23 from part 1 cells were transferred onto naive Huh7.5.1 cells and part 1 cells were lysed to
49
50 24 determine luciferase activity[17, 18]. After 72h, part 2 cells were lysed to determine luciferase
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52 25 activity[17]. siCD81 (20 nM), antagomiR-122 (100 nM) and siApoE (20 nM) were used as
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54 26 positive controls[17]. A non-targeting siRNA with no sequence complementarity to any
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56 27 human gene or homology to any human miRNA was used as negative control.
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3 1 **Inhibitor treatment.** Four hours following HCV RNA electroporation[8], Huh7.5.1 cells were
4 incubated with vehicle or inhibitors of OGT (peracetylated 5-thio-N-acetylglucosamine
5 (Ac₄5S-GlcNAc)[19]) or OGA (Thiamet G (Sigma))[20]. After 96h, supernatants were
6 transferred onto naïve Huh7.5.1 cells for 72h prior to determination of luciferase activity while
7 electroporated cells were lysed to determine luciferase activity.
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16 7 **Gene expression analyses.** Total RNA was purified[17] and transcribed into cDNA using
17 Maxima reverse transcriptase (Thermo Scientific). *GAPDH* and *OGT* mRNA was detected by
18 real time qPCR using iTaq™ Universal Probes Supermix (Bio-Rad) and TaqMan Gene
19 Expression Assay (Thermo Scientific). Relative *OGT/GAPDH* gene expression was
20 calculated by the $\Delta\Delta C_t$ method[21].
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29 13 **Dual luciferase reporter gene assay.** The human *OGT* 3'UTR sequence was retrieved from
30 NCBI (NM_181672.2) and Ensembl genome browser (ENST00000373719.3). A fragment of
31 the *OGT* 3'UTR (positions 3380-3837, NM_181672.2) (Thermo Fisher Scientific GENEART)
32 was cloned between the *NotI* and *XhoI* sites downstream of a *Renilla* luciferase cassette in a
33 psiCHECK2 plasmid (Promega). A mutated version of this construct (9-bp substitution in the
34 predicted miR-501-3p target site) was generated as described[22]. The functionality of the
35 *OGT* 3'UTR was assessed as described[23]. The miRIDIAN mimic negative control 1 was
36 used as control. *Renilla* and *firefly* luciferase activity was assessed 48h after transfection into
37 HeLa cells using Dual-Luciferase Reporter assay (Promega).
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50 23 **Bioinformatic and statistical analysis.** Data analysis and statistical treatment for the
51 miRNA mimic screen were performed in R (www.r-project.org). Cell measurement data used
52 in further analysis were cell viability and luciferase activity. In total 26 sets of plates
53 (performed in triplicate) were tested. The presence of multiple wells with negative and
54 positive controls on each plate allowed stepwise normalization intra- and inter-plate. First,
55 intra-plate zonal bias was examined and a model of median effects across the entire screen
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3 1 determined using the median-polish algorithm[24] and all plates corrected accordingly. Then
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5 2 the dataset was examined for outlier plates, i.e. plates where all individual measurements
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7 3 correlate very poorly with the other remaining replicates. Three and 9 plates were excluded
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9 4 for part 1 and part 2 of the screen, respectively, based on poor median correlation ($r < 0.7$)
10
11 5 so that the remaining plates correlation improved substantially ($> 40\%$). Next, the plates were
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13 6 normalized inter replicates using the particularly robust quantile-quantile approach[25].
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15 7 Finally, the data were tested using a moderated t-test (empirical Bayes shrinkage, R-
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17 8 package limma[26]) for the null-hypothesis of no change of a given miRNA compared to the
18
19 9 negative control. The resulting p -values for independent testing of each miRNA were
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21 10 corrected for the multiple testing situation and expressed as local false discovery rate (lfdr,
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23 11 R-package fdrtool[27]). The testing was performed independently for part 1 and 2 of the
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25 12 screen and candidate miRNAs selected for each part. For data from part 1, a lfdr threshold of
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27 13 0.00027 was used. Data from part 2 were subject to increase inherent stochastic noise and
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29 14 for this reason the minimum acceptable relative risk of false positives was increased to
30
31 15 0.1226 (i.e. maximum 15% risk for each of the retained hits).

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34 16 Other datasets were analyzed using the two-tailed Mann-Whitney test, Wilcoxon test,
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36 17 Spearman correlation or the two-tailed unpaired t-test for data with normal distribution as
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38 18 assessed by D'Agostino and Pearson omnibus and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests (GraphPad
39
40 19 Prism v.6 package).

41 42 43 44 45 46 47 22 **Results**

48
49 23 **Genome-wide identification of human miRNAs affecting the HCV life cycle.** We
50
51 24 performed a genome-wide screen in human hepatoma Huh7.5.1 cells using a genomic
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53 25 miRNA mimics library and a two-step infection assay[17] with a luciferase reporter virus
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55 26 (JcR2a), which allowed us to functionally assess the role of miRNAs during the early steps
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57 27 (part 1 - viral entry/translation/replication) and the late steps (part 2 - viral
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59 28 assembly/release/infectivity) of the HCV life cycle (Fig. 1A). Silencing of *CD81* and *ApoE*,

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2
3 1 two essential host factors required for HCV entry or assembly, respectively, was performed
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5 2 in parallel using small interfering RNA (siRNA) as controls. Silencing of *CD81* resulted in a
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7 3 reduction of HCV infection in part 1 and consequently in part 2 of the screen since reduced
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9 4 viral entry in the first part of the assay leads to a reduced production of viral particles (Fig.
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11 5 1B)[17]. Silencing of *ApoE* resulted in a marked inhibition of HCV infection only in part 2 of
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13 6 the assay, consistent with the role of ApoE in HCV assembly (Fig. 1B)[17]. The screen
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15 7 identified 427 miRNAs (corresponding to about 16% of the library) that significantly
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17 8 modulated HCV infection ($\text{Ifdr} < \text{threshold}$, Supplementary Table 1 and Fig. 1C): 186 miRNAs
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19 9 affected HCV infection in part 1, 309 miRNAs affected HCV infection in part 2, including 68
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21 10 hits in part 1 and part 2. The limited number of part 1 and 2 hits may be due to the fact that a
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23 11 single miRNA may modulate the expression of several proteins, which may have different
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25 12 roles in the viral life cycle. Most hits were observed to dampen HCV infection independently
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27 13 of any significant alteration of cell viability (data not shown). The 186 miRNAs modulating the
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29 14 early steps of HCV infection all decreased viral infection. Among the 309 miRNAs that had
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31 15 an impact in part 2, 11 miRNAs increased HCV infection by at least 3-fold while 298 miRNAs
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33 16 inhibited HCV infection by at least 2.7-fold. Hits from the screen included the let-7 family[2,
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35 17 28], miR-27a[29] and miR-29 family[30] that were already shown to inhibit HCV infection, as
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37 18 well as miR-21[31] and miR-146a-5p[17] that were shown to stimulate HCV infection thus
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39 19 supporting the relevance of our findings. Collectively, our screen identified a set of miRNAs
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41 20 whose overexpression overall impairs HCV infection by affecting viral
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43 21 entry/translation/replication and/or virion assembly/egress/infectivity.
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49 23 **miR-619-3p, miR-501-3p and OGT play a role in late steps of the HCV life cycle.** We
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51 24 focused our analysis on miRNAs that modulate late steps of the HCV life cycle, as the
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53 25 molecular mechanisms of HCV assembly/release remain only partially understood. Our
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55 26 screen identified 241 miRNAs that modulated late steps without affecting early steps of
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57 27 infection: 11 miRNAs increased HCV infection while 230 miRNAs decreased HCV infection.
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59 28 Among the miRNAs that increased HCV infection, miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and

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3 1 miR-4778-5p have not yet been associated with HCV. Since they enhanced HCV infection in
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5 2 part 2 without affecting part 1, these miRNAs may target host genes that control virus
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7 3 assembly/egress/infectivity. We first confirmed the effect of these miRNAs in independent
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9 4 experiments using the same protocol as for the screen. Overexpression of miR-619-3p or
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11 5 miR-501-3p consistently led to an increase in the infection of progeny virions (Fig. 1D) while
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13 6 infection was decreased with progeny virions from antagomiR-transfected cells
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15 7 (Supplementary Figure S1A). miR-619-3p or miR-501-3p were thus selected for further
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17 8 investigation. To study the molecular mechanisms by which these miRNAs affect HCV
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19 9 infection, we generated a list of predicted miRNA targets using DIANA, TargetScan Human
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21 10 v6.2 and miRDB databases, and selected candidate targets based on their expression in our
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23 11 Huh7.5.1 cells as assessed by microarray (data not shown). Ingenuity Pathway Analysis
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25 12 enabled us to refine the gene list by selecting 28 genes involved in the following functional
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27 13 networks or pathways that contribute to the HCV life cycle[32, 33, 34]: lipid metabolism and
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29 14 cholesterol biosynthesis, protein maturation and processing at the endoplasmic reticulum
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31 15 (ER), components of the endosomal sorting complex, adipocyte biogenesis, cellular
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33 16 morphology and cell inflammation (Table 1).

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37 17 To assess whether knock-down of these 28 candidate targets affects virus
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39 18 production, we performed a siRNA-based screen using siRNA pools exhibiting strong
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41 19 silencing without cytotoxicity (Fig. 2). Silencing of *CD81* and antagomiR-122 served as
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43 20 controls for part 1; knock-down of *ApoE* served as control for part 2 (Fig. 2). Hits were
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45 21 defined as genes whose knock-down modulated HCV infection in at least one part of the
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47 22 screen with high significance (Fig. 2, p -value ≤ 0.0001 , Mann-Whitney U-test). HCV
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49 23 entry/translation/replication was significantly modulated by silencing of *PPP3CA*, *CEBPA*,
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51 24 *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX* and *SLC35D1*. HCV assembly/egress/infectivity was significantly
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53 25 modulated by knock-down of *PPP3CA*, *CSDE1*, *GAN*, *USP37*, *CEBPA*, *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX*,
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55 26 *MAPK9*, *SLC35D1*, *DCC*, *RNF144A*, *PPP2R2C* and *OGT*. Strikingly, only the silencing of
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57 27 *OGT* was associated with an enhancement of HCV assembly/release/infectivity (p -value =
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59 28 0.0002), while that of the other hits was associated with reduced HCV infection (Fig. 2).

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3 1 These results indicate that the down-regulation of *OGT* phenocopies the effect of miR-501-
4 3p and miR-619-3p on HCV infection (Fig. 2) and suggest *OGT* as a novel player in the HCV
5 2
6 3 life cycle.
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11 5 **miR-501-3p post-transcriptionally regulates *OGT* expression.** To study whether miR-501-
12 6 3p and miR-619-3p target *OGT*, we analyzed *OGT* RNA and protein levels in Huh7.5.1 cells
13 7 following overexpression of miR-501-3p or miR-619-3p. While neither miRNA had an impact
14 8 on *OGT* RNA levels (Fig. 3A), up-regulation of miR-501-3p significantly decreased *OGT*
15 9 protein expression by ~65% (Fig. 3B, p -value ≤ 0.05 , t-test). miR-619-3p also decreased
16 10 *OGT* expression but less robustly than miR-501-3p (Fig. 3B), prompting us to focus our
17 11 investigation on miR-501-3p. To assess whether *OGT* is a functional target of miR-501-3p,
18 12 we subcloned a fragment of the *OGT* mRNA 3'UTR that harbors the predicted miR-501-3p
19 13 target site in the *Renilla* luciferase expression cassette (RLuc) of a dual luciferase reporter
20 14 construct. Co-transfection of miR-501-3p mimic with the wild-type 3'UTR reporter (RLuc wt
21 15 *OGT* 3'UTR) significantly decreased luciferase activity as compared to the empty vector (Fig.
22 16 3C, p -value < 0.05 , t-test). In contrast, the repression of luciferase expression was lost when
23 17 the reporter with mutated miR-501-3p binding site (RLuc mt *OGT* 3'UTR) was used (Fig. 3C).
24 18 These data are consistent in indicating that miR-501-3p mediates post-transcriptional
25 19 regulation of *OGT*.
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46 21 **O-GlcNAcylation modulates HCVcc infectivity.** To investigate whether *OGT* modulates
47 22 HCV assembly and/or infectivity, we determined infectious virus titer (TCID₅₀) and HCV RNA
48 23 levels to calculate the specific infectivity of HCVcc particles generated in *OGT*-silenced
49 24 Huh7.5.1 cells. Interestingly, *OGT*-silencing led to a significant increase in the TCID₅₀ and
50 25 the specific infectivity of HCVcc (Fig. 4A, p -value ≤ 0.05 , Mann-Whitney test). Noteworthy,
51 26 the effect of *OGT* on HCVcc infectivity was genotype-independent as demonstrated by
52 27 increased infectivity of HCVcc bearing the envelope glycoproteins of genotypes 1a, 1b and
53 28 2a upon *OGT*-silencing (Fig. 4B). We next sought to investigate how *OGT* could modulate

1 HCVcc infectivity. OGT is the only enzyme that catalyzes the addition of N-
2 acetylglucosamine (O-GlcNAc) to serine and threonine residues of proteins. Moreover, OGT
3 has a scaffold function and promotes binding of proteins in multiprotein complexes[35]. To
4 assess whether the enzymatic activity of OGT modulates HCVcc infectivity, we used
5 pharmacological inhibitors of OGT (Ac₄5S-GlcNAc) or O-GlcNAcase (OGA) (Thiamet G), the
6 OGT counterpart that removes O-GlcNAc (Fig. 4C). Ac₄5S-GlcNAc led to a significant
7 enhancement of HCVcc infectivity in a dose-dependent manner, while the opposite effect
8 was observed with Thiamet G (Fig. 4D, p -value \leq 0.05, Mann-Whitney test). Collectively,
9 these results demonstrate that O-GlcNAcylation modulates HCVcc infectivity.

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11 **OGT-silencing affects HCVcc biophysical properties and size distribution.** To further
12 assess how OGT may impact HCVcc morphogenesis, we analyzed the structural and
13 biophysical properties of HCVcc produced in siCtrl- and siOGT-transfected Huh7.5.1 cells
14 following iodixanol gradient ultracentrifugation. Silencing of OGT led to the production of
15 more infectious HCVcc with higher density (Fig. 5A-B) as well as higher ApoE concentrations
16 (Fig. 5C) suggesting that OGT/O-GlcNAcylation affects the biophysical properties of HCVcc.
17 No change in apoB concentrations were observed between HCVcc produced from siCtrl- or
18 siOGT-transfected cells (Fig. 5D), in line with the model that HCV lipovirions contain
19 several exchangeable ApoE molecules and one non-exchangeable apoB[36]. We also
20 visualized HCVcc by electron microscopy (EM) following anti-E2 antibody
21 immunocapture[36] to assess whether OGT-silencing had an impact on HCVcc size. Particle
22 size distribution was assessed from a series of randomly acquired electron micrographs. A
23 shift towards bigger sizes was observed for sucrose-cushion purified HCVcc generated in
24 OGT-silenced Huh7.5.1 cells as compared to control HCVcc (Fig. 6A-B). This shift was also
25 observed in different fractions of iodixanol gradient-separated HCVcc (Fig. 6C-F) in line with
26 the higher infectivity and ApoE concentrations of HCVcc generated in OGT-silenced
27 Huh7.5.1 cells (Fig. 5A-C). These data suggest that OGT-silencing affects the lipidation of
28 HCVcc.

1 **OGT expression increases in liver disease.** Since silencing of OGT promotes HCV
2 infectivity, we assessed whether HCV infection in turn had an effect on miR-501-3p and OGT
3 expression. In Huh7.5.1 cells, HCV infection lead to small but significant increase of miR-
4 501-3p and decrease of OGT levels (Fig. 7A-B and Supplementary Fig. 1B; p -value < 0.05,
5 Mann-Whitney test), which may promote viral infection given the pro- and antiviral roles of
6 miR-501-3p and O-GlcNAcylation, respectively (Fig. 1C-D and 4D). In contrast, no significant
7 difference of OGT expression was observed between the livers of HCV transgenic and wild-
8 type mice[37] (data not shown) suggesting that HCV proteins do not directly modulate OGT
9 expression. In liver tissue from HCV-infected patients, HCV RNA levels were not correlated
10 with OGT expression (Fig. 7C, Spearman correlation: 0.06004019, p -value = 0.7661)
11 suggesting that in patients there is likely no direct effect of HCV on OGT expression.

12 O-GlcNAcylation has been associated with a variety of cancers, including HCC
13 recurrence linked to increased O-GlcNAcylation after liver transplantation[38]. We therefore
14 investigated OGT expression in chronic liver disease and HCC. While there was a trend for
15 increased OGT expression in liver tissue from HCV-infected patients with fibrosis and
16 inflammation (Fig. 7D-E), OGT levels were markedly and significantly elevated in the tumor
17 liver tissue of patients chronically infected with HCV or hepatitis B virus and patients with
18 alcoholic liver disease or non-alcoholic fatty liver disease as compared to non-tumor tissue
19 (Fig. 7F, p -value < 0.05, Wilcoxon test). These data suggest that OGT expression increases
20 in HCC in an etiology-independent manner. Collectively, these results suggest that OGT
21 expression is likely increased in HCV-induced liver disease and cancer through inflammation
22 and fibrosis rather than by HCV itself.

25 Discussion

26 By focusing on miRNAs affecting late steps of the viral life cycle, we uncovered that i) miR-
27 501-3p regulates the expression of OGT; ii) silencing of OGT expression or inhibition of its
28 enzymatic activity increases the infectivity of HCV particles; and iii) OGT knock-down leads

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3 1 to the release of bigger HCV particles. Our data suggest that O-GlcNAcylation affects HCV
4 morphogenesis and infectivity.

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7 3 While we were characterizing the role of OGT/O-GlcNAcylation for HCV
8 morphogenesis, Li and colleagues published their functional genomics study of HCV-miRNA
9 interactions[2]. By conducting genome wide miRNA mimic and hairpin inhibitor screens, they
10 identified a set of miRNAs exhibiting a pro- or antiviral effect on HCV. Characterization of the
11 underlying molecular processes showed that miR-25, let-7 and miR-130 families restrict viral
12 infection by decreasing the expression of cellular HCV co-factors[2]. Despite similarities in
13 the cell type and HCV infection models used here and by Li and colleagues, our screen only
14 displays a small overlap with their study (9% common miRNA hits). This is not surprising
15 given the small overlap between previous siRNA screens to uncover HCV host factors[8, 15]
16 and is likely due i) to the different sizes of miRNA mimic libraries as the library used here was
17 more than 2-times larger than the one used by Li and co-workers, and ii) to the markedly
18 distinct pipelines for hit selection that were used in the two studies. Nonetheless, both
19 screens were consistent in confirming the proviral role of miR-146a-5p in promoting HCV
20 assembly/egress that we previously reported[17] and the global multistep inhibitory effects of
21 the let-7 family on HCV infection[28], further corroborating the involvement of these miRNAs
22 in fine-tuning the HCV life cycle. Both studies also consistently indicated that miR-518a-5p,
23 miR-517-3p, miR-185 and members of the miR-302 family inhibit early steps of HCV
24 infection, while miR-586, miR-620 and members of the miR-200 family inhibit late steps of
25 viral infection. Since none of these miRNAs except miR-185 has been previously associated
26 with HCV infection[39], it might be interesting to further characterize the involvement of these
27 miRNAs in HCV-host interactions. Interestingly, an overall proviral effect of miR-501-3p was
28 also observed by Li and colleagues[2], however the mechanism of action was not studied. By
29 characterizing the role of miR-501-3p in the HCV life cycle, we uncovered OGT as a miR-
30 501-3p target in liver-derived cells and showed for the first time a link between O-
31 GlcNAcylation and HCV infection. These results indicate that genome-wide miRNA functional

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3 1 screens represent a powerful strategy to dissect the role of miRNAs in pathogen-host
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5 2 interactions.

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7 3 While N-glycosylation of HCV envelope glycoproteins plays an important role for
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9 4 escape from virus-neutralizing antibodies[40], so far no functional association between HCV
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11 5 and O-glycosylation has been reported. In contrast to N-linked glycosylation that consists of
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13 6 the attachment of a glycan to a nitrogen of an asparagine residue of proteins in the ER/Golgi
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15 7 prior to their trafficking to the plasma membrane and/or their secretion, the glycosylation of
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17 8 serine and threonine residues with O-GlcNAc is a post-translational modification (PTM) of
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19 9 intracellular proteins that are localized in the nucleus, cytoplasm or mitochondria. The O-
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21 10 glycosylation/deglycosylation of proteins is catalyzed by a single pair of nucleo-cytoplasmic
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23 11 enzymes, OGT/OGA. O-GlcNAcylation is complementary to protein
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25 12 phosphorylation/dephosphorylation, another more broadly known abundant protein PTM that
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27 13 involves numerous kinases/phosphatases. OGT/OGA are often found in protein complexes
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29 14 that also include kinases/phosphatases and a protein can be either O-GlcNAcylated or
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31 15 phosphorylated on a same residue to fine-tune cellular signaling[41]. O-GlcNAcylation and
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33 16 phosphorylation on the same or neighboring serine or threonine residue is known as yin yang
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35 17 site[42].

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38 18 O-GlcNAcylation plays a major role in the regulation of metabolic pathways in the
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40 19 liver, including insulin signaling, bile acid metabolism and lipogenesis[35]. The large number
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42 20 of OGT/OGA substrates and cellular pathways regulated by O-GlcNAcylation hampers a
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44 21 detailed characterization of the role of these proteins in HCV infection. Since i) HCV
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46 22 assembly takes place at ER-derived membranes, ii) OGT/OGA are not known to localize in
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48 23 the ER lumen, and iii) O-GlcNAcylation of extracellular proteins containing EGF-like domains
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50 24 is catalyzed by EGF domain-specific OGT (EOGT) in the ER lumen in an OGT-independent
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52 25 manner[43]), OGT/OGA most likely modulate HCV infection by post-translationally modifying
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54 26 one or several cellular factors required for HCV morphogenesis rather than by affecting viral
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56 27 proteins, although HCV glycoproteins contain putative O-GlcNAcylation sites as determined
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58 28 using OGlcNAcScan, OGTsite and YingOYang1.2 bioinformatics tools (data not shown).

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3 1 Regarding HCV host factors that may be regulated by OGT/OGA, O-GlcNAcylation
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5 2 sites have been predicted in human CLDN1[44] and OCLN at serine sites that can also be
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7 3 phosphorylated and this has been suggested to potentially play a role for HCV entry[45].
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9 4 However, in our experimental setting we did not observe a significant effect of OGT-silencing
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11 5 on the early steps of HCV infection, suggesting that O-GlcNAcylation of CLDN1 and/or
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13 6 OCLN likely does not play a major role in HCV infection. Other host factors important for the
14
15 7 HCV life cycle are well-known O-GlcNAcylated proteins, as for example various nuclear pore
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17 8 complex proteins (Nups) including Nup98, Nup153 and Nup155 that are involved in HCV
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19 9 replication and assembly and/or may be associated with viral particles[46, 47, 48]. However,
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21 10 since depletion of Nups was reported to alter HCV replication and/or assembly but to have
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23 11 no impact on the specific infectivity of HCV particles[46] in contrast to the depletion of OGT
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25 12 as shown here, it is unlikely that a modulation of Nup O-GlcNAcylation accounts for the
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27 13 effects of OGT-silencing and/or OGT/OGA inhibitors on HCVcc infectivity observed in our
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29 14 study. This is in line with our observation that OGT knock-down had no effect on Dengue
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31 15 virus (DENV) replication and infectivity (unpublished observations KH, MZ and Evelyne
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33 16 Schaffer, IBMC, Strasbourg), although Nup98 had been suggested to potentially play a role
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35 17 for DENV infection[46]. These data suggest that OGT does not broadly modulate the
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37 18 infectivity of viruses of the *Flaviviridae* family.

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41 19 However, OGT and/or O-GlcNAcylation have been reported to play a role in the
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43 20 infection with other viruses[49, 50, 51]. Interestingly, while OGT expression modulates the
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45 21 levels of human papillomavirus 16 (HPV16) oncoproteins E6 and E7[52], E6 in turn can up-
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47 22 regulate OGT to increase O-GlcNAcylation and the oncogene activities of HPV[53],
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49 23 suggesting that OGT/O-GlcNAcylation could play a role in virus-induced cancer. In cell
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51 24 culture, HCV infection appeared to be associated with a minor decrease in OGT expression
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53 25 in line with an antiviral role of O-GlcNAcylation. In contrast, an increased OGT expression
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55 26 was observed in HCC tissues of HCV-infected patients. Since OGT has been suggested to
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57 27 activate oncogenic signaling pathways in non-alcoholic steatohepatitis-related HCC[54] and
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59 28 O-GlcNAcylation has been associated with HCC recurrence linked to increased O-

1 GlcNAcylation after liver transplantation[38], these data suggest that in addition to their effect
2 on the HCV life cycle, OGT/O-GlcNAcylation may also play a role in HCV-induced
3 hepatocarcinogenesis.

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1 **Figure legends**

2 **Figure 1. High-throughput screen identifies human miRNAs that regulate the HCV life**
3 **cycle.** (A) Schematic outline of the miRNA mimic screen strategy. Huh7.5.1 cells were
4 transfected with miRNA mimics or controls prior to infection with *Renilla* luciferase HCVcc
5 (JcR2a) two days later (part 1). Cell supernatants of part 1 were used to inoculate naïve
6 Huh7.5.1 cells (part 2). Cells from part 1 and part 2 were lysed at the end of each infection
7 step (2 and 3 days post infection, respectively) to determine luciferase activity. (B)
8 Modulation of HCV entry and replication (part 1) and/or assembly and infectivity (part 2) upon
9 transfection of control non-targeting siRNA (siCtrl, negative control), siCD81 (inhibiting viral
10 entry) or siApoE (inhibiting viral assembly). By inhibiting HCV entry, siCD81 impacts part 1
11 as well as part 2. In contrast, by specifically impairing late steps of HCV replication cycle,
12 siApoE inhibits HCV infection only in part 2. The box plots show the sample lower quartile
13 (25th percentile; bottom of the box), the median (50th percentile; horizontal line in box) and
14 the upper quartile (75th percentile; top of the box) of relative light units (RLU) in each lysate.
15 The whiskers indicate s.d. Data are from three independent experiments. (C) Effects of
16 miRNA overexpression on each part of the HCV life cycle. Data were tested using a
17 moderated t-test (empirical Bayes shrinkage, R-package limma[26]) for the null-hypothesis of
18 no change of a given miRNA compared to the negative control. The resulting p-values for
19 independent testing of each miRNA were corrected for the multiple testing situation and
20 expressed as local false discovery rate (lfdr, R-package fdrtool[27]). miRNAs having a
21 significant effect on either part 1 or 2 of the screen are below the thresholds indicated by
22 dashed lines ($lfdr < 0.00027$ or 0.1226 , respectively). miRNAs that were previously reported
23 to impact on HCV infection as well as miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and miR-4778-
24 5p are highlighted in blue ($Log_2(FC) < 0$) or red ($Log_2(FC) > 0$). Data are from three
25 independent experiments. (D) Effect of miR-140-3p, miR-501-3p, miR-619-3p and miR-4778-
26 5p on the HCV life cycle. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl (Ctrl), miR-140-3p, miR-
27 501-3p, miR-619-3p or miR-4778-5p and infection experiments were carried out as described
28 in A. HCV infection was determined as luciferase activity. Results represent mean

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3 1 percentage \pm s.d. from three independent experiments in triplicate. The dashed line indicates
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5 2 values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value \leq 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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7 3 test.
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11 **Figure 2. OGT is a novel host cell factor involved in the late steps of the HCV life cycle.**

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13 Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with a set of siRNAs against 28 predicted targets of miR-
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15 501-3p and/or miR-619-3p, and infected with HCVcc JcR2A according to the two-step
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17 protocol depicted in Fig. 1A. siCD81, antagomiR-122 and siApoE were used as loss-of-
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19 function controls to perturb HCV entry, translation/replication and assembly, respectively.
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21 miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p, which were ineffective in part 1 of the screen but enhanced
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23 HCV infection in part 2, were transfected in parallel. HCV infection was quantified as fold
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25 change of luciferase activity with respect to negative control (siCtrl). Results for different
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27 replicates are shown as individual points. For each gene, median fold change of luciferase
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29 activity \pm s.d. is shown as black horizontal lines. The dashed line indicates a fold change of
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31 1. Data are from three independent experiments in triplicate. Results for miR-501-3p, miR-
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33 619-3p and siOGT that increase HCV infection in part 2 are depicted in red. Results for
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35 siRNA targeting *PPP3CA*, *CEBPA*, *MID1*, *WDFY3*, *DCX*, *SLC35D1*, *CSDE1*, *GAN*, *USP37*,
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37 *MAPK9*, *DCC*, *RNF144A*, or *PPP2R2C* that significantly modulated HCV infection in part 1
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39 and/or part 2 but did not phenocopy the effect of miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p are depicted in
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22 **Figure 3. miR-501-3p mediates post-transcriptional regulation of OGT by decreasing**

23 **its expression at the protein level.** Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl (Ctrl), a pool
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25 of siRNA against *OGT*, miR-501-3p or miR-619-3p. After 96h, RNA and proteins were
26
27 purified, and *OGT* expression analyzed by RT-qPCR and Western blot. (A) Percentage of
28
29 *OGT* mRNA expression in miRNA-transfected cells as compared to negative control. Results
30
31 are presented as mean \pm s.d. and are from three independent experiments in triplicate. The
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33 dashed line indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value

1 ≤ 0.05, t-test (B) OGT protein expression. Left: percentage of OGT protein expression in
2 siRNA- or miRNA-transfected cells as assessed by quantification of Western blots. OGT
3 levels were normalized to actin levels using ImageLab™ 5.2.1 software (BioRad). Results
4 are presented as mean ± s.d. and are from three independent experiments. The dashed line
5 indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value ≤ 0.05, t-
6 test. Right: representative Western blot analysis. (C) Analysis of miRNA targeting of *OGT*
7 expression by dual luciferase reporter assay. Left: HeLa cells were co-transfected with a
8 miR-501-3p mimic and a dual luciferase reporter plasmid containing either wild type miR-
9 501-3p (RLuc wt *OGT* 3'UTR) or mutated miR-501-3p binding site (RLuc mt *OGT* 3'UTR) to
10 modulate RLuc expression. Co-transfection of the miR-501-3p mimic and empty RLuc vector
11 was used as control. Data are expressed as mean percentage of *Renilla* luciferase activity ±
12 s.d. normalized to *firefly* luciferase, and relative to co-transfection of the vectors with non-
13 targeting miRNA (miR-Ctrl). Results are from three independent experiments in triplicate.
14 The dashed line indicates values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -
15 value ≤ 0.05, t-test. Right: Schematic representation of the used constructs.

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17 **Figure 4. Silencing of *OGT* affects HCV morphogenesis and infectivity.** (A) Analysis of
18 HCV infectivity. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl, a pool of siRNA against *OGT* or
19 ApoE as a loss-of-function control to perturb HCV assembly, prior to infection with HCVcc
20 (Jc1) two days later (entry and replication). Mock-transfected cells were used as control
21 (Ctrl). After another 48h, intra- and extracellular HCVcc particles were used to infect naïve
22 Huh7.5.1 cells (assembly and infectivity). Virus supernatants of Huh7.5.1 cells were assayed
23 by (left) endpoint dilution assay (TCID50). Intra- and extracellular HCV RNA was purified and
24 analyzed by RT-qPCR to calculate (right) the specific infectivity (TCID50/RNA). Data are
25 expressed as mean percentage as compared to control ± s.d. Results are from four
26 independent experiments in triplicate. The dashed line indicates values from control-
27 transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value ≤ 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) Genotype-
28 independent effect of *OGT* on HCV infection. Huh7.5.1 cells were transfected with siCtrl or

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3 1 siOGT prior to infection with HCVcc JcR2a (genotype 2a), H77R2a (genotype 1a) or
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5 2 Con1R2a (genotype 1b). Experiments were carried out and analyzed as described in A. Data
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7 3 are expressed as mean percentage of Renilla luciferase activity as compared to control \pm s.d.
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9 4 Results are from three independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates
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11 5 values from control-transfected cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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13 6 test. (C) Activity of OGT/OGA inhibitors on O-GlcNAcylation. The activity of Ac₄5S-GlcNAc
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15 7 (OGT inhibitor) or Thiamet G (OGA inhibitor) on O-GlcNAcylation of proteins in Huh7.5.1
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17 8 cells was demonstrated by Western blot as described in Supplementary Methods. (D) Effect
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19 9 of O-GlcNAcylation on HCV infectivity. Huh7.5.1 cells were electroporated with HCVcc
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21 10 (JcR2a), prior to treatment with increasing concentrations of Ac₄5S-GlcNAc (OGT inhibitor,
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23 11 left) or Thiamet G (OGA inhibitor, right) 4h later. After 96h, supernatants were transferred
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25 12 onto naïve Huh7.5.1 cells and electroporated cells were lysed to determine luciferase
26
27 13 activity. Luciferase activity in infected Huh7.5.1 cells was assessed 72h later. Data are
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29 14 expressed as mean percentage as compared to control \pm s.d. Results are from three
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31 15 independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates values from vehicle-
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33 16 treated cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test.
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39 18 **Figure 5. Silencing of OGT modulates HCVcc biophysical properties.** (A) Separation of
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41 19 HCVcc by iodixanol density gradient ultracentrifugation. HCVcc were produced in non-
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43 20 targeting siRNA control- or siOGT-transfected Huh7.5.1 cells. After overlaying HCVcc
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45 21 (JcR2A) on a 4%-40% iodixanol step gradient and ultracentrifugation for 16h, fractions of
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47 22 HCV particles were used to infect naïve Huh7.5.1 cells in order to determine TCID₅₀. HCV
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49 23 RNA of each fraction was purified and analyzed by RT-qPCR. Data are expressed as mean \pm
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51 24 s.d. from three independent experiments. (B) Specific infectivity (TCID₅₀/RNA) was
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53 25 calculated and the density was determined by weighting each fraction. Specific infectivity of
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55 26 each fraction is expressed as fold change as compared to the total infectivity of the control.
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57 27 Data are expressed as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments. (C-D) ApoE and
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59 28 ApoB concentrations in the individual fractions were determined by ELISA. The dashed lines
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3 1 indicate limits of quantification of the assays. Data are expressed as mean \pm s.d. from three
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5 2 independent experiments.
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9 4 **Figure 6. Silencing of OGT increases the size of HCVcc.** (A) Representative pictures of
11 5 HCV particles generated in Huh7.5.1 cells transfected with non-targeting siRNA (siCtrl) or
12 6 siOGT. (B-F) Comparative analysis of particle size distribution for immunocapture (IC) from
13 7 HCV particles produced in Huh7.5.1 cells transfected with siCtrl or siOGT prior to infection
14 8 with HCVcc (JcR2a) following sucrose-cushion purification (B) or iodixanol gradient
15 9 fractionation (C-F) of HCVcc. HCVcc were transferred via anti-E2 antibody AR3A on electron
16 10 microscopy (EM) grids through IC. Particle size distribution was assessed from a series of
17 11 randomly acquired electron micrographs with Image-J software (NIH). Results from one of
18 12 three (A-B) or two (C-F) independent experiments are shown. Black lines: size distribution of
19 13 immunocaptured HCVcc produced in siCtrl-transfected cells. Grey lines: size distribution of
20 14 immunocaptured HCVcc produced in siOGT-transfected cells.
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35 16 **Figure 7. OGT expression increases in HCC.** (A-B) Huh7.5.1 cells were infected with HCV
36 17 (JcR2a). After 72h, RNA and proteins were purified, and OGT expression analyzed by RT-
37 18 qPCR and Western blot. (A) Percentage of OGT mRNA expression relative to uninfected
38 19 Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl). Results are presented as mean \pm s.d. from three independent
39 20 experiments in duplicate. The dashed line indicates values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells
40 21 set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) OGT protein expression.
41 22 Left: percentage of OGT protein expression relative to uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl)
42 23 following quantification of Western blots as described in Supplementary Methods. Results
43 24 are presented as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments. The dashed line
44 25 indicates values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05,
45 26 Mann-Whitney test. Right: representative Western blot analysis of OGT and actin. (C) OGT
46 27 expression and viral load in liver tissue from 22 HCV-infected patients and 6 patients not
47 28 infected with HCV described in[55]. Spearman correlation: $\rho = 0.06004019$, p -value = 0.77.
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3 1 (D-E) OGT expression in liver tissue from 22 HCV-infected patients and 6 patients not
4 infected with HCV according to fibrosis (D) or activity (E) scores described in[55]. Wilcoxon
5 test: F1 vs F0 p-value = 0,38; F2 vs F0 p-value = 0,18; F3 vs F0 p-value = 0,43; F4 vs F0 p-
6 value = 0,17; A1 vs A0 p-value = 0,28; A2 vs A0 p-value = 0,23; A3 vs A0 p-value = 0,09. (F)
7 OGT expression in tumor (HCC) and non-tumor (Ctrl) liver tissue from 39 HCV-infected
8 patients, 83 HBV-infected, 80 patients with alcoholic liver disease (ALD) and 13 patients with
9 non-alcoholic liver disease (NAFLD) as described in Supplementary Methods. *, p-value <
10 0.05, Wilcoxon test.
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3 **Table 1. Computational analysis of miR-501-3p and miR-619-3p targets and pathway**
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5 **enrichment.**
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miRNA ID	Target gene symbol	<u>Pathway</u> or network	
miR-501-3p	<i>MEF2A; PPP3CA; PPP3CC</i>	<u>Calcium signaling</u>	
	<i>HMGCS1</i>	<u>Cholesterol biosynthesis</u>	
	<i>AFF4; CHMP1B; CUX1; DCLK1;</i> <i>LMX1A; PTBP2; RBMS1; RC3H1;</i> <i>SCN2A; SEC63; ZFH4</i>	Inflammatory response, dermatological diseases and conditions, inflammatory disease	
	<i>CDK6; CSDE1; GLI2; HOXD10;</i> <i>LSM5; MEF2A; MYCN; OGT;</i> <i>PPP2R2C; PPP2R5E; SEMA3C;</i> <i>TFDP2</i>	Cellular development, nervous system development and function; organ morphology	
	<i>CIT; COL10A1; FNBP1L; GAN;</i> <i>HERC1; KPNA4; NONO; SHPRH;</i> <i>STRN; TARDBP; UBE2H; USP37</i>	Cell death and survival; cellular compromise; free radical scavenging	
	<i>ATXN1; CBLL1; CEBPA; DCC;</i> <i>PEX5L; RCC2; RNF144A; ZC3H12C</i>	Cell morphology, cellular assembly and organization; cellular function and maintenance	
	miR-619-3p	<i>RUNX1T1; SMAD3</i>	<u>Adipocyte biogenesis</u>
		<i>FOXG1; GPBP1; MID1; MKL2; MSI1;</i> <i>PCBP2; WDFY3</i>	Cell cycle; organismal injury and abnormalities; cancer
		<i>ACVR2B; DCX; ESRRG; MAPK9;</i> <i>OGT; PCBP1; PDE3B; SMAD3;</i> <i>SMARCC1; TGFB3; PAPOLA</i>	Carbohydrate metabolism, energy production; small molecule biochemistry
		<i>RUNX1T1; SHANK2; SLC35D1</i>	Gene expression, lipid metabolism, small molecule biochemistry

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4

Supplementary Information

A functional microRNA screen uncovers O-linked N-acetylglucosamine transferase as a host factor modulating hepatitis C virus morphogenesis

Katharina Herzog^{1,2*}, Simonetta Bandiera^{1,2*}, Sophie Pernot^{1,2}, Catherine Fauvelle^{1,2}, Frank Jühling^{1,2}, Amélie Weiss^{2,3,4,5}, Anne Bull⁶, Sarah C. Durand^{1,2}, Béatrice Chane-Woon-Ming^{2,7}, Sébastien Pfeffer^{2,7}, Marion Mercey⁸, Hervé Lerat⁸, Jean-Christophe Meunier⁶, Wolfgang Raffelsberger^{2,3,4,5}, Laurent Brino^{2,3,4,5}, Thomas F. Baumert^{1,2,9,#}, Mirjam B. Zeisel^{1,2,10,#}

¹Inserm, U1110, Institut de Recherche sur les Maladies Virales et Hépatiques, Strasbourg, France; ²Université de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ³Institut de Génétique et de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire, Illkirch, France; ⁴CNRS, UMR7104, Illkirch, France; ⁵Inserm, U1258, Illkirch, France; ⁶Inserm U1259, Faculté de Médecine, Université François Rabelais and CHRU de Tours, Tours, France; ⁷Architecture et Réactivité de l'ARN – UPR 9002, Institut de Biologie Moléculaire et Cellulaire du CNRS, Strasbourg, France; ⁸Institute for Advanced Biosciences, Centre de Recherche UGA - Inserm U1209 - CNRS UMR 5309, Grenoble, France, ⁹Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire, Pôle Hépatodigestif, Hôpitaux Universitaires de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France; ¹⁰Inserm, U1052, CNRS UMR 5286, Centre Léon Bérard (CLB), Cancer Research Center of Lyon (CRCL), Université de Lyon (UCBL), Lyon, France

*Authors contributed equally to this work

Supplementary Material and methods

Cells and cell culture conditions. The source and culture conditions of Huh7.5.1 cells have been described[1]. HeLa cells were purchased from ATCC and cultured in Dulbecco's modified Eagle medium (Gibco® DMEM GlutaMAX™, ThermoFisher Scientific) containing 1% sodium pyruvate as described for Huh7.5.1 cells[1].

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3 1 **Viruses and infectivity assays.** Cell culture-derived recombinant cell culture-derived
4 hepatitis C virus (HCVcc) Jc1 (genotype 2a/2a chimera), H77R2a (genotype 1a/2a chimera
5 engineered for *Renilla* luciferase expression), Con1R2a (genotype 1b/2b chimera engineered
6 for *Renilla* luciferase expression), and JcR2a (genotype 2a/2a chimera engineered for *Renilla*
7 luciferase expression) were generated in Huh7.5.1 cells as described[1, 2, 3, 4]. HCVcc
8 infectivity was determined by calculating the 50% tissue culture infectious dose (TCID50)
9 using anti-NS5A antibody as described[5, 6] or by assessing luciferase activity. HCVcc were
10 used at 10⁵-10⁶ TCID50/mL throughout the study. HCV RNA was purified using a QIAmp viral
11 RNA minikit (Qiagen) and analyzed by one-step RT-qPCR using a Sensi Fast NO ROX kit
12 (Bioline) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Standard curves were performed using
13 10-fold dilution series of HCV RNA.

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16 13 **Purification of HCVcc particles using sucrose cushion or iodixanol density gradient.**
17 HCVcc (JcR2a) were concentrated 10-fold using a Vivaspin column (GE Healthcare). For
18 sucrose cushion purification, HCVcc were purified by overlaying 3.5 mL of culture media on
19 1.5 mL of 20% sucrose, and by ultracentrifuging samples for 4h at 40,000 rpm on a SW-55
20 rotor (Beckman Coulter). Purified HCVcc were resuspended in 30 µL of PBS for analysis via
21 immunocapture and electron microscopy. Density distributions of infectious HCVcc were
22 determined by overlaying 0.5 mL culture media on a 5 mL, 4%-40% iodixanol step gradient,
23 and ultracentrifuging samples for 16h at 40,000 rpm on a SW-55 rotor (Beckman Coulter): 625
24 µl fractions were carefully harvested from the top of each tube, and density was determined
25 by weighing. Infectivity of each fraction was quantified by TCID50 using anti-NS5A antibody
26 as described[5, 6], while HCV RNA of fractions was purified and analyzed as described above.
27 ApoB and ApoE concentrations of fractions were determined by enzyme-linked
28 immunosorbent assay (Human Apolipoprotein B or E ELISA^{PRO} kit, Mabtech) undiluted or in a
29 1:50 dilution, respectively, according to the manufacturer's instructions (Mabtech).

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3 1 **miRNA mimics and siRNAs.** Non-targeting control miRNA, miR-501-3p mimic, miR-619-3p
4 mimic, antagomiR-122, antagomiR-501-3p, non-targeting control antagomiR, non-targeting
5 control siRNA, siRNAs targeting *OGT*, *CD81* or *apolipoprotein E (ApoE)* and a library of 28
6 custom ON-TARGETplus smart pool siRNAs were purchased from Dharmacon (GE
7 Healthcare).

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10 7 **miRNA expression analysis.** Total RNA (100 ng) was purified from control or HCV-infected
11 Huh7.5.1 cells using Tri reagent® (Thermo Scientific) and Direct-zol™ RNA purification kit
12 (Zymo Research). Total RNA was first polyadenylated and reverse transcribed using a
13 miScript II RT system (Qiagen) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The obtained
14 cDNA was subjected to RT-qPCR using miScript SYBR Green kit (Qiagen). Primers were the
15 mature miRNA sequence for the forward primer (Thermo Scientific) and the universal miScript
16 primer (Qiagen) for the reverse primer. Data were analyzed by the $\Delta\Delta C_t$ method using small
17 nucleolar RNA, C/D box 61 (SNORD61) as an endogenous reference and the non-infected
18 samples as a calibrator[7].

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21 17 **Antibodies.** Rabbit anti-OGT antibodies DM-17 and AL24 were purchased from Sigma or
22 kindly provided by Dr. G. W. Hart and Dr. S. Hardivillé (Johns Hopkins University School of
23 Medicine, Baltimore, MD)[8], respectively. Mouse anti- β -actin antibody was purchased from
24 Abcam and mouse, rabbit or sheep HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies (A9044, A0545
25 and A3415, respectively) were purchased from Sigma. Sheep anti-NS5A serum for
26 determination of TCID50 was a kind gift from M. Harris[9]. Human anti-E2 (AR3A) antibody[10]
27 for electron microscopy analysis was kindly provided by Mansun Law (SCRIPPS, California,
28 USA).

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31 26 **Western blotting.** OGT and actin protein expression in human cells was assessed by
32 Western blot as described[8] with some modifications. Briefly, cells were lysed in lysis buffer
33 no. 6 (R&D Systems) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Equal amounts of protein

1 (40 µg) were size-separated through a Mini PROTEAN® TGX Stain-Free™ gel electrophoresis
2 (Bio-Rad) and transferred to PVDF membranes (Bio-Rad). Immunoblots were performed
3 using rabbit anti-OGT (1:2000) and mouse anti-β-actin (1:1000) antibodies[8, 11]. Antigen-
4 antibody complexes were detected by incubating the membrane with the appropriate HRP-
5 conjugated secondary antibodies (1:5000; 1:10,000) and imaged by enhanced
6 chemiluminescence with a ChemiDoc MP imager (Bio-Rad). Quantification of protein
7 expression was performed using ImageLab™ 5.2.1 software (BioRad). For analysis of OGT
8 and GAPDH expression in liver tissue from HCV transgenic (FL-N/35) or wild-type mice[12],
9 crude protein extracts were prepared by homogenization of frozen mouse livers (50–100 µg)
10 in tissue lysis buffer from the Ambion PARIS RNA (Thermo Scientific) and protein isolation kit,
11 supplemented with protease inhibitors (cOmplete™ EDTA-free protease inhibitor mixture,
12 Sigma-Aldrich) and phosphatase inhibitors (PhosSTOP™, Sigma-Aldrich), using a tissue
13 homogenizer (MP Fast Prep24, MP Biomedicals, Santa Ana, CA) and MP Lysing Matrix A
14 tubes. Proteins were quantified using the BCA assay (Thermo Fisher Scientific). Western
15 blotting was performed as described above.

16
17 **Immunocapture and electron microscopy analysis of viral particles.** Sucrose-cushion
18 purified or iodixanol gradient fractionated HCVcc (JcR2a) produced in cells transfected with a
19 non-targeting siRNA control or a pool of siRNA against OGT were transferred via anti-E2
20 antibody AR3A on electron microscopy (EM) grids through immunocapture (IC) as
21 described[13]. Particles were stained with uranyl acetate dihydrate and observed in a JEOL
22 1230 electron microscope. Series of electron micrographs were acquired at random from IC
23 EM grids. The images were then analyzed with Image-J software, to determine the particle
24 size distribution.

25
26 **Gene expression analysis in patient-derived liver tissue.** For OGT expression analysis in
27 patient's samples, raw data were retrieved from the Gene Expression Omnibus (GSE84346)
28 and re-analyzed by quality-trimming (cutadapt) and mapping (HISAT2) to human genome

1 assembly hg19. Reads mapping to Gencode v.19 genes were counted using htseq-count and
2 normalized applying DESeq2. Activity and fibrosis scores as well as viral load were taken from
3 the supplemental data published in[14]. To analyze OGT expression in liver tissue of chronic
4 hepatitis B or C patients, FPKM values and clinical data were retrieved from The Cancer
5 Genome Atlas (TCGA, [https://www.cancer.gov/about-](https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga)
6 [nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga](https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/ccg/research/structural-genomics/tcga)). This data set includes samples from
7 39 HCV-infected patients, 83 hepatitis B virus (HBV)-infected, 80 patients with alcoholic liver
8 disease (ALD) and 13 patients with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

10 **Supplementary References**

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36 37 38 39 40 41 19 **Supplementary figure legends**

42
43 20 **Figure S1. (A) Effect of miR-501-3p inhibition on HCV infectivity.** Huh7.5.1 cells were
44 transfected with control antagomiR (Ctrl), antagomiR-122 as loss-of-function control to perturb
45 HCV replication and antagomiR-501-3p, prior to infection with HCVcc (JcR2a) according to
46 the two-step protocol depicted in Fig. 1A. After 48h, supernatants were transferred onto naive
47 Huh7.5.1 cells. After 72h, Renilla Luciferase activity of infected Huh7.5.1 cells was
48 determined. Data are expressed as mean percentage as compared to Ctrl \pm s.d. Results are
49 from four independent experiments in quadruplicate. The dashed line indicates values from
50 vehicle-treated cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney test. (B) miR-
51 501-3p expression upon HCV infection. Huh7.5.1 cells were infected with HCVcc (JcR2a).

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3 1 After 72h, RNA was purified and miR-501-3p expression analyzed by RT-qPCR. Percentage
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5 2 of miR-501-3p expression relative to uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells (Ctrl). Results are presented
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7 3 as mean \pm s.d. from three independent experiments in duplicate. The dashed line indicates
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9 4 values from uninfected Huh7.5.1 cells set at 100%. Statistics: *, p -value < 0.05, Mann-Whitney
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11 5 test.
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16 7 **Supplementary Table 1. A genome-wide miRNA mimic screen identifies cellular**
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18 8 **miRNAs modulating HCV infection.** Log₂(FC), lfd_r and effect on HCV infection in part 1 and
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20 9 part 2 of the screen are shown for the individual miRNAs of the miRNA mimic library. In red:
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22 10 proviral effect, in blue: antiviral effect. FC: fold change, lfd_r: local false discovery rate
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