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1 **Immune surveillance in clinical regression of pre-invasive squamous cell lung cancer**

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56 **Running Title:** Immune surveillance in regression of preinvasive lung cancer

57

58 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

59 S.A.Q. and C.S. are co-founders of Achilles Therapeutics. C.S. is a shareholder of
60 Apogen Biotechnologies, Epic Bioscience, GRAIL, and has stock options in Achilles
61 Therapeutics. R.R. and N.M. have stock options in and have consulted for Achilles
62 Therapeutics. L.M.C. is a paid consultant for Cell Signaling Technologies, received reagent
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65 Pharmaceuticals Inc., Innate Pharma, and NanoString Technologies, and is a member of the
66 Scientific Advisory Boards of Syndax Pharmaceuticals, Carisma Therapeutics, Zymeworks,
67 Inc, Verseau Therapeutics, Cytomix Therapeutics, Inc., and Kineta Inc.

68

69 **Abstract**

70 Before squamous cell lung cancer develops, pre-cancerous lesions can be found in the
71 airways. From longitudinal monitoring, we know that only half of such lesions become cancer,
72 whereas a third spontaneously regress. While recent studies have described the presence of
73 an active immune response in high-grade lesions, the mechanisms underpinning clinical
74 regression of pre-cancerous lesions remain unknown. Here, we show that host immune
75 surveillance is strongly implicated in lesion regression. Using bronchoscopic biopsies from
76 human subjects, we find that regressive carcinoma *in-situ* lesions harbour more infiltrating
77 immune cells than those that progress to cancer. Moreover, molecular profiling of these
78 lesions identifies potential immune escape mechanisms specifically in those that progress to
79 cancer: antigen presentation is impaired by genomic and epigenetic changes, CCL27/CCR10
80 signalling is upregulated, and the immunomodulator TNFSF9 is downregulated. Changes
81 appear intrinsic to the CIS lesions as the adjacent stroma of progressive and regressive
82 lesions are transcriptomically similar.

83

84 **Statement of Significance**

85 Immune evasion is a hallmark of cancer. For the first time, this study identifies mechanisms
86 by which pre-cancerous lesions evade immune detection during the earliest stages of
87 carcinogenesis and forms a basis for new therapeutic strategies that treat or prevent early
88 stage lung cancer.

89

90

91 Introduction

92 Before the development of lung squamous cell carcinoma (LUSC), pre-invasive lesions
93 can be observed in the airways. These evolve stepwise, progressing through mild and
94 moderate dysplasia (low-grade lesions) to severe dysplasia and carcinoma *in-situ* (CIS; high-
95 grade lesions), before the development of invasive cancer(1). In cross-sectional studies,
96 markers of immune sensing and escape have been associated with increasing grade(2).
97 However, longitudinal bronchoscopic surveillance of such lesions has shown that progression
98 of pre-invasive lesions to cancer is not inevitable; only half of high-grade CIS lesions will
99 progress to cancer within two years, whereas a third will spontaneously regress(3). Our
100 previous work defined the genomic, transcriptomic and epigenetic landscape of carefully
101 phenotyped airway CIS lesions(4). Here, we combine these data with immunohistochemistry
102 (IHC), imaging and transcriptomic analysis of adjacent stroma (**Table S1; Figure S1**) to
103 assess the role of immune surveillance in lesion regression. We identify key immune escape
104 mechanisms enriched in pre-invasive lesions which later progressed to cancer. Understanding
105 these mechanisms may offer new therapeutic strategies to induce regression and prevent the
106 development of invasive disease.

107

108 Results

109 To assess our hypothesis that lesion regression is driven by immune surveillance, we
110 used a deep-learning approach(5) to quantify lymphocytes from hematoxylin and eosin (H&E)
111 stained slides in a large dataset of 112 samples from 62 patients, which contained more
112 infiltrating lymphocytes in regressive lesions than progressive (**Figure 1a**; $p=0.049$). We next
113 performed immunohistochemistry (IHC) on 28 progressive and 16 regressive CIS lesions from
114 29 patients (**Figure 1b-c**). Regressive lesions showed higher concentrations of intra-lesional
115 CD8+ cytotoxic T-cells (**Figure 1a**; $p=0.055$) but no significant difference in CD4+ T helper
116 cells ($p=0.26$) or FOXP3+ regulatory T cells ($p=0.42$). We then quantified immune cells in
117 stromal regions adjacent to CIS lesions, but found no significant differences between
118 progressive and regressive lesions for CD8+ ($p=0.50$), CD4+ ($p=0.43$) or FOXP3+ ($p=0.64$)

119 cells. We confirmed these findings in an independent dataset of 19 progressive and 9
120 regressive samples subjected to multiplex IHC(6,7) (mIHC) using a wider antibody panel of
121 lymphoid biomarkers (**Table S2**), in which we again observed that regressive lesions had an
122 increased proportion of infiltrating lymphocytes (**Figure 2a**; $p=0.032$). Specifically, regressive
123 lesions showed significantly more infiltrating CD3+CD8+ cytotoxic T-cells ($p=0.017$) but no
124 significant difference in CD3+CD4+ T helper cells ($p=0.18$), T regulatory cells ($p=0.12$), B-cells
125 ($p=0.12$), macrophages ($p=0.79$) or neutrophils ($p=0.53$). In the mIHC cohort, the proportion
126 of CD3+CD8+ cells positive for granzyme B and EOMES was similar between progressive
127 and regressive lesions ($p=0.63$ and $p=0.18$ respectively) which may indicate that disruption of
128 T-cell infiltration into lesions has a greater impact on their capacity for immune evasion than
129 impairment of cytotoxic function or differentiation. Again, stromal regions in this cohort showed
130 no significant differences between progressive and regressive lesions.

131 For a broader assessment of transcriptomic differences between CIS lesions and their
132 adjacent stroma, we isolated epithelial tissue and paired stroma separately using laser capture
133 microdissection for 10 progressive and 8 regressive CIS lesions. Similarly to IHC data, cell
134 type deconvolution analysis using the Danaher method(8) demonstrated higher infiltrating
135 lymphocytes within regressive lesions (**Figure 2b**; $p=0.0046$), as did deconvolution of
136 methylation data from 36 progressive and 18 regressive CIS lesions using
137 methylCIBERSORT(9) (**Figure 2c**; $p=0.0081$). Comparing predictions for individual cell types
138 across gene expression and methylation data found an increase in most immune cell types in
139 regressive lesions compared to progressive (**Table S3**).

140 Analysis of cytokines classically considered to be pro- or anti-inflammatory within the
141 epithelial compartment (**Table S4**) demonstrated an increase in pro-inflammatory ($p=3.7 \times 10^{-4}$)
142 but not anti-inflammatory ($p=0.32$) response in regressive lesions compared to progressive
143 (**Figure S2a-f**). *IL2*, *TNF*, *IL12A* and *IL23A* were all increased in regressive lesions (**Figure**
144 **S3a-b**; FDR=0.0081, FDR=0.00051, FDR=0.00078, FDR=0.011 respectively). Only *CXCL8*
145 was upregulated in progressive samples compared to regressive (FDR=0.0063); produced by
146 macrophages, the expression of *CXCL8* correlated strongly with macrophage quantification

147 from deconvoluted gene expression data ($r^2=0.62$, $p=0.007$). Taken together, these data are
148 in keeping with a model in which inflammation via pathways including IL-2 and TNF fosters
149 effective immune surveillance, whilst lesion-associated macrophages – similar to tumor-
150 associated macrophages in advanced cancers – have an immunosuppressive effect.

151 Given the well-known immunosuppressive effects of smoking, we hypothesised that
152 patients who were current smokers were more likely to show reduced immune infiltrate and
153 therefore a higher chance of progression. Smoking status was available for 132 CIS lesions
154 from 59 patients (24 lesions from 13 current smokers; 104 from 43 former smokers; 4 from 3
155 never smokers; **Figure S4a-j**). Using a Cochran-Armitage test to look for a trend from Current
156 to Former to Never smokers, we found a trend towards higher chance of regression ($p=0.002$)
157 and more infiltrating lymphocytes ($p=0.095$). This trend is still observed, yet no longer
158 statistically significant, using a bootstrapping method to account for samples from the same
159 patient ($p=0.069$ for regression; $p=0.12$ for infiltrating lymphocytes). Interestingly, within the
160 former-smoker group we did not observe increasing lymphocytes or chance of regression with
161 increasing time since quitting smoking, suggesting that the observed differences in outcome
162 are driven by the active process of smoking and its direct effects on the immune response,
163 rather than by chronic processes of airway remodelling and repair(10).

164 Recent advances have demonstrated heterogeneity of lung cancer immune infiltration,
165 with patients whose tumors have predominantly infiltrated ‘immune hot’ regions having
166 improved survival as compared to those with abundant poorly infiltrated, ‘immune cold’
167 regions(11,12). Hierarchical clustering of immune cell quantification by mIHC and by
168 deconvolution of both transcriptomic and epigenetic data demonstrated clear clusters of ‘cold’
169 lesions, almost all of which progressed to cancer (**Figure 2d-f**). However, we also observed
170 some ‘hot’ progressive lesions, suggesting the presence of other immune evasion
171 mechanisms in these lesions. We therefore sought to address two questions: firstly, could
172 deficits in antigen presentation and immune recruitment in progressive lesions be identified,
173 which could explain the observed ‘cold’ lesions? Secondly, could disordered immune cell
174 function explain the existence of progressive immune ‘hot’ lesions?

175 The acquisition of mutations that result in clonal neoantigens drives T cell
176 immunoreactivity in cancer(13). We hypothesised that immune-active regressive lesions may
177 contain more neoantigens than progressive lesions, however, this was not supported by
178 whole-genome sequencing data(4) (n=39). Predicted neoantigens correlated very closely with
179 mutational burden ($r^2=0.94$), and progressive lesions have been shown to have significantly
180 higher mutational burden than regressive lesions(4), therefore more neoantigens were
181 identified in progressive than regressive lesions (**Figure S5a-b**; $p=0.088$). This remained true
182 when the analysis was limited to clonal neoantigens (**Figure S5c**; $p=0.023$) and there was no
183 difference in the proportion of neoantigens that were clonal (**Figure S5d**; $p=0.76$). Further,
184 there were no significant differences in binding affinity ($p=0.46$) or differential agretopicity
185 index(14)($p=0.58$) and the ratio of observed to expected neoantigens (“depletion score”(15))
186 was not significantly different (**Figure S5e-h**; $p=0.94$), therefore the putative neoantigens
187 themselves were not qualitatively different in the regressive group. The increased number of
188 neoantigens identified in progressive lesions suggests that immune escape mechanisms must
189 be active in these lesions; indeed, these antigens may act as a selection pressure to promote
190 the development of immune escape(16). Importantly, no overlap in putative tumor neoantigens
191 was observed between different patients suggesting that vaccine-based approaches aiming
192 to prevent progression will most likely need to be designed on a personalised basis.

193 Given that neoantigens are present in progressive lesions, we assessed the ability of
194 these lesions to present antigens to the immune system. In cancer, genomic alterations have
195 previously been associated with modulation of immune response(17,18). We studied
196 mutations and copy number burden of 62 genes expressed by cancer cells which are involved
197 in the following pathways: antigen presentation by MHC mechanisms, antigen processing and
198 immunomodulation (stimulation and inhibition of T-cell responses) (**Figure 3**). Mutations and
199 CNAs in these genes were more prevalent in progressive than regressive samples ($p=0.003$).
200 Four of these genes – *B2M*, *CHUK*, *KDR* and *CD80* – had a significantly elevated dN/dS ratio
201 (19) – comparison of the rates of non-synonymous to synonymous mutations – indicating
202 positive selection for acquisition of mutations in these genes. We observe that expression of

203 immunostimulatory genes predominantly positively correlates with infiltrating lymphocytes in
204 CIS, and these genes are mostly downregulated in progressive compared to regressive CIS.
205 Conversely, inhibitory genes predominantly correlate negatively with infiltrating lymphocytes
206 and are upregulated in progressive lesions.

207 Loss of heterozygosity (LOH) in the HLA region, which is found in 61% of LUSC
208 patients(20), was identified in 34% of patients with CIS lesions. Interestingly, a similar
209 proportion of LUSC patients (28%) demonstrated *clonal* HLA LOH(20), suggesting that such
210 clonal events may often occur prior to tumor invasion; future longitudinal studies will be
211 required to confirm this. We did not find a statistically significant difference in the prevalence
212 of HLA LOH between progressive and regressive lesions ($p=0.25$) although sample numbers
213 were small. Expression of *HLA-A* was significantly reduced in progressive compared to
214 regressive lesions ($p=1.9 \times 10^{-10}$).

215 Additionally, hypermethylation of the HLA region, which is well-described in invasive
216 cancers(21,22), was commonly observed, suggesting that epigenetic HLA silencing may be
217 an important immune escape mechanism in pre-invasive disease. Genome-wide differential
218 methylation analysis between progressive and regressive lesions identified differentially
219 methylated regions (DMRs) including a striking cluster of hypermethylation in chromosome 6
220 ((4); **Figure S6a-b**), covering a region containing all of the major HLA genes. This cluster was
221 also identified in analysis of 370 LUSC versus 42 control samples published by the Cancer
222 Genome Atlas(23). Further analysis of TCGA data demonstrate strong evidence for epigenetic
223 silencing of multiple genes in the antigen presentation pathway: mean methylation beta value
224 over the gene is inversely correlated with expression for *HLA-A* ($r^2=-0.32$, $p=2.5 \times 10^{-10}$), *HLA-*
225 *B* ($r^2=-0.42$, $p<2.2 \times 10^{-16}$), *HLA-C* ($r^2=-0.18$, $p=3.6 \times 10^{-4}$), *TAP1* ($r^2=-0.53$, $p<2.2 \times 10^{-16}$) and *B2M*
226 ($r^2=-0.38$, $p=1.1 \times 10^{-14}$). Similar trends were observed in CIS data (**Figure S7a-b**). The
227 methylation pattern affecting these genes is predominantly promoter hypermethylation
228 (**Figure S8**).

229 Demethylating agents have been shown to promote immune activation through
230 improved antigen presentation, immune migration and T cell activity(24–26). These data

231 support the case for moving on-going trials of demethylating agents in combination with
232 immunotherapy from advanced lung cancer into early disease (examples of such trials include
233 NCT01928576 and NCT03220477, registered at <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>). Additionally,
234 several other cancer-associated pathways are known to be affected by methylation
235 changes(4), therefore the benefits of these drugs may extend beyond immune activation.
236 Nevertheless, we note with caution that some key immune genes demonstrate *positive*
237 correlations in TCGA data between gene expression and methylation, including the immune
238 co-stimulating ligand *TNFSF9* (coding for 4-1BBL) ($r^2=0.32$, $p=1.7\times 10^{-10}$) and the MHC class
239 II transcriptional activator *CIITA* ($r^2=0.39$, $p=2.5\times 10^{-15}$) (**Figure S7**). Further studies will be
240 required to demonstrate that immunological benefits of demethylating agents are not
241 outweighed by effects on these important pathways.

242 Despite this evidence for impairment of antigen presentation mechanisms in CIS, we
243 do observe 'immune hot' CIS lesions which progress to cancer. We therefore next considered
244 functional and microenvironment-related mechanisms to explain how these lesions were able
245 to evade immune predation.

246 To study microenvironment effects on the immune response, we performed gene
247 expression profiling on laser-captured stromal tissue taken from regions adjacent to CIS
248 lesions. In contrast to data from gastrointestinal pre-invasive lesions(27), no genes were
249 significantly differentially expressed on comparing stromal expression between progressive
250 ($n=10$) and regressive ($n=8$) lesions when a FDR of <0.1 was applied. This result holds true
251 with restricted hypothesis testing considering only genes that are related to immunity and
252 inflammation (**Figure 4a-b; Table S4**).

253 Targeting immunomodulatory molecules such as PD-1 now forms part of first-line lung
254 cancer management(28). PD-L1 expression is common in invasive LUSC with estimates of
255 positivity ranging from 34% to 52%, depending on criteria(29). Whilst we did not identify
256 transcriptional upregulation of the PD-L1 gene (*CD274*; **Figure 4c-d**), IHC data identified 3
257 samples with $>25\%$ of epithelial cells (PanCK+) also positive for PD-L1 (**Figure 4e**), all of

258 which progressed to cancer, suggesting that targeting this pathway early in the clinical course
259 may have therapeutic benefit in selected patients.

260 To investigate the role of immunomodulatory molecules more broadly in pre-invasive
261 immune escape, we performed differential expression analysis between progressive and
262 regressive lesions, focused on 28 known immunomodulatory genes (**Table S4**). *TNFSF9* (4-
263 1BBL, CD137L) was significantly downregulated in progressive lesions (FDR=4.34x10⁻⁵;
264 **Figure 4c-d**) with no corresponding change identified in its receptor *TNFRSF9* (FDR=0.6).
265 These findings were corroborated by IHC (**Figure 4e-f**). *TNFSF9* promotes activation of T
266 cells and natural killer (NK) cells(30); in CIS lesions *TNFSF9* expression correlates with
267 cytotoxic cell ($r^2=0.77$, $p=0.0002$) and NK cell infiltration ($r^2=0.54$, $p=0.02$), as predicted from
268 gene expression data. Agonists of the *TNFSF9* receptor have been shown to be clinically
269 efficacious in several cancers(31–33) and these data support their investigation in targeted
270 early lung cancer cohorts. Furthermore, individual lesions showed notably high or low
271 expression of other immunomodulatory genes, raising the possibility that other
272 immunomodulators may be targets for therapy in individual cases (**Figure S9**).

273 To identify differences in cytokine responses between progressive and regressive
274 lesions, we calculated the ligand:receptor mRNA expression ratio for 52 known
275 cytokine:receptor pairs(34). Only one, *CCL27:CCR10*, was significant with FDR < 0.01 (Fold
276 change 1.55, FDR 0.003); progressive samples express more *CCL27* ($p=2.6\times 10^{-6}$) and less
277 *CCR10* ($p=0.1\times 10^{-4}$) than regressive (**Figure 4c-d**). Whilst sample numbers were small, these
278 findings were broadly supported by IHC (**Figure 4e-g**). *CCL27:CCR10* signaling has been
279 associated with immune escape in melanoma through PIK/Akt activation in a mouse
280 model(35); in CIS, *CCL27* expression correlates with expression of both *PIK3CA* ($r^2=0.61$,
281 $p=0.008$) and *AKT1* ($r^2=0.68$, $p=0.002$) (**Figure S10a-b**). *CCL27* is minimally expressed in
282 both normal lung tissue and invasive squamous cell lung cancer(23,36), suggesting that this
283 effect is specific to early carcinogenesis and therefore warrants further investigation as a
284 target for preventative therapy.

285 Our previous research highlighted occasional cases of ‘late progressive’ lesions, which
286 met a clinical endpoint of regression (defined by the subsequent biopsy at the same site
287 showing resolution to normal epithelium or low-grade dysplasia) but the index CIS biopsy had
288 the molecular appearance of a progressive lesion, and it indeed subsequently developed
289 cancer months or years later. Clinical review identified 11 lesions across the 53 regressive
290 lesions in our current cohort (20.7%) that at later clinical follow up subsequently progressed
291 to cancer, and hence are termed ‘late progressive’. These included 4 previously published
292 lesions subjected to whole-genome sequencing and/or methylation and shown to display the
293 genomically unstable appearance of progressive lesions, as well as 7 with
294 immunohistochemistry data and 10 with lymphocyte quantification performed from H&E slides
295 (**Table S1; Figure S1**). Interestingly, based on these data, late progressive lesions appear
296 immunologically similar to regressive lesions, showing increased infiltration with lymphocytes
297 and CD8+ T-cells compared to progressive lesions (**Figure S11**).

298 Whilst we acknowledge that sample numbers are small when examining subgroups of
299 regressive lesions in this way, our data support a model in which lesions can be considered
300 on two axes: genomic stability and immune competence. Our previous work predicts that
301 chromosomally unstable lesions will usually progress, implying that they have escaped
302 immune predation. Yet some may regress if they remain immune competent only to later
303 progress, potentially due to their genomic instability making them more likely to evolve immune
304 escape mechanisms during regression, and hence become ‘late progressors’. Of 11 late
305 progressors in this cohort, median time from regressive index biopsy to progression was 3.2
306 years (range 0.8-4.6 years). This time period represents a change from a point of known
307 immune competence to demonstrated immune escape. Hence, we might estimate that a
308 successful therapeutic strategy to block a particular immune escape mechanism might delay
309 the onset of cancer by around 3 years. Of the remaining 42 regressive samples in this cohort,
310 median follow-up time was 4.73 years (range 0.42-13.5 years), suggesting that genomically
311 ‘stable’ samples are likely to regress and remain regressed long-term. Given their

312 immunological competence, late progressors are included in the regressive cohort when
313 analysing immune escape mechanisms in this study.

314

315

316 **Discussion**

317 In summary, we present evidence that immune surveillance may play a critical
318 role in spontaneous regression of pre-cancerous lesions of the airways. Whilst recent cross-
319 sectional studies have greatly furthered our understanding of immune signals prior to cancer
320 invasion, and indeed at earlier disease stages than CIS(2,12), we have for the first time shown
321 an association with lesion regression. Including such outcome data offers insight into the
322 dynamics of immune surveillance and evasion; assuming that lesion regression is driven by
323 immune surveillance – which is likely based on our data – we are able to directly compare
324 preinvasive lesions which are immune competent (regressed) with those that are able to
325 evade immune predation (progressed). Analysis of ‘late progressive’ samples furthers this
326 model by providing estimates of timescales over which immune evasion evolves. Hence we
327 provide a roadmap for manipulation of the immune system as a cancer intervention strategy,
328 by identifying and targeting differences between these two immune states.

329 To this end, we identify mechanisms of immune escape present before the point of
330 cancer invasion, many of which offer potential therapeutic targets. These data present an
331 opportunity to induce regression and prevent cancer development. Demethylating agents, 4-
332 1BB agonists and CCL27 blockade are therapeutic candidates that warrant further research,
333 as well as targeting the PD-1/PD-L1 axis in highly selected patients. As a result of field
334 carcinogenesis, patients with pre-invasive lesions are at risk of synchronous cancers at other
335 sites, which are likely to be clonally related(4,37) and therefore may benefit from systemic
336 immunomodulatory treatment. The data presented here support a new paradigm of
337 personalised immune-based systemic therapy in early disease.

338

339 **Methods**

340 Additional methods are provided in a supplementary file accompanying this manuscript.

341

342 **Ethical approval**

343 All tissue and bronchial brushing samples were obtained under written informed patient
344 consent and were fully anonymized. Study approval was provided by the UCL/UCLH Local
345 Ethics Committee (REC references 06/Q0505/12 and 01/0148). All relevant ethical regulations
346 were followed.

347

348 **Cohort description and patient characteristics**

349 For over 20 years, patients presenting with pre-invasive lesions, which are precursors
350 of squamous cell lung cancer (LUSC), have been referred to the UCLH Surveillance Study.
351 As previously described(3), patients undergo repeat bronchoscopy every four months, with
352 definitive treatment performed only on detection of invasive cancer. Autofluorescence
353 bronchoscopy is used to ensure the same anatomical site is biopsied at each time point. Gene
354 expression, methylation and whole genome sequencing data of carcinoma in-situ (CIS)
355 samples have been performed on this cohort, and data have been published(4). These data
356 are used in this study.

357 All patients enrolled in the UCLH Surveillance Study who met a clinical end point of
358 progression or regression were included; by definition they underwent an 'index' CIS biopsy
359 followed by a diagnostic cancer biopsy (progression) or a normal/low-grade biopsy
360 (regression) four months later. Index lesions were identified between 1999 and 2017. Cases
361 meeting an end-point of regression underwent clinical review to identify those which
362 subsequently progressed; 11 samples (20.7%) were identified, which are described as 'late
363 progressors' in the main text. Of these 11, median time from 'regressive' index biopsy to
364 progression was 3.2 years (range 0.8-4.6 years) whilst the remaining 42 samples had a
365 median follow up time of 4.73 years (range 0.42-13.5 years). Whilst we cannot fully exclude
366 that any regressive sample may later develop cancer, the fact that median follow up in the

367 study group was longer than the maximum follow up in the late progression group suggests
368 that late progression in included samples is unlikely.

369 All samples underwent laser capture microdissection (LCM) to ensure only CIS cells
370 underwent molecular profiling. Methods for sample acquisition, quality control and mutation
371 calling are as previously described, as are full details regarding patient clinical characteristics.

372 Briefly, gene expression profiling was performed using both Illumina and Affymetrix
373 microarray platforms. Normalisation was performed using proprietary Illumina software and
374 the RMA method of the *affy*(38) Bioconductor package respectively. This study includes 18
375 previously unpublished gene expression arrays from stromal tissue. These samples were
376 collected using LCM to identify stromal regions adjacent to 18 already-published CIS samples
377 (corresponding to the 18 samples undergoing Affymetrix microarray profiling described
378 above). These new stromal samples underwent Affymetrix profiling using the exact same
379 methodology as previously described for CIS tissue samples. To avoid issues related to batch
380 effects between platforms, the analyses in this paper utilise only samples profiled on
381 Affymetrix microarrays, which include both CIS and matched stromal samples (see
382 **Supplementary Methods and Table S5**).

383 Methylation profiling was performed using the Illumina HumanMethylation450k
384 microarray platform. All data processing was performed using the ChAMP Bioconductor
385 package(39).

386 Whole genome sequencing data was obtained using the Illumina HiSeq X Ten system.
387 A minimum sequencing depth of 40x was required. BWA-MEM was used to align data to the
388 human genome (NCBI build 37). Unmapped reads and PCR duplicates were removed.
389 Substitutions, insertions-deletions, copy number aberrations and structural rearrangements
390 were called using CaVEMan(40), Pindel(41,42), ASCAT(43) and Brass(44) respectively.

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396 **Sample selection for profiling**

397 As previously described, all patients enrolled in the surveillance programme discussed above
398 were considered for this study. For a given CIS lesion under surveillance, when a biopsy from
399 the same site in the lung showed evidence of progression to invasive cancer or regression to
400 normal epithelium or low-grade dysplasia, we defined the preceding CIS biopsy as a
401 progressive or regressive 'index' lesion respectively. Due to the small size of bronchoscopic
402 biopsy samples, not all profiling techniques were applied to all samples. Patients with Fresh
403 Frozen (FF) samples underwent whole genome sequencing and/or methylation analysis
404 depending on sample quality. Patients with formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded (FFPE) samples
405 underwent gene expression analysis. Further detail is available in our previous manuscript(4).
406 Additionally, any patient with an available FFPE block underwent image analysis as described
407 below, and all patients with Affymetrix-based gene expression profiling underwent further
408 profiling of laser-captured adjacent stroma.

409

410

411 **Statistical Methods**

412 Unless otherwise specified, all analyses were performed in an R statistical
413 environment (v3.5.0; www.r-project.org/) using Bioconductor(45) version 3.7. Code to
414 reproduce a specific statistical test is publicly available at the Github repository above.

415 Unless otherwise stated, comparisons of means between two independent groups are
416 performed using a two-sided Wilcoxon test. In some cases, multiple samples have been
417 profiled from the same patient, although always from distinct sites within the lung. In such
418 cases we used mixed effects models to compare means between groups, treating the patient
419 ID as a random effect, as implemented in the Bioconductor *lme4* library(46), with p-values
420 calculated using the Anova method from the Bioconductor *car* library (available from
421 <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/car>). Differential expression was performed using the
422 *limma*(47) Bioconductor package to compare microarray data between two groups. When

423 adjustment for multiple correction is required we quote a False Discovery Rate (FDR) which
424 is calculated using the Benjamini-Hochberg method(48). Cluster analysis and visualization
425 was performed using the *pheatmap* Bioconductor package (available from [https://cran.r-](https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/pheatmap/)
426 [project.org/web/packages/pheatmap/](https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/pheatmap/)).

427

428 **Data Availability**

429 All raw data used in this study is publicly available. Previously published CIS gene
430 expression and methylation data is stored on GEO under accession number GSE108124;
431 matched stromal gene expression data is stored under accession number GSE133690.
432 Previously published CIS whole genome sequencing data is available from the European
433 Genome Phenome Archive (<https://www.ebi.ac.uk/ega/>) under accession number
434 EGAD00001003883. Annotated H&E images of all samples used for lymphocyte quantification
435 were deposited to the Image Data Resource (<https://idr.openmicroscopy.org>) under accession
436 number idr0082.

437

438 **Code Availability**

439 All code used in our analysis will be made available at [http://github.com/ucl-](http://github.com/ucl-respiratory/cis_immunology)
440 [respiratory/cis_immunology](http://github.com/ucl-respiratory/cis_immunology) on publication. All software dependencies, full version
441 information, and parameters used in our analysis can be found here.

442

443 **Author Contributions**

444 A.P. and V.H.T. contributed equally to this work, as did K.A., S.E.A.R. and T.L.. A.P.,
445 V.H.T., N.M. and S.M.J. co-wrote the manuscript. S.M.J., S.A.Q., V.H.T. and A.P. conceived
446 the study design. V.H.T., D.C., F.R.M. and S.A. performed stromal LCM and gene expression
447 profiling experiments. C.P.P. and C.T. performed methylation experiments. H.L-S. and P.J.C.
448 performed genomic experiments. A.A., T.L., J.Y.H., L.K. and T.M. designed and performed
449 IHC experiments. Further quantitative multiplex IHC was performed by C.M., M-L.A-L., W.L.,
450 C.B. and L.C.. K.A., S.E.A.R., Y.B.H. and Y.Y. performed cell quantification on H&E and IHC

451 images. S.M.J., P.J.G., B.C. and R.M.T. led the bronchoscopic surveillance programme
452 through which samples were obtained. M.F. and D.M. performed histological review. P.F.D.
453 performed pathological processing. A.P. performed bioinformatic analysis, supported by R.R.
454 and N.M.. R.E.H., K.H.C.G., C.D., A.F., N.M., C.S., C.T., S.A.Q. and N.M. gave advice and
455 reviewed the manuscript. S.M.J. provided overall study oversight.

456

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- 619

620 **Figure legends**

621

622 **Figure 1. Immune cell infiltration of lung carcinoma-in-situ lesions.** a) Combined
623 quantitative immunohistochemistry data of CD4, CD8 and FOXP3 staining (n=44; 28
624 progressive, 16 regressive) with total lymphocyte quantification from H&E images (n=112; 68
625 progressive, 44 regressive) shown. We observe increased lymphocytes (p=0.049) and CD8+
626 cells (p=0.055) per unit area of epithelium within regressive CIS lesions compared to
627 progressive. Stromal regions adjacent to CIS lesions showed no significant differences in
628 immune cells between progressive and regressive lesions. p-values are calculated using
629 linear mixed effects models to account for samples from the same patient; #p<0.1, *p<0.05.
630 (b-c) Immunohistochemistry images of (b) progressive CIS lesion and (c) regressive CIS
631 lesion with CD4+ T helper cells stained in brown, CD8+ cytotoxic T-cells in red and FOXP3+
632 T regulatory cells in blue. Immune cells are separately quantified within the CIS lesion and in
633 the surrounding stroma.

634

635 **Figure 2. Identification of immune ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ carcinoma in-situ lesions by immune**
636 **cell clustering.** Regressive lesions harbored significantly more infiltrating lymphocytes as
637 assessed by multiplex immunohistochemistry (a; p=0.032 comparing percentage of all
638 nucleated cells identified as T-cells (CD45+CD3+) or B-cells (CD45+CD3-CD20+) between
639 19 progressive and 9 regressive lesions). This finding was corroborated by molecular data in
640 partially overlapping datasets; regressive lesions had higher gene-expression derived Tumor
641 Infiltrating Lymphocyte (TIL) scores (b; p=0.0046; n=10 progressive, 8 regressive) and a
642 higher proportion of immune cells as estimated from methylation data using
643 methylCIBERSORT (c; p=0.0081; n=36 progressive, 18 regressive). d) Immune cell
644 quantification from IHC data (n=28) shows an ‘immune cold’ cluster (left) in which most lesions
645 progressed to cancer, and an ‘immune hot’ cluster (right) in which the majority regressed.
646 Similar clustering patterns are seen in deconvoluted gene expression data (e; n=18) and on
647 methylation-derived cell subtypes using methylCIBERSORT (f; n=54). p-values are calculated

648 using mixed effects models to account for samples from the same patient.

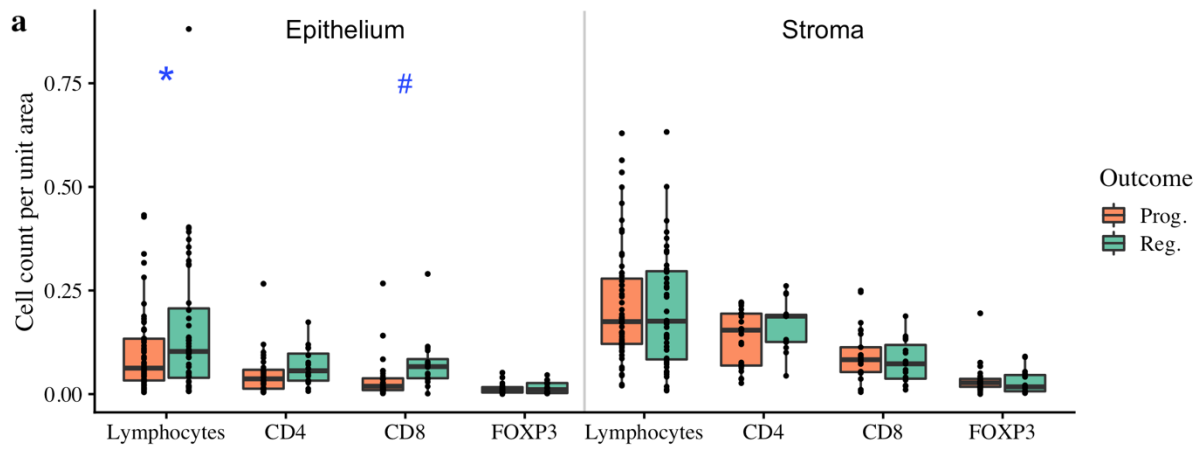
649

650 **Figure 3. Genomic aberrations affecting immune genes in lung carcinoma *in-situ***
651 **lesions.** The mutational status is shown for 62 genes involved in the immune response,
652 which are expressed by antigen presenting (tumor) cells. Genes are categorized as
653 belonging to the Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC) class I or II; stimulators (Stim) and
654 inhibitors (Inhib) of the immune response, and genes involved in antigen processing (Ag-
655 Proc). Mutations and copy number aberrations (CNAs) are shown for each of 29 progressive
656 and 10 regressive samples. Loss of heterozygosity (LOH) events are shown as mutations to
657 avoid confusion with copy number loss, relative to ploidy. The GXN PvR column displays the
658 fold-change in expression of each gene between progressive and regressive samples,
659 defined in a partially overlapping set of 18 samples. Significant genes, defined as False
660 Discovery Rate < 0.05, are highlighted in blue. The TILcor column displays the Pearson's
661 correlation coefficient between the expression of each gene and the gene-expression based
662 tumour infiltrating lymphocyte (TIL) score, derived by the DanaHER method. Progressive
663 samples had more mutations ($p=0.028$) and CNAs ($p=0.0038$) than regressive in this gene
664 set. dN/dS analysis identified *B2M*, *CHUK*, *KDR* and *CD80* as showing evidence of
665 selection.

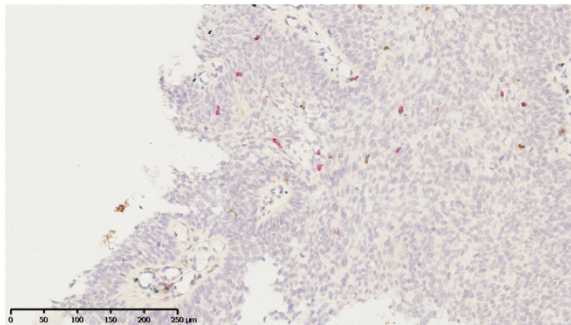
666
667 **Figure 4. Immune escape mechanisms in CIS beyond antigen presentation. (a)**
668 Volcano plot of gene expression differential analysis of laser-captured stroma comparing
669 progressive (n=10) and regressive (n=8) CIS samples. No genes were significant with FDR
670 < 0.05 following adjustment for multiple testing. (b) Principle component analysis plot of the
671 same 18 CIS samples, showing laser-captured epithelium and matched stroma. (c-d) RNA
672 analysis of immunomodulatory molecules and cytokine:receptor pairs in n=18 CIS samples
673 identified TNFSF9 and CCL27:CCR10 as significantly differentially expressed between
674 progressive and regressive samples ($p=0.0000058$ and $p=0.0000019$ respectively). (e)
675 Immunohistochemistry showed that TNFSF9 was similarly differentially expressed at the
676 protein level ($p=0.057$; n=7 with successful staining). (f) Illustrative immunohistochemistry
677 staining for TNFSF9. CCL27 and CCR10 showed a similar trend at the protein level to the

678 RNA level (e,g); whilst these data did not achieve a significance threshold (g; $p=0.49$ for
679 CCL27:CCR10 ratio, $n=10$) we observe several outliers in the progressive group. Analysis of
680 PD-L1 (encoded by CD274) and its receptor PD-1 (encoded by PDCD1) is included due to
681 its relevance in clinical practice; again we do not achieve statistically significant results but
682 do observe three marked outliers with PD-L1 expression $>25\%$, all of which progressed to
683 cancer. All p-values are calculated using linear mixed effects modeling to account for
684 samples from the same patient; *** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ # $p < 0.1$. Units for gene
685 expression figures represent normalised microarray intensity values.
686

Figure 1

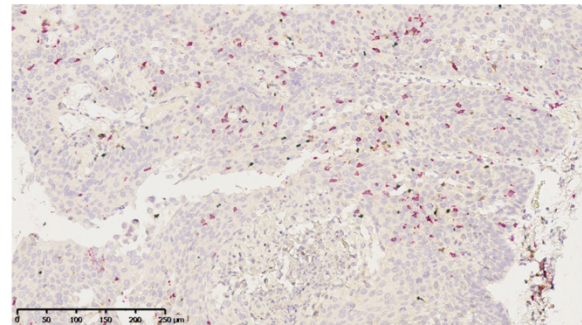


b



Progressive CIS lesion

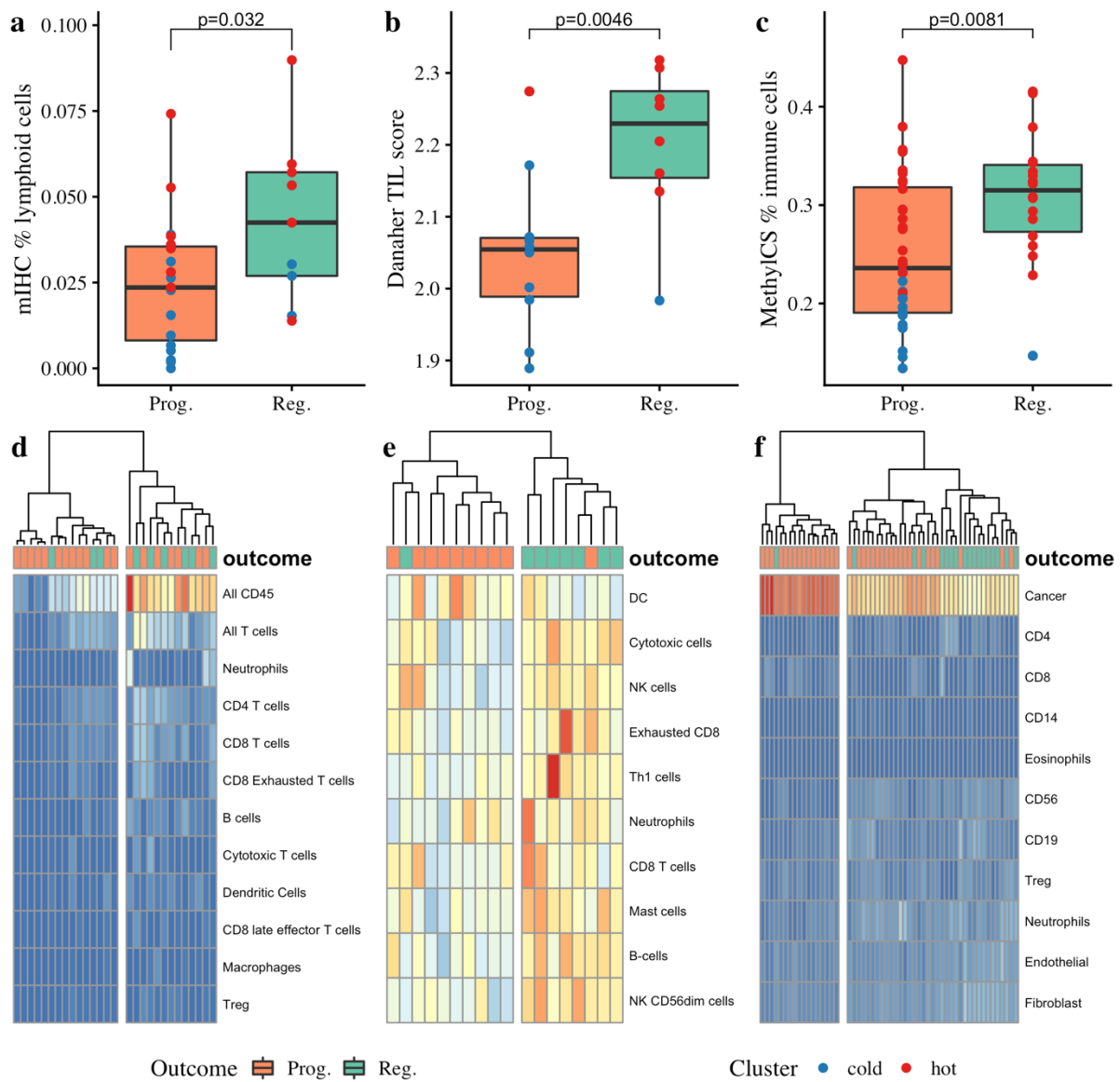
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Regressive CIS lesion

687

Figure 2



688

Figure 3

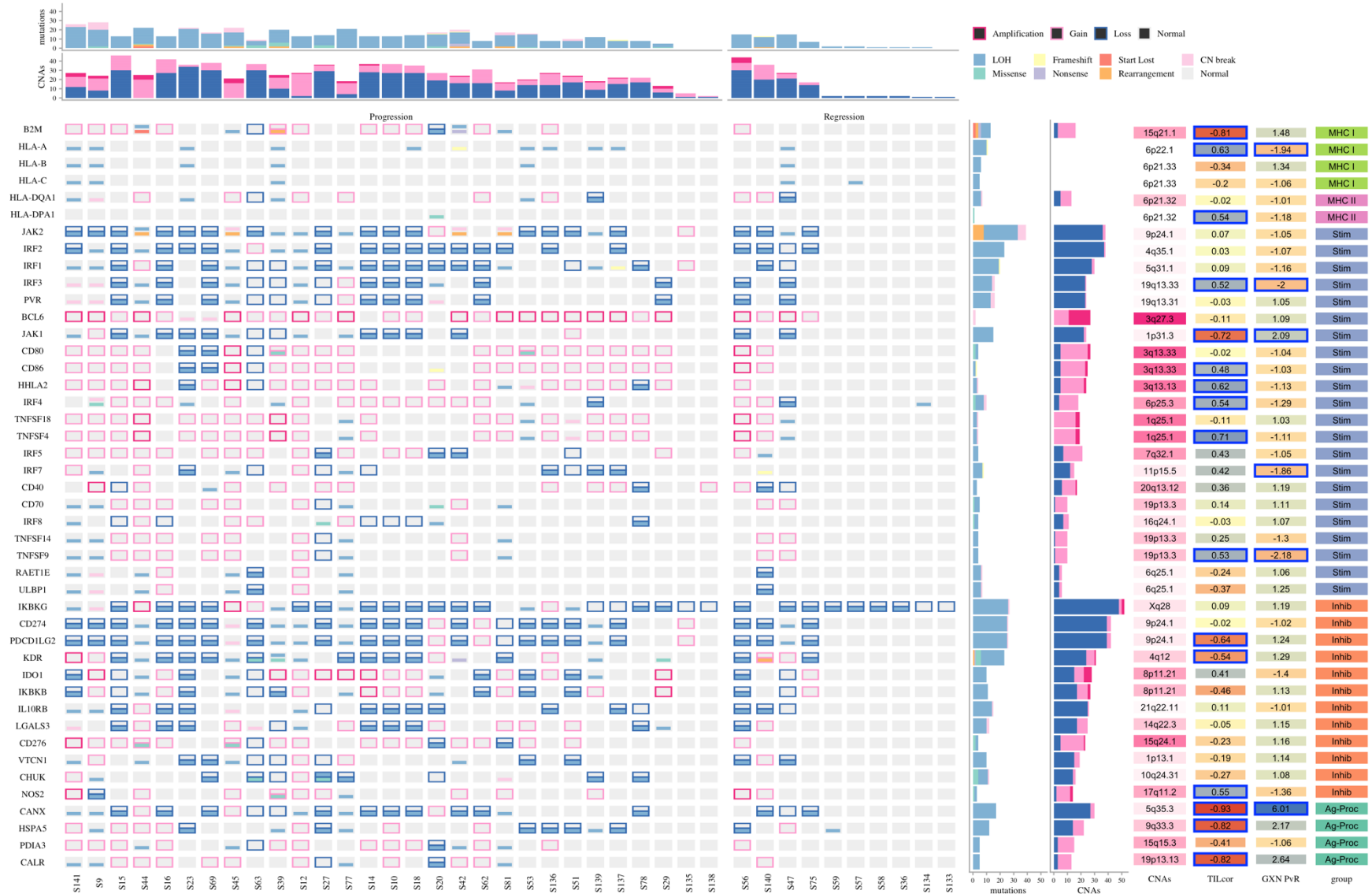
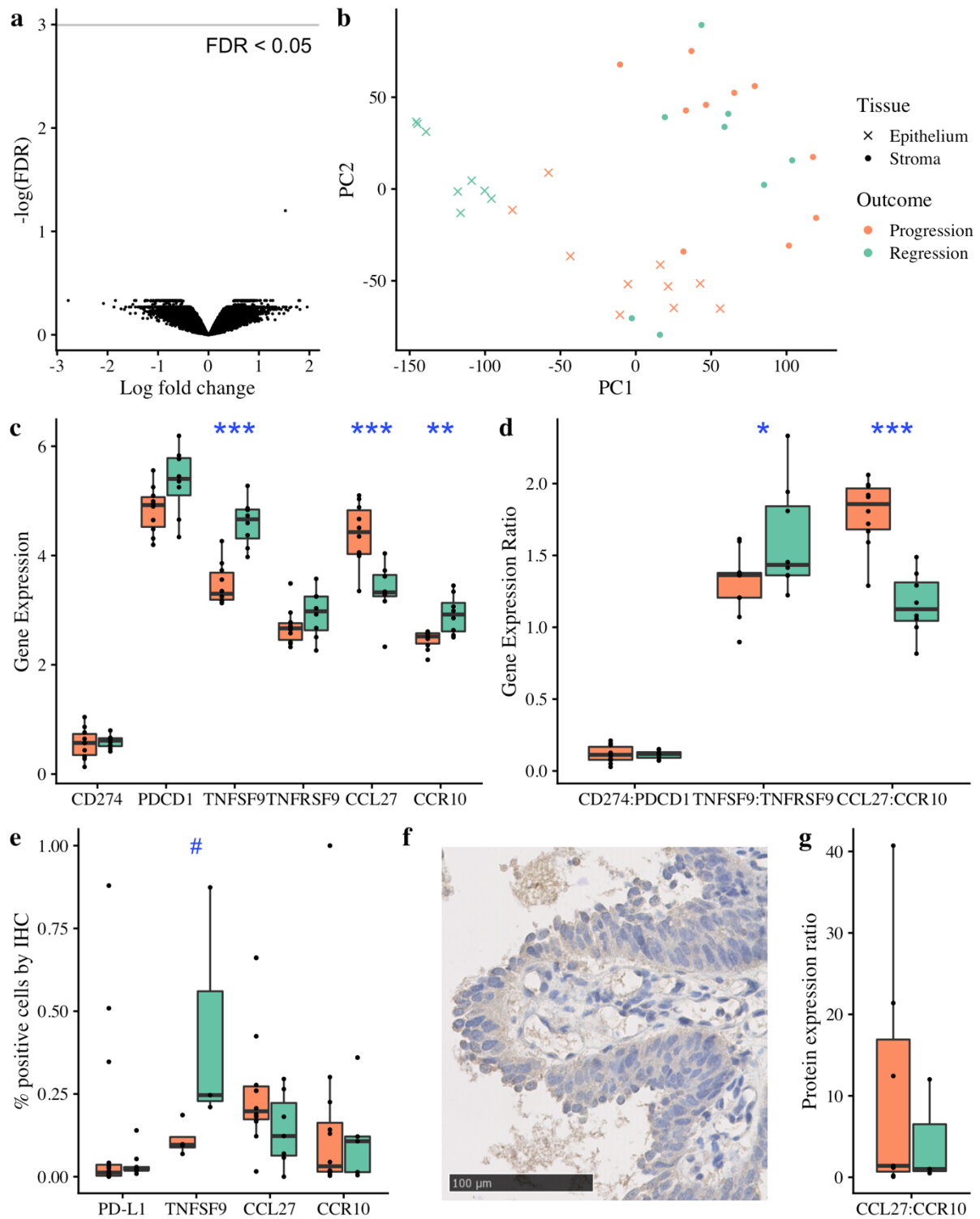


Figure 4



690

CANCER DISCOVERY

Immune surveillance in clinical regression of pre-invasive squamous cell lung cancer

Adam Pennycuick, Vitor H Teixeira, Khalid AbdulJabbar, et al.

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