

Fertility and Sterility

Comparison of different sources of platelet-rich plasma as treatment option for infertility-causing endometrial pathologies

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Abstract:	<p>Objective. To study the effect of human plasma from different sources such as umbilical cord blood and adult blood platelet-rich plasma (PRP) on the regeneration of endometrial damage.</p> <p>Design. Composition analysis, <i>in vitro</i> approaches and a pre-clinical murine model using plasma to promote endometrial regeneration.</p> <p>Setting. Hospital and university laboratories.</p> <p>Patients/Animals. Adult plasma from 4 Asherman's Syndrome/Endometrial Atrophy patients and one fertile woman, commercial umbilical cord plasma and uterine-damaged NOD/SCID mice model were used.</p> <p>Intervention(s). Endometrial stromal cells from primary culture and an endometrial stem cell line were cultured <i>in vitro</i> and uterine-damaged NOD/SCID mice were treated with plasma samples from several origins.</p> <p>Main Outcome Measure(s). All plasma samples contain molecules with a high potential for regeneration (SCF, PDGFBB, THBS1, VWF). Furthermore, the highest increase in <i>in vitro</i> proliferation and migration rate was found when endometrial stromal cells were treated with umbilical cord plasma, adult PRP also revealed a significant increment. In the mouse model, a higher expression of Ki67 and Hoxa10 in the endometrium was detected after applying adult PRP and the proteomic analysis revealed a specific protein expression profile depending on the treatment. The damaged uterine tissue showed more pro-regenerative markers after applying umbilical cord plasma (Stat5a, Uba3, Thy1) in comparison to the other treatments (non-activated umbilical cord plasma, activated adult PRP and not treatment).</p> <p>Conclusion. Human PRP possesses regeneration properties usable for endometrial pathologies. Besides that, these regenerative effects seem to be more apparent when the source of obtaining is umbilical cord blood.</p>

1 **Running title:** Endometrial regeneration using plasma

2 **Title:** Comparison of different sources of platelet-rich plasma as treatment
3 option for infertility-causing endometrial pathologies

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19 **Capsule:** According to a composition analysis, *in vitro* and *in vivo* assays,
20 platelet-rich plasma seems to be a promising option for enhancing endometrial
21 regeneration, especially when coming from umbilical cord blood.

22

1 **ABSTRACT**

2 **Objective.** To study the effect of human plasma from different sources such as
3 umbilical cord blood and adult blood platelet-rich plasma (PRP) on the
4 regeneration of endometrial damage.

5 **Design.** Composition analysis, *in vitro* approaches and a pre-clinical murine
6 model using plasma to promote endometrial regeneration.

7 **Setting.** Hospital and university laboratories.

8 **Patients/Animals.** Adult plasma from 4 Asherman's Syndrome/Endometrial
9 Atrophy patients and one fertile woman, commercial umbilical cord plasma and
10 uterine-damaged NOD/SCID mice model were used.

11 **Intervention(s).** Endometrial stromal cells from primary culture and an
12 endometrial stem cell line were cultured *in vitro* and uterine-damaged
13 NOD/SCID mice were treated with plasma samples from several origins.

14 **Main Outcome Measure(s).** All plasma samples contain molecules with a high
15 potential for regeneration (SCF, PDGFBB, THBS1, VWF). Furthermore, the
16 highest increase in *in vitro* proliferation and migration rate was found when
17 endometrial stromal cells were treated with umbilical cord plasma, adult PRP
18 also revealed a significant increment. In the mouse model, a higher expression
19 of Ki67 and Hoxa10 in the endometrium was detected after applying adult PRP
20 and the proteomic analysis revealed a specific protein expression profile
21 depending on the treatment. The damaged uterine tissue showed more pro-
22 regenerative markers after applying umbilical cord plasma (Stat5a, Uba3, Thy1)
23 in comparison to the other treatments (non-activated umbilical cord plasma,
24 activated adult PRP and not treatment).

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1 **Conclusion.** Human PRP possesses regeneration properties usable for
2 endometrial pathologies. Besides that, these regenerative effects seem to be
3 more apparent when the source of obtaining is umbilical cord blood.

4 **Keywords:** Asherman's Syndrome, Endometrial Atrophy, platelet-rich plasma,
5 umbilical cord blood, Regenerative Medicine.

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INTRODUCTION

The endometrium is an extremely regenerative and complex tissue lining the uterus. It is responsible for embryo implantation and the success of the future pregnancy during the female reproductive life (1,2). However, some disorders affecting this tissue can complicate the implantation process (3–5). In this context, Asherman’s Syndrome (AS) and Endometrial Atrophy (EA) are relevant endometrial pathologies causing these types of fertility problems. AS is defined by the presence of intrauterine adhesions, which contribute to a partial or complete absence of functional endometrium (6), while EA is characterized by insufficient endometrial growth (7). Women suffering from AS or EA have a lower probability of a successful pregnancy because of impaired implantation and early abortion (8). However, until now, there has not been a completely effective and reliable therapy. Different treatments have been proposed (7), but only stem cell therapy has shown any effectiveness (9–14). Nevertheless, this kind of treatment implies invasive and expensive procedures. For this reason, the medical and scientific community is still looking for alternative and cost-effective therapies. In the last years, platelet-rich plasma (PRP) has been proposed as a promising alternative: PRP can easily be isolated and applied non-invasively and moreover this can be done autologously.

Over the last two decades, PRP has been used in different medical fields ranging from dermatology to dental surgery (15–17). PRP is a plasma fraction with a platelet concentration above the normal average (~200.000 platelets/ μ l) (18). It is known that platelet α -granules deliver, after activation, cytokines, chemokines, and different growth factors such as platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF), vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), hepatocyte growth factor

1 (HGF), transforming growth factor beta (TGFβ), or stromal cell-derived factor 1
2 alpha (SDF1α). Therefore, PRP is enriched in these factors (18,19), which play
3 a crucial role in the recruitment of different cell types that proliferate and migrate
4 towards the injured site, promoting tissue regeneration and angiogenesis
5 (18,20).

6 More recently, PRP has started to be used in reproductive medicine. Different
7 groups have shown positive results using *in vitro* experiments using human
8 endometrial cells (21–23). Furthermore, rodent models have also shown
9 promising results, describing how PRP administration in damaged uterine horns
10 enhances cell proliferation, reduces fibrosis, and even increases implantation
11 sites (24,25). Some “proof of concepts” in humans have been carried out too,
12 instilling autologous PRP in patients with a thin endometrium (26–28). However,
13 there is still a need for a profound understanding of its mechanism of action.

14 Going one step forward, PRP can be obtained not only from adult peripheral
15 blood, but also from umbilical cord blood (UCB). It has been generally
16 considered that the younger the source, the higher its regenerative potential is.
17 It is thought to be linked to the higher concentration of growth and pro-
18 angiogenic factors found in comparison to plasma from an older source (29).
19 This has been illustrated functionally using *in vitro* (30,31) and *in vivo* (32,33)
20 assays. There are also several ongoing clinical trials using umbilical cord PRP
21 (34–36).

22 In this pilot study, we developed novel *in vitro* and *in vivo* models to investigate
23 the possible beneficial effects of PRP from AS/EA patients. Using both
24 approaches we aimed to compare if plasma from human UCB had a stronger
25 effect than adult PRP in promoting pro-regenerative events in endometrial

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1 afflictions. We also aimed to ensure that PRP from AS/EA patients was as
2 effective as the one from a healthy woman and thus could be used for
3 autologous treatment.

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5

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study design

An overview of our study is detailed in Figure 1. After extracting peripheral blood (PB) from patients with endometrial pathologies (n=4) and a control (fertile female, n=1), PRP was prepared (Figure 1A). Commercial umbilical cord plasma (STEMCELL Technologies, Catalog #70020.2, Lot. #1706230142) was also prepared (Figure 1B). The product information we received revealed a female Caucasian donor who tested negative for HIV-1 and 2, and Hepatitis B and C. The product was obtained using consent forms and protocols approved by either the Food and Drug Administration or an Institutional Review Board. Part of these samples were activated with 0.1 M calcium chloride (CaCl₂) (Sigma Aldrich, Catalog #21115), for inducing platelet degranulation and growth factors and other signaling molecules secretion. Then, samples were used for different experiments (Figure 1B). First, Liquid Chromatography coupled to Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS/MS) and multiplex protein immunoassays were used for analyzing the specific plasma composition. Secondly, an *in vitro* approach for measuring cell proliferation and migration was developed to demonstrate the plasma effect over key cellular processes involved in tissue regeneration. Finally, an Asherman Syndrome (AS) murine model was employed, where the uterine horns were analyzed by Sequential Window Acquisition of All Theoretical-Mass Spectra (SWATH-MS) to evaluate if plasma was able to recover damaged uterine horns.

Human plasma samples and PRP preparation

PB samples were collected from 4 different AS/EA patients (diagnosed by hysteroscopy in proliferative phase) and from a female control, with proven

1 fertility; all of them aged between 34 and 49 provided informed consent. This
2 study was approved by the Clinical Ethics Committee of IVI Valencia (1707-
3 FIVI-003-IC).

4 To isolate PRP, all PB samples were sequentially centrifuged (280g/8min/RT
5 followed by 400g/15min/RT) and the PRP (upper part) and platelet-poor plasma
6 (PPP, lower part) fractions were collected (Figure 1A). Then, all patient samples
7 (aPRP), part of the PRP control (aPRPC) and part of the umbilical cord plasma
8 (aUCP) were activated using 5% of CaCl₂ 0.1 M.

9 *Adult PRP and UCP analysis by proteomic analysis*

10 LC-MS/MS technique was performed as described elsewhere (37). Briefly, all
11 samples were loaded into a 1D SDS-PAGE gel and LC-MS/MS analysis was
12 performed, eluted peptides were analyzed in a nanoESI qQTOF mass
13 spectrometer and all the fragments were combined in a single search using
14 ProteinPilot v.5.0 and the Swissprot database.

15 Two immunoassays, covering 46 different analytes (Supplemental Table 1),
16 were performed in all samples: Cytokine/Chemokine/Growth Factor 45-Plex
17 Human ProcartaPlex™ Panel 1 and TGF-B1 Human ProcartaPlex™ Simplex
18 Kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific, catalog #EPX450-12171-901 and #EPX01A-
19 10249-901). Quantification was carried out using a Luminex MagPix system and
20 Luminex xPonent Software.

21 *In vitro evaluation of cell proliferation and migration assays*

22 Both assays were performed with two different cell types: a human stromal stem
23 cell line, ICE7 (n=3), obtained by using Hoescht methodology previously
24 described (1); and primary human endometrial stromal cells (hESCs) obtained

1 from endometrial biopsies from healthy oocyte donors (n=10) (38). In both
2 assays, 3 conditions (No Treatment, aPRP and aUCP) were studied.
3 Furthermore, in the cell proliferation assay using ICE7 cells we performed some
4 preliminary tests: 3 more conditions were included (aPRPC, naPRPC and
5 aPPP) to check the optimal concentration (1%, 5%, 10% or 20%) of treatment in
6 the culture media.

7 For viable cell proliferation assay, cells were seeded in a 96-well plate and
8 incubated overnight with DMEM supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum
9 (FBS). Thereafter, CellTiter 96® AQueous One Solution Reagent (Promega,
10 catalog #G3580), containing a tetrazolium compound (MTS), was added and
11 absorbance (490nm) was measured to evaluate viable cell proliferation.

12 For the wound healing assay, cells were seeded in 24-well plates with DMEM
13 supplemented with 10% FBS and grown to confluence. The monolayer was
14 then scratched using a pipette tip. After washing the wells with phosphate-
15 buffered saline solution for removing detached cells, corresponding treatments
16 were added and cells were photographed 0, 24 and 48 hours after scratching
17 and the wound area was quantified using Image J software.

18 *In vivo experiments: proteomic profiles and endometrial regeneration in an AS*
19 *animal model*

20 *In vivo* procedures were performed in female eight-week-old NOD-SCID mice
21 (Charles River Laboratories), according to the Ethics Committee for Animal
22 Welfare (A1483088947170) of the University of Valencia (Spain). An adaptation
23 from our previous protocol (12) was followed: damage was induced inside the
24 lumen of left uterine horns (damaged) using a needle; right horns were left

1 undamaged (control). Mice were distributed in 4 groups and all of them
2 underwent the same protocol: 3 successive injections (day 0, 2 and 4) through
3 the tail vein, containing 100 μ L of plasma each, and they were euthanized on
4 day 7 (Figure 1B). The four groups were: No treatment group (n=6, milliQ H₂O),
5 naUCP group (n=6), aUCP group (n=6) and aPRP group (n=9). Mice from the
6 last group were treated with aPRP from 4 different patients (3 aPRP were
7 injected in 2 animals each for SWATH-MS and the fourth aPRP, in the
8 remaining animals). Endometrial tissue from both horns of 6 mice/group (n=48)
9 was analyzed by SWATH-MS. We used the remaining mice (n=3) from aPRP
10 group for a preliminary test before proceeding with the SWATH-MS analysis.
11 Moreover, endometrial tissues were tested for Ki-67 (a cell proliferation marker)
12 and Hoxa10 (a transcription factor directly related to endometrium function and
13 development) signals, to demonstrate the pro-regenerative events.

14 Ki67 signal (1:100, Abcam, catalog #ab833) was measured by
15 immunohistochemistry and Hoxa10 by Western Blot (WB) (1:100 SantaCruz,
16 catalog #sc-281428). Image ProPlus (Media Cybernetics) and ImageJ software
17 were respectively used for quantification.

18 *Relative quantification of murine protein endometrial tissues by SWATH*

19 SWATH-MS procedure was carried out as described elsewhere (39). Briefly, all
20 samples were pooled to build the spectral library from a 1D SDS-PAGE gel, and
21 resulting peptides were analyzed in a nanoESI qQTOF mass spectrometer.
22 Then, tripleTOF was operated in SWATH mode for individual samples. Data
23 were analyzed using Peak View 2.1 and Marker View. Protein areas were
24 normalized by the total sum of the areas of all the quantified proteins. After
25 statistical analysis, results were validated by WB.

1 *Functional in silico analysis*

2 For proteomic data analysis, Gene Ontology (GO) (40) and Kyoto Encyclopedia
3 of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) (41) databases were considered through
4 g:Profiler tool set (42), Genemania (43) and, 'KEGG mapper–Search pathway'
5 web tools.

6 *Statistical analysis*

7 Data were analyzed using GraphPad Prism 7.04 software and presented as
8 mean + standard deviation (SD) or median ± interquartile range (IQR), when
9 required. An analysis of variance was used to analyze cell proliferation and
10 wound closure rates and growth factors/cytokine/chemokine concentrations. A
11 Mann Whitney test was used to analyze Ki67 and Hoxa10 signals. $P < 0.05$ was
12 considered statistically significant.

13 SWATH-MS data were analyzed using multinomial regression with Elastic Net
14 penalization (Elastic Net penalty value, $\alpha = 0.5$) (44).

15 **RESULTS**

16 *Comprehensive proteomic evaluation of plasma from different sources*

17 The LC-MS/MS proteomic analysis showed the presence of 616 proteins in
18 aUCP, 331 in naUCP and 237 in aPRP samples. Only proteins detected in at
19 least 2 of the aPRP samples were considered (Figure 2A). The functional *in*
20 *silico* analysis revealed no relevant differences among PRP from patients and
21 control (data not included), revealing that plasma from AS/EA patients is not
22 different from a healthy woman and could be used as autologous treatment.

1 According to the objective of this study, we were interested in proteins related to
2 tissue regeneration (45,46), specifically those localized inside platelet α -
3 granules. Among all the proteins detected, thrombospondin-1 (THBS1), α -2-
4 macroglobulin (A2M), von Willebrand factor (VWF), neural cell adhesion
5 molecule 1 (NCAM1), or insulin-like growth factor II (IGF2) were found in all
6 plasma samples. Meanwhile, other interesting proteins such as CD109 antigen,
7 insulin-like growth factor-binding protein 4 (IGFBP4), and angiopoietin-related
8 protein 3 (ANGPTL3) were detected only in naUCP; multimerin-1 (MMRN1),
9 pyruvate kinase (PKM) and peroxiredoxin-1 (PRDX1) were exclusively found in
10 aUCP. Finally, adenosine deaminase 2 (ADA2), 14-3-3 protein gamma
11 (YWHAG), and macrophage migration inhibitory factor (MIF) were only found in
12 aPRP (Figure 2A). To note that due to the big difference between aUCP and
13 naUCP composition, we continued our analysis only with the activated fraction.
14 KEGG pathway analysis was performed only for aUCP and aPRP samples. The
15 analysis revealed that among others, PI3K-Akt signaling pathway was shared
16 by proteins detected in both samples. Hippo pathway only appeared in aUCP
17 fraction while MAPK and Rap1 pathways, in aPRP fractions (Figure 2B).

18 *Growth factors, interleukins and chemokines in plasma samples*

19 The results of the arrays revealed a statistically higher concentration (pg/mL) of
20 several growth factors in both aUCP(*) and naUCP(**) fractions when compared
21 with aPRP. These growth factors were TGF β ($P=0.0048^*$; $P=0.0024^{**}$), kit
22 ligand or SCF ($P=0.0001^*$; $P<0.0001^{**}$), PDGFBB ($P=0.0008^*$; $P=0.0024^{**}$),
23 HGF ($P=0.0005^*$; $P=0.0003^{**}$), and VEGFD ($P=0.0011^*$; $P=0.0006^{**}$) (Figure
24 2C). From all the cytokines and chemokines studied, we detected IL2, IL7, IL15,
25 IL18, eotaxin, leukemia inhibitory factor (LIF), monocyte chemoattractant protein

1 1 (MCP1) and SDF1 α in all samples. However, only IL1-RA ($P=0.0060^*$;
2 $P=0.0010^{**}$) and IL15 ($P=0.0026$) presented statistically differential results; to
3 note that IL15 was the only molecule with a significantly higher concentration in
4 aPRP (Figure 2C). A complete list of the analyzed molecules and the values
5 obtained can be found in Supplemental Table 1.

6 *Increased in vitro cell proliferation and migration after treating cells with plasma*

7 To measure viable cell proliferation rates, we first performed MTS assays. The
8 preliminary tests using ICE7 cells revealed that the highest rate was found in
9 the presence of 1% plasma in the culture media ($P=0.0015$) (Figure 3A) and
10 reaffirmed the higher potential of aPRP ($P=0.0034$) to stimulate cell proliferation
11 compared to aPPP (Figure 3B). These initial tests also reinforced the positive
12 effect of the activation process, when comparing aPRPC ($P=0.0171$) and
13 naPRPC with the No Treatment condition (Figure 3B). As seen on Figure 3B,
14 aPRPC (fold change, FC = 1.20) seems to have a similar effect than aPRP (FC
15 = 1.26), confirming that plasma from AS/EA patients is not affected.

16 Secondly, in the main proliferation assay using ICE7, proliferation rates from
17 aPRP ($P=0.0380$) and aUCP ($P=0.0042$) conditions were significantly higher
18 compared with the No Treatment condition. Furthermore, this increment was
19 higher when applying aUCP (FC = 1.36) instead of aPRP (FC = 1.22) (Figure
20 3C). These results were reproducible when using primary stromal cells
21 (hESCs). Cell proliferation was significantly incremented with the addition of
22 aPRP ($P=0.0394$) and aUCP ($P<0.0001$) to the culture media. In this case,
23 aPRP proliferation rate increased by a 1.30 fold change and aUCP, by 1.80 fold
24 change (Figure 3D).

1 Regarding the wound healing assay, results appeared to generally corroborate
2 these previous results, despite being not statistically significant. There was a
3 noticeable higher trend to cover the initial gap (in % of gap closure 24 hours
4 after the wound) when cells were treated with aPRP (42.20 %) or aUCP (49.40
5 %) in comparison with the No Treatment condition (38.77 %), using ICE7
6 (Figure 3E, upper part). This effect was also reproducible with hESCs where
7 aPRP (50.78 %) and aUCP (53.69 %) seemed to induce a higher wound
8 closure rate than the No Treatment condition (42.52 %) (Figure 3E, lower part).

9 *In vivo increased expression of cell proliferation and endometrial markers after*
10 *applying aPRP*

11 A preliminary test performed in the animal model revealed that aPRP was likely
12 promoting tissue regeneration. The Ki67 immunoassay, which evaluates the cell
13 proliferation rate, showed an increased significant signal ($P=0.0106$) in the
14 damaged horns when compared to the control ones from aPRP group (Figure
15 4A, left). Hoxa10, an important transcription factor for many genes involved in
16 the endometrial function and development, measured by WB also showed a
17 more intense signal in damaged versus control horns (Figure 4A, right), without
18 being statistically significant.

19 *Relative protein quantification in murine uterine horns revealed aUCP as the*
20 *gold standard treatment*

21 The SWATH-MS analysis of the right and left uterine horns (n=48) from all mice
22 groups (No treatment, aPRP, naUCP and aUCP) revealed the presence of 2766
23 different tissue proteins. We performed a statistical analysis using 2 different
24 approaches: firstly, we compared the damaged versus control horns in aPRP,

1 naUCP and aUCP groups separately, and secondly, the damaged horns in
2 each group against damaged ones in the rest of the groups. A detailed list of
3 the differentially expressed proteins (DEP) after performing both approaches is
4 shown in Supplemental Table 2.

5 When we globally analyzed the abundance of proteins in both horns, the
6 damaged and control group profiles were clearly distinguishable (Figure 4B).
7 Interestingly, we found that the up-regulated proteins in the damaged horns of
8 the aUCP group were implicated in different events related to tissue
9 regeneration such as PI3K-Akt, TGF β or JAK-STAT signaling pathways. These
10 proteins were P85 α (a subunit of phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase), 2aaa (Pr65
11 subunit of protein phosphatase 2A), Stat5a (a signal transducer and activator of
12 transcription) and Rhoa (a small GTPase). To note that the up-regulated
13 proteins in the damaged horns of the other groups, aPRP and aUCP, were not
14 involved in the signaling pathways mentioned here.

15 When we only analyzed the damaged horns, proteins seemed to group
16 depending on the treatment applied (Figure 4C). When analyzing these proteins
17 in-depth, damaged horns from group C (aUCP) showed an up-regulation of
18 Uba3 (NEDD8-activating enzyme E1 catalytic subunit), Thy1 (CD90 antigen),
19 Rnh1 (ribonuclease inhibitor) and Atpo (mitochondrial membrane ATP
20 synthase). These last 2 proteins, together with Ppp1ca (protein phosphatase)
21 and Golga2 (Golgin subfamily A member 2), were upregulated in group D
22 (aPRP). Atp1b3 (a subunit of a sodium/potassium-transporting ATPase) was
23 up-regulated in group B (naUCP) and Cklf6 (member of the chemokine-like
24 factor superfamily) and Ndkb (nucleoside diphosphate kinase B), in group A (No
25 Treatment).

1 WB analysis of several of these DEP, in both approaches, corroborated the
2 regulation pattern of these proteins (Supplemental Figure 1). The selected
3 proteins were Cklg6, Golga2, Uba3, Atp1b3, the cytosolic Fe-S cluster
4 assembly factor Nubp2, the tubulin γ 2 (Tbg2) and the transmembrane protein
5 256 (Tmem256).

6 **DISCUSSION**

7 Along this study, we reinforced the regenerative potential of plasma depending
8 on its specific composition or source. This was done via assessing endometrial
9 cell proliferation and migration in *in vitro* assays and tissue regeneration in an
10 AS murine model. We also demonstrated via proteomic analysis the superior
11 potential of the UCB over the adult blood as a source of regenerative plasma.

12 The main goal in patients affected with either AS or EA is to regenerate the
13 endometrial tissue, restoring its normal proliferation rate and thickness. Thus, it
14 is necessary to trigger the complex regeneration process which includes distinct
15 events such as angiogenesis, cell recruitment, matrix deposition and
16 inflammation (47). We postulate here that the presence and concentration of
17 several growth factors, chemokines and cytokines change with the age of the
18 plasma and PRP could play a role in these kinds of processes. We also
19 demonstrated that the (adult or UCB) origin affected the concentration of some
20 of these molecules. Among these, a potent mitogen (HGF) and other growth
21 factors involved in cell chemotaxis and proliferative activities (PDGFBB, SCF),
22 events involving angiogenesis (TGF β , VEGFD) and the inflammatory response
23 (IL1-RA), had a statistically significant higher concentration in UCP (in both
24 a/na) (29,30), providing a higher regenerative ability, while IL2, IL7 and IL15
25 were more concentrated in adult PRP. The increased concentration of these

1 pro-inflammatory cytokines could be explained by the immune immaturity of the
2 UCB (29,48), a characteristic that, added to the fact that plasma is an acellular
3 blood fraction, completely minimize any kind of immunological issue, mainly a
4 rejection reaction when using UCB (49). These results complement previous
5 studies where a detrimental effect of aging in plasma was shown (32,50).
6 Castellano *et al.* demonstrated that UCP could regenerate hippocampal function
7 in aged mice (32) better than adult plasma via specific key factors. These
8 proteins were also detected only (or with a higher score) in the UCP samples,
9 corroborating the results of in this study. The *in silico* functional analysis of
10 these plasma proteins showed different signaling pathways involved in cell
11 proliferation, differentiation and migration, such as the PI3K-Akt pathway, that
12 could be triggering the regeneration processes. The identification of these
13 pathways also correlates with our *in vitro* results where an increase in cell
14 proliferation and migration rates was seen when adding PRP to the medium,
15 with UCP outperforming the other groups.

16 Some studies already demonstrated the beneficial effect of adult PRP over
17 animal models with induced uterine damage (24,25), however none included
18 the younger UCP as done in this study. In our AS murine model, after a deep
19 analysis of the protein patterns of the uterine tissue, we established that aUCP
20 produced major changes in the protein abundance tissue pattern. The functional
21 analysis revealed that the up-regulated proteins in the aUCP group were mainly
22 involved in the regulation of angiogenesis and mitotic cell cycle: Uba3,
23 described as essential for NEDD8-mediated neddylation that is required for
24 normal human endometrial function (51); Thy1/CD90, a well-known endometrial
25 stromal cell marker (2); and, Rini, a regulator of neovascularization that has also

1 been described as down-regulated in endometrial glands in endometriotic
2 versus healthy endometrium samples (52). Besides, when comparing the
3 damaged versus the control uterine horns in the aUCP group, up-regulated
4 proteins such as Stat5a (a mediator of cell response to SCF and other growth
5 factors), were also involved in PI3K-Akt and JAK-STAT pathways, as the
6 plasma proteins, but in further steps of the cascades.

7 Considering this study as pioneer in the use of umbilical cord blood plasma in
8 the endometrial field even using pre-clinical murine models, we are aware about
9 several limitations to this work. Since plasmas samples were not very easy to
10 obtain, our sample size was small. Despite the wound healing assay is the most
11 widely used, several restrictions such as injure/stress/non- proliferation
12 processes affecting cell migration have been described after performing the
13 scratch. Other options related to this issue should be further explored, either
14 with longer exposure times or with other types of migration assays.

15 *Conclusions*

16 Given the specific mechanisms described above, it becomes apparent that PRP
17 is a promising regenerative enhancer, especially when using UCB. Activated
18 UCP revealed to be the best treatment in 3 different scenarios: analysis of
19 plasma composition (higher concentrations of key molecules involved in pro-
20 regenerative processes), *in vitro* evaluation of cell proliferation, and migration
21 and uterine tissue analysis in an AS murine model. Nonetheless, despite that
22 autologous PRP has already started to be used in human patients suffering
23 from AS/EA (27,28,53–55), specific clinical studies are needed to reinforce the
24 higher effectiveness of UCP versus adult PRP.

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1 FIGURE LEGENDS

2 **Figure 1. Study design. (A)** Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) preparation procedure
3 from peripheral blood. Once isolated, it was activated (if necessary) using 5% of
4 CaCl_2 0.1M, aliquoted and stored at -80°C . **(B)** Overview of the different assays
5 and analysis performed using PRP from 3 different sources: commercial plasma
6 from umbilical cord blood, 4 different Asherman's syndrome (AS)/Endometrial
7 Atrophy (EA) patients and a control patient (healthy). Briefly, all plasmas were
8 analyzed by LC-MS/MS and multiplex protein assays and used for 2 different *in*
9 *vitro* assays (MTS and wound healing) using 2 different human endometrial
10 stromal cell types (from a stem cell line and from primary culture) and for an
11 animal model (mice uterine horns were analyzed by SWATH-MS proteomic
12 procedure and by several protein assays).

13 **Figure 2. Composition analysis of plasmas. (A)** Venn diagram showing the
14 number of common proteins between the activated and the non-activated
15 fraction in UCP and the proteins present in all aPRP samples. **(B)** Venn
16 diagram showing the shared KEGG pathways among the proteins detected by
17 LC/MSMS in the aUCP and aPRP. **(C)** Multiplex protein assays results for
18 cytokines, chemokines and growth factors are also shown, for the different
19 samples analyzed. Data are presented as mean + standard deviation (SD).
20 * $P < 0.05$ in aUCP vs aPRP; ** $P < 0.05$ in naUCP vs aPRP; † $P < 0.05$ in aPRP vs
21 UCP(a/na).

22 **Figure 3. *In vitro* assays: cell proliferation and migration assays. (A)**
23 Assessment of optimal concentration to supplement culture media. **(B)** Proof-of-
24 concept MTS (proliferation assay) results in ICE7 line: comparison of cell
25 proliferation between aPRP and aPPP fractions and activated and non-

1 activated PRPC samples. **(C)** MTS results using human endometrial stromal
2 stem cells (ICE7, n=3) and **(D)** human endometrial stromal cells (hESCs, n=10).
3 **(E)** Wound healing (cell migration) assays results using ICE7 stem cell line
4 (n=3) and hESCs (n=10). Data are presented as mean + standard deviation
5 (SD). * $P < 0.05$

6 **Figure 4. *In vivo* assays: AS/EA murine model. (A)** Proof-of-concept: after
7 aPRP treatment, Ki67 immunostaining was performed in uterine tissue sections
8 (20X magnification) and Hoxa10 western blot performed from protein extracts of
9 uterine horns. Data are presented as median \pm interquartile range (IQR). **(B)**
10 Heatmap of SWATH-MS data showing protein presence between damaged and
11 undamaged horns. Up-regulated proteins related to the KEGG pathways in the
12 graphs below are highlighted in bold. The other proteins were also detected in
13 the comparison among the 4 types of damaged horns and/or validated by
14 Western blot. **(C)** Left: heatmap of SWATH-MS results after Elastic Net
15 penalization comparing damaged horns from the 4 groups. Proteins related to
16 pro-regenerative events are highlighted in bold. Right: network (GeneMania)
17 showing the interactions among the differentially expressed proteins in the
18 different groups. * $P < 0.05$.

19 SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURES AND TABLES

20 **Supplemental figure 1. Validation of Elastic Net regularization SWATH-MS**
21 **results by Western Blot. (A)** Western blot bands for one validated protein
22 among the up-regulated ones in each of the groups (comparison between
23 damaged horns from the 4 groups): Cklf6 (No Treatment), Golga2 (aPRP),
24 Uba3 (aUCP) and At1b3 (naUCP). **(B)** Graph showing the relative area
25 measurement (ImageJ software). **(C)** Western blot bands for 3 validated protein

1 (one down- and 2 up-regulated when comparing damaged versus control horns)
2 in the aPRP group (comparison between both horns from naUCP, aUCP and
3 aPRP groups): Nubp2 (down), Tubulin γ 2 (up) and Tmem256 (up). **(D)** Graph
4 showing the relative area measurement (ImageJ software). Data are presented
5 as mean + standard deviation (SD). * P <0.05. Narrows indicate the group (part
6 B) or horn (part D) in which the protein expression value was higher.

7 **SUPPLEMENTAL TABLES**

8 **Supplemental table 1. Multiplex protein assays results of the analyzed**
9 **plasmas.** Protein targets included in the multiplex assays and the concentration
10 values detected in analyzed samples. Blue wells show those factors that were
11 statistically significant among the umbilical cord samples and the adult samples.

12 **Supplemental table 2. SWATH-MS statistics results.** Enumeration, including
13 the ElasticNet coefficient, of the statistically differentiated proteins when
14 performing the intergroup comparison among all damaged horns and the
15 intragroup comparison in the naUCP, aUCP and aPRP groups. In blue,
16 coefficients above 1, which indicate up regulation of the protein.

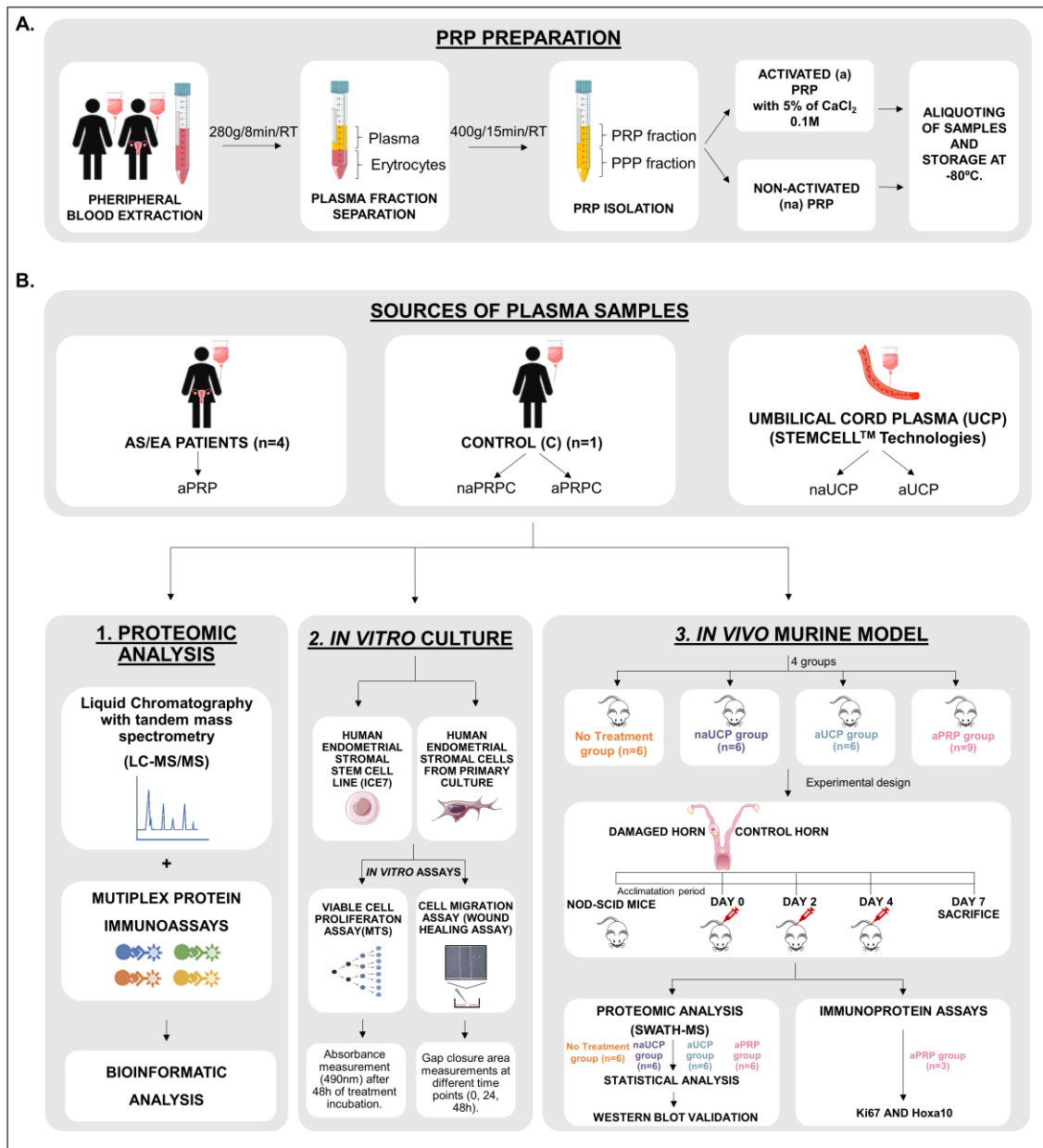


Figure 1

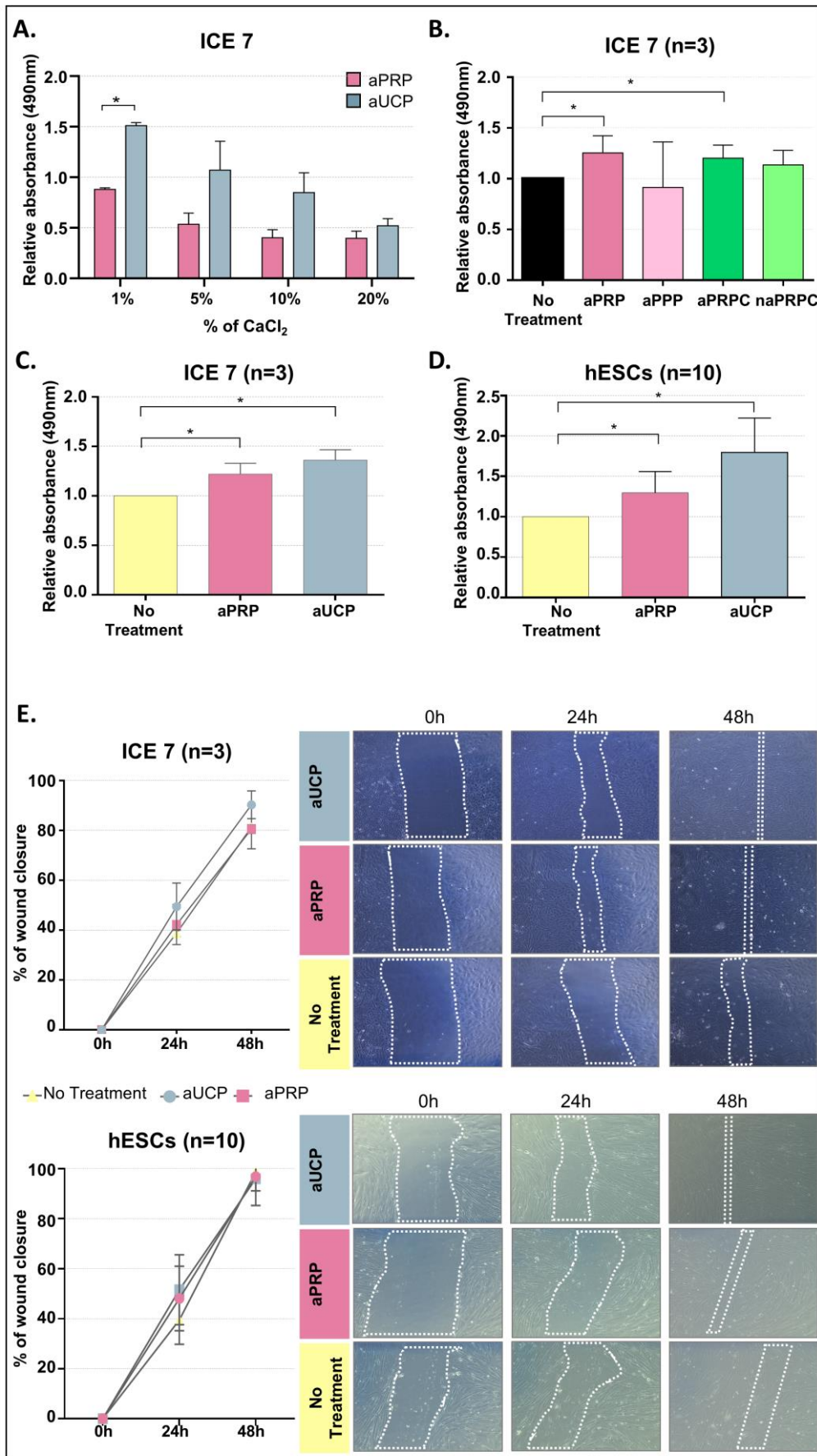
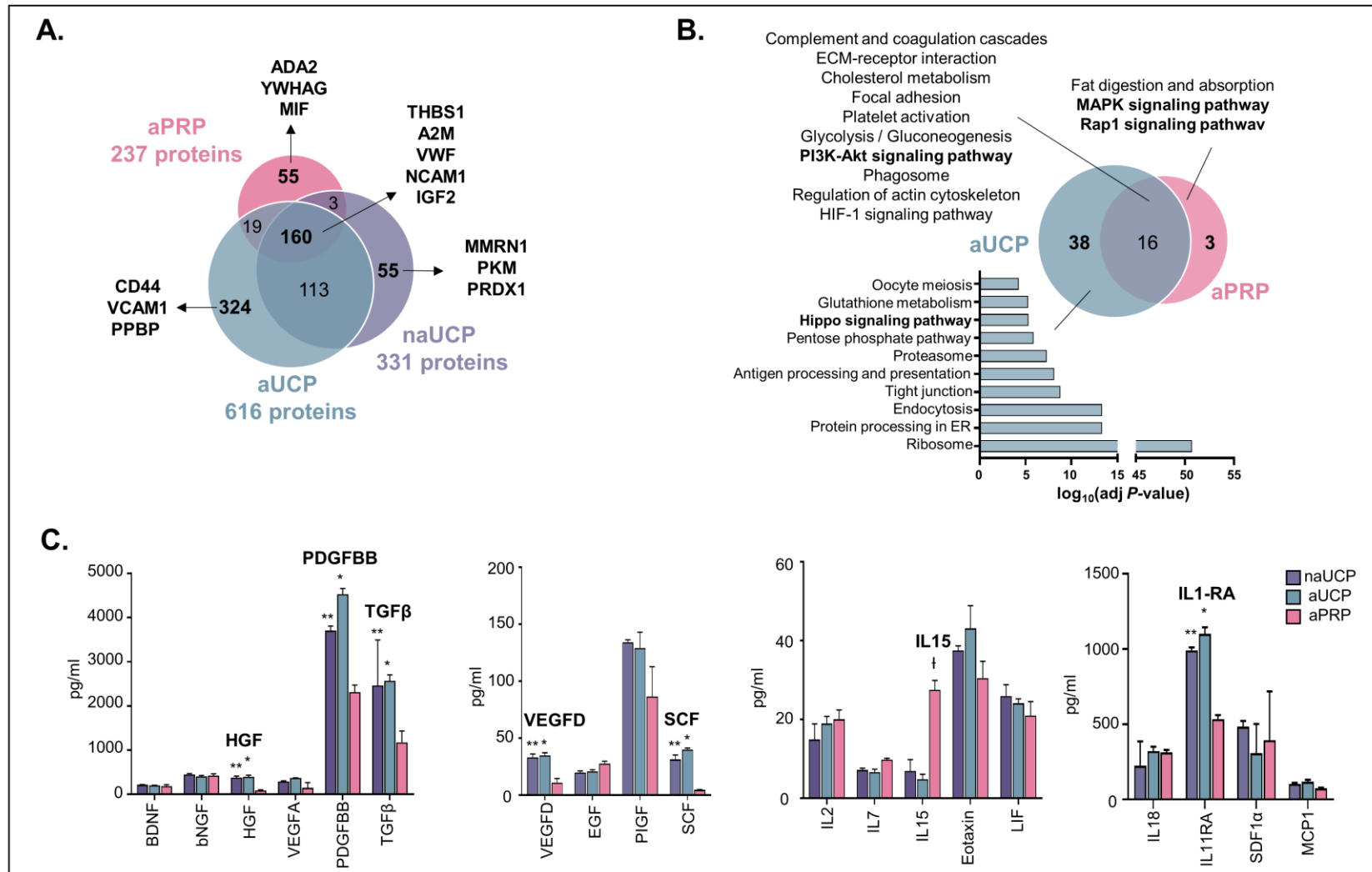
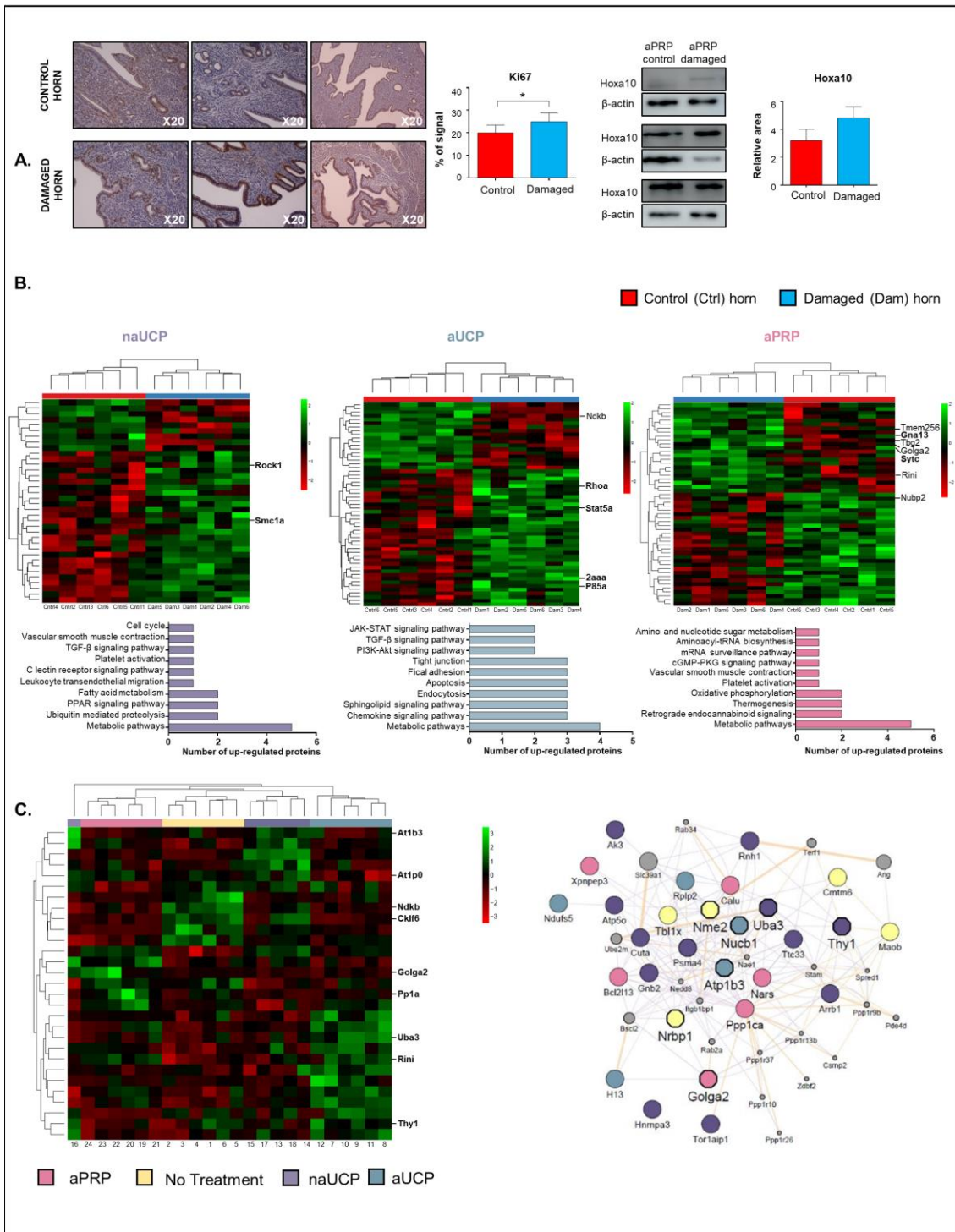
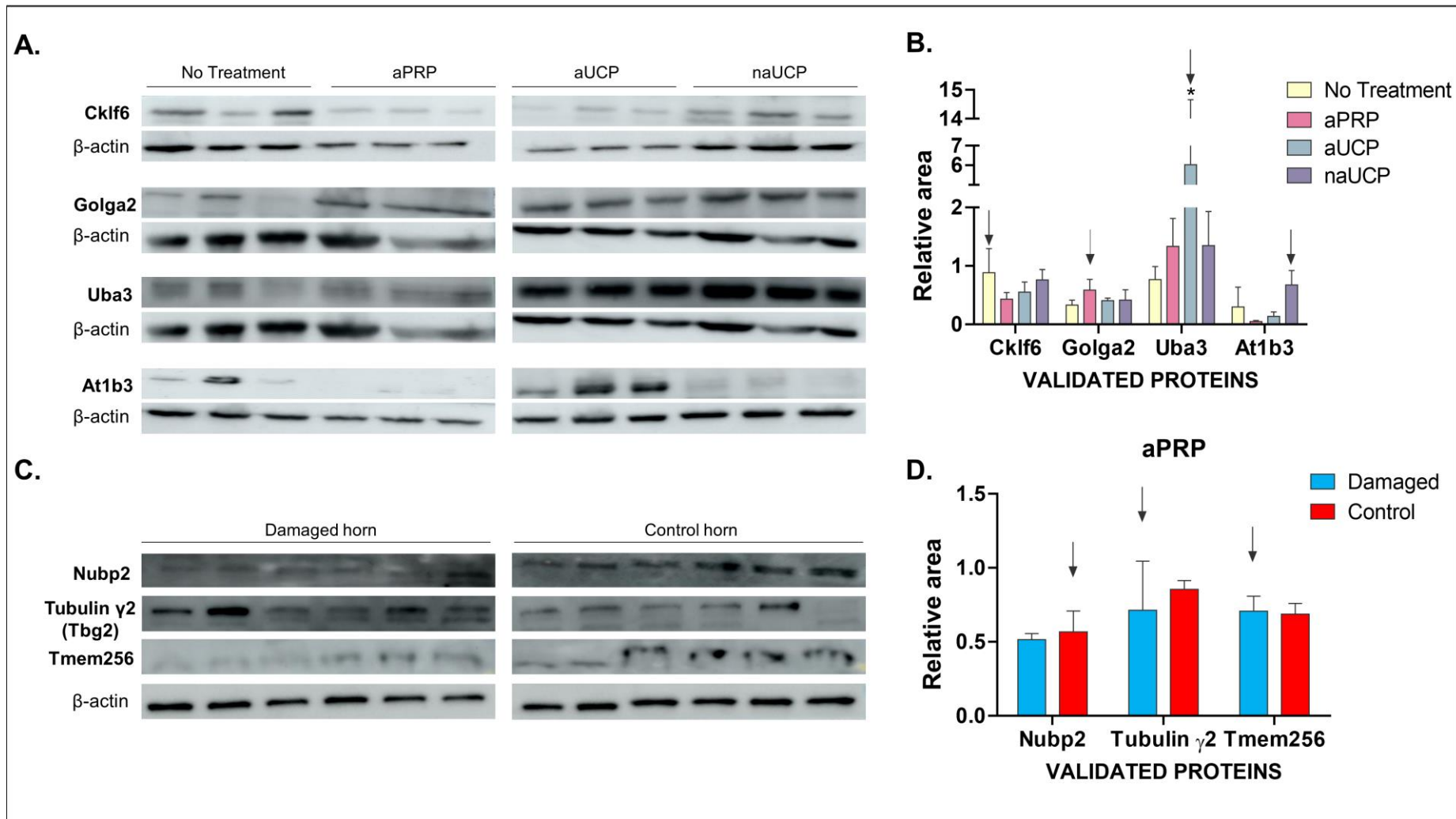


Figure 2







Supplemental Figure 1

Supplemental table 1

TARGET PROTEINS	COMPLETE NAME	aUCP	naUCP	aPRP
GM CSF	Granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor	UDL	UDL	UDL
IFN γ	Interferon gamma	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL1 β	Interleukin-1 beta	2.63	3.25	6.49
IL 12 p70	Interleukin-12, p70	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL13	Interleukin-13	17.65	UDL	UDL
IL18	Interleukin-18	225.04	322.31	312.57
IL2	Interleukin-2	14.93	18.99	20.06
IL4	Interleukin-4	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL5	Interleukin-5	18.88	6.30	UDL
IL6	Interleukin-6	UDL	UDL	UDL
TNF α	Tumor necrosis factor alpha	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL10	Interleukin-10	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL17A	Interleukin-17A	17.55	8.07	UDL
IL21	Interleukin-21	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL22	Interleukin-22	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL23	Interleukin-23	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL27	Interleukin-7	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL9	Interleukin-9	UDL	UDL	UDL
IFN α	Interferon alpha	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL1 α	Interleukin-1 alpha	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL1RA	Interleukin-1 receptor type 1	991.07	1101.37	534.29
IL15	Interleukin-4	6.94	4.86	27.54
IL31	Interleukin-31	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL7	Interleukin-7	7.19	6.69	9.83
TNF beta	Lymphotoxin-alpha	NA	NA	NA
eotaxin	Eotaxin	37.54	43.13	33.23
gro alpha/KC	Growth-regulated alpha protein	UDL	UDL	UDL
IL8	Interleukin-8	UDL	UDL	UDL
IP10	C-X-C motif chemokine 10	UDL	50.82	60.03
MCP1	C-C motif chemokine 2	104.83	118.20	74.71
MIP1 α	C-C motif chemokine 3	UDL	UDL	UDL
MIP1 β	C-C motif chemokine 4	UDL	UDL	UDL
RANTES	Regulated on Activation, Normal T Cell Expressed and Secreted, C-C motif chemokine 5	NA	NA	NA
SDF1 α	Stromal cell-derived factor 1	483.64	308.48	588.13
BDNF	Brain-derived neurotrophic factor	217.21	205.15	425.96
b NGF	Beta-nerve growth factor	311.38	308.40	756.45

EGF	Epidermal growth factor	19.76	20.95	63.87
FGF2	Fibroblast growth factor 2	9.27	UDL	UDL
HGF	Hepatocyte growth factor receptor	382.79	398.94	87.56
LIF	Leukemia inhibitory factor	25.95	24.16	25.86
PDGF BB	Platelet-derived growth factor subunit B	3702.54	4523.90	2312.27
PIGF	Phosphatidylinositol-glycan biosynthesis class F protein	134.13	128.94	160.93
SCF	Kit ligand	31.25	40.13	6.84
VEGF A	Vascular endothelial growth factor A	291.08	371.90	192.14
VEGF D	Vascular endothelial growth factor D	33.23	34.91	16.15
TGF β	Transforming growth factor beta	2449.06	441.12	1340.79

Supplemental table 2

Proteins	Coefficient naUCP	Coefficient aUCP
sp Q9DB20 ATPO_MOUSE	4.16E-07	-4.92E-07
sp Q9D6K7 TTC33_MOUSE	2.80E-05	2.47E-04
sp Q9QXE7 TBL1X_MOUSE	1.99E-06	4.85E-07
sp P01831 THY1_MOUSE	2.29E-07	6.66E-07
sp Q9D8V0 HM13_MOUSE	7.59E-06	-1.64E-05
sp Q9CZ69 CKLF6_MOUSE	4.47E-06	-8.90E-06
sp Q9CQ89 CUTA_MOUSE	8.49E-07	-2.31E-06
sp O35887 CALU_MOUSE	9.52E-06	-7.37E-07
sp Q9WTP7 KAD3_MOUSE	7.63E-07	1.75E-06
sp P97370 AT1B3_MOUSE	4.01E-07	-1.35E-07
sp Q99LY9 NDUS5_MOUSE	1.60E-05	-4.40E-06
sp P99027 RLA2_MOUSE	1.85E-05	-2.88E-06
sp Q02819 NUCB1_MOUSE	1.44E-05	-3.23E-06
sp Q8BP47 SYNC_MOUSE	-1.78E-05	-2.65E-06
sp Q8BW75 AOFB_MOUSE	-6.82E-06	-2.75E-06
sp Q01768 NDKB_MOUSE	-3.34E-07	-6.70E-07
sp Q99J45 NRBP_MOUSE	-5.63E-07	8.71E-08
sp Q91VI7 RINI_MOUSE	-4.35E-07	5.94E-07
sp P59017 B2L13_MOUSE	-2.35E-05	4.43E-06
sp Q8BWG8 ARRB1_MOUSE	-1.09E-05	1.78E-05
sp P62137 PP1A_MOUSE	-1.84E-06	-1.06E-06
sp Q921M4 GOGA2_MOUSE	-5.60E-06	-7.07E-06
sp Q8BG05 ROA3_MOUSE	-1.32E-07	3.03E-07
sp P62880 GBB2_MOUSE	-1.06E-06	1.66E-06
sp Q9R1P0 PSA4_MOUSE	-1.11E-06	4.24E-06
sp Q8C878 UBA3_MOUSE	-1.98E-06	4.23E-06
sp Q8C1A5 THOP1_MOUSE	-2.56E-06	5.58E-06
sp Q921T2 TOIP1_MOUSE	-2.87E-07	1.46E-05
sp B7ZMP1 XPP3_MOUSE	-4.09E-05	9.74E-05

Coefficient aPRP	Coefficient No Treatment
3.63E-08	4.00E-08
-3.22E-04	4.77E-05
-4.56E-06	2.09E-06
-1.14E-06	2.41E-07
-7.84E-05	8.72E-05
-8.31E-06	1.27E-05
2.47E-06	-1.01E-06
1.58E-05	-2.46E-05
-1.98E-06	-5.32E-07
-2.25E-07	-4.09E-08
-9.91E-06	-1.67E-06
-6.77E-06	-8.83E-06
-1.47E-06	-9.66E-06
1.04E-05	1.01E-05
-8.29E-06	1.79E-05
-1.06E-06	2.06E-06
-1.39E-06	1.87E-06
7.91E-07	-9.49E-07
2.14E-05	-2.41E-06
3.59E-06	-1.05E-05
3.32E-06	-4.15E-07
1.83E-05	-5.59E-06
-1.31E-08	-1.57E-07
-1.89E-07	-4.13E-07
-1.91E-06	-1.23E-06
-7.11E-07	-1.54E-06
-9.06E-08	-2.94E-06
-9.26E-07	-1.34E-05
-4.01E-05	-1.65E-05

Proteins	Coefficient
sp Q9JII5 DAZP1_MOUSE	8.68E-01
sp P35282 RAB21_MOUSE	8.51E-01
sp P14824 ANXA6_MOUSE	8.38E-01
sp Q9D892 ITPA_MOUSE	5.41E-01
sp Q99LY9 NDUS5_MOUSE	4.83E-01
sp Q61074 PPM1G_MOUSE	4.71E-01
sp Q8C460 ERI3_MOUSE	4.64E-01
sp Q8C7R4 UBA6_MOUSE	2.61E-01
sp P19973 LSP1_MOUSE	2.29E-01
sp Q9D6Y7 MSRA_MOUSE	1.80E-01
sp P36916 GNL1_MOUSE	1.73E-01
sp P32020 NLTP_MOUSE	1.63E-01
sp P61089 UBE2N_MOUSE	1.48E-01
sp Q9CQM5 TXD17_MOUSE	1.42E-01
sp Q3TLP5 ECHD2_MOUSE	1.18E-01
sp Q9D6F9 TBB4A_MOUSE	1.05E-01
sp Q80YR5 SAFB2_MOUSE	7.21E-02
sp P97390 VPS45_MOUSE	5.94E-02
sp Q9JKY0 CNOT9_MOUSE	4.76E-02
sp Q9QYY8 SPAST_MOUSE	4.16E-02
sp Q6P8J2 SAT2_MOUSE	3.07E-02
sp Q9CQR6 PPP6_MOUSE	2.72E-02
sp Q8VCN9 TBCC_MOUSE	2.24E-02
sp Q9CU62 SMC1A_MOUSE	1.78E-02
sp Q99PU5 ACBG1_MOUSE	1.42E-02
sp P70335 ROCK1_MOUSE	1.08E-02
sp Q80TL7 MON2_MOUSE	4.50E-03
sp Q922P9 GLYR1_MOUSE	-1.61E-02
sp O55028 BCKD_MOUSE	-1.98E-02
sp Q6P2B1 TNPO3_MOUSE	-3.61E-02
sp Q6NV83 SR140_MOUSE	-4.85E-02
sp P49615 CDK5_MOUSE	-5.63E-02
sp Q9ET01 PYGL_MOUSE	-2.20E-01
sp Q9R0N0 GALK1_MOUSE	-3.73E-01
sp Q8CHP8 PGP_MOUSE	-9.68E-01
sp Q9ESZ8 GTF2I_MOUSE	-1.85E+00

Proteins	Coefficient
sp Q8BG05 ROA3_MOUSE	1.19E+00
sp Q76MZ3 2AAA_MOUSE	6.66E-01
sp Q9CZD3 GARS_MOUSE	4.28E-01
sp Q8K1M6 DNM1L_MOUSE	4.08E-01
sp P50544 ACADV_MOUSE	3.79E-01
sp P56399 UBP5_MOUSE	3.76E-01
sp Q8VCW8 ACSF2_MOUSE	3.31E-01
sp P68368 TBA4A_MOUSE	3.16E-01
sp Q91WQ3 SYYC_MOUSE	2.25E-01
sp P08775 RPB1_MOUSE	1.75E-01
sp Q9CWZ3 RBM8A_MOUSE	1.70E-01
sp Q9ER88 RT29_MOUSE	1.59E-01
sp Q9D880 TIM50_MOUSE	1.59E-01
sp O08734 BAK_MOUSE	1.57E-01
sp P53996 CNBP_MOUSE	1.52E-01
sp P26450 P85A_MOUSE	1.36E-01
sp P10107 ANXA1_MOUSE	1.20E-01
sp Q9D379 HYEP_MOUSE	9.30E-02
sp Q3U2P1 SC24A_MOUSE	6.88E-02
sp P21958 TAP1_MOUSE	4.85E-02
sp Q71FD7 FBLI1_MOUSE	4.83E-02
sp Q9CR86 CHSP1_MOUSE	4.64E-02
sp Q922L6 NELFD_MOUSE	4.35E-02
sp Q8BI72 CARF_MOUSE	4.32E-02
sp Q8K2B3 SDHA_MOUSE	3.78E-02
sp P63242 IF5A1_MOUSE	3.77E-02
sp P36552 HEM6_MOUSE	3.19E-02
sp P42230 STA5A_MOUSE	2.71E-02
sp Q8BWG8 ARRB1_MOUSE	2.58E-02
sp P14824 ANXA6_MOUSE	2.53E-02
sp Q8K3C3 LZIC_MOUSE	2.14E-02
sp Q62523 ZYX_MOUSE	1.94E-02
sp Q9QUI0 RHOA_MOUSE	1.37E-02
sp P47968 RPIA_MOUSE	1.34E-02
sp Q07113 MPRI_MOUSE	1.14E-02
sp Q9Z2Q6 SEPT5_MOUSE	9.45E-03
sp Q05186 RCN1_MOUSE	6.31E-03
sp P31786 ACBP_MOUSE	-1.61E-03
sp Q61789 LAMA3_MOUSE	-1.58E-02
sp P60843 IF4A1_MOUSE	-1.92E-02
sp P99026 PSB4_MOUSE	-2.81E-02
sp Q9D8X2 CC124_MOUSE	-4.62E-02
sp Q06185 ATP5i_MOUSE	-5.77E-02
sp Q9D7B7 GPX8_MOUSE	-6.39E-02
sp Q3UZ39 LRRF1_MOUSE	-7.65E-02
sp Q921Y0 MOB1A_MOUSE	-1.19E-01
sp Q9WV98 TIM9_MOUSE	-2.46E-01
sp Q9R0P5 DEST_MOUSE	-3.09E-01
sp P62309 RUXG_MOUSE	-3.96E-01

sp Q8R016 BLMH_MOUSE	-4.26E-01
sp Q60692 PSB6_MOUSE	-4.46E-01
sp P56391 CX6B1_MOUSE	-4.63E-01
sp Q01768 NDKB_MOUSE	-4.80E-01
sp P63168 DYL1_MOUSE	-5.89E-01
sp P48758 CBR1_MOUSE	-7.08E-01

Proteins	Coefficient
sp A2ASQ1 AGRIN_MOUSE	5.22E-01
sp Q921M4 GOGA2_MOUSE	1.68E-01
sp Q9D0R2 SYTC_MOUSE	1.61E-01
sp Q8K4L3 SVIL_MOUSE	1.30E-01
sp Q8VCK3 TBG2_MOUSE	9.76E-02
sp P27601 GNA13_MOUSE	8.94E-02
sp P97470 PP4C_MOUSE	8.84E-02
sp Q99KJ8 DCTN2_MOUSE	8.68E-02
sp Q80ZJ1 RAP2A_MOUSE	8.27E-02
sp P47934 CACP_MOUSE	7.14E-02
sp Q91VW3 SH3L3_MOUSE	6.79E-02
sp Q8VE47 UBA5_MOUSE	6.71E-02
sp Q9JLI6 SCLY_MOUSE	6.31E-02
sp Q8VCF0 MAVS_MOUSE	5.61E-02
sp Q9CQ91 NDUA3_MOUSE	5.27E-02
sp Q91VI7 RINI_MOUSE	4.65E-02
sp Q8BWY3 ERF1_MOUSE	3.71E-02
sp Q78XR0 TPC6A_MOUSE	3.30E-02
sp Q9JK38 GNA1_MOUSE	3.22E-02
sp Q9JMA1 UBP14_MOUSE	2.76E-02
sp Q5F285 TM256_MOUSE	1.01E-02
sp Q99JT9 MTND_MOUSE	7.72E-03
sp O35683 NDUA1_MOUSE	9.12E-04
sp P28076 PSB9_MOUSE	-1.50E-03
sp P14131 RS16_MOUSE	-1.93E-03
sp Q60766 IRGM1_MOUSE	-2.34E-03
sp Q7TNP2 2AAB_MOUSE	-3.58E-03
sp Q9CRC8 LRC40_MOUSE	-4.00E-03
sp Q80Y17 L2GL1_MOUSE	-1.23E-02
sp Q9DBG1 CP27A_MOUSE	-1.60E-02
sp Q8JZM8 MUC4_MOUSE	-2.04E-02
sp Q9D0R8 LSM12_MOUSE	-2.39E-02
sp Q811D0 DLG1_MOUSE	-3.94E-02
sp P09470 ACE_MOUSE	-7.97E-02
sp Q8C7K6 PCYXL_MOUSE	-8.07E-02
sp P61211 ARL1_MOUSE	-8.15E-02
sp Q99LG2 TNPO2_MOUSE	-1.09E-01
sp A2ABV5 MED14_MOUSE	-1.16E-01
sp Q8R5F8 ES8L1_MOUSE	-1.19E-01
sp Q62470 ITA3_MOUSE	-1.36E-01
sp Q924K8 MTA3_MOUSE	-1.39E-01
sp Q8BMG7 RBGPR_MOUSE	-1.54E-01
sp Q9D8V0 HM13_MOUSE	-1.59E-01
sp Q9R062 GLYG_MOUSE	-1.75E-01
sp O35972 RM23_MOUSE	-1.82E-01
sp P53810 PIPNA_MOUSE	-1.92E-01

sp Q2EMV9 PAR14_MOUSE	-2.77E-01
sp Q9R061 NUBP2_MOUSE	-2.98E-01
sp Q9CQL5 RM18_MOUSE	-2.98E-01
sp Q91V09 WDR13_MOUSE	-3.41E-01
sp P84104 SRSF3_MOUSE	-3.65E-01
sp Q61510 TRI25_MOUSE	-4.75E-01