

# ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup>, a marker-independent process for enriching viable circulating tumour cells (CTCs) from melanoma patients' blood.

Simrah Mohammad, Sally Wood, Jonathan Tugwood, Karen Morris, Jackie Pierce, Romina Girotti, Kok Haw Jonathan Lim, Rebecca Lee, Nathalie Dhomen, Paul Lorigan, Richard Marais, Caroline Dive.

Cancer Research UK Manchester Institute, The University of Manchester, Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 4BX, UK

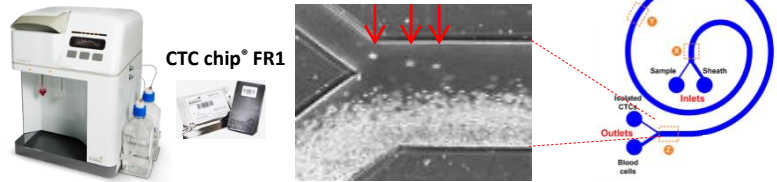


## Introduction

- Melanoma, a highly aggressive form of skin cancer, affects around 12,000 individuals annually in the UK. With a dismal 5-year survival rate for stage IV melanoma, novel insights into early detection and resistance emergence are vital.
- Circulating tumour cells (CTCs) represent a rare population of cells which have shed from a primary tumour into the bloodstream and are responsible for initiating metastases at distant sites. CTCs can be obtained via a minimally invasive 'liquid biopsy' to aid the diagnosis, prognosis and monitoring of disease, as well as to study resistance to treatment.
- The phenotypic heterogeneity of melanoma CTCs poses difficulties in isolating these cells using marker-dependent approaches and therefore other methods were sought.

- ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup> is an automated microfluidic-based system which enriches for CTCs based on size, deformability and inertia in fluid flow. ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup> exploits the impact of inherent hydrodynamic forces, present in curvilinear microchannels, on CTCs.
- In this system, a sample of cells is pumped alongside a sheath fluid in a spiral biochip at optimal flow rates (x). Particles in the sample are subjected to inertial focusing forces - namely dean drag fractionation (DDF) and inertial lift focusing (y).
- The combination of these forces separates larger cells (directed to the inner wall of the spiral) from the smaller cells (directed towards outer wall) in the sample (z).

### ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup>



## Methods

**CDX**

- Enriched samples are centrifuged at 250 x G for 5 minutes.
- Cells are then resuspended in 100µl matrigel.
- This is injected subcutaneously into immunocompromised mice to generate CTC derived explants (CDX).

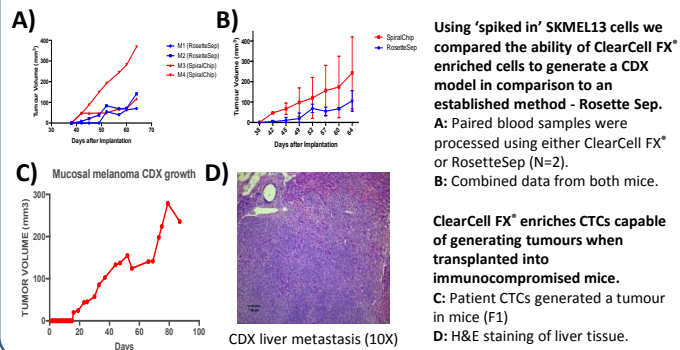
**Glycerol Sample**

- Aliquots of enriched samples are stored in glycerol at -20°C.
- A minimal step staining assay is used to evaluate melanoma cell recovery. Sample is plated into a 96-well plate and imaged on the Opera Phenix.
- Cells are taken out of the plate and put onto DEPArray to isolate single cells.
- Whole Genome Amplification (WGA) of single cells, followed by a quality control (QC) check of the WGA process to assess DNA integrity.

**Markers in Assay:**

- HMB45
- Tyrosinase
- MART-1
- CSPG4
- CD45 (Negative excluder)
- DAPI (Nuclear marker)

## Cell Viability and CDX Model



## System Validation

Label WM266.4 cell line with CellTracker-Green

Spike into 7.5ml HNV blood

RBC Lysis

Enriched labelled cells

Plate the output and image

Use biologically relevant numbers: 100,50,10

38 billion RBCs  
38-75 million WBCs

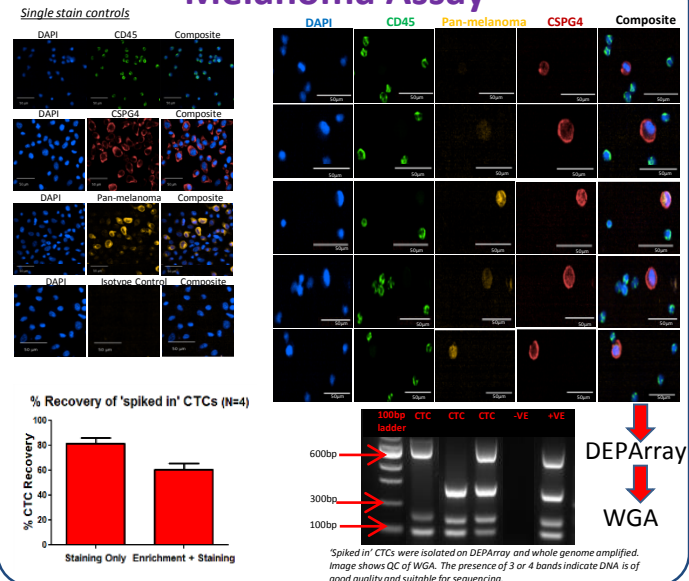
**A)** DAPI CellTracker-Green Composite

A: A single field in a well containing the enriched output. Images were taken on the Opera Phenix. Green: labelled WM266.4 cells Blue: DAPI (nuclear marker).

**B)**

Time Point	% Yield	WBC Count
<b>Control: 91</b>		
24 hr	67	45,869
48 hr	61	94,318
72 hr	58	61,285
<b>Control: 47</b>		
24 hr	53	53,839
48 hr	85	54,488
72 hr	55	48,441
<b>Control: 8</b>		
24 hr	75	30,350
48 hr	50	50,973
72 hr	75	84,190
<b>Average Yield: 66% (N=23)</b>		

## Melanoma Assay



## Conclusions

ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup> provides a robust and efficient method for enriching CTCs from patients' blood without affecting cell viability, and downstream functional analysis is uncompromised. Enriched cells can be assessed for the expression of melanoma markers and subsequently sequenced for confirming mutational status. We have also demonstrated the ability of ClearCell FX<sup>®</sup> enriched cells to generate CDX models which can be used to assess potential therapies.

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