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13 **Predictive model for inflammation grades of chronic hepatitis B: large-scale**

14 **analysis of clinical parameters and gene expressions**

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27

## 28 **List of abbreviations**

29 HBV, hepatitis B virus; HCC, hepatocellular carcinoma; CHB, chronic hepatitis B;

30 ALT, alanine amino transaminase; AST, aspartate amino transaminase; GO, gene

1 ontology; LARS, least angle regression; PCA, principal component analysis; RF,  
2 random forest; SVM, support vector machine; KNN, K-nearest neighbor; AUC, area  
3 under the ROC curve; CI, confidence interval, MDA, mean decrease accuracy.

#### 4 5 **Conflict of interest**

6 None.

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14 located at Fudan University.

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#### 18 19 **Abstract**

##### 20 **Background**

21 Liver biopsy is the gold standard to assess pathological features (e.g. inflammation  
22 grades) for hepatitis B virus infected patients, although it's invasive and traumatic;  
23 meanwhile, several gene profiles of chronic hepatitis B (CHB) have been separately  
24 described in relatively small HBV-infected samples. We aimed to analyze correlations  
25 among inflammation grades, gene expressions and clinical parameters (serum alanine  
26 amino transaminase, aspartate amino transaminase, and HBV-DNA) in large-scale  
27 CHB samples, and to predict inflammation grades by using clinical parameters and/or  
28 gene expressions.

##### 29 **Methods**

30 We analyzed gene expressions with three clinical parameters in 122 CHB samples by

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1 an improved regression model. Principal component analysis and machine learning  
2 methods including Random Forest, K-Nearest Neighbor, and Support Vector Machine,  
3 were used for analysis and further diagnosis models. Six normal samples were  
4 conducted to validate the predictive model.

### 5 **Results**

6 Significant genes related to clinical parameters were found enriching in the immune  
7 system, interferon-stimulated, regulation of cytokine production, anti-apoptosis and  
8 etc. A panel of these genes with clinical parameters can effectively predict binary  
9 classifications of inflammation grade (AUC: 0.88, 95% CI: 0.77-0.93), validated by  
10 normal samples. A panel with only clinical parameters was also valuable (AUC: 0.78,  
11 95% CI: 0.65-0.86), indicating that liquid biopsy method for detecting the pathology  
12 of CHB is possible.

### 13 **Conclusions**

14 This is the first study to systematically elucidate the relationships among gene  
15 expressions, clinical parameters and pathological inflammation grades in CHB, and to  
16 build models predicting inflammation grades by gene expressions and/or clinical  
17 parameters as well.

### 19 **Abstract word count**

20 244

### 22 **Keyword**

23 Clinical predictive model; Inflammation grades; Gene expressions; HBV infection.

### 25 **Key points**

- 26 1. Correlations among inflammation grades, clinical parameters and gene  
27 expressions in CHB patients are only partially enclosed; meanwhile, liquid biopsy  
28 prediction of inflammation grades is still unexplored.
- 29 2. A list of significant genes correlated with clinical parameters was revealed in  
30 several functions and pathways from large-scale samples.

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- 1 3. A panel of genes and clinical parameters can effectively predict binary  
2 classifications of inflammation grade (AUC: 0.88, 95% CI: 0.77-0.93).
- 3 4. A panel with only clinical parameters also has a power (AUC: 0.78, 95% CI:  
4 0.65-0.86) to predict inflammation, which can be further used in the liquid biopsy  
5 method for detecting the pathology of CHB.

6

## 7 **Introduction**

8 In clinic, liver biopsy is a gold standard to directly assess pathological features  
9 (e.g. the inflammation level G) and determine prognosis for HBV-infected patients <sup>1</sup>.  
10 But it is invasive and traumatic. Serum parameters (e.g. Alanine amino transaminase  
11 (ALT) and aspartate amino transaminase (AST)) are utilized to assess the damage of  
12 liver and HBV viral infection <sup>1,2</sup>. In certain cases, these three clinical parameters are  
13 necessities for the decision of following appropriate therapy <sup>1,3</sup>.

14 Microarray is a well-established and widely used technology, which can  
15 effectively provide an image of gene expressions <sup>4</sup>. Researchers have only identified  
16 several gene profiles in relative small number of HBV-infected patients <sup>5,6</sup>, some of  
17 which have investigated gene expressions with single clinical parameter, e.g. ALT or  
18 HBV expression <sup>7</sup>. There are few studies systematically combining clinical parameters,  
19 gene expressions and pathological inflammation levels to acquire a comprehensive  
20 view of CHB, not to mention in a large-scale sample size. Other researchers began to  
21 explore a liquid biopsy method to assess liver function based on single clinical  
22 parameter or in other liver disease (e.g. chronic hepatitis C) <sup>8-10</sup>. There is barely any  
23 effective predictive model for inflammation grades of CHB right now, and liquid  
24 biopsy method is even more elusive.

25 In this paper, we carried out the first study combining three clinical parameters  
26 (serum ALT, AST and HBV-DNA), gene microarray data and inflammation grades of  
27 CHB. We determined a batch of gene expressions significantly correlated with these  
28 clinical continuous parameters, and uncovered pathways and networks related to CHB  
29 by comprehensive bioinformatics analyses. More importantly, it is the first time to  
30 construct an effective model to diagnose and predict inflammation grades in

1 HBV-infected patients by using these significant gene expressions and/or three  
2 clinical parameters, which can help to develop liquid biopsy method for detecting the  
3 pathology of CHB.

## 4 5 **Materials and methods**

### 6 **Collection of samples and clinical data**

7 This study was approved by the ethics committees of Fudan University (Shanghai,  
8 China). All subjects provided written informed consents according to institutional  
9 guidelines. A standardized procedure was established for preservation of liver biopsy  
10 sample and RNA extract method. Briefly, after the biopsy was taken, it was quickly  
11 submerged in RNAlater, which is an effective stabilizer of tissue RNA, and stored at 4  
12 degree. The sample was later shipped to a biobank and stored at -80 degree for  
13 long-term storage. The workflow of microarray analysis requires rigorous quality  
14 control in RNA integrity. Only RNA samples extracted with  $RIN \geq 7.0$  and  
15  $28S/18S > 0.7$  were processed further. Four sampling sites must completely follow this  
16 standardized procedure, and patients must have same chronic hepatitis B diagnostic  
17 criteria, including HBV persistent infection, HBsAg positive, liver biopsy showed  
18 varying degrees of inflammatory necrosis. There is no distribution bias of liver  
19 disease grades among these sites. Normal samples were obtained and validated by  
20 liver biopsy with non-HBV-infected. Hepatitis samples were obtained by liver biopsy  
21 and conducted blood sampling. The samples with HCV infection or metabolic liver  
22 injury (e.g. fatty liver, chronic alcoholic hepatitis, etc.) were excluded. After  
23 extraction of cRNA, liver tissues were processed by GeneChip Human Genome U133  
24 Plus 2.0 Arrays.

25 Three clinical parameters were measured in blood. The samples with inexact  
26 values ( $> 5 \times 10^7$  or  $< 500$ ) of HBV-DNA were excluded. The activity of inflammation  
27 was measured and confirmed by pathological examination of liver biopsies from two  
28 experienced pathologists separately. They were characterized into five grades (G0-4)  
29 following the pathological analysis of the biopsies <sup>1, 11, 12</sup>.

## 1 **Data processing and bioinformatics analysis**

2 CEL files were performed by Affymetrix Expression Console. Probe set signals  
3 were normalized and summarized by the robust multi-array average algorithm <sup>13</sup> to  
4 adjust different batch effects. All samples passed quality control. The data discussed  
5 in this publication have been deposited in NCBI's Gene Expression Omnibus and are  
6 accessible through accession number GSE83148.

7 We normalized the values of parameters, by  $\log_{10}$  transformation of HBV-DNA  
8 values and min-max normalization of values of ALT and AST. Subsequently, the Least  
9 Angle Regression (LARS) algorithm (package *Lars* <sup>14</sup>) was performed to obtain  
10 significant probes that correlated with ALT, AST and HBV-DNA, respectively. We  
11 only used the expression data of the samples with valid information. Later, significant  
12 probe-level sets were converted to gene-level by using annotation file.

13 Pathway and gene ontology (GO) enrichment were performed by using the  
14 Database for Annotation, Visualization and Integrated Discovery (DAVID,  
15 (<http://david.abcc.ncifcrf.gov/>)). Cytoscape was applied to build gene networks with  
16 geneMANIA plugin <sup>15</sup>.

## 18 **Principal component analysis (PCA) and linear regression**

19 PAST (<http://folk.uio.no/ohammer/past>) was used to carry out PCA and linear  
20 regression to investigate expressions of significant genes correlated with ALT and  
21 AST. The loading coefficients of significant genes were obtained according to  
22 different PCs. The scatter values of HBV-infected samples in each PC were  
23 transformed from the expression values of each sample by loading coefficients. In the  
24 linear regression (Fig. 4D) for PC3, inflammation grades were considered as  
25 numerical variables 0-4 and PC3 scatter values were considered as dependent  
26 variables, with box-plots and fitted lines plotted.

## 28 **Binary classifications of inflammation grades and predictive models by** 29 **machine-learning methods**

30 G0 and G1 were considered as mild inflammation, and G 2-4 as moderate or

1 severe inflammation<sup>1, 12</sup>. Based on these, binary classifications (mild or exacerbated)  
2 of G were introduced. The expressions of significant genes, the above three clinical  
3 parameters and information of sex and age were then utilized to predict these binary  
4 classifications of G.

5 Based on the G classifications, feature selections were conducted by Random  
6 Forest (RF) among significant genes that correlate with either ALT and HBV-DNA,  
7 ALT and AST, or AST and HBV-DNA. A gene panel was obtained. Here we used  
8 K-Nearest Neighbor (KNN), Support Vector Machine (SVM) and RF to build  
9 predictive models for three modules. In general, these are all machine-learning  
10 methods for classification and regression<sup>16, 17</sup>. KNN is a non-parametric algorithm,  
11 assigning weights to the contributions of neighbors on the basis of the basic principle  
12 of majority voting; SVM is a non-probabilistic binary linear classifier, assigning new  
13 examples to one category or the other based on a set of training examples; And RF  
14 constructs decision trees by training sets, and outputs the class either is the mode of  
15 classification or regression of the individual trees. KNN was implemented in Matlab.  
16 SVM (Package *e1071*) and RF (Package *randomForest*) were run by R. Three  
17 modules for predictive models were separately built: Module 1 (with information of  
18 three clinical parameters and adjustment of sex and age), Module 2 (with genes panel  
19 obtained by feature selections), and Module 3 (with all information of selected genes  
20 panel, clinical parameters, and adjustment of sex and age). All modules with three  
21 predictive methods were performed by five-fold cross-validation to avoid over-fitting.  
22 ROC curves were plotted (package *ROCR*) and the area under the ROC curve (AUC)  
23 was calculated (package *pROC*) with 95% confidence interval (CI). All normal  
24 samples were conducted as validations by Module 2 with RF. All packages from R  
25 project can be downloaded from Bioconductor (<http://www.bioconductor.org>).

## 26 27 **Results**

### 28 **Distribution of HBV-infected patients by clinical parameters**

29 One hundred and twenty-two liver hepatitis tissues infected with HBV were  
30 obtained. Of these (Fig. 1 & Table S1), 90 had exact quantitative HBV-DNA values



1 (ranging from 603 to  $1 \times 10^9$ ), and 105 samples had valid quantitative ALT (normal  
2 values: 7-40, and abnormal values: 41-1554.3) and AST values (normal values: 10-35,  
3 and abnormal values: 36-706.1). One hundred nineteen samples were portrayed by G  
4 (from G0 to G4), with 34 G0 samples, 33 G1 samples, 31 G2 samples, 15 G3 samples  
5 and 6 G4 samples. Six normal samples were all identified as G0.

## 6 7 **Analysis workflow**

8 We devised a framework for analyzing three clinical parameters, gene microarray  
9 data and inflammation grades of CHB (Fig. 2A). After normalization, we manipulated  
10 LARS into 90 samples with exact values of HBV-DNA to analyze the significances  
11 correlated with HBV-DNA and 105 samples with exact values of ALT or AST to  
12 analyze the probes significantly correlated with ALT or AST. After annotation, we  
13 finally identified 80 significant genes correlated with serum HBV-DNA, including 48  
14 positive and 32 negative, 96 significant genes (53 positive and 43 negative) correlated  
15 with serum ALT, and 92 significant ones (45 positive and 47 negative) correlated with  
16 serum AST, respectively (Fig. 2B). Two genes, *IGHA1* and *ZNF75A*, significantly  
17 correlated with both values of serum HBV-DNA and ALT. Sixteen others significantly  
18 correlated with both values of serum ALT and AST (Fig. 2B & Table S2).

## 19 20 **Significant gene pathway, GO and gene networks**

21 A gene pathway consists of a group of interacting components, acting in concert  
22 to perform specific biological tasks<sup>18</sup>. Utilizing the DAVID, we identified 7  
23 significant pathways. For HBV-DNA, hTert transcriptional regulation (p-value =  
24  $2.42 \times 10^{-2}$ ), lectin-induced complement pathway (p-value =  $4.11 \times 10^{-2}$ ), and classical  
25 complement pathway (p-value =  $4.11 \times 10^{-2}$ ) were identified. For ALT, B cell  
26 activation (p-value =  $2.51 \times 10^{-2}$ ) was highlighted. For AST, B cell activation pathway  
27 was also significantly (p-value =  $4.97 \times 10^{-2}$ ) enriched, so was pathways in cancer  
28 (p-value =  $7.61 \times 10^{-4}$ ) and pathway of melanoma (p-value =  $4.69 \times 10^{-2}$ ) (Table 1).  
29 Significant GO terms are listed in Table S2, which are mostly enriched in immune  
30 response (GO: 0006955), apoptosis (GO: 0042981, GO: 0043066, GO: 0060548),

1 positive regulation of cytokine production (GO: 0001819) and etc.

2 For gene networks, geneMANIA can search large, publicly available biological  
3 datasets to illuminate interactions<sup>15</sup>. Genes were linked by different color lines,  
4 referring to different interactions (Fig. 3): co-expression, co-localization, physical  
5 interaction, and shared protein domains. The number of lines represents the  
6 importance of the gene in the network. In the ALT-correlated network, 11 significant  
7 genes had more than 3 lines, e.g. *FLII*, *STK17B*, *ANK2* and etc. In the AST-correlated  
8 network, there are 3 sub-networks, and *DGUOK* is an important one which is not in  
9 the significant gene list but interacts closely with others. In the HBV-DNA-correlated  
10 network, *Sept10* and *SLC9A3R2* are at the core of two sub-networks.

11

### 12 **PCA reveals gene expressions correlated with three biological categories: clinical** 13 **parameters, gene functions and inflammation grades**

14 PCA can be used to determine key variables in gene expression data by using an  
15 orthogonal transformation<sup>19</sup>. By applying PCA to 16 significant gene expressions that  
16 correlated with ALT and AST, we obtained three highlighted PCs, each of which can  
17 explain more than 10% of variance: the first (PC1) explained 19.1% of variance  
18 (eigenvalue = 3.052), the second (PC2) explained 13.8% of variance (eigenvalue =  
19 2.202), and the third (PC3) explained 10.7% of variance (eigenvalue = 1.705). The  
20 more portion of variance it can explain, the more important one component is. We  
21 thereby were figuring out biological meanings behind these corresponding  
22 components.

23 In Fig. 4A, genes with positive loading coefficients in PC1 are the same ones that  
24 positively correlate with serum ALT and AST, and the others with negative loading  
25 coefficients have negative correlations. Therefore, PC1 mainly represents the  
26 relative effects of serum ALT and AST.

27 According to loading coefficients in PC2 (Fig. 4B), *DLX3*, *PRDX2* and *YBX1* are  
28 enriched in the GO term regarding regulation of transcription with positive  
29 coefficients (Table. S2). *TTLA4*, *TLL7* and *DCTN4* are enriched in microtubules, and  
30 *IGF1R* and *NRXN1* are related to axonogenesis, all of which represent significant

1 genes with negative coefficients correlated with the function of cell cytoskeleton.  
2 Therefore, PC2 mainly represents the functional differentiation of genes as serum  
3 ALT and AST levels are changing in the HBV-infected patients.

4 For PC3 (Fig. 4C), we carried out a linear regression analysis between  
5 inflammation grades of CHB and scatter values of each sample generated by loading  
6 coefficients in PC3, and found a significant linear correlation between them (p-value  
7 =  $6.69 \times 10^{-3}$ ) (Fig. 4D). Therefore, PC3 mainly explains a linear correlation between  
8 inflammation grades and gene expressions.

9

### 10 **Random Forest model efficiently diagnoses the inflammation grades in CHB**

11 According to PCA, there is a correlation between inflammation grades of CHB  
12 and gene expression in PC3. Inspired from this, we further constructed diagnosis  
13 models to predict inflammation grades based on the 18 sharing significant genes (two  
14 correlated with ALT and HBV-DNA and 16 correlated with ALT and AST).

15 A binary classification of G was introduced based on the categories of all  
16 inflammation grades<sup>1,3</sup>. By utilizing RF, a gene panel with nine genes (*DLX3*,  
17 *ALPK1*, *YBX1*, *ZNF75A*, *SPP2*, *TLL4*, *TLL7*, *AGAP3*, and *DCTN4*) among 18  
18 significant ones for binary classification of G were selected. RF, SVM, and KNN  
19 were further used to construct predictive models, with the involvement of three  
20 clinical phenotypic parameters and adjustment of sex and age. To remove the impact  
21 of missing data on results, we only utilized 81 samples with valid information of  
22 HBV-DNA, ALT, AST, sex and age (Table S1). Sensitivity, specificity and  
23 classification accuracy of each method are shown in Table 2, and ROC curves are  
24 plotted in Fig. 5. All values are averaged in fivefold validations and values of AUC  
25 are shown with 95% CI, according to different predictive modules and models.

26 Using genes panel, Module 2 generally performed better than Module 1 by using  
27 clinical parameters, based on the results of SVM (0.749 vs 0.734), KNN (0.723 vs  
28 0.729) and RF (0.801 vs 0.784) (Table 2). Notably, when combining all information  
29 (Module 3), the predictive power of KNN (0.806, 95% CI: 0.711-0.898) and RF  
30 (0.880, 95% CI: 0.771-0.933) increased dramatically. More importantly, even though

1 the powers of Module 1 are relatively low (RF: 0.784, SVM: 0.734 and KNN: 0.729),  
2 it is still an improvable model by only using clinical parameters to predict  
3 inflammation grades, indicating that liquid biopsy method for detecting the pathology  
4 of CHB is possible. Lastly, we carried out validations by conducting Module 2 of RF  
5 method on six normal samples. All six samples were predicted as mild inflammation  
6 (G0 or G1), with predicting probability up to  $0.827 \pm 0.037$ . In conclusion, RF is the  
7 most powerful model for the diagnosis of inflammation grades of CHB when  
8 combining expressions of nine genes, three clinical parameters, sex and age.

## 9 10 **Discussion**

11 In this study, we considered clinical parameters as continuous variables, and  
12 analyzed gene expressions by an advanced regression algorithm (LARS), which is  
13 more efficient to obtain significant genes than regular linear regression method<sup>14</sup>.  
14 Besides, in CHB samples, part of them have a normal level of ALT, AST, or  
15 inflammation grade (G0), which can be considered as baseline values in LARS  
16 analysis, PCA, and predictive models, as healthy controls in the regular case-control  
17 study. Moreover, to maximize the utilization of all information and eliminate the  
18 impact of missing data, we discarded samples with missing data in separated steps.

19 Several genes and pathways correlated with HBV infection and immune response  
20 were discovered. *TRD*, *CD84*, *HLA-DRB4* and B cell activation pathway (Table 1)  
21 with genes *IGHG3*, *POU2F2*, and *IGHM* positively correlated with ALT values,  
22 suggesting that a proliferation of immune cells and regeneration of liver cells occurs  
23 as an increase of serum ALT after HBV infection. Intriguingly, though the gene  
24 expression profiles came from a mix of different types of cells, these  
25 inflammation-related genes and pathway indicate the inflammatory cells mixing with  
26 hepatic cells may have contributed to the overall gene expression patterns as HBV  
27 infection getting worse. In the core of ALT-correlated network (Fig. 3A), *STK17B*  
28 with positive correlation was reported to form a novel signaling module which  
29 controls calcium homeostasis following T cell activation<sup>20</sup>. Another core gene *PRFI*  
30 was reported as an important role in liver cell injury after HBV infection<sup>21</sup> and

1 HBV-DNA cleanup<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, in the HBV-DNA network (Fig. 3C), a core  
2 significant gene *SLC9A3R2*, co-expressing with *ACACB* and *SPI*, is a membrane  
3 transporter of HBV and HDV entry<sup>23</sup>. The AST positive specific-related gene *CD58*  
4 (Fig. 3B) was also found related to the microtubule and immune response system and  
5 significantly increased with the severity of HBV infection<sup>24</sup>. Intriguingly, by utilizing  
6 interferon-stimulated genes datasets (Interferome:  
7 <http://interferome.its.monash.edu.au>), we found seven interferon-stimulated genes that  
8 are significantly correlated with serum HBV-DNA. *MKX*, *TSNARE1* and *EFR3A* are  
9 positively, and *ACSF3*, *H2AFJ*, *XRN1* and *ZNF677* are negatively correlated with the  
10 increasing value of serum HBV-DNA in infected hepatocytes.

11 In the AST-related pathway, pathways related to cancer were found (Table 1),  
12 supported by the fact that an increasing serum AST often indicates a severe  
13 progression of liver cell damage. *SPI* and *WT1*, clustered in the pathway of *hTert*  
14 transcriptional regulation (Table 1), are reported to significantly correlate with *HBx*  
15 expression<sup>25</sup> and HCC development<sup>26-28</sup>. Interestingly, among 80 significant genes  
16 correlated with HBV-DNA, 8 (10%) of them have been reported to correlate with  
17 HCC<sup>26-30</sup> or other cancers<sup>22, 31, 32</sup>, indicating that they may also play important roles  
18 in the progression from HBV-induced inflammation to HCC. Gene *IGHA1*, which  
19 shares significant positive correlation with HBV-DNA and ALT, is also reported  
20 involving in gastric tumorigenesis<sup>33</sup>.

21 Notably, in PCA of expression data of 16 significant genes, five principal  
22 components (PCs) had an eigenvalue more than 1 and explained 58.7% of variance in  
23 total. The top three PCs can reveal specific biological insights and explain 43.5% of  
24 variance. In the feature selection of predictive model, nine genes were selected based  
25 on their Mean Decrease Accuracy (MDA): *YBX1* (MDA=47.8), *ALPK1* (MDA=28.0),  
26 *ZNF75A* (MDA=18.2), *SPP2* (MDA=13.2), *DCTN4* (MDA=12.3), *AGAP3*  
27 (MDA=7.95), *DLX3* (MDA=6.86), *TLL4* (MDA=4.68) and *TLL7* (MDA=2.57). All  
28 genes above were mainly related to protein phosphorylation, transcription functions  
29 and the major histocompatibility complex. Five of them are related to transcription,  
30 indicating the importance between transcription and inflammation grades.

1 For predictive models, three modules were conducted separately to find the most  
2 appropriate model. We suggest RF as a machine-learning black box to aid in  
3 prediction and diagnosis for binary classification of inflammation grade of CHB,  
4 which has an effective power (0.880) with the help of three indispensable clinical  
5 parameters and nine genes. In previous studies, there established a predictive model  
6 by Xu et al.<sup>9</sup> using red blood cell distribution width value, ALT and other blood  
7 parameters (albumin and platelet) from 446 patients to predict CHB inflammation  
8 with highest AUC of 0.765. While, we have had a relative higher power of AUC of  
9 0.784 (Random Forest, AUC: 0.784, 95% CI: 0.65-0.86) by using the three clinical  
10 parameters from 81 samples to predict inflammation grades in the present study. More  
11 samples and studies are highly required based on our models, which may substitute  
12 liver biopsy by liquid biopsy method into a practical clinic protocol to characterize the  
13 pathological inflammation.

14 In conclusion, we carried out the first analysis of large-scale HBV-infected  
15 samples by combining gene expressions data and three clinical parameters (ALT, AST  
16 and HBV-DNA). We considered the parameters as continuous variables and found  
17 differentially expressed genes related to these parameters. Most of these significant  
18 genes are enriched in immune response, interferon-stimulated, anti-apoptosis, and cell  
19 proliferation. Some important ones are also reported to correlate with HCC or other  
20 cancers.

21 We found genes correlated with clinical parameters provide insights for  
22 inflammation grades of CHB. We thereby constructed models with novel panels and  
23 validated by six normal samples, which can effectively predict binary classifications  
24 of inflammation and aid in the diagnosis of CHB. Notably, the novel panel with only  
25 clinical parameters was quite valuable, indicating that liquid biopsy method for  
26 detecting the pathology of CHB is possible.

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## 2 **Authors' contributions**

3 W.Z., Y.M., J.W., Z.H. and J.L. designed the project. J.L., J.Z., Y.M., X.Z., X.Z., Z.Z.,  
4 J.Z., H.L., L.L., and Z.Y. provided HBV-infected samples and conducted experiments.  
5 W.Z., Y.M., J.H., L.W., Y.P., Y.Z., M.Z., Y.W., Y.L. and J.Z contributed to the analyses.  
6 W.Z., Y.M., J.Z., J.L. and J.W. wrote the manuscript. Z.Y., L.J., J.L. and J.W.  
7 contributed to the final revision. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## 2 **Figure legends**

### 3 **Fig. 1. Value distribution of three clinical parameters.**

4 The Y-axis is the number of samples, and the X-axis is the value of corresponding  
5 serum parameters. (A) and (B), the distributions of serum ALT and AST in 105  
6 hepatitis samples, respectively; (C), the distribution of serum HBV-DNA in 90  
7 hepatitis samples with transformed by  $\log_{10}$ .

8

### 9 **Fig. 2. Workflow for this study and Venn diagram of significant genes for three** 10 **clinical parameters.**

11 (A), workflow for analyzing three clinical parameters, gene microarray data and  
12 inflammation grades of CHB; (B), the Venn diagram of significant genes, including  
13 left circle representing significant genes (positive versus negative) correlated with  
14 HBV-DNA, the middle representing significant genes correlated with ALT, and the  
15 right representing significant genes correlated with AST. The intersection sets are  
16 significant genes shared in the results of HBV-DNA and ALT and ALT and AST,  
17 respectively.

18

### 19 **Fig. 3. Networks generated by significant genes correlated with three clinical** 20 **parameters.**

21 (A), networks correlated with ALT; (B) and (C), networks correlated with AST and  
22 HBV-DNA, respectively. The red circles represent positively correlated genes and the  
23 green represents negative ones. The grey circles represent important genes which are  
24 not in the significant gene lists but interact closely with significances. The lines  
25 interlinking two genes represent the type of interaction between two genes: orange  
26 lines represent co-expression, dark blue ones represent co-localization, red ones  
27 represent physical interaction, and purple ones represent protein domain sharing.

28

### 29 **Fig. 4. PCA of 16 significant genes correlated both with ALT and AST.**

30 (A), the plot of genes for PC1 with 10 positive and 6 negative loading coefficients;

1 (B), the genes for PC2 with 8 positive and 8 negative coefficients; (C), the genes for  
2 PC3 with 7 positive and 9 negative coefficients; (D), boxplot between G and PC3  
3 scatter values of 102 HBV-infected samples. Fitted linear regression lines, R value  
4 and p-values are shown.

5

6 **Fig. 5. ROC curves based on three predictive models and three modules with**  
7 **five-fold cross-validations.**

8 Mean boxplot curves for each model are shown with the values of AUC and 95% CI,  
9 according to different predictive modules (using three clinical parameters only, nine  
10 genes only, or clinical parameters and genes). Dotted curves represent five-fold  
11 validations of each experiment.

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## Tables

**Table 1.** Significant pathways correlated with three clinical parameters (P-values < 0.05). Three databases (BBID, KEGG and BIOCARTA) were subjected to pathway enrichment analysis.

Type	Database	P-value	Genes	Term
ALT	BBID	0.0251	IGHG3, POU2F2, IGHM	B cell Activation
	KEGG	0.0008	IGF1R, FGF16, SMAD3, MDM2, BRCA2, BIRC5, ITGB1, TRAF4	Pathways in cancer (hsa05200)
AST	KEGG	0.0469	IGF1R, FGF16, MDM2	Melanoma (hsa05218)
	BBID	0.05	IGHG1, POU2F2	B cell Activation
HBV-DNA	BIOCARTA	0.0241	SP1, WT1	Overview of telomerase protein component gene hTert Transcriptional Regulation
	BIOCARTA	0.0411	C4A, C4B	Lectin Induced Complement Pathway
	BIOCARTA	0.0411	C4A, C4B	Classical Complement Pathway

**Table 2.** Specificity, sensitivity, accuracy of classification and AUC of predictive modules based on three methods with five-fold cross-validation.

	Specificity	Sensitivity	Accuracy	AUC (95% CI)	Module
SVM	0.6053	0.7209	0.6667	0.7339 (0.5832-0.8146)	Module 1
	0.6579	0.6744	0.6667	0.7489 (0.5832-0.8165)	Module 2
	0.6579	0.6512	0.6543	0.7093 (0.5849-0.8129)	Module 3
KNN	0.5802	0.7971	0.6931	0.7286 (0.6244-0.8407)	Module 1
	0.6938	0.8150	0.7187	0.7226 (0.6543-0.8604)	Module 2
	0.6178	0.8857	0.7666	0.8057 (0.7108-0.8982)	Module 3
RF	0.6053	0.7674	0.6914	0.7841 (0.6450-0.8562)	Module 1
	0.6842	0.7209	0.7037	0.8015 (0.6903-0.8874)	Module 2

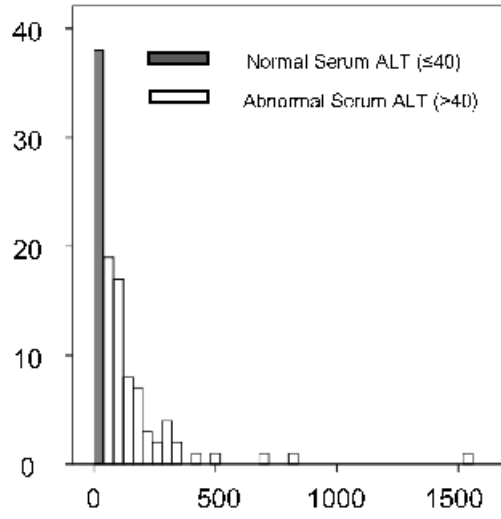
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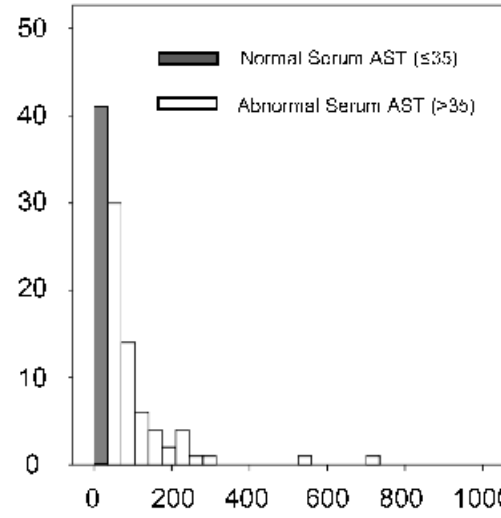
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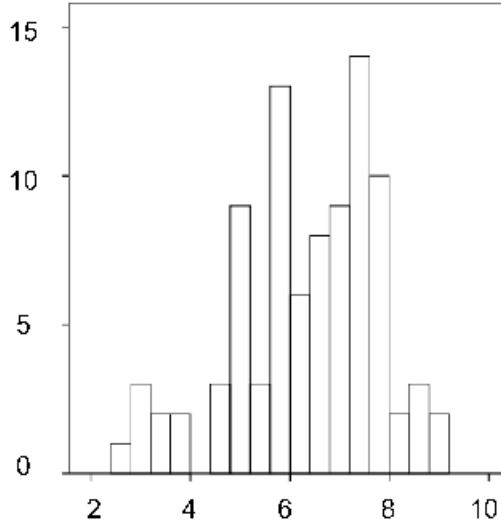
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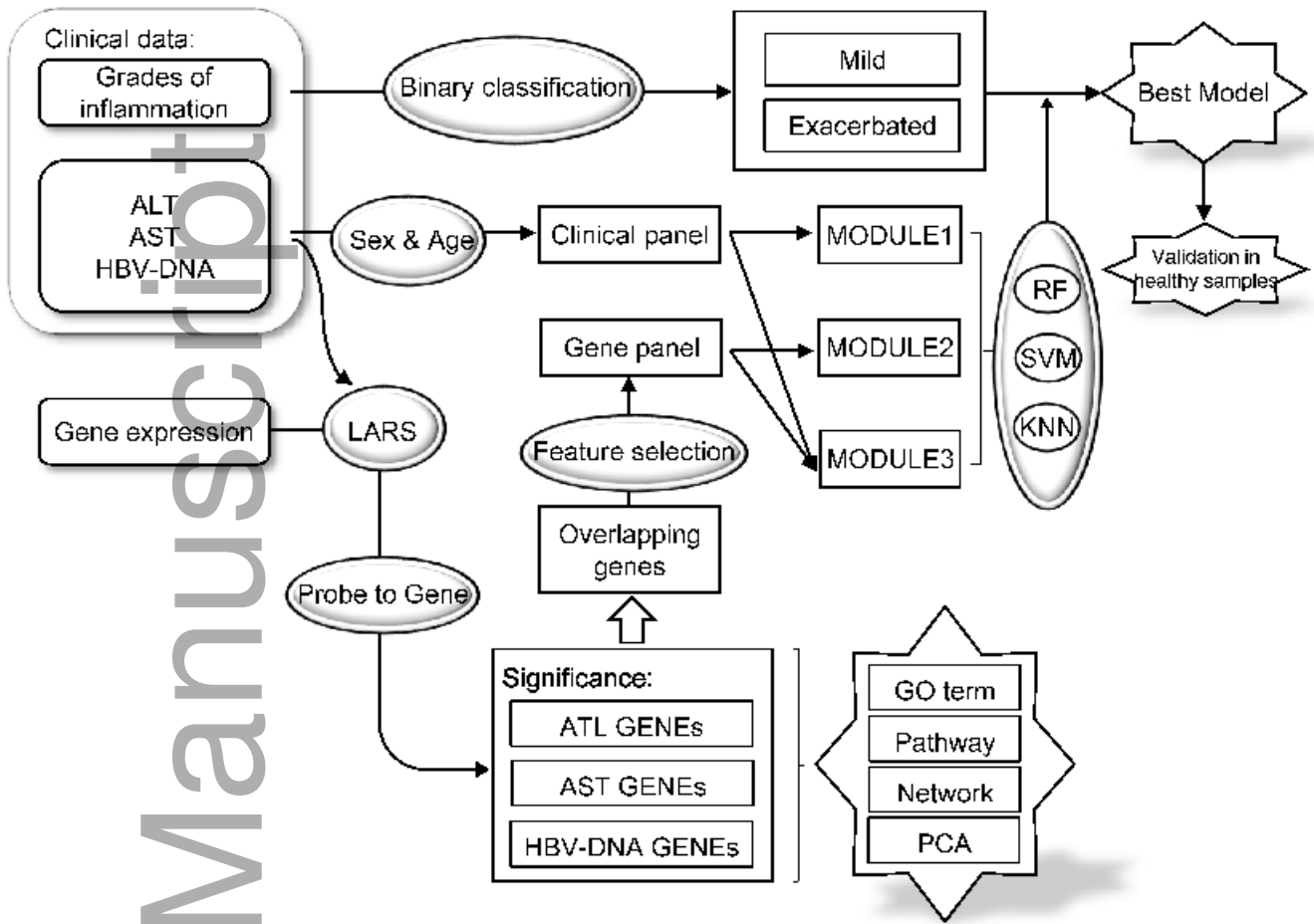
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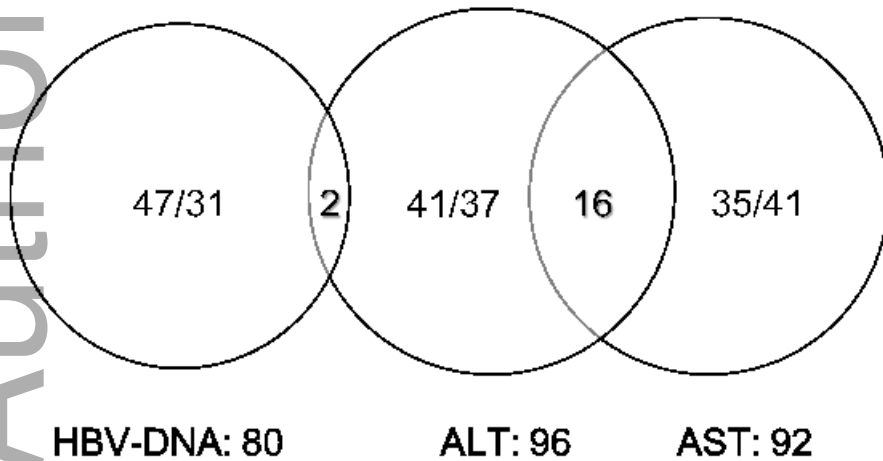


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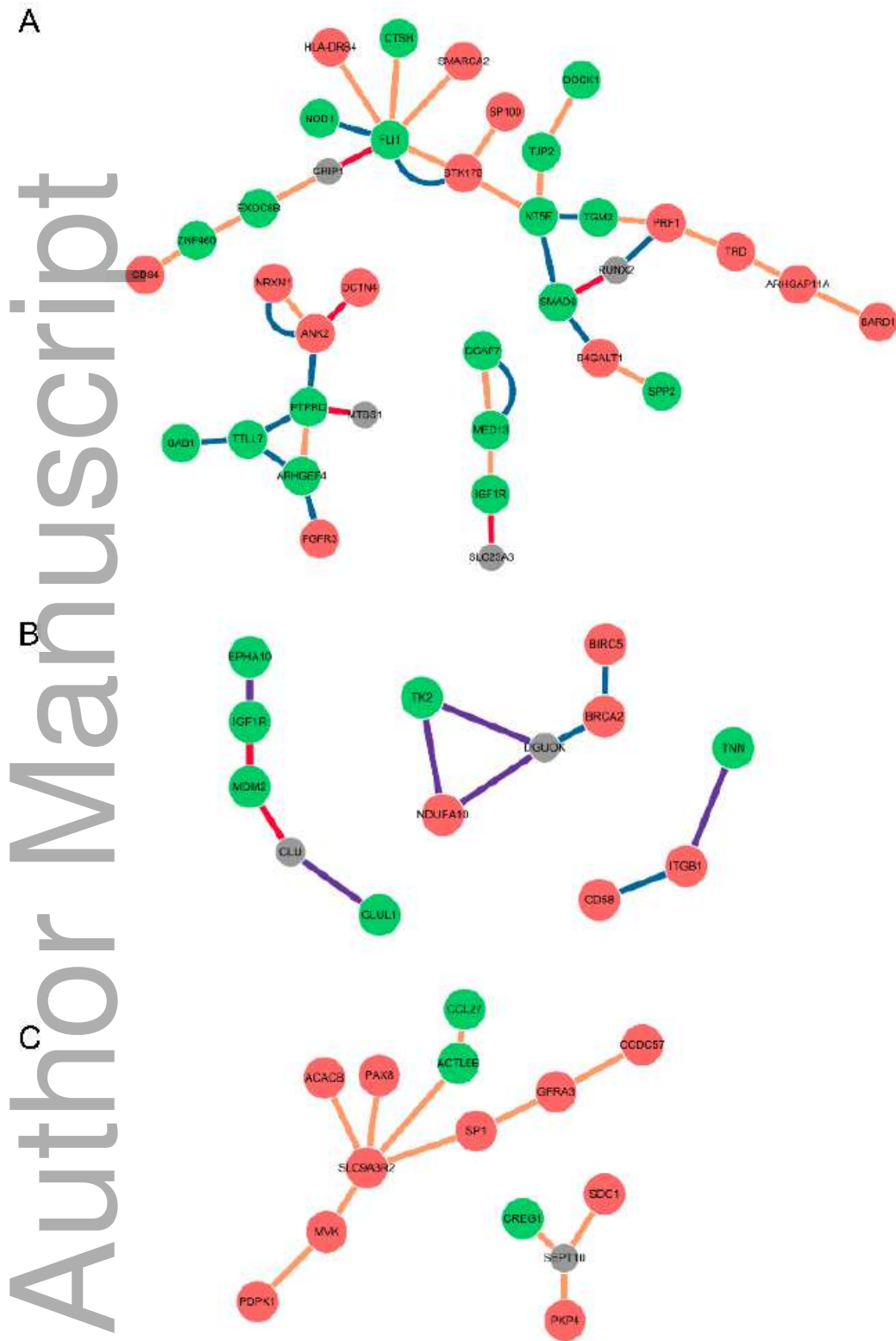
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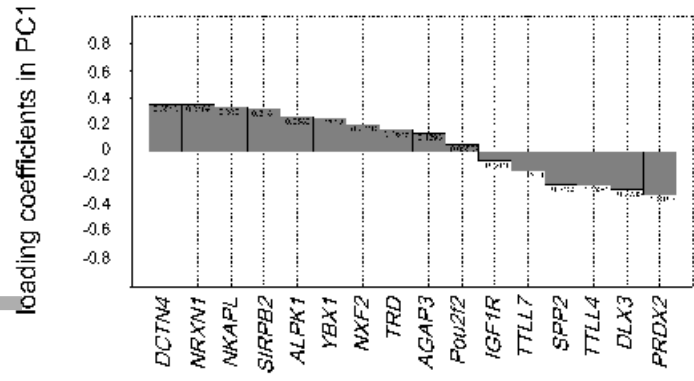
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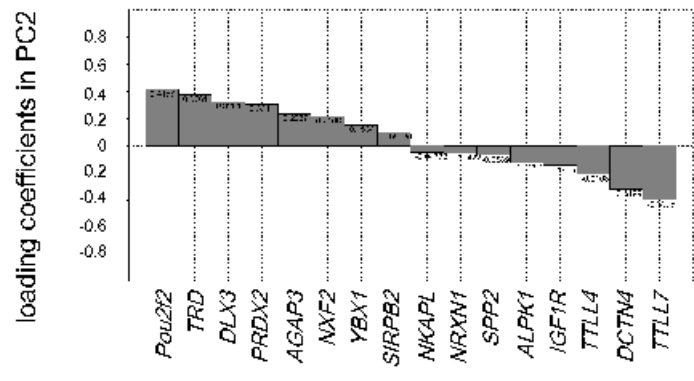
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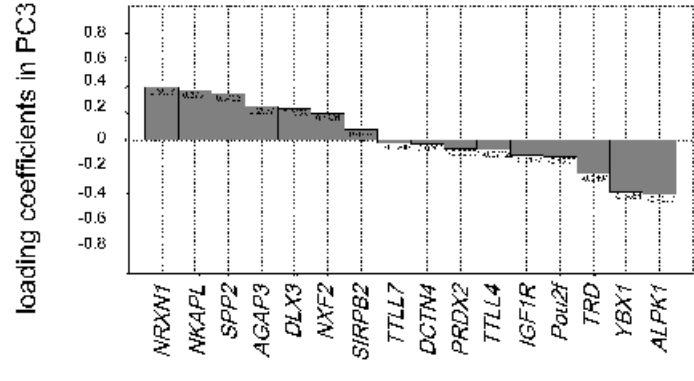
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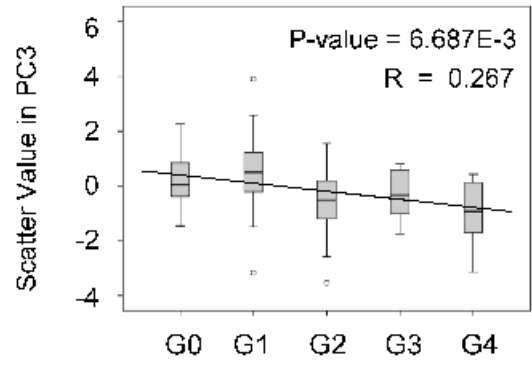
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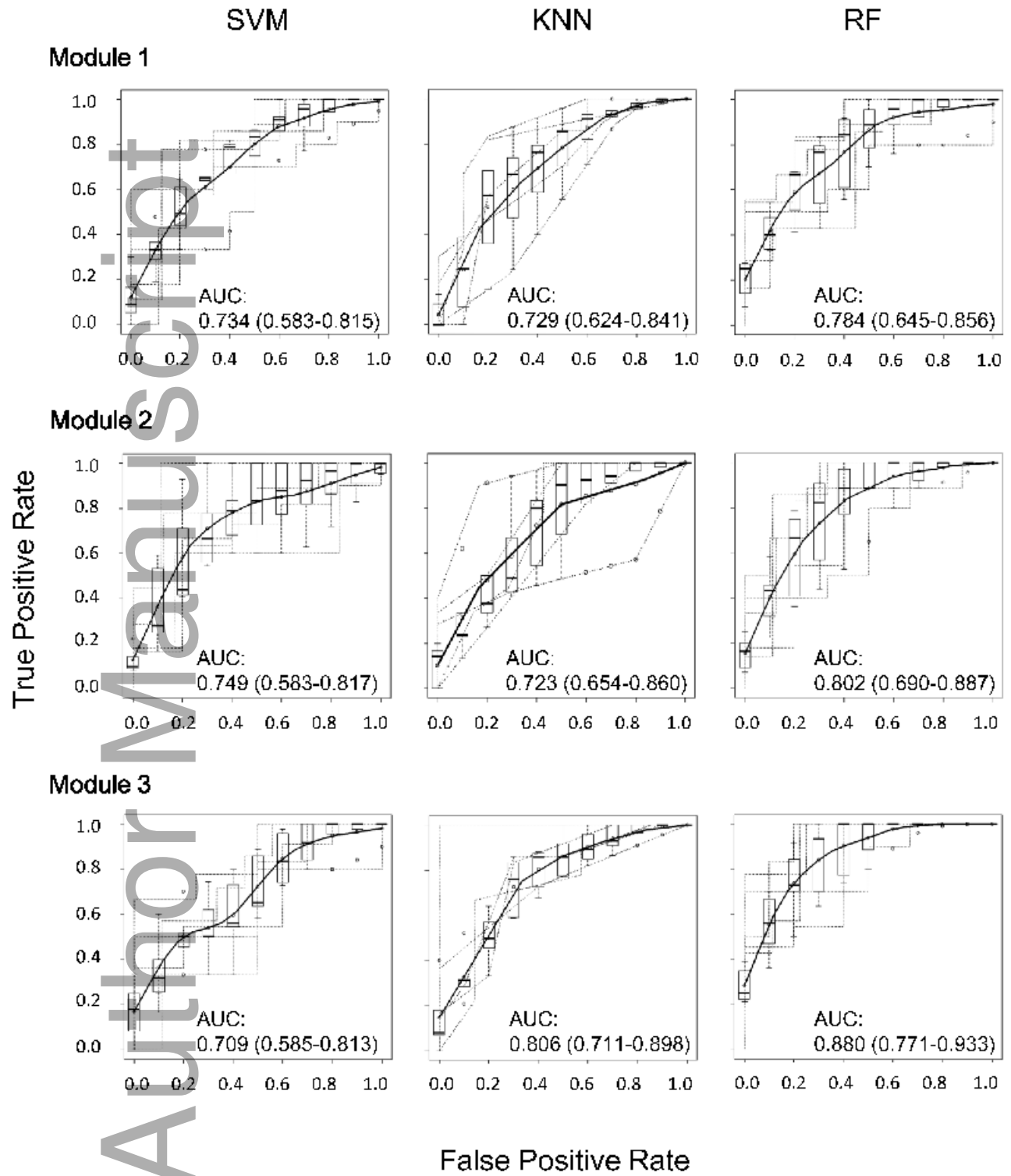
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D



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