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**Protection against murine osteoarthritis by inhibition of the  
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Running head: ubiquitination in osteoarthritis

**Protection against murine osteoarthritis by inhibition of the 26S proteasome and lysine-48 linked ubiquitination**

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** To determine whether the process of ubiquitination and/or activity of the 26S proteasome are involved in the induction of osteoarthritis (OA).

**Methods:** Bovine cartilage resorption assays, chondrocyte cell-line SW1353 and primary human articular chondrocytes were used with the general proteasome inhibitor MG132 or vehicle to identify a role of the ubiquitin–proteasome system (UPS) in cartilage destruction and matrix metalloproteinase-13 (MMP13) expression. In vivo, MG132 or vehicle, were delivered subcutaneously to mice following destabilisation of the medial meniscus (DMM) induced OA. Subsequently, DMM was induced in Lys-to-Arg (K48R and K63R) mutant ubiquitin (Ub) transgenic mice. Cytokine-signalling in SW1353s was monitored by immunoblotting and novel ubiquitinated substrates identified using Tandem Ubiquitin Binding Entities purification followed by mass spectrometry. The ubiquitination of TRAFD1 was assessed via immunoprecipitation and immunoblotting and its role in cytokine signal-transduction determined using RNA interference and real-time RT-PCR for MMP13 and interleukin-6 (IL6).

**Results:** Supplementation with the proteasome inhibitor MG132 protected cartilage from both cytokine-mediated resorption and degradation in vivo in mice following DMM-induced OA. Using transgenic animals only K48R-mutated Ub partially protected against OA compared to wild-type or wild-type Ub transgenic mice and this was only evident on the medial femoral condyle. After confirming ubiquitination was vital for NF- $\kappa$ B signalling and MMP13 expression, a screen for novel ubiquitinated substrates involved in cytokine-signalling identified TRAFD1; the depletion of which reduced inflammatory mediator-induced MMP13 and IL6 expression.

**Conclusions:** Our data for the first time identifies a role for ubiquitination and the proteasome in the induction of OA via regulation of inflammatory mediator-induced MMP13 expression. These data open avenues of research to determine whether the proteasome, or K48-linked ubiquitination, are potential therapeutic targets in OA.

## Keywords

Ubiquitin, proteasome, osteoarthritis, animal model, MMP13

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## INTRODUCTION

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most prevalent joint disease,[1] the typifying feature of which is the progressive degradation of articular cartilage.[2] Cartilage itself is composed of an extracellular matrix (ECM) rich in proteoglycan (principally aggrecan) and collagen (mainly type II) maintained by the sole cell type, the chondrocyte. Remodelling and turnover of this ECM in normal physiology is mediated through the regulation of the expression of matrix components and matrix-degrading enzymes, the metalloproteinases.[3] The phenotype of the chondrocytes shifts in OA, through as yet unidentified processes, to favour catabolism with an increase in metalloproteinase expression evident. Matrix metalloproteinase (MMP)-13 is the generally accepted type II collagen-degrading proteinase in OA with pathological aggrecan cleavage mediated by ADAMTS enzymes, most probably ADAMTS-5.[4] Mechanisms to alter the expression of these enzymes in OA are potential therapeutic targets in what is currently a disease only treatable by joint replacement surgery.

Cellular proteins exist in a dynamic state with multiple pathways leading to their degradation, the best characterised being the ubiquitin–proteasome system (UPS). The UPS plays a pivotal role in the degradation of proteins important in numerous cellular processes including signal transduction pathways, a notable example being that of the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway via the regulation of I $\kappa$ B degradation. I $\kappa$ Bs normally bind and sequester NF- $\kappa$ B dimers in the cytoplasm, but following their degradation the NF- $\kappa$ B complex translocates to the nucleus and regulates inflammatory signalling. Like most proteins destined for degradation via the UPS, I $\kappa$ B is covalently modified by the attachment of the small polypeptide ubiquitin (Ub). Subsequently, additional Ub polypeptides can be covalently attached to the first Ub to create a poly-Ub chain that eventually directs the client protein for proteasomal degradation.[5, 6]

Ub itself is a highly-conserved 76 amino acid polypeptide expressed by all eukaryotes. The covalent attachment of Ub to cellular proteins, ubiquitination, occurs at lysine (K) residues. Ub itself contains seven K residues which allows for different poly-Ub chains to be generated including K48 chains which target proteins to the proteasome. K63 and linear Ub

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chains have emerged as having important roles in signal transduction pathways, the most studied again being the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway.[6]

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of Ub and the UPS in the induction of OA in a murine model and to identify novel targets of Ub, all of which may have potential therapeutic relevance.

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## METHODS

### Cells, samples and treatments

This study was performed with Ethical Committee approval from the Newcastle and North Tyneside Health Authority, UK. Human articular chondrocytes (HACs) were from consenting patients undergoing knee joint replacement surgery and were isolated and cultured as described.[7] Human chondrosarcoma cells (SW1353) were cultured as described.[8] Cells were seeded one day before treatment and cultured in serum-free medium overnight prior to stimulation. Cells were stimulated with human recombinant IL-1 $\alpha$  (0.5 ng/ml) or 0.5  $\mu$ g/ml poly(I-C) (Invivogen, Source BioScience LifeSciences, Nottingham, UK). Where indicated, cells were treated 1 h before and during stimulation with MG132 (5  $\mu$ g/ml) (Tocris biosciences, R&D Europe Ltd. Abingdon, UK or Sigma-Aldrich Ltd. Poole, UK).

### Gene depletion/RNA interference (RNAi)

Cells were transfected with siRNA (50 nM) for 48 h using Dharmafect 1 (Dharmacon, Thermo Fisher Scientific, Epsom, UK) according to the manufacturer's protocol and as described previously.[7, 8] The following siRNAs were used: siGENOME SMARTpool: siGenome TRAFD1 siRNA (M-004097-01-0005) and siGenome Non-targeting siRNA pool #2 (D-001206-14-20)(siCon)(Dharmacon).

### Immunoblotting

Whole cell lysates were prepared as described but supplemented with 20 mM N-ethylmaleimide, to block deubiquitination.[7] Protein extracts were separated by SDS-PAGE, transferred to PVDF or nitrocellulose membranes and probed with the following antibodies: anti-I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ ; anti-phospho-NF- $\kappa$ B p65; anti-FLAG (Cell Signaling, New England Biolabs (UK) Ltd, Hitchin, UK); anti-GAPDH (Chemicon, Millipore (U.K.) Ltd., Watford, UK); anti-TRAFD1 (Santa Cruz Biotechnology (SCBT), Inc., Insight Biotechnology Ltd., Wembley, UK), and anti-Ubiquitin (Dako UK Ltd, Ely, UK).

### Enrichment of proteins with Tandem Ubiquitin Binding Entities (TUBES)

SW1353 protein extracts were prepared following 30 min stimulation with IL-1, 1 h stimulation with poly(I-C), or under basal conditions, all in presence of MG132. Cell lysis

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3 buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 0.15 M NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 1% NP40, 10% glycerol) was  
4 supplemented with protease inhibitor cocktail (Sigma-Aldrich) and 20 mM N-  
5 ethylmaleimide, and concentrated with a 9 kDa cut-off filter (Pierce, Thermo Fisher  
6 Scientific). 4.5 mg of protein were pre-cleared with 50 µl 50% slurry of control agarose for  
7 30 min, and then incubated with 200 µl of 50% slurry TUBE 2 (tebu-bio Ltd, Peterborough,  
8 UK) overnight at 4°C.[9] Enriched proteins were washed thrice with TBS-T (20 mM Tris-HCl  
9 pH 8.0, 0.15-0.2 M NaCl, 0.1% Tween-20), eluted with 200 µl 0.2M glycine-HCl pH 2.5 and  
10 concentrated with a 10 kDa cut-off filter (Amicon, Millipore, Thermo Fisher Scientific,  
11 Epsom, UK). Enrichment of ubiquitinated polypeptides was visualised by immunoblotting  
12 prior to being reduced with 1 mM DTT, alkylated with 5 mM chloroacetamide, and trypsin  
13 (Promega, Southampton, UK) digested at 37°C overnight before identification by mass  
14 spectrometry (MS).  
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#### 26 **Mass spectrometric analysis and data analysis**

27 MS was performed by Dundee Cell Products Ltd. (Dundee, UK) on an UltiMate™ 3000 nLC  
28 (Thermo scientific) coupled to a LTQ Orbitrap XL (Thermo Scientific). RAW data files were  
29 extracted with Raw2MSM and searched using Mascot Search Engine. A maximum of 2  
30 missing tryptic cleavages and the following modifications were selected for database search  
31 criteria: fixed modifications: Carbamidomethyl (C); variable modifications: Acetyl (N-term),  
32 Dioxidation (M), Gln->pyro-Glu (N-term Q), Oxidation (M), with/without GlyGly (K). The  
33 relative quantification of proteins (spectral count) was performed using an exponentially  
34 modified abundance index (emPAI) as described.[10]  
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#### 44 **TRAFD1 cloning and immunoprecipitation**

45 A human TRAFD1 ORF clone, IRQMp5018H057D (Source Bioscience), was PCR amplified  
46 using primers 5'-CAGTGTGGTGGGAATTCGTCCTGGAAGAGCTAAA-3' and 5'-  
47 GATATCTGCAGAATTCTCCTCTTCTCTTCTGTC -3' and subcloned into a modified pcDNA4  
48 (Life Technologies, Paisley, UK) vector using In-Fusion (Takara Bio Europe/Clontech, Saint-  
49 Germain-en-Laye, France) to create a C-terminal FLAG-tag fusion protein. SW1353s were  
50 transfected using JetPEI (Source Bioscience) and TRAFD1 expression detected by  
51 immunoblotting. Transfected cells were treated as indicated. Over-expressed TRAFD1 was  
52 immunoprecipitated from 150 µg of whole-cell-lysate with 1.5 µg of anti-FLAG antibody  
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(Sigma-Aldrich) overnight at 4°C, then incubated with 20 µl protein G PLUS-agarose (SCBT) for 1 h at 4°C. Bound proteins were washed once with lysis buffer and twice with TBS-T and eluted with 50 µl 2 x Laemmli sample buffer prior to SDS-PAGE and immunoblotting with the anti-FLAG or anti-Ub (after autoclaving of membranes) antibodies.

### Real-time reverse transcription-PCR

Total RNA from cells was extracted using Cells-to-cDNA II kit, RNase-free DNase (Life Technologies) treated, and cDNA synthesised as described.[11] Primers and probes were as published [7] or designed by the Universal Probe Library (Roche Applied Science, Burgess Hill, UK) and were: *TRAFD1* F 5'-CAGCCTCAAGAGACCTCACC-3' and R 5'-TCCAGGTAACCAGAAGACAGGT-3' with probe#44; *IL6* 5'-GATGAGTACAAAAGTCCTGATCCA-3' and R 5'-CTGCAGCCACTGGTTCTGT-3' with probe#40. Real-time RT-PCR performed and analysed as described.[12]

### In vitro cartilage degradation assay

Cultured bovine cartilage discs were incubated with serum-free DMEM containing IL-1 (1 ng/ml) and Oncostatin M (OSM) (10 ng/ml) ± DMSO/or MG132 (5 µg/ml) and refreshed on day 7. Residual cartilage explants were papain digested overnight at 65°C. Hydroxyproline (OHPro) and glycosaminoglycan (GAG) release were assayed as described.[13] Conditioned media was assessed at day 7 and 14 (presented) for damaged cells using the ToxiLight™ BioAssay Kit (Lonza, Slough, UK). Day 0 cartilage was freeze-thawed thrice as a positive control of cell damage.

### Experimental osteoarthritis

Experiments were performed on wild-type C57BL/6J or mutant-Ub transgenic mice housed in standard cages with *ad libitum* food and water in accordance with UK Home Office regulations. OA was induced in 8 week old animals, following surgical sectioning of the medial meniscotibial ligament with sham operation as control (data not shown).[14] MG132 or vehicle (50% DMSO/50% polyethylene glycol 300) was delivered via osmotic mini-pump (1004; ALZET Osmotic Pumps, Cupertino, CA, USA) implanted subcutaneously and delivering 0.125 µl/h. Based upon previous studies (e.g. [15]), a single concentration of MG132 (6.6

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3 mg/ml) was selected which delivered 1 mg/kg/day (8 mice/group). Osmotic pumps were  
4 replaced after 4 weeks. 8 weeks post-surgery mice were euthanized and knee joints  
5 harvested for histological examination and scoring. On average 14 sections/joint, harvested  
6 at approximately 80  $\mu$ m intervals, were used for histological scoring by two blinded  
7 scorers.[16, 17] Averaged scores for the maximally affected sections are presented.  
8 Transgenic mutant-Ub animals were as described,[18, 19] where all three transgenic mouse  
9 lines express human Ub as a linear fusion with a N-terminal 6 x His tag and a C-terminal  
10 enhanced green fluorescent protein (eGFP), the latter being cleaved to generate eGFP and  
11 His-tagged Ub. Since all Ub-transgenes have an N-terminal His-tag none can support linear  
12 poly-ubiquitination. K48R Ub and K63R expressing mice also have impaired K48 and K63  
13 poly-ubiquitination respectively. Genotyping of mice was via GFP visualisation [19] and PCR  
14 using Ub forward primer: 5'-CATGCAGATCTTCGTGAAGACCCTGACCGGCAAG-3' and GFP  
15 reverse primer: 5' CCTGCCGGTGGTGAGAT-3' followed by restriction digestion with the  
16 endonuclease NgoMIV which only cleaves the K48R PCR amplicon.  
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### 28 **Statistical analysis**

29 All values are given as mean values of replicates with error bars representing the standard  
30 error of the mean (SEM). Mann-Whitney U-test was used to assess independent pairs with a  
31 Student's t-test used for real-time PCR data analysis using Graphpad Prism Software  
32 (GraphPad Software, Inc., La Jolla, USA), where \*  $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .  
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## RESULTS

### **Inhibition of the proteasome reduces cartilage destruction and *MMP13* expression**

MG132 reduces the degradation of ubiquitin-conjugated proteins by the 26S proteasome complex and because this diverts ubiquitin pools into futile conjugates it has the effect of disrupting Ub homeostasis. Since poly-ubiquitination is strongly associated with NF- $\kappa$ B signal transduction,[20] we evaluated the effect of MG132 on cytokine-induced cartilage destruction using an established bovine cartilage model.[13] MG132 completely ameliorated the cartilage damage, as measured using glycosaminoglycan (GAG) and hydroxyproline (OHPro) release as surrogates for aggrecan and collagen destruction, mediated by the IL-1+OSM combination (Fig. 1A and B). Potential cytotoxicity of the MG132 treatment was assessed at day 7 and 14 (presented Fig. 1C) and showed low toxicity compared to freeze-thawed cartilage or the IL-1+OSM cytokine combination.

Cartilage-collagen turnover is mediated by MMPs, with MMP13 the accepted collagenase in OA. In both HAC and SW1353 cells, MG132 completely abolished the IL-1 or poly(I-C) (pIC) induced *MMP13* expression, the latter stimulus being a double-stranded RNA mimic which is a potent inducer of *MMP13* in HAC (Fig 1D).[7] Since IL-1 and poly(I-C) activate the NF- $\kappa$ B signalling pathway, we examined the effect of MG132 on the activation of this pathway by assessing the phosphorylation status of the NF- $\kappa$ B component p65 and the degradation of I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ , which is a consequence of K48 poly-ubiquitination. Interestingly, MG132 caused an increase in P-p65 even under basal conditions, as has previously been reported.[21] Using an early time-point of stimulation (15 min), at which I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  degradation is initiating,[7, 8] we observed MG132 caused an increase in higher molecular weight I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  immune-reactive products which we ascribed to be K48 poly-ubiquitinated forms (Fig 1E).

### **Inhibition of the proteasome reduces induced-OA in mice**

Given the ability of MG132 to protect against cytokine-induced cartilage destruction, we tested the efficacy of the compound in the murine DMM model of post-traumatic OA. MG132 was delivered systemically post-surgery for the eight week duration of the experiment at which point OA was assessed by histological scoring.[16] By this time-point in the model, cartilage lesions develop primarily on the central weight-bearing region of the

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3 medial-tibial plateau and to a lesser extent the medial-femoral condyles.[14] MG132  
4 significantly reduced cartilage damage in the most affected medial-tibial plateau but  
5 showed little evidence of efficacy for the less damaged femoral condyle (Fig. 2A and B).  
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7 Summation of the medial-femoral and tibial histological scores demonstrated an overall  
8 protection of cartilage loss in MG132 administered animals (Fig. 2B). Similarly to other  
9 studies (e.g. [22]), the administration of MG132 at this dose and for this length of time had  
10 no effect on the activity/wellbeing of the mice and had no impact on the weight of the  
11 animals.  
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### 19 **K48 poly-ubiquitination plays a role in DMM-induced OA**

20 To determine the mechanism by which MG132 protected the mice from induced-OA, we  
21 performed DMM surgery on transgenic mice expressing one of three mutated forms of Ub,  
22 unable to form specific poly-Ub chains, in addition to their endogenous Ub genes.[18] When  
23 examining the medial tibial plateau none of the mutant-Ub mice were protected from OA  
24 with in fact a significant enhancement of the OA score of the K63R mice (Fig. 3A and B).  
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26 However, the medial femoral condyles of the K48R mice showed a significant reduction in  
27 the OA score compared to either 'wild-type' animals or 'wild-type' Ub transgenic animals  
28 (Fig. 3A and B). Overall summation of the histological scores from both medial plateaus  
29 revealed no significant differences between transgenic and 'wild-type' animals (Fig. 3B).  
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### 38 **TRAFD1 positively regulates induced MMP13 expression**

39 Many components of signalling pathways are known to be modulated by Ub conjugation.  
40 Therefore we attempted to identify novel proteins ubiquitinated under either basal or  
41 stimulated conditions which may be important OA given our mouse-model findings, using  
42 chondrosarcoma SW1353 cell extracts. Ubiquitinated proteins were first enriched using  
43 TUBEs which have a nanomolar binding affinity for poly-ubiquitinated proteins.[9] After  
44 confirmation of the enrichment of Ub conjugated proteins (Fig. 4A, mid-panel), proteins  
45 were identified by MS using spectral counts to quantify relative abundance. We identified  
46 176 proteins in total and the protein with the highest emPAI (exponentially modified protein  
47 abundance index) was ubiquitin in all samples (Supplementary table). Identified proteins  
48 with a reported role in NF- $\kappa$ B signalling are listed (Table 1). Of these, TRAFD1 was identified  
49 only under basal conditions and has been identified as a negative regulator of cytokine  
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3 signalling.[23] We therefore confirmed the association of TRAFD1 with ubiquitin by over-  
4 expression and immunoprecipitation of the protein followed by immunoblotting with anti-  
5 Ub antibody (Fig. 4B). Using RNAi we specifically depleted TRAFD1 from SW1353 cells (Fig.  
6 4C) and measured IL-1- or poly(I-C)-induced gene expression. Depletion of TRAFD1 reduced  
7 both basal and induced expression of *MMP13* (Fig. 4D). Previous work with TRAFD1 had  
8 focussed on *IL6* regulation, again similar to our findings with *MMP13*, we observed a  
9 reduction in induced *IL6* expression following TRAFD1 depletion (Fig. 4E).  
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## DISCUSSION

To our knowledge this is the first detailed study to evaluate the therapeutic potential of inhibition of the UPS system for OA.

MG132 is a peptide aldehyde which directly inhibits the active site within the 20S core particle, the catalytic sub-complex of the 26S proteasome. Using the DMM OA model we observed that 8-weeks post surgery, MG132-administered mice had a significant protection against OA-like cartilage erosions. Similarly, using a well established bovine *ex vivo* model of cartilage destruction, mediated by pro-inflammatory cytokines,[13] MG132 totally blocked resorption. Proteasomal inhibitors are considered as potential remedies for autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and have shown efficacy in animal models, including in rat models of OA.[15, 24, 25] This is principally via their ability to inhibit NF- $\kappa$ B activation.[5] Thus, it was perhaps not surprising that here MG132 prevented cartilage destruction in our explant model, presumably via limiting I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$  degradation, NF- $\kappa$ B signal transduction and *MMP13* expression, all of which we demonstrated *in vitro*.

The NF- $\kappa$ B pathway inhibitor I $\kappa$ B was the first identified substrate of the UPS,[26] where following its K48 poly-ubiquitination it is degraded by the proteasome. In fact, multiple different Ub-conjugated proteins are involved in NF- $\kappa$ B signalling. For example, linear poly-ubiquitination of NEMO, K63 poly-ubiquitination of TRAF6 (itself the responsible E3 ligase), and K11 poly-ubiquitination of RIP1, all regulate the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway.[20] Similarly, deubiquitination plays an important role in NF- $\kappa$ B signalling, exemplified by A20.[27]

Although MG132 is a proteasome inhibitor it disrupts the entire UPS, leading to an accumulation of K48 poly-ubiquitination protein and a lack of bioavailable mono-Ub. In an attempt to resolve the mode of action of MG132 in the protection of DMM-induced OA we used 'wild-type', K48R and K63R Ub transgenic mice in further DMM studies. We observed that the K63R mice developed modestly, but significantly, worse OA. K63 poly-Ub chains are involved in range of cellular processes including intracellular trafficking and autophagy where their formation causes proteins to accumulate to the aggresome.[28] Autophagy is protective for healthy cartilage, where loss of the process is associated with cell death and OA-onset.[29] We therefore speculate that the K63R mice would have reduced autophagy, explaining the observed increase in OA score. Our data also indicates that linear poly-

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3 ubiquitination has little importance in DMM-induced OA since all three transgenic Ub mice  
4 are incapable of this form of conjugation with their respective Ub-transgene. Somewhat  
5 pheno-copying the MG132 data, K48R transgenic animals showed significant protection  
6 from DMM-OA, but only on the less affected medial-femoral condyle, suggestive of a delay  
7 in OA-onset. These data warrant further investigation into the role of K48 poly-  
8 ubiquitination at earlier time points during DMM where lesions on the tibial plateau are  
9 initiating. A limitation of these studies is that all the transgenic mice are still able to make  
10 all poly-Ub conjugates because they still express the four copies of the endogenous Ub  
11 genes, UBA52, RPS27A, UBB and UBC,[30] although data suggest the transgenic mutant Ub  
12 acts as a dominant negative form.[18] A further limitation is that the transgenic animals  
13 were maintained on FVB/N genetic background, rather than C57Bl/6, although we still  
14 observed reduced OA in K48R mice compared to the WT-Ub transgenics or 'WT' C57Bl/6  
15 mice, which themselves developed OA indistinguishable from each other (Fig 3).  
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26 Given the protection mediated by both MG132 and the K48R Ub transgene the data indicate  
27 a role for the 26S proteasome and potentially NF- $\kappa$ B signalling in DMM-OA. NF- $\kappa$ B signalling  
28 is the major inflammatory pathway but has yet to be investigated in DMM-induced OA,  
29 although the pathway has been extensively studied in chondrocytes and its inhibition can  
30 suppress OA in an experimental model.[31] In fact the role of inflammation, and in  
31 particular IL-1, in OA remains controversial.[32] Importantly, although we used pro-  
32 inflammatory cytokines to study NF- $\kappa$ B activation and *MMP13* expression, inflammatory  
33 signalling pathways, including NF- $\kappa$ B, can be activated by other signals including mechano-  
34 transduction.[33] Chondrocytes are well known to respond to biomechanical signals to  
35 maintain cartilage homeostasis. The magnitude of these signals are critical for the control of  
36 the activation or inhibition of pro-inflammatory genes, even in the absence of classical  
37 inflammatory stimuli. Further, DMM-induced OA is mechanosensitive with several pro-  
38 inflammatory genes that activate NF- $\kappa$ B, including *IL1b* and *IL6*, induced early following  
39 surgery and suppressed by joint immobilisation [34] - adding validity to our use of cytokines  
40 *in vitro* and our emphasis on NF- $\kappa$ B signalling. However, a number of other signalling  
41 pathways important for cartilage development and integrity are regulated by the UPS  
42 including TGF- $\beta$  and Wnt signalling.[35, 36] Our data cannot preclude that MG132 or the  
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3 K48R Ub-transgene may be affecting these or other pathways to reduce the cartilage  
4 damage induced following DMM surgery.

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6 Given that multiple signalling pathways converge on the upregulation of aggrecanases and  
7 collagenases, especially *MMP13*, we sought to identify potentially novel Ub involved in such  
8 pathways using a novel proteomic method. From these proteomic data we identified  
9 TRAFD1, although we were unable to verify that the protein was directly ubiquitinated since  
10 the identified peptide lacked a characteristic lysine-diglycine modification found after  
11 trypsin digestion of ubiquitinated peptides. However, TRAFD1 has been previously identified  
12 as being ubiquitinated in large-scale proteomic screens for Ub-modified proteins,[37-39]  
13 with K103, K129 and K485 of the human protein showing modification. Here, we  
14 overexpressed and immunoprecipitated a tagged version of TRAFD1 and confirmed the co-  
15 immunoprecipitation of Ub, presumably conjugated to TRAFD1.

16  
17 We chose TRAFD1, also known as FLN29, for further study based upon previous work linking  
18 the protein to toll-like receptor (TLR) and retinoic acid-inducible gene 1 (RIG-1)-like helicase  
19 (RLH) signalling,[23, 40] and thus NF- $\kappa$ B signalling. In these studies, contrary to our findings,  
20 TRAFD1 is reportedly a negative regulator of TLR and RLH signalling.[23] The discrepancies  
21 between our findings and those published could perhaps be explained by differences in the  
22 cells or species used but clearly warrant further investigation. TRAFD1 was also reportedly  
23 important for IRF-3 dimerisation,[23] a process important for poly(I-C)-induced *MMP13*  
24 expression by chondrocytes.[8]

25  
26 Finally, Ub is a member of a family of ubiquitin-like proteins which includes the Small  
27 Ubiquitin-related Modifiers (SUMO). SUMO has recently been linked to *MMP13* expression  
28 and potentially RA.[41] Thus, further work into the role of ubiquitin-like proteins in the  
29 arthritides is required.

30  
31 In summary, here we describe for the first time that disruption of the UPS system is able to  
32 partially protect from OA-like cartilage destruction in the DMM murine model. Using a  
33 proteomic screen we identified TRAFD1 as a potential novel Ub target in chondrocytes and  
34 demonstrate that the depletion of the gene reduces the inflammatory induction of the  
35 potent collagenase *MMP13*. Further work is required to determine whether the protection  
36 from OA observed here by inhibition of the UPS is via TRAFD1, inhibition of NF- $\kappa$ B signalling,  
37 or perhaps via modulation of other pathways such as Wnt or TGF- $\beta$  signalling.



Running head: ubiquitination in osteoarthritis

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Table 1. TUBE-enriched, Ub-associated protein with a role in NF-κB signalling

Protein #	protein		protein description	emPAI			uniprot accession
	accession	short name		unst	IL-1	pIC	
1	IPI00100154	TOLLIP	Toll-interacting protein	0.1	0.1	0.1	<b>Q9H0E2</b>
2	IPI00009146	TRAFD1	TRAF-type zinc finger domain-containing protein 1	0.05	----	----	<b>O14545</b>
3	IPI00094740	RNF31	Isoform 1 of RING finger protein 31	----	0.05	----	<b>Q96EP0</b>
4	IPI00000816	YWHAE	Isoform 1 of 14-3-3 protein epsilon	----	0.23	0.11	<b>P62258</b>
5	IPI00021263	YWHAZ	14-3-3 protein zeta/delta	0.38	----	----	<b>P63104</b>
6	IPI00220740	NPM1	Isoform 2 of Nucleophosmin	----	----	0.5	<b>P06748</b>
7	IPI00179473	SQSTM1	Isoform 1 of Sequestosome-1	0.65	0.65	0.29	<b>Q13501</b>
8	IPI00299147	SUMO3	Small ubiquitin-related modifier 3	1.1	0.64	0.64	<b>P55854</b>

\* emPAI, Exponentially modified protein abundance index.[10]

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### Figure legends

**Figure 1. UPS inhibition prevents cartilage destruction via blockade of NF- $\kappa$ B signaling to MMP13.** (A) and (B). Bovine nasal cartilage was cultured in serum-free medium in the presence of either medium, or medium plus IL-1 and OSM both  $\pm$  MG132 or DMSO vehicle as described for 14 days. (A) Glycosaminoglycan (GAG) release into the medium was assayed using the dimethylmethylene blue assay [13] and is shown for day 7. (B). The levels of collagen fragments released into the medium were determined by measurement of hydroxyproline (OHPro).[13] Results shown are for the cumulative collagen release at day 14 of culture and expressed as a percentage of the total (mean  $\pm$  SD). Experiments were performed with three bovine noses with each experiment performed in quadruplicate. (C). Treatment toxicity was measured in condition medium (day 7 and 14 - presented) using the ToxiLight™ BioAssay Kit. Data is average (n=4) emitted light from a single bovine cartilage experiment with freeze-thawed cartilage used as a positive control and set to 100% toxicity. (D). SW1353 cells or HAC were stimulated with ligands (pIC = poly(I-C))  $\pm$  MG132 or DMSO vehicle, as described and labelled, for 6 h or 24 h respectively. *MMP13* and *18S* expression were measured using real-time RT-PCR. (E). SW1353 cell were stimulated as described for 15 min and isolated protein subjected to immunoblotting with the indicated antibodies. GAPDH was used as a loading control. Real-time PCR results are combined data from 3 separate experiments (n=4/experiment) or representative of two patient HAC. Immunoblotting is representative of two experiments.

**Figure 2. MG132 reduces cartilage destruction in the ‘destabilisation of the medial meniscus’ model *in vivo*.** (A). OA in C57BL/6J mice was induced following surgical destabilization of the medial meniscus (DMM) as described. MG132 (1 mg/kg/day) or vehicle (DMSO/PEG) were delivered via subcutaneously implanted osmotic pump, with pumps replacement after 4 weeks. Data are shown at 8 weeks. Frontal sections (5  $\mu$ m) were stained with haematoxylin, safranin-O/fast green. Sections shown are representative of the most affected from a selected mouse (DMSO vehicle or MG132) and show the medial compartment of the knee joint (5 x magnification). (B). Approximately fourteen sections from each mouse were graded by two blinded scorers using a validated scoring system.[16] The means of the highest score for each animal are plotted (n=8 per group) for the medial



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femoral condyle and tibial plateau and summation of both, with closed circles and open squares for vehicle or MG312 treated animals respectively. Line represents mean and error bars are SEM. Statistical significance was calculated using a Mann Whitney U test.

**Figure 3. Transgenic mutated ubiquitins differentially affect DMM-induced OA.** (A). OA was induced in 10-week old mice transgenic for wild-type ubiquitin, K48R or K63R mutant ubiquitin on the FVB/N genetic background. After 8 weeks animals were sacrificed and knee frontal sections (5  $\mu$ m) stained with haematoxylin, safranin-O/fast green. Sections shown are representative of the most affected from a selected mouse for each genotype and show the medial compartment of the knee joint (5 x magnification). (B). Approximately fourteen sections from each mouse were graded by two blinded scorers using a validated scoring system.[16] The means of the highest score for each animal are plotted for the medial femoral condyle and tibial plateau and summation of both. C57BL/6J mice (n=22) from parallel surgery, by the same surgeon, were used to determine the effect transgenic 'wild-type' Ub. Line represents mean and error bars are SEM. Statistical significance was calculated using a Mann Whitney U test.

**Figure 4. TRAFD1 is a novel ubiquitinated substrate involved in inflammatory signalling.** (A). Protein extracts from SW1353 cells were enriched for poly-ubiquitinated substrates using TUBEs as described, with colloidal coomassie staining (upper-panel) and immunoblotting with an anti-Ub (Ub; mid-panel) antibody used to verify enrichment. Enriched ubiquitin-conjugated proteins were subjected to MS. n-b is 'non-bound' protein collected after incubation with the TUBEs (B). SW1353 cells were transfected with a TRAFD1-FLAG construct or empty vector and overexpression confirmed by immunoblotting. Transfected cells were stimulated as indicated and FLAG-tagged proteins enriched by FLAG-immunoprecipitation, which was confirmed by FLAG-immunoblotting. (C). SW1353 cells were transfected with the indicated siRNA and *TRAFD1* depletion confirmed by real-time RT-PCR. (D) and (E) SW1353 cells were transfected with the indicated siRNA, stimulated with IL-1 (solid bars) or poly(I-C)(PIC) (shaded bars) as indicated for 6 or 24 h, and *MMP13* (D) or *IL6* (E) expression measured by real-time RT-PCR. Data are shown as fold change relative to the cells transfected with a non-targeting siRNA (siCon). Real-time PCR data are from 3 separate experiments performed in quadruplicate.

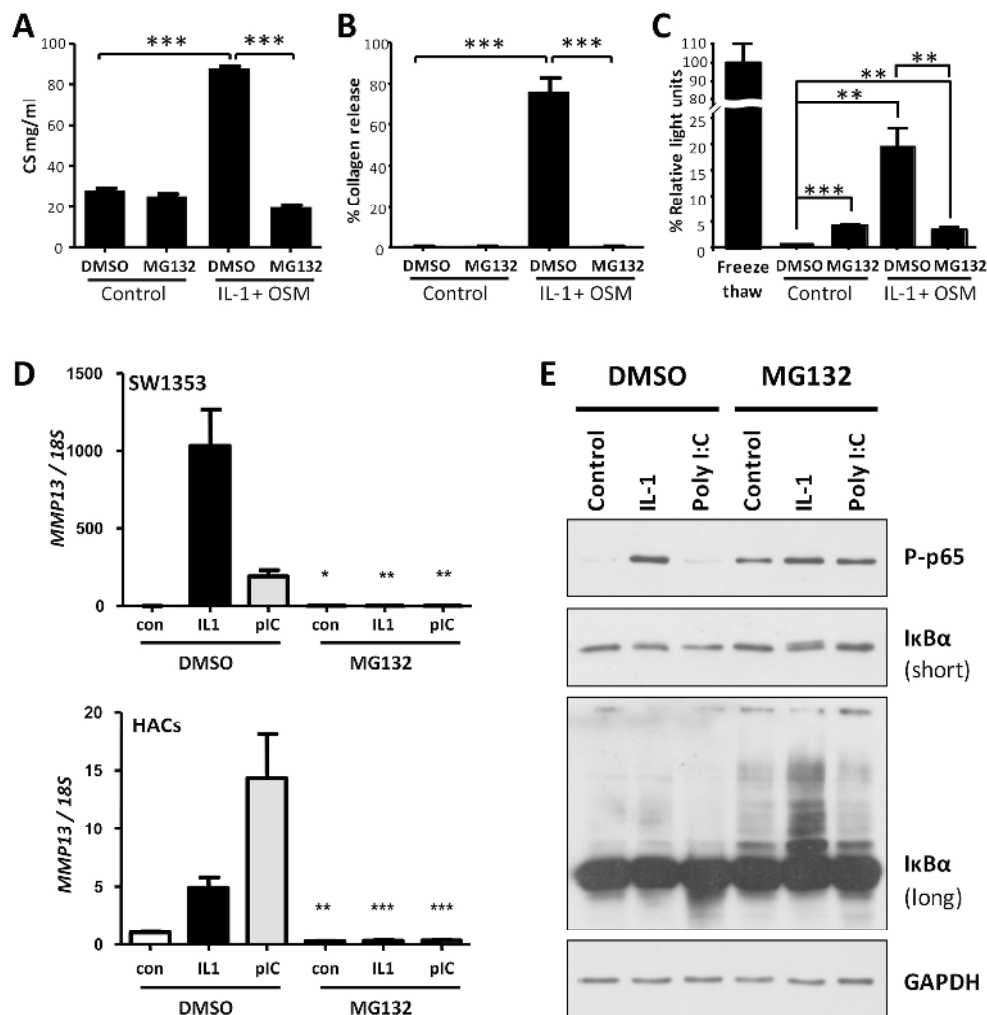


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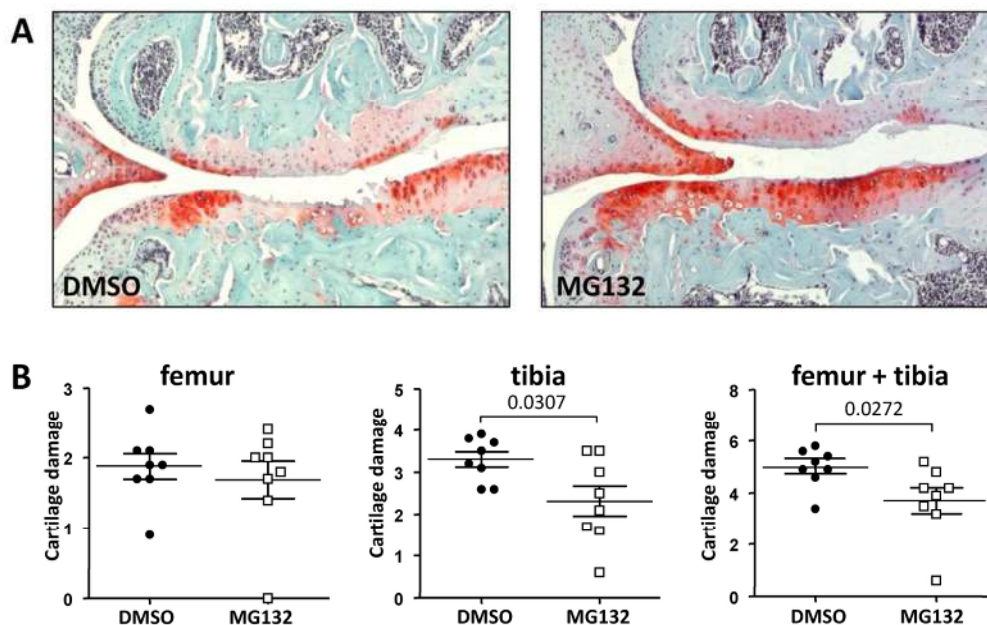


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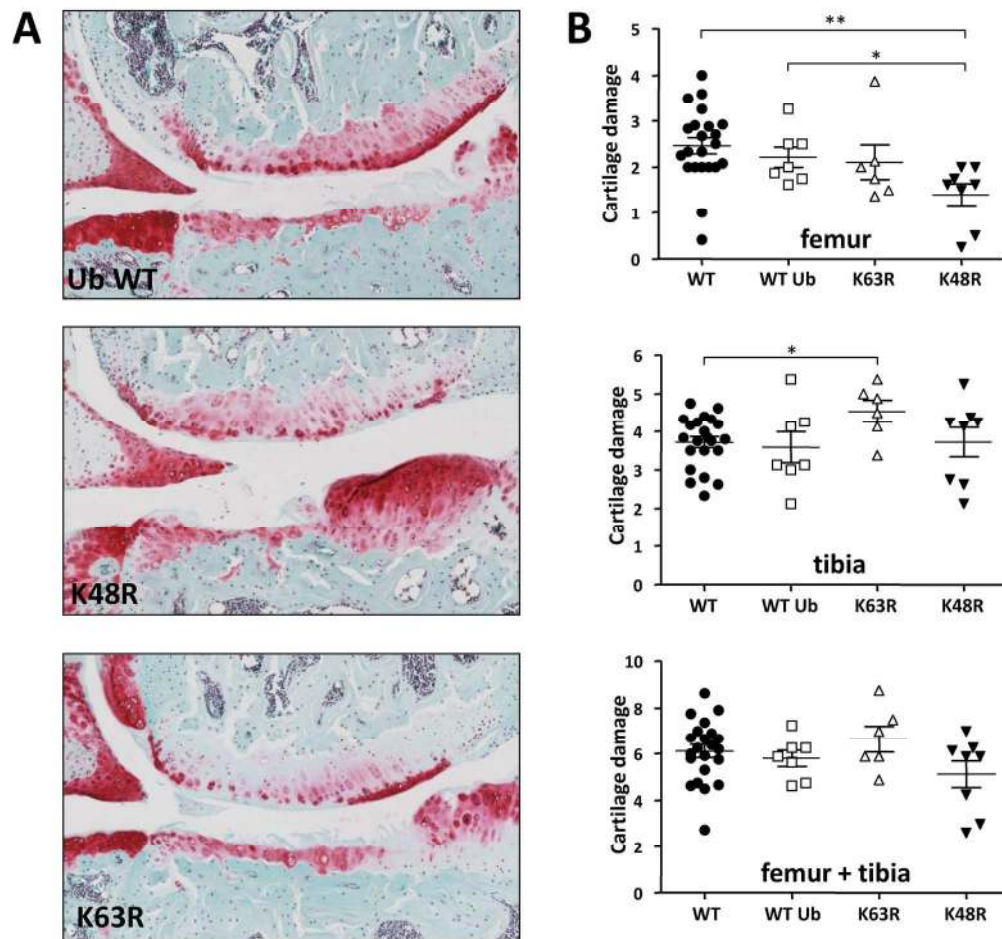


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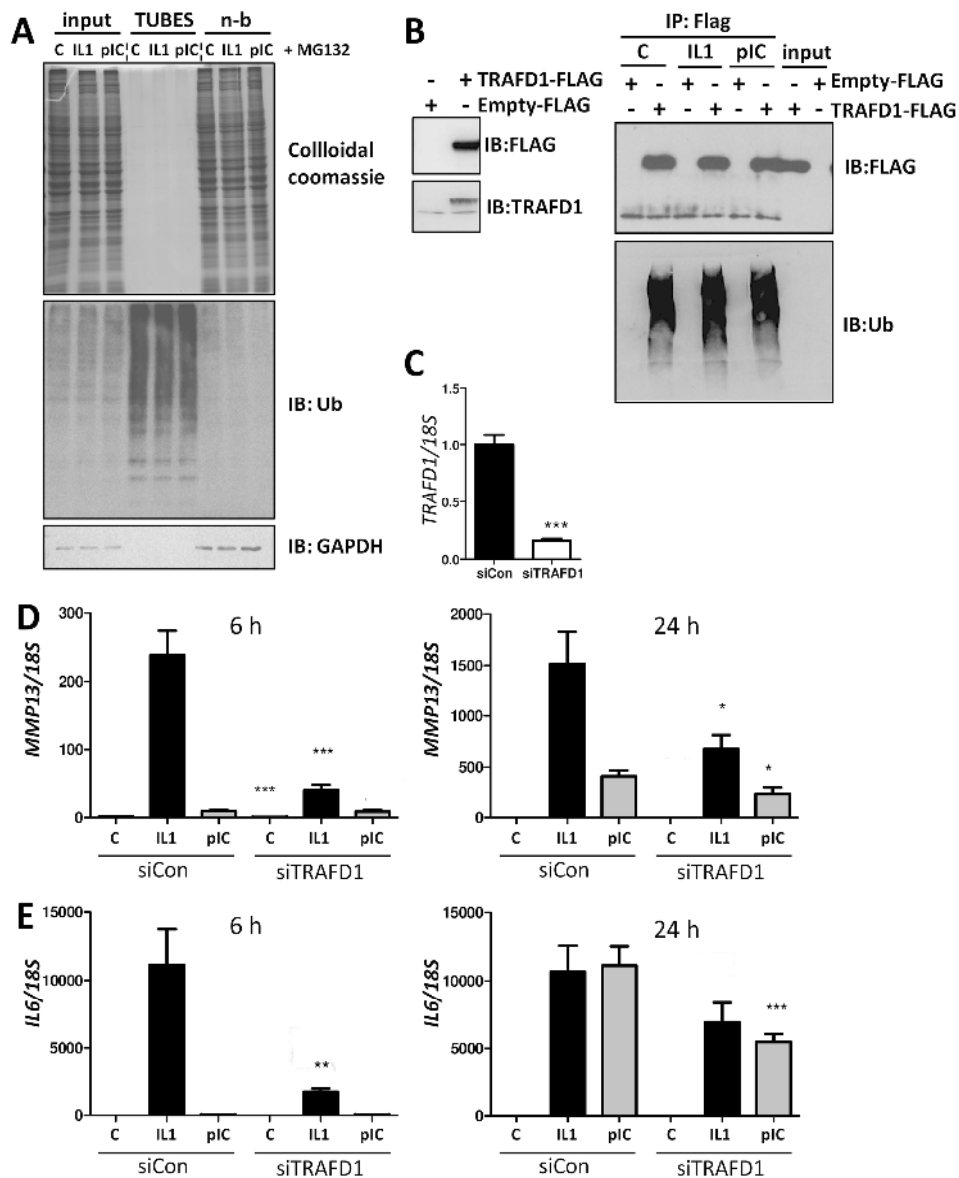


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Table with columns: Accession, Gene, Protein, and various numerical values. Rows include genes like PSMC3, YWHAE, SLC25A5, HSPA9, FHL1, NEDD8, SEC61A1, RPL9, RPL9, DDB1, FLNA, MAGED1, TOM1L2, PSMD11, TUBB, BAG2, MYO6, TRAFD1, SLC1A5, YWHAZ, SLC25A4, MYL6B, CCT6A, RPN2, PSME3, PSMD1, CALM3, BRE, TUBA1C, DHCR7, CYP51A1, FLNA, TUBB, HSPA9, EEF1G, ACTN4, CUL2, Cullin-2, TUBAL3, CSE1L, RNF31, CTNNA1, PPFN1, UBR2, RPS16, ANKHD1, AMFR, PSMD1, HSPA1L, CAV1, PABPC1, RPLP1, RPLP2, RPLP0, G3BP1, RPS7, TUBB3, RPS12, LMNA, ACTA1, RPL12, BANF1, RPL31, PHB2, HIST3H2A, CSDA, COL6A3, FLNC, HNRNPA1, RPL22, MYL9, HIST1H2BB, NPM1, MYL6, SNORD73A, NCL, PPP1CC, ATRP1A1, ACTA2, COL6A3, RPS29, ANKRD13A, SNORD54, MYH9, etc.



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169	IPi00026271	RPS14	40S ribosomal protein S14	0.2	----	0.43	16434	59	----	93	1	----	2	<b>P62263</b>	40S ribosomal protein S14
170	IPi00033494	MYL12B	Myosin regulatory light chain 12B	0.16	----	5.99	19824	66	----	584	1	----	13	<b>O14950</b>	Myosin regulatory light chain 12B
171	IPi00299608	PSMD1	Isoform 1 of 26S proteasome non-ATPase regulatory subunit 1	2.45	----	2.35	106795	1808	----	1909	45	----	43	<b>Q99460</b>	26S proteasome non-ATPase regulatory subunit 1
172	IPi00303476	ATPSB	ATP synthase subunit beta, mitochondrial	0.06	----	0.11	56525	49	----	89	1	----	2	<b>P06576</b>	ATP synthase subunit beta, mitochondrial
173	IPi00418471	VIM	Vimentin	0.25	----	2.11	53676	100	----	621	4	----	20	<b>P08670</b>	Vimentin
174	IPi00450975	RPS16	Uncharacterized protein	0.67	----	0.67	17267	102	----	120	3	----	3	<b>Q6IPX4</b>	40S ribosomal protein S16
175	IPi00797373	DOCK8	Isoform 1 of Dedicator of cytokinesis protein 8	0.01	----	0.01	240886	53	----	42	1	----	1	<b>Q8NF50</b>	Dedicator of cytokinesis protein 8
176	IPi00968128	RPL9	Protein	0.15	----	0.32	21671	45	----	81	1	----	2	-	-

Modified peptides Ubiquitin ?  
 MOIFVK(GG)LTGK K #  
 LIFAGK(GG)QLEDGR  
 TLSDYNIQK(GG)ESTLHLVLR  
 TLTKG(GG)TITLVEPSDTIENVK  
 LIFAGK(GG)QLEDGRTLSDYNIQK

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