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SOFTWARE TOOL ARTICLE

Exploiting the DepMap cancer dependency data using the depmap R package [version 1; peer review: 2 approved with reservations]

Theo Killian, Laurent Gatto

Computational Biology and Bioinformatics Unit, de Duve Institute, Catholic University of Louvain, Brussels, 1200, Belgium

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Abstract

The 'depmap' package facilitates access in the R environment to the data from the DepMap project, a multi-year collaborative effort by the Broad Institute and Wellcome Sanger Institute, mapping genetic and chemical dependencies and other molecular biological measurements of over 1700 cancer cell lines. The 'depmap' package formats this data to simplify the use of popular R data analysis and visualizing tools such as 'dplyr' and 'ggplot2'. In addition, the 'depmap' package utilizes 'ExperimentHub', storing versions of the DepMap data accessible from the Cloud, which may be selectively downloaded, providing a reproducible research framework to support exploiting this data. This paper describes a workflow demonstrating how to access and visualize the DepMap data in R using this package.

Keywords

depmap, cancer, Bioconductor

This article is included in the **Bioconductor** gateway.

This article is included in the **RPackage** gateway.

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1. **Katharina Imkeller** , German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany
European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg, Germany
2. **Ashir Borah**, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, USA
James M. McFarland, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, USA

Any reports and responses or comments on the article can be found at the end of the article.

Corresponding author: Laurent Gatto (laurent.gatto@uclouvain.be)

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Introduction

The consequences of genomic alterations of cancer cells on the molecular biological landscape of the cell may result in differential vulnerabilities, or “dependencies” compared to those of healthy cells. An example of genetic dependency is a gene not necessary for the survival in healthy cells, but due to perturbations of the metabolic networks caused by cancer mutations, such a gene becomes essential for the vitality of a particular cancer cell line. However, due to the complex nature of metabolic networks, the exact mechanistic nature of many genetic dependencies of cancer are not completely understood.¹ A map illustrating the relationships between the genetic features of cancer and those of cancer dependencies is therefore desirable. The Cancer Dependency Map or “DepMap”, a collaborative initiative between the Broad Institute and the Wellcome Sanger Institute, aims to map genetic dependencies in a broad range of cancer cell lines. Over 1700 cancer cell lines have been selected to be tested in this effort, intended to reflect the overall distribution of various cancer diseases in the general population. The stated aim of the DepMap Project is developing a better understanding of the molecular biology of cancer and the exploiting of this knowledge to develop new therapies in precision cancer medicine.²

The DepMap initiative is, as of the date of this publication, an ongoing project, with new data releases of select datasets every 90 days. As of the 20Q4 DepMap release, 1812 human cancer cell lines have been mapped for dependencies.² The DepMap project utilizes CRISPR gene knockout as the primary method to map genomic dependencies in cancer cell lines.²⁻⁵ The resulting genetic dependency score displayed in the DepMap data is calculated from the observed log fold change in the amount of shRNA detected in pooled cancer cell lines after gene knockout.^{6,7} To correct for potential off-target effects of gene knockout in overestimating dependency with CRISPR, the DepMap initiative utilized the CERES algorithm to moderate the final dependency score estimation.³ It should be noted that due to improvements in the CERES algorithm to estimate genetic dependency while accounting for CRISPR seed effects, the RNAi dependency measurements have been rendered redundant, and further data releases for RNAi dependency measurement have been discontinued as of the 19Q3 release.^{2,4} In addition to genomic dependency measurements of cancer cell lines, chemical dependencies were also measured by the DepMap PRISM viability screens that as of the 20Q4 release, tested 4,518 compounds against 578 cancer cell lines.^{2,8} A new proteomic dataset was added with the 20Q2 release, providing normalized quantitative profiling of proteins of 375 cancer cell lines by mass spectrometry.⁹ The DepMap project has also compiled additional datasets detailing molecular biological characterization of cancer cell lines, including WES genomic copy number, Reverse Phase Protein Array (RPPA) data, TPM gene expression data for protein coding genes and genomic mutation call data. Core datasets such as CRISPR viability screens, TPM gene expression, WES copy number and genomic mutation calls are updated quarterly on a release schedule. All datasets are made publicly available under CC BY 4.0 licence.²

A table of the datasets available for the depmap package (as of 20Q4 release) is displayed in Table 1.

The depmap Bioconductor package was created in order to efficiently exploit these rich datasets and to promote reproducible research, facilitated by importing the data into the R environment. The value added by the depmap Bioconductor package includes cleaning and converting all datasets to long format tibbles,¹⁰ as well as adding the unique key `depmap_id` for all datasets. The addition of the the unique key `depmap_id` aides the comparison and benchmarking of multiple molecular features and streamlines the datasets for usage of common R packages such as `dplyr`¹¹ and `ggplot2`.¹²

As new DepMap datasets are continuously released on a quarterly basis, it is not feasible to include all dataset files in binary directly within the directory of the depmap R package. To keep the package lightweight, the depmap package utilizes and fully depends on the ExperimentHub package¹³ to store and retrieve all versions of the DepMap data (as of this publication, starting from version 19Q1 through 20Q4) in the Cloud using AWS. The depmap package contains accessor functions to directly download and cache the most current datasets from the Cloud into the local R environment. Specific datasets (such as datasets from older releases), which can be downloaded separately, if desired. The depmap package was designed to enhance reproducible research by ensuring datasets from all releases will remain available to researchers. The depmap R package is available as part of Bioconductor at: <https://bioconductor.org/packages/depmap>.

Use cases

Dependency scores are the features of primary interest in the DepMap Project datasets. These measurements can be found in datasets `crispr` and `rnai`, which contain information on genetic dependency, as well as the dataset `drug_sensitivity`, which contains information pertaining to chemical dependency. The genetic dependency can be interpreted as an expression of how vital a particular gene for a given cancer cell line. For example, a highly negative dependency score is derived from a large negative log fold change in the population of cancer cells after gene knockout or knockdown, implying that a given cell line is highly dependent on that gene in maintaining metabolic function. Genes that are not essential for non-cancerous cells but display highly negative dependency scores for cancer cell lines, may be interesting candidates for research in targeted cancer medicine. In this workflow, we will describe exploring and visualizing several DepMap datasets, including those that contain information on genetic dependency.

Table 1. Datasets available the depmap package. The 'Release' column indicates the most recent available release.

Dataset	Description	EH_Number	Dimensions	Coverage	Release
rnai	(DEMETER2) Batch and off-target corrected RNAi gene knockdown dependency data	EH3080	17309 genes, 712 cancer cell lines	31 primary diseases and 31 lineages	Aug 7 2019
drug	Drug sensitivity data for cancer cell lines derived from logfold change values relative to DMSO	EH3087	4686 compounds, 578 cell lines	23 primary diseases and 25 lineages	Aug 7 2019
proteomic	Normalized quantitative profiling of proteins by mass spectrometry	EH3459	12399 proteins, 375 cancer cell lines	24 primary diseases and 27 lineages	May 20 2020
crispr	(CERES) Batch and off-target corrected CRISPR-Cas9 gene knockout dependency data	EH3960	18119 genes, 808 cell lines	31 primary diseases and 29 lineages	Nov 20 2020
copyNumber	WES log copy number data	EH3961	27562 genes, 1753 cell lines	35 primary diseases and 38 lineages	Nov 20 2020
TPM	CCLE TPM RNAseq gene expression data for protein coding genes	EH3962	19182 genes, 1376 cancer cell lines	33 primary diseases and 37 lineages	Nov 20 2020
mutationCalls	Merged mutation calls (for coding region, germline filtered)	EH3963	18789 genes, 1749 cell lines	35 primary diseases and 38 lineages	Nov 20 2020
metadata	Metadata for cell lines in the 20Q4 DepMap release	EH3964	1812 cell lines	35 primary diseases and 39 lineages	Nov 20 2020

Below, we start by loading the packages need to run this workflow.

```
library("depmap")
library("ExperimentHub")
library("dplyr")
library("ggplot2")
library("stringr")
```

The depmap datasets are too large to be included into a typical package, therefore these data are stored in the Cloud. There are two ways to access the depmap datasets. The first such way calls on dedicated accessor functions that download, cache and load the latest available dataset into the R workspace. Examples for all available data are shown below:

```
rnai <- depmap_rnai()
crispr <- depmap_crispr()
copyNumber <- depmap_copyNumber()
TPM <- depmap_RPPA()
RPPA <- depmap_TPM()
metadata <- depmap_metadata()
mutationCalls <- depmap_mutationCalls()
drug_sensitivity <- depmap_drug_sensitivity()
proteomic <- depmap_proteomic()
```

Alternatively, a specific dataset (from any available release) can be accessed through Bioconductor's ExperimentHub. The `ExperimentHub()` function creates an `ExperimentHub` object, which can be queried for specific terms of interest. The list of datasets available that correspond to the query, `depmap` are shown below:

```
## create ExperimentHub query object
eh <- ExperimentHub()
query(eh, "depmap")
```

```
## ExperimentHub with 48 records
## # snapshotDate(): 2020-10-27
## # $dataprovider: Broad Institute
## # $species: Homo sapiens
## # $rdaclass: tibble
## # additional mcols(): taxonomyid, genome, description,
## #   coordinate_1_based, maintainer, rdatadateadded, preparerclass, tags,
## #   rdatapath, sourceurl, sourcetype
## # retrieve records with, e.g., 'object[["EH2260"]]'
##
##   title
## EH2260 | rnai_19Q1
## EH2261 | crispr_19Q1
## EH2262 | copyNumber_19Q1
## EH2263 | RPPA_19Q1
## EH2264 | TPM_19Q1
## ... ...
## EH5358 | crispr_21Q1
## EH5359 | copyNumber_21Q1
## EH5360 | TPM_21Q1
## EH5361 | mutationCalls_21Q1
## EH5362 | metadata_21Q1
```

Specific datasets can be downloaded, cached and loaded into the workspace as tibbles by selecting each dataset by their unique EH numbers. Shown below, datasets from the 20_Q3 release are downloaded in this way.

```
## download and cache required datasets
crispr <- eh[["EH3797"]]
copyNumber <- eh[["EH3798"]]
TPM <- eh[["EH3799"]]
mutationCalls <- eh[["EH3800"]]
metadata <- eh[["EH3801"]]
proteomic <- eh[["EH3459"]]
```

By importing the `depmap` data into the R environment, the data may be mined more effectively utilizing R data manipulation tools. For example, molecular dependency for all cell lines pertaining to soft tissue sarcomas, sorted by genes with the greatest dependency, can be accomplished with the following code, using functions from the `dplyr` package. Below, the `crispr` dataset is selected for cell lines with “*SOFT_TISSUE*” in the CCLE name, and displaying a list of the highest dependency scores.

```
## list of dependency scores
crispr %>%
  dplyr::select(cell_line, gene_name, dependency) %>%
  dplyr::filter(stringr::str_detect(cell_line, "SOFT_TISSUE")) %>%
  dplyr::arrange(dependency)
```

```
## # A tibble: 815,355 x 3
##   cell_line      gene_name dependency
##   <chr>          <chr>          <dbl>
## 1 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE RAN              -4.36
## 2 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE PSMB6             -3.82
## 3 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE C1orf109          -3.67
## 4 RH30_SOFT_TISSUE RAN              -3.20
## 5 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE SNU13             -3.07
## 6 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE SPATA5L1          -3.04
## 7 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE HSPE1             -3.03
## 8 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE POLR1C            -2.96
## 9 RH18DM_SOFT_TISSUE CDC16             -2.84
## 10 RH30_SOFT_TISSUE BUB3               -2.83
## # ... with 815,345 more rows
```

A brief survey of the top dependency scores identifies the gene *C1orf109* among the most dependent genes found in the selected list of dependencies scores for soft tissue cancer cell lines. This gene, also known by the alias Chromosome 1 Open Reading Frame 109, codes for a poorly characterized protein which is theorized to promote cancer cell proliferation by controlling the G1 to S phase transition.¹⁴ This protein is selected as an interesting candidate target to explore and visualize the depmap data. **Figure 1** displays the *crispr* data as a histogram showing the distribution of dependency scores for gene *C1orf109*. The red dotted line signifies the mean dependency score for that gene, while the blue dotted line signifies the global mean dependency score for all *crispr* measurements.

Figure 1. Histogram of CRISPR dependency scores for gene *C1orf109*.

```

mean_crispr_dep <- crispr %>%
  dplyr::select(gene_name, dependency) %>%
  dplyr::filter(gene_name == "C1orf109")

crispr %>%
  dplyr::select(gene, gene_name, dependency) %>%
  dplyr::filter(gene_name == "C1orf109") %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = dependency)) + geom_histogram() +
  geom_vline(xintercept = mean(mean_crispr_dep$dependency, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "red") +
  geom_vline(xintercept = mean(crispr$dependency, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "blue")

```

A more complex plot of the `crispr` dependency data, is shown in [Figure 2](#). Visualizing this data involves plotting the distribution of dependency scores for gene `C1orf109` for each major type of cancer, while highlighting the qualitative nature of mutations of this gene in such cancer cell lines (e.g. if such mutations are damaging or conserved, etc.). Genes known to be damaging mutations for a given cancer cell line are highlighted in red, while other non-conserving mutations are highlighted in blue. Notice that the plot in [Figure 1](#) reflects the same overall distribution in two dimensions.

Figure 2. Plot of CRISPR dependency scores for gene `C1orf109` by lineage.

```

meta_crispr <- metadata %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, lineage) %>%
  dplyr::full_join(crispr, by = "depmap_id") %>%
  dplyr::filter(gene_name == "Clorf109") %>%
  dplyr::full_join((mutationCalls %>%
    dplyr::select(depmap_id, entrez_id,
                  is_cosmic_hotspot,
                  var_annotation)),
    by = c("depmap_id", "entrez_id"))

meta_crispr %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = dependency, y = lineage)) +
  geom_point(alpha = 0.4, size = 0.5) +
  geom_point(data = subset(meta_crispr,
    var_annotation == "damaging"),
    color = "red") +
  geom_point(data = subset(meta_crispr,
    var_annotation == "other non-conserving"),
    color = "blue") +
  geom_vline(xintercept = mean(meta_crispr$dependency, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "red") +
  geom_vline(xintercept = mean(crispr$dependency, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "blue")

```

Many cancer phenotypes may be the result of changes in gene expression.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ The extensive coverage of the depmap data affords visualization of genetic expression patterns across many major types of cancer. Elevated expression of gene Clorf109 in lung cancer tissue has been reported in literature.¹⁴ Figure 3 below shows a boxplot illustrating expression values for gene Clorf109 by lineage:

```

metadata %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, lineage) %>%
  dplyr::full_join(TPM, by = "depmap_id") %>%
  dplyr::filter(gene_name == "Clorf109") %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = lineage, y = rna_expression, fill = lineage)) +
  geom_boxplot(outlier.alpha = 0.1) +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1)) +
  theme(legend.position = "none")

```

A relationship between elevated gene expression and genetic dependency in cancer cell lines has been reported in literature.^{1,7} Therefore, genes with elevated gene expression and high genetic dependency may present especially interesting research targets which may be explored through the DepMap datasets. Figure 4 shows a plot of expression versus CRISPR gene dependency for Rhabdomyosarcoma. The red vertical line represents the average gene expression for this form of cancer, while the horizontal line represents the average dependency for this cancer type.

```

sarcoma <- metadata %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, cell_line, primary_disease, subtype_disease) %>%
  dplyr::filter(primary_disease == "Sarcoma",
    subtype_disease == "Rhabdomyosarcoma")

crispr_sub <- crispr %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, gene, gene_name, dependency)

tpm_sub <- TPM %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, gene, gene_name, rna_expression)

```



```

sarcoma_dep <- sarcoma %>%
  dplyr::left_join(crispr_sub, by = "depmap_id") %>%
  dplyr::select(-cell_line, -primary_disease,
               -subtype_disease, -gene_name)

sarcoma_exp <- sarcoma %>%
  dplyr::left_join(tpm_sub, by = "depmap_id")

sarcoma_dat_exp <- dplyr::full_join(sarcoma_dep, sarcoma_exp,
                                   by = c("depmap_id", "gene")) %>%
  dplyr::filter(!is.na(rna_expression))

```

Figure 3. Boxplot of TPM expression values for gene C1orf109 by lineage.

```
sarcoma_dat_exp %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = dependency, y = rna_expression)) +
  geom_point(alpha = 0.4, size = 0.5) +
  geom_vline(xintercept = mean(sarcoma_dat_exp$dependency, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "red") +
  geom_hline(yintercept = mean(sarcoma_dat_exp$rna_expression, na.rm = TRUE),
    linetype = "dotted", color = "red") +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45))
```

Genes with the highest dependency scores and highest TPM gene expression are found in the upper left section of the plot in [Figure 4](#). Almost all of the genes with the highest dependency scores display above average expression.

```
sarcoma_dat_exp %>%
  dplyr::select(cell_line, gene_name, dependency, rna_expression) %>%
  dplyr::arrange(dependency, rna_expression)
```

Figure 4. Expression vs crispr gene dependency for Rhabdomyosarcoma.

```
## # A tibble: 95,720 x 4
##   cell_line      gene_name dependency rna_expression
##   <chr>          <chr>          <dbl>          <dbl>
## 1 JR_SOFT_TISSUE  RAN              -2.49           9.51
## 2 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE RAN            -2.43           9.89
## 3 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE SNRPD1          -2.31           7.99
## 4 JR_SOFT_TISSUE  C1orf109         -2.28           4.56
## 5 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE ATP6V1B2        -2.23           5.44
## 6 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE POLR2L          -2.21           6.09
## 7 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE PSMA3            -2.20           7.58
## 8 JR_SOFT_TISSUE  TXNL4A           -2.19           5.53
## 9 SCMCrm2_SOFT_TISSUE POLR2I          -2.19           6.51
## 10 JR_SOFT_TISSUE  SNRPD1           -2.19           8.28
## # ... with 95,710 more rows
```

Evidence that changes in genomic copy number may also play a role in some cancer phenotypes has also been described in literature.^{3,18,19} This information can also be explored through the depmap datasets displaying the log genomic copy number across cancer lineages. Figure 5 shows such a plot for gene C1orf109 for each major type of cancer lineage:

Figure 5. Boxplot of log copy number for gene C1orf109 by lineage.

```

metadata %>%
  dplyr::select(depmap_id, lineage) %>%
  dplyr::full_join(copyNumber, by = "depmap_id") %>%
  dplyr::filter(gene_name == "Clorf109") %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = lineage, y = log_copy_number, fill = lineage)) +
  geom_boxplot(outlier.alpha = 0.1) +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1)) +
  theme(legend.position = "none")

```

Discussion and outlook

We hope that this package will be used by cancer researchers to dig deeper into the DepMap data and to support their research in precision oncology and developing targeted cancer therapies. Additionally, we highly encourage current and future depmap users to combine depmap data with other datasets, such as those found through the The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) and the Cancer Cell Line Encyclopedia (CCLE).

The depmap R package will continue to be maintained in line with the biannual Bioconductor release schedule, in addition to quarterly releases of DepMap data.

We welcome feedback and questions from the community. We also highly appreciate contributions to the code in the form of pull requests on github.

Data availability

The depmap datasets are available through ExperimentHub. To install the depmap package, start a recent version of R and execute:

```

if (!requireNamespace("BiocManager", quietly = TRUE))
  install.packages("BiocManager")
BiocManager::install("depmap")

```

Software availability

The depmap package is available from: <https://doi.org/doi:10.18129/B9.bioc.depmap> Source code available from: <https://github.com/UCLouvain-CBIO/depmap> Archived source code as at time of publication: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4739949>²⁰ License: Artistic-2.

All packages used in this workflow are available from the Comprehensive R Archive Network (<https://cran.r-project.org>) or Bioconductor (<http://bioconductor.org>). The specific version numbers of R and the packages used are shown below.

```

## R version 4.0.3 Patched (2021-01-18 r79847)
## Platform: x86_64-pc-linux-gnu (64-bit)
## Running under: Manjaro Linux
##
## Matrix products: default
## BLAS: /usr/lib/libblas.so.3.9.0
## LAPACK: /usr/lib/liblapack.so.3.9.0
##
## locale:
## [ 1] LC_CTYPE=en_US.UTF-8      LC_NUMERIC=C
## [ 3] LC_TIME=en_US.UTF-8      LC_COLLATE=en_US.UTF-8
## [ 5] LC_MONETARY=en_US.UTF-8  LC_MESSAGES=en_US.UTF-8
## [ 7] LC_PAPER=en_US.UTF-8     LC_NAME=C
## [ 9] LC_ADDRESS=C             LC_TELEPHONE=C
## [11] LC_MEASUREMENT=en_US.UTF-8 LC_IDENTIFICATION=C
##
## attached base packages:
## [1] parallel stats graphics grDevices utils datasets methods

```

```
## [ 8] base
##
## other attached packages:
## [ 1] stringr_1.4.0      ggplot2_3.3.3      ExperimentHub_1.16.0
## [ 4] AnnotationHub_2.22.0 BiocFileCache_1.14.0 dbplyr_2.1.1
## [ 7] BiocGenerics_0.36.0 depmap_1.4.0        dplyr_1.0.5
## [10] kableExtra_1.3.4
##
## loaded via a namespace (and not attached):
## [ 1] Biobase_2.50.0      httr_1.4.2
## [ 3] bit64_4.0.5         viridisLite_0.3.0
## [ 5] shiny_1.6.0         assertthat_0.2.1
## [ 7] interactiveDisplayBase_1.28.0 BiocManager_1.30.12
## [ 9] stats4_4.0.3        blob_1.2.1
## [11] yaml_2.2.1          BiocWorkflowTools_1.16.0
## [13] BiocVersion_3.12.0  pillar_1.5.1
## [15] RSQLite_2.2.5       glue_1.4.2
## [17] digest_0.6.27       promises_1.2.0.1
## [19] rvest_1.0.0         colorspace_2.0-0
## [21] htmltools_0.5.1.1   httpuv_1.5.5
## [23] pkgconfig_2.0.3     bookdown_0.21.6
## [25] purrr_0.3.4         xtable_1.8-4
## [27] scales_1.1.1        webshot_0.5.2
## [29] svglite_2.0.0       later_1.1.0.1
## [31] git2r_0.28.0        tibble_3.1.0
## [33] farver_2.1.0        generics_0.1.0
## [35] IRanges_2.24.1      usethis_2.0.1
## [37] ellipsis_0.3.1      cachem_1.0.4
## [39] withr_2.4.1         cli_2.4.0
## [41] magrittr_2.0.1      crayon_1.4.1
## [43] mime_0.10           ps_1.6.0
## [45] memoise_2.0.0       evaluate_0.14
## [47] fs_1.5.0            fansi_0.4.2
## [49] xml2_1.3.2          tools_4.0.3
## [51] lifecycle_1.0.0     S4Vectors_0.28.1
## [53] munsell_0.5.0       AnnotationDbi_1.52.0
## [55] compiler_4.0.3      systemfonts_1.0.1
## [57] rlang_0.4.10        grid_4.0.3
## [59] rstudioapi_0.13     rappdirs_0.3.3
## [61] labeling_0.4.2      rmarkdown_2.7
## [63] gtable_0.3.0        DBI_1.1.1
## [65] curl_4.3            R6_2.5.0
## [67] knitr_1.31.3        fastmap_1.1.0
## [69] bit_4.0.4           utf8_1.2.1
## [71] stringi_1.5.3       Rcpp_1.0.6
## [73] vctrs_0.3.7         tidyselect_1.1.0
## [75] xfun_0.22
```

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Ashir Borah

Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA, USA

James M. McFarland

Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA, USA

This article by Killian and Gato introduces the DepMap R package and demonstrates its application for working with DepMap data in R. This package is aimed at aiding and enhancing the reproducible analysis of DepMap datasets in R, by providing cleaned and reformatted versions of these datasets, and an easy-to-use API for importing the data into R. The authors also demonstrate the application of their package, in conjunction with commonly-used R analytical tools, for performing some common analyses of DepMap data.

We are excited to see the creation of such an R package to enhance the usability of the DepMap data, and the code appears to be well-written, clearly documented, and well-maintained. However, we believe most of the intended functionality of the tool is either unnecessary or not well addressed in the current implementation. In addition, some of the example analyses used to highlight the tool in the manuscript are problematic in various ways. Thus, we believe these substantial issues should be addressed before the tool will be of broader use to the community.

In terms of the stated goals of the DepMap R package, the authors highlight the following:

"The value added by the depmap Bioconductor package includes cleaning and converting all datasets to long format tibbles, 10 as well as adding the unique key depmap_id for all datasets." and "The depmap package was designed to enhance reproducible research by ensuring datasets from all releases will remain available to researchers"

We don't believe that there is significant 'cleaning' of the data being done in this package and note that all of the files being generated in quarterly DepMap data releases already include the depmap_id unique key. All of the DepMap datasets are already made available in a citable, immutable data repository (Figshare), which indeed is where the authors are sourcing (a subset of) those files. Creating an additional repository for the data, with only minor formatting changes

seems to be of limited benefit. It also creates a risk of confusing users (i.e. the authors only include a subset of the files published in the DepMap releases, and if their versions of the datasets aren't kept up-to-date users might end up using older versions of the data inadvertently).

We do agree that there is utility in creating a simple and easy-to-use API for accessing DepMap data in R, and the ability to download the data when needed, and cache locally accordingly seems useful. However, as an API there are several important limitations. First, the choice to reformat the datasets to long-form tibbles may be useful for facilitating certain analyses but is clearly a suboptimal choice for downloading and importing many of the datasets. Most of the DepMap datasets are large dense matrices, and formatting them as long-form tables increases the file sizes by $> \sim 5x$ or more, which significantly impacts download and load times. Even if the authors wanted to encourage consistent use of long-form versions of the datasets it would be much more efficient to download/cache/load the datasets in their native matrix form and then create helper functions to easily/quickly convert the datasets once loaded into R (e.g. 'pivot_longer' from the tidyverse package). We also think it would be better for the API to access the data directly from the primary source at Figshare rather than creating an additional version on ExperimentHub. It would also be helpful to indicate the availability of other files in the DepMap data releases on Figshare that aren't included in the ExperimentHub repo so users are at least aware.

In terms of the manuscript itself, we also believe the example applications could be substantially improved. In particular, the main vignette highlighting the gene C1orf109 we found to be confusing and lacking clear motivation. The gene is nominally selected because it scores as a strong dependency within the 'soft tissue' cell lines specifically, but there is no normalization or differential comparison used, so it seems rather (also from Figure 2) that this gene is a common-essential gene, without any clear linkage to soft tissue cancers. Presumably, this gene was selected because it's poorly characterized and could represent a novel cancer target, but the results presented don't really support this, and are likely to create confusion. If the goal is merely to illustrate examples of using tidyverse tools to analyze depmap data, the paper would be better-suited by using well-known examples of selective cancer dependencies (e.g. BRAF dependency in BRAF mutant cancers). Similarly, other plots used to demonstrate analysis of DepMap data seem to lack clear motivation. For example, in Fig 4 the authors plot expression vs dependency across all genes and cell lines within rhabdomyosarcoma, which shows a relationship, but it's not clear what question this is really asking or addressing. Genes that appear as dependencies in these cell lines should in general be expressed in those cell lines (otherwise they are likely false positives), but beyond this, it's unclear what is being shown, or how it should be interpreted.

Specific Issues:

- In the second paragraph the authors state *"As of the 20Q4 DepMap release, 1812 human cancer cell lines have been mapped for dependencies"*. This is the number of cell lines included in the sample.info metadata file, NOT the number with genetic dependencies measured. For example, the number of cell lines with CRISPR screening in the 20Q4 Achilles dataset is 789.
- We don't think it's correct to say that RNAi has been rendered 'redundant' in light of large-scale CRISPR datasets, as RNAi screens are still a useful source of information that can be complementary to CRISPR screens.
- It would be helpful to clarify that the package includes a subset of the available DepMap data release files. For example, the authors refer to the 'protein-coding TPM' expression

data, which is perhaps the most commonly used file derived from DepMap RNA-Seq data. However, DepMap also provides a number of other mRNA expression datasets (e.g. all genes' TPM, transcript level TPM, expected counts, etc.). The authors also state that "Core Datasets" are updated quarterly, though there are ~40 files updated quarterly, so it's unclear what "Core" refers to.

- Also in the second paragraph, the authors refer to 'shRNA' in the context of 'gene KO', and presumably are referring to CRISPR rather than RNAi screens (in which case the reagents are sgRNA rather than shRNA).
- Should mention somewhere that the RNAi dataset (DEMETER2) used is actually a combined dataset from Project Achilles, Novartis Project DRIVE, and the study by Marcotte *et al.*
- In their example, the authors use text matching on the cell line names to filter for soft tissue cell lines. Lineage information in the cell line names has been deprecated and can be incorrect. It is important to instead use the lineage information provided in the sample info file.

Minor:

- Typo in the abstract "simply the use" should be 'simplify the use'.
- We note that as of 21Q2, DepMap CRISPR datasets are being processed using the Chronos algorithm, rather than CERES. This would be worth clarifying.
- There are typos in the example code used to load the data: `"TPM <- depmap_RPPA()"` and `RPPA <- depmap_TPM()"`
- "Chemical dependency" should be rephrased as "chemical sensitivity". The authors also use the term 'molecular dependency' which seems confusing.
- The authors state that dependencies imply a given gene is needed for maintaining 'metabolic function', though we believe it would be clearer to state as needed for "viability" or "proliferation".
- The authors could make their example code more efficient for demonstration purposes. Namely, by filtering for genes of interest before joining tables.
- The example dot plot by lineage (Fig 2) could be improved by adding boxplot or violin plots by lineage to illustrate the distribution of the data which is very difficult to see.
- "Genes known to be damaging mutations for a given cancer cell line are highlighted in red,..." Should be "Cell lines with damaging mutations in the selected gene..."

Is the rationale for developing the new software tool clearly explained?

No

Is the description of the software tool technically sound?

Yes

Are sufficient details of the code, methods and analysis (if applicable) provided to allow replication of the software development and its use by others?

Yes

Is sufficient information provided to allow interpretation of the expected output datasets and any results generated using the tool?

Yes

Are the conclusions about the tool and its performance adequately supported by the findings presented in the article?

Partly

Competing Interests: We work as part of the DepMap team at the Broad Institute generating the data releases used in this work.

Reviewer Expertise: Computational biology, functional genomics, cancer target identification

We confirm that we have read this submission and believe that we have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however we have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 11 June 2021

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Katharina Imkeller

¹ German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany

² European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg, Germany

The article introduces the depmap package that allows rapid access to the different datasets of the Cancer Dependency Map project. This Bioconductor package is easy to use, the code is well written and documented. Issues related to the package raised on github are addressed by the authors and the data is regularly updated. Overall this is a very useful resource for the cancer dependency research community.

I have a few suggestions that in my opinion would improve the article and help the package become even more popular.

1. In the introduction, 2nd paragraph, the authors introduce the different types of data provided in depmap. The difference between RNAi and CRISPR screens is not clear enough. In the sentence starting with "The resulting genetic dependency...", shRNA should be replaced by sgRNA (single guide RNA) or gRNA (guide RNA). Also, please explain how the genetic dependency in shRNA/RNAi screens is calculated (DEMETER algorithm?). It is not

clear to me what the expression "CRISPR seed effect" is referring to (sentence starting with "It should be noted...").

2. I am wondering why the authors chose C1orf109 as an example for one of the use cases. It could be more interesting for the typical reader/user if the article illustrated another gene, for which differential genetic dependency in combination with somatic mutation can actually be observed. KRAS could be such a gene, but there are many more examples.
3. The figures are sometimes displayed above the code chunk that is used to generate them, which makes it difficult to follow, especially if the reader is used to Rmarkdown style. Maybe the authors could add a comment line in the respective chunks indicating "used to generate Figure X".
4. Some sections of the article are difficult to read and could be easily improved by a few small modifications. I list a few examples here (not exhaustive):

Abstract:

- Replace the " and `` signs.
- simply -> simplify
- Reformulate the sentence starting with "In addition", because it is difficult to understand.

Introduction:

- exploiting -> exploitation/utilisation/application ? (paragraph 1).
- proteomic -> proteomic (paragraph 2).
- aides -> aids (paragraph 4).
- reformulate sentence starting with "Specific datasets ..." (paragraph 5).

Use cases:

- reformulate sentence starting with "The genetic dependency ..." (paragraph 1).
- cancer medicine -> cancer therapy (paragraph 1).

Discussion:

- replace "dig deeper into" ? (paragraph 1).
- Part of the data in depmap is already derived from CCLE. Maybe specify what additional data type is available from CCLE (paragraph 1).

Is the rationale for developing the new software tool clearly explained?

Yes

Is the description of the software tool technically sound?

Partly

Are sufficient details of the code, methods and analysis (if applicable) provided to allow replication of the software development and its use by others?

Yes

Is sufficient information provided to allow interpretation of the expected output datasets and any results generated using the tool?

Yes

Are the conclusions about the tool and its performance adequately supported by the findings presented in the article?

Yes

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: genetic dependencies, immunogenetics

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

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