Teachable Tool for Standardization of Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell Colony Selection from Live Cell Microscopy Image Sequences

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Abstract

The ability to reprogram somatic cells to an embryonic stem cell-like state using four transcription factors has had landmark impact on basic biological research, drug screening, and disease modeling. However, IPS colony selection remains technically challenging, while stemness characterization is costly and time consuming. Tools that can reliably classify IPS colonies in real time would be extremely useful to standardize selection, and drive down costs through the selection and expansion of fewer colonies. We developed a teachable image recognition tool that can be used for the detection and classification of human induced pluripotent stem cell (IPS) colonies. Whole well scans of human IPS colonies were recorded for four weeks after transduction. Colony reprogramming status was assessed based on morphology and virus silencing at the end of four weeks (Day 0) to establish ground truth. Our automated image recognition analytic achieved IPS colony classification accuracy of 99.83% (7 false positives from 4077 candidates). We found that using measurements from multiple time points improved the classification performance.

Methods

IPS culture and image acquisition

Human fibroblast cell lines are provided by the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. The cells are plated (100,000 cells into one well of a 6-well plate) and transduced for two consecutive days with four retroviruses (1ml MIG-Oct4, 1ml MIG-Klf4, 1ml MIG-Sox2 and 200ul MIG c-Myc). Five days later, the cells are trypsinized and replated on feeder (irradiated mouse embryonic fibroblasts) in one 10 cm dish. The culture dishes are placed in a BioStation CT (Nikon, Japan) and incubated over a period of four weeks. Whole well scans were obtained by 2x magnification in phase contrast and fluorescence (GFP) every 6 hours. At the end of Week 4, 27 IPS colonies are identified manually by morphological appearance and viral GFP-silencing to establish ground truth data for comparison.

Image Analysis

Whole well scans from Day 0, -1 week, -1.5 weeks, and -2 weeks were loaded into SVCell software (DRVision Technologies, Bellevue, WA) and stitched to create 20,000-by-20,000 pixel composite images for analysis. Automated colony detection is performed using a segmentation procedure incorporating Soft Matching [1,2] technology, and measurements are made for each colony. A classification rule is taught using SVCell decision procedure incorporating regulation tree[3,4] technology. 179 colonies were taught (27 IPS, 152 other) using the ground truth. Terminal nodes were limited to a minimum of 10 samples to prevent over-training.

Results

Colony Detection

An automated segmentation procedure is created using Soft Matching (Fig. 2) and applied to the phase contrast channel of the Day 0 image. Basic measurements of compactness, standard deviation of phase channel intensity, and area were calculated in SVCell for each colony and used to filter obvious non-IPS colonies. The gating rule removed 3,871 non-IPS colonies, leaving 179 challenging cases for further analysis.

Fig. 2. Colony detection by Soft Matching in SVCell. Images shown on the right and in Figures 3 and 4 are downsampled by 50%. a) Regions of interest are drawn on the image and assigned labels for “Enhance”... thus Soft Matching can discard extraneous image information and reduce the requirement for classification step.

Fig. 3. Classification Rule. Screen shot of the regulated decision tree used for classification.

Fig. 4. Key Measures. Illustration of colony boundary region (Week -1 image).

Table 1. Decision tree error rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Missed iPS</th>
<th>False iPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 0</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Of the 179 colonies analyzed, 27 were identified as true IPS colonies using the Day 0 image. Fig 5 and Table 1 plot the classification error rates for the three decision trees. By using all three data sets for prediction, only 7 colonies out of 179 (3.91%) were misclassified, of which no IPS colonies were missed.

Introducing additional time points reduces the total error rate and the number of false IPS detections. In addition the 7 false detections were reviewed and appear reasonable.

Overall performance is excellent with just 7 false detections and no misses from 4,077 candidate colonies (0.17% error).

Conclusion

The selection of IPS colonies for expansion is a critical task that is difficult to standardize. This study validates SVCell as a useful tool for colony classification. We will continue to use the tool to assess classification of IPS colonies using many more images as test data. We will look to determine the earliest time point from which IPS colony formation can be reliably predicted. It is hoped that SVCell could enable reliable and automated selection of IPS colonies in the future.

References


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