

MicroRNA-130b-5p accelerates the migration and invasion of osteosarcoma via binding to TIMP2

Z.-H. CHENG, C. LUO, Z.-L. GUO

Department of Neurosurgery, Shanghai Ninth People's Hospital, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Medicine, Shanghai, China

Abstract. – **OBJECTIVE:** To elucidate the potential function of microRNA-130b-5p in the progression of osteosarcoma (OS) and the underlying mechanism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The relative level of microRNA-130b-5p in OS tissues and cell lines was determined by quantitative Real Time-Polymerase Chain Reaction (qRT-PCR). The correlation between the microRNA-130b-5p level and the pathological characteristics of OS was analyzed by the Chi-square test. The Kaplan-Meier curves were introduced for assessing the survival of OS patients with high expression and low expression of microRNA-130b-5p. The regulatory effects of microRNA-130b-5p on the migratory and invasive abilities of MG63 and U2OS cells were evaluated by the transwell assay. The relative levels of matrix metalloproteinase 2 (MMP2) and MMP9 in OS cells with overexpression or knockdown of microRNA-130b-5p were determined. The binding relationship between microRNA-130b-5p and TIMP2 was verified through the dual-luciferase reporter gene assay. Finally, a series of rescue experiments were performed to cover the role of microRNA-130b-5p/TIMP2 in the progression of OS.

RESULTS: MicroRNA-130b-5p was upregulated in OS tissues and cell lines. The high expression of microRNA-130b-5p indicated a poor prognosis of OS patients. Overexpression of microRNA-130b-5p accelerated OS cells to migrate and invade. Besides, the relative levels of MMP2 and MMP9 were upregulated in OS cells overexpressing microRNA-130b-5p. TIMP2 was the target of microRNA-130b-5p, which was negatively regulated by microRNA-130b-5p. The knockdown of TIMP2 reversed the regulatory effect of microRNA-130b-5p on the migratory and invasive abilities of the OS cells.

CONCLUSIONS: MicroRNA-130b-5p is upregulated in OS. It accelerates the progression of OS via upregulating TIMP2 level.

Keywords:

MicroRNA-130b-5p, TIMP2, Osteosarcoma.

Introduction

Osteosarcoma (OS) is a primary malignant bone tumor that mainly affects children and adolescents aged 15-25 years. OS often originates from mesenchymal tissues and involves the metaphysis, especially in the distal femur and proximal tibia. OS is highly destructive, and its high mortality rate, morbidity, and metastatic rate remain high. Currently, the etiology and the pathogenesis of OS have not been comprehensively explored. Effective anti-osteosarcoma treatments are still lacking³⁻⁵. It is of great significance to elucidate the molecular mechanism of OS, thus developing novel strategies for OS treatment.

MicroRNA is a small RNA with 18-25 bp long that participates in various physiological processes in eukaryotic cells⁶⁻⁸. It is currently known that microRNAs are abnormally expressed in tumors and served as diagnostic hallmarks⁹⁻¹¹. MicroRNA-130b locates on 22q11, which is upregulated in multiple types of cancers as an oncogene¹²⁻¹⁷. Conversely, microRNA-130b exerts a tumor-suppressor role in some other types of tumors¹⁸⁻²¹. The specific role of microRNA-130b in OS, however, has not been reported yet.

TIMPs are inhibitors of the MMPs family containing 184-194 amino acids with a molecular weight of 21 kD²². TIMPs have four subtypes, namely TIMP1, TIMP2, TIMP3, and TIMP4. The TIMPs family exerts a decisive role in the remodeling process of ECM. It is found²³ that TIMPs are abnormally expressed in different stages of tumors. Imbalanced MMPs/TIMPs leads to ECM deposition or degradation that affects the invasiveness and metastasis of tumors²⁴⁻²⁷. The potential relationship between microRNA-130b-5p and TIMP2 has not been reported yet.

This study aims to elucidate the role of microRNA-130b-5p in the progression of OS. Our conclusion may provide new therapeutic targets for OS.

Patients and Methods

OS Patients

48 paired tumor tissues and matched adjacent tissues were surgically resected from OS patients treated in Shanghai Ninth People's Hospital from December 2016 to October 2018. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Shanghai Ninth People's Hospital. They did not receive preoperative anti-tumor therapy and were pathologically diagnosed. All subjects volunteered to participate in the study and signed written informed consent.

Cell Culture and Transfection

Osteoblast cell line hFOB 1.19 and OS cell lines MG63, U2OS, Saos2, HOS, and 143B were provided by Cell Bank (Shanghai, China). The cells were cultured in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's Medium (DMEM; Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS; Gibco, Rockville, MD, USA), 100 µg/mL penicillin and 0.1 mg/mL streptomycin, at 37°C, in a 5% CO₂ incubator.

The cells were pre-seeded in a 6-well plate and cultured until 80% of confluence. The transfection of 50 nmol/L microRNA-130b-5p or anti-microRNA-130b-5p or NC was conducted using Lipofectamine 2000 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA). The transfected cells for 24 h were harvested for *in vitro* experiments.

Quantitative Real Time-Polymerase Chain Reaction (qRT-PCR)

Total RNA in cells was extracted using TRIzol reagent (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) and subjected to reverse transcription. The extracted complementary deoxyribonucleic acid (cDNA) was used for PCR using SYBR Green method (Takara, Dalian, China). The primer sequences were as follows: MicroRNA-130b-5p: F: 5'-GAGTGCATGATGAA-3', R: 5'-GAGTGCATGATGAA-3'; TIMP2: F: 5'-AAGAGCCTGAACCACAGGT-3', R: 5'-GGAGGAGATGTAGCAC-3'; MMP2: F: 5'-AAGAGCCTGAACCACAGGT-3', R: 5'-AG-

GCACCCTTGAAGAAGTAGC-3'; MMP9: F: 5'-GAACCAATCTCACCGACAG-3', R: 5'-GCCACCCGAGTGTAACCATA-3'.

Transwell

Diluted Matrigel was used to pre-coat the transwell chamber overnight at 4°C. Cell density was adjusted to 2×10⁵/mL in serum-free medium. 50 µL of medium containing 10% FBS and 200 µL of cell suspension were added in the basolateral and apical chamber of 24-well plate, respectively. 24 h later, the cells were fixed in ethanol for 30 min and stained with 0.1% crystal violet for another 10 min. The invaded cells were observed and photographed using an inverted microscope. The invasion assay was conducted in the same procedure except for Matrigel pre-coating (Promega, Madison, WI, USA).

Western Blot

The total protein was extracted from cells using RIPA lysis buffer (Beyotime, Shanghai, China) and quantified by bicinchoninic acid (BCA) method (Beyotime, Shanghai, China). The protein sample was loaded on sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide electrophoresis and transferred on a polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF; Millipore, Billerica, MA, USA) membrane. The membranes were blocked in 5% skim milk for 2 hours and subjected to incubation with primary and secondary antibodies. The bands were exposed by enhanced chemiluminescence (ECL; Pierce, Rockford, IL, USA) and analyzed by Image Software (NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA).

Dual-Luciferase Reporter Gene Assay

The cells seeded in the 24-well plate with 2×10⁵ cells per well were co-transfected with WT TIMP2 3'UTR/MUT TIMP2 3'UTR and microRNA-130b-5p mimic/NC. 48 hours later, the cells were lysed for determining the relative luciferase activity (Promega, Madison, WI, USA).

Statistical Analysis

GraphPad Prism 7 (La Jolla, CA, USA) was used for data analyses. The data were expressed as mean ± standard deviation. The intergroup differences were analyzed by the *t*-test. The Chi-square test was performed for evaluating the correlation between the microRNA-130b-5p level and pathological indexes of OS patients. Survival analysis was carried out using the Kaplan-Meier method. *p*<0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Results

MicroRNA-130b-5p Was Upregulated in OS Tissues and Cell Lines

Compared with matched non-tumor tissues, microRNA-130b-5p was upregulated in the OS tissues as the qRT-PCR data revealed (Figure 1A). The enrolled OS patients were divided into high expression group and low expression group based on the median level of microRNA-130b-5p. The correlation analyses demonstrated that high expression of microRNA-130b-5p was closely related to tumor stage and distant metastasis of OS (Table I). Identically, the microRNA-130b-5p level remained higher in OS patients with stage II+III relative to those with stage I (Figure 1B). OS patients accompanied by distant metastasis

presented a higher abundance of microRNA-130b-5p than those without distant metastasis (Figure 1C). The Kaplan-Meier curves revealed a worse prognosis in OS patients with high expression of microRNA-130b-5p compared to those with low expression (Figure 1D). In addition, the microRNA-130b-5p level in OS cell lines was also detected. Compared with normal osteoblasts, microRNA-130b-5p was highly expressed in OS cell lines (Figure 1E). Among the five OS cell lines determined in this study, U2OS and MG63 cells expressed the highest and lowest level of microRNA-130b-5p, respectively. Hence, they were selected for constructing the knockdown and overexpression models *in vitro*. The above data suggested the potential involvement of microRNA-130b-5p in the progression of OS.

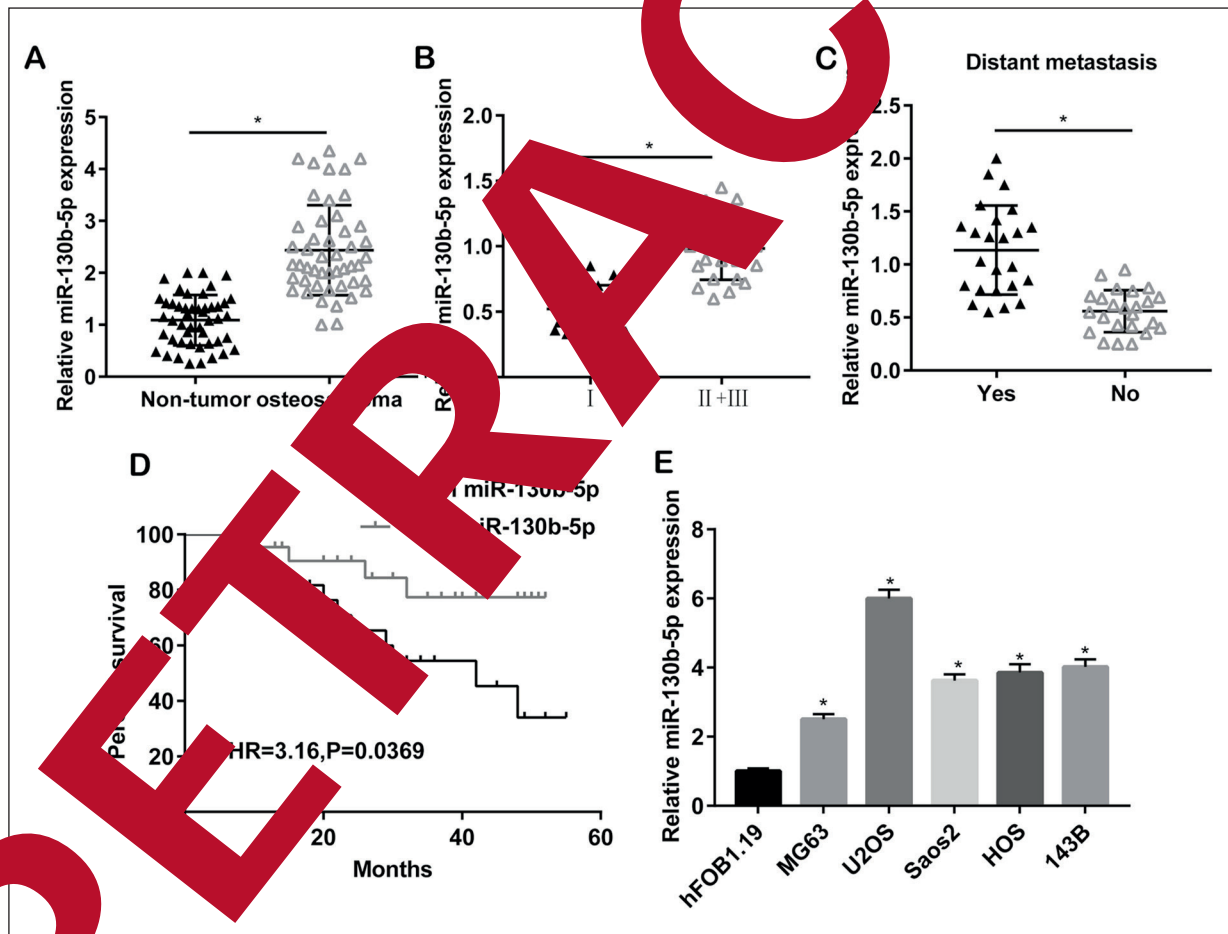


Figure 1. MicroRNA-130b-5p was upregulated in OS tissues and cell lines. **A**, The relative level of miR-130b-5p in OS tissues and matched non-tumor tissues. **B**, The relative level of miR-130b-5p in OS patients with stage II+III and stage I. **C**, The relative level of miR-130b-5p in OS patients either with distant metastasis or not. **D**, The Kaplan-Meier curves introduced for the stage II+III OS patients with high expression and low expression of miR-130b-5p. **E**, The relative level of miR-130b-5p in osteoblast cell line hFOB1.19 and OS cell lines MG63, U2OS, Saos2, HOS, and 143B.

Table 1. Correlation between miR-130b-5p level and pathological characteristics of OS patients (n=48).

Clinicopathologic features	Number of cases	miR-130b-5p expression		p-value
		Low (n = 24)	High (n = 24)	
Age (years)				0.386
≤ 20	23	10	13	
> 20	25	14	11	
Gender				
Male	25	13	12	
Female	23	11	12	
Tumor size				0.562
≤ 5 CM	22	10	12	
> 5 CM	26	14	12	
TNM stage				0.009*
I	27	18	9	
II+III	21	6	15	
Distant metastasis				0.042*
Yes	21	14	7	
No	27	10	17	

MicroRNA-130b-5p Promoted OS Cells to Migrate and Invade

MicroRNA-130b-5p mimics and anti-microRNA-130b-5p were constructed to explore the biological function of microRNA-130b-5p in the progression of OS. The transfection of microRNA-130b-5p mimics in MG63 cells markedly upregulated microRNA-130b-5p level (Figure 2A). The migratory and invasive abilities were elevated in MG63 cells overexpressing microRNA-130b-5p (Figure 2B). The transfection of anti-microRNA-130b-5p efficiently downregulated microRNA-130b-5p level in MG63 cells (Figure 2C). The transwell assay showed that the knockdown of microRNA-130b-5p attenuated U2OS cells to migrate and invade (Figure 2D). Previous studies have reported a crucial role of MMPs in regulating the migratory and invasive abilities of OS cells. Here, the relative levels of MMP2 and MMP9 were upregulated in MG63 cells overexpressing microRNA-130b-5p. Conversely, the transfection of anti-microRNA-130b-5p markedly reduced their levels (Figure 2E). These data demonstrated that microRNA-130b-5p influenced the OS cells to migrate and invade via upregulating MMPs.

TIMP2 Was the Direct Target of MicroRNA-130b-5p

Through TargetScan prediction, the binding sites between microRNA-130b-5p and TIMP2 were depicted in Figure 3A. Furthermore, microRNA-130b-5p overexpression reduced the

luciferase activity in wild-type TIMP2 3'UTR; whereas microRNA-130b-5p knockdown elevated luciferase activity (Figure 3B). The transfection of microRNA-130b-5p mimics in MG63 cells downregulated the mRNA and protein levels of TIMP2 (Figure 3C, upper in Figure 3D). The opposite trends were observed after transfection of anti-microRNA-130b-5p in U2OS cells (right in Figure 3C, bottom in Figure 3D). Therefore, TIMP2 was verified to be the direct target of microRNA-130b-5p.

TIMP2 Reversed the Role of MicroRNA-130b-5p in the Progression of OS

It is speculated that TIMP2 may participate in the microRNA-130b-5p-mediated progression of OS. The relative level of TIMP2 was markedly upregulated in U2OS cells transfected with anti-microRNA-130b-5p, which was further reduced after transfection of si-TIMP2 (Figure 4A). The downregulated MMP2 and MMP9 in U2OS cells transfected with anti-microRNA-130b-5p were reversed by TIMP2 knockdown (Figure 4B). Moreover, the transwell assay showed that the knockdown of microRNA-130b-5p attenuated the migratory and invasive abilities of U2OS cells, which were further reversed by transfection of si-TIMP2 (Figure 4C). Collectively, microRNA-130b-5p accelerated the migratory and invasive abilities of the OS cells *via* targeting TIMP2.

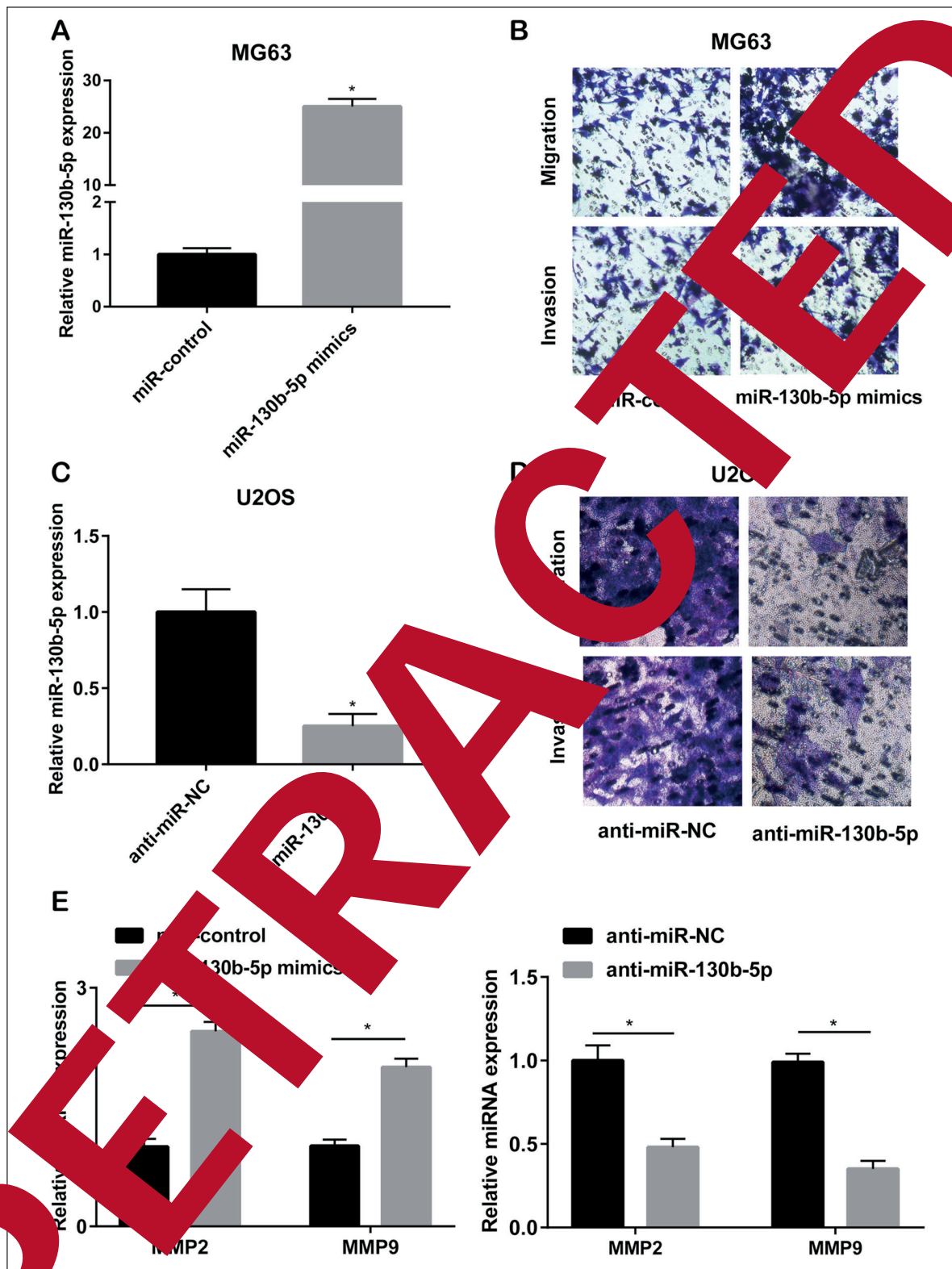


Fig. 5. miR-130b-5p promoted OS cells to migrate and invade. **A**, The transfection efficacy of miR-130b-5p mimics in MG63 cells. **B**, The transwell assay showed the migration and invasion in MG63 cells transfected with miR-control or miR-130b-5p mimics (magnification: 40 \times). **C**, The transfection efficacy of anti-miR-130b-5p in U2OS cells. **D**, The transwell assay showed the migration and invasion in U2OS cells transfected with anti-miR-NC or anti-miR-130b-5p (magnification: 40 \times). **E**, The relative levels of MMP2 and MMP9 in OS cells transfected with miR-130b-5p mimics or anti-miR-130b-5p.

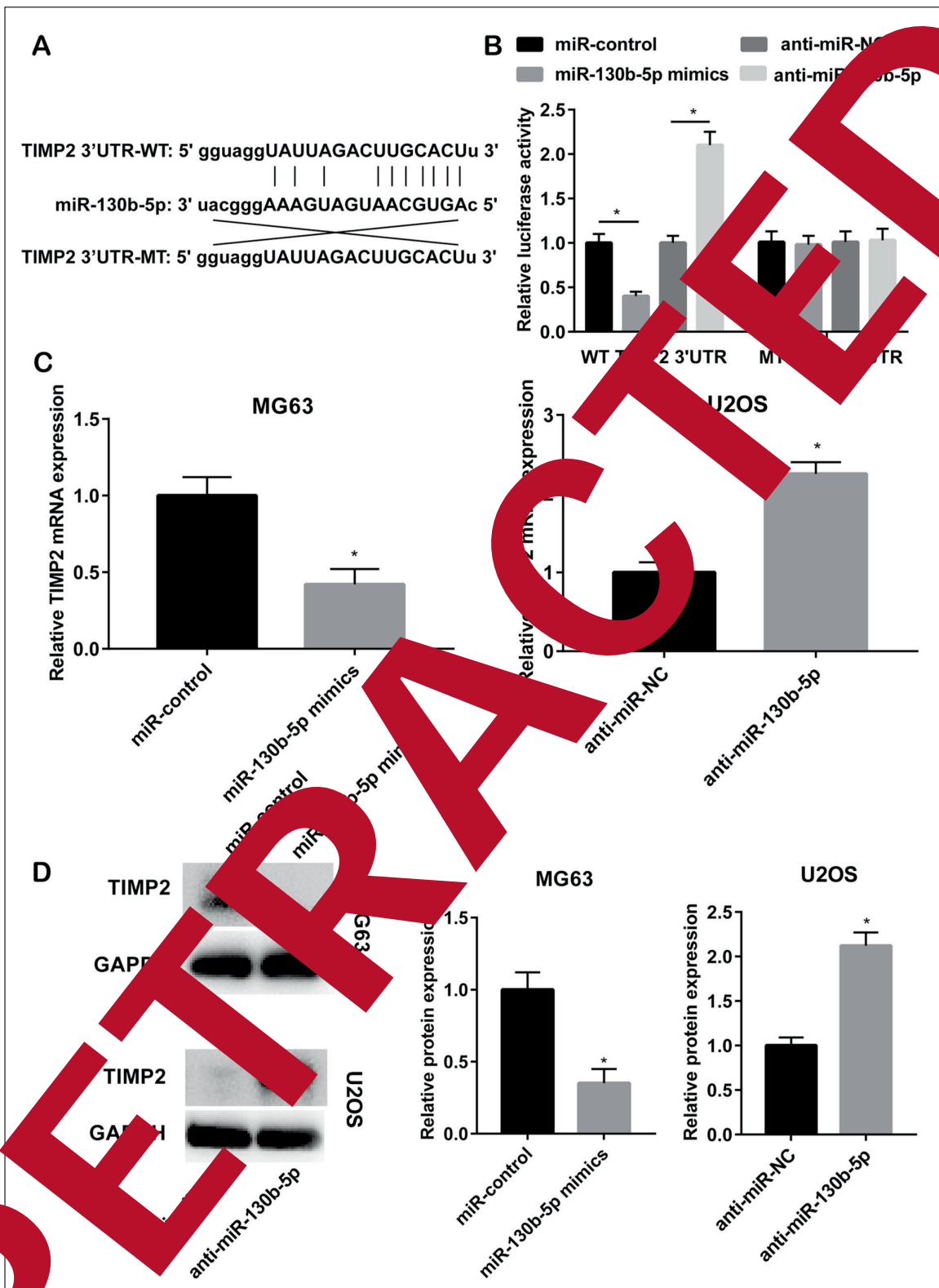


Figure 2. miR-130b-5p is a direct target of TIMP2. **A**, The predicted binding sequences between miR-130b-5p and TIMP2 3'UTR. **B**, The dual-luciferase reporter gene assay showed the relative luciferase activity in cells co-transfected with miR-130b-5p mimics/anti-miR-130b-5p and WT TIMP2 3'UTR/MUT TIMP2 3'UTR. **C**, The relative level of TIMP2 in OS cells transfected with miR-130b-5p mimics or anti-miR-130b-5p. **D**, The protein level of TIMP2 in OS cells transfected with miR-130b-5p mimics or anti-miR-130b-5p.

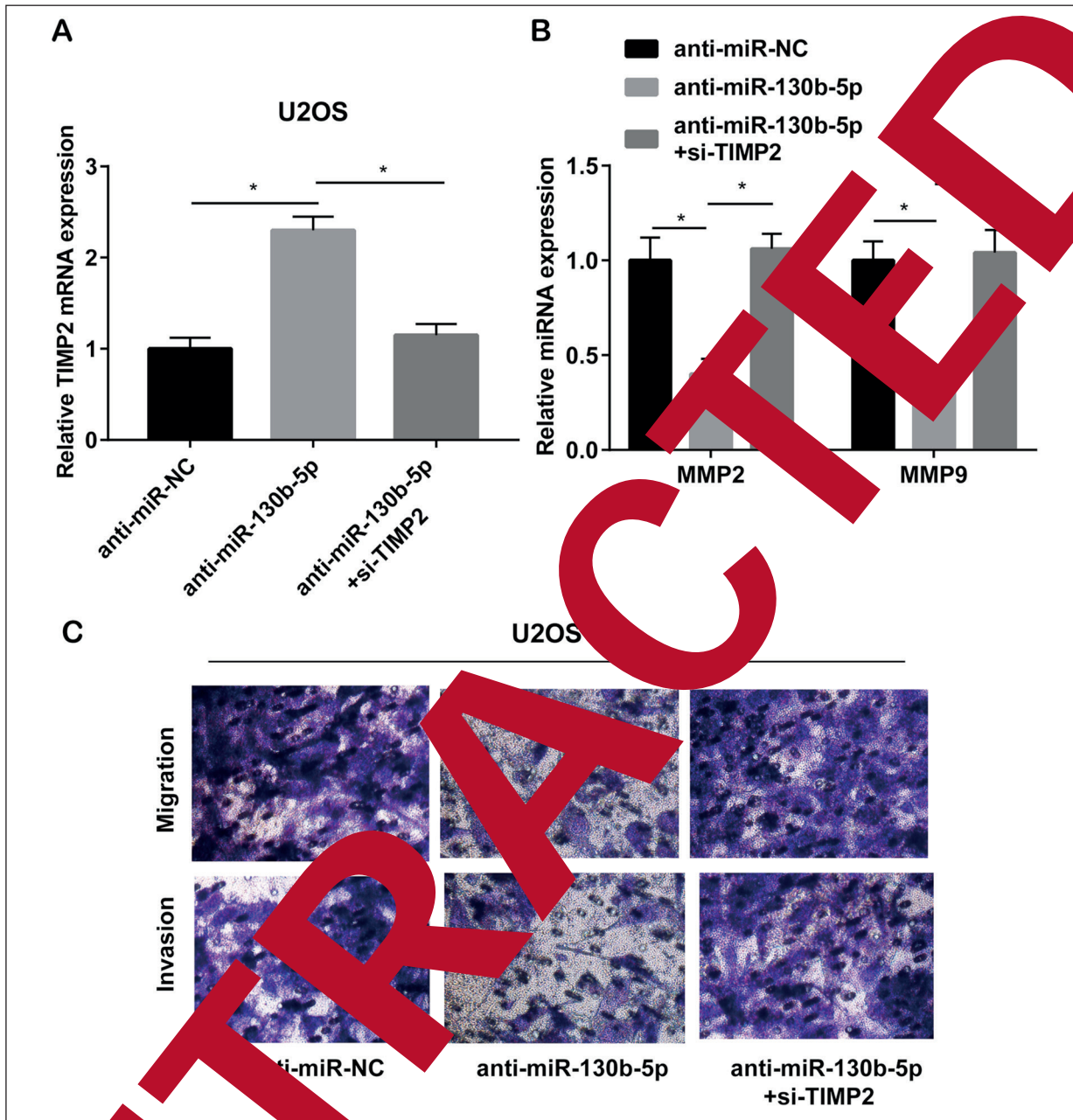


Figure 4 TIMP2 reversed the role of miR-130b-5p in the progression of OS. **A**, The relative level of TIMP2 in U2OS cells transfected with anti-miR-NC, anti-miR-130b-5p or anti-miR-130b-5p+si-TIMP2. **B**, The relative levels of MMP2 and MMP9 in U2OS cells transfected with anti-miR-NC, anti-miR-130b-5p or anti-miR-130b-5p+si-TIMP2. **C**, The transwell assay showed the migration and invasion in U2OS cells transfected with anti-miR-NC, anti-miR-130b-5p or anti-miR-130b-5p+si-TIMP2 (signification $^{*}P < 0.05$).

Discussion

Osteosarcoma is a primary malignant tumor with high malignancy and poor prognosis. It is estimated that the 5-year survival of patients with metastatic or recurrent OS is less than 20%. With the development of

new examination technologies and therapeutic strategies, the treatment efficacy of OS has made great progress in recent years. Nevertheless, the overall survival of OS is unsatisfactory^{28,29}. Therefore, further explorations on the molecular mechanism of the OS development have a vital significance.

The potential interaction between abnormally expressed microRNAs and tumors has been well concerned. MicroRNAs could degrade or inhibit the translation of target mRNAs by binding to mRNA 3'UTR, thus silencing the target genes^{30,31}. A great number of studies³²⁻³⁷ have shown that abnormally expressed microRNAs are closely related to tumor diagnosis and prognosis. In this paper, microRNA-130b-5p was upregulated in OS and correlated to poor prognosis of OS patients. Furthermore, *in vitro* experiments demonstrated that the overexpression of microRNA-130b-5p could accelerate the migratory and invasive abilities of the OS cells. Therefore, microRNA-130b-5p may be a potential target contributing to OS treatment.

TIMPs are endogenous inhibitors of the matrix metalloproteinase family, which can effectively inhibit MMPs activity, reduce ECM destruction, and maintain cell-cell integrity. TIMPs also prevent tumor metastasis from improving the prognosis of the affected patients^{38,39}. Currently, clinical evidence has identified the involvement of TIMP2 in tumor progression. For example, the serum level of TIMP2 is relatively low in patients with invasive gastric cancer, renal cell carcinoma, esophageal cancer, or non-small cell lung carcinoma^{40,41}. Low level of TIMP2 in tumor tissues may be related to the increased invasiveness of tumors. On the contrary, the overexpression of TIMP2 sufficiently suppresses tumor growth and enhances chemotherapy sensitivity⁴². Several microRNAs have been identified to influence tumor cell behavior via targeting TIMP2⁴³. For instance, miR-200b in breast cells, miR-106A in gastric cancer cells, and miR-221 in renal cancer cells are capable of regulating tumor cell behaviors *via* targeting TIMP2⁴⁴⁻⁴⁶. Here, we verified the binding relationship between microRNA-130b-5p and TIMP2. microRNA-130b-5p negatively regulated the TIMP2 level in OS cells. Notably, the knockdown of TIMP2 reversed the regulatory effect of microRNA-130b-5p on the OS cells. To sum up, microRNA-130b-5p was believed to play the carcinogenic role in OS *via* inhibiting TIMP2 level.

Conclusions

We show that microRNA-130b-5p is upregulated in OS and predicts poor prognosis of OS patients. It accelerates the progression of OS *via* inhibiting TIMP2 level.

Conflict of Interest

The Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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