

1 **Genomic abnormalities of *TP53* define distinct risk groups of paediatric B-cell non-**
2 **Hodgkin lymphoma**

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26

27 **Running Title:** *TP53* abnormalities in paediatric mature B-NHL.

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51 **Abstract**

52 Children with B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma (B-NHL) have an excellent chance of survival,
53 however, current clinical risk stratification places as many as half of patients in a high-risk
54 group receiving very intensive chemo-immunotherapy. *TP53* alterations are associated with
55 adverse outcome in many malignancies; however, whilst common in paediatric B-NHL, their
56 utility as a risk classifier is unknown. We evaluated the clinical significance of *TP53*
57 abnormalities (mutations, deletion and/or copy number neutral loss of heterozygosity) in a
58 large UK paediatric B-NHL cohort and determined their impact on survival. *TP53*
59 abnormalities were present in 54.7% of cases and were independently associated with a
60 significantly inferior survival compared to those without a *TP53* abnormality (PFS 70.0% vs
61 100%, $p<0.001$, OS 78.0% vs 100%, $p=0.002$). Moreover, amongst patients clinically defined
62 as high-risk (stage III with high LDH or stage IV), those without a *TP53* abnormality have
63 superior survival compared to those with *TP53* abnormalities (PFS 100% vs 55.6%, $p=0.005$,
64 OS 100% vs 66.7%, $p=0.019$). Biallelic *TP53* abnormalities were either maintained from
65 presentation or acquired at progression in all paired diagnosis/progression Burkitt lymphoma
66 cases. *TP53* abnormalities thus define clinical risk groups within paediatric B-NHL and offer
67 a novel molecular risk stratifier, allowing more personalised treatment protocols.

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72 **Introduction**

73 Current treatments for high-grade paediatric B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma (B-NHL) in
74 resource-rich countries are extremely effective, with over 93% of children being cured¹⁻⁵.
75 Following the recent demonstration of the benefit of the anti-CD20 monoclonal antibody
76 rituximab these same rates of cure are now achieved even in patients presenting with
77 established high-risk clinical features (high lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), bone marrow
78 (BM) and/or central nervous system (CNS) disease)⁵. This success, however, has required the
79 use of intensive multi-agent chemo-immunotherapy regimens, associated with significant,
80 predominantly acute, toxicity such as infection and mucositis as well as a small risk of long-
81 term neurological side effects and second malignancy⁶⁻⁸. Accordingly, reduction in treatment
82 intensity for at least some patients is a key objective. Unfortunately, previous attempts to
83 reduce treatment intensity in high-risk bone marrow/CNS-positive patients resulted in
84 unacceptable deterioration in survival, highlighting the need for biomarker-driven risk
85 stratification to complement currently established clinical and laboratory risk features^{2,9}.

86

87 In contrast to the excellent overall survival currently achieved, the outcome for children with
88 primary refractory or relapsed B-NHL is extremely poor, with fewer than 30% successfully
89 salvaged despite the routine use of high-dose chemotherapy and stem cell rescue¹⁰⁻¹³.

90 Mounting toxicity in this heavily pre-treated group means that escalating intensity alone
91 cannot provide the solution to improving outcome in these patients¹⁴. Instead, a more
92 comprehensive understanding of the biological drivers of therapy resistance is essential to
93 support development of more effective and less toxic targeted therapies for this group of
94 patients¹⁵.

95

96 Genomic studies have greatly improved our understanding of the pathogenesis and clinically-
97 relevant heterogeneity of both Burkitt lymphoma (BL) and diffuse large B cell lymphoma
98 (DLBCL)¹⁶⁻²⁸. Amongst their findings is the frequent mutation in both diseases of the tumour
99 suppressor gene *TP53*, inactivation of which has an established role in lymphomagenesis²⁹⁻³³.
100 *TP53* mutation, often accompanied by loss of heterozygosity, is present in 25-50% of
101 sporadic BLs and approximately 20% of adult DLBCLs at diagnosis, while a recent report
102 suggested a lower incidence amongst paediatric large B-cell lymphomas^{16-22, 24-28, 34-36}.
103 Consistently, *TP53* mutations have been shown to be associated with adverse clinical
104 outcomes in adult aggressive B-cell lymphoma, including DLBCL, and other lymphoid
105 neoplasms^{24, 34-38}. In chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL), they are associated with a poor
106 response to chemotherapy and detection of *TP53* mutation and 17p deletion is used to guide
107 therapeutic decisions³⁹. However, to date no study has incorporated analysis of clinical
108 outcome with a detailed characterisation of *TP53* alterations in paediatric B-NHL, where BL
109 predominates, and the potential utility of *TP53* status as a clinical risk stratifier in this age
110 group has remained unclear.

111

112 To address this question, we collected and analysed a clinically annotated cohort of 95
113 paediatric B-NHL patients from the UK. Using sequencing and copy number (CN)
114 microarray data we show that *TP53* abnormalities at presentation are associated with disease
115 progression and poor outcome. Importantly, the absence of *TP53* abnormalities is associated
116 with an extremely low risk of relapse even in high-risk patients defined by high tumour stage
117 and LDH. Moreover, we demonstrate that biallelic *TP53* abnormalities are either maintained
118 or acquired at the time of disease progression, implicating loss of *TP53* function in the
119 development of treatment resistance. Finally, we show that *TP53* abnormalities are associated

120 with complex chromosomal copy number profiles, identifying a potential mechanism
121 underlying the evolution of chemo-resistant disease.

122

123 **Methods**

124 *Patients and Clinical Samples*

125 B-NHL samples from UK hospitals registered with the Children's Cancer and Leukaemia
126 Group (CCLG) Tissue Bank between 1993 and 2014 were obtained following informed
127 consent from participants or their parent/guardian. A minimum of three-years follow-up was
128 obtained for all survivors. Lymphomas were re-classified according to the World Health
129 Organisation (WHO) Classification of Tumours of Haematopoietic and Lymphoid Tissues⁴⁰.
130 *IG-MYC* status was confirmed by fluorescence *in situ* hybridisation (FISH) as described in
131 supplemental methods. The cohort comprised BL (n=64), DLBCL (n=19), Burkitt-like
132 lymphoma with 11q aberration (BLL-11q, n=5) and remaining cases which could not be fully
133 classified (B-NHL, NOS n=7).

134

135 *TP53 Mutation and 17p Copy Number Analysis*

136 *TP53* mutational status was assessed using whole-exome sequencing (WES, n=90) or Sanger
137 sequencing of exons 5 to 8 (n=5). WES data were generated using Illumina Nextera Exome
138 enrichment (n=89) or TWIST Human Core Exome kit (n=1) and sequenced on an Illumina
139 NovaSeq within the Newcastle University Genomics Core Facility or Illumina HiSeq by
140 Eurofins Genomics (Germany). Data were analysed using the Genome Analysis Toolkit
141 (GATK 3.7) and variants called using Mutect2. PCR products for Sanger sequencing were
142 amplified using primers designed for *TP53* (Supplemental Table 1) and sequenced by
143 Eurofins Genomics. WES base calls were confirmed by Sanger sequencing in 39 cases, with
144 100% concordance between sequencing methods.

145

146 Copy number alterations (CNAs) of 17p and other chromosomes were identified using
147 Affymetrix Cytoscan HD, Genome-wide Human SNP Array 6.0 or OncoScan arrays
148 performed by Eurofins Genomics. Raw data were analysed and visualised in Nexus Copy
149 Number 10.0 (BioDiscovery) to detect CNAs and copy number neutral loss of heterozygosity
150 (CNN-LOH) in all samples.

151

152 **Chromosomal Complexity Analysis**

153 Complex patterns of chromosomal copy number abnormality were defined as those with a
154 fluctuation between two or more copy number states involving two or more individual
155 segments $\geq 100\text{kb}$ on a chromosome arm. These included chromothripsis-like patterns of
156 alternation between two copy number states as well as stepwise increase in copy number of
157 chromosome arms. This definition excludes regions with heterozygous deletion followed by
158 homozygous deletion, single regions of gain, deletion or CNN-LOH, and abnormalities
159 affecting alternate chromosome arms.

160

161 **Statistical Analyses**

162 Estimates of overall survival (OS) and progression free survival (PFS) were calculated and
163 compared using Kaplan-Meier methods, log-rank tests and Cox-regression models. OS was
164 defined as the time from diagnosis to death from any cause, with censoring at the date of last
165 contact. PFS was defined as the date of diagnosis to the time of disease progression or death.
166 We report 3-year OS and PFS survival rates. All variables conformed to the proportional
167 hazards assumption. Other comparisons were performed using Fisher's exact test. Analyses
168 were performed using R Bioconductor packages 'survival' for univariate and multivariate
169 analysis and 'survminer' for visualization of Kaplan-Meier survival curves.

170

171 **Results**

172 **Patient Demographics and Clinical Characteristics**

173 The cohort consisted of the diagnostic tumour samples from 95 UK paediatric B-NHL
174 patients. In total 89 of the 95 (94%) cases were uniformly treated on FAB/LMB 96 protocols
175 (trial or interim guidelines) and had complete follow-up with a median follow-up of 66.2
176 months (1-270.4 months) (Table 1). In keeping with previously published clinical trial
177 cohorts^{4, 41}, the 89 FAB/LMB96-treated cases in the present study demonstrated a median age
178 of 8 years, a male predominance of 3.4:1, a predominance (67%) of Burkitt lymphoma, a
179 majority of high stage (III/IV) patients (73%), bone marrow disease in 18% and CNS disease
180 in 6% of cases. *MYC* status was available for 84/89 samples (five cases failed FISH or had no
181 available material), amongst which 63 (75%) had an *IG-MYC* translocation, including 56/58
182 BL, 4/16 DLBCL, 3/5 B-NHL, NOS and 0/5 BLL-11q cases. Survival estimates at 3 years for
183 PFS and OS were 83.1% (95% CI 75.7-91.3) and 87.6% (95% CI 81.1-94.8), respectively.
184 For those patients with disease progression (primary refractory or relapsed disease), the
185 median time from initial diagnosis to progression was 4.5 months (range 2.8-7.7 months).
186 The additional 6 of the 95 cases (4 BL, 1 DLBCL and 1 B-NHL, NOS) were included in the
187 genomic analysis only.

188

189 **Genomic Analysis of the *TP53* locus**

190 *TP53* mutations were found in 46/95 (48.4%) cases: 37 cases had a single non-synonymous
191 somatic mutation, eight had two different somatic mutations and one had a germline mutation
192 (DLBCL with Li-Fraumeni syndrome) (Figure 1A, Supplemental Table 2). *TP53* mutations
193 were found in 37/64 (57.8%) BL, 4/19 (21.0%) DLBCL, 4/7 (57.1%) B-NHL, NOS cases and
194 1/5 (20.0%) BLL-11q cases. All three DLBCL cases with somatic *TP53* mutations and all

195 four mutated B-NHL, NOS cases carried *IG-MYC* rearrangements. The 35 distinct mutations
196 included 33 missense mutations and two deletions leading to frameshifts. All but two
197 mutations involved the DNA binding domain and experimental data from the UMD and
198 IARC *TP53* databases showed all but two of the mutations to be functionally deleterious^{42, 43}.
199 As seen in other cancers^{42, 44}, the most commonly mutated residues were R175 (n=6), G245
200 (n=5), R248 (n=7) and R273 (n=4).

201

202 Next, we analysed 17p copy number alteration and identified deletions in 15/95 (15.8%)
203 cases: 10/64 (15.6%) BL, 4/19 (21.0%) DLBCL and 1/7 (14.3%) B-NHL, NOS. The median
204 region of deletion was 20.6 Mb (range 17.9-22.2 Mb), resulting in deletion of >80% of 17p
205 (Figure 1B). Additionally, 8/95 cases (8.4%) showed CNN-LOH: 7/64 (10.9%) BL and 1/19
206 (5.3%) DLBCL. The median region of CNN-LOH was 19.5 Mb (range 12.9-22.3 Mb), again
207 covering >80% of 17p (Figure 1C). All 17p deletions and CNN-LOH involved the *TP53*
208 locus. The presence or absence of *TP53* copy number deletion was assessed by FISH in 76/95
209 cases: 49/64 BL, 16/19 DLBCL, 5/5 BLL-11q and 6/7 B-NHL, NOS (Supplemental Table 2).
210 These included 12/15 cases with *TP53* deletion, 5/8 with CNN-LOH and 59/72 with neither.
211 In each case the FISH results were concordant with the copy number array findings.

212

213 Combining the mutation and CN data for the *TP53* locus showed that abnormalities are
214 common at presentation with 52/95 (54.7%) cases harbouring at least one abnormality and
215 functionally inactivating biallelic events present in 26/95 (27.4%) cases (Figure 1D;
216 Supplemental Table 2). Of the 26 cases with monoallelic *TP53* abnormalities, 20 had a single
217 somatic heterozygous mutation (median variant allele frequency 39%, range 18-50%), four
218 had a deletion and two had CNN-LOH. Among the 26 cases with biallelic abnormalities, 17
219 had *TP53* mutation together with a deletion or CNN-LOH, two had a homozygous mutation

220 and seven had compound heterozygous mutations. The correlation between p53 protein
221 expression and *TP53* status was assessed by p53 immunohistochemistry (IHC) in a subset of
222 cases. In most cases *TP53* mutation was associated with overexpression of p53 protein but
223 the correlation between p53 expression levels and *TP53* status was variable and IHC could
224 not reliably detect the range of genomic alterations (Supplemental Table 3).

225

226 ***TP53* Abnormalities are Associated with Chromosomal Complexity**

227 Genomic *TP53* alterations have been associated with genomic complexity in DLBCL and
228 other tumours^{21, 33, 44-46}. In this study, *TP53* abnormalities were not associated with the
229 number of CNAs or the percentage of genome altered (Supplemental Table 4). However,
230 *TP53* abnormalities were associated with complex CN profiles of specific chromosomes.
231 (Figure 2; Supplemental Table 5). Excluding BLL-11q, which is defined by a complex 11q
232 rearrangement, chromosomes with complex CNAs were present in 30/51 cases with *TP53*
233 abnormality but only in 5/39 cases with wild-type *TP53* ($p < 0.001$). This association was
234 particularly strong for BL, in which 24/40 (60%) *TP53* abnormal cases harboured a complex
235 chromosome compared to only 1/24 (4.2%) *TP53* wild-type cases ($p = 0.001$). The Li-
236 Fraumeni syndrome case (DLBCL with *TP53* biallelic abnormality) demonstrated the highest
237 number of complex CNAs within the whole cohort, but otherwise there was no association
238 between *TP53* abnormalities and complex CNAs in DLBCL cases.

239

240 Most notably, complex CNAs of 1q, 11q and 13q were associated with biallelic *TP53*
241 abnormalities ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 2). Complexity of 1q typically involved stepwise increases in
242 copy number, with only two cases having telomeric deletion (Supplemental Figure 1). Both
243 chromosome arms 11q and 13q recurrently showed a pattern of a region of gain adjacent to
244 telomeric deletion, similar to the profile defining BLL-11q cases⁴⁷ (Supplemental Figures 2-

245 3). All ten cases with this characteristic gain-telomeric deletion pattern of 13q (here termed
246 13q^{plex}) were BL (Supplemental Table 5). The *MIR17HG* locus mapped within the region of
247 13q CN gain/amplification, notably located in the highest peak for 9/10 (90%) 13q^{plex} cases
248 (Supplemental Figure 3).

249

250 **Survival Analysis of *TP53* Abnormalities in Paediatric B-NHL**

251 The clinical characteristics of cases with or without a *TP53* abnormality are presented in
252 Supplemental Table 6. Univariate survival analyses identified a significantly adverse PFS for
253 patients with high disease stage, bone marrow involvement or high LDH (Supplemental
254 Table 7). CNS involvement was associated with a hazard ratio of 3.0 but did not reach
255 significance, likely due to the low number of cases (n=5). Those with mutations had
256 significantly inferior 3-year survival compared to those without (PFS 66.7% (95% CI 54.2-
257 82.0) vs 100% (95% CI 100-100), $p<0.001$ and OS 75.6% (95% CI 64.0-89.2) vs 100% (95%
258 CI 100-100), $p<0.001$) (Supplemental Figure 4A-B), although no hazard ratio could be
259 reported due to the absence of events in cases without *TP53* mutation. Likewise, 17p CNN-
260 LOH involving *TP53* was also associated with worse outcome (PFS HR 4.9 (95% CI 1.6-
261 15.6), $p=0.007$; OS HR 4.7 (95% CI 1.2-17.7), $p=0.023$) (Supplemental Figure 4C-D,
262 Supplemental Table 7). In contrast, as previously reported in the context of the FAB/LMB96
263 trial, univariate analysis showed that, agnostic of *TP53* mutation status, cases with deletion of
264 17p including the *TP53* locus did not have inferior outcome (Supplemental Figure 4E-F,
265 Supplemental Table 7)².

266

267 Combining the *TP53* locus alterations (Figure 3A), patients with at least one *TP53*
268 abnormality had a significantly inferior 3-year survival compared to those with no
269 abnormality (PFS 70.0% (95% CI 58.4-83.9) vs 100 (95% CI 100-100), $p<0.001$ and OS

270 78.0% (95% CI 67.3-90.4) vs 100 (95% CI 100-100), $p=0.002$) (Figure 3B-C). Importantly,
271 those patients without any *TP53* abnormality at initial diagnosis had a PFS of 100% (95% CI
272 100-100) and an OS of 100% (95% CI 100-100). Most *TP53* abnormalities were seen in
273 patients diagnosed with BL and the presence of any *TP53* abnormality remained adversely
274 prognostic within this subgroup (PFS 67.5% (95% CI 54.4-83.7) vs 100% (95% CI 100-100),
275 $p=0.005$ and OS: 75% (95% CI 62.7-89.7) vs 100 (95% CI 100-100, $p=0.017$) (Supplemental
276 Figure 5). Both monoallelic and biallelic *TP53* abnormalities were associated with adverse
277 outcome, when compared with *TP53* wild-type cases (monoallelic PFS 76.0% (95% CI 61.0-
278 94.7) vs 100% (95% CI 100-100), $p=0.001$ and OS 80.0% (95% CI 65.8-97.3) vs 100% (95%
279 CI 100-100), $p=0.004$; biallelic PFS 64.0% (95% CI 47.7-85.9) vs 100% (95% CI 100-100),
280 $p<0.001$ and OS 76.0% (95% CI 61.0-94.7) vs 100 (95% CI 100-100) $p=0.001$), but with no
281 significant difference identified between these two groups (Figure 3D-E). There was no
282 association between prognosis and either complex CNA patterns of 1q, 11q or 13q
283 (Supplemental Table 8) or gain of *MIR17HG*. Neither was there a difference in outcome for
284 patients with or without any complex CNA (PFS HR 1.7 (95% CI 0.6-4.7), $p=0.295$; OS HR
285 1.8 (95% CI 0.5-5.9), $p=0.332$).

286

287 Multivariate analysis was performed to assess the impact of *TP53* abnormalities alongside
288 established high-risk clinical factors (BM and CNS involvement, stage and high LDH)
289 (Supplemental Table 7). Due to the lack of an event amongst the *TP53* wild-type patients
290 included in this analysis we are unable to report a hazard ratio for *TP53* status; however,
291 having included this strong prognostic factor in the model, those established high-risk clinical
292 factors were not independently significant.

293

294 ***TP53* status risk stratifies patients with clinically defined high-risk disease**

295 The Inter-B-NHL ritux 2010 trial (NCT01516580) has recently demonstrated the survival
296 benefit of adding rituximab to modified FAB/LMB96 chemotherapy for patients with high-
297 risk disease (stage III and LDH > 2x ULN, stage IV or Burkitt leukaemia)⁵. Nevertheless,
298 rituximab-chemotherapy was associated with increased incidence of prolonged
299 hypogammaglobulinaemia and may be associated with a greater number of infections⁵. Given
300 the inferior outcome of these patients prior to the use of rituximab and the unacceptable
301 deterioration in that outcome with a previous attempt to reduce therapy intensity⁹, they
302 represent a key group for further biomarker-driven stratification. We therefore sought to
303 understand the prognostic impact of *TP53* abnormalities specifically in this group. High-risk
304 patients had a higher rate of *TP53* abnormality (27/41, 66%) than low/intermediate-risk
305 groups (20/42, 48%), but here this association was specifically within the *TP53* biallelic
306 group ($p=0.037$) (Supplemental Table 6). As expected, the high-risk group had an inferior
307 survival compared to the intermediate and low-risk groups (PFS 70.7% (95% CI 58.1-86.1)
308 vs 94.7% (95% CI 87.9-100.0) vs 100.0% (95% CI 100.0-100.0), $p=0.013$) and OS 78.6%
309 (95% CI 66.4-91.8) vs 94.7% (95% CI 87.9-100.0) vs 100.0% (95% CI 100.0-100.0),
310 $p=0.067$) (Figure 4A-B). Strikingly, despite the substantial clinical value of stage and LDH,
311 the absence of any *TP53* abnormality in high-risk patients remained strongly associated with
312 an excellent clinical outcome compared to high-risk patients with any *TP53* abnormality (PFS
313 100% (95% CI 100-100) vs 55.6% (95% CI 39.7-77.9), $p=0.005$ and OS 100% (95% CI 100-
314 100) vs 66.7% (95% CI 51.1-87.0), $p=0.019$) (Figure 4C-D). Stratification of the
315 low/intermediate-risk group identified an inferior outcome for patients with any *TP53*
316 abnormality but this did not reach significance (PFS 100 % (95% CI 100-100) vs 90% (95%
317 CI 77.8%-100%) vs, $p=0.133$ and OS 100% (95% CI 100-100) vs 90% (95% CI 70.7%-
318 100%), $p=0.133$) (Supplemental Figure 6).

319

320 **Biallelic *TP53* Abnormalities Evolve during Disease Progression**

321 Very little is known about the genomic changes associated with therapy resistance and
322 disease progression in BL or other paediatric B-NHL⁴⁸. To understand the evolution of *TP53*
323 abnormalities associated with therapy resistance we investigated the paired biopsies taken at
324 the time of disease progression for 7 cases and one further paired biopsy (patient BL39) taken
325 from a viable residual tumour mass detected at routine reassessment following the CYM-1
326 component of FAB/LMB96 therapy. Amongst six BL cases, four had major clonal biallelic
327 *TP53* abnormalities at the time of the original diagnosis (Figure 5 and Supplemental Table 9)
328 and these same biallelic abnormalities were maintained at the time of disease progression.
329 Interestingly, the other two BL cases showed acquisition of biallelic *TP53* abnormalities in
330 the second biopsies, further supporting a role for *TP53* in treatment resistance. The first,
331 BL23, had only a monoallelic clonal G245S mutation at diagnosis but developed CNN-LOH
332 at relapse, rendering this mutation biallelic. The other, BL39, lacked a detectable *TP53*
333 abnormality at initial diagnosis but the residual tumour had both a deletion of chromosome
334 17p and a classical pathogenic R248W mutation. Analysis of WES data failed to identify
335 even a minor clonal R248W mutation at presentation (0/124 reads). In contrast to the BL
336 cases, both DLBCL cases with paired material harboured a monoallelic *TP53* abnormality at
337 both diagnosis and progression. In five of the six BL cases, therapy resistant disease was
338 associated with an increase in the number of chromosomes showing a complex copy number
339 profile (Figure 5).

340

341 **Discussion**

342 The addition of rituximab to first-line therapy for children with high-risk B-NHL has resulted
343 in $\geq 93\%$ event-free survival (EFS) in all risk groups⁵. This success requires intensive multi-
344 agent chemotherapy and comes at the cost of significant acute toxicity and there now exists a

345 growing understanding of the long-term sequelae⁶⁻⁸. However, with very few relapse events
346 occurring, identifying the prognostic biomarkers required for improved risk stratification in
347 this rare patient group has become extremely challenging. Consequently, we undertook an
348 analysis of the prognostic significance of *TP53* status in a large national cohort of paediatric
349 mature B-NHL cases diagnosed prior to the routine introduction of rituximab therapy. This
350 showed that the presence or absence of *TP53* abnormalities defines two patient groups with
351 markedly different progression-free and overall survival rates, adverse and favourable
352 respectively.

353

354 The principal clinical challenges in paediatric B-NHL have, for some years, been: 1)
355 improving survival in high-risk patients; 2) reducing therapy intensity without increasing risk
356 of relapse⁹; 3) identifying mechanisms of therapy resistance which result in extremely poor
357 survival following relapse. Addressing the first of these challenges, the international
358 collaborative trial Inter-B-NHL ritux 2010 (NCT01516580) recently demonstrated an 11%
359 increase in EFS in high-risk patients (defined as stage III with LDH greater than twice the
360 upper limit of normal, stage IV or Burkitt leukaemia) with the addition of six doses of
361 rituximab to a modified FAB/LMB96 chemotherapy schedule⁵. This contrasts with the
362 unacceptable reduction in survival seen in high-risk bone marrow/central nervous system
363 positive patients randomised to reduced intensity therapy within the FAB/LMB96 study⁹.
364 Nevertheless, within the reduced intensity arm of the high risk FAB/LMB96 study, an 80%
365 EFS was seen, implying that only a minority of patients benefit from intensification of
366 treatment. The inability to identify those with a low risk of treatment failure has hampered
367 risk stratification beyond clinicopathological features. Here, we show that within the high-
368 risk patient group, (as defined in the Inter-B-NHL trial), *TP53* wild-type patients have a very
369 low risk of relapse, despite the absence of rituximab therapy. If validated in international trial

370 cohorts, analysis of *TP53* status may allow identification of a subset of patients currently
371 considered high-risk for whom chemo-immunotherapy can be de-intensified without
372 compromising efficacy. Initially this could involve omitting rituximab but further reduction
373 in chemotherapy similar to that attempted within FAB/LMB96, could also be considered. Our
374 finding provides a potential biomarker platform for future trials of therapy reduction, albeit
375 that a large number of patients and a more effective salvage strategy would be necessary for
376 such a trial.

377

378 Critical to the better treatment of progressive or relapsed disease is a much deeper
379 understanding of the drivers of therapy resistance. The finding that *TP53* abnormalities are
380 associated with increased risk of disease progression, and our analysis of paired Burkitt
381 lymphoma samples showing that all cases either maintained or developed biallelic *TP53*
382 abnormalities at progression, suggest a key role for *TP53* loss of function in this process. In
383 support of this assertion, Reutter *et al*⁴⁹ found multiple *TP53* abnormalities at diagnosis and
384 relapse in each of 5 relapsed BL cases studied. Given the many biological pathways impacted
385 by p53, the mechanisms by which *TP53* abnormalities promote therapy resistance merits
386 further investigation in support of developing an effective salvage therapy. It is notable,
387 therefore, that we found a strong association between *TP53* abnormalities and *MYC*
388 rearrangements in our cohort. Since these two cancer genes cooperate to drive experimental
389 lymphomagenesis in mice and have been associated with a particularly poor prognosis when
390 concurrently mutated and translocated, respectively, in adult DLBCL, a deeper mechanistic
391 understanding of the interactions between p53 and MYC in paediatric B-NHL may be
392 particularly informative in this regard^{29, 32, 38}.

393

394 Mutations, present in half of cases, were the most frequent *TP53* abnormalities detected in
395 our cohort. As expected, *TP53* deletions and CNN-LOH were less prevalent and were mostly
396 present in tumours with *TP53* mutation^{2, 50-53}. Overall, half of all cases with a *TP53*
397 abnormality had biallelic alterations expected to abrogate wild-type *TP53* functions at
398 diagnosis and biallelic events were present in all BL tumours at the time of progression.
399 However, while the presence of any *TP53* abnormality was associated with an increased risk
400 of disease progression and death, there was no difference in PFS or OS between cases with
401 monoallelic or biallelic alterations at diagnosis. This contrasts with recent findings in
402 myelodysplastic syndrome and plasma cell myeloma, in which specifically biallelic *TP53*
403 alterations at diagnosis are associated with poor survival⁵⁴⁻⁵⁶. The increasing evidence that
404 many mutant p53 proteins exhibit gain of function or dominant negative properties may
405 provide a partial explanation but our analysis of paired diagnosis/progression BL samples
406 suggests the alternative explanation that clones/subclones with monoallelic *TP53*
407 abnormalities may evolve to a biallelic state during disease progression under the selective
408 pressure of therapy^{32, 33, 57}. Interesting in this regard is the recent report of a case of relapsed
409 BL with expansion of a low level (2% VAF) *TP53* R248Q mutation at diagnosis to a 93%
410 VAF at relapse, secondary to a combination of clonal expansion and CNN-LOH⁵⁸.

411

412 *TP53* mutations are associated with several types of genomic instability, including
413 aneuploidy and chromothripsis, and thus increased genome complexity across the cancer
414 spectrum^{33, 44, 46}. Notably, a recently described subset of adult DLBCL carrying frequent
415 biallelic inactivation of *TP53* by mutation and 17p deletion is selectively associated with an
416 increase in small and large CNAs^{21, 45}. Similarly, an association between *TP53* abnormalities
417 and chromothripsis-like changes, including of 13q, has been reported in adult DLBCL^{59, 60}.

418 Although we did not see an effect on global genomic complexity in our predominantly BL

419 paediatric cohort, we did observe the correlation of *TP53* abnormalities with complex copy
420 number patterns involving 1q, 11q and 13q. The 13q gains centred on the *MIR17HG* gene, in
421 keeping with a previous report of an association between 17p deletion and *MIR17HG* gain in
422 a small sample set⁵⁰. That report speculated that *MIR17HG* gain was associated with relapse
423 but our data suggest that this probably results indirectly from the association of *MIR17HG*
424 gain with *TP53* abnormalities⁵⁰.

425

426 We have demonstrated the clinical importance of *TP53* abnormalities in paediatric B-NHL,
427 identifying them as a potential biomarker capable of further risk-stratifying patients currently
428 considered high-risk. These findings now need to be validated in a large international trial
429 cohort. For those children without a *TP53* abnormality, the risk of disease progression is
430 extremely low and stratified trials examining therapy reduction should be considered.

431 Evolution of biallelic abnormalities at relapse implicates *TP53* biology as a driver of therapy
432 resistance and relapse and further understanding of the underlying mechanisms could lead to
433 new strategies to prevent or treat therapy resistant disease.

434

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446

447 **Authorship Contributions**

448 V.R. conceived the study, secured funding and finalized the manuscript with editorial
449 assistance from all authors. V.R., S.B. and C.M.B. designed the study, directed the research
450 and wrote the manuscript; V.R., A.M.N., S.B. and C.M.B. co-ordinated and participated in
451 data collection, analysis and interpretation; V.R., M.Z., A.E.B and A.M.N. processed and
452 analysed the copy number and whole exome sequencing data; P.Z., A.Er., A.Ba., R.E.C, and
453 S.W. did laboratory experiments and analysis. V.R., A.M.N., M.Z. and A.E. performed
454 statistical analysis; V.R., C.M.B, S.B, A.B., S.T., M.T. and C.H. gathered samples and patient
455 data, and provided clinical interpretation. C.M.B., K.W. and D.T. conducted the pathological
456 review of the cases. All authors approved the manuscript.

457

458 **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest**

459 The authors declare no competing financial interests.

460

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726

727 **Figure Legends**

728 **Figure 1: *TP53* mutations and genomic copy number abnormalities are detected in a**
729 **high proportion of paediatric B-NHL cases.** (A) A lollipop showing 53 somatic and one
730 germline mutation (R248Q detected in a Li-Fraumeni syndrome case). (B) Deletion of the
731 *TP53* locus was detected in 3/14 patients with disease progression (P) and 12/78 with no
732 disease progression (NP). (C) CNN-LOH of the *TP53* locus was detected in 5/14 patients
733 with disease progression (P) and 3/78 with no disease progression (NP). (D) Representation
734 of co-occurrence of *TP53* abnormalities. Inner circle represents *TP53* copy number status;
735 outer ring represents *TP53* mutation status.

736

737 **Figure 2: A pattern of complex chromosomal abnormalities in paediatric B-NHL is**
738 **associated with *TP53* status.** Oncoplot showing *TP53* status (upper panel) and associated
739 complex chromosomes (lower panel). Histogram displaying the frequency of complex
740 abnormalities of each chromosome arm in biallelic, monoallelic and *TP53* normal groups. As
741 a diagnosis of BLL-11q is determined by the presence of a complex 11q rearrangement, these
742 five cases were excluded from this analysis. *TP53* Biallelic with 1q complexity vs *TP53*
743 Normal with 1q complexity, $p=0.026$; *TP53* Biallelic with 11q complexity vs *TP53* Normal
744 with 11q complexity, $p=0.006$. *TP53* Biallelic with 13q complexity vs *TP53* Normal with 13q
745 complexity, $p=0.001$; *TP53* Biallelic with 13q complexity vs *TP53* Monoallelic with 13q
746 complexity, $p=0.002$. Fisher's Exact test $*=p<0.05$, $**=p<0.01$; # Li-Fraumeni syndrome
747 case.

748

749 **Figure 3: Identification of patient risk groups based on *TP53* status.** (A) Oncoplot
750 showing *TP53* status with clinical and molecular parameters as described in the key. Data is
751 plotted from left to right according to *TP53* status. Kaplan-Meier plots showing (B)
752 progression free and (C) overall survival for any *TP53* abnormality (deletion, CNN-LOH
753 and/or mutation), and (D) progression-free and (E) overall survival according to normal
754 (green), monoallelic (amber) or biallelic (red) *TP53* status. # Li-Fraumeni syndrome case.

755

756 **Figure 4: *TP53* status differentiates patients in the clinically defined high-risk group in**
757 **paediatric B-NHL.** Kaplan-Meier plots showing (A) progression-free and (B) overall
758 survival for high, intermediate and low clinical risk groups, and (C) progression-free and (D)
759 overall survival in high-risk patients according to the presence of any *TP53* abnormality.

760

761 **Figure 5: Biallelic *TP53* abnormalities are either maintained or acquired at the time of**
762 **progression of BL.** (A) Overview of clinical and molecular parameters for 7 patients with
763 matched samples taken at initial diagnosis (D) and at the time of progression (P). (B) One
764 patient had matched samples from initial diagnosis and the time of reassessment.

765

Tables

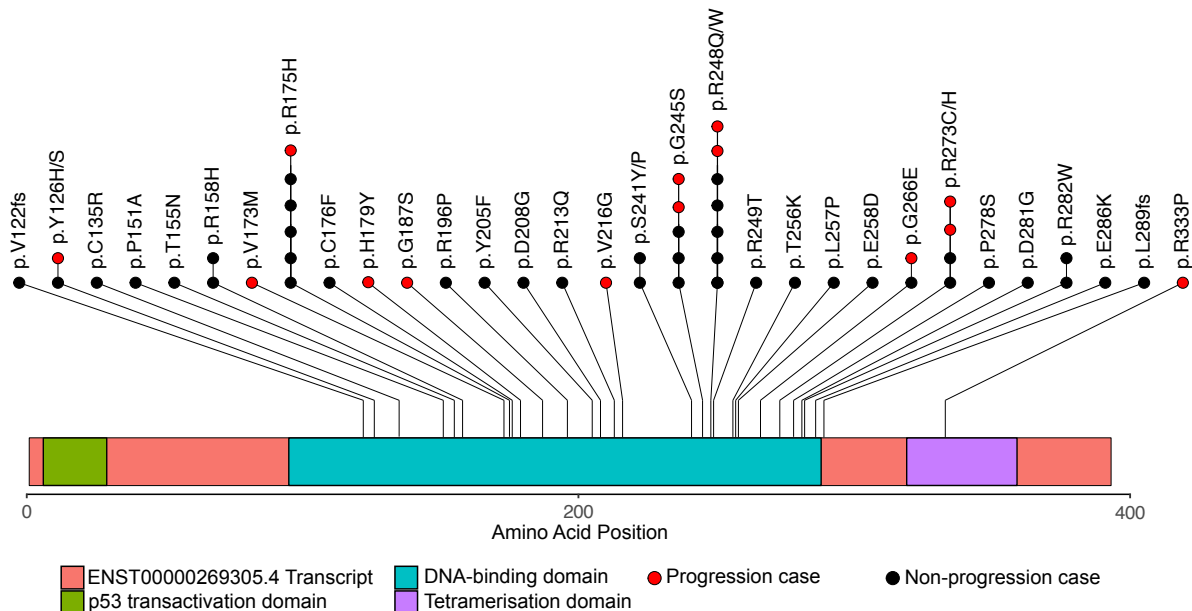
Tables

Table 1: Clinical and cytogenetic characteristics of the FAB/LMB96-treated paediatric B-NHL cases.

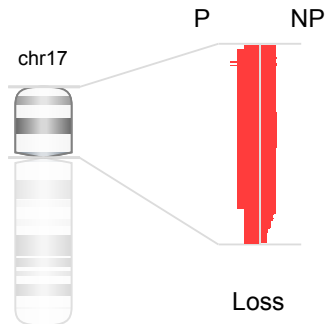
		FAB/LMB96-treated Cohort	
		Total Cases	89
Diagnosis	BL		60 (67.4%)
	DLBCL		18 (20.2%)
	BLL-11q		5 (5.6%)
	B-NHL, NOS		6 (6.7%)
Median Age at Diagnosis (range), years			8 (0.5-17)
Sex	Male		68 (76.4%)
	Female		20 (22.5%)
	Not available		1 (1.1%)
Tumour Stage	Stage I or II		24 (27.0%)
	Stage III or IV		65 (73.0%)
	Not available		0 (0.0%)
BM Involvement	Y		16 (18.0%)
	N		71 (79.8%)
	Not available		2 (2.2%)
CNS Involvement*	Y		5 (5.6%)
	N		83 (93.3%)
	Not available		1 (1.1%)
LDH > 2x ULN	Y		38 (42.7%)
	N		38 (42.7%)
	Not available		13 (14.6%)
MYC Translocation	Y		63 (70.7%)
	N		21 (23.6%)
	Not available		5 (5.6%)
Risk Group	High		41 (46.1%)
	Intermediate		38 (42.7%)
	Low		4 (4.5%)
	Not available		6 (6.7%)
Treatment Group	Group A		4 (4.5%)
	Group B		68 (76.4%)
	Group C		15 (16.9%)
	Group unknown		2 (2.2%)
	Rituximab Added**		2 (2.2%)
	No Rituximab		84 (94.4%)
	Rituximab unknown		3 (3.4%)
Outcome	PFS	Progression / relapse	15 (16.9%)
		Median time to event (range), months	4.5 (0.9-7.7)
	OS	Deaths	11 (12.4%)
		Median time to death (range), months	6.5 (0.9-11.1)

BL = Burkitt lymphoma; DLBCL = diffuse large B-cell lymphoma; BLL-11q = Burkitt-like lymphoma with 11q aberrations; B-NHL, NOS = B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma not otherwise specified; Y = Yes; N= No; "-" = no event, hazard ratio not reported; BM = bone marrow; CNS = central nervous system; CSF = cerebrospinal fluid; LDH = lactate dehydrogenase; ULN = upper limit of normal. PFS = progression-free survival. OS = overall survival. * One case had CSF involvement. ** Two cases received rituximab from the start of first-line therapy, two other patients received rituximab following switch to group C therapy following post-CYM-1 reassessment.

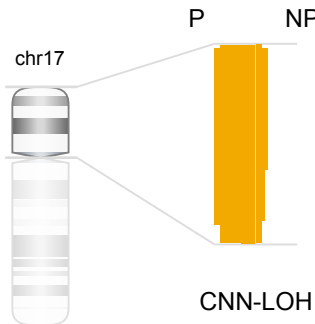
A.



B.



C.



D.

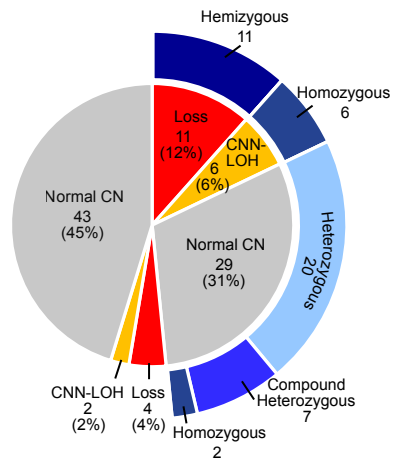
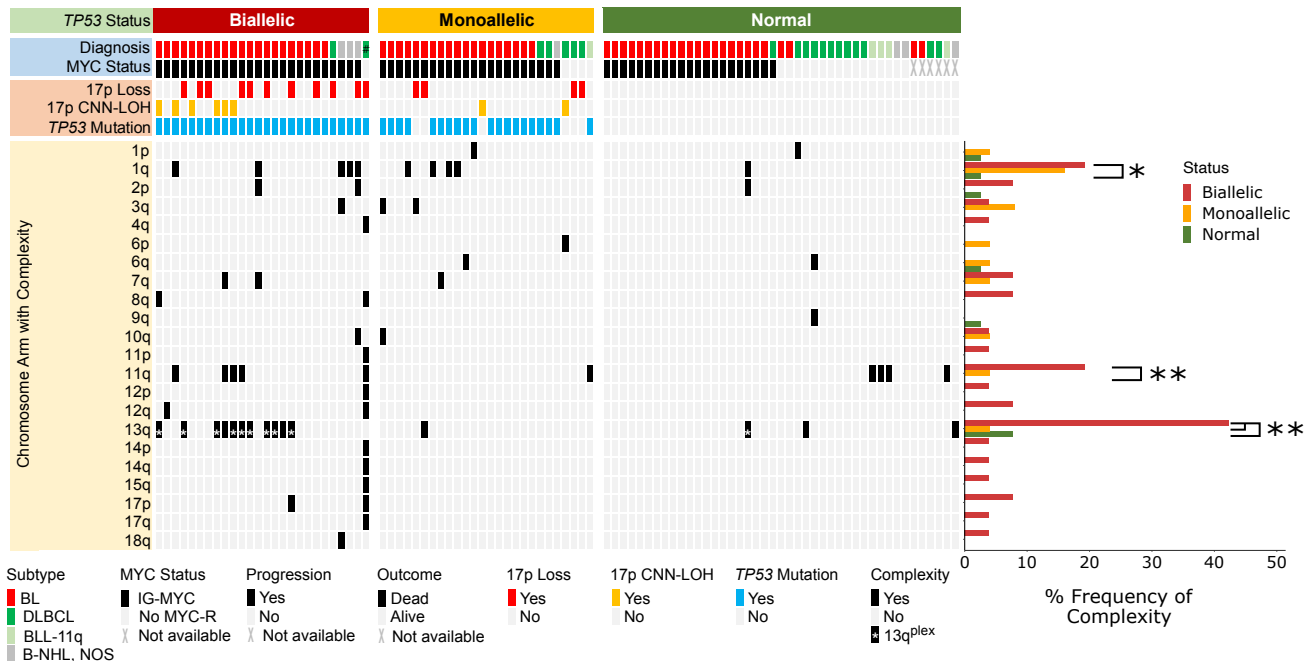
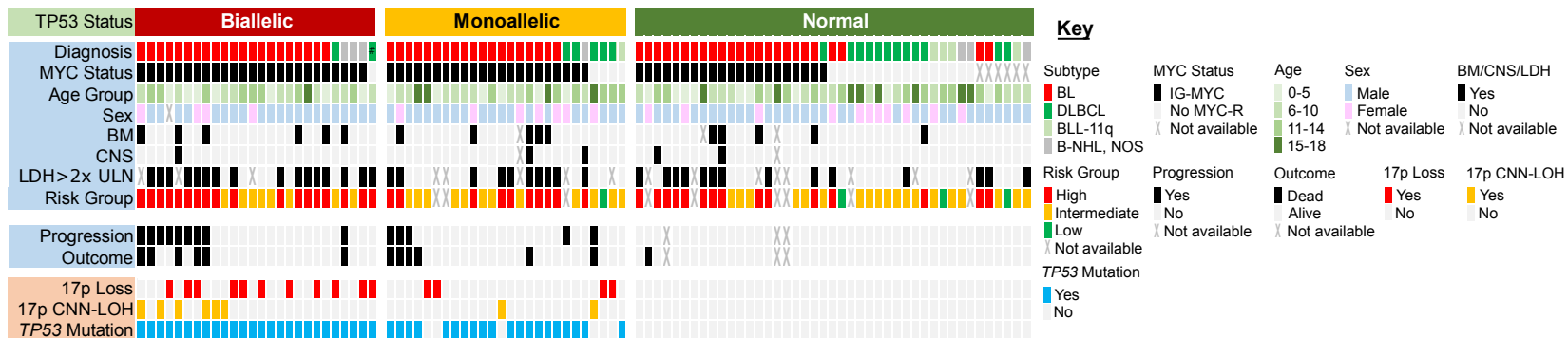


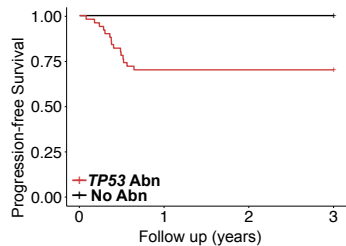
Figure 2



A.

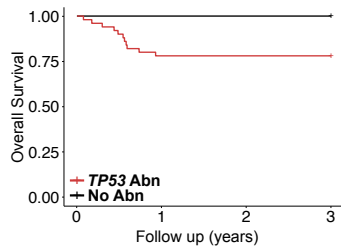


B.



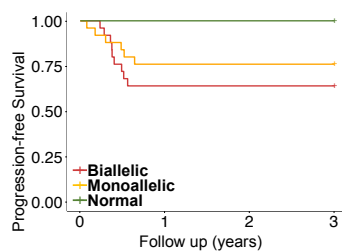
	0	1	2	3
Number at risk				
No Abn	39	39	39	39
TP53 Abn	50	35	35	35

C.



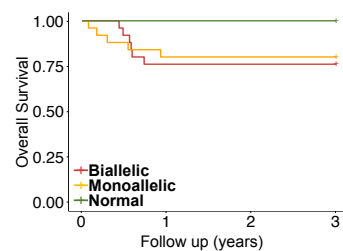
	0	1	2	3
Number at risk				
No Abn	39	39	39	39
TP53 Abn	50	39	39	39

D.



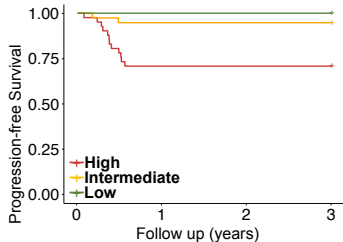
	0	1	2	3
Number at risk				
Biallelic	25	16	16	16
Monoallelic	25	19	19	19
Normal	39	39	39	39

E.



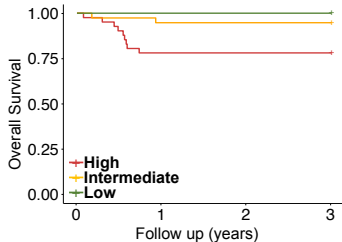
	0	1	2	3
Number at risk				
Biallelic	25	19	19	19
Monoallelic	25	20	20	20
Normal	39	39	39	39

A.



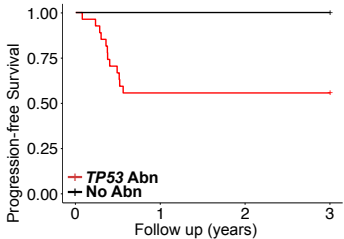
	Number at risk			
High	41	29	29	29
Intermediate	38	36	36	36
Low	4	4	4	4

B.



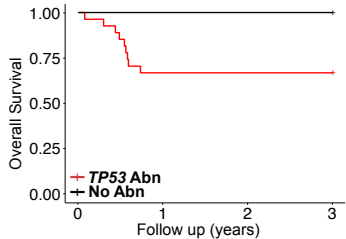
	Number at risk			
High	41	32	32	32
Intermediate	38	36	36	36
Low	4	4	4	4

C.



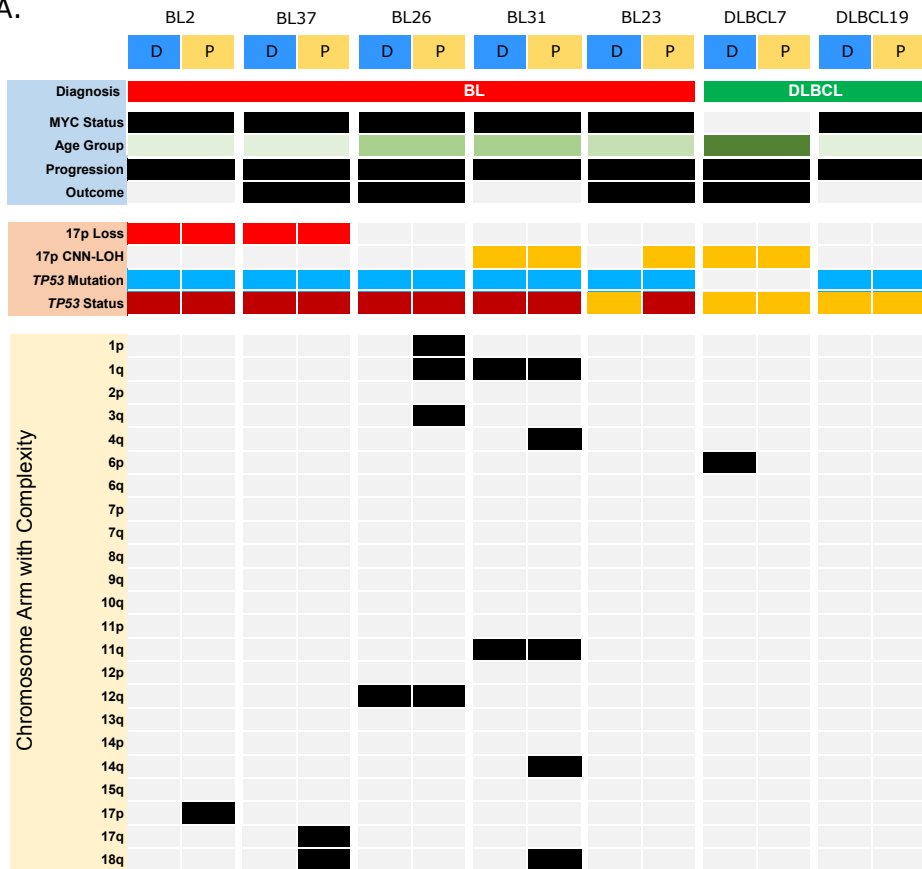
	Number at risk			
TP53 Abn	27	15	15	15
No Abn	14	14	14	14

D.



	Number at risk			
TP53 Abn	27	18	18	18
No Abn	14	14	14	14

A.



B.

