

A comprehensive *in silico* analysis of pathogenic nsSNPs in the *NT5C2* gene involved in relapsed ALL

Reyhane Chamani^{1*}, Parnia Sadat Pourhesseini MahmoudAbadi¹, Yasamin Janati¹, Roxana Tajdini¹

1. Department of Biology, Yazd University, Yazd, Iran

*Corresponding author: Dr Reyhane Chamani, PhD at the Department of Biology, Yazd University, University Blvd, Safayieh, Yazd, Iran, PO Box: 891581841, Tel: 98-3531232652, Email: chamani@yazd.ac.ir ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5160-0159

Received: 09 January 2022

Accepted: 02 August 2022

Abstract

Background: About 10-20% of children suffering from acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), experience a relapse, which is a major cause of their death. Purine nucleotide analogs are frequently prescribed to maintain the treatment of ALL. Cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase (NT5C2) catalyzes the 5' dephosphorylation of purine analogs. Gain-of-function mutations in the *NT5C2* gene result in resistance to the treatment with purine analogs and subsequently in the relapse of the disease.

Materials and Methods: In this descriptive study, bioinformatics tools were used to assess the effect of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in the *NT5C2* gene on the function and structure of the protein. So, 352 missense variants were retrieved from the NCBI database and analyzed by SIFT, PROVEAN, PMut, PANTHER, PolyPhen2, SNPs & Go, and PhD-SNP servers. Then, structural evaluations were performed using HOPE, NetSurp-2.0, and PyMOL. Moreover, stability and evolutionary preservation were assessed by I-Mutant2.0 and ConSurf, respectively.

Results: As many as 31 nsSNPs were predicted to be affecting the protein function and stability. Also, the native residues were found to be evolutionarily preserved. The structural evaluation demonstrated that a change of hydrophobicity, flexibility, size, charge, or surface accessibility due to 24 nsSNPs would lead to the change of noncovalent interactions and then the conformation of the protein.

Conclusion: Identification of biomarkers is significant in the prediction of relapses in ALL children. In this study, bioinformatics tools served to identify 24 high-risk deleterious nsSNPs in the *NT5C2* gene. These mutations can be used to predict resistance to chemotherapy and relapse in ALL patients.

Keywords: Bioinformatics tools, *NT5C2* gene, 5'-nucleotidase, Pathogenicity prediction, Relapsed ALL

Introduction

Due to intensified combined chemotherapy regimens, children suffering from Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) can have a survival rate of five years in 90% of the cases. However, 10-20% of patients experience the relapse of the disease and resistance to the treatment, which is a major cause of death in children (1). So, the identification of novel predictive biomarkers is essential for relapsed ALL. Heterozygous mutations in the *NT5C2* gene occur in 10% and 20% of relapsed B-precursor ALL and relapsed T-ALL cases, respectively (2, 3). Recently, Barz et al. (4) identified 110 *NT5C2* mutations in 16.5% of 455 relapses in B-cell precursor ALL.

The *NT5C2* gene, also known as *cN-II*, *GMP*, *NT5B*, *PNT5*, *SPG45*, and *SPG65*, is located on chromosome 10q24.32-q24.33 and has 27 exons. It encodes 5'-nucleotidase, cytosolic II (EC3.1.3.5), a highly conserved enzyme that dephosphorylates 6-hydroxypurine monophosphates, inosine monophosphate (IMP), guanosine monophosphate (GMP), and xanthine monophosphate (XMP) as well as dIMP and dGMP to nucleosides which are subsequently transported out of the cell. This process controls the intracellular purine nucleotide pool (5, 6). Maintenance therapy for ALL is given to sustain remission. The most common chemotherapy regimen includes 6-

mercaptapurine (6-MP) and 6-thioguanine (TG). These drugs incorporate into the salvage pathway of purine biosynthesis and generate nucleotide monophosphates such as 6-thioinosine monophosphate, 6-thioxanthine monophosphate, and 6-thioguanosine monophosphate that interfere with nucleic acid biosynthesis and activate DNA-mismatch-induced apoptosis (7, 8). The gain-of-function mutations in *NT5C2* intensify the dephosphorylation and clearance of nucleotide monophosphates resulting from thiopurines analogs and, therefore, extremely reduce their cytotoxic effects in patients with the relapsed disease (3, 9, 10). Missense non-synonymous single nucleotide polymorphism (nsSNP) is a point mutation in which a single-base change leads to an amino acid modification in the protein. This substitution may have a neutral or deleterious effect on the protein structure and function. The change in the amino acid may alter the secondary structure, motifs, physicochemical properties (11), dynamics, interacting domain, and the active site of a protein or enzyme, consequently affecting its function. So, damages to missense SNPs are associated with various diseases (12). Besides, some studies have been conducted to find the relationships between SNPs and traits like human diseases. In other words, SNPs serve as genetic markers of diseases in populations (13). Research has shown that SNPs may also impact the response to some drugs. Therefore, the investigation of nsSNPs may help to develop personalized medicine (14). The experimental investigation of how all missense SNPs impact the structure and function of encoded proteins is very difficult, time-consuming, and expensive. Nowadays, bioinformatics and computational tools are valuable for the preliminary screening of deleterious nsSNPs and the determining of candidates for future experimental studies (15). While mutations of cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase play a significant role in the

relapsed ALL, their effects on the structure and function of enzymes have not been clarified yet. So, the present study aims to determine high-risk pathogenic nsSNPs in the *NT5C2* gene using various bioinformatics tools.

Materials and Methods

Retrieving nsSNPs

The nsSNP information of the *NT5C2* gene was retrieved from the dbSNP database

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/projects/SNP/>) and the ClinVar database (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/clinvar>) of the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

SIFT

SIFT (Sorting Intolerant From Tolerant, <https://sift.bii.a-star.edu.sg/>) can predict the tolerance or the effect of amino acid substitution on the protein function using sequence homology and the physical properties of amino acids. A missense SNP is considered to be of effect on protein function when the SIFT score is < 0.05 , while a score of ≥ 0.05 indicates that the substitution is tolerated for the protein (16).

PROVEAN

PROVEAN (Protein Variation Effect Analyzer,

<http://provean.jcvi.org/index.php>) at first clusters the aligned sequences with a 75% global sequence identity and then uses the top 30 clusters to predict the effect of amino acid mutations. A cutoff value of -2.5 is also defined. Substitutions with a score more negative than the cutoff value are considered as deleterious, and those with a score more positive than -2.5 are neutral (17).

PMut

Pmut (<http://mmb.irbbarcelona.org/PMut/>) uses a Random Forest classifier, trained by SwissVar as a manually curated variation database. It calculates a score from 0 to 1 for each mutation. Mutations with a score of 0 to 0.5 are considered neutral, while a

score between 0.5 and 1 indicates that the substitution is pathogenic (18).

PANTHER

PANTHER

(<http://www.pantherdb.org/tools/csnpscoreForm.jsp>) is based on a method called PSEP (position-specific evolutionary preservation). It computes the length of time (in millions of years) to examine the residue in proteins that have been evolutionarily preserved in the ancestry. PANTHER reports the result as a probability of deleterious effects (Pdel). Besides, if the preservation time is more than 450 million years, the substitution may be considered damaging. Also, the mutation would be possibly damaging or benign if the time of preservation is 200-450 or less than 200 million years, respectively (19).

PolyPhen2

Polyphen2 (Polymorphism Phenotyping v2, <http://genetics.bwh.harvard.edu/pph2/>) uses an interactive greedy algorithm to select some structural and sequence-related features and compare the wild-type and mutant alleles according to these features. It uses multiple sequence alignments, naive Bayes classifiers as well as HumDiv and HumVar datasets to predict the effect of an amino acid mutation on the protein activity. PolyPhen2 defines a score from 0 (neutral) to 1 (damaging). So, 0.00-0.14 is categorized into benign, 0.15-0.84 into possibly damaging, and 0.85-1 into probably damaging (20).

SNPs & Go

SNPs & GO (<https://snps-and-go.biocomp.unibo.it/snps-and-go/index.html>) are based on a method that uses Support Vector Machines (SVM) and various data derived from the Gene Ontology (GO) annotation, including the data on the sequence, evolution, and function of proteins to predict whether amino acid substitution is related to a disease or not. The method involves calculating the Reliability Index (RI) of prediction, scoring from 0 (unreliable) to 10 (reliable) (21).

PhD-SNP

PhD-SNP (Predictor of human Deleterious Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms, <https://snps.biofold.org/phd-snp/phd-snp.html>) predicts the disease-related or neutral impact of SNPs on the protein function using Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifiers, sequence and profile information, and BLAST program. It computes a Reliability Index (RI) for each prediction (22).

I-Mutant2.0

I-Mutant 2.0 (<https://folding.biofold.org/cgi-bin/i-mutant2.0.cgi>) predicts the stability of the protein after an amino acid mutation from its structure (if available) or sequence using the Support Vector Machine and the ProTherm database. As the mutation occurs, the predictor calculates the $\Delta\Delta G$ value (kcal/mol) by subtracting the unfolding Gibbs free energy value of the native protein from the unfolding Gibbs free energy value of the mutated one. The result can be reported in either of the two ways as follows:

- a) with the $\Delta\Delta G$ value (a value of < 0 indicates a decrease in the protein stability, while $\Delta\Delta G > 0$ shows an increase in it)
- b) with the $\Delta\Delta G$ sign (+ for increased stability and - for decreased stability) (23).

NetSurfP-2.0

Predicting the Absolute and Relative Surface Accessibility and the secondary structures (helix, strand, and coil) from the sequence of a protein is done by NetSurfP-2.0

(<https://services.healthtech.dtu.dk/service.php?NetSurfP-2.0>). It also estimates disordered residues and the phi/psi dihedral angles of each amino acid. NetSurfP-2.0 employs a deep neural network architecture for prediction (24).

HOPE

HOPE (<https://www3.cmbi.umcn.nl/hope/>) is a server that combines the structural information collected from databases and software programs such as WHAT IF web services, UniProt and Refprop to predict the

effect of amino acid substitution on the structure of a given protein (25).

ConSurf

The ConSurf (<https://consurf.tau.ac.il/>) server assesses the evolutionary preservation of amino acid sites in a protein. Firstly, ConSurf seeks close homologous sequences using CSI-BLAST, PSI-BLAST or BLAST. Then, a multiple sequence alignment of the homologous sequences is employed to construct a phylogenetic tree through the neighbor-joining algorithm. The empirical Bayesian or ML algorithms are used to calculate the position-specific conservation scores. The continuous conservation scores are shown by nine grades, from the most variable positions (grade 1) to the most conserved positions (grade 9) (26).

Ethical Consideration

The present study was approved at Research Ethics Committees of Yazd University with ID: IR.YAZD.REC.1401.024

Results

Screening the pathogenic nsSNPs

On the purpose of screening, 352 missense variants were retrieved from the dbSNP database. Of them, 69 SNPs were in the intronic regions, and 4 and 2 SNPs were synonymous and stop codon, respectively. So, they were excluded. Seven different *in silico* predicting tools (SIFT, PROVEAN, PMut, PANTHER, PolyPhen2, SNPs & GO, and PhD-SNP) were employed to screen the deleterious *NT5C2* nsSNPs (Figure 4a). Firstly, all the nsSNPs were examined with SIFT, PROVEAN, PMut, and PANTHER. Out of 277 nsSNPs, 176 were predicted as "affect protein function" by SIFT, 134 as "deleterious" by PROVEAN, 122 as "disease" by PMut, and 267 as "probably damaging" by PANTHER (Supplementary Table I).

In addition, 115 common nsSNPs were considered pathogenic by all the four mentioned tools, and then they were explored using PolyPhen2, SNPs & GO, and PhD-SNP. Of them, 69 nsSNPs were predicted as "probably damaging" by

PolyPhen2. Also, 61 and 84 nsSNPs were predicted as "disease" by SNPs & GO and PhD-SNP, respectively (Table I). Among them, 31 were considered "pathogenic" by all these three *in silico* tools (Table II). Moreover, the effect of 115 amino acid substitutions on the stability of the protein was explored using I-Mutant2.0 (Table I). As it was found, 98 nsSNPs decreased ($\Delta\Delta G < 0$) but 17 nsSNPs increased ($\Delta\Delta G > 0$) the stability of the protein.

Evaluation of the structural effects of nsSNPs

The effect of 31 screened amino acid substitutions on the secondary structure of the cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase was evaluated using the NetSurfP-2.0 server (Table II). As the results showed, Absolute and Relative Surface Accessibility (i.e., ASA and RSA, respectively) were changed largely by some mutations including S464F, R442C, F441C, F296S, F296V, P293Q, Y225C, L190H, G184R, T183P, Y178C, I142N, and R98G, while the variations in the others were minor.

In addition, the structural effects of mutations were explored using the HOPE server. According to HOPE, in M53T, Y82H, L110S and F296S, the mutated residue was smaller and more hydrophilic than the wild-type residue. This implies that hydrophobic interactions, either in the core of the protein or on the surface, may be lost. In P293Q, the wild-type residue was proline. This residue is known to be very rigid, thus inducing a special backbone conformation that might be required at this position. Mutations can disturb this distinct conformation. In N38S, L109V, Y178C, T183P, Y225C, N250S, and Y461C, mutation leads to a smaller and more hydrophobic residue. This can result in the loss of hydrogen bonds and/or disturb correct folding. In I46M, T56I, L57F, L86W, I142N, L190H, and S464F, the mutant residue is bulkier, which might lead to a bump. It is also more hydrophilic, which means that hydrophobic interactions, either in the core of the protein or on its surface, may be

lost. In H486N and F441C, the mutant residue is smaller, and the wild-type and mutant residues differ in terms of hydrophobicity. These differences might lead to a loss of interactions. In L235P, the wild-type residue is located in a region annotated in UniProt to form an α -helix. Proline disrupts an α -helix when not located at one of the first three positions of that helix. So, the helix will be disturbed, which can have severe effects on the structure of the protein. The mutation G184R introduces a charged residue that can cause repulsion with other residues in the protein or ligands. Also, the bigger size of the mutant might lead to bumps. In R98G, D103G, D200G, R442C, and R456H, the wild-type is a charged residue, whereas the mutant is neutral. This can cause a loss of interactions with other molecules or residues. In the case of mutation to G, glycine is very flexible and can disturb the required rigidity of the protein at that position. When an amino acid position is evolutionarily preserved, it powerfully reflects its structural and functional importance in the protein. The evolutionary preservation of the native residues was analyzed by the ConSurf web server. As the results indicated, out of 31 residues, 27 cases were highly preserved with a score of more than 7 (Table II). The others were intermediately preserved with a score of 5. If a residue in the sequence of a protein is evolutionary preserved, its mutation almost certainly affects the protein function. Amino acid side-chains vary in polarity and charge. This variation affects the formation of polar contacts with other residues in the protein, which may alter the 3D conformation and, subsequently, the function of the protein (27). So, the polar contacts in the native and mutant tertiary structure of the protein were analyzed using PyMOL (The PyMOL Molecular Graphics System, Version 2.0 Schrodinger, LLC.). Out of 31 nsSNPs in H486N, H209N, L110S, L109V, L86W, Y82H and I46M, the length and the number of the polar contacts with the other residues did not change, while the alteration in the length and the number of the

polar contacts was detected in the others using PyMOL (Figures 1-3). These results support the data obtained by NetSurfP-2.0. So, regardless of these seven mutations, 24 nsSNPs were introduced as high-risk mutations affecting the function of 5'-nucleotidase. The flowchart of the steps for the screening and identification of high-risk deleterious nsSNPs in *NT5C2* is presented in Figure 4A.

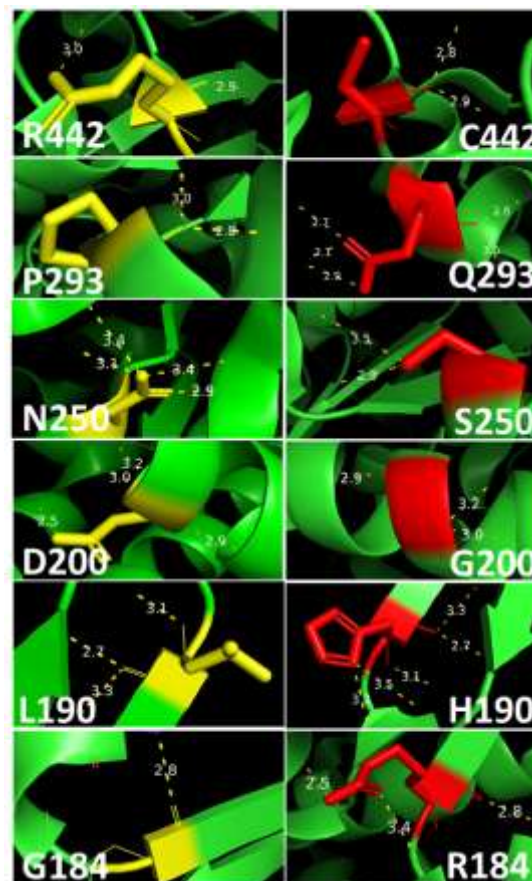


Figure 1. Evaluation of the polar contacts using PyMOL: The 3D structure of 5'-nucleotidase (PDB ID: 2J2C) was illustrated by the PyMOL software (The PyMOL Molecular Graphics System, Version 2.0 Schrodinger, LLC.). Using the mutagenesis wizard of the software, mutations were performed on the structure, and then the lengths (dashed line) as well as the numbers of the polar contacts of the native (yellow) and mutant (red) residues with the others (green) were evaluated (The number on the dashed line indicates the length of the contact). The length and the number of the polar contacts were changed due to R442C, P293Q, N250S, D200G, L190H, and G184R mutations.

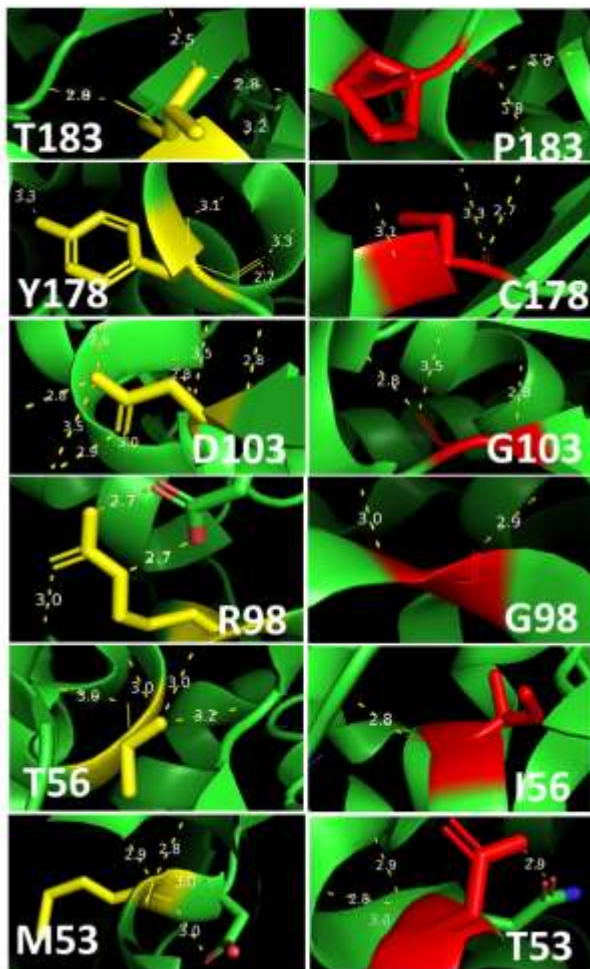


Figure 2. Change of the polar contacts due to mutations: The tertiary structure of the 5'-nucleotidase (PDB ID: 2J2C) was shown by the PyMOL software (The PyMOL Molecular Graphics System, Version 2.0 Schrodinger, LLC.). Using the mutagenesis wizard of the software, mutations were created in the structure, and then the lengths (dashed line) as well as the numbers of the polar contacts of the native (yellow) and mutant (red) residues with the others (green) were compared (The number on the dashed line indicates the length of the contact). The length and the number of the polar contacts were altered after T183P, Y178C, D103G, R98G, T56I, and M53T mutations.

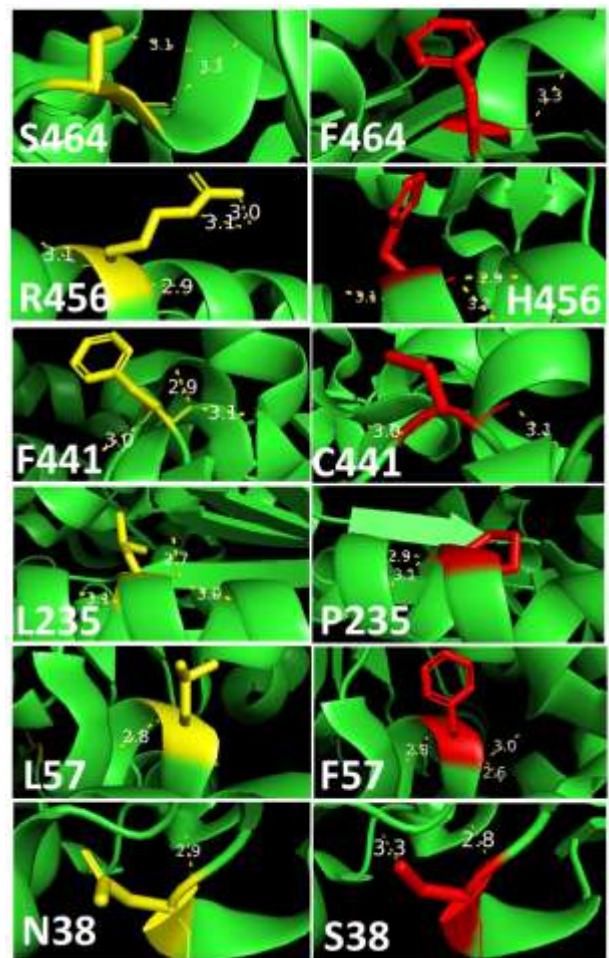


Figure 3. Alteration of polar contacts caused by mutations: The structure of 5'-nucleotidase (PDB ID: 2J2C) was displayed by the PyMOL software (The PyMOL Molecular Graphics System, Version 2.0 Schrodinger, LLC.). Using the mutagenesis wizard of the software, mutations were induced in the structure, and then the lengths (dashed line) as well as the numbers of the polar contacts of the native (yellow) and mutant (red) residues with the others (green) were predicted (The number on the dashed line indicates the length of the contact). The length and the number of the polar contacts were changed due to S464F, R456H, F441C, L235P, L57F, and N38S mutations.

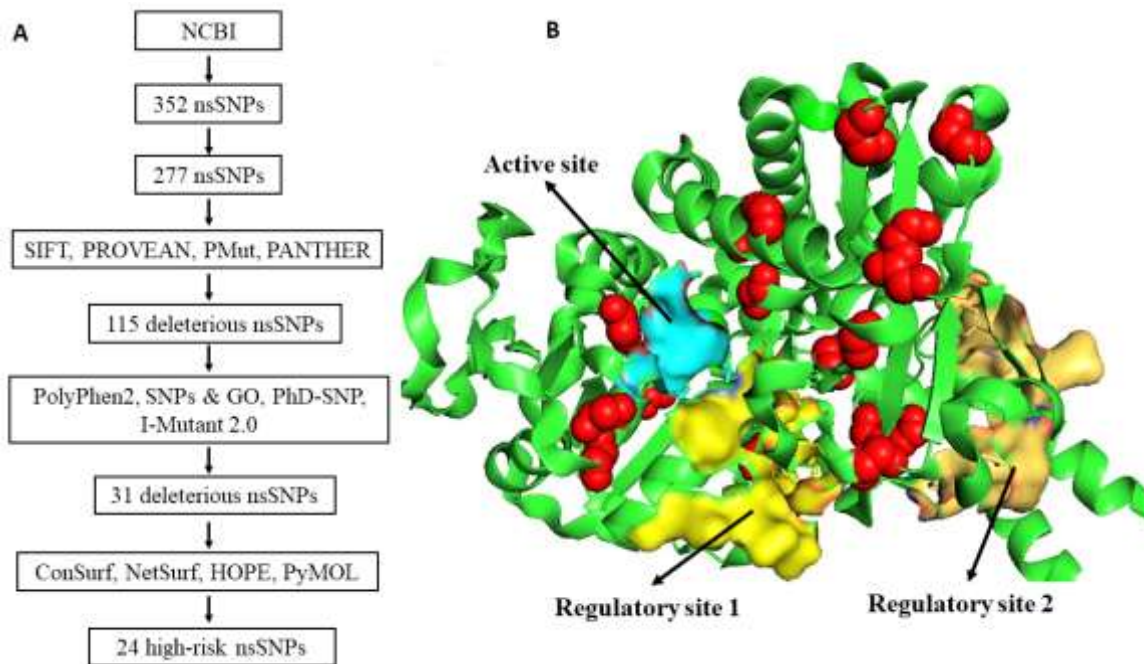


Figure 4. A) The flowchart of the steps to screen and identify the high-risk nsSNPs in *NT5C2* using bioinformatics tools and B) The structure of the 5'-nucleotidase (*NT5C2*) enzyme illustrated by PyMOL: The active site and regulatory sites 1 and 2 are marked in blue, yellow and orange, respectively. Also, 24 high-risk mutations are demonstrated with red spheres.

Table I: Prediction of deleterious nsSNPs in *NT5C2* using PolyPhen-2, SNPs & Go and PHD-SNP as well as stability by I-Mutant2.0

| rs ID* | Amino acid change | PolyPhen-2 | PolyPhen-2 score | SNPs & Go | SNPs & Go RI # | PHD-SNP | PHD-SNP RI | I-Mutant | I-Mutant RI |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|---------|------------|----------|-------------|
| rs2066199416 | E550K | possibly damaging | 0.461 | Neutral | 7 | Neutral | 6 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs745326714 | R526W | probably damaging | 1.000 | Neutral | 3 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs368467266 | H522Y | benign | 0.104 | Neutral | 6 | Neutral | 5 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs777429683 | R521W | probably damaging | 1.000 | Neutral | 3 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs765678401 | R507W | probably damaging | 1.000 | Neutral | 2 | Neutral | 2 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1335692779 | P503L | possibly damaging | 0.921 | Neutral | 6 | Disease | 1 | Decrease | 2 |
| rs1352405866 | H486N | probably damaging | 1.000 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs1180354638 | N467I | probably damaging | 1.000 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 9 | Increase | 5 |
| rs1186701443 | N467D | probably damaging | 0.982 | Disease | 0 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1266276091 | S464F | probably damaging | 0.999 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 7 | Increase | 4 |
| rs2066545902 | A463V | probably | 0.994 | Disease | 1 | Disease | 5 | Increase | 1 |

| | | damaging | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------|---|---------|---|----------|---|
| rs1260681713 | Y461C | probably damaging | 1.000 | Disease | 6 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs948869581 | D459E | possibly damaging | 0/927 | Neutral | 0 | Disease | 7 | Increase | 1 |
| rs1030219633 | R456H | possibly damaging | 0/978 | Disease | 1 | Disease | 5 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1431600760 | V454A | possibly damaging | 0/996 | Neutral | 6 | Neutral | 2 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs1443548253 | F450L | possibly damaging | 1 | Neutral | 0 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs1222615420 | R446W | possibly damaging | 0/564 | Neutral | 0 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs2066559867 | R446H | possibly damaging | 0/669 | Neutral | 3 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs985929069 | R442C | possibly damaging | 0/999 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 2 |
| rs771233729 | F441L | possibly damaging | 0/877 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 4 |
| rs2066562591 | F441C | possibly damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs1272078839 | S439N | possibly damaging | 1 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 4 | Increase | 3 |
| rs775844720 | D431V | possibly damaging | 0/999 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs1433755096 | M430R | possibly damaging | 0/494 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs147120336 | I423T | possibly damaging | 0/954 | Neutral | 6 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs759224877 | S418P | possibly damaging | 0/821 | Neutral | 4 | Neutral | 1 | Increase | 1 |
| rs2066656074 | P414T | benign | 0/017 | Neutral | 8 | Neutral | 2 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs2066658373 | R413C | possibly damaging | 0/716 | Neutral | 6 | Disease | 1 | Decrease | 4 |
| rs1057519868 | D407A | possibly damaging | 1 | Neutral | 4 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs2066664389 | H405Y | possibly damaging | 0/999 | Neutral | 5 | Neutral | 4 | Increase | 3 |
| rs184419317 | L392F | possibly damaging | 1 | Neutral | 4 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs775006132 | E391G | possibly damaging | 1 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs774430005 | S387L | benign | 0/349 | Neutral | 5 | Neutral | 6 | Increase | 0 |
| rs1359768582 | G330R | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1564921342 | S328P | probably damaging | 0.998 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 8 | Increase | 0 |
| rs1590671523 | G324A | benign | 0.100 | Neutral | 3 | Disease | 4 | Increase | 0 |
| rs746549118 | P320A | possibly damaging | 0.553 | Neutral | 7 | Disease | 4 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs776631372 | G315A | possibly damaging | 0.952 | Neutral | 7 | Disease | 0 | Decrease | 2 |
| rs926878263 | I314T | probably damaging | 0.988 | Neutral | 4 | Neutral | 1 | Increase | 3 |
| rs1188927869 | G310S | benign | 0.042 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 6 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|-------------------|-------|---------|---|---------|----|----------|---|
| rs1415972113 | T307S | possibly damaging | 0.670 | Neutral | 6 | Neutral | 2 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs1463329393 | T307A | possibly damaging | 0.504 | Neutral | 4 | Disease | 1 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs780974514 | R303H | probably damaging | 0.999 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs745869293 | R303C | probably damaging | 0.977 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 2 |
| rs1564924220 | T300I | benign | 0.075 | Neutral | 4 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs2067655015 | T300S | possibly damaging | 0.723 | Neutral | 8 | Neutral | 6 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1009620186 | F296S | probably damaging | 0.980 | Disease | 8 | Disease | 10 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs1234315434 | F296V | probably damaging | 0.997 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 10 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs2067659333 | P293Q | probably damaging | 0.972 | Disease | 6 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs775316562 | R291W | benign | 0.042 | Neutral | 1 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1306826286 | V288A | probably damaging | 0.999 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs768829960 | S281P | possibly damaging | 0.874 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 9 | Increase | 1 |
| rs199588287 | Q280P | benign | 0.042 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs2068444135 | D257G | possibly damaging | 0.732 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1344739408 | T256R | possibly damaging | 0.803 | Disease | 8 | Disease | 8 | Increase | 0 |
| rs767133782 | N250S | probably damaging | 0.989 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs753745374 | F246L | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 1 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1226896141 | V242L | possibly damaging | 0.938 | Neutral | 7 | Neutral | 7 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1288561387 | L235P | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs765117850 | P233L | probably damaging | 0/998 | Neutral | 7 | Neutral | 3 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs752467649 | P233T | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 7 | Neutral | 5 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs1590754368 | D229H | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 4 | Disease | 2 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1355588604 | V226A | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 1 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs1431496089 | Y225C | probably damaging | 0/995 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs774747772 | K224N | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 6 | Increase | 1 |
| rs1359934879 | E223 K | benign | 0/024 | Neutral | 5 | Neutral | 4 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1453382388 | L222 P | probably damaging | 0/968 | Neutral | 8 | Neutral | 1 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs2068866642 | N221Y | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 1 | Disease | 5 | Increase | 4 |
| rs1288943666 | H209N | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs745543095 | W207G | probably | 0/997 | Neutral | 0 | Disease | 5 | Decrease | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------|---|---------|----|----------|---|
| | | damaging | | | | | | | |
| rs769321277 | D206H | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 4 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs762580200 | D200G | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 6 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs952030661 | Q199H | possibly damaging | 0/918 | Disease | 1 | Disease | 2 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs774448444 | R195W | possibly damaging | 0/607 | Disease | 1 | Neutral | 6 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1166034561 | L190H | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 5 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs1305679810 | G184R | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs761543688 | T183P | probably damaging | 0/997 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1425381216 | Y178C | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs2069499073 | V169A | probably damaging | 0/998 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs1340184014 | C167Y | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 3 |
| rs200072674 | Y163F | probably damaging | 0/991 | Neutral | 3 | Neutral | 5 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1267748680 | T162I | probably damaging | 0/984 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 2 | Decrease | 2 |
| rs1387152557 | P160S | possibly damaging | 0/617 | Neutral | 7 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1369817879 | F157L | probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1298943557 | T155I | possibly damaging | 0/946 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs587777174 | R149G | probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 7 | Disease | 4 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs1195771135 | I142N | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs718137833 | N117S | Probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 5 | Neutral | 1 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs768600364 | D113N | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1307699666 | L110S | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 6 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs988179515 | L109V | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1446916348 | G107A | Probably damaging | 0/998 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 4 |
| rs761830299 | Y106N | Probably damaging | 0/999 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs773870376 | D103G | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 10 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs781092106 | R98G | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs377735697 | P96L | Probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 2 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs1590866563 | L87F | Probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 1 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 9 |
| rs2071346838 | L86W | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 0 | Disease | 4 | Decrease | 7 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|-------------------|-------|---------|---|---------|---|----------|---|
| rs2071348526 | Y82H | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs773823085 | R76I | Probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 0 | Neutral | 3 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs773930069 | E66G | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 1 | Disease | 5 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs2071365783 | P63L | possibly damaging | 0/953 | Neutral | 2 | Disease | 1 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs767057029 | K61M | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 0 | Disease | 4 | Increase | 1 |
| rs2071368159 | K61E | Probably damaging | 0/972 | Neutral | 1 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs868119072 | L57F | Probably damaging | 0/998 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 5 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1400732197 | T56I | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 1 |
| rs377751446 | M53T | Probably damaging | 0/996 | Disease | 5 | Disease | 3 | Decrease | 6 |
| rs766283362 | M53V | Probably damaging | 0/999 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 2 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1302349591 | I46M | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 3 | Disease | 4 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1141098 | M43V | Probably damaging | 0/998 | Disease | 0 | Neutral | 0 | Decrease | 8 |
| rs1565150621 | S40R | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 4 | Disease | 7 | Increase | 0 |
| rs1393472957 | R39L | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 7 | Disease | 9 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1330033795 | N38S | Probably damaging | 0/998 | Disease | 2 | Disease | 7 | Decrease | 7 |
| rs1340377706 | F36L | Probably damaging | 1 | Disease | 6 | Disease | 8 | Decrease | 5 |
| rs2079961540 | F36Y | Probably damaging | 1 | Neutral | 3 | Disease | 6 | Decrease | 7 |

*rs ID: reference SNP cluster identifier, # RI: Reliability Index

Table II Prediction of structural changes due to mutations by NetSurfP-2.0 and evolutionary conservation by ConSurf

| rs ID ^a / (amino acids) | Native / Mutant | RSA ^b (%) | ASA ^c (Å) | SS3 ^d | SS8 ^d | Surface accessibility | ConSurf score |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| rs1352405866 (H486N) | H | 58 | 105 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| | N | 56 | 101 | coil | coil | buried | |
| rs1266276091 (S464F) | S | 12 | 14 | strand | β-sheet | buried | 8 |
| | F | 16 | 32 | strand | β-sheet | exposed | |
| rs1260681713 (Y461C) | Y | 3 | 7 | strand | β-sheet | buried | 9 |
| | C | 3 | 4 | strand | β-sheet | buried | |
| rs1030219633 | R | 36 | 82 | helix | α-helix | exposed | 9 |
| R456H | H | 37 | 67 | helix | α-helix | exposed | |
| rs985929069 | R | 21 | 49 | strand | β-sheet | exposed | 9 |
| R442C | C | 13 | 18 | strand | β-sheet | buried | |
| rs2066562591 (F441C) | F | 9 | 19 | coil | β-sheet | buried | 8 |
| | C | 6 | 8 | strand | β-sheet | buried | |
| rs1009620186 (F296S) | F | 23 | 46 | coil | turn | exposed | 9 |
| | S | 34 | 40 | coil | turn | exposed | |
| rs1234315434 (F296V) | F | 23 | 46 | coil | turn | exposed | 9 |
| | V | 18 | 28 | coil | turn | buried | |
| rs2067659333 (P293Q) | P | 17 | 24 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| | Q | 31 | 56 | coil | coil | exposed | |
| rs767133782 (N250S) | N | 18 | 27 | coil | bend | buried | 9 |
| | S | 21 | 24 | coil | bend | buried | |
| rs1288561387 (L235P) | L | 3 | 5 | helix | α-helix | buried | 7 |
| | P | 6 | 7 | helix | α-helix | buried | |
| rs1431496089 (Y225C) | Y | 9 | 18 | helix | 3 ₁₀ helix | buried | 8 |
| | C | 5 | 7 | helix | 3 ₁₀ helix | buried | |
| rs1288943666 (H209N) | H | 8 | 15 | helix | α-helix | buried | 9 |
| | N | 9 | 14 | helix | α-helix | buried | |
| rs762580200 (D200G) | D | 6 | 9 | helix | α-helix | buried | 9 |
| | G | 4 | 3 | helix | α-helix | buried | |
| rs1166034561 (L190H) | L | 22 | 41 | strand | β-sheet | buried | 5 |
| | H | 40 | 72 | strand | β-sheet | exposed | |
| rs1305679810 (G184R) | G | 17 | 13 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| | R | 43 | 98 | coil | coil | exposed | |
| rs761543688 (T183P) | T | 34 | 47 | coil | turn | exposed | 5 |
| | P | 48 | 68 | coil | turn | exposed | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----|----|--------|----------------|---------|---|
| rs1425381216 | Y | 18 | 39 | coil | coil | buried | 5 |
| (Y178C) | C | 13 | 18 | coil | coil | buried | |
| rs1369817879 | F | 9 | 18 | coil | turn | buried | 9 |
| (F157L) | L | 8 | 14 | coil | turn | buried | |
| rs1195771135 | I | 10 | 18 | coil | β -sheet | buried | 7 |
| (I142N) | N | 28 | 41 | strand | coil | exposed | |
| rs1307699666 | L | 2 | 3 | strand | β -sheet | buried | 8 |
| (L110S) | S | 3 | 3 | strand | β -sheet | buried | |
| rs988179515 | L | 1 | 2 | strand | β -sheet | buried | 8 |
| (L109V) | V | 1 | 1 | strand | β -sheet | buried | |
| rs773870376 | D | 5 | 7 | strand | β -sheet | buried | 9 |
| (D103G) | G | 3 | 3 | strand | β -sheet | exposed | |
| rs781092106 | R | 19 | 44 | strand | β -sheet | exposed | 9 |
| (R98G) | G | 9 | 7 | strand | β -sheet | buried | |
| rs2071346838 | L | 4 | 7 | helix | 3_{10} helix | buried | 5 |
| (L86W) | W | 5 | 13 | helix | 3_{10} helix | buried | |
| rs2071348526 | Y | 11 | 23 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| (Y82H) | H | 13 | 24 | coil | coil | buried | |
| rs868119072 | L | 3 | 5 | coil | β -sheet | buried | 8 |
| (L57F) | F | 3 | 5 | coil | β -sheet | buried | |
| rs1400732197 | T | 2 | 2 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| (T56I) | I | 2 | 4 | coil | coil | buried | |
| rs377751446 | M | 11 | 22 | coil | Turn | buried | 9 |
| (M53T) | T | 11 | 16 | coil | Turn | buried | |
| rs1302349591 | I | 4 | 7 | coil | coil | buried | 8 |
| (I46M) | M | 4 | 8 | coil | coil | buried | |
| rs1330033795 | N | 18 | 27 | coil | coil | buried | 9 |
| (N38S) | S | 17 | 20 | coil | coil | buried | |

^a rs ID: reference SNP cluster identifier, ^b RSA: Relative Surface Accessibility; ^c ASA: Absolute Surface Accessibility; ^d SS3 and SS8: Secondary Structure using 3- and 8-class definitions predicted by NetSurfP-2.0

Discussion

Cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase is a tetrameric enzyme composed of two dimers of the same type and, like the haloacid dehalogenase (HAD) superfamily, has three conserved motifs. Motif I consists of Asp52, Asp54, Thr56 and Leu57, Motif II of Thr249, and Motif III of Lys292,

Asp351 and Asp356. They shape the active site of the enzyme (Figure 4B) and are involved in the binding to the phosphate moiety of the substrate and the catalytic mechanism of the enzyme i.e. dephosphorylation of purine analogs (28). This activity controls the intracellular purine nucleotide pool (5, 6). In this

tetrameric enzyme, dimers contact the residues of the adjacent dimers at interface A using 19 hydrogen bonds and four salt bridges. The salt bridges are formed between Arg363 and Asp145 and between Arg442 and Glu487 (29). Moreover, cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase is allosterically activated by effectors such as ATP, diadenosine tetraphosphate, and 2,3-BPG (28). Two regulatory sites have been detected in the enzyme (Figure 4B). In regulatory site 1, the activator forms hydrogen bonds with Gln453, Asn154, and several water molecules. In this process, Ile152, Arg144, Phe354, Lys362, Arg456, and Tyr457 are important. In regulatory site 2, the activator forms hydrogen bonds with His428, Met432 and Met436, and residues such as Phe127, Arg129, Arg131, Arg134, Lys140, His428, and Arg446 play a role here. The enzyme has a region of 13 negatively charged residues at the C-terminal. They may interact with the three positively charged regions K(25)KYRR, K(359)SKKRQ and Q(420)RRIKK and participate in the activation and regulation of the cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase (29).

Maintenance therapy for ALL patients is given to postpone remission. The most common chemotherapy regimen includes 6-mercaptopurine (6-MP) and 6-thioguanine (TG). However, about 15% to 20% of children suffering from acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) experience a relapse, which is a significant cause of death in children. Heterozygous mutations in the *NT5C2* gene occur in 10% and 20% of relapsed B- and T-ALL cases, respectively (2, 3). Gain-of-function mutations in *NT5C2* intensify the dephosphorylation and clearance of nucleotide monophosphates resulting from thiopurines analogs and, therefore, extremely reduce their cytotoxic effects in relapsed patients (3, 9, 10). The change of amino acids due to nsSNPs may alter the secondary and 3D structures, motifs, physicochemical properties (30), flexibility, interacting residues, and the active site of an enzyme, thus affecting its

function and causing diseases (12). Moreover, SNPs serve as genetic markers of diseases in populations and may also impact the response to some drugs (14). It is very difficult and expensive to experimentally investigate the impacts of all missense SNPs on the structure and function of encoded proteins (31). Hence, bioinformatics tools are valuable for the preliminary screening of deleterious nsSNPs and determining of candidates for future experimental studies (15). In the present study, 276 nsSNPs were retrieved from the NCBI database. They were screened for deleterious mutations firstly by SIFT, PROVEAN, PMut and PANTHER and then by PolyPhen2, SNPs & GO, and PhD-SNP. However, there are some other prediction tools such as Fathmn, Mutation Assessor, Align-GVGD, CAAD, and MutPred. The servers applied in this study were selected because they are widely used and freely available and can predict pathogenicity based on various criteria and algorithms such as sequence homology, physicochemical properties of amino acids, random forest classifier, evolutionary preservation, interactive greedy algorithm, and support vector machines (SVMs). In the dbSNP database, in addition to single nucleotide variants of *NT5C2*, other types of mutations such as insertion, deletion, frameshift and synonymous have been reported for this gene. Missense mutations were selected for this study because examining all types of mutation is very complicated, time-consuming, and practically impossible. So far, only some missense mutations have been experimentally investigated for their pathogenic effects; most of them have remained unexplored. Furthermore, the effect of nsSNPs on the stability of the protein was predicted with the I-Mutant 2.0 server. In this regard, all the applied predicting tools indicated the effects of 31 nsSNPs on the protein function and stability. Evolutionary conservation analyses with ConSurf also showed that 90% of the 31 native amino acids were

highly preserved. So, the effects of these mutations on the interactions of amino acids with other residues and on the structure of the protein were explored using the HOPE, PyMOL and NetSurfP-2.0 tools. Based on HOPE, the substitution of a residue with different properties such as hydrophobicity, flexibility, size, and/or charge, compared to a native one, leads to the change of noncovalent interactions including hydrogen bonds, salt bridges, and hydrophobic interactions. It also results in conformational changes in the protein. In addition, according to PyMOL and NetSurfP-2.0, polar contacts and surface accessibility are changed by 24 mutations except for H486N, H209N, L110S, L109V, L86W, Y82H, and I46M substitutions. It is noteworthy that most of these mutations are located within or very close to critical regions including active sites such as I46M, M53T, T56I, L57F, N250S, P293Q, F296V and F296S as well as regulatory sites such as I142N, F157L, F441C, R442C, R456H, Y461C and S464F (Figure 4B). The experimental characterization of the mutant forms of cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase has clarified the mechanisms of some relapse-associated *NT5C2* mutations. Mutations including K359Q and L375F change the conformation of helix A segment into an active α -helix and lead to the amplification of nucleotidase activity in the absence of allosteric activators (7). The *NT5C2* enzyme has a self-inactivation mechanism enabled by the arm region and the inter-monomeric pocket. R39Q, R238W/L/G/Q, R367Q, S445F, R446Q, and R478S mutations remove positively charged residues located in the inter-monomeric pocket, or K404N, D407A/Y/E/H, S408R, P414S/A, and D415G mutations alter the arm region. This is how they interfere with the self-inactivation process (7). Therefore, it can be deduced that mutations in the vital regions of the enzyme, including the active and regulatory sites, would alter the conformation and the function of the

cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase. Besides their importance in relapsed B-ALL and T-ALL, *NT5C2* mutations play a role in coronary heart disease (CHD) susceptibility (32) and autosomal recessive spastic paraplegia (SPG45) (33). Recently, loss-of-function mutations in *NT5C2* has been reported in patients with spastic paraplegia (34, 35).

Conclusion

In conclusion, with the aid of a variety of bioinformatics tools, 24 high-risk deleterious nsSNPs in the *NT5C2* gene have been found with probable effects on the function of cytosolic 5'-nucleotidase. Therefore, nsSNP can be used as a predictive biomarker for the relapses that occur after maintenance therapy in ALL children.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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