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Second Primary Malignancies After Commercial CAR T Cell Therapy: Analysis of FDA Adverse Events Reporting System (FAERS)

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Abstract:

Second primary malignancies (SPMs) were reported in 536 out of 12,394 (4.3%) adverse event reports following CAR T cell therapies in the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS). Myeloid and T-cell neoplasms were disproportionately more frequently reported, warranting further follow-up.

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47 **ABSTRACT**

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49 Second primary malignancies (SPMs) were reported in 536 out of 12,394 (4.3%) adverse event
50 reports following CAR T cell therapies in the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS).
51 Myeloid and T-cell neoplasms were disproportionately more frequently reported, warranting
52 further follow-up.

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54 **TO THE EDITOR:**

55 Chimeric antigen receptor T cell therapies (CAR T) have emerged as groundbreaking treatments
56 for different hematologic malignancies ¹. To date, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has
57 approved six CAR T products for relapsed or refractory B cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia,
58 diffuse large B cell lymphoma, mantle cell lymphoma, follicular lymphoma, and multiple
59 myeloma. CAR T-eligible patients are often heavily pretreated with a higher risk of treatment-
60 related adverse events (AEs), including second primary malignancies (SPMs) ^{2,3}. Recently, the
61 FDA received reports of CAR-positive lymphomas in patients treated with CAR T products ⁴.
62 Such concerns highlight the need for better characterization of SPM risk after CAR T cell
63 therapy. Herein, we analyzed the FDA AE Reporting System (FAERS) database to quantify the
64 CAR T reports with SPMs. Detailed methods can be found in the supplementary appendix.

65

66 We identified 12,394 unique CAR T AE reports, of which 2,225 were associated with the System
67 Organ Class "Neoplasms benign, malignant and unspecified". After applying exclusion criteria,
68 536/12,394 (4.3%) SPM reports were included. Axicabtagene ciloleucel (Axi-cel) and

69 tisagenlecleucel (tisa-cel) comprised most of the reports (277/536, 51.7% and 177/536, 33.0%,
70 respectively). Characteristics of the AE reports are detailed in **Table 1**.

71
72 The most frequent SPMs by High-level Group Term (HLGT) were leukemias (333/536, 62.1%)
73 representing 2.7% (333/12,394) of all CAR T reports. Leukemias included myelodysplastic
74 syndromes (MDS) (208/536, 38.8%; 208/12,394, 1.7%), acute myeloid leukemias (106/536,
75 19.8%; 106/12,394, 0.9%), and 2 cases of T-cell large granular lymphocytic leukemia. Skin
76 neoplasms were the second most frequent SPM (54/536, 10.1%; 54/12,394, 0.4%) which
77 included non-melanoma skin neoplasms (42/536, 7.8%, 42/12,394, 0.3%) and skin melanomas
78 (12/536, 2.2%; 12/12,394, 0.1%). Hematopoietic neoplasms excluding leukemias and
79 lymphomas were reported in (26/536, 4.9%; 26/12,394, 0.2%) including lymphoproliferative
80 disorder NEC (n=15), myeloproliferative neoplasms (n=7), and histiocytoses (n=4). Nervous
81 system tumors were reported in (21/536, 3.9%; 21/12,394, 0.2%), while respiratory neoplasms
82 were reported in (20/536, 3.7%; 20/12,394, 0.2%). (**Figure 1; Tables S6-S11**).

83
84 T-cell non-Hodgkin lymphomas were identified in 17/536 (3.2%) reports, representing 0.1%
85 (17/12,394) of all CAR T reports. These included 12 anaplastic large T-cell lymphomas (7 in
86 tisa-cel and 3 in axi-cel, and 2 in ciltacabtagene autoleucel [cilta-cel]), 3 peripheral T-cell
87 lymphoma (1 in tisa-cel, 1 in cilta-cel, and 1 in lisocabtagene maraleucel [liso-cel]), one
88 angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma (axi-cel), and one enteropathy associated T-cell
89 lymphoma (cilta-cel). (**Figure 1a**). Most cases were reported from the United States (n=9). Out
90 of the 17 cases, 8 reported death, 4 reported hypogammaglobulinemia, 3 reported cytokine
91 release syndrome, 2 reported hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis, and 2 reported neurotoxicity.

92 The enteropathy-associated T-cell lymphoma case also had immune-mediated enterocolitis. Two
93 cases reported out-of-specification manufacturing without additional information (**Tables S13**).

94

95 Analysis of SPMs disproportionality in the CAR reports showed a significantly higher reporting
96 odds ratio (ROR) for myelodysplastic syndrome in axi-cel (ROR = 3.5 [95% CI 2.9; 4.2]), tis-cel
97 (ROR = 1.3 [95% CI 1-1.8]), liso-cel (ROR = 4.6 [95% CI 2.4; 8.5]), ide-cel (ROR = 2.8 [95%
98 CI 1.2;6.7]), and cilta-cel (ROR = 6.7 [95% CI 3.3; 13.5]) (**Figure 1c**). Tisa-cel and cilta-cel
99 were associated with higher ROR for acute myeloid leukemia (ROR= 1.5 [95% CI 1.2;2.0]; and
100 4.1 [95% CI 1.3; 12.8], respectively). Anaplastic large T-cell lymphomas were
101 disproportionately more reported in tisa-cel (ROR= 7.4 [95% CI 3.1;17.4]) (**Figure 1c**).

102

103 SPMs have been extensively documented in survivors of hematologic malignancies^{2,3}. However,
104 fewer studies have reported on SPM incidence after CAR T therapies. Six out of the 8 pivotal
105 trials reported the incidence of SPMs. SPMs after Tisa-cel were reported in 3/137
106 (2.2%) in the acute lymphoblastic leukemia trials (ELIANA and ENSIGN)⁵, while no SPMs
107 were reported in the large B cell lymphoma trial (JULIET)⁶. ZUMA-1 and ZUMA-7 trials
108 reported incidence of SPMs after axi-cel of <1% and 4.7%, respectively^{7,8}. No SPMs were
109 reported after brexucabtagene autoleucel (brexu-cel) ZUMA-3 trial⁹. The incidences of SPMs
110 after liso-cel were 8.1% and 3.3% in the TRANSCEND NHL and the TRANSFORM trials,
111 respectively^{10,11}. While CARTITUDE-1 reported SPMs of 25.8% after cilta-cel¹², the KarMMa-
112 1 trial did not report on SPMs after ide-cel¹³. SPM incidence of 3.6% after commercial CD19
113 and BCMA CAR T products was reported by Ghilardi and colleagues¹⁴. Other reports on
114 commercial CAR T cells indicated an SPM incidence between 3.9 and 4.5%^{15,16}. While SPMs

115 represented 4.3% of the total submitted FAERS CAR T AE reports, this percentage only reflects
116 the likelihood of reporting SPMs to the FDA.

117
118 ROR of myeloid neoplasms was elevated in 5/6 of the CAR-T products. Myeloid neoplasms
119 after CAR T were reported in the pivotal trials with SPM data as well as other investigational
120 studies^{7,8,13,17,1}. A recent study reported a shorter onset of myeloid neoplasms after CAR T
121 compared to their development following stem cell transplantation^{1,17}. Additionally, cytogenetic
122 and clonal abnormalities were frequently present in patients before receiving CAR T therapies
123 suggesting a clonal evolution of existing treatment-related clonal hematopoiesis^{17,18}.

124
125 The FDA indicated that 22 cases of T-cell malignancies were reported to be associated with five
126 of the six CAR-T products¹⁹. Genetic sequencing was performed for three cases with the CAR
127 transgene identified in the malignant clones¹⁹. We identified 19 cases of T-cell malignancies (17
128 T-cell non-Hodgkin lymphomas and two T-cell large granular lymphocytic leukemia). Details on
129 two cases associated with cilta-cel and liso-cel were previously published^{20,21}. CAR transgene
130 integration into the 3' UTR of the PBX2 gene was detected in the cilta-cel case. However, the
131 evidence was inconclusive as to whether the CAR integration was a driver of the malignant
132 transformation, given the presence of pre-existing genetic mutations unrelated to CAR T
133 infusion. Ghilardi et. al. identified a case of peripheral T cell lymphoma developed three months
134 after receiving axi-cel¹⁴. The CAR transgene copies in the tumor biopsy were very low. NGS
135 analysis revealed that the population giving rise to the malignant clone predated the CAR T
136 infusion. However, they did not rule out CAR T manufacturing or induced inflammation as
137 contributors to lymphoma development. Finally, additional studies have reported viral

138 integrations into key hematopoiesis regulatory genes, such as TET2 and CBL, resulting in clonal
139 expansion in 2 responding CAR T patients with no malignant transformation reported to date
140 ^{22,23}.

141
142 The FAERS database remains a valuable resource for identifying adverse events (AEs) not
143 captured during clinical studies, however, it has limitations such as duplicate report submissions,
144 missing information, inability to establish causal relationships, and underreporting or
145 overreporting based on AE severity. Additionally, the absence of a denominator reflecting the
146 total number of prescribed products limits the ability to establish AE incidence. Finally, the
147 quarterly release of raw data may delay independent analysis and public information
148 dissemination.

149
150 In conclusion, SPMs after CAR T represented a small fraction of the AE reports in FAERS. The
151 disproportionality analysis suggests an increased risk of reporting certain SPMs, notably myeloid
152 and T-cell malignancies. The low numbers do not provide conclusive evidence of the risk of
153 SPMs after CAR T therapy. Dedicated registries to study SPMs post CAR T can offer valuable
154 insights for patient care and future development. This becomes pertinent as CAR T therapies
155 expand to nonmalignant conditions ²⁴. Finally, the primary cause of mortality in relapses or
156 refractory hematologic malignancies remains the primary disease.

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Authorship contribution

ME and MOE contributed to study conception and design, data analysis and interpretation, figure creation, and draft manuscript preparation. JM contributed to the data compilation and curation. ML, CD, MF, MP, and MM contributed to data interpretation, manuscript drafting and editing. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict-of-Interest Statements

M. Lunning reports research support by BMS and consultancy for AbbVie, AZ, BMS, Caribou, Diachi Sankyo, Fate Therapeutics, Genentech, Genmab, Ipsen, Janssen, Kite, Loxo, Nurix, Recordati, Regeneron, SeaGen, Takeda, ViTToria **C. D’Angelo** reports being on the advisory boards of Seagen, BMS, Abbvie, Ono Pharma. He received research funding from Ono Pharma, BMS, Fate Therapeutics, Curis Inc, Beigene and has provided consultation to Abbvie. **M. Perales** reports honoraria from Adicet, Allogene, Allovir, Caribou Biosciences, Celgene, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Equilium, Exevir, ImmPACT Bio, Incyte, Karyopharm, Kite/Gilead, Merck, Miltenyi Biotec, MorphoSys, Nektar Therapeutics, Novartis, Omeros, OrcaBio, Sanofi,

184 Syncopation, VectivBio AG, and Vor Biopharma. He serves on DSMBs for Cidara Therapeutics,
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187 support for clinical trials from Allogene, Incyte, Kite/Gilead, Miltenyi Biotec, Nektar
188 Therapeutics, and Novartis. **M. J. Frigault** reports consultancy for BMS, Novartis, Kite, Arcellx,
189 Iovance, Cytoagents. **M.V. Maus** is an inventor on patents related to adoptive cell therapies, held
190 by Massachusetts General Hospital (some licensed to Promab) and University of Pennsylvania
191 (some licensed to Novartis). M.V.M. holds equity in 2SeventyBio, Century Therapeutics,
192 Neximmune, Oncternal, and TCR2 and has served as a consultant for multiple companies
193 involved in cell therapies. M.V.M. is on the Board of Directors of 2Seventy Bio. M.V.M. has
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195 All other authors declare no competing interests.
196

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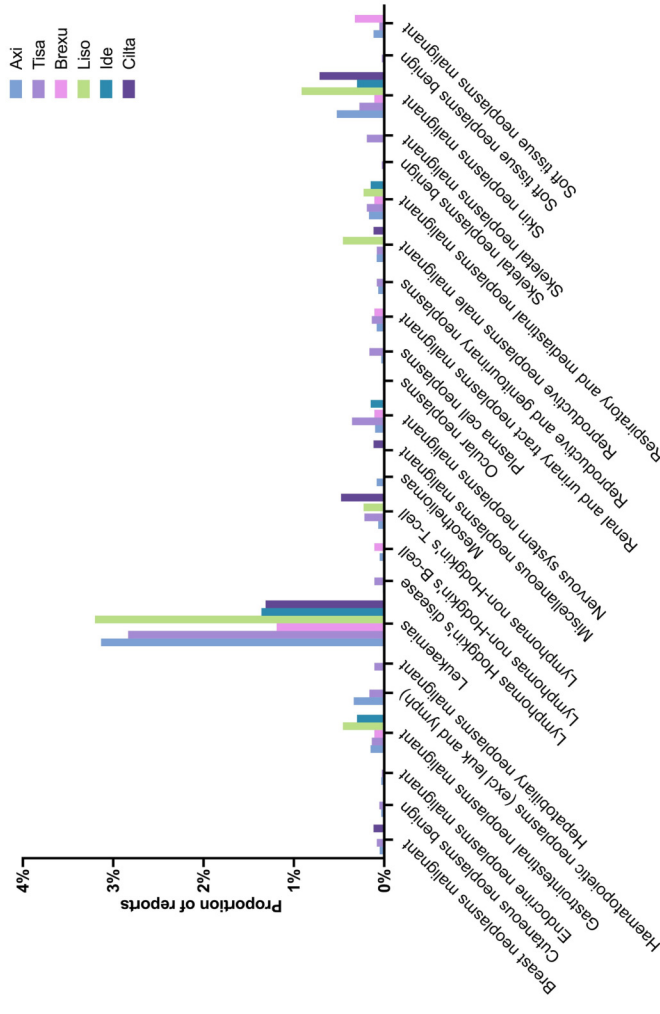
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272 **Figure Legend**

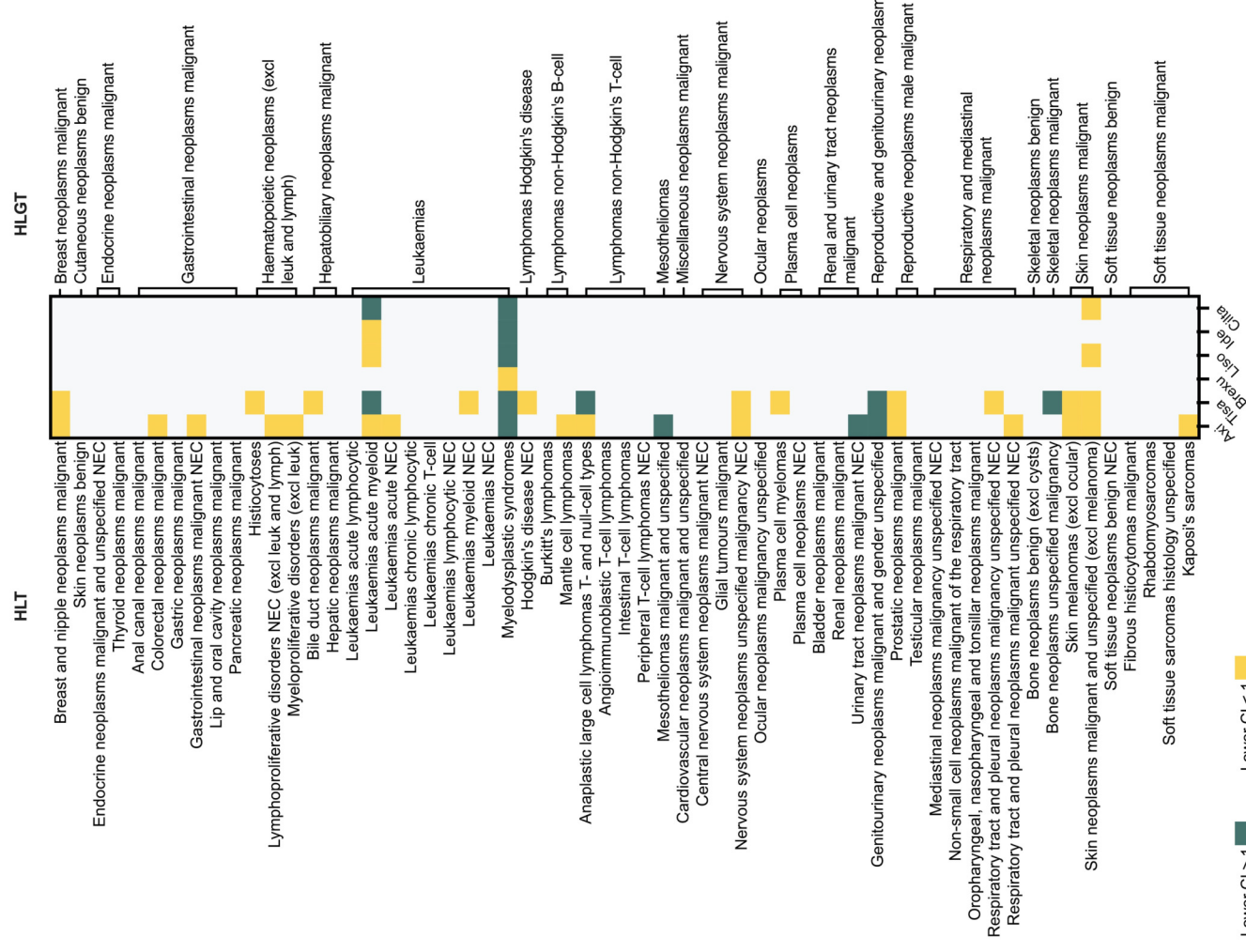
273 **Figure 1.** Frequency and disproportionality of reporting for second primary malignancies (SPMs) in different chimeric antigen
274 receptor T-cell (CAR T) products. 1a. Proportion of reports of each SPM (in higher level group terms) in each product to the total
275 number of AE reports associated with the corresponding CAR T product. 1b. Absolute number of reports for each SPM (in higher
276 level group terms) in CAR T products. 1c. Disproportionality of reporting measured as the relative odds ratio (ROR), compared to the
277 other non-CAR T drugs administered for the respective indication. Grey areas reflect insufficient number of reports (<3 reports) and
278 thus ROR was not calculated. Green areas reflect significant ROR, defined as lower bound of the 95% confidence interval of greater
279 than 1. Yellow areas reflect non-significant signal. Axi-cel: axicabtagene ciloleucel; Tisa-cel: tisagenlecleucel; Brexu-cel:
280 brexucabtagene autoleucel; Liso-cel: lisocabtagene maraleucel; Ide-cel: idecabtagene vicleucel; Cilta-cel: ciltacabtagene autoleucel.

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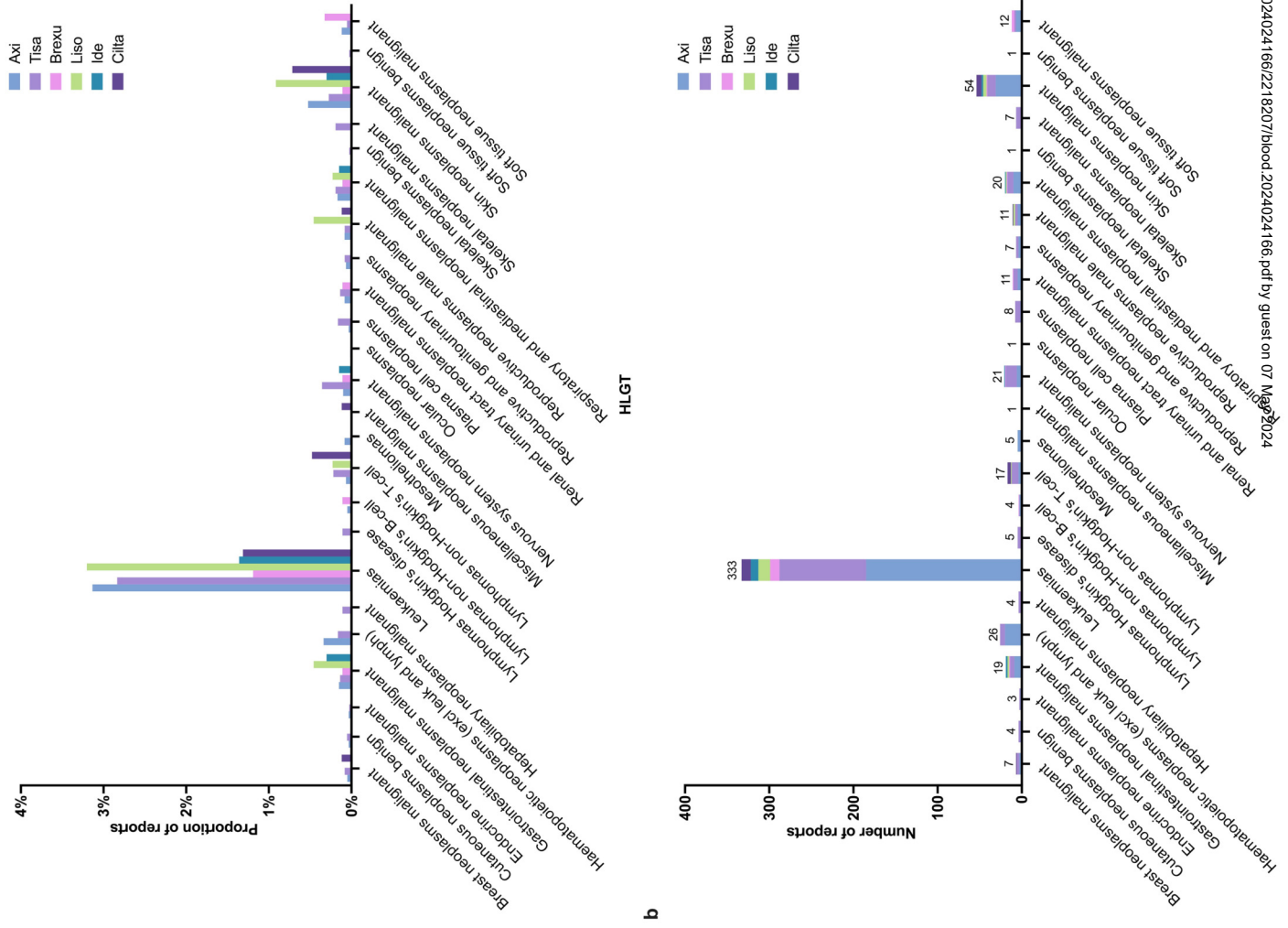
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