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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA RIVERSIDE

Toxicogenomic Assessment of Particulate Matter (PM)-Induced Health Effects

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Environmental Toxicology

by

C. M. Sabbir Ahmed

June 2021

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Ying-Hsuan Lin, Chairperson Dr. David A. Eastmond Dr. Roya Bahreini

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The Dissertation of C. M. Sabbir Ahmed is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Two most beautiful women: my mom (the memory of my mom in heaven) and my wife

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Toxicogenomic Assessment of Particulate Matter (PM)-Induced Health Effects

by

C. M. Sabbir Ahmed

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Environmental Toxicology University of California, Riverside, June 2021 Dr. Ying-Hsuan Lin, Chairperson

Particulate Matter (PM) is a complex mixture of organic and inorganic chemicals, which can trigger systemic health effects including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer, cardiovascular dysfunction, obesity, and diabetes. The exact mechanisms by which disease progression occurs, however, remain unclear. Therefore, proper chemical characterization of PM and their effects on the development of diseases are required to fully understand PM-induced health effects. In this dissertation, we investigated the toxicological responses and disease progression pathways through transcriptomic analysis to probe the potential molecular mechanisms leading to PMinduced health outcomes. First, the toxicological potency of PM emitted from a modern vehicle equipped with a gasoline direct injection (GDI) engine was examined using eight different fuel blends with varying aromatic hydrocarbon and ethanol contents. Second, the potential health impacts of dimethyl selenide (DMSe)-derived secondary organic aerosols (SOA) were investigated by RNA sequencing (RNA-seq). Third, the lncRNA-mRNA coexpression analysis was conducted to investigate the role of lncRNAs in altered gene expression following DMSe-SOA exposure.

 Results from these studies indicate that gasoline exhaust particles from eight different fuel blends imbalance the gene expression related to oxidative stress and inflammation. RNA-seq data reveal major biological pathways perturbed by DMSederived SOA associated with elevated genotoxicity, DNA damage, and p53-mediated stress responses, as well as downregulated glycolysis and interleukin IL-4/IL-13 signaling that regulate diabetogenesis and allergic airway inflammation, respectively. In addition, we found that four *trans*-acting lncRNAs known to be associated with human carcinogenesis, including *PINCR*, *PICART1*, *DLGAP1-AS2*, and *LINC01629*, also differentially expressed in human airway epithelial cells treated with DMSe-derived SOA. Overall, using toxicogenomic approaches, this dissertation contributes to an improved understanding of potential biomarkers in early biological responses to PM exposure derived from traffic and natural sources.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review

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1.1 Air Pollutants in the 21st Century

In the twentieth century, the health effects of air pollution entered the world's consciousness. However, the relationship between poor air quality and human disease has been recognized since antiquity.¹ Air pollutants are defined as any substances in the air, which may harm humans, animals, vegetation or material. Air pollutants can be grouped into four categories: (i) gaseous pollutants (e.g., sulfur dioxide- SO_2 , nitrogen oxide- NO_x , carbon monoxide-CO, ozone-O3, volatile organic compounds-VOCs); (ii) persistent organic pollutants (e.g., dioxins); (iii) heavy metals (e.g., lead, mercury); and (iv) particulate matter (PM).² The lethality of air pollution was initially recognized in December 1952 when 3000 deaths occurred in London, England over a 3-week period due to "dense smog" containing sulfur dioxide and smoke particulates.³ Meanwhile, the photochemical smog episodes in Los Angeles, United States resulting from uncontrolled emissions of NO_x and hydrocarbons in the presence of sunlight during 1940s also raised serious public health concerns. To address the growing air pollution issues and to set limits on emissions of air pollutants, the Clean Air Act (CAA) was established in 1970 in the United States.⁴ The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) have been defined by the 1970 CAA for six primary pollutants (also known as "criteria air pollutants") found in air, including CO, lead, NO_x , $O₃$, $SO₂$, and PM, which have been widely studied over the decades.^{5, 6} For its key role in climate, air quality, and adverse health effects, PM is considered as an important pollutant in the atmosphere.^{7, 8} In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a new guideline for its PM standard. The annual primary standards was set at 12 μg m⁻³ for PM_{2.5} and the daily (24-hour) standard at 35 and 150 μg m⁻³ for $PM_{2.5}$ and PM_{10} , respectively.⁵ In most developing countries, the PM concentrations usually exceed the latest air quality guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is based on annual exposures to PM_{10} ; 20 μ g m^{-3,6} and become major contributors to the global burden of PM-induced health risks.

1.2 PM Sources, Compositions, and Sizes

PM is a complex mixture of small solid particles or liquid droplets suspended in the air made up with numerous organic and inorganic components that varies continuously in size and chemical composition in time and space.^{1, 9, 10} The major chemical constituents of PM include organic compounds (e.g., polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, PAH); biological compounds (e.g., endotoxin, cell fragments), sulfates, nitrates, elemental and organic carbon, and metals (e.g., iron, copper, nickel, zinc, and vanadium). ⁶ The size of PM is generally described by its "aerodynamic equivalent diameter" (AED) , where PM with the same AED tends to have the same settling velocity. Because the size of PM controls it deposition, three subgroups of PM fractions: ≤ 10 , ≤ 2.5 , and ≤ 0.1 µm (PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, and $PM_{0.1}$, respectively) are of particular concerns.¹ In general, a diameter between 2.5 and 10 μm (PM_{2.5–10}) is defined as "inhalable coarse particles," less than 2.5 μm as "fine particles," and less than $0.1 \mu m$ as "ultrafine particles".¹ When compared, PM_{2.5} has lifetimes up to day to weeks and PM_{10} has minutes to hour. Additionally, traveling distance of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ are 100-1000 km and 1-10 km, respectively.⁶

Sources of PM can be both natural and anthropogenic. Natural sources include forest fires, volcanoes, dust storms, and aerosolized sea salt. Manmade sources of PM include traffic emissions, combustion in mechanical and industrial processes, and tobacco smoke.^{1, 2} Furthermore, among all of the major emission sources, traffic-related PM could contribute to ca. 25% of the ambient $PM_{2.5}$ globally, and up to 37% in regions with highly populated urban centers.⁹ For example, it has been estimated that 12.4 tons/day of $PM_{2.5}$ are directly emitted from vehicles in the LA Basin.¹¹ In addition, secondary organic aerosols (SOA) can be generated from both anthropogenic and natural sources.¹² In the presence of atmospheric oxidants (e.g., O3, OH, NO3 radical), SOA can be generated through the transformation of volatile organic compound (VOC) precursors.¹³ Globally there is a large contribution of these SOA to atmospheric $PM₁^{8, 14}$ For example, isoprene (C_5H_8) and α -pinene $(C_{10}H_{16})$ are dominantly emitted into the atmosphere by many species of trees, undergoing complex chemical reactions and leading to the formation of biogenic SOA.8, 15 In addition, from microbial methylation and plant metabolism, selenium (Se) can be volatilized and released into the atmosphere in methylated forms, such as dimethyl selenide (DMSe) or dimethyl diselenide (DMDSe).^{16, 17} Compared to a structural analog of DMSe, dimethyl sulfide (DMS) has been reported as a major precursor leading to secondary aerosol formation in marine atmospheric environments.¹⁸ Atmospheric lifetimes of DMSe against oxidation by O_3 , OH, and NO₃ have been reported, ranging from minutes to hours at typical respective oxidant concentrations.¹⁹ Therefore, SOA from atmospheric oxidation of DMSe could potentially contribute to atmospheric PM as a natural source.

1.3 Routes and Target Organ of PM Exposure

Atmospheric PM enters the human body primarily via inhalation and ingestion, while the dermal contact represents a minor route of exposure.²⁰ The sizes of PM are directly linked to adverse health effects through inhalation. In general, particles with AED of greater than 10 μ m can be largely filtered out by the nose and upper airways.^{1, 9} PM_{2.5} and PM0.1 can deposit deeply into the lungs, and they cannot be easily cleared by the respiratory system.²¹ These small particles may even directly penetrate the bloodstream to enter the circulation system and reach various target organs (e.g., lung, heart, liver and brain), which can trigger systemic health effects.²²

1.4 Health Effects of PM from Traffic and Natural Emissions

It has been reported by the WHO that 4.2 million premature deaths occurred due to exposure to ambient $PM_{2.5}$ in 2016.²³ The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified the diesel exhaust as carcinogenic (Group 1) and gasoline exhaust as possibly carcinogenic (Group 2B) to humans in consideration of diesel exhaust's strong positive association with an increased risk for lung cancer.^{24, 25} As a case study, a systematic review was conducted on traffic-related PM and cardiometabolic syndrome.⁹ We searched peer-reviewed journal articles that had been published between 1 January 1980 and 20 June 2018. Reviews of published literature were conducted using four of the most commonly accessed databases for scientific journals, including Google Scholar, Web of Science, PubMed, and JSTOR.⁹ In each database, we used a stepwise strategy to search the most relevant studies by entering the keywords in the following order: "Traffic-related air pollution", "Particulate matter", "Human health", and "Metabolic syndrome".

After applying the eligibility criteria, the key findings of our search results were summarized based on the study design, the characteristics of subject groups, the exposure metrics, and health outcomes. This resulted in 25 independent research studies for the final review. Key findings from both epidemiological and toxicological revealed consistent correlations between traffic-related PM exposure and the measured cardiometabolic health endpoints.⁹ The active components in fresh traffic-related PM could be attributed to metals, black carbon, elemental carbon, PAHs, and diesel exhaust particles. Existing evidence indicates that the development of cardiometabolic symptoms can occur through chronic systemic inflammation and increased oxidative stress (Figure 1.1). The elderly (especially for women), children, genetically susceptible individuals, and people with pre-existing conditions are identified as vulnerable groups.⁹ Correlations between systolic blood pressure and exposure to traffic-related PM2.5 have also been reported previously by Brook et al.²⁶ and Langrish et al.²⁷ Notably, it has been reported that even at low levels, trafficrelated PM2.5 may dysregulate metabolic insulin sensitivity, and eventually contribute to the development of diabetes.²⁸ However, the roles of traffic-related PM and exact molecular mechanisms modulating toxicological responses and/or disease progression are not fully understood. Thus, more studies are required to explore the roles of genetic and epigenetic factors in influencing health outcomes by integrating multi-omics approaches (e.g., genomics, epigenomics, and transcriptomics) to provide a comprehensive assessment of biological perturbations caused by traffic-related PM.⁹

Figure 1.1: A conceptual diagram of traffic-related particulate matter (PM)-induced cardiometabolic syndrome, connecting sources, exposure, biological perturbations, and outcomes⁹

Despite their abundance in the atmosphere, the health effects of PM and SOA emitted by natural sources have been less studied, but they may also pose potential health risks. PM and SOA from natural sources vary largely in chemical compositions and toxicity depending on their precursors and surrounding environments that influence the atmospheric transformation processes and result in different characteristics of SOA products.^{2, 7, 14} For example, recent studies have found that the isoprene-derived SOA con contribute to reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation and alter oxidative stress-related gene expression through the nuclear factor E2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) pathway.^{8, 29} Such evidence indicates that some SOA constituents, such organic hydroperoxides, may be redox active and can act as exogeneous ROS.

1.5 PM-induced Toxicity Assessment Techniques

The toxicity of PM can be evaluated on a variety of levels, ranging from molecular and cellular to whole-organism effects of exposure. Particulate matter (PM)-induced adverse health effects may be based on a common theme, which has been hypothesized that PM generates $ROS^{30, 31}$ The ability of PM to generate ROS is called oxidative potential (OP).³² To date, measurement of OP provides the initial ideas about PM's potential to generate ROS and adverse health effects in biological systems.^{33, 34} The most common and popular OP measurement of PM is conducted with an acellular dithiothreitol (DTT, $HSCH₂(CH(OH))₂CH₂SH)$ assay, where DTT shares some similarities with glutathione.^{32,} ³⁴⁻³⁷ Cell-free DTT assay provides faster output than cell-based assay and incorporates lesscontrolled environments. Therefore, DTT assay is widely used for measuring OP of PM.^{34,} ³⁸ In living organisms, ROS is generally produced in mitochondria and endoplasmic reticulum (ER). Where cellular reductants like NADP/NADPH provide electrons enabling the reduction of molecular oxygen (O₂) to superoxide anion (O^{-2}).^{34, 39} The rate of DTT consumption is proportional to the amount of redox-active species in PM. Other acellular assays available for OP measurements are the dichlorofluorescein (DCFH) and ascorbic acid (AA)-based tests. The DCFH assay determines OP from the rapid oxidation of DCFH to the fluorescent DCF species in the presence of horseradish peroxidase $(HRP)^{40,41}$ In contrast, the AA assay evaluates OP by measuring the consumption of O_2 using an oxygenspecific electrode.^{40, 42}

In many scientific disciplines, cell-based (or *in vitro*) assays provide a common strategy to support toxicity testing. Typically, *in vitro* models traditionally used over past decades were a monolayer of cells grown in media and provided a means of examining morphological and biochemical signaling processes while avoiding many of the limitations of animal models.43, 44. However, compared to *in vivo* conditions, *in vitro* models cannot accurately depict and simulate the rich environment and complex processes due to their simplicity.⁴⁵

Several diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer have been found to associated with PMinduced health effects. Instead, a combination of genetic and environmental factors usually interacts to influence an individual's risk of disease.^{9, 46, 47} The "-omics" approaches (e.g., genomics, epigenomics and transcriptomics) can provide a comprehensive assessment of biological perturbations caused by PM exposure, and facilitate an understanding of adverse outcome pathways.⁹ Using microarrays and emerging methods such as next generation sequencing (e.g., DNA-seq, RNA-seq) enable investigators to profile genomics, epigenomics and transcriptomics changes across the entire genome.⁴⁶ Epigenetics can regulate gene expression without alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetic modifications provide plausible connections between the environmental stressors and alterations in gene expression that might lead to diseases.⁴⁸ Examples include DNA methylation, histone modifications, chromatin remodeling, non-coding RNAs (ncRNA) including microRNA (miRNA), and long non-coding RNA (lncRNAs) expression. In transcriptome studies, messenger RNA (mRNA) has been the primary target and RNA-seq technology has revealed that the human genome is pervasively transcribed, resulting in thousands of novel non-coding RNA genes. As a result, attention is expanding to the most common, yet the most poorly understood RNA species: lncRNAs.⁴⁹

The lncRNAs are defined as transcribed RNA molecules greater than 200 nucleotides in length with little or no protein coding capability. As opposed to microRNAs (miRNAs) which are involved in transcriptional and post-transcriptional gene silencing via specific base pairing with their targets, lncRNAs regulate gene expression by diverse mechanisms.47, 50 In addition, lncRNAs have been used as effective biomarkers and are believed to be critical in the manifestation of diverse diseases.⁴⁷

Therefore, ncRNAs or their inhibitors may be potential targets during the treatment of PM-induced diseases. Currently, the effects of epigenetic changes on altered gene expression regulated by lncRNAs are still poorly understood. Additionally, no exact molecular mechanism has been revealed to bridge the gap between the traffic and natural sources of PM exposure and physiological alteration and/or disease progression. Thus, toxicogenomic approaches may be valuable in understanding the potential molecular mechanisms contributing to the increased risk of PM-related health outcomes.

1.6 Overview of Research Aims and Objectives

As discussed above, toxicogenomic approaches can be a valuable tool to study PMinduced health effects exposed to both anthropogenic and natural emissions. The transcriptomic profiling can provide a broad overview of disease mechanisms and progressions at early stages by analyzing differential gene expression. Thus, the overall objective of this research is to conduct a toxicogenomic assessment of PM from traffic and natural sources, as well as their health consequences.

The study described in Chapter II aims to link gasoline fuel compositions and PM emissions to the observed toxicological responses in human airway epithelial cells (BEAS-2B), as well as the measured aerosol oxidative potential of gasoline exhaust from 8 different fuel blends. The study described in Chapter III evaluates the potency of PM formation from DMSe through oxidation by O_3 and OH. Also, transcriptome-wide gene expression changes by RNA-seq in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA are assessed in this chapter. To date, the potential to produce inhalable DMSe-derived secondary organic aerosols (SOA) has not been investigated. We hypothesized that atmospheric oxidation of DMSe could be an important source for secondary aerosol production. The Se-containing aerosols may pose increased health risks upon inhalation due to their redox-active chemical properties. In Chapter IV, we studied the role of lncRNA in gene regulation in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA. Integrative analysis of lncRNA-mRNA co-expression showed that lncRNAs could potentially regulate gene expression via both *cis* and *trans* mechanisms. Finally, in Chapter V, the conclusions and implications of this dissertation are summarized to highlight the overall findings of this dissertation.

Chapter II: Toxicological responses in human airway epithelial cells (BEAS-2B) exposed to particulate matter emissions from gasoline fuels with varying aromatic and ethanol levels

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2.1 Introduction

Ambient particulate matter (PM) has been recognized as an important cause of adverse health effects leading to increased pulmonary, cardiovascular and cancer mortalities.^{51, 52} According to the recent report published by the World Health Organization (WHO), exposure to outdoor air pollution has been linked to about 4.2 million deaths worldwide in 2016.⁵³ These health outcomes are greatly influenced by traffic-related air pollution resulting from rapid urbanization and increased traffic loads within the past few decades. The traffic sector is a significant contributor of pollutant emissions in the atmosphere, including carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and PM.^{52, 54, 55} The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified the diesel exhaust as carcinogenic (Group 1) and gasoline exhaust as possibly carcinogenic (Group 2B) to humans in consideration of its strong positive association with an increased risk for lung cancer.25, 56, 57

Modern gasoline engines, such as gasoline direct injection (GDI), have been introduced to the U.S. market to meet growing environmental demands, such as those of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction and improved engine efficiency.⁵⁸

However, due to the direct fuel injection in the combustion chamber, GDI engines generate a substantial amount of PM emissions.^{59, 60} Previous works have shown that GDI vehicles produce higher PM mass and black carbon emissions than the traditional port-fuel injection vehicles or diesel vehicles equipped with diesel particulate filters $(DPFs)$.⁶¹⁻⁶³ Several studies have shown that fuel type, including chemical composition, volatility, and oxygen content will affect the physical and chemical properties of PM emissions from GDI engines.⁶³⁻⁶⁵ There is a widespread concern that gasoline aromatic levels significantly contribute to the formation of both primary PM emissions and secondary organic aerosols (SOA).66-68 The development of the PM Index (PMI) provides a modeling tool for the prediction of primary PM emissions from gasoline engines by linking gasoline PM with gasoline composition and properties, such as the vapor pressure and double bond equivalent (DBE) of each hydrocarbon component in the fuel.^{69, 70} Studies have shown that gasoline aromatics (aromatics have higher DBE values than paraffins or other hydrocarbons) have significant effects on exhaust PM emissions and demonstrate a tendency for greater PM emissions with high PMI gasoline fuels.^{63, 71-73} For example, Fushimi et al. 74 reported higher PM mass emissions for the fuels containing more aromatics with high boiling points and DBE values from GDI and port fuel injection (PFI) vehicles. On the other hand, a number of studies have shown the beneficial impacts of ethanol in reducing tailpipe emissions from GDI engines. $65, 75, 76$

Many epidemiological and toxicological studies have indicated that human lungs are vulnerable to PM exposure.^{2, 51, 77} A number of studies are currently investigating the toxicological characteristics of PM emissions from GDI engines, with fewer studies emphasizing the fuel effect on PM toxicity from GDI engines.⁷⁸⁻⁸¹ Maikawa et al. 82 reported the metabolism of PAHs and upregulated expression of oxidative stress-related genes (i.e., increased levels of gene expression products) in cultured lung slices from mouse tissues in response to GDI engine exhaust exposure. Similarly, Libalova et al. ⁸³ showed that exposure to PM emissions from the combustion of butanol-gasoline blends resulted in alteration of stress signaling in BEAS-2B cells, including oxidative stress, metabolism of PAHs and pro-inflammatory responses. However, Bisig et al. ⁸⁴ found no significant cellular responses after the exposure to PM emissions from the combustion of gasoline or gasoline-ethanol blends in multi-cellular human lung cells. Exposure to PAHs in polluted air is known to generate reactive intermediates and lead to the formation of DNA adducts through bioactivation.^{85, 86} The metabolism of PAHs has been linked to the oxidative DNA damage, activation of the aryl hydrocarbon receptor and reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation.⁸⁷⁻⁸⁹ Excessive production of ROS is a known cause leading to oxidative stress (an imbalance between ROS and antioxidants) that will eventually damage to biomolecules (e.g., DNA, lipid, and protein) and result in a wide variety of diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases and cancer.⁹⁰ PAH derivatives, such as nitrated and oxygenated PAHs generated from the operation of GDI engines, may also contribute to multiple toxic events induced by gasoline exhaust particles.⁹¹

 This study aims to link gasoline composition and PM emissions to the observed toxicological responses in human lung cells. This is a companion study to a major research program designed to investigate fuel compositional effects on the tailpipe emissions and secondary aerosols from GDI vehicles.^{68, 92}

Testing was performed on a current technology GDI vehicle when operated on eight different fuel blends over the LA92 driving cycle using a chassis dynamometer. The extracted PM components were analyzed using the DTT assay and applied to human airway epithelial cells (BEAS-2B) to assess the oxidative potential and exposure-induced toxicological responses. Multivariate principal component analysis (PCA) and multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis were conducted to understand the associations among fuel formulations, aerosol oxidative potential, and PM-induced biological alterations.

2.2 Materials and Methods

2.2.1. Testing Protocol and Emissions Analysis

Emissions testing was performed at the University of California, Riverside Center for Environmental Research and Technology (CE-CERT). Details on the testing protocols and emissions analysis techniques are described elsewhere.^{68, 92} Briefly, the test vehicle was exercised over duplicate LA92 cycles using a Burke E. Porter 48-inch single-roll electric dynamometer. All gaseous and particulate emissions were determined according to the U.S. EPA protocols for light-duty emission testing as given in the CFR, Title 40, Part 86.

The test vehicle was a Tier 3 or California LEV III compliant passenger car equipped with wall-guided direct fuel injection system and a three-way catalyst (TWC). The vehicle was operated on eight different gasoline fuels that were created to meet nominal total aromatics targets of 20 vol% and 30 vol% and ethanol levels ranged from 0 vol% to 20 vol%. More details on fuel blending and major physicochemical properties are provided in.⁶⁸

The main physicochemical properties of the test fuels are listed in Table S2.1, Supplementary Information (SI). PM samples were collected onto 47 mm Teflon membrane filters and stored at -20°C until analysis. Filters were extracted with 23 mL of methanol followed by 50 min of sonication. After sonication, the extracted solution was then transferred to another vial and used for the analyses of PM chemical composition and subsequent cell exposures.

2.2.2. DTT Assay

Dithiothreitol (DTT), 5-5'-dithiobis (2-nitrobenzoic acid) (DTNB), 1,4 naphthoquinone (1,4-NQ) and dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO, USA). The potassium phosphate monobasic/sodium hydroxide buffer solution (KH2PO4, pH 7.4) was purchased from Fisher Scientific. The DTT assay procedures were adapted from published protocols ⁹³ using clear flat bottom 96-well microplates. For each experiment, 0.5 mM DTT was made fresh in the phosphate buffer solution. A 1 mg/mL of 1,4-NQ was prepared in DMSO, and further diluted with buffer solutions to make a 0.01 mg mL⁻¹ working solution to serve as positive controls. Two sets of reactions were performed to examine the effects of solubility on measured DTT activities. For the first set of reactions, the reaction mixture consisted of 100 μL aqueous phosphate buffer, 20 μL of fuel extracts (containing 0.5-1 μg of PM mass), and 5 μL of 0.5 mM DTT. Then, the microplate was sealed and incubated at 37°C for 30 min. After incubation, 10 μL DTNB (1mM) was added to titrate the remaining reduced DTT and form a 2-nitro-5-thiobenzoic acid (TNB). The final reaction volume for each well was 135 μL.

The second set of reactions was carried out in the same manner, except 50 μL of aqueous phosphate buffer was replaced with 50 μL of methanol to increase the solubility of organic matter in the assay. Each PM sample was prepared in triplicate. Absorbance of the resultant TNB was measured at 405 nm using a TECAN SpectraFluor Plus microplate reader with 620 nm as the reference wavelength. The absorbance was further corrected by subtracting the light absorption of PM sample itself. The final DTT activity (nmol/min/ μ g) was calculated using the consumption of DTT normalized by the incubation time and PM mass (Table S2.2, SI).

2.2.3. Cell Culture

BEAS-2B cells were obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC). Cells were cultured in Gibco® LHC-9 medium (1X) (Invitrogen), which is serum-free LHC basal medium supplemented with retinoic acid, epinephrine and gentamicin. The cells were grown at 37 \degree C and 5% CO₂ in a humidified incubator.

2.2.4. Cell Exposure

In 24-well plates, cells were seeded at a density of 2.5×10^4 cells per well in 250 μL of LHC-9 medium for 2 days prior to exposure. Upon the time of exposure, cells reached around 60−70% confluence. PM extracts were dried off under a gentle nitrogen stream and reconstituted with the LHC-9 medium. Cells were washed with the phosphate buffered saline (PBS) buffer and then exposed to 50 μg/mL of PM extracts in the LHC-9 medium for 24 hr. Experiments were conducted in triplicate per treatment group.

2.2.5. Cytotoxicity Assay

To assess the viability of cells, the lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) cytotoxicity assay was performed following the manufacturer's protocol (Roche). Supernatants were collected 24 h after exposure. Triton X-100 (0.1%) was used as a positive control to simulate 100% cell death. The absorbance was measured using a TECAN SpectraFluor Plus microplate reader at 490 nm, with a reference wavelength at 620 nm.

2.2.6. RNA Isolation and Purification

At the end of exposure, cells were lysed with 350 μL of TRI Reagent (Zymo Research) for the total RNA isolation. Isolated RNA samples were further purified using the spin column-based Direct-zol RNA MiniPrep kit (Zymo Research). RNA quality and concentrations were determined using a NanodropND-1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific). The 260 /280 nm absorbance ratios of all samples were determined to be >1.8. Extracted RNA samples were stored at -80°C until processing.

2.2.7. Gene Expression Analysis

Gene expression of selected biomarkers, including heme oxygenase 1 (*HMOX-1*), interleukin-6 (*IL-6*), tumor necrosis factor-alpha (*TNF-* α), chemokine ligand 5 (*CCL5*) and nitric oxide synthase 2 (*NOS2*), was measured using the one-step QuantiFast SYBR Green® RT-PCR kit (Qiagen). The QuantiTect Primer Assays (Qiagen) of *HMOX-1*, *IL-6*, *TNF-α*, *CCL5*, and *NOS2* were used in this study. Results were normalized to a housekeeping gene beta-actin (*ACTB*) and expressed as fold changes over the unexposed controls.

Thermal cycling conditions for RT-PCR were set as follows: 10 min at 50 °C for reverse transcription, 5 min at 95 °C for initial denaturation and 40 cycles of amplification (10 s at 95 °C and 30 s at 60 °C).

2.2.8. Statistical Analysis

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Tukey's multiple comparison test was performed to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in measured DTT activities between the fuels (GraphPad Prism 4). The Pearson correlation and PCA were conducted for calculating correlation coefficients and the dimension reduction of measured fuel properties, respectively, using the SPSS (v24, IBM) software. After PCA analysis, the K-Means clustering algorithm was performed on the reduced dataset using the Python platform (Python 3.5.5). The cluster number was 3, number of initial seed $= 10$, maximum number of iterations of the algorithm $= 300$ and tolerance $=$ 1×10^{-4} . The centroids of the clusters were measured using the formula: (xc, yc) = $((x1+x2+....+xk)/k, (y1+y2+....+yk)/k)$, where k is the number of points in a cluster. Associations among principle components (PCs), DTT activity and biological responses (i.e., fold changes of gene expression) were further analyzed by MLR within the SPSS (v24, IBM).

2.3. Results and Discussion

2.3.1. Oxidative Potential of PM

The results of the DTT assays conducted in both aqueous buffer solutions and mixed methanol-buffer solutions to assess the oxidative potential of PM emissions from different fuels are shown in Figure 2.1.

Overall, significant differences of DTT activities were found between the fuels in either aqueous buffer solutions or mixed methanol-buffer solutions, as shown in Table S2.3 and Table S2.4 in SI. Fuel 2 (0% ethanol and 30% aromatics) showed the highest oxidative potential of PM emissions compared to Fuel 4 and Fuel 7 (0.039 nmol/min/μg in the mixed methanol-buffer solution and 0.030 nmol/min/μg in the aqueous buffer) (Figure 2.1). Fuel 2, Fuel 3, and Fuel 7 showed statistically significant increases in oxidative potential (0.016- 0.03 nmol/min/μg) for PM mass compared to Fuel 1 (0.0077 nmol/min/μg) (Table S2.3 and Table S2.4, SI). The higher oxidative potential for these fuels can be attributed to the higher levels of total aromatics for Fuel 2 and Fuel 7 compared to Fuel 1.

Figure 2.1. DTT activity (nmol/min/μg) of PM samples emitted from eight fuel blends, blank filter for the negative control, and 1,4-NQ as the positive control. Red represents the DDT activity assessed in the 100% aqueous buffer solutions (DTTa) and blue represents the DDT activity assessed in 50%/50% (v/v) methanol/buffer solutions (DTTm).

The higher oxidative potential for Fuel 3 compared to Fuel 1 could likely be due to the higher concentration of heavier C10+ aromatics for this fuel, as indicated by its relatively higher PMI compared to Fuel 1.

To examine the effects of gasoline aromatics on PM emissions and the resulting toxicity, the test fuels have been categorized into high PMI fuels (Fuel 2, Fuel 4, and Fuel 7) and low PMI fuels (Fuel 1, Fuel 3, Fuel 5, Fuel 6, and Fuel 8). Strong positive correlations were found between high PMI fuels and elevated oxidative potential of PM mass emissions (both DTTa and DTTm as shown in Figure 2.2 (a-b). For the high PMI fuels, Fuel 2, which had higher concentrations of C9/C10+ aromatics and higher PMI value compared to Fuel 4 and Fuel 7, showed the highest DTT activity. This finding indicates that the presence of heavier aromatics with higher DBEs in the fuel resulted in poor fuel evaporation during the combustion process and in the formation of PAHs responsible for PM emissions. PM-bound PAH species, including oxygenated PAHs such as quinones since unsubstituted PAHs are not redox active, are known to strongly correlate with DTT $94, 95$. Although PAH emission measurements were not made possible for this study, it is safe to theorize that high PMI fuels produced higher PM-bound PAH emissions, especially quinones (i.e., 1,4-naphthoquinone). Despite the fact that Yang et al. 68 showed an inverse correlation of PM mass emissions and PMI for the high PMI fuels due to ethanol's higher heat of vaporization (higher PMI fuels with higher ethanol produced more PM), this study showed reduced oxidative potential of PM for the high PMI fuels as ethanol increased.

Although the PM mass was higher for these fuels (i.e., Fuel 4 and Fuel 7), the oxygenated fraction in the fuel resulted in the generation of PM constituents that did not participate in the DTT oxidation (i.e., less oxygenated PAHs). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the presence of ethanol had a more prominent role in the oxidative potential of PM emissions, at least for the high PMI fuels. For the low PMI fuels, the splash blend Fuel 8 (20% ethanol and 19% aromatics) showed the least oxidative potential, which can be ascribed to the dilution of aromatics in the fuel, leading to lower aromatic levels and to lower rates of aromatic soot precursor formation.

Figure 2.2: Correlations between DTT activities, biomarker responses and PMI. Analyses were carried out based on aromatic levels in fuels. High aromatic fuels include: F2 (PMI: 2.22, Total aromatic: 30%), F4 (PMI: 2.15, Total aromatic: 30%), and F7 (PMI: 2.09, Total aromatic: 30%). Low aromatic fuels include: F1 (PMI: 1.75, Total aromatic: 20%), F3 (PMI:1.89, Total aromatic: 20%), F5 (PMI: 1.72, Total aromatic 20.30%), F6 (PMI: 1.76, Total aromatic: 20%), and F8 (PMI: 1.61, Total aromatic: 19%). Strong correlations were found between higher aromatic levels versus DTTa (A), DTTm (b), *IL-6* (D), and *NOS2* (G). Black color represents higher aromatic levels, and red color represents lower aromatic levels.
Additionally, the presence of oxygen in the fuel will promote the oxidation of soot precursors such as PAHs ⁹⁶, which are known to be especially active in eliciting oxidative stress responses in PM emissions.^{97, 98} As discussed earlier, the relatively higher DTT activity for Fuel 3 was due to the increased levels of heavier aromatics compared to the other low PMI fuels.

Table 2.1: Pearson correlation table among fuel compositions, DTT activities, and toxicological responses.

	Total aromatics	$C10+$	DTTa	DTT _m	PMI		Ethanol <i>HMOX-1</i>	IL-6		TNF-a CCL5 NOS2	
Total aromatics	1										
$C10+$	0.99										
DTTa	-0.02	0.06									
DTTm	0.40	0.50	0.39	1							
PMI	0.95	0.98	0.08	0.63	1						
Ethanol	-0.35	-0.39	-0.07	-0.25	-0.50	1					
<i>HMOX-1</i>	0.41	0.40	-0.56	0.04	0.45	-0.62	1				
IL-6	0.28	0.21	-0.01	-0.10	0.05	0.71	-0.25				
$TNF-\alpha$	0.36	0.27	-0.41	-0.27	0.24	-0.08	0.56	0.34	1		
CCL5	0.64	0.65	0.05	0.18	0.70	-0.73	0.52	-0.41	0.17	1	
NOS2	0.46	0.50	0.35	0.21	0.55	-0.68	0.28	-0.47	-0.10	0.93	1

The oxidative potential for PM mass emissions of the test fuels measured in the aqueous solutions ranged from 0.007-0.030 nmol/min/μg and were found to be at similar levels compared to those values reported by Cheung et al. 99 (0.012 nmol/min/µg) and Geller et al. 100 (0.025 nmol/min/µg). However, the DTT consumption of PM emissions from a previous study conducted with GDI vehicles showed an average of 0.056 nmol/min/μg, which was higher than our reported DTT activities in both aqueous and methanol solutions (0.007-0.039 nmol/min/ μ g).⁸¹

Also, the difference between DTTm and DTTa values demonstrates the significance of solubility of PM constituents in measured aerosol oxidative potential, which may have implications for their bioavailability, which depends on several factors including solubility in lung fluids, permeability across cell membrane, and dissolution rate of exposed PM constituents ^{101, 102}.

Figure 2.3. Cytotoxicity evaluated by the LDH assay. BEAS-2B cells were exposed to PM emissions from eight different fuel blends at the concentration of 50 μ g mL⁻¹ for 24 h. Results were expressed as percentage of LDH release relative to negative controls of unexposed cells maintained in the cell medium and positive controls treated with Triton X- $100 (0.1\% \text{ v/v}).$

A more in-depth correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the relationship between DTT (both DTTa and DTTm) and fuel composition, as shown in Table 2.1. DTTm showed moderate correlations with C10+ aromatics ($R = 0.50$) and total aromatics ($R =$ 0.40), and a moderate to strong correlation with PMI ($R = 0.63$) (Table 2.1). Due to the

higher solubility of non-polar PM constituents in methanol, our results suggest that higher aromatics could contribute to higher DTTm. Similarly, Bates et al. ¹⁰³ reported a positive correlation ($R = 0.34$) between DTTm versus PM_{2.5} emissions from light-duty gasoline vehicles.

2.3.2. Cytotoxicity Assay

Cytotoxicity was assessed using the LDH assay after 24 h exposure to PM emissions from all test fuels. About $\leq 30\%$ cytotoxicity indicated that cells were stressed after exposure, and the exposure conditions were not overly toxic that could allow further evaluation of gene expression changes ¹⁰⁴. Overall, as shown in Figure 2.3, there was no significant cytotoxicity $(\leq 30\%)$ observed in cells exposed to PM emissions at the level of 50 μg/mL. Thus, the concentration of 50 μg/mL was used as the non-lethal dose for the following gene expression analysis in this study, which is comparable to the level of emissions applied in other studies ^{83, 105}. Notably, Fuel 2 PM emissions induced relatively higher cytotoxicity than the other fuel blends, along with its higher DTTa and DTTm (Figure 2.1), which might be related to its higher aromatic content and the absence of ethanol.

2.3.3. Gene Expression Analysis

The relative levels of gene expression for the exposure and control groups, expressed as fold changes, were calculated using the comparative cycle threshold $(2^{-\Delta \Delta CT})$ method.¹⁰⁶ Fold changes (Log₂) of *HMOX-1*, *TNF-* α *, IL-6, CCL5*, and *NOS2* gene expression are shown in Figure 2.4 and Table S2.2, SI. With the exposure to PM emission extracts from different fuels at the concentration of 50 μg/mL for 24 hrs, expression of oxidative stress-related gene *HMOX-1* was upregulated, whereas expression of inflammation-related genes, including *TNF-α, IL-6, CCL5* and *NOS2*, were downregulated in BEAS-2B cells.

Figure 2.4. Heatmap of differential gene expression in BEAS-2B cells exposed to PM emissions from eight different fuel blends. Results are expressed as fold change (log₂) over unexposed controls and normalized to a housekeeping gene *ACTB*. In the diagram above, the red color represents upregulation and the blue color represents downregulation.

Overall, under non-lethal conditions (cytotoxicity $\leq 30\%$, Figure 2.3), we found that the expression of *HMOX-1* gene, which is widely used as a biomarker for oxidative stress, was significantly upregulated after exposure to all fuel PM samples (Figure 2.4). The results reported here agree with recent studies of gasoline exhaust exposure reporting significantly upregulated *HMOX-1* 83, 84, 105. The Pearson correlation analysis indicated that *HMOX-1* has a strong negative correlation with ethanol content ($R = -0.62$) and moderate positive correlations with total aromatics $(R = 0.41)$ and $C10+$ aromatics $(R = 0.40)$ (Table

2.1). When we grouped the fuels into high and low levels of aromatics to correlate PMI with the *HMOX-1* expression again, we did not find significant subgroup effects on *HMOX-1* expression (Figure 2.2 c). Correlations from total aromatics, PMI, and ethanol level suggest that higher ethanol fueling may potentially reduce the *HMOX-1* expression, while total aromatics and C10+ aromatics may potentially contribute to upregulation of *HMOX-1.*

Conversely, cytokines such as *TNF-α* and *IL-6* were downregulated after exposure to PM emissions from different fuels. High PMI fuels with higher ethanol levels showed an inverse strong correlation with *IL-6* (Figure 2.2 d). For the low PMI fuels, the high ethanol blend Fuel 8 having the lowest PMI value showed an increase in the cytokine IL-6. These findings reveal that PMI and the presence of heavy aromatics in the fuel may not significantly affect cytokine IL-6 production, whereas an increase in ethanol concentration in the fuel may result in more reactive PM components that can trigger the downregulation of cytokine *IL-6* production. No strong correlations were seen for *TNF-α* as a function of fuel composition; however, a strong positive correlation was identified showing decreased downregulation of *IL-6* for the higher ethanol content fuels (R= 0.71, Table 2.1).

Addition of ethanol in gasoline fuels has been reported to reduce the concentrations of PAH species in PM exhaust from GDI engines $107, 108$, which can potentially explain our observation on the decreased downregulation of *IL-6*. PAH is a class of aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AhR) agonists that can suppress $IL-6$ expression $109, 110$. The PAH-mediated suppressed expression of *TNF-α* and *IL-6* could be correlated with the cellular injury and pathogenesis of chronic inflammatory diseases including cancer, celiac disease, vasculitis,

lupus, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), atherosclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, and psoriasis ¹¹¹. Thus, the increased ethanol content in fuels appears to neutralize the immunosuppressive effect caused by PAHs. Notably, our observations of downregulation of both *TNF-α* and *IL-6* cytokines at the transcriptional level agree with Manzano-León et. al. ¹¹² that reported PAH-containing PM2.5 downregulated *TNF-α* and *IL-6* expression in THP-1 cells (a human monocytic cell line) at the translational level.

The proinflammatory chemokine CCL5*/*RANTES (regulated upon activation, normal T-cell expressed, and secreted) and the chemokine modulator NOS2 were also found to be downregulated in the PM emissions from all test fuels (Figure 2.4). CCL5 plays a key role in recruiting a variety of leukocytes into inflammatory sites including T cells, macrophages, eosinophils, and basophils in collaboration with certain cytokines such as IL-2.¹¹³ Additionally, *NOS2* can activate the NF- κ B factor through tissue damage and airway inflammation of asthma.114-116 In the inflammatory states, *NOS2* produces nitric oxide, which plays a critical factor in the pathogenesis of inflammatory lung diseases.¹¹⁷

CCL5 and *NOS2* gene expression showed positive correlations with aromatic content in fuels; however, the fuels with higher ethanol blending showed negative correlations (i.e., downregulation) with the *CCL5* and *NOS2* biomarkers (Table 2.1). There is also a significant effect of PMI on *CCL5* and *NOS2* gene expression for the high aromatic and low aromatic fuel groups (Figure 2.2 f-g). Correlation analysis indicated moderate to strong negative correlations between ethanol content and expression of *CCL5* and *NOS2* (Table 2.1, R= -0.73 and -0.68 for *CCL5* and *NOS2*, respectively), suggesting that reactive PM constituents were likely produced by ethanol-containing fuels that trigger *CCL5* and *NOS2* downregulation*.* Our results agree with a recent study that showed a downregulation of *CCL5* responded to ethanol blends from a GDI vehicle.⁸⁰ The opposite direction of correlations (aromatics and *CCL5/NOS2* versus ethanol and *CCL5/NOS2*) indicate the potential antagonistic effects in BEAS-2B cell in response to GDI PM emissions exposure.

The observed downregulation of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines in this study is consistent with many previous studies that reported exposure to high concentrations of PAHs in PM can induce immunosuppressive effects (e.g., reduced levels of cytokines and low inflammatory activities).¹¹⁸⁻¹²⁰ Yang et al. 91 showed that GDI vehicles can produce substantial amounts of both vapor- and particle-phase nitro-PAHs and oxygenated-PAHs emissions. Therefore, it is possible that the negative regulation of inflammatory responses induced by fuels with varying aromatic and ethanol levels is linked to PAHs and their derivatives in the PM emissions.

When comparing the expression of biomarkers with the DTT results, it is generally expected that DTT activities (i.e., the oxidizing components in PM) would be positively correlated with oxidative stress and inflammatory-associated gene expression in response to particle-bound ROS generation 98 . Under the present test conditions, no positive correlation was found, with the inducible oxidative stress biomarker *HMOX-1* showing a moderate negative correlation with the measured DTTa $(R = -0.55)$ and no correlation with DTTm $(R = 0.04)$ consumptions (Table 2.2). Previous research showed a positive correlation between DTT activity with *HMOX-1* expression in BEAS-2B cells exposed to ambient particles from the Los Angeles basin ⁹⁸. A recent study, on the other hand, showed no significant positive correlations between DTT responses and cellular biomarkers (e.g.,

TNF- α *, IL-6)* from secondary organic aerosol samples ¹²¹. Thus, whether DTT activities are good indicators of cellular responses remains inconclusive. Compared to the DTT assay, which is an isolated chemical reaction, cellular response involves a complicated biological system. We do not consider the DTT consumption originated from the particles as the only source of ROS production, since various intracellular processes could also produce endogenous ROS, which suggests that the cellular oxidative stress in response to GDI PM emissions from different fuels may be driven by different mechanisms not accounted by DTT consumption $90,122$.

Table 2.2. A multiple linear regression model to predict the altered gene expression of biomarkers and DTT activities by principal components (PCs).

	Parameters	$HMOX-I$	$TNF-\alpha$	IL-6	CCL5	NOS2	DTT _a	DTT_m
	Pearson R	0.680	0.363	0.893	0.861	0.731	0.100	0.416
PC1	Standardized coefficient, B1	0.413	0.360	0.284	0.675	0.495	-0.055	0.338
	<i>p</i> -value	0.263	0.427	0.218	$0.031*$	0.166	0.907	0.443
PC ₂	Standardized coefficient, β 2	-0.540	0.045	0.846	-0.534	-0.537	-0.083	-0.242
	p -value	0.160	0.919	$0.008*$	0.066	0.139	0.859	0.578
\sim 0.0 σ								

**p* < 0.05

2.3.4. Principle Component Regression

PCA was performed to evaluate the influence of specific fuel properties on the DTT activity and the gene expression of biomarkers. Two principal components were extracted, explaining 87.41% of the total variance (Table S2.5, SI). After reducing the dimension of fuel properties, two principal components (PC1 and PC2) were identified. The two extracted components corresponded to two groups of hydrocarbon compounds (Figure 2.5), with PC1 representing the hydrophobic hydrocarbons (aromatic compounds) and PC2 representing the hydrophilic hydrocarbons (oxygenated compounds). The points inside each ellipse indicate a similar group of chemical constituents (Figure 2.5). Table S2.5, SI shows that the most significant contributors to PC1 were total aromatics (94.8%), C10+

aromatics (95.5%), and PMI (95.7%), while oxygen/carbon ratio (77%) and ethanol (78%) contributed mostly to PC2.

Figure 2.5. Principal component plots for fuel properties. Red ellipse represents PC1 (aromatics group), orange ellipse represents PC2 (oxygenated group) and green ellipse represents other chemicals, respectively. Triangle in each ellipse represents the centroid.

The multiple linear regression model with the Pearson *R* values was used to predict the gene expression alterations and DTT activities by PCs (Table 2.2). Significant associations between biomarkers and PCs were observed. Overall, aromatics-dominated PC1 is associated with the expression of *CCL5* ($p = 0.031$) and oxygenates-dominated PC2 is associated with the $IL-6$ ($p = 0.008$) gene. Both gasoline aromatics and ethanol levels have significant impacts on inflammatory gene regulation, which could potentially suggest airway inflammation associated disease progression caused by exposure to GDI PM emissions from these fuels. Significant associations between oxygenates-dominated PC2 and *IL-6* also support that the presence of ethanol in gasoline will likely reduce PAH emissions and their derivatives in PM and neutralize the downregulation of the inflammatory biomarkers.

2.4. Conclusions

This study used a current technology GDI vehicle when operated on eight gasoline fuels with two different levels of aromatics and different ethanol contents over the LA92 cycle to assess the impacts of fuel composition to the toxicological responses in human lung cells. Our results showed the gasoline aromatics and ethanol concentrations were linked to exhaust PM emissions and the up-down regulation of biomarkers. We showed that the method of PM extraction, prior to exposure, may have an impact on the selective enrichment of certain type of PM constituents because of the solubility in the solvents. For this reason, exposure at an air-liquid interface (ALI) without solvent extraction may be considered in future studies to represent a more relevant exposure scenario for lung epithelial cells. 123

Moreover, future studies examining dose- and time-dependent responses to trafficrelated PM are required to provide a more comprehensive picture for traffic-induced toxicological effects. Lastly, our findings indicate that fuel composition influenced the amount of PM mass emissions and altered the expression of oxidative stress and inflammation-related genes in BEAS-2B cells*.* High PMI fuels led to higher aerosol oxidative potential (DTT_m) , more significant PAH-mediated immunosuppressive effects on *IL-6* expression, and reduced levels on *CCL5/NOS2* downregulation. On the other hand, higher ethanol content contributed to decreased levels of *IL-6* downregulation and more significant *CCL5/NOS2* downregulation. These different patterns of correlations reveal that fuel compositions play an important role in determining the chemical and toxicological properties of PM emissions. Future studies are required to further investigate the underlying molecular mechanisms to gain a more comprehensive understanding of health effects induced by gasoline exhaust.

2.5. Supplementary Information

Table S2.1: The main physicochemical properties of the test fuels.

P value	p<0.0001		
P value summary	***		
Are means significantly different? $(P < 0.05)$	Yes		
R squared	0.64		
ANOVA Table	SS	df	MS
Treatment (between columns)	0.004	8	0.00047
Residual (within columns)	0.002	42	4.9E-05
Tukey's Multiple Comparison Test	Mean Diff.	\mathbf{q}	<i>p</i> value
Fuel 1 vs Fuel 2	-0.02	7.86	p < 0.001
Fuel 1 vs Fuel 4	-0.02	5.12	p < 0.05
Fuel 1 vs Fuel 5	-0.02	6.11	p < 0.01
Fuel 2 vs Fuel 7	0.01	4.95	p < 0.05
Fuel 2 vs Fuel 8	0.02	7.22	p < 0.001
Fuel 5 vs Fuel 8	0.02	5.47	p < 0.05

Table S2.3. ANOVA and Tukey's Multiple Comparison Test of fuel blends for DTT activity in aqueous buffer solution.

Fuel 2 vs Fuel 8 0.02 9.54 *p* < 0.001

Table S2.4: ANOVA and Tukey's Multiple Comparison Test of fuel blends for DTT activity in mixed methanol-buffer solutions.

Table S2.5. Principal component extraction explaining 87.41% of the total variance for principal component analysis (PCA) and multiple linear regression.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

Chapter III: Exposure to dimethyl selenide (DMSe)-derived secondary organic aerosol alters transcriptomic profiles in human airway epithelial cells

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3.1. Introduction

Selenium (Se) is a trace element existing in natural environments and also a micronutrient essential for human health.^{17, 124} The oxidation states of Se are critical to determine its solubility, mobility, bioavailability and toxicity.¹²⁵ The average Se concentration in soils is ~ 0.4 mg kg⁻¹, with elevated levels up to 5000 mg kg⁻¹ in certain regions including the United States, Canada, China, Japan, Venezuela, and India.¹⁷ The occurrence of Se in these regions depends upon the type of soil, extent of soil erosion, organic matter and rainfall. In addition, the elevated Se levels can be associated with overuse of Se-containing fertilizers.^{17, 125} Atmospheric deposition and soil drainage make Se available in water bodies.^{17, 124} In underground water, Se concentrations increase due to the use of Se-containing fertilizers in agricultural lands.¹²⁵ Oxyanions of Se⁴⁺ and Se⁶⁺ along with a number of selenides $(Se²)$ are predominately present in aquatic environments.¹²⁶ A significant transitory reservoir for Se element is the air.^{126, 127} Microbial transformation in both terrestrial and aquatic systems contributes to volatilization of Se and its release into the atmosphere in methylated forms, such as dimethyl selenide (DMSe), dimethyl diselenide (DMDSe), methaneselenol, or the inorganic selenium dioxide (SeO₂). Presence of volatile DMSe has been reported in bottled water at concentration ranges of 4- 20 ng L^{-1} .¹²⁸ Plants metabolically release Se into the atmosphere in the form of hydrogen selenide and selenates, as well as methylated Se and selenites.^{17, 126} As Se is chemically similar to sulfur, the sulfate transporters in the plant's roots facilitate the Se transport and distribution.^{17, 126, 129} Atmospheric input of Se is largely influenced by natural emissions from aquatic and terrestrial environments (including volcanic eruptions) and also anthropogenic emissions from industrial processes.^{126, 130, 131}

In the human body, Se plays an important role in regulating oxidative stress and the immune system.¹⁷ It also acts as the catalytic center of several seleno-proteins, including glutathione peroxidase and thioredoxin reductase.¹³² Deficiencies of Se in the human diet can cause thyroid dysfunction, growth retardation and impaired bone metabolism.¹³³ On the other hand, selenosis (i.e., the condition of Se toxicity) can lead to pulmonary edema, garlic breath, gastrointestinal disorders, neurological damage, hair loss, and sloughing of nails.¹⁷ Se has a relatively narrow range for optimal human consumption, with toxic levels reported at >400 μg per day and dietary deficiency at < 40 μg per day.¹²⁵ It has been reported that the methylated forms of Se (e.g., DMSe) are less toxic than the inorganic Se species.¹³⁴ However, with the doses of 0.05 and 0.1 mg Se/kg of body weight, DMSe intratracheal instillation in mice has been reported to cause lung injury and inflammation.¹³⁵ Inhalation of DMSe can also result in damage to centrilobular liver cells and acute tubular injury of the kidney.¹³⁵

The chemical fate and transport of Se in natural environments and its interactions with plants have been widely studied.^{126, 129} Atmospheric lifetimes of DMSe against oxidation by ozone (O_3) , hydroxyl radical (OH) , and nitrate radical (NO_3) have been reported, ranging from minutes to hours at typical respective oxidant concentrations.¹³⁶ However, limited details for gas-phase products of DMSe oxidation are available.

Dimethyl selenoxide $((CH₃)₂SeO)$ has been identified as the major gaseous product in O_3 oxidation of DMSe, while both OH and NO_3 radical oxidation of DMSe are thought to predominantly proceed by breaking the Se-C bond, leading to formation of formaldehyde.¹³⁷ Although not directly identified, formation of methanseleninic acid (CH3Se(O)OH) and dimethyl selenoxide as intermediates and precursors of nitrate salts is also expected from its OH and NO₃ oxidation. As a structural analog of DMSe, dimethyl sulfide (DMS) has been reported as a major precursor leading to secondary aerosol formation in marine atmospheric environments.¹⁸ To date, the potential of DMSe to produce inhalable secondary organic aerosol (SOA) through atmospheric oxidation has not been investigated. SOA represents a highly complex and reactive mixture of oxidized species. The dynamic nature of SOA makes characterization of its health impacts challenging. Given the wide range of emission sources of DMSe, we hypothesized that DMSe may be a ubiquitous precursor leading to SOA formation, thereby increasing the toxicity of ambient aerosols due to the redox-active properties of Se-containing components.

In this study, we characterized the chemical properties of SOA generated from OH and O_3 oxidation of DMSe in the presence of nitric oxides (NO_x) in controlled chamber experiments, and assessed the transcriptome-wide gene expression changes in human airway epithelial cells (BEAS-2B) exposed to DMSe-derived SOA. Gene expression profiling was carried out using RNA sequencing (RNA-Seq) followed by pathway enrichment analyses to identify perturbed biological pathways to provide a mechanistic understanding of DMSe-derived SOA-induced health effects.

3.2. Materials and Methods

3.2.1. Chamber Experiments

DMSe oxidation experiments were carried out in a \sim 1.3 m³ fluorinated ethylene propylene (FEP) Teflon environmental chamber, filled with Zero Air (ZA). In the OH oxidation experiment, nitrous acid (HONO) vapors generated by dropwise addition of sodium nitrite to sulfuric acid were first introduced in the chamber, followed by flowing NO to achieve ~170-300 ppby of NO by start of irradiation. DMSe was injected into the chamber by flowing ZA over \sim 1.2 µL of DMSe in a glass bulb, to achieve a mixing ratio of \sim 300 ppbv in the chamber. After allowing the content of the bag to mix for 10 min, black lights (peak radiation intensity at \sim 350 nm) surrounding the chamber were turned on to initiate photooxidation. Based on previous characterization experiments of octane oxidation, the expected OH concentration in the chamber is at least 3×10^7 molecules cm⁻ 3.138 In the O₃ oxidation experiment, O₃ was first introduced in the chamber by flowing ZA through a λ =185 nm lamp source (UVP Ltd.). After reaching ~250 ppbv of O₃ in the chamber, O_3 injection was stopped, and vapors of DMSe (1.2 μ L) were injected into the bag. Once O_3 mixing ratio decreased to 50 ppby, additional O_3 was injected to the bag in a similar manner to maintain a mixing ration of ~ 50 -150 ppbv. During the O₃ oxidation experiment, background NO_x in the chamber before the reaction was less than 2 ppbv. Relative humidity in the chamber was low (25%) in both experiments. A summary of the experimental conditions is provided in Table S3.1.

During the experiments, gas phase mixing ratios of O_3 and NO_x were monitored by a UV photometric ozone analyzer (Thermo, Model 49*i*) and a chemiluminescence analyzer (Thermo, Model 42*i*), respectively. Aerosol size distributions were measured by a Scanning Electrical Mobility Spectrometer (SEMS, Brechtel Manufacturing Inc.) while aerosol composition was measured by a mini aerosol mass spectrometer (mAMS) with a compact time-of-flight mass spectrometer detector (Aerodyne Research, Inc.). DMSederived SOA mass concentrations were determined by standard analysis of the unit-mass resolution spectra of mAMS (using SQUIRREL ToF-AMS Analysis Toolkit, v.1.61) as well as size distribution measurements by SEMS.^{139, 140} DMSe-derived SOA densities used in SEMS mass calculations were determined by comparing vacuum aerodynamic-based mass distributions from the mAMS with mobility-based volume distributions of the SEMS.¹⁴¹ Given the performance of mAMS during the experiments (mass spectrometer resolution of ~1100 and mass accuracy of better than 1.2 ppm at *m/z* 40 and better than 3 ppm at *m/z* 184), multi-peak fitting routines written for high-resolution analysis of mAMS spectra were applied to *m/z* < 113 amu (using PIKA ToF-AMS Analysis Toolkit, v.1.21) to gain more detailed insights into the composition of DMSe-derived SOA.¹⁴² It is worth noting that $>97\%$ of the detected aerosol mass in both experiments was at $m/z < 113$ amu. The high-resolution ion-list of PIKA was adjusted to include Se-containing fragments (and their corresponding isotopic fragments) in the fitting routine.

3.2.2. Aerosol Sample Collection and Extraction

At the end of each experiment, DMSe-derived SOA samples were collected onto 47 mm Teflon membrane filters and stored at -20 °C for two weeks until extraction. Filters were extracted with 23 ml of high-purity methanol (HPLC grade, Fisher Scientific), followed by 50 min of sonication. After sonication, the extracted solution was transferred to a clean vial and methanol solvent was dried off under a gentle stream of nitrogen gas. Then, the extracted DMSe-derived SOA constituents were stored at -20 °C (typically for a day) until further analysis.

3.2.3. Dithiothreitol (DTT) Assay

DTT assays were conducted to measure the oxidative potential (i.e., thiol reactivity) of DMSe-derived SOA products from both $O₃$ and OH oxidation experiments. The DTT assay procedures were carried out based on those published by Kramer et al.⁹³ Briefly, an aqueous buffer solution was made with potassium phosphate monobasic/ sodium hydroxide (0.05 M, pH 7.4) and 1 mM ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA). The reaction mixtures (n=3) containing 1 μg of DMSe-derived SOA extracts and 2.5 nmol of DTT were incubated at 37 °C for 30 min; then the remaining DTT was quenched with 10 nmol of DTNB to make the final volume of 135 μL. The reaction between DTNB and DTT produced 5-thio-2-nitrobenzoic acid (TNB) that can be measured by its absorbance at 412 nm using a UV-Vis spectrophotometer (Beckman DU-640). The DTT consumption rate (expressed as nmol DTT consumed per min per μg of sample) was quantified in comparison with blank filter samples. To examine the potential for sample degradation during storage,

filter samples from O₃ and OH oxidation experiments were also analyzed immediately after collection.

3.2.4. Cell Culture and Exposure

BEAS-2B cells, obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC), were originally derived from the normal bronchial epithelium of a healthy individual. Cells were transformed by infection with a replication-defective SV40/adenovirus 12 hybrid and cloned to create an immortalized cell line.¹⁴³ Cells were cultured in commercially purchased Gibco® LHC-9 medium (1X) (invitrogen) and grown at 37 °C and 5% $CO₂$ in a humidified incubator. Cells were seeded in 24-well plates at a density of 2.5×10^4 cells per well in 250 μL of LHC-9 medium for 2 days prior to exposure. At the time of exposure, cells reached 60−70% confluence. Dried DMSe-derived SOA extracts were reconstituted with LHC-9 medium. Cells were washed with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), and then exposed to DMSe-derived SOA extracts from the O_3 and OH oxidation experiments at the concentration of 10 μ g ml⁻¹ for 24 hr. Cells exposed to extracts of blank filters were included as negative controls.

3.2.5. RNA Isolation and Sequencing

After 24 hr of exposure, cells were lysed with 350 μL of TRI Reagent (Zymo Research) for total RNA isolation. Isolated RNA samples were further purified using the spin column-based Direct-zol RNA MiniPrep kit (Zymo Research). Extracted RNA samples were stored at -80 °C until processing. Nanodrop ND-1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Wilmington, DE) and Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent, Santa Clara, CA) were used to measure the RNA quality and concentrations. The 260/280 nm

absorbance ratios of all samples were determined to be >1.8. The RNA integrity number (RIN) scores from Bioanalyzer were >7. Following the manufacturer's recommendations, RNA-Seq libraries were prepared using NEBNext ultra II Directional RNA Library Prep Kit for Illumina NextSeq 500 high output 75bp single end analysis. RNA-Seq was performed at the University of California, Riverside- Institute for Integrative Genome Biology (IIGB). The read data were deposited in the sequence read archive (SRA) BioSample database (SRA accession number: PRJNA539990).

3.2.6. RNA-Seq Data Analysis

After sequencing, FastQC (version $0.11.7$)¹⁴⁴ was used for read quality assessment. Trimming was obtained using Trimmomatic (version 0.35).¹⁴⁵ Bases before positions 13 and after 72 were cropped with CROP:72 and HEADCROP:13 parameters. Reads that are at least 50 bases long were kept using MINLEN:50. Then, raw reads were aligned to the human genome version hg19 with HISAT2 (version 2.1.0).¹⁴⁶ The aligned files were converted to bam files, sorted and indexed with samtools (version 1.9).¹⁴⁷ Subread (version 1.6.2) tool was used for counting reads of the UCSC Genome Browser annotated coding sequence (CDS) using the featureCounts commands.¹⁴⁸ Normalization and differential gene expression analysis was carried out using three different packages, including DESeq2 (version 1.18.1), edgeR (version 3.20.9), and Limma package (version 3.34.9) in R (version $3.4.4$).¹⁴⁹⁻¹⁵¹ The combination of multiple data processing tools that use different models and normalization methods to identify differentially expressed genes (DEGs) improves the sensitivity of DEG identification and provides more reliable and robust results than the individual solutions. 49, 152

Cut-offs used for DEGs between treated and untreated samples were identified and considered significant if the p-value was ≤ 0.01 , FDR value was ≤ 0.01 , and the absolute Log₂ Fold Change (Log₂ FC) was \geq 1. The workflow for RNA-Seq data analysis is provided in Figure S3.1. The Log2 FC values of selected genes are provided in Figures S3.2-S3.3.

3.2.7. Pathway Enrichment Analysis

For significantly altered genes, pathway enrichment analyses were performed to identify perturbed biological pathways from target gene sets using the ConsensusPathDB database.¹⁵³ To interpret the function of altered genes, overrepresentation analyses were carried out. Based on the hypergeometric distribution, the significance level of observed overlap between the members of predefined pathways and the input DEGs were calculated. Criteria of (1) a minimum overlap of two genes between the input list and pathways, and (2) a p value cutoff of 0.01 were set.¹⁵⁴ ClueGO (a Cytoscape app, version 2.5.4) was used for visualization of enriched pathways.¹⁵⁵

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Aerosol Production and Composition

Both OH and O₃ oxidation experiments resulted in DMSe-derived SOA formation. Despite the intense nucleation during the O_3 experiments (e.g., Figure 1a), the total mass of DMSe-derived SOA formed from the O_3 oxidation (10-20 μ g m⁻³) was significantly lower than in the OH experiments $(250-300 \mu g m⁻³)$ at similar oxidation times and with similar amounts of DMSe injected (e.g., Figure 3.1b).

Figure 3.1. (a) Nucleation and growth of DMSe-derived SOA particles during O3 oxidation of DMSe; (b) aerosol mass concentrations during OH and $O₃$ oxidation experiments, as determined by mAMS and SEMS; aerosol density values of 1.8 g cm⁻³ and 1.6 g cm⁻³ were used in O_3 and OH oxidation experiments, respectively.

Although chamber concentration of DMSe was not monitored during the experiments, given the differences in DMSe oxidation rate constants with OH (6.8 \times 10⁻¹¹) cm³ molecule⁻¹ s⁻¹)¹³⁶ and O₃ (6.8 \times 10⁻¹⁷ cm³ molecule⁻¹ s⁻¹)¹³⁶ and representative oxidant concentrations during the experiments ([OH]_{average} = 3×10^7 molecule cm⁻³ and [O₃]_{average} = 75-100 ppbv), we expect to have reacted only $~50$ -60% ($~160$ -180 ppbv) of DMSe with O3 after 80-100 min (assuming secondary production of OH was negligible), while a negligible fraction should have remained during the same time in the OH oxidation experiment. Further discussion on DMSe's potential to form SOA is provided in Section 3.4.1. As shown in Figure 3.1b, in both experiments, estimated mass concentrations using mAMS unit-mass resolution spectra, along with the standard relative ionization efficiency of organics (RIE_{org}=1.4) and unity collection efficiency, agreed well with the total mass concentrations estimated from the measured size distributions and inferred SOA densities. High-resolution analysis of mAMS spectra with the modified HR-ion list suggests that on average \sim 52-54% of the observed mass concentration in the range of m/z <113 was from

fragments containing Se, while \sim 18-22% of the mass stemmed from organic fragments lacking Se in their structures (Figure 3.2a). The contribution of the Se-containing ions was similar between the O_3 and OH oxidation experiments (Figure 3.2b), suggesting the composition of DMSe-derived SOA is relatively similar for both pathways.

Figure 3.2. (a) Fractional contribution of SOA species to total SOA mass during filter collection. (b) Average HR-MS analysis of Se-containing fragments during the peak mass concentration of O3 and OH oxidation experiments. Frequency of each atom in the designated ions is specified by integers x, y, and z.

In both experiments, \sim 20-25% of aerosol mass was from nitrate (Figure 3.2a); however, given the different NO^{+}/ NO_{2}^{+} ratios, different compounds likely contribute to the nitrate concentrations in the OH and O_3 oxidation experiments (Figure S3.4). During the first ~40 min after start of the reaction, there is evidence for formation of organonitrates in both systems, given the higher ratio of NO^{+}/ NO_{2}^{+} relative to that of ammonium nitrate. However, during the OH experiment, the ratio decreased to values lower than that of ammonium nitrate after $~60$ min while in the O₃ experiment the ratio approached ammonium nitrate calibrations (Figure S3.4). These observations suggest formation of nitrated salts or nitro-organics in the OH experiment and the formation of nitric acid in the $O₃$ experiment.

3.3.2. Aerosol Oxidative Potential

The oxidative potential of aerosol is expressed as DTT consumption rate normalized to the particulate matter (PM) mass (pmol/min/µg). Both aerosol samples collected from OH and O₃ oxidation experiments have similar DTT consumption rates of \sim 77 pmol/min/ μ g, suggesting the presence of common oxidizing moieties in both aerosol systems. Note that the reactive components in DMSe-derived SOA did not seem to decay rapidly under the given storage duration and conditions as evidenced in the similarity of DTT activity between stored and freshly analyzed filter samples (Figure S5). The DTT assay has been widely used as an indicator for total particle-bound oxidants in aerosol constituents.¹⁵⁶ In comparison with other sources of PM, DMSe-derived SOA have DTT consumption rates higher than ambient PM (10–70 pmol/min/µg),¹⁵⁷ SOA from isoprene, toluene and α pinene (2.1–57.5 pmol/min/µg),^{93, 158, 159} and diesel exhaust particles (1–61 pmol/min/µg).⁹⁹ The DTT consumption rates of DMSe-derived SOA are comparable to cooking OA (90 \pm 51 pmol/min/PM), but less than biomass burning OA (151 \pm 20 pmol/min/µg)¹⁵⁷ and naphthalene SOA (153.4 \pm 49.2 pmol/min/ μ g) that potentially constitute redox active quinones.¹⁵⁷

3.3.3. Differential Gene Expression from RNA-Seq Data

RNA-Seq was performed to detect differential gene expression in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA (from both OH and O₃ oxidation experiments) versus the control groups that were exposed to the blank filter extracts. The lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) assay analysis of the cellular samples indicated no significant cell death after 24 hr of exposure; therefore, RNA-seq results represent the true transcriptional change of the live cells (Figure S3.6). From RNA-Seq quality analysis, the quality metrics indicated basecomposition bias before 13 and after 72 bp positions, which could be due to the unbalanced selection of random primers. Therefore, those base positions were cropped prior to alignment. On average, we obtained 24.8 million mapped reads, with a mapping rate of 90.81% (Table S3.2). From 23,393 UCSC annotated human CDS, we retained \sim 55% of genes for subsequent analyses with transcriptional signal fpm≥1 in DESeq2. This percentage was the same when using cpm≥1 as a threshold in edgeR and limma.

With the sorting criteria of Log₂ FC \pm 1, p value = 0.01, false discovery rate (FDR)adjusted p value $= 0.01$, DESeq2, edgeR, and Limma resulted in 2619 and 2616, 2605 and 2687 , and 1229 and 1258 DEGs for $O₃$ and OH, respectively. The three sets of DEGs obtained from DESeq2, edgeR, and limma were intersected to identify common DEGs. As shown in the intersections of Venn diagrams in Fig. 3.3, we identified 1196 common DEGs from exposure to O_3 oxidation products (862 up-regulated and 334 down-regulated) and 1232 common DEGs from exposure to OH oxidation products (875 up-regulated and 357 down-regulated) for the downstream pathway enrichment analysis.

Figure 3.3. DEGs identified from three different tools, including DESeq2, edgeR, and Limma for BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA resulting from (a) O3 and (b) OH-initiated oxidation. Sorting criteria: Log₂ FC \pm 1, p value = 0.01, FDR/adjusted p value $= 0.01$, and CPM ≥ 1 . Bar graphs represent the number of up-regulated and down-regulated DEGs in the intersections of three gene sets input from DESeq2, edgeR, and Limma.

3.3.4. Perturbed Biological Pathways

Significantly altered biological pathways were identified using the ConsensusPathDB database (Tables S3.3-4). The input of DEGs were categorized into six groups based on up- and down-regulation of genes: (1) up-regulated by both $O₃$ and OH oxidation products, (2) up-regulated by O_3 only, (3) up-regulated by OH only, (4) down-regulated by both O_3 and OH oxidation products, (5) down-regulated by O_3 only, and (6) down-regulated by OH only (Fig. S3.7). Figure 3.4 shows the major biological pathways enriched for up-regulated and down-regulated DEGs by both $O₃$ and OH oxidation products.

Top pathways that are enriched by up-regulated common DEGs from both $O₃$ and OH oxidation products include genotoxicity, p53 signaling and mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) signaling (Table S3.3). On the other hand, down-regulated common DEGs by both O3 and OH oxidation products enriched pathways mostly associated with the metabolic regulation of glucose, as well as the interleukin IL-4 and IL-13 signaling that are related to the pathogenesis of allergic airway disorders (Table S3.4).

3.4. Discussion

3.4.1. DMSe-derived SOA Yields

Both OH and O₃ oxidation of DMSe resulted in formation and growth of DMSe-derived SOA. Considering the estimated amounts of reacted DMSe in each experiment, our results suggest DMSe-derived SOA formation yields of \sim 23% and \sim 2% in the OH and O₃ oxidation experiments, respectively (Table S3.1). The significantly lower yields in $O₃$ oxidation experiments suggest formation of relatively more volatile products under these conditions. These SOA formation yields are in the same range as the yields observed in non-seeded chamber or flow tube photooxidation experiments of other naturally emitted hydrocarbons, such as isoprene and α -pinene.¹⁶⁰⁻¹⁶² Further discussion on the potential abundance of atmospheric DMSe oxidation products is presented in Section 3.4.7. Note that these SOA yields are likely underestimated since vapor and particle losses to the chamber walls were not corrected for, and the observed nitrate components were not considered as DMSe-derived SOA.

Despite the much lower formation yield in the $O₃$ oxidation experiment, bulk DMSederived SOA composition was very similar to that in the OH oxidation experiment, which could potentially explain similar values of aerosol oxidative potential measured for DMSederived SOA in the two systems.

3.4.2. PM oxidative potential and DMSe-derived SOA induced oxidative damage

High PM oxidative potential measured by the DTT assay has been associated with the ability of PM to generate reactive oxygen species (ROS) .¹⁶³ Previously, the DTT activities of ambient PM have been largely attributed to the presence of transition metals and quionones.¹⁶⁴ In this study, the oxidative potential of DMSe-derived SOA was assessed and found to contribute to high DTT consumption rates, which supports our hypothesis that DMSe-derived SOA possesses redox-active properties. Recent studies have also indicated that PM oxidative potential can be directly linked to the reactivity of PM constituents towards thiol functional groups within biomolecules leading to cellular oxidative stress.^{8,}

¹⁶⁵ Cellular oxidative stress can be attributed to an imbalance between ROS production (from both exogenous and endogenous sources) and their elimination through protective mechanisms by antioxidants. Disbalance in these pathways is the leading cause of a variety of injuries, including acute and chronic inflammation, genome instability and mutation, pulmonary fibrosis, obesity, diabetes and atherosclerosis.¹⁶⁶ Prior studies have established that through metabolic processes, Se compounds have the potential to induce genotoxicity via generation of ROS.¹⁶⁷ Relative expression of oxidative stress and antioxidant-related genes are consistent with DTT results (Fig. S3.2). With exposure to DMSe-derived SOA in BEAS-2B cells, several pathways associated with oxidative damage, genotoxicity, glutathione metabolism, biological oxidation, and DNA damage response were perturbed and are discussed in the next sections.

Results from both DTT assays and pathway enrichment analysis suggest that Secontaining moieties in DMSe-derived SOA might be important in ROS-induced oxidative damage.

3.4.3. DNA damage, genotoxicity and activation of p53-mediated stress response

The up-regulated DEGs from both O_3 and OH oxidation experiments revealed the activation of p53 signaling pathway in response to DMSe-derived SOA exposure in BEAS-2B cells (Table S3.3 and Figure 3.4a). Tumor suppressor protein p53 is encoded by the *TP53* gene, which is one of the most commonly mutated genes in human cancer,¹⁶⁸ including lung cancer. ¹⁶⁹ More than half of all tumors exhibit mutations in either *TP53* or MDM2 proto-oncogene (*MDM2*) genes, whose protein products control p53 activity.^{168, 170} The affinity of p53 for MDM2 is reduced when ataxia-telangiectasia mutated (ATM) protein kinase (Table S3, FDR = 7.22×10^{-2}) phosphorylates p53, which consequently results in reduced p53 degradation by MDM2, and thus enhances p53 protein stability and activity.¹⁷¹ The functions of p53 are complex; under normal conditions, p53 expression is very low inside the cell, but it is activated in response to oxidative, genotoxic or oncogenic stress; p53 exerts its activities as tumor-suppressive, pro-oxidant, and antioxidant.^{168, 172} Under mild stress, activated p53 acts as a pro-oxidant and mediates the activation of tumor protein 53-induced nuclear protein 1 (*TP53INP1*) and cyclin dependent kinase inhibitor 1A (*CDKN1A*) to induce cell cycle arrest in G1 to allow cells to repair and recover from damage. Under prolonged stress or rapid DNA damage, p53 acts as an antioxidant and activates the BCL2 binding component 3 (*BBC3*) and phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetateinduced protein 1 (*PMAIP1*) genes that produce proapoptotic proteins to neutralize the DNA damage.^{168, 172} In addition, p53 can also act as an upstream activator to regulate mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK) signaling in response to DNA damage from external insults.¹⁷³ Overall, DMSe-derived SOA can activate p53 through the genotoxicity pathway, which could potentially result in various adverse cellular events like DNA damage, heat shock, hypoxia and oncogene overexpression.¹⁷⁴

3.4.4. Dysregulation of metabolic pathways with p53 activation

The down-regulated DEGs identified from this study revealed the dysregulation of metabolic pathways associated with cholesterol biosynthesis, glycolysis, gluconeogenesis, and fatty acid synthesis (Table S3.4 and Figure 3.4b).¹⁷⁵ Upon activation of $p53$ under stress, many cellular processes that control energy and metabolism are negatively regulated to maintain homeostasis. Recent studies have shown the connection between p53, energy metabolism, and metabolic diseases, including type II diabetes mellitus.^{168, 172} Moreover, p53 can also indirectly control glycolysis by regulating the phosphatidylinositol 3 kinase/protein kinase b (PI3K/Akt) pathways (Table S3.4, FDR = 4.70×10^{-5}). Specifically, the PI3K/Akt pathway can be negatively regulated by the p53 target genes, including the tumor suppressor gene phosphatase and tensin homologue deleted on chromosome 10 (*PTEN*) that is frequently inactivated by mutation.¹⁶⁸ As the PTEN phosphatase activity is the major antagonist of Akt, PTEN could affect the p53 protein levels and stability by keeping Akt inactive, ^{172, 176} and thus PTEN would be an essential component of the p53 response upon DNA damage.

At the same time, p53 is linked to enhance the transcription of *PTEN*. ¹⁷⁷ However, under reduced nutrient or energy levels, the Akt and AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK) (Table S3.3, FDR = 1.88×10^{-3}) fail to be activated, which can subsequently induce p53. As a result, it is clear that p53 plays a pivotal role in the metabolic regulation.¹⁷² Through suppression of the peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor-γ coactivator-1α $(PGC-1\alpha)$, p53 also influences the insulin resistance that is critical in the development of type II diabetes and pre-diabetes.^{168, 178} Notably, the Warburg effect (FDR = 1.33×10^{-3}) was also found to be significantly enriched in the current study (Table S3.3). The Warburg effect describes the increased usage of glycolysis for ATP synthesis rather than using oxidative phosphorylation, which is a metabolic hallmark of cancer cells that rewire their metabolism to promote growth and survival.¹⁷² It has been suggested that the Warburg effect may provide unifying insights into the progression of cancer and type II diabetes mellitus.¹⁷⁹ Overall, the perturbed biological pathways identified in this study (Tables S3.3- 4) are coherent, and conclusively support the potential significance of p53-mediated metabolic dysregulation caused by DMSe-derived SOA exposure.

3.4.5. Signaling Associated with Allergic Airway Inflammation

Down-regulated IL-4/IL-13 signaling (FDR = 6.40×10^{-4}) and neutrophil degranulation $(FDR = 1.61 \times 10^{-2})$ pathways were both observed in this study (Table S3.4), consistent with previous reports that IL-4 and IL-13 can suppress excessive neutrophil accumulation.¹⁸⁰ Although neutrophils were directly not tested in the current study, genes involved in neutrophil degranulation were found differentially expressed in BEAS-2B.

Among these DEGs, mutation in *SERPINA1* has been linked to low levels of alpha-1 antytrypsin (AAT) in alveolar epithelial cells that may lead to premature development of pulmonary emphysema.¹⁸¹ Notably, perturbations in various inflammatory responses and signaling pathways revealed the potential interplay between oxidative damage and inflammation upon DMSe-derived SOA exposure, which may result in the production of soluble mediators to activate the signal transducer and activator of transcription 3 (STAT3) and MAPK that mediate the expression of a variety of genes in response to cellular stimuli.^{166, 182} Chronic inflammation can contribute to tumor development through induction of oncogenic mutations, genomic instability, early tumor promotion, and enhanced angiogenesis. In the type 2 inflammatory responses associated with the pathogenesis of asthma and allergies, IL-4 and IL-13 are the signature cytokines that can be triggered by allergens;¹⁸³ however, IL-4 and IL-13 play distinct roles in allergic inflammatory states. Briefly, IL-4 regulates Th2 cell proliferation and survival that has been shown to be essential in the initiation of allergic airway responses, while IL-13 contributes to the pathological features of diseases (e.g., mucus production, airway smooth muscle alterations, and sub-epithelial fibrosis).¹⁸⁴ Recent studies have shown that activation of IL-4/IL-13–STAT6 and ROS-epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) signaling pathways is associated with airway mucin overproduction induced by foreign stimuli,¹⁸⁵ as well as enhanced epithelial repair in response to lung injury.¹⁸⁶ Together with the significant ROS generation potential (as measured by DTT) and the identified EGFR signaling pathway, our findings highlight the potential significance of DMSe-derived SOA in modulating allergic airway inflammation.

3.5. Potential Limitations

When interpreting the results of the current study, some potential limitations should be considered. First, the oxidative potential of DMSe-SOA was measured using an acellular
DTT assay to approximate the ability of PM to generate ROS or reactivity towards thiols. Recent studies have indicated that DTT activity can only represent part of PM-bound ROS.¹⁸⁷ Measurement of ROS within cells will provide more direct evidence to determine the cellular oxidative stress conditions and warrants future work. Also, the initial concentration of DTT used in the assay has been reported to influence the DTT consumption rates.¹⁸⁸ Caution should be taken when intercomparing the DTT assay results from different studies. In addition, owing to the nature of the hard ionization technique used by mAMS, composition of the highly fragmented DMSe-derived SOA products was obtained. To identify specific moieties or functional groups of DMSe-derived SOA contributing to ROS generation, comprehensive analysis that can retain molecular information is necessary. DMSe-derived SOA samples were extracted with methanol, which may have selectively enriched certain types of DMSe-derived SOA constituents. Furthermore, the use of an immortalized cell line (BEAS-2B) may not faithfully represent the untransformed human airway epithelium, but it provides reproducible results critical to gaining initial insights into cellular response to DMSe-derived SOA exposure. Lastly, as RNA-Seq and pathway enrichment analysis have enabled rapid identification of pathway perturbations at the transcriptional level, functional validation will be required to demonstrate the effects on the changes of phenotypes.

3.6. Atmospheric Implications

Selenium contamination is associated with a broad spectrum of natural and anthropogenic activities, but the sources and sinks are not well constrained in the atmosphere. Concentrations of Se measured in ambient aerosols have been reported to

range from \sim 1.5-30 ng m⁻³.¹⁸⁹ A wide range of selenium volatilization rates from terrestrial emissions in California has also been reported (\sim 20 µg Se m⁻² d⁻¹ for bare soil and up to 430 μ g Se m⁻² d⁻¹ in biotreated soil).^{190, 191} Moreover, Karlson et al. reported that DMSe emissions potentially can increase with the onset of the warmer temperatures, during the summer season.¹⁹² In San Joaquin Valley, DMSe contributes to 90% of volatile Se.¹⁹³ Assuming a 1-acre source area, the emissions rates mentioned above translate to ~4-80 pptv d^{-1} emissions of DMSe in a 1.5 km deep planetary boundary layer. Considering typical, non-polluted daytime OH and nighttime O_3 concentrations $(4\times10^6$ molecule cm⁻³ and 50 ppbv, respectively) with the estimates of our DMSe-derived SOA formation yield, at least \sim 0.2-80 ng m⁻³ of DMSe-derived SOA can be produced in four hours during day or night. Although Se-rich soils might not be in close proximity to populated areas, since fine particles have lifetimes of \sim 7-10 days, once formed in at the atmosphere, DMSederived SOA particles could potentially be transported away and pose health risks in areas downwind of high DMSe emission regions.

Furthermore, if agricultural fields contain high Se in the soil, field workers could potentially be in direct exposure to significant amounts of DMSe-derived SOA, especially during the warmer months. Overall, atmospheric oxidation of DMSe produces SOA with high oxidative potential. Transcriptomic gene expression profiling followed by pathway enrichment analysis revealed that major biological pathways perturbed by DMSe-derived SOA are associated with elevated genotoxicity, DNA damage, and p53-mediated stress responses, as well as dysregulated metabolic activities and cytokine signaling that plays crucial roles in allergic airway inflammation. Future work is required to examine

atmospheric emissions of DMSe and gain a more detailed molecular composition of DMSe-derived SOA. To fully assess environmental health impacts of DMSe-derived SOA, direct measures of ROS production and validation of the perturbed biological functions in primary airway epithelial cells and other cell types would also be valuable.

3.7. Supplementary Information

S3.1: Cytotoxicity Assay

The lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) cytotoxicity assay was performed to assess the viability of cells, following the manufacturer's protocol (Roche). Cells were seeded in 24 well plates at a density of 2.5×10^4 cells per well in 250 µL of LHC-9 medium for 2 days prior to exposure. Supernatants were collected 24 h after exposure. To simulate 100% cell death, Triton X-100 (0.1%) was used as a positive control. The absorbance was measured using a TECAN SpectraFluor Plus microplate reader at 490 nm, with a reference wavelength at 620 nm.

Table S3.1. Summary of smog chamber experimental conditions. Experiments were carried out to oxidize ~300 ppbv of DMSe by OH ($k=6.78 \times 10^{-11}$ cm³/molecule/s) and O₃ ($k=6.8 \times$ 10^{-17} cm³/molecule/s).

Oxidant	Irradiation	$[NO]_0 (ppbv)$	[O ₃] ₀ (ppbv)	Yield
		300	≤ 1	26 %
OH	Yes (peak λ -350 nm)	200	\leq 2	20 %
		170	\leq 2	23 %
		\leq 2	200	2.0%
O ₃	none	$<$ 2	270	2.4 %
		$<$ 2	220	1.3%

Sample ID	Pre-Trimming	Post Trimming	Alignment Rate
	#Reads	#Reads	(%)
Control #1	67677315	66634166	93.23%
Control #2	70530339	69950456	92.99%
Control #3	47054369	46702719	92.51%
O_3 #1	65336736	65035144	89.75%
O_3 #2	60974300	60764347	90.07%
O_3 #3	71361747	70750882	89.61%
OH #1	36214977	35932064	90.20%
OH #2	49401319	48271745	89.30%
OH #3	44435743	44174097	89.82%

Table S3.2: Alignment rates of samples with the human reference genome (hg19).

E2F7; SMAD7; PRKAB2; ESRRB; NR4A3;

DHCR24; CA9; CHST15; CDA;

Figure S3.1. Pipeline for RNA-Seq data analysis. For DESeq2, fragments per million (fpm≥1 in at least two samples) was used to normalize library size and to filter out lowly expressed genes. For edgeR and limma packages, counts per million (cpm≥1 in at least two samples) was used. In edgeR, trimmed mean of M-values (TMM) was also used to normalize for composition bias, and gene-wise negative binomial generalized linear fit models with quasi-likelihood tests were used to count data using the glmQLFTest function. In limma, minimum total count of 25 reads in two samples was used for removing lowly expressed genes which was equivalent to cpm≥1 in average. Then, the voom function was used to transform count data to ready-to-use for linear modelling. The linear modeling was carried out by lmFit and contrasts.fit functions.

Figure S3.2. List of identified DEGs related to oxidative stress, ROS generation or antioxidant enzymes at the cellular level. Most of the antioxidant-related genes were downregulated while oxidative responsive genes were upregulated. Some of the oxidative stress responsive genes (e.g., *HMOX-1, DUOX1, TPO,* and *CYP1A1*) showed higher range of relative expression levels (log2FC, 2.5-4.5). The relative expression of oxidative stressrelated genes clearly correlates with our DTT results that measured the oxidative potential of DMSe-derived SOA.

Figure S3.3: The relative expression of highlighted genes in the discussion.

Figure S3.4. Time trend of the ratio of common nitrate ions during DMSe oxidation experiments in comparison with the ratio observed during ammonium nitrate calibrations.

Figure S3.5. DTT activity (pmol/µg/min) for both frozen and fresh SOA samples from OH and O3 oxidation of DMSe. Compared to fresh SOA samples, frozen filters (stored in dark in a -20 \degree C freezer for about two weeks) showed minimal decay (\sim 5%) of DTT activity for SOA generated from O₃ oxidation, while no significant differences were observed for SOA generated from OH oxidation ($p > 0.05$).

Figure S3.6. (A) LDH release and (B) cytotoxicity (%) induced by extracts of DMSederived SOA from O3 and OH oxidation at a concentration 10 µg/mL. The negative (-) control represents cells exposed to the blank filter extracts, and positive (+) control represents cells exposed to 1% Triton X-100.

Figure S3.7. Number of common and unique DEGs induced by SOA generated by O3 and OH oxidation products: (A) common DEGs, (B) DEGs induced by O_3 oxidation products only, and (C) DEGs induced by OH oxidation products only.

Chapter IV: Integrative analysis of lncRNA-mRNA co-expression in human lung epithelial cells exposed to dimethyl selenide (DMSe)-derived secondary organic aerosols

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4.1. Introduction

Selenium (Se) is a trace element cycling in the natural environment and a micronutrient essential for human health.¹⁹⁴ Excess Se intake from dietary or environmental exposure has been linked to several human diseases, including cancer, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, and disorders of central nervous system.¹⁹⁵⁻¹⁹⁷ Se is readily found in soil, water, and air.^{194, 198} Both biotic and abiotic processes govern the fate and transport of Se in the environment. Through microbial methylation and plant metabolism, inorganic Se can be transformed to volatile organoselenium compounds.^{194,} ¹⁹⁹ Previous studies suggested that alkylated Se compounds, such as dimethylselenide (DMSe) and dimethyl diselenide (DMDSe), are volatile and less toxic compared to the inorganic Se species.²⁰⁰ However, it has been recently revealed that the atmospheric oxidation (with O_3 and OH) of DMSe leads to the formation of secondary organic aerosol (SOA), which could potentially pose health risks in areas with high DMSe emissions (e.g., Se-rich fields) and their downwind regions during summer months.¹⁹⁹ The resultant DMSederived SOA has been shown to be a potent stressor in human airway epithelial cells (BEAS-2B) that can perturb several biological pathways, including genotoxicity, DNA damage, p53-mediated stress responses, cholesterol biosynthesis, glycolysis, and interleukin IL-4/IL-13 signaling.¹⁹⁹

Long noncoding RNAs (lncRNAs) are a class of transcripts that typically have more than 200 nucleotide (nt) in length, $201, 202$ but they contain no functional open reading frame that may or may not be polyadenylated and do not have protein coding capacity.^{202,} ²⁰³ In human tissues, most lncRNAs are expressed at lower levels compared to proteincoding RNAs.²⁰⁴ However, recent studies have reported that lncRNAs play a critical role in regulating gene expression and cellular homeostasis.^{47, 205, 206} Based on the position relative to protein-coding genes, lncRNAs are classified as intergenic (between genes), intragenic/intronic (within genes) and antisense.²⁰⁷ In response to internal or environmental stimuli, lncRNAs show cell type-specific expression, suggesting that their expression is under considerable transcriptional control and can potentially be disturbed under stress.^{206,} ²⁰⁸ In general, lncRNAs can directly interact with DNAs or RNAs by base pairing and form a strong duplex or a triplex.^{202, 209} Through epigenetic, transcriptional and posttranscriptional mechanisms, lncRNAs can also control the expression of their adjacent genes in *cis* (near the site of lncRNA production) or modulate gene transcription in *trans* (to distant target genes), 202 and recruit chromatin-modifying enzymes for gene regulation.²⁰⁸

Aberrant expression of certain lncRNAs has been found in different types of human cancers.²⁰² LncRNAs can contribute in multiple ways to the regulation of DNA damage repair, while failures in DNA damage response can cause mutation and cancer transformation.210, 211 Recent studies have reported that several lncRNAs are transcribed

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after DNA damage in response to external stimuli.²¹² Specifically, some lncRNAs have been found to regulate transcriptional response of the tumor suppressor protein $p53$,²¹³ which has critical functions in response to DNA damage to prevent mutations from being passed on down the lineage.²¹⁴ For example, long intergenic non-coding RNA-p21 (*lincRNA-p21*), which is located upstream of *CDKN1A* gene, can interact with hnRNA-K (heterogeneous nuclear ribonucleoprotein K) to regulate apoptosis and act as a transcriptional repressor in the canonical p53 pathway.²¹³ The lncRNA *DINO* (damageinduced noncoding), which is also transcribed upstream of the *CDKN1A* gene, is inducible in a p53 dependent-manner to promote cell cycle arrest or apoptosis.²¹⁵ The lncRNA *GUARDIN* is shown to be p53-responsive to sustain the genome stability by acting as a decoy to sequester *miRNA-23a* and maintain the expression of *TRF2* (telomeric repeat factor 2) to prevent chromosome end-to-end fusion.^{216, 217} The lncRNA *PANDA* (p21associated ncRNA DNA damage-activated) can be directly activated by p53after DNA damage, 2^{12} and negatively regulates apoptosis through interaction with the transcription factor NF-YA (nuclear factor Y).²¹⁵ Additionally, lncRNA *DDSR1* (DNA damagesensitive RNA1) is induced in an ATM-dependent manner and regulated by the NF-кB transcription factor (nuclear factor "kappa-light-chain enhancer" of activated B cells) in response to DNA damage.²¹⁷ Overall, lncRNAs play an essential role in the regulation of DNA damage response and cell cycle control to protect cells from malignant transformation.210, 216

We have recently demonstrated that DMSe-derived SOA is a potent stressor in BEAS-2B cells that can lead to genotoxicity and p53-mediated DNA damage responses at the mRNA expression level.¹⁹⁹ The role of lncRNAs in regulation of gene expression via epigenetic mechanisms and their contributions to the observed perturbations remain unclear. Given the increasing evidence suggesting the potential involvement of lncRNAs in lung carcinogenesis, 205 , 218 this study aims at identifying lncRNAs responsible for oncogenic dysregulation in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA. We performed integrative analyses of the lncRNA and mRNA transcriptome to investigate the role of differentially expressed (DE) lncRNAs in regulating gene expression via *cis* and *trans* mechanisms. Results from this study provide an improved understanding of lncRNAsmediated stress response induced by DMSe-derived SOA exposure.

4.2. Experimental Methods

4.2.1. DMSe-derived SOA Generation and Sample Collection

To generate DMSe-derived SOA, a ~1.3 m³ fluorinated ethylene propylene (FEP) Teflon chamber was used as a controlled atmosphere. Prior to each experiment, the chamber was filled with zero air. Detailed operating procedures for this chamber experiment and sample collection have been described previously.¹⁹⁹ Briefly, oxidation of DMSe with atmospheric oxidants such as O_3 and OH was initiated separately. In the O_3 oxidation experiments, ∼300 ppbv of DMSe vapors (1.2 μL) were introduced into the chamber to react with ∼250 ppby of O_3 to generate SOA. In the OH oxidation experiments, nitrous acid (HONO) vapors were first generated in the chamber by the dropwise addition of sodium nitrite to sulfuric acid. Then, DMSe was introduced into the chamber by flowing zero air over ∼1.2 μL of DMSe in a glass bulb to achieve a mixing ratio of ∼300 ppbv.

Black lights (peak radiation intensity at ∼350 nm) surrounding the chamber were turned on to initiate photooxidation after allowing the content of the bag to mix for 10 min. DMSe-derived SOA samples were collected onto 47 mm Teflon membrane filters with a sampling flow rate of 10 L min^{-1} at the end of each experiment. Collected filter samples were stored at −20 °C immediately. To preserve the integrity of SOA constituents, filter samples were extracted within two weeks with 23 mL of high-purity methanol (>99.9%, Fisher Chemical™) by 50 min of sonication. The extracted solution was transferred to a clean vial after sonication, and then blown dry under a gentle stream of nitrogen gas. Finally, the extracted DMSe-derived SOA constituents were stored at −20 °C until cell exposure.

4.2.2. Cell Culture and Exposure

BEAS-2B cells were obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC). Cells were cultured in Gibco® LHC-9 medium $(1\times)$ (Invitrogen) grown at 37 °C and 5% CO₂ in a humidified incubator. Cells were seeded in 24-well plates at a density of 2.5×10^4 cells per well in 250 μL of LHC-9 medium for 48 hours prior to exposure. Upon the time of exposure, cells reached around 60–70% confluence. Extracted DMSe-derived SOA materials were reconstituted with the LHC-9 cell culture medium. Cells were washed with phosphate-bu \square ered saline (PBS) and then exposed to DMSe-derived SOA extracts collected from the O_3 and OH oxidation experiments at the concentration of 10 μ g mL⁻¹ for 24 h. The exposure concentration was selected based on comparison to prior studies using similar approaches to test other types of aerosol samples (e.g., isoprene $SOA²¹⁹$ or gasoline exhaust^{220, 221}) to elicit transcriptional changes in BEAS-2B cells under noncytotoxic conditions. Cells exposed to the extracts of blank filters were included as negative controls. Experiments were conducted in triplicate per treatment group. After 24 h of exposure, supernatants were collected for assessment of cytotoxicity using the lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) assay (Roche) to ensure that the exposure conditions were not highly cytotoxic to interfere with the downstream lncRNA expression analyses. Details of the LDH assay has been described elsewhere.¹⁹⁹ To isolate the total RNA, cells were lysed with 350 μL of TRI reagent (Zymo Research).

4.2.3. RNA Extraction, Library Construction, and Sequencing

The lysed cell solutions were further purified using the spin column-based Direct-zol RNA MiniPrep kit (Zymo Research). Immediately after extraction, RNA samples were stored at −80 °C until further analysis. RNA quality and concentrations were measured using a Nanodrop ND-1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Wilmington, DE) and an Agilent 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent, Santa Clara, CA). The 260/280 nm absorbance ratios of all RNA samples were >1.8 and the RNA integrity number (RIN) scores from Bioanalyzer were >7. RNA-Seq was performed at the University of California, Riverside-Institute for Integrative Genome Biology (UCR IIGB). Detailed methods of library preparation and RNA sequencing have been published previously.¹⁹⁹ The RNA-seq read data were deposited in the sequence read archive (SRA) BioSample database (SRA accession number: PRJNA539990).

4.2.4. Processing of RNA-seq Data

RNA-seq raw data (raw reads) in fastq format were checked for quality through FastQC (version 0.11.7)¹⁴⁴ and pre-processed by Trimmomatic (version 0.35).¹⁴⁵ In these steps, clean data (clean reads) were obtained by removing reads containing adapters, reads containing poly-N, and low-quality reads from raw data. All downstream analyses were based on the high-quality clean data.

4.2.5. Read Mapping and Quantification for lncRNA Analysis

Raw reads were aligned to the human genome version hg19 [Genome Reference Consortium Human Build 37 (GRCh37)] using HISAT2 (version 2.1.0).¹⁴⁶ The aligned files were converted to bam files, sorted, and indexed with samtools (version 1.9).¹⁴⁷ Subread (version 1.6.2) tool was used for counting reads of the GENCODE annotated coding and long noncoding transcript using the featureCounts commands.¹⁴⁸ Normalization and di \Box erential lncRNA expression analysis were carried out using DESeq2 (version $1.18.1$ ¹⁴⁹ in R (version 3.6.3). Cuto is used for DE lncRNAs between exposed and unexposed samples were identified and considered significant if the p value was ≤ 0.01 , false discovery rate (FDR) value was ≤ 0.01 , and the absolute log2 fold change (log2 FC) was $\geq \pm 1$. The workflow for RNA-Seq data analysis for lncRNAs is provided in Figure S4.1.

4.2.6. Prediction of *cis* **and** *trans* **lncRNA Target Genes**

LncRNA target genes were divided into two categories: *cis*-target and *trans*-regulated genes. Target genes within 10 kb upstream or downstream of the lncRNA were considered as *cis* target genes were identified using bedtools (version 2.29.2). *Cis* acting lncRNAs and their corresponding target genes were further analyzed for their differential gene expression using R (version 3.6.3). The top 20 DE lncRNAs (determined with the smallest FDR values) were used to predict the *trans*-regulated genes using rtools (http://rtools.cbrc.jp/cgi-
bin/RNARNA/index.pl).²²² Top 100 predicted *trans* target genes were selected based on the minimum energy of lncRNA and mRNA interaction. From a total of 2,000 genes, DE genes (log2FC > |±2|) were selected for construction of the *trans*-regulatory network using network (version 1.16.0) and ggnet (version 0.1.0) packages in R (version 3.6.3)

4.2.7. Gene Ontology (GO) and Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA)

DE *cis*-target protein-coding genes were further analyzed for the GO enrichment using R package goseq (version 1.38.0). DE lncRNAs were analyzed for the enrichment of human cancer-associated lncRNAs obtained from the public database Lnc2Cancer 2.0 (http://www.bio-bigdata.net/lnc2cancer) for GSEA by using the fgsea package (version $1.12.0$).^{223, 224}

4.2.8. Code Availability

Data analysis and codes are available at (https://github.com/biplabua/lncRNA_Analysis_2020).

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Differential Expression of lncRNAs

Our prior study has shown that genes associated with genotoxicity and DNA damage responses are enriched in BEAS-2B cells in response to the DMSe-derived SOA exposure.¹⁹⁹ The RNA-seq results highlighted the true transcriptional changes of the live cells, as the exposed cells did not show significant cytotoxicity (assessed by LDH release) with the concentration of 10 μ g mL⁻¹ after 24 h of exposure.¹⁹⁹ On average, we obtained 27, 28, and 17 million mapped reads in control, O3, and OH treatment groups for mRNA and 1.5, 1.7, and 1.1 million mapped reads for lncRNA, respectively (Table S4.1). We hypothesized that lncRNAs could modulate gene expression involved in BEAS-2B cells in response to the DMSe-derived SOA exposure. Though differential expression analysis we detected lncRNAs in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA from both OH and O3 oxidation experiments.

With the criteria of $log2 FC > \pm 1$ and the FDR < 0.01, the DESeq2 identified 716 and 837 DE known lncRNAs for O3 and OH experiments, respectively, which are highlighted in Figure 4.1a-b. In addition, we found 646 up-regulated and 191 downregulated DE lncRNAs from OH oxidation experiments, and 554 up-regulated and 162 down-regulated DE lncRNAs from O3 oxidation experiments (Figure 4.1c-d). Total 461 of upregulated and 121 down-regulated lncRNAs were common between BEAS-2B cells exposed to O_3 and OH oxidation products (Figure 4.1c-d; Figure S4.2). This finding is consistent with our prior report of similar SOA composition (i.e., Se-containing fragments) and common mRNA expression patterns that are associated with genotoxicity from both O3 and OH experiments. Thus, co-expressed lncRNAs and mRNAs identified in this study revealed possible epigenetic controls of gene expression by lncRNAs.

Figure 4.1. Differential expression of lncRNAs in BEAS-2B cells. (a-b) The Volcano plots of DE lncRNAs in control vs. DMSe-derived SOA from O3 oxidation and control vs. DMSe-derived SOA from OH treated BEAS-2B cells, respectively. X-axis represents log2 (fold-change), and Y-axis represents -log10 (padj). Red dots denote the significantly upregulated lncRNAs and green dots denote the significantly down-regulated lncRNAs. Black dots denote the non-differentially expressed lncRNAs. (c-d) Venn diagram shows the number of the DE up-regulated and down-regulated lncRNAs in $O₃$ and OH, respectively.

4.3.2. GSEA of Cancer-related lncRNAs

Since our previous study found alteration of cancer-associated mRNAs,¹⁹⁹ DE lncRNAs were further analyzed to examine the enrichment of cancer-associated lncRNAs using GSEA (Figure 4.2 a-d). The GSEA shows that a large fraction of up-regulated lncRNAs is cancer-related (Figure 4.2a and c). However, the GSEA analysis also showed some lncRNAs are downregulated and associated with cancer (Figure 4.2b and d). This finding is consistent with our previous study on gene expression profiling.

We found genotoxicity, DNA damage, and p53-mediated stress response pathways significantly enriched, which collectively leads to carcinogenesis.¹⁹⁹ In addition, many of the lncRNAs in the database were experimentally validated and mechanistically linked to cancer development and progression.^{223, 225} Thus, both up- and down-regulated lncRNAs found in this study could potentially contribute to carcinogenesis.

Figure 4.2. GSEA of cancer-related lncRNAs. (a-b) represents GSEA of DMSe-derived SOA from O_3 for up and down-regulation, respectively, and (c-d) represents DMSe-derived SOA from OH for up and down-regulation, respectively.

4.3.3. *Cis***-targeted Genes Prediction of the DE-lncRNAs**

Differential co-expression of cancer-associated lncRNAs and mRNAs provides a putative network of lncRNA-mediated expression changes. We further investigated how DE lncRNAs can interact with the nearest target genes to regulate DMSe-derived SOAinduced gene regulation responses at the cellular level. To answer this question, we analyzed DE lncRNA and the mRNA within 10 kb upstream and downstream.

The hierarchical clustering of lncRNA and their respective mRNA showed that most up-regulation of lncRNA in both samples are correlated with the upregulation of their nearest coding genes (Figure 4.3a). Among these nearest genes, 279 and 285 genes were differentially expressed in cells exposed to O3 and OH oxidation products from the neighboring lncRNAs (Figure 4.3b). In addition, 214 DE genes were common for both O₃ and OH oxidation products (Figure 4.3b). Among the *cis* acting nearby DE genes (Figure 4.3b), 196 and 191 genes showed the same expression trend with nearby lncRNAs for O₃ and OH, while 18 and 23 genes showed the opposite expression trend with neighboring lncRNAs for O_3 and OH, respectively (Figure S4.2-3). GO analysis of common 214 DE genes showed significantly enriched GO terms including T cell homeostasis, signal transduction involved in DNA damage checkpoint, signal transduction by p53 class mediator, regulation of SREBP signaling pathway, regulation of apoptotic signaling pathway, MAPK cascade, intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway by p53 class mediator, cellular response to stress, and cell death (Figure 4.3c and Table S4.4). These results indicated that lncRNAs may participate in gene regulation related to p53-mediated signal transduction, DNA damage, cell death, apoptosis, cellular stress response, and MAPK cascade in BEAS-2B cells via *cis*-acting mechanisms.

Figure 4.3. Predicted cis-targeted genes of the differentially expressed lncRNAs. (a) A heatmap generated from the log2FC values from RNA-Seq results to visualize the expression patterns of responsive lncRNAs and their neighboring genes in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA from O3 and OH oxidation products. (b) The number of *cis*-targeted DE genes predicted by DE lncRNAs. (c) GO enrichment analyses of the DE genes adjacent to the DE lncRNAs. The color of the dots represents *q* (FDR) values, and the size of the dot represents the number of DE genes mapped to the reference pathways.

4.3.4. Prediction of *trans***-targeted Genes of the DE lncRNAs**

Previous studies have suggested that lncRNAs can regulate the expression of neighboring protein-coding genes, as well as genes located on other chromosomes via a *trans* mechanism.226, 227 In this study, we predicted the potential *trans*-targeted genes of the top 20 DE lncRNAs common for both O_3 and OH oxidation products. A total of 2,000 *trans*-targeted genes were selected to construct the interaction network. The top 20 DE lncRNAs have a total of 239 potential *trans*-targeted genes ($log2FC \geq \pm 1$) (Table S4.5).

Among the 239 *trans*-acting DE genes for both O3 and OH oxidation products, 124 genes showed the same expression trend (for up and down regulation) and 115 genes showed the opposite expression trend with the *trans*-acting lncRNAs (Figure S4.5). The interactions between lncRNAs and their DE target genes ($log2FC > \pm 2$) are shown in Figure 4.4. Most coding genes are regulated by distinct lncRNA. Notably, a few coding genes (e.g., *TSPAN11, TNNI1, ACHE, HOXB9, SRCIN1, IGF2, MEX3B, PGPEP1, KCNA7, POPDC2, IQSEC3, ZNF662*) could be regulated by multiple lncRNAs (Figure 4.4 and Table S4.5).

Figure 4.4. Predicted trans-targeted genes (log2FC>|±2|) and regulatory network of the differentially expressed lncRNAs. The regulatory network of top 20 DE lncRNAs (with the lowest FDRs) was built by R package (version 3.6.3) for both $O₃$ and OH oxidation products. The colors represent type of RNAs. Blue: mRNA; red: lncRNA. The triangles denote up-regulation, and the dots represent the downregulation.

4.4. Discussion

The lncRNA response to DMSe-derived SOA exposure is consistent with our previous findings, showing that common O_3 and OH oxidation products (typically Secontaining aerosol constituents) interplay with cellular responses.¹⁹⁹

However, the exact association between lncRNAs and gene expression in this context remains to be elucidated fully. Growing evidence suggests that lncRNAs can regulate gene expression at epigenetic, transcriptional, and post-transcriptional levels, and are widely involved in various physiological and pathological processes.^{206, 228, 229} Our previous study indicated that DMSe-derived SOA induced differential gene expression associated with p53-mediated stress response, genotoxicity, and DNA damage pathways in BEAS-2B cells.¹⁹⁹ These pathways are collectively responsible for carcinogenesis. Here, we demonstrate that cancer-related lncRNAs (as documented in the public database 223) are differentially expressed in response to DMSe-SOA exposure.

Increasing evidence has revealed that altered expression of many lncRNAs can be found in various types of human cancers. Dysregulated lncRNAs may behave like tumor suppressors or oncogenes via interaction with the promoter or enhancer regions of a gene and modulate the gene expression.²³⁰ Therefore, a further exploration of the roles and mechanisms of lncRNAs involved in different stages of cancer development (i.e., initiation, promotion and progression) is critical to provide novel lncRNA-based strategies for the treatment of human cancers. Some well-studied lncRNAs have been reported as oncogenes (e.g., *HOTAIR*²³¹ and *MALAT1*²³²), and tumor suppressors (e.g., *MEG3*²³³). We anticipate that the DE lncRNAs identified in this study could provide valuable information for lncRNA-based biomarkers for cancer diagnosis and prognosis. A recent study reported that after DNA damage, a p53-regulated lncRNA *PINCR* (p53-induced noncoding RNA) was induced nearly100-fold and exerted a pro-survival function in human colorectal cancer cells *in vitro* and tumor growth *in vivo*. 234

In addition, a novel lncRNA *PICART1* (p53-inducible cancer-associated RNA transcript 1) was identified and found to be upregulated by p53.²³⁵ *PICART1* expression was found to be decreased in breast and colorectal cancer cells and tissues. Their study suggests that *PICART1* is a novel p53-inducible tumor-suppressor lncRNA.²³⁵ In this study, we found DE *PINCR* (log2FC 4.88) and *PICART1* (log2FC 3.16) (Fig 4.4, Table S4.5), which potentially suggest that *PINCR* and *PICART1* might be involved in p53 mediated gene regulation when exposed to DMSe-derived SOA.

On the other hand, our study identified lncRNA *LINC01629* (log2FC 4.97) (Table S4.5), which has been reported as a potential biomarker associated with oral squamous cell carcinoma (one of the most common malignancies worldwide).²³⁶ In addition, lncRNA DLGAP1 antisense RNA 2 (*DLGAP1-AS2*) (log2FC 2.34) (Table S4.5) was found in our study, which has been reported to be up-regulated significantly in glioma.²³⁷ It has been confirmed that loss of *DLGAP1-AS2* in glioma cells could induce cell apoptosis, resulting in the suppression of the progression of glioma.²³⁷ Another study reported that lncRNA *DLGAP1-AS2* knockdown may inhibit hepatocellular carcinoma cell migration and invasion by regulating miR-154-5p methylation.²³⁸ Therefore, our above-identified lncRNAs could potentially act as mediators for modulating cancer development following exposure to DMSe-derived SOA.

High mortality and low survival rates for cancers mainly result from the delay in diagnosis.²³⁹ Recently, lncRNAs have been explored as potential biomarkers for early detection of cancers.²³⁹ In fact, increasing investigations show that lncRNAs are cell- and tumor-specific, and play critical roles in many biological processes.

Thus, lncRNAs could be used as diagnostic markers or therapeutic targets in various cancer types.239, 240 Studies suggest that *PANDA* is overexpressed in many tumors and may potentially act as a biomarker for cancer diagnosis.²⁴¹ In addition, *NEAT1* (Nuclear Enriched Abundant Transcript 1) was identified as a direct p53-target gene and it drove tumor initiation and progression, and thus could serve as a diagnostic biomarker.²⁴² Overall, our identified DE cancer-related lncRNAs could also potentially be used as biomarkers for early detection of DMSe SOA-induced health outcomes.

We used the RNA-Seq technique to profile the DE lncRNAs in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-SOA. In contrast to the known mRNA functions, one major challenge in lncRNA profiling is that the functions of most lncRNAs have not been determined, and no existing database is currently available to identify their functional annotations.²²⁷ Mounting evidence demonstrates that lncRNAs can regulate the expression of neighboring (*cis*) and distant (*trans*) target genes, and the expression of lncRNAs is highly correlated with expression of neighboring (*cis*) and distant (*trans*) target genes.^{227, 243} In our study, GO analysis of the DE *cis*-target genes showed connections with the following pathways: signal transduction involved in DNA damage checkpoint, signal transduction by p53 class mediator, regulation of SREBP signaling pathway, regulation of apoptotic signaling pathway, MAPK cascade, intrinsic apoptotic signaling pathway by p53 class mediator, cellular response to stress, and cell death in DMSe-derived SOA exposed BEAS-2B cells (Table S4.4). Most of these pathways were found in our previous study.¹⁹⁹

Here, we found a clear pattern that DMSe-derived SOA is potentially responsible for DNA damage and p53 signaling pathways, and that co-expressed DE lncRNAs could

regulate these biological processes via *cis* mechanisms. LncRNAs can interact with associated mRNAs via the formation of complementary hybrids and it can work from both nearby and distant sites.²⁴⁴ In this study, the top 20 DE-lncRNAs and their potential *trans*targeted genes were identified (Figure 4.4). Some genes (e.g., *SRCIN1, MEX3B, TSPAN11, ZNF662*) were found to be associated with multiple lncRNAs (Figure 4.4). Many of these have been reported to be associated with cancer pathogenesis in previous studies. For example, *SRCIN1* (SRC kinase signaling inhibitor 1), which translates a docking/adaptor protein is co-expressed with both lncRNA *AC145207.2* and *PICART1* (Figure 4.4). *SRCIN1* behaves as a tumor suppressor in breast cancer, and recent studies reported that this is also correlated with delaying tumor progression for colorectal cancer.²⁴⁵ Additionally, *MEX3B* (muscle excess 3 RNA binding family member B) is associated with lncRNA *PICART1* and *AP003396.5* (Figure 4.4). This gene is involved in the process of apoptosis, increased invasion of gastric cancer cells, and tumorigenesis.²⁴⁶ The *HOXB9* (homeobox superfamily, cluster B 9) gene is involved with both lncRNA *DDIT4-AS1* and *AC010761.5*. This gene can regulate lung adenocarcinoma progression.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, *TSPAN11* (Tetraspanin 11) is co-expressed with both *AL139423.1* and *AL133415.1*, which has the potential to influence invasiveness and metastasis of cancer cells.²⁴⁸

ZNF662 (zinc finger protein 662)*,* which is the largest family of sequence-specific DNA binding proteins and encoded by 2% of human genes, 2% is co-expressed with both *PINCR* and *DLGAP1-AS2* (Figure 4.4). It has been reported that epigenetic changes of *ZNF662* genes may be associated with the development and progression of oral squamous cell carcinoma.²⁵⁰ Gene *IGF2* (insulin-like growth factor 2) is involved with both lncRNA *AC145207.2* and *AL354766.2* (Figure 4.4), which can regulate lung tumorigenesis in lung epithelial cells by promoting exocytosis of *IGF2*. ²⁵¹ All these above findings indicate that lncRNAs may regulate these genes to participate in the regulation of cancer progression via *trans* mechanisms.

While the current study provides novel information at the transcriptomic level regarding cellular responses to DMSe-derived SOA through epigenetic mechanisms, cautions are needed in interpretation of results. First, the exposure was carried out using an immortalized (BEAS-2B) human bronchial epithelial cell line that does not differentiate or develop tight junctions. In addition, many lncRNAs show tissue-specific expression patterns. Future studies are warranted to utilize primary cell cultures or *in vivo* inhalation designs to investigate the transcriptional and epigenetic changes induced by DMSe-derived SOA exposure. Further functional validation at the phenotype level will also be required to demonstrate the e \square ects on the changes of DMSe-derived SOA exposure from the epigenetic perspective.

4.5. Conclusion

Taken together, lncRNAs constitute a critical hidden layer of gene regulation in complex organisms that may contribute to lung carcinogenesis and its complications through dysregulation of gene expression.²⁵²⁻²⁵⁴ By profiling the expression of both lncRNAs and mRNAs, our findings indicate that lncRNAs are potentially involved in the modulation of DNA damage responses in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-SOA. Specifically, cancer-related lncRNAs were found to be differentially expressed, and these lncRNAs may modulate carcinogenesis via *cis* and *trans* regulatory mechanisms. GO

network analysis of *cis*-targeted genes showed significantly enriched GO terms for DNA damage, apoptosis, and p53-mediated stress response pathways. Among the top 20 potential *trans*-acting lncRNAs, 4 lncRNAs (e.g., *PINCR, PICART1, DLGAP1-AS2, LINC01629*) are linked to human carcinogenesis. Our findings provide a useful resource for further investigation of whether specific lncRNAs or a set of lncRNAs identified here can serve as biomarkers for lung carcinogenesis. Therefore, validation of the affected biological functions is required to confirm their clinical significance.

4.6. Supplementary Information

Figure S4.1. The workflow for RNA-Seq data analysis for lncRNAs.

Figure S4.2. Correlation of differentially expressed lncRNAs in BEAS-2B cells exposed to DMSe-derived SOA from O3 and OH oxidation.

Sample	mRNA	IncRNA
Control#1	30991631	1658724
Control#2	32203734	1802536
Control#3	20674281	1216303
$O_3#1$	28334958	1807673
$O_3#2$	26522679	1667846
$O_3#3$	30726267	1930738
OH#1	14129905	906934
OH#2	20597118	1332204
OH#3	19334403	1202592

Table S4.1. Number of reads aligned to mRNA and lncRNA.

lncRNAs Nearby Genes **lncRNA ID lncRNA** symbol **log2F C FDR value statu** Gene ID **Gene symbol** $\frac{log2F}{C}$ **FDR** value **statu s** ENSG00000272411.1 AC116312.1 4.58 4.46E-03 Up ENSG00000169247 SH3TC2 -3.00 3.92E-36 Down ENSG00000256006.1 AC084117.1 -2.54 6.80E-03 Down ENSG00000134333 LDHA -2.91 0.00E+00 Down ENSG00000227220.1 AL133346.1 -2.74 1.67E-74 Down ENSG00000118523 CTGF -2.72 0.00E+00 Down ENSG00000261604.1 AC114947.2 -2.46 6.63E-89 Down ENSG00000112972 HMGCS1 -2.69 0.00E+00 Down ENSG00000265415.1 AC099850.4 -2.24 ####### Down ENSG00000068489 PRR11 -2.26 7.11E-75 Down ENSG00000228404.1 AP001468.1 -1.63 5.71E-07 Down ENSG00000160285 LSS -2.18 2.71E-77 Down ENSG00000242396.1 AC096536.2 -2.08 3.80E-43 Down ENSG00000116133 DHCR24 -2.13 6.83E-85 Down ENSG00000258232.2 AC125611.3 -2.03 1.01E-80 Down ENSG00000167553 TUBA1C -2.12 4.99E-183 Down ENSG00000271795.1 AC011337.1 -1.61 4.95E-08 Down ENSG00000086570 FAT2 -2.08 2.44E-32 Down

Table S4.2: Expression information of DE-lncRNAs and nearby protein-coding genes for	
O3 oxidation.	

	lncRNAs					Nearby Genes			
lncRNA ID	lncRNA symbol	log2FC	FDR value	status	Gene ID	Gene symbol	log2FC	FDR value	status
ENSG00000265784.1	AC006441.3	-1.11	1.09E-48	Down	ENSG00000002834	LASP1	-1.29	9.73E-40	Down
ENSG00000260510.1	AC004381.1	4.80	9.66E-04	Up	ENSG00000005187	ACSM3	1.23	2.93E-17	Up
ENSG00000246640.1	PICART1	2.66	9.09E-77	Up	ENSG00000005884	ITGA3	-1.27	5.10E-59	Down
ENSG00000264044.1	AC005726.2	-1.21	1.73E-12	Down	ENSG00000007202	KIAA0100	-1.27	7.57E-32	Down
ENSG00000272940.1	U62317.3	4.65	3.16E-03	Up	ENSG00000008735	MAPK8IP2	2.00	4.11E-27	Up
ENSG00000272356.1	AL080317.2	1.33	1.13E-21	Up	ENSG00000009413	REV3L	1.25	1.11E-22	Up
ENSG00000268189.2	AC005785.1	1.29	1.24E-29	Up	ENSG00000011243	AKAP8L	1.27	2.87E- 107	Up
ENSG00000231964.1	AL731567.1	5.87			ENSG00000012779	ALOX5	5.77	2.92E-67	
			9.07E-06	Up					Up
ENSG00000244738.1	AC026316.3	4.75	4.64E-03	Up	ENSG00000013297	CLDN11	-1.30	1.31E-56	Down
ENSG00000273361.1	AC021016.3	-1.25	2.67E-03	Down	ENSG00000018280	SLC11A1	4.22	2.75E-05	Up
ENSG00000233589.1	AL138789.1	-1.01	9.59E-19 4.97E-	Down	ENSG00000024526	DEPDC1	-1.08	1.08E-43 $2.11E -$	Down
ENSG00000234961.1	AL133415.1	-1.65	112	Down	ENSG00000026025	VIM	-1.65	133	Down
ENSG00000232358.1	AL050404.1	1.04	7.49E-07	Up	ENSG00000026559	KCNG1	1.11	1.78E-18	Up
ENSG00000253389.2	AC113133.1	5.96	2.32E-05	Up	ENSG00000029534	ANK1	3.42	2.23E-60	Up
ENSG00000246323.2	AC113382.1	1.51	2.07E-07	Up	ENSG00000031003	FAM13B	1.36	2.41E-27	Up
ENSG00000240963.1	AL645465.1	-1.21	4.27E-18	Down	ENSG00000035687	ADSS	-1.18	2.11E-85	Down
ENSG00000260618.1	AC025917.1	1.75	1.24E-14	Up	ENSG00000047346	FAM214A	1.65	3.49E-77	Up
ENSG00000270012.1	AC232271.1	-1.27	2.09E-05	Down	ENSG00000049769	PPP1R3F	1.63	5.25E-21	Up
ENSG00000253653.1	AC009185.1	4.41	2.13E-07	Up	ENSG00000055163	CYFIP2	4.64	$0.00E + 00$	Up
ENSG00000177699.4	AC011944.1	2.42	2.97E-06	Up	ENSG00000058335	RASGRF1	3.06	1.50E-21	Up
ENSG00000249906.1	AC006487.1	1.72	5.74E-13	Up	ENSG00000064300	NGFR	1.67	5.21E-33	Up
ENSG00000262966.2	AC005695.1	5.77	1.77E-05	Up	ENSG00000065320	NTN1	4.39	4.96E-78	Up
ENSG00000273123.1	AC020634.2	4.69	9.22E-03	Up	ENSG00000065534	MYLK	3.66	1.32E- 151	Up
ENSG00000265415.1	AC099850.4	-2.34	4.90E- 112	Down	ENSG00000068489	PRR11	-2.44	5.63E-81	Down
ENSG00000265840.1	AC010761.5	2.62	2.85E- 135	Up	ENSG00000076604	TRAF4	2.45	$0.00E + 00$	Up
ENSG00000265474.1	AC010761.4	2.04	4.14E-81	Up	ENSG00000076604	TRAF4	2.45	$0.00E + 00$	Up
ENSG00000266456.1	AP001178.3	2.42	3.83E-19	Up	ENSG00000079101	CLUL1	3.45	1.89E-27	Up
ENSG00000269899.1	AC025857.2	-2.19	6.98E-08	Down	ENSG00000079459	FDFT1	-1.67	1.51E- 125	Down
ENSG00000271730.1	AL390208.1	3.16	2.43E-85	Up	ENSG00000080546	SESN1	3.22	$0.00E + 00$	Up
ENSG00000255202.1	AL049629.1	1.63	3.41E-03	Up	ENSG00000085063	CD59	-1.20	1.68E-53	Down
ENSG00000255092.1	AC010768.2	5.13	1.30E-03	Up	ENSG00000085117	CD82	2.49	1.06E- 210	Up
ENSG00000254693.1	AC010768.1	2.70	6.77E-95	Up	ENSG00000085117	CD82	2.49	1.06E- 210	Up
ENSG00000254933.1	AP000785.1	4.72	3.41E-03	Up	ENSG00000085741	WNT11	4.14	7.01E-04	Up
ENSG00000271795.1	AC011337.1	-1.95	1.02E-08	Down	ENSG00000086570	FAT2	-2.75	1.48E-46	Down
ENSG00000267898.1	AC026803.2	3.07	6.07E-09	Up	ENSG00000087088	BAX	1.55	3.84E-82	Up
ENSG00000257042.1	AC008011.2	-1.96 2.16	6.31E-15	Down Up	ENSG00000087494 ENSG00000088538	PTHLH	-1.92 1.69	9.26E-35	Down
ENSG00000273356.1	LINC02019		8.67E-07			DOCK3		4.42E-03	Up

Table S4.3: Expression information of DE-lncRNAs and nearby protein-coding genes for OH oxidation.

		Set	Candidate	
GO term ID	q-value	size	containde	GO term name
GO:0005515	2.06E-16	11866	487 (4.1%)	protein binding
GO:0044424	7.68E-14	14513	553 (3.8%)	intracellular part
GO:0005622	7.68E-14	14539	553 (3.8%)	intracellular
GO:0005829	3.34E-12	5109	$253(5.0\%)$	cytosol
GO:0044444	1.73E-11	9698	407 (4.2%)	cytoplasmic part
GO:0005737	2.49E-11	11575	463 (4.0%)	cytoplasm
GO:0043229	3.21E-11	12754	496 (3.9%)	intracellular organelle
GO:0043227	5.37E-10	12507	484 (3.9%)	membrane-bounded organelle
GO:0043231	1.41E-08	10999	434 (4.0%)	intracellular membrane-bounded organelle
GO:0044446	1.94E-07	9279	373 (4.0%)	intracellular organelle part
GO:0043233	6.48E-07	5283	234 (4.4%)	organelle lumen
GO:0071704	7.88E-07	11025	428 (3.9%)	organic substance metabolic process
GO:0044237	7.88E-07	10637	415 (3.9%)	cellular metabolic process
GO:0044238	7.88E-07	10663	415 (3.9%)	primary metabolic process
GO:0048522	1.11E-06	5324	242 (4.6%)	positive regulation of cellular process
GO:0070013	1.31E-06	5283	$234(4.4\%)$	intracellular organelle lumen
GO:0005634	2.53E-06	7415	308 (4.2%)	nucleus
GO:0044877	3.17E-06	1094	$69(6.3\%)$	protein-containing complex binding
GO:0005654	9.81E-06	3520	166(4.7%)	nucleoplasm
GO:0006807	1.10E-05	10174	393 (3.9%)	nitrogen compound metabolic process
GO:0080090	2.03E-05	6071	261 (4.3%)	regulation of primary metabolic process
GO:0043228	2.19E-05	4260	$189(4.5\%)$	non-membrane-bounded organelle
GO:0043230	2.19E-05	2166	$110(5.1\%)$	extracellular organelle
GO:0031981	2.90E-05	4134	186 (4.5%)	nuclear lumen
GO:0070062	3.11E-05	2142	$110(5.1\%)$	extracellular exosome
GO:0044260	3.22E-05	8256	333 (4.1%)	cellular macromolecule metabolic process
GO:0048518	3.22E-05	6051	258 (4.3%)	positive regulation of biological process
GO:0044428	3.37E-05	4521	$199(4.4\%)$	nuclear part
GO:0043170	3.62E-05	9445	370 (3.9%)	macromolecule metabolic process
GO:1903561	3.76E-05	2164	$110(5.1\%)$	extracellular vesicle
GO:0051641	3.90E-05	2871	138 (4.8%)	cellular localization
GO:0043232	4.12E-05	4250	188 (4.4%)	intracellular non-membrane-bounded organelle
GO:0031323	5.50E-05	6130	$260(4.3\%)$	regulation of cellular metabolic process
GO:0051171	6.62E-05	5904	251 (4.3%)	regulation of nitrogen compound metabolic process
GO:0005912	6.75E-05	540	$39(7.2\%)$	adherens junction
GO:0031982	6.81E-05	3851	172 (4.5%)	vesicle
GO:0019222	6.85E-05	6671	276 (4.2%)	regulation of metabolic process
GO:0060255	7.55E-05	6156	259 (4.2%)	regulation of macromolecule metabolic process
GO:0070161	8.86E-05	556	39 (7.0%)	anchoring junction

Table S4.4: Gene ontology (GO) for *cis*-targeted genes.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Implications

Overall, this dissertation utilized molecular and toxicogenomic approaches to investigate biological responses to PM from traffic-related and natural emissions. In the literature review in Chapter I, we assessed the current scientific evidence by searching the keywords of "traffic related air pollution", "particulate matter", "human health", and "metabolic syndrome" from 1980 to 2018 of traffic-related PM-induced cardiometabolic syndrome. It was an initial step to formulate research questions about the traffic-related PM and their health effects. Our findings reveal consistent correlations between trafficrelated PM exposure and measured cardiometabolic health endpoints. We found that the development of cardiometabolic symptoms can occur through chronic systemic inflammation and increased oxidative stress. We suggested that additional research was needed to investigate the detailed chemical composition of PM constituents, atmospheric transformations, and the modes of action to induce adverse health effects. Furthermore, we highlighted that future studies could explore the roles of genetic and epigenetic factors in influencing cardiometabolic health outcomes by integrating multi-omics approaches (e.g., genomics, epigenomics, and transcriptomics) to provide a comprehensive assessment of biological perturbations caused by traffic-related PM. Based on our literature review, we designed our experiments and selected gasoline exhaust particles as our source of exposure in Chapter II.

We assessed the toxicological potencies of PM emissions from a modern vehicle equipped with a gasoline direct injection (GDI) engine when operated on eight different fuels with varying aromatic hydrocarbon and ethanol contents. Testing was conducted over

the LA92 driving cycle, using a chassis dynamometer with a constant volume sampling system, where particles were collected onto Teflon filters. The extracted PM constituents were analyzed for their oxidative potential using the dithiothreitol (DTT) chemical assay and exposure-induced gene expression in human lung cells. Different trends of DTT activities were seen when testing PM samples in 100% aqueous buffer solutions versus elevated fraction of methanol in aqueous buffers (50:50), indicating the effect of solubility of organic PM constituents on the measured oxidative potential. The Higher aromatic content in fuels corresponded to higher DTT activities in PM. In the literature review we observed that chronic systemic inflammation and increased oxidative stress are the main identified pathways leading to cardiometabolic disease. Therefore, we selected a few biomarkers related to oxidative stress and inflammation Each of the selected biomarkers was significantly altered with the gasoline exhaust particles exposure. Exposure to PM exhaust upregulated the expression of *HMOX-1*, but downregulated the expression of *IL-6*, *TNF-α*, *CCL5* and *NOS2* in BEAS-2B cells. The principal component regression analysis revealed different patterns of correlations. Aromatics content contributed to more significant PAH-mediated *IL-6* downregulation, whereas ethanol content was associated with decreased downregulation of *IL-6*. Our findings highlighted the key role of fuel composition in modulating the toxicological responses to GDI PM emissions. Chapter II confirms the findings of our literature review that inflammation and oxidative stress are two important pathways for traffic-related PM-induced health outcomes.

In the Chapters III and IV, we studied DMSe-derived SOA, a novel natural source of PM. The major source of DMSe compounds is through microbial transformation and plant metabolism in aquatic and terrestrial environments. We investigated the processes of DMSe oxidation leading to SOA formation and the pulmonary health effects induced by exposure to DMSe-derived SOA. In Chapter III, we characterized the chemical composition and formation yields of SOA produced from the oxidation of DMSe with OH radicals and O_3 in controlled chamber experiments. Further, we profiled the transcriptomewide gene expression changes in human lung cells after exposure to DMSe-derived SOA. The oxidative potential of DMSe-derived SOA, as measured by the DTT assay, suggested the presence of oxidizing moieties in DMSe-derived SOA at levels higher than in typical ambient aerosols. Compared to our traffic-related PM (Chapter II), DMSe-derived SOA has more oxidative potential capacity. Utilizing RNA sequencing (RNA-Seq) techniques, gene expression profiling followed by pathway enrichment analysis revealed several major biological pathways perturbed by DMSe-derived SOA, including elevated genotoxicity and p53-mediated stress responses, as well as downregulated cholesterol biosynthesis, glycolysis, and interleukin IL-4/IL-13 signaling. Chapter III highlights the significance of DMSe-derived SOA as a stressor in human airway epithelial cells.

In Chapter IV, we extended our study at the lncRNA level because recent evidence has suggested that lncRNAs can play important role and act as a potential epigenetic factor in gene expression regulation. We performed integrative analyses of lncRNA–mRNA coexpression in the human lung cell exposed to DMSe-derived SOA and identified a total of 971 differentially expressed lncRNAs in the human lung cells exposed to SOA derived from O3 and OH oxidized DMSe. Gene ontology network analysis of *cis*-targeted genes showed significant enrichment of DNA damage, apoptosis, and p53-mediated stress response pathways. In addition, four *trans*-acting lncRNAs known to be associated with human carcinogenesis, including *PINCR*, *PICART1*, *DLGAP1-AS2*, and *LINC01629*, also differentially expressed in human lung cells treated with DMSe-SOA. Overall, Chapter IV highlights the potential regulatory role of lncRNAs in altering gene expression induced by DMSe-SOA exposure.

Taken together, our findings conclude that oxidative stress and inflammatory biomarkers play a pivotal role in the health outcomes from traffic-related PM. Trafficrelated PM can be linked to the global public health of PM for vulnerable people who live in urban areas and are hence exposed to higher levels of traffic-related PM. Through our literature review, the elderly (especially for women), children, genetically susceptible individuals, and people with pre-existing conditions were identified as vulnerable groups. The oxidative potential and health outcomes induced by natural DMSe-derived SOA can have important implications for both urban and rural people. Due to higher volatilization rate of methylated Se under warmer temperature, DMSe-derived SOA emissions potentially can increase in warmer region. Furthermore, because of the relatively long lifetime of the DMSe-derived SOA $(-7-10 \text{ days})$, their ability to travel further distances, and its toxicological potency, DMSe-derived SOA is potentially a new environmental pollutant. We identified some major pathways including genotoxicity and p53-mediated pathways that are perturbed by DMSe-derived SOA. Additionally, we investigated the potential role of lncRNAs in DMSe-derived SOA exposed lung cells and found that lncRNAs might regulate gene expression through both *cis* and *trans* mechanism. Therefore, our identified mRNA and lncRNA could serve as potential biomarkers for lung diseases.

Further functional validation at the phenotype level is recommended for future studies to demonstrate the effects of gasoline exhaust particles and DMSe-derived SOA exposure from both genetic and epigenetic perspectives. Moreover, results from these studies will ultimately inform regulators about health effects due to PM exposure from traffic and natural emissions and help determining strategies to minimize the health risks from PM exposure.

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