DTC-OSTI-MatlabCancerModelling-A

**Main reference:**

[K. Smallbone, R.A. Gatenby, R.J. Gillies, P.K. Maini, D.J. Gavaghan. Metabolic changes during carcinogenesis: potential impact on invasiveness. *J. Theor. Biol.* **244**, 703-713 (**2007**)](http://eprints.maths.ox.ac.uk/566/1/223.pdf)

**Abstract**

Based upon the work of Smallbone et al. we have developed a hybrid cellular automaton to model the adaptation of cancer cells to its microenvironment. Our aim is to replicate Smallbone’s results with our own MatLab code. The code is a mathematical model of a theoretical model proposed by Gatenby and Gillies (2004). Gatenby and Gillies hypothesised that cancerous growth starts with hyper-plasticity (increased proliferation) in cells. Initially, cell survival and proliferation is limited by oxygen levels, as dictated by the oxygen diffusion limit away from blood vessels. Any adaptations by cells that reduce the reliance on oxygen for ATP production are promoted and result in cell proliferation towards the glucose diffusion limit. Reduced oxygen reliance is associated with an up-regulation in glycolysis and an increase in anaerobic metabolism. As a by-product of glycolysis, acidification of the local environment is observed (increased levels in lactic acid), that now acts as the proliferation limit by inducing cell death (both necrotic and apoptotic). Low pH promotes the next stage in cellular evolution with the emergence of acid-resistance (i.e. resistance to acid-induced toxicity). The cellular phenotype has a significant proliferation advantage because it will acidify the surroundings in a way that is toxic to its competitors but harmless to itself. By using mathematical methods to examine cellular evolution of premalignant cells within anatomical constraints, Smallbone suggests Gatenby and Gillies’ sequence is integral in the formation of invasive cancer tissue. He goes on to predict that the transition from self-limited premalignant growth to invasive cancer could be delayed or prevented by interrupting the hypoxia-glycolysis-acidosis cycle.

**Introduction**

Cancer-related diseases cause 7 million deaths worldwide every year (The World Health Report 2006) despite significant improvements in understanding, diagnosing and treatment of the disease. The use of mathematical and computation models may be central to the next step in understanding cancer progression and dynamics in patients (L. Preziosi et al. & E. Y. Rodin et al.).

Cancerous cells often show increased rates in glycolysis (glucose consumption) as a result of persistent increases in anaerobic metabolism. Importantly the phenomenon is not observed solely around hypoxic tissue where there is irregular and disordered vascular coverage. Glycolytic cells are observed even in the presence of oxygen where aerobic metabolism would be expected to dominate. Anaerobic metabolism is very inefficient at extracting energy from glucose, and to compensate a several-fold increase in cellular glucose consumption is observed (Di Chiro et al., 1987).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that linear, intuitive word-models cannot explain the complex dynamics in multi-scale systems (such as carcinogenesis) (Gatenby et al. 2002; Gatenby and Maini, 2003; Komarova, 2005). Instead a detailed mathematical model is required. In Smallbone’s study, he uses evolutionary models of carcinogenesis with explicit spatial parameters to accommodate the geometry of early tumour development. The method uses a hybrid cellular automaton (Anderson, 2005; Patel et al, 2001). The advantage of an automaton model is that each cell can be treated as discrete individuals such that cellular processes (proliferation, death, adaptation and metabolite consumption/production) can be modelled for each cell individually. The automaton is described as hybrid because metabolite distribution (oxygen, glucose and H+ concentrations) are allowed to form a continuous field across the cells.

**Materials and Methods**

Our hybrid automaton was designed using the guidelines and parameters outlined by Smallbone et al. The conditions of the automaton is stored in 5 matrices of size height x width. Each one holds information on one of the five variables: cell state, ATP, glucose, hydrogen (pH) or oxygen. The first matrix contains information of the state of the cell in each element. An element can be empty, contain healthy cell, or contain a tumour cell in one of seven states. A tumour cell can be hyperplastic, glycolic, acid-resistant or any combination of the three.

The automaton is initialised and updated according to the following structure:

**A – Initialise conditions**

Set up 5 matrices of size height x weight:

1. State: all elements ‘empty’ except the bottom row, which are marked as 1 (or normal cells).
2. ATP: All elements with state > 0 marked as a=1. Otherwise a=0.
3. Glucose: All elements with state > 0 marked as g=1. Otherwise g=0.
4. Oxygen: All elements with state > 0 marked as c=1. Otherwise c=0.
5. Hydrogen: All elements marked as h=0.

*Input:* params.

*Output:* Matrices(state,ATP,glucose,oxygen,hydrogen).

**B – Cellular Automata**

Implement changes in cell state (cell division, metabolism, death and evolution).

*Inputs:* ATP, hydrogen, state, oxygen, params.

*Outputs:* state.

**C – Update ATP matrix**

Calculate new ATP levels for each element depending on the new states of each element.

*Inputs:* glucose, oxygen, state.

*Outputs:* ATP.

**D – Update X matrix, where X = glucose, oxygen or hydrogen**

Calculate new X levels for each elements depending upon the new state of each element and the diffusion boundary conditions.

*Inputs:* state, boundary conditions

*Outputs:* X

**E – Plot results**

Graphical display of each matrix to represent the distribution of cells and metabolites.

The input parameters (params) were selected such that they could be changed upon each running of the model. They can be checked and edited in the file setParams.m. Below they are listed in alphabetical order for reference:

a0 : Minimum ATP for a cell to survive.

c : Rate of oxygen uptake by cells.

dc : Diffusion coefficient for oxygen.

dg : Diffusion coefficient for glucose.

height :Height of the grid.

hn : Normal cell acidity threshold.

ht : Tumour cell acidity threshold.

k : Glycolytic rate constant.

na : Number of ATP molecules produced during complete oxidation.

pa : Adaptation rate.

phi\_g : Rate of glucose uptake by cells.

width : Width of the grid.