

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER-1

Figure 1. 1: Histology of the prostate gland. Well defined acini of the gland surrounded by a single layer of secretory acinar (Luminal) cells; A thin layer of Basal stem cells beneath the Luminal cells; and stroma surrounds entire acini as supporting cells 4

Figure 1. 2: Hypothetical zones of the Prostate. Zone-specific prevalence of prostatic diseases. The peripheral zone (75% of the PCa of the gland); transitional zone (most BPH and 20% of PCa of the gland); Central zone (5% of PCa of the gland 4

Figure 1. 3: Volume distribution in total semen. Prostatic secretions contribute to 25-30% of the total seminal fluid to augment the sperm capacity for fertilization 5

Figure 1. 4: Development of the prostate. Prenatal budding, branching, and morphogenesis of the prostate gland followed by the differentiation of the prostatic cells to form a mature prostate gland during puberty 6

Figure 1. 5: Testosterone levels. Age dependant Plasma Testosterone levels in males .. 7

Figure 1. 6: Steroid hormone actions. Androgens are crucially required from the gestational stage to puberty that form a fully mature and functional prostate gland. 8

Figure 1. 7: AR expression in cell types of the developing prostate. AR expression stimulates a specific cell proportion of the UGM for the differentiation of the prostate gland in the gestational period. Post-birth, the gain of AR expression has been observed in prostate epithelial cells (especially luminal cells) and small a subset of stromal cells during adult age form a fully functional prostate gland 9

Figure 1. 8: Prostate gland cells organization and their identity markers. Prostate cells in stromal and epithelial compartments have been specifically characterized via expression of peculiar protein expression 10

Figure 1. 9: Conversion of testosterone into DHT. Formation of DHT is achieved in the stromal cells of the prostate where 5 α -Reductase-I & II enzyme converts Testosterone into a more potent androgen, DHT 11

Figure 1. 10: Prostatitis. Inflammation in the prostate due to infections leading to urethral constriction..... 13

Figure 1. 11: Benign Prostate Hyperplasia. Non-malignant tumor formation in the transition zone of the prostate..... 13

Figure 1. 12: Prostate Cancer. Malignant tumor formation in the peripheral region of the gland that can metastasize to the different body parts 14

Figure 1. 13: Protein structure of AR representing motifs and phospho-sites. AR gene belongs to chromosome X–q arm. It consists of 8 exons containing vital domains: Interacting NTD (exon-1: Green) with FxxLF and WxxLF motifs, Transcription controlling DBD (exon2-3: Red), Dimer forming Hinge region (exon-4: Yellow), Androgen binding LBD (Exon 5-8: Blue) containing LxxLL motif to identify ARE sites on DNA. The exons and motifs of AR are also illustrated in the 3D-image with color-coding prepared on PyMol™ Software. 23

Figure 1. 14: AR signaling in a prostate cell. (A) Activation of AR by DHT leads to its dissociation from Hsp90/70 and nuclear translocation. Interaction of AR with various coregulators leads to its binding to ARE site of the target gene to be transcribed. **(B)** Activation of AR by Androgen dependent (Androgen Mediated) and Androgen independent (Growth factor and signal transduction pathway mediated activation) 24

Figure 1. 15: AR Splice variants. Truncated DBD or LBD containing protein variants of AR. NTD: N-terminal domain, HR: hinge region, DBD: DNA-Binding domain, LBD: Ligand Binding Domain, CE: cryptic exon 26

Figure 1. 16: AR phosphorylations. (A) Region-specific phospho-sites on AR protein, **(B)** Role of phospho-sites of AR functions and their regulating kinases 28

Figure 1. 17: A model of typical prostatic acini to represent the presence of AR in various cell types. Cells present in Basal, Luminal, and stromal compartments are shown with the degree of AR expression in these cells. AR⁺: Highly expressed AR; AR^{lo}: minimal expression of AR; AR⁻: No AR expression. 34

Figure 1. 18: The crosstalk between epithelial and stromal cells. The secretion of andromedins - GFs and survival factors (SF) from stromal cells regulates the secretion of PSA and human kallikrein-2 (HK2) during prostate disease progression. The production of Andromedins is under the control of AR activation and signaling in stromal cells 35

CHAPTER-2

Figure 2. 1: Schematic representation of the hypothesis of the present study 58

CHAPTER-4

Figure 4. 1: Molecular imbalance through Androgens causes BPH condition in Prostate gland: Increasing availability of androgens and growth factors and decreasing

cell death develops a molecular imbalance that progresses towards BPH condition. (Adapted⁹) 72

Figure 4. 2: Brief plan of work..... 74

Figure 4. 3: Histology and immunohistochemistry of BPH patient tissues. (A) Histological section of surgically excised BPH prostate tissue; Scale 100µm, 20X. **(B)** Immunohistochemistry of AR (green) and Vimentin (Orange) Image:10X-100µm; AR (Red)-P63 (Green), AR(Red), and LGR4 (Green), Image:20X-50µm in BPH patient tissue. 76

Figure 4. 4: Immunoblot image of protein expression profile in BPH patients. The protein expression of AR, pARs213, ARV7, Ki67, LGR4, β-CATENIN, ΔNP63α, OCT4, IGF1, pAkt, PanAkt, SMAD2/3 in BPH patients (N=20). *β-CATENIN and SMAD2/3 has N=19..... 77

Figure 4. 5: Protein expression of AR, ARV7, and pARs213 in BPH patients. The image represents immunoblots and densitometric analysis of AR, ARV7, and pARs213 in graphs. N=20 (AR^{lo}=08; AR^{hi}=12) Mean±SEM; AR^{lo} v/s AR^{hi} patients; *p≤0.05, **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001. 79

Figure 4. 6: miRNA expression profile in BPH patient tissues and BPH stem/progenitor cells. (A) Identification of miRNAs targeting stem/progenitor gene transcripts using TargetScan, mirBASE, and ExiconTM tools; **(B)** miRNA expression of miR-27a, miR-21, miR-34a, Let7f, and Let-7d in BPH patient tissues; Graph represents AR^{lo} patients, Mean±SEM, N=6; AR^{hi} expressing patients N=6; *p<0.05. 81

Figure 4. 7: Gene and protein expression profile of BPH patient tissues based on AR expression pattern. (A) Gene expressions of *LGR4*, *β-CATENIN*, *ΔNP63α*, *OCT4* (*POU5F1*), *cMYC*, and *SOX2* in BPH patients with high and Low AR protein expression conditions; AR^{lo} patients N=6; AR^{hi} expressing patients N=9; **(B)** Protein expression of LGR4, β-Catenin, ΔNP63α, and OCT4 in BPH patients and densitometric analysis represented in graphs; N=20 (AR^{lo}=08; AR^{hi}=12). Graph represents Mean±SEM; AR^{lo} v/s AR^{hi} patients; *p≤0.05, **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001..... 82

Figure 4. 8: Protein Expression profile of AR^{lo} and AR^{hi} patients. The image shows the protein expression of Akt, pAkt, IGF1, and Ki67 in AR^{lo} and AR^{hi} patients. The graph also shows the age of the BPH patient subjects in AR^{lo} and AR^{hi} patients. N=20 (AR^{lo}=08; AR^{hi}=12) Mean±SEM; *p<0.05, ***p≤0.001. 84

Figure 4. 9: AR Expression analysis in PCa tissue samples (TCGA-Dataset) on the cBioPortal tool. (A) AR expression and mutation pattern in different types of PCa Patients (N=3779); (B) Alterations of “Queried gene Set” in TCGA Prostate Adenocarcinoma dataset (N=492); (C) Heatmap of mRNA expression of “Queried Gene set”; (D) Analysis of AR protein expression vs mRNA expression of queried genes (N=492); (E) Graphs represent the relative expression of miR-27a, miR-21, miR-34a, Let-7d, and Let-7f in normal (N=52) v/s prostate adenocarcinoma (N=499) subjects analyzed from TCGA dataset (S-MED); Mean±SD, ****p<1E-05, prostate adenocarcinoma v/s normal subjects; (F) Correlation analysis of AR protein expression v/s protein expression of queried genes in PCa patients (N=347). The correlation was performed using Pearson correlation; p<0.001 was considered significant. Pos: Positive Correlation, Neg: Negative Correlation, na: no association. 89

Figure 4. 10: Graphical summary. AR expression and its correlation in BPH and PCa Patient studies..... 94

CHAPTER-5

Figure 5. 1: Plan of work. (A) The schematic representation of the treatment exposure with brief experimental design. (B) Graphical elucidation of the exploration of AR regulated molecular events in BPH stem/progenitor cells. 108

Figure 5. 2: Flowcytometric analysis of the stem cell markers. The graph represents the expression of BSC surface receptors, CD49f (99.9%), CD117 (87.8%), CD133 (33.9%), LGR4 (47.8%), and P63 (30.5%) in the BPH epithelial cells. Minimum 10,000 events were captured on the flow cytometer. 109

Figure 5. 3: Flow cytometric analysis of stemness specific surface receptors. Expression of CD49f, CD117, CD133, LGR4 (BSC Markers) in BPH stem/progenitor cells treated with TP and Nil; The values represent the percent population of positive cells identified by the flow cytometer 111

Figure 5. 4: Cellular localization and chromatin accessibility of AR in BPH stem/progenitor cells. (A) Image shows cytoplasmic and nuclear localization (Mean±SEM; n=3; ¹p<0.05 CSS vs treated groups of Cytoplasmic fractions) and (B) Euchromatin accessibility (n=1) of AR in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to 4-hour treatments of AR agonists and antagonist. 112

Figure 5. 5: Tumour sphere formation in BPH stem/progenitor cells after treatment with AR agonists and antagonist. (A) Bright-field images of upper panel Matrigel tumorspheres formed by BPH stem/progenitor cells treated with CSS (Control), TP, IGF-1, and Nil. Images captured are under 4X objective and lower panel demonstrate migrated BPH stem/progenitor cells from the spheres (black circle and arrow) after the treatment of CSS (Control), TP, IGF-1, and Nil. Images captured at 4X objective (Scale- 100µm) (B) The graph represents the average size of the tumor formed in >150µm, 150-100µm, and <100µm groups in TP, IGF-1, and Nil to BPH stem/progenitor cells. Bars represent Mean±SEM (n=4). *p<0.05 Control vs Treatment groups, †p<0.05 TP vs Nil groups. (C) The graph represents a total number of tumorsphere formed in >150µm, 150-100µm, and <100µm groups with the treatment of TP, IGF-1, and Nil to BPH stem/progenitor cells. Bars represent Mean±SEM (n=4). **p<0.01 Control vs Treatment groups, ††p<0.01 TP vs Nil groups. (D) Western blot analysis of AR and LGR4 protein expression in the BPH stem/progenitor tumorspheres isolated from Matrigel. The graph represents the densitometric analysis of AR and LGR4 from the western blot image. Bars represent Mean±SEM (n=4). *p<0.05 Control vs Treatment groups. 113

Figure 5. 6: Immunocytochemistry of BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, and Nil treatments. (A) Representative immunocytochemistry images showing extracellular expression of AR (Red) and LGR4 (Green), isotype control (bottom panel), (B) LGR4 (green) and β-Catenin (red), and (C) ΔNP63 (red) in BPH stem/progenitor cells treated with 10nM TP, 200ng/ml IGF-1 and 50µM Nil. Nuclei were stained with DAPI (blue). Magnified images of specific regions (marked with white ‘#’) were shown in each confocal image shown as a sperate box in the bottom left or top right corner. Images were captured with 60X objective, Scale bar: 20µm. (D) Immunoblot images of cytoplasmic and nuclear localization β-Catenin and ΔNP63α in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to 4-hour treatments of TP, IGF-1, and Nil. The graphs indicate the relative protein expression values normalized with ponceau. n=3; Mean±SEM; †p<0.05 cytoplasmic levels of control v/s treatment groups, *p<0.05 nuclear levels of control v/s treatment groups. 117

Figure 5. 7: The protein levels of stemness-associated LGR4, SOX2, OCT3/4, and ΔNP63α markers in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, Nil, and Wort treatments. (A) Immunoblot and graphs represent the protein expression of LGR4, SOX2, OCT3/4, and ΔNP63α in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to the specific treatments; n=3; Mean±SEM; *p<0.05 CSS v/s treated groups; (B) Nuclear and cytoplasmic

localization of Δ NP63 α and γ in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to the 24-hour treatment of AR and AKT activators and inhibitors; n=3; Mean \pm SEM; *p<0.05 CSS v/s treated groups. (C) Heatmap represents miRNA expression in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, Nil, and Wort treatments. (n=2) \otimes = data not available. 120

Figure 5. 8: Protein expression analysis of Signaling proteins and stem/progenitor markers. Immunoblot and graphs represent the protein expression of AR, pAKT, Total AKT, and Smad2/3 in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, Nil, and Wort treatments for 24 hours; n=3; Mean \pm SEM; *p<0.05 CSS v/s treated groups. 122

Figure 5. 9: Effect of ARKD in BPH stem/progenitor cells. (A) The growth curve of the BPH stem/progenitor cells monitored for 5 days after developing ARKD condition by the shRNA construct. The graph represents Mean \pm SEM values; n=5; **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, control v/s ARKD groups; (B) The graphs represent the gene expression data of *LGR4*, β -Catenin, and *cMYC* in control and ARKD BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP and IGF-1 treatments. n=4; Mean \pm SEM; *p<0.05, **p<0.01 control v/s all the groups; (C) Protein expression analysis of AR, LGR4, β -Catenin, Δ NP63 α , and pAkt normalized with individual β -actin levels in Control and ARKD BPH stem/progenitor cells treated with TP and IGF-1; n=1. 124

Figure 5. 10: Co-immunoprecipitation (Co-IP) of the endogenous AR and β -catenin protein. Complex formation post AR activation (TP⁺ and IGF-1⁺) and inhibition (Nil⁺) treatment for 24 hours from BPH stem/progenitor stem cells. Immuno-precipitations were performed using (A) anti-AR antibody, (B) anti- β -catenin antibody, and immune complexes were probed and developed using the western blot method, and (C) Total input of the samples as shown in the image. The anti-rabbit IgG antibody served as a negative control during the Co-IP assay. 125

Figure 5. 11: Interaction of AR and β -Catenin with LGR4 promoters. (A) The image represents the identification of on TATA-box, transcription initiator complex, and within LGR4 promoter and probable AR-motif binding sites on the LGR4 promoter region identified with EPD tools. The specific primer in the promoter region is highlighted with blue boxes. (B) The graph represents Mean \pm SEM values of fold change in gene expression of *LGR4* in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, and Nil treatment for 6 and 12 hours. All the treatment groups were compared with control of the respective time point. n=3; *p<0.05. (C) The graphs represent Mean \pm SEM values of ChIP fold enrichment of AR and β -Catenin proteins on *LGR4* promoter at -843 to -722 and -468 to -286 regions.

n=3; **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (CSS vs AR ChIP); [!]p<0.05, ^{!!!}p<0.001 (CSS vs β-Catenin ChIP). 127

Figure 5. 12: Interaction of AR and β-Catenin with ΔNP63 promoters. (A) The image represents the identification of on TATA-box, transcription initiator complex, and within ΔNP63 promoter and probable AR-motif binding sites on the LGR4 promoter region identified with EPD tools. The specific primer in the promoter region is highlighted with blue and red boxes. **(B)** The graph represents Mean±SEM values of fold change in gene expression of ΔNP63 in BPH stem/progenitor cells exposed to TP, IGF-1, and Nil treatment for 6 and 12 hours. All the treatment groups were compared with control of the respective time point. n=3; *p<0.05. **(C)** The graphs represent Mean±SEM values of ChIP fold enrichment of AR and β-Catenin proteins on ΔNP63 promoter at -630 to -442 and -514 to -275 regions. n=3; *p<0.05, **p<0.01 (CSS vs AR ChIP); ^{!!}p<0.01, ^{!!!}p<0.001 (CSS vs β-Catenin ChIP). IgG and RNA-Polymerase II (RPOLII) served as negative and positive control respectively during ChIP. 129

Figure 5. 13: Graphical summary. The molecular role of AR in the regulation of LGR4 and ΔNP63α articulation in BPH stem/progenitor cells. 135

CHAPTER-6

Figure 6. 1: Brief plan of work..... 146

Figure 6. 2: Androgens regulates the cell proliferation of BPH patient-derived SMCs.

(A) α-SMA and vimentin expression in the isolated cells from BPH patients confirming the presence of stromal cells; image -20X; Scale bar: 100μm. **(B)** Flow cytometric analysis of CD90 and CD34 in BPH patient-derived SMCs. **(C)** AR protein expression in stromal cells upon 10nM-TP and 50μM-Nil treatments: Plotted values in bar graph represent Mean±SEM (n=3; *p≤0.05). **(D)** Assessment of Stromal cell proliferation by MTT upon 10nM-TP and 50μM- Nil treatments: Bars represent percent cell proliferation of each treatment group at different time intervals. Data represented as Mean±SEM. *p≤0.05, **p≤0.01, ***p≤0.001 all groups vs 24-hrs Control (SFM); @P≤0.05, @@P≤0.01 48-hrs Control (SFM) vs 48-hrs treatments; [!]p≤0.05, ^{!!!}p≤0.0001 72-hrs Control (SFM) vs 72-hrs treatments. 148

Figure 6. 3: Activation and inhibition of stromal-AR alter the cell proliferation and clonogenicity of BPH epithelial cells. (A) Cell proliferation of BPH epithelial cells after treatment of Control-CM, TP-CM, and Nil-CM. Data represented as

Mean±SEM.; n=3-4; @p≤0.05 all groups 48-hrs vs 48-hrs Control-CM treatment; !p≤0.05 72-hrs of all groups vs 72-hrs Control-CM treatment; \$p≤0.05 48 hrs vs 72-hrs TP-CM treatment; ###p≤0.001 48-hrs vs 72-hrs Nil-CM treatment. **(B)** Cell proliferation of BPH epithelial cells after treatment of 10nM TP and 50µM Nil in SFM. Data represented as Mean±SEM.; n=3; *p≤0.05 vs 24hrs Control; @@p≤0.01 vs 48hrs Control; !!p≤0.01 vs 72hrs Control. **(C)** Clonogenic growth of BPH epithelial cells treated with AR agonist and antagonist exposed Stromal cells derived CM (Control-CM, TP-CM, and Nil-CM) and brightfield images captured at Day 0 (left), Day 3 (middle), Day 6 (right) and Right panel show crystal violet staining on 6th Day. **(D)** Clonogenic growth of BPH epithelial cells treated with 10nM TP and 50µM Nil and brightfield images captured at Day 0 (left), Day 3 (middle), Day 6 (right) and Right panel shows crystal violet staining on 6th Day of respective treatments during clonogenic growth of BPH epithelial cells. n=2, image -4x and 20X; Scale bar: 100µm..... 150

Figure 6. 4: Stromal-AR does not affect the secretion of IGF-1 in BPH patient-derived SMCs.

(A) Quantitative estimation of IGF-1 in Control-CM, TP-CM, and Nil-CM groups by ELISA; Mean±SEM; n=3; **(B)** Cell proliferation of BPH epithelial cells after treatment of 10ng/ml anti-IGF-1-mAb in each secretome Control-CM, TP-CM, and Nil-CM. Data represents Mean±SEM; n=3;***p≤0.001 all groups compared with SFM Control; \$p≤0.05, \$\$\$p≤0.001 Control-CM vs Control-CM+IGF-1-mAb, ##p≤0.01, ###p≤0.001 TP-CM vs TP-CM+IGF-1-mAb, !p≤0.05, !!p≤0.01, !!!p≤0.001 Nil-CM vs Nil-CM+IGF-1-mAb..... 151

Figure 6. 5: Activation and inhibition of stromal-AR distinctly affect the secretory factors.

The graph represents the specific peaks of stromal cells secreted factors exposed to TP and Nil separated through HPLC. Distinct peaks in comparison to the mobile phase, incomplete media, and drug treatments from stromal cell secretome were highlighted with blue arrows..... 152

Figure 6. 6: Inhibition of stromal-AR affects Myc, AR, and Akt levels in BPH epithelial cells through secreted factors.

(A) Immunoblot images and graphs representing protein expression of AR, tAKt, and pAkt normalized with β-Actin in BPH epithelial cells upon Control-CM, TP-Cm and Nil-CM treatments; Data represented as Mean±SEM; n=3; *p≤ 0.05, **p<0.01 as compared to control-CM; @P≤0.05, TP-CM vs Nil-CM. **(B)** Graph representing transcript levels of cMyc in

BPH epithelial cells upon Control-CM, TP-Cm, and Nil-CM treatments; Data represented as Mean±SEM; n=4; *p≤0.05 as compared to control- CM. 153

Figure 6. 7: Activation of stromal-AR influences the basal/progenitor state of BPH epithelial cells through secreted factors. (A) Graphs representing transcript levels of LGR4 and β-Catenin in BPH epithelial cells upon Control-CM, TP-Cm, and Nil-CM treatments; Data represented as Mean±SEM; n=4; *p≤0.05,**p≤0.01 as compared to control- CM. **(B)** Immunoblot images and graphs representing protein expression of AR, LGR4 and ΔNP63α normalized with β-Actin in BPH epithelial cells upon Control-CM, TP-Cm and Nil-CM treatments; Data represented as Mean±SEM; n=3; *p≤ 0.05, as compared to control-CM; @p≤0.05, TP-CM vs Nil-CM 155

Figure 6. 8: Graphical summary. The image illustrates the role of stromal-AR activation and inhibition in BPH epithelial cells 159

CHAPTER-7

Figure 7. 1: Overall summary of the present work..... 169