

Treatment-Induced Epigenetic Modifications in MCI and Probable Alzheimer's Disease

Christopher Lewis Reading, PhD¹, Juozas Gordevicius, PhD², Jonathan Haroon, BS³, Kaya Jordan, BS³, Elisabeth Rindner, BS³, Clarence N Ahlem, MS¹, Kennedy D Mahdavi^{3,4}, Rama Surya, BS³, Victoria Venkatraman^{3,4}, Harvey Yuan, MS⁵, Sergio Becerra, BS^{5,6}, Bijan Pourat, MD⁷, Taylor Kuhn, PhD^{3,8}, Joseph Palumbo, MD¹, Robert Brooke, MS², Sheldon E Jordan^{3,5,9}

¹BioVie Inc., Carson City, NV, USA; ²Epigenetic Clock Development Foundation, Torrance, CA, USA; ³The Regenesis Project, Santa Monica, CA, USA; ⁴Princeton Pharmatech, Princeton, NJ, USA; ⁵Synaptec Network, Inc., Santa Monica, CA, USA; ⁶Department of Research and Psychiatry VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Los Angeles, CA, USA; ⁷Pourat, M.D., Beverly Hills, CA, USA; ⁸Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA; ⁹Department of Neurology, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA

BACKGROUND

Alzheimer's disease (AD) exhibits global and several tissue- and gene-specific alterations in DNA methylation,¹⁻³ an epigenetic modification generally occurring at CpG sites,⁴ as well as an increase in the epigenetic age,⁵ a reliable indicator of biological age and overall health⁶

Chronic inflammation, thought to be instrumental in AD pathogenesis and disease progression,⁷ has also been shown to induce extensive and aberrant DNA hypermethylation⁸

NE3107 is an investigative, oral, small-molecule, blood-brain barrier-permeable compound with potential anti-inflammatory and insulin-sensitizing functions thought to result from binding to ERK and selectively inhibiting ERK-, NF-κB-, and TNF-α-stimulated inflammatory signaling, without affecting homeostasis, and is being evaluated for its ability to slow or prevent progression of MCI and AD⁹

In a recent exploratory, phase 2, open-label, 3-month clinical trial (NCT05227820) in 23 patients with MCI or mild to moderate dementia, NE3107 treatment was associated with the following clinical improvements:

- Increased perfusion and functional connectivity in several regions of the brain (primary endpoint)¹⁰
- Reduced inflammation (lower TNF-α), CSF AD biomarkers (pTau and pTau:Aβ42 ratio), and oxidative stress (increased brain glutathione)¹¹
- Better neurocognitive functioning (including improved ADAS-Cog11, QDRS, and ADCOMS)¹²
- Significant improvements in the clinician-, patient-, and caretaker-rated Global Rating of Change (GRC)¹²
- Reduction in depression severity and improvement of dementia symptoms¹³

Given the potential roles of inflammation and aberrant DNA methylation (DNAm) in AD pathophysiology, we evaluated the scope of the anti-inflammatory effects of NE3107, including changes in DNA methylation and epigenetic age of the patients in the NCT05227820 trial

OBJECTIVES

This exploratory, phase 2, open-label, 3-month study explored the potential effects of anti-inflammatory NE3107 treatment on epigenetic modifications, specifically DNA methylation, in addition to neurophysiological health, neurocognitive function, biomarker status, oxidative stress, depression symptoms, and functional improvement (GRC), as well as the overall treatment experience, in patients with dementia

Here, we report the post-treatment changes in the DNAm-based skin and blood clock⁶ profile, gene-specific changes in the DNAm profile, as well as correlations among changes in DNAm and other clinical measures from the study

METHODS

Study Design

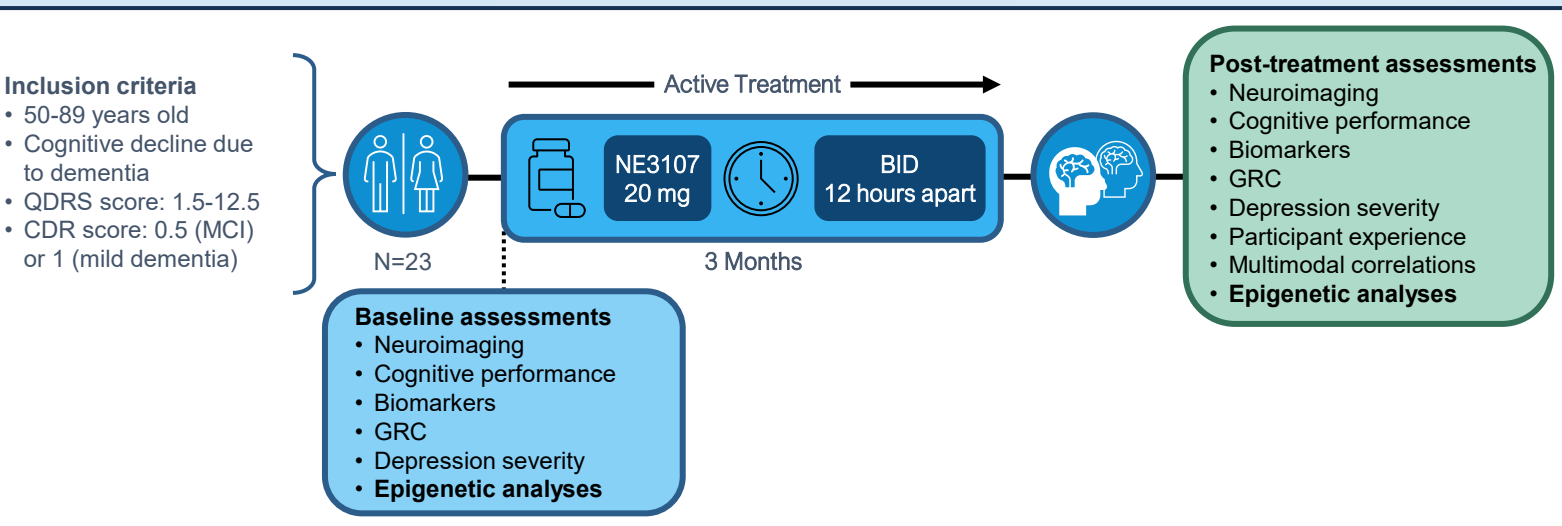
This was a single-arm, open-label, phase 2 trial evaluating the efficacy and safety of 20-mg oral NE3107 administered twice daily (approximately 12 hours apart) to patients with clinical dementia over a duration of 3 months (Figure 1)

Study Population

Key inclusion criteria

- Age 50-89 years
- Diagnosis of cognitive decline due to degenerative dementia
- QDRS score range 1.5-12.5; converted CDR score of 0.5 (MCI) or 1 (mild dementia)

Figure 1. Study design



Assessments

Primary – change from baseline to treatment completion

- Multi-modal brain MRIs performed at baseline and treatment completion assessed structural and functional cerebral alterations associated with AD

Secondary – changes from baseline to treatment completion

- Serological inflammatory marker: TNF-α
- AD CSF biomarkers: Aβ42, pTau, pTau:Aβ42 ratio, and total Tau
- Cognitive performance assessments, including ADAS-Cog11, MoCA, and MMSE
- Participants, clinicians, and caregivers reported a GRC upon study completion
- Depression symptoms: Patient Depression Questionnaire (PDQ-9)
- Dementia symptoms and treatment experience: 60-minute semi-structured participant interviews

Skin and blood clock analyses

Gene-specific DNAm alterations

- Illumina 850K array DNA methylation changes following 14 weeks of NE3107 treatment were sorted and the top 400 CpGs with decreased methylation (decreases >50%) were explored for correlations with changes in clinical results following treatment
- In addition, changes in MCI/AD clinical measures from baseline to 14 weeks were compared with changes in all individual CpG residues in the Illumina 850K array

RESULTS

23 patients were enrolled in the study and received 20-mg oral NE3107 twice daily for 3 months

Table 1. Baseline characteristics

Characteristic	All patients (N=23)
Age, mean (SD)	71.1 (9.50)
Gender, n (%)	
Female	16 (70)
Male	7 (30)
Family history, n (%)	
AD	5 (22)
AD, dementia, unspecified etiology	2 (9)
AD, PD	1 (4)
Dementia, unspecified etiology	4 (17)
PD	1 (4)
QDRS score, mean	5.07
CDR score, n (%)	
0.5	18 (78)
1	5 (22)
MMSE, n (%)	
≥20 (MCI to mild dementia)	18 (78)
<20 (moderate dementia)	5 (22)
PDQ-9, n (%)	
<5 (none to minimal depression)	n=22 7 (32)
≥5 (mild, moderate, or severe depression)	15 (68)
APOE status	
ε2/ε3	2 (9)
ε2/ε4	1 (4)
ε3/ε3	9 (39)
ε3/ε4	10 (44)
ε4/ε4	1 (4)

There were no significant changes in DNAm of T cells, NK cells, or granulocytes (Table 2)

Figure 2. Change from baseline in DNAm (skin and blood clock analysis)

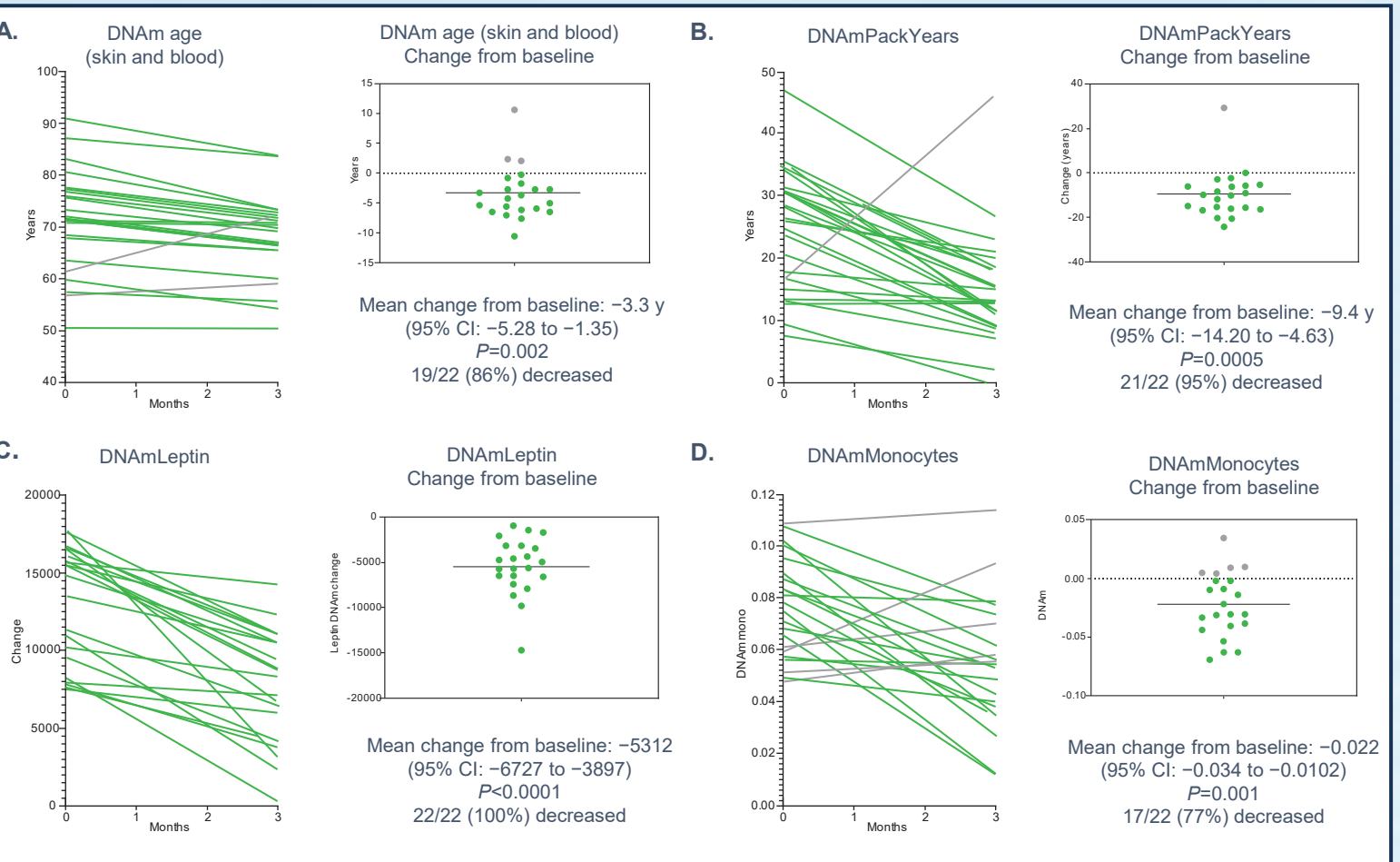


Table 2. Skin and blood clock analysis

Parameter	Baseline, mean (SD)	3 months, mean (SD)	Change, mean (%)	P ^a	Patients experiencing improvement, n (%) (N=22)
Epigenetic age ^a , y	70.8 (10.6)	67.5 (8.5)	-3.3 (-4.7%) 95% CI: -5.3 to -1.4	0.002	19 (86)
DNAmPackYears	24.1 (9.7)	14.6 (9.5)	-9.4 (-39%) 95% CI: -14.2 to -4.6	0.005	21 (95)
DNAmLeptin (CpGs)	13141 (3634)	7829 (3595)	-5312 (-40%) 95% CI: -6727 to -3897	<0.0001	22 (100)
Blood Cell Frequency (Freq)					
DNAmMonocytes (Freq)	0.076 (0.019)	0.054 (0.024)	-0.022 (-29%) 95% CI: -0.034 to -0.0102	0.001	17 (77)
Monocytes (Freq)	0.046 (0.124)	0.044 (0.104)	-0.002 (-4.9%)	ns	-
Correlation ^b , mean (P)	0.156 (0.076)	0.00047 (0.928)			
DNAmCD8Tcell	0.014 (0.019)	0.013 (0.021)	-0.002 (-12%)	ns	-
DNAmCD4Tcell	0.185 (0.105)	0.152 (0.069)	-0.033 (-18%)	ns	-
DNAmNKcell	0.0629 (0.039)	0.0632 (0.054)	0.0003 (0.5%)	ns	-
DNAmGranulocyte	0.667 (0.131)	0.653 (0.103)	-0.015 (-2.2%)	ns	-

^aHeat, ^bR² (b distribution)

Gene-specific DNAm analysis

The top 400 CpGs with decreased methylation (decreases >50%) were explored for correlations with changes in clinical results following treatment

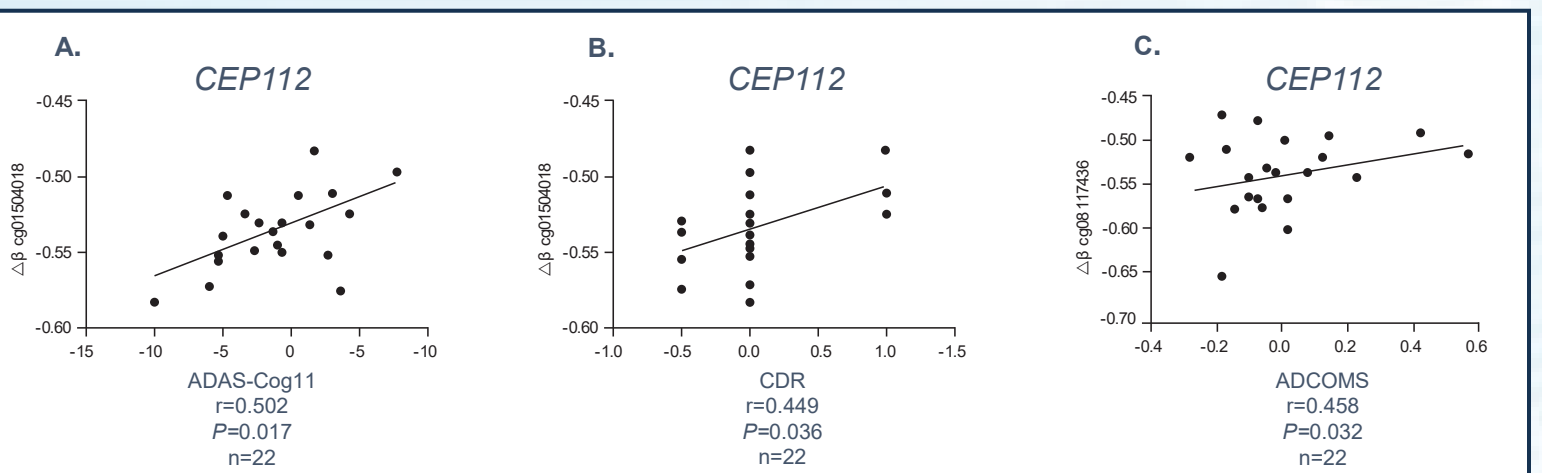
- 366/400 CpGs were associated with identified genes
- Changes for CpGs that showed Spearman correlations (P<0.05) with individual clinical changes (biomarker, cognition, function, and imaging) were highly intercorrelated and were predominantly related to genes for which decreased expression has been implicated in AD
- A total of 167 of these genes showed significant Spearman correlations with changes in at least 1 clinical measure from the study
- 42 of these correlated with ≥2 clinical measures, with correlations in the direction of improvement for the clinical measures (Table 3)
- One such gene, CEP112, which encodes centrosomal protein 112, important for cell division and cell cycle progression,¹⁵ and is downregulated in AD,¹⁶ showed significant reduction in DNAm which was correlated with several measures of cognition, specifically ADAS-Cog11, CDR, and ADCOMS (Figure 4)
- CpG residues with a significant median decrease in the change from baseline were individually correlated with each clinical measure evaluated as part of the clinical trial
- The frequency of significant Spearman correlations for changes in all 850K CpGs with representative genes involved in insulin signaling; anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-apoptotic, and anti-amyloid responses; and neurostimulation was calculated for each clinical measure (Table 4)

Table 3. Gene-specific DNAm analysis

Gene	Probe	Median DNAm change	Significant Spearman correlations with clinical measures*
CEP85L	cg14346555	-0.590	↓ADAS-Cog11, ↑grey matter
SPDYE4	cg21610999	-0.5568	↓ADAS-Cog11, ↑precuneus glutathione
VRK2	cg13118287	-0.568	↓ADAS-Cog11, ↑GRC
CEP112	cg01504018	-0.531	↓ADAS-Cog11, ↓CDR, ↓ADCOMS, ↑GRC
ILKAP	cg20598555	-0.539	↓ADCOMS, ↓QDRS
DBNDD2	cg01373262	-0.561	↓CDR, ↓ADCOMS
CAB39L	cg00467160	-0.544	↓ADCOMS, ↓QDRS, ↑GRC, ↓CSF Tau
SLC37A1	cg11453546	-0.546	↓ADCOMS, ↓CSF glucose
SLC26A1	cg23958868	-0.573	↓ADCOMS, ↓QDRS
NPHP4	cg15324288	-0.528	↓ADCOMS, ↓QDRS
IQGAP1	cg23480821	-0.515	↓ADCOMS, ↓CSF Aβ42
OR10G7	cg18910882	-0.525	↑GRC, ↓QDRS-behavior
WDR59	cg00519320	-0.514	↑PDQ-9, ↑frontal lobe
CXCR7	cg15650509	-0.549	↓CSF pTau, ↓CSF pTau/Aβ42, ↓CSF Tau
KIR2DL3	cg01171428	-0.550	↑precuneus glutathione, ↓CSF Aβ42, ↓systolic BP
PAIP2B	cg16116663	-0.538	↓CSF Aβ42, ↓CSF Tau
SRSF4	cg01993027	-0.564	↓CSF pTau/Aβ42, ↑grey matter, ↑frontal lobe, ↓CSF Aβ42
SELT	cg00832928	-0.593	↑frontal lobe, ↑grey matter
PELP1	cg13593809	-0.578	↑frontal lobe, ↑grey matter, ↓weight
MCM10	cg01490296	-0.572	↑grey matter, ↓systolic BP
EMC2	cg13442241	-0.552	↑grey matter, ↓systolic BP
DHR6	cg04272309	-0.543	↑precuneus glutathione, ↑frontal lobe, ↑grey matter
LRRC69	cg09339848	-0.534	↓CSF pTau/Aβ42, ↑precuneus glutathione, ↑frontal lobe, ↑grey matter
FAM184A	cg24402990	-0.516	↑precuneus glutathione, ↑grey matter
RBPJL	cg27133230	-0.559	↑precuneus glutathione, ↑frontal lobe
INO80	cg00470768	-0.548	↑precuneus glutathione, ↓systolic BP
SLC141A2	cg24073653	-0.533	↑precuneus glutathione, ↓systolic BP

*Arrows indicate the direction of change with decreased DNAm.

Figure 4. Correlations between changes in CEP112 DNAm and cognitive outcomes



Post-treatment improvements in correlations

- The number of significant positive correlations between CDR and the genes with >50% DNAm reduction increased from 11 at baseline to 38 after NE3107 treatment (Fisher exact test P<0.0001)
- Similar increases in the number of significant positive correlations were seen with other clinical measures, including QDRS, PDQ-9, and GRC, suggesting a re-establishment of homeostasis

Table 4. Frequency of significant Spearman correlations between changes in DNAm (individual CpG residues) and clinical measures after 14 weeks of NE3107 treatment

Clinical measure	Insulin signaling ^a	Anti-oxidant ^b	Anti-inflammatory ^c	Anti-apoptotic ^d	Anti-amyloid ^e	Neuro-stimulatory ^f
MRI neuroimaging						
Hippocampus	16	24	9	4	3	1
Grey matter ^g	91	78	24	24	22	26
Frontal lobe	238	152	44	49	36	69
Temporal lobe	181	112	26	28	13	49
Parietal lobe	91	154	40	47	14	74
Occipital lobe	42	28	9	2	2	5
Gluthathione	67	43	27	14	8	20
Cognitive assessments						
CDR	15	23	13	5	5	10
MMSE	31	29	18	7	3	5
ADAS-Cog11	26	16	12	4	9	8
ADCOMS	13	17	4	3	5	8
MoCA	23	8	8	2	2	6
QDRS	10	19	6	3	1	8
PDQ-9	71	49	22	6	17	18
Biomarkers						
pTau	22	26	6	6	3	12
pTau/Aβ42	46	43	19	6	5	15
Aβ42	11	24	9	7	1	15
Tau	34	38	10	2	2	15
TNF-α	23	17	14	7	8	8

^aINS, IGF, IGF1, IGF2, IGF3, IGF4, IGF5, IGF6, IGF7, IGF8, IGF9, IGF10, IGF11, IGF12, IGF13, IGF14, IGF15, IGF16, IGF17, IGF18, IGF19, IGF20, IGF21, IGF22, IGF23, IGF24, IGF25, IGF26, IGF27, IGF28, IGF29, IGF30, IGF31, IGF32, IGF33, IGF34, IGF35, IGF36, IGF37, IGF38, IGF39, IGF40, IGF41, IGF42, IGF43, IGF44, IGF45, IGF46, IGF47, IGF48, IGF49, IGF50, IGF51, IGF52, IGF53, IGF54, IGF55, IGF56, IGF57, IGF58, IGF59, IGF60, IGF61, IGF62, IGF63, IGF64, IGF65, IGF66, IGF67, IGF68, IGF69, IGF70, IGF71, IGF72, IGF73, IGF74, IGF75, IGF76, IGF77, IGF78, IGF79, IGF80, IGF81, IGF82, IGF83, IGF84, IGF85, IGF86, IGF87, IGF88, IGF89, IGF90, IGF91, IGF92, IGF93, IGF94, IGF95, IGF96, IGF97, IGF98, IGF99, IGF100, IGF101, IGF102, IGF103, IGF104, IGF105, IGF106, IGF107, IGF108, IGF109, IGF110, IGF111, IGF112, IGF113, IGF114, IGF115, IGF116, IGF117, IGF118, IGF119, IGF120, IGF121, IGF122, IGF123, IGF124, IGF125, IGF126, IGF127, IGF128, IGF129, IGF130, IGF131, IGF132, IGF133, IGF134, IGF135, IGF136, IGF137, IGF138, IGF139, IGF140, IGF141, IGF142, IGF143, IGF144, IGF145, IGF146, IGF147, IGF148, IGF149, IGF150, IGF151, IGF152, IGF153, IGF154, IGF155, IGF156, IGF157, IGF158, IGF159, IGF160, IGF161, IGF162, IGF163, IGF164, IGF165, IGF166, IGF167, IGF168, IGF169, IGF170, IGF171, IGF172, IGF173, IGF174, IGF175, IGF176, IGF177, IGF178, IGF179, IGF180, IGF181, IGF182, IGF183, IGF184, IGF185, IGF186, IGF187, IGF188, IGF189, IGF190, IGF191, IGF192, IGF193, IGF194, IGF195, IGF196, IGF197, IGF198, IGF199, IGF200, IGF201, IGF202, IGF203, IGF204, IGF205, IGF206, IGF207, IGF208, IGF209, IGF210, IGF211, IGF212, IGF213, IGF214, IGF215, IGF216, IGF217, IGF218, IGF219, IGF220, IGF221, IGF222, IGF223, IGF224, IGF225, IGF226, IGF227, IGF228, IGF229, IGF230, IGF231, IGF232, IGF233, IGF234, IGF235, IGF236, IGF237, IGF238, IGF239, IGF240, IGF241, IGF242, IGF243, IGF244, IGF245, IGF246, IGF247, IGF248, IGF249, IGF250, IGF251, IGF252, IGF253, IGF254, IGF255, IGF256, IGF257, IGF258, IGF259, IGF260, IGF261, IGF262, IGF263, IGF264, IGF265, IGF266, IGF267, IGF268, IGF269, IGF270, IGF271, IGF272, IGF273, IGF274, IGF275, IGF276, IGF277, IGF278, IGF279, IGF280, IGF281, IGF282, IGF283, IGF284, IGF285, IGF286, IGF287, IGF288, IGF289, IGF290, IGF291, IGF292, IGF293, IGF294, IGF295, IGF296, IGF297, IGF298, IGF299, IGF300, IGF301, IGF302, IGF303, IGF304, IGF305, IGF306, IGF307, IGF308, IGF309, IGF310, IGF311, IGF312, IGF313, IGF314, IGF315, IGF316, IGF317, IGF318, IGF319, IGF320, IGF321, IGF322, IGF323, IGF324, IGF325, IGF326, IGF327, IGF328, IGF329, IGF330, IGF331, IGF332, IGF333, IGF334, IGF335, IGF336, IGF337, IGF338, IGF339, IGF340, IGF341, IGF342, IGF343, IGF344, IGF345, IGF346, IGF347, IGF348, IGF349, IGF350, IGF351, IGF352, IGF353, IGF354, IGF355, IGF356, IGF357, IGF358, IGF359, IGF360, IGF361, IGF362, IGF363, IGF364, IGF365, IGF366, IGF367, IGF368, IGF369, IGF370, IGF371, IGF372, IGF373, IGF374, IGF375, IGF376, IGF377, IGF378, IGF379, IGF380, IGF381, IGF382, IGF383, IGF384, IGF385, IGF386, IGF387, IGF388, IGF389, IGF390, IGF391, IGF392, IGF393, IGF394, IGF395, IGF396, IGF397, IGF398, IGF399, IGF400, IGF401, IGF402, IGF403, IGF404, IGF405, IGF406, IGF407, IGF408, IGF409, IGF410, IGF411, IGF412, IGF413, IGF414, IGF415, IGF416, IGF417, IGF418, IGF419, IGF420, IGF421, IGF422, IGF423, IGF424, IGF425, IGF426, IGF427, IGF428, IGF429, IGF430, IGF431, IGF432, IGF433, IGF434, IGF435, IGF436, IGF437, IGF438, IGF439, IGF440, IGF441, IGF442, IGF443, IGF444, IGF445, IGF446, IGF447, IGF448, IGF449, IGF450, IGF451, IGF452, IGF453, IGF454, IGF455, IGF456, IGF457, IGF458, IGF459, IGF460, IGF461, IGF462, IGF463, IGF464, IGF465, IGF466, IGF467, IGF468, IGF469, IGF470, IGF471, IGF472, IGF473, IGF474, IGF475, IGF476, IGF477, IGF478, IGF479, IGF480, IGF481, IGF482, IGF483, IGF484, IGF485, IGF486, IGF487, IGF488, IGF489, IGF490, IGF491, IGF492, IGF493, IGF494, IGF495, IGF496, IGF497, IGF498, IGF499, IGF500, IGF501, IGF502, IGF503, IGF504, IGF505, IGF506, IGF507, IGF508, IGF509, IGF510, IGF511, IGF512, IGF513, IGF514, IGF515, IGF516, IGF517, IGF518, IGF519, IGF520, IGF521, IGF522, IGF523, IGF524, IGF525, IGF526, IGF527, IGF528, IGF529, IGF530, IGF531, IGF532, IGF533, IGF534, IGF535, IGF536, IGF537, IGF538, IGF539, IGF540, IGF541, IGF542, IGF543, IGF544, IGF545, IGF546, IGF547, IGF548, IGF549, IGF550