

# LncRNA FBXL19-AS1 Promotes Proliferation and Metastasis of Cervical Cancer Through Upregulating COL1A1 as a Sponge of MiR-193a-5p

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## Research

**Keywords:** Cervical cancer, proliferation, metastasis, FBXL19-AS1, miR-193a-5p, COL1A1

**Posted Date:** January 7th, 2021

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-139991/v1>

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**Version of Record:** A version of this preprint was published at Journal of Biological Research-Thessaloniki on August 16th, 2021. See the published version at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40709-021-00151-8>.

# Abstract

**Background:** Cervical cancer (CC) is one of the most common and malignant tumors in women. In this study, we aim to explore the role and mechanism of FBXL19-AS1, a novel long-chain non coding RNA with marked roles in a variety of tumors, in regulating the proliferation and metastasis of CC. The expression of FBXL19-AS1, miR-193a-5p and COL1A1 were detected by RT-PCR and western blot. Gain- and loss- of functions of FBXL19-AS1 and miR-193a-5p were performed in CC cell lines *in vitro*. The proliferation, migration, invasion, apoptosis and epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) level were determined.

**Results:** FBXL19-AS1 and COL1A1 were significantly up-regulated in CC, while miR-193a-5p was significantly down-regulated. Overexpression of FBXL19-AS1 significantly promoted the proliferation, migration, invasion and EMT of CC cells and inhibited apoptosis, while knockdown of FBXL19-AS1 had the opposite effects. On the other hand, miR-193a-5p inhibited the proliferation and metastasis of CC cells. Mechanistically, FBXL19-AS1 functioned as a competitive endogenous RNA and inhibited the expression of miR-193a-5p, which targeted at the 3'-UTR site of COL1A1 and negatively regulated COL1A1 expression.

**Conclusion:** FBXL19-AS1 can promote the proliferation and metastasis of CC by sponging miR-193a-5p and up-regulating COL1A1.

## Background

There are many types of cancers in the female genital system, and Cervical Cancer (CC) is one of the most prevailing malignancies in the female reproductive tract, with high morbidity and mortality in female tumors (BRAY et al., 2018). At present, the main clinical treatment methods are surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy. However, there are no specific clinical symptoms in the early stage of CC, and patients were in an advanced stage at the time of consultation. Additionally, the indications for surgical treatment are limited by tumor staging, and the severe side effects of radiotherapy and chemotherapy have harmful impacts on women's psychophysiology (Junichi et al., 2010). Therefore, it is urgent to establish a more effective early diagnosis and targeted therapy strategy.

Long non-coding RNA (lncRNA) is non-coding RNA with more than 200 nt in length and a function of regulating gene expression, which plays a vital role in regulating cell metabolism and growth (Caley et al., 2010). In addition, lncRNA is closely related to the apoptosis, invasion and metastasis of tumor cells and has a significant influence on tumor development (Kapranov et al., 2010). lncRNAs with aberrant expressions are expected to be used as diagnostic markers in multiple tumors. For instance, it has been found that lncRNA HOTAIR is an essential marker for breast cancer diagnosis and prognosis, and an independent risk for breast cancer metastasis and poor prognosis (Costa, 2010). lncRNA MALAT1 has been found highly expressed in cancer tissues such as liver cancer, breast cancer, non-lung small cell carcinoma, colon cancer and prostate cancer (Lin et al., 2007). lncRNA FBXL19-AS1, with a length of

3951 bp, is located in chromosome 16. Moreover, FBXL19-AS1 plays a role in tumor progression. For example, FBXL19-AS1 expression is remarkably increased in breast cancer and promotes its development (Siclari et al., 2010). Some scholars also stated that FBXL19-AS1 promotes the growth, metastasis and invasion of osteosarcoma by targeting miR-346 (Pan et al., 2018). However, the functions and mechanisms of lncRNA FBXL19-AS1 in cervical cancer are still elusive.

MicroRNA (miRNA), as a non-coding RNA with 20 ~ 22 nt in length, can implement in the degradation of the targeted mRNA, thus exerting a regulatory effect in the biological behaviors of tumor cells (Macfarlane et al., 2010). MiR-193a-5p has been proven its participation in the biological processes of various tumors. For example, miR-193a-5p is highly expressed in hepatocellular carcinoma (Wang et al., 2018), lung cancer (Xie et al., 2018) and prostate cancer (Yang et al., 2017), playing a carcinogenic role. However, it has anti-tumor effects on gastric cancer (Chou et al., 2018), osteosarcoma (Pu et al., 2016) and breast cancer (Tahiri et al., 2014) with lower expression in those tumors. Unfortunately, there are few reports about miR-193a-5p in cervical cancer.

Collagen type I alpha 1 chain (COL1A1) is a gene located at 17q21.33 and encoding the pro-alpha1 chains of type I collagen whose triple helix comprises two alpha1 chains and one alpha2 chain (Panagopoulos et al., 2019). COL1A1 has been also reportedly involved in the development of many human diseases such as sports-related tendon and ligament injuries (Wang et al., 2017) and osteogenesis imperfecta (Wang et al., 2020). Interestingly, COL1A1 are proved to be candidate prognostic factors in several cancers such as gastric cancer (Li et al., 2016). Others demonstrate that COL1A1 is increased in CC tissues and COL1A1 activation could inhibit the apoptosis of CC cells (Liu et al., 2017). It can be seen that COL1A1 gene is related to the biological characteristics of CC while the upstream mechanism of COL1A1 in CC remains to be explored.

Several studies have manifested that lncRNA, targeting miRNA and regulating mRNA, plays a crucial role in tumors. Here, FBXL19-AS1 expression was found to be increased in CC tissues and associated poorer overall survival of CC patients. Further experiments confirmed that FBXL19-AS1 has essential effects on the proliferation, metastasis and invasion of CC cells. What's more, FBXL19-AS1, as the ceRNA of miR-193a-5p, was found to upregulate COL1A1 expression. Therefore, we speculate that FBXL19-AS1 can modulate the progression of CC dependently through miR-193a-5p/COL1A1 axis.

## Results

### **FBXL19-AS1 was upregulated in CC tissues and modulated CC cell proliferation and apoptosis.**

To explore the role of FBXL19-AS1 in CC, RT-PCR was used to detect the level of FBXL19-AS1 in CC tissues and cells. The results indicated that FBXL19-AS1 was notably increased in CC tissues compared with that of adjacent healthy tissues ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 1A) and CC cells compared with HUCEC cells ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 1B). What's more, the higher level of FBXL19-AS1 was associated with poorer differentiation of CC and the higher TNM stages (Table 1). Through KM plotter analysis (<http://kmplot.com/analysis/>), we found that in CC tissues, higher FBXL-19-AS1 predicts poorer overall survival (Fig. 1C). Hence, those

results indicated that FBXL19-AS1 might be an oncogene in CC. To explore the mechanism, FBXL19-AS1 was over-expressed in C-33A cells and down-regulated in HeLa ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 1D). Next, the proliferation and apoptosis of the CC cells were tested. The results of CCK8 assay illustrated that the proliferation capacity of over-expressed FBXL19-AS1 cells was increased (compared with the NC group), and the proliferation capacity decreased after FBXL19-AS1 knockdown (compared with the si-NC group) ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 1E-F). Western blot assay was performed to detect apoptosis-related proteins. When FBXL19-AS1 was over-expressed, Bax, Caspase-3 were down-regulated and Bcl2 were upregulated. After knocking down FBXL19-AS1, Bax, Caspase-3 were upregulated and Bcl2 were down-regulated. ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 1G), Therefore, it was speculated that FBXL19-AS1 was a unfavorable factor for CC diagnosis and functioned as an oncogene by promoting cell proliferation and inhibiting apoptosis.

### **FBXL19-AS1 promoted metastasis and EMT of CC cells.**

The Transwell experiment was carried out to explore the effect of FBXL19-AS1 on the migration and invasion of CC cells. The experimental results demonstrated that the migration and invasion were remarkably enhanced after over-expressing FBXL19-AS1, while the opposite results were found after FBXL19-AS1 knockdown ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 2A-B). Moreover, as epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) is a vital factor in mediating CC metastasis, the EMT markers of E-cadherin, Vimentin and Snail were examined by Western blot. The results showed that compared with the control group, E-cadherin expression was decreased after FBXL19-AS1 overexpression, and Vimentin and Snail expressions were upregulated. After knocking down FBXL19-AS1, E-cadherin expression was increased, while Vimentin and Snail expressions were down-regulated ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 2C). The above statistics suggested that FBXL19-AS1 promoted the metastasis of CC cells via aggravating the migration, invasion and EMT of them.

### **FBXL19-AS1 targeted miR-193a-5p.**

By browsing Starbase database (<http://Starbase.sysu.edu.cn/>), the base complementary binding sites between FBXL19 AS1 and miR-193a-5p was found (Fig. 3A). By conducting RT-PCR, it was found that miR-193a-5p expression was considerably down-regulated in CC tissues (compared with normal tissues) ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 3B) and CC cells (compared with HUVEC cells) ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 3C). Besides, by analyzing the relationship between miR-193a-5p expression and the outcome of CC patients via KM plotter (<http://kmplot.com/analysis/>), we found that the CC patients with lower level of miR-193a-5p had less survival (Fig. 3D). At the same time, we found that miR-193a-5p had a negative relationship with FBXL19-AS1 in terms of their expressions in CC tissues (Fig. 3E and F). What's more, miR-193a-5p expression was notably decreased after FBXL19-AS1 over-expression, while it was upregulated after FBXL19-AS1 knockdown ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 3G). To further confirm the targeting relationship between the two, we carried out luciferase reporter gene experiment. The results represented that miR-193a-5p had no obvious effect on the luciferase activity of the FBXL19-AS1-WT vector that was mutant at the binding sites with miR-193a-5p, but miR-193a-5p inhibited the luciferase activity of the FBXL19-AS1-WT vector ( $P < 0.005$ , Fig. 3H). Based on the above results, we believed that FBXL19-AS1 had a targeted binding relationship with miR-193a-5p and negatively regulated miR-193a-5p expression.

### **miR-193a-5p inhibited the malignant behaviors of CC cells.**

To further verify the role of miR-193a-5p in CC, we transfected miR-193a-5p mimics or miR193a-5p inhibitors in HeLa and C-33A cells respectively ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 4A). Besides, CCK-8 and Western blot were performed to examine cell proliferation and apoptosis. The results illustrated that, compared with the NC group, the proliferative level of HeLa cells was weakened miR-193a-5p upregulation, and the apoptosis level was increased, while inhibition of miR-193a-5p enhanced cell proliferation and dampened apoptosis of C-33A cells ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 4B-D). In addition, Transwell experimental outcomes illustrated that the migration and invasion levels of CC cells in the miR-193a-5p mimics group were down-regulated, while those in the anti-miR-193a-5p group were upregulated ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 4E-F). Western blot results showed that E-cadherin expression in miR-193a-5p mimics group was upregulated, and Vimentin and Snail expressions were down-regulated, while anti-miR-193a-5p group showed the opposite trends ( $P < 0.04$ , Fig. 4G). Combined with the above results, we speculated that miR-193a-5p inhibited CC progress as an anti-tumor gene.

### **FBXL19-AS1 overexpression limited the anti-tumor effects of miR-193a-5p.**

Aiming on the exploration of how FBXL19-AS1/miR-193a-5p axis influences tumor progression, we co-transfected C-33A cells with FBXL19-AS1 overexpressing plasmids and miR-193a-5p mimics. The the expressions of FBXL19-AS1 and miR-193a-5p was detected via RT-PCR. The results showed that FBXL19-AS1 notably attenuated miR-193a-5p up-regulation induced by the transfection of miR-193a-5p mimics. On the other hand, FBXL19-AS1 was notably decreased when transfected with miR-193a-5p mimics ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 5A-B). The results of CCK8 experiment showed that the addition of FBXL19-AS1 increased the cell proliferation capacity compared with that in miR-193a-5p group ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 5C). Next, the results of western blot indicated that compared with the miR-193a-5p group, the Bax and Caspase-3 levels in the FBXL19-AS1 overexpression group were attenuated while Bcl2 level was elevated (Fig. 5D). Furthermore, FBXL19-AS1 upregulation significantly accelerated the migration, invasion and EMT of C-33A-cells compared with miR-193a-5p group ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 5E-G). Collectively, the above results suggested that FBXL19-AS1 inhibited the inhibitive effects of miR-193a-5p on CC cells.

### **miR-193a-5p targeted COL1A1.**

Next, we further analyzed the downstream pathways modulated by miR-193a-5p via mirPath v.3 (<http://snf-515788.vm.okeanos.grnet.gr/index.php?r=mirpath>). Two candidate KEGG pathways were found, namely the Steroid biosynthesis and the ECM-receptor interaction, and there were 3 candidate genes potentially regulated by miR-193a-5p (Fig. 6A). Next, TargetScan database ([http://www.targetscan.org/vert\\_72/](http://www.targetscan.org/vert_72/)) was used for predicting the binding sites of the three genes with miR-193a-5p. Interestingly, only COL1A1 was found to have complementary binding sites with miR-193a-5p (Fig. 6B). Following that, RT-PCR was performed to verify COL1A1 expression in CC tissues, and the results illustrated that COL1A1 expression was significantly upregulated in CC tissues compared with that in the normal tissues ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 6C). By analyzing the diagnostic significance of COL1A1 in CC via KM plotter (<http://kmplot.com/analysis/>), we found that higher level of COL1A1 predicts poorer overall

survival and Relapse Free survival of CC patients. ( $p < 0.05$ , Fig. 6D). Besides, we also found that the COL1A1 was lowly expression in normal cervical tissues but obviously upregulated in CC tissues (COL1A1 was mainly located in the cytoplasm CC cells) (Fig. 6E). Next, by conducting luciferase reporter gene experiment, we confirmed that miR-193a-5p targeted at the 3'UTR of COL1A1 mRNA (Fig. 6F). Moreover, gain and loss of miR-193a-5p and FBXL19-AS1 revealed that miR-193a-5p inhibited COL1A1 while FBXL19-AS1 promoted COL1A1 expression in CC cells. Thus, the FBXL19-AS1/miR-193a-5p could modulate CC progression potentially through COL1A1, which was a promising oncogene in CC.

### **Inhibition of COL1A1 weakened CC cell proliferation and metastasis.**

To further explore the functions of COL1A1 in CC development, a COL1A1 knockdown cell model were constructed (Fig. 7A). By detecting the cell proliferation via CCK8, we found that COL1A1 knockdown resulted in a considerable decrease of cell proliferation ( $P < 0.05$ , Fig. 7B). Western blot results illustrated that knockdown of COL1A1 upregulated Bax and Caspase-3 expressions and inhibited Bcl2 expression (Fig. 7C). Meanwhile, COL1A1 downregulation also led to the attenuation of migration, invasion and EMT of CC cells (Fig. 7D-F). In summary, COL1A1 functions as an oncogene in CC through modulating the proliferation, apoptosis, migration, invasion and EMT of CC cells.

## **Discussion**

Cervical cancer is one severe tumor in the female reproductive system. Due to its high morbidity and mortality, women of all ages are susceptible to the disease, especially middle-aged women, which seriously affects women's mental health and social life (Shrestha et al., 2018, Huang et al., 2017). Hence, to identify the molecular mechanisms and therapeutic targets is necessary for cervical cancer occurrence and development. The present study proved that FBXL19-AS1 is upregulated in CC tissues and acts as an unfavorable predictor of CC patients. Moreover, our functional and mechanistical experiments indicated that FBXL19-AS1 promotes CC development via mediating miR-193a-5p/COL1A1 axis.

Unlimited growth and being prone to metastasis belong to the two crucial factors of tumor progression, which are the same for CC. Therefore, many strategies have been applied in the treatment of CC via modulating the apoptosis and metastasis of CC (Qureshi et al., 2015, Markman et al., 2014). Though lncRNAs are limited with gene coding abilities, multiple lncRNAs have been found to be dysregulated in CC and have obvious effects on the malignant behaviors of CC cells. For example, lncRNA SNHG1 was upregulated in CC tissues and cell lines and overexpression of SNHG1 promotes the proliferation, migration and invasion of CC cells (Liu et al., 2018). lncRNA SRA, which participates in cervical cancer cell proliferation and migration, can be used as a potential therapeutic target and prognostic marker for cervical cancer (Eoh et al., 2017). As a novel lncRNA, FBXL19-AS1 was found to play a role in multiple tumors such as osteosarcoma (Pan et al., 2018), breast cancer (Dong et al., 2019) and lung cancer (Jiang et al., 2019). Surprisingly, this study found that FBXL19-AS1 is overexpressed in CC tissues and cells. Besides, the upregulated FBXL19-AS1 predicts poorer survival of CC patients. What's more, it promoted

CC cell proliferation, migration and invasion. Those results confirmed that FBXL19-AS1 is a referable molecular target for CC treatment and prognosis.

Epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT) is a crucial process in many types of human epithelial carcinoma including CC. Losing the epithelial properties (marked by E-cadherin) and gaining mesenchymal characteristics (marked by Vimentin, N-cadherin, Snail) are two main features of EMT (Cervantes-Arias et al., 2013, Guarino et al., 2007). Additionally, EMT is also an important process in the invasion and metastasis of human cervical carcinoma (Li et al., 2018). Interestingly, many lncRNAs are found to affect the EMT of CC cells. For instance, downregulation of lncRNA AFAP1-AS1 not only suppressed the migration and invasion of cervical cancer cells, but also inhibited epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT)-related genes (Bo et al., 2019). Interestingly, FBXL19-AS1 has also been proved to modulate the EMT process of cancers. For example, FBXL19-AS1 upregulation enhanced the migration, invasion and EMT of non-small cell lung cancer (Yu et al., 2019) and breast cancer (Zhang et al., 2019). Here, we also evaluated the EMT of CC cells under selective regulation of FBXL19-AS1 level. Our data showed that FBXL19-AS1 overexpression led to higher level of Vimentin and Snail but less expression of E-cadherin. Therefore, FBXL19-AS1 could regulate the metastasis of CC cells via enhancing EMT.

MiRNA participates in the regulation of target genes through complementary base pairing, thus affecting the pathophysiological changes of diseases (McDonald et al., 2015, Bell et al., 2016). MiRNA exists stably in the blood circulation and has great application value in the early diagnosis, stage determination and prognosis assessment of CC, besides, miRNA also exerts significant effects on the malignant behaviors of CC. Taking miR-497-5p as an example, it directly targeted the multi-comb chromosome box 4 (CBX4) and inhibited CC cell proliferation (Chen et al., 2019). MiR-3647-5p has been shown to target AGR2 to limit CC cell proliferation and promote apoptosis (Liu et al., 2019). Studies have found that miR-193a-5p has an anti-cancer effect in various tumors such as osteosarcoma (Pu et al., 2016) and hepatocellular carcinoma (Li et al., 2019). Interestingly, our study also found that miR-193a-5p was decreased in CC tissues and limited cell proliferation and migration, suggesting that miR-193a-5p plays an anti-cancer role in CC.

Type I collagen is an important member of the collagen family which is a key structural component of the extracellular matrix. COL1A1 and COL1A2 are two members of Type I collagen, interestingly, both of COL1A1 and COL1A2 are dysregulated in several cancers and involved in tumor invasion and progression (Li et al., 2016, The fibrillar collagen family et al., 2010). For example, in breast cancer, the increased COL1A1 level was associated with poor survival, especially in patients with ER + breast cancer. Knockdown of COL1A1 inhibited metastasis and EMT of breast cancer cells (Liu et al., 2018). Besides, COL1A1 is upregulated in colorectal cancer (CRC) and promoted CRC cell migration via WNT/PCP signaling pathway (Zhang et al., 2018). Presently, we discovered that COL1A1 was over-expressed in CC tissues and cells, and knocking down COL1A1 considerably attenuated cell proliferation, migration and invasion and accelerated cell apoptosis. Thus, COL1A1 was proven as an oncogene in CC.

Recently, the lncRNA-miRNA-mRNA network has aroused many researchers' interests, especially in tumor progression. Basically, lncRNA acts as a competitive endogenous RNA (ceRNA) by sponging miRNA, which targets at the 3'UTR of its target gene mRNA. Thus, lncRNA indirectly promotes gene expression (Fan et al., 2018, Ma et al., 2019). For instance, lncRNA NEAT1 upregulated the expression of EZH2 and promoted breast cancer growth by inhibiting miR-101 expression (Qian et al., 2017). In CC, lncRNA DANCR regulated ROCK1 expression by competitively binding to miR-335-5p (Liang et al., 2019). Here, we found that there are binding sites between FBXL19-AS1 and miR-193a-5p by analyzed through Starbase. Functionally, FBXL19-AS1 overexpression inhibited miR-193a-5p expression and also dampened the anti-tumor effects of miR-193a-5p by conducting rescue experiment. In addition, miRpath v3.0 showed that COL1A1 was a candidate gene of miR-193a-5p. Fortunately, TargetScan database showed a binding site between miR-193a-5p and COL1A1, which encouraged us to further explore whether FBXL19-AS1 works in promoting cancer by indirectly regulating COL1A1 expression. Our data indicated that COL1A1 expression was upregulated following FBXL19-AS1 over-expression and downregulated when miR-193a-5p was upregulated. Thus, FBXL19-AS1 upregulated COL1A1 expression by inhibiting miR-193a-5p.

## Conclusion

The upregulated expression of FBXL19-AS1 in CC may serves as a reference index for CC diagnosis. Moreover, FBXL19-AS1 upregulates COL1A1 by targeting miR-193a-5p to accelerate CC cell growth, metastasis, EMT and inhibit apoptosis. The FBXL19-AS1/miR-193a-5p /COL1A1 axis plays a significant role by modulating the development of CC. however, more experiments such as in vivo assays and clinical experiments are needed to further confirm the biofunctions of this novel axis in CC progression.

## Methods

### Tissue specimens.

Forty-six cervical cancer patients who underwent surgical treatment in our hospital from October 2014 to October 2015 were selected. No radiotherapy or chemotherapy or other anti-tumor treatment was given to the patients before surgical treatment. The patients had an average age of 52 years, with the youngest aged 32 and the oldest 69 years. All subjects in this study have signed informed consent, and the research ethics committee of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region Maternal and Child Health Hospital approved the study.

### Cell culture.

Human healthy cervical cells (HUCEC) and human cervical cancer cells (HeLa, Caski, C-33A, AV3) were purchased from the American Type Culture Collection (Rockville, MD, USA). The cells were cultured in an RPMI1640 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, MA, USA) medium containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (Thermo Fisher Scientific, MA, USA) and 1% penicillin/streptomycin (Invitrogen, CA, USA) at 37 °C with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> volume fraction. During the logarithmic growth phase, 0.25% trypsin (Thermo Fisher HyClone,

Utah, USA) was used for cell passage. We selected C-33A and HeLa cells as auxiliary research objects since their large expression differences.

### **Cell transfection.**

Cells, taken from the logarithmic growth stage, were trypsinized and transited into 6-well plates ( $5 \times 10^6$  per well). After cell growth was stable, they were transfected. Over-expressed FBXL19-AS1 plasmids, small interference RNA targeting FBXL19-AS1 (Si-FBXL19-AS1) or COL1A1 (si-COL1A1), miR-193a-5p mimics, miR-193a-5p inhibitor (anti-miR193a-5p and their negative controls were transfected into C-33A and HeLa respectively according to the instructions of FuGENE®HD Transfection Reagent (Roche, Shanghai, China). At 37 °C with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, the cells were cultured in an incubator. After 24 h of transfection, the medium was changed with fresh complete medium and the cells were kept incubated for another 48 h. Total RNA of the cells was extracted for real-time fluorescent quantitative PCR (RT-PCR) to detect the transfection efficiency. After successful transfection, they were used in subsequent experiments.

### **RT-PCR.**

TRIZOL method was performed to extract total RNA from CC tissues and cells routinely, and the extracted total RNA was used to remove genomic DNA by deoxyribonuclease I (Sigma). The reverse transcription reaction was carried out according to the operation procedure of the reverse transcription kit (Thermo, Shanghai, China), and the reaction conditions were: 70 °C, 10 min; 5 min on ice; 42 °C, 60 min; 95 °C, 5 min; 0 °C, 5 min. The fluorescence quantitative PCR reaction system was 25  $\mu$ L, containing 500 ng cDNA template, 250 nmol/L reverse and forward primers, and 12.5  $\mu$ L of 2  $\times$  SYBR Green PCR Master mixture (Solarbio). GAPDH and U6 were used as the endogenous control. Primers for FBXL19-AS1: forward 5'-CCCATTGTCCCCATTTTGCA-3', reverse 5'-AGGCAGCAGGAATCAGTCTT-3'; miR-193a-5p primers: forward 5'-CAGTGCAGGGTCCGAGGT-3', reverse 5'-AACAAATTGGGTCTTTGCGGGC-3'; Primers for COL1A1: forward 5'-CCTGGATGCCATCAAAGTCT-3', reverse 5'-AATCCATCGGTCATGCTCTC-3'. Primers for GHPAD: forward 5'-TGGTTGAGCACAGGGTACTT-3', reverse 5'-CCAAGGAGTAAGACCCCTGG-3'. The reaction tube was placed into the MX3000P Real-time PCR reaction instrument, and the reaction conditions were: 94 meters, 55 meters, 72 meter, 45 cycles, with fluorescence signal monitoring. The  $2^{(-\Delta\Delta Ct)}$  value indicates the relative expression of genes, and Ct value represents the number of amplification cycles passed when the fluorescence signal of the amplified product reached the set threshold during the PCR amplification process.  $\Delta\Delta$  process sample under test (Ct target gene - Ct GAPDH) - in the control group (Ct target gene - Ct GAPDH).

### **CCK8 method.**

C-33A and HeLa CC cells in the exponential growth phase were taken and made into a single-cell suspension. After being counted, cell density was adjusted (1000 cells per well). We inoculated them in 96-well plates (6 replicates in each group, 6 well plates in total) and cultured for 12 h, 24 h, 48 h, 72 h and 96 h. After adherent culture, with the addition of 90  $\mu$ L medium and 10  $\mu$ L CCK-8 solution (Beyotime, Shanghai, China) into the samples, blank control wells containing only CCK-8 solution and medium were

set. After a 2-hour incubation, the absorbance (A) value of each well was evaluated and recorded with a Microplate Reader at the wavelength of 450 nm.

### **Western blot.**

We applied the protein extraction kit to extract the total proteins of different cell groups. BCA method was applied for protein concentration SDS-PAGE electrophoresis was taken to isolate the total protein with 50 µg total proteins per pore. After 2-hour electrophoresis, the proteins were wet transferred to PVDF membranes, sealed with 5% skim milk powder (1 hour) and incubated with primary antibodies of Anti-Bax antibody (ab32503, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-Bcl2 antibody (ab59348, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-Cleaved Caspase3 antibody (ab2302, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-E Cadherin antibody (ab40772, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-Vimentin antibody (ab92547, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-SNAIL antibody (ab53519, 1:1000, abcam, USA), Anti-COL1A1 antibody(39952, Cell Signaling Technology, USA), Anti-beta Actin antibody(ab8227, 1:1000, abcam, USA) overnight at 4 °C. The next morning, the membranes were rinsed with TBST and incubated at 37 °C with the addition of horseradish peroxidase-labeled Goat Anti-rabbit (ab6721, 1:300, USA) (1 hour). The protein bands were exposed by Chemistar™ High-sig ECL Western Blotting Substrate. The experiment was repeated three times.

### **Transwell assay.**

The C-33A and HeLa CC cells were seeded into the Transwell chambers ( $2.5 \times 10^4$  cells/well) 24 h after transfection. The cells in the upper chambers were resuspended in a serum-free medium and the lower chambers were added with medium containing 20% serum. For invasion experiments, a layer of Matrigel (Sigma) was laid inside the chamber to simulate extracellular matrix (final concentration 2 mg/ml, diluted with serum-free medium, 40 µL each chamber, 37 °C, 30 min to 1 h until gelation), while for migration experiments, no Matrigel was added to the chamber. After 24-hour cell migration and invasion, the cells were removed, secured with a mixture of formaldehyde and acetic acid for 15 min, rinsed with PBS, stained with crystal violet, and washed with 1XPBS after staining. Finally, the cells in the chamber were wiped off with cotton swabs, and the quantity of those cells invaded and migrated were counted under the microscope.

### **Dual luciferase activity experiment.**

All luciferase reporter vectors (FBXL19-AS1-MT, FBXL19-AS1-WT, COL1A1-MT, COL1A1-WT) were constructed by Promega (Madison, WI, USA). C-33A cells ( $4.5 \times 10^4$ ) were inoculated in a 48-well plate and cultured till 70% confluence. Then, we used lipofectamine 2000 to co-transfect those luciferase reporter vectors with miR-193a-5p mimics or negative control in C-33A cells. Forty-eight hours after transfection, the luciferase activity was detected following manufacturer's instructions of the dual luciferase reporter assay system (Promega, Wisconsin, USA). All experiments were made in triplicate and repeated three times.

## **Data analysis.**

We applied SPSS17.0 statistical software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) to analyze the statistics. Measurement data were presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation ( $x \pm s$ ). We employed the t-test for the mean of two sample groups and the one-way analysis of variance for the mean of multiple samples.  $P < 0.05$  was considered to be statistically valuable.

## Declarations

### Ethics approval and consent to participate

Our study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region Maternal and Child Health Hospital.

### Consent for publication

Not applicable.

### Availability of data and materials

The data sets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests, and all authors should confirm its accuracy.

### Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Authors' contributions

XMJ and XYH conceived and designed the experiments. XYH, HYS and XHS performed the experiments. HYS and XHS analyzed the statistics. XYH wrote the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

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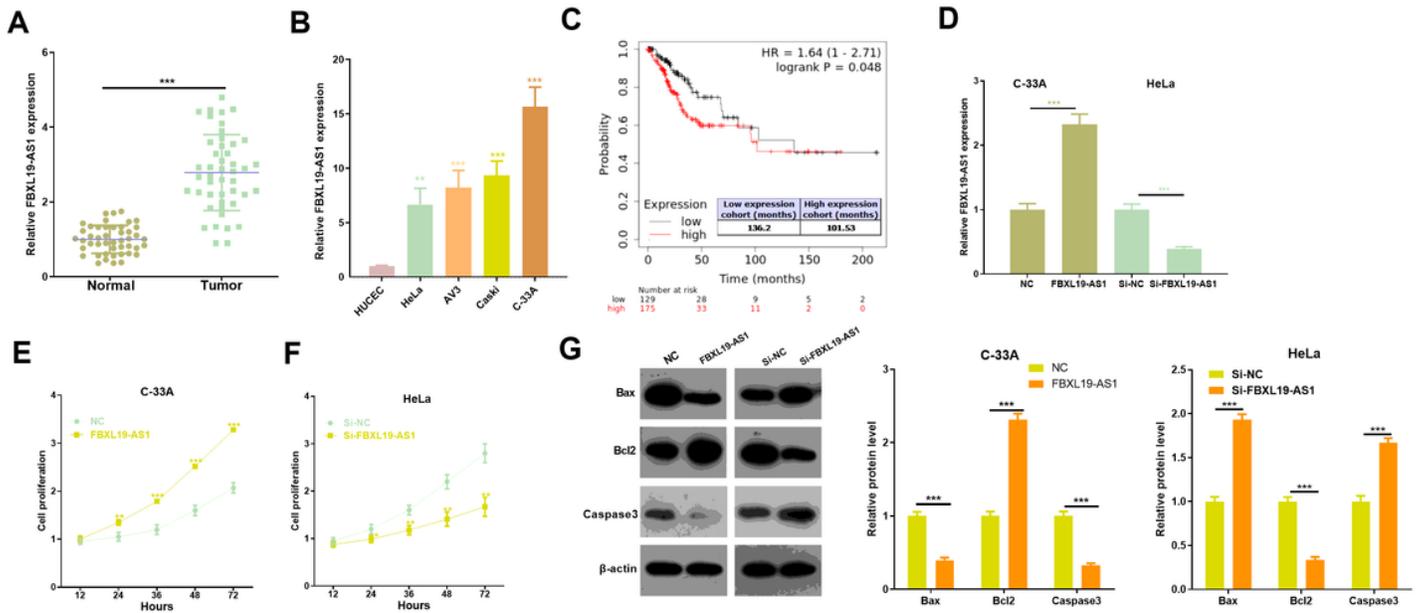
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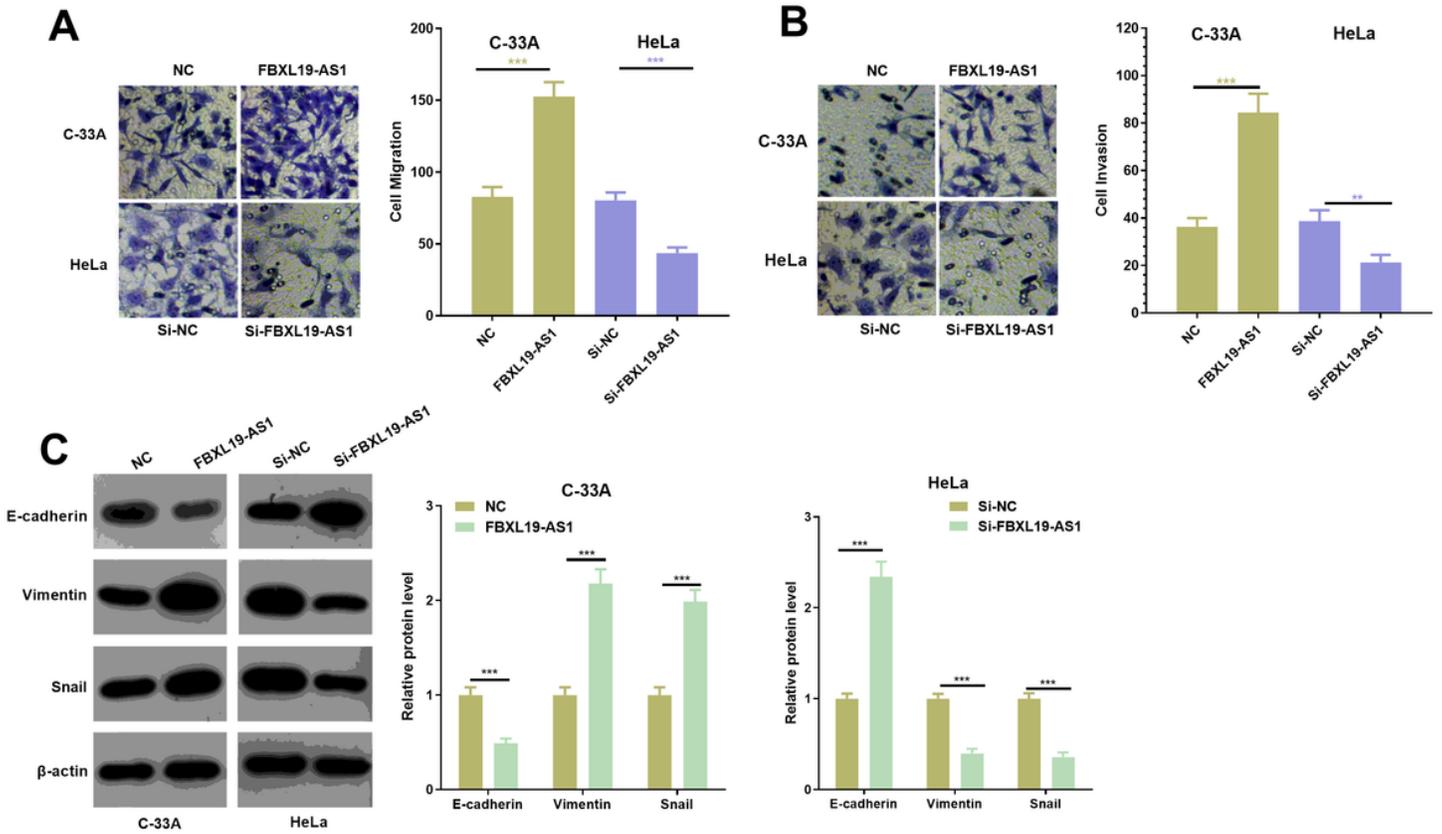
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## Figures



**Figure 1**

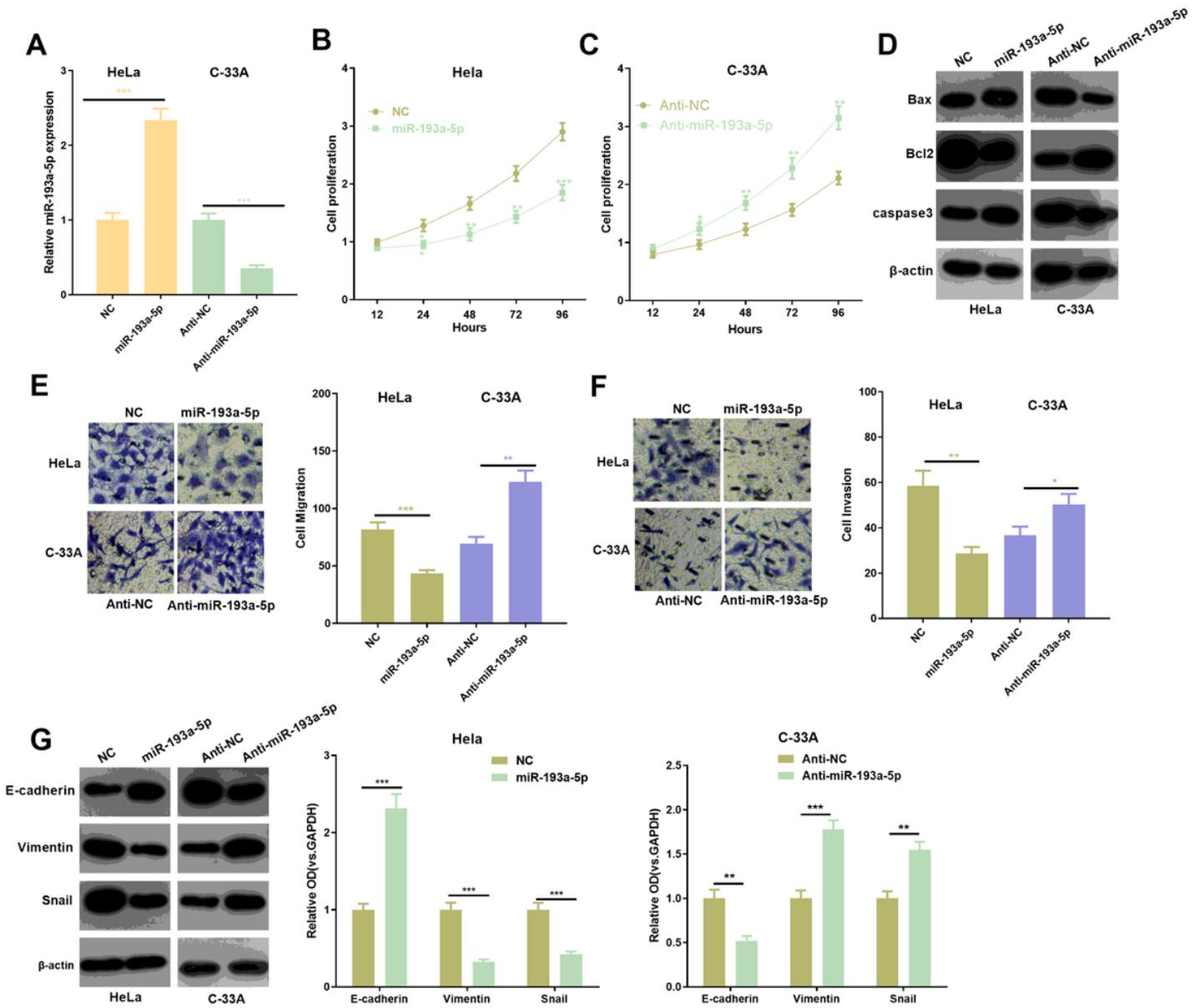
FBXL19-AS1 expression in cervical cancer tissues and its regulation on the proliferation and apoptosis of cervical cancer cells. A: RT-PCR detection of FBXL19-AS1 expression in 46 cases of CC tissues and adjacent normal tissues. B: RT-PCR detection of FBXL19-AS1 expression in Human healthy cervical cells (HUVEC) and human cervical cancer cells (HeLa, Caski, C-33A, AV3), \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  vs. HUVEC group; C: KM plotter (<http://kmplot.com/analysis/>) was used for the analysis of FBXL-19-AS1 expression in the overall survival of CC patients. D: C-33A and HeLa cells were used for the cell model of FBXL19-AS1 overexpression and downregulation. E-F: The effect of FBXL19-AS1 on the proliferation of C-33A and HeLa cells was detected via CCK-8; G: Western blot taken to detect the changes of apoptosis protein after FBXL19-AS1 regulation. \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ .



**Figure 2**

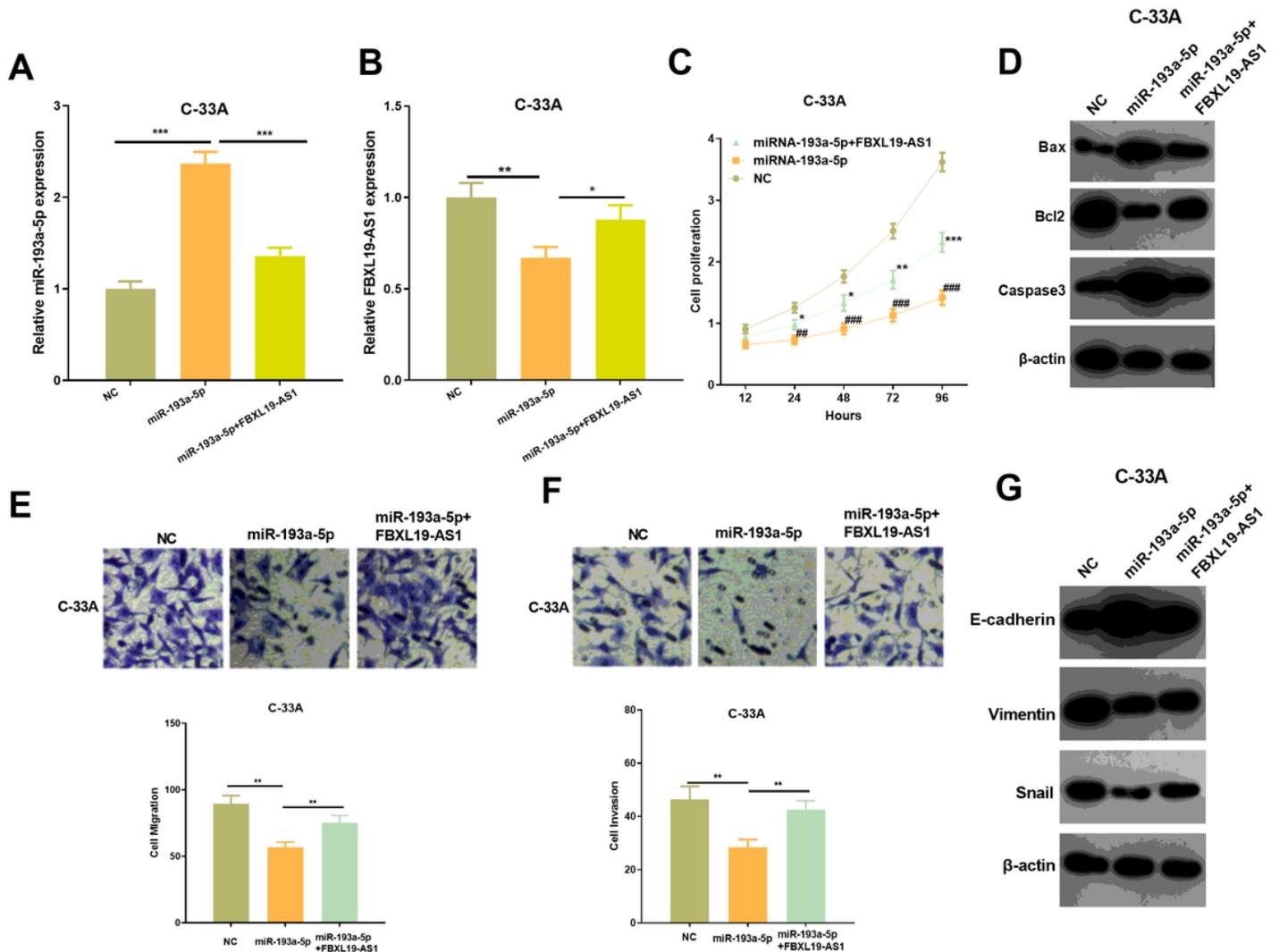
FBXL19-AS1 promoted cervical cancer cell migration, invasion and EMT. A-B: Transwell detection of CC cell migration (A) and invasion (B) after regulation of FBXL19-AS1; C: After regulation of FBXL19-AS1, the expressions of EMT-related markers (including E-cadherin, Vimentin and Snail) were detected by Western blot. \*\* P < 0.01, \*\*\* P < 0.001.





**Figure 4**

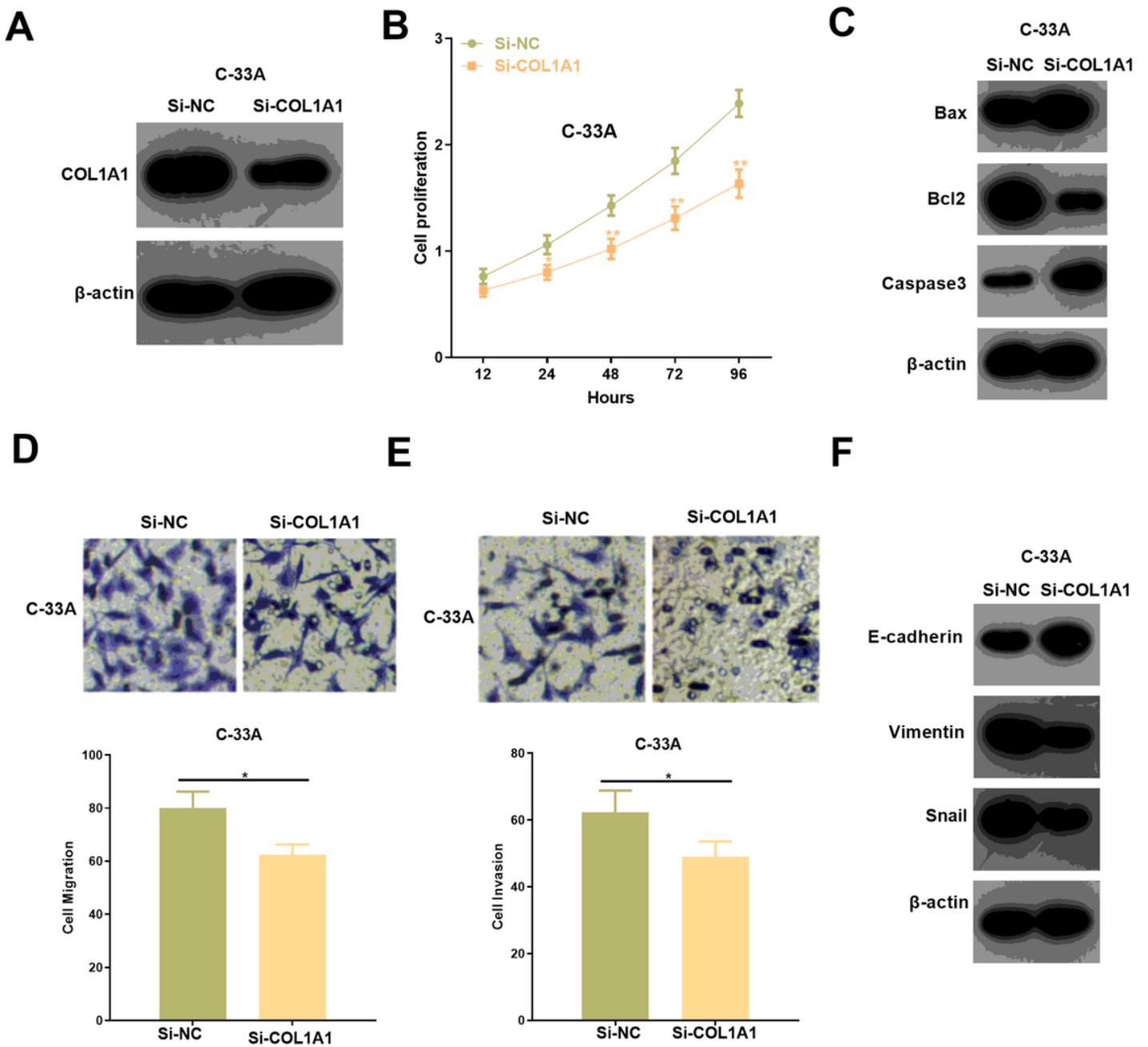
MiR-193a-5p limited the malignant biological behaviors of CC cells. A: MiR-193a-5p expression in CC cells (Hela and C-33A) transfected with miR-193a-5p mimics or inhibitors was detected by RT-PCR; B and C: CCK-8 was used to detect the effects of miRs-193a-5p on CC cell proliferation, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  vs. NC group or anti-NC group. D. Western blot was used for the detection of apoptotic proteins; E-F: Transwell was used for the detection of the migration and invasion ability of CC cells; G: The expressions of EMT-related markers in CC cells after transfection with miR-193a-5p mimics or inhibitors were detected by western blot. \*  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ .



**Figure 5**

FBXL19-AS1 inhibited the effects of miR-193a-5p on CC cells. A-B: C-33A cells were transfected with miR-193a-5p mimics or FBXL19-AS1 overexpressing plasmids, then RT-PCR was conducted to examine the level of miR-193a-5p (A) and FBXL19-AS1 (B); C: CCK8 test was performed to detect cell proliferation ability, ### $p < 0.01$  and ### $p < 0.001$  vs. NC group, \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$  vs. miR-193a-5p group; D: Western blot test to measure apoptosis-related proteins; E-F: Transwell was applied to examine cell migration and invasion ability; G: Western blot test to determine the expression of EMT-related markers in each group. \*  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ .





**Figure 7**

Inhibition of COL1A1 attenuated CC cell proliferation and metastasis. A: C-33A cells were transfected with si-NC or si-COL1A1 and Western blot was used for the detection of COL1A1 protein expression; B: CCK-8 assay was taken to measure cell proliferation changes after COL1A1 knockdown, \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$  vs. si-NC group; C: Apoptosis protein expression after COL1A1 knockdown treatment was evaluated by western blot; D-E: Transwell was applied to detect the ability of cancer cell migration and invasion after COL1A1 knockdown; F: Western blot was taken to measure the expression of relevant EMT-related markers after COL1A1 knockdown. \*  $P < 0.05$ .

## Supplementary Files

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