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(54) **FIBRINOGEN ALPHA AND HEMOGLOBIN
POLYPEPTIDES AS CANCER MARKERS**

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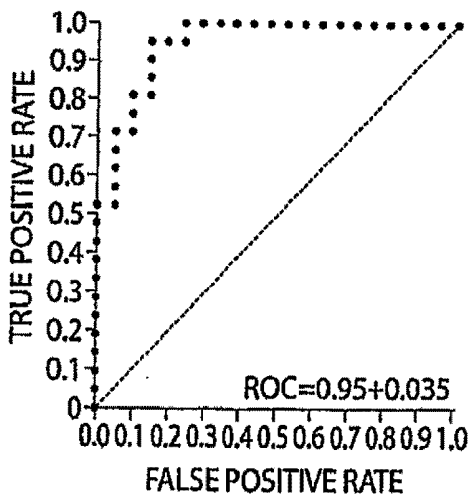
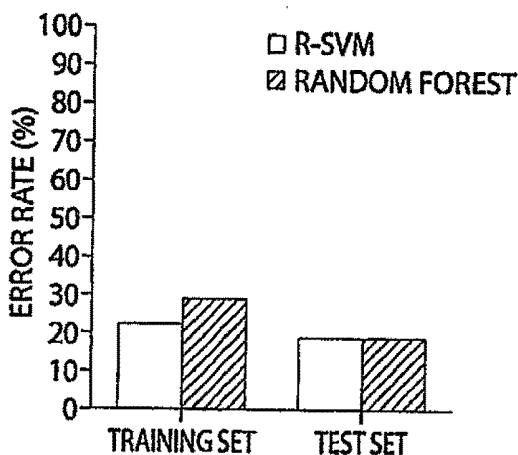
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention provides methods of detecting cancer
using biomarkers.



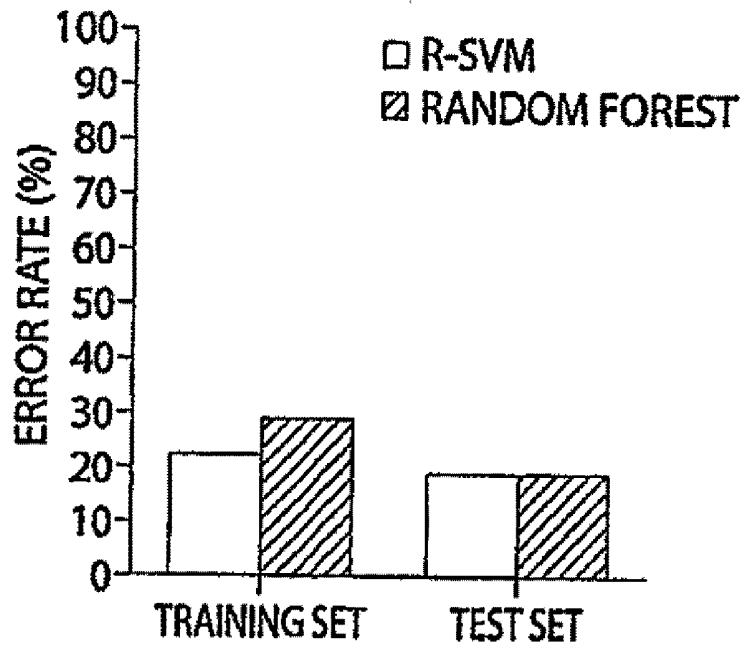


Fig. 1A

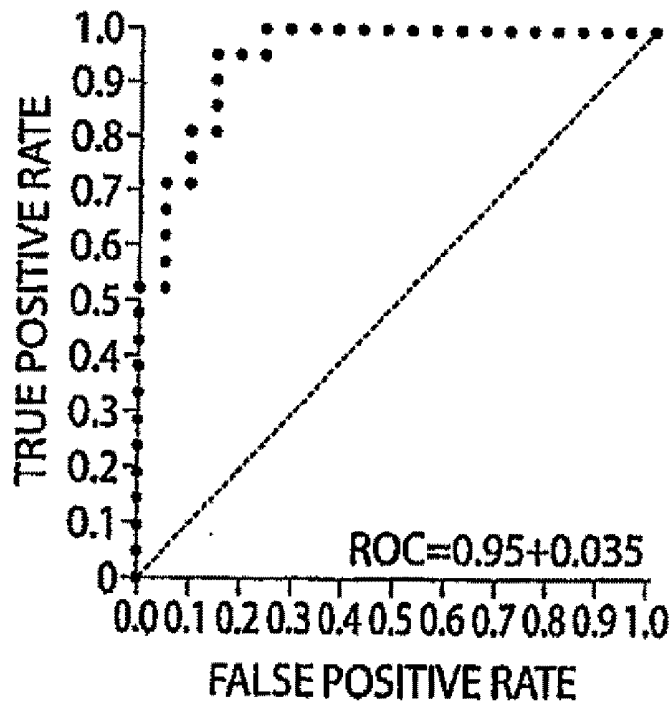


Fig. 1B

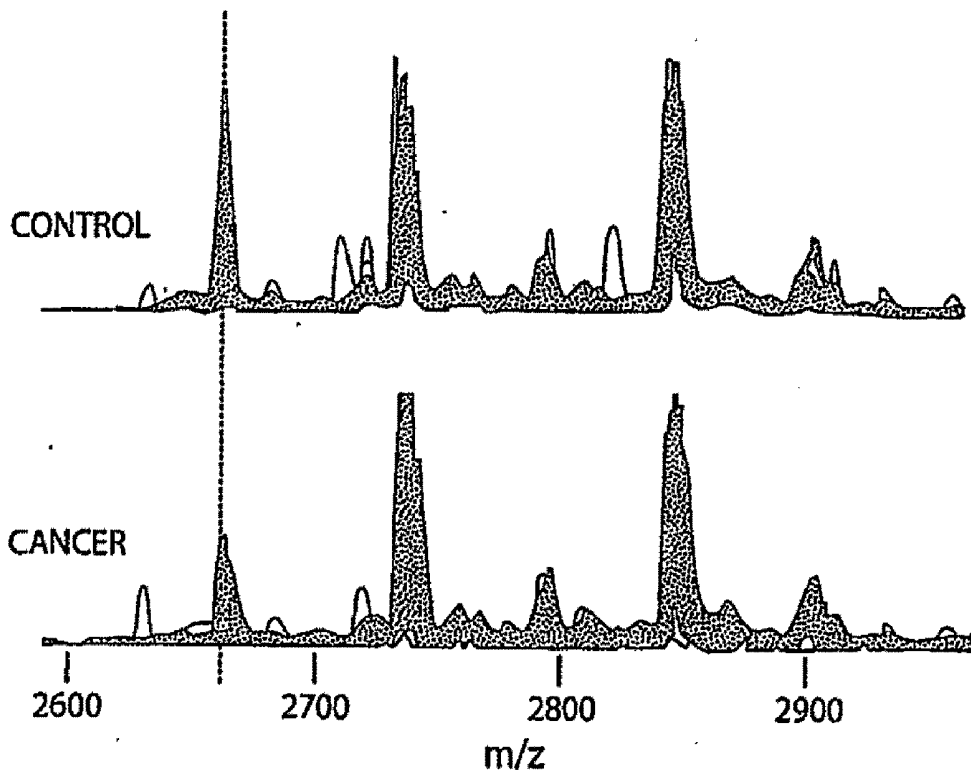


Fig. 2A

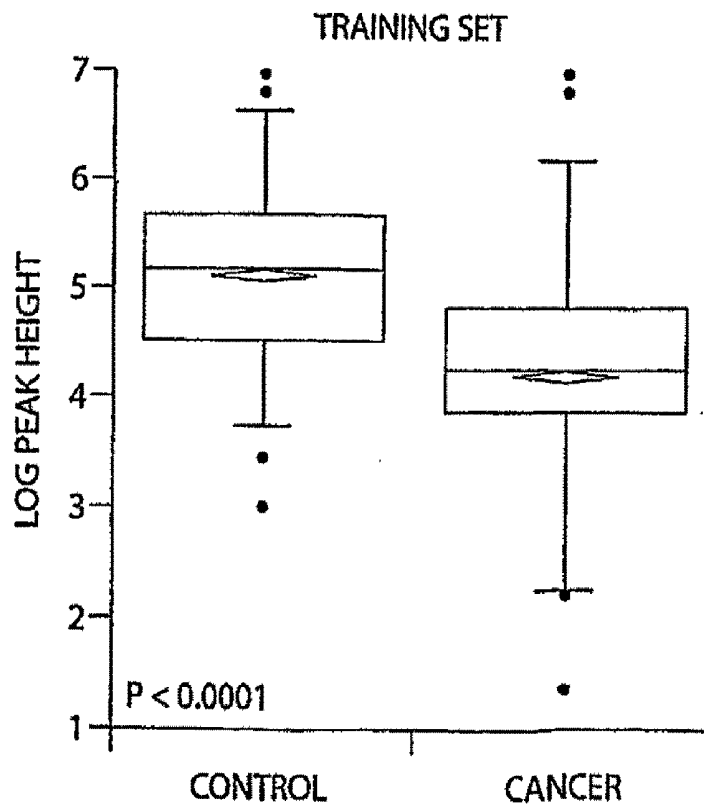


Fig. 2B

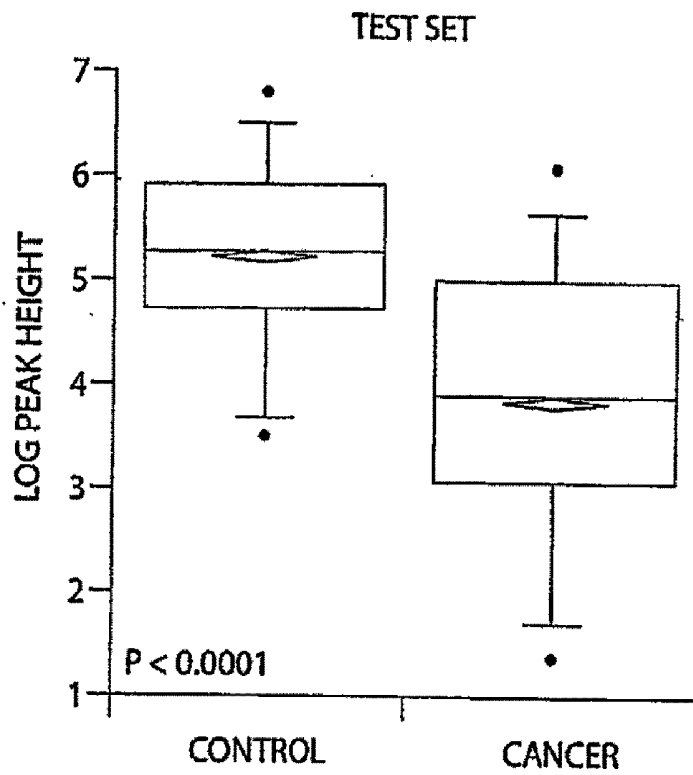


Fig. 2C

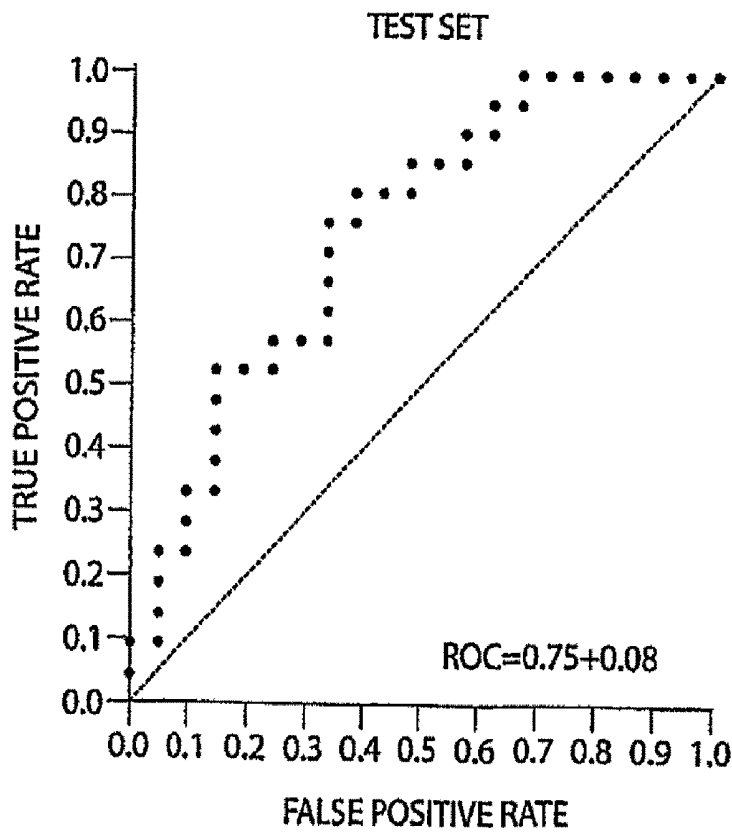


Fig. 2D

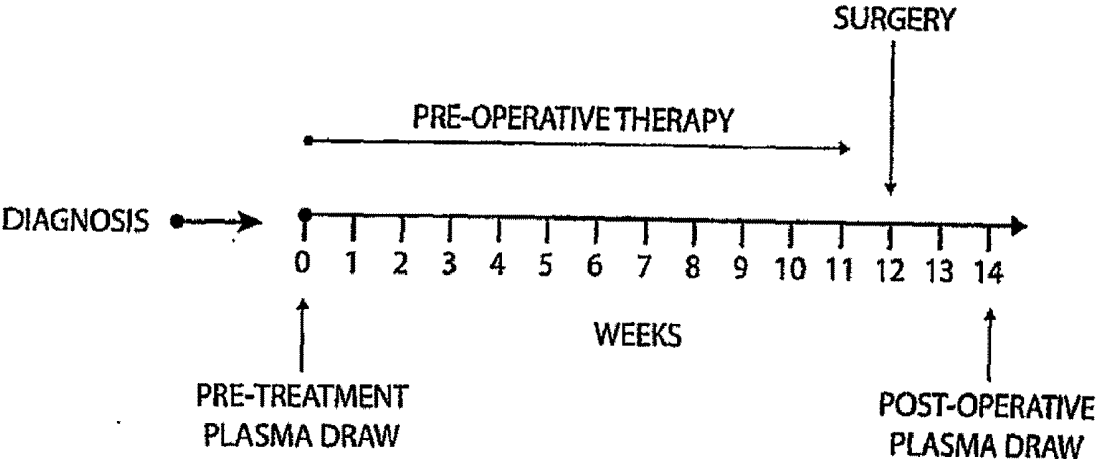


Fig. 3

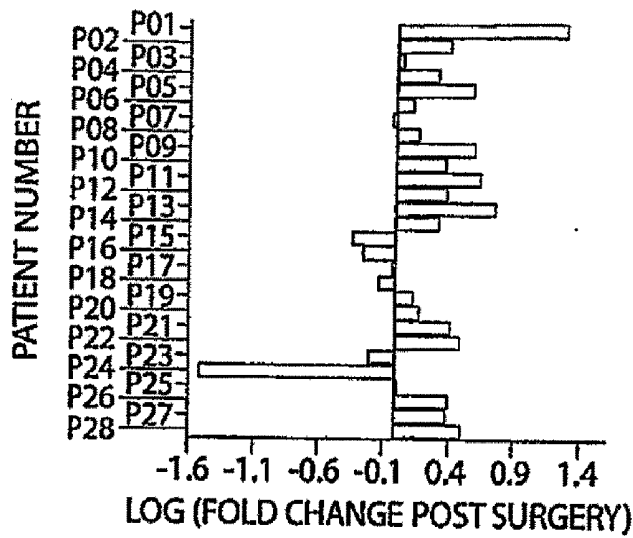


Fig. 4A

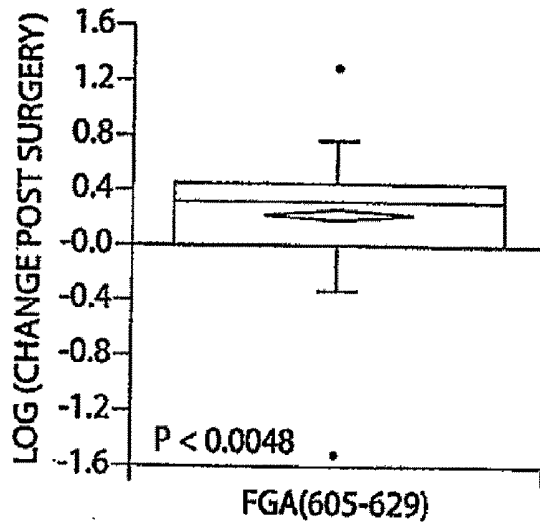


Fig. 4B

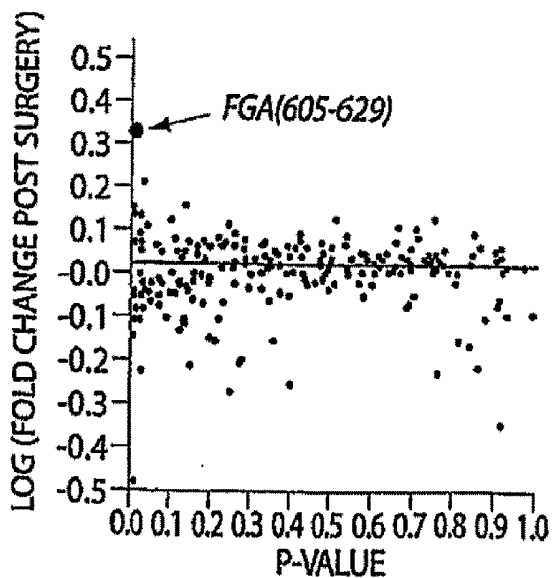


Fig. 4C

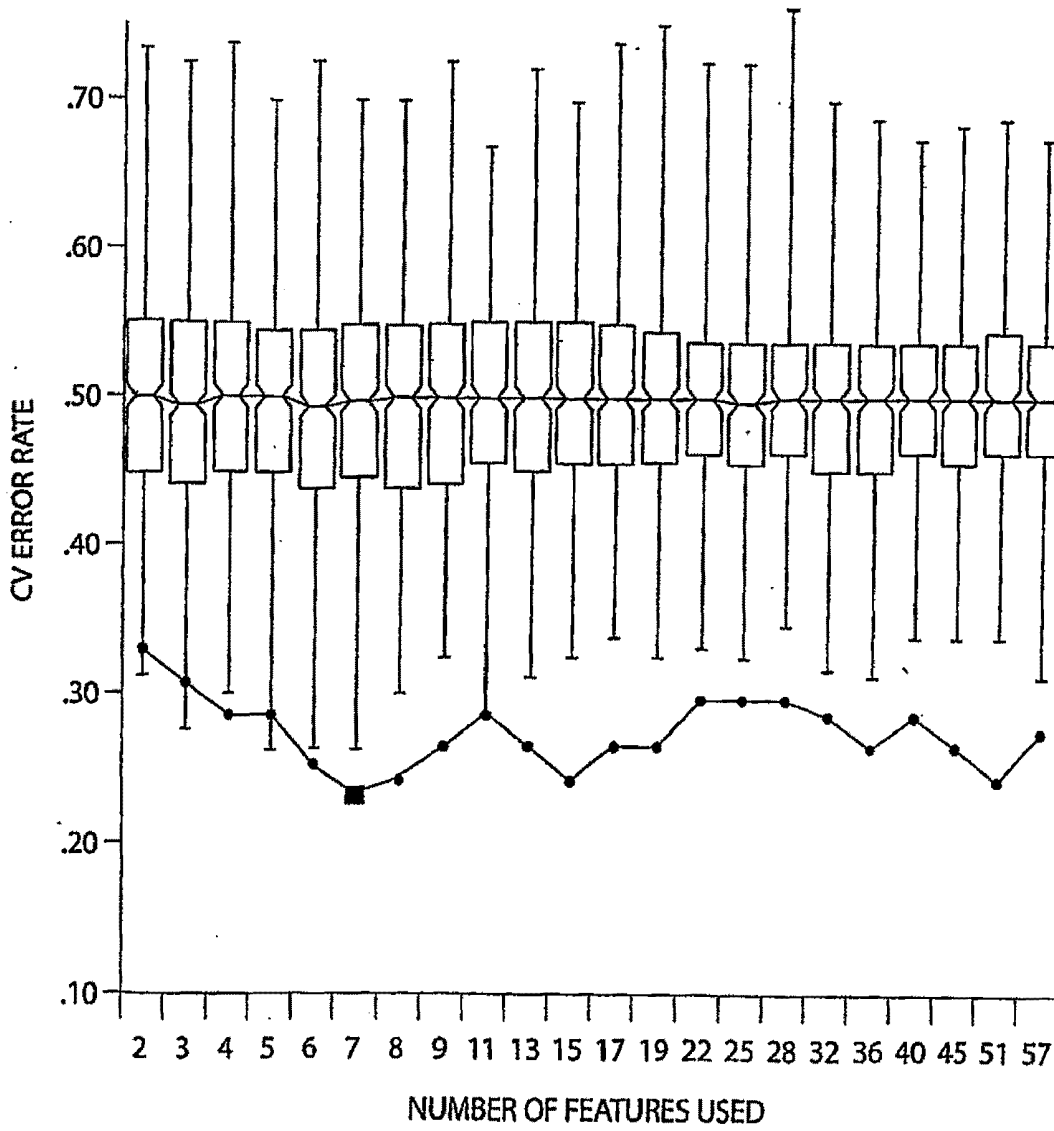


Fig. 5

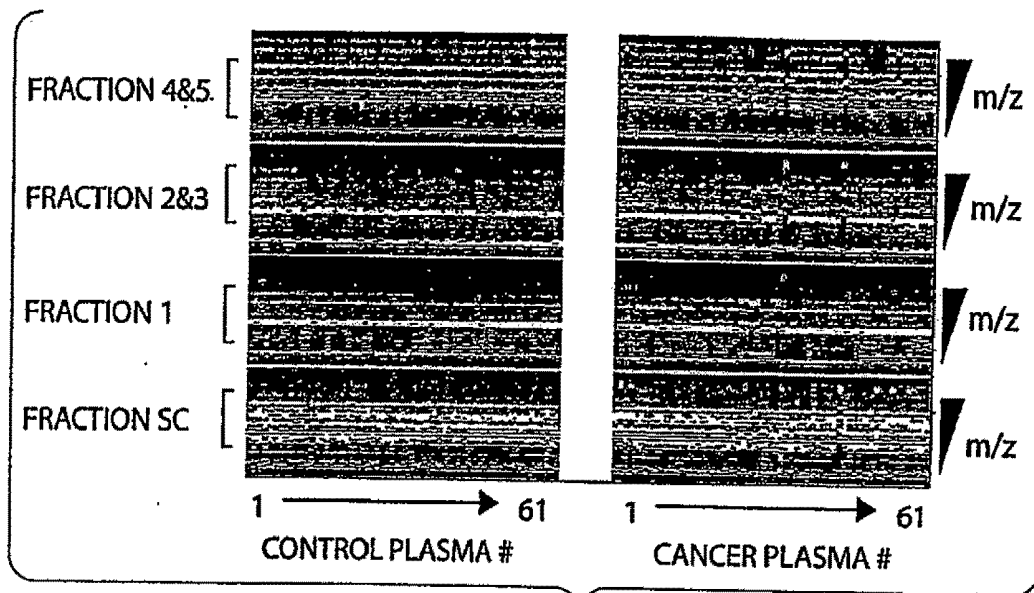


Fig. 6A

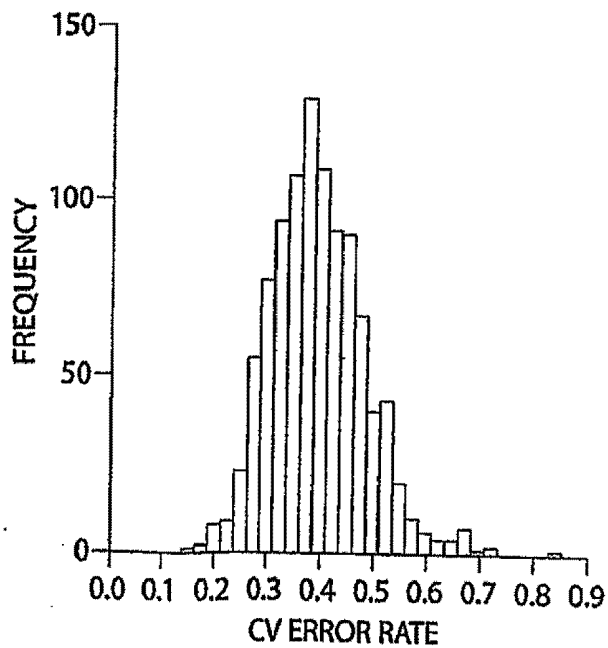


Fig. 6B

FIBRINOGEN ALPHA AND HEMOGLOBIN POLYPEPTIDES AS CANCER MARKERS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to generally to detecting cancer using a biomarker.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Breast cancer is a common disease, with one in eight women affected by the age of 85. It strikes more than 200,000 women each year; and 44,000 of these women will die of their disease¹. There is a compelling need to diagnose and treat breast cancer more effectively. Moreover, earlier disease stage at diagnosis correlates directly with improved survival¹. Local and systemic treatments cure a substantial proportion of early-stage patients^{2,3}. Hence, improvements in screening and early detection will unequivocally save lives.

[0003] Breast cancer is a heterogeneous disease, with several phenotypic distinctions and with an unpredictable clinical course⁴⁻⁶. Molecular markers are used to define subsets of tumors. Useful classification is achieved by determination of the estrogen receptor, progesterone receptor, and HER2 content of cancer cells^{7,8}. Recently, finer classification was performed using genome-wide RNA expression arrays⁹. In general, HER2-positive tumors segregate in a unique subset of human breast cancers, substantiating the importance of this oncogenic protein. A clinically useful classification divides breast cancer into hormone receptor positive tumors, HER2 positive tumors and tumors negative for both markers. These clinical distinctions are important for treatment response, and it is likely they effect identification of sensitive and specific diagnostic biomarkers as well.

[0004] Currently screening mammography is the mainstay for breast cancer detection. However, at least 10% of breast cancers cannot be visualized with mammography because they do not create a change in the density or architecture of breast tissue¹⁰. Only marginal benefits are demonstrated in woman under age 50 subjected to annual screening mammography¹⁰. To complement screening with mammography, there are few serum markers of any clinical utility in breast cancer and none that are useful for early detection. Markers used in clinical practice (such as CEA, CA 15.3) reflect tumor burden and are useful for addressing questions of response to therapy rather than diagnosis¹¹. Other markers have been evaluated,^{12,13} but lack the sensitivity and specificity to serve as diagnostic biomarkers for breast cancer. There is a need for a broader-based approach to biomarker discovery and tests that will complement mammography.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The invention provides biological markers to monitor the diagnosis and prognosis of cancer.

[0006] Cancers are diagnosed in a subject by detecting a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide in a sample obtained from the subject. A decrease (i.e. lower level) in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide in the sample compared to a normal control sample (e.g., a control value) indicates of the presence of a cancer in the subject. Whereas, a similarity or an increase in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide indicates the absence of a cancer in the subject. An increase (i.e. higher level) in the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide in the sample compared to a normal control sample (e.g., a control value) indi-

cates of the presence of a cancer in the subject. Whereas, a similarity or a decrease in the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide indicates the absence of a cancer in the subject. By lower level is meant at least a 2, 4, 5, 10-fold or lower value in the test sample compared to the control sample.

[0007] The progression of a cancer is monitored by detecting a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide in a two or more samples obtained from a subject over time and comparing the amount of fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide detected. For example, a first sample is obtained prior to the subject receiving treatment and one or more subsequent samples are taken after or during treatment of the subject. The cancer is progressing if the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide decrease over time or the amount of hemoglobin increases over time. Whereas the cancer is not progressing in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide polypeptide remains constant or increase over time or the hemoglobin polypeptide remains constant or decreased over time.

[0008] The sample is a biological sample obtained from the subject. The sample is for example, serum, blood plasma, ascites fluid, or urine.

[0009] A full-length fibrinogen α C domain peptide is detected. Alternatively, a fragment of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide is detected. For example, a fibrinogen α C domain peptide containing amino acid residues 605 to 629 of a fibrinogen alpha polypeptide when numbered in accordance with a mature wild type fibrinogen polypeptide (e.g., Swiss Protein Accession Number P02671) is detected. An exemplary fibrinogen α C domain peptide includes the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1 or a amino acid sequence at least 95%, 96%, 97%, 98% or 99% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1. Preferably, the fibrinogen α C domain peptide contains at least 5, 10, 15, 20 contiguous amino acid residues of SEQ ID NO:1. The fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide is detected by any means known in the art. The fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide is detected electrophoretically or immuno chemically. Immunochemical detection includes for example, radio-immunoassay, immunofluorescence assay, or enzyme-linked immunosorbant assay. For example, a fibrinogen α C domain peptide is detected using an anti-fibrinogen α C domain peptide antibody, and the amount of antigen-antibody complex is detected as a measure of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide in the sample.

[0010] Cancers include solid tumors (e.g., breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer) or liquid tumors (e.g., lymphoma or leukemia)

[0011] Optionally, the method is carried out on a subject concurrently with testing that patient for elevated Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) levels, with the combined results providing a superior indication of the presence of cancer than screening or monitoring with a fibrinogen α C domain peptide

alone. Additionally, a peptide with mass to charge (m/z) ratio of about 7558, 7933, 1418 or 15168 is also detected.

[0012] The subject has not been previously diagnosed as having cancer. Alternatively, the subject has been diagnosed with cancer. Optionally, the subject has been previously treated surgically or hormonally for cancer. The subject may be genetically at risk for breast cancer and/or is positive for the BRAC1 or BRAC2 gene.

[0013] Kits containing in one or more containers, a fibrinogen α C domain peptide antibody or a hemoglobin polypeptide, a detection reagent and instructions are further provided by the invention.

[0014] Unless otherwise defined, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although methods and materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the present invention, suitable methods and materials are described below. All publications, patent applications, patents, and other references mentioned herein are incorporated by reference in their entirety. In case of conflict, the present specification, including definitions, will control. In addition, the materials, methods, and examples are illustrative only and not intended to be limiting.

[0015] Other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description, and from the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] FIG. 1A is a bar chart showing the error rate of both R-SVM and random forest selected biomarker sets. The external cross validation error rate (i.e., the cross-validation error rate was estimated by leaving sample(s) out prior to feature selection, so that to guarantee an unbiased CV error estimation) was estimated on the training data set by each algorithm. The same model was then applied on the test data set and the prediction error was shown.

[0017] FIG. 1B is a schematic representation of a Receiver Operating Characteristics curve plotted using the 7 biomarker set obtained from the R-SVM analysis on the test data set. Area under the curve (AUC) is shown as mean \pm SD.

[0018] FIG. 2A is a schematic representation showing a representative spectra from cancer and control plasma. Spectra from all the samples of Fractions 2 and 3 in first run are overlaid, and grouped into control or cancer categories. The 2660 m/z peak is labeled with a dotted line.

[0019] FIG. 2B is a box plot showing the peak height of the 2660 Dalton marker in the training data set. The Y-axis is the base 2 logarithm of the peak height. The data from fractions 4 and 5 was plotted using the box plot format where the whiskers extend to 95% of the data points, the horizontal line is the median and the diamond is the mean. The box includes data in the range from the 25th to the 75th quartile. The marker segregates cancer from control patients in the training set with a p-value less than 0.0001.

[0020] FIG. 2C is a box plot showing the peak height of the 2660 Dalton marker in test data set, drawn as in (B).

[0021] FIG. 2D is a ROC curve showing the 2660 Dalton marker used alone in the test data set. Area under the curve (AUC) value was shown as mean \pm SD.

[0022] FIG. 3 is a schematic representation of the pre- and post-surgery study. Pre-surgery samples were collected at diagnosis. Patients were treated on neo-adjuvant protocols in which trastuzumab (herceptin) combined with chemotherapy

was given prior to surgery. Post-surgery plasma was obtained from a blood draw at least two-weeks after the surgery. A total of 28 pairs of pre- and post-surgery samples were collected.

[0023] FIG. 4A is a bar chart showing the fold change post-surgery of FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ in 28 patients. Individual patients are shown on the vertical axis and the logarithm of the fold-change is plotted on the horizontal axis; a declining level of the marker is shown to the left of center, and an increasing marker is shown to the right.

[0024] FIG. 4B is a box plot showing the log fold change in peak height of FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ post-surgery. The data from fraction 4 and 5 was plotted using the box plot format where the whiskers extend to 95% of the data points, the horizontal line is the median and the diamond is the mean. The box includes data in the range from the 25th to the 75th quartile. FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ returns towards normal levels post-surgery. The difference of the pre- and post-treatment level is significant (paired $p=0.0048$).

[0025] FIG. 4C is a scatter plot showing the log of median fold-change between pre- and post-treatment values versus the p value by paired t-test. The y-axis is the log of median fold change in peak height for biomarkers, and the x-axis is the p value of these biomarkers by paired t-test. The solid circle in the upper left hand corner represents the FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ peak and has the greatest fold change and one of the lowest p-values post-surgery as compared to all the other peaks.

[0026] FIG. 5 is a box plot showing cross validation error distribution of correct and permuted class label data sets. The box plots represent the distribution of cross validation errors of data sets with class label permuted for each number of features ranging from 3 to 98. The marker selection and cross validation error calculation were repeated 500 times for each number of features. The line connecting the box plots is the mean of each of these cross validation errors. The data points connected by lines below each box plot are the cross validation errors of the original data set with the true class labels for that number of features.

[0027] FIG. 6A are photographs of spectra showing the intensity of whole spectra in cancer and control plasma. The heights of each point in the spectra are converted into intensity and depicted in a heat map format where signal ranges from lower intensity shown in red to higher intensity in yellow.

[0028] FIG. 6B is a histogram showing the distribution of cross validation errors (CV) of 1000 random sets of 8 biomarkers estimated by Support Vector Machine (SVM) analysis.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0029] The invention is based upon the discovery of biomarkers for the detection of cancer. Using Surface Enhanced Laser Desorption and Ionization (SELDI) technology, protein biomarkers were identified in plasma that was differentially expressed in control versus cancer plasma samples. One marker, which has a mass to charge (m/z) of about 2660 and was further identified as a COOH terminal fragment of fibrinogen alpha (referred to herein as the fibrinogen α C domain peptide) reverted toward control levels following surgical treatment. Other peptide biomarkers useful in the detection of cancer include peptides with mass to charge (m/z) ratio of about 7558, 7933, 1418, 15876 or 15168. The peptide with the m/z ratio of about 7558 was identified as doubly charged alpha globulin, the peptide with the m/z ratio of about 7933 was identified as double charged beta globulin; the peptide with the m/z ratio of about 15168 was identified as alpha

globulin; the peptide with the m/z ratio of about 15876 was identified as beta globulin. Thus, the fibrinogen α C domain peptide and hemoglobin are ideal candidate markers of cancer. Accordingly, the invention provides methods of detecting and evaluating cancer in a subject by measuring the levels of fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide. In addition to measuring the biomarker fragments, full length polypeptides or the protease that cleave the full length polypeptides to the biomarker peptides can also be measured (e.g., detected)

[0030] The methods disclosed herein are employed with subjects suspected of carrying cancer, to monitor subjects who have been previously diagnosed as carrying cancer, to monitor subjects who have been treated for cancer and to screen subjects who have not been previously diagnosed as carrying cancer.

[0031] Human fibrinogen is a circulating 340 kDa glycoprotein that is comprised of two symmetric half molecules, each consisting of one set of three different polypeptide chains termed α , β and γ , and is synthesized by the liver. The concentration of circulating fibrinogen is about 9 μ M in normal blood. At sites of tissue injury, fibrinogen is converted to fibrin by a-thrombin to form a fibrin clot. This fibrin clot is subsequently degraded into a number of fragments, primarily by plasmin. Many of those degradation fragments have biological functions, such as mitogenic effects on fibroblast and endothelial cells, vasoactive effects, and migratory effects. In tumors, fibrinogen is characterized as protumorigenic because it binds growth factors such as VEGF, promotes

endothelial cell proliferation, interacts with other matrix proteins providing a physical protective barrier, and serves as a scaffold for cell migration via integrin binding. However, there is also evidence suggesting that fibrinogen can also be antitumorigenic by inhibiting cell motility due to its adhesive properties and by acting as a chemoattractant for inflammatory cell infiltration in the immune response.

[0032] By a fibrinogen α C domain peptide is meant that the peptide contains a portion of the COOH terminus of a fibrinogen alpha peptide, e.g., amino acids 220-629 (SEQ ID NO:3). No particular length is implied by the term "peptide." The fibrinogen α C domain peptide is less than 390 amino acids in length, e.g., less than or equal to 150, 100, 75, 50, 35, 26, 25, 15, or 10 amino acids in length. Preferably, a fibrinogen α C domain peptide includes amino acids 605-629 when numbered in accordance with a full length mature wild type fibrinogen alpha peptide. An exemplary fibrinogen α C domain peptide includes a peptide, which includes (in whole or in part) the sequence NH₂-DEAGSEADHEGTHST-KRGHAKSRPV-COOH (SEQ ID NO:1). Preferably, the fibrinogen α C domain peptide includes at least 5, 10, 15, 20 or more contiguous amino acids of SEQ ID NO:1.

[0033] A wild type unprocessed fibrinogen alpha polypeptide is shown in Table A (SEQ ID NO:2). The mature (i.e., processed) fibrinogen alpha peptide is underlined (amino acids 20-866; SEQ ID NO:6); the α C domain is shown in bold.

TABLE A

(SEQ ID NO: 2)					
Human Fibrinogen Alpha					
<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>60</u>
<u>MFQMRIVCLV</u>	<u>LSVVGTAWTA</u>	<u>DSGEGDFLAE</u>	<u>GGGVRGPRVV</u>	<u>ERHQACKDS</u>	<u>DWPFCSDEDW</u>
<u>70</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>120</u>
<u>NYKCPGRCRM</u>	<u>KGLIDEVNQD</u>	<u>FTNRINKLKN</u>	<u>SLFEYQKNNK</u>	<u>DSHSLTTNIM</u>	<u>EILRGDFSSA</u>
<u>130</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>170</u>	<u>180</u>
<u>NNRDNTYNRV</u>	<u>SEDLRSRIEV</u>	<u>LKRKVIKQVQ</u>	<u>HIQLLQKNVR</u>	<u>AQLVDMKRLE</u>	<u>VDIDIKIRSC</u>
<u>190</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>210</u>	<u>220</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>240</u>
<u>RGSCSRALAR</u>	<u>EVDLKDIEDQ</u>	<u>QKQLEQVIKQ</u>	<u>DLLPSRDRQH</u>	<u>LPLIKMKPVP</u>	<u>DLVPGNFKSQ</u>
<u>250</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>270</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>290</u>	<u>300</u>
<u>LQKVPPEWKA</u>	<u>LTDMPQMRME</u>	<u>LERPGGNEIT</u>	<u>RGGSTSYGTG</u>	<u>SETESPRNPS</u>	<u>SAGSWNSGSS</u>
<u>310</u>	<u>320</u>	<u>330</u>	<u>340</u>	<u>350</u>	<u>360</u>
<u>GPGSTGNRNP</u>	<u>GSSGTGGTAT</u>	<u>WKPSSGPGS</u>	<u>TGSWNSGSSG</u>	<u>TGSTGNQNP</u>	<u>SPRPGSTGTW</u>
<u>370</u>	<u>380</u>	<u>390</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>410</u>	<u>420</u>
<u>NGSSSERGSA</u>	<u>GHWTSSESVS</u>	<u>GSTGQWHESE</u>	<u>GSFRPDSPPS</u>	<u>GNARPNPDW</u>	<u>GTFFEVSGNV</u>
<u>430</u>	<u>440</u>	<u>450</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>470</u>	<u>480</u>
<u>SPGTRREYHT</u>	<u>EKLVTSGDK</u>	<u>ELRTGKEKVT</u>	<u>SGSTTTTRRS</u>	<u>CSKTVTKTVI</u>	<u>GPDGHEKVTK</u>
<u>490</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>510</u>	<u>520</u>	<u>530</u>	<u>540</u>
<u>EVVTSLEDGSD</u>	<u>CPEAMDGLTL</u>	<u>SGIGTLDGFR</u>	<u>HRHPDEAAFF</u>	<u>DTASTGKTFP</u>	<u>GFFSPMLGEF</u>
<u>550</u>	<u>560</u>	<u>570</u>	<u>580</u>	<u>590</u>	<u>600</u>
<u>VSETESRGSE</u>	<u>SGIFTNTKES</u>	<u>SSHHPGIAEF</u>	<u>PSRGKSSSYS</u>	<u>KQTSSTSYN</u>	<u>RGDSTFESKS</u>
<u>610</u>	<u>620</u>	<u>630</u>	<u>640</u>	<u>650</u>	<u>660</u>
<u>YKMADEAGSE</u>	<u>ADHEGTHSTK</u>	<u>RGHAKSRPVR</u>	<u>DCDDVLQTHP</u>	<u>SGTQSGIFNI</u>	<u>KLPGSSKIFS</u>
<u>670</u>	<u>680</u>	<u>690</u>	<u>700</u>	<u>710</u>	<u>720</u>
<u>VYCDQETSLG</u>	<u>GWLLIQQRMD</u>	<u>GSLNFNRTWQ</u>	<u>DYKRGFGSLN</u>	<u>DEGEGEFWLG</u>	<u>NDYLHLLTQR</u>

TABLE A-continued

(SEQ ID NO: 2)					
Human Fibrinogen Alpha					
730	740	750	760	770	780
GSVLRVELED	WAGNEAYAAY	HFRVGSEAE	YALQVSSYEG	TAGDALIEGS	VEEGAETTS
790	800	810	820	830	840
NNMQFSTFDR	DADQWEENCA	EYVGGGWYIN	NCQAANLNGI	YYPGGSYDPR	NNSPYEIEING
850	860				
VVWVSFRGAD	YSLRAVRMKI	RPLVTQ			

[0034] Hemoglobin is the protein molecule in red blood cells, which carries oxygen from the lungs to the body's tissues and returns carbon dioxide from the tissues to the

alpha globin polypeptide is shown in Table B (SEQ ID NO:4) and beta globin polypeptide is shown in Table C (SEQ ID NO:5)

TABLE B

(SEQ ID NO: 4)					
Human Alpha Globin					
10	20	30	40	50	60
VLSPADKTNV	KAAWGKVGAAH	AGEYGAEALE	RMFLSFPTTK	TYFPFHDLSH	GSAQVKGHGK
70	80	90	100	110	120
KVADALTNAV	AHVDDMPNAL	SALSDLHAHK	LRVDPVNFKL	LSHCLLVTLA	AHLPAEFTPA
130	140				
VHASLDKFLA	SVSTVLTSKY	R			

TABLE C

(SEQ ID NO: 5)					
Human Beta Globin					
10	20	30	40	50	60
VHLTPEEKSA	VTALWNGKVN	DEVGGEALGR	LLVVYPWTQR	FFESFGDLST	PDAVMGNPKV
70	80	90	100	110	120
KAHGKKVLGA	FSDGLAHLDN	LKGTFFATLSE	LHCDKLHVDP	ENFRLLGNVL	VCVLAHHPGK
130	140				
EFTPPVQAAY	QKVVAGVANA	LAHKYH			

lungs. The iron contained in hemoglobin is responsible for the red color of blood. Hemoglobin is a tetrameric molecule. Each hemoglobin tetramer consists of 2 alpha and 2 beta globin subunits. Each alpha globin subunit consists of 141 amino acids, and has a molecular weight of 15,126 Daltons. Each beta globin subunit consists of 146 amino acids, and has a molecular weight of 15,867 Daltons.

[0035] The normal ranges for hemoglobin depend on the age and, beginning in adolescence, the sex of the person. The normal ranges are: Newborns: 17-22 gm/dl; One (1) week of age: 15-20 gm/dl; One (1) month of age: 11-15 gm/dl; Children: 11-13 gm/dl; Adult males: 14-18 gm/dl; Adult women: 12-16 gm/dl; Men after middle age: 12.4-14.9 gm/dl; Women after middle age: 11.7-13.8 gm/dl.

[0036] By a hemoglobin polypeptide is meant an alpha globin polypeptide or fragment thereof, a beta globulin polypeptide or fragment thereof, dimers or tetramers of an alpha and beta globulin polypeptide or fragment thereof. An

Diagnostic and Prognostic Methods

[0037] Cancers are detected by examining the amount of fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide in a test sample (i.e., a patient derived sample). A change in the level if the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide compared to a control sample is indicative of cancer in the subject. The change may be an increase or a decrease in the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide relative to a control sample. The control sample is prepared (i.e., fractionated) in a similar fashion as the test sample.

[0038] Optionally, full length fibrinogen or the protease activity that produces the fibrinogen α C domain peptide is detected. The cancer is a solid tumor such as for example, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, endocervical cancer, fallopian cancer, uterine cancer, prostate cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, pancreatic cancer, stomach cancer, or colorectal cancer. Alternatively, the cancer is a liquid tumor such as leukemia or

lymphoma. A sample is for example, blood, serum, ascites fluid, urine, or other bodily fluids.

[0039] The amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide is determined in the test sample and compared to the expression of the normal control level. By normal control level is meant the expression level of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide typically found in a subject not suffering from a cancer. A decrease of the level in the patient derived sample of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide indicates that the subject is suffering from or is at risk of developing cancer. In contrast, when the methods are applied prophylactically, a similar level or an increase in the level in the patient derived sample of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide indicates that the subject is not suffering from or is at risk of developing cancer. An increase of the level in the patient derived sample of a hemoglobin polypeptide indicates that the subject is suffering from or is at risk of developing cancer. In contrast, when the methods are applied prophylactically, a similar level or a decrease in the level in the patient derived sample of a hemoglobin polypeptide indicates that the subject is not suffering from or is at risk of developing cancer.

[0040] The alteration in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide is statistically significant. By statistically significant is meant that the alteration is greater than what might be expected to happen by chance alone. Statistical significance is determined by method known in the art. For example statistical significance is determined by p-value. The p-values is a measure of probability that a difference between groups during an experiment happened by chance. ($P(z \geq z_{observed})$). For example, a p-value of 0.01 means that there is a 1 in 100 chance the result occurred by chance. The lower the p-value, the more likely it is that the difference between groups was caused by treatment. An alteration is statistically significant if the p-value is at least 0.05. Preferably, the p-value is 0.04, 0.03, 0.02, 0.01, 0.005, 0.001 or less.

[0041] The “diagnostic accuracy” of a test, assay, or method concerns the ability of the test, assay, or method to distinguish between patients having diabetes or at risk for diabetes is based on whether the patients have a “clinically significant presence” of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide. By “clinically significant presence” is meant that the presence of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide in the patient (typically in a sample from the patient) is higher or lower than the predetermined cut-off point (or threshold value) for that fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide and therefore indicates that the patient has cancer for which the sufficiently high presence of that protein is a marker.

[0042] The terms “high degree of diagnostic accuracy” and “very high degree of diagnostic accuracy” refer to the test or assay for that fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide with the predetermined cut-off point correctly (accurately) indicating the presence or absence of the cancer. A perfect test would have perfect accuracy. Thus, for individuals who have diabetes, the test would indicate only positive test results and would not report any of those individuals as being “negative” (there would be no “false negatives”). In other words, the “sensitivity” of the test (the true positive rate) would be 100%. On the other hand, for individuals who did not have diabetes, the test would indicate only negative test results and would not report any of those individuals as being “positive” (there would be no “false positives”). In other

words, the “specificity” (the true negative rate) would be 100%. See, e.g., O’Marcaigh A S, Jacobson R M, “Estimating The Predictive Value Of A Diagnostic Test, How To Prevent Misleading Or Confusing Results,” Clin. Ped. 1993, 32(8): 485-491, which discusses specificity, sensitivity, and positive and negative predictive values of a test, e.g., a clinical diagnostic test.

[0043] Changing the cut point or threshold value of a test (or assay) usually changes the sensitivity and specificity but in a qualitatively inverse relationship. For example, if the cut point is lowered, more individuals in the population tested will typically have test results over the cut point or threshold value. Because individuals who have test results above the cut point are reported as having the disease, condition, or syndrome for which the test is being run, lowering the cut point will cause more individuals to be reported as having positive results (i.e., that they have cancer). Thus, a higher proportion of those who have cancer will be indicated by the test to have it. Accordingly, the sensitivity (true positive rate) of the test will be increased. However, at the same time, there will be more false positives because more people who do not have the disease, condition, or syndrome (i.e., people who are truly “negative”) will be indicated by the test to have fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide values above the cut point and therefore to be reported as positive (i.e., to have the disease, condition, or syndrome) rather than being correctly indicated by the test to be negative. Accordingly, the specificity (true negative rate) of the test will be decreased. Similarly, raising the cut point will tend to decrease the sensitivity and increase the specificity. Therefore, in assessing the accuracy and usefulness of a proposed medical test, assay, or method for assessing a patient’s condition, one should always take both sensitivity and specificity into account and be mindful of what the cut point is at which the sensitivity and specificity are being reported because sensitivity and specificity may vary significantly over the range of cut points.

[0044] There is, however, an indicator that allows representation of the sensitivity and specificity of a test, assay, or method over the entire range of cut points with just a single value. That indicator is derived from a Receiver Operating Characteristics (“ROC”) curve for the test, assay, or method in question. See, e.g., Shultz, “Clinical Interpretation Of Laboratory Procedures,” chapter 14 in Teitz, Fundamentals of Clinical Chemistry, Burtis and Ashwood (eds.), 4th edition 1996, W.B. Saunders Company, pages 192-199; and Zweig et al., “ROC Curve Analysis: An Example Showing The Relationships Among Serum Lipid And Apolipoprotein Concentrations In Identifying Patients With Coronary Artery Disease,” Clin. Chem., 1992, 38(8): 1425-1428.

[0045] An ROC curve is an x-y plot of sensitivity on the y-axis, on a scale of zero to one (i.e., 100%), against a value equal to one minus specificity on the x-axis, on a scale of zero to one (i.e., 100%). In other words, it is a plot of the true positive rate against the false positive rate for that test, assay, or method. To construct the ROC curve for the test, assay, or method in question, patients are assessed using a perfectly accurate or “gold standard” method that is independent of the test, assay, or method in question to determine whether the patients are truly positive or negative for the disease, condition, or syndrome (for example, coronary angiography is a gold standard test for the presence of coronary atherosclerosis). The patients are also tested using the test, assay, or method in question, and for varying cut points, the patients are reported as being positive or negative according to the test,

assay, or method. The sensitivity (true positive rate) and the value equal to one minus the specificity (which value equals the false positive rate) are determined for each cut point, and each pair of x-y values is plotted as a single point on the x-y diagram. The "curve" connecting those points is the ROC curve.

[0046] The area under the curve ("AUC") is the indicator that allows representation of the sensitivity and specificity of a test, assay, or method over the entire range of cut points with just a single value. The maximum AUC is one (a perfect test) and the minimum area is one half. The closer the AUC is to one, the better is the accuracy of the test.

[0047] By a "high degree of diagnostic accuracy" is meant a test or assay (such as the test of the invention for determining the clinically significant presence of fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide, which thereby indicates the presence of diabetes) in which the AUC (area under the ROC curve for the test or assay) is at least 0.70, desirably at least 0.75, more desirably at least 0.80, preferably at least 0.85, more preferably at least 0.90, and most preferably at least 0.95.

[0048] By a "very high degree of diagnostic accuracy" is meant a test or assay in which the AUC (area under the ROC curve for the test or assay) is at least 0.875, desirably at least 0.90, more desirably at least 0.925, preferably at least 0.95, more preferably at least 0.975, and most preferably at least 0.98.

[0049] Optionally, expression of other peptide biomarkers for cancer are also determined as further indication of whether or not the subject is carrying a cancer. For example, peptides with mass to charge (m/z) ratio of about 7558, 7933, 1418 or 15168 are detected. Additionally, expression of other known biomarkers for a particular cancer are also determined as further indication of whether or not the subject is carrying a cancer. For example, alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) is detected.

[0050] The fibrinogen α C domain peptide, hemoglobin polypeptide and the additional biomarkers are detected in any suitable manner, but is typically detected by contacting a sample from the patient with an antibody which binds the fibrinogen α C domain peptide, hemoglobin polypeptide or biomarker and then detecting the presence or absence of a reaction product. The antibody may be monoclonal, polyclonal, chimeric, or a fragment of the foregoing, as discussed in detail above, and the step of detecting the reaction product may be carried out with any suitable immunoassay. The sample from the subject is typically a biological fluid as described above, and may be the same sample of biological fluid used to conduct the method described above.

[0051] Expression of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide also allows for the course of treatment of cancer to be monitored. In this method, a biological sample is provided from a subject undergoing treatment, e.g., surgical, chemotherapeutic or hormonal treatment, for a cancer. If desired, biological samples are obtained from the subject at various time points before, during, or after treatment.

Expression of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide hemoglobin polypeptide is then determined and compared to a reference, e.g. control whose cancer state is known. The reference sample has been exposed to the treatment. Alternatively, the reference sample has not been exposed to the treatment. Optionally, such monitoring is carried out preliminary to a second look surgical surveillance procedures and subsequent surgical surveillance procedures. For example, samples may be collected from subjects who have received initial surgical treatment for cancer and subsequent treatment with antineoplastic agents for that cancer to monitor the progress of the treatment.

[0052] If the reference sample is from a subject that does not have cancer, a similarity or an increase in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide in the test sample and the reference sample indicates that the treatment is efficacious. However, a decrease in the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide in the test sample and the reference sample indicates a less favorable clinical outcome or prognosis. Whereas an increase in the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide in the test sample and the reference sample indicates a less favorable clinical outcome or prognosis.

[0053] By "efficacious" is meant that the treatment leads to an increase in the amount of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide, a decrease in the amount of a hemoglobin polypeptide or a decrease in size, prevalence, or metastatic potential of a tumor in a subject. Assessment of cancer is made using standard clinical protocols. Efficacy is determined in association with any known method for diagnosing or treating the particular tumor.

[0054] Expression of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide or a hemoglobin polypeptide also allows the identification of patients who will be responsive to systemic, e.g., chemotherapeutic, hormonal or radiation therapy. In this method, a biological sample is provided from a subject prior to undergoing surgical treatment, for a cancer. Expression of a fibrinogen α C domain peptide is then determined and compared to a biological sample obtained from the subject after surgical removal of the cancer. The patient will likely be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide increases after surgical removal the cancer. In contrast a the patient will likely not be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the polypeptide remains constant or decreases after surgical removal of the cancer. The patient will likely be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide decreases after surgical removal the cancer. In contrast, a the patient will likely not be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide remains constant or increases after surgical removal of the cancer

[0055] Expression of the fibrinogen α C domain peptide, hemoglobin polypeptide or other cancer biomarkers (e.g., Her-2 or CA-125) is determined at the protein or nucleic acid level using any method known in the art. For example, Northern hybridization analysis using probes which specifically recognize one or more of these sequences can be used to determine gene expression. Alternatively, expression is measured using reverse-transcription-based PCR assays, e.g., using primers specific for the differentially expressed sequence of genes. Expression is also determined at the protein level, i.e., by measuring the levels of peptides encoded by the gene products described herein, or activities thereof. Such methods are well known in the art and include, e.g., immu-

noassays based on antibodies to proteins encoded by the genes. Any biological material can be used for the detection/quantification of the protein or Ws activity. Alternatively, a suitable method can be selected to determine the activity of proteins encoded by the marker genes according to the activity of each protein analyzed.

[0056] The subject is preferably a mammal. The mammal is, e.g., a human, non-human primate, mouse, rat, dog, cat, horse, or cow. Subjects are typically human females or human males. The methods are applicable to testing for cancer such as breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer.

[0057] The subject has been previously diagnosed as carrying a cancer, and possibly has already undergone treatment for the cancer. Alternatively, the subject has not been previously diagnosis as carrying a cancer. The present invention is useful with all patients at risk for a cancer. Although each type of cancer has their own set of risk factors, the risk of developing cancer increases as with aged, gender, race and personal and family medical history. Other risk factors are largely related to lifestyle choices, while certain infections, occupational exposures and some environmental factors can also be related to developing cancer. Breast cancer risk factors include personal and family history of breast cancer, early menarche (first period before age 12), obesity, late onset of menopause (after age 50), alcohol abuse, smoking, lack of exercise, and delayed or absent child bearing. The risks of developing breast cancer increase exponentially after the age of 30.

[0058] Optionally, the subject is tested for carrying other indicators of susceptibility of developing cancer. For example, the subject is positive for BRAC1 or BRAC2.

[0059] Diagnosis of cancer is typically made through the identification of a mass on an examination, though it may also be through other means such as a radiological diagnosis, ultrasound, or the detection of a humoral marker such as CA-125, HER-2 or PSA. Treatment is typically through cytoreductive surgery, followed by treatment with antineoplastic agents such as docetaxel vinorelbine gemcitabine, capecitabine or a combinations of cyclophosphamide, methotrexate, and fluorouracil; cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, and fluorouracil; doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide; doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide with paclitaxel; doxorubicin followed by CMF; or Cyclophosphamide, epirubicin and fluorouracil. In addition, many patients will require radiation therapy. In patients with breast cancer, tamoxifen therapy may also be required.

[0060] Immunoassays carried out in accordance with the present invention may be homogeneous assays or heterogeneous assays. In a homogeneous assay the immunological reaction usually involves the specific antibody (e.g., fibrinogen α C domain peptide or hemoglobin polypeptide), a labeled analyte, and the sample of interest. The signal arising from the label is modified, directly or indirectly, upon the binding of the antibody to the labeled analyte. Both the immunological reaction and detection of the extent thereof are carried out in a homogeneous solution. Immunochemical labels which may be employed include free radicals, radioisotopes, fluorescent dyes, enzymes, bacteriophages, or coenzymes.

[0061] In a heterogeneous assay approach, the reagents are usually the sample, the antibody, and means for producing a detectable signal. Samples as described above may be used. The antibody is generally immobilized on a support, such as

a bead, plate or slide, and contacted with the specimen suspected of containing the antigen in a liquid phase. The support is then separated from the liquid phase and either the support phase or the liquid phase is examined for a detectable signal employing means for producing such signal. The signal is related to the presence of the analyte in the sample. Means for producing a detectable signal include the use of radioactive labels, fluorescent labels, or enzyme labels. For example, if the antigen to be detected contains a second binding site, an antibody which binds to that site can be conjugated to a detectable group and added to the liquid phase reaction solution before the separation step. The presence of the detectable group on the solid support indicates the presence of the antigen in the test sample. Examples of suitable immunoassays are radioimmunoassays, immunofluorescence methods, or enzyme-linked immunoassays.

[0062] Those skilled in the art will be familiar with numerous specific immunoassay formats and variations thereof, which may be useful for carrying out the method disclosed herein. See generally E. Maggio, *Enzyme-Immunoassay*, (1980) (CRC Press, Inc., Boca Raton, Fla.); see also U.S. Pat. No. 4,727,022 to Skold et al. titled "Methods for Modulating Ligand-Receptor Interactions and their Application," U.S. Pat. No. 4,659,678 to Forrest et al. titled "Immunoassay of Antigens," U.S. Pat. No. 4,376,110 to David et al., titled "Immunoassays Using Monoclonal Antibodies," U.S. Pat. No. 4,275,149 to Litman et al., titled "Macromolecular Environment Control in Specific Receptor Assays," U.S. Pat. No. 4,233,402 to Maggio et al., titled "Reagents and Method Employing Channeling," and U.S. Pat. No. 4,230,767 to Boguslaski et al., titled "Heterogeneous Specific Binding Assay Employing a Coenzyme as Label."

[0063] Antibodies are conjugated to a solid support suitable for a diagnostic assay (e.g., beads, plates, slides or wells formed from materials such as latex or polystyrene) in accordance with known techniques, such as precipitation. An antibody or antibody fragment that binds to CA-125 or CEA may optionally be conjugated to the same support, as discussed above. Antibodies as described herein may likewise be conjugated to detectable groups such as radiolabels (e.g., 35 S, 125 I, 131 I), enzyme labels (e.g., horseradish peroxidase, alkaline phosphatase), and fluorescent labels (e.g., fluorescein) in accordance with known techniques.

[0064] Diagnostic kits for carrying out the methods described herein are produced in a number of ways. In one embodiment, the diagnostic kit comprises (a) an antibody (e.g., fibrinogen α C domain peptide) conjugated to a solid support and (b) a second antibody of the invention conjugated to a detectable group. The reagents may also include ancillary agents such as buffering agents and protein stabilizing agents, e.g., polysaccharides and the like. The diagnostic kit may further include, where necessary, other members of the signal-producing system of which system the detectable group is a member (e.g., enzyme substrates), agents for reducing background interference in a test, control reagents, apparatus for conducting a test, and the like. Alternatively, a test kit contains (a) an antibody, and (b) a specific binding partner for the antibody conjugated to a detectable group. Ancillary agents as described above may likewise be included. The test kit may be packaged in any suitable manner, typically with all elements in a single container along with a sheet of printed instructions for carrying out the test.

Example 1

General Methods

[0065] Patient Cohort and Sample Handling

[0066] Sixty-one pre-therapy patients with HER2-positive breast cancer and 61 healthy women controls were used for the study. For the case-control study, plasma from the patients was randomly split into a training set of 40 patients and 40 controls and a test set of 21 patients and 21 controls. The cancer and control samples were collected in the same way to avoid possible systemic bias. For the longitudinal study, plasma from another cohort of 28 patients with operable cancer underwent a pre-treatment plasma collection and was compared to plasma from a blood draw at least two-weeks after the completion of all treatments (post-treatment blood draw). These women were treated on neo-adjuvant protocols in which trastuzumab (herceptin) combined with chemotherapy was given prior to surgery. All stage II and III women underwent surgery, either mastectomy or wide excision (lumpectomy), and a combination of procedures were done on ipsilateral lymph nodes. Known axillary disease was removed surgically. For those undergoing wide-excision, breast radiation given after surgery was part of the local treatment. The clinical characteristics of the patients are listed in Table 1; some of these patients were deemed to have stage IV disease during treatment.

[0067] Blood was collected at the Dana Farber-Harvard Cancer Center under IRB-approved protocols. The entire case-control study was repeated on stored plasma held at -80°C . All samples were collected in tubes containing citrate buffer and processed immediately under same conditions prior to freezing. All samples were analyzed without information as to patient identities.

[0068] Plasma Fractionation

[0069] Plasma samples were fractionated with an anion exchange resin (Biosepra, Marlboro, Mass.) using stepwise pH elution in a 96 well filter plate format (Nalge Nunc, Naperville, Ill.). First, 50 μl of plasma was denatured in 75 μl of buffer U9 (9M urea, 2% CHAPS, 50 mM Tris-HCl pH 9) in a 96 well plate at 4°C . for 20 minutes while shaking.

[0070] Filter plates were loaded with 180 μl of the pre-treated resin (washed with 5 bed volumes of 50 mM Tris-HCl pH9, 50% suspension in the wash buffer). This was followed by equilibration with buffer U1 (1M urea, 0.22% CHAPS, 50 mM Tris-HCl pH9), and then 50 μl of the denatured plasma samples were transferred to the equilibrated filter plate. An additional 50 μl buffer U1 was added into each well. The filter plate was shaken for 30 minutes at 4°C . to allow the binding of plasma proteins to the resin. The filter plate was spun into a collection plate labeled as "Fraction 1". An additional 100 μl of wash buffer 1 (50 mM Tris-HCl with 0.1% n-Octyl β -D-glucopyranoside (OGP), pH10) was added into the filter plate, which was shaken for 10 minutes at room temperature and spun-filtered into the same Fraction 1 collection plate. "Fraction 23" was obtained by washing the resin in the same manner with wash buffer 2 (100 mM NaPhosphate with 0.1% OGP pH7) and then with wash buffer 3 (100 mM NaAcetate with 0.1% OGP pH5). "Fraction 45" was obtained by washing the resin, with wash buffer 4 (100 mM NaAcetate with 0.1% OGP pH4) and wash buffer 5 (50 mM NaCitrate with 0.1% OGP pH3). Remaining denatured plasma prior to fractionation (75 μl) was diluted in 225 μl of PBS and labeled as "Fraction SC". All the collection plates were stored at -70°C . until proceeding with protein chip surface capture protocol.

[0071] Protein Chip Surface Capture

[0072] IMAC40 chip-binding surfaces, charged with CuSO_4 were used and loaded into a 192 well Bioprocessor (Ciphergen, CA). A Tecan Genesis robotic workstation was used for liquid handling and all experiments were carried out at room temperature. Binding of proteins to the chip surface was performed by adding 70 μl of binding buffer and 10 μl of the indicated plasma fraction and vortexing for 30 minutes. The chips were then washed 3 times with 100 μl PBS and rinsed twice with 100 μl water. The Bioprocessor was disassembled and the chips were air dried for 10 minutes. At the end of the process, 1 μl of an energy absorbing molecule (EAM) solution (Cyano-4-hydroxycinnamic acid, CHCA) in 50% acetonitrile and 0.5% trifluoroacetic acid, was applied to each spot using a 96 channel Tecan Genmate robot. The chips were air dried for another 10 minutes, and then scanned immediately using the procedure outlined below.

[0073] Spectrum Data Collection

[0074] The chips were scanned using a PBSII-C instrument (Ciphergen, CA) equipped with an autoloader. SELDI software version 3.1 was used to control the parameters of data collection. The parameter settings were: High mass collection limit was 20000 m/z (mass to charge ratio). Optimization range was from 1000 to 10000 m/z, focused at 5500 m/z. The laser intensity used was optimized for each fraction. An automatic protocol was implemented to collect the data from each set of chips. One hundred twenty laser shots were fired across each spot and the resulting data collected, averaged and stored as the spectrum for that spot.

[0075] The molecular weight accuracy of the system was calibrated with a peptide mixture immediately before scanning of each fraction. The spectra were labeled as Fraction m/z, where "SC" representing plasma fraction, "F23" representing fraction 2 and 3 combined, etc.

[0076] Spectrum Data Processing

[0077] The baselines were subtracted and the spectra normalized by the total ion current function using default parameter settings of the Ciphergen software. Peaks were defined as those peptides with a signal-to-noise ratio (S/N) above five. Biomarker candidates, i.e., peaks with similar m/z value across spectra, were detected using the following criteria, 1) peak intensity of five-fold over noise, 2) peaks present in a minimum of 10% of all spectra, and 3) the m/z of peaks differed across spectra by $\leq 0.3\%$ of the m/z. Quality control procedures to detect individual spectrum failure and failed fractions³¹ were applied. Failed spectra and fractions were eliminated from further analysis.

[0078] Two independent experiments with the same collection of samples were performed, one that was used immediately and one that was kept frozen for six months at -80°C . Before averaging the two experiment data sets, highly reproducible markers were determined between the data sets. The peaks were aligned allowing for 0.1% to 0.3% mass error between the two data sets. A correlation coefficient was calculated for each of the aligned peaks and only peaks with correlation coefficient higher than 0.5 were selected for averaging and biomarker detection. The 61 cancer and 61 control samples were randomly partitioned into a training set containing 40 cancer and 40 controls, and a test set containing the other 21 cancer and 21 controls. Biomarker selection was applied on the training set, validated on the test set and finally further validated on the pre- and post-surgery longitudinal study.

[0079] Biomarker Selection

[0080] Four methods to select biomarkers that segregate cancer patients from controls were used: Recursive Support Vector Machine (R-SVM)³², Random Forest³³, T-test and Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve. The first two methods analyze multi-dimensional data and directly select important biomarkers that contribute the most to the classification of samples. The later two methods evaluate the importance of each marker independently, and the importance of these markers is reflected by p-value and relative ranking. For T-test, after calculating a p-value for each of the biomarkers, False Discovery Rate (FDR) control³⁴ was used to adjust the raw p-values and selected important biomarkers by the adjusted p-values. Biomarkers were discovered in two identical sets of plasma, one that was used immediately and one that was kept frozen for six months at -80° C. Peaks from both sets of plasma were aligned, peak identity defined and only candidates reproduced in both sets were designated candidate biomarkers.

Example 2

Biomarker Selection (Case-Control Study)

[0081] Table 1 shows the clinical characteristics of patients in the case-control study. The distribution of disease burden (stage) and hormone receptor content in primary tumors was similar in cases assigned to the learning and test sets. All tumors were HER2-positive by usual clinical criteria, and all tumors were high-grade breast cancers. Sixty-one breast cancer patients and controls were randomly partitioned into a training set containing 40 patients and 40 controls, and a test data set containing 21 patients and 21 controls. A total of 57 peaks passed selection criteria. Using cross validation and variable feature selection, R-SVM selected a seven biomarker set that was the optimal predictor of cancer status (FIG. 1, Supplemental Data). We then compared the biomarkers discovered by R-SVM to those found by Random Forest algorithm, t-test, and receiver operation curve algorithms. The results are summarized in Table 2. The seven-biomarkers selected by R-SVM were at least in the top 24 markers selected by the other methods. The top R-SVM-determined marker (F45_2661.4) was also ranked first in each of the other biomarker selection methods. Therefore, several peptides were "discovered" using very different statistical methods, and one peptide was ranked first by all methods of discovery.

[0082] R-SVM and Random Forest are statistical algorithms that build prediction models using combinations of individual features, in this case peptide peaks from the SELDI-TOF spectrographs. The best models from both methods were generated using the training set from the case-control study and validated on the test set. Unbiased external cross-validation error on training set and the prediction error on the test set by both methods are shown in FIG. 1A. With R-SVM, a minimum cross validation (CV) error of 22.5% was found with seven biomarkers on the training set. Validating the R-SVM selected model on the test data resulted in a similar error of 19.1%. The CV errors estimated by R-SVM with original as well as permuted class labels were shown in figure S1. The median CV error for any given number of model peaks is around 0.5 when class labels were randomly permuted, showing the CV error estimated by the R-SVM algorithm is unbiased. Since the CV error with original class labels is significantly lower than that of the permuted labels,

significant classification information exists in the data. Using the Random Forest method, the CV error on training data set was 28.75%, and the error with the test data was 19.0%.

[0083] Receiver operating characteristics (ROC) curve is used to estimate the clinical performance of biomarkers, and results are summarized by the area under the ROC curve. An area under the curve (AUC) >0.9 is commonly used to identify markers useful in clinical practice³⁵. Seven biomarkers obtained from R-SVM analysis were used to calculate the ROC on the test data set. FIG. 1B shows the ROC curve for the seven-biomarker set; the calculated AUC=0.95, indicating good discrimination segregating cancers vs. controls.

[0084] Inconsistent sample collection, processing and storage may lead to inaccurate conclusions. These effects were estimated first by arbitrary designation of training and test sets from the 61 HER2-positive, untreated cases and controls (presented above); secondly by the use of peaks discovered independently in plasma used immediately and aliquots from the same blood draw stored for 6 months, and finally by visual inspection of intensity maps (heat maps) representing the entire spectrograph of cases and controls (FIG. 6A).

[0085] No individual spectra failed in either data set of the two independent experiments, separated by storage for 6 months. Fraction 1 failed in the second experiment and data was not used. After peak alignment, 98 peaks were identified in the samples analyzed immediately, 74 peaks were identified in the samples stored for six months and 57 peaks were reproduced in both plasma cohorts. Sample bias may lead to misinterpretation of case-control studies utilizing SELDI^{36, 37}. Using raw spectrographic data, we constructed composite heat maps from fractionated plasma in cases and controls, allowing detection of a systemic bias. No significant or pervasive differences were noted (FIG. 6A). Similarly, random sampling groups of seven biomarkers, and calculating the cross validation errors for prediction of cancer and controls, showed a random CV error that centered around 40%, consistent with the existence of informative markers in the case-control cohort (FIG. 613). There does not appear to be strong sample or analytic bias in this study.

Example 3

Identification of a 2660 Dalton Marker

[0086] A marker with an m/z value close to 2660 ranked as the most important according to all 4 statistical methods used; furthermore, this marker appeared in multiple fractions and in samples analyzed after prolonged freezing (Table 2). Superimposed spectra from all cancer and control samples in F23 in the 2600 to 2900 M.& range are shown in FIG. 2A. The overlaid peak height at 2660 is lower in plasma from cancer patients than in the plasma from unaffected controls. To quantitatively show this difference, FIGS. 2B and 2C show box-plots of the peak heights for this biomarker in cancer patients and unaffected controls in the training data set and the test data set, respectively. The expression of this peptide was significantly (T-test, $p<0.0001$) higher in control vs. cancer patients. The ROC was plotted using this single marker in the test data set and achieved an AUC=0.75, indicating discrimination using this single marker (FIG. 2D).

[0087] Using direct on-chip sequencing with a Q-TOF mass spectrometry instrument the peptide was identified with high probability (Mowse Score of 24) as a fragment from the c-terminus of Fibrinogen Alpha (FGA). This peptide encompasses amino acids 605-629 (referring to Swiss-Prot acces-

sion number P02671) of human Fibrinogen Alpha. The sequence of the peptide is DEAGSEADHEGTHST-KRGHAKSRPV (FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉). Furthermore, biomarkers with 2660 m/z value in other fractions (possibly leaking between fractions), were confirmed by sequencing to be the same peptide.

Example 4

Pre and Post-Surgery Validation (Longitudinal Study)

[0088] Local treatment of breast cancer alone renders most patients disease-free and eliminates clinically detectable disease. Therefore, there is an expectation that an important biomarker would revert to normal levels after neoadjuvant chemotherapy and surgical resection of the tumor. The change in the levels of biomarkers in pre and post-surgery samples were examined for validation of the case-control study. The post-surgery blood samples of a new cohort of twenty-eight patients were collected along with their corresponding pre-treatment blood samples. The schematics of pre and post-surgery sample collection are shown in FIG. 3. Patient clinical characteristics for this pre and post-surgery population are listed in Table 1 (pre-post surgery study).

[0089] The pre- and post-surgery samples were processed and analyzed together. A total of 229 peaks were detected using the same criteria described in the Materials and Methods. A pair-wise t-test was used to compare the pre- and post-surgery levels for each of the 229 peaks. The majority of the 28 patients had increased level of FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ post-surgery as shown in FIG. 4A. Overall, FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ was significantly higher in post-surgery patients compared to pre-surgery patients ($p < 0.0048$; FIG. 4B). FIG. 4C is a scatter plot of p-values indicating the significance of change in marker concentration post-surgery versus the logarithm of the median fold change post-surgery of all 229 markers. Compared to all other markers, the level of FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ has the highest fold change (an increase toward normal levels) associated with one of the most significant p-values. Therefore, the pre- and post-surgery study confirmed that levels of FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ return to normal after pre-operative chemotherapy and surgical resection of the tumor, validating its importance as a biomarker for HER2-positive breast cancer and suggesting FGA₆₀₅₋₆₂₉ is useful in monitoring therapy.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of the breast cancers in the study cohorts.									
Sample cohort	Tumor Characteristics [†]								
	Estrogen			Progesterone			Stage [‡]		
	Receptor [‡]		NR [§]	Receptor [‡]		NR	II or III	IV	NR
	Pos. (%)	Neg. (%)		Pos. (%)	Neg. (%)		(%)	(%)	
Case-Control Learning Set	25 (62.5)	15 (37.5)	0	25 (66)	13 (34)	2	36 (90)	4 (10)	2
Case-Control Test Set	12 (60)	8 (40)	1	11 (58)	8 (42)	2	16 (76)	5 (24)	0
Pre- & Post-Surgery	17 (61)	11 (39)	0	14 (54)	12 (46)	2	28 (100)	0	1

[†]All tumors were HER2-positive

[‡]Estrogen and progesterone receptor content was determined by immunohistochemistry on pre-operative core needle biopsies and reported in the clinical record.

[§]Stage was determined pre-operatively by clinical criteria and reported in the clinical record.

[¶]NR: Not reported

TABLE 2

Relative rank of seven markers selected by R-SVM using other statistical methods			
Marker Selected by R-SVM (rank order)	Relative rank by different statistical methods		
	Random Forest [†]	T-test ^{‡,†}	ROC [‡]
(1) F45_2661.4 [†]	1	1	1
(2) SC_2660.7	7	3	3
(3) SC_2953.9	4	6	5
(4) SC_7932.7	9	7	7
(5) F23_4576.3	6	12	10
(6) SC_8922.5	19	14	22
(7) SC_3158.3	22	23	24

[†]Biomarker designations explained in Materials and Methods

[‡]Markers determined by Random Forest are ranked by their mean decrease in gini distance (see supplemental methods); markers determined by T-test are ranked according to T-statistics; markers determined by ROC are ranked by the area under the ROC curve for each marker comparing cancer vs. control.

[†]The first four markers found by T-test were statistically different in cancer vs. control samples after adjustment for false discovery (adjusted $p < 0.05$).

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Other Embodiments

- [0145] While the invention has been described in conjunction with the detailed description thereof, the foregoing description is intended to illustrate and not limit the scope of the invention, which is defined by the scope of the appended claims. Other aspects, advantages, and modifications are within the scope of the following claims.

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Lys Asn Asn Lys Asp Ser His Ser Leu Thr Thr Asn Ile Met Glu Ile
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			805						810					815	
Glu	Ile	Glu	Asn	Gly	Val	Val	Trp	Val	Ser	Phe	Arg	Gly	Ala	Asp	Tyr
			820					825					830		
Ser	Leu	Arg	Ala	Val	Arg	Met	Lys	Ile	Arg	Pro	Leu	Val	Thr	Gln	
	835						840					845			

What is claimed is:

1. A method for facilitating the diagnosis of a cancer in a subject, comprising detecting a fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a sample from said subject, wherein the a decrease of said polypeptide in said sample compared to a normal control sample indicates of the presence of a cancer in said subject.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said subject has previously been treated surgically or hormonally for said cancer.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising detecting Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA).

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said subject is BRAC1 or BRAC2 positive.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said cancer is breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising detecting a peptide with mass to charge (m/z) ratio of about 7558, 7933, 1418 or 15168.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises amino acid residues 605-629 of a fibrinogen alpha polypeptide when numbered in accordance with a mature wild type fibrinogen alpha polypeptide.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 5 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 10 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 20 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

14. A method according to claim 1, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide is detected electrophoretically, or immunochemically.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said immunochemical detection is by radio-immune assay, immunofluorescence assay or by an enzyme-linked immunosorbant assay.

17. A method according to claim 1, wherein said subject has not been previously diagnosed as having cancer.

18. A method according to claim 1, wherein said subject has been previously diagnosed as having cancer.

19. A method for monitoring the progression of a cancer in a patient, comprising

a. detecting the presence of a fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a first sample from said patient at a first period of time,

b. detecting the presence of said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a second sample from said patient at a second period of time

c. comparing the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide detected in step (a) to the amount detected in step (b), wherein the cancer is progressing if the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide decreases over time, whereas the cancer is not progressing if the amount of the polypeptide remains constant or increases over time.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said patient has previously been treated surgically or hormonally for said cancer.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein said first sample is taken from said patient prior to being treated for said cancer.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein said second sample is taken from said patient after being treated for said cancer.

23. A method according to claim 19, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.

24. A method according to claim 19, further comprising detecting the presence of Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) in said patient.

25. The method of claim 19, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises amino acid residues 605-629 of a fibrinogen alpha polypeptide when numbered in accordance with a mature wild type fibrinogen alpha polypeptide.

26. The method of claim 19, wherein said c-terminal fibrinogen alpha degradation comprises the amino acid sequence at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

27. A method of diagnosing cancer in a subject comprising, detecting the presence of a fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a sample from the subject; determining the level of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in said sample to provide a test value; and comparing the test value to a standard value, wherein a test value below the standard value is indicative of a cancer.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein said test value is 2 fold lower than said standard value.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said test value is 5 fold lower than said standard value.

30. The method of claim 27, wherein said test value is 10 fold lower than said standard value.

31. A method according to claim 27, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.

32. A method according to claim 19, further comprising detecting the presence of Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) in said subject.

33. The method of claim 27, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises amino acids 605-629 of a fibrinogen alpha polypeptide when numbered in accordance with a mature wild type fibrinogen alpha polypeptide.

34. The method of claim 27, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

35. A method determining whether a patient with a cancer will likely be responsive to systemic therapy comprising

- a. detecting the presence of a fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a first sample from said patient obtained prior to surgical removal of said cancer,
- b. detecting the presence of said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide in a second sample from said patient obtained after surgical removal of said cancer and
- c. comparing the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide detected in step (a) to the amount detected in step (b), wherein the patient will likely be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide increases after surgical removal of said cancer, whereas the patient will likely not be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the polypeptide remains constant or decreases after surgical removal of said cancer.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein said cancer is breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises amino acid residues 605-629 of a fibrinogen alpha polypeptide when numbered in accordance with a mature wild type fibrinogen alpha polypeptide.

38. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1.

39. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 5 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

40. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 10 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

41. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 15 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

42. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises at least 20 contiguous amino acid residues of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1

43. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO 1.

44. A method according to claim 25, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.

45. The method of claim 35, wherein said fibrinogen α C domain polypeptide is detected electrophoretically, or immunochemically.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein said immunochemical detection is by radio-immune assay, immunofluorescence assay or by an enzyme-linked immunosorbant assay.

47. A method for facilitating the diagnosis of a cancer in a subject, comprising detecting a hemoglobin polypeptide in a sample from said subject, wherein the an increase of said polypeptide in said sample compared to a normal control sample indicates the presence of a cancer in said subject.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein said subject has previously been treated surgically or hormonally for said cancer.

49. The method of claim 47, further comprising detecting Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), S-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA).

50. The method of claim 47, wherein said subject is BRAC1 or BRAC2 positive.

51. The method of claim 47, wherein said cancer is breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer.

52. A method according to claim 47, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.

53. The method of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide is detected electrophoretically, or immunochemically.

54. A method according to claim 47, wherein said subject has not been previously diagnosed as having cancer.

55. A method according to claim 47, wherein said subject has been previously diagnosed as having cancer.

56. A method for monitoring the progression of a cancer in a patient, comprising

- a. detecting the presence of a hemoglobin polypeptide in a first sample from said patient at a first period of time,

- b. detecting the presence of said hemoglobin polypeptide in a second sample from said patient at a second period of time
 - c. comparing the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide detected in step (a) to the amount detected in step (b), wherein the cancer is progressing if the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide decreases over time, whereas the cancer is not progressing if the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide remains constant or increases over time.
- 57.** The method of claim **56**, wherein said patient has previously been treated surgically or hormonally for said cancer.
- 58.** The method of claim **56**, wherein said first sample is taken from said patient prior to being treated for said cancer.
- 59.** The method of claim **56**, wherein said second sample is taken from said patient after being treated for said cancer.
- 60.** A method according to claim **56**, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.
- 61.** A method according to claim **56**, further comprising detecting the presence of Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), 5-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) in said patient.
- 62.** A method of diagnosing cancer in a subject comprising, detecting the presence of a hemoglobin polypeptide in a sample from the subject; determining the level of the hemoglobin polypeptide in said sample to provide a test value; and comparing the test value to a standard value, wherein a test value above the standard value is indicative of a cancer.
- 63.** The method of claim **62**, wherein said test value is 2 fold lower than said standard value.
- 64.** The method of claim **62**, wherein said test value is 5 fold lower than said standard value.
- 65.** The method of claim **62**, wherein said test value is 10 fold lower than said standard value.
- 66.** A method according to claim **62**, wherein said sample is urine, serum or blood plasma.
- 67.** A method according to claim **62**, further comprising detecting the presence of Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), Beta-2-microglobulin (B2M), Bladder tumor antigen (BTA), CA 15-3, CA 27.29, CA 125, CA 72-4, CA 19-9, Calcitonin, Carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), Chromogranin A, Serum gamma globulin, Serum Her-2/neu, Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), Lipid Associated Sialic Acid in Plasma (LASA-P), NMP22, Neuron-specific enolase (NSE), Prostate-specific antigen (PSA), Prostatic acid phosphatase (PAP), Prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA), 5-100, TA-90, Thyroglobulin, or Tissue polypeptide antigen (TPA) in said subject.
- 68.** A method determining whether a patient with a cancer will likely be responsive to systemic therapy comprising
- a. detecting the presence of a hemoglobin polypeptide in a first sample from said patient obtained prior to surgical removal of said cancer,
 - b. detecting the presence of said hemoglobin polypeptide in a second sample from said patient obtained after surgical removal of said cancer and
 - c. comparing the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide detected in step (a) to the amount detected in step (b), wherein the patient will likely be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the hemoglobin polypeptide decrease after surgical removal of said cancer, whereas the patient will likely not be responsive to systemic treatment if the amount of the polypeptide remains constant or increase after surgical removal of said cancer.
- 69.** The method of claim **68**, wherein said cancer is breast cancer, colon cancer, liver cancer, pancreatic cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, or lung cancer.

* * * * *

专利名称(译)	纤维蛋白原 α 和血红蛋白多肽作为癌症标志物		
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摘要(译)

本发明提供了使用生物标志物检测癌症的方法。

