

Databases and ontologies

## EVpedia: a community web portal for extracellular vesicles research

Dae-Kyum Kim<sup>1,†,‡</sup>, Jaewook Lee<sup>1,†,‡</sup>, Sae Rom Kim<sup>1,‡</sup>, Dong-Sic Choi<sup>1,‡</sup>, Yae Jin Yoon<sup>2,‡</sup>, Ji Hyun Kim<sup>1,‡</sup>, Gyeongyun Go<sup>1,‡</sup>, Dinh Nhung<sup>1,‡</sup>, Kahye Hong<sup>1,‡</sup>, Su Chul Jang<sup>1,‡</sup>, Si-Hyun Kim<sup>1,‡</sup>, Kyong-Su Park<sup>1,‡</sup>, Oh Youn Kim<sup>1,‡</sup>, Hyun Taek Park<sup>1,‡</sup>, Ji Hye Seo<sup>1,‡</sup>, Elena Aikawa<sup>3</sup>, Monika Baj-Krzyworzeka<sup>4</sup>, Bas W. M. van Balkom<sup>5</sup>, Mattias Belting<sup>6</sup>, Lionel Blanc<sup>7</sup>, Vincent Bond<sup>8</sup>, Antonella Bongiovanni<sup>9</sup>, Francesc E. Borràs<sup>10</sup>, Luc Buée<sup>11</sup>, Edit I. Buzás<sup>12</sup>, Lesley Cheng<sup>13</sup>, Aled Clayton<sup>14</sup>, Emanuele Cocucci<sup>15</sup>, Charles S. Dela Cruz<sup>16</sup>, Dominic M. Desiderio<sup>17</sup>, Dolores Di Vizio<sup>18</sup>, Karin Ekström<sup>19,20</sup>, Juan M. Falcon-Perez<sup>21</sup>, Chris Gardiner<sup>22</sup>, Bernd Giebel<sup>23</sup>, David W. Greening<sup>24</sup>, Julia Christina Gross<sup>25</sup>, Dwijendra Gupta<sup>26</sup>, An Hendrix<sup>27</sup>, Andrew F. Hill<sup>13</sup>, Michelle M. Hill<sup>28</sup>, Esther Nolte-'t Hoen<sup>29</sup>, Do Won Hwang<sup>30</sup>, Jameel Inal<sup>31</sup>, Medicharla V. Jagannadham<sup>32</sup>, Muthuvel Jayachandran<sup>33</sup>, Young-Koo Jee<sup>34</sup>, Malene Jørgensen<sup>35</sup>, Kwang Pyo Kim<sup>36</sup>, Yoon-Keun Kim<sup>37</sup>, Thomas Kislinger<sup>38</sup>, Cecilia Lässer<sup>39</sup>, Dong Soo Lee<sup>30</sup>, Hakmo Lee<sup>40</sup>, Johannes van Leeuwen<sup>41</sup>, Thomas Lener<sup>42,43</sup>, Ming-Lin Liu<sup>44,45</sup>, Jan Lötvald<sup>39</sup>, Antonio Marcilla<sup>46</sup>, Suresh Mathivanan<sup>24</sup>, Andreas Möller<sup>47</sup>, Jess Morhayim<sup>41</sup>, François Mullier<sup>48,49</sup>, Irina Nazarenko<sup>50</sup>, Rienk Nieuwland<sup>51</sup>, Diana N. Nunes<sup>52</sup>, Ken Pang<sup>53,54</sup>, Jaesung Park<sup>55</sup>, Tushar Patel<sup>56</sup>, Gabriella Pocsfalvi<sup>57</sup>, Hernando del Portillo<sup>58</sup>, Ulrich Putz<sup>59</sup>, Marcel I. Ramirez<sup>60</sup>, Marcio L. Rodrigues<sup>61,62</sup>, Tae-Young Roh<sup>1,2</sup>, Felix Royo<sup>21</sup>, Susmita Sahoo<sup>63</sup>, Raymond Schiffelers<sup>64</sup>, Shivani Sharma<sup>65</sup>, Pia Siljander<sup>66</sup>, Richard J. Simpson<sup>24</sup>, Carolina Soekmadji<sup>67</sup>, Philip Stahl<sup>68</sup>, Allan Stensballe<sup>69</sup>, Ewa Stępień<sup>70</sup>, Hidetoshi Tahara<sup>71</sup>, Arne Trummer<sup>72</sup>, Hadi Valadi<sup>73</sup>, Laura J. Vella<sup>74</sup>, Sun Nyunt Wai<sup>75</sup>, Kenneth Witwer<sup>76</sup>, María Yáñez-Mó<sup>77</sup>, Hyewon Youn<sup>30</sup>, Reinhard Zeidler<sup>78</sup> and Yong Song Gho<sup>1,†,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Life Sciences, Pohang University of Science and Technology, Pohang, Republic of Korea, <sup>2</sup>Division of Integrative Biosciences and Biotechnology, Pohang University of Science and Technology, Pohang, Republic of Korea, <sup>3</sup>Cardiovascular Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA, <sup>4</sup>Department of Clinical Immunology, Polish-American Institute of Paediatrics, Jagiellonian University Medical College, Cracow, Poland, <sup>5</sup>Department of Nephrology and Hypertension, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands, <sup>6</sup>Section of Oncology, Department of Clinical Sciences, Lund University, Lund, Sweden, <sup>7</sup>The Feinstein Institute for Medical Research, Manhasset, NY, USA, <sup>8</sup>Department of Microbiology, Biochemistry,

and Immunology, Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA, USA, <sup>9</sup>Institute of Biomedicine and Molecular Immunology (IBIM), National Research Council (CNR), Palermo, Italy, <sup>10</sup>Innovation in Vesicles and Cells for Application in Therapy, Germans Trias i Pujol Research Institute, Germans Trias i Pujol University Hospital, Badalona, Spain, <sup>11</sup>INSERM, UMR837 JEAN-PIERRE Aubert Research Centre, Lille, France, <sup>12</sup>Department of Genetics, Cell- and Immunobiology, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary, <sup>13</sup>Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, BIO21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, <sup>14</sup>Institute of Cancer & Genetics, School of Medicine, Velindre Cancer Centre, Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK, <sup>15</sup>Program in Cellular and Molecular Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital and Department of Cell Biology, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA, <sup>16</sup>Section of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, USA, <sup>17</sup>Department of Neurology, College of Medicine, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, TN, USA, <sup>18</sup>Cancer Biology Program, Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA, <sup>19</sup>Department of Biomaterials, Institute of Clinical Sciences, Sahlgrenska Academy at University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden, <sup>20</sup>BIOMATCELL VINN Excellence Center of Biomaterials and Cell Therapy, Gothenburg, Sweden, <sup>21</sup>Metabolomics Unit, CIC bioGUNE, CIBERehd, IKERBASQUE Research Foundation, Technology Park of Bizkaia, Derio, Bizkaia, Spain, <sup>22</sup>Nuffield Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, John Radcliffe Hospital, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, <sup>23</sup>Institute for Transfusion Medicine, University Hospital Essen, University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany, <sup>24</sup>La Trobe Institute for Molecular Science (LIMS), La Trobe University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, <sup>25</sup>Division of Signaling and Functional Genomics, German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany, <sup>26</sup>Jai Prakash University, Chapra, Bihar, India, <sup>27</sup>Laboratory of Experimental Cancer Research, Department of Radiation Oncology and Experimental Cancer Research, Ghent University Hospital, Ghent, Belgium, <sup>28</sup>The University of Queensland Diamantina Institute, Translational Research Institute, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, Australia, <sup>29</sup>Department of Biochemistry & Cell Biology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands, <sup>30</sup>Department of Nuclear Medicine, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea, <sup>31</sup>Cellular and Molecular Immunology Research Centre, Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing, London Metropolitan University, London, UK, <sup>32</sup>CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, <sup>33</sup>Department of Physiology and Biomedical Engineering, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN, USA, <sup>34</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, Dankook University College of Medicine, Cheonan, Republic of Korea, <sup>35</sup>Department of Clinical Immunology, Aalborg University Hospital, Aalborg, Denmark, <sup>36</sup>Department of Applied Chemistry, Kyung Hee University, Yongin, Republic of Korea, <sup>37</sup>Ewha Womans University Medical Center, Seoul, Republic of Korea, <sup>38</sup>Ontario Cancer Institute, Toronto, ON, Canada, <sup>39</sup>Krefting Research Centre, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden, <sup>40</sup>Biomedical Research Institute, Seoul National University Hospital, Seoul, Republic of Korea, <sup>41</sup>Department of Internal Medicine, Erasmus University Rotterdam Medical Centre, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, <sup>42</sup>Department of Blood Group Serology and Transfusion Medicine, University Hospital of Salzburg, Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg, Austria, <sup>43</sup>Spinal Cord Injury & Tissue Regeneration Center Salzburg (SCI-TReCS), Paracelsus Medical University, Salzburg, Austria, <sup>44</sup>Department of Dermatology, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA, <sup>45</sup>Department of Medicine, Temple University School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA, <sup>46</sup>Àrea de Parasitologia, Departamento de Biologia Celular y Parasitologia, Universitat de València, Burjassot, Valencia, Spain, <sup>47</sup>Tumour Microenvironment Laboratory, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, Herston, QLD, Australia, <sup>48</sup>Hematology Laboratory, NARILIS, Namur Thrombosis and Hemostasis Center (NTHC), CHU Dinant Godinne UCL Namur, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, <sup>49</sup>Department of Pharmacy, NARILIS, Namur Thrombosis and Hemostasis Center (NTHC), University of Namur, Namur, Belgium, <sup>50</sup>Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and Hospital Infection Control, Medical Center-University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany, <sup>51</sup>Department of Clinical Chemistry, Academic Medical Center, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, <sup>52</sup>Laboratory of Medical Genomics, A.C. Camargo Cancer Center, São Paulo, Brazil, <sup>53</sup>Inflammation Division, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research, Parkville, VIC, Australia, <sup>54</sup>Department of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia, <sup>55</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Pohang University of Science and Technology, Pohang, Republic of Korea, <sup>56</sup>Departments of Transplantation and Cancer Biology, Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL, USA, <sup>57</sup>Mass Spectrometry and Proteomics, Institute of Biosciences and Bioresources, National Research Council of Italy, Naples, Italy, <sup>58</sup>ICREA, Barcelona Centre for International Health Research, Barcelona, Spain, <sup>59</sup>The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, <sup>60</sup>Laboratory of Molecular Biology of Parasites and Vectors, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>61</sup>Paulo de Góes Microbiology Institute, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>62</sup>Centre for Technological Development in Health (CDTS), Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>63</sup>Cardiovascular Research Institute, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA, <sup>64</sup>Department of Clinical

Chemistry and Hematology, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands, <sup>65</sup>California Nanosystems Institute, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA, <sup>66</sup>Division of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, Department of Biosciences, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, <sup>67</sup>Australian Prostate Cancer Research Centre-Queensland, Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, QLD, Australia, <sup>68</sup>Department of Cell Biology and Physiology, Washington University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, MO, USA, <sup>69</sup>Department of Health Science and Technology, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark, <sup>70</sup>Department of Medical Physics, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland, <sup>71</sup>Department of Cellular and Molecular Biology, Graduate School of Biomedical Science, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan, <sup>72</sup>Department of Hematology, Hemostasis, Oncology and Stem Cell Transplantation, Hannover Medical School, Hannover, Germany, <sup>73</sup>Department of Rheumatology and Inflammation Research, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden, <sup>74</sup>Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research Melbourne, Austin Hospital, Heidelberg, VIC, Australia, <sup>75</sup>Department of Molecular Biology, Umeå University, Umeå, Sweden, <sup>76</sup>Department of Molecular and Comparative Pathobiology, The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA, <sup>77</sup>Unidad de Investigación, Hospital Santa Cristina, Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria Princesa, Madrid, Spain, <sup>78</sup>Department of Otorhinolaryngology and Research Group Gene Vectors, University of Muenchen, Helmholtz-Zentrum München, Munich, Germany

\*To whom correspondence should be addressed.

†The authors wish it to be known that, in their opinion, the first two authors should be regarded as joint First Authors.

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‡Only these authors are not listed alphabetically by their last name.

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## Abstract

**Motivation:** Extracellular vesicles (EVs) are spherical bilayered proteolipids, harboring various bioactive molecules. Due to the complexity of the vesicular nomenclatures and components, online searches for EV-related publications and vesicular components are currently challenging.

**Results:** We present an improved version of EVpedia, a public database for EVs research. This community web portal contains a database of publications and vesicular components, identification of orthologous vesicular components, bioinformatic tools and a personalized function. EVpedia includes 6879 publications, 172 080 vesicular components from 263 high-throughput datasets, and has been accessed more than 65 000 times from more than 750 cities. In addition, about 350 members from 73 international research groups have participated in developing EVpedia. This free web-based database might serve as a useful resource to stimulate the emerging field of EV research.

**Availability and implementation:** The web site was implemented in PHP, Java, MySQL and Apache, and is freely available at <http://evpedia.info>.

**Contact:** [ysgho@postech.ac.kr](mailto:ysgho@postech.ac.kr)

## 1 Introduction

Almost all living organisms on earth shed extracellular vesicles (EVs) into their microenvironment. EVs are spherical bilayered proteolipids with an average diameter of 20–1000 nm (Ellen *et al.*, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2008; Théry *et al.*, 2009). Cells release EVs either constitutively or in a regulated manner and these vesicles harbor a specific subset of proteins, mRNAs, miRNAs, lipids and metabolites reflecting their originating cell types and conditions (Bellingham *et al.*, 2012; Choi *et al.*, 2014; de Jong *et al.*, 2012; Duperrthuy *et al.*, 2013; Mayr *et al.*, 2009; Raimondo *et al.*, 2011; Simpson *et al.*, 2008; Subra *et al.*, 2007; Wai *et al.*, 2003). EVs are also found in various biological fluids, such as amniotic fluid, ascites, breast milk, plasma, saliva, semen, serum and urine (Asea *et al.*, 2008; Caby *et al.*, 2005; Cheng *et al.*, 2014a, b; Dai *et al.*, 2008; George *et al.*, 1982; Lässer *et al.*, 2011; Poliakov *et al.*, 2009; Raj *et al.*, 2012; Witwer *et al.*, 2013). Recent advances in this fast growing field (Fig. 1) have facilitated several insights: (1) EVs play multifaceted functions in intercellular communication (Cocucci *et al.*, 2009;

Lee *et al.*, 2008; Simons and Raposo, 2009; Théry *et al.*, 2009); (2) EV-mediated intercellular communication is an evolutionarily conserved phenomenon (Deatherage and Cookson, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2008, 2009); (3) EVs are rich sources of biomarkers for non-invasive diagnosis and prognosis of various human diseases (Chaput *et al.*, 2005; Choi *et al.*, 2013a; D'Souza-Schorey and Clancy, 2012; Mullier *et al.*, 2013; Sarlon-Bartoli *et al.*, 2013; Shedden *et al.*, 2003; Simpson *et al.*, 2009); and (4) Diverse therapeutic approaches have been pursued to utilize EVs and their mimetics for vaccine, chemotherapeutic drug and siRNA delivery (Alvarez-Erviti *et al.*, 2011; Chaput *et al.*, 2005; Jang *et al.*, 2013; Kordelas *et al.*, 2014; Lai *et al.*, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2012; Simpson *et al.*, 2009; Sun *et al.*, 2010).

Publications on EVs have grown rapidly during the last several years, indicating that the field of EVs is expanding intensively (Fig. 1). The identification of vesicle-specific cargos could help us to unravel the molecular mechanisms underlying the cargo sorting and biogenesis of EVs. In addition, this will lead to better comprehension of the pathophysiological functions of EVs, and discovery of EV-based potential biomarkers of human diseases. Therefore, many

investigators have focused on categorizing these complex vesicular components by various high-throughput technologies, such as mass spectrometry-based proteomics and lipidomics as well as microarray- and next-generation sequencing-based transcriptomics (Barry *et al.*, 1997; Choi *et al.*, 2013b; Koh *et al.*, 2010; Utleg *et al.*, 2003; Valadi *et al.*, 2007). Together with conventional biological approaches, these multiomics-based analyses of EVs derived from various cell types and body fluids have identified several thousands of different vesicular components.

EV secretion and EV-mediated intercellular communication are evolutionarily conserved (Biller *et al.*, 2014; Deatherage and Cookson, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2008, 2009). Researchers in this field have coined dozens of different names for EVs, especially for more complex eukaryotic cell-derived EVs as listed in Box ('Extracellular Vesicles: Diverse Nomenclature') (Choi *et al.*, 2014; Gould and Raposo, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, there is progress toward a single nomenclature, since the different names in use make it difficult to follow the progress in the field. In addition, most vesicular components identified by multiomics-based high throughput analyses are presented in the supplementary information of published articles. Taken together, online searches for EV-related publications and vesicular components are currently challenging, especially for start-up researchers in this field. Therefore, a comprehensive public repository of EV-related publications and vesicular

#### Extracellular Vesicles: Diverse Nomenclature

##### Prokaryotes

###### *Archaea*

Membrane Vesicles

###### *Gram-negative Bacteria*

Extracellular Vesicles, Membrane Blebs, Outer Membrane Blebs, Outer Membrane Vesicles

###### *Gram-positive Bacteria*

Extracellular Vesicles, Membrane Vesicles

##### Eukaryotes

Argosomes, Blebbing Vesicles, Budding Vesicles, Dexosomes, Ectosomes, Exosome-like Vesicles, Exosomes, Exovesicles, Extracellular Membrane Vesicles, Extracellular Vesicles, Matrix Vesicles, Membrane Particles, Membrane Vesicles, Microparticles, Microvesicles, Nanovesicles, Oncosomes, Prominosomes, Protasomes, Shedding Microvesicles, Shedding Vesicles, Tolerosomes

components will help the community of EV research to understand various aspects of these complex extracellular organelles.

## 2 Databases that store EV data

The explosion of EV data has justified the need for databases that catalog proteins, nucleic acids and lipids associated with EVs. Currently, three databases exist for EV research including ExoCarta (Simpson *et al.*, 2012), EVpedia (Kim *et al.*, 2013) and Vesiclepedia (Kalra *et al.*, 2012). These existing databases have made large-scale bioinformatics analyses feasible and provide an ideal platform for EV-based biomarker studies. EVpedia provides additional benefits compared with ExoCarta and Vesiclepedia. EVpedia is the only resource that contains data on both prokaryotes and eukaryotes. In addition, EVpedia allows for Gene Ontology enrichment analysis, network analysis of vesicular proteins and mRNAs, and set analysis of vesicular datasets by ortholog identification. Other databases do not have any such embedded analysis tools.

## 3 Launch of EVpedia

EVpedia (<http://evpedia.info>) was first launched in January 2012 (Kim *et al.*, 2013). To construct this public web-based database, we first collected publications on prokaryotic and eukaryotic EVs through a combination of NCBI PubMed searches (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>) for text-mining solutions and manual curation using all nomenclatures assigned to EVs described in Box (see also Kim *et al.*, 2013). Based on these EV-related publications, we constructed the comprehensive and integrated database of proteins, mRNAs, miRNAs, lipids and metabolites for systematic analyses of prokaryotic and eukaryotic EVs.

## 4 Overview of current EVpedia

Since the launch of EVpedia, we have improved this database by continually collecting additional EV-related publications and datasets, by adding more tools for systematic analyses of EVs, and by supplementing the menu bars for 'Top 100+ EV markers', 'User forum' as well as 'My EVpedia'. Through closed and open beta tests, we built an 'EVpedia Community' (about 350 world-wide EV researchers) and updated EVpedia most recently in May 2014.

The updated EVpedia has five functional modules for systematic analyses of EVs derived from prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells (Fig. 2): (i) a database of publications and principal investigators, (ii) a database of vesicular proteins, mRNAs, miRNAs, lipids and

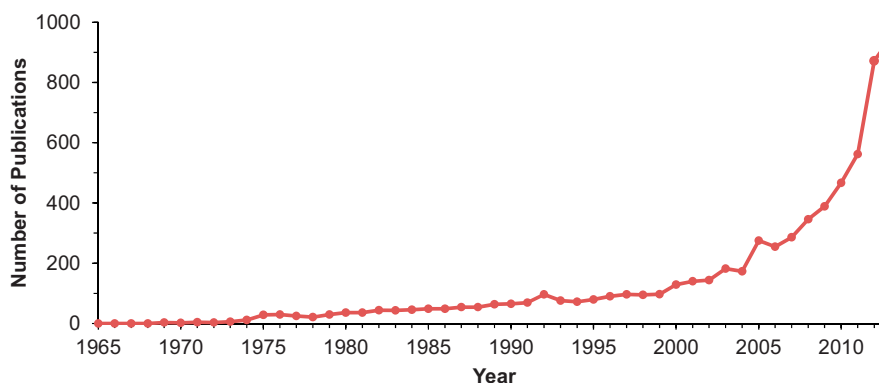


Fig. 1. Publication trend of EV studies. This graph shows the number of publications on EVs per year, indicating that the field of EVs is expanding rapidly

metabolites, (iii) identification of orthologous vesicular components, (iv) an array of tools for bioinformatic analyses including sequence search, set analysis, Gene Ontology enrichment analysis and network analysis, as well as (v) ‘My EVpedia’, a personalized function of EVpedia. Using ‘My EVpedia’, users privately store their own datasets, analysis results and publications of interest by creating their own accounts. New functions of this updated EVpedia are indicated in red texts in Figure 2.

**We invite the research community to submit EV-related multiomics data and publications to EVpedia.**

As of May 2014, a total of 6879 EV-related publications with 3336 principal investigators have been cataloged in EVpedia. In addition, a total of 172 080 vesicular components from 263 high-throughput datasets are listed (Table 1). All of these vesicular components could be searched by their sequences and browsed. Furthermore, in the ‘Top 100+ EV markers’ menu, the current vesicular components are sorted in the descending order of their identification counts, which are the numbers of datasets identifying those vesicular components or their orthologs.

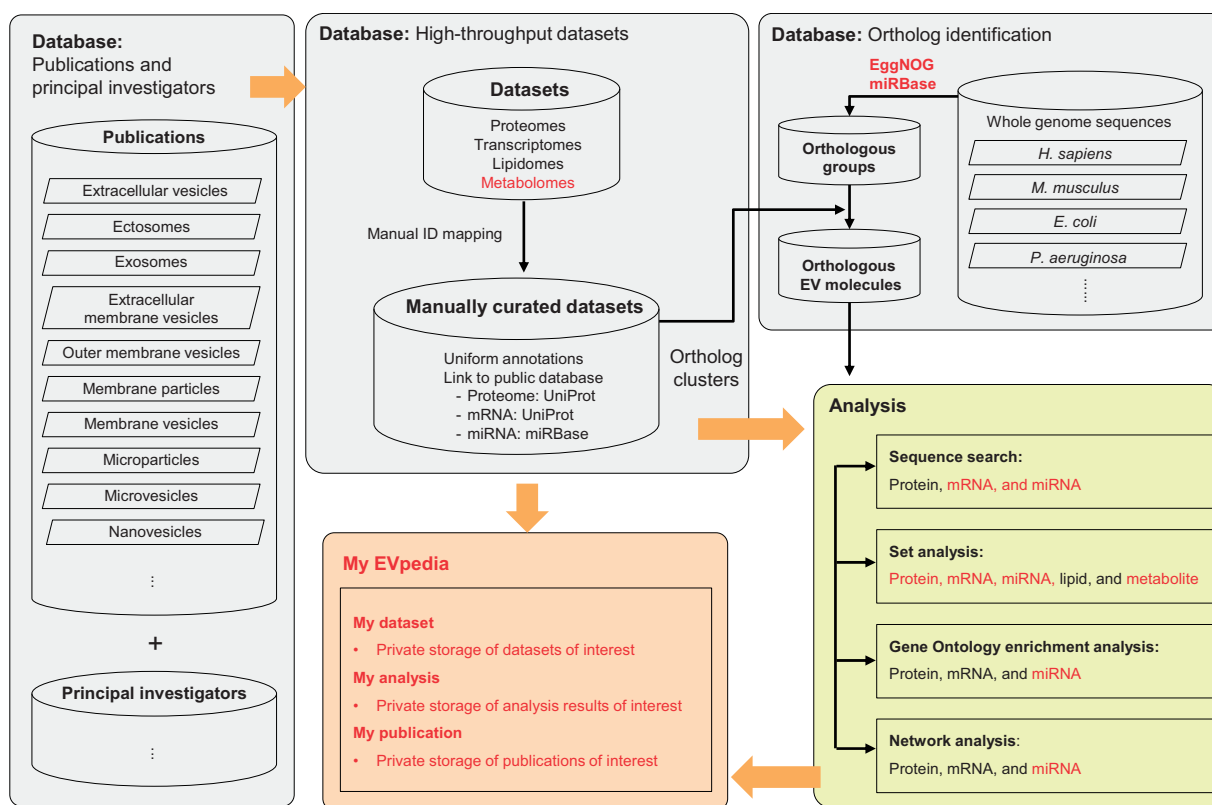
### 5 Community participation and annotation in EVpedia

After the initial launch in January 2012, EVpedia has been globally accessed more than 65 000 times from more than 750 cities (Table 1). For community annotation of EVpedia, we built ‘EVpedia

Community’. About 350 members from 73 international EV research groups have joined this community, in which they can exchange EV-related information and submit their multiomics data via the ‘User forum’ and ‘Upload’ menu bars in EVpedia, respectively. In addition, non-members can easily join the ‘EVpedia Community’ by adding their information via clicking the ‘Sign In’ menu. Moreover, EVpedia has been cross-linked with the website of the ‘International Society of Extracellular Vesicles’ (<http://www.isev.org>).

### 6 Concluding remarks

EVpedia is a comprehensive database of EVs derived from prokaryotes and eukaryotes. Currently, a total of 6879 EV-related publications and 172 080 vesicular components (proteins, mRNAs, miRNAs, lipids and metabolites) are deposited in this public repository. For the systematic analysis of EVs, EVpedia also provides integrated systems biology research tools such as ‘Experiment’, ‘Browse’, ‘Analysis’, ‘Top 100+ EV markers’ and ‘My EVpedia’ menu bars. In the future, additional multiomics datasets and publications will be deposited, and we expect more researchers to join the ‘EVpedia Community’ and to share their research data. The community database is scheduled to be updated every 3 months. EVpedia, a community web portal for EV research, should serve as a useful resource to stimulate the emerging field of EV biology research and to help us to elucidate the fundamental roles of these complex extracellular organelles.



**Fig. 2.** Overall structure of EVpedia. EVpedia provides a comprehensive database for (i) publications and principal investigators, (ii) vesicular proteins, mRNAs, miRNAs, lipids and metabolites and (iii) identification of orthologous vesicular components. For systematic analyses of vesicular components, there is an array of tools for sequence search, set analysis, Gene Ontology enrichment analysis and network analysis. ‘My EVpedia’ is a personalized function of EVpedia to deposit the user’s own datasets, analysis results and publications of interest. Note that red texts indicate newly included functions in the updated version of EVpedia

**Table 1.** EVpedia statistics

	All	Eukaryotes	Prokaryotes
Publications			
Articles	6879	6021	858
Principal investigators	3336	2886	483
Proteomes			
Studies	117	97	20
Datasets	176	148	28
Proteins	78 971	74 696	4275
Transcriptomes			
mRNA			
Studies	17	17	0
Datasets	28	28	0
mRNAs	74 430	74 430	0
miRNA			
Studies	11	11	0
Datasets	29	29	0
miRNAs	18 119	18 119	0
Lipidomes			
Studies	22	21	1
Datasets	29	28	1
Lipids	550	534	16
Metabolomes			
Studies	1	1	0
Datasets	1	1	0
Metabolites	10	10	0
Participating			
Laboratories (countries)	73 (20)		
Accesses (countries)	66 617 (73)		

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