23.5% efficient monolithic perovskite/organic tandem solar cells based on an ultra-thin metal-like metal-oxide interconnect.

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Multi-junction solar cells provide an avenue to overcome fundamental efficiency limits of single-junction devices. The facile bandgap tunability of metal-halide perovskite solar cells renders them attractive building-blocks for multi-junction architectures.\textsuperscript{1} Combinations with crystalline silicon and copper indium gallium selenide (CIGS) cells have been reported.\textsuperscript{2, 3} All-perovskite tandem cells have likewise shown promising results.\textsuperscript{4, 5} Meanwhile, narrow-gap non-fullerene acceptors (NFA) have revived the area of organic solar cells (OSCs) and unlocked skyrocketing efficiencies.\textsuperscript{6, 7} Organic and perovskite semiconductors share similar processing technologies, which renders them attractive partners in multi-junction architectures. As of yet, perovskite/organic tandem cells show subpar efficiencies of ~20 per cent, limited by the low open circuit
voltage ($V_{oc}$) of wide-gap perovskite cells and losses introduced by the interconnect between the sub-cells.\textsuperscript{9, 10}

Here, we demonstrate two-terminal $p$-$i$-$n$ perovskite/organic tandem cells with an efficiency of 23.5 per cent and a high $V_{oc}$ of 2.15 volts, operating near the levels predicted by a semi-empirical model. The perovskite sub-cells with optimized charge extraction layers afford an unsurpassed combination of a high $V_{oc}$ and fill-factor. The organic back-cells provide a high external quantum efficiency in the near-infrared. In surprising contrast to paradigmatic concerns about limited photostability of non-fullerene cells,\textsuperscript{11} we evidence an outstanding operational stability if excitons are predominantly generated on the NFA, which is the case in a tandem cell, where the illumination is spectrally filtered by the perovskite cell. A novel interconnect based on an ultra-thin (~1.5 nanometers) metal-like indium oxide layer offers unprecedented low optical/electrical losses.

This work sets a new milestone for perovskite/organic tandem devices, that outperform the best $p$-$i$-$n$ perovskite single junctions\textsuperscript{12} and are at par with perovskite/CIGS and all-perovskite multi-junctions.\textsuperscript{13} Perovskite/organic tandem architectures bear a realistic potential to reach an efficiency above 31%.

In general, multi-junction solar cells are designed as a series connection of wide-bandgap and narrow-bandgap sub-cells with complementary absorption spectra. An improved overlap with the solar spectrum and reduced thermalization losses are the keys to overcome the Shockley-Queisser efficiency limit of single-junctions.\textsuperscript{14} Hybrid metal-halide perovskites have received tremendous attention as photo-active materials in solar cells.\textsuperscript{15} Their typical ABX$_3$ crystal structure comprises methylammonium (MA$^+$), formamidinium (FA$^+$), or Cs$^+$ ions on the A-site, Pb$^{2+}$ ions on the B-site, and halide ions, such as I$^-$ or Br$^-$, on the X-site. Some members of this family, e.g. FA$_x$Cs$_{1-x}$Pb(I$_y$Br$_{1-y}$)$_3$, afford tunability of the bandgap energy ($E_g$) between 1.5-2.3 eV, mainly by variation of the I/Br ratio,\textsuperscript{16, 17} rendering them especially attractive for the design of multi-junction cells.

All-perovskite tandem cells require narrow-gap materials ($E_g < 1.3$ eV), where the lead is partially replaced by tin.\textsuperscript{18, 19} However, severe stability issues are linked to the unwanted transformation of Sn$^{2+}$ to Sn$^{4+}$, which leads to non-intentional p-type doping and an overall degradation of device
performance. This effect can be slowed down to some extent by additives, such as a surplus of sacrificial Sn(0) inside the active layer.\textsuperscript{4} Alternatively, c-Si or CIGS back-cells have been employed \textsuperscript{2, 3} in combination with a wide-gap perovskite front-cell. Some of these tandems already outperform the best c-Si single junctions.\textsuperscript{2, 20} On the downside, perovskite/c-Si tandems are not compatible with low-temperature, low-cost, large-area manufacturing - a paradigm that is frequently quoted for perovskite solar technology. In this regard, organic solar cells (OSCs) represent an attractive option as narrow-gap back-cell. OSCs were typically based on so-called bulk-heterojunction architectures, that were formed by a blend of a donor polymer and a fullerene derivative as acceptor.\textsuperscript{21} Owing to the limited tunability of the energy levels of the fullerene, progress in OSCs came to a halt at efficiency levels of about 11\%.\textsuperscript{22} However, with the recent introduction of non-fullerene acceptors (NFAs), OSCs started to see a second wave of outstanding advancement, which has propelled their efficiencies beyond 18\%.\textsuperscript{6, 7, 23} This progress mainly draws from the narrow energy gap of the acceptor moiety and an efficient exciton dissociation requiring only small energy offsets between donor and acceptor, which is the key to unlock low losses in \(V_{oc}\) compared to \(E_g/q\) while still providing a high external quantum efficiency (EQE) and thus high short circuit current densities (\(J_{sc}\)).\textsuperscript{24, 25}

\textit{Narrow-gap organic sub-cell}

For the narrow-gap sub-cell in our tandem architecture, we consider an organic photo-active system based on the polymer PM6, that contains a fluorinated-thienyl benzodithiophene, and the NFA Y6, which consists of a ladder-type dithienothiophen[3.2-b]-pyrrolobenzothiadiazole central moiety and 2-(5,6-difluoro-3-oxo-2,3-dihydro-1H-inden-1-ylidene)malononitrile units (Figure 1a).\textsuperscript{26} We employ a \(p-i-n\) type device architecture with molybdenum-trioxide as hole extraction layer (HEL) and a bi-layer of \(C_{60}/2,9\)-Dimethyl-4,7-diphenyl-1,10-phenanthroline (BCP) for efficient electron extraction. Our cells with binary PM6:Y6 blends (1:1.2) provide a power conversion efficiency (PCE) of up to 16.5\%. The EQE spectrum of these devices extends beyond 900 nm (Figure 1b, Figure S1). Adding a certain concentration of fullerene molecules into the PM6:Y6 photo-active layer to form a so-called ternary system, i.e. PM6:Y6:PC\textsubscript{60}BM (1:1.2:0.2), improves the blend morphology, which results in enhanced charge transport and reduced non-radiative recombination.\textsuperscript{27, 28} Thus, a notable boost in cell characteristics is achieved with a PCE up to 17.5\% (for device statistics see Figure S2). We want to
highlight a notably enhanced EQE of > 85% for the ternary cells in the range of $\lambda > 650$ nm, which is the spectral region of operation when combined with a wide-gap front-cell in a tandem. The absorption spectra of PM6 and Y6 (Figure 1c) show that for $\lambda > 650$ nm excitons are predominantly generated on the Y6, which will be shown to be the key that unlocks outstanding device stability.

Stability of NFA cells under continuous operation is still a serious concern and a subject of vigorous scientific research. To assess the stability of our binary and ternary cells under the illumination conditions applicable in a prospective perovskite/organic tandem cell, we used a filtered white LED (labelled: “LED$_{VIS}$”) and a near infrared (NIR) LED (peak at 850 nm; labelled: “LED$_{NIR}$”) as light sources, which predominantly create excitons on the PM6 or Y6, respectively (Figure 1c).

Under combined VIS/NIR illumination (details can be found in the experimental section), binary and ternary cells show a notable decay of the PCE under continuous operation in the maximum power point (MPP) (Figure 1d), mainly due to a loss in fill factor (FF) (Figure S3). This degradation motif has previously been explained by a photoinduced reorganization in the donor/acceptor blend and the formation of microscopic aggregates of NFA molecules, which leads to a reduced electron mobility and enhanced recombination.

Owing to their improved blend morphology, the decay of the ternary cells is notably slower than that of the binary cells. However, most strikingly, under NIR illumination, where excitons are solely generated on the Y6, the devices did not show any burn-in and no degradation even under long-term continuous operation for more than 1,000 h. These findings indicate that the detrimental morphological changes, discussed above, would require excitation of the donor polymer PM6 and that they can be substantially mitigated if predominantly the Y6 NFA is excited. On the other hand, we found that upon continuous illumination with the white LED under inert conditions the photoluminescence quantum yield of PM6 shows a notable degradation, while the Y6 is less affected (Figure S4). Therefore, photo-induced degradation of PM6 could likewise play a significant role in addition to possible morphological changes. In any event, our findings contradict the paradigmatic association of non-fullerene solar cells with operational instability, and they present the especially encouraging prospect that the long-term operational stability of perovskite/organic tandem cells will not be limited by the narrow-gap OSC. This is in notable contrast to all-perovskite tandems, where the stability issues of Sn-based narrow-gap PSCs are still a very serious issue.

The PM6:Y6 organic system provides an energy-gap of 1.33 eV, and we conducted a semi-empirical electro-optical simulation to identify a suitable wide-gap PSC for a tandem. Details of the simulation can be found in the supporting information.
According to Figure 1e, an efficiency of 25.5% is predicted with a perovskite bandgap in the range of 1.85-1.92 eV, assuming a tandem FF of 80% and a loss in $V_{oc}$ compared to $E_g/q$ of 0.5 V, in each sub-cell. In a more optimistic scenario (FF = 85% and loss in $V_{oc}$ compared to $E_g/q$ of 0.4 V), a tandem of a narrow-gap OSC ($E_g = 1.15$ eV) with a PSC ($E_g = 1.75$ eV), provides the prospect to reach an efficiency of 31.3% (Figure S5). As of yet, efficient OSCs with $E_g = 1.15$ eV have not been developed.

**Figure 1** Architecture and properties of the organic sub-cell. **a**, Layer sequence of the single junction OSC and chemical structure of the molecules used in the photo-active layer. **b**, External quantum efficiency (EQE) of binary (PM6:Y6) and ternary (PM6:Y6:PC$_{60}$BM) cells with a magnified view of the spectral region $> 650$ nm, which is the relevant range of operation for the OSC in a perovskite/organic tandem cell. **c**, Absorption spectra of the donor and acceptor molecules used in the photo-active layer. The vertical line marks the $E_g$ of a possible wide-gap front cell material. Spectra of (filtered) light emitting diodes used in the stability assessment to selectively excite the donor/acceptor are also shown (labelled “LED_VIS” and “LED_NIR”). **d**, Long term stability study of binary and ternary cells continuously operated in the maximum power point (MPP) with exciton generation on both acceptor and donor (“VIS+NIR”) or only on the acceptor (“NIR”). Please note the break in the x-axis. **e**, Realistic semi-empirical model of the tandem cell efficiency vs. energy-gap of organic and perovskite sub-cells. The intersection of the dashed lines marks corresponds to the energy gap of the PM6:Y6:PC$_{60}$BM back-cell and the matching energy-gap of the perovskite front-cell.
**Wide-gap perovskite sub-cell**

We selected FA$_{0.8}$Cs$_{0.2}$Pb$_{(10.5}$Br$_{0.5)}$$_3$ as suitable perovskite composition with a bandgap of 1.85 eV (Figure S6). Early studies have shown, that for PSCs with $E_g > 1.75$ eV, the $V_{oc}$ did not concomitantly increase with $E_g$, which has frequently been attributed to photo-induced halide-segregation in the perovskite into bromine- and iodine-rich domains.$^{31}$ Yet, more recently, recombination losses at the interfaces of the wide-gap perovskite and the adjacent charge extraction layers have been found to be predominately limiting the $V_{oc}$.$^8,32$ As such, we aimed to minimize these interfacial losses in order to narrow in on the highest possible $V_{oc}$ in our PSCs.

In a first step, we analyzed the quasi-Fermi level splitting (QFLS) in the perovskite upon illumination. The QFLS provides an excellent indication (and upper limit) of the $V_{oc}$ that can be expected in an actual solar cell and it allows to determine the potential discount in $V_{oc}$ associated with the respective charge extraction layers adjacent to the perovskite. Poly[bis(4-phenyl)(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)amine (PTAA) is currently the most prominent hole extraction layer (HEL) in $p$-$i$-$n$ PSCs. However, PTAA comes with serious limitations due to the tradeoff between efficient hole transport, which requires the PTAA to be as thin as possible, and selectivity, that has been found to impose a lower limit to the PTAA thickness.$^{33}$ To overcome the issues associated with PTAA, we use [2-[(3,6-Dimethoxy-9H-carbazol-9-yl)ethyl]phosphonic Acid (MeO-2PACz)$^{13}$ as HEL, that forms a dense, pinhole-free self-assembled monolayer on the ITO bottom electrode. In a direct comparison perovskite layers on MeO-2PACz as HEL afford a 90 meV larger QFLS compared to their analogues on PTAA (Figure 2a). Interestingly, in stark contrast to PTAA, with MeO-2PACz as HEL, we also did not observe any notable halide segregation under a one sun equivalent illumination on a timescale of several minutes, despite using a Br:I ratio of 0.5:0.5 (Figure S7). This is rather unexpected, as literature suggests notable halide segregation for Br concentrations in this range.$^{34}$ Our findings demonstrate that the proper choice of HEL allows to mitigate halide segregation in perovskites even with elevated Br-concentrations.

Before studying the impact of the electron extraction layer (EEL), we implemented passivation strategies, such as the addition of excess lead$^{35}$ or the modification of the perovskite surface by the organic halide salt phenethylammonium iodide (PEAI),$^{36}$ which promotes the formation of a 2-dimensional perovskite capping layer (see Figure S8 - S10). As evidenced by photoelectron spectroscopy, the insertion of PEA$^+$ leads to some notable lowering of the perovskite valence band maximum
(Figure S11), which prevents photo-generated holes from reaching the EEL and thereby improves the selective extraction of electrons.

In the absence of an EEL the surface passivation does not affect the QFLS (Figure 2a), which indicates that defects at the surface or grain boundaries do not impose a limit in this scenario. The situation changes if we complete our p-i-n PSCs by adding PC$_{60}$BM and Al doped ZnO nanoparticles (AZO NP) as EEL (Figure 2b).\textsuperscript{37} Note, for the integration of the PSCs in the tandem cells, an additional SnO$_x$ layer, grown by low temperature atomic layer deposition (ALD), is used that serves as permeation barrier, which not only improves the long term stability but also protects the layers underneath against chemical attack by the solvents of subsequent wet chemical processes.\textsuperscript{38, 39} In striking contrast to PTAA, with MeO-2PACz as HEL, the addition of the EEL infers a substantial reduction of the QFLS, and the resulting $V_{oc}$ shows notable further improvements upon passivation with excess lead and even more by the formation of a 2D perovskite cap (Figure 2c). Ultimately, PSCs with hysteresis-free current-voltage characteristics are achieved, that provide a very high stabilized $V_{oc} = 1.34$ V (Figure 2 d, e) with a $FF$ that falls within a narrow range of 77-82\% (Figure 2c and Figure S12). In previous reports, an increase of $V_{oc}$ typically came at the cost of a lowered $FF$ and a discount in EQE. A comparison with the literature on PSCs with an $E_g$ in the range of 1.8-1.9 eV shows that our careful mitigation of losses at the interfaces unlocked access to previously unreached territory of combined high $V_{oc}$ and $FF$ (Figure 2e). Finally, when operated continuously for more than 100 h, the PCE of the wide-gap PSCs remains above 80\% of its initial value (Figure 2f).
Figure 2 Optimized wide-gap perovskite sub-cell. a, Splitting of the quasi-fermi levels (QFLS) in case of varied hole extraction layers (HEL), i.e. Poly[bis(4-phenyl)(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)amine (PTAA) or [2-(3,6-Dimethoxy-9H-carbazol-9-yl)ethyl]phosphonic Acid (MeO-2PACz), and with and w/o usage of excessive lead or a two dimensional capping layer (2D cap, see text) b, Layer sequence of the p-i-n perovskite single junction. c, comparison of the open circuit voltage ($V_{oc}$) of actual perovskite solar cells (PSCs) with the corresponding splitting of the quasi-Fermi level splitting (QFLS) with and w/o electron transport layer (ETL) and varied device annealing temperature. The FF of each cell type is shown in the lower panel. The different temperatures refer to the annealing conditions after deposition of the AZO NP layer. The dots represent the results of individual devices and indicate the experimental spread. d, current density vs. voltage characteristics for champion PSCs with a 2D capping layer (MeO-2PACz SAM as HTL) or PbI$_2$ excess (PTAA as HTL) on the perovskite active layer. The inset shows the stabilized $V_{oc}$ of 1.34 V for the cell with the SAM as HEL. e, comparison of the $V_{oc}$ and FF our PSCs with $E_g = 1.85$ eV to PSCs (with $E_g$ in the range of 1.8-1.9 eV) reported in the literature. The respective references can be found in Table S1. f, normalized PCE vs. time of the PSCs illuminated with a white LED and operated in the maximum power point.
**Low-loss recombination interconnect**

The interconnect is a key component of monolithic (2-terminal) tandem solar cells (Figure 3a). In a $p-i-n$ tandem, it facilitates the recombination of electrons from the bottom perovskite cell with the holes from the top organic cell, ideally without any loss of $V_{oc}$ and $FF$. In the simplest approach, one could omit the top electrode of the perovskite cell and stack the organic cell directly on top. In this case, the interface between the low-work-function SnO$_x$ and the high-work-function MoO$_x$ affords only extremely poor, s-shaped $J/V$ characteristics of the resulting tandem cell (Figure 3b). This is due to a Schottky barrier of 0.6 eV that forms at the SnO$_x$/MoO$_x$ interface (see Figure 3c, d and Figure S13).

To render the interconnect ohmic, thin layers (~ 1 nm) of a metal (Ag or Au) are frequently inserted between top- and bottom-cell.$^{10, 40}$ However, even a Ag-layer as thin as 1 nm already introduces significant optical losses that lower the EQE of the back-cell and the overall $J_{sc}$ of the tandem cell as shown further below. Thus, we developed an interconnect based on an ultra-thin ALD-grown InO$_x$ layer with a thickness of only ~1.5 nm (details of the ALD growth process can be found in the experimental section). We leverage the unique property of ALD to provide utmost control of layer thickness even on the level of Ångströms, which is impossible with conventional deposition techniques. The insertion of InO$_x$ between SnO$_x$ and MoO$_x$ outstandingly improves the $J/V$ characteristics of the tandem cells (Figure 3b). Already 32 ALD cycles (thickness ~1.5 nm, Figure S14) are sufficient to render the SnO$_x$/InO$_x$/MoO$_x$ stack ohmic (Figure 3b, c, d).

To better understand the interconnect, we conducted an extensive study using photoelectron spectroscopy to determine the energetic line-up (Figure 3 d and Figure S15-S19). The upward band bending found in case of SnO$_x$/MoO$_x$ is completely alleviated by the insertion of the ultra-thin InO$_x$, enabling barrier-free transport of electrons from the bottom PSC across the SnO$_x$/InO$_x$/MoO$_x$ layer sequence. Ultimately, these electrons recombine with the holes from the OSC at the MoO$_x$/organic interface.$^{41, 42}$ Notably, after completion of a nucleation phase (~ 32 ALD cycles), the InO$_x$ layer shows a metallic nature with an electron density $\sim 10^{20}$ cm$^{-3}$, (Figure 3d,e). As the metallic InO$_x$ layer is ultra-thin, it still provides a very high sheet resistance $> 10^6 \Omega$/sq, which is a prerequisite for future large-area scalability as it is of critical importance to avoid shorting of the sub-cells in case of local shunt paths.$^5$

High carrier densities typically infer optical absorption, which is another important reason to keep the thickness of the interconnect to a minimum.$^{43}$ Most strikingly, our ultra-thin InO$_x$ interconnect with a transmittance near unity does not introduce
notable optical losses (Figure 3g), which boosts the EQE of the organic back-cell and the overall $J_{sc}$ of the tandem by about 1.5 mA/cm$^2$ compared to the case of an interconnect based on 1 nm of Ag, which affords a PCE of only about 20% (Figure 3 h, Figure S20). ALD allows for large-area, high-throughput processing (even at atmospheric pressure), and enables conformal coating of textured surfaces that frequently occur in light trapping concepts. Hence, we foresee that the applicability of our interconnect is not limited to perovskite/organic tandem cells but it may also be favorably used in other tandem cells.

**Figure 3 Tandem interconnect.** a, Schematic of a perovskite/organic tandem cell with InO$_x$ or Ag as interconnect. b, $J$/$V$ characteristics of tandem cells with varied thickness (# of ALD cycles) of the InO$_x$ interconnect. c, $J$/$V$ characteristics of SnO$_x$/(InO$_x$)/MoO$_x$ diodes d, energetic line-up determined with and without InO$_x$. Note, in the first 2 nm of the molybdenum oxide layer we found a mix of oxidation states of the molybdenum ranging from Mo$^{2+}$ to Mo$^{6+}$ (details in Figure S15-S19). The first 2 nm of the molybdenum oxide are characterized by the presence of MoO$_2^{2-}$ clusters (details in supporting information). e, Sheet resistance and carrier density vs. thickness of the InO$_x$. f, ultra-violet photoelectron spectroscopy of the
valence band (VB) density of states (DOS) of InOₓ, showing the onset of a metallic behavior at 32 ALD cycles. g, optical transmission of an interconnect based on 32 ALD cycles (~1.5 nm) of InOₓ, bare and sandwiched between SnOₓ and MoOₓ. For comparison, the InOₓ has been replaced by a nominally 1 nm thick layer of Ag. h, resulting EQE spectra of the organic back-cell with InOₓ or Ag as interconnect demonstrating the significant current losses induced by only 1 nm Ag.

Monolithic perovskite-organic tandem cells

Drawing from the significant progress outlined above, we prepared monolithic perovskite/organic tandem solar cells with outstanding characteristics. The EQE spectra of the PSC and OSC sub-cells of an optimized perovskite/organic tandem are shown in Figure 4a. Excellent current matching, as required in a series connection, is evidenced by the identical integrated current density of 14.1 mA/cm² for both sub-cells. The high Vₒc = 2.15 V of the tandem cell results from a perfect addition of the J/V characteristics of the sub-cells without discount in Vₒc (Figure 4b, Figure S21). As a result, a champion tandem cell with a PCE of 23.5 % is achieved (Figure 4b,c). Our devices state the most efficient monolithic perovskite/organic tandem cells (inset Figure 4c), as of yet, and outperform the most efficient single junction perovskite cells in p-i-n architecture.¹² The tandem characteristics show a very small statistical variation (Figure S22 & S23) resulting from a robust processing of the perovskite sub-cell.⁴⁵ We evidence an excellent stability of more than 1,000 h with no sign of degradation when the devices are kept under inert atmosphere, and a T₈₀ of 130 h under continuous operation in the MPP (Figure 4 d, e). Note, the temporal behavior of the tandem under continuous operation is essentially governed by that of the perovskite sub-cell (Figure 2f).

| scan direction | PCE / % | FF / % | Vₒc / V | Jₛc / mA/cm² |
|----------------|---------|--------|----------|--------------|
| PSC reverse    | 16.8    | 81     | 1.34     | 15.6         |
| PSC forward    | 16.4    | 80     | 1.33     | 15.5         |
| OSC invariant  | 17.5    | 75     | 0.87     | 26.7         |
| tandem reverse | 23.7    | 78     | 2.15     | 14.2         |
| tandem forward | 23.0    | 76     | 2.12     | 14.2         |

Table 1: Champion solar cell characteristics of the single junctions and tandem cell derived from their J/V characteristics. Note, for all cells, the Jₛc
agrees with the current density obtained from the EQE spectra (deviation less than 1%).

**Figure. 4 Perovskite/organic tandem cells.** **a,** External quantum efficiency spectra of both sub-cells in the tandem cell. For reduced reflection, the backside of the substrate was coated with a 100 nm thick MgF$_2$ layer. **b,** J/V characteristics of tandem cells. **c,** Stabilized power output (SPO) of the tandem cell. (inset) scanning electron microscopy image of the cell cross section. **d,** Stability of the tandem cells under continuous operation in the MPP, and **e,** when stored in N$_2$. 
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Additional information

Author contributions

TR, TB and KB conceived and designed the experiments. TB and KB contributed equally to this work. SO and CKo contributed the XPS, UPS and IPES analysis. KB, TB, FZ, CKr, MG, TM and FG were performing the experimental work on the solar cells. TG and MT contributed the metal oxide ALD layers as well as electrical characterization. TH did the cross-section SEM measurements. PC, LP, DN and MS...
designed, conducted and evaluated the PLQY/QFLS studies. AA and SA provided the expertise in the processing of the self-assembled monolayers. DH and KM contributed temperature dependent J/V characterization. LM, AH and FS designed and conducted the GIWAXS studies. All authors discussed the results and were involved in the writing.

Supplementary Information available

Competing financial interests: The authors declare no competing financial interests.