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**Research article****A class of small multiplicative functions in Piatetski-Shapiro sequences****Haihong Fan\***

College of Science, Northwest A &amp; F University, Yangling 712100, China

\* **Correspondence:** Email: fanhaihong1@hotmail.com.

**Abstract:** For any real number  $x$ ,  $[x]$  denotes the integer part of  $x$ .  $\mathcal{F}_1$  denotes a class of multiplicative functions that are small in a numerical sense. In this paper, we study the distribution of the functions from  $\mathcal{F}_1$  in Piatetski-Shapiro sequences. In particular, we prove that for  $1 < c < \frac{4}{3}$ ,

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ f \in \mathcal{F}_1}} f([n^c]) = \int_1^{x^c} \gamma u^{\gamma-1} d\left(\sum_{1 \leq n \leq u} f(n)\right) + O(x^{1-\varepsilon}),$$

where  $\gamma = \frac{1}{c}$  and  $[n^c]$  is the Piatetski-Shapiro sequence.

**Keywords:** Piatetski-Shapiro sequences; multiplicative function; small value; exponential sum; distribution of primes

**Mathematics Subject Classification:** 11N05, 11N37

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**1. Introduction**

In classical analytic number theory, the distribution of prime numbers has always been an important research topic. In addition to the qualitative result that there are infinitely many primes, people are also concerned about some quantitative results, such as the famous prime theorem. In addition, the representation of prime numbers by irreducible polynomials is one of the most important problems in the prime distribution module. At present, this problem has been completely solved in the case of linear polynomials, but it is still unknown whether  $n(n \geq 2)$  degree polynomials represent prime numbers. In the middle of the two is the famous Piatetski-Shapiro prime number theorem.

The Piatetski-Shapiro sequences are sequences of the form

$$([n^c])_{n=1}^{\infty}, \quad c > 1, \quad c \notin \mathbb{N}.$$

In 1953, Piatetski-Shapiro [1] first proposed this sequence and proved that when  $c \in (1, 12/11)$ , the

sequence contains infinite primes. More precisely, for such  $c$ , he showed that

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ [n^c] \in \mathbb{P}}} 1 \sim \frac{x}{c \log x} \text{ as } x \rightarrow \infty. \quad (1.1)$$

Since then, the range of  $c$  has been continuously expanded by scholars; see [2–9]. At present, the best result is obtained by Rivat and Sargos [10], who proved that (1.1) is true for  $c \in (1, 2817/2426)$ . In addition to asymptotic results, Rivat and Wu [11] proved that there are infinitely many Piatetski-Shapiro primes for  $c \in (1, 243/205)$ .

In addition, scholars have also combined the Piatetski-Shapiro sequence with other famous number theory problems. Let  $d(n)$  denote the number of positive divisors of natural numbers  $n$ . The study of sum  $\sum_{n \leq x} d(n)$ , called the Dirichlet divisor problem, is a famous problem in number theory. In 1999, Arkhipov, Saliba, and Chubarikov [12] investigated the distribution of divisor functions in Piatetski-Shapiro sequences and proved that for  $1 < c < 8/7$ ,

$$\sum_{n \leq x} d([n^c]) = xP(\log x) + O\left(\frac{x}{\log x}\right),$$

where  $P(x)$  is a polynomial of degree 1. Later, the range of  $c$  was improved by Lü and Zhai [13], and Wang and Zhang [14] to  $1 < c < 495/433$  and  $1 < c < 6/5$ , respectively.

In 1975, Stux [15] was the first to study the distribution of square-free numbers of the form  $[n^c]$ . He proved that for any fixed  $1 < c < \frac{4}{3}$  the asymptotic formula

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ [n^c] \text{ is square-free}}} 1 = \frac{6}{\pi^2} x + O(x)$$

holds. In 1978, Rieger [16] improved the result of Stux, and showed that for  $1 < c < 3/2$ ,

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ [n^c] \text{ is square-free}}} 1 = \frac{6}{\pi^2} x + O(x^{\frac{2c+1}{4} + \varepsilon}).$$

Later, Cao and Zhai [17] improved Rieger's range by the method of exponential sums and proved that for  $1 < c < 61/36$ ,

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ [n^c] \text{ is square-free}}} 1 = \frac{6}{\pi^2} x + O(x^{\frac{36(c+1)}{97} + \varepsilon}).$$

Next, Cao and Zhai [18] further improved  $1 < c < 61/36$  to  $1 < c < 149/87$ .

Influenced by the above problems, scholars have studied cube-free and square-full numbers in the Piatetski-Shapiro sequence and its analogues. In 2017, Zhang and Li [21] proved that there are infinite cube-free numbers of the form  $[n^c]$  for any fixed real number  $c \in (1, 11/6)$ . Subsequently, the range of  $c$  was extended to  $c \in (1, 2)$  by Deshouillers [22]. In 2020, using the simple one-dimension exponent pair, Srichan and Tangsupphathawat [23] considered square-full numbers in the Piatetski-Shapiro sequence. In 2023, Dimitrov [19] investigated square-free values of  $[n^c \tan^\theta(\log n)]$ . In 2025, Dimitrov [20] investigated cube-free values of  $[n^c \tan^\theta(\log n)]$ .

In this paper, we will propose a special function class  $\mathcal{F}_1$ , which contains the multiplicative arithmetic functions  $f(n)$  satisfying the following properties:

(A.1)  $f(p) = 1$  for any prime  $p$ ;

(A.2)  $f(n) \ll_\varepsilon n^\varepsilon$  for  $n \geq 1$  and any  $\varepsilon > 0$ .

Inspired by the above problems, we study the distribution of the functions from  $\mathcal{F}_1$  in Piatetski-Shapiro sequences. Through the combination of classical Vaaler transformation and the two-dimensional exponential sum method, we obtain the following result.

**Theorem 1.1.** *Let  $1 < c < \frac{4}{3}$ . Then we have*

$$\sum_{\substack{n \leq x \\ f \in \mathcal{F}_1}} f([n^c]) = \int_1^{x^c} \gamma u^{\gamma-1} d\left(\sum_{1 \leq n \leq u} f(n)\right) + O(x^{1-\varepsilon}), \quad (1.2)$$

where  $\gamma = \frac{1}{c}$ .

In fact,  $\mathcal{F}_1$  includes many number-theoretic functions, and we may select a few important and common examples:  $d^{(e)}(n)$ , the number of exponential divisors of  $n$ ;  $\beta(n)$ , the number of square-full divisors of  $n$ ;  $a(n)$ , the number of non-isomorphic Abelian groups of order  $n$ ;  $\mu_2(n)$ , the characteristic function of the square-free integers. Thus, from Theorem 1.1, we immediately obtain Theorem 1.2 as follows:

**Theorem 1.2.** *For  $f(n) \in \{d^{(e)}(n), \beta(n), a(n), \mu_2(n)\}$ , we have the asymptotic formula*

$$\sum_{n \leq x} f([n^c]) = \int_1^{x^c} \gamma u^{\gamma-1} d\left(\sum_{1 \leq n \leq u} f(n)\right) + O(x^{1-\varepsilon}),$$

where  $\gamma = \frac{1}{c}$  and  $1 < c < \frac{4}{3}$ .

## 2. Notations and preliminary lemmas

Throughout this paper,  $\varepsilon$  always denotes a small enough positive constant, which may alter the value in different situations.  $e(x) = \exp(2\pi ix) = e^{2\pi ix}$ .  $m \sim M$  means  $c_1 M \leq m \leq c_2 M$  for absolute constants  $c_1$  and  $c_2$ .  $\psi(t) = t - [t] - \frac{1}{2}$ .

Next, we quote some lemmas used in this paper.

**Lemma 2.1.** *For any  $H \geq 1$ , there exist numbers  $a_h$  and  $b_h$  such that*

$$\left| \psi(t) - \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} a_h e(th) \right| \leq \sum_{|h| \leq H} b_h e(th), \quad a_h \ll \frac{1}{|h|}, \quad b_h \ll \frac{1}{H}.$$

*Proof.* See pages 206–210 of Vaaler [24]. □

We also need the following lemma about the two-dimensional exponential sum.

**Lemma 2.2.** Suppose  $M$  and  $N$  are large positive numbers,  $A > 0, \alpha, \beta$  are rational numbers (not non-negative numbers). Suppose  $m \sim M, n \sim N, F = AM^\alpha N^\beta \gg N, |a(m)| \leq 1, |b(n)| \leq 1$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned} S &= \sum_{M < m \leq 2M} \sum_{N < n \leq 2N} a(m)b(n)e(AM^\alpha n^\beta) \\ &\ll (MN^{1/2} + F^{4/20} M^{13/20} N^{15/20} + F^{4/23} M^{15/23} N^{18/23} \\ &\quad + F^{1/6} M^{2/3} N^{7/9} + F^{1/5} M^{3/5} N^{4/5} + F^{1/10} M^{4/5} N^{7/10}) \log^4 F. \end{aligned}$$

*Proof.* See Proposition 1 of Zhai and Cao [25].  $\square$

**Lemma 2.3.** Let  $q \geq 0$  be an integer. Suppose that  $f$  has  $q + 2$  continuous derivatives on  $I$ , and that  $I \subseteq (N, 2N]$ . Assume also that there is some constant  $F$  such that

$$|f^{(r)}(x)| \approx FN^{-r},$$

for  $r = 1, \dots, q + 2$ . Then

$$\sum_{n \in I} e(f(n)) \ll F^{1/(4Q-2)} N^{1-(q+2)/(4Q-2)} + F^{-1} N,$$

where  $Q = 2^q$ .

*Proof.* See Theorem 2.9 in Graham and Kolesnik [26].  $\square$

### 3. Proof of Theorem 1.1

In this section, we prove Theorem 1.1.

For  $f \in \mathcal{F}_\infty$ ,  $f(n)$  is a multiplicative function, and for any prime  $p$ ,  $f(p) = 1$ . Therefore, using the Euler product formula, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{f(n)}{n^s} &= \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^s} + \frac{f(p^2)}{p^{2s}} + \frac{f(p^3)}{p^{3s}} + \dots \right) \\ &= \zeta(s) \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{f(p^2) - 1}{p^{2s}} + \frac{f(p^3) - f(p^2)}{p^{3s}} + \dots \right) \\ &= \zeta(s)G(s). \end{aligned} \tag{3.1}$$

When  $\operatorname{Re} s > 1/2$ ,  $G(s) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{g(d)}{d^s}$  converges absolutely. Through simple analysis, it can be concluded that

$$\sum_{d \leq z} |g(d)| \ll_{\varepsilon} z^{\frac{1}{2} + \varepsilon}. \tag{3.2}$$

Comparing the left and right sides of Eq (3.1), we found that

$$f(n) = \sum_{n=ld} g(d). \tag{3.3}$$

Let  $\gamma = 1/c$ .  $[n^c] = m$  means that

$$-(m+1)^\gamma < -n \leq -m^\gamma.$$

Hence, we get

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{n \leq x} f([n^c]) &= \sum_{m \leq x^c} ([-m^\gamma] - [-(m+1)^\gamma])f(m) + O(x^\varepsilon) \\ &= \sum_{m \leq x^c} ((m+1)^\gamma - m^\gamma)f(m) + \sum_{m \leq x^c} (\psi(-(m+1)^\gamma) - \psi(-m^\gamma))f(m) + O(x^\varepsilon) \\ &:= S_1 + S_2 + O(x^\varepsilon).\end{aligned}\tag{3.4}$$

First, we estimate  $S_1$ . Taylor expansion

$$(x+1)^\gamma - x^\gamma = \gamma x^{\gamma-1} + O(x^{\gamma-2})$$

and partial summation provides that

$$\begin{aligned}S_1 &= \gamma \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m)m^{\gamma-1} + O\left(\sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m)m^{\gamma-2}\right) \\ &= \int_1^{x^c} \gamma u^{\gamma-1} d\left(\sum_{1 \leq n \leq u} f(n)\right) + O(x^{1-c}).\end{aligned}\tag{3.5}$$

Now we consider the sum  $S_2$ . In view of Lemma 2.1, we get

$$S_2 = S_{21} + O(S_{22}),\tag{3.6}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}S_{21} &= \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} a(h)[e(-h(m+1)^\gamma) - e(-hm^\gamma)], \\ S_{22} &= \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) \sum_{|h| \leq H} b(h)[e(-h(m+1)^\gamma) + e(-hm^\gamma)].\end{aligned}$$

There is an additional term,  $h = 0$ , in the sum  $S_{22}$ , and the processing of  $S_{22}$  is similar to that of  $S_{21}$ , which we will explain later.

We will first consider estimating the upper bound of  $S_{21}$ . For convenience, we set

$$\phi_h(t) = e(h(t^\gamma - (t+1)^\gamma)) - 1,$$

then  $S_{21}$  can be expressed as

$$S_{21} = \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} a(h)\phi_h(m)e(-hm^\gamma).$$

By a splitting argument, we only need to estimate

$$S_{21} = \sum_{m \sim M} f(m) \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} a(h)\phi_h(m)e(-hm^\gamma),$$

where  $M \leq x^c$ . Using partial summation and noting  $a_h \ll \frac{1}{|h|}$ , we obtain

$$S_{21} \ll \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \frac{1}{h} \left| \sum_{m \sim M} f(m)\phi_h(m)e(-hm^\gamma) \right|$$

$$\begin{aligned}
&\ll \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \frac{1}{h} \left| \int_M^{2M} \phi_h(t) d \left( \sum_{M \leq m \leq t} f(m) e(-hm^\gamma) \right) \right| \\
&\ll \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \frac{1}{h} \left| \phi_h(2M) \sum_{M \leq m \leq 2M} f(m) e(-hm^\gamma) \right| \\
&\quad + \int_M^{2M} \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \frac{1}{h} \left| \frac{d\phi_h(t)}{dt} \right| \left| \sum_{M \leq m \leq t} f(m) e(-hm^\gamma) \right| dt \\
&\ll M^{\gamma-1} \max_{M \leq t \leq 2M} \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \left| \sum_{M \leq m \leq t} f(m) e(-hm^\gamma) \right| \\
&\ll x^{1-c} \max_{M \leq t \leq 2M} \sum_{0 < |h| \leq H} \left| \sum_{M \leq m \leq t} f(m) e(-hm^\gamma) \right|, \tag{3.7}
\end{aligned}$$

where we have used the bounds

$$\phi_h(t) \ll ht^{\gamma-1}, \quad \frac{d\phi_h(t)}{dt} \ll ht^{\gamma-2}.$$

From (3.7) and by a splitting argument, we need to estimate

$$\Sigma := \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| \sum_{m \sim M} f(m) e(hm^\gamma) \right|, \tag{3.8}$$

where  $1 \leq H' \leq \frac{H}{2}$ . Noting that

$$|e(f(n))| = 1,$$

when  $n$  is real, we use (3.3) and triangle inequality to get

$$\begin{aligned}
\Sigma &= \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| \sum_{ld \sim M} g(d) e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) \right| \\
&= \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| \sum_{1 \leq d \leq 2M} g(d) \sum_{l \sim L} e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) \right| \\
&\leq \sum_{h \sim H'} \sum_{1 \leq d \leq 2M} |g(d)| \left| \sum_{l \sim L} e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) \right| \\
&:= \Sigma^*, \tag{3.9}
\end{aligned}$$

where  $L = \frac{M}{d}$ .

Now, we split  $\Sigma^*$  into two parts:

$$\begin{aligned}
\Sigma^* &= \sum_{1 \leq d \leq \sqrt{M}} |g(d)| \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| \sum_{l \sim L} e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) \right| + \sum_{\sqrt{M} \leq d \leq 2M} |g(d)| \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| \sum_{l \sim L} e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) \right|, \\
&:= \Sigma_1 + \Sigma_2. \tag{3.10}
\end{aligned}$$

For  $\Sigma_1$ , we apply Lemma 2.3 ( $q = 0$ ) to deal with the innermost sum about  $l$ , then from (3.2) we get

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma_1 &\ll \sum_{1 \leq d \leq \sqrt{M}} |g(d)| \sum_{h \sim H'} \left| (hd^\gamma L^\gamma)^{\frac{1}{2}} \right| \\ &\ll_{\varepsilon} H^{\frac{3}{2}} M^{\frac{\gamma}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \varepsilon}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.11)$$

For  $\Sigma_2$ , we first estimate the innermost double sum. Regarding the two-dimensional exponential sum of  $h$  and  $l$  in (3.10), we can use Lemma 2.2 with  $m = l, n = h, F = d^\gamma HL^\gamma$  to obtain

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{h \sim H'} \sum_{l \sim L} e(hl^\gamma d^\gamma) &\ll H^{\frac{1}{2}} M d^{-1} + H^{\frac{19}{20}} M^{\frac{4}{20}\gamma + \frac{13}{20}} d^{-\frac{13}{20}} + H^{\frac{22}{23}} M^{\frac{4}{23}\gamma + \frac{15}{23}} d^{-\frac{15}{23}} \\ &\quad + H^{\frac{1}{6} + \frac{7}{9}} M^{\frac{\gamma}{6} + \frac{2}{3}} d^{-\frac{2}{3}} + H M^{\frac{\gamma}{5} + \frac{3}{5}} d^{-\frac{3}{5}} + H^{\frac{8}{10}} M^{\frac{\gamma}{10} + \frac{4}{5}} d^{-\frac{4}{5}}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.12)$$

Substituting (3.12) into (3.10), noting (3.2), and using the partial summation formula yields

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma_2 &\ll H^{\frac{1}{2}} M^{\frac{3}{4} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{19}{20}} M^{\frac{4}{20}\gamma + \frac{23}{40} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{22}{23}} M^{\frac{4}{23}\gamma + \frac{53}{92} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{17}{18}} M^{\frac{\gamma}{6} + \frac{7}{12} + \varepsilon} \\ &\quad + H M^{\frac{\gamma}{5} + \frac{11}{20} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{8}{10}} M^{\frac{\gamma}{10} + \frac{13}{20} + \varepsilon}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.13)$$

Combining the estimates of (3.7), (3.9), (3.10), (3.11), and (3.13) immediately provides the following upper bound result for  $S_{21}$ :

$$\begin{aligned}S_{21} &\ll H^{\frac{3}{2}} x^{\frac{3}{2} - \frac{3}{4}c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{1}{2}} x^{1 - \frac{c}{4} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{19}{20}} x^{\frac{24}{20} - \frac{17}{40}c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{22}{23}} x^{\frac{27}{23} - \frac{39}{92}c + \varepsilon} \\ &\quad + H^{\frac{17}{18}} x^{\frac{7}{6} - \frac{5}{12}c + \varepsilon} + H x^{\frac{6}{5} - \frac{9}{20}c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{8}{10}} x^{\frac{11}{10} - \frac{7}{20}c + \varepsilon}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.14)$$

We now consider the upper bound of  $S_{22}$ . The contribution of  $h = 0$  is

$$\begin{aligned}&\ll b_0 \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) \\ &\ll_{\varepsilon} H^{-1} x^{c + \varepsilon}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.15)$$

By noting  $b_h \ll \frac{1}{H}$ , the contribution of  $h \neq 0$  is

$$S_{22} \ll \frac{1}{H} \sum_{1 \leq |h| \leq H} \left| \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) (e(h(m+1)^\gamma) + e(hm^\gamma)) \right|.$$

By substituting variables, we only need to estimate

$$\frac{1}{H} \sum_{1 \leq |h| \leq H} \left| \sum_{m \leq x^c} f(m) e(hm^\gamma) \right|. \quad (3.16)$$

So using the same processing method as (3.8), the contribution of  $h \neq 0$  is

$$\begin{aligned}&\ll H^{\frac{1}{2}} x^{\frac{1}{2} + \frac{c}{4} + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{2}} x^{\frac{3}{4}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{20}} x^{\frac{4}{20} + \frac{23}{40}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{23}} x^{\frac{4}{23} + \frac{53}{92}c + \varepsilon} \\ &\quad + H^{-\frac{1}{18}} x^{\frac{1}{6} + \frac{7}{12}c + \varepsilon} + x^{\frac{1}{5} + \frac{11}{20}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{5}} x^{\frac{1}{10} + \frac{13}{20}c + \varepsilon}.\end{aligned}\quad (3.17)$$

Combining (3.6), (3.14), (3.15), and (3.17), we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_2 \ll & H^{\frac{3}{2}} x^{\frac{3}{2} - \frac{3}{4}c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{1}{2}} x^{1 - \frac{c}{4} + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{19}{20}} x^{\frac{24}{20} - \frac{17}{40}c + \varepsilon} \\
 & + H^{\frac{22}{23}} x^{\frac{27}{23} - \frac{39}{92}c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{17}{18}} x^{\frac{7}{6} - \frac{5}{12}c + \varepsilon} + H x^{\frac{6}{5} - \frac{9}{20}c + \varepsilon} \\
 & + H^{\frac{8}{10}} x^{\frac{11}{10} - \frac{7}{20}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-1} x^{c + \varepsilon} + H^{\frac{1}{2}} x^{\frac{1}{2} + \frac{c}{4} + \varepsilon} \\
 & + H^{-\frac{1}{2}} x^{\frac{3}{4}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{20}} x^{\frac{4}{20} + \frac{23}{40}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{23}} x^{\frac{4}{23} + \frac{53}{92}c + \varepsilon} \\
 & + H^{-\frac{1}{18}} x^{\frac{1}{6} + \frac{7}{12}c + \varepsilon} + x^{\frac{1}{5} + \frac{11}{20}c + \varepsilon} + H^{-\frac{1}{5}} x^{\frac{1}{10} + \frac{13}{20}c + \varepsilon}.
 \end{aligned} \tag{3.18}$$

Choosing  $H = x^{\frac{7c-6}{10}}$ , we obtain

$$S_2 \ll x^{1-\varepsilon} \tag{3.19}$$

as long as  $c < \frac{4}{3}$ , where  $\varepsilon$  will be chosen with respect to  $c$ .

Finally, combining (3.4), (3.5), and (3.19), we proved Theorem 1.1.

## 4. Conclusions

In this article, we studied the distribution of a special class of small- value multiplicative functions in Piatetski-Shapiro sequences and obtained a good range of applicability for the constant  $c$ . This result will have certain significance for enriching the relevant theories of Piatetski-Shapiro sequences and provide some enlightenment for the related research of other function types.

## Use of Generative-AI tools declaration

The author declares she has not used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the creation of this article.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares that no conflicts of interest exist in this manuscript.

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