Background SLE is characterised by the inappropriate activation of type I Interferon (IFN) and increases in apoptosis and NETosis by neutrophils, which in combination with defective apoptotic cell and NET clearance provides an ongoing source of self-antigen. IFN can further propagate the disease process by promoting B cell activation, survival, and differentiation into plasma cells (PC). PC produces autoantibodies that can form immune complexes (IC) to further stimulate IFN production creating a vicious cycle. Important questions that remain unclear are the site and mechanisms of IFN activation. We have recently demonstrated a prominent IFN signature in the bone marrow (BM) of SLE patients that is more pronounced than paired peripheral blood and correlated with higher serum autoantibodies and disease activity. We hypothesise that BM is a key site of IFN activation in SLE and better understanding of signals in the BM that regulate IFN activation may lead to discovery of new treatment targets.

Materials and methods BM supernatant and serum were obtained from SLE patients (n = 11 IFN high, n = 11 IFN low). Plasmacytoid dendritic cells (pDC) were purified from healthy donor blood. To determine if BM supernatant and serum induce IFN production, pDC was cultured with BM supernatant or serum with and without necrotic cell material. Necrotic cell material was generated by repeat freeze-thawed U937 cells. Culture supernatants were collected and IFN was measured by ELISA.

Results We found that BM supernatant from SLE patients with high level of multiple serum autoantibodies was able to induce pDC to produce type I IFN (BM: 1248 ± 259.1, BM + necrotic: 12091 ± 68.50 pg/ml). The serum from the same patient also induced pDC to produce IFN that was greatly enhanced by necrotic cell material (serum: 12244 ± 90, serum + necrotic: 114292 ± 6998 pg/ml). BM supernatant and serum from SLE patients with low level of serum autoantibodies did not induce pDC to produce IFN even in the presence of necrotic cell material. The relationship to the IFN signature and NETosis is under evaluation. Additionally, we are examining ICs as interferonogenic factors in the BM.

Conclusions These data suggest that the BM microenvironment of SLE patient contains factor(s) that promote type I IFN production by pDC that may correlate with the presence of serum autoantibodies. However, the mechanisms of IFN production in the BM appear to be different from that of the serum.
for IgG in humans, we included transgenic mice expressing FcγR-IlIA to our in vivo mechanistic investigations. Platelet activation and mitochondrial release were monitored upon intravenous injection of synthetic ICs in wild type (WT) and transgenic (Tg) FcγRlIA mice.

Results We found that on activation, platelets relocate their mitochondria toward the cell membrane and then release respiratory-competent mitochondria into the extracellular milieu, both as free organelles and encapsulated within vesicles called micro-particles (MP). Extracellular mitochondria were internalised by bystander leukocytes and, importantly, induced leukocytes rolling and adhesion to the blood vessel wall, suggesting that neutrophils and/or endothelial cells are activated by extracellular mitochondria. Activated platelets were more abundant in SLE patients than control subjects, and were associated with IgG. Extracellular mitochondria, both encapsulated in platelet MPs or naked, were also observed in blood circulation in SLE, and were frequently associated with IgG. Mechanically, ICs present in blood induce profound cell activation, which is dependent on platelet FcγRlIA and its signalling cascade.

Conclusions Platelets represent an important source of mitochondria, which release in blood upon stimulation of FcγRlIA, might promote systemic inflammation in SLE. Whether the blockade of FcγRlIA might represent an attractive avenue in SLE research, and whether platelet activation markers and extracellular mitochondria might be utilised as potential biomarkers for the stratification of lupus patients needs to be further considered.

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### Abstracts

**II-12 CSF-1 AND IL-34: DISTINCT POTENTIAL BIOMARKERS FOR LUPUS**

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**Background** A noninvasive means to predict the onset and recurrence of lupus is needed to optimise and individualise treatment. Macrophages (Mφ) are prominent in inflamed tissues targeted for destruction in SLE. We hypothesised that the principal molecules required for Mφ survival and proliferation are biomarkers for SLE. CSF-1 and IL-34 are promising candidates as both (i) bind to cFMS expressed by Mφ, thereby promoting Mφ survival and proliferation and (ii) promote destructive inflammation. However, IL-34 and CSF-1 have differing functions, which may be related to IL-34, not CSF-1, binding to a second receptor and distinct spatial temporal expressions.

**Materials and methods** We analysed serum and urine CSF-1 and IL-34 levels in SLE patients with nephritis (LN), arthritis (LA), cutaneous and serositis compared with healthy controls in two lupus-prone mouse strains, MRL/lpr and STING−/−. Mice were analysed at 16 wk of age. A similar F2 cross was set up for IRF3−− and MRL/lpr mice as well as STING−/− and C57Bl/6/lpr mice and as analysed above for STING/lpr mice (n ≥10 per group). C57Bl/6, CGAS−−, Unc93b−−/−, and STING−/− mice were injected i.p. with TMPD and evaluated at day 14 and 6 months post injection.