Abstracts

of family members and improved therapy for patients and families.

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GG-12 ABSTRACT WITHDRAWN

GG-13 ‘EPITOF’ – A NEW METHOD FOR CHARACTERIZING THE EPIGENETIC LANDSCAPE IN SLE

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Background SLE is a complex disease with very few approved therapeutic options. Unique opportunities exist to characterize blood cells, tissues such as kidney and skin, urine, serum and plasma as part of ongoing longitudinal cohort studies such as Accelerating Medicines Partnership (AMP) and Autoimmunity Centers of Excellence (ACE), and investigator initiated or company-sponsored clinical trials. The epigenome, in particular, is an area of great interest.

Materials and methods We have recently published a new method called Epigenetic Time of Flight (EpiTOF), a mass cytometry based method that enables broad characterization of post-translational modifications (PTMs) of histones in health and disease. Our initial studies demonstrated marked heterogeneity in younger vs older healthy adults. Twin studies showed that ~70% of variation is related to environment. Twenty-two different populations of blood cells were profiled, and the PTMs alone were sufficient to identify cell populations, even in the absence of cell surface markers.

Results Blood derived from multiple diseases was provided through the ACE Collaborative Network and local Stanford investigators and subjected to EpiTOF analysis followed by complex computational analysis. I will present ongoing studies in SLE, SSc, RA, IBD, JIA, vaccines, and infectious diseases using EpiTOF.

Conclusions EpiTOF and other multiplexed assays (such as autoantibody profiling) of samples derived from SLE patients, as well as patients with related autoimmune diseases, have tremendous potential and should be included in all clinical trials, with a goal to better understand pathogenesis and to identify novel therapeutic targets.

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Innate Immunity

II-01 TLR9-DEFICIENCY EXACERBATES AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE IN MODELS OF SLE AND CUTANEOUS LUPUS THROUGH B CELL INDEPENDENT MECHANISMS

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Background TLR9 appears to play both a protective and a disease-promoting role in animal models of SLE. Even though TLR9 is required for the production of anti-dsDNA and anti-nucleosome autoantibodies, TLR9-deficient autoimmune-prone mice invariably develop more severe disease than their TLR9-sufficient counterparts. Molecular mechanisms that account for this paradoxical function of TLR9 have mainly been explored in cell lines to a large extent and hence focused on competition between TLR7 and TLR9 for binding to Unc93B1 and the ability to access to the appropriate signaling compartment. Our own in vitro comparison of bone marrow derived macrophages and bone marrow derived dendritic cells, obtained from TLR9-sufficient vs TLR9-deficient mice and stimulated with TLR7 ligands, suggested that the impact of TLR9-deficiency might be highly cell type specific, and led us to focus on primary cells obtained from animal models of systemic autoimmunity.

Methods We initially used pristane-injected BALB/c mice as a model of SLE, and found that TLR9-deficiency did not exacerbate renal disease and the accumulation of an unusual myeloid subset in the kidneys of these mice. We have directly examined the contribution of TLR9-deficient and TLR9-sufficient cells in these mice using a mixed bone marrow chimera strategy. We have also developed an inducible rapid onset model of cutaneous lupus that depends on the injection of OVA-specific T cells into mice that express an OVA fusion protein on class II+ cells; here, TLR9-deficient and TLR7-sufficient recipients develop cutaneous lesions with many of the features of discoid lupus within 4 weeks of T cell injection. Cells isolated from the kidneys of the BALB/c pristane mice and the skin of the cutaneous lupus mice have been further characterized by flow cytometry and gene expression.

Results These studies have identified a myeloid subset present at sites of inflammation and in normal peripheral blood that appears to be uniquely impacted by the loss of TLR9. Functional properties of these cells will be discussed.

Conclusions TLR9 deficiency impacts very specific myeloid subsets apart from its effects on B cell development and differentiation.

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Background Neuropsychiatric manifestations of systemic lupus erythematosus (NPSLE) affect approximately 40% of patients. Lipocalin-2 (LCN2), an acute-phase reactant protein, is an established urinary biomarker in lupus patients. Previous studies using LCN2-deficient mice have demonstrated its role in glial migration and chemokine regulation in the brain. We therefore hypothesized that LCN2 is involved in NPSLE pathogenesis.

Methods We investigated the lupus prone B6.Sle1.Sle3 (Sle1,3) mouse and the effects of LCN2 deficiency on the development of the neuropsychiatric phenotype exhibited by this strain. Sle1,3, B6.LCN2KO, B6, and Sle1,3-LCN2KO mice (6–10 month old; n=5–10/group) underwent comprehensive neurobehavioral assessment, and brains were evaluated by flow cytometry and RNA sequencing.

Results Sle1,3 mice exhibited significant impairment in spatial memory (p<0.04, figure 1A) and recognition (p<0.02, figure 1B) memory when compared with B6 mice, and these deficits were attenuated in Sle1,3-LCN2KO mice (p<0.001, p<0.02, figure 1A-B). Furthermore, Sle1,3 mice demonstrated anhedonia, and this depression-like behavior was significantly reduced with LCN2 deficiency (p=0.01, figure 1C). Flow cytometry showed a significant increase in brain infiltrating CD8+ T cells in Sle1,3 mice, with a reduction in infiltration in the Sle1,3-LCN2KO strain (p=0.06). Preliminary analysis of RNA sequencing from sorted microglia revealed differential expression of genes between B6 and Sle1,3 mice (figure 1D) and between Sle1,3 and Sle1,3-LCN2KO mice (figure 1E). Moreover, genes involved in cognition and memory that were differentially expressed in Sle1,3 mice were restored to background B6 expression levels in Sle1,3-LCN2KO mice.

Conclusions Our findings establish the Sle1,3 mouse as an NPSLE model and demonstrate that LCN2 deficiency attenuates neurobehavioral deficits and regulates microglial expression of genes essential to NPSLE development.

Abstract II-03 Figure 1 SLE1,3 mice exhibit reduced preference for objects in novel position in the object placement test (A) and for novel objects in the object recognition test (B), and these spatial memory (A) and recognition memory (B) deficits are attenuated by LCN2 deficiency. (C) SLE1,3 mice tend to demonstrate anhedonia through lack of preference for saccharin-treated water, and LCN2 deficiency ameliorates this depression-like behavior. Data are shown as mean ±SEM. *p<0.05. Volcano plot demonstrates genes differentially expressed between microglia from B6 and SLE1,3 mice (D) and between SLE1,3 mice and SLE1,3-LCN2KO mice (E). Red genes are highly significant genes determined by DEseq2 with a false discovery rate of 10%. Red genes to the right or left of the dashed lines are significant genes with a 3-fold (D) or 2-fold (E) change in expression.