Differential and sequential immunomodulatory role of neutrophils and Ly6C[hi] inflammatory

monocytes during antiviral antibody therapy

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Abstract

Antiviral monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) can generate protective immunity through Fc-FcγRs interactions. Using a mouse model of retroviral infection, we previously showed a crucial role for immune complexes (ICs) in the enhancement of T-cell responses through FcγR-mediated activation of dendritic cells (DCs). However, IC-FcγR interactions involve different cells of the immune system other than DCs such as neutrophils and monocytes. These two myeloid cell-types are innate effector cells rapidly recruited to sites of infection. In addition to being key cells to fight against invading pathogens, they are also endowed with immunomodulatory properties. While the role of DCs in enhancing antiviral immune responses upon mAb treatment has been addressed in several studies, the role of neutrophils and monocytes has been much less studied. Here we addressed how mAb therapy affects the functional activation of neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes in retrovirus-infected mice. We found that both cell-types activated *in vitro* by viral ICs secreted high levels of chemokines able to recruit monocytes and neutrophils themselves. Moreover, inflammatory cytokines potentiated chemokines and cytokines release by IC-activated cells and induced FcγRIV upregulation. Similarly, infection and mAb-treatment upregulated FcγRIV expression on neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes and enhanced their cytokines and chemokines secretion. Notably, upon antibody therapy neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes displayed distinct functional activation states and sequentially modulated the antiviral immune response through the secretion of Th1-type polarizing cytokines and chemokines. Our work provides novel findings on the immunomodulatory role of neutrophils and monocytes in the enhancement of immune responses upon antiviral mAb therapy.

Introduction

The development of powerful antiviral monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) has provided new therapeutic opportunities to treat severe viral infections [1,2]. Fc-dependent mechanisms are crucial for efficient antiviral activity of neutralizing mAbs through the engagement of IgG receptors (FcγRs) expressed on immune cells. These Fc-FcγR interactions lead to the elimination of viral particles and virus-infected cells through phagocytic and cytotoxic mechanisms (i.e. antibody-dependent cellular phagocytosis (ADCP), antibody-dependent cell-mediated cytotoxicity (ADCC),…) [3]. Moreover, studies in different animal models of viral infection, including ours, have provided evidence that mAbs can also enhance antiviral immune responses (so called "vaccinal effects") in a Fc-dependent manner [4]. These vaccinal effects have been recently reported in HIV-infected patients treated with broadly neutralizing mAb (bnAbs) [5–7] although the mechanisms involved have not been identified thus far. The elucidation of the molecular and cellular mechanisms driving Fc-dependent, mAb-mediated immunomodulation is therefore an important issue that will be key to achieving protective immunity against severe viral infections by mAbs.

While several Fc-mediated effector functions (i.e. ADCC, ADCP, ….) have been shown to be required for antibody-mediated antiviral protection, [8–11] whether and how FcγR engagement by antiviral mAbs affects the immunomodulatory properties of different FcγR-expressing cells (i.e. cytokines/chemokines secretion, activation markers expression, …) has been little studied. In addition, the specific contribution of different FcγRs-expressing cells in the induction of vaccinal effects by mAbs still remains ill-understood. These issues are important to be addressed due to their potential clinical implications. However, multiple restrictions (i.e. technical and ethical issues, costs, …) largely limit those studies in humans and non-human primates (NHP). As an alternative, *in vivo* studies in immunocompetent mice infected with the

Murine Leukemia Virus FrCasE allowed the identification of several immunological

mechanisms that drive protective immunity upon mAb therapy [4,12]. We have previously shown

that treatment of FrCasE-infected mice with the neutralizing mAb 667 (recognizing the

retroviral envelope glycoprotein, expressed on virions and infected cells) elicits protective

adaptive antiviral immunity through the engagement of FcγRs [13,14]. Notably, mAbs form

immune complexes (ICs) with viral determinants that enhance antiviral T-cell responses

through FcγR-mediated binding to dendritic cells (DCs) [13,15–17]. However, IC-FcγR interactions

may involve different cells of the immune system other than DCs (i.e. neutrophils, monocytes,

….). We have recently shown a key immunomodulatory role of neutrophils in the induction of

protective humoral responses *via* the acquisition of B-cell helper functions (i.e. B-cell activating

factor secretion) upon engagement of FcγRs by the therapeutic mAb [18]. While the role of IC-

activated DCs in the enhancement of antiviral immune responses has been addressed in several

studies [12,19,20] the role of IC-activated neutrophils has mostly been overlooked. Neutrophils are

innate effector cells rapidly recruited to sites of infection. Evidence shows that, in addition to

being key effector cells to fight against invading pathogens, neutrophils are also endowed with

immunomodulatory properties through the secretion of a plethora of chemokines and cytokines

[21–23]. Yet, the functional activation of neutrophils by viral ICs and the resulting effect on their

immunomodulatory properties have poorly been studied in the context of antiviral mAbs

therapies. Similar to neutrophils, inflammatory Ly6C^{hi} monocytes are also rapidly recruited to

sites of infection and are key players to fight against viral infections [24]. Recently, it has been

reported that the therapeutic effect of antiviral mAb requires the engagement of FcγR on

monocytes [10]. This depends on Fc-FcγR interactions that are crucial to control viral spread

through the enhancement of ADCP. However, the potential contribution of monocytes to the

induction of vaccinal effects by antiviral mAb has not been reported. As both neutrophils and

inflammatory monocytes display multiple immunomodulatory functions and can mediate

protective immunity, immunopathology or immunosuppression in a context dependent manner,

it is important to dissect how antiviral mAb therapy shapes the phenotype and functional

properties of these FcγR-expressing cells as this might have important therapeutic implications.

Here, we used the FrCasE retroviral model to address how viral infection, with or without mAb

therapy, affects the phenotypical and functional activation of neutrophils and inflammatory

monocytes. Both, neutrophils and monocytes activated *in vitro* by viral determinants secreted

high levels of monocyte- and neutrophil-recruiting chemokines, suggesting a self-sustaining

mechanism of neutrophils and monocytes recruitment upon viral infection. *In vivo*, we have

shown that viral infection and mAb-treatment shape the immunomodulatory properties of

neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes. Our data show that the functional activation of both

cell types differs in terms of cytokine and chemokine secretion, evolves overtime and is

different in the presence or the absence of mAb-treatment. Importantly, antibody therapy leads

to increased secretion of proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines that are potent inducers

of Th1-biased immune responses. Our work provides hitherto unreported findings on the

immunomodulatory properties of neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes in a context of

antiviral mAb-therapy. These findings might help to improve mAb-based antiviral therapies by

tailoring therapeutic interventions aiming at harnessing the immunomodulatory properties of

these cells.

Materials and methods

Mice: Inbred 129/Sv/Ev mice (H-2D^b haplotype) were used and maintained under conventional, pathogen-free facilities at the Institut de Génétique Moléculaire de Montpellier (RAM-ZEFI). They have been used without distinction as to sex and at different ages according to experiments.

Viral stocks: FrCasE [25] viral stocks were produced and stored as previously described in [26].

Viral infection and immunotherapy: Eight-day-old 129/Sv/Ev mice were infected by intraperitoneal (i.p.) administration with 50 μl of a viral suspension containing 50,000 focus-forming units (FFU) and treated, or not, with 30 μg 667 mAb targeting gp70 protein of viral envelope, [27], 1-hour p.i. and on days 2 and 5 p.i. by i.p. administration. Mice were euthanized and spleens collected at days 8 and 14 p.i.

Phenotypical and functional activation of FcγRIV-expressing cell from spleen ex vivo: Single-cell suspensions of splenocytes were obtained from naive, infected/non-treated and infected/treated mice at 8 and 14 days p.i. Spleen cell suspensions were obtained by mechanical dissociation in PBS, then filtered in 0,70 μm strainer. 20 % of each spleen was used for immunophenotyping by FACS, 80% left was dedicated to neutrophils and monocytes sorting. Red blood cells were lysed (ACK, Lonza) and an enrichment with biotinylated anti-B220 (BD Biosciences), anti-CD3 (BD Biosciences), following of anti-biotin Ab magnet-bead coupled (Miltenyi) and magnetic LS-columns (Miltenyi) was performed to remove spleen lymphocytes and increase the sorting efficacy. Cells were stained with specific marker of populations of interest (Ly6G-BD BioSciences, Ly6C-BioLegend, CD11b-BD BioSciences) and neutrophils (Ly6G^{hi}) and inflammatory monocytes (Ly6C^{hi}) were sorted (>97-98% pure) using the BD

Biosciences FACSAria device. Sorted cells were cultured in 96-well plates at a density of 4×10^6

cells/ml (1×10^6 cells/well) in 10% FBS-containing RPMI medium for 24h, and cell-free

supernatants were collected and stored at -20°C, to allow cytokines and chemokines protein

release quantification.

Flow cytometry: Organs of interest were collected to realize immunophenotyping of immune

cells. Spleen cell suspensions were obtained by mechanical dissociation in PBS. BM cell

suspensions were obtained by dissection and PBS-2%-FBS flushing of tibias and femurs. Cells

were stained at 4°C using fluorochrome-conjugated antibodies against, CD11b (M1/70,

eBioscience), CD45.2 (104, BD Biosciences), CD62L (MEL-14, BD Biosciences), CD86

(GL1, BD Biosciences), Ly6G (1A8, BD Biosciences) and Ly6C (AL-21, BioLegend). FcγRIV

expression was determined using 9E9 antibody (kindly provided by Dr. Pierre Bruhns, Institut

Pasteur), produced by BioXcell, and then labeled with Alexa Fluor 647. Forward scatter area

and forward scatter time-of-flight, as well as side scatter, were used to remove doublets from

flow cytometry analyses. Cells were analyzed on FACS LSR Fortessa (BD Bioscience), and

the data were analyzed using the FlowJo software.

Neutrophils and monocytes isolated from BM used in in vitro experiments*:* Neutrophils and

monocytes were purified from 8 to 11-week-old naive mice BM. After dissection of lower

limbs, BM cell suspensions were collected by PBS-2% FBS EDTA (2 mM) flushing (25G

needle) of tibias and femurs. BM cell suspensions were filtered with a 0,40 μm nylon strainer.

Two magnetic-based cell sorting (MACS) isolation kits were used to purified either neutrophils

(Miltenyi Biotec) and monocytes, (Miltenyi Biotec) by negative selection, both with high purity

(>97-98%), determined by FACS (LSR Fortessa, BD Bioscience). Cells were placed in culture

in U bottom 96-well plates at a concentration of 1 million/ml in 10% FBS-containing RPMI

medium.

Stimulation of neutrophils and monocytes in vitro: Purified neutrophils and monocytes were

seeded at 150 000 cells/ well in 150 µl of RPMI, then incubated for 24h with LPS (1µg/ml,

Sigma), or FrCasE virus (MOI 5: 5 viral particles /cell), or ICs (virus FrCasE and 1µg 667

mAb), or 1µg 667 mAb alone. The MOI and 667 mAb concentration used to form ICs were

previously identified by dose-response experiments involving different MOI and different 667

mAb quantities. In parallel, the same experiments were performed adding inflammatory

cytokines, TNFα 100 UI/ml (Peprotech), IFN γ 100 UI/ml (eBioScience), IFNα11 a 1000

UI/ml, produced and generously provided by Dr. Gilles Uzé (DIMP, CNRS). After 24h of

stimulation, supernatants were collected and stored at -20°C to quantify chemokines and

cytokines protein release secretion. The viability of neutrophils and monocytes 24h post-

stimulation was high (> 85%). No significant differences in cell viability were observed among

the different stimulation conditions. Phenotypic activation of both neutrophils and monocytes

was measured using surface markers by flow cytometry.

Chemokines and cytokines protein release quantification: Soluble chemokines and cytokines

secretion were quantified from cell-free collected supernatants of *in vitro* cultured neutrophils

and monocytes and of sorted splenic neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes (of naive,

infected/non-treated and infected/treated mice 8 and 14 days p.i. and immunotherapy), using

bead-based immunoassays (LegendPLex, BioLegend) and analyzed on the BD Bioscience-LSR

Fortessa device. The protein release quantification was established by the appropriate software

(LEGENDplex^TM data analysis).

Statistics: Statistical analyses were performed using GraphPad Prism 5 (GraphPad Software).

Data were expressed as mean ± SEM, and statistical significance was established using a

parametric 1-way ANOVA test with Bonferroni's multiple comparisons post-tests or non-

parametric Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparisons post-test for multiple

comparisons or paired Student's t tests when two groups were compared. P values lower than

0.05 were considered as statistically significant.

Study approval. All experimental procedures were performed in accordance with the French

national animal care guidelines (CEEA-LR-12146 approval, Ethics committee of the

Languedoc-Roussillon Region, Montpellier).

Results

Neutrophils activated by viral determinants, free or in the form of ICs, secrete high levels of chemokines able to recruit monocytes and neutrophils. We have previously shown a key role of neutrophils in the induction of long-term protective antiviral immunity upon mAb therapy of infected mice [18]. To better characterize the phenotypical and functional activation of neutrophils by viral determinants, free or in the form of ICs, we isolated bone marrow (BM) neutrophils from naive mice and stimulated them for 24h *in vitro* with free FrCasE virions or opsonized with the 667 mAb (ICs) (Figure 1A). Free 667 mAb was used as control. Both, FrCasE virions and ICs induced a strong activation of neutrophils as shown by a higher expression of the CD11b molecule as well as an increased frequency of CD11b^{hi} CD62L^{lo} neutrophils (Figure 1B). However, IC-mediated phenotypic activation was significantly higher.

We next assessed the functional activation of virus- and IC-stimulated neutrophils by measuring their capacity to secrete chemokines and cytokines. Both stimuli led to high secretion levels of several chemokines such as CCL2, CXCL1, CXCL5 and to a lesser extent CCL3 and CCL4 (Figure 1C), the secretion of the latter chemokine being significantly enhanced in IC-stimulated neutrophils. However, both the virus and ICs poorly induced the secretion of the 12 cytokines analyzed (Supplemental Figure 1A). This contrasted with the high secretion of IL-6 and TNFα pro-inflammatory cytokines observed upon lipopolysaccharide (LPS) stimulation despite similar CD11b upregulation induced by LPS and viral determinants (Supplemental Figures 1B-1C). In addition, LPS-stimulated neutrophils only secreted a low amount of CCL3 and CCL4 chemokines, with no secretion of CCL2, CXCL1, CXCL5 chemokines (Supplemental Figure 1D). These data show that bacterial-related pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs) induce a functional activation of neutrophils different from that of viral stimuli. Interestingly, the chemokines which were more strongly secreted by neutrophils upon viral stimuli (but not

by LPS) have been shown to be involved in the recruitment of neutrophils themselves (CXCL1,

CXCL5) and inflammatory monocytes (CCL2).

Inflammatory monocytes activated by viral determinants, free or in the form of ICs, secrete

high levels of chemokines able to recruit neutrophils and monocytes. We next assessed the

activation of Ly6C^{hi} monocytes isolated from naive mice BM and stimulated for 24h with virus

or ICs (Figure 2A). Both stimuli significantly activated monocytes (as depicted by an increased

CD86 expression) (Figure 2B) and induced the secretion of CXCL5, CXCL1 and CCL2

chemokines, the secretion of the latter chemokine being significantly enhanced in IC-stimulated

monocytes (Figure 2C). As compared to neutrophils, higher amounts of the neutrophil-

recruiting chemokine CXCL1 were detected as well as lower amounts of CXCL5 and CCL2.

Virus- and ICs induced a weak secretion of most of the 12 cytokines analyzed (Supplemental

Figure 2A). This contrasted with high level secretion of IL-6, TNFα and IFNγ observed upon

LPS stimulation (Supplemental Figure 2C). LPS stimulation also induced a wider and different

panel of chemokine release (Supplemental Figure 2D), notably with the secretion of high

amounts of CCL3, CCL4, CCL5, and to a lesser extent CXCL1 and CXCL10. As observed in

neutrophils, these data show that viral stimuli induce a functional activation of monocytes

different from that of bacterial-related PAMPs.

Inflammatory conditions potentiate the activation of neutrophils and monocytes by viral ICs.

As the inflammatory microenvironment resulting from the viral infection and mAb therapy

might affect the antiviral immune response, we next assessed the phenotypic and functional

activation of neutrophils and monocytes by viruses and ICs under an inflammatory environment

(i.e. in the presence of proinflammatory/immunomodulatory cytokines, such as TNFα, IFN-I

and IFNγ).

TNFα and IFNγ significantly enhanced the phenotypic activation of neutrophils by ICs (but not

by free virus) (Figure 3A). We also showed that TNFα, IFNγ and IFN-I enhanced the secretion

of different cytokines and chemokines by IC-stimulated neutrophils (Figures 3B-3E). Notably,

we observed an enhanced secretion of TNFα (by TNFα itself), CXCL1 (by TNFα and IFNγ),

CCL4 and CXCL10 (by IFNγ and IFN-I) and CCL5 (by IFNγ). In contrast, inflammatory

conditions hardly modified the secretion profile of free virus-activated neutrophils as only the

secretion of the CXCL10 was induced in virus stimulated cells, consistent with the IFN-

dependent induction of this chemokine (Figure 3E).

With regard to monocytes, IFN-I and IFNγ significantly potentiated the phenotypic activation

of IC-stimulated monocytes (as depicted by an increased expression of the CD86 molecule)

(Figure 4A) but not that of virus-activated cells. Similar to neutrophils, TNFα, IFNγ and IFN-

I also enhanced the secretion of different cytokines/chemokines by IC-stimulated monocytes,

leading to increased secretion of CCL2 and CXCL1 (enhanced by the 3 cytokines), TNFα

(enhanced by IFN-I) and CXCL10 (enhanced by both types of IFN) (Figure 4B-4E). TNFα,

IFNγ and IFN-I stimulation also modulated the cytokine/chemokine secretion profile of virus-

activated monocytes (i.e. CCL2, CXCL1), although to a lesser extent than IC-activated cells

(Figure 4E).

Altogether, these data highlight that inflammatory conditions enhance the phenotypic and

functional activation of IC-stimulated neutrophils and monocytes. The cytokine/chemokine

secretion enhancement observed in IC-activated cells differs depending on the stimulating

cytokine and the responding cell type (i.e. increased secretion of TNFα, CCL4, CCL5 and

CXCL1 by IC-activated neutrophils and TNFα, CCL2 and CXCL1 by IC-activated

monocytes). It is worth to note that inflammatory conditions mainly enhanced the secretion

profile of IC-activated cells but not that of virus-activated cells (notably in neutrophils).

Inflammatory conditions upregulate the expression of FcγRIV on in vitro activated

neutrophils and monocytes. FcγRs expression might differ between steady-state *versus*

inflammatory/pathological conditions [28], however little is known about modulation of FcγRs

expression in the context of viral infections and mAb-therapy. We thus assessed whether the

activation of neutrophils and monocytes by virus and ICs affected the expression of the

activating receptor FcγRIV, both in the absence and in the presence of inflammatory cytokines.

The modulation of this FcγR is all the more relevant to be studied in this experimental model

as (i) it is a high affinity receptor for IgG2a, (which is the isotype of the 667 mAb) and (ii) it is

highly expressed on neutrophils, the latter having a key immunomodulatory role in mAb-

mediated protection of retrovirus-infected mice [18]. We found that IFNγ and IFN-I stimulation

(but not TNF-α) led to the upregulation of FcγRIV expression on neutrophils (IFNγ) (Figure

5A) and monocytes (IFNγ and IFN-I) (Figure 5B). In contrast, in the absence of inflammatory

cytokines, neither the virus nor the ICs significantly modulated the expression FcγRIV on

neutrophils (Figure 5A) and monocytes (Figure 5B). However, IFNγ stimulation enhanced the

upregulation of FcγRIV expression in virus- and IC-stimulated monocytes. These results show

the specific effect of the different inflammatory cytokines (TNF-α, IFN-I, IFN-γ) on the

modulation of FcγRIV expression.

Viral infection and mAb therapy upregulate FcγRIV expression on neutrophils and on

inflammatory monocytes. We next assessed *in vivo* whether the inflammatory environment

resulting from FrCasE viral infection and 667 mAb therapy modulated the expression of

FcγRIV on neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes. To this end, mice were infected and

treated, or not, with the therapeutic mAb (infected/treated and infected/non-treated,

respectively). Then, the expression of FcγRIV on neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes

from the spleen (one of the main sites of viral replication) was evaluated at different time points

post-infection (p.i.): at day 8 p.i. (i.e. corresponding to the peak of viremia) and day 14 (i.e.

corresponding to the peak of primary cytotoxic T-cell responses) [13]. Age-matched naive mice

were used as controls. The cell populations of interest were defined by flow cytometry (Figure

6A) based on the expression of CD11b, Ly6G and Ly6C to gate neutrophils (CD11b$^+$, Ly6G^{hi})

and inflammatory monocytes (CD11b$^+$Ly6G$^-$Ly6C^{hi}).

In steady-state conditions, FcγRIV was highly expressed on splenic neutrophils. Lower FcγRIV

expression was detected in Ly6C^{hi} monocytes at the different time points assessed (Figure 6B).

At day 8 p.i. FcγRIV expression was significantly upregulated on neutrophils and monocytes

in infected/non-treated mice. In contrast, at day 14 p.i. infected/treated mice showed a stronger

upregulation of FcγRIV on both cell-types as compared to infected/non-treated and control

mice.

These results suggest a distinct inflammatory environment in infected/non-treated mice *versu*s

infected/treated mice that evolves over time and differentially modulates the expression of the

activating FcγRIV in neutrophils and monocytes, leading to a stronger upregulation at 8 days

p.i. in infected/non- treated mice and at 14 days p.i. in infected/treated mice.

FcγRIV upregulation in infected/treated mice is associated with enhanced expression of

MHC-II and co-stimulatory molecules on neutrophils and monocytes. We next addressed the

activation of splenic neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes in infected mice with or without

immunotherapy at days 8 and 14 p.i. by monitoring cell surface activation markers. Similar to FcγRIV expression, we showed that the activation state of the cells evolved over time. At day 8 p.i. (Figure 6C), CD11b was upregulated on neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes upon viral infection either in the absence or in the presence of immunotherapy. However, infected/treated mice showed a significantly higher CD86 upregulation in neutrophils than infected/non-treated mice. At day 14 p.i. (Figure 6C), CD11b and CD86 expression was increased in splenic neutrophils isolated from both infected/treated- and infected/non-treated mice, with no significant differences between these two groups of mice. In contrast, MHC-II upregulation was only induced in infected/treated mice, suggesting a mAb-mediated upregulation of this molecule. Similarly, we observed a significantly higher upregulation of CD86 co-stimulatory molecule and MHC-II in inflammatory monocytes from infected/treated mice as compared to infected/non-treated mice.

These data show that mAb treatment leads to the upregulation of MHC-II in neutrophils and monocytes at 14 days p.i. as well as the upregulation of the CD86 costimulatory molecule in monocytes (Figure 6C). This is associated with the FcγRIV upregulation observed in neutrophils and Ly6C^{hi} monocytes from infected/treated mice at this time point (Figure 6B).

Neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes are differentially and sequentially activated upon antiviral mAb treatment. To further characterize the activation state of neutrophils and Ly6C^{hi} monocytes upon viral infection and mAb-therapy, we addressed the cytokine and chemokine secretion profile of splenic neutrophils and monocytes sorted from infected mice treated, or not, with the 667 mAb, at days 8 and 14 p.i. Cells sorted from age-matched naive mice were used as controls. We found that the secretion profile of neutrophils and monocytes was distinct but it was globally enhanced in both cell-types in infected/treated mice as compared to

infected/non-treated mice (Figure 7A and 7B), in particular at day 8 p.i. in neutrophils and at

14 p.i. in monocytes.

At day 8 p.i., neutrophils from both infected/non-treated and infected/treated mice showed a

broad chemokine and cytokine secretion profile as deduced from an increased secretion of most

of the 13 chemokines and 12 cytokines assessed, although at weak levels (Figure 7B and 7C).

Notably, neutrophils from infected/treated mice showed a higher increase in IFN-I (IFNβ)

secretion (8,3-fold increase) than neutrophils from infected/non-treated mice (4,8-fold

increase). In contrast, infection and mAb-treatment hardly affected the chemokine/cytokine

secretion of Ly6C^{hi} monocytes as they only showed a weak increase (1.4-fold increase) in

CXCL1 secretion in infected/treated mice as well as a slight increase in cytokines secretion

(both in terms of diversity and fold increase) mainly in infected/non-treated mice (Figure 7B).

Interestingly, at day 14 p.i., the functional activation of both cell-types completely differed from

that observed at day 8 p.i. (Figure 7B and 7C). We found a more restricted but stronger

induction of chemokines/cytokines secretion, mostly in cells isolated from infected/treated

mice. In contrast to the broad cytokines and chemokines secretion profile observed at day 8 p.i.,

neutrophils only secreted CCL4 and CCL5 chemokines and showed no cytokine secretion at

day 14 p.i. It is worth noting that CCL4 secretion was strongly enhanced in infected/treated

mice consistent with the enhanced secretion of this chemokine observed upon neutrophils IC-

stimulation *in vitro*. In addition, Ly6C^{hi} monocytes showed a higher secretion of 6 chemokines

(CCL3, CCL4, CCL5, CCL22, CXCL1 and CXCL10) and 3 Th1-polarizing cytokines (IL-6,

TNFα, IFNγ) in infected/treated mice as compared to infected/non-treated mice, with notably

strong induction of IL-6 and IFNγ.

In summary, FrCasE infection and 667 mAb-treatment induce the secretion of multiple

chemokines and cytokines by neutrophils and monocytes. The secretion profile evolves over

time in both cell-types and it is mostly increased upon antibody therapy, with notably an

enhanced secretion of Th1-polarizing cytokines and chemokines by Ly6C^{hi} monocytes isolated

from infected/treated mice at 14 p.i, Overall, these data suggest a role for the therapeutic mAb

in the functional activation of these FcγRIV-expressing cells.

Discussion

We have previously shown that neutrophils have a key immunomodulatory role in the induction of protective immunity by antiviral mAbs through the acquisition of B-cell helper functions [18]. Here we provide a new insight into the immunomodulatory role of neutrophils in a context of antiviral mAb-therapy. Our work shows that antibody therapy shapes neutrophils properties, notably it leads to the upregulation of MHC-II expression and the enhanced secretion of multiple cytokines and chemokines. Our work also show that mAb-treatment strongly enhances the functional activation of inflammatory monocytes leading to the secretion of Th1-type polarizing cytokines and chemokines. These enhanced immunomodulatory functions of neutrophils and monocytes observed in infected/treated mice are associated with the upregulation of FcγRIV upon mAb treatment.

Our data show that neutrophils' cytokine/chemokine secretion profile differs between viral *versus* bacterial stimulus. This is important to highlight as most of the studies investigating the immunomodulatory role of neutrophils have been conducted in bacterial infection models. Thus, *in vitro* stimulation of neutrophils by viral determinants led to a poor production of cytokines but to a wide and strong release of chemokine, with notably high secretion levels of the monocytes-and neutrophils-recruiting chemokines (CCL2, CXCL1, CXCL5) that was not observed upon LPS stimulation. On the contrary, LPS-stimulated neutrophils produced high amounts of proinflammatory cytokines but a narrower and weaker chemokine release. As for neutrophils, viral determinants also lead to different functional activation of monocytes than LPS. Thus, stimulation of monocytes by viral determinants (but not LPS) led to the secretion of high amounts of the neutrophils-recruiting chemokine CXCL1 and to a lesser extent the monocytes-recruiting chemokine CCL2. These results suggest a self-sustaining mechanism of neutrophils and monocytes recruitment upon viral infection, and raise the hypothesis of an early

cooperation between neutrophils and monocytes in the induction of the antiviral immune

response. This secretion profile of neutrophils induced by viral determinants is in agreement

with an increased CCL2 release observed upon *in vitro* HIV stimulation of neutrophils [29].

Increased levels of CCL2 and CXCL1 have also been reported in neutrophil- and monocytes-

infiltrated tissues in different viral infections [30–33]. However, chemokine increase was mostly

assessed in total tissue extracts but not directly in neutrophils or monocytes isolated cells, which

prevented the identification of the cell origin of chemokines. It is worth noting that a very early

(i.e. 24-48h p.i.) but transient expression of CCL2 and CXCL1 has also been reported upon

infection by RSV, CMV and influenza virus [30,31,34]. Such early but transient expression would

be in agreement with the very low secretion of these chemokines detected at day 8 p.i. in

infected mice treated, or not, with the therapeutic mAb.

Our data also highlight the effect of inflammatory conditions on the modulation of the

functional activity of neutrophils and monocytes. Thus, the *in vitro* stimulation with

inflammatory/immunomodulatory cytokines potentiated the release of several chemokines and

cytokines by IC-activated neutrophils and monocytes (Figure 3) (i.e. CCL4, CCL5, CXCL1,

TNFα) while having a less pronounced or no effect on virus-activated cells. This is consistent

with the upregulation of FcγRIV also observed in cytokine-stimulated neutrophils and

monocytes. Although not formally shown, these results support a role for the inflammatory

environment and IC-stimulation in the enhancement of chemokine/cytokine secretion by

neutrophils and monocytes observed in infected-treated mice. Our *in vitro* observations also

allowed us to dissect the specific effect of IFNγ, IFN-I and TNFα on the enhancement of the

functional properties of IC-activated neutrophils and monocytes (both in terms of secretion

profile and FcγRIV modulation). Notably, IFNγ and IFN-I priming (but not TNF-α), led to the

upregulation of FcγRIV in neutrophils and/or monocytes, in agreement with previous reports

in other experimental settings [35–37]. This suggests a role for both types of IFN in the upregulation

of FcγRIV on neutrophils and monocytes observed *in vivo* upon infection and mAb-treatment.

However, FcγRIV expression was more strongly enhanced in infected/non-treated mice at day

8 p.i. and in infected/treated mice at day 14 p.i. suggesting a different and evolving

inflammatory environment in both groups of mice. Similarly, the neutrophils and monocytes

secretion profile was also distinct at days 8 p.i. and 14 p.i., The different activation state of

these cells observed between infected/treated versus infected/non-treated mice (notably at day

14 p.i.) suggests that the control of viral propagation by the therapeutic mAb dramatically

changes the inflammatory environment and the subsequent immune outcome. Thus, in addition

to blunt viral propagation, Fc-mediated clearance of opsonized virus/infected cells by immune

effector cells (i.e. ADCC, CDC, ADCP, …) might generate danger signals able to induce

inflammation. This, together with FcγR-triggering might lead to enhanced activation of FcγR-

expressing cells. Our *in vivo* results showing FcγRIV upregulation on neutrophils and

monocytes are in agreement with the FcγRs modulation induced by the inflammatory conditions

resulting from bacterial and IC-mediated autoimmune pathologies [28,38]; and provide new

evidence on the regulation of FcγRs expression in the specific inflammatory context of antiviral

mAb-based immunotherapies, not reported thus far.

Our work provides new mechanistic insights into the hitherto underestimated role of neutrophils

as key cells in the modulation of adaptive antiviral immunity upon mAb treatment.

Interestingly, at steady-state conditions, neutrophils express high levels of FcγRIV. Its

expression is higher than that observed in inflammatory monocytes. Thus, it is tempting to

speculate that upon viral infection and mAb-treatment, the early recruitment of neutrophils,

together with their high expression of FcγRIV, result in potent Fc-triggering by ICs in these

cells. This might be key to initiate the modulation of immune responses through the production

of multiple cytokines and chemokines able to recruit and activate multiple innate immune cells such as monocytes, NK cells, DCs and neutrophils themselves [22]. This suggests a potential role for neutrophils as early drivers of the induction of vaccinal effects by mAbs. Supporting this hypothesis, at day 8 p.i. neutrophils showed a higher and a wider induction of chemokines and cytokines release than monocytes, while monocytes secreted strong quantities of Th-1 polarizing cytokines and chemokines at day 14 p.i. Consistent with this, a differential and sequential functional activation of myeloid cells has been recently reported by Zhang and collaborators in a model of influenza infection [39]. By using single-cell RNA sequencing, they showed two waves of inflammation, with neutrophils being the major contributor to the first wave while macrophages generated a second wave of proinflammatory factors. However, the contribution of the different myeloid cells to the inflammation process was only assessed at the transcription level.

Our work suggests that the upregulation of FcγRIV on neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes induced by the viral infection and mAb-treatment might increase Fc-triggering by ICs leading to improved immune responses, both in terms of magnitude and quality. In agreement with this, the FcγRIV upregulation on neutrophils and monocytes in infected/treated mice observed at 14 days p.i. is associated with (i) higher expression of CD86 costimulatory molecule and MHC-II and (ii) higher secretion of cytokines and chemokines, which might enhance antiviral immune responses. The high secretion of Th1-polarizing cytokines (IL-6, TNFα, IFNγ) [40–44] and chemokines (CXCL10) [45–48] by inflammatory monocytes from infected/treated mice at day 14 p.i, argues in favor of a mAb-mediated Th1 polarization of the antiviral immune response by these cells. According to this, we previously reported that 667-mAb treatment of FrCasE infected mice leads to a Th1-biaised immune response as observed by the development of strong CD8 T-cells responses at day 14 p.i. [13,18,49] as well as long-lasting protective humoral

immune responses predominantly of the IgG2a isotype [13,18,26]. This Th1-type immune response

observed in infected/treated mice contrasts to the non-protective immunosuppressive responses

observed in infected/non-treated mice [50]. Our results are also consistent work of Fox and

collaborators showing that the therapeutic activity of mAbs against chikungunya virus (CHIK-

V) requires Fc-FcγR interaction on monocytes [10]. In agreement with our data, mAb-treatment

led to higher levels of proinflammatory chemokines and cytokines in ankles of CHIK-V

infected mice. However, chemokines and cytokines were assessed in total ankle samples

containing multiples myeloid cell-types (including neutrophils and monocytes) but not in

isolated myeloid cells. Thus, neither the effect of mAb-treatment on the secretion profile of

monocytes nor the cell origin of chemokines and cytokines were addressed. Finally, it is also

worth mentioning the upregulation of MHC-II molecules observed in neutrophils sorted from

infected/treated mice. This observation broadens the immunomodulatory role of neutrophils

upon mAb-treatment as it suggests that neutrophils might acquire antigen-presenting cell

features and induce antigen-specific T-cells responses. In agreement with this, it has been

shown that upon *ex vivo* stimulation with IgG immune complex (IC) or viral cognate antigens,

neutrophils upregulated expression of MHCII and costimulatory molecules and increased T cell

activation [51–53].

Our work shows a distinct secretion profile of neutrophils and Ly6C^{hi} monocytes, in terms of

type, amount and kinetics of chemokines/cytokines secretion. This highlights a differentially

and sequentially activation of these FcγRIV-expressing cells upon antiviral mAb treatment and

suggests their key and complementary action in the induction of protective immune responses

by mAb. This is important to keep into consideration as thus far, mostly DC have been

considered as key cells involved in the induction of vaccinal effects by mAbs [13,16,17]. Thus, the

identification of neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes as players in the induction of

protective immunity by mAbs might have therapeutic implications. These findings might help

to improve mAb-based antiviral therapies by tailoring therapeutic interventions aiming at

harnessing the immunomodulatory properties of these cells. To this end, different approaches

could be envisaged: (i) the use of cell-type specific, appropriate immunostimulatory host-

directed therapies and (ii) the design of antiviral mAbs engineered to enhance their affinity for

FcγRs expressed on human neutrophils and monocytes, such as FcγRIIa and FcγRIIIa [17,54–56].

Thus, in addition to allow superior antibody-mediated phagocytosis, these Fc-engineered mAbs

could also modulate cytokine/chemokine production to ultimately lead to more effective

adaptive immune responses.

Author contributions

Jennifer Lambour (JL), Mar Naranjo-Gomez (MN-G) and Mireia Pelegrin (MP) defined the research program. JL, MN-G, and Myriam Boyer-Clavel (MB-C) performed the experiments. JL, MN-G and MP carried out the data analyses. JL and MP wrote the manuscript. Grants to MP funded the study.

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549 **Conflict of interest disclosures**

550 The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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 FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1: **Phenotypic and functional activation of neutrophils stimulated with FrCasE**

virions and ICs. A. *Experimental scheme.* **B**. *Phenotypic activation of neutrophils stimulated*

by FrCasE virions or viral ICs made with the 667 mAb. V, free virions; IC, viral ICs; M, culture

medium. Free 667 mAb was used as control. Activation was assessed by monitoring CD11b

expression and frequency of CD11b^{hi} CD62L^{lo} neutrophils. The data represent 12 independent

experiments. **C**. *Functional activation of neutrophils stimulated by FrCasE virions (V) or viral*

ICs made with the 667 mAb (IC). Chemokines release was assessed in supernatants of

neutrophils isolated from BM of naive mice (>97-98% purity) and stimulated for 24h by FrCasE

virions (red) or viral ICs (blue) or left unstimulated (grey). The data represent 5 independent

experiments. Data are expressed as means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was established

using a parametric 1-way ANOVA test with Bonferroni's multiple comparisons post-tests (*p

< 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001).

Figure 2: **Phenotypic and functional activation of monocytes stimulated with FrCasE**

virions and ICs. **A.** *Experimental scheme.* **B**. *Phenotypic activation of monocytes stimulated*

by FrCasE virions or viral ICs made with the 667 mAb. Free 667 mAb was used as control. V,

free virions; IC, viral ICs; M, culture medium. Activation was assessed by monitoring CD86

expression. The data represent 7 independent experiments **C**. *Functional activation of*

monocytes stimulated by FrCasE virions (V) or viral ICs made with the 667 mAb (IC).

*C*hemokines release was assessed in supernatants of monocytes isolated from BM of naive mice

(>97-98% purity) and stimulated for 24h by FrCasE virions (red) or viral ICs (blue) or left

unstimulated (grey). The data represent 5 independent experiments. Data are expressed as

means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was established using a parametric 1-way ANOVA test

with Bonferroni's multiple comparisons post-tests (*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001).

Figure 3: **C**ytokine stimulation potentialize the functional activation of neutrophils by ICs.

BM-derived neutrophils were isolated from naive mice and activated as in **Figure 1** in the presence, or in the absence, of *TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ.* V, free virions; IC, viral ICs; M, culture medium. **(A).** *Phenotypic activation of activated neutrophils by TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ.* Activation was assessed by monitoring CD11b (**A**). *Modulation of the functional activation of neutrophils by TNFα* (**B**), IFN-I (**C**) or IFNγ **(D)**. Chemokines and cytokines release were assessed in supernatants of activated neutrophils (**B-D**). (**E**) Histograms depict the increase in cytokine/chemokine release upon stimulation of virus- and IC-activated neutrophils by *TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ* (calculated as the difference in the amount of chemokine/cytokine secretion by V- or IC-stimulated neutrophils in the presence or in the absence of cytokine stimulation). Only those chemokines/cytokines significantly enhanced by *TNFα* (**B**), IFN-I (**C**) or IFNγ **(D)** stimulation are depicted. The data represent 6 independent experiments for **A**, 4 independent experiments for **B-E**. Data are expressed as means +/- SEM. Diamonds indicate significant differences to all the other stimulation conditions (black diamond), or to the corresponding stimuli in the absence of cytokine stimulation (open diamond), to corresponding medium without virus or IC stimuli (grey diamond) as determined by Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparisons post-tests ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 4: **C**ytokine stimulation potentialize the functional activation of monocytes by ICs.

BM-derived monocytes were isolated from naive mice and activated as in **Figure 2** in the presence, or in the absence, of *TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ.* V, free virions; IC, viral ICs; M, culture medium. **(A).** *Phenotypic activation of activated monocytes (A) by TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ.* Activation was assessed by monitoring CD86 expression **(A)**. *Modulation of the functional activation of monocytes by TNFα* (**B**), IFN-I (**C**) or IFNγ **(D).** Chemokines and cytokines

release were assessed in supernatants of activated neutrophils (**B-D**). (**E**) Histograms depict the

increase in cytokine/chemokine release upon stimulation of virus- and IC-activated monocytes

by *TNFα, IFN-I or IFNγ* (calculated as the difference in the amount of chemokine/cytokine

secretion by V- or IC-stimulated monocytes in the presence or in the absence of cytokine

stimulation). Only those chemokines/cytokines significantly enhanced by *TNFα* (**B**), IFN-I (**C**)

or IFNγ (**D**) stimulation are depicted. The data represent 3 independent experiments for **A** and

3 independent experiments for **B-E**. Data are expressed as means +/- SEM. Diamonds indicate

significant differences to all the other stimulation conditions (black diamond), or to the

corresponding stimuli in the absence of cytokine stimulation (open diamond), or to

corresponding medium without virus or IC stimuli (grey diamond) as determined by Kruskal-

Wallis test with Dunn's multiple comparisons post-tests ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 5: **FcγRIV is upregulated by IFN stimulation on both neutrophils and monocytes**

cell surface. Neutrophils and monocytes were isolated from naive mice and stimulated as in

Figures 3 and 4. FcγRIV expression was evaluated on neutrophils (**A**) and monocytes (**B**). V,

free virions; IC, viral ICs; M, culture medium. The data represent 6 independent experiments

for neutrophils (**A**) and 3 independent experiments for monocytes (**B**). Data are expressed as

means +/- SEM. Diamonds indicate significant differences to the corresponding stimuli in the

absence of cytokine stimulation (open diamond) or to corresponding medium without virus or

IC stimuli (grey diamond) as determined by Kruskal-Wallis test with Dunn's multiple

comparisons post-tests ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 6: **FcγRIV is upregulated *in vivo* on splenic neutrophils and on inflammatory**

monocytes. Splenocytes from naive (grey), infected/non-treated (I/NT; red) and

infected/treated (I/T; blue) mice were analyzed on days 8 (D8) and 14 (D14) p.i. for FcγRIV

expression. **(A)** Gating strategy used to define neutrophil and monocyte populations. **(B)**

FcγRIV expression on *CD11b⁺Ly6G^{hi}* neutrophils and *Ly6C^{hi}* monocytes. **(C)** Cell surface

markers expression (CD11b, CD86, MHCII) on *CD11b⁺Ly6G^{hi}* neutrophils and *CD11b⁺Ly6C^{hi}*

monocytes surface. The data represent 5 independent experiments at D8 p.i. and 6 independent

experiments at D14 p.i with at least 6-8 mice per group (I/NT and I/T) and 3-5 mice per group

(naive mice). Data are expressed as means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was established

using a parametric 1-way ANOVA test with Bonferroni's multiple comparisons post-tests (*p

< 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001).

Figure 7: **Cytokine and chemokine secretion profile of splenic neutrophils and**

inflammatory monocytes. Splenic neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes from naive,

infected/non-treated (I) and infected/treated mice (IT) were isolated at days 8 p.i. (D8) and 14

p.i. (D14) for assaying their chemokine and cytokine secretion profile in supernatants of sorted

cells cultured at a density of $4x10^6$ cells/ml ($1x10^6$ cells/well) for 24 h. Data represent 3

independent experiments on D8 p.i. and 4 independent experiments on D14 p.i. with at least 6-

8 mice per group. **(A)** Total quantity of chemokines and cytokines secreted by neutrophils and

inflammatory monocytes from infected/non-treated (I) and infected/treated mice (I/T). **(B)**

Chemokine and cytokine secretion of neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes isolated from

naive, infected/non-treated (I) and infected/treated mice (IT). The color code shows fold-

increase compared to secretion detected in cells isolated from naive mice (the raw chemokine

and cytokine release values are given in brackets, expressed in pg/ml). **(C)** Chemokine and

cytokine secretion of neutrophils and inflammatory monocytes isolated from infected/non-

treated (I) and infected/treated mice (IT) expressed as percentage of chemokine and cytokine

showing a fold-increase ≥1.4 as compared to cells isolated from naive mice.

A

FrCas^E   IC

129/Sv/Ev   PMN from
              mice BM   24 h
                         stimulation   **Phenotypical and Functional
                                          activation of PMN**

B

M	
V	
IC	
667	

CD11b

CD11b (MFI)

*** *** ** ***

M   V   IC   667

CD62L   M   V   IC   667

3,22 %   16,4 %   25,8 %   5,47 %

CD11b

CD11b^hi CD62L^lo (%)

*** *** ** ***

M   V   IC   667

C

Concentration (pg/ml)

*** ***
*
**
*
* *
** **

M
V
IC

CCL2 CCL3 CCL4 CCL5 CCL11 CCL17 CCL20 CCL22 CXCL1 CXCL5 CXCL9 CXCL10 CXCL13

Figure 1

A

B

C

Figure 2

A

B

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7