Single-cell RNA sequencing analyses of primary cutaneous B-cell disorders

reveal distinct molecular patterns consistent with clinical behavior

Short Title: scRNA-seq analyses of primary cutaneous B-cell disorders

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Abbreviations

MZLPD   Marginal zone lymphoproliferative disorder

MZL   Marginal zone lymphoma

FCL   Follicle center lymphoma

DLBCL-LT   Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, leg type

scRNA-seq   Single-cell RNA sequencing

TCR   T-cell receptor

BCL   B-cell lymphoma

PSEUDO   Pseudolymphoma

HC   Healthy control

Key Points

- This is the first comprehensive molecular map of primary cutaneous B-cell lymphoproliferative disorders.

- Differences between entities were primarily geared by the expanded B-cell clone and less by other immune or stromal cells.

Abstract

Cutaneous B-cell lymphomas (CBL) comprise a diverse group of diseases with variable clinical course and prognosis. The cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying the pathogenesis of CBL remain ill-defined. Here we performed single-cell RNA sequencing combined with B-cell and T-cell receptor sequencing in three distinct CBL entities. In contrast to benign cutaneous pseudolymphomas and healthy skin, each CBL variant contained a single dominant B-cell clone. In marginal zone lymphoproliferative disorder (MZLPD), expanded clones generally showed terminal differentiation along a physiological trajectory towards plasma cells and displayed transcriptomic profiles indistinguishable from the benign polyclonal bystander B-cells. Follicle center lymphoma (FCL) clones also exhibited a canonical B-cell marker profile but consisted of more homogeneous populations of proliferating and non-proliferating germinal center (GC) B-cell-like phenotypes. In the most aggressive CBL, diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, leg type (DCBCL-LT), cells revealed multiple non-physiological marker profiles as well as aberrant proliferative activity beyond conventional GC-like cells. Fibroblasts in MZLPD, FCL and pseudolymphomas, but not DLBCL-LT, expressed the classical chemotactic chemokine *CXCL13.* These data suggest that in cutaneous B-cell disorders other than DLBCL-LT, physiological immune circuits are primarily operative, consistent with their overall indolent behavior.

Introduction

Primary cutaneous B-cell lymphomas comprise a heterogeneous group of extranodal non-Hodgkin lymphomas.[1] The three most common subtypes include primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoproliferative disorder[2] (MZLPD, also named primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma),[3] primary cutaneous follicle center lymphoma (FCL), and primary cutaneous diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, leg type (DLBCL-LT).[1] MZLPD and FCL are highly indolent with a 5-year disease-specific survival of >95%, while DLBCL-LT is associated with an aggressive disease course as reflected by a 5-year survival rate of less than 60%.[4]

Previous gene expression analyses identified characteristic B-cell phenotypes in each of these diseases. MZLPD B cells were found to be most similar to plasma cells, FCL showed a more germinal center (GC)-like phenotype, and DLBCL-LT lesions were most consistent with activated B-cells.[5-7] A key challenge is that, in B-cell lymphomas, clonality is not always detectable using routine molecular methods, or when a surrogate such as light-chain restriction is used.[8] In those instances, the differentiation from so-called pseudolymphomas can be difficult, as they are usually defined as non-clonal B-cell proliferations.[9] Additionally, some authors suggest that especially MZLPD may develop from pre-existing, non-neoplastic lymphoid infiltrates,[10] adding another level of complexity to the diagnosis of cutaneous B-cell lymphomas. To distinguish these from pseudolymphomas, skin flow cytometry was found to have superior sensitivity than immunohistochemistry, *in situ* hybridization or immunoglobulin heavy chain gene rearrangement examinations. Nevertheless, its routine use is difficult as it requires fresh tissue, is prone to technical challenges during processing, and is not widely available.[9] Thus, we urgently need a better cellular and molecular characterization of primary cutaneous B-cell neoplasms and

pseudolymphomas to improve our understanding of their pathophysiology, and

identify diagnostic and prognostic markers for improved patient care.

Here, we present an in-depth, single-cell RNA sequencing-based characterization of

primary cutaneous B-cell lymphomas and pseudolymphomas. By combining this with

B and T-cell receptor sequencing, we were able to clearly differentiate each

condition on a molecular level.

Materials & Methods

Patient recruitment and sample processing

Patients were recruited at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria. Skin punch

biopsies were taken after obtaining written informed consent, under a protocol

approved by the Ethics Committee of the Medical University of Vienna (EK

1360/2018). After processing using the Skin Dissociation Kit by Miltenyi Biotech

(Bergisch Gladbach, Germany),[11-13] single-cell suspensions were subjected to

scRNA-seq using the Chromium Single Cell Controller and Single Cell 5' Library &

Gel Bead Kit v1.1 (10X Genomics, Pleasanton, CA) according to the manufacturer's

protocol. TCR and BCR sequences were enriched from cDNA using the VDJ Kit

workflow by 10X Genomics. Sequencing was performed using the Illumina NovaSeq

platform and the 150bp paired-end configuration.

Data analysis

Preprocessing of the scRNA-seq data was performed using Cell Ranger version

6.1.2 (10x Genomics). Raw sequencing files were demultiplexed using the Cell

Ranger command "mkfastq." Each sample was aligned to the human reference

genome assembly "refdata-gex-GRCh38-2020-A" using the Cell Ranger command

"count".

TCR and BCR sequences were processed using CellRanger's "vdj" command.

CellRanger's clonotype assignments were used as a basis. Clonotypes that shared

the same CDR3 sequence in one chain and did not differ in any other chain were

merged.

Expression data was processed using R (version 4.2.1),[14] Seurat (version 4.0.5),[15]

and monocle3 (version 1.0.0).[16] Plots were generated using Seurat and ggplot2

(version 3.3.5).[17] As initial quality control, cells with <500 genes or >20%

mitochondrial genes were removed. Subsequently, *MALAT1*, mitochondrial and

ribosomal genes, as well as immunoglobulin variable cluster and TCR variable

genes were removed. Next, basic normalization and sample-specific bias removal

was performed using Seurat's scTransform on all samples from one disease group.

For this step, the "method" parameter was set to "glmGamPoi" and

"conserver.memory" was enabled. Variables to regress were set to % mitochondrial

genes and the sample identifier. Disease group data was subsequently integrated

using Seurat's reciprocal principal component approach.[15] Integration markers were

identified using the first 30 principal components and the number of anchors

("k.anchor") set to 20. Dataset integration was subsequently performed using the first

30 principial components. Clustering was performed using Seurat's

"FindNeighbours" function to construct the nearest neighborhood graph, followed by

the "FindClusters" function to identify distinct clusters. For the completely integrated

dataset, this was done using the first 15 principial components for the non-

lymphocytic subclustering and 30 principal components for the B-cell and T-cell

subclustering, and a resolution of 0.5 for the T-cell clustering and 0.8 for the B cell

and non-lymphocytic ones. Certain cell populations were further subclustered to

identify smaller populations. These included NK cells/ILCs, proliferating T cells,

CD4+ T cells, and all major non-lymphocytic cell types. Here, the subclustering was

performed by extracting the respective cells and re-running the PCA, the

neighborhood graph creation, and the identification of clusters. This step used the

first 15 principal components and a resolution of 0.1-0.5 depending on subset size.

Clustering results were then re-integrated into the original subclustering. Differential

expression analysis was performed using Seurat's FindMarkers function and the

data in the "SCT" slot.

The trajectory/pseudotime analysis was performed using monocle3.[16] Here, the

Seurat object was converted into monocle's cds object. Clusters were identified

based on the UMAP embedding. Subsequently terminally differentiated plasma cells

were used as the starting point to derive the pseudotime, which was then inverted in

order to match the canonical B-cell differentiation path.

Multiplex Immunohistochemistry

Multiplex immunostainings were conducted as previously described.[18] Briefly, 4µm

sections were deparaffinized and antigen retrieval was performed in heated citrate

buffer (pH 6.0) and/or Tris-EDTA buffer (pH 9) for 30 min. Thereafter, sections were

fixed with 7.5% neutralized formaldehyde (SAV Liquid Production GmbH, Flintsbach

am Inn, Germany). Each section was subjected to 6 successive rounds of antibody

staining, consisting of protein blocking with 20% normal goat serum (Dako, Glostrup,

Denmark) in PBS, incubation with primary antibodies, biotinylated anti-mouse/rabbit

secondary antibodies and Streptavidin-HRP (Dako), followed by TSA visualization

with fluorophores Opal 520, Opal 540, Opal 570, Opal 620, Opal 650, and Opal 690

(PerkinElmer, Waltham, MA, USA) diluted in 1X Plus Amplification Diluent

(PerkinElmer), Ab-TSA complex-stripping in heated citrate buffer (pH 6.0) and/or

Tris-EDTA buffer (pH 9) for 30 minutes, and fixation with 7.5% neutralized

formaldehyde. Thereafter, nuclei were counterstained with DAPI (PerkinElmer), and

sections were mounted with PermaFluor fluorescence mounting medium (Thermo

Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA). Multiplexed slides were scanned on a Vectra

Multispectral Imaging System version 2 (Perkin Elmer). Briefly, a library from spectral

peaks emitted by each fluorophore from single stained slides was created with the

Advanced Image Analysis software (InForm 2.4, PerkinElmer) and used for spectral

unmixing of multispectral images allowing for identification of all markers of interest.

Autofluorescence was determined on an unstained representative study sample.

After adaptive cell segmentation, cut-off values for each fluorophore/antibody

staining were defined. All phenotyping and subsequent quantifications were

performed blinded to the sample identity.

Data Sharing Statement

Complete gene level expression and VDJ sequencing data of all newly analyzed

samples will be made available on GEO. Data from healthy control samples in a

previously published dataset from our laboratory are available under GEO accession

number GSE173205.[11]

Results

Single-cell RNA sequencing map of primary cutaneous B-cell lymphomas, pseudolymphomas and healthy control individuals

Using single-cell RNA sequencing (scRNA-seq), we profiled 178,647 cells from skin biopsies of patients with clinical and histopathological diagnoses of primary cutaneous B-cell lymphomas, namely MZLPD (97,680 cells, n=7 patients), FCL (14,107 cells, n=1 patient), DLBCL-LT (13,387 cells, n=3 biopsies from 2 patients), in comparison to patients with idiopathic nodular B-cell pseudolymphomas[19] (PSEUDO, 36,163 cells, n=4 biopsies from 3 patients) and healthy control subjects (NHS, 17,310 cells, n=4 individuals, Table 1, Table S1). Clustering analyses revealed diverse skin cell populations according to expression of canonical cell markers, including large numbers of B and T cells, as well as smaller populations of NK cells, myeloid dendritic cells (DCs), plasmacytoid dendritic cells (pDCs), macrophages (Macro), fibroblasts (FB), keratinocytes (KRT), smooth muscle cells (SMC), melanocytes (Mel), and blood and lymphatic endothelial cells (EC, LEC), (Figure 1A-C). While most cell types were found at varying numbers in all 5 groups, B cells and pDCs were essentially absent in NHS samples (Figure 1D). Further subclustering of all B cells (Figure 1E) revealed a diverse pool of differentiation stages, from naïve B cells (*IGHD+*), GC cells (*CD38+AICDA+*) to fully differentiated plasma cells (*CD27+CD38+SDC1+IGHG1+IGHG4+)* (Figure 1E-F).

B cells from DLBCL-LT showed distant, separate clustering from other entities, while FCL was largely confined to GC-like cells (Figure 1G). By contrast, MZLPD B cells were found across various different cell types, largely overlapping with pseudolymphomas (Figure 1G). In order to characterize B-cell clonality of our

samples, we combined scRNA-seq profiling with B-cell receptor (BCR) sequencing

and depicted the single most abundant clone for each sample, colored for each

disease group (Figure 1H). High top clone numbers were found in DLBCL-LT, FCL

and MZLPD, consistent with a clonal disease, while numbers were much lower in

pseudolymphoma (Figure 1H). While the top clones of DLBCL-LT and FCL showed

distinct clustering, those from MZLPD and pseudolymphomas were largely

overlapping (Figure 1H). These data suggest a close transcriptomic relation between

MZLPD and pseudolymphomas, when compared to FCL and DLBCL-LT.

MZLPD shows distinctively expanded clones in contrast to pseudolymphoma

samples

To better delineate potential differences between MZLPD and pseudolymphomas,

we clustered each of these samples separately (Figure 2A-B). In contrast to

pseudolymphomas (Figure 2A), MZLPD showed distinct clusters of the single most

abundant clone in all samples (Figure 2B). Consistently, top clone numbers were

considerably higher in MZLPD than in pseudolymphomas (Figure 2C), and the gap

from the first to the second most abundant clone was much larger in MZLPD than

pseudolymphoma samples (Figure 2D). This confirms the concept that MZLPD is a

clonal process, while pseudolymphomas show a generally polyclonal B-cell receptor

pattern, despite otherwise strong transcriptomic similarities.

Expanded clones of MZLPD span several B-cell subsets

Given these similarities beyond the clonal expansion, and to facilitate a direct

comparison, we separately subclustered B-cells of MZLPD and pseudolymphomas

(Figure 3A). This subclustering allowed us to phenotypically identify eleven different

B-cell subtypes (Figure 3A-B, Table S2). We found five clusters of naïve B cells, as

defined by expression of *CD19, MS4A1* (CD20)*,* and *IGHD*, while being negative for

CD27 and *CD38* (Figure 3B). All naïve B cells expressed low, but noticeable levels

of the B-cell activation gene *CD83*. Naïve 1 and 2 were further characterized by up-

regulation of MHC II genes, indicating early activation.[20] Naïve 3 showed an

additional up-regulation of heat shock proteins and thus likely represent stressed

activated B cells in the dataset.[21] Naïve 4 exhibited strong *VPREB3* expression, a

known B-cell differentiation marker[22] that we also found in some GC B cells (Figure

3B). Therefore, naïve 4 might be most consistent with activated cells differentiating

towards GC B cells. Naïve 5 were *ATM+* and partly *BCL6+*, both associated with

V(D)J recombination.[23] Their embedding in close vicinity to memory cells (Figure 3A)

suggests very late *IGHD+* cells in the process of class switching. Besides this large

pool of naïve B cells, we observed activated B cells with stronger *CD83* expression

that further harbored the anti-apoptotic NF-κB target transcription factor gene

BCL2A1 and the chemokine ligand *CCL4*.[24] We were able to identify two distinct

populations of *CD38+AICDA+* GC B cells: *BCL6+* cells (GC1), and an *MKI67+*

population of proliferating B cells (GC2)[25] (Figure 3A-B). We also found a

comparably large fraction of *CD27+, IGHD+* and *IGHG1*[low] B cells which most likely

represent unswitched memory B cells, and, together with switched memory B cells

(*CD27+IGHE+IGHG4+*) represent marginal zone B cells.[24] Finally, plasma cells

(*CD27+CD38+IGHG1+IGHG4+SDC1/CD138+*) formed a clearly separated cluster

(Figure 3A-B). Importantly, clonally expanded B cells from MZLPD samples did not

form a distinct population but spanned several cell clusters (Figure 3C). These top

abundant MZLPD clones were primarily found in (i) *CD27+* memory B cells, (ii)

plasma cells and (iii) GC B cells (Figure 3C). While frequencies of expanded clones

increased towards more differentiated B-cell clusters, the opposite was found within

the polyclonal infiltrate (Figure 3D). However, the cluster distribution of these clones

showed considerable patient-to-patient variation (Figure 3E, Table S3), a finding

consistent with the pathological observation that some, but not all, MZLPD lesions

are dominated by plasma cell-like B cells, which have previously been classified as

cutaneous immunocytomas.[26] While most MZLPD clones showed a switch towards

IgG isotypes, sample 92 was characterized by *IGHM* and *IGHE* expression (Figure

3F), consistent with the previously described rare form of IgM-dominant / uncommon

class-switched MZLPD.[2] The expanded clone of sample 92 formed three distinct

groups: two as part of the "switched memory" cluster and one as part of plasma cells

(Figure 3E). The cluster adjacent to "GC2" had a clearly proliferative component that

was *MS4A1* (CD20) negative (Figure 3G), a phenotype that is not typically seen in

physiological B-cell development and differentiation.[27] Similarly, the second group in

the "switched memory" fraction also contained an *MS4A1* negative portion (Figure

3G). This kind of aberrant phenotype was not present in any other MZLPD sample

(not shown), and might explain the potentially more aggressive behavior of non-

switched or non-IgG switched MZL.[28,29] Generally, though, differential gene

expression analysis between expanded clones and the polyclonal B-cell infiltrate in

MZLPD samples did not reveal major differences. The analysis resulted in only 24

differentially expressed genes (DEGs) within the GC1 cluster, followed by as little as

13 DEGs in switched memory B cells (Figure 3H, Table S4). These DEGs consisted

of down-regulated MHC II genes (*HLA-DRB1, HLA-DRA, HLA-DQA1, HLA-DQB1*)

and an up-regulation of *IGLC3* within the expanded clone, corresponding to the

observed dominance of lambda chain positive lymphomas in our dataset (Figure 2B,

Table S4). Taken together, these minimal differences indicate that clonally expanded

B cells were very similar to the respective subsets of polyclonal B cells.

To further assess the distribution of clonally expanded B cells on this differentiation

path, we used Monocle3 to place all B cells on a pseudotime scale (Figure 3I). This

put naïve 1 (MHC II^{high}) and activated B cells at the beginning of the differentiation

scale, followed by naïve 2. Naïve 4 cells were similarly positioned as GC cells,

followed by proliferating GC cells (Figure 3I). Here, clustering positioned some

switched memory B cells close to late GC B cells, suggesting that these late GC

types differentiate towards memory B cells / early plasma cells. Naïve 5 were put on

a similar pseudotime section as some memory B cells, which matches their assumed

up-regulation of genes associated with V(D)J recombination.[23] Therefore, this

pseudotime trajectory approximated the known B-cell differentiation path.[27]

Importantly, cells of the expanded clone tightly followed this trajectory, with

increasing canonical differentiation markers such as *CD27, IGHE, IGHG1,* and

IGHG4 during pseudotime (Figure 3J). In each sample, these clonally expanded

cells were distributed over a wide range of the pseudotime trajectory and ranged

from naïve B cells to terminally differentiated plasma cells (Figure 3K). This indicates

that expanded clones of MZLPD generally follow the normal B-cell differentiation

path and terminally differentiate within the skin.

In contrast to MZLPD, expanded FCL clones only consisted of GC-like B cells

We next assessed whether other forms of primary cutaneous B-cell lymphomas also

followed conventional B-cell differentiation trajectories. Clustering analysis of a

biopsy from a primary cutaneous follicle center lymphoma (FCL) patient showed GC-

like cells to dominate the B-cell population (Figure 4A-C). In contrast to MZLPD,

clonally expanded B cells were strictly confined to proliferating and non-proliferating

CD38+, AICDA+ GC B cells (Figure 4B). By contrast, activated B cells only consisted

of polyclonal cells (Figure 4B). Similarly, a published FCL sample from a study on

the effect of oncolytic virotherapy in cutaneous B-cell lymphoma[30] revealed the

dominant clone also to be limited to proliferating and non-proliferating GC clusters,

corroborating our results (Figure 4D-G). From these data, we conclude that the

expanded clones from primary cutaneous FCLs are confined to the

histopathologically observed GC forming B cells.[31]

DLBCL-LT showed multiple aberrant B-cell phenotypes

We further profiled 3 samples from 2 DLBCL-LT patients (Table 1, Figure 5A). In

contrast to expanded clones of MZLPD (Figure 3) and FCL (Figure 4), DLBCL-LT

cells showed marker combinations that did not follow physiological B-cell phenotypes

(Figure 5B). Virtually all clonally expanded cells (Figure 5C) showed expression of

CD27, with widespread loss of *MS4A1* (CD20, Figure 5D). There was no expression

of late-stage differentiation markers like *IGHE, IGHG1, IGHG4*, and *SDC1* (CD138)

(Figure 5D). The large fraction of proliferating (*MKI67+)* cells included *MS4A1-* and

CD38- cells (Figure 5D), which do not typically exist under physiological conditions.[27]

These findings were replicated in a published DLBCL-LT sample[30] (Figure S1A-D).

There, malignant cells were again *CD27+,* with fractions showing a loss of *MS4A1*,

and proliferating cells spanning several B-cell phenotypes (Figure S1D). Plasma

cells and canonical *IGHD+* naïve B cells were only found in the polyclonal B-cell

fraction (Figure S1D). In both datasets, malignant clones were not confined to

specific cell clusters, but were found across all B-cell clusters at high proportions,

while polyclonal cell counts were generally much lower in number (Figure 5E, S1).

This was in stark contrast to FCL and MZLPD, where polyclonal B cells were

consistently present at higher frequencies than the top expanded B-cell clone (Figure

5F). The presence of considerably proliferating and dedifferentiated cells that do not

correspond to canonical B-cell stages is very consistent with the clinical observation

that DLBCL-LT is a more aggressive entity than FCL or MZLPD.

In contrast to B cells, major T-cell populations did not differ between disease

groups

Since T cells constituted the largest group of cells in our dataset, even outnumbering

B-cell counts in most samples (Table S1), we further subclustered this population

(Figure S2A). T-cell clusters consisted of diverse subpopulations of *CD4+* helper T

cells, *CD8A+* cytotoxic T cells including a *CCL4+IFNG+* population, NKT cells,

smaller clusters of *FOXP3+* regulatory T cells, *NR4A2+TNFRSF18+TNFRSF4+*

activated T cells, exhausted *CD4+PDCD1+TIGIT+* T cells, *MKI67+* proliferating T

cells, *CD3D-KLRD1+* NK cells and *CD3D-KLRD1-KLRB1+* innate lymphoid cells

(ILCs) (Figure S2B, Table S5). In contrast to B cells that showed several non-

overlapping clusters depending on the disease type (Figure 1G), T lymphoid clusters

were generally present in all conditions, albeit at lower levels and with less T-cell

proliferation in NHS samples (Figure S2C). Overall, differential gene expression did

not reveal major differences among groups, except for increased expression of

cytotoxic molecules in DLBCL-LT compared to all other conditions (Table S6). When

combining scRNA-seq with TCR sequencing, we found a generally polyclonal TCR

pattern, with frequencies of top expanded clones in the range of NHS (Figure S2D).

In contrast to the *CD4* dominance in NHS, lymphomas and pseudolymphomas

showed the top clones to be primarily present in *CD8A+* cytotoxic populations, which

might be consistent with a cytotoxic anti-lymphomatous immune reaction[32] (Figure

7D). Nevertheless, we did not detect T-cell populations uniquely expanded in

individual disease groups, as opposed to B cells.

Multiplex immunohistochemistry showed a diverse B-cell infiltrate in MZLPD

and pseudolymphomas in contrast to DLBCL-LT

As current scRNA-seq methods can be prone to sampling bias, we assessed B cell

and T cell populations by using a multiplex immunohistochemistry (IHC) approach

previously established at our center.[18] This panel allowed us to simultaneously

characterize naive-like B cells (CD19+/CD20+, CD27-, CD38-, CD138-), GC-like B

cells (CD19+/CD20+, CD27-, CD38+, CD138-), memory-like B cells (CD19+/CD20+,

CD27+, CD38-, CD138-), plasma cells (CD19+, C20-, CD138+), and T cells

(CD19-/CD20-, CD5+). Overall, MZLPD and pseudolymphoma samples harbored a

diverse lymphocytic infiltrate, as opposed to DLBCL-LT (Figure 6A-B). While we

observed all B-cell subtypes in pseudolymphomas and MZLPD samples, several

DLBCL-LT samples only consisted of naive-like CD19+ and CD20+ B cells. We

further quantified phenotypic diversity of the infiltrate using the Shannon diversity

index (Figure 6C). This confirmed a significantly larger heterogeneity of lymphocyte

composition in pseudolymphomas and MZLPD samples compared to DLBCL-LT,

paralleling indolent *vs.* aggressive clinical disease behavior.[33]

Indolent B-cell lymphomas and pseudolymphomas are characterized by a

***CXCL13*+ fibroblast population**

We also assessed non-lymphocytes and their distribution across diseases (Figure

7A-B, Table S7). As expected, DCs and macrophages were significantly less

frequent in NHS, consistent with a relative increase of fibroblast and melanocyte

counts (Figure 7C). While total fibroblast numbers were comparable across

lymphomas and pseudolymphomas, *CXCL13*+ fibroblasts were the only population

consistently absent in all DLBCL-LT samples (Figure 7D-E, S3), cells known to be

key to B-cell recruitment in the tumor microenvironment[34] and infection.[35,36] All other

subsets showed no significant difference in cell number between disease groups

(Figure S3).

We further performed differential gene expression analysis comparing each cell type

of one disease against the respective cells of the other three subtypes (Figure 7F-G).

Most differentially expressed genes in MZLPD and pseudolymphomas were found in

keratinocytes (Figure 7F-G). However, these were driven by single samples and

correlated with clinically visible inflammation rather than the disease subset (not

shown). FCL was dominated by down-regulated genes (Figure 7F) which were rather

caused by up-regulated genes in other samples (Table S8). The comparably large

number of significantly up-regulated genes in DLBCL-LT (Figure 7G) was driven by

B cell and cell division associated genes, most likely originating from lysed tumor

cells leading to ambient RNA contamination.[37] The largest number of non-B cell-

associated genes was found in DCs, macrophages, and fibroblasts (Figure 7F-G),

mainly including inflammation-associated genes (Table S8). On closer inspection, we

found that these differences were largely driven by single samples (not shown).

Therefore, the major consistent disease specific difference on a cell population level

was the lack of *CXCL13*+ fibroblasts in DLBCL-LT, suggesting a potentially critical

role in disease-specific B cell recruitment for these cells.

Discussion

By using scRNA-seq analyses of primary cutaneous B-cell disorders, we were able to detect disease-specific features, primarily on the level of expanded B-cell clones. Transcriptomic properties of other cells, including T cells and stromal cells, were surprisingly homogeneous, without consistent differences across disease groups. In line with DLBCL-LT's aggressive clinical behavior, DLBCL-LT clones consisted of highly aberrant B cells, in contrast to all other conditions investigated, which largely showed cellular phenotypes mimicking physiological cell populations. Specifically, the B-cell infiltrate in FCL was dominated by an expanded clone of relatively homogeneous GC B cells. By contrast, MZLPD clones spanned multiple B-cell phenotypes, indicating that these cells follow a physiological B-cell differentiation path towards end-differentiated plasma cell-like B cells that no longer proliferate. This observation supports the recently suggested re-classification of IgG class-switched marginal zone lymphoma as a lymphoproliferative disorder,[2] except for a small subset of IgM+/non-canonically class-switched MZLPD, which might still be regarded as a lymphoma due to frequent extracutaneous involvement.[28,29,38] In line, we found a single *IGHM+* MZLPD patient to show aberrant phenotypic features that were absent in class-switched MZLPD. Nevertheless, expanded clones of MZLPD could phenotypically not be differentiated from polyclonal B cells, further suggesting their close correlation with physiological phenotypes.[28,29,38-41] This might explain why many studies struggled to identify the putatively malignant clone in MZLPD,[30] which can make the differentiation from so-called pseudolymphomas particularly difficult.[19] For this reason, there is an ongoing debate whether some pseudolymphomas might merely represent lymphomas that have not yet been correctly diagnosed due to lack of sensitivity of routine diagnostic methods.[42] However, we consistently found that

pseudolymphomas harbored a clearly polyclonal B-cell pattern, in contrast to

MZLPD. Nevertheless, longitudinal studies will be necessary to investigate whether

these patients will eventually develop overt lymphomas, or whether they retain their

polyclonal, non-malignant characteristics.

The fact that expanded clones in FCL and MZLPD samples did not differ significantly

from physiological, polyclonal B cells might also suggest a generally physiological

mechanism of recruitment of these cells to the skin. Interestingly, we detected a

distinct population of *CXCL13*+ fibroblasts in FCL, MZLPD, and pseudolymphomas,

but not in DLBCL-LT or healthy control skin. By expressing this prominent B-cell

attracting chemokine, these fibroblasts might have a role in chemotaxis of the

observed B cell infiltrates in pseudolymphomas and indolent lymphoma groups,[34-36]

but not DCBCL-LT. In line, DLBCL-LT showed a much less diverse B-cell infiltrate

than pseudolymphomas or MZLPD and was rather dominated by monomorphous B-

cell populations. Taken together, this investigation is the first comprehensive

molecular map of primary B-cell lymphoproliferative disorders in humans, which

might help guide future treatment approaches for these skin conditions.

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Authorship contributions

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JG received personal fees from AbbVie and Novartis. CJ has received personal fees

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630 **Tables**

Subject ID		Age	Sex	Race	Histopathological diagnosis	Location	Disease duration (years)	Ongoing treament	Previous treamtents	Disease stage
112		51	F	White	Healthy control	Trunk	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
115		48	M	White	Healthy control	Trunk	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
116		56	F	White	Healthy control	Trunk	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
121		44	F	White	Healthy control	Trunk	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
92		72	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Upper arm	8 years	None	Rituximab	T1bN0M0
104		33	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Trunk	3 years	None	Clarithromycin	T1bN0M0
110		47	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Trunk	13 years	None	Rituximab	T3aN0M0
129		38	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Shoulder	14 years	None	Clarithromycin, surgery	T3aN0M0
146		47	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Upper arm	1 year	None	Surgery	T1aN0M0
172		72	W	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Lower thigh	2 years	None	Surgery, radiotherapy	T1bN0M0
WB3		60	M	White	Primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma/lymphoproliferative disorder	Neck	1 year	None	None	T1bN0M0
99 + 159		30	M	White	Nodular cutaneous pseudolymphoma	Upper arms	1 year	None	None	T3aN0M0
134A		73	M	White	Nodular cutaneous pseudolymphoma	Scalp	11 years	None	Rituximab	T2cN0M0
166		47	F	White	Nodular cutaneous pseudolymphoma	Face	16 years	None	Glucocorticosteroids, hydroxychloroquine, apremilast	T2cN0M0
198		77	M	White	Primary cutaneous follicle center lymphoma	Scalp	1 year	None	None	T2aN0M0
206		74	M	White	Primary cutaneous diffuse large cell lymphoma, leg type	Lower leg	<1 year	None	None	T2bN0M0
117 + 207		78	F	White	Primary cutaneous diffuse large cell lymphoma, leg type	Forearm and lower leg	<1 year	None	Radiotherapy, R-CHOP	T3aN0M0

631 **Table 1.** Patient baseline characteristics at time of sampling.

 Figure Legends

Figure 1. Fig. 1: scRNA-seq map of B-cell lymphoma, pseudolymphoma and

healthy control samples. (A) UMAP of unsupervised clustering of 178,647 cells

integrated from primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoproliferative disorder

(MZLPD, n=7 patients), primary cutaneous follicle center lymphoma (FCL, n=1

patient), primary cutaneous diffuse large B-cell lymphoma leg-type (DLBCL-LT, n=3

biopsies from 2 patients), in comparison to patients with idiopathic nodular B-cell

pseudolymphoma (PSEUDO, n=4 biopsies from 3 patients) and healthy control

subjects (NHS, n=4 individuals) according to similarity of transcriptome, resulting in

14 different color-coded clusters. **(B)** Feature plots of individual patient groups. **(C)**

Dot plots of cell clusters displaying average gene expression (red color) and

frequency (circle size) of selected canonical cell type markers. **(D)** Relative

distribution of major cell types across disease groups. **(E)** Sub-clustering of the entire

B-cell population. **(F)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying average gene expression

(red color) and frequency (circle size) of selected canonical cell type markers of the

subclustered B-cell population. **(G)** Feature plot of the B-cell population colored

according to the disease group. **(H)** Feature plot displaying the top abundant B-cell

clone of each sample, color coded for each disease group. UMAP: Uniform Manifold

Approximation and Projection.

Figure 2. Distribution and quantification of the single most abundant clone

within individual MZLPD and pseudolymphoma samples. (A-B) Feature plots of

(A) pseudolymphoma and (B) MZLPD samples clustered individually, without sample

integration. Red: cells with the single most abundant BCR from each sample; single

point mutations of the BCR sequence were considered to originate from the same

clone; blue: cells with polyclonal BCR; grey: no BCR detected. **(C)** Absolute numbers

of the single most abundant clone per sample and group, horizontal line denotes

median. **(D)** Absolute numbers of the first 10 most abundant clones per denoted

sample. UMAP: Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection. BCR: B-cell

receptor.

Figure 3. Subclustering of B cells from MZLPD, pseudolymphoma and NHS

samples. (A) UMAP of unsupervised sub-clustering of 51,723 cells integrated from

initial B-cell clusters of primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma (MZL, n=7),

pseudolymphoma (n=4) and healthy control individuals (n=4) according to similarity

of transcriptome, resulting in 11 different color-coded clusters. **(B)** Dot plots of cell

clusters displaying average gene expression (red color) and frequency (circle size) of

selected canonical cell type markers. **(C)** Combined UMAP of cell clusters from

MZLPD samples colored according to clonality of BCR. Red: cells with most

abundant monoclonal BCR from each sample; blue: cells with polyclonal BCR; grey:

no BCR detected. **(D)** Absolute numbers of clonally expanded B cells (red) and

polyclonal B cells (blue) per cell cluster of MZLPD samples. **(E)** Feature plots of cell

clusters colored according to clonality of BCR, showing individual MZLPD samples.

(F) Dot plots displaying average gene expression (red color) and frequency (circle

size) of selected immunoglobulin markers within the top abundant clone of each

MZLPD sample. **(G)** Feature plots of sample #92 showing expression distribution for

selected marker genes. Expression levels for each cell are color-coded and overlaid

onto UMAP plots. Red color intensity represents the respective level of expression.

(H) Number of DEGs within each cluster, comparing clonally expanded with

polyclonal B cells from MZLPD samples. Genes that were expressed in at least two

samples per group and had an adjusted p value ≤0.01 and an absolute average log2

fold-change ≥0.8 were considered significantly regulated. **(I)** Monocle3 pseudotime

trajectory within all B cell subclusters. **(J)** Normalized expression of selected

canonical B cell developmental genes within top expanded clones of MZLPD

samples according to pseudotime buckets from 1.99 to 12.4; cells are color-coded

according to clustering. **(K)** Positioning of individual cells of the most abundant clone

for MZLPD samples according to the pseudotime trajectory; cells are color-coded

according to clustering. UMAP: Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection.

BCR: B-cell receptor.

Figure 4. Follicle center lymphoma (FCL) shows germinal center clustering of

the expanded clone. (A) UMAP of unsupervised clustering of 14,107 cells from a

follicle center lymphoma sample according to similarity of transcriptome resulting in

12 different color-coded clusters. **(B)** Combined UMAP of cells colored according to

clonality of BCR. Red: cells from the top expanded BCR; blue: cells with polyclonal

BCR; grey: no BCR detected. **(C)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying average gene

expression (red color) and frequency (circle size) of selected canonical cell type

markers. **(D)** UMAP of unsupervised clustering of 11,110 cells from the P12 follicle

center lymphoma sample from Ramelyte et al.[30] **(E)** UMAP of cells from sample P12

with cells colored according to the clonality of the BCR. **(F)** Dot plots of canonical

markers for the identified clusters from sample P12. **(G)** Absolute number of BCR

positive cells from sample P12 per cell type, split by cells from the dominant clone

and the remaining polyclonal infiltrate.

Figure 5. Diffuse large B cell lymphoma samples show aberrant B cell

phenotypes. (A) UMAP of unsupervised clustering of 13,387 cells integrated from 3

samples of diffuse large B-cell lymphoma, leg type, resulting in 18 different color-

coded clusters. **(B)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying average gene expression (red

color) and frequency (circle size) of selected canonical cell type markers. **(C)**

Combined UMAP of cell clusters colored for the most abundant BCR+ clone per

sample. **(D)** Feature plots of expression distribution for selected marker genes.

Expression levels for each cell are color-coded and overlaid onto UMAP plots. Red

color intensity represents the respective level of expression. **(E)** Absolute numbers of

clonally expanded B cells (red, yellow, purple) and polyclonal B cells (blue) per B-cell

cluster and sample. **(F)** Percentages of expanded clones (red) vs the polyclonal B-

cell infiltrate (blue) for each depicted sample.

Figure 6. Multicolor immunofluorescence assessment of diversity of B-cell

subpopulations in pseudolymphoma, MZLPD, and DLBCL-LT samples. (A)

Relative number of B-cell phenotypes per sample based on multicolor

immunofluorescence quantification. **(B)** Representative pictures of multicolor

immunohistochemistry staining of pseudolymphoma, MZLPD and DLBCL-LT

samples. **(C)** Shannon entropy per sample to estimate the diversity of the cell

compositions between the disease groups. DLBCL-LT samples showed a

significantly reduced diversity compared to pseudolymphoma and MZLPD.

Figure 7. *CXCL13*+ **fibroblasts are absent in DLBCL-LT samples. (A)** UMAP of

unsupervised clustering of the 35,457 non-lymphoid cells integrated from all samples

resulting in 19 different color-coded clusters. **(B)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying

average gene expression (red color) and frequency (circle size) of selected

canonical cell type markers. **(C)** Combined UMAP of cell clusters split by sample

group. **(D)** Absolute numbers of *CXCL13*+ fibroblasts for all disease groups. **(E)**

Absolute numbers of the total fibroblast population for all disease groups. Upper and

lower hinges correspond to the first and third quartiles. Upper and lower whiskers

extend to the largest value within a maximum of 1.5 times the inter-quartile range.

Colored points represent individual values. **(F-G)** Numbers of differentially expressed

genes (F) downregulated or (G) upregulated per disease group within the depicted

cluster.

Single-cell RNA sequencing analyses of primary cutaneous B-cell disorders

reveal distinct molecular patterns consistent with clinical behavior

Supplementary Figure Legends

Figure S1. Published data of a DLBCL-LT sample confirms aberrant B-cell

phenotypes within the malignant clone. (A) UMAP embedding of B cells extracted

from sample P11 from Ramelyte et al. Cells are colored based on the BCR data with

clonally expanded cells in red, polyclonal cells in green, and cells without detectable

BCR in grey. **(B)** UMAP embedding with cells colored based on the clustering results

and B cell phenotypes. **(C)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying average gene

expression (red color) and frequency (circle size) of selected canonical cell type

markers. **(D)** UMAP embedding with cells colored based on the normalized

expression of *IGHD, CD38, MKI67*, and *CD27*.

Figure S2. T cell, NK and ILC populations across patient groups. (A) UMAP of

unsupervised clustering of the 74,493 T lymphoid cells integrated from all samples,

resulting in 10 different color-coded clusters. **(B)** Dot plots of cell clusters displaying

average gene expression (red color) and frequency (circle size) of selected

canonical cell type markers. **(C)** Combined UMAP of cell clusters split by sample

group. **(D)** UMAP embedding with cells color coded based on TCR sequencing. Red

points represent the most frequent clone, blue points represent polyclonal cells, and

grey points represent cells with missing TCR information.

Figure S3. Absolute cell numbers of non-lymphoid cells per disease group. Upper

and lower hinges correspond to the first and third quartiles. Upper and lower

whiskers extend to the largest value within a maximum of 1.5 time the inter-quartile

range. Values outside this range are shown as individual points. Colored points

represent individual values.

Supplementary Table Legends

Table S1. Absolute numbers of cells per sample and cell type, corresponding to

Figure 1A.

Table S2. Absolute numbers of B-cell subtypes from MZLPD, pseudolymphomas,

and NHS per sample and subtype, corresponding to Figure 3A.

Table S3. Absolute numbers of clonally expanded B cells from MZLPD samples per

B-cell subtype, corresponding to Figure 3C.

Table S4. Differentially expressed genes per B-cell subtype comparing clonally

expanded with polyclonal B cells from MZLPD samples, corresponding to Figure 3H.

Genes that were expressed in at least two samples per group and had an adjusted p

value ≤0.01 and an absolute average log2 fold-change ≥0.8 were considered

significantly regulated.

Table S5. Cluster marker genes of individual T-cell/NK/ILC populations,

corresponding to Figure S2.

Table S6. Differentially expressed genes per T-cell/NK/ILC subtype comparing

sample groups, corresponding to Figure S2.

Table S7. Cluster marker genes of individual non-lymphoid populations,

corresponding to Figure 7.

Table S8. Differentially expressed genes per non-lymphoid cell subtype comparing

sample groups, corresponding to Figure 7.

Figure 1

Figure 2

(A)

Pseudolymphoma

99

159

134A

166

UMAP 2

UMAP 1

- IGH:CARVPHSRCFDPW
  IGK:CQQTYTHITF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGH:CARIIDFSYASATYSPLPPTYYFDYW
  IGH:CARIIDFSYGSATYSPLPPTYYFDYW
  IGL:CQSLNSSAVVF
  IGL:CQSLNNSAVVF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGK:CQAGITF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGL:CATWDSSLSGVVF
- Polyclonal
- Other

(B)

Marginal zone lymphoproliferative disorder

110

129

92

104

- IGH:CARVAGDLAVTEMRPYSYYYAMDVW
  IGL:CSFAGSYTDYVF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGH:CATDLITMIQGVMRYYNGLDVW
  IGK:CQQGYSPPPSF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGH:CAREIVVPPGAHYFYYAMDVW
  IGL:CGSWDDALNGRVF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGH:CARGGDSSGYDRNAFDLW
  IGK:CQQYADKPGTF
- Polyclonal
- Other

146

172

WB3

(C)

Clone Size

cells

- IGH:CALGDCISTSCFMDVW
  IGH:CAVGDCISTSCFMDVW
  IGL:CQVWDADSDHHWVF
  IGL:CQVWDADTDHHWVF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGL:CQAWDSNTVAF
- Polyclonal
- Other

- IGL:CGIWNDSLNLHIF
  IGL:CGIWNDSLNLHVF
  IGL:CGTWNDTLNLHVF
  IGL:CGTWNDSLNLHVF
  IGL:CGTWNDSLNLHMF
- Polyclonal
- Other

MZL   Pseudo

Disease
- MZL
- Pseudo

(D)

| MZLPD 104 | MZLPD 110 | MZLPD 129 | MZLPD 146 | MZLPD 172 | MZLPD 92 | MZLPD WB3 | PSEUDO 134A | PSEUDO 159 | PSEUDO 166 | PSEUDO 99 |

cells

Figure 3

Figure 4

(A) Follicle center lymphoma 1

(B)

Top clone
Polyclonal
Other

(C)

(D) Follicle center lymphoma 2

(E)

Top clone
Polyclonal
Other

(F)

(G)

Clone P12

Polyclonal

BCR Assignment
Clone P12
Polyclonal

Figure 5

Figure 6

(A)

Figure 6 (A): Stacked bar chart showing Distribution of lymphocytes across three groups (PSEUDO, MZLPD, DLBCL−LT) with cell type legend: naive-like B cell, Memory-like B cells, GC-like B cells, Plasmacell-like B cells, T cell.

(B)

PSEUDO   DLBCL−LT   MZLPD

CD27
CD5
CD138
CD38
CD19
CD20

(C)

Boxplot of Shannon Entropy across PSEUDO, MZLPD, DLBCL−LT.

Figure 7

Figure S1

Figure S2

(A) T-cell subclusters

UMAP 2 — UMAP 1

prol T
ILC
NK
NKT
CCL4+ CD8
CD8
CD4
exh CD4
activated T
Foxp3+ Treg

(B) CD3D   CD8A   CD4   MKI67

NKG7   KLRD1   KLRB1   FOXP3

(C) DLBCL-LT   FCL   MZLPD   NHS   PSEUDO

(D) DLBCL-LT   FCL   MZLPD   NHS   PSEUDO

● Polyclonal TCR
● Top TCR clone
● Other

Figure S3