Necrosis drives susceptibility to *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* in POLG mtDNA mutator

mice

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ABSTRACT

The genetic and molecular determinants that underlie the heterogeneity of *Mycobacte-*

rium tuberculosis (Mtb) infection outcomes in humans are poorly understood. Multiple

lines of evidence demonstrate that mitochondrial dysfunction can exacerbate mycobac-

terial disease severity and mutations in some mitochondrial genes confer susceptibility

to mycobacterial infection in humans. Here, we report that mutations in mitochondria

DNA (mtDNA) polymerase gamma (POLG) potentiate susceptibility to Mtb infection in

mice. POLG mutator mtDNA mice fail to mount a protective innate immune response at

an early infection timepoint, evidenced by high bacterial burdens, reduced M1 macro-

phages, and excessive neutrophil infiltration in the lungs. Immunohistochemistry reveals

signs of enhanced necrosis in the lungs of Mtb-infected POLG mice and POLG mutator

macrophages are hyper-susceptible to extrinsic triggers of necroptosis *ex vivo*. By as-

signing a role for mtDNA mutations in driving necrosis during Mtb infection, this work

further highlights the requirement for mitochondrial homeostasis in mounting balanced

immune responses to Mtb.

INTRODUCTION

Defects in mitochondria are associated with a variety of human diseases and metabolic disorders (1). Inherited mitochondrial diseases, caused by mutations harbored in the mitochondrial genome (mtDNA) or in nuclear-encoded mitochondrial genes, lead to devastating neurodegenerative and cardiovascular disorders (2). They are also frequently associated with chronic inflammation and autoimmunity. Type I interferonopathies, for example, are often caused by mutations that result in aberrant release of mitochondrial nucleic acids and chronic engagement of cytosolic nucleic acid sensing (3-5). Consistent with important links between mitochondrial health and immune function, patients with mitochondrial mutations are prone to frequent viral and bacterial infections that are often more severe (6-7). They can also suffer from systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS) caused by hyper-inflammation in the absence of infection (8). Furthermore, human SNPs in mitochondrial genes have shown to confer susceptibility to several bacterial pathogens, including *Salmonella typhi* (9), *Listeria monocytogenes* (10), and *Mycobacterium leprae* (11). Despite clear connections between mitochondria and immunity, the mechanistic contributions of specific mitochondrial-associated mutations in driving susceptibility to infection remains unclear.

Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb) is the causative agent of tuberculosis, an ancient disease that remains the number one infectious disease killer worldwide (12). The success of Mtb is driven in large part by its ability to manipulate and establish a replicative niche in host innate immune cells, primarily macrophages (13). A key hub in the Mtb-macrophage host-pathogen interface are mitochondria, which control cellular energetics, lipid metabolism, and the generation of reactive oxygen species, as well as gatekeep entry into programmed cell death (14). While the precise molecular determinants of TB disease severity remain elusive, decades of research have identified a role for cell death in dictating TB disease outcomes. Apoptosis, or "immunologically silent" cell death correlates with protection, whereas necrotic forms of cell death are associated with mycobacterial cell-to-cell spread and immunopathology (15). Consequently, TB has evolved a variety of strategies to inhibit apoptosis while promoting necrosis (16).

Several studies have mechanistically shown how distinct flavors of necrosis (e.g. inflam-

masome-mediated pyroptosis, RIPK-dependent necroptosis, ferroptosis) promote Mtb

pathogenesis (17-21). We and others have begun to link cell death during Mtb infection

with disruptions in mitochondrial homeostasis (14, 22-23). We recently reported that

mutations in the mitochondrial-associated protein leucine-rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2)

can promote necroptosis during Mtb infection by rendering mitochondrial membranes

susceptible to damage by the pore-forming protein gasdermin D, resulting in the release

of mitochondrial ROS (23). Building on this finding, we set out to determine how other

mitochondrial mutations alter Mtb infection outcomes.

Here, we investigate how Mtb infection proceeds in a common model of mitochondrial

dysfunction, the POLG mtDNA mutator mouse. These knock-in mice contain a D257A

substitution in the proofreading exonuclease domain that results in accumulation of

mtDNA mutations as the mice age (24). Although this mouse model does not harbor a

specific human disease-associated mutation, it presents with symptoms that parallel

many of the clinical manifestations seen in mitochondrial disease patients, such as car-

diomyopathy, progressive hearing loss, and anemia (25). These mice also have exacer-

bated inflammatory responses and are susceptible to septic shock, which correlates

with clinical symptoms seen in mitochondrial disease patients (3). Here, we report that

POLG mtDNA mutator mice display enhanced susceptibility to Mtb infection evidenced

by higher bacterial burdens, excessive neutrophil infiltration in the lung, and enhanced

necrosis. These findings argue that mtDNA fidelity is required to maintain balanced cell

death outcomes during Mtb infection.

RESULTS

POLG mutator mice harbor higher Mtb bacterial burdens

To better understand how mitochondrial-associated gene mutations drive Mtb infection outcomes, we chose to study the POLG mutator mouse model (B6.129S7(Cg)-Pol-g[tm1Prol]/J). Because they harbor a D257A substitution in the proofreader exonuclease domain of mtDNA polymerase gamma, these mice accumulate mtDNA mutations (24). They have been a useful tool for studying mitochondrial dysfunction in aging (24, 26), but only a few studies have used them to study infection (27). Using a low-dose aerosol model, which administers 100-200 Mtb bacilli into the lungs of each animal, we infected WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice at approximately 3 months of age (**Figure 1A**). We chose to infect young mice to avoid variability in mtDNA instability and the potential for inflammation-associated pathology in our cohort (*Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice experience premature aging and early death (24, 26, 28)). At 21 days post-infection, we sacrificed mice, homogenized a portion of the lungs, spleen, and liver and enumerated Mtb col-ony-forming units (CFUs) to measure bacterial burden. We observed a significant in-crease (half-log) in Mtb recovered from the lungs of *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice compared to WT mice (**Figure 1B**). *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice were also more permissive to Mtb dis-semination, as bacterial burdens were higher in the spleens and livers as well (**Figure 1C-D**). These findings demonstrate that mice experiencing POLG-dependent mitochon-drial dysfunction cannot properly control Mtb replication and spread *in vivo*.

POLG mutator mice lungs exhibit increased neutrophils and fewer M1 macro-phages during Mtb infection

Previous studies have linked POLG-related mitochondria dysfunction to elevated inflam-matory responses (e.g. type I IFN) following exposure to pattern recognition receptor (PRR) agonists such as LPS and dsDNA (3). To grossly examine the inflammatory state of the lungs in Mtb-infected *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice, we evaluated lung tissues via he-matoxylin and eosin (H&E) staining. As is characteristic of Mtb infection, we observed histiocytic inflammation (aggregation of monocyte- and macrophage-derived cells) in the lungs of both genotypes (**Figure 2A-B, S2A-B**). Curiously, despite harboring higher bacterial loads, *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice displayed less histiocytic lung inflammation at

day 21 post-infection compared to WT (**Figure 2C,** black outline in H&E images). This suggests that $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice fail to effectively recruit one or more types of immune cells into infected regions of the lung. In contrast, we found that $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice lungs were more prone to neutrophil cluster formation, a phenomenon associated with NET release and pathogen clearance (28,29) (**Figure 2D,** white outline in H&E images). These findings argue that an altered immune cell landscape dominates the lungs of $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice during Mtb infection.

To further define innate immune cell populations in the lungs of $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice during Mtb infection, we isolated single cell suspensions and used flow cytometry to identify key cell types. Overall, we measured similar numbers of hematopoietic cells (CD45$^+$) in the lungs of Mtb-infected $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator and WT mice (**Figure 2SC**). However, the percentage of total monocytes, in particular classical Ly6C$^+$ CD43$^-$ monocytes, was higher in $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice (**Figure S2D-F and 2E**). Previous studies have correlated CD43 with control of Mtb in macrophages, and in mice, the absence of CD43 leads to increased bacterial load and defective granuloma formation (30). We did not observe major differences in the percentage of monocyte-derived macrophages (CD45$^+$ CD11b$^+$ Ly6C$^-$ SSC^{hi}) (**Figure 2SG**), dendritic cells (CD45$^+$ CD11b$^+$ CD11c$^+$) (**Figure 2SH**), or alveolar macrophages (CD45$^+$ CD11b$^{low/neg}$ CD11c$^+$ CD170$^+$) (**Figure 2SI**).

Consistent with the lower levels of histiocytic inflammation (**Figure 2C**), we measured fewer M1 macrophages (CD86$^+$ macrophages) in Mtb-infected $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice (**Figure 2F**). This was a concomitant with increased percentage of M0 (CD86$^-$ CD206$^-$) macrophages (**Figure 2G**), supportive of a macrophage polarization defect in $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice. M2 (CD86$^-$ CD206$^+$) macrophages were similar between the two genotypes (**Figure 2SJ**). Importantly, pro-inflammatory M1 macrophages play an important role in the early control of Mtb by promoting granuloma formation, triggering T cell infiltration, and upregulating antimicrobial molecules like nitric oxide (31-33). Concomitant with fewer M1 macrophages, we observed a significant increase in the recruitment of neutrophils (CD45$^+$ C220$^-$ CD11b$^+$ Ly6G$^+$) in $Polg^{D257A}$ mice lungs (**Figure 2H**).

166 Enhanced neutrophil recruitment has been previously shown in animal models and tu-
167 berculosis patients to correlate with tissue damage and poor Mtb infection outcomes
168 (34-36). Collectively, these results suggest that a combination of defective M1 macro-
169 phage polarization, low expression of CD43 on monocytes, and/or enhanced neutrophil
170 infiltration result in higher Mtb bacterial burdens in *Polg^{D257A}* mice.

Decreased M1 macrophage responses drive susceptibility to Mtb infection in
POLG mutator mice
Having observed changes in the numbers and types of cells that infiltrate *Polg^{D257A}*
lungs, we next wanted to compare the overall cytokine milieu of *Polg^{D257A}* and WT lungs
during Mtb infection. Consistent with fewer M1 macrophages, key pro-inflammatory and
antimicrobial transcripts including *Tnfa*, *Nos2, Ifng, Nlrp3* were reduced in *Polg^{D257A}* mu-
tator mice lungs *(***Figure 3A-D)**. M1 macrophage chemokine transcripts, *Cxcl9* and
Cxcl10, were also reduced in *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice lungs (**Figure 3E-F**). *Polg^{D257A}* mu-
tator mice did not show differences in ISG transcripts (**Figure 5SC-E**). These data pro-
vide additional evidence that *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice fail to mount a sustained inflamma-
tory response sufficient to control Mtb replication and dissemination.

Necrotic debris dominates POLG mutator mouse lungs during Mtb infection
Having seen altered immune cell infiltration and inflammatory transcript abundance in
Mtb-infected *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice, we next looked more carefully at immunopathology
in the lungs.
We and others have previously associated necrotic debris, characterized by neutrophil
clusters with granular debris, with poor tuberculosis outcomes in mice (23, 37). Accord-
ingly, we observed increased clusters of necrotic debris in Mtb-infected *Polg^{D257A}* muta-
tor mice lungs compared to WT (**Figure 4A-C, white outline areas**). Because necrosis
is associated with exuberant Mtb growth and virulence (19, 38-39), we next used acid-
fast staining to look for Mtb bacilli in areas of consolidated inflammatory infiltrates. In ar-
eas of neutrophil clusters and necrotic debris, we qualitatively observed more clumps of
Mtb bacilli in *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice lungs (**Figure 5A-B, black arrowheads**). We also
denoted instances of growth characteristic of cording, a virulence-related form of Mtb

growth associated with necrosis, specifically in the lungs of *Polg*[D257A] mutator mice (**Figure 5B, white arrowheads**) (19, 38-39). These findings suggest that areas of necrotic debris that dominate *Polg*[D257A] mutator mice lungs correlate with a failure to restrict Mtb growth.

Polg[D257A] macrophages are prone to necrotic death and cell death in response to Mtb infection

To better understand the molecular mechanisms underlying the susceptibility of *Polg*[D257A] mutator, we asked if their propensity to accumulate necrotic debris was due entirely to the inflammatory milieu of the lung, or if there was a cell-intrinsic propensity for *Polg*[D257A] macrophages to undergo necrosis. To test this, we isolated bone marrow and differentiated macrophages from WT and *Polg*[D257A] mutator mice at either 6 or 12 months of age. These ages represent the typical "onset" and "late" stages of mitochondrial disease in *Polg*[D257A] mutator mice as they relate to human patients (24, 40). We first infected WT and *Polg*[D257A] BMDMs from 6-month-old mice with Mtb (MOI=5) and tracked cell death kinetics using propidium iodide (PI). After 24h of infection, *Polg*[D257A] macrophages underwent higher Mtb-induced cell death compared to WT controls (**Figure 6A**). Because Mtb infection triggers several cell death pathways in macrophages (apoptosis (41), ferroptosis (21), and inflammasome-mediated pyroptosis (17-18)) and PI cannot distinguish between these forms of cell death, we next employed canonical cell death triggers to gain additional insight into the type of cell death that is enhanced in *Polg*[D257A] BMDMs. To begin, we treated WT and *Polg*[D257A] BMDMs from 6-month-old mice with the apoptosis inducer staurosporine, a protein kinase inhibitor that triggers apoptosis via aberrant caspase activation. In response to a low dose of staurosporine (100 nm), we observed slightly more propidium iodide incorporation in *Polg*[D257A] BMDMs (**Figure 6B**). These findings are consistent with previous work that found increased apoptotic markers associated with accelerated aging in POLG mutator mice (24). Next, to induce necroptosis, we treated WT and *Polg*[D257A] BMDMs with recombinant murine TNFα in combination with a SMAC mimetic and pan-caspase inhibitor to initiate RIPK1/RIPK3/MLKL-dependent necroptosis (42). *Polg*[D257A] macrophages isolated from 6-month-old mice were highly susceptible to necroptosis (**Figure 6C**) and this

phenotype was enhanced in *Polg^D257A* BMDMs from 12-month-old mice (**Figure 6D**).

These findings suggest that *Polg^D257A* macrophages are more sensitized to necrotic

forms of cell death, which may account for enhanced necrosis and Mtb dissemination *in*

vivo.

Discussion

Because mitochondrial-associated mutations can increase the risk of life-threatening in-

fections, there is a critical need to understand how altered mitochondrial homeostasis

affects the immune response to pathogens. Here, we describe how a mutation in mito-

chondrial POLG, which results in the accumulation of mtDNA mutations and mtDNA in-

stability, confers susceptibility to Mtb infection by enhancing necrosis. We demonstrate

that in response to Mtb, *Polg^D257A* mutator mice fail to mount protective immune re-

sponses in the lung. We propose this stems in large part from the propensity of

Polg^D257A macrophages to preferentially undergo necrosis over other forms of pro-

grammed cell death when infected with Mtb. Enhanced necrosis is a likely driver for the

pro-bacterial cellular immune milieu (high neutrophils, low M1 macrophages) we ob-

serve in *Polg^D257A* mutator mice. It may also directly support high levels of Mtb growth in

Polg^D257A lungs. Studies from the Ramakrishnan lab have repeatedly linked necrosis to

extracellular mycobacterial cording and poor disease outcomes in the zebrafish model

(43,44). In human macrophages, Mtb replication is enhanced in cells undergoing late

stages of necrosis that exhibit evidence of plasma membrane damage (45). Mtb has

also been shown to thrive in macrophages that have phagocytosed Mtb-infected PMNs

that died via necrosis (38). Although we were unable to decisively assess whether Mtb

bacilli in *Polg^D257A* lungs were extracellular due to limitations of H&E and AFB staining,

our data convincingly correlate enhanced necrosis in *Polg^D257A* mutator mice with high

Mtb bacterial burdens.

Over the course of these studies, we were surprised to find that several pro-inflamma-

tory cytokines and chemokines are less abundant in *Polg^D257A* mutator mice, despite

their harboring more bacteria (**Figure 3 and S3**). It is possible that the accumulation of

mtDNA mutations and chronic stimulation of pattern recognition receptors by

mitochondrial DAMPs render $Polg^{D257A}$ immune cells refractory to immune signaling

upon pathogen sensing (46). We previously reported a phenotype like this in LRRK2 KO

macrophages, which have high basal type I IFN expression and are unable to induce

ISG expression in response Mtb (47). It is also possible that the failure of $Polg^{D257A}$ mu-

tator mice to upregulate pro-inflammatory cytokines stems from rewiring of cellular me-

tabolism and mitochondrial OXPHOS, which is uniquely regulated in Mtb-infected mac-

rophages (48,49). Notably, $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice do not always fail to induce type I

IFN in response to bacterial pathogens. Recent work from the West lab shows that 48h

post-intratracheal instillation of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* strain O1 (PAO1), $Polg^{D257A}$

mutator mice exhibit elevated levels of ISGs in the lung and BAL fluid (27). It is possible

that upon initial encounter with Mtb, $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice similarly hyperinduce ISGs

and pro-inflammatory cytokines and that we are reporting on a different, chronic re-

sponse 21 days post-infection. However, it is also possible that the $Polg^{D257A}$ mutation

responds to and elicits an immune milieu to different pathogens in different ways. In-

deed, we know that *Pseudomonas* and Mtb initially elicit type I IFN expression through

distinct signaling pathways (TLR4/TRIF (50) and cGAS (51), respectively) and likely in-

terface with mitochondria in distinct ways as well. Investigations of Mtb-infected

$Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice at additional early time points may help us distinguish between

these two potential explanations.

These studies were motivated, in part, by several genome wide association studies

(GWAS) that identified SNPs in mitochondrial genes that confer susceptibility to myco-

bacterial infection in humans. Most of these studies looked at patients with leprosy,

which is caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, a close cousin of Mtb. Mutations in genes

like *Park2*, which encodes the mitophagy factor Parkin (52,53), *Tfam*, which encodes a

histone-like protein of the mitochondrial genome (11), as well as *Polg* (11) have been

linked to leprosy susceptibility or severity of disease. The Mtb phenotype we report is

consistent with GWAS that identified a human SNP in POLG associated with multibacil-

lary leprosy—a form of the disease characterized by high bacterial loads in lesions (11).

Collectively, our study bolsters confidence in these GWAS and provides new insight into

the potential mitochondria-associated mechanisms driving altered susceptibility to my-

cobacterial disease.

Limitations of the study: One drawback of the $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mouse model is that the

mice accumulate mutations throughout the entire mtDNA genome over time (54). Thus,

one cannot ascribe pathological phenotypes to a specific defect in a single mitochon-

drial gene. Likewise, although human patients with mutations in the exonuclease "proof-

reading" domain of POLG have been linked to diseases such as Alpers and Leigh syn-

drome (55, 56), $Polg^{D257A}$ mutator mice do not mirror a specific model of mitochondria

diseases. Given these caveats, future investigations may wish to probe Mtb pathogene-

sis in mice that more accurately model mitochondrial mutations in humans. Regardless,

our study adds to a growing literature arguing that mitochondrial health is required to

generate protective immune responses to Mtb. Accordingly, we propose that disruption

to mitochondrial homeostasis, via mutation, metabolic disease, stress, etc. plays a criti-

cal role in dictating the spectrum of tuberculosis disease in humans.

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

MATERIALS and METHODS

Mouse husbandry and strains

POLG^{D257A/D257A} C57BL/6J mutator mice were purchased from the Jackson laboratory. *POLG^{D257A/+}* breeder pairs used to generate *POLG^{+/+}* and *POLG^{D257A/D257A}* experimental mice were obtained from male *POLG^{D257A/+}* to female C57BL/6J crosses. All mice used in experiments were compared to age- and sex- matched controls and fed 4% standard chow. Littermate controls were used in all experiments. For *ex vivo* BMDM experiments, male mice 6-month and 12-month of age were used. For *in vivo* Mtb infections, mice were infected at 12 weeks of age. All animals were housed, bred, and studied at Texas A&M Health Science Center under approved Institutional Care and Use Committee guidelines.

M. tuberculosis

The Erdman strain was used for all *M. tuberculosis* infections. Low passage lab stocks were thawed for each experiment to ensure virulence was preserved. *M. tuberculosis* was cultured in roller bottles at 37°C in Middlebrook 7H9 broth (BD Biosciences) supplemented with 10% OADC (BD Biosciences), 0.5% glycerol (Fisher), and 0.1% Tween-80 (Fisher) or on 7H10 plates. All work with *M. tuberculosis* was performed under Biosafety level 3 containment using procedures approved by the Texas A&M University Institutional Biosafety Committee.

Primary cell culture

Bone marrow derived macrophages (BMDMs) were isolated by flushing mouse femurs and tibias with 10 mL DMEM 1 mM sodium pyruvate. Cell suspensions were centrifuged at 400 rcf for 5 min and responded in BMDM media (DMEM, 20% FBS (MilliporeSigma), 1 mM sodium pyruvate (Lonza), 10% MCSF conditioned media (Watson lab)). Cells were plated on non-TC treated plates and differentiated at 37°C 5% CO_2. On day 3 following plating, cells were fed 50% additional volume with BMDM media. Cells were harvested at day 7 with 1XPBS EDTA (Lonza).

METHOD DETAILS

M. tuberculosis **infection**

For *M. tuberculosis* infections *ex vivo*, low passage Mtb was prepared by growing it to log phase (OD600 0.6-0.8). Bacterial cultures were spun at 58 rcf for 5 min to remove large clumps. The bacteria was then pelleted at 2103 rcf for 5 min and washed with 1XPBS. The wash step was repeated twice. The resuspended bacteria cultures were sonicated at 70% amplitude for 10 sec repeated three times (Branson Ultrasonics Corp.) followed by a low speed spin (58 rcf) to remove remaining clumps. The bacteria were diluted in DMEM (Hyclone) + 10% horse serum (Gibco) for *ex vivo* infections, or 1X PBS for *in vivo* infections. For *ex vivo* infections, plates containing cells and bacteria were spun at 234 rcf for 10 min to synchronize infection. Fresh BMDM media was then added to the cells. See "plate based assays for cell death" for details on measuring cell death kinetics during Mtb infection.

Plate based assays for cell death

BMDMs were plated in 96-well clear bottom plates (Corning) at 2.5×10^4 cells/well in 50 μL of media. Following cell adherence (1 hr), an additional 25 μL was added to each well. The following day, media was removed, and respective agonists were used to initiate various cell death modalities. For cell death assays, 5 μg/ml propidium iodide (PI) (ThermoFisher) was added at the time of adding cell death agonists. Total cell numbers used for normalization were counted on a subset of cells using NucBlue (ThermoFisher) in 1X PBS. Live cell imaging was done using 4X magnification on either a Lionheart plate reader or Cytation 5 (Biotek). Post-run analysis was conducted using Gen5 v3.15 (Biotek) software. For necroptosis induction, cells were activated with 100 ng/ml recombinant murine TNFα (PeproTech), 500 nM SMAC mimetic birinapant (Selleck Chemicals), and 20 μM pan-caspase inhibitor z-VAD-FMK (R&D Systems). Apoptosis was induced with 100 nM stauroporine (Tocris Bioscience).

In vivo **Mtb infections**

All infections were performed using procedures approved by Texas A&M University Institutional Care and Use Committee. The Mtb inoculum was prepared as described

above. Age- and sex-matched mice were infected via inhalation exposure using a Madi-
son chamber (Glas-Col) calibrated to introduce 100-200 CFUs per mouse. For each in-
fection, approximately 3 mice were euthanized immediately, and their lungs were ho-
mogenized and plated to verify an accurate inoculum. Infected mice were housed under
BSL3 containment and monitored daily by lab members and veterinary staff. At the indi-
cated time points, mice were euthanized, and tissue samples were collected. Blood was
collected in serum collection tubes, allowed to clot for 1-2 hrs at RT, and spun at 1000
rpm for 10 min to separate serum. Organs were divided to maximize infection readouts
(CFUs: left lobe lung and 1⁄2 spleen; histology: 2 right lung lobes and 1⁄4 spleen; RNA:
post-caval lobe and 1⁄4 spleen; Flow: right inferior lobe). For histological analysis organs
were fixed for 24 hrs in 10% neutral buffered formalin and moved to ethanol (lung,
spleen). Organs were further processed as described below. For cytokine transcript
analysis, organs were homogenized in Trizol, and RNA was isolated as described be-
low. For CFU enumeration, organs were homogenized in 5 ml PBS + 0.1% Tween-80,
and serial dilutions were plated on 7H10 plates. Colonies were counted after plates
were incubated at 37°C for 3 weeks.

Gene expression analysis by RT-qPCR

For lung tissue, RNA was isolated using Direct-zol RNAeasy kits (Zymogen). cDNA was
synthesized with Bio-Rad iScript Direct Synthesis kits (BioRad) per manufacturer's pro-
tocol. RT-qPCR was performed in triplicate wells using PowerUp SYBR Green Master
Mix. Data was analyzed on a QuantStudio 6 Real-Time PCR System (Applied Biosys-
tems), and quantification of gene expression was performed using a standard curve and
normalized to *Actb* expression levels. qRT-PCR primer sequences can be found in **Ta-**
ble 1.

Flow cytometry

For *ex vivo* analysis of lung cell populations at 21 days post Mtb infection, the right infe-
rior lobe was isolated and washed twice in 1X PBS. The lung was then minced and di-
gested in digestion buffer (70 μg/ml Liberase (Roche) and 50 μg/ml DNASE I (manufac-
turer) in RPMI 1640 (HyClone)) for 30 min at 37°C 5% CO_2. Single suspensions were

achieved by consecutively filtering homogenates through 70 μM and 40μM cell strain-
ers. Live dead staining was performed using Ghost dye 510 (Tonbo). Fc receptors were
blocked using CD16/CD32 monoclonal antibody (eBiosciences). Cells were stained with
antibodies against surface proteins CD11b (BV421, BDBiosciences), CD11c (BV605,
BioLegend), CD45 (BV785, BioLegend), CD170 (eFluor-488, eBiosciences), CD43 (PE,
BD Biosciences), Ly6G (PerCP-Cy5.5, eBiosciences), Ly6C (APC, eBiosciences),
CD206 (APCeFLuor-700 eBiosciences), CD86 (APCeFluor-780, eBiosciences). Cells
were washed 2 times before fixing in 4% PFA for 15 min at RT. Following fixation cells
were washed twice with 1X PBS and incubated overnight at 4°C. Total lung cell counts
were based on live single cells (Ghost low/-) in 200 mL or 1/3 lung lobe. FSC/SSC was
used to differentiate macrophage (CD45$^+$ CD11b$^+$ Ly6G$^-$ CD11c$^{low/-}$ SSC^{hi} FSC^{mid}) and
monocyte ((CD45$^+$ CD11b$^+$ Ly6G$^-$ CD11c$^{low/-}$ SSC^{lo} FSC^{mid}) Flow cytometry was per-
formed on the LSR Fortessa X20, and FCS Express software was used for post-acquisi-
tion analysis.

Histopathology
Mtb infected mouse lungs were fixed with 10% neutral formalin and processed, embed-
ded in paraffin, and cut into 5 μM sections and stained with hematoxylin and eosin
(H&E) or acid-fast stain (AFB) (AML Laboratories). A boarded veterinary pathologist
performed a blinded evaluation of lung sections for inflammation. To quantify the per-
centage of lung fields occupied by histiocytic inflammatory infiltrates, scanned images of
a lobe of each lung were analyzed using QuPath Bioimage analysis v 0.4.3 to determine
the total cross-sectional area of inflammatory foci per total lung cross sectional area.
Additional criteria were evaluated by dividing the digital images into 500 × 500 μm grids
and counting the percentage of squares containing neutrophils, neutrophils arranged in
clusters (> 5 neutrophils in close approximation), or degenerate neutrophils/necrotic cel-
lular debris.

Statistical analysis
All data are representative of two or more independent experiments with n=3 or greater
unless specifically noted in the figure legends. For all quantifications, n represents the

number of biological replicates, either number of wells containing cells or number of

mice. Error bars represent SEM. For *in vitro* assays, statistical significance was deter-

mined using either a two-tailed Student's unpaired T test or two-way ANOVA with

Tukey's post hoc test. For *in vivo* mouse infections, significance was determined using a

Mann-Whitney U test based on the assumption that samples (mice) followed a non-nor-

mal distribution. The specific statistical test used to determine significance for each ex-

periment is listed at the end of the figure legends. All calculations of significance were

determined using GraphPad Prism Version 10 Software expressed as P values. The

threshold for significance was determined by a p value of < 0.05, and annotated as * =

$p<0.05$, ** = $p<0.01$, *** = $p<0.001$, ****=$p<0.0001$. For *in vivo* infection mouse experi-

ments, we estimated that detecting a significant effect requires two samples to differ in

CFUs by $0.7e^{10}$. Using a standard deviation of $0.3e^{10}$ for each population, we calcu-

lated that a minimum size of 5 age- and sex-matched mice per group per time point is

necessary to detect a statistically significant difference by a t-test with alpha (2-sided)

set at 0.05 and a power of 80%. Therefore, we used a minimum of 5 mice per genotype

per time point to assess infection-related readouts.

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660   **Table:**

661   **Table 1: qRT-PCR primer sequences**

Gene	FWD primer	REV primer
Tnfa	ATGGCCTCCCTCTCATCAGT	GTTTGCTACGACGTGGGCTA
Nos2	GCAGCACTTGGATCAGGAA	GAAACTTCGGAAGGGAGCAA
Ifng	CTCTTCCTCATGGCTGTTTCT	CGCTTATGTTGCTGATGG
Nlrp3	AAAATGCCTTGGGAGATCCA	AAGTAAGGCCAGAATTCACC
Cxcl9	TGTGGAGTTCGAGGAACCCT	TGCCTTGGCTGGTGCTG
Cxcl10	CCAAGTGCTGCCGTCATTTTC	GGCTCGCAGGGATGATTTCAA
Il1b	GGTGTGTGACGTTCCCATTA	ATTGAGGTGGAGAGCTTTCAG
Il6	CCAGAGTCCTTCAGAGAGATACA	CCTTCTGTGACTCCAGCTTATC
Il1ra	CAGCTCATTGCTGGGTACTT	CTCAGAGCGGATGAAGGTAAAG
Isg15	GAGCTAGAGCCTGCAGCAAT	TTCTGGGCAATCTGCTTCTT
Rsad2	ATAGTGAGCAATGGCAGCCT	AACCTGCTCATCGAAGCTGT
Cxcl1	CCGAAGTCATAGCCACACTCA	CTCCGTTACTTGGGGACACC
Cxcl5	TGCCCTACGGTGGAAGTCAT	AGCTTTCTTTTTGTCACTGCCC
beta-Actin	GGTGTGATGGTGGGAATGG	GCCCTCGTCACCCACATAGGA

Figure 1. *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice display increased Mtb replication and dissemination *in vivo.*

(A)   Experimental timeline of Mtb *in vivo* infection.

(B)   Mtb colony forming units (CFUs) collect from WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(C)   CFUs recovered from WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice spleens at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(D)   CFUs recovered from WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice livers at day 21 post-Mtb infection. Statistical analysis: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Statistical significance determined for (B-D) using Mann-Whitney test.

Figure 2. *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice display increased neutrophils and less M1 macrophages during Mtb infection.

(A)   Hematoxylin and eosin staining of WT lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection. Asterisks denote areas of consolidated and infiltrated by inflammatory cells. Black dashed line delineates regions of healthy versus inflamed areas of lung in right panel. Outlined regions (white dashed lines) in denote areas of neutrophil clusters. Upper panel scale bar is 800 μM. Lower panel scale bar is 20 μM.

(B)   As in (A) for *Polg^{D257A}* mice.

(C)   Quantification of histiocytic inflammation using H&E staining of WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(D)   Average total surface area of neutrophil clusters using H&E staining of WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(E)   Lung CD43⁻ monocytes in WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice analyzed by flow cytometry at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(F)   As in (E) but for lung M1 macrophages.

(G)   As in (E) but for lung M0 macrophages.

(H)   As in (E) but for lung neutrophils.

Statistical analysis: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. Statistical significance determined for (C-H) using Mann-Whitney test.

Figure 2S. Cytokine analysis of *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice lungs during Mtb infection.

(A)   Hematoxylin and eosin staining of WT mice lungs at day 21 post- Mtb infection. Asterisks denote areas of consolidated and infiltrated by inflammatory cells. Black dashed line delineates regions of healthy versus inflamed areas of lung in right panel. Outlined regions (white dashed lines) in denote areas of neutrophil clusters. Upper panel scale bar is 800 μM. Lower panel scale bar is 20 μM.

(B)   As in (A) but H & E staining in *Polg^{D257A}* mice lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(C)   Lung CD45$^+$ cells in WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice analyzed by flow cytometry at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

(D)   As in (C) but for lung monocyte derived macrophages.

(E)   As in (C) but for lung M2 macrophages.

(F)   As in (C) but for lung myeloid dendritic cells.

(G)   As in (C) but for lung alveolar macrophages.

(H)   As in (C) but for lung monocytes.

(I)   As in (C) but for lung Ly6C^{hi} CD43$^+$ monocytes.

(J)   As in (C) but for lung Ly6C^{lo} CD43$^+$ monocytes.

Statistical analysis: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Statistical significance determined for (C-J) using Mann-Whitney test.

Figure 3. Dampened M1 macrophage pro-inflammatory response is a hallmark of *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice during Mtb infection

(A)   Lung *Tnfa* transcripts in WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice analyzed by qRT-PCR at day 21 post- Mtb infection.

(B)   As in (A) but for *Nos2*

(C)   As in (A) but for *Ifng*

(D)   As in (A) but for *Nlrp3*

(E)   As in (A) but for *Cxcl9*

(F)   As in (A) but for *Cxcl10*

Statistical analysis: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$. Statistical significance determined for (A-F) using Mann-Whitney test.

**Figure 3S. *Polg^D257A* mutator mice do not show differences in interferon stimu-
lated genes (ISGs) during Mtb infection**

(A)   Lung *Il1b* transcripts in WT and *Polg^D257A* mice analyzed by qRT-PCR at day 21

post- Mtb infection.

(B)   As in (A) but for *Il6*

(C)   As in (A) but for *Il1ra*

(D)   As in (A) but for *Isg15*

(E)   As in (A) but for *Rsad2*

(F)   As in (A) but for *Cxcl1*

(G)   As in (A) but for *Cxcl5*

Statistical analysis: $*p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$. Statistical significance deter-

mined for (A-G) using Mann-Whitney test.

Figure 4. *Polg^{D257A}* mutator mice exhibit increased necrotic debris during Mtb infection.

(A)   H&E staining of WT mice lungs at day 21 post- Mtb infection. Asterisks denote areas of consolidated and infiltrated by inflammatory cells. Outlined regions (white dashed lines) denote areas of necrotic debris. Upper panel scale bar is 800 μM. Lower panel scale bar is 20 μM.

(B)   As in (A) but for *Polg^{D257A}* mice.

(C)   Quantification of necrotic debris using H&E staining of WT and *Polg^{D257A}* mice lungs at day 21 post-Mtb infection.

Statistical analysis: $p < 0.05$, $**p < 0.01$, $***p < 0.001$. Statistical significance determined for (C) using Mann-Whitney test.

Figure 5. Higher levels of necrotic debris contribute to higher bacilli burden in

Polg^{D257A} **mutator mice during Mtb infection.**

(A)   H&E and acid-fast bacilli (AFB) staining of WT mice lungs at day 21 post- Mtb

infection. Asterisks denote areas of consolidated and infiltrated by inflammatory cells in

left panel. Left panel scale bar is 800 μM. Right panel scale bar is 20 μM. White arrow-

heads denote instances of Mtb cording. Black arrowheads denote clumps of Mtb bacilli.

(B)   As in (A) but for *Polg^{D257A}* mice.

Figure 6. *Polg^D257A* mutator macrophages are prone to necrotic cell death.

(A)   Cell death in 6-month-old WT and *Polg^D257A* macrophages infected with Mtb for 48h (MOI=5). Cell death was measured by propidium iodide uptake (% cell death= Propidium iodide positive/ total cell count *100%).

(B)   As in (A) but 6-month-old WT and *Polg^D257A* macrophages were treated with 100 nM staurosporine to induce apoptosis.

(C)   As in (A) but 6-month-old WT and *Polg^D257A* macrophages were treated with 100 ng/ml TNFα, 500 nM Birinapant, and 20 μM zVAD-FMK to induce necrosis.

(D)   As in (C) but with 12-month-old WT and *Polg^D257A* macrophages.

Statistical analysis: n=3 *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Statistical significance determined for (A) using one-way ANOVA with Sidak's post-test and (B-D) using two-way ANOVA with Tukey's post-test.

A

WT n= 6
POLG^D257A n= 9

+Mtb
↓
0   21
Days post-infection (DPI)

B   Lung
Day 21

***

CFU

10^7
10^6
10^5

WT   POLG^D257A

C   Spleen
Day 21

**

CFU

10^6
10^5
10^4

WT   POLG^D257A

D   Liver
Day 21

***

CFU

10^6
10^5
10^4
10^3

WT   POLG^D257A

Figure 1

Figure 2

A WT

B POLG^D257A

C CD45+ cells

D Monocyte derived macrophages

E M2 macrophages

F Myeloid DCs

G AVMs

H Monocytes

I Ly6C^hi CD43+ monocytes

J Ly6C^lo CD43+ monocytes

Figure S2

Figure 3

A — WT

B — POLG^D257A

C

Necrotic
debris

% positive grids

30
20
10
0

WT   POLG^D257A

*

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6