Ex vivo **modelling of lung tissue resident antimicrobial responses**

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Abstract:

Tissue resident host responses to microbial infections in the respiratory tract are highly

dynamic in space and time and rely on the interaction of a multitude of cell types. In an

attempt to model these multicellular responses reliably in cell culture, we compare here the

global transcriptional antimicrobial response to infection with influenza A virus (IAV) in

precision cult lung slices (PCLS), volume defined organ discs largely maintaining the cellular

composition and 3D architecture of the donor lung. To permit a fair comparison of host

responses in an isogenic background we first challenged mice in vivo and murine PCLS

(mPCLS) and assess host transciptomic changes by unbiased RNAseq. While core antiviral

responses overlapped substantially, mPCLS lacked certain features—such as type II interferon

expression—likely due to the absence of infiltrating immune cells responses. Importantly,

when expanding our findings to immune experienced human precision cut lung slices (hPCLS),

we find a much broader antiviral response after IAV challenge, including type I, II and III

interferons, suggesting the presence of responsive tissue resident lymphocytes. To prove

specificity of this response we infected hPCLS with Streptococcus pneumoniae. Ex vivo tissues

responded with a distinct proinflammatory gene profile including IL1A, IL1B and IL17

expression. Blocking of IL-1 signaling partially inhibited the proinflammatory response,

suggesting cellular cross-talk and a complex and specific antimicrobial reaction in this *ex vivo*

model. In conclusion diversified tissue resident immune cell compartment distinguishes the

human *ex vivo* model, making it an ideal system for microbiological and immunological

research.

Importance

Pathogen interactions with the lung are very dynamic processes. In biomedical research it is paramount to model these processes in the laboratory as accurately as possible. Influenza A virus has been extensively studied in epithelial cell culture models, including advanced organoids and organ on a chip systems. We use here ex vivo cultured PCLS and use transcriptomics to assess the global tissue resident host response to viral and bacterial challenge. Our data show 1) that murine PCLS faithfully reflect core responses to viral infection, while missing proinflammatory responses linked to infiltrating immune cells and 2) that human PCLS show a highly diversified tissue resident immune response to viral infection due to previous exposures of the host to this pathogen. These responses are clearly distinct from antibacterial gene profiles. Our data advertise PCLS as a complex and realistic model to study tissue resident immune responses to microbes in a human system.

Introduction

Respiratory infections with viral or bacterial pathogens are the 5th leading cause of death worldwide and the leading cause of death in low income countries (excluding COVID-19) according to 2021 WHO estimations[1]. Continuous exposure to the surrounding air makes the lung mucosa an ideal entry port for airborne viral and bacterial pathogens. Influenza viruses alone are responsible for more than half a million deaths annually often complicated by secondary bacterial pneumonia, mostly with Streptococcus pneumoniae or Staphylococcus aureus. A major initial barrier against establishment of respiratory infections is the antimicrobial host response elicited by respiratory epithelial cells in conjunction with tissue resident immune cells. Modelling the complexity of this first line of defense in cell culture setting remains however challenging, in part since the human lung consists of more than fifty

cell types[2]. 2D cell culture models do not reflect this cellular diversity and the complex spatial

3D organization of respiratory tissue.

Precision cut lung slices (PCLS) are *ex vivo* cultured, i.e. volume defined discs of human or

animal lung tissue origin and bridge conventional cell culture models and *in vivo* systems [3,4].

They preserve the cellular composition and 3D architecture of lung tissue and are arguably

the most complex *ex vivo* model to study lung physiology and pathology[5]. Since they are

disconnected from the circulation of the host organism, they constitute an ideal scenario to

study the tissue resident immune response to invading microbes. We compare here the tissue

resident host response to viral and bacterial challenge in a murine and human ex vivo model

with data from in vivo infected lung tissues.

Results

The antiviral host response to influenza A viruses in the respiratory tract is an

extraordinarily dynamic process initiated by infected epithelial cells and surveilling tissue

resident immune cells. This first line of defense can be decisive for the outcome of infection.

It establishes an antiviral state in the respiratory tissue, most importantly induced by

cytokines of the interferon family. It further attracts immune cells from the blood and the

interstitial space into the lung to limit and clear viral infection.

To delineate early tissue resident antiviral responses from those after immune cell

infiltration, we turned to the mPCLS model (**Fig 1A**). Brightfield microscopy confirmed the

maintenance of typical lung tissue architecture after tissue slicing (**Fig 1B**). mPCLS were

cultured for several days without signs of tissue disintegration (**Fig. S1**). The immune cell

compartment of mPCLS was predominantly characterized by naïve CD4 T cells and B cells in

the lymphoid panel (**Fig. 1C, gating strategy in Fig. S2A**) and monocytes (classical and non-

classical) in the myeloid panel (**Fig. 1D, gating strategy in Fig. S2B**). As compared to published

in vivo data[6], mPCLS show a slightly higher proportion of B lymphocytes *vs.* T lymphocyte, and

a generally lower representation of myeloid cells, suggesting a that the latter might be

partially excluded in the process of PCLS preparation.

The porous nature of this *ex vivo* model permitted IAV infection with a clinically relevant H1N1

strain influenza A/Netherlands/602/2009 (H1N1) throughout the tissue as demonstrated by

specific RNAscope staining of vRNA in mid-sections 48h post infection (**Fig. 1E**). We did

however observe a preference for infection in larger airways. A similar distribution of vRNA

signal was found in *in vivo* infected lung tissue 48h post infection (**Fig. 1F**). In line with this

viral titers *ex vivo* and *in vivo* reached comparable levels 48h post infection (**Fig 1G and H**).

Using a bulk RNAseq approach we compared transcriptional responses in IAV infected

lung tissue *in vivo* and *ex vivo*. Not surprisingly the PCA separated host responses clearly

between the two models (along PC1), while the IAV induced parallel shift of the global

transcriptome along PC2 in the two systems, which was less prominent especially in the *ex*

vivo model (**Fig. 2A**). Accordingly, we found substantially more differentially regulated genes

(DEG) *in vivo* than in mPCLS (**Fig. 2B-D**). Approximately 20% of the upregulated protein coding

DEG were classified as "immune system" related in the Reactome database[7] (**Fig. 2B**).

Notably, IAV induced DEG in mPCLS were largely found upregulated *in vivo* (**Fig. 2B**). The two

gene sets correlated with a R^2: 0.5 (**Fig. 2E**). An analysis of transcription factor binding sites in

promoters of upregulated genes in mPCLS indicated that IRF3 and STAT2 are mostly

responsible to drive the *ex vivo* response, while *in vivo* NFκB, STAT5B, NOD2 and IRF3 were

the most significantly enriched transcription factors (**Fig. S3A and S3B**)[8-10]. Comparative

Reactome analysis of mPCLS and *in vivo* mouse responses to IAV revealed a strong enrichment

in immune system including cytokine signaling, innate and adaptive immunity in both models

(**Fig. 2F**). While for mPCLS, the response was restricted to immune system activation, we found *in vivo* additionally an enrichment in hemostasis, extracellular matrix organization and programmed cell death among the upregulated DEG (**Fig. S3C-E**).

A common denominator of the antiviral response in human and murine hosts is the interferon response[11]. *Ex vivo* type I and III interferon genes were generally upregulated to a much lower extend than *in vivo*, with IFNB1 being the most highly induced type I interferon gene (**Fig. 2G**). Accordingly, we found upregulation of typical ISGs like MX1, OAS1, or IFIT1 ((**Fig. 2G**) amongst others). Notably, mPCLS were completely devoid of a type II interferon response (**Fig. 2G**). Accordingly, ICAM1 an experimentally confirmed type II IFN dependent gene[12] was not upregulated in mPCLS after IAV challenge but type I/type III dependent genes were. IFNγ is almost exclusively produced by lymphoid cells (NK, NKT, effector/memory CD4$^+$, CD8$^+$ and γδ T lymphocytes). These cells were largely absent in mPCLS (**Fig. 1C**) possibly explaining the lack of IFNγ in response to IAV infection.

Both our PCLS donor mice and the *in vivo* infected animals were immunologically naïve to IAV infection, explaining the lack of tissue resident memory cells. To simulate tissue responses of immune-experienced mice we generated mPCLS from IAV (A/Netherlands/602/2009 H1N1) preinfected mice one month after primoinfection (**Fig. 3A**) and challenged these immune experienced mPCLS with the same virus strain *ex vivo*. The presence of memory T lymphocytes was confirmed by FACS (**Fig 3B and gating strategy in Fig S4**). Viral replication was reduced in *ex vivo* tissues from IAV primed mice as confirmed by qPCR for vRNA and by titration of viral supernatants (**Fig. 3C and 3D**). Surprisingly, this did however not result in a generally heightened transcriptional response in IAV primed murine lung tissues *ex vivo* as assessed by targeted qRT-PCR (**Fig. 3E**). Our data hence suggest an increase in viral defense with improved control of viral replication one month after priming,

which does not generally depend on an upregulation of innate immune genes, nor seems to

promote it upon *ex vivo* reinfection of tissues.

In average a human is exposed every 5-10 years to a new influenza virus[13]. These repeated

infections lead to an accumulation of tissue resident memory T cells in adults. In elderly

influenza specific $_{trm}$T-cells decline with advanced age in lung tissue, which could in part

contribute to the reduced antiviral response[14]. Since elderly form a major population at risk

for severe IAV infection, we asked if PCLS from an immune experienced elderly human donor

would provide a more realistic model of tissue resident immune responses against IAV.

PCLS were cut from histologically healthy bystander tissue of tumor resections (for patient

cohort data **see Table S1**) and maintained typical 3D architecture of human lung tissue (**Fig.**

4A). Notably, airspaces were much larger than those found in mPCLS (**Fig. 1B**). *Ex vivo* hPCLS

were cultured for several days without signs of cell death comparable to mPCLS (**Fig. S1**). In

contrast to murine tissues T lymphocytes were the dominant lymphoid cell population in

hPCLS among these more than 50% effector memory CD4 and CD8 T cells (**Fig. 4B and gating**

strategy in Fig. S5A). Additionally, we found low percentages of NK and NKT cells, absent in

ex vivo mouse tissues. In the myeloid panel, monocytic myeloid derived suppressor cells [15]

and neutrophils were dominant (**Fig. 4C and gating strategy in Fig. S5B**).

As for mPCLS, IAV penetrated the entire tissue (**Fig 4D**) and resulted in robust viral titers 48hpi

(**Fig. 4E**). We found little donor to donor variation in the replication data, despite using tissues

from different anatomical locations of the lung and diverse underlying disease states (**Table**

S1), supporting the robustness of this model system for microbiological research. The PCA

clearly separated mock treated from IAV infected hPCLS. This is similar to data obtained from

an influenza virus RNA positive lung autopsie tissue from a patient who died shortly after an

influenza B virus diagnosis when compared to freshly isolated healthy lung tissue material

(**Fig. 5A**). In contrast to the mouse model, comparable numbers of DEG were upregulated in

hPCLS and human *in vivo* infected lung tissue. However, at protein coding gene level we found

only an small overlap of the upregulated DEG of hPCLS with the *in vivo* tissues (**Fig. 5B-C**). This

could be the consequence of a number of confounding effects: comparison of non-isogenic

hosts, comparison of an influenza A virus vs an influenza B virus infection, different

sequencing protocols (standard illumina RNAseq *vs.* exon enrichment for *in vivo*) and most

importantly, differences in the time point post infection. Nevertheless, the reactome analysis

provided however substantial overlap in upregulated gene modules related to innate immune

response, cytokine signaling and DNA replication, the latter being absent in murine samples

(**Fig. 5D and E**). On gene level the intersection of upregulated genes contained known ISGs

like (MX2, IFI6, IFIT1, IFIT5, IFIT3, IFI27, IRF27, IRF9, ISG15, IFITM1) were found. IAV infection

robustly induced type I, II and III interferons in hPCLS. Upregulation of IFNγ and IFNγ-induced

genes after IAV infection (**Fig. 5F**) is of interest in this model since it confirms the activation

and functionality of tissue resident lymphoid cells.

Next we were interested in testing the specificity of the transcriptomic response of hPCLS to

a viral infection. Using a bacterial challenge with *S. pneumoniae* (serotype 3) we expected a

distinct host response. As for the viral infection, bacteria penetrated the tissue to the center

section (**Fig. 6A**). 24h post infection with *S. pneumoniae* we observed a substantial increase

in bacterial titers associated with the lung tissue (**Fig. 6B**). The host response to Spn infection

was showed a higher donor variation and was generally less pronounced as for the viral

challenge (**Fig. 6C**), with patient 1 not responding to the bacterial challenge despite robust

bacterial replication. Since the same patient tissue reacted well to viral challenge (**Fig. 5**), we

conclude, this is a antigen specific effect. In contrast to the IAV response the antibacterial

host profile was however largely characterized by proinflammatory marker genes (e.g. IL1A

IL1B, TNF, IL6, IL17A) and interleukin signaling in the Reactome analysis (**Fig. 6D-F**). Lastly, we

tested cell-to-cell communication in the human *ex vivo* model by blocking IL-1β signaling with

a specific antibody. We compared the expression of IL-1β dependent genes after challenge

with Spn in hPCLS. Without affecting the bacterial replication (**Fig. 6G**), the blocking of IL-1β

signaling reduced the respective antimicrobial tissue response (**Fig. 6H**), confirming a robust

cell-to-cell communication in this complex *ex vivo* model.

Discussion

While primary respiratory tract epithelial cells have been shown superior to immortalized

lung epithelial cells with regards to antiviral responses[16], they are li Human lung-on-a-chip

models, lung organoids or stratified airway epithelial cells (often used in air liquid interface)

are mostly limited to the contribution of epithelial cells to lung infection biology. The PCLS

model gains rapidly importance in biomedical studies targeting lung pathologies and

pharmacological testing. mPCLS and hPCLS have been used to study the pathophysiology of

inflammatory lung diseases[17,18] and to test their response to disease relevant

proinflammatory stimuli[19]. In respiratory infectious disease research animal PCLS and hPCLS

gain importance, e.g., to assess the action of antimicrobials in a relevant organ context [20,21].

Others used PCLS models before to assess the innate immune response to viral challenge[22-24]

or to colonization with different mixes of commensal bacteria (mPCLS)[25]. Two recent studies

investigated viral replication and antiviral host responses in hPCLS by single cell RNAseq from

a single human donor[26,27]. *Ex vivo* culture lung tissue from COPD patients with terminal lung

emphysema was used to characterize early antiviral and antibacterial responses, 24h after

IAV, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* or *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (BCG) challenge, by scRNAseq

and bulk RNAseq[27]. Importantly, the authors noted a high donor dependent variation in host

responses. They further stated that the pre-inflamed state of these tissues might not be fully

representative of the antimicrobial response in healthy lung tissue. This could explain why

only a limited number of IAV upregulated genes were found as compared to our study. We

provide here comprehensive transcriptome data in human and murine ex vivo tissue

compared to *in vivo* host responses and complement these findings with a detailed

characterization of the cellular composition of the two PCLS models. While not surprising we

show a clear contribution of the tissue resident memory cells to human host responses

against IAV infection *ex vivo*. As for laboratory mice derived PCLS, the biological differences

to hPCLS in responsiveness to microbial infection stem likely from different genetics,

metabolism, microbiome and baseline immune status. The last point is of particular interest

when studying infectious agents since many in vivo studies rely on immunologically naïve

animals. Our data indicate that mPCLS from naïve mice rather poorly respond to IAV infection

as compared to *in vivo* infections or hPCLS. In part the lack of infiltrating immune cells into

the PCLS model explains these differences, but also the absence of tissue resident immune

cells. Beyond this, especially infiltrating monocytes and neutrophils are contributing

substantially to the cytokine response and eventually immune pathology observed during a

severe viral pneumonia[28]. Hence proinflammatory signaling was not faithfully reproduced

especially in the naïve murine *ex vivo* model. Exogenous addition of monocytes from blood or

bone marrow might be a strategy to compensate for the absence of a connection to the

supply with blood derived immune cells to overcome the limited antiviral response. PCLS from

animals with multiple IAV encounters could serve as a better model to mimic the immune

history observed in human patients, who on average undergo an IAV infection every 5-10

years[13]. Surprisingly, the innate antiviral host response did not differ in these animals. We

found for example no increased expression of IFNγ, suggesting that tissue resident T-

lymphocytes do not contribute to the increased protection. Considering the high number of

B lymphocytes in mPCLS, we suspect an antibody mediated partial neutralization of viral

infection. Globally, we observed specific antiviral and antibacterial responses in both PCLS

systems, suggesting a clear distinction between the two types of pathogens. It must be noted

that the timing (48h IAV *vs* 24h Spn) could in part explain these differences. Notably, a recent

report indicated that PCLS undergo a spike of innate immune and inflammatory gene

induction on the day of cutting which wanes within 24h[29]. It is unclear how this mechanic

induction of the innate immune response affects a subsequent challenge with viral or

bacterial pathogens. The lack of IFNγ induction by IAV infection in mPCLS was suggesting that

the early antiviral response in *ex vivo* tissues naïve animals relies purely on a type I interferon

responses. In contrast antibacterial/proinflammatory signaling after Spn challenge was

readily detectable in mPCLS but less in hPCLS. This also suggests that mPCLS are not generally

unresponsive to microbial exposure. In fact, an important contributor to the antibacterial host

responses in mice is age. PCLS from aged mice display a stronger inflammatory reaction to

bacterial PAMP than tissues from young animals[30]. In hPCLS from aged patients, we detected

a distinct proinflammatory host response after Spn colonization, as compared to the antiviral

response. Globally this response was less pronounced as the antiviral response despite robust

bacterial replication. In fact, hPCLS from one human patient did not upregulate innate

immune response genes after Spn challenge, but at the same time responded well to IAV,

which suggest potentially an individual response based on previous exposure to pneumococci

and potentially depending on patient specific subsets of tissue resident immune cells.

Alternatively, tolerance mechanisms towards this common pathobiont in the upper

respiratory tract of humans might play a role in dampening the antibacterial response. This

could indicate that hPCLS could reflect the individual exposure history of a given patient and

hence be used to study the basic cellular response in lung tissue based on immune history

shaped cell composition. Such a tool would be useful to predict innate responses in lung tissue

of different age groups, e.g., to novel influenza viruses, where preexisting immunity can play

an important role to prevent mortality in critical target groups as reported for the 2009 H1N1

pandemic[31]. IFI27 for example was previously identified as marker for IFN responses in

peripheral immune cells (monocytes and conventional DC) of influenza virus infected human

patients[32], suggesting that some of these immune cells could reside in hPCLS. The shortage of

human biopsy/autopsy material collected early during an IAV infection makes it difficult to

conclusively answer these questions. On a more applied note, we think that hPCLS could be

used to test antivirals or anti-inflammatory drugs in a realistic environment with additional

viral restriction provided by the tissue resident immune cells and with an architecture and

accessibility reflecting that of the native tissue.

Material and Methods

Ethics

Human tissue was obtained from the thorax surgery of the university hospital Geneva (HUG)

and its use was approved under the license 2022-01942 by the CCER. Written patient consent

was provided. Animal experiments were approved by the cantonal authorities and

institutional animal welfare board under license number: GE216).

PCLS generation

mPCLS: C57BL/6J mice (female, 7–10 weeks of age) were purchased from Charles River

Laboratories (France) and housed at least 7 days under SPF conditions with a strict 12h/12h

light/dark cycle and food and water at libitum. Animals were euthanized by intraperitoneal

injection of pentobarbital (150µg/g, Esconarkon®, Streuli Pharma, Uznach, Swtizerland) when

experimental or humane endpoints were reached. To collect lung tissues, the abdominal

cavity and the thoracic cage were opened surgically. The inferior vena cava was nicked, and

lung lavage was performed by PBS 1X injection into the heart right vena. Next, a catheter

(22G) was inserted in the trachea to perfuse the lungs with 2% low-melting-point agarose

warmed to 37°C (Sigma-Aldrich, A9414, diluted in DMEM/Ham's F12, Gibco). The mouse was

cooled at 4°C for 10 min, then the lung was excised and incubated 30 min at 4°C to let the

agarose solidified. The lobes were dissociated and murine PCLS (250µm thickness) were cut

with a Krumdieck tissue slicer (Alabama R&D, USA, MD600).

hPCLS: The use of human tissue was approved by the cantonal ethics committee of Geneva

(CCER, project number 2022-01942). Lung tissues were provided by the thorax surgery unit

of the University Hospital Geneva (Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève, HUG). Tumor-free

tissue from lung cancer resection surgeries of 22 patients were collected for this work. The

average age was 67.4 (±10.7) years, 12 were females and 10 males. Concerning smoking

habits: 8 were active, 7 formers smokers, 3 non-smokers, and 4 were without information.

Location of the resected tissue was in lower left lobe (3), lower right (2), upper left (6), upper

right (8), middle right (3). Individual underlying disease state and medication are indicated in

Table S1. The lung segment was washed with PBS 1X and perfused with 2% low-meting-point

agarose thanks to catheters (22G). The solidification was allowed by 1h30 at 4°C on ice. Using

a coring press (Alabama R&D, USA MD500), tissue cylinders of 8mm diameter were generated

and transversally sliced into PCLS as described for mPCLS. PCLS were maintained in 500µL

DMEM/Ham's F12 (Gibco, supplemented with 100 U/mL penicillin and 100 µg/mL

streptomycin (Sigma-Aldrich, P0781) without FCS) in 24-wells plate at 37°C, 5% CO2. The

medium was changed 2 hours after cutting to remove the agarose, experiments were

performed the day after the cutting to allow tissue recovering and agarose dissolution. Tissue

integrity was confirmed with a brightfield microscope (Evos microscope system, Thermo

Fisher).

Bacteria

Spn (ATCC: (Klein) Chester 6303, serotype 3) was grown in Trypticase Soy Broth (Oxoid, UK,

BO0369M) at 37°C with 5% CO_2 in static culture up to 0.4 optical density (OD600 nm). PCLS

infection was performed using 10^3CFU per well in the PCLS culture medium at 37°C, 5% CO_2.

The inoculum was removed after 4h incubation, PCLS were washed two times with PBS 1X

and fresh culture medium was added. The infection was stopped 24h post-inoculation.

Supernatants and tissues were collected. Tissues were homogenized with a BeadBlaster

homogenizer (Benchmark, D2400) using 1.4mm ceramic beads to determine bacterial titers

(Omni International, 19627). Serial dilutions were spotted on Trypticase Soy agar plates with

5% sheep blood (BioMerieux, M1006) at 37°C with 5% CO2.

Viruses

A/Netherlands/602/2009 (H1N1)[33] was kindly provided by Dr. Florian Krammer (Icahn School

of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY, USA). PCLS were infected with 10^5 PFU in 200µl of

PCLS medium per well. After 50 min of viral adsorption at 37°C, PCLS were washed with PBS

1X and incubated in fresh culture medium. Supernatants were collected at the indicated times

post infection and viral titers were determined by plaque assay in MDCK cells (Madin-Darby

canine kidney, ATCC).

Plaque assays

MDCK cells were grown in DMEM (Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium, Gibco) supplemented

with 10% (vol/vol) heat-inactivated fetal bovine serum (Gibco) and 100 U/mL penicillin and

100 µg/mL streptomycin (Sigma-Aldrich, P0781). Cells (6-well plate format, 1,5 x 10^6

cells/well) were infected with 10-fold serial dilutions in PBS 1X 0,2% BSA of the virus for 50

min at 37°C. Supernatants were replaced by fresh overlay medium supplemented with 1

mg/mL of N-tosyl-L-phenylalanine chloromethyl ketone (TPCK)-treated trypsin (Sigma) and

0,6% purified agar (Oxoid) and plates were incubated at 37°C 5% CO_2. After 48 h, cells were

fixed for 1 h at RT with 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) and the overlays were removed. Cells

were stained using a solution of 16% Methanol and crystal violet and plaques were counted

visually.

In vivo infection

For inoculation with IAV, mice were injected intraperitoneally with a mix of ketamine/xylazine

(100 mg/kg and 5 mg/kg, respectively) in 200 µl of sterile PBS. Upon reaching deep anesthesia,

mice were inoculated with 40 µl of PBS or virus (10^4 PFU) via the intranasal route. Lungs were

collected after 24h and 48 hpi for IAV.

RNA extraction & RT-qPCR

Tissue was stored at -80°C in RNA protect Tissue reagent (Qiagen, 76104, Germany). PCLS

were disrupted in the lysis buffer from the kit with 1.4mm ceramic beads (Omni International,

19627) using a BeadBlaster homogenizer (Benchmark, D2400). Then, RNA extraction was

performed with the NucleoSpin RNA XS kit (Macherey-Nagel, 740902), following the

manufacturer's instructions. Elution was done in 30µl of water. RNA concentration was

estimated by Nanodrop. 250 ng were used for reverse-transcription using the MMLV-RT

(Invitrogen, 28025013). Gene expression was assessed by quantitative PCR using 2X KAPA

SYBR FAST qPCR Master Mix-Universal (KAPA Biosystems, USA) and 10 µM of forward and

reverse primers (**Table S2**). PCR was realized with CFX Connect Real-Time PCR detection

system (Biorad) following this thermal cycling protocol: an initial denaturation step at 95 °C

for 10 min, followed by 45 cycles of denaturation at 95 °C for 15 s, annealing/extension at

61.5 °C for 60 s, with a final melting curve step from 60 to 95 °C with 0.5 °C increment. The

relative gene expression was calculated with the ΔΔCt method, using *hprt* (murine tissue) or

18s-rRNA (human tissue) genes for normalization.

For all lungs from mice or unprocessed lung biopsies from human, total RNA was extracted

using TRIzol (Ambion, Life technologies) following manufacturer's instructions.

Lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) assay

To determine global cell suffering, LDH release was quantified daily into the PCLS supernatant

using the colorimetric test CYQUANT ™ LDH cytotoxicity assay kit (Invitrogen, C20300),

according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

RNAscope

PCLS from mice and human were collected under sterile conditions, fixed in PBS 1X -

paraformaldehyde 4% solution overnight at 4°C and embedded in paraffin and sliced using a

standard microtome (5 µM thickness). *In situ* detection of *Streptococcus pneumoniae*

(RNAscope® Probe - B- S. pneumoniae -SPN23F12870-C2, accession number: FM211187.1,

nucleotides: 2-753) and IAV (RNAscope® Probe V - Influenza A - H1N1 – segment 5 – NP - O8

-C1, accession number: CY176945.1) was performed using the RNAscope 2.5 HD Assay - RED

(Advanced Cell Diagnostics) according to the manufacturer's protocol. Briefly, tissue slices

were deparaffinized by 1h incubation at 60°C followed by four rounds in 100% xylol and four

rounds in 100 % ethanol solutions. An incubation with hydrogen peroxide was performed for

10 min and target retrieval was achieved by incubating the slides with RNAscope 1x Target

Retrieval Reagent for 45 min at 95°C. Tissue was permeabilized using RNAscope protease plus

for 30 min (Advanced Cell Diagnostics). Probe hybridization was performed with a specific

RNA probe for IAV or Spn for 2 h at 40°C. Signal amplification was achieved by incubating the

tissues at 40°C with AMP solutions provided by the kit. Cyanine 3 and cyanine 5 were used as

fluorophores respectively for IAV and Spn. Slides were counterstained with Prolong Diamond

Antifade Mountant with DAPI (Invitrogen, P36962). Slides were visualized under Nikon A1r

spectral microscope under a x10/20 objective and processed using Zen Software.

Transcriptomic analysis

RNA was extracted as described before at the replication peak of each pathogen (48h for IAV,

24h for Spn). RNAseq (30 million reads per sample (triplicates for each murine condition, five

patients samplings for hPCLS) was performed at the iGE3 Genomics Platform at the University.

Analysis of these data was realized with the help of the Bioinformatics Support Platform

(UNIGE). Libraries were prepared with the Illumina TruSeqHT Stranded mRNA protocol for

PCLS and mouse in vivo lungs and with RNA exome-seq for human in vivo autopsy samples

and corresponding control. The sequencing was done on Illumina NovaSeq 6000 sequencer.

Sequenced reads were mapped with HISAT2 aligner either to the mouse genome GRCm39

(source: ensembl 110) or to the human genome GRCh38.p14 (source: ensembl 110). Read-

count quantification was extracted with the method summarizeOverlaps() from R package

GenomicAlignments. The code and softwares used in the analysis were packaged into a

docker container made publicly available at https://github.com/BioinfoSupport/ngs

(container), https://github.com/ BioinfoSupport/rnaseq (mapping and quantification

pipeline), and https://github.com/BioinfoSupport/genomes (for HISAT2 indexed genomes).

Normalization, differential gene expression analysis, and data visualization were conducted

with the R programming language. Package DESeq2 was used to asset the statistical

significance of differential gene expressions. More specifically, we conducted 4 independent

DESeq2 analyses to take into consideration samples pairing: A) one with 6 unpaired samples

of the mouse in vivo conditions (mIV_mock, mIV_IAV); B) another with the 6 paired-samples

of the mouse PCLS conditions (mPCLS_mock, mPCLS_IAV); C) a last with 15 paired samples of

the human PCLS conditions (hPCLS_mock, hPCLS_Spn, hPCLS_IAV); D) one with 6 unpaired

samples of the human in vivo conditions (hIV_mock, hIV_Influenza). The details of the samples used in each set is given in **Table S3** "RNA-seq Samples description". Pathway enrichment analysis was done under the R programming language with hypergeometric tests against Reactome.org database. Transcription factor enrichment analysis was realized using EnrichR[8-10].

Flow cytometry

One day after slicing, 14 PCLS per condition were washed with cold PBS 1X and pooled together. Cell dissociation was performed for 45 minutes at 37°C (aggitation) with PBS +5% FBS with 0.5 mg/mL Collagenase D and 0.1mg/mL DNaseI. Cells were centrifugated 5 min at 300g. Red blood cell lysis was performed with ACK buffer for 4 minutes at RT. The reaction was stopped with RPMI 10% FBS and cells were spined and washed in PBS.

Cells were stained 15 min at RT with Fixable Viability Dye (Invitrogen, 1:1000 in PBS 1X) and FC blocking was performed with 0.25μg of TruStain FcX PLUS (Biolegend) in 100μL of MACS before staining. Cells were then stained 15 min on ice with surface markers antibodies resuspended in MACS buffer (PBS-0.5% BSA- 2mM EDTA) according to the panel. Antibodies references are indicated in **Table S4**. Cells were fixed with 200 μL of IC Fixation Buffer (Thermofisher) for 30 min at RT. Samples were centrifugated at 450g at RT for 5 min. Cells were resuspended in an appropriate volume of MACS buffer and the samples were run on LSRII Fortessa instrument (BD Biosciences).

IL-1β blocking experiment in hPCLS.

hPCLS were infected with 10^3 CFU of Spn, after 4h of attachment, PCLS were washed 2 times with PBS 1X and culture medium containing 10μg/ml antibody anti-ILβ (R&D Systems, MAB601, clone 2805) was added. Tissues and supernatants were collected 24hpi. Stastistical analysis was

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism 9 or R and statistical tests applied as

well as the number of biological and technical repeats are indicated in each respective figure

legend.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Figure legends

Figure 1: Modeling the early host response against Influenza A virus in murine PCLS.

A) Schematic of PCLS generation: lungs are perfused with a low melting agarose solution to

    preserve the 3D lung architecture. After solidification at 4°C, lungs are cored into regular

    cylinders and processed to slicing using a microtome. PCLS are then kept in culture

    medium at 37°C.

B)   Brightfield picture of an untreated murine PCLS. Scale bar represents 400µm.

C-D) Untreated PCLS were enzymatically digested one day after slicing to characterize

baseline composition of lymphoid (C) and myeloid (D) immune cells. Results are presented in

% of total lymphoid population and in % of total myeloid population (N=3). **Lymphoid cells**:

LB: lymphocytes B, gdLT: γδ T lymphocytes, NK: natural killer cells, NKT: natural killer T cells,

LT: lymphocyte T, n: naïve, cm: central memory, em: effector memory. **Myeloid cells**: AMs:

Alveolar macrophages, Neut: neutrophils, DCs: dendritic cells, ClaMs: classical monocytes,

PatMs: patrolling monocytes.

Mice   and   mPCLS   were   respectively   infected   with $10^4/10^5$ PFU   of   IAV

(A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1) for 24 or 48h.

E-F) In situ RNA hybridization of viral nucleoprotein (Cyanine 3) was used to visualize IAV at

48hpi in mPCLS sections (E) and in vivo in mouse lungs (F). Confocal observation was done at

x100 (top pictures IAV & uninfected, size bar represents 100µM) or at x200 (bottom pictures,

size bar represents 50µm).

G-H) Titers were measured by plaque-assay on mPCLS (G, N=4, duplicates) and on in vivo

infected lung (H, N=3) at 24 and 48hpi.

Figure 2: Comparative transcriptomic analysis of the early host response to Influenza A virus

in murine lung in vivo and ex vivo

Mice   and   mPCLS   were   respectively   infected   with $10^4/10^5$ PFU   of   IAV

(A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1) for 48h. Tissue was processed to bulk RNA sequencing and

host response was analyzed on R using Deseq2 package.

A) Principal component analysis illustrates the transcriptional response of mock treated

(blue) and IAV-infected lung tissue (orange) in vivo and in mPCLS. Arrows indicate the

pairs of mock and infected PCLS from the three independent experiments.

B) Venn diagrams of the commonly upregulated (orange) or downregulated (blue) genes in

mouse in vivo and mPCLS infected with IAV. The white circle indicates the genes related

to immune system pathways (using Reactome annotations).

C-D) Volcano plot showing differentially expressed genes between IAV-infected and mock

samples in mouse in vivo (C) and in mPCLS (D). Log2 fold-change induction is indicated in the

x-axis, -log10(p-adjusted) in the y-axis. Genes have been represented in: orange

(upregulated), blue (downregulated), grey (not significant). Genes associated to immune

system pathways are depicted in black.

E) Scatter plot comparing the genes regulated by IAV in mouse in vivo (log2 Fold Change in x-

axis) and in mPCLS (log2 Fold Change in y-axis). Correlation is indicated with R Pearson

coefficient (R=0.5, p<2.2E-16). Color legend indicates the direction for mouse in vivo/mPCLS

genes regulated.

F) Pathway enrichment analysis was conducted using hypergeometric tests against

Reactome.org database. -log10 (p-adjusted) is given by a color scale. Coverage percentage of

the pathway set is indicated by the size of the dot. Pathways are indicated with the total

number of genes in brackets and the number of genes significantly regulated are indicated

next to the dot. Significantly enriched pathways are indicated by a black circle.

G) Heatmap illustrates the regulation of interferon signaling genes by IAV 48hpi in mouse in

vivo and in mPCLS. Genes are represented by the log2 Fold Change (pink: positive log2FC,

blue: negative log2FC), * indicates if the gene is significantly regulated by IAV infection.

Figure 3: Characterization of the innate immune response in IAV-primed mPCLS

A) Mice were intranasally primed with PBS or 40pfu of A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1

(N=3, duplicates). One month later, mice were sacrificed and mPCLS were generated

and homologously re-infected with 10^5 pfu of IAV for 48h. Supernatants and tissues

were collected for titers and RNA extraction.

B) Flow cytometry was conducted on untreated mPCLS from PBS or IAV-primed mice.

Lymphoid cell population was quantified.

C) Viral replication was measured at 48hpi by RT-qPCR on M1 gene on IAV-infected PCLS

from PBS and IAV-primed mice.

D) Viral titers 48 hpi were measured by plaque-assay.

E) RT-qPCR on antiviral genes was performed 48hpi. Fold change over mock are

represented.

Statistical analysis was done with a t-test (N=3, each symbol represents one independent

experiment). PBS-primed mPCLS are represented in white boxes and IAV-primed mPCLS

in blue boxes. p-value is indicated.

Figure 4: Antimicrobial host response to viral challenge in the human PCLS model

A) Brightfield picture of an untreated human PCLS in culture (magnification X100, size bar

represents 400µM).

B-C) Untreated PCLS from 3 patients were enzymatically digested one day after slicing to

describe the baseline composition of lymphoid (B) and myeloid (C) immune cells. Results

are presented in % of total lymphoid population and in % of total myeloid population.

Lymphoid cells: LB: lymphocytes B, gdLT: γδ T lymphocytes, NK: natural killer cells, NKT:

natural killer T cells, LT: lymphocyte T, n: naïve, cm: central memory, em: effector

memory, emra: effector memory CD45RA$^+$. **Myeloid cells**: AMs: Alveolar macrophages,

OtMs: other macrophages, Neut: neutrophils, DCs: dendritic cells, ClaMs: classical

monocytes, NClaMs: non-classical monocytes, IntMs: Intermediate monocytes .

628  D) In situ RNA hybridization of viral nucleoprotein (Cyanine 3) was used to visualize IAV

629   at 48hpi in hPCLS sections. Magnification x200. Size bar is representing 50 μm.

630  E) hPCLS were infected with 10^5 pfu of IAV (A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1) for 8 days,

631   viral titers were measured daily by plaque-assay (3 patients in duplicates).

Figure 5: Antimicrobial host response to viral challenge in the human PCLS model *versus* in

vivo human lungs

Human PCLS from five patients were infected with 10^5 pfu of IAV

(A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1) for 48h. In parallel, lung biopsies from a naturally Influenza-

infected patient *in vivo* (triplicates from three different lobes) were compared to unprocessed

lung samples from three uninfected patients. Bulk RNA sequencing was performed on these

samples and analysis was conducted using Deseq2 package on R software.

A) Principal component analysis illustrates the global transcriptomics response of control

640  (blue) and Influenza-infected (orange) samples in human in vivo (left) and in hPCLS (right).

641 B) Venn diagrams of the commonly upregulated (orange) or downregulated (blue) genes in

642  human *in vivo* and hPCLS after influenza infection. The white circle indicates the genes

643  related to immune system pathways.

644 C) Volcano plot showing differentially expressed genes between Influenza-infected and mock

645  samples in human in vivo (left) and in hPCLS (right). Log2 fold-change induction is indicated

646  in the x-axis, -log10(p-adjusted) in the y-axis. Genes have been represented in: orange

647  (upregulated), blue (downregulated), grey (not significant). Genes associated to immune

648  system pathways are illustrated in black.

649 D) Pathway enrichment analysis was conducted using Reactome database. -log10 (p-

650  adjusted) is given by a color scale. Coverage percentage of the pathway set is indicated by

651  the size of the dot. Pathways are indicated with the total number of genes in brackets and

the number of genes significantly regulated are indicated next to the dot. Pathways

significantly enriched are surrounded by a black circle.

E) Heatmaps indicate the commonly up genes in human in vivo and in hPCLS after influenza

infection for Innate Immune System, Cytokine Signaling and DNA replication pathways.

Genes are ranked by the log2 Fold Change (upregulated: pink, downregulated: blue).

F) Heatmap of genes associated with interferon signaling. The significance of regulation by

IAV in human in vivo and in hPCLS is indicated by a *.

Figure 6: hPCLS can reproduce a classical antibacterial response towards a bacterial

challenge

Human PCLS from five patients were infected with 10^3 cfu of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* (Klein

Chester ATCC 6303, serotype 3) for 24h. Bioinformatic analysis was done using Deseq2 with

R programming.

A) In situ RNA hybridization of dnaA (Cyanine 5) was used to visualize *Spn* at 24hpi in hPCLS

sections. Magnification x100. Size bar is representing 100 μm. Mock are uninfected hPCLS.

B) Bacterial titers from tissue homogenates of PCLS were measured at 24hpi (N=5,

duplicates).

C) Principal component analysis illustrates the global transcriptomics response of mock

treated (blue) and Spn infected 24hpi (orange) hPCLS. Arrows indicate the corresponding

infected sample for each patient mock sample.

D) Volcano plot showing differentially expressed genes between Spn infected and mock

treated samples. Log2 fold-change induction is indicated in the x-axis, p-adjusted in the

y-axis. Genes have been represented in: orange (upregulated), blue (downregulated),

grey (not significant). Genes associated to immune system pathways are represented in

black.

E) Pathway enrichment analysis was conducted using Reactome database (hypergeometric

test). The top 10 pathways upregulated by *Spn* infection are shown. -log10 (p-adjusted)

is given by a color scale. Coverage percentage of the pathway set is indicated by the size

of the dot. Pathways are indicated with the total number of genes in brackets and the

number of genes significantly regulated are indicated next to the dot.

F) Heatmaps of the top 30 genes significantly upregulated (pink) and downregulated (blue)

by Spn in hPCLS from 5 patients. Genes are ranked by the log2 Fold Change.

G-H) hPCLS have been infected 24h with Spn (10^3 cfu) and co-treated with an IL-1β blocking

antibody (10µg/ml) (N=3, duplicates). G) Bacterial titers have been measured. H) RT-qPCR

has been realized on a panel of genes associated to IL-1β signaling for Spn infection.

Statistical significance was established with a one-way ANOVA (N=3, each symbol represents

one independent experiment). White boxes are the Spn-infected hPCLS, grey boxes are co-

treated with anti-IL-1β cocktail.

Supplementary figures:

Figure S1: Viability of mPCLS and hPCLS in culture.

Cell death was measured in mPCLS (in green) and hPCLS (in gray) by quantification of LDH

release upon 4 days post-slicing. Positive control of cell death (100%) was realized with triton

10X treatment (N=3, duplicates).

Figure S2: Flow cytometry gating strategy to describe immune cells in murine PCLS

Examplary gating strategy is shown for A) Lymphoid cell panel B) Myeloid cell panel

Figure S3: Signaling activation in mouse in vivo and ex vivo 48h after IAV infection

Mice   and   mPCLS   were   respectively   infected   with 10^4/10^5 PFU   of   IAV

(A/Netherlands/602/2009/H1N1) for 48h. Tissue was processed to bulk RNA sequencing and

host response was analyzed using 'DeSeq2' package on R. Transcription factor enrichment

analysis was conducted using EnrichR platform for IAV host responses in mouse in vivo (A)

and ex vivo (B). Only transcription factors significantly enriched are indicated. Odds ratios

are indicated in x-axis and p-value in y-axis. Hemostasis pathway (C), Extracellular matrix

organization (D) and Programmed cell death (E) heatmaps in mouse system 48h after IAV

infection

Figure S4: Flow cytometry gating strategy to describe resident memory lymphoid cells in

murine PCLS

Examplary gating strategy is shown for a lymphoid cell panel

Figure S5: Flow cytometry gating strategy to describe immune cells in human PCLS

Examplary gating strategy is shown for A) Lymphoid cell panel B) Myeloid cell panel.

A

Low melting agarose perfusion

Solidification 4°C

Coring & PCLS cutting by microtome

PCLS obtention

PCLS culture & treatment

B

mPCLS

A, airway area; AE, airway epithelium; AV, alveolar spaces; SM, smooth muscle; AR, airway ramification

C

Lymphoid cells

% of lymphoid population

LB, gd LT, NK, NKT, CD8 LT n, CD8 LT cm, CD8 LT em, CD4 LT n, CD4 LT cm, CD4 LT em, Others

D

Myeloid cells

% of myeloid population

AMs, Neut., DCs, ClaMs, PatM, CD11b-, Others

E

Cya3-DAPI *Cya3 (IAV)*

mPCLS IAV 48h

Control

F

Cya3-DAPI *Cya3 (IAV)*

mouse in vivo IAV 48h

Control

G

mPCLS

IAV titers (PFU/ml)

24h 48h

H

mouse in vivo

IAV titers (PFU/ml)

24h 48h

A

hPCLS

A, airway area; AE, airway epithelium; AV, alveolar spaces;
SM, smooth muscle; AR, airway ramification

D

IAV 48H

Control

Cya3-DAPI   *Cya3 (IAV)*

B

Lymphoid cells

% of lymphoid population

LB, gd LT, NK, NKT, Others, CD8 LT N, CD8 LT CM, CD8 LT EM, CD4 LT N, CD4 LT CM, CD4 LT EM, CD8 LT EMRA, CD4 LT EMRA

C

Myeloid cells

% of myeloid population

AMs, OtMs, Neut., DCs, ClaMs, NClaMs, IntMs, CD11b+/HLA-DRI-, CD11b-, Others

E

H1N1 titers

PFU/mL

10^{10}
10^8
10^6
10^4
10^2
10^0

D1 D2 D3 D4 D5 D6 D7 D8
days post-infection