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Naïl Benallegue, Bryan Nicol, Séverine Bézie, Hadrien Regue, Nadège Vimont, et al.. Alteration of CD8+ CD45RC[int/neg] regulatory T cells functions in Multiple Sclerosis and correlates with disease severity. ECTRIMS 2018 (34th congress of the european committee for treatment and research in Multiple Sclerosis), Oct 2018, Berlin, Germany. inserm-02159755

HAL Id: inserm-02159755

<https://www.hal.inserm.fr/inserm-02159755>

Submitted on 19 Jun 2019

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Alteration of CD8+CD45RC^{int/neg} regulatory T cells functions in Multiple Sclerosis and correlates with disease severity

Naïl Benallegue^{1,2,3,4}, Bryan Nicol^{1,2,3,4}, Séverine Bézie^{1,2,3}, Hadrien Regue^{1,2,3}, Nadège Vimont^{1,2,3}, Léa Flippe^{1,2,3}, Alexandra Garcia^{1,2,3}, David A. Laplaud^{1,2,3,4} and Carole Guillonneau^{1,2,3,4}.

¹Center for Research in Transplantation and Immunology, INSERM, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France; ²Institut de Transplantation Urologie Néphrologie (ITUN), CHU Nantes, Nantes, France; ³LabEx IGO "Immunotherapy, Graft, Oncology", Nantes, France; ⁴co-authors

BACKGROUND

Autoimmune diseases can develop following pathological activation of autoreactive effector cells and/or, alternatively, after weakening of self-protective regulatory mechanisms. Most of the studies have focused on CD4⁺ Tregs and the **role of CD8⁺ Tregs in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) remains largely unexplored**. We previously reported the suppressive properties of rat and human **CD8⁺CD45RC^{int/neg} Treg cells**, expressing Foxp3 and acting through IFN γ , TGF β and IL34 cytokines (Guillonneau, JCI, 2007; Bézie, JCI, 2015, Bézie, Front. Immunol., 2018). Thus, their **potency of suppression** make them strong candidates of disruptive immune tolerance, especially in MS where CD8⁺ T cells play a major role. **Thus, the overreaching goal of this study is to define the role of CD8⁺ regulatory T cell in MS pathogenesis**

MATERIAL & METHODS

56 untreated relapsing-remitting MS patients and 52 age- and gender-matched healthy volunteers (HV) were recruited.

- **Tregs** were defined as CD3⁺CD8⁺ (or CD4⁻) CD161^{low}V α 7-CD45RC^{int/neg} T cells. MAIT cells were excluded from all analysis.
- **Staining:** T cells were stimulated or not 5h with PMA+ionomycin including 4h with BFA before FACS depending on the marker investigated.
- **Transcriptomic analysis:** 3'-Digital Gene Expression Sequencing was performed on unstimulated cells. Analysis was performed using R packages and KEGG, Reactome and Gene Ontology databases for Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA).

CD8+CD45RC^{INT} TREGS FREQUENCY IN BLOOD IS REDUCED DURING EXACERBATION WHEREAS CD8+CD45RC^{NEG} TREGS ARE MORE FREQUENT WITH ENHANCED SUPPRESSIVE FUNCTIONS

IN SEVERE PATIENTS WITH A HIGHER MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SEVERITY SCORE, CD8+CD45RC^{INT} TREGS FUNCTION IS IMPAIRED

CONCLUSION

For the first time, we demonstrate an **impairment of CD8+CD45RC^{int} Tregs in MS**. We propose to define two populations of CD8+CD45RC Tregs:

- **CD8+CD45RC^{int} are dysfunctional in severe MS patients and less frequent during exacerbations**
- **CD8+CD45RC^{neg} Tregs react properly to inflammation with enhanced regulatory functions during exacerbations**

We suggest CD8+CD45RC^{int/neg} T cells and subsets may be potential therapeutic targets and prognostic tools in MS

Authors have no financial disclosures that would be a potential conflict of interest with this presentation