

Human autoimmune disease: learning from models

The BioPark Hertfordshire, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3AX: 19th June 2009

"More than 3% of the population suffer from some form of autoimmune disease and this meeting will bring together experts working with well-validated models of human autoimmunity. The emphasis of the meeting will be on the use of animal models to elucidate pathogenetic mechanisms of relevance to human disease and to develop novel therapeutic strategies" **Chair:** *Dr. Richard Williams*, Imperial College London, UK.

This meeting has CPD accreditation

- 9:00 – 9:45 **Registration**
- 9:45 – 10:00 **Introduction by the Chair:** *Dr. Richard Williams*, Imperial College London, UK
- 10:00 – 10:40 **Immunotherapy of rheumatoid arthritis: lessons learnt from animal models**
Dr Val Corrigall, KCL School of Medicine at Guy's, King's and St Thomas' Hospitals, London, UK
Stress proteins are upregulated at the site of inflammation such as that found within the joints of patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Initially these proteins were identified as autoantigens and hence targets for immune attack. However, subsequent studies both in man and mouse have characterised these antigens as either stimulators of anti-inflammatory mediators or are themselves in fact targets of regulatory T cells. Both these observations make stress proteins attractive candidates for the development of novel immunotherapeutics. The translational research aimed at developing such biologics for the treatment of inflammatory arthritis will be discussed.
- 10:40 – 11:20 **VITILIGO: An Enigmatic Auto Immune Disease?**
Emeritus Professor P.K. Das, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Vitiligo is a disease where the epidermal pigment cells [melanocytes], the main defense mechanism against UV mediated damage, are lost randomly. The disappearance of melanocytes shows ugly appearance of skin with varying degree of white maculae. As such, vitiligo is neither life threatening nor a debilitating disease as compared to other well known autoimmune diseases such as lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, autoimmune diabetes etc. Further, despite the demonstration of the presence of mild inflammatory infiltrate in the skin paralleling the loss of melanocytes, vitiligo can not be categorized as an inflammatory dermatoses. Interestingly, the disease is often associated with the presence of classical autoimmune disease symptoms in the same patient.
Various types of theories on the etiology of vitiligo are often being discussed and debated endlessly among the investigators. Since last decade, however, the autoimmune mechanism is being advocated by the investigators. Indeed, our own work meticulously demonstrate that the loss of melanocytes in "a certain type of generalized vitiligo" is caused by autoreactive melanocyte specific T cells. In addition, in some patients auto-antibodies against melanocytes can also be demonstrated. Nevertheless, vitiligo as such is not always perceived in the category of the classically known autoimmune disease.
Since the autoimmune pathology, though remains obscure, it is believed that the perturbation of homeostatic immune physiology of host, (which is maintained via the interacting antigen presenting cells [APC]-T cells and B cells), leads to the precipitation of any autoimmune disease including vitiligo. Such perturbation immune homeostasis can be illustrated clearly in vitiligo pathology. One bonus point for studying vitiligo as a model autoimmune disease is that the therapeutics for melanoma, a deadly skin cancer, can possibly be designed, by studying vitiligo. Against the above scenario, this presentation will argue the necessity for undertaking vitiligo research within the umbrella of both autoimmunity and cancer. For further reading the followings could be referred for further reading.
- 11:20 – 12:00 **Inflammatory mediators and lupus autoimmunity**
Professor Rizgar A Mageed, William Harvey Research Institute, St Barts and the Royal London, UK
It is established that the immune and inflammatory responses cross-regulate each other. In this study we show that manipulation of the immune system in murine lupus by administration of recombinant TNF α , or blocking endogenous TNF α with antibody profoundly influences lupus autoimmunity. The studies have also shown that in this setting TNF α /anti-TNF α act directly on T and B-lymphocytes and profoundly affect their proliferation, cytokine production and a number of other vital functions with consequent effects on autoimmunity. We explore the pathways through which these responses are effected. Further, the relevance of the studies to human diseases will be discussed.

12:00 – 12:05
12:05 – 13:00

Speakers photo
Lunch

13:00 – 13:40

Animal models for autoimmune diabetes
Dr Lucienne Chatenoud, Hôpital Necker, France

13:40 – 15:20

What knockout mice have taught us about the pathogenesis of lupus
Professor Marina Botto, Imperial College, London, UK

Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is a multisystem autoimmune disease characterised by the production of an extraordinary array of autoantibodies reactive with nuclear antigens. Interaction of these autoantibodies with their cognate antigens leads to widespread inflammatory injury and underlies the pathogenesis of SLE. The aetiology of SLE is unknown, as well as the factors that influence the severity of disease manifestations. In mice and humans, expression of autoimmunity is under complex genetic control. A strategy to analyse the contribution of individual alleles to a multigenic trait has been the development of animals carrying genetic manipulations of specific genes implicated in the pathogenesis of SLE. This approach allows an *in vivo* assessment of the impact on the immune system of severe modifications in the expression (deficiency or overproduction) of genes suspected to play a role in the development of an autoimmune response. Genetically manipulated models have proved to be very useful to dissect effector mechanisms involved in disease pathogenesis and/or to delineate genetic mechanisms that may lead to systemic autoimmunity. Several important observations have emerged from the genetically engineered models. First, whether a particular gene or mutation causes a disease depends on the host: both disease susceptibility and the disease phenotype that result from the alteration of a single gene depend on other genes. Second, some genetic defects may share common pathogenic pathways. As a result, one could reasonably predict the possibility of developing common therapeutic strategies to treat this multifactorial complex condition. Finally, the development of genetically manipulated animals has led to the discovery of new roles for genes with known immune functions. The complement deficient animals that will be presented in more details are a typical example of this. There is overwhelming evidence that deficiency of classical pathway complement proteins causes the development of SLE in humans and mice. Complement is implicated in the pathogenesis of SLE in several ways and may act as both friend and foe. Recently it has been suggested that one of the main activities of the classical pathway is to promote the resolution of inflammation by enhancing the clearance and uptake of dying cells by macrophages. We have developed a series of murine models of complement deficiency and SLE and found that these mice develop a lupus-like disease and have an impaired clearance of apoptotic cells. We have observed a similar phagocytic defect in macrophages derived from C1q-deficient humans cultured in autologous serum. This defect was rectifiable with purified human C1q. Consistent with these findings, we have data showing that macrophages from two lupus-prone murine strains have an impaired phagocytosis of apoptotic cells when compared with two non-autoimmune strains. Collectively these data strongly support the hypothesis that deficiency in complement predisposes to the development of lupus through inefficient removal of potentially pathogenic apoptotic cell debris. However, impaired clearance of such cells is, on its own, insufficient to produce autoimmunity. The data available from knockout mice emphasize that susceptibility to an autoimmune disease might depend on many factors in addition to the defective removal of dying cells. In summary it is clear that the traditional view of the role of complement in autoimmunity needs revision. Complement activation in lupus has been viewed as a major cause of tissue injury. Instead, evidence is emerging that complement may play a protective role rather than an exclusively pro-inflammatory role in tissue injury.

15:20 - 16:00

Pre-clinical models of autoimmune connective tissue diseases
Professor David Abraham, University College London, UK

Connective tissue diseases have complex pathogenic mechanisms encompassing host genetics, vascular manifestations, aberrant inflammation and autoimmunity leading to enhanced tissue repair resulting in scarring and replacement fibrosis. Contemporary approaches use reporter transgenesis to track and target pathogenic cells and knock-in and -out technologies to manipulate the cells and key molecular events involved. These are utilised within existing naturally occurring disease models and those induced by modulating the environment. Developing useful systems to model and study human disease processes *in vivo* represents a major biomedical challenge, as does their interpretation and utility as pre-clinical models to reliably access novel therapeutics

16:00 – 16:30
16:30 – 17:00

Selected Abstracts
Chairman's summing up.

About the Chair

Richard Williams has been working for many years at the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology on the immunotherapy of rheumatoid arthritis using animal models. His work contributed to the successful development of TNF blocking biologics, which are now widely used in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases.

About the Speakers

Rizgar Mageed was awarded his PhD at London University in 1985. His interests are in understanding causes of autoimmunity and relationship with chronic inflammation. He worked at the Department of Immunology University of Birmingham until 1990 when he joined the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology Division at Imperial College as a senior lecturer. In 2000, Prof. Mageed was awarded an Arthritis Research Campaign Fellowship and appointed Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Rheumatology at University College London. He was appointed to his current post at the Bone and Joint Research Unit at the William Harvey Institute in December 2002.

Professor P.K. Das is retired as Associate Professor in Immunology and Head of the Research Group of Experimental Dermato Immuno Pathology, Department of Pathology, Academic Medical Center University of Amsterdam(AMC-UvA), Netherlands,(however still active as a Free Lance Research Consultant at AMC-UvA and also continuing as Professor of Chronic Inflammation/Immunodeficiency, at the Institute of Paediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, University of Brescia, Italy. I am a UK citizen, studied Biochemistry with a Ph.D. degree from London University and worked as an University Academic in London University, Hong Kong University, McGill University(Canada), University of Hamburg(Germany) until settling down in Netherlands. Since last 30 years worked as an Immunologist then as immunopathologist in University of Amsterdam until the retirement at the age of 65 years. Since last twenty five years devoted the research career in immunopathology of Tropical Diseases like Leprosy, Schistosomiasis, Tuberculosis and relevant inflammatory tissue reaction. He has authored more than 200 publications in various Peer reviewed journals and chapters of Book and popularising articles. His scientific publications scan the field of Enzymology, Human Genetics, Neuro science and since last 30 years in the field of inflammation, immunity, infection and immunodeficiency. Supervised more than 20 \Ph.D. students of different Nationality. His current interests among others is in the development of tropical medical research and education with a relevance to global health in an active co-operation with Brazil and India, in an Honorary Capacity

Dr Valerie Corrigall gained her PhD from London University in 1980. Since then she has had a specific interest in T cells in inflammation biology and in particular their role in rheumatoid arthritis. Valerie is now senior lecturer in the Department of Academic Rheumatology on the Guy's Hospital Campus of KCL School of Medicine. Recently she was instrumental in isolating and identifying the stress protein BiP as a novel autoantibody in rheumatoid arthritis. Her subsequent work has generated data showing BiP has powerful anti-inflammatory properties. A clinical trial for BiP as a novel immunotherapy for rheumatoid arthritis is to be started later this year.

Marina Botto is Professor of Rheumatology in the Division of Medicine, Imperial College, London. Her research focuses on complement biology and systemic autoimmunity. Over the years she has developed several animal models of complement deficiency which have helped to understand the role of complement in SLE and renal diseases

Professor Abraham is research director in the Centre for Rheumatology at UCL. Initially trained at the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology in London, he then became a Medical Research Council Travelling Fellow in Molecular Genetics and Transgenics at the Jackson Laboratory in the USA, and has worked at the MRC National Institute for Medical Research as a senior scientist in genes and development. Major research interests include the biology of tissue repair, and pathology of scarring and fibrosis, and the development of *in vivo* pre-clinical models of human disease as to study the pathogenesis and treatment of autoimmune connective tissue diseases.

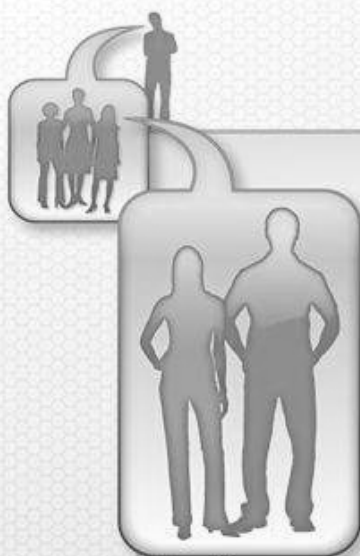
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*This meeting was **organised by Euroscicon** (www.euroscicon.com), a team of dedicated professionals working for the continuous improvement of technical knowledge transfer to all scientists. Euroscicon believe that they can make a positive difference to the quality of science by providing cutting edge information on new technological advancements to the scientific community. This is provided via our exceptional services to individual scientists, research institutions and industry. The event was hosted by **BioPark** (www.biopark.co.uk), a research and development centre in Welwyn Garden City providing specialist facilities and support for bioscience and health technology businesses to grow, and to develop new products and technologies*

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