

Table 1 Characteristics of participants

Characteristics	HD	AC	ATL	HAM/TSP
Participant number	10	23	10	10
Age, median years (IQR)	54 (49–62)	59 (50–70)	65 (61–76)	60 (54–62)
Male sex, no (%)	3 (30)	6 (26)	5 (50)	3 (30)
WBC (IQR)/ μ L	4,930 (1,437)	5,157 (1,100)	17,030 (12,975)	5,900 (1,500)
Lymphocyte (IQR)/ μ L	1,717 (503)	1,697 (601)	8,443 (10,764)	1,739 (560)
PVL median (IQR)	-	1.8 (0.5–5.0)	59.6 (18.3–67.1)	9.6 (5.6–12.0)

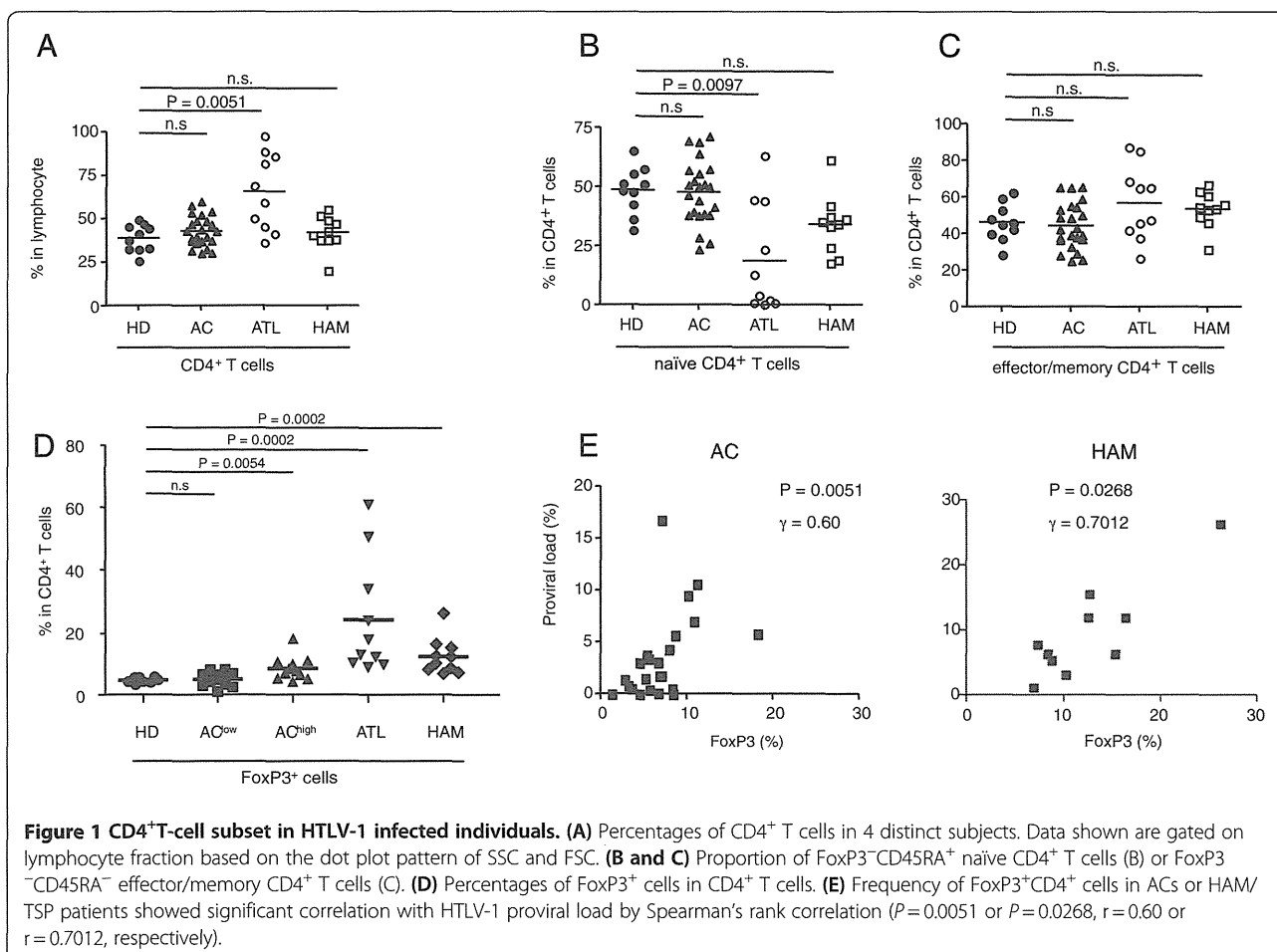
NOTE. HD healthy donor; AC asymptomatic HTLV-1 carrier; ATL adult T-cell leukemia; HAM/TSP HTLV-1 associated myelopathy/tropic spastic paraparesis; IQR interquartile range; PVL proviral load. ATL patients consist of 2 acute, 4 smoldering and 4 chronic types of ATL cases.

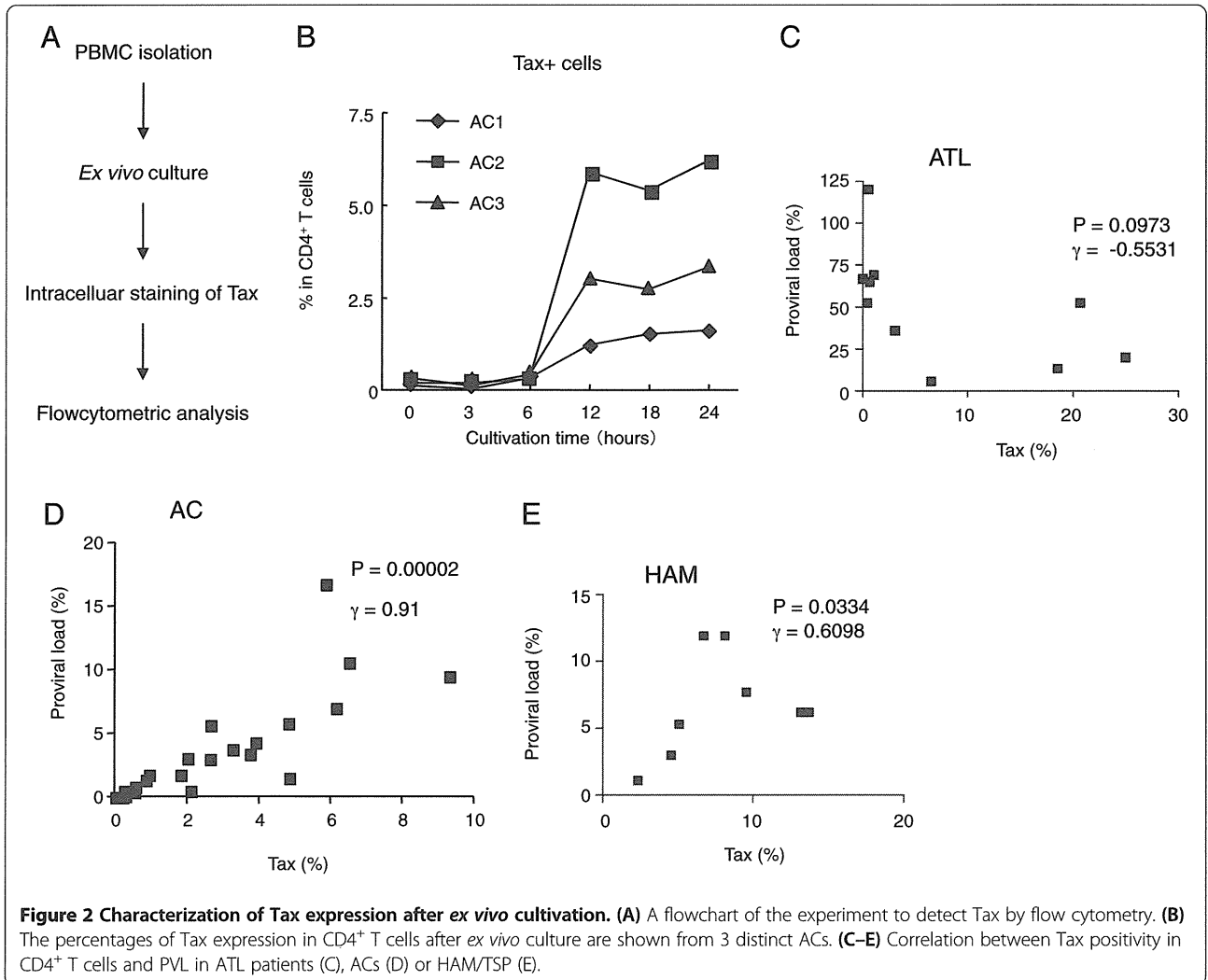
of each T-cell subset showed the same tendency as well as the frequency (Additional file 1: Figure S1). These results collectively suggested that HTLV-1 infection increased the frequency of FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T cells.

Tax expression after *ex vivo* culture is well correlated with proviral load

It has been reported that Tax expression increases spontaneously during *ex vivo* cultivation [32], which is useful to detect HTLV-1 infected cells at single cell level. We,

therefore, used the same method to detect HTLV-1 infected cells by flow cytometry (Figure 2A), in which we can detect both Tax and various markers of CD4⁺ T-cell subsets at the same time. We first evaluated the detection system by using a series of samples collected at different time points after *ex vivo* cultivation. We found that a small number of Tax-expressing cells could be detected after *ex vivo* cultivation for 6 hours; significant expression could be observed after 12 hours cultivation; and Tax expression continued for 24 hours of cultivation





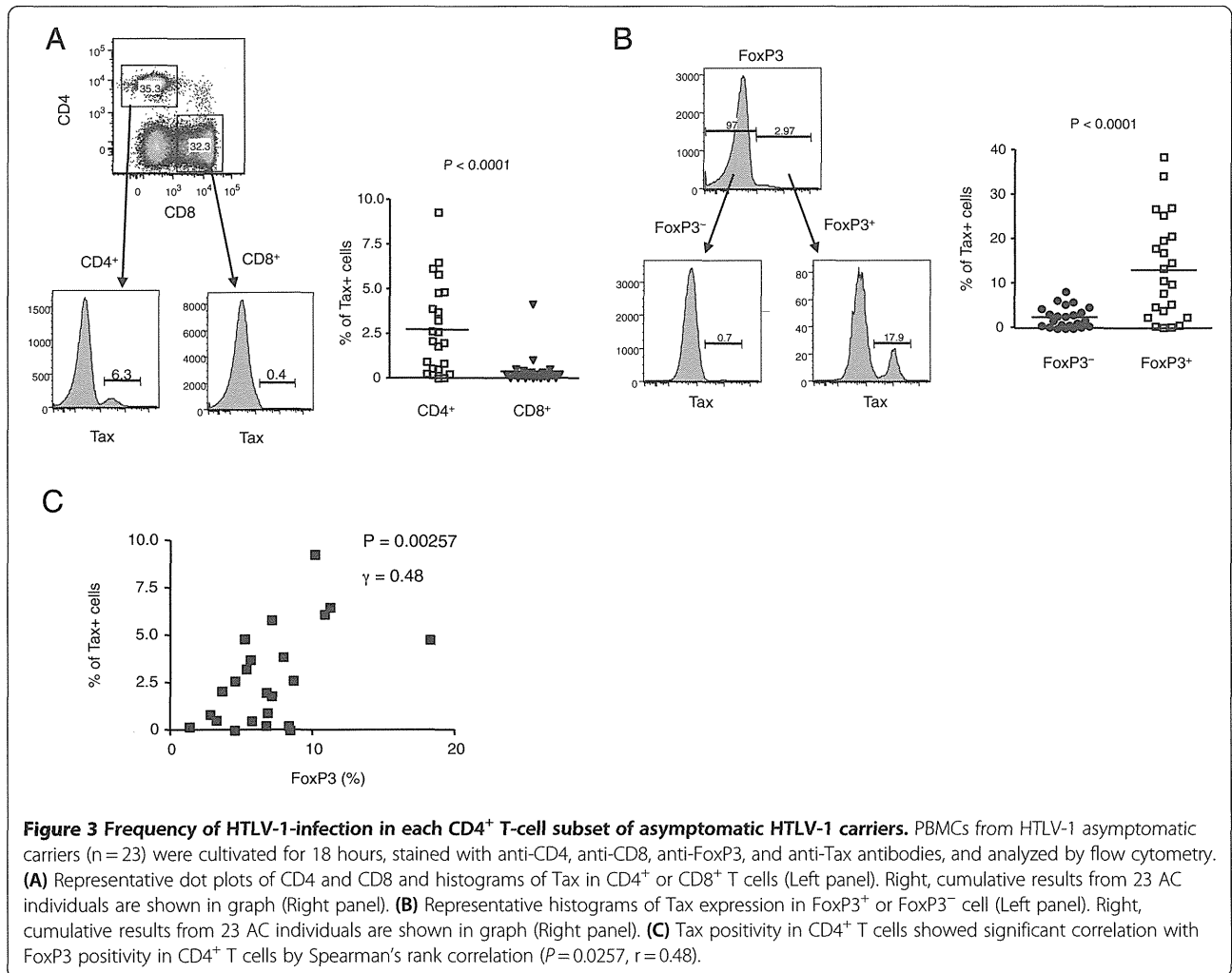
(Figure 2B). In order to confirm the efficiency of this system, we analyzed the correlation between HTLV-1 proviral load and the percentage of Tax expression in this system.

Consistent with previous reports that Tax expression is frequently silenced in ATL cells, Tax expression after *ex vivo* cultivation of ATL cells was not correlated with the proviral load (Figure 2C). The percentage of Tax positive cells tended to be lower than the proviral load even after *ex vivo* culture in AC and HAM/TSP patients, but we found that Tax positivity showed a significant correlation with the proviral load both in AC and HAM/TSP ($r = 0.91$ or 0.61 , $p = 0.00002$ or 0.0334 , respectively, Figure 2D and E). In order to investigate whether T-cell subset markers, including FoxP3 and CD45RA, are influenced by *ex vivo* cultivation, we analyzed their expression both before and after cultivation. The results showed that the frequency of FoxP3 or CD45RA was not significantly changed during *ex vivo* culture (Additional file2: Figure S2). These findings collectively

indicate the usefulness of this Tax detection system for this study.

The frequency of HTLV-1 infection in each CD4⁺ T-cell subset

We next investigated which T-cell subset is frequently infected with HTLV-1. We cultivated PBMCs isolated from HTLV-1 infected individuals *ex vivo* for 12–18 hours and stained with antibodies to Tax and various T-cell subset markers such as CD4, CD8, and FoxP3. Consistent with the previous reports, the frequency of Tax positivity in CD4⁺ T cells was much higher than that in CD8⁺ T cells ($p < 0.0001$, Figure 3A). Among CD4⁺ T cells, the FoxP3 positive cell population contained a significantly higher ratio of Tax positive cells than that in FoxP3 negative cells ($p < 0.0001$, Figure 3B). In line with the finding in Figure 1E, the frequencies of FoxP3⁺ cells were significantly correlated with Tax positivity in CD4⁺ T cells. ($r = 0.48$, $p = 0.0257$, Figure 3C). These results indicated



that the increased FoxP3⁺ cells in HTLV-1-infected individuals were frequently infected with HTLV-1.

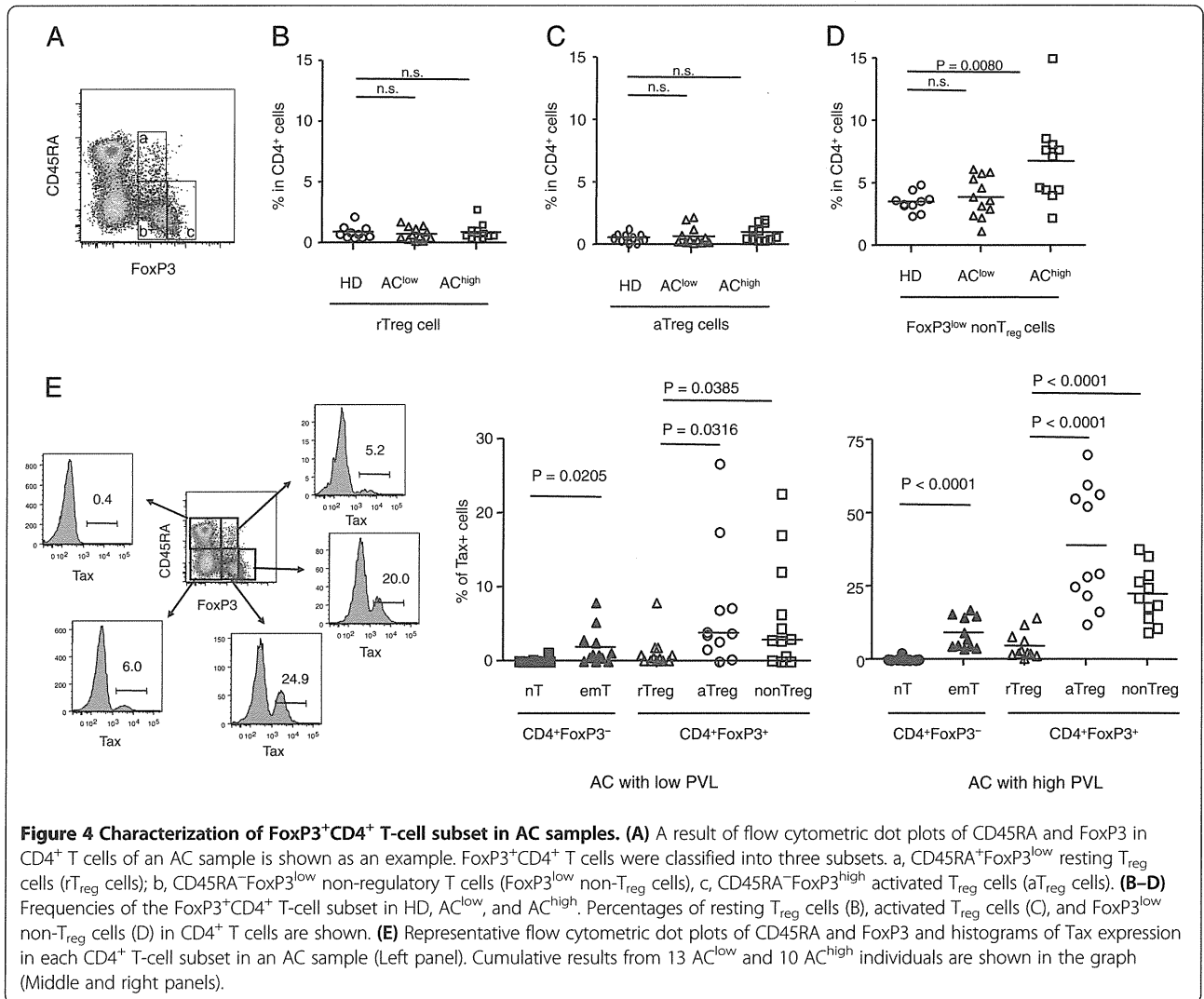
Characterization of FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T-cell subset in AC

We further focused on the FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T-cell subset as defined previously (Figure 4A) [27]. First, we investigated the frequency of FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T-cell subset in HD or AC. The results showed that the frequencies of rT_{reg} or aT_{reg} in AC^{low} or AC^{high} were not significantly different from that in HD (Figure 4B and 4 C), but FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells were significantly more frequent in the AC^{high} population (p = 0.0080, Figure 4D). We next analyzed the presence of HTLV-1 in each CD4⁺ T-cell subset by using AC sample. We observed that Tax positivity in FoxP3⁻ effector/memory CD4⁺ T cells was higher than that of FoxP3⁻ naive CD4⁺ T cells (p < 0.0001, Figure 4E). Since effector/memory CD4 T cells are the most dominant in total CD4 T cells in terms of absolute cell number, the Tax-expressing cells are most abundant in effector/memory CD4 T cells (Additional file 3: Figure

S3). More interestingly, Tax positivity in aT_{reg} cells or FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells was much higher than that of rT_{reg} cells in AC both AC^{low} and AC^{high} subjects (p < 0.0001 or 0.0001, respectively, Figure 4E). These results indicated that HTLV-1 is frequently present in aT_{reg} cells or FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells.

Characteristics of T-cell subsets in HAM/TSP patients

To investigate the inflammatory aspects of HTLV-1 infection, we next focused on PBMCs of HAM/TSP patients. There were no significant differences in the percentage of CD4⁺ or CD8⁺ T cells between HD and HAM/TSP groups (p = 0.3073 and 0.1509, respectively, Figure 5A). The result of Tax staining showed that HTLV-1 infection was predominantly detected in CD4⁺ T cells, and at a higher frequency in CD4⁺FoxP3⁺ T cells than CD4⁺FoxP3⁻ T cells (p = 0.0069, Figure 5B). To characterize the phenotype of FoxP3⁺ cells in HAM/TSP patients, we investigated the expression levels of T_{reg} associated molecules, and found that the expression of GITR or CTLA-4 in HAM/TSP patients



was significantly lower than that in HD ($p=0.0328$ or 0.00002 , respectively, Figure 5C). On the contrary, CD25 expression was high in HAM/TSP patients ($p=0.0099$, Figure 5C). We further evaluated FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T-cell subset in HAM/TSP patients. The frequencies of rT_{reg} were not significantly different from that in HD ($p=0.9096$, Figure 5D), but aT_{reg} cells or FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells were remarkably increased ($p=0.0250$ or 0.0004 , Figure 5E and 5F). Furthermore, aT_{reg} cells or FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells showed a high frequency of Tax⁺ cells compared with rT_{reg} cells ($p=0.0069$ or 0.0069 , respectively, Figure 5G) as observed in ACs (Figure 4E). These data indicated that HTLV-1 infection significantly influenced not only the frequency but also the phenotype of CD4⁺FoxP3⁺ T cells in an inflammatory disease HAM/TSP.

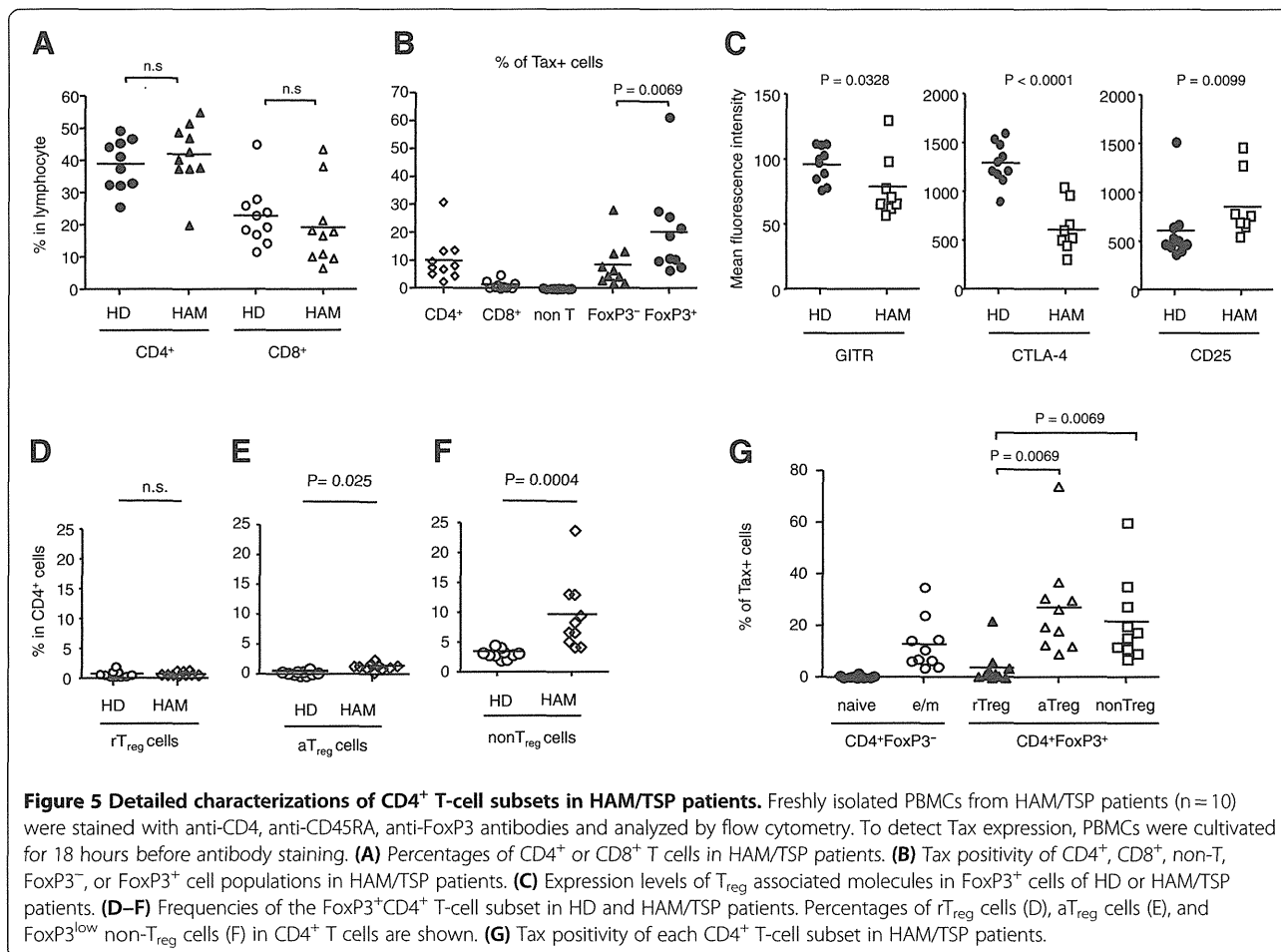
Phenotypical analyses of ATL cells

Previous studies reported that some ATL cells express FoxP3 or CD25 [30,31,33], but the precise information

about FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T-cell subset of ATL cells remains unknown. We, therefore, analyzed CD4⁺ T-cell subsets for ATL cases. FoxP3 positivity was 80% in ATL cases; yet the expression level was different among the cases (Figure 6A), which is consistent with previous reports [30,31]. In line with the finding in asymptomatic HTLV-1-infected carriers that the percentage of HTLV-1 in FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells or aT_{reg} cells was high (Figure 4E), ATL cells analyzed in this study did not express CD45RA, suggesting that FoxP3-expressing ATL cells might be derived from FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} or aT_{reg} cells. CD25 expression on ATL cells was generally high, but there was also much variation among the cases (Figure 6B).

Discussion

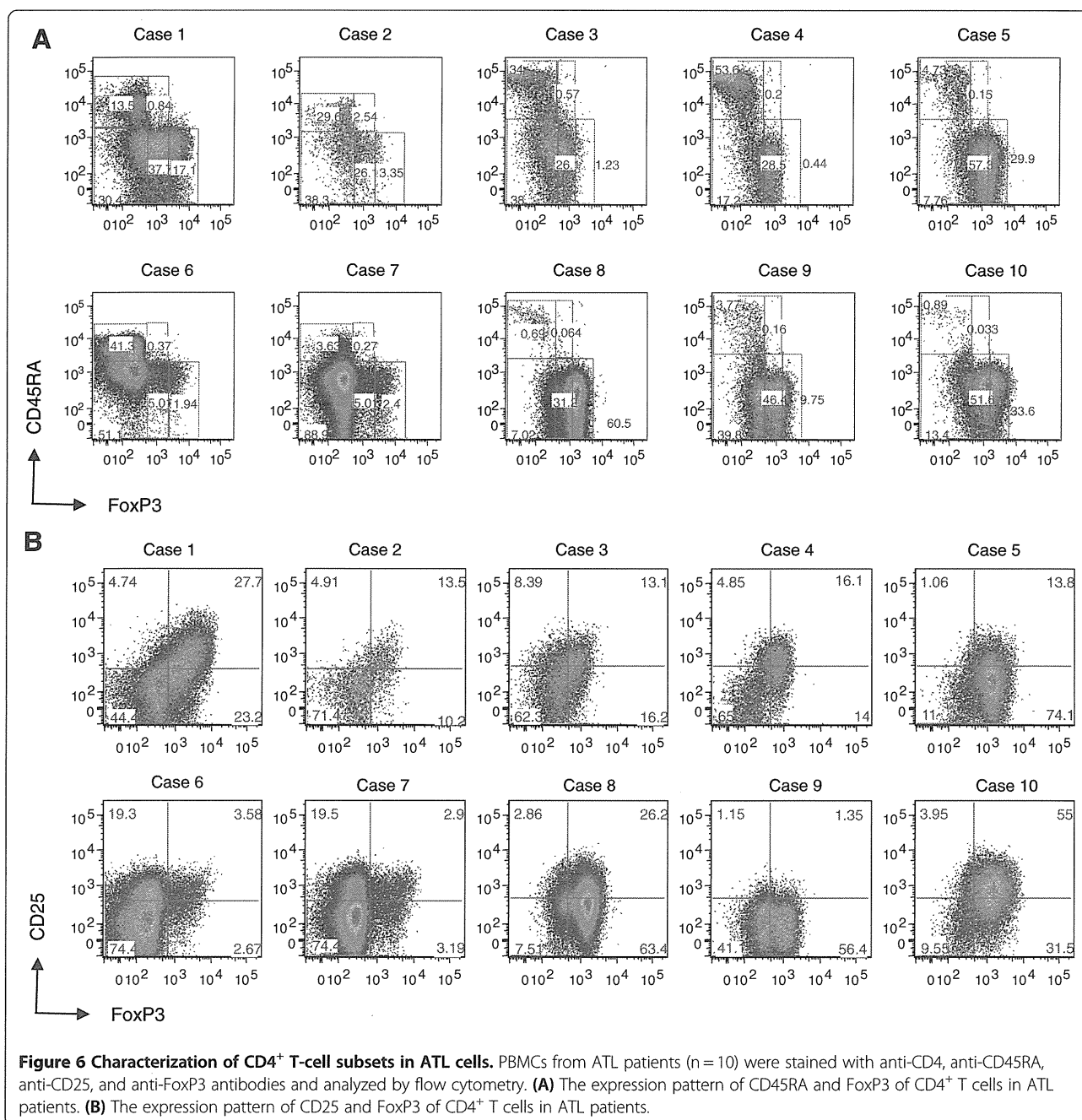
FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells play a crucial role in persistent infection and pathogenesis of chronic viral infection. Previous studies have suggested that T_{reg} cells suppress virus-



specific CD8⁺ T-cell effector functions in chronic human viral infections such as human immunodeficiency virus, hepatitis C virus and cytomegalovirus [34,35]. Regarding this point, FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells play a role in facilitating viral persistence. In HTLV-1 infection, the frequency of FoxP3⁺ cells is indeed correlated with the impairment of CTL activity against the viral antigen Tax in HAM/TSP patient [36]. On the other hand, FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells could prevent tissue damage caused by excessive immune response triggered by viral infection. In addition to these general roles of FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells in chronic viral infection, FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells should have some specific role in HTLV-1 infection, because FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells are comprised in CD4⁺ T cells, which are a main host cell population of HTLV-1. Here we performed a comprehensive analysis of CD4⁺ T-cell subsets in individuals naturally infected with HTLV-1 and revealed that the frequency of HTLV-1 infection is positively correlated with the frequency of FoxP3⁺ T cells (Figure 1E). The increased FoxP3⁺ T cells themselves are frequently infected with HTLV-1 (Figure 3B), suggesting that HTLV-1 utilizes the FoxP3⁺ T cells as a host cell. What is the advantage for HTLV-1 to exist in FoxP3⁺ T cells? There are two

possibilities for this preference. First, FoxP3⁺ T cells are known as hyper-proliferating cells *in vivo* with a doubling time of 8 days [37], which could contribute to clonal expansion of infected cells. Second, HTLV-1 can evade the host immune system by directly infecting this potentially immuno-suppressive cell population. Thus, HTLV-1-infection of FoxP3⁺ T cells should enable the virus to increase or maintain proviral load and achieve persistent infection.

How then does HTLV-1 infection target FoxP3⁺ T cells? This could be explained by the following two mechanisms. First, FoxP3⁺ T cells are known to contact with dendritic cells (DCs) frequently [38], which could increase the chance of *de novo* viral infection between DCs and FoxP3⁺ T cells. A recent study demonstrated that cell-free HTLV-1 efficiently infects DCs, and the infected DCs promote *de novo* infection of CD4⁺ T cells [39]. This notion is consistent with the finding that effector/memory-type CD45RA⁻ T_{reg} cells, including FoxP3^{low} non-T_{reg} cells and FoxP3^{high} aT_{reg} cells, are more frequently infected with HTLV-1 than CD45RA⁺ rT_{reg} cells (Figure 4E). Second, once FoxP3⁻ T cells are infected with HTLV-1, HBZ should be expressed in the host cells. Since HBZ is recently



reported to induce FoxP3 expression via enhancing TGF- β signaling pathway [17,40], HTLV-1 infection is likely to convert FoxP3⁻ cells into FoxP3⁺ cells. In addition, HTLV-1 has a cell-extrinsic effect on FoxP3⁺ cell generation. HTLV-1 infected cells secrete CCL22 via expression of Tax, which indirectly contributes to the generation and maintenance of HTLV-1 uninfected FoxP3⁺ cells [41,42]. This would contribute to an increased number of HTLV-1-uninfected FoxP3⁺ cells.

Since FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells play a crucial role in suppressing immune response, the increase of FoxP3⁺ cells

observed in HTLV-1 infection may contribute to immunodeficiency, which is frequently observed in HTLV-1 infection [43]. On the other hand, the high frequency of FoxP3⁺ T cells observed in HAM/TSP patients is paradoxical, because the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP is believed to be inflammatory. Therefore, we analyzed the phenotype of the increased FoxP3⁺ cells and observed that CTLA-4 and GITR expression of FoxP3⁺ T cells in HAM/TSP patient was significantly reduced compared to uninfected individuals (Figure 5C). A similar observation was reported previously that the expression level of

FoxP3, GITR, or CTLA-4 mRNA in CD4⁺CD25⁺ T cells of HAM/TSP patients is lower than that of HD [44]. That report used CD4⁺CD25⁺ as a marker of T_{reg} cells, but CD4⁺CD25⁺ T cells contain not only FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells but also FoxP3⁻ activated T cells. Particularly the proportion of CD4⁺CD25⁺FoxP3⁻activated T cells is up-regulated in HAM/TSP patients, which is likely to reduce the proportion of FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells in CD4⁺CD25⁺ T cells of HAM/TSP patients. Thus, the expression level of GITR or CTLA-4 in FoxP3⁺ T cells of HAM/TSP patients has not been elucidated yet. To avoid this concern, we utilized the multicolor flow cytometry, which enabled us to show that CTLA-4 and GITR were clearly down regulated in FoxP3⁺ T cells of HAM/TSP patients.

Then what is the underlying mechanism of this phenomenon? We reported recently that HBZ-Tg mice showed a pro-inflammatory phenotype in spite of the increase of Foxp3⁺ T cells [17], which is similar to HAM/TSP patients (Figure 1D). T_{reg} associated molecules were also down regulated in Foxp3⁺ T cells of HBZ-Tg mice. Thus, HBZ-mediated FoxP3 dysfunction may play a role in the abnormality regarding FoxP3⁺ cells in HAM/TSP patients. It has been reported that Tax also contributes to the dysregulation of FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells. Tax suppresses FoxP3 expression at transcriptional level [45], which alternatively or additionally could contribute to the abnormal phenotype of FoxP3⁺ cells. These findings collectively indicate that the increased FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells were functionally impaired in HAM/TSP patients. Furthermore, FoxP3⁺ CD4⁺ T cells in HAM/TSP patient contain an increased FoxP3⁺ non-Treg population (Figure 5F), which would contribute to the inflammatory phenotype of HAM/TSP via generation of pro-inflammatory cytokine-producing CD4⁺ T cells such as T_{HAM} cells [46] or exFoxp3 cells [47].

In the current study, we did not observed FoxP3 repression during Tax expression by *ex vivo* cultivation. This result seems to be inconsistent with a previous report that Tax represses FoxP3 expression [45]. There are two possible explanation of this inconsistency. First, there is the difference of the ways to express Tax. In the previous study, the authors used transfection of plasmid that induces Tax expression by the CMV promoter. We used endogenous HTLV-1 provirus to express Tax. Therefore, the expression level of Tax in our current study should be much lower than that of the previous study. In addition, Tax expression was induced in a proportion of FoxP3⁺ cell in our current study. Second, there are differences in incubation time for Tax expression. In the previous study, the authors evaluated FoxP3 expression after 48 hours of transfection, whereas we evaluated FoxP3 expression within 24 hours after Tax expression.

High expression levels of CD25 are also well documented in HTLV-1 infection [33]. Consistent with previous

findings, CD25 expression is upregulated in FoxP3⁺ cells of HAM/TSP patient (Figure 5C). One determinant of the susceptibility to HAM/TSP is host genetic polymorphism such as MHC class 1, which influences the efficiency of CTL against HTLV-1 [48,49]. HTLV-1-infected individuals who have HLA class I susceptible for HAM/TSP may allow high expression of Tax and/or HBZ, which could cause up-regulation of CD25 molecules in the FoxP3⁺ cell population (Figure 5C).

It is controversial whether ATL is a leukemia of FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells or not. However, there is no *a priori* reason to assume that ATL cells must be exclusively derived from FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells or non-T_{reg} cells. Indeed, there are previous reports to support both possibilities. Some studies have reported that ATL cells have regulatory functions [50,51], whereas other studies reported no regulatory function in ATL [52,53]. We showed here that HTLV-1 is frequently detectable in CD4⁺FoxP3⁺ T cells (Figure 3B) in AC. More than half of ATL cells express FoxP3 (Figure 6), even though FoxP3 expression in ATL cells is variable as shown in the present and previous studies [30,31]. These findings prompt us to propose an idea that more than a half of ATL cells are possibly derived from FoxP3⁺ T_{reg} cells. We reported previously that HBZ expression is constitutively active but Tax expression is frequently silenced in ATL cells, which possibly contributes to high frequency of FoxP3⁺ ATL.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that HTLV-1 infection induced the abnormality of frequency and phenotype of FoxP3⁺ T cells, suggesting that HTLV-1 has evolved a sophisticated strategy to achieve persistent infection by directly affecting the central regulator of the host immune system. HTLV-1-mediated dysregulation of FoxP3⁺ T cells is likely to be a critical cellular mechanism for the understanding HTLV-1 pathogenicity.

Methods

Clinical samples and ethics statement

PBMCs were obtained from asymptomatic HTLV-1 infected carriers (n = 23), HAM/TSP patients (n = 10), ATL patients (n = 10), and age-matched healthy controls (n = 10). Characteristics of each group are presented in Table 1. ATL patients consist of 2 acute, 4 smoldering and 4 chronic types of ATL cases. Genomic DNA extracted from PBMCs was used to determine proviral load (PVL) as described previously [29]. Briefly, PVL was quantified by real time PCR and calculated by using genomic DNA of TL-Om1, an ATL cell line with one copy of complete HTLV-1 provirus, as a standard of 100%. We defined AC with less than 2% of proviral load as AC^{low} and AC with more than 2% of proviral load as AC^{high}. This study was conducted according to the

principles expressed in the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Kyoto University (844 and E-921). All patients provided written informed consent for the collection of samples and subsequent analysis.

Antibodies

The following antibodies were purchased from BD Pharmingen; purified monoclonal antibody (mAb) for human CD3 (UCHT1), CD4 (RPA-T4), CD8a (RPA-T8), CD45RA (NI100) and CTLA-4 (BNI3). Purified mAbs for human CD25 (BC96), GITR (eBio AITR) and FoxP3 (236A/E7) were purchased from eBioscience.

Flow cytometric analysis

PBMCs were isolated with Ficoll-Isopaque (GE Healthcare) gradient centrifugation. Flow cytometric analyses were carried out using a FACS CantoII with Diva Software (BD Pharmingen), and the data were analyzed by FlowJo software (TreeStar). To discriminate dead cells, we used LIVE/DEAD Fixable Near-IR Dead Cell Stain Kit (Invitrogen). For cell surface staining, 10^6 cells were incubated with mAbs for 30 minutes at 4°C, and then analyzed. For intracellular staining, we used a human FoxP3 staining kit according to the manufacturer's protocol (eBioscience). To distinguish FoxP3⁺ and FoxP3⁻ cell population clearly, we used isotype control according to the manufacturer's recommendation. To detect the viral antigen Tax, we cultured PBMCs from ACs or HAM/TSP patients for 12–18 hours and stained with monoclonal antibodies against FoxP3 or Tax (MI-73) [54], and then analyzed by flow cytometry.

Statistical analysis

To compare 2 groups when data were determined to have a Gaussian distribution, the Student *t* test was used. If data did not have a Gaussian distribution, the Mann–Whitney *U* test was used for unpaired data, and the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was used for paired data. The AC group and HD did not differ significantly in sex or age, using chi-squared test and Mann–Whitney *U* test. Differences with *P* < 0.05 were considered to be statistically significant. Correlations were evaluated using Spearman's rank correlation.

Additional files

Additional file 1: Figure S1. Absolute cell numbers of each CD4⁺T-cell subset in HTLV-1 infected individuals. (A) Absolute cell numbers of CD4⁺ T cells in 4 distinct subjects. Data shown are gated on lymphocyte fraction based on the dot plot pattern of SSC and FSC. (B and C) Absolute cell numbers of FoxP3⁻CD45RA⁺ naïve CD4⁺ T cells (B) or FoxP3⁻CD45RA⁻ effector/memory CD4⁺ T cells (C). (D) Absolute cell numbers of FoxP3⁺ cells in CD4⁺ T cells.

Additional file 2: Figure S2. Effect of *ex vivo* cultivation on FoxP3 and

CD45RA expression. The percentages of FoxP3 and CD45RA expression in CD4⁺ T cells both before and after *ex vivo* culture are shown from 5 distinct ACs.

Additional file 3: Figure S3. Frequency of each CD4 T-cell subset in Tax-expressing cell population in AC. Cumulative results from 23AC individuals are shown in the graph.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Acknowledgments

This study was supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science and Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare, a grant from Takeda Science Foundation, a grant from Naito Foundation. We thank Prof. Charles R.M. Bangham for critical reading of the manuscript and Ms. M. Nakashima for preparation of peripheral blood of patients. We are most grateful to the patients and healthy donors who participated in this study.

Author details

¹Laboratory of Virus Control, Institute for Virus Research, Kyoto University, Kyoto, 606-8507, Japan. ²Department of Hematology, Imamura Bun-in Hospital, Kagoshima, 890-0064, Japan. ³Department of Neurology, Graduate School of Medical Science, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kyoto, 602-8566, Japan. ⁴Department of Hematology, Kumamoto University School of Medicine, Kumamoto, 860-8556, Japan. ⁵Current address: Immunology Section, Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, Imperial College, London, W2 1PG, UK.

Authors' contributions

This study was designed by YS and MM. Laboratory analysis was performed by YS and JT. Data analysis was performed by YS, AU, JT and MM. Clinical samples and data were provided by AU, MN and KN. YS and MM wrote the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Received: 24 December 2011 Accepted: 30 May 2012

Published: 30 May 2012

References

1. Uchiyama T, Yodoi J, Sagawa K, Takatsuki K, Uchino H: **Adult T-cell leukemia: clinical and hematologic features of 16 cases.** *Blood* 1977, **50**:481–492.
2. Gallo RC: **The discovery of the first human retrovirus: HTLV-1 and HTLV-2.** *Retrovirology* 2005, **2**:17.
3. Takatsuki K: **Discovery of adult T-cell leukemia.** *Retrovirology* 2005, **2**:16.
4. Matsuoka M, Jeang KT: **Human T-cell leukaemia virus type 1 (HTLV-1) infectivity and cellular transformation.** *Nat Rev Cancer* 2007, **7**:270–280.
5. Gessain A, Barin F, Vernant JC, Gout O, Maurs L, Calender A, de The G: **Antibodies to human T-lymphotropic virus type-I in patients with tropical spastic paraparesis.** *Lancet* 1985, **2**:407–410.
6. Osame M, Usuku K, Izumo S, Ijichi N, Amitani H, Igata A, Matsumoto M, Tara M: **HTLV-I associated myelopathy, a new clinical entity.** *Lancet* 1986, **1**:1031–1032.
7. Sugimoto M, Nakashima H, Watanabe S, Uyama E, Tanaka F, Ando M, Araki S, Kawasaki S: **T-lymphocyte alveolitis in HTLV-I-associated myelopathy.** *Lancet* 1987, **2**:1220.
8. Milagres SP, Sanches JA Jr, Milagres AC, Valente NY: **Histopathological and immunohistochemical assessment of acquired ichthyosis in patients with human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I-associated myelopathy.** *Br J Dermatol* 2003, **149**:776–781.
9. Etoh K, Tamiya S, Yamaguchi K, Okayama A, Tsubouchi H, Ideta T, Mueller N, Takatsuki K, Matsuoka M: **Persistent clonal proliferation of human T-lymphotropic virus type I-infected cells in vivo.** *Cancer Res* 1997, **57**:4862–4867.
10. Cavois M, Leclercq I, Gout O, Gessain A, Wain-Hobson S, Wattel E: **Persistent oligoclonal expansion of human T-cell leukemia virus type 1-infected circulating cells in patients with Tropical spastic paraparesis/HTLV-1 associated myelopathy.** *Oncogene* 1998, **17**:77–82.
11. Yoshida M: **Multiple viral strategies of htlv-1 for dysregulation of cell growth control.** *Annu Rev Immunol* 2001, **19**:475–496.

12. Giam CZ, Jeang KT: HTLV-1 Tax and adult T-cell leukemia. *Front Biosci* 2007, **12**:1496–1507.
13. Gaudray G, Gachon F, Basbous J, Biard-Piechaczyk M, Devaux C, Mesnard JM: The complementary strand of the human T-cell leukemia virus type 1 RNA genome encodes a bZIP transcription factor that down-regulates viral transcription. *J Virol* 2002, **76**:12813–12822.
14. Satou Y, Yasunaga J, Yoshida M, Matsuoka M: HTLV-1 basic leucine zipper factor gene mRNA supports proliferation of adult T cell leukemia cells. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 2006, **103**:720–725.
15. Usui T, Yanagihara K, Tsukasaki K, Murata K, Hasegawa H, Yamada Y, Kamihira S: Characteristic expression of HTLV-1 basic zipper factor (HBZ) transcripts in HTLV-1 provirus-positive cells. *Retrovirology* 2008, **5**:34.
16. Arnold J, Zimmerman B, Li M, Lairmore MD, Green PL: Human T-cell leukemia virus type-1 antisense-encoded gene, Hbz, promotes T-lymphocyte proliferation. *Blood* 2008, **112**:3788–3797.
17. Satou Y, Yasunaga J, Zhao T, Yoshida M, Miyazato P, Takai K, Shimizu K, Ohshima K, Green PL, Ohkura N, et al: HTLV-1 bZIP factor induces T-Cell lymphoma and systemic inflammation in vivo. *PLoS Pathog* 2011, **7**:e1001274.
18. Saito M, Matsuzaki T, Satou Y, Yasunaga J, Saito K, Arimura K, Matsuoka M, Ohara Y: In vivo expression of the HBZ gene of HTLV-1 correlates with proviral load, inflammatory markers and disease severity in HTLV-1 associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP). *Retrovirology* 2009, **6**:19.
19. Jacobson S, Shida H, McFarlin DE, Fauci AS, Koenig S: Circulating CD8+ cytotoxic T lymphocytes specific for HTLV-1 pX in patients with HTLV-1 associated neurological disease. *Nature* 1990, **348**:245–248.
20. Bangham CR, Osame M: Cellular immune response to HTLV-1. *Oncogene* 2005, **24**:6035–6046.
21. Kannagi M, Harada S, Maruyama I, Inoko H, Igarashi H, Kuwashima G, Sato S, Morita M, Kidokoro M, Sugimoto M, et al: Predominant recognition of human T cell leukemia virus type I (HTLV-I) pX gene products by human CD8+ cytotoxic T cells directed against HTLV-I-infected cells. *Int Immunol* 1991, **3**:761–767.
22. Fontenot JD, Gavin MA, Rudensky AY: Foxp3 programs the development and function of CD4+CD25+ regulatory T cells. *Nat Immunol* 2003, **4**: 330–336.
23. Hori S, Nomura T, Sakaguchi S: Control of regulatory T cell development by the transcription factor Foxp3. *Science* 2003, **299**:1057–1061.
24. Khattri R, Cox T, Yasayko SA, Ramsdell F: An essential role for Scurfin in CD4+CD25+ T regulatory cells. *Nat Immunol* 2003, **4**:337–342.
25. Sakaguchi S, Yamaguchi T, Nomura T, Ono M: Regulatory T cells and immune tolerance. *Cell* 2008, **133**:775–787.
26. Wing K, Onishi Y, Prieto-Martin P, Yamaguchi T, Miyara M, Fehervari Z, Nomura T, Sakaguchi S: CTLA-4 control over Foxp3+ regulatory T cell function. *Science* 2008, **322**:271–275.
27. Miyara M, Yoshioka Y, Kitoh A, Shima T, Wing K, Niwa A, Parizot C, Taffin C, Heike T, Valeyre D, et al: Functional delineation and differentiation dynamics of human CD4+ T cells expressing the FoxP3 transcription factor. *Immunity* 2009, **30**:899–911.
28. Richardson JH, Edwards AJ, Cruickshank JK, Rudge P, Dalgleish AG: In vivo cellular tropism of human T-cell leukemia virus type 1. *J Virol* 1990, **64**:5682–5687.
29. Yasunaga J, Sakai T, Nosaka K, Etoh K, Tamiya S, Koga S, Mita S, Uchino M, Mitsuya H, Matsuoka M: Impaired production of naive T lymphocytes in human T-cell leukemia virus type I-infected individuals: its implications in the immunodeficient state. *Blood* 2001, **97**:3177–3183.
30. Karube K, Ohshima K, Tsuchiya T, Yamaguchi T, Kawano R, Suzumiya J, Utsunomiya A, Harada M, Kikuchi M: Expression of FoxP3, a key molecule in CD4CD25 regulatory T cells, in adult T-cell leukaemia/lymphoma cells. *Br J Haematol* 2004, **126**:81–84.
31. Abe M, Uchihashi K, Kazuto T, Osaka A, Yanagihara K, Tsukasaki K, Hasegawa H, Yamada Y, Kamihira S: Foxp3 expression on normal and leukemic CD4 + CD25+ T cells implicated in human T-cell leukemia virus type-1 is inconsistent with Treg cells. *Eur J Haematol* 2008, **81**:209–217.
32. Hanon E, Hall S, Taylor GP, Saito M, Davis R, Tanaka Y, Usuku K, Osame M, Weber JN, Bangham CR: Abundant tax protein expression in CD4+ T cells infected with human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I (HTLV-I) is prevented by cytotoxic T lymphocytes. *Blood* 2000, **95**:1386–1392.
33. Hattori T, Uchiyama T, Toibana T, Takatsuki K, Uchino H: Surface phenotype of Japanese adult T-cell leukemia cells characterized by monoclonal antibodies. *Blood* 1981, **58**:645–647.
34. Aandahl EM, Michaelsson J, Moretto WJ, Hecht FM, Nixon DF: Human CD4+ CD25+ regulatory T cells control T-cell responses to human immunodeficiency virus and cytomegalovirus antigens. *J Virol* 2004, **78**:2454–2459.
35. Cabrera R, Tu Z, Xu Y, Firpi RJ, Rosen HR, Liu C, Nelson DR: An immunomodulatory role for CD4(+)CD25(+) regulatory T lymphocytes in hepatitis C virus infection. *Hepatology* 2004, **40**:1062–1071.
36. Toulza F, Heaps A, Tanaka Y, Taylor GP, Bangham CR: High frequency of CD4 + FoxP3+ cells in HTLV-1 infection: inverse correlation with HTLV-1-specific CTL response. *Blood* 2008, **111**:5047–5053.
37. Vukmanovic-Stejic M, Zhang Y, Cook JE, Fletcher JM, McQuaid A, Masters JE, Rustin MH, Taams LS, Beverley PC, Macallan DC, Akbar AN: Human CD4+ CD25hi Foxp3+ regulatory T cells are derived by rapid turnover of memory populations in vivo. *J Clin Invest* 2006, **116**:2423–2433.
38. Yamazaki S, Steinman RM: Dendritic cells as controllers of antigen-specific Foxp3+ regulatory T cells. *J Dermatol Sci* 2009, **54**:69–75.
39. Jones KS, Petrow-Sadowski C, Huang YK, Bertolette DC, Ruscetti FW: Cell-free HTLV-1 infects dendritic cells leading to transmission and transformation of CD4(+) T cells. *Nat Med* 2008, **14**:429–436.
40. Zhao T, Satou Y, Sugata K, Miyazato P, Green PL, Imamura T, Matsuoka M: HTLV-1 bZIP factor enhances TGF-beta signaling through p300 coactivator. *Blood* 2011, **118**:1865–1876.
41. Hieshima K, Nagakubo D, Nakayama T, Shirakawa AK, Jin Z, Yoshie O: Tax-inducible production of CC chemokine ligand 22 by human T cell leukemia virus type 1 (HTLV-1)-infected T cells promotes preferential transmission of HTLV-1 to CCR4-expressing CD4+ T cells. *J Immunol* 2008, **180**:931–939.
42. Toulza F, Nosaka K, Tanaka Y, Schioppa T, Balkwill F, Taylor GP, Bangham CR: Human T-lymphotropic virus type 1-induced CC chemokine ligand 22 maintains a high frequency of functional FoxP3+ regulatory T cells. *J Immunol* 2010, **185**:183–189.
43. Tachibana N, Okayama A, Ishizaki J, Yokota T, Shishime E, Murai K, Shioiri S, Tsuda K, Essex M, Mueller N: Suppression of tuberculin skin reaction in healthy HTLV-I carriers from Japan. *Int J Cancer* 1988, **42**:829–831.
44. Ramirez E, Cartier L, Rodriguez L, Alberti C, Valenzuela MA: In vivo fluctuation of Tax, Foxp3, CTLA-4, and GITR mRNA expression in CD4(+) CD25(+) T cells of patients with human T-lymphotropic virus type 1-associated myelopathy. *Braz J Med Biol Res* 2010, **43**:1109–1115.
45. Yamano Y, Takenouchi N, Li HC, Tomaru U, Yao K, Grant CW, Maric DA, Jacobson S: Virus-induced dysfunction of CD4 + CD25+ T cells in patients with HTLV-I-associated neuroimmunological disease. *J Clin Invest* 2005, **115**:1361–1368.
46. Yamano Y, Araya N, Sato T, Utsunomiya A, Azakami K, Hasegawa D, Izumi T, Fujita H, Aratani S, Yagishita N, et al: Abnormally high levels of virus-infected IFN-gamma + CCR4+ CD4+ CD25+ T cells in a retrovirus-associated neuroinflammatory disorder. *PLoS One* 2009, **4**:e6517.
47. Zhou X, Bailey-Bucktrout SL, Jeker LT, Penaranda C, Martinez-Llordella M, Ashby M, Nakayama M, Rosenthal W, Bluestone JA: Instability of the transcription factor Foxp3 leads to the generation of pathogenic memory T cells in vivo. *Nat Immunol* 2009, **10**:1000–1007.
48. Jeffery KJ, Usuku K, Hall SE, Matsumoto W, Taylor GP, Procter J, Bunce M, Ogg GS, Welsh KI, Weber JN, et al: HLA alleles determine human T-lymphotropic virus-I (HTLV-I) proviral load and the risk of HTLV-I-associated myelopathy. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 1999, **96**:3848–3853.
49. Macnamara A, Rowan A, Hillburn S, Kadolsky U, Fujiwara H, Suemori K, Yasukawa M, Taylor G, Bangham CR, Asquith B: HLA class I binding of HBZ determines outcome in HTLV-1 infection. *PLoS Pathog* 2010, **6**: e1001117.
50. Chen S, Ishii N, Ine S, Ikeda S, Fujimura T, Ndhlovu LC, Soroosh P, Tada K, Harigae H, Kameoka J, et al: Regulatory T cell-like activity of Foxp3+ adult T cell leukemia cells. *Int Immunol* 2006, **18**:269–277.
51. Yano H, Ishida T, Inagaki A, Ishii T, Kusumoto S, Komatsu H, Iida S, Utsunomiya A, Ueda R: Regulatory T-cell function of adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma cells. *Int J Cancer* 2007, **120**:2052–2057.
52. Shimauchi T, Kabashima K, Tokura Y: Adult T-cell leukemia/lymphoma cells from blood and skin tumors express cytotoxic T lymphocyte-associated antigen-4 and Foxp3 but lack suppressor activity toward autologous CD8+ T cells. *Cancer Sci* 2008, **99**:98–106.

53. Toulza F, Nosaka K, Takiguchi M, Pagliuca T, Mitsuya H, Tanaka Y, Taylor GP, Bangham CR: **FoxP3+ regulatory T cells are distinct from leukemia cells in HTLV-1-associated adult T-cell leukemia.** *Int J Cancer* 2009, **125**:2375–2382.
54. Mori K, Sabe H, Siomi H, Iino T, Tanaka A, Takeuchi K, Hirayoshi K, Hatanaka M: **Expression of a provirus of human T cell leukaemia virus type I by DNA transfection.** *J Gen Virol* 1987, **68**(Pt 2):499–506.

doi:10.1186/1742-4690-9-46

Cite this article as: Satou *et al.*: HTLV-1 modulates the frequency and phenotype of FoxP3⁺CD4⁺ T cells in virus-infected individuals. *Retrovirology* 2012 **9**:46.

**Submit your next manuscript to BioMed Central
and take full advantage of:**

- Convenient online submission
- Thorough peer review
- No space constraints or color figure charges
- Immediate publication on acceptance
- Inclusion in PubMed, CAS, Scopus and Google Scholar
- Research which is freely available for redistribution

Submit your manuscript at
www.biomedcentral.com/submit



