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Clinical and Experimental Neuroimmunology **5** (2014) 108–109

NEW DEVELOPMENT FROM ASIA

Positive feedback loop through astrocytes causes chronic inflammation in human T-lymphotropic virus type 1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis

Human T-lymphotropic virus type 1 (HTLV-1) is a retrovirus infecting 10–20 million people worldwide, 2–3% of whom develop the chronic spinal cord inflammation that characterizes HTLV-1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP).[1] Evidence suggests that HTLV-1-infected CD4+ T cells migrate across the blood–brain barrier (BBB) and secrete pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as interferon-gamma (IFN-γ), within the central nervous system.[2] The present authors and others have previously shown that the chemokine CXC motif ligand 10 (CXCL10), which binds the CD4+ T helper type 1 (Th1) receptor CXC motif receptor 3 (CXCR3), stands out as particularly elevated in the cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of HAM/TSP patients and is well-correlated with disease progression.[3] We therefore hypothesized that chemokines, namely CXCL10, play an important role in the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP by continuously recruiting pro-inflammatory cells to the CNS.

We first confirmed that the CSF of HAM/TSP patients contains extraordinarily high levels of CXCL10 and CXCR3+ cells.[4] Importantly, the levels of CXCL10 were much higher in the CSF than the

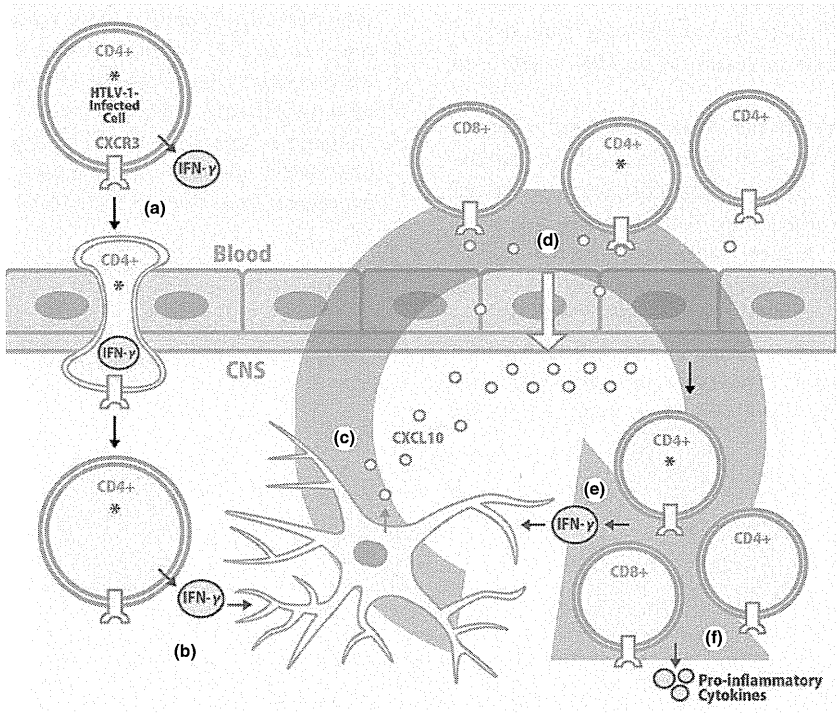

Figure 1 Human T-lymphotropic virus type 1 (HTLV-1)-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP) pathogenesis comprises an inflammatory positive feedback loop. (a) HTLV-1-infected interferon-gamma (IFN-γ)-producing CD4+ Th1 cells migrate across the blood–brain barrier into the central nervous system, where (b) they produce IFN-γ, (c) which stimulates astrocytes to produce CXCL10. (d) The abundant CXCL10 in the central nervous system (CNS) creates a concentration gradient by which CXCR3-expressing CD4+ and CD8+ T cells undergo chemotaxis to the CNS. (e) These Th1 cells attracted by the CXCL10 also produce pro-inflammatory cytokines including IFN-γ, which further stimulates the astrocytes, (f) creating a positive feedback loop that generates abundant pro-inflammatory cytokines in the CNS. The inflammation in the CNS gradually damages the spinal cord.

serum, yielding a concentration gradient towards the CNS. Additionally, levels of CXCL10 were correlated with known features of HAM/TSP, namely increased CSF cell count. Other chemokines, such as CXCL9, CCL5 and CCL4, were considered but did not show similar trends. We then analyzed samples of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC), CSF cells, and spinal cord tissue to show that CD4+CXCR3+ cells are indeed infected with HTLV-1, do migrate across the BBB into the CNS and do produce IFN-γ in HAM/TSP patients.

Together, these results show that the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP involves CXCR3+ cells crossing the BBB, at least in part as a result of chemotactic attraction to the abundant CXCL10 in the CNS, and secreting pro-inflammatory cytokines that cause spinal cord inflammation. The question remains: from where does this abundant CXCL10 originate?

Immunohistochemical analysis of the spinal cord tissue not only confirmed that CXCL10 is produced in the spinal cords of HAM/TSP patients, but also showed that astrocytes might be the main producers. Co-culture of human astrocytoma cells with CD4+ T cells from HAM/TSP patients confirmed that astrocytes produce CXCL10 in response to IFN-γ secreted by CD4+ T cells.

We concluded that these astrocytes likely represent the missing piece of the puzzle, and we postulated the existence of an inflammatory positive feedback loop: infected CD4+ T cells cross the BBB and produce IFN-γ, which stimulates astrocytes to produce CXCL10, which recruits more CXCR3+ cells of both CD4+ and CD8+ subtypes to the CNS, where they produce more IFN-γ (Fig. 1). As for the initial trigger that starts the vicious cycle, it is thought that HTLV-1-infected cells could be inherently likely to cross the BBB as a result of HTLV-1-induced expression of certain cell surface proteins.[5]

Finally, chemotaxis assays showed that it might be possible to disrupt this loop with anti-CXCL10 neutralizing antibodies. As the current data points to a virtually exclusively Th1-dominant pathogenesis, disruption of the Th1 inflammatory process could effectively cure the disease.

Thus, we described a Th1-centric inflammatory positive feedback loop critical for HAM/TSP pathogenesis and suggested that disrupting this loop might lead to a cure.

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Case Reports in Neurology

Case Rep Neurol 2014;6:176–180

DOI: 10.1159/000363687
Published online: May 28, 2014

1662–680X/14/0062–0176$39.50/0
www.karger.com/cnn

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Neuronal Intranuclear Inclusion Disease Presenting with Resting Tremor

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Key Words
Neuronal intranuclear inclusion disease · Tremor · Skin biopsy

Abstract
Neuronal intranuclear inclusion disease (NIID) is a rare neurodegenerative disease with various neurological symptoms. A 73-year-old woman presented with slowly progressive tremor in both hands. The resting tremor was enhanced by cognitive activity and walking. However, there were no other signs of parkinsonism. Levodopa and trihexyphenidyl were ineffective against the tremor. A diagnosis of NIID was made based on skin biopsy findings. The tremor in this case was very similar to that seen in Parkinson's disease (PD). Previous reports and the present case indicate that NIID patients can develop tremor that is similar in character to that seen in PD. NIID should be considered in the differential diagnosis of resting tremor similar to PD.

Background

Neuronal intranuclear inclusion disease (NIID) is a rare neurodegenerative disease characterized pathologically by the presence of eosinophilic hyaline intranuclear inclusions in neuronal and somatic cells [1, 2]. A diagnosis of NIID can be made by skin biopsy in the antemortem period [3]. Previously reported cases of NIID showed various neurological symptoms, including pyramidal and extrapyramidal symptoms, cerebellar ataxia, dementia, convulsion, neuropathy, and autonomic dysfunction [1–4]. A few cases of NIID with

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parkinsonism have also been reported [2, 5, 6]. Here, we report a case of NIID showing resting tremor without other extrapyramidal signs.

Case Presentation

A 73-year-old Japanese woman with a history of hypertension and hyperlipidemia was referred to our hospital because of bilateral hand tremor. The tremor appeared bilaterally from the onset. She had no family history of neurological disease. A diagnosis of essential tremor was made, but arotinolol hydrochloride at a dose of 20 mg/day was ineffective. After 2 years, she was again referred to our hospital due to staggering and aggravation of hand tremor. Neurological examination showed resting, positional, and intentional tremor in both upper limbs. The resting tremor was enhanced by cognitive activity and walking (online suppl. video, www.karger.com/doi/10.1159/000363687). She showed neither bradykinesia nor rigidity, and her gait was slightly unsteady but not ataxic. No other neurological abnormalities were found. Surface electromyography of the right common digital extensor muscle and ulnar flexor muscle showed discharges of muscle activity at frequencies of 6 and 3 Hz, respectively. Brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) revealed dilation of the lateral ventricle, moderate cerebral atrophy, and high-intensity areas in the cerebral white matter in T2-weighted and fluid-attenuated inversion recovery images. MRI diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) showed a high-intensity signal in the corticomedullary junction (fig. 1). ^{99m}Tc-L,L-ethyl cysteinate dimer (ECD) single-photon computed emission tomography (SPECT) showed normal uptake in the thalamus and basal ganglia (fig. 2). Cerebrospinal fluid was normal, and blood examination showed normal thyroid function. Cardiac uptake of ^{123}I-metaiodobenzylguanidine (MIBG) during myocardial scintigraphy was normal (H/M ratio early: 2.55, delayed: 2.49). We performed skin biopsy as part of the differential diagnosis between leukoencephalopathy and NIID. Immunofluorescence analysis with anti-ubiquitin antibody revealed intranuclear inclusions in the adipocytes, sweat gland cells, and fibroblasts (fig. 3). A diagnosis of NIID was made based on the skin biopsy findings [3]. The patient was treated with levodopa at 300 mg/day and trihexyphenidyl at 6 mg per day, which did not improve tremor.

Discussion

Our patient showed resting, positional, and intentional tremor, similar to the tremor seen in Parkinson's disease (PD), in the bilateral upper limbs. The resting tremor in PD patients typically has a frequency between 4 and 6 Hz and is enhanced by motor or cognitive activity [7, 8]. However, extrapyramidal signs, including bradykinesia or rigidity, were not seen in this case. About half of all PD patients show tremor as the initial symptom [9]. In some patients, tremor remains relatively unchanged, and non-tremor components of parkinsonism are mild [10]. However, the tremor in our case was resistant to medication, and uptake of ^{123}I-MIBG during myocardial scintigraphy, which is known to be decreased in PD, was normal [11]. It is therefore unlikely that the resting tremor in this case was due to PD. The pathophysiology of PD has not been fully elucidated, but it has been hypothesized that the pacemaker of resting tremor exists in the basal ganglia-thalamocortical circuits [7, 8]. A few cases of NIID with parkinsonism have been reported [2, 5, 6]. O'Sullivan et al. [5] reported juvenile parkinsonism of NIID. Their case showed asymmetric arm tremor and bulbar symptoms and responded well to levodopa. Widespread hyaline intranuclear

inclusions and neuronal depletion in the substantia nigra were observed at autopsy [5]. Munoz-Garcia et al. [6] reported an autopsy case that developed tremor and unsteady gait as the first symptoms at the age of 50 years. This case also showed writhing movements of the head, trunk, and limbs, as well as repetitive outbursts of anger. Postmortem examination revealed severe neuronal loss in the caudate and putamen but not in the substantia nigra or globus pallidus. The thalamus, mesencephalon, pons, and medulla were histologically normal, except for nuclear inclusions in glial cells. Inclusions were also found in the dentate nuclei of the cerebellum. The authors suggested that functionally injured neurons in the dentate nuclei may be related to the tremor [6]. In contrast, in our case, the onset was later in life. The tremor was resistant to medication, and no other parkinsonian symptoms were seen. Sone et al. [12] reported that high signal intensity in the corticomedullary junction in DWI was a highly characteristic finding in NIID, and skin biopsy was useful for diagnosis. We also made a diagnosis of NIID based on the findings of MRI and skin biopsy. These previous reports and the present case suggest that NIID patients can develop tremor that is similar to that seen in PD. Therefore, NIID should be considered in the differential diagnosis of resting tremor.

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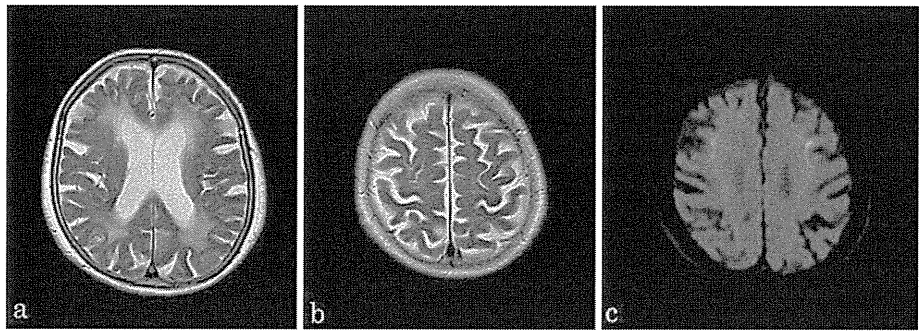

Fig. 1. **a, b** T2-weighted MRI showing dilation of the lateral ventricle, moderate cerebral atrophy, and high-intensity areas in the cerebral white matter. **c** DWI indicated high signal intensity in the corticomedullary junction.

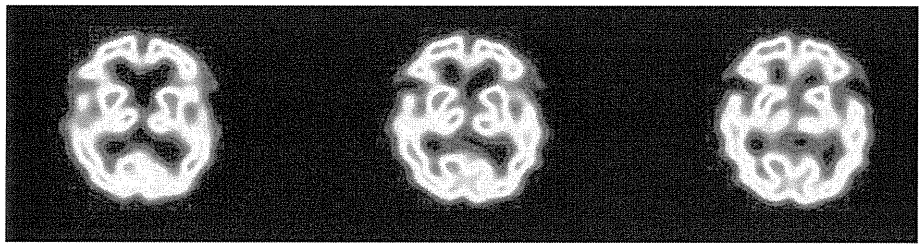

Fig. 2. Normal uptake of the basal ganglia in ECD SPECT.

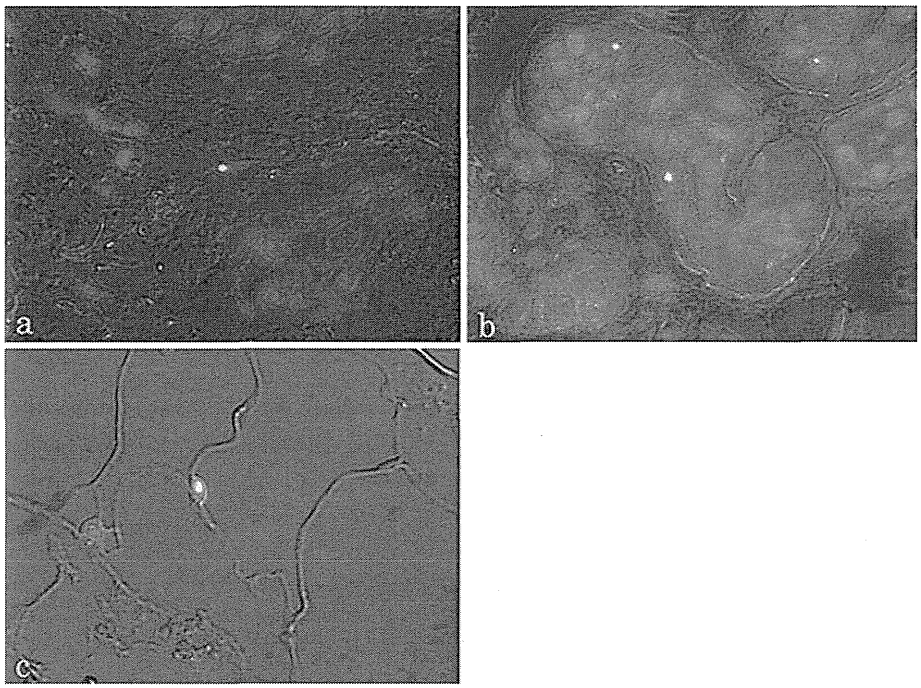

Fig. 3. Double immunofluorescence staining with anti-ubiquitin antibody and 4′,6-diamidino-2-phenylindole dilactate (DAPI) in NIID skin samples. Intranuclear inclusions were stained with anti-ubiquitin antibody (green), and these inclusions were included in the DAPI-positive nuclei in the merged view. **a** Fibroblast. **b** Sweat gland cells. **c** Adipocytes.

J. Neurovirol.
DOI 10.1007/s13365-013-0192-8

REVIEW

Neuroimmunological aspects of human T cell leukemia virus type 1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis

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Received: 19 April 2013 / Revised: 9 July 2013 / Accepted: 22 July 2013

Abstract Human T cell leukemia virus type 1 (HTLV-1) is a human retrovirus etiologically associated with adult T cell leukemia/lymphoma and HTLV-1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP). Only approximately 0.25–4 % of infected individuals develop HAM/TSP; the majority of infected individuals remain lifelong asymptomatic carriers. Recent data suggest that immunological aspects of host–virus interactions might play an important role in the development and pathogenesis of HAM/TSP. This review outlines and discusses the current understanding, ongoing developments, and future perspectives of HAM/TSP research.

Keywords HTLV-1 · HAM/TSP · Host immune response

Introduction

Human T cell leukemia virus type 1 (HTLV-1) is a replication-competent human retrovirus associated with two distinct types of disease: a malignancy of mature $CD4^+$ T cells called adult T cell leukemia/lymphoma (ATL) (Hinuma et al. 1981; Poiesz et al. 1980; Yoshida et al. 1984) and a chronic inflammatory central nervous system disease HTLV-1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP) (Gessain et al. 1985; Osame et al. 1986). Like human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), HTLV-1 is never eliminated from the host despite vigorous cellular and humoral immune responses. However, in contrast to HIV infection, few with HTLV-1 develop disease; only approximately 2–3 % of infected persons develop ATL (Tajima 1990), another 0.25–4 % develop HAM/TSP (Hisada et al. 2004; Kramer et al. 1995; Nakagawa et al. 1995; Osame et al. 1990), and the majority of infected individuals remain lifelong asymptomatic carriers (ACs). Therefore, evaluation of the individual risk of developing disease in ACs would certainly be of considerable importance, especially in HTLV-1 endemic areas.

The viral, host, and environmental risk factors as well as the host immune response against HTLV-1 infection appear to regulate the development of HTLV-1-associated diseases (Bangham and Osame 2005). In particular, a strong immune response, especially the cytotoxic T lymphocyte (CTL) response, to HTLV-1 is seen in patients with HAM/TSP and suggested to be strongly associated with the pathogenesis of HTLV-1-associated diseases (Matsuura et al. 2010; Saito et al. 2012). For more than two decades, the investigation of HTLV-1-mediated immunopathogenesis has focused on Tax, an HTLV-1-encoded viral oncoprotein, because Tax activates many cellular genes by binding to groups of transcription factors and co-activators and is necessary and sufficient for cellular transformation. However, recent reports have identified that another regulatory protein, HTLV-1 basic leucine zipper factor (HBZ), also has a critical role in the development of ATL and HAM/TSP (Matsuoka and Jeang 2011). This review summarizes past and recent studies of HAM/TSP, attempting to answer the following fundamental questions: Why do some HTLV-1-infected people develop disease whereas the vast majority remain healthy? How does HTLV-1 persist in the individual host despite a strong host immune response? How is the inflammatory lesion in HAM/TSP initiated and maintained?

History and epidemiology of HTLV-1

HTLV-1 belongs to the *Deltaretrovirus* genus of the *Orthoretrovirinae* subfamily and infects 10–20 million people worldwide (de The and Bomford 1993; Proietti et al. 2005; Uchiyama 1997). HTLV-1 can be transmitted through sexual contact (Roucoux et al. 2005), intravenous drug use (Proietti et al. 2005), and breastfeeding from mother to child (Hino

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Published online: 14 August 2013

et al. 1985; Kinoshita et al. 1987). At present, the infection is endemic in southwest Japan, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South America, with smaller foci in Southeast Asia, South Africa, and northeast Iran (Verdonck et al. 2007). HTLV-1 was initially isolated in 1980 from two T cell lymphoblastoid cell lines and the blood of a patient originally thought to have a cutaneous T cell lymphoma (Poiesz et al. 1980). It was the first retrovirus ever associated with cancer in a human. Three years before the isolation of HTLV-1, Takatsuki et al. reported ATL, a rare form of leukemia endemic to southwest Japan, as a distinct clinical entity (Uchiyama et al. 1977). In 1981, Hinuma et al. clearly demonstrated that ATL was caused by a new human retrovirus, originally termed ATLV (Hinuma et al. 1981; Miyoshi et al. 1981). Since then, ATLV and HTLV have been shown to be identical, and a single name, HTLV-1, has been adopted. In the mid-1980s, epidemiological data linked HTLV-1 infection to a chronic progressive neurological disease, which was termed tropical spastic paraparesis in the Caribbean (Gessain et al. 1985) and HTLV-1-associated myelopathy in Japan (Osame et al. 1986). HTLV-1-positive TSP and HAM were subsequently found to be clinically and pathologically identical, and the disease was given a single designation as HAM/TSP (Hollsberg and Hafler 1993). To date, more than 3,000 cases of HAM/TSP have been reported in HTLV-1 endemic areas. Sporadic cases have also been described in non-endemic areas such as the USA and Europe, mainly in immigrants from an HTLV-1 endemic area (Araujo and Silva 2006). HTLV-1 can cause other chronic inflammatory diseases such as uveitis (Mochizuki et al. 1992), arthropathy (Nishioka et al. 1989), pulmonary lymphocytic alveolitis (Maruyama et al. 1988; Sugimoto et al. 1989; Sugimoto et al. 1987), polymyositis (Higuchi et al. 1992; Morgan et al. 1989), Sjögren syndrome (Terada et al. 1994), and infective dermatitis (LaGrenade et al. 1990), although there is no clear evidence for an etiological role of HTLV-1 in these diseases.

Clinical and pathological features of HAM/TSP

HAM/TSP is a chronic progressive myelopathy characterized by spastic paraparesis, sphincter dysfunction, and mild sensory disturbance in the lower extremities (Nakagawa et al. 1996). The period from initial HTLV-1 infection to the onset of HAM/TSP is assumed to range from months to decades, a shorter time than that for the onset of ATL (Nakagawa et al. 1995; Olindo et al. 2006). HAM/TSP occurs both in vertically infected individuals and in those who become infected later in life, that is, through sexual contact almost exclusively from male to female, intravenous drug use, contaminated blood transfusions, etc. The mean age at onset is 43.8 years, and like autoimmune diseases, the frequency of cases of HAM/TSP is greater in women than in men (the male-to-female ratio of occurrence is 1:2.3) (Nakagawa et al. 1995). In addition to HTLV-1 antibody (Ab) positivity both in serum and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), the presence of atypical lymphocytes (the so-called "flower cells") in peripheral blood and CSF, a moderate pleocytosis, and raised protein content in CSF is observed in patients with HAM/TSP (Araujo and Silva 2006). Oligoclonal immunoglobulin bands in the CSF; raised concentrations of inflammatory markers such as neopterin, tumor necrosis factor (TNF)-α, interleukin (IL)-6, and interferon (IFN)-γ; and increased intrathecal Ab synthesis specific for HTLV-1 antigens have also been described (Jacobson 2002). Clinical progression of HAM/TSP is associated with an increase in the proviral load (PVL) in individual patients, and a high ratio of PVL in CSF cells/peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) is also significantly associated with clinically progressive disease (Takenouchi et al. 2003). Thus, a pro-inflammatory environment associated with increased numbers of HTLV-1-infected cells is a characteristic immunological profile of HAM/TSP.

Pathological analysis of HAM/TSP autopsy materials showed the loss of myelin and axons in the lateral, anterior, and posterior columns of the spinal cord. These lesions are associated with perivascular and parenchymal lymphocytic infiltration with the presence of foamy macrophages, reactive astrocytosis, and fibrillary gliosis, predominantly at the thoracic level (Iwasaki 1990; Izumo et al. 2000; Yoshioka et al. 1993), suggesting that the immune response against HTLV-1 causes the inflammatory spinal cord damage seen in patients with HAM/TSP (Bangham 2000). In patients with active chronic lesions in the spinal cord, perivascular inflammatory infiltration with similar composition of cell subsets was also seen in the brain (Aye et al. 2000). The peripheral nerve pathology of patients with HAM/TSP with sensory disturbance showed varying degrees of demyelination, remyelination, axonal degeneration, regeneration, and perineural fibrosis (Bhigjee et al. 1993; Kiwaki et al. 2003).

Treatment of HAM/TSP

To date, no generally agreed standard treatment regimen has been established for HAM/TSP, and no treatment has proven to be consistently effective on a long-term basis. Therefore, clinical practice for treatment of patients with HAM/TSP is based on case series and open, nonrandomized, uncontrolled studies. Mild to moderate beneficial effects have been reported for a number of agents in open-label studies including corticosteroids (Nakagawa et al. 1996), danazol (Harrington et al. 1991), pentoxifylline (Shirabe et al. 1997), immunosuppressants such as ciclosporin A (Martin et al. 2012), high-dose intravenous gamma globulin (Kuroda et al. 1991), plasmapheresis (Matsuo et al. 1988), antibiotics (erythromycin and fosfomycin), and vitamin C (Nakagawa et al. 1996). It should be noteworthy that oral prednisolone was effective in 81.7 %

of 131 patients in a large-scale case series study (Nakagawa et al. 1996). However, the complications of corticosteroids limit their use, particularly in post-menopausal women, who are at higher risk for developing HAM/TSP. Multicenter double-blind randomized placebo-controlled trials for the IFN-α treatment indicate that IFN-α is an effective therapy with an acceptable side effects profile (Izumo et al. 1996), although the benefit of long-term IFN-α therapy has not been well studied. In regard to oral antiviral drugs zidovudine plus lamivudine, no evidence of significant benefit yet exists from randomized placebo-controlled trials (Taylor et al. 2006). Recently, oral administration of histone deacetylase inhibitor valproic acid (VPA) has been conducted as a single-center, open-label trial (Olindo et al. 2011). Although administration of VPA induced a transient increase of HTLV-1 expression to expose virus-positive cells to the host immune response, clinical measures and PVL were stable overall. It has also been reported that the antibiotic minocycline significantly inhibited spontaneous lymphocyte proliferation and degranulation/IFN-γ expression in $CD8^+$ T cells of patients with HAM/TSP, suggesting its potential for treatment (Enose-Akahata et al. 2012). Overall, more clinical trials with adequate power are needed in the future.

Risk factors for developing HAM/TSP

It is well-known that HAM/TSP occurs in only a minority of HTLV-1-infected individuals. A previous population association study in HTLV-1 endemic southwest Japan revealed that one of the major risk factors is the HTLV-1 PVL, because the PVL is significantly higher in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs (Nagai et al. 1998). A higher PVL in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs was also observed in other endemic areas such as the Caribbean (Manns et al. 1999), South America (Adaui et al. 2006), and the Middle East (Sabouri et al. 2005). In southwest Japan, it was suggested that genetic factors such as the human leukocyte antigen (HLA) genotype are related to the high PVL in patients with HAM/TSP and genetic relatives. Namely, possession of the HLA class I genes HLA-A*02 and Cw*08 was associated with a statistically significant reduction in both HTLV-1 PVL and the risk of HAM/TSP, whereas possession of HLA class I HLA-B*5401 and class II HLA-DRB1*0101 predispose to HAM/TSP in the same population (Jeffery et al. 2000; Jeffery et al. 1999). Because the function of class I HLA proteins is to present antigenic peptides to CTL, these results imply that individuals with HLA-A*02 or HLA-Cw*08 mount a particularly efficient CTL response against HTLV-1, which may be an important determinant of PVL and the risk of HAM/TSP. In accordance with this observation, it has been reported that CTL spontaneously kill autologous HTLV-1-infected cells ex vivo (Hanon et al. 2000), granzymes and perforin are more highly expressed in individuals with a low PVL (Vine et al. 2004), and the lytic efficiency of the CD8+ T cell response (i.e., the fraction of autologous HTLV-1-expressing cells eliminated per CD8+ T cell per day) was inversely correlated with both PVL and the rate of spontaneous proviral expression (Kattan et al. 2009). Furthermore, the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class I tetramer analysis of lymphocytes isolated from the CSF of patients with HAM/TSP showed even higher frequencies of HTLV-1 Tax11-19-specific, HLA-A*02-restricted CD8+ lymphocytes compared with PBMCs (Nagai et al. 2001b). These findings indicate that an increased proliferation or migration of HTLV-1-infected and/or HTLV-1-specific lymphocytes to the central nervous system might be closely associated with the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP (Hayashi et al. 2008a), and the CTLs against HTLV-1 reduce both PVL and the risk of HAM/TSP. Recently, using a combination of computational and experimental approaches, MacNamara et al. reported that a CTL response against HBZ restricted by protective HLA alleles such as HLA-A*02 or Cw*08, but not a response to the immunodominant protein Tax, also determines the outcome of HTLV-1 infection (Macnamara et al. 2010).

Meanwhile, analysis of non-HLA host genetic factors by candidate gene approaches revealed that non-HLA gene polymorphisms also affect the risk of developing HAM/TSP. Namely, the TNF-α promoter −863 A allele (Vine et al. 2002) and the longer CA repeat alleles of matrix metalloproteinase 9 promoter (Kodama et al. 2004) predisposed to HAM/TSP, whereas IL-10 −592 A (Sabouri et al. 2004), stromal-derived factor 1 +801A (Vine et al. 2002), and IL-15 +191 C alleles (Vine et al. 2002) conferred protection against HAM/TSP. The polymorphisms in the matrix metalloproteinase 9 and IL-10 promoters were each associated with differences in the HTLV-1 Tax-mediated transcriptional activity of the respective gene (Kodama et al. 2004; Sabouri et al. 2004). However, the contributions of these non-HLA genes to the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP are largely unknown and these data have not yet been reproduced in different populations. Further candidate gene studies together with genome-wide association studies in different ethnic populations in a larger sample size may provide evidence for the association of non-HLA genes with the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP.

It has been reported that the lifetime risk of developing HAM/TSP differs among ethnic groups, ranging between 0.25 and 4 %. The annual incidence of HAM/TSP is higher among Jamaican subjects than among Japanese subjects (20 versus 3 cases/100,000 population), with a two to three times greater risk for women in both populations (Hisada et al. 2004; Kramer et al. 1995; Nakagawa et al. 1995; Osame et al. 1990). Although most studies of HTLV-1 genotype have reported no association between variants of HTLV-1 and the risk of HAM/TSP, Furukawa et al. reported the association between HTLV-1 Tax gene variation and the risk of HAM/TSP (Furukawa et al. 2000). Tax subgroup A, which belongs to cosmopolitan

subtype A, was more frequently observed in patients with HAM/TSP, and this association was independent of the protective effect of HLA-A*02. Interestingly, HLA-A*02 appeared to give protection against only one of the two prevalent sequence variants of HTLV-1, Tax subgroup B, which belongs to cosmopolitan subtype B, but not against Tax subgroup A in the Japanese population (Furukawa et al. 2000). Jamaican subjects, who had a higher annual incidence of HAM/TSP, also have cosmopolitan subtype A, whereas approximately 80 % of Japanese subjects, who had a lower annual incidence of HAM/TSP, have cosmopolitan subtype B. Interestingly, HLA-A*02 did not appear to provide protection against HAM/TSP development with cosmopolitan subtype A in a population in Iran (Sabouri et al. 2005).

To test whether the genomic integration site determines the abundance and the pathogenic potential of an HTLV-1-positive T cell clone, Gillet et al. recently reported the results of high-throughput mapping and quantification of HTLV-1 proviral integration in the host genome (Gillet et al. 2011). They mapped >91,000 unique insertion sites (UISs) of the provirus in primary PBMCs from 61 HTLV-1-infected individuals and showed that a typical HTLV-1-infected host carries between 500 and 5,000 UISs in 10 μg of PBMC genomic DNA. They calculated an oligoclonality index to quantify the clonality of HTLV-1-infected cells in vivo and found that the oligoclonality index did not distinguish between ACs and patients with HAM/TSP and that there was no correlation between the oligoclonality index and HTLV-1 PVL in either ACs or patients with HAM/TSP. These results indicate that the higher PVL observed in patients with HAM/TSP was attributable to a larger number of UISs but not, as previously thought, to a difference in clonality. They also obtained evidence that the abundance of established HTLV-1 clones is determined by genomic features of the host DNA flanking the provirus. Namely, HTLV-1 clonal expansion in vivo is favored by a proviral integration site near a region of host chromatin undergoing active transcription or same-sense transcriptional orientation of the provirus. In contrast, negative selection of infected clones, probably by CTLs during chronic infection, favors establishment of proviruses integrated in transcriptionally silenced DNA, and this selection is more efficient in ACs than in HAM/TSP, indicating the selection of HTLV-1-infected T cell clones with low pathogenic potential. More recent reports indicate that circulating HTLV-1-positive cells each contain a single integrated proviral copy (Cook et al. 2012), and cells expressing HTLV-1 Tax protein (i.e., viral protein expression) were significantly more frequent in clones of low abundance in vivo, whereas certain transcription start sites immediately upstream of the viral integration site were associated with virus latency (i.e., no viral protein expression). In particular, Tax-expressing, more "pathogenic" clones were efficiently controlled by the immune response, especially CTLs, whereas non-Tax-expressing "invisible" infected clones were associated with mitotic clonal expansion in vivo (Melamed et al. 2013).

The innate immune response in HAM/TSP

Type I IFN is a key innate immune cytokine produced by cells in response to viral infection. The type I IFN response protects cells against invading viruses by inducing the expression of IFN-stimulated genes, which execute the antiviral effects of IFN (Samuel 2001). The IFN-stimulated genes then generate soluble factors including cytokines that activate adaptive immunity or directly inhibit the virus itself (Liu et al. 2011). In PBMCs of HTLV-1-infected individuals, the level of HTLV-1 messenger RNA is very low and viral protein is not detectable, but these molecules are rapidly expressed after a short time in culture in vitro (Hanon et al. 2000). However, the mechanisms of this phenomenon are largely unknown. Recently, it has been reported that HTLV-1 expression in HTLV-1-infected T cells is suppressed by stromal cells (i.e., epithelial cells and fibroblasts) in culture through type I IFNs (Kinpara et al. 2009). Namely, HTLV-1 Gag protein expression was suppressed when contacted with stromal cells and restored when separated from the stromal cells. Although neutralizing antibodies against human IFN-α/β receptor only partly abrogated this phenomenon, the results indicate that the innate immune system suppresses HTLV-1 expression in vitro and in vivo, at least through type I IFN. More recently, it has been reported that IFN-stimulated genes were overexpressed in circulating leukocytes and the expression correlated with the clinical severity of HAM/TSP (Tattermusch et al. 2012).

Previous reports indicated that patients with HAM/TSP had both a lower frequency and a lower activity of natural killer (NK) cells (especially the CD3+ CD16+ subset) than ACs, although the results were not normalized with respect to the PVL (Yu et al. 1991). Because an important mechanism of induction of NK cell-mediated killing is recognition by the NK cell of a complex of the non-polymorphic MHC molecule HLA-E bound to a peptide derived from the signal sequence of some other MHC class I molecules, the synthetic tetramers of HLA-E with the HLA-G signal sequence peptide were used to identify NK cells in patients with HAM/TSP (Saito et al. 2003). The results clearly showed a lower frequency of HLA-E tetramer-binding cells in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs; as in the earlier studies (Yu et al. 1991), this reduction in frequency was particularly notable in the CD3+ cells, whereas there was no significant difference in the frequency of HLA-E tetramer-binding CD3− cells between patients with HAM/TSP and ACs (Saito et al. 2003). Recent reports also suggest that the frequency of invariant natural killer T (NKT) cells in the peripheral blood of patients with HAM/TSP is significantly decreased when compared with that in healthy subjects and/or ACs (Azakami et al. 2009; Ndhlovu et al. 2009). These findings indicated that the activity of the NK or NKT cell response was associated with the presence or absence of HAM/TSP. Interestingly, a previous uncontrolled preliminary trial of viable *Lactobacillus casei* strain Shirota-containing

fermented milk in patients with HAM/TSP resulted in a significant increase in NK cell activity with improvements in clinical symptoms (Matsuzaki et al. 2005). Thus, circulating NK and NKT cells might also play an important role in the disease progression and pathogenesis of HAM/TSP.

The acquired immune response in HAM/TSP

It has been reported that patients with HAM/TSP generally have higher anti-HTLV-1 Ab titers than ACs with a similar PVL (Ishihara et al. 1994; Kira et al. 1992; Nagasato et al. 1991), suggesting the existence of an augmented humoral immune response to HTLV-1. Interestingly, although Ab responses to the immunodominant epitopes of the HTLV-1 Envelope (Env) proteins were similar in all three clinical groups of HTLV-1 infection (HAM/TSP, ATL, and ACs), reactivity to four Tax immunodominant epitopes was higher in patients with HAM/TSP (71–93 %) than in patients with ATL (4–31 %) or ACs (27–37 %) (Lal et al. 1994). A recent report indicates that the Ab response against HBZ was associated with reduced CD4+ T cell activation in patients with HAM/TSP, and HBZ-specific Ab inhibited spontaneous in vitro lymphocyte proliferation in the PBMCs of patients with HAM/TSP (Enose-Akahata et al. 2013). Among these anti–HTLV-1 antibodies, anti-Env Ab is particularly important because some anti-Env Abs have neutralizing activity against HTLV-1. Antisera raised against recombinant HTLV-1 Env polypeptides (Kiyokawa et al. 1984; Nakamura et al. 1987), vaccinia virus containing the HTLV-1 env gene (Hakoda et al. 1995; Shida et al. 1987), immunization with neutralizing epitope peptides (Tanaka et al. 1994), and passive transfer of human immunoglobulin G that has neutralizing activity (Murata et al. 1996; Tanaka et al. 1993) were all shown to neutralize HTLV-1 infectivity. In HTLV-1 infection, the roles of HTLV-1 neutralizing Ab in vivo are still largely unknown. It will be interesting to examine whether HTLV-1 neutralizing Ab titers correlate with disease status and PVL in infected individuals. Because the mutation rate of HTLV-1 provirus is significantly lower than that of HIV-1, passive immunization with human monoclonal Ab may be a beneficial and effective method to prevent HTLV-1 infection.

Antiviral CD4+ T cell responses are of central importance in driving B cell and CD8+ T cell responses in vivo. The most common HTLV-1 antigen recognized by CD4+ T cells is the Env protein (Goon et al. 2004b; Kitze et al. 1998), in contrast to the immunodominance of Tax in the CD8+ T cell response (Goon et al. 2004a; Jacobson et al. 1990; Kannagi et al. 1991). At a similar PVL, patients with HAM/TSP had a significantly increased frequency of virus-specific CD4+ T cells compared with ACs (Goon et al. 2004b; Nose et al. 2007). The antiviral T-helper (Th) 1 phenotype is also dominant among HTLV-1-specific CD4+ T cells in both ACs and patients with HAM/TSP (Goon et al. 2002), and there is a higher frequency of IFN-γ, TNF-α, and IL-2 production by CD4+ T cells in patients with HAM/TSP compared with ACs of a similar PVL (Goon et al. 2002; Goon et al. 2003). A role for CD4+ T cells in initiating and causing HAM/TSP is also consistent with the immunogenetic observations that the possession of HLA-DRB1*0101, which restricts the immunodominant epitope of HTLV-1 Env gp21, was associated with susceptibility to HAM/TSP in independent HTLV-1-infected populations in southern Japan (Jeffery et al. 1999, 2000) and northeast Iran (Sabouri et al. 2005). Accordingly, a synthetic tetramer of DRB1*0101 and the immunodominant HTLV-1 Env380-394 peptide was used to analyze Env-specific CD4+ T cells directly ex vivo (Nose et al. 2007). The results showed that the frequency of tetramer+ CD4+ T cells was significantly higher in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs with a similar PVL. Furthermore, direct ex vivo analysis of tetramer+ CD4+ T cells from two unrelated DRB1*0101-positive patients with HAM/TSP indicated that certain T cell receptor Vβs were utilized and antigen-specific amino acid motifs were identified in complementarity determining region 3 from both patients. These results suggest that the observed increase in virus-specific CD4+ T cells in patients with HAM/TSP, which may contribute to CD4+ T cell-mediated antiviral immune responses and to an increased risk of HAM/TSP, was not simply due to the rapidly growing HTLV-1-infected CD4+ T cells but was the result of in vivo selection by specific MHC–peptide complexes, as observed in freshly isolated HLA-A*0201/Tax11-19 tetramer+ CD8+ T cells (Saito et al. 2001) and muscle-infiltrating cells from patients with HAM/TSP and HTLV-1-infected patients with polymyositis (Saito et al. 2002).

Previous reports indicated that HTLV-1-specific CD8+ CTLs are typically abundant, chronically activated, and mainly targeted to the viral transactivator protein Tax (Bangham 2000). Further, as already mentioned, the median PVL in PBMCs of patients with HAM/TSP was more than 10 times higher than that in ACs, and a high PVL was also associated with an increased risk of progression to disease (Nagai et al. 1998). Furthermore, HLA-A*02 and HLA-Cw*08 genes were independently and significantly associated with a lower PVL and a lower risk of HAM/TSP (Jeffery et al. 2000; Jeffery et al. 1999), and CD8+ T cells efficiently kill autologous Tax-expressing lymphocytes in fresh PBMCs in HTLV-1-infected individuals (Hanon et al. 2000). These data have raised the hypothesis that the class I-restricted CD8+ CTL response plays a critical part in limiting HTLV-1 replication in vivo and that genetically determined differences in the efficiency of the CTL response to HTLV-1 account for the risk of developing HAM/TSP. The analysis of gene expression profiles using microarrays in circulating CD4+ and CD8+ lymphocytes indicated that granzymes and perforin are more highly expressed in individuals with a low PVL (Vine et al. 2004), suggesting that a strong CTL response is associated

with a low PVL and a low risk of HAM/TSP. In accordance with this observation, the lytic capacity of HTLV-1-specific CTLs in patients with HAM/TSP and ACs quantified by a CD107a mobilization assay showed significantly lower CD107a staining in HTLV-1-specific CTLs in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs (Sabouri et al. 2008); this suggests that patients with HAM/TSP have a high frequency of HTLV-1-specific CD8+ T cells with poor lytic capacity, whereas ACs have a lower frequency of cells with high lytic capacity. Moreover, it has been reported that the high CTL avidity, which is closely associated with the lytic efficiency of CTLs, correlates with low PVL and proviral gene expression (Kattan et al. 2009), indicating that the efficient control of HTLV-1 in vivo depends on the quality of CTLs, which determines the position of virus–host equilibrium and also the outcome of persistent HTLV-1 infection. More recently, MacNamara et al. (Macnamara et al. 2010) showed that HLA class 1 alleles, which strongly bind oligopeptides from the HBZ protein, enable the host to have a more effective immune response against HTLV-1; therefore, such individuals have a lower PVL and are more likely to be asymptomatic. Another recent report showed the presence of HBZ-specific CD4+ and CD8+ cells in vivo in patients with HAM/TSP and in ACs and a significant association between the HBZ-specific CD8+ cell response and asymptomatic HTLV-1 infection (Hilburn et al. 2011). These findings provide strong evidence to support the hypothesis of the crucial role of CTLs and confirm the importance of HBZ for persistent infection. However, because the frequency of HTLV-1-specific CD8+ T cells was significantly elevated in patients with HAM/TSP compared with ACs (Greten et al. 1998; Nagai et al. 2001a), and these cells have the potential to produce proinflammatory cytokines (Kubota et al. 1998), there is debate on the role of HTLV-1-specific CD8+ T cells, namely, whether these cells contribute to the inflammatory and demyelinating processes of HAM/TSP or whether the dominant effect of such cells in vivo is protective against disease, although a protective role and a pathogenic role of CTLs are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, there are other examples of viral infections in which the virus-specific CTLs exert both beneficial (antiviral) and detrimental (inflammatory) effects, such as lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus infection in the mouse (Klenerman and Zinkernagel 1997). It is difficult to separate cause and effect in analyzing the association between T cell attributes and the efficiency of viral control in a persistent infection at equilibrium.

Regulatory T cells (Tregs) are important mediators of peripheral immune tolerance and play an important role in chronic viral infections. HTLV-1 preferentially and persistently infects CD4+ CD25+ lymphocytes in vivo (Yamano et al. 2005), which contain the majority of the Foxp3+ Tregs (Sakaguchi et al. 2006). In patients with HAM/TSP, the percentage of Foxp3+ Tregs in CD4+ CD25+ cells is lower than that in ACs and uninfected healthy controls (Oh et al. 2006; Yamano et al. 2005), whereas the percentage of Foxp3+ cells in the CD4+ population tends to be higher in patients with HAM/TSP than in ACs (Best et al. 2009; Hayashi et al. 2008b; Toulza et al. 2008). Because CD25 is induced by HTLV-1 Tax oncoprotein (Inoue et al. 1986), the proportion of Foxp3+ cells falls in the CD4+ CD25+ population, which contains both Tregs and activated non-Tregs, in HTLV-1-infected individuals, especially patients with HAM/TSP. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use CD25 as a marker of Tregs in HTLV-1 infection, and the best current working definition of Treg phenotype is CD4+ Foxp3+. The high frequency of CD4+ Foxp3+ T cells in HTLV-1-infected individuals is maintained by CCL22 produced by HTLV-1-infected PBMCs (Toulza et al. 2010). The frequency of HTLV-1-negative Foxp3+ CD4+ cells positively correlated with the HTLV-1 PVL (Hayashi et al. 2008a; Toulza et al. 2008), and the CTL activity negatively correlated with the frequency of HTLV-1-negative Foxp3+ CD4+ cells (Toulza et al. 2008). These results suggest that an increase in HTLV-1-negative FoxP3+ CD4+ Tregs is one of the chief determinants of the efficiency of T cell-mediated immune control of HTLV-1. If such Tregs reduce CTL activity, which in turn increases the HTLV-1 PVL, this activity increases the risk of developing HAM/TSP.

Dendritic cells and the other reservoirs of HTLV-1

Dendritic cells (DCs) are antigen-presenting cells that play a critical role in the regulation of the adaptive immune response. In HTLV-1 infection, it has been shown that the DCs from patients with HAM/TSP were infected with HTLV-1 (Macatonia et al. 1992), and the development of HAM/TSP is associated with rapid maturation of DCs (Ali et al. 1993). In vitro culture of lymphocytes from HTLV-1-infected individuals results in "spontaneous lymphocyte proliferation" (SLP), which is the in vitro proliferation of PBMCs without any exogenous stimuli such as antigen or mitogen. In patients with HAM/TSP, the levels of SLP reflect the severity of the disease (Ijichi et al. 1989; Itoyama et al. 1988). Interestingly, depletion of DCs from the PBMCs of patients with HAM/TSP abolished SLP, whereas supplementing DCs restores proliferation (Macatonia et al. 1992); supplementing B cells or macrophages had no effect. A DC-dependent mechanism of SLP was further supported by data showing that antibodies to MHC class II, CD86, and CD58 can block SLP (Makino et al. 1999). Recently, Jones et al. demonstrated that human-derived myeloid and plasmacytoid DCs are susceptible to infection with cell-free HTLV-1 and that HTLV-1-infected DCs can rapidly transfer virus to autologous primary CD4+ T cells (Jones et al. 2008). Furthermore, it was recently demonstrated that transmission of HTLV-1 from DCs to T cells was mediated primarily by DC-SIGN (Jain et al. 2009), and the DCs are the major cell type responsible for the generation and maintenance of Tax-specific CD8+ T cells both in vitro and in vivo (Manuel et al. 2009).

These findings suggest that the interaction of DCs with HTLV-1 is also crucial for the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP. Moreover, using transgenic mouse models that permit conditional transient depletion of CD11c+ DCs, and a chimeric HTLV-1 that carries the envelope gene from Moloney murine leukemia virus, Rahman et al. demonstrated the critical role of DCs in their ability to mount both innate and adaptive immune responses during early cell-free HTLV-1 infection (Rahman et al. 2011, 2010). Because HTLV-1 can impair the differentiation of monocytes into DCs (Nascimento et al. 2011), the interaction of DCs with HTLV-1 plays a central part in the persistence and pathogenesis of HTLV-1.

Conclusions

During the three decades since the discovery of HTLV-1, advances in research have successfully helped us to understand the clinical features of HTLV-1-associated diseases and the virological properties of HTLV-1, although the precise mechanism of disease pathophysiology is still incompletely understood and treatment is still unsatisfactory. Accumulating evidence suggests that the virus–host immunological interactions play a pivotal role in the pathogenesis of HAM/TSP. A genetically determined, less efficient CTL response against HTLV-1 may cause higher PVL and antigen expression in infected individuals, which lead to the activation and expansion of antigen-specific T cell responses, subsequent induction of large amounts of proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines, and progression of the development of HAM/TSP. Future studies should be conducted to identify the precise mechanism of disease development to allow effective treatment and prevention of disease. This will require the development of a humanized small animal model that could be exploited as a tool for screening and evaluation of HTLV-1-associated diseases.

Acknowledgment The author thanks the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Japan (Health Labour Sciences Research Grant on Intractable Disease, ref H22-013 and H23-126) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, ref 21590512 and 24590556), and the Novartis Foundation (Japan) for the Promotion of Science for financial supports.

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AIDS RESEARCH AND HUMAN RETROVIRUSES
Volume 30, Number 00, 2014

DOI: 10.1089/aid.2013.0214

Elimination of Human T Cell Leukemia Virus Type-1-Infected Cells by Neutralizing and Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity-Inducing Antibodies Against Human T Cell Leukemia Virus Type-1 Envelope gp46

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Abstract

Human T cell leukemia virus type-1 (HTLV-1) is prevalent worldwide with foci of high prevalence. However, to date no effective vaccine or drug against HTLV-1 infection has been developed. In efforts to define the role of antibodies in the control of HTLV-1 infection, we capitalized on the use of our previously defined anti-gp46 neutralizing monoclonal antibody (mAb) (clone LAT-27) and high titers of human anti-HTLV-1 IgG purified from HAM/TSP patients (HAM-IgG). LAT-27 and HAM-IgG completely blocked syncytium formation and T cell immortalization mediated by HTLV-1 *in vitro*. The addition of these antibodies to cultures of $CD8^+$ T cell-depleted peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) from HAM/TSP patients at the initiation of culture not only decreased the numbers of Tax-expressing cells and the production of HTLV-1 p24 but also inhibited the spontaneous immortalization of T cells. Coculture of *in vitro*-HTLV-1-immortalized T cell lines with autologous PBMCs in the presence of LAT-27 or HAM-IgG, but not an $F(ab')_2$ fragment of LAT-27 or non-neutralizing anti-gp46 mAbs, resulted in depletion of HTLV-1-infected cells. A 24-h ^{51}Cr release assay showed the presence of significant antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) activity in LAT-27 and HAM-IgG, but not $F(ab')_2$ of LAT-27, resulting in the depletion of HTLV-1-infected T cells by autologous PBMCs. The depletion of natural killer (NK) cells from the effector PBMCs reduced this ADCC activity. Altogether, the present data demonstrate that the neutralizing and ADCC-inducing activities of anti-HTLV-1 antibodies are capable of reducing infection and eliminating HTLV-1-infected cells in the presence of autologous PBMCs.

Introduction

HUMAN T CELL LEUKEMIA VIRUS type-1 (HTLV-1) is the first human retrovirus that was etiologically associated with adult T cell leukemia (ATL) and HTLV-1-associated myelopathy/tropical spastic paraparesis (HAM/TSP).[1–4] HTLV-1 is prevalent worldwide with foci of high prevalence in southwest Japan, the Caribbean islands, South America, and a part of Central Africa. The total number of HTLV-1 carriers is currently estimated to be 10–20 million.[5] The majority of HTLV-1 carriers remain asymptomatic throughout their lives, and approximately 5% of HTLV-1-infected individuals will develop either ATL or HAM/TSP after prolonged latency periods.

HTLV-1 is transmitted through contact with bodily fluids containing infected cells most often from mother to child through breast milk or via blood transfusion. It has been previously established that HTLV-1 efficiently spreads from cell to cell via the formation of virological synapses.[6] More recently, however, the formation of extracellular HTLV-1 viral particles similar to the formation of bacterial films has also been shown to be effective in viral transmission.[7] HTLV-1-antigen-expressing cells are difficult to detect at least in fresh peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) from HTLV-1-infected individuals.[8] However, when these PBMCs are isolated from the blood and cultured *in vitro*, some T cells begin to produce HTLV-1 antigen[9,10] followed by spontaneous immortalization of the cells in media containing interleukin-2 (IL-2).[11]

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