

STRONGER FOR LONGER: Managing Chronic Active ABMR in Renal Allograft Recipients

A Series of Expert Panel Discussions Featuring an Experienced ABMR Patient



Taking Stock of New Findings in the Pathogenesis of Chronic Active ABMR in Kidney Transplantation

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Chronic Active ABMR versus Chronic ABMR





How Bad is Chronic Active ABMR?





Chronic Active ABMR: Median Graft Survival After Diagnosis





Patient Death Rate After Graft Failure





Kaplan B, et al. Am J Transplant. 2002;2(10):970-974.

Pathophysiology of Chronic Active ABMR





IgG Donor-Specific Anti-Human HLA Antibody Subclasses and Kidney Allograft Antibody-Mediated Injury





Distribution of IgG1-4 iDSA subclasses

Identification of the 3 distinct rejection phenotypes according to the characteristics of the dominant donor-specific anti-HLA antibody (MFI, HLA class specificity, C1q-binding capacity, and IgG1-4)

Direct and Indirect Pathways of Endothelial Cell Injury





Farkash EA, et al. Nat Rev Nephrol. 2012;8(5):255-257.

Cellular Pathways Resulting in Allo-Antibody Generation





Modified from: Djamali A, et al. Am J Transplant. 2014;14(2):255-271.

Secondary Lymphoid Organ



Initial interaction occurs here:

- T-helper cell interacts with B-cell
- B-cell activation and differentiation into memory B cells or plasma cells
- Recirculate to secondary lymph nodes or to tertiary or primary organs



Hoffman W, et al. Clin J Am Soc Nephrol. 2016;11(1):137-154.

Primary Lymphoid Organ



- Long-lived plasma cells find their niche in the bone marrow
- Plasma cells obtain high level of specificity and high-level generation of antibodies
- Difficult to reach and treat



Tertiary Lymphoid Organ: Ectopic Germinal Center in Kidney



Ectopic Germinal Centers and Tertiary Lymphoid Organs





Thaunat O, et al. *J Immunol.* 2010;185(1):717-728.

What is ABMR Without Detectable HLA DSA?





Morphologic Evidence of Chronic Tissue Injury (primarily TG)





Loupy A, et al. Am J Transplant. 2020;20(9):2318-2331.

Molecular Diagnostics in Chronic Active ABMR







Gene expression profiling

Banff Human Organ Transplant (B-HOT) Panel



Intragraft Humoral Response versus Systemic Response





TG in the Absence of HLA-DSA



Risk factors, histopathological features and graft outcome of TG in the absence of HLA-DSA.



HLA-DSA, donor specific HLA-antibodies; TG, transplant glomerulopathy Senev A, et al. *Kidney Int.* 2021;100(2):401-414.

Predicted Indirectly Recognizable HLA Epitopes

What About the HLA DSA (+) ABMR (-) Phenotype?





Does DSA Have Predictive Value?



Eskandary et al¹

- 86 patients with DSA >1000 IgG mean fluorescence intensity (MFI)
- Positive predictive value (PPV) of DSA for the diagnosis of ABMR was 51% (44/86 samples that were DSA+ were confirmed to have active ABMR by biopsy)

DART Study²

- 87 patients from the multicenter study
- PPV of DSA for the diagnosis of ABMR was 48% (29/61 samples that were DSA+ were confirmed to have active ABMR by biopsy)
- 1. Eskandary F, et al. *Transplantation.* 2017;101(3):631-641.
- 2. Jordan SC, et al. Transplant Direct. 2018;4(9):e379.

DSA Alone are Not Associated with Increased Risk of Graft Failure



Purpose: Examine long-term outcomes for kidney transplant recipients with DSAs in absence of rejection on biopsy

- 587 total kidney biopsies
 - 192 DSA+
 - 395 DSA-
- The definition of de novo DSA was new DSA with MFI >300

Conclusion: In the absence of rejection, DSAs are not associated with an increased risk of graft failure



Death-Censored Graft Survival

Bottom Line: Not All DSA are Bad!





Chronic Active ABMR Pathophysiology: Summary and Future Directions



POOR OUTCOMES



Chronic active ABMR is common and is associated with poor outcomes

OPTIMAL TREATMENT STRATEGIES



Better understanding of cellular and molecular pathways involved in the pathogenesis of chronic active ABMR could lead to optimal treatment strategies

MULTIPLE PHENOTYPES



Chronic active ABMR has several phenotypes that are associated with different outcomes

PREVENTION AND EARLY DETECTION



Prevention (adherence, optimal IS), early diagnosis (novel biomarkers), and treatment could reduce the incidence of graft failure from chronic active ABMR

Patient Video









How does your understanding of the different ABMR phenotypes influence your therapeutic approach to your patients?



Applying Histological Findings to Expedite Chronic Active ABMR Diagnosis

Benjamin Adam, MD, FRCPC

Laboratory Site Chief and Anatomical Pathology Divisional Director University of Alberta Hospital Associate Professor, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology Program Director, Renal and Transplantation Pathology Fellowship University of Alberta Medical Lead, North Sector Clinical Trials and Research Alberta Precision Laboratories Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

- 64-year-old male
- 10 years post-transplant for polycystic kidney disease
- History of DSA (Class II: DQ2)
- Increasing creatinine to 414 $\mu mol/L$ (4.7 mg/dL)
- Urine: 3+ protein, 2+ hemoglobin







Patient Case (continued)





Kidney allograft, biopsy (10 years post-transplantation):

- Chronic active antibody mediated rejection
- Banff scores: g1 ptc1 i1 ti2 i-IFTA2 t0 t-IFTA1 v0 cg3 mm2 ci2 ct2 cv2 ah2 C4d2



Banff 2019 Classification Antibody Mediated Rejection



2019 Banff Criteria for Chronic Active ABMR (All 3 criteria must be met for diagnosis)

Morphologic Evidence of Chronic Tissue Injury

Including 1 or more of the following:

- Transplant glomerulopathy
- Severe peritubular capillary basement membrane multilayering
- Arterial intimal fibrosis of new onset, excluding other causes

Evidence of Antibody Interaction with Vascular Endothelium

Including 1 or more of the following:

- Linear C4d staining in peritubular capillaries or medullary vasa recta
- At least moderate microvascular inflammation
- Increased expression of gene transcripts/classifiers in the biopsy tissue strongly associated with ABMR

Serologic Evidence of Circulating Donor-specific Antibodies

- DSA to HLA or other antigens
- C4d staining or expression of validated transcripts/classifiers may substitute for DSA
- Thorough DSA testing, including testing for non-HLA antibodies if HLA antibody testing is negative, is strongly advised whenever criteria 1 and 2 are met

Proposed Changes for Banff 2022: Reintroduction of "Suspicious" Categories





Callemeyn J, et al. Am J Transplant. 2021;21(7):2413-2423.

Unpublished

"Chronic": Transplant Glomerulopathy (cg-lesion)

- GBM double contours in ≥1 capillary loop, graded in most severely involved glomerulus (Banff 2013)
 - cg0: No GBM double contours by LM or EM
 - cg1a: No GBM double contours by LM but present in ≥3 glomerular capillaries by EM with associated endothelial swelling and/or subendothelial widening
 - cg1b: GBM double contours by LM (involving <25% of peripheral capillary loops)
 - cg2: 26% to 50% of peripheral capillary loops
 - cg3: >50% of peripheral capillary loops





"Chronic": Peritubular Capillary BM Multi-lamination

- Circumferential PTC basement membrane multi-lamination (EM)
 - Mild: 2 to 4 layers
 - Moderate: 5 to 6 layers
 - − Severe: ≥7 layers
- Diagnostic criteria for "severe" PTCBMML
 - 1 PTC with \geq 7 layers plus \geq 2 with \geq 5 layers
 - Based on 3 most affected of 15 to 20 PTC examined





"Active": C4d Staining (IF or IHC)



- Linear circumferential peritubular capillary staining in cortex/medulla, excluding scarred or necrotic areas (Banff 2003)
 - C4d0: No peritubular capillary staining
 - C4d1: <10% of peritubular capillaries
 - C4d2: 10% to 50% of peritubular capillaries
 - C4d3: >50% of peritubular capillaries
- Positive result:
 - IF: C4d \geq 2 (strong staining)
 - IHC: C4d \geq 1 (any staining)



"Active": Glomerulitis (g-lesion)

- Complete/partial occlusion of at least one glomerular capillary by leukocyte infiltration and endothelial cell enlargement (Banff 2013)
 - g0: No glomerulitis
 - g1: <25% of glomeruli
 - g2: 25% to 75% of glomeruli
 - g3: >75% of glomeruli (mostly global involvement)





"Active": Peritubular Capillaritis (ptc-lesion)

- ≥10% of cortical peritubular capillaries with intraluminal inflammatory cells (Banff 2007)
 - ptc0: No significant peritubular capillaritis
 - ptc1: 3 to 4 luminal inflammatory cells
 - ptc2: 5 to 10 luminal inflammatory cells
 - ptc3: >10 luminal inflammatory cells

Note 1: Inflammation in <10%, regardless of intensity, is ptc0. Note 2: Not scored in medulla, areas of pyelonephritis, adjacent to infarcts, or around nodular lymphoid aggregates. Note 3: Should indicate if ptc is diffuse (>50%) or focal (\leq 50%).





Natural History of ABMR Lesions





TCMR, T cell-mediated rejection

Wiebe C, et al. Am J Transplant. 2012;12(5):1157-1167.

Diagnostic Tools in Kidney Transplant Pathology





IHC, immunohistochemistry; IF, immunofluorescence; EM, electron microscopy

Banff Human Organ Transplant (B-HOT) Panel



Feature	Newer technology based on FFPE tissue	Fresh tissue with cDNA microarrays
Maximum number of transcript targets	800	>47,000
Off-the-shelf panels available	Yes	Yes
Custom panels available	Yes	Yes
Recommended RNA input quantity	100 ng	50 to 500 ng
Approximate assay turnaround time	24 to 40 hours	25.5 to 37.5 hours
Analysis software provided by manufacturer	Yes	Yes
Ability to use same sample for histology and gene expression	Yes	Νο
Immediate access to long-term clinical follow-up data on archival clinical samples	Yes	Νο
FDA approved	Yes	Yes
Approximate assay cost per sample	\$275	\$1000 to \$3000
Integration with local clinical workflow	Simple	Complex

A digital transcription analytics platform

Can use formalin fixed, paraffin embedded (FFPE) samples

Challenges With Gene Expression





with histology ~40% of the time!

Halloran PF, et al. *Am J Transplant*. 2017;17(7):1754-1769. Madill-Thomsen K, et al. *Am J Transplant*. 2020;20(5):1341-1350.

Path Forward to Using Gene Expression in Practice







Donor-derived cell-free DNA (Trifecta Study)





Sigdel TK, et al. *PLoS One.* 2019;14(7):e0220052.

Non-invasive Tools for Diagnosis of ABMR



Not currently part of the Banff Diagnostic Criteria

 \checkmark

Nonspecific



Expensive for routine monitoring



May have a role when a biopsy cannot be done (patient unable to travel or on anticoagulation)

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More research needs to be done



Comprehensive Banff Automation System: Artificial Intelligence and Multimodality Testing





Fig. 1 | **Development of the comprehensive Banff Automation System for kidney allograft precision diagnostics.** Schematic diagram illustrating the decoding, encoding and rectifying processes used to construct the Banff Automation System. During the development process, the multidisciplinary consortium (pathologists, transplant physicians, data scientists and developers) worked closely together and improved the application numerous times. The outputs of the application are a decision tree for better visualization of the process that generates the diagnosis and automated reports in either PDF or Excel format. C4d, complement component C4d staining; DSA, donorspecific antibody.

Clinical Impact of AI and Multimodality Testing







Ongoing Challenges in ABMR Diagnosis



- Uncertain significance of:
 - Microvascular inflammation (in absence of DSA/C4d)
 - Antibody characteristics (quantity, locus, specificity)
 - Non-HLA DSA
- Clinical implementation of newer ancillary tools:
 - Gene expression
 - Donor-derived cell-free DNA
- Inter-relationship between ABMR and TCMR

Patient Video









What new opportunities do you see on the horizon for newer technologies, such as digital pathology and artificial intelligence, in diagnosis and personalized medicine in ABMR?



Assessing the Clinical Potential of Emerging Therapies for Chronic Active ABMR in Kidney Transplant Recipients

Ashley A. Vo, PharmD, FAST Professor, Pediatrics David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Director, Transplant Immunotherapy Program Comprehensive Transplant Center Cedars-Sinai Medical Center Los Angeles, CA, United States

Current Treatments for Chronic Active ABMR



Review



Recommended Treatment for Antibody-mediated Rejection After Kidney Transplantation: The 2019 Expert Consensus From the Transplantion Society Working Group

Carrie A. Schinstock, MD,¹ Roslyn B. Mannon, MD,² Klemens Budde, MD,³ Anita S. Chong, PhD,⁴ Mark Haas, MD,⁵ Stuart Knechtle, MD,⁶ Carmen Lefaucheur, MD, PhD,⁷ Robert A. Montgomery, MD,⁸ Peter Nickerson, MD,⁹ Stefan G. Tullius, MD, PhD,¹⁰ Curie Ahn, MD, PhD,^{11,12} Medhat Askar, MD, PhD,¹³ Marta Crespo, MD, PhD,¹⁴ Steven J. Chadban, PhD,¹⁵ Sandy Feng, MD, PhD,¹⁶ Stanley C. Jordan, MD,¹⁷ Kwan Man, PhD,¹⁸ Michael Mengel, MD,¹⁹ Randall E. Morris, MD,²⁰ Inish O'Doherty, PhD,²¹ Binnaz H. Ozdemir, MD, PhD,²² Daniel Seron, MD, PhD,²³ Anat R. Tambur, PhD,²⁴ Kazunari Tanabe, MD, PhD,²⁵ Jean-Luc Taupin, PhD,^{26,27} and Philip J. O'Connell, PhD²⁸

Abstract. With the development of modern solid-phase assays to detect anti-HLA antibodies and a more precise histological classification, the diagnosis of antibody-mediated rejection (AMR) has become more common and is a major cause of



While it was agreed that the aims of treatment are to preserve renal function, reduce histological injury, and reduce the titer of donor-specific antibody, there was no conclusive evidence to support any specific therapy. As a result, the treatment recommendations are largely based on expert opinion.

evidence to support any specific merapy. As a result, the treatment recommendations are largely based on expert opinion. It is acknowledged that properly conducted and powered clinical trials of biologically plausible agents are urgently needed to improve patient outcomes.

(Transplantation 2020;104: 911-922).

IL-6, interleukin-6; Tfh, T follicular helper

Ideal agent for treatment of cABMR:

- Remove alloantibody
- Prevent ADCC and CDC
- Reduce pathologic markers of injury
- Prevent antibody rebound
- Improve patient and graft outcomes

Aim: Discuss emerging treatments for cABMR based on targeting essential elements of the antibody response to allografts. These include:

- Pathogenic IgG antibodies
- Cytokines (IL-6)
- B-cells & plasma cells

Schinstock A, et al. *Transplantation*. 2020;104(5):911-922.

Emerging Therapeutic Approaches to Reducing Alloantibody Injury to Allografts





APC, antigen presenting cell; APRIL, A Proliferation-Inducing Ligand; BAFF, B-cell activating factor; Bcl-6: B-cell lymphoma 6 protein; BCMA, B-cell maturation antigen; CD19: Cluster of Differentiation 19; CXCR5, C-X-C chemokine receptor type 5; C1Q, first component of complement q; TCR, T-cell receptor

Jordan S, et al. Am J Transplant. 2020;20(Suppl 4):42-56.



New Beginnings

Antibody-Directed Therapies

Emerging Treatments





Imlifidase Mechanism of Action Implications for CDC and ADCC





- An IgG-degrading enzyme derived from Streptococcus pyogenes (IdeS)
- Targets pathogenic IgG molecules
- Approved by the European Union for desensitization treatment of highly sensitized adult kidney transplant patients with positive crossmatch against an available deceased donor
- Not approved by the FDA or in Switzerland

Imlifidase for Desensitization



Imlifidase eliminates pathogenic IgG molecules within hours, preventing ADCC and CDC



Median highest levels of DSAs



Post-transplant IVIg + rituximab Prevents DSA Rebound!

Jordan SC, et al. N Engl J Med. 2017;377(5):442-453.

Emerging Treatments





IL-6: Pleiotropic Cytokine Impacting Multiple Organ Systems





Immune Cells

- 1. Stimulate B-cells differentiation to antibody producing plasma cells
- 2. Plasma cell and myeloma cell growth factor
- 3. Maintains Th1 and Th2 cell activities
- 4. Increases Th17 and Tfh cells
- 5. Decreases Tregs



Lungs

- 1. Cytokine Release Syndrome
- 2. Severe pneumonia
- 3. Pleural effusions /fibrosis
- 4. Death

Liver



- 1. Increase CRP
- 2. Increase Serum Amyloid A
- 3. Increase Fibrinogen
- 4. Increase Hepcidin (anemia of chronic disease)
- 5. Decreases albumin and transferrin





- 2. Increase risk for coronary artery disease
- 3. Increases mortality from cardiovascular disease in ESRD patients

Kidney

- 1. Increase mesangial cell proliferation
- 2. Contributes to glomerular crescent formation
- 3. Contributes to chronic antibody rejection of kidney allografts

Bone Marrow, Synovial Fibroblast

- 1. Increase osteoclast differentiation
- 2. Increase angiogenesis
- 3. Increase platelet
- 4. Responsible for joint damage in RA



IL-6 Signaling and Its Blockade





IL-6: Important cABMR Target



Allograft and Patient Survival in Patients Treated with Tocilizumab* for Chronic Active ABMR



Anti-IL-6R treatment improved both patient and graft survival

TCZ, tocilizumab; SOC, standard of care

*The use of tocilizumab in kidney transplantation is off-label in Switzerland and Europe. Choi J, et al. *Am J Transplant.* 2017;17(9):2381-2389.

Clazakizumab in cABMR



Clazakizumab* Decreases DSAs and Banff Pathology Scores and Improves Graft Function and Survival



*Clazakizumab is not approved in the United States, Switzerland, nor the European Union. Doberer K, et al. *J Am Soc Nephrol*. 2021;32(3):708-722.



Clazakizumab Stabilizes GFR versus Placebo





- Individual: Dashed lines
- Mean eGFR: Solid Lines
- 95% Cls: Shaded areas

*Clazakizumab is not approved in the United States, Switzerland, nor the European Union. Doberer K, et al. *J Am Soc Nephrol*. 2021;32(3):708-722.

Clazakizumab for Desensitization





REGIMEN

Patients received PLEX + IVIG, then anti-IL-6 25 mg SQ monthly

EVALUATION

Changes in MFI for all HLA antibodies and DSAs evaluated at 6 months (study end)

POST-TRANSPLANT

Anti-IL-6 continued post-transplant

*Clazakizumab is not approved in the United States, Switzerland, nor the European Union. Vo AA, et al. *Am J Transplant*. 2022;22(4):1133-1144.

Effects of Anti-IL-6 Desensitization



Time from dialysis to transplant: $92 \pm 54M$

Time from last clazakizumab to transplant: $2.9 \pm 4.0 M$



50% of patients had FCMX+/DSA+

75% had DSA+ at time of transplant









*Clazakizumab is not approved in the United States, Switzerland, nor the European Union. Vo AA, et al. *Am J Transplant.* 2022;22(4):1133-1144.

(C) Class I Mean MFI: Neat vs. 1:8 Dilution



eGFR Stabilization Observed Over 24 Months



DSA Levels Over 24 Months



Stopped Clazakizumab at +12M

IMAGINE Study: Clazakizumab in Treatment-Resistant cABMR

Design

Phase3InterventionClazakizumab, PlaceboStudy TypeInterventional (Clinical Trial)Estimated Enrollment350 participantsAllocationRandomizedIntervention ModelParallel AssignmentMaskingQuadrupleActual Study Start DateOctober 14, 2019

Estimated Completion Date February 2030

Primary Outcome

Time to all-cause composite allograft loss*

Status Recruiting NCT03744910

*Defined as eGFR <15 mL/min/1.73 m² (total cumulative duration of eGFR <15 mL/min/1.73 m² AND/OR dialysis ≥60 days), return to dialysis, allograft nephrectomy, re-transplantation, or death from any cause.



Emerging Treatments





Fc Neonatal Receptor (FcRn): An Emerging Target for Immunotherapeutics





A: Biology of FcRn-IgG interactions that lead to decreased lysosomal degradation & extended $t_{1/2}$ of IgG

B: Importance of FcRn in maintaining IgG and albumin levels in plasma

C: Saturation of FcRn with highdose IVIG accelerates the degradation of ambient IgG/pathogenic molecules

*Rozanolixizumab is not approved in the United States, Switzerland, nor the European Union. Jordan CS, et al. *Transplantation*. 2020;104(1):17-23.

Emerging Treatments





Daratumumab: CD38 Antibody for cABMR









Doberer K, at al. *Transplantation*. 2021;105(2):451-457.

Summary



Most Promising Emerging Treatments for 2023

Imlifidase

 Already approved in Europe, studies in the United States for desensitization (enrolling) and treatment of ABMR (completed)

Anti-IL-6 (Clazakizumab)

- For desensitization in combination with PLEX + IVIG at initiation, results in long-term reductions in HLA antibodies and very effective in reducing rebound DSA posttransplant
- Ongoing trial (IMAGINE Study) for cABMR with plan to complete Interim Analysis #1 in 2023

Anti-CD38/Anti-BCMA

 Studies beginning with these plasma cell-directed monoclonals

FcRN Blockers

- Will be exciting to evaluate as they can reduce deleterious IgG antibodies long-term and re-use is not a problem
- May also reduce immune activation events associated with antigen presentation

Patient Video









How do you see these emerging agents being utilized in the current treatment paradigm?