Anais da Academia Brasileira de Ciências
ISSN: 0001-3765
aabc@abc.org.br
Academia Brasileira de Ciências
Brasil

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Anais da Academia Brasileira de Ciências, vol. 81, núm. 3, septiembre, 2009, pp. 559-569
Academia Brasileira de Ciências
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

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Anais da Academia Brasileira de Ciências (2009) 81(3): 559-569
(Annals of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences)
ISSN 0001-3765
www.scielo.br/aabc

Human neutrophil alloantigens systems

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Manuscript received on September 1, 2008; accepted for publication on April 27, 2009;
presented by LUIZ R. TRAVASSOS

ABSTRACT

Neutrophil alloantigens are involved in a variety of clinical conditions including immune neutropenias, transfusio related acute lung injury (TRALI), refractoriness to granulocyte transfusions and febrile transfusion reactions. the last decade, considerable progress has been made in the characterization of the implicated antigens. Current seven antigens are assigned to five human neutrophil antigen (HNA) systems. The HNA-1a, HNA-1b and HNA- antigens have been identified as polymorphic forms of the neutrophil Fcγ receptor IIIb (CD16b), encoded by thr alleles. Recently, the primary structure of the HNA-2a antigen was elucidated and the HNA-2a-bearing glycoprote was identified as a member of the Ly-6/uPAR superfamily, which has been clustered as CD177. The HNA-3a antigen located on a 70-95 kDa glycoprotein; however, its molecular basis is still unknown. Finally, the HNA-4a and HNA- antigens were found to be caused by single nucleotide mutations in the α_M (CD11b) and α_L (CD11a) subunits the leucocyte adhesion molecules (β_2 integrins). Molecular and biochemical characterization of neutrophil antige have expanded our diagnostic tools by the introduction of genotyping techniques and immunoassays for antibo identification. Further studies in the field of neutrophil immunology will facilitate the prevention and management transfusion reactions and immune diseases caused by neutrophil antibodies.

Key words: neutrophil antigens, blood transfusion, alloimmunization, transfusion reaction, neutropenia.

DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, investigators have observed that the sera of some patients caused agglutination of leucocytes from others individuals. Granulocyte antibodies have been detected in sera of multitransfused persons, women after pregnancy, patients with neutropenia, patients with febrile transfusion reactions, and in the blood of donors that caused pulmonary transfusion reactions in the transfusion recipient. The first granulocyte-specific antigen was described in 1960 by Lalezari in a case of neonatal alloimmune neutropenia. Meanwhile, a number of granulocyte antigens has been described and characterized on the bioch and molecular level, which allowed the developr assays for rapid antibody identification and DNA techniques for antigen typing (Bux et al. 1995).

Neutrophil antibodies have been shown to pla role in the patophysiology of several clinical con including neonatal alloimmune neutropenia (NA toimmune neutropenia of childhood, febrile non lytic transfusion reactions (FNHTR), transfusion- acute lung injury (TRALI), immune neutropeni bone-marrow transplantation, transfusion-relate immune neutropenia (TRAIN), drug-induced ne

TABLE I
Clinical conditions associated with neutrophil antibodies.

Alloimmune diseases	Autoimmune diseases
Neonatal alloimmune neutropenia (NAN)	Autoimmune neutropenia of childhood
Transfusion-related acute lung injury (TRALI)	Drug-induced immune neutropenia
Alloimmune neutropenia after bone marrow transplantation	Autoimmune neutropenia after bone marrow transplantation
Transfusion-related alloimmune neutropenia (TRAIN)	
Refractoriness to granulocyte transfusions	
Febrile transfusion reactions	

TABLE II
ISBT Human neutrophil alloantigens (HNA) nomenclature.

Antigen system	Carrier glycoproteins	CD	Antigens	Former names	Alleles
HNA-1	Fcγ Receptor IIIb	CD16b	HNA-1a	NA1	*FCGR3B*01*
			HNA-1b	NA2	*FCGR3B*02*
			HNA-1c	SH	*FCGR3B*03*
HNA-2	NB1 glycoprotein	CD177	HNA-2	NB1	*CD177*01*
HNA-3	unknown (GP 70–95)		HNA-3a	5b	*unknown*
HNA-4	MAC-1; CR3; $\alpha_M\beta_2$-integrin	CD11b	HNA-4a	MART	*ITGAM*01 (230G)*
HNA-5	LFA-1; $\alpha_L\beta_2$-integrin	CD11a	HNA-5a	OND	*ITGAL*01 (2372G)*

There are several clinically important human neutrophil alloantigen systems. The nomenclature used for these antigens was established in 1998 by an International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT) Working Party (Bux 1999) (Table II). The antigen systems are referred to as human neutrophil antigens (HNA). This nomenclature is based on the glycoprotein location of the antigens. Different polymorphisms of the same glycoprotein are designated alphabetically, in a sequential order of detection (HNA-1a, -1b, -1c) and the nomenclature of the alleles named according to the Guidelines of the International Workshop on Human Gene Mapping. Currently, the HNA systems comprise seven antigens, which are assigned to five glycoproteins (antigen systems).

HNA-1

Biochemistry and Molecular Basis

described in cases of alloimune neonatal neutropenia (Lalezari et al. 1960). Later on, a third polymorphism was described, the SH antigen, now called HNA-1c (Bux et al. 1997b). HNA-1 alloantibodies can cause alloimmune neonatal neutropenia, TRALI and seem not to affect engraftment and neutrophil recovery in alloimmunized recipients of bone marrow transplants (Bux 2001) (Table III).

HNA-1 antigens are located on the human neutrophil Fc gamma-receptor IIIb (FcγRIIIb) and encoded by the *FCGR3B* gene located on chromosome 1. FcγRIIIb belongs to the immunoglobulin superfamily, as it has two extracellular disulphide-bonded immunoglobulin G (IgG)-like domains. The membrane proximal domain contains residues which are critical for ligand binding (Hibbs et al. 1994), and the function of the distal domain is unknown, but it is quite polymorphic. Monoclonal antibodies reacting with FcRIIIb have been designated as CD16b. The FcγRIIIb is attached to the granulo-

TABLE III
Clinical disorders caused by neutrophil specific antibodies.

Antibody	Clinical condition
HNA-1	Alloimmune neonatal neutropenia
	Autoimmune neutropenia
	TRALI
HNA-2a	Alloimmune neonatal neutropenia
	Autoimmune neutropenia
	TRALI
	Drug-induced neutropenia
	Graft failure after bone marrow transplantation
HNA-3a	TRALI
HNA-4a	Alloimmune neonatal neutropenia
	Autoimmune neutropenia
HNA-5a	Unknown

of the plasma membrane (Huizinga et al. 1990a). The FcγRIIIb is a heavily glycosylated protein with different relative molecular weights of 50-65 kDa and 65-80 kDa for the HNA-1a and -1b isoforms, respectively (Ory et al. 1989).

FcγRIIIb is the clinically most important immunogenic glycoprotein of the neutrophil membrane. In addition, 30% of granulocyte autoantibodies recognize epitopes on the FcγRIIIb with a preferential binding to the HNA-1a polymorphic form of this receptor (Bux et al. 1997a). The glycoprotein is constitutively only expressed on neutrophils in mean copy numbers of 190.000 (range 120.000-400.000) (Huizinga et al. 1989).

The *FCGR3B* gene is located on the long arm of the chromosome 1 and consists of five exons with 699 bp encoding 233 amino acids, including a signal peptide of 17 amino acids. cDNA analysis of the gene revealed five nucleotide substitutions (nucleotides 141, 147, 227, 277 and 349) associated with the HNA-1a/b polymorphisms. All substitution sites are located in the third exon that codes for the membrane distal domain. The five nucleotide differences result in four amino acid substitutions (positions 36, 65, 82 and 106) with two additional N-linked glycosilation sites, so that the HNA-1b polymorphic form of the *FCGR3B* has six potential N-linked glycosilation sites, compared to four of the HNA-

An additional polymorphism of the *FCGR3*
HNA-1c antigen that has been associated with a la
gle nucleotide substitution in the allele encoding
1b (Bux et al. 1997a). HNA-1c genetics is comp
by the fact that some of the HNA-1c-positive in
als, mainly Europeans, possess three *FCGR3B* g
their genome with a HNA-1a and -1c allele comb
on the chromosome (Koene et al. 1998). An u
crossing-over event during meiosis may be the
for *FCGR3B* gene duplication in which the allele
ing HNA-1a became associated with the HNA-1
(Steffensen et al. 1999).

In contrast to individuals with a hiperexpres
the FcγRIIIb, few individuals do not express this
tor on their neutrophils due to *FCGR3B* gene defi
showing the HNA-1 null phenotype (de Haas et al.
Most of the FcγRIIIb deficient individuals do no
from repeated infections, autoimmune or immun
plex diseases, but pregnant women can form Fcγ
specific alloantibodies causing alloimmune neutr
in the neonate (Huizinga et al. 1990b).

FUNCTION

The FcγRIIIb is a low affinity receptor for IgG
IgG3. It binds with its membrane proximal dor
the Fc parts of polymeric IgG antibodies. Restin
trophils primarily engage FcγRIIIb for the bin
immune complexes and clearing them from the c
tion. The receptor contributes also to the phago
of opsonized micro-organisms (Bux 2008).

FREQUENCY

The HNA-1 frequencies vary widely among d
populations (Kuwano et al. 2000, Kissel et al.
Lin et al. 1994, Ohto and Matsuo 1989, Han a
1997). Using flow cytometry technique to phe
randomly healthy Brazilian blood donors, we f
frequency of 65% and 83% for HNA-1a and H
respectively (Norcia et al. 2006) (Table IV).

HNA-2

BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BASIS

TABLE IV
Human neutrophil alloantigens (HNA) frequencies (%).

Population	HNA-1a	HNA-1b	HNA-1c	HNA-1 null	HNA-2a	HNA-3a	HNA-4a	HNA-5a
Africans	46–66	78–84	23–31	4	98	NT	NT	88
Chinese	90	52	0	0–0.2	99	NT	NT	65
Asian Indians	44	83	16	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT
Japanese	88	51–61	0	< 0.4	89–99	NT	NT	NT
Koreans	78	75	< 1	NT	86	NT	99	96
Europeans	54–52	87–89	5–7	0.2–0.8	87–97	89–99	96	96
North Americans	56–62	89	5	NT	97	NT	NT	96
Brazilian	100	83	11	NT	97	86–95	96	91
Brazilian Indians	83	36	0	NT	NT	NT	100	96

NT: not tested.

on neutrophils and can be found on the plasma membrane and membranes of secondary granules and secretory vesicles (Goldschmeding et al. 1992). An unique characteristic of HNA-2a is its heterogenous expression, i.e. a single individual has a neutrophil subpopulation which expresses HNA-2a and another that does not. The mean proportion of neutrophils that express HNA-2a ranges from 0-100% and is slightly greater in females (63%) than in males (53%) (Matsuo et al. 2000, Moritz et al. 2007). The HNA-2a expression has been reported to drop in older women but not in men, suggesting that estrogen may influence the antigen expression. This is in accordance with the finding that the HNA-2a expression increases in pregnancy (Caruccio et al. 2003). HNA-2a-negative individuals and the negative neutrophil subset of HNA-2a-positive individuals show in fact a null phenotype since their neutrophils are deficient in the carrier glycoprotein (Kissel et al. 2002). The alloantibodies formed by HNA-2a-negative individuals are important in neonatal alloimmune neutropenia, TRALI, autoimmune drug-induced neutropenia, and graft failure after bone marrow transplantation.

HNA-2a has been characterized as a 56-64 kDa glycoprotein, which is like the FcγRIIIb linked to the cell membrane via a GPI anchor (Stroncek et al. 1990). Monoclonal antibodies directed against HNA-2a have been clustered as CD177. The glycoprotein has two cysteine-rich domains and three N-linked glycosylation sites. Homology of the cysteine-rich domains suggests that CD177 belongs to the Ly-6/uPAR/snake-toxin fam-

19q13.2. In addition, there is a pseudogene homologous to exons 4 through 9 that is located adjacent to the HNA-2a gene, but oriented in the opposite direction. The HNA-2a cDNA consist of 1311 bp coding for 437 amino acids, including a signal peptide of 21 amino acids. The HNA-2a null phenotype was found to be the result of incorrect splicing, leading to mRNA strands containing intron sequences with stop codons.

Function

CD177 is involved in the adhesion of neutrophils to endothelial cells and their transendothelial migration by cationic-dependent interaction with the heterophilic domains of PECAM-1 (CD31) (Sachs et al. 2007). Recently, it has been demonstrated that the subset of neutrophils that express CD177 on their plasma membrane also displays the neutrophil serine protease proteinase 3 (mPR3), which is usually located intracellularly. The function of this co-expression of CD177 and mPR3 on the plasma membrane of a neutrophil subset is unknown (Bauer et al. 2007).

A highly significant HNA-2a up-regulation was observed in patients with bacterial infections and polycytemia vera, as well as in stem cells donors stimulated with granulocyte colony-stimulating factor (Göhring et al. 2004).

Frequency

HNA-2a is a high frequency antigen in North Americans,

can and European studies (Lalezari et al. 1971, Moritz et al. 2007, Norcia et al. 2006, Ohto and Matsuo 1989, Tanigushi et al. 2002) (Table IV).

HNA-3

Biochemistry and Molecular Basis

HNA-3a antigen has been introduced by van Leeuwen et al. in 1964. It has been suggested that the antigen is located on a 70- to 95 kDa protein, which is not linked to the plasma membrane via a GPI anchor as the HNA-1 and -2 antigens (de Haas et al. 2000). Cytogenetics studies suggested that the HNA-3a antigen is the product of a gene located on the chromossome 4. However, the primary structure of HNA-3 remains to be elucidated.

HNA-3a is expressed on neutrophils and lymphocytes, whereas the reported expression on platelets is controversial. Alloantibodies to HNA-3a were found in occasional cases of febrile transfusion reactions (Lalezari and Bernard 1965) and neonatal immune neutropenia (de Haas et al. 2000). HNA-3a alloantibodies were increasingly reported in conjunction with TRALI, especially with severe cases, in which patients required artificial ventilation, or with fatal reactions (Davoren et al. 2003). This is possibly the result of the neutrophil priming capacity for reactive oxygen species production, and probably the marked capability of the HNA-3a antibodies to agglutinate neutrophils.

Function

Nothing is known about the function of HNA-3a.

Frequency

HNA-3a is a high frequency antigen with reported phenotype frequencies ranging from 89-99% in Europeans (van Leeuwen et al. 1964, de Haas et al. 2000, Lalezari and Bernard 1965). Using flow cytometry technique, we found a HNA-3a frequency of 95% in randomly investigated healthy Brazilian blood donors (Norcia et al. 2006) (Table IV).

HNA-4

Biochemistry and Molecular Basis

The HNA-4 system is located on the β_2-in
a member of the Leu-CAM family and integrin
family, which shares a common β subunit (β_2 or
noncovalently associated with four different α su
The HNA-4a antigen is a polymorphic variant
(CR3; CD11b) subunit as the result of a single n
tide change G302A, leading to an arginine inste
histidine at position 61 (Simsek et al. 1996). H
alloantibodies can cause neonatal immune neutr
(Fung et al. 2003). Two types of HNA-4a antise
been identified, with different effects in cell i
tions, suggesting that the humoral response to th
gen is heterogeneous and differs from one imm
person to another (Sachs et al. 2004). The CD11b
is also the target of autoantibodies reported not
cause neutropenia, but also to be able to impa
trophil adhesion (Hartman and Wright 1991).

Function

CD11b/CD18, also known as Mac-1, CR3 or
integrin, is expressed on neutrophils, monocyt
natural killer cells, and plays an important role
leukocyte adhesion to endothelial cells and plate
well as in phagocytosis. It is not known whet
function of CD11b/CD18 is influenced by the H
polymorphism.

Frequency

HNA-4a genotypes were found in $>$ 90% of
Asians and Brazilians (Kline et al. 1986, Han a
2006, Cardone et al. 2006) (Table IV).

HNA-5

Biochemistry and Molecular Basis

The existence of a leukocyte non-HLA, now
HNA-5a, defined by antibodies in a serum
'OND', was reported by Decary et al. in 1979.
5a has been located on the α_L (CD11a; LFA-1
of the leukocyte β_2-integrin family, and was fo
be due to a G2466C substitution in the coding se

Function

The CD11a/CD18 complex, also known as LFA-1 or $\alpha_M\beta_2$-integrin, is expressed on all leucocytes and function as a leucocyte adhesion molecule. It is unknown whether the integrin function is influenced by the HNA-5a polymorphism.

Frequency

Genotyping resulted in HNA-5a frequencies between 79% and 88% in different populations (Sachs et al. 2005). We have found a higher frequency of HNA-5a positive genotype in Brazilian blood donors (91%), and Brazilian Amazon Indians (96%) (Cardone et al. 2006) (Table IV).

LABORATORIAL ASSAYS FOR DETECTING NEUTROPHIL ANTIGENS AND ANTIBODIES

Phenotyping and Genotyping of Neutrophil Antigens

Traditionally, neutrophil antigen phenotyping has been performed using human alloantibodies in the granulocyte agglutination test (GAT), or the granulocyte immunofluorescence test (GIFT). However, alloantisera specific to neutrophil antigens are not always available. Alloantibodies to HNA-1a, -1b, -2a, and -3a are available, but antibodies to HNA-1c, -4a, and -5a are difficult to obtain.

We have found that, when used in flow cytometry, the neutrophil alloantibodies allow a higher sensitivity rate do detect HNAs when compared to the GIFT (A.M. Norcia et al., unpublished data). The GAT and GIFT assays require training, as the results are evaluated with a microscope rather than by the flow cytometer.

Monoclonal antibodies specific to HNA-1a, -1b and -2a have been described, are commercially available, and have been used to phenotype neutrophils using flow cytometry. This method is faster and easier, since the assay can be done with the whole blood instead of isolated neutrophils.

Genotyping assays to HNA-1a, -1b, -1c, -4a and -5a have been developed. The characterization of the genes encoding the HNA-1 antigens has allowed for the development of genotyping assays for these antigens (Bux et

differ at 5 nucleotides, one of which is silent. One nucleotide differs between *FCGR3B*2* and *FCGR3B*3*. Although distinguishing single nucleotide polymorphisms is usually simple, genotyping for *FCGR3B* alleles is complicated by the high degree of homology between *FCGR3B* and the gene that encodes FcγRIIIa, *FCGR3A*. Among the 5 nucleotides that differ between *FCGR3B*1* and *FCGR3B*2*, *FCGR3A* is the same as *FCGR3B*1* at 3 nucleotides and the same as *FCGR3B*2* at 2 nucleotides (Stroncek 2004). As a result most laboratories, including ours, have employed PCR-SSP to distinguish *FCGR3B* alleles (Fig. 1).

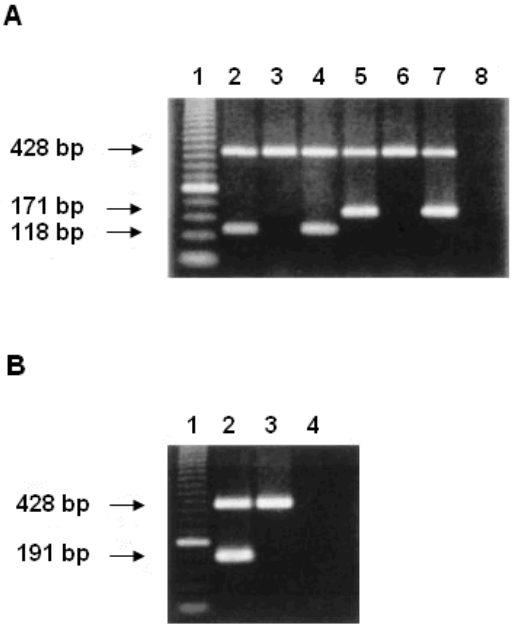

Fig. 1 – Example of HNA-1a, -1b genotyping determination by PCR-SSP. The human growth hormone PCR product (428 bp) is present in all reactions. (A) Lane 1 represents the 50 bp DNA ladder; Lanes 2 and 4: 118 bp PCR product obtained with HNA-1a primers; Lanes 5 and 7: 171 bp PCR product obtained with HNA-1b primers; Lanes 2 and 3: HNA-1a (+/+) homozygous person; Lanes 4 and 5: HNA-1a (+/–) heterozygous subject; and Lanes 6 and 7 show a HNA-1b (+/+) homozygous person; Lane 8 represents the negative control. (B) Lane 1: 50 bp DNA ladder; Lane 2: PCR-SSP positive for the *FCGR3B*3* allele (HNA-1c); Lane 3: HNA-1c negative reaction; Lane 4: negative control (Kuwano et al. 2000).

polymorphism. HNA-4a is due to a single nucleotide substitution in the α_M subunit of the β_2 integrin, G302A, which predicts an Arg61His amino acid polymorphism. HNA-5a is the result of a single nucleotide substitution in the α_L subunit of the β_2 integrin, G2466C, which predicts an Arg766Thr amino acid polymorphism. A variety of methods can be used to type these alleles. A PCR-SSP method is being used to type HNA-4a (Clague et al. 2003). HNA-5a can be typed using a PCR-SSP method or, alternatively by a PCR-RFLP method described by our group (Cardone et al. 2006) (Fig. 2).

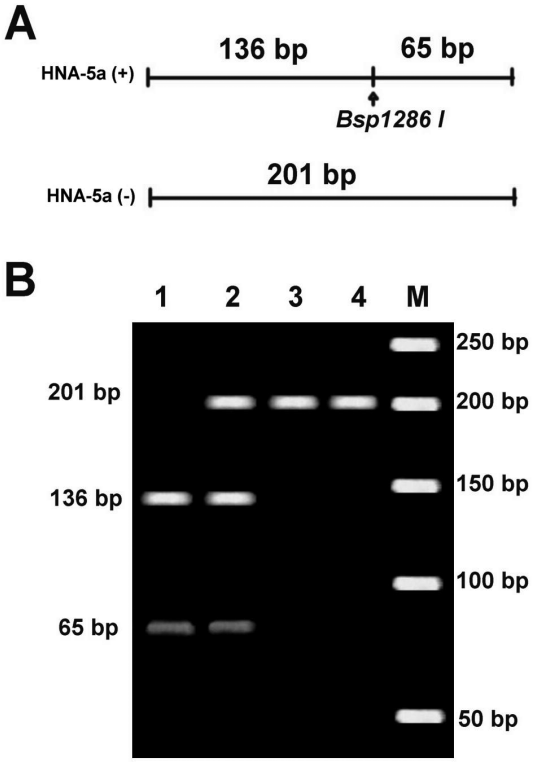

Fig. 2 – Example of PCR-RFLP method and typical results of HNA-5a genotyping. (A) Region (201 bp) in the genomic DNA, in which the HNA-5a polymorphism is located, was amplified by PCR. The sizes of the fragments produced by digestion with *Bsp*12861 are shown. (B) Typical RFLP patterns *Bsp*12861-treated PCR product. Lane 1: homozygous HNA-5a (+/+); Lane 2: heterozygous HNA-5a (+/–); Lane 3: homozygous HNA-5a (–/–); Lane 4: not digested; Lane M: 50 bp DNA ladder (Cardone et al. 2006).

are not available, yet. The HNA-2a-negative phe
is due to *CD177* mRNA splicing defects (Kisse
2002). The *CD177* mRNA from people with
2a-negative neutrophils contains additional seque
varying length that are homologous to *CD177* int
quences. However, no mutations have been dete
the *CD177* introns or exons from people with a
tive phenotype. It may be possible to distingu
HNA-2a-positive from HNA-2a-negative phenoty
analyzing neutrophil *CD177* mRNA for access
quences, but working with mRNA is much mor
cult than working with DNA, and no laboratory
rently analyzing granulocyte mRNA to assess H
antigen expression.

Because the gene encoding HNA-3a has n
identified, no genotyping assays is available f
antigen.

Neutrophil Antibodies

Screening for neutrophil antibodies remains tech
challenging. No single technique has thus far been
to consistently detect all clinically relevant gran
antibodies.

The assays used to detect neutrophil antibo
GAT, GIFT or flow cytometry, and monoclona
body immobilization of granulocyte antigens (MA
In the GAT, antibodies cause neutrophils to activ
glutinate (McCullough et al. 1988). It is a very r
assay, but less sensitive than other methods. Th
can detect antibodies to HNA-1, -2, -3, -4, and -
gens, and it is the assay that can best identify ant
specific for HNA-3a.

In the microscopic GIFT, antigen-antibod
tions are detected using fluorescence-conjugated s
ary antibodies and a fluorescent microscope (M
lough et al. 1988). Strong reactions are readily
guished, but considerable training is required to
guish weak reactions from background staining.
for neutrophil antibodies with flow cytometry is th
as the GIFT, except that neutrophils are evaluated
flow cytometer rather than a fluorescence micros

The MAIGA assay allows the detection of a

HNA-2a on NB1gp (CD177), HNA-4a on complement component C3bi receptor (CR3 or CD11b), and HNA-5a on leukocyte function antigen-1 (LFA-1 or CD11a). The use of neutrophils from panels of donors with known HNA-1 phenotypes allows the identification of antibodies specific to HNA-1a, -1b, and -1c. In addition, antibodies that are directed to FcγRIIIb, but are not specific to HNA-1 antigens, are sometimes detected. The MAIGA assay permits the recognition of antibodies to specific neutrophil glycoproteins even when antibodies to HLA antigens are present.

Because the gene encoding HNA-3a has not been identified, recombinant technology cannot be used to produce HNA-3a antigen. As a result, most laboratories are using intact neutrophils for antibody screening assays. Unfortunately, neutrophils have a short life span, so fresh neutrophils must be prepared from fresh whole blood using density gradient separation. Patient sera are tested against panels of neutrophils prepared from donors with known phenotypes to distinguish antibodies with different specificities. The presence of HLA antibodies can make the detection of neutrophil antibodies difficult. HLA-specific antibodies can be separated from neutrophil-specific antibodies by absorbing serum with platelets (Sachs et al. 2005). Alternatively, monoclonal antibody capture assays can be used to test for antibodies specific to neutrophil membrane glycoproteins. Mammalian cell expression systems have been used to express HNA-1a, HNA-1b and HNA-2a, and these can be used to assess antibodies in flow cytometry, but these cells are not commercially available.

CONCLUSIONS

During the last years, considerable progress has been made in the characterization of granulocyte antigens. Glycoprotein location of the antigens allowed the development of the antigen-specific MAIGA. Elucidation of their molecular basis now makes genotyping by PCR-SSP possible. However, our understanding of the biochemical and molecular nature of neutrophil antigens is still incomplete and many questions remain: the clinical significance of HNA-5 is not known, characterization of

There are many barriers to neutrophil antibody testing, including limited availability of reagent, lack of commercially available test kits, and the need to use fresh neutrophils. However, neutrophil antibodies remain clinically important and there are only few laboratories specialized in granulocyte immunology; therefore, not all cases of alloimmune neutropenia are probably investigated. Further studies in the field of neutrophil immunology will improve our diagnostic tools, and will consequently facilitate the prevention and management of transfusion reactions and immune diseases caused by neutrophil antibodies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These studies were supported by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP, 05/55237-9).

RESUMO

Os aloantígenos de neutrófilos estão associados a várias condições clínicas como neutropenias imunes, insuficiência pulmonar relacionada à transfusão (TRALI), refratariedade à transfusão de granulócitos, e reações transfusionais febris. Na última década, foi observado considerável progresso na caracterização dos aloantígenos envolvidos nestas condições clínicas. Atualmente sete antígenos estão incluídos em cinco sistemas de antígenos de neutrófilo humano (HNA). Os antígenos HNA-1a, HNA-1b e HNA-1c foram identificados como formas polimórficas do receptor FcγRIIIb (CD16b), codificados por três alelos. Recentemente, a estrutura primária do antígeno HNA-2a foi elucidada e a glicoproteína carreadora do antígeno foi identificada como um membro da superfamília Ly-6/uPAR e designada como CD177. O antígeno HNA-3a está localizado em uma glicoproteína de 70-90 kDa, entretanto sua base molecular ainda é desconhecida. Finalmente, os antígenos HNA-4a e HNA-5a são resultantes de mutações de um único nucleotídeo nas subunidades α_M (CD11b) and α_L (CD11a) das moléculas de adesão de leucócitos (β_2 integrinas). A caracterização molecular e bioquímica dos antígenos neutrofílicos permitiu a expansão das ferramentas diagnósticas pela introdução de técnicas de genotipagem e imunoensaios para a identificação de anticorpos. Novos estudos envolvendo a imunologia de granulócitos serão de grande valor para a prevenção e tratamento de reações transfusionais e doenças imunes causadas por aloanti-

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