

Abnormal germinal center reactions in systemic lupus erythematosus demonstrated by blockade of CD154-CD40 interactions

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J Clin Invest. 2007;117(3):835-835. <https://doi.org/10.1172/JCI19301C1>.

Corrigendum Autoimmunity

Original citation: *J. Clin. Invest.* 112:1506-1520 (2003). doi:10.1172/JCI200319301. Citation for this corrigendum: *J. Clin. Invest.* 117:835 (2007). doi:10.1172/JCI19301C1. During the preparation of the manuscript, errors were introduced into Figure 3 that affected paragraph 6 in Results. The corrected paragraph and figure appear below. The authors regret this error. Expression of differentiation and activation antigens during and after treatment of active-SLE patients with humanized anti-CD154 mAb (BG9588, 5c8). CD38positive B cells in the circulation of the active-SLE patients disappeared from the peripheral blood during the treatment regimen with humanized anti-CD154 mAb (Figures 2b, 2c, and 3a). Specifically, before the treatment regimen, $63.8\% \pm 4.1\%$ of the B cells were CD38positive. At 4–8 weeks after initiation of treatment, the percentage of CD38positive B cells in the circulation had dropped to $22.7\% \pm 15.0\%$ ($P = 0.024$ compared with before treatment). Withdrawal of treatment led to a reappearance of CD38positive B cells in the circulation ($79.3\% \pm 8.6\%$) at the earliest time point tested, 2 months after treatment, at a percentage that was not different from the pretreatment percentage ($P > 0.05$). Of note, this trend was significant for both the pre-switch IgD+ ($P = 0.018$) and the post-switch IgD– ($P = 0.022$) B cell subsets.

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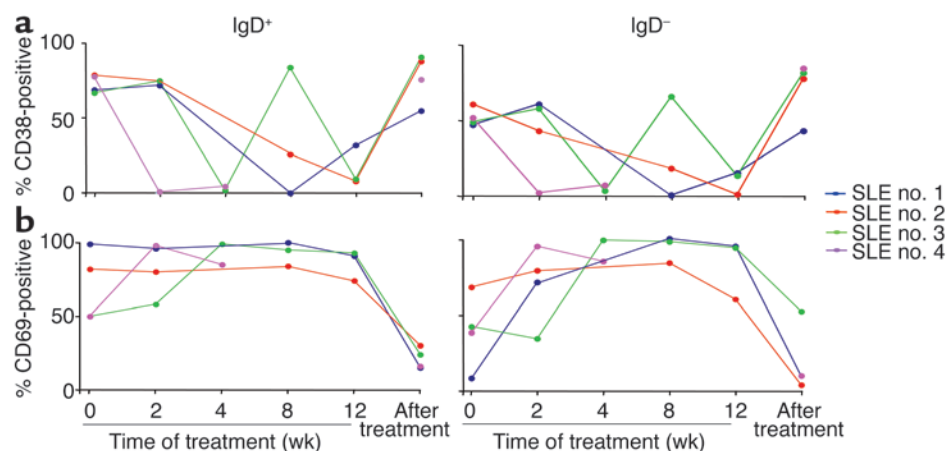
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Original citation: *J. Clin. Invest.* **112**:1506–1520 (2003). doi:10.1172/JCI200319301.

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Expression of differentiation and activation antigens during and after treatment of active-SLE patients with humanized anti-CD154 mAb (BG9588, 5c8). CD38^{positive} B cells in the circulation of the active-SLE patients disappeared from the peripheral blood during the treatment regimen with humanized anti-CD154 mAb (Figures 2b, 2c, and 3a). Specifically, before the treatment regimen, 63.8% ± 4.1% of the B cells were CD38^{positive}. At 4–8 weeks after initiation of treatment, the percentage of CD38^{positive} B cells in the circulation had dropped to 22.7% ± 15.0% ($P = 0.024$ compared with before treatment). Withdrawal of treatment led to a reappearance of CD38^{positive} B cells in the circulation (79.3% ± 8.6%) at the earliest time point tested, 2 months after treatment, at a percentage that was not different from the pretreatment percentage ($P > 0.05$). Of note, this trend was significant for both the pre-switch IgD⁺ ($P = 0.018$) and the post-switch IgD⁻ ($P = 0.022$) B cell subsets.