The NTM-iSpot and its potential in the management of pulmonary NTM infections

Villar-Hernández R[1,2,3,4], Strecker K[1], Stojanovic Z[4,5], Latorre I[2,3,4], Marín A[4,5], Gonçalves-Carvalho F[4,5], Domínguez M[6], Sánchez-Montalva A[7,8,9], Sabriá J[10], Rodríguez Molino P[11], Baquero-Artigao F[11], Millet JP[12,13], Casas X[12,13], Prat C[2,3,4,14], Torrelles JB[15], Preyer R[1], Domínguez J[2,3,4]

1 GenID GmbH, Strassberg, Germany; 2 Institut d'Investigació Germans Trias i Pujol, Badalona, Spain; 3 Departamento de Genética y Microbiología, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain; 4 CIBER Enfermedades Respiratorias, CIBERES, Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Madrid, Spain; 5 Servei de Pneumologia, Hospital Universitari Germans Trias i Pujol, Barcelona, Spain; 6 Servei de Pneumologia Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, Spain; 7 Infectious Diseases Department, Vall d'Hebron University Hospital, PROSICS Barcelona, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain; 8 Grupo de Estudio de Micobacterias (GEIM), Sociedad Española de Enfermedades Infecciosas y Microbiología Clínica (SEIMC), Madrid, Spain; 9 Center for Biomedical Research in Infectious Diseases Network (CIBERINFEC), Institute of Health Carlos III, Madrid, Spain. 10 Servei de Pneumologia, Hospital Sant Joan Despí Moises Broggi, Sant Joan Despí, Barcelona, Spain; 11 Hospital Universitario de La Paz, Madrid, Spain; 12 Unidad Clínica de Tratamiento Directamente Observado "Serveis Clinics", Barcelona, Spain; 13 CIBER de Epidemiología y Salud Pública, CIBERESP, Instituto de Salud Carlos III; 14 Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, University Medical Center Utrecht, Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands; 15 Texas Biomedical Research Institute, San Antonio, Texas, USA.

Preliminary results on the NTM-iSpot indicate that such test may have the potential to help guide the clinical evaluation of patients with NTM present in pulmonary samples but of unclear clinical relevance.

Background

Although commonly considered as clinically less relevant, infections by nontuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) represent a challenge for respiratory and infectious diseases physicians. Their incidence is increasing globally and determining their clinical relevance when found in pulmonary samples remains difficult. Considering the promising performance of a previous enzymatic NTM-specific EliSpot in pulmonary and extrapulmonary NTM-positive cases (pending publication), we decided to assess the use of this test further for patients with NTM isolates in pulmonary samples.

Methods

Using a recently developed NTM-specific 2-color fluorescence EliSpot (NTM-*i*Spot, GenID GmbH, Straßberg, Germany) we evaluated the immune response to NTM-specific antigens through T-cell production of IFN-γ and IL-2 (**Figure 1**). We tested 44 blood samples: 18 from patients with past or present NTM isolation in pulmonary samples (further classified as NTM-related disease, NTM colonization, and past NTM-related disease), 5 from patients with extrapulmonary NTM positive samples (3 lymphadenitis and 2 disseminated infections), 15 from patients with bronchiectasis with no record of NTM isolation, and 6 from healthy controls.

The results were interpreted using the Stimulation Index (SI=Number of spots after NTM-specific stimulation/Number of spots in the negative control) as follows. When there were 0-1 spot in the negative control the test was considered reactive if SI≥7; borderline if SI is >5 and <7; and not reactive if SI ≤5. When there were >1 spots in the negative control the test was considered: reactive if SI>3; borderline if SI is >2 to ≤3; and not reactive if SI ≤2. Responses in the mitogen below 50 spots and in the negative control above 10 were considered invalid.

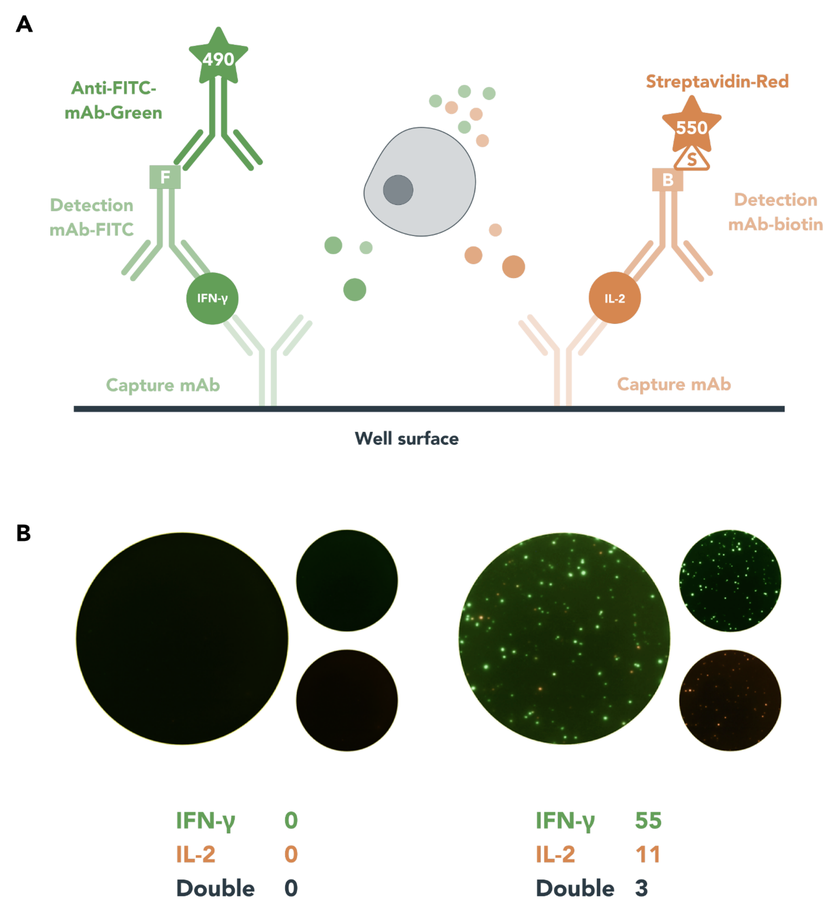

Figure 1. A. Schematic illustration of the two-color iSpot. B. Spot visualization. Representative pictures from a healthy control (left) and an patient with NTM pulmonary disease (right) tested with the NTM-*i*Spot. The healthy control shows no reactive T cells against NTM, while the NTM positive donor shows reactivity with functional T cells expressing both IFN-γ and IL-2. The small sized images show the IFN-γ and the IL-2 response separately (upper and lower images, respectively). The big size image shows the overlay of both cytokines.

Results

The extrapulmonary NTM-positive group had the highest rate of positive results followed by the pulmonary NTM-positive group (**Figure 2 and Tables 1A and 1B**). Within the latter group, the majority of positive results were found in the NTM-related disease cohort (55.5% and 30.0% for IFN-γ and IL-2 response, respectively). In the colonization group, one sample was reactive in terms of IL-2 response (SI value near the borderline) which was borderline in terms of IFN-γ. No reactive results were obtained in the groups of past NTM-related pulmonary disease, bronchiectasis without record of NTM isolation, and healthy controls.

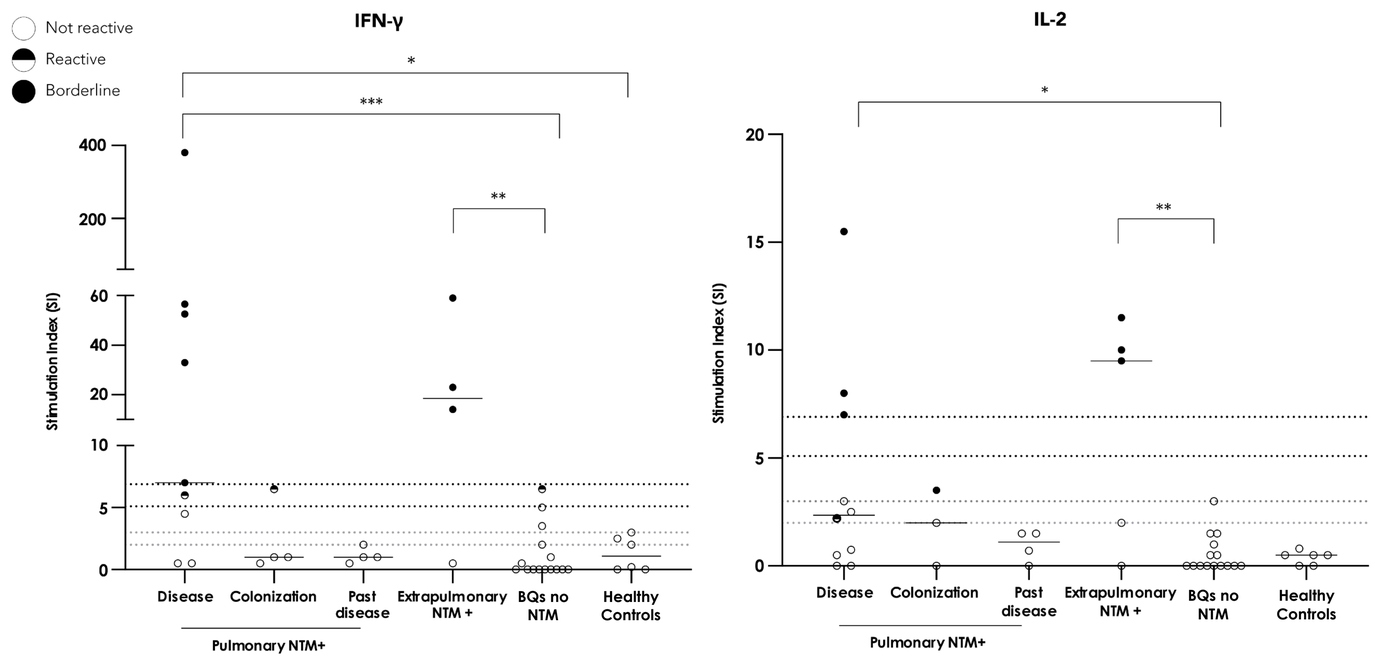

Figure 2. IFN-γ and IL-2 responses after NTM-specific stimulation. Invalid results have been excluded. BQs: bronchiectasis. *= p<0.05, **= p<0.01, ***= p<0.001

Table 1. NTM-iSpot results considering IFN-γ (A) and IL-2 (B) responses. Invalid results have been excluded.

A	NTM-iSpot IFN-γ (n=42)	
	Reactive (%)	Reactive/Borderline (%)
Pulmonary NTM+ (n=17)	5 (29.4)	7 (41.2)
NTM-related disease (n=9)	5 (55.5)	6 (66.7)
NTM colonization (n=4)	0 (0.0)	1 (25.0)
Past NTM infection/disease (n=4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Extrapulmonary NTM + (n=4)	3 (75.0)	3 (75.0)
BQs no NTM (n=15)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.7)
Healthy Controls (n=6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

B	NTM-iSpot IL-2 (n=43)	
	Reactive (%)	Reactive/Borderline (%)
Pulmonary NTM+ (n=17)	4 (23.5)	5 (29.4)
NTM-related disease (n=10)	3 (30.0)	4 (40.0)
NTM colonization (n=3)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)
Past NTM infection/disease (n=4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Extrapulmonary NTM + (n=5)	3 (60.0)	3 (60.0)
BQs no NTM (n= 15)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Healthy Controls (n=6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

AID Autoimmun Diagnostika GmbH
D-72479 Strassberg

Tel. +49 (0)7434 9364-0
Fax +49 (0)7434 9364-40
info@aid-diagnostika.com

Scannen für weitere Informationen: