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TITLE PAGE

Letter to the Editor

Defects in the CD19 complex predispose to glomerulonephritis as well as IgG1 subclass deficiency.

Nicolas Vince*, PhD,^a David Boutboul*, MD,^a Gael Mouillot, PhD,^b Nicolas Just, MD,^d Maria Peralta, MD,^e Jean-Laurent Casanova, MD, PhD,^f Mary Ellen Conley, MD, PhD,^g Jean-Christophe Bories, PhD,^a Eric Oksenhendler, MD,^{a, c} Marion Malphettes*, MD,^{a, c} Claire Fieschi*, MD, PhD;^{a, c} and the DEFI Study Group**.

* These authors contributed equally to this work

** Listed in the appendix

a. EA3963, Université Paris 7 Denis Diderot, centre Hayem, Hôpital Saint-Louis, 1 avenue Claude Vellefaux 75010 PARIS France

b. Laboratoire d'Immunologie Cellulaire et Tissulaire, Hôpital Pitié Salpêtrière et INSERM UMR-S945, Bâtiment CERVI, Paris, France

c. Département d'Immunologie Clinique, Hôpital Saint-Louis, AP-HP, 1 avenue Claude Vellefaux 75010 PARIS France

d. Département de Pneumo-Allergologie, CH Roubaix, 35 rue de Barbieux 59056 Roubaix France

e. CH Mulhouse, 87 avenue d'Altkirch 68051 Mulhouse

f. Unité d'immunologie et d'hématologie, Hôpital Necker, AP-HP, 149 rue de Sèvres 75015

PARIS France

g. University of Tennessee and St Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, Tenn., USA

Corresponding author

Claire Fieschi, MD, PhD

Département d'Immunologie Clinique

Hôpital Saint-Louis, AP-HP

1 avenue Claude Vellefaux

75010 PARIS France

Telephone: +33 1 42 49 96 90

Fax: +33 1 42 49 94 72

E-mail: claire.fieschi@sls.aphp.fr

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47 **Capsule Summary**

48 We identified two novel mutations in *CD19*. These cases add to the clinical and biological
49 phenotype of CD19 deficiency and point to CD19 possible role in IgG1 switching and control
50 of autoimmunity.

51

52 **Key words**

53 CVID, IgG1 subclass deficiency, glomerulonephritis, auto-immunity, CD19 deficiency

To the Editor:

Common variable immunodeficiency (CVID) and selective IgG1 deficiency are primary immunodeficiencies characterized by defective antibody production leading to recurrent infections of the respiratory tract ¹⁻³. Recent studies have identified *CD19* and *CD81* biallelic mutations as underlying CVID in humans. On mature B cells, CD19 functions in a complex with CD21, CD81, and CD225 and acts synergistically with the B cell antigen receptor to induce activation and maturation of the activated B cells into the memory compartment ⁴.

Only five patients with bi-allelic deleterious mutations in *CD19* have been described to date ⁵⁻⁷. Despite variability in CD19 expression, these patients display a remarkable similar phenotype characterized by moderately severe hypogammaglobulinemia, impaired antibody responses upon vaccination and impaired memory B cell formation. We report on two additional patients with CD19 deficiency from two different families.

Out of 400 patients from the French national DEFI cohort with primary hypogammaglobulinemia, 18 had CD19+ cells<1% but a percentage of T, NK and CD19 B cells that didn't add up to 100%. Double CD19/CD20 staining performed in these 18 patients demonstrated a CD19 defect in two patients (Figure E1).

Patient A, a girl of Kurdish descent was referred at 11 years of age with pneumococcal meningitis. She also had a history of recurrent upper respiratory tract infections and giardiasis starting in early childhood. She was found to have hypogammaglobulinemia and impaired antibody response to vaccination (Table E1). *Patient B*, a girl of Moroccan descent and the second child of consanguineous parents was first referred at 13 years of age with failure to thrive. Urinalysis revealed microscopic hematuria and proteinuria without renal failure. Tests for antinuclear antibodies were positive (titer=1/640) in the absence of anti-DNA and anti-ENA antibodies. The complement levels were normal. At 27 years of age, she had surgery for chronic sinusitis and at 29 years of age she developed pneumococcal pneumonia. She was

found to have selective IgG1 deficiency (Table E1). Antibodies to polio and tetanus toxin were detected at protective levels and antibodies to pertussis toxin were detectable albeit at a low level. Isohemagglutinins were present. At 31 years of age, she was referred with nephrotic syndrome and end stage renal disease. A renal biopsy revealed endo-capillary proliferative glomerulonephritis with intense mesangial IgA deposits associated with diffuse interstitial fibrosis consistent with a diagnosis of IgA nephropathy.

CD19 genomic sequencing showed homozygous deletion (1464delC) causing a premature stop codon (P488PfsX15) in patient A. Patient A's parents and brother were heterozygous for the mutated allele. Patient B, born to consanguineous parents, was found to have an insertion (1653_1671+9del28pbins23pb), assumed to be homozygous and disrupting the wild type stop codon (G551GfsX25). Her two children were heterozygous for the mutated allele. Both mutations were frameshift mutations located in the intracytoplasmic domain of CD19, as seen in previously reported patients ^{5, 6} (Figure 1). Normal levels of CD19 transcripts were found by quantitative RT-PCR in patients EBV transformed cell lines (data not shown). Absence of CD19 protein has been confirmed by western blot on these cell lines (Figure E2). However, Western blotting on EBV lines may not be sufficient to prove that the mutation is null in all B cells. Actually, a minority of B cells from patient B expressed CD19, but these cells are not present in EBV transformed cells (Figure E1). One could guess that there are a small number of cells in which alternative stop codons are used and we cannot rule out that this could account for the distinct phenotype.

Patient A had normal B cell count but a sharp reduction in IgD-CD27+ switched memory B cells while IgD+CD27- naive B cells were increased (both in percentage and absolute count).

Patient B displayed a slight reduction of B cell population. Within the B cell compartment, the relative frequency of IgD-CD27+ switched memory and IgD+D27- naive B cells was normal (Table E2 and Figure E1). Flow-cytometric immunophenotyping revealed low CD19

expression in all five carriers. Levels of CD21 were decreased whereas levels of CD81 were normal on B cells from both patients and carriers (Figure E1). Proliferation of purified total and naive B cells from both patients was studied after stimulation with anti-IgM antibody, anti-CD40+IL10 or CpG and showed proliferation comparable to controls (Figure 2a). In vitro Ig production showed very low IgG production by purified total and naive B cells after stimulation with anti-CD40+IL10 or CpG, whereas IgM production was similar to a control for both patients (Figure 2b).

Considering the high similarity among patients exhibiting a monogenic defect in *CD19* or *CD81*, it has been proposed to regard CD19 complex deficiencies as a separate disease within the group of antibody deficiency syndromes ⁷. The present study reveals the wide variance among patients with similar CD19 deficiency. *Patient B* is the first patient with CD19 deficiency, selective IgG1 deficiency, conserved antibody response against protein antigens upon vaccination and a normal IgD-CD27+ switched memory B cell compartment. Her immunological phenotype points to a possible role of CD19 in IgG1 switching in humans. Although clinical immune deficiency was present, the major complication in patient B was a severe IgA nephropathy. Interestingly, glomerulonephritis has been observed in two other patients with CD19 complex deficiency (CD19, CD81) ^{6, 7}. The high frequency of nephropathy in 3 out of 8 patients with CD19 complex deficiency is striking. It has been recently reported that CD19^{-/-} lupus prone NZB/W mice lack a potent splenic regulatory B cell subset (B10 cells) producing IL10, which could account for the significantly earlier onset of nephritis in these knock-out mice when compared with wild type NZB/W controls ⁸.

In conclusion, we describe 2 new cases of CD19 deficiency in patients with antibody production defect. In such patients, lymphocyte phenotyping with an anti-CD19 antibody can lead to a false diagnosis of B cell lymphocytosis. In order to avoid misdiagnosis in that context, immunophenotypes using CD19 staining should be carefully examined to detect a

129 gap due to unstained B lymphocytes in all patients with immunoglobulin production defect,
130 including IgG sub-class deficiencies.

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132 Nicolas Vince*, MSc,^a

133 David Boutboul*, MD,^a

134 Gael Mouillot, PhD,^b

135 Nicolas Just, MD,^d

136 Maria Peralta, MD,^e

137 Jean-Laurent Casanova, MD, PhD,^f

138 Mary Ellen Conley, MD, PhD,^g

139 Jean-Christophe Bories, PhD,^a

140 Eric Oksenhendler, MD,^{a, c}

141 Marion Malphettes*, MD,^{a, c}

142 Claire Fieschi*, MD, PhD,^{a, c}

143 and the DEFI Study Group.

144

145 * These authors contributed equally to this work

146

147 a. EA3963, Université Paris 7 Denis Diderot, centre Hayem, Hôpital Saint-Louis, 1 avenue

148 Claude Vellefaux 75010 PARIS France

149 b. Laboratoire d'Immunologie Cellulaire et Tissulaire, Hôpital Pitié Salpêtrière et INSERM

150 UMR-S945, Bâtiment CERVI, Paris, France

151 c. Département d'Immunologie Clinique, Hôpital Saint-Louis, AP-HP, 1 avenue Claude

152 Vellefaux 75010 PARIS France

- 153 d. Département de Pneumo-Allergologie, CH Roubaix, 35 rue de Barbieux 59056 Roubaix
154 France
- 155 e. CH Mulhouse, 87 avenue d'Altkirch 68051 Mulhouse
- 156 f. Unité d'immunologie et d'hématologie pédiatrique, Hôpital Necker, AP-HP, 149 rue de
157 Sèvres 75015 PARIS France
- 158 g. University of Tennessee and St Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, Tenn., USA

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APPENDIX: DEFI study group

Coordination: E. Oksenhendler, Hôpital Saint Louis, Paris

Clinical Centers: Hôpital Saint Louis, Paris: C. Fieschi, M. Malphettes, L. Galicier, JP Ferman, B. Asli, B. Arnulf, L. Karlin. Bordeaux: JF. Viallard. Limoges: A. Jaccard. Tours: C. Hoarau, Y. Lebranchu. Hôpital Cochin, Paris: L. Mouthon, A. Bérezné. Marseille: N. Schleinitz. Lyon Sud: I. Durieu. Hôpital Necker, Paris: F. Suarez. Clermont-Ferrand: V. Chanet-Porte, M. André, O. Aumaitre. Montpellier: V. Le-Moing. Roubaix: N. Just. Reims: R. Jaussaud. Le Mans: F. Goupil. Lille: E. Hachulla. Perpignan: L. Sanhes. Angers: M. Gardembas, I. Pellier. Lyon Armée: M. Pavic. Dijon: B. Bonnotte. Pitié-Salpêtrière, Paris: J. Haroche, Z. Amoura, G. Leroux. Toulouse: L. Alric. MF. Thiercelin. L. Tetu. D. Adoue. Nancy: P. Bordigoni. Lyon Croix Rousse: T. Perpoint. Lyon Hotel-Dieu: P. Sève. Besançon: P. Rohrlich, F. Legrand. Strasbourg: T. Martin, P. Soulas-Sprauel. Hôpital Foch, Suresnes: LJ. Couderc. Kremlin-Bicêtre: F. Chaix. Hôpital Trousseau, Paris: J. Donadieu, G. Leverger. Rouen: F. Tron, S. Jacquot. Bobigny: C. Larroche. Nantes: A. Masseur, M. Hamidou, C. Thomas. Nancy: M. Morisset. Poitiers: F. Millot. Bondy: O. Fain. Hôpital Bichat, Paris: R. Borie. Rennes: A. Perlat. Clamart: V. Martinez. Hôpital Robert Debré, Paris: T. Leblanc.

Labs

Pitié-Salpêtrière, INSERM UMR-S945, Paris: P. Debré, G. Mouillot, JL. Garnier.
Saint-Louis, Paris, Immunology and HLA: C. Rabian, M. Carmagnat.
Saint-Louis, EA 3963, Paris: C. Fieschi, M. Malphettes, N. Vince, D. Boutboul.

Data Management and Statistics: L. Gérard.

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214 **Figure Legends**

215 **Figure 1.** (a) Schematic representation of the *CD19* coding region (14 exons, 1671
216 nucleotides). The new mutations are shown on the top, the known mutations on the bottom.
217 (TM: transmembrane domain). (b) Pedigrees of patients A and B (homozygous are in black,
218 heterozygous are in half black)

219

220 **Figure 2.** Proliferation (a) and immunoglobulin production (b) of B cells from both patients
221 and one control, these experiments were also performed on naive B cells and provided
222 comparable results (Data not shown). These results are expressed as the mean of triplicate
223 experiments.

224

225

226 Figure 1

227

228 Figure 2