

Cellular and Molecular Roles of β Cell Autoantigens, Macrophages and T Cells in the Pathogenesis of Autoimmune Diabetes

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Type I diabetes, also known as insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) results from the destruction of insulin-producing pancreatic β cells by a progressive β cell-specific autoimmune process. The pathogenesis of autoimmune IDDM has been extensively studied for the past two decades using animal models such as the non-obese diabetic (NOD) mouse and the Bio-Breeding (BB) rat. However, the initial events that trigger the immune responses leading to the selective destruction of the β cells are poorly understood. It is thought that β cell autoantigens are involved in the triggering of β cell-specific autoimmunity. Among a dozen putative β cell autoantigens, glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD) has been proposed as perhaps the strongest candidate in both humans and the NOD mouse. In the NOD mouse, GAD, as compared with other β cell autoantigens, provokes the earliest T cell proliferative response. The suppression of GAD expression in the β cells results in the prevention of autoimmune diabetes in NOD mice. In addition, the major populations of cells infiltrating the islets during the early stage of insulinitis in BB rats and NOD mice are macrophages and dendritic cells. The inactivation of macrophages in NOD mice results in the prevention of T cell mediated autoimmune diabetes. Macrophages are primary contributors to the creation of the immune environment conducive to the development and activation of β cell-specific Th1-type CD4⁺ T cells and CD8⁺ cytotoxic T cells that cause autoimmune diabetes in NOD mice. CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells are both believed to be important for the destruction of β cells. These cells, as final effectors, can kill the insulin-producing β cells by the induction of apoptosis. In addition, CD8⁺ cytotoxic T cells release granzyme and cytolytic (perforin), which are also toxic to β cells. In this way, macrophages, CD4⁺ T cells and CD8⁺ T cells act synergistically to kill the β cells in conjunction with β cell autoantigens and MHC class I and class II antigens, resulting in the onset of autoimmune type I diabetes.

Key words: β cell autoantigens, Macrophages, T cells, Type 1 diabetes.

INTRODUCTION

Type I diabetes is believed to be caused by the progressive loss of insulin-producing pancreatic β cells, by a β cell-specific autoimmune process (Yoon and Jun,

1998; Rossini *et al.*, 1993; Tisch and McDevitt, 1996; Bach, 1995; Nerup *et al.*, 1988; Lernmark *et al.*, 1990; Rabinovich, 1994; Verge and Eisenbarth, 1996; Delovitch and Singh, 1997). Although the pathogenesis of autoimmune IDDM has been extensively studied, the precise mechanisms involved in the initiation and progression of β cell destruction are not clear. Animal models used in the study of IDDM, such as the BioBreeding (BB) rat and the nonobese diabetic (NOD) mouse, have enhanced our understanding of the pathogenic mechanisms of this disease. Extensive studies on the immunopathology of Type I diabetes using these animal models reveal that

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β cell autoantigens, macrophages, dendritic cells, B lymphocytes and T lymphocytes are clearly involved in the β cell-specific autoimmune process. In this review article, we will briefly discuss the involvement of β cell autoantigens, macrophages and T cells in the pathogenesis of autoimmune diabetes in animals.

β cell autoantigens

Islet cell autoantigens, which are the targets of autoimmune attack in IDDM, have proven difficult to identify. The specificity of circulating autoantibodies present in the sera of IDDM patients and diabetic animals has been investigated extensively. Over twenty years ago, Bottazzo *et al.* (1974) and MacCuish *et al.* (1974) first detected antibodies directed against the pancreatic islets. Since that time, several studies have revealed that islet cell antibodies are prevalent in patients with IDDM (Bonifacio *et al.*, 1990). It is known that peripheral CD4⁺ T cells from prediabetic and early diabetic patients proliferate in response to islet autoantigens which reacted with IDDM-associated autoantibodies (Verge and Eisenbarth, 1996). Autoantigens identified in humans, NOD mice, and BB rats include islet cell autoantigens, thought to possess the properties of sialic acid containing glycolipid (Nayak *et al.*, 1985); insulin (Palmer *et al.*, 1983); the insulin receptor (Maron *et al.*, 1984); a 52kD protein (Karounos and Thomas, 1990; Karounos *et al.*, 1990); a 69kD protein (Peitropaolo *et al.*, 1993; Karjalainen *et al.*, 1992); glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD) (Baekkeskov *et al.*, 1990); IA-2, 37/40kD tryptic fragments of a 64kD antigen (different from GAD) (Bonifacio *et al.*, 1995; Lan *et al.*, 1996); heat shock protein 65 (HSP 65) (Elias *et al.*, 1990; Birk *et al.*, 1996; Jones *et al.*, 1990); carboxypeptidase H (Castano *et al.*, 1991); the glucose transporter (Johnson *et al.*, 1990); and a 38kD autoantigen (Roep *et al.*, 1990; Arden *et al.*, 1996; Ko *et al.*, 1991; Ko *et al.*, 1994). The precise role these auto-antigens play in IDDM is not fully understood. Several of these autoantigens and their involvement in IDDM will be discussed below.

Glutamic acid decarboxylase

It is believed that GAD is a major islet cell autoantigen; thus, GAD has been extensively studied. In 1990 Baekkeskov *et al.* identified this 64kD antigen in the pancreatic β cells of IDDM patients as glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD), the biosynthetic enzyme of the inhibitory neurotransmitter gamma-amino-butyric acid (GABA) (Baekkeskov *et al.*, 1990). Anti-64kD autoantibodies were detected in over 85% of newly diagnosed diabetic patients (Baekkeskov *et al.*, 1987) and in about 80% of patients at high risk for developing IDDM (Atkinson *et al.*, 1990).

Immunization of NOD mice with purified GAD results in the tolerization of GAD-reactive T cells and blocks the

development of T cell responses to other β cell antigens, thus preventing insulinitis and diabetes (Kaufman *et al.*, 1993; Elliot *et al.*, 1994). Kaufman *et al.* (1993) found that the initial immune response directed against pancreatic islets in NOD mice was a Th1 response to a confined region of GAD (amino acids 509-528 and 524-543) and that later responses were directed against another region of GAD (amino acids 246-266) and other autoantigens, such as HSP65 and insulin (Kaufman *et al.*, 1993). Recently, it was reported that transgenic NOD mice that hyperexpress GAD in their β cells showed a lower incidence of diabetes. However, another line in which the GAD transgene expression was lower did not show a protective effect (Bridgett *et al.*, 1998). GAD-reactive CD4⁺ Th1 cells isolated from diabetic NOD mice induced diabetes in NOD.severe combined immunodeficiency disease (*scid*) mice (Zekzer *et al.*, 1998) and the overall expression of GAD in NOD mice accelerated the onset and increased the incidence of the disease (Geng *et al.*, 1998). These results suggest that GAD plays an important role in the pathogenesis of autoimmune diabetes. However, controversy surrounds the role GAD plays in the pathogenesis of IDDM. Chen *et al.* have studied the reactivity of T cells to a GAD65-derived peptide, GAD65 residue 524-543, in NOD mice and two congenic NOD strains, B10.H-2^g and NOD.B6^{112-Tshb} (Chen *et al.*, 1994). They demonstrated that the response to GAD65 524-543 was MHC class II-restricted and that T cell responses to GAD-derived peptides can be elicited in mice resistant to the development of spontaneous IDDM. Thus, Chen *et al.* suggested that peripheral tolerance to GAD is not associated with the prevention of diabetes. Also, another research group found that T cells from H-2 identical nonNOD-H-2^g or nondiabetic NOD mice did not proliferate against GAD65 (Bieg *et al.*, 1994). Our recent study showed that β cell-specific suppression of GAD expression in two lines of anti-sense GAD transgenic mice resulted in the prevention of autoimmune diabetes, whereas any level of GAD expression in the β cells in other lines of anti-sense GAD transgenic NOD mice resulted in the development of autoimmune diabetes, similar to that seen in transgene-negative NOD mice (Lim *et al.*, 1998; Yoon *et al.*, 1999). This result indicates that GAD may be a triggering autoantigen in the development of autoimmune IDDM in NOD mice.

Insulin

Insulin is a logical candidate for an autoantigen of IDDM because insulin is the only known β cell-specific antigen related to IDDM. It has been reported that oral intake of insulin retards disease progression in the NOD mouse as a result of the induction of immunoregulatory T cells (Zhang *et al.*, 1991). One study identified insulin-

reactive T cells in NOD mice. Also, insulin B chain-specific CD4⁺ T cell clones accelerate diabetes in young NOD mice and these cell clones adoptively transfer disease in NOD-*scid* mice (Daniel *et al.*, 1994). Transgenic expression of mouse proinsulin II under a MHC class II gene promoter prevented the development of diabetes in NOD mice (French *et al.*, 1997). These results suggest that the insulin autoantigen plays an important role in the development of IDDM. Anti-insulin antibodies (IAAs) have been detected in more than 59% of the patients diagnosed with late preclinical/recent onset IDDM (Palmer *et al.*, 1983; Wilkin and Nicholson, 1984). However, the pathogenic role of IAAs and insulin-reactive T cells needs further investigation. There is an interesting report which examines cross-reactivity between insulin and the islet-expressed retroviral antigen p73 (Serreze *et al.*, 1988). However, the role of this cross-reactivity in the pathogenesis of autoimmune IDDM is not known.

38kD antigen

Anti-38kD autoantibodies were originally identified in human diabetic sera (Baekkeskov *et al.*, 1982). Roep *et al.* identified a 38kD antigen, which was recognized by a T cell clone established from newly diagnosed IDDM patients, from the insulin secretory granule (Roep *et al.*, 1990). Recently these researchers cloned and sequenced a novel murine cDNA encoding this antigen named imogen 38 (Arden *et al.*, 1996). We found that the 38kD antigen in BB rats is the only delayed-expressed islet cell autoantigen whose antibody is consistently found in acutely diabetic DP-BB rats (Ko *et al.*, 1991; Ko *et al.*, 1994). As a result of its delayed expression, this 38kD autoantigen may be considered nonself, which may trigger β cell-specific autoimmunity. Whether there are any molecular similarities between imogen 38 and our delayed-expressed 38kD islet cell autoantigen remains to be determined. Interestingly, one study reports that cytomegalovirus induces antibodies directed against the 38kD antigen in humans (Pak *et al.*, 1990), but, in this instance, the role of the 38kD autoantigen remains to be determined.

IA-2 Autoantigen (37/40kD tryptic fragment)

IA-2 is a newly discovered member of the protein tyrosine phosphatase (PTP) family (Bonifacio *et al.*, 1995; Lan *et al.*, 1996) and is considered to be one of the major autoantigens of IDDM. The IA-2 protein is the precursor to the 37 and/or 40kD islet tryptic fragment (Bonifacio *et al.*, 1995; Lan *et al.*, 1996). Autoantibodies directed against IA-2 have been detected in 70% of IDDM patients. But these autoantibodies are not detected in NOD mice or BB rats (DeSilva *et al.*, 1996). The IA-2 autoantigen from a rat β cell line (RIN5AH) reacts

with sera from IDDM patients (Bonifacio *et al.*, 1995). Antibodies to the IA-2 autoantigen, but not anti-GAD antibodies, were detected in patients who developed acute onset IDDM (Christie *et al.*, 1994), suggesting that antibodies to IA2 are useful serological markers for human IDDM. However, the precise role of the IA-2 antigen in the pathogenesis of IDDM is unknown.

ICA 69

ICA 69 has been identified as a β cell autoantigen. This autoantigen reacts with sera from IDDM patients. ICA 69 also cross-reacts with bovine serum albumin (BSA) (Peitropaolo *et al.*, 1993). Some epidemiological studies revealed that cow's milk may be associated with the development of IDDM, since IDDM patients have an increased level of BSA antibodies (Martin *et al.*, 1991). Since this 69kD β cell autoantigen can be induced by IFN- γ , which may be produced by environmental factors, it has been speculated that there is an association between environmental factors and the induction of the 69kD autoantigen, resulting in the development of IDDM (Karjalainen *et al.*, 1992). Neonatal injection of NOD mice with T cell epitope of ICA69 reduces the incidence of diabetes (Karges *et al.*, 1997). In contrast, some studies do not support the association of BSA with the development of IDDM (Atkinson *et al.*, 1993). Whether this 69kD β cell autoantigen is associated with autoimmune IDDM remains to be determined.

Macrophages

The major populations of cells infiltrating the islets during the early stage of insulinitis in BB rats and NOD mice have been shown to be macrophages and dendritic cells (Kolb *et al.*, 1986; Voorbij *et al.*, 1989; Walker *et al.*, 1988; Jasen *et al.*, 1994). This infiltration precedes invasion of the islets by T lymphocytes, natural killer (NK) cells and B lymphocytes (Amano and Yoon, 1990). In addition, electron microscopy has revealed that most of the single cells present at an early stage of insulinitis in BB rats are macrophages (Kolb *et al.*, 1986). Intraperitoneal injections of silica, a substance known to be toxic to macrophages, into cyclophosphamide (CY)-treated NOD mice or BB rats nearly completely prevents the development of diabetes and insulinitis (Lee *et al.*, 1988a; Oschilewski *et al.*, 1985; Lee *et al.*, 1988b). This result suggests that macrophages play an important role in the development of insulinitis and diabetes in NOD mice. However, the precise role of macrophages in T cell-mediated autoimmune diabetes in NOD mice remains unknown.

We first examined whether macrophages are required for the development of the effector T cells that destroy β cells. Splenocytes from macrophage-depleted NOD

mice did not induce diabetes in NOD.scid mice, while those from control NOD mice in which macrophages were present did, indicating that macrophages are required for the development of β cell-cytotoxic effector T cells NOD mice. Our further study showed that T cells in the macrophage-depleted NOD mouse recipients did not destroy the transplanted NOD islets, indicating that T cells in a macrophage-depleted environment lose their ability to differentiate into cytotoxic T cells that can destroy pancreatic β cells (Jun *et al.*, 1999).

We next asked why the T cells in a macrophage-depleted environment lose the ability to destroy β cells. The depletion of macrophages would be expected to result in the impairment of IL-12 production. A substantial decrease in the production of IL-12 could suppress the Th1 immune response. Th1-type T cells are believed to play a pathogenic role in the autoimmune destruction of β cells. Therefore, a decrease in the Th1 immune response in a macrophage-depleted immune environment may result in the loss of the β cell destructive capacity of the Th1 T cells. On the basis of this hypothesis, we examined the Th1 and Th2 immune responses in macrophage-depleted NOD mice by the measurement of IFN- γ and IL-4 gene expression. We found that the level of IL-4, secreted from Th2-type T cells, was increased, while the level of IFN- γ , secreted from Th1-type T cells, was decreased, indicating that down-regulation of the Th1 immune response and up-regulation of the Th2 immune response may be factors in the loss of the ability of T cells in a macrophage-depleted environment to kill β cells. Our further study showed that the expression of the IL-12R β 2 subunit (preferentially expressed in Th1-type T cells) was significantly decreased in T cells from macrophage-depleted NOD mice, as compared with NOD mice in which macrophages were present. This result supports the supposition that a decrease in the Th1 immune response in macrophage-depleted NOD mice may be an important factor contributing to the impairment of the capability of T cells to kill β cells (Jun *et al.*, 1999).

Among the key roles played by macrophages, along with dendritic cells and B lymphocytes, is the processing and presentation of antigens to CD4⁺ helper T cells in association with MHC-II molecules (Unanue, 1984). Thus, we asked whether the depletion of macrophages would affect the antigen-presenting function in NOD mice. We measured the T cell proliferation response to islet antigens and GAD in the presence of splenocytes, as antigen presenting cells (APC), from macrophage-depleted or macrophage-containing NOD mice. The T cell proliferative response was significantly decreased when splenocytes from macrophage-depleted NOD mice were used as APC, suggesting that the depletion of macrophages results in the down-regulation of antigen-specific CD4⁺ T cell activation (Jun *et al.*,

1999).

Finally, we examined whether the depletion of macrophages would influence the level of T cell activation. We measured the level of expression of FasL and perforin in splenic T cells from macrophage-depleted NOD mice, and found a significant decrease in the expression of FasL and perforin in splenic T cells from macrophage-depleted NOD mice as compared with macrophage-containing NOD mice (Jun *et al.*, 1999). These results suggest that macrophages are required for the activation of the cytotoxic T cells that can destroy pancreatic β cells.

Although further studies to elucidate the precise mechanism of the involvement of macrophages in T cell activation remain to be performed, our studies have shown that IL-12 secreted by macrophages may activate Th1-type CD4⁺ T cells, and subsequently, the IL-2 and IFN- γ produced by these activated CD4⁺ T cells may assist in maximizing the activation of CD8⁺ T cells. The down-regulation of islet cell-specific T cell activation may be another major factor contributing to the impairment of the capability of T cells to kill β cell in macrophage-depleted NOD mice.

In addition to the role of macrophages in the T cell-mediated destruction of β cells, we also examined other factors which may be involved in the destruction of these cells. These include macrophage-derived soluble mediators such as oxygen free radicals and other cytokines including IL-1 β , TNF- α and IFN- γ . We found that the expression of the cytokines IL-1 β , TNF- α , and IFN- γ was significantly decreased in macrophage-depleted NOD mice as compared with PBS-treated control NOD mice. These cytokines, which are released from activated macrophages, are believed to be toxic to β cells (Pankewycz *et al.*, 1995; Mandrup-Poulsen *et al.*, 1987; Appels *et al.*, 1989; Pukel *et al.*, 1988). The toxic effect produced by activated macrophages on β cells is thought to be mediated by the superoxide anion and hydrogen peroxide. The β cell is very sensitive to the production of free radicals because islet cells exhibit very low free radical scavenging activity (Faust *et al.*, 1996; Asayama *et al.*, 1986). Cytokines produced by islet-infiltrating macrophages may contribute to β cell damage by inducing the production of oxygen free radicals in the islets (Malaisse *et al.*, 1982; Corbett and McDaniel, 1992). (Fig. 1)

T cells

Cumulative evidence indicates that T cells play a critical role in the pathogenesis of autoimmune Type I diabetes in NOD mice and BB rats. It has been shown that the development of diabetes was prevented by neonatal thymectomy in BB rats (Like *et al.*, 1982), and BB rats treated with monoclonal antibodies (OX-19) directed against the antigens expressed on the surface

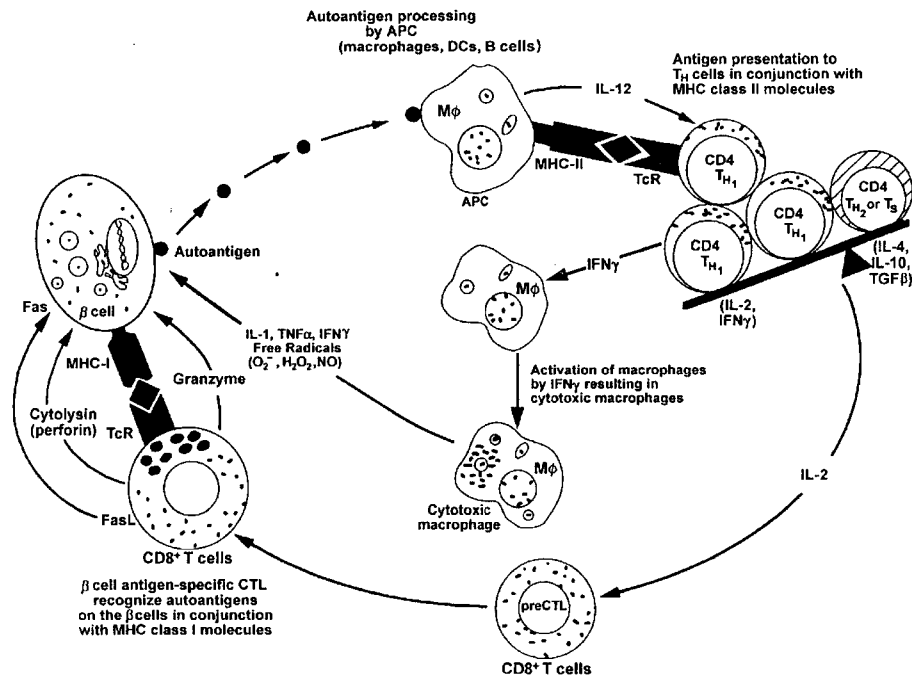


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the development of β cell-specific autoimmune IDDM. β cell autoantigens released from the β cells during spontaneous turnover or insult by viral infection are processed by macrophages and presented to helper T cells in association with MHC class II molecules. Macrophages release IL-12, which activates T_H1 -type $CD4^+$ T cells. While this process is taking place, β cell-specific precytotoxic T cells may be recruited to the islets. These precytotoxic T cells may be induced by IL-2 and other cytokines released by $CD4^+$ helper T cells to differentiate into effector T cells. IFN γ released by helper T cells may cause macrophages to become cytotoxic. These cytotoxic macrophages release substantial amounts of β cell-toxic cytokines (including IL-1 β , TNF α , and IFN γ) and free radicals. In addition, the helper T cells secrete interleukins that activate other helper T cells, B lymphocytes, and cytotoxic T cells. The autoantigen-specific $CD8^+$ cytotoxic T cells, as final effectors, may recognize the autoantigens expressed on many unaffected β cells, in association with MHC class I molecules. These CTLs release granzyme and cytolysin (perforin), which are toxic to β cells. In addition, Fas-mediated apoptosis is involved in β cell destruction. In this way, macrophages, T cells, and cytokines synergistically destroy β cells, resulting in the development of autoimmune IDDM.

of all T cells do not develop diabetes, indicating that T cells play an important role in the destruction of β cells (Like *et al.*, 1986). In addition, lymphocytes from diabetic BB rats transfer the disease to young diabetes-prone BB rats (Koevary *et al.*, 1983; Edouard *et al.*, 1993).

In the NOD mouse model, it is clear that both $CD4^+$ and $CD8^+$ T cells are involved in the development of the disease. Athymic NOD mice and NOD.*scid* mice do not develop insulinitis or diabetes (Ogawa *et al.*, 1985; Dardenne *et al.*, 1989; Makino *et al.*, 1986). In addition, the treatment of NOD mice with anti-CD3 antibodies inhibits the development of diabetes (Christianson *et al.*, 1993). Most transfer studies of NOD splenic T cells into NOD mice show that the transfer of diabetes requires both $CD4^+$ and $CD8^+$ T cells (Miller *et al.*, 1988; Yagi *et al.*, 1992; Thivolet *et al.*, 1991). However, the specific roles that these T cells play in diabetogenesis remain unclear. Diabetogenic $CD4^+$ T cells may undergo activation and differentiation into effector cells upon the release of β cell autoantigens as a result of $CD8^+$ T cell-

mediated destruction of β cells. This hypothesis is supported by the observation that splenic $CD4^+$ T cells from prediabetic NOD mice transfer insulinitis, but not diabetes, to NOD.*scid* mice (Makino *et al.*, 1986), and that MHC class I/ $CD8^+$ T cell-deficient NOD mice do not develop diabetes (Katz *et al.*, 1993; Wicker *et al.*, 1994). On the other hand, there is evidence suggesting that the generation of β cell-cytotoxic $CD8^+$ T effector cells requires the assistance of $CD4^+$ T cells (Nagata *et al.*, 1994). However, some islet-reactive $CD4^+$ and $CD8^+$ T cell clones transfer diabetes without any help from other cells (Peter-son and Haskins, 1996; Wong *et al.*, 1996). Recently, it was reported that MHC class I-restricted $CD8^+$ T cells are required for all but the end stages of diabetes development in NOD mice and use a prevalent T cell receptor α chain gene rearrangement in the initial phase of β cell destruction (Dilorenzo *et al.*, 1998).

We have cloned many $CD4^+$ and $CD8^+$ islet-reactive T cells from lymphocytes that had infiltrated the pan-

creatic islets of NOD mice (Nagata and Yoon, 1992). We have shown that islet cell-specific CD8⁺ T cell clones selectively destroy β cells *in vitro*, whereas CD4⁺ T cell clones do not destroy β cells but attach closely to them (Nagata and Yoon, 1992). Our further studies using cloned CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells reveal that MHC class I-restricted cytotoxic CD8⁺ T lymphocytes (CTLs) play an important role as final effectors in β cell destruction *in vivo* and that CD4⁺ T cells are required for the activation of CD8⁺ T cells and for their recruitment into the pancreatic islets (Nagata *et al.*, 1994; Nagata and Yoon, 1992). We established T cell receptor (TCR) transgenic NOD mice using our two T cell clones NY8.3 (CD8⁺ T cell clone) and NY4.1 (CD4⁺ T cell clone). The TCR β transgenic NOD mice (8.3-TCR β -NOD) with TCR β rearrangements of a β cell-specific CD8⁺ clone (NY8.3) showed a tenfold increase of precursor frequency of β cell-specific CTLs (β -CTLs) and an accelerated onset of diabetes, but not an increased incidence of diabetes (Verdaguer *et al.*, 1996). The TCR $\alpha\beta$ transgenic mice (8.3-NOD) with TCR α and TCR β rearrangements of NY 8.3 showed a 400-fold increase in the peripheral frequency of β -CTLs and a dramatically accelerated onset of diabetes but not an increased incidence of the disease. The transgenic mice (4.1 NOD mice) with both TCR α and TCR β rearrangements of a β cell-specific CD4⁺ T cell clone (NY4.1) (Nagata and Yoon, 1992) also showed an accelerated onset of diabetes as a result of a more rapid progression of islet inflammation (Schmidt *et al.*, 1997). In addition, the 4.1-TCR β -NOD mice, with only the TCR β rearrangement, became diabetic later than did the 4.1-NOD mice (103 ± 20 vs 46 ± 19 days), indicating that the accelerated onset of the disease in these mice required the coexpression of the TCR- α and TCR- β transgenes.

Cytokines produced by T cells also play an important role in the pathogenesis of autoimmune IDDM. In general, Th1 cytokines (IL-2, IFN- γ) cause the development of the disease, while Th2 or Th3 cytokines (IL-4, IL-10, TGF- β) prevent the disease. However, the role of cytokines in the pathogenesis of autoimmune IDDM is complex. For example, treatment of NOD mice or BB rats with anti-IFN- γ prevents the development of diabetes (Debray-Sachs *et al.*, 1991) and the transgene expression of IFN- γ in β cells of normal mice results in the development of IDDM (Sarvetnick *et al.*, 1998). However, the genetic absence of IFN- γ in NOD mice results in a delay of the development of diabetes, but does not prevent it (Hultgren *et al.*, 1996). Systemic administration of IL-4 (Cameron *et al.*, 1997) or IL-10 (Pennline *et al.*, 1994) prevents IDDM in NOD mice and the transgenic expression of IL-4 on β cells prevents the development of diabetes (Mueller *et al.*, 1996). However, local expression of IL-10 in the islets accelerates the development of diabetes in NOD mice, and IL-4 knock-

out NOD mice did not show accelerated disease onset (Wang *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, the interactions of the many different cytokines in the immune system are complicated and the development of diabetes may depend upon which way the finely tuned balance of immunoregulatory T cells is tipped.

Recently, possible mechanisms for T cell-mediated β cell destruction have been elucidated. CD8⁺ cytotoxic T cells destroy β cells through the perforin and granzyme pathway as well as through the Fas-Fas ligand (Fas-L) interaction (Fig. 1). NOD mice lacking perforin expression were found to develop insulinitis, but not diabetes (Kagi *et al.*, 1997). Fas-deficient NOD mice were found to be free of diabetes and insulinitis, and Fas-mediated apoptosis of the β cells was suggested to be the major mechanism for β cell damage (Chervonsky *et al.*, 1997; Itoh *et al.*, 1997). On the other hand, TNF α -TNF α R-mediated apoptosis may play a greater role in the destruction of β cells by CD4⁺ T cells (Kurrer *et al.*, 1997).

CONCLUSION

β cell autoantigens, particularly glutamic acid decarboxylase (GAD), macrophages and T cells play critical roles in the pathogenesis of autoimmune diabetes in NOD mice and BB rats, animal models of human diabetes. NOD mice in which GAD expression is suppressed specifically in the β cells do not develop diabetes, indicating that β cell autoantigens are required for the onset of the disease. Macrophages, as well as dendritic cells, are one of the first cell types to infiltrate the pancreatic islets. The presentation of β cell-specific autoantigens to CD4⁺ helper T cells by macrophages, dendritic cells and/or B lymphocytes, in association with MHC class II molecules, may be the initial step in the development of β cell-specific autoimmunity. In addition, macrophages are required for the activation of both CD4⁺ T cells and CD8⁺ cytotoxic effector T cells (Fig. 1). This is evidenced by the loss of the ability of T cells in a macrophage-depleted environment to differentiate into β cell-cytotoxic T cells, resulting in the prevention of autoimmune diabetes.

In unmanipulated NOD mice, both CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells are required for the development of diabetes. Although some uncertainty remains with regard to the role of CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells in the pathogenesis of autoimmune diabetes, it appears that CD8⁺ T cells are the major final effectors of β cell damage in spontaneous autoimmune diabetes. In humans, most of the immunocytes infiltrating the pancreatic β cells at the time of diagnosis of IDDM are CD8⁺ T cells, suggesting that these cells play a major role in the destruction of β cells at a later stage of the autoimmune process as final effectors.

Cytokines secreted by immunocytes, including macrophages, CD4⁺ T cells and CD8⁺ T cells may regulate the direction of the immune response toward Th1 or Th2 dominance as well as cytotoxic effector cell dominance or suppressor cell dominance. Pancreatic β cells in the islets may be killed by Fas-mediated apoptosis through a Fas/Fas ligand interaction and by perforin and granzymes released by the activated CD8⁺ T cells, as well as by TNF- α /TNF α R-mediated apoptosis in the case of CD4⁺ T cell involvement.

Therefore, the activated macrophages, Th1-type CD4⁺ T cells and β cell-specific CD8⁺ T cells, as well as the cytokines secreted by these cells, act synergistically to destroy the β cells in association with β cell-specific autoantigens and MHC class I and II molecules, resulting in the development of autoimmune diabetes (Fig. 1).

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