



**Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro**

Centro Biomédico

Faculdade de Ciências Médicas

Thaís Bezerra Ferreira

**Papel da dopamina e dos padrões moleculares associados a patógenos no perfil funcional de células T de pacientes com esclerose múltipla.**

Rio de Janeiro

2017

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Tese apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Doutor, ao Programa de Pós-graduação em Microbiologia, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

Orientadora: Prof.<sup>a</sup> Dra. Cleonice Alves de Melo Bento

Coorientador: Prof. Dr. Arnaldo Feitosa Braga de Andrade

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2017

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*J. K. Rowling*



## RESUMO

FERREIRA, Thaís Bezerra. *Papel da dopamina e dos padrões moleculares associados a patógenos no perfil funcional de células T de pacientes com esclerose múltipla*. 2017. 125 f. Tese (Doutorado em Microbiologia) – Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2017.

A esclerose múltipla (EM) é uma doença desmielinizante, de caráter autoimune, do sistema nervoso central, cujo o desenvolvimento e gravidade dependem da influência de fatores ambientais, incluindo estresse psicológico e infecções, no sistema imune de indivíduos com predisposição genética para a doença. Os mecanismos pelos quais esses fatores impactam negativamente na EM podem estar relacionados ao favorecimento de vias de ativação e expansão de clones de linfócitos T encefalitogênicos. Diante do exposto, em nosso primeiro artigo, observamos que o bloqueio *in vitro* do receptor de IL-6 reduziu a produção de citocinas relacionadas ao perfil Th17. Ademais, a capacidade dos sobrenadantes de monócitos, ativados com lipopolissacarídeo (LPS), em potencializar a produção da IL-17 e reduzir os níveis de IL-10 pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> de pacientes com EM foi anulada após a neutralização da sinalização via IL-6R nas culturas desses fagócitos. De forma interessante, a adição desse anticorpo monoclonal potencializou a capacidade da hidrocortisona (HC) em inibir a proliferação e produção de IL-17 pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com EM. No segundo artigo, nós observamos que níveis de dopamina relacionados ao estresse, por mecanismos dependentes da IL-6, elevaram a produção de citocinas por células T CD4<sup>+</sup> com perfil encefalitogênico e resistentes à HC. Em nosso último artigo, elevada percentagem de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> circulantes capazes de expressar receptores do tipo Toll (TLR)2, TLR4 e TLR9 foram detectadas no sangue periférico dos pacientes com EM quando comparado ao grupo controle. Dentre essas células, os subtipos de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> capazes de produzir simultaneamente IL-17 com IL-6 ou com IFN- $\gamma$  foram diretamente associados ao número de lesões cerebrais ativas e grau de incapacidade neurológica. Quando as células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> foram mantidas na presença apenas de ligantes de TLR (TLR-L), maiores níveis de citocinas relacionados ao fenótipo Th17 foram dosados nos sobrenadantes recolhidos nas culturas estimuladas com TLR2-L, o Pam3CSK4. Nessas culturas, os níveis de IL-6 e IL-17 em resposta ao Pam3CSK4 foram diretamente correlacionados aos parâmetros clínicos da doença. Finalmente, culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com EM mais grave responderam ao agonista de TLR2 liberando elevados níveis de GM-CSF e IFN- $\gamma$ . Coletivamente, nossos achados sugerem que a IL-6 exerce um papel importante na imunopatogênese da EM, sendo a produção dessa citocina, assim como de outras relacionadas a diferentes subtipos de células Th17, elevada pela dopamina e diferentes padrões moleculares associados a patógenos. Os achados obtidos aqui ajudam não apenas a explicar como o estresse psicológico e doenças infecciosas são considerados fatores de risco para a EM, como também podem ajudar na criação de novas estratégias terapêuticas.

Palavras-chave: Esclerose Múltipla. IL-6. Padrões moleculares associados a patógenos. Dopamina. Receptores do tipo Toll. Neuroimunologia.

## ABSTRACT

FERREIRA, Thaís Bezerra. *Role of dopamine and pathogens-associated molecular patterns on functional profile of T cells from patients with multiple sclerosis*. 2017. 125 f. Tese (Doutorado em Microbiologia) – Faculdade de Ciências Médicas, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2017.

Multiple sclerosis is an autoimmune, demyelinating disease, of the Central Nervous System, in which the onset and severity depends on the influence of environmental factors, including psychological stress and infections, on the immune system of individuals with genetic predisposition to the disease. In light of that, in our first paper, we observed that the *in vitro* blockage of IL-6 receptor, using anti-IL-6R IgG, reduced the Th17-related cytokines production. In addition, the ability of supernatants from lipopolysaccharide (LPS)-activated monocytes cultures, in increasing IL-17 production and reducing IL-10 levels by autologous CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells was abolished after neutralization of IL-6R signaling in these phagocytes' cultures. Interestingly, the addition of this monoclonal antibody increased the ability of hydrocortisone in inhibiting proliferation and IL-17 production by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells from MS patients. In our second paper, we observed that the stress-related dopamine levels, by IL-6-depending mechanisms, elevated the cytokine production by CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with an encephalitogenic profile and hydrocortisone-resistance. In our third and last paper, an elevated percentage of circulating CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells capable of expressing toll-like receptors (TLR)2, TLR4 and TLR9 was detected in MS patients samples as compared to the control group. Among these cells, the subtypes of CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes able to produce IL-17 with along IL-6 or IFN-gamma were positively related with the number of active brain lesions and the neurological disability. When CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells were maintained in the presence of TLR ligands alone, greater levels of Th17-related cytokines were dosed at the supernatants of cell cultures stimulated with the TLR2L, Pam3CSK4. In these cell cultures, the levels of IL-6 and IL-17 in response to Pam3CSK4 were positively related to clinical parameters of the disease. Finally, CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells cultures from patients with severe MS symptoms released higher levels of GM-CSF and IFN-gamma. Collectively, our findings suggest that IL-6 has an important role in MS immunopathogenesis and the production of this cytokine, as well as others Th17-related ones, are increased by dopamine and different PAMPs. The findings obtained here help not only to explain how psychological stress and infectious diseases are considered risk factors for MS, but they offer information that could aid in the development of new therapeutic strategies.

Keywords: Multiple sclerosis. IL-6. Pathogen-associated molecular patterns. Dopamine. Toll-like receptors. Neuroimmunology.

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## LISTA DE ABREVIATURAS E SIGLAS

APC	célula apresentadora de antígeno
BHE	barreira hemato-encefálica
cAMP	monofosfato de adenosina cíclico
CCL	ligante com motivos C-C
CCR	receptor com motivos C-C
CD	<i>cluster of differentiation</i>
CFA	adjuvante completo de Freund
CIS	síndrome clínica isolada
CpG ODN	oligodeoxinucleotídeos ricos em CpG
CXCR	receptor com motivos C-X-C
D1	receptor 1 da dopamina
D2	receptor 2 da dopamina
D3	receptor 3 da dopamina
D4	receptor 4 da dopamina
D5	receptor 5 da dopamina
DA	dopamina
DAMP	padrões moleculares associados ao dano
DAR	subfamília de receptores de dopamina
DC	célula dendrítica
DNA	ácido desoxirribonucleico
EAE	encefalomielite autoimune experimental
EBNA	antígeno nuclear do vírus Epstein-Barr
EBV	vírus Epstein-Barr
EDSS	Escala Expandida do Estado de Incapacidade
EM	esclerose múltipla
EM-PP	curso progressivo primário da esclerose múltipla
EM-PS	curso progressivo secundário da esclerose múltipla
EM-RR	curso remitente-recorrente da esclerose múltipla
ERK	quinase reguladora de sinal extracelular
FDA	<i>Food and Drug Administration</i>

FoxP3	fator de transcrição <i>forkhead box P3</i>
FS	sistema funcional
GM-CSF	fator estimulante de colônias de granulócitos e monócitos
HC	hidrocortisona
HLA	antígeno leucocitário humano
HSP	proteína de choque térmico
IFA	adjuvante incompleto de Freund
IFN	interferon
Ig	imunoglobulina
IL	interleucina
IL-6R	receptor de IL-6
IRF	elemento de resposta ao interferon
LCR	líquido cefalorraquidiano
LPS	lipopolissacarídeo
LTA	ácido lipoteicoico
MAG	glicoproteína associada à mielina
MBP	proteína básica da mielina
MHC	complexo principal de histocompatibilidade
MOG	glicoproteína da mielina do oligodendrocito
mRNA	ácido ribonucleico mensageiro
MyD88	<i>myeloid differentiation primary response gene 88</i>
NAWM	substância branca de aparência normal
NEDA	sem evidências de atividade da doença
NMOSD	doenças do espectro da neuromielite óptica
nNOS	óxido nítrico sintase neuronal
Pam2CSK4	lipoproteína diacetilada sintética
Pam3CSK4	lipoproteína triacetilada sintética
PAMP	padrões moleculares associados ao patógeno
PBMC	células mononucleares do sangue periférico
PG	peptideoglicano
PHA	fitohematoglutina
PLP	proteína proteolipídica
Poly(I:C)	ácido poliinosínico-policitidílico

PRR	receptor de reconhecimento de padrões
RIS	síndrome radiológica isolada
RMN	ressonância magnética nuclear
RNA	ácido ribonucleico
SNC	sistema nervoso central
SNP	polimorfismo de nucleotídeo único
TCR	receptor da célula T
TGF	fator de crescimento transformado
Th	célula T <i>helper</i> ou auxiliadora
TLR	receptor do tipo Toll
TMD	terapia modificadora de doença
TNF	fator de necrose tumoral
Treg	célula T reguladora
Treg17	célula T reguladora do tipo 17
VMAT	transportador vesicular de monoaminas

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## INTRODUÇÃO

A esclerose múltipla (EM) é uma doença desmielinizante de caráter autoimune do sistema nervoso central (SNC) (NYLANDER; HAFLER, 2012). Descrita por Jean-Baptiste Charcot (HAFLER, 2004), no final do século XIX, a EM é a principal causa de déficit neurológico em adultos jovens, sendo, portanto, um grave problema de saúde pública, pois afeta diretamente a população economicamente ativa do país. Em 2013, a estimativa era que aproximadamente 2,3 milhões de pessoas no mundo conviviam com a EM (MSIF, 2013).

Apesar de sua etiologia multifatorial, a EM tem sido considerada uma condição autoimune de mediação celular com a participação majoritária de subtipos patogênicos das células Th17 e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dirigidos contra antígenos da bainha de mielina (FLETCHER et al., 2010). Portanto, o surgimento de diferentes déficits neurológicos correlaciona-se com a área do SNC afetada pela resposta autoimune (NYLANDER; HAFLER, 2012). Entretanto, assim como para outras doenças autoimunes, o desenvolvimento e a gravidade da EM dependem da interação entre diferentes fatores ambientais, tais como estresse (MOHR et al., 2004) e doenças infecciosas, em pacientes geneticamente predispostos (CUSICK; LIBBEY; FUJINAMI, 2013; FUJINAMI et al., 2006).

Os mecanismos pelos quais o estresse e as doenças infecciosas impactam negativamente na EM podem estar, ao menos em parte, relacionados à desregulação na rede de citocinas inflamatórias que podem, por diferentes vias, favorecer a expansão de clones de linfócitos T encefalitogênicos. Em acordo com essa hipótese, estudo prévio de nosso grupo demonstrou que elevados níveis de dopamina (DA) favorecem a expansão de células Th17 e reduz a produção de citocinas anti-inflamatórias em culturas de células mononucleares do sangue periférico (PBMC – *peripheral blood mononuclear cells*) policlonalmente ativadas de pacientes com transtorno de ansiedade generalizada (FERREIRA et al., 2011). A DA, apesar de ser uma catecolamina produzida principalmente dentro do SNC, tem seus níveis periféricos elevados durante o estresse (BENESICS et al., 1997; MIGNINI; STRECCIONI; AMENTA, 2003). Portanto, a primeira etapa de nosso estudo foi avaliar o papel da DA em modular, *in vitro*, o comportamento das células T de pacientes com EM. No contexto das doenças infecciosas, sabe-se que diferentes padrões moleculares



associados a patógenos (PAMPs – *pathogen-associated molecular pattern*), por ativarem a imunidade inata, podem favorecer a ativação de células T autorreativas (CHEN; SZODORAY; ZEHER, 2015). Diante disso, a segunda etapa desse trabalho foi determinar como diferentes PAMPs podem modular, diretamente, a produção de citocinas por fenótipos de células T implicados na EM. Os dados obtidos por esse tipo de investigação podem ajudar a entender a complexidade da doença e ajudar no desenho de novas terapias em favor do paciente.

## 1 REVISÃO DA LITERATURA

### 1.1 Esclerose Múltipla: epidemiologia

A esclerose múltipla (EM) é uma doença inflamatória que atinge o SNC, que, anatomicamente, compreende o encéfalo e a medula espinhal (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005). Entre as doenças desmielinizantes que afetam esse sistema, a EM é a mais comum (NICOL et al., 2015). Durante o seu curso clínico, os pacientes acumulam incapacidades através de déficits de funções sensitivas, motoras, autônomas e neurocognitivas (MCFARLIN; MCFARLAND, 1982).

A prevalência de EM varia muito ao redor do globo, com lugares com grande prevalência e outros com baixa. Na América do Norte (140 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes) e na Europa (108 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes), são encontradas as maiores prevalências e, na África Subsaariana (2,1 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes) e no Leste Asiático (2,2 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes), são encontradas as menores (BELBASIS et al., 2015). Em 2013, a prevalência média mundial foi de 33 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes (BELBASIS et al., 2015). Segundo o *Atlas of MS*, publicado em 2013, o número estimado de pessoas com EM no mundo é de 2,5 milhões e a incidência é crescente (MSIF, 2013).

Não existem dados nacionais que determinem com exatidão o número de pessoas afetadas pela EM no Brasil. Alguns estudos feitos em cidades brasileiras estão disponíveis e apresentam a prevalência da doença. Em 1997, na cidade de São Paulo, a prevalência era de 15 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes (CALLEGARO et al., 2001). Em 2011, na cidade de Belo Horizonte, em Minas Gerais, a prevalência era de 18 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes (LANA-PEIXOTO et al., 2012). Em 2013, a prevalência era de 27,2 afetados para cada 100.000 habitantes, na cidade de Santa Maria, no Rio Grande do Sul, constatando a maior prevalência no Brasil (FINKELSZTEJN et al., 2013). Segundo estimativas da Associação Brasileira de Esclerose Múltipla, mais de 35.000 brasileiros convivem com a doença atualmente no Brasil e pouco mais de 10.000 estão em tratamento, segundo dados do Departamento de Informática do Sistema Único de Saúde (DATASUS) (MACHADO, 2012).

A doença acomete, em geral, adultos jovens, com idades entre 20 e 40 anos e, como na maioria das doenças autoimunes, as mulheres são mais suscetíveis (COMPSTON; COLES, 2002; SAWCER; FRANKLIN; BAN, 2014), embora haja diferenças nas proporções mulher : homem entre os cursos clínicos. Na forma remitente recorrente da EM, a relação é de 2 mulheres para cada homem afetado, enquanto na forma progressiva primária, essa taxa diminui para 1:1 (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005). Ainda que a doença seja mais comum em adultos jovens, cerca de 2% a apresentam antes dos dez anos e 5% antes dos dezesseis (COMPSTON; COLES, 2002), principalmente meninas (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008).

## **1.2 Esclerose Múltipla: critérios de diagnóstico e curso clínico**

O diagnóstico da EM se baseia em parâmetros clínicos e laboratoriais. Atualmente, a disseminação no tempo e espaço, que pode ser observada em exames de ressonância magnética nuclear (RMN) e na prática clínica, é o fator de maior importância para o diagnóstico definitivo de EM (MCDONALD et al., 2001; POLMAN et al., 2011). A disseminação no espaço é caracterizada por pelo menos uma lesão em T2 em pelo menos dois dos quatro locais considerados característicos da EM (justacortical, periventricular, infratentorial e medula espinhal) (POLMAN et al., 2011). A disseminação no tempo é caracterizada pelo surgimento de novas lesões em T2 ou de novas lesões captantes de gadolínio entre duas RMNs distintas, independente do intervalo de observação. Outra possibilidade é o paciente apresentar simultaneamente lesões captantes e não captantes de gadolínio em uma mesma ressonância (POLMAN et al., 2011). Além desses achados, o surgimento de episódios de incapacidade neurológica também é importante para o diagnóstico da doença. Segundo o critério de diagnóstico publicado mais recentemente, uma recidiva é definida como o surgimento de um episódio de comprometimento neurológico que dure ao menos 24 horas com ausência de infecção ou febre (POLMAN et al., 2011). Entre as recidivas, deve haver um espaço de pelo menos 30 dias de remissão clínica (MCDONALD et al., 2001). Nos pacientes em recidiva, a análise do líquido cefalorraquidiano (LCR) revela a presença de bandas oligoclonais de imunoglobulina do tipo G (IgG) em mais de 90% dos casos (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008). Esses

anticorpos são dirigidos contra proteínas da bainha de mielina e contra componentes de oligodendrócitos (COMPSTON; COLES, 2002). Embora não possuam grande expressividade clínica, esses anticorpos são importantes para o diagnóstico diferencial e representam uma evidência do caráter autoimune da EM (COMPSTON; COLES, 2002; LUBLIN et al., 2014).

A primeira manifestação clínica da doença é chamada de síndrome clínica isolada (CIS – *clinically isolated syndrome*), caracterizada por desmielinização de etiologia inflamatória, mas que não satisfazem o critério de disseminação no tempo (LUBLIN et al., 2014). Alguns pacientes também podem apresentar achados na RMN, sugerindo desmielinização de etiologia inflamatória na ausência de sinais e sintomas, caracterizando a síndrome radiológica isolada (RIS – *radiologically isolated syndrome*) (LUBLIN et al., 2014). Embora a RIS não seja presuntiva da EM *per se*, ela pode ser um importante alerta para um possível futuro diagnóstico, sendo, portanto, necessário acompanhamento prospectivo do paciente (LUBLIN et al., 2014).

Clinicamente, a doença se apresenta como episódios agudos de comprometimento neurológico, deterioração da função neuronal progressiva e gradual ou uma combinação de ambos (LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996). Isso permite que a doença seja dividida em três cursos clínicos principais: remitente-recorrente (EM-RR), progressiva primária (EM-PP) e progressiva secundária (EM-PS) (LUBLIN et al., 2014; LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996).

A EM-RR é caracterizada por recidivas clínicas claramente definidas com recuperação completa ou parcial, com sequelas e deficiências residuais após a melhora, com períodos entre as recidivas caracterizados por ausência de progressão (LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996). Cerca de 85% dos pacientes com EM apresenta esse curso (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005).

A EM-PP, que acomete entre 10 a 15% dos pacientes com EM, é caracterizada por progressão da doença desde o primeiro evento índice com platôs ocasionais, sem a presença de recidivas clínicas definidas, podendo apresentar pequenas melhoras temporárias (LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996; SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005).

A EM-PS é caracterizada como uma fase inicial remitente-recorrente seguida pela progressão que pode apresentar ou não recidivas ocasionais e raras remissões e períodos de estabilidade clínica (LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996). Esse curso clínico é considerado uma evolução da EM-RR (LUBLIN; REINGOLD, 1996). Cerca de 70% dos pacientes com a forma EM-RR desenvolvem o curso progressivo após 10-15 anos

do diagnóstico inicial (ONTANEDA et al., 2016). Ainda não existe um marcador indicativo de mudança do curso EM-RR para o EM-PS e a transição é gradual (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006; LUBLIN et al., 2014).

Em 2014, Lublin e colaboradores fizeram uma revisão dos cursos clínicos da doença, estabelecendo marcadores para melhor definir os cursos ao longo do tempo (LUBLIN et al., 2014). Esses critérios, considerados modificadores de doença, ajudam a informar sobre variáveis temporais durante o curso da EM. A doença é considerada ativa quando são observadas a presença de lesões captantes de gadolínio ou o surgimento de novas lesões em T2 na RMN ou ainda a presença de recidivas clínicas. Quando não é observada nenhuma dessas evidências, a doença é considerada inativa. Nos pacientes que possuem o diagnóstico das formas progressivas (EM-PP e EM-PS), a ausência ou presença de piora clínica ajudam a caracterizar melhor a evolução temporal da progressão (LUBLIN et al., 2014).

Portanto, segundo a revisão proposta em 2014, tanto a CIS quanto a EM-RR podem ser categorizadas em ativa ou inativa, com base em evidências clínicas e de imagem. As formas progressivas, por sua vez, foram agrupadas, podendo se apresentar ativas com progressão, ativas sem progressão, inativas com progressão e inativas sem progressão (LUBLIN et al., 2014).

A EM pode apresentar vários sinais e sintomas, dependendo da área do SNC afetada pelas lesões. As manifestações clínicas indicam o envolvimento de diferentes sistemas, como o motor, o sensitivo, o visual e o autônomo, porém, outros sintomas podem surgir, como dificuldade de deglutição, dificuldade na fala, fraqueza, disfunções na bexiga, dor e fadiga (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008). Um estudo publicado baseado em populações brasileiras mostrou que os principais sintomas apresentados pelos pacientes são os distúrbios de ordem motora, seguido pelos sensoriais, visuais, cerebelares, de tronco cerebral e esfinterianos (VASCONCELOS et al., 2016).

A fim de determinar a gravidade da evolução da doença, os pacientes são estadiados segundo a Escala Expandida de Estado de Incapacidade (EDSS – *Expanded Disability Status Scale*) (KURTZKE, 1983). Essa escala avalia diferentes sistemas funcionais (FS – *functional system*) que podem ser afetados pela EM (Quadro 1) e os pontua de acordo com as incapacidades apresentadas pelos pacientes (Quadro 2). A escala varia de zero, quando o paciente mostra um exame

neurológico sem alterações a dez, quando o paciente vem a óbito por conta da EM (KURTZKE, 1983). É importante ressaltar que a escala atribui uma importância muito grande à deambulação do paciente.

**Quadro 1 - Sistemas funcionais avaliados pela Escala Expandida do Estado de Incapacidade (EDSS).**

Sistemas funcionais	Exemplos de processos relacionados
Funções Piramidais	Movimento voluntário
Funções Cerebelares	Coordenação de movimento Equilíbrio
Funções de Tronco Cerebral	Movimento dos olhos Sensação Movimentos da face Engolir
Funções Sensitivas	
Funções Vesicais e Intestinais	
Funções Visuais	
Funções Cerebrais (ou Mentais)	Memória Concentração Humor
Outros	Fadiga

Fonte: Kurtzke, 1983

## Quadro 2 - Escala Expandida do Estado de Incapacidade (EDSS)

Score	Significado
0,0	Exame neurológico normal (FS grau 0).
1,0	Nenhuma deficiência, sinais mínimos em 1 FS (1 FS 1).
1,5	Nenhuma deficiência, sinais mínimos em 1 FS, excluindo função cerebral grau 1 (mais de 1 FS 1).
2,0	Deficiência mínima em 1 FS (1 FS 2, outros 0 ou 1).
2,5	Deficiência mínima em 2 FS (2 FS 2, outros 0 ou 1).
3,0	Deficiência moderada em 1 FS (1 FS 3, outros 0 ou 1) ou deficiência leve em 3 ou 4 FS (3 ou 4 FS 2, outros 0 ou 1), embora com marcha livre.
3,5	Marcha livre mas com deficiência moderada em 1 FS (1 FS 3) e 1 ou 2 FS 2, ou 2 FS 3, ou 5 FS 2 (outros 0 ou 1).
4,0	Marcha livre sem órtese, independente, por 12 h/dia apesar de deficiência relativamente grave de 1 FS 4 (outros 0 ou 1) ou combinações de graus menores excedendo os limites dos passos anteriores, capaz de andar sem auxílio e sem descanso por 500 metros.
4,5	Marcha livre sem auxílio durante grande parte do dia, capaz de trabalhar o dia todo, pode, contudo, ter alguma limitação para atividade livre ou requerer mínima assistência; caracterizado por deficiência relativamente grave consistindo de 1 FS 4 (outros 0 ou 1) ou combinações de graus menores e marcha livre por 300 metros.
5,0	Marcha livre por 200 metros; deficiência grave atrapalhando as atividades diárias; geralmente 1 FS 5 (outros 0 ou 1) ou combinações de graus menores.
5,5	Marcha livre por 100 metros; deficiência grave para impedir as atividades de vida diária, (1 FS 5, outros 0 ou 1).
6,0	Auxílio intermitente ou unilateral (bengala, muleta, aparelho tutor, órtese) necessário para andar 100 metros com ou sem descansar (+ de 2 FS 3).
6,5	Auxílio bilateral constante para andar 20 metros (+ de 2 FS 3).
7,0	Incapaz de andar 5 metros mesmo com auxílio, necessita de cadeira de rodas comum e faz transferência sozinho, toca a CR por 12 h/dia (= de 1 FS 4; muito raramente só 1 FS 5).
7,5	Incapaz de andar mais que poucos passos, restrito à cadeira de rodas, pode precisar de auxílio para transferência, toca a cadeira de rodas, mas não pode se manter na cadeira de rodas comum o dia todo. Pode necessitar de cadeira de rodas motorizada (+ de 1 FS 4+).
8,0	Essencialmente restrito ao leito ou cadeira de rodas, pode ficar na cadeira de rodas boa parte do dia, mantém muitos cuidados pessoais, geralmente tem o uso efetivo dos membros superiores (FS 4 em muitos sistemas).
8,5	Restrito ao leito boa parte do dia, tem alguma função de membros superiores; mantém alguns cuidados pessoais (FS 4 em vários sistemas).
9,0	Dependente no leito; pode se comunicar e se alimentar (FS 4 na maioria).
9,5	Totalmente dependente no leito, incapaz de deglutir ou se alimentar (todos os FS 4 ou 5).
10,0	Morte por Esclerose Múltipla

Fonte: Kurtzke, 1983  
FS – sistema funcional.

### 1.3 Imunopatogênese da Esclerose Múltipla e Fatores de risco

#### 1.3.1 Achados histopatológicos

Análises histopatológicas revelam que a EM apresenta lesões envolvendo desmielinização inflamatória aguda e focal, com perda axonal e limitada remielinização, levando a placas escleróticas multifocais crônicas (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008). Achados clínicos e de imagem sugerem que a inflamação e a formação de novas lesões na substância branca são a base da EM-RR, enquanto nas formas progressivas, a presença de lesões inflamatórias são raras, mas atrofia das substâncias branca e cinzenta é exuberante, além de mudanças na chamada substância branca aparentemente normal (NAWM – *normal-appearing white matter*) (LASSMANN; BRÜCK; LUCCHINETTI, 2007). Isso sugere que, inicialmente, a reação inflamatória é um importante componente, mas que, com o tempo, um processo neurodegenerativo passa a ser mais preponderante e independente da inflamação (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006; LASSMANN; BRÜCK; LUCCHINETTI, 2007).

Nas lesões em atividade, o infiltrado inflamatório é dominado por células T, principalmente T CD8<sup>+</sup> (NEUMANN et al., 2002), e macrófagos, além da presença de células da micróglia ativadas, e de alterações na barreira hematoencefálica (BHE) (HOCHMEISTER et al., 2006; KIRK et al., 2003). Em amostras de pacientes com EM aguda, é possível encontrar células T CD8<sup>+</sup> com granzima B próximas a oligodendrócitos e axônios desmielinizados (NEUMANN et al., 2002). Essas lesões histológicas podem ser divididas em ativas, crônicas ativas e inativas. As lesões ativas se apresentam com margens não definidas, intenso infiltrado perivascular contendo linfócitos pequenos, parênquima edemaciado, perda de mielina e de oligodendrócitos, dano axonal disseminado, plasmócitos, macrófagos cheios de mielina, astrócitos hipertróficos e nenhuma ou poucas cicatrizes astrogliais (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006). As lesões crônicas ativas, por sua vez, são bem delimitadas, com células infiltradas que se dispõem próximas das margens, macrófagos cheios de mielina e lipídeos, astrócitos hipertróficos, axônios em degeneração e presença de desmielinização, com a deposição de anticorpos (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006).



Já as lesões inativas também apresentam bordas bem delimitadas, tecido cicatricial, poucos axônios desmielinizados, macrófagos e vasos com paredes espessas, com poucos leucócitos em volta e nenhum ou poucos oligodendrócitos (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006).

O processo completo de desmielinização é acompanhado por estágios variados de injúria e perda axonal (FERGUSON et al., 1997; TRAPP et al., 1998), que é em parte contrabalanceada por remielinização (KORNEK et al., 2000). A desmielinização focal de etiologia inflamatória na substância branca é o principal achado na EM-RR.

Nas formas progressivas, a histopatologia é distinta (KUTZELNIGG et al., 2005). Ainda são encontradas lesões desmielinizantes focais na substância branca, mas lesões ativas são raras, embora haja evidência mostrando um crescimento lento e gradual nas suas margens (PRINEAS et al., 2001). Nesse caso, há infiltrados inflamatórios mais discretos, com predominância de células T e micróglia ativada, poucas delas contendo produtos de mielina. Fora dessas placas, a NAWM se apresenta anormal (ALLEN; MCKEOWN, 1979; ALLEN et al., 2001). Acredita-se que esse processo é influenciado por inflamação difusa e ativação generalizada da micróglia, associado a injúria axonal difusa e destruição, seguida de desmielinização secundária (KUTZELNIGG et al., 2005). Além da substância branca, o córtex também é afetado. Extensas áreas de desmielinização cortical são observadas tanto no prosencéfalo e no cerebelo. (KUTZELNIGG et al., 2005).

Apesar da boa descrição quanto a composição do infiltrado inflamatório nas lesões cerebrais de pacientes com EM usando marcadores de linhagens celulares do sistema imune, muitos dos aspectos funcionais dessas células estão sendo desvendados só nos últimos anos, com o conhecimento da complexa biologia comportamental das células T CD4<sup>+</sup>, o subtipo mais implicado na doença (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005). Entretanto, devido a plasticidade funcional desses linfócitos, diferentes eventos ambientais devem impactar no prognóstico e na resposta a terapêutica em pacientes geneticamente predisponentes.

### 1.3.2 Fatores de risco genéticos e a Esclerose Múltipla

Modelos que tentam associar a EM a genes específicos sugerem que, na verdade, a doença é determinada pela associação de diferentes alelos de genes envolvidos na resposta imune. Um dos principais alelos é o antígeno leucocitário humano (HLA – *human leukocyte antigen*) DRB1\*1501, uma molécula que pertence ao complexo principal de histocompatibilidade (MHC – *major histocompatibility complex*) do tipo II. A *odds ratio* para esse alelo chega a 3,10 (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008; HEMMER; KERSCHENSTEINER; KORN, 2015; SAWCER; FRANKLIN; BAN, 2014). Além disso, cada cópia desse alelo parece adiantar em 11 meses o surgimento da doença (SAWCER et al., 2011). Outros alelos, como o DQB2\*0602, DRB5\*0101, DQA1\*0102, DRB1\*0405, DQA1\*0201 e DQB1\*0302, também aumentam o risco de desenvolver a doença – os três últimos, principalmente em populações mediterrâneas (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008; OLERUP; HILLERT, 1991). Entretanto, existem alelos de MHC que parecem estar relacionados à proteção contra a doença, como o alelo que codifica o MHC de classe I, HLA-A\*0201 (BRYNEDAL et al., 2007; SAWCER et al., 2011).

A miscigenação entre diferentes populações europeias, africanas e nativas torna a população brasileira bem particular (IBGE, 2007). Essa miscigenação em conjunto com o uso de diferentes técnicas com diferentes resoluções podem interferir e dificultar a estimativa de variáveis genéticas de risco para o surgimento da EM. Em comparação com populações europeias, a presença do alelo DRB1\*1501 apresentou menor frequência em indivíduos com a EM no estado do Paraná (WERNECK et al., 2016). Por outro lado, estudos anteriores encontraram maiores frequências desse alelo em indivíduos com EM nos estados do Rio de Janeiro e de São Paulo (ALVES-LEON et al., 2007; BRUM et al., 2007; PARADELA et al., 2015). Esse mesmo alelo também foi relacionado à doença de forma dependente da etnia em pacientes caucasianos. Nesse mesmo estudo, outro alelo, o DQB1\*0602, foi associado à doença de forma independente de etnia (ALVES-LEON et al., 2007).

Além do MHC, outros genes, como, por exemplo, os que codificam os receptores de IL-7 (IL-7R – *interleukin-7 receptor*) e de IL-2 (IL-2R – *interleukin-2 receptor*), genes relacionados a sinalização dos interferons e do fator de transcrição NF-κB têm sido relacionados à doença (CEROSALETTI et al., 2013; DENDROU;

FUGGER; FRIESE, 2015; GREGORY et al., 2007; HARTMANN et al., 2014; LUNDMARK et al., 2007; TRABOULSEE et al., 2014).

### 1.3.3 Fatores de risco ambientais: infecções e a Esclerose Múltipla

Doenças infecciosas são implicadas no desenvolvimento e exacerbação de doenças autoimunes, tal como a EM. Por exemplo, infecções por vírus influenza e da família herpes vírus parecem contribuir no desenvolvimento da doença. Uma associação temporal entre a mononucleose infecciosa, causada pelo vírus do Epstein-Barr (EBV – *Epstein-Barr virus*), e desenvolvimento da EM tem sido descrita. Entretanto, esse vírus também tem sido relacionado a outras doenças autoimunes, tais como lúpus, artrite reumatoide e síndrome de Sjögren (IGOE; SCOFIELD, 2013; JIMÉNEZ-DALMARONI; GERSWHIN; ADAMOPOULOS, 2015; LOSSIUS et al., 2012). No curso da EM-RR, patógenos podem também elevar o risco de novas recidivas clínicas. Evidências sugerem que 1/3 de todas as recidivas da EM são relacionadas a infecções (OIKONEN et al., 2011). Aproximadamente 30% dos pacientes acompanhados tiveram recidivas durante o período de 2 semanas antes até 2-5 semanas depois de uma infecção sintomática, principalmente aquelas associadas às vias aéreas superiores (ANDERSEN et al., 1993; EDWARDS et al., 1998; PANITCH, 1994; SIBLEY; BAMFORD; CLARK, 1985). Estudos no modelo experimental da EM, conhecido como encefalomielite autoimune experimental (EAE – *experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis*) demonstraram que infecção prévia com o vírus Influenza H1N1 aumentou a gravidade da EAE, evidenciada pela exuberância nas lesões cerebrais com intensos infiltrados inflamatórios ricos em células T, monócitos e neutrófilos (BLACKMORE et al., 2017; CHEN et al., 2017). Coletivamente, esses achados sugerem que eventos relacionados à ativação inespecífica do sistema imune por produtos microbianos deve favorecer a quebra de tolerância imunológica em pacientes com predisposição genética para EM. Nesse sentido, inúmeros trabalhos têm demonstrado o papel adjuvante de diferentes padrões moleculares associados aos patógenos em favorecer a expansão de subtipos de

células T mais implicados na doença (CHEN; SZODORAY; ZEHER, 2015; HERNÁNDEZ-PEDRO et al., 2016).

#### 1.3.3.1 Produtos microbianos, imunidade inata e a Esclerose Múltipla

Muito do nosso conhecimento acerca dos PAMPs na EM vem dos achados nos modelos experimentais da doença, como a EAE. Estudos nesses modelos animais sugerem a hipótese de que a doença se inicie a partir de uma ruptura na barreira hemato-encefálica decorrente de algumas infecções sistêmicas, o que facilita a entrada de células do sistema imune no SNC de indivíduos com predisposição genética. O encontro dos linfócitos T autoreativos específicos contra antígenos da mielina dispara uma cascata de eventos que resulta na lesão inflamatória desmielinizante, resultando na destruição da bainha de mielina e das células responsáveis pela mielinização do axônio, os oligodendrócitos (FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006). A ativação dessas células na periferia, no entanto, depende das células do sistema imune inato.

A imunidade inata é considerada como a primeira linha de defesa contra patógenos. O reconhecimento desses micro-organismos é feito através de uma série de receptores capazes de ligar diferentes tipos de PAMPs, como os membros da família de receptores do tipo Toll (TLR – *Toll-like receptors*). Até o momento, 13 membros da família são conhecidos, sendo que os TLR1-10 estão presentes em humanos (SATO; AKIRA, 2016). A expressão celular também é diferente: enquanto a maioria dos TLR é expressa na superfície celular, os TLR3, 7, 8 e 9 são expressos em vesículas endossomais (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006). Enquanto os TLRs de superfície estão muito relacionados a reconhecimento de produtos bacterianos no espaço extracelular, os subtipos endossomais detectam ácidos nucleicos de origem viral e bacteriana (DOWLING; MANSELL, 2016).

Os TLRs são expressos em diferentes tipos de células pertencentes ou não ao sistema imune (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006; CARAMALHO et al., 2003). Entretanto, sua expressão é particularmente elevada nas células do sistema imune inato, como nas células dendríticas (DC – *dendritic cell*) (CARAMALHO et al., 2003).

Apesar do reconhecimento de PAMPs pelos TLRs estar associado à proteção e à eliminação de agentes infecciosos, esses receptores têm sido igualmente implicados na indução da EAE/EM. Uma das clássicas formas de induzir o modelo experimental da EM em camundongos é a injeção de antígenos da bainha de mielina emulsificados em adjuvante completo de Freund (CFA – *Complete Freund's Adjuvant*), que carrega na sua fórmula a bactéria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* inativada pelo calor, contendo ligantes de TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 (DOWLING; MANSELL, 2016). Nesse modelo, adição do adjuvante incompleto de Freund (IFA – *Incomplete Freund's Adjuvant*) não foi capaz de induzir a doença nos camundongos imunizados com antígenos da bainha de mielina (HANSEN et al., 2006). De forma interessante, quando o IFA foi injetado junto com um ligante de TLR4, os camundongos desenvolveram a doença (HANSEN et al., 2006). Isso reforça a ideia de que infecções podem se relacionar com o surgimento da doença ou de suas recidivas.

Nos pacientes com EM, há um aumento na expressão de TLR3 e 4 no tecido inflamado do encéfalo e da medula espinhal, sugerindo uma participação destes no processo de autoimunidade (BSIBSI et al., 2002). Enquanto na NAWM desses pacientes, a detecção dos TLRs foi mínima, há uma alta expressão de TLR3 e TLR4 nas lesões ativas, principalmente nas bordas e no centro das lesões (BSIBSI et al., 2002). Nas lesões ativas recentes, as células da micróglia expressam esses receptores em vesículas endossomais, enquanto nas ativas crônicas, astrócitos e célula da micróglia expressam esses receptores na superfície e em vesículas endossomais, respectivamente (BSIBSI et al., 2002). Alterações na expressão de TLRs também são observadas nos camundongos que desenvolvem a EAE: as células da medula espinhal apresentam maiores níveis de ácido ribonucleico (RNA – *ribonucleic acid*) mensageiro (mRNA – *messenger RNA*) para TLR1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 e 9 quando comparados aos camundongos do grupo controle (PRINZ et al., 2006).

A expressão dos TLRs nas células do sistema imune é fundamental no curso da resposta imune. As DCs residentes nos tecidos são imaturas, incapazes de ativar células T virgens. A partir do reconhecimento dos PAMPs feito por meio dos receptores de reconhecimento de padrões (PRRs – *pattern-recognition receptor*), a DC passa por um processo de maturação, caracterizado pelo indução e/ou aumento na expressão de moléculas necessárias para ativar as células T virgens e iniciar a resposta adaptativa. Além de iniciar o processo de ativação, o engajamento dos TLRs pode determinar o perfil no qual a célula T se diferenciará (AGRAWAL et al., 2003;

DOWLING; MANSELL, 2016). Por exemplo, a ligação do TLR2 com seu agonista Pam3CSK4 induz, via sinalização das proteínas quinases p38 e ERK1/2 (AGRAWAL et al., 2003), a expressão de IL-23, citocina importante para a manutenção do fenótipo Th17 (MADDUR et al., 2012).

O TLR2 é importante no reconhecimento de componentes da parede celular de bactérias, como o ácido lipoteicoico (LTA – *lipoteicoic acid*), peptidoglicanos (PG – *peptidoglycan*) e lipoproteínas (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006). Embora controverso, foi relatado que esse receptor também pode reconhecer algumas formas de lipopolissacarídeos (LPS – *lipopolysaccharide*) (LEPPER et al., 2005; WERTS et al., 2001). Isso pode estar relacionado a capacidade do TLR2 em formar heterodímeros com o TLR1 ou 6, o que o ajuda a discriminar variações na estrutura dos lipídeos (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006; OZINSKY et al., 2000). O dímero TLR1/2 reconhece lipopeptídeos triacilados enquanto o dímero TLR1/6 reconhece lipopeptídeos diacilados (SATO; AKIRA, 2016). Outro ligante de TLR2 é o zimosan, uma glucana de origem fúngica, que, em indivíduos saudáveis, foi capaz de induzir, de forma dose dependente, a secreção de IL-23 por DCs (GEROSA et al., 2008). De forma interessante, oligodendrócitos humanos expressam TLR2 e há um aumento na expressão dele nas lesões cerebrais crônicas de pacientes com EM (SLOANE et al., 2010). Na EAE, camundongos deficientes na expressão de TLR2 nas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> ou nocautes para TLR2 apresentam a doença de forma mais branda que os camundongos selvagens (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ et al., 2011; REYNOLDS et al., 2010). Além disso, quando o zimosan foi injetado na dose de 100µg em camundongos foi capaz de induzir a EAE de forma similar a injeção de *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (HANSEN et al., 2006). No entanto, a injeção de pequenas doses de ligantes de TLR2 parece induzir tolerância em camundongos, que desenvolveram EAE de forma mais tardia e menos grave após tratamento com Pam2CSK4, um ligante do dímero TLR2/TLR6 (ANSTADT et al., 2016). Sendo assim, o dímero pelo qual o TLR2 sinaliza parece ser importante para determinar o resultado final de sua estimulação.

O TLR3 reconhece RNA de fita dupla (dsRNA – *double-strand RNA*) (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006), é expresso em neurônios humanos, em oligodendrócitos, em astrócitos e na micróglia (BSIBSI et al., 2010; FARINA et al., 2005; JACK et al., 2005; LAFON et al., 2006). Além disso, parece apresentar um efeito neuroprotetor na EM ao se ligar a proteína endógena *stathmin* (BSIBSI et al., 2010). Quando um análogo sintético de dsRNA, Poly(I:C) (Poly (I:C) – *polyinosinic-*

*polycytidylic acid*), foi usado como adjuvante na indução da EAE, os animais desenvolveram uma forma mais atenuada da doença que foi associada a reduzida resposta proliferativa por parte das células T (HANSEN et al., 2006), levando a doença mais branda (TOUIL et al., 2006). Esses efeitos benéficos da ligação com o TLR3 devem estar relacionados com a capacidade de agonistas em ativar a via de sinalização que aumenta a produção de IFN- $\beta$  (TOUIL et al., 2006), uma citocina que diminui o fenótipo Th17 (RAMGOLAM et al., 2009).

O TLR4 foi o primeiro receptor a ser descoberto (TAKEDA; AKIRA, 2015) e, portanto, é um dos mais estudados. Seu ligante mais conhecido são os LPS presentes na parede celular de bactérias Gram-negativas. Além disso, esse receptor também reconhece moléculas como taxol, a proteína de fusão do Vírus Sincicial Respiratório e proteínas de choque térmico (HSP – *heat-shock protein*), como a HSP60 (TAKEDA; AKIRA, 2015). O LPS é um dos melhores adjuvantes para a indução de EAE, com 100% dos animais desenvolvendo a doença de forma moderada a grave, comparável à ação adjuvante do *M. tuberculosis* (HANSEN et al., 2006). Porém, quando esses animais são previamente tratados com LPS, para induzir tolerância, a injeção do ligante de TLR4 perdeu parte de sua função adjuvante, acarretando uma menor ativação/função APC das DCs (BUENAFE; BOURDETTE, 2007; ELLESTAD et al., 2009; HANSEN et al., 2006), induzindo uma forma mais tardia e branda da doença (BUENAFE; BOURDETTE, 2007; ELLESTAD et al., 2009), ou até mesmo sendo incapaz de induzir a EAE (HANSEN et al., 2006). Outro adjuvante usado na indução da EAE é a toxina pertussis, também um ligante de TLR4 (KERFOOT et al., 2004; RACKE; HU; LOVETT-RACKE, 2005). Ademais, a expressão de TLR4 na glia pode amplificar a lesão neuronal. Quando as células da linhagem MO3.13 imortalizada de oligodendrócitos humanos foram mantidos na presença de LPS, a expressão de uma isoforma neuronal da enzima óxido nítrico sintase (nNOS – *neuronal nitric oxide synthase*) foi elevada e associada a maior suscetibilidade à morte celular mediada por óxido nítrico (YAO et al., 2010). Esse achado sugere que a sinalização via TLR4 pode ser um processo relacionado diretamente à desmielinização.

O TLR5 reconhece a flagelina (HAYASHI et al., 2001), principal proteína formadora dos flagelos bacterianos, estrutura importante para a mobilidade desses micro-organismos (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006). Pouco se conhece sobre os efeitos que ele pode apresentar na EM (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ; BAXTER, 2013).

O TLR7 reconhece RNA de fita simples ricas em uridina e guanosina de origem viral (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006; FORSBACH et al., 2008) e é expresso em membranas endossomais em monócitos e macrófagos, DCs plasmocitoides e células B (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ; BAXTER, 2013). Durante a CIS, o tratamento de PBMC de pacientes com interferon do tipo  $\beta$  (IFN- $\beta$ ) diminuiu a expressão de fatores relacionados com diferenciação do fenótipo Th17 de forma dependente de TLR7 (ZHANG et al., 2009). Já na EM, houve um déficit na produção de interferon do tipo  $\alpha$  (IFN- $\alpha$ ) pelas DCs plasmocitoides estimuladas com agonistas de TLR7 oriundas de pacientes, principalmente durante as recidivas (MYCKO et al., 2014). Esses achados sugerem, a princípio, um papel protetor de agonistas de TLR7 na EM.

O TLR8 reconhece RNA de fita simples ricas em adenina e uridina de origem viral (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006; FORSBACH et al., 2008) e é expresso em monócitos, macrófagos, algumas DCs e mastócitos (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ; BAXTER, 2013). O papel desse receptor na EM ainda não é bem entendido, mas estudo por JOHNSON et al. (2013) demonstrou menor expressão desse TLR nas PBMC dos pacientes com EM, sugerindo um provável efeito protetor na doença (JOHNSON et al., 2013).

O TLR9 reconhece regiões do ácido desoxirribonucleico (DNA – *deoxyribonucleic acid*) de bactérias, rico em sequências CpG repetidas não metiladas, comumente presentes no DNA bacteriano (AKIRA; UEMATSU; TAKEUCHI, 2006). Estudos em humanos e em camundongos apontam papéis contraditórios na função desse receptor na imunopatogênese da EM e da EAE (ZHOU et al., 2017). Camundongos nocauteados para o gene que codifica o TLR9 desenvolveram a EAE induzida com o peptídeo 35-55 da glicoproteína da mielina do oligodendrócito (MOG<sub>35-55</sub> – *myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein*), porém de início tardio e evolução mais branda (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ et al., 2011; PRINZ et al., 2006), embora fossem capazes de montar uma resposta proliferativa com produção de interferon do tipo gama (IFN- $\gamma$ ) similar aos camundongos do grupo controle (PRINZ et al., 2006). Em contraste, também em animais nocaute, a indução da EAE com a proteína da mielina levou a uma doença mais grave, sugerindo um papel regulador desse TLR (MARTA et al., 2008). Essas diferenças podem estar relacionadas a vários ligantes de TLR9 em diferentes populações celulares levando a muitos desfechos (ZHOU et al., 2017) ou até mesmo a diferentes protocolos de indução da EAE (MARTA et al., 2008).



A sinalização intracelular desencadeada quando um TLR encontra seu agonista pode seguir duas vias: a via dependente de MyD88 ou a via independente de MyD88 (também chamada de via dependente de TRIF) (DOWLING; MANSELL, 2016). As duas vias apresentam objetivos distintos: a via dependente de MyD88 resulta em ativação do fator de transcrição NF- $\kappa$ B e a indução de citocinas como IL-6 e fator de necrose tumoral alfa (TNF $\alpha$  – *tumor necrosis factor- $\alpha$* ), enquanto a via independente de MyD88 induz a expressão de interferons do tipo I e ativa elementos de resposta ao interferon (IRF – *interferon regulatory factor*). Portanto, enquanto a primeira é muito relacionada à indução da resposta inflamatória, a segunda é muito relacionada a uma resposta antiviral (DOWLING; MANSELL, 2016).

Essas vias de sinalização parecem estar envolvidas com os mecanismos que levam a autoimunidade observada na EM. Camundongos que desenvolvem a EAE apresentam maiores níveis de mRNA para a proteína MyD88 (PRINZ et al., 2006). De forma interessante, animais nocauteados para o gene que codifica a MyD88 são resistentes a indução da doença (MARTA et al., 2008; MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ et al., 2011; PRINZ et al., 2006). Nesses animais, as DCs mieloides purificadas do baço produziam menores quantidades de IL-6 e IL-23 após a imunização com MOG, além de menores proporções de células T IL-17<sup>+</sup>, menores níveis de mRNA para a IL-17 e menores níveis no soro de IL-17. Juntos, os dados sugerem que a via dependente de MyD88 é importante na indução do fenótipo Th17 (MARTA et al., 2008). Portanto, quando comparados entre si, adjuvantes que utilizam a via dependente de MyD88 são melhores indutores de EAE do que aqueles que utilizam a via independente (HANSEN et al., 2006).

Essas evidências sugerem que determinadas infecções que ativam vias de sinalização dependentes de MyD88 nas células da imunidade inata podem favorecer o desenvolvimento de doenças autoimunes. O mecanismo pelo qual se dá essa relação são complexos, mas parecem envolver quebra de tolerância central e ativação de células T autorreativas e reforçam a importância de uma infecção antes do surgimento da doença.

No SNC, as células da micróglia, via sinalização por TLR, parecem executar um papel na reativação de células T autorreativas periféricas que chegam no parênquima cerebral (ALOISI et al., 1999; LI et al., 2007). Quando estimuladas por agonistas de TLR2 (Pam3CSK4) ou TLR4 (LPS), a expressão de mRNA para IL-23p19 nessas células foi aumentada, enquanto os agonistas de TLR9 (CpG ODN) e

TLR4 (LPS) elevaram a expressão de IL-12p35 (LI et al., 2007). O sobrenadante de culturas de micróglia mantidas com PAMPs foi capaz de aumentar a produção de IL-17 por esplenócitos murinos (LI et al., 2007), sugerindo um papel importante das células da micróglia na manutenção do fenótipo Th17 no SNC.

Embora classicamente os TLR sejam receptores da imunidade inata, a capacidade das células T humanas ativadas em expressar esses receptores (CARAMALHO et al., 2003; MILLS, 2011) sugere que diferentes PAMPs podem modular diretamente o comportamento funcional de células T. No contexto das doenças autoimunes, o engajamento de diferentes ligantes de TLR podem promover a expansão de células T, podendo favorecer o fenótipo Th17 em detrimento de um dano funcional nas células T reguladoras, envolvidas na tolerância imune (NYIRENDA et al., 2011; VOO et al., 2014). Estudos sobre o papel da direta sinalização via TLR nas células T de pacientes com EM podem ajudar a entender a heterogeneidade do curso da EM.

### 1.3.3.2 Imunidade adaptativa e a Esclerose Múltipla

O conhecimento de que a imunidade adaptativa apresenta grande importância no desenvolvimento da EM não é recente. Muitas variantes genéticas relacionadas à EM estão relacionadas a genes que codificam proteínas envolvidas na resposta imune mediada por células T (HEMMER; KERSCHENSTEINER; KORN, 2015). Por exemplo, o principal fator de risco genético para o desenvolvimento da EM é a presença de um alelo do gene que codifica o HLA DRB1\*1501 (HEMMER; KERSCHENSTEINER; KORN, 2015), provavelmente pela sua habilidade em apresentar, com alta afinidade, antígenos da bainha de mielina para as células T CD4<sup>+</sup>. Essas evidências ajudam a compreender melhor o papel que a imunidade adaptativa pode desenvolver na imunopatogênese da doença.

Embora não haja um consenso sobre o que realmente dispara a doença, a participação de diferentes fenótipos efetores de células T tem sido amplamente estudada na EM.

Um fator interessante nesse contexto é que a presença de células T autorreativas contra antígenos da mielina não é exclusividade dos pacientes com EM. Elas também são encontradas em frequências similares no sangue periférico de indivíduos saudáveis (CRAWFORD et al., 2004; FROHMAN; RACKE; RAINE, 2006; LOVETT-RACKE et al., 1998). O que diferencia os dois grupos é o fenótipo que essas células apresentam. Nos pacientes, elas se apresentam como células ativadas ou de memória, enquanto nos indivíduos saudáveis, elas se apresentam como células virgens (LOVETT-RACKE et al., 1998; SCHOLZ et al., 1998).

Historicamente, as células T CD4<sup>+</sup> com o fenótipo Th1 foram as primeiras células implicadas na doença (ADORINI, 1999; YURA et al., 2001). No entanto, estudos na EAE mostraram que animais que apresentavam deficiência para citocinas relacionadas ao perfil Th1, como a IL-12, fundamental para a diferenciação desse fenótipo efetor, e o IFN- $\gamma$ , a principal citocina do fenótipo Th1, eram suscetíveis a indução da doença (BECHER; DURELL; NOELLE, 2002; CUA et al., 2003; FERBER et al., 1996; GRAN et al., 2002). Por outro lado, os animais que não expressavam a subunidade p40 da proteína heterodimérica IL-12 (composta pelas subunidades p40 e p35), eram resistentes ao desenvolvimento da EAE, enquanto os que apresentavam deficiências na expressão da subunidade p35 desenvolviam uma forma mais grave da doença (BECHER; DURELL; NOELLE, 2002; CUA et al., 2003; ZHANG et al., 2003). Finalmente, a descrença do envolvimento das células Th1 na doença foi reforçada com o achado que camundongos que não expressavam o IFN- $\gamma$  apresentavam uma forma mais grave da EAE e, muitas vezes, letal (CHU; WITTMER; DALTON, 2000; FERBER et al., 1996).

A descoberta de um novo fenótipo efetor de células T CD4<sup>+</sup>, reconhecido pela capacidade de secretar IL-17 (PARK et al., 2006), chamado Th17, foi crucial para compreender melhor os mecanismos envolvidos na imunopatogênese da EM.

A biologia das células Th17 é muito complexa, apresentando muitas lacunas a serem preenchidas. Em camundongos, as células Th17 podem se diferenciar na presença ou ausência do fator de crescimento transformado  $\beta$  (TGF- $\beta$  – *transforming growth factor  $\beta$* ) (GHORESCHI et al., 2010). As combinações entre IL-6 e IL-1 $\beta$ , na presença de TGF- $\beta$ 1 ou IL-23, parecem dar origem a diferentes subpopulações de células Th17, que serão discutidas mais à frente. Em humanos, as células Th17 podem se diferenciar na presença de IL-6, IL-1 $\beta$  e o TGF- $\beta$ 1 parece inibir esse processo (ACOSTA-RODRIGUEZ et al., 2007a). Por sua vez, a IL-23 parece ter um

importante papel na estabilização do fenótipo, mais do que na indução dele (LANGRISH et al., 2005; MCGEACHY et al., 2009).

Nesse contexto, estudos mostraram que animais com deficiência na sinalização de IL-1 $\beta$  eram menos suscetíveis à indução de EAE (SUTTON et al., 2006), enquanto os com deficiência de IL-6 eram resistentes à indução da doença (OKUDA et al., 1998; SERADA et al., 2008). Assim como a IL-1 $\beta$  e a IL-6, a IL-23 também foi considerada essencial para a indução da resposta inflamatória autoimune no SNC (CUA et al., 2003; LANGRISH et al., 2005). Em concordância com esses achados, maiores níveis da subunidade p19, presente unicamente na IL-23, foram detectados nas lesões de pacientes com EM e essa expressão se correlacionou com a atividade da doença (LI et al., 2007). De forma interessante, a IL-23 é formada por duas subunidades, p19 e p40 (LANGRISH et al., 2005), esta última comum a IL-12, o que pode ter levado a conclusão inicial da importância do fenótipo Th1 na patogênese da EM (CUA et al., 2003). Em resumo, a diferenciação das células T CD4 em Th17 patogênicas parece depender da presença de IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, IL-23 na ausência de TGF- $\beta$ .

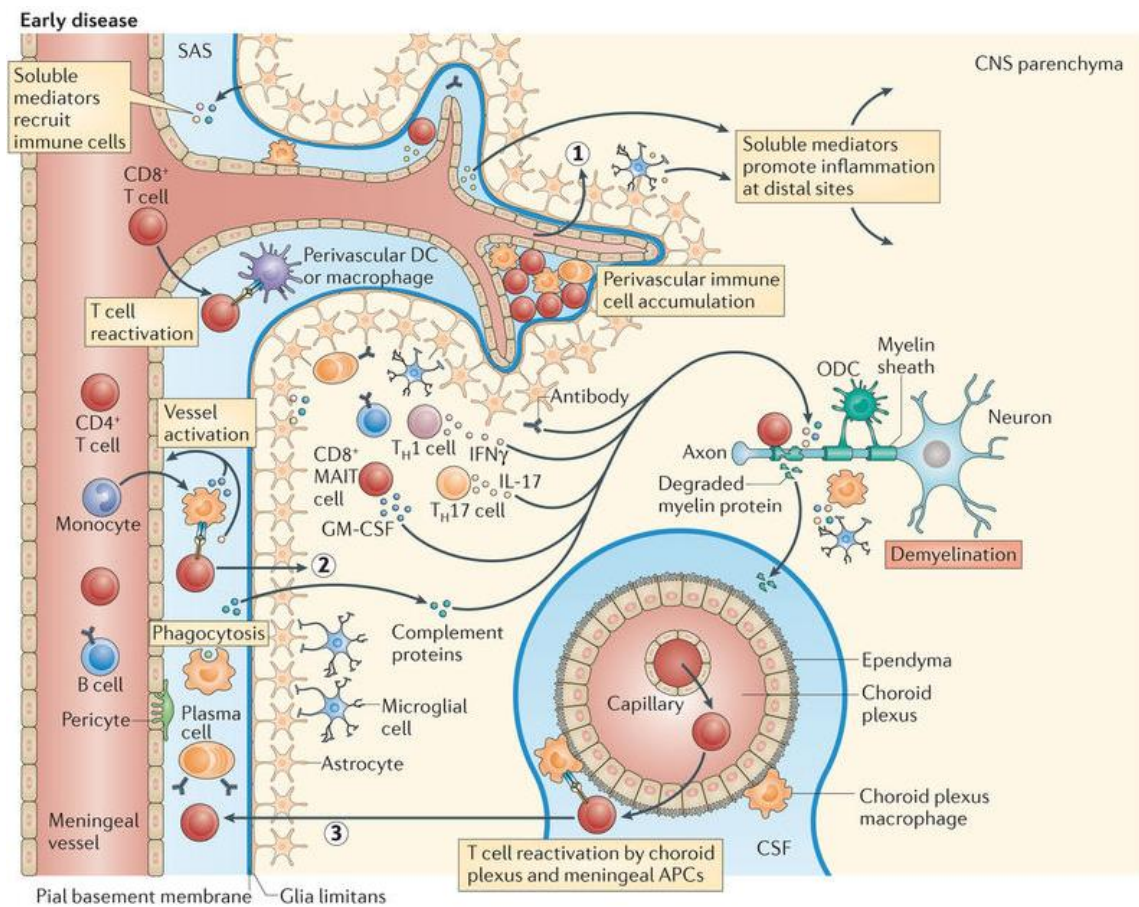
A IL-23 também é capaz de induzir as células Th17 a secretar o fator estimulante de colônias de granulócitos e monócitos (GM-CSF – *granulocyte macrophage colony-stimulating factor*), que é essencial para o desenvolvimento do efeito encefalitogênico mediado por essas células (CODARRI et al., 2011; EL-BEHI et al., 2011). Contudo, em outra linhagem de camundongos, o GM-CSF foi considerado redundante para o desenvolvimento da EAE (PIERSON; GOVERMAN, 2017). Apesar desses estudos parecerem conflitantes, animais com deficiência na expressão do receptor para GM-CSF em monócitos, conhecido como receptor de quimiocina CCR2 (CCR2 – *C-C chemokine receptor type 2*), foram totalmente resistentes à indução da EAE (CROXFORD et al., 2015). Na EM, o GM-CSF tem sido associado a sua capacidade de induzir a migração de células mieloides para dentro do SNC (CODARRI et al., 2011; SPATH et al., 2017). Na EM, a infiltração desses fagócitos tem sido ligada à destruição de oligodendrócitos, neurônios e astrócitos através da grande liberação de espécies reativas de oxigênio (SPATH et al., 2017).

A IL-17, por sua vez, favorece o recrutamento de neutrófilos para o SNC. Esse evento é adicionalmente amplificado pelo recrutamento de células Th17 CCR6<sup>+</sup> periféricas através da quimiocina CCL20 (CCL20 – *Chemokine C-C motif ligand 20*) sintetizada pelas células Th17 nas lesões neuronais (ACOSTA-RODRIGUEZ et al., 2007b; GAFFEN et al., 2014). Adicionalmente, a IL-17 aumenta a permeabilidade da

BHE por diminuir a expressão de ocludina e zonula occludens em células endoteliais da BHE humana (KEBIR et al., 2007), facilitando a migração dessas células para dentro do parênquima nervoso. Pacientes com EM apresentam aumentados níveis de mRNA para IL-17 não só nas lesões (LOCK et al., 2002; TZARTOS et al., 2008), mas também nas células mononucleares no sangue periférico e no LCR (MATUSEVICIUS et al., 1999). A presença de células que expressam IL-17 em lesões ativas agudas e crônicas sugere que esta citocina está relacionada não só com o surgimento da lesão, mas com a sua persistência (TZARTOS et al., 2008). De forma interessante, o mesmo estudo de 2008 realizado com pacientes com EM, encontrou a IL-17 não apenas nas células T CD4<sup>+</sup>, mas também em células T CD8<sup>+</sup>, astrócitos e oligodendrócitos (TZARTOS et al., 2008). Aumento na proporção de células Th17 também foi detectada no sangue periférico e no LCR de pacientes com CIS e EM-RR, principalmente durante as recidivas (BRUCKLACHER-WALDERT et al., 2009). Essas células apresentavam expressão maior de moléculas co-estimulatórias, como CD28, e eram mais resistentes a inibição pelas células T regulatórias (Treg – *regulatory T cell*) do que as células Th1 autólogas (BRUCKLACHER-WALDERT et al., 2009).

Outra citocina produzida pelas células Th17 implicadas na EM é a IL-22, que à semelhança da IL-17, parece ter um papel importante em aumentar a permeabilidade da BHE humana (KEBIR et al., 2007). Além disso, em pacientes com EM, a produção de IL-22 pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> específicas para proteínas da bainha de mielina foi menos sensível à inibição por corticoides e foi diretamente relacionada ao número de lesões cerebrais ativas em pacientes com diagnóstico recente de EM (WING et al., 2015). NA EAE, a IL-22 parece participar ativamente do processo de desmielinização através da sua capacidade de induzir a expressão da molécula Fas/CD95 em oligodendrócitos (ZHEN et al., 2017).

**Figura 1 - Imunopatogênese da EM dentro do SNC na fase inicial da doença.**



Legenda: A infiltração de células do sistema imune, principalmente as células T, é um importante fenômeno na fase inicial da EM. As células T são ativadas na periferia e migram em direção ao SNC. Essas células entram por três principais acessos: pela BHE (indicada por 1), que possui a permeabilidade aumentada, pelo espaço subaracnoide (SAS, indicado por 2) ou pelo plexo coroide (indicado por 3). Após a entrada, junto com a micróglia residente e os astrócitos, promovem desmielinização, injúria nos oligodendrócitos e nos neurônios por mecanismos dependentes de contato e por mediadores solúveis inflamatórios ou neurotóxicos. CNS: sistema nervoso central; CSF: líquido cefalorraquidiano; DC: célula dendrítica; GM-CSF: fator estimulante de colônias de granulócitos e monócitos; IFN- $\gamma$ : interferon-gama; IL-17: interleucina-17; ODC: oligodendrócitos; SAS: espaço subaracnoide; Th1: célula T *helper* 1; Th17: célula T *helper* 17.

Fonte: Adaptada de DENDROU; FUGGER; FRIESE, 2015, f. 11.

Apesar das inúmeras descobertas referentes ao fenótipo Th17 nos últimos anos, ainda há muito a se entender. Entre as principais dificuldades que se apresentam é a grande plasticidade que esse fenótipo exibe podendo produzir simultaneamente citocinas de outros fenótipos, tais como Th1 e Tregs (MADDUR et al., 2012).

Além do CCR6, as células Th17 clássicas expressam o fator de transcrição ROR- $\gamma$ t e produzem IL-17 e IL-22 (MIOSSEC, 2009). Porém, hoje já são reconhecidos pelo menos dois subtipos de células Th17 em camundongos: uma com propriedades

“regulatórias”, que expressa os receptores de quimiocinas CCR6 e CCR4 e produz simultaneamente IL-17 e IL-10 (Treg17), e outro subtipo, conhecido como Th17.1, que expressa os receptores de quimiocinas CCR6 e CXCR3, secreta IL-17 e IFN- $\gamma$  e parece estar relacionada ao desenvolvimento de doenças inflamatórias autoimunes (GHORESCHI et al., 2010; MCGEACHY et al., 2007). A diferenciação do fenótipo Th17.1 depende da presença de IL-6, IL-1 $\beta$  e IL-23 (GHORESCHI et al., 2010). Essas células expressam os fatores transcricionais ROR $\gamma$ t, RORC e t-bet e produzem IL-17A, IFN- $\gamma$ , IL-21 e grandes quantidades de IL-22 (GHORESCHI et al., 2010). Além disso, a transferência adotiva dessas células Th17.1 induziu a EAE de forma mais grave que os animais que receberam as células Th17. A análise histopatológica dos cérebros desses animais que desenvolveram a forma clínica mais exuberante de EAE revelou uma infiltração intensa de células T IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> associadas às lesões neuronais (GHORESCHI et al., 2010).

Evidências mostram que esses fenômenos podem ocorrer também em humanos. As células Treg17, que expressam IL-17 e IL-10 já foram observadas em pacientes com EM que apresentavam menor comprometimento motor (DA COSTA et al., 2016). Além disso, as células T IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> também foram encontradas no sangue periférico (ACOSTA-RODRIGUEZ et al., 2007a; DA COSTA et al., 2016), no LCR (BRUCKLACHER-WALDERT et al., 2009) e em amostras cerebrais de pacientes com EM (KEBIR et al., 2009). Em consonância com esses achados, os níveis de células T IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> foram positivamente correlacionados com a pontuação no EDSS (DA COSTA et al., 2016).

Apesar desses achados sugerirem um envolvimento das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> na EM, a maior proporção de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> são do tipo Th1 não clássica (RESTORICK et al., 2017). Evidências sugerem que as células Th17 murinas não apresentam um fenótipo estável. As células T CD4<sup>+</sup> que produzem, inicialmente, IL-17 podem depois passar a co-expressar IFN- $\gamma$  e, em seguida, deixar de produzir IL-17, mantendo apenas IFN- $\gamma$ , sugerindo, por fim, que essas células podem permutar entre diferentes fenótipos na dependência de fatores oriundos do ambiente no qual se encontram (HIROTA et al., 2011). Esses achados sinalizam a dificuldade em estudar o envolvimento das células T efectoras na EM, podendo, na verdade, indicar que o tipo celular dominante poderia impactar no prognóstico e resposta terapêutica dos pacientes.

Outro fenótipo de células T que também apresenta grande importância no contexto das doenças autoimunes são as células Tregs. Essas células têm como função inibir a resposta pró-inflamatória, na tentativa de impedir que o excesso de inflamação leve a danos ao hospedeiro.

Na EM, deficiências funcionais nas Tregs têm sido descritas por diferentes autores (ASTIER et al., 2006; HAAS et al., 2005; VENKEN et al., 2007, 2008; VIGLIETTA et al., 2004). As Tregs CD4<sup>+</sup> CD25<sup>high</sup> de pacientes com EM-RR, em experimentos de cocultura, foram menos eficientes em inibir a proliferação das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> efectoras, quando comparadas a indivíduos saudáveis (HAAS et al., 2005; MICHEL et al., 2008; VENKEN et al., 2007; VIGLIETTA et al., 2004), sem diferença funcional entre as recidivas e as remissões (HAAS et al., 2005). Essa falha na supressão pode estar ligada a uma menor expressão no fator de transcrição FoxP3, (VENKEN et al., 2007). Todavia, também é possível que a função deficiente nas Tregs possa ser indireta, relacionada a uma grande quantidade de citocinas pró-inflamatórias, como IL-2 e IFN- $\gamma$ , produzidas por células T efectoras que expressam altos níveis de receptor da IL-7, o marcador CD127. Quando as células T CD127<sup>high</sup> foram depletadas *in vitro* do conjunto total das células T, a função supressora das Tregs CD4<sup>+</sup> CD25<sup>high</sup> foi restaurada nos pacientes com EM-RR (MICHEL et al., 2008). Além de IL-2 e IFN- $\gamma$ , o excesso de IL-6 exerce diferentes efeitos adversos no compartimento das células Tregs. Além de inibir sua capacidade supressora, elevados níveis de IL-6 são capazes de reprogramá-las para expressar diferentes genes relacionados ao fenótipo Th17 (BERIOU et al., 2009; NYIRENDA et al., 2011, 2015; PANDIYAN; ZHU, 2015). Portanto, manobras terapêuticas capazes de resgatar e estabilizar a função das células Tregs devem trazer grande impacto no manejo clínico da EM, visto que essas células parecem ser capazes de induzir a diferenciação de células precursoras de oligodendrócitos e remielinização, mesmo na ausência de inflamação perceptível (DOMBROWSKI et al., 2017).

Finalmente, alguns estudos atuais têm sugerido a participação das células B na EM. Nesse contexto, os autoanticorpos contra a mielina foram os primeiros a serem descobertos, mas pouco consenso existe sobre as suas especificidade e patogenicidade (FRAUSSEN et al., 2014; KINZEL; WEBER, 2017). Anticorpos contra a proteína básica da mielina (MBP – *myelin basic protein*), a glicoproteína da mielina do oligodendrócito (MOG – *myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein*), a proteína proteolípídica (PLP – *proteolipidic protein*) e glicoproteína associada à mielina (MAG



– *myelin associated glycoprotein*) vêm sendo encontrados no soro e no LCR não só dos pacientes, mas também dos indivíduos saudáveis (FRAUSSEN et al., 2014), reforçando a hipótese de menor contribuição da imunidade humoral no desenvolvimento e curso da EM. A comparação entre os anticorpos encontrados no LCR de pacientes com EM ou com outras doenças neurológicas mostra que os anticorpos na EM apresentam pouca variabilidade, sugerindo que sejam de origem oligoclonal, enquanto no segundo grupo, a origem é policlonal (OWENS et al., 2003; QIN et al., 1998). Essas evidências ajudam a fortalecer a ideia de que existe uma resposta humoral antígeno-específica ocorrendo no SNC, embora o impacto dessa descoberta não seja totalmente compreendido.

Entretanto, esses autoanticorpos parecem funcionar como marcadores da doença, uma vez que se observa uma correlação positiva entre a presença de IgG anti-mielina tanto com as lesões em T2 e com o número de lesões captantes de gadolínio em T1 nos pacientes com a CIS quanto com o surgimento de recidivas dos pacientes com EM (VOGT et al., 2009). Além disso, a presença de bandas oligoclonais de anticorpos em pacientes com CIS é associada a uma *odds ratio* de 9,88 para a evolução para EM (DOBSON et al., 2013).

No entanto, nos pacientes com EM, também são encontrados autoanticorpos contra uma série de moléculas que estão presentes em outros tipos celulares, como neurônios, astrócitos e oligodendrócitos (FRAUSSEN et al., 2014), mostrando que essa abordagem ainda precisa ser melhor estudada. Dentro desse grupo de moléculas, está o canal de potássio KIR4.1 expresso nas células da glia. Autoanticorpos específicos para esse canal são encontrados em alguns pacientes com EM (NICOL et al., 2015).

Além da produção de anticorpos, a célula B parece ter papel na imunopatogênese da doença. Em um estudo clínico de fase II, a depleção dessas células através do rituximabe, um anticorpo monoclonal anti-CD20, diminuiu o número de lesões novas e antigas captantes de gadolínio, e a ocorrências de recidivas em pacientes com EM-RR (HAUSER et al., 2008). O uso de ocrelizumabe, outro anticorpo anti-CD20, também levou a uma diminuição na quantidade de lesões captantes de gadolínio em pacientes com EM-RR também em estudos clínicos de fase II (KAPPOS et al., 2011). Esses anticorpos atuam induzindo a depleção de células B por três principais mecanismos: citotoxicidade celular dependente de anticorpos, realizada por monócitos, macrófagos e células assassinas naturais (NK – *natural killer*);

citotoxicidade dependente de complemento, no qual complexos antígeno-anticorpo disparam a via clássica de ativação do sistema complemento e apoptose de células B (GASPERI; STÜVE; HEMMER, 2016). Em EAE, essa melhora após a depleção parece estar relacionada à capacidade de as células B secretarem IL-6. É provável que similar benefício com a perda de células B ocorra em pacientes tratados com IgG anti-CD20 (BARR et al., 2012). Em consonância com essa hipótese, Steinman e Zamvil sugerem que a atividade do ocrelizumabe na EM está relacionada com a produção de citocinas e com a função APC de células B e não com a função de produzir anticorpos (STEINMAN; ZAMVIL, 2016).

#### 1.3.4 Fatores de risco ambientais: estresse e a Esclerose Múltipla

Além de infecções, o estresse psicológico também deve contribuir de maneira adversa no curso da EM. Aparentemente, a relação entre estresse e EM é controversa (BRIONES-BUIXASSA et al., 2015). Porém, fatores como duração, tipo e frequência do evento estressor parecem interferir diretamente nessa relação (BRIONES-BUIXASSA et al., 2015), alterando a percepção do estresse como um fator de risco para o desenvolvimento ou as exacerbações da EM.

Nesse contexto, o estresse psicológico tem sido implicado no desenvolvimento e exacerbações de doenças autoimunes de um modo geral (STOJANOVICH; MARISAVLJEVICH, 2008), incluindo a EM (ARTEMIADIS; ANAGNOSTOULI; ALEXOPOULOS, 2011; BRIONES-BUIXASSA et al., 2015; GRANT et al., 1989; WARREN; GREENHILL; WARREN, 1982). Em consonância com esse achado, foram observados aumentos na taxa de recidivas em pacientes em zonas de guerra (GOLAN et al., 2008).

Ao encontro desses resultados, alguns estudos têm sugerido um papel dos mediadores do estresse em desregular o sistema imune e, conseqüentemente, favorecer o desenvolvimento de doenças autoimunes (STOJANOVICH; MARISAVLJEVICH, 2008). No contexto da EM, o estresse pode exercer um efeito deletério direto por aumentar a permeabilidade da BHE, favorecendo a migração de células imunes para o SNC (ESPOSITO et al., 2001, 2002; THEOHARIDES; KONSTANTINIDOU, 2007).

Nesse sentido, como já foi mencionado, durante a evolução da EM, diversas populações celulares invadem o SNC. Essas células migrantes são, então, submetidas a condições novas, como a influência de neurotransmissores locais, por exemplo, a dopamina (DA) que tem importantes funções imunoduladoras (FERRARI et al., 2004; KIRILLOVA et al., 2008; MCKENNA et al., 2002; NAKANO et al., 2008, 2009a).

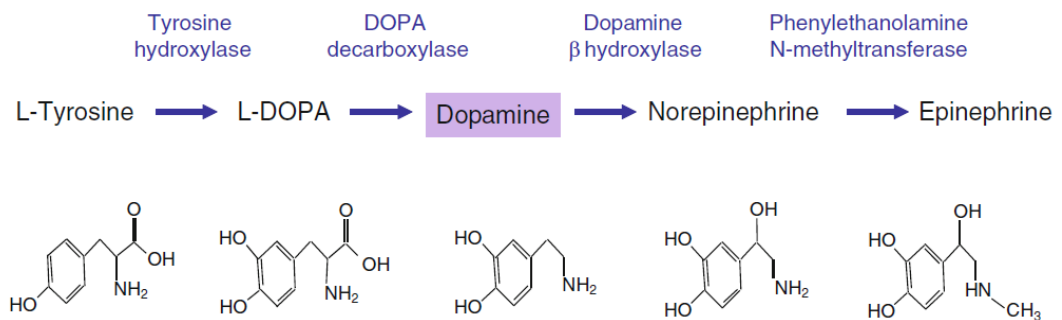
#### 1.4 Dopamina

A DA é o principal neurotransmissor dentro do grupo das catecolaminas no cérebro de mamíferos (MISSALE et al., 1998), uma amina biogênica (LEVITE; MARINO; COSENTINO, 2017) que age em suas células-alvo através de duas classes de receptores, designados de tipo I (DAR I – *dopamine receptor type I*) e os de tipo II (DAR II – *dopamine receptor type II*) (STRANGE, 1993). Os DARs são receptores de membrana com sete domínios transmembrana, pertencentes à superfamília dos receptores acoplados a proteína G (MISSALE et al., 1998). Os DAR I quando estimulados, se acoplam a proteína G<sub>s</sub> e levam a um aumento dos níveis intracelulares de adenosina-3'-5'-monofosfato cíclico (cAMP – *cyclic adenosine-3'5'-monophosphate*), enquanto os DAR II, se acoplam a proteína G<sub>i</sub> e levam a uma diminuição dos níveis de cAMP intracelulares (MISSALE et al., 1998). Dentro dessas classes de receptores, até o presente momento, cinco tipos de receptores foram descritos: D1, D2, D3, D4 e D5. Enquanto D1 e D5 pertencem ao DAR I, os DAR II incluem D2, D3 e D4. Esses dois tipos de receptores permitem que a DA aja de diferentes formas numa mesma célula (SIDHU, 1998).

Esse neurotransmissor exerce muitas funções no SNC, como motricidade voluntária, recompensa, regulação do sono, alimentação, afeto, atenção, função cognitiva, olfato, visão, regulação hormonal, regulação simpática e ereção (BEAULIEU; ESPINOZA; GAINETDINOV, 2015). Na periferia, a DA é precursora de noradrenalina e da adrenalina, o principal neurotransmissor do sistema nervoso simpático e o principal hormônio adrenomedular, respectivamente.

A DA é derivada do aminoácido tirosina. A tirosina é convertida em L-DOPA pela enzima tirosina hidroxilase, etapa que determina a velocidade da reação. A L-DOPA, em seguida é metabolizada pela enzima DOPA descarboxilase gerando DA (WEIHE et al., 2006) (Figura 2).

**Figura 2 - Via de biossíntese da DA e outras catecolaminas, junto com suas estruturas químicas**



Legenda: A via de síntese da dopamina inicia-se com a conversão da L-tirosina em L-DOPA, reação catalisada pela enzima tirosina hidroxilase, na etapa que determina a velocidade da reação. Em seguida, a L-DOPA é convertida em dopamina pela enzima DOPA descarboxilase. A via pode seguir e formar noradrenalina pela ação da dopamina β-hidroxilase sob a dopamina e formar adrenalina pela ação da feniletanolamina N-metiltransferase.

Fonte: LEVITE, 2012, f. 3.

No SNC, o transportador para DA retira o neurotransmissor do espaço extracelular, controlando a meia-vida da DA (MIGNINI; STRECCIONI; AMENTA, 2003). Por outro lado, transportadores vesiculares de monoaminas (VMAT – *vesicular monoamine transporters*) atuam na mobilização intracelular de DA, sintetizada *de novo* ou captada (MIGNINI et al., 2006).

Disfunções na secreção de DA podem levar a graves distúrbios. Enquanto níveis reduzidos de terminais dopaminérgicos são observados em pacientes com a doença de Parkinson, pacientes esquizofrênicos apresentam hiperatividade dopaminérgica (BIRTWISTLE; BALDWIN, 1998; TEMLETT, 1996). De forma interessante, distúrbios imunes têm sido observados em ambos os grupos (ILANI et al., 2001; NAGAI et al., 1996; WANDINGER et al., 1999).

#### 1.4.1 Dopamina: papel imunomodulador

Sabe-se que o sistema imune é regulado tanto por terminações nervosas simpáticas centrais quanto periféricas. Esse controle é feito primariamente pelas catecolaminas, como a DA, que ao interagir com diferentes células do sistema imune regula muitas de suas funções em resposta a diferentes estressores (SARKAR et al., 2010). Sabe-se que diferentes células do sistema imune expressam receptores para a DA (FERRARI et al., 2004; KIRILLOVA et al., 2008; MCKENNA et al., 2002; NAKANO et al., 2008, 2009a), o que indica que as interações entre os sistemas nervoso e imune fazem parte da fisiologia de ambos os sistemas (PACHECO; CONTRERAS; ZOUALI, 2014). Nesse contexto, em várias doenças autoimunes, anormalidades na resposta à DA ou na expressão de seus receptores são descritas (JAFARI et al., 2012; NAGAI et al., 1996; NAKANO et al., 2011)

A fonte primária de DA capaz de modular a resposta imune periférica provem do plasma, na forma de glicoconjugados ou sulfoconjugados (CUCHE et al., 1990), produzidos principalmente por células cromafins nas glândulas adrenais (SCHEUERMANN, 1993). Em indivíduos saudáveis, o nível sérico de DA chega a 10 pg/mL (SAHA et al., 2001a, 2001b). Além disso, os órgãos linfoides primários e secundários possuem inervação dopaminérgica (MIGNINI et al., 2009; MIGNINI; STRECCIONI; AMENTA, 2003), permitindo que essa catecolamina influencie diferentes eventos imunes periféricos. No entanto, a principal fonte de DA são os neurônios dopaminérgicos do SNC. Em geral, as células imunes não cruzam a BHE, mas, no curso de encefalopatias inflamatórias, como a EM, as células imunes efetoras podem entrar no SNC e ter contato com níveis elevados de DA, podendo ser moduladas pela ação dessa catecolamina (OWENS et al., 1998; PACHECO; CONTRERAS; ZOUALI, 2014).

De forma interessante, estudos têm demonstrado que outra fonte de DA provem da síntese por subtipos de células T humanas, particularmente os linfócitos Tregs (COSENTINO et al., 2000, 2007). Nesses estudos, os autores demonstraram expressão constitutiva da tirosina hidroxilase e armazenamento de quantidades substanciais de DA pelas Tregs, enquanto nos linfócitos T efetores apenas quantidades traços de DA foram detectadas (COSENTINO et al., 2000, 2007). Porém, não apenas Tregs humanas, mas linfócitos efetores expressam VMAT, o que permite

a eles acumular DA em vesículas específicas (COSENTINO et al., 2007). Outro achado importante foi a descoberta de que as DCs não apenas expressam receptores de DA como também possuem maquinaria necessária para sintetizar, estocar e liberar DA durante a sinapse imunológica com células T (NAKANO et al., 2009b; PRADO et al., 2012). Devido à proximidade das DCs com as células T, estima-se que a liberação de DA na fenda sináptica imune seja de 100 a 250 nM (NAKANO et al., 2009b), a mesma concentração que é liberada pelos neurônios dopaminérgicos durante as sinapses neurológicas (WICKENS; ARBUTHNOTT, 2005). Isso implica que as células T virgens e de memória devem ser expostas a concentrações relativamente elevadas durante sua interação com as DC.

Os efeitos da DA sobre o sistema imune são amplos, complexos e ainda pouco explorados em suas bases moleculares. Esses efeitos são dependentes da concentração, do modelo experimental (*in vivo* e *in vitro*), do subtipo de receptor para DA que é majoritariamente expresso na célula estudada e do estado de ativação da célula (LEVITE, 2016). Dessa forma, a DA pode ser tanto imunoestimulante quanto imunossupressora, dependendo das condições experimentais usadas. Por exemplo, *in vitro*, a DA tem sido destacada em inibir a proliferação e induzir apoptose das células T de indivíduos saudáveis (BERGQUIST et al., 1997; GHOSH et al., 2003). Bergquist e colaboradores (1994) reportaram que a DA é capaz de suprimir a proliferação e a produção de IFN- $\gamma$  pelas células T de indivíduos saudáveis. Josefsson e colaboradores (1996) e Ghosh e colaboradores (2003) demonstraram que a DA suprime a proliferação das células T e a produção de citocinas por estímulos envolvendo a sinalização via receptor da célula T (TCR – *T cell receptor*) (GHOSH et al., 2003; JOSEFSSON et al., 1996). Ademais, Saha e colaboradores (2001) reportaram que a DA, via receptor DAR I, além de reduzir a proliferação, também foi capaz de inibir a citotoxicidade mediada pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> induzida pela IL-2 (SAHA et al., 2001a).

Apesar dos estudos descritos acima relatarem um efeito inibitório da DA na ativação e função das células T, alguns autores têm demonstrado de forma elegante que agonistas de receptores DAR I favorecem, por outro lado, a diferenciação das células T humanas em células Th17 (NAKANO et al., 2008, 2009b, 2011). Isso pode estar relacionado à capacidade de a estimulação de DCs via D5 induzir a liberação de IL-23 (PRADO et al., 2012). Além disso, esse evento deve ser facilitado pelo efeito da

DA em inibir, também via DAR I, a função das células Treg clássicas (COSENTINO et al., 2007; KIPNIS et al., 2004).

Na EAE, enquanto a ablação química do sistema nervoso simpático protegeu os animais, inibindo o desenvolvimento da doença, fenômeno que foi relacionado com o aumento no número de Tregs no baço e em gânglios linfáticos, em um mecanismo dependente de TGF- $\beta$  (BHOWMICK et al., 2009), a depleção química de DA no SNC levou a uma piora na doença (BAŁKOWIEC-ISKRA et al., 2007).

Nesse modelo experimental, os DAR I parecem induzir o surgimento da doença ou piorar sua evolução, uma vez que o tratamento com o antagonista de DAR I, SCH23390, protegeu os animais do desenvolvimento da doença, fenômeno que pode estar associado a uma inibição na diferenciação de Th17 pelas DCs (NAKANO et al., 2008). Embora os camundongos com o gene para o D5 nocauteado tenham desenvolvido a doença, ela começou tardiamente e foi mais branda (PRADO et al., 2012). Quando os animais selvagens receberam DCs de animais nocaute para o D5, houve uma menor infiltração de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> e de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> no SNC (PRADO et al., 2012).

Com relação aos receptores DAR II, o tratamento com diferentes antagonistas de DAR II parece apresentar resultados distintos. Enquanto o tratamento com L750667 induziu a diferenciação de Th17 mediada pelas DCs, com uma maior produção de IL-17, causando uma doença mais grave e fatal (NAKANO et al., 2008), o tratamento com bromocriptina levou a melhora nos sintomas apresentados pelos animais (DIJKSTRA et al., 1994).

Na EM, as células mononucleares do sangue periférico (PBMC – *peripheral blood mononuclear cell*) de pacientes tanto com as formas progressivas quanto com a forma EM-RR durante as recidivas estimuladas com mitógeno produziram menores níveis de DA (COSENTINO et al., 2002). Essa redução pode estar relacionada à resistência dos linfócitos à apoptose induzida por ativação (COSENTINO et al., 2002). Enquanto a adição de DA às culturas de PBMC de indivíduos saudáveis mantidas com anticorpo anti-CD3 e IL-2 diminuiu a proliferação das células T, a secreção de IFN- $\gamma$  e o mRNA para a metaloproteinase-9, nos pacientes com EM não houve diferença significativa (GIORELLI; LIVREA; TROJANO, 2005).

No contexto dos receptores de DA, foi observada nas PBMC dos pacientes com EM uma menor expressão a nível proteico do receptor D5, independente se eles apresentaram recidivas ou não ou se eram tratados com IFN- $\beta$  (GIORELLI; LIVREA;

TROJANO, 2005). Nos linfócitos circulantes, por sua vez, o tratamento com IFN- $\beta$  levou a um aumento na expressão do mRNA para o receptor D5 (ZAFFARONI et al., 2008). Já nas Tregs, antes do tratamento com IFN- $\beta$ , havia uma alta expressão do receptor D5 e o tratamento diminuiu progressivamente a expressão desses receptor, até chegar, após 12 meses, a uma expressão menor do que a dos indivíduos do grupo controle (COSENTINO et al., 2012).

Com relação aos receptores DAR II, o tratamento com o antagonista bromocriptina levou a piora nos pacientes tratados (BISSAY et al., 1994). No entanto, o tratamento com IFN- $\beta$  diminuiu a expressão do mRNA para o receptor D2 (ZAFFARONI et al., 2008). Não houve diferença na expressão de receptores D3 em PBMC de pacientes com EM sem recidivas há mais de um ano e os indivíduos do grupo controle. Porém o tratamento com IFN- $\beta$  diminuiu a expressão do mRNA para o receptor D3 nas PBMC (GIORELLI; LIVREA; TROJANO, 2005), mas não nos linfócitos circulantes (ZAFFARONI et al., 2008).

Portanto, não há consenso sobre as funções da DA nas células do sistema imune tanto em indivíduos saudáveis quanto de pacientes com EM. Mais estudos são necessários para compreender melhor o papel dessa catecolamina no sistema imune na saúde e na doença.

## 1.5 Tratamento da Esclerose Múltipla

Os esquemas de tratamento para a EM atualmente disponíveis são recomendados apenas para a forma EM-RR, já que para as formas progressivas, nenhuma dessas drogas mostra resultados satisfatórios. O tratamento da doença se divide, então, em três principais frentes: o tratamento direto das recidivas, as terapias modificadoras de doença (TMD) e o tratamento sintomático.

Durante as recidivas, a administração intravenosa de altas doses de metilprednisolona (1000mg/dia) por 3-5 dias é o tratamento de escolha (BRASIL, 2015). Um estudo recente, realizado na França, mostrou que não há menor eficácia da administração oral em comparação à intravenosa de altas doses de metilprednisolona (1000mg/dia) por três dias (LE PAGE et al., 2015). A plasmaferese



também é uma opção, tanto como tratamento adjuvante ou como principal, se a recidiva é muito grave ou evolui muito rápido (DOSHI; CHATAWAY, 2016).

Para os pacientes em remissão, algumas drogas são usadas para modificar a história natural da doença, as TMD. Em 1993, apenas uma droga tinha a aprovação do FDA (FDA – *US Food and Drug Administration*). Ao fim de 2016, eram 13 drogas (DOSHI; CHATAWAY, 2016). O principal objetivo das TMD é a inibição da atividade da doença, unindo parâmetros clínicos, como a ausência de novas recidivas clínicas e a ausência de progressão da incapacidade neurológica, a parâmetros de imagem, como a ausência de novas lesões em T2 e de atrofia cerebral. Esses dois parâmetros são condensados no estado de “ausência de atividade da doença” (NEDA – *no evidence of disease activity*) (DOSHI; CHATAWAY, 2016). No início da década passada, as drogas disponíveis eram os IFN- $\beta$ , o acetato de glatirâmer, azatioprina e mitoxantrona (COMPSTON; COLES, 2002).

Segundo o Ministério da Saúde, os IFN- $\beta$  ainda são a principal droga de escolha entre as TMD (BRASIL, 2015). Caso o paciente se mostre refratário ao tratamento, o acetato de glatirâmer é a próxima escolha. Se o paciente continuar mostrando-se refratário à terapia, o natalizumabe deve ser administrado. O fingolimode é recomendado apenas em casos de pacientes com EM-RR que apresentem recidivas incapacitantes após o uso dos interferons  $\beta$  e do acetato de glatirâmer, que não apresentem contra-indicação ao uso de fingolimode ou apresentem contra-indicação ao uso de natalizumabe (BRASIL, 2015). A falha terapêutica é caracterizada como a presença de pelo menos duas recidivas no período de um ano, de caráter moderado a grave, que deixem sequelas ou limitações significantes, pouco responsivas à terapia com corticoides, ou ainda quando há aumento de um ponto na escala EDSS ou progressão das lesões em atividade (BRASIL, 2015). No Reino Unido, drogas como a teriflunamida, o dimetil-fumarato e o alentuzumabe também são indicadas (DOSHI; CHATAWAY, 2016). No quadro 3, estão representadas as principais TMD usadas no tratamento da EM e o mecanismo de ação proposto para cada uma.

Terapias anti-inflamatórias têm pouco efeito nas formas progressivas (LASSMANN; BRÜCK; LUCCHINETTI, 2007) e, além disso, não existem TMD para esses pacientes. Felizmente, duas drogas testadas em estudos de fase III, o ocrelizumabe e o siponimod aparecem como possíveis terapias para a EM-PP e a EM-PS, respectivamente (KAPPOS et al., 2016; MONTALBÁN et al., 2016).

O tratamento sintomático é usado na tentativa de melhorar a qualidade de vida do paciente, sendo os mais aparentes fadiga, espasticidade, disfunção sexual, dor e ataxia (DOSHI; CHATAWAY, 2016).

Apesar do avanço nas opções terapêuticas objetivando modificar o curso natural da doença, muitos pacientes têm benefícios limitados, enquanto outros não respondem, e isso pode estar relacionado ao nosso pobre conhecimento acerca do papel de diferentes fatores de risco em comportamento funcional as células T desses pacientes.

**Quadro 3 - Principais TMD para a EM e seus mecanismos de ação propostos**

Druga	Mecanismo de Ação Proposto	Referências
Interferon- $\beta$ (Citocina)	$\uparrow$ agentes anti-inflamatórios; $\downarrow$ citocinas pró-inflamatórias; $\downarrow$ diferenciação de Th17.	(MADSEN, 2017; RAMGOLAM et al., 2009)
Acetato de Glatirâmer (Mistura heterogênea de aminoácidos)	Competição por MHC; $\uparrow$ citocinas anti-inflamatórias em DCs e monócitos; antagonismo de TCR em células T autorreativas; $\uparrow$ número de células Treg; $\downarrow$ número de células Th17; $\uparrow$ fenótipos reguladores em células T CD8 <sup>+</sup> ; $\uparrow$ fatores neurotrópicos; $\uparrow$ remielinização; $\uparrow$ proliferação neuronal.	(AHARONI, 2013; WEINSTOCK-GUTTMAN et al., 2017).
Natalizumabe (Anticorpo monoclonal anti-subunidade de integrinas)	$\downarrow$ migração de leucócitos para o SNC.	(CLERICO et al., 2017; POLMAN et al., 2006)
Fingolimod (Análogo da esfingosina-1-fosfato)	Aprisionamento de linfócitos no tecido linfoide.	(DARGAHI et al., 2017; MANDAL et al., 2017)
Teriflunomida (Metabólito da leflunomida)	$\downarrow$ síntese de DNA, em células com alta taxa mitótica; $\downarrow$ sinapse imunológica; $\downarrow$ produção de citocinas pró-inflamatórias; $\downarrow$ proteínas tirosina-quinase; $\downarrow$ ativação do NF- $\kappa$ B.	(HE et al., 2016; KASAREŁŁO et al., 2017).
Dimetil-fumarato (Éster do ácido fumárico)	$\uparrow$ DCs que secretam IL-10; $\downarrow$ função do NF- $\kappa$ B; $\uparrow$ expressão de enzimas antioxidantes; $\uparrow$ restauração da BHE; $\downarrow$ excitotoxicidade do glutamato; $\downarrow$ resistência das T efectoras à inibição pelas Tregs.	(DARGAHI et al., 2017; KASAREŁŁO et al., 2017; SCHLÖDER et al., 2017).
Alentuzumab (Anticorpo monoclonal anti-CD52)	$\downarrow$ linfócitos CD52 <sup>+</sup> .	(DARGAHI et al., 2017; DÖRR; BAUM, 2016; KASAREŁŁO et al., 2017).
Ocrelizumabe (Anticorpo monoclonal humanizado anti-CD20)	$\downarrow$ células B com função APC e com secreção de citocinas, $\uparrow$ sobrevivência de células tronco e plasmócitos.	(ABDELHAK; WEBER; TUMANI, 2017; SHIRANI; OKUDA; STUVE, 2016)
Siponimod (Modulador do S1PR)	$\downarrow$ recirculação e infiltração de linfócitos no SNC.	(SHIRANI; OKUDA; STUVE, 2016)

Legenda:

$\downarrow$  - redução

$\uparrow$  - aumento

## 2 OBJETIVOS

### 2.1 Geral

Investigar aspectos funcionais das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com EM, quando cultivadas na presença de dopamina (DA) ou de PAMPs e de diferentes estímulos policlonais, e correlacionar com parâmetros clínicos.

### 2.2 Específicos:

Artigo publicado 1: *Endogenous interleukin-6 amplifies interleukin-17 production and corticoid-resistance in peripheral T cells from patients with multiple sclerosis*

**Ferreira TB**, Hygino J, Barros PO, Teixeira B; Kasahara TM, Linhares UC, Lopes LMF, Vasconcelos CCF, Alvarenga R, Wing AC, Andrade RM, Andrade AFB, Bento CAM. *Immunology*. 2014 Dec; 143(4):560-8. doi: 10.1111/imm.12334.

- ✓ Quantificar a produção de citocinas nas culturas de PBMC dos pacientes e do grupo controle em resposta a anti-CD3 e anti-CD28;
- ✓ Verificar se há correlação entre a produção de citocinas *in vitro* e o grau de incapacidade dos pacientes;
- ✓ Analisar o impacto do bloqueio do receptor para IL-6 (IL-6R) na secreção das citocinas IL-17, IL-21 e IL-10 e na proliferação em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> estimuladas com anti-CD3 e anti-CD28.
- ✓ Avaliar o impacto do bloqueio do IL-6R no perfil de citocinas produzido por monócitos ativados *in vitro* com lipopolissacarídeo (LPS) de *Escherichia coli* nas amostras de pacientes e de indivíduos saudáveis;
- ✓ Avaliar o impacto do IL-6R na capacidade de sobrenadantes de culturas de monócitos ativados com LPS induzirem a produção de IL-17, IL-21 e IL-10 em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> de pacientes estimuladas com anti-CD3 e anti-CD28;

- ✓ Analisar o impacto do bloqueio do IL-6R na sensibilidade das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes à inibição da proliferação e da produção de IL-17 *in vitro* pela hidrocortisona (HC);
- ✓ Analisar o impacto do bloqueio do IL-6R na sensibilidade das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes à indução da produção de IL-10 e TGF- $\beta$  *in vitro* pela HC.

Artigo publicado 2: *Dopamine favors expansion of glucocorticoid-resistant IL-17-producing T cells in multiple sclerosis*

**Ferreira TB**, Barros PO, Teixeira B, Cassano T, Centurião N, Kasahara TM, Hygino J, Vasconcelos CCF, Alvarenga H, Alvarenga R, Wing AC, Andrade RM, Andrade AF, Bento CAM. *Brain Behav Immun.* 2014 Oct; 41:182–190. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2014.05.013

- ✓ Avaliar, *in vitro*, a resposta proliferativa dos linfócitos periféricos de pacientes com EM em remissão clínica e indivíduos saudáveis em culturas de PBMC em resposta a PHA na ausência e na presença de DA e HC;
- ✓ Quantificar a produção de citocinas nas culturas de PBMC dos pacientes e grupo controle em resposta a PHA na ausência e na presença de DA;
- ✓ Verificar se há correlação entre a produção de citocinas *in vitro* e o grau de incapacidade dos pacientes;
- ✓ Avaliar a capacidade de a HC inibir a produção de IL-17 em culturas de PBMC estimuladas com PHA na ausência ou presença de DA;
- ✓ Avaliar a capacidade de a HC inibir a produção de IL-17 em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> estimuladas com anti-CD3 e anti-CD28 na ausência ou presença de DA;
- ✓ Avaliar o perfil de citocinas produzido por monócitos ativados *in vitro* com lipopolissacarídeo (LPS) de *E. coli* nas amostras de pacientes e de indivíduos saudáveis na ausência ou presença de DA e HC;
- ✓ Avaliar a capacidade de sobrenadantes de culturas de monócitos ativados com LPS e mantidos na ausência ou presença de DA induzirem a produção de IL-17 em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> estimuladas com anti-CD3 e anti-CD28;
- ✓ Avaliar o impacto do bloqueio do IL-6R na produção *in vitro* de IL-17 e IL-10 por células T CD4<sup>+</sup> mantidas em cultura com sobrenadantes de culturas de monócitos ativados com LPS e mantidos na ausência ou presença de DA.

Artigo publicado 3: *Different interleukin-17-secreting Toll-like receptor<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets are associated with disease activity in multiple sclerosis*

**Ferreira TB**, Hygino J, Wing AC, Kasahara TM, Sacramento PM, Camargo S, Rueda F, Alves-Leon SV, Alvarenga R, Vasconcelos CC, Agrawal A, Gupta S, Bento CAM. *Immunology* 2017 Nov; doi: 10.1111/imm.12872.

- ✓ Avaliar a expressão de TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 nas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> de pacientes com EM na fase de remissão clínica e comparar com indivíduos controles;
- ✓ Determinar a proporção das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> que expressam TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 entre os pacientes com EM e indivíduos controles;
- ✓ Analisar, nos pacientes e em indivíduos controles, a porcentagem de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> positivas para TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 capazes de produzir IL-17 em associação com IFN- $\gamma$ , IL-6 ou IL-10;
- ✓ Verificar se há correlação entre os diferentes subtipos de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLRs<sup>+</sup> com o número de lesões cerebrais ativas e o grau de incapacidade do paciente com EM;
- ✓ Dosar as citocinas estimuladas pela estimulação das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> mantidas em presença de agonistas de TLR2 (Pam3CSK4), TLR4 (LPS) e TLR9 (ODN);
- ✓ Verificar se há correlação entre a secreção de citocinas pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> mantidas em presença de agonistas de TLR2 (Pam3CSK4), TLR4 (LPS) e TLR9 (ODN) com o número de lesões cerebrais ativas e com o grau de incapacidade do paciente com EM.

### 3 ARTIGOS CIENTÍFICOS

#### 3.1 Artigo publicado 1 – *Endogenous interleukin-6 amplifies interleukin-17 production and corticoid-resistance in peripheral T cells from patients with multiple sclerosis*

Immunology

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IMMUNOLOGY ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Endogenous interleukin-6 amplifies interleukin-17 production and corticoid-resistance in peripheral T cells from patients with multiple sclerosis

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### Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune disorder of the brain and spinal cord in which peripherally activated myelin-reactive T cells infiltrate the central nervous system (CNS), leading to damage of the myelin sheath.<sup>1</sup> Although the disease can be monophasic, the majority of the patients (> 80%) have a relapsing form of disease with repeated attacks of neurological disabilities that lead to substantial impairment of sensorial, motor, autonomic and cognitive function.<sup>2</sup> As MS is the most common

### Summary

Interleukin-6 (IL-6) has been implicated in the induction of pathogenic IL-17-producing T cells in autoimmune diseases, and studies evaluating the role of this cytokine in T-cell function in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) are lacking. Our objective was to evaluate the role of IL-6 receptor (IL-6R) signalling on *in vitro* functional status of T cells from patients with relapsing–remitting MS during clinical remission. Our results demonstrated that, even during the remission phase, activated T cells from patients produce higher levels of IL-17, and this cytokine was positively correlated with disease severity, as determined by Expanded Disability Status Scale score. In the MS group, the blockade of IL-6R signalling by anti-IL-6R monoclonal antibody reduced IL-17 production and elevated IL-10 release by activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, but it did not alter the production of these cytokines by activated CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells. Blockade of IL-6R signalling also reduced the ability of monocytes to up-regulate T helper type 17 phenotype in patients with MS. Finally, both cell proliferation and IL-17 release by CD4<sup>+</sup> and, mainly, CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells from patients with MS were less sensitive to hydrocortisone inhibition than control group. Interestingly, IL-6R signalling blockade restored the ability of hydrocortisone to inhibit both T-cell proliferation and IL-17 production. Collectively, these results suggest that IL-6 might be involved in MS pathogenesis by enhancing IL-17 production and reducing corticoid inhibitory effects on activated T cells.

**Keywords:** cytokines; interleukin-10; interleukin-17; interleukin-6; multiple sclerosis.

neurological disorder in young adults, it has many social and economic implications.

Unfortunately, an effective therapy for MS has not yet been established. Although glucocorticoids (GC) are usually employed to control the clinical relapses, as disease progresses, patients with MS tend to become resistant to them.<sup>3,4</sup> The lack of more effective therapeutic options is probably related to our lack of knowledge about MS pathogenesis.

In the murine model of MS, known as experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE), T helper type 17

## Endogenous IL-6 amplifies IL-17 production and corticoid-resistance

(Th17) cells, rather than Th1, seem to be critical for its development.<sup>5</sup> In these animals, interleukin-1 $\beta$  (IL-1 $\beta$ ), IL-23 and IL-6 are required to induce encephalitogenic Th17 cells,<sup>6–8</sup> and IL-6 blockade by treatment with anti-IL-6 receptor (anti-IL-6R) monoclonal antibody (mAb) inhibits the development of EAE.<sup>9</sup> This protective effect is associated with reduced IL-17-producing T cells in inguinal lymph nodes from these mice.<sup>9</sup>

There is evidence suggesting the participation of IL-17 in MS pathogenesis. Increased IL-17 expression has been detected in peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) of MS patients during disease exacerbation.<sup>5</sup> Kebir *et al.*<sup>10</sup> have demonstrated that human endothelial cells from patients with MS express high levels of IL-17 receptors, which could favour Th17 infiltration into the CNS. Other studies have demonstrated the expression of IL-17 and IL-6 in perivascular lymphocytes, as well as in astrocytes and oligodendrocytes, in areas of active MS lesions.<sup>11,12</sup> Furthermore, as compared with healthy individuals, higher IL-17-secreting T cells were detected by our group in the peripheral blood of patients with MS during the clinical remission phase.<sup>13</sup> In this study, *in vitro* IL-17 levels were directly associated with neurological disability, determined by Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) score.<sup>13</sup> Although we did not observe any change in interferon- $\gamma$  (IFN- $\gamma$ ) production,<sup>13</sup> Th1 cells also appear to contribute to the inflammatory response during clinical relapse in patients with MS.<sup>5,10,14</sup> The contribution of IFN- $\gamma$  in MS pathogenesis seems to be related to its ability to induce apoptosis of human glial cells. In fact, high IFN- $\gamma$  expression co-localizes with apoptotic oligodendrocytes.<sup>15</sup> Finally, myelin-specific cytotoxic CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells are also thought to be involved in the development of MS. Within MS plaques, CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells outnumber CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, and they appear to promote myelin degradation and neuronal damage.<sup>15</sup> Despite these findings, and in contrast to the murine model for MS, the contribution of IL-6 to T-cell behaviour in patients with MS is less clear. Therefore, in the present work, we investigated the *in vitro* role of IL-6R signalling in the functional status of T cells from patients with MS.

## Materials and methods

### Patients

Twenty patients (four male and 20 female) with definite relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis (RR-MS) according to the McDonald criteria<sup>16</sup> were recruited from Lagoa Hospital (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). All patients were in clinical remission at the time of blood sampling and did not receive disease-modifying therapy (including corticosteroid) for at least 3 months before the testing. The disability status of the patients was evaluated by one of the authors (R.A.), and was scored according to the Kurtzke

EDSS<sup>17</sup> at the time of the study. The patients were between the ages of 19 and 41 years (mean 30.2  $\pm$  12.1 years), and their EDSS scores were between 0 and 7.5 (mean 3.48  $\pm$  2.34). The disease duration ranged from 1 to 8 years (mean 4.1  $\pm$  2.3 years). Twenty-four age/sex-matched (mean 34.5  $\pm$  8.7 years) healthy individuals with no history of autoimmune diseases were also enrolled in this study as control. Finally, no subjects had clinical diagnosis of any infection at the time of study. Written informed consent was obtained from each individual, and the study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects of the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO).

### Cell cultures and stimuli

Peripheral blood (20 ml) was collected in heparin-containing tubes (BD Vacutainer, Franklin Lakes, NY) and mononuclear cells (PBMC) were obtained by centrifugation on Ficoll–Hypaque density gradients. The PBMC were collected, washed three times in Hanks' balanced salt solution and then suspended in 1 ml of RPMI-1640 medium. Viable fresh PBMC were immediately used to obtain T cells and monocytes. To obtain monocytes, PBMC ( $5 \times 10^6$ /ml) were first allowed to adhere in 24-well plates with 2 ml of complete RPMI-1640 for 60 min at 37° in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. After 1 hr, the wells were washed with warm complete medium and non-adherent cells were removed. On the other hand, CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells were purified through a No-touch T-cell isolation kit (Miltenyi Biotec, Auburn, CA), according to the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were obtained after depletion of cells expressing CD8, CD14, CD15, CD16, CD19, CD36, CD56, CD123, T-cell receptor (TCR-)  $\gamma/\delta$  and CD235a (Glycophorin A) markers, while CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells were separated after removal of CD4, CD15, CD16, CD19, CD34, CD36, CD56, CD123, TCR- $\gamma/\delta$  and CD235a (Glycophorin A) positive cells, both by using MACS columns placed on a MACS separator. The efficacy of this procedure was > 96% for CD4<sup>+</sup> cells and > 97% for CD8<sup>+</sup> cells, as determined by cytometry (data not shown).

The cells were cultured in either 96-well flat-bottomed microplates with 0.2 ml or in a 24-well flat-bottomed microplate with 1 ml of RPMI-1640 medium supplemented with 2 mM of L-glutamine (Gibco, Carlsbad, CA), 10% of fetal calf serum, 20 U/ml of penicillin, 20  $\mu$ g/ml of streptomycin and 20 mM of HEPES buffer. To activate T lymphocytes, cell cultures were stimulated with a combination of anti-CD3 plus anti-CD28 (1  $\mu$ g/ml) mAbs for 3 days. The monocytes were activated for 24 hr with lipopolysaccharide (LPS) of *Escherichia coli* EH100 (100 ng/ml; Sigma Co., St Louis, MO). In some experiments, 100  $\mu$ l of the supernatants from LPS-activated monocytes were collected and assayed for their ability to



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modulate IL-17, IL-21 and IL-10 production by autologous polyclonally activated T-cell cultures. The impact of endogenous IL-6 on the *in vitro* immune events was evaluated by adding the humanized anti-IL-6R mAb (Tocilizumab; Roche, Basel, Switzerland) to the cell cultures. This mAb,<sup>18</sup> or the isotype-matching control antibody (IgG1), was added in saturating doses (100 µg/ml) at the beginning and 48 hr after activation of T-cell cultures. Finally, the effect of glucocorticoid was assayed following addition of hydrocortisone (HC;  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M) (Sigma Chemicals, St Louis, MO) at the beginning of cell cultures. Of note, the HC concentration used here did not induce cell death, as evaluated by trypan blue exclusion (data not shown). In all experiments, the cell cultures were performed in triplicate or quadruplicate, and they were maintained at 37° in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. Finally, the assays were paired, that is, fresh PBMC from one patient and one control were analysed together at same experiment.

#### Proliferation assay

Cultures containing approximately  $1 \times 10^6$ /ml of CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells were maintained for 3 days in the presence of anti-CD3/anti-CD28. The cellular proliferation was measured by [<sup>3</sup>H]thymidine incorporation, added to cultures at 4 µCi/well 8 hr before the end of incubation time. The cells were harvested in glass-fibre filters in an automatic cell harvester and radioactive incorporation was measured using a liquid-scintillation counter. The results were shown counts per minute (cpm).

#### Cytokine evaluation

To evaluate the *in vitro* cytokine contents, the supernatants collected from cell cultures were submitted to cytokine quantification by using OptEIA ELISA kits (BD, Pharmingen, San Diego, CA), according to the manufacturer's protocol. Briefly, each ELISA was performed by using pairs of mAbs directed to human IL-1β, IL-4, IL-6, IL-10, IL-12, IL-23, IL-21, IL-17, tumour necrosis factor-α, IFN-γ or transforming growth factor-β (TGF-β). The reaction was revealed with streptavidin-horseradish peroxidase, using 3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine (TMB) as substrate. Recombinant human cytokines ranging from 7.5 to 500 pg/ml were used to construct standard curves.

#### Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using PRISM software (GraphPad Software, San Diego, CA). The statistical test for comparison between groups was the non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis test with multiple comparisons (i.e. immunological events induced in the presence of control anti-IgG1 and or control isotype plus HC). The

non-parametric Mann–Whitney *U*-test and the Student's *t*-test were applied to determine whether the two groups were statistically different for non-parametric and parametric variables, respectively. The Spearman correlation was used to evaluate the correlation between *in vitro* IL-17 and IL-21 and EDSS scores. The significance in all experiments was defined as  $P < 0.05$ .

## Results

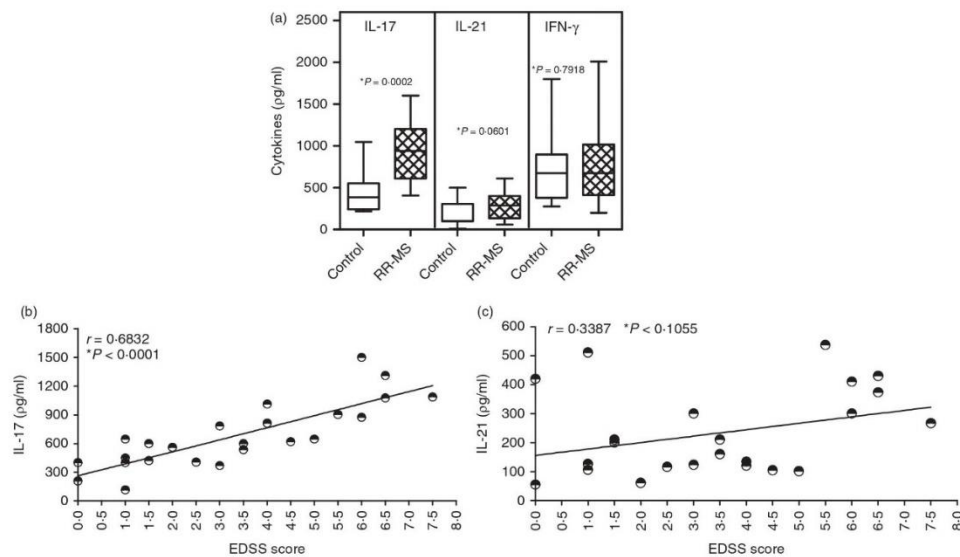
### The role of IL-6R signalling in T-cell proliferation and Th17-related cytokine production in RR-MS patients

Interleukin-6-deficient mice are resistant to EAE induced by myelin antigens.<sup>9,19</sup> In our previous study, higher levels of IL-17 were produced by T cells from patients with MS during the clinical remission phase and they were directly related to disease severity.<sup>13</sup> Here, among classical Th17 cytokines, only IL-17 production was significantly higher in activated PBMC cultures from RR-MS patients than in PBMC cultures from healthy individuals (Fig. 1a). Furthermore, in contrast to IL-21, the levels of IL-17 were related to the EDSS score (Fig. 1b). Blockade of IL-6R by anti-IL-6R mAb in activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures from patients with RR-MS significantly reduced IL-17 release (Fig. 2a) and enhanced IL-10 production (Fig. 2c). The production of both cytokines was lower by activated CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells from patients with MS, and their levels were not significantly altered following blockade of IL-6R signalling (Fig. 2a,c). Interleukin-21 production by both activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells was significantly reduced following IL-6R signalling blockade (Fig. 2b). With regard to Th1-like cytokines, IFN-γ release was not significantly altered following anti-IL-6R mAb in both T-cell subsets (data not shown). As demonstrated in Fig. 2(d), the reduction in IL-17 and IL-21 release by anti-IL-6R mAb was accompanied by attenuation of T-cell proliferation.

### The role of IL-6R in the production of monokines in patients with RR-MS

As aforementioned, *in vitro* IL-17 production was positively related with disease severity and its synthesis classically depends on IL-23, IL-1 and IL-6 cytokines produced by immune accessory cells.<sup>5–8</sup> Here, the release of IL-6 and, mainly IL-23 was higher in LPS-activated monocytes from patients with MS than healthy individuals (Fig. 3a). In these cell cultures, IL-6R signalling blockade reduced the secretion of IL-6 and, mainly, IL-23 (Fig. 3a) in both experimental groups (Fig. 3a). On the other hand, in these cultures, the release of IL-10 was not significantly altered following anti-IL-6R mAb addition in both experimental groups (Fig. 3a).

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**Figure 1.** The relationship between *in vitro* interleukin-17 (IL-17) and IL-21 production with neurological disorders in patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RR-MS). Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) ( $1 \times 10^6$ /ml) obtained from healthy individuals (control,  $n = 24$ ) and patients with RR-MS ( $n = 24$ ) were stimulated for 3 days with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 ( $1 \mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ ) monoclonal antibodies and the levels of (a) interleukin-17 (IL-17), IL-21 and interferon- $\gamma$  (IFN- $\gamma$ ) were determined by ELISA. (b, c) shows the relationship between IL-17 and IL-21 with disease severity in patients with RR-MS, indicated by Expanded Disability Status Scale score. In (a), the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th centiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The mean values were compared using Mann-Whitney *U*-test and the *P*-values are indicated.

To test the impact of IL-6R signalling on the ability of LPS-activated monocytes to modulate the production of cytokines by T cells from patients, supernatants collected after RR-MS-derived monocytes were activated with LPS for 24 hr were added to autologous  $\text{CD4}^+$  and  $\text{CD8}^+$  T-cell cultures in the presence of anti-CD3/anti-CD28 mAbs. As demonstrated in the Fig.3(b,c) after 3 days, the transfer of these supernatants enhanced both IL-17 (Fig.3b) and IL-21 (Fig.3c) release by polyclonally activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells, while up-regulating IL-21 production by  $\text{CD8}^+$  T-cell cultures. These immune events modulated by monocytes were abolished when they were activated in the presence of anti-IL-6R mAb (Fig. 3b,c). The IL-6R signalling blockade enhanced the ability of LPS-activated monocyte supernatants to elevate IL-10 production by activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells from patients with RR-MS (Fig. 3d).

#### The role of IL-6R and corticoid signalling in both cell proliferation and cytokine production by T cells from patients with RR-MS

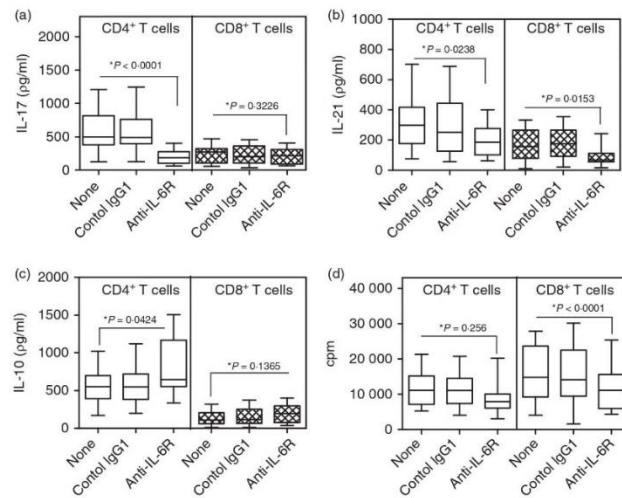
The corticoids are routinely used to control clinical MS relapses. Nevertheless, in our previous study,<sup>13</sup> HC was less efficient in down-regulating cell proliferation and

IL-17 production in activated T cells from patients with RR-MS. Interestingly, in the present study, the blockade of IL-6R signalling significantly amplified the effectiveness of HC in inhibiting both cell proliferation (Fig. 4a) and IL-17 (Fig. 4b) production by polyclonally activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  or  $\text{CD8}^+$  T cells. The HC-mediated inhibition of IL-21 release by MS-derived T cells was also elevated after addition of anti-IL-6R mAb (data not shown). Finally, the dual *in vitro* treatment of activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  and  $\text{CD8}^+$  T-cell cultures from patients with RR-MS with HC and anti-IL-6R enhanced IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$  production (Fig. 5).

#### Discussion

Multiple sclerosis is probably a Th17-mediated chronic inflammatory demyelinating disease of the CNS.<sup>20</sup> Although the lack of functional IL-6R in mice makes them resistant to the development of EAE, the role of this cytokine in T-cell behaviour is less clear in patients with MS. In the present study, we demonstrated that IL-6 might be involved in MS pathogenesis by enhancing IL-17 production and reducing corticoid effects on activated T cells. To our knowledge this is the first report that demonstrates these correlations in patients with MS.

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**Figure 2.** The role of interleukin-6 receptor (IL-6R) signalling in cytokine production and lymphoproliferation in activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures from patients with relapsing–remitting multiple sclerosis (RR-MS). The effect of IL-6R signalling on IL-17 (a), IL-21 (b) and IL-10 (c) production by purified anti-CD3/anti-CD28-activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells ( $1 \times 10^5$ /well) from MS patients ( $n = 24$ ) was analysed after addition of saturating doses of anti-IL-6R monoclonal antibody (mAb) (or isotype control). In (d) we show the impact of this mAb on T-cell proliferation. In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th centiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The mean values were compared using Student's *t*-test and the *P*-values are indicated.

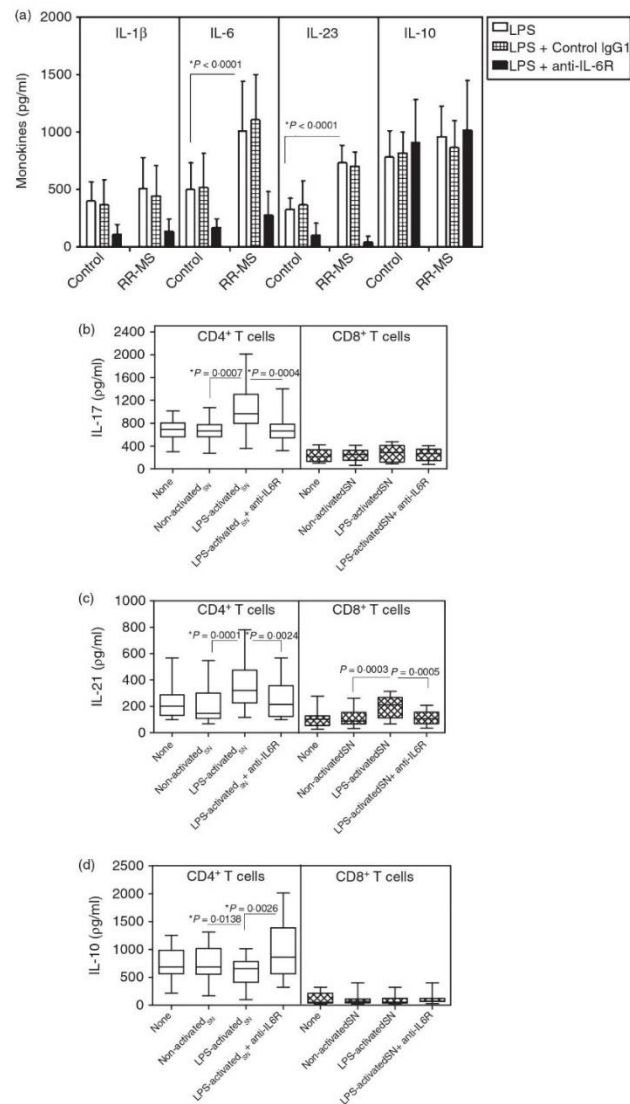
Some studies in patients with MS have suggested that during relapses, Th17 cytokines play a role in the pathogenesis of brain and spinal cord lesions.<sup>3,9</sup> However, enhanced IL-17 production was also detected in polyclonally activated T cells from these patients during clinical remission.<sup>13</sup> Probably, IL-17 signalling is important for the production of various chemokines by fibroblasts and epithelial cells, which attract antigen-presenting cells to the CNS, resulting in demyelination. In our study, no statistical difference was observed in IL-21 production, another classical Th17 cytokine,<sup>21</sup> between the experimental groups. Although in the murine model for MS IL-21 is not essential for the development of EAE,<sup>22</sup> some evidence suggests a detrimental role of this cytokine in MS pathogenesis.<sup>23,24</sup> Tzartos *et al.*<sup>24</sup> detected strong staining for IL-21-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in acute and chronic active MS lesions. The involvement of this cytokine could be related to its function in amplifying a Th17 phenotype.<sup>8,25</sup> The absence of difference in IL-21 production during the remission phase does not exclude a detrimental role of this cytokine during clinical relapses. Interestingly, in our MS cohort, four patients whose CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells produced higher IL-21 levels developed clinical relapse in the first year of follow up.

Besides IL-21, IL-6 is a regulator of Th17 differentiation and IL-6-deficient mice have been shown to be highly resistant to the induction of EAE.<sup>19,26</sup> In these mice, IL-6 plays a critical role in the development of CNS inflammation not only by enhancing IL-17 production, but also by up-regulating vascular cell adhesion molecule and CCR6 expression on endothelial cells and activated T lymphocytes, respectively.<sup>27,28</sup> These molecular events favour the homing and survival of myelin-specific T cells

in the CNS microenvironment. In the present study the *in vitro* blockade of IL-6R signalling by tocilizumab, a humanized anti-IL6R mAb, reduced either IL-17 production by activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells or IL-21 release by both activated T-cell subsets from patients with MS. Furthermore, the down-modulation of these cytokines' production following IL-6R signalling blockade was also associated with reduction in T-cell proliferation in patients with MS, probably in the Th17 compartment. We do not know the reason for the differential ability of anti-IL-6R mAb in modulating IL-17 production by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells of patients with MS, but we discarded the absence of IL-6R expression in CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells, because this mAb was able to modulate IL-21 production by these cells. Nevertheless, we cannot discard an abnormal intracellular signalling for IL-17 expression in CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells from patients with MS. Another possibility is that expanded IL-17-secreting CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells in patients with MS corresponds to a new subset. This is an interesting issue that will be explored by our group.

Excessive inflammation in patients with MS has been associated with insufficient regulation of the immune response by regulatory T cells.<sup>29–32</sup> Although the production of the anti-inflammatory cytokine IL-10 was not significantly different between patients and the control group; here, the IL-6R signalling blockade up-regulated IL-10-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in patients with MS. An elegant study by Korn *et al.*<sup>33</sup> revealed that the responsiveness of murine T cells to IL-6 determines susceptibility to EAE, through its critical effect of inhibiting the conversion of conventional T cells into FoxP3<sup>+</sup> regulatory T cells *in vivo*. Hence, in our next study, we intend to perform a phenotype characterization by cytometry of

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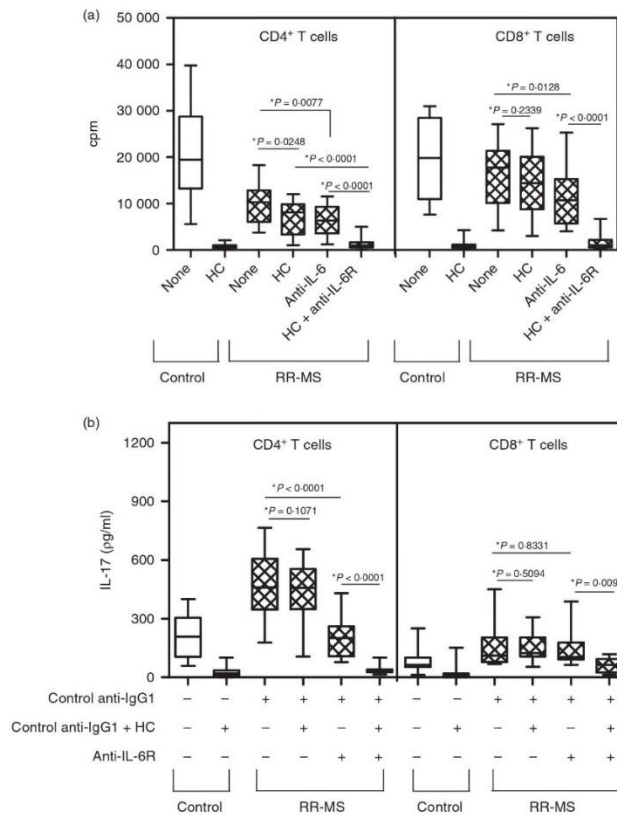
**Figure 3.** Interleukin-6 receptor (IL-6R) signalling blockade reduces the capacity of monocytes from patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) to up-regulate T helper type 17 (Th17) cytokines. In (a), monocytes (approximately  $1.5 \times 10^7$ /ml), obtained from MS patients ( $n = 24$ ) and healthy individuals ( $n = 24$ ) were stimulated with lipopolysaccharide (LPS; 100 ng/ml) in the presence or absence of saturating doses of anti-IL-6R monoclonal antibody (mAb) (or isotype control). After 24 hr, IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, IL-23 and IL-10 production was determined by ELISA. The levels of IL-17 (b), IL-21 (c) and IL-10 (d) were evaluated after culturing CD4 $^+$  and CD8 $^+$  T cells ( $1 \times 10^6$ /ml) from RR-MS patients ( $n = 24$ ) with mAbs anti-CD3/anti-CD28 (1  $\mu$ g/ml) in the absence (none) or presence of 100  $\mu$ l of monocyte supernatant collected from MS monocytes activated (LPS-activated<sub>MS</sub>) or not (non-activated<sub>MS</sub>) with LPS, treated with or not anti-IL-6R mAb. In (b–d), the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th centiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The mean values were compared using Mann–Whitney *U*-test (a) or Student's *t*-test (b–d) and the *P*-values are indicated.

these IL-10- and TGF- $\beta$ -secreting CD4 $^+$  T cells after IL-6R signalling blockade.

The deleterious effects of IL-6 in MS could also be linked to its ability to modulate the functional status of antigen-presenting cells. In humans, the differentiation, expansion and survival of Th17 cells depend on the combined actions of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-23 and IL-6.<sup>34</sup> In this context,

even during clinical remission, enhanced Th17-related cytokine production was associated with higher IL-23 and IL-6 release by LPS-activated monocytes. In agreement with us, a study by Wang *et al.*<sup>35</sup> demonstrated that an elevated frequency of IL-17-secreting T cells, either CD4 $^+$  or CD8 $^+$ , detected in peripheral blood of patients with MS during relapses was associated with high systemic

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**Figure 4.** The impact of interleukin-6 receptor (IL-6R) signalling on the ability of glucocorticoid to inhibit cell proliferation and IL-17 production by activated T cells. Purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells ( $1 \times 10^5$ /well) from patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RR-MS) ( $n = 24$ ) were stimulated with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 ( $1 \mu\text{g/ml}$ ) monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and cell proliferation (a) and IL-17 production (b) were evaluated after 3 days. In some wells, hydrocortisone [HC ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M)] was added at the beginning of the culture. The effect of IL-6R signalling blockade on the ability of HC in regulating cell proliferation and IL-17 production by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells was evaluated after addition of saturating doses of anti-IL-6R mAb (or isotype control). In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th centiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The mean values were compared using Student's *t*-test and the *P*-values are indicated.

IL-23 production. In the present study, the blockade of IL-6R signalling in accessory cells activated by LPS reduced their capacity to up-regulate IL-17 and IL-21 production by T cells from patients with MS, but amplified the release of IL-10. Nevertheless, as LPS-activated monocytes treated with anti-IL-6R mAb also produced high levels of IL-10, we cannot exclude the possibility that the IL-10 detected in activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures was a contribution of this cytokine present in the supernatants of LPS-activated monocytes. However, the production of TGF- $\beta$  was not detected in LPS-activated monocytes (data not shown).

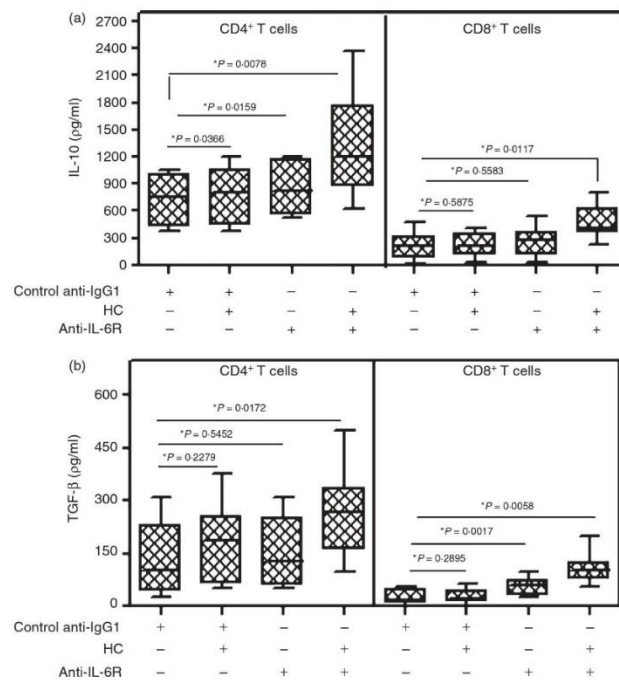
Enhanced IL-6 production plays a significant pathological role in various diseases. Clinical trials have demonstrated the efficacy of tocilizumab for patients with rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis, leading to approval of this innovative drug for the treatment of these diseases.<sup>36,37</sup> Despite these findings, in our present study, IL-17-secreting CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells from patients

with MS were not sensitive to *in vitro* anti-IL-6R treatment. IL-17-producing CD8<sup>+</sup> T (Tc17) cells are detectable in MS lesions; but their contribution to the disease is unknown.<sup>22</sup> In mice, Th17 accumulation and development of EAE required IL-17 production by CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells, suggesting that Tc17 cells are required to promote CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell-mediated induction of disease.<sup>38</sup> A study by Serada *et al.*<sup>9</sup> showed that treatment of anti-IL-6R mAb in established EAE failed to change the course of disease. It will be interesting to evaluate whether the IL-6R-independent IL-17 production by peripheral CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells would correlate with disease severity or therapeutic effect of corticoid, as observed here.

In our study, T-cell proliferation and IL-17 production in MS cell cultures were more resistant to HC, known to inhibit Th1- and Th17-mediated immune responses in normal individuals.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, this phenomenon was more evident in the CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell subset. The blockade of IL-6R signalling amplified the effectiveness of HC in

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**Figure 5.** The impact of interleukin-6 receptor (IL-6R) signalling on the ability of glucocorticoid to modulate IL-10 and transforming growth factor- $\beta$  (TGF- $\beta$ ) production by activated T cells. Purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells ( $1 \times 10^5$ /well) from patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RR-MS) ( $n = 24$ ) were stimulated with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 (1  $\mu$ g/ml) monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) and IL-10 (a) and TGF- $\beta$  (b) production was evaluated after 3 days. In some wells,  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M of hydrocortisone (HC) was added at beginning of the culture. The effect of IL-6R signalling blockade on IL-10- and TGF- $\beta$ -secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells was evaluated after addition of saturating doses of anti-IL-6R mAb (or isotype control). In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th centiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The mean values were compared using Student's *t*-test and the *P*-values are indicated at the figure.



inhibiting both cell proliferation and IL-17 production by polyclonally activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells. In contrast, this dual *in vitro* treatment (anti-IL6R mAb plus HC) enhanced IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$  production. These results suggest a role for IL-6 in amplifying corticoid resistance.

The GC are powerful modulators of inflammation and play a critical therapeutic role in controlling autoimmunity. They suppress the inflammatory process by down-regulating the activity of the transcription factor nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B<sup>40</sup> that is pivotal to control of both T-cell proliferation and pro-inflammatory cytokine production.<sup>41</sup> However, as disease progresses, patients with MS tend to become resistant to GC.<sup>3,4</sup> The mechanism of GC therapeutic unresponsiveness is not yet clarified, but it could be induced by IL-6.<sup>42,43</sup> This GC resistance compromises the physiological regulation of inflammatory responses, leading to a high basal immune activation state.<sup>44</sup> Matysiak *et al.*,<sup>45</sup> showed that PBMC from steroid-resistant patients with MS have reduced transcripts for all three isoforms of GC receptors,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ . Furthermore, they also demonstrated an increased expression of heat-shock protein 90 in leucocytes from patients with MS. Interleukin-6 activates heat-shock protein 90 expression in PBMC,<sup>46</sup> and this protein inhibits GR translocation to the nucleus, and so reduces its transcriptional

products. Similar results were obtained by Gold *et al.*<sup>3</sup> with T cells from patients with RR-MS. Therefore, in MS, sensitivity to GC, mainly in the CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell compartment, probably correlates with clinical course and with susceptibility to the disease.

### Conclusion

Collectively our data suggest that IL-6 might be involved in MS pathogenesis by enhancing IL-17 production and reducing corticoid effect on activated T cells, mainly in the CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell compartment. Although more studies are necessary, these findings indicate that anti-IL-6R mAb treatment might potentially represent an important adjuvant therapy to enhance corticoid responsiveness in the management of human MS.

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### Disclosures

All authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

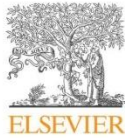
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## 3.2. Artigo publicado 2 – Dopamine favors expansion of glucocorticoid-resistant IL-17-producing T cells in multiple sclerosis

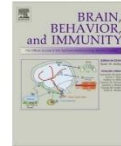
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### Dopamine favors expansion of glucocorticoid-resistant IL-17-producing T cells in multiple sclerosis



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#### ABSTRACT

Dopamine (DA) is a neurotransmitter produced mainly in the central nervous system (CNS) that has immunomodulatory actions on T cells. As the multiple sclerosis (MS) has long been regarded as an autoimmune disease of CNS mediated by T cells, the objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of DA on *in vitro* functional status of T cells from relapsing–remitting (RR)–MS patients. Peripheral T-cells from RR–MS patients were activated by mitogens and cell proliferation and cytokine production were assayed by [<sup>3</sup>H]-thymidine uptake and ELISA, respectively. Our results demonstrated that DA enhanced *in vitro* T cell proliferation and Th17-related cytokines in MS-derived cell cultures. In addition, this catecholamine reduced Treg-related cytokines (IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$ ) release by activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. These DA-induced effects on T cells were mainly dependent on IL-6 production by both polyclonally-activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells and LPS-stimulated monocytes. Furthermore, the production of IL-17 and IL-6 by MS-derived T cells was directly related with neurological disability (EDSS score), and the release of these cytokines was less sensitive to glucocorticoid inhibition in MS patients than in control group, mainly after DA addition. In conclusion, our data suggest that DA amplifies glucocorticoid-resistant Th17 phenotype in MS patients, and this phenomenon could be, at least in part, due to its ability to induce IL-6 production by monocytes and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.

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#### 1. Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune disorder of the brain and spinal cord in which peripherally-activated myelin-targeting T cells infiltrate the central nervous system (CNS) where they are reactivated leading to damage of the myelin sheath (Adams and Victor, 1989). Although the disease can be monophasic, the majority of the patients (>80%) have a relapsing form of the disease with repeated attacks of neurological disabilities that lead to substantial disability through deficits of sensorial, motor, autonomic, and cognitive functions (Schumacher et al., 1965). As

MS is the most common neurological disorder in young adults, it has many implications for the patients and society.

With regard to its immunopathogenesis, animal models of MS, known as experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE), have implicated a pivotal involvement of myelin-specific Th17 cells (Komiya et al., 2006; Langrish et al., 2005; Lovett-Racke et al., 2011). CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells that produce interleukin (IL)-17 have been shown to be essential for inducing EAE (Becher et al., 2002; Lovett-Racke et al., 2011). Furthermore, it was found that IL-23, a Th17-driven differentiation cytokine, could promote the expansion of myelin-specific IL-17-producing T cells and these IL-23-induced IL-17<sup>+</sup> T cells were capable of transferring EAE (Okuda et al., 1998). This finding led to speculations that myelin-specific Th17 cells are the major encephalitogenic T cell population in EAE. With regard to patients, several evidences have suggested the role of IL-17 in MS pathogenesis. The expression of IL-17 mRNA and protein in perivascular lymphocytes, as well as in astrocytes and oligodendrocytes, was detected in areas of active MS lesions

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(Brucklacher-Waldert et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2002; Lovett-Racke et al., 2011; Matuszevicius et al., 1999). In addition, increased IL-17 expression in peripheral blood mononuclear cells of MS patients was detected during disease exacerbation (Lovett-Racke et al., 2011).

Like other autoimmune diseases, the pathogenesis of MS is influenced by environmental factors, including psychological stress (Mohr et al., 2004; Stojanovich and Marisavljevic, 2008; Welsha et al., 2009). Studies using standardized methods for stress assessment have suggested that significant stressful life events trigger the development of MS symptoms in 70–80% of cases (Mohr et al., 2004; Schumann et al., 2012). During stress, the immune system is modulated by central and peripheral sympathetic nervous system through the release of catecholamines, such as dopamine (DA). These molecules interact with different effector immune cells and ultimately regulate a synchronized neuroimmune response of an individual to environmental stresses (Sarkar et al., 2010).

Dopamine (DA) is the major neurotransmitter in the CNS, and it is involved in the control of motor function, emotion, cognition, and regulation of hypothalamus–hypophysis axis (Sibley et al., 1993). DA receptors are seven-transmembrane G protein-coupled receptors classified in two subgroups: D1-like receptors (D1 and D5), that are coupled to G $\alpha$ s and increase intracellular cAMP, and D2-like receptors (D2, D3, and D4), that are coupled to G $\alpha$ i and decrease intracellular cAMP (Sibley et al., 1993). DA not only mediates cellular interactions inside the nervous system, but can contribute to the modulation of immunity via receptors expressed on the surface of immune cells (Idova et al., 2012). Although all DARs can be found on the surface of immune cells, their differential expression results in different functional consequences of DA stimulation in the immune response. Furthermore, some immune cells, like T lymphocytes, also produce DA themselves (Bergquist et al., 1994).

In animal models of MS, DA can influence the disease severity. Study by Nakano et al. (2008) reported that antagonizing D1-like-R with SCH23390 attenuated Th17-mediated EAE. In addition, treatment of proteolipid protein-pulsed dendritic cells (DCs) with D1-like-R antagonist directly prevents the development of EAE (Nakano et al., 2008). This phenomenon could be related with the ability of DR1-like-R agonists to both induce Th17 differentiation and inhibit CD4<sup>+</sup> CD25<sup>high</sup> Tregs (Kipnis et al., 2004). Finally, D5R-deficient DCs prophylactically transferred to wild-type recipients attenuated the severity of EAE, and it was followed by a significant reduction in the percentage of Th17 cells infiltrating the CNS, as compared with control animals transferred with wild-type DCs (Prado et al., 2012). These findings indicate that DA, by signaling through DR1-like-R, should exacerbate the development and severity of EAE. Nevertheless, taking into account that DA is the main central catecholamine, and that its peripheral levels are elevated during stressful events, studies are needed to evaluate the impact of DA on functional status of T cells from MS patients. Therefore, in the present work, we observed adverse effects of stress-related doses of DA on *in vitro* T cell behavior from MS patients that could have implications for disease progression and therapeutic effectiveness of glucocorticoid.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Patients

Twenty patients with definite diagnosis of relapsing–remitting–MS (RR–MS) according to the McDonald criteria (2001) were recruited from Lagoa Hospital (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). All RR–MS patients (02 males/18 females) were in clinical remission at the time of blood sampling and had not received disease-modifying

medications (including corticosteroid) for at least 3 months prior to testing. The disability status of the patients was scored according to the Kurtzke Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) (Kurtzke, 1983) at the time of the study. The patients were between the ages of 21 and 46 (mean, 34.7  $\pm$  13.5 years), and their EDSS scores were between 0 and 7.5 (mean, 4.16  $\pm$  2.1). The disease duration ranged from 2 to 9 years (mean, 6.3  $\pm$  3.7 years). As control group, twenty healthy individuals, matched for age (mean, 34.5  $\pm$  8.7 years) and sex (03 males/17 females) and with no history of autoimmune diseases, were also enrolled in the study. Finally, no individual (from any group) had clinical diagnosis of any infection in the last three months prior to the blood sampling.

The written informed consent was obtained from each individual, and the study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects of the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO).

### 2.2. Peripheral blood mononuclear cell cultures and stimuli

Peripheral blood was collected in heparin-containing tubes (BD Vacutainer, Franklin Lakes, NY) and peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) were obtained by centrifugation on Ficoll–Hypaque density gradient. The fresh viable PBMC ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) were cultured in either 96-well U-bottomed microplates with 0.2 mL or in a 24-well flat-bottomed microplates with 1 mL of RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 2 mM of L-glutamine (GIBCO, Carlsbad, CA, USA), 10% of fetal calf serum (FCS), 20 U/mL of penicillin, 20  $\mu$ g/mL of streptomycin and 20 mM of HEPES buffer. In order to obtain monocytes, PBMC ( $5 \times 10^6$ /mL) were first allowed to adhere in 24-well plates with 2 mL of complete RPMI for 60 min at 37  $^{\circ}$ C in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. After 1 h, the wells were washed with warm complete medium and non-adherent cells were removed. In some experiments we used CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells purified through No-touch T cell isolation kit (Miltenyi Biotec, Auburn, CA, USA). Briefly, CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were obtained after depletion of cells expressing CD8, CD14, CD15, CD16, CD19, CD36, CD56, CD123, TCR $\gamma/\delta$ , and CD235a (Glycophorin A) markers, while CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells were separated after removal of CD4, CD15, CD16, CD19, CD34, CD36, CD56, CD123, TCR $\gamma/\delta$ , and CD235a (Glycophorin A) positives cells, both by using MACS columns placed on MACS separator. The efficacy of this procedure was about > 96% for CD4<sup>+</sup> cells and > 97% for CD8<sup>+</sup> cells, as determined by cytometry (data not shown).

To evaluate the *in vitro* immune response, cell cultures were activated with T-cell polyclonal activators phytohemagglutinin (PHA, 1  $\mu$ g/mL) or plate-bound antibodies to CD3 (anti-CD3) and anti-CD28 for 3 days. The monocytes were activated for 24 h with lipopolysaccharide (LPS) of *Escherichia coli* EH100 (100 ng/mL, Sigma Co). In some experiments, 100  $\mu$ L of the supernatants from LPS-activated monocytes were collected and assayed for their ability to modulate IL-17 and IL-10 production by autologous polyclonally activated T cell cultures. To evaluate the effects of dopamine (DA), the cells were cultured in the presence of stress-related dose of this catecholamine ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M) (Cosentino et al., 2004). The effect of glucocorticoid was assayed by addition of  $10^{-6}$  M or  $10^{-5}$  M of hydrocortisone (HC; Sigma Chemicals, St Louis, MD) at the beginning of cell cultures. Of note, both DA and HC concentrations used here did not induce cell death, as evaluated by trypan blue exclusion (data not shown). Finally, humanized anti-human IL-6 receptor (IL-6R) monoclonal antibody (Tocilizumab, Roche) was used to inhibit signaling through IL-6R in activated T cell cultures. This mAb (Mihara et al., 2005) or isotype-matching control antibody (IgG1), was added in saturating doses (100  $\mu$ g/mL) at beginning and 48 h after activation of T cell cultures. In all experiments, the cell cultures were done in triplicate or quadruplicate, and they were maintained at 37  $^{\circ}$ C in a humidified 5% CO<sub>2</sub>

incubator. Of note, the assays were paired, that is, fresh PBMC from one patient and one control were analyzed together at same experiment. Finally, all immunological evaluations shown here were performed twice in each individual from blood samples collected in different times.

### 2.3. Proliferation assay

PBMC or CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell cultures ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) were maintained for 3 days in the presence of PHA (1  $\mu$ g/mL). In some wells  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M or  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M of HC was added. The cellular proliferation was measured by [<sup>3</sup>H] thymidine incorporation, added to cultures at 4  $\mu$ Ci/well 8 h before the end of incubation time. The cells were harvested in glass fiber filters in an automatic cell harvester and radioactive incorporation was measured using a liquid-scintillation counter. The results were shown as mean  $\pm$  sd of counts per minute (cpm).

### 2.4. Cytokine evaluation

In order to quantify the *in vitro* cytokine contents, supernatants were submitted to cytokines quantification by using OptEIA ELISA kits (BD, Pharmingen, San Diego, CA), according to manufacturer's protocol. Briefly, each ELISA was performed using pairs of mAbs directed to human IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-2, IL-4, IL-5, IL-6, IL-10, IL-12, IL-23, IL-21, IL-17, TNF- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\gamma$  and TGF- $\beta$ . The reaction was revealed with streptavidin-horseradish peroxidase, using 3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine (TMB) as substrate. To avoid the inter-assay variability, the same standard solutions of recombinant human cytokines in defined concentrations ranging from 7.5 to 500 pg/mL were used in all assays.

### 2.5. Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using Prism 5.0 software (GraphPad Software). All immunological evaluations were done triplicate or quadruplicate in each individual and the intra-assay variability ranged from 8% to 20.2% (median value of 9.7%) as calculated by the software above. The statistical test for comparison between groups was the nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis test with multiple comparisons (i.e. immunological events induced in the presence of PHA, PHA/DA and PHA/DA/HC from healthy controls and MS patients), and the results were corrected by Bonferroni to confirm it would be significantly different. The nonparametric Mann–Whitney *U* test and the Student's *t* test were applied to determine whether the two groups were statistically different for nonparametric and parametric variables, respectively. The Spearman correlation was used to evaluate the correlation between cytokines concentration and EDSS scores. The significance in all experiments was defined as  $p < 0.05$ .

## 3. Results

### 3.1. The impact of dopamine (DA) on lymphoproliferation and cytokine profile in activated T cell cultures from MS patients

As shown in Table 1, the extent of lymphoproliferation in response to PHA was significantly lower in cultures from RR–MS patients and it was associated with lower *in vitro* IL-2 production (Fig. 1A). Of note, an additional analysis revealed that both lower T cell proliferation and deficient IL-2 production were mainly detected among RR–MS patients with higher neurological disabilities, that is, EDSS scores higher than 4. With regard to T cell proliferation, the mean values of thymidin up-take was  $25.672 \pm 10.35$  for healthy individuals (HI) as compared with  $10.322 \pm$

**Table 1**  
The effect of dopamine (DA) on T cell proliferation of MS patients.

	Control (Mean $\pm$ SD)	MS patients
PHA	25.986 $\pm$ 9.925 <sup>ns</sup>	16.774 $\pm$ 11.377 <sup>ns,*,<math>\delta</math></sup>
PHA + HC ( $10^{-6}$ M)	2.235 $\pm$ 1.452	7.522 $\pm$ 6.440 <sup>ns</sup>
PHA + HC ( $10^{-5}$ M)	431.3 $\pm$ 418.1	4.058 $\pm$ 3.676 <sup>ns</sup>
PHA + DA	16.155 $\pm$ 7518 <sup>#</sup>	26.395 $\pm$ 9.525 <sup>ns,*,<math>\delta</math></sup>
PHA + DA + HC ( $10^{-6}$ M)	2.021 $\pm$ 2.282	23.553 $\pm$ 9.705 <sup>ns</sup>
PHA + DA + HC ( $10^{-5}$ M)	531.1 $\pm$ 1.060	13.284 $\pm$ 8.072 <sup>†</sup>

PBMC ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) obtained from healthy individuals (control,  $n = 20$ ) and RR–MS patients ( $n = 20$ ) were stimulated for 3 days with PHA (1  $\mu$ g/mL) with or without DA ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M). In some wells, pharmacological doses of hydrocortisone (HC) ( $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M and  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M) were added at the beginning of cell cultures. The level of cell proliferation was determined from [<sup>3</sup>H] TdR up-take. In the table, the mean values were compared and the symbols indicate the *p* values. [<sup>#</sup> $p = 0.0456$ , [<sup>\*</sup> $p < 0.0001$ , [<sup>ns</sup> $p = 0.0031$ , [<sup>†</sup> $p = 0.0032$ , [<sup>ns</sup> $p = 0.0002$ , [<sup>\*</sup> $p = 0.0031$ , and [<sup>†</sup> $p = 0.0026$ ].

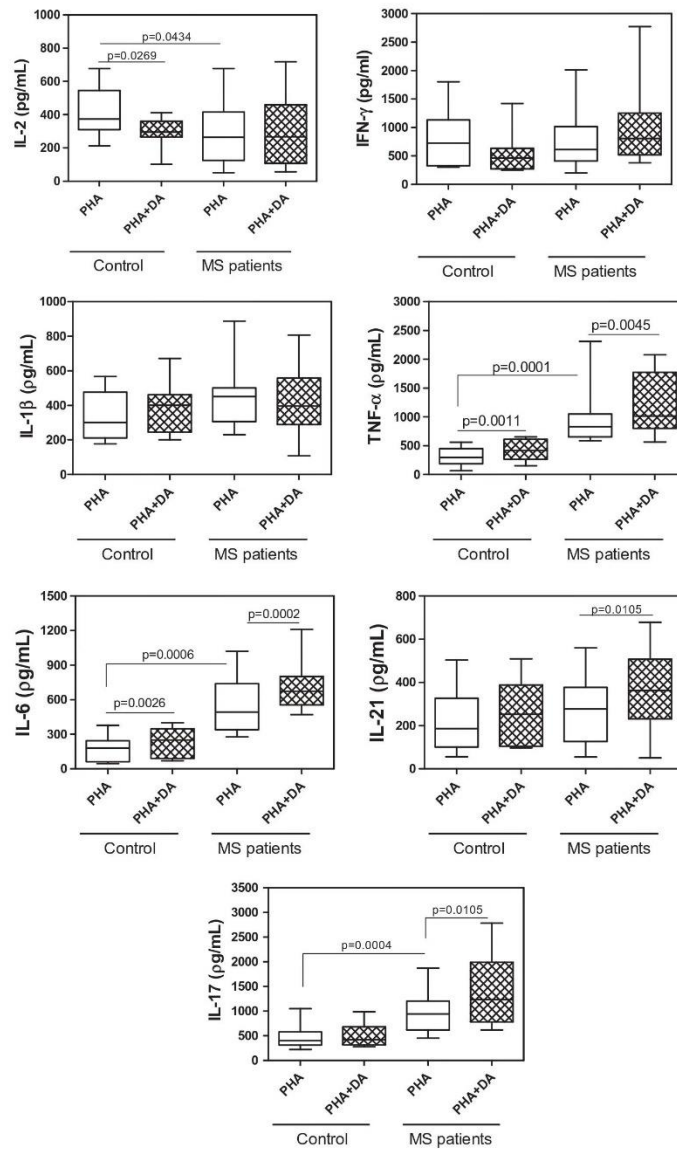
4.516 for RR–MS patients with EDSS > 4 ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Interestingly, while DA diminished T cell expansion in control group, this catecholamine up-regulated it in T cell cultures from MS patients, regardless of EDSS score. The hydrocortisone (HC), that plays an important role in controlling clinical relapses of MS, was less efficient in reducing lymphoproliferation in cultures from RR–MS patients than in control cultures, especially after DA addition (Table 1). Of note, no cell expansion was observed in unstimulated cell cultures from both groups, with or without DA addition (data not shown).

Concerning the evaluation of T cell cytokines network, a dysregulated profile was observed in cultures from MS patients. In this context, among classical Th1 cytokines (IL-2 and IFN- $\gamma$ ), the production of IL-2 was lower in activated cell cultures from RR–MS patients but, differently from the control group, it did not change after DA addition (Fig. 1). The levels of IFN- $\gamma$  were not different between the two groups studied, and DA did not change it (Fig. 1). Regarding Th17-related (IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6 and TNF- $\alpha$ ) and Th17-specific (IL-21 and IL-17) cytokines, significantly higher levels of TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6 and IL-17 were produced by activated T cells of RR–MS patients (Fig. 1). Although the DA had enhanced IL-6 and TNF- $\alpha$  release in both experimental groups, this catecholamine amplified the production of specific Th17 cytokines (IL-17 and IL-21) only in RR–MS-derived activated cells (Fig. 1). Moreover, only in MS-derived cultures, the DA reduced Treg-related cytokines (IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$ ) production (Fig. 2). Finally, the Th2-defining cytokines (IL-4 and IL-5) secretion was not different between the groups, with or without DA addition (data not shown).

As MS is an inflammatory disorder of the CNS, our next step was to perform an analysis of the relationship between the *in vitro* pro-inflammatory cytokines and MS progression. Among all cytokines evaluated, the levels of IL-17 and IL-6, produced by activated T cell cultures, were positively correlated with higher neurological disabilities, as evaluated by EDSS score (Fig. 3). Interestingly, the production of IL-17 (Fig. 4A) and IL-6 (data not shown) by PHA-activated T cell cultures from RR–MS patients was less sensitive to inhibition by different doses of hydrocortisone than control individuals. Furthermore, this higher HC-resistance was observed in both activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and, mainly, CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells (Fig. 4B).

### 3.2. Dopamine up-regulates IL-17-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in MS patients by enhancing the production of IL-6 by LPS-activated monocytes

Considering that Th1 and Th17 phenotypes are mainly determined by, respectively, IL-12 and IL-23/IL-6 axis produced by accessory immune cells (Terhune et al., 2013), we investigated whether DA could impact on T cells phenotype by modulating the production of these cytokines by LPS-activated monocytes. As shown in Table 2, at baseline, the release of IL-23 and IL-6, but

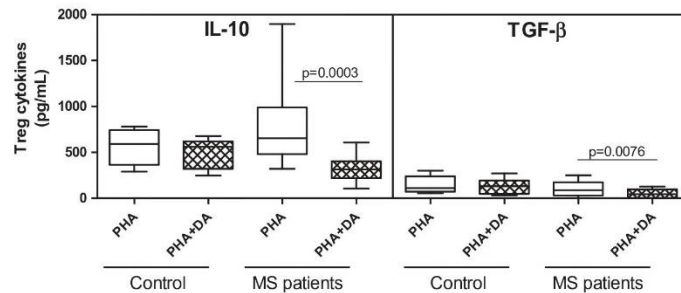


**Fig. 1.** The modulation of *in vitro* pro-inflammatory cytokines profile by dopamine (DA) in MS-derived activated T cells. PBMC cultures ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL), from control ( $n = 20$ ) and RR-MS ( $n = 20$ ) groups, were activated with PHA ( $1 \mu\text{g/mL}$ ) alone or with DA ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M). After 3 days, the supernatants were collected and submitted to cytokines quantification by ELISA. In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th percentiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The median values of control and MS groups were compared and the  $p$  values are indicated at the figure.

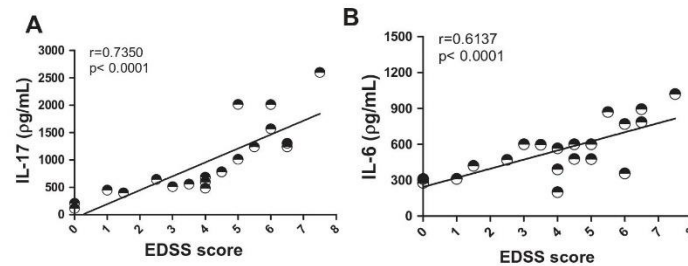
not IL-12, was significantly higher in LPS-activated monocytes from RR-MS patients than in control individuals. Furthermore, in MS-derived cultures, HC was less efficient in reducing the production of these cytokines, especially IL-6. DA significantly elevated IL-6 secretion in both healthy control ( $p = 0.0389$ ) and, mainly, RR-MS patients ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Nevertheless, different from

control cultures, the IL-6 release by LPS-activated monocytes from patients following addition of DA was refractory to HC inhibition (Table 2).

In order to test the bioactivity of IL-23 and IL-6 produced by LPS-activated monocyte, we analyzed their capacity to stimulate the expansion of IL-17-secreting  $\text{CD4}^+$  and  $\text{CD8}^+$  T cells.



**Fig. 2.** Dopamine (DA) reduces Treg-related cytokines production by activated T cells from MS patients. PBMC cultures ( $1 \times 10^6$  ml), from control ( $n = 20$ ) and RR-MS ( $n = 20$ ) groups, were activated with PHA ( $1 \mu\text{g/mL}$ ) alone or with DA ( $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M). After 3 days, the supernatants were collected and IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$  production was determined by ELISA. In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th percentiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The median values of control and MS groups were compared and the  $p$  values are indicated at the figure.



**Fig. 3.** Relationship between *in vitro* IL-17 and IL-6 production with EDSS score in MS patients. The figure shows a direct relationship between PHA-induced IL-17 and IL-6 production in PBMC cultures from MS patients with neurological disorder, indicated by EDSS score.

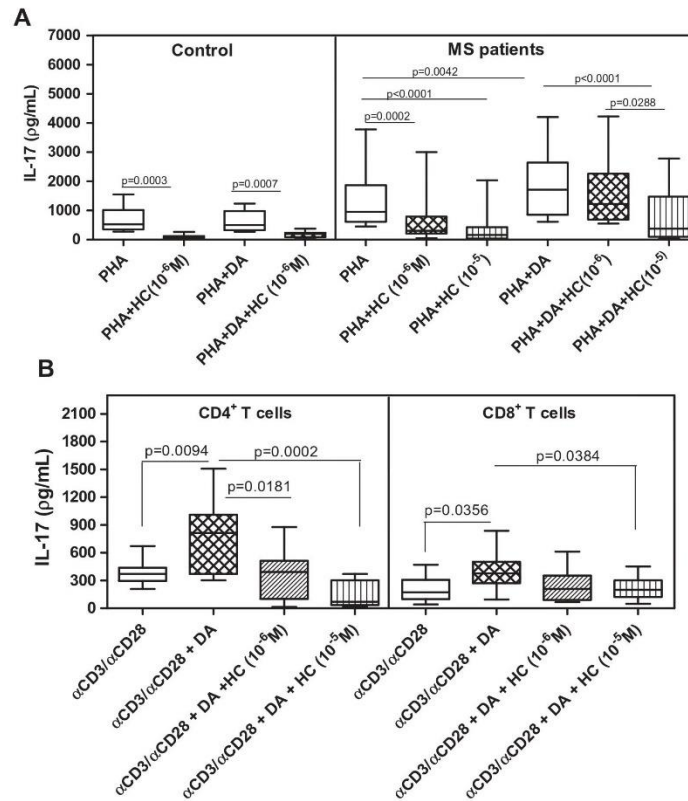
Supernatants collected after 24 h of RR-MS-derived monocytes activation with LPS and DA were added to  $\text{CD4}^+$  and  $\text{CD8}^+$  T cell cultures in the presence of anti-CD3 and anti-CD28. As demonstrated in the Fig. 5A, after 3 days, the transfer of these monocyte supernatants enhanced IL-17 release by polyclonally-activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells, but not by  $\text{CD8}^+$  T cells. Since DA particularly elevated the production of IL-6 in LPS-activated monocytes, our last objective was to determine the role of this cytokine on IL-17 production by purified  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells from patients. As shown in Fig. 5B, the blockage of IL-6R signaling significantly reduced IL-17 release by activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells treated with supernatants collected from LPS-activated monocytes in the presence (LPS-activated<sub>SN/DA</sub>) or absence of DA (LPS-activated<sub>SN</sub>). Of note, IL-6R blockade also reduced  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cell proliferation ( $14.350 \pm 3.211$  cpm for LPS-activated<sub>SN/DA</sub> + control IgG1  $\times 8.115 \pm 2.047$  cpm for LPS-activated<sub>SN/DA</sub> + anti-IL-6R). In contrast, the blockade of IL-6R signaling elevated IL-10 production only in LPS-activated<sub>SN/DA</sub>-treated activated  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells from RR-MS patients.

#### 4. Discussion

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic inflammatory disease that results in demyelination in the CNS. In the present study, we observed that dopamine (DA), abundantly produced in the CNS, can have a deleterious role in the MS pathogenesis by enhancing corticoid-resistant IL-17-producing T cells.

In our study, the extent of T cell proliferation in response to mitogen was significantly lower in cell cultures from RR-MS

patients than in healthy individuals, and it could be explained, at least in part, by the lower *in vitro* IL-2 production in cell cultures from those patients. These events were more critically observed among MS patients with higher EDSS scores. In agreement with our study, similar defective IL-2-dependent T cell proliferation was previously described in MS patients (Merril et al., 1984). Nevertheless, different from control group, DA elevated T cell expansion in cultures from MS patients. This effect is probably mediated by the DA-induced up-regulation of IL-6 and IL-21, which favors Th17 phenotype expansion (Sallusto et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2007). Indeed, the blockage of IL-6R signaling reduced both  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cell proliferation and IL-17 production in MS-derived cell cultures in response to DA. In EAE, IL-6 plays a critical role in the development of CNS inflammation not only by enhancing IL-17 production, but also by up-regulating CCR6 expression on activated T cells, which favors the homing and survival of myelin-specific T cells in the CNS microenvironment (Gyulveszi et al., 2009; Lock et al., 2002; Lovett-Racke et al., 2011). PHA-activated PBMC from MS patients during clinical relapses produce elevated levels of Th17 cytokines, and they may play a role in the pathogenesis of brain and spinal cord lesions (Glabinski et al., 1995; Hollifield et al., 2003). Furthermore, the IL-23/IL-6 axis, by favoring Th17 differentiation, has been linked to MS pathogenesis (El-Behi et al., 2011; Langrish et al., 2005; Wen et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). In our study, higher IL-23 and IL-6 production was seen in RR-MS-derived LPS-activated monocytes and, even during clinical remission period, a positive relationship between IL-17- and IL-6-secreting T cells and the level of neurological disability was observed. Moreover, the DA-induced elevation of Th17-related



**Fig. 4.** The effect of Dopamine (DA) in modulating the ability of glucocorticoid to inhibit IL-17 production by activated T cells. In (A), the production of IL-17 was measured by ELISA in PBMC cultures ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) activated with PHA (1  $\mu$ g/mL), obtained from healthy (control,  $n = 20$ ) or RR-MS ( $n = 20$ ) individuals, in the presence or absence of DA ( $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M) and hydrocortisone (HC,  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M and  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M). In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th percentiles and vertical lines indicate the range. In (B), the impact of DA on IL-17 production by RRMS-derived purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) stimulated with anti-CD3 plus anti-CD8 (1  $\mu$ g/mL) mAbs was evaluated in the absence or in the presence of HC ( $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M and  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  M). The median values ( $\pm$  SD) of IL-17 concentrations and the  $p$  values are indicated at the figure.

cytokines production in RR-MS patients is also mediated by the ability of this neurotransmitter to enhance IL-6 secretion by LPS-activated monocytes. Taking into consideration that DA is mainly produced inside the CNS, its ability to enhance IL-6 production by infiltrating monocytes and T cells could amplify brain lesions by favoring Th17 phenotype. Indeed, the most neurologically debilitated patients (higher EDSS) were exactly those who produced higher amounts of IL-6 and IL-17. Therefore, the levels of these cytokines in the remission period could possibly predict disease severity.

Finally, although IFN- $\gamma$  has also been implicated in MS pathogenesis (Kebir et al., 2009; Panitch et al., 1987), we did not observe any statistical difference in its release by activated T cells, even after DA addition. However, there is a possibility that, during clinical relapses, this cytokine reach levels markedly higher than those observed during the remission phase. Obviously, if possible, the same analysis will be performed in each patient following clinical relapses.

Excessive inflammation in MS patients is linked to insufficient regulation of the immune response by regulatory T cells (Tregs)

(Venken et al., 2007; Ma et al., 2009). These Tregs suppress effector T cell responses by different mechanisms, such as by the release of anti-inflammatory cytokines IL-10 and TGF- $\beta$  (Shevach, 2009). In our present study, although we did not observe any statistical difference in the release of these anti-inflammatory cytokines by activated T cell cultures at baseline, DA significantly reduced the production of them only in RR-MS group. Study by Cosentino et al. (2012) demonstrated that DA, through DR1-like receptors, abolish the ability of Treg from MS patients in inhibiting effector T cell proliferation. However, this dopaminergic inhibition of Treg function was reversed after 24 months of successful IFN- $\beta$  treatment (Cosentino et al., 2012). These results reveal another deleterious effect of DA on MS pathogenesis, by damaging the Treg compartment. This could be probably related the ability of excessive IL-6 to inhibit the conversion of conventional T cells into FoxP3<sup>+</sup> regulatory T cells, as described by Korn et al. (2008) in murine model of MS. Deficiency of the Treg cell compartment can bring clinical consequences, such as more severe clinical relapses.

Besides abundant production of DA in the CNS, the site of MS pathogenesis, its peripheral level elevates significantly in some

**Table 2**  
Dopamine increases IL-6 production by LPS-activated monocytes from MS patients.

		Control (pg/mL)	MS patients
IL-12	LPS	294.5 ± 144.3	326.3 ± 149.2
	LPS + HC	18.6 ± 17.6	47.8 ± 54.5
	LPS + DA	253.2 ± 133.3	354.4 ± 466.3
	LPS + DA + HC	33.7 ± 32.4	157.2 ± 101.1
IL-6	LPS	501.2 ± 312.2*	1.012 ± 431.4 <sup>*,#,*v</sup>
	LPS + HC	28.5 ± 31.3	501.8 ± 217.7 <sup>#</sup>
	LPS + DA	745.3 ± 221.1	<b>1.971 ± 401.2<sup>v</sup></b>
	LPS + DA + HC	88.5 ± 78.2	<b>1.401 ± 523.3<sup>v</sup></b>
IL-23	LPS	327.8 ± 157.3 <sup>**</sup>	607.8 ± 226.4 <sup>**</sup>
	LPS + HC	21.6 ± 25.3	278.3 ± 137.1
	LPS + DA	367.5 ± 168.7	651.2 ± 156.4
	LPS + DA + HC	37.8 ± 27.5	377.6 ± 96.6

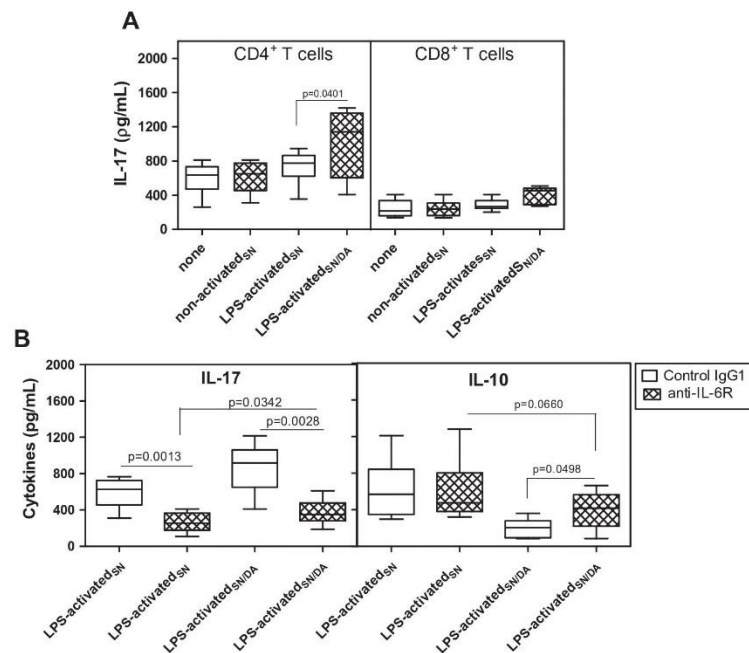
Monocytes (approximately  $1.6 \times 10^5$ /mL), obtained from MS patients ( $n = 20$ ) and healthy individuals ( $n = 20$ ) were stimulated with LPS (100 ng/mL) and/or DA ( $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M). Additionally, in some wells hydrocortisone (HC,  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M) was added at beginning of cultures. After 24 h, IL-12, IL-6 and IL-23 production was determined by ELISA. The data are presented as the mean values ( $\pm$  SD), and \* and <sup>v</sup> indicate  $p$  values  $< 0.0001$ , while \*\* and # indicate  $p = 0.0133$  and  $p = 0.0012$ , respectively. The mean values of IL-6 in bold show absence of significant difference.

pathological conditions, such as stress. Stressful life events have been shown to precede both the onset and recurrence of MS symptoms in 70–80% of cases, using standardized measurement of life stressors (Langrish et al., 2005). Moreover, study by Siegert and Abernethy (2005) has demonstrated high prevalence of major

depressive disorder in MS patients. In our cohort, the prevalence of mood disorders is also elevated. Therefore, an interestingly future study in this issue would be to evaluate the relationship between peripheral levels of DA and the occurrence of clinical relapses and disease progression.

Although we did not measure the blood levels of DA in our RR-MS patients, peripheral elevation of this catecholamine has been demonstrated in patients suffering from other autoimmune diseases. The plasma levels of DA are higher in rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and lupus patients than in healthy individuals (Capellino et al., 2011; Jafari et al., 2013). The elevated levels of DA produced by RA-derived DCs inhibited suppressive activities of CD4<sup>+</sup> CD25<sup>+</sup> Treg through D1-like receptors in both human and mouse models (Cosentino et al., 2007; Nakano et al., 2011). In the context of lupus, the authors observed a reduction of DR2 gene expression on T cells compared with healthy individuals (Jafari et al., 2013). Since DR2 has been associated to favor CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell differentiation towards regulatory T cell (Tregs) (Besser et al., 2005; Ilani et al., 2004; Pacheco et al., 2009; Sarkar et al., 2006), and DR1-like receptors appear to damage the function of this T cell subset (Cosentino et al., 2007), the differential DARs expression on T cells may account, at least in part, for the pathogenesis of immuno mediated disorders.

Besides DA, few studies addressing other catecholamines were performed in MS. Although these studies have demonstrated the epinephrine (EPI) and norepinephrine (NE) levels are elevated in MS patients during clinical relapses (Gold et al., 2005; Rajda et al., 2002), the effects of these catecholamines on MS-derived T



**Fig. 5.** Dopamine-induced increase in IL-6 production by LPS-activated monocytes enhances IL-17 release by MS-derived activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. In (A), purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cell cultures ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) from RR-MS patients ( $n = 15$ ) were stimulated with mAbs anti-CD3 plus anti-CD28 (1  $\mu$ g/mL) in the absence (none) or presence of 100  $\mu$ L of monocyte supernatants collected from MS monocytes activated (LPS-activated<sub>SN</sub>) or not (non-activated<sub>SN</sub>) with LPS, with or without DA ( $1 \times 10^{-5}$  M). In (B), the role of IL-6 signaling on IL-17 and IL-10 production by purified anti-CD3/anti-CD28-activated MS-derived CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells ( $1 \times 10^6$ /mL) from stable RRMS patients was analyzed in the presence or absence of these supernatants. In the figure, the horizontal bars within boxes correspond to the median; box limits correspond to 25th and 75th percentiles and vertical lines indicate the range. The median values of control and MS groups were compared and the  $p$  values are indicated at the figure.

cells are lacking. Studies conducted by our group in T cells from individuals with generalized anxiety disorders (GAD) revealed no effect on NE and EPI, although DA modulated T cell function in a similar way as it does in MS patient's cells (Ferreira et al., 2011). Nevertheless, it would be interesting to evaluate these catecholamines in MS patients.

Other additional results obtained by us suggest a possible deleterious effect of DA on the clinical efficacy of glucocorticoids (GCs) treatment. Elevated doses of hydrocortisone (HC) were less efficient, mainly in the presence of DA, in inhibiting both polyclonal T cell expansion and IL-17 production in MS patients. The same HC resistance was observed in IL-6 and IL-23 production by LPS-activated monocytes from MS patients. Interestingly, the addition of DA to these cultures not only elevated IL-6, but also abolished the ability of HC in reducing the production of this cytokine.

The GCs are powerful modulators of inflammation and play a critical therapeutic role in controlling clinical relapses in MS patients. It is known that, as disease progresses, MS patients tend to become resistant to those drugs, mainly among them with major depressive disorder (Gold et al., 2012; Fischer et al., 2012). Our findings, although preliminary, indicate a probable involvement of DA in favoring this glucocorticoid resistance in MS patients.

Taken together, the results reported here indicate that dopamine amplifies glucocorticoid-resistant Th17 phenotype in MS patients and reveal that this phenomenon could be, at least in part, due its ability to induce IL-6 production by monocytes and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. We believe that differential DA effects on immune cells from healthy and MS individuals is related to distinct patterns of DA receptors expression by T cell subsets in each group, an issue that will be investigated by our team.

#### Conflict of interest statement

All authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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### 3.3. Artigo publicado 3 – Different interleukin-17-secreting Toll-like receptor+ T-cell subsets are associated with disease activity in multiple sclerosis

IMMUNOLOGY ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Different interleukin-17-secreting Toll-like receptor<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets are associated with disease activity in multiple sclerosis

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### Introduction

Infectious diseases are implicated in the development and exacerbation of autoimmune diseases (AID), such as multiple sclerosis (MS), a T-cell-mediated demyelinated and neurodegenerative disorder of the central nervous system (CNS).<sup>1–4</sup> Infections from influenza and herpesvirus families have been suggested as contributing agents to MS. Although infectious mononucleosis by Epstein–Barr virus (EBV) has been widely associated with MS development, this virus also appears to trigger other AID, such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and Sjögren's syndrome.<sup>5–7</sup> These observations

### Summary

Signalling through Toll-like receptors (TLRs) may play a role in the pathogenesis of autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis (MS). In the present study, the expression of TLR-2, -4 and -9 was significantly higher on CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells from MS patients compared to healthy individuals. Following *in-vitro* activation, the proportion of interleukin (IL)-17<sup>+</sup> and IL-6<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells was higher in the patients. In addition, the proportion of IFN- $\gamma$ -secreting TLR<sup>+</sup> CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells was increased in MS patients. Among different IL-17<sup>+</sup> T-cell phenotypes, the proportion of IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells producing IFN- $\gamma$  or IL-6 were positively associated with the number of active brain lesions and neurological disabilities. Interestingly, activation of purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells with ligands for TLR-2 (Pam3Csk4), TLR-4 [lipopolysaccharide (LPS)] and TLR-9 [oligodeoxynucleotide (ODN)] directly induced cytokine production in MS patients. Among the pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs), Pam3Csk4 was more potent than other TLR ligands in inducing the production of all proinflammatory cytokines. Furthermore, IL-6, IFN- $\gamma$ , IL-17 and granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF) levels produced by Pam3Csk4-activated CD4<sup>+</sup> cells were directly associated with disease activity. A similar correlation was observed with regard to IL-17 levels released by Pam3Csk4-stimulated CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells and clinical parameters. In conclusion, our data suggest that the expansion of different T helper type 17 (Th17) phenotypes expressing TLR-2, -4 and -9 is associated with MS disease activity, and reveals a preferential ability of TLR-2 ligand in directly inducing the production of cytokines related to brains lesions and neurological disabilities.

**Keywords:** Multiple sclerosis; PAMP, Th17/Tc-17 cell subsets; TLR

suggest that in addition to molecular mimicry, bystander activation of the immune cells by microbial antigens may contribute to autoimmunity via breakdown of immunological tolerance in genetically predisposed individuals. In this context, some pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs), by playing an adjuvant role, have been implicated in MS pathogenesis.<sup>8,9</sup>

PAMPs mediate their effects through ligation to pattern recognition receptors (PRRs), such as Toll-like receptors (TLRs), mainly expressed on innate immune cells.<sup>10</sup> In humans, 10 different TLRs have been described, named 1–10, with different cellular distributions. While TLR-1, -2, -4, -6 and -10 are expressed on the cell surface, TLR-3,

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-7, -8 and -9 are present intracellularly (e.g. endosomes).<sup>11,12</sup> TLR-1, -2, -4 and -6 recognize bacterial and fungal cell wall components, such as lipopolysaccharide (LPS) and lipopeptides, and TLR-5 binds flagellin.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, TLR-3, -7, -8 and -9 recognize nucleic acid structures, which serve as molecular signatures for viral and bacterial infections.<sup>12</sup> Upon PAMP engagement, the myeloid differentiation primary response protein 88 (MyD88), an adaptor protein associated with the majority of TLR, except TLR-3, activates nuclear factor (NF)- $\kappa$ B, which in turn trigger signalling cascades via phosphatidylinositol-4,5-bisphosphate 3-kinase/protein kinase B (PI3K/AKT) and Ras/mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK). These events promote cell survival and proliferation, as well as production of cytokines.<sup>13</sup>

The reconnaissance of the involvement of PAMPs in MS comes from findings in the experimental model of multiple sclerosis, the experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis (EAE).<sup>14</sup> The classical way of inducing EAE in mice is through the administration of myelin sheath antigens, such as myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein (MOG), emulsified in complete Freund's adjuvant (CFA),<sup>14,15</sup> consisting of heat-inactivated *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* containing ligands for TLR-2, TLR-4 and TLR-9.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the disease may also be induced by different PAMPs.<sup>17</sup> Prinz *et al.*<sup>18</sup> demonstrated that TLR-9-deficient mice exhibited a significant delay in the onset of EAE and milder clinical symptoms. Furthermore, knock-out mice for MyD88 are resistant to EAE induction.<sup>18,19</sup> Finally, LPS injection induces relapses of EAE mice via bystander activation of myelin-specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells.<sup>20</sup> Altogether, these findings suggest that PAMP-induced DC maturation may contribute to the differentiation and expansion of encephalitogenic T-cells. TLRs might even influence on the conversion for progressive forms.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to immune phenotypes, myelin-specific T helper type 17 (Th17) and Th1 cells have been implicated in the pathogenesis of MS.<sup>22</sup> High levels of interleukin (IL)-17A mRNA are detected in the peripheral blood and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of patients with relapsing-remitting MS during clinical relapses.<sup>23,24</sup> Further, the expression of IL-17 has been detected in astrocytes and oligodendrocytes in areas of active MS lesions.<sup>24,25</sup> IL-17-producing CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells (Tc-17) also contribute to brain lesions.<sup>26</sup> With regard to interferon IFN- $\gamma$ , an important cytokine produced by both Th1 cells and Tc-1 cells, their levels are also elevated during clinical relapses, and co-localize with apoptotic oligodendrocytes.<sup>27,28</sup> Although IL-22 is produced by human Th17 cells, the frequency of a unique subset of IL-22 producing CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells (Th22), regardless of IL-17 release, has been associated with apoptosis of oligodendrocytes, diminished expression of forkhead box protein 3 (FoxP3) and risk of new relapses and number of active brain lesions.<sup>29–31</sup> Finally, an increased proportion of granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating

factor (GM-CSF)-secreting T CD4<sup>+</sup> cells, some of these co-expressing IL-17 or IFN- $\gamma$ , were detected in the CNS of MS patients.<sup>32,33</sup> Therefore, the ability of some PAMPs to up-regulate many co-stimulatory pathways in dendritic cells (DCs) may impact the risk of developing and exacerbating MS.

Although PPRs are classically expressed on innate immune cells, activated human T-cells also express detectable levels of TLRs,<sup>15,34</sup> which suggests an ability of PAMPs to directly modulate the behaviour of T lymphocytes.<sup>35</sup> In SLE, elevated TLR-3 and -9 expression on T-cells is related to clinical parameters.<sup>36</sup> In MS patients, Nyrenda *et al.*<sup>37</sup> demonstrated an elevated TLR-2 expression on CD4<sup>+</sup> CD25<sup>hi</sup> FoxP3<sup>+</sup> T-cells. The addition of TLR-2 agonist (Pam3Csk4) on regulatory T-cells (T<sub>regs</sub>) not only inhibited their *in-vitro* suppressive actions, but also skews them towards a Th17 phenotype.<sup>37</sup> However, these authors did not evaluate the expression of TLRs on different T-cell phenotypes or correlate them with clinical parameters in MS patients, which are the objectives of the present study.

## Material and methods

### Patients

Thirty patients with a definite RRMS diagnosis, according to criteria (2010)<sup>38</sup> during the clinical remission phase, were recruited from Lagoa Hospital and Gaffrée Guinle University Hospital/UNIRIO (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). Demographic data such as gender and age at disease onset were obtained from medical records (Table 1). All patients were naive for disease-modifying therapies (DMT) and corticoid therapy for at least 2 months. The

**Table 1.** Demographic and clinical features of the multiple sclerosis (MS) patients and controls

	Control <sup>1</sup>	MS <sup>2</sup>
No. of subjects ( <i>n</i> )	20	30
Gender, female/male ( <i>n</i> )	15/05	21/09
Age in years (mean $\pm$ SD)	29.1 $\pm$ 7.3	27.7 $\pm$ 6.8
Disease duration in years [mean (range)]	NA <sup>5</sup>	5.2 (1–13)
EDSS [mean (range)] <sup>3</sup>	NA	2.1 (0–5)
No. of active brain lesions [mean (range)] <sup>4</sup>	NA	3.59 (0–25)

Data from <sup>1</sup>healthy individuals, <sup>2</sup>relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (RRMS) in remission phase and at disease onset. Age (years) refers to age at point in time that the blood samples were collected. Disease duration refers to the years from the definitive diagnosis of MS. <sup>3</sup>EDSS, Expanded Disability Status Scale and <sup>4</sup>the number of active brain lesions by magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan were determined at the time-point that the blood was collected to perform the immune assays. <sup>5</sup>Not applicable. SD, standard deviation.

occurrence of infectious and other autoimmune diseases was excluded by clinical and serological tests. The neurological disability status of the patients was evaluated by authors (A.C.W. and C.C.V), and was determined according to the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS).<sup>39</sup> To quantify the number of active brain lesions, some of the MS patients underwent brain magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) at the time of blood sampling and clinical evaluation. Imaging was performed using the Siemens Trio 3 Tesla machine. The sequences obtained were T1 GRE 3D (ECHO gradient) on the sagittal plane, with multiplanar reformatting before and after intravenous contrast, weighted sequences in T2 and proton density (PD), fluid attenuation inversion recovery (FLAIR) sequence and T1 magnetization transfer and dissemination with apparent diffusion coefficient (ADC) mapping in the axial plane. Images were analysed by a single neuroradiologist (F.R.), a specialist in demyelinating diseases and blind to the degree of the patient's disability. As a control group, 20 healthy subjects matched by age, gender and ethnic background were recruited. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Subjects at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) and blood was collected only after written informed consent was obtained from each individual.

#### Cultures

Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) were separated by a Ficoll-Paque gradient. These cells were then washed three times in Hanks's balanced salt solution (HBSS) and suspended in RPMI-1640 medium supplemented with 2  $\mu$ M of L-glutamine (Gibco, Carlsbad, CA), 10% of fetal calf serum, 20 U/ml of penicillin, 20  $\mu$ g/ml of streptomycin and 20 mM of HEPES buffer. One  $\times 10^6$  cells/ml of viable PBMC were cultivated in 24-well plates with 2 ml of complete medium in the presence or absence of anti-CD3/anti-CD28 beads (10  $\mu$ l/ml) for 3 days at 37° and 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. In some experiments, enriched CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells were obtained via negative selection using magnetic columns, according to the manufacturer's instructions (EasySep<sup>TM</sup>; StemCell Technology, Vancouver, Canada). Briefly, 50  $\mu$ l of the isolation cocktail were added to a cell suspension of 1  $\times 10^7$  cells in 1 ml of HBSS in a 14-ml tube. After rapidly mixing, the suspension was incubated for 10 min at room temperature. Then, 100  $\mu$ l for CD4<sup>+</sup> and 150  $\mu$ l for CD8<sup>+</sup> of the RapidSpheres suspension, already homogenated, were added to the cell suspension. After rapidly mixing, the cell suspension was incubated at room temperature for 5 min. Finally, 4 ml of HBSS was added to the cell suspension and, after pipetting, the tube was then placed at the magnet for 5 min. Finally, the supernatants were recovered. The purity of CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells was > 98%, as measured by flow cytometry (data not shown). Enriched CD4<sup>+</sup> and

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CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures were maintained for 48 hr in the absence or presence of TLR-4 agonist lipopolysaccharide (LPS; 100 ng/ml from *Escherichia coli* (Sigma-Aldrich, St Louis, MO)), TLR-2 agonist synthetic triacylated lipopeptide (Pam3Csk4, 1  $\mu$ g/ml from InvivoGen, San Diego, CA) or TLR-9 agonist cytosine-phosphate-guanosine (CpG) oligodeoxynucleotides (ODN M362 1  $\mu$ M/ml, from InvivoGen). These concentrations were chosen from a previous study conducted by Voo *et al.*<sup>40</sup> All cell cultures were kept for 48 hr at 37° and 5% CO<sub>2</sub>.

#### Immunofluorescence labelling and flow cytometry

The mouse anti-human monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) to CD3-phycoerythrin-cyanin 5 (PE-Cy5), CD8-fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC), CD4-FITC, TLR-2-PE, TLR-4-PE, TLR-9-PE, IL-17A-PE-Cy7, IFN- $\gamma$  -allophycocyanin (APC), IL-6-APC, IL-10-APC and all isotype-control antibodies were purchased from BD Bioscience (San Diego, CA), and were used to quantify the percentage of different T-cell subsets. Briefly, various combinations of mAbs directed for surface markers were added to PBMC (2  $\times 10^5$ /tube) and incubated for 30 min at room temperature in the dark. The cells were washed with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), then permeabilized by incubating cells with Cytotfix/Cytoperm (BD Pharmingen, San Diego, CA) at 4° for 20 min. After washing, the antibodies for intracellular staining (anti-IL-17, anti-IFN- $\gamma$ , anti-IL-10, anti-IL-6) or the corresponding isotype control anti-immunoglobulin (Ig)G1 were added in various combinations and incubated for 30 min at 4°. The cells were analysed in the Accuri C6 (Accuri<sup>TM</sup>; Ann Arbor, MI) and CFlow software (Accuri<sup>TM</sup>; Ann Arbor). Isotype control antibodies and single-stained samples were used to periodically check the settings and gates on the flow cytometer. After acquisition of 200 000 events, lymphocytes were gated based on forward- and side-scatter properties after the exclusion of dead cells by using propidium iodide and doublets. Further, the gated cells were negative for CD14 marker.

#### ELISA technique

After 48 hr, the supernatant from PAMP-activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells were collected and the cytokines were quantified by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) using OptEIA ELISA kits (BD Pharmingen, San Diego, CA), according to the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, each ELISA was performed using pairs of antibodies against IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-17A (IL-17), IL-22, GM-CSF and IL-10. The reaction was revealed with streptavidin-horseradish peroxidase, using 3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine (TMB) as substrate. Recombinant human cytokines, at concentrations ranging from 3.5 to 500 pg/ml, were used to construct standard curves.

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### Statistical analysis

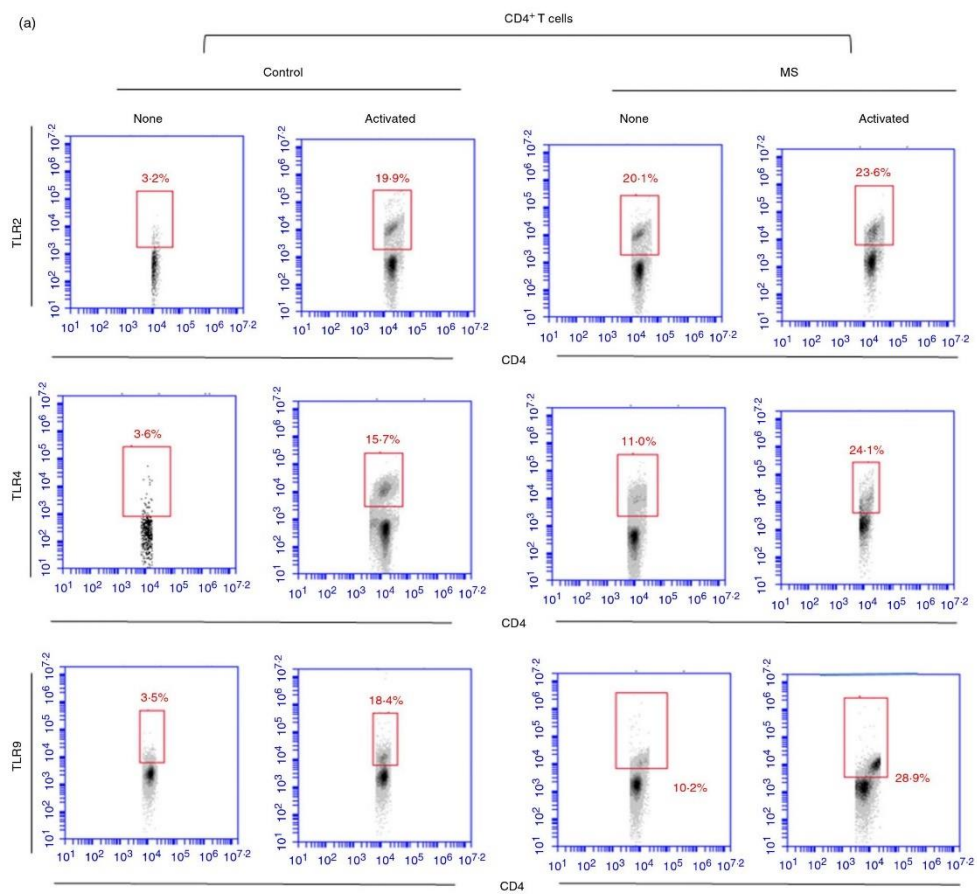
Statistical analysis was performed using PRISM version 5.0 software (GraphPad Software). All immunological evaluations were performed in triplicate or quadruplicate in each individual and the intra-assay variability ranged from 8.7 to 15.1% (median value of 10.1%), as calculated by the software. The non-parametric Mann–Whitney *U*-test and Student's *t*-test were applied to determine whether the two groups were statistically different for non-parametric and parametric variables, respectively.

Correlations between variables were investigated using Pearson's correlation. The significance in all experiments was defined as  $P < 0.05$ .

## Results

### Clinical and demographic data

Our study was performed with 30 MS patients, nine males (30%) and 21 females (70%), all in remission phase (Table 1). The mean age at disease onset was 27.7 years



**Figure 1.** Comparison of the proportion of circulating CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells expressing Toll-like receptor (TLR)-2, -4 and -9 from multiple sclerosis (MS) patients and healthy subjects. Panels (c) and (d) show the proportion [mean  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD)] of TLRs-expressing CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells, respectively. The percentage of T-cells able to express TLRs (-2, -4 and -9) obtained from healthy subjects ( $n = 20$ ) or MS patients ( $n = 30$ ) was evaluated in non-activated or stimulated cell cultures with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 beads for 3 days. *P*-values were obtained by the Mann–Whitney *U*-test. Representative dot-plots showing identification of TLR-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> (a) and CD8<sup>+</sup> (b) T-cells from control and MS patients, after acquisition of 200 000 events, are indicated. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)].

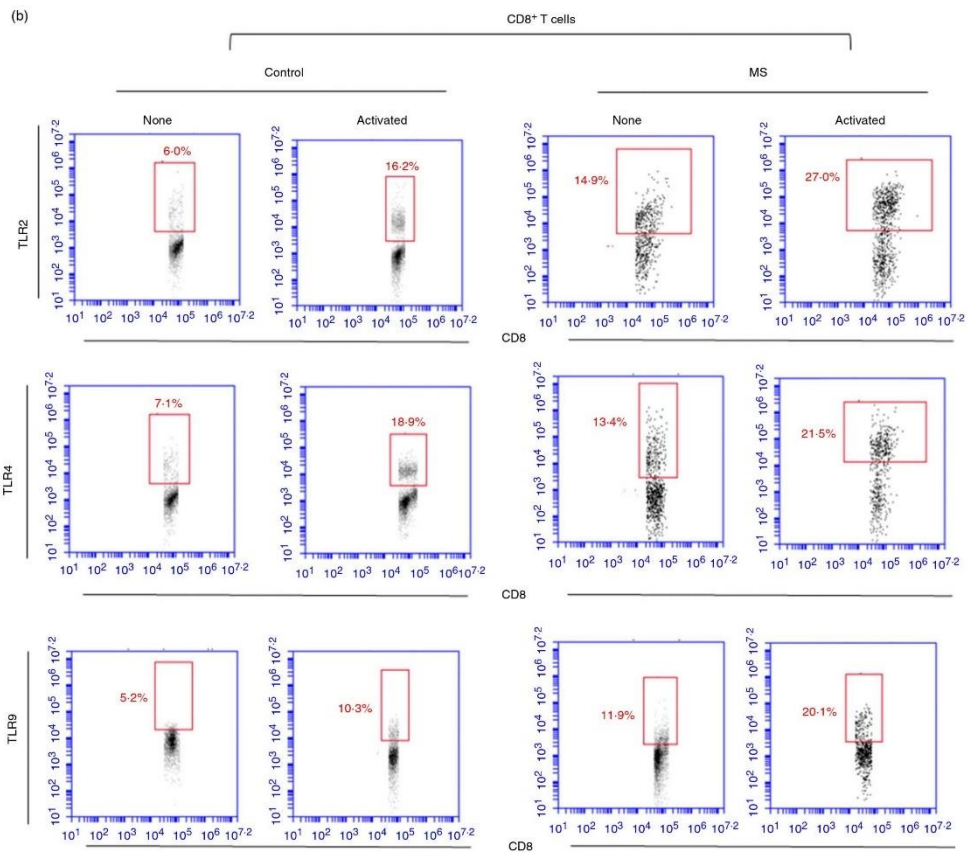
IL-17-secreting TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets and MS

Figure 1. Continued.

(range 17–38 years). Mean time between MS diagnosis and blood sampling was approximately 5.2 years (range 1–13 years). All 30 patients were naive for disease-modifying therapies (DMT); 70% of patients had been previously treated with oral or intravenous corticosteroids to control the acute neurological bouts. However, at the time of the study none of these patients were on corticosteroids for 60 days. Despite all patients being clinically asymptomatic, at the moment of evaluation the data from the brain MRI scan revealed that 18 patients (60%) had active lesions (Table 1).

#### TLR expression on T-cells from MS patients and the cytokine profile

Following the gating strategy shown in Fig. 1a,b, we observed that TLR-2, -4 and -9 expression was

significantly higher at the basal level in both CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells from MS patients than in healthy controls (Fig. 1c,d). Moreover, as shown in Supporting information, Fig. S1, in MS patients the expression levels of TLR-2, TLR-4 and TLR-9 were significantly higher in CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells. Among TLRs (-2, -4 and -9)<sup>+</sup> cells, IL-17A (IL-17) was consistently detected in unstimulated CD4<sup>+</sup> (Fig. 2a and Supporting information, S2a–d) and CD8<sup>+</sup> (Fig. 2c and Supporting information, S3a–d) T-cells from MS patients, but not in the control group. Of note, no difference was observed regarding both percentage and mean fluorescence intensity of MS-derived CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells positive for IL-17 cytokine (data not shown). Following *in-vitro* T-cell activation with anti-CD3-anti-CD28 beads, the proportion of those IL-17<sup>+</sup> cells increased in both experimental groups, but remained higher among TLR-expressing CD4<sup>+</sup> (Fig. 2a and

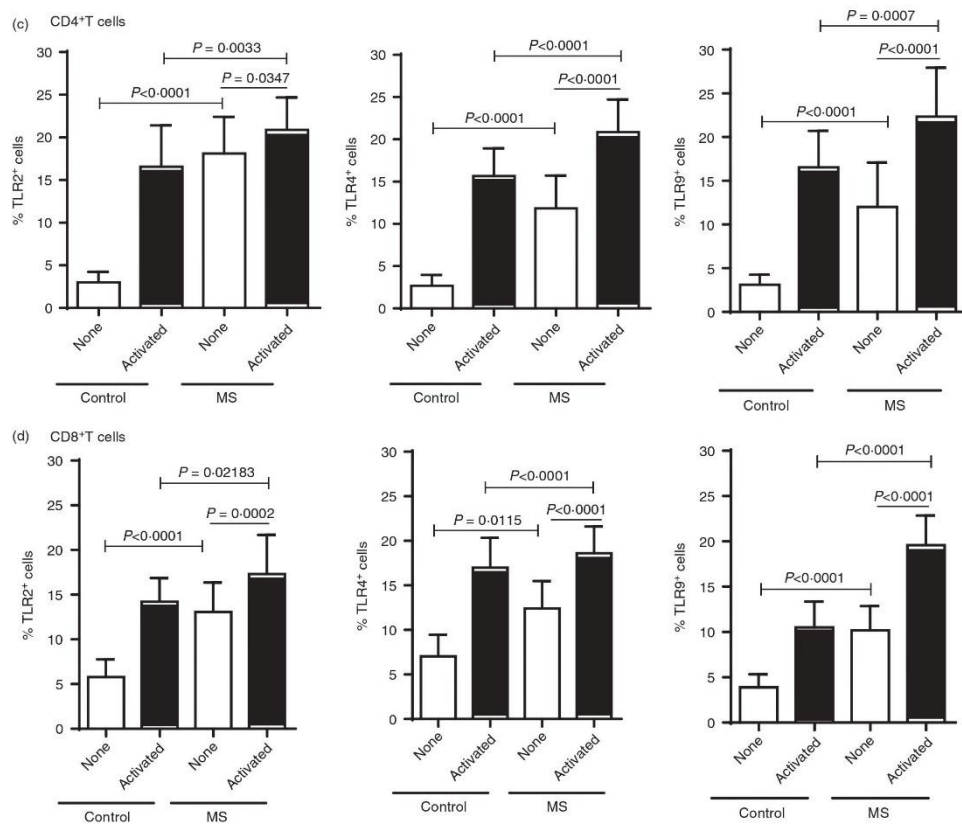
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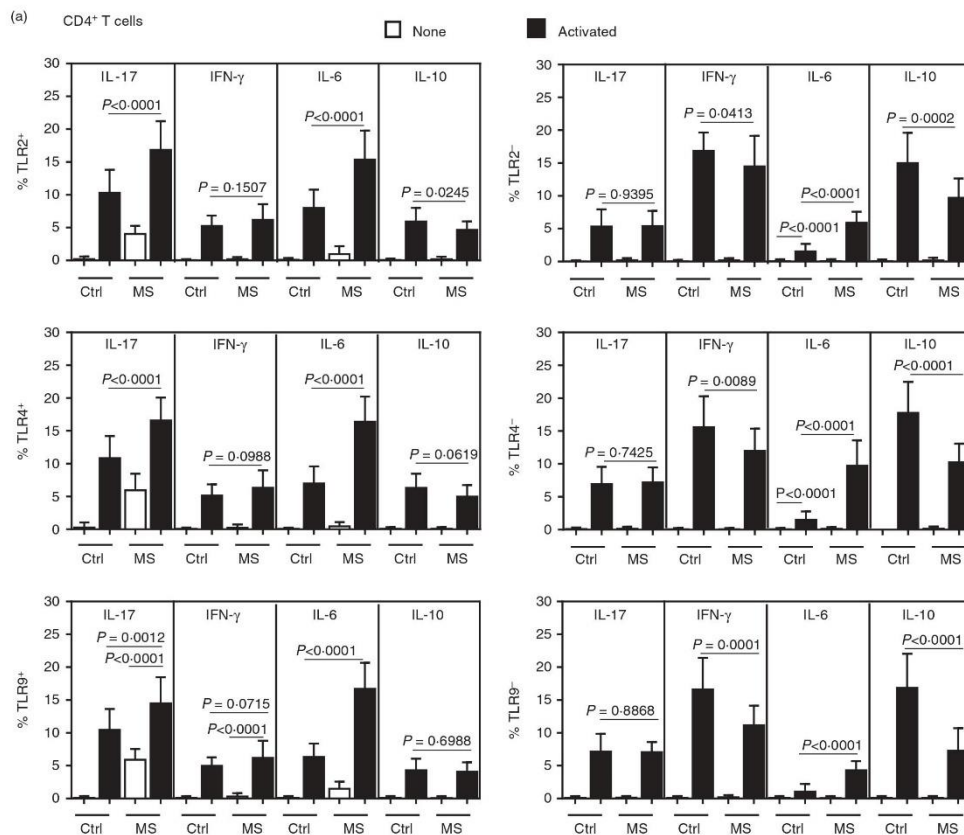
Figure 1. Continued.

Supporting information, S2a–d) and CD8<sup>+</sup> (Fig. 2b and Supporting information, S3a–d) T-cells from MS patients. Moreover, with regard to other cytokines, the proportion of IL-6-producing CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells positive for TLR-2, -4 and -9 was also higher in MS samples when compared with control (Fig. 2a,b). No significance was observed in the percentage of TLR<sup>+</sup> (-2, -4 and -9) CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells capable of producing IFN- $\gamma$  or IL-10 between MS patients and controls (Fig. 2a). By contrast, a higher proportion of IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells were observed in patients with MS (Fig. 2b). The proportions of TLR<sup>+</sup> CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells positive for IL-10 were almost undetectable in majority of patients and controls subjects (Fig. 2b). Among T-cells negative for TLR-2, -4 and -9, detectable cytokine production was seen only after cell activation (Fig. 2b and 2b). While the percentage of activated peripheral IL-6-secreting TLR<sup>-</sup> (CD4 and CD8) T-cells were significantly higher in patients, a

significantly higher proportion of activated IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>-</sup> T-cells was observed only in the MS-derived CD8<sup>+</sup> compartment (Fig. 2b). In contrast to TLR-positive subsets, the percentage of TLR<sup>-</sup> (CD4 and CD8) T-cells able to produce IFN- $\gamma$  and IL-10 was significantly lower in the patient sample (Fig. 2a,b).

#### The proportion of IL-6- and IFN- $\gamma$ -producing TLR<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> T-cells was associated with clinical parameters in MS patients

Although IL-17 is the signature cytokine of the Th17 phenotype, these CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells present a functional heterogeneous lineage, which may perform antagonistic functions.<sup>41–44</sup> The percentage of Th17-like subsets able to produce IL-17 along with IFN- $\gamma$  or with IL-6 was significantly higher among CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells positive for TLR-2, -4 and -9 in MS patients than in the control

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**Figure 2.** The cytokine profile of Toll-like receptor (TLR)<sup>+</sup> T-cells in MS patients. The percentage ( $\pm$  standard deviation (SD)) of CD4<sup>+</sup> (a) and CD8<sup>+</sup> (b) T-cells positive for TLR-2, -4 and -9 able to produce interleukin (IL)-17, interferon (IFN)- $\gamma$ , IL-6 or IL-10 was determined before and after activating T-cells ( $1 \times 10^6$ /ml) from control individuals ( $n = 20$ ) and multiple sclerosis (MS) patients ( $n = 30$ ). The cells were activated with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 (5  $\mu$ l/ml), for 3 days. The *P*-values were obtained by the Mann-Whitney *U*-test. Representative histograms showing identification of IL-17, IFN- $\gamma$ , IL-6 or IL-10 production by TLR<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> (Supporting information, Fig. S1) and TLR<sup>+</sup> CD8<sup>+</sup> (Supporting information, Fig. S2) T-cells from both groups, after acquisition of 200 000 events, are shown in the supplementary figures.

group (Fig. 3b). No significant difference was observed in terms of dual IL-10- and IL-17-secreting T-cells. Moreover, in MS patients, the proportion of IL-6-secreting IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> (-2, -4 and -9) T-cells, either CD4 or CD8 cells, was significantly higher than those able to co-produce IFN- $\gamma$  or IL-10 (Fig. 3a,b). In our previous study, IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell frequencies were positively associated with neurological disabilities, as determined by Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) score.<sup>44</sup> The percentage of IL-6<sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> and IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> subsets, for both activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells, were positively correlated with radiological

activity of the disease and neurological disabilities (Table 2). Nevertheless, taking into consideration the *P*-values, in general a stronger correlation was observed between the frequency of IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets and the number of active brain lesions, mainly those positive for TLR-2. No correlation was observed between clinical parameters and dual IL-17 and IL-6-producing (CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup>) T-cells negative for TLR-2, -4 and -9 (data not shown). Furthermore, no correlation was seen between these signs of clinical activity of the disease and the proportion of all IL-17-secreting T-cell subsets when maintained with medium alone (data not shown).

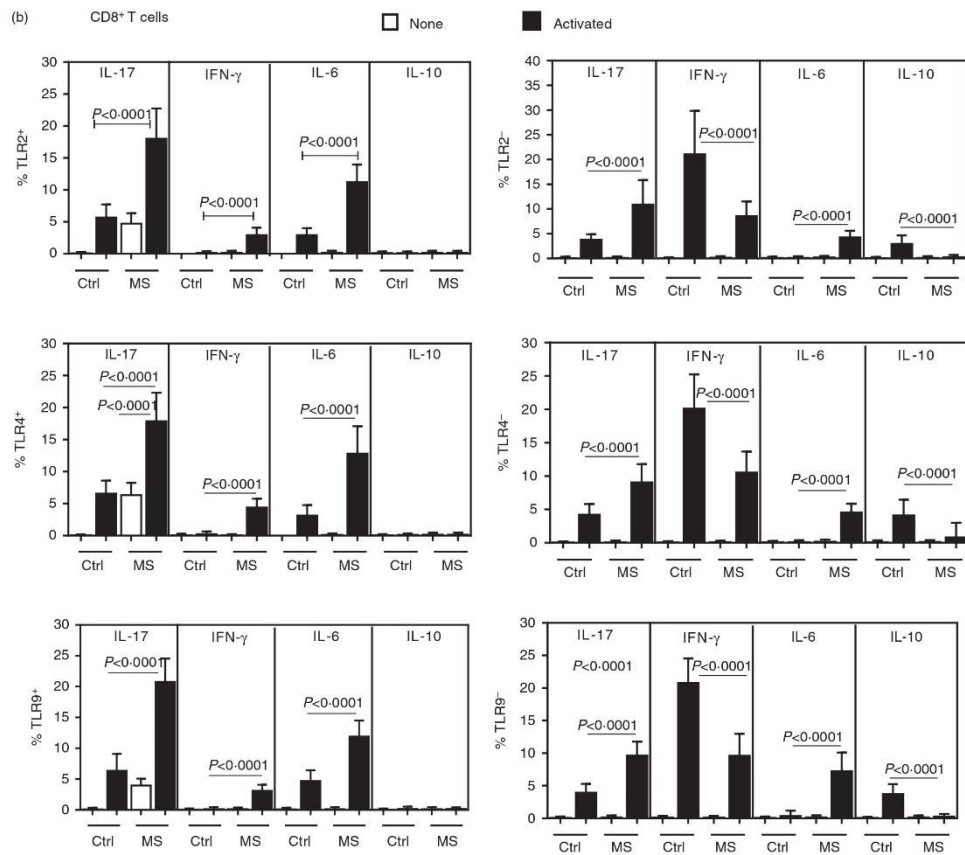
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Figure 2. Continued.

#### The levels of IL-6, IL-17, IFN- $\gamma$ and GM-CSF released by purified T-cells were correlated with disease activity

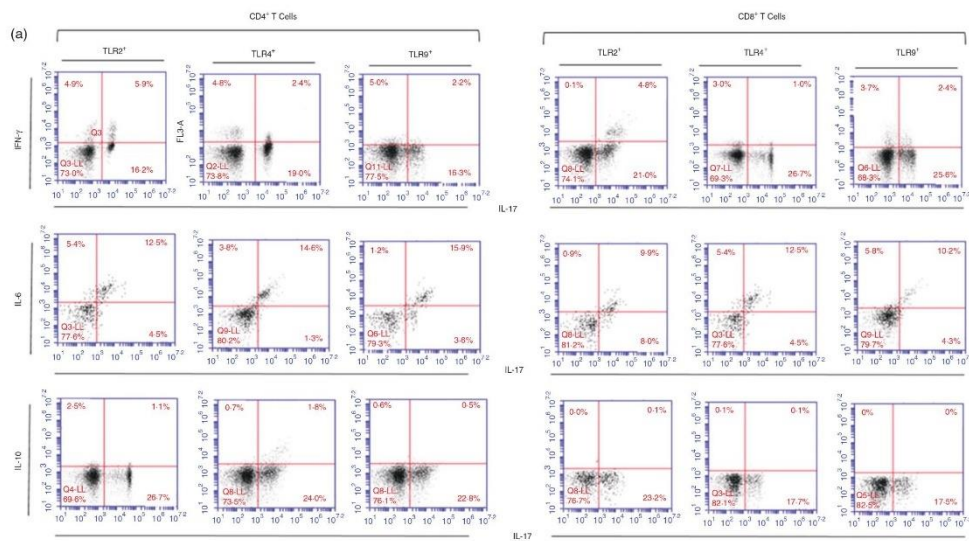
The ability of T-cells to express TLR-2, -4 and -9 suggests that those cells may directly respond to agonists for these PRRs. As observed in Fig. 4, the Pam3Csk4 (TLR-2L), LPS (TLR-4L) and ODN (TLR-9L) were able to directly induce cytokine production by purified CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells from MS patients. Among the PAMPs, Pam3Csk4 was more potent at inducing the production of all proinflammatory cytokines by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures (Fig. 4a). Moreover, the production of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6 and IL-17 by Pam3Csk4-activated CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells was higher when compared with LPS and ODN. In terms of IL-10, its production was elevated in CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells after addition of LPS. More importantly, the number of active

brain lesions and EDSS scores were positively associated with IL-6 levels produced by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells in response to LPS and Pam3Csk4 (Table 3). Further, the release of IFN- $\gamma$  and IL-17 by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells, as well as IL-17 from CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells, in response to Pam3Csk4 was directly correlated with clinical parameters (Table 3). Finally, CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells from patients with the highest number of brain lesions responded *in vitro* to Pam3Csk4 stimulation, releasing higher GM-CSF levels (Table 3). No correlation was observed between clinical parameters and cytokine content by ODN-activated CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells (data not shown).

#### Discussion

Pathogens and their PAMPs have been linked to autoimmune diseases, and are associated with the breakdown of



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**Figure 3.** The proportion of different interleukin (IL)-17-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells positive for Toll-like receptors (TLR) in MS patients. Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) ( $1 \times 10^6/\text{ml}$ ), obtained from multiple sclerosis (MS) patients ( $n = 30$ ), were stimulated with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 (5  $\mu\text{l/ml}$ ), for 3 days. In (b), the proportion [mean  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD)] of dual IL-17/IL-10-, IL-17/interferon (IFN)- $\gamma$ - or IL-17/IL-6 by CD4<sup>+</sup> or CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells able to express TLR-2, TLR-4 and TLR-9 are shown. In (a), representative dot-plots showing identification of different IL-17-producing TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets, after acquisition of 200 000 events, are indicated. The *P*-values were obtained by the Mann-Whitney *U*-test. \**P* < 0.05; \*\*\**P* < 0.0001. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)].

immunological tolerance via activation of self-reactive T-cells.<sup>8,15,17,18,45</sup> In the present study, we demonstrated a relationship between elevated TLR-2, -4 and -9 expression on IL-17-secreting T-cell subsets and disease severity in MS patients.

In MS, the TLR engagement by different PAMPs on DCs appears to favour both Th1 and Th17 phenotypes by releasing high levels of IL-12 and IL-23, respectively.<sup>45</sup> Activated human T-cells also express TLRs, and studies suggest that TLR ligands may result in a lower threshold for T-cell reactivation via TCR.<sup>35,46–48</sup> In the present study, the frequency of CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells expressing TLR-2, -4 and -9 was higher in MS patients than healthy individuals, even in the absence of stimulus. Of note, a higher percentage of those TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cells in patients was also observed *ex vivo*, i.e. after immediate staining of blood sampling (data not shown). In the future, we hope to evaluate the expression of other types of TLRs.

In EAE, CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells deficient in TLR-2 expression were partially protected from experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis.<sup>49,50</sup> In humans, TLRs are involved in the pathogenesis of others Th17-mediated autoimmune diseases, such as SLE,<sup>51</sup> rheumatoid arthritis<sup>52</sup> and

neuromyelitis optic spectrum disorder.<sup>53</sup> A recent study by Zastepa *et al.*<sup>54</sup> demonstrated sustained TLR-2 and -4 expression on naive CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells following *in-vitro* polyclonal activation in MS patients who evolved rapidly to the progressive form of the disease. These findings suggest the involvement of TLR expression in T-cells in MS pathogenesis.

In the present study, although elevated expression of TLR-2, -4 and -9 on MS-derived T-cells was not correlated *per se* with clinical parameters (data not shown), IL-17<sup>+</sup> IL-6<sup>+</sup> and IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> among TLR<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets directly correlated with the number of active brain lesions and neurological disabilities, as determined by EDSS score. These data suggest an involvement of different Th17-like phenotypes in MS.

It is well recognized that IL-17-secreting T-cells present a functional heterogeneous lineage. Among CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells, some pathogenic human Th17 cell subsets have been identified through co-expression of CCR6 and CXCR3 and simultaneous production of cytokines IL-17 and IFN- $\gamma$ .<sup>55</sup> The differentiation of this T-cell subset depends upon IL-6, IL-1 $\beta$  and IL-23 associated with an absence of transforming growth factor (TGF)- $\beta$ .<sup>55–58</sup> Upon transfer, these IFN- $\gamma$ -secreting Th17 cells induced more severe

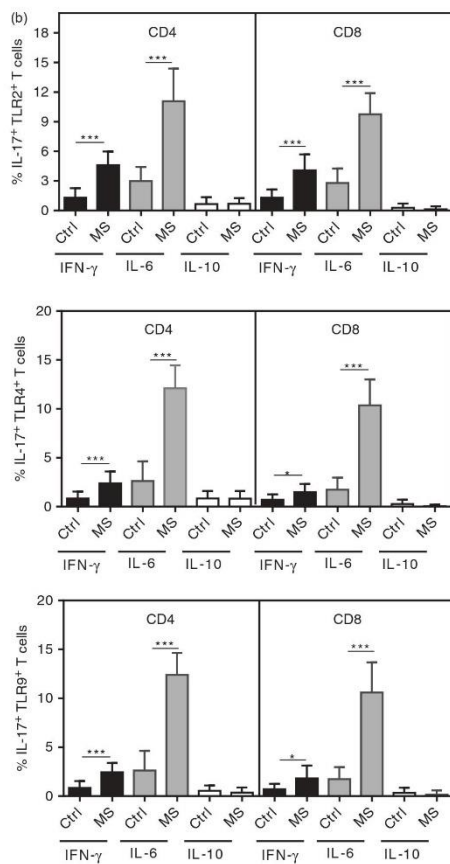
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Figure 3. Continued.

EAE than those that received the classical Th17 cells.<sup>55</sup> Although these cells present a minor T-cell phenotype among those that secrete IL-17 or IFN- $\gamma$ , they were found in the blood and CSF from MS patients during clinical relapses.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in our previous study, a proportion of total IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> IL-17<sup>+</sup> (CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup>) T-cells was associated with EDSS score.<sup>44</sup> These data suggest that circulating IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup> T-cells, regardless of expression of TLR-2, -4 and -9, may present pathogenic phenotypes in MS. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, we report for the first time an expansion of IL-17<sup>+</sup> IL-6<sup>+</sup> TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cells that was associated with MS severity.

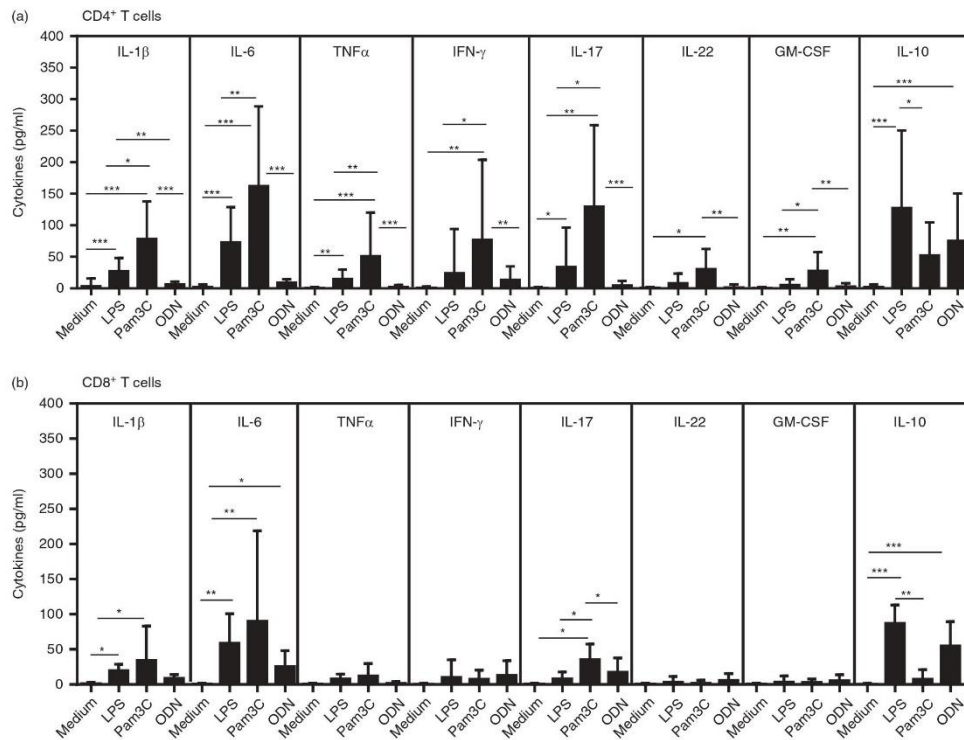
It is known that knock-out mice for IL-6 are resistant to EAE induction.<sup>59</sup> Ferreira *et al.*<sup>60</sup> also demonstrated that endogenous IL-6 is important to maintain the production of IL-17 by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells from MS patients, as well as its role in favouring Th17 phenotype differentiation. Further,

**Table 2.** Correlation coefficient (*r*) between the proportion of different interleukin (IL)-17-secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets expressing Toll-like receptors (TLRs) and clinical parameters in multiple sclerosis (MS) patients

	No. active brain lesions		EDSS	
	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
% TLR-2 <sup>+</sup> CD4 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.9537	<b>&lt;0.0001</b>	0.5556	<b>0.0110</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.4798	<b>0.0323</b>	0.4553	<b>0.0437</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	-0.035	0.8807	-0.024	0.92
% TLR-4 <sup>+</sup> CD4 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.6420	<b>0.0023</b>	0.5013	<b>0.0312</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.4909	<b>0.0280</b>	0.4707	<b>0.0362</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	-0.1147	0.6303	-0.1111	0.6411
% TLR-9 <sup>+</sup> CD4 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.5565	<b>0.0018</b>	0.5136	<b>0.0396</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.6359	<b>0.0026</b>	0.4511	<b>0.0471</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	-0.3699	0.1085	-0.3193	0.1699
% TLR-2 <sup>+</sup> CD8 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.7478	<b>0.0002</b>	0.5014	<b>0.0251</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.4739	<b>0.0348</b>	0.4509	<b>0.0460</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	0.30	0.7974	0.3098	0.1837
% TLR-4 <sup>+</sup> CD8 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.6137	<b>0.0040</b>	0.4924	<b>0.0274</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.5435	<b>0.0133</b>	0.4115	<b>0.0373</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	0.1234	0.6043	0.1346	0.6043
% TLR-9 <sup>+</sup> CD8 <sup>+</sup> T-cells				
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>	0.5649	<b>0.0151</b>	0.437	<b>0.0412</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-6 <sup>+</sup>	0.5449	<b>0.0130</b>	0.478	<b>0.0406</b>
IL-17 <sup>+</sup> IL-10 <sup>+</sup>	0.3301	0.1552	0.3057	0.190

The proportion of different T helper type 17 (Th17)-like subsets from MS patients was compared with radiological activity of the disease ( $n = 18$ ) and neurological disabilities ( $n = 30$ ), determined by the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) score. IFN, interferon; IL, interleukin; TNF, tumour necrosis factor. Significant *P* values are highlighted in bold.

excess of IL-6 damaged T<sub>reg</sub> cells function through reduction of FoxP3 protein expression and release of IL-10, a potent anti-inflammatory cytokine.<sup>61,62</sup> In the present study, the percentage of IL-10<sup>+</sup> (CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup>) T-cells negative for TLR-2, -4 and -9 was significantly lower in patients; however, no relationship was observed with clinical parameters (data not shown). Nevertheless, there is a possibility that, *in vivo*, excessive production of IL-6 by different T-cell subsets co-stimulated with different TLR ligands may overcome T<sub>reg</sub>-mediated suppression of encephalitogenic T-cells. Nyirenda *et al.*<sup>37</sup> showed that TLR-2 ligand Pam3Csk4 and TLR-4 ligand LPS directly blocked anti-CD3-activated T<sub>reg</sub> cell function by reducing IL-10 production, and by inducing resistance in effector T-cells to T<sub>reg</sub> suppression. In general, these results suggest that PAMPs, via different mechanisms, may play a pathogenic role in autoimmunity.



**Figure 4.** Cytokine production by T-cells from multiple sclerosis (MS) patients in response to pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs). The cytokine content in the supernatants collected from purified CD4<sup>+</sup> (a) and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cell (b) cultures maintained for 2 days in the absence or presence of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) (100  $\mu$ g/ml), Pam3Csk4 (1  $\mu$ g/ml) and oligodeoxynucleotide (ODN) (1  $\mu$ M/ml) was determined using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). In the figure, (\*), (\*\*) and (\*\*\*) indicate *P*-values < 0.05, < 0.001 and < 0.0001.

With regard to IFN- $\gamma$ , no difference was observed in the total IFN- $\gamma$ -secreting CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells between the two experimental groups (data not shown). Nevertheless, the IFN- $\gamma$ -producing (CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup>) T-cells negative for TLR-2, -4 and -9 were significantly lower in MS patients than in healthy subjects, which may be a consequence of a trend of higher percentage of IFN- $\gamma$ -secreting TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets.

Although PAMPs co-stimulate T-cell activation, in the present study we have demonstrated that TLR-2, -4 and -9 can directly induce cytokine production by purified CD4<sup>+</sup> T and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells from MS patients. In general, among PAMPs, Pam3Csk4, a TLR-2 ligand (TLR-2L), was more potent in inducing the production of all proinflammatory cytokines by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures. Moreover, the production of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6 and IL-17 by Pam3Csk4-activated CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells was higher when compared with LPS and ODN. In contrast, the Pam3Csk4 induced

almost no IL-10. These findings are in agreement with reported studies demonstrating the ability of Pam3Csk4 to promote production of proinflammatory cytokines by memory T-cells from healthy individuals and MS patients, whereas it inhibits IL-10 production by T<sub>reg</sub> cell subsets.<sup>37,40,46,49</sup> When we correlate the cytokine content and clinical parameters, IL-6 levels produced by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells in response to LPS and Pam3Csk4 correlated positively with the number of active brain lesions and EDSS scores. The same relationship was seen between IFN- $\gamma$ , released by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells, and IL-17, produced by both CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells in response to TLR-2L. In addition, CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cell cultures from patients with radiological active disease secreted higher GM-CSF levels when activated with Pam3Csk4. No relationship was observed between the cytokine response of CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells to ODN and clinical parameters, which could be explained by lower levels of all proinflammatory cytokines

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**Table 3.** Correlation coefficient (*r*) between the *in-vitro* cytokine production by CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells from multiple sclerosis (MS) patients following different Toll like receptors (TLRs) agonists and clinical parameters

	No. active brain lesions		EDSS	
	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>
<b>CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells</b>				
TLR-4 agonist				
IL-1 $\beta$	0.2801	0.2904	0.2332	0.3809
IL-6	0.6993	<b>0.0034</b>	0.6690	<b>0.0058</b>
TNF- $\alpha$	0.3085	0.2424	0.3684	0.1596
IFN- $\gamma$	0.3608	0.1762	0.2785	0.3024
IL-17	0.1178	0.66	0.1386	0.6034
IL-22	0.2162	0.4637	0.1327	0.4680
GM-CSF	0.2414	0.3668	0.1945	0.4680
IL-10	0.2445	0.3587	0.2272	0.3942
TLR-2 agonist				
IL-1 $\beta$	0.5123	0.0912	0.4735	0.1218
IL-6	0.7754	<b>0.0042</b>	0.8022	<b>0.0026</b>
TNF- $\alpha$	0.1857	0.5577	0.2680	0.3939
IFN- $\gamma$	0.5921	<b>0.0464</b>	0.5991	<b>0.04321</b>
IL-17	0.5986	<b>0.0429</b>	0.7713	<b>0.0045</b>
IL-22	0.4170	0.1773	0.3950	0.2030
GM-CSF	0.6387	<b>0.0290</b>	0.5045	0.0960
IL-10	-0.3189	0.2981	-0.3292	0.2740
<b>CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells</b>				
TLR-4 agonist				
IL-1 $\beta$	0.4857	0.3556	0.2942	0.5667
IL-6	0.8697	<b>0.0333</b>	0.9553	<b>0.0222</b>
TNF- $\alpha$	0.4414	0.4333	0.5909	0.2444
IFN- $\gamma$	0.3928	0.6667	0.4045	0.6661
IL-17	0.3816	0.6605	0.4112	0.6567
IL-22	0.3928	0.6645	0.4043	0.6661
GM-CSF	0.3921	0.6660	0.4045	0.6667
IL-10	0.2310	0.65	0.1941	0.7722
TLR-2 agonist				
IL-1 $\beta$	0.2571	0.6583	0.4414	0.4111
IL-6	0.8407	<b>0.0444</b>	0.8359	<b>0.0667</b>
TNF- $\alpha$	0.5161	0.3333	0.4690	0.3101
IFN- $\gamma$	0.6761	0.2	0.6093	0.2667
IL-17	0.9429	<b>0.0167</b>	0.9122	<b>0.022</b>
IL-22	0.1309	0.6667	0.435	0.3339
GM-CSF	0.4395	0.4	0.4553	0.2771
IL-10	-0.3043	0.3333	-0.3482	0.2665

The levels of different cytokines produced by CD4 and CD8 T-cell cultures maintained for 48 hr in the presence of lipopolysaccharide (LPS) [Toll-like receptor (TLR)-4L], Pam3Csk4 (TLR-2L) and oligodeoxynucleotide (ODN) (TLR-9L) were correlated with the number of active brain lesions ( $n = 18$ ) and neurological disabilities, determined ( $n = 20$ ) using the Expanded Disability Status Scale (EDSS) score. IFN, interferon; IL, interleukin; TNF, tumour necrosis factor; GM-CSF, granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor. Significant *P* values are highlighted in bold.

in those cultures. Nevertheless, ODN, like other PAMPs, could co-stimulate TCR-induced T-effector function.<sup>47,63</sup> At present, we are dedicated to analysing the impact of different PAMPs on modulating cytokine production by T-cells stimulated by myelin antigens. These data are in line with some studies showing the ability of PAMPs to preferentially activate Th1 and Th17 phenotypes, probably due to high TLR expression.<sup>15,45,50,64</sup>

The presence of GM-CSF<sup>+</sup> T-cell phenotypes have been associated with disease activity in both EAE and MS.<sup>32,33</sup> This haematopoietic factor should contribute to neuronal damage by inducing recruitment and activation of monocytes into the CNS.<sup>65</sup> Here, the ability of TLR-2L to induce the production of GM-CSF by CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells reinforced the adverse impact of infections in MS.

While TLR-4 and -9 recognize LPS and DNA from bacteria and virus, respectively, TLR-2 is required for recognition of diverse microbial molecules from various types of microorganisms, such as Gram-positive bacteria rich in TLR-2 ligands and *Clostridium perfringens*, recently associated with NMOSD, another CNS neurodegenerative autoimmune disease.<sup>66,67</sup> Interestingly, dysbiosis with overgrowth of commensal species belonging to the *Clostridia* cluster has been reported in MS patients.<sup>68</sup> Excessive TLR-2 ligands from these bacteria are known to induce colitis in animal models of inflammatory bowel disease.<sup>69</sup> These findings suggest the adverse impact of microbial translocation in MS. In this context, a study published by our group<sup>70</sup> demonstrated elevated plasma levels of LPS in MS patients, which were directly related to *in-vivo* IL-6 production. Finally, the presence of endogenous TLR ligands, called danger-associated molecular patterns (DAMPs), could also contribute to MS. In MS, heat shock protein (HSP)70 is a DAMP highly expressed on brain lesions<sup>71</sup> that binds to myelin basic protein, forming an immunogenic complex<sup>72</sup> able to influence the induction of EAE.<sup>73</sup> Although further studies are required, these findings suggest that infections or events that elevate intestinal translocation of bacteria should impact upon the progression of MS by favouring the activation of encephalitogenic memory TLR<sup>+</sup> Th17 cell subsets, both directly and indirectly, through release of alarmins (DAMPs) from damaged cells during inflammatory reactions against pathogens and/or their PAMPs.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, our data, although preliminary, suggest that the expansion of different Th17/Tc-17-like phenotypes expressing TLR-2, -4 and -9 are associated with MS severity, and reveal a particular ability of the TLR-2

IL-17-secreting TLR<sup>+</sup> T-cell subsets and MS

ligand to directly induce cytokine production related to brain lesions and neurological disabilities. This study is significant, because we believe that our data highlight possible molecular mechanisms by which microorganisms negatively impact autoimmunity, which could help to design immunotherapeutic tools for MS patients.

## Disclosure

All authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Figure S1.** The levels of expression of Toll-like receptor (TLR) on T-cells from multiple sclerosis (MS) patients.

**Figure S2.** Representative flow cytometric histograms showing the percentage of peripheral cytokine-producing CD4<sup>+</sup> T-cells able to express, or not, Toll-like receptor (TLR)-2, -4 and -9 in healthy and multiple sclerosis (MS) patients.

**Figure S3.** Representative flow cytometric histograms showing the percentage of peripheral cytokine-producing CD8<sup>+</sup> T-cells able to express, or not, Toll-like receptor (TLR)-2, -4 and -9 in healthy and multiple sclerosis (MS) patients.

## 4 DISCUSSÃO

A esclerose múltipla (EM) é uma doença autoimune, de caráter crônico, na qual células T autoreativas dirigidas contra a bainha de mielina são ativadas na periferia e migram para o sistema nervoso central (SNC) (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005). Uma vez dentro do parênquima nervoso, essas células disparam uma resposta inflamatória contra as proteínas dos oligodendrócitos, o que culmina no processo de desmielinização gerando os sintomas da doença (COMPSTON; COLES, 2008). No entanto, o desenvolvimento e a gravidade da EM dependem da interação complexa entre diferentes eventos ambientais capazes de desregular o comportamento funcional das células T em indivíduos com predisposição genética para a doença (RAMAGOPALAN et al., 2010; SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005). No presente estudo de tese, nós observamos que produtos biológicos presentes durante o estresse e infecções podem impactar negativamente o prognóstico e a resposta terapêutica aos corticoides nos pacientes com EM remitente-recorrente (EM-RR).

Durante muitos anos após a descrição da doença, feita por Jean Baptiste Charcot, em 1868 (SOSPEDRA; MARTIN, 2005), o conhecimento sobre a doença cresceu de forma lenta. Nos últimos 40 anos, graças ao surgimento de novas técnicas laboratoriais e de imagem, associados a estudos em modelos experimentais da doença e ao nosso melhor entendimento sobre o perfil funcional das células T, grandes avanços no entendimento de sua imunopatogênese têm sido feitos. Embora o modelo murino da doença, a encefalomielite autoimune experimental (EAE), que é o mais usado no estudo experimental da doença (LASSMANN; BRADL, 2016), não cubra todos os cursos clínicos que a EM pode apresentar (LASSMANN; BRADL, 2016), estudos nesses animais ainda são muito importantes para entender algumas particularidades que não podem ser observadas em humanos.

Nesse sentido, tanto em modelos animais quanto em pacientes, a expansão de clones de células T específicas para proteínas da bainha de mielina com comportamento relacionado principalmente ao fenótipo Th17 parecem ser cruciais para desenvolvimento da doença (EDWARDS; ROBINS; CONSTANTINESCU, 2010; JADIDI-NIARAGH; MIRSHAFIEY, 2011; LOVETT-RACKE; YANG; RACKE, 2011; RODRIGUES et al., 2016; SIE; KORN; MITSDOERFFER, 2014; YANG et al., 2014). Atualmente, sabemos que as células Th17 representam, na verdade, uma linhagem

celular complexa com diferentes subtipos capazes de exercer diferentes funções biológicas (KLEINWITTFELD; HAFLE, 2013; MADDUR et al., 2012; MURANSKI; RESTIFO, 2013). No contexto da EM, achados da literatura sugerem que a produção de IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6 e IL-23 pelas células acessórias da imunidade inata seja necessária para induzir a diferenciação das células Th17 encefalitogênicas (EL-BEHI et al., 2011; LANGRISH et al., 2005; ZHOU et al., 2007), conhecidas por produzir não apenas IL-17, mas também IL-22, GM-CSF e, até mesmo, IFN- $\gamma$  (BONIFACE et al., 2010; KUWABARA et al., 2017; VOLPE; BATTISTINI; BORSELLINO, 2015). Em nosso primeiro artigo apresentado, publicado na *Immunology* (2014) (Artigo 1), os sobrenadantes colhidos de monócitos ativados com LPS obtidos de pacientes com EM não apenas continham maiores níveis de IL-6 e IL-23, quando comparado ao grupo controle, como também foram capazes de amplificar a produção de IL-17 pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> autólogas. Nesse mesmo sistema, a neutralização da sinalização via receptor da IL-6 pelo anticorpo monoclonal anti-IL-6R, o tocilizumab, nas culturas de monócitos foi capaz de atenuar esse fenômeno observado nas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> após a transferência desses sobrenadantes. De forma interessante, nos primeiros dois artigos, os níveis de IL-17 e IL-6 foram diretamente associados a pontuação do EDSS, escala que mede incapacidade neurológica dos pacientes, com ênfase na habilidade motora (KURTZE, 1983). A IL-6 deve exercer um efeito adverso na EM por diferentes mecanismos, como favorecer a diferenciação das células Th17 patogênicas em sistema de ativação das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> na presença de IL-23 e na ausência de TGF- $\beta$  (GHORESCHI et al., 2010; MADDUR et al., 2012; MCGEACHY et al., 2009).

A IL-6 é fundamental para a indução da EAE (EUGSTER et al., 1998; OKUDA et al., 1998, 1999). Entretanto, e de forma interessante, nesses animais deficientes para IL-6, a imunização com a glicoproteína da mielina do oligodendrócito (MOG – *myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein*) não interferiu com a ativação das células T e produção de IL-2 e IFN- $\gamma$  em resposta *in vitro* à adição de MOG (EUGSTER et al., 1998). Esses resultados sugerem que, ou as células Th17 mielinas-específicas não sejam importantes na EAE, ou a invasão dessas células no SNC dos animais dependa das citocinas liberadas pelas células Th17 capazes de romper a barreira hematoencefálica (BHE). De fato, essa última hipótese está de acordo com achados na literatura sugerindo a importância da IL-17 em facilitar a migração das células T através do plexo coroide (KEBIR et al., 2007).



Em humanos com EM, tanto o mRNA para a IL-6 quanto a proteína IL-6 foram encontrados em lesões ativas e inativas, principalmente associada a astrócitos e dentro de células gliais residentes em áreas de desmielinização e ativação imune, além de áreas perivasculares inflamadas (MAIMONE; GUAZZI; ANNUNZIATA, 1997; SCHÖNROCK; GAWLOWSKI; BRÜCK, 2000; WOODROOFE; CUZNER, 1993). Em pacientes com EM, níveis elevados dessa citocina foram encontrados no plasma (FREI et al., 1991), enquanto que no LCR, os resultados parecem conflitantes. Estudo por Frei e colaboradores, publicado em 1991, não encontrou níveis significativos de IL-6 no LCR dos pacientes com a forma remitente recorrente da doença (EM-RR – esclerose múltipla remitente-recorrente) utilizando o ensaio de crescimento de hibridomas (FREI et al., 1991). Já Navikas e colaboradores encontraram um grande número de células que apresentavam o mRNA para essa citocina, maior que no sangue periférico utilizando hibridização *in situ* em pacientes com diferentes cursos da EM (NAVIKAS et al., 1996). Maimone e colaboradores também encontraram níveis altos de IL-6 no LCR de pacientes com cursos distintos de EM quando comparados a pacientes com doenças neurológicas não-inflamatórias usando um ensaio de hibridomas murinos dependentes de IL-6 (MAIMONE et al., 1991). Mesmo em pacientes com a forma progressiva secundária da doença (EM-PS – esclerose múltipla progressiva secundária) as células IL-6<sup>+</sup> se mostravam uniformemente distribuídas ao longo das lesões agudas ativas e às margens das lesões crônicas ativas (MAIMONE; GUAZZI; ANNUNZIATA, 1997). Essas células eram, em sua maioria, astrócitos, mas macrófagos também apresentaram marcação para IL-6. Já nas lesões crônicas inativas, pouquíssimas ou nenhuma marcação para IL-6 foi observada (MAIMONE; GUAZZI; ANNUNZIATA, 1997). Coletivamente, a maioria dos achados na literatura aponta para um efeito deletério da IL-6 na EM.

Outro achado interessante que implica a IL-6 na EM é sua provável capacidade em amplificar resistência a resistência a corticoides. Em nosso primeiro artigo apresentado (Artigo 1), a adição do tocilizumab elevou a capacidade da HC em reduzir a proliferação e a produção de citocinas relacionadas ao fenótipo Th17 em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> de pacientes com EM (FERREIRA et al., 2014a). Adicionalmente, nessas culturas, o bloqueio da sinalização da IL-6, elevou a produção de IL-10 e TGF- $\beta$ . Esses resultados sugerem que a excessiva produção de IL-6 pode elevar a resistência dos pacientes ao tratamento com corticoides, amplamente usados no manejo clínico das crises agudas de incapacidade neurológica. De fato, resistência

imune aos corticoides tem sido observada tanto clinicamente quanto em cultura por alguns autores (DE KLOET et al., 2007; FAGAN et al., 2013; GOLD et al., 2012; MATYSIAK et al., 2008; STEPHANOU et al., 1997; VOORHEES et al., 2009).

Finalmente, a excessiva produção de IL-6 também pode comprometer mecanismos intrínsecos de regulação imune pelas células Tregs (CHEN et al., 2009; FUJIMOTO et al., 2011). A IL-6 não apenas reduz a capacidade funcional dessas células Tregs como também pode induzi-las a expressar genes relacionados a diferenciação do fenótipo Th17 (BETTELLI et al., 2006; FUJIMOTO et al., 2011; KIMURA; KISHIMOTO, 2010; VELDHOEN et al., 2006; YANG et al., 2008). Em resumo geral, os dados apresentados no Artigo 1 sugerem que a IL-6 pode ser um importante alvo terapêutico. Essa abordagem não é nova em doenças autoimunes. Em pacientes com artrite reumatoide, o bloqueio do IL-6R através do tocilizumab se mostrou um tratamento eficiente (SHETTY et al., 2014). Outro anticorpo, dessa vez contra a própria IL-6, o sirukumab, está passando por diferentes estudos de fase III para tratamento da artrite reumatoide (REICHERT, 2016).

Da mesma forma, os achados obtidos no Artigo 2 também sinalizam o impacto negativo que eventos ambientais podem exercer na EM por favorecer a produção de IL-6, como o estresse.

Assim como em outras doenças autoimunes, a patogênese da EM deve ser influenciada pela ocorrência de transtornos de humor (MOHR et al., 2004; STOJANOVICH; MARISAVLJEVICH, 2008; WELSH et al., 2009). Uma associação clara entre a ocorrência de eventos de grande estresse e desenvolvimento da EM têm sido identificada em 70 a 80% dos pacientes (MOHR et al., 2004; SCHUMANN et al., 2012). Sabe-se que durante o estresse, o comportamento funcional das células T pode ser mediado por um conjunto de neurotransmissores, como a dopamina (DA), a principal catecolamina produzida no SNC, uma vez que as células T humanas expressam todos os subtipos de receptores para a DA. Portanto, a segunda parte de minha tese de doutorado foi investigar o papel dessa catecolamina em modular o status funcional das células T de pacientes com EM.

No trabalho publicado na revista *Brain, Behavior and Immunity* (2014) (Artigo 2) nós demonstramos que a dose usada, relacionada ao estresse, da DA foi capaz de amplificar, *in vitro*, a produção de IL-17 pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> ativadas policlonalmente e obtidas de pacientes com EM (FERREIRA et al., 2014b). Adicionalmente, essa catecolamina elevou a produção de IL-6 por monócitos dos

pacientes ativados com LPS. Essas células responsivas à DA mostraram-se mais resistentes a inibição à hidrocortisona (HC), o que foi parcialmente revertido após a adição de tocilizumab às culturas (FERREIRA et al., 2014b). Essa capacidade da HC em inibir a resposta inflamatória na presença do tocilizumab foi associada a um aumento na produção de IL-10. Sabe-se que os corticoides são capazes de induzir a produção dessa citocina anti-inflamatória por diferentes células do sistema imune (MOZO; SUÁREZ; GUTIÉRREZ, 2004; XYSTRAKIS et al., 2006). Esses resultados sugerem que o aumento da IL-6 pela DA possa ser um importante mecanismo pelo qual essa catecolamina, em excesso, é deletéria na EM. Como o estresse é conhecido em aumentar os níveis de DA no cérebro (ABERCROMBIE et al., 1989) e na periferia (BENESICS et al., 1997; MIGNINI; STRECCIONI; AMENTA, 2003), a habilidade dessa catecolamina em aumentar IL-6 pode ajudar a explicar, ao menos em parte, porque o estresse é um fator de risco para a EM (ARTEMIADIS; ANAGNOSTOULI; ALEXOPOULOS, 2011),

Em contraste com o nosso trabalho, um artigo publicado recentemente mostrou a DA inibindo o fenótipo Th17 em pacientes com EM-RR, em um fenômeno mediado por DAR II (MELNIKOV et al., 2016). Nesse trabalho, os níveis séricos de DA estavam diminuídos durante as recidivas quando comparado à remissão, assim como as células Th17. No entanto, as PBMC dos pacientes com recidivas produziram mais IL-17 e IFN- $\gamma$  quando comparados aos em remissão (MELNIKOV et al., 2016). De forma interessante, a adição de DA a culturas de PBMC diminuiu a produção de IL-17 e IFN- $\gamma$  nos pacientes, independente da presença de recidivas nesses pacientes. Essa diminuição provavelmente ocorreu via DAR II, uma vez que o uso de sulpirida, uma antagonista dos DAR II, aumentou a produção de IL-17 nos grupos experimentais (MELNIKOV et al., 2016).

As diferenças entre esse trabalho e o nosso podem ser relativas a diferentes condições experimentais, como estímulo policlonal usado para ativar as células T (PHA e anticorpos anti-CD3 e anti-CD28) e doses de DA usadas ( $10^{-6}$  e  $10^{-5}$  M). Porém, a diferença que mais chama atenção é que o estudo de Melnikov (2016) foi conduzido em uma coorte de indivíduos com EM que estavam sob tratamento de IFN- $\beta$  ou de acetato de glatirâmer, enquanto a coorte do nosso trabalho não estava sendo tratada por pelo menos três meses (FERREIRA et al., 2014b; MELNIKOV et al., 2016). Essa diferença sugere fortemente que o tratamento com as TMD age também, de forma direta ou indireta, mudando o padrão de resposta à DA, talvez por alterar o

padrão de expressão de receptores para DA. Em animais, foi mostrado que o tratamento com agonista de DAR II induziu a expressão de fatores de transcrição relacionados com os fenótipos Th2 e Treg, mas com diminuição na proliferação e a secreção de IFN- $\gamma$  pelas células T em resposta à concanavalina A, sugerindo uma possível inibição do fenótipo Th1 (HUANG et al., 2010, 2016). Em consonância com esses dados, o tratamento com agonista de DAR I diminuiu a secreção de IFN- $\gamma$ , mas não levou a diferença significativa na proliferação mediada por concanavalina A (HUANG et al., 2010). Entretanto, em outro estudo realizado em camundongos, foi observado que a estimulação via TCR induz a expressão de D3 em células T CD4<sup>+</sup>, favorecendo a diferenciação do fenótipo Th1, além de favorecer, por vias desconhecidas, o fenótipo Th17 em modelo experimental de colite com transferência adotiva (CONTRERAS et al., 2016). Nesse sentido, além do tipo de célula, o receptor em específico, mais do que o subgrupo parece exercer influência na resposta imune.

Em acordo com os nossos dados, estudo por Nakano e colaboradores demonstrou que agonistas de DAR I são capazes de induzir a produção de IL-17 células T CD4<sup>+</sup> de pacientes com artrite reumatoide, um evento que foi dependente de IL-6 (NAKANO et al., 2011). Esse trabalho sugere que a DA, liberada por DCs, induz o eixo IL-6/Th17 agravando a doença autoimune reumatológica.

Além do estresse, doenças infecciosas têm sido associadas à EM (CHEN et al., 2017; COMPSTON; COLES, 2008; PANITCH, 1994; STEELMAN, 2015). Dois mecanismos não excludentes têm sido descritos para explicar a associação entre doenças infecciosas e autoimunidade, mimetismo molecular (CHASTAIN; MILLER, 2012; CUSICK; LIBBEY; FUJINAMI, 2013), e ativação inespecífica da resposta imune que auxiliam na quebra de tolerância imunológica (FUJINAMI et al., 2006; MCCOY; TSUNODA; FUJINAMI, 2006). Com relação a EM, alguns estudos têm documentado uma relação estreita entre a infecção pelo vírus Epstein-Barr (EBV – *Epstein-Barr virus*) com EM (BELBASIS et al., 2015). Lünemann e colaboradores (2008) demonstraram que as células Th1 específicas para o antígeno nuclear 1 do EBV (EBNA 1 - *Epstein-Barr nuclear antigen 1*) também eram capazes de reconhecer, *in vitro*, antígenos da bainha de mielina (LÜNEMANN et al., 2008). Entretanto, infecção por EBV tem sido igualmente associada a outras doenças autoimunes, tais como lúpus eritematoso sistêmico, artrite reumatoide e síndrome de Sjögren (IGOE; SCOFIELD, 2013; JIMÉNEZ-DALMARONI; GERSWHIN; ADAMOPOULOS, 2015; LOSSIUS et al., 2012). Além disso, infecções pelo vírus Influenza também têm sido

associadas ao modelo experimental da EAE (BLACKMORE et al., 2017; CHEN et al., 2017) e à própria EM (OIKONEN et al., 2011). Esses achados não excluem, mas sugerem que o mimetismo molecular não deve ser o principal mecanismo pelo qual doenças infecciosas impactam no desenvolvimento e exacerbação de doenças autoimunes. Mais recentemente, vários estudos têm demonstrado o papel adjuvante de padrões moleculares associados aos patógenos (PAMP – *pathogen-associated molecular patterns*) e o risco de autoimunidade em indivíduos com predisposição genética (CHEN; SZODORAY; ZEHER, 2015; HERNÁNDEZ-PEDRO et al., 2016).

Muitos PAMP têm potente efeito adjuvante na resposta imune inata com impacto na imunidade específica por favorecer a diferenciação e expansão de clones de células T potencialmente patogênicas no contexto de distúrbios inflamatórias (GOVERMAN, 2009; IWASAKI; MEDZHITOV, 2004; YEN et al., 2015; ZOZULYA et al., 2010). Os PAMP medeiam seus efeitos através de sua ligação aos receptores de reconhecimento de padrão (PRR – *pattern recognition receptors*), tais como os membros da família de receptores do tipo Toll (TLRs – *Toll-like receptors*) (TAKEDA; AKIRA, 2005).

No contexto da ativação das células T, o status funcional das APCs estimuladas por diferentes PAMPs pode determinar o tipo de resposta imune adquirida que será montada (CARRENO; COLLINS, 2002; CROFT, 2003). Além de elevar a expressão de importantes moléculas co-estimuladoras, tal como B7.1 (CD80), a habilidade de diferentes PAMPs em induzir padrões polarizados de citocinas irá impactar no fenótipo das células T ativadas (IWASAKI; MEDZHITOV, 2004). Sendo assim, ligantes de TLRs capazes de induzir a produção de IL-23, IL-1 $\beta$  e IL-6 favorecem a diferenciação de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> envolvidas em desordens inflamatórias, tal como a EM (SHI et al., 2013). Entretanto, as células T humanas ativadas (BENDIGS et al., 1999; MARSLAND; KOPF, 2007; MERCIER et al., 2009; RUDD et al., 2008), à semelhança das células da imunidade inata, expressam TLR, sugerindo que PAMPs podem também modular diretamente o seu status funcional.

Em nosso último trabalho (Artigo 3), publicado na revista *Immunology*, nós observamos que a porcentagem de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> circulantes capazes de expressar TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 foi superior nas amostras dos pacientes com EM quando comparado ao grupo de indivíduos saudáveis. Infelizmente, pela falta de reagentes não foi possível avaliar a expressão de outros membros da família TLR, o que pretendemos fazer no futuro próximo. Outra limitação foi a impossibilidade de avaliar a porcentagem

dessas células que expressam simultaneamente TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9, desde que todos eram lidos no mesmo canal do citômetro.

Estudos sugerem que a expressão de TLR em células T tem implicação na indução e gravidade de doenças autoimunes. Em humanos, a expressão de TLR em linfócitos T estão envolvidos na patogênese de lúpus eritematoso sistêmico (CHRISTENSEN; SHLOMCHIKA, 2007), da artrite reumatoide (THWAITES; CHAMBERLAIN; SACRE, 2014) e das desordens do espectro da neuromielite óptica (BARROS et al., 2017). No modelo experimental da EM, células T CD4<sup>+</sup> deficientes na expressão de TLR2 apresentaram uma forma mais branda da doença (MIRANDA-HERNANDEZ et al., 2011; REYNOLDS et al., 2010). Estudo recente por Zastepa e colaboradores demonstrou que expressão sustentada de TLR2 e TLR4 após a ativação policlonal das células T CD4<sup>+</sup> virgens de pacientes com EM foi observada nos pacientes que evoluíram mais rápido para a forma progressiva da doença, caracterizada pela perda progressiva e irreversível das funções neurológicas (ZASTEPA et al., 2014). Essa relação pode estar ligada ao perfil fenotípico no qual essas células se diferenciam.

Nesse contexto, no nosso estudo, a porcentagem de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> capazes de expressar TLR2, TLR4 ou TLR9 e de produzir simultaneamente IL-17 e IFN- $\gamma$  ou IL-17 e IL-6 foi diretamente correlacionada com o número de lesões cerebrais ativas e grau de incapacidade neurológica. Esses achados sugerem que diferentes fenótipos de células Th17 capazes de expressar TLR podem contribuir para a patogênese da EM. Ademais, em acordo com os nossos dois primeiros artigos (FERREIRA et al., 2014a, 2014b), a IL-17 e a IL-6 continuam se relacionando com parâmetros clínicos da doença. Um achado interessante observado pelo nosso grupo foi a relação entre gravidade da EM com a porcentagem das células T que expressam TLR2, TLR4 ou TLR9 e produzem IL-17 em associação com IFN- $\gamma$ . De fato, ao menos dentro do compartimento dos linfócitos T CD4<sup>+</sup> humanos, células Th17 patogênicas têm sido identificadas pela co-expressão de CCR6 e CXCR3 e pela produção simultânea de IL-17 e IFN- $\gamma$  (GHORESCHI et al., 2010). Esse subtipo de célula Th17 induziu uma encefalite desmielinizante mais grave nos camundongos com EAE, quando comparado aos animais que receberam linhagens de células Th17 clássicas (GHORESCHI et al., 2010). Apesar dessas células estarem presente em pequena quantidade no LCR e no sangue dos pacientes com EM, sua presença tem sido associada às recidivas clínicas (BRUCKLACHER-WALDERT et al., 2009). Estudo prévio publicado pelo nosso grupo (DA COSTA et al., 2016), linfócitos T

CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> totais que produzem IL-17 em associação com IFN- $\gamma$  foram diretamente associados à pontuação da escala do EDSS. Coletivamente, esses dados sugerem que células T IL-17<sup>+</sup> IFN- $\gamma$ <sup>+</sup>, que expressam ou não TLRs, devem contribuir na patogênese da EM quando em contato com os seus respectivos ligantes.

Em nosso terceiro artigo (Artigo 3), dentre os PAMPs testados em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> obtidos do sangue periférico dos pacientes com EM, o PAM3CSK4 destaca-se pela sua habilidade em favorecer, diretamente, a produção de citocinas relacionadas ao fenótipo Th17, mas não da IL-10. Parece que ligantes de TLR2, de fato, tendem a favorecer não só a transcrição do gene da IL-17 nas células T CD4<sup>+</sup>, mas também os genes para IL-17F, IL-21 e CCR6 (REYNOLDS et al., 2010). Por outro lado, Nyirenda e colaboradores demonstraram que esse ligante de TLR2/TLR1 não apenas bloqueou diretamente a capacidade das células Tregs ativadas via TCR de produzir IL-10, como também elevou a resistência das células T efetoras em cultura à inibição pelas Tregs (NYIRENDA et al., 2011, 2015). Esse efeito sobre as Tregs dos pacientes com EM mantidas em cultura na presença de ligante de TLR2 foi parcialmente dependente da produção de IL-6 (NYIRENDA et al., 2015).

Em acordo com os nossos dados obtidos pela fenotipagem, a presença de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> capazes de produzir IL-6 em resposta aos ligantes de TLR2 e TLR4 foi diretamente correlacionada aos parâmetros clínicos dos nossos pacientes com EM. A mesma correlação foi observada quanto aos níveis de IFN- $\gamma$  produzidos pelos linfócitos T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> quando mantidos apenas na presença de Pam3CSK4. Adicionalmente, as células T CD4<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com maior atividade neurológica da doença produziram maiores níveis de GM-CSF em resposta ao ligante de TLR2. Esses achados sugerem que produtos microbianos capazes de sinalizar via TLR2 podem impactar no prognóstico da EM por favorecer a produção do GM-CSF, um fator hematopoiético produzido pelas células T encefalitogênicas (RASOULI et al., 2015; RESTORICK et al., 2017; SPATH et al., 2017). Com relação ao ligante de TLR9, a adição do ODN induziu os menores níveis de citocinas pelas células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com EM, e nenhuma correlação com a gravidade da doença foi observada (dados não mostrados). Entretanto, resultados preliminares obtidos pelo nosso grupo mostram que esse PAMP aumentou a produção de citocinas relacionadas ao fenótipo Th17 em culturas de células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> ativadas com anti-CD3/anti-CD28 (dados não mostrados). Isso sugere que, à semelhança de

outros PAMPs, ODN é capaz de co-estimular a ativação das células T via TCR (MERCIER et al., 2009; MORTEZAGHOLI et al., 2017).

Enquanto o TLR4 e o TLR9 reconhecem, respectivamente, LPS bacteriano e DNA bacteriano e viral, o TLR2 é necessário para o reconhecimento de moléculas de origem microbiana de vários tipos diferentes de micro-organismos, como bactérias Gram-positivas ricas em ligantes de TLR2, como *Clostridium perfringens*, recentemente associada às doenças do espectro da neuromielite óptica (NMOSD - *neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder*), outra doença autoimune neurodegenerativa (CREE et al., 2016; VARRIN-DOYER et al., 2012). De forma interessante, a disbiose com grande proliferação de espécies comensais pertencentes ao *cluster Clostridia* foi observada em pacientes com EM (MIYAKE et al., 2015). A excessiva presença de ligantes de TLR2 nessas bactérias é conhecida por participar na indução de colite em modelos experimentais de doença inflamatória intestinal (NAKANISHI; SATO; OHTEKI, 2014). Esses achados sugerem o impacto deletério da translocação microbiana na EM. Finalmente, a presença de ligantes endógenos de TLRs, chamados padrões moleculares associados ao dano (DAMP – *danger-associated molecular patterns*), poderia também contribuir para a EM. Na EM, HSP70 é um DAMP altamente expresso nas lesões cerebrais (AQUINO et al., 1997), que se liga à MBP formando um complexo imunogênico (LUND et al., 2006) capaz de influenciar a indução da EAE (MANSILLA et al., 2014).

Em conclusão, nossos dados, embora preliminares, sugerem que a expansão de diferentes fenótipos Th17-like expressando TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 estão associados com a gravidade da EM, e revelam a capacidade particular de ligantes de TLR2, especialmente do dímero TLR2/TLR1, de induzir diretamente a produção de citocinas implicadas nas lesões cerebrais ativas e incapacidades neurológicas. Esse estudo é importante, porque nós acreditamos que os dados apresentados nessa tese ajudem a explicar os mecanismos pelos quais micro-organismos impactam negativamente na autoimunidade, o que pode ajudar a criar novas estratégias terapêuticas para os pacientes com EM.



## CONCLUSÕES

- Nossos resultados sugerem que a IL-6, ao se ligar ao IL-6R, pode estar relacionada com a patôgenese da EM por aumentar a secreção de IL-17 e diminuir a secreção de IL-10, além de comprometer a eficiência de glicocorticoides em inibir as células T efetoras, especialmente, nas células T CD8<sup>+</sup>.
- Elevados níveis de dopamina (DA), por elevarem a produção in vitro de TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-21 e IL-17 e diminuírem a liberação de IL-10 e TGF- $\beta$  pelas células T ativadas de pacientes com EM, podem favorecer a desregulação imune associada ao desenvolvimento e recidivas da EM nos pacientes com a forma remitente-recorrente.
- Muitos dos efeitos adversos da DA nos linfócitos T dos pacientes com EM foram associados à habilidade dessa catecolamina em amplificar a produção, in vitro, de IL-6 pelas células acessórias.
- Além disso, a DA elevou, por um mecanismo dependente de IL-6, a resistência das células T efetoras à inibição pela HC, principalmente no compartimento das células T CD8<sup>+</sup>.
- A expansão de subtipos de células Th17 capazes de expressar TLR2, TLR4 ou TLR9 e de produzir IL-17 associada à IL-6 ou ao IFN- $\gamma$  foi diretamente correlacionada a parâmetros clínicos relacionados à gravidade da EM.
- As células T CD4<sup>+</sup> e T CD8<sup>+</sup> dos pacientes com EM foram capazes de responder, in vitro, diretamente aos diferentes ligantes de TLR2, TLR4 e TLR9 liberando diferentes citocinas. Entretanto, a produção de citocinas inflamatórias relacionadas aos fenótipos de células T encefalitogênicas foi superior nas culturas estimuladas com o ligante sintético do dímero TLR2/TLR1.
- Dentre todas as citocinas liberadas pelas células T em respostas aos diferentes PAMPs, os níveis de IL-6 e IL-17 em resposta ao ligante de TLR2 foram diretamente associados aos parâmetros clínicos. Ademais, células T CD4<sup>+</sup> de pacientes com piores índices clínicos responderam ao ligante de TLR2 liberando maiores níveis de IFN- $\gamma$  e GM-CSF.

Em resumo, nossos dados obtidos durante o desenvolvimento dessa tese sugerem que a eventos que aumentem a produção de IL-6, tais como infecções e eventos psiquiátricos que elevem dopamina, devem impactar negativamente na esclerose múltipla por favorecer a expansão de células Th17 patogênicas e danificar o status funcional das células T reguladoras.

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## ANEXO - Parecer Consubstanciado do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa

HOSPITAL UNIVERSITÁRIO  
GAFFREE E  
GUINLE/HUGG/UNIRIO



### PARECER CONSUBSTANCIADO DO CEP

#### DADOS DO PROJETO DE PESQUISA

**Título da Pesquisa:** PERFIL IMUNE NA ESCLEROSE MÚLTIPLA

**Pesquisador:** Cleonice Alves de Melo Bento

**Área Temática:**

**Versão:** 1

**CAAE:** 43009015.6.0000.5258

**Instituição Proponente:** Hospital Universitário Gaffree e Guinle/HUGG/UNIRIO

**Patrocinador Principal:** FUN CARLOS CHAGAS F. DE AMPARO A PESQUISA DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO - FAPERJ

#### DADOS DO PARECER

**Número do Parecer:** 1.044.203

**Data da Relatoria:** 29/04/2015

#### Apresentação do Projeto:

ANÁLISE DO PERFIL FUNCIONAL DOS LINFÓCITOS DE PACIENTES COM ESCLEROSE MÚLTIPLA

#### Objetivo da Pesquisa:

Objetivo Primário:

Investigar o impacto de diferentes fatores ambientais no perfil funcional das dos linfócitos de pacientes com esclerose múltipla remitente recorrente (EM-RR) e sua relação com o curso da doença e resposta à terapêutica.

Objetivo Secundário:

Avaliar a expressão de diferentes tipos de receptores do tipo toll (TLRs) em células T e B de pacientes com EM-RR; Investigar o papel de diferentes agonistas de TLRs na resposta proliferativa e produção de citocinas em culturas de células T de pacientes com EM à proteína básica da mielina (PBM); Avaliar a habilidade do glicocorticoide em modular a resposta das células T e B de pacientes com EM estimuladas in vitro com PBM, na presença ou na ausência de diferentes agonistas de TLRs; Avaliar a capacidade da vitamina D em modular o status funcional das células T e B de pacientes com EM-RR seguindo a adição de PBM com ou sem diferentes agonistas de TLRs.

**Endereço:** Rua Mariz e Barros nº 775  
**Bairro:** Tijuca **CEP:** 22.270-004  
**UF:** RJ **Município:** RIO DE JANEIRO  
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Continuação do Parecer: 1.044.203

Investigar uma possível correlação entre a frequência de diferentes fenótipos das células T e B Ag-específicas estimuladas sob diferentes condições com o grau de incapacidade neurológica dos pacientes com EM-RR e à resposta à terapêutica. Investigar uma possível correlação entre a frequência de diferentes fenótipos das células T e B Ag-específicas estimuladas sob diferentes condições com os níveis de vitamina D no sangue periférico.

**Avaliação dos Riscos e Benefícios:**

Riscos:

Os possíveis riscos são aqueles relacionados com a retirada rotineira de sangue, como leve desconforto doloroso ou discreta rouidão local.

Benefícios:

Pelos resultados dos ensaios que serão realizados, o paciente não será beneficiado diretamente, nem seus descendentes. Contudo, irão nos ajudar a compreender melhor como o sistema imune ataca os neurônios do sistema nervoso central. Ainda irá ajudar a identificar porque alguns pacientes possuem formas mais agressivas da doença com maior progressão e menor resposta a terapêutica disponível. Esse conhecimento possivelmente ajudará no desenvolvimento futuro de novas estratégias de tratamento e controle das crises de incapacidade neurológica.

**Comentários e Considerações sobre a Pesquisa:**

o projeto tem como desfecho principal: Conseguir demonstrar que elevada expressão de receptores do tipo toll (TLRs) nas células T está atrelada à maior progressão da esclerose múltipla e a menor resposta ao corticoide, droga imunossupressora utilizada para controlar as crises clínicas. Ademais, deficiência de vitamina D no sangue pode estar atrelada a uma forma mais agressiva da doença.

**Considerações sobre os Termos de apresentação obrigatória:**

Presentam-se completos.

**Recomendações:**

não há

**Conclusões ou Pendências e Lista de Inadequações:**

não há.

**Endereço:** Rua Mariz e Barros nº 775  
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GUINLE/HUGG/UNIRIO



Continuação do Parecer: 1.044.203

**Situação do Parecer:**

Aprovado

**Necessita Apreciação da CONEP:**

Não

**Considerações Finais a critério do CEP:**

RIO DE JANEIRO, 30 de Abril de 2015

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**Assinado por:**  
**Pedro Eder Portari Filho**  
**(Coordenador)**

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