Inflamatory forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis (RA) are chronic diseases that primarily affect peripheral synovial joints. The pathogenesis of RA is multifactorial, including genetic influences on susceptibility, postnatal events in immune maturation, environmental factors, and amplifying cytokine networks that perpetuate inflammation (1). Many elegant models of transgenic and gene disrupted mice provide insight into the pathogenic mechanisms of these diseases. Some of these models such as the K/BxN, TNFα transgenic, IL-1 receptor antagonist deficient, and human T lymphotropic virus type I (HTLV-I) tax transgenic mice develop spontaneous disease. Other models rely on the induction of disease by collagen inoculation in DBA/J or humanized HLA transgenic mice, direct intraarticular antigen or oligonucleotide administration, injection with bacterial cell walls, or by creating immune complexes. The panoply of pathogenic mechanisms illustrates the wide variety of initiating circumstances that can ultimately lead to joint damage. In each case, the final common pathway, i.e., synovial inflammation and joint destruction, resembles RA. However, RA is a complex, heterogeneous disease and the limitations of each animal model should be recognized.

Recently, one model has attracted particular interest, the K/BxN model, wherein spontaneous arthritis occurs in mice that express both the transgene encoded KRN T cell receptor and the IAg7 MHC class II allele (2, 3). These transgenic T cells have specificity for a self-peptide derived from the glycolytic enzyme glucose-6-phosphate isomerase (G6PI) and are able to break tolerance in the B cell compartment resulting in the production of autoantibodies to the same antigen (4, 5). Affinity-purified anti-G6PI Ig from these mice can transfer joint specific inflammation to healthy recipients (4). The mechanism for joint-specific disease arising from autoimmunity to a ubiquitous autoantigen has been puzzling. In a rapid succession of articles, in-cluding one in this issue, some of the mechanisms of this disease arising from autoimmunity to a ubiquitous autoan-tigen has been puzzling. In a rapid succession of articles, in-cluding one in this issue, some of the mechanisms of this disease illustrate the wide variety of initiating circumstances that can ultimately lead to joint damage. In each case, the final common pathway, i.e., synovial inflammation and joint destruction, resembles RA. However, RA is a complex, heterogeneous disease and the limitations of each animal model should be recognized.

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Now that the mechanisms of this model have been elegantly elaborated, it is important to ask how they relate to the uniquely human disease known as rheumatoid arthritis. Our scientific understanding of RA has evolved through many stages, beginning with the discovery of anti-Ig autoantibodies called rheumatoid factors over 50 yr ago. This led to the remarkable hypothesis in 1973 that RA represented an intraarticular immune complex disease mediated by complement activation (12). This notion subsequently fell into disfavor as antigen-specific T cell responses, both autoimmune and otherwise, held primacy. In 1990, we proposed that RA had a T cell–independent component based on its cytokine profile (13), and this hypothesis was recently updated and modified to incorporate the role of innate immunity, partial transformation of synovial fibroblasts, and antigen-independent T cell mechanisms (14). Although still controversial, this paradigm has been partially validated by the relative success of anti–cytokine approaches compared with anti–T cell therapy for RA.

The fortuitous discovery that K/BxN mice spontaneously develop arthritis after an initial T cell–dependent phase with a subsequent T cell–independent phase fits very well with this line of reasoning. As noted above, the pathogenesis of the model has been precisely defined and is due
against type II collagen are a potential contributory factor to most investigators believe that immune responses directed but are not specific for RA (15, 17). After years of study, collagen antibodies can be detected in a subset of patients inflammation (7, 20). Like anti-G6PI antibodies, anti-type II can, like the passive K/BxN model, be used to determine face of cartilage and fix complement is readily induced and by a mixture of monoclonal antibodies that bind to the sur-

Table I. Responses in Mutant Mice to K/BxN Serum Transfer

| Disrupted gene | Disease severity            | Reference |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Rag-1         | Similar to wild-type        | (11)      |
| CD40L         | Similar to wild-type        | (18)      |
| TNFRp55/p75   | Delayed disease onset       | (18)      |
| Inducible NO synthase 2 | Similar to wild-type   | (21)      |
| gpl91 (phox)  | Similar to wild-type        | (21)      |
| TRANCE/RANKL  | Protected from bone erosions| (22)      |
| FCR-γ         | No inflammatory response    | (9, 18)   |
| FcγRI        | Similar to wild-type        | (9)       |
| FcγRIIb      | Similar to wild-type        | (10)      |
| FcγRIII      | Weak inflammatory response  | (9)       |
| CLq or C4    | Similar to wild-type        | (8, 9)    |
| C3 or factor B | Weak inflammatory response  | (9)       |
| C5 or C6     | No inflammatory response    | (9, 10)   |

Despite no animal models are actually RA, they can help us understand normal inflammatory and immune responses or serve as vehicles to test therapeutic agents. It is not yet known whether the K/BxN model is superior, or even equivalent, to the ever-expanding universe of spontaneous and induced models (18, 19). As the basic mechanism of the K/BxN model appears to be immune complex formation on the surface of cartilage, it is very similar to collagen-induced arthritis (CIA). Indeed, passive CIA induced by a mixture of monoclonal antibodies that bind to the surface of cartilage and fix complement is readily induced and can, like the passive K/BxN model, be used to determine which genes play a critical role in joint destruction or inflammation (7, 20). Like anti-G6PI antibodies, anti-type II collagen antibodies can be detected in a subset of patients but are not specific for RA (15, 17). After years of study, most investigators believe that immune responses directed against type II collagen are a potential contributory factor to the disease but not a primary mechanism. It remains to be seen if G6PI will merely join the growing list of autoantigens implicated in RA (e.g., other collagen types, gp39, proteoglycans, RA33, p205, and citrullinated proteins).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the K/BxN model is not the end stage involving relatively nonspecific mechanisms that may (or may not) be related to human disease; instead, the intriguing breakdown of tolerance that permits the formation of autoantibodies could be more relevant to RA as well as other autoimmune conditions. Of particular interest is how these adaptive immune responses, in turn, activate innate immunity as an effector mechanism that can inflame and damage target tissues. Careful dissection of this pathway, including the influence of the genetic background, can define mechanisms of proximal events rather than the undifferentiated final common pathway that is clinically defined as arthritis. Exploration of these mechanisms might provide important clues to etiology of self-directed adaptive responses.

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