Unique genotypic features of HIV-1 C gp41 membrane proximal external region variants during pregnancy relate to mother-to-child transmission via breastfeeding

Li Yin¹,*, Kai-Fen Chang¹, Kyle J. Nakamura², Louise Kuhn³, Grace M. Aldrovandi⁴, Maureen M. Goodenow¹
¹Molecular HIV Host Interaction Section, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institute of Health, Bethesda, MD, USA
²Illumina Inc., San Diego, CA, USA
³Gertrude H. Sergievsky Center, College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Department of Epidemiology, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA
⁴Department of Pediatrics, Sabin Research Institute, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Abstract

Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) through breastfeeding remains a major source of pediatric HIV-1 infection worldwide. To characterize plasma HIV-1 subtype C populations from infected mothers during pregnancy that related to subsequent breast milk transmission, an exploratory study was designed to apply next generation sequencing and a custom bioinformatics pipeline for HIV-1 gp41 extending from heptad repeat region 2 (HR2) through the membrane proximal external region (MPER) and the membrane spanning domain (MSD). MPER harbors linear and highly conserved epitopes that repeatedly elicits HIV-1 neutralizing antibodies with exceptional breadth. Viral populations during pregnancy from women who transmitted by breastfeeding, compared to those who did not, displayed greater biodiversity, more frequent amino acid polymorphisms, lower hydropathy index and greater positive charge. Viral characteristics were restricted to MPER, failed to extend into flanking HR2 or MSD regions, and were unrelated to predicted neutralization resistance. Findings provide novel parameters to evaluate an association between maternal MPER variants present during gestation and lactogenesis with subsequent transmission outcomes by breastfeeding.

Importance—HIV-1 transmission through breastfeeding accounts for 39% of MTCT and continues as a major route of pediatric infection in developing countries where access to interventions for interrupting transmission is limited. Identifying women who are likely to transmit HIV-1 during breastfeeding would focus therapies, such as broad neutralizing HIV monoclonal
antibodies (bn-HIV-Abs), during the breastfeeding period to reduce MTCT. Findings from our pilot study identify novel characteristics of gestational viral MPER quasispecies related to transmission outcomes and raise the possibility for predicting MTCT by breastfeeding based on identifying mothers with high-risk viral populations.

Keywords
Next generation sequencing; Subtype C; HIV-1 gp41 MPER; MTCT; Breastfeeding; Biodiversity; Hydropathy; Charge

Introduction
Mother-to-child HIV-1 transmission (MTCT) can occur during pregnancy, delivery (perinatally) or breastfeeding and contributes substantially to global morbidity and mortality for children under-5 years of age. Rates of perinatal MTCT range from 15% to 45% in the absence of any interventions but can be reduced to less than 5% with appropriate antiretroviral treatment [1–5]. HIV-1 transmission through breastfeeding accounts for 39% of MTCT, and continues to be a major route of pediatric infection in developing countries [6], where access to interventions for interrupting transmission is limited [7].

Viruses that establish MTCT either perinatally or through breastfeeding display limited diversity, as well as relatively short and under-glycosylated gp120 regions [8–12], similar to gp120 regions among transmitter/founder viruses in general [13–16]. The membrane-proximal external region (MPER) of gp41 contains linear epitopes for broadly HIV-1 neutralizing antibodies (bn-HIV-Abs), including 2F5, 4E10, 10E8, Z13e1, and most recently LN01, DH511, VRC42 and PGZL1, and is accessible to plasma bn-HIV-Abs [17–26]. MPER targeting bn-HIV-Abs show outstanding breadth by neutralizing over 90% of viral strains on multiclade panels [19,22,24,26,27]. Although MPER targeting bn-HIV-Abs arose independently from different individuals infected by various clades [19,22,24,26,28], their epitopes overlap extensively, suggesting epitope conservation, immunogenesis, and antibody accessibility and supporting vaccine efforts [29–32]. Elevated maternal antibody titers to HIV-1 envelope (env) gp41 and/or gp120 epitopes are directly associated with perinatal MTCT [33–37]. Our previous study of HIV-1 MPER sequences from HIV-1 infected mother-baby pairs in the Zambia Exclusive Breastfeeding Study (ZEBS), a clinical trial to prevent MTCT of HIV-1 through breast milk [38–40], suggests that polymorphisms in MPER occur naturally and can confer resistance to broadly neutralizing anti-MPER antibodies [40]. Thus, it is plausible to hypothesize that HIV-1 MPER variants in mothers who transmit HIV-1 to their babies by breastfeeding (TM) display a greater extent of genetic polymorphism in MPER compared to those who do not transmit (NTM).

Cross-sectional as well as longitudinal studies of cell-free HIV-1 find persistent mixing and synchronous evolution of viruses between plasma and breast milk in the ZEBS and other cohorts indicating that HIV-1 quasispecies in plasma are representative of virus populations in breast milk [38,41–45], although compartmentalization of cell-associated viruses in breast milk is reported in other studies [41,46]. A sophisticated phylogenetic analysis of longitudinal HIV-1 env V1-V5 sequences from plasma and breast milk of
transmitting mothers suggests that the most common ancestral virus(es) in breast milk originate during the second or third trimester of pregnancy, close to the onset of lactogenesis [38]. Consequently, plasma HIV-1 variants during pregnancy might harbor genetic features related to subsequent breast milk transmission.

To examine the relationship between maternal viruses during gestation and subsequent transmission outcomes through breastfeeding, a pilot study of ZEBS maternal plasma subtype C HIV-1 from second or third trimester of pregnancy were evaluated by next generation sequencing (NGS) to provide broad coverage of HIV-1 quasispecies at the population level and sensitive detection of low-frequency variants. A custom bioinformatic pipeline was developed to assess biodiversity, amino acid substitutions within linear epitopes of known bn-HIV-Abs targeting gp41 MPER, and biochemical features (hydropathy and charge) of plasma subtype C HIV-1 gp41 MPER variants and compared to the adjacent heptad repeat region 2 (HR2) or membrane spanning domain (MSD) among mothers who transmitted or did not transmit HIV-1 through breastfeeding.

Materials and Methods

Study cohort

A nested, case-control study included a subset of eight women infected by subtype C HIV-1 enrolled in ZEBS [38–40]. All subjects were therapy-naive, except for a single peripartum dose of nevirapine according to the Zambian government guidelines during the enrollment period (2001–2004). Written informed consent for participation in the ZEBS study was obtained from all participants. From the larger cohort, our study included plasma samples from four women who transmitted HIV-1 during the early breastfeeding period (TM) (defined by infants who became HIV-1 DNA positive after 42 days following prior negative tests), and four infected women who did not transmit HIV-1 (NTM) [defined by infants who remained HIV-1 DNA negative through the completion of all breastfeeding for a median (quartile range) (QR) of 6.5 (4.0–18.8) months] (Table 1). Maternal plasma samples were collected prospectively during the second/third trimester of pregnancy [median (QR): 80 (32–164) days before delivery] (Table 1). At the time of sampling, the two groups of women were balanced for median (QR) of age [TM, 25.5 (22.5–31.5) years vs. NTM, 27.0 (20.3–34.5) years] (p=0.87), CD4 T-cell count [TM, 146 (117–187) cells/µl vs. NTM, 202 (132–240) cells/µl] (p=0.27), plasma viral load [TM, log_{10} 5.2 (4.9–5.5) HIV-1 RNA copies/ml plasma vs. NTM, log_{10} 5.2 (5.0–5.3) HIV-1 RNA copies/ml plasma] (p=1.00), and breastfeeding period [TM, 4.0 (4.0–11.5) months vs. NTM, 6.5 (4.0–18.8) months] (p=0.53). This genetic protocol was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Florida, the Sabin Research Institute, and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles.

Generation of amplicon library

Viral RNA was extracted from 280µl of plasma using QIAamp Viral RNA Mini Kit (Qiagen, Valencia, CA). A library of HIV-1 env gp41 amplicons [342 nucleotides in length, including pre-HR2 (105 nucleotides) HR2 (102 nucleotides), MPER (66 nucleotides), and 5’ MSD (69 nucleotides)] was generated for each subject from 2,000 HIV-1 RNA copies by RT-PCR using SuperScript™ One-Step RT-PCR (Invitrogen, Carlsbad,
California) followed by amplification using GoTaq colorless Master Mix (Promega, Madison, WI) [47]. First round amplification used forward primer 251 (5’-GGG GCT CTG GAA AAC TCA TCT-3’) and reverse primer 585 (5’-AAT GGT GAG TAT CCC TGC CTA ACT-3’) (nucleotide positions 8,011–8,034 and 8,345–8,368, respectively, in HIV-1<sub>HXB2</sub> genome [48]; 7,387–7,410 and 7,721–7,744, respectively in HIV-1<sub>ETH2220</sub> genome), while second round amplification used forward A-257 (5’-CTATCGCCTCCCTGCACCATCAG GCT CTG GAA AAC TCA TCT GCA CCA-3’) and reverse B-575 (5’-CTATGCGCCTTGCCAGCCCGCTCAG ATC CCT GCC TAA CTC TAT TCA CTA-3’) (nucleotide positions 8,017–8,040 and 8,335–8,358, respectively, in HIV-1<sub>HXB2</sub> genome; 7,393–7,416 and 7,711–7,734, respectively, in HIV-1<sub>ETH2220</sub> genome) with adaptors A or B (underlined nucleotides in respective primer) incorporated at the 5’ ends. Amplicons were gel purified using QIAquick Gel Extraction Kit (Qiagen) as described [49], and submitted to the Interdisciplinary Center for Biotechnology Research at University of Florida for Titanium Amplicon 454-pyrosequencing reading from adaptor B using a Genome Sequencer FLX (454 Life Sciences) according to the manufacturer’s protocol.

Sequence analysis

A bioinformatics pipeline was developed to facilitate analysis of large numbers of HIV-1 gp41 HR2-MPER-MSD sequence reads. The median (QR) number of raw reads was 56,647 (43,142–75,450) per subject. Sequences were submitted to NCBI public access database with accession numbers pending. A quality control step filtered a median (QR) of 7.5% (5.2%–13.2%) low quality reads with ambiguous nucleotides, more than one error in either primer tag, or a length outside mean ± 2 SD length range, leaving median (QR) of 52,408 (37,541–71,533) quality sequences per sample. Depth of sequencing provided median (QR) of 27 (19–36)-fold coverage of input 2,000 HIV-1 RNA copies with no significant difference in sequence number or fold coverage among the samples between the groups. Quality MPER sequences were extracted from the entire HR2-MPER-MSD sequences by aligning to HIV-1<sub>HXB2</sub> and to HIV-1 subtype C consensus sequence generated from HIV sequence database [50].

Nucleotide sequences were clustered at 3% genetic distance using ESPRIT [49,51,52] to develop a consensus sequence for each cluster that represents a sequence variant. Complexity of the HIV-1 population within each individual was evaluated by neighbor-joining (NJ) phylogenetic tree generated from consensus sequences with the maximum-likelihood composite model implemented in MEGA v5.2 [53,54]. Statistical support was assessed by 1,000 bootstrap replicates. NJ trees were annotated manually in Adobe Illustrator CS4 (Adobe Systems Incorporated, San Jose, CA) to display frequencies of HIV-1 cluster variants. Frequencies of amino acid differences at each position compared to subtype B HIV-1<sub>HXB2</sub> were calculated. Non-synonymous substitutions resulting in alteration of viral sensitivity to bn-HIV-Abs, including 2F5, 4E10, LN01, DH511, VRC42, PGZL1, 10E8 and Z13e1, were identified by mapping to known resistant/sensitizing mutations (Figure S1) [19,22,24,26,28,40,55–71]. Number and frequency of amino acid differences were compared between TM and NTM sequences. Positive selection at epitope-composing positions was inferred by Phylogenetic Analysis by Maximum Likelihood (PAML) [72]. Hydropathy index

Yin et al. J Clin Pediatr Neonatol. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2021 September 21.
and charge of each MPER consensus sequence were calculated using an in-house code [52,73,74].

Polymorphisms across all sequences were evaluated by biodiversity, expressed as operational taxonomic units (OTU), using rarefaction, while Chao1 algorithms in ESPRIT [51]. Rarefaction curves display HIV-1 diversity over sequencing depth, and Chao1 infers maximum biodiversity within 2,000 input HIV-1 RNA copies [49,51,52].

**Statistical analysis**

Groups were compared by unpaired t test. Statistical analyses were performed using SAS version 9.1 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC) with P <0.05 (two sided) defined as significant. Logistic regression was used to examine the effects of predicted hydropathy or charge of HIV-1 gp41 MPER and their interactions (exposures) on transmission (outcome).

**Results**

**Population structure**

To evaluate the complexity of viral population structure within each individual, unrooted phylogenetic tree were constructed from maternal consensus MPER sequence clusters. Overall, the analysis showed that sequences were correctly assigned to each individual with no sequence mixing among subjects. Within each subject HIV-1 population were organized into one to three dominant clusters with thousands of sequences per cluster (Figure 1). Dominant sequence clusters generally included a median (QR) of 47% (19% −63%) of sequences. Sequences representing 0.25% to 10% of the viral population within an individual also appeared in low frequency (0 to 4) clusters surrounded by swarms of clusters with less abundant variants, usually representing <0.25% of the population. The structure of viral populations based on gp41 regions was indistinguishable between TM and NTM and similar to HIV-1 populations based on gp120 V3 [49].

**Biodiversity of HIV-1 MPER quasispecies**

Biodiversity of HIV-1 MPER nucleotide sequences within each individual were assessed using rarefaction curves. HIV-1 MPER nucleotide sequences among TM displayed biodiversity ranging from 26 to 110 OTU, which was approximately 50% greater than biodiversity ranging from 18 to 77 OTU among NTM (Figure 2A). When maximum biodiversity within 2,000 HIV-1 RNA copies was estimated, viral populations among TM, compared to populations among NTM, displayed a trend toward greater biodiversity [median (QR): 87 (66–160) OTU versus 33 (28–125) OTU, p=0.33] (Figure 2B).

To determine if differences in biodiversity between TM and NTM were restricted to MPER or extended to adjacent regions in gp41, similar analyses were applied to HR2 and to MSD sequences (Figure 2). Overall, mean estimated maximum biodiversity was more than 2-fold greater in HR2 than in MPER among TM or NTM groups, reflecting in part that the HR2 region (102 nucleotides) is almost twice as long as MPER (66 nucleotides). MSD encoding regions (69 nucleotides) are similar to MPER in length and displayed similar biodiversity.
between NTM and TM groups, although maximum biodiversity in MSD compared to MPER was reduced among TM group (Figure 2B).

**Amino acid substitutions in HIV-1 MPER**

Biodiversity evaluated at the nucleotide sequence level was reflected in diversity among amino acid residues in MPER (Figure 3), as well as in HR2 and in MSD regions (Figures S2 and S3), indicating that a preponderance of nucleotide polymorphisms within each region involved nonsynonymous changes. HIV-1 MPER variants among TM had changes at more amino acid positions than NTM [median (QR) 14 (12–16) vs. 9 (8–14) positions per person, respectively], with amino acid changes in six positions (663, 666, 672, 673, 680 and 681) observed exclusively in TM viral populations. HIV-1 MPER variants from TM also had more amino acid substitutions per position than NTM [median (QR): 7 (4–9) vs. 3 (1–7) respectively, p=0.04]. While the MPER reference sequence for subtype B includes a single N-linked glycosylation motif (positions 674 to 676), the subtype C consensus MPER sequence lacks a similar motif. Although some polymorphisms at position 674 would introduce a motif at low frequency, the number of N-linked glycosylation motifs in MPER was similar among viral populations from TM and NTM. MPER amino acid residues under positive selection were limited (N674G and K683R in TM1, S668K in TM4, N677R in NTM2, and K665R, T676S and K683R in NTM4) with no significant difference between TM and NTM (Figure 3).

**Changes in antibody response epitopes in MPER**

Amino acid substitutions in MPER epitopes might alter susceptibility (i.e., sensitivity or resistance) to bn-HIV-Abs, including 2F5, 4E10, LN01, DH511, VRC42, PGZL1,10E8 and Z13e1 (Figure S1). A bioinformatics approach was applied to evaluate a potential impact of amino acid polymorphisms in MPER on neutralization susceptibility to bn-HIV-Abs. Overall, the neutralization effects by many of the MPER polymorphisms identified by deep sequencing were undefined (Figure 3). Low frequency 4E10- and PGZL1-sensitizing mutation, K665A [26], was identified only in NTM4. In contrast, some MPER polymorphisms were predicted to be associated with resistance to neutralization by 2F5, 4E10, LN01, PGZL1, 10E8 or Z13e1 [22,26,28,40,56,58,59,61–65,67,68,70,71,75–77]. For example, all subjects harbored dominant virus populations with known subtype C amino substitutions E662A, K665S and A667K conferring 2F5 resistance [58,63,75–77]. Additional 2F5 resistant polymorphisms D664N and K665E/Q/R/T/A [56,58,59,62,64,65,68] were identified in 3 individuals (TM1, NTM3, and NTM4). At least one of four 4E10 resistant substitutions (F673L, N674D/S, T676A/I, or N677S) [28,40,60,61,64,65,68] was identified in each individual. LN01 resistant mutation N674S [22] was observed only in TM3 and NTM1. In contrast, PGZL1-resistant mutations N674E/S/T [26] and resistance substitutions to 10E8 (F673L and N674E/S/T) [22,26,28] appeared in multiple TM (TM1, TM3 and TM4) and NTM (NTM1 and NTM4), while Z13e1 resistant mutations (D674N/S/T) [67] appeared in TM3, TM4, NTM1 and NTM3. No known DH511- or VRC42-resistant mutations [19,24] were observed in any individuals. Overall, polymorphic substitutions with predicted resistance phenotypes were identified with variable frequency in most individuals independent of transmission outcomes.
Distinct biochemical characteristics of HIV-1 MPER populations between TM and NTM

To evaluate if predicted amino acid substitutions might alter the biochemical features of MPER, distribution of hydropathy or charge at the population level within TM or NTM MPER was assessed (Figure 4A). TM viral populations compared with NTM demonstrated a left-shift towards increased frequencies of hydrophilic MPER variants with a median (QR) hydropathy index of −10 (QR, −12.5 to −9.6), significantly lower than NTM variants with a median of −7.3 (QR, −10.4 to −5.1) (p <0.0001). The difference in hydropathy index between TM and NTM was concentrated among variants that appeared with reduced frequency (≤20%) (P <0.0001), but not among high frequency variants (>20%) (p=0.34). Low-frequency variants were uniquely identified by NGS, and not found when clonal or single genome sequences were analyzed [40] (data not shown). When charge of MPER amino acids was assessed, a clear right-shift towards an increase in frequencies of MPER variants with greater positive charges occurred in TM with significantly greater net charges (median 2.0; QR, 1.0 to 2.0) compared with NTM (median 1.0; QR, 1.0 to 2.0) (p <0.001) (Figure 4B). The distinct differences in biochemical features between TM and NTM gp41 populations were restricted to MPER and failed to extend into flanking HR2 or MSD domains (Figure 4).

Logistic regression analysis indicated that an increase in MPER hydrophobicity was significantly associated with reduced odds of transmission by breast feeding (p <0.0001), while positive charged MPER regions showed a close relationship with breast milk transmission (p <0.0001). Logistic regression statistics revealed a significant interactive effect on transmission between hydropathy and charge (p <0.0001). For negative, neutral or positive charged regions, odds ratios were 0.741, 0.416 and 0.781 respectively for a one-unit increase in net hydropathy (95% confidence interval 0.738–0.744, 0.413–0.419 and 0.699–0.873, respectively). Charge has an opposite effect on transmission for negative and positive hydropathy. Increase of net charge was significantly associated with reduced odds of transmission for negative hydropathy (OR=0.627, 95% CI, 0.622–0.632), while for positive hydropathy, net charge increase was significantly associated with elevated odds of transmission (OR=6.358, 95% CI, 3.772–10.718).

Discussion

Breast milk is essential for infant development and health particularly in resource limited settings [78–81]. Unfortunately, breast feeding remains a major source of global pediatric HIV-1 infection reflecting, in part, limited parameters to identify women at high risk for viral transmission by breastfeeding and the challenges of providing therapeutic interventions for the duration of the breastfeeding period [82–85]. HIV-1 variants that establish new infections by breastfeeding generally occur at low frequency in the transmitting viral population, are characterized by shorter and underglycosylated gp120 Envelopes, and may represent escape from neutralizing antibodies targeting epitopes in both gp120 and gp41 MPER [9–12,86]. Our exploratory studies of HIV-1 variants by metagenomic approaches identified distinct features of gestational MPER populations that distinguished between women who did or did not subsequently transmit HIV-1 during breastfeeding. Transmission outcome groups in our study were well balanced in age, plasma viral load, CD4 T-cell
counts and breastfeeding practices, which in combination with the depth of sequencing from each individual provided statistical sensitivity. As anticipated virus populations in plasma during pregnancy among women who subsequently transmitted HIV-1 via breastfeeding displayed greater biodiversity. A higher frequency of HIV-1 MPER variants with hydrophilic and positively charged amino acid residues among TM compared with NTM was discovered. The characteristics could only be evaluated at the population level by NGS, as conventional clonal sequencing biases the population towards dominant variants. Phenotypic differences in peripheral blood viral populations overtime that related to subsequent transmission were evident by the third trimester of pregnancy about the time of lactogenesis [38]. While our current study was designed as a cross sectional comparison of maternal virus populations during gestation, whether or not biochemical differences among maternal viral populations present during pregnancy persist during breastfeeding and are related to infecting cell-free or cell-associated viruses in nursing babies are important questions for subsequent studies [87].

Positive selection for any single amino acid change was limited, as was modulation of glycan motifs across MPER. Sensitivity to bn-HIV-Ab, either alone or in combinations, by the novel amino acids in each MPER allele within an individual is difficult to predict with complete accuracy, may differ by subtype [86] and necessitates direct assessment for neutralization susceptibility [88]. Absence of clear bn-HIV-Ab resistance genotypic profiles during pregnancy that distinguish between TM and NTM does not rule out a subsequent role for neutralization resistance in MTCT by breast milk. Yet, polymorphic amino acid positions within MPER during pregnancy frequently mapped outside motifs associated with known bn-HIV-Ab, raising the possibility that factors other than antibody selection contribute to the differences in MPER characteristics between TM and NTM. For example, a significant role in membrane fusion played by MPER requires functional assays to evaluate the consequences by biochemical variants of MPER for viral entry into different host cells or for crossing mucosal barriers.

HIV-1 gp41 MPER plays a critical role in HIV-1 fusion by perturbing the architecture of the bilayer envelope [89–91]. Distribution of hydrophobic amino acid in MPER can modulate membrane fusion [90,92]. Electrostatic interaction between viral particle and negatively charged lipid membrane may also play a role in viral entry [93]. Antibody-membrane interactions for effective engagement with antigens is introduced as a relatively new concept upon the discovery of anti-MPER antibodies against HIV. Electrostatic and hydrophobic association of antibody to the viral membrane are reported to be essential for efficient epitope binding [94,95]. A study of 2F5 observed that the charge of amino acid residual affects ionic interactions between MPER and 2F5 particularly in core epitopes, while hydrophobic interaction between epitope residuals and/or between antibody and epitope is required for stability of epitope-antibody binding [94]. A recent study by Carravilla P et al. [95] demonstrated that 4E10 binding to virus-like lipid bilayer was disrupted by deletion of the hydrophobic residues or removal of charged lipids, and was enhanced by increasing the overall negative charge. In addition, nonspecific electrostatic antibody-lipid interactions increase 4E10 affinity to Env by providing extra contact sites on the viral surface, enlarging the interacting area, and/or facilitating the insertion of the Ab in the membrane after MPER engagement, thus stabilizing the 4E10-Env complex [95]. The decrease in hydrophobicity and increased in positive charge in MPER in MPER variants from TM mothers in this
study may lead to reduced interaction between MPER and MPER targeting antibodies, and thus favored HIV-1 transmission. Logistic regression analysis indicated an interactive effect of hydropathy and charge of HIV-1 MPER variants on breast milk transmission outcome in our study. Similar to our study of gp41 MPER, a significant difference in hydropathy in gp120 between TM and NTM in intrauterine transmission was reported in another study [96], suggesting that intrauterine transmission is associated with maternal envelope quasispecies with altered cellular tropism or affinity for coreceptor molecules expressed on cells localized in the placenta. Together, both studies raise the possibility that antibody-independent mechanisms might contribute to transmission.

A novel aspect of our study is that differences in MPER were compared to flanking regions in gp41. While MPER regions displayed a trend toward increased maximum biodiversity, the striking biochemical characteristics of viral populations associated with MTCT by breastfeeding were restricted to MPER. Although HR2 and MSD segments that flank MPER were diverse, patterns of diversity were unrelated to transmission outcomes, perhaps reflecting HR2 interactions with HR1 or a role for MSD in anchoring gp41 in membranes [97–102]. Overall, deep sequencing coupled with an efficient bioinformatics pipeline provided unprecedented coverage of HIV-1 gp41 MPER quasispecies combined with sensitive detection of low frequency variants that can only be captured by high coverage of input viral copies. Low frequency variants within viral populations are particularly critical and clinically relevant as transmitting viruses. Our proof of principle studies identified months before transmission detailed characteristics of viral quasispecies related to transmission outcomes. By taking into consideration of biodiversity and amino acid polymorphisms increasing antibody resistant or altering the amino acid charges and hydropathies, results raise the possibility for identifying mothers with high-risk viral populations, who might benefit from MPER-targeted bn-HIV-Ab cocktails to reduce transmission during the breastfeeding period.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the study volunteers for participating. Research was supported in part by Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (GMA and MMG); NIH/NIH A01 AI065265 (MMG); Pediatric Immune Deficiency Center, University of Florida, College of Medicine (MMG); and Stephany W. Holloway University Chair for AIDS Research (MMG); NIH funds through an International Maternal Pediatric Adolescent AIDS Clinical Trials Group (IMPAACT) Virology Developmental Laboratory award (GMA) (UM1AI106716). Overall support for IMPAACT was provided by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) under Award Numbers UM1AI068632 (IMPAACT LOC), UM1AI068616 (IMPAACT SDMC) and UM1AI106716 (IMPAACT LC), with co-funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.

References

1. Dabis F, Msellati P, Newell ML, Halsey N, Van de Perre P, Peckham C, Lepage P. Methodology of intervention trials to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV with special reference to developing countries. Aids. 1995;9(suppl. A):S67–74. [PubMed: 8819572]

J Clin Pediatr Neonatol. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2021 September 21.
2. Govender T, Coovadia H. Eliminating mother to child transmission of HIV-1 and keeping mothers alive: recent progress. Journal of Infection. 2014;68:S57–62.

3. Organization WH. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV2014. Available from: http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/mtct/en/.

4. Pan E, Wara D, DeCarlo F, Freedman B. Is Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission Preventable?2002. Available from: http://caps.ucsf.edu/archives/factsheets/mother-to-child-transmission-mtct.

5. Siegfried N, van der Merwe L, Brocklehurst P, Sint TT. Antiretrovirals for reducing the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV infection. Cochrane database of systematic reviews. 2011(7).

6. Taha TE, Kumwenda J, Cole SR, Hoover DR, Kafulafula G, Fowler MG, Thigpen MC, Li Q, Kumwenda NI, Mofenson L. Postnatal HIV-1 transmission after cessation of infant extended antiretroviral prophylaxis and effect of maternal highly active antiretroviral therapy. The Journal of infectious diseases. 2009;115;200(10):1490–7. [PubMed: 19832114]

7. Mofenson LM. Antiretroviral drugs to prevent breastfeeding HIV transmission. Antivir Ther. 2010;11;15(4):537-. [PubMed: 20587847]

8. Rainwater SM, Wu X, Nduti R, Nedellec R, Mosier D, John-Stewart G, Mbori-Ngacha D, Overbaugh J. Cloning and characterization of functional subtype A HIV-1 envelope variants transmitted through breastfeeding. Current HIV research. 2007;31;5(2):189–97. [PubMed: 17346133]

9. Russell ES, Kwiek JJ, Keys J, Barton K, Mwapasa V, Montefiori DC, Meshnick SR, Swanstrom R. The genetic bottleneck in vertical transmission of subtype C HIV-1 is not driven by selection of especially neutralization-resistant virus from the maternal viral population. Journal of virology. 2011;85(16):8253–62. [PubMed: 21593171]

10. Russell ES, Ojeda S, Fouda GG, Meshnick SR, Montefiori D, Permar SR, Swanstrom R. HIV type 1 subtype C variants transmitted through the bottleneck of breastfeeding are sensitive to new generation broadly neutralizing antibodies directed against quaternary and CD4-binding site epitopes. AIDS research and human retroviruses. 2013;31;29(3):511–5. [PubMed: 23075434]

11. Wolinsky SM, Mike CM, Korber BT, Hutto C, Parks WP, Rosenblum LL, Kunstrand KJ, Furtado MR, Munoz JL. Selective transmission of human immunodeficiency virus type-1 variants from mothers to infants. Science. 1992;228;255(5048):1134–7. [PubMed: 1546316]

12. Zhang H, Tully DC, Hoffmann FG, He J, Kankasa C, Wood C. Restricted genetic diversity of HIV-1 subtype C envelope glycoprotein from perinatally infected Zambian infants. PLoS One. 2010;218;5(2):e9294. [PubMed: 20174636]

13. Boeras DI, Hraber PT, Hurlston M, Evans-Strickfaden T, Bhattacharya T, Giorgi EE, Mulenga J, Karita E, Korber BT, Allen S, Hart CE. Role of donor genital tract HIV-1 diversity in the transmission bottleneck. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 2011;111;15(4):E1156–63.

14. Chohan B, Lang D, Sagar M, Korber B, Lavareys L, Richardson B, Overbaugh J. Selection for human immunodeficiency virus type 1 envelope glycosylation variants with shorter V1-V2 loop sequences occurs during transmission of certain genetic subtypes and may impact viral RNA levels. Journal of virology. 2005;79(10):6528–31. [PubMed: 15858037]

15. Derdeyn CA, Decker JM, Bibollet-Ruche F, Mokili JL, Muldoon M, Denham SA, Heil ML, Kasolo F, Musonda R, Hahn BH, Shaw GM. Envelope-constrained neutralization-sensitive HIV-1 after heterosexual transmission. Science. 2004;303(5666);2019–22. [PubMed: 15044802]

16. Salazar-Gonzalez JF, Bailes E, Pham KT, Salazar MG, Guffey MB, Keele BF, Derdeyn CA, Farmer P, Hunter E, Allen S, Manigart O. Deciphering human immunodeficiency virus type 1 transmission and early envelope diversification by single-genome amplification and sequencing. Journal of virology. 2008;82(8):3952–70. [PubMed: 18256145]

17. Burton DR, Stanfield RL, Wilson IA. Antibody vs. HIV in a clash of evolutionary titans. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 2000;101(42):14943–8.

18. Douek DC, Kwong PD, Nabel GJ. The rational design of an AIDS vaccine. Cell. 2006;124(4):677–81. [PubMed: 16497577]

19. Krebs SJ, Kwon YD, Schramm CA, Law WH, Donofrio G, Zhou KH, Gift S, Dussupt V, Georgiev IS, Schätzle S, McDaniel JR. Longitudinal analysis reveals early development of three
MPER-directed neutralizing antibody lineages from an HIV-1-infected individual. Immunity. 2019319;50(3):677–91 [PubMed: 30876875]

20. Montefiori DC. Neutralizing antibodies take a swipe at HIV in vivo. Nature medicine. 20056;11(6):593–4.

21. Montero M, van Houten NE, Wang X, Scott JK. The membrane-proximal external region of the human immunodeficiency virus type 1 envelope: dominant site of antibody neutralization and target for vaccine design. Microbiology and molecular biology reviews. 200831;72(1):54–84. [PubMed: 18322034]

22. Pinto D, Fenwick C, Caillat C, Silacci C, Guseva S, Dehez F, Chipot C, Barbieri S, Minola A, Jarrossay D, Tomaras GD. Structural basis for broad HIV-1 neutralization by the MPER-specific human broadly neutralizing antibody LN01. Cell host & microbe. 20191113;26(5):623–37. [PubMed: 31653484]

23. Wang Y, Kaur P, Sun ZY, Elbahnasawy MA, Hayati Z, Qiao ZS, Bui NN, Nasr ML, Wagner G, Wang JH, Song L. Topological analysis of the gp41 MPER on lipid bilayers relevant to the metastable HIV-1 envelope prefusion state. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 20191115;116(45):22556–66.

24. Williams LD, Ofek G, Schätzle S, McDaniel JR, Lu X, Nicely NI, Wu L, Lougheed CS, Bradley T, Louder MK, McKee K. Potent and broad HIV-neutralizing antibodies in memory B cells and plasma. Science immunology. 2017127;2(7).

25. Zwick MB, Jensen R, Church S, Wang M, Stiegler G, Kunert R, Katinger H, Burton DR. Anti-human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) antibodies 2F5 and 4E10 require surprisingly few crucial residues in the membrane-proximal external region of glycoprotein gp41 to neutralize HIV-1. Journal of virology. 2005115;79(2):1252–61. [PubMed: 15613352]

26. Zhang L, Irimia A, He L, Landais E, Rantalainen K, Leaman DP, Vollbrecht T, Stano A, Sands DI, Kim AS, Poignard P. An MPER antibody neutralizes HIV-1 using germline features shared among donors. Nature communications. 20191126;10(1):1–6.

27. Molinos-Albert LM, Clotet B, Blanco J, Carrillo J. Immunologic insights on the membrane proximal external region: a major human immunodeficiency virus type-1 vaccine target. Frontiers in Immunology. 20171919;8:1154. [PubMed: 28970835]

28. Huang J, Ofek G, Laub L, Louder MK, Doria-Rose NA, Longo NS, Imamichi H, Baier RT, Chakrabarti B, Sharma SK, Alam SM. Broad and potent neutralization of HIV-1 by a gp41-specific human antibody. Nature. 201211;491(7424):406–12. [PubMed: 23151583]

29. Caillat C, Guilligay D, Sulbaran G, Weissenhorn W. Neutralizing Antibodies Targeting HIV-1 gp41. Viruses. 202011;12(11):1–1210.

30. Elbahnasawy MA, Donius LR, Reinherz EL, Kim M. Co-delivery of a CD4 T cell helper epitope via covalent liposome attachment with a surface-arrayed B cell target antigen fosters higher affinity antibody responses. Vaccine. 2018101;36(41):6191–201. [PubMed: 30197285]

31. Elbahnasawy MA, Farag MM, Mansour MT, El-Ghamery AA. Cloning, expression and nanodiscs assemble of recombinant HIV-1 gp41. Microbial Pathogenesis. 202011;138:103824. [PubMed: 31669502]

32. Liu H, Su X, Si L, Lu L, Jiang S. The development of HIV vaccines targeting gp41 membrane-proximal external region (MPER): challenges and prospects. Protein & Cell. 201817;9(7):596–615. [PubMed: 29667004]

33. Baan E, de Ronde A, Stax M, Sanders RW, Luchters S, Vyankandondera J, Lange JM, Pollakis G, Paxton WA. HIV-1 autologous antibody neutralization associates with mother to child transmission. PloS one. 201317;8(7):e69274. [PubMed: 23874931]

34. Diomede L, Nyoka S, Pastori C, Scotti L, Zambon A, Sherman G, Gray CM, Sarzotti-Kelsoe M, Lopalco L. Passively transmitted gp41 antibodies in babies born from HIV-1 subtype C-seropositive women: correlation between fine specificity and protection. Journal of virology. 2012415;86(8):4129–38. [PubMed: 22301151]

35. Guevara H, Casseb J, Zijenah LS, Mbizvo M, Oceguera LF III, Hanson CV, Katzenstein DA, Hendry MR. Maternal HIV-1 antibody and vertical transmission in subtype C virus infection. JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes. 2002415;29(5):435–40. [PubMed: 11981358]
36. Lallemant M, Lallemant-Le Coeur S, Essex M, Baillou A, Barin F, Nzingoula S, Mampaka M, M’Pelé P. Maternal antibody response at delivery and perinatal transmission of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 in African women. The Lancet. 1994;423(3438):1001–5.

37. Pancino G, Leste-Lasserre T, Burgard M, Costagliola D, Ivanoff S, Blanche S, Rouzioux C, Sonigo P. Apparent enhancement of perinatal transmission of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 by high maternal anti-gp160 antibody titer. Journal of Infectious Diseases. 1998;177(6):1737–41.

38. Gray RR, Salemi M, Amanda LO, Nakamura KJ, Decker WD, Sinkala M, Kankasa C, Mulligan CJ, Don TH, Louise KU, Aldrovandi G. Multiple independent lineages of HIV-1 persist in breast milk and plasma. AIDS (London, England). 2011;25(2):143.

39. Kuhn L, Aldrovandi GM, Sinkala M, Kankasa C, Semrau K, Mwiya M, Kasonde P, Scott N, Vwalika C, Walter J, Bulterys M. Effects of early, abrupt weaning on HIV-free survival of children in Zambia. New England Journal of Medicine. 2008;359(2):130–41.

40. Nakamura KJ, Gach JS, Jones L, Semrau K, Walter J, Bibollet-Ruche F, Decker JM, Heath L, Decker WD, Sinkala M, Kankasa C. 4E10-resistant HIV-1 isolated from four subjects with rare membrane-proximal external region polymorphisms. PLOS one. 2010;5(3):e9786.

41. Becquart P, Chomont N, Roques P, Ayouba A, Kazatchkine MD, Bélec L, Hocini H. Compartmentalization of HIV-1 between breast milk and blood of HIV-infected mothers. Virology. 2002;300(1):109–17. [PubMed: 12202211]

42. Gantt S, Carlsson J, Heath L, Bull ME, Shetty AK, Mutsavigwa J, Musingwini G, Woelk G, Zijenah LS, Katzenstein DA, Mullins JI. Genetic analyses of HIV-1 env sequences demonstrate limited compartmentalization in breast milk and suggest viral replication within the breast that increases with mastitis. Journal of virology. 2010;84(20):10812–9. [PubMed: 20660189]

43. Heath L, Conway S, Jones L, Semrau K, Nakamura K, Walter J, Decker WD, Hong J, Chen T, Heil M, Sinkala M. Restriction of HIV-1 genotypes in breast milk does not account for the population transmission genetic bottleneck that occurs following transmission. PLoS One. 2010;5(4):e10213. [PubMed: 20422033]

44. Henderson GJ, Hoffman NG, Ping LH, Fiscus SA, Hoffman IF, Kitrinos KM, Banda T, Martinson FE, Kazembe PN, Chilongozi DA, Cohen MS. HIV-1 populations in blood and breast milk are similar. Virology. 2004;320(2):295–303. [PubMed: 15527854]

45. Salazar-Gonzalez JF, Salazar MG, Learn GH, Fouda GG, Kang HH, Mahlokozera T, Wilks AB, Lovingood RV, Stacey A, Kalilani L, Meshnick SR. Origin and evolution of HIV-1 in breast milk determined by single-genome amplification and sequencing. Journal of virology. 2011;85(6):2751–63. [PubMed: 21911008]

46. Becquart P, Courgnaud V, Willumsen J, Van de Perre P. Diversity of HIV-1 RNA and DNA in breast milk from HIV-1-infected mothers. Virology. 2007;363(2):256–60. [PubMed: 17335864]

47. Coberley CR, Kohler JJ, Brown JN, Oshier JT, Baker HV, Popp MP, Sleasman JW, Goodenow MM. Impact on genetic networks in human macrophages by a CCR5 strain of human immunodeficiency virus type 1. Journal of virology. 2004;78(21):11477–86. [PubMed: 15479790]

48. Ratner L, Haseltine W, Patarca R, Livak KJ, Starich B, Josephs SF, Doran ER, Rafalski JA, Whitehorn EA, Baumeister K, Ivanoff L. Complete nucleotide sequence of the AIDS virus, HTLV-III. Nature. 1985;313(6000):277–84. [PubMed: 2578615]

49. Yin L, Liu L, Sun Y, Hou W, Lowe AC, Gardner BP, Salemi M, Williams WB, Farmerie WG, Sleasman JW, Goodenow MM. High-resolution deep sequencing reveals biodiversity, population structure, and persistence of HIV-1 quasispecies within host ecosystems. Retrovirology. 2012;9(1):1–9. [PubMed: 22214232]

50. Laboratory LAN. HIV sequence database. Available from: http://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/HIV/mainpage.html.

51. Sun Y, Cai Y, Liu L, Yu F, Farrell ML, McKendree W, Farmerie W. ESPRIT: estimating species richness using large collections of 16S rRNA pyrosequences. Nucleic acids research. 2009;37(10):e76-. [PubMed: 19417062]

52. Yin L, Hou W, Liu L, Cai Y, Wallet MA, Gardner BP, Chang K, Lowe AC, Rodriguez CA, Sriaaroop P, Farmerie WG. IgM repertoire biodiversity is reduced in HIV-1 infection and systemic lupus erythematosus. Frontiers in immunology. 2013;4:373. [PubMed: 24298273]
53. Koichiro Tamura GS, Peterson Daniel, Kumar Sudhir. MEGA molecular revolutionary genetics analysis2014. Available from: http://www.megasoftware.net/.
54. Tamura K, Peterson D, Peterson N, Stecher G, Nei M, Kumar S. MEGA5: molecular evolutionary genetics analysis using maximum likelihood, evolutionary distance, and maximum parsimony methods. Molecular biology and evolution. 2011101;28(10):2731–9. [PubMed: 21546353]
55. Blish CA, Nguyen MA, Overbaugh J. Enhancing exposure of HIV-1 neutralization epitopes through mutations in gp41. PLoS Med. 200813;5(1):e9. [PubMed: 18177204]
56. Bunnik EM, van Gils MJ, Lobbrecht MS, Pisas L, van Nuenen AC, Schuitemaker H. Changing sensitivity to broadly neutralizing antibodies b12, 2G12, 2F5, and 4E10 of primary subtype B human immunodeficiency virus type 1 variants in the natural course of infection. Virology. 200981;390(2):348–55. [PubMed: 19539340]
57. Cham F, Zhang PF, Heyndrickx L, Bouna P, Zhong P, Katheing H, Robinson J, van der Groen G, Quinnan GV Jr. Neutralization and infectivity characteristics of envelope glycoproteins from human immunodeficiency virus type 1 infected donors whose sera exhibit broadly cross-reactive neutralizing activity. Virology. 2006330;347(1):36–51. [PubMed: 16378633]
58. Dong XN, Wu Y, Chen YH. The neutralizing epitope ELDKWA on HIV-1 gp41: genetic variability and antigenicity. Immunology letters. 20051015;101(1):81–6. [PubMed: 15951025]
59. Dong XN, Xiao Y, Chen YH. ELNKWA-epitope specific antibodies induced by epitope-vaccine recognize ELDKWA-and other two neutralizing-resistant mutated epitopes on HIV-1 gp41. Immunology letters. 200111;75(2):149–52. [PubMed: 11137140]
60. Gray ES, Madiga MC, Moore PL, Milisna K, Karim SS, Binley JM, Shaw GM, Mascola JR, Morris L. Broad neutralization of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 mediated by plasma antibodies against the gp41 membrane proximal external region. Journal of virology. 2009111;83(21):11265–74. [PubMed: 19692477]
61. Gray ES, Moore PL, Bibollet-Ruche F, Li H, Decker JM, Meyers T, Shaw GM, Morris L. 4E10-resistant variants in a human immunodeficiency virus type 1 subtype C-infected individual with an anti-membrane-proximal external region-neutralizing antibody response. Journal of virology. 200831;82(5):2367–75. [PubMed: 18094155]
62. Huang J, Dong X, Liu Z, Qin L, Chen YH. A predefined epitope-specific monoclonal antibody recognizes ELDEWA-epitope just presenting on gp41 of HIV-1 O clade. Immunology letters. 2002123;84(3):205–9. [PubMed: 12413738]
63. Li M, Salazar-Gonzalez JF, Derdeyn CA, Morris L, Williamson C, Robinson JE, Decker JM, Li Y, Salazar MG, Polonis VR, Milisna K. Genetic and neutralization properties of subtype C human immunodeficiency virus type 1 molecular env clones from acute and early heterosexually acquired infections in Southern Africa. Journal of virology. 2006121;80(23):11776–90. [PubMed: 16971434]
64. Manrique A, Rusert P, Joos B, Fischer M, Kuster H, Leemann C, Niederöst B, Weber R, Stiegler G, Katheing H, Günthard HF. In vivo and in vitro escape from neutralizing antibodies 2G12, 2F5, and 4E10. Journal of virology. 2007815;81(16):8793–808. [PubMed: 17567707]
65. Nakowitz S, Quendler H, Fekete H, Kunert R, Katering H, Stiegler G. HIV-1 mutants escaping neutralization by the human antibodies 2F5, 2G12, and 4E10: in vitro experiments versus clinical studies. Aids. 20051118;19(17):1957–66. [PubMed: 16260901]
66. Nandi A, Lavine CL, Wang P, Lipchina I, Goepfert PA, Shaw GM, Tomaras GD, Montefiori DC, Haynes BF, Easterbrook P, Robinson JE. Epitopes for broad and potent neutralizing antibody responses during chronic infection with human immunodeficiency virus type 1. Virology. 2010120;396(2):339–48. [PubMed: 19922969]
67. Nelson JD, Brunel FM, Jensen R, Crooks ET, Cardoso RM, Wang M, Hessel A, Wilson IA, Binley JM, Dawson PE, Burton DR. An affinity-enhanced neutralizing antibody against the membrane-proximal external region of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 gp41 recognizes an epitope between those of 2F5 and 4E10. Journal of virology. 2007415;81(8):4033–43. [PubMed: 17287272]
68. Pejchal R, Gach JS, Brunel FM, Cardoso RM, Stanfield RL, Dawson PE, Burton DR, Zwick MB, Wilson IA. A conformational switch in human immunodeficiency virus gp41 revealed by the structures of overlapping epitopes recognized by neutralizing antibodies. Journal of virology. 200991;83(17):8451–62. [PubMed: 19515770]
69. Shen X, Dennison SM, Liu P, Gao F, Jaeger F, Montefiori DC, Verkoczy L, Haynes BF, Alam SM, Tomaras GD. Prolonged exposure of the HIV-1 gp41 membrane proximal region with L669S substitution. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 2010330;107(13):5972–7.

70. Wang Z, Liu Z, Cheng X, Chen YH. The recombinant immunogen with high-density epitopes of ELDKWA and ELDEWA induced antibodies recognizing both epitopes on HIV-1 gp41. Microbiology and immunology. 20058;49(8):703–9. [PubMed: 16113499]

71. Zwick MB. The membrane-proximal external region of HIV-1 gp41: a vaccine target worth exploring. Aids. 2005114;19(16):1725–37. [PubMed: 16227780]

72. Yang ZPAML: a program package for phylogenetic analysis by maximum likelihood. Computer applications in the biosciences. 1997101;13(5):555–6. [PubMed: 9367129]

73. Crooks GE, Hon G, Chandonia JM, Brenner SE. WebLogo: a sequence logo generator. Genome research. 200461;14(6):1188–90. [PubMed: 15173120]

74. Kyte J, Doolittle RF. A simple method for displaying the hydrophatic character of a protein. Journal of molecular biology. 198255;157(1):105–32. [PubMed: 7108955]

75. Gonzalez N, Alvarez A, Alcami J. Broadly neutralizing antibodies and their significance for HIV-1 vaccines. Current HIV research. 2010121;8(8):602–12. [PubMed: 21054253]

76. Koh WW, Forsman A, Hué S, van der Velden GJ, Yirrell DL, McKnight A, Aasa-Chapman MM. Novel subtype C human immunodeficiency virus type 1 envelopes cloned directly from plasma: coreceptor usage and neutralization phenotypes. Journal of General Virology. 201091;91(9):2374–80.

77. Ringe R, Thakar M, Bhattacharya J. Variations in autologous neutralization and CD4 dependence of b12 resistant HIV-1 clade C envelonse obtained at different time points from antiretroviral naive Indian patients with recent infection. Retrovirology. 2010121;7(1):76. [PubMed: 20860805]

78. Lanari M, Sogno Valin P, Natale F, Capretti MG, Serra L. Human milk, a concrete risk for infection?. The Journal of Maternal-Fetal & Neonatal Medicine. 2012101;25(sup4):67–9. [PubMed: 22348405]

79. Nicoll A, Killewo JZ, Mgone C. HIV and infant feeding practices: epidemiological implications for sub-Saharan African countries. AIDS (London, England). 199907;4(7):661–5.

80. Ross JS, Labbok MH. Modeling the effects of different infant feeding strategies on infant survival and mother-to-child transmission of HIV. American Journal of Public Health. 2004794(7):1174–80. [PubMed: 15226139]

81. Ryder RW, Manzila T, Baende E, Kabagabo U, Heyward WL. Evidence from Zaire that breast-feeding by HIV-perinatal HIV-1 transmission but does decrease morbidity. Aids. 19915(6):709–14. [PubMed: 1883542]

82. Fiscus SA, Aldrovandi GM. Virologic determinants of breast milk transmission of HIV-1. InHuman Immunodeficiency Virus type 1 (HIV-1) and Breastfeeding2012 (pp. 69–80). Springer, New York, NY.

83. Mofenson LM, McIntyre JA. Advances and research directions in the prevention of mother-to-child HIV-1 transmission. The Lancet. 2000624;355(9222):2237–44.

84. Ogundele MO, Coulter JB. HIV transmission through breastfeeding: problems and prevention. Annals of tropical paediatrics. 200361;23(2):91–106. [PubMed: 12803739]

85. K Shetty A, Maldonado Y. Antiretroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV during breastfeeding. Current HIV Research. 201331;11(2):102–25. [PubMed: 23432487]

86. Jennifer M, Leslie G, Maxwel MO, Ruth N, Julie O. HIV-1 maternal and infant variants show similar sensitivity to broadly neutralizing antibodies, but sensitivity varies by subtype. AIDS (London, England). 2013619;27(10):1535.

87. Milligan C, Overbaugh J. The role of cell-associated virus in mother-to-child HIV transmission. The Journal of infectious diseases. 20141215;210(suppl_3):S631–40. [PubMed: 25414417]

88. Nakamura KJ, Cerini C, Sobrera ER, Heath L, Sinkala M, Kankasa C, Thea DM, Mullins JI, Kuhn L, Aldrovandi GM. Coverage of primary mother-to-child HIV transmission isolates by second-generation broadly neutralizing antibodies. AIDS (London, England). 2013128;27(3).

89. Chan DI, Prenner EJ, Vogel HJ. Tryptophan-and arginine-rich antimicrobial peptides: structures and mechanisms of action. Biochimica et Biophysica Acta (BBA)-Biomembranes. 200691;1758(9):1184–202. [PubMed: 16756942]
90. Lorizate M, Huarte N, Sáez-Cirión A, Nieva JL. Interfacial pre-transmembrane domains in viral proteins promoting membrane fusion and fission. Biochimica et Biophysica Acta (BBA)-Biomembranes. 2008;1778(7–8):1624–39. [PubMed: 18222166]

91. Vishwanathan SA, Hunter E. Importance of the membrane-perturbing properties of the membrane-proximal external region of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 gp41 to viral fusion. Journal of virology. 2008;82(11):5118–26. [PubMed: 18353966]

92. Apellániz B, Nisr S, Nieva JL. Distinct mechanisms of lipid bilayer perturbation induced by peptides derived from the membrane-proximal external region of HIV-1 gp41. Biochemistry. 2009;48(23):35320–31. [PubMed: 19449801]

93. Ionov M, Ciepluch K, Garaiova Z, Melikishvili S, Michlewskas S, Balcerzak Ł, Glińska S, Miłowska K, Gomez-Ramirez R, de la Mata FJ, Shcharbin D. Dendrimers complexed with HIV-1 peptides interact with liposomes and lipid monolayers. Biochimica et Biophysica Acta (BBA)-Biomembranes. 2015;1848(4):907–15. [PubMed: 25576765]

94. Bryson S, Julien JP, Hynes RC, Pai EF. Crystallographic definition of the epitope promiscuity of the broadly neutralizing anti-human immunodeficiency virus type 1 antibody 2F5: vaccine design implications. Journal of virology. 2009;83(22):11862–75. [PubMed: 19740978]

95. Carravilla P, Darré L, Oar-Arteta IR, Vesga AG, Rujas E, de Las Heras-Martínez G, Domene C, Nieva JL, Requejo-Isidro J. The bilayer collective properties govern the interaction of an HIV-1 antibody with the viral membrane. Biophysical Journal. 2020;118(1):44–56. [PubMed: 31787208]

96. Kumar SB, Handelman SK, Voronkin I, Mwapasa V, Janies D, Rogerson SJ, Kwiek JJ. Different regions of HIV-1 subtype C env are associated with placental localization and in utero mother-to-child transmission. Journal of virology. 2011;85(14):7142–52. [PubMed: 21543508]

97. Ismael N, Bila D, Mariani D, Vubil A, Mabunda N, Abreu C, Jani I, Tanuri A. Genetic analysis and natural polymorphisms in HIV-1 gp41 isolates from Maputo City, Mozambique. AIDS research and human retroviruses. 2014;30(6):603–9. [PubMed: 24188582]

98. Miyauuchi K, Curran AR, Long Y, Kondo N, Iwamoto A, Engelman DM, Matsuda Z. The membrane-spanning domain of gp41 plays a critical role in intracellular trafficking of the HIV envelope protein. Retrovirology. 2010;7(1):95. [PubMed: 21073746]

99. Miyauuchi K, Komano J, Yokomaku Y, Sugiuira W, Yamamoto N, Matsuda Z. Role of the specific amino acid sequence of the membrane-spanning domain of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 in membrane fusion. Journal of virology. 2009;83(8):4720–9. [PubMed: 17699283]

100. Mzoughi O, Gaston F, Granados GC, Lakhdar-Ghazal F, Giralt E, Bahraoui E. Fusion Intermediates of HIV-1 gp41 as Targets for Antibody Production: Design, Synthesis, and HR1–HR2 Complex Purification and Characterization of Generated Antibodies. ChemMedChem. 2010;5(11):1907–18. [PubMed: 20922745]

101. Sen J, Yan T, Wang J, Rong L, Tao L, Caffrey M. Alanine Scanning Mutagenesis of HIV-1 gp41 Heptad Repeat 1: Insight into the gp120–gp41 Interaction. Biochemistry. 2010;49(24):5057–65. [PubMed: 20481578]

102. Laboratory LAN. HIV molecular immunology database2015. Available from: http://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/immunology/tables/ab_summary.html.
Figure 1: Organization of HIV-1 gp41 MPER populations.
An unrooted neighbor-joining tree for each individual was developed from the deep sequencing data set clustered at 3% genetic distance. Each branch represents a consensus sequence of HIV-1 gp41 MPER within 3% genetic distance. Symbols represent the proportion of total deep sequences in a cluster: ○, ≤0.25%; ■, > 0.25% to 10%; ★, >10%.
Figure 2: Biodiversity among HIV-1 viral populations.
Nucleotide deep sequences of HIV-1 MPER (66 bp), or HR2 (102 bp), or MSD (69 bp) from each individual were clustered at 3% genetic distances and displayed as rarefaction curves (A) and Chao1 values (B).
A. Y-axis, number of OTU (number of sequence clusters); x-axis, percent of total deep sequences (sequences sampled ÷ total number of sequences x 100%). Rarefaction curves show HIV-1 variants from TMs (red) or NTMs (black), respectively. Numbers of OTU at the end of curves represent biodiversity calculated from rarefaction curve at the sequence depth (100% of deep sequences).
B. Y-axis, maximum number of OTU within 2,000 input viral copies estimated by Chao1 algorithm based on rarefaction curve of HIV-1 variants from each subject [51]; x-axis, study group, TM or NTM, respectively.
Symbols: O, subject #1; □, subject #2; ○, subject #3; Δ, subject #4. Red symbols, TM; black symbols, NTM.
Figure 3: Amino acid changes in MPER compared with HXB2 sequence.

Amino acid residue (a single letter code) which differs from HXB2 sequence was shown in each space with red letter representing amino acid residue resistant to bn-HIV-Ab(s) and black letter depicting amino acid with unknown effect on bn-HIV-Ab susceptibility. The K665A labeled by an * is resistant to 2F5 but increasing the sensitivity to 4E10 and PGZL1. Color scheme is used to define frequency of amino acid substitution with beige representing residues in >80% of HIV-1 MPER variants; green depicting residues in >10% to 80% of HIV-1 MPER variants; and grey representing residues in <1% to 10% of HIV-1 MPER variants. Substitutions outlined in pink are resistant to 2F5; purple are resistant to 4E10; dark green are resistant to LN01; orange are resistant to DH511; light green are resistant to VRC42; dark brown are resistant to PGZL1; cyan are resistant to 10E8; and yellow are resistant to Z13e1. Residues under positive selection are circled by red.

N-linked glycosylation motifs (NXS/T) are outlined by dark grey. a: epitope reported in Yin et al. Page 18 J Clin Pediatr Neonatol. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2021 September 21.
HIV molecular immunology database [102] or published articles [19,22,24,26]; b: subtype C consensus sequence generated from HIV sequence database [50]; c: gp160 amino acid residues 662 to 683 are residues 151 to 172 in gp41 [48]; dash (−): amino acid identity between HIV-1HXB2 and subtype C consensus.
Figure 4: Biochemical characteristics of HIV-1 viral variants.
Frequency distribution of A. hydropathy indexes with each symbol representing the percent of consensus sequences with that particular hydropathy index, or B. net charge of HIV-1 viral variants with each symbol depicting percent of consensus sequences with that particular net charge of MPER, HR2 or MSD from TMs (red symbols) or NTMs (black symbols).
Symbols: ○, subject #1; □, subject #2; ◊, subject #3; ∆, subject #4.
Inserts in A and B show significantly lower hydropathy index and significantly higher net charge respectively in HIV-1 MPER variants from TM in contrast to NTM with each point representing hydropathy index (A) or net charge (B) of each consensus MPER sequence.
Table 1:
Demographic, immune and viral characteristics of study subjects.

| Study group | Maternal | Infant age (days) |
|-------------|----------|-------------------|
|              | Age (years) | Trimester | CD4 T cell (cells/µl) | Viral Load<sup>a</sup> | Duration of breastfeeding (months) | Negative PCR<sup>b</sup> | Positive PCR<sup>b</sup> |
| TM1         | 22        | 2<sup>nd</sup> | 154              | 5.3          | 14            | 34            | 62            |
| TM2         | 27        | 3<sup>rd</sup> | 110              | 5.5          | 4             | 35            | 63            |
| TM3         | 33        | 3<sup>rd</sup> | 198              | 5.0          | 4             | 37            | 70            |
| TM4         | 24        | 3<sup>rd</sup> | 137              | 4.9          | 4             | 28            | 63            |
| NTM1        | 19        | 3<sup>rd</sup> | 181              | 5.3          | 4             | 738           |               |
| NTM2        | 24        | 2<sup>nd</sup> | 115              | 5.0          | 22            | 731           |               |
| NTM3        | 36        | 3<sup>rd</sup> | 223              | 5.3          | 4             | 730           |               |
| NTM4        | 30        | 2<sup>nd</sup> | 246              | 5.1          | 9             | 639           |               |

<sup>a</sup>Log<sub>10</sub> HIV-1 RNA copies/ml plasma;

<sup>b</sup>HIV-1 DNA